

Ed, Burwick, Frederick and Jurgen Klein.

Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA, 1996.

Pages: 240-268

Figures: None

HANS-ULRICH MOHR

The Picturesque: A Key Concept of the Eighteenth Century

In view of the many strands of development in eighteenth-century British social history it appears almost impossible to find a satisfactory common denominator. Notions such as "Enlightenment",¹ "The Rise of the Middle Class(es)" or "Industrial Revolution" are attempts to do this with convenient terms. They are, however, in most cases neither appropriate nor sufficient.² The term "Enlightenment" is an analogy to the development in France, which was quite different from the British situation,³ and "The Rise of the Middle Class(es)" not only began already in the Late Middle Ages, but also continued after the eighteenth century.⁴ Let us therefore have a closer look at one particular historical fact from the eighteenth century which is considered especially rich in consequences.

In 1709, Abraham Darby, a member of the "Society of Friends" (or "Quakers"), put into operation a blast-furnace at Coalbrookdale near Shrewsbury, which he had designed himself using several technical improvements for the production of iron, e.g. the use of coke from mineral coal instead of charcoal. All in all, he set an important example for industrial processes. It spurred on the development at Coalbrookdale in such a way that this place has recently been designated "The Silicon Valley of the eighteenth century" and reconstructed as a museum.⁵ What Darby initiated at Coalbrookdale can,

- 1 This term is used mainly by non-British historians. Cf. e.g. Friedrich Meinecke: *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg 1965), 193ff.
- 2 Christopher Hill: "Reformation to Industrial Revolution". In: *Industry and Empire: From 1750 to the Present Day*, ed. E. J. Hobsbawm (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968); John Foster: *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1974); Peter Mathias: *The First Industrial Nation. An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914* 2nd ed. (London and New York: Methuen, 1983).
- 3 Actually the term "Enlightenment" was actively rejected by British authors because it seemed to carry the notion of French atheism and libertine morals.
- 4 E.g. Manfred Riedel: "Bürger, Staatsbürger, Bürgertum." In: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, I, eds. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972).
- 5 Cf. the detailed and instructive Museum Guide of the "Ironbridge Gorge Museum". See

above all, be characterized as a qualitative impulse in terms of a *functional differentiation*.⁶ In this case, reducing mineral coal to pure carbon before putting it in the blast-furnace implied that functional components of a certain process of production had been laid bare and intensified, which led more directly and effectively to the desired goal. The same thing applies when a smith's hearth is replaced by a blast-furnace, i.e. when hand-crafting is transformed into mass production. Such production, however, cannot be effected without other preconditions. Therefore it is no mere coincidence that Darby belonged to a sect which, though not strictly believing in the Calvinistic and Puritan dogma of the fundamental uncertainty of divine grace, was ascetically striving to find proofs of salvation through economic success in following one's "inner light".⁷ Among the economic preconditions necessary for such industrial developments was a system of banking and finance, which would offer the basis for the economic and functionalistic initiatives of individuals and provide them with capital (i.e., the accumulated results of the work of others) and reduce the risk for the individual.⁸ For such purposes the Bank of England, the insurance business ("Lloyd's") and extended possibilities for speculation had been created by 1700. Although these mechanisms had been designed to facilitate enterprises in international trade they also furthered the advance of functional differentiation in the field of production.

Another achievement of the eighteenth century is (modern) historiography, i.e. the formation of a historical consciousness which previously had existed only in a different form or on a considerably smaller scale (such as salvation history or the writing of chronicles).⁹ Obviously British society, which by the end of the eighteenth century had undergone massive changes through functional differentiation, could now be understood as a coherent whole only by means of a new temporal and perspectival design.¹⁰

also figure 65.

- 6 This term plays a central role in the thought of the systems-theoretician Niklas Luhmann. Cf., his *Soziologische Aufklärung. Aufsätze zur Theorie sozialer Systeme* 2nd ed. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1971), esp. his article "Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme", 113-36; here: 123ff.
- 7 A short sketch of Puritan thought is given in Gerd Birkner, *Literatur und Heilsgewißheit* (Munich: Fink, 1972), 7ff. An overview of the Puritan sects and amongst them Quakerism is presented in Ivan D. Ebner, *Autobiography in Seventeenth-Century England* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971).
- 8 Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* rev. ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 177ff.; Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution, 1603-1714* 2nd ed. (Walton-on Thames: Nelson, 1980), 224ff.
- 9 Meinecke, 193ff.
- 10 Jürgen Habermas: "Über das Subjekt der Geschichte." In: *Seminar: Geschichte und Theorie*.

What is new at the end of the eighteenth century is also artistic (including literary) production of an unprecedented breadth and quantity.¹¹ It appealed to almost all strata of society without demanding an elaborate educational background as had been necessary at the beginning of the century. Although this seems to imply a certain simplification and standardization, this is just a superficial impression. For at the same time a process of internal differentiation of artistic products had taken place in terms of an intensified appeal to the emotions of recipients or groups of recipients. The arts appear to have freed themselves from certain intellectual restraints that had stood in the way of the emotional demands they have to fulfil – certainly a development which is structurally parallel to Darby's activities. This process of adaptation to a progressively differentiating social system was accompanied by a meta-dimension, namely a theoretical discourse about the possibilities of artistic production and its effects.¹² This discourse originated from the necessity partly to secure, partly to abolish the traditional rules of artistic creation, which had been set up in consequence of the reception of classical antiquity in the Renaissance. The fact that this discourse has been continued ever since proves that it has become increasingly indispensable to secure, by describing, explaining and discussing the results achieved by artistic creation in terms of expression and transmission of aesthetic experience. Hence the category of the (classical) Beautiful was supplemented by the Sublime and – filling the wide space between both – the Picturesque.¹³ The aesthetic theory to which

Umriss einer Historik, eds. H.M. Baumgartner and J. Rösen (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), 388-96.

- 11 Richard Altick: *The English Common Reader. A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Chicago & London: U of Chicago P, 1963).
- 12 Samuel H. Monk: *The Sublime. A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII Century England* (1935) Reprint (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1960); Johannes Dobai, *Die Kunstliteratur des Klassizismus und der Romantik in England* 2 vols. (Berne: Benteli, 1974-75); Agnes Addison: *Romanticism and the Gothic Revival* (1938) Reprint (New York: Frank Cass & Co., 1967).
- 13 On the Picturesque see, above all: Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque. Studies in a Point of View*, (1927) Reprint (New York: Frank Cass & Co., 1967); Walter John Hippel, Jr.: *The Beautiful, The Sublime and The Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois UP, 1957); Carl Paul Barbier: "The Theory of the Picturesque." In: *William Gilpin. His Drawings, Teaching, and Theory of the Picturesque* (Oxford UP, 1963), 98-147; Martin Price: "The Picturesque Moment." In: *From Sensibility to Romanticism* ed. by Frederick W. Hilles and Harold W. Bloom (Oxford UP, 1965), 259-92; David Watkin: *The English Vision. The Picturesque in Architecture, Landscape and Garden Design* (London: John Murray, 1982); Malcolm Andrewes: *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain 1760-1800*. (Aldershot: Scolar, 1989); Wylie Sypher: *Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), 48-109.

the discussion in the second half of the eighteenth century continually refers, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) by Edmund Burke, does not deal with the category of the Picturesque.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it is the central concept of aesthetics, and – in view of the high significance of aesthetics in that century – of thought as a whole, in the eighteenth century. This can be seen in the fact that the concept of the Picturesque came to be developed even though it was at variance with the classical canon. The great significance of the Picturesque is also underlined by the fact that it was established in the course of a long and intensive discussion. Burke's codification of aesthetics in terms of the Beautiful and the Sublime was practically accepted from the start, because it stayed within the secure terrain of classicism and Locke's associationist psychology.¹⁵ The answer Burke thus provided had the effect of making clearer which questions were still open. The process in which the Picturesque grew in plausibility stretches over the whole of the eighteenth century. This means that it is intimately correlated with an artistic production which was reacting directly to a society that was increasingly becoming structured according to the principle of functional differentiation. The fact that this process has remained open-ended must be attributed to the nature of aesthetics, which is always beyond conceptualization.

The closeness of the Picturesque to the changes taking place during the eighteenth century renders it an invaluable help in finding a common denominator for that period. This seems to be in line with the following statement by Jörn Rösen:

Die Kunst macht die erfahrene Geschichte durchsichtig auf die Möglichkeiten sinnvollen Lebens in ihr [... Sie] deckt den verborgenen Sinn geschichtlicher Erfahrung auf. Sie stellt der Gesellschaft die sie geschichtlich bewegenden Kräfte in ästhetischer Gestalt vor Augen.¹⁶

(Art makes history transparent with regard to the possibilities of a meaningful life in it. Art reveals the hidden sense of the experience of history. It exposes to society in the shape of aesthetic creations the forces by which the historical processes in society are determined.)

