

JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY: HIS INSPIRATIONS AND SYMBOLS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL ARTS

BY

LESLIE ANN LAWS, B.A., B.F.A., M.F.A.

DENTON, TEXAS

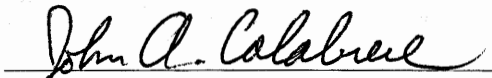
DECEMBER 2013

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

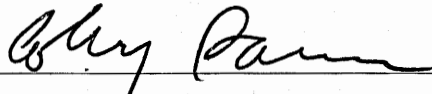
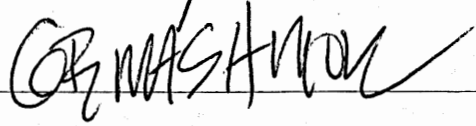

September 30, 2013

To the Dean of the Graduate School:


I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Leslie Ann Laws entitled "Joseph Wright of Derby: His Inspirations and Symbols." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Art History.


Dr. John Calabrese, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:




Department Chair

Accepted:


Interim-Dean of the Graduate School

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Dr. John Calabrese, Mr. Colby Parsons, and Mr. Gary Washmon for agreeing to be on my graduate committee and demonstrating an unending patience with me during the writing of this thesis. I especially appreciate my major professor and committee chairperson, Dr. John Calabrese; without his support, diligence, and cooperation, this thesis would not have been possible. His depth of knowledge in Art History has been an inspiration to me. His study abroad program gave me the opportunity to personally see artworks first hand and gain an appreciation for the richness of art. I will always be grateful for this experience.

I also thank my family Lynn, Laura, and Leith Laws who have continued to give me their loving support and encouragement. They have provided me with an opportunity to continue my education and for that I am very thankful.

ABSTRACT

LESLIE ANN LAWS

JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY: HIS INSPIRATIONS AND SYMBOLS

DECEMBER 2013

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and expand on the use of symbolism in some of Wright's paintings depicting portraiture, landscape, mythology, and history. Although Wright never directly addressed the use of symbolism in his work, observations/interpretations can be formed based on contextual information. Five paintings are analyzed in this thesis in regard to Wright's use of symbols. Other pieces of art are referenced; however, their inclusion is only intended to augment the expansion of information about Wright's work and to substantiate a particular interpretation of his artwork. This thesis is arranged in such a way as to provide a discussion of Joseph Wright's association with the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, members of the Lunar Society, and their impact on his artworks. Research was conducted by examination of peer-reviewed and scholarly periodicals, books, and Internet sources.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of Problem.....	1
Statement of Purpose	1
Statement of Significance	2
Review of Literature	3
Methodology	9
Limitations	10
Terms	10
II. JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY AND HIS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION	12
III. SYMBOLISM AND ARTISTIC STYLE IN ART	31
IV. PAINTINGS BY WRIGHT OF DERBY: THEIR BACKGROUNDS AND ANALYSIS.....	46
<i>A Philosopher by Lamplight</i> , c. 1769.....	47
Background.....	47
<i>A Philosopher by Lamplight</i> , c. 1769.....	51
Analysis.....	51
<i>The Corinthian Maid</i> , c. 1782 -85	59
Background	59
<i>The Corinthian Maid</i> , c. 1782 -85	61
Analysis.....	61
<i>Penelope Unraveling Her Web</i> , by Lamp-Light, 1785	66
Background	66

<i>Penelope Unraveling Her Web, by Lamp-Light, 1785</i>	69
Analysis.....	69
<i>Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud, c. 1785</i>	73
Background.....	73
<i>Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud, c. 1785</i>	79
Analysis.....	79
<i>Sir Richard Arkwright, 1789-90</i>	84
Background.....	84
<i>Sir Richard Arkwright, 1789-90</i>	87
Analysis.....	87
V. CONCLUSION.....	92
FIGURES.....	101
WORKS CITED	120

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. <i>A Philosopher by Lamplight</i> , c. 1769, Oil on canvas, 50½" x 40½".....	101
2. <i>The Corinthian Maid</i> , c. 1782-85, Oil on canvas, 41⅞" x 51¾".	101
3. <i>Penelope Unravelling her Web, by Lamp-Light</i> , 1785. Oil on canvas. 40" x 50"....	102
4. <i>Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud</i> , c. 1785, Oil on canvas, 18" x 25".....	102
5. <i>Sir Richard Arkwright</i> , 1789-90, Oil on canvas, 95" x 60".....	103
6. <i>Anna Ashton</i> , 1769, Oil on canvas, 50" x 40".....	103
7. <i>Mrs. Bathurst</i> , 1770-1771. Oil on canvas. 30" x 25".	104
8. <i>A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery, in which a lamp is put in the place of the Sun</i> , 1766, Oil on canvas, 58" x 80"	104
9. <i>An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump</i> , 1768; Oil on canvas, 72" x 94½".....	105
10. <i>The Alchemist, in Search of the Philosopher's Stone, Discovers Phosphorus, and Prays for the Successful Conclusion of His Operation, as Was the Custom of the Ancient Chymical (sic) Astrologers</i> . 1771. Oil on canvas. 50" x 40"	105
11. Honthorst, <i>Denial of St Peter</i> , 1620, Oil on canvas, 43½" x 57"	106
12. <i>An Iron Forge Viewed From Without</i> , 1773, Oil on canvas, 39⅝" x 55⅛".....	106
13. <i>Arkwright's Cotton Mills by Night</i> c. 1782-1783. Oil on canvas. 39¼" x 49½"	107
14. <i>Erasmus Darwin</i> c. 1792, Oil on canvas, 30" x 25".....	107

15. <i>Peter Perez Burdett and His First Wife Hannah</i> , 1765, Oil on canvas. 57" x 80¼"	108
16. <i>Mrs. Francis Hurt</i> , c. 1780, Oil on canvas, 50" x 40"	108
17. <i>Cornet Sir George Cooke</i> , c. 1766, Oil on canvas, 30" x 25"	109
18. <i>Mr. and Mrs. Coltman</i> , c. 1770, Oil on canvas. 50" x 40"	109
19. <i>Lady Wilmot and her Child</i> , 1788, Oil on canvas, 84" x 62"	110
20. <i>Andrea del Brescianino, Madonna and Child with the Infant St. John the Baptist</i> , c. 1524, Oil on panel, 20" x 16"	110
21. <i>Mrs. Sarah Clayton</i> , c. 1769, Oil on canvas, 50" x 40"	111
22. <i>Anne Bateman</i> , 1755, Oil on canvas, 30½" x 25½"	111
23. <i>Mr. and Mrs. William Chase</i> , c. 1762, Oil on Canvas, 54½" x 75"	112
24. <i>James and Mary Shuttleworth With One of Their Daughters</i> 1764, Oil on canvas, 56" x 72"	112
25. <i>Salvator Rosa, Democritus in Meditation</i> , c. 1650, Oil on canvas, 135½" x 84¼".	113
26. <i>Gerrit Dou, The Hermit</i> , 1670, Oil on panel, 18⅞" x 13⅝"	113
27. <i>Brooke Boothby</i> , 1781, Oil on canvas, 58½" x 81¾"	114
28. <i>A Grotto by the Sea-Side in the Kingdom of Naples, with Banditti; a Sun-Set</i> , 1778, Oil on canvas, 48" x 68"	114
29. <i>Simon Francois Ravenet: After John Hamilton Mortimer, The Origin of Drawing</i> Yale Center for British Art	115
30. <i>David Allan, Origin of Painting: The Corinthian Maid</i> , 1775, 15" x 12"	115

31. Joachim von Sandrart. *Story of Dibutade*. Engraving from Teutsche Academie,
1675.116
32. Johann Jacob von Sandrart. *Story of Dibutade*. Engraving for Joachim von
Sandrart's *Academia nobilizzimae artis pictoriae*, 1683.116
33. *Virgil's Tomb, with the Figure of Silius Italicus*, 1779, Oil on canvas, 40" x 50"..117
34. Exterior engraving after Cla. Nic., from P.A. Paoli *Antiquitates Puteolanae*, 1768.117
35. *Rocks with Waterfall*, c. 1772, Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 43".....118
36. Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV* 1701, Oil on canvas. 109" x 76 $\frac{1}{2}$ ".....119

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Joseph Wright of Derby's reputation is based primarily on paintings depicting science and industry; therefore, most critics spend a great deal of their effort analyzing these paintings and less effort on his lesser-known paintings. Analyses of Wright's work are general in nature with reviewers concentrating on basic information such as: subject material, where and when the painting was made, and what style the artist used. Less information is provided about the subliminal messages and symbols found in his artwork. The problem with this lack of analyses about Wright's work is that a viewer has limited information on which to build a comprehensive appreciation of the artist and his artwork.

To fully understand Wright's philosophies, art, and attitude toward art, one needs to become familiar with the influencing factors which impacted his paintings. Therefore, there will be a discussion of what led to the Industrial Revolution as well as the mind set of the people and culture that was part of the Revolution since these elements were, collectively, instrumental in affecting Wright's paintings.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and expand on the use of symbolism in some of Wright's paintings depicting portraiture, landscape, mythology, and history. Examples of paintings that will be analyzed are: *A Philosopher by Lamplight* c. 1769

(fig. 1), *The Corinthian Maid* c. 1782-85 (fig. 2), *Penelope Unravelling her Web*, by *Lamp-Light* 1785 (fig. 3) *Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud* c. 1785 (fig. 4), *Sir Richard Arkwright* 1789-1790 (fig. 5). Other pieces of art will be referenced; however, their inclusion is only intended to augment the expansion of information about Wright's work and to substantiate a particular interpretation of his artwork.

Statement of Significance

More and more art critics are beginning to pay attention to Wright's artwork; and even though Egerton and Nicolson have done an excellent job covering him, further analysis of his work will expand on Wright's use of symbolism. Although Wright never directly addressed the use of symbolism in his work, observations/interpretations can be formed based on contextual information. How Wright communicated with the viewer, whether it was covertly or overtly, was dependent on the viewer's attitude and philosophy about life in general and art specifically. Therefore, a thorough study of Wright's world becomes significant if one is to completely understand Wright and how he related to others in the eighteenth century. Wright's life and work were the culmination of many factors; he was basically a product of his time. To fully appreciate his artwork and the influences that contributed to his art, one should take a brief glimpse at the evolution of society and its acceptance of artistic expression, all of which contributed to Wright's artwork. Wright painted during a period of time in which art styles, connoisseurs and collectors of art, social positions, and the attitude toward the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge were all changing. To be successful Wright had to respond to these changes.

Review of the Literature

A survey of the literature reveals that in approximately 1751 Wright began his artistic career under the tutelage of Thomas Hudson (1701-1779) in London. Hudson, similar to other portrait painters of the time, had a set way of posing his clients with a standard set of props (Waterhouse 150). This method was probably taught to Wright; however, even though Wright used stock poses and props, such as the shepherd's staff in *Anna Ashton*, 1769 (fig. 6) and *Mrs. Bathurst*, 1770-1771 (fig. 7), he "looked beyond the usual patrician postures and gestures to more meditative poses, sometimes from arcane sources . . . [and most] . . . are posed with emblems of activity, even enterprise . . . " (Daniels 13).

After two years of study in London under Hudson, Wright returned to Derby where he began painting portraits, starting with his family and friends and then exhibiting his artwork at the Society of Artists. Even though most of the literature seems to suggest that Wright's work had a dark and mysterious appearance, he was able to utilize this perception to his advantage. He was "described as one of the most original, versatile and interesting English painters of the eighteenth century, but also as the least known of the famous English painters" (Bellerio 9). He was attracted to the intellectual aspect of science and technology while at the same time he was drawn to the artistic use of light to portray his images. This combination of intellectual and artistic interests did not lend itself well to a lifestyle that was flamboyant; consequently, he did not draw much attention to himself. This observation is supported by a comment by Albert Boime, "Wright's own outlook- rooted in the same socialization process [of local entrepreneurs

as hard working, thrifty, and reliable] - is similarly manifested in a style that is spare and carefully worked" (234).

Critics were not familiar with Wright's approach to art resulting in their inability to compare him with his peers. Biome states that Wright "differs in one fundamental formal feature from his neoclassic colleagues and that is his interest in the scientific study of light and especially of artificial light effects . . . [and that] . . . with his peculiar combination of hard and polished style and astonishing illumination, is difficult to locate in the traditional stylistic categories" (234). If this observation is correct, the difficulty in categorizing his work may have been because critics were still holding on to the Rococo tradition and Wright's paintings were moving away from that style into a more classical or at least neoclassical approach. His science/technology subject material (i.e. factories, astronomy, and physics) moved him away from the Rococo frivolity to a more somber style.

Wright was born during the Age of Enlightenment. During this age, knowledge and the acquisition of knowledge became a central theme of European societies. Wright reflected this interest through his paintings relating to science and industry. To understand the significance of that period, it helps to consider the history of humanity in terms of literacy. Literature suggests that humankind has basically gone through three periods of development: the Preliterate from the beginning of time until, the Literate, and the Period of Revolution. During the Preliterate Period people relied heavily on the spoken word and visual images to communicate their beliefs, superstitions, and concepts. According to O'Connell and Airey, people related to their surroundings through religious

beliefs and dogmas and used shamans and totems to convey their ideas while recording their history through paintings and artifacts (36).

With the development of writing systems, c. 3000 BC, the Literate Period began which allowed for permanent records of information to be created. These permanent records permitted more meaningful discussion of ideas to develop (Mohun 44). Having a permanent record, people had something to which they could refer, allowing concepts to grow and evolve. However, a great number of people were still unable to read and relied heavily on religion and visual images for their sources of information. For thousands of years religion remained the primary focal point of life and the source of information; however, with the written word creeping into the lives of citizens, questions about religious doctrine began to increase. The question of intellectual authority led to an explosion of knowledge along with social and economic realignment, which in turn led to a period of intellectual revolutions (Armstrong 296).

The Scientific Revolution gained momentum with the invention of Gutenberg's printing press in c. 1440. According to J. F. Malgaigne, in 1462 Adolph of Nassau sieged the city of Mainz, Germany and "forced Gutenberg's workers to leave his shop and go elsewhere to France and Italy . . ." (104). These craftsmen left Germany with the knowledge they had gained from Gutenberg and began printing in other parts of Europe. Information became readily available and disseminated to the masses and more people began to ask questions about the "truths", such as human anatomy and physiology, the solar system and society's relationship with God, which earlier had been taken as absolutes (Armstrong 296). The Scientific Revolution did not become a truly

recognizable revolution until 1543 with the publication of Copernicus's book describing the solar system (Asimov 19). This revolution led to the Enlightenment, which, in addition to science, involved industry and technology.

Daniels states, "The torch bearers of truth [during the Enlightenment] were an intelligentsia - moral philosophers, educational reformers, liberal economists, political theorists, experimental scientists – whose writings aimed to explain and improve the natural and social fabric of the world" (6). Knowledge increased in all facets of life: philosophy, history, science, visual arts, literature, industry, and technology. In response to this liberating movement, five men established a relationship that would become an integral part of the Industrial Revolution and of Wright's life. In approximately 1765 this relationship became The Lunar Society. This society evolved into a significant force behind the promotion of science, technology, and industry through the discoveries in science, development of factories, and inventions by its members (Uglow xiv). The Lunar society derived its name from the fact that they met monthly on the Monday nearest a full moon (Fraser, Joseph 15).

Even though Wright was not a member, he was able to use the group's expertise as motivation for much of his artwork depicting industry and technology. Literature implies that the Lunar Society and Wright used each other. Members of the society envisioned Wright's art as being an opportunity to explain their concepts and efforts to the public and Wright used their knowledge and contacts as inspiration and sources of revenue for his artwork (Fraser, Fields 121).

During 1773 to 1775, Wright went to Italy on a Grand Tour (i.e. a trip usually reserved for people of affluence and serving as a rite of passage during this time period). The tour gave him a new perspective on painting, which was not well received by art critics. This perspective however did not appreciably harm his reputation. He was still considered to be an advocate of science and industry; according to his records, his artwork was well received by England's merchants and factory owners (Boime 234). Wright's inspiration for subject material may have been the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the Lunar Society but his artistic inspiration came from artists such as John Hamilton Mortimer (1740-1779), Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), and Caravaggio (1571-1610). John Hamilton Mortimer was a close friend of Wright and through Mortimer's interest in Rosa's work, contacts and portraiture became an influential force behind Wright's artwork. Mortimer and Wright were concurrent students of Hudson so they were familiar with each other's work. In addition to these men, Wright was introduced to works by the "Caravaggesque paintings of the Dutch and French Tenebrist painters [such as] Honthorst" and began incorporating elements from their styles (Cieszkowski 43). Tenebrist painters were, "A group of seventeenth-century European painters who used violent contrasts of light and dark" (Croix, Tansey and Kirkpatrick 1106). "The Italian word *tenebre* means darkness, gloom" (Minor 164). To draw attention and create drama, the tenebrist painter uses a strong contrast between a well-lit subject and its surrounding dark background. Wright was able to create drama and draw attention to his subjects using Caravaggio's tenebrist method of lighting while at the same time inspire and tell a story using Salvator Rosa's dark, haunting, melancholic style.

Unfortunately, Tenebrism was not a readily acceptable form of art in England, which contributed to Wright's artwork being misunderstood and viewed as controversial (Cieszkowski 43).

Although Nicolson's book is titled *Joseph Wright of Derby; Painter of Light*, the force behind Wright's notoriety was based primarily on his subjects, not so much on his use of light. Although he effectively used light for drama, other artists were just as proficient in using light, but were not as much of a supporter of science and industry as Wright. He was able to catch the imagination of his viewers with his use of dramatic lighting, while at the same time adding to their inventory of knowledge with the use of symbolism in a way that words alone would not be able to accomplish for the eighteenth century clientele.

The use of symbols, body language within the paintings, and their interpretations are integral to this thesis. Descriptions and uses of symbols are excellently covered in Battistini's *Symbols and Allegories in Art*, O'Connell and Airey's *Signs and Symbols*, *Gestures* by Desmond Morris and Marie O'Shaughnessy, Shelly Hagen's book on *Body Language*, and Steven Olderr's *Symbolism A Comprehensive Dictionary*. These sources address symbols and gestures, which are universally used even though they may have different interpretations. This point is important because the use of symbols is dependent on the context, time and culture using them. Literature has shown that symbols and body language can be very effective ways of communication regardless of whether they are used intentionally or unintentionally. Some "experts in the field of nonverbal

communication believe that approximately two-thirds of all communication is unspoken” (Hagen 168).

Nicolson depicts Wright as a type of person who blended into society without losing his identity (xii). He was neither flamboyant nor eccentric yet he and his artwork were well known in limited areas of Great Britain. Schwabsky stated that, Wright “was always tempted to endow his works with the trappings of myth and spirituality that enabled him to evade its implications” (104). Regardless of Wright’s intentions, his work seems to have been viewed by the general public as being “known for his eerie portrayals of scientific subjects” (Pyke 16). Wright neither created a new technique, as did Picasso, nor was he as brilliantly diversified as was Leonard da Vinci. He basically did not invent anything new; he elaborated on inspirations he received from his associates and fellow artists. However, he was a skilled artist, a brilliant portraitist, a gifted landscape painter, and a knowledgeable historian.

Methodology

1. Research will be conducted by reviewing peer-reviewed and scholarly periodicals, books, and Internet sources.
2. This thesis will be arranged in such a way as to provide a discussion of:
 - a. a survey of Joseph Wright’s association with the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, members of the Lunar Society and their impact on his artworks.
 - b. the use of symbols and allegories, in selected paintings of Wright.

Limitations

1. I am limited to reproductions and photographs of these paintings and therefore limited to the quality of their facsimiles.
2. This thesis is neither intended to be a biography of Joseph Wright nor is it intended to critically analyze all of his work.
3. Even though other artists and art will be discussed, they are mentioned only to augment the purpose of this thesis.
4. Symbols discussed in this thesis are limited to objects, gestures, and body language, which contribute to the allegories and/or message behind a painting.

Terms

Allegory – The representation of an abstract quality or idea through a series of symbols or persons given the symbolic meaning.

