

**Introduction to:
*The Romantic Imagination:
Literature and Art in England
and Germany.***

**Ed, Burwick, Frederick and
Jurgen Klein.**

**Rodopi, Amsterdam and
Atlanta, GA, 1996.**

Pages 1-16.

Figures: None

FREDERICK BURWICK

Verbal and Visual Modes of Imagination

During a Van Gogh exhibition at Los Angeles some years ago, I found a special pleasure in trying to describe each painting to my friend David. Blind since childhood, David had an uncanny gift for "seeing". Once when I met him outside the main building on campus, David lightly ran his hand along my shirt sleeve and said, "That's a nice looking shirt you're wearing, Fred." "Glad you like it," I said, with an intonation intended to let him know that I took his words as the kind of irony he often indulged in reference to his own blindness. "Brown and blue plaid, isn't it?" he quickly queried. "Who told you?" was my surprised and incredulous response. "Oh, I just guessed," he said. "Lucky guess," I murmured, still thinking that I was being tricked. "Well, I could feel the alternation of warm and cool patches," he explained, "so I knew there was a pattern of light and dark colors to reflect and absorb the sun's radiation. I did just guess the rest. I thought you might like blue and brown."

Wandering with David through the metropolitan gallery, I told him of Van Gogh's swirls, thickly laid on with palette knife and spatula, of the meticulous patterning of his brush strokes. We stood before the *Drawbridge near Arles*. "Do you think it would be all right," David asked, "if I had a look on my own?" I knew what he meant, and I glanced down the hall to the security guard who stood not three yards away. The guard discreetly looked the other way. David "looked" at the painting, running his fingers lightly along the vertical reeds in the foreground, letting them climb the mottled bank to the left, then, pausing to feel the figures on the bank and the half-submerged boat, he let his fingers swim across the undulating ripples of the water and ascend, stone by stone, the bridge wall. His fingers searched out the shape of the drawbridge. He paused at its mid-point. "Horse and wagon," I explained. David, I am sure, saw that painting better than I did, and remembers its details today far more minutely than I do.

How and why this could be true I did not begin to comprehend until I read *Blindness and Early Childhood Development* (1977, 1984) by David Warren. Among other astonishing details, I learned that while the blind make use of those same portions of the cerebral cortex for sensations of touch as

do sighted persons; when they read a braille text, they use instead the area of the visual cortex which the sighted use in reading. Indeed, the visual and lexical areas of the brain are as active in the blind as in the sighted. Reading a painting and reading a poem activate adjacent areas of the cortex. There is every indication that an intense cross-modal interchange takes place in the brain as we perceive and decipher verbal or visual images. A rose by any other name would most likely give us the image of a very different flower. The experience of reading the word "tree" is not the same as reading "pine" or "oak".

The imagination, whatever other attributes it might have, is that mental facility for engendering and manipulating images, and, by the testimony of poets and painters alike, it speaks both a verbal and a visual language. Coleridge, for example, in recollecting his composition of "Kubla Khan" in a dream, insisted that "all the images rose up before him as *things*". The co-presence and interaction of ideas and images, words and things, is the major concern of this volume. The purpose is to examine theoretical grounds for verbal-visual and intercultural assumptions. In commissioning contributions, the editors have chosen to address the vital interchange between England and Germany during the Romantic period. The book opens with studies devoted to a review of those accounts of the creative process which led to the Romantic celebration of the imagination. It goes on to examine the affinities and differences in verbal and visual expression. These major concerns are represented in five sections: I. Imagination, II. The Sister Arts, III. The Sublime and the Picturesque, IV. Ekphrasis, V. Mode, Manner, Style. As a guide and enticement, the editors devote the rest of this Introduction to a quick tour through the contents.

Part I – Imagination

To open the investigation of the romantic concept of the imagination, Jürgen Klein traces its meaning in relation to the semantic shift also evident in the terms "genius" and "ingenium". In summarizing the account of artistic production in classical antiquity, Klein examines differences between Plato and Aristotle, which he then relates to the association of creativity and procreativity, human and divine, in classical mythology. As he continues to recount the changes which took place on through the Renaissance and Enlightenment to Romanticism, Klein makes it evident that definitions of the creative imagination tend to reflect the friction and clash among philosophical systems, which correspond in turn to transitions in cultural values. Because Kant's

"Copernican" revolution of the mind participated in, and helped direct, the new attention to individual experience, his critical philosophy, Klein argues, had pervasive influence in romantic theories of the creative imagination.

