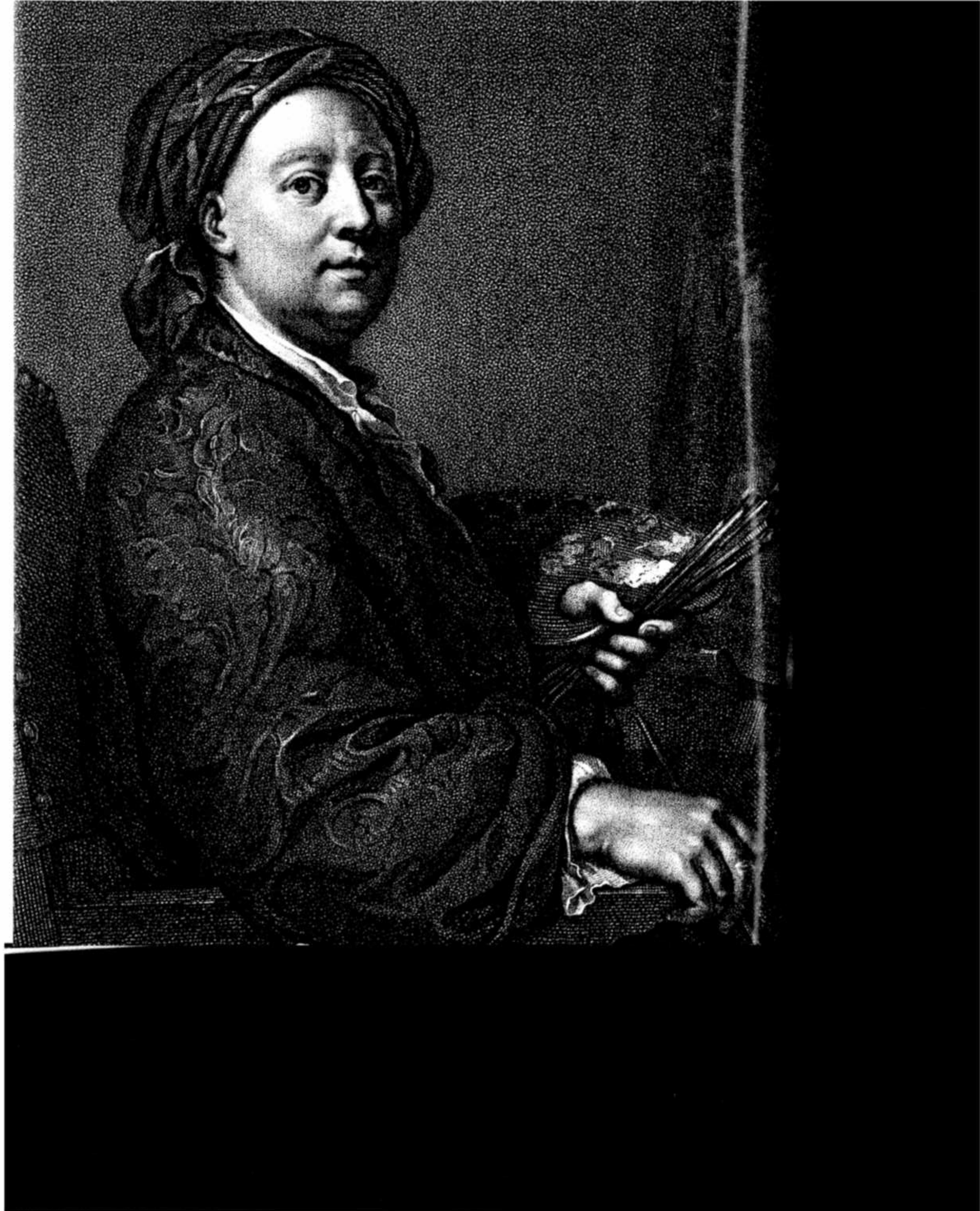
RICHARD WILSON
and the British Arcadia



FRONTISPIECE:
WILLIAM BOND (British, active 1799–1833)
Portrait of Richard Wilson, Landscape Painter
After Anton Raphael Mengs (detail, cat. no. 1)

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LENDERS TO THE EXHIBITION

The Detroit Institute of Arts

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Toledo Museum of Art

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

and those private collectors who wish to remain anonymous

For over fifty years I have been puzzled by the canonization of certain moments — I hesitate to call them "movements" — in art history as "seminal," as if they had sprung full-blown from nowhere, as if nothing had gone before, as if every fresh shoot burst from their soil. One of these moments was "impressionism;" another was "cubism." This obliviousness to art history may be attributable to rampant francophilia, or to the establishment's targeting our ears, not our eyes.

One of the other myths is that the French were the wild romantics, the English the fusty formalists. It was of course the other way around. In the last third of the eighteenth century, when the French were shaking loose from the frothy *préciosité* of Louis XVI's court into cerebral neo-classicism, their wild British contemporaries, Blake, Fuseli, Romney and their circle, were anticipating the symbolism and surrealism of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

And so it was with the antecedent of Impressionism, the romantic landscape. Pure landscape painting had its roots in that most romantic of venues, seventeenth-century Rome, and flowered in mid-eighteenth century England. Artists congregated in Rome from throughout Europe. In retrospect, the personalities of both figure painters and the somewhat later landscapists formed two traditions: the formalists, among them figure painters like Orazio Gentileschi and Saraceni; and the landscapists, followers of Poussin. And among the romantics, figure painter followers of Caravaggio; and landscapists, Claude Lorrain. For the landscapists, the progenitor was Elsheimer, who, like Caravaggio, died in 1610. It was Claude's love affair with the Roman *campagna* that ultimately spawned the British romantic landscape.

Until the mid-eighteenth century, the English were collectors, rarely painters. The painters in London were usually foreigners, imported by the British aristocracy, and most notably by the great collector, Charles I. The first landscape that I know of painted in England is in the background of a "Magdalene" commissioned by Charles I of Orazio Gentileschi between 1626 and 1628. Already by the mid-eighteenth century, British collectors were attracted from their rainy island to Rome for the glories of its classical antiquities, literary associations, and its sunshine.

The Grand Tour by the scions of the British aristocracy reached its apogee in the first third of the eighteenth century, gaining force after the Peace of Utrecht in 1715. These "Grand Tourists" brought back from Italy boatloads of paintings. Art collecting had become the fashion. Dughets appeared in British collections as early as 1707. British auction catalogues between 1714 and 1730 list, for instance, twenty-four Claudes, sixty-six Gaspard Dughets and eight Poussins. Between 1711 and 1759, three hundred landscapes attributed to Gaspard Dughet had passed through London auctions. Claudes had been viewed on the walls of Roman *palazzi* by British Grand Tourists by 1722. By 1750, thirty-five Claudes listed in his *Liber Veritatis* were already in British collections. The Italianate Dutch landscapists, like Jan Both, started appearing in the English country houses by the late seventeenth century, but Cuyp not until after 1741. Cuyp himself never visited Italy, but absorbed the sunny *campagna* from such as Both, who did.

Although British artists had been sketching the Roman landscape as early as the late seventeenth century, it was not until the 1750s that the real Roman influx of British landscape painters began. The inspiration was not only the Roman classical ideal and the *campagna*, but the "air" of the Claudes, the "composition and sentiment" of the Dughets that the British painters had discovered on British country-house walls.

Richard Wilson was among the first of this advance-guard of British landscape painters in Rome, where he lived from 1751/2 to 1756/7. Just as Cuyp had brought the glow of Italian sunlight to his gloomy Holland, so did Wilson to rainy England. But his influence on later painters, on the nineteenth-century romantic landscape, and ultimately on "impressionism," was much greater. Wilson had studied Claude's paintings in Rome and sketched at Claude's sites. He revitalized and informalized Claude's ideal landscape and set it in an eighteenth-century context.

Wilson's influence on his gifted pupil, Thomas Jones, on Gainsborough, Constable, and ultimately and most importantly, on Turner, was profound. The most eloquent moment of British impact on the hide-bound French neo-classical landscape came with Charles X's award of the 1824 Salon gold medal to Bonington and Constable. The French landscape

was suddenly revolutionized, and from thence forged on from Barbizon into "impressionism." Richard Wilson can rightfully be called the father of all this.

The pivotal importance of the British landscape in the development of Impressionism has been overlooked in modern times, with the result that most American and European museums are rich in Impressionism, but weak in its real source, the British landscape. Another result has been the dumping of the most progressive late nineteenth-century painters—Manet, Van Gogh, Gauguin—regardless of their imagery, somewhere under the Impressionist flag, "neo" or "post," whether they were weak painters—Sisley, Pissarro, Caillebotte, even Renoir—or strong—Manet, Degas, Monet. Even the weak have become hallowed names in the museums and the marketplace. The British landscape remains a lacuna in both. Hopefully this small exhibition will serve as an introduction to the exhibition being planned for the Yale Center for British Art and Amgueddfa Cymru—National Museum Wales for 2013–14 to mark the tercentenary of Wilson's birth.

We are grateful for the indispensible assistance of Andrew Wilton who has contributed the introductory essay; Amy Meyers, Angus Trumble and Abigail Armistead of the Yale Center for British Art; Keith Christiansen, Walter Liedtke, Katherine Baetjer and Patrice Mattia of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Jock Reynolds and Laurence Kanter of the Yale University Art Gallery; Graham Beal and Salvador Salort-Pons of the Detroit Institute of Arts; Eric Lee and Nancy Edwards of the Kimbell Art Museum; Rod A. Bigelow and Lawrence Nichols of the Toledo Museum of Art; and Catherine Clement of Tate National for their generous help in facilitating museum loans. Thanks are also due to Françoise Newman for invaluable logistical assistance; Laura Mathis for editorial help with the catalogue; and Ann Guité for organizing the exhibition and writing the catalogue entries. We are most grateful as well to Paul Spencer-Longhurst, Senior Research Fellow, The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, for providing valuable scholarly advice, and to Emmeline Hallmark of Sotheby's, London, for her enthusiastic support of the project.

R.L.F., February 2010

'The founder of the British school of landscape and its first martyr'*

By Andrew Wilton

IN A LITTLE BOOK published in 1823, full of artistic gossip stretching back over the whole of the eighteenth century, the author interrupted an exhaustive catalogue of the principal artists, architects and designers of the period to sigh: 'Richard Wilson, — alas! the greatest genius, the least understood!'[1] In the same year, John Constable echoed the sentiment: 'Poor Wilson! Think of his magnificence, think of his fate!'[2]

This was a lament often heard in the decades after Wilson's death. That happened in 1782, in a small village in North Wales close to where he had been born, sixty-nine years before. He was by then in financial difficulties, driven from London by increasing problems in selling his work. His career as one of the great pioneers of landscape painting in England was already forgotten. The Romantics of the new century took a certain perverse pleasure in the idea that it was they, a generation later, who had rediscovered his true worth. 'Wilson is now numbered with the classics of the art,' wrote John Wolcot in 1810, 'though little more than the fifth part of a century elapsed since death relieved him from the apathy of the cognoscenti, the envy of rivals, and the neglect of a tasteless public.'[3] Not only Wolcot, who was well-known in his day as the satirist 'Peter Pindar', but many artists and connoisseurs, valued Wilson's art highly. Constable (1776–1837) and J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) both admired him and owned works by him.

As a young man Turner consciously and conscientiously imitated him, using his style as springboard for his own mature art. Late in life he recalled 'what I felt in the days of my youth when I was in search of Richard Wilson's birthplace.'[4] John Constable thought 'His works were truly original. He showed the world, what existed in nature, but which it had never seen before.'[5] The influential connoisseur Sir George Beaumont, who admired Constable but became a fierce critic of Turner, was always a champion of Wilson. As John Ruskin observed much later: I believe that with the name of Richard Wilson the history of sincere landscape art, founded on a meditative love of Nature, begins for England: and, I may add, for Europe.'[6] He was the originator of that fresh and fervent approach to the observation and representation of nature that entailed a new, organic connection of the brush-stroke to the feelings of the artist. This was one of art-history's great leaps forward, exemplified in the work of Constable and his fellow Romantics, and it led by an inevitable progression to the experiments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

But Wilson's importance lies not simply in his role as precursor: he actively linked the classics of landscape — the seventeenth-century masters, Salvator Rosa, Claude, Poussin, Gaspard Dughet, Cuyp — with the Romantic future, his vision bridging the two worlds. By absorbing and internalizing the work of the 'Old Masters' he was able to restate its significance in terms appropriate to eighteenth-century Britain, and develop it in accordance with new perceptions of nature as a source of 'feeling' and 'sentiment.' His career as a landscape painter was the fulfillment of a profoundly felt mission. He knew he had something new and important to say, and persisted in saying it, regardless of fashion. As a contemporary observed: 'He had a deep feeling of the importance of his art and of his own importance as a professor of it'[7] — so much so that, as his pupil

* Leslie Parris, *Landscape in Britain, c. 1750–1850*, Tate Gallery, 1973, p. 29.

Joseph Farington recalled, he would assert that 'the country was not yet prepared for him.'[8]

In his sense of the high seriousness of his work, Wilson was in tune with the spirit of his time. He was in fact a pioneer: one of his great achievements, in historical terms, was to discover that spirit sooner than his contemporaries. He anticipated in practice the ideas of Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), who, from the 1760s on, defined the style of the period in his portraits of the aristocracy, and in the famous *Discourses* that he delivered annually to the students of the Royal Academy in London, of which he was founding President.

We only know Wilson as a serious, mature artist. None of his apprentice work seems to have survived, though an ambitious, if somewhat incoherent, record in oil on canvas of *The Hall of the Inner Temple after the Fire of 4 January 1736/7* might qualify for that category.[9] Historians have traditionally thought of the pictures he painted in the 1740s, when he was already in his thirties, as belonging to an 'early' style. In fact that style was far from immature, as is shown by his progress beyond the awkward experiment of *The Hall of the Inner Temple*. As we would expect of a painter of that time, his landscapes tended to be topographical views: records of particular places, characterized by a simplicity and directness that was to be characteristic of his view-making all his life. Rather than being dismissed as 'simple-minded' or 'naïve,' they are qualities more appropriately thought of as manifestations of clear and unaffected thinking.

If he has been thought of as relatively immature still in the 1740s it is only because at that stage he had not yet been to Italy. Unlike most aspiring artists, he postponed that journey until he was nearly forty. He was already well established as a portrait painter, with some capable landscapes to his credit as well, when he travelled to Rome in 1750 at the age of 37. Following the rule that 'early' means 'unformed,' people have tended to dismiss his portraits as uninteresting; but that is to simplify. One of Wilson's first and best-informed biographers, Edward Edwards, considered that he was 'a painter of portraits equal to most of his cotemporaries.'[10] Some are, to be sure, standard single-figure likenesses of the kind produced by dozens of competent painters in the 1730s and 1740s; but there are several that stand out as having real distinction. A group portrait of the two young royal Princes, sons of Frederick, Prince of Wales, with their tutor[11] is startlingly fresh in its presentation of solemn academe opposed to skittish childhood. The boys, sitting far from composedly on a settee (they adopt the sprawling informal poses we associate with the young Thomas Gainsborough),[12] embody a kind of rococo exuberance that is almost deliberately contradicted by the sober black gown of Dr. Ayscough, with his equally sober black eyebrows. Then there is the direct frontal portrait of Flora Macdonald,[13] who after her imprisonment in the Tower of London for her complicity in the Young Pretender's rebellion of 1745 had become a celebrity and an associate of the Prince of Wales himself. Wilson, who as these portraits reveal, had entered the periphery of Frederick's circle, treats her with something of the delicacy that Allan Ramsay (1713–1784) was bringing to his Scottish female sitters in the same period: applying paint with a more robust, less Continental touch, but with similar acuteness and charm of characterization.

It is important to give these portraits proper attention, since they are the youthful work of an artist who moved into a very different field, and excelled in it. To find in them only the commonplace and perfunctory misses their interest as demonstrations that Wilson's powers of observation and invention did not appear spontaneously when he touched Italian soil, as many accounts suggest. On the contrary, several landscapes painted before he visited Italy bear witness to his abilities in that field also. It has even been said that at this stage already he 'was quite as accomplished in this branch of art, even better, perhaps, than he was at portrait painting.'[14]

They are for the most part unaffected topographical views: particular places recorded for their historical or antiquarian interest, with relatively little concern for subtleties of design as such. The two roundels that he executed in the late 1740s for the lovely rococo Court Room of Captain Thomas Coram's Hospital for Foundlings, or abandoned children, are as unaffected as portraits of buildings can be; yet they are to the purpose, businesslike and informative, needing no elaboration in their elegant gilt frames simulating oak wreaths.[15] A view of *Westminster Bridge* at Philadelphia, signed and dated 1745,[16] is representative of the more substantial compositions of this time. There are parallels with the work of Samuel Scott (1702–1772) and, to a lesser extent, that of the Italian Canaletto (1697–1768), who worked in England between 1746 and 1755; but the general presentation is determined by the nature of the subject. A view of *Caernarvon Castle*, of about the same moment,[17] testifies to its 'painted-on-the-spot' accuracy by showing the artist drawing in the foreground, with a gentleman watching as he does so. One commentator has pointed to the various invented elements in the view to argue that Wilson was 'rarely, if ever, particularly concerned with topographical fact.'[18] But that is to misunderstand the eighteenth-century idea of 'fact.' No cameras existed to contradict what the painter asserts, and another artist might well produce a quite different but equally convincing 'truth.' That is the meaning of the pictorial representation of the artist at work.

The point here is that, although it is not accurate in every detail, the view of Caernarvon attempts to show the ruined castle as it appeared in its present surroundings, rather than transformed into a brooding, atmospheric embodiment of the 'Sublime'. The air in which this subject is bathed, suffusing the picture with a clear light and creating a pellucid space around it in which we can move and explore, is not designed to complement some emotionally charged theme – as it was to be, say, in Wilson's picture of *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe*, painted over a decade later. Such dramatic subjects are exceptions: a lucent, crystalline atmosphere is a hallmark of Wilson's manner throughout his life, and was often remarked on. He himself pronounced: 'Claude for air and Gaspar for composition and sentiment; you may walk into Claude's pictures and count the miles.' It was clearly his wish to achieve that lucid three-dimensionality in his own work; and in a recently rediscovered *Extensive Landscape with Lake and Cottages*,[19] also of the mid-1740s, Wilson can be seen precociously creating just such a pictorial recession, luminous, spacious and in its less intellectual way as exquisite an invention as anything he was to achieve later.