Enlightenment – A movement in the eighteenth century that was characterized by a pronounced faith in the power of human knowledge to solve basic problems of existence.

Industrial Revolution – Term used to signify the changes in technology, production of goods, and organization of labor that began unfolding in 18th-century England.

Neoclassicism – Began late eighteenth century and continued to early nineteenth century and emphasized order, clarity, and restraint. Looked to ancient Greece and Rome for inspiration.

Rococo – A style of art in Europe that extended from early to late eighteenth century. This style used small-scale decoration and curvilinear forms, pastel colors, and a

playful, light-hearted, romantic quality in paintings of aristocratic people at leisure.

Taxonomy – Study of the principles of scientific classification and naming of organisms.

The Grand Tour – An eighteenth century tour to Italy, which was taken by northern European nobility.

CHAPTER II

JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY AND HIS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Joseph Wright (1734-1797) was born to John Wright and Hannah (Brookes)

Wright at No. 28 Irongate in Derby, England and when he was about seventeen years old he moved to London to study portraiture under Thomas Hudson from 1751-53 and again in 1756 -57. After Wright completed his studies with Hudson, he exhibited, for the first time, with the Society of Artists in 1765 (Graves 278). Egerton states that the name Joseph Wright of Derby “was pinned on him by reviewers of the Society of Artists’ exhibitions in the mid-1760s, to distinguish him from the Liverpool artist Richard Wright, already exhibiting when Wright came on the scene . . . ” (Wright 13). The Richard Wright of Liverpool was a maritime painter and had exhibited earlier in 1762 at the Society of Artists. Consequently, Joseph Wright’s name became, more or less, officially Wright of Derby and the town of Derbyshire where he lived fully supported the distinction.

He lived in Derby until 1773 when he went on The Grand Tour to Italy. While on the Tour, Wright was unaware that the Society of Artists in London began to see a decline of visitors to their exhibitions. Wright kept sending his artwork to London; however, the artwork was finding less appeal among the Society’s officials. The Society’s secretary commented that in his opinion “Wright’s works were not equil [sic] to what I have seen of his” (Hargraves 59). Hargraves further states, “by 1776 the Society

of Artists was bankrupt in every sense: financially, artistically, ideologically, [and] psychologically” (60).

After returning from Italy in 1775, he moved to Bath where he lived until 1777. While in Bath Wright lost contact with his original clientele, was relatively unknown, and had to compete with a “complex network of painters working in [Bath] . . .” (Hargraves 59). He was treated as an outsider and the combination of these problems prompted Wright to comment, “What I have seen since I have been here has so wounded my feelings, so disturbed my peace, as to injure my health” (Hargraves 60). These problems, in addition to his troubled relationship with the Society of Artists, resulted in his two-year tour in Bath as being a complete failure (Fox 18). He told his brother that he was “painting portraits 'for reputation alone' but begged his brother to keep this secret” so as to not reinforce the increasingly popular view that he was not a reputable portrait painter (Hargraves 58).

Wright’s painting career seemed to have pivoted around 1773, which was the year when he went on his Grand Tour. Hargraves quotes Benjamin West (1738-1820) as saying, “Wright was ruined by going to Italy because it turned his mind from its proper object” (53). West meant that Wright had abandoned his industrial subjects “in favour of the growing number of landscapes and sentimental histories that he began to produce after his return home in 1775” (Hargraves 53). West was the Royal Academy’s second president (Galt 76), and this comment probably acerbated the problems Wright was having with the Academy.

Of the approximately fifty paintings he exhibited at the Society of Artists, about thirty-six were exhibited prior to his departure on The Grand Tour (Graves 286). It was during that time that he exhibited his most famous paintings, which became the source of his reputation: *A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery, in which a lamp is put in the place of the Sun* 1766 (fig. 8); *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* 1768 (fig. 9); and *The Alchemist, in Search of the Philosopher's Stone, Discovers Phosphorus, and Prays for the Successful Conclusion of His Operation, as Was the Custom of the Ancient Chymical (sic) Astrologers* 1771 (fig. 10) (Graves 286). Although his fame came from his treatment of scientific and industrial subjects, according to Krzysztof Cieszkowski, they "constitute[d] only a small fraction of his complete oeuvre - only twelve works out of a total of 342, listed in the catalogue raisonn  " (42). These few paintings are important because they provide a recorded document of the period, since he was "the first professional Painter to express the spirit of the industrial revolution" (Waterhouse 207). Egerton stated that Wright was not a documentary painter of history; he was more interested in the process of creativity (Wright 199). Wright's original intention may have been to be creative and not record history; however, his paintings did record the period in which he lived.

Authors such as Egerton, Nicolson, and Biome stress the importance of Wright's use of light, even calling him "the painter of light". Although Wright's contribution to the use of light was important, it was his combination of light and scenes of science and the Industrial Revolution that set him apart from other artists. Wright was introduced to works of artists who made effective use of artificial light (i.e. Caravaggio and Honthorst)

and incorporated their use of light into his paintings. He also used the paintings of Rosa and Dou as examples of how to effectively create a haunting mood of mysticism.

Schwabsky makes the observation that Wright “was always tempted to endow his works with the trappings of myth and spirituality” (104). He had a strong appeal for the “dramatic highlights and shadows cast upon faces, gestures and objects, and in the way colors changed according to their distance from the light” (Egerton, *Effects* 501).

The artist whose work seems to more closely resemble Wright’s is Honthorst. Honthorst was a close follower of Caravaggio’s tenebrist style; however, he moved away from the stark contrast found in Caravaggio’s work, producing a more subtle style. This reduced contrast lighting technique was what Wright used in most of his paintings. The similarities between Honthorst and Wright can be seen dramatically in Honthorst’s painting *The Denial of St. Peter* c. 1620 (fig. 11) and Wright’s paintings *A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery, in which a lamp is put in the place of the Sun* 1766 (fig. 8) and *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* 1768 (fig. 9). They both have a central point of light, which highlights selected images in the foreground. The background subtly reflects light, providing a sense of depth. Neither painting was executed in the true tenebrist fashion of having startling contrast of light and dark. Wright and Honthorst not only used light in a similar fashion but they also received nicknames, which reflected their use of light; Wright is referred to as the *Painter of Light* and Honthorst is referred to as *Gerard of the Night* (Kearins 4).

Wright effectively used light to illustrate science and industrial themes, which were quite popular; however, most of his steady income came from his portraiture.

Boime refers to them as “bread-and-butter commissions . . .” (234). The commissions for portraits were a reliable source of revenue, with minimal amount of effort. Prints of his landscape and historical paintings became quite popular and provided him with an additional income; however, their market value depended on volume and changing art interests. Prints are mass produced reproductions of a particular theme and are made available to the general public; therefore, if a particular subject is in vogue, the print sells; if the fad no longer exists, prints stop selling. Portraits on the other hand were more reliable because they were not based on a changing market; they were filling a desire of individuals to immortalize themselves. Wright was more than an artist who painted for art’s sake; he was a businessman and art was his business. This observation is supported by the fact that “Wright kept neat account books and approached his work in a methodical and workman-like manner” (Boime 234). Wright’s portrait paintings were based primarily on an individual’s interest and social standing; however, the production of his science/technology, mythical, landscape, and history paintings was based on the interest of society. Wright tried to produce what the public wanted and what would sell.

There seems to be two slightly different ways of looking at the inspirations behind Wright’s artwork. One point of view places his associates as the source of inspiration for his artwork and the public’s interest as coincidental. Most of the authors and researchers seem to support this point of view. However, Paul Duro proposes a slightly different point of view. An example of his position is reflected in his critique of Wright’s rendering of *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (fig. 9). He contradicts the popular opinion that Joseph Priestley, a member of the Lunar Society who performed

experiments on the composition of air, was the instrumental force behind Wright's rendering of the painting. Duro states, "Wright's choice of subject is unlikely to be the result of his having read Priestley . . . [but] . . . more plausibly he was responding to a general surge in interest in popular science – particularly chemistry, physics, and astronomy – among his wealthy provincial clientele" (664). This point may seem trivial; however, it emphasizes the importance of the impact of the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and public interest in science and industry had on Wright's selection of subject material and less on his associates.

The Enlightenment did not happen over night. Opinions differ as to when the Enlightenment actually began and ended; most researchers accept c. 1680 as beginning and c. 1789 as ending dates (Reill and Wilson 179). Louis Bredvold states, "the Enlightenment was the period when Europe really emerged from the Middle Ages and the Modern Mind was born" (1). Harold Grimm, in contrast, believes that it was not until the end of the Reformation Era that people began to think for themselves and stopped following religious dogmas, which was one of the main principles of the Enlightenment (569). Reill and Wilson state that "questions ordinarily treated in religious doctrine and theology assumed pressing significance for the Enlightenment" (181). Reill and Wilson also define the Enlightenment as a "term for the major intellectual and cultural movement of the 18th century, characterized by a pronounced faith in the power of human knowledge to solve basic problems of existence" (179).

Regardless of how one views the Enlightenment, it was a time of intellectual growth and involved people from all walks of life, such as businessmen, craftsmen,

artists, physicians, and philosophers. They all contributed heavily to the movement and advancement of science (natural philosophy). The current use of the term *science* was not coined until forty years after Wright's death and according to McEwen "was still for most people something of a black art, as much a matter of sorcery as of sense" (170). In regard to this point of view, Wright's artwork became more significant during the eighteenth century because he was able to present science in a way that reduced some of the mysticism associated with science and made it more acceptable to the general public. Wright's work demonstrated that "Nothing [could] be better understood or more freely represented, than the effect of candle-light diffused through his great picture[s]" (Egerton, Wright 58).

In England, during the mid to late eighteenth century, scientists traveled and gave lectures. One of these itinerant lecturers on science was James Ferguson, a Scottish, self-taught astronomer and instrument maker. Wright may have attended one of the scientific lectures given in Derby by Ferguson in 1762 and if so, could have been inspired by it to produce one of his famous paintings, *A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery, in which a lamp is put in the place of the Sun*, 1766 (fig. 8) (Egerton, Wright 58). The name *Orrery* was used to pay honor to the Earl of Orrery who commissioned the apparatus. It was "an instrument that provided a working model of the solar system according to the theories of Copernicus [1473-1543]. It was designed so that . . . motions of the planets and the three motions assigned by Copernicus to the Earth could be witnessed in detail" (Reill and Wilson 440). Although Copernicus's theories were centuries old, they were

mysteries to the general public and with the use of the *Orrery*, Wright was able to put a face on the concept of the solar system.

Because of the newfound freedom of thought and research during the Enlightenment, new technology developed resulting in the expansion of industry. As a result of this expansion the working class and business entrepreneurs became the center of power and new patrons of the arts. Artists were catering to a new interest in artwork, one that was very different from frivolous Rococo art. There seemed to be an increased interest in art that depicted real life rather than the superficial world of the aristocrats. Paintings that depicted the working class, such as Wright's *An Iron Forge viewed from without* 1773 (fig. 12), interested the general public because it was something to which they could relate. In this painting Wright depicted the central figure as a "prominent Derbyshire ironmaster and landowner Charles Hurt, whose family dominated the mineral and metal industry . . ." (Daniels 53). Wright used his candle-light effect to illuminate the scene which emphasized working class people. This particular image "represent[ed] the material power and sophistication of a rapidly developing industry" (Einberg 260) that was becoming more prevalent during the eighteenth century. This growth in industry, during the Enlightenment, became the Industrial Revolution. Most of the art before the eighteenth century concentrated primarily on religious themes. The Enlightenment however, opened the door for new artistic expression and Wright made excellent use of that opportunity. Therefore, to fully understand Wright, his philosophies, his art and his attitude toward art, one needs to fully look at the cultural conditions of the eighteenth century.

Art reflects the sociological, economical, political, religious, and mindset of a society. Klingender describes Wright as being “the first professional Painter to express the spirit of the Industrial Revolution” (51). The Industrial Revolution demonstrated the unification of science, technology, entrepreneurship, creativity, and freethinking of the Enlightenment, which collectively, made an important impact on Wright’s work. Wright was interested in how society reacted to the rapid growth of industry and attempted to capture on canvas the dynamics of big business. Beard states “Great factory buildings were rushed up by men ignorant of the elementary principles of sanitation . . . bodily and mental comfort, health, security from dangerous machines, and moral decency were hardly taken into consideration by the captains of industry” (58). Everything seemed to be happening at once and the disturbances, caused by these events, were felt around the world. These disturbances were a source of inspiration for writers, philosophers, and artists. Wright responded to this interest in development of factories by painting *Arkwright’s Cotton Mills by Night* c. 1782-1783 (fig. 13). This painting is of a moonlit night with glowing lights within the building giving it the feeling of being vibrant with activity. Many manufactures in the 1780’s were concerned about people stealing their trade secrets; thus, they refused to allow the public to look inside their factories (Daniels 58). However, Wright’s painting of the mill and landscape allowed the public a glimpse of industry in action without revealing the secrets within (Daniels 58).

The Industrial Revolution began slowly and gained momentum as new technology developed. In the beginning of the revolution, “work had to be done almost without the aid of power-driven, mechanical devices” (Beard 11). But as machinery became

available, industry began to grow. The development of new technology was the collective effort of many men, so that "not one of the great inventions . . . can be attributed in its entirety to a single inventor" (Beard 38). This collective effort is reflected in the number of societies being created during the eighteenth century. Societies, such as the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, the Derby Philosophical Society, and literary and philosophic clubs were being established throughout England.

Of all the provincial scientific societies, the one which most exemplifies the joining of interests of manufacturer and scientist is the Lunar Society of Birmingham and of all such societies this is perhaps the best known - in spite of the fact that less exact information has been published about the Lunar Society than about many of the other societies of the period. (Schofield 409)

The scarceness of correct information about the Lunar Society occurred because it "had no journal of its own . . . [recorded] no official list of members . . . [or] officers, kept no minutes, and, as far as has been discovered, had no constitution, set of rules, or by-laws . . ." (Schofield 145). The Society as an organization was not widely known; however, its members were well known, and because of their scientific and technological interest, they made a direct impact on the Enlightenment. The Lunar Society started in 1765 as the Lunar Circle. On December 31, 1775, the Lunar Circle was changed to the Lunar Society (Schofield 150). Schofield further states that the Lunar Society initially met on Sundays but changed to a Monday afternoon of each month nearest the full moon. Thus, the change in the meeting date triggered a change in the name from Lunar Circle to Lunar Society. (Schofield 154). This change from Sunday meetings to Monday may have

been to accommodate their recent member, Joseph Priestley, who was a preacher at the liberal New Meeting House congregation.

The Lunar Society provided Wright with contact to some of the most influential men in the Enlightenment movement. The Society, as discussed by Jenny Uglow, consisted of men who were known as *Dissenters*, a title which was given to individuals who “were Nonconformists or free-thinkers” (xiv). Priestley, of the Lunar Society, became the “leader of Rational Dissent” (Uglow xiv). There were restrictive laws against the Dissenters; they could not become involved in politics, use the Bank of England, or attend Oxford or Cambridge. In response to these restrictions, the members of the Lunar Society, and other dissenters of the eighteenth century, provided for their own education and therefore became strongly associated with the Enlightenment (Reill and Wilson 163).

The founding members of the Lunar Society were physicians, inventors, potters, chemist, and successful entrepreneurs. Numerous other men became associated with the society, all having a common interest and passion for the “sciences, manufactures, [and] arts [which] insured that artists participated in shaping the vision of the Industrial Revolution” (Boime 201-02). These men and their associates became instrumental in Wright’s artwork. They either consulted him on the details of a particular piece of equipment or provided him with sources of inspiration. Priestley, one of the founding members, probably advised Wright on the painting of *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* (fig. 9) while Wedgwood advised him on *The Corinthian Maid* (fig. 2).

As the Lunar Society grew, more *freethinkers* became involved in the Enlightenment. There does not appear to have been any particular criteria for

membership in the Society except that members were bonded together through their common love of science and did not fit into the common mold of being interested in religion or politics. Initially, "they came together simply through the pleasure of playing with experiments, what Darwin called 'a little philosophical laughing'" (Uglow xv). Apparently, during the eighteenth century one "could be an inventor and designer, an experimenter and a poet, a dreamer and an entrepreneur all at once without anyone raising an eyebrow" (Uglow xviii). Therefore, to understand the Society and its impact on Wright is to understand its members.

Three members of the society who influenced Wright the most were Darwin, Priestley, and Wedgwood. The primary moving force behind the Lunar Society was Erasmus Darwin. As indicated in King-Hele's book *The Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, he was the intellectual and motivational strength of the group. Darwin's impact on Wright was more personal than professional. Darwin appreciated art and wrote poetry, but he never became involved in the production of a painting nor commissioned any major work. However, he introduced Wright to important members of the Lunar Society such as the geologist, John Whitehurst; chemist, Joseph Priestley; and the potter, Josiah Wedgwood. These men inspired Wright to paint artwork that depicted landscapes, scientific studies, and mythology. Darwin's personal life seemed to have strongly impressed Wright. For example, scholars believe Wright became an atheist under Darwin's influence and chose symbols for his paintings that were probably inspired by Darwin's poems and family crest. However, Darwin's primary impact on Wright, as well as Lunar members and community leaders, was his intellect.

Darwin appeared to value the intellectual aspects of science and technology. If a practical use for his ideas was found, that was good; if not, the knowledge gained was sufficient. Uglow states that Darwin was “in love with speculative inventions for their own sake, enjoying the whole process of thinking up an idea and asking: Why not?” (136). He was interested in anything and everything connected to science; he corresponded frequently with members of the Lunar Society, in addition to approximately 121 other individuals, discussing everything from the common cold to electricity to making an “air - balloon of Gold-beater skin” (King-Hele, 225). Early in the 1700’s Darwin along with “entrepreneurs, . . . landowners, . . . surveyors, and . . . manufacturers such as Boulton and Wedgwood” became involved in building a canal system linking major cities in England (Uglow 107). Factories were built near energy sources of wood or coal, near a source of workers, and near a means of transportation (Beard 12). Until the invention of the railway, the canal system was the primary means of transportation for large equipment and products, as demonstrated by Wright’s painting *Arkwright’s Cotton Mills by Night* c. 1782-83 (fig. 13)

Darwin was an independent thinker and blended in very well during the Enlightenment; however, his analytical attitude put him at odds with the Church. He never claimed to be an atheist; however, he was not a close follower of any particular religion, and had problems accepting the teachings of any religious group. He considered himself a man of science and reason. After having visited the Castleton caves in Derbyshire, Darwin continued to widen the rift between himself and the Church. While in the caves, he came in contact with some fossilized shells and was inspired to add “a

motto to his family crest [depicting] three scallop shell: '*E conchis omina*' – 'Everything from shells'; . . . [From this observation he] . . . construct[ed] the first coherent theory of evolution, of competition and survival" (Uglow 152). This motto outraged Canon Seward, resulting in his comment that Darwin "was a follower of Epicurus, who claimed that the world was created by accident and not by God" (Uglow 152). Later, fearing that his medical practice would suffer, removed the motto (Uglow 153). Wright probably was impressed with Darwin's motto because he used the same type of shell in his painting *A Philosopher by Lamplight*, c. 1769 (fig. 1).

Michael Page described Darwin as being "a transitional figure between neo-classicism and Romanticism . . . [and because of] . . . his revolutionary and evolutionary ideas certainly move him closer to the Romantic moderns" (168). Darwin was also actively writing poetry during the period of time that he was proposing evolution. Some of his evolutionary beliefs were incorporated into his literature. These poems seemed to have been precursors of Romanticism, which soon became an art form replacing Neoclassicism.