In privileging the imagination, both its participation in the "infinite I AM" and its mediated expression as "reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities" in the work of art, Coleridge set it far above the fancy which "has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites" (*Biographia Literaria*, ch. 13). The opposition between original inspiration and formal organization had become especially tense during the eighteenth century, yet despite the convenient discrimination of the organic vs. the mechanic, it is obvious that the old fealties of invention and arrangement had collapsed and their boundaries had been redrawn. By laying claim to a secondary imagination, Coleridge effectively includes arrangement as the mediated complement to the invention provided by the primary imagination. Both are set apart from that activity of arrangement which is merely "a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space" and involves nothing more than association and choice in constructing its materials.

This latter mode of arrangement is what Werner Hofmann calls "playing-card aesthetics". The playing-card is a metaphor for an image or idea that may be randomly combined but must nevertheless be played according to specific rules. Comparable to the shuffling of playing-cards, the components of the work of art are integrated into a new texture, a process in which the factors of chance and inter-changeableness receive creative signification. Because the claim for the inner logical necessity of the creative process is nullified, the "playing-card aesthetics" of the eighteenth century, which Hofmann locates in the works of William Hogarth and John Flaxman, may be seen as antecedent to the Dada and Surrealist movements of the twentieth century. Its combinatorial presumptions legitimate experimental techniques like those of collage, montage, and "ready-made" art.

Although the play theory of art is historically identified with Schiller's letters on "Aesthetic Education", the play-drive which mediates the content-drive and the form-drive has little in common with the random chance and gamesmanship of "playing-card aesthetics". Schiller describes a process of perception and reason which gradually shapes the chaotic jumble into a work of art. This informing and transforming process is the "dark total idea" ("dunkle Totalidee"). The resulting work of art grows organically out of the free and natural reciprocity of form and content. Schiller's "dark total idea", Hofmann notes, coincides with Goethe's concept of the morphogenetic process at work in nature and in art. Both Goethe and Schiller oppose the "playing-card" phenomena as a regression, indeed, as an abandonment of the

artistic creativity necessary to the work of art. Just as Coleridge sanctions the lesser mode of fancy, Goethe grants the relevance of “playing-card aesthetics” to such “subaltern compositions” as opera and pictorial satire.

The hierarchical inversion which shifted the authority in composition from traditional forms and models to the originality of the individual entailed, of course, a literary engagement in the revolutionary trends of the times. Even Goethe and Schiller, who might otherwise be cited as representatives of the older classicism, both contributed significantly to assertive individualism and the revolt against patriarchal constraints. Goethe championed individual genius in his early essay on Strassburg Minster, and individual rights in his historical drama, *Götz von Berlichingen*. Schiller’s tragedy, *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*), is often named as a prime example of romantic rebellion against patriarchal authority. In sketching the intellectual and political background for “the Romantic Revolt against the Father”, Horst Meller begins with the reception of *The Robbers* in France and Britain at the time of the French Revolution.

Meller’s investigation is not confined to historical reception. He is concerned, rather, with defining the “parricidal imagination” as evident in subsequent adaptations of the symbolic murder of the father. Elaborating upon issues already noted in the previous two chapters by Klein and Hofmann, Meller too addresses the gradual emancipation of individual consciousness from the social and political constraints of the *ancien régime*. It was not just that romanticism found an appropriate theme in celebrating Aeschylus’s Prometheus and Milton’s Satan as archetypal rebels. The very archetype, argues Meller, enabled the romantic poets and artists to rediscover and liberate previously suppressed powers of creative imagination.

The political enthusiasm of the romantic period Meller traces back to a plebeian radicalism that had already been fermenting in the dissenting movements, heretical sects, and peasant uprisings of the late Middle Ages and Reformation. The mystical ideals of emancipation and equality, as forwarded in medieval chiliasm, are rediscovered and reinterpreted as justification for revolution. Thus the alleged eccentricity and nonconformism of artists like Blake and Fuseli are better understood, Meller asserts, as a reaffirmation of ideas that had long been denounced and marginalized. The subversive revolt against the patriarchal authority of church and state is thereby placed in an age-old context and judged as the artistic fulfillment of previously repressed energies of the imagination.