He finally made the journey to Italy in the Fall of 1750. He went for the inspiration of its classical past, and to see the originals of the landscapes Claude and Poussin had painted. There is a fascinating transition period on his arrival in Venice, and then Rome, when he is 'fluctuating whether to pursue portrait or Landscape painting', as his pupil Joseph Farington (1747–1821) later wrote,[20] confirming, surely, that the two branches of art were equally available to him. In this phase, Wilson was forging links with landscape painters by means of portraiture. He must have been aware in England of the taut, classical compositions of Marco Ricci (1676–1729), and the more florid leafy essays of Jan van Bloemen, known as 'Orrizonte' (1656–1740), an imitator of Gaspard who figured in innumerable English collections, and who influenced George Lambert (1700–1765), an Englishman whom Wilson had certainly encountered in London. Lambert's paintings of landscape alternate between the classical and the topographical, and the sense of freedom to range at will between those two genres was to be an important underlying feature of Wilson's work.

In Venice he met the landscapist Francesco Zuccarelli (1702–1789), who was to arrive in England in 1752, and in due course to become a founder-

member of the Royal Academy. While they were both in Venice the Italian suggested a swap: he would give Wilson a landscape of his in exchange for his portrait by Wilson. In a portrait dated 1751 that is generally believed to be the one he made of Zuccarelli,[21] instead of reflecting the influence of Ramsay or Hogarth (1697–1762), there is every sign of a careful study of the pastel portraits of the Venetian Rosalba Carriera (1675–1757). Whoever the sitter, Wilson shows himself already thinking seriously about the art he was now seeing, presumably for the first time. For Zuccarelli also, it seems, he painted a landscape that may be intended as a homage to Zuccarelli's own style.[22] These prompt responses to new stimuli makes Wilson's otherwise startling shift, apparently at Zuccarelli's suggestion, to a new life as specialist landscape painter, much more understandable. We have seen that he had thought with his habitual care about problems relating to the depiction of natural scenery. From this time on, he took up landscape as his main, indeed his sole, practice.[23] Given the manifest commercial advantages of portrait-painting over landscape, the decision says much for Wilson's self-knowledge, and perhaps for his ultimate indifference to financial reward in itself.

Nevertheless, he was ambitious, and must have been further encouraged when, in Rome a little later, an almost exact contemporary of his, the highly fashionable landscape and marine painter Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714–1789), endorsed Zuccarelli's opinion. Vernet's example must have given him an idea of what he might do, and for a while Wilson painted dramatic imaginary landscape subjects in emulation of Vernet's manner. A rare example of a coastal storm scene was clearly painted as a deliberate imitation of Vernet soon after his arrival in Rome,[24] and in several subsequent canvases we see him gradually absorbing Vernet's lessons into his perception of landscape: *The Murder* of 1752,[25] for example, deploys all the furniture of a 'sublime' subject derived from Salvator Rosa: blasted tree, beetling crag, foaming torrent, and dastardly banditti. There are several versions and variants of this subject;[26] and in the same year he painted more banditti round a tent in a calmer landscape[27] which, especially in its figures, betrays a lingering debt to Zuccarelli.

But Zuccarelli could never be a serious model for him. Later, in the nineteenth century, the differences between the two artists were perfectly clear: the Italian was 'a mere decorative painter . . . whose works are a compound of facile insipidity and theatrical prettiness, with little Nature and less art.'[28] His light, flickering touch may well have suggested lessons for Wilson, who seems also to have absorbed something of the technique of the Venetian Francesco Guardi, known mainly for his scenes on the light-filled Lagoon and capriccios of water and crumbling ruins. A painter that Wilson rather unexpectedly cited as an object of his admiration is the now relatively obscure Flemish artist Franz de Momper (1607–1670), possibly confused with his father Joos de Momper (1564–1634). He could certainly have encountered works by the Mompers in Rome, perhaps among those assembled there by one of his most admiring patrons, William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth.[29] But these artists were providing Wilson only with hints. He had, as his 'grand object . . . to display that genius which consists in the power of expressing that which employed his pencil, whatever it might be, *as a whole*; so that the general effect and power of the whole might take possession of the mind, and for a while suspend the consideration of the subordinate and particular beauties or defects.[30]

This was very much what Reynolds advocated as an approach to serious painting. Wilson 'did for landscape what Reynolds did for faces,' as Allan Cunningham observed.[31] Reynolds recommended an assiduous study of the Old Masters as a means of entering into the spirit of Antiquity and of the great art of the Renaissance. The layers of association that an artist built up by allusion to the Old Masters were

intrinsic to the richness and value of what he was doing. So Reynolds himself painted portraits in the style of Veronese or Titian, and Wilson reported from Venice: 'here I have studied Titian as much as ever I could, which I hope to show you the effects of in my future productions.'[12]

It may appear that he didn't in the end apply Titian's lessons conspicuously in his landscapes. At least one contemporary thought his 'tone of colour truly Titianesque;'[13] but the important lesson was not one of style or technique: it was one of vision. Wilson and his contemporaries admired Titian's ability to 'generalize'—to distil essential meaning from circumstantial detail and eliminate what was visually superfluous. 'By this [generalization] a painter, without superseding one iota of drawing or character, may convey a simpler, truer, and higher impression of Nature than by the most minutely detailed imitation. . . . mean and literal imitation certainly degrades art, as much as simple, broad, and general treatment ennobles it.'[14]

One method of getting to grips with the lessons of the past, as well as the present, was to draw. Wilson had already shown himself to be an accomplished draughtsman: a life-size head of Commodore (later Admiral) Smith in black and white chalk on blue paper is a forceful characterization, very much in the manner of portrait painters' studies from the time of Kneller to Hudson and Ramsay.[15]

While he was in Italy, Wilson was a prolific draughtsman and we can gain vivid insights into his response to the country from the many drawings he made there. Two sketchbooks survive, to demonstrate the vigour with which he pursued and captured the visual context of his life in Rome, in details ranging from his own unmade bed, complete with chamber-pot, to the fragments of classical sculpture that were everywhere in the city, or the trees and rocks of the surrounding Campagna.[16]

At first he worked in black and red chalks on white paper, but soon moved on to a style presumably borrowed from fellow artists in the French Academy, who preferred a grey or blue paper support and worked in black chalk elaborated with the stump—a tool for rubbing the chalk into areas of gradated tone. As Ozias Humphry (1747–1810) recalled, 'Mr Wilson says the best and most expeditious mode of drawing landskips from nature is with black chalk and stump, on brownish paper touched with white.'[17] The medium was certainly French, and in the drawings of French artists working in the Watteau tradition, like Michel-Ange Challe (1718–1778) and Louis-Gabriel Blanchet (1705–1772) we find striking technical parallels; perhaps even more so in the work of a draughtsman who arrived in Rome somewhat later, Charles-Joseph Natoire (1700–1777).

The way of working that Wilson evolved is especially effective in the long series of views that he made in 1754 for one of his most admiring patrons, the Earl of Dartmouth. These fine drawings are set off by lined paper mounts, made by Wilson himself, and show the scenery of the city and its environs in compositions of the utmost grace and harmony, possessing, as Farington said, 'all the quality of his pictures except the colour.'[18] Of the sixty-eight or so that he made only twenty-four have survived; they are among the finest drawings of the eighteenth century, from any European school.[19]

Dartmouth took Wilson to Naples in the spring of 1753, and bought oil paintings from him, acquiring two large views, *Rome from the Villa Madama* and *St Peter's and the Vatican from the Janiculum*[20] in that year. Several prominent Grand Tourists followed his example, and Wilson gathered round him in Rome a supportive party of distinguished patrons: William Lock, Thomas Hollis, Stephen Beckingham, Lord Strafford, and Ralph Howard, later Viscount Wicklow. Not all were British: the doyen of Roman cognoscenti, Cardinal Albani, commissioned a landscape from him on the recommendation of Horace Mann, the British Representative at Florence.[21] These canvases signal the start of Wilson's true

maturity as a landscape painter in oils, and mark a decisive break with his earlier style. The work that he produced in this new manner while he remained in Rome—he left probably in 1757[42]—constitutes an extraordinary legacy in itself, and is distinct in character from later developments. The pictures are often large, though even when they are not they are impressive by virtue of their bold masses and somber colouring. They are clearly influenced by Claude's carefully balanced views in an imaginary Campagna; but they are not remotely similar to Claude. As the entry on Wilson in Matthew Pilkington's famous *Dictionary of Painters* put it: 'Wilson has been called the English Claude; but how unjustly, so totally different their style!'[43]

This is apparent even at a hasty viewing. Wilson's forms are 'generalized' in a way that Claude never attempted, and placed with an eye to grand effect that is always aware of the 'classic ground' on which he is walking. Edward Dayes (1763–1804), a watercolourist working at the end of the century, remarked that Wilson's 'forms are grand, majestic, and well selected; and his compositions are not encumbered with a multitude of parts, a fault frequently observed in Claude.'[44] Here again the teaching of Reynolds has taken firm root; but Wilson was inculcating it by example already in the 1750s.

What is most striking about the great Roman canvases of these years is their weighty presence: it has been suggested[45] that they betray the influence of such contemporary painters as Orrizonte, and indeed that is what we might expect; Wilson borrows compositional formulae from such sources, but his pictures are altogether more serious. Claudean delicacy is subsumed in monumental forms, often silhouetted against a luminous sky like the cyclorama of a stage-set; and clothed in a solemn palette that adheres to the 'sad and fuscous colours' associated specifically with the Sublime in Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, published later in this decade, in 1757.[46]

On the question of Wilson's palette, we must take into account an inevitable darkening of many of his pigments over time. It was noticed that by the mid-nineteenth century 'the greens, probably from the use of yellow lake, have faded, and that all the darks have grown much darker than originally painted'—changes that have befallen many paintings of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We must rely, then, to some extent on reports of Wilson's pictures from the eighteenth century. Pilkington's *Dictionary* noted that 'His colouring was in general vivid and natural; his touch, spirited and free; his composition, simple and elegant; his lights and shadows, broad and well distributed; his middle tints in perfect harmony.'[47]

Even so, the mood of the Roman subjects of the mid-1750s seems notably and deliberately sober. In them Wilson seeks grandeur by means quite other than the vocabulary of the Sublime that he had been borrowing from Vernet. They are stripped of all incidental drama, and depend entirely on the sheer weight and subtle balance of their compositions to convey the import of Ancient civilization brooding over the landscape. It is interesting that when he had returned to London he set about summing up his experiments with the classic Sublime in a work that made use of these novel 'generalizations' while incorporating the narrative drama (or melodrama) of Vernet and, behind him, Salvator Rosa. The resulting picture, which he showed at the Society of Arts in 1760, proved a turning point both in his career and in the history of landscape painting in Britain.

The Destruction of the Children of Niobe[48] was ambitious in several respects. It made use of a canvas considerably larger than even the most imposing of his Roman subjects; and it took for subject not a topographical view, nor an invented narrative of banditry and mayhem in the wilderness. In choosing to illustrate a famous story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Wilson deliberately took up a salient theme of the art

of the great seventeenth-century masters. Claude and the two Poussins, Nicolas and Gaspard, had all married landscape with classical myth in order to dramatise nature by extension into the world of gods and men. The tragedy of Niobe is told in terms both of human and natural drama. Even among the works of Claude and Poussin scenes of such violence are comparatively rare, though this is precisely the type of natural drama that he had been impressed by, and imitated, in the work of Vernet at the outset of his Italian stay. The savagery of the storm that whips up the waves of the sea and bends the branches of the trees is a counterpart of the anger of Apollo and Diana as they vent their revenge on Niobe for her arrogance in vaunting her children's beauty and prowess over those of the gods, shooting their arrows one after another to destroy each in turn. The last child clings to its mother's breast, vainly seeking shelter from the mortal wound it cannot evade, and very shortly to fall lifeless among its already dead siblings.

Wilson not only retells a familiar and ever-poignant tale, but demonstrates his learning by alluding to a famous classical sculpture, the group of twelve figures depicting Niobe and her children in the Uffizi Gallery at Florence, whose poses he borrows. This was a *tour de force*, an integration of ancient and modern, landscape and history, a powerful representation of human emotion reflected and embodied in natural turbulence, in terms of the whole pantheon of major landscape painters who had initially formed his approach.

The picture was successful enough to merit several repetitions, and an engraved reproduction by one of the leading engravers of the time, William Woollett, published in 1761 by London's top printseller, John Boydell.

Wilson was a founding member of the Royal Academy when it came into existence in London in 1768, but never enjoyed good relations with its first President, Reynolds. When he came to mention Wilson in his fourteenth Discourse, he did so six years after Wilson's death, and only in the context of a eulogium of Thomas Gainsborough. Even then, his comments consisted of nothing but criticism. His remarks were, in fact, specifically an attack on *Niobe*. It was as though Reynolds needed to undermine the very foundations of Wilson's claim to seriousness as a landscape painter:

> Our late ingenious Academician, Wilson, has, I fear, been guilty, like many of his predecessors, of introducing gods and goddesses, ideal beings, into scenes which were by no means prepared to receive such personages. His landskips were in reality too near common nature to admit supernatural objects. In consequence of this mistake, in a very admirable picture of a storm, which I have seen of his hand, many figures are introduced in the fore-ground, some in apparent distress, and some struck dead, as a spectator would naturally suppose, by the lightning; had not the painter injudiciously (as I think) rather chosen that their death should be imputed to a little Apollo, who appears in the sky, with his bent bow, and that those figures should be considered the children of Niobe.[19]

Given that Reynolds himself frequently introduced gods and goddesses into his pictures, in the even more implausible likenesses of his sitters, these strictures seem disingenuous. He went on to explain what he meant, but it is not clear how the strictures applied to Wilson ought not to be leveled at Reynolds as well:

> To manage a subject of this kind, a peculiar style of art is required; and it can only be done without impropriety, or even without ridicule, when we adapt the character of the landskip, and that too, in all its parts, to the historical or poetical representation. This is a very difficult adventure, for it requires a mind thrown back two thousand years and as it were naturalized in antiquity, like that of Nicolo Poussin, to achieve it.[20]

Since Wilson had the reputation of being one the most learned of artists, this slighting comparison

with Poussin must have seemed particularly damning. Nevertheless, intentionally or not, Reynolds delivered a back-handed compliment in speaking of his landscapes as 'too near common nature'. When in 1782 he painted his grand portrait of *Mrs John Musters as Hebe*, supported by clouds and attended by an eagle,[51] he presumably reckoned that the stage-set in which his sitter poses is patently of a piece with the make-believe character she assumes. He was not attempting a realistic transcription of nature.

Reynolds's attack was not approved by everyone: Edward Edwards, who taught Perspective in the Academy for nearly twenty years, described Reynolds's remarks as 'the effect of petulant pique.'[52] A correspondent wrote to the *Morning Post* complaining: 'It is an extraordinary circumstance that Sir Joshua Reynolds in his last discourse to the Academy should have so slightly touched on the character of so eminent an artist as the late Wilson — a classic in landscape. How has the President's liberality slept! Why was not the great artist mentioned in the President's discourse that succeeded poor Wilson's death? . . . Fie, Sir Joshua!'[53]

But perhaps Reynolds saw in Wilson a true exemplar of his own aesthetic principles, and found it difficult to give him full credit. As his pupil James Northcote pointed out, 'The desire to perpetuate the form of self-complacency crowded the sitting room of Reynolds with women who wished to be transmitted as angels, and men who wished to appear as heroes and philosophers.'[54]

Reynolds managed, in the same Discourse, to fling aspersions at several other contemporaries of his, whom we might today imagine to have been serious rivals for the crown of pre-eminence in portraiture that Reynolds knew he was seen as coveting, even if he disclaimed any but a workaday professional concern. He 'ventured to prophesy' that Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787) and Anton Rafael Mengs (1728–1779), two of the most successful of Continental portraitists, would 'very soon fall . . . into what is little short of total oblivion.' Batoni and Mengs were both practising in Italy while Wilson was there. Mengs, who was to become the leading Neo-classical painter on the Continent, painted in 1752 a hearty, friendly likeness of Wilson posed before a large classical landscape in progress on his easel, and is recorded as having said that he had 'never met with but two English artists of superior genius, they were R. Wilson and Athenian Stuart.'[55] That Mengs took such early interest in Wilson makes it clear that Wilson hesitated very little before plunging into his new-found métier, and that he was immediately perceived as distinguished in it.

I have digressed into a consideration of Reynolds's opinion of Wilson because it illuminates not merely the personal animosities of the London art world of the time, but more interestingly the range of interpretations of which the basic notion of classicism was susceptible. It is clear that for many of his contemporaries Wilson's seriousness was not in question. Woollett's plate of *Niobe* was published by Boydell in 1761, and its success changed the fortunes of British printmaking decisively: a long period of subordination to the French came to an end, and engravings and mezzotints emanating from London swiftly came to dominate European markets, a state of affairs that endured until the outbreak of War with France in 1793 put paid to free markets in Europe. Woollett followed up with prints after other paintings by Wilson, notably *Phaeton*, published in 1763; *Celadon and Amelia*, illustrating James Thomson's poem *The Seasons*, in 1766; *Cicero at his Villa* in 1778, and with assistance from other engravers *Meleager* and *Apollo and the Seasons*, in 1779. Reynolds, who measured success very much in terms of the print market, and ensured that his works were regularly mezzotinted for the print shops, may have been over-sensitive to this aspect of Wilson's ascendancy, which kept his images before the public even after the artist himself was dead.

The 1760s and early '70s were the glory days of Wilson's career. His reputation was firmly estab-

lished, reinforced by this succession of important engravings after major pictures. He was a founding member of the Royal Academy when it was established in 1768. Even if his relations with Reynolds were patchy, they were colleagues, and there are stories of them together, for instance in Italy (they were both in Rome in 1751–2), where Reynolds overheard, and delightedly relayed, Wilson's exclamation in front of the famous waterfall near Terni, the Cascate delle Marmore: 'Well done water, by God!'[56] And Uvedale Price recounted how Wilson and Reynolds were 'looking at the view from Richmond Terrace' together – presumably from Reynolds's house there, or near it.[57]

A document that brings the two men very close is the famous portrait group by Johan Zoffany (1733/4–1810) of *The Academicians of the Royal Academy*, painted in 1772.[58] In this scene in the Academy's Life Class, Reynolds watches the Keeper arranging the pose of a model, surrounded by his associates. Not far from him, but leaning against a wall a little apart, is Wilson, looking on with truculent interest. Round his head can be detected a change of tone in the paint that indicates that this little portrait-study was done, as the others must have been, as a separate exercise. It is odd that Zoffany did not efface this evidence of his process. The effect is that Wilson seems very slightly separated from his colleagues: he is of the group, but distanced from it, watching, perhaps critically, and not joining in the polite or learned conversation that animates the rest.

