Of primary importance here is the young speaker's *act* of picturing. The poem sets up a drama of choice. We humans live in a natural world characterized by cyclic revolutions. Particular identities like Matthew and his daughter Emma live and die, but their generic forms reappear. Matthew, turning from his daughter's grave, confronts, "Beside the churchyard yew, / A blooming Girl, whose hair was wet / With points of morning dew" (ll. 42–44). While in one sense she is not Emma, in another sense she is. The problem is whether to accept this recompense—and Matthew rejects it. At the poem's conclusion, we find the young speaker making the same choice: he turns back in his mind to what has disappeared, reviving his picture of Matthew. By setting this pictorial action in a context of "April Mornings," Wordsworth colors it with a pun yielding religious significance. We are reminded that nature's cycles are, in their own natural kind, resurrections: all things are reborn in the return of April morning; and they rise up glistening, offering to replace our tears with "morning dew." But the speaker, like Matthew before him, turns from this consolation. He gives himself, instead, to an unnatural resurrection.[5] For him, morning becomes mourning (and morning dew, mourning *due*); and he raises Matthew from his grave through the pictorial impulse of his own mind. It is the act of picturing which, in this poem, Wordsworth would have us find awesome. The human mind is reacting against nature. It plays God. In picturing, the mind reveals it is not of this world.

Wordsworth's pictures, then, mean beyond themselves. One only begins to learn what they mean by pressing deep, seeking out those principles of pictorial significance which lie behind the pictures in the poet's work. We must ask not only what, but also why. Unless we ask this latter question, we may not know what we are looking at.

5. See Karl Kroeber, *The Artifice of Reality* (Madison, 1964): For Wordsworth, he argues, "remembering is a creative, not a mechanical process, a human form of resurrection" (p. xix).

6

CARL WOODRING

What Coleridge Thought of Pictures

Henry Nelson Coleridge, nephew and son-in-law of the poet, praised his uncle as "an unerring judge of the merits of any serious effort in the fine arts."[1] The present brief exploration will touch on some of the ways Coleridge came to judge pictures on a wall before him.

The graphic arts came into full existence for Coleridge, as for Wordsworth,[2] from acquaintance with Sir George Beaumont in 1803. After a week with the Beaumonts at Dunmow, Essex, in February 1804, he wrote to John Rickman:

> . . . I have learnt as much fr[om] Sir George respecting Pictures & Painting and Painte[rs as] I ever learnt on any subject from any man in the same Space of Time. A man may employ time far worse than in learning how to look at a picture judiciously. [*CL*, 2:1063]

Pompous though his second sentence might seem, it may have sounded eminently debatable to the statistical assistant to Parliament who received it; more to the point, it is replete with self-discovery. The "divine" paintings owned by Sir George made Coleridge "almost an apostate to Music" (1066). Although Beaumont's Coleorton Hall was not yet completed, many of the famous paintings later to enter the National Gallery hung at Dunmow or in the Beaumont's house in Grosvenor Square, where Coleridge stayed before leaving for Malta in March. From the Beaumont collection, we can identify among Coleridge's favorites a large, detail-packed Rubens, *Autumn, Chateau de Steen*—which made

1. *TT*, 2:219 n. See the list of abbreviations at the end of this chapter.
2. Martha Hale Shackford, *Wordsworth's Interest in Painters and Painting* (Wellesley, 1945), pp. 10–18.

identifiable contributions to Constable, Crome, and Turner[3]—and a landscape by Richard Wilson, Claude-descended but throbbing with human activity, *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe.*[4] In coloring, Coleridge preferred Sir George's own landscapes to the Wilson—but then Wilson was neither his tutor nor his host. For the moment, and I think only for the moment, he was impressed by Nicolas Poussin's *Landscape, "Phocion"* (National Gallery 40) and two Claude Lorraines (*CL,* 2:1110). Given English taste for the previous hundred years, we can understand why he found it worth three exclamation marks that anybody less than a duke should own a Poussin, whether Nicolas or Gaspar.

Coleridge visited James Northcote, admired on his wall a work attributed to Bronzino, and was sketched by Northcote for a portrait, but they did not take to each other. Beaumont made possible, however, Coleridge's inspection in 1804 of several larger collections, notably that later purchased from J. J. Angerstein to form the nucleus of the National Gallery—Titian, Correggio, Sebastian del Piombo (*The Raising of Lazarus*, the first work catalogued in the national collection), both Poussins, Claude, Rubens (*The Rape of the Sabines*, NG 38), Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Aelbert Cuyp, and works attributed to Domenichino and the Carracci. Writing to Southey, Coleridge gave priority, perhaps by chance, to the collection of Lord Ashburnham, which included a Cuyp and a festival scene by Teniers. With a note from Beaumont, he visited a prominent picture-cleaner to see a Salvator Rosa and "above all the picture of St. Helena dreaming the vision of the Cross, designed by Raphael & painted by Paul Veronese." This *Saint Helena* (NG 1041) has been variously ascribed, but its diamonded pattern of diagonals has given the majority vote to Veronese and has led more professional critics than Coleridge to echo the spirit of his final remark, "That is a POEM indeed!" (*CL,* 2:1110).