In the concluding chapter of Part I, Gabriele Rommel returns to a function of the imagination acknowledged in Jürgen Klein’s opening chapter. Klein had observed how the evolving concept of the imagination was shaped

by the historical interaction between philosophical systems and cultural values. Rommel notes that in the poetics of Novalis, imagination is not simply defined in terms of transcendental philosophy, it is recognized and actually used as a cognitive agency. Imagination is not just a faculty commanded by poets and artists, it is applied by humanity at large in their effort to comprehend the world in which they move and act. The imagination enables the mind to generate those symbolic constructs which are necessary in ascertaining possible connections in immediate experience as well as in projecting speculative scenarios for interpreting relationships temporally or spatially beyond immediate ken. Because Novalis is a poet who engages the cognition-forming capacities of the imagination to facilitate the construction of symbolic world pictures, he participates in that tradition usually attributed to philosophers of an opposing camp. He shares, that is, basic assumptions of rationalist philosophers from Francis Bacon through Condillac.

Novalis thus regards the imagination, along with memory and common sense, as crucial to the problem-solving faculties of reason. He had more in common with the philosophers of the French Enlightenment, Rommel demonstrates, than is commonly acknowledged. She does not slight, however, the important contribution of Fichte to Novalis’s concept of the imagination. It was Fichte’s deduction of self-awareness, she acknowledges, that prompted Novalis to elaborate his plan for absolutely free thinking. Within this plan all cognitive structures acquire free and equal status. Because the discipline of science and the magic of poetry are both formed through cognitive acts of the imagination, the presumed difference between symbolic tropism and material tropism is dissolved. Novalis calls our attention to the magic of science and the discipline of poetry. That poetry itself fulfills a scientific purpose in revealing the interpenetration of mind and matter is what Novalis posits in his *Lehrlinge zu Sais* and *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*.

Part II – The Sister Arts

Because William Blake combines visual and verbal media in the composite art of his “illuminated” poems, the resulting interaction provides a rare and valuable opportunity for examining the relationship of the Sister Arts. Although Blake uses both media, he also exploits their differences, often problematizing the cross-references between his two sign systems. This interaction in Blake’s graffiti-laden *Laocoön* and in the annotated frames of his *Job* provides what Frederick Burwick identifies as a romantic counterpart to Lessing’s influential essay, *Laokoon: oder, über die Grenzen der Malerei und*

Poesie (Laocoön: or, On the Boundaries of Painting and Poetry). As De Quincey objected in the notes to his translation of Lessing's *Laocoon*, the presumed primacy of spatiality in painting and temporality in poetry is by no means determinate. By using the one art form to mediate the other, even to mimic the sign-system of its sister art, Blake reveals a complementary activity in interpreting words and images. By placing images of books within the picture within the book, Blake shows that the boundaries, while never erased, are easily relocated.

In Part I, Gabriele Rommel described how Novalis's scientific studies at Freiberg merged with his subsequent exposition of the cognitive imagination in his literary works. With reference to Achim von Arnim's scientific studies at Halle and Göttingen, Roswitha Burwick shows how the physics of electricity and magnetism informed Arnim's comprehension of the physiology of perception and his explanation of the creative process. She also examines Arnim's theories of the interconnection of poetry and painting. While Schelling and the *Naturphilosophen* appropriate from contemporary science to construct abstract and speculative philosophical systems, and Novalis draws the empirical findings of science into the magical world of imagination, Arnim endeavors to maintain the coexistence and simultaneity of both.

Perception, the sensory response to external stimuli, is transmitted through the electro-chemical processes of the neural system. It functions according to the same laws which may be externally observed in the action of Volta's pile and Galvani's experiment with the frog's leg. Poetry and painting mediate the creative process which is a continuing fermentation. Arnim's attention is not to the final product, but to the presence of the artist in the work. Without this perceived presence, the dynamic process is disrupted. Because the human mind is capable of self-reflective consciousness, it is possible to become aware of the internal flow of energy. Out of this awareness arises divination (*Ahndung*), the crucial principle of all formation and all aesthetic experience.

In her comparative study of Wordsworth and Constable, Wilhelmina Hotchkiss emphasizes the aesthetic elaboration of place. Both created artistic personae in terms of their alert and sensitive response to the familiar landscape of "home". The intensity of this local attachment becomes the source of moral and spiritual truth which both men sought to represent in their works. Hotchkiss documents this parallel between Wordsworth and Constable by examining the formative period in each of their careers when they experienced, both of them profoundly, the creative stimulation of returning home and reclaiming place. This imaginative and emotional appropriation of place she then examines in Constable's painting of scenes around East

Bergholt and Dedham Vale, and in Wordsworth's poetic attention to his own childhood and the rustic life in the Lake District.

