

Quinteiro, Sílvia (2006) "Perspective and Framing in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and in the Work of Caspar David Friedrich" in Rui Carvalho Homem, and Maria de Fátima Lambert (eds), *Writing and Seeing. Essays on Word and Image*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York, pp. 79-87.

Abstract: This article is a comparison between the works of Ann Radcliffe and Caspar David Friedrich based on the analysis of the relationship that is established between the observer and the landscape, as well as on the ways of representing this relationship, namely by analysing the selected perspectives and framings. In this paper, we focus on compositional and organizational strategies of landscape, and also on thematology, as it represents an inescapable way of approaching both these works.

Taking place in a very particular context in the histories of literature and painting, the meeting between observer and landscape is one of the most characteristic aspects of the works of Ann Radcliffe and Caspar David Friedrich. In fact, the increasing interest of the individual in landscape that took place by the ending of the 18th century and during the 19th century had a decisive influence over the course taken by the artistic creation, both in literature and in painting. The evolution of the pictorial representation towards a landscape painting,¹ and of literature towards the novel, is a consequence of the public's/reader's acceptance of this kind of representation. This diverted the artistic creation from the classical imposition of unity. In this period, the public begins to appreciate a new kind of representation, less centred in the actions of the characters, thus opening a path for description in literature and for landscape in painting – at the turn of the century, "Landscape" was the magical word', as we are told in *Caspar David Friedrich: His Life and Work* (p. 22).

As the action of the character is no longer the central issue of the work, the role of nature in the construction of the work's meaning and of the observer's figure can now be emphasised. In their works, Ann Radcliffe and Caspar David Friedrich do not represent an individual or a setting but the way the individual experiences landscape. Being the only object of representation in a picture, and meaningful in itself, landscape becomes the central element of the pictorial text and therefore excuses the presence of a human element, at least apparently. A similar phenomenon occurs in literature: descriptive passages become numerous and are central in the structure of the gothic novel. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*,² for instance, the vast number of descriptions always exists in close relation to the development of the narration. By looking at the placement of the descriptive excerpts in this work, we see that description is an essential element of the narrating process. Consequently, description emerges invariably in the moments of great reflection and

¹ See also Claudio Guillén, "El Hombre Invisible. Paisaje y Literatura en el Siglo XIX", in *Paisaje, Juego y Multilingüismo*, ed. by Darío Villanueva and Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza (Santiago de Compostela: Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico, 1996), p. 67-83 (p. 69) and J. H. van den Berg, "The Subject and his Landscape", in *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York and London: Norton & Company, 1990), p. 57-65 (p.60-63).

² Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, [1794] 1988).

tension, in which decisions are made or decisive situations for the course of the narration take place.

In this article, the comparison between the works of Radcliffe and Friedrich is based on the analysis of the relationship established between the observer and the landscape, as well as on the ways of representing this relationship. This analysis comprehends an interpretation of the selected perspectives and framings. Thus, in the case of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, we will focus necessarily on the descriptive passages. These play a similar role in the gothic novel to that of the representation of landscape in painting in the 18th and 19th centuries. In fact, the pictorial and the literary representations/descriptions of landscape had parallel courses until their affirmation as meaningful texts. As Ayala says, in 'El Paisaje y la Invención da la Realidad', Romanticism was the period when landscape became a character.³

The analysis that we present here is a comparison between the texts, on compositional and organizational strategies of landscape, but also on the level of thematology, as it represents an inescapable way of approaching both these works. Effectively, many other aspects would have to be considered in a further study of the relationship between the observer and landscape in the works of Radcliffe and Friedrich: the meaning of landscape, the impact it has over the observer, and the different means of acceding the landscape (the selection of perspectives and framings).⁴

³ Francisco Ayala, 'El Paisaje y la Invención da la Realidad', in *Paisaje, Juego y Multilingüismo*, ed. By Darío Villanueva and Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza (Santiago de Compostela: Servicio de Publicacións e Intercambio Científico, 1996), p. 23-30 (p. 24)

⁴ For a further analysis of this relationship see Jesus, 1998.

