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WORDSWORTH'S INTEREST IN PAINTERS AND PICTURES

(EXCLUDING PORTRAITS)

AND

THE EFFECT OF THIS ON HIS POETRY.

Thesis submitted for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW,

March 1966.

by

J. R. WATSON.

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● 重要事項

Preface

The only previous attempt to discuss Wordsworth's interest in pictorial art is Martha Hale Shackford's study, Wordsworth's Interest in Painters and Pictures, (Wellesley Press, Wellesley, Mass., 1945). Professor Shackford's monograph of some eighty pages, while enumerating Wordsworth's references to painters and pictures, does not attempt to draw inferences from them, or to trace the relationships between the poet and his painter friends in any detail. She also relies entirely on published sources. The work deals with portrait-painting as well as the other kinds, and the portrait-painting side of the study has been superseded by Frances Blanshard's Portraits of Wordsworth (London, 1959). The present study is an attempt to develop the remainder of Professor Shackford's work into a full study of Wordsworth's knowledge of painters and pictures.

By permission of the Trustees of the Dove Cottage Collection, Grasmere, the relevant unpublished papers there have been consulted. These include letters to Wordsworth from Beaumont, Haydon, Wilkie and others; the Journals kept by Mary Wordsworth of the tours of 1820 and 1823, and Doza Wordsworth's Journal of the tour of 1828; and Sir George Beaumont's copy of The Excursion, with marginalia in his own hand. Also consulted have been the 'Coleorton

Papers' in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, containing letters from Wordsworth to Beaumont only partly published by William Knight, and letters from Beaumont to Uvedale Price; the typescript copy of Farington's Diary, in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum; and the Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson, including his Travelling Diaries, in Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London. I have also consulted an unpublished M.A. thesis of the University of London, by Evelyn G. Mitchell, 'Sir George Beaumont and his Contacts with English Romanticism' (1938).

The present thesis is constructed in four sections. In the absence of any definitive account of Wordsworth's relations with the painters of his time, it has been thought necessary to supply a detailed chronological account of his friendships with painters, his interest in contemporary fashions concerning pictorial art, and his knowledge of the painting of his time. This is followed by an examination of his tours abroad, and the opportunity which these gave him to increase his knowledge and experience of the subject. The third section deals with his critical opinions of the European schools and of those British painters who were not his contemporaries; and the fourth attempts an estimate of his powers as a critic of

art, and of the effect which the interest in painters and pictures had on his poetry.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.

- WW, DW, MW: William, Mary, Dorothy Wordsworth.
- DCG: Papers in the Collection at Dove Cottage, Grasmere.
- DCG, B to W: Letters from Beaumont to Wordsworth in the Collection.
- DCG, H to W: Letters from Haydon ditto.
- E.L.: Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, edited by E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1935.
- M.Y.: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years, edited by E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1937.
- L.Y.: The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Later Years, edited by E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1939.
- P.W.: The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, edited by E. de Selincourt and H. Darbishire, Oxford, 1940-49.
- HCR on Books and Writers: Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers, edited by Edith J. Morley, London, 1938.
- The Farington Diary: The Farington Diary, by Joseph Farington R.A., edited by James Greig, London, 1922-28.

Introduction.

Critics of Wordsworth have for many years been at pains to contradict Emerson's idea of the poet as a writer with no master but nature and solitude. They have asserted that Wordsworth was a poet who underwent more complex and sophisticated influences, and that his intellectual beliefs and enquiries were of major importance in the creation of his poetry. Philosophy was one interest, politics another; and Wordsworth had a wider reading and cultural background than a poet of nature and solitude might be thought to require. From this background the present study aims to illuminate one particular strand of interest, Wordsworth's knowledge of painters and pictures, and to examine the relation between this and his poetry.

Wordsworth was born in an age when the connection between poetry and painting was an automatic assumption of every critical theorist. Poetry was defined as a speaking picture, and painting as a silent poem; Diderot described what was a truism for his age - 'one rediscovers the poets in the painters and the painters in the poets'.¹ It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that Wordsworth should have told Robert Perceval Graves, the Curate of Windermere -

1. Quoted by K. Badt, John Constable's Clouds, (London, 1950), p.81.

that there were three callings, for success in which Nature had furnished him with qualifications - the callings of poet, landscape-gardener, and critic of pictures and works of art.(1)

Graves adds the following comment:

As to works of art, his criticism was not that of one versed in the history of the schools, but, always proceeding upon first principles, the 'prima philosophia,' as he called it; and it was, as it appeared to me, of the highest order.(2)

Graves's impression was confirmed by others of Wordsworth's contemporaries. John Opie, according to his widow, 'said of Wordsworth that he talked on Art more sensibly and more like an artist than anybody he had met professionally.'³ B.R. Haydon remarked that 'Wordsworth's ...knowledge of art is extraordinary',⁴ and that 'he detects errors in hands like a connoisseur or artist.'⁵

1. G. Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth, (London, 1851), ii.482. No date is given for this conversation, but Graves became Curate of Windermere in 1833, so presumably it took place between 1833 and 1850.

2. Ibid, ii.482.

3. A.M.W. Stirling, Richmond Papers, (London, 1926) p.39; quoted by F. Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth, (London, 1959), p.30.

4. Tom Taylor, ed., The Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals, (London, 1855), ii.730-731.

5. Ibid, i.182.

Similarly Henry Crabb Robinson wrote in his diary:

'Wordsworth is a fine judge of paintings and his remarks are full of feeling and truth.'¹ These testimonies, and the frequent allusions to painting in Wordsworth's poetry and letters, suggest that he was very knowledgeable about painting, and that we need only investigate the process by which he acquired this knowledge and its extent. The

critics of the twentieth century, on the other hand, have raised another question, because they have scorned Wordsworth's opinions on art. E. de Selincourt wrote in 1926:

'Wordsworth never acquired any sound taste in pictorial art'², and he was followed by Herbert Read, who dismissed the matter summarily: '... the one-sidedness of Wordsworth's aesthetic sensibility is often evident; he had no appreciation of either painting or music.'³ More recently, Mary Moorman has written, somewhat more circumspectly; 'His eye was quite untrained in the judgment of art; it simply followed his feelings.'⁴ There is perhaps some similarity between

1. E.J. Morley, ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers, (London, 1938), p.357. (Hereafter abbreviated to 'HCR on Books and Writers').

2. E. de Selincourt, ed., The Prelude (2nd Edn., revised H. Darbishire, (Oxford, 1959), p.587.

3. Herbert Read, Wordsworth, (new Edn., London, 1949), p.79.

4. Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Early Years, 1770-1803, (Oxford, 1957), p.171.

this last remark and Graves's 'his criticism was not that of one versed in the history of the schools', both implying that Wordsworth's criticism was uninformed and perhaps haphazard; but there is still an obvious gap between most of the twentieth-century opinions about Wordsworth's art criticism and those of the nineteenth century. De Selincourt for instance, commented on Graves's account as follows:

And when he [Wordsworth] spoke of himself as qualified for the calling of critic of painting and the fine arts, he claimed no technical knowledge; rather was he thinking of the continual habit of his mind to reflect upon the principles which underlie all the varied manifestations of loveliness.(1)

Whether de Selincourt was right here is the basis of the third line of enquiry upon which this study is based. Was Wordsworth's art criticism any good? or was he deceiving himself when he claimed to be a critic of pictures and works of art? And, finally, how did this interest affect his poetry? These two questions will remain to be answered after a discussion of how Wordsworth acquired his knowledge of painting, and how great that knowledge really was. These are subjects which this study aims to discuss in assessing Wordsworth's interest in painters and painting and the influence of this on his poetry.

1. From E. de Selincourt's Preface to his edition of the Guide to the Lakes, (London, 1926), p.xx.

Chapter 1. Visual art and Wordsworth's early poetry.
Gilpin and the Picturesque. The interest in painting and
painters to 1803.

The first sign of any interest in the visual arts in Wordsworth's life is due to the accident that he was born in an age which saw the great vogue for Picturesque travel in England. The development of an interest in mountain scenery during the eighteenth century¹ had inevitably affected the popularity of the Lake District, and by the time of Wordsworth's youth a considerable amount of topographical literature had accumulated on the subject of his native counties.² It was only natural that the young Wordsworth, keenly aware of the beauties of the local scene, should have read some of these,³

1. See M.H. Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, (Ithaca, 1959); S.H. Monk, The Sublime, (new Edn., Ann Arbor, 1960).

2. The first important works were John Dalton's Descriptive Poem Addressed to Two Young Ladies on their Return from viewing the Mines near Whitehaven, (1755); Dr. John Brown's Letter Describing the Vale and Lake of Keswick, (written c.1758, published in Newcastle 1767, London 1768); Thomas Gray's journal of his tour of 1769, published in Mason's edition of The Poems of Mr. Gray, (York, 1775) and as an appendix to the second edition of Thomas West's Guide to the Lakes, (1780); and William Hutchinson's An Excursion to the Lakes in Westmorland and Cumberland in 1773 and 1774, (London, 1776).

3. This is demonstrated by echoes and references in some early poems, e.g. note to An Evening Walk (1793 text), lines 433-434 and line 445 (P.W., 1.323); note to Lines left upon a seat in a Yew-tree, (P.W., 1.329). N.S. Fink, in The Early Wordsworthian Milieu, (Oxford, 1958), pp.23-24, detects a further debt to Gray in An Evening Walk (1793 text), lines 267-268.

and particularly the one which was destined to become the best known, William Gilpin's 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, first published in 1786.¹ At some time before 1796 Wordsworth acquired his own copy of this work, and also a copy of the similar work on the Picturesque by Gilpin which deals with the Highlands of Scotland.² That Gilpin's illustrations influenced the visual descriptions of Wordsworth's early poem An Evening Walk is demonstrable from an examination of the poem's first paragraph:

Far from my dearest friend, 'tis mine to rove
Thro' bare grey dell, high wood, and pastoral cove;
His wizard course where hoary Derwent takes
Thro' craggs, and forest glooms, and opening lakes,
Staying his silent waves, to hear the roar
That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Ledore:

1. Hereafter referred to as 'Tour of the Lakes'. Z.S. Fink, in his examination of Christopher Wordsworth's notebook in The Early Wordsworthian Milieu, finds a reference to a review (with excerpts) of Gilpin's book in the European Magazine, January 1788, and plausibly suggests that William would also have been familiar with this. (Fink, Op.Cit., pp.25-26).

2. E.L., p.155; WW to William Matthews, March 21 1796, in which Wordsworth asks for both books (four volumes) to be forwarded from Basil Montagu's house to Racedown.

Where silver rocks the savage prospect cheer
Of giant yews that frown on Rydale's mere;
Where peace to Grasmere's lonely island leads,
To willowy hedgerows, and to emerald meads;
Leads to her bridge, rude church, and cottag'd grounds,
Her rocky sheepwalks, and her woodland bounds;
Where, bosom'd deep, the shy Winander peeps
'Mid clust'ring isles, and holly-sprinkl'd steeps;
Where twilight glens endear my Esthwaite's shore,
And memory of departed pleasures, more. (1)

Pink attributes an opening paragraph like this to a reading of Picturesque topographers and a consequent assimilation of the qualities of Italian landscape painting which they so much admired.² Gilpin's influence is visible in the way in which the two parts of the paragraph - the wild

1. P.W., 1.4: An Evening Walk (1793), lines 1-16.

2. Pink, *Op.Cit.*, p.26: Pink finds there 'two vignettes' which 'are precisely such as might be expected from a poet who had read the picturesque writers referred to in the notebook. The first gives a 'savage prospect' on Rydal Mere, such a prospect of that little lake as could have been composed only by one whose head was full of Brown's Letter with its descriptions of Claude Lorrains in one direction on Derwentwater, Poussins in another, and the shaggy horrors of Salvator Rosa in a third. The four lines on Grasmere which follow, with their directing of the eye to successive features of the scene and their careful enumeration of its components, are also pictorial in manner and suggest nothing so much as the work of an impressionable young man who had read Clarke's analysis of the limitations of Gray's station for viewing the valley and his exposition of the proper constituents of a Grasmere landscape. (Pink refers to James Clarke's Survey of the Lakes, published in 1787).

and rugged contrasted with the calm and peaceful¹ - are each made up of a mixture of local views, so that Wordsworth brings together places which are quite separate geographically. This I believe to be the direct result of trying to paint a word-picture to resemble a Gilpin illustration, for Gilpin, in the tradition of 'ideal landscape' which had dominated landscape painting since the time of Claude, did not like what he called 'exact views'.² In copying nature, he maintained,

we should not copy with that painful exactness, with which Quintin Matsis, for instance, painted a face. This is a sort of plagiarism below the dignity of painting.(3)

The illustrations in his Tour of the Lakes, he says in the preface, are of two kinds:

1. Linked, of course, with the current distinction between the sublime and the beautiful, mostly fully expounded by Burke in 1757, and connected with Wordsworth's later distinction between beauty and fear as educative processes of nature.

2. Letter from Gilpin to Sir George Beaumont, June 20 1801, in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; quoted by C.P. Barbier, William Gilpin (Oxford, 1963), p.107.

3. William Gilpin, Five Essays on Picturesque Subjects; with a Poem on Landscape Painting. (London, 1808), p.160.

One kind is meant to illustrate and explain picturesque ideas.... The other sort of drawings is meant to characterize the countries, through which the reader is carried. The ideas are taken from the general face of the country; not from any particular scene. (1)

It is this predilection for 'fictitious views' (as Gilpin liked to call them) that Wordsworth is following in the first paragraph of An Evening Walk, when he brings together Lodore and Rydal, or Grasmere, Windermere and Esthwaite. Many years later Wordsworth attributed it to the power of the imagination:

I will conclude my notice of this poem by observing that the plan of it has not been confined to a particular walk or an individual place; a proof (of which I was unconscious at the time) of my unwillingness to submit the poetic spirit to the chains of fact and real circumstance. The country is idealized rather than described in any one of its local aspects. (2)

Wordsworth's unconsciousness of the unlocalised description when he wrote the poem suggests that he was immersed in Picturesque ideas and techniques. When he came to dictate the note, in 1843, the preference for general effect over exact description had to be explained, and Wordsworth did so by his rather pretentious idea of not submitting the poetic spirit to the chains of fact. In 1787-89 he was following

1. Tour of the Lakes, i. xxiv-xxv.

2. P.W., i. 319.

the accepted method of portraying an ideal landscape, shown particularly clearly in Gilpin.

In addition to this, other parts of the poem suggest a debt to Gilpin.¹ For instance, Gilpin is very conscious of the effect and importance of light, particularly on a mountain landscape, and especially at sunset;² Wordsworth also shows a great sensitivity to these effects,³ and to

1. Verbal echoes from Gilpin and other writers on the Picturesque are numerous, and have been adequately recorded. See the notes by E. de Selincourt, P.W., i. 320-323; Fink, Op.Cit., pp. 23-24.

2. Tour of the Lakes, i. vii-ix; i. 175.

3. An Evening Walk, A 91-104, 151-164, 191-194, 399-406 (P.W., i. 12-36).

other instances of light on landscape.¹ His description of the cloud on the mountains (line 179 ff.) also probably owes something to Gilpin.²

Other evidence confirms an interest in the Picturesque at this time: in The Prelude Wordsworth records that during his second long vacation (in 1789) he travelled north from Cambridge 'making quest for works of art,/Or scenes renowned

1. Other pieces in the *Juvenilia* confirm this, e.g. 'Beauty and Moonlight' (P.W., i.263) lines 5-10:

'Twas Twilight and the lunar beam
Sail'd slowly o'er Winander's stream.
As down its sides the water stray'd
Bright on a rock the moonbeam play'd.
It shone half-sheltered from the view
By pendent boughs of tressy yew.

or 'Anacreon' (P.W., i.261-2) lines 15-16, 23-24, 37-40;

or 'The Vale of Esthwaite' (P.W., i.270-283) lines 77-78:

When Twilight, wrapp'd in dusky shroud,
Slow journey'd from her cave of cloud;

lines 95-102:

While in the west the robe of day
Fades, slowly fades, from gold to gray,
The oak its boughs and foliage twines
Mark'd to the view in stronger lines,
Appears with foliage marked to view,
In lines of stronger browner hue,
While, every darkening leaf between,
The sky distinct and clear is seen.

2. Tour of the Lakes, i.90-91.

for beauty'¹ in Dovedale, the Yorkshire Dales and in little known parts of the Lake District. However, at some time between the composition of An Evening Walk ('at school, and during my two first College vacations')² and the completion of Descriptive Sketches (1792, three years later) Wordsworth seems to have found the Picturesque inadequate as a technique for the full appreciation of landscape. The original title of Descriptive Sketches had been 'Picturesque Sketches', and the footnote announcing the change was vehement and uncompromising:

I had once given to these sketches the title of Picturesque; but the Alps are insulted in applying to them that term. Whoever, in attempting to describe their sublime features, should confine himself to the cold rules of painting would give his reader but a very imperfect idea of those emotions which they have the irresistible power of communicating to the most impassive imaginations. The fact is, that controuling influence, which distinguishes the Alps from all other scenery, is derived from images which disdain the pencil. Had I wished to make a picture of this scene I had thrown much less light into it. But I consulted nature and my feelings.(3)

1. The Prelude (1850), vi.190-191. The 1805 text omits this, suggesting that when he wrote the earlier version Wordsworth was having a reaction against the Picturesque.

2. P.W., i.318.

3. P.W., i.62.

There was probably more than one reason for this note. Mary Moorman, for instance, suggests that it was due to the inadequacy of English landscape painting at this time:

'The setting sun did not yet appear in English landscape painting, otherwise Wordsworth might not have felt it so incumbent upon him to distinguish so sharply between "the cold rules" of painting and the word-picture inspired purely by "Nature and the feelings". The English water-colour artists like Francis Towne who were already enthusiastic admirers of the Swiss landscape were more concerned with the severity and ruggedness of mountain architecture than with the effulgence of sunlight and the transfiguring of landscape by its rays.'(1)

Another reason for the rejection of the idea of the Picturesque in this note is that Wordsworth was feeling after qualities in landscape which were not purely visual. The distinguishing feature of Descriptive Sketches is its celebration of Swiss independence, and the connection in Wordsworth's mind between this love of liberty and the mountainous country in which the Swiss live. The landscape, in short, has a moral power, and something of the violence of Wordsworth's note is due to the fact that a study of the Picturesque effects of a landscape obscures its moral power and its action on the feelings.

1. Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Early Years, 1770-1803, (Oxford, 1957), p.145. For Francis Towne see Adrian Bury, Francis Towne, (London, 1962).

In spite of this reaction against the Picturesque, there are signs that it still retained some hold upon Wordsworth's habits of viewing scenery. For instance, there is his pedestrian tour of North Wales in 1791, mentioned in the introduction to Descriptive Sketches:

... I might have inscribed to you a description of some of the features of your native mountains, through which we have wandered together, in the same manner, with so much pleasure. But the sea-sunsets, which give such splendour to the vale of Clwyd, Snowdon, the chair of Idris, the quiet village of Bethgelert, Menai and her Druids, the Alpine steeps of the Conway, and the still more interesting windings of the wizard stream of the Dee, remain yet untouched. (1)

Here again we see the influence of Gilpin as Wordsworth singles out the sunset effect for special mention, as he does in the poem which follows.²

It is at this point in Wordsworth's life, during his first residence in London in 1791, that we find the first suggestion of his looking at pictures as opposed to the general inheritance of a certain tradition of pictorial

1. P.W., i. 43.

2. Lines 336-347 and 562-567 (1793). Compare the sunset in An Evening Walk, lines 97-108 (1793).

landscape.¹ He describes the sights of London that are
'within doors', including

those sights that ape
The absolute presence of reality,
Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
And what earth is, and what she had to shew.(2)

Wordsworth goes on to qualify this description rather
obscurely, but I think he is distinguishing between painting
as a high form of creative art and a kind of painting used
to make a 'Panorama' or a 'Diorama'. The latter were
representations of countries or landscapes, either painted
or modelled in relief (like the one of Switzerland mentioned
at the beginning of the Guide to the Lakes) and it is these
to which Wordsworth seems to allude when he continues:

I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
By means refined attaining purest ends,
But imitations, fondly made in plain
Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill
Submits to nothing less than taking in
A whole horizon's circuit, do with power,
Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,
Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,...
Or more mechanic artist represent
By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
From blended colours also borrowing help,
Some miniature of famous spots or things, - (3)

1. I have omitted an early reference to Reynolds in the
Juvenilia printed by E. de Selincourt (P.W., i. 261-262) on
the grounds that it seems to be no more than a famous name
used to begin the poem, and that Wordsworth shows no know-
ledge of Reynolds's art in the poem, beyond the fact that
he painted portraits.

2. The Prelude (1850), vii. 232-235.

3. The Prelude (1850), vii. 235-244, 248-251.

This is confirmed by Wordsworth's description of his departure for France:

Scarcely was a year thus spent
Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,
With less regret for its luxurious pomp,
And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,...¹

which suggests that he was prevented from seeing any really good art, and that he would have visited the private collections in London if he could have done so.²

During the stay in Paris which followed, he succeeded where in London he had failed, and saw a picture which deeply moved him. Surprisingly, in view of his political interests and revolutionary sympathies, it affected him more than the ruins of the Bastille, which he visited -

1. The Prelude (1850), ix. 28-32. The 1805 version runs as follows:

A year thus spent, this field (with small regret
Save only for the Book-stalls in the streets.
Wild produce, hedge-row fruit, on all sides hung
To tempt the sauntering traveller from his track)
I quitted,... (ix. 31-35).

I suggest that Wordsworth inserted the reference to the private collections because between 1805 and 1850 he became more conscious of what he had missed in not seeing them.

2. For the difficulty and expense involved in gaining access to private collections at this time, see W.T. Whitley, Art in England 1800-1820, (Cambridge, 1928), pp. 1-4.

Affecting more emotion than I felt,
For 'tis most certain that the utmost force
Of all these various objects which may shew
The temper of my mind as then it was
Seem'd less to recompense the Traveller's pains,
Less mov'd me, gave me less delight than did
Among other sights, the Magdalene of Le Brun,
A Beauty exquisitely wrought, fair face
And rueful, with its ever-flowing tears.(1)

Le Brun had painted this picture of Saint Mary Magdalen for the Carmelite convent in the Rue d'Enfer. According to Legouis, 'it was regarded as one of the "sights" of the day. Religious music was played for the benefit of those who came to view it.'² This suggests that Wordsworth was sight-seeing rather than looking for works of art. Whether this is so or not, his admiration of Le Brun's picture has brought upon him the scorn of modern critics. It was on the evidence of his response to this picture that de Selincourt, Herbert Read and Mary Moorman dismissed Wordsworth's opinions on art as worthless.³ The picture, according to

1. The Prelude (1805), ix. 71-79. In the 1850 version the 'other sights' are omitted, which increases the effect of Le Brun's picture as a striking memory.

The 'ever-flowing tears' give us the first sight of a theme which is to become fundamental to Wordsworth's view of painting - the idea that a painting can fix and make permanent the fleeting moment.

2. B. Legouis, La Jeunesse de Wordsworth, translated by J.W. Matthews, The Early Life of William Wordsworth, (London, 1921), p. 194.

3. See Introduction, above.

Mary Moorman, is 'one of the most extreme examples of the exaggerated treatment of sentiment in Baroque art.'¹

Two things would perhaps be said in Wordsworth's defence at this point. The first is that painting of this kind was fashionable at the time; in Italy the most renowned painters were Guido Reni and the Carracci, and the popular appeal of Le Brun's picture was only to be expected. The second is that Wordsworth at this period of his life had no pretensions to a satisfactory appreciation of works of art.

Thirteen years later we find him writing to Sir George Beaumont of his 'never having had an opportunity of studying any pictures whatsoever...'²; thus any pictures which he did see were observed with an untutored eye, and it is not surprising that he should have been easily and deeply moved by a popular and sentimental work.³

1. Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Early Years, 1770-1803, p.172.

2. B.L., pp.401-2: WW to Sir George Beaumont, July 20 1804.

3. The surprising thing about this whole passage is the way in which Wordsworth contrasts Le Brun's picture so directly and pointedly with the ruins of the Bastille. His assertion that the picture affected him more than the ruins which signified a great revolutionary and political event is the opposite of what we might expect. Perhaps Wordsworth is using the episode to emphasise his lack of political interest before his friendship with Beaupuy and the influence of Godwin.

The period from the return to England in December 1792 to the settling at Racedown with Dorothy in 1795 is the period of Wordsworth's life about which we know least. Among the scanty evidence available there is nothing to suggest an interest in pictorial art. Nor does the period at Racedown and Alfoxden suggest much. At Racedown we know that the living-room contained a picture of 'little St. Mark's Place in Venice',¹ and a 'beautiful picture of Leda naked in a gilt frame' which was packed up during the Wordsworths' stay and sent to the Pinney's house at Bristol.² Wordsworth sent for his copies of Gilpin's Lake District Tour and Scottish Tour,³ but he tried to sell them two years later,⁴ so he may have been more interested in their market value than in their contents at this time.

1. From the inventory of the furniture: see Mary Moozman, William Wordsworth, The Early Years, 1770-1803, (Oxford, 1957), p.285. This was probably an engraving of a picture by Guardi or Canaletto of the Piazzetta.

2. Bergen Evans and Hester Pinney, 'Racedown and the Wordsworths', Review of English Studies, viii. (1932), p.17. They suggest that Dorothy may not have approved of the picture.

3. H.E., pp.155-6: WW to William Matthews, March 21 1796.

4. Ibid., p.198: WW to Joseph Cottle, August 23 1798.

The friendship with Coleridge which began during this period of Wordsworth's life is unlikely to have furthered Wordsworth's knowledge of painting because at this time Coleridge seems to have been as ignorant as Wordsworth about the subject.¹ During these years the only reference to a specific example of visual art is Wordsworth's admiration for the work of Thomas Bewick, the wood-engraver. This is shown at its clearest in the manuscript version of The Two Thieves, which dates from 1798:

Oh! now that the boxwood and graver were mine,
Of the Poet who lives on the banks of the Tyne!
Who has plied his rude tools with more fortunate toil
Than Reynolds e'er brought to his canvas and oil.(2)

This shows a knowledge of the methods of wood-engraving, though a rather unhappy description of the 'rude tools' necessary for such work. The comparison with Reynolds is also unsatisfactory: Wordsworth is here comparing two methods which are so utterly different that comparison

1. A letter of Coleridge to John Rickman, February 15 1804, implies a fair degree of ignorance: '... I have learnt as much fr[om] Sir George [Beaumont] respecting Pictures & Painting and Painters as I ever learnt on any subject from any man in the same Space of Time. A man may employ time far worse than in learning how to look at a picture judiciously' (E.L. Griggs, ed., Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Oxford, 1956-59, ii.1063)

2. P.W., iv.245.

becomes only a matter of individual preference for one method over another. Perhaps this is why the verse was altered to exclude Reynolds in the published version. Wordsworth's liking for Bewick was also no doubt due to a predilection for his subject matter and an admiration for the detail and accuracy of his natural observations, as opposed to the portrait painting of Reynolds. In this connection, it is noteworthy that Wordsworth refers to Bewick not as an artist or an engraver, but as a 'Poet'. This is a word which he used to denote not just people who wrote verse, but those people who had what he considered to be the feelings of a poet, like his brother John, and Sir George Beaumont.¹ Bewick's careful and loving delineation of natural phenomena would entitle him to such a name.²

That Wordsworth was not thinking very hard when he made an unfavourable comparison between Reynolds and Bewick

1. His brother was 'a Poet in everything but words' (E.L., p.447: WW to Sir George Beaumont, Feb. 11 1805) and Beaumont himself had 'A Poet's heart' (P.W., iv.271; Elegiac Musings, 1.22).

2. See Hazlitt's essay, 'Mr. Wordsworth', in The Spirit of the Age: 'In art, he greatly esteems Bewick's woodcuts'. (P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, London, 1932, xi.93).

is suggested by the fact that Wordsworth had been reading from Reynolds's criticism before 1798. In the Advertisement to the Lyrical Ballads Reynolds is quoted;¹ and in 1804 Wordsworth wrote to Beaumont - 'Several of the Discourses I had read before, though never regularly together'.² The effect of this reading would have been to give Wordsworth a comprehensive introduction to artistic practice and appreciation; and however little he may have been able to understand Reynolds's finer points or his use of specific examples (as the letter to Beaumont suggests)³ he would at least have been familiarised with names and periods and ideas.⁴

During the visit to Germany which followed the publication of Lyrical Ballads there is little sign of an interest in painting. In the 'Hamburgh Journal' Dorothy Wordsworth records a visit to a French painter, and her impressions of

1. 'An accurate taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition.' (P.W., ii. 384).

2. E.L., p.401; WW to Sir George Beaumont, July 20 1804.

3. Ibid., pp.401-402: '...they have very much added to the high opinion which I before entertained of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Of a great part of them, never having had an opportunity of studying any pictures whatsoever, I can be but a very inadequate judge'.

4. A full treatment of Reynolds's influence on Wordsworth will be found in Chapter 13.

some pictures in the Church of St. Christopher, but these are the only references to paintings,¹ and the poems of this journey abroad (The Prelude, Books I and II, and the Lucy poems) show no sign of any influence or interest. The next development follows some time later, after the settling at Grasmere in December 1799.

At this time the Lake District was very popular with both amateur and professional painters: some training in the representation of mountain scenery was thought to be an essential, and as the Alps were inaccessible on account of the war with France, the mountains of Cumberland and Westmorland became the substitute. It is not surprising, therefore, that Wordsworth should have met some painters, and it could be argued that he should have met more, and met them more quickly, for there are only two recorded acquaintances with painters before the important meeting with Sir George Beaumont in 1803.

The first painter was Julius Caesar Ibbetson,² the oil and water-colour painter, who had settled in the Lake District early in 1799 and married Bella Thompson, the daughter of an Ambleside weaver.³ On June 16 1800, William and Dorothy

1. For the details of these references, see Chapter 8.

2. 1759-1817.

Wordsworth drank tea at his house at Clappersgate (on the Grasmere side of Ambleside) and looked at his pictures.¹ At this period in his work Ibbetson was chiefly occupied in landscape painting, and Wordsworth probably saw examples taken from the locality.² He may have seen the pictures, or preparations for them, which Ibbetson exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1801 - 'View near Skelwith' and 'View of Ulls Water from Gowbarrow'.³ The pictures of this period show a clear rejection of the Gilpin approach in favour of an uncompromising topographical one: the scenes are accurate representations of views in the area of Ambleside, Grasmere and Ullswater, in contradiction to the tendency towards 'ideal landscape' which Wordsworth had inherited through Gilpin.⁴

It is difficult to judge the extent of the acquaintance

1. Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, (London, 1941), i.49; and E.L., p.406, DW to Lady Beaumont July 25 1804: 'At first when my Brother and I came to live here we called upon him and looked at his pictures...'

2. For examples of Ibbetson's Lake District landscapes, see Rosta Mary Clay, Julius Caesar Ibbetson, 1759-1817 (London, 1948).

3. A. Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts, A Dictionary of Contributors, 1769-1904 (London, 1905-6), iv.213.

4. A similar tendency towards a topographical and exact landscape may be seen in 'Tintern Abbey', which shows a distinct removal from the ideal landscape of An Evening Walk.

in the years following 1800. Most of the references to Ibbetson occur in letters from Dorothy Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, and Lady Beaumont regarded Ibbetson as a person to be avoided. On one occasion she even seems to have warned Dorothy Wordsworth about something.¹ Thus when Dorothy writes, in 1804:

Ibbetson, the Father, I believe, is proud and high-spirited: I know nothing ill of him except that he is addicted to drinking violently by fits, and I have been told that his conversation in the company of women is unbecoming and indecent. We have seen nothing of him for at least three years.(2)

she may have been minimising the extent of the acquaintance in writing to Lady Beaumont. For even though Ibbetson moved to Troutbeck, further away from Grasmere, in 1802, Dorothy visited his wife who was ill after childbirth in 1804,³ and Wordsworth himself in a letter shows some knowledge of Ibbetson's house.⁴ This suggests a degree of intimacy

1. E.L., p.405; DW to Lady Beaumont, July 25 1804: 'We are much obliged to you for your foresight and kind caution respecting the Ibbetsons'. Lady Beaumont's letter has disappeared, and there is nothing to indicate the cause of offence. Presumably it happened after 1800, for there is a letter in existence from Sir George Beaumont to Ibbetson of that date, in friendly terms. (The letter is printed by Clay, Op. Cit., p.133).

2. E.L., pp.405-6.

3. E.L., p.400; DW to Catherine Clarkson, July 18 1804.

4. E.L., p.385; WW to Richard Sharp, April 29 1804.

which was withheld from Lady Beaumont's eyes; but the extent of the friendship remains uncertain.

The second painter-visitor to the Lake District was an exception in two ways: he painted portraits rather than landscapes, and he had met Wordsworth and Coleridge before, so that his visit was by way of renewing an acquaintance rather than starting one. This was William Hazlitt, who painted a gloomy-looking portrait of Wordsworth during the summer of 1803.¹ Almost certainly Hazlitt's conversation was of the greatest interest in respect of the study of painting: during the previous year he had been (together with almost every other young English painter) to Paris, taking advantage of the short Peace of Amiens. He had returned full of enthusiasm about the Louvre and its art treasures, which had been greatly augmented by the loot of Napoleon's Italian campaigns, and something of this was

1. Discussed by F. Blanchard in Portraits of Wordsworth, (London, 1959), pp.44-6 and 142. Hazlitt also painted a portrait of Coleridge during this visit.

almost certainly communicated to Wordsworth and Coleridge.¹

Hazlitt's visit ended abruptly, and his friendship with Wordsworth did not survive the years which followed, so that this visit cannot be thought of as a fruitful one for Wordsworth's interest in painting. The exact opposite is true of the acquaintance with Sir George Beaumont which also began during the summer of 1803. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Beaumont's friendship for Wordsworth's interest in visual art: for before 1803, as we have seen, this had been limited to the sight of an occasional picture

1. See, for example, Hazlitt's description of the Louvre in his Life of Napoleon: 'As a gallery, the Louvre was unrivalled... and it was "a journey like the path to heaven," to visit it for the first time. You walked for a quarter of a mile through works of fine art; the very floors echoed the sounds of immortality.... School called unto school; one great name answered to another, swelling the chorus of universal praise. Instead of robbery and sacrilege, it was the crowning and consecration of art; there was a dream and a glory, like the coming of the Millennium.' (The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P.P. Howe, London, 1932, xiii. 212).

Traces of Hazlitt's conversation during this visit are found in Coleridge's notebooks and in his letters, but they do not mention Hazlitt's appreciation of the Louvre's collection. Professor K. Coburn suggests that a note about Fuseli owes something to Hazlitt, but that is all. See The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, (London, 1957-62), Note to entry 954.

(not always a very good one),¹ to an acquaintance with Ibbetson, a reading of Reynolds, and a knowledge of the Picturesque.² After 1803 the interest in painting and the friendships with painters increased very rapidly, to become one of Wordsworth's more serious concerns; and the friendship with Beaumont became a pervasive and widespread influence on his life and thought, and consequently on his poetry.

1. An exception to this was the visit paid to a distinguished private collection, that of the Duke of Hamilton, at Hamilton Palace, in a journey to Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1801. There Wordsworth saw, among other paintings, Rubens's 'Daniel in the Lions' Den'. See below, Chapter 12.

2. For the later development of Wordsworth's ideas on the Picturesque, see Appendix II.

Chapter 2. The friendship with Beaumont, 1803-1806.
Meetings with painter-visitors to the Lake District.
Wordsworth's visit to London, 1806.

Sir George Howland Beaumont, Bart., was in his fiftieth year when he met Wordsworth (who was then thirty-three).¹ He was a man with wide interests, including politics and the drama; but his chief interest was in painting, in the exercise of his own patronage, and the acquisition of his own collection. He owned three houses: one in London in Grosvenor Square, one at Dunmow in Essex and one at Coleorton, near Ashby de la Zouche in Leicestershire, which he was rebuilding during the year immediately following 1803 in the currently fashionable style under the supervision of George Dance, a notable architect of the day.² His influential position and his wide acquaintance with the artists of the time made his friendship with Wordsworth unique, because he was able to offer Wordsworth the sympathy and encouragement of a fellow-artist, and also to give him an entry into a circle which

1. For an account of Beaumont's life see D.N.B. and E.G. Mitchell, 'Sir George Beaumont and his contacts with English Romanticism', unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of London, May 1938.

2. See the Aquatint after a drawing by William Westall of the new Coleorton Hall, reproduced as Plate 29 a. in T.S.R. Boase, *English Art, 1800-1870*, (Oxford, 1959).

at many important points was in contact with the significant developments in pictorial art.

Beaumont's account of his meeting with Wordsworth during his stay in the Lake District during the summer of 1803 is concisely recounted by Joseph Farington in his diary:

Sir George Beaumont called. - Lodged at Jackson's at Keswick in the same House with Coleridge, a few years ago a violent Democrat but now quite opposite, - abt. 32 years old, - of great genius, - a Poet, - prodigious command of words, - has read everything. -

Sir George also became acquainted with Wordsworth (nephew to Cookson), who is a rival genius, has abt. £70 a yr. is married, - lives near Grassmere, - is abt. the same age. - (1)

-
1. The Farington Diary, by Joseph Farington, R.A., ed. James Greig (London, 1922-23), ii. 172. (November 29 1803). (Hereafter referred to as 'The Farington Diary').

Coleridge met Beaumont before Wordsworth, owing to the accident of their living in the same house.¹ He must have talked about Wordsworth to the Beaumonts, and shown them Hazlitt's portrait, for he wrote to Wordsworth on July 23 about -

Sir G. & Lady B. who are half-mad to see you -

1. The Farington Diary, ii. 207. (March 21 1804): 'Sir George mentioned Him (Coleridge) as an instance why we shd. not give way to first prejudices. He saw Coleridge at Sotheby's last year, & felt such dislike to Him that when He found Him at Keswick in the summer following He considered how He shd. shun Him. - They met however for they by chance were in the same house (Jacksons) and getting into conversation soon became attached.'

Evelyn M. Howe (formerly E.G. Mitchell) in 'Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth's Friend', Studies in Romanticism, iv. 3, (Spring, 1965), pp. 143-157, suggests that the meeting occurred because the Beaumonts' fondness for children helped to break down (through three-year-old Derwent Coleridge) an initial dislike.

Mrs. Howe stresses that Lady Beaumont was an influence as important as Sir George, and this should not be forgotten. Lady Beaumont was a woman of enthusiasm, whose likes and dislikes probably had a considerable impact on her easy-going husband.

(Lady B. told me, that the night before last as she was reading your Poem on Cape RASH JUDGEMENT, had you entered the room she believes she should have fallen at your feet) Sir G. & his wife both say, that the Picture gives them an idea of you as a profound strong-minded Philosopher, not as a Poet - (1)

Presumably the meeting between Wordsworth and Beaumont took place some time between the writing of this letter and the tour of Scotland which was begun by Wordsworth, Dorothy and Coleridge on August 16. But even before the meeting Beaumont had been so impressed by Coleridge's account of Wordsworth and of the value of their friendship that he made Wordsworth a present of a piece of land at Applethwaite, near Keswick.² Beaumont's idea was that Wordsworth should build a house there, and that this would renew the kind of daily intercourse which Wordsworth and Coleridge had enjoyed

1. E.L. Griggs, ed., Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, (Oxford, 1956-59), ii. 957. For the poem on Cape Rash-Judgment see P.W., ii. 115: 'A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,....'

2. Beaumont's first letter to Wordsworth indicates quite clearly that the gift came before the meeting: 'You will recollect when the business was settled, I had never seen you, & tho I felt deeply indebted for pleasure received & had heard a character of you from Coleridge which I could not but admire, yet whatever thanks are due ought to be paid to him, you very well know it is impossible to be acquainted with him without earnestly wishing to oblige him, & I soon found there was no means of doing this so effectually as by accommodating his friend. (DCC, B to W, October 24 1803).

in Somerset during the writing of Lyrical Ballads.¹

Wordsworth acknowledged the gift in a letter of October 14, written with evident care and courtesy:

Mr. Coleridge showed me the writings of the Applethwaite Estate, and told me the little history of what you had done for me, the motives, &c. I need not say that it gave me the most heartfelt pleasure, not for my own sake chiefly, though in that point of view it might well be most highly interesting to me, but as an act which, considered in all its relations as to matter and manner, it would not be too much to say, did honour to human nature; at least, I felt it as such, and it overpowered me. (2)

In addition to this gift of land, Beaumont also made Wordsworth the present of two of his drawings, one of Applethwaite itself³ and the other of Conway Castle.

1. 'I had moreover a most ardent desire to bring you nearer together, I thought with pleasure on the encrease of enjoyment you would receive from the beauties of nature by being able to communicate more frequently your sensations to each other, & that this would be a means of contributing to the pleasure and improvement of the world by stimulating you both to poetical exertions'. (DCO, B to W, October 24 1803).

2. E.L., p. 339. WW to Sir George Beaumont, October 23 1803.

3. This drawing of Applethwaite is now in the Museum at Dove Cottage: it is a drawing of great vigour and liveliness, showing trees and a stream by the cottage, with Skiddaw in the background. (Beaumont's drawings were often better than his oil paintings). For Wordsworth's appreciation of it, see E.L., p. 424.

The most interesting reaction to this present was not Wordsworth's appreciation so much as his immediate reciprocation of the gift by sending Beaumont three of his sonnets.¹ This indicates, I suspect, that Wordsworth was anxious that Beaumont should regard him not with the eyes of a patron, but as a fellow-artist. No doubt this is in part due to Wordsworth's desire to remain independent, but it also suggests a basis upon which the friendship grew and flourished: Wordsworth regarded Beaumont's attempts at landscape painting as important attempts to represent Nature: 'How often did we wish for five minutes' command of your pencil while we were in Scotland!' he wrote in the same letter.² In the same vein we find Dorothy Wordsworth writing to Coleridge in March 1804, about a small rivulet which William had discovered in one of their walks:

1. E.L., p. 342: The sonnets were 'Degenerate Douglas' (P.W., iii. 83), 'Vanguard of Liberty' (P.W., iii. 120), and 'Shout, for a mighty victory is won' (P.W., iii. 122).

2. E.L., p. 341.

It is a miniature of all that can be conceived of savage and grand about a river, with a great deal of the beautiful. William says that whatever Salvator might desire could there be found. He longed for Sir George Beaumont, but if it is not seen in winter it would be nothing. (1)

The combination of Beaumont and Salvator Rosa in this passage suggests that the former may have been close to the Picturesque tradition in which Wordsworth had been brought up in his approach to landscape.² In the same way, the division in Dorothy Wordsworth's description into two attributes, 'savage and grand' and 'a great deal of the beautiful' is reminiscent of the traditional Burkeian division of the first paragraph of An Evening Walk.

By the time of this letter, Beaumont had evidently been accepted as a valued friend by Wordsworth and Coleridge.

1. E.H., p. 365; DW, WW, and MW to S.M. Coleridge, March 6 1804.

2. For Beaumont's correspondence with Gilpin see C.P. Barbier, William Gilpin (Oxford, 1963), esp. p. 107.

In the spring of 1804, Wordsworth wrote a sonnet about the Applethwaite estate which was sent to Beaumont on April 14 in a letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont;¹ an exchange of letters occurred between the two women during this year, although it is clear that they had never met.² Meanwhile the correspondence between Beaumont and Wordsworth was resumed in July, when Beaumont sent Wordsworth a copy of the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Beaumont had been a friend of Reynolds, and Wordsworth's letter of thanks acknowledges the connection; it also sums up the state of his knowledge of pictures at this time:

Of a great part of them, (The Discourses) never having had an opportunity of studying any pictures whatsoever, I can be but a very inadequate judge; But of such parts of the Discourses as relate to general philosophy, I may be entitled to speak with more confidence; and it gives me great pleasure to

1. E.L., p. 385; DW to Lady Beaumont, April 14 1804. The sonnet, revised and published in 1842, may be found in P.W., 11. 3.

2. E.L., p. 382; DW to Lady Beaumont, April 14 1804: 'My Sister and I feel ourselves greatly delighted and honoured by the wish you express to become acquainted with us. For our parts we have looked forward with much pleasure to the time of your revisiting Keswick in the hope that we should become personally acquainted with you.'

say to you, knowing your great regard for Sir Joshua, that they appear to me highly honourable to him. (1)

By the end of 1804 Wordsworth had completed his reading of Reynolds' Discourses, and thus laid the foundation of his later knowledge of the great painters. His own early interests had been in landscape and topographical work, moving from Gilpin back to Salvator Rosa.² Now he would have been made aware of the different schools of Italian painting, the other European schools, and above all, perhaps, of the greatness of Michelangelo. It is not surprising that on Christmas Day 1804, Wordsworth should have shown a greatly quickened interest in the possibility of seeing pictures and a keen desire to learn about them:

I have since read the rest of his Discourses, with which I have been greatly pleased, and wish most heartily that I could have an opportunity of seeing in your company your own collection of pictures and

1. E.L., pp. 401-2; WW to Sir George Beaumont, July 20 1804. For Wordsworth's remarks on Reynolds as portrait-painter, see below, Chapter 10.

2. For the influences behind the Picturesque, see Elizabeth W. Manwaring, Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-Century England (New York, 1925).

some others in town, Mr. Angerstein's for instance, to have pointed out to me some of those finer and peculiar beauties of Painting which I am afraid I shall never have an occasion of becoming sufficiently familiar with pictures to discover of myself. (1)

Wordsworth was soon to have an opportunity of seeing both the Beaumont and Angerstein collections, and of increasing his confidence in the judgment of pictures. In the meantime, however, the meeting with Beaumont was leading to a development of interest in the subject from another direction. From 1804 onwards, Wordsworth met more of the painter visitors to the Lake District, and two of them may have called at Dove Cottage at Beaumont's suggestion. On October 7th, 1804, Dorothy Wordsworth reported to Lady Beaumont:

We have seen a Mr. Eddridge who talked with us about you - he seems a very pleasing man - Wm wished we could have seen more of him - he was much delighted with Sir G.'s drawing of Applethwaite. (2)

1. E.L., pp. 423-4 WW to Sir George Beaumont, December 25 1804; J.J. Angerstein was a wealthy merchant and connoisseur, whose collection was bought at his death to form the nucleus of the new National Gallery.

2. E.L., p. 418; DW to Lady Beaumont, October 7 1804.

This was Henry Edridge (1769-1821), a miniaturist and portrait painter, who later (in 1806) did an excellent likeness of Wordsworth.¹ With him came Richard Duppa (1770-1831), artist and author, and a friend of Southey.² Duppa was an enthusiast for Italian painting, and was engaged at the time upon a Life of Michelangelo. He introduced Wordsworth to Michelangelo's poetry, and used three of Wordsworth's translations in the book.³

Wordsworth liked Edridge - 'a man of very mild and pleasing manners, and as far as I could judge, of delicate

1. Discussed by F. Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth (London, 1959), pp. 143-4.

2. Duppa had published A selection of Twelve Heads From the Last Judgment of Michel Angelo (1801) and Heads From the Fresco Pictures of Raffaele in the Vatican (1803).

3. The Life of Michel Angelo Buonarroti with his poetry and letters (London, 1806). See D.L., p. 424; WW to Sir George Beaumont, December 25 1804: 'Duppa is publishing a life of Michael Angelo, and I received from him a few days ago two proof-sheets of an Appendix which contains the poems of M.A., which I shall read, and translate one or two of them, if I can do it with decent success. I have peeped into the sonnets, and they do not appear at all unworthy of their great Author.' The translations may be found in P.W., iii. 14-15.

In an acknowledgement (2nd. Edn., London, 1807, p. 238) Duppa mentions 'my friends Southey and Wordsworth'.

feelings, in the province of his Art.¹ - and no doubt he was glad to renew the acquaintance in London when the portrait was done.² A later reference to Duppa, on the other hand, suggest that this friendship did not last long.³ However, on this visit to Dove Cottage the two artists agreed in their admiration for Beaumont's drawing, and the meeting seems to have been very successful.⁴

At this time two things happened which gave a considerable impetus to the friendship. The first was the departure of Coleridge for Italy and Malta early in 1804. He stayed with the Beaumonts at Dunnock and again at their London house

1. E.L., p. 424; WW to Sir George Beaumont, December 25 1804.

2. See Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Later Years, 1803-1850, (Oxford, 1965), pp. 72-73: Wordsworth visited Edridge in company with Godwin.

3. Henry Crabb Robinson observed Wordsworth and Duppa at a dinner-party in 1812: 'He (Duppa) calls Wordsworth his friend in his life of Michael Angelo. No one today would have thought they had been acquaintances.' (E.J. Morley, Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers, London, 1938, p. 91). Robinson thought Duppa was a snob, which may account for this.

4. E.L., p. 424: '... they were both most enthusiastic in their praise of it, to my great delight'.

at Grosvenor Square.¹ From the time of his departure from England in April 1804 until his return in 1806, his welfare was a common subject of interest which kept the correspondence going,² particularly between Dorothy Wordsworth and Lady Beaumont. The second happening was probably the most disturbing single event of Wordsworth's life: the death of his brother John in the sinking of the Earl of Abergavenny off Portland on February 5th, 1805. The fact that this happened while Coleridge was away meant that Wordsworth turned for sympathy to two friends - Beaumont and Lamb.³

The news reached Grasmere on February 11, in a letter from Richard Wordsworth, and the shock made Dorothy and Mary very ill.⁴ In his grief and loneliness Wordsworth

1. E.L., p. 364; DW, WW, and MW to S. T. Coleridge March 6 1804: 'I am sorry you have left Dunmow...'. E.L., p. 375; DW to Catherine Clarkson, March 24 1804: 'He was at Sir George Beaumont's in Grosvenor Square...'. It was during this stay that Coleridge learned something about painting; see his letter to Rickman, quoted above, Chapter 1.

2. See Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Later Years, 1803-1850, (Oxford, 1965), p. 29.

3. See E.V. Lucas, ed., The Letters of Charles Lamb, (London, 1935), i. 382 ff. Lamb was not in the habit of preserving letters written to him, so we only have his replies, which are models of sympathy and tact.

4. E.L., p. 446; WW to Richard Wordsworth, February 11 1805.

wrote to Beaumont - perhaps the first letter, apart from a brief acknowledgment to his brother - and received an immediate and sympathetic reply.¹ A longer letter of February 20 confirms the degree to which Wordsworth was hoping for support from Beaumont; although he wrote to James Losh in March that 'The distress of mind under which we are at present labouring is not to be measured by any living person but one, and that is poor Coleridge.'² Wordsworth is obviously trying, in these letters to Beaumont, to describe the character of John in such a way that Beaumont will be able to realise fully the extent of the loss, to enter into Wordsworth's grief, and, to a certain degree take Coleridge's place. By the summer of 1805, he is evidently feeling that a change of scene would do them all good, and again he turns to Beaumont - rather diffidently, in the way of a man who is not used to asking for favours, particularly from the aristocracy, but in a way which illustrates a new

1. E.L., p. 447; WW to Sir George Beaumont, February 11 1805; DCC, B to W, February 17 1805.

2. E.L., p. 463; WW to James Losh, March 16 1805. Many of the letters to Beaumont at this time describe John's character: he was 'a Poet in every thing but words' (Feb 11); 'In everything his judgments were sound and original' (Feb 20); 'he was of a meek and retired nature, loving all quiet things' (March 12).

kind of dependence on a new kind of friend:

I wished to know how you were at present situated as to house-room at Coleorton, that is, whether you could have found a corner for me to put my head in, in case I could have contrived to have commended three weeks' time, or so. (1)

Beaumont, who had not completed his new house, was not able to accommodate Wordsworth and his family as he wished,² and Wordsworth did not enjoy his hospitality until the spring of 1806. This was Wordsworth's first visit to London for nearly four years, and much of it seems to have been spent in Beaumont's house in Grosvenor Square.³ During the stay Wordsworth could not have avoided meeting Beaumont's painting friends and protégés: he certainly met Farington⁴ and Wilkie⁵, and had his portrait done by Edridge; he may also have met Constable and some of Beaumont's other acquaintances. More

1. E.L., p. 510; WW to Sir George Beaumont, July 29 1805.

2. DCC, B to W, August 11 1805.

3. There is some doubt about whether Wordsworth actually stayed in Beaumont's house: on April 20 Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont that they were 'very happy in the thought of his being now so near to you, so very near that it is almost the same thing as if he were under your roof.' (M.Y., p. 20). But one of Wordsworth's letters in early May gives Beaumont's house as his address (M.Y., p. 22).

4. The Farington Diary, ii. 206 (April 26 1806): 'Wordsworth, the Poet, came in the evening' (to Grosvenor Square); and iii. 209 (May 1 1806): 'Went to Sir George Beaumont's at breakfast time. Wordsworth there.'

5. See below, Chapter 6.

important than this, however, is the fact that Wordsworth would have been able to see the Royal Academy Exhibition in company with Beaumont¹, and to have his wish to see Beaumont's own collection gratified. Two years before, on his way to Malta, Coleridge had described the collection:

...the Pictures in his Picture-Room are most exquisite. - The famous Rubens, two Claudes, a Gaspar Poussin!! & yet Sir George's own Landscapes hang by them undishonored while the niobe of Wilson, which in poetic Conception and form is a first-rate & sublime landscape, with the exception of the sharp-shooters in the Clouds - yet in colouring looks quite mealy and pasteey by comparison. - (2)

The 'famous Rubens' was the 'Landscape, Chateau de Steen'; one of the Claudes was 'Hagar and the Angel', which Beaumont carried with him everywhere in a special case made for the purpose; the other was probably 'Narcissus'. The Poussin (actually Nicholas, not Gaspar) was 'Phocion, washing his feet', and the sharp-shooters in the clouds of Wilson's 'Niobe

1. The Farington Diary, iii. 210 (May 1 1806): 'Westall I called on in the evening to get Him to sign Cards in Dance's name for Sir G. Beaumont & Wordsworth for the private view of the Exhibition tomorrow.' The exhibition included Wilkie's 'Village Politicians', two Turners ('Fall of the Rhine at Schaffhausen' and 'Pembroke Castle: clearing up of a thunder-storm'), an early and uncharacteristic but very topical Constable ('The Victory at Trafalgar'); Hoppner's 'Sleeping Nymph' was much admired.

