

NAVIGATING A LAND DIVIDED:
CHARLES FRASER, HIS ANTEBELLUM LANDSCAPES,
AND THE REFINEMENT OF SOUTHERN TASTE

by

SANDY KRISTIN McCAIN

(Under the Direction of Janice Simon)

ABSTRACT

Art historical scholarship related to nineteenth-century American art traditionally engages with artistic activities conducted in the Northeast, while largely neglecting contemporaneous enterprises that occurred in the American South. The intention of this dissertation, broadly considered, is to spark a reassessment of the South's place in American art history by examining the significant changes affected by one southern artist in particular, Charles Fraser (1782-1860). More specifically, I argue that Fraser, who is most often discussed as a miniaturist, is still more significant to American art as a landscape painter and promoter of the fine arts during the antebellum era. Indeed, the artist avidly pursued landscape painting before the genre had a significant market in the United States and prior to its emergence as a signifier of America's natural exceptionalism and cultural identity. He was not the only southern artist working during the first half of the nineteenth century, but, as this dissertation demonstrates, Fraser was extraordinarily persistent in his pursuit of artistic training, his promotion of the fine arts

in Charleston, and his determination to maintain a diplomatic stance in the midst of escalating tensions between North and South.

INDEX WORDS: Charles Fraser, southern art, southern culture, Antebellum South, art of the American South, Fraser Gallery, South Carolina Academy of Fine Art, Antebellum Charleston, American Landscape Painting, southern landscape painting, southern romanticism

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SANDY KRISTIN McCAIN

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M.A., San Diego State University, 2008

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SANDY KRISTIN McCAIN

Major Professor:	Janice C. Simon
Committee:	Alisa L. Luxenberg
	Nell Andrew
	John Inscoe
	Isabelle L. Wallace

Electronic Version Approved:

Julie Coffield
Interim Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2015

DEDICATION

For my family.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“It is somewhat remarkable that our Southern States have never produced an artist of world-wide, or, indeed, of universally acknowledged national reputation... This sectionality of the art-spirit in our country is something inaccountable.”

-- Margaret Junkin Preston, *Southern Review* (July 1879)¹

Charles Fraser (1782-1860) was a Charlestonian artist and a central figure within a larger artist circle that included painters such as Washington Allston, Samuel F.B. Morse, and Edward Malbone. Unfortunately, art historical scholarship that deals with antebellum American art seldom if ever explores art of the American South in a meaningful way. Thus, Fraser’s place within the history of American art has been unclear, whereas the contributions of many of his artist friends based in the Northeast, including Allston, Morse, and Malbone, have been thoroughly discussed and confirmed. The intention of this dissertation, broadly considered, is to spark a reassessment of the South’s place in American art history by examining the significant changes in taste and the artists’ social status within southern society affected by one southern artist in particular, Charles Fraser. More specifically, I argue that Fraser, who is most often discussed as a miniaturist, is still more significant to American art as a landscape painter and promoter of the fine arts. In fact, the artist avidly pursued landscape painting before

¹ Margaret Junkin Preston, “ART. VII,” *Southern Review* 26, no. 51 (July 1879): 394-395.

the genre had a notable market in the United States and prior to its emergence as a signifier of America's natural exceptionalism. He was not the only southern artist working during the first half of the nineteenth century, but Fraser was extraordinarily persistent in his pursuit of art instruction, his promotion of the fine arts in Charleston, and his determination to maintain a diplomatic stance in the midst of escalating tensions between North and South. The following chapters demonstrate that Charles Fraser and his pursuit of a career as a landscape painter conflict with the stereotype of the lazy, uneducated, unrefined, and fiery tempered Southerner constructed by northern writers during the antebellum years. In contrast to this stereotype, Fraser showed himself to be a Southerner with an agenda to become a successful landscape painter on a national scale.

That art historical scholarship related to nineteenth-century American art traditionally engages with artistic activities conducted in the Northeast, neglecting contemporaneous enterprises that occurred in the American South, is not entirely surprising. Certainly the growth of metropolises and the emergence of intellectual and literary movements in the Northeast during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made this region an attractive destination for artists and, decades later, an appealing subject for American art historians. The landscapes by northeastern painters Thomas Cole and the Hudson River school artists, for example, are among some of the most celebrated examples of nineteenth-century American art. They continue to be considered instrumental to understanding and appreciating America's artistic heritage. Certainly these images were also noted harbingers of America's artistic progress and natural exceptionalism by the 1830s.

And yet, as this dissertation will demonstrate, portions of the American South, such as Fraser's hometown of Charleston, South Carolina, were equally eager to become more refined and sophisticated. No group of landscape painters comparable to the Hudson River school artists existed south of the Mason-Dixon line during the antebellum era, but this is not to suggest that landscapes were absent from southern collections and artists' studios. In fact, Fraser was instrumental in affecting a shift in taste among southern collectors who preferred portrait painting by encouraging them to consider the landscape genre.

The reader will notice that nowhere in this dissertation is a discussion of so-called "Southern Art." I make no claims for such a genre, as to do so would suggest the existence of a uniquely southern artistic style and, by extension, other stylistic divisions within American art according to the regional origins of the artist. At best, art of the American South can be described as that which takes regional issues as its subject or art objects created by an artist working in the region. But no stylistic distinctions are evident. To suggest this would be to minimize the significance of trans-regional artistic exchange, a notion that is very much at the heart of this investigation. By adopting an impartial, socio-historical approach, this dissertation brings into focus the South's contribution to American art history and works to broaden our understanding of American art.

Unfortunately, efforts to recognize the South's contribution to American landscape painting and, more broadly, to American art history, are complicated by the scantiness of surviving literary and visual material. The region's harsh climate, the vast destruction brought on by the Civil War, and the resulting widespread poverty during Reconstruction significantly affected the longevity of art objects and related

documentation in southern cities. This in part explains the absence of art of the American South, including landscapes by Charles Fraser, most of which were destroyed during the Civil War, from many surveys of American Art. Of those art objects that did survive the Civil War and Reconstruction, the majority are portrait paintings and miniatures. Valued more than other genres by their owners, these pictures of celebrated ancestors were saved from destruction and retained despite post-war hardships. Many wealthy Southerners sacrificed their still life, landscape, and allegorical paintings when Union soldiers approached. Thus, our understanding of many southern collections, particularly those with inadequate documentation, is limited and incomplete.

Further exacerbating efforts to appreciate the significance of the antebellum South to the story of American art history is the sparseness of archival resources related to art training and criticism in the region. Apprenticeships were generally informal, unregulated affairs. And critical literature about the visual arts of the South, so pivotal to publicizing art beyond its place of production, was equally informal or, in many cases, altogether absent during the antebellum period.

Perhaps it is not surprising then, that American art history, particularly of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, is primarily concerned with northeastern art. It is this “sectionality of the art-spirit in our country” that Mary Junkin Preston, a writer and poet from Louisville, Kentucky, lamented in her biography of South Carolina native Washington Allston published in *Southern Review* in 1879. Bemoaning the fact that “one has but to run one’s eyes over a catalogue of American artists to discover that they have been drawn almost entirely from the Northern and Middle States,” Preston blamed the absence of southern artists, such as Allston, from critical discussions of American art on a

lack of patronage among wealthy Southerners who, she claimed, did little to support and encourage the arts locally.² While there is undoubtedly some truth in Preston's assertion, this investigation into the career of southern artist Charles Fraser reveals the inaccuracy of such a sweeping condemnation.

