For Marion

In the immense sum of human existence what is a single unit? Every sod on which we tread is the grave of some former being; yet is there something that softens without enervating the heart in tracing in the life of another those emotions that all of us have known ourselves. For who is there that has not, in his progress through life, felt all its ordinary business arrested, and the varieties of fate commuted into one chronicle of the affections? Who has not watched over the passing away of some being, more to him at that epoch than all the world? And this unit, so trivial to the calculation of others, of what inestimable value was it not to him? Retracing in another such recollections, shadowed and mellowed down by time, we feel the wonderful sanctity of human life, we feel what emotions a single being can awake; what a world of hope may be buried in a single grave! And thus we keep alive within ourselves the soft springs of that morality which unites us with our kind, and sheds over the harsh scenes and turbulent contests of earth the colouring of a common love.


Hans Werner Breunig

**English Rhine Tourism in 19th-Century Literature**

"And what dost thou muse upon, O descendant of the race of Laurin?" said the prince.

"Upon TIME!" answered the dwarf, gloomily. "I see a River, and its waves are black, flowing from the clouds, and none knoweth its source. It rolls deeply on, aye and evermore, through a green valley, which it slowly swallows up, washing away tower and town, and vanquishing all things; and the name of the River is TIME."


… what the Tiber is to the classic, the Rhine is to the chivalric age. The steep rock and the gray dismantled tower, the massive and rude picturesque of the feudal days, constitute the great features of the scene; and you might almost fancy, as you glide along, that you are sailing back adown the river of Time, and the monuments of the pomp and power of old, rising, one after one, upon its shores!

Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, 1st Baron Lytton (1803-1873), lets his novel’s characters begin their Rhine journey at Rotterdam where they are somewhat impatient to view the grandeur of the river, for which they must wait till they have passed Cologne. Let us follow them for a while and take the liberty to look back or forward on our imaginary journey along the banks of that famed river.

Almost like the pilgrims in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* – and Lytton’s travellers (like Byron’s Childe Harold) are indeed on a pilgrimage, too, as even the title *The Pilgrims of the Rhine* (1834) tells us – they while the time away by telling stories even before they “… pass into the dull land of Holland” (ch.3)¹ and gradually go up river:

"But, my Gertrude, you must wait till we have passed Cologne, before the glories of the Rhine burst upon you."

"It reverses life, my child," said the moralizing Vane; "and the stream flows through dulness at first, reserving its poetry for our perseverance."  

(Ch.5)

The commerce met with at Rotterdam is, to Bulwer-Lytton, quasi un-poetical; the poetry of the river must be expected in different surroundings. The travellers are disputing whether Life is either, as it were, reversed as they go up river, from the old, shapeless and dull expanses of the stream to the enlivening, youthful stretches of it further up, or whether, on the other hand, old age and even sickness, and the weakness it brings with it, may not still be accompanied by an intense appreciation of vividness.

Ann Radcliffe, who had made a similar journey as early as 1794, had cast a more sympathetic eye both to Rotterdam, which she thinks is the most beautiful of the cities in the union (*A Journey*, p.20), and to “Commerce, which cannot now be long discouraged in any part of Europe, because without it the interest of the public debts cannot be paid, is the permanent defender of freedom and knowledge against military glory and politics.” (*A Journey*, p 22.) This is no doubt a more generous approach to beauty, even though she, too, makes sure to indicate that there are, at the time of description, no boats on the river near Cologne that might spoil the view (*A Journey*, p 171); in Radcliffe’s attitude the leisure which may reveal beauty knows itself as based on commerce which in turn guarantees peace. In the 19th century, however, the beautiful and also the sublime are approached quite directly, leaving ordinary efforts – be they social or economic – out of account; wild scenes of nature, rather than fertile fields and orchards, are then in the focus of attention. In this respect, the clash between the 18th century (and former centuries) and the 19th becomes perspicuous. Beauty and utility became utterly separate.

Ann Radcliffe, after all, describes Holland on about 150 pages and does not simply use that country as a tedious delay of delights to follow. Even once she has passed into Germany, the chain of all the towns on her way does not cease to be of interest to her. Thus Cleve, Xanten and even Neuss are described and put into a well founded historical setting, from Tacitus to the then present. The same tenor is maintained in Cologne, where she is matter-of-fact enough to abstain from a description of the Three Magi. Yet, when the Seven Mountains (Siebengebirge) come into sight, Ann Radcliffe’s style changes noticeably:

¹ or “That water-land of Dutchmen and of ditches”, as Byron had once called it. (*Don Juan*, X, lxiii)
To the north, spread the wide plains, before seen, covered with corn, then just embrowned, and with vines and gardens, whose alternate colours formed a gay checker work with villages, convents and castles. The grandeur of this level was unbroken by any inclosures, that could seem to diminish its vastness. The range of woody heights, that bound it on the west, extend to the southward, many leagues beyond the hill Santa Crucis; but the uniform and unbroken ridges of distant mountains, on the east, cease before the Seven Mountains rise above the Rhine in all their awful majesty. (Radcliffe, Journey, pp 220-1)

**Passing the Equinoctial Line between the Present and Past Worlds**

And thence through Berlin, Dresden, and the like, Until he reach’d the castellated Rhine: – Ye glorious Gothic scenes! how much ye strike All phantasies, not even excepting mine! A grey wall, a green ruin, rusty pike, Make my soul pass the equinoctial line Between the present and past worlds, and hover Upon the airy confine, half-seas over.

