

British Romantic Criticism and the Fine Arts: A Study in Philosophical Theories of

Literary Unity

By

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Abstract

This dissertation is an exploration of how a small but important group of Romantic critics, finding fault in the ideal of three unities developed by neoclassical Academicians and wrongly attributed to Aristotle, turned to the terminology and practices of the fine arts to emphasize their conception of organic unity in literature. The Romantic analogy to painting in particular enables a philosophical criticism of literature to present the aesthetic semblance of painting, the comprehension of a multitude of details in a harmonious whole that is a natural unity to its medium, as a paradigm of modern-romantic poetry and its aspirations to similar complexity, particularity, and imaginative colour. Further, in extension of the French *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* of the seventeenth century, the division of ancient and romantic art by Romantic critics like August Schlegel, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and William Hazlitt not only establishes an ethnological and historical difference between the artistic productions of these two cultural periods but also allows, unlike the neoclassical unities, a non-anachronistic philosophical vocabulary of whole and parts or of the general and particular in the criticism of poetry, which involution provides a “rule” more consonant with the laws of the imagination rather than with the rhetorical and absolutist *dicta* that were thither available in the literary canon.

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List of Abbreviations

- BL* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: 7: Biographia Literaria: or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, eds. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (2 vols., New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983).
- BL₂* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. John Shawcross (2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907).
- CL* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Leslie Griggs (6 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971).
- CN* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (5 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957-2002).
- KU* Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
- LL* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: 8: Lectures 1818-1819: On the History of Philosophy*, eds. J.R. de J. Jackson (2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- LR* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. 1836*, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (2 vols., London: Forgotten Books, 2013).
- SWF* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: 11: Shorter Works and Fragments*, eds. H.J. Jackson and J.R. de J. Jackson (2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

- TL* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Hints Towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life*, ed. Seth B. Watson (London: John Churchill, 1970).
- TT* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: 14: Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (2 vols., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- Works* William Hazlitt, *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, eds. PP. Howe, Arnold Glover, and A.R. Waller (21 vols., London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1930-4).

Introduction

This study is an investigation into the importance of references to fine arts, especially painting, in British Romantic aesthetics.¹ My concern is thus not with the style or content of the many stylistically and spiritually revolutionary works of verse and prose produced in Britain and the European continent around the turn of the nineteenth century but with the important body of criticism which comments on them. The critical works with which I am engaging are not mere handmaidens to what might be considered the more noble situation of literature proper. The literary, artistic, and philosophical criticism of the Romantic period reveals as much about the period's outlooks on art, philosophy, and society as the poetry or political treatises, and compositionally some of Coleridge's or Goethe's essays flaunt richer poetic texture than their best verse. In respect to what is borrowed from considerations of painting, sculpture, and other fine arts for the purposes of literary criticism, the end of this project will be to discern what is meant by literary unity and how the British Romantics in particular, who besides Coleridge are rarely treated as philosophical critics in their own right, methodize that unity. Unity may be an old task in critical investigation into any art, but new methods and definitions were

¹ The term aesthetics did not gain scholarly currency until the late-nineteenth century, so I will often refer to the broader discipline of "philosophical criticism." Walter Hipple Jr., in *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (1957), notes that what we call "aesthetics" was normally called "philosophical criticism" in eighteenth-century Britain. There are some uses of the term "aesthetic" in English-language criticism of the Romantic period, but to avoid potential anachronism I will continue to refer to the discipline, as it is practised in the eighteenth to early-nineteenth century, as "philosophical criticism." Timothy M. Costelloe provides a brief summary of the term "aesthetics" and its uses in Britain in *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein* (2013), 1-5. He writes, "Although the intellectual roots of modern aesthetics are buried deep in British soil, the term *aesthetics* is distinctly of German stock," and, "In England and Scotland, 'aesthetics' did not become common currency until well into the nineteenth century" (1, 2).

needed in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to accommodate new conceptions of art, literature, and the imagination.

The concept of unity was of prevailing interest to Romantic critics and philosophers, and their concern has carried over to modern scholarship on nineteenth-century literature, philosophy, psychology, and art. Unity is a byword of then nascent organic philosophies, as in Friedrich von Schelling's highly influential and paradigmatic *System of Transcendental Idealism (System des transcendentalen idealismus)* (1800), where art like both science and philosophy must presuppose the idea of a unified organism (219-224), which, as a holistic and self-organizing structure whose wholeness can be grasped better by intuition than by analysis, confers upon aesthetic experience a high status indeed. Theories of imagination in the period abound with references to unity. Coleridge, like Schelling, conceived of a universal divide between such opposites as subject and object, and mind and matter, and postulated the imagination as a sort of synthetic power that ultimately attempts to "idealize and unify" those divisions (*BL* 1:304). And for those seeking vindication of the modern or Romantic style, of the lyric, or sketch, or symphonic poem, critics were pressed to seek unity in all works of art.

My argument is that a small but important group of Romantic critics, finding fault in the ideal of three unities developed by French critics of the seventeenth century and wrongly attributed to Aristotle, turned to the terminology and practices of the fine arts to emphasize their conception of organic unity in literature. I mean by organic unity a structural principle of internal consistency, so that in analogy to biological growth the parts and whole of an object are interdependent. In *The Romantic Imperative: the Concept of Early German Romanticism* (2003), Frederick Beiser points out that the best

definition of this Romantic concept is found in the preceding period in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), in which Kant writes that essential to the concept of organism (and the unity thereof) are the two ideas that the idea of the whole must precede the parts and make them possible and that the parts reciprocally cause and effect each other (Beiser 84; Kant 5: 372-373). This organic notion of unity challenges the standard literary practice defined by the rhetorical tradition inherited by French Neoclassicism, which derived its principles from Roman and Greek rhetorical treatises and established poetic and pictorial conventions for the predetermined ends of classically successful styles, genres, or structures that are rationally but far from organically ordered.

As to the influence of the fine arts on literary criticism, I mean that arguments about painting and sculpture in particular discuss the unities of those arts in such a way, of relating parts and whole and foregrounding *inner* consistency, as to provide methodology and language to the developing interest of similar unities in literature. Where the dogma of theories of unity in previous literary criticism related merely to rigid consistencies of time, place, and action, the Romantic school found in the visual analogy a unity akin to what modern psychology has termed *gestalt*, a meaningful and unified structure that is irreducible to any one of its parts.²

Bound to this argument of analogical thinking are two further concerns, the first related to the scholarship of our time and the second to the cultural and critical conditions of the turn of the nineteenth century. The first regards M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (1953), which in the canon of Romantic scholarship is the preeminent account of the Romantic imagination. Abrams's

² Rudolf Arnheim (1904-2007), an art theorist and perceptual psychologist, was the first to consider "gestalt psychology" in the context of art. In *Art and Visual Perception* (1954) he writes, "In a 'gestalt' the structure of the whole is determined by the structure of the parts, and vice versa" (467).

famous thesis is that because of the overthrow of theories of imitation and pragmatism by the theory of expression by late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century critics and artists, visual analogues no longer suffice for Romantic concepts of art and mind.³ He concludes,

The use of painting to illuminate the essential character of poetry—*ut pictura poesis*—so widespread in the eighteenth century, almost disappears in the major criticism of the romantic period; the comparisons between poetry and painting that survive are casual... (50)

Abrams offers music as the new analogy for Romantic poetry, particularly the lyric, for it is non-mimetic and unlike painting it is more reliant on expression than representation (50-51). But as Abrams too recognizes throughout the course of his argument, the theory of imitation in Romantic criticism is not totally discarded but altered to rather reflect the validity of imaginative representations and of representations of inner life and subjectivity. Likewise, in my view, analogies to fine arts, especially painting, persist in the Romantic period, but rather than prescribe pictorial and moral expectations from poetry to painting, as the sister arts analogy *ut pictura poesis* has traditionally averred especially since the Italian Renaissance critics like Ludovico Dolce (1508-1568) and Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo (1538-1592),⁴ the analogy is reformulated in Romantic

³ Abrams begins *The Mirror and the Lamp* with an orientation of the four critical theories that account for the major aesthetic paradigms of Western thought since antiquity. They are the mimetic, the pragmatic, the expressive, and the objective. The mimetic is concerned with a work of art's relation to nature or external reality, where the integrity of imitation is key; the pragmatic with a work's relation to an audience, where moral and educational benefits are of primary regard; the expressive with a text's relation to its author, where "raw" feeling and the intimation of the creative mind of the artist at work are central; and the objective, which is defined by the cachet given to a work's internal integrity by formalist critics of the twentieth century (3-29). Abrams dedicates the rest of the book to explore the expressive theory that he assumes for the Romantics.

⁴ Rensselaer Lee "Ut Pictura Poesis," 196, 204, 221. Lee discusses both Renaissance Italian and neoclassical French theoreticians of the sister arts doctrine in fair and equal regard. He also remarks on the

criticism to reflect poetry's absorption of painting's prime concern with individual detail against general effect.

The second concern is related to the first in that it asserts a reimagining of the visual analogy. The assertion is found most prominently in August Wilhelm Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* (1809-1811), when he declares that modern literature is picturesque and ancient literature is statuesque (22). This distinction, influenced in great part by the *Quarrel between Ancients and Moderns* (*Querelle des anciens et des modernes*) in France and later in Britain, piqued the engagement, among others, of Madame de Staël, Francis Jeffrey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey, and William Hazlitt.⁵ The force of this distinction upon critical thought of the

overextension of the "humanist theory of painting" after the Italian Renaissance. Lee writes, "The seventeenth century continued to cherish the humanistic theory of painting and developed it, moreover, in a way that the preceding century had never done. For the Italian critics, intent on the more important business of pointing out how painting resembled poetry in range and profundity of content, or in power of expression, had never fostered the notion, though it could be traced back to Aristotle, of purely formal correspondences between the sister arts: design equals plot, colour equals words, and the like. But the later French and English critics sometimes overworked these correspondences, and by what amounted to a most unfortunate extension of the same kind of artificial parallel, they sometimes attempted to enclose the art of painting in an Aristotelian straight-jacket of dramatic theory. The result for criticism and practice was a serious confusion of the arts that resulted, as every one knows, in Lessing's vigorous and timely attempt in the mid-eighteenth century to redefine poetry and painting and to assign to each its proper boundaries" (202). In a way, then, the Romantic revival of the analogy between poetry and painting is rather a revival of the symbolic analogy between the two as it was appreciated in the Renaissance, before the mechanical formal confusion of seventeenth-century French neoclassicism.

⁵ Aside from mentions in works by critics like René Wellek, the only work I have found dedicated to the British Romantic adaptation of the *Querelle* is Herbert Weisinger's "English Treatment of the Classic-Romantic Problem" (1946), which I shall discuss in the first chapter and to which I owe great thanks for establishing the breadth and also limits of the division between the classical and modern-Romantic in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century. The tension between the classical and the Romantic can also be discussed as the matter of an attempt at periodicity at the time. This is suggested throughout my introduction and first chapter, but my focus is on the theoretical conceptualizations of the division and of the fine arts analogies A. Schlegel attaches to the division. More recently, David Perkins in "The Construction of 'The Romantic Movement' as a Literary Classification" (1990) has written, "In England between 1798 and 1824 the term 'Romantic' did not name a contemporary literary movement or period. The Schlegels's seminal contrast of the ancient or classical and the 'Romantic' or 'modern' was known to Crabb Robinson around 1803, to Coleridge by 1812, and generally to literary persons after Mme de Staël's *Germany* and A.W. Schlegel's *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art* were published in English translations in 1813 and 1815, respectively. *The contrast was a familiar contrast in England throughout the nineteenth century*; but in this contrast 'Romantic' did not refer to contemporary literature, but to that of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This use of 'Romantic' lies behind many applications of the adjective in the

time is not only in the allowance of the analogy between literary and visual productions but also in the historicist recognition of the need for a new language and set of guidelines to assess “modern” art, a term that encapsulates everything from the Spanish Golden Age to Romantic poets like Schiller, and in the recognition moreover of the anachronistic standards of neoclassical criticism.⁶

As the broad terms of my argument already indicate, my method of treatment is very roughly aligned with what the intellectual historian and philosopher Arthur O. Lovejoy, who divined the origins of Romanticism in a plurality of reactionary philosophical and historical factors, termed the “History of Ideas.” In *The Great Chain of Being* (1936), Lovejoy writes that the study of the history of ideas isolates a “unit-idea,” like nature for example, and “seeks to trace through more than one—ultimately, indeed, through all—of the provinces of history in which it figures in any important degree, whether those provinces are science, literature, art, religion, or politics” (15). The method can also focus on various sets of “dialectical motives” that characterize the strain in a thinker or period (10). Among Lovejoy’s more well known, acknowledged heirs are René Wellek and Isaiah Berlin, on whose works I draw throughout this dissertation. I also add to this list M.H. Abrams, whose *The Mirror and the Lamp* in particular established the paradigmatic way of thinking about Romantic poetic expression and with which I shall

early nineteenth century to texts whose content were exotic, idealized, irrational, or wonderful” (130, my italics),

⁶ From Herder to Coleridge, neoclassicism was typically viewed as a strict, tyrannical, rule-based approach to art. This is the “Romantic” view of neoclassicism. For a more nuanced view, see Frederick Beiser’s *Diotima’s Children: German Aesthetic Rationalism from Leibniz to Lessing* (2009). In an effort to rediscover great neoclassical thought on art, or what he calls “aesthetic rationalism,” which he rightly thinks has been unfairly typecast since Kant and then the Romantics, Beiser makes such arguments as: “The rationalist tradition also lays emphasis upon the emotive or expressive power of art as well as its representative and formal aspects. But the relation of the rationalist tradition to modern theories of expression is complex, not least because those theories themselves vary so much” (11).

tussle, not by any means to presume to overturn the paradigm but to correct one of its basic assumptions about the analogy between painting and literature.

Lovejoy's interpretations and methodology have come under much criticism, though I think scholarly corrections to the History of Ideas have now been assumed into its framework.⁷ Leo Spitzer, a colleague of Lovejoy at John Hopkins University, produced the first significant criticism of Lovejoy's work, asserting that the analytical elements of his methodology made ideas and thoughts of any given period atomistic and abstract from multifarious historical, social, and cultural conditions. For example, where Lovejoy had argued in "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms" (1924) that there is no unified "Romantic" movement and the word should be used in the plural to designate a network of features shared by many people in many nations at roughly the same time, Spitzer saw this unnecessary discrimination as a symptom of the History of Ideas' ultra-analytical method and in its stead proposed "a *Geistesgeschichte*," in which "*Geist*" represents "the totality of features of a given period or movement which the historian tries to *see as a unity*—and the impact of which, the philosophy of the Encyclopaedists and positivistic mathematicians to the contrary, does in fact amount to more than that of

⁷ Daniel J. Wilson, in "Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being after Fifty Years" (1987), summarizes and explains the major attacks on Lovejoy's interpretations of methodology from the 1940s to 1980s and finds the History of Ideas to have finally withstood its challenges. Aside from Spitzer, discussed below, Wilson deals with critics who, in accusing Lovejoy's methodology of glossing over the uniqueness of particular thinkers with broad unit-ideas, "foreshadow a line of criticism developed by hermeneutical and deconstructionist critics" (197-198). Maurice Mandelbaum in "The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy" (1985) takes issue with the assumption in the History of Ideas that any ideas may "have had a long unitary history" (38), and though he thinks that Lovejoy failed in the "attempt to establish historical *connections*" he thinks Lovejoy is to be commended for being able to indicate "historical *parallels*" (41). Louis O. Mink in "Change and Causality in the History of Ideas" (1968) writes that Lovejoy "characterizes ideas in such a way that (like physical constants or the number 2) they cannot have a history at all, that is, undergo development and change" (9). Michel Foucault's short essay "Archeology and the History of Ideas, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), like the work of Mandelbaum and Link, suggests that Lovejoy's general patterns obscure individual thought. Wilson argues for the valuableness of Lovejoy's work despite the criticism it has received and even suggests that Lovejoy himself actually employed a more flexible and dynamic concept of unit-idea, as his critics would want him to, than the way it is simply defined at the beginning of *The Great Chain of Being* (206).

the aggregate of the parts” (203). Further, he explains, unlike the “History of Ideas,” “with its plural unintegrated into a unity,” the term *Geistesgeschichte*, which cannot be translated as “intellectual history” because of that term’s over-intellectual connotations, accounts for creative and affective impulses” (191). The History of Ideas as a kind of *Geistesgeschichte*, where for example Romanticism is understood as a unified movement and where both critical and artistic ideas are read as being generated organically by various philosophical and cultural contexts, is how its followers have understood that methodology anyway. Spitzer contends that Romanticism, as a unifying term, “is an appropriate symbol... which suggests an emphasis on emotion, on the irrational, the mysterious, the metaphysical, the Christian, the fatalistic, the historical, a reaction against classicism” (192), and that is just how Wellek, a sure historian of ideas, phrases the movement when disagreeing with Lovejoy’s discriminations *whilst* still following his methodology:

If we examine the characteristics of the actual literature which called itself or was called ‘romantic’ all over the continent, we find throughout Europe the same conceptions of poetry and of the working and nature of poetic imagination, the same conception of nature and its relation to man, and basically the same poetic style, with a use of imagery, symbolism, and myth which is clearly distinct from that of eighteenth-century neoclassicism. (“Concept II” 147)⁸

Also, the engagement with “dialectical motives” is the very practice of Romantic critics, to whom Lovejoy owes a debt. This dissertation, because of its subject, shows Romantic

⁸ Hans Eichner, in “The Rise of Modern Science and the Genesis of Romanticism” (1982), credits two works for the “general recognition that something fundamental did happen” in European intellectual life around the turn of the nineteenth century. One is Foucault’s *Les Mots et les choses* (1966), and the other is Lovejoy’s *The Great Chain of Being* (8).

critics dealing with the tensions between such dialectical motives as antiquity vs. modernity, general vs. particular, homogenous vs. heterogeneous, statuesque vs. picturesque, whole vs. parts, etc. The adoption of the History of Ideas as a methodology with its utilization of dialectical motives, then, is also a way to think within the genre of Romantic criticism and to explore its internal limitations and biases as a natural result of analysis without suffering a totally different and external set of limitations and biases from another methodology that would not yield anything interesting about the subject but would simply produce incongruities between itself and the subject. Another way to state this, which will be touched upon in each chapter but explained most fully in the first, is that the dialectics occasioned by the search for unity in Romantic criticism are as much a subject of criticism as those eventual formulations of unity in analogy with fine art.

Romantic scholarship in the twenty-first century is voluminous and varied. But in spite of the field's typical inclusiveness, a quality I attribute in acknowledgment of the diverging methods and provocative conclusions allowed in contemporary Romantic scholarship, I perceive a deep reservation and even bias against citing those early scholars, like Harold Bloom and Northrop Frye, who revived interest in the Romantic period to the level it still enjoys today. I can thus place my work in the larger context of Romantic scholarship in two significant ways. First, I offer my argument about Romantic theories of literary unity and their connection to the fine arts, as demonstrated by the association between modern-romantic art and the picturesque, as a response to the absence of any such theorizing in the scholarship between Romantic literary criticism and poetics with the Romantics' theoretical understanding of the fine arts. Again, given the inclusiveness of the field and some renewed interest in comparable matters pertaining to

philosophies of art in scholarship on especially the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this argument, while new, is not in contradiction to any body of recent critical work.⁹ Second, my methodology, which I see as inextricably bound with my subject matter, is a break with recent historiographical trends in Romantic scholarship and thus is in contradiction to a good deal of recent critical work on the period that has disavowed the likes of Abrams, Lovejoy, and Wellek.

What I mean by this latter point about my break with historiographical trends is that though cohesive intellectual movements no longer exist as they have decades hence, both in academia and public life, the legacy of New Historicism still informs literary scholarship. New Historicism can roughly be understood as a response to the grand narrative schemata of older historicist literary criticism, rather favouring tracing the small links among synchronic cultural, social, and political events, practices, and texts. The movement at first was also a reaction against what it perceived to be the abstract, ahistorical formalism of the New Critical and the Poststructuralist movements that preceded it. In Romantic scholarship, the standard of New Historical theorization was set by Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (1983). McGann believes that the dominant form of historicism in literary studies, adopted from Romantic critics themselves and which he calls "The German Ideology" and "Romantic Ideology," presumes *via* its language of organicism and imagination that a poem can transcend historical and ideological determinants (10, 12). He also claims that statements assuming

⁹ Some recent and significant scholarship on British Romanticism and aesthetics, not elsewhere discussed in my dissertation, includes Frances Ferguson's *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (1992), Ian Balfour's *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (2002), Nicholas Halmi's *The Genealogy of the Romantic Symbol* (2007), and Denise Gigante's *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* (2009). These works have been inspiring but they focus more on various aspects of aesthetics and the connection to more traditionally philosophical issues like ontology and not back to philosophical critical issues like artistic unity, nor do they explicate the connection between Romantic literary criticism and theorizations of the fine arts.

a unified Romantic movement as espoused by Abrams and Wellek distort their subjects for there are far too many contradictions between writers and political opinions in the age to subscribe to the Romantic ideology (17-24). McGann finds the tendency to broad historicizing as well as older periodizing and contextualizing practices to be problematic.

More recent New Historical scholarship is more tolerant of Lovejovian historicism, like with James Chandler's acknowledgment in *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (1998), a work otherwise certainly directed to Marxist readings of culture through politics in the manner of McGann, that "Romanticism is the age of the spirit of the age—that is the period when the normative status of the period becomes a central and self-conscious aspect of historical reflection" (78). Even more recently than Chandler, Jonathan Sachs in *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination, 1789-1832* (2009) states explicitly his focus on historical *literary* and not social or political events (6). Further, in wanting to remark on the Romantic constitution of modernity by way of the rejection of classical models by figures like A.W. Schlegel, Coleridge, and Madame de Staël, Sachs pays tribute (though in a footnote) to the work of Abrams and also Walter Jackson Bate (18-19 n.30).

It is my view then that any critical discussion of the constitution of Romantic poetic practices and philosophical criticism by that movement's self-acknowledged rejection of classical *dicta* and statuesque aesthetics is required to employ in large part that early scholarship that actually engaged with such issues thoroughly. I take some cues from New Historicism, for example by not wanting to suffer terminological anachronism, but the pure New Historicism or Cultural Poetics of McGann potentially leads to an

atomism in methodology and breadth and a reduction of intellectual and artistic categories to socio-political reverberations. In citing Abrams, Wellek, Lovejoy, and others, and in engaging with such figures as Herder, A.W. Schlegel, Madame de Staël, Coleridge, and Hazlitt, I rather think I engage more with that sort of *zeitgeistgeschichte* (*zeitgeist* history) that Shelley called the “spirit of the age” (1146), where broad cultural categories concerning, for example, the general characteristics of an age, like the plasticity attributed to Greek culture and picturesqueness attributed to the modern-romantics, are not oversights but vital units to understanding and argumentation.

A sort of renaissance of an interest in issues of formalism has given birth to such works as Susan J. Wolfson’s *Formal Charges: The Shaping of Poetry in British Romanticism* (1997), which refuses to discount poetic form and aesthetic experience to the service of meditations on ideology and material culture. Wolfson manages to retrieve the old chestnut of “organic form” out of the fire without either burning her hands or being inflammatory in turn, stating that the aesthetic offered by Coleridge of “organic form” over the “mechanical regularity” of “predetermined effect” is truly “a synecdoche for Romanticism,” that the “formal investments of poetry” from the period expose the difficulty that even New Historicists have had in totally moving away from formalist readings,¹⁰ and that “Romanticism’s involvement with poetic form, in its contentious

¹⁰ Wolfson shows how the assumption of historical neutrality in New Criticism and other formalist movements by New Historicists is an unfair assessment of formalism and, in response to similar accusations against Romantic writers themselves, argues that actually the “politicizing of form... is more crucial to Romantic poetics than the anti-formalism with which its practices were retrospectively tagged” (20-21). Stephen Cohen, discussed just below, likewise argues, “New Criticism’s repudiation of historicism’s emphasis on extraliterary context as its ‘heuristic antithesis’ invited its caricature as an a historical formalism whose limitations, both perceived and real, led in the cultural ferment of the 1960s to its own repudiation by a cultural studies movement wary of any sort of literary exceptionalism as a form of cultural and institutional elitism” (1). Rene Wellek writes in *Concepts of Criticism* (1963), “A straw man is set up: the New Critic, who supposedly denies that a work of art can be illuminated by historical knowledge at all. It is then easy to show that poems have been misunderstood because the meaning of an obsolete word

theorizing and in divergent practices, participates in central discussions of its historical moment” (4, 5, 30). While the first and second points I have here selected demonstrate Wolfson’s conviction in the irreducible importance of Romantic poetic form, which is “not simply conscriptable as information for other frameworks of analysis” and “demand[s] a specific kind of attention” (30),¹¹ by that last point on Romantic formalism and its “historical moment” Wolfson is expressing the discovery made even earlier by Austin Warren and René Wellek, whose *Theory of Literature* (1949) she quotes, that “Modern literary history arose in close connexion with the Romantic movement, which could subvert the critical system of Neo-Classicism only with the relativist argument that different times required different standards. Thus the emphasis shifted from the literature to its historical background” (Warren and Wellek, 139). Wolfson too recognizes this tension between the inherent historical formalism of Romanticism, which I shall discuss in the context of the *Querelle* and the shifting aesthetic standards of the eighteenth and nineteenth century away from neoclassical models to more imaginative conceptions of literary and artistic rules that are historically grounded, as the “split view of Romanticism—as an inimical contextualism and as a progenitor of theoretical formalism” that “patterned the way its poetry got discussed, discounted, or evaded altogether for the sake of (and sometimes as a condition of) other critical agenda” (11). What is at stake in

was missed or a historical or biographical allusion ignored or misread. But I do not believe that there ever was a single reputable ‘New’ critic who has taken the position imputed to him. The New Critics, it seems to me rightly, have argued that a literary work of art is a verbal structure of a certain coherence and wholeness, and that literary study had often become completely irrelevant to this total meaning, that it had moved all too often into external information about biography, social conditions, historical backgrounds, etc. But this argument of the New Critics did not mean and could not be conceived to mean a denial of the relevance of the historical information for the business of poetic interpretation” (6-7).

¹¹ Stuart Curran premises his *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (1986) on such claims about the importance of formal features and innovations during the British Romantic period. He writes, “form was so inescapable a necessity for Romantic subjectivity, a ground for either commitment or disengagement, but always a ground for self-mirroring and self-creation” (216).

this dissertation is a set of definitively aesthetic issues, and so like Wolfson I step away from New Historicism not to assume that those issues are ahistorical but so that I ensure that I do not assume that aesthetic issues like “form” and “unity” are simply validated as “texts” by their submission as evidence to documentations of sociological and political interests.

In addition to my attention to aesthetic experience, another methodological departure I take is to dissent from what Stephen Cohen regards as the legacy of New Historicism’s “unquestionable success in de-essentializing the boundaries between the literary and the non-literary” (2). Cohen writes in the introduction to *Shakespeare and Historical Formalism* (2007), a book reminiscent of Wolfson’s *Formal Charges* that attempts, in his words, to produce “a historically and ideologically sensitive formalism” (14), that while New Historicism is “still a productive methodology and a dominant institutional presence,” “New Historicism has never systematically theorized or consistently incorporated in its practice the historical roots and functions of literary form. In the resultant critical doldrums, there are signs that the form-history pendulum is preparing to swing back to one of the formalist modes that held sway before the rise of New Historicism” (2, 5). Cohen is here indicating the peculiar discursiveness of anti-formalist methodologies like and especially New Historicism, which diminishes the exceptionalism of literature and other arts in order to emphasize literature’s latent ideologies and its equality with traditionally vulgar, in the archaic sense, discourses like diary entries and public speeches.¹² Further, Cohen is suggesting a problem with this

¹² What Cohen writes here of the New Historical view on the Early Modern period as that view is problematized by Sidney and his *Defense* can be shifted to the potential disturbance of any New Historical view on the Romantic period and the importance of its poetry by Shelley’s *Defense*: “while New Historicism seeks to assert literature’s cultural power by downplaying literary exceptionalism and

methodology's insistence upon "de-essentializing" various boundaries, and I see this eschewal as negatively bound to New Historicism's peculiar "pan-textual" discursiveness.

I mentioned above my interest in ideas of the *Zeitgeist* and *Geistesgeschichte*, which should indicate two things. The first is the belief that lest cultural materials are to be left as atomistic entities without reference points by which to be judged, an historical-formalist study must develop some theory or theories of periodization. While there are bound to be exceptions and limitations to what, for example, might be considered "Romantic" or "neoclassical," such categories are indispensable periodical theorizations that provide helpful conceptual frameworks. Second, which is more to the point of "pan-textual" discursiveness, my focus is on what might be considered a kind of "monism," a typical category of intellectual history that presupposes that the understanding of various intellectual and imaginative productions of an age is accommodated by an essential network of beliefs and theoretical assumptions that determine those productions, such as I attempt to expose in this introduction, especially with my analysis of the growing critical importance of particularity of details, national indigeneity, and historical relativism.

Maurice Mandelbaum, in "The History of Ideas, Intellectual History, and the History of Philosophy" (1965), writes of such "monism" that it

emphasizing its commonality with other discourses, Sidney seeks to defend poetry's cultural value by distinguishing it from other discourses as singularly efficacious. If all discursive practice has a shared socio-ethical goal, different discourses pursue that goal in different ways, with varying levels of success; poesy does so by bringing to bear the Horatian imperatives to teach and delight, not simply to present virtue but to move one to embrace it. In so doing, it bests its chief rivals, history and philosophy: for if history can teach by example, poesy, by virtue of its fictiveness, can adduce a more effective example; and if philosophy's precepts may rival the pedagogical value of poesy's embodiments of those precepts, the dry abstraction of the former cannot compete with the latter's ability to move its audience to learn through the delights of beautiful language and compelling tales" (9).

would be represented by many who speak in terms of a *Denkstil* [way or style of thinking] or of a *Zeitgeist*, which pervades the art, thought, taste, and modes of feeling at a particular time and place. According to some who hold a view of this sort, there is a unity in all of what might be called the expressive forms of man's spirit, and no one of these forms can be adequately understood apart from the unity which pervades them all. Thus, the view is monistic. (48)¹³

Further, the view of this dissertation would be one of “*cultural monism*,” which unlike New Historical studies and very much in the manner of older scholars like Abrams and Wellek largely (but not *totally*) sets aside aspects of social life like economic organization in order to emphasize as the backdrop of its problems some aspects of culture, that term being taken, as Mandelbaum says, “in that narrower (non-anthropological) sense in which its primary field of reference is the aesthetic, intellectual, religious, and moral aspects of the life of the times” (48). Whether qualities such as the “picturesque” are imputed to sociological arrangement or political process of the early-nineteenth century is a matter of speculation, but the “cultural” material does determine the significance of that term in the criticism of literature, fine art, history, and general *zeitgeist*. But these monistic attributions, like the interdisciplinary attempt to find some formal and picturesque unity of whole and parts in various dynamic productions during the Romantic era, whether a poem or a landscaped garden, have a part of their historical grounding in their irrefutable articulation of the *zeitgeist* or spirit of the age which echoes through them. While analogies with the fine arts in literary criticism, for the sake of an

¹³ This phenomenon to Foucault is called the *episteme*, which “may be suspected of being something like a world-view, a slice of history common to all branches of knowledge, which imposes on each one the same norms and postulates, a general stage of reason, a certain structure of thought that the men of a particular period cannot escape,” as well as “the total set of relations that untie, at a given time period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems” (211).

attempt to find newer more “Romantic” models of unity, are the focus of this dissertation, underlying my central argument is the notion, which I have already offered and will explore at greater length below, of historicity as an essential feature of Romantic aesthetics, when the self-recognition of Romantic critics as being “modern” or “romantic” in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century demonstrates the reaction against neoclassical ahistorical absolutism. I take another cue from Wolfson here, who writes that “historical formalism illuminates the historicity of literary forms” (15). A study of such matters as those that interest me, of say a “Romantic” period in culture, cannot be undertaken without some theory or theories of periodization, of what for example it might mean to be “Romantic,” and such a study is only enabled by a discipline of intellectual history like the History of Ideas.¹⁴

I give special acknowledgement to René Wellek’s *A History of Modern Criticism* (1955-1992). Like Wellek, my adoption of the History of Ideas is checked by literary explication, though even more so. What groundwork I develop will in each chapter resolve into a critical inquiry of a certain set of ideas in the criticism of major British Romantic figures. Unlike Wellek, the breadth of my historical assessment is hence to the end of exploring British Romanticism, thus limiting my analyses to a certain time and place. The advantage of this method is that it allows such contextualization that proves the antecedents of some Romantic ideas. This method then allows the revelation of the grave importance of those ideas when the historical recurrence of those ideas, which

¹⁴ I would like to here note and pay some tribute to a German academic discipline called “Begriffsgeschichte” (Conceptual History) that is parallel and broadly equivalent to the Anglophone History of Ideas. My comments about the need to theorize periodicity are inspired by some statements from the greatest practitioner of *Begriffsgeschichte*, Reinhart Koselleck (see *The Practice of Conceptual History: Time History, Spacing Concepts*, esp. 3-6.). For more about *Begriffsgeschichte*, see the Mandelbaum article on “The History of Ideas” and Melvin Richter’s “Begriffsgeschichte and the History of Ideas” (1987).

otherwise one might assume to be isolated to only one historical period or group of thinkers, is brought to full light. The nineteenth-century division between the ancient and modern and the analogy between painting and poetry are such ideas that have antecedents and become more meaningful in historical context. I do not mean to insinuate that modern critical ideas, such as we see in Romantic conceptions of unity, for example, are but superficial shades on an eternal and unchanging light, nor, of course, that sharp periodical distinctions preclude cross-historical analysis. The awareness of historicity, developed by eighteenth-century German writers, discussed below, later by British critics, and then by contemporary scholars of the history of ideas who can trace their ancestry to these former reactionaries against Enlightenment absolutism and universality, rather suggests the metaphor of a colour spectrum: each hue bleeds into and enriches every following one on the spectrum, yet its chromatic startle is of a singular character.

The interdisciplinarity of this thesis is a natural reflection of the interdisciplinarity of Romantic criticism. Thus, at the heart of the dissertation, in its conception as an academic project about literature and art history and art theory, is the discipline of aesthetics, the great breadth of which study is one of the few which can singularly comprehend so wide and deep strategies as those of the Romantic critics. I may at times eschew the word aesthetics because it might sound too *recherché*, but the column of historical theorists from that discipline whom I have stacked one upon the other to transmit some of the most essential theoretical ideas about art to various parts of the thesis forms the spine of my project. Bernard Bosanquet's *A History of Aesthetic* (1892) has been influential. It is the first such study published in the English language and is unprecedented in the Anglo-philosophical tradition for placing such a great emphasis on

art and aesthetic experience. I also take as an influence of Bonsanquet's *History* its Hegelian, dialectical, and analogical method, which views one of the principal conflicts in the narrative of aesthetics the tension between the ideal and the common, or the general and the particular. Bosanquet's work is sometimes eclipsed by that of his Italian contemporary Benedetto Croce, whose *Aesthetic* (1902) first popularized the notion that in the history of aesthetics theories of expression supplant mimetic theories, as Abrams too proposes, but both are valuable. *A History of Esthetics* (1939) by Katharine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn is expansive, and is one of the very few works that not only explores seventeenth-century Neoclassicism in detail but also relates it to Classical antiquity before and modern aesthetics in Britain and Germany after. Paul Guyer's recent *A History of Modern Aesthetics* (2014) provides thorough and insightful analyses of many eighteenth-century and Romantic aestheticians and, in a step that is very rare for a contemporary philosopher of aesthetics, Guyer includes British Romantic critic-poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley), whose critical writings are normally given weight only by literary scholars, in his treatment of Romantic aesthetics. The works of many others, like the art historians Erwin Panofsky and Rensselaer Lee, have been of considerable impact, but the above have in some way informed or aided every part of my project and thinking.

As for literary scholarship, I must pay my greatest dues to the work of Roy Park, specifically his essay "'Ut Pictura Poesis': The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath" (1969), which has partly helped me consolidate my argument about the British Romantics not abandoning but modifying the critical analogy between poetry and painting with an eye toward reconciling individual detail and general effect. Park makes a similar claim and,

as I shall explore in the first chapter, argues that Abrams's generalization about the irrelevance of painting to Romantic poetics requires revision. Herbert Weisinger's "English Treatment of the Classical-Romantic Problem" (1946) is also exceptional in its argument, examining the much-ignored Schlegelian division between the ancient and the modern in British Romantic criticism. I have not come across any other text dedicated to the topic.

I have made great use in this dissertation of some remarkable scholarship on Romanticism from recent years, whenever appropriate. However, it will not slip anyone's notice that the core of the scholarship on which I rely is much older. This is not a decision made out of antiquarianism but necessity. In the past few decades, the Romantic *Querelle* has been largely forgotten, perhaps because the debate between the classical and modern-romantic is seen to have been settled even as early as the eighteenth century. It would take an exceptionally nostalgic academic to consider, for example, whether Shakespeare might not have been so vulgar if in *Julius Caesar* (1599) the plebeians did not speak as patricians nor the plot have stumbled on so bloody long, in violation of the unity of action, after the death of Caesar.¹⁵ But the Romantic adoption of the classical-modern division is both *externally* and *internally* interesting. Externally, in that it reveals the engagement of quite revolutionary Romantic critics with the literary theories of eras past and their influence upon later understandings of ideas of relativism and rules that arose out of the debate. It is internally interesting in that it exposes how consequential Schlegel's division between the classical and modern-romantic and especially his analogy

¹⁵ Charles Gildon, in "Shakespeare's life and works" (1710), followed the neoclassical line by proposing that *Julius Caesar* failed to conform to the "Unity of Action, which can never be broke without destroying the poem," by carrying on after Caesar's assassination (166). Gildon asserts that if Shakespeare had more closely followed the ancients he might have rivalled their fame, but he erred in following a loose conception of nature over the rules (164-165).

of the latter with the picturesque is for how British Romantic critics would formulate the notions of unity that are *definitive* in our understanding of Romantic poetry, theory, and art.

It is my view that the division between the ancient and modern and then the particular association between the modern (romantic) and the picturesque in British Romantic criticism *via* Schlegel are gravely neglected in the scholarship. Meanwhile, the formulations of literary and artistic unity and the conceptualizations of Romantic literary standards are taken for granted. My effort is to bring these matters to the fore, contextualize them historically, and then to submit them to critical analysis. Ultimately, I will demonstrate how Romantic theories of literary unity in England, agreeable to organic relations of parts and the whole which is understood through them, locate the aesthetic semblance in painting of such an organic relationship between whole and parts.

This dissertation will explore the reworking of the analogy between poetry and painting in British Romantic criticism generally and then examine the particular aesthetic theories of Coleridge and Hazlitt. To that end, here in my introduction I dedicate some space to a critical historicization of the French and British *Quarrels* between the arts of antiquity and modernity, which debates first propose the necessity of different literary rules and standards for modern literature from ancient literature. The pairing of “modern” (meaning, as I will explain, “Romantic”) literature with the “picturesque” in nineteenth-century philosophical criticism suggests both that painting (in the form of the picturesque) is a trope of literary criticism and that this trope is subservient to the “Romantic” concept of criticism. After expounding the French *Querelle*, upon which Schlegel’s own division is partly based, I will discuss other factors in eighteenth-century

European criticism working toward undoing the neoclassical yoke, like the trend toward particularity of detail and toward rejecting antique models for imitation. These factors too are products of the *Querelle*, by which they were enabled, and have some influence on Schlegel's formulation. I will then examine Schlegel's division directly and show how his association of the modern-romantic with the picturesque establishes a powerful archetype which encapsulates growing critical concerns with historicity, particularity, emphases on imagination over neoclassical rules, and even cultural nationalism.

A natural concern for an argument insisting on the critical connection between painting and poetry utilized by British Romantic writers is whether this is different from the neoclassical *ut pictura poesis* theory. This question I answer in my first chapter, in which I make the distinction between Romantic fine arts analogies and the sister arts doctrine by showing how the dogmatic impulse to pictorialism of the first, prescribing formalized rules of general effect deduced from ancient rhetorical treatises and poems to then contemporary (seventeenth- and eighteenth- century) painting, differs from Romantic analogies to fine arts. I argue that the Romantic analogy to painting enables a philosophical criticism of poetry to present the aesthetic semblance of painting, the comprehension of a multitude of details in a harmonious whole that is a natural unity to its medium, as a paradigm of modern-romantic poetry and its aspirations to similar complexity, particularity, and imaginative colour. Further, the division of ancient and romantic art by Romantic critics like Coleridge, Hazlitt, and de Quincey not only establishes an ethnological and historical difference between the artistic productions of these two cultures but also allows, unlike the neoclassical unities, a non-anachronistic philosophical vocabulary, of whole and parts or of the general and particular, in the

criticism of poetry, so that the “rules” of the moderns differ from the ancients as much as their works, where in neoclassical theory the unities are applied in assumption of strict accordance to any work of any time period. After scrutinizing Abrams’s mirror-lamp thesis, which assumes all references to painting are, first, a part of the *ut pictura poesis* theory and, second, obsolete if not absent in Romantic criticism, I will analyse the general dialectical methodology of Romantic criticism which, crucially, differs from the rhetorical methodology of neoclassical criticism. I will show this difference leading a way to understanding two distinctive ways of critically analogizing poetry and painting, the one neoclassical and the other Romantic. I shall thereafter reveal the great extent to which major British Romantic critics respond to and employ Schlegel’s division between the ancient and the modern-romantic and his association of the modern-romantic with the picturesque, before I later examine the larger and more significant utilizations of critical references to painting in their works when attempting to expound a theory of literary unity. Lastly in this chapter, I will demonstrate the reworking of the metaphor of the mirror, which Abrams rejects as a model for Romantic criticism and which has been since the Renaissance the primary trope of the *ut pictura poesis* theory, by British Romantic critics themselves. I then explain their use of the metaphor in relation to the language of whole and parts, or of the general and individual, which are the central terms of explaining literary unity in Romantic criticism *via* painting.

The following two chapters focus on the aesthetic theories of individual critics, with a greater focus on the language of the general and particular in the formulation of unity in analogy to the fine arts. First I shall focus on Coleridge and his appropriation of the Schlegelian division in attempting to formulate artistic unity with a heavy reliance on

painting. In this chapter I venture a close analysis of that popular but vague term of Coleridge's criticism, "multēity in unity." This formula for beauty and unity is first pronounced in the overlooked *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism* (1818) and in the preparatory essays of the same year which I consider essential supplements to the main text. I show that these texts constellate Coleridge's most consistent efforts to define aesthetic terms. I ultimately argue that the aesthetic categories the Picturesque and Statuesque represent analytically distinguished impulses, respectively, of the centrifugal and centripetal forces on which the simultaneously variegating and unifying function of "multēity in unity" is premised. The Statuesque impulse reappears in Coleridge's later and better-recognized statements on the plastic imagination. The term "Statuesque" is Coleridge's unique translation into English of Schlegel's association of the ancient with the "*plastik*." While "multēity in unity," and other similar terms of unity in Coleridge's work, are most often discussed in the context of Coleridge's literary criticism, like the famous *Biographia Literaria* (1817), I show how this formula of artistic unity, however much it is applied to poetry by even Coleridge himself in other works, is deduced from the trope of fine arts analogies, particularly of painting. The issues of the *Querelle*, like the modern attempt to find new "rules" for poetry, are latent in his essays, as I show. But Coleridge's originality and departure from Schlegel are clear, as his essays show a full, and expressly British, development of the language of whole and parts to formulate unity and beauty.

The last chapter is about William Hazlitt, perhaps the British Romantic figure who knew most about the fine arts, having spent some time both as an amateur painter and many more years after as a professional arts critic for various publications. I argue

that the theory of “the characteristic,” a theory of aesthetic unity and semblance, is at the heart of Hazlitt’s philosophical criticism on art and literature and ultimately portraiture is the consummate representative of that theory. The importance of the connection between Hazlitt and such eighteenth-century theorists of the characteristic as Aloys Hirt and Goethe is that characteristic theory provides the appropriate critical context to understand Hazlitt’s aesthetic arguments that attempt to mediate between the general and particular, a connection yet to be made in scholarship on Hazlitt. In fact, the central tenets of Hazlitt’s philosophical criticism map onto the central concerns of theorists of the characteristic. The characteristic is akin to such predicates as interesting and subjective which those *modernes* Schiller and Schlegel ascribe to Romantic art, much the same way that Hazlitt conceives of painterly “characteristic” art as being opposed to statuesque neoclassical art that copies antique models. Hazlitt’s rebukes of the aesthetic theory of the neoclassical Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), an authority on art, style, and taste at the Royal Academy during his time, are thus figured in the chapter. The characteristic, in the way that it relies on a Romantic definition of imitation and produces a sort of Coleridgean “multēity in unity” of parts and whole, is a kind of formulation of Romantic unity.

As a rhetorical exordium to the below and to elucidate however belatedly some of what has already been said above, I want to make a few quick remarks about the word and concept “Romantic.” According to Hans Eichner, the word “romantic” is used as far back as the early-seventeenth century to refer to poetry that embraced the medieval romances, and Joseph Warton (1722-1800) in his *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754) used the word in this sense in juxtaposition to the classical (*Romantic* 6).

Various sources point to medieval origins as well as to a synonymy with the Gothic by the eighteenth century for shared associations with fancy and excess and, as I shall later show, with garden scenes. However, Eichner argues, the Schlegel brothers' use of the term in the late-eighteenth century really concretized the way it is understood now. This more familiar definition of the romantic is penned first by Friedrich Schlegel in a 1798 submission to the periodical the *Athenäum* that theorizes "*romantische Poesie*." Eichner notes that in F. Schlegel's submission the contrast between the concepts of romantic and classical poetry is implied (113-114). Schlegel's 116th fragment reads,

Romantic poetry is a progressive, universal poetry...It tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature...It can so lose itself in what it describes that one might believe it exists only to characterize poetical individuals of all sorts...It alone can become, like the epic, a mirror of the whole circumambient world, an image of the age...It is capable of the highest and most variegated refinement, not only from within outwards, but also from without inwards; capable in that it organizes—for everything that seeks a wholeness in its effects—the parts along similar lines, so that it opens up a perspective upon an infinitely increasing classicism...Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analyzed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. (Schlegel, *Fragments* 32)

Unlike the concept of classical poetry, which is predicated on objectivity and completeness, romantic poetry tends to profusion and subjectivity. It is not clearly

demarcated in its objects either, as it mixes a variety of things, and even genres, in its products, such as poetry and prose or, as Romantic critics like to reference elsewhere in the case of Shakespeare, tragedy and comedy. August Schlegel, for example, grants Shakespeare the title of a romantic poet for his comingling of genres, thus assembling a work of organic form, not bound in its unity by generic neoclassical rules, the imaginative and organic semblance of which he says further is more analogical, again unlike the neoclassical, to painting rather than statuary (338-340). While imagination, a new notion of imitation, and feeling are stable indicators of this concept of Romantic poetry, Frederick Beiser argues that this modern literature is eclectic, both in substance and in definition, and so the “only way to describe romantic poetry will then be in terms of its general aesthetic and moral qualities” (13). What is important to note for my own discussion is that around the turn of the nineteenth century there was a shift in sensibility to more imaginative forms of art and literature, under which fall changing notions of unity and imitation, that have been and can be grouped under the term romantic.

It is this set of essential differences between the classical and the modern-romantic, insinuated as a way to develop new ways of assessing literature since the French *Querelle* of the seventeenth century, with special regard for unity by the nineteenth century, that occupies so many major Romantic critics. As for that regard for unity, Schlegel’s association of the romantic with the “picturesque,” which association is recognized by British critics of the period, is a fascinating performance of what is arguably already inherent in the concept of romantic, in the simultaneous references of the picturesque to landscape and painting. (The provenance of the picturesque in the use of that term by Romantic critics for its association with modern-romantic poetry will be

discussed in greater detail in section IV, when I connect it especially with landscape theory). Eichner notes that the romantic change of sensibility, beginning in the eighteenth century, was first achieved in the English garden, “with its semblance of naturalness and freedom from restraint, over its French competitor,” and, “When the cult of the English garden spread into France and Germany, ‘romanesque’ and ‘romantisch’ (which quickly, though not entirely, replaced the earlier ‘romanisch’) became truly popular epithets in France and Germany” (5). “Meanwhile,” he continues, “the change in sensibility that had produced the English garden began to make itself felt in literature as well—as first in England, in such works as Warton’s *Observations on the Faerie Queen* (1754), Macpherson’s Ossianic forgeries (1760 *ff.*), Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), and Bishop Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765)” (6). The conception of picturesque landscape was conditioned by painting and, as Elizabeth Manwaring discusses in *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England* (1925), an interest in painted landscapes imbued with literary associations and poetic feeling was concomitant with the use of the word “romantic” in England (Eichner 31; Manwaring *passim*). Modern-romantic literature and landscape (-painting) then share emphases on variety, feeling, contrast, complexity, and irregular form. The picturesque is to painting what romantic is to literature. Logan Pearsall Smith in *Words and Idioms: Studies in the English Language* (1925) writes that the romantic is “a literary emotion” and “Just as romantic means Nature seen through a literary medium, so *picturesque* was used to describe scenes that were like pictures, and were seen throughout the medium of... painting” (82). Further, as neoclassicism was still dominant throughout Royal Academies in early-nineteenth-century Europe, for which Academies painting was the

preeminent art form as it had been for Renaissance classicists, the Romantic usurpation of the medium as a critical reference might also be strategic. And with that, we enter the beginning of the debate between the Classical and the Romantic.