Over a century and half after Preston expressed her frustration with the northern-centric perspective of American art critics, scholarly neglect of the American South continues. It is only within the last fifty years that scholarship on southern artists, however sparse, has emerged. More recently, in 1996, art historian Randolph Delehanty boldly offered an explanation as to the region's continued neglect in his essay, "The South: The Last Frontier in American Art":

One crucial side effect of the region's troubled history was the engendering and lingering of antisouthern prejudice among other Americans, especially among the critics and tastemakers of the cosmopolitan Northeast. In the art world, which since the 1840s had been overwhelmingly dominated by New York City, this animosity has exacerbated the isolation and neglect of the body of southern works.³

Imbedded in Delehanty's claim that anti-southern sentiment in the art world has its origins in the 1840s is a clear reference to New York historian William Dunlap (1766-1839), who is best known for his multivolume *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, published in 1843. Dunlap's compilation of anecdotal biographies of artists working in America is still considered an invaluable resource for understanding artistic production and collecting trends during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But, as Delehanty observed, threaded

² Preston, "ART. VII," 395.

³ Randolph Delehanty, *Art in the American South: Works from the Ogden Collection* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 5.

throughout Dunlap's encyclopedic text is an art historical bias against the American South.

Dunlap did not go so far as to exclude southern artists or those working in the American South from his text, but rather he deemphasized the significance of the region and, in so doing, set an unfortunate precedent that would be followed by later generations of scholars. Dunlap's bias is particularly evident in his biography of Washington Allston, Fraser's friend and fellow Charlestonian who left his hometown at age eight to attend school in Newport, Rhode Island, returning home only occasionally thereafter.⁴ Dunlap assumed Allston's relief at having been "preserved from disease" by Newport's comparatively healthful environment. He claimed that "Mr. Allston was peculiarly happy in being removed from the place of his birth, before lessons more pernicious than could flow from witch stories [could be] taught by the negroes of the household or the plantation."⁵ Thus was Allston spared the fate of becoming a slave's companion and a permanent resident of his family's plantation. If we are to believe Dunlap, Allston's success as a painter is in no small degree owing to his escape from Charleston to the more cultured and "salubrious" Northeast. And yet in a letter written to Dunlap precisely to assist the author's composition of this biography, Allston asserted the opposite to be true:

⁴ Diana Strazdes, "Washington Allston's Early Career, 1796-1811" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1982), 14.

⁵ The full quote reads: "Mr. Allston was peculiarly happy in being removed from the place of his birth, before lessons more pernicious than could flow from witch stories were taught by the negroes of the household or the plantation." "Witch stories" is a reference to the tales told among slaves about the evil creatures believed to reside beyond the confines of the plantation grounds. These superstitious myths were passed down among generations of slaves to discourage runaways. William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (New York: Printed by Benjamin Blom, 1834), 2:153.

I remember that I used to draw before I left Carolina... that my favourite amusement... was making little landscapes about the roots of an old tree... These were sometimes presented with pitchers [sic] made of the pomegranate flower. These childish fancies were the straws by which, perhaps, an observer might then have guessed which way the current was setting for after life.⁶

Allston went on to explain that this initial proclivity for imitating nature soon gave way to more Romantic inclinations inspired by his early childhood that would become the hallmark of his career:

I delighted in being terrified by the tales of witches and hags, which the negroes used to tell me; and I well remember with how much pleasure I recalled these feelings on my return to Carolina, especially on revisiting a gigantic wild grape-vine in the woods, which has been the favourite swing for one of these witches.⁷

Allston's insistence that he continued to draw on his childhood memories of South Carolina throughout his career – asserted here as well as in other correspondences – did not factor into Dunlap's account.

The significance of an artist's southern roots to his biography could not be as easily dismissed in Dunlap's biography of Charles Fraser. On the contrary, here Dunlap emphasized the limitations imposed on artists working in Charleston. Even as he celebrated Fraser for having “done much for the progress of the arts of design, by his own pencil, and by his conduct as a man and a gentleman,” Dunlap honored the artist as a local – not a nationally known – painter.⁸ His accolades fall somewhat flat largely as a result of the brevity of this biography. Fraser, we are told, painted miniatures of wealthy

⁶ Fraser to William Dunlap, 20 May 1833, in *The Correspondences of Washington Allston*, ed. Natalia Wright (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1993), 330. Although the subject matter of Allston's work is not region-specific, in his correspondences, Allston asserts that his fascination with banditti stories and other adventure tales stemmed from his childhood experiences in South Carolina.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:294.

South Carolinians. The artist's miniatures of non-Southerners are not mentioned. His oil portraits, still lifes, allegorical "fancy" paintings and landscape images are similarly neglected. And while Dunlap alludes to Fraser's role in promoting the arts, specific examples of Fraser's orations and other promotional activities are noticeably absent from the author's account. Dunlap also overlooked the emergence of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art, founded by Fraser's artist circle in Charleston during the 1820s, in his later discussion of the development of art academies in America.

William Dunlap's treatment of artistic enterprise within the American South reinforced scholarly focus on other regions, particularly the Northeast. So why did South Carolina, the cultural center of the American South, seemingly produce no great painters during the nineteenth century to provoke a reconsideration of the region's significance within American art history? This is the question posed by archivist Gene Waddell in his 1979 essay, "Where are Our Trumbulls?" Waddell suggests that diverted talents were to blame and argues that South Carolinians were more interested in contributing to the social pattern in general (through oration, literature, as well as the arts), rather than focusing on any single objective.⁹ An individual's enterprise and character were celebrated above all else. Assuming Waddell's assessment to be true, Fraser's neglect in art historical scholarship is perhaps a reflection of his own diverse interests, which included orating, writing poetry, practicing law, discussing politics, recording historical events and, of course, painting.

No matter the reasoning or the sparseness of documentation, the fact remains that our understanding of American art is as yet incomplete so long as work produced in or

⁹ Gene Waddell, "Where Are Our Trumbulls?" in *Art in the Lives of South Carolinians: Nineteenth-Century Chapters*, ed. David Moltke-Hansen (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1979), GWb-2.

with regard to the southeastern quarter of the nation continues to be marginalized. How can American art of the nineteenth century, in accordance with art historical scholarship, suggest American progress and the desire to develop a cohesive national identity following the War for Independence, if approximately one third of the nation's inhabitants remain unrepresented?

Carolyn Weekley's groundbreaking book, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, published in 2012, represents the most recent attempt to address the scholarly neglect of southern artists and challenge the northern-centric perspective. In addition to discussing individual art objects and artists, Weekley addresses four themes she considers pivotal to understanding art of the early American South: training and the status of painters; distinctions between fine art and the mechanical arts; the popularity of portraiture; and the nature of southern clientele.¹⁰ But Weekley's study is, as the title of her book suggests, limited to the colonial era and so stops short of Charles Fraser and the antebellum generation. Nonetheless, Weekley's book provides an important foundation for any study of art of the American South.