A full appreciation of the Sister Arts meant for many romantics an actual bond between poet and painter. Although that ideal was best realized when the painter was also a poet, as in the case of Blake, an intimate collaboration might also bring about the desired synthesis. In Germany, Brentano and Tieck both sought the collaboration of Runge, and Arnim engaged in competition with Schinkel to test the relative capacities of verbal and visual media. Among the English romantics, the friendship between Wordsworth and Beaumont produced two stunning examples of the collaborative endeavor. Norma Davis recounts the circumstances which resulted in the engraved illustrations to Wordsworth's poems from Beaumont's *Peele Castle in a Storm* and *The White Doe of Rylestone*. The reciprocity between poet and painter, as Davis shows, worked both ways. Wordsworth's elegiac stanzas "Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont" are at once an example of ekphrasis (a topic to be discussed in Part IV) and a deeply personal response to the death of his brother. Beaumont's painting becomes the focal point which enables the poet to come to terms with his own grief. *The White Doe of Rylestone* is a painting which directly responds to Wordsworth's poem. Beaumont himself chose the scene to be illustrated. In bringing the effect of the doe's mystical light to canvas, Davis asserts, Beaumont provided an apt visual interpretation of the poem.

While the preceding chapters on the Sister Arts have endeavored to demonstrate specific grounds of similarity, Drummond Bone in the concluding chapter of Part II argues that neither the verbal means of representing a visual experience, nor the visual means of representing the verbal, are ever adequate to the task. All comparisons of one medium with another must remain arbitrary and subjective. With full cognizance of his own caveat, however, he goes on to outline the shared presence of a Romantic mode of perception and execution in Turner's *Rome, from Mount Aventine* and Shelley's "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills". In comparison to the poet's experience of a formal shadowiness, Drummond Bone calls attention to the painter's disregard for permanence, his preference for creating an immediate and inconstant beauty, and his technique of indicating rather than defining visual details. Both poet and painter respond to the fragmentary or "open" form of romantic organicism, avoiding the determinate and finite as if it were an agent of repressive reason.

In his immediacy of inspiration and seeming neglect of the "finish" of exhibition painting, Turner indulges the spontaneity of romantic "genius". The polarities of feeling and understanding, spirit and matter, illusion and

reality are as much a part of Turner's work as of Shelley's. In his "Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills", Shelley views a world made up of antithetical contrasts, and, as in Turner, the experience of translucence and transience indicates an access into eternity while solidity is an attribute of constraining mortality. When, in Turner's paintings, solidity melts into undefined shades of light, the inner space of the depicted objects is liberated from objective form, and the material surface is revealed as a mediating image. Turner thus seems attracted to the Shelleyan endeavor to remove the "veil of being", to dissolve the bodily existence which conceals the ideal.

The parallel images and effects in Turner and Shelley may well be, as Drummond Bone admits, accidental features of their individual endorsement of romantic ideals. Although Turner himself carefully distinguished the two arts and asked for separate criteria of judgment, he also concluded that, however different their pursuits, the two media "love and follow the same cause". According to Kant, the gap between *phenomenon* and *noumenon* cannot be bridged. While it is no doubt likewise impossible to close the gap between poetry and painting, as Drummond Bone has acknowledged, both Shelley and Turner participated in a romantic endeavor to extend the limitations of their respective media and to transcend the insurmountable barriers between imagination and artistic production.

Part III - The Sublime and the Picturesque

In a seminal essay on "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison", Anne Mellor in 1979 demonstrated that Coleridge conducted his readers through the aesthetic provinces of three discrete landscapes: the picturesque, the beautiful, and the sublime. Coleridge's definition of the sublime, she explains, stipulates a symbolic mode of perception and a psychological reconciliation of self and other. To introduce the discussion of the sublime and picturesque in this section, Mellor examines how the Coleridgean concept of the sublime was manifest in Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode", and in the paintings of Turner and Friedrich, but was ultimately overturned in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful, she argues, are coded respectively as male and female. The beautiful, defined by the undulating curve, evokes feelings of love and desire, procreation and preservation of life. The sublime, by contrast, is life threatening: it works through fear of the other and the desire to dominate the unknown. The sublime thus engages a masculine self-centeredness. In the paintings of Turner and Friedrich, Mellor describes how the "grandiosity of the artistic ego" has prioritized the sublime.