The role of the observer is fundamental, since the representation of the natural elements is unavoidably made according to the point of view of one individual and according to the kind of descriptive organization he chooses, namely when he selects the objects for representation.

In Friedrich's works, the observer can be placed in two different locations. The first one, and the most usual in landscape painting, is setting the observer outside the landscape. He is located in a selected exterior point, from which he focalises the elements he finds the most representative. The second kind of observer is not exclusive from Friedrich's work,⁵ even if this observer became a recurrent and identifying element of his work: the *Rückenfigur* is the figure of an individual that gazes upon the landscape with his back turned. In Friedrich's work this individual is more than a simple landscape painter, he is an observer ("*Schauender*"):⁶ someone who takes pleasure in observing nature, someone whose only objective is to share a mood that is common to the individual and *his* landscape. As we can infer from the designation, the *Schauender* does not mean to create any kind of artistic representation of the landscape observed - he is just someone who takes pleasure from gazing upon the scenario that surrounds him. The act of observing is the means and its purpose, process and objective. In Friedrich's work, the act of observing is measurable in the dimensions and the strategic placement of the *Rückenfiguren* in the paintings. It is meaningful in landscape painting, that landscape does not always occupy the most part of the canvas. As the cross on the top of the mountain, the ruin or any other elements that stands for the human presence and that allows a reading of the landscape, the *Rückenfigur* is always much evidenced in the composition. By becoming the focalizer, Friedrich's *Rückenfigur* erases the narrator's presence. Comparing the *Rückenfiguren* to the figures gazing upon the landscape in Ann Radcliffe's work, we can state that by assuming a place inside the landscape, the human figure determines what is visible according to its location.

⁵ In *Caspar David Friedrich, 1774-1840*, Werner Hofmann refers to the presence of *Rückenfigur* in the works of the 17th century authors and he points out the fact that in Friedrich's work this figure represents a pure landscape observer, something that happened for the first time in the 18th century: "Zunächst ist zu bedenken, daß seine Rückenfiguren nicht Zeichner, sondern ausschließlich Schauender ist, der vor einem großartigen Naturspiel innehält. Die Gestaltung eines solchen Themas kündigt sich erstmals im 18. Jahrhundert an" Hofmann, 1974 (p. 40).

⁶ On the definition of "*Schauender*", see Hofmann, 1974 (p.40).

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for example, St. Aubert says that he used to climb a chestnut tree that existed in La Vallée in order to be able to enjoy the landscape: “How often, in my youth, have I climbed among its broad branches [...]. How often I have sat [...] looking out between the branches upon the wide landscape, and the setting sun, till twilight came” Radcliffe (p. 13). Locating the character in a high point is a recurrent strategy in the Radcliffe’s work, that it is also present in Friedrich’s paintings, namely and paradigmatically in *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*, 1818 (figure 1). This kind of placement is decisive for the process of constructing the landscape. As Van den Berg referred in ‘The Subject and his Landscape’ (p. 62), and Guillén in ‘El Hombre Invisible. Paisaje y Literatura en el Siglo XIX’ (p. 67-68), building a landscape is a paradoxical process because it depends on man’s capacity to exclude himself from it. In fact, the romantic individual has distanced himself from landscape - this distance has given him the possibility of recognizing himself, and he consequently became able to recognize the world that surrounded him. The human element could finally understand its relation to that world. In Radcliffe’s work, St. Aubert’s exterior and high placement gives the character a privileged perspective, one that allows him to realize how vast the landscape before him is. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, this quest for privileged perspectives is particularly explicit when St. Aubert travels between La Vallée and Languedoc for medical reasons. Instead of choosing a direct and plain trajectory, St. Aubert decides to cross the Pyrenees through its highest points simply because that would allow him to enjoy better and more romantic views: “St. Aubert, instead of taking the more direct road, that ran along the feet of the Pyrenées to Languedoc, chose one that, winding over the heights, afforded more extensive views and greater variety of romantic scenery” Radcliffe (p. 27). In fact, by giving a larger relevance to certain elements and characteristics of landscape, the human figure guides the way we read it.

