Britain and Italy
in the Long Eighteenth Century

Britain and Italy in the Long Eighteenth Century: Literary and Art Theories

Edited by

Rosamaria Loretelli and Frank O'Gorman

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INTRODUCTION

ROSAMARIA LORETELLI
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Europe is now one; and, in the eighteenth century, the Europe of the learned was one. Although well known and obvious, these two facts have not yet seeped into our cultural unconscious as deeply as we would like.

Guided by this awareness the Italian and the British Societies for Eighteenth-Century Studies are running a joint programme of conferences both to foster research on the eighteenth-century cultural transfers between the two countries, a field still very patchily covered, and to promote cross-cultural attitudes in the interpretation of British and Italian eighteenth-century texts. The intent is to have scholars partake of a cultural background that is not shared from the start, and cultivate, so to say, their outlook on the texts of their own tradition through perspectives coming from the other culture.

Here we publish the proceedings of the second Anglo-Italian conference, that was hosted by the Federico II University of Naples and its Linguistic Centre, directed by Annamaria Lamarra in April 2009. The essays, although short for editorial reasons, expand sectors of their authors' much wider researches, almost all recently published, or shortly to be published in book form in one of the two languages.

In this collection of essays, which range across literature, philosophy, aesthetics, music and art, the authors are motivated by a number of considerations. Several of them are deeply concerned to investigate contemporary perceptions of the world and knowledge about the world rather to construct yet further historico-empirical narratives. Indeed, several essays impinge not merely upon new ideas and novel methodologies but with new conceptions of knowledge and even with the establishment of what later periods may conceive to be new academic disciplines. Inevitably, others are anxious to explore cultural interconnections between Britain and Italy. These, it should be noted, while as fascinating as ever are, in general, found to be as elusive and as complex as ever, the materials in this collection emphasising, perhaps, the difficulties in the

way of mutual comprehension on the part of two very distinct cultures during the eighteenth century.

A comprehensive background to the subject of eighteenth-century literary and art theories is provided in this book by Rosy Colombo's "Dealing with Change in Literary and Art Theories" which spotlights the dynamics of change in the field of eighteenth-century "aesthetics," progressively emerging as the mutable outcome of the interrelations between changing forms and changing critical discourse. These complex dynamics will be a prerequisite leading to the foundation of the notion of aesthetics as an autonomous form of knowledge.

One of these changing forms is the picturesque, discussed here by Francesca Orestano in "Picturesque Reconsidered—and Preserved" not so much for its own sake as in terms of the mutable attitudes towards it from the eighteenth century to the present. Time and mutability are also at the core of "Stranded in the Present: Modernity and De Ligne's *Lettre de Parthenizza*" by Bram van Oostveldt and Stijn Bussels who convincingly present that text, issued after the French Revolution, as being on the verge of modernity. Within the frame of a picturesque aesthetics it contains, embedded, a sense of discontinuity with the past, traumatically felt as no longer a guide for the future.

Without rejecting the usual scholarly perspective which tends to look for mutual influences and for patterns of cultural migration when considering Italian and British art theories, Andrea Gatti in his "A Dialogue between the Deaf and the Dumb. Aesthetic Theories in England and Italy during the Eighteenth Century" focuses instead on the difficulties involved in their mutual understanding, relating them to relevant differences in the general philosophies of the two countries. The question of linguistic universals, still one of the recurring issues in language theory, was as is well known a widely debated theme in the Scottish Enlightenment. In "The Linguistic Turn in the Aesthetics of the Scottish Enlightenment" Daniele Niedda takes position on Dugald Stewart's thinking about language and knowledge in relation to Thomas Reid, his mentor and the founder of the "common sense" school. On the subject of the Scottish Enlightenment Suzanne Marcuzzi's "Hutcheson on Beauty and Virtue" advocates an interpretation of Hutcheson's aesthetics that sees his accounts of beauty and of morality as inextricably linked.

A facet of the eighteenth century that has only recently started to attract the attention of scholars, promising however an abundant crop, is that of the different forms of residual orality present within its culture. Within this field Ruth Perry tackles "The printed Record of an Oral Tradition: Anna Gordon Brown's Ballad," focusing on the case of a

middle-class woman born in 1747 who had learned traditional ballads as a child and who in later life sang them for transcription in what is known to be the earliest oral repertoire of ballads collected from a living person.

In the last few decades the history of publishing and book dispersal has made significant strides. From this standpoint Lia Guerra and Anna Giulia Cavagna contribute new documentary evidence of the interest of eighteenth-century Italy in the English world and map some channels of book circulation. The extent of the presence of British books in an important library in Pavia is attested by Lia Guerra's "The Circulation of British Books in Eighteenth-Century Pavia: Work in Progress"; while a complex picture appears in Cavagna's "Eighteenth-Century Italian Books in London: the Presence of Italian Regional Publishing in the Collections of the British Library." Here, after establishing the scale of books printed in Italy for rich British readers on the Grand Tour, Cavagna considers books in Italian published in London (their authors, their public, their material forms such as types of paper and of print, page layout etc.) and then, more analytically, books published in eighteenth-century Pavia and Genoa to be found in collections held by the British Library.

At the crossroads where the history of the book and of reading intersect the history of literary forms stands Rosamaria Loretelli's essay ("The Space of Time: *Fleurons* as Temporal Markers in Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* and Ugo Foscolo's *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*") that examines the function of some graphic markers in the first editions of Richardson's *Clarissa* and of the first Italian novel, i.e. Ugo Foscolo's *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis*.

Riccardo Capoferro's "Imaginary Voyages' Aesthetic Theories: Towards a Definition of the Fantastic" directs attention to Margaret Cavendish's *The Blazing World* and David Russen's *Iter Lunare*, two imaginary voyages in which the scholar highlights the attempt to establish the aesthetics of a literary mode, the fantastic, pointing out its essentially oxymoric nature, as basically unrealistic but obliged to define itself in relation to empirical and scientific protocols. The presence and function of music (the Italian opera, particularly) and of musical theory in Frances Burney's novels is the rewarding theme of Barbara Witucki's "Music, Don Quixote, and the Novels of Miss Burney." In "Talking Animals and the Instruction of Children. Dorothy Kilner's *The Rational Brute*" Silvia Granata writes a chapter of the genesis of children's literature featuring talking animals, and focuses on three aspects in particular, namely its relation to the novel as a literary genre at its outset, contemporary educational theories, and the issue of animal rights.