2. E.L. Griggs, ed., The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, (Oxford, 1956-59), ii. 1110.

and her children' were Apollo and Daphne.¹

More interesting than any of the great masterpieces, so far as Wordsworth's poetry is concerned, was Beaumont's own painting of Peele Castle in a storm. By a series of coincidences the picture would have appealed to Wordsworth and affected him with a relevance to his own personal experience: and the fine poem which he wrote shortly after his return to Grasmere suggests that as he stood in Beaumont's painting room the grief and misery of the months since his brother's death crystallised in his mind and became expressible in poetry.²

The picture is a dramatic one, full of dark clouds and roaring waves, which seem to meet one another in the storm.³ The castle is on the left of the picture, buffeted by the winds and the waves; while on the right Beaumont had intro-

1. Also in the collection was a Rembrandt, 'The Jew Merchant' and 'The Return from the Ark' by S. Bourdon. Both of these had belonged to Sir Joshua Reynolds. For a full list, see Appendix I.

2. This was not the first poem occasioned by John Wordsworth's death, but the finest. See Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Later Years, 1803-1850, (Oxford, 1965), pp. 42-46.

3. The picture is now at Belgrave House, Leicester in the Collection of the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

duced that most common subject of Romantic painting, a shipwreck.¹ The ship is just sinking, though within reasonable distance of the shore: and as the Earl of Abergavenny went down just offshore near Portland, the scene would have had an obvious connection for Wordsworth. Add to this the fact that the castle itself was well known to him - he had stayed nearby during the summer of 1794 - and the connection becomes still stronger. Beaumont actually realised that the shipwreck would produce a painful remembrance, and did not show the picture to Wordsworth;² but no doubt Wordsworth would have had an ample opportunity during his stay in London to spend time in the picture-room. The result was that after more than a year Wordsworth had at last found a centre around which he could express his

1. See T.S.R. Boase, 'Shipwrecks in English Romantic Painting', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, xxi, Nos. 3-4, 1959, pp. 332-346.

2. DCC, B to W, June 29 1806: 'I will not say I feel flattered by your verses on Peele Castle, because I know you never intended it, but I must own I feel my pride not a little elated that I should by any means be the cause of so beautiful a poem, the time spent on that picture I shall ever consider as disposed of to the greatest advantage. When you came to town you will recollect I did not shew you Peele Castle tho it was in the room, because I thought it might raise painful sensations in your mind, I did not sufficiently consider "How sweet the uses were of your adversity, & what a precious jewel it were in its head."'

sense of loss: and yet his sense was that all is not loss, that out of suffering has come strength and hope and dignity, as the firmness of the rhythm indicates.

The first part of the poem contrasts the storm which Beaumont had painted with the calm summer scene experienced by Wordsworth during a fine spell of weather in the summer of 1794. Wordsworth remembers that his interpretation of the place and the time would have been very different:

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile
Amid a world how different from this!
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. (1)

This picture would have been connected with a belief about the essential happiness and serenity of life, a belief which has not stood the test of time:

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made:
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been, - 'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul. (2)

The process which Wordsworth is here describing is a familiar one in his poetry, in which the complete surrender to a beneficent Nature is replaced by a perception

1. Lines 17-20; P.W., iv. 259.

2. Lines 29-36; P.W., iv. 259.

of pain and suffering. This is 'the still sad music of humanity' which has power to chasten and subdue on the occasion of the second visit to Tintern Abbey; in the 'Immortality Ode' the loss of the radiant vision is tempered by a new participation -

In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind. (1)

The death of his brother is the sharpest of the shocks which induce this humanising process. Under its influence Wordsworth realises that the picture of Peele Castle which he would have painted is not so mature as the actual presentation which Beaumont had produced:

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been the Friend,
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore. (2)

1. Ode, Intimations of Immortality, lines 184-8; P.W., iv. 284.

2. 'Peele Castle', lines 41-44; P.W., iv. 260. In this verse Wordsworth again seems to have the aim of impressing Beaumont with the feeling that he would have like John Wordsworth if he had lived; this carries on the strain which is so noticeable in the letters - see note above, p. 42.

Not only does Beaumont paint the storm which is more representative of the central difficulties of life than the calm; he also includes the castle which for Wordsworth becomes a symbol of steadfastness in adversity and the shipwreck, symbol of loss and tragedy. Thus the storm is a symbol of the shock of an event like the death of his brother; and the poet sees himself as the castle, standing firm against the shock. Yet such an experience is a sobering and humanising one: never again can he surrender to a life in Nature which means ease and happiness, for any attempt to understand or come to terms with Nature must include the storm and the shipwreck as well as the calm. Such an appreciation brings the poet nearer to his fellow-men through suffering, and the conclusion of the poem rests upon two virtues - sympathy and fortitude:

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here. -
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn. (1)

Beaumont's picture depicted a shipwreck which was very similar to the one in which John Wordsworth was drowned;

1. Lines 53-60; P.W., iv. 260.

because of this, Wordsworth found that he was able to approach this most terrible of subjects through another person's expression of it. Once this had happened, other important lines of thought converged upon the picture: the theme of past happiness and present sorrow, and the grandeur associated with the kind of fortitude which Wordsworth had been displaying since his brother's death. The several lines of thought come together to make an educative experience, bringing the poet nearer to his fellow-men. It is this unity, with its development of thought and feeling held together, which makes this poem the most impressive of those written about John Wordsworth's death; and the unity is undoubtedly due to Wordsworth's apprehension of the picture as containing within its various elements the total expression of what he wanted to say. His own words to Beaumont sum up the effect best:

I am glad you liked the verses; I could not but write them with feeling with such a subject, and one that touched me so nearly: your delicacy in not leading me to the Picture did not escape me. It is a melancholy satisfaction to me to connect my dear Brother with anybody whom I love much; and I knew that the verses would give you pleasure as a proof of my affection for you. The picture was to me a very moving one; it exists in my mind at this moment as if it were before my eyes. (1)

1. M.Y., p. 50; WW to Sir George Beaumont, August 1 1806.

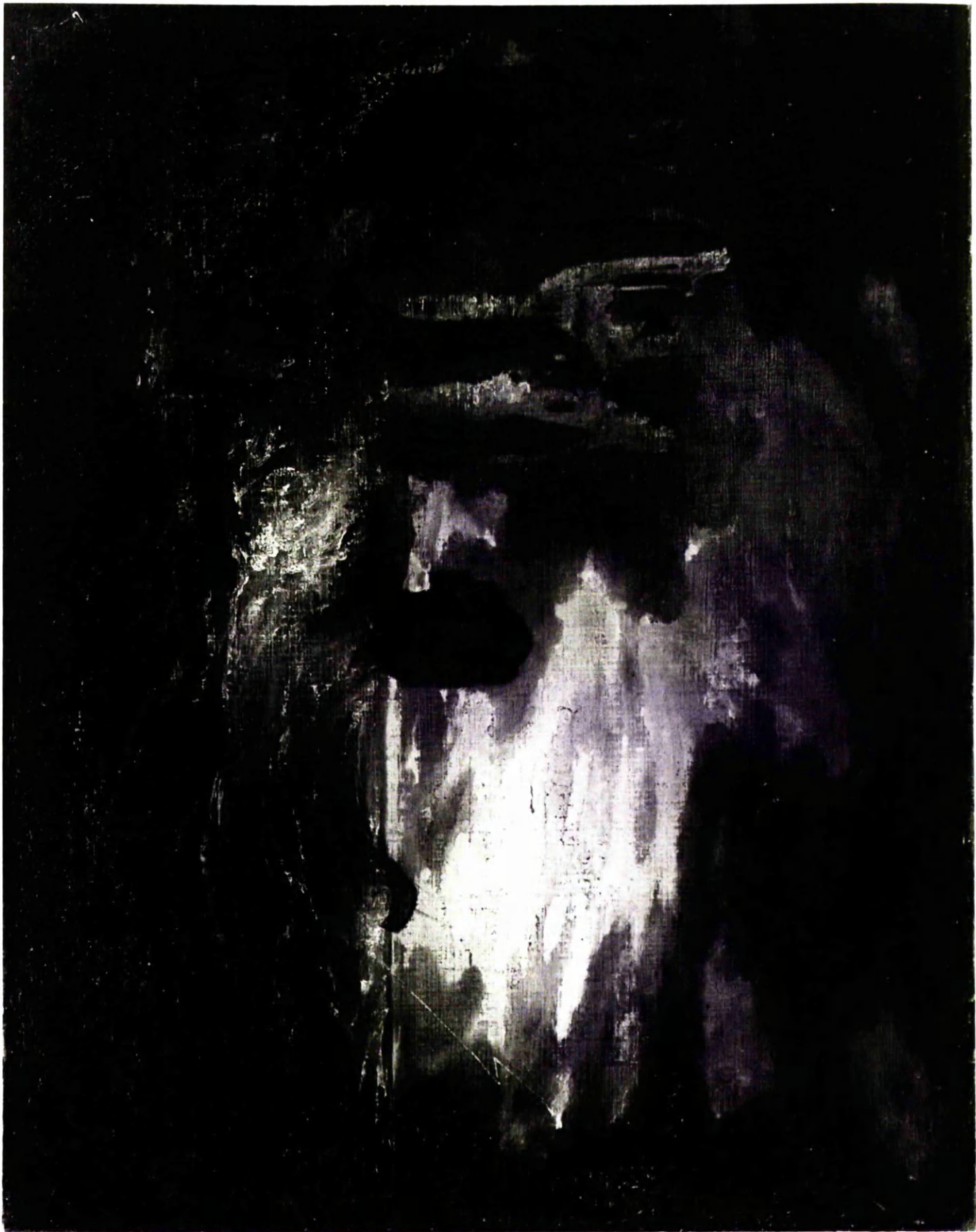


Plate 1. Sir George Beaumont: Peele Castle in a Storm. (City of Leicester Museums and Art Gallery).

Chapter 3. The friendship with Beaumont, 1806-1815.

Wordsworth arrived home from his trip to London in 1806 on May 25th, 'with looks and health so much improved that we knew not how to express our happiness' as Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont.¹ During the summer the correspondence was carried on by both William and Dorothy, and was equally brisk in return. Wordsworth sent 'Peel Castle' to Beaumont sometime in June;² early in July Beaumont sent Richard Payne Knight's Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste,³ and in September there followed another picture, an illustration of Wordsworth's poem 'The Thorn'.⁴ Wordsworth's reception of this is a very interesting example of his attitude to painting at this time:

1. M.Y., p.31; June 3 1806.

2. Beaumont's letter of appreciation (quoted above), was dated June 29. Wordsworth is probably referring to this poem in his letter of June 3 (M.Y., p.30):... 'a few verses, in which I did not forget Grosvenor Square, as you will know if I ever take up the strain again, for it is not finished.'

3. M.Y., p.43. During the previous winter Wordsworth had been reading another important work on the Picturesque, Uvedale Price's Essay on the Picturesque. See M.Y., pp.2-3.

4. M.Y., p.64; WW to Sir George Beaumont, September, 1806.

The picture of the Thorn has been ten days under our roof. It has pleased us greatly; and the more it is looked at, the more it pleases. Yet we have two objections to it; one, that the upright bough in the thorn is, we think, too tall for a tree in so exposed a situation; and the other, - which I remember you mentioned as having been made by somebody in town, - that the woman appears too old. (1)

The criticism that the tree in the painting is 'too tall for a tree in so exposed a situation' suggests that Wordsworth's approach was still naïve and crudely representational. It is noteworthy in this respect that Beaumont's explanation of his treatment of the thorn relies for its effect upon a recognition of the demands of the formal and compositional elements of a painting; and an appreciation of this is just what Wordsworth seems to lack at this time. Here is Beaumont's reply:

I am glad the picture is arrived & still more that it rather improves upon you, I believe the criticism is just respecting the height of the Thorn, which is contrary to the letter of the poem as well as the matter of fact, for I believe they seldom grow so high in such a situation, this I was aware of, but I thought the subject required a little decoration in the picture, tho not in the poem & that the mere ridge of a hill together with the sombre colour it required, might without this liberty appear too barren, I believe I can alter it however - With regard to the age of the woman the dress in some measure leaves that to the spectators imagination. (2)

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1. M.Y., p. 64; WW to Sir George Beaumont, September 1806.
 2. DCG, B to W, September 13 1806.

This seems a perfectly adequate justification of the picture, and a far more informed attitude than Wordsworth's preoccupation with the height of the tree under certain natural conditions. However, Beaumont himself later expressed dissatisfaction with the work, as Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick:

Sir George Beaumont painted a picture from it [The Thorn] which Wilkie thought his best. He gave it to me; though, when he saw it several times at Rydal Mount afterwards, he said, 'I could make a better, and would like to paint the same subject over again'. The sky in this picture is nobly done, but it reminds one too much of Wilson. The only fault, however, of any consequence is the female figure, which is too old and decrepit for one likely to frequent an eminence on such a call.(1)

This later criticism, with its comparison of Beaumont's sky with Wilson's certainly sounds more informed, though at the end we have the same preoccupation with probability and verisimilitude in connection with the age of the woman who has climbed the hill. This is one example of Wordsworth's tendency to judge pictures by the story which they told rather than by any formal painterly qualities.

1. P.W., ii. 511-13. The picture of 'The Thorn' and another by Beaumont, 'The White Doe', hung in the library of Rydal Mount until Wordsworth's death. See Christopher Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet Laureate, D.C.L. (London, 1851), p. 27. The picture was never engraved for an illustration of Wordsworth's poems.

During this summer of 1806 Sir George and Lady Beaumont had hoped to return to the Lake District, but the plans fell through. However, in July, Beaumont offered the Wordsworths the use of the Home Farm at Coleorton for the duration of the winter. This offer was accepted, as Dove Cottage was becoming too small (William and Mary's third child had been born in June), and the family took up residence at the end of October.

On the journey to Leicestershire occurred the first meeting for two years with the returning Coleridge. This was a most unsatisfactory meeting, according to Dorothy Wordsworth,¹ and its failure would no doubt have served to emphasise the warmth of the Beaumonts' welcome.² Sir George and Lady Beaumont were spending the winter in London,

1. See her letter to Catherine Clarkson, November 5-6 1806, (M.Y., pp. 67-70). Coleridge had been causing his friends a great deal of anxiety since his return to England in August by his refusal to return to his wife. See M.Y., p. 63, WW to S.T. Coleridge; and the next two letters, WW to Beaumont and DW to Lady Beaumont, both dated September 1806 (M.Y., pp. 64-67).

2. M.Y., p. 70; DW to Catherine Clarkson, November 5-6 1806: 'The Beaumonts are delightful, affectionate good people. They received us like old Friends, and have contrived all in their power for our accommodation.'

but they had delayed their departure until a few days after the Wordsworths' arrival. Consequently we see the movement away from Coleridge and towards Beaumont continuing, even after Coleridge's return.

During the winter there was a full correspondence, largely because Wordsworth had shown some interest in a plan by Lady Beaumont for a winter garden and was in consequence invited to supervise the laying out of it. She had taken the idea from Addison, in The Spectator, No.477, an essay which Wordsworth mentions:¹ its catalogue of normally unremarked beauties no doubt appealed to Wordsworth;

The walls are covered with ivy instead of vines. The laurel, the horn-beam, and the holly, with many other trees and plants of the same nature, grow so thick in it that you cannot imagine a more lively scene. The glowing redness of the berries, with which they are hung at this time, vies with the verdure of the leaves and is apt to inspire the heart of the beholder with that vernal delight which you have somewhere

1. M.Y., p.76; WW to Sir George Beaumont, November 10 1806. The closeness of this date to the move to Colcorton may mean that Wordsworth had read Addison before. See also M.Y., p.120; DW to Catherine Clarkson, February 17 1807.

taken notice of in your former papers.(1)

Wordsworth had strong views about gardening, which he connected (in a letter written in 1805) with a failure to understand the poets and painters who laid the foundations of taste in such matters:

Painters and Poets have had the credit of being reckoned the fathers of English gardening; they will also have, hereafter, the better praise of being fathers of a better taste... It was a misconception of the meaning and principles of poets and painters which gave countenance to the modern system of gardening, which is now, I hope, on the decline.(2)

Throughout the eighteenth century painters and poets had been regarded, as Wordsworth says, as 'the fathers of English Gardening': William Mason, in The English Garden (1778-1781) gives pride of place to Spenser and Milton, with Pope as a later corrector of taste, and Bacon, Temple and Addison as prose writers; the painters are Poussin, Claude and

1. The Spectator (London, 1797), vii.25-6; No.477. Wordsworth may have drawn upon this passage and upon his experience as a winter-gardener at Coleorton in the Guide to the Lakes, where he remarks upon the superiority of winter over summer colours: 'The oak-coppices, upon the sides of the mountains, retain russet leaves; the birch stands conspicuous with its silver stem and puce-coloured twigs; the hollies, with green leaves and scarlet berries, have come forth to view from among the deciduous trees, whose summer foliage had concealed them; the ivy is now plentifully apparent upon the stems and boughs of the trees, and upon the steep rocks.' (Guide to the Lakes, ed. E. de Selincourt, Oxford, 1926, p.29).

2. E.L., pp.523-4; WW to Sir George Beaumont, October 17 1805.

Salvator Rosa.¹ Wordsworth's attack on 'the modern system of gardening' is amplified in other parts of his letter: he is chiefly anxious that the natural beauty surrounding the house shall not be spoilt. Beaumont must have a proper respect for the surroundings of his new house:

Setting out from the distinction made by Coleridge which you mentioned, that your House will belong to the Country, and not the Country be an appendage to your House, you cannot be wrong. (2)

Wordsworth's opinion on this subject and on the whole matter of landscape gardening practice shows a very close alignment with the views of the theorists of the Picturesque, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price, in their controversy with the landscape gardeners, represented by Humphry Repton, who was defending his own methods and those of Capability Brown. The basis of Price and Knight's case was that the landscape gardeners had interfered with nature by removing the rugged and wild to make way for an artificial smoothness. Their contours of landscape were based upon Hogarth's line of beauty, which, Knight argued, was as artificial as the

1. In this connection, Spenser was famous for The Faerie Queene, (The garden of Adonis and the Temple of Venus), Milton for Paradise Lost, Book IV, and Pope for the Fourth Moral Essay.

2. E.L., p. 523; WW to Sir George Beaumont, October 17 1805.

straight line they were trying to avoid.¹ Instead of the wild and natural, Brown had preferred smooth lawns and fields, dotted with clumps and belts of trees, or diversified with an artificial lake.² Price and Knight attacked this practice, though it is not clear that Wordsworth had read their work at the time of writing his letter.³ However, three months later Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont:

1. See Knight's poem, The Landscape (1794), 1.141-2 and 1.145-6 (quoted by N. Pevsner, 'Richard Payne Knight', Art Bulletin, XXXI, 1949, pp.293-320; see p.302):

...binding beauty in its waving line,
Destroys the charm it vainly would define.
The path that moves in even serpentine
Is still less nat'ral than the painted line.

2. The chief documents in this controversy are Payne Knight's The Landscape (1794), Uvedale Price's Essay on the Picturesque (1794) and Payne Knight's An Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste (1805). Repton published Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening in 1795. See also Repton's appearance as Marmaduke Milestone in Thomas Love Peacock's Headlong Hall (1815).

3. The letter (E.E., p.522) is dated October 17 1805. DW's letter to Lady Beaumont mentioning the reading of Price's book is dated January 19 1806 (M.Y., p.1) and her phrasing suggests a recent reading. Wordsworth was sent Knight's Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste in the summer of 1806 (M.Y., p.43). However, it is possible that Wordsworth was aware of the controversy before this, and that he had read Price's Essay on the Picturesque and Knight's The Landscape at some period after their publication in 1794.

My Brother has read Mr. Price's Book on the picturesque... My Brother thinks that Mr. Price has been of great service in correcting the false taste of the layers out of Parks and Pleasure-grounds. (1)

In this connection it is interesting that in the letter to Beaumont in which he comments adversely on 'the modern system of gardening' Wordsworth's chief example is that of Alnwick, which Capability Brown had 'improved' for the Duke of Northumberland. In addition to this, one of Wordsworth's neatest phrases recalls a striking element of the controversy of 1794-5. He is condemning the great landowners for 'thrusting themselves in between us and Nature'. 'Surely', he asks, 'it is a substitution of little things for great when we would put a whole country into a nobleman's Livery.'² This recalls very accurately Knight's attack on Repton's suggestion in his 'Red Book' for Tatton, near Knutsford. Repton had suggested that the milestones might bear the coat of arms of the proprietor, William Egerton, to mark the

1. Wordsworth actually wrote to Price on the subject: See M.Y., p.30, WW to Lady Beaumont, June 3 1806: 'I have received a very obliging letter from Mr. Price, who seems much pleased with what I said upon the Sublime. He... is kind enough to invite me to Foxley, holding out the inducement of the neighbouring scenery of the Wye.'

2. E.L., pp.524-5; WW to Sir George Beaumont, October 17 1805.

extent of his land,¹ and Knight's use of this to score a point may have been remembered by Wordsworth.

Whatever his reading, there is little doubt that when Wordsworth arrived at Coleorton and set about his task of making a winter garden, he had strong views about the correct approach to landscape gardening, and that these views coincided with those of Knight and Price. No doubt his experience during the winter of 1806-7 was one of the factors which led Wordsworth later to describe himself as furnished with the qualifications of a landscape gardener.² Meanwhile the task led to a very long letter to Lady Beaumont; and in February Wordsworth wrote the first of many poems connected with Coleorton and its grounds - 'Lady! the songs of Spring were in the grove!'³ Probably the most important poem written during this stay at Coleorton was the 'Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle', composed, according to Wordsworth, 'while I was walking to and fro along the path that led from Sir George Beaumont's Tarnhouse, where we resided,

1. See Dorothy Stroud, Humphry Repton (London, 1962), p. 79 and p.83; and Thomas Love Peacock, Headlong Hall (Collected Edition, 1934), p.23.

2. See above, Introduction.

3. P.W., iii.29.

to the Hall which was building at that time.¹

In April the Wordsworths visited London.² On the 28th Farington noted in his diary: 'Sir George & Lady Beaumont & Wordsworth called & I went with them to Grosvenor Square'.³ There they visited Beaumont's gallery, and Farington noted a discussion of a painting by Wilson.⁴ A few days later Farington met Wordsworth again, with either Dorothy or Mary, at the Royal Academy Exhibition.⁵

Not long after the Wordsworths returned to Coleorton

1. Ibid, ii. 515. According to the D.N.B., this picture was suggested by one of Beaumont's pictures; but the poem seems to have little connection with the art of landscape as usually practised by Beaumont.

2. They did not stay with the Beaumonts, but with Basil Montagu in Thornhaugh Street (between Russell Square and Woburn Square, where the University of London now is). This would, however, have been convenient for Grosvenor Square. The reason for the visit was probably to arrange for the publication of Poems in Two Volumes.

3. The Farington Diary, iv. 129

4. Quoted below, Chapter 12.

5. The Wordsworths did not think highly of the Exhibition: according to Farington, 'He thought it a poor exhibition, and she said it was the worst she had ever seen.' Among the pictures exhibited were Turner's 'The Blacksmith's Shop', Wilkie's 'The Blind Fiddler', and three Constable paintings of the Lake District.

Sir George and Lady Beaumont followed them,¹ arriving at the beginning of June. The Wordsworth family left on June 10th,² but the absence from the Beaumonts did not last long because Sir George and Lady Beaumont spent a good part of the summer in the Lake District. They were at Keswick in July, where both William and Dorothy stayed with them,³ and later spent a week at Grasmere itself.⁴ During this visit (or perhaps on leaving Coleorton) Beaumont gave Wordsworth two of his oil paintings: one was a picture of the neighbourhood of Coleorton, and was no doubt intended as a souvenir of the winter's residence. They were both much admired. Wordsworth told Beaumont, by visiting artists, though he does not specify (with one exception) who these

1. Between his return to Coleorton and that of the Beaumonts, Wordsworth wrote the frequently-quoted letter to Lady Beaumont which demonstrates, among other things, what an important part she must have played in the friendship by her championing of Wordsworth's poetry. Wordsworth is referring to Poems in Two Volumes, and part of the letter runs: 'Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny, to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier, to teach the young and the gracious of every age, to see, to think and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous;' etc. (M.Y., p.126, WW to Lady Beaumont, May 21 1807).

2. M.Y., p.136; DW to Catherine Clarkson, July 19 1807.

3. M.Y., p.139; same letter. See also p.141, DW to C. Clarkson, August 30 1807.

4. M.Y., p.143; DW to Jane Marshall, September 19 1807.

were.¹ The exception was William Havill (or Havell), a well-known water-colour painter, who spent two and a half years in the Lake District from 1807 to 1810. During the first part of this period he lived at Ambleside, and Wordsworth met him during the winter of 1807-8:

Havill, the Water-Colour Painter... is painting at Ambleside; and has done a view of Rydale Water, looking down upon it from Rydale Park, of which I should like to know your opinion; it will be exhibited in the spring, in the water-colour exhibition.(2)

Beaumont saw the exhibition, and duly gave Wordsworth his opinion:

1. M.Y., p.171; WW to Sir George Beaumont, Jan or Feb 1808: 'Your two oil Paintings (and indeed everything I have of yours) have been much admired by the artists who have seen them. And for our own parts we like them better every day; this in particular is the case with the small picture from the neighbourhood of Coleorton...'

2. M.Y., p.171; WW to Sir George Beaumont, Jan or Feb 1808. G.R. Redgrave, A History of Water-Colour Painting in England, (London, 1892), p.101, says that Havill, 'a lover of mountain scenery, spent ten years in Westmoreland, where he produced many fine works.' It is difficult to identify the picture in question, because between 1805 and 1812 Havill exhibited 114 drawings at the 'Old Water-Colour Society'. (See J.L. Roget, A History of the 'Old Water-Colour' Society, London, 1891, i.295). Roget quotes Havill's friend W.H. Pyne: 'the richness and intensity of colouring in some of his happiest works suffered but little in comparison with paintings in oil, a consequence that resulted from his continual practice of painting his effects on the spot. These drawings, though broad in effect and bold in execution, yet were highly wrought, being the result of careful study and much labour'. (Roget, Op.Cit., i.295).

I think the drawing you mentioned to me of Havills one of the best there - he has however lost his breadth & upon the whole has been retrograde - (1)

It is clear from another letter that Beaumont did not like Havill, regarding him as lacking in humility -

Havill is an ingenious young man & if you can inspire him with a little humility you will be of great service to him & facilitate his progress. (2)

At this period of his life, Wordsworth was obviously working in great harmony with Beaumont. Probably during the Beaumonts' visit to Grasmere in 1807 'Peter Bell' was read to them, and by the beginning of 1808 Sir George had completed a sketch for an illustration to the poem, and was contemplating a finished picture. There was a plan, it is clear, to publish 'Peter Bell' (which had been written in 1798 but never published) with Beaumont's picture engraved

1. DCC, B to W, undated, probably May 1808.
2. DCC, B to W, February 25 1808.

as a frontispiece or accompaniment,¹ a plan which was fulfilled in 1819. The picture shows Peter at the beginning of Part II of the poem, sitting in a trance among the rocks, with the ass by the side of the river on the right of the picture.

On the same lines, a letter from Wordsworth went on to mention the completion of 'The White Doe of Rylstone', and to suggest that there would be a fine subject for a painter, perhaps implying that Beaumont should illustrate this poem too:

In the Poem I have just written you will find one situation which, if the work should ever become familiarly known, would furnish as fine a subject for a Picture as anything I remember in Poetry, ancient or modern. I need not mention what it is,

1. M.Y., p.169; VW to Sir George Beaumont, Jan or Feb 1808: 'I am quite delighted to hear of your Picture for Peter Bell; I was much pleased with the Sketch, and I have no doubt that the picture will surpass it as far as a picture ought to do.'

See also M.Y., p.172; DW to Lady Beaumont: 'It gave us great delight to hear that Sir George has painted the picture from Peter Bell. I should think, independent of its own connection with the Poem, that the painting must gain very much by the change of time, from moonlight to (early) morning; and as separating that scene entirely from the action contained in the poem, it is very judicious. There would have been some confusion if the moon light had been preserved.'

See also DCC, B to W, February 25 1808: 'If an engraving were to be made from Peter Bell I hope you will allow me to be at the expence, which would be no great matter... one thing I must tell you it is very small, and I did intend to have painted it on a larger scale, but I really have not strength to encounter a large work...'

This comment is interesting, for it implies that Words-

This comment is interesting, for it implies that Wordsworth was conscious of the visual images which his lines evoked, and their possibilities for illustration. It is as though his friendship with Beaumont and his interest in painting was beginning to affect his whole approach to the presentation of a scene. To the modern reader the scene which seems to have the greatest possibilities is the arrival of the doe in the ruins of Bolton Abbey; but Beaumont chose to paint an illustration based on lines 178-185;²

"Look, there she is, my Child! draw near;
She fears not, wherefore should we fear?
She means no harm;" - but still the Boy,
To whom the words were softly said,
Hung back, and smiled, and blushed for joy,
A shame-faced blush of glowing red!
Again the Mother whispered low,
Now you have seen the famous Doe;...³

1. M.Y., p.171; WW to Sir George Beaumont, Jan or Feb 1808.

2. P.W., iii.545. The date of this painting is later, for in Feb 1810 (M.Y., p.359), IW wrote to Lady Beaumont: "he [WW] hopes to complete The White Doe, and proud should we all be if it could be honoured by a frontispiece from the pencil of Sir George Beaumont." When the poem was published in 1815, an engraving of the picture did form the frontispiece: it shows the doe in the left foreground, with the ruins of the abbey in the middle distance, and the river on the right of the picture. A mother is pointing the doe out to her child, and other pairs of observers are also interested in the doe's appearance. The colours in the picture have faded badly.

3. P.W., iii.288-9.

This passage, of course, offers plenty of scope for a painter of family or domestic scenes, or for a genre-painter like Wilkie; it also has an obvious tendency towards the sentimental, and Beaumont's choice seems to reflect an inclination in this direction. He may have been trying to emulate Wilkie, his newest protégé, or the lines may have had a genuine appeal for him. The picture, together with Beaumont's picture of 'The Thorn', hung in the library of Rydal Mount until Wordsworth's death.¹

In the spring of 1803, Wordsworth spent some time in London; he had undertaken the journey at short notice after hearing alarming reports of Coleridge's health. He seems to have gone straight to London and then spent some time at Dunnock with the Beaumonts before returning for a short while to London.² During his stay at Dunnock Beaumont furnished him with letters of introduction to Lawrence and perhaps also credentials to enable them to see the collection of pictures belonging to J.J. Anger-

1. G. Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet Laureate, D.C.L., (London, 1851), p.27. It is now in the possession of Wordsworth's great-grand-daughter, Mrs. Dickson.

2. Wordsworth left Grasmere on February 23 (M.Y., p.177, DW to Jane Marshall, Feb 24 1803); 'We had a letter from Coleridge on Monday, written just after you set off for Dunnock.' (M.Y., p.179, DW to WW, March 23 - the Monday was March 21); 'I had a pleasant ride to town from Dunnock' (M.Y., p.185, WW to Sir George Beaumont, April 8).

stein.¹

During this visit to London, Wordsworth also saw at work another of Beaumont's proteges, Wilkie's friend Benjamin Robert Haydon. In 1808 he was beginning his 'Death of Dentatus' when Wordsworth met him.²

Wilkie and Haydon stayed at Coleorton in August 1809, and Wordsworth was half expected to join them on his way to Wales, for Beaumont was cautioning the painters to be careful about politics as a subject for conversation:

Sir George said to us one day at dinner,
"Wordsworth may perhaps walk in; if he do, I
caution you both against his terrific democratic
notions." (3)

In the event, the plans fell through, and Wordsworth did not revisit Coleorton until July 1810. The house had been completed and was duly admired.⁴ There would have been

1. M.Y., p.185; WW to Sir George Beaumont, April 8 1808. It is clear from this letter that Wordsworth had visited the Angerstein collection before, no doubt in the company of Beaumont during one of the earlier visits to London. For his remarks on Rembrandt's 'The Woman taken in Adultery', See Chapter 12.

2. DCC, B to W, February 26 1809. For the details of this letter see below, Chapter 5.

3. B.R. Haydon, Autobiography, ed. Tom Taylor, (London, 1853), 1.125.

4. M.Y., p.381; DW to Richard W, July 1810.

the difficult behaviour of Coleridge to discuss;¹ and also the book which Wordsworth had sent to the Beaumonts, Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire, by the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson, to which Wordsworth had supplied the introduction.² This introduction was later expanded to become the Guide to the Lakes.

1. M.Y., p.371; WW and DW to Lady Beaumont, May 10 1810: (WW writes) 'Be so good, my dear Lady Beaumont, as to tell Sir George that I should have written to him long ago, but too much love, combined with a good deal of sadness, has kept me silent.'

2. Wilkinson's illustrations were very poor, and it is interesting to see Wordsworth's confidence in his own Judgment about them: writing to Lady Beaumont - 'The drawings, or etchings, or whatever they are called, are, I know, such as to you and Sir George must be intolerable. You will receive from them that sort of disgust which I do from bad poetry, a disgust which can never be felt in its full strength but by those who are practised in an art, as well as amateurs of it... They will please many who in all the arts are most taken with what is most worthless.' (M.Y., p.371, WW to Lady Beaumont, May 10 1810). A glance at the book confirms this judgment: Wilkinson is poor at mountain forms, representing them by one line drawn above another with a wavy and unconvincing top line; his skies are left blank; his depiction of water is crude. Often there seems to be no connection between his foreground and background, and the figures in the foreground (to remember a criticism made by Wordsworth on another occasion) are distracting. Wordsworth much preferred the illustrations to the Lake District done by William Green, in his Seventy-eight Studies from Nature (1809). In 1808 Wordsworth had bought from Green a drawing of 'the cottage at Glencolyn, Ullswater'. See M.Y., p.171, WW to Sir George Beaumont, Jan or Feb 1808 and Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Later Years, (Oxford, 1965), p.159n.

Wordsworth himself became a member of the 'touring world' at this time, visiting with Beaumont the garden laid out by Shenstone at the Leasowes near Birmingham and Lord Lyttleton's estate at Hagley. Wordsworth would have been familiar with their names since his early reading of Gilpin's Tour of the Lakes, where there is a detailed description of them both.¹ Afterwards, Wordsworth went on to take up a long-standing invitation to visit Uvedale Price at Foxley in Herefordshire. There the celebrated garden failed to please him: 'wanting both rock and water,' he wrote, 'it necessarily wants variety'.²

This letter (written to Beaumont in August 1811) is of great interest. In addition to the visit to Price and a discussion of Picturesque gardening, Wordsworth refers to the painting by Rubens which Beaumont owned (Landscape: Chateau de Steen), then to Beaumont's own painting of a scene from the neighbourhood of Coleorton (given to Wordsworth in 1807), and finally produces a poem on the latter subject.³ This was the sonnet entitled 'Upon the Sight of a Beautiful Picture':

1. i.51-61.

2. M.Y., p.467; WW to Sir George Beaumont, August 28 1811.

3. M.Y., pp.464-470; WW to Sir George Beaumont, August 28 1811.

Praised be the Art whose subtle power could stay
Yon cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape;
Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day;
Which stopped that band of travellers on their way,
Ere they were lost within the shady wood;
And showed the Bark upon the glassy flood
For ever anchored in her sheltering bay.
Soul-soothing Art! whom Morning, Noontide, Even,
Do serve with all their changeeful pagentry;
Thou, with ambition modest yet sublime,
Here, for the sight of mortal man, hast given
To one brief moment caught from fleeting time
The appropriate calm of blest eternity.(1)

The letter containing this sonnet was written when Wordsworth and his family were staying near the sea in Cumberland, in the hope that sea-bathing would be good for his ailing daughter Catharine. It was while staying there that Wordsworth wrote his poetical 'Epistle to Sir George Howland Beaumont, Bart.',² a poem of nearly three hundred

1. P.W.,iii.6. Wordsworth told Haydon in 1816 that this sonnet was 'a favorite of mine, and I think not unworthy of the subject, which was a picture painted by our Friend Sir George Beaumont'. (M.Y.,p.703; WW to B.R. Haydon, January 13 1816).

The poem does not confine itself to references to Beaumont's painting, as Wordsworth's letter (footnote 3, page 70) goes on to show: 'The images of the smoke and the Travellers are taken from your Picture; the rest were added, in order to place the thought in a clear point of view, and for the sake of variety.' (M.Y.,p.468).

2. P.W.,iv.142-150. Wordsworth wrote a fifteen-line supplement to the Epistle in 1841 (P.W.,iv.151).

lines in heroic couplets whose diction is reminiscent of
An Evening Walk:

Far from our home by Grasmere's quiet Lake,
From the Vale's peace which all her fields partake,
Here on the bleakest point of Cumbria's shore
We sojourn stunned by Ocean's ceaseless roar;(1)

The poem is unremarkable except as a demonstration of affection for Beaumont; something which is also shown by the time spent later in the year in composing an inscription to the memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Beaumont was proposing to erect a cenotaph to the memory of Reynolds as part of the decoration of his grounds, and commissioned Wordsworth to write a poetical inscription for it. During the autumn of 1811 Wordsworth was busy with this, and the correspondence shows that he took a great deal of trouble over it.² In the process Wordsworth also composed an inscription for a seat in the grounds.³

In 1812 Wordsworth was once again staying with the Beaumonts at their town house in Grosvenor Square in the

1. Lines 1-4; P.W., iv.142.

2. M.Y., pp.470-478; WW to Sir George Beaumont, Nov 1811 and November 16 1811, and to Lady Beaumont, Nov 20 1811.

3. M.Y., p.476; P.W., iv.197. There are also two other poems dealing with the Coleorton grounds at this time: P.W., iv.195-196.

early summer.¹ During this visit Beaumont received a copy of the pamphlet entitled A Catalogue Raisonné of the Pictures now Exhibiting at the British Institution, which attacked him and two other Directors of the British Institution. It is not known who wrote the pamphlet, but it seems to have been some members of the Royal Academy, who attacked Beaumont for his failure or refusal to recognise the genius of Turner.²

1. During this visit, Wordsworth and Henry Crabb Robinson went to the British Museum to see the antiquities, which Wordsworth beheld, according to Robinson, 'with great interest and feeling as objects of beauty, but with no great historical knowledge'. (H.C.R. on Books and Writers, i.170). This was before the arrival of the Elgin Marbles in the British Museum, but they had been exhibited by Lord Elgin since 1808 in a building attached to his house at Hyde Park Corner. There Wordsworth must have seen them, for he wrote to Haydon in December 1815 'A Man must be senseless as a clod, or perverse as a Fiend, not to be enraptured with them'. (M.Y.p.685; WW to B.R. Haydon, December 21 1815). The Marbles were purchased by the Government in 1816, and removed to the British Museum. See W.T. Whitley, Art in England, 1800-1820, (Cambridge, 1928), pp.259-261.

2. See A.J. Finberg, The Life of J.M.W. Turner, R.A., (Oxford, 1939), p.223: 'When men will stoop to condemn high talents with the virulence which ought to be reserved for criminal actions, when men of undoubted judgment and ability will, under the plea of correcting the taste, use all their influence to oppress, when they will unblushingly proclaim their determination to deprive the first genius of the day of encouragement, and set up inferior works, to put him down, they must expect to have their actions narrowly scrutinized and the purity of their motives suspected.'

As he was staying with Beaumont at the time, Wordsworth must have been closely involved in the disturbance which the pamphlet caused; and no doubt it made an appreciation of Turner more difficult.

This visit to London also saw the reconciliation with Coleridge, and an application in person to Lord Lonsdale for a sinecure.¹ Beaumont encouraged this application, and when, in March 1813, the office of Stamp Distributor for Westmorland became vacant, was one of Wordsworth's guarantors. Beaumont, in fact, played a large part in the whole transaction, acting as a kind of intermediary between Lonsdale and Wordsworth.² Wordsworth was naturally suspicious about the good intentions

1. Wordsworth had applied in writing, February 1812 (M.Y., p.486).

2. DCC, B to W, August 31 1812, conveying from Lonsdale 'a wish to offer you £100 a year until he has the power of doing better for you'. Wordsworth refused through Beaumont, who wrote again (DCC, B to W, October 2 1812): 'I should certainly have remonstrated had I not thought too much time had already elapsed since the receipt of his Lordship's letter - I have just received another which confirms me in the opinion you should have accepted his offer for with that delicacy and sensibility which marks his character peculiarly, he evidently appears to be hurt by your refusal.' Encouraged by Beaumont (DCC, B to W, December 23 1812) Wordsworth changed his mind and accepted the annuity (M.Y., p.527, WW to Lord Lonsdale, December 27 1812), and the first instalment arrived early in January (M.Y., p.537, WW to Lord Lonsdale, January 8 1813).

of the Lonsdale family,¹ but Beaumont (who had produced a change in Wordsworth's ideas about the aristocracy) had stressed the culture and generosity of Lord Lonsdale and encouraged the connection as far as possible. In March 1813 Wordsworth became Stamp Distributor for Westmorland and on May 1st the family moved into Rydal Mount. It is perhaps too much to call Beaumont the architect of these changes in Wordsworth's worldly estate, but he certainly played a considerable part in bringing them about.

Between the correspondence on inscriptions and on finance both Beaumont and Wordsworth found time for their common interest in painters. Coleridge, Wordsworth learned, had become friendly with the American painter, Washington Allston, and in the same letter he mentions Wilkie and George Arnald, a landscape painter.² Landscape painting was rather a special art so far as Wordsworth was concerned; Arnald, he wrote,

Would have been a better painter, if his
genius had led him to read more in the early part
of his life..... I do not think it possible to

1. For details of the debt owed to the Wordsworth family by the former Lord Lonsdale (who died in 1802, cousin to this Lord) see M. Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Early Years, 1770-1803, (Oxford, 1957), pp. 167-9.

2. For the remarks on Wilkie, see below, Chapter 6.

excel in landscape painting without a strong tincture of the Poetic Spirit.(1)

Beaumont's reply is also interesting, for it shows an area of interest in poetic scenery which corresponds to Wordsworth's bias in favour of landscape painting:

I perfectly agree with you that Landscape painting requires in the painter a poetic feeling & when we consider how interesting a part of poetry the scenery is we shall not wonder.(2)

No doubt Beaumont's interest in the scenery of a poem is one reason why he was very enthusiastic about The Excursion on its publication in 1814. Two letters written in November 1814 praise the poem highly, and in a passage from the second book Beaumont thought that he recognised an experience which he had shared during one of his visits to the Lake District:

I verily think the vision near the end of the 2d book is the fairest flower of British Poesy - it perfectly fascinates me - Pray tell me if it was not suggested by that marvellous effect we saw in returning thro Patterdale amongst the mountains of Ulswater; - into every crevice & hollow of the hills the clouds poured in profusion, & no shape regular or fantastic, no colour brilliant or solemn, no light splendid or awful, was omitted by the setting sun on that glorious display - I remember you were struck dumb for an hour at least, & then you told me words might do little but not much in

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1. M.Y., p.475; WW to Sir George Beaumont, November 16 1811.
 2. DCC, B to W, undated, but late November 1811.

describing it - you have proved yourself mistaken.(1)

Beaumont's own copy of The Excursion is now in Dove Cottage Library, and it contains a few pencil notes in his own hand. The first of these confirms his interest in the 'scenery' of a poem, for at the beginning of Book I he singles out for comment lines 13-17:

... the dreaming man
Half conscious of the soothing melody,
With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,
By power of that impending covert, thrown
To finer distance.(2)

Here Beaumont has written in the margin: 'Seen with a true painter's eye - the strength and force of an impending rock naturally softens and extends the scene'. Twice more Beaumont writes enthusiastic marginalia, both times in Book VI: 'What is called Choice Spirit!' is found opposite

1. DCC, B to W, November 30 1814. The passage to which Beaumont alludes is almost certainly ii.829 ff.:

- when a step.
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!

Whether Beaumont was right in recognising this scene we shall probably never know; it is interesting that Lamb also thought that he (Lamb) had seen the sunset depicted in the poem when in Wordsworth's company on an entirely different occasion. See E.V. Lucas, ed., The Letters of Charles Lamb, (London, 1935), ii.127.

2. P.W., v.8.

lines 273-4,¹ and 'All exquisite' opposite line 777.²

In gratitude for his patronage, Wordsworth dedicated The Excursion to Lord Lonsdale; but at the same time he was pressing on with plans for a new edition of his poems. This edition appeared in March 1815 and was dedicated to Beaumont, who provided the illustrations at the front of each of the two volumes.³ These were engravings from Beaumont's pictures of 'Lucy Gray' (known to Wordsworth and Beaumont as 'the snow cottage', probably because the cottage under snow takes up the major part of the picture, with Lucy Gray as a small figure carrying a lantern on the right hand side of the composition) and of 'Peele Castle'.⁴

1. These lines describe the grave of the miner. P.W., v. 194-5.

2. These lines describe the end of the uncharitable widow:

She, who had rebelled,
Was into meekness softened and subdued;
Did, after trials not in vain prolonged,
With resignation sink into the grave;
And her uncharitable acts, I trust,
And harsh unkindnesses are all forgiven,
Tho', in this Vale, remembered with deep awe.
(P.W., v. 211.).

3. Wordsworth had first proposed the dedication to Beaumont of 'The White Doe' or 'Peter Bell'. See DCC, B to W, July 4 1814 and July 19 1814.

4. The engraving from 'Peele Castle' (by S.W. Reynolds) is very poor. Beaumont himself described it as a 'libel' (DCC, B to W, August 20 1821).

Wordsworth's dedication to Beaumont is the only letter of this period which has survived, although from Beaumont's letters it is quite clear there was an active correspondence; and the dedicatory letter itself serves as a good summary of this friendship which had come to play such an important part in Wordsworth's life:

... In addition to a lively pleasure derived from general considerations, I feel a particular satisfaction; for, by inscribing them with your name, I seem to myself in some degree to repay, by an appropriate honour, the great obligation which I owe to one part of the collection - as having been the means of first making us personally known to each other. Upon much of the remainder, also, you have a peculiar claim, - for some of the best pieces were composed under the shade of your own groves, upon the classic ground of Coleorton;... Nor is there any one to whom such parts of this collection as have been inspired or coloured by the beautiful country from which I now address you, could be presented with more propriety than to yourself - who have composed so many admirable pictures from the suggestions of the same scenery....(1)

Here we have the whole progress of the friendship in a shortened version: Beaumont's interest in Wordsworth, beginning with the poems showed to him by Coleridge; his love of the Lake District, and his landscape painting; and his hospitality at Coleorton. To this we might add the visits to London, the loss of Coleridge's friendship and Beaumont's part in the engineering of the Stamp Distributorship. All these add up to the conclusion that Beaumont's

1. M.Y., pp. 627-8; WW to Sir George Beaumont, February 1 1815.

friendship was a most influential one on Wordsworth's life, and its influence continues in the years after 1815.¹

1. The year 1815 also saw the publication of The White Doe of Rylstone, with Beaumont's picture engraved as a frontis-
piece.

Chapter 4. The friendship with Beaumont, 1815-1827.

Beaumont acknowledged Wordsworth's dedication to him of the 1815 volume of poems in a letter written sometime during the spring:

I must in the first place thank you heartily for the delicate & affectionate manner in which you have dedicated the work to me.... I wish you could come to town on account also of the Exhibition of Dutch & Flemish pictures which we are to have at the British Institution - It will be most splendid. (1)

Wordsworth did visit London later in the spring and no doubt saw the exhibition; Beaumont was among those who lent pictures for it.² Wordsworth would probably have

1. DCC, B to W, undated, but spring 1815.

2. See W.T. Whitley, Art in England, 1800-1820, (Cambridge, 1928), pp. 246-7: 'However, after the close of the exhibition of modern pictures, the Directors of the British Institution made amends for any shortcomings in the spring by gathering together a fine collection of Old Masters which they showed at their gallery in the summer. This - the first exhibition of Old Masters held in England - was composed of Flemish and Dutch pictures, borrowed from the most important private collections, including those of the Prince Regent, the Dukes of Bedford, Marlborough and Grafton, the Marquis of Stafford, Lord Grosvenor, Sir Abraham Hume, Sir George Beaumont and Mr. Angerstein.' There were twenty-three pictures by Rubens in the exhibition, and nineteen by Rembrandt: see Algernon Graves, A Century of Loan Exhibitions, 1813-1912, (London, 1913), pp. 1005-4 and p. 1159.

also seen the Royal Academy Exhibition. On May 21st Farington dined with the Beaumonts at Grosvenor Square, and Wordsworth and his wife were of the party.¹ They did not stay at Grosvenor Square,² but on the way back to Rydal they spent some time at Coleorton.³ The Beaumonts visited the Lake District later in the summer, so that 1815 was a year in which Wordsworth and Beaumont were closely in touch with one another. No doubt their agreement on the political situation helped: the news of the battle of Waterloo would have been received while the Wordsworths were staying at Coleorton. Similarly we find 'Wordsworthian' sentiments in Beaumont's letters:

1. The Farington Diary, viii. 1. Farington noted that 'In the course of Conversation Poetry was a Topick.' A fuller account of the evening is in the typescript copy of Farington's diary in the British Museum.

2. M.Y., p. 666; WW to R.P. Gillies, April 25 1815: 'We shall be in lodgings somewhere at the west-end, and may easily be heard of, by inquiries at Sir George Beaumont's corner of North Audley Street, Grosvenor Square.' On May 22 Wordsworth wrote to Coleridge (M.Y., pp. 669-70): 'I remain in Town nearly three weeks longer.'

3. M.Y., p. 674; DW to Catherine Clarkson, June 28 1815: 'I do not reckon upon seeing them before the 15th. [July] They will be loth to leave Coleorton....'

With what severity the winter has commenced - I should delight to see your mountains silvered over - there is a charm in winter which is most poetical & if I am granted a few years more it is my intention to pass one among the "silent hills" - I do not look forward to my London excursion with much pleasure there is something unwholesome to the soul in that atmosphere - (1)

This letter was written in the late autumn. Earlier, Beaumont and Wordsworth had been staying together at Lowther Castle, the home of Lord Lonsdale. From there Wordsworth wrote to Haydon -

I forwarded to you from Rydale Mount a few days ago the dimensions of my pericranium, taken by the hand of Sir George Beaumont - He is entitled to our common thanks for he exerted himself not a little upon the occasion; and I hope the performance will answer your purpose. (2)

This suggests that Sir George and Lady Beaumont had spent some time at Rydal during their visit to the Lake District.

During this visit to the Lake District, Sir George and Lady Beaumont arranged to take a small house at Keswick for the next three summers. Wordsworth stayed with them there in 1816: as Uvedale Price wrote to Beaumont, presumably in answer to a letter - 'You seem always to be surrounded at Keswick by poets & painters & men of genius

1. DCC, B to W, November 19 1815.
2. M.Y., pp. 679-80; WW to B.R. Haydon, September 12 1815.

& talent in various ways;....¹ The next meeting may not have been during the following summer, for it appears that the Beaumonts did not use their Keswick house. They stayed instead with Lord Mulgrave, near Whitby, and in December 1817 Beaumont wrote -

But after all the beauties of Mulgrave crowned by the glories of the ocean, I must say I languished for my mountains; - make my peace with them, I will not forsake them another year. (2)

Soon after this letter, Wordsworth was staying at Coleorton on his way back from a visit to London during the winter;³ and during the summer Sir George and Lady Beaumont were again in the Lake District and stayed for some of the time at Rydal Mount.⁴

Instead of going to the Lake District during the summer

1. Letter from Price to Beaumont in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, dated October 27 1816.

2. DCC, B to W, December 15 1817.

3. A. Cunningham, The Life of Sir David Wilkie (London, 1843), ii. 7, letter from Wilkie to Beaumont, January 19 1818: 'Mr. Wordsworth, who did me the kindness to call a few weeks ago, was, he said, to stop at Coleorton, on his way to the North. He has most likely reached you before this;....'

4. M.Y., pp. 827-8; DW to Jane Marshall, October 1818. See also The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, ed. E. de Selincourt, (London, 1941), i. 425: 'Sir George and Lady Beaumont spent a few days with us lately, and I accompanied them to Keswick.'

of 1819, Beaumont spent the time in Switzerland, a visit which may have left its mark on Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes. On his return, for instance, Beaumont wrote to Wordsworth about the difficulty of painting landscape in Switzerland, in anything more than a sketch:

You must know I had formed a sort of conceit, namely that Switzerland was more sketcheresque than picturesque, & there is something in the notion, for the materials however sublime in reality, are certainly very heterogeneous - for the purpose of an artist; inasmuch, that I never yet saw a picture of characteristic Switzerland which gave me much pleasure, in a slight sketch, if the mind by intelligent touches not too decisive, is led on truly to a certain point, the imagination will finish the picture to its own satisfaction, but when white snow, blue sky, & black firs, are too rigidly rendered, in all the grossness & materialism of oil, I never yet saw the result satisfactory. (1)

Beaumont's opinion here may owe something to a letter sent to him while at Lucerne by Uvedale Price:

Three notes of your pencil, in your most sketcheresque manner, is on such occasions worth a thousand of them [~~Beaumont's~~ words]. I must own, however, that you have contrived to impress Mont Blanc, with all the striking circumstances under which you saw it, so strongly on my imagination, that I have had the vision before me ever since... (2)

1. DCC, B to W, February 28 1820.

2. Letter from Price to Beaumont, dated August 5 1819, in Pierpont Morgan Library. The word 'sketcheresque' does not appear in the O.E.D. and it seems very likely that Beaumont took it from Price.

This probably refers to a verbal description of Mont Blanc seen through a break in the clouds, which Beaumont also communicated to Wordsworth.¹ Later Beaumont tried to paint some of the Swiss scenes in oil:

... after lamenting such feelings could not be excited by representation - I was rash enough to conceive that by a little judicious management I might possibly overturn my own system - this perhaps was vain, but it was worth ambition & in that contest I have been so deeply engaged that I have not had resolution to quit my work to write,

1. DCC, B to W, February 28 1820: 'One thing I must mention altho it is impossible to give you any adequate notion of the effect it had upon my mind - The weather was rainy & all the mountains shut out from mortal eyes during our journey to Chamouny nevertheless at times we saw symptoms of the higher Alps enough to excite the deepest interest. The evening we arrived I walked out having given up all hopes of seeing anything interesting for that evening - when I perceived a strong light on the clouds before me & as the sun was behind them I could not readily account for the appearance - on turning round I was struck with a bright light which I could hardly understand. At the bottom of a long perspective of clouds was a mysterious light of no particular form but of dazzling brightness - the clouds approached & retired, sometimes enlarging & sometimes diminishing it - too solid for a cloud, & too ethereal for a mountain as I thought. It greatly puzzled me for no form appeared for sometime, at length, & almost at once, Mount Blanc shone forth in all his majesty I never saw so sublime a vision - I could hardly look at it.' This sounds very like the kind of description which Price was acknowledging.

or anything else.¹

A year later, in February 1821, Beaumont was trying to paint Mont Blanc, perhaps the great scene which he had described in prose. Wordsworth, who had been staying at Coleorton in December 1820,² may have seen the work in progress. 'I have had a most tremendous contest with Mt Blanc' wrote Beaumont in February -

& I flatter myself there is something in the picture altho in spite of all my efforts much is wanting. - I wish you could see it my object is to give magnitude, air, & above all stillness to "the lonely hills" - Nothing can accomplish this but attention to the general effect in every touch - detail however pleasing is very apt to interfere, & to sacrifice Mt Blanc to a cowslip would be but a bad bargain - Nor is labour saved by painting for the general effect - I have heard Farington say, Wilson whose great merit was this comprehensive view of Nature, was at least employed three months on each of his half lengths - (3)

This is almost certainly the impetus behind the following paragraph from the Guide to the Lakes, in which Wordsworth

1. DCC, B to W, February 28 1820.

2. The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, ed. W.B. Pope (Cambridge, Mass., 1960-63), ii. 296: 'Called at Wordsworth's; he at Sir George's beautiful situation.'