II. Division between the Ancient and the Modern: the French *Querelle*

In spite of giving Aristotelian philosophy top billing in their theories on drama and poetry, the thinking of seventeenth-century literary critics is typified by Descartes (1596-1650) and the ideals of analytical thought, order, and coherence. The theorists of the age embraced the Enlightenment *dicta* on logic, morality, and once again, because the notion cannot be stressed enough in the productions of this period, order. The fanatical reliance on classical models and rules ostensibly derived from artistic productions and treatises of antiquity is only disturbed by the proposal that the ancient and the modern actually might have different strengths, which provocation enables in the following period the outright privileging of modern art and lays the foundation to support the calls for a new literary criticism.

I think the appropriate symbol for the philosophical and artistic position of neoclassical theorists is the line. The line best represents the conceptual divisions, such as of mind/body, and geometrical method of the Cartesian philosophy; the distinctions between literary genres were strictly delineated; in dance, Pierre Beauchamp (1689-1761), who choreographed for the Court of Versailles, often prescribed lateral balletic movements and emphasized the now familiar turnout of legs to accentuate the lines of a dancer's body to the audience whom the dancer had to face outwardly, so that his steps moved gracefully on a two-dimensional geometrical plane; Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), the greatest French painter of the age, developed his famous rational classicism of ancient

themes and grand manner in style by studying the formal disinterestedness in perspective and anatomy from ancient sculptures like the Laocoön, the Belvedere Torso, and various sarcophagi and vases; and the symmetries of the gardens and palace at Versailles were drawn from elaborately mathematical Renaissance treatises on perspective.¹⁶ The line is unemotional, rational, and with its beginning and end and infinite length points to that doctrine of “Progress” popular with the French *philosophes*, which extended both forward to a new and enlightened civilization free of the subjugating mysteries of the Church, which Voltaire (1694-1778) called the “persecuting and privileged orthodoxy,” and backward to the ancient republics of Greece and Rome, those first rational democracies which were meant to serve as models for the new civilization.¹⁷

The ideal of rationality is the keystone for the neoclassical critics. Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn write in *A History of Esthetics* (1953), “The literary critics alluded freely to the Gothic barbarism of earlier writers, their lack of polish and refinement, their innocence of science and method” (215). Jean Vauquelin de la Fresnaye (1536-1608) advised the perfection of art through the perfection of rules in his *L’art Poétique* (1574). Gilbert and Kuhn note that René Le Bossu (1631-1680) and François Hédelin, the abbé d’Aubignac (1604-1676) were also authoritative voices in the legislation of rules and structure to art in an effort to assert rational control over irregularity (214-215). Perhaps the most prominent figure in concretizing the rules is Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (1636-1711). The *L’art poétique* (1674) is his most

¹⁶ Jack Anderson’s *Dance* (1974) is the best accessible resource on Beauchamp’s place in the innovation of balletic technique under the Bourbon court, see 20-25. For Poussin’s classical influences see Ann Sutherland Harris’s *Seventeenth-Century Art and Architecture* (2005), 223-224

¹⁷ The cited phrase is the standard English translation of the concept “l’Infâme,” a vague, oppressive force Voltaire mentions throughout his works and letters. Christiane Mervaud writes, “*L’Infâme* represents for Voltaire a combination of fanaticism and superstition” and that Voltaire’s fight against it is “pivotal to his whole philosophy” (161).

influential work and best expresses the neoclassical estimation of poetry of the time and the poetic ideals such a critical outlook would wish to fix. Boileau held that an artist should not study nature in any form but only *la nature raisonnable*, and there were was no more reasonable nature, nature set to method and distilled to essential and general nature beauty, than the ancient models (*L'Art* 61). Hence, the study of the ancients, another of his principles, is akin to the first.

The predominance of reason over material nature suggests a fear of realism, of the wild and particular, and an embrace of the rational and general. The question of whether the observance of nature in art is general or particular was pressing in the century. Wellek says the insistence on “general nature,” in accordance to notions of decorum, “meant the exclusion of the purely local, concrete, and individual” (*History* 1: 15). René Rapin (1643-1713) wrote that the rule of poetic art is to “reduce Nature into method” (qtd. in Gilbert and Kuhn, *History* 219). The subjection of nature to reason is made again later by the Augustan critics of the eighteenth century, who deliberately parrot their French predecessors. Pope writes in *An Essay on Criticism*, “First follow Nature, and your Judgment frame/ By her just standard, which is still the same” (1: 46), and John Dennis in the fifth dialogue of *The Impartial Critick* (1693), which assays the *Querelle*, writes, “The Rules of *Aristotle* are nothing but Nature and Good Sense reduc’d to a Method” (in Spingarn 3: 194). And just as Poussin looked not to the masses and local environs but to ancient models for his conception of nature, the Augustan authors like Pope, John Dryden (1631-1700), and Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) took to imitating such idealized writers from the golden reign of the first Roman emperor Augustus Caesar (63 BCE-14 CE) as Horace, Juvenal, and Virgil. John W. Draper suggests in “Aristotelian ‘Mimesis’ in

Eighteenth-Century England” (1921) that the extremity of this simulating impulse was a British concern, as many of the English neoclassical critics seem to have conflated mimesis with copy (375). This conflation is another example of the pseudo-Aristotelianism of neoclassical theory and is forcefully rejected later by such Romantics as Coleridge who spend great pains to distinguish (imaginative) imitation from (mechanical) copy.

In respect to the decorum and general rules ostensibly derived from Aristotle and artists of classical antiquity, there was no stricter creed in neoclassical criticism than the unities. The neoclassical unities are as follow: the unity of action, that a single action should carry the plot; the unity of time, that the duration of the action represent the actual length of performance; and the unity of place, that a single physical space, one that does not improbably transgress the physical limits of the stage itself, should place the action. Ludovico Castelvetro (1505-1571) first prescribes the unities to drama in his commented 1576 edition of Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle Translated and Explained (Poetica d’Aristotele vulgarizzata e sposta)* (qtd. in Charlton’s *Castelvetro’s Theory of Poetry* 83-94). Where these rules of order suffer rigidity in Castelvetro, in the French critics of the seventeenth century they are tortured to *rigor mortis*.¹⁸ René Wellek notes the shift in

¹⁸ It should be noted that Aristotle did not demand the dramatic unities of action, time, and place, as they are understood in the neoclassical context, anymore than he expected powdered periwigs on the French stage. He suggests a unity of action in the *Poetics*, which is the one unity later adopted by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics like Johnson, Schlegel, and Coleridge, but only observes the duration of time in drama. The unity of place is purely a contrivance of neoclassical criticism, inferred first by Castelvetro from the unity of time. But there is no evidence that a closer look at Aristotle occasioned a fracture in classical ideology. It was rather caused by the distinction between the ancient and the modern, and concomitant concern for the “particular” over the merely “general” of neoclassical criticism. In speaking of dramatic order, Aristotle writes in the *Poetics* that

the [tragic] plot, being a *mimesis* of an action, [must] also be [a *mimesis*] of an action [that is] unified and whole in itself, and the constituent events [must] be so put together that if one of them is shifted or taken away, the whole [structure] is disrupted and thrown out of kilter. For a part that clearly does nothing by being present or left out is no *part* of the whole. (81, §30)

France, when D'Aubignac in the *Pratique du théâtre* (1657) demands the unity of time to mean three hours (*History*, 1: 14). In England, Dryden vehemently criticizes Shakespeare for his violation of the unities in the *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668), and Thomas Rymer (1643-1713) translates Rapin's great work as *Reflections on Aristotle's Treatise of Poesie* (1674), to which he adds a preface which reproduces the unities and demands the rational and universal rules for poetry and drama gleaned from the ancients (Rymer in Spingarn 2: 163-180).¹⁹

Certainly the neoclassical unities were prevalent in theory and in application. The works of Molière (1622-1673) and Jean Racine (1639-1699) were thought to be well ordered and polished. Pierre Corneille (1606-1684), widely regarded as the father of French drama, was both an advocate and victim of the unities. His play *Le Cid* (1637) produced such results that breached classical conventions and caused a passionate debate about the differences between ancient and modern art that ultimately began to unite the unities and gestures to a similar division made later by Schlegel and other Romantics.

This debate is the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (*Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns*) that shook French intellectual life toward the end of the seventeenth century and awakened a historical sense across Europe.²⁰ The *Querelle* was initiated by

Of time, Aristotle only says that they "must have a length such as can readily be held in memory" (79, §28), and he observes earlier that the amount of time encompassed by actions in a tragedy does not tend to run a length greater than a day (65-67, §16). Aristotle's comments on dramatic unity, as in the above remark on unity of action, bear greater resemblance to the idea of organicism in Romantic scholarship than any neoclassical prescriptions of unity.

¹⁹ Dryden's *An Essay of Dramatick Poesie* can be found in the seventeenth volume of *The Works of John Dryden* (1956-2002), edited by Alan Roper. Many of the critical essayists of the seventeenth century whom I quote throughout the introduction I cite from the standard three-volume collection edited by Joel Elias Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century* (1908-1909).

²⁰ The *Querelle* was so named by Hippolyte Rigault in *Histoire de la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1856) as a pun on Perrault's later work *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, discussed below. In the second volume of *A History of Criticism and Literary Taste* (1902), George Saintsbury writes of the *Querelle* that it engaged the best minds of arts and letters during its time and that "the sort of deification

Charles Perrault's *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand* (1687), a poem read to the Royal Academy which caused an uproar for having submitted to the learned audience that the modern achievements of Louis XIV's age rivalled those of antiquity: "I regard the Ancients, but do not bend the knee,/...we can compare without fear of injustice,/ the Age of Louis with the fine Age of Augustus" ("...Je voi les Anciens, sans plier les genoux,/ ...l'on peut comparer sans craindre d'être injuste,/ Le Siècle de Louis au beaux Siècle d'Auguste") (3). Despite already arousing the rage of the great Academicians like Boileau with his recital, Perrault later published his four-volume *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1688-1697), in which he suggests the distinction between the ancients and moderns based on his distinction of aesthetic values, between absolute and universal beauties ("Des beautés universelles & absoluës") and particular and relative beauties ("particulieres & relatives") (*Parallèle* 2: 48-52). Boileau responds vehemently in his 1694 *Critical Reflections on certain passages of the rhetorician Longinus where, by occasion, they respond to some of Mister P[errault]'s objections to Homer and Pindar* (*Oeuvre* 3: 295-432). This series of essays essentially foists ancient authority on Perrault's perceived attempt to privilege the modern writers over the classical.

Many other voices contribute to this debate in the last decade of the century, such as Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757), who proposed scientific advancements of the era as leverage to the cultural superiority of the moderns over the ancients, but the exchange between Boileau and Perrault outlines the essentials of the matter.²¹ Perrault's historical division constructs a scheme that entreats a non-classical assessment of non-

with which the whole of the sixteenth century, and most orthodox authority in the earlier seventeenth, had regard for antiquity, was sure to breed revolt" (2: 321).

²¹ See Levine's *Battle of the Books*, 18. Levine notes that Fontenelle's *Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes* (1688), little known outside of its placement in the *Querelle*, was translated into English by 1719 (38).

classical works. The *Querelle* thus, Günter Leypoldt argues in a 1999 article on neoclassicism, “opened criticism to the discourse of ‘Custom’” (340), so that particularities of observation or artistic construction, of particular place or character as opposed to general iconography, are heeded. As inheritors now of a tradition that has absorbed Impressionism of the late-nineteenth century and Abstract Expressionism of the twentieth century this seems quite obvious, but to a seventeenth century audience in France the classical precepts were not absurdly mechanical but rational and inspired.

The historical reconsideration of artistic production and assessment engendered by the *Querelle* was far stronger in Britain than in France. In France, rationalist thought prevailed and even during Napoleon’s reign in the early-nineteenth century the prominent painters of the day were of neoclassical stock, like Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825) and Jean-August-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). I have already pointed as echoes of French neoclassicism in the eighteenth century some Augustan poets and critics, but even these figures, with the exception of the obstinately traditional Rymer, belong to a time and tradition that recognizes the value of the individual detail against a merely general classical effect and of the significance of historical context. Dryden advocated the unities and the use of classical models but complained in a 1693 letter about “the too servile imitation of the Ancients” (qtd. in Levine, 87). The intellectual environment out of which their writing arises is after all grounded by the British empirical school, and just as the art-critical impulse to generality in seventeenth-century France is defined by the Cartesian tendency to the “universal,” the inductions from individual feeling or particular sense experience in Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Locke (1632-1704), and David

Hume (1711-1776) bear affinity with contemporary aesthetic impulses to “particularity” in Britain.²²

The *Querelle* was imported into Britain by Sir William Temple (1628-1699), who took his stance against theories of progress in Fontenelle and Thomas Burnet’s *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684, first English translation from Latin), both of which identify scientific with cultural progress and which refute what Burnet called the “superstitious Veneration for Antiquity” (*Sacred Theory* 566). Joseph M. Levine argues that in respect to ideas of progress Temple, a moralist, “was more concerned with human than with physical nature,” and wherever “Wit, Learning, or Genius” were involved, the moderns could only imitate those things at which the ancients naturally excelled (Levine 18, 19; Temple in Spingarn 3: 32). Temple thought of the attacks of the moderns as the onslaught of Goths upon the pillars of Rome (in Spingarn 3: 52-53). Jonathan Swift, who worked for Temple at Trinity College, published his brief satire *The Battle of the Books* as an afterword to *A Tale of the Tub* (1704) in defence of his old mentor after the classicist and theologian William Wotton repudiated Temple in his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694).

Also, this second phase of neoclassicism in the eighteenth century is set against a revival of classical antiquity from the ground rather than from an intellectual ideal. The moral and aesthetic connotations from the conflation of classical and rational remain, but now attention shifts from classical imitations to actual productions from antiquity.

Archaeological excavations in Athens and other parts of Greece precipitated public and artistic fascination in antiquity. The Grand Tour, a cultural and educational pilgrimage

²² Bernard Bosanquet suggests a similar division of influences in *History of Aesthetic* under the topic, “The two Tendencies, ‘Universal’ and ‘Individual,’” 170-171.

across Europe for gentlemen of privilege, flourished at the ruins of Italy, especially at the preserved sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii which were newly exposed. The German historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), who worked as a librarian for a resplendent collection of antiquities housed in Rome, aggrandized Greek art and culture in his *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks* (1755), establishing a superiority of the ancients which the succeeding generation of critics in Germany would struggle to reverse. But unlike the French neoclassicists, Winckelmann studied and propagated the ideals of antiquity proper, not a modern and ornamental distortion from which rules were meant to be drawn and whose models were expected to be imitated. In a seeming paradox, Winckelmann writes that the moderns can excel the ancients, if only they first imitate them (*Reflections* 2). But here, again, he is not pointing to the copying of models like neo-classicists before him but suggesting that if only the moderns tend to nature as the Greeks did, “to form certain general ideas of beauty, with regard to the proportions of the inferior parts, as well as of the whole...according to the superior model of some ideal nature,” as Winckelmann finds as modern a painter as Raphael to have accomplished in his *Galatea* (1514), then they too can effect such beauty as the Greeks before them (12-13). His fellow classicist, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781), who seemed to subscribe to the rhetorical tradition of literary criticism, likewise turned from French theories and criticized the neoclassical unities in his *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767-69) (*Werke* 367-727). Meanwhile, Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715-1725) instituted the fashion for the Palladian, pseudo-classical style of architecture across Britain and Joseph Spence, a friend of Pope who was a professor of poetry at Oxford, wrote a study comparing Roman poetry to recently

discovered Roman coins and sculptures which would later influence John Keats's own work but incite an attack from Lessing.²³ But whatever the fascination with Greek and Roman culture by the end of the eighteenth century, the Hellenism that affected Friedrich Schiller, Keats, Schelling, and Byron, among others, always implied an artistic and historical alterity to which modernity could not reverse.

The earliest participants of the *Querelle* up to the mid-eighteenth century, even those supporting the moderns, did not achieve much more historical understanding than their opponents. Just as one party inferred rules from works of antiquity and applied them to modern art, the other party foisted ideas of progress unfairly upon the ancients. When Perrault meditated upon his parallels between the ancients and the moderns, he could only promote his contemporaries by castigating the paragon of ancient poetry, Homer, by reprimanding the Greek bard's lack of modern decorum in the *Iliad*. Antoine Houdar La Motte (1672-1731), also a champion of the moderns, is singular in addressing such complaints even from his own faction. In the *Discours sur Homer*, attached to his translation of the *Iliad* (1714), he argues that Homer does not err in describing tables without lavishness, or Agamemnon, a king, having to dress himself, or Achilles, a hero, preparing a meal with his own hands. He writes, "It would be ridiculous to blame these alleged defects in propriety to a poet who could not paint that which had yet to take effect" ("Il serait ridicule de reprocher ces prétendus défauts de bienséance à un Poète qui ne pouvait pas peindre ce qui n'était pas encore") (*Texte Critique* 183).²⁴ He writes that

²³ *Polymetis: An Enquiry concerning the agreement between the works of the Roman Poets and the Remains of the Ancient Artists* (1747).

²⁴ Theobald's edition translates "bienséance" as "Congruity" (33). However, "bienséance" is properly a neoclassical critical term, like "belle nature" and "raison." I think, then, "propriety" is a more appropriate translation. Theobald's translation is not incorrect. It simply assumes too much about a reader's understanding of that word, for "bienséance" does in fact refer to a kind of congruity, between characters in

Homer's age was rude and it is only in retrospect that his "paintings" ("la peinture") have become rude in these our more delicate centuries (183). Sir Richard Blackmore (1654-1729), a poet and physician, examined both sides of the French *Querelle* and the ensuing English *Battle of the Books* in his *Essays upon Several Subjects* (1716) and decided that just as the ancients should admit that Homer did at times err, the moderns should admit that none of their own great artists had ever produced so great a work as a Homeric epic (Blackmore, 1: 156-185; Levine 144). Translating Homer became somewhat of a fashion after Anne Le Fèvre Dacier's 1714 edition of *The Iliad*, the inspiration for La Motte's translation of the same year. At the behest of Swift, Pope followed suit and released his now famous translation of the *Iliad* (1715-1720), in the preface to which he takes umbrage to Madame Dacier's antiquarian propensity to laud the ancients in every regard, citing the wide practices of revenge, cruelty, rape, robbery, greed, and slavery from those ages (7: li). But, unlike Perrault, Pope does not expect modern decorum from Homer. He writes, "I would not be so delicate as those modern critics, who are shocked at the servile offices and mean employments in which we sometimes see the heroes of Homer engaged" (7: 14).

These little skirmishes over Homer reveal the limitations of the *Querelle*. Critics had yet to fully recognize and develop a language for historical relativism, to judge a work by the cultural and artistic norms of its own time. Before, there was no hesitation for someone like Racine in the preface to his *Iphigénie* (1675) to argue that sense and reason are the same in all places and times and, in criticism of Perrault, "The taste of Paris finds itself agreeing to that of Athens; my audience were moved by the same things

a drama or poem and the social conventions to which those characters are obligated in any given context. The above example of a king, Agamemnon, having to dress himself, is, according to seventeenth-century French social and aesthetic standards, a transgression of bienséance.

that once set to tears the most learned people of Greece” (“Le goût de Paris s’est trouvé conforme à celui d’Athènes; mes spectateurs ont été émus des mêmes choses qui ont mis autrefois en larmes le plus savant peuple de la Grèce”) (474). By Pope’s time, when the debate is tempered, Homer is advanced as the *locus criticus* for the tension between ancient and modern poetry. Levine notes the disgrace felt by critics up to the early-eighteenth century who could not confidently present a paragon of modern art to equal Homer (291). They will later in the eighteenth century herald Shakespeare as their modern saviour. The *Querelle* set a precedent in dividing on fairer terms than before the ancient from the modern, and the division reverberates in Romantic criticism, which establishes a philosophical aesthetics based on that distinction. Folded into the Romantic revival of the *Querelle* are widely changing opinions from the decades previous on historical criticism, as present in the classical-modern division, and on related issues that allow a critical differentiation in assessment of classical from modern art, like a shifting emphasis from generality to particularity, and the privileging of national and “Northern” European art and artists opposed to those from Latinate countries, like France and Italy, who as descendants of the Romans were assumed to be inherently neoclassical. In Britain, it is the picturesque that poses the first great counter-aesthetic to the classical.

III. “Custom” and the Landscape of Modern Art during the Eighteenth Century

Simultaneous to the second phase of neoclassicism in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century are British and German criticisms favouring national indigeneity, historical relevance or relativism, and particularity or custom over French classicism’s *ex cathedra* presumptions to cosmopolitanism, absolutism, and generality. Also, where neoclassical criticism relied on the examples of classical statuary and idealized precepts

inferred from the ancients, the new criticism looks to landscape and painting and attempts to develop a new language and methodology to describe the conditions of modern art.

The cultural shift beginning in the late-eighteenth century, to valuing indigenous and folk literatures and the concomitant shift in critical sensibilities to valuing particularity of detail and to historicist judgment of literary works and their “rules,” constitutes the framework by which Romantic critics: 1. Insinuate a division between ancient and modern-romantic art and literature, in acknowledgement of the historical and thus of the critical differences between the two cultures and their artistic productions, thereby further acknowledging the exigency of new rules or formulations for defining central features of modern-romantic literary productions, such as for the concept of unity; and 2. Associate modern-romantic literature with the picturesque, which analogy is enabled by the division between the ancient and the modern and all of that division’s critical consequences but which also emphasizes the “particularity” and profusion of details inherent in the unity of picturesque productions. The picturesque is then not just an illustrative aspect but an integral quality of modern-romantic literature, just as the statuesque had been of classical literature.

This section is divided twofold. The first part deals with historical relativism in literary and philosophical criticism, and the second deals with landscape theory and its privileging of particularity. By the end, I mean to have drawn together the two concerns of historicism and particularity into that third of cultural or national indigeneity, which lurks spectrally throughout the two parts of this section but finally manifests in the paramount form of Shakespeare, who was accepted as a literary master who, unlike Homer or classical derivatives like Racine who attempted to copy Homer, was

indigenous to Anglo-Saxon culture, presented picturesque unities in defiance of the neoclassical rules, and who consequently would be heralded by the time of the Romantics as the apex of picturesque, modern-romantic poetry.

1. The Critical Orientations of Historical Relativism

I should like to begin with the notion of historical relativism which I introduced earlier and which is associated with reactions against Enlightenment and neoclassical thinking, including but certainly not limited to artistic norms. Before discussing British comments on the matter, I look to continental thinkers in the eighteenth century who are more common representatives of such cultural distinctions as one finds in Schlegel and other philosophers and historians in the nineteenth century and after. The remarks made about literature by these critics, in motivation of their historicist outlook on artistic production as being bound to cultural and ethnological particularities, which outlook is a provocation to the reigning impulse in criticism to neoclassical *dicta*, make fertile soil for the development of such criticism that then also positively appraises art and culture indigenous to Northern European traditions, from post-Classical Medievalism to modern-romanticism.

In *Three Critics of the Enlightenment* (2000), Isaiah Berlin locates the origins of historical relativism in Giovan Battista Vico (1668-1744), Johann Georg Hamann (1730-1788), and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803). Vico was the first to suggest, in his *Scienza Nuova* (1725), that societies are mutable and are characterized in every age by some element common to their political, social, artistic, and philosophical productions. The repudiation of the notion of “timeless truths” in favour of observing particular changes in various era and cultures went hand in hand with Vico’s repudiation of the

wide application of Cartesian philosophy.²⁵ While the criteria of clear and distinct ideas along with strictly deductive rules suited mathematics and natural science just well, Vico thought that the pure and eternally true premises by which such a method begins and ends ill fitted humanistic studies. The logical bonds that held together the elements in the method of that system, where each element is analytically exhausted by the category from which it is deduced (e.g. quantity from number), do not hold for organic links that create community or other non-rational experiences with non-“necessary” links, like passions, images, memories, and dreams. A perhaps crude but nevertheless illustrative example of this might be the difference between statements in a syllogism and the accents of a poem.

Berlin notes in *Three Critics* that with Vico begins comparative cultural history and the use of genetic rather than mathematic terms to describe organisms and relationships between entities and even entire fields of knowledge like art and religion.

Berlin writes that for Vico, “in addition to traditional categories of knowledge—a priori/

²⁵ Another of Vico’s most popular theories in the Romantic period, and today, is not strictly relevant to my argument here, but at least deserves some mention. The centrepiece of Vico’s work is the tracing of the three ages in a cycle of history: a mythical age of gods; a heroic age of the élite; and a vulgar age of the people. Each is associated, respectively, with poetic, allegorical, and descriptive language. The intellectual blueprint behind the Romantic call to a poetical primitivism that is often associated with Rousseau is thus drawn first by Vico. Hamann will write, “Poetry is the mother tongue of the human race” (*German Criticism* 81), and, in England, Thomas Love Peacock and Percy Bysshe Shelley engage in a famous exchange on the association between the poetic and the primal or primitive. While the integrity of modern-Romantic art is a major source of disagreement between Shelley and Peacock, both happily reproduce in agreement the poetical-primal association. In “The Four Ages of Poetry” (1820), Peacock argues that the golden age was the poetical time of yore, shortly after the first oral age of poetry, and it celebrated past kings, heroes, and triumphs in immediate retrospection (827-829), while the poetry of the current (modern-Romantic) age suffers from “the rant of unregulated passion, the whining of exaggerated feeling, and the cant of factitious sentiment” (832). Peacock’s point by the end is that poetry now longer serves a civic use in modern society, and that it is an obsolete and superfluous activity. Shelley’s *A Defence of Poetry* (1821), a direct reply to Peacock’s essay modelled after Sir Philip Sidney’s *The Defense of Poesy* (c. 1595), argues that poetry is “the expression of the imagination,” and that imagination in turn is a complementary faculty to reason in understanding the world (1131). Disparaging the criterion of utility, which he associates with French mechanistic philosophy, Shelley suggests that poetry is a form of moral education that can improve society (1142-1143). He writes further that because the poetical faculty “creates new materials of knowledge and poet and pleasure” and because it “engenders in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order which may be called the beautiful and the good,” “Poetry is indeed something divine” (1143). For these and other merits, Shelley claims, “Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (1146). Shelley’s, like Hamann’s and Herder’s, is a very Romantic understanding of the historical progression that Vico describes.

deductive, a posteriori/ empirical, that provided by sense perception and vouchsafed by revelation—there must now be added a new variety, the reconstructive imagination,” an entering into the life of other cultures and outlooks “which only the activity of *fantasia*—imagination—makes possible” (11). In the *Scienza*, under the tenth chapter’s focus on “The idea of a new critical art,” Vico even alleges that a historian must acknowledge the cultural and environmental differences of various people in order to draw appropriate laws of interpretation, just as Herder will argue (67).²⁶

Hamann was a highly religious and mystical Counter-Enlightenment thinker whose appeals to feeling, self-expression, and dynamism would affect, through his pupil Herder, the *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Urge*) movement of the mid- to late-eighteenth century that prioritized subjectivity and genius over the rules and classifications that characterized French neoclassicism. He sought truth in direct experience and not in systematic abstractions, and for this reason felt an affinity with English poets like John Dyer (1699-1757), a painter, poet, and priest, and Edward Young (1683-1765), best known for his *Night-Thoughts* (1742-1745) and *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), for critically and poetically privileging genius over rules and for expressing rather than dissecting truths. Hamann, in *Aesthetica in Nuce: A Rhapsody in Cabalistic Prose* (1762), questions whether Enlightenment naturalists like Newton and Buffon could ever replace poetic and religious mythologies, and accuses followers of the new sciences that feign to improve upon a poetic knowledge of the world. He writes, “Your lying, murderous philosophy has cleared Nature out of the way” (in *German Criticism* 86), insinuating that empiricism has mechanized the world to abstraction from its organic and

²⁶ Paul Hamilton writes in *Coleridge’s Poetics*, “Vico’s influence on anybody is notoriously difficult to substantiate exactly, but it is undeniable that Herder and Coleridge display the same ‘animae naturaliter Vichianae’ [‘souls naturally Vichian’]” (77 n. 18).

originally imaginative contexts, which insinuation is premised on Hamann's belief that all of nature is imbued with the mysteries of creation and latent with God's creative energies.²⁷

Herder, who was familiar with both Vico and Hamann, I regard as the most formative figure in the transition to the concerns with historicism, nationalism, and organicism that will define German Romanticism and set up the conditions of relativistic criticism upon which Schlegel makes his distinction. Herder was born into a disorganized assemblage of provincial German states still reeling from the humiliation wreaked upon them by France and her allies during the Thirty Years' War, where the inwardness and austerity of Protestantism found much ground made fertile by the slaughter of large portions of the population and by little other recourse in public life. When their own princes and electors looked to the courts of Paris and Milan for culture, the Germans looked to those glittering courts with contempt. When hunger and neglect glutted their maws across the land, better faith was put in the spiritual world. Herder in reaction hated the artificiality and conceit of the French and championed in their stead indigenous cultures, i.e. cultures born out of particular peoples and their history, traditions, and shared values, rather than that cosmopolitan, and consequently imperialistic, culture of the French that no longer had any organic connection with its national soil or its people.²⁸

²⁷ Hamann's references are to Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1726/7), physicist and mathematician, and George-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), a French naturalist and mathematician. In rejecting the mechanical abstractions of such Enlightenment scientists, who were common enemies of the Romantics for the perceived threat of over-rationalizing nature, and in attempting to salvage what harm he believes they have done, Hamann writes, "all we have left in nature for our use is fragmentary verse and *dissecta membra poetae*. To collect these together is the scholar's modest part; the philosopher's to interpret them; to imitate them, or—beholder still—to adapt them, the poet's" (*German Criticism* 82). Nature is posited as the fragmented substance of poetry whose scattered parts must be unified into a comprehensible and imaginative whole by the poet.

²⁸ Herder's historical understanding of modern, Romantic culture is developed from Winckelmann's interpretations of Greek art. As I argued above, Winckelmann is not a traditional member of the party of

Thus, Herder praised not only German folk culture but also the artistic and cultural traditions of the Indians, Persians, and even the Greeks, each because it had its own flavour and did not suffer the imposing “truffle” of French recipes for beauty.

Herder credits the British for preserving their national poetry, meaning their ballads and Mediaeval and Renaissance writers like Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare. Herder was naturally taken in by the myth of Ossian, for its promise of a Gaelic poet-prophet who, unlike Homer, was indigenous to Western culture, and he championed what he called *Kraft* (power), a living and organic force that breaks through dead mechanistic rules. Historicism and cultural circumstance are the axle and wheel that drive forward his arguments against neoclassical criticism in his essay on Shakespeare in *On German Art and Style* (1773), a collection of essays that also includes “Excerpt from an Exchange on Ossian and the Songs of the ancient Folk.” In the essay on Shakespeare Herder writes, “In Greece drama developed in a way in which it could not develop in the north” (“In Griechenland entstand das Drama, wie es in Norden nicht entstehen konnte”), and *vice versa*. The drama of Sophocles and the drama of Shakespeare are two so different things that in certain respects have only the name of drama in common (“Also Sophokles Drama und Shakespears Drama sind zwei Dinge, die in gewissem Betracht kaum den Namen gemein haben”) (*German Criticism* 144; *Werke* 5: 209-210). Herder is up to this point

the *anciens* who finds anything modern distasteful. His adulation of the Greeks comes from a recognition of the suitability of their art to their culture, climate, and general ethnological circumstances, however fanciful those circumstances might sometimes be. Herder is building upon this form of recognition, between art and the culture and people from which it arises. As a result he comes to the conclusion that Greek art cannot be replicated for the Germans, for the beauty of that people lies elsewhere in more immediate circumstances. Cf. Karl Menges’s view in “Herder and the ‘Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,’” in *Eighteenth-Century German Authors and Their Aesthetic Theories: Literature and the Other Arts* (1988). Menges argues against the accepted view of Herder’s response to the *Querelle* as the usual relativist one, and rather insists that Herder incorporates relativism into his nuanced idea of “historical continuity” (173). Thus, Menges holds Herder as an enlightened idealist and more cautious literary critic than the more progressive and radical Schlegel and Schiller.

reiterating the *Querelle*. But he continues, what we ought to regard as dead rules now were natural characteristics to the Greek stage, such as “that simplicity of Greek plot, that austerity of Greek manners, that sustained, buskined quality of expression, the music, the stage, unity of place and of time—all this lay so fundamentally and naturally, without any art or magic, in the origins of Greek tragedy” (“Jene Simplizität der griechischen Fabel, jene Nüchternheit griechischer Sitten, jenes fort ausgehaltne Kothurnmäßige des Ausdrucks, Musik, Bühne, Einheit des Orts und der Zeit – das alles lag ohne Kunst und Zauberei so natürlich und wesentlich im Ursprunge griechischer Tragödie”) (*German Criticism* 145; *Werke* 5: 210). While neoclassicism merely creates a “puppet of Greek theatre” (“Puppe des Griechischen Theaters”) by copying antiquated and derivative “rules” of time, place, and action that never truly existed for the Greeks but were impulses natural to their life, manners, and art, Shakespeare is actually closer to Sophocles because he too is committed to representing nature faithfully in accordance to his own time, place, language, history, and traditions (*Werke* 5: 213-214). The Greek and Elizabethan drama are natural because they bear an organic connection to their origins, where French drama is artificial.²⁹

²⁹ The opposite view, the kind to which Herder is viciously responding, was held by Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700-1766), who held what might justly be called a cultural dictatorship in Germany during most of his professional life, until coming into disrepute when challenged, around the time of Herder, by Johann Jakob Breitinger and Johann Jakob Bodmer’s public, Galliphobic, and Angophilic attacks against Gottsched. In his introduction to *German Criticism*, Timothy Chamberlain notes, “For Gottsched, the undoubted superiority of the French meant that the Germans could best achieve a literature of their own by following the French example. In his *Critical Poetics* (1730), he therefore closely followed French classical models, and the teaching of Nicolas Boileau, which led in particular to an insistence on probability, a suppression of the imagination, and rigid formal laws such as the doctrine of the three unities of the theatre. While later critics, starting already with the Swiss theorists Bodmer and Breitinger around 1740, criticized this rigidity, and began a turn to English models, Gottsched’s influence should not be underestimated, particularly since it was combined with his substantially helpful reform of the German language, and coincided with the ascendancy of French culture at German courts” (x-xi). Bodmer and Breitinger made great strides in popularizing English writers like Shakespeare and Milton, whom they translated into German. Gottsched’s neoclassicism, and his adherence to Greek models on the false premises of general

In respect to German drama, Herder can only feel those pangs of inferiority when looking now not to France but to England, which had preserved its indigenous folk culture and inspired such national artists to the envy of the Germans. In *Letters for the Advancement of Humanity. Eighth Collection* (1796), he attempts to account for why Germany has not produced its own Shakespeare (*German Criticism* 165). A. Gillies in “Herder’s Essay on Shakespeare: ‘Das Herz der Untersuchung’” explains that Herder realized that while England had maintained a national poetic tradition throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, and did not succumb to foreign influence, a fruitful basis remained for the work of Elizabethan and later poets, and this was not the case in Germany (275). A key part of Herder’s understanding of Shakespeare is his notion that Shakespeare arose out of national legends and popular folk-songs, just as Homer and Ossian and early chapters of the Old Testament were ultimately productions of folk songs (*Volklieder*). He wanted to stand to Shakespeare, as a critical redeemer, as Thomas Warton had to Edmund Spenser in *Observations on the Faerie Queen of Spenser* (1754), Thomas Tyrwhitt to Geoffrey Chaucer in his editions of the *Canterbury Tales* (1775-1778), and Bishop Thomas Percy to the tradition of ballads in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Gillies writes that Herder’s project for his countrymen was to “follow the example set by Percy; namely, to seek out the unknown songs of the people, so that there would be available a native foundation upon which the literature of the future might be built,” so that “a revival comparable to that of the Elizabethan period might be brought about. A German Shakespeare would be born only of the German folk-song” (275). By then, German medieval literature, like the manuscript of *Minnesänger*,

beauty and unchanging nature, fell into disrepute when people like Wincklemann returned to proper Greek sources and did not refer to unhistorical conceptualizations of “ancient” art and culture.

the Teutonic equivalent in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries of the more famous Provençal troubadours, and the songs of the Niebelungs, parallels to Old Norse legends about the dragon-slayer Siegfried, were discovered to form a national German literary tradition.³⁰

British critics offered similar defences of “modern” artists, however so little their works were in accordance to neoclassical rules. Warton, in his *Observations*, in partly contrasting the medieval romantic epics with the tradition of classical antiquity, praises the *Faerie Queene* for its irregularity and formal impolish and defends Spenser on the grounds that he, like his Italian model Ludovico Ariosto, “did not live in an age of planning,” and “It is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to” (*Observations* 1:15), for contemporary conceptions of form or propriety, as much as ancient ones, allow little insight into the conditions of Early Modern romance and epic.³¹ Richard Hurd too, in the *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), reduced the importance of classical precepts. He rather praised the inherent poetry of the rude Gothic (*Letters* 79, 98-104), and in the dialogue “On the Golden Age

³⁰ Bodmer and Breitinger were pivotal in the dissemination and popularization of these texts too, for they were more imaginative, more “romantic,” and indigenous to Anglo-Saxon culture, all features to the contrary of French drama. See Wellek, *History* 1: 147-148; Berlin, *Three Critics* 170-171.

³¹ Clarissa Rinaker writes in “Thomas Warton and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism” (1915) that Warton “recognized the inadequacy of the classical rules, as interpreted by Boileau and other modern commentators, as standards for judging modern literature;” that “he introduced the modern historical method of criticism by recognizing that no work of art could be independently judged, isolated without references to the influences which determine its character;” and that he “understood more fully than his contemporaries the true relation between classical and modern literature, understood that the English writers of the Augustan age, in renouncing their heritage from the middle ages, had deprived themselves of the qualities which alone could have redeemed their desiccated pseudo-classicism” (87-88). In *Romantic and Its Cognates*, Immerwahr discusses the German poet and critic Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg (1737-1823). He writes, “Gerstenberg placed the antithesis between the Romantic and the classical in even sharper focus than Warton. Moreover, he was the first writer to uphold the Romantic style and imagination of Ariosto as of equal merit to Homer and Virgil. He also stresses two concepts associated with the Romantic which were later to be especially developed by the Schlegels: the picturesque (*malerisch*) and Warton’s ‘various,’ rendered *mannigfaltig* by Gerstenberg” (61). For the “mannigfaltig” beauty of Shakespeare, see Gerstenberg, *Briefe über die Merkwürdigkeiten der Literatur* (1766), 126; for Warton’s remarks on the matter, *Observations* 1: 15.

of Queen Elizabeth” (1759), marks that eponymous era and not the classical past as England’s nascent movement to self-expression.

2. The English Garden and the Obsolescence of Neoclassical Order

The English took their first great stand against neoclassicism in a most English manner: through their gardens. The English garden, with its careful asymmetrical landscapes and ornamentation by ruins, was directly opposed to the formal perfection of the *jardin à la française*, as at Versailles, and was a great source of national pride. Those anthropological concerns, with climate and character, that swayed continental thinkers are not absent in Britain, though are not as strong as they were in Germany. The greater emphasis in the new criticism was to particularity, no doubt informed by British empiricism’s mandate on the same matter along with its methodological insistence upon observation over metaphysical abstraction. The great artistic theory that forms these concerns in landscape, as well as in painting and even tourism, is the picturesque. All of the remarks about such writers as Shakespeare and his picturesque genius in creating a whole out of particular details, when picturesque theory is adapted to literary theory, are empowered by the historicist consideration explored in the preceding part of this section, which ended directly showing the connection between historicist criticism and the favouring of Northern writers, uncorrupted by neoclassical rules, like Shakespeare. The most important qualities by which the picturesque is understood in the eighteenth century carry their critical influence when Romantic writers will analogize modern-romantic literature with the picturesque.

The picturesque was quite popular in the eighteenth century, challenging burgeoning discourses on the sublime to stand as the official opposition to the more

traditional and certainly standard aesthetic of the beautiful. The picturesque, an Anglicization of the French *pittoresque* or Italian *pittoresco*, and those in turn from the Dutch *schilderachtig* and then *pittoresk* of the seventeenth century, roughly means *in the manner of a picture*, a definition that benefits from adjectival connotations like *scenic*, *quaint*, and *pleasant*.³² William Gilpin (1724-1804), the famous theorist who recommended the best sites for the picturesque tourist, defines it in his *Essay on Prints* (1769) as “a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture,” and confesses in *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* (1792), “I have always myself used it merely to denote *such objects, as are proper subjects for painting*: to that, according to *my definition*, one of the cartoons [by Raphael], and a flower piece [by Huysum] are equally picturesque” (36-37). Something is picturesque if it befits picturing, and this tautology is resolved upon referencing the kind of picture to which the picturesque often refers, the paintings of Claude Lorrain (née Gellée, 1605-1682). Claude’s incalculable influence on British painting and picturesque theory as it applies to other arts rests on his idyllic pastoral landscapes. Each casts a pleasant, mellow tint over the natural bounties often framed by charming Greco-Roman ruins. The picturesque is then an idealized portrait of nature. Its other great practitioners in painting are Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), who unlike Claude laid emphasis on the wildness and ferocity of nature, and Poussin, who was mentioned briefly above and whose calm landscapes resemble Claude’s, save Poussin’s regular introduction of pastoral or historical figures into his scenes.

³² For the best introduction to the Picturesque, see Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1967). For the Dutch origins of the term, see Boudewijn Bakker, “Schilderachtig: Discussions of a Seventeenth-Century Term and Concept” (1995).

But the primary predicative association for the picturesque is not idealization but particularity. Christopher Hussey writes in *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1967)³³ that Claude “took the step of combining the theories of philosophers with the perceptions of a painter. He minutely studied the actual details of natural forms, and from them derived what seemed to him the ideal form to which nature appeared to be tending” (9-10). Hussey might be rendering Claude in the light of later Romantic poets and critics whose ideas of imitation, organism, and totality are in some ways influenced by picturesque theory and practice, but this bent is fair for the trajectory of my argument and for the actual effect Claude had on British aesthetics.

James Thomson’s work, especially his poetic tetralogy *The Seasons* (1730), adapted the picturesque mode to literature and opened to poets a pastoral way of description that had waned in popularity in poetry perhaps since Virgil’s *Eclogues* and *Georgics* and Horace’s *Epodes*. In *The Castle of Indolence, An Allegorical Poem* (c. 1748) he is clear as to his artistic inheritance, crediting “Whate’er Lorrain light-touch’d with softening Hue,/ Or savage *Rosa* dash’d, or learned *Poussin* drew” (186: 1.38.341-342). But it was not some classical idea of Arcadia with which Thomson engaged, and this point distinguishes his painterly naturalism from the various modes of scenery of classical antiquity and the Renaissance, like the Georgic. Blanford Parker in *The Triumph of Augustan Poetics* (1998) charts the observance of particularity in European thought from Baroque to Augustan literatures and notes the coinciding rise of the novel. He writes of Thomson, “the innovations of subject matter and particularly the expansion of scenic poetry changed forever the horizon of English verse” (144). Thomson’s poetics lie between Locke’s empiricism and Wordsworth’s realism and simplicity.

³³ Originally published in 1927.

The picturesque aesthetic is an affront to the simple and clean line of neoclassical beauty, for it relishes variety and asperity. Gilpin too is an excellent representative here. He writes that the picturesque “abhors art,” by which he means that it ceases to be itself when it more resembles a polished and idealized image rather than nature in all of her variety, irregularity, and roughness, as in bristling hedgerows and feathery tufts of leaves (*Three Essays* 27). Walter Hipple Jr., in *The Beautiful, the Sublime, & the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (1957), suggests a *concordia discors* in Gilpin’s statement that the picturesque “consists in uniting in one whole a variety of parts; and these parts can only be obtained from rough objects” (Hipple 194; Gilpin 19). For Sir Uvedale Price, 1st Baronet (1747-1829), who set the gardens of his Hertfordshire estate according to picturesque principles, the picturesque offers an informal and asymmetrical interpretation of nature as an alternative to classical beauty, and thus in its un-polished variety bears “that which painting can, and sculpture cannot express” (250). Of Price’s ideas, Raymond Immerwahr in “‘Romantic’ and Its Cognates in England, Germany, and France before 1790,” published in Eichner’s collection *‘Romantic’ and Its Cognates*, writes that the elements Price attributes to the picturesque, of intricacy, variety, irregularity, “comprise an important part of the area which other critics of the late eighteenth century were assigning to the romantic” (*Romantic* 39). Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824) in *An Analytic Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805) celebrates blended and sketched lines and broken tints not abstracted but regarded “under peculiar circumstances and modifications of the atmosphere,” as well as “irregular masses of light and shadow harmoniously melted together,” for “such are the objects and compositions of objects, which we properly call *picturesque*” (147). Hipple writes that “Knight argues

for the superior picturesqueness of a heterogeneous style” (264). Upon the inference of heterogeneity in the picturesque, Knight makes the distinction that the beauty of sculpture is in form where that of painting lies in colouring and light, and so those features “which are peculiarly appropriate to sculpture, are directly the reverse of the picturesque forms above mentioned” (189). These casual distinctions between painting and sculpture will be fully theorized by the Romantics.

While picturesque theorists and practitioners of the eighteenth century certainly did not intend to divine out of their considerations of foliage and fancy the growth of the Romantic movement, as if the picturesque were the substance of sibylline leaves, it is insensitive to ignore how much the theory actually informs later literary and artistic practices. Bernard Denvir and Malcolm Andrews have remarked that even the advent of watercolour in picturesque landscape painting, which medium better suited the interest in subtle changes in atmosphere, the emotional suggestiveness of images, and the natural conditions of British climate and landscape, overflowed the moulds of neoclassical representation. Denvir writes of watercolour, “It gave the final blow to the persistence in landscape art of the Latinized metaphors and similes of Pope and Dryden” (93). Hussey says that the picturesque “was in each case a prelude to romanticism. It occurred at the point when an art shifted its appeal from the reason to the imagination,” and that “the picturesque interregnum between classic and romantic art was necessary in order to enable the imagination to form the habit of feeling through the eyes” (4). The picturesque is just as participatory as Romantic art in the cult of sensibility propounded by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), where what is full of individual and emotional colouring impresses more strongly than what is general and intellectual. The picturesque thus

differs from the classical because of its preoccupation with custom and locality. This distinction in eighteenth-century arts and letters between the local in modern art and general in classical art is informed by Perrault's earlier division between the ancients and conventional beauty on the one hand, and on the other the moderns and customary beauty, that is, beauty particular to a certain time, place, people, or circumstance.

The discussion of custom or particularity is critical to the picturesque but not exclusive to it. Dr Johnson is a complex but crucial case here. In his "Preface to Shakespeare" (1765), he praises the bard because his "characters are not modified by the custom of particular places" (Johnson, *Selected Poetry and Prose* 301), and his opposition to the arbitrary prescriptions of custom leads him to further disregard the rigid neoclassical unities of time and place as well as defend the co-mixture of genre known as tragicomedy. However, Johnson distinguishes between custom and particularity and the latter term can be just as predicative of nature as the general. Johnson writes, "Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident" (303), meaning that essential conditions of humanity prevail over national or epochal circumstances. But nature is not merely the general. It too, like the picturesque, is formed from particulars. He writes that in Shakespeare, "There is a vigilance of observation and accuracy of distinction which books and precepts cannot confer" (319). Between the general as a neoclassical ideal and the particular taken to the extreme of custom Johnson actually prefers an intermediate image of definiteness, both original and intelligible.³⁴ Warton

³⁴ This argument is most clearly defined in Howard D. Weinbrot's *Aspects of Samuel Johnson* (2005), 179-194, and "The Reader, the General, and the Particular: Johnson and Imlac in Chapter Ten of *Rasselas*" (1971). Weinbrot writes in *Aspects*, "Johnson's conception of poetic generality and particularity is not as broad as it has been represented. In chapter 10 of *Rasselas*, in his practical criticism, and in his practice as an artist, normative generality is based upon careful, detailed, and laudable close observation. It is intended to evoke not an 'ideal' image, but the original and its sublunary specifics" (184). He also connects this

also, while echoing Aristotle, writes in his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756), “A minute and particular enumeration of circumstances judiciously selected...renders [poetry]...a more close and faithful representation of nature than [history]” (48-49). To literary and philosophical critics of the eighteenth century modern considerations of particularity, as set against the idealized general, were increasingly pressing.

The next section of this chapter argues for the effect Schlegel’s division between the ancient and modern had on British Romantic philosophical critics, which division is already hinted at by some English writers of the eighteenth century as shown above, but I would like to venture here the effect that the British picturesque and the aesthetic of the English Garden would likely have had on German aestheticians like Schlegel.

Immerwahr’s “The First Romantic Aesthetics” (1960) is a rare work in arguing after the effect of the *englischer Garten* on German Romantic aesthetics. Immerwahr takes note of the lack of criticism on the connection, which in great part has been “obscured by a certain reaction of the early German romantic authors against the English landscape architecture” (23). But the actual influence remains. Immerwahr’s case centres on Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld (1742-1792), a German theorist of art and landscape, and his *Theory of Garden Art (Theorie der Gartenkunst)* (1779-1785). Hirschfeld was the first critic of landscape to define what is “romantic” in aesthetic terms. Hirschfeld had argued that “The romantic...is almost entirely a work of nature,” and the resemblance is not only in the presentation of mountains, waterfalls, and grottoes but also in the unique and striking combinations of such objects, however irregular the arrangements might

negotiation between the general and particular in literary scholarship to the fine arts: “This aesthetic theory was not limited to the literary arts. Sir Joshua Reynolds also urges the relationship between the general and the particular and the role of the reader’s cooperating imagination” (190).

seem (qtd. in Immerwahr 4). Hirschfeld's primary sources are such British tracts as Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), which stressed the irregularity of naturalism; Sir William Chambers's *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772), which depicted fantastical "romantic" gardens as had not been seen since Ariosto, Tasso, and the *Arabian Nights*; and Joseph Heely's *Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Envil, and the Leasowes* (1777), in which "romantic," in the chivalric sense that is also present in the later "Romantic," is confused with the picturesque as a predicate for irregular and striking natural beauty. Heely, Immerwahr suggests, orients himself by typically Romantic reference points: "imaginative literature, the new concept of nature as a richly heterogeneous and wildly spontaneous creator, and landscape," and he "stresses the principles of novelty, irregularity, wild disorder, confusion, grotesqueness, the contrast of nature and art, of multiplicity with unity" ("First Romantic" 11; '*Romantic*' *Cognates* 43).³⁵ These scholarly contributions make clear that the predications of the concept of the Romantic, of imagination in Coleridge and emotion in Hazlitt and variety in Schlegel, were developed many decades before in Anglo-Saxon landscape theory. The qualities championed in the types of literature and art that broke with neoclassical creed, of irregularity, informality, freedom, naturalness, expression, organicism, arose directly out of theories of landscape. Immerwahr writes, "the scenes which garden criticism itself calls romantic and the qualities which it attributes to such scenes anticipate the literature and critical aesthetics of the romantic movement proper, commencing at the end of the eighteenth century with Wackenroder, Tieck, the Schlegels, Novalis, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Chateaubriand" (23).