In *Frankenstein*, however, she observes a gender conflict in which the violence and egotism of the sublime is exposed and devalued.

After tracing the term "picturesque" from its first recorded use in 1685, Hans-Ulrich Mohr goes on to examine the defining attributes that became prominent in the aesthetics of the mid-eighteenth century. Peculiar to the term, of course, was the expectation that nature should imitate art. The "English garden", according to this conception, imitated not nature, but nature aestheticized. The display of property made the estate garden an artistic medium in which the conventions of landscape painting were to be "realized". With Gilpin's *Dialogue* (1748), the picturesque emerges as a (socially, politically, economically) privileged art form. When one turned to nature in search of the picturesque, with "Claude glass" in hand, the intent was to find those scenes in which God's creation visibly resembled the garden of the wealthy connoisseur or the painting in his gallery.

The picturesque thus assumed stature as a model of reality, a balancing and harmonizing principle between the extremes which Burke defined in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Mohr outlines the progressive developments within the art of landscape gardening under William Kent, Henry Flintcroft, and Capability Brown, and in the landscape painting of Claude Lorrain, Constable, Gainsborough, and Turner. He summarizes, as well, the influence on pastoral description in eighteenth-century literature. He observes a gradual emancipation of the picturesque with the rise of the middle class and foment of revolutionary politics. Especially in the gothic novel, with its elements of subversive irrationality and emotionality, the picturesque becomes literally bewildered and the hierarchical authority crumbles into ruin.

Observing changes in the evaluative response to art, Lilian Furst argues for the epiphanic quality of *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (*Outpourings of the Heart of an Art-Loving Friar*). Neither placing Wackenroder's text within a tradition of art history and criticism, nor acknowledging its deviation from eighteenth-century genres and literary tastes, suffice to assess his aesthetic and literary importance. Wackenroder concentrates on the productive relationship between the work of art and the reactions elicited in the viewer's imagination. He thus emphasizes his very lack of a determinate and analytical stance in beholding the work of art. Because Wackenroder's guiding principle is the "love of art", Furst turns her attention to the relationship between technique and imagination, the abolition of mechanistic investigation, the bracketing of analysis. Wackenroder is not anticlassical in indulging his phantasies of the past, but he is antidogmatic.

An important factor in liberating the aesthetics of the *Herzensergießungen*, Furst insists, is their presentation as fiction. Furst thus assesses the genre question and the reader-response problem anew, demonstrating how the synthetic structure of the text in its mixed format combines semantical and formal aspects. The friar is not an autobiographical identity but a deliberately fictional protagonist whose flexiloquent and polysemous ambiguity can be read as a personification of the imaginative faculty. In his transformation and intermediation between this fictive self and others, Wackenroder creates an atmosphere "warranted" by the lack of clear boundaries between textual elements, so that the flexibility of the frame accounts for expansion (various directions) and differentiation (subframes). Not only does the friar act as the conscious nexus for the different voices, he also connects and interconnects the different genres, fields of vision and ideology. The imaginative space in Wackenroder constituted by heart and imagination as the effusions of inner self integrates divine inspiration, the mysterious within revelatory flashes of inspiration. Fiction as a work of the inner dimensions disregards the technicality of art history, but expands towards a mythology, in which fairy-tale and pure truth converge, so that the inner eye functions as substitute for outward vision, the inner eye, which experiences art as religion, as an expression of divine grace.

Part IV – Ekphrasis

One of the most often cited examples of ekphrasis in romantic poetry is Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn". Another is the description of the *Dying Gladiator* in Canto IV of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The latter example, James Heffernan reminds us, is but one in a series of verbal representations of well-known classical statues which station the narrative progression of Canto IV. In recounting Byron's interests in the visual arts, Heffernan finds that his values closely follow the *Discourses* of Joshua Reynolds. As an outspoken critic of Lord Elgin's "rape" of the Parthenon marbles, Byron tended to see the work of art as "belonging" to its place of origin. His brief tribute to Canova's *Bust of Helen*, Heffernan notes, shows that Byron did not endorse Lessing's caution, in his *Laokoon* essay, that the beauty of Helen was a matter for poetry, not for visual representation.