Another of the Lunar Society's members, who was a source of inspiration to Wright, was Joseph Priestley. Priestley's background was intriguing and could have fascinated Wright enough to inspire him to paint *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* 1768 (fig. 9). Priestley was not only one of the dissenters, but a controversial figure in his own right. When he was nineteen, "he went to the Dissenting Academy at Daventry, and at this institution developed the power of free discussion on most subjects, especially theology . . ." and the courage to disagree with established opinions (Griffiths

45). This attitude got him in trouble with religious groups and with government doctrines in England. The publication of Priestley's "*Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit in 1777* [branded him as being a hated theologian] because it was a powerful exposition of materialism. Critics denounced him as an atheist, as an infidel, and other epithets were hurled at him from all parts of the country" (Griffiths 47). In 1780, Priestley moved to Birmingham and became the preacher at the liberal New Meeting House. However, while in Birmingham, he published documents supporting the American Revolution for Independence and the French Revolution. Those documents in addition to his "writings and speeches against the Established Church" created such a controversy that he was considered dangerous to the Church and State and was condemned by the Birmingham clergy (Griffiths 48). In 1791, a "'Church-and-King' mob destroyed not only his home and scientific laboratory but also the Birmingham New Meeting House" (Reill and Wilson 471). The destruction of his property resulted in his and his families immigrating to the United States. Priestley's troublesome relationship with religion probably added to Wright's questionable association with the Church.

While in Birmingham, Priestley's main source of support and camaraderie was with members of the Lunar Society. Except for Darwin, Priestley was probably the most prolific writer of the Lunar Society members. He started publishing in 1763 when he was thirty years old; by 1794 he had published 108 books (Thorpe 116). He wrote books on physics, religion, philosophy, psychology, education, language, history, and law. Some of his writings were on specific research and some were general informational treatises (Reill and Wilson 472). Priestley was also one of the most productive in scientific

research. Other members of the Lunar Society were interested in science; they discussed science, and utilized science for their inventions, but most were not involved directly in scientific research as was Priestley.

Priestley's claim to fame was through his research on the chemistry of air. He was an advocate of the phlogiston theory proposed by a German chemist and physician, Georg Ernst Stahl. Phlogiston was thought to be matter that was found in the three elements - earth, water, and air. The theory hypothesized that all substances could be separated from phlogiston, providing air was present. During the early part of the eighteenth century, most chemists throughout Europe and England were supporters of the presence of phlogiston and performed numerous experiments on air, one of whom was Joseph Priestley. Griffiths notes, "During [Priestley's] lifetime he examined the burning of candles, the respiration of animals upon air, [and] the action of living plants on the air . . ." (60).

Although Priestly made many discoveries about air he is most well known for his discovery of oxygen, even though he never realized that he had done so. It was not until the French chemist Antoine Lavoisier, who experimented further with Priestley's gas, named the gas "oxygen" that chemistry began to move away from the Phlogiston Theory.

Wright became associated with Priestly through the Lunar Society and because the public had been intrigued by the illustrations of Priestley's work, Wright was inspired to produce *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* 1768 (fig. 9) (Duro 664). In that painting, Wright was able to visually demonstrate to the public Priestley's research, the importance of having "dephlogisticated [sic] air" (Thorpe 167) (oxygen) present for life

and the ability to remove that air with a vacuum pump invented in 1650 by Otto von Guericke of Magdeburg, Germany. Wright was able to place before the public the intrigue of technology and scientific research while at the same time reveal the importance of the results of such research. Priestley must have consulted with Wright on the details of the research so that the intricacies would be accurately recorded. Priestley never commissioned a painting from Wright; however, he probably was instrumental in Wright's paintings depicting science and scientific themes.

Another member of the Lunar Society who was very much involved in Wright's work was Josiah Wedgwood. Erasmus Darwin introduced Wright to his close friend, Wedgwood (1730-1795), who was also one of the founding fathers of the Lunar Society. Not only was Darwin a close friend of Wedgwood, but he was also Wedgwood's physician. This relationship is reflected in the approximately 103 letters between him and Darwin (King-Hele xxvi). Some of the correspondences were because of mutual interest and some were medical advice. He and Darwin shared a mutual interest in everything related to technology and science. However, unlike Darwin, Wedgwood was interested in art and the practical side of entrepreneurship of science and technology. Darwin, on the other hand, valued science for science's sake.

One of Wedgwood's greatest contributions to the art world was that he inspired and created a need for artistic expression. In 1759, Wedgwood became an independent potter, developing his own pottery business in Burslem, England, known as the Ivy Works (Smiles, Wedgwood 40). Wedgwood's pottery business was an expanding enterprise and he was the first scientific industrialist to use artists in such large-scale

production. When Wedgwood wanted “mysteries of the imagination . . . he chose Wright; when he wanted factual renditions of figures, he chose Stubbs; . . . Stubbs anatomized and Wright mythologized” (Uglow 333). Wedgwood was also a major figure in the Industrial Revolution, primarily because of his business creations, his inventions, and the employment of numerous people. Wedgwood was an artist, craftsman, businessman, inventor and entrepreneur. He had invented different glazes one of which was his green earthenware. His craftsmanship and unique designs on service ware, which he created for Queen Charlotte, resulted in his being referred to as “Potter to her Majesty” (Jewitt 140). His glaze formula eventually became available to the public, and his green earthenware began to be produced by the surrounding manufacturers (Smiles, Wedgwood 33).

Not only was Wedgwood an excellent craftsman, but he was also one of the first industrialists to realize the importance of advertising. After seeing Wright’s painting *Belshazzar’s Feast* in 1773, Wedgwood became aware of the possibilities of people buying a painting that was connected to the pottery industry. He wrote his associate, Bentley, and basically made the observation that he thought he had found a way of respectably promoting pottery (Boime 258). He began contacting artists such as Stubbs and Wright to explore the possibilities of using their work to promote his pottery.

Wright’s association with Wedgwood resulted in his paintings being not only a medium for advertisement, but also a way of increasing his exposure. Wright’s national reputation was established through his scientific and industrial paintings, and his association with men of social, political, economical, and intellectual prestige contributed

to this endeavor. However, since he was little known outside of England, it was his reputation at the local level that ensured his livelihood and position in society. His commissions by local upper class citizens, such as Wedgwood, were responsible for most of his paintings.

Although the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, and cultural interests were influential in Wright's artwork, a separate factor and less vital was the change in artistic styles. Wright was "living in an age of artistic anarchy when anything from the most austere Neo-Classicism to the most outrageous Neo-Gothic was permissible" (Nicolson 65). The following chapters will discuss Wright's use of symbols and his response to the changing artistic style in the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER III

SYMBOLISM AND ARTISTIC STYLE IN ART

One unique characteristic of humans is their ability to communicate abstract concepts pictorially. Through the use of images humans are able to express emotions, beliefs, information about themselves, and their culture. Regardless of whether the desired outcome of the imagery is religious grandeur, as seen in Baroque style; frivolity of life, found in Rococo style; or the sophistication of the Masters, seen in Neoclassicism artistic style is in a constant state of change. However, irrespective of this fluctuating style, one relatively stable feature available to artists is the use of symbols. The interpretation of symbols may change over time, depending on the culture using them, but they are less mutable than the artistic style. This chapter will discuss symbols and artistic style used in Wright's paintings during the eighteenth century, primarily as they apply to England and Europe.

"The word 'symbol' is derived from the ancient Greek *symbollein*, meaning to throw together" (O'Connell and Airey introduction). The use originated with the custom of breaking apart a clay tablet signifying that an agreement or contract had been concluded. When the two parties came back together the pieces *symbola* would be joined. The *symbola* or symbol carried with it the idea that something was missing but with the symbol's introduction, completeness was reestablished (O'Connell and Airey introduction). Since there are no words in a painting that can complete a thought,

communication becomes visual. Today, in Western culture, the use of symbols that are represented in a painting, sculpture, text, or oral presentation, makes a concept complete.

A symbol can be an object, gesture, or facial expression that helps the artist communicate an idea. An artist can use symbols to add depth and meaning to a piece of artwork, which can help the artist complete his or her story. One's ability to communicate symbolically with the use of objects becomes more efficient as the meaning of a particular symbol becomes generally accepted. Since antiquity the use of symbols has become more organized and standardized. For example, in Western tradition the following objects have gained universal acceptance as symbols depicting the following meanings: hourglass - passage of time; cross - Christianity; skull - death; sword - protection and strength.

Douglas Davies states, "Very often symbols are what might be called a physical manifestation of ideas" (33). This physical manifestation can be used to complete an idea or concept through association. An object or objects in a painting that are associated with some activity, process, or profession can be used to transfer their association to a person in a painting. An example of such transference can be demonstrated through the use of pens or quills. Pens/quills are typically symbolic of writing and by having either one in a portrait an association can be established between the person in the painting and the activity of writing. Wright used this technique in the portrait *Erasmus Darwin* 1792 (fig. 14). Darwin was known for his poetry, and Wright was able to associate Darwin and writing by placing a quill in his hand. Another example of transference by association is seen in Wright's painting *Peter Perez Burdett and his first wife Hannah* 1765 (fig. 15).

Burdett was a cartographer, and Wright used a physical object (a telescope) to convey that fact. Wright could have established the same association by having Burdett hold a map, compass, or pieces of survey equipment. In both paintings a physical object was used to complete the idea that the portrait was more than just a painting of some person; Wright was adding another dimension, individualization, to his portraits by including the subject's particular interest.

In addition to completing or individualizing the subject of a portrait, symbolisms can also depict daily life and customs. Karen Armstrong explains in her book, *The History of God*, that through "symbolic stories, cave paintings and carvings . . . people were able to express their wonders of life and link these . . . mysteries [to] their own lives; [and] . . . poets, artists and musicians are often impelled by a similar desire today" (5). Walter Goldschmidt supports Armstrong's observation by stating "Without the symbol there would be no culture, and man would be merely an animal, not a human being" (73).

Through the study of art from different periods one can see how society has evolved. Art is not static; it changes with society. Therefore, when art from different periods is studied collectively one can see the changes in society. Objects used in a painting can give an insight into the habits, behavior, profession, form of recreation, status, and standard of living of a culture. An example of such an object depicting an acceptable behavior in society is found in the painting *Mrs. Francis Hurt* c. 1780 (fig. 16). She is holding a gold snuffbox in her right hand (Egerton, Wright 204) and appears to be pinching snuff to put in her mouth. The snuffbox in this painting is

symbolic of acceptable behavior found among woman in England during the eighteenth century. Clothing is another symbol, which can reveal customs found in a culture. Clothes can symbolize one's profession and status such as in Wright's painting *Cornet Sir George Cooke* c. 1766 (fig. 17). Egerton describes the painting as being faithfully executed in "every detail of the uniform as worn in 1766 – 8 . . ." (Wright 78). In addition to the coat and trim, scarf, hat, and cuffs, Wright painted Cooke with one gold epaulette on his left shoulder indicative of an officer in the Horse Guards. "Officers in the Infantry regiments wore them on the right . . ." (Egerton, Wright 78). Someone of that era would be familiar with the uniform and know the man's status and military way of life. Someone of a different century or country may have no idea what was being symbolized. As centuries change, so will customs; artists reflect this evolution through symbols.

Gestures can also provide information about how a person thinks or feels. The use of hands can be an effective way of relaying information about a person's attitude. Because of the hand's importance and the detail, accuracy, and time spent on their execution, Wright charged more money "for a hand" in a painting (Egerton, Wright 78). The artist must carefully display the hands or the viewer may misinterpret the message. Placing hands on hips with the fingers either facing forward or in a fist symbolically represents dominance or readiness to take action (Pease 238). This behavior seems to be natural and universally understood. Wright used this form of body language in his paintings *Mr. and Mrs. Coltman* c. 1770 (fig. 18) and *Sir Richard Arkwright* c. 1789

(fig. 5) to show that these two men were in control of their lives and that they had social and economic power.

Some gestures are innate, such as a smile. "Smiling and laughing are universally considered to be signals that show a person is happy" (Pease 69). Some gestures are learned, such as *the cheek screw with the forefinger*, which can mean any of the following: good, effeminate, crazy, crafty, or nothing, depending on the country of its use (Morris and O'Shaughnessy 62).

Gestures, which are learned, are dependent on the culture in which they are used. Cantor makes the point that if an allegory is being used by a culture other than the one to which a viewer belongs, the meaning is often misunderstood or totally unknown (126). Lucie-Smith states "The medieval artist expected his contemporaries to recognize . . ." what was meant by symbols thanks to what was commonly used and known during their time (7). During that period, European cultures were well defined by religious standards and the symbols being used would have been meaningless to people outside of European influence. During medieval times, as well as during the Renaissance era, most artists' contemporaries would be familiar with the context in which the paintings were executed and would have no problem understanding the symbolism being used. This phenomenon is seen in the numerous paintings in which a mother and her infant are painted in such a manner that they unquestionably represent Madonna and Child. This theme is found in Wright's painting *Lady Wilmot and her Child* 1788 (fig. 19). Sir Robert Wilmot commissioned Wright to paint a portrait of his wife and child; and in doing so, Wright painted both mother and infant in a pose reminiscent of numerous Madonna and Child

paintings. Wright wrote in his account book that the portrait was “a Madona [sic]” and not Lady Wilmot (Egerton, Wright 126). A source of inspiration could have been Andrea del Brescianino’s painting *Madonna and Child with the Infant St. John the Baptist* c. 1524 (fig. 20). Wright may have seen the painting while he was on the Grand Tour in Italy. He posed the child looking back at the viewer, in a fashion similar to Brescianino’s painting, and dressed Mrs. Wilmot in red with a scarf flowing down her left shoulder in a fashion that could be considered typical of a Madonna painting. Most viewers of the Renaissance would have recognized such a painting as representing Mary and Christ.

In symbolism, “everything has some meaning, everything has a purpose which at times is obvious, and at others less so . . . and everything leaves some trace or ‘signature’ which is open to investigation and interpretation” (Cirlot xlii). Symbols do not function alone “nothing is independent, everything is in some way related to something else” (Cirlot xxxvi). A symbol, such as color for instance, may serve a particular function in one painting while in another painting it might tell a completely different story depending on its association. Cirlot makes the observation that, “Colour symbolism is one of the most universal of all types of symbolism, and has been consciously used in the liturgy, in heraldry, alchemy, art and literature” (52). Wright often used red in his paintings; however, the context of the painting determined the symbol’s meaning. For example, in Western tradition red as used in the painting *Sir Richard Arkwright* (fig. 5) could symbolize high rank or position and emotion; while in *The Corinthian Maid* (fig. 2) it could symbolize love and virility. Purple, on the other hand, typically symbolizes wealth, primarily because it was extremely “expensive to produce as it was made from . . .

Purpura molluscs which were rare and . . . costly to process” (O’Connell and Airey 115). Therefore, people who dyed their clothing purple were usually wealthy. Wright used this color in several of his paintings but not as effectively as he did in his painting *Mrs. Sarah Clayton* c. 1768 (fig. 21). Mrs. Sarah Clayton lived in Liverpool and was “one of the leading business figures . . . the main entrepreneur in the coal industry, the city’s leading property developer and promoter of public buildings” (Daniels 18). Wright suggested her position and wealth in Liverpool with the use of light purple for her dress.

Another example of an object that has multiple meanings depending on context, is the pearl. O’Connell and Airey noted that “In Christian iconography, the Virgin Mary is sometimes compared to an oyster shell, and Christ to the pearl” (183). When Wright used pearls in his painting *Anne Bateman* 1755 (fig. 22), he could have intended it to have religious connotations. The Bateman family and the Gisborne family, into which she married, were associated with members of the clergy. Through that association her son, Thomas Gisborne, became a priest in The Church of England (Egerton, Wright 35). Therefore, pearls would have been fitting objects for Wright to use if he was attempting to reveal a connection between The Church of England and Anne Bateman. Jack Tresidder is of the opinion that pearls are symbolic of Christianity and are “the quintessential symbol both of light and of femininity” (121). But Wright also used pearls as props in most of the portraits that included females; their introduction could have been used to suggest purity. The pearls would typically be placed in the person’s hair as if to resemble a tiara that “emphasizes the predominance of the passive, reflective and feminine qualities of the figure” (Cirlot 133). In some portraits the pearls belonged to the

sitter and in some portraits Wright is assumed to have provided the props to enrich the sitter's qualities (Egerton, Wright 74). Whether he owned the pearls or not, Wright may have used them in various contexts to suggest multiple meanings such as: wisdom, wealth, salvation, or faith.

Symbols are interpreted "according to the beliefs and social customs that inspire the artist [or his/her viewer] . . ." (Hall IX) and are understood to be a supplement or an extension to the story being told by Wright in his paintings. Although Wright was interested in being able to express himself artistically, he was also driven by the marketplace. Most of Wright's associates were society's intelligentsias, members of the upper middleclass. His paintings were designed to attract these types of clientele who would most likely appreciate his artwork because of their cultural background.

As a result of The Industrial Age, the economic strata began to shift causing a demographic change in the typical connoisseur and patron of the art. New galleries were opened which allowed artists to market their artwork toward the industrialists who were becoming the new collectors and patrons. Along with this new trend in patronage, there was a change in interest in art style from Baroque to Rococo to Neoclassical during the eighteenth century (Levey 15).

Baroque extended from about 1600 to the early 1720s and was replaced by Rococo, which began around 1700 and ended in the middle 1780s. The aristocracy saw Baroque art as a way to demonstrate their splendor and sophistication, but much of the establishment resisted any new style of art. However, this grandeur was unattainable by the general population and according to Levey was not designed to "please or amuse but

[to] stun the spectator” (16). According to Mohun, Baroque art “in its purest form was produced only in Catholic countries, often as part of the decoration of churches” (194).

Patronage during the eighteenth century began to shift toward the wealthy industrialist and reflected the pleasures they deemed important; the new form of art that emerged was referred to as “‘rococo’ (from the French *rocaille* or ‘pebble’ and *coquille* or ‘shell’), [which] suggests a world of sensuous objects . . .” (Boime 13). This new art style worked well for smaller rooms and a more light-hearted atmosphere (Levey 18). There are dissenting opinions about Rococo as seen in Levey’s comment that “perhaps it is untrue that there ever was any rococo painting; and certainly it is one of the most puny styles in the brood spawned by art-historians” (15). It was viewed as a rebellion against Baroque and not really an authentic art style (Levey 15).

Rococo would not have been possible if it were not for a change in thinking brought about by the Enlightenment. A French painter and engraver, Hubert Gravelot, introduced Rococo into England (Mohun 243). Although England seemed to have been one the focal points of the Enlightenment “England was to have no native baroque or rococo painting[s]” (Levey 15). Gravelot shared his ideas with his friends such as William Hogarth and through Hogarth and his associates Rococo began to spread throughout England. The frivolous style of Rococo never became as popular in England as it did in France; however, it did inform as well as entertain, which helped make it more popular with the general public than the ostentatiousness of Baroque. Wright’s subject paintings, such as *The Alchymist, in Search of the Philosopher’s Stone, Discover*

Phosphorus . . . (fig. 10), were informative while *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump* 1768 (fig. 9) were informative and, in a morbid sense, entertaining.

During the Baroque period, “women had still been hovering on the outskirts of social life, but in the age of rococo they moved into its very centre” (Schonberger 54). This movement during the eighteenth century from marginalization to a more centralized focus was due primarily to the new thinking of the Enlightenment. Women and children began to have more prominent roles in social life. They became focal points and not just props in some conversational paintings. Wright moved them from the background to the forefront as seen in his painting *Peter Perez Burdett and his first wife Hannah* 1765 (fig. 15). Egerton is of the opinion that Mr. Burdett is the dominant figure (Wright 87); however, Wright painted him in dark colors causing him to blend into the rock wall behind him. Mrs. Burdett, on the other hand, is wearing a delicately feminine dress painted in light colors, causing her to radiate under the direct rays of the sun. Her dress is a light purple, symbolic of wealth, and she is assuming a posture of dominance with her hand on her hip. Although her gaze directs the viewer toward Mr. Burdett, her flamboyance and radiance competes with Burdett for attention.