Among the cultural transfers between eighteenth-century Britain and Italy that are still waiting for thorough research is that of the Italian reception of the British novel, both through translations/adaptations and through imitations. Here Daniela Mangione ("Fielding and Sterne: Reception, New Debts and Echoes in the Italian Novel of the First Hundred Years") deals with the reception of Henry Fielding's and Laurence Sterne's novels and breaks new ground, pointing at passages in Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi's *Il buco nel muro* where echoes of *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy* and *The Sentimental Journey* blatantly emerge. Emilio Sergio's "A British Look at Italian Poetry: Saverio Bettinelli, the *English Letters* (1766), and the Idea of Cosmopolitanism" discusses Saverio Bettinelli's *Lettere inglesi*, the report of an imaginary encounter between the two cultures, according to the model of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*.

Angelo Canavesi ("Sterne and Foscolo: the Ironic Sovereignty of the Individual") focuses on the *Sentimental Journey*'s newly invented language of sensibility that he shows to be strictly related to the neuroscience of the time (occasionally pointing out at similarities with the recent discovery of "mirror neurons"). This to illustrate a consistent obstacle facing Ugo Foscolo's first Italian translation, and precisely to render the discourse of a narrating self "suspended between feeling and articulation."

The present volume is closed by James Moore's "'Marble Mad and Very Extravagant': Henry Ince Blundell and the Politics of Cultural Reputation in Britain and Italy" on eighteenth-century attitudes towards art collecting. Through an investigation of Henry Ince Blundell's approach to collecting, and focusing on his relationship with the other art collector Charles Townley—their relation to Italy and their buying Italian art items—Moore shows how the historicity of a collection and specialist knowledge was felt in the eighteenth century as increasingly important for the cultural reputation of the collector.

These essays collected here are characteristic of the state of a number of disciplines at a particular time in the early twenty-first century. Further Anglo-Italian Conferences will, no doubt, continue to work on these foundations. To these Conferences, and to the publications which we anticipate will follow them, the editors can only look forward.

DEALING WITH CHANGE IN LITERARY AND ART THEORIES

ROSY COLOMBO*

A study of literary and art theories in eighteenth-century British culture should map the complex interconnection between transformations of forms, on the one hand, and of critical discourse, on the other. It was precisely this interconnection that, parallel to the development of empiricism, contributed to the establishment of a groundbreaking notion of aesthetics as an autonomous form of knowledge and, for the first time, a discipline *per se*, which suited the demands of the age but also performed an active role in the ways of the modern world. It has been universally acknowledged that a new species of criticism—on which I shall focus later—was essential in creating an aesthetic consciousness which, in its turn, played a crucial role in the historical and epistemological transformations of the age. The eighteenth-century vision contemplated a vital shifting of boundaries between the traditionally consolidated categories of art and the beautiful; what I would like to argue in this paper is that it also initiated a more elaborate concept of creativity, which could reach beyond the prerogatives of artistic genius.[1] In the wake of Galilei and Bacon's example, creativity found a place in the empirical sciences and was appropriated as an attribute by the "new philosophers," thus transcending the literary and artistic spheres. Creativity was claimed as the enlightened foundation for the *Encyclopédie* project; it even became a feature of lifestyles newly fashioned by individual talent. An increasing concern with identity in terms of a continuous performance of an imagined self required an invention of "strategies for showing"—a concern which is at the root of today's obsession with self-image—and created the ideal terrain from which the sphere of fashion emerged as a powerful agent of change. The market of appearance encouraged individual talents to negotiate the right to "seem," to create forms of identity which were no longer supposed to reflect the stability of social codes. For the first time in history, both the

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production and the consumption of beauty began to incorporate the shadows of relativity and imperfection. In this particular sense, aesthetics was constitutive of modernity.

Against this background, it is worthwhile to consider the interplay between the various neoclassical styles which developed in the course of the long eighteenth century. Early in the century, the Augustans understood that a traditional prescriptive concept of literary and artistic production was on the wane and that parody was the only possible strategy to preserve the memory of the classics on the cultural market.[2] However, a more flexible neoclassicist mode, anticipated by *The Spectator* and formalized by Samuel Johnson, could engage in a compromise with the categories of time and individual experience. Towards the end of the century, another version of neoclassicism set in to support progress and perfectibility, values which had been incarnated by the French Revolution; however, such a rational strand of neoclassicism entailed a consciousness of the mutability of aesthetic values. It is precisely this awareness that led to the cultural hegemony of *taste*, which, as a faculty defined by subjectivity and time, implied a notion of aesthetics that could contemplate ontological relativity and accept imperfection as a feature of beauty, immanent in the aesthetic experience.

A specifically British example is provided by the cult of the picturesque that characterized landscape gardening. While rejecting the regular, geometrical patterns imposed on nature by architects from the Renaissance on (let us think only of Versailles), the picturesque played with the boundaries of nature and visual art forms, and blended the appeal of classical models of ideal beauty with the Gothic revival of the taste for ruins. Ruins could at times function as rich ornaments that bestowed prestige on the garden's owner, but, more importantly, they visually conceptualized the passing of time, thus highlighting the ephemeral condition of artistic creation, both literally and metaphorically. The scenario of the most celebrated eighteenth-century English gardens, such as Stowe, or Stourhead, is eloquent enough.[3]

But let me return to the metamorphoses of neoclassicism from a more empirical perspective. Modern novelists, for instance, though working towards variety and change, could still refer to neoclassical categories when vindicating the rights of the "mongrel forms" of their invention. Thus did Fielding; but even Richardson could refer to the Ancients—to Aristotle, to Horace, to Virgil—in his postscript to *Clarissa* to justify the heroine's tragic end to his sensitive female readers, who objected to her death.[4] Paradoxically enough, classical principles could be expanded to

deflate neoclassical stereotypes and even overturn them, as Samuel Johnson did when, in the very name of a rational "nature," he challenged the detractors (I need not mention Voltaire) of Shakespeare's irregular treatment of the dramatic unities.[5]