Heffernan's major task in this chapter is to interpret the structure and techniques of the three ekphrastic passages in Canto IV: the *Medici Venus*, the *Dying Gladiator*, and the *Belvedere Apollo*. Byron "explicitly eroticizes" his account of Venus and Apollo. Both are seen as realizing desire: Apollo is

the fulfillment of "a dream of Love,/ Shaped by some solitary nymph"; Venus longs for the embrace of Mars, and her "lips are/ With lava kisses melting while they burn". The images are not only shaped by desire, desire melts the constraining stone and brings the image to life. Byron's technique is not just to describe, but to dramatize. In contrast to the lines on the *Dying Gladiator* in Thomson's *Liberty*, Byron's ekphrastic stanzas recreate the cruelty of the Roman games, in which "young barbarians" were "Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday". Heffernan cites passages from other poems to show how this technique of animating the hypostatic tableau is a significant attribute of Byron's poetic style.

In her chapter in Part I on Novalis's theory of imagination, Gabriele Rommel quotes from a letter in which Keats sets himself apart from Byron: "You speak of Lord Byron and me – There is this great difference between us. He describes what he sees – I describe what I imagine. Mine is the hardest task." In the preceding chapter, James Heffernan observed Byron's poetic integration of real statues; in the present chapter, Wolf Hirst attends to Keats's conjuration of imaginary statues. That ekphrasis might apply to the imaginary as well as the real work of art is no latter-day presumption of the romantic poets. A traditional example of ekphrasis, after all, was the description of Achilles's shield in the *Iliad*. In *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion*, Hirst focusses on Keats's techniques of giving a seemingly palpable substance to the airy stuff of dreams. In this artistic transformation of dream into poetic "reality", Hirst notes, the statue is the mediating half-way point.

For Hirst the technique of creative composition and the ways in which dreams are converted into lifelike reality are of greater interest than the actual objects that are metamorphosed into art. He approaches the *Hyperion* poems as Keats's self-reflexive presentation of the creative process: the poet rouses his imaginary sculpture from its statuary existence through the "silent Workings" of the imagination. It is a technique that elaborates the hypostasis of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" into epic proportions. According to Hirst's interpretation, Keats has accepted, and thematized, the argument in Lessing's *Laokoon*: the visual artist works in space, the verbal artist in time. Thus when describing and revitalizing sculpture or painting, the Keatsian narrator posits a spatial and simultaneous representation which he then transforms into the temporal action of narrative. In *The Fall of Hyperion*, the act of dream becoming poem provides the analogue to the transformation of the raw material of perceptual experience into a series of imaginary pictures first visualized and then verbalized as poetry. The final step in the poet's task of interpreting his visions is to make them accessible to others. He must articulate, externalize, dramatize. The artist is himself transformed from passive

dreamer into actively involved interpreter. Even as an abandoned fragment, *The Fall of Hyperion*, Hirst declares, is a triumph over time. The poet not only animates the statue, he also reverses the process, freezing his images back into the enduring stasis of art.

Grant Scott's study of Shelley's poem, "On the Medusa", provides an especially valuable conclusion to this section on ekphrasis. He begins by calling attention to the better known instances: Byron's description of the Dying Gladiator in *Childe Harold*, Canto IV, and Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn". He then goes on to provide a succinct summary of ekphrasis, with special emphasis on its extensive use in eighteenth-century poetry. Shelley's ekphrastic description of *Medusa* (a painting then attributed to Da Vinci) imitates the conventions associated with poems on portraits of beautiful women. Herein lies one of the many "perils of ekphrasis" which Scott delineates. *Medusa's* "beauty" is a source of horror: whoever beholds her is instantly petrified. If ekphrasis is the technique of making the inanimate object of art seem to come alive, as in the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, the myth of *Medusa* offers the counter-instance of turning life into stone. Perseus was able to slay *Medusa* by turning his back to her awful gaze and guiding his sword with the reflected image in a mirror. The painted "Head of *Medusa*" gives every indication that the petrifying power of those eyes is still active. If there is a potential terror in the painting, Shelley's ekphrastic animation might well set it loose. This possibility of liberating the frozen image gives rise to ekphrastic fear. The poet, as Coleridge announces in "Kubla Khan", is capable of conjuring such powerful images that "All who heard should see them there, / And all should cry, Beware! Beware!" Shelley's strategy is continually to shift perspective with verbal images of mirroring and reflecting. The poem's triumph, Scott concludes, lies in confronting its own ekphrastic evasions, in thematizing ekphrastic fear, and accepting the mutilated head as an emblem for its own poetic expression.