As the Picturesque was not only a constant companion of artistic production in the eighteenth century but also an overall integrative concept, it must be

- 14 On Burke's aesthetics see J.T. Boulton's comprehensive introduction (of more than 100 pages) to his edition of the *Philosophical Enquiry* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).
- 15 Boulton, xxxv ff.
- 16 Jörn Rösen: *Ästhetik und Geschichte. Geschichtstheoretische Untersuchungen zum Begründungszusammenhang von Kunst, Gesellschaft und Wissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1976), 17.

considered highly indicative of a dimension in which the meaning of historical experience can be permanently traced and to which even historians may look for orientation for their work.

The first instance of the use of the word “picturesque” in Britain is to be found in a book on painting by a certain William Anglionby in 1685.¹⁷ He writes that the Italian expression “a la pittoresk” signifies a bold expression or stroke. The next evidence dates from 1703. The word occurs in Richard Steele’s comedy of manners, *The Tender Husband*. Here a detail of a painting dealing with a subject from classical antiquity is declared to be “very picturesque”. The painting shows a pastoral scene in which one of the characters of the play, a young lady, is presented as the amazon Thalestris in armour. A dark-skinned dwarf in the background is holding the bridle of a white horse. The picturesque detail, now, consists of the fact that a fair-skinned Cupid in the foreground is secretly stealing the amazon’s removed helmet “to show that love should have a part in all gallant actions” (IV.ii.88ff.)¹⁸.

In the first case the term “pittoresk” means “in the style of a painter”. In the second, in the form “picturesque”, it means “in the style of a picture” or “suitable for pictorial representation”. This second version has prevailed in Britain as the basic definition of the term (in contrast to further implications which have since developed from its varying contexts of usage). The second version is also the more comprehensive one as it includes the attitude of the artistic connoisseur with his knowledge of the imaginary museum of past works of art. The orthographical change from “tt” to “ct” is probably due to a naive popular etymology or, rather, analogy to “picture”, which became usual because it coincided with the new normative understanding of the term.¹⁹ The example from Steele’s drama shows that now the term does not so much refer to the *technique* of painting as to what could be a relevant and appropriate *subject* of pictorial representation.

The next evidences of the word occur in 1712 and 1717 in the writings of Alexander Pope.²⁰ They show that by this time it was mainly applied to landscape and nature. Objects – either artificial ones such as statues and temples placed in natural surroundings, or others found in nature – are

17 Hipple, p.185.

18 Richard Steele: *The Tender Husband*, ed. by Calhoun Winton (London: Arnold, 1967), 57 (Regents Restoration Drama Series).

19 The same way of thinking in analogies has, however, served to retain the original orthography in Italy (pittura = picture; pittore = painter) and in France. So from the beginning of the eighteenth century “pittoresco/pittoresque” also means “picturesque” (= in picture-like fashion).

20 *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “picturesque”.

evaluated in regard to whether they make a good “picture” because they convey an allegorically expressed moral interpretation of nature.

Nine years before the Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry* an anonymous text had appeared under the title *A Dialogue Upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable The Lord Viscount Cobham at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (1748). In presenting observations as a platonic dialogue between two men it imitates Shaftesbury’s famous *The Moralists* (1709). This is hardly a far-fetched ancestry, as it is in precisely this text that a character named Philocles delivers a panegyric on “wild, unspoiled Nature” (part 3, section 2). The author of the *Dialogue Upon the Gardens [...] at Stow [...]* was – as William Templeman has convincingly proved – William Gilpin.²¹ One of the participants in his dialogue observes that the ruin on the shore enhances the beauty of the lake:

There is something so vastly picturesque, and pleasing to the Imagination in such Objects, that they are a great Addition to every Landskip.²²

The other one agrees and explains:

[A] regular Building perhaps gives us very little pleasure; [...] yet a fine Rock, beautifully set off in Claro-obsкуро, and garnished with flourishing Bushes, Ivy, and dead Branches, may afford us a great deal; and a ragged Ruin, with venerable old Oaks, and Pines nodding over it, may perhaps please the Fancy yet more than either of the other two Objects.²³ [figures 70, 66, 95]

The criteria for the Picturesque which are developed in the course of the dialogue, are the following:

Irregularity, contrast, roughness, kinship to the real world, variety, use of light and shade, novelty, pictorial organization.²⁴

The *Dialogue* went through three editions within the next few years and was even plagiarized in 1750.²⁵ This suggests that it was of significance in the understanding of the Picturesque and that there seems to have been an obvious need for such definitions.

What was the practice of landscape gardening like from which Gilpin could draw his conclusions? The garden at Stowe had mainly been created by

21 William Templeman: *The Life and Work of William Gilpin, 1724-1804* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1939), 113-30.

22 [William Gilpin]: *A Dialogue Upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable The Lord Viscount COBHAM at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (1748) Reprint (Los Angeles: The Augustan Reprint Society, 1976), 6.

23 Ibid.

24 Alexander M. Ross: *The Imprint of the Picturesque on Nineteenth Century British Fiction* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1986), 4.

25 Templeman, 128ff.

William Kent,²⁶ the most important garden designer in the first half of the eighteenth century. Kent was able to draw on precursors who had already developed elaborate landscape gardens by synthesizing (a) the garden as an area for the cultivation of plants and (b) the park as a pasturing ground and as a game-reserve for hunting.²⁷ Such amalgamated gardens were gradually ceding their (re)productive functions to the function of bearing witness to the social status of their owners. High rank in the social hierarchy was expressed in terms of dominance over nature.²⁸ Such dominance was above all represented in the artistic moulding of what was found in nature, i.e. ground, soil, rocks, vegetation, water. By rearranging, altering and shaping these components and by combining them with artistic objects (besides the castle or the stately home) such as statues, urns, monuments, grottoes, temples and chapels, the owner's background in education and knowledge could be presented as something splendid and exclusive. In this way the social status of the owner of the garden was legitimized in terms of educational refinement, and his property was justified as the outcome or the corollary of his superiority in dealing with nature. It also indicated that wide space for playful and leisurely behaviour ensued from his social privileges. One line of development of the picturesque landscape garden consisted in demonstrating one's dominance over nature in an increasingly self-confident way by reducing all that seemed to intervene between man and nature and claiming to have discovered nature's implicit authentic laws. Charles Bridgman introduced the "ha-ha".²⁹

26 Kent began his work at Stowe around 1733. His predecessors were Bridgman, Vanbrugh and Gibbs. As George B. Clarke ("Grecian Taste and Gothic Virtue. Lord Cobham's Gardening Programme and its Iconography." In: *Apollo*, June 1973: 566-71) has pointed out, it appears as if there may also have been an early and direct influence from Alexander Pope's garden at Twickenham, which was designed as a "picturesque retreat dedicated to philosophical reflection". Pope, who was a member of Lord Cobham's literary circle, had been a frequent visitor to Stowe. Lord Cobham's garden seems to be based in its central parts upon the same iconographical notions as Pope's garden, i.e. the representation of the Elysian Fields according to an allegorical dream vision described in Addison's *Spectator* (cf. Watkin, 14-22).

27 On the development of gardening see Miles Hadfield, *A History of British Gardening* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). See also Kenneth Woodbridge: *The Stourhead Landscape, Wiltshire* (The National Trust, 1989), p.11.

28 Anne Berningham: *Landscape and Ideology. The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: U of California P, 1986), 11ff.

29 S.A. Mansbach: "An Earthwork of Surprise: The eighteenth-Century Ha-Ha." In: *Art Journal* XLIV (Fall 1982): 217-21. The first document attributing the introduction of the "ha-ha" to Bridgman is Horace Walpole's "On Modern Gardening" (ca. 1785) in: H.W.: *The Works in 5 vols.* (London, 1798), Reprint: (Hildesheim & New York: Olms, 1975), II, 519-45; here: 535.

this is a stone wall of approximately the height of a man hidden in a fosse which thus creates the appearance of an uninterrupted continuation between the more immediate grounds of the estate it encircles and the surrounding pasture or the natural landscape outside by remaining excluded from view. The ha-ha was originally a device used in connection with the building of fortresses, but now it could keep either cattle or game away from the house and the surrounding decorative or ornamental gardens.

Up to 1720 the English Garden was strongly influenced by French classicism as realized by Le Nôtre, the famous designer of the gardens at Versailles.³⁰ The Dutch garden, which William of Orange had introduced to Britain, showed only slight variations from this model. Both types represent, more or less, a widely extended garden which is characterized by formalization and ornaments. This "formal garden" is symmetrically arranged round the central axis of view from the windows or the balcony at the first floor of the stately home. It consists of extended planes of "parterres", geometrically and ornamentally arranged low hedges and flower-beds.