³⁵ In the second volume of the *Letters*, see 40, 46, 65, 99, 119, 128, and 221 for sundry acknowledgements of "romantic" landscapes and views.

To return to my previous contrast between the English and French gardens, the former, especially as developed in picturesque criticism and practice, was a reaction against the rigid decorum and symmetry of the neoclassical gardens at Versailles, as they had been laid by their architect André Le Nôtre (1613-1700).³⁶ Those romantic values attributed to such gardening, painting, and literature develop into, as Immerwahr argues, “the stylistic values of the imaginative literature from which the romantic ultimately derived” (23). In my view, the garden’s associations with both freer formal features and with medieval romance show that landscape and picturesque criticism share a common ancestry with the development of the term “Romantic” in Germany in the late-eighteenth century by August Wilhelm Schlegel and his brother Friedrich. August Wilhelm in his *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, delivered several years after his translation of Horace Walpole’s *History of Modern Taste in Gardening*, even addresses the landscape debate between the English and French garden in order to repudiate the rigidity of French tragedy and the unities, that the French garden architects like Le Nôtre, who reduce all to symmetry and lines, could not understand “the *hidden order* in an English park” (273, my

³⁶ A recent work on Le Nôtre’s projects and influence is Ian H. Thomson’s *The Sun King’s Garden: Louis XIV, André le Nôtre, and the Creation of the Gardens of Versailles* (2006). Thomson writes, “Under Le Nôtre the French formal garden reached its apogee” and he brought the “Grand Style” of poetry and painting to landscape (5). The notion of “Grand Style” is inherently neoclassical and will be discussed in the second chapter when the phrase is voiced by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Immerwahr in “First Romantic Aesthetics” writes, “The English gardening movement had begun very early in the eighteenth century as a reaction against the rigidly symmetrical formal landscaping practised by Le Nôtre, the landscape architect of Versailles, who had also designed some gardens in England” (7). Manwaring makes the same claim in the introduction to *Italian Landscape*. Kant in the *Critique of Judgment* argues that regularity is restraint and that “the English taste in gardens... pushes the freedom of the imagination almost to the point of the grotesque, and makes this abstraction from all constraint by rules the very case in which the taste can demonstrate its greatest perfection in projects of the imagination” (126)

italics). Thus all of landscape's preoccupations with particularity or custom, irregularity, expression, and so on, are built into the very definition of Romantic or the "modern."³⁷

All of this is to show the reciprocity among poetics and philosophical criticism, on the one hand, and landscape and fine arts (in respect to the picturesque) theory, on the other hand, from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. In announcing modern-romantic literature as picturesque, Schlegel may be making explicit a series of connections among literature, painting, and even landscape that already inhere in the concept of the Romantic. Painting and landscape theories' concerns with imagination, rich variety, and energy are a product of that sharp move away from neoclassical *dicta* occasioned by developments in historical criticism, which saw an acceptance of cultural differences between the Greeks and modern, Northern European artists; cultural nationalism, which recognized the efforts of non-classical artists like Shakespeare, with implications for other, even then contemporary, artists who arose from Anglo-Saxon traditions and practices, as well as discovered "Northern" medieval traditions as both a distant source of inspiration and a revived "romantic" mode; and turned attention to some particularity of detail in criticism, against the pure generalizing of neoclassical criticism. Finally, that wanton irregularity so praised in English gardening and, as we shall see in more detail later, in painting, produces the possibility for new, non-pseudo-Aristotelian models of artistic unity, of that "hidden order" once discerned in an English park.

³⁷ Lovejoy comes to a similar conclusion in *The Great Chain of Being*: "In one of its aspects that many-sided thing called Romanticism may not inaccurately be described as a conviction that the world is an *englisher Garten* on a grand scale" (16).

IV. Division between the Ancient and the Modern: European Romantic Context

The Romantic division between the ancient and modern is at the very heart of Romantic philosophical criticism, which begins properly with the Schlegel brothers. August Schlegel's *Lectures*, building upon the shift in artistic, philosophical, and cultural sensibilities to what is eventually termed "Romantic," relates those concerns with particularity, historical criticism, and the like, back to one of the central concerns of the original French *Querelle*: to formulate a new idea for literary unity beside the neoclassical unities of time, place, and action. Schlegel suggests a resolution in some sense of internal, organic unity, which, when Schlegel's division is adopted by British Romantic critics, is then at greater length discussed in the language of whole and parts and also at greater length discussed in analogy to the fine arts, especially painting. Schlegel, alongside his immediate Continental heir Madame de Staël, who helped popularize the core ideas of the *Lectures* throughout the British Isles, asserts the exigency for Romantic critics to formulate new concepts of imagination, imitation, beauty, and, linking them all, unity for modern poetry, that might be found in modern-romantic literature's painterly, picturesque analogies. According to August Schlegel, and echoing Herder and even Wincklemann, modern-romantic art must aspire to Greek art in so much as it must develop an internal unity and must be natural to its own time and culture. The enemy here is French and Italian Neoclassicism, which has developed false rules of artistic organization (like the pseudo-Aristotelian unities) and has superficially copied poetic and fine arts models of antiquity, without any observation to the particularities of its own culture. I will here first analyse Schlegel's immediate intellectual relations, specifically Friedrich Schiller's and his brother Friedrich Schlegel's work, which

establish a Romantic version of the *Querelle* division between the classical and modern. I then move to Schlegel and de Staël, who are of crucial importance as their writings form the very basis upon which British Romantic critics assume the analogy with painting as a way to articulate poetic unity for post-classical literature. The impulse to consider particularity in the conception of the unity of a work of art, to consider post-classical literature and its rules on their own historical terms, and to privilege the picturesque or painterly heterogeneity of that modern-romantic literature that is indigenous to Northern European traditions, embodied supremely by Shakespeare, all form the groundwork of the Schlegelian division between classical and modern-romantic art and literature, and the analogy of the latter with the picturesque.

Some of the most important ideas of A.W. Schlegel's *Lectures* can be found in Friedrich's earlier *On the Study of Greek Poetry (Über das Studium der griechischen Poesie)* (1797), while Winckelmann's classicism and reading of Greek art as pure remain in the background of each. The *Study* is contemporaneous to Schiller's *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry (Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung)* (1795), the similar ideas of which Schlegel acknowledged in the preface to a later edition of his own essay. Schiller's key idea is that ancient art is characterized by simplicity and homogeneity and that culture's direct commune with nature renders it "naïve." Modern art and culture are conversely characterized by complexity and heterogeneity, and the divorce from nature by civilization and by philosophical and scientific advances in abstract thinking render modernity "sentimental." Where the ancients excel in simplicity, which harmony is derived from their culture, the moderns excel in richness of material, as drawn from their complex culture of self-reflexivity and historical consciousness. But the moderns

nevertheless strive to the task of unity and communion with nature: “Our culture, by means of reason and freedom, should lead us back to nature,” for the “poet...either is nature or he will search for her. The former is the naïve, the latter the sentimental poet” (*Naïve* 85, 110). The moderns must not imitate the ancients, for the conditions of culture are different than before and such an action would only result in dull mannerism. Like Herder, Schiller suggests we must orient ourselves to the conditions of our own time and place just as the Greeks had theirs. Friedrich Schlegel in the *Study* similarly argues that antiquity is governed by an original naturalism that reveals an attention to nature, not to rules. It is disinterested and objective. The modern is more interested in what is idiosyncratic or characteristic. Schlegel writes that the unity so natural to antiquity is an elusive goal for modern artists, but he suggests throughout the possibility of a modern theory of literary unity not premised on French rules nor any slavish imitation of the ancients. Of course, the paragon of modernity here is Shakespeare, in whose dramas, F. Schlegel writes,

The ground of the interrelation [of the parts]...is often so deeply hidden, the invisible bonds, the relations, are so subtle that even the most astute critical analysis must fail if discrimination is lacking, if one brings false expectations or proceeds from false principles. In *Hamlet* all individual parts necessarily develop out of a common centre and react on it. Nothing is extraneous, superfluous, or coincidental in this masterpiece of artistic wisdom. (33)

An exigency of reading for both whole and parts is imposed. All of the various parts of *Hamlet* serve some philosophical interest, and so the unity to which the complexity of parts is subservient is itself complex. F. Schlegel also articulates this division between the

deep interrelation of parts in Shakespeare and superfluity of parts in French drama in such words that sound like Schiller's and hearken back to the *Querelle*: "With greater intellectual development, the goal of modern poetry naturally becomes *individuality* that is *original and* interesting. The simple imitation of the particular is, however, a mere skill of the *copyist*, not a free art" (32). Against any theory of "correctness," which would demand the strict imitation of ancient models for the sake of unity and meaning, Shakespeare has shown "inner principles of life" at play in his drama which bring some cohesion to the play as binding interests. Schlegel writes of modern poetry, "the meaning, spirit, and inner coherence of the represented essence must come forth out of it. Thus even characteristic poetry can and should represent the general within the particular" (32). The effect achieved out of the manifold and complex parts of modern art must achieve some unity, but that unity must be as philosophically oriented as modern culture, and will thus likely be heterogeneous rather than homogeneous.

As I have noted, the claims of F. Schlegel's *Study* are sympathetic to those voiced in Schiller's *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*, and there is an advantage to a recourse to Schiller's work because it states in simpler terms the divide between the ancient and modern that rests at the foot of Schlegel's pronouncements. The naïve poet of pre-modern culture experiences an undivided unity with nature, with which he has close, simple, and physical contact. The sentimental and modern-romantic poet, on the other hand, is defined by the reflectiveness, abstract thought, and distance from nature—in the manner against which Rousseau was reacting—that defines modern-romantic society and thus its artistic productions. Hence August Schlegel's later analogies, building upon Schiller and his brother Friedrich's works, of classical literature with statuary, both sharing a bare

simplicity of unity and features, and modern-romantic literature with painting, both sharing a profusion of details, however much in contradiction and heterogeneous in unity. F. Schlegel's remark about copying is both another warning against imitating ancient models and a reminder that the unity of modern art is philosophical, affective, or intellectual and not just a simple arrangement of similar parts. We may venture the example of a colour palette. The visual juxtaposition of white and black is more interesting than black and grey, for while the latter pair are but a few shades in chromatic difference the former, starkly different, symbolically effect the complex but complementary notions of good and bad, light and dark.

We finally arrive at August Wilhelm Schlegel's Vienna *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*.³⁸ Friedrich may have been the intellectual original of the pair, but August's writings had a greater effect outside of Germany. Further, August seems to

³⁸ The division between the Classical and the Romantic, with the respective division between the statuesque and the picturesque, was much in intellectual currency around this time. Georg Anton Friedrich Ast (1778-1841) wrote of the division between classical and Romantic poets as that between statuary ("Plastik") and painting ("Malerei") (qtd. in Eichner 128). In *Concepts of Criticism* (1963), Wellek notes that Ast had attended A.W. Schlegel's earlier lectures at Jena in 1798 (136 n.19). Sandra Richter, in *A History of Poetics: German Scholarly Aesthetics and Poetics in International Context, 1770-1960* (2010), shows how Ast's essentially Romantic notions of poetry and art are at heart influenced by Schelling and the Schlegel brothers, especially in espousing an organic notion of literary and artistic unity (91-93). Jean Paul, another great Romantic philosopher-poet, devotes much space in his *Vorschule der Aesthetik (School for Aesthetics)* (1804) to the division between Classical and Romantic art: the "plastic poetry" of the Greeks in the fourth course, 44-55, §16, and then on the relationship between the Greeks and the Moderns in the fifth course on Romantic poetry, 56-70, §17. Jean Paul's conception of poetry is Vichian, as it was for Hamann, Rousseau, Herder, and Wordsworth, in that he conceives of poetic language as a primitive, imaginative, and spontaneous mean of communication. Like De Quincey, as we shall see in the first chapter, Paul locates the origin and character of modern-Romantic poetry in Christianity (62-63, §22), and he repeats the associative fine arts divisions, that "Painting, like poetry, is much closer than sculpture to Romantic infinity and in landscape often dissolves into it completely" (57, §21), and that, "A statue excludes romanticism with its narrow and precise contour; painting approaches it in human groupings and reaches it in landscapes without men, like those of Claude Lorrain. A Dutch garden seems the very opposite of Romanticism, but an English garden which extends into an undefined landscape can surround us playfully with a Romantic region, that is, with the background of an imagination left free to wander in the beautiful" (60). The counter-opposition of the Romantic to the Dutch, the Dutch being famed in painting for naturalism or an over-abundance of details, is developed by British Romantic critics, as I show especially in chapters 2 and 3. While the Neoclassicists are condemned by the Romantic critics for over-generalization, the Dutch school are condemned by them for over-particularization, the Romantic critics themselves attempting a mediation of both whole and parts for the sake of organic unity.

explicate and apply the core of his brother's ideas. The division between the ancient and the modern in the *Lectures* is exemplary of August's more practical criticism of Friedrich's discoveries. The antique was of more interest to Friedrich in the *Study* though the modern, also called romantic because of its derivation from Medieval romance, is of greater concern to August, who writes of it as "the fruit of the heterogeneous union of peculiarities of the modern nations and the fragments of antiquity whereas the civilization of the ancients was much more of a piece" (*Lectures* 22). Like Friedrich, Schiller, and Herder, August recognizes that every art is perfect in its own time and the achievements of historical progress in every culture affect the purpose and makeup of any culture's artistic productions. He states his own purpose at the outset, that "It belongs to the general philosophical theory of poetry, and the other fine arts, to establish the fundamental laws of the beautiful," and that the connecting link between fine arts theory and art history "is furnished by criticism, which both elucidates the history of the arts, and makes the theory fruitful" (17-18). The *Lectures* turn out to be an analytical, historical, and ethnological study of the fine arts, with special attention paid to the differences between the ancients and the moderns.

In laying the groundwork for his argument, Schlegel first turns to the perversion of the study of the ancients by some of the modern French critics, whose predilection for rules and decorum observe less the vitality of the ancients than reflect their own ossified standards for artistic production. "But in the fine arts," he writes, "mere imitation is always fruitless; even what we borrow from others, to assume a true poetical shape, must, as it were, be born again within us" (21). He mentions Dante as an example, who, though he acknowledged Virgil as his master, produced a work quite different from the *Aeneid*.

In particular, Schlegel's attack is aimed at the "Three Unities, which have given rise to a whole Iliad of critical wars" and are but a "pretended affinity" between the spirit of neoclassical works and the spirit of Greek tragedy (236). Schlegel derides, "Every Frenchman who has sucked in his Boileau with his mother's milk, considers himself a born champion of the Dramatic Unities, much in the same way that the kings of England since Henry VIII are hereditary Defenders of the Faith" (237). The analogical irony is that the unity and wholeness of tragedy lay in assertions and acknowledgments of free will and necessity by the course of events and within the breast of the tragic hero. That is, the rules miss the actual robustness and vitality of Greek culture on display in ancient drama, whereas "the French have endeavoured to form their tragedy according to a strict idea" and those dramas "Stript thus of their proper investiture, they lose much in truth, profundity, and character; and the whole composition is deprived of the living charm of variety, of the magic of picturesque situations" (273). The Greeks had no sense of such rules and strutted a "refined and ennobled sensuality," and in their noble simplicity, not betraying the social artifices of modernity, the entire "mental culture of the Greeks was a finished education in the school of Nature" (24).

European culture, following antiquity, is represented not by sensuous nature but by inwardness. In the Middle Ages Europe was introduced to Christianity and this religion "regenerated the ancient world from its state of exhaustion and debasement; it is the guiding principle in the history of modern nations" (24-25). Here those climatological and ethnological differences seen in Herder and even at the heart of some picturesque theory hinge the comparison between antiquity and modernity. Unlike those outward and joyful Mediterranean cultures of the Greeks and Romans, "The stern nature of the North

drives man back within himself; and what is lost in the free sportive development of the senses, must, in noble dispositions, be compensated by earnestness of mind” (25). The Germanic peoples, above all, are touted as the most receptive to the introspection and sentimentality of Christianity, which, admonishing the merely sensual and material, gives rise to notions of chivalry and romance. In the romantic culture, i.e. modern (Christian) culture as developed post-antiquity from the Middle Ages onwards, intellectual and emotional striving replace material satisfaction. Schlegel writes, “Hence the poetry of the ancients was the poetry of enjoyment, and ours is that of desire: the former has its foundation in the sense which is present, while the latter hovers betwixt recollection and hope” (26-27). However more complex the modern spirit, it must bear some residual substance beyond its reach, beyond satisfaction. This is the difference between the satisfied, in the sense of both contained and fully comprehended, recollection of the origin of the scar on Odysseus’s thigh by Homer and, contrarily, the pain at and incomprehension of mutability and time in the remembrances of many of Wordsworth’s characters.³⁹

³⁹ I take the illustrative example of Odysseus’s thigh from Erich Auerbach’s famous *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946). The book explores various works of literature, those significant for their unique imitative compositions, from the post-Classical, Christian tradition, and makes an interesting point about the kind of “unity of interest” found in La Motte, Schlegel, and Coleridge. The first chapter explores the scene of the cloaked hero’s return to Ithaca in Book 19 of Homer’s *The Odyssey*, when the old nurse Eurycleia upon washing the stranger’s feet recognizes her master’s scar on his thigh and is sent, with the narrative, into a remembrance of the past, of the origin of the scar. This scene is contrasted with the story of Abraham and Isaac in the *Old Testament*. In Homer, Auerbach argues, everything is externalized into action, and “What he narrates is for the time being the only present, and fills both the stage and the reader’s mind completely,” for in Homer there is no sense of background, obscurity, or elision (3-4). Auerbach quotes Goethe and Schiller on this technique of Homer, culled from a series of letters between the two in April 1797, on the subject of the “retarding element” in Homeric poems, the “going back and forth” by means of episodes that is “opposed to any tenuous and suspensive striving toward a goal” (5). The story of the wound, for example, “becomes an independent and exclusive present” and is not related with any sense of the half-obscurd depths of the past (7). But in the *Old Testament*, the narrative and form are not detailing what is simply physical or even clear, but produce metaphorical and sublime meanings. Much here possesses “background,” as when God announces to Abraham “Behold, here I am,” indicating not His material location but spiritual presence and omnipresent covenant with Israel (8-12). Here, “the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose

In respect to the recognizable wholeness and simplicity of one culture and the fragmentation and complexity of the other, Schlegel announces, “the spirit of ancient art and poetry is *plastic*, but that of the moderns *picturesque*” (22). Schlegel returns to this point and suggests an explanation only after he discusses the notion of aesthetic unity again. The Grecian ideal of human nature is a perfect harmony, but the moderns are conscious of a discord and struggle to unite form and matter and other such binaries that are found naturally resolved in Greek art and poetry. Modern poetry, for example, that reflects on sublime or transcendental thoughts, ideas that eschew materiality, are more difficult to express than the ancient poetry of corporeal beauty. This issue of self-consciousness or reflexivity too, which is present in Schlegel and Schiller, differentiates the structure and stylistic mode of those romantic poets, like Wordsworth and Coleridge and Goethe, who in their poetry reflect upon the poetic process, from classical or neoclassical poets, who are more prone to transcribe their ostensibly unmediated observations of history and legend (this is Peacock’s point, made derisively, above in n.25). We must remember that August Schlegel, unlike his brother Friedrich, is more interested in the literary tradition than the artistic. He contemplates the great theory of unity in literary criticism, Aristotle’s *Poetics*, but finds it lacking. Of “magnitude,” the idea of proportionality that assumes an intelligible number of parts within a whole, Schlegel writes that if this “requisition of beauty” were the only determining factor then

of the narrative, all else is left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is non-existent; time and place are undefined and call for interpretation; thoughts and feeling remained unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most unrelieved suspects and directed toward a single goal (and to that extent *far more of a unity*), remained mysterious and ‘fraught with background’” (11-12, my italics). Wordsworth’s “spots of time” are wonderful examples of this latter mode of imitation, and the Cumbrian bard is a conspicuous absence in Auerbach’s text, perhaps only explained by the fact that Auerbach, as a Romantic philologist, was more interested in Italian, French, and Spanish works. Shakespeare and Schiller are two of the few Anglo-Saxon writers who receive treatment.

endless accumulations could comprise a work with nothing more than a casual connection, and there is then yet no explanation as to the unity for “the compositions of Shakespeare and of other romantic poets, who have included in one picture a more extensive circle of life, characters, and events, than is to be found in the simple Greek tragedy” (239). (Aristotle’s passing remark on magnitude may become that neoclassical perversion of the Unity of Time.) While ancient and modern art do differ from each other, they share, as had been said as far back as Herder, some honesty to their culture and to their contemporary conditions that are absent in French neoclassical productions, whose theories of unity are analogous to the mechanical unity of a watch in that they exist only for an abstract, “rational” reason foreign to the imagination and to feeling. True unity is rather like an “organic unity” which consists in “the inward intuition of life” and manifests some essential or meaningful features about its subject (244). Schlegel references the comparable notion of the “unity of interest” by La Motte, that French author cited above in the context of the *Querelle* who championed the moderns and who defended Madame Dacier during the *Querelle*. Schlegel, inspired by La Motte, writes that unity must suggest an “idea of *One* and *Whole*” that arises not from structural arrangement but from “the primary and spontaneous activity of the human mind” (234-234).⁴⁰ This unity is *inner*, i.e. like an organism it develops from within and is not a “stiff

⁴⁰ In *A Critical Discourse upon Homer’s Iliad* (1714 trans.), La Motte writes, “As Unity ought to reign in the whole, so it ought to reign in every part (“Ainsi l’unité que doit régner dans le tout doit aussi régner dans chaque partie”) (*Discourse* 37; *Texte Critique* 186). In the *Discours à l’occasion des Macchabées* (1721), about his tragedy composed that year for the state theatre *La Comédie Française*, La Motte argues that the unity of interest is in his opinion the essential condition of tragedy (“...cette unité d’intérêt... est à mon avis la condition plus essentielle d’une tragédie”) (*Texte Critique* 552). La Motte then advances the unity of interest against the three neoclassical unities. He writes, “I will venture here a paradox, that among the first rules of theatre the most important was almost forgotten. Ordinarily, the three unities of place, time, and action are treated, but I would add that that which even can alone can still produce a great effect is the unity of interest, which is the true source of continuous emotion, rather than those other three conditions that cannot fill nor save a work from languor.” (“Je hasarderai ici un paradoxe: c’est qu’entre les

regularity” such as when an “external force is imparted to any material merely as an accidental addition without reference to its quality,” and so “all genuine forms are organical” in the sense that the form is an intellectual organization true to or best representative of the content and not an abstract application of an external rule (340).

Greek and modern-romantic works of art accomplish such *inner unity*, which such unity I discern to be the intended final effect of those works whose unity is decided by interest and organicism, but the plastic and picturesque analogies imply two varying patterns of inner unity for two very different cultures: the antique, which is simple, homogenous, or, as Schiller terms it, naïve; and the modern, which is complex, heterogeneous, or, as Schiller terms it, sentimental. Schlegel writes,

the principal cause of the difference lies in the plastic spirit of the antique, and the picturesque spirit of the romantic poetry. Sculpture directs our attention exclusively to the group which it sets before us, it divests it as far as possible from all external accompaniments, and where they cannot be dispensed with, it indicates them as slightly as possible. Painting, on the other hand, delights in exhibiting, along with the principal figures, all the details of the surrounding locality and all secondary circumstances, and to open a prospect into a boundless distance in the background; and light and shade with perspective are its peculiar charms. (252)

Ancient literature is analogous to sculpture because, in honest portrayal of its simple and noble culture, it is stripped to what is essential: the action of the human body, without

premières règles du théâtre on a presque oublié la plus importante. On ne traite d'ordinaire que des trois unités, de lieu, de temps, et d'action ; et j'y en ajouterais toute seule pourrait encore produire un grand effet, c'est l'unité d'intérêt, qui est la vraie source de l'émotion continue, au lieu que les trois autres conditions exactement remplies ne sauveraient pas un ouvrage de la langueur”) (553).

regard for idiosyncrasies or lavish adornment. Modern literature is analogous to a painting because, like modern culture, it is defined by multifarious and conflicting customs and regards all of the boundless complexities and subjects of modern existence. The scope of both analogies and the suggestive similarity of Schlegel's use of picturesque with that of the British and German landscape theorists can be examined when Schlegel casts his analogies on the dramatic stage:

Respecting the two species of poetry with which we are principally occupied, we compared the ancient Tragedy to a group in sculpture: the figures corresponding to the characters, and their grouping to the action; and to these two in both productions of art is the consideration exclusively directed, as being all that is properly exhibited. But the romantic drama must be viewed as a large picture, where not merely figure and motion are exhibited in larger, richer groups, but where even all that surrounds the figures must also be portrayed; where we see not merely the nearest objects, but are indulged with the prospect of a considerable distance; and all this under a magical light, which assists in giving to the impression the particular character desired. (343)

He continues that the picture is less perfectly bounded than the group—the sculptural sets he has in mind are figurative and free-standing—because like a landscape painting which cannot display the entirety of a horizon or any natural prospect the picture “is like a fragment but out of the optic scene of the world” (343). While painting thus suffers a lack not issued by the reality of sculpture, it nevertheless “communicates more life to its imitations, by colours which in a picture are made to imitate the lightest shades of mental expression in the countenance. The look, which can be given only very imperfectly by

Sculpture, enables us to read much deeper in the mind, and to perceive its lightest movements” (343-344). We must then consider the assumptions behind painting and sculpture with which Schlegel forks his division. By painting is meant landscape, even perhaps seventeenth- and eighteenth-century picturesque painting, where the incompleteness of the breadth, actualized by the very act of having to *frame* a natural prospect, implies an incomplete whole. The difficulty of harmony is further pronounced by the density of objects and colours. By sculpture is evidently meant free-standing, figurative statuary, which through the annals of time has lost any paint that may have been applied to it and now stands as a Winckelmannian cold, white, marble ideal.⁴¹ In order to conceptualize this idealization, one must infer that visually taken in at once, limited in material, and bereft of any non-essential traits, sculpture is perfectly bounded as a whole. But painting, by those very qualities of complex disharmony and variety of objects, can display greater depth and expression, which are beyond the stripped abilities of sculpture.

The unity of modern-romantic art is, at the risk of sounding pedestrian, not as obvious as that of ancient art. It exists nonetheless. According to Schlegel, the romantic drama does not meditate upon only that which is essential and serious but “embraces at once the whole of the chequered drama of life with all its circumstances” and blends all “into one harmonious whole” (344). The paragon of this romantic harmony might be Shakespeare, who was condemned by the neoclassical critics for that very embrace of the

⁴¹ Until the late-twentieth century, and perhaps even by some now, it had been assumed that ancient sculpture was a pure white, monochromatic art, as those works appear to us now after centuries of natural discolouration. This ignorance of ancient polychromy, which quite suits the idealization of Greek aesthetics, is discussed in Susan Ebbinghaus’s *Gods in Colour Gallery Guide* (2007), a print supplement to the famous travelling exhibition of the same theme. Ebbinghaus details the growth of an ideal, monochromatic aesthetic from the discovery in particular of the Laocoön group during the Renaissance (2), which group is so influential to writers like Winckelmann and Lessing.

gamut of life in a single work, which we now call tragi-comedy. The “changes in time and place, contrast of sport and earnest,” and other such mixtures are “not mere licences but true beauties in romantic drama” (344). Schlegel writes, “I require a deeper, more intrinsic, and more mysterious unity than that with which most critics are satisfied. This Unity I find in the tragical compositions of Shakespeare, in as great perfection as in those of Aeschylus and Sophocles; while, on the contrary, I do not find it in many of those tragedies which nevertheless are lauded as correct by the critics of the dissecting school” (244). That inner unity of the picturesque pattern of modern art that concedes heterogeneity and irregularity is a critical resolution to the excesses and complexities of harmony in modern art.

Romantic suggestions of organicism or of inner unity are not unique to Schlegel, but his division between the plastic and picturesque patterns of unity has deep reverberations throughout the period.⁴² We see in the *Lectures* his attempt to establish a means of unity in literature that bespeaks the vitality and inwardness true of modern culture, but the only schemata available in the actual literary tradition, Aristotle’s *Poetics*, fall short. The comparison of ancient art with sculpture and modern-romantic art with painting is not intended to suggest formal or teleological tendencies as one might see in theories of *ut pictura poesis*—that painting and poetry must share the same ends of moral instruction or aesthetically display the same standards of decorum or historical subjects—but provides schemata, underlying conceptual organizations of whole and parts, that emblemize the contours of antique and romantic literary intelligibility. Plastic literature is as unrobed, simple, and healthy as a Greek statue, and picturesque literature is as

⁴² See n. 38 above for Jean Paul’s similar but illuminating take on the classical-Romantic, statuesque-picturesque division.

adorned, complicated, and reflective as a painting. One thus tends to homogeneity and its unity is simple, and the other tends to heterogeneity and its unity is complex. Each schema, the plastic and the picturesque, reveals an inner pattern for the reciprocal determination of the whole and parts of a work of art. This division would be taken up by a few but central figures of European Romanticism in Germany, Italy, and Great Britain, but the popularity of Schlegel's theory was aided in great part by Madame de Staël.

The work of Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein (1766-1817) popularized the essential ideas of Schlegel's *Lectures* throughout Europe, though her politicized take on aesthetic matters brought such chagrin to the Napoleonic authorities in France, neoclassical to the core as they were, that could never have been supposed by the original German lectures. The assumed morality, rationality, and timeless authority of a neoclassical aesthetic has always been to the great benefit of authoritarian or outright totalitarian political regimes, from Napoleon to Hitler. Its prescriptive presence in French public life throughout even the early-nineteenth century, in architecture and painting especially, is thus to little surprise. De Staël, a liberal cosmopolitan by upbringing whose father Jacques Necker was finance minister for the Bourbon monarchy in France, vehemently opposed the emperor's authoritarianism and hosted an influential literary coterie in her salon. Her *De la littérature considérée dans le rapports avec les institutions sociales* (1800) is a historicist treatise in the manner of Herder that distinguishes the literature of the south from the north by means of climate and personality, setting the cold introspection of the Nordic tribes, of the English, Danish, Germans, and Swedes, at an artistic advantage. She states her preference in the preface to the second edition: "The verses of Thomson touch me more than the sonnets of Petrarch. I prefer the poetry of

Gray over the songs of Anacreon” (“Les vers de Thomson me touchent plus que les sonnets de Pétrarck. J’aime mieux les poesies de Gray que les chansons d’Anacréon”)

(5). Against antiquarians like Bossu and d’Aubignac, de Staël praises the sentimentality of the moderns and their imitation of passions as opposed to physical nature in the manner of the Greeks (38). Her highly polemical *De l’Allemagne* (1810/13) adapted these earlier views to the model of division presented by Schlegel and elicited the ire of the establishment. Her remarks on the sterility of French literature and its susceptibility to society, fashion, and absurd rules of unity led to a dramatic censure by the Duke of Rovigo, Napoleon’s head of the Imperial Guard and the Minister of Police, who sent gendarmes to destroy thousands of copies of the first edition. De Staël includes a transcription of the Duke’s threatening letter to her in the second edition, in which he warns that her work “is not French” and that, in reference to such Englishmen and Germans as Shakespeare and Goethe whom she praises, the French “are not reduced to seek for models amongst the people you admire” (1: vi).

De Staël’s *De l’Allemagne* is based on the lectures in Vienna she heard Schlegel give on dramatic art and literature, and August himself aided in the composition of de Staël’s book. In the second volume she commends the work of Herder and Schiller but praises the Schlegel brothers as literary treasures of Germany and its most renowned critics. Her reiteration of their criticism actually indicates the primary interests of her own work. She writes of the brothers’, but particularly August’s, remarks on French neoclassicism: “literature, they say, in ages which are called classical, loses in originality what it gains in correctness” (2: 384). She again writes of them, “The general spirit of those critics is the same with that of Rousseau in his letter against French music” (2:

384), as Rousseau in his typical strive toward primitivism had written in his *Lettre sur la musique françoise* (1753) against the unnatural erudition of contemporary French music in favour of natural and original expression.⁴³ The division between the ancient and modern-romantic that underlies *De l'Allemagne* is essentially Schlegelian. Unlike the modern Latinized nations like Spain and France, who were still in their art and culture attempting to hark back to Rome, Teutonic nations had resisted the Roman yoke and were seen to be defined by Christianity and the chivalry of the Middle Ages. She writes, “The people of those [Latinized] regions evince less propensity to abstract reflection than we find among the German nations; they are more addicted to the pleasures and the interests of the earth; and, like their founders, the Romans, they alone know how to practise the arts of dominion” (1: 2). Like Winckelmann she differentiates between the original Greek works by which antiquity is truly defined and later Roman imitations. Further, Teutonic tribes have not been proselytized by this barren imitating force and have turned to their own tradition of introspection and symbolism. De Staël also attributes the picturesque to the art of these latter peoples. The chivalry of the Middle Ages is of a manner of “a naïveté of sentiment” and “picturesque interest,” and that interest owes to a romantic “diversity of scenes and characters” (2: 12). The Gothic aesthetic of Northern people like the Germans and English is also “picturesque” (2: 399), where sculpture better brings into relief the artistic conditions of antiquity (2: 392). De Staël holds the neoclassical unities in poor regard, like Johnson and Schlegel, but does not offer like the latter any positive theory of internal unity. She stops likewise short in the famous 11th chapter of the first volume when she reiterates Schlegel’s analogy, that

⁴³ John T. Scott discusses Rousseau’s vicious attack on what he perceived to be the artificiality of French musical composition, as well as his part in the related “Quarrel of the Bouffons,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Critical Assessments of Leading Political Philosophers* (2006), 379-389.

poetry is like sculpture and modern or romantic poetry like painting, because of the simplicity of the former and the richness of the latter.

De Staël's *De l'Allemagne*, in spite of the French authorities' censorious efforts, was widely disseminated throughout Europe and bolstered literary conceptions of the Romantic. Though the first edition was destroyed it was reprinted in Paris in 1814, by when Napoleon was forced to abdicate and exiled to Elba, before which year an English translation appeared in London. Within France, as René Wellek notes, one of her defenders, the poet Alexandre Soumet, in *Scruples littéraires de Madame de Staël* (1814), "violently attacked French neoclassicism and pleaded for a criticism of beauties" (*History 2*: 231). François-René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand (1768-1848), the Catholic aristocrat who is reputed to have established literary Romanticism in France, disagreed with de Staël's liberalism and fantastical reading of Ossian but nevertheless engaged with her work and, in *Le Génie du Christianisme* (1802) states his preference in the *Querelle* for modernity and its Christian heritage. Marie-Henri Beyle (1783-1842), better known by his *nom de plume* Stendhal, wrote against the unities whilst setting "romanticisme" opposite to "classicisme" in his *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823), and Victor Marie Hugo (1802-1885) is equally dismissive of French neoclassical rules in his preface to his play *Cromwell* (1827). In Italy, critics like Ermes Visconti and Alessandro Manzoni reiterate both Schlegel's and de Staël's distinction in bias of the modern-romantics and their repudiation of the unities. In Italy and France, Schlegel's and de Staël's division between the ancient and the modern was an effort to redeem and establish the difficult new Romantic style in literature, but in Britain, where literary Romanticism began as early as Wordsworth's and Coleridge's 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, and where Shakespeare for a

century before was already praised for having broken the rules of unity and decorum, the classical-romantic division and its concomitant consideration of painting as an analogy for romantic art furnished a critical vocabulary and indeed an analogical method to discuss modern notions of unity, imitation, and imagination in ways thither lacking in the literary tradition. According to Eichner, de Staël's book was favourably reviewed by Sir James Mackintosh for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1813, by William Taylor of Norwich in the *Monthly Review* in the same year,⁴⁴ and Coleridge engaged directly with both de Staël's and Schlegel's ideas (see chapters 1 and 2) (*Romantic* 202). Hazlitt reviewed John Black's translation of the original *Lectures* for the *Edinburgh Review* in 1816 and like Coleridge continued to adapt Schlegel's ideas, the classical-romantic divide and the analogy to painting, in his own work (see chapters 1 and 3), as did De Quincey, albeit with some reservation and confusion (chapter 1), while Byron acknowledged the controversy but dismissed Schlegel's stance altogether (chapter 1). Lord Francis Jeffrey, who is perhaps best known for establishing the *Edinburgh Review* and for his disapproval of the Lake School of poetry, having famously once begun a review of Wordsworth's *Excursion* with the condescending complaint "This will never do!" (*Contributions* 584), wrote a review De Staël's *De La Littérature* in November of 1812 in which, in spite of his sometimes harsh criticisms of her, he concedes the analogy between modern poetry, figured at its apex by Shakespeare, and painting, both having in common some unity of a profusion of details and an intelligible effect (58). Wellek, in "The Concept of 'Romanticism' in Literary History. I. The Term 'Romantic' and its Derivatives" (1949),

⁴⁴ In his forward to a recent translation of Georg Herzfeld's *William Taylor of Norwich: A Study of the Influence of Modern German Literature in England (Eine Studie über den Einfluss der neuren deutschen Litteratur in England)* (1897, trans. 1997), Burwick writes, "As a major figure in this international trade [of ideas] during the Romantic period, Taylor stands alongside Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey, and Thomas Carlyle as a leading mediator in Anglo-German literary relations" (3).

also numbers among those who review or reproduce Schlegel and de Staël's ideas Nathan Drake in his *Shakespeare* (1817), Sir Walter Scott in his *Essay on Drama* (1819), Thomas Campbell's *Essay on Poetry* (1819), and some contributions in *Ollier's Literary Magazine* (1820) (14).

The deep influence of the classical-romantic division is expressed with some wit in August Schlegel's obituary in the *Athenäum*, that "Frenchmen will not readily forget that he disparaged Molière," and "Englishmen...are deeply indebted to him" (qtd. in Schlegel, *Lectures* 15). Schlegel's *Lectures* represent a great achievement over neoclassical precepts, especially the rigid unities, and facilitate Romantic theorizing of literary unity in the new analogy between poetry and painting. Those Englishmen who "are deeply indebted to him," like De Quincey, Coleridge, and Hazlitt, perhaps the most formidable and consequential literary critics of Romantic Britain, utilize both the division between the classical and the modern-romantic and especially the association between romantic poetry and the picturesque to attempt to formulate theories of literary unity that are conscious of the new artistic sensibility that favours a negotiation of general effect and individual detail and not a total dismissal of the latter, and a recognition of the historical and cultural gap between new, "romantic" artists and the distant, objective productions of classical antiquity. The analogy to painting, for British Romantic critics, encapsulates the ability of the aesthetic semblance of that art to represent the unity of all the imaginative colouring, profusion of details, and feeling sought to be unified sensibly in modern literature.

Chapter One: The Critical Relevance of the Painting Analogy in British Romanticism

In my introduction I detailed the critical history of the literary-philosophical transmutations of the division between ancient art and literature and modern-romantic art and literature, corollary to which division can be charted an increasing dissatisfaction with the usual pseudo-Aristotelian terms of literary criticism and also a burgeoning analogy of painting with modern-romantic art. The purpose of this latter analogy is to set new terms for a non-neoclassical formulation for literary unity by using some qualities of painting, which, as I shall show, accommodate eighteenth-century and Romantic understandings of artistry, creativity, and imagination better than the rigid and ahistorical rules for unity that had thither been prescribed by neoclassical critics. In the British Romantic context, the predication of picturesque qualities to modern art, most importantly, bestows such terms of interpreting unity that do not suffer the anachronism of, say, the neoclassical unities. Complementary to nascent organic theories, the terms of painting as they exist in British fine arts or more general philosophical criticism suit Romantic conceptions of artistic and literary unity, i.e. those of whole and parts or the general and particular, which are rare in literary theories but quite pronounced in some philosophical and many aesthetics theories in the eighteenth century.

The analogies between poetry and painting are ubiquitous in Romantic criticism of nineteenth-century Britain and sometimes even function in artistic practice. An example of the analogy in practice is Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), a series of consciously picturesque word-paintings. The imaginative colouring of the *Sketches* is so exemplary of what Karl Kroeber also sees in J.M.W. Turner's Romantic paintings as

the perception of “variety, a consciousness of the distinct and different forms of which [landscape’s] unity was composed,” that Kroeber, like John Ruskin in his famous defence of Turner in *Modern Painters* (1843-1860), compares the atmospheric effects in Wordsworth and Turner (Kroeber, *Images* 141; Ruskin, *Works* 3: 307). Remarking on a habit shared by many Romantic painters, Laurence Starzyk in “‘Ut Pictura Poesis’: The Nineteenth-Century Perspective” (2002) writes, “Turner’s fascination with appending poems of his own or others’ composition to his canvases,” and “the Royal Academy’s insistence in 1798 that exhibitors attach epigraphs to their submissions, underscore the continuing significance of *ut pictura poesis* and of the importance of the verbal in representations of the visual” (10). Mario Praz argues in *Mnemosyne: The Parallel between Literature and the Visual Arts* (1970) that these artistic parallels can be understood by the idea of a period’s “handwriting,” a sort of *zeitgeist* theory that proposes that “each epoch has its peculiar handwriting or handwritings, which, if one could interpret them, would reveal a character” which manifests in a “similarity of structure in a variety of media” (25, 60). My concerns are related to these issues, though the handwriting with which I am dealing is less poetical than philosophical. I will show how the relationship between poetry and painting in the critics with whom I am working is of critical value to the end of presenting the unity of parts under a complex whole as symbolized by painting. This analogy follows the flaws that I perceive Romantic critics to have felt in incumbent theories of unity in literary criticism that were inappropriate for more organic and imaginative conceptions of poetry. The analogy is hence a direct repudiation of neoclassical theories of form and unity. In this chapter, I will first argue how Romantic critics redefine the analogy between poetry and painting and how

Abrams's very famous and very influential thesis arguing for the obsolescence of the analogy and its metaphor of the mirror is misguided. I then show the great critical prevalence not just of references to painting generally but of the association between poetry and painting, or the picturesque, in adoptions and analyses in nineteenth-century Britain of Schlegel's division between the ancient as plastic or statuesque and the modern-romantic as picturesque. Last, I make sense of the terminology—varying at times, “particular,” “individual,” “general,” “whole,” “parts,” “local,” “individual”—of antithetical qualities that is so integral to the critical assessment of literary and artistic unity for some British Romantics.

II. Ut Pictura Poesis and Abrams's Mirror

I argue that the analogy between romantic art and painting in some major British critics of the nineteenth century is not a restatement of the *ut pictura poesis* theory of the seventeenth-century French and Italian Academicians, and in this point I depart from the orthodox belief inspired by Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp* that the analogy between painting and literature is totally inappropriate for Romantic poetics (50). Again, according to Abrams's theory, because of the overthrow of imitation by the theory of expression by late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century critics and artists, visual analogues no longer seem to suffice for Romantic concepts of art and mind. But the difference between Schlegel's pronouncement as it is adapted in Britain and the *ut pictura poesis* theory is evident in the origins and aims of each. While the sister arts analogy prescribed both rules and content from poetry to painting in order to elevate the lowly status of the latter to a true and decorous humanist discipline, the critical simile between ancient literature and sculpture on the one hand and romantic literature and

painting on the other arises from a burgeoning historicism in literary scholarship of the time and the recognition of a shared complexity, particularity of detail, and a picturesque unity in both modern literature and painting. After briefly explaining the sister arts analogy of *ut pictura poesis* and its presumed break after fierce and influential criticism by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and even Edmund Burke (1729-1797), I will contextualize the critical antecedents of Abrams, who also argue that the new analogy for poetry is music rather than painting. I will show the misstep made by these critics between Romantic theories of expression and genius and the too-definiteness of painting and consequently show the resulting differences between the *ut pictura poesis* theory and other inter-art analogies. I will then pivot from these differences to demonstrate different types of poetic criticism, of which the “rhetorical” system of the sister arts doctrine is but one type. The differences between varying methodologies of criticism, in my view, opens up the possibility of different types of inter-art analogies. In singling out the dialectical methodology of Romantic criticism, which methodology is complementary to ideas of organicism and unity, I will examine how British Romantic critics not only use painting as an analogy for literature but do so to the end of describing unity and wholeness rather than content.

The undoing of the analogy between poetry and painting recognizes some basic generic differences between the two arts but is also motivated by newer, romantic conceptions of poetry. The *tertium comparationis* (third thing of comparison) of the parallel between painting and poetry is *mimesis*, and we saw in the introduction how Neoclassicists had a pseudo-Aristotelian understanding of that term by which they thought that art ought to imitate general and ideal nature, as best represented by antique

models.⁴⁵ Those antique models, of course, excel in depicting physical beauty. The adoption of antique beauty led to *dicta* commanding symmetry, decorum, simplicity, and the like. Abrams's argument is that between the Renaissance and the mid-eighteenth century, the concept of the mirror illustrated art's representational potential (31-34), and, in respect to direct imitation as the *tertium comparationis* of the sister arts analogy, "the appeal to painting corroborated the concept that poetry is a reflection of objects and events" (34). While painting corroborated the concept of poetry as a reflection of physical things, the proper metaphor of this strictly imitating process is a mirror. But, as Abrams notes, the image produced by a mirror is only a simulacrum of a physical object, and this strict mimeticism is out of sync with the Romantic turn from empirical ideals to intuitive and emotional ones. Such statements on the concept of poetry by Wordsworth in the 1800 "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) as that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (*Prose Works* 1: 126), by Shelley in the *Defence of Poetry* (1821) that poetry is "the expression of the imagination" (*Poetry and Prose* 511), and by Hazlitt in "On Poetry in General" that poetry "is the language of the imagination and the passions" (*Works* 5: 1), indicate, as Abrams says, that a "coherent theory of poetry which takes its departure from...[these types]...of analogy, instead of from imitation, will clearly favour very different emphases and criteria" (47). Thus does Abrams then assert that Romantic

⁴⁵ The explicit logical assumption of imitation as the uniting ground of the analogy between poetry and painting is not entirely novel. Charles Batteux, who is often quoted celebrating the neoclassical notion of "la belle nature," in his *Les Beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (*The fine arts reduced to a common principle*) (1746) famously conceived of "imitation" as a unifying principle for all of the arts. Batteux writes of his own discovery that painting is a silent poetry and after moving closer to the ideas of Horace and Boileau, the former having found *via* the *ut pictura poesis* theory that poetry and painting are both imitations, Batteux himself goes further to apply the same principle to other arts like music and gesture ("Il se trouva que la Poésie était en toute une imitation, de même que la Peinture. J'allai plus loin: j'essayai d'appliquer le même principe à la Musique & à l'Art du Geste, & je fus étonné de la justesse avec laquelle il leur convenait") (*Beaux arts* 8). The reconfiguration of neoclassical tropes and metaphors, like the mirror, by Romantics will be discussed below.

poetry is less like a mirror reflecting reality and more like a lamp illuminating the world from within and that in consideration of the above and too of the many references to the poet and poetry as Aeolian harps in Coleridge and Shelley, “In place of painting, music becomes the art frequently pointed to as having a profound affinity with poetry” (50).

This paradigmatic argument against any reading of *ut pictura poesis* in Romantic writing is not totally incorrect but is in want of crucial rephrasing. Not only does the analogy remain in some form but it is also of paramount importance to literary criticism of the time. As Abrams concedes, and as many others since him who have followed his argument state, imitation is a concept that is still critically addressed in the Romantic period. Frederick Burwick in *Mimesis and Its Romantic Inflections* (2000) writes that important to the “romantic definition of imitation is the shaping presence of the mind. The mediating self is revealed in and through the external artefact” (8).⁴⁶ I propose that just as the definition of imitation, that hinging notion of representation that is the *tertium comparationis* of the sister arts analogy, changes so too does the dynamic of the analogy between painting and poetry. For example, just as Romantic representation can be so self-reflexive, from Wordsworth’s *Prelude* to J.M.W. Turner’s proto-impressionist landscapes, in that introspective way heralded by Herder, Schiller, and Schlegel, then what poetry has in common with painting too might be less about a similarity with what physical objects are represented than *how* objects might be represented together.⁴⁷ Roy Park, in “‘Ut Pictura Poesis’: The Nineteenth-Century Aftermath” (1969), writes that the

⁴⁶ Burwick differs Abrams in that he, unlike Abrams and Wellek, does not oppose mimetic and expressive theories. In the manner of John L. Mahoney’s *The Whole Internal Universe: Imitation and the New Defence of Poetry in British Criticism, 1660-1830* (1985), Burwick’s *Romantic Inflections* seeks to connect Romantic notions of imitation to actual Aristotelian theory as opposed to neoclassical formulations.