The human eye that makes the selection chooses what and how we can see but it simultaneously eliminates whatever may disturb the *picture* it creates.⁷ As the characters that gaze at the landscape in Ann Radcliffe’s novel, Friedrich’s *Rückenfiguren* are a fundamental element for the staging of focalization. They are not simple objects represented in the scene: they build their own mechanisms of representation.

One of the most common motives in the works of Friedrich and Radcliffe is the window. The representation of the window as an independent motive is a tradition that dates from the 19th century, even though its origin goes back to the Flemish and Tuscan schools, since the 15th century.⁸ But it is effectively in the 19th century that the use of the window as a theme becomes noteworthy. In one of the most significant romantic paintings on this theme, *Jungfrau an dem Fenster*, 1822 (figure 2), Friedrich uses a motive that is recurrent in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and of which his painting constitutes a variation – the woman that gazes upon the landscape from a window. In effect, there are numerous representations of Emily in this situation, in which the window functions as the element that simultaneously allows and limits the observation. The window becomes the boundary, an ambivalent and paradoxical element that illustrates the relation between what is at the same time ours and

⁷ See Francisco Ayala, ‘El Paisaje y la Invención de la Realidad’, in *Paisaje, Juego y Multilingüismo*, ed. By Darío Villanueva and Fernando Cabo Aseguinolaza (Santiago de Compostela: Servicio de Publicaciones e Intercambio Científico, 1996), p. 23-30 (p. 25).

⁸ See Charles Sala, *Caspar David Friedrich: The Spirit of Romantic Painting* (Paris: Éditions Pierre Terrail, 1994), p. 190.

unfamiliar to us - in Yuri Lotman's words, "our pogany".⁹ Being a boundary, the window is the place where the individual can make what is external to him his own, a place that belongs to two different worlds, where their separation is set, but also where they meet and share. In Ann Radcliffe's work, the window is the type of boundary that better represents Lotman's definition of the concept: it is a place of exclusion, but also and simultaneously of inclusion. The window is the frontier between interior and exterior. It is a privileged space of separation, but also a place of union, because it allows the individual to become an observer and thus to reach with the eye the otherwise unreachable landscape. Actually, we can even state that the window as boundary allows the observer to see beyond what his eye can reach – it can be a link to past events and a means of bringing them to the present:

The windows of this room opened upon the garden. As Emily passed them, she saw the spot where she had parted with Valancourt on the preceding night: the remembrance pressed heavily on her heart, and she turned hastily away from the object that had awakened it. (Radcliffe, p. 161)

The same window that sets the boundary between the room and the exterior, keeping Emily away from the garden, opens itself to the garden, allowing the incursion of the heroine's eye and transforming that same incursion, not only in a visual act, but also in an evocation of the past. Located at the window Emily plays alternate roles: *Schauender* and *Zeichner*: "[Emily] took her instruments for drawing, and placed herself at a window, to select into a landscape some features of the scenery without" Radcliffe (p. 276). In fact, in this passage, Emily is before the landscape, selecting the features that she wants to draw. She acts like an artist (*Zeichner*), valuing essentially the aesthetical features. Nevertheless, when characters contemplate landscape, they transform this act into a theme of representation, and the aesthetical aspects lead inevitably to the spiritual and to the moral, as we can perceive from the following passage:

At her favourite pavilion at the end of the terrace, where, seating herself at one of the embowered windows, that opened upon a balcony, the stillness and seclusion of the scene allowed [Emily] to recollect her thoughts, and to arrange them so as to form a clearer judgment of her former conduct. (Radcliffe, p. 126)

As well as in Friedrich's *Jungfrau an dem Fenster*, 1822 (figure 2), in quoted excerpt, the woman that gazes upon the landscape uses the window as a means through which she accedes to the landscape, as the axis that links interior and exterior and therefore as the link between the earthly and the revelation. By the use of this woman's eye the window becomes a passage between the darkness of the studio's interior (a representation of Friedrich's own spiritual darkness at that time) and a vision of an exterior world that is bright and spiritualized. It is the woman's eye - a duplication of the artist's eye (subsequently duplicated by our own eye) - that makes an effective access to the landscape and to the spiritual possible. In fact, a window can be opened and can lead to the air and to the light, it is a symbol of receptivity. The square window stands for the earthly receptivity, for what comes from Heaven. For that reason, the window in *Jungfrau an dem Fenster* draws a Christian cross over the head of the observer and is opened upon a landscape that is filled with elements of religious meaning. The poplars we see on the margin opposite to the one where the woman stands are a symbol of suffering, pain, sacrifice and death wish.¹⁰

⁹ Yuri Lotman, 'The Notion of Boundary', in *Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 131-142 (p.137).