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi defines the American South as comprising United States territory between and including Maryland and Texas from the Ohio River to the Gulf of Mexico.¹¹ Given the temporal parameters of this dissertation, spanning from the conclusion of the Revolutionary War in 1783 to the eve of the Civil War in 1860, and the fact that during these decades artistic

¹⁰ Carolyn Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South* (New Haven: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in association with Yale University Press, 2013), passim.

¹¹ According to this definition, the American South includes: Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. For a more detailed explanation of the different geographical zones within the American South, see Randolph Delehanty. *Art in the American South*, 4.

production was primarily limited to commercial centers, Charleston, South Carolina, is the principal southern city discussed in the chapters to follow. As the leading southeastern port city with strong commercial ties to England, New York, and Boston, Charleston was an attractive destination for emigrant European as well as itinerant northern artists and therefore became a nurturing environment for the cultivation of native artistic talent.

Charleston was not only one of the largest and wealthiest cities in America by the end of the eighteenth century; it was also the most active of all southern communities in its encouragement of the arts.¹² Upon returning from his southern travels in 1773, Bostonian Josiah Quincy, Jr. (1744-1775) said of Charleston: “in grandeur, splendour of buildings, decorations, equipages, numbers, commerce, shipping, indeed in almost every thing, it far surpasses all I ever saw or expected to see in America.”¹³ Wealth acquired through mercantile and agricultural enterprises enabled Charlestonians to indulge in cultural activities in a way other Southerners could not. Nineteenth-century historian Henry Adams (1838-1918), described the perpetuation of this prosperity and refinement within planter society in *The United States in 1800*:

With their cultivated tastes and hospitable habits,... [Charlestonians] were travelers, readers, and scholars; the society of Charleston compared well in refinement with that of any city of its size in the world...¹⁴

¹² Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 163. Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), 121.

¹³ Josiah Quincy, *Memoir of the Life of Josiah Quincy, Jun. of Massachusetts* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, & Company, 1825), 73. Maurie D. McInnis, “Our Ingenious Countrymen Mr. Benbridge,” in *Henry Benbridge: Charleston Portrait Painter (1743-1812)* (Charleston: Gibbes Museum of Art, 2000), 6. Exhibition Catalogue.

¹⁴ The full quote reads: “The small society of rice and cotton planters at Charleston, with their cultivated tastes and hospitable habits, delighted in whatever reminded them of European civilization. They were travellers, readers, and scholars; the society of Charleston compared well in refinement with that of any city of its size in the world, and English visitors long thought it the

Charlestonians' eagerness to be perceived as refined was nowhere more evident than in their residences. A planter's palatial home, replete with impressive furnishings and a formidable collection of art, served as visual evidence of his gentrification.¹⁵

One member of a prestigious planter family, Thomas Middleton (1791-1863), created a wash drawing *Friends and Amateurs in Musick* [Fig. 1.1] in 1827 that offers insight into the practice of art collecting and how art may have been displayed in the home.¹⁶ In a description accompanying his sketch, Middleton notes: "I have taken pains to strike the general air & carriage of the individual and the costumes of the day... a pleasing idea of the custom of these times, and the habits of their [later viewers'] forefathers."¹⁷ From the palatial extravagance of their plantation home at Middleton Place to the urban elegance of their Charleston house, the Middletons set the standard by which other planter families measured their own gentility. Thomas Middleton's grandniece,

most agreeable in America." Henry Adams, *The United States in 1800* (Ithaca, NY: Great Seal Books, a Division of Cornell University Press, 1955), 1:107. Adams struggled with his own shifting perspective of the American South. While he praised the refinement of its upper classes in his 1889 text, *The United States in 1800*, by the end of his life, Adams described Southerners as having short tempers and poor intellect in *The Education of Henry Adams*, published in 1907. For a thoughtful discussion of the changing role of the region within Adams's writings, see Michael O'Brien, *Henry Adams and the Southern Question* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

¹⁵ Per capita wealth in these American households increased by 50-100% by 1770. A considerable portion of these funds was spent on houses and art as symbols of refinement. Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, and Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 5 and 15. Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 163. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 7. Maurie D. McNinnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 6.

¹⁶ This drawing may have been based on a similar scene of another Charlestonian gathering created by George Roupell titled *Peter Manigault and his Friends* (1760-70). *Selections from the Collection of the Carolina Art Association* (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1977), 54. The artist's older brother, Arthur Middleton (1785-1837), was a planter and (at the time of the drawing's creation) state legislator. Arthur spent his summers in his Charleston abode – presumably the location of this gathering. Sarah Lytle, "Thomas Middleton: At Ease with the Arts in Charleston" in *Art in the Lives of South Carolinians: Nineteenth-Century Chapters*, ed. David Moltke-Hansen (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1979), SL-2.

¹⁷ *Selections from the Collection of the Carolina Art Association*, 55.

Alicia Hopton fondly recalled the plethora of art objects to be found in their family residences:

the walls of the library above the wainscot were lined with well-filled book shelves; below were closets and drawers full of rare works of art, water-colors of unusual size, priceless engravings, exquisite miniatures and other treasures...¹⁸

In *Friends and Amateurs in Musick*, Thomas Middleton does not depict a well-stocked library or cabinet of curiosities, but rather the artfully adorned parlor of his brother (Alicia Hopton's grandfather) Arthur's Charleston residence wherein a group of jocular gentlemen converse and play musical instruments. Paintings on the walls behind the gentlemen speak to the diversity of subjects to be found in many southern collections, which ranged from landscape and genre scenes to history and portrait paintings. One painting has been definitively identified as American expatriate Benjamin West's portrait of the artist's father and namesake, Thomas Middleton (1753-1797), which appears left of the mantle and centrally located within the composition. Other paintings can be loosely attributed.¹⁹ Art historian Maurie McInnis has suggested that the interior scene over the mantle piece resembles work by the School of Granet.²⁰ And the neoclassical history painting represented on the far left of the composition is likely a copy after Angelica

¹⁸ Alicia Hopton Middleton, *Life in Carolina and New England during the Nineteenth Century* (Bristol, RI: Privately Printed, 1929), 68.

¹⁹ Maurie McInnis identifies Thomas Middleton's portrait by Benjamin West in McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 301-302.

²⁰ Francois-Marius Granet's work was popular among Charleston collectors – particularly his interior views (prized for their strong architectural motifs) and the atmospheric quality of his land- and seascapes. Paintings by other artists in the style of Granet are often attributed to “School of Granet” in Charlestonian collectors' inventories. *Ibid.*, 302. It may be worth noting that both Henry Inman and Charles Fraser created copies after Granet. Inman's *An Abbey Window* (1830) is located at the Gibbes Museum of Art, as is Fraser's *An Ancient Bath* (after 1800).