(Byron, Don Juan, X, lxi)

Between Ann Radcliffe’s and Bulwer-Lytton’s intellectual travelogues, there is that of Lord Byron, both in Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage Canto III (1816) and in Don Juan (1819-24). The river Rhine becomes symbolic of the flow of time, as a Rhine journey becomes a trip into history.² So also in Bulwer-Lytton (Pilgrims of the Rhine, ch.27):

... to see the Rhine only in the sunshine is to be unconscious of its most majestic aspects. What baronial war had those ruins witnessed! From the rapine of the lordly tyrant of those battlements rose the first Confederation of the Rhine,—the great strife between the new time and the old, the town and the castle, the citizen and the chief. Gray and stern those ruins breasted the storm,—a type of the antique opinion which once manned them with armed serfs; and, yet in ruins and decay, appeals from the victorious freedom it may no longer resist!

But to Bulwer-Lytton, it is not merely the Middle Ages, whose fortified manifestations are, after all, all-too obvious along the river banks, but the aspect of timelessness evokes even Roman and Greek antiquity.

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² “Der Rhein wird zum Symbol für den Fluß der Zeit, so wie die Rheinreise eine Reise in die Geschichte wird.” (Blaicher, Das Deutschlandbild in der englischen Literatur, p 114.)
Landscape and Characters along the Rhine as Substituting Celebrated Places of Antiquity

Vane grew seriously alarmed; he repented that he had yielded to Gertrude's wish of substituting the Rhine for the Tiber or the Arno; and would even now have hurried across the Alps to a warmer clime, if Du——-e had not declared that she could not survive the journey, and that her sole chance of regaining her strength was rest. Gertrude herself, however, in the continued delusion of her disease, clung to the belief of recovery, and still supported the hopes of her father, and soothed, with secret talk of the future, the anguish of her betrothed. The reader may remember that in the most touching passage in the ancient tragedians, the most pathetic part of the most pathetic of human poets—the pleading speech of Iphigenia, when imploring for her prolonged life, she impresses you with so soft a picture of its innocence and its beauty, and in this Gertrude resembled the Greek's creation—that she felt, on the verge of death, all the flush, the glow, the loveliness of life.

(Bulwer-Lytton, ch.28)

... of all enchanted and enchanting scenes ever lighted by the full round moon, give me Heidelberg! Not the Collosseum of Rome – neither in itself, nor yet in Lord Byron’s description, and I have both by heart – can be more grand, and in moral interest, in poetical associations [...] the castle of Heidelberg has the advantage.

(Ann Jameson, Sketches of Germany, p 46.)

Of course there are good reasons for claiming this sort of identity of German with ancient Roman or Greek scenes. For the Grand Tour would traditionally take the British to Italy, so the relatively novel discovery of Germany was not to fall short of established expectations. The Rhine Valley stood for history, but also for classical literature. The River of Time had all this to offer. As Gisela Dischner has meticulously pointed out, a great number of English Rhine Romantics did not tire of likening particular scenes which they found along the banks of the Rhine with amphitheatres. In the course of the 19th century, however, that trope was more and more used by authors whose imitative imagination fell short of fancying anything better and the Romantic was more impressed by nature’s infinitude and wildness than by confined aspects of it resembling artefacts of whatever age (cf. Dischner, 49; 60). Yet the amphitheatre simile is a distinguishing feature between German and English Rhine Romanticism. For it was only in England that a Rhine trip might compete with the Grand Tour; thus the amphitheatre simile is quite absent from German Rhine Romanticism.

3 Lord Byron’s physician Polidori on 10 May 1816 is one of those who discovers in “… the scenery not anything particular till we see the Seven Hills, a large amphitheatre on the right, glimpses on the left of the Rhine and the Seven Hills …” (Gisela Dischner, Ursprünge der Rheinromantik in England, 48.)
Cologne

Almost as a natural consequence of this attitude, it is not so much the cathedral but the marks of Roman occupation, which first come to Bulwer-Lytton’s travellers’ minds when they arrive at Cologne.

ROME—magnificent Rome! wherever the pilgrim wends, the traces of thy dominion greet his eyes. Still in the heart of the bold German race is graven the print of the eagle's claws; and amidst the haunted regions of the Rhine we pause to wonder at the great monuments of the Italian yoke.

At Cologne our travellers rested for some days. They were in the city to which the camp of Marcus Agrippa had given birth; that spot had resounded with the armed tread of the legions of Trajan. In that city, Vitellius, Sylvanus, were proclaimed emperors. By that church did the latter receive his death. (The Pilgrims of the Rhine, Ch. 7)

Among the great number of churches extant in Cologne, it is not the gothic cathedral (which generally tended to be admired not least owing to its resemblance to ruins) but the church of St.Maria’s – a Romanesque basilica built upon Roman remains – which Bulwer-Lytton mentions first in the context of Cologne. A visit to the cathedral does ensue but is not given more space than that of the church. Next thing the reader encounters is a boat trip on the calm majestic Rhine from which Cologne’s towers are viewed in the distance; yet it seems to be profounder matters which that evening scene immediately evokes and which, indeed, are described and even allegorized in a story told on the water: a story concerning woman’s love as defying the grave. (The woman in the party, Gertrude, is close to death.) So even at Cologne, the story telling does not cease. The river Rhine suggests and embodies the philosophical question of life’s destiny, of loss and enduring love. The individual on the slowly flowing river feels loss and love (which foreshadow Gertrude’s death at the end of the book), but by turning to its lost object, that very love is seen as emanating from it. The object is forever active, but the grieving self is deluded in his selfish grief.