The weeks with Beaumont made Coleridge alert to the sunlight and antiquities of Malta and appropriately poised for the conjunction of Rome and Washington Allston in 1806. Allston, who gave him his best chance to understand painters and Americans, also opened for him the glories of Italian churches, frescoes, and galleries. He saw for himself the

3. Sir Charles Holmes, *The National Gallery,* 3 vols. (London, 1935), 2:59–60.

4. The Wilson was destroyed by enemy action in 1944. Other versions survive in the Mellon Collection (Yale Center for British Art) and in the collection of the Earl of Ellesmere.

supremacy of Raphael and Michelangelo. He had the two greatest visual orgies of his life—and, as we shall see, something more than visual orgies—in the Sistine Chapel, with Allston as guide, and at the Campo Santo in Pisa.

In the one note that has survived from his visit to the Uffizi in the spring of 1806 he remarks of *The Holy Family* of Parmigianino there that it was reworked (*"umarbeitet,"* for *umgearbeitet*) into the *Puck* (or *Robin Goodfellow*) and *Muscipula* (or *Mouse-Trap Girl*) of Sir Joshua Reynolds. He refers, one feels confident, to parallels between the somewhat coy solemnity of the Holy Mother, similarly repeated in the face of her child, and the respectively mischievous and knowing smirks of the Reynolds Puck and Muscipula. The almost identical curls of the holy child and of Puck extend down the center of the foreheads. This line of curls, double in the Parmigianino and single in the *Puck,* has its counterpart in one straight and one curved forelock extending to the sideward glance of the *Muscipula.*[5] As the facial form and expression of the two Reynolds paintings were available in widely circulated engravings, it is impossible to tell how long Coleridge's recollection of them had persisted. He could have seen the *Puck* at Samuel Rogers's in March. He was certainly not a regular visitor at Holland House, where the *Muscipula* hung, but he could have been there at several widely separated dates. Whatever the interval, his notation shows that he did carry from painting to painting a memory of expressive design that gave him a connoisseur's recognition of Reynold's reminiscence.

On his return to England with reproductions of the Italian masters, he planned at once a series of lectures at the Royal Institution on "the Principles common to the Fine Arts." For these he needed first his "collection of Prints from the Fresco Works of Raphael" (*CL,* 2:1190–91). Thereafter, he often visited collections of art along his way; in 1808, Angerstein's again; in 1810, Burleigh House, seat of Brownlow Cecil, the Marquis of Exeter, with a rich confusion of major and minor works in 145 rooms; in 1814, various collections in Bristol, the pictures of the Marquis of Lansdowne at Bowood, and the celebrated collection of Paul Cobb Methuen at Corsham House, representative of English interest in Italian painting of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, landscape from the Poussins and after, and the later Flemish and Dutch

5. *CN,* 2:2853. The three paintings are reproduced in *CN* immediately following this entry, as plates 6–7.

painters. At Burleigh, Coleridge made note (surviving to us) only of *The Marriage of Boaz and Ruth* by Ciro Ferri (1637–89); at Corsham, among some 500 catalogued paintings he noted a Ferri and fifteen other works, including two large Rubens canvases and a Parmigianino, *Madonna and Child with Saint Jerome, Saint Mary Magdalen, and the Infant Saint John* (original in the Uffizi, identified descriptively by Coleridge as "Glass Painting looked at thro' colored Glass"[6]). The *Boaz and Ruth* stacks ingeniously one above another a delightful series of horizontals connecting triangles within diamonds; but perhaps Kathleen Coburn correctly identifies Coleridge's interest in the second Ferri as resulting from interest in the first, and his interest in the first as a resemblance between Ferri's Ruth and Sara Hutchinson (*CN*, 3:3995 n.). In any event, to exhaust the remaining evidence of Coleridge's visits to collections of art would be to mislead; the safe summary is that he visited unsystematically whatever collections opened along his irregular path.