Nearly sixty years of age at this date, he wears a simple grey wig with double roll on each side, and a plain snuff-coloured coat and waistcoat, with big brass buttons, his arms folded. His face is fleshy, with the beginnings of a double chin, the skin rather dark: Wilson was a well-known tippler, 'much addicted to liquor.'[59] He was caricatured with a bottle-nose,[60] and Peter Pindar dubbed him 'red-nosed Dick;'[61] but Zoffany's portrait gives no indication of such a feature, though the nose he depicts is broad with a slight bulb at the tip. Horace Walpole approved of Zoffany's picture, in which he found 'all the attitudes easy and natural, most of the likenesses strong.' The portrait of Wilson is of a somewhat reserved yet shrewd, thoughtful and gently humorous man: 'a man full of information and anecdote, and no less full of satire,' as an admirer, the portrait painter William Beechey (1753–1839), described him.[62]

He continued to recapture the spirit of Rome and the Campagna in many pictures of the 1760s and '70s. But it is clear from the work he produced that almost as soon as he came back to London he was vividly reminded of the topographical tradition that he had left behind. In the five views of *Wilton House* that he executed for its owner the Earl of Pembroke immediately after his return we encounter both straightforward topography, in conception and composition similar to the house-portraits of George Lambert; and an 'elevated' classical calm that spills over from Italy. His view of *Wilton from the south-east*[63] shares the compositional austerity and tonal intensity of the scenes at Lake Nemi or Avernus that he was to repeat many times in the next decades. On the other hand the views of the house looking east, or of the *Temple Copse and Stables*,[64] do not attempt to evoke an Italian atmosphere, but present the facts of a working estate with little pretence of being 'high art.' This seems an unaffected reversion to the topography of Lambert, a branch of landscape painting that Wilson had clearly not renounced: a true professional, he was happy to absorb it into his repertory of solutions to the diverse problems he was called on to tackle.

During the next two decades, the house portraits oscillate between these two poles. For instance, an expansive portrait of *Syon House from Richmond Gardens*,[65] dating from the early 1760s, refers very clearly to the compositional types of Cuyp, and adopts the nonchalant, gentle approach to its subject that Paul Sandby (1730–1809) would characteristically adopt in his watercolour views of the same period.

Equally, some of the Welsh subjects on which he lavished his greatest energies have the texture and layout of picturesque views produced by many artists in this decade. The large views on the River Dee that he painted for Sir Watkin Williams Wynn and others around 1770 are a conscious reworking of Italian 'grandeur' in terms of a more homely, less historically fraught, spot, with much emphasis on broken foliage and dappled light: English (or Welsh) characteristics, not Italian ones. This reinterprets the Sublime as the Picturesque; and it is one of Wilson's achievements in his English and Welsh subjects that that he succeeded in marrying these two central eighteenth-century aesthetic concepts.

He continued to produce classical subjects, perfectly balanced and controlled compositions of the utmost ease and elegance, suffused with a still convincing Italian glow. The picture exhibited and engraved by Woollett in 1779, *Apollo and the Seasons*, is representative of his later works of this type.[66] It exists in several varied versions, and has been thought to repeat a composition originally devised when Wilson was still in Rome: in the engraved variant the figures were added by John Hamilton Mortimer (1740–1779), a not uncommon occurrence with Wilson's landscapes; *Niobe* underwent similar treatment in some versions. Collaborations of this kind were commonplace in the eighteenth century.

The exhilarating precision with which Wilson organizes Italianate subjects like *Apollo and the Seasons* has a fascinating parallel in one of his Welsh mountain scenes. *Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle*, a picture of the mid-1760s,[67] is the product of complete technical control: although the subject is rugged, almost Gothic in its sublimity, it nevertheless attains its grandeur by a strict economy of means, the details of the landscape reduced to a minimum, and placed on the canvas with an almost oriental clarity and delicacy.

This type of the 'terrific' Sublime was not as far removed from the serenely Classical as might be supposed; partly, no doubt, because Salvator Rosa had long before provided precedents for combining the two. The version of *Apollo and the Seasons* in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, has in its background a glimpse of an immense waterfall, which may allude to another work on which Wilson was engaged in the mid-1770s: a view of *Niagara Falls*, undertaken for engraving and taken from a drawing by an amateur, 'Lieutenant Pierie of the Royal Artillery.'[68] This record of a sublime work of nature far more spectacular than any natural phenomenon that Europe could boast is much more powerful as an evocation of nature at her grandest than anything that the eighteenth century had yet achieved. Here Wilson dipped his toe unawares into the high nineteenth century, when Romantic landscape ideas had crossed the Atlantic and were animating the response of Americans to their own scenery.[69] The intermediary in this exchange was, of course, Turner, who relished such excesses of nature, and said 'he should like to see Niagara, as it was the greatest wonder in Nature.' In fact, he seems to have owned a version of Wilson's picture himself,[70] an apt expression of his interest in both Wilson and the New World.

Wales did not always prompt Wilson to exercises in severe mountain grandeur. Some of his most informal and gentle studies come from the same part of the world. His little view of a lake high up among the rocky summits of Cader Idris, in central Wales, *Llyn-y-Cau*,[71] is so direct, so unconstrained by pictorial convention, that it is surprising to learn that it is almost exactly contemporary with the austere *Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle*. It is, indeed, a premonition of Romantic nature painting at its most spontaneous and subjective, even if it can be accused of distorting the actual features of Cader Idris for compositional purposes.

A very different instance of this originality of vision is the view down *The Valley of the Mawddach*, now in Liverpool.[72] Dating from the mid-1770s, this represents a new loosening of the compositional for-

mulas on which Wilson had been happy to play variations hitherto. It is certainly much freer in its approach to space and air than the rather formal design of the *Snowdon*. The fresh, airy perspectives on which he prided himself serve here to waft the eye over an undulating landscape that is to be enjoyed for its sheer openness and extent, the distant peaks of Cader Idris serving simply to give scale, rather than to impose grandeur on the scene. In the midst of this flowing, remarkably unstructured progress we pause to take in a solitary tree on a distant hillside, defined by Wilson simply as a tall, verdant individual casting its own shadow on the nearby turf, a natural phenomenon in its own unassuming right. A reviewer of the large group of Wilsons shown at the British Institution in 1814 described this quality well: 'every object in his pictures keeps its place, because each is seen through its proper medium.'[73] This concern for the individual existence of objects in the landscape is no doubt what endeared Wilson to Constable, and it explains his crucial place among the forebears of Romantic landscape painting.

The materials with which Wilson created such lucid perspectives of air and light were keenly noted by his contemporaries. Paul Sandby, an admirer who went to great lengths to find buyers for his pictures when he was hard up,[74] made a note of the layout of his palette: it comprised flake-white, Naples yellow, yellow ochre, Prussian blue, light red, ivory black, vermilion, brown pink, and terre verte. Like Constable, he attached great importance to his skies ('the chief organ of sentiment', in Constable's own phrase): as the portrait painter Ozias Humphry reported, 'He lays in his skies with Prussian blue and finishes them with ultramarine; never attempts to finish them at once, does it sometimes in twice, but frequently paints them over six or seven times.' Ultramarine was however an expensive pigment and could not always be afforded.[75]

He was quickly seen as the most significant forerunner of the Romantic landscapists. Some of his pupils were to prove standard-bearers in the next decade: both the Welsh gentleman amateur Thomas Jones (1742–1803) and William Hodges (1744–1797), who accompanied Captain Cook on his famous voyages of exploration round the world, were pioneers of the open-air oil sketch, a development of Wilson's own commitment to the airy, three-dimensional truth of landscape. It was that truth which the doyen of the first generation of Romantic watercolourists, John Robert Cozens (1752–1797), perfected in his own medium, conveying limpid air and expansive distance in a way that would have been inconceivable without the innovations of Wilson.

Another watercolourist, the Exeter drawing-master Francis Towne (1739/40–1816), who worked with Jones in Rome in 1780–81, took up many of Wilson's Italian themes, translating his motifs into a Neo-classical idiom of precisely articulated masses of flat, dry yet vibrant colour, organized in harmonious patterns making use of the same bold, resonant shapes that Wilson used in his Roman views.

By the time of Towne's death in 1816 a younger generation had already contributed its homage to Wilson: Turner's paintings in his manner belong to the late 1790s.[76] Dr John Wolcot is recorded as saying: 'It is worthy of observation that none of Wilson's pupils caught the manner of their master, and yet a school has arisen which strongly partakes of it, of which the drawings of my early acquaintance, the generous and giddy Tom Girtin, are an instance.'[77] Girtin (1775–1802), Turner's contemporary and early drawing-companion, may have been 'generous and giddy' as a person, but his art is very different: sober, monumental, the quintessence of a serious Neo-classicism in landscape that Wilson's work seems to anticipate. Although Girtin's medium was watercolour, it is doubtful whether he received his ideas from Towne; he was more probably influenced directly by Wilson. He restricted his palette to a sombre range of soft greens, greys and browns, and his forms to bold masses of terrain or foliage off-

set by a solidly geometric architecture: a way of working that harks back with a renewed sense of relevance to the sober 'generalization' of Wilson.

Ruskin's broad placing of Wilson in the story of British landscape painting has been quoted. But in his most influential writings on art, in *Modern Painters*, published in the 1840s and '50s, his goal was to establish Turner as the supreme hero of landscape painting, and his judgement was more nuanced. It had the effect of denigrating the achievements of the British artist who, more than any other, had helped form Turner's style and thematic preoccupations. When Turner celebrated Lord Byron's description of Italy in his painting of 1833, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage—Italy*,[78] he quoted lines from the poem:

And now fair Italy!
Thou art the garden of the world.
Even in thy desert what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful, thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility:
Thy wreck a glory, and thy ruin graced
With an immaculate charm that can never be defaced[79]

—a Romantic perception of the ancient Mediterranean culture that Wilson had felt, absorbed and understood, and which Turner must have been well aware of in his own struggles to out-Claude Claude. Ruskin seems almost deliberately to be contradicting Byron in a strong attack on Wilson in *Modern Painters*, saying that he was 'corrupted by study of the Poussins, and gathering his materials chiefly in their field, the district about Rome—a district especially unfavourable, as exhibiting no pure or healthy nature, but a diseased and overgrown flora, among half-developed volcanic rocks, loose calcareous concretions, and mouldering wrecks of buildings, and whose spirit I conceive to be especially opposed to the natural tone of the English mind.'[80]

It was surely Wilson's achievement precisely to bring the 'natural tone of the English mind' to bear on Claudean subject matter, to transplant and translate the seventeenth century into a new, essentially British, language of landscape that enabled Turner, Constable and those who came after them to establish their national school as the pre-eminent home of inspired nature painting.

1. Ephraim Hardcastle, *Wine and Walnuts*, 2 vols., London, 1823, I, p.179 note.
2. John Constable, letter to John Fisher, 9 May 1823; printed in R. B. Beckett, ed., *John Constable's Correspondence*, vol. XII, Ipswich, 1968, p. 117.
3. Additional note to entry on Wilson in Matthew Pilkington, *A Dictionary of Painters* . . . New edition by Henry Fuseli, R.A., 1810.
4. J. M. W. Turner, letter to F. H. Fawkes, 27 December 1847; see John Gage, ed., *Collected Correspondence of J. M. W. Turner*, Oxford, 1980, p. 219. Turner painted a careful copy of Wilson's *Tivoli and the Roman Campagna*, Tate, London, TGN 05512, Butlin and Joll, 1984, no. 44; the Wilson original is in the Memphis Brooks Museum, Memphis, Constable, pp. 222–23, plate 116b; and see catalogue no. 10.
5. Letter to John Fisher, 26 August 1827; see Beckett, 1968, p. 232.
6. John Ruskin, *The Art of England*, Lecture VI, November 1883 (Sir E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 vols., London, 1903–12; vol. XXXIII, p.378).
7. W. T. Whitley, *Artists and their Friends in England*, 2 vols., London, 1928 (reprinted New York 1968), p. 381.
8. The remark was quoted by Constable in his letter to John Fisher, of 26 August 1827 (see note 5 above).
9. Tate, London TGN 02989; see Elizabeth Einberg, 'Richard Wilson's earliest dated painting, the Story of a dreadful calamity,' *The Burlington Magazine* CXIX, June 1977, pp. 436–41.
10. Edward Edwards, *Anecdotes of Painting*, London, 1808, p. 78.
11. The prime version of this picture is in the National Portrait Gallery, London; W. G. Constable, *Richard Wilson*, London, 1953, p. 153, plates 5a, 5b., reproduced as two separate works following the division of the canvas in c. 1920. A smaller, but intact, version of the subject with several differences is in the Yale Center for British Art, Constable, ibid., plate 6b.
12. Compare Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), portraits of *Philip Thicknesse*, c. 1755, City Art Galley, St Louis, Missouri, and *John Plampin*, c. 1752, National Gallery, London.
13. 1747; Scottish National Portrait Gallery.
14. Adrian Bury, *Richard Wilson, R.A., The Grand Classic*, Leigh-on-sea, 1947, p. 44.
15. The two roundels were first recorded at the Foundling Hospital in 1751. They are: a view of the *Foundling Hospital* itself, which could hardly present its subject with more unvarnished simplicity; and a view of *St George's Hospital*, which makes use of a foreground tree but is otherwise equally plain. The pair are Constable, p. 180, plates 43a, 43b. According to Solkin, the two designs are deliberately contrasted exercises in the 'classical' and the 'Dutch' landscape styles. See David H. Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue, 1982, pp. 149–50. See also [Elizabeth Einberg], *Manners and Morals: Hogarth and British Painting 1700–1760*, exhibition catalogue, Tate Gallery, 1987, p. 183.
16. Constable, p. 180; plate 44a. Another, possibly the prime version, is in the Tate, London TGT03665; reproduced in Solkin, 1982, p. 147 (as Private Collection).
17. Catalogue no. 2. Constable, p. 173; plate 32a.
18. Solkin, p. 148, no. 7. Oddly enough, Solkin uses this very argument, i.e. the presence of a figure of the artist sketching, to make the point that Wilson worked directly from nature in his *View of Dover* (Yale Center for British Art; Constable, p. 177, plate 38b), repeated in a version at Cardiff (Constable, pl. 38c).
19. Private collection; see Solkin, 1982, cat. no. 6 and page 27; reproduced in colour plate I.
20. Joseph Farington, *Diary*, New Haven and London, 16 vols., 1978–84 (Index 1998); entry for 28 July 1805.
21. Tate Gallery, London, TGN 03727; Constable, p. 155, plate 9b (as 'A Venetian Gentleman'). Zuccarelli had been in London briefly in the 1740s and it is possible that Wilson met him then.
22. Now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. See Luke Herrmann, *British Landscape Painting of the Eighteenth Century*, New York and Oxford, 1974, p. 52, plate 44b.
23. Constable reproduces three portrait heads of 1752: a bust-length portrait of *Thomas Hollis* (Fogg Art Museum, Harvard), and two heads of *Capuchin monks*, plates 9c, 10a, 10b; a later exception is the portrait supposedly of Rowland Jones, probably dated 1757; pp. 156–7, plate 11b.
24. *Italian Coast Scene with a Wreck*; private collection. See Herrmann, 1974, p. 55 and plate 46.
25. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; Constable, p. 79, 157–8; plate 12b.
26. Constable, pp. 157–58, plates 12b, 12c, 14a.
27. National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; Constable, p. 157, plate 12a.
28. R. and S. Redgrave, *A Century of British Painters*, 1866, new ed., London and New York, 1947, p. 40.
29. Thomas Wright (*Some Account of the Life of Richard Wilson Esq., R.A., with Testimonies to his Genius and Memory, and Remarks on his Landscapes* . . . London, 1824) thought that

Wilson was referring to Joos de Momper; see pp. 39–45; Adrian Bury thought that Joos's son Franz was included in the reference; op. cit., pp. 42–43. See Ingamells, p. 277: 'on 28 February 1755 [Dartmouth dispatched to England a case with] pictures, including two landscapes by Momper and "a portfolio with 30 of Mr Wilson's drawings." Whitley, vol II, pp. 202–3, prints a letter written in 1790 by the painter Jacob More (1740–1793), remembering 'Mr Wilson mentioning this master to me, and one may see that he looked at them himself.'

30. Wright, 1824, p. 48.
31. Allan Cunningham, *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters*, vol I, 1829, p. 175.
32. Letter to Admiral Smith, 8 June 1751, quoted in Constable, p. 21; but see Solkin, 1982, p. 13 for a correction of the date given there.
33. Wright, 1824, p. 64, citing *The Works of the Late Mr Edward Dayes*, 1805.
34. Redgrave, *A Century of British Painters*, 1866, p. 41.
35. In the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. Constable, p. 151, plate 2c. This is a study for the whole-length portrait of Commodore Smith in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, of which two versions exist; Constable, p. 152, plates 2a, 2b. Edwards (p. 80) describes another drawing, now in the British Museum, which is dubiously signed and seems to be in a different hand.
36. See Denys Sutton and Ann Clements, *An Italian Sketchbook by Richard Wilson, R.A.*, Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, London, 1968.
37. Whitley, 1928, vol. I, p. 385.
38. Farington, *Diary*, 9 June 1806; *Biographical Note* (of Richard Wilson), c. 1805. See Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, catalogue of an *Exhibition of Works by Richard Wilson*, 1936, p. 12.
39. See Brinsley Ford, 'The Dartmouth collection of drawings by Richard Wilson,' *The Burlington Magazine*, XC, December 1948, pp. 337–45; and *The Drawings of Richard Wilson*, London, 1951.
40. Lord Dartmouth's two pictures are now in the Yale Center for British Art and Tate, London, TGT 01873; Constable, pp. 218–220, plates 107a, 110a.
41. As recorded by Farington, *Diary*, 28 July 1805; though no picture corresponding to this commission has been identified. See Constable, p. 30; and John Ingamells, ed., *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701–1800 compiled from the Brinsley Ford Archive*, New Haven and London, 1997, pp. 635, 1008 etc.
42. Ingamells, *loc. cit.*
43. Pilkington; entry in the revised edition, 1810, probably written by John Wolcot.
44. Dayes, cited in Wright, 1824, p. 64.
45. See Solkin, 1982, pp. 14–15.
46. Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
47. Pilkington; entry in the revised edition, 1810, see note 32.
48. See catalogue nos. 7 and 8.
49. Robert R. Wark, ed., *Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art*, New Haven and London, 1975, p. 260.
50. Wark, 1975, pp. 260–61.
51. Kenwood, the Iveagh Bequest. David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds, A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, New Haven and London, 2000, no. 1326.
52. Edwards, 1808, p. 84.
53. Whitley, 1928, vol. I, p. 382.
54. James Northcote, cited in Cunningham, p. 212.
55. Ingamells, p. 1007. James 'Athenian' Stuart (1713–1788).
56. Quoted from 'The Diary of an Invalid' in Wright, 1824, p. 19.
57. Wright, 1824, p. 17.
58. The Royal Collection, Oliver Millar, *The Later Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty The Queen*, London 1969, no. 1210. For a recent discussion of the picture see Desmond Shawe-Taylor, *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of Fashionable Life*, exhibition catalogue, The Queen's Gallery, London, 2009, pp. 124–29, no. 24.
59. Whitley, 1928, p. 381.
60. A caricatured likeness of Richard Wilson by Sir George Beaumont was etched by Thomas Hastings; see fig. 1.
61. J. T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, 1828, new ed., 1949, p. 67.
62. Whitley, 1928, *loc. cit.*
63. Constable, plate 58b; collection the Earl of Pembroke.
64. Constable, plates 59a, 59b; collection the Earl of Pembroke.
65. Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich; Constable, pp. 184–85; see plate 54a.
66. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge and other collections; a version in which the composition is reversed is Tate, London, TGN 05551; Constable, pp. 167–68, plates 26a, 26b. See Solkin, 1982, pp. 236–37, and Robin Simon, 'New Light on Richard Wilson', *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXI, July 1979, p. 438.
67. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Constable, p. 186, plate 55. A second, very similar version is in the Castle Museum, Nottingham.
68. Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Museums; Constable, pp. 230–31, plate 126a. The engraving was by William

Byrne, 1774. See Solkin, 1982, pp. 242–43.