As early as 1712 Joseph Addison had demanded in number 414 of the "moral weekly" *The Spectator* that the Dutch and French examples be rejected.³¹ He had applied John Locke's associationist psychology to art and concluded:

If we consider the works of *Nature* and *Art*, as they are qualified to entertain the Imagination, we shall find the last very defective, in Comparison to the former; for though they may sometimes appear as Beautiful or Strange, they can have nothing in them of that Vastness and Immensity, which afford so great an Entertainment to the Mind of the Beholder [...] There is something more bold and masterly in the rough, careless Strokes of Nature, than in the nice Touches and Embellishments of Art.³²

In a similar vein he criticized British gardeners:

[...] instead of humouring Nature, [they] love to deviate from it as much as possible. Our Trees rise in Cones, Globes, and Pyramids. We see the Marks of the Scissars upon every Plant and Bush [...] for my own part I would rather look upon a Tree in all its Luxuriancy and Diffusion of Boughs and Branches, than when it is thus cut into a Mathematical Figure; and I cannot but fancy that an Orchard in flower looks infinitely more delightful than the little Labyrinths of the most finished Parterre.³³

30 Hadfield, 106-78 (cf. figure 96).

31 Joseph Addison, Richard Steele *et al.*: *The Spectator in Four Volumes*, ed. by Gregory Smith (London: Dent and New York: Dutton, 1979), III, 284-87.

32 *Spectator*, III, 284.

33 *Spectator*, III, 286.

On the other hand he observed:

[...] yet we find the Works of Nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art; For in this case our Pleasure rises from a double Principle; from the Agreeableness of the Objects [...] Hence it is that we take Delight in a Prospect which is well laid out, and diversified with Fields and Meadows, Woods and Rivers; in those accidental Landscips of Trees, Clouds, and Cities, that are sometimes found in the Veins of Marble; in the curious Fret-Work of Rocks, and Grottos; and, in a Word, in any thing, that hath such a Variety of Regularity as may seem the Effect of Design, in what we call the Works of Chance. If the Products of Nature rise in Value, according as they more or less resemble those of Art, we may be sure that artificial Works receive a greater Advantage from their resemblance of such as are natural; because here the Similitude is not only pleasant but the Pattern more perfect.³⁴

Finally Addison gave the programmatic advice (and, in fact, it was understood as such) that man should “improve” Nature as he finds it into “a pretty Landskip [...] by some small Additions of Art”.³⁵

Addison’s statement articulated the concept of the Picturesque as it was developed in the context of the cultural discourse of London.³⁶ On the one hand, it took up pre-existing elements, on the other, it anticipated inherent tendencies. An important contributor to this discourse was Alexander Pope, the poet. His garden, which he laid out behind his villa on the banks of the Thames at Twickenham from 1718 onwards and which he continued to develop until his death in 1744, was greatly admired.³⁷ Pope was on friendly terms with William Kent, the designer of the garden at Stowe. In Italy Kent had studied mainly the classicistic Palladian style, but he had also acquired profound knowledge in the field of seventeenth-century landscape painting,³⁸ the leading figures of which were Nicholas Poussin, Salvator Rosa, Claude Lorrain, Gaspar Dughet and the Dutch School (Wijnants, Ruisdael, Hobbema, Rubens *et al.*). Kent designed the garden at Stowe as a series of vistas, each of which seems to be part of a landscape painting. On the one hand he

34 *Spectator*, III, 285.

35 *Spectator*, III, 286.

36 A sociological view of the London scene in the first half of the eighteenth century is given by Jürgen Habermas: *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Öffentlichkeit*, 4th ed. (Neuwied & Berlin: Luchterhand, 1969). More detailed are G.M. Trevelyan: *Illustrated English Social History* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1964), III; Roy Porter: *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1982); J.H. Plumb: *England in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1972).

37 Hadfield, *British Gardening*, 179-197.

38 *Ibid.*, and Joan Clifford: *Capability Brown. An illustrated life of Lancelot Brown, 1716-1783* (Augsburg: Skire, 1987), 6ff.

wanted to display natural and authentic conditions. On the other hand he had to create, artificially and artistically, variety, openness, distance and space. Thirdly, he had to present buildings and statues, which added a dimension of allegorical exegesis to the natural scenery, to their best advantage. The origin and the reception of Gilpin’s *Dialogue* confirm that Stowe, where Kent was able to put his theoretical knowledge into practice thanks to the riches, the enthusiasm and the education of its owner, was regarded as sensational. This achievement of Kent’s must indeed be regarded as the high point in the development of the picturesque concept in the first half of the eighteenth century. To what extent Stowe provided orientation for the next generation can be seen from the following facts:

(1) William Gilpin, who had analysed Kent’s result in such an intensive and affirmative way, became in the course of the next decades one of the leading national authorities in the discourse on picturesque aesthetics on the strength of his extensive travels in and acquaintance with the landscapes of Britain.³⁹

(2) Kent’s master disciple Lancelot Brown became a nationally sought-after designer of landscape gardens. Until his death in 1783 he laid out approximately 300 landscape gardens. Brown received the nickname “Capability”, because this was his standing term whenever he evaluated a given estate with regard to “natural improvements”.⁴⁰

(3) British landscape painters, who had trained with the same foreign painters as the landscape gardeners, came to consider British landscapes and landscape garden as a worthwhile subject. (See, e.g., Richard Wilson’s painting of Croome Court estate, which was created by Brown; cf. figure 82.)⁴¹

As Brown was coming to fame, Burke’s *Enquiry* was published. As it is the case with almost everything in the field of aesthetics in the eighteenth century, Addison’s *Spectator* Essay “On the Pleasures of the Imagination” (No. 411-421; 21st June – 3rd July 1712) provided the framework. By the way, Addison’s statements on landscape gardening quoted above are from the same source.

Parallel to his criticism of classicistic concepts in these statements, his aesthetics expands the classicistic notion of Beauty through the ideas of *Novelty* (*Variation*) and *Greatness* (*Vastness*). Here Addison refers to the treatise *De Sublimitate*, which is supposed to have been written by a certain Longinus in the era of the Roman Emperor Augustus. This text, which is

39 On Gilpin see Barbier; Templeman; Hipple, chap. 13.

40 On Brown see Dorothy Stroud: *Capability Brown* (London: Faber, 1975); Clifford. See also figures 93, 94, 101, 82.

41 A profound assessment of Richard Wilson’s work is given by David H. Solkin: *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1982).

concerned with the effects of rhetoric, thus became the classical text which legitimized the disregard for the traditional classicistic aesthetic. Burke then summed up the discussion about the Beautiful and the Sublime in a differentiated way on an empirical and sensationalistic basis. In this way he created firm criteria for the practical application of these categories. The effect of the Sublime is described as “terror”, which is caused by the qualities of obscurity, power, privation (vacuity, darkness, solitude, silence), vastness, infinity (succession, uniformity), magnitude, difficulty, magnificence, light, colour, sound, loudness, suddenness, intermitting sounds, bodily pain [figures 65, 88].⁴² The Sublime causes terror because it affects the human idea of self-preservation. It transmits *aesthetic* experience, however only “when it does not press too close”.⁴³ The “delightful horror”,⁴⁴ which is thus imparted by sublime objects, consists in a feeling of “glorying” and “inward greatness”,⁴⁵ that Burke explains as follows:

[...] the mind [is] always claiming to itself some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates [...]

The qualities of the Beautiful are described as smallness, smoothness, gradual variation, delicacy of form and colour.⁴⁶ Between the close-at-hand softness of the Beautiful and the distanced powerful Sublime there was a wide gap. As illustrated in the quotations above, Addison had already indicated by looking at open nature (and landscape) that many things which could be perceived there were the origin of aesthetic pleasure. Burke then established empirical nature as the privileged object of a perceptive attitude which could be practised by everybody and thus was a permanent challenge to traditional aesthetics. Therefore, according to Burke, it was the impressions of nature on the senses and the resources of the imagination which mattered and not just what conformed to certain psychological concepts and the classical rules of art. Besides, Nature is not an objective quantity. It is what man is able to articulate about it in terms of concepts and, at the same time, something that exceeds all this. Therefore one can say that Burke’s theory demanded to be rectified by the concrete experience of nature. This provided an additional stimulus to the evolution of the concept of the Picturesque, which, as we have shown, had already existed for a few decades. This concept represented a mode of perception which did not so much rely upon theoretical assumptions sanctioned by

42 Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry*, ed. Boulton, 57-87 (Part II).