3. DCC, B to W, February 20 1821.

is discussing the unsuitability of Swiss landscape for painting:

This must have been felt by the ancient masters; for, if I am not much mistaken, they have not left a single landscape, the materials of which are taken from the peculiar features of the Alps; yet Titian passed his life almost in their neighbourhood; the Poussins and Claude must have been well acquainted with their aspects; and several admirable painters, as Tibaldi and Luino, were born among the Italian Alps. A few experiments have lately been made by Englishmen, but they only prove that courage, skill and judgment may surmount any obstacles; and it may be safely affirmed, that they who have done best in this bold adventure will be the least likely to repeat the attempt. (1)

The paragraph was added to the Guide to the Lakes in the third edition (1822), where it formed a nice compliment to Beaumont. The whole question of the painting of Alpine scenery may have been discussed during the visit to Coleorton in 1820 and given Wordsworth the knowledge which is displayed there; and the last sentence may refer to Beaumont's age and the difficulty which he experienced with the painting. It is also interesting that Wordsworth, who had been familiar with the Swiss landscape since his journey of 1790 with Robert Jones and its expression in Descriptive Sketches, should have added to the third edition a comparison of Alpine and Lake District scenery. Once again Beaumont's

1. Guide to the Lakes, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1926), p. 105.

influence can be seen at work, for the 'sketcheresque' letter of 1820 has some affinities with Wordsworth's description.¹

The visit paid by William and Mary Wordsworth to Coleorton in December 1820 was at the conclusion of their tour through Switzerland to the Italian Lakes and then returning through Paris. The most interesting result of this 1820 visit was the beginning of the series of Ecclesiastical Sonnets. Wordsworth wrote in 1822:

1. This connection was first observed by E.G. Mitchell, Sir George Beaumont and his Contacts with English Romanticism (unpublished thesis, University of London M.A., May 1938). Wordsworth's paragraph is as follows:

We have then for the colouring of Switzerland, principally a vivid green herbage, black woods, and dazzling snows, presented in masses with a grandeur to which no one can be insensible; but not often graduated by Nature into soothing harmony, and so ill suited to the pencil, that though abundance of good subjects may there be found, they are not such as can be deemed characteristic of the country; nor is this unfitness confined to colour: the forms of the mountains, though many of them in some points of view the noblest that can be conceived, are apt to run into spikes and needles, and present a jagged outline which has a mean effect, transferred to canvas. (Guide to the Lakes, p. 103).

During the month of December, 1820, I accompanied a much-beloved and honoured Friend in a walk through different parts of his estate, with a view to fix upon the site of a new Church which he intended to erect. It was one of the most beautiful mornings of a mild season, - our feelings were in harmony with the cherishing influences of the scene; and such being our purpose, we were naturally led to look back on past events with wonder and gratitude, and on the future with hope. Not long afterwards, some of the Sonnets which will be found towards the close of this series were produced as a private memorial of that morning's occupation. (1)

The year 1820 also saw the publication of the four-volume edition of Wordsworth's poems, and an engraving from Beaumont's paintings formed the frontispiece to each volume.² This was the last edition in which this happened: by 1827 the plates were too worn to be of further use.

In 1821 the Beaumonts were preparing for a continental tour of their own.³ This took place during the winter of

1. P.W., iii. 556. The most obvious examples of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets connected with Coleorton are Part III, Nos. xxxix, xl, and xli.

2. As follows: I, 'Lucy Gray'; II, 'Peter Bell'; III, 'The White Doe'; IV, 'Peele Castle'.

3. In August Beaumont sent Wordsworth another picture: 'I have however sent you down the little picture suggested by the banks of the Greta, which I remember you like at Coleorton, this was done only the day before I left London, & then too late I perceived an accident by chafing in the sky - & some other little amendments which I would have made but for want of time, however I hope if it please God I should return, to set it right at Rydal.' (DCC, B to W, August 20 1821).

1821-2, and Beaumont wrote to Wordsworth from Rome. The letter describes many of the pictures seen on the way, passing through Milan, Venice, Siena and Bologna.¹ This letter was followed by a second, which was written on Beaumont's return to England. Together the two letters form a concise guide to Italian art: Luino at Milan, Titian and Tintoretto at Venice, where Beaumont was 'tipsy with colour'; Giulio Romano at Mantua, and, to Beaumont's surprise (he would not have stopped there if his cousin had not been taken ill) the Sienese school. Above all was Rome, 'like a magnificent dream', where Beaumont singled out for praise Raphael and the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. He actually managed to acquire a magnificent unfinished marble by

1. Perhaps the most interesting part of this very long and informative letter is Beaumont's description of the galleries at Rome, which may have given him the idea for the formation of a National Gallery: 'At this moment the Vatican, & the Capitol are opened quite gratuitously to every soul, & it is delightful to see people of all descriptions from the highest to the lowest gazing at works which in London would not be regarded with half the pleasure with which our people devour the Panorama or Mrs Salmons waxwork.' (DCC, B to W, December 27 1821).

Michelangelo, showing St. John presenting two turtle doves to the child Jesus.¹

These letters were not only instructive; they undoubtedly fired Wordsworth's imagination and made him want to visit Rome himself. It seems clear from a letter of 1825 that he and Beaumont had formed a plan of going together which was abandoned.² In the event, Wordsworth went with Henry Crabb Robinson in 1837, and one of the things which most delighted him at Rome was the sight of a beautiful pine tree on the skyline, and finding out that Beaumont had saved it from being cut down.³

Sir George and Lady Beaumont seem to have remained abroad for most of 1822,⁴ and the next meeting with Wordsworth was not until the spring of 1823, when William and

1. This was, of course, the 'Madonna Taddei', which was presented to the Royal Academy in 1830 by Sir George Beaumont's cousin (also Sir George Beaumont) who succeeded to the title. See W. T. Whitley, Art in England, 1821-37 (Cambridge, 1930), pp. 201-3.

2. L. Y., p. 204; WW to Sir George Beaumont, May 28 1825: 'Most reluctantly do I give up the hope of our seeing Italy together; but I am prepared to submit to what you think best.' This may have been due to Beaumont's declining health.

3. Giving rise to the sonnet 'The Pine of Monte Mario at Rome' (P.W., iii. 212). See below, Chapter 9.

4. L. Y., p. 89; WW to Samuel Rogers, September 16 1822: 'Where are the Beaumonts? and when do they come to England? We hear nothing of them.'

Mary stayed at Coleorton on the way to their tour of the Netherlands.¹ By the beginning of April they were all in London, admiring the Michelangelo,² and meeting Charles Aders, a wealthy merchant with a remarkable and (for the period) unusual collection of German and Flemish painting. Beaumont was very interested, according to Robinson, in the German paintings, in a Perugino and in a copy of the Van Eyck altarpiece from Ghent.³

The next meeting seems to have been early in 1824.⁴ They were certainly together in London at the end of March,

1. L.Y., p. 105; DW to Samuel Rogers, February 17 1823: 'They [William and Mary] will leave home tomorrow... and... will turn aside to Coleorton, where they purpose spending about three weeks with our kind friends Sir George and Lady Beaumont'.

2. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 291: 'We [Robinson, Wordsworth and others] called at Sir George Beaumont's to see his fragment of Michael Angelo, a piece of sculpture in bas- and haut- relief, a Holy Family... . Sir George is himself a very elegant man and talks well on matters of art. Lady Beaumont is also a gentlewoman of great sweetness and dignity, I should think among the most interesting by far of persons of quality in the country. I should have thought this even if I had not known of their great attachment to Wordsworth.'

3. Ibid, i. 292.

4. The dating is confused. See L.Y., p. 132; DW to Edward Quillinan, January 7 1824: 'My brother and I are going to Coleorton next week'. But Wordsworth was still writing from Rydal Mount on January 24; (L.Y., p. 136).

when William and Dorothy went with Sir George and Lady Beaumont to visit Wilkie.¹ They also visited an exhibition, probably at the Royal Academy, before leaving London.² Later in the year, after a tour in Wales, Wordsworth revisited Coleorton on his way back to Rydal.³

In December 1824 occurred the death of Mrs. Fermor, Lady Beaumont's sister. She left Wordsworth a legacy of £100,⁴ and Wordsworth wrote some 'Elegiac Stanzas' addressed to Beaumont together with two verses for a memorial tablet in

1. L.Y., p. 139; DW to Edward Quillinan, March 29 [1824].
2. L.Y., p. 146; DW to Edward Quillinan, early May 1824: 'we are going to the Exhibition at St House'. De Selincourt identifies 'St House' as Stafford House (where the Duke of Sutherland had a fine collection), but it is equally likely to have been Somerset House, where the Royal Academy had its rooms. The familiarity of the abbreviation suggests the latter.
3. L.Y., pp. 169-170; WW to Christopher Wordsworth, January 4 1825. This suggests that the date supplied by de Selincourt to letter 707 (L.Y., p. 126) - November 23 1823 - should be 1824. The letter begins 'On returning from Leicestershire a few days ago...'. Had the date been 1823, Wordsworth would have met Constable at Coleorton; Constable's letters to his wife show no sign of Wordsworth's presence. ~~See below, p.~~
4. L.Y., p. 170. Same letter.

the church in the grounds of Coleorton.¹ Wordsworth was at Coleorton in the late autumn of 1825, and the tablet may have been erected then.²

The 1825 visit was the last which Wordsworth paid to Coleorton during Beaumont's lifetime. There was, however, a meeting between them at Keswick in 1826, during Beaumont's last visit to the Lake District, and they probably visited Buttermere together.³ Beaumont 'was wonderfully well, and enjoyed his old haunts with a freshness most enviable', wrote Wordsworth to John Taylor.⁴ This appearance of robust health must have been deceptive, for Beaumont's death occurred less

1. P.W., iv, 255 and iv, 269; and Fenwick note, iv, 457.

2. L.Y., pp. 228-9; DW to Catherine Clarkson, October 18 1825. See also L.Y., p. 236; WW to Sir Walter Scott, January 2 1826, which implies a somewhat later visit; it also suggests that Wordsworth met Allan Cunningham there. Cunningham was the secretary to Chantrey, the first sculptor of the day, and it is possible that Chantrey was employed by Beaumont for the memorial tablet to Mrs. Pymor.

3. L.Y., pp. 253-4; WW to Jane Marshall, late October 1826: 'I promise myself a good deal of pleasure in the neighbourhood of Buttermere.' (The letter is written from Keswick: 'Sir G. Beaumont and Mr. Rogers are both here'.).

4. L.Y., p. 260; WW to John Taylor, November 21 1826.

than six months later, on February 7th 1827. 'His loss cannot be supplied', Wordsworth wrote to Southey;¹ and to Samuel Rogers:

He has left a gap in private society that will not be filled up, and the public is not without important reasons to honour his memory and lament his loss. Nearly five and twenty years have I known him intimately, and neither myself nor my family ever received a cold or unkind look from him. (2)

The division of this into private and public refers, on the public side, to Beaumont's work towards the foundation of a National Gallery of Art. Much of his time during the early 1820's was spent in encouraging this; the generous gift of his own collection in 1823 was an important influence in encouraging the government to go ahead with the purchase of the Angerstein Collection, and between them the two groups of paintings made an impressive nucleus for further development.

Lady Beaumont died in July 1829. In November 1830 Wordsworth visited Coleorton at the invitation of the new Sir George and Lady Beaumont, and on leaving he composed 'Elegiac Musings', in which Beaumont is described as

1. L.Y., p. 264; WW to Robert Southey, Feb-March 1827.
2. L.Y., p. 265; WW to Samuel Rogers, March 10 1827.

Gone from this world of earth, air, sea, and sky
From all its spirit-moving imagery;
Intensely studied with a painter's eye,
A poet's heart; (1)

In which we notice that Beaumont, like Wordsworth's brother, is awarded the highest compliment of having a poet's heart, although he did not write verse.

In assessing the influence of Beaumont upon Wordsworth it is tempting to make the obvious inference that Beaumont came into Wordsworth's life just as Coleridge went out of it, and that this was one reason for the decline in Wordsworth's poetic power: that the stimulating and far-reaching ideas of Coleridge were succeeded by the conventional urbanities of Beaumont. In support of this it could be urged that Beaumont was an older man whose ideas were those of an older generation, and whose conservative temperament made him quite unfit to be a good influence on a radical experimenting poet like Wordsworth.

Beaumont had not, of course, Coleridge's range of intellectual ideas or power to stimulate; but we must be careful not to write him off as an amiable dullard. We have Coleridge's notebook entry to take into consideration, in

1. P.W., iv. 271: the full title of the poem is 'Elegiac Musings in the grounds of Coleorton Hall, the seat of the late Sir G. H. Beaumont, Bart.', but the Fenwick note makes it clear that the poem was actually written between Coleorton and Cambridge. See P.W., iv. 457.

which he speaks of Beaumont as an equal:

Coleridge! Coleridge! will you never learn to appropriate your conversation to your company? Is it not desecration, indelicacy, a proof of great weakness & [even vanity] to talk to (?) etc., etc., as if you [were talking to] Wordsworth or Sir G. Beaumont? (1)

This reference suggests a parity of esteem which is not unlike Wordsworth's early attitude to Beaumont - treating him as a fellow artist rather than a patron. Whether Byron's sneer about Wordsworth's later relations with Beaumont and Lonsdale was justified is another matter: Wordsworth, wrote Byron, 'has a baronet in London who draws him frontispieces and leads him about to dinners and to the play; and a Lord in the country, who gave him a place at the Excise - and a cover at his table.'² Certainly Beaumont was responsible for making Wordsworth less of a recluse, for introducing him to a great many people, for encouraging him to come to London with more frequency than he might have done; and he was also an influence in the development of Wordsworth's state of mind in relation to Lord Lonsdale and the whole idea of patronage which

1. quoted J.B. Beer, Coleridge the Visionary, (London, 1959), p. 40.

2. The Works of Lord Byron, ed. Prothero, (London, 1901), Letters and Journals, v. 101.

lay behind the Stamp Distributorship. Thus a relationship which began in a sharing of some artistic endeavour developed into something quite different, and it is arguable that the whole course of Wordsworth's life after about 1805 would have been different had he not met Beaumont when he did.

The friendship undoubtedly added to the stability, security and happiness of Wordsworth's family life, for Beaumont was able to help with money, hospitality and influence. It may also have contributed towards the Tory reaction which Wordsworth showed in his later years; although the most important factor in this was probably the Whig attitude to the war against Napoleon, nevertheless the personal acquaintance with someone like Beaumont helped to remove some of Wordsworth's original prejudice. F.M. Todd, in Politics and the Poet, writes -

We shall see how in later years Wordsworth's support of the aristocracy and their privileges was coloured by his acquaintance with the generosity of Lonsdale's successor and with the cultured patronage of Sir George Beaumont. (1)

In addition to these general influences, there are specific examples of Beaumont's presence in the Guide to the

1. F. M. Todd, Politics and the Poet (London, 1957), p. 18.

Lakes, in the 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets', in 'Pelee Castle' and in the other poems connected with Beaumont or with Coleorton.¹

This account has concentrated upon Beaumont's influence upon Wordsworth in pictorial art rather than in any other sphere (like the drama, in which Beaumont was very interested). There can be little doubt that in this field of pictorial art Beaumont was able to introduce Wordsworth to many important things which had up to that time been closed to him. Beaumont was able to take Wordsworth to see painters at work in their studios, to private views of exhibitions, to galleries and private collections which he would otherwise not have seen. In addition to this, there was his own fine collection, and, above all, perhaps, his knowledge and critical judgment. This critical judgment seems to have been good in respect of the older schools of painting, and of some contemporary

1. See Allan Cunningham, Lives of the most eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects (London, 1833), vi. 145: 'When Beaumont planted a tree on a favourite spot, Wordsworth was ready to record the circumstances in verse; and when he raised an altar by wood or dele, the poet signalised it in song.'

painters. Allen Cunningham said that he was 'one of the truest critics on art of his time',¹ and wrote in his *Life of Wilkie*:

Wilkie once said to me that Sir George Beaumont had a nicety of judgement and a delicacy of feeling in painting, surpassing all he had ever met with in those who reckoned themselves critics. (2)

These testimonies are supported by the excellence of Beaumont's own collection.³ However, there are signs that his taste was not so sure when it came to the work of the younger painters of his day, and in some respects he was a poor guide for Wordsworth to all that was most original and interesting in contemporary painting. The most obvious example of this failure is his dislike of Turner, and his refusal to see any merit in his work. Criticisms of Turner by Beaumont abound in the pages of Farington's diary.⁴ His taste, which had been formed in an earlier generation, was

1. Ibid, vi. 139.

2. Allen Cunningham, The Life of Sir David Wilkie, (London, 1843), i. 327.

3. For a list of Beaumont's pictures, see Appendix I.

4. See, for instance, The Farington Diary, ii. 95: 'the water in Turner's Sea piece (Calais Harbour) like the veins on a marble slab.' Or ii. 219: 'Vandewelde's picture made Turner's Sea appear like pease soup.'

closed to a whole range of new ideas: Constable fared little better than Turner, until in 1823 he was invited to study at Coleorton Hall.¹ There the well-known story of Constable's taking a fiddle and laying it out on the lawn² is a good illustration of Beaumont's conventional and rigid ideas. The kind of inflexibility which must have preceded this demonstration suggests a mind which had affinities with the age of Reynolds, and which had failed to adjust to the age of Constable and Turner. This was only to be expected from a man of Beaumont's age -- he was seventy-one when this took place in 1823 -- but it does mean that the kind of introduction to painting which he gave Wordsworth was conventional rather than exciting, and one-sided and inadequate with regard to the younger painters of the time. The result was that Wordsworth never really came to terms, as he might have done with another

1. This is perhaps because Lady Beaumont, who perhaps exercised a more definite influence than her husband (See Evelyn M. Howe, 'Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth's Friend', Studies in Romanticism, iv. 3.) did not like Constable -- 'He seemed to be a weak man.' (The Farington Diary, ii. 219).

2. C.R. Leslie, Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, ed. J. Mayne, (London, 1951), p. 114. Cp. Beaumont's remark on the same page: 'Do you not find it very difficult to determine where to place your brown tree?'

mentor, with the most original painters of his day.

As a painter, Beaumont was undistinguished. Even Allan Cunningham, who had known him, was doubtful about his work. Cunningham says what he can in Beaumont's favour, but it is with the feeling of making the best of a poor case:

Of his skill as a painter, I have heard artists speak both in terms of censure and commendation. Whilst writing this imperfect sketch, I applied to one whom I reckoned equally clever and candid for his opinion; and his evasion of the question I must consider as unfavourable. I have, however, seen many of Beaumont's landscapes; for, as he painted for several hours almost every morning, he produced numbers, some of which he gave to his friends, and others to public galleries; and, if I may venture to speak from my own feelings, I must say there is nothing of common-place in their conception. He felt the poetry of the scenes which he desired to delineate; and his notions are all akin to the lofty and the grand. (1)

No doubt this poetic quality was what Wordsworth appreciated in Beaumont; and he would not be experienced enough to notice the lack of practical skill which Cunningham goes on to remark. Cunningham put this down to the accident of his high birth and fortune, which prevented him from settling to the hard work which was necessary:

1. Cunningham, Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, etc., vi. 152-3.

Nature had done much for him; but fortune rendered the gift unavailing. Coleorton Hall, and a good income, hindered him from ranking with the Wilsons, the Turners, and the Callcotts of his day; the duties of his station, the allurements of polished society, - in short, the want of the armed hand of poverty to thrust him into the ranks of the studios and the toiling - hindered him from acquiring that practical skill of execution, without which imagination and taste are comparatively fruitless. (1)

Beaumont's pictures reflect this criticism admirably.²

Their most characteristic feature is the application of paint in smooth patches, so that they have the appearance of being painted in oils with a water-colour technique. The majority are landscapes, in which Beaumont can be seen to be imitating Wilson and Claude, but to have failed to obtain their effects. As Cunningham says:

He loved Claude, and imagined that he imitated him. His heart was, however, with Wilson; if he set up the former for his model, his eye wandered unconsciously to the latter. In his works, there is less of the fine fresh glow of nature than I could wish to see: there are glimpses of grandeur; indications rather than realities - the dawn, but never the full day. (3)

1. Cunningham, Lives of the Painters, etc., vi. 153

2. The best collection is at Belgrave House, Leicester, in the keeping of the Leicester Museums and Art Gallery. There have been exhibitions of Beaumont's work at Leicester in 1938 and 1953 (the bi-centenary of his birth).

3. Cunningham, Lives of the Painters, etc., vi. 153.

It is not at all surprising that Wordsworth should have admired Beaumont's work; no doubt there was a predisposition to like it because of their friendship, but other factors also helped. For one thing, Beaumont's approach to landscape was a conventional one, in a direct line of descent from Claude and Wilson, making none of the fresh insights and demands of a Turner or a Constable.¹ For another, the landscapes were nearly all simple and unaffected, painted, as Cunningham describes, with little skill but 'feeling the poetry of the scenes', and this last quality would have undoubtedly been the important one for Wordsworth. Another reason for his appreciation may have been that they were in general linked to a specific place - Coleorton, or parts of the Lake District, or Peele Castle - and Wordsworth's feeling for place is an important aspect of his thought and his poetry. In their representation of what Gilpin called 'exact views', Beaumont's pictures depart from the tradition of the pure Picturesque; in their choice of subjects, however, and the arrangement of the different parts of the composition, they resemble closely the work of the Picturesque

1. Wordsworth did appreciate Constable, but Turner was very little regarded; neither plays as important a part as one might expect in Wordsworth's interest in painters. See below, Chapter 6.

painters. This is not surprising, since Beaumont's master, Claude, was also the fountain-head of the Picturesque tradition. Thus Beaumont combines the technique of the Picturesque with a local application, and this was, I suggest, very attractive to Wordsworth.

However, Wordsworth's appreciation of Beaumont as a painter is not one of the most important features of their relationship. More important is Sir George and Lady Beaumont's encouragement of Wordsworth as a poet, and the stimulus and opportunity they gave him to broaden his interests and acquaintances. Thus the solitary poet was drawn into the circle surrounding Beaumont, and the result was that an interest in painting became one important feature of Wordsworth's development of wide social interests. We now turn to the detailed examination of this feature of his life after 1803.

Chapter 5. Wordsworth and Haydon, 1808-1846.

Wordsworth first met Benjamin Robert Haydon, then aged twenty-two, in the spring of 1808. Haydon had been studying in London since 1804, and was engaged on his second picture and first important commission, The Death of Dentatus, which he was painting for Lord Mulgrave. Beaumont wrote to Wordsworth about it in the following February:

I must however say a few words on the progress Haydon is making because I know you & yours interest yourselves in the progress of genius in every shape - The hopes that I formerly conceived of this young man encrease daily - he possesses the quality Coleridge considers as one of the most convincing marks of genius the power of laboring long & with pleasure to accomplish the end he has in view. He has now been engaged incessantly on the picture of which you saw the beginning for more than a year it goes on improving & what surprises me not the least mark of labour appears on the face of the work - he hopes to complete it for the exhibition & I shall be much disappointed if it do not surprise you - (1)

The picture was completed in time for the Royal Academy exhibition of 1809, as Beaumont had said; although at the time when Wordsworth saw it, the subject was not very well advanced, for Haydon was dissatisfied with his first attempts after seeing the Elgin Marbles in January 1808. Much of the first six months of that year he spent studying the

1. DCC, B to W, February 26 1809.

marbles and drawing from them, and Wordsworth would have doubtless heard something of their impact upon the young painter.¹ Haydon's aim was to become a great historical painter, an aim which was ridiculed by one of his contemporaries and mentors,² but which Beaumont had hopes of:

I must say I have formed expectations which will be much disappointed if he should not turn out the best historical painter this country has ever produced - at the same time I allow it to be extremely difficult to decide & I may be mistaken, but he possesses many requisites - an excellent eye for colour, a fine conception of character, & expression, draws so well & is determined to draw better, a fine feeling for light & shade - an ardent imagination & cool judgment, readiness to confess his errors, the firm until convinced, a good understanding, a virtuous mind & most determined perseverance...(3)

Beaumont's good opinion of Haydon was confirmed by the finished picture of Dentatus, and he commissioned the young painter to paint a picture of Macbeth. Unfortunately, a quarrel ensued with regard to the size of the painting, and Beaumont's relations with Haydon became strained during 1810 and continued to be so until the completion of the

1. See Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals. ed T.Taylor (London, 1853), (Hereafter referred to as 'Autobiography'), i.84-89. For the exact dates see The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, ed. W.B. Pope (Cambridge, Mass., 1960-63), i.xxvi. (Hereafter referred to as 'Diary').

2. See Autobiography, i.22-23, for Haydon's reception by Northcote.

3. DCC, B to W, February 26 1809.

picture in January 1812; while matters were not improved by Haydon's attack in the Examiner on Payne Knight and on the Royal Academy. This effectively prevented the British Institution from awarding him their prize, and completed the disastrous affair of the 'Macbeth'. The consequence of this was that Beaumont did not mention Haydon in his letters to Wordsworth, and Haydon was not among those whom Wordsworth is recorded as having visited during his stay in London in 1812.¹

Haydon restored his reputation and Beaumont's friendship with the successful completion of 'The Judgement of Solomon' in 1814. As a mark of admiration for the picture the British Institution, on the proposition of Beaumont, awarded Haydon one hundred guineas; and this was followed by the freedom of Plymouth, his native city. Beaumont wrote to Wordsworth in November 1814:

Do you see how Haydon has been feted at Plymouth he has certainly great merit & thinks he has more - they will intoxicate him - Have you seen his letter in the last Examiner - In which (I mean in which paper) you are quoted as prime authority.(2)

1. Haydon wrote (Autobiography, i.185) 'The whole of 1812 I never saw one single person of fashion. I was forgotten as if I had never been.'

2. DCC, B to W, November 30 1814. The letter (in The Examiner No. 361, November 27 1814) is a reprint from the Plymouth Chronicle of Haydon's letter of acceptance of the freedom of the borough. Beaumont's other reference is to an article in the same number by 'W.H.' (Presumably Hazlitt) 'On the Love of Nature': in the article the last two lines of the 'Immortality Ode' are quoted, and also lines 125-8 of 'Tintern Abbey'.

Haydon and Wordsworth saw a good deal of one another during Wordsworth's visit to London in 1815, and the obvious inference to draw from this is that Beaumont's renewed friendship caused them to meet. On May 23rd, Haydon recorded, 'I Breakfasted with Wordsworth & spent delightful two hours'.¹ On June 13 Haydon made a cast of Wordsworth's face, and listened to 'the principles of his system, his views of man, & his objects in writing.'² He entered a note in the diary: 'I don't know any man I should be so inclined to worship as a purified being'.³ Wordsworth, for his part, seems to have been impressed by Haydon: he wrote three letters to him before the end of the year, the third containing his complimentary sonnet - 'High is our calling, Friend! - Creative Art'.⁴ This sonnet, with its celebration of the

1. Diary, i.446.

2. Ibid, i.450. Wordsworth would have seen in its early stages Haydon's huge picture 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem', begun in 1814 and finished in 1820.

3. Ibid, i.451.

4. P.W., iii.21.

struggle and heroism of an artist's life,¹ was admirably calculated to please Haydon; indeed Haydon himself gave rise to it in his letter to Wordsworth written on November 27, so that, as Wordsworth wrote, the sonnet 'was occasioned, I might say inspired if there be any inspiration in it, by your Letter'. The letter contains the words - 'I will bear want, & pain & misery & blindness, but I will never yield a step I have gained on the Road I am determined to travel'.²

Wordsworth's composition of the sonnet in reply to this, and the other letters to Haydon written during 1815, suggest a rapid and agreeable growth of the friendship. The first of them invited Haydon to come to Rydal Mount,³

1. High is our calling, Friend! - Creative Art
(Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues,)
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned - to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert...

2. F.W. Haydon, Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table-Talk, (London, 1876) - hereafter abbreviated to 'Haydon Correspondence' - ii.19. Punctuation and other alterations are from the originals in Dove Cottage Library, where the collection includes some letters not published in the 'Haydon Correspondence'.

3. M.Y., p.680; WW to B.R. Haydon, September 12 1815.

and the second accompanied the present of a pencil-case, evidently a reciprocating gift for one which Haydon had given Wordsworth.¹ Haydon had been telling Wordsworth of his plans to become a great historical painter, and thereby raise the status of art in England and the reputation of England abroad, as it appears from Wordsworth's first letter:

I hope Christ's Entry into Jerusalem goes on to your satisfaction: I cannot doubt but that Picture will do you huge credit; and raise the Reputation of Art in this Country.(2)

No doubt this appealed to Wordsworth's sense of patriotism; and Haydon had struck other right notes in the early stages of their correspondence. His determination was one; a dislike of portrait painting was another;³ a third was his admission that he had 'benefitted & have been supported in the trouble of life' by Wordsworth's poetry.⁴

In this connection it is interesting to notice Haydon

1. Ibid, p.681; WW to B.R. Haydon, October 8 1815: '... in return for that I possess from you...'.
2. Ibid, p.680; WW to B.R. Haydon, September 12 1815.

3. Haydon Correspondence, ii.20, where Haydon describes Northcote, 'sunk into a portrait-painter'.
4. Ibid, ii.19.

quoting from The Excursion in his diary for June 22 1815.¹

The correspondence with Haydon inevitably brought Wordsworth more closely into contact with the London art world. He heard about the visit of the Italian sculptor Canova, and the controversy about the worth of the Elgin Marbles.² Wordsworth implies in his reply that he had

seen them, perhaps during his visit to London in 1815:

'A Man must be senseless as a clod, or perverse as a Fiend, not to be enraptured with them'.³ Thus Wordsworth shows himself to be unequivocally on Haydon's side in the

1. Diary, 1.454-5: 'How did I recognise effects of shadow on arms, graduations of colour, softness, & tones which I have seen in Nature often, and which "lie in my mind like substances." From The Excursion, 1.136-8. This is only the first of many quotations from Wordsworth in the diary.

2. Haydon Correspondence, 11.19-20: ' - & since I last wrote you Canova has arrived in town, and last Sunday week he honored me by a visit, he staid long, & was affected by my picture, I am convinced he is the only thoroughly grounded artist I ever met in my life before - of the Elgin Marbles he speaks with affection; He told me they were amply worth a journey from Rome to see, & that they would produce a change & revolution in the Art - I met him there again today, and soon saw he felt all their beauties as he ought - It is a great pleasure to me, to know I said the same thing myself six years since that I have always maintained their cause, & have gained all the little I know in forms from the study of these divine things....'

3. M.Y., p.685; WW to B.R. Haydon, December 21 1815.

controversy, against Payne Knight and the other detractors;¹ though he may not have approved of the violence of Haydon's polemics in the press on the subject. Haydon's articles in The Champion did him no good, as Beaumont recognised when writing to Wordsworth early in 1816:

Your description of Haydon & his enthusiasm is a true likeness - I am really sometimes alarmed for him - I have lately corresponded with him & I have ventured to give him some advice respecting his unbounded eagerness - but he is as tender as a "wincing colt" & I fear I have done no good - I was very sorry to see a dissertation in the Champion upon the Elgin Marbles I think in which opportunity is taken to censure Mr. Knight with the utmost severity - this will of course be imputed to Haydon - by these means he throws obstacles in the way of those who value his talents & have his welfare & cause sincerely at heart - He admires you - to adoration - perhaps a few lines of advice from you might be of service - (2)

Wordsworth's description of Haydon's enthusiasm which Beaumont refers to is now lost; but it may have been stimulated by Haydon's reception of the sonnet, 'High is our

1. See also M.Y., p. 720; WW to John Scott, March 21 1816: 'Haydon has done himself credit by his essay on the Elgin Marbles'. The title of the essay was 'The Judgement of Connoisseurs upon works of Art compared with that of Professional Men, in reference more particularly to the Elgin Marbles'. The essay was published in The Examiner as well as The Champion.

2. DCC, B to W, February 11 1816.

calling, Friend!' Haydon wrote on the bottom of the letter: 'Never since the Freedom of my Native Town has my heart so swelled as on reading this',¹ His letter of acknowledgement to Wordsworth is a similar effusion.²

Wordsworth's reply to Haydon's enthusiastic letter contains an interesting discussion of the problems involved in Haydon's picture of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem. Haydon had thought of putting in a character of 'a hard, unfeeling prude', but was deterred by the knowledge that 'Raphael seems universally to have rejected' characters of this kind.³ Wordsworth was typically cautious and

1. M.Y., p.687, note.

2. Haydon Correspondence, 11.20-21: 'Since the freedom of my native Town was voted me in honor of Solomon, I have never been so shaken as I was, on reading your exquisite Sonnetts; the last is the highest honor that ever was paid to me; reflect what I must feel, my dear Sir, when the first effusion of Poetry that was ever addressed to me, has been addressed by our greatest Poet - ...

You are the first English poet that has done complete justice to my delightful art never was so just and true a compliment paid to it in English verse before as

(Whether the instrument of words she use
Or pencil, pregnant with etherial hues)

This is the truth; every other Poet has shewn a thorough ignorance of its nature before - seeming not to know the mind was the same, the means only different - If for this only, you will have the gratitude of every Painter.'

3. Haydon Correspondence, 11.22.

orthodox in his advice:

I think you have done well in rejecting the character of the supercilious Prude. - I cannot but think such a person discordant with the piece... A character like that of the haughty prude belongs rather to the higher kinds of Comedy, such as the works of Hogarth, than to a subject of this nature... I coincide with you in opinion as to Raphael's characters, but depend upon it he has erred upon the safer side. Dramatic diversities aid discrimination, and should never be produced upon sublime subjects by the sacrifice of sublime effect.(1)

It will be seen that the kind of correspondence which took place between Wordsworth and Haydon inevitably stimulated Wordsworth's interest in pictures. The friendship may even have given Wordsworth the idea for part of one of the poems of thanksgiving after the battle of Waterloo. In the 'Ode 1814' Wordsworth suggested that an historical painting should commemorate the victory over Napoleon:²

1. M.Y., p.702; WW to B.R. Haydon, January 13 1816. The finished picture shows no trace of the haughty prude, so Haydon must have thought better of it.

2. The poem was originally entitled 'Ode composed in January 1816', and probably originally referred to Waterloo; E. de Selincourt (P.W., iii.460-461) thinks that the title was changed so that the Ode would refer to the events of 1814 and give the series of thanksgiving poems a better balance.

Victorious England! bid the silent Art
Reflect, in glowing hues that shall not fade,
Those high achievements; even as she arrayed
With second life the deed of Marathon
Upon Athenian walls;(1)

Haydon had been seeing himself at the head of a revival of English historical painting for some time, and these lines which were so much in accord with his ideas received another of his enthusiastic receptions:

It [the collection of thanksgiving Odes] has been my constant companion for days - and will be until I can repeat it - in your second my heart leaped indeed to see your allusion to "the silent art" You are the first English Poet who has done justice to it, or who seems to understand its powers, its relations or its principles - (2)

Haydon's letters deal usually with one of two subjects at this time - politics and painting; and the two were linked with an intense and emotional patriotism which led him to see his own efforts as a kind of artistic counterpart to the successes of Wellington against Napoleon. The letters furnished Wordsworth with many details about what was going

1. P.W.,iii.147 (Ode, line 94 ff.).

2. DCC, Haydon to W, May 16 1816. (not published in Haydon Correspondence). Haydon's dream of public patronage of painting was advocated by Thomas Phillips, Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy, in his Lectures on the History and Principles of Painting, (London, 1833), pp.xxiii-xxiv.

on in the London art world, and particularly the events which seemed significant to Haydon. In November 1816, for instance, Haydon wrote about the Cartoons of Raphael which had been exhibited at the British Gallery, and which, Haydon thought, would 'advance the Art 50 years'.¹ Haydon had been drawing from the Cartoons, and no doubt received encouragement from their grandeur and size to continue with his own huge picture: he wrote again to Wordsworth in December 1816:

I have been getting on furiously & successfully with my Picture, and am now suffering in my health a little in consequence, but I hope soon to be well, and if God spare my eyes, to complete it - hourly and daily in the morning & the evening, does my hope to shine in my glorious Art get more vivid and intense.(2)

By this stage in the evolution of 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem' Haydon had formed the idea of putting in his friends

1. DCC, Haydon to W, November 18 1816 (not published). The Cartoons were 'The Miraculous Draught of Fishes' and 'Paul Preaching at Athens'; see W.T. Whitley, Art in England 1800-1820, p.256.

2. Haydon Correspondence, 11.30-31. This letter also introduced Wordsworth to 'a young poet, Keats', enclosing Keats's sonnet which refers jointly to Haydon and Wordsworth: 'Great spirits now on earth are sojourning'.

as some of the bystanders, and Wordsworth was to be one: 'I cannot quote your ideas', wrote Haydon, 'therefore I must do so with your face.'¹ Wordsworth sat to Haydon for his likeness to go in the picture during his next visit to London in the winter of 1817-18.² It was during this visit to London that Haydon gave 'the immortal dinner' which was attended by (among others) Wordsworth, Keats and Lamb.³ A fortnight later Wordsworth sat to Haydon for a chalk sketch of his head.⁴

There follows a gap in the existing correspondence for nearly two years. Haydon wrote in September 1818, but there are no letters from Wordsworth in existence until January 1820, when he wrote to congratulate Haydon upon the

1. Ibid, ii.31.

2. Diary, ii.171. It must have been about this time that Wordsworth made a poor but appropriate pun: 'Wordsworth one day complained that he found no advance in the picture since the time he had previously examined it, on an earlier visit to London. "Mr Haydon", he said, "if you ever adopt a nickname, as the old painters did, it must be Tenyears [Teniers]; for you have been ten years about this work".' (William Sharp, Life and Letters of Joseph Severn, London, 1892, p.34).

3. Diary, ii.173-176; Autobiography, i.354-357.

4. Diary, ii.182. This was probably drawing VIII in F. Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth, (London, 1959), p.145.

completion of 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem'. 'If I could see your Picture,' he wrote, 'I think it would inspire me with a Sonnet'.¹ What Haydon, (who had been working for almost six years with little or no income) required was not a sonnet but money; but this Wordsworth refused to supply.²

Wordsworth was in London during the summer of 1820, and saw the picture then. It did not inspire Wordsworth with a sonnet, but only with a verse of 'Peter Bell', which describes the ass remembering -

- that day
When Jesus humbly deigned to ride,
Entering the proud Jerusalem,
By an immeasurable stream
Of shouting people deified!(3)

This passage, as de Selincourt notes, does not occur in the MSS. of the poem,⁴ and therefore it must have been

1. M.Y., p.861; WW to B.R. Haydon, January 16 1820.

2. Ibid, pp.861-2; WW to B.R. Haydon, January 24 1820. Wordsworth's attitude to Haydon in this letter seems very inconsiderate, but he was probably unaware of the extent of Haydon's difficulties. In June 1820 Crabb Robinson noted that Wordsworth 'wants to have a large sum raised to enable him [Haydon] to continue in his profession.' HCR on Books and Writers, p.241.

3. P.W., ii.377.

4. Ibid, ii.530. Mary Moorman (William Wordsworth, The Later Years, 1803-1850, p.366 and note) thinks that the lines were added when the poem was in proof.

added shortly before publication in 1819; followed by the note in 1820 which de Selincourt quotes: 'I cannot suffer this line [976] to pass, without noticing that it was suggested by Mr. Haydon's noble picture of Christ's Entry into Jerusalem.'¹

From July 11 until November 9 1820 Wordsworth was on the Continent. On his return, Haydon breakfasted with him between his return and Haydon's departure for Scotland to exhibit his picture in Edinburgh and Glasgow. At this breakfast Wordsworth invited Haydon to call at Rydal Mount on his way back from Scotland.² Haydon did so, during December, but the Wordsworths had not reached home, having been invited to Coleorton by Sir George and Lady Beaumont.³

Apart from a short note from Wordsworth in August 1821, there is a large gap in the existing correspondence. This may be due to the disorder into which Haydon's affairs were

1. Ibid, ii.530.

2. Diary, ii.464. This is a retrospective note, written in 1824, and consequently vague about the exact dates: 'On his return from this Tour 1820, he lodged in Oxford St., where I breakfasted with him, and he repeated Laodamia, & gave me the correction with his advice how to come to him on my return from Scotland, 1820.'

3. Diary, ii.296: 'called at Wordsworth's; he at Sir George's beautiful situation.'

thrown by successive arrests for debt and imprisonments. The first imprisonment (though not the first arrest) was in 1823, when Wordsworth was in London, but there is no sign of any intervention by him. However, he visited Haydon during the following year like a Job's comforter, with the greeting - 'Well, Haydon, you found the world too strong.'¹ Another visit in the same month (April 1824) saw Wordsworth criticising a speech by Thomas Campbell to the newly-established Society of British Artists.²

There follows a gap in the record of the acquaintance until 1831; on April 12 of that year Wordsworth called on Haydon 'after an absence of several years'³ and found the painter at work on a picture for Sir Robert Peel - 'Napoleon on St. Helena':

He spoke of my Napoleon in high poetry of language, with his usual straight forward intensity of diction. We shook hands heartily. He spoke of Napoleon so highly that I wrote & told him to give me a Sonnet. If he would or could, he'd make the fortune of the Picture.(4)

1. Diary, ii.470.

2. Ibid, ii.471: Campbell had said that 'there was a union between Poetry, Painting, & Music' and 'it was the wish of his heart to see the Professors of both Arts joined'. See below, Chapter 10.

3. Diary, iii.515.

4. Ibid, iii.515. 'He spoke of Napoleon so highly' refers, of course, to the picture, and not to the person.

Haydon, whose financial circumstances were embarrassing him at this time, wrote to Wordsworth three days later:

You must not think us disrespectful, if we do not pay you the compts of an invitation as we used to do - Since I last saw you - I have lost all - in fact nothing is left us but the Clothes on our backs and if we asked you to dine the chance is, you must turn up your plate to eat your pudding on the back, if you wanted a clean one - (1)

On the same day, April 15, he wrote in his diary -
'Wordsworth has promised a Sonnet'.²

1. DCC, Haydon to W, April 15 1831 (not published; found in Dora Wordsworth's autograph book).

2. Wordsworth seems to have repented of this promise very quickly, for he wrote to Haydon on April 23 (L.Y., p.550): 'If I can command my thoughts I will write something about your Picture, in prose, for the Muse has forsaken me'. Haydon wrote back (in an unpublished paragraph of the letter published in Haydon Correspondence, ii.37-38, reproduced by de Selincourt, L.Y., p.553n.): 'I cant let you off with dull prose - though your prose is poetry - you know "High is our calling" - I must have a specimen of yours, and shall enclose you a fair proof that you may look at it occasionally, and wait for inspiration'. He concluded his letter - 'Adieu my dear Friend. My Kingdom for a Sonnet'.

The sonnet was sent on June 11 (L.Y., pp.553-4): 'On the other side is the Sonnet, and let me have your "Kingdom" for it... You knew how much I admired your Picture both for the execution and the conception. - The latter is first-rate, and I could dwell upon it a long time in prose without disparagement to the former; which I admired also having to it no objection but the Regimentals - they are too spruce and remind one of the Parade, which the Wearer seems to have just left.' (L.Y., pp.553-4, WW to B.R. Haydon, June 11 1831).

The sonnet which Wordsworth eventually provided was addressed to R.B. Haydon (Wordsworth never got Haydon's initials right) 'on seeing his Picture of Napoleon Buonaparte on the Island of St. Helena'.¹ The first lines show one of Wordsworth's attitudes to paintings very clearly: he is unable to judge the quality of workmanship or craftsmanship, but he can recognise the feeling or the 'poetry' included in them:

Haydon! let worthier judges praise the skill
Here by thy pencil shown in truth of lines
And charm of colours; I applaud those signs
Of thought, that give the true poetic thrill;...²

The true poetic thrill consists in the dramatic (one might almost say melodramatic) vision of Napoleon standing alone on a still evening, watching the last light from 'the invisible sun/ Set, like his fortunes;'. This statement

1. For the initials see Haydon's letter to Moxon from the King's Bench Prison (Haydon Correspondence, ii.41): 'There is a trifle would oblige me. He dedicates his sonnets to R.B. Haydon. My name is B.R. Haydon...'

2. P.W., iii.51. (Miscellaneous Sonnets, Part III, No.xxvi). There is an odd addition to the Fenwick note on this poem. It is printed by A.B. Grosart, The Prose Works of William Wordsworth (London, 1876), iii.64: 'This sonnet, though said to be written on seeing the portrait of Napoleon, was in fact composed some time after, extempore, in Rydal Mount. in pencil - But it was said in prose in Haydon's studio, for I was present: relate the facts and why it was versified.' This addition has the ring of Haydon about it, but it is difficult to account for its presence in the notebook.

of the twilight of Napoleonic power evidently appealed to Wordsworth on both artistic and political grounds.

Between 1832 and 1834 Haydon was busy with his large picture of the 'Reform Banquet' commissioned by Lord Grey; but the exhibition of this was unsuccessful, owing to the unpopularity of the sitters, and Haydon was once again in financial difficulties. He was saved for a time by a commission from the Duke of Sutherland, and in 1835 he gave a series of lectures on 'Painting and Design'. But in 1836 he was back again in the King's Bench Prison, writing to Moxon, Wordsworth's publisher, with typical buoyancy of spirit:

Will you put me down as a subscriber to your numbers of Wordsworth, this is a strange place to order him from, but I relish him more here than in the mountains - from sheer contrast of locality - I will send at the first.(1)

1. Haydon Correspondence, ii.41. When Wordsworth heard that Haydon was in prison he sent a visitor with some money to Mrs. Haydon; he received an affecting letter from her, now in the Dove Cottage Collection (DCC, Mary Haydon to WW, October 20 1836):

'That you have remembered me and my little family in our present distressing circumstances, has made a deep and lasting impression on my grateful feelings....

The many and severe sufferings which I have gone through with my highly-gifted and at the same time unfortunate husband have made me a mere child in feelings; therefore, my dear Sir, any deficiency you may see in this letter, pray attribute to its right cause;....'

On his release, Haydon continued his new career of lecturing with some success, and in June 1838 he wrote to Wordsworth, proposing to dedicate the lectures to him when they were published.¹ With some reservations about Haydon's poor opinion of Michelangelo, Wordsworth accepted, though the book did not appear for some years.²

Wordsworth called on Haydon when he was in London during the late spring of 1839. He found the painter at work on a companion picture to the Napoleon,³ of the Duke

1. Haydon Correspondence, ii.42: 'The enthusiasm which has followed my Lectures is extraordinary, and when I publish them, to whom shall I dedicate them? Ah! to whom? To him who hailed the first dawn and predicted the Sunrise; who had the moral courage to unite their author in inspiration with himself - to William Wordsworth -'.

2. The first volume appeared in 1844, the second in 1846; for details of the disagreement over Michelangelo, see below, Chapter 11.

3. It would be more accurate to say 'the Napoleons', for by this time Haydon had painted a number of them to keep himself out of debt. They included 'Napoleon in his Bedroom', 'Meditating at Marengo', 'In Egypt', 'Musing at the Pyramids' and others. In 1844 he wrote: 'I have painted nineteen Napoleons, thirteen of them "At St. Helena".' (See Richard and Samuel Redgrave, A Century of British Painters, ed. Todd, London, 1947, p.281). Clarke Olney (Benjamin Robert Haydon, p.191) puts the figure between 1831 and 1846 as 'no less than 25 (and probably closer to 40) Napoleons Musing at St. Helena, plus other Napoleons Musing in a variety of places.' But Olney also makes the point that this was a common practice at the time.

of Wellington on the field of Waterloo, which Wordsworth though very promising.¹ A sonnet on the picture which Wordsworth wrote during the following year, and which caused him a good deal of trouble,² was enthusiastically received by Haydon - 'The sonnet will be my ruin - I am spouting it all day'.³

Between 1839 and Haydon's death in 1846, the correspondence was frequent; and although Wordsworth apparently

1. L.Y., p.982; WW to B.R. Haydon, July 8 1839: 'Your Picture of the Duke of Wellington I thought very promising but excuse my saying - that as you had given that of Buonaparte with his back to the Spectator, I could not help wishing that you had not repeated so much of the same position in that of his Conqueror.'

2. P.W., iii.53. (Miscellaneous Sonnets, Part III, No. xxix). See George J. Worth, 'A Troublesome Wordsworth Sonnet', Notes and Queries, November 1958, p.467. The various alterations are to be found in L.Y., pp.1033-1038 and p.1042.

3. DCC, Haydon to W, September 9 1840 (not published in Haydon Correspondence). See also Diary, v.3-4. There are signs that Haydon's enthusiasm was by this time something of a standing joke to Wordsworth and his close friends, for on the back of Haydon's previous letter (Haydon Correspondence, ii.46) Wordsworth wrote to Isabella Penwick: 'For Miss F. entertainment which please return to be answered'. (DCC, Haydon to W, March 5 1840).

did not see Haydon during his visit to London in 1841,¹ he made up for the omission in 1842. In June of that year Wordsworth had the first of several sittings for the portrait of himself with Helvellyn as a background.² In addition, he and Haydon went to church together twice,³ and dined at the house of Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, a friend of Crabb Robinson and an eminent lawyer.⁴ During this period Haydon was preoccupied with his plans for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament, and was preparing his cartoons for the competition of 1843. He had advocated the decoration of the walls long before the fire of 1834 had given the opportunity of a new building, and in the early forties his chance to use his historical painting seemed at last to have come. His letters to Wordsworth contain many references to the cartoons, and to his study of the

1. Verth (Notes and Queries, November 1958) shows that Wordsworth was displeased at what he had heard was an inaccurate printing of the sonnet, and he may have not wished to call on Haydon for this reason.

2. Discussed by F. Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth, pp.88-91.

3. Autobiography, 111.199,201; Diary, v.158, 162-3.

4. Diary v.164-5: 'I went for the Poet in a nice fly & dashing Coachman. The Venerable Poet looked grave & half took me to task for my extravagance, so I sent the Cab away when we were landed, & we both strolled home tired & lost our way... I got home at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 12 - tired - & groaning against Wordsworth's economy... I am now done up & stretched out.'

medium of fresco; and when Haydon failed to win a prize, Wordsworth was ready with consoling letters.¹

This failure was a blow from which Haydon never completely recovered. However, he continued to produce various schemes for making money, by publishing his lectures and exhibiting six of his own designs for the Houses of Parliament, in spite of the result of the official competition. Wordsworth would no doubt have seen some of these when he called on Haydon in May 1845. He had come to London in response to an invitation to the Queen's Ball, which he attended in a Court Dress borrowed from Samuel Rogers. Haydon was disgusted, and wrote a copious denunciation of the whole proceeding in his diary, including a bad free verse poem, which concludes -

Farewell old Friend, no longer friend of mine,
For thy betrayal of the great & sacred Cause
Of Intellectual independence of all
Authority & Royalty & power.(2)

1. L.Y., pp.1171-2, WW to B.R. Haydon, July 3 1843, and undated, [? July 1843]. The first encloses £5, but appears to refuse a further request for money. In the second Wordsworth speaks of several letters unanswered, which suggests that Haydon was writing, as he did to his other friends, to complain of the decision and to suggest that he was the victim of a persecution. (See for instance, M.H. Shackford, Letters from Elizabeth Barrett to B.R. Haydon, London, 1939).

2. Diary, v.444.

During the visit to London, Wordsworth seems once again to have reminded Haydon of the dangers of running into debt, for Haydon wrote in October 1845:

'... one of my set is done & the second in progress - you asked me where all the money was to come from I say I have always trusted in God, & do so now more than ever...' (1)

This is the last letter from Haydon to Wordsworth that is extant, and probably the last of the original correspondence, for Haydon was busy throughout the winter in painting his Cartoons and keeping away his creditors. The exhibition opened on Easter Monday, April 13 1846, and was a complete failure; the public was much more interested in Barnum's dwarf, Tom Thumb, who was on show in an adjoining room in the Egyptian Halls, and Haydon closed his exhibition on May 18 with a loss of £111. He committed suicide on June 22 1846.

Haydon's friendship with the later Wordsworth is not difficult to account for; there are several traits of his character which would have appealed to Wordsworth. The first was his patriotism: he once described himself to Wordsworth as 'a thorough English man who wishes the supremacy of his Country right or wrong - My politics are

1. DCC, Haydon to W, October 27 1845 (not published in Haydon Correspondence).

very simple my dear Friend, beat the French always -- and then shake hands, but always beat them first.'¹ At a time when many poets and intellectuals were against the war with France and sometimes actually supporters of Napoleon, Wordsworth found Haydon all that he could wish for in fervent and uncompromising patriotism. Indeed this patriotism was itself one of Haydon's motives in his particular approach to painting, in embarking on huge canvases of historical subjects in spite of all dissuasion: he had hopes of being the founder of a great school of British painting. As he wrote to Wordsworth --

'... if my life and eyes are only spared till
I can inoculate a sufficient number of daring
Youths with true principles - I shall have no fear
for the Art of my glorious Country we must be great,
in Painting, and we will be great in spite of all
the obstructions on Earth.(2)

This passage shows another attractive side to Haydon's character, one which would have appealed to Wordsworth -- that is his determination. During Haydon's later years this determination became more like imprudence and foolhardiness,

1. Haydon Correspondence, ii.37, which omits the last part of this quotation from the original in the Dove Cottage Collection.

2. Haydon Correspondence, ii.30-31.

and led to his tragic end; but at the early stage of the friendship Wordsworth (as we can see from the 'High is our calling, Friend' sonnet) was impressed by statements like -

I will bear want, & pain & misery & blindness,
but I will never yield a step I have gained on the
Road I am determined to travel - (1)

Haydon's enthusiasm, and his defiance of all difficulties and obstructions, seem to have appealed to Wordsworth - particularly as this determination was connected with another quality which threw them together - a feeling for religion. Haydon frequently prayed about his work, and was encouraged to carry on with his huge tasks by a kind of blind faith. After receiving Wordsworth's first sonnet to him, Haydon wrote:

I must say that I have felt melancholy ever since receiving your sonnets, as if I was elevated so exceedingly, with such a drunken humming in my brain, that my nature took refuge in quiet humbleness and gratitude to God....