In addition to a new positioning of woman and children, the Rococo style “emphazed [sic] elegance, frivolity, and decorative charm” (Mohun 242). Reill and Wilson state that “the culture of sensibility [was] associated with the feminine in formal 18th-century aesthetic theory” (518). John Timbs also observes that curved lines are indicative of softness, beauty, and femininity (57) and that the adoption of the S-curve in rococo art accomplished such symbolism (Reill and Wilson 518). Wright made use of

this visual movement in his painting *Mr. & Mrs. William Chase* c. 1762 (fig. 23). Wright provided a sense of softness through the use of the undulating movement of the drapes, on the left, while at the same time represented femininity with the use of the S-curve. The implied line found in Mrs. Chase's posture demonstrates this flowing curve. Following a line from the bird in her left hand across her body down her right arm to her right hand produces an S-curve similar to a pose by a ballerina. The painting is rendered in soft delicate colors also providing a sense of femininity.

The primary problem with this painting is its lack of theme. Mrs. Chase is sitting holding a bird while Mr. Chase is just standing holding a flute. The birdcage in the background explains the presents of the parrot that Mrs. Chase is holding; however, there appears to be no reason for the flute. Egerton mentions that Wright was an accomplished flutist and often used a flute as a prop; in this particular case the instrument seems to be an afterthought (Wright 49). This gives the impression that Wright gave Mrs. Chase a parrot, Mr. Chase a flute and told them: "go and do something". However, in his defense, this is one of Wright's earliest pieces and he was beginning to establish himself as an artist and develop his own style.

Although Rococo is primarily a feminine style of art, Neoclassicism, in contrast, "depicts the activities of gods or kings in compositions organized symmetrically along straight lines; [which were] representative of the masculine" (Reill and Wilson 518). An example of Wright's blending of these two styles of art, while giving children a more important role, is seen in his painting *James and Mary Shuttleworth with one of their Daughters* 1764 (fig. 24). Mr. Shuttleworth on the right, dressed in a dark coat and a

bright red hunting jacket creates a jarring contrast to his wife and daughter on the left side. He almost seems to have been part of another painting which was attached to the one with his wife and daughter. On one hand, Mr. Shuttleworth seems dominant because of his body language and dominant colors; however, his wife and daughter appear to be the focus of the painting. By using posture and color Wright combined a masculine element of neoclassicism and a feminine element of Rococo. Through gesture and positioning Wright was also able to demonstrate the importance of children in his painting. Placing the daughter in the forefront with a bird in her hand brings the viewer's attention to her. Also, there are three implied lines which bring the viewer's eye to the young girl: one line is created from the top of Mrs. Shuttleworth's head down along her body to her daughter; the second line of vision is from Mr. Shuttleworth's head down along his right arm to his daughter; and the third line is along the dog's body and head and points toward the girl. These three implied lines create three triangles with the daughter at their apex. This configuration is reminiscent of Renaissance composition which made use of implied triangles. Egerton proposes that Wright began to create his own style and originality with this painting (Wright 44); his pose was not as rigid as his mentor's (Thomas Hudson) poses, and he began making use of indirect lighting in his compositions. His depiction of real life in his portraiture tended to move his paintings in the direction of neoclassicism while they maintained a light, airy appearance of Rococo. Since Wright lived during the Rococo and Neoclassical eras there appears to be a blending of styles making his paintings unique. His paintings reflect a casual attitude yet not to the point of Rococo playfulness; he depicts a family of means without the

ostentatious grandeur of Baroque and reveals natural events without reverting to abstractions of ancient times as in Neoclassicism.

During the latter part of the eighteenth century, Rococo gave way to Neoclassicism because of several factors. The French Revolution was one of the contributing elements in this shift. Frank notes, "With the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789, the luxurious life that centered on the French court ended abruptly, and French society was disrupted and transformed" (350). This transformation was reflected in an interest in paintings similar to the masters of the Renaissance era. There was a movement away from the irrational and illogical representation of nature, as found in the frivolous Rococo art, to more substantial subjects. The evolution of art and culture from Rococo to Neoclassical was reflected by Wright in many of his paintings. Two examples of this transition are *The Corinthian Maid* c. 1782-85 (fig. 2); and *The Alchemist, in Search of the Philosopher's Stone, Discovers Phosphorus, and Prays for the Successful Conclusion of His Operation, as Was the Custom of the Ancient Chymical [sic] Astrologers* 1771 (fig. 10). The subject material, the use of Roman arches, and the somber presentation of these paintings reflect a neoclassical style. Therefore, because of the collective influences of the revolutions (i.e. Industrial, and French) in conjunction with the Enlightenment, society became eager to return to the classical forms of art and life.

"Neoclassicism ultimately became the preferred style of both the English Industrial Revolution and the French social and political Revolution . . ." (Biome 185). Neoclassical art strove to accurately represent nature and therefore merged itself very

well into the Enlightenment movement. The Neoclassical art began c. 1760 and was a revival of the Classical style based on symmetry and the triangular style of the Renaissance period (Boime 7). This movement in England captured an ideal approach to art using simple forms and colors to represent a formal approach to art that moved away from the gaudy and flamboyant styles of the previous periods. Painting, sculpture, poetry, stage production, and literature all fell under the impact of this new simpler way of looking at life. Reill and Wilson state "Painted or sculpted figures were expected to be ideal representations, unblemished and betraying no signs of a particular state of mind or emotion . . ." (420). However, if an artist attempted to follow these rules they had to allow themselves some latitude in artistic freedom because

actual nature did not provide examples of perfect beauty. Rather, perfection of form had to be abstracted from real objects by the artist. Art did not, therefore, strictly imitate nature but rather acted to purify nature by identifying and representing the pure abstract forms behind natural structures. (Reill and Wilson 420)

Wright's later artwork was of this neoclassical period; however, he did not adhere to all of the rules that were typical of this style. His artwork dealt more with capturing light; and his images were more about science and industry. Klingender states, "The first formal attempts by painters to introduce industrial scenes and themes into the fine arts occurred during the Reformation, when the struggle against Catholicism inspired landscapes and genre paintings . . ." (57).

Wright was able to expand the interest in science and industry and through the use of light was able to make something as serious as labor fascinating and entertaining.

Wright made use of color, body language, landscape, and props to enhance the message

of his paintings. Wright did not rigidly follow one particular style of art; however, he attempted to be faithful to his subject material while at the same time he provided a sense of mysticism and intrigue.

CHAPTER IV

PAINTINGS BY WRIGHT OF DERBY: THEIR BACKGROUNDS AND ANALYSIS

The following paintings: *A Philosopher by Lamplight* c. 1769 (fig. 1), *The Corinthian Maid* c. 1782-85 (fig. 2), *Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light* 1785 (fig. 3), *Virgil's Tomb Sun breaking Through a Cloud* c. 1785 (fig. 4), and *Sir Richard Arkwright* 1789-90 (fig. 5) are discussed in this chapter. They were selected because they reflect the richness and broad interests of Joseph Wright, and because they are samples of lesser-analyzed paintings. Most of the critical analyses of his work have been on his paintings prior to 1773, at which time he went on his Grand Tour. He began to concentrate more on portraits, landscapes, subject, and historical paintings after his return from the Tour.

Wright used many symbols, either intentionally or unintentionally, in his paintings. Through the use of symbols, he was able to add depth and meaning to his paintings that went beyond the visual image itself. His contacts with Lunar Society members, industrial entrepreneurs, and the intellectual growth of the Enlightenment all contributed to his artwork.

The discussion of each painting will consist of two parts; one part will provide background information, and the other part will be an analysis of the painting in regard to symbols and style used by Wright. Background material is discussed so as to provide sufficient information for the reader to fully appreciate and understand the story behind

the painting. Without knowing the painting's background, Wright's artwork becomes nothing more than just paint on canvas; however, to the reader who is familiar with the richness behind the painting, the artwork takes on a life of its own. Knowing the history behind a painting, a reader of this thesis has a better understanding and appreciation for its analysis. The background will address Wright's inspiration and the history of the subject material. The analysis will concentrate on the messages Wright was able to deliver through the use of symbols, which enhance the overall content of his works.

A Philosopher by Lamplight c. 1769

Background

A Philosopher by Lamplight (fig. 1) has been known by numerous titles: *Philosopher by Lamplight*, *Philosopher Studying Anatomy by Lamplight*, *Hermit*, and *A Hermit Studying Anatomy*. The painting was exhibited in c. 1769 under the title *A Philosopher by Lamplight* and was renamed as *A Hermit* when a print by William Pether was exhibited in 1770 at the Society of Artists (Graves 197). "The word hermit is derived from the Greek *eremites* 'living in the desert'" (Bottomley 12). Since there is no record of Wright expressing his reason for painting such a scene, any comment as to its origin is speculation. The general consensus is that Salvator Rosa's painting *Democritus in Meditation* c. 1650 (fig. 25) was Wright's inspiration and that he either saw the painting himself or that it was described to him by his friend John Hamilton Mortimer. The reason Mortimer is thought to have discussed Salvator Rosa's work is that he was considered to be nothing more than an imitator of Rosa, as suggested by Allan Cunningham's description of Mortimer as 'This Salvator of Sussex' (193), which

suggests that Mortimer would have been the man to consult. Mortimer and Wright studied under Hudson, and Wright may have used some of Mortimer's themes, such as *Banditt*; however, they had very little artistic style in common. Allan Cunningham described Mortimer's style as having "a certain dash of savage grandeur . . . [with] . . . a wild freedom unknown at that period in the productions of the English school" (188). In contrast, Francis Klingender states that Wright's style focused more on the effects of the "cold light of the moon mingled with dim candlelight" (51).

Wright may or may not have been influenced by Rosa; however, Wright "soon began to refer to [his painting] as 'Democritus' or 'A Hermit,' perhaps because he found that his source was readily recognized as Rosa's [*Democritus in Meditation* c. 1650-1651 (fig. 25)]" (Egerton, Wright 91). Egerton's comment implies that Wright was unaware of the similarity between his piece and Rosa's until it was brought to his attention. Inspiration may have come from other sources, such as Gerrit Dou's (1613-1675) painting *The Hermit* 1670 (fig. 26).

This observation is supported by the similarity between Wright's painting and Dou's *Hermit* and the fact that they both painted candlelit scenes using strong chiaroscuro effects (Martin 53). Dou's and Wright's hermit scenes seem to be more organized and within an enclosure, as represented by the entryways in both paintings. Rosa's *Democritus* painting seems cluttered, disordered, and not in or near an enclosure.

Paul Duro, as discussed earlier, indicated that interests of the period, rather than any one individual, were more likely to be an influential factor behind Wright's subjects. If Duro's hypothesis is correct, then one should be able to find other sources of

inspiration for Wright's *A Philosopher by Lamplight* (fig. 1) painting. One such source may have been the increased interest in ornamental hermits during the eighteenth century. During this time, for a man to be considered as a person of culture and sensibility, he needed to be seen at the London Theater, to read all the right books, and have a house at least modestly furnished with Thomas Chippendale furniture (France 87). However, to be considered truly refined, a gentleman had to let it be known that "he was spending a certain amount of his time alone, being melancholy on a mountain" (France 87).

This conflict of images created a problem for a man of wealth. Since the wealthy during the eighteenth century "believed there [was] no point in doing anything for yourself if you [could] pay somebody to do it for you, they employed people to be melancholy on their behalf," and the person they hired was referred to as an "ornamental hermit" (France 87). These individuals became quite popular among the wealthy Englishmen and could have been a source of inspiration for Wright's artwork.

The Honorable Charles Hamilton (1704-1786), whose estate was at Pains' Hall, near Cobham, Surrey, was one of England's landlords who had turned his garden into a park and hired an ornamental hermit to live on his property. Sitwell states that Hamilton posted a notice requesting a hermit with the following requirements:

The hermit should . . . continue [to live] in the hermitage seven years, where he should be provided with a Bible, optical glasses, a mat for his feet, a hassock for his pillow, an hourglass for his timepiece, water for his beverage, and food from the house. He must wear a camlet robe, and never, under any circumstances, must he cut his hair, beard, or nails, stray beyond the limits of Mr. Hamilton's grounds, or exchange one word with the servant. (49)

An ornamental hermit was becoming fashionable within the culture of eccentric and wealthy Englishmen. France states that for the eighteenth century English aristocrat, an ornamental hermit, complete with hourglass, Bible, and skull was a necessary accessory to his property (88). At this time in history, the name hermit seems to conjure images of an individual who was an eccentric, a recluse who had sequestered himself to escape the trials and tribulations of life. Although Wright did not paint his hermit/philosopher in the physical condition prescribed by Hamilton, he did provide a skull, hourglass, water (stream in the background), robe, and a book, which may have been a Bible. Wright's interest may have been piqued by the fact that such an individual had significance during the eighteenth century.

In addition to the general interest in an ornamental hermit, Wright's individual interest may very well have been aroused by the arrival of Jean Jacques Rousseau to England in 1766, which happened to be three years before Wright exhibited his *Philosopher* painting. Rousseau was a well-known philosopher from France who, because of his political and social eccentricities, had become a celebrity and had also been exiled from "different countries and states across Europe" (Uglow 181). Graham observes that "All [of] society, including the Prince of Wales *incognito*, called on him in Buckingham Street; the theaters were crowded to gaze on him" (203). One of Rousseau's eccentricities was that, in addition to being paranoid, he was a recluse and attempted to isolate himself in hermitages (Morley 234). Uglow states "The story went out that Rousseau used to hide in a cave . . . 'in melancholy contemplation', and . . . hated being interrupted" (182). Rousseau was also interested in botany and while living in

Derby, had become friends with one of Wright's close friends, Erasmus Darwin. This association provided a wealth of information about Rousseau. Another tie Wright had with Rousseau was through an associate, Brooke Boothby. Wright painted Boothby holding one of Rousseau's books (fig. 27), indicating Boothby's admiration for the writer (Egerton, Wright 116). There were members of the Lunar Society who were also followers of Rousseau, such as Thomas Day and Richard Edgeworth, so Wright could have been quite aware of Rousseau and his eccentricities and therefore inspired to paint such a character.

Considering the diverse interest during the eighteenth century, the more plausible reason for Wright's painting *A Philosopher by Lamplight* (fig. 1) was probably the appeal of ornamental hermits and the eccentricities of a well-known person such as Rousseau. Therefore, the *what* to paint was influenced by the period; the *how* to paint was influenced by other artists.

A Philosopher by Lamplight c. 1769

Analysis

From the first to the eleventh century, hermits were thought to be the epitome of perfection so that "abbots, kings and emperors would seek their advice" (Bottomley 24). However, by the twelfth century, they were recognized as thinkers, eccentrics, wanderers, dissenters against church and state, and comforters to the poor and downtrodden (Bottomley 24). This may have been the type of person Wright was attempting to paint rather than some ragged derelict, as suggested by Hamilton's advertisement, discussed above. *A Philosopher by Lamplight* was a speculative painting, which did not sell during

Wright's lifetime. Even though the title of the painting includes *Philosopher*, Wright seems to have permitted William Pether to use the name *An Hermit* for his print published May 14, 1770 (Egerton, Wright 91).

Wright used many of the symbols and images recognized by the populace of his lifetime to create his *A Philosopher by Lamplight*. His first choice was the overall scene, a hermitage, which was typically a grotto. Wright used some artistic license in his painting; he made the scene look like a stage setting with a large opening facing the viewer and an entryway in the back. By painting the scene in such a manner, he was able to bring to the viewer a sense of scholarly meditation on the inside while at the same time allow the viewer to see the outside and connect the viewer with the mystical qualities of nature. Wright painted the scene so that the lamplight illuminated the philosopher and the objects on the table. He may have taken some artistic privileges with the placement of the lamp; it seems to be hanging either parallel to the hermit or slightly in front of him. If this is the case, then there should not be any light on the cave's left front side; the rocks seem to be too far forward to reflect any light. Also, the lamp is typically the type that sits on something but is not hung from the ceiling with an open flame. The flame would soon do damage to the material holding the lamp. A suspended light is usually enclosed in a lantern as seen in Dou's painting *The Hermit* (fig. 26). Also, the tether holding the lamp probably would not have been wire because, during the eighteenth century, the making of wire through a process called *pulling*, was usually reserved for making jewelry and not for everyday use (Carroll 321).

Regardless of how the lamp was used, Wright needed to have a source of light illuminating his subjects, if he was to maintain his reputation as being a painter of light. Wright was able to use the lamp to serve basically two functions: one, a symbolic function and two, a utilitarian function for illumination. Cirlot regards a lamp as symbolizing intelligence and the spirit (176); Ripa considers a lamp to be the “light of understanding”(67) and an “emblem of vigilance” (73). Olderr lists numerous symbolic meanings for lamps, two of which are charity and self-sacrifice (77). All of these symbols would be applicable for a hermit, philosopher, or monk, which was probably why so many artists used lamps as props in their paintings of recluses, as did Gerrit Dou in his painting *Hermit* (fig. 26).

One of the reasons for the failure of Wright’s painting to sell may have been because of the visual discord that is created between the hermit and the images surrounding him. His clothing does not fit the scene and the two individuals behind him seem to be out of place and unexplainable. The hermit’s clothing seems to be a contradiction; he is dressed in a robe befitting of a hermit/philosopher/monk, but he is wearing buckled shoes and an ascot as Arkwright wore in his painting (fig. 5). Wright used a red belt for his hermit, which is symbolic of blood and sacrifice and could therefore be worn by a monk (Cirlot 29). The combination of these features would give Wright’s subject the appearance of being someone of substance other than of poverty. That observation may be the reason Wright originally called his painting *A Philosopher by Lamplight* (fig. 1). All of these images together suggest that the focal individual is a well-to-do philosopher or monk who is living in less-than-ideal surroundings.

Not only does the main figure appear to be a paradox but so do the two people entering the cave on the right side. It is unlikely that Wright would have just placed the individuals in the painting to provide balance; that could have been accomplished in many other ways. Nicolson makes the point that *The Alchemist* . . . (fig. 10) and *A Philosopher by Lamplight* (fig. 1) were presented as sale companions. He states that the two figures in the backgrounds of both paintings are on the same scale as the men in the foregrounds; Nicolson also observes that there is a close similarity between the two men in pursuit of knowledge in both paintings (52). However, one problem with Nicolson's observation is proportion; the two background individuals in *A Philosopher by Lamplight* (fig. 1) are not in proportion with the man in the foreground; they appear to be in another dimension. If they are as close to the man as they appear, they would come to his waist, if he stood up; they would also be about as big around as his leg.

The function of the two young men in the background poses another problem. In *The Alchemist* . . . (fig. 10), the two figures can be justified; they are laboratory assistants; but, the two in *A Philosopher by Lamplight* (fig. 1) seem to have no role nor does their presence contribute to the musing of the main figure. Therefore, they must have some symbolic significance. Egerton refers to the two figures as boys who are wanderers, as symbolized by the scallop shells on their hats (Wright 92). As Bruce-Mitford state "In Christianity [shells] signifies pilgrimage, particularly to the shrine of St. James in the Spanish city of Santiago de Compostela, where pilgrims wore the scallop on their clothing (55). The shells may have symbolized pilgrimage; however, Wright may have

used the shells found in Darwin's poems and family crest as inspiration for the two figures (Uglow 152).

The identity of the two figures becomes more complicated when one considers the staff, which is carried by the lead person. The staff is topped off with a knob, which adds to their mysterious presence especially since "Universal authority is symbolized by a spherical top [on a staff], as in the scepter of British monarchs" (Tresidder 137). Adding to the mystery of the two figures is their cloaks. The weather does not seem to justify a cloak, especially if the temperature is warm enough for the two to be barefooted. If these two individuals had travelled a long way through harsh conditions to seek knowledge and guidance from this hermit, they would have had more than just a cloak for their protection. Tresidder suggests that the cloaks would be suitable for someone on a covert mission and could symbolize concealment, invisibility, and intrigue (134). In addition, hushed motion of the figure in the lead might also reflect an attitude of veiled action; therefore, their presence and intent seem to be incompatible with the overall theme of the painting unless Wright had intended for the two to be *Banditti*. This is a theme he has used before, as in the painting *A Grotto by the Sea-Side in the Kingdom of Naples, with Banditti; a Sun-Set* 1778 (fig. 28).