43 Burke, 46.

44 Burke, 73.

45 Burke, 50f.

46 Burke, 91-128 (Part III).

century-old traditions as on the reception of artistic production. Consequently it was relatively unbiased, open for application and adaptation. In this sense the aesthetic of the Picturesque was characterized by a high degree of immediacy in its relation to the contemporary idea of nature.

The idea of nature which determined the meaning of the Picturesque up to the middle of the eighteenth century was *Physico-Theology*.⁴⁷ This term is taken from the title of a widely read book by Thomas Derham published in 1713, which articulates the accepted notions among the then prevalent ideas about reality. As its title indicates, it aims at a synthesis between a secularized version of a puritanical Anglicanism, on the one hand, and the scientific and mathematical findings of Newton, on the other hand. Newton’s discovery of the law of gravitation was in that era regarded as a heuristic paradigm. Even today it is perplexing that a short mathematical formula serves to explain two phenomena which seem so different, viz. the orbits of celestial bodies and the fall of an apple from a tree. This correlation of (a) perception and (b) an underlying natural law was transferred analogously to nature. Its surface was considered to be wild and varied – typical of a world punished because of the Fall of Man; but behind it regular, lawful and reasonable mechanisms were believed to be at work. Although God might not be immediately present in his creation, it might still be considered as his perceivable presence, the “sensorium” of God. It was man’s task in this unordered and chaotic world to bring its latent reasonability to the fore. In this sense Addison could praise, in the *Spectator* 69, the international trade which he thought was so successful and useful because it conformed to the objective laws of reason. Trade relations would compensate for regional disadvantages, and by bringing together goods from various countries they allowed the creation of new and more reasonable things. Here is a direct correspondence to Addison’s advice to landscape gardeners to improve nature “by very small additions of art”.

Likewise, there is a legitimizing effect. The social groups which had the means to lay out landscape gardens could conceive of themselves as people who behaved in an authentic way because they behaved in accord with the latent reasonability of nature. As this group, the gentry, dominated British society, society as a whole could be interpreted as an authentic contractual society where the original primeval equality of all men had been transformed into a hierarchy of qualification and competence. Locke’s political and social theories provided the foundations for this by combining the Puritan notion

47 E.g. Basil Willey: *The Eighteenth-Century Background Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (1940) (Harmondsworth: Peregrine, 1965), 9-77; Alan D. McKillop: *The Background of Thomson’s ‘Seasons’* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1942).

of assuring oneself of one's salvation through economic success with his empiricism and the tradition of natural rights inherited from classical antiquity. Thus the society which he explained as a kind of "Genteel Compromise"⁴⁸ could find adequate expression in a classical arcadian landscape encompassing hierarchical social distinctions. This happened in the shape of gardens (Pope, Kent), of landscape painting (Wilson, Lambert *et al.*) and of poetry (Pope: *Windsor Forest*, Dyer: *Grongar Hill*, Thomson: *The Seasons*).⁴⁹

Shaftesbury, who was probably the most enthusiastic spokesman for Physico-Theology and the Genteel Compromise, believed that there existed an objective moral law in nature which was communicated to man through an innate *moral sense* that was awakened by the aesthetic experience of nature. Physico-Theology and the Genteel Compromise, however, contained a strong element of change, as they accepted the relevance of individual experience. Besides, the ongoing process of functional differentiation created chances for upward social mobility which would, finally, lead to a weakening of the hegemony of the old upper class. The concept of the Picturesque, which bridges the gap between Burke's Beautiful and Sublime and, finally, even reduces them to marginal phenomena of the Picturesque, is no longer a correlate of the neoclassical system of objectified reason. It is now based upon the aesthetic experience of a manifold nature without such a traditional backing. Hence Sir Joshua Reynolds defines *nature* in his *Discourses* (1769-1790) as the pleasing correlative of man's mind:

In short, whatever pleases has in it what is analogous to the mind, and is, therefore, in the highest and best sense of the word nature.⁵⁰

Such mental dispositions could still be in line with traditional Physico-Theology. But already in William Kent's Stowe the buildings, monuments and statues which were presented amidst the arcadian arrangement of the landscape were actually quotations from diverse cultures and epochs. At Stourhead,⁵¹ a landscape garden built by Henry Flitcroft (a friend of William Kent), there are, for example, the imitation of Palladian Bridge, a mediaeval Gothic convent, a fourteenth-century Gothic market cross, which the owner of

48 I take this term from Robert Hopkins: "The Cant of Social Compromise: Some Observations on Mandeville's Satire." In: *Mandeville Studies*, ed. Irwin Primer (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975), 168-92.

49 McKillop; Heinz-Joachim Müllenbrock: *Whigs Kontra Tories. Studien zum Einfluß der Politik auf die englische Literatur des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1974), 93-141.

50 Hussey, 61.

51 A detailed description is given by Kenneth Woodbridge.

Stowe had saved from destruction in Bristol, and a temple of Apollo and a Pantheon [figures 97, 98]. These buildings as well as the statues inside them are, in most cases, copies or slight variations of ancient Roman originals. Frequently this line of ancestry has been transmitted by way of other works of art. The temple of Flora, for example, contains a copy of the famous Borghese Urn (the original is today in the Louvre at Paris); the statue of the God of the river Stour in the grotto where the Stour originates is very similar to the God of the Tiber in Salvator Rosa's *Tiber and Aeneas*; the Pantheon (copied in miniature from the Roman original) is not only included in Palladio's *I Quattro Libri Dell'Architettura* (*Four books of architecture*, 1570), but also in Claude Lorrain's painting *Aeneas in Delos*; and both bridges, one of stone and one of wood, were likewise suggested by Palladio's *Quattro Libri*.⁵²

The emancipated, i.e. no longer classicistically determined, Picturesque admitted all historical styles. What finally mattered was an authentic view of nature. In this traces of human activities were registered, too, especially in terms of buildings, either complete or ruined. In connection with this, history became thematic. And, gradually, the notion of an ideal and reasonable nature could be replaced by the experience of the everyday world, as far as this was possible because of the metaphysical foundations of the Picturesque. An emancipation of aesthetic experience from such substantialistic presuppositions did not occur before the twentieth century, e.g. in movements such as Cubism or in something like William Carlos Williams' poem "The Red Wheelbarrow", where a trivial object is presented as conveying aesthetic functions.

The new coordinates of the Picturesque in the second half of the eighteenth century can be explained by the fact that the old Physico-Theology was re-examined and that its components were revaluated and rearranged. The basis of the new synthesis was a stronger reliance on John Locke's empirical and sensationist associationist psychology. Behind this change lay above all, the end of the former model of society, the Genteel Compromise. How did this come about? A society in which the functional differentiation of the economy is the hegemonial instrument of the dominant group, had structurally subscribed to social change. In this sense Physico-Theology as well as the Genteel Compromise were by no means definite concepts, but rather configurations of notions which had been stable for about fifty years. During that time above all the lower middle class gained in social significance, i.e. those groups between the gentry (from the landed gentry down to the professionals of the urban gentry) and the bottom stratum (more than 50% of the popula-

52 Woodbridge, 45-60.

tion with an income at or below the poverty line). The lower middle classes consisted of the descendants of the sort of people who had articulated their political intentions in both civil wars of the seventeenth century in the medium of Puritan thought. They expected the realization of a social hierarchy in which people who were “justified” or “elected” in a moral and religious sense should be in the highest ranks. In accordance with their Puritan background these people displayed a rigorous moralism. For the time being they had to bear the burden which the dominant Whig gentry had inflicted on Britain in order to secure and expand their international economic policy, i.e. high taxation, direct or indirect involvement in wars, lack of supplies and pauperization. At the same time their traditional rights were restricted because of the abolition of guilds and the enclosures. The setting-up of trade unions was strictly prohibited. After 1720 this group, which found their spokesmen in Bolingbroke, a Tory, and Pulteney, an oppositional Whig, formed the hard core of the political opposition.⁵³

Another important model of thought was represented by Libertinism.⁵⁴ It continued a tradition which had drawn from discoveries in the field of natural science the conclusion of a cynical materialism. Faced with a partly mechanistic, partly chaotic, partly indifferent nature, human freedom and authenticity could, in their view, only be salvaged by using the human intellect as a means of securing the enjoyment of refined sensual pleasures. For the lower middle class with their rigorous moralism and also for the followers of Physico-Theology such behavior could only appear as self-destructive immorality and as oppressive depravity.

