

Transplantation of the Picturesque: Emma Hamilton, English Landscape, and Redeeming the Picturesque*

ANZAI Shin-ichi

Le Pittoresque nous vient d'Angleterre.
— Stendahl, *Mémoires d'un touriste* (1838)

The Picturesque as a historical phenomenon emerged in eighteenth-century England.¹⁾ It can be defined as a mode of vision which sees the world, more or less consciously, as a series of established pictures, such as that of Claude Lorrain (1600-82) and Salvator Rosa (1615-73). The most typical objects seen in this way were landscape gardens and natural scenery (cf. fig. 1-A, B), but people also talked about Picturesque literature, music, and human figures such as



Fig. 1-A: Claude Lorrain (1600-82),
Coast View of Delos with Aeneas.



Fig. 1-B: Stourhead, Wiltshire, England
(an early English landscape garden in imitation of fig. 1-A).

the poor and women.²⁾ Then, in late eighteenth-century England, the Picturesque was formulated into aesthetic theories.

* A shorter version of this paper was read at a conference titled, "Gendered Landscapes: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of Past Place and Space," held at Pennsylvania State University, 1999. Thus, my initial intention was to consider the cultural phenomenon of the Picturesque as a whole in an international and contemporary context, not to go into a detailed study of the historically specific Picturesque in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. For the latter, see my article: "Gilpin, Price, and Knight: A Critical Survey of the Aesthetics of the Picturesque," *Aesthetics* (The Japanese Society for Aesthetics), V (1992), 65-76.

1) The most relevant previous studies on the Picturesque are: Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England: A Study chiefly of the Influence of Claude Lorrain and Salvator Rosa on English Taste 1700-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925); Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (1927; rpt. London: Frank Cass, 1983); Walter John Hippie, Jr., *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (Carbondale: The Southern Illinois University Press, 1957); David Watkin, *The English Vision: The Picturesque in Architecture, Landscape and Garden Design* (London: John Murray, 1982); Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989); Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991); Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (eds.), *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

2) For Picturesque literature, see Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958); for Picturesque music,

As has been often pointed out,³⁾ the Picturesque was such a highly multi-faceted cultural phenomenon that it is dangerous to generalize it precariously. But, at the same time, one can safely say that the Picturesque mode of vision was broadly shared among the cultural elite of England and other nations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and that people were well aware that it was a sufficiently unified (and sometimes fashionable) one to be invoked under the single rubric of "picturesque." In addition, what is remarkable is its widespread influence, not only on English Romantic literature, but also, for example, on modern American landscape architecture. In a recent, extensive study, Gena Crandell points out that as a result of the global diffusion of the Picturesque—via painting, animation, cinema, TV, video, computer technology, etc.—today "we take the world to be a picture":

There is no doubt that the eighteenth-century English landscape garden has been the most influential force in the last two centuries of landscape design. . . . Today when we think of nature we too often conjure up images borrowed from eighteenth-century England. . . . *Undeniably, the landscape itself has become the repository of pictorial conventions and landscape architecture the perpetuator of the painterly vision.*⁴⁾



Fig. 2: Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), *An Artist Travelling in Wales*.

Ever since its emergence in the eighteenth century, though, the Picturesque has been criticized and ridiculed (cf. fig. 2),⁵⁾ because the Picturesque eye does not see the natural world directly, but distorts or conceals it by the mediation of pictures. It assimilates the diversities and anomalies of the seen object to ready-made stereotypes. Especially when the Picturesque mode of vision is applied to the non-European world and the female body by a supposedly superior Western male subject, the implied violence of assimilation becomes obvious.⁶⁾

see, Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque, as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape*, 3 vols. (1810; rpt. Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg International, 1971), I, 43f.; for the Picturesque poor, e.g., *ibid.*, I, 63; I shall discuss Picturesque women below.

- 3) E.g. Joseph Burke, *English Art: 1714-1800* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), Ch. XII (esp. pp. 374f.); Johannes Dobai, *Die Kunstliteratur des Klassizismus und der Romantik in England*, vol. 2 (Bern: Benteli, 1975), p. 298.
- 4) Gina Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized: "The View" in Landscape History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 11, 8, 165 (italics original). For a wide-ranging survey of the somewhat elusive influence of the Picturesque on American paintings, literature, architecture, landscape and city planning, see also John Conron, *American Picturesque* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).
- 5) Cf. J. R. Watson, *Picturesque Landscape and English Romantic Poetry* (London: Huchson Educational, 1970).
- 6) For recent criticisms of the political ideologies of the Picturesque (including its colonialist tendency), see: John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); *idem*, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), Ch. 3; Robinson, *op.cit.*, pp. 47-89; esp. Copley and Garside, *op.cit.* For the complicity between colonialism and the Picturesque English garden and aesthetics, see also:

However, I want not to condemn the Picturesque, but to redeem it, by concentrating on the concept of "transplantation," a term which often appears in the literature. The Picturesque eye transplants pictures onto reality. As is always the case with transplantation, there certainly is a violence involved here, but transplantation can also provide healing. I will concentrate on this latter, neglected moment in the Picturesque, which has been transplanted into so many facets of today's world. In the following, therefore, my priority lies just in grasping the phenomenon of the Picturesque in general (hence, the capital, P) from eighteenth-century England on for the sake of redeeming it against the recent criticisms, not in going into the details of its historical ramifications, though in a later part I shall focus on a hidden aspect of the historical Picturesque aesthetics around 1800.

Sir William Hamilton's "Picture-madness": Emma and the English Garden in Naples



Fig. 3: Tommaso Piroli, after Friedrich Rheberg. *Drawings faithfully copied from Nature at Naples and with permission dedicated to the Right Honourable Sir William Hamilton* (1794).