69. In the mid-nineteenth century depictions of Niagara by American artists were common. Perhaps the most important were those of Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900): *Niagara Falls*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and *Niagara Falls from the American Side*, 1867, National Gallery of Scotland. See Franklin Kelly, *Frederic Edwin Church*, exhibition catalogue, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1989, cats. 30, p. 90, and 40, p. 116.

70. Walter Thornbury, *The Life of J. M. W. Turner, R.A.*, 2nd ed., London, 1877, p. 349; Tate, London, TGN 01891, Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J. M. W. Turner*, 2nd ed., New Haven and London, 1984, no. 547. Butlin and Joll record the possibility that the picture entered the national collections as part of a quite different Bequest; but the fact that it sits so appositely among the works that Turner collected to celebrate his enthusiasms and friendships argues sufficiently strongly for his ownership to be credited.

71. Tate, London, TGN 05596, c. 1765–66; Constable, pp. 171–72, plate 31a.

72. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Constable, pp. 180–1, plate 45a. Probably exhibited as 'Cader Idris Mountains,' Royal Academy 1774 (316).

73. Cited in Wright, 1824, p. 90.

74. Whitley, 1928, vol. I, p. 383.

75. See Whitley, 1928, vol. I, pp. 384–85.

76. For example, *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells, Cumberland*, 1798; Turner Bequest, Tate, London, TGN 00461; Butlin and Joll, 1984, no. 5.

77. Redgrave, 1947, p. 45.

78. Exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1832; Turner Bequest, Tate, London, TGN 00516; Butlin and Joll, 1984, no. 342.

79. Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto 4 (1818), stanza XXVI.

80. Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. I, 1843; *Works*, vol. III, p. 189.

c. 1713
Born at Penegoes, Montgomeryshire, the son of a clergyman, who gave him a sound classical education.

1729
Sent to London, where studied under Thomas Wright, a minor portrait painter. Achieved some success in London as a painter of portraits, of which the best-known is *Francis Ayscough with the Prince of Wales (later King George III) and Edward Augustus, Duke of York and Albany* of c. 1749, now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. Although primarily active as a portraitist, also produced some landscapes.

1750
Traveled to Italy, stopping first in Venice, where warmly received by the well-known British consul and art collector Joseph Smith. Became acquainted with Francesco Zuccarelli, who may have encouraged his activities as a landscape painter.

1751/2
Traveled to Rome, accompanied by the painter and art dealer Thomas Jenkins, in the carriage of William Lock of Norbury, a young connoisseur and future collector. Befriended by French landscape painter Joseph Vernet, who may have influenced his decision, made around this time, to abandon portraiture and devote himself to landscape. Once established in Rome, made frequent sketching expeditions in the Italian countryside and produced views for Grand Tourists, creating a storehouse of material for later use.

1756/7
Returned to London. During the 1760s, enjoyed great success for Italian and British landscapes painted in the 'Grand Manner' inspired by the seventeenth-century continental masters. Was a founder-member of the Society of Artists, to the first exhibition of which he sent *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe* (cat. no. 7), a milestone in the creation of historical landscape painting in Britain. Was a founder-member of the Royal Academy in 1768, and exhibited there regularly until 1780.

1776
Having precipitously fallen from favor and in declining health, Wilson applied for and was given post of Librarian to the Royal Academy to supplement his meager income.

1781
Returned to Wales to live with relatives at Colomendy Hall, near Llandberis, Denbighshire.

1782
Died on May 12, and buried at Mold, Flintshire.

CATALOGUE

Abbreviations of frequently cited literature

Constable	W. G. Constable, *Richard Wilson*, London & Cambridge, Mass., 1953.
Ford	Brinsley Ford, *The Drawings of Richard Wilson*, London, 1951.
Solkin	David H. Solkin, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Gallery, 1982.

WILLIAM BOND (British, active 1799–1833)

Portrait of Richard Wilson, Landscape Painter

After Anton Raphael Mengs
Published 20 January 1812

etching and stipple engraving
plate: 11¾ by 10 inches (29.9 by 25.4 cm.)
sheet: 14⅝ by 12½ inches (37.1 by 31.8 cm.)

BELOW THE IMAGE: Class 1 Painting Engraved by W.m Bond for "the Fine Arts of the English School"/ RICHARD WILSON, ESQ. R.A., LANDSCAPE PAINTER,/From a Portrait copied by JOHN TAYLOR, under the inspection of Wilson, after an original Picture by/ RAPHAEL MENGS, in the Possession of of/ SIR W.W. WYNNE, BART./ TO SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT BART. as a lover of the Fine Arts, and an admirer of the great Artist here commemorated, this Portrait and / the accompanying Memoir are respectfully inscribed by John Britton / London: Published January 20, 1812, by Longman & Co., Paternoster Row; J. Taylor, High Holborn, London; & W. Bond, Newman Street

SELECTED RELATED REFERENCES

T. Wright, *Some account of the life of Richard Wilson, Esq. R.A...*, London, 1824, pp. 106–07.

D. Cooper, "The Iconography of Richard Wilson," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 90, No. 541 (April 1948), pp. 109–18 (another impression illustrated fig. 20).

Constable, p. 68.

This print is one of a number of engravings made after the well-known *Portrait of Richard Wilson*, which was painted by Anton Raphael Mengs when both artists were living in Rome in 1752.[1] Wilson presumably brought the picture with him upon his return to England around 1756/7, but subsequently sold it to Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn, one of his early and most important patrons.[2] After Sir Watkin's death in 1789, Mengs's portrait remained in possession of the family until acquired in 1947 by the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

Wilson's pupil Thomas Wright described the genesis of the present engraving by William Bond, which appeared, along with a short essay on Wilson, in John Britton's *The Fine Arts of the English School*, published in 1812 in London:

> Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, bart., has in his possession a portrait of the artist himself painted by Raphael Mengs. From a copy of this picture, painted by Mr. John Taylor, under the inspection of Wilson, a very beautiful engraving was made some years ago by Mr. Bond, for a work entitled *The Fine Arts of the English School*, accompanied by a short memoir.[3]

Taylor's copy of Mengs's portrait is now untraced, but was probably made before Wilson left London in 1781.[4] Bond's engraving and the accompanying memoir by Britton are dedicated to "an admirer of the great Artist [Wilson]," Sir George Beaumont. Beaumont (1753–1827) was a talented amateur painter, the founding director of the British Institution, and one of the most important art collectors of his day in Britain. Although he never bought a picture from Wilson during the latter's lifetime, he eventually acquired no less than six of his works,

including the Italian sketchbook of 1754 now at the Yale Center for British Art, and one of the major versions of the *Niobe* (see cat. no. 8).

Bond's engraving memorializes Wilson's appearance in the prime of his life—dignified, evidently prosperous, and at the beginning of the most successful phase of his career. Over two decades later, Beaumont himself made a sketch of Wilson, now known from an etching by Hastings, which likely accurately captures the artist's much deteriorated state toward the end of his life (fig. 1).[5] Beaumont paid a final, and perhaps more fitting tribute to Wilson after the artist's death, when, according to Farington, he "removed a huge stone from a distance of ½ mile [from Coleorton Hall, his country house] & placed it in Shubbery [sic] to commemorate Richard Wilson, the Landscape painter."[6] Still *in situ* in the grounds of Coleorton, the massive boulder was sketched by Constable on a visit there on 28 November 1823.[7]

1. According to Edwards, ". . . his [Wilson's] works were so much esteemed, that Mengs painted his portrait, for which Wilson in return painted a landscape" [E. Edwards, *Anecdotes of painters, who have resided or been born in England* (London 1808), p. 78]. For the other engravings after Mengs's portrait, see Cooper as cited above.
2. Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 79. Exactly when and why the portrait entered Sir Watkin's collection at Wynnstay is not known, but Wilson's reduced circumstances toward the end of his life may have been a factor (Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 110).
3. Quoted T. Wright, as cited above.
4. John Taylor (1739–1838).
5. Cooper (*op. cit.*, p. 114) dates Taylor's copy to 1775 or later.
6. Constable, p. 61, who cites as his source Farington's Diary, 21 March 1820.
7. The stone bears the inscription, "Brought here 6 Jan 1818." Constable's pencil and wash drawing, now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum, is inscribed on its verso: "Stone in the Grove of Coleorton Hall. Dedicated to the Memory of Richard Wilson. Novr 28 1823" [A. Anderson, "Wordsworth and the Gardens of Coleorton Hall, *Garden History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter 1994), p. 214].

Fig. 1 Thomas Hastings after Sir George Beaumont, *Sketch of Richard Wilson* from *Etchings from the works of Richard Wilson; with some memoirs of his life &c.* London, 1825 (detail). Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

2.

Richard Wilson

Caernarvon Castle, circa 1744–45

oil on canvas
32½ by 45 inches (82.6 by 114.3 cm.)

The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1998.1

Founders Society Purchase, Robert H. Tannahill Foundation Fund, Joseph H. Parsons Fund, Ralph Harman Booth Bequest Fund, DeRoy Testamentary Foundation Acquisition Fund, Edna Burian Skelton Fund, Mary Martin Semmes Fund, Abraham Borman Family Fund, Mr. and Mrs. Allan Shelden III Fund, and funds from Stanley R. and Lynn W. Day, Mr. Richard A. Manoogian, Marvin and Betty Danto, Marianne Schwartz, European Paintings Council, Margaret H. Demant, Ruth F. Rattner, and other contributors

PROVENANCE

Collection Sir Charles Tennant, Baronet, †1906, The Glen, Peebleshire, Scotland; The Hon. Mrs. Walter Elliot, Baroness Elliot of Harwood, D.B.E., †1997, Hawick, Scotland (by descent); Acquired by the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1998

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

London, Tate Gallery, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, 1982–1983, no. 7; also traveled to Cardiff, National Museum of Wales; and New Haven, Yale Center for British Art

Washington, National Gallery of Art, *The Treasure Houses of Britain*, 1985–1986, no. 318

SELECTED REFERENCES

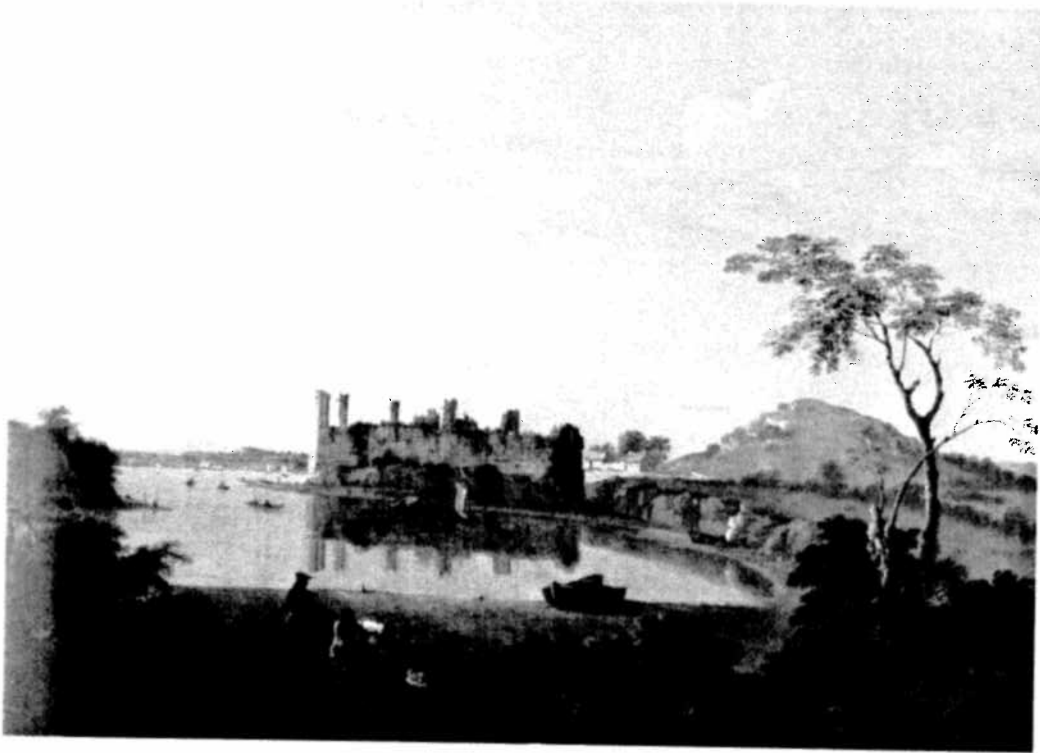
Constable, p. 173 under plates 32a,b.

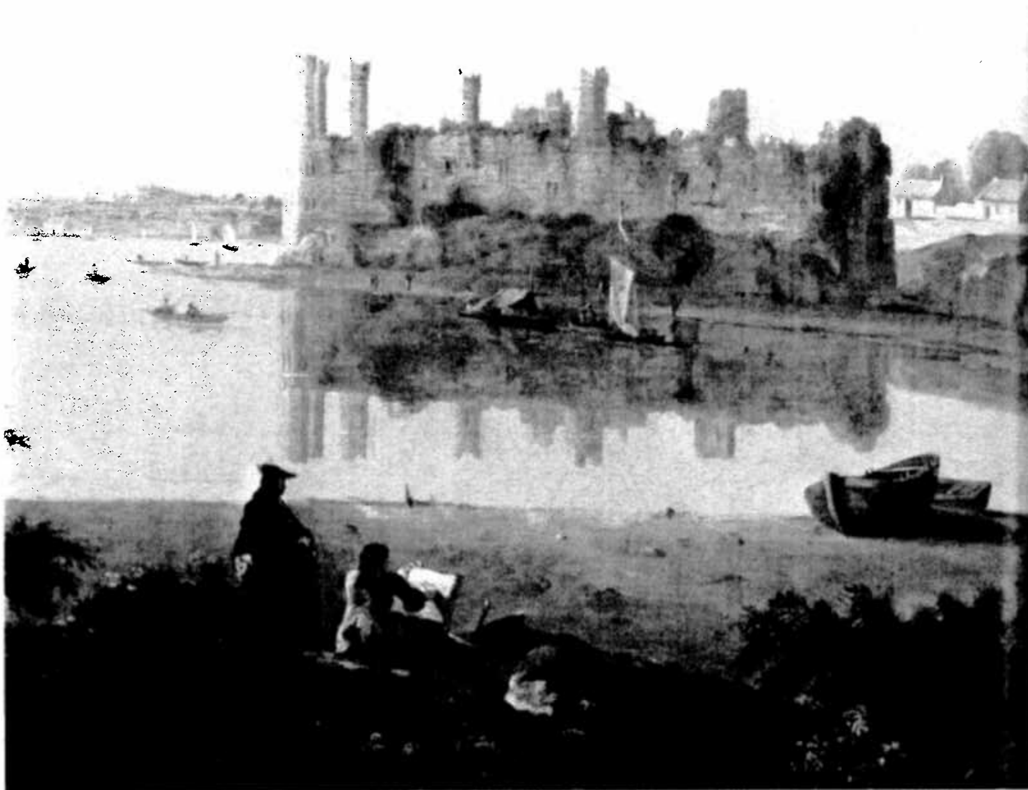
M. Warner, *This Other Eden: British Paintings from the Paul Mellon Collection at Yale*, exh. cat., Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 1998, p. 68, under no. 21.

Solkin, pp. 28–31 (color ill., pl. II).

Datable to circa 1744–45, *Caernarvon Castle* was painted by Wilson before his trip to Italy, and—along with a closely similar version at the Yale Center for British Art—represents his earliest known certain view of his native Wales.[1] Located on the banks of the River Seiont in northwest Wales, Caernarvon Castle was built in 1283–84 by King Edward I of England following his conquest of Wales, and while under construction, was the birthplace of Edward II, the first English prince to be given the title of Prince of Wales. The most magnificent of the four castles built by Edward I in northern Wales, Caernarvon was intended by him to serve as the seat of English government there.