How often have I, leaning over a fire nearly out, with my picture before me, untouched for the day from want of money to pay a model; how often, for a short time, have misgivings made my heart sink, and then something has startled me, and I have felt as if a Superior Being had reflected a beam of light upon my brain, and a sensitive ring through my frame whispered, "Go on!"(2)

1. Ibid, ii.19.

2. Haydon Correspondence, ii.21-22.

In later years Haydon and Wordsworth went to church together when Wordsworth was in London; and the sharing of an orthodox religious standpoint must have been very important for the friendship. Once again, Wordsworth would have found Haydon an exception from so many of Haydon's generation with whom he disagreed, like Hazlitt, or Shelley, or Byron or the Hunts.

In painting, Haydon undoubtedly advanced Wordsworth's knowledge. He also probably introduced Wordsworth to the Elgin Marbles, and this may have stimulated him to read Winckelmann on the Antique (which he did not like).¹ As a critic of painting, he held decided views which formed an interesting contrast with those of Reynolds and Beaumont which had been Wordsworth's first introduction to the criticism of art. These ideas are given full rein in Haydon's Lectures on Painting and Design, which are notable, in the first place, for their stress on the study of anatomy. 'Never leave nature', he says at one point,² and the skill and accuracy of the Elgin Marbles in representing heroic action

1. M.Y., pp. 685-686; WW to B.R. Haydon, December 21 1815. See below, Chapter 10.

2. Op.Cit., i. 197. Cf. Reynolds, Third Discourse: 'Nature herself is not to be too closely copied. There are excellencies in the art of painting beyond what is commonly called the imitation of Nature'. (H.W. Beechy, ed., The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, London, 1885, i. 329).

never cease to call forth his admiration in this respect. He prefers them to the 'pedantic twistings' of the forms of Michelangelo, and criticises Reynolds's 'blind admiration' for Michelangelo.¹ Continually Haydon has in mind a British emulation of the Italian school,² and, above all, the supreme excellence of the Greeks.³ Other characteristic ideas recur: his religion,⁴ his dislike of Wilkie's later style and jealousy of his success;⁵ and above all, his ideas on

1. Lectures on Painting and Design, i.193-194.

2. Ibid, i.209: 'Stay in Britain, all ye who glory in enterprise; stay in Britain, and make her greater than Italy!'

3. Ibid, i.236: '... the great works of Greek art had the finest drawing, the most wonderful knowledge of form, the finest grouping, and the finest expression, - to which I will add colour, which I can prove.' And i.245: 'What Titian, Michael Angelo, and Raffaele, tried to do, was the habitual practice of the Greeks'.

4. Ibid, i.281: 'One cannot help considering the beautiful piety of one so highly gifted as Rubens, without contrasting it with the conceited infidelity and impudent scepticism, one has witnessed occasionally in the most imbecile in the art.... It is impossible not to conclude that those whom God has most endowed with genius, have been always the most pious and the most conscious of their imperfections.'

5. Ibid, ii.70, and throughout the lecture on Wilkie.

the importance of State patronage for historical painting.¹ The two volumes are remarkably consonant with what we know of Haydon's ideas from his letters, and it seems very likely that they represent a fair sample of the ideas which Wordsworth would have listened to over the years.

As a painter, Haydon attempted large canvases and sublime subjects. This has been suggested as one reason for his failure: that the taste of the period, affected by certain sociological changes, was moving away from broad effects towards minute details which were highly finished, and Haydon was being left behind.² But there seem to have been other and more permanent reasons for the defeat of his aims. According to Richard and Samuel Redgrave -

1. Ibid, ii.91-152: Lecture X, 'On the effect of the Different Societies in Literature, Science, and Art, on the Taste of the British Nobility and People.' and Lecture XI, 'On a Competent Tribunal, and its importance to a Nation where Art is concerned.'

2. By Eric George, The Life and Death of Benjamin Robert Haydon (London, 1948), p.229: 'The great noblemen used to cover their walls from floor to ceiling, and did not mind a few big pictures to break the monotony, but they took years to do it, and the manufacturer with a new house preferred to have fewer pictures and liked them small. As a concomitant of smallness high finish became more desired than ever. High finish led to an insistence on minute detail; and it was not long before everything Haydon stood for was out of fashion, and everything he despised and hated was in.'

It may be doubted if under more tranquil conditions he would have done more. He seemed at times to begin his pictures without any plan or forethought, and to begin painting in the fervour of his first conception, without even drawing in; how, then, can it be wondered that the gross faults they exhibit were often very severely commented on? He was a good anatomist and draughtsman; his colour was effective, his treatment of his subject and his conception original and powerful; but his works have a hurried and incomplete look, his finish is coarse, sometimes woolly, and is not free from vulgarity.(1)

These criticisms are made clearer by reference to two other critics of Haydon. The first is Hazlitt, writing about 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem':

...he has there, in our judgment, laid in the groundwork, and raised the scaffolding, of a noble picture; but no more. There is spirit, conception, force, and effect: but all this is done by the first going over of the canvas. It is the foundation, not the superstructure of a first-rate work of art. It is a rude outline, a striking and masterly sketch....

What remains then, but that he should add to bold contrasts fine gradations, - to masculine drawing nice inflections, - to vigorous pencilling those softened and trembling hues which hover like air on the canvas, - to massy and prominent grouping the exquisite finishing of every face and figure, nerve and artery, so as to have each part distinct with life and thought and sentiment, and to produce an impression in the spectator not only that he can touch the actual substance, but that it would shrink

1. Richard and Samuel Redgrave, A Century of British Painters, (ed., R. Todd, London, 1947), pp. 281-282.

from the touch? (1)

The second is G.F. Watts:

Haydon seems to me to have succeeded as often as he displays any real anxiety to do so; but one is struck with the extraordinary discrepancy of different parts of his work, as though, bored by a fixed attention that had taken him out of himself, yet highly applauding the result, he had daubed and scrawled his brush about in a sort of intoxication of self-glory...(2)

Watts thought Haydon's 'Solomon' to be 'beyond all comparison, his best'³, and he also admired the head of Lazarus from 'The Raising of Lazarus' painted in 1821. It would be agreeable to think that Wordsworth was also capable of discerning between the good and the bad in

1. P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, (London, 1932), xvi.209-210. (From Hazlitt's review of Farington's Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds in the Edinburgh Review, August 1820).

2. Printed in the first edition of Tom Taylor's Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon. In the second edition it was expanded into a treatise on High Art and the criticism of Haydon toned down because his son objected. See R. Chapman, The Laurel and the Thorn, a study of G.F. Watts, (London, 1945), pp.167-8.

The 'unfinished' characteristics of Haydon's art may be seen in the reproduction of 'Nero Harping while Rome burned', Plate 63a in T.S.R. Boase, English Art, 1800-1870, (Oxford, 1959).

3. R. Chapman, The Laurel and the Thorn, p.168.

Haydon's work, and that this accounts for Wordsworth's reluctance to write sonnets about Haydon's later work. However, according to Aldous Huxley, even an admiration for Haydon's early work would qualify as evidence of a critical failure:

One only has to glance at one of Haydon's drawings to perceive that the man had absolutely no artistic talent. The lines are hard, heavy, uncertain and utterly insensitive. He fumbles painfully and blunderingly after likeness to nature, and when he cannot achieve realism falls back on the cheapest art-student tricks. The paintings -- such of them, at any rate, as I have seen in the original or in reproductions -- are entirely without composition. They abound in bad drawing and disproportions. The colour is crude and inharmonious.(1)

After giving some examples of this incompetence from Haydon's 'The Agony in the Garden', Huxley goes on:

The Agony in the Garden is admittedly one of the least successful of Haydon's pictures. I regret that I have never seen his best -- Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, and The Raising of Lazarus. The former is at Cincinnati; to judge by the photographs it bears a certain very distinct resemblance to a picture.(2)

1. Aldous Huxley, 'B.R. Haydon' in The Olive Tree, and other essays, (London, 1947), pp.240-241. The essay dates from 1926, when it was prefaced to Huxley's edition of the Autobiography and Journals.

2. Ibid, pp.241-242.

Such criticism, together with Haydon's poor reputation which it partly explained, stands together with de Selincourt's remark about Wordsworth's appreciation of pictures: 'Wordsworth never acquired any sound taste in pictorial art, and was able later to express a genuine admiration for the canvases of his friends Haydon and Sir George Beaumont.'¹ However, there has more recently been a defence of Haydon, spirited and convincing, by A.C. Sewter,² and if he is right, critics are not justified in speaking so patronisingly of this aspect of Wordsworth's art appreciation. Sewter reminds us of Watts's beginning to his estimate of Haydon: 'I find it very difficult to arrive at a direct conclusion', and in this spirit Sewter examines the paintings in a careful rebuttal of what he calls (with some justification) Huxley's 'Macaulayan' portrait. According to Sewter, Haydon's 'Raising of Lazarus' can stand up to a comparison with the picture of the same subject by Sebastian del Piombo; and he singles out as Haydon's masterpiece his portrait of 'Wordsworth upon Helvellyn' painted in 1842, which he calls

1. The Prelude, ed. E. de Selincourt (Oxford, 1926), p.568.

2. 'A Revaluation of Haydon', Art Quarterly, v. (1942), pp. 323-337.

'the finest English portrait of the nineteenth century'.¹

He concludes:

This hasty survey of the more important surviving evidences of Haydon's powers will not, of course, bring us to any judgment of him which could be claimed as more than provisional, awaiting the rediscovery of the innumerable lost works. But we can conclude that he is not the despicable artist he is so often assumed to be. (2)

This seems to be as far as Haydon's defender is able to go, but it does suggest some basis for Wordsworth's interest in the painter's work. In addition, there can be little doubt that pictures like 'The Death of Dentatus' and

1. Art Quarterly, v (1942), p.331. It is interesting to compare this with the assessment of someone who knew Wordsworth, R.P. Graves: '... this alone deserves to be the historical portrait of Wordsworth: it represents him musing on the side of Helvellyn, the mountain-mists floating around him. Nothing can be truer to the original than the droop of the head weighed down by the thoughts and feelings over which the active imagination is pleasurably brooding; and if there be some want of finish and refinement in the modelling of the features, there is a grandeur at the same time poetical and truthful in the fine development of the temple and crown - in the visionary look, and in the hanging underlip, quivering with the coming verse.' (from 'Recollections of Wordsworth and the Lake Country' in Afternoon Lectures on Literature and Art, Dublin, 1869, pp.285-6). Graves's criticism of Haydon's technique seems to tally very well with that of Watts and the Redgraves.

Part of Graves's description is quoted by F. Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth, p.109.

2. Art Quarterly, v. (1942), p.336.

'The Judgment of Solomon' were outstanding in the exhibitions to which they were sent, so that there is nothing unusual in Wordsworth's feeling.¹ We must also remember that at one time in his life, before the onset of serious financial trouble, Haydon was running a small but vigorous school of painting, the progress and aims of which would have appealed to Wordsworth the educator.²

In this school Haydon insisted on the importance of drawing from life and the detailed study of anatomy, as well as the emulation of the highest masters: the high peak of the school's success was an exhibition of drawings by the pupils from two of the Raphael Cartoons and from the Elgin Marbles in 1819. William Bewick, one of the pupils, met Wordsworth and was praised for his part in it:

He then came and took a seat beside me, and told me how pleased he had been with my drawings from Raphael's Cartoons and the Elgin Marbles that he had seen exhibited, and what desire he had to see similar comprehensive copies from the celebrated frescoes of Michael

1. Cp. Clarke Olney, Benjamin Robert Haydon (Athens, Georgia, 1952), p.viii: '... the fact remains that a number of his better paintings were sensationally successful in their day, and stirred certain of his contemporaries, men and women of unquestionable taste, to sincere and often enthusiastic admiration.'

2. See Frederick Cummings, 'B.R. Haydon and his School', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, xxvi (1963), pp. 367-380.

Angelo, such as the Prophets and Sibyls,
and the compositions from the Sistine Chapel
at Rome.(1)

It is likely that Haydon, with his dislike of the pre-
eminent reputation of Michaelangelo, would have disagreed
with this last point; but no doubt he was gratified with
Wordsworth's approval of the exhibition.

These shared aims and ideas help to explain the way
in which the friendship between Wordsworth and Haydon
survived through the years, in spite of Haydon's improvidence
and Wordsworth's disapproval of it. Haydon also felt that
Wordsworth had too little sympathy with human failings, as
he wrote to Mary Russell Mitford:

I grant that Wordsworth is very pure and
very holy, and very orthodox, and occasionally
very elevated, highly poetical, and oftener
insufferably obscure, starched, dowdy, anti-
human and anti-sympathetic, but he never will
be ranked above Byron nor classed with Milton,
he will not indeed.... I dislike his selfish
Quakerism; his affectation of superior virtue;
his utter insensibility to the frailties - the
beautiful frailties of passion. ... (2)

Haydon went on to relate this to Wordsworth's poetry:

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1. T. Landseer, The Life and Letters of William Bewick,
(London, 1871), i.87-88.
 2. Haydon Correspondence, ii.87-88.

When he came back from his tour, I breakfasted with him in Oxford Street. He read 'Laodamia' to me, and very finely. He had altered, at the suggestion of his wife, Laodamia's fate,... because she had shown such weakness as to wish her husband's stay. Mrs. Wordsworth held that Laodamia ought to be punished, and punished she was.(1)

This was written in 1824, at a time when Haydon may have felt that Wordsworth was unsympathetic towards his financial difficulties. However, the friendship survived, ultimately perhaps because of Haydon's personality. He was, says Olney, 'extraordinarily vital - like Wordsworth's poet, "a man pleased with his own passions and volitions," rejoicing "more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him".'² Mary Russell Mitford wrote: 'You would have liked Haydon; you could not have helped yourself';³ and 'If you had known him personally, his great power of conversation and constant life of mind would have carried you away.'⁴ Perhaps the most convincing of these descriptions is by William Carey:

1. Haydon Correspondence, ii.88. Mary Moorman points out that the change was probably due to fidelity to Virgil, not to any severity on Wordsworth's part. (William Wordsworth, The Later Years, 1803-1850, pp.274-275.)

2. Clarke Olney, Benjamin Robert Haydon, p.ix.

3. A.G. L'Estrange, The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford, (London, 1882), ii, 265. Letter to D. Starkey, 1853.

4. A.G. L'Estrange, The Life of Mary Russell Mitford, (London, 1870), iii.249. Letter to Miss Goldsmid, 1852.

On extending his hand, I found it burn in mine; while a deep hectic purpled his cheek and the feverish fire, which sparkled in his dark eyes, threw a double portion of animation into his features. This appearance, in a man so young, and so gifted, touched me sensibly, I could not help exclaiming - 'My dear Sir, you apply too closely....' He stood more upright, as if proudly confronting a danger; and a flush of triumph passed ... over his countenance.... and with a sudden wave of his hand and an elated movement of his whole person, cried out... 'but two pictures more and I shall die satisfied. I am not one of those who fall in love with works of art, and are cold and dead to nature.'... The indescribable look, the tone, the 'non omnis moriar' of the sentiment, made a never-to-be-forgotten impression.(1)

Wordsworth's opinion of Haydon fits in very well with the characteristics of his art which are noticed by G.F. Watts and the Redgraves. It is most clearly shown in a letter of 1841:

Haydon is bent upon coming to Rydal next summer, with the view of painting a likeness of me, not a mere matter-of-fact portrait, but one of a poetical character, in which he will endeavour to place his friend in some favourite scene of these mountains. I am rather afraid, I own, of any attempt of the kind, notwithstanding my high opinion of his abilities; but, if he keeps in his present mind, which I doubt, it would be in vain to oppose his inclination. He is a great enthusiast, possessed also of a most active intellect; but he wants that submissive and steady good sense, which is absolutely necessary

1. William Carey, Critical Description and Analytical Review of "Death on the Pale Horse," Painted by Benjamin West, P.R.A. With Desultory References to the Works of Some Ancient Masters and Living British Artists (London, 1817, pp.169-172; quoted by Marcia Allentuck, Review of The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, ed. W.B. Pope, Vols I and II, The Art Bulletin, xiv, No.1 (March 1963), pp. 74-77.

for the adequate development of power, in that art to which he is attached.(1)

These reservations in Wordsworth's liking for Haydon may be seen as responsible for at least some of the faults listed by Haydon's critics - hurried drawing, or 'scrawling his brush about' - and they suggest that Wordsworth was not so entirely taken in by Haydon as de Selincourt would have us suppose. It was typical of Haydon to disdain 'a mere matter-of-fact portrait', and surely an accident that the result was to succeed so well. Wordsworth evidently did not have much confidence that it would: and knew that until Haydon acquired 'submissive and steady good sense' which we may regard as the ability to plan, and carry through to perfection every detail of the structure, he would never be the great painter he hoped to be.

However, the importance of the friendship from the point of view of this study is obvious, in spite of the inadequacies of Haydon's art. There is not only a vigorous correspondence to witness to Wordsworth's interest, but also the visits to London and the poetry which is connected with Haydon. Haydon's letters, for their part, kept Wordsworth

1. WW to Henry Reed (of Philadelphia), January 13 1841. Printed in C. Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth (London, 1851), ii.374.

in touch with a London art-world which he might have otherwise lost interest in after Beaumont's death, and the whole correspondence gives an excellent insight into Wordsworth's opinions on art and his knowledge of the subject.

Chapter 6. Wordsworth and Wilkie; Wordsworth and Turner; Wordsworth and Constable.

1. Wordsworth and Wilkie.

Wordsworth probably first met Wilkie either through Godwin,¹ or through Beaumont, in London during the spring of 1806.² At that time Wilkie had been in London for a year, and had just scored a great success with his picture 'The Village Politicians', painted for the Earl of Mansfield and hung at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1806. Beaumont had become interested in the young painter before the picture was finished, and commissioned a work from him:³ the sub-

1. Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Later Years, 1803-1850, (Oxford, 1965), pp. 72-73, finds a reference in Godwin's Diary to a visit by him and Wordsworth to Wilkie.

2. M.Y., p. 62; WW to Sir George Beaumont, September 8 1806: 'I am glad Wilkie is with you, pray remember me to him.' E. de Selincourt had previously dated this letter 1804 (E.L., p. 410), suggesting that Wordsworth had met Wilkie in Edinburgh in 1801, and when he altered the letter's date he did not alter this conjecture. However, if the letter was written in 1806, Wordsworth's remark probably refers to a meeting earlier in that year. In 1801 Wilkie was only sixteen, and an obscure student.

3. Allan Cunningham, The Life of Sir David Wilkie, (London, 1843), i. 95-96. (Hereafter referred to as 'Cunningham'). A letter from Uvedale Price to Beaumont in the Pierpont Morgan Library, dated April 27 1806 shows that Beaumont had written enthusiastically to him about Wilkie.

ject which was decided upon was 'The Blind Fiddler', and Wordsworth may have seen the beginnings of the work, or been present when the subject was determined.

Wordsworth seems to have liked Wilkie, and the meeting seems to have been a successful one, for Beaumont replied to Wordsworth's letter 'Wilkie desires his kind remembrances to you'.¹ There are, however, two pieces of evidence which complicate this picture of harmony, and which lead me to speculate that Wordsworth may have been present when the subject of Wilkie's picture was being discussed with Beaumont. The first of these is the coincidence that in 1806 Wordsworth wrote a poem about a blind fiddler. This is the poem entitled 'Power of Music', which Wordsworth himself called 'my Orpheus of Oxford Street'.² It describes the way in which various passers-by in Oxford Street are compelled to stop to listen as a blind man plays on the pavement, and the way in which they are cheered by his music.³ The Fenwick note to this poem says 'taken from life, 1806',⁴ which con-

1. DCC, B to W, Sept 13 1806.

2. M.Y., p. 78.

3. P.W., 11. 217-8.

4. Ibid, 11. 507.

firmly that the poem took its origin from an actual experience during Wordsworth's London visit, and it is possible that Wilkie may have had the subject recommended to him by the poet. It would have been in keeping with Wordsworth's character to have made such a suggestion to Wilkie; and it was a sensible idea, because the scene would have been particularly suited to Wilkie's talents as a genre painter.¹

The picture which we have (now in the Tate Gallery) bears no resemblance to the subject-matter of Wordsworth's poem. It depicts a group of people, possibly a family, inside a poor cottage listening to the player. So Wordsworth's suggestion, if it was ever made, was rejected. In fact there would be no grounds for thinking that Wordsworth put any suggestion forward if it were not for an entry in Farington's diary:

1. Cp. R. P. Graves's remarks on 'Power of Music' in 'Recollections of Wordsworth and the Lake Country': 'With what force are all the figures in this group drawn and animated!. It would make an admirable subject for a genre-painter.' (Afternoon Lectures on Literature and Art, Dublin, 1869, p. 295). Graves goes on to say that 'Wordsworth had himself no musical sense', which makes the poem more remarkable.

He [Wilkie] was offended with Wordsworth who offered to propose subjects to Him to paint, & gave Him to understand that when He could not think of subjects as well as paint them He wd. come to Him. (1)

This piece of gossip was told to Farington by Constable at a dinner-party in November 1807, but it could have been referring to an event of the previous year.² If it was, a reconstruction of what actually happened would be as follows: Wordsworth saw the blind fiddler in Oxford Street, and suggested the scene to Beaumont and Wilkie as a subject for the picture; his own poem was perhaps to be a companion-piece. With a natural show of independence Wilkie declined to have the subject dictated to him, but tactfully agreed to paint a picture containing the figure of a blind fiddler.

This reconstruction must remain speculative; however, it has the merit of being consistent with the characters of the persons involved, and with Wordsworth's taste in painting

1. The Farington Diary, iv. 238.

2. In the same diary entry, Farington notes down other happenings which occurred in 1806, as told to him by Constable - such as the first meeting between Constable and Wordsworth, which took place in the autumn of that year.

There is no record of a meeting between Wordsworth and Wilkie in 1807, though one could have taken place. Wordsworth came to London in April, and Wilkie left for Scotland early in May. (Cunningham, i. 147).

for the appealing and the sentimental. We return to fact and evidence with Wordsworth's letter to Beaumont in November 1806 -

I long to see Wilkie's picture. From Lady Beaumont's account it seems to have surpassed your utmost expectations. I am glad of this, both because the picture is yours, and as it is an additional promise of what he is to do hereafter. No doubt you will read him my Orpheus of Oxford Street, which I think he will like. (1)

This suggests, at least, that Wordsworth thought of his poem as being somehow connected with Wilkie's painting. Probably Wordsworth saw the painting during his visit to London in the spring of 1807, but there is no record of this, nor of a meeting with Wilkie. In spite of this, it is safe to conjecture that Wordsworth would have approved of the picture when he saw it.² It was Beaumont's picture for one thing, and we have the evidence of Wordsworth's later remarks about Wilkie for another.

1. M.Y., p. 78. 'Lady Beaumont's account' is not among the letters in the Dove Cottage Collection, and I have been unable to trace it elsewhere.

2. Beaumont wrote to Wordsworth about it from Dunmow, in March 1807: 'I believe I told you Wilkie's picture was here - he has finished each character with its appropriate expression so exquisitely that I believe few are able even to conceive the subject so well as he has executed it - he is indeed a most extraordinary young man -'. (DCC, B to W, March 15 1807)

Through Lady Beaumont, Wilkie, for his part, was called upon to admire Wordsworth's poetry, a task which he found very difficult. He visited Coleorton Hall in company with Haydon in 1809, and noted in his journal:

27th, [August] Lady Beaumont requested me to read after breakfast Wordsworth's Preface to his Poems, which, with some of the poems to which it alluded, and a letter in the poet's hand-writing, I read accordingly; but could not be brought at all to coincide with the fundamental principles of his system, or to admire as elegant the pieces which are pointed out as examples of his style. (1)

This occurred on the last morning of the visit, but throughout their stay Wordsworth seems to have been a frequent topic of conversation. Sir George read 'The Thorn' to them;² there was a bust of Wordsworth in the garden; and Haydon remembered Beaumont's cautioning them about Wordsworth's 'terrific democratic notions' in case he arrived at Coleorton while the painters were there.³

1. Cunningham, i. 249. The journal continues: 'This was not, however, the case with her ladyship, who admires Wordsworth's productions next to those of Shakespeare and Milton.'

2. Cunningham, i. 247: Wilkie's journal for August 19.

3. Haydon, Autobiography, ed. Tom Taylor, (London, 1853), i. 125. Wordsworth had planned to accompany his sister-in-law, Sara Hutchinson, to see her brother in Wales, and to call at Coleorton on the way; but the plans fell through. See M.Y., p. 336.

Wordsworth had visited London during the previous year, 1808, but there is no record of his having had any contact with Wilkie. However, during his visit to the Angerstein Collection with Coleridge,¹ he would have seen one of Wilkie's paintings, 'The Village Festival'. Wilkie was not mentioned by Wordsworth in a letter again until 1811, when he enquired about the painter's health in a letter to Beaumont.² Wilkie had been ill for a long while during 1810, and stayed with Beaumont as part of his convalescence, so that Wordsworth had been informed of what was going on.³ The fact that Wilkie, unlike Haydon, preserved a firm and steady friendship with Beaumont, was bound to have some effect on his relationship with Wordsworth: neither was allowed entirely to forget the presence of the other.

1. M.Y., p. 185. Wilkie's picture is not mentioned by name in this letter.

2. M.Y., p. 475: 'Pray how is Wilkie in health, and also as to progress in his Art?'

3. DCC, B to W, Nov 13 1810. This letter also implies that Wordsworth knew Wilkie only slightly at this time: 'I believe you know we were very near losing Wilkie this summer - he is now with me & his health is still very precarious... - He is indeed exclusive of his merit in his profession an excellent young man & if you knew him better I am sure you would be interested for him as I am.'

There is a record a few years later (1815) of a conversation between Wordsworth, John Scott (editor of the Champion), Henry Crabb Robinson, and Haydon:

Both H and S seemed to entertain a high reverence for the poet. Wilkie's picture Distraining for Rent was spoken of. Scott's criticism had been applauded by Sir George Beaumont. But it was agreed that he is a bad colourist and not improving in that respect. (1)

'Distraining for Rent', which was on exhibition at the British Institution, was one of Wilkie's most successful pictures. 'It was welcomed', says Cunningham, 'as one of his happiest compositions',² and the Directors of the British Institution gave Wilkie six hundred guineas for it (on the proposal of Sir George Beaumont). Scott's essay in The Champion (May 14) was in reply to a letter (April 16) comparing Wilkie unfavourably with Hogarth, which was itself occasioned by Hazlitt's essay 'On Mr. Wilkie's Pictures' (March 5). Scott has a long examination of 'Distraining for Rent', which begins -

1. Unpublished entry in the Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson (June 18 1815) in Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London.

2. Cunningham, i. 436-7. Distraining for Rent (No. 12 in the Wilkie Exhibitions of 1958) is now the property of the Countess of Swinton. Hazlitt said of this picture that it raised the artist to 'that small but noble group whose name is not so much of today as of all time.' (Wilkie Catalogue, p. 13).

As a piece of feeling it is the highest of his works: the principal interest of the picture is impressed and illustrated by shewing its effects on a variety of dispositions, and of persons more and less concerned in the event, -- from the unfortunate master and mistress of the house, to the gossiping drab, who has left her business at home, and stands there with the key of the street door in her hand, that she may tell the particulars to her neighbours.' (1)

This is preceded by a more general discussion of Wilkie's art, in which Scott singles out Wilkie's colouring as being in need of improvement. He speaks of --

Wilkie, whose "colouring", unfortunately, is very undeserving of admiration, and who is comparatively very poor in the mere painting part of his pictures. If it were not for his men, and women, and children, who would go to look at his pots and pans?...

Some ignorant remarkers have spoken of his tough as bad: it is now, as it always was, excellent, -- but his painting is meagre and slovenly, and his colouring cold and unsatisfactory. It is due to his own reputation, and his country's interest in it, that his ambition as an artist should not rest satisfied, till his excellence in what is most peculiar to his art be as undisputed and distinguished as his knowledge and feeling of the features and niceties of human nature. (2)

It would seem from this that Wilkie's art was one which was peculiarly suited to Wordsworth's approach to painting. Wordsworth always disclaimed any ability to criticise the technique of a picture, but was quickly engaged by the subject.

1. The Champion, No. 123, Sunday May 14 1815.

2. The Champion, No. 123, Sunday May 14 1815.

Thus any deficiencies which Wilkie may have had would have escaped him, while only the conception which Scott so praises would have made an impression.

Both Beaumont¹ and Haydon² mention Wilkie in their letters to Wordsworth, but there is no record of any meeting between Wordsworth and Wilkie until the winter of 1817-18, when Wordsworth called at Wilkie's studio at Kensington.³ In all probability Wordsworth would have seen the picture of Scott and his family which Wilkie exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1818,⁴ and the

1. DCC, B to W, Jan 8 1817: 'He has been highly gratified by a visit from the Duke of Wellington who has given him a commission - the subject he (the Duke) has chosen is soldiers regaling with pipes & tobacco at an alehouse door... an excellent subject & I am sure he will make the most of it.'

2. DCC, H to W, Nov 18 1816: 'Wilkie has finished a Landscape, which in parts is extremely beautiful, and it will do him great credit at the Institution this Season; he will have that and the Pedlar together.' This Landscape was perhaps 'Sheepwashing' (No. 21 in the Wilkie Exhibitions of 1958), now in the National Gallery of Scotland.

3. Cunningham, 11. 7: Wilkie's letter to Beaumont, Jan 19 1818 - 'Mr. Wordsworth, who did me the kindness to call a few weeks ago, was, he said, to stop at Coleorton, on his way to the North. He has most likely reached you before this; and I envy you all in the possession of his society.'

4. A. Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts, (London, 1905-6) viii. 267.

pictures which the painter was preparing for the exhibition of the British Institution.¹

The next meeting between the two was probably not until 1824. In the spring of that year Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth accompanied Sir George and Lady Beaumont on a visit to see Wilkie at his studio.² The attraction was probably the unfinished picture of the visit of George IV to Scotland, but Wilkie was also finishing pictures for

1. A. Graves, The British Institution, 1806-1867, (London, 1908), p. 584. These were 'Bathsheba' and 'Love-making - From the story of Duncan Gray'. The following lines of Burns's poem were quoted in the Catalogue:

Maggie coost her head fu' heigh,
Look'd asklant and unco' skeigh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh
Ha, ha, the wooing o't.

'Bathsheba', (No. 23 in the Wilkie Exhibitions of 1958), is now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

2. MS.Y., p. 139: D.W. to Edward Quillinan, March 29 [1824] - 'We are going with Sir G. and Lady B. to see Wilkie and his pictures at one o'clock,....'.

the Duke of Bedford and Sir Robert Peel.¹

During the following winter, Wilkie suffered a severe breakdown in health, and from 1825 to 1828 he was travelling in Europe, in the hope that a change of scene would do him good. Towards the end of the three years, he began to work again, and Cunningham tells of the reports coming back to England -

' - that he had stepped out of the style with which he had acquired his fame, and formed or invented one which required fewer figures, less detail, but which accomplished more, with less outlay of labour, than his earlier compositions. (2)

The change in Wilkie's style - it has been described as constituting a 'looser and oilier brushwork, darker tone and Rembrandtesque lighting'³ - was unpopular among his contemporaries. Haydon wrote to Wordsworth in 1838:

1. Cunningham, ii. 103-4, 108-9. For the Duke of Bedford Wilkie painted 'The Cottage Toilette' (from lines from Allan Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd'); for Sir Robert Peel, 'Smugglers offering run goods for sale or concealment'. These were exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1824, together with Wilkie's picture of a Greenwich pensioner - 'A Study for Commander Trunnion, made in Greenwich Hospital'. See Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts, viii. 268. The last-named picture (No. 41 in the Wilkie Exhibitions of 1958) is now in the National Gallery of Scotland.

2. Cunningham, iii. 1.

3. John Woodward, Catalogue of Paintings and Drawings by Sir David Wilkie, National Gallery of Scotland, August-September 1958 (Hereafter 'Wilkie Catalogue'), p. 4.

His latter pictures are detestable he has painted the Queen this year - as if she had been dragged through Soap suds - I never saw such a thing - (1)

One suspects that this remark refers to a study rather than a finished picture, but a later finished work, 'The First Council of Queen Victoria' (painted during the winter of 1838-9) was severely criticised by the Queen herself.² There is no record of a visit to Wilkie's studio again, though Wordsworth was invited in 1839;³ so there is no means of knowing his reaction to the new Wilkie. Most people who approved of his anecdotal genre work were disappointed and it has been left to the twentieth century critic to redress the balance.⁴

1. F. W. Haydon, Correspondence and Table-Talk of B. R. Haydon, ii. 45. Punctuation from original in DCC.

2. Wilkie Catalogue, pp. 27-8: Queen Victoria's diary for Nov 12 1847 (unpublished) - 'We occupied ourselves looking at pictures which are standing in the corridor, 1st one of my First Council by Wilkie which is one of the worst pictures I have ever seen, both as to painting and likenesses. Everyone was horrified when they saw it yesterday....'

3. DCC, Wilkie to W, May 10 1839.

4. e.g. John Woodward, Wilkie Catalogue, p. 6: 'Today this changed style, with its powerful impact and lovely feeling for tone, stamps him out not as a derivative and timid Scottish Teniers but as a considerable figure amongst his European contemporaries.'

A description of Wilkie in a poem of Wordsworth composed in 1834 ('Lines suggested by a Portrait from the pencil of T. Stone') suggests that Wordsworth was thinking of his earlier work as his most typical, because the poet stresses the way in which it is immediately attractive to all kinds of people from many different classes, and gives as two of its characteristics 'truth in character' and 'depth of feeling'. The lines are as follows:

A British Painter (eminent for truth
In character, and depth of feeling, shown
By labours that have touched the hearts of kings,
And are endeared to simple cottagers) - (1)

However the phrase 'touched the hearts of kings' may refer to the fact that George IV was one of the few people to appreciate Wilkie's later style, and in fact bought four of Wilkie's pictures from the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1829. In all probability Wordsworth had heard of this sale and remembered it when he came to write the poem; while the rest of his description refers to the Wilkie he knew before the painter left England in 1825. 'Truth in character' is certainly an accurate description of such pictures as 'Distraint for Rent', 'The Letter of Introduction', 'The Penny Wedding' and the others of that period.

1. P. W., iv. 123.

'Depth of feeling' is also a quality which is attributable to these paintings, though here we must notice that Wordsworth had once, in a letter to Beaumont, implied that genre painting was inferior to landscape because it did not require 'a strong tincture of the Poetic spirit'. The date of the letter was 1811: //

Wilkie's style of Painting does not require that the mind should be fed from Books; but I do not think it possible to excel in landscape painting without a strong tincture of the Poetic Spirit. (1)

In spite of this patronising remark, Wilkie's paintings before the journey abroad contained a simplicity of technique and representation which no doubt appealed to Wordsworth, for it made the paintings 'endeared to simple cottagers' and (as Wordsworth claimed for his own verse and could have applied to Wilkie) 'It turns upon the individual dignity which humbleness of social condition does not preclude, but frequently promotes.'² Wilkie was the kind of painter who gave

1. M. Y., p. 475.

2. P. W., 11. 461. (Postscript, 1835, to the Preface to the Edition of 1815).

immediate pleasure,¹ without pandering to the weaknesses of popular taste² - and it is therefore not surprising that Wordsworth should have approved.

The poem mentioned above, 'Lines suggested by a Portrait from the pencil of F. Stone', contains a summary of a story which may have come from Wilkie*. The poem itself, which is about a portrait of Jemima Quillinan, discusses the way in which art fixes the moment of time when the subject was being painted; thus Wordsworth calls it

1. Preface to Lyrical Ballads: 'The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man.' (P. W., ii. 395).

2. 'Away, then, with the senseless iteration of the word, popular,... lamentable is his error who can believe that there is anything of divine infallibility in the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community, ever governed by factitious influence, which, under the name of the PUBLIC, passes itself, upon the unthinking, for the PEOPLE. Towards the Public, the Writer hopes that he feels as much deference as it is entitled to: but to the People... his devout respect, his reverence, is due. (From Essay, Supplementary to the Preface of 1815, P.W., ii. 429-30).

a humble branch of the divine,
In visible quest of immortality,...(1)

and in illustration of the idea of the permanence of art Wordsworth tells the story of the old monk who showed Wilkie the picture of the Last Supper by Titian in the Convent of the Escorial Palace, and who was so moved by the contrast between the picture and its subject and the short lives of his fellow-monks and himself:

And thinking of my Brethren, dead, dispersed,
Or changed and changing, I not seldom gaze
Upon this solemn Company unmoved
By shock of circumstance, or lapse of years,
Until I cannot but believe that they -
They are in truth the Substance, we the Shadows. (2)

Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick that the account of this incident 'was told in this house [Rydal Mount] by Mr. Wilkie', and a note appended to the manuscript of the poem says the same thing: 'Wilkie was the painter to whom this affecting incident occurred... and he told it to me when at Rydal the other day.'³ However, this evidence is contradicted by a letter from Wilkie to Wordsworth:

1. P. W., iv. 123.

2. Ibid., iv. 123.

3. Ibid., iv. 429.

Without knowing that you were aware of the incident, I am glad, from the faithful, and kind reporter through whom it has reached you, it has fallen into such good hands, and that it has been so noticed and so applied, giving as you have done an illustration of the powers of human Art, compared with the "changed and changing" realities of life, with what reminds me much, of the self evident intelligence and force of a Scripture Parable. (1)

I am unable to resolve this contradiction.² The story is further complicated by the fact that Samuel Rogers (who added the story in a note to the 1838 edition of his Italy) claimed to have been told the same thing by a monk at Padua.³ This, as Wordsworth says, 'is not easy to explain'.⁴ Probably the last meeting between Wilkie and Wordsworth took place in September 1839, when Wilkie was in the Lake District.⁵ This, of course, is much too late to affect the question of who told whom about the monk. This was almost certainly their last meeting: during the following year Wilkie set out

1. DCC, Wilkie to W, June 10 1836.

2. Entries in Wilkie's journal show two visits to see Titian's painting, but the old monk's story is not mentioned. See Cunningham, ii. 484 and 527.

3. P. W., iv. 429. See Samuel Rogers, Italy, (new edition, London, 1838), p. 295.

4. Ibid, iv. 429.

5. Cunningham, iii. 275: 'I passed in and about the Lakes of Cumberland, visiting some friends, who took me to see Mr. Wordsworth and his family.'

on a tour of the Near East, from which he did not return.

Wordsworth's friendship with Wilkie was due in a large measure to Beaumont; but I think it could be maintained that Wilkie's pictures were ideally suited to Wordsworth's kind of art appreciation. They were genre paintings, it is true, and therefore not so 'poetical' as landscapes: but the profusion of incident, and the importance of subject as opposed to technique suggest qualities which are in line with Wordsworth's preferences in his appreciation of visual art.

2. Turner and Constable.

Landscape painting was the first branch of the art with which Wordsworth came into contact, and it retained a special place in his affections. It seems therefore surprising that Wordsworth should have had so little contact with the two greatest landscape painters of his day, who are probably the two greatest landscape painters of the whole British School. They were near-contemporaries of Wordsworth, and yet his interest in them seems slight; and surprising though this may appear, the reasons are not far to seek. In fact, the relations with both are a good example of how seriously Beaumont's personal feelings influenced Wordsworth's relations with contemporary painters. Beaumont seems actively to have disliked Turner, and he was not very enthusiastic about Constable; and the originality of both artists made it easy for Beaumont to condemn their work as not fitting in with his preconceived ideas. The patronage of Turner by Beaumont's rival, Lord Egremont, and Turner's uncompromising support of the Royal Academy in its quarrel with the British Institution (of which Beaumont was a Director) did not help matters, and there seems to have been a personal antipathy between them which was never overcome.

Wordsworth had not much chance of understanding Turner: he would have had little opportunity of studying his pictures, and at least one of his other friends was completely unable to understand what Turner was trying to do. This was Henry Crabb Robinson, who had what A. J. Finberg aptly calls 'the ordinary prosaic mind',¹ and who was completely baffled by Turner's treatment of a topographical subject:

Turner, R.A., has a magnificent view of Dieppe. If he will invent an atmosphere, and a play of colours, all his own, why will he not assume a romantic name [for his pictures]? No one could find fault with a Garden of Armida, or even of Eden, so painted. But we know Dieppe, in the north of France, and can't easily clothe it in such fairy hues. I can understand why such artists as Constable and Collins are preferred. (2)

Obviously it is not the picture as such that Robinson is disturbed about, but the picture as a representation of a place: this is to be 'more & more extravagant, and less attentive to nature'. A note in Robinson's diary for March 14 1835 suggests that Wordsworth thought the same way:

1. A. J. Finberg, The Life of J. M. W. Turner, R. A., (Oxford, 1939), p. 289.

2. quoted A. J. Finberg, The Life of J. M. W. Turner, R. A., p. 289.

I called with Wordsworth on Copley Fielding. We had a very pleasant chat on painting, a subject on which Wordsworth talks well. He spoke severely of Martin (not even sparing Turner) and of all the analogous artists in poetry, etc. (1)

To speak about Turner in the same light as Martin (whom he detested) and 'the analogous artists in poetry' suggests that Wordsworth was thinking of them as representatives of a class.² Martin was (thought Wordsworth) a flashy sensationalist, and Wordsworth may have been unhappy about what might be considered the 'sensational' aspect of Turner's work - the way he appeared to have disregarded nature in order to produce an imaginative effect, in the way which so disturbed Robinson. The story of Turner's reply to the man who said 'I never saw anything like that in Nature' illustrates this clearly; Turner is supposed to have answered - 'Very likely; but don't you wish you were able to see it?'³

However, this only applies to one aspect of Turner's work, though to us the most interesting; for Turner's more conventional topographical studies Wordsworth had a sensible appreciation. In the Guide to the Lakes he mentions a 'fine

1. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 459.

2. For an analysis of Martin and 'the analogous artists in poetry', see below, Chapter 7.

3. Quoted by H. Goodwin, 'Wordsworth and Turner' in Wordsworthiana, ed. W. A. Knight, (London, 1889), p. 273.

drawing' by Turner of Hardraw Sear and its waterfall,¹ and he very much admired the illustrations which the painter did for Samuel Rogers's Poems (1834).²

There is only one other reference to Wordsworth's opinion of Turner, and this is indirect. Near the end of Wordsworth's life he is on record as having criticised Ruskin's Modern Painters:

Ruskin he thought a brilliant writer, but there was too much praise of Turner in his book, to the disparagement of others; he had hardly a word for any one else. (3)

This is more a criticism of Ruskin, I think, rather than of Turner; though on the whole Wordsworth was delighted with Ruskin.⁴

I think we may conclude that Wordsworth's opinion of Turner was not unlike that of Robinson - 'the ordinary prosaic

1. Guide to the Lakes, ed. E. de Selincourt, (London, 1926), p. 2.

2. L. Y., p. 692; WW to Edward Moxon, January 14 1834: 'we are charmed with the design and execution of the illustrations'. Some of the illustrations were by Stothard and some by Turner. Wordsworth also possessed a copy of Rogers's Italy, with Turner's illustrations.

3. Quoted by W. A. Knight, Life of Wordsworth, (Edinburgh, 1889), ii. 334.

4. See below, Chapter 13.

mind' - that he like Turner's topographical and illustrative work, but not his more daring experiments. In fairness, however, it should be remembered that Wordsworth's mentor in such matters was Beaumont, and that in consequence Wordsworth was never allowed an opportunity seriously to consider the essential nature of Turner's most interesting work.

Constable was certainly nearer to Beaumont than Turner was, but Beaumont had reservations about his ideas and his ability:¹ although he invited Constable to Coleorton he never commissioned a picture from him. Wordsworth is recorded as having met Constable three times, but in each case

1. He told Farington that 'The young man wants application' (May 20 1802 - The Farington Diary, unpublished). This may have been due to Lady Beaumont's dislike of Constable. It may also have been due to Constable's refusal to take up a post as drawing-master in a military school. Or again, it may have been due to Constable's technique, which laid him open to the frequent charge of painting 'unfinished' pictures; but this is unlikely to have been the case as early as 1802. Cp. Tom Taylor, ed., Autobiographical Recollections By the late Charles Robert Leslie, R.A., (London 1860), I. 200: 'Sir George Beaumont was a sincere friend to the Arts, but in many things a mistaken one. He was right in his patronage of Wilkie and of Haydon, but he ridiculed Turner, whom he endeavoured to talk down. He did the same with respect to Stothard, and though personally very friendly to Constable, he never seems to have had much perception of his extraordinary genius.'

we have some idea of the painter's reactions and no idea of Wordsworth's.¹ However, there is extant a letter written in 1844 from Wordsworth to Constable's daughters, which places the relationship between poet and painter in a favourable light, and sums up the extent of their acquaintance:

Mr. Wordsworth presents his Compliments to the Misses Constable and thanks them for the acceptable present of the Memoirs of their Father's life which he has just received. He lost no time in perusing the Book with which, on many accounts he has been much interested. Mr. Wordsworth had the pleasure of making Mr Constable's acquaintance when he visited this country long ago;

This refers to Constable's visit to the Lake District in 1806: Constable remarked to Tarington later about 'the high opinion Wordsworth entertains of Himself' and obviously did

1. Constable progressed from an initial dislike of Wordsworth to a final admiration. See J. R. Watson, 'Wordsworth and Constable', Review of English Studies, N.S., xiii, No. 52, (November 1962), pp. 361-367.

not relish the meeting.¹ Wordsworth's letter to the Misses Constable continues:

and through their common friend Sir George Beaumont used often to hear of him, though he had not the good fortune to fall in with him, till the latter part of his life when they met with mutual pleasure. The engravings with which the Memoirs are illustrated, are eminently characteristic of the Painter's mind. Mr. W. was not unacquainted with these works, as Mr Constable had gratified him with a Copy of his English Landscape, a work most honorable to his Genius. Pity that he did not prolong his stay in this beautiful country, i.e., that we might have had its features reflected by his pencil. (2)

1. At one time I thought Farington's account (December 12 1807 - The Farington Diary, iv. 239) was wrong or wildly exaggerated. Mr. R. B. Beckett, however, explains the circumstances and shows that no doubt can be thrown on Farington's evidence: Constable remained in the Lake District until the end of October (although we have no drawings dated after mid-October, perhaps because of rain); Wordsworth and Coleridge were together at Kendal from Sunday 26 October until Wednesday 29 October (see M. Y., pp. 68-69; DW to Catherine Clarkson, November 5-6 1806: 'We (that is Mary and I) stayed with him from Sunday evening till Tuesday morning at nine o'clock; but Sara H. and Wm did not part from him till the following morning.' During these few days Wordsworth and Coleridge must have met Constable at the house of Mrs. Lloyd, who lived near Windermere.

2. WW to the Misses Constable, June 6 1844; from MS in the Burgess Collection, University of Oregon Library. See the note by Paul M. Zall, Modern Language Notes, lxxi, (1956), p. 338.

Mrs. Mary Moorman has also informed me of the existence of a letter of 1837 from Wordsworth to C. R. Leslie, in which Wordsworth agreed to subscribe to a memorial 'to so admirable an Artist as Mr. Constable'.

This letter suggests both a knowledge of and a liking for the work of Constable; yet Wordsworth's remark at the end about depicting the Lake District suggests that he had no real feeling for the essential nature of Constable's genius. Constable told Leslie that 'the solitude of mountains oppressed his spirits',¹ and he never went back to the Lake District after his visit in 1806; and his pictures celebrate an entirely different kind of natural beauty. It would seem that in expecting Constable to paint scenes from the Lake District Wordsworth was showing a lack of understanding as great as that shown to Turner by Beaumont or Robinson. In each case the painter's central and distinguishing genius was ignored or misunderstood.

Thus the contact and interest shown by Wordsworth in the two great landscape painters of his day was disappointingly small. However, critics have often discussed the relations between them in another sense - the similarities of their attitudes to nature and to their work. In particular the approach and the work of Turner has been often described as 'Wordsworthian', perhaps because of the

1. C. R. Leslie, Memoirs of the life of John Constable, (ed. J. Mayne, London, 1951), p. 18.

difficulty of finding words to describe Turner adequately. Thus Walter Thornbury: 'All Turner's works betray a truly Wordsworthian recognition of detail and a love of common things.'¹ How meaningless the use of a word like 'Wordsworthian' can be in attempting to describe a painter is shown by the way in which it is used by two other critics, Harry Goodwin and Charles Clare. Goodwin writes:

Both left old paths; both sought after new methods, fresh truths of nature, rarely hesitating to use the most homely incidents to illustrate their themes. (2)

Like Thornbury, Goodwin insists upon Turner's 'delicate mystery of detail',³ and then he goes on to draw other parallels - Turner's Shipwrecks and Wordsworth's 'Peele Castle' - and concludes by finding in both the poet and the painter 'a strange mingling of the sublime and the ridiculous'.⁴ For Charles Clare, on the other hand, the Wordsworthian quality is quite different: it is a peace and harmony, a

1. Walter Thornbury, The Life of J. M. W. Turner, R.A. (2nd Edn., London, 1877), p. 544.

2. Harry Goodwin, 'Wordsworth and Turner', in Wordsworthiana, ed. W. A. Knight, (London, 1889), p. 269.

3. Ibid, p. 270. (Perhaps a mistake for 'mastery'?)

4. Ibid, pp. 272-273.

spaciousness and dignity, which Clare finds in both.¹

It has been left to C. B. Tinker to remind us of Turner's very un-Wordsworthian affinity with Byron.²

Thus the use of the word 'Wordsworthian' has been imprecise and not very useful: generally it seems to be used as an affective word, to describe a 'feeling' which has been obtained from a picture or a poem, or both. However, this must not distract us from the fact that Wordsworth and Turner were contemporary artists dealing with landscape, and that this does pose some obvious questions. What kind of landscape does each use? What effects does each observe? How does the finished poem or picture relate to the landscape which originally inspired it?

The answer to the first question is certain to be

1. Charles Clare, J. M. W. Turner, His Life and Work, (London, 1951), p. 36: 'The Byronic storms of the earlier years give way to a more reflective outlook on nature and his feeling becomes more akin to that of Wordsworth.' Also see p. 43: 'Turner's exhibits in the Royal Academy this year [1809] still remained comparable to Wordsworth's attitude towards nature. They were spacious and dignified compositions relying mainly for their effect upon the play of quiet light over the scenes.' And see p. 49, where Clare speaks of 'liquid tones which matched the harmony of Wordsworth.'

2. C. B. Tinker, Painter and Poet, (Cambridge, Mass., 1938), pp. 152-154. Tinker also points out a precise similarity: that Turner's 'titles, like Wordsworth's, are often annoyingly long and detailed.' (p. 146).

vague and imprecise: each is such a varied artist, with a response to so many different forms. One could use 'Peele Castle', for instance, to parallel some of the shipwreck pieces of Turner, but 'Peele Castle' is hardly central in Wordsworth's use of landscape. Nor should we forget how different a Turner landscape like 'Frosty Morning' is from his sea-pieces, and how in its turn this differs from large narrative pictures like 'The Decline of Carthage', or the Alpine studies, or the studies of morning light and mist. Each of these, with the exception of the Carthage pictures, might be said to be paralleled in Wordsworth (in, say, the opening stanzas of 'Resolution and Independence', or Book VI of The Prelude), but each is a parallel on its own, and it is impossible to call them all 'Wordsworthian' or 'Turneresque' with any kind of accurate meaning.

The second question is a little easier to answer, for we can justifiably say that both Wordsworth and Turner had an acute eye for the most sensitive effects of light and shade or mood and weather on landscape. This gives substance to the argument that Turner is like Wordsworth in his attention to detail. Occasionally, too, the poet actually describes a landscape under certain conditions:

as in the Snowdon passage from Book XIV of The Prelude, or the passage from Book II of The Excursion which was so admired by Beaumont (ii. 829 ff.). However, this account of similarity easily slips into cataloguing examples like this or into dubious generalization. The answer to the third question, I believe, contains the essential likeness between Wordsworth and Turner.

Each of them, I think it is true to say, escapes from a literal vision of landscape into something much greater: into a dynamic for the imagination and a source of strength. Thus Wordsworth uses the landscape in 'Tintern Abbey' not just as a landscape but as a power. In the same way Turner's reply to his questioner - 'Very likely; but don't you wish you were able to see it?' - suggests an art which, while respecting nature, transcends the ordinary man's vision of nature to find something higher and more valuable. This seems to me to be the one characteristic which binds Wordsworth and Turner together, and to be of central importance to an understanding of their methods and aims.

The parallels between Wordsworth and Constable are not so vague, and have received better treatment, notably from Kurt Badt in his study John Constable's Clouds. Badt sees a parallel between Constable's sketches followed by the

finished landscapes and Wordsworth's 'emotion' as he contemplates nature followed by the 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' which gives rise to the poem as we have it.¹ Another parallel is their interest in 'the humblest departments of daily life' (Badt is quoting the dedication to Peter Bell), and in 'plainness and ordinariness of form and expression'.² Constable 'wanted to make something out of nothing, in attempting which he [the painter] must almost of necessity become poetical', which corresponds to Wordsworth's intention 'to give the charm of novelty to things of everyday'.³ To these parallels noted by Badt we might add that each of them believed he was doing something quite original: Constable wrote to Leslie -

your regard for me has at least awakened me to believe in the possibility that I may yet make some impression with my 'light' - my 'dews' - my 'breezes' - my bloom and my freshness - no one of which qualities have yet been perfected on the

1. Kurt Badt, John Constable's Clouds, (London, 1950), pp. 82-87.

2. Ibid, pp. 88-89.

3. Ibid, p. 88: Badt is quoting Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, Ch. xiv.

Canvas of any painter in the world.¹

In the same way, Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick that a couplet in An Evening Walk was

important An Evening Walk history; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I made a resolution to supply, in some degree, the deficiency. (2)

Thus the parallels between Wordsworth and Constable seem more accessible than those between Wordsworth and Turner, though that is not to say that they are necessarily more accurate. To ask the first question again - what kind of landscape does the painter use? - clearly shows this, for Constable, as we have seen, was unhappy with the

1. P. Leslie, ed., Letters from John Constable, R.A. to C. R. Leslie, R.A. (1826-1837), (London, 1931), p. 104. Constable's feeling for dew and freshness (well illustrated by the story of Constable's alarm at Chantrey's glazing of his picture - 'there goes all my dew' - see Leslie's Life, ed. J. Mayne, p. 177) is reminiscent of Coleridge's appreciation of Wordsworth: 'above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew drops.' (Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross, Oxford, 1907, i. 59).