First, let us look at the case of Emma Hamilton (1761?-1815), the second wife of Sir William Hamilton (1730-1803), the British Envoy Extraordinary to Naples, a geologist, and a dilettante.⁷⁾ Emma (as I shall refer to her throughout this paper), incidentally, later became well-known as the mistress of Admiral Nelson who defeated Napoleon's navy.

Emma provides a typical example of the female body seen as Picturesque landscape, for she and her husband developed a performing art, named "attitude" (fig. 3).⁸⁾ In these "attitudes," Emma would pose in imitation of famous pictures, sometimes sitting in a box representing the frame of the picture. Her attitudes were seen by numerous grand tourists to Naples, some of whom were invited to draw her while posing. One such tourist-spectator was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), who admired Emma as "the masterpiece of

Bruce McLeod, *The Geography of Empire in English Literature, 1580-1745* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), esp. pp. 145f., 165ff., 221-29; Elizabeth A. Bohls, "The Gentleman Planter and the Metropole: Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774)," Gerald MacLean, Donna Landry, and Joseph P. Ward (eds.), *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 180-96.

7) For information about Emma and William Hamilton, I am indebted to Ian Jenkins and Kim Sloan (eds.), *Vases and Volcanoes: Sir William Hamilton and his Collection* (London: British Museum Press, 1996).

8) Cf. Kirsten Gram Holmström, *Monodrama, Attitudes, Tableaux Vivants: Studies on some Trends of Theatrical Fashion 1770-1815* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1967).

the great artist [i.e., Nature]."⁹⁾

This attitude, which would lead to the popularity of "tableaux vivants" in the nineteenth century, is a most conspicuous way of acting out the Picturesque mode of vision in the sense that it consciously dramatizes the mechanism of seeing the reality as a picture. Sir William was such a lover of painting that Horace Walpole (1717-97), another famous dilettante of the time, had predicted before Sir William was dispatched to Naples: "[Hamilton] is picture-mad, and will ruin himself in virtuland [i.e., Italy]."¹⁰⁾ Sir William was also particularly familiar with the Picturesque aesthetic theories of his friends, Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829) and Richard Payne Knight (1750-1824). Since Goethe and many paintings depicting Emma, in her time, referred to her as "nature" (fig. 4), she was obviously seen as a Picturesque natural object.¹¹⁾ Sir



Fig. 4: John Raphael Smith, after George Romney, *Nature* (1784).

William himself tended to identify her with Picturesque landscape, as is known from his letter reporting her arrival in Naples in 1786: "A beautiful plant called *Emma* has been transplanted here from England, and at least has not lost any of its beauty."¹²⁾

This likening of Emma's arrival to horticultural transplantation was in many ways pertinent. Firstly, the addressee of the letter is Joseph Banks (1743-1820), the natural historian, who then as the head of Kew Gardens, London, and the president of the Royal Society, was hunting species of plants from all over the world.¹³⁾ Secondly, Sir William himself was at that time absorbed in making an English landscape garden in Naples. Thirdly, the eagerly awaited English gardener chosen by Banks for constructing Sir William's garden, a John Andrew Graefer,¹⁴⁾ had arrived from England at Naples just a week before Emma. Fourthly, Sir William's had lost his first wife four years before,

9) *Italienische Reise, Goethes Werke: Hamburger Ausgabe* (München: Beck, 1988), XI, 217: "das Meisterstück des großen Künstlers [i.e., der Schöpfung]." Cf. *ibid.*, XI, 209, 330f. Goethe uses such tableaux vivants at a pivotal point in his novel, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809), II, 5, 6, *Werke*, ed.cit., VI, 391-94, 402-05. For Goethe and the Picturesque, see also his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, II (1812), 8, *Werke*, ed.cit., IX, 320f.

10) Horace Walpole, to Mann, 8 June 1764, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-83), XXII, 243.

11) Cf. Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, figs. 160, 168, 193. Emma is also seen as a statue, as Walpole comments: "Sir William Hamilton has actually married his gallery of statues" (to Mary Berry, 11 September 1791: *Correspondence*, ed.cit., XI, 349). Goethe says he witnessed Emma's attitudes lit by fire, which was in accordance with the contemporary custom for watching statues. Cf. Oskar Bätschmann, "Pygmalion als Betrachter: Die Rezeption von Plastik und Malerei in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts," Wolfgang Kemp (ed.), *Der Betrachter ist im Bild* (Köln: DuMont, 1985), pp. 183-224. In fig. 13 below, Sir William is clearly identified as Pygmalion the sculptor.

12) Letter to Joseph Banks, BL. Add. MS 34,048, f. 30; cit. Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 20 (the italics on "transplanted" are the author's).

13) Cf. Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Gardens* (London: Harvill, 1995), Ch. 6.

14) He is a disciple of William Kent (1685-1748), the pioneer of English landscape gardening. Cf. Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

mourning her death bitterly; and it was as a distraction from this very sorrow that he proposed to construct the English garden in Naples. He writes to Banks: "I promise myself great pleasure in this new occupation [of landscape gardening]. As one passion begins to fail, it is necessary to form another; for the whole art of going through life tollerably [*sic*] in my opinion is to keep oneself eager about anything. The moment one is indifferent *on s'ennuie*, and that is a misery to which I perceive even Kings are often subject."¹⁵ Clearly, Emma was, just like English gardening, a distraction from this "*ennui*" caused by his first wife's death. Hence, it must have been pertinent to the economy of his psychology to liken Emma's arrival to horticultural transplantation; in his mind Emma and his English garden commingle under the same category of the Picturesque.