A list of English artists that Coleridge knew but disliked or pointedly ignored (for example, Benjamin Robert Haydon) included most of those who painted portraits of him. In 1808, when John Landseer the engraver presumed upon their common ground as lecturers at the Royal Institution, Coleridge was too ill to see him and was unperturbed at the loss (*CL*, 3:50–51). He apparently gave little thought or attention to Constable or Turner. He disliked Fuseli's "horrors." He was not unique in disliking the poet Samuel Rogers but learning from Rogers's collection of paintings and drawings.[7]

He thought of Charles Robert Leslie and Samuel F. B. Morse largely as cooperative friends of the great Allston, even though Leslie "contrived to take a head of me which appears to be the most striking Likeness ever taken—perhaps, because I did not *sit* for it" (*CL*, 4:879). The remark was occasioned because Coleridge, who had not seen his daughter for five years, was confused by a picture of her—brought by Leslie for Coleridge to admire but actually by William Collins—and thought it

6. *BL*, 2:222–23; *CL*, 3:536; *CN*, 3:3995, 4227. Coleridge ascribed to John Martin the same sort of excessive accentuation: ". . . Martin never looks at nature except through bits of stained glass" (*TT*, 1:159). As early as 1799 he had made a notation to send Greenough a "Claude Lorraine [mirror] & the coloured glasses" (*CN*, 1:452). In 1803 he recorded experiments of his own, putting "the colored Glasses to my eyes as a pair of Spectacles, the red to the left, the yellow Glass to the right eye," etc. (*CN*, 1:1412).

7. G. F. Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, trans. Elizabeth Rigby, Lady Eastlake, 3 vols. (London, 1854), 2:73–82. Rogers spoke spitefully of the Beaumonts—as of almost everybody—to Coleridge's annoyance (*CL*, 2:964–65, 1093, 1098).

"the most beautiful Fancy-figure, I ever saw" (*CL*, 4:878, 892). The epithet "Fancy" here does not derogate, although it distinguishes a kind which is not portrait, not history, not genre. Assuming the picture to be by Leslie, Coleridge thought his daughter *might resemble it.* The composition, a figure seated with hands in lap, legs extended under a long dress diagonally, and feet crossed, resembles iconographically Gainsborough's portrait of Mrs. Richard Brinsley Sheridan,[8] with softening linear touches of Miss Muffett, Undine, and dreaming adolescence. After praising Collins's work for *"Natural fineness,"* as distinct from superimposed refinement, Coleridge went on: "Your landscape, too, is as exquisite in its correspondence with the figure as it is delightful to the eye, in itself" (892). Primarily, although contour would be subsumed, Coleridge's perception must rest on the interaction of tonal and color values that the eighteenth century had known as "keeping." Of such technical matters he had haphazard knowledge, but more than his untechnical language might convey.[9] He had learned especially from friends, Beaumont the earliest and Allston the most. The personal story boils down to these two. Coleridge writes to Leslie of Allston's genius, not of Leslie's talents. He seems to have regarded Benjamin West as a chilly painter and colder man, except in West's moments of championing Allston (*CL*, 3:352, 534).

Had Coleridge known no painters and seen few paintings, his theories of art might have been scarcely different. He begins at bedrock by distinguishing between imitation and copy. A copy has sameness; an imitation has sameness with difference. One of Coleridge's favorite examples, with a representative application of the distinction, appears in his statement of the principle in 1814 to the actor Charles Mathews:

> Now an *Imitation* differs from a Copy in this, that it of necessity implies & demands *difference*—whereas a Copy aims at *identity*. What a marble peach on a mantle-piece, that you take up deluded, & put down with pettish disgust, is compared with a fruit-piece of Vanhuysen's, even such is a mere *Copy* of nature compared with a true histrionic *Imitation*. A good actor is Pygmalion's Statue, a work of

8. Andrew Mellon Collection, National Gallery, Washington, D. C.

9. In "Satyrane's Letters" of 1809, revising letters of 1798–99 from Germany, he described Ratzeburg at evening, "the whole softened down into *complete keeping*, if I may borrow a term from the Painters." *The Friend*, ed. Barbara Rooke, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1969), 2:238.

exquisite *art, animated* & gifted with *motion;* but still *art,* still a species of *Poetry.*[10]

The basic distinction, noted by Petrarch, apparent in the argument of Joseph Warton and Edward Young against Richard Hurd, and explored by Adam Smith (cited by Coleridge) was carried further with the help of Schelling. It is perceptible in Aristotle, where I take it to oppose Plato's charge that imitation, in the form of impersonation in the speeches of epic and tragic poetry, conveys evil motives in persuasive form.

The distinction in itself leaves little room for the imagination to maneuver. But Coleridge has a further point to make: "Imitation is the mesothesis of Likeness and Difference," more or less as "Painting is the intermediate somewhat between a thought and a thing" (*TT,* 1:91; 2:215). The difference enters with thought. The artist thus produces "the intermediate somewhat" instead of an imitative thing. In the fine arts, Coleridge argued in his essay on method, the initiative must proceed from within (*The Friend,* 1:448–524). And notice the implication: a poem is neither an object, a thing, nor an "immediate somewhat." A poem is mental; a picture is somewhat.