2. P.W., i. 319.

grandeur of mountain scenery,¹ and his greatest paintings are set in a land of trees and hedgerows and rivers. The effects which he observes there are perhaps Wordsworthian in one respect, in their love of detail: the play of light and shade, the colour of trees and grass and the shapes of clouds. But the third question - how does the finished picture relate to the landscape which originally inspired it - is here the most significant of all. The landscapes of Constable, like those of Wordsworth, were deeply associated with his personal feelings: the valley near Dedham was for him like the vale of Grasmere for Wordsworth, a place which he loved to paint and paint again. In addition to this, his landscape paintings are often expressive of a mood; Graham Reynolds points out that 'the addiction to dramatic, tempestuous skies grew on Constable as he got older, and it is not hard to cor-

1. Graham Reynolds, Constable, The natural painter, (London, 1965), p. 32, suggests an affinity between Constable's painting done on this visit and Wordsworth's poetry:

'The water-colours emphasize the claustrophobic, frightening aspects of mountains, the quality felt in Wordsworth's paranoic lines about Ullswater

"the huge Cliff

Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
With measured motion, like a living thing,
Strode after me".'

relate the climax of this process with the illness and death of his wife and the increasing troubles of his later life.'¹ Like Wordsworth, Constable thought of wind and fresh air as healthful: he described his picture of 'The Leaping Horse' as 'lively and soothing, calm and exhilarating, fresh and blowing'² and said that the trees in 'The Cornfield' were 'shaken by a pleasant and healthful breeze'.³ His presuppositions, therefore, are very similar to those which lie behind the first lines of The Prelude, and the interaction between the moods of landscape and the moods of his own mind is certainly similar to Wordsworth's high argument':

How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted: - and how exquisitely, too -
Theme this but little heard of among men -
The external World is fitted to the Mind; (4)

-
1. Graham Reynolds, Constable, The natural painter, p. 89.
 2. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
 3. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
 4. P.W., v. 5; from the 'Prospectus' of The Recluse in the 1814 preface to The Excursion.

It is affinities like this that make it possible to use the word 'Wordsworthian' about Turner and Constable (although the word has been used too imprecisely in the past). In spite of their actual lack of contact, these two painters were the closest of their contemporaries to Wordsworth in what they were trying to do, and in terms of similarity between poet and painter their work is of the utmost importance for this study.

Chapter 7. Wordsworth and other contemporary British and American painters.

It has already been observed that Wordsworth became acquainted with several painter-visitors to the Lake District - Ibbetson, Edridge, Duppa, Constable, Havill, and probably others who are unspecified and unrecorded. During his visits to London Wordsworth met others, or saw their pictures and formed opinions about their work. Generally speaking, Wordsworth was indebted for this introduction to the painter or his work to Beaumont or to Haydon. This chapter aims to illustrate the extent and range of Wordsworth's knowledge of contemporary art in Britain.

At this time, Turner's great rival in the production of extraordinary effects on canvas was John Martin, whose historical pictures like 'Joshua Commanding the Sun to Stand Still upon Gibeon', 'The Deluge', and, most famous of all, 'Belshazzar's Feast', were the sensations of their day. It was against the tide of popular opinion and current criticism that Lamb produced Martin as his chief example of the moderns in his essay entitled 'Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art'. Lamb described Belshazzar's Feast as 'this huddle of vulgar consternation',¹

1. Charles Lamb, The Essays of Elia and The Last Essays of Elia, (World's Classics Edition, 1954), p. 330.

and detected a diffusion of impact in 'Joshua' which he ascribed to 'defect of this imaginative faculty'¹ - that is a faculty 'which reduces confusion to a kind of unity'.² With all this Wordsworth agreed. On receiving The Last Essays of Elia in 1833, he wrote to Lamb: 'In your remarks upon Martin's pictures, I entirely concur';³ and this point of view is confirmed by a conversation which Henry Crabb Robinson noted two years later, when Wordsworth 'spoke severely of Martin... and of all the analogous artists in poetry, etc.'⁴ It seems likely that Wordsworth was referring to Martin here as an artist of the sublime and the terrible, and expressing his distaste for this aspect of Romanticism: the aspect which Gautier pinpointed with a memorable phrase when he said that Martin had 'le cauchemar de l'infini'.⁵ In this, Martin had his imitators (painters like Papworth and Danby) and predecessors: the catalogue for his picture

1. Ibid, p.333.

2. Ibid, p.332.

3. L.Y., p.657; WW to Charles Lamb, May 17 1833.

4. HCR on Books and Writers, p.459.

5. Quoted by Jean Seznec, John Martin en France, (London, 1964), p.17. Seznec traces Martin's influence on Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Michelet, Dumas, Berlioz and others.

'The Deluge' quotes from Byron's 'Heaven and Earth', and Campbell's 'The Last Man' was the inspiration for Martin's picture of the same name.¹ Campbell's note to 'Heaven and Earth' suggests the kind of excitement which Martin was exploring, which has affinities with the imagination of Edgar Allan Poe: 'Man's wickedness', wrote Campbell, 'the perturbed creation, fear-struck mortals, demons passing to and fro in the earth, an overshadowing solemnity, and unearthly loves, form together the materials.'²

Thus Martin was a representative of a kind of Romanticism which Wordsworth disliked. In other respects, he would seem to have been suited to Wordsworth: he was a native of Northumberland, and one critic has suggested that the valley of the South Tyne was an inspiration for some of his landscapes;³ also he was on good terms with

1. Reproduced in Ruthven Todd, Tracks in the Snow, (London, 1946), plate 46.

2. The Poetical Works of Lord Byron, Collected and Arranged, with Illustrative Notes, (London, 1847), p.243.

3. Thomas Balston, John Martin, 1789-1854, His Life and Works, (London, 1947), p.18: 'Both the park-like quality of the valley and the breadth and depth of the views were clearly the inspiration of the many paintings and engravings of Paradise and Heaven which are among Martin's masterpieces. The valley also supplied material for his wilder works. Especially in July it is liable to storms and floods of uncommon violence, and it was there that he learnt that delight in thunder and lightning and hail which remained throughout his life and helped to inspire his Deluge and Joshua and many others of his most famous works.'

Sir George Beaumont, who frequently visited his studio although he seems never to have bought a picture. In addition to this, Martin's excellence was in conception and design rather than in colouring and execution. He was, according to E. Chesneau, the French critic, one of those artists 'qui ne poursuivent que l'effet moral, ou plutôt l'effet littéraire - le seul qu'ils puissent atteindre'.¹ In this case it would seem that Wordsworth's criticism of Martin is concerned at least partly with this literary effect: his remarks noted by Robinson suggest a dislike of the subject matter which the painter was using. Lamb's criticism is concerned more with the technique than the subject matter: it may have appealed to Wordsworth because of the way in which it used the older painters as a stick to beat Martin with, or just because it drew attention to a kind of seeking after the most sensational effect possible, and an attempted grandeur which is sought by the multiplication of figures and the endless vistas of colossal buildings. Thus Wordsworth, it seems, would have disliked Martin on both grounds: for the kind of sensational excitement which formed the basis of his inspiration and for

1. E. Chesneau, La Peinture Anglaise, 1882, quoted by Jean Seznec, John Martin en France, (London, 1964), p.40.

the way in which this appeared to be so enthusiastically indulged in the technical performance. Modern criticism, I think, suggests that Wordsworth and Lamb were right: Martin lacked the vision of Blake or Palmer on the one hand, and the skill of Turner and Constable on the other. His pictures, with their preponderance of reds and browns and purples seem to express a grandiose conception rather than a visionary one, and to be designed to be the sensation of a day rather than the inspiration of future generations.

The disparagement which Robinson made a note of in his diary was part of a conversation which took place in the house of Copley Fielding, the president of the Water-Colour Society and, according to Richard and Samuel Redgrave, 'the fashionable teacher of the day'.¹ Fielding is thus another name to add to those painters known to Wordsworth; another may have been Peter de Wint, also a water-colour painter, to whom Wordsworth refers in two letters of 1840 to Mrs.

1. A Century of British Painters, ed. R. Todd, (London, 1947), p.445. Wordsworth met Copley Fielding again in 1841 (E.J. Morley, ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers, London, 1938, ii.597): no doubt the acquaintance was helped by Copley Fielding's work on the illustrations for a book by Wordsworth's nephew Christopher, Greece, pictorial, descriptive and historical, which had been published in 1839.

Gaskell.¹ During the previous year, Wordsworth had invited de Wint to Rydal Mount, but the painter had been unable to come;² his work, if Redgrave's account is to be believed, would have been well calculated to appeal to Wordsworth: 'He loved to paint direct from nature, and was never so happy as in the fields. His subjects are principally chosen in the Eastern and Northern counties... His works have much freshness and purity.'³

Copley Fielding and Peter de Wint were two of the finest water-colour painters of their day. Another, not so eminent, was William Westall, whose Views of the Caves near Ingleton, Gordale Scar, and Malham Cove, in Yorkshire (1818) suggested three sonnets to Wordsworth, which appeared in Blackwood's Magazine in January 1819 (which suggests an unusual rapidity of composition).⁴ Westall's engravings

1. L.Y., p.996 and p.1013; WW to Mrs. Gaskell, January 9 1840 and March 25 1840. For De Wint see Charles Holme, ed., Masters of English Landscape Painting, J.S. Cotman, David Cox, Peter de Wint, (London, 1903).

2. In the Dove Cottage Collection there is a letter from de Wint to Wordsworth dated October 23 1839, thanking Wordsworth for an invitation to Rydal Mount and reluctantly declining.

3. Samuel Redgrave, A Dictionary of Artists of the English School, (London, 1878), p.125.

4. P.W., 111.36-38; Miscellaneous Sonnets, Part II, Nos. xxxiii-xxxv.

emphasise the rugged and rocky qualities of the landscape, and Wordsworth's appreciation of them is linked with his continuing interest in the Picturesque.¹ Westall's friendship persisted for many years: according to E. de Selincourt, he 'spent much time in the Lake country between 1811 and 1820, and was intimate with WW., Southey, and Sir George Beaumont.'² He must have returned later, for in 1831 he exhibited a picture at the Royal Academy entitled 'Rydal Mount, the residence of William Wordsworth, Esq.'³ In 1840 Westall stayed at Rydal making sketches for illustrations.

1. Farington records a contemporary opinion (by William Daniell) of some earlier drawings by Westall of Madeira: 'He did not think of what might be interesting to the Topographer but only what would, in His opinion, "Comewell" (picturesque).' (The Farington Diary, v.139).

2. P.W.,iii.430. See also M.H. Grant, A Chronological History of the Old English Landscape Painters, (Leigh-on-Sea, 1957-61),vii.532.

3. A. Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts, (London, 1905-6), viii.232; quoted by F. Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth, p.166.

to Wordsworth's poems,¹ and three years later Wordsworth recommended him to Haydon as a man who would be able to provide Haydon with a picture of Helvellyn to give him some idea for the background of his 'Wordsworth upon Helvellyn'.² Westall's kind of Picturesque topography, and his concentration on the north of England, make it hardly surprising that Wordsworth should have known him and his work.³

Of these three water-colour painters we know little beyond the facts of acquaintance and reference. More revealing, in respect of Wordsworth's opinions on art, is his single reference to Landseer, written in a letter to Haydon in 1839:

1. L.Y., p.996; WW to Edward Moxon, January 10 1840: 'Mr. W. has been a week with us taking a few sketches with a view to the illustration of my Poems. The Weather and a bad cold had been much against him, but he has done pretty well. In particular he has made one very good drawing in perspective of the interior of our chief sitting-room. It has a most picturesque appearance and I cannot but think would be acceptable to those who take an interest in my writings. He has done the outside of the House and the surrounding landscape.' See also Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth, pp.87-88. I have been unable to find any edition of Wordsworth's poems illustrated by Westall.

2. L.Y., p.1172; WW to B.R. Haydon, [? July] 1843.

3. A good example of Westall's work, and probably known to Wordsworth, is his drawing of Coleorton Hall, reproduced in T.S.R. Boase, English Art, 1800-1870, (Oxford, 1959), plate 29a.

The genius of our times in your art is ruined by painting to Commission that is under the control of those who order the Pictures. - Landseer if he does not take care will be killed by this.... Take for example that picture in Lord Westminster's Gallery a family piece - Is it possible a Man of his genius and skill could have painted such a thing except under the like baneful influence?(1)

This comment might have been made about a number of Landseer's pictures at this time, as the artist moved from his early studies of animals in their natural state to more and more pictures of children and their dogs. One of these may be the picture in question, though there is no direct evidence; but one of the few family pieces painted at this time was the 'Portrait of the Marquess of Stafford and the Lady Evelyn Gower, Dunrobin Castle in the distance', exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1838.² A description of this picture in F.G. Stephens's Memoirs of Sir Edwin Landseer gives an idea of the kind of painting which Wordsworth was referring to:

1. L.Y., p.982-3; WW to B.R. Haydon, July 8 1839.

2. Sometimes called 'The Sutherland Children'. See A. Graves, Catalogue of the Works of the Late Sir Edwin Landseer, R.A., (London, 1874), p.5. The picture would have been likely to find its way into the Duke of Sutherland's Gallery at Stafford House rather than Lord Westminster's Gallery: Wordsworth may have made a mistake about where he saw it.

"The Portrait of the Marquis of Stafford, and the Lady Evelyn Gower", before the public in 1838, is that pretty picture of the girl with a fawn, round the neck of which she has placed a garland; a spaniel sits "begging" before her; a boy in short dress, with bare shoulders and legs, is seated on the grass in front of the group, and looks up, while a noble deer-hound lolls against a tree; it is probably Landseer's best portrait-picture.(1)

The difference between this and the early Landseer picture of 'Fighting Dogs getting Wind' which Wordsworth would have been familiar with when it was in Beaumont's collection, no doubt gave rise to his comment. In it Wordsworth shows a critical judgment which has been supported by the views on Landseer which have evolved during this century: in the 1961 exhibition at the Royal Academy, according to the Catalogue, 'A few examples of Landseer's later style (including three or four of his most familiar pictures) have been included, but the weight of the present selection is in favour of his earlier period.'² In an essay on 'Landseer as a Craftsman' in the introduction to the Catalogue, Derek Hill writes: 'If he had been able to

1. Op. Cit., p.100. The picture is reproduced between pages 156 and 157.

2. Paintings and Drawings by Sir Edwin Landseer R.A., Royal Academy of Arts, Diploma Gallery, London, 1961, pp.iii-iv.

sustain the quality of the work done during his early years and had had the physical urge and ability to advance from there, he might well have become a painter of European importance.¹ And he goes on to blame Landseer's failure to do this on exactly the same forces which Wordsworth felt were ruining him: 'Apart from the physical disability of his later years it was the fashionable and dictated taste of the time in England that halted Landseer in mid-career.'² Thus Wordsworth's criticism in 1839 seems to have anticipated the current evaluation of Landseer in a way which appears most striking if we consider the enormous popularity of Landseer's later pictures in his own day.

During this period there were two notable American painters working in England, C.R. Leslie and Washington Allston.³ Leslie, who was an agreeable and much-liked man, was an acquaintance of Beaumont's, from whom he obtained anecdotes for the biography of Reynolds which he was to

1. Ibid, p.xii.

2. Ibid, p.xiii.

3. Leslie, though born in London, was brought up in America and the child of American parents, and is generally thought of as the compatriot of Allston.

leave unfinished at his death.¹ He also met Coleridge, whom he came to know quite well.² Leslie is regarded by T.S.R. Boase as 'one of the most expert' of a class of story-tellers in paint, whose work met an increasingly popular demand for the portrayal of literary subjects.³ How this appealed to the Wordsworths is seen in a letter from Dorothy Wordsworth to Henry Crabb Robinson in 1824:

I have heard of your being at the exhibition
I hope you liked Leslie's picture of Sancho and
the Duchess - we were charmed with it - (4)

This picture, which Dorothy Wordsworth singled out from the whole Royal Academy Exhibition of 1824, was a characteristic production of Leslie's. According to Tom Taylor, 'Don Quixote was a favourite source of subjects to Leslie. Besides his thrice repeated "Sancho in the apartment of the Duchess", we owe to the same book many of the painter's best

1. The Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds, commenced by Charles Robert Leslie, R.A., continued and concluded by Tom Taylor, M.A., (London, 1865), i.iv.

2. See Autobiographical Recollections. By the late Charles Robert Leslie, R.A., ed. Tom Taylor, (London, 1860), Vol. I, Chapter II, *passim*.

3. T.S.R. Boase, English Art, 1800-1870, pp.170-172.

4. E.J. Morley, ed., Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle, (Oxford, 1927), i.127.

pictures.¹ One of the repetitions of the picture was chosen by Richard and Samuel Redgrave as a good example of Leslie at his best, and from their description we can obtain a good idea of the work which so impressed the Wordsworths. The Redgraves begin by a general reflection on Leslie's work:

The subjects chosen by Leslie were of a higher class than the early works of either Wilkie or Mulready. He seems from the first to have had an innate refinement in his choice, and to have thrown a sense of gentle blood into all he did. His works abound in beauty, elegance, character, and quiet humour, which make them irresistibly pleasing.(2)

The description of 'Sancho Panza in the Apartments of the Duchess' (to give the picture its full title) is very detailed:

How lovely is the duchess, how perfectly at her ease, how truly one of Nature's gentlewomen as she sits listening to Sancho's tale! What a round full form! The light of a happy smile in her eyes; the amused satire of her dimpling mouth, pleased at the simplicity of the peasant squire who takes her into his confidence, and binds her to secrecy as to his master's escapades, putting his finger to his nose as he tells his tale. Contrasted with the rare beauty of the lady, and serving as its foil, is the stately, frigid duenna, drawn up to her full height, her hands crossed in front, her keen,

1. Autobiographical Recollections, i.xxxvii, in the 'Editor's Preface'.

2. A Century of British Painters, (ed. R. Todd, 1947), p.302.

observant eye seeing all that is going on; but no smile is ever likely to twinkle there nor to part her thin dry lips. What a contrast to the laughing black damsel on the opposite side of the picture, who grins and shows a mouthful of teeth, at the unconscious assurance of the garlic-loving Sancho in relating his adventures to her noble mistress.(1)

It is easy to see that this picture would have appealed to Wordsworth, with its interesting subject-matter and immediately comprehensible technique. Tom Taylor (who edited Leslie's memoirs) even thought, in a rather complacent way, that Leslie's pictures had an improving and beneficent influence on the lower classes,² and this may have additionally recommended the painter to Wordsworth. That Wordsworth took a particular interest in Leslie after seeing 'Sancho and the Duchess' is suggested by his remark to

1. Ibid, p.302.

2. Autobiographical Recollections, (Editor's Preface), i. xxi: 'It is pleasant to me to think that so many of Leslie's pictures should have found a home among the mills of Lancashire and the smoking forges and grimy workshops of Birmingham. They are eminently calculated to counteract the ignobler influences of industrial occupation by their inborn refinement, their liberal element of loveliness, their sweet sentiment of nature, their literary associations, and their genial humour. I can speak from personal observation to the real appreciation of these pictures in such places, not on the part of their possessors only, but among the many, both masters and workmen, to whom these galleries are so liberally opened.'

Beaumont about the exhibition one year later - 'Leslie, I hear, has not advanced'.¹ It is clear from a letter in Dove Cottage Library that Leslie and Wordsworth had not met before 1837,² and they probably did not do so before 1842, when Leslie noted that 'Rogers, Wordsworth, and Washington Irving were all under my roof together'.³

From the point of view of Wordsworth's poetry, his connections with Washington Allston are very much more

1. L.Y., p.204; WW to Sir George Beaumont, May 28 1825. The pictures exhibited by Leslie in 1825 show his predilection for literary subjects. There were two oil paintings: from The Merry Wives of Windsor ('Slender, with the assistance of Shallow, courting Anne Page') and from Walton's Lives ('Sir Henry Wotton presenting the Countess of Sabrina with a valuable jewel on the eve of his departure from Venice'). There were also drawings in illustration of the Waverley Novels. (See A. Graves, The Royal Academy of Arts, v.39.)

2. The letter is preserved in Dora Wordsworth's autograph book, is dated August 28 1837, and concerns a subscription to honour Constable, who had just died. Leslie begins: 'I trust you will pardon the liberty a stranger takes in submitting to you the accompanying circular'.

3. Autobiographical Recollections, 1.240-241. Leslie records that Wordsworth admired copies by John Jackson of the Reynolds portraits of Sir George and Lady Beaumont, which hung in his painting-room. Henry Crabb Robinson, who was also present, mentions 'a very pleasing picture of the christening that lately took place - making for the Queen. This was Leslie's picture of 'The Christening of the Princess Royal'. (NOR on Books and Writers, p.615).

important than his connections with Leslie. Wordsworth probably first heard of Allston through Coleridge, who had met him in Rome in 1806¹ and who thought Allston a 'paramount Genius'.² Coleridge introduced Allston to Beaumont, who commissioned a painting on a religious subject for his new church in the grounds of Coleorton Hall. Beaumont wanted a picture of the Resurrection, but Allston, as Beaumont told Wordsworth, 'objected & wishes to paint Peter delivered from prison - this will give him opportunity for effect & colour'.³ In the event, Beaumont was not very happy with the result, entitled 'The Angel Releasing St. Peter from Prison', which Allston exhibited at the British Institution in 1816.⁴ Wordsworth must have seen this

1. See Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E.L. Griggs, (Oxford, 1956-59), ii.1172.

2. Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Griggs, iii.534.

3. DCC, B to W, February 20 1814.

4. DCC, B to W, April 17 1816: 'Alston has sent the Picture of Peter delivered from prison to the British Institution - but he has not finished it to my mind - the sketch I think greatly superior - altho that has many faults - It is certainly excellently conceived upon the whole, but the Angel is certainly too material - the garment is too like flannel it should be of the consistence of a summer cloud - '. The picture is reproduced as Plate xxviii in E.P. Richardson, Washington Allston (Chicago, 1948), and so far as one can judge from a reproduction, there is some justification for Beaumont's criticism about the angel.

picture during one of his visits to Coleorton: it was one of the works which formed the basis of his appraisal of Allston which he wrote to the painter's brother-in-law after Allston's death in 1843:

... there was such high promise in the few works of his pencil which I had the opportunity of seeing, that they stood high in my estimation, much above any artist of his day. They indicated a decided power of higher conceptions, and his skill in dealing with the material of art struck me as far beyond that of any other painter of his time.(1)

This was obviously very high praise for Wordsworth, and it would seem to be little justified in view of Beaumont's criticism of the picture which he had commissioned. A year or two later, however, Beaumont wrote to Wordsworth about another picture which was to have a great effect on the poet:

he has ... painted a picture of Jacobs dream which is very striking, instead of a ladder, flights of steps lead onward far into glory - (2)

Wordsworth probably saw 'Jacob's Dream' during his visit to London in the winter of 1817-8, but the chronology of the sight of the picture and the poem which is related to

1. L.Y.,p.1185; WW to R.H. Dana (Sen.), October 1843.

2. DCC, B to W, undated, but summer 1817.

it is very confusing.¹ The poem in question is the effusion 'Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty', one of the best of Wordsworth's later poems.²

Allston (who had returned to America in 1818) was sent a manuscript copy of the poem transcribed by Mrs. Wordsworth 'in gratitude for the pleasure she received from the sight

1. Wordsworth said, in a note on the MS, that the poem was 'Composed during a sunset of transcendent Beauty, in the summer of 1817'. (P.W.,iv.10n.) Yet according to E.P. Richardson (Washington Allston, p.117), the picture was not painted until after Allston's visit to Paris in the autumn of 1817. Beaumont's letter to Wordsworth, however, quoted above, mentions the picture as finished by the summer of 1817. (Beaumont's letter, though undated, definitely belongs to the summer of 1817, for it refers at some length to the retirement from the stage of John Philip Kemble, which took place on June 27). Thus Richardson's date would appear to be wrong by some months; though this does not alter the fact that Wordsworth was not in London until December 1817, and therefore must have written the poem in the summer of 1818. (It was published in 1820). The only other solution is that Wordsworth wrote a first draft in 1817, and added the part which is related to the painting later; but the whole conception of the poem is so closely bound up with the picture that it seems more likely that Wordsworth made a mistake over the date.

2. P.W.,iv.10. David Perkins, in Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity, (Cambridge, Mass.,1964) comments on Wordsworth's use of wit in his later poetry. His metaphors, says Perkins, are most successful when they illustrate religious conceptions, and (although Perkins does not use it) this poem is a good example of Wordsworth's baptized imagination' at work. See Perkins, Op.Cit.,pp.252-257.

of Allston's pictures, in particular "Jacob's Dream".¹
In a note to the poem's third stanza, Wordsworth wrote:

In these lines I am under obligation to
the exquisite picture of "Jacob's Dream", by Mr.
Alstone, now in America. It is pleasant to
make this public acknowledgment to a man of
genius, whom I have the honour to rank among
my friends.(2)

The lines to which Wordsworth was referring are as
follows:

- Wings at my shoulders seem to play;
But, rooted here, I stand and gaze
On those bright steps that heavenward raise
Their practicable way.
Come forth, ye drooping old men, look abroad,
And see to what fair countries ye are bound!(3)

The 'bright steps' are the mountain ridges, like steps
marching into the sunset:

And, if there be whom broken ties
Afflict, or injuries assail,
Yon hazy ridges to their eyes
Present a glorious scale,
Climbing suffused with sunny air,
To stop - no record hath told where!
And tempting Fancy to ascend,
And with immortal Spirits blend!(4)

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1. Jared B. Flagg, Life and Letters of Washington Allston,
(New York, 1892), pp.133-134. Quoted in L.Y., p.1184n.
 2. P.W., iv.397.
 3. Ibid, iv.12; lines 49-54.
 4. P.W., iv.11-12; lines 41-48.

In a footnote to the poem Wordsworth explicitly compares this effect to Jacob's ladder;

The multiplication of mountain-ridges, described at the commencement of the third Stanza of this Ode as a kind of Jacob's Ladder, leading to Heaven, is produced either by watery Vapours, or sunny haze; - in the present instance by the latter cause.(1)

This curious note (half imagination, half meteorology) presupposes a two-stage leap of the imagination. Firstly there is the conception of Jacob's ladder as steps, rather than as a normal ladder; and secondly there is the use of mountain ridges, under certain conditions, to make the steps. Wordsworth was able to complete the second leap because the first had been done for him by Allston: so that when he looked into the sunset at Rydal, and saw the mountains rising step by step into the sunny haze, he remembered Allston's picture and what it stood for. The picture, as Beaumont's letter suggests, was original and unusual: 'instead of a ladder, flights of steps lead onward far into glory'. The sleeping figure of Jacob lies in the foreground, surrounded by groups of angels in twos and threes, while the steps ascend towards the back of the picture, disappearing into light, with more groups of angels in the middle and far

1. Ibid, iv.13.

distance.¹

The process by which the poem evolved seems not unlike the composition of the 'Peele Castle' poem: an idea finds a point of reference in a picture, which stands as a centre of ideas which hold the poem together. In this instance the central idea is that an evening of such splendour and beauty brings heaven and earth very close together -

That frail Mortality may see -
What is? - ah no, but what can be!(2)

which is related, of course, to Jacob's vision at Bethel, of heaven as near and accessible. Wordsworth's vision is obtained through the evening of splendour, and points two ways: forward to death and the hope of immortality, and backwards to the vision of childhood - so that part of the poem (as Wordsworth points out) is connected with the 'Immortality Ode':³

1. The picture is owned by Lord Leconfield, at Petworth; it is reproduced as Plate xli in E.P. Richardson, Washington Allston.

2. P.W.,iv.10; lines 7-8.

3. In the footnote (P.W.,iv.13): 'Allusions to the Ode entitled "Intimations of Immortality" pervade the last Stanza of the foregoing Poem.'

Such hues from their celestial Urn
Were wont to stream before mine eye,
Where'er it wandered in the morn
Of blissful infancy.
This glimpse of glory, why renewed?(1)

The poem does not answer this question, but rejoices in the combination of earthly and unearthly, of local and mystical;

An intermingling of Heaven's pomp is spread
On grounds which British shepherds tread!(2)

and this is not unconnected with the combination of imagination and meteorology which has been noticed in the footnote.

For these ideas of vision Allston's picture provides a reason and a justification. It is possible, by looking at the picture, to see the process by which Wordsworth turned a description of a fine evening into an expression of faith; and it is also possible to see the picture as the visual expression of the idea which holds the poem together, the conception of a mountain landscape as a series of heavenly steps, with all that this implies. It is, I think, the strength of this central symbol which lifts the poem above so many written at this time, and for this we owe a great debt to Allston's picture.

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1. P.W.,iv.12; lines 61-65.
 2. P.W.,iv.11; lines 39-40.



Plate 2. Washington Allston: Jacob's Dream. (Collection of Lord Leconfield, Petworth.)

Chapter 8. Wordsworth's experience of pictures seen on tours before 1837.

There were two major ways in which Wordsworth gained knowledge and experience of pictorial art. The first was through his connections with contemporary painters, and the interest in the contemporary world of art which followed; the second, to which we now turn, was the series of visits which he paid to the Continent during his lifetime, which gave him the opportunity to see the works of the great European masters on a large scale. In England he had had an introduction to them after 1803, in the examples of their work which was to be found there - the Raphael Cartoons, the pictures in Beaumont's collection and in Angerstein's. The journeys abroad gave him the opportunity to consolidate this introduction into a satisfactory amount of knowledge and actual visual experience of the greatest painting in Europe.

There were many visits abroad, beginning with the walking tour with Robert Jones in 1790 and continuing to the visit to Italy with Henry Crabb Robinson in 1837. The pattern of interest in pictures is almost exactly what we should expect from studying Wordsworth's relations with the English art world: there was not much concern to begin with, but it

increased after the friendship with Beaumont and the others had begun. There was little to be recorded in the early visits, but a great deal in the tours of 1820, 1823 and 1828; while the tour of 1837 will require a chapter to itself.

During the walking tour of 1790 it is obvious that Wordsworth was more interested in such things as the Swiss landscape and the Swiss people, and there is no mention anywhere of a work of art. The first mention, in fact, comes from his stay in Paris in 1791, which gave rise to his enthusiasm which has brought upon him the unanimous scorn of twentieth century critics.¹ Without trying to ignore this error of judgment (though Le Brun was not by any means a bad painter²) two pleas should be made in Wordsworth's defence. The first is that painting of this period and of this kind was fashionable at the time: in Italy, as we shall see, the most popular painters were the Seicento painters from the school of Bologna, the Carracci, Guido Reni, Domenichino and Guercino, with the addition of Raphael. In Flemish painting Rubens and

1. See above, Introduction.

2. See Sir Anthony Blunt, Art and Architecture in France, 1500 to 1700, (London, 1953), p. 242.

Vandyke had eclipsed all others. The earlier centuries were regarded patronisingly as a rather unsatisfactory twilight out of which emerged the full glory of Raphael and his contemporaries and successors. Le Brun had the advantage of belonging to a century which was regarded as the apex of artistic achievement, and an enthusiasm on his behalf was only to be expected. Indeed, Legouis notes that the picture was one of the sights of Paris.¹

The second thing that must be said on Wordsworth's behalf is that at that period of his life he had no pretensions to be anything more than an ignoramus in matters of art criticism. Thirteen years afterwards he wrote to Beaumont of his 'never having had an opportunity of studying any pictures whatsoever...'²; and in 1808 - 'I have not much confidence in my judgment of pictures, except when it coincides with yours'.³ Before such a recognition of his own inadequacy in 1808 it is not very fair to condemn an error of judgment in 1791; it is certainly hardly surprising that Wordsworth should have been easily and deeply moved by

1. See above Chapter 1.

2. E.L., pp. 401-402; WW to Sir George Beaumont, July 20 1804.

3. M.Y., p. 186; WW to Sir George Beaumont, April 8 [1808].

a popular and sentimental work.

The ignorance of 1791 continued in the next trip abroad, which was the winter spent with Dorothy Wordsworth in Goslar, the winter of 1798-99. There are, indeed, two unimportant references in Dorothy's account of the journey known as the 'Hamburgh Journal'.¹ at Hamburg they visited the house of a French painter, not named, and found 'the painter's lady very warm in her vindication of her husband's style of painting'.² They also visited a church, where Dorothy was not impressed by the pictures.³ But this is all. The

1. Journal of a visit to Hamburgh and of Journey from Hamburgh to Goslar (1798).

2. E. de Selincourt, ed., Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, (London, 1941), i. 24. (Hereafter referred to as 'Journals of D.W.').

3. Journals of D.W., i. 28: 'St. Christopher's ... is adorned with a number of images within, which looked to me paltry and gaudy; there are some pictures, which I should think were ill-painted. There is one of the Saint fording the river with Christ upon his back, a giant figure, which amused me not a little.' 'St. Christopher's' may be a mistake for St. Catharine's, which 'has an original painting of the famous orthodox Priest Melchior, of whom a fable is related, that he brought Christ, when an infant thro' the red sea'. (A Sketch of Hambourg - It's commerce, customs and manners, by an English Resident There, Hambourg, 1801, p. 10.)

Wordsworths were looking for 'a village near a University, in a pleasant, and if we can a mountainous, country',¹ perhaps with an eye to the Picturesque, in spite of the reaction in Descriptive Sketches and 'Tintern Abbey'. But villages near Universities proved too expensive,² and they ended up at Goslar, which was near mountains, but which had no opportunities for intellectual, cultural or even social life. Thus they saw no more pictures, or none which seemed worthy of any mention.

In these early visits to the Continent, the sight of a painting was no more than an occasional accident. The later tours show much more of a balance between works of nature and works of art. This is particularly true of the tours of 1820, 1828 and 1837, which took Wordsworth to areas of great natural beauty as well as cities of art treasures. The visit to Flanders and Holland in 1823 was an exception, being devoted almost entirely to the great cities of the Low Countries, and covering, in a short time, a great number of important museums and churches. 'Adventures we have had few', wrote Mary Wordsworth in her journal at the end of this tour, 'but

1. E. L., pp. 189-190; WW to James Losh, March 11 [1798].

2. E. L., pp. 193-194; DW to Mrs. Rawson, June [- July 3] 1798.

I trust we have stored up thoughts & Images that will not die.¹

The first of these later tours took Wordsworth and a party to Switzerland and the Italian Lakes in 1820. They spent much time in the Alps, retracing the steps which Wordsworth and Robert Jones had trod in 1790, but they also saw many pictures before arriving at the Alps, and later in Milan and Paris. At Ghent, for instance, Mary Wordsworth noted 'fine pictures' in her journal after a visit to the Museum of the Academy and to some of the churches,² and more pictures at Namur and Liège.³ At Aix-la-Chapelle there was 'Christ after being taken from the Cross, by Vandyke'⁴ and at

1. Mary Wordsworth's Journal of the tour of 1823 is in the Dove Cottage Collection. This entry is dated June 11.

2. Mary Wordsworth's journal of this tour is in the Dove Cottage Collection. (Hereafter referred to as 'MW's 1820 Journal'). A few extracts from this journal were published in 1884 by W. A. Knight, as notes to Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820. See his edition of The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, (Edinburgh, 1884), vi. 196-292. The description of Ghent (not published) is dated July 15.

3. MW's 1820 Journal, July 18 and 19.

4. Ibid, July 20.

Cologne 'the famous Picture of St. Peter nailed to the Cross, by Rubens'.¹ Also at Cologne, Dorothy Wordsworth mentioned the Cathedral, with its Rubens tapestries, and its monuments in the side chapels.² In addition to this, the early part of the tour gave rise to Wordsworth's sonnet on Bruges, which begins -

The Spirit of Antiquity - enshrined
In sumptuous buildings, vocal in sweet song,
In picture, speaking with heroic tongue,...(3)

After Cologne, however, the pleasures were of a different kind, and the travellers were preoccupied with the scenery and the hazards of crossing the Alps. Thus no more pictures were mentioned until the travellers reached Milan.⁴ They had been joined at Lucerne by Henry Crabb Robinson, whose travelling diary is another record of what they saw. At

1. Ibid, July 21.

2. Journals of D.W., ii. 41-42.

3. P.W., iii. 165.

4. If we except the decorations on the covered bridges at Lucerne, which, at the suggestion of Robinson, were incorporated into the 'Desultory Stanzas' which Wordsworth composed on receiving the proofs of Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820. Wordsworth himself said that these decorations 'are not to be spoken of as works of art'. (P.W., iii. 200 and note, P.W. , iii. 488-489).

Milan he noticed particularly Guercino's 'Abraham and Isaac' and Albani's 'Cupids dancing round a tree', and his remarks on Raphael and Leonardo also show his conventional 1820 taste:

One Raphael only is in the gallery, a very early piece - The Marriage of the Virgin and St. Joseph. It is one of those pieces which being known to be by Raphael, shews the hand of the master, but otherwise it might have been thought the work of his teacher Perugino or of any other painter of the same age. - Great purity of expression mixed with hardness of outline and a great want of perspective are remarkable.¹

The patronising attitude to the earlier Italian painters which is demonstrated here was very common at this time, and it was even extended to Leonardo da Vinci, as Robinson goes on to show:

Leonardo da Vinci has furnished a marriage of Cana and several other fine pictures, but there are scarcely any pictures by the masters of the very highest reputation. (2)

At Milan, however, was Leonardo's celebrated fresco of 'The Last Supper', about which Wordsworth wrote the sonnet:

The searching damps and many an envious flaw
Have marred this Work; the calm ethereal grace,
The love deep-seated in the Saviour's face,
The mercy, goodness, have not failed to awe
The Elements; as they do melt and thaw

1. From Henry Crabb Robinson's Travelling Diary, which exists in a number of small notebooks in Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London. Selections from it may be found in E. J. Morley, ed., Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers, (London, 1938), abbreviated here to 'HCR on Books and Writers'.

2. This and the preceding reference come from Robinson's travelling diary, Sept 2 1820.

The heart of the Beholder - and erase
(At least for one rapt moment) every trace
Of disobedience to the primal law.
The annunciation of the dreadful truth
Made to the Twelve, survives: lip, forehead, cheek,
Of what it utters, while the unguilty seek
Unquestionable meanings - still bespeak
A labour worthy of eternal youth! (1)

He saw a volume containing sketches by Leonardo in the
Ambrosian Library, and Robinson recorded his comment:

'How instructive it is,' said Wordsworth, 'to
see how this great man began by studying the
mechanical and ended with the beautiful, which he
did not attempt until he had made himself master
of every kind of machinery, all mathematical pro-
portions. It was not till late that he ventured
on beauty as exhibited in the human form.' (2)

In addition to seeing the Leonardo, the travellers
undertook 'labours in the heat in quest of churches, entering
every one that lay in the road we chanced to take', as
Dorothy Wordsworth noted.³ Of these the only one which
Mary Wordsworth remarked upon in her Journal (besides the
Santa Maria delle Grazie) was the 'Monastery Maggiore -
Chapel built by Brabante & painted by Luino, - some of the

1. P.W., iii. 183-184.

2. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 253.

3. Journals of D.W., ii. 237.

pictures very beautiful, & the Chapel curious'.¹

The travellers spent some three or four days in Milan; and then returned over the Simplon Pass to Lausanne and Geneva, and thence through Dijon to Paris. There de Selincourt summarises their stay:

They saw all the sights of Paris and went six times to the Louvre. 'The pictures of Raphael, Titian and Poussin rivet me - I cannot like Rubens' fleshy women - his children very sweet' is Mary's entry in her journal. (2)

Wordsworth himself, however, was more impressed by the zoo in the Jardin des Plantes (which seems, by all accounts, to have been a remarkable one for the age) and told Lord Lonsdale that the statues and pictures of the Louvre affected him feebly in comparison.³

After this tour of 1820, the next took place in 1823, when William and Mary Wordsworth spent the early summer in Flanders and Holland.⁴ On the way there they stopped in

1. MW's 1820 Journal, September 3. The series of frescoes by Luino represented the life of St. Catherine, and there were pictures of SS. Cecilia, Ursula, Apollonia and Lucia.

2. E. de Selincourt, Dorothy Wordsworth, (Oxford, 1933), p. 342.

3. M.Y., p. 902; WW to Lord Lonsdale, October 7 [1820].

4. From May 16 to June 11.

London, where Henry Crabb Robinson recorded a visit to the house of Charles Aders, a merchant and connoisseur with a distinguished private collection of German and Flemish pictures:¹

I met by appointment at Aders's, Wordsworth, Sir George Beaumont, and Rogers. Mrs. Aders was unwell, but was present. She had the satisfaction of seeing her pictures highly admired.... Sir George seemed to be in particular interested by these specimens of old German art. The Perugini (three figures in a sort of open temple) he declared to be in parts hardly distinguishable from Raphael. The great painting by Van Eyck he spent a long time in examining. (2).

One of the 'specimens of old German art' was a Dürer, 'Portrait of an Old Woman', and the Perugino was a picture of the Holy Family.³ The 'great painting by Van Eyck' was a good copy of the 'Adoration of the Lamb' from the altarpiece in the Cathedral at Ghent. The unusual bias towards

1. See M.K. Joseph, Charles Aders, a biographical note, (Auckland, New Zealand, 1955). Wordsworth's first meeting with Aders had taken place three years earlier: On November 19 1820 the Wordsworths and the Lambs breakfasted with Aders, and Robinson noted 'Aders gratified by having his pictures duly appreciated'. (HCR on Books and Writers, p. 257.)

2. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 292.

3. They were bought, among others, by Robinson at the sale which followed Aders's bankruptcy in 1839, and are described by him in the diary, May 28 1839. (HCR on Books and Writers, p. 572.)

pictures from Northern Europe which was shown in Aders's collection made it a suitable prelude to a tour of the cities of Flanders and Holland.

The first of these cities was Bruges, where they had 'no comfortable examination of the pictures in the Churches' because of the frequency of the services.¹ At Ghent Mary Wordsworth noted 'A good picture of a Bishop in his robes within the Altar railing of the Church of St. Nicholas' and 'The Vandyke 1644'.² But the first great city was Antwerp, where Mary Wordsworth began to revise her poor opinion of Rubens, when confronted with his religious paintings: they 'visited the Cathedral & feasted our eyes upon those magnificent Pictures of Reubens, over & over again'.³ The three

1. Mary Wordsworth's journal of this tour (referred to hereafter as 'MW's 1823 Journal') is similar to the 1820 one; it is in the Dove Cottage Collection, and a few extracts were published by W. A. Knight in his Life of Wordsworth (Edinburgh, 1889), appended to his edition of the Poetical Works. This extract (not published) is dated May 19.

2. MW's 1823 Journal, May 21; the first picture was by N. Roose, 'Call of St. Nicholas to the Episcopal Office', and the 'Vandyke 1644' was a celebrated picture of the Crucifixion, painted in that year.

3. W. A. Knight, The Life of William Wordsworth, (Edinburgh, 1889), iii. 83.

great Rubens paintings in the Cathedral at Antwerp were regarded as his finest works - the 'Descent from the Cross', the 'Elevation of the Cross' and the 'Ascension of the Virgin'; as Charles Tennant, whose tour had been undertaken in 1821-22, wrote:

Here the noblest works of the immortal Rubens... transfix with deepest interest the attention of the beholder, and with his thoughts seem to transfer his very existence to the time and place of the awful events here represented. (1)

In addition to this visit to the Cathedral, they also went to the favourite attraction of the Church of St. James, where there was the Rubens family monument and a picture of the Holy Family in which the various members of the family of Rubens represented their counterparts from Scripture. As if this was not enough, Mary Wordsworth then noted:

Besides the several Churches, so rich in fine Paintings, we spent much time in the Museum - formerly the Convent des Recollects, an extremely interesting place, independant of the Treasure now contained in it. - We brought away catalogues & itineraries which give the description of each picture. The one by which I was most impressed was a Christ on the Cross by Van Dyck - there was a chaste simplicity about his piece which quite rivetted me - the principal figure in the centre - St. Dominique in an attitude of contemplation - the Ste Catherine embracing the feet of the Cross & lifting a countenance of deep-searching agony, which, compared with the expression of patient suffering in that of the Saviour was almost too much

1. Charles Tennant, A Tour through Parts of the Netherlands, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Savoy, and France, in the year 1821-2, (London, 1824), i. 21.

to look upon - yet once seen it held me there. (1)

We visited likewise two private collections...(2)

From Antwerp they went north, and the pre-eminence of Rubens and Vandyke gave way to that of Rembrandt as they turned from the Flemish to the Dutch School. At The Hague, Mary Wordsworth remarked that 'The King's Gallery most attracted us, with its magnificent Collection of Pictures'.³ In this Collection, Rembrandt was the first master, supported by painters such as Jan Steen, Paul Potter, Cuyp, Ruysdael and Van de Velde. Similarly at Amsterdam, Mary Wordsworth singled out Rembrandt:

At the Surgeons' hall saw Rembrant's fine Picture of the Dissector - principal figure wore his hat - 7 Spectators uncovered & the Corpse: three living hands appear besides the Dissector's he wears a Vandyk's collar, the rest ruffs round the neck - date 1632. (4)

The centre-piece of the great collection at the Museum

1. W. A. Knight, The Life of William Wordsworth, iii. 84; the spelling and punctuation from the original.

2. MW's 1823 Journal, May 23.

3. Knight, Op.Cit., iii. 85.

4. MW's 1823 Journal, June 2: This is a very accurate description of 'The Anatomy Lesson of Professor Nicolaes Tulp', now in the Mauritshuis at The Hague.

was also a Rembrandt - the 'Night Watch'. There Mary Wordsworth found 'too many pictures to particularize - descriptions are given in the Catalogues of those of Rembrant & Vandervelt - but several of Ostade & Wouverman &c &c are delightful'.¹ It is clear that between the Museums of The Hague and Amsterdam, they would have seen a fine and representative collection of Dutch painting.

Returning through Malines, they came once again within the influence of the inevitable Rubens and Vandyke. They visited three churches, and Mary Wordsworth's entries are as enthusiastic as any on the tour. They saw Rubens's 'Miraculous Draught of Fishes',² in the church of Notre Dame, and in the Cathedral one of the greatest pictures of Vandyke:

Vandyke's Crucifixion exquisite - Our Saviour's agony contrasted with that of the two thieves - Mary Mag - The Virgin St John & two Apostles at the foot of the Cross - Two Executioners & horse to the left - sweetly composed - sky & coloring quite sublime. (3)

In the church of St. Jean they saw another Rubens, an altar-piece with wings, the centre representing the Adoration

1. MW's 1823 Journal, June 2.

2. Plate 210 in Rubens, Paintings and Drawings, Phaidon Press (London, 1939).

3. MW's 1823 Journal, June 6.

of the Magi and two of the wings the Martyrdom of St. John and St. John on the island of Patmos (described by Mary Wordsworth as 'St. John & Eagle').¹

Malines was the last city in which Mary Wordsworth remarked on seeing pictures in her journal of this tour. She and William were back staying with friends in Kent on June 11, after only four weeks abroad, but four weeks which were remarkable for the number of pictures seen and the comprehensive coverage of Flemish and Dutch art.

The third and final foreign tour undertaken before 1837 was the journey made by Wordsworth, his daughter Dora, and Coleridge. They began with Bruges, Ghent and Brussels, and then travelled down the Rhine as far as Godesberg, where they stayed at a summer house owned by Charles Aders, returning through Amsterdam and Antwerp.² On the way through London, even before the tour had really started, we find Wordsworth looking at pictures: breakfasting with Aders,³ visiting the

1. Ibid, June 6.

2. Dora Wordsworth's journal of this tour, neatly bound and paginated, is in the Dove Cottage Collection. (Hereafter referred to as 'Dora Wordsworth's journal, 1828').

3. E. J. Morley, ed. Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle, (Oxford, 1927), i. 188.

National Gallery twice¹ and seeing an exhibition of Old Masters at the British Institution.²

Dora's record of the pictures seen show that she was as conventional as her mother in preferring the later Flemish painters to the earlier. In spite of her visit to Aders's house with its copy of the Van Eyck altar-piece, she remarked at the Cathedral of Ghent only upon 'the Crucifixion by Vandyke in bad preservation'.³ At the Museum of the Academy she noted Rubens's picture of St. Francis receiving the stigmata, and a picture of a fishmonger by Adrian van Utrecht; 'some good Pictures but my Tutors tell me none quite first rate'.⁴ Dora's reliance on authority emerges again at Brussels, where she also provides direct evidence of a preference of Wordsworth's own:

To the Prince of Orange's Palace in the Place royale - a small but very choice collection of Pictures. A superb Rubens - the subject a boar hunt - which my Father and Mr. G. prefer to any picture they know of this great Master - so wild - so fiery - trees wonderful, bright sky peeping through & behind their branches -

1. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 357 and p. 359.
2. Ibid, p. 358.
3. Dora Wordsworth's journal, 1828, p. 7.
4. Ibid, p. 8.

Our time was sadly limited - hours might have been passed delightfully looking at that Picture alone - then there were others of Rembrant Vandyke &c all first rate as I was taught. (1)

Wordsworth was no doubt schooled in the appreciation of Rubens's landscape painting by Sir George Beaumont, who owned a particularly fine example of it.

During the journey down the Rhine, Dora saw no pictures; at Cologne, where they would have been a great attraction, she was unwell through heat and fatigue. It is quite possible, however, that Wordsworth and Coleridge revisited St. Peter's, to see the Rubens picture of St. Peter nailed to the Cross which Mary Wordsworth had admired eight years before. But there is no evidence of anything else until the travellers had returned to Amsterdam. There, after an excursion, Dora and her father -

made our way to the Museum - where we found Mr Coleridge enjoying the Pictures - Many delightful ones - Gerard Dow's celebrated one with the lights. Rembrants night watch & others as interesting which would fill my little book a thousand times. (2)

After this the travellers covered much of the same ground which Wordsworth had passed during the two previous

1. Dora Wordsworth's journal, 1828, p. 11.

2. Ibid, pp. 74-75. Dow's picture is probably 'Girl at the window with a lamp in her hand'.

tours: after the Museum at Amsterdam came the Museum at The Hague, followed by the Cathedral at Antwerp, together with the Church of St. James. At Ghent they had a quick look at Vandyke's Crucifixion, and finally at Bruges visited the great churches several times.

The pattern which these tours before 1837 demonstrate is consistent with everything else connected with Wordsworth's interest in pictorial art.

In addition to the growing interest in the later years, we may also remark the kind of appreciation which is shown in the records of these tours. The list of pictures draws almost entirely on the work of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; in the work of the Flemish School, Rubens and Vandyke dominate to the virtual exclusion of everyone else; in spite of Aders's copy of the Van Eyck altar-piece at Ghent, the original receives no mention. Indeed, from Van Eyck to Brughel, Flemish painting is as though it had never been. The same, with more excuse perhaps, may be said of the Dutch School, which is dominated by Rembrandt and his contemporaries. Wordsworth and his family, in fact, were the most conventional of early nineteenth-century travellers so far as painting is concerned: their interests reflect exactly those of their guide-books, or those of the

guide-books of the period. A similar tendency may be seen in the Italian tour of 1837, which reinforces these impressions.

Chapter 9. The Tour to Italy in 1837.

'The enthusiasm for Italian travel', writes C.P. Brand, 'reached its peak shortly after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and continued for about ten years.'¹ Brand distinguishes the rise of an 'Italomania' during this period,² and it is not therefore surprising that Wordsworth (who had learnt Italian at Cambridge) should have wished to visit Italy. Originally the plan was that he should go with Sir George Beaumont, but this fell through,³ and Wordsworth did not succeed in his aim⁴ until 1837, when his companion was Henry Crabb Robinson. They left England on March 19 and arrived back in London on August 7, and their route was summarized by Robinson as follows:

Through France along the Corniche road to Pisa, by Volterra to Siena; thence to Rome. After a month there, we returned by the three Tuscan monasteries to Florence; thence through Parma to Milan and then turning eastward by the lakes of Como, Iseo, and Garda to Venice. We

1. C.P. Brand, Italy and the English Romantics, (Cambridge, 1957), p.23.

2. Ibid, p.3, and passim.

3. See L.Y., p.204; WW to Sir George Beaumont, May 28 1825: 'Most reluctantly do I give up the hope of our seeing Italy together'.

4. Apart from the sight of Milan and some of the Italian Lakes in 1820.

crossed the Alps by the new road along the valley of the Piave and that of the Drave through Werfen, Hallein, etc., to Salzburg.... to Munich, Stuttgart, and to Heidelberg and then through Brussels to Calais.(1)

Wordsworth considered the Italian part of this journey as the most important: 'At present I consider our Tour finished', he wrote from Munich, 'and all my thoughts are fixed upon home'.² The evidence is that he took this Italian part of the journey very seriously: he undertook it, he told his wife, 'as a duty',³ and he worked hard and conscientiously to see the right things. 'I have kept duty constantly in my eyes,' he wrote, 'and have greatly enriched my mind.'⁴ This entailed a degree of perseverance which, for a man of sixty-seven, was a considerable strain, as he confessed in a letter from Rome:

1. HCR on Books and Writers, p.515. There is a more detailed itinerary in C. Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth (London, 1851), ii. 316-318. The Memoirs contain an account of this tour supplied by Robinson (together with the itinerary), which, together with Robinson's travelling diary, forms the main source of reference. Selections from Robinson's diary in 'HCR on Books and Writers' have been supplemented by consulting the original in Dr. Williams's Library, Gordon Square, London.

2. L.Y., p.878; WW to MW, July 17 1837.

3. L.Y., p.879; WW to MW, July 17 1837.

4. Ibid.

Of villas and their gardens I have seen I can scarce tell you how many, some from the views they command of the city, old and new, very impressive. But of churches and pictures and statues in them I am fairly tired - in fact I am too old in head, limbs and eyesight for such hard work, such toiling and such straining and so many disappointments either in finding the most celebrated picture covered up with curtains, a service going on so that one cannot ask to have a sight, or the church closed when one arrives at the door.(1)

This letter carries with it an air of dogged perseverance, as though the writer had determined, against his inclinations, to see as much as possible. Robinson noted that 'Wordsworth confesses it a duty rather than a pleasure to make the circuit of palaces as well as churches',² but it is quite clear that the circuit of palaces was considered by Wordsworth to be in the line of duty, and consequently not neglected.