Whatever scenario Wright used to explain who the two figures are, none of the reasons explain their function in the painting. Wright may be using them to add to the mysterious theme of the painting, which is implied by the cloudy, moonlit sky. The two individuals could be representing the robbing of life, creativity, and the philosophical wellbeing of mankind. Their presence may represent the tenuousness of knowledge and

life, as do the night, clouds, skeleton, and hourglass. The night symbolizes death as do the clouds that are covering the moon, which symbolizes imaginative sensitivity (Olderr 89). Clouds also add to the spiritual quality of the scene, because they too symbolize "the mystical and sacred" (Bruce-Mitford 37). Supporting Bruce-Mitford's effort to solve the mystery, O'Connell and Airey add, "In Judaeo [sic]-Christian tradition, clouds sometimes indicate the presence of God" (198). Cirlot states,

There are two principle aspects to cloud-symbolism: on the one hand they are . . . symbolic of forms as phenomena and appearance, always in a state of metamorphosis . . . [and on the other hand] . . . clouds reveal their family connexion [sic] with fertility-symbolism and their analogous relationship with all that is destined to bring fecundity. (50)

The movement of the clouds over the moon may be symbolic of the gradual elimination of old knowledge and wisdom and the birth of a new freedom of thought as seen in the Enlightenment. The moon is often associated with wisdom and "is sometimes linked with the acquisition of knowledge" (O'Connell and Airey 120). According to Cirlot, "The symbolism of the moon is wide in scope and very complex" (214). Because of its control over tides and its cyclic activity, some ethnic groups, such as Greek, Indians, and Iranians, view the moon as being associated with death and a place where the dead go to live (Cirlot 215). On the other hand, Boime implies that Wright used the moon to promote the Lunar Society and his contact with the Society's members (234). His opinion may have value; however, the moon could have represented the quest for knowledge, which was the central theme of the Enlightenment. The Lunar Society was relatively unknown and would not have generated as much interest in the paying clientele as would the exciting new intellectual movement of the Enlightenment.

Several other objects are also used symbolically. Individuals such as philosophers and monks, who are depicted as being deep in meditation, are often shown with objects such as an hourglass and a skeleton. In Wright's *Philosopher*, the hourglass is positioned on the left side of the painting and the skeleton on the table. The hourglass depicts the passing of time, while the skeleton "in the majority of allegories and emblems . . . is the personification of death" (Cirlot 298). A skull can also symbolize "folly of clinging to the things of this world" (Tresidder 24). A skull is also used to symbolize the focal subject's desire to isolate himself from the trivia of life and to concentrate on higher intellectual goals, such as in hermit paintings by Dou and Rosa.

On the floor of Wright's cave is a horse skull, which may have been a copy of Rosa's painting or it might be Wright's way of giving respect to George Stubbs. The two artists became acquainted through their association with Wedgwood and his pottery production. Stubbs was known for his studies of horse anatomy and in 1766, Stubbs produced and published etchings of "*The Anatomy of the Horse* [which became a] . . . major reference for scientists and artists" (Reill 576). Living horses typically symbolize "speed, grace, and nobility" (Bruce-Mitford 61). The horse skull could therefore represent the demise of its living qualities.

The area outside the cave gives the painting its mystical feeling. The gnarled tree hovering over the cave with the branches creeping over the edge presents an ominous image of doom and intrigue. Generally trees symbolize immortality and a "link between the three worlds (heaven, earth, [and] the underworld)" (Olderr 140). However, a withered tree symbolizes death, which would be in keeping with the meaning of the lamp,

hourglass, and skeleton inside the cave (Olderr 140). The trees in Wright's painting appear to be oak, which have a rich symbolic history. Different countries have their own interpretations of the presence of oaks; "in Europe the oak stands for heroism" (Bruce-Mitford 45). Regardless of the culture, oaks appear "to have links with nobility and endurance" (Tresidder 79). Because of the deforestation during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Great Britain, trees in succeeding years have been symbols of wealth and power. Wealthy landowners became the reservoirs of forestland, and Wright reflected this image in his conversation portraiture and landscape scenes; he included trees in most of his paintings. Wright probably used gnarled trees to add character and intrigue to his scene while reflecting the struggle for life.

There are several vines growing on the walls of the cave, which carry with them a religious connotation. Vines symbolize "an unfailing source of natural creation" and "the relationship between God and his people" (Olderr 144). Since Wright chose such a scene as an isolated grotto, he probably used the vines and draping leaves to carry out the theme of communication between the hermit and nature, and his musing about living creatures.

All of these symbols collectively represent that time is fleeting and that man's quest for knowledge is in a constant state of flux. The painting fuses different elements together to tell a story of men in search for something; the philosopher is seeking secular knowledge and the wanderers may or may not be seeking spiritual knowledge.

The Corinthian Maid c. 1782-85

Background

Wright was becoming interested in history painting and after having been inspired by William Hayley's poem *An Essay on Painting* 1778, he realized that such a scene would be a fitting subject for one of Wedgwood's pieces (Daniels 54). The poem tells a story about a daughter of a potter who draws an outline around her lover's shadow while he sleeps, because he is soon to leave. Verse 126 of the poem states,

Inspir'd by thee, the soft Corinthian maid
Her graceful lover's sleeping form portray'd
... The line she trac'd with fond precision true,
And, drawing, doated on the form she drew
... His kindred fancy, still to nature just
Copied her line, and form'd the mimic bust.
Thus from the power, inspiring Love, we trace
The modell'd image, and the pencil'd face. (Hayley 9)

Hayley's poem was based on a story by Pliny (Gaus Plinius Secundus), a Roman author, naturalist, and philosopher, who lived in the First Century AD. Pliny states that the young Corinthian maid "being deeply in love with a young man about to depart on a long journey, traced the profile of his face, as thrown upon the wall by the light of the lamp" (Bostock and Riley 283). This story would have caught Wright's attention not only because the poem mention lamplight but also because numerous authors had suggested that Pliny implied that the Corinthian Maid had invented drawing/painting. However, Pliny never made such a statement as indicated by Muecke's comment "the invention of painting by the Corinthian Maid did not [become] popular in painting until the later eighteenth century" (297). The observation that drawing/painting was not

invented by the Corinthian Maid is reaffirmed by a translation of Pliny's writings in which he states, "Linear drawing was discovered by Saurias, who traced the outline of the shadow cast by a horse in the sun, and painting by Kraton, who painted on a whitened tablet the shadows of a man and woman" (Sellers 227). Bostock and Riley also add to the confusion by translating Pliny as following:

The invention of line-drawing has been assigned to Philocles, the Egyptian, or to Cleanthes of Corinth. The first who practised [sic] this line-drawing were Aridices, the Corinthian, and Telephanes, the Sicyonian, artists who, without making use of any colours, shaded the interior of the outline by drawing line. (229)

These men concentrated on the two-dimensional aspect of their art, while the Corinthian maid's legend went a step further. The legend states that the maiden's father (Dibutade), who was a potter, "filled in the outline with clay and baked it with his other pottery" (Rosenblum, Origin 281). Sellers uses this part of the legend to declare that "the maiden invented the art of modelling [sic] figures in relief" (227).

Wright proposed the idea to Wedgwood and the fact that the Maid was a potter's daughter piqued Wedgwood's interest; through that association he saw a marketing possibility of uniting romance with his pottery. Wedgwood wanted to attract the wealthy female clientele with a scene that was romantic while sublimely suggesting an association of two lovers and his pottery. Wright attempted to follow the legend while at the same time produce a marketable product for his patron. Wedgwood insisted that Wright use certain pottery-related items in the painting (i.e. kiln and shelves full of vases); however, whether or not he dictated how Wright was to paint the scene is

unknown. The proposal resulted in a commission for Wright to paint *The Corinthian Maid* c. 1782 – 85 (fig. 2).

***The Corinthian Maid* c. 1782-85**

Analysis

In addition to resembling a first century A.D. legend, Wright's painting is also of a similar genre resembling Simon Ravenet's engraving of John Mortimer's painting *The Origin of Drawing* (fig. 29), that had been published May 1, 1771, by John Boydell (Rosenblum, Transformation 21); and a painting by a Scottish artist, David Allan (1744-1796), which is called *The Origin of Painting* 1773 (fig. 30) (Rosenblum, Origin 283). Wright's rendition of *The Corinthian Maid* (fig. 2) is similar to most others in that he involves only two people; some have several people in the scene, and some have a cupid present. Frances Muecke makes the point that Pliny did not describe *Love's* inspiration or guidance; therefore, the inclusion of a cupid, directing the maiden's hand, seems to have originated during the seventeenth century with "Franciscus Junius's encyclopedic compendium of ancient sources on art . . . first published in Latin, in 1637" (299). Wright's painting might have followed Pliny's description by showing an intimacy, closeness, and love between a sleeping young man and maid.

This painting resulted in a collaborative effort between Wright and Wedgwood. The completion of the painting took longer than anticipated, mainly because Wedgwood kept making changes, which Wright attempted to accommodate. Wedgwood allowed some ladies to see the picture, which was displayed on an easel. They were "shocked at the immodesty of the Maid" (Daniels 55) and believed that the material in which the

Maid was dressed clung too closely to her body; so, Wright had to adjust her by adding more material to satisfy the women's concerns (Daniels 55). After several years of interruptions and correspondence with Wedgwood, Wright completed *The Corinthian Maid* sometime between 1782 and 1785. Wright's painting is uncluttered. He used a simple background with subtle shades of earth tones, pierced by a single light that comes from the top left, illuminating the two figures in the foreground. Wright gave this image a glowing candlelight effect that he was famous for in many of his other paintings (Egerton, Wright 134). This light casts a prominent shadow around the male's figure and a very soft, airy shadow around the maiden's figure. (For the writing of this thesis the painting was digitized and when adjustments of saturation and light intensity are made, removing all of the subtle images, one is able to see the concentration of light). Wright was able to focus the viewer's attention on the bright red color along the edge of the drape on the left, the young couple, the dog's head, and the kiln in the background. Also by removing extraneous imagery, one is able to see a unifying configuration of the couple. Following the maiden's left knee, up along her body, from her head down along the young man's head, along his arm back to her knee completes a circle, creating an encompassing unit, which becomes a focal point.

The completed work also reveals two large pottery vases in the front room along with pots on shelves and a glowing kiln in the back room; "the fires on the right [from the kiln] are probably an allusion to those of Wedgwood's own pottery factory at Stoke-on-Trent, appropriately named Etruria" (Rosenblum, Origin 284). Wedgwood suggested that Wright incorporate these symbols, such as the gothic kiln and pottery, in the

painting, to help promote his pottery industry. This painting demonstrates a Neo-classical style with the drapery and a Roman-style with the arch. Egerton concludes, "Wright never produced another picture so austere neo-classic as this . . ." (Wright 134).

Neo-classical painters typically used the symbol of a sleeping greyhound. Egerton describes it as "a creature with pretensions to neo-classical elegance . . ." (Wright 134). Wright used such a dog to add elegance to a painting of people of high social standing such as the conversation portrait of *James and Mary Shuttleworth with one of their Daughters* 1764 (fig. 24). Shuttleworth (1714-1773) was a wealthy landowner, high Sheriff of Yorkshire and a Member of Parliament (Egerton, Wright 44). However, the dog in *The Corinthian Maid* may have played an additional role. According to Bruce-Mitford in Greek mythology dogs were considered to be "spiritual leaders . . ." (60). This dog would have been a supporting figure for a young Greek man leaving on an extended journey. Additionally, the dog may have been "a symbol of loyalty and protective vigilance" (Tresidder 62), which would have been for the benefit of the maiden as well as the young man.

But the most effective symbol for a painter is color itself. Color is used very dramatically in *The Corinthian Maid* especially as seen in shawls, clothes, and drapery. Wright used basically seven colors: white, red, yellow, gold, green, pink, and somber earth tones, to add depth to the painting's story. Cirlot, in his book, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, provides an excellent coverage of the historical significance and the symbolism associated with color. Cirlot believes that Color-symbolism is based primarily on innate

principles such as *thinking*, as represented by blue; *intuition*, by yellow; *surging and tearing emotions*, by red; and *sensation*, by green (53). The young man's clothing is gold, which Cirlot believes symbolizes "the negative sense of the point of departure or emanation rather than the point of arrival" (56). This color symbolism would be consistent with the story depicted in Hayley's poem, listed above, since the young man was supposedly departing on a long journey. The clothing he is wearing may be indicative of a Greek wardrobe; however, his clothes do not seem to fit the Greek style of the period. Abrahams points out that the combination of sleeves and length of the garment does not seem to be correct (60). However, Wright was able to represent the national origin of the couple with their Greek profiles and the maiden's wardrobe. The maid is wearing yellow, and Tresidder describes this color as "the most ambivalent, swing[ing] from positive to negative symbolism according to context and range of hue" (159). Bruce-Mitford states, "since the Middle Ages yellow has come to signify, in Europe, betrayal and treachery" (107). However, he continues, "In 1759 the Order of the Golden Rose was created by papal decree, an honor reserved mainly for female Catholic sovereigns, [which elevated the status of yellow]" (51). Other analysts suggest that Wright may have used yellow more broadly to represent "the sun; fruitfulness; beneficence; joy" (Olderr 152). But Cirlot describes yellow as most consistently representing *intuition*, which may be symbolic of the young maid's fear for her lover who will soon be leaving (53).

Both focal characters in *The Corinthian Maid* are wearing some type of wrap; his is blue/green and hers is pink. Bruce-Mitford refers to blue as symbolizing calm

reflection (107). Tresidder claims that “blue symbolizes infinity, eternity, truth, devotion, faith” (157). Olderr lists many symbols for blue; however, most of them refer to love and devotion (13). Green also seems to relate to a positive characteristic of the person wearing the color. Olderr lists fertility, life, youth, and innocence as a few of the interpretations that are symbolized by the color green (59). The pink shawl, which the maid is wearing, seems to connote sensuality, joy, youth, good health, and femininity (Olderr 103). Therefore, Wright seems to have painted the couple in colors symbolizing the eternal bond between two lovers.

The only other symbolic color in Wright’s *Corinthian Maid* is the red in the kiln and the red drape on the left side of the painting. Wright probably used the red drape to add balance while at the same time to present the young couple in an emotional embrace. Cirlot describes red as being associated with “pulsating blood and emotion” (53). Therefore, red could well symbolize the couple’s intense emotional relationship. Through the use of color and props a story seems to unfold suggesting that Wright sees the two young people as being in love with a common bond. She is presented as hopeful, healthy, and full of life; however, she realizes that she will be left alone and feels compelled to capture his likeness on the wall. The binding symbolism of the blue-green wrap located between the two of them could also represent a bonding love (Cirlot 56).

The staff, held in the crook of the left arm of the young maiden’s lover typically is a symbol of masculine fertility. Tresidder observes, “It often implies royal or spiritual power to administer justice” (139). However, in other images, such as Joachim Sandrart’s engraving *The Story of Dibutade* 1675 (fig. 31), the young man holding the

staff is thought to be a shepherd. Joachim's nephew, Johann Sandrart, also engraved *The Story of Dabudene* 1683 (fig. 32) with a young man holding a staff, which may have been a shepherd's staff. Wright used such a staff in other paintings as a prop; in this painting, Wright seems to be depicting the young man as a shepherd.

These symbols, taken collectively, describe a classical setting in which a young couple are in love. Wright probably was striving for something that would be eye catching on one of Wedgwood's pottery pieces, while at the same time tell a story of a joyful relationship that involves love and affection. Yet the setting seems to be incongruous; the scene is eye catching and poignant yet worrisome. The maid may have been working in the pottery shop when the young man visited her; if so, why is he asleep? He would have had no reason to be in a working pottery shop unless it was to see the young maid; it would not have been to take a nap. It is understandable that Wedgwood wanted pottery and a working kiln to be seen in the painting; however, by juxtaposing the couple and dog in the forefront with the working kiln in the background, the scene becomes somewhat strained. Wright appeared to be attempting to satisfy his customer while at the same time to satisfy his creativity in duplicating a scene described centuries before.

Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light, 1785

Background

The painting *Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light* 1785 (fig. 3) is thought to have been a companion piece to Wright's *The Corinthian Maid* c. 1782 – 85 (fig. 2) (Egerton, Wright 131). Wedgwood commissioned *The Corinthian Maid* and is

thought to have commissioned *Penelope*, primarily, because he purchased the painting before it was exhibited. William Hayley, the poet, who inspired Wright to paint *The Corinthian Maid*, was also instrumental in the production of the *Penelope* painting. This painting is totally based on symbolism; even the name *Penelope* is symbolic, her name comes from a Greek word meaning *a weaver*. Wright did not see another person's interpretation of the story; there were no locations he could have visited for inspiration; his painting was based only on Homer and Hayley's description of what took place.

Homer's poem, *The Odyssey*, written in early 7th century B.C., is about the journey of King Odysseus (Roman name Ulysses) who was requested by King Agamemnon to help fight a battle against the city of Troy. Odysseus left for battle when his son, Telemachus, was about a month old. The story of Penelope, and the part which Wright painted, took place when Telemachus was in his mid-twenties and not as a child as depicted in Wright's painting. The painting is based primarily on suggestions made by William Hayley. Hayley suggested that Telemachus be painted, as being sickly and that Penelope should be looking anxiously at her son. Wright was concerned that Homer's description of Penelope's son did not describe him as being either sickly or a child. Egerton states that Hayley reassured Wright by telling him "that in such kind of historical or rather poetical subjects, you may take any liberties you please" (Wright 131). Hayley also suggested that a statue of Odysseus be included in the painting.

Penelope's weaving of the shroud took place twenty years after Odysseus's departure. Because he had been absent so long everyone, except for Penelope, considered him dead. She loved her husband and never for one moment doubted that he

was alive. Because Odysseus was thought to be dead, the local single townsmen courted Penelope requesting that she should choose among them whom she would marry. Her suitors were becoming obnoxious and kept pressuring her to choose one of them to the point that she concocted a scheme to deflect their courtship. Penelope's scheme was to create a project for herself, which would take time to complete, thereby delaying having to make a decision. Her plan was to weave a shroud for her elderly father-in-law who, when he died, would have something in which to be wrapped. She described the plan to her suitors stating that after the completion of the shroud she would marry one of the men. J.W. Mackail translates Homer's book nineteen as revealing her plan:

So spake I; and, as is the way of men,
They were persuaded: all the daytime then
At the great loom I wove, and every night
With torches set unwove my work again.
"Thus for the space of full three years did I
Deceive the Achaeans by my subtlety.
But when the fourth year brought the seasons round
As the months waned, and many days went by . . . (67)

Penelope would weave her cloth during the day and at night would unravel her work. As indicated by the poem she was able to keep up the subterfuge for three years until a handmaiden revealed Penelope's ruse. Since there was nothing in Homer's poem to suggest anything about the location or environment in which the weaving took place, Wright was intrigued by the story and followed Hayley's suggestions for painting

Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light 1785 (fig. 3)

Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light 1785

Analysis

The similarities between the paintings *The Corinthian Maid* (fig. 2) and *Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light* (fig. 3) are found primarily in their themes and colors. The themes of both paintings are about the love of a young woman for a man who is either about to go on a journey or is on a journey. Both men are on a mission and the women left behind, or soon to be left behind, are remembering their loved ones. The Corinthian maid is thinking of the future while Penelope is thinking of the past. Wright's use of earth tones gives the viewer a feeling that the moment is a time of calm reflection and not a time of gayety. Brown earth tones represent an attitude that can reflect grief and melancholy, which would be a fitting attitude for these two young women (Olderr 17).