Nothing dark, then, or bitter, rests with our remembrance of the lost: we are the mourners, but pity is not for the mourned,—our grief is purely selfish; when we turn to its object, the hues of happi-

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4 Indeed from the Age of Enlightenment on, the Gothic connoted the darker ages, though in England Gothic churches were still being built, particularly in rural areas, at that time (Dischner, 101f). It is thus not surprising that the first of important English Rhine tourists with a pen to his command, William Beckford (the author of Vathek), on his trip as early as 1782, does not much care for the edifice of Cologne cathedral, while he does admire the grave of the Three Magi therein. (Dischner, 134; cf. 44 and 126.)

5 “St. Maria im Kapitol ist die größte der romanischen Kirchen Kölns. Wie schon der Name "Maria im Kapitol" zeigt, hat diese Kirche etwas mit den Römern zu tun. Denn sie ist erbaut auf den Fundamenten eines römischen Tempels (um 50 n. Chr.), der den sogenannten Kapitolinischen Gottheiten Jupiter, Juno und Minerva geweiht war. Reste dieses Tempels wurden bei den Grabungen nach dem 2. Weltkrieg gefunden.” [http://www.maria-im-kapitol.de/kirche/index.htm](http://www.maria-im-kapitol.de/kirche/index.htm) as of 16 Oct. 2010. – Bulwer-Lytton also points this out in his novel: “The church of St. Maria occupies the site of the Roman Capitol, and the place retains the Roman name; and still something in the aspect of the people betrays the hereditary blood.” Pilgrims of the Rhine, Ch.7
ness are round it, and that very love which is the parent of our woe was the consolation, the triumph, of the departed! (Ch.7)

A Rhine trip has now become a fairly intellectual pursuit. It is thus not surprising that the scenery, quite explicitly, does not count only for itself, but the traveller, through reflection, knows about its history, and stories told by the secular Rhine pilgrims include even the world of legend and folklore. It may thus not surprise the reader too much to find that the River Rhine is in itself not only in many respects allegorical (usually of morality or of history), but that, as the title of chapter 9 tells us, the scenery of the Rhine is even perceived as analogous to the German national, nay literary, genius.

As the Rhine flows, so flows the national genius, by mountain and valley, the wildest solitude, the sudden spires of ancient cities, the mouldered castle, the stately monastery, the humble cot,—grandeur and homeliness, history and superstition, truth and fable, succeeding one another so as to blend into a whole. (Ch.9)

Perhaps so as to make this awe-inspiring whole more tolerable to a British readership, a German student from Heidelberg is introduced later to discuss German literature and remark that “We [the Germans] eternally step from the sublime to the ridiculous; we want taste.” (Ch18)

The starting point of Rhine worship, as indeed of the description of anything German, with English authors, was often enough merely imaginary. Not unlike the Mont Blanc, the Rhine Valley invited lyrical praise by English poets who had not even been there. Felicia Hemans (1793-1835), for one, from 1820 became the centre of Liverpudlians interested in Germany and romanticized the Rhine Valley, e.g. in her poem ‘The Troubadour, or Richard Coeur de Lion’, in which poem she describes the captivity of King Coeur de Lion on Trifels Castle; again, in her poem ‘The Ivy Song’, she contemplates an ivy leaf on the ruins of Rheinfels.

_6 Lytton can clearly see a departure of the German mind from the idea, and a rise in materialism: "But," added Trevlyyan, a moment afterwards, "the Ideal is passing slowly away from the German mind; a spirit for the more active and the more material literature is springing up amongst them. The revolution of mind gathers on, preceding stormy events; and the memories that led their grandsires to contemplate will urge the youth of the next generation to dare and to act."* (Ch. 9) to which he later adds a footnote: * “Is not this prediction already fulfilled?—1849.”

_7 Bulwer-Lytton, in his _Pilgrims of the Rhine_ (1834), was fascinated by what he saw in Germany and quite generally put it into context with what he calls the ‘German genius’: “The best commentary to the German genius is a visit to the German scenery. The mighty gloom of the Hartz, the feudal towers that look over vines and deep valleys on the legendary Rhine; the gigantic remains of antique power, profusely scattered over plain, mount and forest; the thousand mixed recollections that hallow the ground; the stately Roman, the stalwart Goth, the chivalry of the feudal age, and the dim brotherhood of the ideal world, have here all alike their record and their remembrance.” (Bulwer-Lytton, _The Pilgrims of the Rhine_, Ch.9.)

_8 Blaicher 95._

_9 Dischner, 261f. – Accuracy is irrelevant when the waters of the Rhine, famed for their green colour, become ‘the blue waters of the Rhine’ in Hemans, and also in Thomas Grattan (1836) (Dischner, 269). William Marsh, too, expects the floods of the Rhine to be blue, but he eventually finds them to be of a dirty yellowish hue, so that Gisela Dischner conjectures he may be confusing them with the River Main (Dischner, 276).
In the case of Ann Radcliffe, too, it was after rather a similar worship of merely imagined landscapes in her Gothic novels, that she actually travelled to the Rhine and wrote her Rhine travelogue as early as 1794, five years before Wordsworth and Coleridge were living in North Germany.\textsuperscript{10} She, however, was indeed fascinated by Cologne cathedral (Dischner, 161). – In a later chapter we will have occasion to consider satirical appreciations of Cologne (cf. ‘Rhine Satire’).

The Metaphysics of Appropriation

As British Rhine tourism took place at a time when colonialism was in full sway, the question suggests itself as to whether trips to the Rhine had an aspect of appropriation (or even, on some level, of colonisation) about them. This is not a random, or politically motivated, question, but rather a philosophically grounded one. For if we take John Locke’s \textit{Treatises of Government} as a particularly English attempt at analysing the human condition, every-one, according to Locke, is known as possessing some property in the world and our being in the world takes place as an original appropriation of it (an appropriation originally quite irrespective of material possessions).