Definite indications of a growing political influence of the lower middle class existed from the 1740s on.⁵⁵ They culminated in the bloody riots around the liberal democrat Wilkes (1763ff.), whom the establishment tried, by all means possible, to keep out of the Commons, and in the massive resistance to George III. The end of traditional Physico-Theology and the Genteel Compromise was also a frequent topic in the cultural sphere. Hume’s skepti-

53 Habermas, 1969, 69ff.

54 During the Restoration Era (1660-1688) Libertinism existed mainly in the coterie of the Stuart courts. In the eighteenth century this tradition was represented by parts of the Whig Establishment. On Libertinism see Dale Underwood: *Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners*, 2nd ed. (Boston, Mass.: Archon, 1969), Part 1; Dieter Hoffmann: *Die Figur des Libertin. Überlegungen zu einer politischen Lektüre de Sades* (Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 1984); Gerhard Schneider: *Der Libertin. Zur Geistes- und Sozialgeschichte des Bürgertums im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970); Reiner Wild: “Freidenker in Deutschland.” In: *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* VI (1973): 253-85.

55 Cf., e.g., J.H. Plumb, 68ff.

cism not only doubted man’s reason but also his ability to achieve authentic knowledge. Instead of man’s trust in the laws of objectified reason he recognized that man’s survival in history was based upon an irrational foundation that was only relatively reliable. Dr. Johnson in his novel *Rasselas* (1759) emphasized the irrationality and obscurity of history. The conclusion he drew was that man had to withdraw his individualistic claims towards life and society and that he should wait for and endure what life and history had in store. Richardson’s epistolary novel *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748/9) had explicitly thematized the social outlook of the lower middle class, their sufferings as well as their self-justified and individualistic striving for social significance. They, too, could neither certify the working of objectified reason in society nor affirm the idea that the principle of benevolence permeated all social relations. The model of authentic human behavior in the era of Physico-Theology and the Genteel Compromise was the Man of Sensibility, the counter-image to the libertine “wit” and to the Puritan “saint”. His ability for aesthetic perception endowed him with a particular affinity with objectively reasonable nature and rendered him a particularly authentic human being. Laurence Sterne (*Tristram Shandy*, 1760ff; *Sentimental Journey*, 1768) and Henry Mackenzie (*The Man of Feeling*, 1771) demonstrated that his privileged relationship with nature consisted merely of an unrealistic egocentricity. Once again man and nature became mysteries. The so-called *Celtic Revival*, which commenced in the 1750s, signalled the end of the traditional models of reality and society, too.⁵⁶ At first, this movement served as a cultural protest by the urban (upper lower) middle class in Wales, who felt dominated by an Anglicized squirearchy. This configuration strongly emphasized existing trends towards a revival of interest in the national mediaeval and Elizabethan heritage on behalf of the middle classes all over Britain.

A general loss of significance of neoclassical concepts can be seen in a belated and somehow diminutive British parallel to the French “*Querelle des anciens et des modernes*” which took place during the 1760s between the conservative *Critical Magazine* and the comparatively progressive *Monthly Magazine*.⁵⁷ All this proves that a model of reality and society which might be able to mediate a new social compromise between Puritanism, Libertinism and Physico-Theology would, in the first respect, have to consider the lower middle class point-of-view: i.e. its frustrating everyday experience, its expectation of a solution of their problems in a historical development of progressive perfection, its moralistic attitude, and the functionalistic (and ascetic)

56 Solkin, 86ff.; 100ff.

57 Solkin, 77f.

pressure: in the face of a permanent threat by the abyss of poverty. This new model would also have to emphasize the role of individual experience to a larger extent but it would, on the other hand, accept restrictions as to the immediate social rewards for individual performance.

Let us trace how this new model of reality and society is developed in the various fields of artistic production and what its qualities are like.

Landscape gardening was dominated by “Capability” Brown⁵⁸ in the second half of the eighteenth century. His landscapes with their characteristic feature of *multiple* vistas provided for a “natural” variety of interpretations and thus included the newly emerging orientations. Still, landscape gardens were the domain of the establishment, so that a general lag behind the developments in the other artistic media is to be expected. Nevertheless, these gardens had the advantage of visual impressiveness and plasticity. Brown came under heavy criticism for “inadequate naturalness”. His too schematic dissolution of forests into picturesque “clumps”, the damming-up of “lively” brooks into “boring” lakes and the isolation of the mansions from the parks and thus from nature were some of the objections made against him.⁵⁹ The strongest attack came from his rival, William Chambers, a famous architect and Treasurer of the Royal Academy. He demanded the use of more richly varied plant material and more buildings of the oriental type, especially *chinoiseries* as relevant parts of a natural garden. Chambers’ criticism was generally refuted as exaggerated, but it was correct in tendency. Something that never really caught on with the British was orientalism. Probably because the Gothic style matched the native climate and vegetation of Britain better and because the outlook of the (lower) middle classes was nationalistic, it was this style which prevailed. So closeness to nature became synonymous with Gothic architecture and a vegetation (above all trees and shrubs) that showed as many variations in form and colour as possible. William Gilpin travelled extensively in Britain during the 1770s in search of picturesque localities, which he recorded as sketches and as descriptions. After circulating these for more than a decade among friends and art experts, he put them before the general public in the middle of the 1780s.⁶⁰ Gilpin more or less pointed out a

58 See above note 38.

59 Clifford, 33f; Stroud, 164ff; Hadfield, 211ff; Hussey, 135-60.

60 Gilpin’s most important texts, besides the above-mentioned *Dialogue* are: (1) *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty. Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (London, 1786); (2) *Three Essays: on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: to Which is Added a Poem, on Landscape Painting* (London, 1792). See also note 62 below.

topography which lyrical poets like Wordsworth and painters like Turner and Girtin were soon to acknowledge enthusiastically.⁶¹

In his *Essay on the Picturesque* (successively extended versions in 1794, 1798 and 1810) Uvedale Price implied a response to Burke. His definition of the Picturesque was, however, not very detailed: “a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture.”⁶² He also rejected Brown and Gilpin as not being close enough to nature and differentiated the descriptive vocabulary in a technical sense by describing the Picturesque as “striking contrasts of form, colour, light and shadow”.⁶³ Such a technical point-of-view presented the Sublime even more as a marginal phenomenon of the Picturesque. The emphasis on the technical created a moral problem. The notion that a higher degree of variety and variegation made an object more picturesque affirmed that the experience of poverty, decay and ruin was particularly picturesque. This clashed with the conviction that picturesque-ness was equivalent to being morally good. The problem was solved by keeping the aesthetic and the moral components apart and (1) by putting the element of historical interpretation between them and (2) by emphasizing the irrationality of nature, which is understood as a huge organism (more details below).

Price was also prepared to transfer the quality of “picturesqueness” to musical sounds.⁶⁴ In his *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805) Richard Payne Knight had accused Price of a “fundamental error” in

[...] seeking for distinctions in external objects which only exist in the modes and habits of viewing and considering them.⁶⁵

Knight made it clear that a training through the study of paintings was the most important element of picturesque perception. Of almost similar importance was the fact that such a mode of perception evoked recollections of earlier impressions, experiences and knowledge.

This suggests a depth of implications which was already indicated in connection with the moral element. All taken together, it means that the Picturesque is, despite its often being defined in technical terms, more than

61 So in going to the Lake District or to Tintern Abbey these artists were following “hints” given by Gilpin.

62 [William Gilpin]: *An Essay upon Prints: Containing Remarks Upon the Principles of Picturesque Beauty* [London, 1768], x (quoted from Ross, 12).

63 Uvedale Price: *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape*, new ed. (London, 1796), 153.

64 Ross, 16.

65 Hussey, 80.

simply a theory for the assessment of paintings and landscapes; it is a *model of reality and society*. It originated within the context of Physico-Theology and Genteel Compromise, but then it evolved into their successor, as it was able to integrate the various developments and changes of the eighteenth century. Important preconditions for this were the facts (1) that it conceded relatively broad space to the aesthetic experience of the individual, (2) that in perceiving reality a historical dimension was evoked in the beholder. In landscape gardening this aspect was conveyed by including or alluding to the art of the past in its many variants, especially Gothic art and buildings, even in a ruined state.