Wright used very few primary colors in these paintings; he used mixtures, which would be appreciated by an intellectual clientele. Cirlot states, that primary colors elicit primary emotions, secondary colors elicit deeper emotions and that "art of very advanced and refined cultures has always thrived upon subtle tones of yellowish mauve, near-violet pink, greenish ochres, etc." (55). One of the more prominent symbolic colors which Wright used is green, found in the drapery, shawl, and shroud. Olderr describes green as being a feminine color representing peace and hope (59). O'Connell and Airey associates green with "renewal, youth, freshness, fertility, and hope" (158). Penelope is wrapped in green suggesting that she is full of love and hope for her husband and son. Penelope is probably hoping that Odysseus will soon return home, and Wright may have

demonstrated this feeling with the color green. Her body language and gestures also suggest that she is in a moment of apprehension; she looks pensively at Telemachus while simultaneously toiling at her plan to deceive. As discussed in chapter three, gestures of the hands can also be an effective way of communicating a feeling. Pease state, "there are more connections between the brain and the hands than between any other body parts" (32). Wright realized the importance of hands and their symbolic messages, because he charged extra for painting hands in portraits. Her hands are arranged in such a way as to suggest a pause in her efforts. Both hands are curved inwards as closing in on themselves for support and protection. Because of the symbolism used in the painting, the viewer is subconsciously made aware of Penelope's dilemma and emotionally bonds with her.

Although Penelope is a queen, she is portrayed as a woman with the same basic concerns as any mother and wife. To demonstrate Penelope's social position, Wright relied on symbolism and body language. Wright used a tassel, on the left side of the drape, to symbolize her social position. A tassel represents wealth, prestige, and power and as noted by O'Connell and Airey, various religious groups have a tradition of wearing a tassel to symbolize rank (245). Additionally, Penelope's light purple colored dress symbolizes wealth, as discussed in chapter four. Her posture also suggests a person of refinement. Although she is barefooted, Wright painted her with her foot gracefully placed on the footstool; her toes are delicately holding the cloth which she is unraveling.

Wright not only painted Penelope with the delicate manner of refinement, but he also symbolized her wealth by placing her in a room with a palatial appearance. Wright

had no idea how the room was furnished nor did he know anything about its architecture; therefore, he was left to his own imagination. The weaving room has a domed alcove along with supporting columns along the wall; the room is similar to rooms found in palaces or churches. Although Penelope was a Greek, Wright painted a Roman style arched door to her left. The chair behind the column on the right appears to be a small version of a throne. By painting Penelope in such an environment, Wright was probably attempting to demonstrate that regardless of one's position in life, all are confronted with the same emotions of love and fear.

Although the painting is about Penelope, the primary focal point is her son. The light, which is hidden behind the statue of Odysseus, highlights Telemachus. Penelope's and Odysseus's gaze directs the viewer's attention toward the boy, and Wright used posing to help reinforce that attention. The boy is at the apex of a V created by Penelope's arm and Odysseus's arm and leg. Both lines of sight bring the viewer's attention to her son. The viewer is given the impression that Penelope is saying to her son: *I am going through this charade for you; in hopes your father will soon return.* Wright may have been attempting to appeal to the motherly instincts of his female patrons. Women were becoming more involved in art and business during the eighteenth century and were becoming an important source of income for Wright.

There are two other important symbols that Wright used to tell his story, a dog (Argus) and the statue of Odysseus. Penelope was in need of support and companionship and the dog could have served that purpose. Cirlot describes the dog as being an "emblem of faithfulness [and often appears] at the feet of women in . . . engravings" (84).

Wright did not use a greyhound as he did in *James and Mary Shuttleworth With One of Their Daughters* 1764 (fig. 24) to symbolize culture. Therefore, Wright probably intended the dog to not only be a faithful companion for Penelope but also a companion for Telemachus. Another possible function of the dog is to symbolize the calmness of the scene; it sits nearby patiently waiting for its master to appear. When Odysseus returned twenty years later, Argus recognized “his master and died with joy” (Pope 237).

The most conspicuous symbol is the statue of Odysseus. The primary storyline behind Homer’s *Odyssey* is the travels of Odysseus. Therefore, Wright must have intended for the statue to play a major symbolic role. Wright could have intended for the statue to be literally present and represent his kingship and protection of Penelope. Another possible scenario would be for Odysseus to be viewed allegorically as a constant provider of strength. Odysseus was known for his personal strength; he had a bow, which only he could draw. Wright decided to symbolize this strength while simultaneously respond to a complaint about the nakedness of the statue. He planned to have Odysseus hold an arrow in one hand and suspend a quiver just below his stomach to provide some modesty. The plan was generally well received except by Hayley, the man who had suggested the introduction of the statue in the first place. Hayley commented “this crafty substitute for a fig-leaf would only have the effect of making 'some saucy imaginations' exclaim 'Happy is the man that hath his Quiver full'” (Nicolson 147) and recommended that Odysseus be lightly covered with a drape. Wright modified the painting by placing a cloth across Odysseus’s loins and has him hold a spear in his right hand. By painting Odysseus in such a fashion, Wright was able to satisfy his critics and

symbolize the King's protective vigilance. By placing the light behind Odysseus, Wright was able to suggest the essence of Odysseus's presence.

Wright was able to suggest a neo-classical appearance through the use of clothing, Roman arch, and Greek statue. By using the strong light and dark effects, he was able to convey a story of a quiet atmosphere that amplifies the concerns Penelope has for her husband and son. Egerton also makes the observation that "The composition is grand and elegant" (Wright 132).

Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud c. 1785

Background

Compared to the many paintings produced by Wright, *Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud c. 1785* (fig. 4) is based on a man whose history is the most controversial and mysterious. The man is real, but his documented life is fictitious. The structure Wright painted was real, but everything associated with the large monolith seems to be a myth. Wright is thought to have literature and drawings of the tomb, which he used for reference (Egerton, Wright 120). His method of gathering as much information about his subjects as he could, support the idea that he knew all about Virgil.

Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro) was born October 15, 70 B. C., in a district near Mantua, Italy and died September 21, 19 B. C.. He seems to have come from a humble background. W. Y. Sellar states, "according to one account, [his father] was a potter, according to another a 'viator' (or officer whose duty it was to summon prisoners before magistrates)" (112). Fairclough describes Virgil as "of rustic parentage, and brought up in the bush and forest" (vii). Sellar describes him as having "been of a tall and awkward

figure, of dark complexion, and to have preserved through all his life a look of rusticity” (129).

In addition to documented accounts of this great Roman writer, many legends also exist. Charles Leland, in his book *The Unpublished Legends of Virgil* presents an excellent variety of legends about Virgil’s birth, life, and death. The story of his birth sets the tone for most of the myths about his capabilities and works of magic. “Some say that he was the son of a fairy (*fata*), and that his father was a King of the magicians; others declared that his mother was the most beautiful woman in the whole world, and that her name was *Elena* (Helen), and his father was a spirit” (Leland 5). According to legend, his mother Helen conceived Virgil by immaculate conception after having drunk wine, which contained liquid gold; and with the aid of three fairies he was “born fair and strong and beautiful; [and] all who saw him [were amazed]” (Leland 5). The legend continues by claiming that when Virgil was fourteen, he fell asleep next to a stone, which covered a vase; the vase held a fairy “who told him that there was also in the vase a book of magic and necromancy [witchcraft]” (Leland 6). Next to the vase was a magic wand, and through the wand’s magical power, the fourteen- year-old Virgil, “who had been as small as a dwarf, became a tall, stately, handsome man” (Leland 6). Because of the power in his magic book, Virgil was thought to possess the powers of gifted magicians and witches and through his efforts he was able to do everything from driving flies from Rome to making stone fish edible (Leland 45,103). Also, because Virgil’s work had religious significance and resembled Christian doctrines, “he was elevated to the rank of those prophets who had foretold the coming of Christ” (Comparetti 99). Domenico

Comparetti states that “those who believed that Virgil prophesied the coming of Christ were ridiculed as believing that Virgil was a Christian without Christ” (101). Even though Virgil was famous as a poet during his own time, most of his notoriety and mystical powers were not fabricated until late into the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Trapp 4). He spent most of his real life, not as a supernatural mythical being but as an unobtrusive, mild-mannered poet who was concerned only with his work.

Wright used his imagination and creativity to tell a story of a man who had become larger than life. During the late 1770s and early 80s Wright was at a point in his life where he was “in a delicate balance between . . . [painting] what actually was there, and what he liked to construct out of what was there” (Nicolson 83). Painting Virgil’s tomb provided Wright with the opportunity to use his imagination and construct a scene, which reflected both fiction and reality. Gentlemen who were on the Grand Tour “were predisposed towards acquiring paintings of classical sites . . . such as Virgil’s Tomb” (Egerton, Wright 120). Wright was of like mind and became intrigued by the stories about Virgil. He was known for his habit of spending a considerable amount of time obtaining information about a subject, even to the point of making himself ill. Wright is thought to have “injured his health by lying on his back on the floor of the [Sistine] Chapel [for great lengths of time studying the ceiling] and contracting a liver complaint” (Nicolson 7). This being his habit, Wright probably was well versed on Virgil’s history and used the historical figure as an opportunity to use his imagination and flare for the mysterious. Trapp makes the point that Wright probably had a copy of Paolo Antonio Paoli’s book *Antichita di Pozzuoli: Antiquitates* published in 1768, which was used by

many artists on the Grand Tour (24); the engraving (fig. 34) is found in Paoli's book. The tomb is close to a grotto, near the bay of Naples, and Virgil supposedly dug both with his powers of magic. The problem with the tomb being dug by Virgil, is that the tomb is described as being "brick-built without, lined with stone, vaulted, [and] niched" (Trapp 13). J. B. Trapp also describes the tomb as a type of *columbarium* (a place for storing funeral urns), which had a large square base, a column shaped top and two entrances, one built and one broken through (8). This is the type of structure Wright painted and not one that was carved out of a rock wall.

The terms *grotto* and *tomb* are sometimes used interchangeably and in some cases the cavern near the Bay of Naples is referred to as Virgil's grave (Trapp 9). Supposedly Virgil was being chased by assassins and during his escape he came to a steep rock wall and spoke the following:

Mighty spirit of the mountain,
Ope thy rocky heart to me.
Gentle sprite, I pray thee
Have mercy upon me,
As thou truly hopest [sic]
That God may pity thee. (Leland 15)

The rock opened up, and Virgil was saved. Virgil thought that the grotto would be of some value, so he left it as it is today (Leland 15). Wright must have been intrigued by this legend because not only did he paint Virgil's tomb, but he also painted the cavern near the Bay of Naples.

Virgil, who appeared to be in poor health most of his life, and according to his wishes, was buried in Naples; however, according to Trapp "no locality is given for the

grave" (4). The tomb's location is based primarily on vague descriptions provided by other poets such as Marcus Martial c. 40 A.D. – c. 103 A.D., Silius Italicus c. 28 A.D. – c. 103 A.D., Pablius Statius c. 45 A.D. – 96 A.D., and philosopher Pliny (Gaus Plinius Secundus) 23 A.D. – 79 A.D. According to Trapp, their vagueness "must have been irritating for any ancient literary tourist who sought the spot" (3). These men regarded Virgil as a saint. Martial would speak of the "Ides of October as sacred to Vergil" (Comparetti 49). The poet "Silius Italicus used to celebrate his birthday every year, visiting his tomb as if it were a temple" (Comparetti 48). In 1779, Wright painted Virgil's Tomb with Silius kneeling inside *Virgil's Tomb, with the figure of Silius Italicus* (fig. 33). Trapp states "the story of Silius was famous enough for [Wright] to have heard it before or after, or even during, his visit" (26). After retiring in the late 70s A.D., Silius purchased the land occupied by Virgil's grave and "repaired the tomb and made it serve as a shrine at which to keep the Ides of October [sacred]" (Trapp 3). Silius continued taking care of the property until he voluntarily starved himself to death in c. 103 A.D. after discovering that he had an inoperable tumor (Trapp 3). Pliny the younger claimed, in approximately 101 A.D., that Silius, who maintained the burial site, was probably more precise about the location of the tomb than anyone else.

Wright painted Virgil's tomb while on his Grand Tour in Italy and the one he painted must have been accepted as the correct location; however, if Trapp is correct, the location was only an educated guess. The site has become heavily commercialized, and any similarity between what is seen today and its appearance during the eighteenth century is probably accidental.

Comparetti relays the story pertaining to the disposition of Virgil's bones as follows. Supposedly during the twelfth century, an Englishman asked King Roger II of Sicily for permission to take the bones of Virgil from Naples (Comparetti 273-274). The king gave his permission, and the people of Naples consented because they did not believe the Englishman would be able to find the grave. After extensive excavation, the Englishman found a grave and assumed it was Virgil's. He attempted to remove the bones as permitted by the king; however, the people of Naples were concerned that if the bones were removed, Naples would lose Virgil's protection. Therefore, they refused to release the bones; however, they did allow the Englishman to take the book of magic, which rested under the head of Virgil. The bones were removed and kept behind bars at the 'Castel di Mare' (Comparetti 273-274). Trapp tells of another man, by the name of Ludowicus, who had also visited the site earlier and failed to recover any bones (4). The problem with this legend is that Virgil wanted his ashes buried in Naples and not his bones. Stories about his death and burial mention both ashes and bones; therefore, the true account of his burial remains unknown.

These stories just add to the mystery and legends of Virgil and his burial site; now that the book of magic is missing and the bones are unobtainable, the exact location of the grave is unknown. It is probably this colorful history that inspired Wright to paint the scene; and the opportunity to creatively use light and symbolism to tell a story of a legendary person heightened his interest.

Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud c. 1785

Analysis

Although Wright probably painted six versions of Virgil's Tomb, only one was painted in daylight (Egerton, Wright 122). The only painting in which the tomb is bathed in sunlight does not have the mystical qualities of his other five nighttime paintings. He was known for his dramatic use of light; therefore, he must have had some other reason for painting in stark daylight. Because the painting *Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud c. 1785* (fig. 4) is not typical of Wright's style, it will be the one analyzed.

Wright probably attempted to paint the tomb as an object to be respected for its own quality and thus highlighted it with sunlight. He did not strive to create something emotional or mystical, as would have been expected based on his style, especially in light of the wealth of legends about Virgil. There are three areas to be considered – the tomb proper, the area surrounding the tomb, and the features inside the tomb. Wright presents an ancient tomb with signs of age, deterioration, and possible violation. The tomb with its rough exterior stands out as a large monolith paying respect to the one buried inside. O'Connell and Airey state that rocks are symbolic of eternity and divinity (195), and the pyramidal shape adds to the stability of the emblem of a sacred place. Wright produced one painting in which he included Silius (fig. 33), who considered Virgil to be a saint, and as mentioned above, maintained his tomb as if it were a shrine. Therefore, Wright painted a historical scene that portrays a tomb befitting a mystical power of ancient time.

Light enters the structure from the right side illuminating the tower, the atrium, and the left edge of the entryway. These lighted areas provide bulk to the tomb and focus

on the door to the vault. The tomb has a broken wall, which accounts for the light entering the atrium on the right side (Trapp 9). However, the vault at the back of the atrium also appears to be illuminated from an outside source, and if it is, one questions whether the burial chamber is just an open room. The painting in which Silius is present in *Virgil's Tomb, with the Figure of Silius Italicus* 1779 (fig. 33) appears to have a closed door leading to the vault. On the other hand, the engraving in Paoli, *Antiquitates Puteolanae* book, (fig. 34) allows the viewer to see all the way through the tomb. The views of an open and closed door to the tomb represent only two of the many interpretations of the tomb.

By having light glow from the vault (fig 4), Wright may be attempting to symbolize Virgil's belief that "the gods of mythology appear[ed] to have real existence, as manifestations of . . . divine energy" (Sellar 18) by implying that there was divine energy within the crypt. Virgil is thought to have made the Grotto of Posillippo and tomb by magic, thus symbolizing his mythical power over nature. Wright may have also painted the tomb with an opening because "the going through a hole or passage, especially in a rock, signified new birth, or illumination or initiation" (Leland 16). This interpretation would be fitting because of the brilliance, which was attributed to Virgil. The ability to go from the shadows of the unknown into the light of knowledge was an attribute supposedly possessed by those who had magical powers (Leland 17). This is one feature of Virgil that is repeatedly addressed in the many legends about him.

Wright could possibly be acknowledging the legend of Virgil's immortality by painting a scene with the sun breaking through the clouds. The sun "is typically

associated with power, manifesting both as a supreme deity and in emperors or kings” (O’Connell and Airey 118). Olderr has the sun symbolizing a large number of characteristics; however, the majority of them are associated with divine energy, power, and spirituality (131). Clouds, on the other hand, are seen as obscuring the truth; therefore, the sun, as used in the title of Wright’s painting, is literally breaking through the clouds and figuratively breaking free of the darkness of ignorance. The sun coming through the clouds could be highlighting Virgil as the person of wisdom with divine energy and power as described by centuries of legends.

Wright has covered the tomb in vegetation and probably placed Bay trees at the top of the roof of the tomb. A Bay tree is a variety of Laurel, and the tree is thought to have sprouted at the top of Virgil’s tomb. Legend claims that a Bay tree grows on the top in response to Virgil’s mother’s dream and action. Supposedly, she dreamed “that she [had] give[n] birth to a branch of laurel” (Trapp 10). Legend has her starting a fire of laurel branches, and as the fire crackled, Virgil was born (Leland 5). People would take cuttings from the tree with the belief that the twigs would bring them good luck. The tree had died and been replanted several times, so it is quite likely that Wright painted the scene with a Bay tree on the top. The “Bay tree is a symbol of immortality and victory” (Bruce-Mitford 43). Cirlot adds, “The crowning of the poet, the artist or conqueror with laurel leaves was meant to represent not the external and visible consecration of an act, but the . . . victories over the [unseen] negative . . . forces” (181). Therefore, the tree symbolized Virgil’s triumph over the unseen mysteries of life. No one had actually seen him accomplish the many feats he was alleged to have accomplished; therefore, the laurel

honored what he was presumed to have done or capable of doing. The Bay tree, mounted on top of the grave, is like placing a Laurel crown on his head, giving him the symbol of power and honor. Bruce-Mitford states that when Laurel is “worn as a wreath it symbolized the poet and excellence in the sciences and arts” (44). Of all the symbols associated with Virgil’s tomb, the Laurel or Bay tree is probably the most meaningful because it clearly identifies Virgil as an exalted poet.

Virgil’s work has religious allegorical significances and even though he was thought to be a pagan by Christians, the fourteenth and fifteenth century historians placed a lot of importance on Virgil’s role in Christianity (Comparetti 107). Comparetti claims that “Ancient poetry and ancient religion were so closely connected in their causes, their origin, and their development that they had become in great part actually identical” (163). Virgil was the primary authority on grammar, and many Christian authors quoted Virgil, which gave him a closer association with religion than he deserved (Comparetti 79). The vines Wright painted growing on and in the tomb possibly reinforce Virgil’s image as a religious prophet. Elizabeth Haig states, “The principle of the allegorical fruits is the vine. It is one of the most ancient emblems of Christ” (235). Since Virgil is thought to have foretold the coming of Christ, this is a fitting symbol. Additionally, “vine[s] frequently appear as a symbol both of youth and of eternal life” (Cirlot 360).

Wright painted two figures in the doorway to the crypt whom Egerton refers to as visitors (Wright 122). This observation is not likely primarily because of perspective. Wright’s painting, in which he included Silius (fig. 33), seems to put the tomb and a human form in proper proportion. This proportion is not reflected in the painting of

Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud c. 1785 (fig. 4). The individuals in Virgil's tomb are too small to be real people and, therefore, must be symbolic of some special event associated with Virgil or the tomb. Wright was probably well aware of the story about the attempt to remove Virgil's bones and these figures, or *banditti*, could well symbolize the Englishman Ludowicus, or grave robbers. Wright painted three similar individuals in his *Rocks With Waterfall* c. 1772 (fig. 35), whom Daniels called *banditti* (62). Therefore, the tiny individuals in Virgil's Tomb could be *banditti* (detail of fig. 35). Wright was well aware of Mortimer and Rosa's work in which they often used *banditti* as integral figures in their themes, and Wright could have used these individuals in this painting (fig. 4). The *banditti* tugging at the vine in the doorway of the crypt could very well be interpreted as a struggle with legendary beliefs that Virgil had supernatural spiritual powers. It could very well be symbolic of the attempt to humanize Virgil and eliminate his legend of immortality.