The concept of property is of rather a puzzling nature in Locke. For whereas he says that the world and the inferior creatures are given to man in common, there is a more basic concept of property which does not extend over worldly objects at all. For Locke\textsuperscript{11} first introduces the term ‘property’ irrespective of material objects:

\begin{quote}
Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a \textit{Property} in his own \textit{Person}. (Locke, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Treatise of Govt., 287.)
\end{quote}

and:

\begin{quote}
[...]\textit{though the things of Nature are given in common, yet Man (by being Master of himself, and \textit{Proprietor of his own Person}, and the Actions or \textit{Labour} of it) had still in himself the great Foundation of Property.} (Ibid., 298.)
\end{quote}

What exactly are we to understand by ‘Person’? If Locke means simply the human body – a sense of ‘person’ still currently in use – then he would be saying that all possession is an extension of the relationship humans have to their bodies. Whatever the body touched and improved when that object was still owned in common would by this effort become private property of that person. – But the case seems to be more complicated than this. For the relationship of property which Locke seems to consider as primary includes indeed such an intangible thing as liberty. In the state of nature, says Locke, the enjoyment of that state is very uncertain:

\textsuperscript{10}Ann Radcliffe: \textit{A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: to Which Are Added, Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland.} Dublin, 1795.

This makes him willing to quit this Condition, which however free, is full of fears and continual dangers: And 'tis not without reason, that he seeks out, and is willing to join in Society with others who are already united, or have a mind to unite for the mutual Preservation of their Lives, Liberties and Estates, which I call by the general Name, Property. (Locke 1988b: 350)

Locke here explicitly calls by the name of property “Lives, Liberties and Estates”. Evidently, he does not only mean possessions when he speaks of ‘property’, as he repeatedly stresses.

By Property I must be understood here, as in other places, to mean that Property which Men have in their Persons as well as Goods. (Locke 1988b: 383)

Without here going into the details of the transition from that form of property which consists in ‘lives’ and ‘liberties’, to that of ‘estates’, it is evident that the property consisting in estates and outward possessions is less original than that which Man has in ‘lives’ and ‘liberties’. Outward possessions are to Locke derived from this more intimate property of ‘lives’ and ‘liberties’ which every one shares with everybody else.

Man shares the property consisting in life and liberties with all mankind. The property in estates, however, places a distinction between one man and another. (Locke 1988b: 350.)

Thus, any trip, like any other human experience, entails taking possession of a part of the world. It offers a great opportunity for sharing experience not just as individual property, but as property originally shared in its very constitution; but it may also lead to a claim of utter separation between what is seen by one tourist and what is seen by another, as soon as calculations of physical possession come into play.

Appropriation as Physical: Foreign Scenery as a Source of Inspiration

For the English, there was also a practical aspect to their Rhine journeys. At a time when taste had changed from the formalised garden towards the picturesque which included the accidental instead of generalised planning, the Rhine scenery became interesting to the privileged who, at the end of the 18th century still were the only Brits frequenting the banks of the Rhine.12

Die Landschaft selbst war nicht von ihrer geographischen Bestimmtheit aus interessant. Den Romantiker interessierte eine spezifische Konstellation, in der Elemente der Landschaft, Felsen, der glitzernde Rheinstrom, dunkle Ruinen, das Licht der Abendsonne oder die Dämmerung, in der Berge und Ebenen verschwimmen, sich zum Ganzen einer Stimmung zusammenschlossen. Die Landschaft wird also durch eine spezifische Konstellation zum Stimmungsträger für den ästhetischen Zustand des Menschen (daher die Unwichtigkeit der geographischen Einzelheiten in

12 From 1816 on, when the first steam boat had found its way from London to Cologne, this would change and not only the educated aristocracy would travel up the river. Cf. http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofsteamna00kennuoft/historyofsteamna00kennuoft_djvu.txt

With an increase in British Rhine travel, notably after the first steam boat had found its way from London to Cologne in 1816, trips to the Rhine were no longer a privilege of the aristocracy. Commercial entrepreneurs were pushing their way up the social ladder and were thus seeing new parts of the world as something they might attempt to possess, at a time when they were also gradually taking over some of the landed gentry’s estates at home.

Thus, Richard Doyle in his British Rhine trip cartoons makes sure to draw attention to his three travellers’ possessions, both before they set out on their journey and on the point of their return. Between these two poles, the reader also sees a sketch of ‘The Great Briton’ contemplating the possession of one of the Rhine castles. The question of possession, which had pre-

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13 Cf. [http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofsteamna00kennuoft/historyofsteamna00kennuoft_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/historyofsteamna00kennuoft/historyofsteamna00kennuoft_djvu.txt)

14 Richard Doyle, *The Foreign Tour of Messrs Brown, Jones and Robinson. Being the History of What They Saw, and Did, in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy*. London: Bradbury [e.a.], 1854.
viously been taken, for the greatest part, as a metaphysical possession, is here taken as a material issue which bold British commercialism might settle without the interference of subtle spiritualism. The cartoon is subtitled: ‘The Great Briton. As he stood contemplating the Rhine-Land, wondering if it would be possible to live in that country; and considering, (supposing he had one of these castles now) how many thousands a year one could do it with. The scenery would do; and with English institutions it might be made a good thing of.’ (Richard Doyle, The Foreign Tour of Messrs Brown, Jones and Robinson, p 12 http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29463/29463-h/29463-h.htm (7 Jan.2011)).