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Hartman identified this phenomenon in Romantic literature as the self-consciousness of the subject, where the subjectivity of the poet becomes the subject of the poem, in “Romanticism and ‘Anti-Self-Consciousness’” (1970), 48-53.

resurgence of the *ut pictura poesis* “doctrine in the latter half of the century had served to camouflage a much more vital issue—the conflict between art as ideal or general and art as the minute discrimination of the individual,” and that therefore, “The importance of painting for the literary critics of the early nineteenth century lies elsewhere, and it is because of this that Abrams’s generalization requires serious modification” (156).

Maureen McCue writes in *British Romanticism and the Reception of Italian Old Master Art 1793-1840* (2014) that “traditionally scholarship has emphasized the visionary qualities of Romantic poetry over the visual experience” when actually in the Romantic period the “development of a critical vocabulary that applied to both literature and painting allowed writers and painters to help each other describe and evaluate aesthetic endeavours” (17, 101). McCue especially notes the “celebration of particulars” that “began to replace the desire for a single, all-encompassing standard of ideal beauty,” the articulation of which for various arts reveals that “Romantic writers created a vocabulary which lent itself to both art and literature” (97).⁴⁸ There is certainly a prominence of references to painting, and even sculpture, in literary criticism of the Romantic period, but to understand it one needs to first distinguish it from the simple *ut pictura poesis* doctrine by which any analogy between literature and art is normally understood.

The *ut pictura poesis* theory is derived from Horace’s *Ars Poetica* (c. 19 BCE), written as a poetic epistle to the *familia* Pisos, which summarizes and propounds the best

⁴⁸ McCue also quotes one of Wordsworth’s letters to Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846), a now famous but then unsuccessful Romantic painter who either for affection or sycophancy was friends with many major British Romantic figures, on the delicate balance between general effects and particular features: “it is better that expression should give way to beauty than beauty be banished by expression. Happy is he who can hit the exact point where grandeur is not lowered but heightened by detail, and beauty not impaired, but rendered more touching and exquisite by Passion” (102). McCue writes, “Wordsworth encourages Haydon to cultivate his talent for realism, for the telling detail, but warns that it is difficult to achieve a balance between specificity and the harmony of the whole. Wordsworth’s reference to Garrick implicitly reveals how the vocabularies of artistic genres were becoming more fluid, so that it seemed entirely appropriate to refer a painter to the example of an actor” (102).

classical precepts and practices in poetry. Among his maxims are that a poem ought to be self-consistent; comprised of unity, somewhat in the manner of the work of a good sculptor who does not sacrifice the literal wholeness of the body of his work for particular details; and achieve a harmony of instruction and pleasure (453, ll. 32-37). It is through this last achievement that the poet wins “every vote” (479, ll. 333-344). Most famously, Horace announces: “Ut pictura poesis,” as is poetry so is painting (481, l. 361). Horace’s point here is that a critic must not only heed to a poem her close attention to details but, as she would a painting, stand back from it so that she can take pleasure in its broad and impressionist whole. Plutarch later attributes the origin of the analogy to Simonides’s aphorism, that painting is mute poetry and poetry is a speaking picture (Praz 4-5).

By the late Renaissance, when the theory is made popular, the sister arts analogy ossifies into a system of set rules. With an ever-increasing esteem of painting, architecture, and sculpture over drama and poetry, many Italian critics felt deeply the lack of a tradition of philosophical treatises on those arts such as was available to literature from Aristotle onwards. Rensselaer W. Lee shows in “Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting” (1940) how before the systematization of dramatic rules in France, baroque art theorists like Ludovico Dolce similarly assumed pseudo-Aristotelian rules and then, lacking a *Poetics* of painting, prescribed them to the visual arts. This effort was intended to accord the privilege to painting as ranking among the best of the liberal arts, though its rules were in fact derivative. Much emphasis was placed upon the superiority of general and ideal imitation over any sort of naturalism; that the painter, as Dolce writes in the *Dialogue on Painting (Dialogo della pittura)* (1557), “must labour hard not only to

imitate but also to surpass nature” (qtd. in Lee, 204); on traditionalism of theme and subject (Lee, 211-212), a sense of *la belle nature* or of what the British Academician Joshua Reynolds later refers to as *grandeur* in his neoclassical *Discourses on Art* (Reynolds 44); instruction and delight (Lee 226-227); and strict notions of decorum (228-230), such as were observed by even some of the party of the *modernes* in the *Querelle* who disparaged Homer for painting his noble characters performing un-courtly actions.

The prescription of poetical rules to painting was to the detriment of imaginative creation. Irving Babbitt argues in *The New Laokoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts* (1910) that the formal confusion engendered by the sister arts analogy in the Renaissance contributed to dead poetical diction in the seventeenth century (18), that in the impulse to imitate the ancients rather than real life certain decorous phrases and words ought to have been used as gleaned from the noble dramas and rhetorical treatises of the past. There is an echo of this impulse as late as Samuel Johnson’s *Rambler No. 168* (1751), when after commending the *dicta* of Boileau he criticizes Shakespeare’s use of such “low and vulgar language” in *Macbeth* as “knife” and “blanket” where perhaps dagger and cloak might have been more regal (213, 215). Dryden exhausted the formal comparisons between the two arts in his “Parallel between Painting and Poetry,” the preface to his translation of Charles Alphonse Du Fresnoy’s Latin poem *De Arte Graphica* (1668, 1695 English trans.).⁴⁹ About *De Arta Graphica*, Jean H. Hagstrum writes in *The Sister Arts. The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (1958), “Dufresnoy’s formulation of *ut pictura poesis*—a more dogmatic one than even the Italian Renaissance had known—fell into congenial soil in England”

⁴⁹ He most likely would have been working from Roger de Piles’s French translation of the same year from the original publication in Latin.

(111). Dryden goes further in the “Parallel between Painting and Poetry” and equates literary expression with painterly colour and plot with design, as I show in a moment.

The insistence on the obsolescence of the analogy between literature and painting that Abrams espouses begins first with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Laocoön, or About the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (*Laokoon, oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*) (1766). Lessing’s main departure point is Winckelmann’s ornate description of the statue of the Trojan priest Laocoön and his sons wrestling with serpents that coil around them and Winckelmann’s disappointment that the statue does not represent that intense anguish that the character Laocoön does in Virgil’s *Aeneid*. But Lessing disagrees with the assumption that the beauty of visual art should follow that of poetry, and *vice versa* (“Laocoön” 27-29; *Werke* 786-787). Turning to his attention to any theorists and practitioners of the sister arts doctrine, Lessing argues that it is the critic’s role to distinguish the rules of poetry from painting and proceeds to condemn the modern critics who have failed to do so. He uses picturesque (*malerisch*) as a pejorative adjective when warning poets against a manner or subject best fit for the visual arts and lauds the bodily or physical beauty of sculpture (*körperliche Schönheit*) as the ultimate aesthetic obtaining in all fine arts (“Laocoön” 102; *Werke* 2: 902). According to Lessing, poetry unfolds in time and so its subject should be action, which is likewise successive according to its medium. Painting unfolds in space so its subject should be representation of physical bodies and their relations to one another, which are simultaneous according to their medium (“Laocoön” 80-81; *Werke* 2: 875-876). However, Lee in “Ut Pictura Poesis” notes a contradiction in Lessing, that in advocating that plastic beauty should dominate all art forms and thereby confusing sculpture with painting Lessing, like Hamlet, was

“hoist with his own petard” (215). Burke likewise in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1756) challenges the practice of pictorialism, though he unlike Lessing says little of critics and associates poetry with obscurity as opposed to visual clarity, an effect beyond painting (55). The associative obscurity and interiority of poetry, for both Lessing and Burke, annuls the analogy with painting, which by its very medium is distinguished by clarity and exteriority. That great eighteenth-century and Romantic aesthetic too, the Sublime, is premised on these notions of indeterminacy and obscurity.

Lessing is exceptional in having so formatively attacked the then popular artistic creed of pictorialism that elided poetry and painting by assuming that poetical images should be translatable into a visual medium and *vice versa* (Hagstrum 4). But in spite of Lessing and Burke’s warnings against the confusion of arts in the form of the artistic practice of pictorialism they both still fit neatly within the tradition of inter-art comparisons that flourished in eighteenth-century criticism. Babbitt addresses the confusion of arts in *The New Laokoon* when he writes, “It is rare to read through a critical treatise on either art or literature, written between the middle of the sixteenth and the middle of the eighteenth century, without finding an approving mention of the Horatian simile, ‘as is painting, so is poetry’ (*ut pictura poesis*),” and “if the mention is not of Horace, then it is of the equivalent saying of Simonides that ‘painting is mute poetry, and poetry a speaking picture’” (Babbitt 3). James S. Malek also, in *The Arts Compared: An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetics* (1974), notes that such comparisons extend from antiquity to the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ During this period, Dryden, whom I

⁵⁰ Malek also argues that theorists of the eighteenth century “recognized the search for universal bases of all arts as a legitimate branch of ‘philosophical criticism’” (11). In a now famous two-part essay published

showed advocating the unities in my introduction, further unsurprising in his neoclassicism in his “Parallel between Painting and Poetry,” perpetuates what Hagstrum saw as Dufresnoy’s dogmatic subscription to the sister arts doctrine, to codify rules appropriate to painting. Dryden then even suggests that as painting and poetry are sisters, one simply called, in a Simonidean fashion, “dumb poesy, and the other a speaking picture,” painting should not only resemble poetry but poetry should aspire to the

in 1951, Paul O. Kristeller, an eminent scholar of Renaissance Humanism, argues in “The Modern System of Arts” that only the eighteenth century first develops a philosophy which systematically enumerates all of the “fine arts” together, a method which Kristeller also terms “a comprehensive theory of aesthetics” (1: 510). Kristeller’s supporting claims are: 1. The modern “fine arts” (by which he means poetry, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture) originate in the eighteenth century, for which formation Charles Batteux’s 1746 *Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe* (*The fine arts reduced to a common principle*) is pivotal; 2. Only the eighteenth century produces a literature which treats general aesthetic ideas rather than technical precepts; and 3. Although the modern system of fine arts originates in the eighteenth century, “all romantic as well as later aesthetics takes this system as its necessary basis” (2: 44). The arguments Kristeller propounds were ordained as tenets of art history and philosophical aesthetics until such recent refutations as by James I. Porter (2009), who restates John Dewey’s argument from his *Art as Experience* (1934), that the very distinction of a group of products we call the “fine arts” is a fruitless one because art and experience, let alone fine arts and crafts, exist on an organic continuum to which any claim of aesthetic autonomy is anathema (Porter, 2-4; Dewey, 25-27). Cf. Larry Shiner (2009) and Peter Kivy (2012), who come to Kristeller’s defence, and James O. Young (2015), who takes Porter’s contrarian views. My own view can be partly expressed by quoting Kivy. The crown jewel in Kivy’s article is the point at which he turns on its head Porter’s own argument about the instability of groupings of the arts throughout history. The very fact that the belonging of music, dance, or crafts to the fine arts was ever disputed means that there was a category of the fine arts, however unstable and culturally and historically contingent it is or might have been. Such disagreement and categorization is absent in classical antiquity. Kivy lastly argues that Batteux, whom Porter conscripts in his own camp, is in fact in accordance with the way Kristeller reads him: “for Batteux the concept of an integrated, *named* group of entities, the ‘fine arts’, was epistemically prior, and a common principle was sought for them, which of course turned out to be mimesis. For Plato and Aristotle mimesis was the prior concept, which what *we* call the fine arts, Batteux the *beaux arts*, were examples of, among other things. Thus Plato and Aristotle could no more entertain the project of reducing the fine arts to a *même principe* than they could entertain the project of defining the ‘scientific method.’ And that is what Batteux *et alia* were doing in the eighteenth century that was remarkably modern” (68). I think Porter’s criticism is largely valid, but Kristeller through Kivy has presented arguments which seem most compelling. While Shaftesbury, Kant, Batteux, and other writers in the eighteenth century would have not divorced art from matters of morality and the like, a Greek in the second century would not have looked upon a statue as art in the first instance. To his eyes the statue was a part of the social fabric of society and performed a civic or religious function, like a temple or theatrical performance. Whatever moral attributes Rameau in the eighteenth century savoured in discussing music, it was still by definition art and not religion. Schelling attributes the remarkable un-aestheticism of Greek art to the “plastic fancy of Greece,” and thus in Homer the Gods are not supernatural but a part of nature which the statue imitates. So visceral and lived was the experience of Greek “art” that Pausanias records that the statues of the Gods in Delphi were chained at the wings and feet so that the people’s holy sentinels might not leave the city. It is no surprise then that Władysław Tatarkiewicz concludes in consequence that the “ideas in the classical aesthetics of the Greeks were formulated for philosophical or everyday use, rather than for aesthetics itself” (“Classification of Arts in Antiquity” 231).

technical feats of painting (Hagstrum 3). From Dryden to the first decade of the nineteenth century, Malek says, “comparative discussions of the arts assumed increasing importance in British criticism” (11). An interesting figure in the eighteenth century who recalls the modernist concerns with historicity and particularity is Charles Lamotte, who published *An Essay upon Poetry and Painting, with Relation to the Sacred and Profane History* (1730). The *Essay upon Poetry and Painting* was influenced by Dryden’s “Parallel” and similarly espoused decorum as a uniting feature of art and literature. But Lamotte also thought that, besides decorum, truth resides in historical observance and regard for local particularities and not just generalities of nature (10, 37, 57). For example, against the neoclassical notion of *la belle nature* or propriety, Lamotte criticizes “when the Manners, Fashions, and Practices of different Ages are jumbled and confounded together” (10). Lamotte’s concern for historical detail, which is quite explicitly an attack on the neoclassical stage, echoes the pronouncements of the *modernes* during the *Querelle* in France and later in England.

However, other critical voices harmonize with Burke and Lessing’s pronouncements against pictorialism. Some critics, more attuned to cults of genius and the privileging of an expressive aesthetic over classical mimesis, lambasted the analogy between poetry and painting but did so to offer music as a more suitable analogy.⁵¹ Charles Avison, a notable English Baroque and Classical composer who is reputed to have written the first piece of music criticism in English with *An Essay on Musical Expression* (1752), is important for having set the concept of imitation as a mere decorative backdrop behind the spectacle of expression (57). The rejection of formal

⁵¹ Murray Krieger’s *Ekphrasis* (1992) argues that Addison and Burke were pivotal in the critical orientation by the eighteenth century to expressive theory from mimetic theory, so that the visual restrictions of the *ut pictura poesis* tradition broke open to representations of abstraction, emotion, and confusion (98-103).

qualities for affective qualities significantly altered the terms by which not only inter-art comparisons could be practised but even the method by which a single art could be assessed. Avison marks the strength of music in its expressiveness and thus its ability to rouse the passions and move us, while painting and poetry are more bound to imitation in the sense of physical similitude (58, 61-2).⁵² James Beattie's *Essays on Poetry and Music, as They Affect the Mind* (1776) highlights the sympathy and associations shared in music and poetry and, in a reference to the *Querelle*, lauds poetry and music as "rational and regular" when they are natural and expressive where otherwise those practices that derive Aristotelian rules from Sophocles and Homer are "temporary" and "ought not to be applied to the poems of other ages and nations" (5-6). Daniel Webb's *Observations on the Correspondence between Poetry and Music* (1769) relates the strength of the titular "sisterly" arts to the analogous affect, as Burke did with the sublime in his *Enquiry*, between nervous vibrations and the motion of passions (Burke 127-128).⁵³ Sir William Jones in "On the Arts, Commonly Called Imitative" (1772) outright rejects mimesis by equating art with nature and imitation with simple copying, and prefers poetry and music for better moving the passions (202). Aside from the various minor writings of the time, Thomas Twining's "Dissertations on Poetry and Music as Imitative Arts" (1789), prefixed to his translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, is the most important *ut musica poesis* treatise of the late-eighteenth century in England. Twining declares that "the time is

⁵² Avison includes many parallels between even painting and music, analogizing, in the manner of Dryden, such things as degree, colouring, and expression in painting with melody, harmony, and expression in music (24-25).

⁵³ Webb's entire book is largely a series of physiological analogies between the two arts. He posits from the start, "I shall suppose, that it is in the nature of music to excite similar vibrations [to poetry], to communicate similar movements to the nerves and spirits" (6). As for why music deserves its intimacy with music rather than any other fine art, Webb explains, "Painting and sculpture, on whatever subjects employed, act simply, as imitative arts; they have no other means of affecting us than by their imitations. But music acts in the double character of an art of impression as well as of imitation" (28).

come, when we no longer read the antients with our judgments shackled by determined admiration,” and in addition to that rejection of antique models suggests that music is as imitative an art as poetry if imitation is understood as the mimesis of an emotive force rather than as some physical transcription as the Neoclassicists had perverted Aristotle: “The highest power of Music... is, undoubtedly, its power of raising *emotions*” (xii, 46). Burke too twins poetry and music for their similar powerful effects when introducing taste in his *Enquiry* (25).⁵⁴ In these comparisons the concept of imitation, understood as a physical though still idealizing concept, is belittled for lacking the emotive and passionately moving qualities of the concept of expression.⁵⁵

Differences in inter-art comparisons reveal differing methodologies. James Harris’s “A Discourse on Music, Painting, and Poetry” (1744) does not analogize music and poetry so much as it holds the latter “superior to either of the other Mimetic Arts; it having been shewn to be equally excellent in the Accuracy of its Imitation” (94). But by privileging visual accuracy as the guarantor of artistic superiority, the manner by which Harris finds his conclusion is comparable to that of Charles Lamotte, who in his *Essay upon Poetry and Painting* writes that painting is “superior to Poetry” because of its imitative strength, a conclusion which only incidentally to the critic’s opinion is the reverse of the “Discourse,” for in methodology and principle they are quite similar. Many of the theorists above, who emphasize expression over imitation, tend to proceed by enquiring how a judgment of art or literature might precipitate from ascertaining the

⁵⁴ Kiene Brillenburg Wurth argues in *Musically Sublime: Indeterminacy, Infinity, Irresolvability* (2009), “what Harris observes about music in the *Treatises* Burke will also observe about works and poetry in the *Enquiry*: as in music according to Harris, so in poetry according to Burke” (33).

⁵⁵ In a moment recalling Burke’s *Enquiry*, Lessing writes that the end of poetry is to induce emotional associations an agent might hold with an object or representation and not primarily to resemble the physical makeup of an object (“Laocoön” 108-109; *Werke* 2: 912-913).

effect it has on our feelings or our nervous systems. The establishment of different methodologies will also contextualize the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine from Romantic inter-art analogies. The four methodologies of critical poetics, suggested by Robert Marsh in *Four Dialectical Theories of Poetry: An Aspect of English Neoclassical Criticism* (1965), are problematic, rhetorical, causal, and dialectical.

Problematic criticism is attuned to distinguishing particular concerns of art and to differentiating and defining various categories. Exemplars of this inductive approach are Aristotle and Lessing. In Aristotle's *Poetics*, poetry is distinguished from rhetoric, history, and philosophy or science. He establishes the form of artistic expression in his remarks on mimesis and classifies genres of poetry such as tragedy and epic poetry as well as the matter and methods by which they differ. The *Poetics* also famously locates and analyses the rules for tragic pleasure, such as *anagnorisis*, *peripeteia*, and *catharsis*. Lessing's *Laokoon* lays down separate aesthetic principles for poetry and painting, and the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* considers the rules and categories of superior dramatic representation. The problematic approach works to isolate different principles and categories in artistic production.

Rhetorical criticism is evidenced by many of the neoclassic critics, such as were introduced above and in the introduction, who, Marsh says, treat literature as means rather than as ends and in particular as means of achieving predetermined ends. Marsh writes,

different species of poems, for example, are not viewed (as they are in the *Poetics*) as possible unique problems of artistic construction, differentiated inductively according to an empirical grasp of the different principles of their

constitution. They are viewed, rather (as in Horace's *Ars poetica*), as more or less conventional, prescribed modes of communicative discourse or affective composition, through which certain pre-established effects or literary qualities can be achieved. (6)

The rhetorical method assesses or demands a work's excellence by virtue of its accordance with principles and general qualities as collected from the best practices of classical antiquity in respect to subject matter or style. The point made of Neoclassicists generally in the context of my discussion of the *Querelle* can be made here again to more sharply define the contours of this critical poetics, that this form of criticism is pseudo-Aristotelian in its manner and principles and in its subscription to *a priori* rules of communication has more in common with the rhetorical treatises of Cicero and Quintilian.

The doctrinaires of the *ut pictura poesis* theory are rhetorical critics. Rensselaer Lee argues that Italian theorists of the sister arts analogy counselled painters to read rhetoricians, to follow rules of decorum, and, in their misunderstanding of Aristotelian theory, to paint only historically significant human actions. In adherence to formulae and patterns for beauty, inferred from classical poetry and statuary and applied to painting, in the humanist doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* it was assumed that the only appropriately noble subject matter for painting, *qua* ancient poetry and statuary, is a historical scene or character, whether Greek or Christian, sacred or profane. Lee writes that the French Royal Academy in the seventeenth century "declared the noble subject to be a *sine qua non* of the grand style that aimed at universal truth through the imitation of 'la belle nature'" (211). The aspiration of the doctrine was not to simply recreate poetry in

painting, though that was often a result, but to follow poetry's advanced step so that painting too could establish itself as a liberal art of high standard. So, Reynolds in his *Discourses*, as a neoclassical humanist who privileges history painting over landscape or still-life and who criticizes circumstances of minuteness and particularity in subject and style, observes that "early education and the universal course of reading have made familiar and interesting to all of Europe" the great events of Greek and Roman history and subjects of Scripture, "without being degraded by the vulgarism of ordinary life in any country" (58).⁵⁶ The inter-art comparisons in rhetorical criticism, as exemplified by the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine, orient themselves to an aesthetic purism of ideal and general qualities that often results in mannerism or rigidity.

The third type of critical poetics is the causal, which is frequently observed in the eighteenth century. As Marsh puts it, in causal criticism "the central consideration is not how best to *obtain* predetermined literary qualities or effects," which consideration is the primary motivator of rhetorical criticism, "but rather how to *explain* qualities and effects in relation to the natural behaviour of human beings," and "this was usually done by means of principles and method derived from various empiricist systems of epistemology, psychology, and 'natural philosophy'" (9). In repudiation of rhetorical criticism's pre-established formal criteria for the sake of ideal beauty, causal criticism discusses poetry in terms of vibrations, impressions, pleasures and pains, and associations. While those critics who analogize poetry and painting, as that analogy is commonly understood within the confines of the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine, are rhetorical critics, those who analogize poetry with music tend to adopt the causal method. In Avison, Beattie, Burke, and Webb, the mechanical principles of natural cause, whether in

⁵⁶ Reynolds, whose neoclassicism, against which Hazlitt reacted, will be discussed further in Ch. 3.

discussions of beauty or novelty or sublimity—or, in causal theorists such as Richard Payne Knight and Gilpin, of the picturesque—supplant *a priori* formalized rules that pay homage to the ancient poets and sculptors. In fact, if the *tertium comparitionis* of the traditional sister arts analogy is a pseudo-Aristotelian conception of ideal imitation, that of the analogy of poetry and music, as we saw, is not imitation at all but expression and all of its connotations of genius, indistinctness, feeling, and the like.

Last is dialectical criticism, which Marsh says can be found as early as Plato, is evidenced in a few writers of the eighteenth century like Shaftesbury on whom he concentrates in his book, and is exemplified best by the Romantic movement in criticism. Marsh writes,

Dialectical theories differ radically from problematic and causal theories in that the dialectician discusses poetry (and most other things as well) primarily by means of broad analogies and syntheses, rather than by literal differentiation and analysis, and he does so within the context of controlling a priori disjunction or opposition between two realms or conceptions of the whole of things... (11)

Because dialectic criticism is characterized by its transcendental origins in Plato, the Stoics, Plotinus, and any other philosophical seer that gazed to the heavens through the grains of the material world, invocations of a higher realm and the ideals of beauty residing within it are common tropes. In respect to methodology, dialectical criticism negotiates the tensions, similarities, continuities, and contradictions between two concepts in order to ultimately attempt their presumed harmony. This methodology is the key to much German Romantic philosophy and to the criticism of its British inheritor Coleridge. The basic premise of this dialectic in Romantic philosophical writing, as Paul

Guyer presents it in *A History of Modern Aesthetics* while discussing poet-philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin's "Judgement and Being" (c. 1795), is that "judgment (urtheilen) is a 'primordial division' (ur-teilen) of an antecedent unity," and that the process of knowledge is not to contrive some new arrangement but to *re-constitute* an original unity "that precedes its various parts" and which "is in some way known to the self through an 'intellectual intuition'" (2: 20). In the throes of such competing notions as concept and intuition, material and intellectual, subjective and objective, ancient and modern, and particular and general, Romantic dialecticians like Schelling, the Schlegels, and Coleridge abide by the idea that "aesthetic experience is one if not the paradigmatic form of this 'intellectual intuition'" that discovers unity and "art is one if not the paradigmatic form for the expression of the mind's recognition or reconstitution of this unity" (2: 21). As the consummation of two competing forces, the dialectic harmony strikes an Aristotelian attitude, of posing a sum greater than its parts. Marsh notes the relationship between dialectical criticism and Romantic organicism, when there was a "radical shift from 'mechanistic' and 'imitative' conceptions of poetic invention characteristic of the neoclassical period to a predominance of 'organismic' and 'expressive-creative' conception" (192). That dialectic harmony is organic because, like an organism and unlike a mechanistic principle of a predetermined effect caused by certain rules, it is self-organizing and is composed of reciprocally related parts so that the entire structure and its interrelated parts can only be conceived of as a whole. The idea of the whole gives meaning to the parts and so those parts are informed by the whole, which, like an "intellectual intuition," both the artist and the philosophical critic grasp comprehensively or imaginatively.

The connection between the dialectical methodology of Romantic philosophical criticism and painting lies in that pressing issue of literary scholarship in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century—no doubt cogitated in other disciplines, like metaphysics, long before—that accounts, as Roy Park also notes above, for the resurgence of a version of the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine during that time: the tension between literary and artistic effect, on the one hand, as ideal or general, and, on the other, as local or particular. Troy Thomas’s paper on “Interart Analogy: Practice and Theory in Comparing the Arts” (1991) argues that the Romantic assertion of subjectivity and expression over accuracy of imitation resulted in an alteration of the sister arts analogy, “rooted in the belief that both arts were spiritual and symbol, bound to the material world, yet imaginative, private, and expressive of that which went beyond the merely physical” (29). James Heffernan in *The Re-Creation of Landscape: A Study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable, and Turner* (1984), like Thomas, is primarily interested in the relationship between poetic practice and conceptions of landscape but also notes that in British Romanticism a more dynamic relationship between painting and poetry succeeds the traditional concept of “sisterhood” (47). The rhetorical manner of the *ut pictura poesis* doctrine limited the analogy between poetry and painting to strict rules related to imitation, in the sense of copying models, and as we saw in the introduction, the rules were often framed in reference to unity. To restate my claim, just as the *tertium comparationis* (i.e. Romantic definitions of imitation) of the analogy between poetry and painting changes so too does the dynamic of the analogy itself. It alters from an antiquated mode of prescription to a dialectical synthesis of the general and ideal and the particular and customary. Coleridge refers to this dialectic as “the involution of the

universal in the individual” (*BL* 2: 185). Hazlitt writes that poetry “is an imitation of nature,” but it “signifies the excess of the imagination beyond the actual or ordinary impression of any object or feeling,” and that the best imitation in painting, as in poetry, “combines truth of imitation with effect, the parts with the whole, the means with the end” (*Works* 5: 3, 4: 76). For Coleridge, in the famous thirteenth chapter of his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), the imagination is an imitative, now in the older and authentically Aristotelian sense of dynamic and unifying, force that dialectically reconciles in art such opposing forces as mind and nature (*BL* 1: 296-306). Coleridge adds in that chapter that for the idea of the imagination’s unifying act of synthesis in art, there is a necessity for the concept of the “tertium aliquid,” “an inter-penetration of the counteracting powers, partaking of both” (*BL* 1: 300), which is an alchemical version of what I have termed the logical *tertium comparationis* in an inter-art analogy. Much more can and shall be said about the actual references to painting and even re-workings of both the discussions of imitation and the use of the mirror analogy to describe poetry. But even before then, I stake that the various assumptions about music’s intimacy with Romantic poetics and the irrelevance of the painting analogy ignore, along with the above, the widespread acceptance by some major British Romantic writers of one other major critical experience: their embrace of August Schlegel’s *Querelle*-like division between ancient literature as plastic, like statuary, and modern-romantic literature as picturesque, like painting.

III. Division between the Ancient and the Modern: British Romantic Context

While it has not received very much treatment in English-language Romantic scholarship, Schlegel’s division between ancient poetry as plastic and modern-romantic poetry as

picturesque occupies a few but very important British Romantic writers: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt, and Thomas de Quincey. Herbert Weisinger's "English Treatment of the Classical-Romantic Problem" (1946) is a rarity in its attention to the topic. Weisinger writes that the classical-romantic debate "had the prestige of the major writers of the period behind it" and that "the sources of the ideas to be considered are of intrinsic interest, particularly since they were treated by the most important English writers of the period" (479). Weisinger's own focus is on the new higher, philosophical criticism on the Elizabethans during the period. As I see it, British Romantics extend and critically *apply* the division and its respective fine arts analogies, whereas Schlegel and de Staël do not develop it in respect to literature or art very much nor apply it to them. The association of poetry with the picturesque was especially provoking for them, as that aesthetic concept in many arts in Britain, from landscape painting to descriptive poetry, as Christopher Hussey argues in *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1927), marked the shift from Classicism to Romanticism and prepared the way for a criticism of imagination and feeling (4). In the analogy between modern-romantic poetry and the picturesque, the aesthetic concept derived from landscape gardening and the simple adjective meaning to be like a picture are elided as both share associations of particularity of details, complexity, affect, subjectivity, and colour. The analogy enables a philosophical criticism of poetry to present the aesthetic semblance of painting, the comprehension of a multitude of details in a harmonious whole that is a natural unity to its medium, as a paradigm of modern-romantic poetry and its aspirations to similar complexity, particularity, and imaginative colour. Further, the division of ancient and romantic art not only establishes an ethnological and historical difference between the

artistic productions of these two cultural periods but also allows, unlike the neoclassical unities, a non-anachronistic philosophical vocabulary of whole and parts or of the general and particular in the criticism of poetry, so that the “rules” of the moderns differ from the ancients as much as their works.

Some of Coleridge’s most powerful and fascinating statements on poetry, imagination, and art are made in the context of the division between the ancient and the modern-romantic. As I explain in fuller detail in the next chapter, Coleridge translates Schlegel’s *plastik* as statuesque, first introducing that word to the English vocabulary, and only then, whilst contemplating some major European painters through the dialectic of whole and parts and the generalizing statuesque and particularizing picturesque, is he able to develop his famous concept of “multēity in unity,” which is essentially that aforementioned “involution of the universal in the individual.” Coleridge’s lectures on literature reveal the development of these ideas. In 1808, he says that beauty should be defined as the many “reduced to unity by the correspondence of all the parts to each other & the reference of all to one central Point” (*LL* 1: 35), and, in another lecture on the principles of poetry of the same year, he makes a passing remark on the possibility of a common principle to the fine arts, as Charles Batteux had famously theorized the possibility of such an all-encompassing principle years before (see n. 45, 50). But by the time of his recognition of the division between the ancient and modern toward the end of 1810, the references and analogies to the fine arts, especially painting, and the use of the language of whole and parts, or the general and individual, are far more present in his writing.

Coleridge establishes an opposition between the ancient and the modern similar to that of Herder, Schlegel, and De Staël, but he locates the fruition of the modern with the Elizabethans.⁵⁷ Coleridge writes in his preparatory notes for a lecture on the *Belle Lettres*, “Ancients statuesque—Moderns picturesque—” (*LL* 1: 492), and Henry Crabb Robinson, in an 1811 diary entry, reports of Coleridge,

The ancient drama, he observed, is distinguished from the Shakespearian in this, that it exhibits a sort of abstraction, not of character, but of idea. A certain sentiment or passion was exhibited in all its purity, unmixed with anything that could interfere with its effect. Shakespeare, on the other hand, imitates life, mingled as we find it with joy and sorrow. (*Diary* 1: 320-321)

Early in his understanding of the division, Coleridge sounds very much like Schlegel in intuiting a difference, one not only of style but also of a spiritual or philosophical difference between the classical and the romantic. The proceeding lectures explain the division in further detail and expand on the abstraction of one and commixture of the other while at the same time introducing the terms “statuesque” and “picturesque” to the division. In an 1813 lecture on Shakespeare and education, Coleridge says,

The Greeks were polytheists, their religion was local, the object of all their knowledge, science, and taste, was their Gods: their productions were therefore (if the expression may be allowed) *statuesque*; the moderns we may designate as *picturesque*; the end, complete harmony. The Greeks reared a structure, which in its

⁵⁷ While the manner in which the Elizabethans are discussed is unique to the Romantics, the adulation of the Elizabethans, as Weisinger notes, is an extension of an eighteenth-century critical impulse (477-478).

parts and as a whole, filled the mind with the calm and elevated impression of perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion. (*LL* 1: 517)⁵⁸

In both of Coleridge's statements, an extreme abstraction is attributed to the Greeks who present a thing bare, in its purity, like a nude body, while the moderns like Shakespeare, in true imitation of life, mingle any quality or affection that the Greek artist would abstract out of his work lest it interfere with its simple unity of effect; like, for example, an oil stain or shiny brooch on an austere red drape in the background of a painting. In the 1813 lecture, Coleridge is drawing attention to the anthropomorphism of Greek art and culture, where all symbols of meaning are given physical, human shape, and consequently statuary is privileged by the culture. These statuesque productions, Coleridge says in Winckelmannian fashion, are of "perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion," effecting a simple and calm unity of similarly simple parts. Coleridge's following remarks on the moderns read,

The moderns, blending materials, produced one striking whole; this may be illustrated by comparing the Pantheon with York Minster or Westminster Abbey. Upon the same scale we may compare Sophocles with Shakespeare:—in the one there is a completeness, a satisfying, an excellence, on which the mind can rest; in the other we see a blended multitude of materials; great and little; magnificent and mean: mingled, if we may so say, with a dissatisfying, or falling short of perfection: yet so promising of our progression, that we would not exchange it for that repose of

⁵⁸ George Whalley passingly remarks in an essay in Eichner's *'Romantic' and Its Cognates: The European History of a Word* (1972) that Coleridge "was the earliest exponent of the classical-romantic distinction in England" (178).

the mind, which dwells on the forms of symmetry in acquiescent admiration of grace. (*LL* 1: 517)⁵⁹

Just as the defenders of the *anciens* in the original *Querelle* upheld Homer as their paragon, while the party of the *modernes* lacked such an idol, Coleridge here promotes Shakespeare as the modern-romantic artist *par excellence*, perhaps after some of his eighteenth-century intellectual ancestors Warton, Hurd, Bodmer and Breitinger, and Herder. Unlike the statuesque productions of the ancients, the picturesque productions of the moderns blend various, asymmetrical materials to a mingled effect that falls short of the perfect unity of Greek art but is so “promising of our progression” (i.e. intellectually engaging in its complexity and intimation of the difficult process of unifying such a complexity of materials) that it is superior to the “repose of the mind” and calmness of the experience of statuesque productions. The contrast between Sophocles and Shakespeare is compared to that between the simple, classical Pantheon, with its noble Corinthian columns under a modest pediment, and York and Westminster Abbeys, large medieval structures in the Gothic style with highly decorated façades, tall spires, and majestic stained-glass windows. Statuesque and picturesque are then derived from but not limited to statuary and painting. As I shall discuss in full in the next chapter, they are best understood as stylistic impulses. For Romantic writers, the term “modern” is an expansive one that includes the Medieval, the Gothic, the historically Romantic, and, within that great historical breadth, excludes Italian and French neoclassicism or any sort of Latinate assumption of the styles and techniques of classical antiquity, as evidenced

⁵⁹ This passage echoes not only August Schlegel but also Friedrich Schlegel’s above-quoted fragment on Romantic poetry. While Coleridge was certainly familiar with August Schlegel’s work, who again popularized his brother’s ideas, the direct connection between Coleridge and Friedrich Schlegel is unclear. See Paul Hamilton’s *Coleridge’s Poetics*, 17, 57, 91.

even by some British writers and artists in the eighteenth century, that are not deemed indigenous to North European culture. The matter of chronology is secondary here to the complex relationship of ideas and beliefs in art, culture, and society—one statuesque in its simplicity and commune with nature and the other picturesque in its multifariousness and complexity.

Coleridge formulates a notion of Romantic literary unity as expressed in the division between the classical statuesque and the modern-romantic picturesque. First, in an 1811 lecture on Shakespeare and Milton, the modern and Greek dramas are compared to painting and statuary. He says, “In the latter [statuary] as in the Greek drama the characters must be few because the very essence of statuary was a high degree of abstraction which would prevent a great many...figures from being combined,” as in the hypothetical example he gives of introducing “an old nurse” into the heroic subject of the Niobe sculpture group in Italy, after the tragic mythical character whose sorrow turned her into stone. The old nurse would be a “disgusting” addition, for her character would conflict with the dignity of the production and the work must be so circumscribed so that “no one personage must be brought in but what is abstraction: all must not be presented to the eye but the effect of multitude must be produced without the introduction of anything discordant” (*LL* 1: 349). While the scope of statuesque productions is necessarily narrow in respect to its intended simple unity of effect, modern drama is analogous to painting, like “a picture of Raphael or Titian,” where “an immense number of figures might be introduced, even a dog or cat or a beggar,” and from “a less degree of abstraction an effect is produced equally harmonious to the mind” and “more true to nature” (*LL* 1: 349). Modern literature is like painting in the breadth of its scope and its

inclination to inclusion of the great variety of life, as opposed to abstraction from it, and it is because of this imaginative capacity to render in unity this manifold of appearances, a capacity granted as the province of painting, that modern literature is “more true to nature” than the highly idealized and abstracting Greek drama, which stylistically is allergic to the discordant and diverse forms of life.

Coleridge employs the association of modern literature with the picturesque as a pivot to criticize any notion of literary unity that might be derived from ancient models and proposes a more organic conception of unity similar to that which emerges from painting. Coleridge lays claim in a lecture, “I have named the true genuine modern poetry the romantic; and the works of Shakespeare are romantic poetry revealing itself in the drama.” He then asserts that for Shakespeare we require a new critical vocabulary because the terminology of ancient drama, like the “tragedies” of Sophocles or the “comedies” of Aristophanes, would be misapplied to the romantic drama (*Shakespearean Criticism* 1: 197). For the criticism of the romantic drama, “the deviation from the simple forms and unities of the ancient stage is a principle and, of course, an appropriate excellence, of the romantic,” because in respect to the ancient drama, “these [neoclassical] unities are to a great extent the natural form of that which in its elements was homogenous, and its representation addressed eminently to the outward senses” (*Shakespearean Criticism* 1: 197-198). Coleridge is making the point like Schlegel and Herder before him that the pseudo-Aristotelian unities of time, place, and action, which are derived from ancient drama, might be consistent with it. But “the romantic poetry, the Shakespearean drama, appealed to the imagination rather than to the senses, and to the reason as contemplating our inward nature,” and so to assume those prescribed unities,

which are so unfit in their principles to the more subjective and inward nature of modern poetry, as “*eternal truths*” is folly, for they are *un-informed* of the new literature and culture of the moderns. If poetic unity is not to be arbitrary, it must be derived from “the imagination” and “obedient only to the laws which the imagination acts by” (*Shakespearean Criticism* 1: 198). The imagination broadly works by capturing various parts in a whole or, as he writes in the *Biographia*, by “reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant” (*BL* 2: 23). This general process of unity from parts to whole is not entirely different for the ancient writers, but the criticism of modern poetry requires a looser and more philosophical principle of unity that is not so intensely abstractive, for while “the very essence of the [the ancient] consists in the sternest separation of the diverse in kind; the [modern] delights [in variety]” (*Shakespearean Criticism* 1: 197-198). It is thus, as he suggests in the *Biographia*, that there is “Something analogous to the materials and structure of modern poetry...in our common landscape painters” (*BL* 2: 32), for both work with such a breadth of material, intensity of subjective perception, and imaginative colour that is wanting of a new unifying principle, one which is consonant with the complexity and variety of picturesque art.

William Hazlitt is the British Romantic critic most in tune with painting, having himself trained as a painter. And, though he was not as philosophically oriented in his aesthetics as Coleridge, he was well versed with lectures on the topic at the Royal Academy and peppered his thoughts about painting and fine art generally through his essays, the most relevant of which I shall set to analysis when I focus on Hazlitt in the third chapter. Hazlitt’s review of John Black’s 1815 English translation of Schlegel’s *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* is most relevant here, as it illustrates Hazlitt’s

understanding and acceptance of the proclamation of modern-romantic poetry as picturesque and consequently the urgency of a new theory of artistic unity.

Hazlitt reviewed Black's translation in an essay titled "Schlegel on the Drama," published in February of 1816 in the *Edinburgh Review*. In his extensive treatment of the *Lectures*, Hazlitt writes, "The ideas of the ancients were too exact and definite, too much attached to the material form or vehicle in which they were conveyed, to admit of those rapid combinations, those unrestrained flights of fancy" that exemplify romantic poetry, and so the "two principles of imitation and imagination [that characterize ancient and modern poetry], indeed, are not only distinct, but almost opposite" (*Works* 16: 62-63). While the Greeks have certainly mastered direct and simple imitation, according to Hazlitt in "On Poetry in General" (1818), the more expansive imitation of the moderns, as fantastical as their productions might be, "is not the less true to nature because it is false in point of fact; but so much the more true and natural, if it conveys the impression which the object under the influence of passion makes on the mind" (5: 4). Like Coleridge, Hazlitt relegates imitation in the sense of copying to a lower position than imitation in the sense of an imaginative recreation as coloured by the mind's eye. His phrasing when remarking directly on Schlegel's *Lectures* also indicates an approval of some of the German theorist's central tenets, as when the association of the ancient and modern with fine arts is pronounced. First, Hazlitt continues his own considerations of imitation and unity in literature, the past-tense of which should be noted:

Hence the severity and simplicity of the Greek tragedy, which excluded everything foreign or unnecessary to the subject. Hence the unities: for, in order to identify the imitation as much as possible with the reality, and leaving nothing to mere

imagination, it was necessary to give them the same coherence and consistency to the different parts of a story, as to the limbs of a statue...

Now, the characteristic excellence of the moderns is the reverse of all this. As, according to our author, the poetry of the Greeks is the same as their sculpture; so, he says, our own more nearly resembles painting. (16: 63-64)

Like Coleridge, Hazlitt here is speaking to the great abstraction in Greek literature, from anything that is discordant to some ideal and general effect. The neoclassical concepts of unity, attributed here to the ancients from whom they are ostensibly derived, are related to an obsolete notion of imitation, appropriate *then* for the ancients, which concerns itself with qualities of purity inherent in now anachronistic forms of literary harmony, like coherence and consistency. The beauty of this antiquated and grand sense of poetic harmony is analogous to the artistic unity of another production of the ancients: statuary, and its pleasant marbled simplicity. Reiterating Schlegel's division, Hazlitt notes in "On the Spirit of Ancient and Modern Literature—on the German Drama, contrasted with that of the Age of Elizabeth" (1819) that "our own" poetry, that is modern-romantic poetry, is analogous to painting and shortly after accredits the association to shared impulses to variety, contrast, and the "colours of fancy" which "are reflected on the different objects" (6: 350).

Hazlitt expresses poetry's painterly associations throughout his criticism, but in the lecture on the "Spirit of Ancient and Modern Literature" he makes clear that the association is rooted in an essential Schlegelian difference between ancient and modern-romantic art and in Romantic criticism's exigency to find new parallels and formulations for poetic unity. Hazlitt says that ancient drama is limited to "external form, and to a

certain dignity of attitude and expression, selection in the figures, and unity in their groupings, as in statue or bas-relief” (6: 347). The formal unity of ancient literature is premised on formal perfection and is produced by an idealizing impulse. He expands on the analogy between Greek literature and plastic art when he notes, “there are exactly the same powers of mind displayed in the poetry of the Greeks as in their statues. Their poetry is exactly what their sculptors might have written. Both are exquisite imitations of nature; the one in marble, the other in words” (6: 349). The formal unity, abstract and generalized from discordance to beautiful forms, tells us that the principle of imitation is oriented to idealized but physical reproductions of nature. The same power is at work in the plastic arts, where a marble limb, to use a previous example, is not shaped after that of a swarthy blacksmith or anaemic philosopher but from fairer proportions, as might be averaged from a collection of the most beautiful athletes. The “Gothic or romantic...or poetical tragedy” differs from the classical in “having a larger scope in the design and boldness in the execution, from the illustration of passions and fanciful forms, as supremely exhibited by Shakespeare and others in the age of Elizabeth” (6: 347). The seeming excess of the Gothic (termed synonymously by Hazlitt as the romantic and Shakespearian) in its overwhelming effect emphasizes how much its principle of imitation varies from that of the classical, for it is attuned not to abstract idealizing but to capturing the rich gamut of life, with all of its variations, colour, and even ugliness and contradictions. Hazlitt makes another fine arts analogy similar to Schlegel and Coleridge when he says, “Sophocles differs from Shakespear as a Doric portico from Westminster Abbey. The principle of the one is simplicity and harmony, of the other richness and power. The one relies on form or proportion, the other on quantity and variety and

prominence of parts” (6: 347-348). The language of whole and parts is far more pronounced in many of his other essays but Hazlitt’s remark here already insinuates the picturesque profusion of parts in modern-romantic art and the simple generality of ancient art. Also, the “French or common-place rhetorical style, which is founded on the antique as to its form and subject-matter” is derided by Hazlitt, as it had been by Herder, because it lacks individuality and owing to its assumption of anachronistic rules it is weak and divorced from nature (6: 347).

De Quincey’s formulation of the classical-romantic debate honours the latter for both its aesthetical picturesque delights and its historical and spiritual Christian associations. In one of his many self-aggrandizing autobiographical pieces, published in 1835 under his “Sketches of Life and Manners; from the Autobiography of an English Opium Eater” in *Tait’s Magazine*, De Quincey recounts his readings at Oxford. He contends that while a great power is to be felt in Greek tragedy, there is an even greater power presiding in Elizabethan tragedy, and, “without having read a line of German at that time, or knowing of any such controversy, I began to meditate on the elementary grounds of difference between the Pagan and the Christian forms of poetry” (10: 155). The self-begotten nature of De Quincey’s conception of this dispute, “carried on extensively in France, not less than in Germany, as between the *classical* and the *romantic*” (10: 155), is questionable, but he does dedicate a considerable amount of space to his reflections on the matter. Resisting the Hellenism of Schiller and Goethe, De Quincey correlates ancient poetry and religion with death and finitude and romantic poetry and (the Christian) religion with life and infinity, and each with a particular fine art. In an article on “A Brief Appraisal of

Greek Literature in Its Foremost Pretensions” (1828), also published in *Tait’s*, de Quincey states,

In the Greek drama, he must conceive the presiding power to be *Death*; in the English, *Life*. What Death? — What Life? That sort of death, or of life locked up and frozen into everlasting slumber, which we see in sculpture; that sort of life, of tumult, of agitation, of tendency to something beyond, which we see in painting. The picturesque, in short, domineers over English tragedy; the sculpturesque, or the statuesque, over the Grecian. (11: 21-22)⁶⁰

The aesthetic finitude of Greek poetry and art, of physical action and the well-defined anthropomorphized idea, is set to spiritual terms by De Quincey, who detects in the ancients’ gloomy and naked productions a sense of death. The Romantic is associated with life because it is implicated in the post-classical arousal of Christianity and that world-view’s conceptions of infinitude and life after death. Here the fine arts analogies to the ancient and the modern-romantic are made explicitly in connection with the religious differences between the Greeks and Northern Europeans, that because of one’s characterization by death is it “sculpturesque” or “statuesque,” indicating a stillness in form and substance, and the other contrarily “picturesque” because it captures the profusions and vital expressions seen in painting. Romantic poetry is moved by a “tendency to something beyond, which we see in painting” and Greek poetry is, like sculpture, physically and spiritually confined (11: 22). De Quincey writes conclusively, “The picturesque, in short, domineers over English tragedy; the sculpturesque, or

⁶⁰ In this paper, De Quincey first establishes the *Querelle*, with La Motte representing the *modernes* and Madame Dacier the *anciens*, and then teases, after having mocked the antiquarianism of the latter, “From this preface it is already abundantly clear what side *we* take in this dispute about modern literature and the antique” (11: 7, 11: 51).

statuesque, over the Grecian” (11: 22). De Quincey’s remarks about the statuesque stillness of classical art and the picturesque profusions of modern-romantic art suggest that the romantic-picturesque is centrifugal because it effervesces outward in plenitude while the ancient-statuesque is centripetal because it concentrates inward to a singular harmony. These conflicting impulses will be analysed in the next chapter, as they play a significant but overlooked role in Coleridge’s aesthetics.