Wright continued the religious symbolism on the outside of the tomb. He painted a series of steps on the right side, which, according to Cirlot, "is a symbol which is very common in iconography all over the world. It embraces the following essential ideas: ascension, gradation, and communication between different, vertical levels" (312). They typically symbolize the connection between two worlds, heaven and earth (Cirlot 313). Supposedly Virgil was made aware of the meaning of life in death, which could have been implied by having a stairway next to his tomb (Comparetti 222).

If Virgil had been alive during the twentieth century and read about the many accounts of his exploits, he probably would not have recognized himself. History made

him a legend with supernatural powers. Wright used symbols subtly to suggest these mystical qualities without going to extremes. Although legends had been built around Virgil's life, he was still just a man with humble beginnings; Wright was able to symbolically paint a scene that reflected both concepts of the man. Faithful followers of Virgil can see symbols exalting his mystical qualities while others see symbols reflecting death and decay. Wright painted a scene that reflected a historical event while expressing his artistic creativity.

Sir Richard Arkwright 1789 -90

Background

Wright painted a portrait of *Sir Richard Arkwright 1789-90* (fig. 5), who was a symbol of the industrial age. Arkwright set the standard for entrepreneurship and Wright wanted to immortalize such an icon. He was born 1732 in Preston, England, to Thomas and Sarah Arkwright and was the youngest of thirteen children. From the very beginning Arkwright demonstrated initiative and drive. His family was very poor and, unfortunately, could not send him to school; so, Arkwright taught himself to read and write (Smiles, Self 47). As a young boy he was a barber's apprentice until he was approximately eighteen. At that time he began to show his gift for entrepreneurship; he occupied an underground cellar in Bolton, England and put up a sign advertising his business (Smiles, Self 47). After a few years he gave up barbering and starting dealing in hair. He traveled to different towns and bought hair, which he prepared for wig makers (Burrows 61). This travel provided him with the opportunity to see how business was

being conducted around England and ultimately set the foundation for his rise to fame and fortune.

Also during his travels, he became aware of the weaving business and James Hargraves's invention. Prior to 1760 weaving of garments was a cottage-based business, which was time and energy consuming. Seeing the need for a faster way of producing thread for weaving, James Hargraves invented the Spinning-Jenny in 1767. This invention allowed more threads to be made in a shorter time. This efficiency was viewed by the general public as a threat to their livelihood and, consequently, resulted in their demonstrating against Hargraves and destroying his invention (Burrows 63). Even his wife rebelled against him; she "burnt a wooden model of his spinning-wheel" (Carlyle 182).

Arkwright became aware that Hargraves's machine only made short threads for weaving. He used the spinning-wheel's basic design and modified the machine so longer threads could be produced. Arkwright was charged with infringing on Hargraves's inventions resulting in Arkwright's losing patents on part of his equipment. Some members of the Lunar Society, who had vested interests in the cotton industry, became angry with Arkwright. Matthew Boulton, a member of the Lunar Society, was of the opinion that Arkwright was a tyrant and more self-assured than a king and if he had been smarter, he would not have lost his patent (Uglow 395).

After Arkwright's patent conflict had been settled and his machinery had been completed, he moved his operations from Manchester to Nottingham. This move was made because he did not want to become involved in the same difficulties Hargraves had

experienced with an angry public (Burrows 72). Along with other investors and partners, Arkwright finally, in 1771, developed a mill in Cromford, England (Burrows 77). Arkwright's mill provided job opportunities for the citizens of Nottingham, even children. He had his own rules about the employment of children. Fisk makes the observation that Arkwright "did not employ parish apprentices, nor any child under the age of ten, and no children were admitted into the mills until they could read" (28). Working conditions were deplorable during the eighteenth century, but because of men like Arkwright and advocates of the Enlightenment, conditions began to improve for women and children.

The mill was run by waterpower until James Watt had improved the use of steam power. In approximately 1774, Watt and Boulton entered into partnership and from that point on, steam became the driving force behind the Industrial Revolution (Burrows 77). Arkwright's mills provided a great income, but they also created a lot of grief. He hired numerous employees and even built living quarters for his workers. However, since his milling frames allowed one person to do the job of many, the public saw his factory as a threat to their livelihood. The manufactures of the milling industry banded together to contest Arkwright's patent, which he lost, and in the process the townspeople destroyed one of his mills (Smiles, Self 50).

Although Arkwright was interested in science and technology, he never became a member of the Lunar Society. He was more interested in what the members could contribute to business other than their coming together "simply [for] the pleasure of playing with experiments" (Uglow xv). However, after many years of struggling to

overcome his meager background, patent problems, financial problems, and public relation problems, he was “credited with creating the factory system, earning him such titles as a 'founding father' of the Industrial Revolution and the 'father of the factory system'” (Fisk 25). In addition to becoming quite wealthy, he helped make Britain a major participant in the world of production, resulting in his being knighted in 1786 by King George III (Egerton, Wright 198). “In the following year, he reached the pinnacle of his social ambition when he was made High Sheriff of Derbyshire” (Fisk 30). In 1789 he bought a large estate near Cromford on which he built Willersley Castel (Fisk 30). In that same year, Wright finished a portrait of Arkwright. Daniels states that Arkwright commissioned Wright to paint his portrait, which was completed in 1789 – 90 after the last trial pertaining to the patent (Joseph 56).

Sir Richard Arkwright 1789-90

Analysis

Arkwright was a symbol of the Industrial Revolution, and entrepreneurship and was, therefore, a fitting subject for Wright to paint. Wright not only painted a portrait of Arkwright, but also a landscape scene of one of Arkwright's mills. The portrait, *Sir Richard Arkwright 1789-90*, (fig. 5) is rich with symbols; and Wright was able to use these symbols along with body language, color, and props effectively to tell the story of a man who is thought “to be the first industrial tycoon in Britain” (Fisk 30).

Whether Wright posed Arkwright or left him alone to pose himself is not known; however, if Wright posed Arkwright, then the scene becomes one of perception by the painter, but if Wright left the posing up to Arkwright, the painting becomes one of self-

image. In either case the posture, props, and clothing provide clues to Arkwright's attitude, whether real or perceived. Wright's painting appears to portray a man of resolution and command. Other authors, such as Egerton and Carlyle, view Arkwright in a different light. Egerton states that the painting "is a portrait without flattery" (Wright 198). Carlyle describes Arkwright as "a plain almost gross, bagcheeked [sic], potbellied Lancashire man, with an air of painful reflection, yet also of copious free digestion" (182).

Regardless of one's personal opinion of the man, he was a successful industrialist. His claim to fame was the milling of cotton, so one of the props used in the portrait was the roller frame, which was a device used in Arkwright's mill to spin thread. The frame "was not only the key component of his own cotton mills in the Midlands and North West but [was also] licensed at high prices to other large-scale manufacturers with at least a thousand spindles" (Daniels 56). The frame represents years of struggle in the courtroom, and Arkwright was quite possessive of the piece of machinery. Whether Arkwright or Wright wanted the prop present is unknown, but its symbolic importance in the painting is very noticeable.

The piece of machinery lies on the table near Arkwright's left hand, which is clenched and positioned next to the frame. His left foot is on the inside of the table leg. Both actions seem to be saying this is my invention and no one dare challenge me on its ownership. Olderr suggests that a fist demonstrates: "power, resistance; deterrent capability; [and] threat" (50). Allen Pease and Barbara Pease describe the feet as an indication of intention; and that the feet point toward the object or individual which holds

a person's attention (284). The angle of the body and left leg seem to be pointing toward the table, which holds his prize possession. Also, Wright painted the rollers white against a dark background, which catches the viewer's attention, causing Arkwright and the spinning frame to become visually one unit.

One the most striking feature about this painting is Arkwright's over-all body language in which he assumes the posture of power and control. His puckered lips give him the impression of determination and contemplation and as Carlyle describes, "painful refection" (182). Pease indicates that spread elbows designate ownership of space and demonstrate power, dominance, and readiness for action (237). Arkwright attempts to make himself as large as possible by spreading out, thus claiming he is lord over all. The hand on his right hip is also interpreted as being a gesture indicating power (Pease 104). Arkwright's jacket flows from his body to the floor and appears to flow into the drapes near his right foot. This observation, along with the fact that there are no buttonholes, which would allow him to use the garment as a coat, causes it to appear as a cloak. There are many interpretations for the symbolic meanings of a cloak, such as protection, mystery, invisibility, and intrigue. (Tresidder 134). Wright was probably attempting to appeal to Arkwright's ego and used the cloak to symbolize "superior dignity" (Olderr 26). This interpretation would fit in with the overall theme of the painting, which is power, energy, and control.

Wright carried out this theme of power with the use of the color red, which Olderr describes as symbolizing "creative force" and "imperial power" (110). Tresidder

describes red “As the colour of arousal [and] linked with sexuality,” as demonstrated by the location of the red velvety material on which Arkwright is sitting (156).

Through the use of symbols, Wright’s painting emphasizes Arkwright’s powerful social and economic position even as Hyacinthe Rigaud used symbols to denote political authority in his painting of *Louis XIV 1701* (fig. 36). Even though Wright was not attempting to emulate Rigaud’s painting, he did use similar symbols to represent a man of power. The drapes encase Arkwright (fig. 5), further emphasizing the importance of the man beneath, just as the drapes imply importance with *Louis XIV*. The drapes in both paintings are red, which seems to have numerous and diverse symbolic meanings, such as aggression, war, fire, energy, love, joy, and love of God depending on the situation in which the color is being used. Tresidder describes red as being an “emblematic colour of power and therefore of gods of war such as the Roman Wars” (156). Given the situation in which Wright painted Arkwright, the more likely interpretation of the red drapes would be power and creativity.

Another symbol of power in Wright’s painting of Arkwright is the tassel hanging from the drapery. The tassel “represents wealth, prestige and power . . . [also in] . . . Catholicism and other religious traditions, the wearing of tassels can symbolize rank” (O’Connell and Airey 245). Similar to the tassel shown in the *Louis XIV* portrait, Arkwright’s gaze draws the viewer’s attention to the tassel that hangs behind him emphasizing his wealth and power.

Louis XIV’s painting is used as a comparison because both paintings are about social position through the use of symbols. Rigaud’s painting “was not to express

Louis's character but to glorify the monarchy [in France]" (Getty Museum). Wright, on the other hand, was probably attempting to express the power Arkwright had in his position within English society, and the significant impact he had on industry as a self-made entrepreneur.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Joseph Wright of Derby produced over three hundred paintings, of which only a few have contributed to his reputation. These well-reviewed paintings are important because they provide some of the first recorded views of the eighteenth century as supported by Waterhouse's comment that Wright was "the first professional painter to express the spirit of the industrial revolution" (207). However, most of Wright's artwork has been less critically analyzed and consists of additional material depicting portraiture, landscape, mythology, and history.

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze and expand on the use of symbolism in selected paintings of Wright's lesser-studied work. In addition to concentrating on his artwork, this thesis is designed to provide a brief discussion of the evolution of the Enlightenment and how it brought about a change in the interest in art. However, the primary contribution of this thesis is its focus on Wright's use of symbols and the alternative interpretations of his artwork. To demonstrate these contributions five paintings were selected. The paintings *A Philosopher by Lamplight* c. 1769 (fig. 1) and *Sir Richard Arkwright* 1789-90 (fig. 5) were selected because they represent prevalent ideas indicative of the eighteenth century during which acquisition of knowledge and entrepreneurship were becoming significant; *Virgil's Tomb: Sun breaking through a Cloud* c. 1785 (fig. 4) was selected because it was about a famous poet who is historically

described as having supernatural powers; and the paintings, *Corinthian Maid* 1782-85 (fig. 2) and *Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light* 1785 (fig.3) were selected because they are based on ancient literature and they demonstrated one of the first efforts to use art as a means of advertisement. The classical stories, which these two paintings represent, are typical of the neoclassical age which Wright embraced. Homer compiled the *Odyssey* in the early 7th century B.C. in which Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, played an important role. Pliny wrote *Natural History* in c. 77 A.D. where the story of the Corinthian Maid was told. These two classical authors have been studied for their contribution to literature and science; Wright was able to use symbols to represent his version of their stories.

The first painting discussed is *A Philosopher by Lamplight* c. 1769 (fig. 1). Most researchers of this painting give Salvator Rosa's *Democritus in Meditation* c. 1650 credit for inspiring Wright to paint this scene. The primary reason for assuming Rosa's painting to be the source of inspiration is the fact that John Hamilton Mortimer was a devoted follower of Rosa and being a friend of Wright, was influential in guiding Wright's interest in the direction of Rosa's painting. This point may be valid; however, there seems to be other sources of motivation that could have contributed more to Wright's selection of subject material than Rosa's painting. This thesis makes the point that eighteenth century Ornamental Hermits, Jacques Rousseau, or Gerrit Dou's painting, *The Hermit* 1670, could have been influential. This thesis discusses each one of these subjects and concludes that Rosa's painting probably played a lesser role than assumed by other researchers.

Wright's painting *A Philosopher by Lamplight* is often referred to as the *Hermit Studying Anatomy*, which could be an allegory of the quest for knowledge during the eighteenth century. This view is consistent with the philosophy, during the Enlightenment, that knowledge comes through observation. Wright was aware of the importance scientists placed on acquiring knowledge through direct observation and could have used the philosopher studying anatomy to symbolically reinforce that philosophy. During the Enlightenment there was a growing interest in taxonomy and the use of comparative anatomy was an important element in this area of study. This interest was stimulated during the eighteenth century in response to a publication in 1735 by the famous botanist, Carl Linnaeus, who described how plants and animals were to be named. The philosopher may have been studying the differences and similarities between the skeletons of humans and other mammals. This observation could be one of the explanations for the presence of the horse's skull on the floor. Erasmus Darwin, who was a follower of Linnaeus, wrote poems about classification of plants and animals and being a close friend of Wright might have influenced him to use a skeleton and scallop shells in the painting. This thesis makes the observation that Darwin provided much of the intellectual stimulus for Wright and this painting could support this observation. The skeletons could have a dual symbolic role: one representing death and the other the acquisition of knowledge.

The scene appears harmonious until one considers the two young men in the background. They appear to be out of proportion to the philosopher, causing one to question their function. The shells on the young men's hats pose another problem.

Because the shells are scallops, most researchers refer to the young men as pilgrims seeking knowledge and consider nothing else. They may be pilgrims; however, this thesis makes the point that Wright's visual interpretation of the two young men casts some doubt on their role. Wright painted their body language in a way that suggests their presence is less honorable than scholars seeking knowledge. The young man in the background seems to be indicating that he wishes to leave while the one in the foreground is stealthily approaching the philosopher. They appear to either have accidentally come upon the philosopher or they are up to no good. In either case, they do not appear to be seeking words of wisdom. If this observation is correct then the relationship between them and the philosopher becomes an element of disharmony and may have contributed to Wright's inability to sell the painting.

Two other paintings which are considered as legendary fables are *The Corinthian Maid*, 1782-85 (fig. 2) and *Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light* 1785 (fig. 3). The paintings' themes are similar in that both reflect a loving relationship between two people. These two paintings are discussed because they represent an attempt to use art to help stimulate trade during the Industrial Revolution. During the eighteenth century, art had often been used to promote some ideology or philosophy but not as an advertisement to sell a product. The paintings are thought to be companion pieces and were used by Wedgwood to create an interest in his pottery.

After much discussion about what was to be included in the painting, Wedgwood finally commissioned Wright to paint *The Corinthian Maid*. Wedgwood wanted symbols to be used in the painting that would help stimulate an interest in his pottery and have a

scene that would appeal to women in Derbyshire. Wedgwood wanted to subtly create an interest in his product by having a kiln and ceramic pieces in the painting. Wright wanted to please his patron and also be creatively faithful to the story of the maid; consequently, he was caught between the blending of creativity and commercialization. Although Wright was able to creatively produce a neoclassical painting, his combination of young love and the interior of a pottery factory resulted in a paradoxical scene.

Most researchers attempt to establish a connection between Wright's painting with the artwork of other artists who were using the maid to demonstrate the origin of painting and drawing. However, Wright's communication with Wedgwood does not support this observation. Wright was only attempting to be faithful to Pliny's story and produce artwork which Wedgwood could use to promote his pottery. Wedgwood agreed to this sitting because of the symbols used and the fact that the maiden's father was a potter. He was also convinced that the scene would appeal to women who were more likely to purchase his pottery than men. Wright selected the scene because he saw an opportunity to creatively use candlelight. Other authors may agree with this observation; however, they usually overlook Wright's ability to subliminally tell two stories, one of young love and one of advertisement. This thesis highlights the symbols and explains why they are important in the painting. Wright used gestures, color, inanimate objects, body language, and an animal to help demonstrate a story about love, fear, nationality, occupation, and social position. The kiln and pottery played a dual role; one role was to represent Wedgwood's ceramic pieces; and, the second role was to establish a relationship between Wedgwood's work and young love.

Wedgwood is thought to have also commissioned the painting *Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light* 1785 (fig. 3). However, there does not appear to be any communication between Wedgwood and Wright substantiating this observation. Since Wedgwood purchased the painting before it was exhibited, the assumption of its commission is probably correct. Because the story about Penelope is mythical and there were no restrictions on its production, Wright was able to creatively produce a neoclassical scene that had harmony and cohesiveness. Most critics discuss how beautiful the painting is without addressing how well Wright was able to tell the story of a waiting wife for her longtime absent husband. Although Wright was not particularly faithful to the ancient story, he very masterfully used symbols to tell a story of love and concern. The contrapposto posing of Odysseus's statue is reminiscent of the Renaissance style, which reinforces the neoclassical theme. Wright wrote a letter to Hayley, the poet who suggested the statue, stating that he had positioned the statue in such a way as to hide the candlelight and brighten the highlights (Egerton, Wright 132). This technique resulted in the statue having a shadowy-veiled appearance, suggesting that it may have been an apparition who was watching over his family. The statue of Odysseus could be symbolic of the protection provided by a father and husband for his family, since he and Penelope appear to be showing concern for their son Telemachus. Through the use of symbols such as: gestures, color, inanimate objects, body language, and an animal, a story unfolds about love, fear, nationality, loyalty, concern, and social position. Most researchers mention these emotions and observations, but do not discuss Wright's ability to manipulate their instinctive feelings through symbols.

The forth painting discussed is *Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud*, c. 1785 (fig. 4). Wright painted six versions of this scene, and this particular painting was selected because it is completely different from the other five versions. It is painted in stark daylight revealing heavy textures with crumbling surfaces; however, because of the subtle lighting used in the other paintings, surfaces are rendered as smooth and soft. Unlike the other five paintings this one did not sell until after Wright's death, which may have been because it was not his typical candlelit painting style.

This thesis discusses the symbolic significance of eight objects in the painting: *Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud*, sunlight, clouds, tomb, rocks, laurel, vines, figures, and steps to tell a story of a well-known poet who was just a man yet thought to have mystical qualities. Critics of the six paintings spend most of their efforts describing the scene and Wright's inspiration; they mention these eight objects but ignore their symbolic contribution to the painting. An example of this dismissal of symbolism is Judy Egerton's description of the small individuals in the doorway of the tomb. She describes them as just visitors and never mentions them again (Wright 122). This thesis argues that, because of their proportions, the individuals must be symbolic of something special that is associated with either Virgil or the tomb. They may be symbolic of banditti, grave robbers, or Ludowicus (an English scholar sent to Naples to find Virgil's bones). Virgil's remains have historically been a source of concern, and these two small individuals could represent an important part of the tomb's history. Wright was able to symbolize their relevance by subtly placing them in the vault's doorway. The painting

Virgil's Tomb is an example of Wright's ability to integrate symbols into a painting without detracting from the painting's story.