The aesthetic and the historical valency of the picturesque object or scene gave rise to a certain mood in the viewer.⁶⁶ Usually, the picturesque traveller tried to find a harmonizing golden aura in nature, which is typical of Claude Lorrain's paintings (cf. also Turner's representation of *Bolton Priory* [figure 70]). In case this aura did not appear immediately to the beholder, he could look at the landscape through a yellow-tinged glass, a so-called "Claude glass".⁶⁷ Claude's landscape paintings presented the experience of transitoriness and of conflicts in contrast to an implicit yearning for the Golden Age as the promise of a social utopia.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, they expressed a basic sympathy or even understanding between man and nature. For this purpose, in his paintings he inscribed into an immense and powerful nature allegorical scenes of conflicts but also impressive classical buildings, in order to illustrate the transient condition but also the greatness of man. Analogously, the multiplication of buildings of various styles and epochs in the landscape gardens of the eighteenth century documented the consciousness of an advanced stage in the human understanding or dominance over nature, at least on behalf of a possessing and art-loving upper class. This consciousness was intermingled with the melancholic awareness of the limitations of the individual and of his temporality. The specific picturesque mood accrued from the concrete and intensive perception of a basic harmony between the individual and the surrounding nature, which was thereby seen as landscape and as a space where history had occurred and – most of the time latently – continued to occur. At the same time he experienced nature as a friendly and well-meaning organism of, finally, sublime dimensions, which was, however, pursuing supra-individual intentions. Hence in experiencing such a scenery the individual became aware of his momentariness and his limitations, whereupon "tears

66 Sypher, 86.

67 Sypher, 85.

68 Ingrid Schulze: *Claude Lorrain* (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst, 1984), 4; 27.

from the depth of some divine despair / rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes" as Tennyson later put it.⁶⁹

A variant of the Picturesque which turned the elegiac element into sentimental self-indulgence was the so-called *Rustic Picturesque* or *Cottage Art*, which can be found in the works of Gainsborough's final phase and in some periods of Constable's artistic life.⁷⁰ Such a distortion of the elegiac was made possible through a scenic arrangement which eliminated the element of social conflict and the awareness of transitoriness or historicity. Thus poor and simple people are presented in playful and happy intercourse with an amiable nature. A situation which might have been possible at best for a limited time is given as an unending, timeless and ahistorical social state (cf. Gainsborough: *The Woodcutters*). Such scenes could appear as a strident contrast to the actual present and its frustrations. They evoked, in an irrational surge, the onlooker's awareness of his sufferings in the given society and, in consequence, cathartic tears to quench those feelings. The unreality of such a "rustic" scene and its emotional pseudo-solution render it a piece of social-romantic kitsch.

What developments occurred in the *literary* genres, the drama, the novel and poetry in the course of the eighteenth century? The probably best known element of the classical theory of literature is the concept of the three unities, introduced by Italian theoreticians in the sixteenth century from Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁷¹ These rules were still so strongly held in esteem in the eighteenth century that Shakespeare's dramas were only performed with the appropriate adaptations. Nevertheless Shakespeare remained in such high regard that he was permanently accepted as an author worth adapting. When the Genteel Compromise and Physico-Theology lost significance and thus the rules of classical poetics became increasingly obsolete, then Shakespeare's dramas were looked at as orientations for the writing of new dramas and of literature in general. The most popular new drama at that time was written by an author who was given the nickname of "the Scotch Shakespeare". The drama bore the title *Douglas. A Tragedy* and its author was John Home (or Hume); it was first performed in Edinburgh in 1758.⁷² Although the title suggests some kind of analogy to *Macbeth*, the main character of the play is a female protagonist

69 In his poem "Tears, idle Tears", included in *The Princess* (1847).

70 This is dealt with extensively in Ann Berningham: *Landscape and Ideology. The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: U of California P, 1986). See also Sypher, 87-90.

71 Manfred Fuhrmann: *Einführung in die antike Dichtungstheorie* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 1973), 197-202.

72 Included in *Bell's British Theatre [...], Volume The Twentieth [...], Containing [among others] "Douglas" by Mr. Hume [sic!]* (London, 1780).

– in the context of her family and her kinship. Matilda is the widow of Lord Douglas, who has been killed by his greedy, i.e. excessively individualistic, relatives. Ignorant of this fact she has married her former husband's brother, the murderer. Suddenly her son out of her first marriage reappears after having been missing for twenty years. He has been brought up close to nature by poor, simple people living in the forest under circumstances similar to what is articulated later as the "Rustic" Picturesque (by Gainsborough and Constable). A bloody clash between this young man and his relatives ensues, which leaves them all dead. Matilda, who has witnessed of all this, jumps in despair from a cliff into the turbulent sea. The drama intends to evoke pitiful feelings in the spectator through which he should become aware of his faculty of *benevolence*, which is understood as an immediate reflection of the latent reasonability of nature and the guarantee of a good, perfectible society. The workings of reason in and through natural processes, however, were considered to remain in such a state of latency that nature as a whole appeared inscrutable and irrational. Thus a historical dimension was added to or discovered in nature, which allowed nature to be regarded as still meaningful and as favourably inclined towards man. The tragedy is set in the Middle Ages. So the present of around 1750 appears as an era of socio-historical improvements caused, above all, by the authenticity of Christian and humanistic orientation which culminate in the modes of behaviour inspired by the benevolence of the eighteenth-century middle class(es). Scenes with an intense and detail-laden atmosphere such as castle-yards, groves, rocky sea-coasts, as well as certain dramatic times of day and night or seasons became relevant assets in conveying this message. Nature *qua* landscape and *qua* the historical process that occurs in it was presented as the medium of the empirical and aesthetic proof of an overall meaningful process, which is inaccessible to rational analysis. So *Douglas* effects an irrationalization, a historization and an aestheticization of Physico-Theology. This is a direct equivalent of the Picturesque which we have traced in the spheres of painting and of landscape gardening.

Considering the broad appeal which *Douglas* as a product of the commercial theatre had, it becomes clear that the Picturesque, as the successor of the Genteel Compromise, successfully attempted a co-orientation of the gentry and upper middle class on one side and of the lower middle class on the other. In the field of landscape gardening, which, of course, is the domain of the rich, classicism was continued to a relatively large extent, however not by all, mainly as part of an eclectic palette and no longer in the old exclusive sense, but as a kind of "coloring".⁷³ In the field of literature which appealed to a

73 Robert Rosenblum: "Neoclassicism: Some Problems of Definition." In: *Transformations*

wider audience, i.e. one with a high proportion of lower middle class members, however, a strong inclination towards the Gothic Middle Ages as the picturesque expression of a national and a proto-middle class consciousness was to be found. History appeared as a meaningful process leading up to a world moulded by middle class virtues. Excessive individualism was stigmatized as unauthentic behavior. This included Puritan morality and self-justified fanaticism as well as the libertinism of the Establishment.

Under the dominance of classicistic rules, verse – outside the drama and the epic – was used to serve satirical, hymnical, entertaining and gregarious purposes.⁷⁴ James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726ff.) is a broad-dimensioned didactic poem which explains Physico-Theology through natural processes in the course of the four seasons. Edward Young's *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742-45) already show the influence of the idea of history prevalent in the lower middle class by connecting the tradition of the Puritan *Funeral Elegy* with Physico-Theology. A similar synthesis is achieved by Thomas Gray in his *Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard* (1750). For him Nature and society only make sense in a long-term, historically and aesthetically orientated perspective. Confronted with the over-individual process of history the individual becomes melancholically aware of his own insignificance and transitoriness. The further development of lyrical poetry shows an emphasis on such types as the elegy, the ode and the sonnet, which offer themselves as textual patterns for the expression of a subjective aestheticism within the framework of the picturesque model. Anthologies of lyrical poetry which, from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, were appearing increasingly frequently on the book market, bear witness to this.⁷⁵ One of the most impressive documents of the Picturesque is the *œuvre* of William Wordsworth. In his partly descriptive, partly narrative, partly philosophically aesthetic, partly didactic poem *The Prelude* (1805-6) he deals extensively with the faculties of the imagination (Books XI-XIII). In this context he verifies details of natural scenery in picturesque terms. Then he points out how the imagination is able to "track the main essential Power" behind "Nature's secondary grace" and to take "her way up sublime".⁷⁶

in *Late Eighteenth Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967), 3-49; here: 4.

74 Good surveys of eighteenth-century poetry are given by James Sutherland: *A Preface to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: OUP, 1970); Eric Rothstein: *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Poetry, 1660-1780* (London & Boston: Routledge, 1981).

75 Victor Lange: *Die Lyrik und ihr Publikum im England des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1935).

76 William Wordsworth: *The Prelude. A Parallel Text*, ed. by J.C. Maxwell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 526, lines 289ff.