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1817) epitomizes the loneliness and isolation of civilized Man. What is of particular interest to us here is Frankenstein's journey down the Rhine on his way from Switzerland to Scotland, where he is to create his monster's female counterpart. Whilst Frankenstein is generally haunted by his creature (even in such remote places as the glacier at Chamonix, at the North Pole, in Scotland, but also in his bedroom), his Rhine trip is entirely without such unpleasant encounters. Frankenstein, though dejected, finds some measure of inner peace not known in a long time:

>This part of the Rhine, indeed, presents a singularly variegated landscape. In one spot you view rugged hills, ruined castles overlooking tremendous precipices, with the dark Rhine rushing beneath; and, on the sudden turn of a promontory, flourishing vineyards, with green sloping banks, and a meandering river, and populous towns occupy the scene.

>We travelled at the time of the vintage, and heard the song of the labourers, as we glided down the stream. Even I, depressed in mind, and my spirits continually agitated by gloomy feelings, even I was pleased. I lay at the bottom of the boat, and, as I gazed on the cloudless blue sky, I seemed to drink in a tranquillity to which I had long been a stranger.15

This appreciation of picturesque Rhine scenery which, at its extreme, even shuts out that very scenery by gazing merely at the blue sky, is quite remote from any kind of appropriation. Senses other than the eye are involved in rousing the peaceful mood Frankenstein describes. Dejection, even when brought to some form of relief, makes the mind disinterested in possession, be it physical or intellectual, and yet Frankenstein seems to be content with himself, if only for a few moments. If anything, Frankenstein seems to be thinking ‘this is me’ rather than ‘this is mine’.

Bulwer Lytton may well have Victor Frankenstein in mind who gazes at the vines and hill-tops as he is gliding down the Rhine, when he, Lytton, writes:

>He little comprehends the true charm of the Rhine who gazes on the vines on the hill-tops without a thought of the imaginary world with which their recesses have been peopled by the graceful

credulity of old; who surveys the steep ruins that overshadow the water, untouched by one lesson from the pensive morality of Time. Everywhere around us is the evidence of perished opinions and departed races; everywhere around us, also, the rejoicing fertility of unconquerable Nature, and the calm progress of Man himself through the infinite cycles of decay. He who would judge adequately of a landscape must regard it not only with the painter's eye, but with the poet's. The feelings which the sight of any scene in Nature conveys to the mind—more especially of any scene on which history or fiction has left its trace—must depend upon our sympathy with those associations which make up what may be called the spiritual character of the spot.

(Preface.)

The immediate appreciation of history, which Byron had sensed and put into his verse, is here becoming a criterion of successful or unsuccessful appreciation of Rhine scenery.

Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein* is giving her own impressions of a Rhine trip in 1814. She may indeed be grouped among the Rhine Romantics, with Lord Byron, but unlike her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley does not mention the Rhine valley. Instead, Titisee in the Black Forest is the only picturesque place in Germany which he immortalizes in a poem. But to Byron the Rhine valley is a metaphor for autumn, and its castles connote the political strife for freedom which he himself could easily identify with. Like for Frankenstein, for Byron the Rhine dissipates all self-destructive melancholy:

Adieu to thee, fair Rhine! How long delighted
The stranger fain would linger on his way!
Thine is a scene alike where souls united
Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray;
And could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey
On self-condemning bosoms, it were here,
Where Nature, nor too sombre nor too gay,
Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere,
Is to the mellow Earth as Autumn to the year.

(*Childe Harold*, III, 59)

**Appropriation as Intellectual: Lord Byron and ‘The Castled Crag of Drachenfels’**

Byron certainly appears fascinated by the Rhine valley and its castles. Thackeray claims that he was so only with an eye to his readership and that his Rhine veneration was not sincere (Dischner, 251).

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16 Dischner, p252.
The castled crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o’er the wide and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
Between the banks which bear the vine,
And hills all rich with blossom’d trees,
And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scattered cities crowning these,
Whose far white walls along them shine,
Have strew’d a scene, which I should see
With double joy wert thou with me.18

Lord Byron’s account of the Rhine valley was one of the most influential. In fact, many British Rhine tourists had Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*19, notably Canto III (1816), in hand as they were going up, or down, the river. This holds not only for poets and novelists, but also for the famous painter William Turner whose depictions of the Rhine merit particular attention.

The epithet of ‘the castled crag of Drachenfels’ is from Byron20. It is then also taken up by Lytton, without explicit reference to Byron anywhere in Lytton’s novel, as Byron’s words had by then become quite proverbial:

ON leaving Cologne, the stream winds round among banks that do not yet fulfil the promise of the Rhine; but they increase in interest as you leave Surdt and Godorf. The peculiar character of the river does not, however, really appear, until by degrees the Seven Mountains, and “THE CASTLED CRAG OF DRACHENFELS” above them all, break upon the eye.

Lytton’s party catch the Drachenfels in full sunlight, but it is the Rolandseck which receives supreme praise: “Nothing can exceed the eloquent and wild grandeur of the whole scene. That spot is the pride and beauty of the Rhine.” (Ch. 10) It is from now on that the picturesque (indeed not the sublime!) places seen along the Rhine have their own stories which need telling. In fact, the plot is then continued, in the ensuing five chapters, from the perspective of the fairies who are following the party up river.

FROM the Drachenfels commences the true glory of the Rhine; […] “A robber’s life amidst these mountains, and beside this mountain stream, must have been the very poetry of the spot carried into action.” (Ch. 15)

The ailing beloved (by the hybrid name of Gertrude) who is approaching death by consumption corresponds in physique to the scenery with all its castles in ruin: “… her figure had sunken from its roundness, but still how light, how lovely were its wrecks!” (Ch.15)

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17 This is a phrase frequently used in the later Rhine literature. Cf. e.g. Bulwer-Lytton, *The Pilgrims of the Rhine*, p 101. Even travel guides of the time made use of it.
18 III, 55 (1).
19 There is also mention of the Rhine in *Don Juan* (1818), Canto X, lxi and lxii.
20 The castled crag of Drachenfels / Frowns o’er the wide and winding Rhine,/ Whose breast of waters broadly swells/ Between the banks which bear the vine (*Harold*, Canto III, LIV, 1)
A Possession beyond all Possession: Mortality and Immortality

The great river, particularly along its most scenic stretches, inspires reflections on permanence within the steady flow of life with its beginning and ending. These reflections, in the case of The Pilgrims of the Rhine, are initiated on account of the serious illness of Gertrude, but they are of course taking place in that landscape and not e.g. in the flatlands.