The castle is shown from the south, with the triple-turreted Eagle Tower at its western end, and the Isle of Anglesey visible to the northwest. Wilson has otherwise taken certain liberties with the topographical facts, calling to mind the remark of his pupil, Farington, that "Wilson when he painted views seldom adhered to the scene as it was."[2] In addition to reducing the castle's massive scale, Wilson has transformed it into a vegetation-covered ruin. This is most likely an allusion to the inevitable effects of time and the transience of worldly glory—moralizing sentiments commonly associated with ruins in Wilson's time.[3] He has also altered the topography of the setting somewhat, turning the River Seiont into a small lake or inlet, and moving





DETAIL, CAT. NO. 2

Twt Hill closer to the castle on the right. Most notably, the bustling commercial port town which Caernarvon actually was in the mid-eighteenth century has been virtually eliminated. We are presented, instead, with a tranquil view of a picturesque ruin in an idyllic rural setting, its form reflected in mirror-smooth water under a clear and luminous sky. In the distance, peasants are shown quietly at their labors, while in the foreground, two well-dressed gentleman — an artist with an observer — engage in leisurely pursuits. Solkin suggested that such a juxtaposition reflects contemporary aristocratic notions of the ideal country life, in which the upper and lower classes live in harmony, each in accordance with their ordained lot.[4] One wonders if the artist who sketches the scene while observed by his gentleman companion might refer to Wilson himself, composing this idealized view of the British countryside with just such a patron in mind.[5]

Although the delicate palette and intricately elaborated surfaces are *rococo* in accent, the design of *Caernarvon Castle* is based on a compositional type evolved by Gaspard Dughet in the seventeenth century, and often employed by Wilson's contemporaries, John Wootton and George Lambert.[6] The easily replicated formula of a body of water, architecture and framing foreground trees would have been familiar to Wilson from their work, as well as from engravings after Gaspard's pictures published by Pond and Knapton in the early 1740s.[7] After Wilson's return from Italy at the end of the 1750s, he would continue to adapt his English and Welsh views to the compositional models of Dughet and other masters of 'Grand Manner' landscape painting.

The earliest known owner of *Caernarvon Castle* was Sir Charles Tennant, 1st Bart. (1823–1906), a prominent Glasgow industrialist and one of the wealthiest men in Victorian Britain. A trustee of the National Gallery and early champion of British painting, he assembled a remarkable collection of important works by Reynolds, Gainsborough, Constable, Turner and Bonington, among many others.

1. The picture now at Yale (1976.7.174) was formerly in the collection of Mrs. Hart, Forest Row, Sussex (Constable, 32a; oil on canvas, 25 1/2 by 41 inches).
2. *The Farington Diary*, ed. J. Greig [n.d.], Vol. V, p. 107, December 15, 1808.
3. Solkin, p. 28.
4. Ibid., pp. 148–49. For a more detailed interpretation of the picture's significance, see also pp. 28–31.
5. Wilson's contemporary, the sculptor Joseph Nollekens, recalled that Wilson dressed exceptionally well for an artist of the early 1740s (Solkin, p. 13).
6. Solkin, p. 29 and p. 136, n. 17.
7. For example, Chatelain's engraving published in 1743 after Gaspard's landscape in the collection of the Earl of Chomondeley, or Wood's engraving after the Gaspard belonging to John Blackwood, published in the same year [C. Knapton and A. Pond (publ.), *44 Engraved Plates after Claude Lorraine, Nicolas Poussin and Others* (London, 1741–46)].

3.

Richard Wilson

Capriccio Landscape with Lake, Castle, and Hills, 1751 or early 1752

oil on canvas
23 by 29 inches (58.5 by 73.7 cm.)

Private Collection, New York

PROVENANCE

Possibly Mr. Benson (tutor to Ralph Howard, 1st Viscount Wicklow), 1752; The Rev. Dr. Marlow (1758–1828), Oxford, by 1814; Mrs. Marlow; Rev. G.T. Clare, Bainton Rectory, Driffield, Yorkshire (by descent); Mr. A. Coventry, Edinburgh, 1862; Commander Creighton-Maitland (by descent); With Agnew's London; J. Gourdes de Souza, 1948; With Agnew's, London; Peter Temple, 1951; With Agnew's, London; Private collection, London, 1965

EXHIBITED

London, British Institution, 1814, no. 159 ("Italian Scene" lent by Dr. Marlow)

London, Tate Gallery, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, 1982–83, no. 61; also traveled to Cardiff, National Museum of Wales; and New Haven, Yale Center for British Art

SELECTED REFERENCES

B. Ford, "Richard Wilson in Rome. II—The Claudean Landscapes," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 94, No. 596 (November 1952), pp. 307–08 (ill. fig. 8).

Constable, pp. 78–79, 204 (ill. pl. 84b).

In 1750, at the age of 37, Wilson traveled to Italy, and by the Fall of that year had arrived in Venice, where he stayed until departing for Rome late in 1751. In Venice he was kindly received by the well-known British consul and collector, Joseph Smith, who likely introduced him to Francesco Zuccarelli, then the leading landscape painter in the city. The two artists struck up a friendship, and Zuccarelli, whose portrait Wilson painted in 1751, probably helped influence the younger artist's decision, made soon thereafter, to devote himself to landscape.[1]

It is uncertain whether the present undated picture was actually painted in Venice or soon after Wilson's arrival in Rome in late 1751 or early in 1752.[2] What is clear, though, is its debt to Venetian *settecento* landscape painters, especially Marco Ricci, whose work, such as the *Landscape with River and Buildings* (fig. 2), Wilson would surely have encountered in Consul Smith's collection in Venice.[3] As Ford and others have noted, the composition, rich palette, and fluid handling of paint seen in this picture are indebted to Ricci's example, as are the architectural details of the machicolated tower and bridge.[4] Constable also pointed out that an obvious *capriccio*, or imaginary view such as this, while rare in Wilson's art, was much favored by Wilson's Venetian contemporaries.[5]

Conspicuous in size and placement in the right foreground is a terracotta-colored vessel on which is sketchily evoked what appears to be a scene of Bacchic revelry. Although its scale and shape recall a type of storage jar (*dolium*), which in Roman times was used for foodstuffs, oil, and wine, these were never decorated in antiquity. The stone-like covering—suggestive of a well—is similarly incongruous from an archeological point of view, indicating that this is an invented object *all'antica*, consistent with the *capriccio* theme.[6] By contrast, Wilson's Roman paintings of just a few years later would be characterized

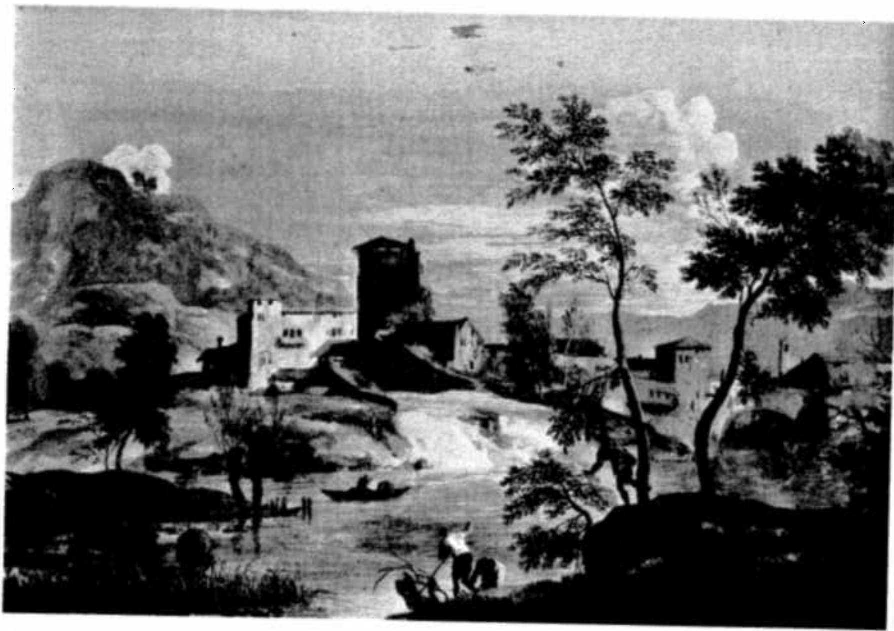


Fig. 2 Marco Ricci, *Landscape with River and Buildings*, c. 1725–30. Tempera on leather, 12 by 17½ inches (30.5 by 45.1 cm.). The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle (3114). The Royal Collection © 2010, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

by archeological accuracy in the depiction of antiquities, as Ford observed.[7]

Solkin suggested that this landscape might be identifiable with that mentioned by Wilson in a letter of November 1752 as having been sold to Mr. Benson, tutor and traveling companion of the Irish Grand Tourist Ralph Howard (later Lord Wicklow), who had himself commissioned two landscapes from Wilson in that year.[8] The picture is in any case securely traceable to the Rev. Dr. Marlow (1758–1828), who in 1814 lent it to the retrospective exhibition at the British Institution of pictures by Hogarth, Wilson, Gainsborough and Zoffany.[9] Marlow was President of St. John's College, Oxford (1795–1828), and one of Wilson's most important early admirers, having written an essay on Wilson which was published in Oxford in 1811 in *Studies and Designs by Richard Wilson done at Rome in the year 1752*.[10]

1. In a letter written from Venice, Wilson referred to his portrait of Zuccarelli, which Michael Levey identified as the portrait, signed and dated 1751, now in the Tate Gallery, London, NO3727; see M. Levey, "Wilson and Zuccarelli at Venice," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 101, No. 673 (April 1959), pp. 139-40 and Solkin, p. 177, no. 59.
2. The earliest evidence for Wilson's presence in Rome dates from January, 1752. Ford was first to suggest that this picture may have been executed at the beginning of Wilson's stay in Rome, around the same time as the *Landscapes with Banditti* which Wilson painted for Ralph Howard early in 1752 (Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 308). Constable (p. 78) felt it may have been painted in Venice, while Solkin (p. 179) was inclined to assign it to a date shortly after Wilson's arrival in Rome.
3. This picture, now in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle, was one of a number of works by Ricci that passed from Smith's collection into that of George III in 1762 (M. Levey, *The Later Italian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, London, 1964, p. 34 and cat. no. 608).
4. Ford, *op. cit.*, pp. 307–38; Constable, pp.78–79; Solkin pp. 178–79; see also Andrew Wilton's foregoing essay, page 14.
5. Constable, p. 79.
6. Paul Roberts of the British Museum and Joan Mertens of the Metropolitan Museum of Art kindly furnished this information concerning the vessel.
7. Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 312.
8. Solkin, p. 179. For the Wicklow pictures, *Landscape with Banditti round a Tree* and *Landscape with Banditti: The Murder*, now in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, see Constable, 12a, 12b, and Solkin, nos. 62–63.
9. *Catalogue of pictures by the late William Hogarth, Richard Wilson, Thomas Gainsborough and J. Zoffani*, London, 1814, no. 159.
10. Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 308. The book was published by R. Archer.

4.
Richard Wilson

Tivoli: The Cascatelli Grandi and the Villa of Maecenas, circa 1752

oil on canvas
16½ by 28⅜ inches (42 by 72 cm.)
Signed with initials, lower left: "RW"

Private Collection, Seattle

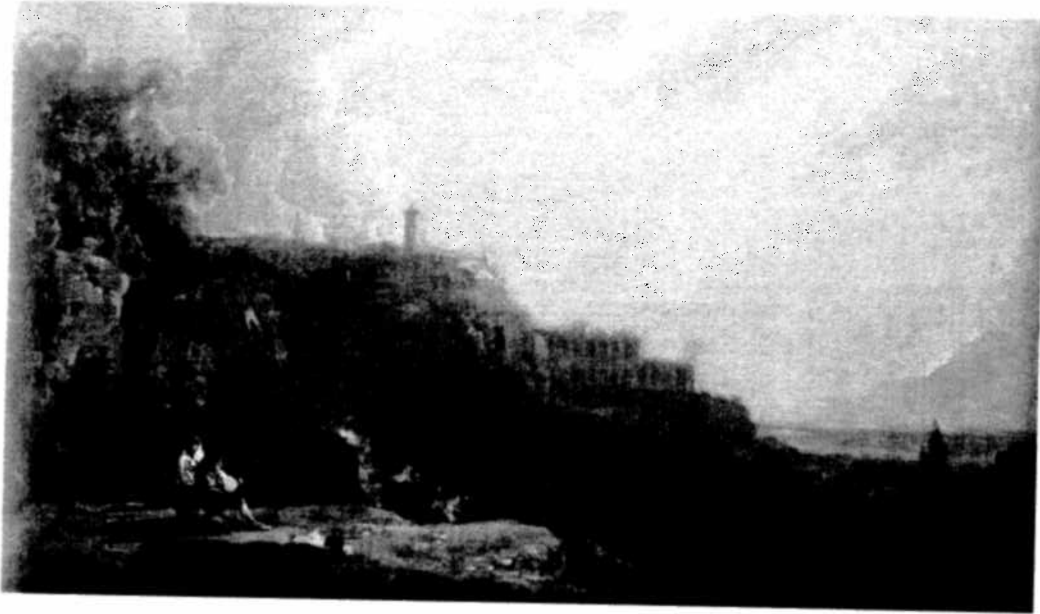
PROVENANCE
Private collection, Rome

SELECTED RELATED REFERENCES
Constable, pp. 82, 225; pl. 117a.
Solkin, nos. 65–66, pp. 181–83.
P. Conisbee, "Tivoli: The Cascatelli Grandi and the Villa of Maecenas," in *In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1996, p. 111.

Signed with the artist's initials, this previously unrecorded picture shows the great waterfalls at Tivoli as seen from across the gorge of the River Anio, with the town of Tivoli on the hilltop at left, the ruins of the so-called Villa of Maecenas just beyond, and a view of the Roman *campagna* unfolding in the distance. Located about 20 miles northeast of Rome, Tivoli—known in ancient times as Tibur—was celebrated by Virgil and Horace for the spectacular beauty of its setting, and was also renowned from the sixteenth century for its magnificent classical ruins. By Wilson's time, Tivoli had become a key destination for artists as well as visitors on the Grand Tour, and he seems to have made a number of excursions there during his Roman stay. Tivoli's allure for Wilson must have been greatly enhanced by the fact that the great seventeenth-century classical landscape artists, Claude Lorrain and Gaspard Dughet, had themselves gone there to sketch, and incorporated its scenery into their painted works.

The present picture is one of several known versions of *Tivoli: The Cascatelli Grandi and the Villa of Maecenas*, of which the best-known is now preserved in the National Gallery of Ireland. That picture and its companion, *Tivoli: The Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna*, also now in Dublin, were purchased from Wilson in Rome by Joseph Henry of Straffan, County Kildare in 1752, thus making them Wilson's earliest known paintings of actual Italian scenery.[1] Like the version in Dublin, the present picture is painted in an unusually broad and lively manner, especially apparent in the distant view of the *campagna*, where the landscape forms are only sketchily indicated, and the handle of the brush was used to quickly scratch through the thinly applied wet paint, giving a sense of texture and depth (detail, overleaf). Wilson is known to have used this technique in only one other instance—*Tivoli: The Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna*, the second picture acquired by Joseph Henry in 1752, which would suggest that the present picture is of a similar early date.[2]

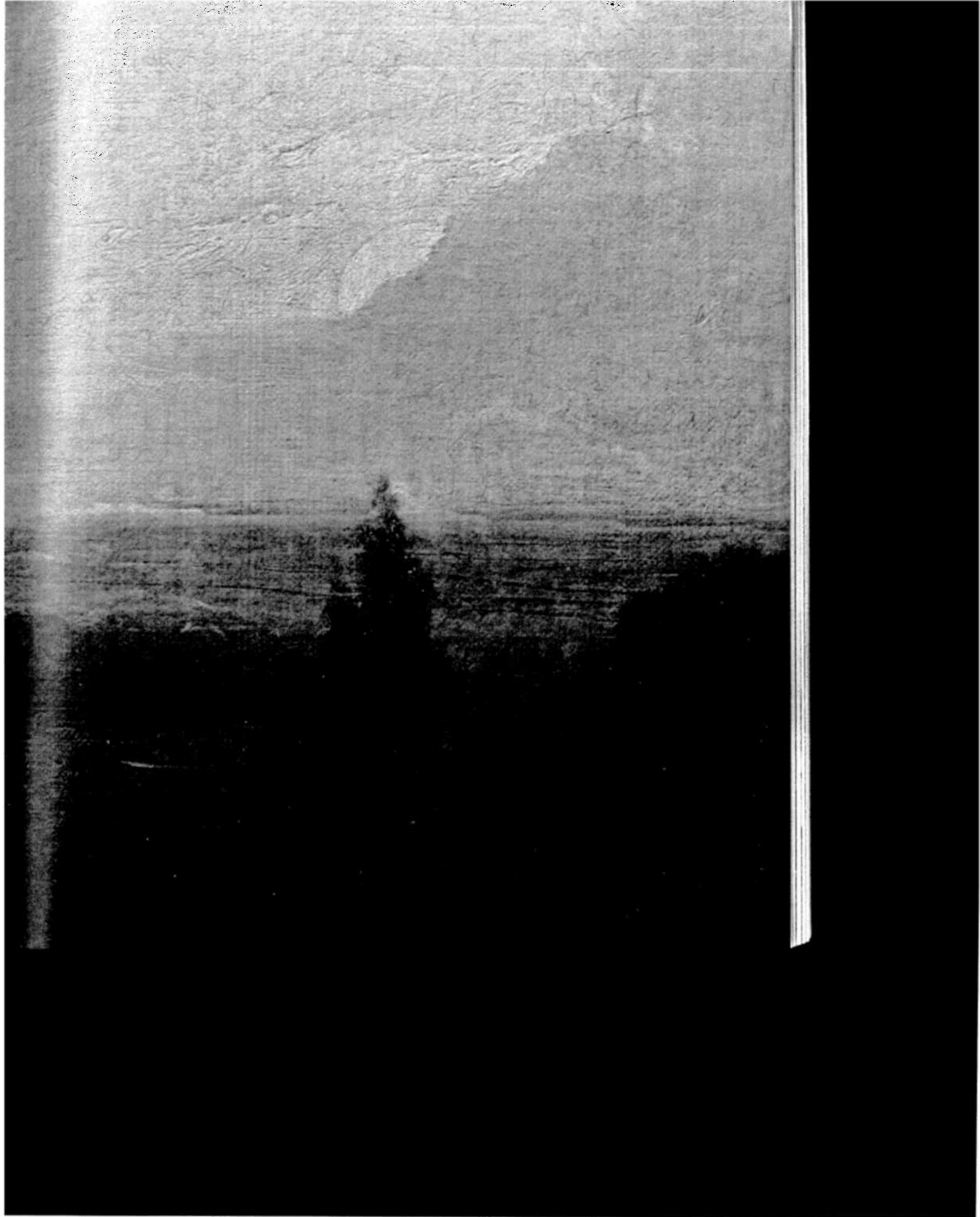
As in the version in Dublin, Wilson has shown an artist seated on a folding stool at a portable easel, painting the scene before him.[3] Solkin and others have suggested that Wilson may have executed the companion pieces at Dublin at least partly on the spot,[4] and one wonders if the present picture—comparable



to them in modest scale and spontaneous brushwork—might have been as well.[3] Although the issue may never be resolved, Wilson's close attention to nature is here especially evident in the treatment of the sky, where the movements of the clouds and fleeting effects of light from the setting sun—just beginning to disappear behind a cloud—have been captured with extraordinary freshness and truth to appearances. At the same time, the harmonious massing of the clouds vis-à-vis the landscape, in which a noble ruin of ancient Rome is silhouetted against a majestic sunset sky, makes this one of Wilson's most poetically inspired visions of Italy.[6]

Turner himself owned a version of *Tivoli: The Cascatelli Grandi and the Villa of Maecenas,* which entered the Tate Gallery in 1856 as part of the Turner Bequest. Formerly thought to be a copy he made after Wilson in his early years, it is now given to Wilson or his studio.[7] A drawing of the composition formerly in the collection of Sir Thomas Barlow and now in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, is specifically related to the present picture in its inclusion of the peasant woman holding a baby who observes the artist at work, the shaping and location of some of the clouds, and, most notably, the placement of the sun.[8]

1. Another, larger autograph version, thought by Constable to date from Wilson's Roman period as well, is in the Dulwich Picture Gallery (oil on canvas, 28¾ by 38 inches; Constable, pl. 117a). For this and other known versions of the composition, see Constable, p. 225.
2. That the picture comes from a private Roman collection, having been handed down within the family for as long as is known, is suggestive of Italian origins.
3. Constable noted that Wilson's pupil Farington wrote in his diary (upon seeing the version now at Dulwich) that Wilson had "represented himself with an Easel painting" (Constable, p. 225).
4. Solkin, pp. 182–83; B. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific: In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, New Haven, 1992, pp. 111–12; E. Einberg, "Tivoli: the Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna," in *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. A. Wilton and I. Bignamimi, exh. cat., Tate Gallery, London, 1996, p. 143; Conisbee, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
5. Both companion pieces in Dublin measure 19⅝ by 26 inches.
6. Thought in Wilson's time to be the Villa of Maecenas, the great patron of Virgil and Horace, the structure has since been identified as part of a temple complex dedicated to Hercules Victor.
7. London, Tate Gallery, no. 5538; see M. Butlin and E. Joll, *The Paintings of J. M. W. Turner*, New Haven & London, 1984, vol. I, p. 314, no. 545 (ill. vol. II, pl. 538).
8. Black chalk, grey wash with white heightening on prepared paper, 10⅝ by 16¾ inches (27.5 by 43 cm.), inv. D 5023/49; ill. *English Watercolours and Other Drawings: The Helen Barlow Bequest*, Edinburgh, 1979, fig. 541.