It is totally legitimate here to accuse Sir William of sexism¹⁶; indeed, when he wrote "Emma has been transplanted," she was not even informed that she was brought to Naples only to become one of his distractions. Her lover at that time happened to be Sir William's nephew, who wanted to get rid of her to marry for money; thus, it was arranged that she be Sir William's mistress. Although Sir William later married Emma, she then got angry, naturally, when she came to realize his true intentions.

This transplantation, therefore, developed at least one symptom of rejection. However, one can say in general that there is always an element of rejection implied in the Picturesque, because the Picturesque inevitably involves transplantation, and every transplantation involves heterogeneity, as well as homogeneity, between what is transplanted and its recipient. A telling example of this situation is Sir William's English garden in Naples.

Originally, the Picturesque landscape garden had been produced by transplanting Italian landscape into English soil, via (mainly) seventeenth-century landscape paintings. This process is formulated by William Mason (1725-97) in a poem apostrophizing English elite grand tourists to Italy:

... ye of Albion's sons
Attend; Ye freeborn, ye ingenuous few,
.....
Visit the Latian plain [i.e., the Roman Campagna], fond to *transplant*
Those arts which Greece did, with her Liberty,
Resign to Rome. . . .
.....
... your eyes entranc'd
Shall catch those glowing scenes, that taught a CLAUDE [Lorrain]
To grace his canvass with Hesperian hues:

15) Letter to Banks, 3 May 1785, BL. Add. MS 34,048, ff. 24-25; cit. Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 18 (italics original).

16) For feminist readings of the Picturesque, see: Carole Fabricant, "Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses: The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, Vol. 8 (1977), 109-33; *idem*, "The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century," Ralph Cohen (ed.), *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 49-81; esp. Ann Bermingham, "The Picturesque and Ready-to-wear Femininity," Copley and Garside, *op.cit.*, pp. 81-119.

And scenes like these, on Memory's tablet drawn,
 Bring back to Britain; there give local form
 To each Idea; and, if Nature lend
 Materials fit of torrent, rock, and shade,
 Produce new TIVOLIS.

.....
 In [great painters'] immortal works thou ne'er shalt find
 Dull uniformity, contrivance quaint,
 Or labour'd littleness; but contrasts broad,
 And careless lines, whose undulating forms
 Play thro' the varied canvass: these *transplant*
 Again on Nature; take thy plastic spade,
 It is thy pencil; take thy seeds, thy plants,
 They are thy colours; . . .¹⁷⁾

But what about an English Picturesque landscape garden transplanted back into Italian soil,
 via an English ambassador?

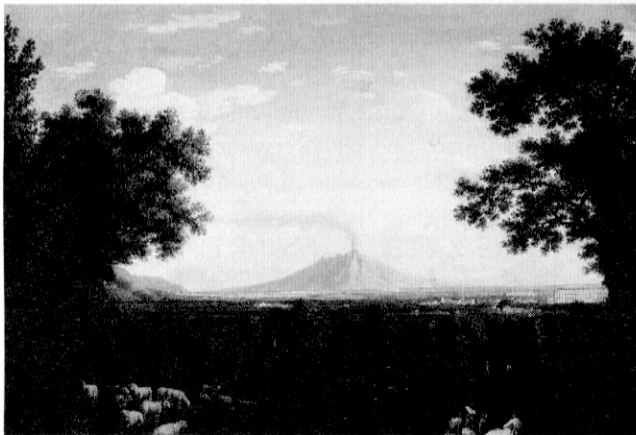


Fig. 5: Jakob Philipp Hackert, *View of the English Garden at Caserta* (1793).

Does it not amount to a tautology, as is shown by a painting of Sir William's garden, which looks exactly like an Italian landscape itself depicted by a Claude Lorrain (fig. 5).¹⁸⁾ At least for Italian visitors, who knew only the geometrical formal garden, a Picturesque English garden in Naples was nothing but their everyday landscape, as Sir William deplors:

To enjoy an English garden requires a previous education that is the case, no one can be sensible of the beauties of Homer coming to it directly from reading Tom Thumb & Jack the Giant Killer, so how many companies when they are in the Garden ask where is the English Garden? being told they are in it they say Lord! there is nothing but grass & trees that bear no fruit and often advise poor Graefer [the gardener of Sir William's English garden] to cut out some figures on his beautiful turf.¹⁹⁾

17) William Mason, *The English Garden: A Poem* (1772-81; 1783; rpt. New York: Garland, 1982), Bk. I, ll. 50f., 57ff., 64-71, 270-77 (the author's italics).

18) Cf. Frank Maier-Solgk and Andreas Greuter, *Landschaftsgärten in Deutschland* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997), p. 9.

19) Letter to Banks, BL Add. MS 34,048, f. 89; cit. Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 288; cf. Gianni Venturi, "The Landscape Garden in Lombardy: Utopia, Politics and Art at the Beginning of the 19th Century," *Lotus International*, XXX (1981), 38-45.

In other words, to appreciate the Picturesque, one has to dissimilate and distance the familiar, making heterogeneity and Otherness emerge; and this is more or less true of all the Picturesque transplantations.

To redeem the Picturesque, we should explore these elements of heterogeneity and Otherness. In this light, I shall examine some examples of the Picturesque transplantation onto the non-European world, and then take a brief look at the aesthetic theories of the Picturesque in late eighteenth-century England, before re-examining Emma's case.