Kauffmann's *Telemachus Returning to Penelope* (1770-1780).²¹ Next to this composition, is a smaller genre scene depicting what appears to be a figure amidst a small herd of animals outside a quaint country house. Elsewhere, over the mantelpiece, the Granet-style painting seemingly leans against and partially conceals a horizontal seascape picture. On either side are miniature portraits, presumably of other members of the Middleton family. Finally, an allegorical painting appears cropped at the far right of Middleton's drawing. The large size and placement of West's portrait, the Granet-style seascape, and the copy after Kauffmann attest to the southern collector's preference for the classicizing style of European-trained artists. The collecting habits of Charleston gentlemen, including the Middletons, were largely informed by the standards of taste set by their English counterparts.

The Charlestonian elite's emphasis on lineage as evidentiary of refinement coupled with a general nostalgia for the revolutionary spirit of the late eighteenth century meant that portraits of ancestors, such as that of Thomas's and Arthur's father, were prominently displayed, as were those of contemporary relatives, as seen in the miniature portraits on the mantelpiece.²² The desire to display gentility was a characteristic that wealthy Charlestonians shared with their northern peers and one that emanated from an eagerness to emulate European notions of cultural refinement. Europeans associated

²¹ Angelica Kauffmann's *Telemachus Returning to Penelope* (1770-1780) is owned by the Mead Art Museum affiliated with Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts.

²² For a more detailed discussion of how and why early Americans coveted portraits of ancestors as signifiers of aristocratic lineage and symbols of refinement, see Margaretta M. Lovell, *Art in the Season of Revolution: Painters, Artisans, and Patrons in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). Of particular interest is Lovell's discussion of John Singleton Copley's *Joshua Henshaw* in her chapter, "The Remembering Eye: Copley's Men and the Case of *Joshua Henshaw*."

national greatness in part with artistic maturity.²³ Nurturing the arts therefore became an increasingly significant expectation of upper class Americans.

In her essay “Taste, Art, and Cultural Power in Nineteenth-Century America,” Barbara Dayer Gallati argues that the question of taste raised in the eighteenth century – whether it is innately acquired or a learned skill – was and continues to be unresolved.²⁴

American collectors were aware of the work of English Enlightenment philosophers, such as Joseph Addison, Edmund Burke, and David Hume, who published extensively on aesthetic theory and taste.²⁵ Gallati suggests that extracts and reviews of these and other similarly concerned essays reprinted in American newspapers testify to the significance of “taste” as a component of critical discourse during the eighteenth and nineteenth

²³ Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 20. Charlestonians were particularly concerned with English concepts of refinement. In 1816, William H. Prescott wrote of English refinement: “The Englishman is the most truly rural in his tastes and habits of any people in the world. I am speaking of the higher classes. The aristocracy of other countries affect the camp and the city. But the English love their old castles and country seats with a patriotic love... [W]e are not to look on the English gentleman as a mere Nimrod. With all the relish for field sports and country usages, he has his house filled with collections of art and extensive libraries. The tables of the drawing-rooms are covered with the latest works sent down by the London publisher.” William Hickling Prescott, “English Society and English Gentlemen” in *Transatlantic Crossing: British Visitors to America in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Walter Allen (New York: Morrow, 1971), 70.

²⁴ Barbara Dayer Gallati, “Taste, Art, and Cultural Power in Nineteenth-Century America,” in *Making American Taste: Narrative Art for a New Democracy*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (London: The New-York Historical Society in association with D. Giles Limited, 2011), 11. Although Gallati’s study focuses on narrative landscape painting in antebellum New York, her thorough analysis of Americans’ English-derived sense of taste is relevant to understanding the development of a taste for landscape painting broadly. The notion of “taste,” addressed by Plato and other ancient philosophers, became a serious topic of scholarly debate during the Enlightenment era and continues to be addressed by scholars, including Gallati, and critics today. It is a complex issue, but one that this dissertation will not explore in-depth in an effort to maintain focus on the primary concern, Charles Fraser and landscape painting in Charleston.

²⁵ Ibid., 20. These published works include: Joseph Addison, “Taste,” in *Spectator* (1712); William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty, Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (1753); Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1st published in 1757); and David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” (1757).

centuries.²⁶ Although Gallati's study focuses on antebellum New York, her conclusion is also applicable to Charleston, where the Charleston Library Society housed Archibald Alison's *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (Boston, 1812), Jonathan Richardson's *The Science of a Connoisseur* (London, 1791), as well as a French translation of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's *History of the Art of the Ancients* (Paris, 1794) and *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London, 1809).²⁷

The significance of Charleston as an antebellum cosmopolitan port city inhabited by local and itinerant artists has not gone completely unnoticed. In 1949, amateur historian Anna Wells Rutledge wrote *Artists in the Life of Charleston: Through Colony and State, from Restoration to Reconstruction*, a compilation of primary source material related to artists working in Charleston with some editorial notes.²⁸ Rutledge's text is pivotal to any study of early southern artists, as is the work of Maurie McInnis.

In *In Pursuit of Refinement: Charlestonians Abroad, 1740-1860*, Angela D. Mack and McInnis rightly assert that the Charlestonian elites' enthusiasm for European art,

²⁶ Ibid., 14-21. "An Essay on Taste" published in *Boston Magazine*, for example, defined taste as the "power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art." "An Essay on Taste. From a New Work," *Boston Magazine* I (November 1783): 27. Many art history scholars have addressed the significance of taste to critical discourse related to American art during the nineteenth century. Some relevant texts to consider include: Annie V.F. Storr, "Ut Pictura Rhetorica: The Oratory of the Visual Arts in the Early Republic and the Formation of American Cultural Values, 1790-1840" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1992). Particularly interesting is the chapter "Gentlemen's Learning and the Visual Arts." Another good resource, this one giving more focus to landscape paintings, is available in Janice Simon, "The Crayon, 1855-1861: The Voice of Nature in Criticism, Poetry, and the Fine Arts" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1990).

²⁷ *A Catalogue of the Books Belonging to the Charleston Library Society* (Charleston, SC: Charleston Library Society, 1826). Other related resources then available at the Charleston Library included: Richard Layne Knight's *Analytical Inquiry into the principles of Taste* (London, 1805), William Thompson's *Elementary principles of Beauty in the works of Nature and Art* (London, 1798), and Samuel Whelpley's "Lectures on Genius and Taste" (undated).

²⁸ Anna Wells Rutledge, *Artists in the Life of Charleston: Through Colony and State, from Restoration to Reconstruction*, vol. 39, part 2 of the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1949).

culture, and society was evidenced in their preference for art objects (primarily portraits) painted by European-trained artists, such as Jeremiah Theus, Henry Benbridge, and John Trumbull.²⁹ Mack and McInnis focus on the planter class and Charleston's cultural development as determined by that social class. Though Fraser's social status as a gentleman artist situated him within the planter class and at the center of Charleston's artistic and cultural development, his contributions beyond miniature portrait painting are not addressed in their book.

McInnis continues her exploration into the Charlestonian elites' efforts to appear more refined, again discussing Fraser only incidentally, in her book *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*. Published six years after her collaboration with Mack, in this text, McInnis discusses architecture and the decorative arts as she considers the political implications of Charleston's cityscape.³⁰ Again McInnis emphasizes the significance of patronage in her examination of local structures and furnishings. Each of these texts acknowledges Charles Fraser as a well-respected miniaturist, who, like any other artist in Charleston, submitted himself to the whims of his patrons and the art market. This dissertation, however, demonstrates that Fraser was in fact remarkably proactive in his engagement with artists in and beyond Charleston and determined in his pursuit of landscape painting.