In France, the middle of the century saw the launch of the *Encyclopédie*'s methodical revision of knowledge in all branches of learning—significantly with no separation between Sciences and *Belles Lettres*. In Britain, a number of initiatives in the public sphere of the press took a more empirical turn, with the shift of critical writing from systematic and theoretical tracts to the more analytical and open form of the essay. A new species of literary criticism emerged, mostly published in magazines and generally focused on contemporary novels, which afforded a fruitful dialogue with the critical mode of the author's prefaces, effectively becoming a liminal paratext of novelistic writing.[6] Consider the Prefaces or Postscripts or even the chapters inserted in novels: the writers themselves not only advertised their work as a commodity (the current title for a Preface was in fact "advertisement"), but also discussed their own poetics with an eye to the reader as a consumer, no longer an abiding disciple of the Renaissance schools. In *Joseph Andrews*, three Prefaces were presented to the readers under the assumption that from time to time their metaphorical journey through the story needed a stop, which would allow them to reconsider the pleasures of their experience in a rational way: "Those little vacant spaces between our chapters may be looked upon as an inn or resting place where [the traveller] may stop and consider what he hath seen."[7] Another case in point is the memorable joint defence of the novel and of the female sex inserted by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey*: "Yes, novels," Austen writes,

> if the heroine of one novel be not patronised by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? […] "And what are you reading, Miss—?" "Oh, it is only a novel!" replies the young lady, while she lays down her book with affected indifference or momentary shame. — "It is only Cecilia or Camilla or Belinda"; or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humour, are conveyed to the world in the best chosen language.[8]

Thus a very short leap separated criticism as a constitutive part of a narrative from criticism *as* narrative. Not surprisingly, the mode of biography provided a new template for criticism, to the extent that it played a crucial

part in Johnson's invention of literary history.[9] *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-1781)[10] is significantly a history of individual poets, where the emphasis is on the "character" of each poet, regarded as the original source of his creative imagination. Such a humanization of criticism effectively bridges the gap between Johnson's critical mode and the practice of eighteenth-century novelists, who also looked at history as biography, the plot of the book being the history of the life of an individual: his/story. *Joseph Andrews*' manifesto of realism is eloquent: "Biography is real history rather than the history of England, the history of France or Spain […] *Don Quixote* is worthy of the name of a history."[11] And Johnson, in *Rambler* n. 60: "No species of writing seems more worthy of cultivation than biography."

Nevertheless, the making of a canon was a necessity of the age. Johnson's seminal work on the *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), on the *corpus* of Shakespeare's works (*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 1765) and on the eighteenth-century English poets set the example. He paved the way for Elizabeth Inchbald's massive publication of English dramas (as chronologically performed on the contemporary stage), and for Anna Laetitia Barbauld's first collection of *British Novelists*, complete with an extensive introductory apparatus which was meant to set the production of the eighteenth-century novel in the perspective of historical progress, in fact in a tradition of its own. Clara Reeve shared the same historical outlook in trying to define a canon for *The Progress of Romance*.[12] Neither task was easy, given the generic instability of eighteenth-century narratives.[13]

Canon-making in the eighteenth century was informed by contemporary aesthetic theories of consumption, both in an attempt to establish continuity with unprecedented formal experiments, and with a view to promoting a sense of national tradition. In this perspective, the exhibition culture of major British literary texts played an extraordinary role.

The project of John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, which opened in 1786 and was followed by other similar exhibitions, most importantly by John Füssli's 1799 Milton Gallery, was a new visual phenomenon which translated the action of Shakespeare's plays—in Fussli's case, Milton's *Paradise Lost*—into a series of paintings exhibited in strict reference to pages from the texts. Füssli's was a multimedial experiment in which visitors could read *Paradise Lost* visually, and an instance of how deeply visual culture was beginning to affect reading practices. Readers were

turning into spectators,[14] and this happened because a visual narrative was inserted within specific scenes of reading, encouraging an encounter between paintings and books.

The recasting of great British literature in the form of painting galleries met various needs. By emancipating Shakespeare engravings from mere reproductions of stage scenes of the 70s and the 80s, this practice offered a testimony of a superior British taste in painting, thus bolstering national pride. It also cleverly exploited marketing strategies in showcasing illustrated editions, or even single prints, which common visitors could afford. Above all, it allowed art to participate in the construction of a modern national literary canon in Britain, with Shakespeare and Milton at its centre.

Even the theoretical discourse on literature and the arts had to take into account the sphere of consumption. The dogmatic discourse on the rules imposed by Renaissance theorists on the creator of a work of art gave way to a dialogue with the reader, which was meant to improve the consumer's taste. From Addison to Burke, from Hume to Hogarth, legislative discourses on composition shifted towards modern theories inspired by an anatomy of the human mind. "Il ne suffit pas pour le goût, de voir, de connoître la beauté d'un ouvrage," wrote Montesquieu; "il faut la sentir, en être touché. Les sources du beau, du bon, de l'agréable, &c. sont donc dans nous-mêmes; & en chercher les raisons, c'est chercher les causes des plaisir de nôtre ame."[15] The pleasure of taste, added Hume, was rooted in feeling and emotions.[16] "The impression becomes irresistible when we ourselves are called to share in the action, when human dignity, human beauty, human passions […] mix in the plan […] and every image before us is reflected by a similar one within ourselves," wrote Füssli in the *Milton Gallery Prospectus* (1791), undermining the very possibility of an objective idea of beauty, and thus of "ideal beauty."

And so it happened that taste came into its own as a major feature of the age. In the second half of the century, debates on the idea of taste took a downright revolutionary turn in the non-humanistic theory of beauty elaborated by William Hogarth, the champion, along with Sterne and Edmund Burke, of irregular, unfinished forms—thus heading towards the twentieth-century consciousness that imperfection is an immanent quality of the aesthetic experience of modernity.[17] This challenge to an organic vision of form merged with the late eighteenth-century poetics of ruins, whose appeal lay not in a quest for retrieval or reconstruction of an original whole; it lay, rather, precisely in their incomplete and fragmentary nature. One way or the other, the very traces of time were beginning to be

felt as marks of beauty, thus paving the way to a phenomenological approach to literature and the arts.

One crucial issue was the ontological status of taste: was taste a special faculty, "an instinct of the heart," the ineffable French "je ne sais quoi" ("un charme invisible qu'on n'a pu définir"), which transcended a rational conception of beauty? Or was it rather an intellectual faculty, that internal sense which, in different ways, attracted philosophers from Shaftesbury to Locke and Hutcheson? "Le goût […]—argued the *Encyclopédie*—mérite plûtôt le nom de *fantaisie*."[18]

An excellent survey published in Italy a few years ago by Giuseppe Sertoli maintains that Addison's papers on "the pleasures of the imagination"[19] provided a link between Locke's empiricism and Hutcheson's epistemology, which had given a rational twist to Shaftesbury's neoplatonic formula of "sensus communis." In defining taste as an interaction between the senses, the imagination and rational judgement, Addison fathered a modern conception of aesthetics, even going as far as to separate aesthetics from ethics, in this way opening up a space for the Romantic notion of art as an autonomous sphere. Most importantly, by arguing that beauty was not an immanent quality present in an object, but an effect of the object on the spectator (hence his pseudonym of Mr. Spectator), therefore a subjective experience, Addison articulated the rights of the bourgeois consciousness.