Here aesthetic experience is qualified as the only authentic mode of knowledge. This implies an elitist attitude. Only men who are especially perceptive (an ability that cannot be acquired by schooling) are in possession of such a faculty. The former “Man of Sensibility” had thus become a titanic prophet, who, however, was realizing his limits and developing a broken mind, because all his insight did not help him to overcome the fundamental gulf between man and creation.⁷⁷

Aesthetic eclecticism is an important component of the Picturesque. We have so far described it (1) as a selective attitude towards the repertoire of historical styles within *one* medium of art and (2) as a transfer between different genres and media of art. One example was the coexistence of Classical, Gothic and Chinese buildings, monuments or statues within one landscape garden. Similar configurations could be found in texts. Lyrical poetry was now often appearing episodically in prose texts. Above we defined lyrical poetry in the second half of the eighteenth century as the representation of the individual aesthetic experience of the picturesque model. In consequence, such an experience, if it were to be presented in the medium of prose, had to be characterized and contrasted through its lyrical qualities, viz. its hyperstructure through the use of metre, verses, stanzas, metaphors, etc.⁷⁸ A novel which consists almost of a chain of alternating narrative and lyrical passages is *The Mysteries of Udolpho. A Romance* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe. Even the epigraph at the beginnings of the individual chapters are poetic quotations complying with the criterion of being picturesque. The authors cited range from Shakespeare and Milton, to the “Graveyard Poets” and up to the late eighteenth century. As with Uvedale Price, Mrs. Radcliffe extends the term picturesque to acoustical perceptions. Actually it includes scenes of a synaesthetic totality which at a higher stage of intensity changes into music, not so much a symphony, more a song, which moves man’s innermost thoughts and feelings. This is the moment of a complete concord between the individual and nature, which is possible only in an irrational way. Here is an early example from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (chap. XII):

The scene was filled with that cheering freshness, which seems to breathe the very spirit of health, and she heard only sweet and *picturesque* sounds, if such an expression may be allowed – the matin-bell of a distant convent, the faint murmur of the sea-waves, the song of birds, and the far-off low of cattle, which she saw coming slowly on between the trunks of the trees. Struck with the circumstances

77 The most popular incarnation of such a creative titan broken in spirit was Byron. Peter L. Thorslev, Jr.: *The Byronic Hero. Types and Prototypes* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1962).

78 Jürgen Link: *Literaturwissenschaftliche Grundbegriffe. Eine programmierte Einführung auf strukturalistischer Basis* (Munich: Fink, 1974).

of imagery around her, she indulged the pensive tranquillity which they inspired; and while she leaned on her window, waiting till St. Aubert should descend to breakfast, her ideas arranged themselves in the following lines:

The first Hour of Morning
How sweet to wind the forest’s tangled shade
When early twilight, from the eastern bound,
Dawns on the sleeping landscape in the glade,
And fades as morning spreads her blush around!⁷⁹

In such instances the interpenetration of historical artistic styles and the media of art has come full circle. Now a certain (i.e. the picturesque) experience of nature, which has been developed in painting and landscape gardening is presented in literature by mixing prose and poetry. The underlying notions reach back to ideas transmitted by the theatrical stage of the baroque era, as Claude painted landscapes like *coulisses* to give nature a dimension of spatial depth, in which historical documents of man’s greatness such as classical buildings appear [figures 97, 82].⁸⁰

The atmospheric totality of theatrical performances continued to influence the creation of comprehensive aesthetic notions in the eighteenth century. In this case Shakespeare’s tragedies provided stimuli for Horace Walpole, the author of the first “Gothic Story”: *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Throughout his life this man had been concerned with the developments in all fields of artistic creation. Walpole had also redecorated his villa in Twickenham by copying interesting details from Gothic buildings, e.g. the fan-vaulting from Henry VII’s chapel at Westminster.⁸¹ He also had a picturesque garden laid out. He wrote a book on the history of painting and an essay on the Art of Gardening. He collected material for anthologies of lyrical poetry among living authors and he had a wide circle of friends among contemporary artists and connoisseurs. The original title of his novel *The Castle of Otranto* pretended, with an irony not everyone was aware of, that the text was the translation of a mediaeval manuscript. The second edition instead carried the new generic term “Gothic Story” and the second preface defined it as an anti-classicist synthesis of novel and romance which attempts to reproduce the atmosphere evoked by mediaeval buildings. In his private correspondence Walpole explained that the text had originated from a dream.⁸² During the political

79 Ann Radcliffe: *The Mysteries of Udolpho. A Romance, Interspersed with some pieces of poetry* (Oxford: OUP, 1970), chap. VII.

80 Solkin, 42ff; Schulze, 6; 26.

81 R.W. Ketton-Cremer: *Horace Walpole. A Biography*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen, 1964), 128-96; esp. 176 (plate).

82 Ketton-Cremer, 189ff.

confrontations which are particularly remembered for the names of the protagonists Wilkes and George III, Walpole had sided with the progressive faction and thus had come under massive pressure from the group in power. At the end of a particularly exasperating day in June 1764 Walpole fell exhaustedly into a deep sleep. And there he dreamed that his Gothically decorated villa came alive with characters modelled upon such Shakespearean tragedies as *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*. This dream he transferred into his novel, which deals with the fall of a dynasty which has usurped the principality of Otranto. At the end, the prince's excessive individualism is punished through the interference of sublime powers which reinstate the lawful inheritor, a young man, who is qualified by his moral integrity and his middle-class benevolence and sensibility. The real subject of the novel is, however, the atmosphere of the castle. At the end of the story this expressive symbol of an era of feudal dominance is destroyed. The former owner, who had been murdered, reappears and bursts it after expanding himself in the style of an oriental bottle imp to enormous size. Then he ascends to heaven surrounded by a gloriole.

Walpole's Gothic story has all the elements of the Picturesque: irrationalization, historization, aestheticization of Physico-Theology – though with an ironic twist. Already two years before Walpole, Thomas Leland had published a narrative titled *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury. An Historical Romance*, which has the same ingredients, except the ironic component. In contrast to Walpole's text *Longsword* was no success. Only in a dramatized version in the style of Home's *Douglas* under the title *The Countess [!] of Salisbury. A Tragedy* (1765) did the text reach a wide audience.⁸³ Leland's *Historical Romance* had taken up an historicizing and aestheticizing modification of the Sentimental Novel, which originated in France.⁸⁴ Abbe Prévost's novels, which had been inspired by Defoe, had been assimilated by his successors in France to the novels of Richardson. These texts had been translated and enjoyed considerable popularity in England. Leland continued this tradition with the intention to write a historically authentic novel. Hereby he made use of the coordinates of the Picturesque, obviously because historical awareness seems to have had such an implication at that time. But he did not imply an aesthetic appeal to the benevolence of the spectators, which proves his histo-

83 Bertrand Evans: *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: U of California P, 1947), 26-30.

84 On Leland and his predecessors see Robert D. Hume's "Introduction" to the Arno Press reprint of *Longsword. Earl of Salisbury. An Historical Romance*; James R. Foster, "The Abbé Prévost and the English Novel." In: *PMLA* XLII (1927): 443-64; James R. Foster: *History of the Pre-Romantic Novel in England* (London: OUP and New York: MLA, 1949), 45ff.

riographic intentions. This kind of appeal came into the "text" only in the dramatized version by means of centering it around a female protagonist.

Considering the development of the Gothic Novel as a whole, one could say, that – parallel to the other media of art – it helps to develop and to establish the Picturesque, too.⁸⁵ The specific functional segment of the Gothic Novel in this process was to deal with the complex relationships between (1) an extensive and detailed (picturesque) representation of landscape and of history occurring in landscapes and (2) the human mind and psyche in configurations (situations) where moral decisions have to be made. The central purpose of this was the development of a new orientation for authentic behaviour succeeding the obsolete concept of "The Man of Sensibility". This was concertized in two separate strands of development.

The first continued the Prévost-Richardson tradition and was, beginning with Clara Reeves's *The Old English Baron* (1777), carried on mainly by woman writers, such as Harriet and Sophia Lee, Charlotte Smith, Ann Radcliffe *et al.* The texts of these authors demonstrated that the Picturesque offered considerable behavioural space for the individuality of women against dominant persons in a patriarchal and property-based society. It also conceded extended topographical mobility and freedom in the choice of a husband, as long as the moral guidelines were observed.

The strand of Gothic Novels by *male* writers succeeded Walpole's text. Beckford's and Lewis's protagonists also claim an extended space of behaviour, but in doing this they deny the (lower-middle-class) moral component of the Picturesque. Consequently, the excessive individualist is punished by the workings of picturesque Nature. The reader's consent to this punishment may, however, be intermingled with secret admiration for the offenders as they protest against the dominance of a mysterious and indifferent universe, often a titanic endeavour. This provides the picture of an aesthetic libertinism expressing the great abilities, but also the immense creativity of man. The alternative rejected by these overreaching characters is the modest acceptance of an historical development which appears irrational and thwarts individual ambition, but which seems, in the long run, to bring about an improvement of man's condition.

Nevertheless, middle-class and upper-class Gothicism converged. Around 1795 the two were as separate as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

85 See my articles "The beginning of the Gothic Novel from a functional and sociohistorical point of view." In: *English Romantic Prose*, eds. Hans-Jürgen Diller & Günther Ahrends (Essen: Blaue Eule, 1989); "Skizze einer Sozialgeschichte des englischen Schauerromans." In: *Englisch-Amerikanische Studien* VI (1984): 112-40.