5.

Richard Wilson

The Temple of Clitumnus, circa 1754

oil on canvas
19 by 29 inches (48.9 by 73.7 cm.)

Private Collection, New York

PROVENANCE

John Hawkins (1761–1841) Bignor Park, Sussex; By descent to his son, Christopher Henry Thomas Hawkins, London (sale Christie's, 11 May 1896, lot 27; bt. McLean for £20); T.W. Bacon, London (inv. No. 115); Thence by descent, until 2001

EXHIBITED

London, British Institution, 1824, no. 176 (lent by John Hawkins)

London, British Institution, 1844, no. 164 (lent by J. H. Hawkins)

Leeds, *National Exhibition of Works of Art at Leeds*, 1868, no. 1189 (lent by J. H. Hawkins)

Birmingham, Museum and Art Gallery, *Exhibition of Pictures by Richard Wilson and his Circle*, 1948–49, no. 4 (lent by T. W. Bacon)

London, Tate Gallery, *Pictures by Richard Wilson and his Circle*, 1949, no. 3 (lent by T. W. Bacon)

SELECTED REFERENCES

Constable, pp. 82, 109, 197 (ill. pl. 75b).

J. J. Emerick, *The Tempietto del Clitunno near Spoleto*, University Park, 1998, vol. 2, p. 121, n. 22.

Located along the old Via Flaminia near Spoleto in Umbria is the so-called Temple of Clitumnus, close by the river of that same name. Although by Wilson's time the small structure had long served as Christian church, it was then believed to have originally been the ancient Roman shrine dedicated to the oracular diety, Jupiter Clitumnus, which had been described by Pliny the Younger as lying next to a spring at the river's source.[1] Such classical associations made the temple a popular destination for eighteenth-century visitors on the Grand Tour, and Wilson must have visited there on his journey from Venice to Rome with William Lock of Norbury and Thomas Jenkins late in 1751.[2] No outdoor sketches of the site by Wilson survive, but an etching by Giuseppe Vasi reproducing a finished drawing by Wilson, published in Rome in 1753, must represent his earliest known treatment of the subject (fig. 3).[3] While the articulation of space via horizontal bands recalls the precedent of Claude, the temple itself, shown from a three-quarter angle, is based on Piranesi's well-known etching of the structure, published in 1748.[4] Other details—such as the peasant lounging by the water in the foreground, and the gnarled, blasted tree trunks—are suggestive of Vernet, whom Wilson met soon after arriving in Rome, and who, according to Farington, encouraged him to become a landscape painter.[5] In its eclectic mix of elements, the image relates to other of Wilson's works from his first year in Rome, such as those painted for Ralph Howard in 1752.[6]

By comparison, the present picture is more nearly Claudean, reflecting Wilson's study of the French artist's landscapes then in Roman collections. The balanced, architectonic design, clearly articulated space via parallel planes, and tranquil, Arcadian mood are indebted to Claude's example, as is the broad panorama of gracefully sloping, distant

mountains and the rendering of the foliage as gently-rounded, blurred masses silhouetted against the sky. Even such motifs as the broken columns scattered in the foreground and cows drinking from the water in the middle distance are derived from Claude, suggesting Wilson's prolonged and detailed study of the older artist's work. In its pronounced Claudean accent, *The Temple of Clitumnus* relates to Wilson's Roman production from 1753 onward, as Constable noted.[7]

Securely traceable only to 1824, when lent by John Hawkins to the British Institution, the present picture might be identifiable with that version belonging to James Paine II (1745–1829), son of the famous English neo-classical architect, which sold at Christie's on 28 June 1814.[8] In the catalogue of that sale is a quote about the picture there attributed to Wilson himself:

> The one is scenery taken from the long-famed Clitumnus, near the once mystic temple of Juno which I have herein restored from its state in ruins, as seen near the source gently cascading into the streamlet, from whence flows that classic river. The period of time described produces the effects of those lights, &c. which succeeds the dawn of day, interspersed with the vapours and subdued tints that accompany the morning atmosphere.[9]

Although the *Temple of Clitumnus* owes much to the art of Claude, Wilson's remarks reveal his sensitivity to transient effects of outdoor light and atmosphere, to which his many on-the-spot drawings, executed during the Roman period, also attest. Wilson's restoration of the temple "from its state in ruins" may relate to the idealized reconstructions of antique buildings which sometimes appear in paintings by Claude,[10] but Wilson was also likely thinking of Palladio's reconstructions of the Temple of Clitumnus from *I Quattro libri dell' architettura*, two of which were in fact reproduced in the same book as Vasi's etching after Wilson's drawing of the site.[11] Restorations of ruins are rare in Wilson's work, but another instance, also from the 1750s, is seen in *The Lake of Nemi* or *Speculum Dianae*, which shows the Temple of Diana in pristine state.[12] This latter picture was acquired in 1758 by Henry Hoare for Stourhead, where the Temple of Flora had been erected in 1744. Set above a natural spring within the gardens, its design was based by the architect, Henry Flitcroft, on the Temple of Clitumnus, and was surely known to Wilson before his departure for Rome.

1. Pliny the Younger described the river and its sanctuary in his *Letters*, VIII, 8, and the river is mentioned in poems by Propertius, Virgil and Statius. For the building, which in fact served from its beginnings in the 4th century as a Christian church, see Emerick's book cited above.
2. For their route, see Ford, p. 19. The Temple of Clitumnus is located along the Via Flaminia between Foligno and Terni.
3. Wilson's drawing is untraced.
4. Emerick, *op. cit.*, p. 122. Piranesi's etching is plate 26 in the series entitled *Antichità Romane de' tempi della repubblica e de' primi Imperatori.*
5. Ford, p. 22.
6. For these, see B. Ford, "Wilson in Rome. I—The Wicklow Wilsons," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 93, no. 578 (May 1951), pp. 157–67. The landscape background of the print, with the tall hill sloping down from the left, and a smaller distant view confined to the right, is similar to that seen in the Wicklow *Summons of Cincinnatus* (ill. ibid., fig. 18).
7. Constable, p. 82.
8. The picture was purchased at that sale by a Mr. Gray of Leadenhall Street. In the same sale was a companion piece, also belonging to Paine, representing the Bridge at Rimini (lot 83). The Christie's catalogue states that both pictures were "purchased from the artist's easel by the present proprietor, who has never before allowed them to pass out of his possession." Given the birth date of James Paine II (1745), it would seem more likely that the present picture—if it is indeed that which appeared at the Christie's 1814 sale—would have been purchased from Wilson by Paine's father (1717–1789). For other versions of the composition, traced and untraced, see Constable, pp. 197–98.
9. Quoted from *The Getty Provenance Index*, lot 0082 from Sale Catalogue Br-1205 (Lugt 8545).

Fig. 3 Giuseppe Vasi after Richard Wilson, *View of the Temple and River of Clitumnus*. Etching from Ridolfino Venuti, *Osservazioni sopra il fiume Clitunno*... Rome, 1753, plate VI. ©The Trustees of the British Museum

10. I. G. Kennedy, "Claude and Architecture," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 35 (1972), pp. 260–83. Wilson also could have known the more archeologically correct 'restorations' of Roman structures which sometimes appear in Poussin and Gaspard Dughet [R.C. Smith, "The Ruins of Rome," *Expedition*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Winter 1961), p. 26].

11. At least nine editions of Palladio's *Quattro Libri* had been published in London before the middle of the eighteenth century. The reproductions of Palladio's reconstructions in Venuti's book appear on plates IV and V. Brian Lukacher kindly suggested the connection with Palladio.

12. Trustees of Jane, Lucy and Charles Hoare; Solkin, no. 77.

6.

Richard Wilson

Lake Nemi and Genzano from the Terrace of the Capuchin Monastery

oil on canvas
$16^{7}/_{8}$ by $21^{1}/_{8}$ inches (42.9 by 53.7 cm.)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of George A. Hearn, 1905, 05.32.3

PROVENANCE

William Lock, Norbury Park, near Leatherhead, Surrey; William Parsons; Benjamin Booth, London (by 1790); Reverend Richard Sawley Booth (d.1807); By descent to his sister, Marianne, Lady Ford, London (by 1814); ? Richard Ford (from 1849 until at least 1851); ? Hon. G.A.F. Cavendish-Bentinck (sale, Christie's, London, 11 July 1891, lot 537: "An Italian Lake Scene, with figures on a terrace and buildings on a rock in the background. 17 in. by 20 1/2 in."; bt. Lesser); George A. Hearn, New York (until 1905)

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

London, British Institution, 1814, no. 174 (as Lake of Nemi, lent by Lady Ford)

? London, British Institution, 1851, no. 139 (as Genzano and the Lake of Nemi, lent by Richard Ford)

SELECTED REFERENCES

B. Ford, "The Dartmouth Collection of Drawings by Richard Wilson," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 90, No. 549 (December 1948), p. 345.

Ford, p. 61.

Constable, pp. 35–36, 41, 82–83, 110–11, 125, 208–09; pl. 95a.

W. G. Constable, "Richard Wilson: Some Pentimenti," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 96, No. 614 (May 1954), p. 147.

D. Sutton and A. Clements, in *An Italian Sketchbook by Richard Wilson, R.A.*, London, 1968, vol. 2, pp. 19, 28–29 (ill. fig. 26).

Solkin, p. 171.

K. Baetjer, *British Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1575–1875*, New York, 2009, no. 25, pp. 57–59 (color ill., p. 57).

Taken from the terrace of the Capuchin monastery near the hilltop town of Genzano about 20 kilometers southwest of Rome, this view shows the town with the Palazzo Sforza Cesarini in the middle distance, the southern end of Lake Nemi to the left, and a view of Monte Circeo and the Mediterranean beyond. A volcanic lake surrounded by the wooded slopes of the Alban Hills, the spectacularly sited Lake Nemi had been extolled by Virgil and Ovid, and was also famed for the sanctuary of the goddess Diana on its northern shore. The lake and its surroundings had attracted Claude Lorrain and Gaspard Dughet in the seventeenth century, and were portrayed by Wilson in many and varied views throughout his career.

The Metropolitan picture is one of at least three known versions of this subject,[1] to which two remarkable drawings are closely related. The first, an exquisite plein-air pencil drawing in Wilson's Italian sketchbook of 1754 inscribed "Gensano/ from the Capuchin," shows the palazzo and other buildings in greater detail and at closer range than in the Metropolitan picture (fig. 4).[2] Dated in the same year is a splendid, highly finished sheet, *Capucins at Gensano*, one of a series of views of Rome and its environs which Wilson made for William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth, who had visited Rome on the Grand Tour between 1752 and 1754 (fig. 5).[3] With some variations, most notably in the trees, foreground figures and angle of the terrace, the

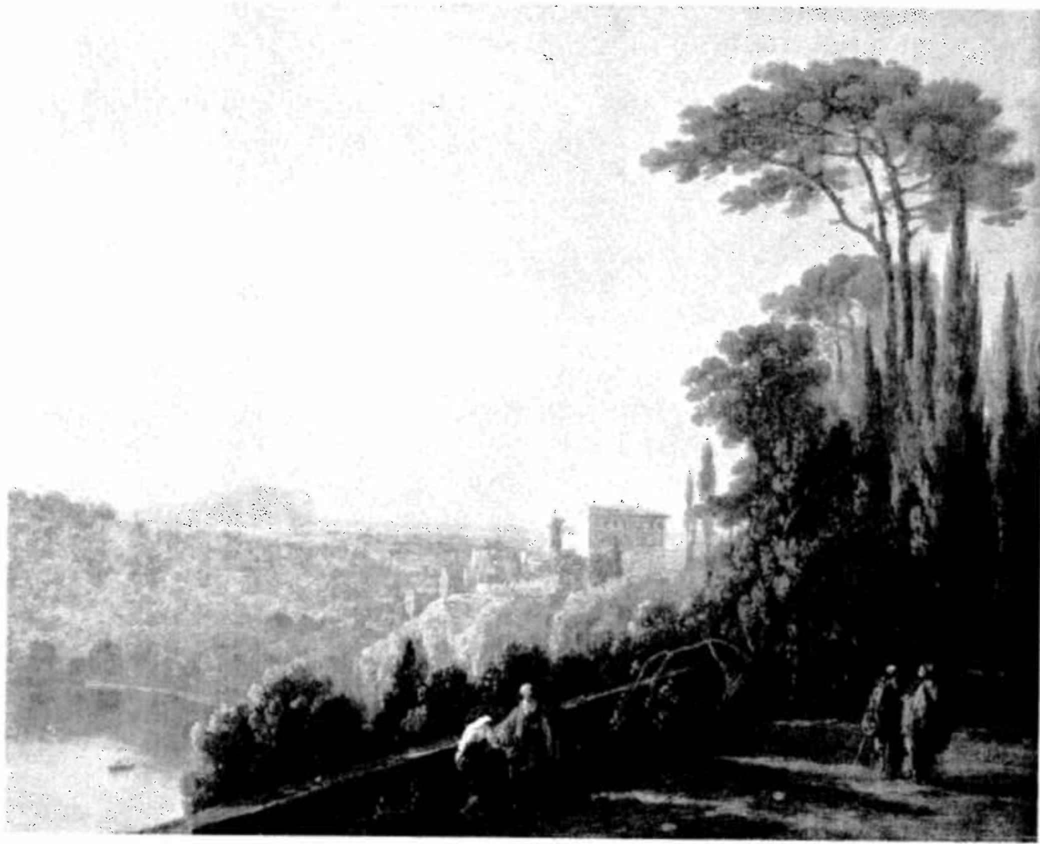


Fig. 4 Richard Wilson, *"Gensano from the Capuchin,"* from *An Italian Sketchbook*, 1754, graphite with white chalk on paper, 11 1/8 by 8 1/4 inches (28.1 by 21 cm). Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection (B1977.14.359, fol. 6r)

Metropolitan picture follows the Dartmouth sheet in many of its essentials, which led Constable to propose that it was based directly on the drawing, or a replica after it.[4] Although Constable speculated that it may have been painted in Italy, Solkin and others have assigned *Lake Nemi and Genzano from the Terrace of the Capuchin Monastery* to Wilson's post-Italian period.[5] This landscape would indeed seem to align itself with the Italian views which Wilson painted soon after his return to England, in which the glowing light of the late afternoon sun infuses the colors with warmth as it evokes a feeling of nostalgic reverie.[6]

The painting's earliest recorded owner was William Lock of Norbury (1732–1810), a wealthy young Englishman who had given Wilson a ride in his carriage from Venice to Rome late in 1751. Many of the sketches Wilson made along the way are traceable back to Lock, who also owned two other pictures by Wilson, and might have commissioned the present one.[7] By 1790, it had passed—via Wilson's friend and patron, the comedian William Parsons—to Benjamin Booth (1732–1807), a director of the East India Company who formed a remarkable collection of some fifty works by Wilson.[8] The picture was later inherited by Booth's daughter, Lady Ford, in whose possession it was in 1820 when Hastings made an etching after it.[9] There is no known record of when the picture left the Ford family collection, nor is there certain evidence of its whereabouts until acquired, probably in the latter part of the nineteenth century, by the prominent New York merchant, George A. Hearn. One of the foremost art collectors of his day, Hearn (1835–1913) was a trustee and important benefactor to the Metropolitan Museum. He donated some 130 paintings to its collection, including works by Constable, Gainsborough, Reynolds and the present Wilson.[10]

1. For the other versions of the composition, all now untraced, see Constable, p. 209 and Baetjer, *op. cit.*, p. 59 and n. 5.
2. Wilson still had this notebook in his possession in 1765 (C. White, *English Landscape 1630–1850. Drawings, Prints & Books from the Paul Mellon Collection*, exh. cat., Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, 1977, p. 11).
3. This important early commission was likely secured for Wilson through Thomas Jenkins, an artist, dealer and antiquary with whom he was sharing lodgings in the Piazza di Spagna in 1753. Only 25 drawings from the original set of some 68 sheets which Wilson made for Dartmouth are known today.
4. Constable, pp. 36–37. The Dartmouth drawings were sent to England in 1755 while Wilson was still in Italy [M. Cormack, "Selection II: British Watercolors and Drawings from the Museum's Collection," *Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design*, Vol. 58 (April 1972), p. 23].