The classic-romantic divide points to a scepticism of a classicizing impulse in poetic production in criticism and an appreciation for the want of a new critical vocabulary and method for post-classical style in literature and art, from Gothic architecture to Shakespeare and then further to that new Romantic poetry that Wordsworth in the “Preface” distinguishes as expressing “the real language of men,” culled from “incidents from common life” (*Prose Works* 1: 116, 1: 122), which local particularities are at great odds with the neoclassical stock of acceptable words and subjects dignified for their decorum and ideal qualities. The direct engagement with these ideas in British Romantic philosophical criticism, of course, cannot be overstated. The later Romantic poets and critics, who were far more cosmopolitan and prone to Hellenism than their agrarian, and often conservative, predecessors from the early-nineteenth century were sometimes dismissive of such a division. Lord Byron writes in an 1820 letter,

I perceive that in Germany, as well as in Italy, there is a great struggle about what they call ‘*Classical*’ and ‘*Romantic*,’—terms which were not subjects of classification in England, at least when I left four or five years ago. Some of the English Scribblers, it is true, abused Pope and Swift, but the reason was that they

themselves did not know how to write either prose or verse; but nobody thought them worth making a sect of. Perhaps there may be something of the kind sprung up lately, but I have not heard much about it, and it would be such bad taste that I shall be very sorry to believe it. (*Complete Poetical Works* 546)

Byron's defensive remarks on behalf all that is classical, including the neoclassical Pope and Swift, are similar to those made when again defending Pope and attacking Bowles and the Lake poets during that famous seven-year-long public argument (1819-1826), when the Reverend Bowles, who asserted that natural objects and feelings are more poetic than artificial manners in subject and feeling, wrote a preface defaming Pope in his own edition of Pope's poetry.⁶¹ Shelley and Keats were both highly drawn to classical antiquity and made great use of analogies not to painting but to music in their poetry and prose, but Shelley read and was highly influenced by Schlegel's criticism of neoclassical poetry and the analogy between classical poetry and statuary.⁶² As a note after August

⁶¹ Jonathan David Gross connects Byron's defence of Pope in the debate with his bent toward the *anciens* in the *Querelle*. He writes, "In the years that followed Madame de Staël's death in 1818, Byron became involved in aesthetic controversies in which he struggled, like Staël, to unite classical and Romantic taste. If Staël defined Romanticism in *De l'Allemagne*, Byron challenged her definition in his letters on the Pope-Bowles controversy" (101). James Chandler's "The Pope Controversy: Romantic Poetics and the English Canon" (1984) offers an excellent summary of the eponymous debate, especially 482-483. Chandler also notes the importance of the reaction against the Neoclassicists and of the defence of Bowles for Romantic writers. For example, he observes Coleridge's acknowledgement to Bowles in thanks for the formation of his own critical principles about poetry in the first chapter of the *Biographia* (484). Chandler continues from his summary of the controversy and remarks about Coleridge, "I have already mentioned Bowles's edition of 1806 and the publication of *English Bards* in 1809. Further, in the years immediately preceding the later controversy, we find a series of critical and literary documents that are all centrally relevant to the questions raised by Warton and Johnson: Wordsworth's *Essay Supplementary* to the Preface of 1815; in 1817, Keats's "Sleep and Poetry" and Coleridge's *Biographia*; in 1818, Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*; and in 1819, Byron's *Don Juan* (canto 1). The pamphlet war of 1819-26 escalated too quickly, in other words, because lines had already been established and artillery already emplaced in this larger struggle. When Shelley observed to Byron in 1821 that Pope was 'the pivot of a dispute in taste,' it was surely this larger dispute that he had in mind—the 'dispute in taste' associated with what we commonly call the Romantic movement in England" (485).

⁶² In "Tragedy: The Cenci and Swellfoot the Tyrant," published in the *Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (2013), Michael Rossington writes, "Shelley's antipathy to neoclassical tragedy had been excited through *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur. Vorlesungen* (1809-1811) by August Wilhelm Schlegel, 'the learned critic' ... as he styled him, who admonished French writers for their largely contemptuous

Schlegel's death read in the *Athenæum* (1798-1800), a literary magazine started by the Schlegel brothers said to be the founding publication of German Romanticism,

This illustrious writer was, in conjunction with his brother Frederick, as most European readers well know, the founder of the modern romantic school of German literature, and as a critic fought many a hard battle for his faith. The clearness of his insight into poetical and dramatic truth, Englishmen will always be apt to estimate by the fact that it procured for himself and for his countrymen the freedom of Shakespeare's enchanted world, and the taste of all the marvellous things that, like the treasures of Aladdin's garden, are fruit and gem at once upon its immortal boughs: —Frenchmen will not readily forget that he disparaged Molière. The merit of Schlegel's dramatic criticism ought not, however, to be thus limited. Englishmen themselves are deeply indebted to him. (qtd. in Schlegel, *Lectures 15*)

The repelling of neoclassical style and precepts, the beginning of which should fairly be located in the early-eighteenth century, is irreversibly changed by early British Romantic critics, and it is Schlegel's formulation of the division between the classical and the modern-romantic that reverses the poles of philosophical attraction in English letters. The *Lectures* capture the cultural zeitgeist, of an awakened sense of the imagination and expression, of poetic fancy and recovery of indigenous Northern European traditions, and of a stylistic and critical commitment to locality and particularity. More nuanced, but also more unique in influence, is the reformulated historical, stylistic, and critical analogy between poetry and painting—which is not a reiteration of the sister arts analogy—that

attitude towards Greek dramatic literature. He read Schlegel's lectures aloud in Black's English translation en route to Italy in March 1818" (304). Jacqueline Mulhallen in *The Theatre of Shelley* (2010) argues that Shelley's *Defence* was in fact influenced by Schlegel's *Lectures* (72).

discovers a kinship in aesthetic semblance or unity between the two romantic arts, as they negotiate whole and parts and attempt a harmonious constitution of imaginative complexity. As I put it before, the analogy enables a philosophical criticism of poetry to present the aesthetic semblance of painting, the comprehension of a multitude of details in a harmonious whole that is a natural unity to its medium, as a paradigm of modern-romantic poetry and its aspirations to similar complexity, particularity, and imaginative colour. Painting is thus of great critical importance to some early Romantic critics in England, and its association with romantic poetry in the division between the classical and the modern is a key element in much of their critical thought. But the reworking of the analogy between poetry and painting in this body of criticism goes further, when the metaphor of the mirror, the linchpin of the analogy between poetry and painting in the sisters arts doctrine, which Abrams and others deny, is made salient and refashioned in early British Romantic criticism to effect such a relationship between the two arts that befits the concerns with imagination and literary and artistic unity pressed by the classical-romantic divide.

IV. The Terms of Unity

By taking a large step back to view some shifts from classicism to the romantic period in their broadest shapes, one can see that there is a transition in criticism from mechanistic to organic theories of art and literature, from a rhetorical to a dialectical method, from a focus on generality and ideal beauty to particularity and local details or personal expression, and, according to the great Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), “The transition from tangible, plastic, to purely visual, painterly perception follows a natural logic that could not be reversed” (17). Plasticity is attributed to classical art

because of a perceived emphasis on tangibility, physical limits, symmetry, proportion, and ideal wholeness. Plastic unity is exemplified by a closed line, like a circle. The linearity of plastic, or statuesque, conceptions of artistic presentation and unity is smudged during the transition to painterly approaches in artistic practice and criticism so that ideas of impression, limitlessness, depth, and obscurity are privileged. Coleridge, for example, praises Peter Paul Rubens's extraction of "latent poetry" out of "common objects" and further lauds the erasure of linearity in his paintings, for while in other painters "the scene is confined as if it were imprisoned...in Rubens the landscape dies a natural death; it fades away into the apparent infinity of space" (*LL* 1: 134). The Romantic critics quite resemble, in an inverted way, that other, older, critic of classical mimesis, Plato, who also lived in a self-conscious age when traditional standards in all fields were being attacked (Babbitt 89). E.H. Gombrich writes in *Art and Illusion* (1960) that in Plato's time mimesis was a recent invention and "Plato looked back with nostalgia at immobile schemata of Egyptian art," which in its rigidity and recycled and impersonal characterizations of figures and objects imitated "changeless ideas rather than fleeting substances" (9, 101). The Romantics are likewise responding to rigidities in literary practice and conceptions of imitation from the previous age, but with an eye to innovation. I do not mean to argue that they abandon all critical inheritances, and the critical shift to which I am now pointing appears in the analogy between poetry and painting. The analogy undergoes a reconsideration, as I have been arguing, and I will focus in this section on how the language of the particular and the general, or of aesthetic semblance or unity, is of great importance in the criticism of the period in relation to the analogy between poetry and painting.

While I have described the function of attributing the statuesque to all Greek art and literature and the picturesque to all modern-romantic art and literature, I have yet to remark on the conceptualization of these schemata. It rather sounds like poetic rambling, in the context of what is presented as philosophical criticism, to first confuse poetry with painting and then to compare, without much explicit categorical assortment, romantic poetry with Shakespeare with Gothic architecture with painting with poetry again. The function of the primary analogy in this section of my chapter, between poetry and painting, has been demonstrated to reveal a dialectic operating to critically establish an arrangement of whole and parts, so that a plenitude of imaginative details might still be organically formed in a comprehensible whole (as in a picture) without either abstracting from all variety for the sake of classical aesthetic purity (as in statuary) or subjecting literature to neoclassical rules of unity not in keeping with any true organic work of poetry. However, I have yet to provide a scholarly term to describe both the statuesque and picturesque as conceptual categories. To the best of my knowledge, the most appropriate term might be what the art historian Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) has called “the concept of artistic volition” (“*Kunstwollen*”). Panofsky’s self-conscious, style-historical approach is inherited from other figures already discussed, like Winckelmann and Schlegel and Hazlitt, and it sets out theoretical principles to discern broad, underlying stylistic principles. The concept of artistic volition theorizes the autonomy of art, that there is an “immanent” meaning to art that is understood in the process of dialectical interpretation. But Panofsky says in “On the Problem of Describing and Interpreting Works of Visual Art,” translated and published in 2012 after a 1931 lecture, that the understanding of a work of art “can be understood neither as the sum of sensible

qualities nor as aggregate of stylistic criteria but exclusively as unity within and above the principles of design” (65). This idea of unity means that understanding an artwork cannot be achieved by discerning and categorizing its physical elements, by classifying the symbolism of some content or the consistency of its palette, but by determining the underlying formative principles that are the basis of its style. In “The Concept of Artistic Volition” (1920, trans. 1981), he writes that artistic volition is the ontological basis of a style according to form and content and does not rely as historical or psychological studies might on such external explanations for a work’s effect as political situation or an artist’s personal fixation. What differentiates *kunstwollen* from formalist concepts and methodologies more familiar to literary study is that “artistic volition” is referenced “mainly in talking of total artistic phenomena, of the output of the period, a people, or a community” (20). For our concerns, that large period is the post-Classical, Christian modern-romantic, and the community, to use the language of Herder and de Staël, are gloomy, introspective, Northern Europeans. The “artistic volition” of the modern-romantic is the picturesque, and the determinative stylistic categories are the general and the particular, or whole and parts. Panofsky’s concept articulates in clearer terms what La Motte and Schlegel meant by “immanent” and Coleridge by “involution,” and to understand such terms as “picturesque” and “romantic” as both chronological and typological, as artistic volitions ought to be understood, will aid the reader in accepting the sometimes hazy statements Romantic critics make on these matters.

Hitherto we have been discussing the history of a theoretical problem, of how to understand, classify, and assess romantic literature, with special regard to its unity, part of which process, since the *Querelle* of the seventeenth century, has been to distinguish

the matter and methodologies of ancient from modern art and literature. Bereft of a formulation for unity indigenous to art, literature, or the imagination—and in repudiation of both neoclassical rules for unity, which are foreign to not only art but to the imagination, as they are abstractions of reason, and of classical models, the abstracted and bare physical plasticity of which does not understand the conditions of modern literature and existence—some Romantic critics reformulate the parallel between poetry and painting. The Romantic reformulation of the parallel between poetry and painting is exercised by altering the definition of imitation, the analogy's *tertium comparationis*, and thereby changing the entire function and dynamic of the analogy, so that something of the makeup of painting, that subsumption of a multiplicity of colouring and details in a unified whole (the “involution of the universal in the individual”), might bespeak the sort of unity which romantic poetry likewise attempts. Literature and painting are certainly different kinds of things, but as imaginative activities that embody the ripest fruits of the romantic spirit they are of the same type and share an allegiance to a picturesque *kunstwollen* that in fact characterizes, according to the Romantics, all art of the post-classical period.

Antithetical terms like individual and general, and parts and whole, seem to present the *ur*-problem which Romantic notions of unity attempt to resolve. The effect of any given work, however harmonious or chaotic, is composed of these conflicting elements. As we shall see analysed in the following chapters, something like the “general” is not merely the reading of a physical arrangement of objects but also something, according to Hazlitt, that is “intensely personal and local” (*Works* 6: 145), which remark suggests both the organic union of the general and particular and even the

“union and regularity of feeling” through the sustaining details of art (6: 348). Hazlitt’s understanding of an underlying stylistic principle in literature and art always rests on such a unity and intensity of feeling in his criticism. While one might consider it odd to discuss such terms of formal imitation as the general and particular in the context of Romantic poetry, it behoves one to consider that such scepticism assumes a mechanical definition of imitation, a concept that we remember the Romantics did not dismiss but redefined. For Hazlitt, “Imitation interests...by exciting a more intense perception of truth” (4: 75), of unifying a variety of perceptions under an *artful* and not mechanical gaze. He writes that true genius “combined truth of imitation with effect, the parts with the whole, the means with the end” (4: 76). Coleridge also sought a means of discerning the immanent significance and unity of literature and art within the realms of art itself. He writes in the *Biographia* that the critical rules of artistic and literary interpretation will be deduced from the imagination, for the “*rules* of the IMAGINATION are themselves the very powers” that govern artistic creation; and, in the lectures on literature, explains that the “gift of true Imagination [is] that capability of *reducing a multitude into a unity of effect*, or by strong passion to modify series of thoughts into one predominant thought or feeling” (*LL* 1: 249, my italics). Even Wordsworth, against the sort of informal sentimentality attributed to the Romantics themselves, writes in his 1815 “Essay, Supplementary to the Preface” that to identify Shakespeare as simply “a wild irregular genius” is not to understand him, as the real judgment of Shakespeare should lie in “the selection of his materials, and in the manner in which he has made them, *heterogeneous* as they often are, constitute a unity of their own, and contribute all to one great end” (*Prose Works* 3: 69).⁶³ For maintaining heterogeneity within some homogeneous whole,

⁶³ This part of the “Essay” also includes a brief derision of the “French Critics” who have perverted the

Coleridge often praises Shakespeare by means of a painting metaphor, that his work is “always in keeping,” and elsewhere in his lectures Shakespeare is a poet of “Picturesque power” whose imagery is “often minute, by the highest effort of picturing in words of which language is capable” (*LL* 1: 361, 1: 242). Whether they are discussed explicitly or implicitly, the consideration of the particular and individual is ubiquitous in much Romantic philosophical criticism. Such antithetical terms of unity, the ideal configuration of which is exemplified by painting, are dialectical variables that are instantiated by concrete values only in the context of the particular work of art whose immanent unity is attempted to be grasped. Further, the organic terms of unity therefore provided by the particular and individual circumvent the mechanistic anachronism employed by the neoclassical unities and also the mechanistic duplication of ancient models.

As shown before, while the references to the fine arts, and painting in particular, are ubiquitous in Romantic literary criticism, they are most interesting when regarding unity or wholeness. Laurence Starzyk defends Park’s view, arguing that “Park’s contention is not that the analogy of poetry and painting was no longer pervasive in Romantic aesthetics, but that it required readjustment in light of the revolution in poetic thinking advanced by Schlegel, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Carlyle, and Ruskin” (2). Park, we remember, proposed that the analogies of painting with poetry were meant to show “the involution of the general and the individual” (159), and spends much of his essay showing how such a possibility remains open by demonstrating that “It is through its emphasis on the individual that painting exercised its greatest influence on the literary criticism of the Romantic period” (163). My argument insists more on the unity of whole and parts present in painting (than on simply the unchecked presence of particularity) as

study of Shakespeare (3: 68-9).

premiering the analogy. There are also moments when Romantic critics explain this painterly unity in literature by using the metaphor of a mirror, a figure thought to have obsolesced around the turn of the nineteenth century by Abrams and others. Specifically, Coleridge uses the example of the Claude Glass. A Claude Glass is a small, tinted convex mirror that was popular with tourists who had an interest in the picturesque and who would use it to view a landscape under the tonal harmony provided by the tint of the glass, thereby rendering that landscape to resemble the picturesque landscape paintings of the titular Claude Lorrain. Malcolm Andrews explains how the coloured Glasses introduced a painterly “master tint” into a scene and unified by that tint all accidents and roughness in nature so that the glasses effectively “harmonize an assemblage of heterogeneous forms and colours” (70). Coleridge uses the metaphor of the mirror in discussing the mind’s imaginative perception of nature when he writes, “In the country, all around us smile Good and Beauty—and the Images of this divine καλοκάγαθόν [kalokagathon]⁶⁴ are miniaturized on the mind of the beholder, as a Landscape on a Convex Mirror” (CL 1: 154). While the metaphor of the mirror normally tends to neoclassical aesthetics and, according to Seamus Perry in *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (1999), is “the great trope of *ut pictura poesis*” (231),⁶⁵ in the Romantic period the picturesque mirror demonstrates a variety in unity, tinted whole by what Coleridge in the *Biographia* calls the “modifying colours of the imagination” (BL 2: 5), or how Wordsworth writes in the “Preface” to the *Lyrics Ballads* that his poetry was to throw over “incidents from common life... a certain colouring of imagination” (1: 122). The more imaginative

⁶⁴ An identification of beauty with virtue, which can roughly be translated as beautiful-goodness.

⁶⁵ Hagstrum in *The Sister Arts* notes the shift in meaning of the mirror in the eighteenth century from rendering exact reality to reflecting some vigor and vividness in imagery (134-136). Burwick, in *Mimesis and Its Romantic Inflections*, similarly argues, “Far from being neglected, the tropes of ‘imitation’ and the ‘mirror’ were brought forth as key witnesses in interrogating the claims of mimesis” (14).

conceptions of the picturesque for romantic poetry first suggested by Schlegel present an interesting array of implications for literary unity, of harmonizing a multitude of parts *via* a unifying whole coloured by the imagination's perception, from which faculty British Romantic criticism derives its rules. The analogy between poetry and painting issued by the ancient-romantic division, and the concomitant reimagining of the definitions of imitation and unity, confirms not only the relevance of both the mirror trope and the analogy between the sister arts but also demonstrates the unique and neglected manner by which Romantic critics in Britain sought organic formulae for modern poetry, applying the language of the individual (local) and general (ideal), by heralding the aesthetic semblance natural to painting as a symbol for poetic unity. With that, I shall now examine in greater detail two of the most important critics in this regard, Coleridge and Hazlitt.

Chapter Two: Coleridge's "Multëity in Unity" and the Statuesque and Picturesque Impulses

Without contradiction, Coleridge is regarded critically as a fine poet whose genius might have unlocked the language of the birds had he chanced upon a hint of dragon's blood, and locally as a philosopher manqué who menaced the town's children with impromptu discourses on metaphysics. His most confusing regard in scholarship is oft times as a philosopher of aesthetics. He is either a brilliant aesthete whose *Biographia Literaria* (1817) set into theory the revolutions in poetry and criticism in Romantic Britain, or an abstruse plagiarist of German philosophy.⁶⁶ Coleridge never did produce a systematic philosophy of the arts, let alone the compendium of all knowledge toward which all of his life and work were bent, but his critical oeuvre presents fascinating and at times novel aesthetic theories.

Alongside his theories of imagination and symbol, Coleridge's most important contribution to aesthetics is his formula "multëity in unity." This chapter sets forth an analysis of "multëity in unity," that vague but essential definition of beauty in Coleridge's aesthetics. Along with his essay "On Poesy or Art" (1818), I will discuss Coleridge's *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism in the Fine Arts* (1814), for while they have been overlooked the *Essays* provide the clearest sustained attempt in Coleridge's critical oeuvre at attempting a philosophy of the fine arts and are the source

⁶⁶ Accusations of plagiarism have been levelled at Coleridge since Thomas de Quincey published an article, shortly after Coleridge's death, in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (September 1834), pointing out similarities to Schelling in chapter 12 of the *Biographia*. The modern prosecutorial texts are René Wellek's *Immanuel Kant in England*, esp. 65-135; and Norman Fruman's *Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel*. While Fruman forms a moralistic polemic against what he perceives as Coleridge's intellectual dishonesty, Wellek's detailed exploration of Coleridge's borrowings has more in common with the careful comparative analysis of G.N.G. Orsini's *Coleridge and German Idealism*. Coleridge's most sensible defender is Thomas McFarland, who understands Coleridge's adaptations and translations from others as not plagiarism but "mosaic composition" (*Pantheism* 28). At the extreme of this end are figures such as J.H. Muirhead and I.A. Richards, who cite Coleridge as a modern philosopher akin in his critical revolution to Galileo.

of the phrase “multēity in unity.” The distinction of aesthetic terms is crucial to understanding Coleridge’s definition of beauty, but the *Essays* alone do not entirely service the task. The somewhat fragmentary attempts at defining aesthetic terms, published before but in the same year as the *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism*, I regard as preparatory essays and critical supplements to the main text. These preparatory essays provide the groundwork for the fuller but assumed conceptualization of beauty as “multēity in unity” in the later *Essays*, as they present the constituent elements contained in that principle in the form of various categories or, as I later term them, impulses. The preparatory essays are titled as follows: “On Aesthetic Problems,” “Definitions of Aesthetic Terms,” and “On the Distinction Between the Picturesque and the Sublime.” The aesthetic categories on which I will be focussing are the Shapely, the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and the Statuesque. All of these shorter essays, published around the same time, constellate Coleridge’s project to define aesthetic terms.⁶⁷

In reaction to then popular theories of association, Coleridge attempts to furnish for both the artist and the philosophical critic an objective and universal principle that serves originality, imagination, beauty and any other vicissitude of the creation, experience, and judgment of art. While the resulting term “multēity in unity” is assumed in Romantic scholarship as intelligible *per se*, it is my purpose to examine its constituent parts and thus significance as a term in Coleridge’s criticism. Coleridge’s adaptation of August Schlegel’s division between the classical-statuesque and modern-picturesque is central to the *Essays*, but in an effort to emphasize the originality of Coleridge’s adaptation of this particular trope, i.e. this set of fine arts analogies, I shall make

⁶⁷ “On Poesy or Art” is located in Shawcross’s edition of the *Biographia*, and the preparatory essays, along with the *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism in the Fine Arts*, are read from the Bollingen edition of Coleridge’s *Shorter Works and Fragments*.

references back to Schlegel only when necessary. The focus here is on what role the Picturesque and Statuesque play in Coleridge's formulation of literary and artistic unity as "multēity in unity."

This chapter will first contextualize the importance of Coleridge's experience of Renaissance art, which excitements induce the initiative of the *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism in the Fine Arts*. I then define *genial criticism* by locating the rule guiding both the critic and artist in Coleridge's concept of imitation. Section IV examines Coleridge's method of analytically distinguishing between aesthetic categories using the language of whole and parts, and unity and variety. I then finally argue that the aesthetic categories the Picturesque and Statuesque represent analytically distinguished impulses, respectively, of the centrifugal and centripetal forces on which the simultaneously variegating and unifying function of "multēity in unity" is premised. The Statuesque impulse reappears in Coleridge's later and better-recognized statements on plastic imagination. By the end, I hope to have shown the critical relevance of theorizations of the fine arts to Coleridge's formulation of literary unity.

II. The Fine Arts

The *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism in the Fine Arts* afford a baroque but sweeping view of Coleridge's dedication to philosophical criticism and the fine arts. Walter Jackson Bate, in assessing the *Essays* as Coleridge's "most important single contribution to the general criticism of art" (Bate, 364 n.1), is in fact echoing Coleridge's own statements that the *Essays* represent his "best compositions" and are a "natural predecessor of the *Biographia*" (CL 3: 535, 4: 561). Such high regard is met with a fascinating history of Coleridge's experiences with the fine arts and the search thereof for

basic principles of criticism that might account for the many paintings and statues Coleridge examined at home and on his travels. Eduardo Zucatto's *Coleridge in Italy* (1996) chronicles Coleridge's interest in the "generalizing idealism of the Italians" (70), in reference to the Italian Old Master artworks he saw abroad. The history of Coleridge and the fine arts and the revelation of original and idealizing Renaissance art, when put into the context of the development of Coleridge's criticism of the fine arts, recognizes some basic factors in his pursuit at a philosophical and unifying aesthetics in the *Essays*.

Coleridge published his *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism* in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* in five parts. The *Bristol Journal* in excitement heralded the publication in advance:

The termination of the calamities of war having at length furnished us with more vacant room, than we for years have been accustomed to find unoccupied, it is our intention, next week, to diversify our columns by the announcement of a series of Essays upon the FINE ARTS, particularly upon that of Painting; illustrated by Criticism upon the Pictures now exhibiting by *Mr. Allston*, in this city, as well as other works of merit, in the possession of several gentlemen well known in our vicinity. The pleasure to be derived from their perusal will readily be anticipated, when we inform our readers, that they are furnished us by the pen of *Mr.*

Coleridge. (*SWF* 1: 353)

The cessation of the Napoleonic Wars allowed more to the observance of the fine arts than two inches of column space. The kingdoms of Europe and their galleries were once again open to the bounds of the public, though the treasures amassed by Napoleon's plundering *Grande Armée* rearranged many national collections of art and artefacts. The

establishment of a national school of art with the founding of the Royal Academy in 1768, the middle-class' growing familiarity with and admiration of foreign schools of art as partly inspired by leisurely Grand Tours around the continent, and a nationalist flourish of production especially during the Napoleonic Wars all provided the rich conditions which gave root to the fine arts in Britain around the turn of the nineteenth century.

Coleridge's introduction to the fine arts was handled by Sir George Beaumont, whom he met in 1803. Beaumont in his own, albeit amateurish, right was himself a painter. In a manner most befitting a privileged aristocrat with the inclinations of a gentlemanly courtier, Sir George inherited his father's baronetcy, studied at Eton College, where he took drawing instruction from the famed landscape painter Alexander Cozens, and prevailed upon the European continent to open herself for his Grand Tour, through the course of which he collected some Old Master paintings and refined his palette. Shortly after his return home around the late 1790s, Beaumont was received as a considerable force and a definite cynosure of taste, and assigned a good deal of his inheritance to the patronage of the more artistically inclined of his countrymen. A vehement critic of J.M.W. Turner's impressionistic paintings of light and water, Sir George, according to Margaret Greaves in *Regency Patron: Sir George Beaumont* (1966), stood as a watchman of the eighteenth-century neoclassical artistic ideals of heroism and majesty (96).

In his spectacular *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Fine Arts* (2008), Morton Paley notes that Coleridge's exposure to Sir George's conversation and private collection had a remarkable effect on him (7). In a letter to his friend John Rickman, Coleridge

writes a year after his acquaintanceship with Beaumont, “I have learnt as much fr[om] Sir George respecting Pictures & Painting and Painters as I ever learnt on any subject from any man in the same Space and Time” (*CL* 2: 1063). But Coleridge was not ever disposed to proselytization, and he eventually renounced the suffocating eighteenth-century aesthetic standards upheld by Beaumont. The most provocative, which Paley observes as the ultimate indication that Coleridge was willing to move beyond the ideals represented by Sir George Beaumont (12), is Coleridge’s gibe at the jejune attempt at harmonizing atmosphere in highly academic landscape paintings, the primary target being chromatically suffusing sunsets (*TT* 1: 226).

The most formative influence on Coleridge’s understanding of the fine arts, which ultimately gives rise to the *Essays*, is his trip to Italy *via* Malta in 1806, also where he meets Allston for the first time. In *Coleridge’s Laws: A Study of Coleridge in Malta* (2010), Barry Hough and Howard Davis write that Coleridge was initially invited to British occupied Malta by his friend John Stoddart, who was there serving as Kings and Admiralty Advocate (23).⁶⁸ He stayed for about a year and, after mistaking a Caravaggio for a Correggio and exhausting what few other splendours he was able to correctly identify, Coleridge decided to travel back home. In spite of the grave danger risked by Coalition nationals on Continental soil, Coleridge decided to sail home from Italy and sallied first to Rome.

The beauties of Rome opened Coleridge’s eyes to the grandeurs of fine art and disposed him to reconsider Classicism, which he had until then experienced as cold and formulaic in the English and French contexts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

⁶⁸ Biographical details of Coleridge’s thoughts and goings-on in Malta are intimately detailed in Griggs, “Malta” 201-217; and Sultana, *Malta and Italy*. Sultana explores even the topography of Malta during Coleridge’s two years of stay there, but Griggs is more to the point about Coleridge’s intellectual activity.

with which he was more familiar. Coleridge's dislike of poets such as Pope and Racine was out of a feeling and principle that they were too mechanical and artificial. An example of this mechanical style is located in Coleridge's censure of the "unconnected, epigrammatic" style of Pope, Dryden, and their followers which he like other Romantics thought to be influenced by French neoclassical style and against which "pseudo-poetic diction" he reacted in his own work (*BL* 1: 39). Zuccato writes that Coleridge's enthusiasm for the painting, statuary, and lyrical poetry of the Renaissance arose out of a belief that the intellectual and harmonizing impulse of Platonism was its "distinctive and unifying character" (5). This somewhat imagined connection between Platonism and the art of the Italian Renaissance, invigorated by Coleridge's belief in the majestic and incomparable beauty of such art, later leads Coleridge to characterize the principle of beauty in the *Essays* in a similarly quasi-Platonic manner.

Undoubtedly, Rome had changed significantly since the French Directory, and later both the Consulate and Empire under Napoleon, assumed inheritance of great art and secured as tributes of its wars the Apollo Belvedere, the Venus de Medici, the Laocoon, The Crucifixion of St. Peter by Guido Reni, and Raphael's the Transfiguration.⁶⁹ But Rome hosted an embarrassment of riches, and enough remained that shone brighter and attracted more eyes than anything Coleridge had seen in Oakover Hall or at Sir George's house in Grosvenor Square. He writes, "by my regula[r atten]tion to the best of the good things in Rom[e,] and associating almost wholly with the Artists of acknowledged highest reputation I acquired more insight into the fine arts in the three months, than I could have done in England in 20 years" (*CL* 2: 1178).

⁶⁹ Webb, *Romantic Hellenism* 226; and McClellan, *Louvre*.

Amongst the artists of reputation to whom Coleridge refers here are Antonio Canova, the great neoclassical sculptor who also advised the British to acquire the Elgin Marbles, and Washington Allston, an American painter who to Coleridge became a friend and consort among the ruins and galleries of Rome. Michael Raiger, in “Coleridge’s Light in Malta and Rome,” reports that Coleridge also spent a considerable amount of time at Allston’s country villa in Olevano Romano, a commune in the province of Rome (83-86). Coleridge bore great respect for Allston and thought of him as having achieved a supremacy of colouring rivalled only by Titian. Such was the effect of their companionship that he expressed to Allston love and honour, and Allston in return recalled poetically, “some of our walks under the pines of the Villa Borghese, I am almost tempted to dream, that I once listened to Plato, in the groves of the Academy” (Allston, v).

When Coleridge returned to England in 1806 he was still in thrall of his sightings in Italy and declared his intention to accept an application from the Royal Institution to deliver a series of “lectures on the ‘Principles common to all the Fine Arts’” (*CL 2*: 1181), though he felt he was lacking the requisite prints to illustrate his point. He felt especially bereft of the prints of Raphael’s frescos. But if the “sublime, majestic” Raphael was the prime mover in the essay at principles common to all fine arts, it was Allston who caused Coleridge to publish his findings several years after the lectures. Just as Coleridge, in admission to his wife Sarah, was “disposed to accept, both for money and reputation” the application from the Royal Institution for a course of lectures (*CL 2*: 1181), he would be moved in 1814 to secure the reputation and financial well-being of his American friend by the same concerns.

An exhibition in Bristol of Allston's work in the same year occasions Coleridge's decision to publicly defend and feature his friend's work in the *Essays on the Principles of Genial Criticism*. Allston's paintings were exemplary in illustrating Coleridge's conclusions about the failures of contemporary art criticism, in particular the vague but popular theories of association put forth by Archibald Alison and Richard Payne Knight, by whose laws works of art, as Coleridge writes in the preliminary *Essay*, are judged simply by "the effects produced on the spectator by such and such impressions" and thus "explaining every thing it explains nothing; and above all, leaves itself explained" (*SWF* 1: 349-350). Edna Aston Shearer notes in her article on Coleridge and Wordsworth's marginalia in a copy of Richard Payne Knight's *Inquiry* that against the *omnium gatherum* of Knight's random and contingent assortment of sensory information, "Coleridge feels a need to understand 'the unity of all,' and has a passion for multiplying and resolving distinctions" (69). The distinction between the two is clearer in the domain of taste. Coleridge is stating that the domain of true taste, meaning recognition and appreciation of the beautiful, is within the domain of art and not base gustatory pleasures. For example, he writes in the second *Essay* that "venison is agreeable because it gives us pleasure; while the Apollo Belvidere [*sic*] is not beautiful because it pleases, but it pleases us because it is beautiful" (*SWF* 1: 362). The taste of venison is subjective and to the end of satiation, while the beauty of the Apollo Belvedere is objective, universal, and autonomous. This notion becomes even clearer, below, when Coleridge expounds upon his grand principle of beauty. His aim in the *Essays* was then to adduce a philosophical principle that could intellectually account for creativity, the imagination, and the perception and consequent judgment of beauty.

This philosophical principle is “multēity in unity” (372), and, again, it is the task of this chapter to discover its manner of formation and significance as a term of criticism. In the *Biographia*, Coleridge argues, “to admire on principle, is the only way to imitate without loss of originality” (*BL* 1: 85). The *Essays* intend to furnish a rule for both the philosophical critic and the poet, and the principle’s demand for originality, which sometimes is termed “expression” or “free life,” is in great part inspired by Renaissance art, in which category Coleridge sometimes includes Allston. He says that the strength of Allston, Michelangelo, and Raphael is in their reduction of mere external form to a unified and imaginable beauty.⁷⁰

Coleridge’s exposure to fine art in Rome may simply have consolidated his already growing interest in religious symbolism, but it also taught him the relationship between ideas and their sensuous embodiment. J.B. Bullen argues in “Coleridge and Early Italian art” (1993) that Coleridge believed that the development of Italian art, from the Mediaeval period to the Renaissance, was the “evolution of the Platonic forms in the plastic medium, and that the triumph of this period in the visual arts was their mastery of religious symbolism” (196-197). This connection between the intellectual and the sensuous has ramifications for the concept of criticism and is related to the above remark on originality. Again in the *Biographia*, Coleridge says that “the copyist of Raphael’s Transfiguration must repeat more or less perfectly the process of Raphael” (*BL* 1: 137). First, an inference must be drawn that the criticism of a work of art is premised on the same rule as the production of a work of art, for only thus can *genial* criticism function, as will be discussed in the next section. Second, the relationship between varied sensuous

⁷⁰ In the fifth of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 1: 237. Coleridge’s praise of Allston’s genius in terms used for Italian artists is composed in an 1815 letter to the man (*CL* 4: 607) that resembles an earlier communiqué with J.J. Morgan, in which he compares Allston directly to Raphael (*CL* 3: 520-521).

material and unified intellectual formation, as inspired by Renaissance art and of which the original process of Raphael seems so exemplary, is the movement from variety to unity.

III. Variety to Unity

In the first of the *Essays*, Coleridge makes clear his method immediately in the title: “*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*” (SWF 1: 356). He explains in the body of the text 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” (SWF 1: 360), so that the principle of beauty Coleridge later offers, “multēity in unity,” is an imperative placed on both the critic and artist. The eponymous *geniality* of the criticism is in participating in the *genius* of the artist in the production of her work, so that the former must be deduced from the laws and impulses of the latter. This section shows how Coleridge’s concept of imitation contains the rule of the artist from which the rule of the critic is deduced, which rule is premised on the movement from variety to unity. The imitative working of the artist from variety to unity in her attempt at artistic beauty establishes the rule and terminology to assist the philosophical critic to judge artistic beauty as “multēity in unity.”

Richard Harter Fogle, Raimonda Modiano, and G.N.G. Orsini are three of the few scholars to analyse the *Essays* at some length. Fogle remarks, in *The Idea of Coleridge’s Criticism* (1962), that “genial” indicates pertinence to the “genius” of the artist, which conclusion allows the inference that genial is the adjectival conjugation of genius. In “Coleridge as Literary Critic: *Biographia Literaria* and *Essays on the Principles of*

Genial Criticism” (2009), Modiano most recently goes to the length of attributing as the source of genial criticism Kant’s view that the creativity of “genius” is a status accorded to critic and artist alike, but she is otherwise largely in agreement with Fogle and Orsini. The latter, in *Coleridge and German Idealism* (1969), summarizes it best, and with an relational inflection which Coleridge himself would appreciate. As Orsini puts it, Coleridge means by the word, “sympathetically evaluating genius” (168). All three critics are right in noting the aspect of “genius” that inheres in the notion of “genial,” but there is a deeper relation between the two found in the etymology of the words that more sharply pronounces the vital, imitative activity engaged by the artist *and* the critic. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, both “genial” and “genius” are ultimately derived from the Latin verb “gignere,” meaning “to beget” (“genial, adj.” OED). “Genial Criticism” is then not only criticism concerned with the works of genius, but also a begetting or perhaps even a poietic, in the sense of productive, exercise which is akin to acts of artistic genius.

The principles which “animate and guide the true Artist in the production of his work,” from which the principles of genial criticism are deduced, are suggested in Coleridge’s lectures on European literature and his later sketches on literary life and opinions. In the fourth of his *1808 Lectures on Principles of Poetry* he says that imitation is “not a *Copy* of Nature” but is “the universal Principle of the Fine Arts” (*LL* 1: 83-84). The definition of beauty in the *Essays* and elsewhere as “multēity in unity” is supported by other tenets of Coleridge’s philosophical criticism, the most importance of which here is the concept of imitation. Imitation, as he defines it in contrast to representational fidelity, is the “mystery of genius in the fine arts” (*BL*₂ 2: 258). He struggles to articulate

its rule of creativity by which its result, artistic beauty as “multēity in unity,” can be assessed; and in the same utterance is reticent on formal standards of beauty, so that like trying to measure the Christian doctrine of the Trinity with a compass and ruler the creative imagination is not in misrepresentation reduced to formulae which blaspheme against the vital activity of genius and the fine arts.

Coleridge’s definition of imitation is conceived not in the hope of replication, as the term is normally understood, but unification. The impulse to unify in philosophical criticism is found as early as Aristotle’s *Poetics*, but the Romantic groundwork is laid in Spinoza and takes the familiar refrain of the pantheistic One-and-All, an ascription of underlying unity for the sake of comprehension to otherwise unfathomably multifarious forms of nature. Frederick Beiser argues in *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (2003) that after the *Pantheismusstreit* (Pantheism controversy) of the 1780s, out of which debacle the work of Spinoza was revived, many of the earlier Romantics attempted to grasp and reassemble in their idealist frameworks tenets of the Dutch philosopher’s thought most conducive to popular ideas about organic cause and living force (177-186). The pinnacle of Romantic thought, Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie*, was in part an attempt to reconcile on the one hand Spinoza’s idea that the question of the division between subject and object is answered by a single substance underlying reality and on the other hand Fichte’s radical investiture of the subject with the creative capacity to create the objective world outside of itself. The hope conceived of Coleridge’s mimetic notions is in such visions of poietic unity.

Before returning shortly to imitation, I wish to make a quick remark about the mediatory function of art between the objective and subjective. As it was for Schelling,

for Coleridge the subject-object question was an epistemological problem with an aesthetic solution, with such propinquity that he flattered his German peer by adapting entire statements from the latter's lecture on the relationship between the fine arts to nature (*Über das Verhältnis der bildenden Künste zur Natur*). Schelling argues that artistic activity is muscled by both unconscious and conscious powers, so that the work of art reveals the process of the artist objectifying his subjectivity. Marble is lifeless until the sculptor activates its form, and mere letters are dead until the spirit of the poet sets them into verse. Coleridge echoes this sentiment in "On Poesy or Art" when he writes that "Art itself might be defined, as of a middle nature between a thought and a thing...the union and reconciliation of that which is nature with that which is exclusively human. It is...distinguished from nature by the unity of all the parts in one thought or idea" (254). The co-identification between a subject and object is symbolically captured by art. More importantly, a work of art also differs from nature in that it conveys the rich but superabounding varieties of nature in an intelligible aesthetic semblance. This co-identification is the romantic synthesis of "idealism and realism," of Fichte and Spinoza, to which Beiser refers (*Imperative* 184).

Coleridge's most elegant expression of imitation is in his analogy of a wax seal in "On Poesy or Art": "The impression on the wax is not an imitation, but a copy, of the seal; the seal itself is an imitation" (*BL*₂ 2: 255). The wax impression is a mechanical replication, but the seal is what in the third of the *Essays* he calls the "forma informans" or the "informing form" that gives life to beauty and is itself a vital stamp (*SWF* 1: 377). In his study *Mimesis and Its Romantic Reflections* (2007), Frederick Burwick explains that while it is clear that the wax impression is a copy because it is a simple imprinted

replica of the original object, the seal must be understood as an imitation because it, as an original production, represents the human process of transforming nature (91).

Following this analogy of the seal, Coleridge states that art *qua* imitation ought to reconcile likeness and difference, and he notes his disgust with wax-work figures. With such copies, as with the impression on wax by the seal, “You set out with a supposed reality and are disappointed and disgusted with the deception” (*BL*₂: 256). Thus the formulation of imitation here is emphatically not in order to express the hyper-realism of Zeuxis’ grapes or the uncanny figuring of Madame Tussaud’s wax figures, for then simply would the material verisimilitude of a work of art be contrived and starting from extreme similarities the work begins to show and ends in differences. In “respect to a work of genuine imitation, you begin with an acknowledged total difference, and then every touch of nature gives you the pleasure of an approximation to truth” (*BL*₂: 256). Imitation begins with multiplicity and works itself into unity.

The phrase “every touch of nature” denotes the various but limited parts that are selected by the artist in the formation of her work and is not a suggestion that the entirety of the superabundance of nature must be imitated:

We must imitate nature! yes, but what in nature—all and everything? No, the beautiful in nature. And what then is the beautiful? What is beauty? It is, in the abstract, the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse; in the concrete, it is the union of the shapely (*formosum*) with the vital. (*BL*₂: 256)

It is predominantly the abstract definition of beauty, as a “unity of the manifold” or “coalescence of the diverse,” on which I have been focussing in this chapter, for it is the central tenet of Coleridge’s philosophical criticism. The concrete distinction between the

shapely and the vital, the combination of which beauty represents, will be made clear in the following section when I cite Coleridge's distinctions between aesthetic terms.

The principle of beauty is inferred from the creative and unifying imitation of the artist. The definition in the third *Essay* reads, "The Beautiful, contemplated in its essential...is that in which *the many*, still seen as many, becomes one" (*SWF* 1: 371). From the example here provided he draws next his most conclusive definition. The example is of frost on a window-pane that "has by accident crystallized into a striking resemblance of a tree or a sea-weed. With what pleasure we trace the parts, and their relations to each other, and to the whole!" (*SWF* 1: 371). In addition to instantiating the appearance of beauty in this aesthetic semblance of many parts, read organically as each part relates to each and the whole, Coleridge remarks that the discernment of the shape of any animal in the window-frost, whether as noble as a tiger or foul as a frog, bears no effect on the beauty of the thing. "So far is the Beautiful from depending wholly on association, that it is frequently produced by the mere removal of associations. The most general definition of Beauty, therefore, is—that I may fulfil my threat of plaguing readers with hard words—Multēity in Unity" (*SWF* 1: 372).

The manner by which beauty is here defined is in contradistinction to pleasures of association, as of a black-pudding or a sirloin of beef, which only "please us because they please us" (*SWF* 1: 362). Because the pleasure of association is contingent upon accidents and not grounded in an objective criterion, such a pleasure cannot be one of beauty. This is what Coleridge's means by "agreeableness."

The "agreeable" is a term borrowed from Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: "angenehm." Kant's issue with agreeableness is that it is a merely private and

interested feeling and thus cannot be disinterestedly and universally shared (*KU* 5: 206-211). Personal gustatory preferences are excellent examples of this. What is then based purely on sensation and self-gratification fails to resolve into a normative claim about the beauty of a thing. As Coleridge understands it in the *Essays*, “The beautiful...not originating in the sensations, must belong to the intellect” (*SWF* 1: 381), which may be a gloss on Kant’s subtler point about the harmonious play of cognitive faculties in an aesthetic experience (5: 218). The most important fact to take away is that Coleridge, like Kant, differentiates the judgment of beauty from either purely sensual interest, as in the agreeable, and purely intellectual interest, as in the good or moral concerns.

In the *Essays*, the “BEAUTIFUL is thus at once distinguished from both the AGREEABLE, which is beneath it, and from the GOOD...while the sense of beauty rests gratified in the mere contemplation or intuition. [W]hen we find an object agreeable, the *sensation* of pleasure always precedes the judgment, and is its determining cause. We *find* it agreeable. But when we declare an object beautiful, the contemplation or intuition of its beauty precedes the *feelings* of complacency” (*SWF* 1: 380). Sensations cannot be reduced to a universal rule and by consequence are inexplicable and not fit criteria for philosophical judgment. The good is premised on reason and will, and beauty differs from this in arising “from the perceived harmony of an object...with the inborn and constitutive rules of the judgement and imagination: and it is always intuitive” (*SWF* 1: 383).

A judgment predicated on agreeableness cannot claim that a thing is beautiful, “though it may greatly increase the sum of our pleasure, when it does not interfere with the beauty of the object, nay, even when it detracts from it.” A moss-rose with a sprig of

myrtle and jasmine does not increase in beauty though it may be plucked from the garden and presented by the hand of a lover, nor is the “total pleasure received from one of Mr. Bird’s finest pictures” any more beautiful should a familiarity with the sitter of the portrait draw one’s regard (*SWF* 1: 376).⁷¹

This great point once secured, that associations are so little disposed to offering anything like an objective principle for pleasure, Coleridge asserts that “The safest definition then of BEAUTY, as well as the oldest, is that of Pythagoras: THE REDUCTION OF MANY TO ONE...*The sense of Beauty subsists in simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts, each to each, and of all to a whole*” (377-378). The disparate physical or formal phenomena which comprise “multēity” need to be animated and unified by a creative agency, the process of the genius artist, in the vital manner of a neoplatonic demiurge.⁷²

In deducing the rule of the critic from the act of imitation by the artist who works from variety to unity, Coleridge suggests that the critic’s imperative and pleasure is in engaging in the imaginative activity of forming a “multēity in unity,” where the parts of a work of art remain as parts while yet relating to a whole that unifies them or an aesthetic semblance as exemplified by the interrelated parts made whole by frost on the window pane. This activity, through the course of a *genial* criticism, relates directly to the artist’s composition of her work as she imitates nature by selecting only beautiful parts and forming a “unity of the manifold.” As the language of associations has very much the

⁷¹ Edward Bird (1772-1819), a genre painter with whom Coleridge was acquainted. He was made an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1812 (*SWF* 1: 376 n.1).

⁷² The demiurge, or craftsman of the cosmos, is from Plato’s *Timaeus*, and animates and orders the dead material of the world (1291). Coleridge contemplates the relationship between the artist and the material with which she works in a Notebook entry: “The Poet & his Subject, are they not as the [demiurge] and [material] of Plato?” (*NB* 3: 3952).

complexion of caprice and inclination, the terms most favourable to the definition of beauty and guidance to the critic in the *Essays* are whole and parts.

IV. Whole and Parts

The preparatory essays reveal the organization of beauty as “multēity in unity” out of aesthetic categories which similarly attempt in their own manners to balance the many with oneness. The Shapely and the Beautiful are the basic aesthetic categories that present what whole and parts are present in true beauty. In the next section I argue that in distinguishing between the Picturesque and Statuesque, Coleridge is detailing respectively the variegating and unifying impulse simultaneously present in “multēity in unity.” However, in recognition of Coleridge’s method, we must first look to the general estimation of whole and parts as comprised by the categories titled the Shapely and the Beautiful, which categories establish the terminology and process out of which, I shall show, his later definition of beauty in the *Essays* as “multēity in unity” is born.

The method in question is one of analytical distinction, in this case meaning to differentiate and define terms which have haphazardly been synonymized or confused.⁷³ One of Coleridge’s favourite anecdotes in this respect, told in the *Essays*, relates a trip he takes with an accidental party of travellers to the Falls of the Clyde in Scotland on 21 August 1803. When one of the party observes that the cataract of the torrent is “in the strictest sense of the word, a sublime object, a lady present assented with warmth to the remark, adding—“Yes! And it is not only sublime, but beautiful and absolutely *pretty*” (*SWF* 1: 362). Herein lies an imperative concern of the *Essays*, to define aesthetic terms,

⁷³ In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Coleridge calls this process of differentiating concepts and terms for the sake of analytical clarity “desynonymising” (1: 213, 2: 533). The above distinction between copy and imitation is an example of this.

which are “often confounded in common use, and considered as mere synonymes” (*SWF* 1: 364). He cites the Agreeable, Beautiful, Picturesque, Grand, and Sublime, and, as is his *modus operandi*, bandies about quotations in Latin and Greek from a legion of philosophers.

The most relevant citation to his cause is Hobbes’s statement from the *Examinatio*: “Notice how easily men slip from improper use of words into errors about things themselves” (*SWF* 1: 367).⁷⁴ Coleridge assures his readers that such seeming pedantry is for philosophical precision and is more favourable than “the sans-culotterie of a contemptuous ignorance,” for such distinctions are not only the groundwork but the “indispensable condition, of all *rational* enquiry concerning the Arts” (*SWF* 1: 375). Such definitions are also, in effect, opposed to the vagaries of theories of association, which fabricate principles of judgment out of the hazy impressions felt by an agent in her experience of art.