Death itself occurs at Heidelberg, off the Rhine, but the unison in thought is attained by reflections on the Rhine scenery. The healing powers attributed to the Rhine are thus raised to a metaphysical level. The moribund Other (Gertrude in this case) is an almost overwhelmed admirer of the scenic Rhine valley, thus elevating her own decay as well as the passage of the river to a sphere which cannot perish. Weak as we are, we can worship something that, though secular, manifests a power beyond mortality, and the appreciation of that worship in the beloved who shares this admiration will make that love immortal. For the Rhine scenery will henceforth be remembered, and even experienced, not as a mere appearance to be stared at, but as an expression of spiritual activity in the Other. Love has overcome death.

It is indeed somewhat unsatisfactory that Gertrude is ill with consumption, and Gisela Dischner seems to worry that the borderline to Kitsch has here been transgressed (Dischner, 51). But then again, how was the theme of death and loss to be made plausible? Death would have needed to be found in fully aware vitality, which is certainly not impossible but presumably less appealing to a broad 19th-century readership.

Lytton’s party are going up the Rhine because they hope the scenery will heal the ailing Gertrude Vane (– in vain!). Even those who, in the wake of too much romanticizing and idealizing, tend to be satirical rather than in earnest praise of the Rhine, still do not openly doubt the comfort and therapeutic power of the Rhine, even though some mockery concerning the more naïve Rhine Romantics can clearly be read between the lines:

> In short, Gerard, if you, or any of your friends ever suffer from hypochondriasis, weak nerves, melancholy – morbid sensibility – or mere ennui – let me advise you and them, as you value your lives, health and spirits – your bodies and your minds, to do as we have done, and go UP THE RHINE.        (Thomas Hood, *Up the Rhine*, p265)

William Turner (1775-1851)

Not only was it in literature, but in the Romantic visual arts, too, that an artist felt the need to open up for foreign scenery. It is well known that William Turner, for instance, travelled on the Continent more often than his literary colleagues. He frequently revisited the Rhine and Mosel valleys.

If Turner primarily wanted to show at home the picturesque Continental landscape (or even sublimity, as certainly e.g. in the case of the Alps), his would be a most interesting case of dealing with the sublime. While Burke had emphasised the role of the obscure for the sub-
Turner’s increasing tendency in his work to focus on colour composition rather than on concrete objects or landscapes might well serve for an illustration of that idea. The colours themselves, and no longer the boundless shapes of awe-inspiring objects (too huge indeed to even suggest the material possession of them), make for the spiritual transformation in the viewer that transports his state of mind into one of profound uncritical admiration.

William Turner, *Coblenz and Ehrenbreitstein from the Mosel*, circa 1839

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22 Later, Turner was much impressed by Goethe's colour theory (transl. 1840) and even named some of his pictures after it, so that the objects depicted become of secondary importance as compared with the study of colour: e.g. *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory) – the Morning after the Deluge; Moses writes the Book of Genesis* (1843)

Turner is often termed a forerunner of the Impressionists. This, however, is not quite tenable, even if Turner shares with the Impressionists his aversion to the academic notions of art. For with the Impressionists it is the object itself which is in the centre of attention and which is seen (sometimes over and over again) in a new light. With the mature Turner, however, it is the composition of colours which is of interest, and this composition could then be made concrete by indicating a few details of shape. This is what Turner did with his later Rhine and Mosel colour studies. Whether a particular picture is the castle at Heidelberg, or ‘The Bright

Stone of Honour’, as Turner with Byron calls the Burg Ehrenbreitstein, or a castle in Wales or England – this was to Turner but of secondary importance.

Thus Turner underwent a very similar development as did his literary colleagues on whose footsteps he quite intentionally followed. A text or a painting is to cultivate some power which is to guide the reader or viewer away from the narrowness of a particular setting and which suggests geographic universality, much in accordance with Wordsworth who says that he deals with ‘the primary laws of our nature’. There is, then, to Wordsworth and to Turner, a power which speaks of itself and to which the accidents in space and time are but arbitrary. To arrive at this attitude, however, it was necessary to Turner, as to most of the Romantic poets, to get to know foreign parts. There is thus no such thing as philistine nationalism amongst the English Romantics. In Turner's sketches and paintings the foreignness of scenery is cultivated to the extent of making visible the laws of the human mind, and local interest is thus lifted to a higher sphere.

Although Turner found his subjects in Byron and in Scott whose works he illustrated, it is well observed by Andrew Wilton that there is only one parallel to Turner's landscape visions in 19th century literature, namely, the ‘drunken intensity of Wordsworth’s dialogue with nature’.

The Painter and the Poet

Not only do pictures seem to have influenced writers in their praise of Rhine scenery; the reverse is also the case. For it is well known that William Turner had a copy of Byron’s Childe Harold, Canto III (which had just appeared) with him and even was guided by Harold, as Turner was following the very course which Byron had ascribed to his hero. Thus verbal descriptions, enlightened with fancies of the history of the place which invites reflections of decay and also of permanence, exercised some influence on the painter. To Lytton it is clear that the poet’s, and not the painter’s eye, may convey an adequate view of the Rhine valley (see quote above, from Lytton’s ‘Preface’).