(1794) and Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). The overwhelming reception of Lord Byron's work ten to fifteen years later shows, however, that aesthetic libertinism was understood as the expression not only of the limits set to human abilities and efforts but also of the sufferings of the middle class in the existing society. Around 1810 all relevant theoretical writings on the Picturesque had been published (Gilpin, Price, Knight). Furthermore, there were several parodies, viz. Beckford's *Modern Novel Writing* (1796) and *Azemia* (1797), Barrett's *The Heroine* (1813), Peacock's *Headlong Hall* (1816) and *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1794; 1817) and Coombe's *Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (1817). These writers criticized, in an earlier phase, the self-centred inefficiency of middle-class sentimentalism and, in a later phase, the self-destructive egocentricity of aestheticism. Walter Scott's Historical Romances (1814ff., e.g. *Waverley*) must be seen in parallel, as they distanced themselves explicitly from the Gothic Novel.⁸⁶ They subscribed to what Scott calls "Picturesque in action."⁸⁷ Their tremendous reception by a national (and even international) reading public indicates how much this model had become common fare. Scott's novels were regarded as an implicit expression of the historical experience of the Napoleonic era and after. The picturesque model stood for an attitude that was mildly optimistic as the individual recognized himself as creative, capable of aesthetic experience and, to a degree, master of his fate. On the other hand he felt himself exposed to sufferings inflicted by an inscrutable history and the injustices of the social conditions. The new orientational concept of a morally authentic humanism found expression in a combination of aestheticism and instrumentalized (realistic, positivistic) rationality. Good examples for this are provided by Jane Austen's heroines. *Sense and Sensibility*, the title of one of her novels, programmatically circumscribes these two components. A later, more succinct version, was E.A. Poe's rationalistic aesthete, social technician and pragmatic "moralist", Dupin, the prototype of the private detective. The Picturesque found iconic realization in the shape of Neo-Gothicism, which in the course of the expansive building during the Victorian Era became *the* characteristic feature of the British cities [figures 91, 92].⁸⁸ Therefore it was no coincidence that the Houses of Parliament, which had to be reconstructed after a fire in 1832, were rebuilt in the Neo-Gothic style.

86 In Scott's "Introductory" to *Waverley*.

87 Ross, 46-72; Horst Tippkötter: *Walter Scott: Geschichte als Unterhaltung: Eine Rezeptionsanalyse der Waverley Novels* (Frankfurt/M.: Klostermann, 1971), 152ff.

88 Kenneth Clark: *The Gothic Revival. An Essay in the History of Taste*, 3rd ed. (London: John Murray, 1978), 92ff.

Looking back on the process of the plausibilization of the Picturesque, the following qualities and functions can be attributed to it: It helped art to become the means of knowledge *par excellence*. Hereby art was able to emancipate itself from external restrictions to a large extent, especially moral ones, because the development of the Picturesque had proved that there were no latent *moral* laws in nature equivalent to the laws of physics. The emancipation of art enhanced a self-reflexiveness of artistic production in which it became increasingly aware of its functional scope and its material. Equipped with these means, a new attitude towards the everyday world was made possible, which was explicitly more realistic than before. This aspect guaranteed a long life for the Picturesque. Only after artistic production had been radically separated from metaphysical assumptions, as for example in Cubism, and a full concentration on the artistic material and the autonomous creativity of man gained ground, did it become obsolete.

The nineteenth century can be described as successive phases in the relativization of this model. So the concept of an organic nature was demonized, an impression which is emphasized by the crises of the industrial and capitalist society and which finds full expression in the impact of Darwinism. R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* indicates that the Picturesque has become double-bottomed and secularized. "Jekyll" is a name that can be read as an inversion of "like I" but it is, above all, the name of a lady representative of Victorian gardening. So the cultivated, harmonizing surface of the Victorian middle class world is sharply contrasted in Stevenson's story with the omnipresent threat from the spheres this society excludes or negates. Thus the relative optimism of the Picturesque at the beginning of the nineteenth century has given way, to a relatively pessimistic outlook on the perfectibility of the human condition.

The development of the Picturesque is expressed *in nuce* in the work of the painter Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851). In its first phase (1793-97) we find picturesque studies of architecture (ruins) and landscapes which he sketched on his travels through Britain. In his final phase (after 1840) he overemphasizes atmospheric phenomena of light and haze imaginatively to express the incomprehensibility of nature.⁸⁹ He imitates the creative process of nature by showing forms that seem to exist halfway between coming to the fore out of a mass of unformed matter and falling back into it. To represent such a subjective view of nature he needs informal, undeter-

89 John Gage: *J.M.W. Turner. A Wonderful Range of Mind* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1988); Martin Butlin & Evelyn Joll: *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner* 2 vols., rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987); Karla Bilang, J.M. William Turner (Dresden: Verlag der Kunst 1985).

mined means of expression. In this way he anticipates a realization of experience which is unbiassed in regard of historical teleology and metaphysical assumptions, as for example practised by Post-Impressionism and Cubism in the twentieth century. Turner indicates how the distortions and pre-dispositions of the Picturesque would be overcome. From this contrast it becomes clear that the Picturesque had its socio-historical function in the integration of the upper and the lower middle classes, but that, at the same time, it legitimized property distinctions by declaring them to be of a hierarchical authenticity. It also served the purpose of a general calming, a stabilization and a self-deception of the middle classes as to their abilities of dominance over nature. It helped to conceal the reality of functionalist and moralist pressures in society by channeling experience into ideal and idyllic notions of nature and by propagating a perfectionist teleology of history. Nevertheless, it was still an open, adaptable concept with a realistic tendency, which thematized man's relationship with the world in an unprecedentedly detailed way. Therefore it had from the start a grip on many elements with which man is able to ascertain himself creatively about his possibilities.

At the beginning of my article I asked whether a common denominator for the socio-historical development of Britain in the eighteenth century could be given. I hope to have offered sufficient proof that such a common denominator exists in the shape of "the plausibilization of the picturesque model of reality and society". The nineteenth century, by contrast, could then be characterized as "the relativization of the Picturesque".

My argument has involuntarily demonstrated by its length that this concept unfortunately lacks the convenience of terms such as "Industrial Revolution" or "Rise of the Middle Class(es)". But it has also given proof that socio-structural entities like norms, values, models of reality and society are, in the last resort, more relevant than the "concrete facts". Socio-structural entities represent complex notions through which groups and individuals behave towards their impalpable, but infinitely plastic, environment as if it were real and real just the way they assume to experience it. This affirms Jörn Rüsen's statement that it is above all the artistic production of an epoch from which the historians can take the relevant guidelines for establishing consistencies for the writing of history. But our findings tell us, too, that the historiography of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, because of its foundation on the Picturesque, became a prey to the erroneous implications of this concept, such as substantialism, a historical teleology based upon the progress of middle-class values, and an overestimation of the individual's part in making history. And, above all, it was unaware to what great extent the new consciousness of history was in fact a reduction of an aesthetic consciousness.

LILIAN R. FURST

In Other Voices: Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen* and the Creation of a Romantic Mythology

Wackenroder's *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (*Outpourings of an Art-Loving Friar*) has acquired a strange and equivocal reputation in the canon of German Romanticism. To some extent the controversy is not surprising because the *Herzensergießungen* so jolted conventions (and still does) that it was bound to seem eccentric in the literal sense of seeming out of center, odd, original, not conforming to the ordinary rules.

Among the rules which it infringes are those of genre, which have become of increasing importance with the growing critical focus on both structuration and the reader's horizon of expectations as crucial factors in the interpretive process. The *Herzensergießungen* includes, according to Mary Hurst Schubert's count, no fewer than six sub-genres:¹ exchange of letters, quasi-biographical chronicles of lives, quasi-theoretical theses, a *Novelle*, lyric poetry, and discovered parchments. The twice inserted "quasi" surely denotes doubts as to the validity of this parataxis; a seventh sub-genre, quasi-autobiography, could well be added. It is a bewildering profusion that defies the neat categorization favored by critics. The *Herzensergießungen*, Martin Bollacher laments, has no "Gattungsbezeichnung" (generic label),² and presents itself "weder als systematische kunsttheoretische Abhandlung noch als Erzählung oder Roman mit einer einheitlichen, im epischen Kontinuum sich entfaltenden Handlung" (neither as a systematic art theoretical treatise nor as a narrative or novel with a unified action that unfolds in an epic continuum).³ The inclusion of Bollacher's article in Paul Michael Lützeler's 1981 collection of

1 Mary Hurst Schubert: *Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's "Confessions" and "Fantasies"* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State UP, 1971), 39-42.

2 Martin Bollacher: "Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder: *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders*." In: Paul Michael Lützeler: *Romane und Erzählungen der deutschen Romantik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 34-57; here: 42.

3 Bollacher (1981), 41.