Coleridge’s first adumbration of beauty is in the preparatory essays, in which the category is called the Beautiful and, emphatically, set against the category called the Shapely. While the next section sets forth to argue that Coleridge defines the Picturesque and the Statuesque as distinct categories in order to represent the opposing centrifugal and centripetal impulses comprised by the synthetic definition of beauty as “multēity in unity,” this section establishes the necessary assortment of whole and parts in the Beautiful generally. The Shapely, while maintaining integral unity, fails in providing the amount of heterogeneity, or number of parts, which are as important to the production of pleasure as unity. (The significance of whatever balance of whole and parts as

⁷⁴ From Hobbes’s *Examinatio et emendatio mathematica hodiernae*, the original Latin of which reads: “Animadvertite, quám sit ab improprietate verborum pronum hominibus prolabi in errores circa res” (*SWF* 1: 367).

represented by the categories in this section is in great part to secure the groundwork for my next section and its aesthetic categories).

The Shapely is a rudimentary conception of beauty and in Coleridge's criticism is at best now only a symbol of beauty. The Shapely resembles the abstract definition of beauty from "On Poesy or Art," as a unity of the manifold. But despite its regularity of form, or perhaps directly because of its strict and cold formalism as exemplified by a triangle, it lacks in the concrete "the living organic" parts of true beauty and is thus of a lower order of the beautiful (*BL*₂ 2: 257). In the *Essays*, Coleridge writes that Proclus "named the triangle the first-born of beauty, it being the first and simplest symbol of *multēity in unity*" (*SWF* 1: 369). The triangle is a polygon which produces a closed shape with the fewest possible number of lines, and thus in its few but nevertheless multiple parts reduced to unity the triangle is a symbol of multēity in unity. In "Definitions of Aesthetic Terms," the composition of the category is displayed:

The distinct Perception of a Whole... arising out of a *distinct* <simultaneous> perception of the Parts, in the relations of all to each, and of each to each and to all, constitutes—the *Shapely*.—Instance—a Triangle. (*SWF* 1: 350)⁷⁵

There is some clarification needed as to the meaning of "distinctness" and "clearness," used here and in the excerpt below. The angle brackets inserted by the editors of the *SWF* indicate that the word therein contained was inserted between the lines by Coleridge. The apposition of the term "simultaneous" in the definition of the Shapely indicates that distinctness is a kind of totality or homogeneity. The insertion of the word simultaneous

⁷⁵ The language of varying clarities of perception is likely lifted from the Rationalist aesthetic tradition, as in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714-1762) and Christian Wolff (1679-1754), but the similarity stops at semantics. Though Coleridge has nothing here to say about an object's "perfection," the doctrine of "unity in variety" is a major component of Rationalist aesthetic theories. See Beiser's *Diotima's Children*, 2, 5, 8.

is then an explanatory one, for neither here nor further do distinct and simultaneous mean anything different. The words clearness and clear are used in such contexts that they signify, in opposition to simultaneousness or distinctness, a sort of confusion or heterogeneity of parts. Critical terms such as distinctness, clearness, and the simultaneous do not appear again in Coleridge's criticism and are simply provisional. I translate the distinct and simultaneous as the homogenous, and clearness as the heterogeneous. Homogeneity and heterogeneity mean more consistently and are more accurate designations for the unifying and variegating impulses Coleridge is attempting to discern in various aesthetic categories. Further, these two terms are adopted after the preparatory essays to describe said impulses. Again, the context of the use of these words substantiates the substitution, and I shall remain with my translations to avoid obscurity.

The overriding impulse of the Shapely is homogeneity. The Shapely is a homogenous perception of a whole arising out of a homogenous perception of parts. The whole arises out of the parts because the Shapely, as the exemplary geometric shape shows, exhibits a simply unity of few parts. The parts of a triangle, simple extensions of line, would not result in a triangle or any other elementary plane figure if the parts were not in such homogeneity as to essentially preclude the need for a superimposed unity.

If there were any heterogeneity in the parts of a triangle—irregular or disconnected lines, or parts which are not lines at all—then the result would simply produce abstract lines in space or an unorganized whole. What we recognize as the homogeneity of the whole of the shape, its very construction as a complete triangle, is inextricably bound with its homogeneity of parts, so that one cannot differentiate the whole from the parts of the shape. Both the whole and parts of the Shapely are

homogenous because they perfectly complement one another, i.e. the spatial arrangement that is the unity of a triangle *is* the very existence of its parts, which are geometrical lines, in such a form. The whole and parts of the Shapely inhere in one another. Though the overriding impulse of the Shapely is homogeneity, in the Beautiful a heterogeneity of parts is introduced.

Coleridge's definition of the Beautiful in the preparatory essays is proposed against the Shapely. Again in the "Definitions of Aesthetic Terms," in distinction to the Shapely,

When the parts are so numerous, that they cannot be perceived simultaneously without sinking from *distinctness* into *clearness*, then

...The *distinct* Perception of a Whole arising out of a *clear* simultaneous Perception of the constituent Parts, in the relations of All to Each, and of each to each and to all, constitutes *the* BEAUTIFUL. (*SWF* 1: 350)

When the parts are too numerous to be simply as homogenous as those of a triangle the Shapely is lost. The Beautiful displays a homogenous whole while its constituent parts are both heterogeneous *and* homogenous, thereby seeming to obviate the need for a homogenous whole or perhaps contradicting the makeup of the parts. But the mixed homogeneous and heterogeneous nature of the parts of the Beautiful indicates only that while the parts are varied they are also of choice or ideal variety. There are various parts in the Beautiful, thus the parts are heterogeneous, but here the parts are choice and abstracted from ugly or disrupting details, thus the parts are also homogenous. This is the difference, as Coleridge argues, between a perfect wheel and a dirty tire. The mixed

heterogeneous and homogenous nature of the parts of the Beautiful, and abstraction from discordant parts, is taken up again in the corollary to the definition of the Beautiful:

When...a mechanic declares a machine beautiful, abstracting from the Tar, accidental Inequalities of Surface, &c...then the Object is beautiful [in so far as the abstracter is concerned].

When the whole sensuous Image is...abstracted totally not partially, this...is *the Beautiful*...in the *general use* of the word. The Object is beautiful [in so far as it seems to be so to all]. (*SWF* 1: 351)⁷⁶

A mechanic may abstract from conspicuously ugly parts of a wheel, such as tar and bumps, but only when the entire object and not just a singular perception of it is *totally* abstracted from such discordant parts can the figure be regarded as truly Beautiful. In the *Essays* Coleridge repeats the difference between an old coach-wheel disfigured with tar and dirt and what he now describes as a polished golden wheel of the chariot of the Sun, in which there is

nothing heterogeneous, nothing to abstract from: by its perfect smoothness and circularity...the whole is a comple[te] harmony...Of all “the many,” which I actually see, each and all are really reconciled into unity: while the effulgence from the whole coincides with, and seems to represent, the effluence of delight from my own mind in the intuition of it. (*SWF* 1: 372)

Circles and circularity are *passim* in the work of Coleridge and his fellow Romantics for symbolic reasons, some of which are relevant here. For example, a circle is a symbol of the dynamic relation of all things as discussed previously in the context of organic

⁷⁶ The original Latin here reads “quoad abstrahitur, et quoad abstrahentem,” and “quoad...videtur, et ad omnes.”

causes, the movement of which has its end as its beginning. Though the triangle is the “first-born” of Beauty in which a multitude is unified, the circle is the ideal in which “the greatest conceivable multitude of parts harmonized with most perfect *Oneness*” (*SWF* 1: 279). The edges of a triangle number three and effect a unified shape, but the circumference of a circle is a line breaking at every single point into a curve which completes a harmonized whole while the tangent lines touching every point of its arc are innumerable.

The symbol of Coleridge’s definition of the Beautiful in the preparatory essays is the circle. It should not be mistaken for a paradigm of the Beautiful, as it might be in Plato’s mathematical conception of the world, of that aesthetic category that brings variety into unity, because the parts and whole which comprise a circle are skeletally simple for so large instantiations as Coleridge has in mind to represent each (such as the aforementioned union of the shapely with the “vital”), and so its formal shape is simply a symbol of the function of bringing a multitude of parts into a unified whole.

Further proof of the mere symbolism of the circle, and of the distinction between the Beautiful and the Shapely, is offered in the instantiation of parts as being capable of inducing a certain pleasure that the mechanical parts of any geometrical shape cannot offer. In the *Essays*, Coleridge writes that the “Beautiful (i.e. *Pulcher*)” is constituted by “the shapely (i.e. *formosus*) joined with the *naturally agreeable*” (373). These pleasing parts that are “naturally consonant with our senses” (*SWF* 1: 373) cannot constitute beauty, yet they are essential components. The attention to the pleasantness of the parts of the Beautiful is paid in “On the Distinction Between the Picturesque and the Sublime”:

When this perfection of *form* [of the Shapely] is combined with pleasurable in the sensations excited by the substance so formed—there results the Beautiful.

(*SWF* 1: 352)

At the risk of confusing our terminology, the triangle is *formally* beautiful, but the Beautiful categorically is that which combines this perfection of form with such parts as are naturally pleasurable to our senses. The above polished, golden wheel of the chariot of the Sun is such an example, in distinction to the Shapely where the matter is represented but by geometrical space, demarcated by lines.

The consideration of beauty out of whole and parts, or uniformity and variety, is commonly drafted by eighteenth-century British aestheticians. Hogarth in *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753) thought the source of beauty was in regulated variety, best represented by a graceful serpentine line he called “the line of beauty” (38). Hutcheson’s formula in *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1726) more closely resembles that of Coleridge: “The Figures that excite in us the Ideas of Beauty, seem to be those in which there is *Uniformity amidst Variety*,” and “what we call Beautiful in Objects, to speak in the Mathematical Style, seems to be in a compound Ratio of Uniformity and Variety.” The beauty of a triangle, he deduced from his equation, is then less of a circle (17). Walter Hipple, in the now standard *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth Century British Aesthetic Theory* (1957), comments that variety is the number and kind of parts that make up the whole and uniformity is the relations of resemblance and causation obtaining among them. Order and complexity produce the compound ratio (27-28). This is highly evocative of Coleridge’s definition of Beauty as “multēity in unity.” Coleridge once claimed an Italian inheritance of his

phrase. During a table talk transcribed by his son Hartley, he is recorded having said, “Francesco *Tessala*’s definition of Beauty was—*il più nell’ uno*—Multitude in unity—and there is no doubt that such is the Principle of Beauty” (*TT* 1: 261). Woodring, in his annotations, notes that Coleridge must have said “Francesco de Salez,” meaning St François de Sales (1567-1622), a Savoyard Doctor of the Church (n. 2). But Coleridge also attributes the phrase to “the Italian philosophers” (*CL* 5: 99-100). Terms like uniformity and variety serve as variables rather than definite values, so any features can be plugged in. This method is not literal but analogical, in that the associative qualities represented by each term are formed by that term’s application to each individual work of art, and then each term develops further definition when put into relation with the other.

The analytical distinction of the Beautiful into a harmony of whole and parts and the instantiation of a pleasurable complexity of those parts corroborates the three numbered conclusions Coleridge draws at the end of *Essay* the third. The first, that “Beauty is harmony.” The second, against the geometrical lines of the Shapely, that beauty is inspired by those parts that are “naturally consonant with our senses by the pre-established harmony between nature & the human mind.” And, third, “according to rule the first,” only those objects can be admitted “which belong to the eye and ear, because they alone are susceptible of distinction of parts” (*SWF* 1: 373). The taste of a sirloin of beef, for example, is one of the palate and not of the intellect. In the absence of a governing principle decided upon a judgment of whole and parts, this indiscriminate taste of a sirloin of beef, the whole and parts of which are not discerned, cannot be one of beauty. One must in correction to the seductions of the confluences of gustatory and intellectual taste cultivate and improve one’s faculty of judgment, for

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. We must therefore have learnt what is peculiar to each, before we can understand that “Third something,” which is formed by an harmony of both. (*SWF* 1: 365)

That “Third something” which interpenetrates and combines the opposing forces of whole and parts is the governing principle of beauty as “multēity in unity.” It is governing because the terms by which either parts or whole are instantiated depend on the individual work of art being assessed. The work of art decides the referential significance of whole and parts in application of the principle, but the function of bringing variety into unity and the maintenance of constituent parts in harmony remains regardless of the varied instantiations. All and sundry oblique accounts concerning “multēity in unity” are referable to this proposition. But as Coleridge writes in his above remark on taste, the critic is to have learned what is peculiar to each opposing power which forms in combination that principle to judge art. This assertion alongside his other in the preliminary *Essay*, that the principal arts on which the premises of the *Essays* are based are painting and statuary, turns us to the aesthetic categories most important in understanding “multēity in unity”: the Picturesque and the Statuesque.

V. Picturesque and Statuesque

The stress of my argument falls here on the fact that Coleridge analytically distinguishes the variegating and unifying impulses in “multēity in unity” into the Picturesque and Statuesque categories in order to highlight the centrifugal and centripetal forces working dynamically in the principle of beauty. In “On Poesy or Art,” he writes,

In order to derive pleasure from the occupation of the mind, the principle of unity must always be present, so that in the midst of the multĕity the centripetal force be never suspended, nor the sense be fatigued by the predominance of the centrifugal force. This unity in multĕity I have elsewhere stated as the principle of beauty. It is equally the source of pleasure in variety, and in fact a higher term including both. (*BL*₂ 2: 270)

While the Picturesque and Statuesque have not gained the popularity of other critical terms in Coleridge's vocabulary, they constitute the impulses of "multĕity in unity" and are indispensable in understanding the synthesizing force of that principle through these its discrete parts. The central and preparatory essays develop a philosophical vocabulary in their detailing of various aesthetic categories and provide to the critic terms deduced from the activity of the imagination. This deduction I explained in a previous section and here Coleridge defines for the critic the variegating and unifying activities of the creative imagination, as evidenced by a work of art and as reconciled finally by "multĕity in unity," as the centrifugal and centripetal impulses of the Picturesque and Statuesque.

Painting and statuary establish two opposing but essential aesthetic models and each is essential to developing a definition of the beautiful in the fine arts. In "On Aesthetic Problems" Coleridge writes that the primary point which must be settled before any inquiry into the fine arts can be attempted is "What share the Beautiful must have in a Statue or Painting...in order to entitle it to the name of a work of *fine art*" (*SWF* 1: 348). The later subheadings in the *Essays* are dedicated to principles of genial criticism concerning the fine arts, "especially those of STATUARY and PAINTING." In the first of the *Essays*, he explains,

tho the title of these essays proposes, as their subject, the Fine Arts in general, which as far as the main principles are in question, will be realized, in proportion to the writer's ability; yet the application and illustration of them will be confined to those of Painting and Statuary, and of these chiefly to the former. (*SWF* 1: 359)

The graphic and plastic arts are comparatively advantaged here because of the universality of their respective languages. "Michael Angelo and Rafael are for all beholders; Dante and Ariosto only for the readers of Italian" (*SWF* 1: 359). Painting and Statuary are composed of natural signs which are intelligible to anyone with sight (and taste), while the artificial signs of literal language are intelligible only to native speakers of such a language. This idea is not novel to Coleridge. Aside from the eighteenth-century associations between painting and natural signs, the Catholic Church was a leading patron of art throughout the European Counter-Reformation because religious painting was more intelligible and thus more effective than Latin scripture to a largely illiterate populace.

With the exception of Dante here, and later Shakespeare and Milton, Coleridge's references and examples throughout the *Essays* are mainly to graphic and plastic artists and art, such as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, Raphael's Gallery, the Venus de Medici, and the Apollo Belvedere. The significance of painting and statuary, however, is not simply in the popularity or hermeneutic accessibility of the two media but in the aesthetic models represented by each: the Picturesque and the Statuesque.

The issue again is a matter of whole and parts. In "Definitions of Aesthetic Terms," Coleridge defines the Picturesque against the Beautiful:

Reverse the order of [the Beautiful], and let there be a distinct Perception of the Parts and only a *clear* Perception of the Whole, and we have the PICTURESQUE.

(*SWF* 1: 351)

In “On the Distinction Between the Picturesque and the Sublime,” he writes further of the Picturesque,

When the Parts by their harmony produce an *effect* of a Whole, but there is no seen form of an Whole producing or explaining the Parts—i.e. Where the Whole is *felt*, but the Parts only are *seen* and distinguished—the Picturesque. (*SWF* 1: 353)

I shall first explain how the term Picturesque is used and then why. Very simply, in acceptance of the recondite technicalities of the semantics such as we have already parsed, the Picturesque is the opposite of the Beautiful. The Beautiful contains a simultaneous heterogeneity and homogeneity of parts and a homogeneity of a whole, indicating a variety of different but harmonious parts and a unified whole. The Picturesque is conversely defined by a homogeneity of parts and a heterogeneity and homogeneity of a whole, indicating that the various parts may coalesce in likeness but the overall whole is both homogenous and heterogeneous because though it is unified the unity is weak.

The corollary definitions of the Picturesque do not contradict this assessment, that the Picturesque might also be seen as having a heterogeneous perception of parts, and “a confused Perception or (what is indeed the same thing), a *Sense*, an *Impression*, of the Whole” (*SWF* 1: 351). Even if the Picturesque is defined as having heterogenous parts and only a mere “*Sense*” or “*Impression*” of a whole, when nothing is seen “producing or

explaining” the parts, the fact remains that unlike the Beautiful the Picturesque does not attain unity of a whole through its various parts.

As to why Coleridge uses the term Picturesque, there are two provenances for the term that designate its use as a category of heterogeneous parts bereft of total unity. The first and simplest is the Picturesque of landscape painting and eventually poetry, à la Thomson and other descriptive writers, which became ever so popular in British aesthetics of the eighteenth century. Most likely derived from the Italian *pittoresco*, which in turn comes from the “schilderachtig” of seventeenth-century Dutch painters, to indicate the manner of a painter or of a picture, and highly influenced by the landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain (née Gelée, c. 1604-1682), this Picturesque ideal consists of the charm in variety found in rough English gardens and paintings of wild and asymmetrical natural scenes.⁷⁷ The Picturesque attempts a *concordia discors* by harmonizing the various discordant elements of its productions by way of a superimposed “master tint” that effects tonal harmony. In practice, then, the weakness of the whole of the Picturesque to which Coleridge refers in his definition, or the mere “*Impression*” thereof, is akin to that Academy convention of foregrounding a painting with a mellow brown or yellow varnish in order to disguise the asperity of objects and colours under a singular tone, thereby contriving an arbitrary unity imposed from without.

The second provenance of the Picturesque category is in German criticism that distinguishes the condition of modern art from that of ancient art. For example, Lessing uses picturesque (*malerisch*) as a pejorative adjective when warning poets from a manner

⁷⁷ See Hussey, *The Picturesque*, esp. Ch. 1, for the best concise introduction to the Picturesque, its establishment by Uvedale Price (1747-1829), and its origins in Claude. Garside and Copley’s *Politics of the Picturesque* pays great attention to the connection of the category to various visual arts; as does Andrews in *Search for the Picturesque*. For Dutch origins of the term, see Boudewijn Bakker’s “Schilderachtig.”

or subject best fit for the visual arts and lauds the bodily beauty of sculpture (*körperliche Schönheit*) as the ultimate aesthetic obtaining in all fine arts (*Laoköon* 144). But it is from Schlegel that Coleridge appropriates the division between ancient Classical art as *plastisch* and modern Romantic as *pittoresk*.⁷⁸ Coleridge is credited as first introducing the word “Statuesque” into the English language, perhaps as a translation of *plastisch*.

The Oxford English Dictionary credits Coleridge first using the word “statuesque” in a 1799 letter to Thomas Poole: “Never did I behold aught so impressively picturesque, or rather *statue*-esque, as these Groups of Women in all their various attitudes” (*CL* 1: 511). The *Essays*, and the lectures to the Royal Institution that precede them, are undoubtedly influenced by Schlegel’s *Lectures (Vorlesungen)*, delivered in 1808 and published in 1809-1811; but, given that Coleridge uses the term several years previous to his exposure to Schlegel, I give some credit to the suggestion expressed by Anna Augusta von Helmholtz-Phelan in *The Indebtedness of Samuel Taylor Coleridge to August Wilhelm von Schlegel* (1907), that it is possible that there is some truth in Coleridge’s assertions “that he was possessed of all the ‘main and fundamental’ ideas applied by Schlegel before he had seen a page of the German critic’s work” (297). In the *Essays*, however, the term is undoubtedly adopted and used in the sense of Schlegel’s *plastisch*, as opposing the picturesque, and the effective division between the Statuesque and Picturesque is too identical to Schlegel’s use of these terms as to be accidental.

If the first kind of Picturesque is represented by landscape gardening and ruined abbeys, this second is most certainly represented by Shakespeare who, Coleridge informs

⁷⁸ See Schlegel, *Vorlesungen* 1: 22, or Black, *Lectures* 1: 9 for a translation. The claim that Coleridge borrows from Schlegel has been made again recently by Burwick, who pays attention to the *Lectures* and shared notions of classical aesthetics in “Greek Drama.”

during a lecture on *The Tempest*, perfected the “Picturesque” unity (*LL* 1:361), meaning complex and necessarily incomplete unity, typical of romantic drama.

The Picturesque of ruined abbeys and *The Tempest* have this in common, that they present a complex variety of parts. Coleridge coins the term Statuesque to indicate the opposite impulse in art to the Picturesque, where the whole is of such totality that it distracts from the parts as being discrete parts and rather subsumes them into the whole. Following the Picturesque in “Definitions of Aesthetic Terms,”

Let the Impression of the Whole be such as to withdraw our conscious attention from the Parts as Parts, and you have the Statuesque. (*SWF* 1: 351)

In the lectures on Shakespeare he argues that the productions of the moderns are “picturesque” and those of the Greeks “statuesque,” for while the moderns blend a multitude of materials to produce a striking whole, Greek art attains “perfect beauty and symmetrical proportion” “in its parts and as a whole” (*LL* 1: 517). And, in a previous lecture,

The Shakespearian drama and the Greek drama might be compared to painting &...statuary. In the latter as in the Greek drama the characters must be few because the very essence of statuary was a high degree of abstraction which would prevent a great many...figures from being combined into the same effects. (*LL* 1: 348-349)

In these lectures, having set the material breadth of painting in opposition to statuary, Coleridge examples as the abstraction of statuary the Niobe group he saw in 1812 at the Florentine Uffizi Gallery. While the heroism of the group would be disturbed by the introduction of anything discordant, such as “an old nurse,” an immense number of

figures running the gamut from dogs to beggars could be introduced to a painting by Raphael or Titian to produce an effect “equally harmonious to the mind, more true to nature, and in all respects but one superior to Statuary; the perfect satisfaction in a thing as a work of art” (*LL* 1: 349).

The terms Picturesque and Statuesque, while of distinct advantage, are separated with ambivalence. The prospect of the Statuesque is in total unity, harmony, and abstraction, and such artful repose results in “perfect satisfaction.” The Picturesque is not as ideal in its presentation but, as evidenced at times by Shakespeare and by its vegetable associations with landscape painting, it organically forms through its many parts a unity more complex than the Greek drama. Greek drama, in the same 1812 series of lectures of literature, removes “the Heterogeneous—even as the Spirit of the Romantic Poetry,” just as Shakespearean drama “is Modification, or the blending of the Heterogenous into an whole by the unity of the Effect” (*LL* 1: 439). Yet the Statuesque impulse creeps into Coleridge’s criticism at every point and is prominent in the *Essays* when he examines the work of Allston and Raphael.

This Statuesque impulse is inherent, for example, in Coleridge’s understanding of the formal beauty he discerns in Allston’s work. As an instance of “the Beautiful, arising from regular form” in the *Essays* (*SWF* 1: 373), Coleridge refers his readers to Allston’s *The Dead Man Restored to Life by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha* (1814), a history painting recently exhibited at the British Institution. Working counter clock-wise, he reads into the characters in the painting “a circular group” as if they were a statue set, and commends the human figures for expressing “variety of life, motion, and passion” beyond the constraint of their form (*SWF* 1: 373). He follows immediately in similar

fashion with Raphael's *Galatea* (1514), in which "the circle is perceived at first sight," but "within the circular group" is such variety and vitality "in the junction of the figures" that the work displays "the balance, the perfect reconciliation, effected between these two conflicting principles of the FREE LIFE and of the confining FORM!" (*SWF* 1: 374). Coleridge only seems to be slipping into the same fault as Lessing in his essay on the *Laoköon*, who, as mentioned, in an attempt to distinguish the confusion between poetry and painting muddles his argument by confusing painting with sculpture. Coleridge highlights sculptural features in both paintings, but the reading is not the generic confusion at which Lessing would take umbrage. It is instead a perception of a unifying impulse drawn from the principles of statuary.

Allston was not found wanting in suggestion and conversation on the topic of his work. Coleridge stood by his friend in defence and guidance in urging others to celebrate *The Dead Man* by review or purchase and in sharing with him his own convictions on the essence of art. He determined in Allston the sentiment that a true imitation of Nature, not of the "dead Shapes" but the "outward *Letter*" of Nature, is a symbolic expression of creative activity from which "disturbing forces" are abstracted (*CL* 4: 607). In a letter to Beaumont, Coleridge admits the impact of his advice on Allston's choice of a religious subject for his large Scripture piece, within which revelation he praises the sculptural models Allston formed in preparation for the characters in his painting (*CL* 3: 352). Hazlitt appraised the painting as having reached the "simple dignity and pathos of Raphael" by its composition of the "human figure" throughout, but faulted it for lacking variety of expression (*Works* 18: 13).

The Picturesque and Statuesque are, however, best understood as representations of impulses than as types of art, the former centrifugal and the latter centripetal. The requisite of statuary is a high degree of abstraction and the production of a unity so ideal that in order to maintain its harmony it cannot allow diffusive parts, which impulse is the centripetal quality of the Statuesque that is signified even in the definition Coleridge provides for the term in “Definition of Aesthetic Terms.” The Picturesque, conversely, has a greater compass but is centrifugal in that the abundance of its parts struggles in vain to result in the ideal unity typical of statuary.

The abstracting or statuesque impulse, honed by the Greeks, perfectly attains that necessary unity with which much other art, with its centrifugal parts, struggles. The business of a poet, for Coleridge as it was for Dr Johnson’s fictitious Imlac in *Rasselas*, is to examine species and not individuals. As Imlac puts it, the poet “does not number the streaks of the tulip” (29), or generally lose the forest for the tree by focussing on minute discriminations in a portrait of nature. In another note on *The Tempest*, Coleridge argues that this romantic drama is not “dependent upon a fidelity of portraiture” and is a “birth of imagination” that “rests only on the coaptation and union of the elements granted to, or assumed by, the poet” (*LR* 2: 94). The components of true romantic art are born in the imagination and from that source unified.

Dutch and Flemish artists fail in this respect. The infant that Raphael’s *Sistine Madonna* holds in her arms is so perfectly ideal that he “cannot be guessed of any particular age” and is therefore “Humanity in infancy,” whereas the “babe in the manger in a Dutch painting is a fac-simile of some real new-born bantling” (*TT* 1: 229).⁷⁹ When

⁷⁹ As I established in the introduction, Wincklemann’s classicism was historical and lent itself, to a certain extent, to aesthetic relativism. He was not a neoclassicist in the manner of the party of the *anciens* of the

speaking of *The Tempest* in the *Biographia*, he remarks that where Shakespeare's play is "creation rather than painting," those who indulge in an excess of particular details have failed by having their work "dutchified by minute touches" (*BL* 2: 128). Shakespeare's "Protean" genius is his ability to represent the breadth of humanity through individual characters who struggle with universal moral and intellectual ideas.

I repeat that while the Picturesque and Statuesque have clear reference to the artistic media of which they are derivative, namely, painting and statuary, they are best understood as impulses as defined by their respective centrifugal and centripetal qualities. Coleridge certainly establishes Classical statuary as representative of the Statuesque, but he also in a letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds lambasts the great Bernini's baroque statues for "picture petrification" and "excess of fancy over imagination, the aggregate over the unifying faculty" (*CL* 4: 569), and at other times criticizes contemporary statues for a profusion of unnecessary details, like marbled periwigs. These are Picturesque statues. On the other hand, the paintings by Allston and Raphael heralded in the *Essays* possess and are approved for their Statuesque qualities.

The power of "multēity in unity" as a definition of beauty is that it accounts for and is itself born out of both the centrifugality of the Picturesque and the centripality of the Statuesque. The Picturesque fancy supplies a breadth of material with which the artist works, and the Statuesque imagination forms an aesthetic semblance of a whole. All beauty, whether embodied by the statue of Niobe or a painting by Raphael, is multēity in

Querelle who demanded that all modern art simply copy antique models. Just as Herder and Schlegel were in some way influenced by him, so was Coleridge. The remarks here are exemplary. Winckelmann, in his *Reflections*, similarly writes, "The imitation of beauty is either reduced to a single object, and is *individual*, or, gathering observations from single ones, *composes of the whole*. The former we shall call copying, drawing a portrait; 'tis the straight way to Dutch forms and figures; whereas the other leads to general beauty, and its ideal images, and is the way the Greeks took" (18).

unity, but that “unity will be more intense in proportion as it constitutes each particular thing a whole of itself; and yet more, again, in proportion to the number and interdependence of the parts which it unites as a whole” (*TL* 45). A Picturesque work without Statuesque qualities results in “picture petrification,” and a Statuesque work without Picturesque profusion and divisions displays a shallow austerity that does not actualize the torn and complex modern condition expressed by Shakespeare and Allston. The romantic poet faced with oppositions must realize an interpenetration of parts to effect a whole.

VI. Plastic Unity

If the endeavour of defining Beauty in part by analytically distinguishing its synthesized qualities into the Picturesque, Statuesque, and Shapely might seem to have exceeded the measures of paint, marble, and lines, it is granted that Coleridge’s criticism suffers less from undisciplined consideration of expression than from a propensity toward abstraction, and specifically, for general aesthetic principles over enquiries into fine art devoid of philosophical investment.

Coleridge’s definition of beauty is as much an aim and possibility as it is a principle of organization and judgment, for unity is an intellectual organization of disparate physical phenomena needing to be animated by the imagination. There is a correspondence between the unifying act of the artist in the process of creation and the unifying act of the critic in the process of understanding and synthesis. The artist subjects a variety of parts to an imaginative whole when she imitates “Nature, the prime Genial Artist” (*LL* 1: 495), while she who practises genial criticism acts in accordance with those same rules animating and guiding the artist. The instability of the elements of the mixture

“multēity in unity” gives the formula its potency, bestowing beyond semantic incertitude a flexibility of application with singular observation to the rule suggested by the action of unifying a variety.

Abstraction is the key to multēity in unity, and in this respect while both the Picturesque and Statuesque are fundamental to understanding the centrifugal and centripetal impulses simultaneous in Coleridge’s formula, the plastic harmony of statuary presses more upon the matter. Representing the inexhaustible variety of life is to be abstract. Greek statuary seems truer than an Egyptian hieroglyphic because whereas the Egyptian artist exhausted all three dimensions and flattened them to create a supremely objective image (irrespective of shifting viewpoint), the Greek sculptor abstracted from the third dimension in order to suggest it. Like a sphere, a statue is expressed as much by what is hidden as by what is present, the idea of the whole being formed by the imagination. Even when the bulky pulchritude of statuary is at odds with such a visionary conception of beauty, Coleridge speaks of it as a *beau idéal* which, in the celebrated manner of Zeuxis painting Helen’s divine beauty, has abstracted from distortion by selecting only the fairest parts of nature.

In his later more conservative and religious years, Coleridge’s tendency to abstraction grows stronger as he inspirits the trust in making “the Senses out of the Mind—not the Mind from the Senses, as Locke etc.” (*TT* 1: 312). Samuel Perry writes in *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* that in the equivocation between plurality and unity and because of his growing ambivalence about the latter, Coleridge found the “vigorously counter-sensuous anti-empiricism” of Platonism appealing (45). The central and preparatory *Essays* also allow much ground for comprehending this increasing plasticity

of Coleridge's later thought. For example, other significant terms, in the more highly regarded *Biographia*, such as "Esemplastic" and "Eisenoplasmy" have been referred back in scholarship to phrasal cognates, like Schelling's "In-Eins-Bildung." Coleridge contrives an etymology for "Esemplastic" from "the Greek words, εἰς ἓν πλάττειν [eis en plattein] i.e. to shape into one" (*BL* 1: 168). Shawcross includes in the annotations to his edition of the *Biographia* the interpretation that in using the term "Esemplastic" Coleridge is attempting to approximate Schelling's "In-Eins-Bildung," or "into-one-formation," from the latter's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art* (*BL*₂ 1: 249). The editors of the Bollingen edition of the *Biographia* provide a variety of potential sources, such as the German word for imagination (Einbildungskraft) (*BL* 1: 168-170 n. 2). Patrick L. Carver, in "Evolution of the Term 'Esemplastic,'" suggests the term is a xenophilic translation of the Anglo-Latinate "coadunation," referring to that imaginative and modifying faculty that Coleridge wrote of years earlier (239-331). But the root of "Esemplastic" and "Eisenoplasmy" is a direct assumption of *plastisch*, which adjective Coleridge earlier translated as Statuesque, while the prefix is probably the transformation of the Greek preposition "eis," indicating the centripetal movement to or into something.

Of great importance to an understanding of Coleridge's critical poetics is his adoption of general principles from the fine arts and their critical tradition. The slow, pedantic palaver of the *Essays* does not provoke the many and quick thrills of the *Biographia*, but these writings showcase the care and consideration behind some of Coleridge's most popular ideas and also the great consequence for his literary theory of his experience of and thinking about the fine arts. "Multēity in unity" may be regarded as an abstract principle for beauty in relation to all arts and philosophy, but its polar

elements, the Picturesque and the Statuesque, are deduced from the fine arts. Coleridge in effect sketches a sort of dictionary of aesthetic terms and their schemata, to verbalize and philosophically organize in his way what otherwise can be felt and articulated only poetically; as in awe of the apotheosis of Raphael's tragic Galatea or Allston's resurrecting prophet, where the portrait of suffering expresses a beauty that combines the real and the ideal, an elevation more than human with all the truth of life formed harmoniously into an imaginative representation.

Chapter Three: Hazlitt and the Characteristic

The little-known tradition of theories of the characteristic begins in eighteenth-century Germany but is transmitted to English arts and letters through the Royal Academy. To immediately clear up a potential confusion, the characteristic has only a loose relationship to what in literary criticism is called character and is rather defined as another version of an ideal representation which spiritually elaborates what is most significant in an object.⁸⁰ This conception of characteristic Hazlitt draws from portrait painting and underlies his critical judgments on literary and visual works of art, and his engagement with the art-theoretical tradition as discussed below discloses the explanation of such ideas that are basic assumptions of his more familiar literary writings and “verbal” portraits or character sketches of famous figures as in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825).⁸¹ Hazlitt does not identify this tradition but refers to it and is its successor. The importance of the connection between his writings and those of such theorists of the

⁸⁰ Character is a rather old-fashioned critical term, and even remarks about it in private exchange hint at a stubborn morality. A character, simply defined as a person or agent in a narrative work, is a simple enough engagement. The type of character subject to inquiry in criticism is the derivative of the Greek ethos, the *quality* of a narrative person or agent as revealed through action, thought, or other representation. The critic assesses a character by the moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities that ground her person and psychological complexities. The presence of such complexities render her what E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) calls a round character, in opposition to what he in the absence of these complexities calls a flat character, sometimes also called a caricature, which concept will be recalled in the last section of this chapter (Forster 73-74). The Mediaeval etymon of character defines it as a trait, a mark, or an impressed feature of something, like a seal on wax (“character, n.” OED). Hazlitt’s conception of the characteristic, a word that of course otherwise is etymologically related to character, shares only a surface affinity with all of these understandings of character, though he does focus on the representation of singular entities.

⁸¹ Throughout Hazlitt’s life, the craft of the painter touched every point of his critical output. I cite as a point of evidence that oft quoted admission of his, that his writings are but “the thoughts of a metaphysician expressed by a painter” (17: 311). Hazlitt initially followed his older brother in pursuing training as a portrait-artist but soon after took to writing about art. His articles appeared in such widely read publications as the *Champion*, the *Examiner*, the *London Magazine*, and the *Morning Chronicle*. William C. Wright writes in “Hazlitt, Ruskin, and Nineteenth-Century Art Criticism” that by 1816 Hazlitt achieved enough stature as an art critic to be commissioned to write an article on “Fine Arts” for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (510). Even when Hazlitt began his career as a literary critic the next year, painting and theories of visual art remained with him. Elizabeth Fay in “Portrait Galleries, Representative History, and Hazlitt’s *Spirit of the Age*” (2002) explains of Hazlitt’s inclination toward the literary, “The portraits in *Spirit of the Age* must be verbal rather than pictorial because the philosophical tradition Hazlitt is revising rests its case on language rather than image” (167).

characteristic as Aloys Hirt (1759-1837) and Goethe is that characteristic theory provides the appropriate critical context to understand Hazlitt's aesthetic arguments that attempt to mediate between the general and the particular.

I argue that the characteristic is at the heart of Hazlitt's philosophical criticism on art and literature and ultimately, as my analysis shall show, portraiture is the consummate representative of art that illustrates character. By that I mean that portraiture exemplifies a mode of representation that shows a general effect *through* particular details. Further, in Hazlitt's critical outlook, this style of representation selects details that pertain to the significance of the character or general effect. For example, a depiction of an aged philosopher will show a furrowed brow, the intricate creases of which, allowed by the artist, personify the image of a deeply pensive person who has brooded for a few decades upon the cosmos for what feels like aeons. As much attention in finishing to some drapery which might rest in the background to the figure is overly particular and not characteristic, for it emphasizes an irrelevance to character; a very general representation as fair and unfurrowed as a typical sculpted divinity is as removed from concerns of particular character as those irrelevant ornamental drapes.⁸² I am classifying such artistic concerns to Hazlitt as relating to "the characteristic style" because Hazlitt fits in and assumes that eighteenth-century aesthetic tradition that meditates on what those others before have referred to as the theory of the characteristic, a connection which has yet to be explained in scholarship on Hazlitt.

The concept of the characteristic is now relatively obscure in both the primary and secondary literature. Other mentions not cited below in the body of my argument are

⁸² In "On the Imitation of Nature," Hazlitt identifies excessively particularized art, as in the Dutch naturalism, and excessively general art, best represented by Neoclassicism, as polar opposites. He terms the former style "finical," and the latter "gross" (18: 71).

largely in histories of aesthetics, where Aloys Hirt, the founder of the theory, is noted, as in Bernard Bonsanquet's *History of Aesthetic* (1904), in which Bonsanquet says that the characteristic is the central principle of modern aesthetics and distinguishes it from Greek beauty, its proponents including Hirt, Schiller, and Goethe (302-312). Katherine Everett Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn also briefly mention Hirt and Goethe on the characteristic in their *A History of Esthetics* (1972) and say that it was adopted by Schlegel in his division between the ancient ideal and the modern picturesque (353). A contemporary of Hirt and Goethe, Johann Heinrich Meyer, quotes Hirt on the characteristic in his 1825-1836 *The History of the Formative Arts of the Greeks and Romans: from their Origin to their Highest Flowering* (*Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Griechen und Römern: von ihrem Ursprunge bis zum höchsten Flor*). Alessandro Costazza in "Das 'Charakteristische' ist das 'Idealische'" remarks that Hirt might have taken the concept from Giuseppe Spalletti's 1765 *Essay on Beauty* (*Saggio sopra la bellezza*), whose obscure work was popularized in Germany by the neoclassicist Joseph Mengs to whom Spalletti's essay is addressed (Spalletti 8-10). This interaction between Spalletti, Mengs, and Hirt is taken up by Benedetto Croce's famous 1902 work, *Aesthetic: As Science of Expression and General Linguistic* (270-271). As the title indicates, this work is better known for theorizing expression, opposed to formalism, as the unifying groundwork of modern art. Other mentions in German criticism are in K.W.F. Solger's *Vorlesungen über Aesthetik* (1829), 160-165; Max Schasler, *Kritische Geschichte der Aesthetik* (1872), 1: 491-494; F. Denk's *Das Künstschöne und Charakteristische von Winckelmann bis Friedrich Schlegel* (1925); and G. Stemmerich's *Das Charakteristische in der Malerei. Statusprobleme der nicht mehr schönen Künste und ihrer Bewältigung* (1994).

The only mentions of the connection between the characteristic and Hazlitt in English-language literary criticism are three passing remarks in the first two volumes of René Wellek's *A History of Modern Criticism*, and one in M.H. Abrams's *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Wellek first notes, "The term 'characteristic'...found much favour in Germany with Sulzer (who seems to have picked it up from Spalletti), Hirth [*sic*], Heinrich Meyer, Goethe, and finally with Friedrich Schlegel and Hazlitt" (1: 137). Wellek later attributes the theory of the characteristic to Hazlitt, but does not explain the connection between Hazlitt's criticism and the theory. He writes that Hazlitt "advocates the view that art must aim at the 'characteristic,' the essential of a particular object," and that "Hazlitt combines emotionalism with a doctrine (if we can call it that) of imagination as sympathizing with the characteristic essence of things" (2: 201, 2:203). Abrams quickly remarks that "Hazlitt's interpretation of the ideal (resembling the German theory of the 'characteristic')...[represents] the quintessence of a single object" (56). In these formative accounts of Romantic philosophical criticism, Wellek's and Abrams's statements are powerful insinuations of the characteristic in Hazlitt's aesthetics but are in need of development.

As I will show, the central tenets of Hazlitt's philosophical criticism map onto the central concerns of theorists of the characteristic: on selectiveness in representation, on singular form and expression, and later on portraiture.⁸³ Hazlitt assumes this tradition and

⁸³ The process of selectiveness in Hazlitt is usually ignored in the scholarship, save the very few exceptions in Stanley P. Chase and Elisabeth Schneider who acknowledge it as a problem and whom I shall discuss later. Selectiveness presents itself as a problem in Hazlitt because it seems, at first glance, to contradict the overwhelming statements Hazlitt makes against generality in favour of particularity. However, I show that Hazlitt is propounding an aesthetic, again what I am calling the characteristic style, distinct from both wholly general and particular styles, for against their mechanistic and flattened impersonal modes, Hazlitt says true genius in art is in "an intense sympathy with some one beauty or distinguishing characteristic in nature" (8: 49). While Hazlitt does not produce a formula for how this process of selectiveness always works, I analyse its constituency in the body of his criticisms of over-generalizing artists, like neoclassical

advances it by relating sympathy to portraiture, thereby proposing characteristic style as against pure formalism and mechanism in art and a unique mediation between particularity of detail and general effect. Throughout these writings, Hazlitt proposes his painterly definition of aesthetic semblance, in the form of the theory of the characteristic, in contradistinction to neoclassical theories of form and consequently situates his modern theory of unity and expression in relation to painting, while associating both antiquity and neoclassicism with statuary. As I did with Coleridge previously, by the end of this chapter I hope to have shown the significance of theorizations of the fine arts in the work of this philosophical critic otherwise known for his writings on literature.

II. Theories of the Characteristic

Characteristic theory, where the concept of the characteristic is not just an element but the very subject of the aesthetic theory, properly begins with Aloys Hirt (1759-1837), who was in his time a prominent archaeologist, historian, and philosophical critic of art.⁸⁴ His theory might have been transmitted to Hazlitt through Henry Fuseli's *Lectures on Painting* (1801) or from Reynolds, in whose *Discourses* it is briefly mentioned albeit as inferior to the neoclassical theory I will show him to propound.

imitators, and over-particularizing artists, like the Dutch painters. In fact, the reconfiguration of the general and the particular Hazlitt exercises for the intentions of expression, sympathy, and character is in a way a reconciliation of the then dominant yet competing styles of his time and the values they represented: the generalizations of the "ideal" and the particularizations of the "picturesque." See Chase, "Hazlitt as a Critic of Art" (1924), 190; Schneider, *The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt: A Study of the Philosophical Basis of his Criticism* (1933), 66.

⁸⁴ British picturesque theory also conceptualizes the "characteristic," where the characteristic is the primary attribute in picturesque art though not yet its own theory as in Hirt and others. The term characteristic here is affiliated with the categories of the modern and the picturesque. As discussed at greater length previously, Schlegel popularized the division between ancient art as statuesque and perfect, and modern art as picturesque and characteristic. Both Hazlitt and Coleridge borrowed Schlegel's distinctions and understood the attributes of modern art to be the detailed, emotional, divided, and complex. Thus, as ever, is Shakespeare the paradigm of modern art to them. Walter Hipple writes in *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* that "the strongly marked, the 'characteristic,' is most picturesque" (197). What is particular and circumstantial is the definitive quality of the picturesque and sets that aesthetic category apart from the beautiful and the sublime.

Hirt's theory is premised on the impression of and consequent imperative to singularity or particularity in art. He printed his "Essay on Artistic Beauty" ("Versuch über das Kunstschöne") in Schiller's publication *Die Horen* in 1797. Hirt argues here that the "Charakteristik" is the central principle of artistic beauty ("Hauptgrundsatz des Kunstschönen") and is composed of individual characteristics that constitute an essence or being ("individuellen Merkmale, welche ein Wesen constituieren") (647). By "characteristics" Hirt understands specific forms of individuality like movement, gesture, mien, colour, shading, etc. He writes that however great our notion of beauty or the ideal, this abstract general concept must be resolved into its individual characteristics ("...diesen abstrahierten allgemeinen Begriff in seine individuellen Merkmale aufzulösen [müssen]) (648). The "Charakteristik" as a theory is dependent upon the presence of "individual characteristics," or particularities, that would comprise the whole of an artistic work. Hirt is here also distinguishing between special kinds of particularities and sundry details by his use of the term "individual characteristics" and further by his unique subordination of those particularities to the whole (which "must be *resolved* into its individual characteristics). Those individual characteristics selected for a work of art are not random but unique to whatever whole is meant to be effected. Alessandro Costazza, in "The 'Characteristic' is the 'Ideal,'" says that the truth and individuating imperative that Hirt ascribes to the Charakteristik is the experience of the artistic process, meaning the selection of the right moment of presentation and the appropriate primary and secondary objects for a subject rather than *any* forms of nature (7). The singular importance of any of the various parts is to the expression of that whole which they

uniquely comprise. Hirt's theory of the "Charakteristik," as it is for later theorists of the characteristic, is thus at heart an intermediary between the particular and the general.⁸⁵

Hirt suggests that the work of art that is most beautiful is not that which deals with the most beautiful object but that which is most expressive. In consequence, he argues that the Laocoön is more beautiful than the Apollo because for all the Apollo's classical perfection it lacks the feeling and natural expression of the Laocoön (652). He revisits the argument in his essay on the "Laokoön," also published in *Die Horen*. Hirt assesses Lessing and Winckelmann's arguments as to why Laocoön does not or cannot scream, the reason for Lessing being that the representation of such physical anguish would wreck the beauty of his visage and for Winckelmann that the beauty of the character's soul prevents such contortion.⁸⁶ Winckelmann, after all, had held that such statuary ought to exhibit only "noble simplicity and silent grandeur" ("edle Einfalt und stille Größe").⁸⁷ Lessing's conclusions are drawn, again, from his separation of poetry from painting, and thus of successive narrative from simultaneous narrative. Because the statue would further have overstepped the limits of its medium if the sculptor attempted to represent the entire narrative of Laocoön's death if the Trojan priest was shown wrapped by serpents *and* screaming, it is best that the moment of representation is the pregnant moment, and so the visual representation is meant to be transcended quickly by an imaginative completion of the action suspended in a work of art (Lessing, "Laocoön 80-81; *Werke* 2: 875). But Hirt writes that the representation of Laocoön does not portray

⁸⁵ While the emphasis on the particular is clear, Costazza in "The 'Characteristic' as an Aesthetic Category of German Classicism" ("Das 'Charakteristische' als Ästhetische Kategorie der Deutschen Klassik") argues that Hirt's theory is still not an incipient theory of naturalism or realism (70-73). Cf. Richter "The End of Laocoön," 124.

⁸⁶ Lessing, "Laocoön" 80-81; *Werke*, 2: 875. Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 30-32.

⁸⁷ Fuseli's less common translation reads: "noble simplicity and sedate grandeur" (34).

a scream because stylistically the work of art ought to avoid such ugliness, but simply because the character as understood within the work physically cannot. Laocoön's visage is such because the serpents wrapped around his torso prevent any inhalation or exhalation of air and not because of external stylistic demands (Hirt, 938-939). Hirt's point is to prove that this great sculpture-group too is indicative of the Charakteristik.

Hirt contends against Lessing that art can be expressive only when it depicts an object or model in accordance with its own circumstances rather than with extraneous rules for representation. He writes that even in ancient art each character possesses movements and details that belong to her alone in her circumstances and each her own expression: "Every movement, every passion, every form is unique for each character" ("Jede Bewegung, jede Leidenschaft, jede Form ist bei ihm individuell für jeden Charakter") (942). According to Hirt then, Lessing errs in theoretically separating beauty from expression, however violent the latter may be. Whatever the ancients abstracted from nature was not to effect general beauty but to effect an individual character (Hirt 942). A work of art ceases to be beautiful when it is not true to its own character. Put another way, the representation of a character is expressive, and thus beautiful, when it contains such "individual characteristics" that are appropriate to its circumstances. Hirt writes, "The most beautiful God, for example, Bacchus, is ugly, when he appears not constituted in his own forms..." (954). Hirt gives other such examples of what he calls the "Hauptkarakter" ("central characteristic") of ancient representations of divinity, as of Juno's majesty, Mercury's cunning, Diana the huntress's protective tunic, and Venus's loveliness (949-950). The concept of the "Hauptkarakter" clarifies the organic relationship previously suggested between the whole and the "individual characteristics"

into which that whole is expected to resolve in a representation. For example, Hirt might say the “Hauptkarakter” of Laocoön is suffering, and so a representation of calmness, though stylistically pleasing, would be extraneous to the subject and thus not expressive. (We remember that Hirt has argued that Laocoön is not actually calm and that the figure’s “silence” is consistent with the constriction of the coiled serpents that prevents him from screaming, for the body itself is still tense with mortal struggle and demonstrative of pain).