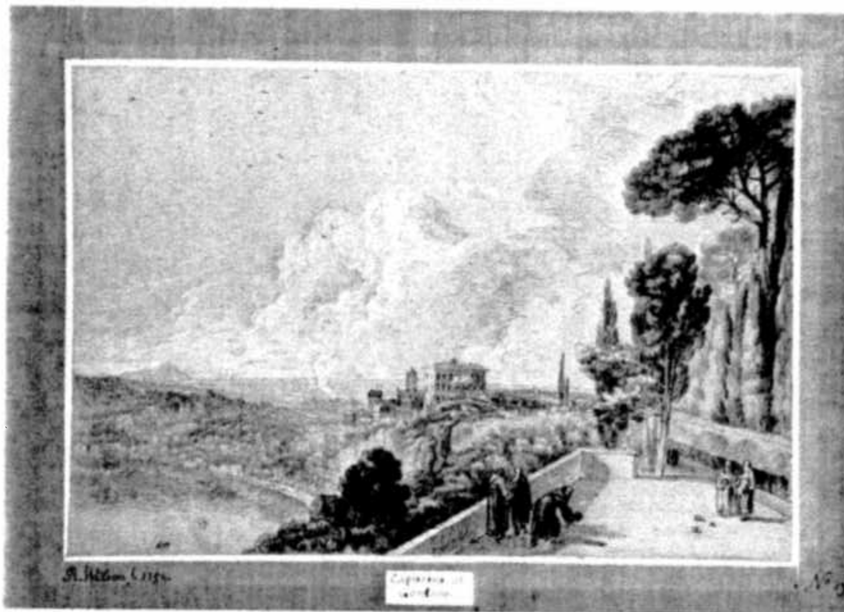


Fig. 5 Richard Wilson, *Capucins at Gensano*, 1754, chalk, stump, white heightening on wove blue paper, 11 1/4 by 16 5/8 inches (28.7 by 42.2 cm.). Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Anonymous Gift (70.118.60). Photo: Erik Gould, Courtesy of the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

5. Constable, pp. 82–83. Solkin (p. 171) dated the picture to the 1760s; Sutton (*op. cit.*, p. 19) to after Wilson's return to England; and Baetjer (*op. cit.*, p. 59) to just before or soon after Wilson's return.
6. Paul Spencer-Longhurst has pointed out that the Metropolitan picture is close in dimensions to one of a pair which may have been exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1761 (nos. 137–38); these appeared at Sotheby's, 18 November 1987, lot 69; see also Baetjer, *op. cit.*, p. 59, n.5.
7. Baetjer, ibid., p. 59, who also suggests it could have been a gift from Wilson to Lock. The other two pictures by Wilson belonging to Lock were a portrait of Lock painted in Venice, and a *Celadon and Amelia*, which Constable tentatively identified as that exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1765 (Constable, pp. 25, 41). For drawings associated with Wilson's journey with Lock, see Solkin, nos. 16–20.
8. Constable, p. 123. In an undated list of his collection, Booth cited the picture as having belonged to "Locke"; in another list compiled in 1790–91 it is recorded as having earlier been with Parsons (Constable, p. 208).
9. Lady Ford's red wax seal appears on the painting's stretcher. For the etching, see T. Hastings, *Etchings, from the works of Ric. Wilson . . .* London, 1825, p. 18 and pl. 17.
10. See *The George A. Hearn Gift to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in the City of New York*, New York, 1906.

7.

Richard Wilson

The Destruction of the Children of Niobe, 1760

oil on canvas
58 by 74 inches (147.3 by 188 cm.)

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Paul Mellon Collection, B1977.14.81

PROVENANCE

Bought by William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland (1721–1765), 1760; William Henry, Duke of Gloucester (1743–1805), by 1790 (sale, Christie's, 17 May 1806, lot 21; bought in); William Frederick, Duke of Gloucester (1776–1834), 1814; Wynn Ellis (1790–1875), by 1843 (sale, Christie's, 6 May 1876, lot 135; bt. Agnew for £451 10s.); D. Bromilow (acquired from Agnew's, 1876); Thence by descent (sale, Bonham's, London 4 May 1961, lot 92; bt. Agnew); Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon (acquired in 1961)

EXHIBITED

London, Society of Artists, 1760, no. 72

London, British Institution, 1814, no. 206 (lent by the Duke of Gloucester)

London, British Institution, 1843, no. 152 (lent by Wynn Ellis)

Manchester, *Art Treasures of the United Kingdom*, 1857, no. 32 (lent by Wynn Ellis)

Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, *Painting in England 1700–1850. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon*, 1963, no. 19

London, Royal Academy of Arts, *Painting in England 1700–1850 from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon*, 1964–65, no. 301

New Haven, Yale University Art Gallery, *Painting in England 1700–1850 from the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon*, 1965, no. 227

London, Tate Gallery, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, 1982–83, no. 87; also traveled to Cardiff, National Museum of Wales; New Haven, Yale Center for British Art

New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, *Nobleness and Grandeur: Forging Historical Landscape in Britain, 1760–1850*, 2005

SELECTED REFERENCES

"Richard Wilson's Niobe," Editorial, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 85, No. 498 (September 1944), pp. 211–12.

Constable, pp. 71, 86–87, 160–63.

W. G. Constable, "Richard Wilson: A Second Addendum," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 104, No. 179 (April 1962), pp. 138, 141.

J. Burke, *English Art 1714–1800*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 226–28.

Solkin, pp. 16–17, 59–66.

The Destruction of the Children of Niobe is widely considered the key picture of Wilson's career and a landmark in the history of British landscape painting. Probably begun in 1759, it was shown in the following year at the first exhibition of the Society of Artists, of which Wilson had been a founder-member. Conceived in a very different vein from the many serene, Claudean views of Italy and England which Wilson painted after his return to London, the picture is based on the dramatic story of Niobe as recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (VI: 165–212). Niobe, queen of Thebes, exalted herself above the goddess Latona, boasting that she was richer in her fourteen children than the goddess in her mere two. Angered by this insult, Latona complained to her

Fig. 6 Richard Wilson, *Niobe and her Child*, from *An Italian Sketchbook* of 1752, leaf 35. Pencil on paper, 8 by 5⅝ inches (20.3 by 14.2 cm.). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, E.3586-1922. V & A Images/ Victoria and Albert Museum

son and daughter, Apollo and Diana, who took revenge by killing all of Niobe's children with their bows and arrows. Stricken with grief, Niobe turned to stone. In the poem, Ovid lingers over the death of the final child, the youngest daughter, whom the distraught Niobe tries in vain to protect:

The last, with eager care the mother veil'd,/ Behind her spreading mantle close conceal'd,/ And with her body guarded, as a shield./ Only for this, this youngest, I implore,/ Grant me this one request, I ask no more;/ O grant me this! she passionately cries:/ But while she speaks, the destin'd virgin dies.[1]

Wilson highlights this terrible moment in the story by showing the figure of Niobe trying to hide the girl in the center of a vast and turbulent land-

scape, as Apollo aims the fatal arrow from above. The blasted trees, storm-tossed sea, lightening bolt striking the mountain, and fire raging in the distant town serve to emphasize the violence of the narrative. In its harrowing subject, heightened pathos, and the great destructive force of nature it depicts, the *Niobe* may reflect something of the contemporary taste for terror which had found widespread expression in poetry by the middle of the century.[2]

Wilson based the image of Niobe and her child on the celebrated ancient statue which he had sketched at the Villa Medici in Rome, and would have been well-known to former visitors on the Grand Tour. (fig. 6).[3] In the pictorial organization, formal vocabulary, and expressiveness of its landscape, the picture shows Wilson's allegiance to the great tradition of continental landscape painting, especially the dramatic views of Rosa, Dughet and Vernet.[4] His choice of an Ovidian subject, in which small figures enact the narrative within an extensive landscape setting, is indebted to this tradition as well, particularly as seen in the work of Poussin, and more importantly, Claude Lorrain.

As Wilson's first monumental landscape to be presented in a public forum, the *Niobe* proved an enormous success. Much admired by visitors to the exhibition, it was acquired by no less than the Duke of Cumberland, whose nephew, George William Frederick, would soon be crowned George III. The engraving after it by Woollett, published by Boydell in 1761, was hugely popular, earning a profit considered remarkable at the time and bringing Wilson much renown. As Solkin observed, with the *Niobe,* Wilson established his reputation as an accomplished exponent of the 'Grand Style' of landscape painting, worthy of comparison with the great continental masters, past and present.[5] More significantly, by combining landscape with history painting, Wilson introduced a new category of subject into British art—the historical landscape. In doing so, he not only elevated landscape painting to a new level of seriousness in Britain, but also paved the way for the great Romantic artists of the next generation, Constable, Turner, and Martin.

1. Quoted from *Metamorphoses by Ovid, translated into English verse under the direction of Sir Samuel Garth by John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison . . . and other eminent hands,* London, 1727.
2. For example, James Thomson's *The Seasons,* of which the first complete edition appeared in 1730. Wilson must have also been aware of Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* published in 1757, in which the emotion of terror is set forth as the basis of the sublime. For an interpretation of Wilson's *Niobe* as an essay in the sublime as conceived of at the time, see S.H. Monk, *The Sublime,* Ann Arbor, 1960 ed., pp. 196–97.
3. The marble is now in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. For other drawings associated with this version of the *Niobe,* see Constable, p. 163, and cat. no. 8.
4. Solkin, p. 201. Wilson might have known Poussin's lightning-struck *Stormy Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe,* (Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt), which was in England by 1733. He surely would have seen Salvator Rosa's dramatic landscape in *The Finding of Moses,* which was hanging in the Colonna Palace in Rome throughout the eighteenth century (Detroit, The Detroit Institute of Arts).
5. Solkin, p. 201.

8.

Richard Wilson

The Destruction of the Children of Niobe, circa 1765 (?)

oil on canvas
17 15/16 inches by 24 1/4 inches (45.6 by 61.6 cm.)

Private Collection, New York

PROVENANCE

Arthur Morrison, Esq., High Barn, Chalfont St. Peter, Bucks [sale, Sotheby's, London, 19–20 March 1946, lot 251: "Finished Study for the Destruction of Niobe's Children (formerly in the Tate Gallery and destroyed during the war)." Bt. Chilvers]; Dr. Richard Levy, New Orleans

EXHIBITED

London, Tate Gallery, 1930 (lent by Arthur Morrison)
Hull, Ferens Art Gallery, *Exhibition of Works by Richard Wilson, R.A.*, 1936, no. 9 (lent by Arthur Morrison)

SELECTED RELATED REFERENCES

"Richard Wilson's Niobe," Editorial, *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 85, No. 498 (September 1944), pp. 211–15.
Constable, pp. 160–63.
W. G. Constable, "Richard Wilson: A Second Addendum," *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 104, No. 709 (April 1962), p. 141.
Solkin, pp. 201–02, n. 3.

The present picture is one of a number of versions of *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe* which Sir George Beaumont gifted to the National Gallery, London, in 1826, and which was destroyed by enemy action during World War II. The Beaumont composition represents one of four major interpretations of the theme painted by Wilson from circa 1760 to circa 1765, the others being: that exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1760, and now at the Yale Center for British Art (cat. no. 7); the so-called Bridgewater House *Niobe* in the Duke of Sutherland's collection; and the picture formerly in the collection of Lord Davies, now on loan to the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.[1] The chronological sequence of Wilson's various treatments of the theme has yet to be fully resolved. On an engraving after the Beaumont picture published in 1792, it is described as being "From the first picture on that subject [Niobe] painted by Richard Wilson Esq., R.A." Based on this and his assessment of the picture's style, Constable concluded that the Beaumont composition was likely the earliest of the four,[2] but Solkin suggested it may have been the last, datable to "as late as the middle sixties."[3]

The present picture was once part of the extensive collection of Wilson's work belonging to Arthur Morrison, Esq. In the catalogue of his sale on 20 March 1946, it is described as a "Finished Study for the Destruction of Niobe's Children (formerly in the Tate Gallery and destroyed during the war)." The picture's small scale vis-à-vis the Beaumont picture (and indeed, in relation to all the other known versions) is not inconsistent with that of a finished oil study, nor are its minor variations in relation to it, such as the outlines of the clouds and shaping of the tree branches. However, since Wilson is not otherwise known to have made preliminary studies in oil on canvas, it would seem more likely that the present picture was intended as small-scale replica.

This picture was exhibited next to the Beaumont *Niobe* at the Tate Gallery in 1930, along with some

twenty other Wilsons then in the collection of Arthur Morrison.[5] It was also included in the exhibition of Wilson's work at the Ferens Art Gallery in Hull in 1936. Curiously, the picture was unknown to Constable in the original or from photographs.[6]

A number of drawings have been associated with the various Niobe compositions, of which two were used exclusively for the Beaumont version: a sketch after an antique herm from Wilson's 1754 Roman sketchbook,[7] and a study for the entire landscape setting in the Victoria & Albert Museum, executed in the unaccustomed (for Wilson) medium of bodycolor on paper, of which the attribution to Wilson has been often doubted, but which Solkin tentatively endorsed.[8] Two figural studies, which Wilson used for both the Beaumont and Yale pictures, are also known: a black and white chalk drawing for the strongly foreshortened recumbent male figure in the center of both compositions in the National Museum of Wales,[9] and a pencil sketch of Niobe and her clinging child which Wilson made in 1752 after the famous ancient statue then in the Villa Medici, Rome (fig. 6). As Solkin noted, Wilson's choice of a marble source accords with Ovid's account of Niobe turning to stone, an allusion undoubtedly calculated to demonstrate his erudition.[10]

1. For the four *Niobe* compositions and their many versions, traced and untraced, see Constable, 1953, as cited above.
2. Ibid., pp. 87, 160–61, and Constable, 1962, p. 141.
3. Solkin, pp. 201–02, n. 3. Joseph Burke also considered the Beaumont picture the last of the *Niobes* (J. Burke, *English Art 1714–1800*, Oxford, 1976, p. 227, n.1).
4. The Beaumont picture measured 116 by 167 cm., well over twice the size of the present version.
5. The picture was one of 159 from the Morrison collection shown at the Tate in consideration of a possible bequest, which did not, however, materialize. No catalogue accompanied the exhibition.
6. In citing the present picture, Constable noted that it was "reported not to be by Wilson" (Constable, p.163).
7. See D. Sutton and A. Clements, *An Italian Sketchbook by Richard Wilson, RA*, London, 1968, p. 48, no. 27.
8. Solkin, p. 200, no. 86, with illustration.
9. Constable, pl. 21a.
10. Solkin, p. 60. A kneeling female figure in a study in the British Museum (1847-7-23-107) appears in reverse in both the Beaumont and Yale pictures (Constable, p. 163 and Solkin, p. 199, with ill.).

9.
Richard Wilson

'The White Monk,' circa 1760–62

oil on canvas
26 by 31½ inches (66 by 80 cm.)
Signed on boulder, lower left: "W"

Toledo Museum of Art. Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment,
Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey, 1958, 1958.38

PROVENANCE

Possibly Sir C. Robinson; Possibly Lord Poltimore; James Orrock; 1st Viscount Leverhulme; Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight, Cheshire; Acquired from Agnew, London, 1958

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

London, National Gallery, Millbank, *Loan Exhibition of Works by Richard Wilson*, 1925, no. 29

Manchester, City Art Gallery, *Richard Wilson Loan Exhibition*, 1925, no. 63

Birmingham, City Museum and Art Gallery, *Richard Wilson and his Circle*, 1948–49, no. 57

London, National Gallery, Millbank, *Richard Wilson and his Circle*, January, 1949, no. 56

London, Tate Gallery, *Richard Wilson: The Landscape of Reaction*, 1982–83, no. 103; also traveled to Cardiff, National Museum of Wales; and New Haven, Yale Center for British Art

New Haven, Yale Center for British Art, *Great British Paintings from American Collections: Holbein to Hockney*, 2001–02, no. 20; also traveled to San Marino (CA), Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens

SELECTED REFERENCES

Constable, pp. 119, 227 (I, 1), pl. 122a.

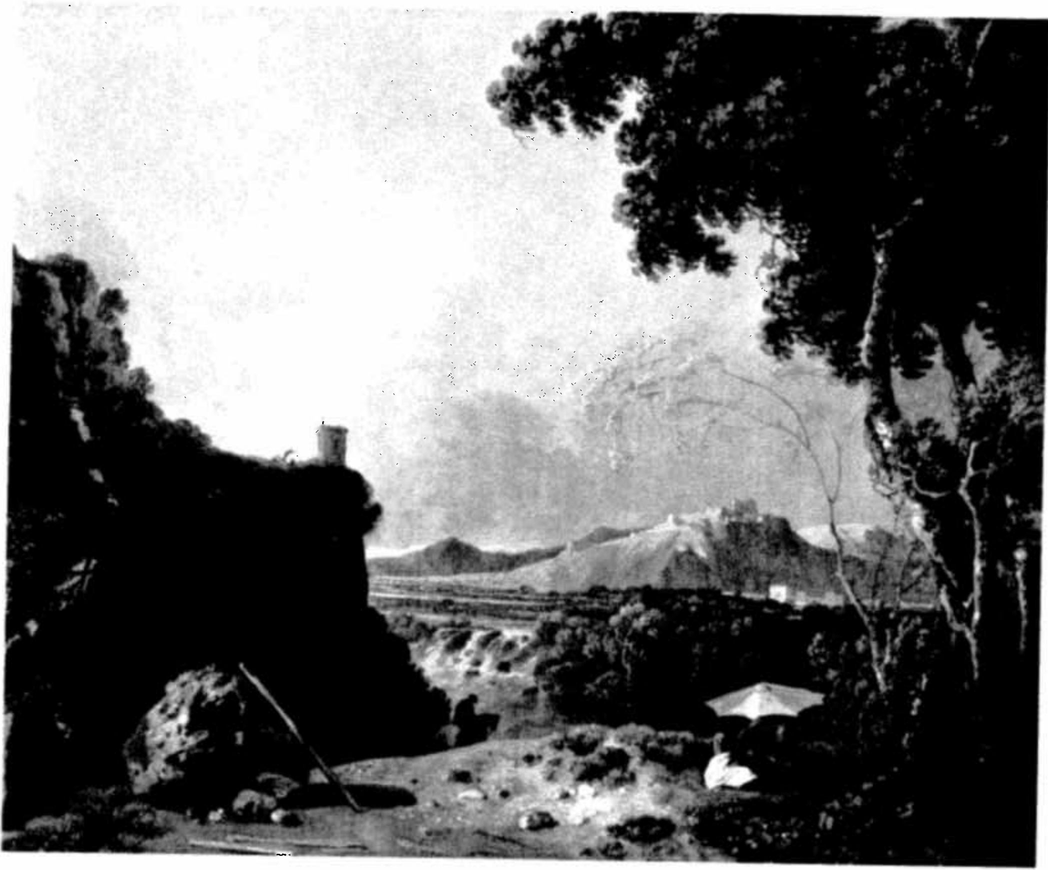
The Toledo Museum of Art, European Paintings, Toledo, 1976, p. 168 (ill., pl. 317).