Part V – Mode, Manner, Style

Although many historians of art and literature have acknowledged the impact of Newtonian science on eighteenth-century thought, most have cited only the experiments with the prism. Poets and painters alike, as Marjorie Nicholson has shown in *Newton Demands the Muse*, were fascinated with the prismatic transformations of pure white light and the radiant rainbow. Barbara Stafford, in the opening chapter to this section on "Mode, Manner, Style", addresses not the content but the style. Probing into the intellectual implica-

tions of assuming a theoretical or experimental style in the work of art, she describes two opposing trends which result from the gradual disruption of the classical sense of harmonic world order. The "bare" style sought to sustain the old harmony by a rigorous selectivity and studied simplification. The "prismatic" style called for encyclopedic detail and visual complexity. What characterizes the encyclopedic method of Piranesi, she says, is the effort to create a new synthesis out of the abundant detail. Aesthetically replicating the efforts of Newtonian science, the artist strives to bring "the most complicated things together under a common denomination". The legacy of Galileo and Newton in Western art is not restricted to images of science, but manifests itself in the very styles of representation.

Gerald Finley, in his chapter on "Pigment into Light", also ponders the consequences of Newtonian science. He, too, is concerned with style, yet it is a matter of style not separable from specific content. How can the painter's pigments be made to represent light? When a child paints a green meadow with a stately tree, a bright glob of yellow paint is often added to the upper center to represent the sun. Painters of the Italian renaissance knew the difficulty of painting the sun, and typically represented its presence as shining into the depicted scene from behind the viewer's shoulder. Because pigment radiates no light of its own, counterfeiting light means showing its effects, the glimmer and gloom which define its presence and absence in the nooks and crannies of illusionary three-dimensional space. Van Dyck, de Witte, Vermeer, and other Dutch and Flemish painters of the seventeenth century grew more bold: although the sun itself remained concealed, its light was allowed to pour into interior scenes through windows and doors. And lesser sources of illumination – candles and torches – were actually represented on the canvas. Georges de La Tour was a stunning master of these *chiaroscuro* effects. But in the romantic period, Turner was even more daring. The sun is made to glare directly from his canvas: not the naive blob of yellow paint, but the sun diffracting through atmospheric haze. The trick of Turner's illusions, much like La Tour's, is to show the effects of light. Unlike La Tour, Turner had the advantage of great scientific advances in the optical principles of reflection and refraction.

As Finley demonstrates, Turner directly engages Goethe's *Theory of Colours* and was well aware of Goethe's objections to Newton's *Opticks*. Basic to Goethe's account of the spectrum is the dioptric effect which he witnessed in the milkglass bust of Napoleon on his window ledge: light coming towards the viewer appears red/yellow, light passing away from the viewer appears blue/violet. As artist, Turner objected to Goethe's polar opposition of light and darkness. It tells us, Turner recorded, "nothing about shadow or Shade as

Shade or Shadow Pictorially or optically". Turner also questioned Goethe's insistence that colour is not "contained" in white light but results from the physical and physiological effects of light. Finley describes Turner's watercolour, *Norham Castle* (1822-23), which optically demonstrates the diffraction of the sun's white light at the ruin's edge into a myriad of tiny prismatic images, painted with small brush tips of the three primary colours and systematically overlapped with images of the three secondary hues. In the companion paintings of the Deluge, *Shade and Darkness* and *Light and Colour*, Turner carries out an elaborate visual critique of Goethe's theory. Turner, Finley concludes, remained suspicious of Goethe's theory even though he admired the poetic attention to optical detail. "Goethe", Turner wrote, "leaves us ample room for practice even with all his theory."

A significant mode in romantic poetry and painting is the contemplative or meditative. It is a mode that adapts and secularizes the contemplative mode long encouraged in religious practice. The secularization becomes increasingly manifest during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and the meditative retreat from the busy world, as advocated in Johann Georg Zimmer's, *Einsamkeit*, found a wide audience amid the clamor of rapidly growing cities. Thomas De Quincey compared the increasing industrialization to a maelstrom. Against the violent outward thrust of this centrifugal power, De Quincey urges, it is all the more imperative to respond with centripetal energies directed inward. Unless we restore the strength of subjective reverie, he cautions, the center will not hold.

In his chapter on "The Contemplative Mode", Murray Roston identifies a characteristic circularity in the romantic response to nature: observing nature becomes an occasion for observing the mind. The outward-inward cycle, Roston notes, is also a defining attribute of the Kantian sublime: the sense of impotence (*Hemmung*) in beholding the vast grandeur of nature is transformed into an ecstasy (*Ergießung*) as the mind begins to appreciate its capacity to absorb that vastness into its own creative faculties. Coleridge founded his theory of the imagination on the conscious capacity of the finite mind to participate "in the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM". Wordsworth devoted much of the *Prelude* to meditative reflections on the spiritual power and presence inhabiting visible nature. Even Shelley, in spite of his overtures of atheism, appropriates the language of religious meditation to celebrate his awareness of the "awful shadow of some unseen Power" resident in the physical world.