The Picturesque outside Europe: South Africa and Japan

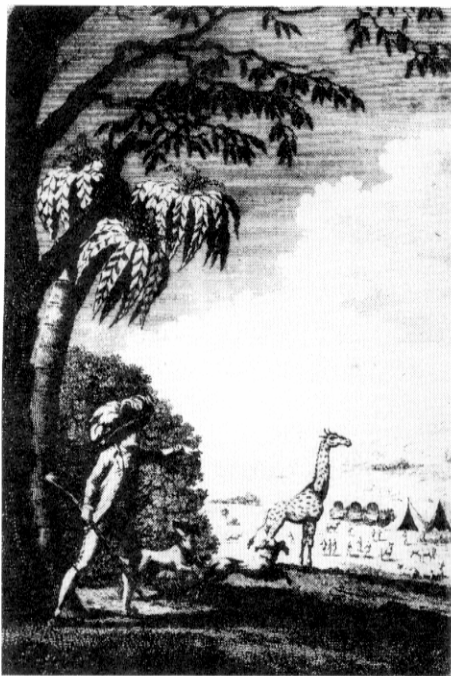


Fig. 6: "Encampment in the Great Namaqua Country." Le Vaillant, *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa* (London, 1790), frontispiece.

It is easy to criticize modern Western travelers and colonists for violently assimilating the non-Western world to their Picturesque stereotype. For example, the frontispiece of the widely read tour, François Le Vaillant's *Travels into the Interior Parts of Africa* (English trans., anon., London, 1790: fig. 6),²⁰ imposes the Claude Lorrainean style of composition — where the picture-plane is divided into foreground, middle ground, background, and sidescreen(s)²¹ — onto the native land of Africa.

Even in this banal picture, however, one can point out some ambiguities not to be explained away only as violently colonialist. The author-cum-hunter is pointing to the interior of the book/Africa to be conquered. But this interior lies just *outside* the picture frame. The picture, therefore, suggests that imposing a ready-made formula on something else always reveals the Other outside the formula; and, that the formula cannot cover the whole. Hence, the superiority of the Western formula can be turned into its inferiority, as Le Vaillant himself asserts in the text:

- 20) Cit. David Bunn, "'Our Wattled Cot': Mercantile and Domestic Space in Thomas Pringle's African Landscapes," W. J. T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 127-73 (130).
- 21) For this formula, see esp. William Gilpin's first published Picturesque tour: *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, &c. Relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* (1782; rpt. Richmond: The Richmond Publishing, 1973), p. 8. Jane Austen, who sometimes uses Gilpin's ideas, refers to this formula in her *Northanger Abbey* (1818; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 125f. (Ch. 14).

Ye English gardens twenty times changed with the wealth of the citizen! Why do your streams, your cascades, your pretty serpentine walks, your broken bridges, your ruins, your marbles, and all your fine inventions, disgust the taste and fatigue the eye, when we know the verdant and natural bower of the Pampoen-Kraal [in South Africa]?²²⁾

Here, the formula of the English garden finally turns out to be inferior to the reality of the African landscape. This inversion of superiority and inferiority can be observed in many other instances of the Picturesque transplantation around the world.

In the case of the Japanese landscape, it is another English ambassador, Sir Rutherford Alcock (1809-97), who first saw it as distinctively Picturesque (in the Western sense). Describing his 1861 travels in Japan, he as a cultural elite adopts the established formula of the English Picturesque tour:

While riding on alone, it would be easy to fancy the scene was in some picturesque English county. We came upon a very beautiful moss-rose growing by the side of a cottage, a variety of the English species apparently, . . . we passed through many scenes worthy of the artist's pencil; indeed, the number of tempting pictures was tantalising, since it was clearly impossible to take even the slightest sketch of all. . . . as we descended through a rocky pass into the valley below, and caught the first glimpse of the cultivated fields and terraced hills with another range of mountains towering beyond, picturesque Japanese figures filling up the foreground, it was difficult to pass and take no note.²³⁾



Fig. 7: "View of Fusi-yama from Yosiwara." Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon* (London, 1863). Cf. fig. 5.

In the last scenery, the Japanese figures make up the foreground, the fields and hills are the middle ground, and the mountains, the background, while the rocky sides of the pass provide the sidescreens, thus constructing a typical Claude Lorrainean composition.

The superiority of the Western gaze, implied here, becomes manifest when Alcock describes Mt. Fuji (fig. 7), the highest mountain in Japan,

22) Le Vaillant, *op.cit.*, I, 165; cit. Bunn, *op.cit.*, p. 133.

23) Sir Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in Japan*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, 1863), II, 82f. Alcock regards Japan as the most "garden-like" in the world besides England and dreams of transplanting the Picturesque Japanese scenery into English gardens: "[Japanese plants] give studies for the landscape painter of unrivalled beauty. There is an infinite variety of form, character, and colouring, in the masses of foliage that everywhere meet the eye, grouped in the midst of well-kept fields and verdant slopes which any English gentleman might envy for his park" (I, 201).

which Alcock climbed first as a foreigner, even though in pre-modern Japan foreigners were strictly prohibited from traveling:

[Fuji] may be seen from Yeddo [i.e., old Tokyo] at a distance of some eighty miles, on a bright summer evening, lifting its head high into the clouds, the western sun setting behind it and making a screen of gold on which its purple mass stands out in bold relief. Or, early in the morning, its glittering cone of snow, tipped with the rays of the rising orb; — and in either aspect it is certainly both singular and picturesque, . . . To the Japanese who are anything but cosmopolitan, it may be the 'matchless' . . . ²⁴⁾

The Japanese are too ignorant and narrow-minded to "match" Mt. Fuji to anything else, whereas Alcock's cultivated eye can see it through the established medium of the picture.