When we look into Coleridge's encounters with the picturesque, we find both convention and the unique Coleridge. In 1810 every educated Englishman, and many who were uneducated, approached the visual carrying the terms *beautiful, sublime,* and *picturesque* like buckets, each filled to the sloshing point with accumulated meanings.[11] For Coleridge as for most, sublimity in painting starts with Salvator Rosa. If John Martin embodied the material sublime, and Fuseli debased it with "Diableries,"[12] Salvator married material and psychic sublimity. Salvator's pictures of battles, banditti, and blasted trees possessed also the quality that Coleridge regarded as more essential than all others to the

10. *CL,* 3:501. Similar statements occur in *TT,* 2:218–19; *BL,* 2:6, 30, 56, 185, 255–61; *CL,* 6:1038; *PL,* pp. 291–92; *ShC,* 1:115, 117, 177–78; in other lectures and marginalia, and elsewhere. A later age might say that *even* flower paintings by the Huysum family possessed some difference from a copy, but in Coleridge's day the paintings of Jan van Huysum (1682–1749) were said to "excite as much surprise by their finishing, as they excite admiration by their strict imitation of nature." John Gould, *Biographical Dictionary of Painters, Sculptors, Engravers, and Architects,* "New Edition." 2 vols. (London, 1838).

11. For a convenient bibliography, see Walter John Hipple, Jr., *The Beautiful, The Sublime, and The Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale, 1957), pp. 377–84.

12. On Martin, *CN,* 3:4227; *TT,* 1:159; on Fuseli, *CL,* 1:135; *CN,* 1:742, 954 ("a Brusher up of Convulsia & Tetanus upon innocent Canvas").

sublime: obscurity, "the half perceived, yet not fixable, resemblance of a form to some particular object of a diverse class, which resemblance we need only increase but a little, to destroy, or at least injure, its beauty-enhancing effect, and to make it a fantastic intrusion of the accidental and the arbitrary, and consequently a disturbance of the beautiful." This description of half-conscious perceptions introduces a fragmentary essay on the essence of beauty, but the process, Coleridge concludes, "might be abundantly exemplified and illustrated from the paintings of Salvator Rosa."[13] Coleridge partook, inevitably, of the growing conception of sublimity as a power of the human mind ready to dissolve the restrictive limits of any external stimulus; yet his canon of the sublime remained incongruously physical.

Nowhere does he show much interest in the two Poussins or Claude. He does not bring the rules of picturesque asymmetry to the description of landscape paintings. He takes the word *picturesque* logically, not only in William Gilpin's sense of applying principles extracted from Nicolas Poussin for the determination of actual vistas outdoors, but in the negative sense that whatever is like a picture cannot be a picture. Coleridge, in more intense observation of actual landscape than Gilpin's, incorporates the discipline of the picturesque within his own kinesthetic responses. In November 1803, reading and meditating an essay by Christian Garve, "Über einige Schönheiten der Gebirgsgegenden," he noted:

> The effect ought not to be forgotten, that from the distance in mountain Countries being so distinct, you have a continual Inducement to look forward to the distance—whereas in flat Countries you look just before you, or on each side of you, at the turn in the Road, or the Flowers in the Hedge. Now there certainly is an intellectual movement connected with looking forward / a feeling of Hope, a stirring & inquietude of Fancy—. To look down upon, to comprehend, to be above, to look forward to, are all metaphors that shew in the original feeling a resemblance to the moral meaning christened thereafter. [*CN,* 1:1675.4]

He finds in his responses to landscape the original moral meanings that he expects the painter to transfer, along with the muscular dimension of composition, into oil on canvas.

13. *BL,* 2:250. On Salvator Rosa, see also *CN,* 1:1495 f67^{v}, 2:1899.23. On the sublime, see also *BL,* 2:309 n.; *ShC,* 1:162, 220; 2:37, 104, 199.

A few months later, planning a series of poems on drawings and oil sketches by Beaumont, he conflated his sense of Beaumont's compositions with his own kinesthetic and emotional responses to the scenes invoked by Beaumont. On the left side of the second drawing, "a noble old Stump of a Tree with its picture-ward Horn not unantlered—: in the Center *A solitary Church* on a Hillock, unenclosed, unrailed, wild—!! behind it you see *down into* [the *to* of *into* cancelled] *upon* a flat vale /: the whole back of the Picture filled by Mountains in the Two Ridges—clouds upon them" (*CN*, 2:1899.2). His abbreviations and symbols for translitteration of spatial elements make quotation difficult, but part of his mnemonic description of the twenty-eighth drawing can illustrate further the way his practice on landscape of disciplined observation redounds on his responses to pictures: from the left edge, one-fifth of the horizontal foreground is occupied by a clear moat, "then commences the point of the beautifully hillocked & serrated Bay, whose other point reaches more than one third into the picture / near that point comes out a lingula of Land, one half as long as the lingula which forms that inner point of the bay, & so forms a bay within the bay, exactly a semi-oval, only that its inner line is longer by the half than the line" toward the lower frame. For Coleridge, writers on the picturesque had not deadened nature with the "mimic rules" against which Wordsworth complained, but had awakened a layman's mind to the interchanges between seeing and painting. The notebooks contain remarkable explorations of sublimity and unity in scenes of nature and civilization; several in 1804 show that Coleridge was to learn from Schelling only terminology and a dubious analogy between art and organic life.