Hume and Burke, each in his own way, proceeded in precisely this direction. To the author of *The Standard of Taste* the answer was a relativistic conception of beauty, whereas Burke took a step further by setting the experience of the sublime in a different category from that of a calm contemplation of beauty.[20] Burke's theory of the sublime entailed annihilation of the self and loss of identity (something similar to the Freudian notion of death drive) and it was therefore very different from Kant's. According to the latter the sublime actually led to an empowerment of the self, since reason could always overcome the shock produced by an overwhelming emotion. It is not surprising that to our post-Freudian mind, Burke's argument (at least before his conversion to conservativism) is much more compelling than Kant's.[21]

The increasing interest in taste was one of the consequences of the transformation of aesthetics into a mode of human experience, a necessary follow-up to the groundbreaking enlightenment project. Taste allowed middle-class consumers to rise in status: they could become "people of quality" thanks to a broadening conception of education, which now also included the learning of elegant manners. In other words, Innovation affected not only epistemological theories and critical practices, but also

the lifestyle of the nation, particularly with reference to London, no longer merely a city, but a metropolis in the making.

A number of changing attitudes—a new way of living in the city as well as a productive indulging in leisure, and (therefore) *pleasure* time—can be appreciated fully in the emerging domain of fashion: the eighteenth century was the age in which fashion became an art form. Thus the *Encyclopédie*: "Les modes se détruisent & se succedent continuellement […]. Le bizarre étant le plus souvent préféré […] par cela seul qu'il est plus nouveau." Two centuries later Coco Chanel was to give fashion a more icastic definition:"la mode est ce qui se démodé," thus voicing the paradox that to be *in fashion* automatically presupposes being *out of fashion.* The advancement of fashion gave a new twist to the old semantics of luxury, and made the traditional link between luxury and the strict *ancien régime* codes look obsolete. No longer figuring in the list of the private vices of degraded aristocrats which still prevailed in the Italian hours of Giuseppe Parini's *Il Giorno*, and not yet acknowledged by Giacomo Leopardi as the "sister" of Death,[22] fashion could thrive in the economy of the British marketplace and be considered by Adam Smith as having a positive rebound on the general welfare of the country, as well as adding a colourful touch to the identity of a nation still proud of its Puritan origins.[23] The progress of the middle classes was actively shaping the image of a refined modern gentleman, in whom "a spirit of elegance had supplanted the rapacity of wealth."[24] Someone who—in the course of time—could gradually materialize the dream of perfectibility born of the Enlightenment, and rise above his lowly origins by displaying elegance of manner and polite modes of conversation, whether on the page or in the drawing room scene. A project of self-improvement allowed individuals to become the agents of their self-fashioning and make up their own selves according to their own fancy, featuring representations which were independent of Nature's mould as well as of class and gender. The self could therefore be transformed into a "character," a *persona* on the stage of the modern world, a mask in the great feast of the collective unconscious. In England, Locke's theory of the workings of the imagination through associations of images had lent philosophical legitimacy to the priority of the visual amongst the pleasures of the imagination. The *Spectator* followed: "Our sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses. It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas."[25] London metropolitan culture was obsessed with representations of its own modernity in such places of public entertainment as the pleasure gardens. Not surprisingly, therefore, John Brewer's recent comprehensive cultural study of the eighteenth century *Pleasures of the Imagination* deals

extensively with the importance of the sphere of representation in the cultural market, as well as the crucial role of lifestyle changes.[26] And it was a reading of the eighteenth century as "the ceaseless century"[27] that inspired a 1998 New York exhibition on period costumes recreated from Watteau's paintings, along with today's remakes, produced by such unconventional "merchants of style" as Vivienne Westwood.[28]

Strategies for Showing[29] were at the core of an aesthetization (some scholars have rather suggested the term "femininization") of social life.[30] Among them were strategies and practices exploited by the marketplace to cater to the pleasure of a new species of art collector, increasingly interested in possessing of a variety of small objects, in which a feminized version of beauty challenged the "grand style" of painting (particularly the portrait): one example was the china and lacquer imported from the colonies and displayed on dressing tables (think of Belinda's), in addition to fine coffees and teas which had superseded the traditional British drinks (gin and ale).[31] The importance of the coffee house, which offered the comfort of a well-brewed cup but also an open democratic space of exchange, from good reading to pleasant conversation, cannot be overemphasized when reflecting upon the rise and development of a modern powerful public sphere.

Together with the new colonial imports, *prêt à porter* antique objects became available to the community of collectors: now the Grand Tour marketplace fully exploited the cult of antiquity and contributed to the shift of perspective from the Roman to the Greek legacy, which gained momentum as a result of the archaeological discovery of Paestum, at the end of the century.

In this way, vital negotiations of change in the sphere of the visual arts developed from the compromise between renewal and neoclassicism in its various incarnations.[32] David's neoclassicism is a typical example. He staged the different phases in history from the French Revolution to Napoleon, first by representing the Revolution as a re-enactment of ancient Republican Rome, then moving on to celebrate the imperial glory of Napoleon. Later, his vision drew on the pure, naked, original beauty of the Greeks, celebrated by Winckelmann and interpreted by Canova. Finally, he engrafted the taste of the ancients onto a taste for the archaic, epitomized by the uncontaminated, Edenic world of the American natives. In David's non-canonical view, antiquity was no longer a given, handed down for imitation at the disposal of posterity; he felt that tradition was as an invention of the present, a response of modern culture to its unstable identity.[33] The retrieval of an "ideal beauty" was in fact a project of

modern aesthetics, afflicted by a sense of loss and an existential imperfection, which Hogarth's theory of beauty expressed in the windings of an unfinished serpentine line. The dynamics of change was only partly progressive, as the current issue about the "rise" of the novel as a canonical form from the start well shows. Johnson's method could foster the historical outlook of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and perhaps even Ian Watt's thesis of a "rise of the novel" and its linear development. Today, one is aware that there never was a darkness, a narrative night out of which, like the sun, the novel rose as an organic form;[34] nor was there ever a canonical form of the novel in the eighteenth century.[35] The novel was an experimental, "digressive" kind of writing, to which crisis was constitutive. Unstable by definition as it was, it became a natural ally of fashion, in spite of its negative representation of fashion as the quintessence of the inauthentic.