Alcock's medium here, however, seems to be not Western oil painting, but the Japanese traditional folding-screen painting with gold leaves on the background,²⁵⁾ which suggests that the Western formula is somehow inadequate or inferior for interpreting the Japanese landscape.²⁶⁾ The inadequacy of Western media to depict Japanese scenes was already implied in the quotation above in which Alcock voiced his frustration about his incapacity to appropriate all the Japanese landscapes into sketches. Hence, the Western Picturesque formula itself can be utilized to emphasize the very "singularity" or "matchlessness" of the Japanese native landscape that cannot be subsumed by the ideology of the Picturesque.

This is exactly the tactics that the Japanese geographer Shigetaka Shiga (1863-1927) adopts in his encomium of Japan, *The Japanese Landscape* (1894), which was popular and influential in the nationalist and militarist Japan just before and during the second World War. Though a great reader of John Ruskin, Shiga belittles the English way of seeing nature, including the Picturesque:

The English boast of their autumnal scenery so much, but they are almost ignorant of Japanese maples. . . . The beauty of Japanese nature poetry never occurred to even Wordsworth, the poet of the "Lake District," who observed minutely and loved dearly the English natural landscape. True, Sir Walter Scott, the genius with profound sagacity in depicting natural sceneries, had a tact of balancing the various colors of nature, nearing the masters of painting. But it is a pity that he

24) Ibid., I, 406. In Japanese, "Fuji" could originally mean "matchless." His own sketch of Mt. Fuji (fig. 7 of this article) is exactly based on the conventional Claude Lorrainean composition.

25) In the paragraph following this quotation, Alcock himself says that he witnessed abundant Japanese illustrations of Fuji in "the ornament of tea-cups or cabinets" and woodcut prints (I, 407). Generally he estimates the traditional Japanese fine arts very highly, stating that the Japanese "have an eye for form and picturesque grouping; and understand effects of light and shade," though he doesn't appreciate the Japanese landscape painting, because "Their knowledge of perspective is too limited" (II, 281). Alcock's collection of Japanese fine arts would be shown at the second Great Exhibition in London (1862), leading to the upsurge of Japanism in Britain.

26) Alcock himself partly admits this: "Like Don Quixote, . . . [Western] writers on Japan have hitherto seen everything through highly coloured glasses, and generally of a Claude Lorraine hue" (I, 46). Here Alcock is referring to the so-called "Claude Lorraine glass" used by English Picturesque tourists to tone down the real landscape into a picture (cf. Andrews, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-73).

rarely depicts maples. In short, English people not knowing the subtleties of maples, the English autumn is nothing compared to autumn in Japan.²⁷⁾

Thus, the Picturesque contains a (latent) dialectic or inversion between ideological superiority and inferiority. This dialectic, however, can be detected even in the English aesthetic theories of the Picturesque as early as in the eighteenth century.²⁸⁾

English Aesthetic Theories of the Picturesque: Dialectic of Superiority and Inferiority

Certainly, those English Picturesque aesthetic theorists insisted on some superiority of the elite Picturesque eye over the common eye. For example, in an imaginary dialogue, Sir Uvedale Price, Sir William's friend, makes a layman to painting admit himself to be just a "vulgar observer" and inferior in appreciating nature: "Tell me, then, how you account for this strange difference between an eye accustomed to painting, and that of such a person as myself?"²⁹⁾

27) Shigetaka Shiga, *The Japanese Landscape* (in Japanese: *Nihon Fûkei Ron*; 1894; Tokyo: Iwanami, 1995), pp. 16f. (the author's translation).

One of the most important modern Japanese novelists, Sôseki Natsume (1867-1916), having studied English literature in London, wrote a consciously Picturesque novel, *Kusamakura* (1906; English trans. Alan Turney, *The Three-Cornered World* [London: Owen, 1965]), which proved to be a best seller at the time. In the early part of the novel, the hero, a Picturesque tourist-painter representing the author proclaims: "I . . . from now on will regard everyone I meet . . . as no more than a component feature of the overall canvas of Nature. . . . Three feet away from the canvas you can look at it calmly . . . you are not robbed of your faculties by considerations of self interest, and are therefore able to devote all your energies to observing the movements of the figures from an artistic point of view" (pp. 23f.). But he considers this aesthetic disinterestedness inherent in the Picturesque as not so much Western but traditionally *oriental*: "[Western poets] are content to deal merely in such commodities as sympathy, love, justice and freedom, all of which may be found in that transient bazaar which we call life. . . . Happily, oriental poets have on occasion gained sufficient insight to enable them to enter the realm of pure poetry" (pp. 19ff.).

Indeed, there had been an important technique of "mitate" (literally, "seeing-as" or "surrogation") in the traditional Japanese arts similar to that of the Picturesque, where some real thing is identified as, or likened to, another (famous) thing usually depicted in painting or literature. Cf. Nobuo Tsuji, *Playfulness in Japanese Art* (The Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1986), pp. 63-66. As Tsuji emphasizes, "mitate" sometimes produces the effect of playfulness or parody, which element I shall detect in the Western Picturesque itself based on fig. 13 below.

28) Generally speaking, such dialectic can be said to be peculiar to the entirety of modernity as "the age of the world picture." Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). And again, it is ultimately based on the fundamental ambiguity of the "representation" (*Vorstellung*) itself. When reality is recognized through representation, the representation at once reveals and conceals reality; then, on the one hand, if the former moment of revealing is emphasized, the revealing eye will be privileged into a superior position of the discoverer of truth; on the other hand, if the latter moment of concealing is emphasized, the representation will be denigrated as an inferior stiff stereotype, as in the Romantic reaction against the Picturesque. Cf. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Representation," Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (eds.), *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

29) Price, *Essays*, III, 273.