With Lessing's *Laokoön* as his starting point, Coleridge developed a deep distrust of the Horatian adage *ut pictura poesis est*. Walter Scott had a "Rubens-like power of painting motion," but Spenser's descriptions are all medleys that "disregard time and space."[14] Although Coleridge could play at assigning stanzas of Milton's "Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity" to particular painters—stanza 15 "for the ceiling of a princely banquet-room, in the style of a Parmeggiano or Allston," stanza 23 "I think I have seen—possibly, by Fuseli"—Milton's poems and his own he took to be musical even where common error regarded them as pictorial.[15] The corollary is equally true: the spider web on the poor box in the *Rake's Progress* series is "one proof of a hundred that every thing in Hogarth is to be translated into *Language*—words—& to act as words, not as Images" (*CN*, 3:4096).

14. Cited by Sara Coleridge, "Appendix on the Poetical Picturesque," in her edition of *Biographia Literaria*, 2 vols. (London, 1847), 2:442, 447. Cf. *ShC*, 2:85.

One can predict certain deductions from Coleridge's theory that visual art is a collection of objects. After meeting Beaumont he had begun to wonder if knowledge, feeling, and taste could not be produced naturally, independent of wealth or other opportunity to study Raphael and Rembrandt, and he was to maintain thereafter the disinterestedness of all taste; but add it any way you liked, it clearly took wealth to live among great exemplars of the visual arts (*CN*, 1:1755; 3:3584; *TT*, 2:280). Painting had therefore, and for other reasons, not been as universal as poetry.

Painting is intermediate between a thought and a thing, but the *thing* that makes it possible is eminently and imminently perishable (*CN*, 2:2813). The sphere of "action," of influence, is incomparably less for painting than for poetry, and the chance of physical annihilation is far greater. Even in the Sistine Chapel, Coleridge says, he felt the pain of physical risk at all times to Michelangelo's conception (*CN*, 3:3286). A poem can exist without a page, but the visual arts are unalterably physical in their dress.

So much for the work of art. What of the worker: What kind of youth turns into a painter? Coleridge's high praise of Allston as a person comes often by way of contrast with other painters (*CL*, 3:352, 510). Allston grew into manhood with the conception before him of ideal beauty rather than of copying or imitation of *natura naturata*. Of Coleridge's acquaintance, Allston and Wordsworth so concentrated on ideal wholeness that they could work in a room of "broken gallipots" or a "dusty Paper-wilderness"; whereas Southey and—Coleridge adds—S.T.C. needed a "Lady-like Wholeness" in their physical surroundings (*CN*, 3:4250). Most young painters, lacking "the Love of *Beauty*," grow into selfish, greedy, envious scoundrels who go into a neat room and paint for money. Thank God for Allston.

Intimacy over several periods, in Rome, London, and Bristol, led Coleridge to find increasingly in Allston's paintings the painter's own

15. *Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p. 184; *BL*, 2:14, 103.

aspirations. Of Allston's "large Scripture Piece" of three years' labor, *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha* (fig. 41), Coleridge wrote to a friend when it was exhibited in Bristol, July 1814:

> . . . I was more than gratified by the wonderful Improvement of the Picture, since he has restored it to his original Conception. I cannot by words convey to you, how much he has improved it within the last Fortnight. Were it not, that I still think (tho' ages *might* pass without the world at large noticing it) that in the figure of the Soldier there is too much motion for the distinct Expression, or rather too little expression for the quantity & vehemence of Motion, I should scarcely hesitate to declare it in it's present state a *perfect* work of art. Such Richness with such variety of Colors, all harmonizing, and while they vivify, yet deepen not counteract, the total effect of a grand Solemnity of Tint, I never before contemplated. [*CL*, 3:517]

A century and a half later, nearly every reviewer in the *Times Literary Supplement* had learned how to complain of "our society's continuing commitment to content at the expense of form in all the arts."[16] Coleridge conceives the harmony of colors as subservient to the harmony of subject, but his commitment to *idea* enables him to require a harmonizing of the several harmonies in "the *perfect* work of art." On this ground he had been a teacher to Allston—and in other fields than painting, to greater minds than Allston's.