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Fraser became a central figure in a burgeoning society of local and itinerant artists in Charleston. Unlike his European-trained contemporaries, Fraser never attended an art academy. Nor did he

²⁹ Angela D. Mack and Maurie D. McInnis, *In Pursuit of Refinement: Charlestonians Abroad, 1740-1860* (Charleston, SC: Gibbes Museum of Art, 1999), passim.

³⁰ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, passim.

establish a studio outside of Charleston. But he did travel north on several occasions to confer with established artists, visit art exhibitions, and learn about newly established art institutions. Although relocating to New England was feasible, even encouraged by some of his artist friends, Fraser was determined to remain in his hometown. His sojourns, however, resulted in several commissions and ultimately earned Fraser a national reputation.

Fraser emerged as a telling example of a proactive southern artist working during the early nineteenth century because of the position he occupied within a larger network of well-established canonical American artists and the volume of primary source material related to his artistic career, including scrapbooks, sketchbooks, pamphlets, correspondences, and an exhibition catalogue. Fraser's landscape images are important in that they tell the story of his artistic development and, later, attest to his bi-regional sympathies. But the artist's prowess as a landscape painter is difficult to argue. In fact, his work is relatively conservative and traditional, revealing his considerable reliance on copying the work of English painters and engravers. This study is not an argument for his incorporation into the American art history canon. Rather, his importance lies in his artistic development and avid promotion of the arts, which offer insight into art production, training, and shifts in taste within Charleston, the cultural nexus of the antebellum South. Furthermore, Fraser's life, spanning from 1782 to 1860, bridges the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, the decades during which landscape painting became the most celebrated genre in American art.

That few of Fraser's landscape paintings have been located challenges attempts to understand the quantity and quality of his full body of work. An extant list of the artist's

landscape images in 1857 appears in a catalogue published in conjunction with his retrospective exhibition that year.³¹ But the majority of these are believed to have been destroyed or lost during the Civil War and the chaotic years that followed. It is not surprising, then, that most scholars examining Fraser's artistic career focus on his production of miniatures.

The first monograph on Fraser, written by historian and Charleston artist Alice Huger Smith and published in 1923, broadly examines Fraser's contributions to Charleston society as a miniaturist and amateur historian and is, by Smith's own admission, incomplete (and remarkably short at only thirty-one pages).³² Smith also published select images from Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook in 1940.³³ Although sketches discussed therein depict provincial structures and their surrounding landscape, Smith's nostalgic explanations of these views impose on them a documentary function. For Smith, Fraser's drawings capture a Charleston that is no longer. The works' significance, beyond documenting Charleston, is not addressed.

³¹ It is worth noting that the 1857 retrospective exhibition, though it included over 300 works by Fraser, was not a complete representation of his life's work. As noted in the exhibition catalogue: "Something like an adequate conception can be formed of the entire range of Mr. Fraser's professional labors, when it is remembered, that in addition to the foregoing list [an earlier mentioned list of select sketches from Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook], and to the two Catalogues presented in the former part of this pamphlet [those works on exhibition], there remain more than one hundred and fifty miniatures, and a proportional number of larger pieces, which their proprietors, for various reasons, have abstained from sending to the Gallery." Caroline Gilman quoted by George S. Bryan in Charles Fraser and Samuel Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857, with Descriptive and Biographical Illustrations* (Charleston: James and Williams, Printers, 1857), 63.

³² Smith and Smith, *Charles Fraser*. Although Smith provides a nice overview of Fraser's life and travels, she does not engage with his art in a meaningful way. She admits on several occasions that the details her account lacks are readily available for those interested and willing to search for it in archival libraries.

³³ Charles Fraser and Alice Huger Smith, *A Charleston Sketchbook, 1796-1806: Forty Watercolor Drawings of the City and the Surrounding Country, including Plantations and Parish Churches, by Charles Fraser* (Charleston, SC: Carolina Art Association, 1940 and 1971). Smith includes a brief introduction to the resident of the property for each of the plantation portraits or parishes depicted.

Four years later, historian Anna Wells Rutledge built upon Smith's monograph in her unpublished manuscript titled "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860: With a Descriptive Catalogue of His Pictures Including his Portraits in Oils & Miniature" archived at the South Carolina Historical Society.³⁴ Rutledge offers a more in-depth exploration of Fraser's multifaceted significance to Charleston culture than had Smith. But while she does refer to Fraser's interest in and production of landscape paintings, her exploration focuses on his miniature and portrait paintings almost exclusively, as the subtitle of her manuscript suggests.

A leading authority on Fraser and his miniature portraits, art historian Martha Severens collaborated with Charles L. Wyrick in 1983 to produce *Charles Fraser of Charleston: Essays on the Man, His Art, and His Times*. The essays therein, written by various historians and art historians, including Severens herself, objectively explore Fraser's many accomplishments as a lawyer, artist, civic leader, and historian.³⁵ Severens addresses Fraser's landscape paintings in her chapter "Charles Fraser: Sketches and Oil Paintings," in which she acknowledges the artist's transition from miniature to landscape painting during the 1840s and argues quite convincingly that Fraser's deteriorating health and the development of the daguerreotype prompted this shift. But the majority of the book privileges Fraser's ability as a miniaturist and amateur historian, asserting his place within the miniature portrait painting tradition in America and examining his numerous orations, essays, and memoirs. By contrast, my investigation focuses on Fraser's

³⁴ Anna Wells Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860: with a Descriptive Catalogue of His Pictures Including his Portraits in Oils & Miniature" (unpublished manuscript, 1944). Anna Wells Rutledge Papers, 1887-1996, South Carolina Historical Society.

³⁵ Martha R. Severens and Charles L. Wyrick, ed., *Charles Fraser of Charleston: Essays on the Man, His Art and His Times* (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, in association with the Gibbes Art Gallery, 1983), passim.

landscape paintings and promotional efforts to the exclusion of his already thoroughly discussed miniature portraits.

As Severens notes, Fraser was a man of multifaceted interests. His scrapbook of 1843, housed at the South Carolina Historical Society, reveals as much.³⁶ It includes clippings from periodicals published in cities throughout the United States that address a wide range of topics from natural phenomena and catastrophes, political events, and foreign affairs, to obituaries of statesmen, poems, and portions of advice columns.³⁷ Deeply ingrained within Fraser was a sense of history and a clear desire to affect it. He frequently spoke at important local events, such as the dedication of Magnolia Cemetery and the groundbreaking ceremony for the College of Charleston. He also gave lectures to intellectual societies, including the American Lyceum in New York and the Charleston Library Society, and was elected a director of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art and treasurer of the College of Charleston. Fraser's influence and reputation ultimately led to the creation of the Fraser Gallery in 1857. This first retrospective exhibition in Charleston of a local artist, never before addressed by scholars, is examined at length in chapter five.