But at the same time this superiority of the Picturesque eye was based on some inferiority,³⁰ or at least on a humiliating recognition that the Picturesque mode of vision is limited, not able to comprehend all. William Gilpin (1724-1804), the founder of Picturesque aesthetics, had already realized this limitation peculiar to the Picturesque eye when he wrote:

The case is, the immensity of nature is beyond human comprehension. She works on a *vast scale*; and, no doubt, harmoniously, if her schemes could be comprehended. The artist, in the mean time, is confined to a *span*. He lays his little rules therefore, which he calls the *principles of picturesque beauty*, merely to adapt such diminutive parts of nature's surfaces to his own eye, as come within its scope.³¹

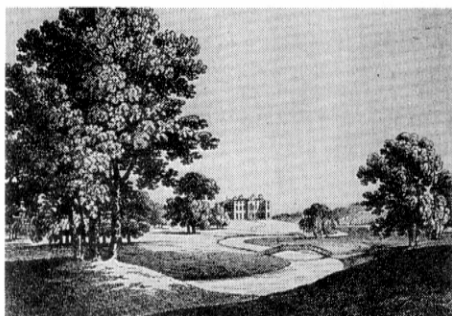


Fig. 8-A: A smooth, beautiful garden. Illustration from Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape, A Didactic Poem* (1794)



Fig. 8-B: An intricate, picturesque garden. Ibid.

This very narrowness of the Picturesque vision and the inscrutability of the world resulting from it, however, is the source of the aesthetic pleasure that is peculiarly Picturesque. Another Picturesque theorist, Price, explains (cf. fig. 8-A, B):

... the stimulus from whence the most constant and marked effects proceed, that which in a peculiar manner belongs to the picturesque, and distinguishes it from the beautiful, — arises principally from its two great characteristics, intricacy and variety, as produced by roughness and sudden deviation, and as opposed to the comparative monotony of smoothness and flowing lines.

If we take any smooth [i.e., beautiful] object, whose lines are flowing, such as a down of the finest turf with gently swelling knolls and hillocks of every soft and undulating form, though the eye may repose on this with pleasure, yet the whole is seen at once, and no further curiosity is excited; but let those swelling knolls (without altering the scale) be changed into bold broken promontories, with rude overhanging rock; instead of the smooth turf, let there be furze, heath, or fern, with open patches between, and fragments of rocks and large stones lying in irregular masses, ... the whole of the one may be comprehended immediately, and ... if you traverse it in

30) This includes the cultural inferiority of England to Italy, which was the precondition for the vogue of the grand tour among the English in the eighteenth century. It was probably as a reaction against this humiliating fact that the patriotic novelist Henry Fielding (1707-54) opposed the fashionable grand tour in *Joseph Andrews*, etc.

31) Gilpin, *op.cit.*, p. 18 (italics original); cf. Humphry Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1803; rpt. Oxford: Phaidon, 1980), p. 221.

every direction little new can occur; while in the other every step changes the whole of the composition. . . . All these deep coves, hollows, and fissures invite the eye to penetrate into their recesses, yet keep its curiosity alive and unsatisfied; . . .³²⁾

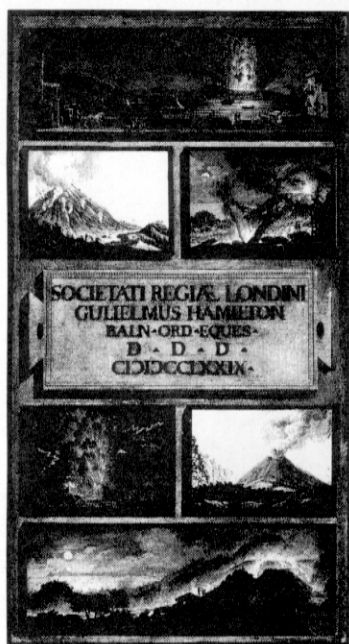


Fig. 9: William Hamilton, *Supplement to the Campi Phlegraei* being an Account of the Great Eruption of Mount Vesuvius (Naples, 1779), frontispiece.

This tantalizing sensation—note the sexual overtones of the last sentence, which shall be explicated immediately below—caused by the inscrutability and impenetrability of the Picturesque landscape derives from some humiliating impotence of the Picturesque eye; since the Picturesque eye cannot see all, there is always an excess or the Other, escaping its grasp, its comprehension, its penetration, which, though frustrating, titillates it in a peculiar way.

Narcissism of Emma/Nature: The Picturesque as Healing

Now let us return to Emma's case, in order to complete our search for a redemptive moment in the Picturesque. Emma's husband, Sir William, a friend of several Picturesque aestheticians, was also aware that nature escapes human comprehension. Famous for his geological observations on volcanoes around Naples (cf. fig. 9), Sir William criticizes the old type of natural history:

Nature acts slowly, it is difficult to catch her in the act. Those who have made this subject their study, have without scruple, undertaken at once, to write the Natural History of a whole province, or of an entire continent; not reflecting, that the longest life of man scarcely affords him time to give a perfect one of the smallest insect.³³⁾