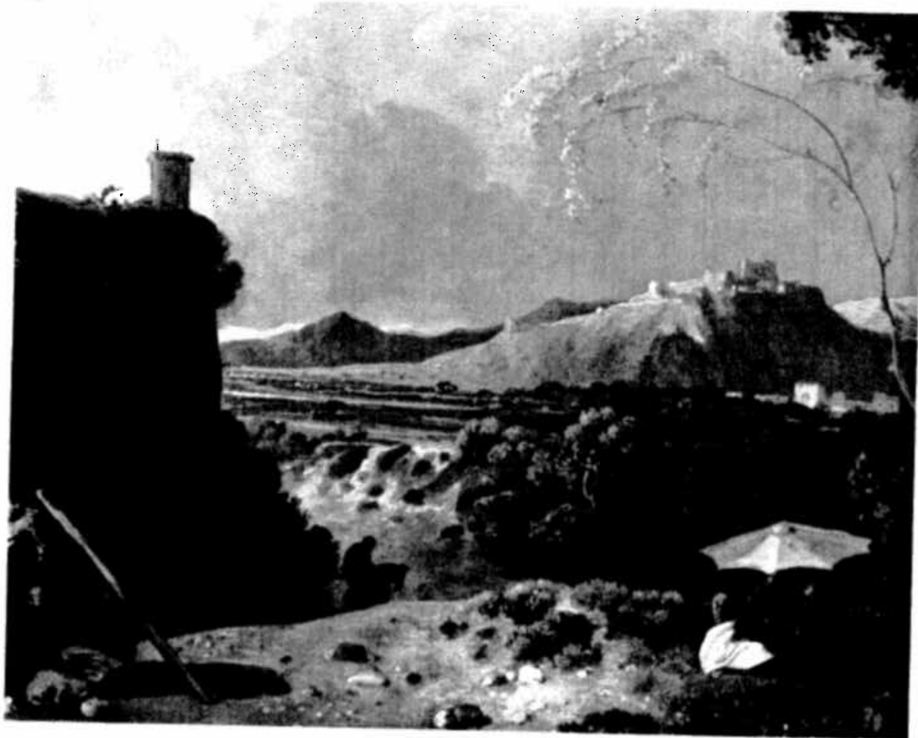
Solkin, pp. 66–70 (color ill., pl. VI).

D. Sutton, "A Meditative Love of Nature: The Richard Wilson Exhibition," *Apollo*, Vol. 117, No. 251 (January 1983), p. 43 (ill., fig. 10).

Perhaps Wilson's most popular landscape composition, *'The White Monk'* was much repeated by Wilson and his studio, and by various later followers and imitators. Of the more than twenty known versions of the subject, the Toledo picture is among the most highly finished, and is also thought to be the earliest autograph example, datable to circa 1760–62.[1] While many versions depict monks praying before a crucifix on the rocky promontory in the left middle distance, the Toledo picture shows what appear to be two monks or pilgrims kneeling in devotion in front of a gabled chapel. On a stage-like plateau in the foreground, two young lovers are seated under a parasol; behind them unfolds a magnificent prospect of waterfalls, woods, and a distant range of mountains, toward which a horseman slowly rides.[2] In its breadth of design, exquisite balance, and gracefully echoing forms, *'The White Monk'* is among Wilson's most accomplished essays in 'Grand Manner' landscape.

Solkin interpreted *'The White Monk'* as an illustration of the philosophic notion of *concordia discors*, which posited a universe structured by God as the "harmonious union of opposing elements or forces." He pointed, for example, to the contrast between the dark, rugged, Rosa-like landscape at left and the peaceful, brighter Claudean view at right, and to the differing human types of monks and lovers. In his





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view, the seemingly timeless, perfectly ordered world of reconciled opposites which the picture presents explains its extraordinary success with the English gentry during the socially turbulent decade of the 1760s.[3] Such an interpretation was strongly disputed by Sutton, who viewed the picture as "neither a philosophical nor a political tract, but an escapist picture, in which the couple under the umbrella, the monk, the Rosa-esque cliffs, the elegant tree and the Claudean distance provide a harmonious composition designed to please the eye . . . and enchant the spectator."[4] While Wilson's intended meaning may never be known, the luminous break in the clouds behind the figures praying on the promontory might have some bearing on the picture's significance in its suggestion of the divine presence in the natural world.

The title *'The White Monk'* seems to have been a nineteenth-century invention. The original title is unknown, and over the course of that century, versions went under a confusing number of different titles, including 'Lago di Como,' 'San Marino,' and 'The Umbrella Picture.'[5] Although the site has not been precisely identified and is probably a composite view, the scenery recalls that of the Anio gorge at Tivoli, as depicted, for example, in Wilson's *Tivoli: The Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna* of around the same time (cat. no. 10). The drawing on which the composition of this latter picture is based, showing figures under a parasol at lower right, may have figured in the genesis of *'The White Monk'* as well (fig. 7).[6]

1. For the variants and versions of the subject, traced and untraced, see Constable, pp. 227–30; for the date of the Toledo painting, see Solkin, p. 66.
2. The motif of the horseman riding diagonally into the distance recurs in other of Wilson's landscapes of the 1760s and 1770s, such as *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe*, *View on the Thames near Twickenham* or *Valley of the Mawddach*. As French noted, it derives from Dughet's *Landscape with Horseman*, which Wilson would have known from Vivares's engraving after the picture published by Knapton in 1741, when in the collection of Peter Delmé (A. French, *Gaspard Dughet, called Gaspar Poussin 1615–1675*, exh. cat., Kenwood House, London, 1980, p. 89).
3. Solkin, pp. 66–70.
4. Sutton, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
5. Constable, p. 76.
6. Ibid., p. 223.

10.

Richard Wilson

Tivoli: The Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna, circa 1765

oil on canvas
29 by 38½ inches (73.6 by 97.8 cm.)

Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, 1979.29

PROVENANCE

John Laporte (1761–1839), London; Amabel Yorke, Baroness Lucas of Crudwell, Countess de Grey of Wrest (1750–1833), London and Wrest Park, Bedfordshire, England (acquired from the former, 10 June 1817); By descent to her nephew, Thomas Philip Robinson Weddell, 6th Baron Lucas of Crudwell, 3rd Baron Grantham, and 2nd Earl de Grey of Wrest (1781–1859), Wrest Park, Bedfordshire; By descent to his daughter, Anne Florence Weddell de Grey Cowper, Baroness Lucas of Crudwell, Countess Cowper (1806–1880), Panshanger, Hertfordshire, and Wrest Park, Bedfordshire; By descent to her son, Francis Thomas de Grey Cowper, 7th Earl Cowper, 8th Baron Lucas of Crudwell, 4th Lord Dingwall, 3rd Baron Butler of Moore Park (1834–1905), Panshanger, Hertfordshire, and Wrest Park, Bedfordshire; By descent to his nephew, Auberon Thomas Herbert, 9th Baron Lucas of Crudwell, 5th Lord Dingwall (1876–1916), London; By descent to his sister, Nan Ino Herbert Cooper, Baroness Lucas of Crudwell, Lady Dingwall (1880–1958), London [sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 26 May 1922, no. 89 as "A View at Albano, near Rome" (bt. 160 gns by Percy Moore Turner, Independent Gallery, London)]; Scott & Fowles, New York; Mrs. Frederick Wallis Hinkle, Cincinnati (acquired from the former, late 1920s or early 1930s); Acquired by the Kimbell Art Foundation from Newhouse Galleries, Inc., New York, 1979

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

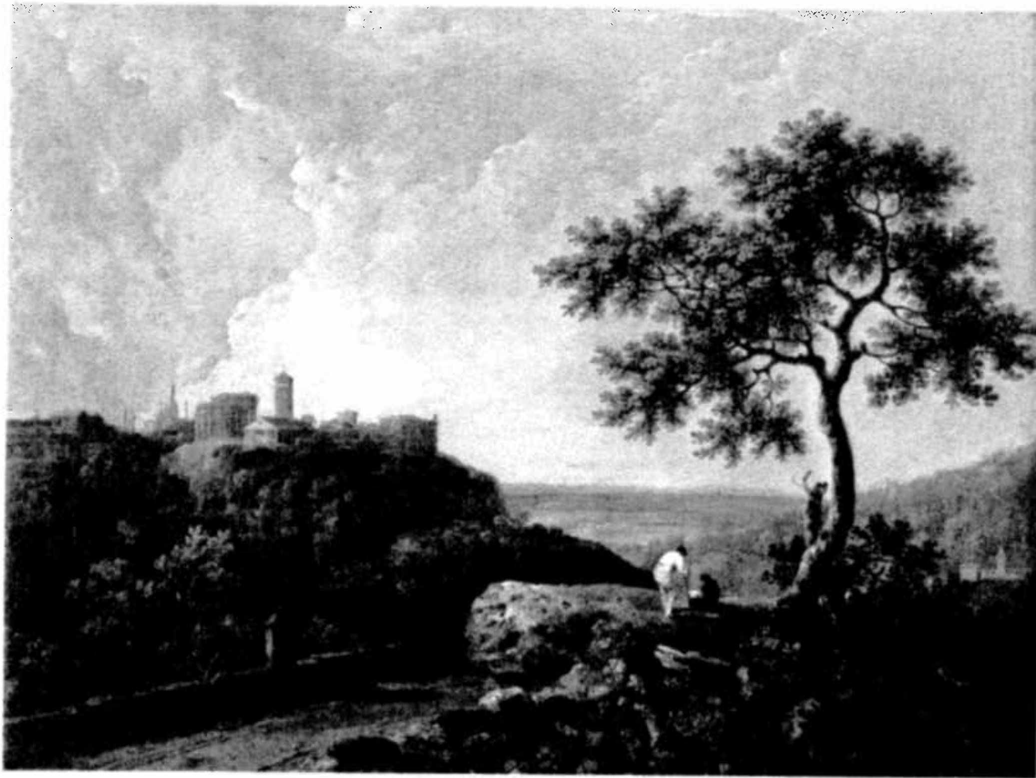
London, British Institution, 1817, no. 94 (as "Sybil's Temple, Tivoli," lent by J. Laporte)
Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum, 1940
Montgomery, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, *The Grand Tour: The Tradition of Patronage in Southern Art Museums*, 1988–89, no. 48

SELECTED REFERENCES

Constable, pp. 223–24, under pl. 116b (version #1).
In Pursuit of Quality. The Kimbell Art Museum: An Illustrated History of the Art and Architecture, New York, 1987, p. 242 (color ill.).
T. Potts (ed.), *Kimbell Art Museum. Handbook of the Collection*, New Haven and London, 2003, p. 103 (color ill.).

This splendid view, taken from across the deep ravine of the river Aniene, shows the distant plains of the Roman *campagna* and the acropolis of Tivoli, with its two most famous ancient structures silhouetted against the sky: the rectangular Temple of the Tiburtine Sibyl and the circular Temple of Vesta, known in Wilson's time as the Temple of the Sibyl.[1] Seated under a tree in the foreground is an artist sketching the view while observed by a standing peasant, a vignette which surely reflects Wilson's own experience of sketching outdoors at the site during his Roman sojourn.[2] A rapidly executed black chalk study in the Victoria and Albert Museum showing a view of the Temple of the Sibyl and the *campagna* testifies to at least one such circumstance (fig. 7).[3]

In the eighteenth century, the Temple of the Sibyl was among the most popular tourist attractions



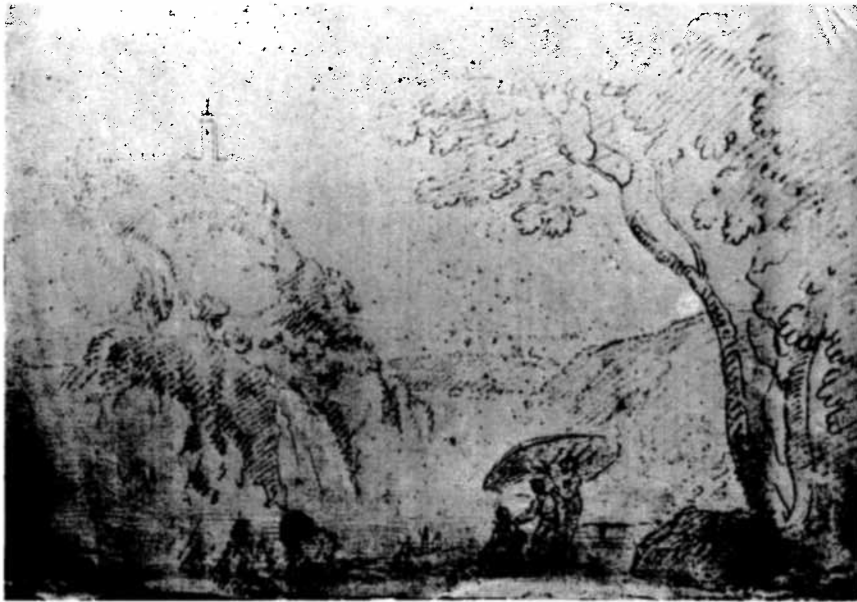


Fig. 7 Richard Wilson, *Tivoli: Temple of the Sibyl*, circa 1752. Black chalk heightened with white on paper, 9½ by 13⅞ inches (24.1 by 35.2 cm.). Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Dyce 656. V & A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum

in Italy, and Wilson repeated the present composition in a number of variants, versions and replicas. Constable distinguished two principal variants: one exemplified by *Tivoli: Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna* now in the Tate, which includes a peasant couple in the foreground; and the other, by the Kimbell picture and a second, larger version, now preserved in the Memphis Brooks Museum.[4] Datable to the mid-1760s, after Wilson's return to England from Italy, both variants are based on a much earlier composition now in the National Gallery of Ireland, which was bought from Wilson in Rome by the Irish Grand Tourist, Joseph Henry, in 1752. The Dublin picture, which may have been partly executed *en plein air*, shows the same basic landscape view, but with an artist walking down the road in the center foreground, carrying an easel and accompanied by an assistant.[5]

Although clearly based on the actual topography of the site, Wilson's *Tivoli: The Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna* is also informed by the tradition of 'Grand Manner' landscape painting on the Continent. Some variant of Gaspard Dughet's own *View of Tivoli* of circa 1659 in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford,[6] may have served as Wilson's compositional model,[7] but the *View of Tivoli with the Temple of the Sibyl* by Dughet's chief imitator in Rome, Jan Frans van Bloemen, has also been suggested as the likely source for Wilson's design.[8]

Two drawings are closely related to the present composition, one from the collection of Mrs. F.L. Evans, and the other formerly belonging to Sir

Edward Marsh. Brinsley Ford tentatively attributed these to Wilson's pupils, Johnson Carr and William Hodges, respectively.[9]

Around 1798, some two decades before his first visit to Italy, the young Turner made a copy after Wilson's composition, in which he omitted the figures as well as the large tree in the foreground.[10] Compared with the known autograph variants and versions of Wilson's *Tivoli: The Temple of the Sibyl and the Campagna*, Turner's copy is closest to the Kimbell picture, not only with respect to some of its minor compositional details (such as cloud formations, shaping of the hillock in the foreground, and the tree along the wall in the left foreground), but also in its dimensions, which are virtually identical. This raises the possibility that the Kimbell picture might have served as Turner's model[11] at the beginning of Turner's career as a painter, when, as Andrew Wilton observed, "Wilson was quite explicitly his hero and chief model."[12]

1. The Temple of Vesta was converted into the church of Santa Maria della Rotunda during the Middle Ages. The Temple of the Tiburtine Sibyl was converted into the church of San Giorgio in the eighteenth century.
2. Ford, pp. 23–24.
3. Constable, pl. 116a.
4. The Tate variant (TGN 01706) was formerly in the collection of E.F. Collingwood (Constable, 115a). The Memphis Brooks picture (inv. 59.26) was first recorded in the collection of Lord Barnard, Raby Castle, Durham (37 by 49½ inches; Constable, 116b). A third version of the Kimbell/Memphis Brooks composition, formerly in the collection of The Earl of Cavan, sold Christie's, London, 3 December 2008, lot 178, as "Wilson and studio." (28½ by 38⅜ inches; Constable, p. 224 version #2). For other recorded versions and copies, some of doubtful authenticity, and some not yet identified, see Constable, pp. 222–25.
5. See Solkin, p. 183, no. 66 and A. Wilton and I. Bignamini (eds.), *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, exh. cat., Tate Gallery, London, 1996, p. 143, no. 97 (color ill).
6. Inv. WA 1897.15; M.-N. Boisclair, *Gaspard Dughet 1615–1675*, Paris, 1986, no. 186. For the variants, see A. Wilton and I. Bignamini, *op. cit.*, no. 3, p. 43.
7. Dughet's *Imaginary Landscape with Buildings in Tivoli* of circa 1670 in the National Gallery, London (formerly entitled *View of Ariccia*) was proposed by Anne French as an example of the kind of Dughet which Wilson must have relied on for his design (A. French, *Gaspard Dughet, called Gaspar Poussin: 1615–1675: A French Landscape Painter in Seventeenth Century Rome and his Influence on British Art*, exh. cat., Kenwood House, London, 1980, p. 88).
8. Solkin, p. 183 with illustration, as circa 1710–1720(?), private collection.
9. Ford, nos. 82–83 (ill.).
10. 29 by 38 inches; London, Tate Gallery, TGN 05512; M. Butlin and E. Joll, *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner*, rev. ed., New Haven and London, 1984, no. 44 (ill. plate 53).
11. This suggestion was first made by Nancy Edwards in 2003 (*Kimbell Art Museum. Handbook of the Collection* as cited above).
12. A. Wilton, *J. M. W. Turner. The 'Wilson' Sketchbook*, London, 1988, p. 15. For Turner's study of Wilson in the late 1790s, see also D. Solkin, "Education and Emulation," in *Turner and the Masters*, exh. cat., Tate Britain, London, 2009, pp. 100–01.