Johnson's imperfect ending to *Rasselas*, significantly a "Conclusion in which Nothing is Concluded," conveys the sense of an ontological limit, internalized by an unfinished form. Two centuries later, Samuel Beckett, who admired Samuel Johnson, was to make this imperfect vision his own.

Notes

[1] Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe, eds., *Shifting the Boundaries* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995).

[2] Among studies published in Italy, see the excellent *Rettorica dell'epica*, by Flavio Gregori (Bologna: Cisalpino, 1998).

[3] See Michel Baridon, *Le Jardin paysager anglais au dix-huitième siècle* (Dijon: Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2000).

[4] See Samuel Richardson, Postscript to *Clarissa; or the History of a Young Lady*, ed. William King and Adrian Bott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1929-1931), in which several objections that had been made to the catastrophe and to different parts of the preceding history are briefly considered.

[5] See Samuel Johnson, *Preface to Shakespeare e altri scritti shakespeareani*, ed. Agostino Lombardo (Bari: Adriatica, 1960).

[6] See Joseph F. Bartolomeo, *A New Species of Criticism: Eighteenth-Century Discourse on the Novel* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994).

[7] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews* (London: Everyman's Library, 1973), book II, 60.

[8] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21-22.

[9] On Samuel Johnson as the inventor of literary history, see the landmark study by René Wellek, *A History of Literary Criticism: 1750-1950*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1955).

[10] See the edition by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[11] Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*, book II, 143.

[12] Elizabeth Inchbald, ed. *The British Theatre* (London, 1806-1809), 25 vols.; Elizabeth Inchbald, ed., *The Modern Theatre* (1811), 10 vols.; Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *British Novelists* (London, 1810); Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance* [1785], in *The Progress of Romance and the History of Charoba, Queen of Aegypt*, ed. Esther M. McGill (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2007). Two recent Italian studies on Barbauld are Donatella Montini's "Anna Laetitia Barbauld's Ethics of Sentiment," in Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli, eds., *Romantic Women Poets. Genre and Gender* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007) and Silvia Granata's *The Dear Charities of Social Life: The Work of Anna Laetitia Barbauld* (Bergamo: Sestante Edizioni, 2008).

[13] On seventeenth- and eighteenth-century generic instability see Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1987).

[14] Thus reads the subtitle of Luisa Calè's recent study on Milton's Gallery, *Fuseli's Milton Galley: "Turning Readers into Spectators"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[15] "Goût," *Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française* (5th edn., 1798), vol. 7, 761-62. On this topic, see Giuseppe Sertoli, *Il gusto nell'Inghilterra del Settecento*, in Luigi Russo, ed., *Storia di un'idea estetica* (Palermo: Aesthetica, 2000). Interesting bibliographical references can be found in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Robert (London: Macmillan, 1996). See also Lia Formigari, *L'estetica del gusto nel Settecento inglese* (Firenze: Sansoni 1965).

[16] See David Hume, "On the Standard of Taste," in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (1757), ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1985).

[17] See William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty: Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1997). See also Umberto Eco, *Storia della bellezza* (Milano: Bompiani, 2005).

[18] "Goût," *Dictionnaire de L'Académie Française*, vol. 7, 761.

[19] See *The Spectator* no. 409 and nos. 411-421. In *The Spectator*, ed. D.F. Bond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), vol. III.

[20] See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757-1759), ed. James T. Boulton (London: Routledge, 1958).

[21] See Sertoli, *Il gusto nell'Inghilterra del Settecento*.

[22] See Giacomo Leopardi, "Dialogo della moda e della morte," in *Operette morali* (Milano: Garzanti, 1991).

[23] It is significant that the issue was dealt with by Adam Smith in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) rather than in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). A useful introductory study is Colin Campbell's *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

[24] From Frances Burney, *Cecilia* (1782), ed. Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

[25] *The Spectator*, no 411, 21 June 1712.

[26] See John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination. English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997).

[27] On the "Ceaseless Century" exhibition see Richard Martin, *The Ceaseless Century: 300 Years of Eighteenth-Century Costume* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000).
[28] See Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Paola Colaiacomo and Vittoria C. Caratozzolo, *Mercanti di stile. Le culture della moda dagli anni '20 a oggi* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 2002).
[29] See Marcia Pointon, *Strategies for Showing; Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture, 1665-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). See also Porter and Mulvey Roberts, *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*.
[30] See Gill Perry and Michael Rossington, *Femininity and Masculinity in Eighteenth Century Art and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
[31] Not surprisingly, Burke defines beauty as feminine, in contrast to a masculine sublime.
[32] On neoclassicism, see Mario Praz, *Gusto Neoclassico* (1st. edition 1939; Milano: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1990). See also Antonio Pinelli, *Il neoclassicismo nell'arte del Settecento* (Roma: Carocci, 2005), and Orietta Rossi Pinelli, *Le arti nel Settecento europeo* (1st. edition 2000; Torino: Einaudi, 2009). On the Greek legacy, see Giuseppe Massara, "Shaftesbury e l'Antico," in *La Grecia antica mito e simbolo per l'età della Grande Rivoluzione* (Milano: Guerini Associati, 1991). An interesting aspect of the connection between antiquity and the cultural market is the success of *Etruria*, Joshua Wedgewood's firm, which manufactured reproductions and imitations of art objects.
[33] "Invented traditions are responses to novel situations. They take the form of reference to old situations, or establish their own past by repetition." See Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 2.
[34] See McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel*.
[35] See Franca Ruggieri, "The Machinery of My Work," in Franca Ruggieri, ed., *Oltre il romanzo: da Sterne a Joyce* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1992).

PICTURESQUE RECONSIDERED AND PRESERVED

FRANCESCA ORESTANO*

Gilpin, Price, Knight: picturesque theory and its varieties

Within the long perspective of the reception of the picturesque—a word still well in use today—and in the context of recent cultural and visual studies, my contribution explores the complexities inherent in this aesthetic category which, from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, came to be known as "picturesque beauty," "picturesqueness" or, *tout court*, "the picturesque." Even today, when looking around for interior and garden decoration, in tourist and travel guides, in fashion, photography and image-making, we do encounter this term, indicative of a degree of artistic ambition, and of a formalist attitude which is inevitably accompanied by appropriate feelings such as nostalgia for an irretrievable past, but also irreverent laughter—the ridicule and the sentimental often looming almost in unison behind it. Actually the visual notion of picturesque value goes hand in hand with the ironic awareness of its low value, marring the desirable distinction inscribed in the use of an aesthetic code with hints of affectation, vulgarity of a repetitious kind, silly display.