- 32) Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful*; . . . (London, 1794), pp. 105ff. (for clarity's sake, I quote from the first edition, instead of the edition cited above; cf. *idem*, *Essays*, I, 122f.). Here, Price is criticizing the "smooth" landscape gardening of "Capability" Brown (1716-83). In mid-eighteenth-century Britain, however, such clear "prospect" and (perhaps Rousseauistic) transparency were favored, probably as a reaction against the ongoing obscurity and unscrutability of the society as a whole brought about by the division of labor and societal compartmentalization resulting from the commercialization and industrialization of Britain. Cf. John Barrell, "The Public Prospect and the Private View," Simon Pugh (ed.), *Reading Landscape: Country-City-Capital* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 19-40; *idem*, *English Literature in History 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson, 1983); my "Illusionismus und Enttäuschung in englischen Gartentheorien um 1800," Gerd-Helge Vogel and Barbara Baumüller (eds.), *Carl Blechen (1798-1840): Grenzerfahrungen-Grenzüberschreitungen* (Greifswald: Steinbecker Verlag, 2000), pp. 119-28. See also, Jean Starobinski, *Jean-Jacque Rousseau, Transparency and Obstruction*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988).
- 33) Sir William Hamilton, *Campi Phlegraei, Observations on the Volcanos of the Two Sicilies* (Naples, 1776), I, 54; cit. Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 68. Of course, this is merely a cliché in the agnostic, experimentalist milieu of eighteenth-century England. In the context of landscape aesthetics, see e.g., Samuel Johnson, *The Adventurer*, No. 107 (1753), *Dr. Johnson's Works* (1825; New York: AMS, 1970), IV, 95; William Shenstone,

Does not this recognition of the inscrutability of nature apply to Emma herself, who was often identified with nature as was shown earlier? Is it not also true of her "attitude" that "it is difficult to catch her in the act"?

At the very least, the actual Emma tended to escape Sir William's control: i.e., her liaison with Nelson even forced Sir William to give up his diplomatic career. Surprisingly, though, Sir William had anticipated such scandals even before he decided to accept Emma, as he had said: "Tho' a great City, Naples has every defect of a Province and nothing you do is secret. It would be fine fun for the young English Travellers to endeavour to cuckold the old Gentleman their Ambassador." And after his resignation, he recollects: "I was sensible . . . that I shou'd be superannuated when my wife wou'd be in her full beauty and vigour of youth."³⁴

So, one can guess that he might have half-welcomed Emma's escape from his control. Indeed, according to his friend Price, the appeal of a Picturesque woman rests exactly on her characteristics of uncontrollable irregularity and inscrutability:

. . . it is also common to say of a woman — que sans être belle elle est *piquante* — a word, by the bye, that in many points answers very exactly to picturesque. The amusing history of Roxalana and the Sultan, is also the history of the piquant, which is fully exemplified in her person and her manners: Marmontel certainly did not intend to give the *petit nez retroussé* as beautiful feature; but to shew how much such a striking irregularity might accord and co-operate, with the same sort of *irregularity* in the character of the mind. The playful, unequal, coquetish Roxalana, full of sudden turns and caprices, is opposed to the beautiful, tender, and constant Elvira; and the effects of irritation, to those of softness and languor: the tendency of the qualities of beauty alone towards monotony, are no less happily insinuated.³⁵



Fig. 10: Pietro Antonio Novelli, *Attitudes of Lady Hamilton* (1791).

Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening, in *The Works in Verse and Prose* (1764; rpt. New York: Garland, 1982), II, 129, 142; Richard Payne Knight, *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805; 4th ed. 1808; rpt. Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg International, 1972), pp. 474ff. Hamilton's *Campi Phlegraei* is unique among the genre because of its exceptionally numerous and beautiful illustrations (cf. fig. 9), i.e., its Picturesqueness.

34) Letter written in 1785; BL, Add. MS 42,071, f. 4; cit. Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 20; A. Morrison, *Catalogue of the Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents formed between 1865 and 1882 by A. Morrison. The Hamilton and Nelson Papers* (London: Thibideau, 1893-94), No. 513; cit., Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

35) Price, *Essays*, I, 73f. (italics original). Price also says the Picturesque is "the coquetry of nature" (*An Essay*, 1st ed., p. 86). He is well aware that his sexual (and tactile) characterization of the Picturesque will cause ridicule. See *An Essay*, pp. 77f., and also compare it with the revised version, *Essays*, I, 114, where the sexual allusion has been eliminated.



Fig. 11: [? James Gillray,] *Drawings faithfully copied from Nature at Naples: A New Edition considerably Enlarged and humbly Dedicated to all Admirers of the Grand and Sublime* (1807). Cf. fig. 3.



Fig. 12: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *A Bacchante* (1783-4).

A Picturesque woman as this is a "narcissistic" object in the Freudian sense; that is to say, it escapes external control and is autonomous to the degree of inscrutable.³⁶⁾ Emma may have been such an object to Sir William, especially when acting "attitudes." In fact, the pictures depicting "attitudes," including caricatures (figs. 3, 10, 11, 13), are all "absorptive," to use Michael Fried's dichotomy, compared to her other ordinary "theatrical" portraits (fig. 12)³⁷⁾: i.e., in acting "attitudes," Emma is so completely captured by one or other emotion that she is not aware of the observers' gaze, showing narcissistic "self-contentment and inaccessibility" (Freud).³⁸⁾

This Picturesque narcissism of Emma could have provided some healing moment to Sir William. As was stated earlier, she was, just like the Picturesque English garden, a distraction from the "ennui" caused by his first wife's death. He devoted an "eager" "passion" to his first wife, or according to Freud's diction, the "complete object-love of the attachment type."³⁹⁾ But such strong attachment to the loved object can exhaust the subject's basic narcissism and living energy. Hence, the paradox that keeping the object consistently narcissistic can contribute to restoring the basic narcissism of the subject itself. Maybe, Emma's "attitude" was a contrivance to emphasize and enhance her narcissism, making her autonomous beyond the picture-frame. This seems the more plausible because Sir William, even though aware of the possibility of scandals, dared to show her "attitudes" to many male grand tourists.⁴⁰⁾

To accept Emma's narcissism may not only be healing to Sir William, but also a prevention against his possible violence toward Emma. The Picturesque is characterized by some

36) Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth, 1963), XIV, 73-107. For the concept of narcissism applied to the Picturesque, see: Frances Ferguson, "In Search of the Natural Sublime: The Face on the Forest Floor," *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 129-45; Raimonda Modiano, "The Legacy of the Picturesque: Landscape, Property and the Ruin," Copley and Garside, *op.cit.*, pp. 196-219.