After following the eye of the observer from figure to figure in *The Dead Man Revived*, in his third essay "On the Principles concerning the Fine Arts" (a series undertaken partly to promote Allston and this painting), Coleridge concluded with a generalization similarly applicable, he thought, to Raphael's *Galatea*:

> You will find, what you had not suspected, that you have here before you a circular group. But by what variety of life, motion, and passion is all the stiffness, that would result from an obvious regular figure, swallowed up, and the figure of the group as much concealed by the action and passion, as the skeleton, which gives the form of the human body, is hidden by the flesh and its endless outlines![17]

16. Terence Hawkes, *TLS*, 26 November 1976, p. 1480.

17. *BL*, 2:234. Shawcross found in this passage and that following it on Raphael's *Galatea* a separation of form and content, but the separation of perceived form and felt subject exists chiefly in the polarity of objects to be reconciled through the psychological process of creation (*BL*, 1:197–98, 202; 2:12). The philosophic critic analyzes the whole into its reconciled opposites. The polarity of subject and opposite constitute two ways of viewing the same whole. For Coleridge's remarkably topographical and kinesthetic response to Allston's *Diana and Her Nymphs in the Chase*, in 1806, see *CN*, 2:2831.

Attracted though he is by line and contour, he has learned under tutelage to praise the submersion of contour beneath a communicated sense of motion and passion.

He had something less definite to learn. Acquaintance with Beaumont and soon after with Allston had opened Coleridge's perceptions like two sudden descents of Zeus. Coming to know Charles and Eliza Aders, at the end of 1812 or early 1813, had a more gradual effect, with consequences that are not easy to demonstrate. Aders introduced a taste for northern, "Gothic," early Flemish and German (and later Nazarene), pre-Raphaelite, unclassical work soon to overspread Victorian England.[18] In the notable collection Aders began to assemble about 1817, Coleridge would have seen, and often, paintings attributed to the van Eycks, Petrus Christus, Lucas van Leyden, Martin Schöngauer, Hendrik Bles, and Cornelius Engelbrechsten, as well as a few noteworthy Italian paintings and work by current artists later to be more prized than in their own time. Knowing that Coleridge admired the early Flemish and German works, and would have thought about them, does not tell us what he thought. Of Catharine de Predl, a protegee of Mr. and Mrs. Aders who did "a very fine Likeness in Chalk" of Coleridge, he remarks on a firm line typical of the early northern painters, but his examples for comparison are Italian:

> Her painting is more like the best specimens of Andrea del Sarto and Fra Bartholomeo, than I have ever seen—and as to Drawing, I question whether any of our English Artists, unless it be Lawrence, . . . could approach to the perfect science & yet delicate stroke of her pencil. [*CL*, 6:588]

Confirmation of Coleridge's preference for line over color lies not in Dutch realism—with a Christ child or other children "just like the little rabbits we fathers have all seen with some dismay at first burst"—but in the firm linear manner of successive early paintings that he comes upon

18. M. K. Joseph, *Charles Aders . . .*, Auckland University Bulletin No. 43, English Series No. 6 (Auckland, 1953); John Steegman, *Victorian Taste: A Study of the Arts and Architecture from 1830 to 1870* (London, 1970), pp. 10–48. In Frank Davis, *Victorian Patrons of the Arts: Twelve Famous Collections and Their Owners* (London, 1963), the taste for northern art is reflected only in the collecting of the Prince Consort.

for the first time surprised by joy. For the exception, his favorite colorist, Rubens, he appeals to an aesthetics of infinity: "In other landscape painters the scene is confined and as it were imprisoned;—in Rubens the landscape dies a natural death; it fades away into the apparent infinity of space" (*TT*, 1:237, 238). One could, of course, point to paintings with firmly outlined figures arranged in open form, but Coleridge's Rubens substitutes openness for line in every portion of the work.

If Coleridge's delight in Rubens does not directly challenge the nephew's dictum that his eye was "almost exclusively, for the idea or universal," it leads us toward a challenge. The fullest account we have of Coleridge's responses to paintings came about when the nephew and his wife, Coleridge's daughter, encountered him amidst the annual loan exhibition of the British Institution in 1831. Each recorded a few of his remarks. The paintings exhibited, representative of English collectors' taste during the first third of the century, made it inevitable that viewers would particularly notice later Flemish and Dutch painting, but Coleridge's comments as he stood before *Archers Shooting at a Target*, by David Teniers (1610–90), typify certain of his preferences:

> Observe the remarkable difference between Claude and Teniers in their power of painting vacant space. Claude makes his whole landscape a *plenum*: the air is quite as substantial as any other part of the scene. Hence there are no true distances, and every thing presses at once and equally upon the eye. There is something close and almost suffocating in the atmosphere of some of Claude's sunsets. Never did any one paint air, the thin air, the absolutely apparent vacancy between object and object, so admirably as Teniers. . . . See the distances between those ugly louts! how perfectly true to the fact! [*TT*, 1:232–35]

In his own art, the romantic seeks the universal in the dynamic particular, but concentration on the particular enables the romantic to respect and enjoy an effort to achieve surface realism of fact—on occasions when no principle of hierarchy is involved. A Crabbe and a Teniers can be admired, so long as they are not put in competition with a Milton or a Raphael.