Yet what we see in Turner was similarly expressed in Wordsworth, as, for example, in the latter’s sonnet ‘Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3rd, 1802’. There, a scene is appreciated merely for its effect of colour and freshness, whilst concrete shapes (‘domes, ships theatres and temples’) are obscured into one great impression. Through Turner, it may thus be said, a view of nature analogous to that of Wordsworth was introduced into English

26 Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1800), Routledge p 244f.
27 Cecilia Powell, Turner in Deutschland. Mit einem Beitrag von Pia Müller-Tamm, hg. von Manfred Fath. München & New York 1995, p.18. – Walter Scott was so very popular in Germany, that a German publisher, realising that Redgauntlet would not be finished in time for the Leipzig Bookfair in 1824, published a German substitute with the title of Walladmor (seemingly by Scott, but really written by Willibald Alexis). Even on the Rhine Scott’s influence was then present, when the ladies would flush umbrellas à la Walter Scott.
Rhine Romanticism, although, ironically, Wordsworth was not himself a Rhine Romantic. Turner in his approach to art was most poetical.

**Rhine Satire**

Not even **S.T. Coleridge** was constantly hovering when it came to visiting German sights. On a trip to the Rhine in 1828 together with **William Wordsworth** and that poet’s daughter **Doro**, Coleridge was particularly impressed by the stinks in Cologne and satirically played on the idea of ‘Eau de Cologne’ without mentioning it:

> In Köhn, a town of monks and bones,  
> And pavements fang’d with murderous stones,  
> And rags, and hags, and hideous wenches;  
> I counted two and seventy stenches,  
> All well defined, and several stinks!  
> Ye Nymphs that reign o’er sewers and sinks,  
> The River Rhine, it is well known,  
> Doth wash your city of Cologne;  
> But tell me, Nymphs! what power divine  
> Shall henceforth wash the river Rhine?  

(c.1828)

It is striking that Coleridge, writing his two satirical poems on Cologne, does not mention, nay even distracts attention from, that city’s renowned cathedral by praising another church – St.Geryon. His fellow traveller (and then almost reconciled former friend) William Wordsworth who on this trip to the Rhine was predominantly occupied with his homesickness, had indeed praised the Cathedral in his poem ‘In the Cathedral of Cologne’, written on occasion of a previous visit to Cologne in 1820. In those verses the former revolutionary who had challenged the Anglican Church, is full of hope that the angels may take care of the completion of the still unfinished towers, and seems to be saying so without a tinge of irony.

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29 Coleridge’s description of Cologne even entered contemporary travel guides. Cf. Günther Blaicher, 94 and Dischner, 255.

30 Also Ann Radcliffe (1795), Crabb Robinson (1869), H.R. Addison (1839), the American Mary Boddington (1835) and others were in full praise of the cathedral. Of course there were others, such as Robert Gray, who thought so little of Cologne cathedral that they did not even mention it (Robert Gray, *Letters during a course of a Tour through Germany, Switzerland and Italy... with Reflections on the Manners, Literature, and Religion of those Countries*. London 1794.) One year later Ann Radcliffe, on the other hand, at least confesses that ‘the cathedral, with its huge, unfinished mass, has a striking appearance’. (Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: To Which Are Added, Observations*...
Not so Coleridge. In the first of his two short poems (‘Cologne’) he distinguishes the stinks and stenches of Cologne of which he claims to count seventy-two and reflects on the lavatory power of the river Rhine. In the second (‘On my Joyful Departure from the Same City’) he is decidedly more positive, praising the two things he finds worthwhile in Cologne: ‘Mr. Mum’s Rudesheimer’ (i.e. a particular wine from the Rheingau) and, instead of the Cathedral, the ‘church of St.Geryon’.

Perhaps this latter praise has indeed to do with the first. For Coleridge may consider himself, and perhaps even the typical English tourist in general, to some degree intoxicated. The word ‘now’ in the second verse of the poem (‘As I am a rhymers:/ And now at least a merry one,/) may suggest that Coleridge pretends – probably with no effort to disguise himself – to be under the influence when writing these lines. For he continues: ‘Mr Mum’s Rudesheimer/ And the church of St.Geryon/ Are the two things alone/ That deserve to be known/ In the body and soul-stinking town of Cologne’).

If Coleridge wishes to give the impression of being tipsy, his praise of St.Geryon may have further implications. Coleridge does not tell us whether he is enthused about the interior or the exterior of St.Geryon. Given the state in which the cathedral (whose patron saint is Peter) was in 1828, i.e. still a partially finished building, it is striking that St.Geryon must have given a rather similar prospect: an adjacent church by the name of St.Christoph was in the process of being taken down. Deconstruction work was begun in 1806 but was not finished before 1841. Thus Coleridge and Wordsworth should have seen, among many other very impressive churches in Cologne (the city boasts a dozen Romanesque churches, many of European reputation), two outstanding ones at which some sort of (de-)construction work was going on. And if the English tourist is under the influence of Mr. Mum’s Rhine wine, why indeed should he not confuse the two?

Now St.Gerion is – as St.Maria will be to Bulwer-Lytton six years later – a fine Romanesque basilica, and in 1828 certainly worth Coleridge’s praise. He may after all have been quite serious, and Coleridge’s merriment may not have been satirical, nor may his praise have had much to do with the wine (of whose quality he complains on other occasions). The remains of St.Christopher, not mentioned by Coleridge, would indeed have made for a fine romantic set-


31 Stephen Gill remarks in this context: “The young radical who had scorned the idea of vegetating on a ‘paltry curacy’ and had arrayed the Bishop of Llandaff had always been moved by the fabric of the Church visible, the ‘snow-white church’ of Hawkshead, ‘sending out a gracious look all over its domain’, and by the idea of the Church as a force for cohesion and continuity.” Stephen Gill, William Wordsworth. A Life. OUP 1989, 344.