Selections from Robinson's diary have preserved an oversimplified Wordsworth, the lover of nature and not of art - thus: 'Wordsworth has little pleasure in antiquities, but every form of natural beauty attracts him'.³ However,

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1. L.Y., p.856; WW to MW and Dora W[? May 9; p.m. May 20].
 2. HCR on Books and Writers, p.520.
 3. Ibid, ii.519.

if we examine the original diary, the pattern emerges as rather different, for it is clear that Wordsworth actually spent far more time looking at works of art than his companion. No doubt the sense of duty was responsible, but Wordsworth frequently kept at it long after Robinson had given up -- in Milan,¹ Rome,² Bologna³ and Munich.⁴ In each of these places the travellers separated, Wordsworth going to look at works of art while Robinson stayed at home or visited friends. Robinson, a gregarious person, had no preconceived ideas about his duty on a Continental tour, and set out to enjoy himself. In a moment of irritation Wordsworth described Robinson's enjoyments as

loitering about towns, gossiping, and attending reading-rooms, and going to coffee houses; and at table d'hotes etc., gabbling

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1. Robinson's travelling diary, June 10: 'He went to the Brera Gallery and I to the Mylius's'.
 2. Ibid, May 12: 'Wordsworth had planned to go to the Vatican with Mr. Severne, and I declined going with them'.
 3. Ibid, June 7: 'Wordsworth went alone to San Luca; I met him on his return'.
 4. Ibid, July 18: 'Wordsworth and I walked forth to the Pinakotheca or Bilder Gallery... I will not attempt any account of the pictures which I saw today very slightly... I left Wordsworth alone between 11 and 12'.

German, or any other tongue, all which places and practices are my abomination.(1)

When this happened, Wordsworth's chief resort was the local art gallery. 'I am quite tired of this place,' he wrote from Munich, 'the weather has been very bad, and after the galleries close which is at 12 o'clock and one, I have nothing to do....'(2)

The route followed by Wordsworth and Robinson during their tour enabled them to see all the most popular places except Naples, where there was an outbreak of cholera. Apart from this, however, the Italian schools of painting were well represented along their route. They went at an interesting time, when the critical taste was shifting, and their opinions reflect the period of readjustment in artistic appreciation. The guide books of the years which immediately followed the wars against Napoleon were, according to J.R. Hale, 'intensely conservative':

Nearly all of them were written generations previously and merely vamped up to supply the sudden demand after 1814. They enshrined the opinions of the mid-eighteenth century, and drew attention to the works most valued then. Apart

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1. L.Y., p.878; WW to MW, July 17 1837.
 2. L.Y., p.882; WW to MW, July 17 1837.

from Michelangelo and the late Raphael, the heroes of the guide books were Titian, Guido, Domenichino, Guercino and the Carracci.(1)

As these names suggest, guide books of the period unite in assuming Rome and Bologna to be the pre-eminent art cities of Italy. Rome had Michelangelo and Raphael, together with such celebrated frescoes as Guido's Aurora and palaces decorated by the Carracci, Domenichino and Guercino. As for Bologna - 'All the world seems captivated with that city', wrote T. Uwins in 1826, 'and the great authority in criticism, Mr. Hazlitt, told me in Rome: "Sir, I patronize Guido".'² Occasionally, like J.T. James in 1820, writers mention the earlier Italian painters: James said that Masaccio, Filippo Lippi and Ghirlandaio 'by no means deserve to lie in that oblivion to which they have generally been consigned by posterity.'³ Frequently, however, the early painters were described in terms that were apologetic and patronising. Here is Thomas Phillips,

1. J.R. Hale, ed., The Italian Journal of Samuel Rogers, (London, 1956), p.93.

2. M.T.S. Raimbach, Memoirs and Recollections of Abraham Raimbach, (London, 1843), p.195.

3. The Rev. J.T. James, The Italian Schools of Painting, (London, 1820) quoted by J.R. Hale, England and the Italian Renaissance, (London, 1954), p.117. Chapter 5 of Hale's book contains a useful summary of the changes in taste in this period.

Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy, writing in 1833:

We carefully examined and re-examined works of different ages, from the 10th to the 17th century; and found that there were two important points relative to the art of painting of which we had previously attained but very imperfect ideas. First, we were impressed with pleasure in beholding the propriety, indeed, I may say the perfection of feeling and understanding that mingled with the imperfections to be found in the works of the early painters; those of the 13th and 14th centuries, the period of the resuscitation of art in Italy. We saw with surprise, that the peculiar beauties of thought exhibited in those imperfect paintings had been far too lightly dwelt upon by writers on the subject;...(1)

Similarly, Josiah Conder, in his Italy, published in 1831, describes the Campo Santo at Pisa:

But the chief interest of the cemetery is derived from the frescoes with which the walls are nearly covered, the work chiefly of Giotto and his pupils, Gozzoli, Rondinelli, and Andrew and Simon Orcagna. For the early period in which they were painted, says Mr. Williams, 'they possess considerable merit. In the works of Benozzo Gozzoli, we may trace a happy choice of nature, expressed with taste and ease. In those too of Buffamacco, Giotto, Aretino, and Veneziano, several figures are drawn with an ease and freedom which would not discredit a more refined period of art'... In the chapel of the cemetery, at one end of the cloister, are some smaller pictures of early date; a Madonna by

1. Thomas Phillips, Lectures on the History and Principles of Painting, (London, 1833), preface, pp.x-xi.

Cimabue, and a picture by Giovanni Pisano, his master, painted upon leather, and a curious specimen of the infancy of art.(1)

Samuel Rogers, Wordsworth's friend and the author of Italy, visited Florence in 1814 and 1815, and was one of the few people capable of appreciating the work of Cimabue and Giotto. He owned two paintings attributed to Cimabue, and he was one of the few visitors of the time to mention the frescoes (as opposed to the monuments, which were a great attraction) in the Santa Croce. But even Rogers thought the finest picture in Florence was the Martyrdom of St. Catherine by Bugiardini, in the church of Santa Maria Novella - the dramatic had an obvious appeal:

Is not this the best in Florence? The Saint herself & the light from heaven upon her exquisite. The story admirably told. The consternation of all, blasted by excess of light.(2)

1. Josiah Conder, Italy, (London, 1831), iii.11; 'Williams' is probably H.W. Williams, Travels in Italy, Greece and the Ionian Islands, (London, 1820).

2. J.R. Hale, ed., The Italian Journal of Samuel Rogers, p.202; Bugiardini lived from 1475 to 1554. Rogers's opinion is echoed by Marianne Colston, Journal of a Tour in France, Switzerland, and Italy, during the years 1819, 20 and 21 (Paris, 1822), i.104: 'Many excellent paintings adorn the chapels, amongst which I was particularly struck by the Martyrdom of St. Catherine, by Bugiardini'.

However, there is no doubt that at the time when Wordsworth and Robinson went on their tour, the interest in the earlier Italian schools was reviving, to emerge fully in the next decade in the powerful advocacy of Ruskin. It is not entirely clear which guide-book they took with them: Robinson at one point¹ mentions 'Forsyth', referring to Joseph Forsyth's Remarks on Antiquities, Arts, and Letters during an Excursion in Italy, in the years 1802 1803.² However, I suspect that Robinson did not use this book, but another which quotes from it extensively: this was Josiah Conder's Italy (1831). Not only was this more up to date than Forsyth's book, but also its three small volumes were easy to carry, and furthermore, Conder was known to Robinson personally.³

1. Robinson's travelling diary, April 24. 'We also saw the church of San Quirino [at Siena] because Forsyth had recommended some pictures by Vanni'. See below p.237.

2. I have used the Second Edition, (London, 1816), hereafter referred to as 'Remarks'.

3. HCR on Books and Writers, p.849. The chief argument in favour of their taking Forsyth and not Conder is the way in which they followed the former's example and visited Laverna, Camaldoli and Vallombrosa, on their journey from Rome to Florence. See below, p. 242n.

Wordsworth had also read (and possessed a copy of) Gilbert Burnet's Travels through France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, (London, 1750). See C.N. Coe, Wordsworth and the Literature of Travel, (New York, 1953), p.28.

That they took with them either Forsyth or Conder is almost certainly confirmed by Robinson's comment on one of the first works of art they saw in Italy, a basso-relievo by Michaelangelo at Genoa.¹ It was 'a sort of bust pieta' and 'if really by Michelangelo it shews him capable of all the grace and charm that seem most opposed to his genius. The deep feeling of the Mother and the undisgusting corpse-face of the Christ are admirable'.² This may be compared with Forsyth, quoted by Conder: 'The life and death which he has thrown into this little thing, the breathing tenderness of the Virgin, and the heavenly composure of the corpse, appeared to me beautifulseforeign to the tremendous genius of the artist.'³ The striking similarity between these accounts suggests that Robinson was drawing on his guide-book for help in commenting on works of art, perhaps unconsciously.

1. Wordsworth and Robinson spent some time in Paris, and had a leisurely journey through France, so that the Italian border was crossed on April 12. Pictures seen in Paris will be dealt with when considering the French School; see below, Chapter 12.

2. Robinson's travelling diary, April 15.

3. Forsyth, Remarks, p.6; quoted by Conder, Italy, i.234.

In addition to the Michelangelo, Robinson made a note of an 'Assumption' by Puget, 'in a Guido-like style... worth seeing',¹ showing him in a conventional attitude of admiration before the seventeenth century.² This, however, is all he noted in Genoa - missing the Palazzi Durazzo, one of which (according to Conder) contained a fine collection of paintings from this period.

After Genoa, Wordsworth and Robinson made their way south, travelling through Lucca, Pisa and Siena; and at each of these it is interesting to notice what Robinson thought worthy to record. At Lucca it was a picture by Fra Bartolommeo (a favourite painter at this time) of The Virgin of Mercy.³ On their arrival at Pisa the first place visited was the Campo Santo where they 'took a hasty glance

1. Robinson's travelling diary, April 15.

2. It is interesting to see how highly a painter like Puget was valued. Conder quotes Simond, Sketches of Italy, who calls Puget 'the Michael Angelo of France' (Italy, i.235).

A convenient guide to such assessments is Mariana Starke's Travels on the Continent. Miss Starke marks pictures after the manner later made famous by Baedeker, except that she uses exclamation marks instead of stars. I have used the 1820 edition (which superseded Miss Starke's Letters from Italy and a later version (1828 - sixth edition) entitled Information and Directions for Travellers on the Continent. The first of these gives one exclamation mark to the Michelangelo, none to the Puget; the second moves the Puget up a class, so that they each have an exclamation mark. (Travels, etc., p.194; Information, etc., p.115. These abbreviations will be used throughout).

3. Robinson's travelling diary, April 21.

at the old frescoes before dinner'.¹ These paintings by Giotto, Gozzoli, Andrew and Simon Orcagna and others were, as we have seen, regarded somewhat in the light of historical curiosities and thought of as very imperfect. - 'a sort of paleology of painting'.² Wordsworth may have returned to the Campo Santo later in the evening (only one day was spent in Pisa) in order to have more than a 'hasty glance', for in his poem, 'Musings near Aquapendente', he speaks of

The blest tranquillity that sunk so deep
Into my spirit, when I paced, enclosed
In Pisa's Campo Santo, the smooth floor
Of its Arcades paved with supulchral slabs,...(3)

However, the poem was not composed until 1841, and Wordsworth's imagination may have blurred the haste of the visit; in any case, the chief quality about the Campo Santo which seems to have impressed him was the atmosphere of the place, and not its decoration.

1. Ibid, April 21.

2. G.W.D. Evans, The Classic and Connoisseur in Italy and Sicily, (London, 1835), 1.40. See also Mariana Starke, Travels, etc., p.172: 'Round the walls are Frescos of the fourteenth and fifteenth century; which, however deficient in many respects, cannot but yield pleasure to those persons who wish, on their entrance into Italy, to view the works of the Revivers of an Art afterwards brought to exquisite perfection.'

3. P.W., 111.207.

From Pisa, Wordsworth and Robinson went on to Siena, where Robinson enjoyed the Piccolomini Library.¹ After visiting it they went in search of a small church - San Quirino, to see a picture by the Sienese painter Andrea Vanni, which Robinson did not like. It was, he wrote, 'a visit not worth the trouble'.² It is worth noting that at Siena Robinson begins to emerge as a typical critic of his time, admiring the Raphaelesque frescoes, disliking Vanni, and (in common with all the guide books) ignoring the rest of the Sienese school, like Duccio and Simone Martini.

The travellers proceeded from Siena to Rome, where they arrived on April 26 and stayed for four weeks, during which time Wordsworth 'worked hard', as he told his family, 'to see the most remarkable things'.³ He was assisted in this by an acquaintance with some of the English artists

1. Robinson's travelling diary, April 24: 'frescoes said to be designed by Raphael and executed by him and Pinturicchio; certainly the figures are Raphaelesque. This is a fine foretaste of the Roman frescoes.'

2. Ibid, April 24. The reason for this visit was that Forsyth had recommended the picture - Vanni's 'Descent from the Cross' - 'a jewel concealed in the obscure church of S. Quirico'. (Forsyth, Remarks, pp.105-106; quoted by Conder, Italy, iii.66. Conder amends 'Quirico' to 'Quirino'). Vanni lived from c.1340 to 1414.

3. L.Y., p.858; WW to his family, May 19 1837.

who were resident in Rome - in particular with Joseph Severn (the friend of Keats), two sculptors (John Gibson and William Theed), and William Collins, the landscape painter, 'a great favourite of Wordsworth's'.¹ Gibson and Severn took Robinson and Wordsworth to the Vatican, where Gibson pointed out 'all the prime objects, the Minerva, Apollo, young Augustus, Laocoon Torso'.² Severn went

1. HCR on Books and Writers, p.519. Collins was an old friend, having stayed with Wordsworth at Rydal in 1818 (see Jared B. Flagg, The Life and Letters of Washington Allston, New York, 1893, p.141).

Gibson would have been known to Wordsworth through Beaumont, who (according to the D.N.B.) commissioned 'Psyche borne by Zephyrs' from Gibson in 1822.

2. Mariana Starke (Travels, etc., pp.330-332) gives four exclamation marks to Laocoon and to the Apollo Belvedere, but none to Minerva and Augustus. In addition to having the guidance of a professional sculptor, Wordsworth had also read the Abbe Wincklemann (the foremost authority of the day, referred to by Starke) on the Antique, though he had a poor opinion of the Abbe's book. (see M.V., pp.685-6).

Robinson noted that Wordsworth preferred pictures to sculptures: 'His eye for colour seems more cultivated than his sense of form: at least the picture galleries were more attractive to him than the museums of sculpture.' (Letter to Barron Field, printed in W.A. Knight, The Life of William Wordsworth, Edinburgh, 1889, 111.296).

with Wordsworth on three other visits to see pictures,¹ and painted a portrait of him.² Collins, for his part, took Wordsworth to the English church, and on two excursions. On the first of these they climbed the Monte Mario, and stood beneath a tall pine tree which had been saved from destruction, nearly twenty years before, by the intervention of Sir George Beaumont.³ Wordsworth had observed the beauty of the tree on his first evening in Rome, and was excited to find that it had been saved from the axe by his friend. The sonnet on the subject - 'The Pine of Monte Mario at Rome'⁴ - is a record of his feelings. He also visited an 'Academy of St. Luke' to see a picture by Beaumont hanging

1. These took place on May 12 (to the Vatican, to see the paintings, as on the previous visit they had seen only the sculptures. We have no details, because Robinson did not go), May 14 (to see a private collection, in which Robinson noted a fine Domenichino) and May 16 (to the Palazzo Doria, where there were some fine Claudes and Salvator Rosa's Belisarius - given four exclamation marks by Miss Starke).

2. See F. Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth, pp.82-83, and 162-163. Severn had apparently met Wordsworth before, at Haydon's. The portrait, according to Wordsworth's grandson, looked like 'an elderly gentleman waiting for a bus'.

3. L.Y., p.855; WW to MW and Dora W, [? May 9; p.m. May 20.]

4. P.W., iii.212. (See also note, P.W.,iii.493-494).

there.¹

Although Wordsworth was 'working hard' at seeing whatever was worth seeing, he declined to particularize in his letter home.² He had, in an earlier letter, mentioned that the inside of St. Peter's had impressed him,³ but for details of the sights and pictures which he and Robinson saw, we must turn to the latter's diary. There we find them on May 3 seeing Michelangelo's Moses and the most celebrated fresco in Rome, Guido's Aurora. For Robinson this was 'the most perfect of Frescoes',⁴ and Wordsworth remembered it five years later as retaining an outstanding freshness. Discussing the durability of fresco in a letter to Haydon, he wrote:

The deservedly celebrated Auroras of Guido, at Rome, seemed to my eye as fresh as yesterday; while other things in the same City had faded almost to perishing.(5)

1. Robinson's travelling diary, May 10. There were two Academies of St. Luke, one containing a museum, the other an art school. It is not certain which one had Beaumont's picture.

2. L.Y., p.858; WW to his Family, May 19 1837: 'I would gladly single out from what we have seen something the description of which might interest you, but I seem to have little talent for dealing with objects so new to me'.

3. L.Y., pp.956-857; WW to MW and Dora W ? May 9; p.m. May 20.

4. Robinson's travelling diary, May 3.

5. L.Y., p.1123; WW to B.R. Haydon, April 8 1842.

For the remainder of the stay in Rome Robinson's diary provides a clear account of the various places visited, including a thorough circuit of palaces, villas and churches. Beside the Vatican and the Palazzo Rospigliosi (containing Guido's Aurora) they saw the Palazzi Doria, Borghese, Sciarra, Farnese, Farnesina and Colonna, the Villa Ludovisia, and churches such as Santa Maria del Popolo and Santa Maria della Pace.¹ It is not surprising that Wordsworth should have told Robinson that it was 'a duty rather than a pleasure to make the circuit of palaces as well as churches'.² Robinson was also, I suspect, a little astonished at the sight of the great poet of nature taking so much trouble over the productions of art. He wrote to his brother about Wordsworth:

He has little pleasure in either antiquities or mere ordinary church or gallery-hunting but no man ever more enjoyed the beauties of nature. On the whole, however, he enjoyed Rome quite as much as I expected.(3)

One wonders how much Robinson had expected Wordsworth to enjoy Rome. Certainly (to contradict the first part of Robinson's remarks to his brother) Wordsworth did say that he had seen the various sights of Rome 'with very

1. Details from Robinson's travelling diary, May 3 to 22.

2. HCR on Books and Writers, ii.520.

3. E.J. Morley, Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle, (Oxford, 1927), i.344.

great pleasure';¹ I think that we should assume that the pattern which has been generally suggested, of nature-lover bored in Rome, needs to be re-examined. By this period of his life Wordsworth had cultivated a wide variety of interests, and this is evidenced by the range and versatility of his sight-seeing, and the sociability which he demonstrated towards the English painters and sculptors in Rome.

At the end of May, Wordsworth and Robinson left Rome for Florence, where they arrived on May 30.² At Florence the contemporary preference for Raphael and his successors was even more striking than in Rome, for travellers tended to ignore the earlier Florentine painters by which they were surrounded. For them, as for most visitors, the Santa Croce was 'of great interest from the noble characters

1. L.Y., p.858; WW to his Family, May 19 1837.

2. Three of Wordsworth's poems, 'The Cuckoo at Laverna' (P.W.iii.218), 'At the Convent of Camaldoli' (P.W.iii.222) and 'At Vallombrosa' (P.W.iii.223) show that on the return journey from Rome the travellers followed the example of Forsyth (but not Conder) in visiting the three sanctuaries of Laverna, Camaldoli and Vallombrosa. The dates of the visits were May 27, 28 and 30 respectively. (See C. Wordsworth, Memoirs, ii.317.)

whose monuments adorn it,¹ and for the frescoes of Giotto and his followers. Robinson had, as he confessed, a poor eye for frescoes (except the famous Guido), and when he and Wordsworth visited the Chiesa del 'Annunciata to see the frescoes by Andrea del Sarto, he failed to respond (though the phrase 'at least' suggests that Wordsworth did): 'the famous frescoes of Andrea', he wrote, 'in the cloisters - but which I at least was unable to appreciate'.² They also visited the Pitti Palace, which, of course, was well stocked with pictures of the period they so much admired,³ the church of San Lorenzo containing the Michelangelo chapel with the monument to the Medici princes,⁴ and to the church of the Carmine. This was to see the frescoes

1. Robinson's travelling diary, June 1.

2. Ibid, June 2. These were much praised by Conder (ii.334-335), but not mentioned by Forsyth.

3. Ibid, June 2: Robinson noted that it was 'free from the mass of ordinary works which is the drawback on looking at Masterpieces. The collection here is admirable.' He was particularly struck by Fra Bartolommeo's St. Mark, Michaelangelo's The Fates, Raphael's Madonna della Seggiola and portraits of Julius II and Leo X, and landscapes by Rubens and Salvator Rosa. The Raphael Madonna is given five exclamation marks by Miss Starke (her highest award) and the Fra Bartolommeo has four.

4. Ibid, June 3: Robinson noted 'all which are lost on me'.

of Masaccio. Robinson was particularly interested in these, because he owned a set of engravings of them; one of the few examples of his interest in an early Italian school.¹ In addition to this, Wordsworth did a great deal of gallery-hunting on his own during the week they spent in Florence, as we can see from his letter to Dora on June 4:

I have spent my time very pleasantly in Florence; it is so much less fatiguing a place than Rome; but even here one has to waste a great deal of labour in sight-seeing on account of Churches and Galleries being closed when you expect them to be open. Yesterday I had no less than three pretty long walks which turned to no account - the places being shut up, though I was under the guidance of an Italian who lives in Florence.(2)

At some time, however, Wordsworth did succeed in visiting the Uffizi. This was the inspiration for a sonnet, No.xx. in Memorials of a Tour in Italy, 1837.³

The painting in question was Raphael's St. John in the Wilderness, which hung in the room which also contained the Venus de' Medici; and in this particular case the note which Wordsworth dictated to Isabella Fenwick is more revealing than the Sonnet to which it is attached:

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1. Robinson's travelling diary, June 5.
 2. L.Y., p.867; WW to Dora W, June 4 1837.
 3. P.W.,iii. 225.

It was very hot weather during the week we stayed at Florence; and, never having been there before, I went through much hard service, and am not therefore ashamed to confess I fell asleep before this picture and sitting with my back towards the Venus de Medicis.(1)

The sonnet deals with John the Baptist rather than with Raphael, though the effect of Raphael's picture may be estimated by the fact that the poem was written almost three years later, in the spring of 1840.²

From Florence, Wordsworth and Robinson proceeded to Bologna, 'rich in the finest works of art, and mistress of some incomparable chefs d'oeuvres',³ as one guide-book had it. 'Above all', said another, 'Bologna will be celebrated to the end of time, for the number of excellent painters which it has produced.'⁴ Before such generally

1. P.W.,iii.499.

2. Ibid,iii.500. The Sonnet is quoted below, Chapter 10, as an illustration of the way in which Wordsworth tended to turn pictures into descriptive poems, fulfilling the idea of a picture as a 'silent poem'.

3. J.G. Lemaistre, Travels after the Peace of Amiens, through parts of France, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, (London, 1806),ii.229.

4. Henry Coxe, Picture of Italy, (London, 1815), p.143.

held opinions as this, it is something of a surprise to find Wordsworth and Robinson in the vanguard of a taste which was swinging away from the post-Raphaelite painters who had been popular for so long. This is particularly the case since there is no real instance of it until the arrival at Bologna; but there, Robinson wrote:

We went to the gallery, where Wordsworth found very little to interest him. Undoubtedly the Bolognese School is very inferior to the Roman and Venetian.(1)

This originality was continued as Robinson went on to praise the early school as well as the celebrated later one:

But Guido is surely a delightful painter... Domenichino, too, has great ability... and there are some fine heads by Giotto....(2)

1. Robinson's travelling diary, June 7. This seems to be quite original for Robinson; both Forsyth and Conder are enthusiastic about the Bolognese school: e.g., Forsyth, Remarks, p.328: 'This city was, at least, the second field of painting in Italy;... Here are Guido's two apostles, a picture considered as the finest left in Italy. I can conceive no excellence beyond the figure of Peter. Indeed, so excellent is art here, that it disappears, and gives up the work to sentiment. I might heap technical praises on this divine picture; but I could not convey my own impressions.' (Part quoted by Conder, ii.266-267.)

The first part of this quotation has, of course, been published, because it shows Wordsworth the anti-art figure. (See HCR on Books and Writers, p.524).

2. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 524.

They stayed at Bologna for two nights, and then went on through Parma to Milan. At Parma they stopped long enough to admire the collection of Correggios in the Royal Academy - in particular La Madonna de S. Girolamo, which was mentioned by Conder and which Robinson called 'an unforgettable picture'.¹ They also looked at the cathedral, but (like Conder again) they found that the lighting was poor and they were unable to see Correggio's decoration of the cupola.² In Robinson's account there is no mention of Parmigianino, the other painter of Parma; 'Corregio', he wrote, 'is the all in all'.³

At Milan, their next stop, Wordsworth was as usual happy to be on ground which he had visited before. He went to the Brera Gallery and to the Cathedral 'several times', but missed the Ambrosian Library and Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper.⁴ He had the more time for looking at works of art since Robinson had friends in Milan, and was happy to find new company.⁵

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1. Robinson's travelling diary, June 8; Conder, ii.30.
 2. Robinson's travelling diary, June 8: 'it was mere darkness visible'; Conder, ii.33.
 3. Robinson's travelling diary, June 8.
 4. L.F., p.872; WW to Dora W and MW, June 21 1837.
 5. Robinson's travelling diary, June 10: 'He went to the Brera Gallery and I to the Mylius's!'

From Milan they crossed slowly to Venice through the cities of Northern Italy. At Padua they had a good look at the Giotto frescoes, where Robinson's comment reflects something of the swinging of taste which was taking place: he writes in the tone of a man who has been told that they are wonderful, but who cannot really appreciate them:

We went into the Churches of the Arena and the Emeritane to see frescoes by Giotto - These are things I dare not flatter myself I can understand or feel - yet I fancied I was not altogether insensible to their excellence, though those of Mantegna have beauties more within my reach.(1)

The stop at Padua was a short one, but Robinson was soon more at home among the Venetian painters. Here, sixteen years before, Beaumont had become, as he told Wordsworth, 'tipsy with colour',² and the two visitors saw enough Venetian painting to make them equally excited. Among other places they saw Titian's house and the Palazzo Ducale, with many examples of the work of Titian, Paul Veronese and Tintoretto. The last-named's Crucifixion

1. Ibid, June 22. Conder (ii.124) notices 'a beautiful John the Baptist, by Guido' but says hardly anything about Giotto.

2. DCC, B to W, December 27 1821.

in the Scoula di San Rocca was, for Robinson, 'one of the few pictures I shall never forget.'¹

After six days spent in Venice, Wordsworth and Robinson crossed the border into Carinthia and thence into Austria at the end of June, this bringing to an end the Italian part of their journey. We may now attempt to assess the impact upon Wordsworth of this visit, in so far as it affected his knowledge of pictorial art.

It is evident that Wordsworth was no more than an amateur connoisseur. 'Six days apiece were quite enough for both Florence and Venice', he wrote, 'unless one had meant to make a study of the works of art there'.² However, this should not be taken to mean that Wordsworth did not bother much about seeing the art-treasures of the Italian cities; as we have seen, he persevered in his attempt to see as many as possible, and his complaints come, not at seeing too many pictures, but rather at finding galleries shut when he expected to find them open.³ Nor should the feeling that Wordsworth essentially

1. Robinson's travelling diary, June 25.

2. L.Y., p.876; WW to his Family, July 5 1837.

3. L.Y., p.856; 'such toiling and such straining and so many disappointments either in finding the most celebrated picture covered up with curtains, a service going on so that one cannot ask to have a sight, or the church closed when one arrives at the door'. Also L.Y., p.867, quoted above, p. 244.

preferred gardens, or landscape, or picturesque scenery, prevent us from recognising the extent of his interest in art. 'What I have seen both of Nature and Art in Italy have delighted me much', he wrote.¹ 'Nature and Art' is a phrase which might be used to sum up this tour: delighted with the scenery, yet also determined to make the most of this unique opportunity to see the greatest pictures and sculptures in the world. 'I have been incessantly employed in visiting Churches, Galleries and spots in the neighbourhood that command views of Val d'Arno and the city', he wrote from Florence,² in a sentence which shows well the balance between art and nature on this tour. For Wordsworth to have maintained a 'nature only' attitude, as the selections from Robinson's diary have suggested, would have been to rob the Italian journey of half its value and all its uniqueness.

The evidence which is found in the unpublished parts of Robinson's diary tells us much about Wordsworth's serious attention to what he thought of as his duty; it also tells us much about the pictures which Robinson and Wordsworth saw together, and Robinson's reactions

1. L.Y., p.870; WW to Dora W and MW, June 21 1837.

2. L.Y., p.866; WW to Dora W, June 4 1837.

to them. Unfortunately we have very few pieces of evidence about Wordsworth's own reactions until the tour was over. A year after his return to England he wrote to Haydon:

Whoever goes into Italy, if Pictures be much of an object with him, ought to begin where I ended, at Venice. Not as I did, with the pure and admirable productions of Fra Bartolomeo at Lucca and with Raphael at Rome, so on to Florence, Bologna and Parma and Milan: and Venice by way of conclusion. Italian Pictures ought to be taken in the following order or as nearly as may be so, Milan, Padua, Venice, Bologna, Parma, Florence, Rome. (1)

In this order it is difficult to detect any perception of the development of Italian painting through the different schools. Padua, with the work of Giotto, is certainly early; but it is difficult to see why Venice, Bologna and Parma should come before Florence. The only conclusion we can come to is that Wordsworth was listing the cities in order of increasing attraction as he found them, keeping the best - Florence, with its Pitti Palace, and Rome, with its Michelangelos and Raphaels - till last. On the other hand, it is clear from some of Wordsworth's other comments that he did learn to appreciate the early Italian painters;

1. L.Y., p.955; WW to B.R. Haydon, July 28 1838.

and this appreciation was probably due to the Italian tour. In the same letter to Haydon he wrote in defence of Perugino:

undoubtedly there is in him, as in all the elder Masters, a hardness and stiffness, and a want of skill in composition, but in simplicity, and in depth of expression he deserved to be looked up to by Raphael to the last of [his] days. The transfiguration would have been a much finer picture than it is if Raphael had not at that period of his life lost sight of Perugino and others of his predecessors more than he ought to have done. (1)

Four years later he wrote:

I think there is a touching and austere simplicity and beauty, with a corresponded depth [h] of expression, in many of the faces and persons of single figures in the Scripture pieces of Pietro Perugini and other painters both Italian and German of the elder Schools which Raphael with all his marvellous power failed to attain, or rather did not attempt, being inclined by classical influences to aim at something else. (2)

It is difficult to see how Wordsworth would have had the opportunity to become impressed by the early Italians except by visiting Italy. It seems to me to be quite clearly the result of the application which he demonstrated. From this and from Robinson's diary, which gives the day to day account of the cities visited and the pictures seen,

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1. L.Y., p.955; WW to B.R. Haydon, July 28 1828.
 2. Ibid, p.1123; WW to B.R. Haydon, April 8 1842.

we may certainly conclude that by the end of the tour Wordsworth had considerably increased his knowledge and appreciation of Italian painting; thus completing a wide and comprehensive education in the schools of European painting from the later tours on the Continent.

Chapter 10. Wordsworth's general theories about painting.

1. The Sister Arts.

Coleridge once described painting as 'the intermediate somewhat between a thought and a thing'¹; Wordsworth was content to subscribe to the commonplace idea of the eighteenth century which saw painting and poetry as 'the sister arts', as he did in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads² rather accepting the traditional formula than enquiring into the relation between the original thought and its expression. He was content to see painter and poet as fellow-servant of the creative imagination, and not to enquire further; thus he joined himself and Haydon in the service of -

Creative Art
(Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues) (3)

And he used the words painter and poet in ways which

1. Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 2nd Edn., (London, 1836), p. 49; August 30 1827.

2. 'We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters'. (P.W., II. 392). W. J. B. Owen, Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads, edited with an Introduction and Commentary, (Anglistica, IX, Copenhagen, 1957), p. 168, suggests some sources for this idea.

3. P.W., III. 21.

demonstrate their closeness and even suggest that they are interchangeable Terms. Michelangelo 'is the great epic painter, the poet executing his high imaginings with the pencil',¹ and he used the word 'poet' to describe Beaumont and Thomas Bewick, as artists whose attitudes to their work Wordsworth felt entitled them to that term. Michelangelo was a kind of epic poet; Beaumont and Bewick attain the status by their faithful study and appreciation of nature (Wordsworth thought that it was not possible to excel in landscape painting 'without a strong tincture of the Poetic Spirit.').² At one time Wordsworth had a plan to write a dialogue upon Nature, Poetry and Painting,³ which, had he carried it out, would have doubtless made his ideas on the

1. T. Landseer, Life and Letters of William Bewick, (London, 1871), i. 88.

2. M.Y., p. 475; WW to Sir George Beaumont, November 16 1811. Wordsworth seems carefully to have reserved the word 'poet' for use on special occasions, and not to have subscribed too closely to its indiscriminate use in calling a painting 'a silent poem'. Cp. Ruskin's comment on Landseer's 'The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner': 'one of the most perfect poems or pictures (I use the words as synonymous) which modern times have seen.' Quoted by Richard and Samuel Redgrave, A Century of British Painters, (ed., R. Todd, London, 1947), p. 417.

3. L.Y., p. 184-185; WW to Jacob Fletcher, February 25 1805: 'I... feel inclined to make Snowdon the scene of a Dialogue upon Nature, Poetry, and Painting - to be illustrated by the surrounding imagery'.

relationship between the two arts much clearer. Meanwhile it is possible to see from the poems which Wordsworth occasionally composed about pictures that he certainly regarded them as silent poems. Take, for instance, the sonnet on Raphael's picture of St. John in the Wilderness, which Wordsworth saw at Florence:

The Baptist might have been ordain'd to cry
Forth from the towers of that huge Pile, wherein
His Father served Jehovah; but how win
Due audience, how for aught but scorn defy
The obstinate pride and wanton revelry
Of the Jerusalem below, her sin
And folly, if they with united din
Drown not at once mandate and prophecy?
Therefore the Voice spake from the Desert, thence
To Her, as to her opposite in peace,
Silence, and holiness, and innocence,
To Her, as to all Lands its warning sent,
Crying with earnestness that might not cease,
"Make straight a highway for the Lord - repent!" (1)

Here Wordsworth has done nothing but turn the silent poem into a rather pedestrian speaking picture. The same might be said of other sonnets, like the one on Leonardo da Vinci's 'Last Supper' at Milan,² or on Rubens's picture of 'Daniel in the Lions' Den' at Hamilton Palace.³ There are

1. P.W., iii. 225. See above, Chapter 9.

2. Ibid, iii. 183-184. Quoted above, Chapter 8.

3. Ibid, iii. 275-276. Quoted below, Chapter 12.

also, of course, many poems of Wordsworth which are primarily visual, and do little more than paint a picture themselves.¹

In spite of this similarity in both theory and practice Wordsworth held that there was some difference between the two arts: primarily it was that the poet was freer, and the painter was circumscribed by his medium - not necessarily by a need to be representational (Wordsworth does not seem to have believed this), but by the very fact that he works in lines and colours.² The clearest statement of this is in the Fenwick note to a sonnet in the collection Yarrow Revisited, entitled 'Composed in Roslin Chapel during a storm:

A Painter delineating the interior of the chapel and its minute features under such circumstances would have, no doubt, found his time agreeably shortened. But the movements of the mind must be more free while dealing with words than with lines and colours; such at least was then and has been on many other occasions my belief, and, as it is allotted to few to follow both arts with success, I am grateful to my own calling for this and a thousand other recommendations which are

1. e.g., 'Between Namur and Liege', (P.W., iii. 167-168), or 'Aerial Rock', (P.W., iii. 7) or the three sonnets suggested by Westall's engravings, (P.W., iii. 36-38).

2. Thus restricting himself to visual effects. This links up with Wordsworth's ideas about the despotism of the eye and the creative imagination. See below, Chapter 14.

denied to that of the Painter. (1)

The compulsion to use lines and colours prevents the painter from exercising the freedom of his imagination to the extent which the poet can. Thus in the famous stanza from 'Peele Castle' the poet is able to add something extra which the painter cannot supply:

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream; (2)

Perhaps this difference between the two arts is why Wordsworth is on record as demurring at a speech by Thomas Campbell, in which Campbell said 'there was a union between Poetry, Painting & Music' and that 'it was the wish of his heart to see the Professors of both Arts joined'. Wordsworth's comment, according to Haydon, was 'I hope not', followed by 'I don't believe a word of it'.³

Wordsworth saw one quality possessed by visual art as very important. That was its ability to make an effect which would normally be evanescent and fleeting into some-

1. P.W., iii. 528.

2. Ibid, iv. 259.

3. The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, ed., W. B. Pope, (Cambridge, Mass., 1960-63), ii. 471.

thing permanent - and this was connected, of course, with the desire for permanence which is so evident in Wordsworth's poetry and criticism.¹ If a painting was really satisfactory as an expression of a subject which appealed to Wordsworth, its capturing and holding of a moment of beauty made it into the tangible equivalent of one of the 'spots of time' in The Prelude

That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired; (2)

This fixing of a moment of beauty into a permanent shape is found frequently as a poetic statement concerning visual art in Wordsworth's work, most notably in the sonnet to Beaumont written in 1811, which begins -

Praised be the Art whose subtle power could stay

1. See D. Perkins, The Quest for Permanence, (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), and W. J. B. Owen, 'The Major Theme of Wordsworth's 1800 Preface', Essays in Criticism, vi, No. 2, (April, 1956), pp. 144-159.

2. The Prelude, (1850), xii. 209-215.

Yon cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape; (1)

Similarly a much later poem, 'Lines suggested by a Portrait from the pencil of P. Stone', describes painting as the

Art divine
That both creates and fixes, in despite
Of Death and Time, the marvels it hath wrought. (2)

2. Portrait Painting.

This fixing of the impermanent became, for Wordsworth, a major source of pleasure in portrait painting. He had begun by regarding portraiture as an inferior branch of the art, to judge from one of his early letters to Beaumont, which asks the following question about Reynolds:

1. Quoted in full above, Chapter 3. R. P. Graves, in 'Recollections of Wordsworth and the Lake Country', has an interesting comment on this sonnet: 'The same thought, with some modification, is exquisitely brought out in Keats's Ode On a Grecian Urn. I could not but see that when Wordsworth asserted, as I heard him do, the priority of his own lines, he felt a peculiar satisfaction. Not that he suggested any borrowing of the idea on the part of Keats. I believe there is no reason for doubting that each of these poems shines with a light as original as it is brilliant.' (Afternoon Lectures on Literature and Art delivered in the Theatre of the Royal College of Science, S. Stephen's Green, Dublin, in the Years 1867 & 1868, Dublin, 1869, pp. 301-302).

2. P.W., iv. 122.

Is it not a pity, Sir George, that a man with such a high sense of the dignity of his art, and with such industry, should not have given more of his time to the nobler departments of painting? (1)

The reasons for this, as the letter goes on to make clear, are that portrait painting deals with what Wordsworth regarded as trivial, and that it neglects the 'permanent':

I do not say this so much on account of what the world would have gained by the superior excellence and interest of his pictures, though doubtless that would have been very considerable, but for the sake of example. It is such an animating sight to see a man of genius, regardless of temporary gains, whether of money or praise, fixing his attention upon what is intrinsically interesting and permanent, and finding his happiness in an entire devotion of himself to such pursuits as shall most ennoble human nature. (2)

It was common at the time to regard portrait painting and landscape painting as inferior to historical painting.³ For Wordsworth it was concerned essentially with the impermanent; and it is curious that this idea should have

1. E.L., p. 402; WW to Sir George Beaumont, July 20 1804.

2. Ibid.

3. Cp. M.T.S. Raimbach, Memoirs and Recollections of Abraham Raimbach, (London, 1843), p. 133: 'he [a French friend] assured me that the powers of Lawrence, as a portrait painter, were admitted to a certain degree, but that his acquirements as an artists generally were estimated rather cheaply by the painters of the Institute, who considered themselves as holding in quality of historical painters a much higher grade in the profession.'

been turned right round in Wordsworth's later life to give him a new respect for portraiture. His liking for it in 1840 is based on his recognition of its ability to preserve the appearance of much-loved friends and thus something of the pleasure of knowing them: in his sonnet 'On a Portrait of I.F. [Isabella Fenwick] painted by Margaret Gillies' he knows that the subject of portrait will pass away:

Yet, blessed Art, we yield not to dejection;
Thou against Time so feelingly dost strive:
Where'er, preserved in this most true reflection,
An image of her soul is kept alive,
Some lingering fragrance of the pure affection,
Whose flower with us will vanish, must survive. (1)

The same idea occurs in the lines on the F. Stone portrait,² which was of Jemima Quillinan as a young girl, who may never, it appears, seem so delightful again as she does in the portrait:

That posture, and the look of filial love
Thinking of past and gone, with what is left
Dearly united, might be swept away
From this fair Portrait's fleshly Archetype,
Even by an innocent fancy's slightest freak
Banished, nor ever, haply, be restored
To their lost place, or meet in harmony
So exquisite; but here do they abide,
Enshrined for ages. Is not then the Art
Godlike, a humble branch of the divine,
In visible quest of immortality,

1. P.W., iii. 412.

2. See above, Chapter 6, in connection with Wilkie.

Stretched forth in trembling hope? (1)

This is all a far cry from Wordsworth's remarks on Reynolds, and it may fairly be said that Wordsworth's appreciation of portrait painting grew immeasurably as he became older and became more and more aware of the transience of human relationships.²

3. Ideal Landscape.

We have seen how Wordsworth's approach to painting as the 'sister art' of poetry was a conventional one; the same may be said of his theories about landscape painting, which correspond closely to the conception of 'ideal landscape' which had dominated thinking on the subject since the time of Claude.³ This is hardly surprising, for not only does it lie behind the Picturesque but also the Beaumont collection was particularly well endowed with examples of it.⁴ In this spirit of 'ideal landscape' Wordsworth wrote

1. P.W., iv. 122-123.

2. It is possible that Dorothy Wordsworth's illness may have increased this feeling, and the appreciation of portraiture as a record of the past.

3. See Chapter iv of Sir Kenneth Clark, Landscape into Art, (London, 1949).

4. e.g., several fine Claudes, and a picture after Nicholas Poussin of Phocion (Sir Kenneth Clark specifically mentions Poussin's pictures of Phocion, Landscape into Art, pp. 67-68.)

to Beaumont in 1811:

I heard the other day of two artists who thus expressed themselves upon the subject of a scene among our Lakes. 'Plague upon those vile Enclosures!' said One; 'they spoil everything.' 'O,' said the Other, 'I never see them.' Glover was the name of this last. Now, for my part, I should not wish to be either of these Gentlemen, but to have in my own mind the power of turning to advantage, wherever it is possible, every object of Art and Nature as they appear before me. (1)

Wordsworth is here standing between two extremes, of a literal rendering of landscape on the one hand (in which the enclosures are a nuisance) and of a complete departure from it on the other. Between is the artist, 'turning to advantage...every object of Art and Nature'. This goes back to Gilpin's 'fictitious views' which Wordsworth imitated in An Evening Walk, where the plan was not 'confined to a particular walk or an individual place', and which Wordsworth ascribed to 'my unwillingness to submit the poetic spirit to

1. M.Y., p. 467; WW to Sir George Beaumont, August 28 1811. John Glover (1767-1849) was a fashionable water-colour painter of the day.

the chains of fact and real circumstance.¹ Always the artist selects and refines, to produce a work of art from the landscape rather than a representation of it. Something of the idealising process goes on unconsciously, as we can see from some remarks which Wordsworth made about Scott, who would go out into the countryside with a notebook and pencil, write down those things which struck him most forcibly, and then go home and incorporate the whole in a description. He should rather, thought Wordsworth, have gone home and described what he remembered after several days:

He would then have discovered that while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated; that which remained - the picture surviving in his mind - would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so in a large part by discarding much which, although in itself striking, was not characteristic.

1. Note to An Evening Walk, P.W., i. 319. Cp. Addison, The Spectator, No. 411: 'We cannot, indeed, have a single image in the fancy that did not make its first entrance through the sight; but we have the power of retaining, altering, and compounding those images which we have once received, into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination'. Or Cp. Lord Kames (Henry Home), Elements of Criticism, (6th Edn., Edinburgh, 1785), ii. 519-250: 'Further, man is endued with a sort of creative power: he can fabricate images of things that have no existence. The materials employed in this operation, are ideas of sight, which he can take to pieces and combine into new forms at pleasure: their complexity and vivacity make them fit materials.'

In every scene many of the most brilliant details are but accidental; a true eye for nature does not note them, or at least does not dwell on them. (1)

Thus the kind of ideal landscape which was traditional in Wordsworth's day corresponded to an actual selective process of the mind, and the technique of landscape painting, as Wordsworth saw it, was to present 'the ideal and essential truth of the scene'. Sir Kenneth Clark has an interesting quotation which is relevant here:

... Fuseli, the keeper of the Royal Academy, whose lectures represented the most enlightened teaching of the day, referred to 'that last branch of uninteresting subjects that kind of landscape which is entirely occupied with the tame delineation of a given spot.'

Sir Kenneth comments:

These must go into the category of famous last words, for when they were spoken Constable was already a student at the Academy and Wordsworth had published his Lyrical Ballads. Man's relation with nature was about to enter upon a phase of greater intimacy, in which Bellini's love of all creation became a new religion, explicit, dogmatic and ethical. (2)

He is certainly right when he maintains that Wordsworth's poetry helped to bring about an appreciation of specific

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1. F. W. H. Myers, Wordsworth, (London, 1925), p. 144.
 2. Sir Kenneth Clark, Landscape into Art, p. 35.

landscape;¹ but there is no relation between this and Wordsworth's ideas about landscape painting, which look back through Gilpin and the eighteenth century to Claude, Poussin, Domenichino and Annibale Carracci, the most famous practitioners of ideal landscape. It is not the only example of the way in which Wordsworth is more conventional in his prose than in his poetry.²

Figures in landscape Wordsworth found a distraction.
He told Farington and Beaumont -

He thought Historical subjects shd. never be
introduced into Landscape but where the Landscape was
to be subservient to them. Where the Landscape was
intended principally to impress the mind, figures,
other than such as may a thousand time appear, and seem

1. The first paragraph of 'Tintern Abbey' is an obvious example of Wordsworth's topographical poetry.

2. Cp. M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, (New York, Norton Library Edn., 1958), pp. 103-104: 'Wordsworth was more thoroughly immersed in certain currents of eighteenth century thinking than any of his important contemporaries. There is, for example, almost none of the terminology of post-Kantian aesthetic philosophy in Wordsworth. Only in his poetry, not in his criticism, does Wordsworth make the transition from the eighteenth-century view of man and nature to the concept that the mind is creative in perception, and an integral part of an organically inter-related universe.'

accidental, and not particularly to draw the attention, are injurious to the effect which the landscape shd. produce as a scene founded on an observation of nature.¹

Once again Wordsworth was treading in the footsteps of Gilpin, who wrote in his poem On Landscape Painting:

Yet, if thy skill should fail to people well
Thy landscape, leave it desert. Think how CLAUDE
Oft crowded scenes, which Nature's self might own,
With forms ill-drawn, ill-chosen, ill-arranged,
Of man and beast, o'er loading with false taste
His sylvan glories. Seize them, Pestilence,
And sweep them far from our disgusted sight! (2)

In fact, one of the characteristic developments of Claude's art is the way in which the figures become less and less important in the landscape,³ and this seems to have been characteristic of ideal landscape.⁴

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1. The Farington Diary, iv. 129; April 28 1807.
 2. William Gilpin, Five Essays, on Picturesque Subjects; with a Poem on Landscape Painting, (3rd. Edn., London, 1808), pp. 119-120. See also C.P. Barbier, William Gilpin, (Oxford, 1963), pp. 145-146.
 3. See Sir Anthony Blunt, Art and Architecture in France, 1500-1700, (London, 1953), p. 200.
 4. Wordsworth was inconsistent enough, on one occasion, to wish that Hogarth might have occasionally showed 'his knowledge of character, manners, and passion by groups under the shade of Trees, and by the side of Waters in appropriate rural dresses.' (L.Y., p. 600; WW to John Kenyon, January 26 1832). This would have been an occasion when the landscape was not 'intended principally to impress the mind' and the figures were to be the centre of attraction - 'the Landscape was to be subservient to them.'

4. Genre Painting and Historical Painting.

This condemnation of figures in landscape must not be taken to indicate a dislike of figure-painting as such, for Wordsworth had a lively interest in both genre-painting and historical painting. This is not difficult to explain: it is linked with Wordsworth's tendency to see painting as 'poetic'. The best summary of this attitude is found in an entry in Henry Crabb Robinson's diary:

I have thought that Wordsworth's enjoyment of works of art is very much in proportion to their subserviency to poetical illustration - I doubt whether he feels the beauty of mere form. (1)

This subserviency to illustration is what gave Wordsworth 'the true poetic thrill', as he once described it,² which is found chiefly in historical painting; although Wordsworth had an affection for genre painting, as we can see from his appreciation of Wilkie and Hogarth. Hogarth's work, however, belonged to 'the higher kinds of Comedy',³ and historical painting was altogether more elevated and sublime,

1. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 257.

2. P.W., iii. 51: 'To B. R. Haydon, on seeing his Picture of Napoleon Buonaparte on the island of St. Helena'.

3. M.Y., p. 702; WW to B. R. Haydon, January 13 1816.

'something that realizes the idealisms of our nature, and assists us in the formation of new ones', as he wrote of the Italian school.¹ This kind of elevation is clearly seen in a correspondence with Haydon, who had the idea of putting a kind of Hogarthian figure into his 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem':

viz the hard, unfeeling, prude who looks with a sneer of cruel self approbation at the penitent girl, chuckling that she herself has escaped vice... (2)

Wordsworth felt 'such a person discordant with the piece', unsuited 'to a subject of this nature, which to use Milton's expression is "more than heroic".³ But he went on to qualify this by advocating some kind of addition of human detail into sublime painting:

1. L.Y., p. 184; WW to Jacob Fletcher, February 25 1825. Cp. Reynolds's Third Discourse: 'The painters who have applied themselves more particularly to low and vulgar characters, and who express with precision the various shades of passion, as they are exhibited by vulgar minds (such as we see in the works of Hogarth), deserve great praise; but as their genius has been employed on low and confined subjects, the praise which we give must be as limited as its object.' (The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, ed. H. W. Beechy, London, 1885, I. 341).

2. F. W. Haydon, Benjamin Robert Haydon: Correspondence and Table Talk, (London, 1876), II. 22. (Punctuation from the original in Dove Cottage Library).

3. M.Y., p. 702; WW to B. R. Haydon, January 13 1816.

I would on no account discourage your efforts to introduce more of the diversities of actual humanity into the management of sublime and pathetic subjects. Much of what Garrick is reported to have done for the stage, may by your Genius be effected for the Picture Gallery. (1)

Evidently Wordsworth found certain sublime historical painting remote, and was glad of some 'diversities of actual humanity' to put the picture on his level.

5. Expression and Communication.

It may have been connected, however, with his feeling for the importance of communication in the arts. The idea of comprehensibility and accessibility was one which was always before him in his own poetry, and also in his criticism of painting. We have seen how Wilkie was praised for a kind of communication which removed all class distinction: his labours --

have touched the hearts of kings
And are endeared to simple cottagers (2)

and there is an even clearer example of this idea. In 1817 Henry Crabb Robinson was present at a meeting between Wordsworth and Coleridge:

1. Ibid.

2. P.W., iv. 123.

Coleridge spoke of painting in that style of mysticism which is now his habit of feeling. Wordsworth met this by dry unfeeling contradiction.... Coleridge maintained that painting was not an art which could operate on the vulgar, and Wordsworth declared this opinion to be degrading to the art. (1)

Wordsworth's ideal (both in painting and poetry) was an art which could at one and the same time have a universal appeal without becoming sensational or trivial or degrading. His dislike of Martin, for instance, was based upon the fact that he felt the painter to be 'popular' in the worst sense. He wrote in the 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' (i.e. of 1815), first published in 1820:

Go to a silent exhibition of the productions of the sister Art, and be convinced that the qualities which dazzle at first sight, and kindle the admiration of the multitude, are essentially different from those by which permanent influence is secured. (2)

As its place in the Preface shows, this was a problem which affected Wordsworth's ideas about poetry and painting; and the pictures which he admired were most frequently those which combined an accessibility with an appearance of dealing with subjects which were edifying, and sensible, and which seemed to be concerned with the permanent problems and feelings

1. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 214-215.
2. P.W., ii. 429.

of man. Not that he wished for the kind of permanence which is cut off from human living. In 1815 he picked up a translation of Winckelmann from a book-stall in Penrith, and wrote to Haydon that -

It appears to me but a slight thing; at the best superficial, and in some points, particularly what respects allegorical Painters, in the last Letter, very erroneous.' (1)

The book was Reflections Concerning the Imitation of the Grecian Artists in Painting and Sculpture. In a Series of Letters., published in Glasgow in 1766. It is, as Wordsworth says, a slight thing; and he obviously did not approve of Winckelmann's strictures upon the state of modern painting, when the critic wrote:

Praying Hermits, Martyred Monks, Holy Families, Crucifixions, Europa's Rape, Daphne's Flight, Phaeton's Fall, and such like subjects, drawn from true or false religion, are so thread-bare and common, that some variety is become requisite to renew a palled taste. (2)

The jaded palate, the over-sophisticated approach, which this suggests was anathema to Wordsworth; nor did he see any sense in Winckelmann's remedy, which was 'to enlarge the compass of this sublime art, and to make it extend to those

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1. M.Y., p. 685; WW to B. R. Haydon, December 21 1815.
 2. Winckelmann, Op. Cit., pp. 141-142.

objects that do not fall within the province of our external senses.¹ Wincklemann proposed to take advantage of 'the succours of allegory, by the means of emblems and figures that expressed universal ideas.² By his disparaging comment on this, we may conclude, I think, that Wordsworth saw little point in allowing painting to take over what he regarded as the peculiar province of poetry - the representation of ideas without lines and colours - and that he had no enthusiasm for the superseding of landscape, history or genre painting by an art which was allegorical and abstract.

1. Ibid, p. 142.

2. Ibid, p. 144.

Chapter 11. Wordsworth's criticism of the Italian Schools.