The possibilities of stylization learned from Aders's early northern pictures could not be tested in the exhibition of 1831, where Coleridge's favorite was Rubens. The seven paintings by Rubens in the exhibition

included *The Triumph of Silenus*, which Coleridge found wonderfully libidinous. (Sir Robert Peel, the owner, had employed a breeches painter to cover the ultimate indecencies.) The poet stood before *Landscape, Sunset* (NG 167) and thought also of the Rubens landscape owned by Beaumont, *Autumn, Chateau de Steen* (NG 66): Rubens extracts "latent poetry" out of "common objects," though his beastly goddesses and heroes show that he has no comprehension of the spiritual (*TT*, 1:237). With or against his will, Coleridge was clearly drawn to the *thingness* of northern art.

Parties at the Aders's included Francis Danby, John Linnell, Samuel Palmer, and William Blake, all at this period in their several ways visionary. In 1818 the Swedenborgian C. A. Tulk elicited from Coleridge comments on *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* as experiences of the eye. Coleridge reported first to H. F. Cary on these "Poems with very wild and interesting pictures, as the swathing," by "a man of Genius," a "mystic *emphatically*" (*CL*, 4:833–34). Blake afforded him the pleasure of proclaiming himself sane and ordinary by comparison. He comments on poems and illuminations separately, in disjunction. Blake has weighted the illuminations with two disadvantages, poor anatomy and "despotism in symbols." Specifically, concerning the general title page and plate 2 (the piper with celestial child and sheep—"such as only a Master learned in his art could produce"), Coleridge complains of bad draftsmanship:

> . . . occasionally, irregular unmodified Lines of the Inanimate, sometimes as the effect of rigidity and sometimes of exossation—like a wet tendon. So likewise the ambiguity of the Drapery. Is it a garment—or the body incised and scored out? The *Limpness* (= the effect of Vinegar on an egg) in the upper one of the two prostate figures in the Title page, and the *eye*-likeness of the twig posteriorly on the second—and the strait line down the waist-coat of pinky gold-beater's skin in the next drawing, with the I don't know whatness of the countenance, as if the mouth had been formed by the habit of placing the tongue, not contemptuously, but stupidly, between the lower gums and the lower jaw—these are the only *repulsive* faults I have noticed.[19]

19. *CL*, 4:836–37. Coleridge saw the copy later available to Garth Wilkinson for the first reprint (1839). For a fuller discussion of Coleridge's comments see B. R. McElderry, Jr., "Coleridge on Blake's Songs," *Modern Language Quarterly* 9 (1948): 298–302.

The tone, as well as Coleridge's high praise for most of the poems he specifies, makes the point clear: it is not inability he is trying to describe for Tulk, but perversity.

Unsatisfied with surface realism and suspicious of the visionary in art, Coleridge prized above all the ideal. In the symbols of the ideal there would be no despotism, but full harmony with the medium employed to reveal the translucent particular. Acquaintance with early northern art would have reinforced the experiences in Italy to bring about his insistence that the arts might improve steadily in technique and dexterity but not, to go by the record, in substance:

> Painting went on in power till, in Raffael, it attained the zenith, and in him too it showed signs of a tendency downwards by another path. The painter began to think of overcoming difficulties. After this the descent was rapid, till sculptors began to work inveterate likenesses of perriwigs in marble,—as see Algarotti's tomb in the cemetery at Pisa,—and painters did nothing but copy, as well as they could, the external face of nature. Now, in this age, we have a sort of reviviscence,—not, I fear, of the power, but of a taste for the power, of the early times. [*TT*, 1:181]

To interpret these remarks according to Coleridge's basic aesthetics, substance and technique were as one at the height of painting, before dexterity began to outpace substance. Some such discovery Coleridge made in Italy in 1806. Although he declared in 1815 that ideally he would summer in Zurich, for "German depth, Swiss ingenuity," and spend the rest of the year "alternately at Rome and in Florence," his discovery of ideal fusion can be traced to the Sistine Chapel and the Campo Santo at Pisa (*CL*, 4:569).

In the philosophical lectures of 1819 he described the Pisan mural *Il Trionfo della morte* as an idea, a Platonic idea of death, the scattering of all except miserable beggars from the approach of the dreadful goddess, an example of Platonism as the possibility of search for the essential powers of things "as they exist in the Supreme Mind": "There, from all the laws of drawing, all the absence of color (for you saw no color—if there were any you could not see it, it was gone) it was one mighty idea that spoke to you everywhere the same."[20] Coleridge returned to the coincidence of

20. *PL*, p. 168. The mural, by an unknown artist, was ascribed by Vasari to Andrea Orcagna but usually by Coleridge, for convenience and impact, to Giotto. For a reproduction (from an engraving) and a description see Robert Gittings, *John Keats* (Boston, 1968), p. 280, pl. 39. Leigh Hunt, without any of Coleridge's Plotinian Christianity, concurred on arrival at Pisa that the muralists there (rather than "the Massaccios and Peruginos") were the real inspirers of Raphael and Michelangelo. The tomb of Algarotti that Coleridge marks as periwigged proof of artistic decline in substance receives Hunt's disinterested praise. "Letters from Abroad, Letter I.—Pisa," *The Liberal*, No. 1 (1822): 109–15.