32 George Meredith in Farina, A Legend of Cologne (1857) mentions the same point with irony.

33 William Keach, as editor of the Penguin ed. of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Complete Poems (1997), points out (ibid., p 600f) that Coleridge inserted ‘a’ before ‘rhymers’ in two copies of the poem’s first publication.

34 I am much indebted to Dr. Verscharen of the Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln for evidence dug up some time before the archive’s collapse into a tube tunnel: The scholarly work to consult in the matter is by Karl Josef Bollenbeck, Der Kölner Stadtbaumeister Johann Peter Weyer (doctoral thesis) Bonn 1969, p 52ff. Pictorial evidence can be found in Stadtspuren: Denkmäler in Köln, ed. by Stadt Köln 1984, vol. 3: Köln: Die romanischen Kirchen im Bild, p 155.
ting, as can be seen on a contemporary etching. On the other hand, the cathedral, too, was praised by others for exactly this sort of setting, so there would not have been any need for Coleridge to prefer St.Geryon on this account. Either, then, Coleridge is really impressed by St.Geryon's interior and seriously thinks it superior to the cathedral's Gothic naves. Or he just goes for any non-gothic substitute out of the 80 churches Ann Radcliffe counted in Cologne. Or, again, he plays on the idea of a confusion between the two, thus parodying himself.

This hypothesis may be worth contemplating, even if it needed to be abandoned later on: in praising St.Geryon’s Church instead of the generally acclaimed cathedral, Coleridge may have wished to ridicule the English tourists’ blindness in moving about the Continent. The object of admiration may be interchangeable and may indeed be confused when more liquid charms offer themselves.

Not all of the English Rhine tourists with a name in literature were, or feigned to be, as utterly unmoved by the Rhine scenery around the Lorelei as Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Crabb Robinson (1775-1867), for one, visited the Rhineland four times in the fifty years between 1801 and 1851 and was particularly impressed by the Rheingau. In 1829, one year after Coleridge’s and Wordsworth’s trip there, he notes in his diary:

> The rich variety of romantic scenery between Coblenz and Bingen kept me in a state of excitement and pleasure, which palled not a moment. Sentiment was mingled with the perceptions of beauty.

It may be worth remembering that Crabb Robinson of course was much of a mediator between English and German Romantics. A disciple of Schelling, he had been introduced to the Rhine Romantic Brentano family circles as early as 1800. It was Crabb Robinson, who alerted Friedrich Schlegel, Herder, Arndt, Tieck and Knebel to the importance of William Wordsworth as the great contemporary poet, as did Coleridge with Tieck, Humboldt und Schlegel (all in Rome in 1806, and Schlegel again in 1828 in Bad Godesberg). But what was the result of this? No more than just a mention, in passing, of the ‘School of the Lakes’ by Tieck in an essay. Apart from this, the Germans took rather little notice of the first generation of English Romantics.

The foreign and the foreigner as absurd: Englishmen abroad

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35 Of this there is later given evidence by Richard Doyle, The Foreign Tour of Messrs Brown, Jones and Robinson. Being the History of What They Saw, and Did, in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. London: Bradbury Evans 1854. In one of this volume’s cartoons the English tourists, before ‘They “do” the cathedral’ (ibid., p 8), are depicted holding their noses, and the commentary runs: ‘The real Eau de Cologne, and its effect upon the noses of three illustrious individuals’ (ibid., p 7).

36 The same holds for Robert Southey who, like Coleridge, shows little enthusiasm for the Rhine and for Cologne. (Dischner, 259).


38 Crabb Robinson, Diary II, p 446.

39 Juliet Barker, 602; see also Coleridge, Letters VI, editorial commentary, p .......

40 Dischner, 255.
Cartoonists, too, have contributed towards what may be called Rhine satire. For one, Doyle in his collection of drawings called *The Foreign Tour of Messrs Brown, Jones and Robinson. Being the History of What They Saw, and Did, in Belgium, Germany, Switzerland and Italy* has ridiculed British Rhine tourists, as “They ‘do’ Cologne cathedral”, or as they are appalled by the stinks in cologne, which he calls ‘the real eau de Cologne’.

Even the most scenic stretch of Rhine scenery is not safe from satire. And thus the Rhine becomes a true part of British cultural awareness.
THE SCENERY BECOMES MYSTERIOUS.

THEY NOW BECAME ENVELOPED IN WHAT SEEMED A COMBINATION OF FOG (LONDON NOVEMBER) AND MIST (SCOTCH). ONLY THINK OF THOSE TWO NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS GOING UP THE RHINE WITH THE REST OF THE FASHIONABLE WORLD. AT FIRST IT OBSCURED THE HILL TOPS, WITH THE RUINS THEREON; THEN THE VILLAGES AND VINEYARDS BELOW; AND FINALLY BOTH BANKS OF THE RIVER ENTIRELY DISAPPEARED. THE COMPANY ON BOARD THE STEAMBOAT DID NOT, AT THIS PERIOD, PRESENT THE MOST CHEERFUL ASPECT. (From http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29463/29463-h/29463-h.htm (7 Jan 2011))
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Nineteenth-century literature, especially French literature, contains many helpful references to the sorts of instruments and sounds that composers of the period were trying to reintroduce or re-create in their own works in the \textit{Ancient Oriental} genre. Gustave Flaubert's \textit{Salammbô} and Hector Berlioz's \textit{Les Troyens} epic opera.