The fifth painting discussed is *Sir Richard Arkwright* 1789-90 (fig. 5), which was selected because it represented the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. This painting is an excellent example of Wright's ability to produce an allegory, which aptly represents the Industrial Revolution. There are very few critiques of this painting and most of those that are written gloss over the symbolism and concentrate on the character and personality of Arkwright. This thesis fills in a gap of knowledge by closely analyzing the various symbols used in the portrait. Wright's use of body language (e.g. hands on hips), props (roller frame), color red, tassel, and clothing to portray Arkwright as a man who reflects the new entrepreneur of the eighteenth century. Knowledge of these symbols provides the viewer with a greater appreciation of the portrait and of Wright as an artist. The eighteenth century opened the door to new scientific discoveries, which in turn led to new technology that could be used to help expand industrialization. Arkwright was one of the leaders in this expansion and Wright was able to capture on canvas the essence of the Industrial Revolution. Most critics appreciate Wright's artistic style and his ability to capture a man's likeness but fail to recognize the allegory in Wright's painting.

The painting of Arkwright, along with *A Philosopher by Lamplight* and *Virgil's Tomb: Sun Breaking through a Cloud*, consist of information with which Wright was personally familiar; he knew individuals who were recluses; he had visited Virgil's Tomb; and, he was well acquainted with Sir Arkwright. These three paintings provided

physical images to which Wright could relate. This familiarity with the subject material provided the foundation on which Wright could easily build his allegories. On the other hand, the other two paintings, *The Corinthian Maid* and *Penelope Unravelling Her Web, by Lamp-Light* seemed to have posed a problem for Wright. His repertoire of knowledge about the background of these two paintings, though extensive, consisted of material written by other people and probably produced a feeling of uncertainty. He had a general idea about the story he wanted to tell but probably was unsure about its accuracy. This thesis does not address Wright's accuracy to detail; it concentrates only on the story he tells with the use of symbols. This thesis supports other authors' view that Wright was intrigued by the expansion of knowledge and industry during the Enlightenment and romanticized science and industry in his paintings. However, this paper goes beyond other authors' views by describing how Wright used symbols to express his fascination with science and industry.

Whether Wright intentionally or unintentionally used the symbols discussed in this thesis, it is reasonable to deduce that he must have been responding to an intuitive understanding of symbols. The point has been made that the use of a symbol is based on a cultural understanding of the symbol. In Western culture, the presence of a dog in a painting symbolizes faithfulness and protection. Consequently, Wright could have unintentionally introduced a dog without being aware of its significance, or he could have intentionally introduced a dog because he knew the significance of its presence. These alternate points of view become one of the contributing factors in this thesis because it demonstrates that there are several ways to analyze and interpret Wright's artwork.

FIGURES



Fig. 1.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Philosopher by Lamplight*, c. 1769, Oil on canvas, 50½ x 40½". Derby Museum and Art Gallery.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 2.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *The Corinthian Maid*, c. 1782-85, Oil on canvas, 41⅞ x 51¾". J. Paul Getty Museum.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 3.
Joseph Wright of Derby,
Penelope Unravelling her Web, by Lamp-Light, 1785.
Oil on canvas. 40" x 50". Getty Museum.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 4.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Virgil's Tomb: Sun breaking through a Cloud*, c. 1785, Oil on canvas, 18" x 25".
Ulster Museum, Belfast.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 5.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Sir Richard Arkwright*, 1789-90, Oil on
canvas, 95" x 60". Private Collection.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 6.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Anna Ashton*, 1769, Oil on canvas,
50" x 40". University of Liverpool Art Gallery.
Source: Nicolson, plate 65, pg. 42, vol 2.



Fig. 7.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Mrs. Bathurst*, 1770-1771.
Oil on canvas. 30" x 25". Private Collection.
Source: Nicolson, plate 84, pg. 57, vol. 2



Fig. 8.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery, in which a lamp is put in the place of the Sun*, 1766, Oil on canvas, 58" x 80". Derby Museum and Art Gallery.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 9.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*
1768, Oil on canvas, 72" x 94½". The National Gallery, London.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 10.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *The Alchemist, in Search of the Philosopher's
Stone, Discovers Phosphorus, and Prays for the Successful Conclusion of
His Operation, as Was the Custom of the Ancient Chymical (sic) Astrologers*
1771. Oil on canvas, 50" x 40". Derby Museum and Art Gallery.
Source: Daniels, fig. 16, pg. 27.



Fig. 11.
 Honthorst, *Denial of St Peter*, 1620, Oil on canvas, 43½" x 57".
 Minneapolis Institute of Arts.
 Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 12.
 Joseph Wright of Derby, *An Iron Forge Viewed From Without*, 1773,
 Oil on canvas, 39⅝" x 55⅝". Hermitage Museum, Leningrad.
 Source. Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 13
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Arkwright's Cotton Mills by Night* c. 1782-1783. Oil on canvas. 39¼" x 49½". Private Collection.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 14
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Erasmus Darwin* c. 1792, Oil on canvas, 30" x 25". Private Collection.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 15.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Peter Perez Burdett and His First Wife Hannah*, 1765, Oil on canvas. 57" x 80¾". Narodni Galerie, Prague.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 16.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Mrs. Francis Hurt*, c.1780, Oil on canvas, 50" x 40". Private Collection.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 17.
Joseph Wright of Derby *Cornet Sir George Cooke*, c. 1766, Oil on canvas, 30" x 25". The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 18
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Mr. & Mrs. Coltman*, c. 1770, Oil on canvas. 50" x 40". The National Gallery, London.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 19.
Joseph Wright of Derby,
Lady Wilmot and her Child, 1788, Oil on canvas, 84"x 62".
Private Collection.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 20.
Andrea del Brescianino, *Madonna and Child with the infant St. John the Baptist*, c. 1524, 20" x 16". Private Collection.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 21.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Mrs. Sarah Clayton*, c. 1769, Oil on
canvas, 50" x 40". Fitchburg Art Museum.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 22.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Anne Bateman*, 1755, Oil on canvas,
30½" x 25½". Private Collection.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 23.
Joseph Wright of Derby *Mr. and Mrs. William Chase*, c. 1762, Oil on canvas, 54½" x 75". Private Collection.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 24.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *James and Mary Shuttleworth With One of Their Daughters* 1764, Oil on canvas, 56" x 72". Private Collection.
Source: Olga's Gallery, <<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Fig. 25.

Salvator Rosa, *Democritus in Meditation*, c. 1650, Oil on canvas, 135½" x 84¼". Statens Museum for Kunst.

Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 26.

Gerrit Dou, *The Hermit*, 1670, Oil on panel, 18⅛" x 13⅝".

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Timken Collection.

Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 27.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Brooke Boothby*, 1781, Oil on canvas,
58½" x 81¾". Tate Gallery, London.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>

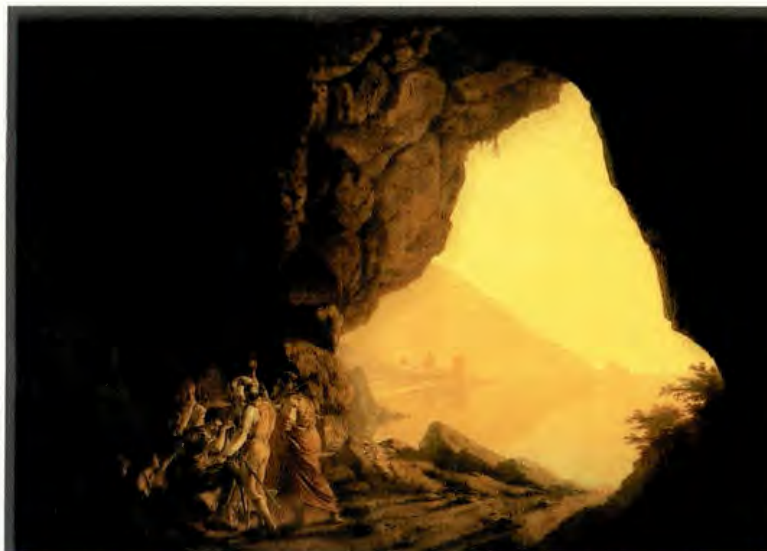


Fig. 28.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *A Grotto by the Sea-Side in the Kingdom of Naples, with Banditti; a Sun-Set*, 1778, Oil on canvas, 48 x 68". Private Collection.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 29.

Simon Francois Ravenet, after John Hamilton Mortimer, *The Origin of Drawing* Yale Center for British Art. Paul Mellon Collection.

Source: Ravenet, Simon Francois.

<<http://www.collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3637738>>



Fig. 30.

David Allan, *Origin of Painting: The Corinthian Maid*, 1775, 15" x 12". National Gallery of Scotland.

Source: Rosenblum, *Origin* fig. 6.



Fig. 31.
Joachim von Sandrart. *Story of Dibutade*. Engraving from
Teutsche Academie, 1675.
Source: Rosenblum, *Origin* fig. 3.



Fig. 32.
Johann Jacob von Sandrart. *Story of Dibutade*. Engraving for Joachim
von Sandrart's *Academia nobilissimae artis pictoriae*, 1683.
Source: Culler, fig. 1, pg. 52.



Fig. 33.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Virgil's Tomb, with the Figure of Silius Italicus*, 1779, Oil on canvas, 40" x 50". Private Collection.
Source: Commons, <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>



Fig. 34.
Exterior, engraving after Cla. Nic., from P. A. Paoli *Antiquitates Puteolanae*, 1768.
Source: Trapp, fig. 9a.



Fig. 35.
Joseph Wright of Derby, *Rocks With Waterfall*, c. 1772, Oil on canvas, 31 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 43". Private collection.
Source: Olga's Gallery,
<<http://www.abcgallery.com>>



Detail of bottom right corner of image.



Fig. 36.
Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Louis XIV* 1701, Oil on canvas. 109" x 76½".
The Getty Los Angeles.
Source: Paintings Alley, <<http://www.paintingsalley.com>>

WORKS CITED

- Abrahams, Ethel B. Greek Dress, A study of the Costumes Worn in Ancient Greece, From Pre-Hellenic Times to the Hellenistic Age. London: John Murray, 1908. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Armstrong, Karen. A History of God. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.
- Asimov, Isaac. A Short History of Biology. Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1964.
- Battistini, Matilde. Symbols and Allegories in Art. Trans. Stephen Sartarelli. Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005.
- Beard, Charles. The Industrial Revolution. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1901. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Bellerio, Annalisa. "Joseph Wright of Derby." The Magazine of Franco Maria Ricci. 87 (Sept. 1997): 8-9.
- Boime, Albert. Art in an Age of Revolution 1750-1800. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Bostock, John and H. T. Riley trans. The Natural History of Pliny. London: Henry G. Bohn. 1857. VI 2008. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Bottomley, Frank. Yorkshire's Spiritual Athletes: Hermits & Other Solitaries. 222 pgs. <www.zurgy.org/medieval/hermits> PDF file.
- Bredvold, Louis I. The Brave New World of The Enlightenment. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan press, 1961.
- Breunig, Charles, and Matthew Levinger. The Revolutionary Era 1789-1850. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2002.
- Bruce-Mitford, Miranda. Signs and Symbols. New York: DK Publishing, 1996.
- Burrows, E. The Triumphs of Steam or, Stories From The Lives of Watt, Arkwright, and Stephenson. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, c. 1858. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

- Cantor, G. "Weighing Light: the role of metaphor in 18th century optical discourse." eds. A. E. Benjamin, G.N. Cantor & J.R.R. Christie, The Figural and the Literal: Problems of Language in the History of Science and Philosophy. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1987, 124-146.
- Carlyle, Thomas. The Works of Thomas Carlyle in Five Volumes. Critical and Miscellaneous Essays. 5 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. IV 1904. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Carroll, Diane Lee. "Wire Drawing in Antiquity." American Journal of Archaeology 76.3 (Jul. 1972), 321-323.
- Cieszkowski, K.Z. "The Industrial Revolution: Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of the Industrial Revolution." History Today 33.5 (May 1983): 41-46.
- Cirlot, J. E. A Dictionary of Symbols. 2nd ed. Trans. Jack Sage. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1971.
- Commons Wikimedia. <<http://www.Commons.Wikimedia.org/wiki/>>
- Comparetti, Domenico. Vergil In The Middle Ages. Trans. E. F. M. Benecke. New York: MacMillan & Co, 1895. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Conroy, Ellen. The Symbolism of Colour. London: William Rider & Sons. 1921. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Croix, Horst De La, Richard G. Tansey, and Diane Kirkpatrick. Art Through The Ages. 9th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1991.
- Culler, Matthew B. Self-Referance in Caravaggio's *Calling of St. Mathew*. Thesis. Chapel Hill: North Carolina, 2007.
- Cunningham, Allan. The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects. 5 vols. London: John Murry, 1832. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Daniels, Stephen. Joseph Wright. London: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Davies, Douglas. "The Evocative Symbolism of Trees." The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments. Eds. Cosgrove, Denis and Stephen Daniels. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Duro, Paul. "Great and Noble of the Moral Kind: Wright of Derby and the Scientific Sublime." Art History 33.4 (2010): 660-679.

Egerton, Judy. ed. Wright of Derby. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990.

---. "Wright of Derby and the Effects of Light." The Magazine Antiques. 138 (1990): 496-505.

Einberg, Elizabeth. "Acquisition in focus: Wright of Derby's 'An Iron Forge'." Apollo 138 (1993): 260.

Fairclough, H. Rushton. trans. Virgil. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1 1930.
<www.archive.org> PDF file.

Fisk, Karen. "Arkwright: Cotton King or Spin Doctor." History Today. 48.3 Mar. 1998.

Fox, Abram Jacob. "A World of Trouble: Joseph Wright of Derby in Bath, 1775-1777." Thesis. University of Maryland, 2009.

France, Peter. Hermits the Insight of Solitude. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.

Frank, Patrick. Artforms. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson. 2009.

Fraser, David. "Joseph Wright of Derby and The Lunar Society An essay in the artist's connection with science and industry." Wright of Derby. Ed. Judy Egerton, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990.

---. "Fields of Radiance: The Scientific and Industrial Scenes of Joseph Wright." The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments. Eds. Cosgrove, Denis, Stephen Daniels. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Galt, John. The Life, Studies, and Works of Benjamin West, Esq. President of the Royal Academy of London. London: Royal Academy, 1820. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Getty Museum, Louis XIV.
<<http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=582>>

Goldschmidt, Walter. Exploring the Ways of Mankind. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960.

- Graham, Henry Grey. Rousseau. London: William Blackword and Sons, 1882. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Graves, Algernon. The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791. New York: George Bell and Sons, 1907. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Griffiths, A. B. Biographies of Scientific Men. London: Robert Sutton, 1912. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Grimm, Harold J. The Reformation Era 1500-1650. New York: The Macmillian Company, 1954.
- Hagen, Shelly. The Everything Body Language Book. Avon: Adamsmedia, 2nd ed., 2011.
- Haig, Elizabeth. The Floral Symbolism of the Great Masters. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1913. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Hall, James. Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.
- Hargraves, Matthew. "Joseph Wright of Derby and the Society of Artists of Great Britain." The British Art Journal. 11.1 (March 2010): 53-61.
- Hayley, William. An Essay on Painting: In Two Epistles To M R. Romney. 3rd ed. London: J. Dodsley, 1781. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Jewitt, Llewellynn. The Wedgwoods: Life of Josiah Wedgwood; with Notices of his Works and their Productions, Memoirs of the Wedgwood and other Families, and a History of the Early Potteries of Staffordshire. London: Virtue Brothers and Co., 1865. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Kearins, Colleen Mary. "Melody as Metaphor in Gerrit van Honthorst's Paintings of Musicians." Thesis. University of Texas at Austin, 2011.
- King-Hele, Desmond. ed. The Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Klingender, D. Francis. Art and The Industrial Revolution. Ed. and Revised Arthur Elton. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1968.
- Leland, Charles Godfrey. The Unpublished Legends of Virgil. London: Elliot Stock. 1899. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

- Levey, Michael. Rococo to Revolution. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Lucie-Smith, Edward. Symbolist Art. New York: Oxford University Press. 1972.
- Mackail, J. W. Trans. The Odyssey. London: John Murray. 1910. books 17-24.
<www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Malgaigne, J.F. Surgery and Ambroise Pare. Wallace B. Hamby Trans. and Ed.
Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965.
- Martin, W. Gerard Dou. Trans. Clara Bell. London: George Bell and Son, 1902.
<www.archive.org> PDF file.
- McEwen, John. "Enlightenment Portrayed." Art in America. 78 Oct. 1990: 165-171.
- Minor, Vernon Hyde. Baroque and Rococo Art and Culture. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1999.
- Mohun, Janet et al. eds. Art over 2,500 works from cave to contemporary. New York: Dorling Kindersley, 2008.
- Morley, John. Rousseau. New York: MacMillan and Co. 1 1900. <www.archive.org> PDF file.
- Morris, Desmond, and Marie O'Shaughnessy. Gestures; their origins and distribution. New York: Stein and Day, 1979.
- Muecke, Frances. "Taught by Love: The Origin of Painting Again." Art Bulletin. 81.2 June 1999: 297-302.
- Nicolson, Benedict. Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light. London: Routledge. 1 1968.
- . Joseph Wright of Derby: Painter of Light. London: Routledge. 2 1968.
- O'Connell, Mark, and Raje Airey. The Complete Encyclopedia of Signs and Symbols. London: Anness Publishing Ltd, 2007.
- Olderr, Steven. compiled by. Symbolism A Comprehensive Dictionary. Jefferson: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2005.
- Olga's Gallery. <http:www.abcgallery.com>

Page, Michael. "The Darwin Before Darwin: Erasmus Darwin, Visionary Science, and Romantic Poetry." Papers on Language and Literature 41.2 (Spring 2005): 146-169.

Paintings Alley. <<http://www.paintingsalley.com>>

Pease, Allen, and Barbara. The Definitive Book of Body Language. Buderim Australia: Pease International, 2004.

Pope, Alexander. trans The Odyssey of Homer. New York: John Wurtele Lovell, 1880. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Praz, Mario. "Baroque in England." *Modern Philology. Seventeenth-Century Essays in Honor of George Williamson*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 61.3 (Feb. 1964): 169-179.

Pyke, Nicholas. "Self-taught master of industrial age." The Times educational supplement. London: Times Newspaper. 4236 (1997): 16.

Ravenet, Simon Francois. The Origin of Drawing (number 47 of catalogue Mortimer Exhibition 1968). Yale Center for British Art. Paul Mellon Collection. <<http://collections.britishart.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3637738>>

Reill, Peter Hanns, and Ellen Judy Wilson. Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment. revised edition. New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2004.

Ripa, Caesar. Iconologia or Moral Emblems. London: Benj. Motte, 1709. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Rosenblum, Robert. "The Origin of Painting: A Problem in the Iconography of Romantic Classicism." The Art Bulletin. 39.4 (Dec., 1957): 279-290.

---. Transformation in Late Eighteenth Century Art. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Schofield, Robert E. "The Industrial Orientation of Science in the Lunar Society of Birmingham". Isis. 48.4 (Dec., 1957): 408-415. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Schönberger, Arno, and Halldor Sochner. The Rococo Age Art and Civilization of the 18th Century. trans. Daphne Woodward. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Schwabsky, Barry. "Wright of Derby." Arts Magazine 65 (Nov. 1990): 104.

Sellar, W. Y. The Roman Poets of the Augustan Ages: Virgil. Oxford: Claredon Press. 2010. <www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/34163> PDF file.

Sellers, E. The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art. Trans. Jex-Blake, K. London: MacMillan and Co., 1896. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Sitwell, Edith. English Eccentrics. New York: The Vanguard Press, 1957.

Smiles, Samuel. Self-Help Character and Conduct. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1863. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

---. Wedgwood, Joseph, 1730-1795; Wedgwood Ware. London: J. Murray, 1894. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Thorpe, T. E. Joseph Priestley. London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1906. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Timbs, John. Anecdote Biography: William Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsbrough, Henry Fusell, Sir Thomas Lawrence, and J. M. W. Turner. London: Richard Bentley, 1860. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Trapp, J. B. "The Grave of Vergil." Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes. 47 (1984): 1-31. <www.archive.org> PDF file.

Tresidder, Jack. Symbols and Their Meanings. New York: Frieman/Fairfax, 2000.

Uglow, Jenny. The Lunar Men Five Friends Whose Curiosity Changed the World. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002.

Waterhouse, Ellis. Painting in Britain 1530-1790. London: Penguin Press, 1953.