Platonism in the Pisan muralists, Michelangelo, Dante, and the post-Aquinian philosophers again and again.[21]

Confronting the masterpieces of Michelangelo, Coleridge's gothic romanticism moves in stark divergence from Shelley's romantic hellenism. Shelley reported to Peacock on the Sistine Chapel:

> I cannot but think the genius of this artist highly overrated. He has not only no temperance no modesty no feeling for the just boundaries of art, (and in these respects an admirable genius may err) but he has no sense of beauty, and to want this is to want the essence of the creative power of mind. . . . What a thing his Moses is, how distorted from all that is natural & majestic only less monstrous & detestable than its historical prototype.[22]

The difference comes down at bottom to those detestable biblical prototypes. Coleridge's Plotinized Platonism receives the sanction of his belief in the Holy Trinity of three in one. Here rises still another significance of Aders's northern primitives. Coleridge wishes evermore to see a painting of the Holy Family, with no smirk on the face of the child and a kinesthetically convincing projection of the Holy Ghost.

From 1803 Coleridge looked at pictures and landscapes with eyes enriched by the words of books and friends concerning the picturesque and the sublime. Told how to follow the hand of Beaumont and the longer reach of Allston, he practiced not only on engravings—print shops and portfolios were the Time-Life (including television) of his day—but more keenly in the midst of natural scenery offering opportunity for sharpened and imaginatively unified perception. Frequently if unsystematically he stood before walls filled with the available masterpieces. Almost everything within him, the customs and manner of almost every painter he met, almost all his belief in imagination, told him that

21. See *CN*, 2:2856–57; *PL*, pp. 167–68, 193; *TT*, 1:179–80; *Miscellaneous Criticism*, pp. 7, 10; *CL*, 4:569.

22. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1964), 2:80. Coleridge is specific about the role of Greek genius in Christian idealism in *PL*, p. 257.

no adornment of walls could compare with Beethoven or the greater heights of poetry. Like Wordsworth's leech-gatherer, he persevered. He learned progressively about design and technique, especially in landscape painting. More than one would expect, he came to admire realistic imitation of nature. With a uniform theory of the arts to mount upon, he could in several great moments pay his highest tribute to a picture: it was true poetry. Even so, he could risk only Dante and Milton, not Shakespeare, for comparison.

Abbreviations Used in Citing Works by Coleridge

BL *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (2 vols., London, 1907).
CL *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (6 vols., Oxford, 1956–71).
CN *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (vol. 1, London, 1957; 2, New York, 1961; 3, Princeton, 1973).
PL *The Philosophical Lectures*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York, 1949).
ShC *Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. T. M. Raysor (2 vols., London, 1960).
TT *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. H. N. Coleridge (2 vols., London, 1835).

7

WILLIAM WALLING

More Than Sufficient Room: Sir David Wilkie and the Scottish Literary Tradition

I

> The midnight torch gleamed o'er the steamer's side,
> And Merit's corse was yielded to the tide.
>
> J. M. W. Turner, "The Fallacies of Hope"[1]

Perhaps no artist has been accorded a more successful—and ambiguous—memorial than the one Turner painted for Sir David Wilkie in 1841–42, shortly after the latter's death on the homeward leg of a visit to the Holy Land. From a sufficiently jaundiced point of view, in fact, Turner's remarkable *Peace—Burial at Sea* (fig. 42) may be said to have eclipsed Sir David Wilkie himself, inflicting upon his memory the exact inversion of what Mark Antony was able to accomplish so effectively for Caesar. In a word (to keep to the jaundiced Antonian view), Turner came to the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1842, not to praise his long-time rival with a speech, but to bury him with a painting.

The provocative use of black (most particularly for the sails of the vessel from which Wilkie's body was being so obscurely lowered into the water), the quite deliberate decision to paint the scene as if viewed from the Spanish mainland, somewhere in the vicinity of Gibraltar (because of quarantine regulations the steamship *Oriental* had been compelled to sail from Gibraltar into the Atlantic, where, at latitude 36.20, longitude

1. Printed by Turner in the catalogue of the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1842 to accompany *Peace—Burial at Sea* (no. 338).

lyx

41. Washington Allston, *The Dead Man Revived by Touching the Bones of the Prophet Elisha*