37) Cf. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980); Jenkins and Sloan, *op.cit.*, figs. 155-61, 166-69, 192-93.

38) Freud, *op.cit.*, XIV, 89.

39) "Die volle Objektliebe nach dem Anlehnungstypus." Freud, *op.cit.*, XIV, 88.

40) At least Horace Walpole was well aware of the possibility of scandals, as he said: "I shall not be so generous as Sir William, and exhibit my wives in pantomime to the public" (to Mary Berry, 11 September 1791: *Correspondence*, ed.cit., XI, 350).

distancing of the object, which, by deferring the immediate satisfaction of the seeing subject's desire, can prevent the violent possession of the desired object.

This will become obvious by that comparison between the simply beautiful and the Picturesque which was one of the main topics among Picturesque aestheticians. On the one hand, according to Edmund Burke, the most influential precursor to Picturesque aesthetics, beauty is "that quality or those qualities in bodies by which they cause love, or some passion similar to it."⁴¹ This "love" is closely connected with strong sexual desire and can lead to a violent, possibly destructive assimilation of the desired object by the desiring (male) subject, as Burke explicates:

... violent effects [are] produced by love, which has sometimes been even wrought up to madness, ... the generation of mankind is a great purpose, and it is requisite that men should be animated to the pursuit of it by some great incentive. ... [the object of love] can so quickly, so powerfully, or so surely produce its effect. ... we like to have [beautiful objects] near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them, ...⁴²



Fig. 13: Thomas Rowlandson, *Lady H***** Attitudes* (? c. 1800).

On the other hand, the Picturesque results from abandoning such an immediate satisfaction of desire. Thus Price contrasts the beautiful and the Picturesque:

Soft, fresh, and beautiful colours ... give us an inclination to try their effect on the touch; whereas ... that inclination ... in objects merely picturesque, and void of all beauty, is rarely excited.

I have read, indeed, in some fairy tale, of a country, where [picturesque] age and wrinkles were loved and caressed, and [beautiful] youth and freshness neglected; but in real life, I fancy, the most picturesque old woman, however her admirer may ogle her on that account, is perfectly safe from his caresses.⁴³

To use an example favored by the Picturesque aestheticians, "the most beautiful objects will become [picturesque] from the effects of age, and

41) Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757, 1759), ed. James T. Boulton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), p. 91.

42) Ibid., pp. 40-43.

43) Price, *Essays*, I, 71.

decay."⁴⁴⁾ The Picturesque is, therefore, produced by hampering the violent assimilation and possession of the object by the subject.

From this viewpoint of the prophylactic nature of the Picturesque, I will finally consider Thomas Rowlandson's caricature of the "attitudes" of Sir William and Emma (fig. 13). Here, Sir William is acting the role of a perverted old man (in the guise of a Pygmalion) who lets his wife be symbolically raped by the pen/nis of a young tourist or artist. This certainly explicates the obscenity and sexist violence latent in the Picturesque gaze. But it is ironic that the most obscene picture-in-a-picture was obviously drawn also by Rowlandson himself. And it is Rowlandson, too, who staged this whole show of the entire picture, just as Sir William staged the encounter between Emma and the young artist. So the laughter aimed at the young artist and Sir William implicates Rowlandson as well. In other words, the Picturesque gaze ridicules itself. This element of reflexivity and derogating oneself inherent in the Picturesque tradition can work against the violence of the Picturesque mode of vision, and provide a redemptive moment for healing.

* * *

These examples show that the tradition of the Picturesque is far from monolithic. It involves both assimilation and dissimulation, superiority and inferiority, violence and healing, and their inversions. This is because the Picturesque is a transplantation of a familiar, established formula onto the Other, making homogeneity and heterogeneity emerge in the same instance. Through this recognition, we may turn our own "picture-madness" transplanted in us into a redemptive moment.⁴⁵⁾

44) Ibid., I, 82f.; cf. *ibid.*, I, 170, I, 203f., III, 291-94. Hence, the Picturesque cult of ruins.

Price's theory of the Picturesque is an explicit reaction against the French Revolution (this reactionary character seems more conspicuous in the first edition of his treatise, published just after the Revolution, than in its later revisions). His reaction is also closely connected with that against the bourgeois "levelling" of the social hierarchy within Britain, represented by the "levelled" smooth garden of "Capability" Brown (Price, *An Essay*, 1st ed., pp. 28f.; here Price may be referring to the Puritan radicals, "Levellers" who were supposed to claim demolition of the unequal distribution of landed property in the mid-seventeenth century). Thus, his aesthetics reflects the loss of self-confidence and the impotence on the side of the cultural elite, caused by the traumatic upsurge of bourgeois hegemony (cf. Andrews, *op.cit.*, esp. pp. 40f.) and can be interpreted as the elite's attempt to regain their narcissism (and possibly, superiority) through distancing the bourgeois and granting them a narcissistic self-contentment (or confinement).

45) For another redeeming reading of the Picturesque, see Negel Everett, *The Tory View of Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), esp. Ch. 3, which asserts the Picturesque coexisted with benevolence and philanthropy.