But perhaps the most telling evidence of Fraser's profound sense of history is his *Reminiscences of Charleston*, published in 1854, just three years prior to the Fraser Gallery.³⁸ This publication of Fraser's memoirs, which constitute lectures given before the Charleston Literary Club (portions of which also appeared in the *Charleston Courier*)

³⁶ Charles Fraser Scrapbook, ca.1843. South Carolina Historical Society. Charleston, South Carolina. The scrapbook was given to Catherine P. Ravenel in 1864 by her uncle Daniel Ravenel who received it from Charles Fraser as a gift.

³⁷ Clippings are taken from the *Charleston Mercury*, *Charleston Gazette*, *The Boston Transcript*, *The New York Mirror*, the *Washington Telegraph*, and *The American Register*, among others.

³⁸ Charles Fraser, *Reminiscences of Charleston, Lately Published in the Charleston Courier, and Now Revised and Enlarged by the Author* (Charleston, SC: Garnier & Company, 1854).

attests to Fraser's reputation as a cultural historian and the collective desire among Charlestonians to preserve memories of the antebellum culture that was slipping away by the 1850s. Fraser's account of social, political, and economic changes he witnessed in Charleston continues to be an important reference for historians and, likewise, a crucial resource for this study.

The dissertation that follows is divided into four sections that are for the most part organized chronologically. Fraser's youthful pursuit of an education in landscape painting between approximately 1793 and 1816 as well as the considerable reputation he acquired during these years is the topic of chapter two. Fraser's informal training, which began under the supervision of local artisan Thomas Coram involved two trips north to visit established artists in Boston and New York and resulted in his placement at the center of a burgeoning artist community in Charleston. While many painters in the American South, particularly native artists, struggled to locate reliable patrons, Fraser did not. His account book and written correspondence with family and friends reveal that Fraser's pencil was always in hand. He did not need to supplement his income by painting signs or furnishings, as so many other local artists did, because his elevated social status granted him access to wealthy patrons.

Although portraiture was the preferred genre among southern patrons, landscapes and estate portraits dominate Fraser's earliest sketchbooks (1793 and 1796-1806). A careful analysis of some of these sketches reveals that Fraser learned much about landscape composition from Coram, as well as English artists, most notably William Gilpin and Paul Sandby. Through such assessments and an investigation into Fraser's activities beyond Charleston, this chapter demonstrates that Fraser actively sought an

informal education in landscape painting before the genre gained popularity in the United States.

Charles Fraser's place within the American landscape painting tradition is the topic of chapter three. Fraser learned much about landscape painting from his northern travels and encouraged a similar consideration of this artistic genre and of art instruction among his fellow Charlestonians from roughly 1820 to 1850. As this chapter shows, Fraser encouraged a taste for landscape painting among his Charleston clients by urging patrons, such as Robert W. Gibbes, to incorporate more landscape paintings into their collections. Because he cultivated a patron network that spanned from Massachusetts to the Carolinas, Fraser, a former Federalist who had run for office on several occasions, exhibited caution in the midst of escalating regional tensions. During the 1830s and 1840s, as the issues of states rights and the possible expansion of slavery westward created a rift between North and South, Fraser adopted a politically neutral stance. Through careful examinations of Fraser's landscape images created during these decades, this chapter explores the artist's earnest attempt to appeal to the differing Romantic tastes of his northern and southern patrons. In so doing, this chapter not only attests to Fraser's professional motivation for political neutrality, but it also asserts the truly multifaceted nature of antebellum Americans' taste for landscape painting.

Chapter four addresses how Fraser utilized his knowledge and reputation as a man of culture and refined taste to promote the arts and art instruction. Again, the artist's regional diplomacy pervades with regard to his promotional efforts. Not only did Fraser contribute to the nation's artistic culture by providing William Dunlap with information about his artist friends to assist the author's creation of *History of the Rise and Progress*

of the Arts of Design in the United States (1834), but he also supported the establishment of a national art academy.

Interestingly, Fraser's promotion of art was not absolute as other scholars have suggested. Fraser did not, for example, support the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art founded by some of his artist friends in 1821. Although he was elected to serve on its Board of Directors, correspondences between John Cogdell and Samuel Morse, co-founders of the institution and fellow directors, reveal that Fraser was in fact indifferent to the Academy's survival. Scholars of southern art have been baffled by the artist's resignation from the Board of Directors and eventual withdrawal from the institution. But, as chapter four argues, Fraser had a different agenda in mind – one that attests to his aptitude as a professional artist highly attuned to the desires and expectations of his clientele. The artist's familiarity with and adherence to planter values and traditions, his political ideology, as well as his experiences visiting northern art institutions are important factors to consider when discussing Fraser's withdrawal from and the ultimate failure of the Academy in Charleston, which closed its doors due to lack of support in 1830.³⁹

Despite conflicts with the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts, Charles Fraser continued to involve himself in Charleston's art community. Though by the 1850s, Fraser, nearing the end of his life, encouraged others to take the reins. Chapter five specifically addresses the Fraser Gallery, a retrospective exhibition of the artist's

³⁹ Scholars largely agree that the institution's preoccupation with creating opportunities for young artists to train and exhibit their work to the detriment of cultivating patronage among the wealthy, in conjunction with poor management and rising political tensions, led to the institution's downfall. Paul Staiti, "The 1823 Exhibition of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts: A Paradigm of Charleston Taste?" in *Art in the Lives of South Carolinians: Nineteenth-Century Chapters*, ed. David Moltke-Hansen (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1979), PSb-3. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 140-149.

miniatures, landscapes, and other paintings, sponsored by his friends in 1857 and accompanied by the first and most complete catalogue of the artist's work. Unlike the annual exhibitions sponsored by the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art, Fraser's exhibition was eagerly attended. Patrons, both in and beyond Charleston, loaned miniatures and paintings for the event in a way that they had not for the Academy. Although the retrospective declared itself to be a celebration of Charles Fraser, my investigation into the primary organizers of the event, Samuel and Caroline Gilman, reveals that the exhibition of images, arranged as they were within the space, had an ulterior, political motive and one more attuned to Fraser's own political sentiments.

The dissertation concludes by discussing the ramifications of Fraser's promotional efforts in Charleston. Although his regional affiliation may have adversely affected his national reputation and many of his landscape paintings were destroyed by General Sherman's troops, Fraser's surviving work as well as his efforts to promote the arts in Charleston led to the establishment of the Carolina Art Association in 1858 and the Gibbes Art Gallery, now the Gibbes Museum of Art.

Charles Fraser, his sketches, and paintings offer insight into art production, purchasing, and collecting in antebellum Charleston beyond what has been addressed in previous scholarship. Fraser's artistic development, success, and promotional efforts are important to the history of American art, as he was the first southern fine artist who was trained and who flourished in the South. But there are other, later southern artists, who continue to be neglected in art historical scholarship. Thus, Charles Fraser, as discussed in this dissertation, can be understood as a case study for appreciating the potential of other, as yet overlooked, southern artists to American art history. It may seem that

Fraser's determination to leave his mark on the art world was ultimately unsuccessful – another casualty of the Civil War. And yet, Charles Fraser, though absent from the American art canon, has not been forgotten. To the contrary, his work and that of his southern contemporaries is of increasing interest to American art scholars, collectors, and museum curators today.