¹⁰ Helmut Börsch-Supan, *Caspar David Friedrich*, (München: Prestel-Verlag, 1990), p. 134.

Poplars are funerary trees, they symbolize the regressive forces of nature, remembering the past and emphasizing the absence of hope in the future.¹¹ The masts of the ships that cross the river (which in this context is a clear reference to the river Hades) lead to a reflection about the passage from life to death (Sala, p. 193).

Being then essentially a symbol of revelation (Chevalier et Gheerbrant, p. 432) and of the entering of the divine light (Daemmrich, p. 252), the sort of window that is most frequently represented in Ann Radcliffe's work is the "casement". It is a sort of window that can be opened and closed like a door, allowing both the observation and the occultation, namely the occultation of the interior and thus the preservation of the intimacy.¹² In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the semi-opened window that allows Emily's observation is also the source of the revelation and of the illumination that guides her conduct. We should then remind that a semi-opened window is at the same time a semi-closed window. Hence, if the opening makes it a source of revelation, as mentioned previously, the closed part the window is a mechanism of occultation. So, even though Emily can now make a "clearer" judgement of her conduct, there is always the presence of a veil of obscurity that partially occults her. In Radcliffe's work, the implicit geometric opposition of inside and outside (Bachelard, p. 250) goes beyond the domain of the purely visual and aesthetic. The window allows disclosure of the character's moral: Emily's interior tensions and conflicts, her feelings of inclusion and exclusion, and the pain that results from this kind of interior aggression (Bachelard, p. 250-251). Windows aren't then simply a means of acceding landscape. Effectively, the presence of the window in *Jungfrau an dem Fenster*, 1822 (figure 2), leads our eye in the direction of what is beyond the window, but it also turns us into individuals that long for the unreachable, being inevitably separated from the observed landscape. There is an insuperable separation, but there is simultaneously a meeting between inside and outside that makes the individual long for the infinite that exists beyond the window in a landscape that is almost dematerialized by luminosity. Joseph Koerner¹³ refers to this by calling it an exile and disagrees with the possibility of understanding the relationship between observer and landscape as an immersion of the woman at the window in the landscape that she gazes upon:

Is this really the case in Friedrich's landscapes, though? In the great *Woman at the Window* from 1821, now in Berlin, pictorial symmetry expresses not an identification with, or immersion in, the landscape, but rather a separation from it. [...] As window the canvas does not invite any easy entrance into the painted world, any fiction of homogeneity real and represented space. Rather, the picture-window sequesters us, like the woman, in a position of exile from, and longing for, what we can always only partially see. (Koerner, p. 112-113)

In *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as in Friedrich's representations of the inside of the studio, the description of what is located on this side of the window is so austere and contained that our attention is fixed on the landscape the window reveals and which luminosity is opposed to the strictness that reigns in the interior. In fact, Friedrich's "barren cell-like

¹¹ Alain Chevalier, Jean et Gheerbrant, *Diccionario de Símbolos* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Editora, [1982]1992), p. 26-27.

¹² Gaston Bachelard, *La Poética del Espacio*, (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, [1957] 2000), p. 261-268.