The circular turn from external nature to internal reflection, Roston argues, is effectively represented in romantic painting by placing a contemplative beholder in the landscape. The "*Rückenfigur*" (*repoussoir*) in Friedrich's

painting not only represents intense brooding on the sublimities of nature, it also invites "viewer identification and a vicarious sharing of his mood of rapt cogitation". The persistence of the religious meditative tradition Roston finds equally prominent in Runge's vision of the child embracing the glorious dawn, in Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, in Wordsworth's recollections of childhood. The contemplative mode may rely on a nostalgia for the past, and for the old mysticism of divine immanence, but it also invites the mind to stand in awe before its own visionary powers.

Describing his approach as contrastive and confrontational, rather than comparative, Karl Kroeber turns to the work of Friedrich and Turner, each "regarded as the premier exemplar of Romantic painting in their country", in a determined effort to set forth precisely those attributes which are incommensurate. Friedrich's use of the mediating '*Rückenfigur*' positions the viewer effectively outside the painting. His scene is symbolic, his mode meditative. Turner, by contrast, deliberately bedazzles the eye with the glare diffracted through mist and haze, the glint reflected off lake or river. He requires his viewer to "enter into" the painting, to grope through glint and glare to discover what might be hidden. There is a "self-advertizing paintedness" in Turner's style which stymies perception but effectively challenges apperception. There is no single "right" position for "entering into" Turner's painting: one approaches close to the canvas, steps away, and wanders from side to investigate how the eye has been baffled. Friedrich, however, specifically locates the viewer's position. We are expected to look over the shoulder of his "*Rückenfigur*", not to "enter into" the painting, but share aloof the meditative experience. His style is linear, his content allegorical. Turner strives for diversity, Friedrich for a holistic symbolic appeal.

The divergent attributes of style, mode, and manner which Kroeber thus dismantles might well "irritate", he readily acknowledges, "because they do not converge toward some definitive conclusion". He is not unhappy with this result. The purpose of criticism, he says, is the "discrimination of distinctions". Generalizations may not be impossible, but they are "relatively useless as final critical judgments". Kroeber, then, is content to leave us with differences. Jörg Traeger, in the final chapter in this volume, wants to reconcile differences and to restore a sense of common concerns in the French, German, and English painting of the period. His three examples, David's *Mort de Marat* (*Death of Marat*), Friedrich's *Mönch am Meer* (*Monk by the Sea*), and Turner's *Morning after the Deluge*, do indeed seem appropriate for an investigation of the incommensurate.

Granting the profound differences in these three paintings, Traeger asks what connections might be discerned in mode, manner, or style. The answer,

he declares, lies hidden in Kleist's metaphor of a spectator whose eyelids have been cut away. Kleist (actually Brentano; see p. 413n.) describes his response to Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea*. In the barren foreground stands a small "Rückenfigur", a Capuchin monk, gazing out upon the wide, empty sea and sky. Not a cloud, nor sail, nor tree offers the eye relief from the bleak prospect. Kleist's metaphor implies not only that all framing devices have been eliminated within the painting, but also that barriers between observer and observed, illusion and truth, have been removed. The result is an almost painful immediacy. It is this brusque and direct manner, Traeger argues, that Friedrich's painting has in common with the paintings of David and Turner.

In David's *Marat*, the stark sculptural physicality of the representation evokes the morbid reality of a display of relics. The observer's aesthetic response is pushed toward a pathological affliction. The work of art seems to expose rather than merely to represent its object. Its referential character is minimized if not utterly abolished. In Turner's *Deluge*, the atmospheric swirl of sunlight diffracting through rain and mist produces a phantasmagoric glare. The colourization is at once an accurate representation of the physics of light and an uncanny externalization of the visionary. The metaphor of the lidless eyes, Traeger points out, is effectively realized in one of Blake's illustrations to Young's *Night Thoughts*. Blake depicts the very sort forceful imposition of reality upon the illusory medium of art which Kleist's metaphor describes, and which creates the aching tensions in the works of Friedrich, David, and Turner.

Part I – Imagination