Let us look at its beginnings. The potential threat of the visual at the expense of morality and virtue was already there. The definition of "picturesque beauty" occurs for the first time in the context of an English landscape garden, in 1748: it is used to describe a monument which is an artificial ruin, rich in decorative, visual value, yet—unlike other monuments—deprived of all inscription or reference to well-known and instructive episodes in history or literature. In the philosophical dialogue occurring between two imaginary characters, Callophilus and Polypthon, who visit the gardens at Stowe, the appreciation of picturesque beauty already implies an ethical dilemma:

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> *Polypth*. Yes, indeed, I think the Ruin a great Addition to the Beauty of the Lake. There is something so vastly picturesque and pleasing to the Imagination in such Objects, that they are a great Addition to every Landskip. And yet perhaps it would be hard to assign a reason, why we are more taken with Prospects of this ruinous kind, than with Views of Plenty and Prosperity in their greatest Perfection: Benevolence and Good-nature, methinks, are more concerned in the latter kind.
> *Calloph.* Yes: but cannot you make a distinction between natural and moral Beauties?[1]

The dialogue points out that benevolence has nothing to do with picturesque beauty. Ethics and aesthetics do not agree. Reverend William Gilpin's concept of one different species of beauty is characterised by its exclusive emphasis on the visual, on the appetite of the eye, whetted by formal elements such as contrast and variety, and deprived of any moral project or issue, indeed not concerned with human benevolence.

In 1792, in his *Three Essays* which were already supposed to clarify all previous misunderstandings, Gilpin warns his readers:

> we admirers of the picturesque are a little misunderstood with regard to our *general intention*. […] Whereas, in fact, we speak a different language. […] We every where make a distinction between scenes, that are *beautiful*, *amusing*, or otherwise pleasing; and scenes that are *picturesque*. [...] In what, then, do we offend? At the expence of no other species of beauty, we merely endeavour to illustrate, and recommend *one* species more; which, tho among the most interesting, hath never yet, so far as I know, been made the set object of investigation.[2]

The lightness of picturesque beauty is not supposed to delve deeply into profound moral issues. It resides in the area of a different kind of language, which could be described as the pure region of design, of visible surfaces—whether scenes of nature or images—where the picturesque eye finds its reward:

> We might begin in moral style; and consider the objects of nature in a higher light, than merely as amusement. We might observe, that a search after beauty should naturally lead the mind to the great origin of all beauty […] But tho in theory this seems a natural climax, we insist the less upon it, as in fact we have scarce ground to hope, that every admirer of *picturesque beauty*, is an admirer also of the *beauty of virtue*.[3]

Amusement is the word Gilpin uses for his picturesque beauty which, as he argues, can be best captured by the genre of the sketch—a minor genre indeed—which does not require academic training nor expensive materials,

such as oils and canvas, but just an album and a pencil. Picturesque beauty can be observed and sketched in several parts of England, especially the River Wye, the Lake District, Scotland—the destinations of Gilpin's summer tours which subsequently provide him with material for his printed "Observations relative chiefly to Picturesque beauty…" illustrated by fine monochrome aquatints, in sepia or indigo.[4]

At the end of the first essay Gilpin inserts a letter from the great academic art guru, Sir Joshua Reynolds, who, on receiving a complimentary copy, had sent his comments, wondering whether "the epithet picturesque [may be] applicable to the excellences of the inferior schools" of painting, being "incompatible with the grand stile" and perhaps "synonymous to the word taste."[5] The answer of the Reverend would be that picturesque beauty is concerned with variety, not with grandeur.

From this exchange, one may already predict the applicability of the term picturesque to taste, fashion, middle-class aesthetics. Originally intended for the use of estate owners, the picturesque gains momentum as it becomes a friendly tool for non-academic amateur artists, print-makers, excursionists and tourists. Women have access to picturesque aesthetics, and learn to sketch a landscape with rapid strokes on the page of their album. In order to compose a lively sketch, full of variety and contrast, ruggedness and claro-obscuro, ruins provide the best subject because of their fragmentary condition. For Gilpin an elegant piece of Palladian architecture does not please in a picture because of its regularity and symmetry:

> Should we wish to give it picturesque beauty, we must use the mallet, instead of the chisel; we must beat down one half of it, deface the other, and throw the mutilated members around in heaps. In short, from a *smooth* building we must turn it into a *rough* ruin.[6]

These words epitomise the source of the ensuing long-lasting controversy which opposes the theory of visual values and picturesque composition against the quest for moral associations, or simply proprietary common sense.[7] Picturesque values alone "offend": the dry contemplation of the ruin has to be enhanced by becoming moral feelings. We witness the clash between two centuries, two systems of thought, between the aesthetic and the philosophical, which in the long run will endow the picturesque with the double strength arising from vision and design. But before the completion of this process, Reverend Gilpin has to be consigned to a destiny of immediate scathing criticism, followed by satire and eventually the silence of oblivion. Indeed the concept of mutilation and scattered

limbs, if acceptable as a metaphor for picturesque composition and ruggedness, means a tangible threat of destruction if literally applied to houses and flourishing gardens—not to delve upon its sadistic innuendos, rather evident within the philosophy of associations.