¹³ Joseph Leo Koerner, *Caspar David Friedrich and the Subject of Landscape* (London: Reaktion Books, 1990).

studio”¹⁴ is represented in many other paintings by the author and by other artists that portrayed him in his atelier. If we focus, for instance, on Friedrich’s *Blick aus dem linken Atelierfenster*, 1805 (figure 3), and *Blick aus dem rechten Atelierfenster*, 1805 (figure 4), or on Georg Friedrich Kersting’s (1787-1847) *Caspar David Friedrich in seinem Atelier*, 1812 (figure 5), and *Caspar David Friedrich malend in seinem Atelier*, 1811 (figure 6), we will verify that there is only a very small amount of objects in the atelier and that they are generally essential to the act of painting. Contrarily to most artists, Friedrich does not fill his atelier with objects that might stimulate the mind to the artistic creation. Friedrich finds his inspiration precisely in the absence of exterior objects of reference. The German painter’s atelier is characterized by a strictness that is reflected in his works and that leads Karl Kroeber to consider Friedrich a “pre-minimalist” painter (Kroeber, p. 410). It is probably due to this austerity of the interior that, as Wieland Schmied states in *Friedrich*, the woman that gazes upon the landscape from the window in *Jungfrau an dem Fenster*, 1822 (figure 2), is in a way compelled to do it. Her impulse is a “confirmation of our own impulse” to look at what is beyond the window and consequently it is a mechanism of pictorial orientation and organization.¹⁵ The fascinated woman at the window makes us follow her example and allows us to share her experience, as Emily does in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*:

Soon after, she caught, between the steep banks of the road, another view of the chateau, peeping from among the high trees, and surrounded by green slopes and tufted groves, the Garonne winding its way beneath their shades, sometimes lost among the vineyards, and then rising in greater majesty in the distant pastures. The towering precipices of the Pyrénées, that rose to the South, gave Emily a thousand interesting recollections of her late journey; and these objects of her former enthusiastic admiration, now excited only sorrow and regret. (Radcliffe, p. 116)

In this excerpt, we find detailed information about the different aspects of the landscape that Emily observes from the window of the carriage on her way to Udolpho. But there is also a description of the heroine’s feelings that clarifies the kind of relationship that is established between her and the surrounding nature. Emily feels that nature shares with her a similar mood, and so the "former enthusiastic admiration" is replaced by the "sorrow and regret" that the undesired destination of the journey causes on the heroine.

The use of the window as an instrument for the construction of landscape is also a means of creating several different landscapes from the same central point. Using the house, the pavilion or the carriage as central points,¹⁶ the windows create different landscapes according to where they are turned to:

Three windows presented each a separate and beautiful prospect; that to the north, overlooking Languedoc; another to the west, the hills ascending towards the Pyrenées, whose awful summits crowned the landscape; and a third, fronting the south, gave the Mediterranean, and a part of the wild shores of Rousillon, to the eye. (Radcliffe, p. 479)

¹⁴ Barbara Maria Stafford, *Visual Analogy: Consciousness as the Art of Connecting* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1999), p.68

¹⁵ In Wieland Schmied, *Friedrich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1995), p.100.

¹⁶ This central point of observation, that allows the individual to observe whatever he chooses to without being seen from the outside, functions here as a kind of Panopticon (see Michel Foucault, [1987] 1998, p. 165-167) . The house, the pavilion and the carriage protect the intimacy of the individual that is kept under their obscurity, and is only revealed by the values and tensions that are reflected on the *pictures* that he creates.

It was of octagonal form, the various landscape. One window opened upon a romantic glade, where the eye roved among the woody recesses, and the scene was bounded only by a lengthened pomp of groves; from another, the woods receding disclosed the distant summits of the Pyrenées; a third fronted an avenue, beyond which the grey towers of Chateau-le-Blanc, and a picturesque part of its ruin were seen partially among the foliage [...]. (Radcliffe, p. 482)

In both excerpts, the windows are, more than simple objects, a fundamental element to the framing of landscape. They appear as the representation of the individual that builds that landscape. The windows are *the individuals* that select the perspective and that afterwards frame the landscape. Windows have the function of opening themselves upon the landscape ("One window opened upon a romantic glade") and of exhibiting it ("Three windows presented each a separate and beautiful prospect", "a third, fronting the south, [...] gave the Mediterranean [...] to the eye"). There is no other character in these passages, and even the way verbs are used here turn the act of observing the landscape into an act that is not individual or particular. There is a generalization of the act of looking that can be related to impersonality because, even though the presence of the individual is not suppressed, there is an impossibility of making a concrete identification of the observer ("where the eye roved", "were seen"). The window is simply an opening upon a space that the characters that look through it actualize:¹⁷