CHAPTER 2

THE STUDENT:

PURSUING AN ARTISTIC EDUCATION

On a warm fall morning in 1795, thirteen-year-old Charles Fraser navigated the dirt roads of Charleston as he made his way north from his brother's home on Broad Street to Queen Street.⁴⁰ There he commenced drawing lessons at the home of local engraver, Thomas Coram (1756-1811).⁴¹ The city Fraser traversed was a small but thriving metropolis that was still in the process of rebuilding in the aftermath of the American War for Independence. Fraser later described the atmosphere of post-revolutionary Charleston in his 1853 publication *Reminiscences of Charleston* as somewhat turbulent, "exhibiting the most extravagant and enthusiastic sympathy in behalf of the French revolution."⁴² A year prior to his drawing lessons, Fraser witnessed the pro-Jacobin "beheading" and removal of a sculpture of one-time-hero Lord Chatham

⁴⁰ Fraser's older brother, Frederick, noted in his receipt book that he paid Thomas Coram "£ 3/5/3 on June 27, 1796 for one quarter's teaching Master Charles drawing, the sum of which had been due on October 9, 1795." Frederick Fraser Receipt Book, 1792-1816. South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina. Although Frederick Fraser (1762-1816) controlled his brother's finances, Charles Fraser appears to have resided with another brother, William Fraser (1760-1814), who lived at no. 89 Broad St in Charleston in 1790, rather than on the family plantation where Frederick lived. Listed in *The Charleston Directory and Revenue System of the United States, 1790* (Charleston: Printed by T.B. Bowen, 1790), n.p. According to the 1790 United States Federal Census, William Fraser had in his household two white males under sixteen years of age – presumably William's son, Frederick Fraser (1794-1867) and his brother, Charles. First Census of the United States, 1790, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, DC.

⁴¹ Thomas Coram resided at no. 81 Queen Street in 1794. Listed in *The Charleston, 1794* (Charleston: Printed by W.P. Young, 1794), n.p.

⁴² Charles Fraser, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, 39.

(William Pitt).⁴³ En route to Coram's house, Fraser would have passed through the newly vacated intersection at Broad and Meeting Streets where the sculpture had once stood – its absence a testament to the changing landscape of Charleston.

In the decades following the Revolutionary War, the city of Charleston expanded and prospered. Though the urban landscape changed, with Greek Revival architecture becoming more common, the wealthy planter elite's artistic taste did not. At the turn of the nineteenth century, they continued to prefer portraiture reminiscent of Sir Joshua Reynolds's "Grand Style." The Charleston elite overwhelmingly patronized European-trained artists to create these visual symbols of the sitters' patriarchal role and gentrification. Though not institutionally trained, Charles Fraser experienced success as a miniature painter, creating portraits that in many ways conformed to the elite's aesthetic expectations. He also acquired a favorable reputation for his landscape paintings and devoted a significant portion of his artistic education to learning about this genre. In fact, the thirteen-year-old Charles Fraser en route to Thomas Coram's house in 1795 attended the artist's drawing school in part to learn about landscape composition.

⁴³ Charles Fraser, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, 21, 36-43. The sculpture was created in 1770 to commemorate William Pitt's support for the American resistance to the Stamp Act. However, in 1794, Pitt, then the Prime Minister of Great Britain, suspended the writ of habeas corpus, restricted rights to assembly, and adopted other restrictive measures in response to parliament's growing concern regarding recent acts of Jacobin sympathizers and radicals. In so doing, he lost the support of many Jacobin supporters in American cities. The sculpture of Pitt in Charleston, for example, was seized by Jacobin sympathizers in 1794 and hanged by means of a jack and pulley until its head separated from its body. Local papers described the act as signifying the success of the French Guillotine. William Cobbett, *Porcupine's Works; Containing Various Writings and Selections, Exhibiting a Faithful Picture of the United States of America; of their Governments, Laws, Politics, and Resources; of the Characters of their Presidents, Governors, Legislators, Magistrates, and Military Men; and of the Manners, Morals, Religion, Virtues, and Vices of the People: Comprising also A Complete Series of Historical Documents and Remarks, From the End of the War, in 1783, to the Election of the President, in March, 1801, in Selections from Porcupine's Gazette, from the Beginning of June, to the 15th of August, 1797* (London: Printed by Cobbett and Morgan, 1801), 6:112. Charlestonian enthusiasm for the French Revolution changed, however, when the situation in France worsened. Charles Fraser, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, 36 and 46.

This chapter addresses the miniaturist's active pursuit of an education in landscape painting at a time when portraiture still dominated the American art market. Prior to Thomas Doughty's transition to landscape painting in 1816 and the discovery of Thomas Cole by William Dunlap and John Trumbull in 1825, this young aspiring Charlestonian artist was learning about landscape composition by looking at engravings after drawings by William Gilpin and Paul Sandby. Unlike his American contemporaries, Fraser did not embark on the European Grand Tour or travel to London to learn about grand manner history painting from Benjamin West and his colleagues at the British Royal Academy.⁴⁴ Instead, Fraser fashioned his own artistic education in the United States – one that included studying prints, attending art exhibitions nationwide, observing and sketching the American countryside during his travels, and engaging with artists in and beyond Charleston. By pursuing an education in landscape painting and, in so doing, cultivating a national reputation as a respected artist, Fraser sparked a reconsideration of local artistic talent and landscape painting among Charlestonian patrons. It was a gradual process and one that began under Thomas Coram's tutelage.

A Planter Youth's Desire for an Artistic Education

Fraser was just one of a small group of boys who gathered at the home of Thomas Coram in October 1795 to learn how to draw and paint with watercolors. Since arriving from England in 1770, Coram had developed a considerable reputation for his intricately

⁴⁴ Most of the American artists who studied under Benjamin West at the British Royal Academy, including Washington Allston, John Blake White, and John Trumbull, returned to the United States prepared to create history paintings such as were *en vogue* in London only to find no market for such paintings in America.

engraved visiting cards, silver, watches, brass doors, and even currency.⁴⁵ Yet by the mid-1780s, Coram had begun dabbling in landscape painting. Indeed, advertisements for his drawing school in local newspapers appeared simultaneously with notices in which Coram listed “a few Pieces of Landscape Paintings, Some of them copied from capital works, and... offered to the public, as the result of his first essay in the art.”⁴⁶ Coram was not alone in his desire to sell landscape paintings. Since the late eighteenth century, itinerant painters in Charleston had sporadically advertised their landscape painting ability, but with little success. For example, upon emigrating from London in January 1766 an otherwise unknown artist named Warwell placed an ad in the *South-Carolina Gazette* announcing that he could paint landscapes, seascapes, as well as history scenes and altarpieces.⁴⁷ Later advertisements, which continued until May of 1767, offered additional services, such as copying, cleaning, and mending pictures. That Warwell and other painters of landscapes at this early juncture did not remain in Charleston and none of their work is known today is evidence of the preeminence of portrait painting in Charleston throughout the eighteenth century. Despite this, Coram, an established engraver and watercolorist, must have experienced a degree of success composing

⁴⁵ Margaret Simons Middleton, “Thomas Coram, Engraver and Painter,” *Antiques Magazine* 29, no. 6 (June 1936): 243.