Hegel’s own philosophy of fine art is just a part of his overall metaphysical system, but in the introduction to his *Aesthetics* he addresses Hirt’s theory of the characteristic. Hegel says Hirt’s “Charakteristik” involves first, “a content as, for example, a specific feeling, situation, occurrence, action, individual,” and second, “the mode and manner in which this content is presented. It is on this manner of presentation that the artistic law of the characteristic depends, since it demands that everything particular in the mode of expression shall serve towards the specific designation of its content and be a link in the expression of that content” (Hegel 1: 17-18). Hegel then articulates the difference between a style that expresses a predominant character, what Hirt called “Hauptkarakter,” through appropriate particular details and a Dutch or photographic style that simply collates as many details as possible. In drama, for example, the content of the work of art is action. That action is composed of people doing various things, such as eating, talking, or sleeping. But, Hegel argues,

whatever of all this does not stand in immediate relation to that specific action (which is the content proper) should be excluded, so that, in that content, nothing remains without significance. In the same way, in a picture, which seizes on only

one phase of that action, there could be included—such are the wide ramifications of the external world—a mass of circumstances, persons, situations, and other incidents which have no relation to the specific action in that phase and contribute nothing to its distinctive character. But according to the principle of ‘the characteristic,’ nothing is to enter the work of art except what belongs to the appearance and essentially to the expression of this content alone; nothing is to be otiose or superfluous. (1: 18)

No action is shown that is superfluous to a character and her characteristic expression. Hegel here expresses negatively the same idea Hirt positively predicated of the characteristic. Hirt had argued that a representation must contain circumstantial details particular to the general representation, such as of, say, Diana’s protective tunic which across the pantheon of Gods is unique to her function as the goddess of the hunt. Hegel is now emphasizing a process of selectiveness that is intrinsic to the theory of the characteristic, a process of singling out leading qualities or a leading quality in an object or model. Again, as he says, “according the principle of ‘the characteristic,’ nothing is to enter the work of art except what belongs to the appearance and essentially to the expression of this content alone,” and one might substitute “the appearance” with Hirt’s “Hauptkarakter” for it is to a conception of a central characteristic that those essential parts are subordinated in the theory of the characteristic.

Goethe is the immediate heir of Hirt’s theory of the characteristic. Hegel says above that the characteristic selects what is of “significance,” and this word is central in Goethe’s response to Hirt in a 1798 essay published in his own journal, *Die Propyläen*.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Bernard Bosanquet notes in *History of Aesthetic* that Goethe first mentions the characteristic in his 1870 essay *On German Architecture (Von Deutsche Baukunst)* (Bosanquet 272 n.1). In this essay Goethe,

Simon Jan Richter argues in “The end of Laocoön” that in his “Über Laokoon” Goethe agrees with the demand for expression in the theory of the characteristic and like Hirt radicalizes the notion against Lessing. Richter argues, “What sets Goethe’s ‘Über Laocoon’ apart from previous classical or classicizing discourse...is its open avowal that pain is the origin of the statue’s beauty,” whereas “the consensus of Winckelmann and Lessing...was that pain was an intrusive and disruptive force disturbing the calm centre of classicism, and requiring rigorous control, even if its presence as a component of the statue argued for its necessity” (Richter 125). Where Winckelmann and Lessing had agreed, albeit for different reasons, that Laocoön ought not to scream, Goethe argues that any work of art should represent the significant and most extreme moment of expression, in this case Laocoön’s agonizing scream or final shudder of death, which is the “highest pathetic expression” (“der höchste pathetische Ausdruck”) of greatest importance to the fine arts (“...die für die bildende Kunst von Wichtigkeit ist”) (62).⁸⁹ As to the actual material of this characteristic “significance” which the artist discerns and then depicts, Paul Guyer in *A History of Modern Aesthetics* argues that Goethe does not conceive of it as Platonic form lying outside of nature but as “as an essential form within nature, like an Aristotelian form, that manifests itself in multiple ways and needs the focus of the artist to distinguish what is essential in it from what is accidental” (1: 498). Goethe then conceives of the characteristic work attaining an organic unity, in which all of the parts relate essentially to the whole. In his 1799 epistolary *The Collector and His Circle* (*Der*

comparing classical art to the modern Gothic, claims of the latter, “This characteristic art is now the only true one” (“Diese charakteristische Kunst ist nun die einzige wahre”) (13).

⁸⁹ Of beauty, Goethe also writes that the artist must “show the knowledge of human bodies; of the Characteristic itself as well as Expression and Passion” (“...sie Kenntnis des menschlichen Körpers, daß sie das Charakteristische an demselben sowie Ausdruck und Leidenschaft zeige”), which is related to the exigency of “extreme” (“Extrem”) representation of physical and spiritual pains (“physischen und geistigen Leidens”) (57).

Sammler und die Seinigen), in which one of the interlocutors is an imaginary version of Aloys Hirt, Goethe argues that “Character stands to the beautiful as the skeleton to the living man,” so that it is the essential fleshing out and colouring of the skeletal form of beauty (75).⁹⁰

Henry Fuseli (1741-1825), born Johann Heinrich Füssli, is the first “Briton” to have theorized the characteristic in art. The originally Swiss painter displayed formidable art-theoretical training and was in an ideal position to translate German art theory into English praxis. Fuseli dedicated himself to art after first making the acquaintance of Reynolds and in later years became a Professor of Painting and the Keeper at the Royal Academy. During his professorship, Fuseli gave a series of lectures on painting, throughout which he discussed the British art-historical tradition alongside those of the French, Italian, and German.⁹¹ Cord-Friedrich Berghahn writes in his short article on the *Lectures on Painting* that Fuseli “develops a highly original concept of the ‘characteristic,’ serving as a link between the artist’s invention and a classical concept of style” (487). Berghahn continues that Fuseli’s idea of the characteristic is modelled on Aloys Hirt’s concept, and “the Characteristic for Hirt, as for Fuseli, decidedly does not stand in opposition to the beautiful, but forms rather the ‘general principle for artistic beauty’” (493).⁹²

⁹⁰ Guyer mentions that the aesthetic theory of truth of the famous Romantic Prussian philosopher and diplomat Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), while indeed a different aesthetic speculation, is close to Goethe’s theory of the characteristic (1: 505).

⁹¹ In *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man*, Duncan Wu recounts Hazlitt’s first impressions of Fuseli’s lectures, to which he was taken by Sir John Soane, a professor of architecture at the Royal Academy. Soane reports that his companion was impressed by the lecture. Hazlitt wrote, “Mr Fuseli has wit and words at will; and, though he had never touched a pencil, would be a man of extraordinary pretensions and talents” (qtd. 263).

⁹² “‘Charakteristisch’ steht für Hirt—wie für Füssli—dezidiert nicht im Gegensatz zum Schönen, sondern bildet vielmehr den ‘Hauptgrundsatz des Kunstschönen.’”

Like Hirt and Goethe, Fuseli argues that even for the ancients imitation was “*essential, characteristic, ideal*” (348). Fuseli cites Pliny’s congratulation of the Greek sculptor Euphranor’s statue of Paris, in whom are reconciled so many characteristics of the man: as an umpire of the goddesses during his judgment of beauty between Aphrodite, Athena, and Hera; as the soldier who felled the great Achilles with an arrow; and as the lover of Helen. As to whether this compound might not suggest a confusion of character, he responds, “Yet, not all three, one ideal whole irradiated” the divine semblance (374). As he says later of the Laocoön, however so great the variety of qualities throughout the figure, still “*one great expression*” must remain (376).⁹³

Fuseli places expression in opposition to images that confuse qualities. He is however not as emphatic as Goethe, and later Hazlitt, about *extreme* expression, though as we shall see he is similar to Hazlitt in leveraging Raphael and Titian as paragons of characteristic style. When Fuseli speaks of expression it is decidedly always in terms of singularity. Echoing Hirt’s reservation about classical laws of style that could be applied to any figure for some predetermined idea of beauty, Fuseli elevates feeling above laws and implies its occasion by the truth between a figure and the circumstances of his or her representation. For example, Fuseli admits that “no face of Raphael’s is perfectly beautiful,” but that is because “form to him was only a vehicle of character or pathos” and his “composition always hastens to the most necessary point as its centre” as his “expression” is “in strict unison with and decided by character” (384). Any rule that might be provided for the composition of the figure is set out by the figure itself, again signifying an organic unity that differs depending on the figure and, to quote Hirt, its

⁹³ Fuseli still agrees with Lessing’s pregnant moment when he writes of the artist’s selection of a scene, “the moment of this choice never suffers the action to stagnate or to expire; it is the moment of transition, the crisis big with the past and pregnant with the future” (384).

“Hauptkarakter.” Fuseli employs affective language, that of feeling and pathos, as a means to convey the spirit of unity, that predominant quality in a figure, at work in Raphael’s characteristic style. While as the condition of this style expression is the tenor, Fuseli offers physiognomy as the vehicle.⁹⁴

The importance of the considerations of physiognomy is twofold. First, readings of physiognomy are implicit in statements on Laocoön’s pain and the Apollo’s repose, *inter alia*, in Lessing, Hirt, Goethe, Fuseli, and later in Reynolds’s and Hazlitt’s readings of musculature and attitude in sculpture and painting. Second, and as a consequence of this presence, the inferences of character and effect from the countenance and body of a figure inform what I perceive to be the core of theories of the characteristic: establishing the general through the particular. This is still vague, as the establishment of the general through the particular can manifest itself in a great many ways. But in the tradition of characteristic theories, the focus of those readings of particularities in countenance and body moves from only sculpture to, at the height of this tradition, portrait painting; in opposition, history painting is aligned with neoclassical theories of the ideal and their *foci* on generality of representation. We will see this flowering in Hazlitt but note now that Fuseli first makes the turn.

Fuseli attributes physiognomy to the condition of portrait painting, where pathognomy, or the study of action, is the condition of history painting. He then identifies both portrait painting and history painting with the literary genres, respectively, of drama and history. He says that where in history the act and the agent alike are both subordinate

⁹⁴ I allow physiognomy to be defined by its most basic meaning, as the determination of character by study of the body or especially the face. In *A History of Sir Charles Grandison*, Samuel Richardson writes that physiognomy is that grace which “we may call Expression,” and Diderot in the *Encyclopédie* calls it “the expression of character” (l’expression du caractère) (“physiognomy, n.” *OED*).

to fact, so drama subordinates all to the agent, “his character and passion” (427). Still, Fuseli is traditional in the importance he gives to history painting, and he expresses that in it too must “physiognomic character” be given. If a history painter or writer is to depict Germanicus, a Roman dying among Romans, he “is not to mix up characters which observations and comparison have pointed out to him” but must provide “all the real modifications of time and place, which may serve unequivocally to discriminate that moment of grief from all others” (430). Even the history painter must be as selective and detailed as the portraitist: “the fixed character of things determines all in his choice, and mere floating accident, transient modes and whims of fashion, are still excluded. If defects, if deformities are represented, they must be permanent, they must be inherent in the character” (431). Fuseli’s importance in the tradition of the theory of the characteristic is his importation of the concept from German criticism, his development of diction, such as of physiognomy, to verbalize that theory’s statements on art, and then his burgeoning discrimination of portraiture as a kind of painting that realizes the peculiarities of characteristic style and expression.

One more figure deserves mention before Hazlitt, and this is Reynolds. He is best known for his *Discourses on Art*, a series of lectures that were delivered at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790. Reynolds’s neoclassical theories were largely the antagonists against which Hazlitt developed his own romantic criticism. In Reynolds’s defence, I advocate that his series of lectures show a development of ideas, and so he vacillates on some points.⁹⁵ The Reynolds of *Discourse III* against which Hazlitt argues on the matter of expression is not the same to be met in *Discourse V*, in which he

⁹⁵ Laurence Lipking in *The Ordering of the Arts in Eighteenth-Century England* warns against reading the varying opinions in the *Discourses* as a progressive dialectic, but nevertheless admits the shifts in arguments throughout (170-185).

concedes some weaknesses in his theory of the ideal before again marshalling his energies away from the bounties of nature in *Discourse VI*. Hazlitt, in “Character of Sir Joshua Reynolds,” dismisses the notion that “Sir Joshua raised the status of portrait painting to that of history or that he introduced more general principles of the art” (18: 52), but in *Discourse V* Reynolds at least begins to do just that. In fact, these *Discourses* can be seen to be anticipating Fuseli’s ideas of characteristic style, as adopted from Hirt and others.

Like Fuseli, Reynolds tentatively opposes portrait to history painting. The one shows likeness as the other shows action. Likewise, just as portrait for Fuseli could mean both literature and visual art and, further, both painting and sculpture, for Reynolds a portrait is broadly discussed as any art that is local and particular. In *Discourse IV* he says that for the Dutch “a history-piece is properly a portrait of themselves” because of the circumstantial and immediate details given of human life (69). These same “local principles which characterize the Dutch school extend even to their landscape painters,” for while they produce a faithful representation of “an individual spot,” in its minute particulars it is but a “confined portrait” (69). Reynolds praises Claude, whom Hazlitt will accuse of cold idealness, for composing from “various draughts” and for being convinced “that taking nature as he found it seldom produced beauty” (69-70). Reynolds concludes in this lecture that Claude worked upon that same principle of the history painter by avoiding too many details, which inclusions would result in a defective model. History painting is always general while portrait painting is always particular.

Reynolds’s derision for individuated portraits is relaxed in *Discourse V*, where the characteristic style is finally given recognition. He begins by acknowledging the

weakness of uniting the excellences of the central characteristics of a variety of figures into a kind of composite:

we need not be mortified or discouraged at not being able to execute the conceptions of a romantick imagination. Art has its boundaries, though Imagination has none. We can easily, like the Antients, suppose a Jupiter to be possessed of all those powers and perfections which the subordinate Deities were endowed with separately. Yet, when they employed their art to represent him, they confined his character to majesty alone. Pliny...observes, that in a statue of Paris, by Euphranor, you might discover at the same time three different characters; the dignity of a Judge of the Goddesses, the Lover of Helen, and the conqueror of Achilles. A statue in which you endeavour to unite stately dignity, youthful elegance, and stern valour, must surely possess none of these to any eminent degree. (79)

According to Reynolds, a figure compounded of various qualities is bounded by the limits of representation, yet such a union, in spite of its difficulty, is an imaginative ideal. “The summit of excellence,” Reynolds repeats, “seems to be an assemblage of contrary qualities” (79). The assemblage of *contrary* qualities is against the spirit of the “Hauptkarakter” and the selective organization into a whole of only what is essential to and consistent with the representation of a figure or general object. It also suggests a simply general effect. While this ideal style rests upon a union of various excellent qualities derived from various figures, Reynolds admits two styles in which various excellent qualities might be subordinated: the “ornamental” and the “characteristical.”

When Reynolds speaks of the ornamental style he is referring to Dutch art, or a naturalistic style that is overly abundant in details. Of the other, Reynolds says that it is *inferior* but crucially accepts that it “has still great merit, because it shews that those who cultivated it were men of lively and vigorous imagination. This... may be called the original or characteristic style” (84-85). Reynolds’s remarks on this style are limited. He says that by it there is a perfect correspondence between the parts and the whole and that such a style is replete with expression. Leaving the ornamental style aside, he recommends either the great or the “characteristical” modes to his students: “The object of the first is, to combine the higher excellencies and embellish them to the greatest advantage; of the other, to carry one of these excellencies to the highest degree” (89).

Finally we turn to Hazlitt. Hazlitt does not explicitly claim affiliation with prior theories of the characteristic from the German tradition but he commonly uses that word as a descriptive adjective for the type and degree of expression to be realized by the artist, as when he lauds the Greek statues of the Apollo and the like for their “characteristic expression” or certain portraiture for its “characteristic essence” (*Works* 18: 82; *Criticisms* 87). I use the term because it best encapsulates in a word Hazlitt’s aesthetic theory, especially as it is produced as a response to Reynolds, such as against confusing excellences, as reinterpreting the theory of the ideal, emphasizing expression over pure formalism, and fixating on the veracity of the representation of a character (sculptural, pictorial, or literal) to its idea, i.e. that predominant quality, “Hauptkarakter,” expressed throughout.

It is likely, as I suggested, that the concept of the characteristic was adopted into British arts and letters by Fuseli and Reynolds, the great Royal Academicians of the age,

and later engaged by Hazlitt who attended and read the lectures of each. Further, Hazlitt fits neatly into the above tradition of theories of the characteristic. Every major subject of his philosophical criticism, on selectiveness of details, expression, and the high esteem of portrait painting for its encapsulation of the above subjects (those very subjects which have concerned theorists of the characteristic, from Hirt to Fuseli, and which I take to be foundational to the theory), points to Hazlitt as the heir of this tradition, for these same subjects are the cornerstones in the vast architecture of Hazlitt's own philosophical criticism. While they can all certainly be read discretely as different points, I argue that together they constellate a progeneration of characteristic theory and are best understood in the context of the inheritance of that tradition. While there are variations in how the characteristic has been approached by its theorists, for Hazlitt and his predecessors it is essentially a selective expression of what is most significant in an object, the result of which is a union of general effect with particular detail. This concern is ubiquitous in Hazlitt's criticism and is first addressed in Hazlitt's reaction to Reynolds's generalizing theory of the ideal.

III. The Ideal and Abstraction

Hazlitt's most formidable achievement in matters of art criticism is in his reaction to Sir Joshua Reynolds's theory of the ideal, the ballyhooed "Great Style," as Sir Joshua articulated it in his *Discourses on Art*. Howsoever audacious Hazlitt's acerbic responses, found throughout a range of articles and essays, it is in his reinterpretation of Reynolds's theory of the ideal in art as a matter of the characteristic, a reconciliation of individual

details and general significant effect, that he shows his quality as a philosophical critic.⁹⁶ Notably, I argue that Hazlitt does not dismiss outright abstraction as he reads it in the theory of the ideal, where it functions as a process of generalization from all particularities; nor does he read it antithetically as a process of “individuation,” as argued by Roy Park (“Painter as Critic” 1073). Rather, in complement to theories of the characteristic, Hazlitt, in an attempt to mediate between the general and the particular, instantiates abstraction in his own criticism as a process of selectiveness.

The *Discourses* are a series of lectures that were delivered at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790. Stanley P. Chase, in his study “Hazlitt as a Critic of Art” (1924), is one such individual who approaches Hazlitt by Reynolds, and he says of the lectures that they are “what was undoubtedly the generally accepted doctrine of the arts in England up to the time of Turner” and that they are, next to Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of Poets* and the *Preface to Shakespeare*, “probably the weightiest critical document produced in England in the age of Johnson” (180).⁹⁷ I would add to the list of weighty critical documents on art during this time Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics*, Addison’s papers, and Burke’s *Enquiry*. But what distinguishes Chase’s list from a more comprehensive one is the artistic mode after which he means to argue. He explains that the *Discourses* serve “to relate Hazlitt’s criticism to the classical tradition of the

⁹⁶ Hazlitt is not the first Romantic to respond to Reynolds with some disdain. Blake’s marginalia to the *Discourses* is famous for such accusations as, “This Man was Hired to Depress Art,” and “To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess” (*Discourses* 284, 289). These tacitly *ad hominem* scribbles are among the least discourteous remarks he penned. Hazlitt shared with Blake a suspicion of the Royal Academy and its rules and, more importantly, disagreed with the abstraction from particularity that Reynolds espoused.

⁹⁷ It is worth restating the great authority of the *Discourses* and their lecturer. In *The Aesthetics of William Hazlitt: A Study of the Philosophical Basis of his Criticism*, Elizabeth Schneider writes that “Sir Joshua Reynolds’s *Discourses on Art* are the most important pronouncement in England from the eighteenth-century standpoint, upon the representative arts” (50). Bate in *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* says that “Reynolds’s *Discourses* comprise perhaps the most representative single embodiment in English of eighteenth-century aesthetic principles” (79).

eighteenth century—a tradition extending back to the Renaissance and derived ultimately, of course, from Aristotle” (180).⁹⁸

A disciple of the classical Elgin Marbles and liable to reference traditional eighteenth-century canons like Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and Pope’s *Essay on Criticism*, Hazlitt hardly seems like the bannerman who would draw against a neoclassical host. It is also true that Sir Joshua does not always stand sentinel for the old guard, as many assume he was wont.⁹⁹ It does rather seem that Hazlitt like Reynolds bears the weight of the Aristotelian tradition upon him, like the doctrine that art ought to or does imitate nature, while struggling toward a theory that serves to explain modern literary and visual art. Schneider writes that the Romantic character in Hazlitt’s writing is “less in throwing over of old theories than in the new interpretation which he gave to neoclassical commonplaces” (44). The validity of her assertion is obtained in the very fact that Hazlitt distinguishes his aesthetic theory from Sir Joshua’s by using and reinterpreting the very language of the *Discourses*, with the concepts of ideal beauty, nature, and imitation presenting themselves as the most salient appropriations.

A significant argument of the *Discourses* is an extension of a Classical premise, that “all the arts receive their perfection from an ideal beauty, superior to what is to be found in individual nature” (42). This inspired form of beauty is essential to the *great*

⁹⁸ It is not in ignorance of some of the great philosophical criticism in Britain that my argument, like Chase’s, is contextualized, but in determination of the material which Hazlitt is either assuming or rejecting. It is this classical tradition, which is redefined by the Romantics, that deals with the concepts and vocabulary used by Hazlitt, of general and particular and whole and parts, as discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

⁹⁹ Walter Jackson Bate argues in *Criticism: The Major Texts* that across the *Discourses* one finds a growing emphasis on typically Romantic ideas, as on imagination and creativity (256), and again in *From Classic to Romantic* (79-92). Leonard M. Trawick likewise says in “Hazlitt, Reynolds, and the Ideal” that Reynolds “anticipates much of the Romantic demand for intensity and individuality” (241). John L. Mahoney explores the liberality and Romantic contours of Reynolds’s aesthetics in “Reynolds’s ‘Discourses on Art’: The Delicate Balance of Neoclassic Aesthetics,” in which he goes so far as to argue that Reynolds’s discussions of the power of the imagination anticipates Hazlitt (133).

style and exists more in the artist's mind than nature.¹⁰⁰ The artist perceives the imperfections, blemishes, and excrescences of nature and abstracts from them in order to intellectually distil a more perfect image. Reynolds writes that this mode of construction requires "digesting, methodizing, and comparing our observations," for it is only through a comparative correction of nature's uglier forms against her more beautiful forms that a great style can be attained and that an artist can construct "an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original" (44). The artist is not imitating nature as it is given in the world but as it ought to be, which imperative is an imagined perfection.

It follows that in shearing nature's excrescences to produce a great style, the artist must avoid or extract as many details as possible to serve the greater effect, for "the whole beauty and grandeur of the art consists," says Reynolds, "in being able to get above singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind" (44). Nature, in its boundless objects and details, inevitably contains blemishes and defects, and so imperfection is a precipitant of minuteness of detail. An excess of deforming varieties is checked by an allegiance to general outline and form.

¹⁰⁰ Just as often referred to as the "*grand style*" in the *Discourses*. This notion has more in common with Lockean "compound images" and "nominal essences" than Neo-Platonism. Hazlitt's criticism is a departure from Lockean abstraction, but Reynolds's theory of the ideal, or of general beauty, resembles Locke's theory of abstract ideas. As is the case with Locke's abstract ideas, Reynolds's general beauty is an *a posteriori* (subsequent to and drawn out of experience) ideal that is constructed as a generalized compound from various particular experiences. Thus whenever Reynolds refers positively to "nature," he is largely referring to the conceptual result of this distillation process. Hoyt Trowbridge too has argued in "Platonism and Sir Joshua Reynolds" that in spite of the easy comparison between Reynolds and the Neo-Platonic theories of the Renaissance, "the true philosophical affinity of Reynolds's classicism is not [with] Plato but John Locke" (1), and that "Reynolds's 'great ideal perfection and beauty' are the analogue in painting of Locke's sortal names and nominal essences" (4). As corroborated by the reference to the artist's mind in the excerpt I have cited, Trowbridge is arguing that Reynolds does not subscribe to the Renaissance view that aesthetic pleasure lies in the presentation of *transcendental* ideal forms, nor is it induced by the sort of visceral copying of Nature honed by the Dutch. It is a fictive composite existing in the imagination. Cf. Louis I. Bredvold's "The Tendency Toward Platonism in Neo-Classical Esthetics," in which Reynolds is argued to have been influenced by the Platonism of the Reverend Zachariah Mudge (1694-1769), the prebendary who taught Reynolds at Exeter (114).

Hazlitt, hired as an art critic, reviewed the *Discourses* for the *Champion* newspaper in four parts: November 27 1814 (“Introduction to an Account of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Discourses: I”), December 4 (“II: On Genius and Originality”), December 25 (“III: On the Imitation of Nature”), and January 8 1815 (“IV: On the Ideal”). It should be noted, though, that his responses to Reynolds are available at most points across the gamut of his aesthetic criticism. In the third instalment of his official review, Hazlitt formulates his contention in the form of his own definition of imitation. To throw his own definition into relief, he casts his foil affront, that “Sir Joshua’s general system may be summed up in two words,—‘*That the great style in painting consists in avoiding the details, and peculiarities of particular objects,*’” and that

The imitation of nature is the great object of art. Of course, the principles by which this imitation should be regulated, form the leading topic of Sir Joshua Reynolds’s lectures. It is certain that the mechanical imitation of individual objects, or the parts of individual objects, does not always produce beauty or grandeur; or, generally speaking that *the whole of art does not consist in copying nature*. Reynolds seems hence disposed to infer, that the whole of art consist in *not* imitating individual nature. This is also an error, and an error on the worst side. (*Works* 18: 70)

Hazlitt recognizes Reynolds’s claim that there is little beauty or even art in the mechanical imitation of particularities, be they individual objects or *parts* of individual objects. But while he allows regulation in imitation, he disputes the total abandonment of nature, that is of particular details in representation, which Reynolds accepts. Hazlitt’s own view is that the “*highest perfection of the art depends, not on the separation, but on*

the union (as far as possible) of general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy” (18: 70, my emphasis). That the highest perfection of art depends on a *union* of the general and individual is a subtlety which shall be explored shortly. What matters most at the moment is the argument that any notion of great style in art, in Hazlitt’s sense, does not consist of avoiding details as Reynolds proposes but is actualized out of them. The inclusion of details is a necessary function of imitating nature. Where nature imitated in Reynolds is a nature conceptualized as ideal, or always in the process of being corrected by the artist to the excessive point of producing fantasy, nature imitated in Hazlitt is a nature conceptualized as corrected only to the point of selecting and highlighting what is most significant. So little is the effect of gross generalizations as that of Raphael’s *Cartoons*, which Reynolds hails throughout the *Discourses* for demonstrating the great style, but, as Hazlitt says also in reference to Raphael, of merely “common sign-painting” that cannot without particularity distinguish its subject or substantial meaning (18: 71).¹⁰¹ Even those great exemplars of what Reynolds supposes as avowing the great style Hazlitt confirms are beautiful only because of their assumption of particular details.

Reynolds’s great style clearly rests on an ideal generalizing principle that assumes that the multiplicity of nature is an aggregate of imperfections. But in Hazlitt “grandeur does not consist in omitting the parts, but in connecting all the parts into a whole,” and “abstract truth or ideal perfection does not consist in rejecting the peculiarities of form, but in rejecting all those which are not consistent with the character intended to be given” (*Criticisms* 214). This inherence of consistency of character in Hazlitt’s theory of

¹⁰¹ The *Cartoons* are a series of tapestry illustrations that were highly popular from the late-eighteenth to nineteenth centuries

abstraction I shall show again in the next section in the context of middle forms and the Elgin Marbles. For now, Hazlitt is clearly departing from Reynolds's advocacy of general art and is suggesting the consummation of any truth and perfection in a kind of harmony, or at least *relation*, of whole to parts, or of general to particular.

Hazlitt's turn from Reynolds's proposition of the general impulse in art to his own argument for the individual has been termed by Roy Park as "Hazlitt's Theory of Abstraction." In "The Painter as Critic: Hazlitt's Theory of Abstraction," Park writes that around 1814 Hazlitt

developed a highly individual and revolutionary theory of abstraction that was to become the basis of his response both to life and to art. The origin of the theory can be traced back to painting, but its elaboration is the consequence of his training as a philosopher, and its application to literature in the period after 1814 is the result of his awareness of its general critical implications. Only by emphasizing the conjoint operation of philosophy and painting in the earlier part of his career—as studies preparatory to the criticism of literature—can his sudden emergence as a literary critic be satisfactorily explained. (1072)

Abstraction to Park, as he understands it in Hazlitt, means the process of individuation. In this line of argument, Hazlitt's theory of abstraction as individuation is directly *contra* Reynolds's theory of abstraction as generalization. Also, as Park suggests, Hazlitt's theory, and I think his critical *oeuvre* as a whole, arises out of various concerns and experiences and is likewise so distributed in application. If his theory of abstraction is informed by philosophy, literature, and especially painting, it is not confined to any one

endeavour by subsequent consideration.¹⁰² In regards to art, I mean to say its application extends as much to literature as it does to fine arts, however much it may particularly be influenced by the latter. This realization is more of note to the greater theoretical framework of my thesis.

Park reads Hazlitt's theory of abstraction as a process from generalization to individuation and is a great step toward a better understanding of Hazlitt's critical position. Park essentially argues that against the vagaries of generalization Hazlitt positively assumes abstraction as a process of "individuation" (1073). The resulting emphasis on "the concrete and particular" in Hazlitt's later literary criticism, Park finds, is "the consequence of his own experience of painting," in which medium the terms and realities of particularity with which Hazlitt engages are inherent (1076). Park then grants considerable space to explicate Hazlitt's theory of abstraction (as individuation) within the framework of eighteenth-century philosophical theories on the issue. Park situates Hazlitt directly against Locke and his notions of compound ideas and abstraction and sets him closer to Hobbes, Berkeley, and Hume, who thought that ideas are not abstract and general but particular (1073). Against even these three critics Hazlitt differs according to Park as he reminds us that Hazlitt is unique for practically redefining abstraction as a process of individuation rather than generalization. Strangely, as much as Park's argument relies on these epistemological theories, and as much as Hazlitt's own writings are directly informed by them, Park downplays the matter and instructs that "Hazlitt's view of abstraction cannot adequately be appreciated within the framework of eighteenth-

¹⁰² Stephen A. Larrabee, in "Hazlitt's Criticism and Greek Sculpture," argues that "By 1817 Hazlitt was so deep in aesthetic criticism that references to the fine arts began to appear with increasing frequency in his literary criticism also, for example, in the 1818-1819 *Lectures on the English Poets*" (78). For more on the broad influence and application of Hazlitt's theory, see Park, "The Painter as Critic," 1072.

century philosophical thought” (1073). However, this particular philosophical debate on abstraction and general ideas is both a source of Hazlitt’s formation of his theory of abstraction and helps to distinguish how he differs not only from Locke but from Reynolds. Further, I read abstraction in Hazlitt not as a process of individuation but of selectiveness.

To what extent the mind improves understanding by way of abstractions and generalizations was already well under discussion by Hazlitt’s time. Locke established the paradigm that held that any object is an aggregate of several qualities but the mind necessarily abstracts from those particularities over a series of experiences to form a compound image (Locke, *Essays II passim*). The phrase “compound image” I am using is inspired by a series of statements in Locke’s *Essay*, such as when he speaks of “complex *Ideas*” that are defined against simple ideas by virtue of being “compounded of *Ideas* of several kinds, put together to make a complex one; v.g. *Beauty*” (165). While something like “composite image” is just as adequate, the adjective “compound” carries the resonance of Lockean abstraction I wish to commission in the phrase, as when I use it in the context of Reynolds’s great style. Let us now take as an example something that I shall show Reynolds also using below: the nose. We begin with the profile of a face. Thinking now like Reynoldsian artists, we know that whatever the specificity of a face or faces, the concept of a profile is formed by conventional qualities corresponding to that general term. From the experience of several faces different but similar enough protuberances which we call noses are found, and so a general “nose” forms a part of the compound image of the profile of a face. Particularities are thus abstracted to general representations or what Locke calls “nominal essences” (Locke 15). This is very much,

for Locke, an epistemological and not an aesthetic concern, but it is important to Hazlitt's appropriation and conception of abstraction. Bishop Berkeley contested Locke's theory of abstraction in *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), claiming that stripping particularities cannot create new general ideas, but impoverished ones (2: 25-40). Either way, Hazlitt clearly departs from the premise of the debate by refusing to define abstraction as a process of generalization.

Hazlitt does not deny the general in his theory, but he discerns it as arising out of particulars. In "On People of Sense" he writes, "The poet describes vividly and individually, so that any general results from what he writes must be from the aggregate of well-founded particulars," which statement is arguably still consistent with Locke. But in "On Abstract Ideas," the difference between his theory of abstraction and Locke's is located in an inflection, where abstraction is to Hazlitt an exigent weakness and not a positive power of the mind as it is to Locke:

all our notions from first to last, are strictly speaking, general and abstract, not absolute and particular; and to have a perfectly distinct idea of any one individual thing, or concrete existence, either as to the parts of which it is composed, or the differences belonging to it, or the circumstances connected with it, would imply an unlimited power of comprehension in the human mind, which is impossible...Abstraction is a consequence of the limitation of the comprehensive faculty, and mixes itself more or less with every act of the mind of whatever kind. (2: 191)

The human mind itself is not so complex that it can register distinctly every mark or particular quality of an object. The concept of the profile of a face will include a

forehead, eyes, a nose, lips, and a chin, but even in the full privilege of light the portraitist does not make out the overwhelming aggregate of minute details, as in every pore or eyelash. (The difference between perception and cognition is not important here in Hazlitt). The inflection that in some part distinguishes Hazlitt's understanding of abstraction from Locke's is that Hazlitt thinks of abstraction as an unfortunate necessity, born of the deficiency of mental powers, and not a strength.¹⁰³

In the *Lectures on English Philosophy* Hazlitt disagrees with Locke's view that an abstract idea is purely general and subsequently has no reference to particular, in the sense of both actual and singular, experience. However, he also disagrees with Berkeley's view that because all ideas are particular an abstract idea is an impossibility. In "On Reason and Imagination" Hazlitt writes of his disdain for those "who have no notion of any thing but generalities," but even worse he dislikes "those who cannot for the soul of them arrive at the comprehension of an abstract idea" (12: 44). Schneider writes that in Hazlitt "abstraction begins in the mind's innate tendency to unification or whole-making, that is, in its *idealizing* tendency" (489). The extremes of either end are the purely general, indicating a vague grossness out of which too many particulars have been abstracted, and the purely particular, indicating a profusion of unified details wanting in abstraction.

Hazlitt's explicit attention to abstraction in Locke begins to reveal that his own understanding of the process is more nuanced than a conclusion of simple generalization, as Locke defines it, or simple individuation, as Park interprets it. Park acknowledges the shortcoming of his interpretation of abstraction as individuation when he considers

¹⁰³ Also in "On Abstract Ideas," Hazlitt says, "Mr Locke's method...of abstraction is by most considered as a sort of artificial refinement" (2: 191).

Hazlitt's detestation of overly particular Dutch painters, whose stylistic drawbacks Hazlitt sees as equal in flaw to that of general and ideal painters. Park writes of Hazlitt, that in a sense,

one can say his demand for particularity is unqualified...His criticism of many Dutch painters for their inability to organize detail into a plastic whole is incompatible with the view that he emphasizes the individual to the exclusion of everything else. (1080)

However, I believe that Hazlitt's view of abstraction *is* compatible with his reproach of the details of Dutch painters, who Hazlitt says have carried "this principle [of imitating particulars] into its abuse, by copying every thing they saw, and having no preference of one thing to another" (*Works* 18: 123). The confusion has precisely to do with Park's conclusion that Hazlitt's theory of abstraction is defined as a process of individuation. I argue that what the evidence above from Hazlitt shows is that abstraction positively understood is not a process of individuation but of selectiveness, and so Hazlitt's criticism of Dutch painters, and related schools that do not heed attention to the whole, is perfectly consistent with his greater views on the representative arts. Abstraction is implicit in Hazlitt when it refers to the result of that selective process that arrives at the general through the individual.

Hazlitt does not verbalize the role of selectiveness in his aesthetics but it reconciles his criticisms of both highly general and particular artists and functions as the process by which the general and particular can be reconciled. Uttara Natarajan notes in "Hazlitt, Ruskin, and Ideal Form" that "all generals, where they are aggregates of particulars, are ideal insofar as they comprise a unity, and the greater the number of

particulars comprising that unity, the greater the unity, and the more ideal” (498).

Schneider, like Chase, notes that Hazlitt “fails to recognize adequately the significance of the principle of selection” in his own theory, and that “he takes for granted that the artist must be selective” (Schneider 66, cf. Chase 190). What Hazlitt lambasts is abstraction from all particularities and individual distinctions, such as he finds in Reynolds’s dogmatic concept of the ideal, to which concept he attributes the “pedantic, servile race of artists” who, he writes in a *Champion* article on the “Character of Sir Joshua Reynolds,” “had carried the abstract principle of improving on nature to such a degree of refinement, that they left it out altogether.” This type of ideal beauty confounds “all the varieties and irregularities of form, feature, character, expression or attitude in the same artificial mould of fancied grace and fashionable insipidity” (18: 52).¹⁰⁴

Selectiveness is key to Hazlitt here because in his view an excess of either the general or particular little results in beauty. In the first instalment of his review of the *Discourses*, Hazlitt attaches his loathing of the English Academic style to Sir Joshua’s principles. He writes that the “English school of painting is universally reproached by foreigners with the slovenly and unfinished state in which they send their productions into the world” with their “neglect of the subordinate details; in other words, with aiming at *effect* only in all their works of art” (*Works* 18: 62-63). He returns to this point in the third essay, when he sets the French and English schools at extreme ends. The French err in attending to each individual detail, not considering the relation of the parts to one

¹⁰⁴ All remarks on the insipidity of fashion in Hazlitt are references to the rules and practices of the Royal Academy, which he detested. In “The Catalogue Raisonné of the British Institution,” published in the *Examiner* on November 3, 1816, Hazlitt wrote, “The English are a shop-keeping nation, and the Royal Academy are a society of hucksters in the Fine Arts, who are more tenacious of their profits as chapmen and dealers, than the honour of the Art” (18: 105); and, in the essay “On Imitation,” after railing against the mechanism of rules, he says, “The worst judges of pictures in the United Kingdom are, first, picture-dealers; next, perhaps, the Directors of the British Institution; and after them, in all probability, the Members of the Royal Academy” (4: 77).

another. “The French painters see only lines, and precise differences;—the English only general masses, and strong effects” (18: 74). Similar complaints are made elsewhere of the “littleness in a Dutch picture, where there are a vast number of distinct parts and objects, each small in itself, and leading to nothing else” (8: 39). Both French and Dutch artists “proceed from a want of real concentration and force of intellect” (18: 87). Just as particularities are *desiderata* in highly general art, intellectual unity, *via* abstraction, is wanting in Dutch and French art. A balance between both, in Hazlitt’s theory, is true ideal beauty. In this respect, Hazlitt’s view of abstraction, if understood as selectiveness and as evidenced by his writing, is perfectly consistent with his view of Dutch art.

Hazlitt writes that the Dutch painters are illustrative of the tendency of over-particularization, for while they laudably do actually imitate nature, I quote again, they have carried “this principle into its abuse, by copying every thing they say, and have no choice or preference” (18: 123). These artists also show genuine interest in and understanding of the inherent beauty of nature, and Hazlitt admits preference for Ruysdael’s sparkling waterfalls or Teniers’s boors to “the most classical or epic compositions which could have been invented out of nothing” (18: 123), though Raphael is still held in higher regard than either.¹⁰⁵ Hence, the Dutch habit of imitating all details is almost as ill regarded in its achievements as Reynolds’s precept of avoiding all particulars. Hazlitt thus believes what is expressed by the best artists is a union of the general and the particular.

¹⁰⁵ Jacob van Ruisdael (1629-1682) and David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690). John Barrell in *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* also cites this remark by Hazlitt, and then compares on the one hand Reynolds and James Barry, professor of painting at the Royal Academy previous to Reynolds and a profound figure of Irish Neoclassicism who influenced Blake, and on the other hand Hazlitt. He writes that for Barry and Reynolds, “the ideal is *conceived*; for Hazlitt, it is *discovered*” (321). While for the Neoclassicists the excellence of Raphael “is his ability to produce representations of general character,” for Hazlitt “his excellence—and it is this that makes him the pre-eminent artist, with Titian, among the moderns—is his ability to discover and to copy characters at once individual and ideal” (322).

As I will show in the next section, the “union (as far as possible) of general truth and effect with individual distinctness and accuracy” is best termed the *characteristic* style in Hazlitt. As for the extremes of highly general and highly particular styles, Hazlitt supplies his own terms. In the third instalment of the review of the *Discourses*, “The *gross* style consists in giving no details,—the *finical* in giving nothing else,” and “The union of both kinds of excellence...is that which has established the reputation of the greatest masters” (18: 71). Ideal beauty in Hazlitt unifies individual detail with general effect and does not conform to the terminal gross or finical styles. In his attack on Reynolds’s middle forms and lauding the Elgin Marbles, I see Hazlitt qualifying the element of selectiveness in his theory of abstraction when he counters with his concepts of expression and consistency of character.

IV. Form and Expression

Hazlitt develops the importance of expression in his critical outlook against Reynolds’s theory of form, where he in opposition to the notion of mixing the best qualities of various models emphasizes the singularity of figures. He also meditates on the related idea of the predominant quality of a figure, an idea which very much resembles Hirt’s “Hauptkarakter,” and suggests that it is only the selective emphasis on that predominant quality which can lead to an effect of expression. Examples from Greek statuary and the Elgin Marbles figure prominently in Hazlitt’s discussions on these matters.

The lectures of the *Discourses* deny the adequacy of a single model because nature can never offer in an instance that ostensibly superior image of the imaginative mind. Art purifies nature’s defects, and because this ideal beauty arises out of a process of comparing, compounding, and correction, beauty is always general. Sir Joshua writes

of this general and intellectual beauty that “it is an idea that subsists only in the mind; the sight never beheld it” (171). The notion of a singular model is an affront to the traditional theory of ideal beauty.¹⁰⁶ In the same respect, so is too great a fidelity to nature. He warns in the third *Discourse*, “Nature herself is not to be too closely copied” (41), for the excellences of art are to be found beyond the superabundance and gross varieties of yet perfected nature. In “On Certain Inconsistencies in Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Discourses,” Hazlitt interrogates Reynolds’s question of “what is to be understood by nature; whether it is a general and abstract idea, or an aggregate of particulars,” and perceives that Reynolds “strenuously maintains the former of these positions” (8: 131). Put another way, the question is whether nature is a general composite of typical qualities or an accumulation of all possible particulars. Implicit in Reynolds’s question is the imperative to ideal beauty, that is, to excise all imperfections and deformities contained as particularities in the organism of nature, the correction to which is a composite of the finest elements abstracted out of various models.

Hazlitt takes up again in “On Certain Inconsistencies” the issue of discriminating against particulars that deviate, according to Reynolds, from the universal rules of grandeur and ideal beauty, which deviation pollutes the canvas of the artist. Here Hazlitt is responding in particular to a trilogy of essays Reynolds wrote for *The Idler* in 1759.

Hazlitt writes,

I would say that deformity is not the being varied in the particulars, in which all things differ (for on this principle all nature, which is made up of individuals, would be a heap of deformity) but in violating general rules, in which they all or

¹⁰⁶ Hazlitt thought Reynolds a hypocrite for advocating the imitation of the ancients while commending Michelangelo for not using foreign models. Hazlitt joked, “Michael Angelo took his ideas of painting from sculpture, and Sir Joshua from Michael Angelo” (18: 83 n.1).

almost all agree. Thus there are no two noses in the world exactly alike, or without a great variety of subordinate parts, which may still be handsome, but a face without any nose at all, or a nose (like that of a mask) without any particularity in the details, would be a great deformity in art or nature. (8: 131)

The great deformity in art for Hazlitt is in a generalization, for example, of a facial feature such as a nose, where in nature no two noses are alike. The impact of the representation of a nose is in part contained in the particularity of that nose. Certainly, I think, *Cyrano de Bergerac's* nose did not move the world so much as *Cleopatra's*.¹⁰⁷

The difference between Reynolds and Hazlitt's views of abstraction is contained in the effect guaranteed by each, either grandeur by Reynolds or expression by Hazlitt. For Reynolds, grandeur, essentially a cognate term for ideal beauty, is attained by leaving out particular details, a process that distils a composite from the finest features of several models. Hazlitt too, however much he rails against the deletion of particularities in Reynolds's theory, admits selectiveness, but he means selectiveness in a singular model in order to attain expression (grandeur and expression being effects of the whole).

Hazlitt summarizes that for Reynolds grandeur consists in leaving out particular details "because those particular details are sometimes found without any grandeur of effect" (8: 131-132). But Hazlitt finds this to be absurd. He argues, "If the mere leaving out the details constituted grandeur, any one could do this: the greatest dauber would at that rate be the greatest artist" (8: 132). Further, Reynolds's logic suggests that any composite of particularities revealing grandeur of effect would then by necessity likewise

¹⁰⁷ Blaise Pascal wrote famously in his *Pensées* that had Cleopatra's nose been shorter the whole face of the world would have been altered (162). *Cyrano de Bergerac* is the eponymous large-nosed Romantic hero of Edmond Rostand's well-known play, though his feature is to him a grotesque embarrassment that hardly moves his lover.

show such a grandeur of effect. Unfortunately, this Frankenstein-esque notion is just what Reynolds has in mind when he delivers his theory of forms: central and middle.

A central form is essentially a neoclassical demonstration of a compound image.¹⁰⁸ Reynolds describes superior works of art as those of “central forms,” and says in *Discourse* III that there is a beautiful central form for every particular species (47).

Expanding on the examples that Reynolds himself gives in this section, we can imagine that the beauties of the Hercules, the Apollo, and the Gladiator constitute different kinds of central forms of the human body, each of which is a beautiful idea of that greater species which is the human body. Each of the three figures, while individually perfect, is yet the representation of a class and not of an individual. The Apollo is then not just a representation of that longhaired archer who pulled his bow upon the Achaeans, but a generic representative, in that he is the paradigm of the genre, of graceful pulchritude. Reynolds says that “in each of these classes there is one common idea which is the abstract of the various individual forms belonging to that class” (47). Thus, we can understand that the Apollo may be a composite of soft and delicate qualities of beauty that scattered asunder may be found in others, as in Paris’s noble forehead or Helen’s

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds’s ideal beauty caters to a rational, classical taste for aesthetics. His rational and classical approach to imitation is a version of none other than that of Zeuxis who, arguably, is one of the artists whom Plato has in mind when he relates his anxieties about imitation in the *Republic*. When Zeuxis failed to find a single model beautiful enough to pose for his painting of Helen, whose beauty surpassed all, he welcomed a procession of five different models out of whom he could select the finest particularities to realize a compound image of ideal beauty. Zeuxis is named a few times in *Gorgias*, 453c. (Plato 798-799). J.W. Roberts writes in *City of Sokrates: An Introduction to Classical Athens*, “Plato (*Republic* 602d) viewed the art of Apollodorus and Zeuxis, the art of appearance, with great hostility: such art could only distract from the search for knowledge of reality” (210). George J. Leonard, in *Into the Light of Things: The Art of the Commonplace from Wordsworth to John Cage*, writes, “The version of Zeuxis’ parable Sir Joshua Reynolds favoured—and which Wordsworth and his generation studied in Reynolds’s collected *Works*—appeared in Dryden’s ‘Preface’ to the translation (by William Mason) of Du Fresnoy’s *De Arte Graphica*, a Latin poem composed in Rome in 1637” (38). While Zeuxis’ method is an excellent manifestation of Reynolds’s theory of the ideal, he only mentions the Greek painter once in the *Discourses*, when he says that the artist should divest himself of all local customs and prejudices and thus, in aspiring to universal and general habits and attitudes, “he calls upon posterity to be his spectators, and says with Zeuxis, *In aeternitatem pingo* [that he painted at eternity]” (49).

white arms. The more removed this form is from particularities foreign to it, as in Paris's covetous eyes or Helen's tears of guilt, the more perfect it becomes.

A central form of a beautiful human figure compounds various qualities into an average of that class. But Reynolds then describes another kind of form, which is more general than even central forms:

though the most perfect forms of each of the general divisions of the human figure are ideal, and superior to any individual form of that class; yet the highest perfection of the human figure is not to be found in any of them. It is not in the Hercules, nor in the Gladiator, nor in the Apollo; but in that form which is taken from all, and which partakes equally of the activity of the Gladiator, of the delicacy of the Apollo, and of the muscular strength of the Hercules. For the perfect beauty in any species must combine all the characters which are beautiful in that species. (47)

Reynolds does not provide an appellation for this form, which is proposed to be illustrative of the greatest grandeur of effect, but Hazlitt in his responses calls it a "Middle form" (8: 137). Hazlitt writes in respect to Sir Joshua's "steering clear of all representations of things as they really exist," he has presented nothing but "shadowy middle forms, made up of an abstraction of all other" (18: 77-78). A middle form is an ultra species of central forms in that it further compounds the qualities of the latter, though a central form is already itself an abstraction and distillation of the finest qualities of a genus of beauty (active, delicate, or muscular). The result of such distillation, Reynolds says, is the perfect beauty in any species (47). The middle form of a flower, to take an example, might combine the carmine startle of a rose, the inflorescence of a

dahlia, and the simple stem of a tulip. The finest genera comprise the middle form of the species flower.