The windows of this room were particularly pleasant; they descended to the floor, and, opening upon a little lawn that surrounded the house, the eye was led between groves of almond, palm-trees, flowering-ash, and myrtle, to the distant landscape, where the Garonne wandered. (Radcliffe, p. 3)

The use of anthropomorphism ("descended") and the fact that the narrator confers the window a characteristic that actually belongs to the landscape observed through it ("pleasant"), reveal the true value of this mechanism of landscape construction. The window itself is simply a potentiality, but it is the human eye that particularizes the elements of landscape, that distinguishes them and that apprehends them as meaning. In this sense, the window is an opened way through which we can reach the landscape. But it is only the human eye that can make that transition, actualizing and giving a meaning to something that was only a hypothesis. Like any other point from which landscape can be apprehended, the window functions mainly as a means to place the individual before the landscape, even if apparently there is no one at the window. This because constructing a landscape is a process that has its origin in the cognitive act of observing. A similar effect can be found in Friedrich's paintings of the windows in his studio: *Blick aus dem linken Atelierfenster*, 1805 (figure 3), and *Blick aus dem rechten Atelierfenster*, 1805 (figure 4). Once again the window is represented as if its overture upon the landscape was independent of the existence of a human eye. Friedrich's studio's windows almost make us forget that our eye is a duplication of the artist's eye. Having both been represented from the same point of the room, it seems the windows are simply there and exist regardless of the intervention of an artistic eye that would determine the point of view. This absence of the artist would also justify the complex and very unusual perspective that was chosen for the representation of the left window. Effectively, a frontal perspective would allow a vaster

¹⁷ In *The Lost Travellers*, Bernard Blackstone analyses the human presence in nature, namely the presence of the traveller, and comes to the conclusion that "if nature is a cryptogram, intelligent travel is an exercise in interpretation. The traveller is a moving eye, passing from letter to letter, from word to word, appreciatively. Rocks, trees, waves, birds, bees – here is a divine alphabet" (1962, p. 36). It is then the human eye that shapes nature transforming it in different landscapes with different meanings.

vision of the exterior, but would also indicate the absence of the individual's organizing eye. Nevertheless, the observer is present in both paintings: in *Blick aus dem linken Atelierfenster*, 1805 (figure 3), on the right side of the window, we can see a mirror that reflects the image of a door, which must be located behind the observer. In *Blick aus dem rechten Atelierfenster*, 1805 (figure 4), the presence of the individual is also very discrete but still much more visible than in *Blick aus dem linken Atelierfenster*, 1805 (figure 3) – we can see the reflection of the artist's head on the mirror, on the left side of the canvas. But it is meaningful that the artist's presence can only be noticed through its reflection on the mirror, because this is a paradoxical affirmation of both the individual's existence and his none existence, since, as Foucault states, the mirror is the place where the individual can be seen, but where he does not exist.¹⁸

To sum up, we can affirm that, both in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and in Caspar David Friedrich's work, the representation of landscape is based on a process of perception and representation that always depends on the presence of an observer (either an explicit or an implicit one) – an eye that selects and organizes the elements, choosing the perspective and the framing. The apparent impersonality in the representation of certain landscapes is in fact a simulacrum that results from a more or less generalized use of a set of aesthetic and religious principles that are dominant during the romantic period.¹⁹ These principles make us forget the presence of the “cultural eye”²⁰ and transform the observed landscapes into something more than simple descriptions. Landscapes become a link and a passage between interior and exterior, between the earthly and the religious revelation. They become a passage in which both the observer and the unknown eye are always and inevitably a duplication of the “cultural eye” of the artist.

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¹⁸ Michel Foucault, ‘Of Other Spaces’, in *Diacritics*, Spring, 16:1 (1986), 22-27 (p.24).

¹⁹ Namely the notions of *picturesque*, as defined by Uvdale Price in ‘from An Essay on the picturesque, as compared with the sublime and beautiful (1794)’ and the concepts of *beautiful* and *sublime* in the sense that they are used by Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*.

²⁰ Helena Carvalhão Buescu, *Incidências do Olhar: Percepção e Representação* (Lisboa: Editorial Caminho, 1990), p. 67.

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