Wordsworth was not given to making generalizations about painting, but on one occasion he compared the Dutch painters with 'the higher order of Italian Artists, in whom beauty and grace are predominant'.¹ He went on to explain that he was not referring to the Italian landscape painting, but to -

their mode of treating the human figure, in their Madonnas, Holy families, and all their pieces of still life. These materials as treated by them, we feel to be exquisitely fitted for the pencil - yet we never think of them as picturesque - but shall I say as something higher - something that realizes the idealisms of our nature, and assists us in the formation of new ones. (2)

At this period the two great masters of Italian painters were Michelangelo and Raphael.³ Their position is

1. L.Y., p. 183; WW to Jacob Fletcher, February 25 1825.

2. Ibid, p. 184.

3. Compare the situation when Pope was writing his 'Epistle to Mr. Jervas' in 1715:

Each heav'nly piece unweary'd we compare,
Match Raphael's grace, with thy lov'd Guido's air,
Caracci's strength, Correggio's softer line,
Paulo's free stroke, and Titian's warmth divine.

(The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. J. Butt, London, 1963, one-volume edition of the Twickenham text, p. 250.)

summarized by C. P. Brand:

They had been the idols of the latter half of the eighteenth century, during which Michael Angelo had slowly increased in popularity at the expense of Raphael. There were qualities in Michael Angelo's works which had a strong appeal for the mystery and terror-loving generations at the turn of the century. (1)

Wordsworth had an early introduction to the pre-eminence of Michelangelo from his reading of Reynolds's Discourses, and his own translations from Michelangelo's poems would have given Wordsworth an added interest. Some of the translations appeared in Richard Duppa's The Life of Michel Angelo Buonarroti with his poetry and letters (1806). In addition to this, Beaumont acquired, as we have seen, a beautiful example of Michelangelo's work during his visit to Italy in 1821-2. Beaumont wrote to Wordsworth during this visit:

Whilst I was in Rome I studied M. Angelo with all my might - & the result was an increasing admiration & wonder every succeeding day - I used to think Sir Joshua's comparison of him to Homer, & Raphael to Virgil rather too much - but to say the least, I am now in doubt - I feel now a deep conviction the C. Sistina is the noblest work of man, at least in the line of art - (2)

Wordsworth's own homage to Michelangelo was recorded by

1. C. P. Brand, Italy and the English Romantics, (Cambridge, 1957), p. 142.

2. DCC, B to W, September 1822.

Haydon's pupil William Bewick:

'Angelo', he said, 'is the great epic painter, the poet executing his high imaginings with the pencil; no one touches the hem of his garment in that lofty comprehensiveness that soars beyond the regions of commonplace, adding ideality and greatness to ordinary forms, giving sublimity and distinctive character to what in other hands might only be dramatic... we must brace the sinews, so to speak, of our comprehension to grapple with the grandeur and sublimity of thought and imagination, the epic greatness of Michael Angelo, who has the merit of eclipsing, in these respects, as well as in the difficulties and technicalities of his art, every other artist that had preceded him; - I mean of that epoch.' (1)

Bewick was a pupil of Haydon's, and Haydon held views on Michelangelo which were very different from those of Beaumont. After the arrival in England of the Elgin Marbles Michelangelo's reputation declined, because his forms were thought to be exaggerated;² and Haydon's championship of the Elgin Marbles against considerable opposition led him to make disparaging remarks about Michelangelo in an attempt to reinforce his arguments. This went on for many years: a good example is from 1838, in the article on 'Painting' which Haydon wrote for the sixth edition of the Encyclopaedia

1. T. Landseer, Life and Letters of William Bewick, (London, 1871), 1. 88-89.

2. See C. P. Brand, Italy and the English Romantics, p. 143.

Britannica:

After the Capella Sistina was opened, Raffaele, bit like everybody else by its heavy, cumbrous, vulgar, broad, and circular design, immediately tried it; but it did not suit his beautiful nature any more than it would have suited the elliptical beauty of the heroic forms of Greece... (1)

When Haydon proposed to dedicate his Lectures on Painting and Design to Wordsworth, the latter wrote:

I have not seen any extracts from your Lectures, but I have somewhere heard that you speak of Michel Angelo in terms of disparagement to which I cannot accede, and therefore I should like that, in the terms of your dedication, you would contrive as briefly as you can to give it to be understood that I am not pledged to the whole of your opinions in reference to an Art in which you are so distinguished. (2)

Haydon replied, stating his case succinctly:

I have shown Michel Angelo, (great being as he was) is not so pure a model as the Greeks, and that we have evidence Phidias was greater & a purer one -

I have proved he perplexed his limbs with useless anatomy, and did not know as the Greeks did in the Naked, how to clear the superfluous from the essential. (3)

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 7th Edn., (Edinburgh, 1842), xvi. 714. Haydon here may be parodying Reynolds's First Discourse: 'On the sight of the Capella Sistina, he [Raphael] immediately, from a dry, Gothic, and even insipid manner, which attends to the minute accidental discriminations of particular and individual objects, assumed that grand style of painting, which improves partial representation by the general and invariable ideas of nature'. (The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, ed., H. W. Beechy, (London, 1885), i. 307.)

2. L.Y., pp. 944-945; WW to B. R. Haydon, June 25 1838.

3. Haydon Correspondence, ii. 43 (corrected from the original).

This was a widely-held view at the time, and Wordsworth no doubt realized that the kind of pre-eminence which Michelangelo had held in the days of Reynolds and Beaumont was over. He replied:

I have had an opportunity of reading your Essay in the Encyclopaedia, and neither in that, nor in your Letter, do I find any thing said concerning Michael Angelo, to which I object. I acknowledged him to be liable to all the charges you bring against him; it would only be a question between us of the degree in which he is so. (1)

As Michelangelo's reputation declined, that of Raphael increased. Wordsworth spoke of Raphael as a 'transcendent genius',² but at one stage of his life thought that Michelangelo was responsible for some of Raphael's greatness. This idea is found in the same account by William Bewick of Wordsworth's conversation, which is not dated, but must have taken place when Bewick was a pupil of Haydon's between 1817 and 1823. Bewick reported:

After a few words about the influence of 'this sun of Art [Michelangelo] upon the refined, pure intelligence and the beautiful soul of Raphael,' Wordsworth added, 'Raphael was strengthened, both morally and physically by Michelangelo, for by him his mind expanded, his hand was emboldened, and he depicted his conceptions with

1. L.Y., p. 955; WW to B. R. Haydon, July 28 1838.
2. T. Landseer, Life and Letters of William Bewick, 1. 88.

greater power and distinctive character; and what, perhaps, is extraordinary, without diminishing in the least his wonted delicacy, or grace, or refinement. (1)

Delicacy, grace and refinement were the Raphaelesque qualities which Wordsworth had in mind when he advised Haydon against including in his 'Christ's Entry into Jerusalem' the character of an unfeeling prude. Haydon remarked that he could not find any characters of the kind in the works of Raphael, and that 'all His Men and Women have one feeling of goodness and benevolence'.² Wordsworth agreed: 'I coincide with you in opinion as to Raphael's characters, but depend upon it he has erred upon the safer side.'³ If this suggests that he valued Raphael uncritically for a consistent sublimity, it should be remembered that later Wordsworth criticised him for losing the simplicity of Perugino and the earlier Italian

1. Ibid, i. 89. Cp. Reynolds, in the Fifth Discourse: 'It is to Michel Angelo that we owe even the existence of Raffaele; it is to him Raffaele owes the grandeur of his style. He was taught by him to elevate his thoughts, and to conceive his subjects with dignity.' (The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, ed. H. W. Beechey, London, 1885, i. 371).

2. Haydon Correspondence, ii. 23 (corrected from the original).

3. M.Y., p. 702; WW to B. R. Haydon, January 13 1816.

painters.¹ I have suggested that this was the result of a new awareness of the beauties of the early painters which was discovered in the tour of 1837.

Raphael is concerned in two of Wordsworth's poems. One is the sonnet on his picture of 'St. John in the Wilderness' in the Uffizi at Florence, which has already been quoted as an example of a picture treated as a silent poem. The other is a poem of 1828, in which the spirit of Raphael is invoked, without much specific meaning.² It is also worth noting that a copy of Raphael's picture known as the Dresden Madonna hung 'directly over the fireplace' of the drawing-room of Rydal Mount.³

Wordsworth does not specify which painters earlier than

1. See above, Chapter 9.

2. P.W., ii. 321: 'A Jewish Family', which begins -

Genius of Raphael! if thy wings
Might bear thee to this glen...
Thou wouldst forego the neighbouring Rhine,
And all his majesty...

This invocation seems to be merely rhetorical, and may be compared with Wordsworth's use of Reynolds in the Anacreontic poem from the Juvenilia, P. W., i. 261-262.

3. C. Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth, (London, 1851), ii. 489.

Raphael he admired, with the exception of Perugino, whom he considered to have 'a touching and austere simplicity and beauty.'¹ Another favourite was Leonardo da Vinci:

Wordsworth owned a print of 'the Virgin and Saint Barbara and Catherine gazing upon the infant Jesus'.² In 1820, during the tour to Switzerland and the Italian lakes, Wordsworth saw 'The Last Supper' in the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan, and wrote the sonnet, 'Tho' searching damps and many an envious flaw', which is not unlike the poem on Raphael's picture of Saint John, but in addition to the silent poem which is found in the picture, there is also its condition to be a subject for poetry; and some affective criticism is also added. It can hardly be claimed that the result is particularly successful. 'I speak of it as I felt', said Wordsworth in the note; and he went on -

The copy exhibited in London some years ago, and the engraving by Morghen, are both admirable; but in the original is a power which neither of those works has attained, or even approached. (3)

All this suggests a lively interest in the work of Leonardo, and it comes as something of a surprise to find that

1. L.Y., p. 1123; WW to B. R. Haydon, April 8 1842.

2. L.Y., p. 1175; WW to Isabella Fenwick, August 2 1843.

3. P.W., 111. 481.

Wordsworth did not revisit the convent when he was in Milan during the tour of 1837; particularly as he enjoyed revisiting places from which he had received pleasure.

In addition to the copy of the Dresden Madonna and the print of the Leonardo, Wordsworth also owned three originals by Lucca Giordano, nicknamed 'fa-presto' because of the speed at which he worked. They had been bought in Italy in 1845 by Wordsworth's son John,¹ and they hung on the staircase at Rydal Mount.² Two of the subjects are known. One of them, 'Vulcan presenting to Venus the armour for Mars' appears in the Catalogue of the Sale of Wordsworth's library in 1859.³ Another was a picture of Diana and Endymion, as we can see from the poem which Wordsworth wrote on it, beginning:

Giordano, verily thy Pencil's skill
Hath here portrayed with Nature's happiest grace
The fair Endymion couched on Latmos-hill;
And Dian gazing on the Shepherd's face

1. See L.Y., p. 1274; WW to Edward Moxon, January 15 1846. For the English habit of purchasing pictures in Italy, see C.P. Brand, Italy and the English Romantics, p. 18.

2. HCR on Books and Writers, pp. 711-712: 'John Wordsworth, when in Italy, purchased some paintings ascribed to Giordano. Three have been placed on the staircase... Their subjects are mythological.' Robinson makes it sound as if there were more than three pictures, but this is not the case - see L.Y., p. 1274, where Wordsworth mentions 'three large Pictures'.

3. The Catalogue says, wrongly, that it was 'Purchased by the late Mr. Wordsworth on one of his earlier Continental Tours.' (p.43).

In rapture,... (1)

Once again, the poem is a description of the subject of the picture, a verbalising of the silent poem. Indeed, Wordsworth's poems on Italian paintings seem to divide into two classes: those descriptive of the subject, and those descriptive of the effect on the beholder. Into the second class falls the other sonnet which Wordsworth wrote about a picture by Giordano. This is entitled 'Sonnet to a picture by Lucca Giordano in the Museo Borbonico at Naples',² and it describes the picture as a very dramatic one, which has affinities with the Magdalen of Le Brun:

A sad and lovely face, with upturn'd eyes,
Tearless, yet full of grief - How heavenly fair
How saintlike is the look those features wear! (3)

It seems possible that Giordano was another favourite painter of Wordsworth, and that his son knew this when sending home the three pictures in 1845; at any rate, it is possible that he knew this sonnet, which explains his choice of picture.

1. P.W., iv. 18.

2. Wordsworth could not have visited the Museo Borbonico during his tour of 1837 (the poem was composed in 1839) because he was prevented from going to Naples on account of an outbreak of cholera. E. de Selincourt thinks that he saw a copy of the picture somewhere. (P.W., iv. 468).

3. P.W., iv. 468.

Of the other Italian painters, Wordsworth admired 'The Raising of Lazarus' by Sebastian del Piombo and Michelangelo in the Angerstein Collection,¹ and the frescoes of Guido Reni at Rome.² He also described the work of Fra Bartolommeo as 'pure and admirable'.³ He must also have been familiar, as everyone was, with the landscapes of Claude and Salvator Rosa: although I can discover only one reference to Rosa,⁴ he represented one of the two kinds of landscape painting which formed the basis of the Picturesque tradition.

Tibaldi and Luino, the Poussins, Claude and Titian were all painters mentioned by Wordsworth in the Guide to the Lakes, as familiar with the Alps yet not attempting to

1. M.Y., p. 185; WW to Sir George Beaumont, April 8 1808: 'The great picture of Michael Angelo and Sebastian pleased me more than ever.'

2. See above, p. 240.

3. See above, p. 251.

4. E.L., p. 365; DW to S. T. Coleridge, March 6 1804: 'William says that whatever Salvator might desire could there be found'. ('There' was a small rocky stream above Rydal, described by DW as 'a miniature of all that can be conceived of savage and grand about a river, with a great deal of the beautiful.')

paint them.¹ No doubt his own travels in the region had given him an interest in the illustration of the area, and he had remarked upon its absence in the work of the painters of northern Italy. He may also have discussed the subject with Beaumont before writing the paragraph in the Guide to the Lakes, for Beaumont, after his visit to Switzerland in 1819, tried to paint Mont Blanc;² he also mentions Luino in one of his letters.³

Of these painters, the only one whose work is criticized by Wordsworth is Titian. He wrote to Lamb, who had used Titian's 'Bacchus and Ariadne' as a stick to beat Martin with in his essay on the 'Barrenness of the Imaginative Faculty in the Productions of Modern Art'. While he agreed with Lamb's censure about Martin, he nevertheless added:

May it not be a question whether your own Imagination has not done a good deal for Titian's Bacchus and Ariadne?

1. Guide to the Lakes, (ed. E. de Selincourt, London, 1926), p. 105.

2. See above, Chapter 4.

3. DCC, B to W, December 27 1821: 'I was particularly struck by the frescos of Luino, a man hardly known in England'.

With all my admiration of that great artist, I cannot but think that neither Ariadne or Theseus look so well on his Canvas as they ought to do - (1)

The customary criticism of this picture was that it was poor in the drawing of the figures. Haydon wrote:

To shew the young artist that it is never too late to improve, let him compare the Bacchus and Ariadne in our National Gallery, when he could not draw finely, with the Pietro Martyre when he could. (2)

It is probable that Wordsworth's criticism was due to this deficiency, which would be more obvious than its other qualities.³

Wordsworth's knowledge of Italian painting came from several sources. The first was probably the Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds, which would have given him a good

1. L.Y., p. 657; WW to Charles Lamb, May 17 1833.

2. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 7th Edn., (Edinburgh, 1842), xvi. 717. Haydon wrote this article over the signature 'Q.Q.Q.Q.'. Compare A. J. Valpy, National Gallery of Painting and Sculpture, (London, 1833), p. 77: 'Although the drawing of Titian was frequently inferior to that of masters very far below him in the scale of merit, in other respects the severest critic is obliged to confess that his works are complete in their effect.'

3. Lamb replied: 'Inter nos the Ariadne is not a darling with me, several incongruous things are in it, but in the composition it served me as illustrative.' (E. V. Lucas, The Letters of Charles Lamb, London, 1935, iii. 371).

idea of the pre-eminence of the Italian schools, and particularly of Michelangelo. There was the friendship with Beaumont, although Beaumont's collection contained no Italian work until his acquisition of the Michelangelo 'Madonna Taddei' in 1822; and Beaumont's letters from Italy were an introduction to Italian painting in miniature. Then there were the several fine Italian paintings in the Angerstein Collection, with which Wordsworth was familiar.¹ Ultimately there was the tour to Italy in 1837, with its discovery of the simplicity and grace of the earlier Italian painters. All this knowledge would have been consolidated by his other reading, such as Lamb's essay and Haydon's lectures;² and we may agree, I think, that Wordsworth possessed the kind of knowledge of Italian painting which one would expect from a cultured man of his time.

1. See Appendix II.

2. In the Catalogue of the sale of Wordsworth's library in 1859 appear also 'No. 535 "The Italian Schools of Painting" (from Kugler), with Notes, etc., by Sir C. L. Eastlake, P.R.A., (Autograph Presentation by the Editor)' and 'No. 640 "Ruskin's Modern Painters, their superiority, etc.,"'. These works were published in 1842 and 1843-1846 respectively, and so cannot be said to have influenced Wordsworth's knowledge of Italian painting.

Chapter 12. Wordsworth's criticism of other Schools.

1. The eighteenth-century British School

Wordsworth's relations with British painters who were his contemporaries have already been discussed. This chapter refers to his knowledge and opinions of the painters of the British School who lived before his day. There are four of these relevant to this study: Hogarth, Wilson, Gainsborough and Reynolds.¹

For an introduction to Hogarth, Wordsworth had Lamb's essay 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth', from which he quotes in the Preface to the 1815 edition of the Poems.²

1. We should also mention the dismissal of James Barry (1741-1806). Wordsworth and Henry Crabb Robinson looked at his decorations in the great room of the Society of Arts in 1823, while sheltering from a shower of rain. Robinson noted that 'Wordsworth's curiosity was raised, and soon satisfied, by Barry's pictures. It requires no connoisseurship to perceive the utter want of all skill in colouring and the mediocrity of his drawing.' HCR on Books and Writers, p. 292). For a description of Barry's pictures see S. Redgrave, A Dictionary of Artists of the English School, (London, 1878), p. 27. Dr. Johnson admired the conception of the decorations very much; he himself was introduced in a flattering posture into one of them. See Boswell's life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, (Oxford, 1934), iv. 224.

2. P.W., ii. 439.

This essay, with its spirited defence of Hogarth on grounds which would have appealed to Wordsworth, must have prepared him well for an appreciation of the painter. Hogarth, said Lamb, was not just a comedian: his work engaged 'first and foremost ... the very heart of man, its best and most serious feelings'.¹ In words which recall some of the Wordsworthian ideas in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Lamb wrote:

It is the fashion with those who cry up the great Historical School in this country, at the head of which Sir Joshua Reynolds is placed, to exclude Hogarth from that school, as an artist of an inferior and vulgar class. Those persons seem to me to confound the painting of subjects in common or vulgar life with the being a vulgar artist. The quantity of thought which Hogarth crowds into every picture, would alone unvulgarise every subject which he might choose. (2)

In addition to this, Hogarth was admirably suited to that aspect of Wordsworth's appreciation which laid stress on the subject-matter of a painting. As Lamb said: 'His graphic representations are indeed books: they have the teeming, fruitful, suggestive meaning of words. Other pictures we look at, - his prints we read.'³

1. Poems Plays and Miscellaneous Essays of Charles Lamb, ed., Alfred Ainger, (London, 1895), p. 272.

2. Ibid, p. 276.

3. Ibid, p. 273.

In a letter of 1816, no doubt influenced by Lamb's essay, Wordsworth classed Hogarth's work among 'the higher kinds of Comedy'.¹ The most detailed appreciation of Hogarth, however, came later, in a letter to John Kenyon, a friend who had presented Wordsworth with a collection of prints from Hogarth's work:

We are great admirers of Hogarth, and there are perhaps few houses to which such a collection would be more welcome; and living so much in the Country, as we all do, it is both gratifying and instructive to have such scenes of London life to recur to as this great master has painted. (2)

Wordsworth went on to wonder what Hogarth (whose father was a Westmorland man) might have become if he had been brought up in the Lake District instead of in London, and to regret his exclusive concern with London life:

It is remarkable that his pictures, differing in this from the Dutch and Flemish Masters, are almost exclusively confined to indoor scenes or city life. Is this to be regretted? I cannot but think it is, for he was a most admirable painter, as may be seen by his works in the British Gallery; and how pleasant would it have been to have had him occasionally show his knowledge of character, manners, and passion by groups under the shade of Trees, and by the side of Waters in appropriate rural dresses. (3)

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1. M.Y., p. 702; WW to B. R. Haydon, January 13 1816.
 2. L.Y., p. 600; WW to John Kenyon, January 26 1832.
 3. L.Y., p. 600; WW to John Kenyon, January 26 1832.

This seems at first sight to be absurd, and to be based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of Hogarth's genius. In this it seems not unlike Wordsworth's letter about Constable to the painter's daughters, regretting that Constable did not spend more time in the Lake District.¹ However, Wordsworth went on to improve the idea by an analogy with Chaucer and Shakespeare, which gives it more force:

He reminds me both of Shakespeare and Chaucer; but these great Poets seem happy in softening and diversifying their views of life, as often as they can, by metaphors and images from rural nature; or by shifting the scene of action into the quiet of groves or forests. (2)

Indeed, this idea is easily understandable when we consider Hazlitt's remarks on Hogarth:

I know no one who had a less pastoral imagination than Hogarth. He delights in the thick of St. Giles's or St. James's. His pictures breathe a certain close, greasy, tavern air. (3)

If this seems nearer to the genius and spirit of Hogarth than Wordsworth's remark, it nevertheless serves as

1. See above, Chapter 6.

2. L.Y., p. 600.

3. The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P.P. Howe, (London, 1931), vi. 141; from 'On the Works of Hogarth. On the Grand and Familiar Style of Painting', Lecture VII of Lectures on the English Comic Writers (1819).

a reminder that Wordsworth's suggestion is part of his whole code of belief, and may be thought of as an extension of the opening lines of The Prelude.

The idea of 'groups under the shade of Trees' raises again the question of the place of figures in a landscape.¹ If Hogarth had painted them, presumably Wordsworth would have seen the landscape as subservient to them, and the picture would have escaped the censure which Farington noted. The occasion of Wordsworth's condemnation of figures in a landscape was a visit to Beaumont's painting gallery in 1807, and the picture which gave rise to it was by Richard Wilson, as the entry in Farington's diary makes clear. Wordsworth may have been echoing Reynolds's criticism in the Fourteenth Discourse of Wilson's 'Destruction of Niobe's Children'; Reynolds said that Wilson had been guilty

of introducing gods and goddesses, ideal beings, into scenes which were by no means prepared to receive such personages. His landscapes were in reality too near common nature to admit supernatural objects. In consequence of this mistake, in a very admirable picture of a storm, which I have seen of his hand, many figures are introduced in the foreground, some in apparent distress, and some struck dead, as a spectator would naturally suppose, by the lightning;

1. See above, Chapter 10.

had not the painter injudiciously (as I think) rather chosen that their death should be imputed to a little Apollo, who appears in the sky, with his bent bow, and that those figures should be considered as the children of Niobe. (1)

This picture of the 'Destruction of Niobe's Children' was owned by Beaumont, and it is very likely that Wordsworth was thinking of Reynolds's opinion as he stood in Beaumont's painting gallery. He may have transferred Reynolds's criticism to another of Wilson's pictures in the room, for Farington continues his record of Wordsworth's remarks, after the condemnation of figures in landscape:

He thought this picture by Wilson excellent, but objected to the foreground dark trees on the left hand which seemed to him like a skreen, put before the most distant parts. (2)

Wordsworth's criticism of Wilson, although it has the imprint of Reynolds, nevertheless has some affinity with

1. The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, ed. H. W. Beechy, (London, 1883), ii. 90. The picture in question is reproduced as Plate 18 in W. G. Constable, Richard Wilson, (London, 1953). Coleridge did not like what he called 'the sharp-shooters in the Clouds'; see above, p. 44.

2. The Farington Diary, iv. 129. The picture was 'sent by Mr. Bowles to be disposed of'; known as 'The Hermitage', it was sold to Samuel Rogers. See The Farington Diary, iv. 133, where it is described as 'the picture of Villa Madame'. See also W. G. Constable, Richard Wilson (London, 1953), p. 145 and pp. 202-203; a reproduction of the subject is at Plate 32a, where Wordsworth's criticism may be seen to have had some substance.

modern appreciations of Wilson's art. Ellis Waterhouse makes the point that to Wootton and Lambert, Wilson's predecessors, landscape was (as he puts it) 'either a mere piece of decorative furniture or a record of an actual scene.' He continues:

It was Wilson who first charged the 'landscape' in Britain with the values of an independent work of art, sometimes - and in these he was less successful - by attempting the Grand Style and combining 'history' with landscape, and sometimes, which was his great achievement, by infusing into his scene a feeling, either solemn or lyrical, for the divine element in nature which can best be apprehended by likening it to the feeling which is the constant theme of Wordsworth. (1)

No doubt it was this quality of Wilson's landscape which appealed to Beaumont, who, according to Cunningham, placed Wilson 'at the head of the landscape-painters of this country'.² Cunningham later says of Beaumont:

He loved Claude, and imagined that he imitated him. His heart was, however, with Wilson; if he set up the former for his model, his eye wandered unconsciously to the latter. (3)

1. Ellis Waterhouse, Painting in Britain, 1530 to 1790, (London, 1953), p. 172.

2. Allan Cunningham, The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects, (London, 1833), vi. 138.

3. Ibid., vi. 153.

Wordsworth may have read this : he told Isabella Fenwick that Beaumont's picture of 'The Thorn' had a sky which was 'nobly done, but it reminds one too much of Wilson'.¹

However, Beaumont was not unaware of certain of Wilson's faults, and one of his strictures bears a distinct resemblance to Wordsworth's criticism about the 'skreen'.²

Cunningham records Beaumont as writing:

his subjects are sometimes meagre,... and sometimes too artificial, and decidedly composition; and in producing what he called hollowness, or space, he frequently divided the distances, so that they had too much the appearance of cut scenery at the theatre.²

Thus one of Wordsworth's criticisms of Wilson may be derived from Reynolds, another from Cunningham, and another from Beaumont. However, there can be no doubt that, through Beaumont, Wordsworth was given a thorough and sympathetic introduction to Wilson's work.

Wilson's only rival, in the matter of British landscape painting, was Gainsborough, as Beaumont recognized. He summed up the differences between the two painters very neatly, by a comparison with two poems of Gray. The extract is taken from the same letter on Wilson:

1. P.W. 11. 512.

2. Allan Cunningham, The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, etc., vi. 139.

His sole rival is Gainsborough: and if it be allowed, as I think it must, that he had a finer and higher relish for colour, or, in the technical term, a better painter's eye, than Wilson; on the other hand, Wilson was far his superior in elevation of thought and dignity of composition. Both were poets; and, to me, The Bard of Gray, and his Elegy in a Country Churchyard, are so descriptive of their different lines, that I should certainly have commissioned Wilson to paint a subject from the first, and Gainsborough one from the latter: and if I am correct in this opinion, the superior popularity of Gainsborough cannot surprise us; since, for one person capable of relishing the sublime, there are thousands who admire the rural and the beautiful, especially when set off by such fascinating spirit and splendour of colour as we see in the best works of Gainsborough. (1)

In addition to this, Wordsworth would have had as an introduction to Gainsborough the Fourteenth Discourse of Reynolds, whose preference for Gainsborough as opposed to Wilson is evident. Reynolds's admiration of Gainsborough is generous and unexpected in the context of the Discourses, for Gainsborough's independence from the traditions and schools advocated by Reynolds as the proper grounding for a student of painting makes him a figure whose work breaks all the rules. But it is not difficult to see which elements of Reynolds's approval would have appealed to Wordsworth, as Reynolds writes:

1. Ibid, vi. 138-139.

For my own part, I confess, I take more interest in and am more captivated with the powerful impression of nature, which Gainsborough exhibited in his portraits and in his landscapes, and the interesting simplicity and elegance of his little ordinary beggar-children, then with any of the works of that School, [the Roman] since the time of Andrea Sacchi, or perhaps we may say Carlo Maratti; (1)

Beaumont did not own any pictures by Gainsborough; nor were there any in the Angerstein Collection. One result of this is that we have no record of Wordsworth's opinion of Gainsborough as an artist, although twice Wordsworth recounted anecdotes concerning the painter. The first of these dates from 1811, in a letter to William Godwin,² the second from 1842, in conversation with Haydon.³ Neither

1. The Literary Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds, ii. 81-82.

2. M.Y., p. 427; WW to William Godwin, March 9 1811: 'Some one recommended to Gainsborough a subject for a Picture, it pleased him much, but he immediately said with a sigh, "What a pity I did not think of it myself".'

3. F.W. Haydon, Correspondence and Table-Talk of B. R. Haydon, ii. 141: 'A friend of Gainsborough's had a sweet child who was going away to school. As her father was on a sick-bed he was touched at parting with her. This came to Gainsborough's ears. So Gainsborough looked out for her, and said to her, "My little love, can you keep a secret?" "I don't know," said she; "but I'll try." "Well!" said he, "you come to me tomorrow." She came, and he painted her portrait, in order that when she was gone it might be placed at the foot of papa's bed, to delight him. The child went to school enjoying her secret, and the next morning, when her father opened his eyes, there was the image of his darling looking at him from the bottom of his bed!'

of these, unfortunately, throws light on Wordsworth's opinion of Gainsborough as an artist.

As we have seen,¹ Reynolds's Discourses were some of the earliest essays on art which Wordsworth read. He paraphrased part of the Seventh Discourse in the 'Advertisement' to the First Edition of Lyrical Ballads, and incorporated it into the Preface to the Second Edition:

An accurate taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an acquired talent, which can only be produced by severe thought, and a long continued intercourse with the best models of composition. (2)

At this time of his life, Wordsworth was also comparing Reynolds unfavourably with Thomas Bewick,³ and one of his first letters to Beaumont regretted that Reynolds should have spent so much time on portraiture.⁴

Shortly after their first meeting, Beaumont presented Wordsworth with a copy of the Discourses, and Wordsworth

1. Chapter 1.

2. P.W., ii. 384 and ii. 403.

3. See above, Chapter 1.

4. E.L., pp. 401-402; WW to Sir George Beaumont, July 20 1804.

read those which he had not read before and re-read the others, expressing himself 'greatly pleased'.¹ No doubt Beaumont's friendship with Reynolds and his enthusiasm for his ideas and his art did much to encourage Wordsworth's good opinion; and it is not surprising that a number of Wordsworth's criticisms of art seem to be derived from Reynolds, or at least to have an affinity with his ideas. From Reynolds, Wordsworth would have understood something of the relative merits of Michelangelo and Raphael;² he

1. E.L., p. 423; WW to Sir George Beaumont, December 25 1804.

2. See, for instance, Wordsworth's remarks on the two painters as recorded by William Bowick, quoted above, Chapter II. Cf. Reynolds, the Fifteenth Discourse, and the First Discourse - 'Raffaello, it is true, had not the advantage of studying in an Academy; but all Rome, and the works of Michel Angelo in particular, were to him an Academy. On the sight of the Capella Sistina, he immediately, from a dry, Gothic, and even insipid manner, which attends to the minute accidental discriminations of particular and individual objects, assumed that grand style of painting, which improves partial representation by the general and invariable ideas of nature.' (Literary Works, i. 307).

may have inherited an appreciation of ideal landscape;¹ and from Reynolds may have come the habit of classifying schools and types of painting as higher and lower. The Dutch School, for Reynolds and Wordsworth, was lower than the Italian;² and Wordsworth's feelings about portrait painting receive support from Reynolds's modest appraisal of his own branch of the art as one of 'these humbler walks of the profession',³ and of the practitioner as 'the cold painter of portraits'.⁴

It is not surprising that Wordsworth should have followed

1. See above, Chapter 10; cp. Reynolds's Fourth Discourse, where he is discussing the Dutch school of landscape painters: 'Their pieces in this way are, I think, always a representation of an individual spot, and each in its kind a very faithful but a very confined portrait. Claude Lorrain, on the contrary, was convinced, that taking nature as he found it seldom produced beauty. His pictures are a composition of the various beautiful scenes and prospects.... That the practice of Claude Lorrain, in respect to his choice, is to be adopted by Landscape-painters in opposition to that of the Flemish and Dutch schools, there can be no doubt,....' (Literary Works, i. 359).

2. Cp. Reynolds's Third and Fourth Discourses (especially, Literary Works, i. 341 and i. 358-359).

3. The Fourth Discourse, Literary Works, i. 360.

4. The Third Discourse, Literary Works, i. 342.

Reynolds, for two reasons. The first is that Reynolds was an authority in a field in which Wordsworth knew little, at least when he first read the Discourses; the second is that Reynolds and Wordsworth share other ideas in common which form part of their basic approach to critical problems. M. H. Abrams has remarked that Wordsworth's criticism is nearer to the eighteenth century than his poetry is;¹ and although he is more interested in particularity and individuality than Reynolds is, he would have agreed with Reynolds's motives in avoiding those qualities. As W. J. Bate says, 'The end of art, Reynolds maintained, is ethical enlargement',² which corresponds to Wordsworth's concern that his poems should 'teach the young and gracious of every age, to see, to think and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous'.³ Nevertheless, both Reynolds and Wordsworth remembered that the first duty of the artist is to give pleasure: Wordsworth in the Preface

1. The Mirror and the Lamp, (Norton Library, New York, 1958), pp. 103-104.

2. W. J. Bate, From Classic to Romantic, (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), p. 79.

3. M.Y., p. 126; WW to Lady Beaumont, May 21 1807.

to Lyrical Ballads - 'The poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure...'¹ and Reynolds in the Seventh Discourse: 'A picture should please at first sight'.²

Wordsworth described the eye, in The Prelude, as 'the most despotic of our senses'³ - meaning, as he makes clear, the bodily eye and not the inward eye of the imagination. The poet must aim to shake off the tyranny of the bodily eye, in order to cultivate the imagination; and Reynolds says the same about the painter:

it is not the eye, it is the mind which the painter of genius desires to address; nor will he waste a moment upon those smaller objects which only serve to catch the sense, to divide the attention, and to counteract his great design of speaking to the heart. (4)

In addition to this, Reynolds commended simplicity as

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1. P.W., ii. 395.
 2. Literary Works, i. 417.
 3. The Prelude, (1850), xii. 129.
 4. The Third Discourse, Literary Works, i. 340.

'the general corrector of excess';¹ and one critic has laid stress on the importance for Reynolds of the theory of association, which is another link with Wordsworth.² It is difficult, in all these cases, to claim any direct influence, or anything extraordinary about their similarity of belief, because Reynolds was very much an apologist for his time, and both he and Wordsworth were affected by those philosophical ideas which were generally current. But Wordsworth evidently moved freely in the intellectual area occupied by Reynolds, and if his practice differed from that of the painter, his motives and his philosophy were similar.³

1. The Eighth Discourse, Literary Works, i. 443.
2. See Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art, ed. Robert R. Wark, (San Marino, Calif., 1959), pp. xxiv - xxvi.
3. In the Fourteenth Discourse, describing Gainsborough, Reynolds has an account of Gainsborough's practice of painting by candle-light which curiously anticipates Coleridge's use of 'moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape' in his chapter on the genesis of Lyrical Ballads in Biographia Literaria (ed. J. Shawcross, Oxford, 1907, ii. 5.) Reynolds writes: 'By candlelight, not only objects appear more beautiful, but from their being in a greater breadth of light and shadow, as well as having a greater breadth and uniformity of colour, nature appears in a higher style'. (Literary Works, ii. 84.)

Reynolds's opinion that the painters should be well acquainted with the poets¹ would also no doubt have appealed to Wordsworth. It may even have suggested to him a reciprocal action as a help to the poet, and been one motive in his study of painters and pictures. Among these, under Beaumont's tuition, the works of Reynolds would have been the first he admired - the 'Man's Head in Profile' in the Beaumont Collection, and the portraits of Sir George and Lady Beaumont; and in the Angerstein Collection, the portrait of Lord Heathfield with the keys of Gibraltar. We have no record of Wordsworth's response to these, but it is not difficult to imagine him acquiescing with Beaumont in his high opinion of Reynolds as an artist, in addition to his admiration for Reynolds as a critic.

2. The Dutch and Flemish Schools.

'As for the Rembrandt you mention', wrote Lord Chesterfield to his son in 1751, 'though it is very cheap

1. The Seventh Discourse, Literary Works, i. 407: 'Every man whose business is description, ought to be tolerably conversant with the poets, in some language or other; that he may imbibe a poetical spirit, and enlarge his stock of ideas.'

if good, I do not care for it. I love la belle nature; Rembrandt paints caricaturas.'¹ For Lord Chesterfield (who had been, indeed, Ambassador to The Hague a century before Wordsworth visited there) and for the eighteenth century as a whole, Rembrandt's failure was a lack of feeling for the ideal, a rugged individuality of treatment and technique which could not (it was thought) stand comparison with the seicento Italian painters. The Italians displayed a combination of lifelike vividness and ideal form which proved irresistible to a generation brought up on the neo-classical canons of criticism; and the painters of Northern Europe were neglected in consequence. As late as 1825, Wordsworth contrasted the Dutch school with 'the higher order of Italian Artists, in whom beauty and grace are predominant';² and while this may be nothing more than Wordsworth behind the times, it nevertheless also serves as a reminder that other schools of painting were at this time

1. B. Dobree, ed., The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope 4th Earl of Chesterfield, (London, 1932), p. 1727.

2. L.Y., p. 183; WW to Jacob Fletcher, February 25 1825.

of little account beside the Italian. The countries themselves were less visited: far fewer guide books were written on countries other than Italy, and those that were tended to lump several countries together, like Tennant's 'Tour, through Parts of The Netherlands, Holland, Germany, Savoy, and France'.¹ One result of this was that, apart from a few great figures, the painters were little known; and the rediscovery of the Italian 'primitives' which was taking place during Wordsworth's lifetime was not accompanied by any parallel rediscovery of the early painters of the North. Rembrandt, later in the eighteenth century than Lord Chesterfield, was admired; so were Vandyke and Rubens, both of whom had some connection with Italy. Thus when Wordsworth speaks of these, and mentions no others, he is merely reflecting a tendency of the time. It was left to the Impressionists to rediscover Vermeer; while the early painters were largely ignored. One of the few people to collect them was Charles Aders, to whom Wordsworth was introduced by Henry Crabb Robinson, and who remained a

1. e.g. Charles Tennant, A Tour through Parts of The Netherlands, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Savoy, and France, in the year 1821-2. (London, 1824).

friend until he left the country after becoming bankrupt in 1839.¹ At the sale of Aders's effects, Robinson bought nine pictures and offered to present two to Wordsworth, who chose a Dutch landscape, 'Sandbank' by Ruysdael, and a picture of the Virgin and Child by Van der Weyden.² The choice of the Ruysdael reflects Wordsworth's love of landscape painting; Hazlitt observed a liking for 'Waterloo's sylvan etchings',³ which is another example from the Dutch School.

But the greatest Dutch painter was, of course Rembrandt. Of Rembrandt Wordsworth seems to have had some experience, for when he wrote to Beaumont in 1808 about 'The Woman taken in Adultery' he remarked that 'I have seen many pictures of Rembrandt which I should prefer to it.'⁴

1. Wordsworth called on Aders in 1836. (M. K. Joseph, Charles Aders, a biographical note, Auckland, New Zealand, 1955, p. 50.) It may have been Aders to whom Coleridge was referring to in 1817 when he wrote to Washington Allston about 'a German Gentleman, of excellent good taste in Painting, and himself a Possessor of a very curious collection of the old Netherland masters.' (E. L. Griggs, ed., Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Oxford, 1956-59, iv. 794). The description 'very curious' would have been typical of the age in respect of Aders's collection.

2. HCR on Books and Writers, p. 572.

3. P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, (London, 1932), xi. 93.

4. M.Y., p. 185; WW to Sir George Beaumont, April 8 [1808].

Among those which he would have seen were the two owned by Beaumont, 'The Deposition from the Cross' and a 'Portrait of a Jew Merchant', and the other Rembrandt in the Angerstein Collection in addition to 'The Woman taken in Adultery', which was the 'Adoration of the Shepherds'. Wordsworth's verdict on 'The Woman taken in Adultery' was as follows:

The new Rembrandt has, I think, much, very much in it to admire, but still more to wonder at, rather than admire.... The light in the depth of the Temple is far the finest part of it; indeed, it is the only part of the picture which gives me very high pleasure; but that does highly please me. (1)

The effect of light which Rembrandt achieved in this picture was the quality most remarked upon by the critics of Wordsworth's day.² The luke-warm praise which Wordsworth bestowed is very similar to the criticism of Hazlitt, who described the picture as -

1. M.Y., pp. 185-186; same letter.

2 For instance: 'The power displayed in it, of embodying light, and of making it tell upon the senses and imagination as if it were a material thing, is prodigious'. (British Galleries of Art, London, 1824, pp. 17-18); 'The "Woman Taken in Adultery", in point of extraordinary finish, and splendid effect of chiaro-oscuro, is the most remarkable.' (M. Passavant, Tour of a German Artist in England, London, 1836, p. 44).

prodigious in colouring, in light, and shade,
in pencilling, in solemn effect; but that is nearly
all -

of outward show
Elaborate, of inward less exact.

Nevertheless, it is worth any money.... If
this extraordinary genius was the most literal and
vulgar of draughtsmen, he was the most ideal of
colourists. (1)

Hazlitt's stress on the word 'ideal', and his estimate
of Rembrandt as 'the most literal and vulgar of draughtsmen'
shows that he has some affinities with Lord Chesterfield
in his approach to Rembrandt. The interesting thing is
that he thought Wordsworth had too. Writing of Wordsworth's
appreciation of art, Hazlitt says:

His eye also does justice to Rembrandt's fine and
masterly effects. In the way in which that artist
works something out of nothing, and transforms the
stump of a tree, a common figure into an ideal object,
by the gorgeous light and shade thrown upon it, he
perceives an analogy to his own mode of investing the
minute details of nature with an atmosphere of
sentiment; and in pronouncing Rembrandt to be a man
of genius, feels that he strengthens his own claim
to the title. (2)

1. P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt,
(London, 1932), x. 13-14. Compare Hazlitt's remarks
about outward and inward with Reynolds's 'it is not the eye,
it is the mind which the painter of genius desires to
address.' (Third Discourse, Literary Works, i. 340).

2. P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt,
(London, 1932), xi. 93.

Here is the egotistical sublime indeed, if Hazlitt is right; showing Wordsworth's admiration for Rembrandt to be nothing but an extension of his poetic philosophy. Rembrandt reaches the ideal, on this judgment, through his paintings of nature; which accounts for Wordsworth's half-hearted admiration of 'The Woman taken in Adultery', for his choice of a landscape painting from the Aders Collection, and, most significant of all, his preference for a landscape painting above all others of Rubens.

The evidence for this comes from Dora Wordsworth's journal of the tour of 1828, at Brussels, where the party saw -

A superb Rubens - the subject a bear hunt - which my father and Mr. C. prefer to any picture they know of this great Master - so wild - so fiery - trees wonderful, bright sky peeping through & behind their branches - (1)

This impression was held, it should be remembered, after seeing the great Rubens paintings in Antwerp which so impressed Mary Wordsworth during her visit, and which Wordsworth was to see later on the way back from his visit

1. Dora Wordsworth's Journal of the tour of 1828, in the Dove Cottage Collection; p. 11.

to Italy in 1837.¹ It was probable that something of the lively appreciation of Rubens's landscape came from a study of the great painting owned by Beaumont, the 'Autumn: the Chateau de Steen'. Beaumont's tuition is evident in the letter in which Wordsworth mentions the painting:

What a noble instance, as you have often pointed out to me, has Reubens given of this in that picture in your possession, where he has brought, as it were, a whole County into one Landscape, and made the most formal partitions of cultivation; hedge-rows of pollard willows conduct the eye into the depths and distances of his picture; and thus, more than by any other means, has given it that appearance of immensity which is so striking. (2)

The 'this' of which Rubens seemed to Wordsworth to be such a good example was 'the power of turning to advantage, wherever it is possible, every object of Art and Nature as they appear before me',³ and thus Wordsworth's opinion of Rubens was linked once again with some kind of transforming quality, and connected with the whole conception of ideal landscape.

One of Wordsworth's poems refers to a picture by Rubens.

1. Henry Crabb Robinson's Travelling Diary, August 3 1837. Wordsworth also visited the Museum at Antwerp.

2. M.Y., pp. 467-468; WW to Sir George Beaumont, August 28 1811.

3. M.Y., p. 467.

This was 'Daniel in the Lions' Den', a picture in the possession of the Duke of Hamilton. Wordsworth had first seen the picture in 1801, when he visited Hamilton Palace on his way to Basil Montagu's wedding.¹ The Duke had a fine collection of paintings, which Wordsworth saw for the second time during his tour of Scotland in 1831.²

Yarrow Revisited, which commemorates this tour, contains the following sonnet, entitled 'Picture of Daniel in the Lions' Den, at Hamilton Palace':

Amid a fertile region green with wood
And fresh with rivers, well did it become
The ducal Owner, in his palace-home
To naturalise this tawny Lion brood;
Children of Art, that claim strange brotherhood
(Couched in their den) with those that roam at large
Over the burning wilderness, and charge
The wind with terror while they roar for food.
Sate are these; and stilled to eye and ear;
Hence, while we gaze, a more enduring fear!
Yet is the Prophet calm, nor would the cave
Daunt him - if his Companions, now bedrowsed
Outstretched and listless, were by hunger roused:
Man placed him here, and God, he knows, can save. (3)

1. G. M. Harper, William Wordsworth, his life, works and influence, (London, 1916), ii. 6.

2. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Dorothy Wordsworth tried to see the collection in 1803, but were twice refused admission. See Journals of D.W., i. 229-232.

3. P.W., iii. 275-276. The picture, which had once belonged to Charles I, was sold in 1832, but returned to Hamilton Palace in 1886. See M. Rooses, L'Oeuvre de P.P. Rubens, (Anvers, 1886), i. 163-164. The picture is reproduced as Plate 40 of Volume I (opposite p. 152).

If this is one of the less distinguished poems of Wordsworth which relate to painting, it nevertheless shows the effect of something other than a Rubens landscape upon his mind, and restores some proportion to his appreciation of the artist.

3. The French School.

In the case of both Dutch and Flemish painting, it is noteworthy that Wordsworth mentions no-one except the great masters accepted by the taste of the time. A similar conservatism may be seen in his criticism of French art. In 1837 he visited the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris; it was described by a guide-book as containing 'the most celebrated Works of modern French Painters',¹ but Wordsworth only found what he grumpily described as 'a number of French artists copying there pictures which had better be buried'.² The Salon at the Louvre was little better:

Went to the Louvre. The old Pictures removed to make room for the annual exhibition of French art. We were sorry for this as the new things gave us but little pleasure, though not uninteresting as shewing

1. Mariana Starke, Information and Directions for Travelers on the Continent, (London, 1828), p. 19.

2. L.Y., p. 841; WW to Isabella Fenwick, March 24 [1837].

the present state of French art which really does not seem to have much to boast of - The most impressive picture we noticed has for its subject Lord Strafford kneeling down on his way to his place of execution to receive the benediction of Archbishop Laud. (1)

The picture mentioned was by Paul de la Roche, and it was bought by the Duke of Sutherland for his gallery at Stafford House.²

Here, as often before, we see Wordsworth being impressed by a picture with a vivid narrative subject-matter. The general condemnation of French painting at this period is typical of Wordsworth's approach to contemporary European art. There is no mention in his work of Gericault or Delacroix, or of Canova; only in British painting, where he knew the painters personally are there signs of sustained interest. There is one account of a meeting with the German mural painter, Peter von Cornelius, in Munich,³ but

1. L.Y., p. 841; WW to Isabella Fenwick, March 24 [1837].

2. See Lord Ronald Gower, My Reminiscences, (London, 1883) p. 10.

3. Henry Crabb Robinson's Travelling Diary, July 20 1837: '... we went to the new church of St Ludwig where was fortunately Cornelius the designer & director of the great work there executing - We found him at the great picture of the last judgment - He recognised me civilly - Several of his pupils were at work in different parts of the church - By means of scaffolding - we cd. go from one pt to another & stand under the roof... Occasionally individual figures were richly coloured but in general I thought the effect feeble & unpleasant'.

that was as unproductive as the French experience.

Wordsworth was on much safer ground when it came to the great French masters, and Claude and Poussin in particular. Claude is only mentioned once,¹ in the Guide to the Lakes,² but I think that this must be a case of a familiarity which did not speak of something which was so much taken for granted. Claude was, after all, the painter of ideal landscape whose pictures were a model for eighteenth-century landscape painters and connoisseurs of the Picturesque; Beaumont was the owner of four fine examples of his work, and an enthusiastic demonstrator of his excellence, and carried one of the four with him everywhere in a travelling case made specially for the purpose. It is inconceivable that Wordsworth did not admire the Claudes in Beaumont's collection, and the work of the artist as a whole.

For Poussin, Hazlitt provides the evidence:

We have known him enlarge with a noble intelligence and enthusiasm on Nicholas Poussin's fine landscape-compositions, pointing out the unity of design

1. Hazlitt's remark about Wordsworth's 'lines on a Picture by Claude Lorraine' is a mistake for the sonnet 'Praised be the Art' about Beaumont's picture. (P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, London, 1932, xi. 90).

2. E. de Selincourt, ed. Guide to the Lakes, (London, 1926), p. 103.

that pervades them, the superintending mind, the imaginative principle that brings all to bear on the same end; and declaring he would not give a rush for any landscape that did not express the time of day, the climate, the period of the world it was meant to illustrate, or had not this character of wholeness in it. (1)

In this criticism Wordsworth appears to require from a landscape either a kind of topographical and meteorological exactitude - the sort of thing which is found in Constable's cloud studies - or a landscape which tends towards the ideal.

Claude and Poussin are the only two French painters admired by Wordsworth (with the exception of the notorious Le Brun). This makes a fitting conclusion to his criticism of the European schools of painting, for his opinions throughout are based on an admiration of the great masters, and a lack of interest in either the earlier or the more modern schools.

P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt,
1. 1832, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt,
(London, 1932), xi. 93.

Chapter 13. Wordsworth as a critic of pictorial art;
an assessment.

As we have seen, the twentieth-century estimate of Wordsworth's powers as a critic of pictorial art is low. His contemporaries admired his remarks on painting (and I have found no evidence that they were not unanimous in this); but critics of the present century speak in terms of a distinct lack of taste. A recent critic admits Wordsworth's interest, but lends his support to the general view:

Wordsworth... had a more sustained interest in painting and visual art than might be immediately suspected: though, as de Selincourt observes, he never acquired any very sound taste. (1)

What de Selincourt actually said was much stronger - that Wordsworth 'never acquired any sound taste'.² The difference between 'any sound taste' and 'any very sound taste' suggests that the matter is too complicated to be so summarily dismissed.

1. C. Salvesen, The Landscape of Memory, (London, 1965), p.56.

2. Quoted above, Introduction.

In the first place it must be recognised that Wordsworth's criticism of art does not survive in any form which can be considered to be sustained argument or discussion. It exists in fragments of reported conversation, in occasional poems or parts of poems, and in random observations in letters. There are a great many of these, and an examination of them enables us to deduce with some accuracy the opinions which Wordsworth held on many issues which relate to pictorial art; but they do not constitute a body of serious and coherent exposition which can be subjected to a sustained critique. Nor can the fragments be fitted together to form a consistent pattern, for the isolated observations carry different weight in accordance with the circumstances in which they were made. An opinion in a letter is more likely to be a reasoned and considered opinion than a remark made in conversation; and the position is further complicated by the fact that Wordsworth tended to stress different aspects of the subject when writing to different people. He agreed with Haydon about the Elgin Marbles, and later acquiesced to some extent in his low estimate of Michelangelo; yet he was glad to tell Beaumont how much he had appreciated Reynolds's Discourses. Such unevenness

of evidence makes a criticism difficult.

This difficulty is even clearer when we realise that the fragments come from many different periods of Wordsworth's life. As he learned a great deal about painting after 1803, it is clear that any evidence which we have of his criticism before that time will be worth less than the later pronouncements. This is important, because the twentieth-century critics who have spoken harshly of Wordsworth's art criticism have all done so from the starting point of his remarks in The Prelude about Le Brun's picture in Paris. When this is used in evidence, it should be remembered that it occurred in 1791, and that Wordsworth's interest in painting dates principally from around 1803.

The evidence of the fragments shows that after this date Wordsworth had a sustained interest in the subject. If the study of painting began under the stimulus of a personal friendship, it developed into something of considerable importance for Wordsworth's later years. From the reading of Reynolds in 1804 to the 'pleasure and admiring approval with which he greeted the first

publication of Mr. Ruskin,¹ in the last decade of his life, the concern is clearly visible in his letters, his poetry, his visits abroad and his reported conversation. We may compare his involvement with the subject, and his thoughtful consideration of it, with Cowper's facile remarks in Book I of The Task:

Strange! there should be found,...
Who, satisfied with only pencil'd scenes
Prefer to the performance of a God
Th'inferior wonders of an artist's hand!
Lovely indeed the mimic works of art;
But Nature's works far lovelier. I admire -
None more admires - the painter's magic skill,
Who shows me that which I shall never see,
Conveys a distant country into mine,
And throws Italian light on English walls:
But imitative strokes can do no more
Than please the eye - sweet Nature every sense.(2)

When compared with this approach, the depth of Wordsworth's interest is immediately apparent. The purpose of the first part of this study has been to chart the progress of this interest, and on the evidence of the early

1. R.P. Graves, 'Recollections of Wordsworth and the Lake Country', in Afternoon Lectures on Literature and Art, delivered in the Theatre of the Royal College of Science, S. Stephen's Green, Dublin, in the years 1867 & 1868, (Dublin, 1869), p.301.

2. H. Milford, ed., The Poetical Works of William Cowper, (London, 1911), p.138; The Task, 1.413-427.

chapters I think it is possible to argue that the concern with pictorial art developed so that it took second place only to politics in the preoccupations which affected his poetry in the later years.

The sustained interest in the subject meant that over the years Wordsworth acquired a wide and comprehensive knowledge about it. He had some familiarity with every major school of European painting except the Spanish. And we need not assume (in spite of R.P. Graves's remark that Wordsworth was not 'versed in the history of the schools',²) that this knowledge was unhistorical. No doubt he learned a great deal from reading Reynolds and from talking to Beaumont, and his letters show an awareness, for instance, that Perugino and Raphael have certain distinct qualities which are due to the difference in generation; and it seems most unlikely that Wordsworth was not reasonably familiar with the general progression of painters in schools: that he did not realise, for example, that Claude and Poussin influenced Wilson, and that Wilson influenced Beaumont.