In Hazlitt's view, this theory of form fails as a standard of taste and beauty. He argues in "On Certain Inconsistencies" that the theory of middle forms does not so much unite different excellences as much as it produces a compromise, though which negotiation the salient effect of each excellence is bargained, for the sake of amalgamation, into what he calls a "neutral form" (8: 143). In an 1822 essay Hazlitt returns to the matter and argues that by Reynolds's principle of abstraction we "compound an artificial nature" that does not answer to "actual nature" (18: 151). He asks in repulsion why one would not in allegiance to this principle compound all objects and wonders, "Would not the thing be abominable, an abortion, and worse than the worst Dutch picture?" (18: 151). The over-generalized effect of middle forms is uglier than the over-particularization of Dutch details. He grants that "there is indeed a general principle or character to be adhered to," "but it is produced by the circumstances and idea of a *singular* model" (18: 152, my emphasis). The general principle allowed by a singular model is expression, to which consistency of character is concomitant, and it is developed through Hazlitt's rereading of singular statuary.

Hazlitt's cases for the abstraction from and for a singular model are the Apollo, the Hercules, the Mercury, and the Venus:

All these are, as it were, *personifications, essences, abstractions* of certain qualities...Instead of being abstractions of all sorts of qualities jumbled together in a neutral character, they are in the opposite sense *abstractions* of some single quality or customary combinations of qualities, leaving out all others as much as

possible, and imbuing every part with that one predominant character to the utmost. The Apollo is a representation of graceful dignity and mental power; the Hercules of bodily strength; the Mercury of swiftness; the Venus of female loveliness, and so on. (18: 159)

Whereas a middle form has the effect of neutralizing singular qualities of singular models, this characteristic form or style, called so because it abstracts to heighten the qualities of a predominant character in a model or figure, has the effect of intensification. Because each genus represents a different character, a compound of all of them would be nonsensical or hazy, which latter predicate might better be understood as “general” in the pejorative sense. As Hazlitt explains it in reference to Venus’s delicately rounded form and Diana’s sylvan stealth, “That a form combining and blending the properties of both, the downy softness of the one, with the elastic buoyancy of the other, would be more perfect than either, we no more see than that grey is the most perfect of colours” (18: 160). The ideal, as Hazlitt interprets it, “then requires a difference of character in each figure as a whole, so it expects the same character (or a corresponding one) to be stamped on each part of the figure” (18: 160). Because Diana is the goddess of the hunt, her legs ought to be more muscular and sinewy than those of Venus. Because in her erotic languor Venus’s primary attitude is recumbence, while Diana pursues her prey in exposition of harsh winds and dangers lurking in the haunts of the woods, the former’s countenance will naturally be fairer than the hardened visage of the latter.

The abstraction which Hazlitt finds so disturbing in Reynolds is more clearly defined in those essays in which the artistic and theoretical practices of compounding and averaging are examined, where the effect of these generalizing practices neutralizes the

impression of art. In “The Ideal,” published January 10, 1830 for *The Atlas* (not to be confused with “On the Ideal” of January 8, 1815 which is elsewhere cited in this chapter), Hazlitt writes

It has been usual to represent the *ideal* as an abstraction of general nature, or as a *mean* or average proportion between different qualities and faculties, which, instead of carrying any one to the highest point of perfection or satisfaction, would only neutralise and damp the impression. (20: 303)

In accordance with such a procedure, any magnitude of quality would be “neutralised” by a central tendency across similar such forms that are being compounded into one image. The soft feminine repose of Venus’s beauty is baffled by the assumption of Hercules’s broad shoulders, however so attractive their taut expanse on the original model, and *vice versa*.

Hazlitt means that a singular model impresses the most because it aesthetically clarifies some leading quality of which, among many other qualities, it is composed. It therefore does not betray indeterminacy or aesthetic haziness suffered by the con-fusion of qualities by blending into a composite the leading qualities from various models, as advocated by the theory of middle forms. Hazlitt writes of such expressive representation of singularity, “A thing is not more perfect by being something else, but by being more itself,” and the compounding of images “imparts the same character to all, according to a certain established or preconception in the mind.” The “amalgamation...of a number of different impressions into one” is an impoverished interpretation of ideal form because it is a simple metaphysical generalization. These middle forms, “by taking a number of things and *muddling* them all together,” do not satisfy the true representation of any

figure. Hazlitt's own characteristic style is a better ideal "by singling out some one thing or leading quality of an object and making it the pervading and regulating principle of all the rest, so as to produce greatest strength and harmony of effect" (20: 303-304).

Reynolds's ideal, especially as interpreted through the theory of middle forms, eliminates not only particular circumstances, as of place or situation, but also erases character.

Middle forms pretend to unite, but rather have the effect of blending all character into a non-descript figure of general, or vague, conception.

Hazlitt takes even works of classical antiquity to demonstrate the integrity of his own Romantic aesthetic theory. Wright argues that both Hazlitt and Ruskin disagreed with Reynolds's concept of generalized nature and ignorance of particular nature, yet both in "attacking the ideal form saw the dangers of the other extreme—over-fidelity to detail—and sought a *via media*," or a middle road to reconcile particular qualities with general effect. Because Hazlitt refutes the theory of middle forms, which effect a natural average by compounding all excellent qualities, Hazlitt, Wright further argues,

"propounded the idea that the ideal is actually the extreme rather than the mean" (513).

Reynolds, as shown above, traces his principles, like the ideal and middle forms, to Greek precepts that he derives largely from classical statuary, and Hazlitt's reinterpretation of the ideal, and the issue of the fidelity to nature against generalization, is played out in a direct reading of Greek statuary. In the extended *Encyclopaedia* article on the Fine Arts, Hazlitt writes that "the common notion of the *ideal*, as something quite distinct from *actual* nature" arises out of "the perfection of Greek statues." Hazlitt says that because there is nothing in the modern world that still corresponds to the unique and exquisite beauty and grandeur of these fine forms and symmetrical figures, it has been assumed

that the Greek statues must have “been created from the idea existing in the artist’s mind, and could not have been copied from anything existing in nature. The contrary, however, is the fact” (18: 112). The forms of Greek statues are not imaginative abstractions but are as local and national as any sitter of a Dutch portrait. This is especially true in the case of the Elgin Marbles.

The Elgin Marbles are to Hazlitt a supreme illustration of the heightening of a predominant characteristic, for as a set they both present particular and significant details and attain a desirable general effect. Hazlitt announced in the *Examiner*, “The Elgin Marbles are the best answer to Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Discourses,” and their style is none other than that of nature.¹⁰⁹ The “Elgin Marbles are in their essence and their perfection casts from nature—from fine nature...not from an idea in the artist’s mind abstracted from all objects in nature” (18: 100). The marble sculptures represented the height of classical art and the perfect rational style Reynolds propounds, yet they are assumed by Hazlitt, because of their simultaneous grandeur of effect and great detail, as a direct contradiction of Reynolds’s theories of the ideal and middle forms. Hazlitt’s lengthiest appraisal of the sculptures is in “On the Elgin Marbles” of *The London Magazine*. He likens the figures of the Marbles to petrified human figures, for “they have every appearance of absolute *fac-similes* or casts taken from nature” (18: 145). Every detail, mass, form, and action from the Marbles is naturalistic, so that in the swell of a calf muscle the “distinction and union of all the parts, and the effect of action every where impressed on the external form” deceives one into imagining the marble is a flexible substance (18: 145). Hazlitt’s description is wonderfully evocative: “It seems here as if

¹⁰⁹ This is taken from “The Elgin Marbles,” published in *The Examiner* on June 16, 1816. It is not to be confused with the essay cited right below, “On the Elgin Marbles,” which was published for *The London Magazine* in February of 1822.

stone could move: where one muscle is strained, another is relaxed, where one part is raised, another sinks in, just as in the ocean, where the waves are lifted up in one place, they sink proportionally low in the next” (18: 148). In comparison to such natural, particular, and graceful figures, Sir Joshua’s picture of *Puck* (1789) looks mannered, unreal, and hazy: “The fingers are mere *spuds*, and we doubt whether any one can make out whether there are four toes or five allowed to each of the feet” (18: 148).¹¹⁰ An examination of the painting shows that if any numerical disagreement exists in the pedal digits of Sir Joshua’s *Puck*, it is in the possible excess upon the left foot. Still, the backdrop and central figure are sketchy and slightly impressionistic, and *Puck* is given the plumpish pallidity of a cherub without much else detail. The Marbles’ figures rather show a harmony of motion, effect, and countenance, and, as Hazlitt says, “display the same character” throughout each figure (18: 148).

The contradiction presented by the Marbles to Reynolds’s theories is thus twofold. The first contradiction is to Reynolds’s aesthetic precept that the ideal or grandeur of effect depends on the exclusion of details. But Hazlitt says that in the Elgin Marbles the “largest masses and the grandest outline are consistent with the utmost delicacy of finishing in the parts” (8: 145), all without an indefinite abstraction from anything which exists in nature. What fineness exists in the figures is not the product of a general image compounded by the mind, but, within singular models, from nature itself. This notion takes us to the next contradiction; that in opposition to middle forms. Even strength and activity, which would seem to benefit from aggregation, “do not depend on

¹¹⁰ Reynolds’s painting is intended to be an illustration of Robin Goodfellow (Puck) from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the knavish sprite and mischief-maker who serves the faery king Oberon.

the middle form; and the middle form is to be sacrificed to the representation of these positive qualities” (8: 141). Hence,

The *ideal* is only the selecting a particular form which expresses most completely the idea of a given character or quality, as of beauty, strength, activity, voluptuousness, &c. and which preserves that character with the greatest consistency throughout. (18: 149)

Reynolds’s *Puck* might have approximated such an ideal if the figure’s attributes throughout had been more consistent with that of a hobgoblin.¹¹¹ Any idea in art must be individualized or defined lest it be destroyed by generalizing abstraction, where selective abstraction only heightens the effect of character.

The artist does not improve upon her subject by forcing into it the predominant characteristic of another model, which compounding would only neutralize the predominant characteristic of the first. According to Hazlitt, she ought to rather heighten the predominant characteristic of one model. Where Reynolds’s middle forms produce a cacophony, the ideal in Hazlitt’s sense carries the idea of an object or quality to its highest pitch and harmonizes the individual details, all of which are consonant to that idea, with the general effect. The abstraction to highlight the characteristic expression of a figure or form, “by removing what is irrelevant and supplying what was defective,” makes the figure or form “more itself than it was before” (*Criticisms* 358).¹¹² Expanding

¹¹¹ Another example of this ideal is in Hazlitt’s citation of Hogarth, whose Gothic resolution, Hazlitt says, would require little justification if he gave Charon bandy legs, because “watermen are generally bandy-legged” (8: 141). Coleridge likened Hogarth’s pictures of people to those of Shakespeare’s descriptions (*CM* 2: 816), and praised his “character-painting” (*CL* 2: 1134). He does not describe Hogarth’s pictures as caricature, and the difference between character and caricature will be discussed in the next section.

¹¹² This phrase, “characteristic expression,” can be found in a variety of nineteenth-century sources, some of which also point to a reconciliation of Italian generality and Dutch particularity. These uses are vaguely critical and lack the philosophical investment of Hazlitt’s use, and it is not clear where they originate. For example, Sir Joshua Bell in *Essays on the Anatomy of Expression in Painting* (1806) refers to

on Reynolds's and Hazlitt's references to the goddess of love, the predominant characteristic of Venus is soft voluptuousness, so potential varicose and callous qualities of the model must be abstracted in order to highlight that predominant characteristic; the abstraction must not work the other way as Reynolds would have it, so that various other models, of whatever predominant characteristics, are combined to the effect of a blurred (rather than sharpened) figure of erotic beauty. Any predominant quality is the expression of a figure, and its heightening is the imperative of the characteristic style.

V. Picturesque, Portraiture, and Sympathy

Hazlitt's defence of sympathy and expression, which he often pairs together, against mechanism in art, when only formal skill is advanced without feeling, is salient in his considerations of the picturesque. British picturesque theory in its later versions emphasizes expression and sympathy, those concerns that Hazlitt assumes in his own theory. Again, the characteristic for Hazlitt and his predecessors is essentially a selective expression of what is most significant in an object, the result of which is a union of general effect with particular detail. The question of significance for Hazlitt is always in the representation of some predominant or central quality that is felt as much as seen.

This type of representation is best captured by portraiture and its language abounds in

"characteristic expression" in representation (72). Michael Bryan, in the enlarged 1849 edition of his original 1816 *Dictionary of Painters and Engravers: Biographical and Critical*, uses the phrase to describe the works of many artists, including Maria Angelica Kauffman (1741-1807), who was one of the founding members of the Royal Academy. When Bryan comes to Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617-1682), he writes that by Murillo's "characteristic expression... There is little of the academy discernible in his design or composition," and, "His style may be said to hold a middle rank between the unpolished naturalness of the Flemish, and the graceful and elegant taste of the Italian school" (189). The phrase is also found casually scattered in articles in both *La Belle Assemblée* (1806-1837), a British women's publication, and the equally posh *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1731-1922), where Dr Johnson worked for some time. One of the more striking examples is in James Northcote's *Life of Titian* (1830), which Hazlitt helped write. Northcote was a painter and member of the Royal Academy who rubbed shoulders with Reynolds, in whose studio he was a pupil, John Opie, and Henry Fuseli. In *Life of Titian*, he points out the "select form of beauty" in "characteristic expression" (2: 61).

Hazlitt's criticism. Joel Haefner remarks in "'The Soul Speaking in the Face': Hazlitt's Concept of Character" that "portraiture... is the apogee of art in Hazlitt's aesthetics" (66). Haefner is working from John Kinnaird's great study, *William Hazlitt: Critic of Power*, which argues that "Portrait remains for Hazlitt the prototypical model for all expression in art," for character in Hazlitt means "*a relation of self to self*" and signifies sympathy (160-161). I believe that expression and sympathy, which are elsewhere considerable elements of Hazlitt's criticism, are related to the issue of representation of what is characteristic.¹¹³ Hazlitt suggests that the greater the sympathy and feeling in an object in art, the greater the amount of character thereby revealed. The merely general or merely particular styles sketched above are impersonal because they flatten all distinctions. Either, in the case of a general style, classical types realized out of academic precepts are given without observance to unique character or, in the case of a particular style, a mechanical superabundance of minute details is given without observance to the uniqueness of certain details that in general unity would express some feeling or character. A sympathetic approach *intensifies* a predominant quality in order to heighten the expression of character.

¹¹³ The thrust of Hazlitt's *An Essay on the Principles of Human Actions* is that imagination carries an agent out of herself into feeling for another. This sympathetic process transcends mere self-interest. For an excellent précis of this argument, see Raymond Martin and John Barresi's "Hazlitt on the Future of the Self" (1995). It is likely that Hazlitt was influenced by David Hume, who considered the imaginative capacity for sympathy in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1738); as well as by Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Hume wrote in his *Treatise*, "The force of sympathy is very remarkable. Most kinds of beauty are deriv'd from this origin" (1: 235). John L. Mahoney writes in *The Logic of Passion: The Literary Criticism of William Hazlitt* that Hazlitt "had read Hume and Smith; in fact, he was reading Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* in 1798, the year of his first meeting with Coleridge and at a time when he was working on his *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*. He is convinced that "there had been no metaphysician in this country worth the name" since Hume [*Works* 8: 65]. Hume, Smith, and Hazlitt all concluded that sympathy, rooted in the imagination, is a key in human response" (34). For a better sense of Hazlitt's position in the greater tradition of writings on sympathy, see the introduction to Meghan Marie Hammond and Sue J. Kim's *Rethinking Empathy through Literature* (1-13).

Alongside a commitment to variety and locality, the picturesque, especially in its later literary development beyond instructions for landscape gardening, invokes sympathy and thereby further distances itself from pure neoclassical formalism. The essay “On the Picturesque and the Ideal” reveals that Hazlitt’s understanding of the picturesque is perfectly Romantic. By this I mean that while he understands the picturesque to denote variety, saliencies, and complexity, he also understands its quaint streams to run a bit cold. The art-historical picturesque, whether by the crags of savage Rosa or Gilpin’s sketches, is surface, or merely aesthetic, in its decisive asymmetry and variety. In the *Biographia*, Coleridge criticizes the coldness of certain poets for their “impassioned flow, or picturesque arrangement” (*BL* 2: 33). Ruskin likewise condemns this surface-picturesque in relation to what he in *Modern Painters* calls the “Turnerian Picturesque,” which bears quite some resemblance to Hazlitt’s notion of expression.

The non-Romantic picturesque is without heart or expression. As Malcolm Andrews points out in *The Search for the Picturesque*, picturesque pleasures were principally offered to serve the leisure of élite connoisseurs whose “full aesthetic engagement with a wild landscape and its inhabitants entailed a corresponding moral detachment” (236). The scenes of rustic decay are not reconciled with humane sympathies. Gilpin’s aesthetic fascination with ruined abbeys and charred stone led him to call Oliver Cromwell, that genocidal tyrant who wreaked destruction and bloodglut across the British Isles, a “picturesque genius” (qtd. in Andrews 47). While the lower picturesque ideal is heartless by virtue of making all of its phenomena merely aesthetically delightful, without consideration of the emotional meaning of any object, Turner’s picturesque shows that the “painter has communion of heart with his subject”

(Ruskin 23: 25). Turner's windmills and villages evoke the melancholy of the poverty implied by the ruins and disorder amongst which the inhabitants of his paintings reside. The subject of Turner's picturesque is infused with sympathy and expressions of life and suffering.

Picturesque theory thus contains the elements of the characteristic, as Hipple mentions, and of sympathy which are essential to Hazlitt's own critical situation. Hazlitt consequently regards Claude, according to art history the picturesque painter *par excellence*, as ideal rather than picturesque. Hazlitt writes, "I imagine that Rubens's landscapes are picturesque: Claude's are *ideal*. Rubens is always in extremes: Claude in the middle" (8: 320). Rubens is picturesque because the forms he paints have "a prominence and a distinctive character" about them, and he carries "one peculiar quality or feature of nature" to the extreme (8: 318). But Hazlitt thinks Claude is representative of Reynolds's ideal because all is balanced and harmonized to such a degree that no one thing is salient and all softly falls into a delicate mist. The ideal here pleases, but "the picturesque is merely a sharper and bolder impression of reality" (8: 320). The picturesque is individual, and the "individual, the characteristic in painting, is that which is in a marked manner" and "is truth," while the ideal is general and "is good" in that it delights (8: 321). When Hazlitt writes that the end of "the characteristic" is "truth," he speaks of it in the manner of Hirt and Goethe, as the suitability of individual shapes to the whole being represented. Claude is not allowed the appellation of a picturesque painter because he is "in the middle," and his paintings have no marked and individual expression. In the essay "On Gusto," Hazlitt says of Claude's landscapes that they

resemble a mirror or a microscope. To the eye only they are more perfect than any other landscapes that ever were or will be painted; but they lay an equal stress on all visible impressions...his eye wanted imagination: it did not strongly sympathise with his other faculties. He saw the atmosphere, but he did not feel it.
(4: 79)

Ideal (general) art is much like Dutch (particular) art, as neither is defined by characteristic expression nor impregnated with feeling. Reynolds's ideal style is then as mechanical as the microscopic and finical Dutch style. As Hazlitt understands them, Rubens's picturesque is differentiated from Claude's ideal by an absence of some leading quality in the latter, which leading quality or mark is the artist's infusion of passion and, concomitantly, interest in her subject. Hazlitt's notions of character and expression thus contain an ethical register, for bereft of them the artist treats her work in moral detachment, and the middle style in which all things are generalized and compounded, where in perceptual removal "an equal stress" is laid "on all visible impressions," indicates truly a lack of sympathy with any one of them. The greater an artist's sympathy with her work, the more expressive that work becomes as indicated by some marked characteristic taken to an extreme.

Hazlitt's theoretical mandate for artistic production is that art ought to carry a central characteristic to the highest degree of expression, and his attempted mediation between the neoclassical ideal and the picturesque shows the want of sympathy in both. This want is satisfied by portraiture. The rather peripheral attention paid by Fuseli and Reynolds to the connection between the inherent demand for particularity and characteristics in portraiture and the characteristic style itself is a connection held under

direct gaze by Hazlitt. Hazlitt maintains that portrait painting is “a *bona fide* art” which at its best “contains the fullest representation of individual nature,” and that it is nothing less than “the biography of the pencil, and he who gives most of the peculiarities and details, with most of the general character—that is of *keeping*—is the best biographer, and the best portrait-painter” (18: 74-75). Bruce Haley, in “Hazlitt’s Portraits: The Informing Principle,” writes that the Regency period saw portraiture’s cultural ascendancy in England, and even the *Boydell Shakespeare Gallery*, an effort to foster in Britain an indigenous school of history painting, was reviewed favourably as a school of portrait painting (86).¹¹⁴ I suggested above the role of sympathy in Hazlitt’s formulation of expression and how this aesthetic model differs from affectively colder aesthetics that do not infuse a work of art with feeling or discern a predominant characteristic. I wish to now develop the importance of portraiture to Hazlitt’s aesthetics, particularly in respect to the concept of the characteristic after which I have been arguing, by showing within it the relevance of sympathy.

Because of portraiture’s focus on a singular model and attempt to express something unique about a character though certain physiognomic qualities particular to her, this type of painting figures prominently in Hazlitt’s esteem. Unlike in Academic history paintings, where any of the stock neoclassical figures can receive the appellation of any god or hero without change to the character’s physiognomy, portraiture requires details unique to and consistent with a character. Because of the emphasis on the personal in portrait painting Haley argues that it is the most Romantic of the visual arts as it is in this sense most analogous to a lyrical poem (89). Portraiture is thus premised first on

¹¹⁴ For more on the rise of portraiture in Britain during the Romantic period see Elizabeth A. Fay’s *Fashioning Faces: The Portraitive Mode in British Romanticism* (2010).

feeling and second on technique or formalism. Or better yet, the formal qualities of portraiture, among other works of the characteristic style, are purposeful for the sake of expression and feeling.

As to why portraiture might be paradigmatic of the characteristic, Hazlitt is quite explicit. He writes that the portrait painter is “much less liable than the historical painter to deviate into the extremes of manner and affectation; for he cannot discard nature altogether, under the excuse that *she only puts him out*. He must meet her, face to face” (53). A portraitist must imitate a real image before her, with all visible and suspected characteristic peculiarities, and cannot draw from prefigured ideal forms received from iconic figures as in traditional history painting. In “On the Ideal,” a similar point is made again when he writes,

The concrete, and not the abstract, is the object of painting, and of all the works of imagination. History-painting is *imaginary* portrait-painting. The portrait-painter gives you an individual such as he is in himself, and vouches for the truth of the likeness as a matter of fact: the historical painter gives you the individual such as he is like to be. (78)

In this essay Hazlitt is speaking of history painting as he thinks it ought to be. Portrait painting is allowed immediate data with which to work and out of which to highlight some predominant quality, while the history painter must imagine what that characteristic might be. That history painting is spoken of here as Hazlitt thinks it ought to be is especially marked when he in the same paragraph derides the historical painter who leaves out “such particulars as are inconsistent with the pre-conceived idea” (18: 78).

Note, that it is in this essay, in the context of portraiture, that Hazlitt lavishes praise upon the Elgin Marbles as particular and ideal.

History painting, when ideal in Hazlitt's sense, is as concerned with individual nature as portraiture, but differs only in the absence of an immediate model to be imitated. History too must have a "marked and decided character, and not a character of indifference: and as the gestures and expression are consistent with themselves, not as they are common to others," for the "keeping in character, not the want in character, is the essence of history" (18: 78). The best of general characters in history painting are composed of and defined by individual peculiarities, and the consistency of these various qualities within each figure best comprises an expressive whole, rather than foreign qualities compelled by modish precepts. Hence, in the essay immediately prior, "On the Imitation of Nature," Hazlitt disagrees vehemently with Reynolds that "with regards to EXPRESSION...*the perfection of imitation consists in giving the general idea or character, not the peculiarities of individuals,*" securing the caveat, "We do not think this rule at all well-founded with respect to portrait painting, nor applicable to history to the extent to which Sir Joshua carries it" (18: 74).

Hazlitt most clearly conceptualizes his view of sympathy in the *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805), which formulates a notion of the "sympathetic imagination" against the Hobbesian view of inherently selfish human nature and the egocentric imagination of fellow Romantics like Wordsworth.¹¹⁵ Besides some counter streams of eighteenth-century British psychology, excepting his inspiration by Adam Smith, whom he resembles, Hazlitt is unnerved by the Cumbrian bard's artistic self-

¹¹⁵ For the background on notions of sympathy in Romantic conceptions of imagination, see Bate's "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism." Even here, Bate notes that for the Romantics the preeminent example of the sympathetic imagination is Shakespeare (114).

centredness, whereby the ego is so great that every character in the poetry is merely an inflection of the poet. Chiding Wordsworth's aspirations, Hazlitt writes that "The recluse, the pastor, and the pedlar, are three persons in one poet" (4: 113). Wordsworth's poet self is "the reverse of the camelion; for it does not borrow, but lends its colour to all about it" (8: 43).¹¹⁶ Like Coleridge, who ironically could not see Wordsworth's egoism past his own head, Hazlitt thought Shakespeare a sympathetic poet because he could enter into vastly different characters, itself an act of sympathy, and make a character like Othello sympathetic, an act related to but different from the first. J.D. O'Hara is right to point out in "Hazlitt and the Functions of the Imagination" that while the importance of sympathy in Hazlitt's understanding of the imagination is undeniable, "it does not by any means sum up Hazlitt's ideas about the imagination as an aesthetic or creative faculty" (552). Sympathy alone cannot create art, and such a reign as O'Hara grips checks the buck of exaggeration. But sympathy is inseparable from Hazlitt's understanding of character, and that category in turn from portraiture. To acknowledge sympathy in the theory of the characteristic, I turn for a moment to that cartoonish spectre that haunts the otherwise dignified illustrations of extreme expression, character, and portraiture: caricature.

Caricature, *prima facie*, as an accentuation of a characteristic or striking physiognomic feature, is perfectly representative of characteristic expression.¹¹⁷ Yet

¹¹⁶ Similarly, Keats wrote in an 1817 letter to Richard Woodhouse of a "camelion Poet," one who, like Shakespeare, assumes any character and whose personality is selfless and colourless (*Letters* 386-387).

¹¹⁷ E.H. Gombrich and Ernst Kris pursued a study of caricature that traced its development from the late Renaissance to the twentieth century in "The Principles of Caricature." They discuss some of the oldest descriptions of caricature in Giovanni Atanasio Mosini's *Diverse figure* (1646), Giovanni Petro Bellori's *Le vite de pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* (1672), and Filippo Baldinucci's *Vocabulario Toscano dell' arte del disegno* (1681). They write that in caricature, "The weakest features are exaggerated and this serves to unmask the victim," and that caricature "is a likeness more true than mere imitation could be. And caricature, showing more of the essential, is truer than reality itself" (319). They expanded on these views in their book, *Caricature* (1940). Louis Rose, in "Daumier in Vienna: Ernst Kris, E.H. Gombrich, and the Politics of Culture," focuses on Ernst and Gombrich's roles as propaganda analysts in their studies of

Hazlitt would not associate James Gillray's prints of John Bull with Shakespeare's portrayal of Falstaff.¹¹⁸ Hazlitt remarks on caricature when writing of Reynolds's famous portrait of Samuel Johnson, affectionately nicknamed "Blinking Sam" because of the near-sightedness on display in Dr Johnson's strained epi-ocular grasp of a book.¹¹⁹ Here Reynolds is actually praised for his depiction, just as Boswell is for introducing to his biography the scene he orchestrates between Johnson and his Whig-rival Jack Wilkes. Reynolds did not blunder by giving a fashionable representation, "as we see of some modern poets in some modern magazines," where dilettantes "naturally look for the same selection of beauties in a portrait" (18: 75). This sort of fashionable portrait is an ignorant affectation "to the dignified rank of historical portrait," in that it assumes standard criteria for beauty. Of these portraits which reveal more about fashion than the sitter, and these history paintings which rely on compound and stock images, Hazlitt writes that "they are merely *caricature transposed*: that is, as the caricaturist makes a mouth wider than it really is, so the painter of *flattering likenesses* (as they are termed) make it not so wide, by a process just as mechanical and more insipid" (18: 75). Caricature and "ideal" images

caricature and its politics. Charles Baudelaire's "The Essence of Laughter" (1855, *L'essence du Rire*) is the first modern treatment of caricature, where it is regarded as comical, ironic, and grotesque. Similarly, Karl Rosenkranz famously assayed caricature in his 1853 *Aesthetics of Ugliness* (*Aesthetik des Hässlichen*) and argued that caricature in literature and art presents a comic disproportion between a representation and its object and is an offensive and powerful political force. It seems that after Rosenkranz, most discussions of caricature contextualize it within an aesthetics of the ugly or grotesque. Hegel, who as an objectivist dismissed Hirt and Goethe's theory of the characteristic in his own aesthetics because it was too premised on emotion, also happens to mention caricature. Douglas Moggach in *Politics, Religion, and Art: Hegelian Debates* says that Hegel opposed "fantastic caricature" to what he thought was the "true Ideal" (247 n. 32; Hegel 1: 295). Many caricaturists were practicing in especially eighteenth-century Britain, like George Cruikshank, Hogarth, James Gillray (see note below), and Thomas Rowlandson. The first book to be published on caricature in Britain is Mary Darly's *A Book of Caricatures* (c. 1762), and the first historical treatment in Britain may be Thomas Wright's *A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art* (1875). E.M. Forster notes that "flat characters" in the seventeenth-century were sometimes called either "humours" or "caricatures" (73).

¹¹⁸ James Gillray (1756-1815) was a popular political and social caricaturist.

¹¹⁹ This is recounted in one of the many notes in Hester Thrale's classic *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson* (1786, 313).

have in common an *exaggeration* of qualities, the former comedic and the latter pathetic. Both are fantastical and removed from nature.¹²⁰ Further, both take a superfluity and exaggerate it so that the representation becomes *unnatural*, whether it be a grotesque forehead or inscrutable herculeanism.

Again, caricature and fashionable “ideal” portraits are, as Hazlitt says, mechanical. We can similarly say that they are merely stylistic ploys that render an image that ceases to resemble nature. True portraiture, Hazlitt follows the above comments, consists in “seizing the predominant form or expression, and preserving it with truth throughout every part,” and “the number of individual peculiarities, as long as they are true to nature, cannot lessen, but must add to the strength of the impression” (18: 75). The divorce from nature in caricature and fashionable portraits is evident, as is the subsequent lack of a consistent principle to which all the other parts are modified *in respect to* character. Reynolds succeeds in drawing out well Johnson’s “sluggishness of outward appearance...that absorption of faculty, and look of purblind reflection, which were characteristic of his mind. The accidental discomposure of his wig indicates his habits” (18: 76). The artist here has felt the manifold characteristics of the subject and avoided mechanism by staying true to the subject’s character.

¹²⁰ Hegel notes in his *Aesthetics* that Hirt too says that while what is caricatured might be a characteristic, the specific character is so exaggerated to absurdity that it becomes an unnatural superfluity and is thus ultimately not properly characteristic (18-19). In respect to the extremes of caricature and the ideal, we can consider the difference between Jacques-Louis David’s portrait *Napoleon at the Saint-Bernard Pass* (1801) and James Gillray’s cartoon *The Plum Pudding in Danger* (1805). In David, Napoleon is represented in a heroic neoclassic style, pointing westward toward the yet unconquered world, in full military regalia (the dress of the *Chasseurs à Cheval de la Garde Impériale*), while his chivalric horse whinnies in excitement. Napoleon here is almost a mythological force. In Gillray, those same attributes of heroism and conquest exist, but are exaggerated the other way, i.e. comically by the now ridiculously sized bicorn that dominates the figure of *le petit général* and his maniacal imperialism reduced to the action of slicing of a globe-pudding—thus rendering him quixotic and bathetic rather than heroic and pathetic. Both are equally fantastical.

In “On the Elgin Marbles,” when Hazlitt there too discusses portraiture, he writes about “the scope of feeling required to sympathize with the critical and powerful movements of passion” (18: 161). While the passions that need to be caught by the artist can be shown in the body, “The face...is the throne of expression” (18: 161). Here, the mechanism of an aesthetic mode such as Reynolds’s ideal or a fashionable or caricaturistic style fail to determine characteristic expression, for,

it is not only necessary to see the effects, but to discern the cause, in order to make the one true to the other. No painter gives more of intellectual or impassioned appearances than he understands or feels. It is an axiom in painting, that sympathy is indispensable to truth of expression. Without it, you get only caricatures, which are not the thing. (18: 161-162)

The paintings in Lucien Buonaparte’s collections, in an essay by a similar name, are revealing of the unfeeling portraits of which Hazlitt speaks in this remark.¹²¹

Buonaparte’s pictures are “the very *priggism* of portrait-painting,” for in the typically French style they depict all life as still life “by the same mechanical process by which that which has neither life nor motion may be represented” (18: 85). Most importantly, it is not possible “to imitate the human countenance, which is moveable and animated, as you would imitate a piece of drapery, or a chair, or a table” (18: 85). The faces of French portraiture do not excite because they are inanimate and coldly replicated and wanting in expression. Noting the desideratum, Hazlitt writes, “Expression is therefore only caught by sympathy,” and, “Without the indications of the mind breathed into the countenance and moulding the features, the whole must appear stiff, hard, mean, unconnected, and

¹²¹ Lucien Bonaparte (1775-1840) was a prince and brother of the Emperor Napoleon who helped reestablish the French Academy.

lifeless—like the mask of a face, not like the face itself” (18: 86). A portrait of Charlemagne by Bounaparte is mechanical because “the countenance has not been expanded by thought and sentiment,” nor is it drawn from “the life; which baffles the mechanical minuteness and ‘laborious foolery’” of this style of art (18: 86). The principles of mechanical art are more arithmetical than characteristic. In tending so to lines and detached parts, servile copying does not contemplate the greater general appearance into which the parts ought to be subsumed and therefore does not refer to anything actual in nature, particularly not to any notion of individual character. Expression is not foreign to a character, forced by precept, but indigenous to it.

In order to further understand the above remark on the indispensability of sympathy to truth of expression, one needs to understand Hazlitt’s personal and somewhat spiritual experience with portraiture. Haefner writes that Hazlitt had found in his experience with the portraits of Old Masters in the Louvre a conveyance of the soul of humanity, “the essence of human character,” which experience he hoped to re-convey to his readers (655). According to Haefner, character is at the root of Hazlitt’s criticism of literature and fine art and its prominence distinguishes Hazlitt’s unique meditations on the concept. A portrait depicts that throne of expression, the face, and reveals through its individual and unique parts—such as features, complexion, feelings expressed in countenance, age, class, etc.—a picture of humanity itself which confesses inner character.

The interaction between the artist and her art is suggested by Hazlitt to be analogous to the interaction between the work of art and a spectator, in that both are driven by an interest in character and sympathy. Hazlitt believed, “We do not see nature

with our eyes, but with our understandings and our hearts” (20: 388). He means by this statement that there is an affective resonance in art that cannot be portrayed by mechanical copying, and it needs an artist with a sympathetic capacity to illustrate the characteristic expression in a subject that, to a servile copyist, is beyond her merely visual and unfeeling skills. That predominant expression, “which is seen but for a moment, but dwells in the heart always...is only seized as it passes by a strong and secret sympathy” (18: 82). Without feeling, the minute circumstances which frame a character might be lost.

Feeling realizes itself in portraiture, again taking that term loosely, in the form of characteristic expression. As previously mentioned, Fuseli has also in common with Hazlitt a great admiration for Raphael, though this admiration is shared also by Reynolds. But Hazlitt objects to Reynolds’s appropriation of Raphael as a high example, in modern times, of the grand or ideal style, because Reynolds makes the essence of that style as “formed in the mind of the artist by rejecting the peculiarities of individuals, and retaining only what is common to the species” (18:114). Hazlitt’s own appreciation for Raphael is based on the artist’s skill in such works as the *School of Athens* (1509-1511), that famous fresco of all the great ancient Greek philosophers. In the *School of Athens*, one sees all the heads to be entirely copied from particular characters in nature, nearly proper for the persons and situations which he adapts them to; and he seems to me only to add and take away what may answer his purpose in little parts, features, &c., conceiving, while he had the head before him, ideal characters and expressions, which he adapts their features and peculiarities of face to. (18: 80)

Raphael, of course, did not actually have the heads before him, but he was acutely attentive to each character he painted. As Hazlitt says here, Raphael selects no more nor less than is appropriate for the person and the situation in which that person is placed. There are sundry philosophers in the picture, having much more than even discipline in common, yet each is unique in his physiognomy. Further, Raphael displays each with a unique, characteristic expression. For example, Plato, the metaphysical idealist, is aged, barefoot, and weary. His silver hair and beard evanescing into the white clouds behind him, he points a finger toward the heavens. His gesture, bringing into relief the verticality of the picture-plane, anchored only by the beautiful arches above, invokes his aery theory of ideal forms. Aristotle, by contrast, whose philosophy finds substance in the physical realms of nature and action, is youthful, dressed in gold-embroidered raiment and sandals, and walks one step apace in front of Plato as his right hand extends flatly in front of him, its palm facing downward. His youth and his pace suggest the modernity and influence of his philosophy. His gesture, by foreshortening, points directly toward the viewer, brings into relief the spatial depth in the painting, and invokes empirical concerns with the concrete particulars of earth and not general notions.

The relevance of feeling or what Hazlitt also simply calls sympathy to characteristic expression in portraiture is in the attentiveness to a character's individuality, with which both artist and viewer ought to be in communion. Hazlitt writes in "On Novel and Familiarity," "The study of individual models produces imitators and mannerists: the study of general principles produces pedants. It is feeling alone that makes up for the deficiencies of either mode of study" (12: 297). The mechanism of general forms can only depict types that have been intellectualized, and the result is

equally as mannered and cold as the mechanism of the spiritless copying of minute details in the finical style. The characteristic style reveals the bearing of insight and sympathy an artist brings to her subject and makes visible what otherwise can perhaps only be felt. The best art for Hazlitt is like portraiture in that it represents individual character or a predominant characteristic pertaining to that individual, and individual character is best represented by (characteristic) expression. Expression is nothing less than the visual representation of the thought and feeling of a subject or character as sympathetically discerned by the artist. Raphael's *School of Athens* demonstrates this perfectly, by artistically expressing notions as abstract as a *belief* in ideal forms by way of physiognomy.¹²²

Titian is another great portraitist to Hazlitt, for the significant or “characteristic” element in his work is the expressive disclosure of felt life and activity. In his famous essay “On Gusto,” Hazlitt notes that while the colour of flesh in Rubens is like that of flowers, or by other similarly mannered artists is painted like drapery, “Titian’s is like flesh, and like nothing else...The blood circulates here and there, the blue veins just appear” (4: 77). Unlike Titian, the flesh of others’ “has not the internal character, the living principle in it” (4: 77). Thus Titian’s work is not wanting in gusto, a term that is identical to characteristic expression. He writes of gusto that it is the highest degree of expression, the giving the “truth of character from the truth of feeling” (4: 77). In Titian’s flesh there is verisimilitude through particularity, but also liveliness in that representation of individual nature.

¹²² Heinrich Wölfflin, the Swiss art historian, similarly remarks on Raphael’s *Disputation of the Holy Sacrament* and *School of Athens* in *Classical Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance (Die klassische Kunst: eine Einführung in die italienische Renaissance)*: “The all-important thing was the artistic motive which expressed a physical and spiritual state, and the name of the person was a matter of indifference: no one asked what the figures *meant*, but concentrated on what they *are*” (88).

Hazlitt references the portrait painter as a discoverer of the human condition, for he “who has been working on a face for several days, still finds something new in it which he did not notice before” (9: 118). Hazlitt argues that no skill of hand nor of observation, whatever the genius of the artist, could sufficiently portray what nature, in her infinite particulars, portrays in one object, and so “We do not see nature by looking at it” (9: 118). He means here that we cannot represent nature *merely* by looking at it, nor, under the same moral and aesthetic burden, can we turn away from nature to the fanciful reliefs of imagination. As Hazlitt writes of genius and originality, where “some strong quality in the mind” answers to and brings “out some new striking quality in nature,” the impressions made upon us, in both new and unknown combinations, “must act by sympathy, and not by rule” (8: 42). Thus art “is a continual creation and, “With every stroke of the brush, a new field of inquiry is laid open” (8: 7).

It was this communion with the lifeblood of art, and its insights into humanity, that conceived in the heart of the Unitarian minister’s son the extravagant hope that a portrait of an individual character might occasion an imaginative sympathy; the very same that guided the artist’s eyes and hand. Neither simply an imaginary generalized composite, nor a priggish replication of details, the best art, like the best portrait, is a sympathetic process that selects, through feeling, the most significant qualities pertaining to a character, and jolts that incremental totality into a singular, characteristic moment of expression.

Conclusion

Before pursuing some perhaps bold statements about the consequences of my interpretation regarding the assumption of the Schlegelian *Querelle* and its fine arts analogies in British Romantic criticism, I want to state and restate some limitations to my project, the demarcation of which should help situate my contribution to the body of scholarship on British Romanticism and aesthetics that already exists. First, I offer my arguments as judgments of what I have identified variously as philosophical criticism, literary criticism, poetics, or aesthetics. I take these few appellations for the act of criticism to mean a type of science of art and literature, in the sense that a disciplined body of knowledge is being exercised in motivation of certain principles and methodologies. The central principle I have selected to examine is broadly called “unity,” and its methodology I discerned as dialectical. In relation to that principle of unity, organical in contours, I studied the trope of fine arts analogies, particularly of painting, to reveal the extent to which a theoretical understanding of that medium by some Romantic critics suggests that painting’s “involution” of particular details within a general whole is regarded as paradigmatic of a theory of unity that might analogously be devised for modern poetry. This conceptual analogy, between the aesthetic semblances of poetry and painting, arising out Schlegel’s association of modern-Romantic literature with the picturesque as against the overly abstract statuesque *Kunstwollen* of classical art and literature and culture, is a correction to the neoclassical pseudo-Aristotelian unities of drama, which until the Romantics was the prevailing theory of unity in the body of Western literary criticism. I do not feign any advantage to a scholar today in applying my methodology or results to the actual artistic output of Romantic poets. The criticism

developed by Romantic writers is substantial in its own right, as is that of every age. Criticism is necessarily an *organon*, an instrument of reasoning and discovery containing its own rules for investigation, but as a discipline it is also its own body of knowledge. I believe in Northrop Frye's view in the "Polemical Introduction" to the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) that criticism "is to art what history is to action and philosophy to wisdom: a verbal imitation of a human productive power which in itself does not speak" (12). Criticism, Frye is suggesting, needs must exist because the arts however so much they represent meaningful things cannot themselves speak an explanation to an audience. This latter task is the province of the critic, and to critics at the turn of the nineteenth century, for whom poetry "is a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it" (1138), an awful force capable of changing both individual experience and the world, a body of criticism was needed to say just these things.

I hope that my analysis of the British Romantic assumption of the *Querelle* also counters two biases against these critics that I have perceived in much scholarship I have read, that they are at the best of times simply literary critics whose contributions bear little relevance either to histories of aesthetics or even less historical art-historical criticism, and that early British Romantics are a provincial group of poets who generally did not suffer to engage much with continental thought. As to the first point, I have already noted the progress Guyer has made in his recent *A History of Modern Aesthetics* by including chapters on Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Shelley. Given the knowledge of fine arts and their theoretical underpinnings displayed by the writers discussed in this dissertation, it seems rather unfair to think there to be a hiatus in substantial and

influential philosophical criticism on the arts in Britain between Reynolds and Ruskin. This assumption of irrelevance of British Romantic critics to theories of art has been less outright stated than implied by virtue of the disregard or subordination in philosophical histories of aesthetics of Coleridge, Hazlitt, and de Quincey. In a way, by assaying the problem of literary unity, though by recourse to an analogy to fine art, these critics are, as the proverb goes, merely pouring old wine into new bottles. But then, let spill a libation to perennial philosophy, for literary and artistic criticism has always yielded the strongest and most complex draughts when dealing with that fundamental issue of unity. It is the basis of the first proper art-literary treatise in Western letters, in the form of Aristotle's *Poetics*, and needs to be continually redefined against every new age, culture, and artistic movement. In *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (trans. 1980), Tatarkiewicz argues that Romanticism is characterized by "a vital, dynamic and picturesque reality. In contrast to the static, statuary art admired by the classics, romanticism is worship of the dynamic, the tempestuous, the picturesque, the unusual" (196). Clearly influenced by the division between the classical and the modern-Romantic, and the association of the modern-Romantic with the picturesque, Tatarkiewicz is drawing attention to the essential predicates of Romantic poetry and thus, given the great significance of the concept of poetry in the period, of Romanticism itself as a movement or a *Kunstwollen*. Just as the concept of modern-Romantic poetry, meaning all art and literature, or even all imaginative activity, is dynamic and "picturesque," so too must be its critical feature of unity, rather than "statuesque" and rigid as it was in the form of the unities of time, place, and action for Academic theorists in the courts of France and Italy and in the salons of Britain. The critical endeavour of this essential feature, to regulate the new concept of

poetry, would also have to be vital, historical, particular *and* general, and imaginatively intelligible, i.e. following, after Coleridge and Hazlitt, “laws” of imagination and feeling and not just abstract reason.

While I first established the predicative details of new conceptions of poetry and art beginning as early as the French *Querelle* in order provide groundwork for correlating concepts of unity, the philosophical depth of critical conceptions of unity by British Romantics also can be read back to realize the monumental importance poetry held at the time. W.K. Wimsatt, Jr.’s “The Structure of the ‘Concrete Universal’ in Literature” (1947) lays some claims I see pertinent to this assertion. First, Wimsatt’s definition of the “concrete universal” is taken from the type of Romantic unity we are here describing. Wimsatt cites Coleridge on Shakespeare, that the excellence of the bard’s work consists in a “union and interpenetration of the universal and particular” (265), as an example of his concept. As I understand Wimsatt’s argument, a literary work, as a complex of details in an intelligible whole, is universal in its wide allowance of particulars and its open accessibility to interpretation, but concrete in that it is a sensuous presentation of otherwise abstract or even philosophical ideas of, further, “these” and not any other things. Wimsatt’s “concrete universal” refers to the unified value of a work as expressed by its structural makeup from various parts into a whole. Wimsatt writes that the matter is “one about the relations of parts and whole” and that “the complexity and unity of the poem, is also its maturity or sophistication or richness or depth, and hence its value. Complexity of form is sophistication of content” (277-278). This aesthetic comprehension of complexity is what Coleridge called “multēity in unity” or referred to as “Picturesque” unity, or what Hazlitt considered to be the “characteristic.” Wimsatt is

constantly echoing the language of the Romantic critics in writing of the concrete universal, even admitting that it is an articulation of “heterogeneous unity” (278). The apprehension of whole and parts by analysing rhetorical or pictorial structure, and then the evaluation of the work’s sophistication or value by its internal difficulties relating to those parts under a whole, suggests that theories of heterogeneous unity, as in Aristotle or the British Romantics, are both prescriptive and descriptive. The more heterogeneous that unity, the more enriched is the unified effect and value; a chariot’s wheel greater than a geometrical circle, and a portrait of intimate suffering greater than a stock image of a tragic hero.

The influence of the application of the picturesque association with modern-Romantic poetry, in distinction to the statuesque qualities of classical antiquity, by early British Romantics, if not evident in the writings of the generation of writers immediately following, is significant to the later nineteenth-century critics. In his essay on “Schiller” (1831), published in the fourteenth issue of *Fraser’s Magazine*, Thomas Carlyle writes that unlike the Europeans, the British “are troubled with no controversies on Romanticism and Classicism,—the Bowles controversy on Pope having long since evaporated without result” (13). Wellek in *Concepts of Criticism* regards Carlyle’s remark as “complacent” (149). But George Whalley, in his contribution to Eichner’s *Romantic and Its Cognates*, argues, “I cannot agree with Wellek that this represents a ‘complacent’ attitude; to the contrary, in this passage, and in many others, Carlyle shows that he was ashamed how little the English had recognized the importance of this ‘turbid fermentation of the elements,’ and how trifling a part they seemed to have played in it” (240). Walter Pater, whose reputation as a “Romantic”-Victorian essayist is perhaps even

greater than that of Carlyle, is more explicit about his regard for the debate. In the “Postscript” to his *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style* (1889), he writes, “The words, *classical* and *romantic*, although, like many other critical expressions, sometimes abused by those who have understood them too vaguely or too absolutely, yet define two real tendencies in the history of art and literature” (243). He notes that although the terms *classical* and *romantic* “have acquired an almost technical meaning, in application to certain developments of German and French taste, yet this is but one variation of an old opposition, which may be traced from the very beginning of the formation of European art and literature” (248). We know that the *critical* opposition goes back only as far back as the *Querelle*, though it is true that the *Querelle* does suggest a very early division of *Kunstwollenen* following classical antiquity. The greater point here is that the division comes as a counterpoint to French neoclassicism.

Another illusion in scholarship I would like to dispel is that the earlier British Romantics were a provincial bunch of agrarian conservatives, educated by nature and dusty old tomes, without either a self-consciousness of their place in a movement or a substantial knowledge of the current intellectual goings-on of the European continent, Coleridge being an obvious exception to the latter assumption about the lack of engagement with foreign ideas. But the others too acknowledge their participation as modern-romantics in their version of the *Querelle*, thus demonstrating their interaction with the ideas of Madame de Staël and August Schlegel, among their German predecessors.

Finally, the adoption of the Schlegelian *Querelle* in British Romanticism exhibits three topics of great importance to these critics, the relationship between which things has

not been explored before: the concept of unity, formulated by an involution of a general whole through particular parts; the importance of fine arts analogies to conceptions of unity, especially to painting or the picturesque; and Shakespeare as a critical paradigm for modern-Romantic poetry and its characteristic heterogeneous or picturesque unity.

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