In the years following the publication of Gilpin's *Three Essays,* controversy against his theory flares up at first among two estate owners, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, and a landscape gardener, Humphry Repton, all equally opposed to mutilation, ruin, and decay, albeit for different reasons. Humphry Repton remarkably coins a new word, gardenesque, with the aim of promoting good, healthy plant-growing, instead of felling trees and adorning gardens with their scattered limbs. Uvedale Price objects to using the principles of painting in the context of landscape improvement[8] and refashions the picturesque as a category halfway between the beautiful and the sublime, calling it "picturesqueness." Richard Payne Knight argues that this aesthetic category is a category of taste,[9] which may best be handled, in unison, by the optical nerve and art expertise of the connoisseur. It is easy to see in Knight's theory the lure of social distinction: the connoisseur—who is also a grand tourist and art collector—is going to view with supercilious irony the asinine application of Gilpin's "little rules" for assessing and sketching domestic landscape. And not only are the class rewards of connoisseurship connected with a taste for the picturesque in art and natural scenery. Psychological associations, emotions, refined feelings find in ruins the most melancholy, attractive, evocative and picturesque object:

> The first impression made by the view of a mass of ruins can scarcely in any country have been of the pleasing kind. […] their forlorn and dilapidated condition must have excited melancholy emotions. […] Hence the refined taste of modern times, occupied at leisure in extracting from every object the whole sum of sentiment it is capable of affording, has attached to ruins a set of ideas, formerly either little attended to, or overwhelmed by acuter sensations. Not have they been only regarded as sentimental objects. The newest and most fashionable mode of considering them is with respect to the place they hold in the picturesque.[10]

The passage by John Aiken explains why the picturesque becomes the fashion of the day, the *mot juste*, a rage, a bone of contention—*vide* "The Estrangement from Wordsworth," in De Quincey's *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*, apparently caused by the theory of picturesque beauty which the bard considered his "sacred and privileged pale."[11]

And while Romantic poets discuss the merits of mountain scenery and the Lakers start visiting the area, already in 1798 a tourists' destination,[12]

urban landscape will gradually become the centre of interest, for writers, readers, artists, its dilapidation and social ruins providing the fittest subject for sketches, both visual and verbal. The natural environment, the old village, the quaint cottage, are bound to evoke a sense of nostalgia, but will soon stimulate regional and national campaigns for their preservation.[13] Wordsworth himself, in his long career, may be seen at once as the poet of picturesque landscape and the herald of a new ecological sensibility, born out of his picturesque associations and committed to the preservation of local values, of vernacular buildings, which, in his *Guide to the Lakes*, are described as being at once aesthetic and rich in cultural value.[14]

What happens then to Reverend Gilpin, to his picturesque tours, to his rules for sketching landscape? Why is his name absent from Ruskin's *oeuvre*—apart from one telling mistake of attribution?[15] The Reverend, whose formal theory was drowned in lakes of melancholy tears over the ruins, is now threatened by peals of laughter. Gilpin does not disappear: he survives, but transformed into Doctor Syntax. When this change occurs, even the Romantic penchant for the picturesque is smothered under fear of ridicule: the subsequent five editions of Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* show his progressive, careful erasure of all reference to the offending term—and to Reverend Gilpin.[16] What happens can be explained in terms of a cultural transformation. Gilpin's picturesque, unlike the sublime and the beautiful, is a surface aesthetics: unlike the sublime, it does not plumb the depths of psychology, unlike the beautiful it does not equate with reason and virtue. If the sublime makes us shiver in fright, and the beautiful soar into blissful harmonies, the sentimental picturesque is what eventually makes us shed a furtive tear, while the formalist, old-fashioned idea of Reverend Gilpin generates amusement, verbal comedy and grotesque caricature.

This is Gilpin's destiny: he becomes the hero of a comical series of picturesque adventures, under the mask of Doctor Syntax. Syntax is at once a speaking caricature of the supercilious Reverend, a type of Parson Adams, but also the Don Quixote of the Lake District, which is a clear allusion to the visual fallacy which causes his raptures in front of old ruins, shaggy asses, shrivelled old ladies, signposts covered with moss. The lolling rhyme of William Combe and the brilliant aquatints of Thomas Rowlandson provide early nineteenth-century readers with the comedy of Gilpin's picturesque.[17] Laughter is elicited by the hero's stubborn application of visual principles deprived of all feelings or sense: Rowlandson's vignettes portray his long, stumbling, awkward figure, the wig often askew, mixing with country types, rustics and peasants, often inebriated, under the shade of rugged elms, or with soldiers and sailors

dancing with the girls of the town, the fiddler drunk too. The mild sting of satire portrays the drunkenness of the gentry, "gilded coaches tumbling and trundling through the heavy and undying green tunnels of the English lanes and royal roads."[18] We laugh, whenever we see the picturesque acolyte, the picturesque traveller, the picturesque gardener, sketcher, watercolourist, falling into waterfalls, pits, ravines, bringing ruin and destruction to the territory or just idly loitering under the pealing rain to savour a scene of interesting dilapidation.

From around 1810 onwards, reaching a peak of international success in the 1830s, the *Tours of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* raise the storm of ridicule which is going to drown the Reverend and his theory in laughter. The astringent morality of the Victorian age will do the rest. The transition has been finely caught by Osbert Sitwell in an essay on Thomas Rowlandson, whom he considers "the greatest master of pure line" England produced, and yet was dismissed by the Victorian art-loving public as a mere common print-artist, bent on portraying the slatterny Saturnalia of grotesque unbecoming subjects: "the newly-born, Port-drinking middle-classes of the nineteenth century looked back with horror at the rum-punch orgies of the eighteenth…"[19] Rowlandson's convivial types and their vices, so rich in contrasts and variety, would be drowned in the sentimental excess of the Victorian age which would brood over them with a keen sense of guilt. This did not prevent the eye from looking at scenes of ruin, or artists from portraying them, but induced the gazer to respond to them in a self-deprecating fashion, covering so to say his head in ashes, while still gazing, still scanning with the eye.

The formalist rules of composition are not forgotten by Victorian artists, but the picturesque scene of poverty has to elicit a moral sermon, a virtuous reprobation of the architectural, social, human ruin it contemplates. This is Ruskin's attitude, always at cross-purposes with the picturesque while operating in its area.[20] For Ruskin this aesthetic is "eminently a heartless one" because

> the lover of [the picturesque] seems to go forth into the world in a temper as merciless as the rocks. All other men feel some regret at the sight of disorder and ruin. He alone delights in both […] Fallen cottage—desolate villa—deserted village—blasted heath—mouldering castle—to him, so that they do but show jagged angles of stone and timber, all sights are equally joyful.[21]

Ruskin's sense of guilt for his poor starving picturesque subjects does exist together with his appetite for the visual. His *Elements of Design* provide us with a striking replica of Gilpin's "little rules"—only that

Ruskin typically calls them "laws."[22] His coinage of the term "Turneresque" reveals his divided feelings, and the typical Victorian clash between ethics and aesthetics.

Ruskin's depreciation of the "heartless" or vulgar picturesque must, however, be viewed in the context of the popular fortunes of Doctor Syntax: the other side of the story being that nineteenth century authors will in fact exploit with glee the comic potential of the picturesque mode. Picturesque aesthetics involve the risk of a moral stigma, but also imply downright ridicule. This comic mode of preserving the picturesque, when apparently at its lowest, cheapest and commonest, can be traced in the works of several authors who, by inserting ironic statements about the picturesque, reward the reader's sense of superiority, of class achievement and distinction.

In Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812) huge sums are spent by Lady Clonbrony to decorate an apartment in London in ghastly bad taste, both picturesque and exotic; Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818) is full of irony for the picturesque ignorance of Catherine Morland and in *Mansfield Park* (1814) she portrays the laughable and gullible character Mr. Rushwort who wants to improve his estate at a dear price, cutting down a whole avenue of ancient trees; the aesthetic disputes of Price and Knight are satirized in Thomas Love Peacock's *Headlong Hall* (1816); in E. Allan Poe's "The Domain of Arnheim" (1847) the millionaire Mr. Ellison spends his capital to improve his landscape garden but suddenly dies and cannot enjoy his architectural whims: the garden will be open to ticket-paying visitors. Who can refrain from laughing when Bouvard and Pécuchet in the eponymous novel by Gustave Flaubert (1881) decide to give a picturesque character to their rural property? Fallen trunks hit by lightning, a fake Etruscan tomb, a Chinese bridge that does not bridge any water, whole trees cut into the shape of peacocks: nothing is spared to improve their property according to fashion, and to impress their neighbours.

William Makepeace Thackeray has to be counted among Doctor Syntax's votaries. He gives to his would-be art critic, Michael-Angelo Titmarsh, an umbrella whose valuable horn-head represents Doctor Syntax; and in an 1854 review of John Leech's *Pictures of Life and Character*—a book "better than plum-cake at Christmas"—the reader is referred back to the funny pictures of Rowlandson's Doctor Syntax: "Doctor Syntax in a fuzzy-wig, on a horse with legs like sausages, riding races, making love, frolicking with rosy exuberant damsels" who would "tumble off the towers or drown, smiling, in the dimpling waters."[23] Art criticism, connoisseurship and its jargon elicit very different responses

from Ruskin and Thackeray, which we may list under the sentimental or the ironic reaction.

Victorian authors view the picturesque as a commodity—useful for interesting sketches of urban dilapidation, necessary to enliven descriptions of Italian landscape in the popular Murray and Baedeker guides,[24] handy whenever a pinch of comicality has to be added to serious matters, to boring art connoisseurship. The Romantic feeling for picturesque landscape, instead, specifically applied to the Lake District but providing a useful model for territorial implementation, will gradually inspire the foundation of institutions for the preservation of natural beauty: out of the meetings of the Wordsworth Society we can trace the birth of the National Trust.

The picturesque, a cultural mapping

But the reception of the picturesque cannot simply be described as the sequential chronological development of an aesthetic fashion which starts in 1748 and gradually spreads from the visual to the verbal, and from formalism into the moral lessons art must convey.

In fact, within the historical map of three centuries, at least three different varieties of the picturesque idea coexist and interact—often at cross-purposes, or in parallel, and requiring further consideration. The first version of it, Gilpin's formalist aesthetic attitude, which enjoys a sustained genre success with the popular practice of sketching,[25] can be detected in the art of early modernism; the second version, namely the sentimental picturesque bent upon national ruins and their associations, will bear upon architectural versions of Englishness, and will enhance the Romantic feeling for landscape and its vernacular buildings: a feeling which will bring about ideas of collective amenity, the task of preservation, which will be inherited by Clough Williams-Ellis[26] and by Nikolaus Pevsner's concept of national taste.[27] Third, the cultural reading attached to picturesque images has been revived in recent times by E.H. Gombrich[28] who invites the reading of landscape in art through the social sciences; but we may also count Raymond Williams's relevant study *The Country and the City*, and Susan Sontag's essay on Camp, which traces critical inroads from eighteenth-century aesthetics into the area of contemporary fashion, design, film-making, in ways that indicate the contemporary revival of picturesque taste and its aesthetic culture.[29]

Picturesque reception therefore has to be viewed across the high and the low areas of culture, stretching from the exclusive club of connoisseurs and acolytes to the wild oats of popular—and pop—culture; ensconced

within the space of amateurish art, but also directly feeding into its technological reproduction, through aquatint and magic lantern slides, photography, the cinema, mass-visual culture.

In order to make this point, the changing attitudes towards the first picturesque object, the ruin, provide a full variety of useful cases. After describing the picturesque ruin at Stowe, Gilpin had stated that "in a moral view the industrious mechanic is a more pleasing object than the loitering peasant. But in a picturesque light, it is otherwise."[30] If we seek descriptions of picturesque ruins—whether architectural or human—how many types of loitering peasants have we met, idly decorating the English landscape? Wordsworth's paupers and vagrants visually belong to the type; and the sentimentally picturesque British virgins mentioned in Ugo Foscolo's *Dei Sepolcri* deserve a mention:[31]

> Pietosa insania, che fa cari gli orti
> De' suburbani avelli alle britanne
> Vergini, dove le conduce amore
> Della perduta madre… (vv. 130-132)

The ornamental grounds and tombs of the celebrities at the Pére Lachaise in Paris are absolutely picturesque, and rightly deserve a visitors'guide: equally so, guides will be printed for many American rural cemeteries.[32] Dickens's *Old Curiosity Shop* provides varieties of the picturesque, both in the shop where gothic fragments are collected, and with the many tramps and gypsies to be met on the road.[33] Charlie Chaplin's early silent movies revive the type of the archetypal tramp as a comic target for heartless laughter based upon the popular genre of merciless slapstick; the same Chaplin provides a sentimental tramp with the protagonist of *The Kid*, equally picturesque, albeit in lachrymose fashion. Wyndham Lewis starts his career as a writer and draughtsman with his short stories about tramps, whom he describes and sketches as "wild bodies," meant to elicit with their mechanic soulless features a dark laughter—indeed the master of the modernist line saw Thomas Rowlandson as his model.[34]

In 1948 Evelyn Waugh with *The Loved One, An Anglo-American Tragedy*, illustrated by Stuart Boyle, provides another darkly comic version of the picturesque ruin, set in Hollywood: in the cemetery for the rich and famous called "Whispering Glades," funereal monuments of eclectic kind are scattered around a lake, with an island, and along box walks, "a sunken herb-garden, a sundial, a bird-bath and fountain, a rustic seat and a pigeon-cote."[35] The same eclectic choice of decorative monuments is described by Malcolm Bradbury in the academic novel *Stepping Westwards* (1984), as featured in a modern university campus,