What Graves may have meant about the 'history of the schools' was that Wordsworth did not have much knowledge of the antecedents of the great masters in each school; that he knew Raphael and Rembrandt and Rubens, Leonardo and Vandyke, Claude and Poussin, but that he

did not know anything about Masaccio or Botticelli, or Breughel or Van Eyck. This, it must be admitted, is true. Although Wordsworth's knowledge was wide and comprehensive, it was so only within the bounds of current taste; but this is hardly surprising, and hardly the occasion for criticism. Wordsworth had the visual appreciation common to his age, and neither of his two mentors, Beaumont and Reynolds, diverted his attention from the conventional to the unconventional in criticism. In addition to this, his temperament kept him tentative and conventional in an art in which he was not an expert; he had suffered too much himself from poetasters and literary amateurs to be otherwise. 'I have not much confidence in my judgment of pictures,' he wrote to Beaumont in 1808, 'except when it coincides with yours.'¹ This was in many ways an excellent thing. His reliance on Beaumont gave him a thorough grounding in the works of the great masters and prevented him from making foolish mistakes. In consequence, his criticism of the old masters is very sound. His remarks on Michelangelo and Raphael, his criticism of Wilson, his admiration of Poussin, all may be seen as the sensible opinions of an intelligent man of the period. That this

1. M.Y., p.186; WW to Sir George Beaumont, April 8 [1808].

is so is also shown by the praise bestowed on his art criticism by his contemporaries.

The conventional approach, which worked so well with the established masters, was not so successful when it came to the criticism of contemporary painting. De Selincourt's criticism divides into two parts - that Wordsworth admired the Le Brun, and the fact that he 'was able later to express a genuine admiration for the canvases of his friends Haydon and Sir George Beaumont' - and if the first may be discounted because of the date, the second is far more difficult to defend. This is not because Wordsworth was praising second-rate painters; they were, after all, his friends. It is because it asks the question, if only by implication, about Wordsworth's criticism of his more deserving contemporaries. Where, above all, is the appreciation of Constable and Turner, who would seem to have had so much in common with the poet?

This certainly seems a serious omission. Yet we must be careful not to look upon the matter too much with the hindsight of a later age. To judge Wordsworth's art criticism by the standards of the twentieth century, with its perception of formal qualities and its knowledge of all the developments of theory during the last hundred years, is to judge it by standards which were impossible

for him to achieve. This was, after all, the age of Bird and Etty, of Barret and Reinagle, the age which neglected Constable and did not appreciate the best of Turner. We may also remember Wordsworth's successes in the criticism of contemporary painting, such as his dislike of Martin and his condemnation of the later work of Landseer.

The conclusion of all this is that it is not possible to judge Wordsworth's criticism by its results alone; or that if we go by the results it is defensible on all counts. The criticism of the old masters is good, and the criticism of contemporary painting is typical of the age. It is, in fact, much better than de Selincourt would have us think, for it is the criticism of an intelligent man of the time. But the idea of 'unsound' remains, to suggest that there is something wrong with the critical methods which Wordsworth used, and this must now be examined. 'His eye', says Mary Moorman, '...simply followed his feelings.'¹

This is quite true, not necessarily in the sense of an immediate giving way to a first emotional impression, but in the way in which Wordsworth's approach to pictorial art was never disinterested. In almost every case the

1. Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Early Years, 1770-1803, (Oxford, 1957), p.171.

criticism of pictures became affected by his views on some other subject. Thus his remarks on Hogarth were obviously connected with a preference for the country over the town, and those on Constable with a feeling for the peculiar power of mountain scenery. His views on Martin were linked with his dislike of 'the analogous artists in poetry', such as Campbell and Byron; while his praise of Bewick was due to the wood-engraver's meticulous and uncritical delineation of nature. Anything which seemed likely to corrupt would have received short shift, in painting as in poetry; just as anything which provided wholesome instruction would have recommended itself to Wordsworth. 'Every great Poet is a Teacher', he wrote to Beaumont; 'I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing.'¹ No doubt he envisaged a similar function for the practitioner of the sister art.

Obviously every person's appreciation of works of art is governed to some extent by his own likes and dislikes, and his opinions on life and art in general. It is to overcome this that critical theory has been evolved, largely since Wordsworth's day. But Wordsworth seems

1. M.Y., p.170; WW to Sir George Beaumont, [Jan or Feb 1808].

peculiarly prone to the influence of personal feelings because his criticism was so frequently affective. Le Brun's picture is an early and obvious example, but there are others from the period when he had a serious and developing interest in the subject. He found in Haydon's picture of Napoleon 'signs /Of thought, that give the true poetic thrill',¹ and Leonardo's 'The Last Supper' presented qualities that 'melt and thaw /The heart of the Beholder'.² This affective criticism is closely connected with the subject-matter of the picture, rather than with its technique, and this is a salient feature of Wordsworth's approach, as may be seen from many of the poems which are connected with painting, such as the sonnets on Raphael's picture of St. John the Baptist, or on Rubens's 'Daniel in the Lion's Den'. When they visited the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1824, the Wordsworths were delighted with Leslie's picture of 'Sancho Panza in the apartments of the Duchess'; for, like others at the time, they liked pictures which told a story. Henry Crabb Robinson once observed:

1. P.W.,iii.51.

2. P.W.,iii.184. In a note Wordsworth said 'I speak of it as I felt.' (P.W.,iii.481).

I have thought that Wordsworth's enjoyment of works of art is very much in proportion to their subservience to poetical illustration - I doubt whether he feels the beauty of mere form.(1)

All the evidence suggests that Robinson was right.

This was probably because of two influences. The first was the spirit of the age, for which the story of a picture was of supreme importance, as the popularity of Wilkie's pictures shows. The second was Wordsworth's adherence to the accepted idea of ut pictura poesis without any attempt to think out the relationship between art and expression, and the differences between painting and poetry in this respect. Having done this, he then imposed his own ideas about poetry on to painting. This includes not only the kind of moral ideas which we have already noticed, but also ideas of expression. The most valuable lines of the sonnet by Thomas Gray quoted in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads were, for Wordsworth, those which were nearest to prose, because 'the language of such Poetry as is here recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men';² that is, the best lines of the Gray sonnet are not detached by any formal qualities

1. HCR on Books and Writers, p.257.

2. P.W., 11.392.

from the feelings which they claim to represent. An application of a similar principle to painting leads to a naive realism, as in Wordsworth's remarks on Beaumont's picture illustrating 'The Thorn':

... we have two objections to it; one, that the upright bough in the thorn is, we think, too tall for a tree in so exposed a situation; and the other, - which I remember you mentioned as having been made by somebody in town, - that the woman appears too old.(1)

Beaumont's defence was naturally the defence of the formal demands of his picture: 'I thought the subject required a little decoration in the picture, tho not in the poem'.² But the fact that Wordsworth should have made two such observations shows how much his criticism of art was bound up with his general ideas about poetry and its relation to life.

This criticism of the picture of 'The Thorn' is the worst example of Wordsworth's art appreciation. In general, although it depended to some extent on his other interests, it was more sensible and accurate. Its success was due to two things: the conventional tuition of Beaumont and Wordsworth's own unwillingness to relinquish

1. M.Y., p.64; WW to Sir George Beaumont, September 1806.

2. DCC, B to W, September 13 1806.

it; and secondly the fact that Wordsworth's views on life and morality, on art and expression, were on the whole sensible, so that his art criticism was generally sound too. Wordsworth had not, of course, thought out a critical theory of painting with anything like the rigour of a modern critic's argument; but this, like an admiration for the most original art of his time, was hardly to be expected. The result of not thinking out his position was that there was nothing to save Wordsworth from the occasional critical lapse.

On the whole, however, the fragments which we have give the impression of a criticism which was much better than might at first appear. The fragments themselves suggest a series of random utterances with no proper theory behind them, but the combination of Beaumont's tuition and Wordsworth's own good sense make the criticism, on the whole, well-informed and intelligent. There are mistakes, certainly, and it lacks a method in the modern critical sense; but it seems to me arguable that for its time it was far more knowledgeable and sensible than has hitherto been recognised.

Chapter 14. The effect of Wordsworth's interest in painters and painting on his poetry.

When Pope wrote his 'Epistle to Mr. Jervas' in 1715, he described an active co-operation between painting and poetry:

Smit with the love of Sister-arts we came,
And met congenial, mingling flame with flame;
Like friendly colours found them both unite,
And each from each contract new strength and light.
How oft' in pleasing tasks we wear the day,
While summer suns roll unperceiv'd away?
How oft' our slowly-growing works impart,
While images reflect from art to art? (1)

This ideal of mutually illuminating arts was possible because, as Ernest Lee Tuveson has said, 'description for its own sake, the setting forth of simple images, is a paramount activity of poetry' in the eighteenth century.² An example of this may be observed in the pictorial quality of Thomson's Seasons ('Winter' begins 'See, Winter comes...') which in its turn gave a tremendous impetus to the development of English landscape painting. Thomson is often thought of as a forerunner of the Romantic movement, but Jean Hagstrum has

1. The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. J. Butt, (one-volume edition of the Twickenham text, London, 1963), p. 249.

2. Ernest Lee Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), p. 22.

emphasised his debt to the tradition of English Neo-classicism, not least in the way in which this Neo-classicism held as important the idea of ut pictura poesis, with its authority from Antiquity and the Renaissance.¹ The rediscovery of the concept of enargeia, or lifelike vividness, in the early eighteenth century, linked up with what M. H. Abrams has described as 'a long rhetorical tradition that a speaker is most emotionally effective when he visualizes and evokes the scene he describes'.² To this theoretical ground for the pre-eminence of the idea of ut pictura poesis in the first half of the eighteenth century, may also be added the practical consideration that in no previous age did the writers, or the audience for whom they were writing, have such a wide knowledge of painting and of the criticism of painting. Thus both theoretical and practical considerations forced the two arts of painting and poetry together: and Erasmus Darwin expressed, crudely and belatedly, the prevailing attitude when he maintained that 'nothing is poetic that does not present a visual image'.³ It is not surprising that Pope

1. Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts, (Chicago, 1958).

2. The Mirror and the Lamp, (Norton Library, New York, 1958), p. 160.

3. Quoted by M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, (Norton Library, New York, 1958), p. 54.

should have written of the sister arts that 'each from each contract new strength and light.'

The idea of ut pictura poesis not only had the authority of antiquity behind it: it was also congenial to the Neo-classical temper because of its simplicity, its clarity and its completeness. It was broken down, together with the remainder of the synthesis, under pressure from various points. Burke, for instance, challenged the whole conception of poetry as representational, clear and detailed, which was so often the result of applying the concept of enargeia. Instead he maintained that obscurity had more aesthetic value than clarity, and that poetry was not obliged to be representational as painting was: and the art which was nearest to poetry was not painting but music. This idea became a commonplace of artistic theory in the nineteenth century, no doubt owing in part to the enthusiasm with which Romantic art embraced the idea of sublimity linked with vagueness. The idea of lifelike vividness gave way to the holiness of the heart's affections and the truth of the imagination. Linked with this, and expressed most clearly in Lessing's Laokoon, was the recognition that poetry and painting were basically trying to do different things: Lessing thought that the visual arts were not concerned with expressing the internal workings of the mind, but with the beauty of the external world; that

'painting, a spatial and visual art, should not strive to become a temporal and psychological art; and poetry, a temporal and intellectual art, should ignore the demands of line, space, colour, and simultaneity of effect'.¹

This idea receives a neat versification by Crabbe:

Cities and Towns, the various haunts of men,
Require the pencil; they defy the pen:...
Of Sea or River, of a Quay or Street,
The best Description must be incomplete;
But when an happier Theme succeeds, and when
Men are our subjects and the deeds of Men;
Then may we find the muse in happier style,...(2)

These ideas are linked with the most important of the pressures which broke down the Neo-classical idea of ut pictura poesis - the suggestion that poetry does not represent objects, but objects seen with feeling and passion: that, as Wordsworth said, 'Our business is not so much with objects as with the law under which they are contemplated'.³ The trouble with Peter Bell, for instance, was that he saw a primrose as a yellow primrose, and nothing more. 'The fact is', wrote De Quincey, 'that no mere description, however

1. Jean H. Hagstrum, The Sister Arts, p. 155.

2. The Borough, Letter I, lines 7-8, pp. 297-301.

3. L.Y., p. 184; WW to Jacob Fletcher, February 25 [1825].

visual or picturesque, is in any instance poetic per se, or except in and through the passion which presides'.¹ One of the results of this is the process of seeing natural things as objects to which feelings can and should be attached, later designated by Ruskin as the pathetic fallacy. This attribution of feelings to inanimate objects began in the late eighteenth century,² and coincides directly with a lessening of interest in the object for its own sake - and, of course, in its appearance, and in the possibilities of its transfer from one art to another. The result of these tendencies was the replacing of painting by music as the art most analogous to poetry.

It is against the background of this changing relationship between the arts that we must see Wordsworth's interest in painters and painting if we are to realise the effect of this interest completely. For Wordsworth's position is central along the line of development, half-way between the Neo-classical position and the nineteenth-century one. More than the other Romantic poets, he looks back towards the

1. Notes to a partial translation of Lessing's Lacoon, in Collected Writings, ed. David Masson, (Edinburgh, 1889-1890), ix. 206; quoted by M. H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, p. 54.

2. See Josephine Miles, Pathetic Fallacy in the Nineteenth Century, (University of California Publications in English, Volume 12 no. 2, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1942).

world of clearly defined objects: Coleridge, for instance, found 'not seldom a matter-of-factness in certain poems', which included 'a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects'.¹ One of the characteristics of Wordsworth's poetry is its continual attachment to the elements of everyday common life or to the physical universe. In The Prelude he describes the way in which the imagination worked, and yet was steadied by the continued apprehension of actual things:

Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm
Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
As mine was through the bounty of a grand
And lovely region, I had forms distinct
To steady me: each airy thought revolved
Round a substantial centre, which at once
Incited it to motion, and controlled. (2)

This 'substantial centre' is very important for Wordsworth's poetry. Its presence is felt even at the most mystical moments, when

we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. (3)

1. Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross, (Oxford, 1907), ii. 101.

2. The Prelude (1850), viii. 426-432.

3. 'Tintern Abbey', lines 45-49; P.W., ii. 260.

In moments like this, the object-world of every day seems to have been left behind. The eye by which it is usually seen is made quiet, and another kind of seeing takes place. There are, in fact, two 'eyes' in Wordsworth's poetry: the first is the organ of sight which we use normally, described by Wordsworth at one point as 'The most despotic of our senses',¹ while the second is an eye which is creative and transforming, the servant of the imagination, the mind's eye, 'the bliss of solitude'.² Frederick A. Pottle has written of Wordsworth's poetry:

The subject is a mental image, and the eye is that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude. The mental image accompanies or is the source of the emotion recollected in tranquillity; it recurs in memory, not once but many times, and on each occasion he looks at it steadily to see what it means. (3)

The subject is indeed a mental image, but it must be insisted that the mental image begins in an encounter with an object, to which the image is faithful. If the encounter is a memorable one it develops into a mental image which

1. The Prelude (1850), xii. 129.

2. 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', line 22; P.W., ii. 217.

3. Frederick A. Pottle, 'The Eye and the Object', Wordsworth Centenary Studies Presented at Cornell and Princeton Universities, ed. G. T. Dunklin, (Princeton, 1951), p. 32.

recurs, and then takes its place as one of the 'spots of time' which are so important to Wordsworth. But each spot of time is firmly based on an actual occurrence in a specific place, which 'steadies' the visionary experience. The process is well described by Marian Mead:

What we have now to observe is, that his eye was not only passive and receptive, but creative. And this relation, of imagination bodying forth the forms of things unknown, the giving of outward life, more or less real, to inward conceptions, would appear to be the more usual path of creative power in poets. Wordsworth's characteristic path was different, it may be said, opposite; for in his most distinctive thinking, as well as in the work which most truly expresses him, what he created entered his mind from without, commonly through the eye.... creation grows from perception; it is no extraneous invention, but actually, in the last analysis, an enlarged, illumined, perception, bringing out forms and meanings which, though to the ordinary observer invisible, are all the time really there. (1)

The process is often confusingly described, and neither Professor Pottle or Professor Mead can claim to have done more than illuminate one part of it. René Wellek has outlined the different ways in which the Wordsworthian imagination works:

Wordsworth disconcertingly vacillates among three epistemological conceptions. At times he makes imagination purely subjective, an imposition of the human mind on the real world. At other times he makes it an illumination beyond the control of the conscious mind and even beyond the individual soul. But most

1. Marian Mead, Four Studies in Wordsworth, (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1929), pp. 21-22.

frequently he takes an in-between position which favors the idea of a collaboration. (1)

In this collaboration between the visionary poet and the objects which he perceives and which steady his imagination, it is clear that the eye plays an important part in its actual function of transmitting the actual physical object's appearance to the mind. If it does this to the exclusion of the imaginative power, the result is 'disconnection dead and spiritless'.² But without it the Wordsworthian imagination lacks its beginning and its centre. It is clear that if an interest in painting is likely to affect any part of Wordsworth's poetry, it will affect the descriptive part of this process.

The power of painting to influence Wordsworth's descriptive poetry may be seen in his treatment of landscape in different poems. The first paragraph of An Evening Walk, for instance, is a generalized treatment of Lake District landscape in the manner of Gilpin and the other Picturesque illustrators, and the whole poem speaks vaguely and in

1. R. Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, Vol 2, The Romantic Age, (New Haven, 1955), p. 145.

2. P.W., v. 139; The Excursion, iv. 962.

general terms about the evening scene, presenting vignettes which are typical. The following paragraph conveys clearly the idea of a Gilpin illustration:

Into a gradual calm the breezes sink,
A blue rim borders all the lake's still brink;
There doth the twinkling aspen's foliage sleep,
And insects clothe, like dust, the glassy deep:
And now, on every side, the surface breaks
Into blue spots, and slowly lengthening streaks;
Here, plots of sparkling water tremble bright
With thousand thousand twinkling points of light;
There, waves that, hardly weltering, die away,
Tip their smooth ridges with a softer ray;
And now the whole wide lake in deep repose
Is hushed, and like a burnished mirror glows,
Save where, along the shady western marge,
Coasts, with industrious oar, the charcoal barge. (1)

Soon after An Evening Walk was the attempt to come to terms in descriptive poetry with the scenery of the Alps in Descriptive Sketches. Some of Wordsworth's difficulty with that poem, and his attack on the Picturesque in the celebrated footnote, may have been due to the fact that no illustrator had treated the Alps in a way which satisfied Wordsworth. There was no Gilpin to help him with his descriptions as there had been in the Lake District, and Mary Moorman has acutely realised that those painters who had tried to illustrate the Alps had failed to do justice to the aspects of them that Wordsworth saw,² so that Words-

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1. An Evening Walk (1849), lines 114-127; P.W., i. 15.
 2. See above, p. 13.

worth (who was trying at this point to describe an Alpine sunset) found himself unable to rely on conventional pictorial treatment of the Alps, and consulted 'nature and my feelings'. Matters were better when it came to 'Tintern Abbey', the first paragraph of which might be accurately described as topographical-picturesque. The scene, like a Gilpin landscape, has a background ('steep and lofty cliffs'), a foreground ('plots of cottage-ground') and a middle distance (hedgerows and pastoral farms). At the same time it is particularized as being 'a few miles above Tintern Abbey', and the continual repetition of 'These', 'this', 'here', remind us that this is a single and very special landscape for Wordsworth.¹ It shows a distinct development towards a versification of topographical landscape, as opposed to the generalised landscape of the Picturesque.

A later example to show the way in which Wordsworth's treatment of landscape may have been influenced by his interest in painting comes from the sonnet 'Between Namur and Liège, No. VI in Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820:

1. See Geoffrey H. Hartman, The Unmediated Vision, (New Haven, 1954), p. 4. This may be compared with Constable's love for one particular valley above all others.

The Morn, that now, along the silver MEUSE
Spreading her peaceful ensigns, calls the swains
To tend their silent boats and ringing wains,
Or strip the bough whose mellow fruit bestrews
The ripening corn beneath it. As mine eyes
Turn from the fortified and threatening hill,
How sweet the prospect of yon watery glade,
With its grey rocks clustering in pensive shade -
That, shaped like old monastic turrets, rise
From the smooth meadow-ground, serene and still! (1)

In this case the picture of the fertile valley surrounded by rocks and contrasted with a fortified hill suggest a landscape by Claude, or the Rubens 'Chateau de Steen'. Mary Moorman draws attention to another landscape which is very similar, from Wordsworth's 'Ode, 1814', No. XXXIX in 'Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty', which, as she says, 'has something of the repose and classic breadth of Claude Lorraine's pictures.'²

I saw, in wondrous perspective displayed,
A landscape more august than happiest skill
Of pencil ever clothed with light and shade;
An intermingled pomp of vale and hill,
City, and naval stream, suburban grove,
And stately forest where the wild deer rove;
Nor wanting lurking hamlet, dusky towns,
And scattered rural farms or aspect bright;
And, here and there, between the pastoral downs,
The azure sea upswelled upon the sight. (3)

1. P.W., iii. 167-168.

2. Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth, The Later Years, 1803-1850, (Oxford, 1965), p. 288.

3. P.W., iii. 144.

Once again we see Wordsworth working in the tradition of 'ideal landscape', blending many different kinds of prospect into one; and in spite of the assertion that the landscape is 'more august than happiest skill/ Of pencil ever clothed with light and shade', the whole passage brings to mind a Claudian landscape.

Wordsworth was good at this kind of landscape painting in words, as Beaumont's marginal comment on a passage of The Excursion reminds us: 'Seen with a true painter's eye - the strength and force of an impending rock naturally softens and extends the scene'.¹ But he could also put into words other kinds of painting, which influenced his imagery; in particular genre painting and portraiture. The best example of a poem which has affinities with genre painting is 'Power of Music', the poem describing the blind fiddler whom Wordsworth saw in Oxford Street. Words like 'there' and 'that' emphasise the fact that Wordsworth is here versifying what he saw, and subscribing to the 'long rhetorical tradition that a speaker is most emotionally effective when he visualizes and evokes the scene he describes':

1. See above p. 77.

As the Moon brightens round her the clouds of the night,
So He, where he stands, is a centre of light;
It gleams on the face, there, of dusky-browed Jack,
And the pale-visaged Baker's, with basket on back. ...

Mark that Cripple who leans on his crutch; like a tower
That long has leaned forward, leans hour after hour! -
That Mother, whose spirit in fetters is bound,
While she dandles the Babe in her arms to the sound. (1)

The figures group themselves round the fiddler like
the figures in a painting by Wilkie, whose work Wordsworth
had been introduced to during this same visit to London
in 1806. A similar kind of literary pictorialism is found
in the versification of a portrait image in the sonnet
'Recollection of the Portrait of King Henry the Eighth,
Trinity Lodge, Cambridge'. In this, as in most of the
poems which have pictures as their subjects, Wordsworth
describes and then reflects; this is a process particularly
suited to the sonnet, whose octave forms the description
and sestet the reflection. Thus the poem attempts to re-
produce both the subject and something of the effect which
the particular treatment has on the beholder, and in this
way Wordsworth's about painting has affinities with his
affective criticism:

1. Lines 13-16, 37-40; P.W., ii. 218.

The imperial Stature, the colossal stride,
Are yet before me; yet do I behold
The broad full visage, chest of amplest mould,
The vestments 'broidered with barbaric pride:
And lo! a poniard, at the Monarch's side,
Hangs ready to be grasped in sympathy
With the keen threatenings of that fulgent eye,
Below the white-rimmed bonnet, far-described,
Who trembles now at thy capricious mood?
'Mid those surrounding Worthies, haughty King,
We rather think, with grateful mind sedate,
How Providence educeth, from the spring
Of lawless will, unlooked-for streams of good,
Which neither force shall check nor time abate! (1)

There are many sonnets of this kind, in which Wordsworth describes a painting and comments on it. A list would include those on Leonardo's 'The Last Supper', Raphael's picture of John the Baptist in the Uffizi at Florence, Rubens's 'Daniel in the Lions' Den' at Hamilton Palace, the sonnets on Haydon's pictures, the two on Lucca Giordano, and those on Westall's views of the caves in Yorkshire. The sonnet seems to have been a convenient form for these poems: the fourteen-line stanza might even be thought of as the poetic equivalent of a picture-frame, into which the work of art is fitted.

Thus Wordsworth's descriptive poetry is frequently affected by his knowledge of painting, so that not only the imagery of his poems but sometimes the whole subject-matter is related to the tradition of ut pictura poesis.

1. P.W., iii. 40.

The finest of the poems, however, are those in which the actual experience, often a landscape, is transformed and made the occasion of a vision or an inspiration; without this transforming quality the poems are too much connected with the objective descriptions of the eighteenth century. The sonnet last quoted shows this eighteenth-century quality, not only in its representation of the picture in words, but also in its diction, with compound epithets and words like 'fulgent', 'broidered', and 'edubeth'. The greatest of Wordsworth's poetry, while not excluding an attachment to the objects of the physical world, is of a different order. It includes an important element of the mystical as one of its components, as A. C. Bradley recognised:

Setting aside, then, any questions as to the ultimate import of the 'mystic' strain in Wordsworth's poetry, I intend only to call attention to certain traits in the kind of poetic experience which exhibits it most plainly. And we may observe at once that in this there is always traceable a certain hostility to 'sense'. I do not mean that hostility which is present in all poetic experience, and of which Wordsworth was very distinctly aware. The regular action of the senses on their customary material produces, in his view, a 'tyranny' over the soul. It helps to construct that every-day picture of the world, of sensible objects and events 'in disconnection dead and spiritless,' which we take for reality. (1)

1. A. C. Bradley, Oxford Lectures on Poetry, (London, 1909), p. 130.

It was with a sense of the importance of this visionary and mystical strain in his poetry that Wordsworth wrote in The Prelude of his travels among the Alps:

That very day,
From a bare ridge we also first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be. (1)

From the point of view of the workings of his imagination, Wordsworth realised that the 'soulless image' was to be avoided: 'Sight is at first a sad enemy to imagination', he wrote,² and it was this which caused his departures from the Picturesque tradition in the early years. The true process of the inspiration was when the sight of an object led to what Professor Pottle calls the 'mental image'. It was often accompanied by a state of sleep, or a dream, as in 'Tintern Abbey' or in 'Resolution and Independence', where the leech gatherer talks to the poet:

But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream; (3)

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1. The Prelude (1850), vi. 523-528.
 2. P.W., iii. 494.
 3. Lines 107-110; P.W., ii. 239.

The dream state is an important one for Wordsworth's poetry, for it is then that the poet is often released from the despotism of the bodily eye and the tyranny of the wakeful mind. It is against this background that we may examine Wordsworth's particular interest in painters and paintings: a background of a poetry which includes two elements simultaneously -- an attachment to objects, and a transformation of those objects. If painting influenced Wordsworth's descriptive poetry considerably, how did it affect the visionary or mystical part of his poetry?

Clearly, not so advantageously. The friendship with Beaumont was undoubtedly an excellent thing in itself; but it was the beginning of changes in Wordsworth's life, the effects of which were incalculable. It involved a turning of the mind from the narrow circle of friends and relatives in the remoteness and peace of Grasmere, and eventually visiting London to become an ornament of the cultural society of which Beaumont was a prominent member. Through Beaumont Wordsworth developed his knowledge of the whole contemporary world of art and letters, and it was only a short step to the meetings with Wilkie, Haydon, Farington and the rest, to the visits to the Royal Academy exhibitions

and to the general enjoyment of London life.¹

The emergence of a new Wordsworth, sociable and enjoying visits to London, coincided with the beginning of his poetic decline. The new life which he was beginning to lead was peculiarly fitted to destroy the foundations upon which his greatest poetry had been built up to that time: the strength of the visionary eye and the suspension of the wakeful mind. This second feature of Wordsworth's genius was clearly undermined by the kind of life which he was beginning to lead: the many new faces, the multitude of new impressions, the new demands on his time, all forced a kind of wakefulness which went contrary to his deepest needs as a poet. The first feature, the strength of the visionary eye and the loss of the bodily eye, is linked to this, because wakefulness presupposes the presence of the bodily eye; but it is also peculiarly affected by anything connected with the visual which causes the bodily eye to remain alert, and here Beaumont's interests in painting and landscape gardening are important. Sir Ifor Evans writes:

1. It will be remembered that Wordsworth arrived home from London in 1806 'with looks and health so much improved that we knew not how to express our happiness'. (M.Y., p. 31; DW to Lady Beaumont, June 3 1806).

There remains the problem of whether Sir George's influence was a desirable one, and here I think one approaches a very complex question. Sir George was the patron at his best, never interfering, always encouraging, and with a wife who seemed to have a most kindly nature and a real understanding of verse. Yet the problems of landscape gardening in Sir George's home at Coleorton, the attachment to the picturesque, all led Wordsworth to become more interested in the beauties of nature than in that mystical experience arising from commonplace, even homely scenes, which had governed him in his most creative years. For behind Tintern Abbey and The Prelude there is not the beauty of the individual scene but a high and unique experience arising often from the very simplest elements. I would therefore suggest that it is very probable that, unwittingly, Sir George's influence helped to confuse in Wordsworth's mind the difference between his unique vision and mere descriptive nature poetry. So it might be said that apart from all questions of diminution of poetic power Sir George is partly responsible for the difference of point of view in the nature descriptions of The Prelude and The Excursion. On the other hand it would, I think, be a respectable view that what was unique in Wordsworth was in any case dimming and disappearing, at least after the end of the first few years of his acquaintance with Sir George and Lady Beaumont. (1)

Evan's last sentence, and the qualifications which appear throughout the paragraph, are reminders that any attempt to relate Wordsworth's decline to a particular cause is ultimately bound to remain speculative. Nevertheless, in his suggestion that Beaumont 'helped to confuse in Words-

1. B. Ifor Evans, 'Wordsworth and the European Problem of the Twentieth Century', Wordsworth Centenary Studies Presented at Cornell and Princeton Universities, ed., G. T. Dunklin, (Princeton, 1951), p. 122.

worth's mind the difference between his unique vision and mere descriptive nature poetry' and that Beaumont directed Wordsworth's attention towards landscape gardening and the Picturesque, Evans makes it quite clear that Beaumont's influence encouraged the use of bodily eye, and turned Wordsworth back towards the Picturesque which he had rejected some years before. To Evans's notice of landscape gardening in this connection should also be added the interest in painting, which no doubt increased Wordsworth's discrimination in respect of natural appearances, and his use of the bodily eye in an appreciation of art. This was not a bad thing; but it was not allied to a state of mind which encouraged the transformation of the natural appearance. What remained, in short, was the sight without the vision: the collaboration between the objective world and the transcending imagination was not sustained.

Beaumont, of course, should not take the blame alone for this: others like Uvedale Price helped to re-awaken Wordsworth's interest in scenery and in the Picturesque, and other painters increased his art appreciation. Beaumont was only the instrument by which Wordsworth was introduced to a whole new range of acquaintances whose ideas were more conventional than his own, who were discussing visual fashions

which he had rejected, and whose habits of living and thinking may have destroyed the poet and visionary in Wordsworth. Hazlitt described the later poetry as affected by a worldliness and sophistication, alien to the true Wordsworth, which he evidently associated with Beaumont's influence:

His [Wordsworth's] later philosophic productions have a somewhat different character. They are a departure from, a dereliction of his first principles. They are classical and courtly. They are polished in style, without being gaudy; dignified in subject, without affectation. They seem to have been composed not in a cottage at Grasmere, but among the half-inspired groves and stately recollections of Cole-Orton.¹

While he notices that the later poems are 'a dereliction of his first principles', Hazlitt seems to be trying to approve of them in this passage; a twentieth century critic would be more inclined, I think, to turn the process which Hazlitt is describing into a plain statement of Wordsworth's decline, associating the decline with the range of new interests.

Pictorial art was, as we have seen, an important interest for Wordsworth after 1803; and the poems which have a connection with pictorial art show the process of poetic decline

1. P.P. Howe, ed., The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, (London, 1932), xi. 90.

clearly, with two notable exceptions. There are three groups of them. The first is the group of sonnets which has already been discussed: poems which describe paintings and reflect on them, giving to the reader a versified pictorial image, a speaking picture. With them may be bracketed the best of the descriptive poems which are connected with pictures, the poems containing landscapes whose composition and effect owes something to contemporary illustration. The second group includes poems like 'Praised be the Art' and 'High is our calling, Friend!' or the 'Lines suggested by a Portrait from the pencil of F. Stone'; these are poems in which the sight of a painting or a conversation with a painter have been the basis for a reflective and meditative poem, or for occasional pieces of meditation within the poem. Although Wordsworth himself compared 'Praised be the Art' with Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', none of the poems is more than conventional and unexciting. The ideas are that art fixes the fleeting moment, and that both painting and poetry are fine but arduous occupations; the first is a commonplace of Romantic thought, for it solves, if only in art, the persistent problem of transient happiness. Nor is the expression, though sensible and vigorous in the sonnets, enough to compensate for the ordinariness of the thought.

The third group consists of the two successful poems in which painting plays a large part. These are 'Peele Castle' and 'Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendour and Beauty'. Significantly, both these poems do not have the painting as an actual subject, but rather as a means of expression of an internal thought or vision, so that in these cases we have an example of the collaboration between what is seen and what is glimpsed by the imagination, which is characteristic of Wordsworth's greatest poetry. By a series of coincidences, Beaumont's picture of Peele Castle in a storm corresponded with the themes of happiness succeeded by suffering and the terror of storm and shipwreck which were present in Wordsworth's mind, and which enabled him to objectify his misery and sense of bereavement. The poem is about stoical resignation, and it moves in its majestic assurance because the central symbol is so exactly provided by the painting. Thus Wordsworth does not have to spend time spelling out the details of the narrative and of the processes of his thought: he can allude to the painting, and the rest falls into place.

A similar process happens in the other poem. The idea behind it is that the sunset, seen in a mountainous country, is of such a splendour that it seems like a celestial glory; and by making the mountains appear like the steps of

Jacob's ladder going up to Heaven, Wordsworth gives an air of precision to what originally seemed wishful thinking. The idea of the mountains as steps of a staircase leading to Heaven even has something in it of a witty complexity. Here the wit comes from the fusing of two unlikely things: the sunset in the Lake District and the steps leading into glory from Allston's picture. The result is a last flash of the old vision, which begins with an objective experience and transforms it. 'This glimpse of glory, why renewed?' writes Wordsworth, and one possible answer is that Allston's picture was the agent that re-activated the process of visionary transformation, by providing an idea to which the landscape could be related.

These two poems are the crown of Wordsworth's interest in painting and painters. He became in his later years, as we have seen, knowledgeable and well-informed about painting and friendly with many painters, but his finest poetry did not respond to such influences. It is clear that, particularly in his early poetry, Wordsworth was aided in his descriptions of landscape by current pictorial attempts and ideas; but the poetry of his greatest period, though beginning in description, ends in a vision which is beyond any external influence.

APPENDIX I.

THE BEAUMONT COLLECTION

The following is a list of pictures known to have been in the possession of Sir George Beaumont:

(See National Gallery Catalogue, 1929; Later National Gallery Catalogues, viz. British School, by M. Davies, London, 1946, French School, by M. Davies, London, 1946, Dutch School, by N. Maclaren, London, 1960; The Farington Diary, ed. J. Greig, London, 1922-28, v.76; Descriptive and Historical Catalogue of the Pictures in the National Gallery:... British School, by Ralph N. Wornum, revised by Sir Charles Lock Eastlake P.R.A., London, 1857).

Numbers refer to National Gallery numbering.

CLAUDE:

- 61. Landscape: Hagar and the Angel.
- 19. Landscape: Narcissus.
- 58. Landscape, with a Goatherd and Goats.
- 55. Landscape: the Death of Procris (ascribed to Claude).

SEBASTIEN BOURDON:

- 64. The Return of the Ark.

NICHOLAS POUSSIN (AFTER):

- 40. Landscape: a man washing his feet at a fountain.

JAN BOTH:

- 71. A Rocky Landscape with Peasants and Pack Mules.

REMBRANDT:

- 51. A seated man with a stick: 'A Jew Merchant'.
- 43. The Deposition.

RUBENS:

66 Autumn: the Chateau de Steen.

CANALETTO:

127 A View in Venice: 'The Stone-Mason's Yard'.

RICHARD WILSON:

108 Ruins of the 'Villa of Maecenas' at Tivoli.

110 Landscape, with figures, representing the
Destruction of Niobe's Children.

REYNOLDS:

106 A Man's Head in Profile.

WILKIE:

99 The Blind Fiddler.

BENJAMIN WEST:

126 Pylades and Orestes brought as Victims before
Iphigenia.

Apart from these pictures given to the National
Gallery, the following were also in Beaumont's possession:

REYNOLDS:

Portrait of Sir George Beaumont.

Portrait of Lady Beaumont.

TITIAN:

The Virgin and Child with St. John.¹

LANDSEER:

Fighting Dogs getting Wind.²

MICHAELANGELO:

Madonna Taddei. (Given by Beaumont's cousin to the Royal Academy in 1830).

RICHARD WILSON:

Castel Gandolfo³

Two circular pictures - an Old Castle and a Waterfall.⁴

In addition to these, Constable noted 'a Cozens and a Swaneveldt',⁵ and Beaumont also is said to have commissioned 'Psyche borne by Zephyrs' from the sculptor John Gibson.⁶

1. Listed in an MS description of Beaumont's Collection in the 'Coleorton Papers' in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

2. See F.G. Stephens, Memoirs of Sir Edwin Landseer, (London, 1874), p.54.

3. See W.G. Constable, Richard Wilson, (London, 1953), p.19.

4. Ibid, p.211. It also seems that Beaumont owned three other pictures by Wilson, which he sold to Benjamin Booth in 1798. See W.G. Constable, Op.Cit., p.207, p.210, p.214.

5. C.R. Leslie, Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, (ed. J. Mayne, London, 1951), p.109.

6. D.N.B.

APPENDIX II.

WORDSWORTH'S LATER INTEREST IN THE PICTURESQUE.

The process by which Wordsworth received his first impressions of pictorial art through the writers and illustrators of the Picturesque has been described in Chapter 1, where it was observed that the conventional description of An Evening Walk was followed by the reaction against the Picturesque in Descriptive Sketches. The reaction is continued in 'Tintern Abbey', although Wordsworth's first visit in 1793 was probably due to the abbey's fame as a picturesque beauty spot; it is described in Gilpin's Observations on the River Wye¹ as 'the most beautiful and picturesque view on the river'.²

Two things may be noticed about the title of the poem. The first is that Wordsworth mentions Tintern Abbey and then disregards it: the lines were 'Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey'. Thus he rejects the popular

1. Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, &c., relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: made in the summer of the year 1770, (London, 1782). Hereafter referred to as 'Wye Tour'.

2. Wye Tour, p.47.

viewpoint; but by including it in the title, he draws attention to it and consequently to its rejection. Instead of being a poem about a grand Picturesque ruin known to every visitor to the Wye, it is to be a more personal and private utterance about one landscape which contains an inspiration and a stimulus to remembrance for the poet alone.¹ The second characteristic of the title is its strange similarity to the title of a Picturesque work. The words 'On revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798' might have occurred on a Gilpin title-page, and any reader of 1798, beginning this work for the first time, would read the title and expect a poem to follow which would demonstrate the Picturesque qualities of the landscape. Instead, after the first paragraph, the poem becomes introspective and reflective rather than descriptive; and this deviation from the expected pattern

1. The stress on this single particular landscape and no other is noticed by Geoffrey H. Hartman in The Unmediated Vision (New Haven, 1954), p.4: 'The emphasis is on these waters, these steep and lofty cliffs, this sycamore, these plots of cottage-ground, these orchard tufts, these hedgerows these pastoral farms, as if the poet were thinking: what I now see are not waters in general, cliffs in general or even smoke in general; I have an inexplicable affection for these particular hedgerows (hardly hedgerows, little lines of wood run wild) - which seem to reciprocate by offering me a mute demonstration of love.' This stress on one particular place, one might add, is in direct opposition to the tradition of eighteenth-century landscape description and painting.

would have been, I suggest, more important to the contemporary reader than it is to us. It might even have been the main point of the poem: the arousing of expectations in the direction of the Picturesque only to dismiss them and thus present the reader with an implicit rejection of a current fashion in viewing landscape. One critic has remarked upon the 'conventionality of the opening lines of the poem'¹ and this is so marked as to be almost suspicious; so that it becomes important as a conventional base for an unconventional poem. The first paragraph, in other words, is significant mainly for the way in which its beauty and exactness of description is the occasion of a new kind of vision - when the eye is 'made quiet' and a new kind of sight 'into the life of things' emerges.²

This interpretation is supported by a passage in The Prelude in which Wordsworth sees the Picturesque interest which he had in landscape in his youth as a regrettable

1. J.B. McNulty, 'Wordsworth's Tour of the Wye', Modern Language Notes, xl, 5, (May 1945), pp. 291-295.

2. Cp. S.H. Monk, The Sublime, p. 204: 'The picturesque traveller, in search of Claudian beauty or Salvatorian sublimity, was busy seeing; Wordsworth had to teach him not only to see, but to interpret in terms of personal intuition.'

phase. He is moving towards a conception of landscape as important on a level of moral influence and character, and consequently the approach of writers on the Picturesque seems superficial and distracting. The passage in the 1805 version of The Prelude is as follows:

Oh! Soul of Nature! that dost overflow
With passion and with life, what feeble men
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
But through presumption, even in pleasure pleas'd
Unworthily, disliking here, and there,
Liking, by rules of mimic art transferr'd
To things above all art. But more, for this,
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit, giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion, to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power
The affections, and the spirit of the place,

Less sensible.(1)

The trouble is actually deeper than just the using of the Picturesque fashion to inspect landscape. It is something more fundamentally affecting the development of Wordsworth's poetry. The passage from The Prelude continues:

Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause
More subtle and less easily explain'd

1. The Prelude (1805), xi.146-164. Christopher Hussey, in The Picturesque, (London, 1927) says (p.127) that 'Cowper found no need for the picturesque, and Wordsworth congratulated himself on his immunity from its influence'. He bases this remark on the lines

... for this
Although a strong infection of the age
Was never much my habit, - giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion.

Quoted like this the lines certainly seem to bear this meaning; but in the context of the paragraph it is quite obvious that Wordsworth is not congratulating himself but deeply regretting his Picturesque interests, however small they may have been. Hussey is followed in his misreading by Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1960), who cites the same lines and comments: 'He congratulates himself somewhat loftily on never having given himself over to the cant terms of the picturesque. But his scorn savours of ingratitude...'. (pp.204-205). Neither Hussey nor Monk perceives that Wordsworth is speaking of his own presumption and self-pampering, and his application of art-inspired rules to things which were above rules. Norman Nicholson, The Lakers, (London, 1955), pp.162-163, interprets the passage correctly.

That almost seems inherent in the Creature,
Sensuous and intellectual as he is,
A twofold Frame of body and of mind;
The state to which I now allude was one
in which the eye was master of the heart,
When that which is in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses gain'd
Such strength in me as often held my mind
In absolute dominion.(1)

This discussion obviously owes a considerable amount to the eighteenth-century ideas of sight as the most important provider of ideas and images for the imagination. Wordsworth's rejection of this idea may be seen to have other connections. His phrase describing the eye -- 'The most despotic of our senses' recalls a phrase which Coleridge was later to use in Biographia Literaria: 'Under that despotism of the eye... under this strong sensuous influence we are restless because invisible things are not the objects of vision'.² This occurs during Coleridge's refutation of Hartley and the doctrine of Association, and it is easy to see a connection between Coleridge's attack on Hartley and Wordsworth's on the Picturesque. Both the doctrine of Association and the study of the Picturesque presuppose a mind which is in some way passive, receiving what it sees

1. The Prelude, (1805), xi.164-176.

2. Biographia Literaria, ed. J. Shawcross, (Oxford, 1907), 1.74.

and combining or comparing it with other sights. For Coleridge, typically, this was a philosophical problem: in order to see the imagination working properly he had to overthrow a system which (as he thought) obscured it.¹ Wordsworth, I believe, was working out the same process in relation to the Picturesque. Equally typically, he related the problem of the developing imagination not to a philosophical question but to a personal growth, from the Wordsworth of An Evening Walk to the Wordsworth of Descriptive Sketches and 'Tintern Abbey'. But each poet comes to the same conclusion about the relation of the eye to the imagination. The eye is a tyrant, preventing the imagination from getting to work; the importance lies in the invisible. This is why Wordsworth's rejection of the Picturesque is so important for his poetry: it was the rejection of something which was impeding his statement of what was really important to him. We may, perhaps, see in the interest in painting and pictures which develops after 1803 a backsliding into a concentration on the visible, and this may be one of the reasons for a decline in Wordsworth's poetry after the great decade.

1. Coleridge was working on this problem in the spring of 1801, and may have discussed it with Wordsworth. See his letters to Thomas Poole, March 16 and March 23 1801 (Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. E.L. Griggs, (Oxford, 1956-59), ii.706, 709.

Meanwhile we should note that Wordsworth's practice was not entirely in accordance with his theory. Side by side with a rejection of the Picturesque as an obstacle to the high imagination, goes a persistence in looking for Picturesque qualities in landscape. A good example from this period when Wordsworth and Coleridge were rejecting the domination of the eye is found in their tour of Scotland with Dorothy Wordsworth in 1803:

When we were within about half a mile of Tarbet, at a sudden turning, looking to the left, we saw a very craggy-topped mountain amongst other smooth ones; the rocks on the summit distinct in shape as if they were buildings raised up by man, or uncouth images of some strange creature. We called out with one voice, "That's what we wanted!" alluding to the frame-like uniformity of the side-screens of the lake for the last five or six miles.(1)

The side-screens of the lake framed the picture itself, which contained the unmistakable ruggedness and irregularity of a traditional Gilpinesque landscape.

In the same spirit which made him join with Coleridge and Dorothy in a shout of recognition, Wordsworth continued to read the current literature relating to the Picturesque.

1. E. de Selincourt, ed., The Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, (London, 1941), i.255-256. For other instances of Dorothy Wordsworth's interest in the subject see John R. Nabholz, 'Dorothy Wordsworth and the Picturesque', Studies in Romanticism, iii.2., (Winter, 1964), pp.118-128.

In January 1806 Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont: 'My Brother has read Mr. Price's Book on the picturesque',¹ and as we have seen, Wordsworth found himself in agreement with Price and Knight in their attack on the landscape gardening of Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton.² Wordsworth even seems to have written to Price during the first half of 1806, presumably communicating his agreement, for he wrote to Lady Beaumont on June 3:

I have received a very obliging letter from Mr. Price, who seems much pleased with what I said upon the Sublime. He ... is kind enough to invite me to Foxley, holding out the inducement of the neighbouring scenery of the Wye.(3)

Here we notice that seeing the Wye valley is still an 'inducement'; and Wordsworth continued his reading in the Picturesque with Richard Payne Knight's An Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste, published in 1805. This had been sent to the Wordsworths by Lady Beaumont, who was no doubt aware of Wordsworth's interest in the subject,⁴ an increase which was fostered by his commission

1. M.Y., pp.2-3; DW to Lady Beaumont, January 19 1806.

2. See above, Chapter 3.

3. M.Y., p.30; WW to Lady Beaumont, June 3 1806.

4. M.Y., p.43; DW to Lady Beaumont, July 9 1806.

to design a winter garden for the new Coleorton Hall.

Four years passed before Wordsworth actually visited Price, in the autumn of 1810. Price's celebrated garden, laid out in accordance with his own principles, surprisingly failed to please Wordsworth: he commented that 'wanting both rock and water, it necessarily wants variety',¹ and went on to put his finger on a weakness of landscape gardening in general, whether conducted by the methods of Brown and Repton or by those of Price and Knight:

A man by little and little becomes so delicate and fastidious with respect to forms in scenery, where he has a power to exercise a controul over them, that if they do not exactly please him in all moods, and every point of view, his power becomes his law; he banishes one, and then rids himself of another, impoverishing and monotonizing Landscapes,...(2)

These words carry with them the authority of one who had written about landscapes, for in 1810 had appeared his anonymous introduction to Joseph Wilkinson's Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire. This essay was republished with some slight alterations in 1820, and appeared as the Guide to the Lakes in 1822.

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1. M.Y., p.467; WW to Sir George Beaumont, August 28 1811.
 2. M.Y., p.467; WW to Sir George Beaumont, August 28 1811.

The Guide to the Lakes illustrates very well the complexities and contradictions of Wordsworth's attitude to the Picturesque at this time. It addresses itself to 'the Minds of Persons of taste, and feeling for Landscape',¹ and not to their eyes; but one of the chief instruments of Wordsworth's method - a discussion of the natural operations of geology and meteorology - has been shown to derive from Price and from another Picturesque writer, Thomas Whitaker, whose History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven had been a source for The White Doe of Rylstone.² And as E. de Selincourt³ and W.M. Merchant⁴ have noted, Wordsworth had become accustomed to view a landscape with the eyes of a Picturesque traveller, and to use his vocabulary. Like Gilpin,

1. Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes, ed. E. de Selincourt, (London, 1926), p.1. (Hereafter referred to as 'Guide').

2. By John R. Nabholz, 'Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes and the Picturesque Tradition', Modern Philology, lxi, 4, (May 1964), pp.288-297.

3. Guide, p.xxi: 'It became with him an instinct to judge of a natural scene in the light of an artistic composition'.

4. A Guide through the District of the Lakes, by William Wordsworth, with an Introduction by W.M. Merchant, (London, 1951), p.23: 'Though his view of the natural scene was both more original and more penetrating than that of his predecessors, his work too is governed to a great extent by their vision and their vocabulary.'

Wordsworth is interested in such things as the play of light and shadow on the mountain-side;¹ but the real difference between Wordsworth and a writer of the Picturesque is found when we compare a passage from Gilpin about the outline forms of mountains with one from Wordsworth. Gilpin writes:

Mountains... rising in regular mathematical line, or in whimsical, grotesque shapes, are displeasing.... Such forms also as suggest the idea of lumpish heaviness are disgusting - round, swelling forms, without any break to disincumber them of their weight.(2)

The use of the word 'disgusting' gives away Gilpin's position - that of the discriminator, 'disliking here, and there, /Liking' and 'giving way /To a comparison of scene with scene'. Wordsworth's approach to the problem is consistent with his protest in the Prelude:

1. Compare Wordsworth, Guide, p.26, with Gilpin, Tour to the Lakes, p.viii. Wordsworth: 'I do not indeed know any tract of country in which, within so narrow a compass, may be found an equal variety in the influences of light and shadow upon the sublime or beautiful features of landscape' Gilpin: '... we sometimes see (in a mountainous country especially) a variation of light alter the whole disposition of a landscape.'

2. Tour to the Lakes, 1.83.

Their forms are endlessly diversified, sweeping easily or boldly in simple majesty, abrupt and precipitous, or soft and elegant. In magnitude and grandeur they are individually inferior to the most celebrated of those in some other parts of this island; but, in the combinations which they make, towering above each other, or lifting themselves in ridges like the waves of a tumultuous sea, and in the beauty and variety of their surfaces and colours, they are surpassed by none.(1)

Here we have a happy acceptance of what Nature offers, with no cavilling or comparisons; one feels that it would not be possible for Wordsworth to use Gilpin's word 'disgusting' about any forms in nature.² It is a question of comprehending the peculiar excellence of a type of scenery, and not just cultivating a taste; which is why Wordsworth is concerned to point out some of the features which he had come to appreciate as a resident. As he said in 1825:

My wish being to teach the Touring World,
which is become very numerous, to look through
the clear eye of Understanding as well as through
the hazy one of Sensibility.(3)

1. Guide, p.27.

2. Cp. the praise of Mary Wordsworth in Book XII of The Prelude (1850):

'She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;
Whate'er the scene presented to her view,
That was the best, to that she was attuned
Through her humility and lowliness,...'(lines 158-161).

And see also the story told about Wordsworth - '... he wasn't a man as would give a judgment again' any mountain.' (quoted by G. Salvesen, The Landscape of Memory, London, 1965, p.57.)

3. L.Y., p.173; WW to Jacob Fletcher, January 17 1825.

This understanding entails the delightful attention to detail which is so marked a feature of the Guide to the Lakes; and it excludes unfortunate and disparaging comparisons. But it does not exclude, necessarily, the visual aspects of landscape, and hence the confusion. For when Wordsworth talks about fine or interesting views (which he does often) he naturally uses the language of the landscape-viewers.

A postscript to Wordsworth's appreciation of the Picturesque is found in his letters to Jacob Fletcher in 1825. Fletcher had sent Wordsworth a manuscript of some observations on the scenery of North Wales, in which he compared it unfavourably with the Scottish mountains and lakes. Wordsworth replied that 'it seems next to impossible to discriminate between the claims of two countries with the impartiality of a Judge'.¹ He thought that he (Wordsworth) had been unfair to the Alps in his comparison of them with the Lake District in the Guide to the Lakes.² In passing Wordsworth asks:

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1. L.Y., p.172; WW to Jacob Fletcher, January 17 1825.
 2. L.Y., p.172.

tell me precisely what you mean by objects being picturesque - and yet unfit for the pencil. Many objects are fit for the pencil which are not picturesque - but I have been in the habit of applying the word to such objects only as are so.(1)

Here Wordsworth shows himself to be in the tradition of Gilpin and opposed to the variations on that tradition introduced by Price. In his Essay on the Picturesque Price wrote:

Mr. Gilpin... defines picturesque objects to be those 'which please from some quality capable of being illustrated in painting;' or, as he again defines it in his Letter to Sir Joshua Reynolds, 'such objects as are proper subjects for painting.'... I hope to show in the course of this work, that the picturesque has a character not less separate and distinct than either the sublime or the beautiful, nor less independent of the art of painting.'(2)

Price even thought that there could be picturesque music:

I am well convinced... that music - though it appears like a solecism - may be as truly picturesque, according to the general principles of picturesqueness, as it may be beautiful or sublime, according to those of beauty and sublimity.(3)

1. L.Y., p.173.

2. Sir T.D. Lauder, Sir Uvedale Price on the Picturesque, (Edinburgh, 1842), pp.77-78.

3. Sir T.D. Lauder, ed., Sir Uvedale Price on the Picturesque, (Edinburgh, 1842), pp.79-80.

One can gain some idea of Price's feeling about what actually was Picturesque from his suggestion that while Handel's choruses were sublime and Corelli's famous 'pastorale' beautiful, a 'capricious movement of Scarlatti or Haydn might be called picturesque'. With all this Wordsworth evidently had little to do, preferring the simpler definition of Gilpin.

Thus Wordsworth's rejection of the picturesque found in Descriptive Sketches, in 'Tintern Abbey' and The Prelude, was not so complete as it might appear. The position is confusing in the Guide to the Lakes, and perhaps the best way to sum it up is to say that Wordsworth often went beyond the Picturesque in his response to natural scenery, but that on many occasions the Picturesque formed an adequate and appropriate response.

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