⁴⁶ “DRAWING SCHOOL. THE subscribed having been frequently solicited to teach the ART of DRAWING, takes this method of informing the public in general, and his friends in particular, that he intends immediately to open a Drawing School, for the purpose of instructing youth in that useful and pleasing art; and having a large collection of prints and studies of every kind, suitable for such an undertaking; he flatters himself, his knowledge in that line, will give every satisfaction.” Advertisement. *Columbian Herald* (Charleston), November 26, 1784. Also *South-Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser* (Charleston), November 27, 1784. In 1786, Coram began advertising his abilities as a painter of landscapes as well. Advertisement. *Columbian Herald* (Charleston), November 3 and 20, 1786. “Copied from capital works” likely refers to compositions derived from prints after old masters or well-known European artists that Coram, as a member of a mercantile family, would have had access to.

⁴⁷ Advertisement. *South-Carolina Gazette; and Country Journal* (Charleston), January 21, 1766, printed in Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 219.

landscapes, for in a notice of 1788, the artist thanked the public for its support and announced that he was selling a second set of paintings.⁴⁸

Coram introduced Fraser to landscape prints and taught the youth to compose landscape scenes, but he was not Fraser's first artistic influence. Fraser's brother, Alexander, initiated young Charles in the act of drawing. Little is known of Alexander's artistic interests beyond a small sketchbook titled "SKETCHES from NATURE," which scholar Julia Curtis dates to 1793.⁴⁹ This sixty-six page sketchbook includes theatrical illustrations, plantation ground sketches, as well as caricatures and bears the signatures of both Alexander and Charles Fraser. Curtis argues that the intermingling of styles – some crudely drawn forms and others more refined – suggests two different authors and may be evidentiary of Charles' earliest efforts then guided by his older brother.⁵⁰ Curtis further attributes certain theatrical sketches therein, such as the rendering of Goldfinch from *On the Road to Ruin* and Ariel in *The Tempest*, as well as another composition labeled *A Scene in the Theatre Charleston* [Fig. 2.1], to young Fraser, who frequented the theater with his childhood friend, later famed portraitist, Thomas Sully.⁵¹ The latter scene offers

⁴⁸ Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 300-301.

⁴⁹ "SKETCHES from NATURE by A. Fraser & C. Fraser," Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca.1700-ca.1905. On loan from Mrs. Carolina W. Cohen to the South Carolina Historical Society. Although six images from this sketchbook were dated 1796 when published in Severens and Wyrick's *Charles Fraser of Charleston* (1983), Julia Curtis argues that the theatrical scenes refer to performances that took place in Charleston during the spring of 1793. Julia Curtis, "Redating Sketches from Nature by A. Fraser and C. Fraser," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 93, no. 1 (1992): 52.

⁵⁰ Curtis, "Redating Sketches from Nature by A. Fraser and C. Fraser," 61.

⁵¹ *Gold Finch* and *Ariel* appear on pages thirty-four and two of the sketchbooks, respectively. "A Scene in the Theatre Charleston" appears on page twenty-three. "SKETCHES from NATURE by A. Fraser & C. Fraser," Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca.1700-ca.1905. On loan from Mrs. Carolina W. Cohen to the South Carolina Historical Society. Thomas Sully (1783-1872) resided in Charleston between 1793 and 1798, at which time his parents (both actors) performed on the Charleston stage. Thomas Sully told historian William Dunlap of Charles Fraser: "He was the first person that ever took the pains to instruct me in the rudiments of the art, and although himself a mere tyro, his kindness, and the progress made in consequence of it, determined the

a perspectival study of the Broad and Meeting Street intersection after Parisian painter Anthony Audin's theatrical backdrop in the Charleston Theatre.⁵² Not only does Fraser depict the sculpture of Lord Chatham with head intact, thereby suggesting a creation date that predates the sculpture's 1794 beheading, but it also indicates that the young artist studied local theatre sets prior to attending Coram's school.

Drawing lessons with an established artist, such as Coram, was a routine part of the fundamental education for planter youths like Fraser. In *Drawn to Art: A Nineteenth-Century American Dream*, Diana Korzenik contends that the ability to draw was considered a basic skill as desirable as learning to write.⁵³ For members of Charleston's planter class, drawing was also a genteel amateur pursuit. Not only could drawing lessons enable a gentleman planter, such as Thomas Jefferson, to create rudimentary plans for a house or design stately gardens, but it also served as a form of art appreciation. The Charleston Library Society, located on the upper level of the Statehouse (now the County Courthouse) at Broad and Meeting Streets and within a block of Fraser's residence, held

course of my future life." According to Dunlap, both youths began "face-making and spoiling copy books" during these years. William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:237.

⁵² Curtis, "Redating Sketches from Nature by A. Fraser and C. Fraser," 57. According to Curtis, Audin's theatrical backdrop was likely used for plays set in town, such as *The Rivals*. Advertisement. *City Gazette* (Charleston), April 5, 1793. Audin was also a painter of "apartments in architecture, marine, and landscapes, all in the most new and approved tastes." Advertisement. *City Gazette* (Charleston), June 29, 1791.

⁵³ The importance of drawing grew out of commercial, military, and cartographic needs felt during the eighteenth century. Diana Korzenik, *Drawn to Art: A Nineteenth-Century American Dream* (London: University Press of New England, 1985), 50-51. Even planter youths educated abroad, such as noted art collector William Byrd II of Virginia, learned to draw. William Byrd II of Westover Plantation in Virginia took watercolor lessons from Eleazer Albin (active 1713-1759) while studying in England. Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 84. Examining the inventories of certain southern gentlemen reveals that included in their personal libraries were art books. The 1765 inventory for Charleston attorney James Grindley, for example, shows that he owned John Smith's *Art of Painting in Oyl* (published in London in 1676). Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 17.

materials that assisted planters in this pursuit.⁵⁴ These frequently illustrated texts emphasized the importance of art to a cultured people, discussed technical methods, and, over time, evolved into “how to” manuals.⁵⁵ Fraser’s teacher, Coram, as a self-trained artist whose brother was in the business of importing British books, among other commodities, likely owned some of these drawing and painting manuals.⁵⁶ In fact, Fraser described Coram’s library as highly specialized and containing many works on art and artists.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ The Charleston Library was established in 1748 by merchants and professionals who sought the latest British publications. The collection, which initially circulated among the residences of the founding members, eventually found a home in the city’s statehouse in 1792. Between 1835 and 1914, the collection was relocated to the Bank of South Carolina at the corner of Church and Broad Streets before it reached its current location at 164 King Street, behind the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston. *Library Society History*, <http://www.charlestonlibrarysociety.net/>.

⁵⁵ Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American*, 17. Although Weekley concedes that little is known as to which texts found their way south, she does acknowledge that Robert Wells, a bookseller in Charleston, was importing art books, such as Thomas Martyn’s *The English Connoisseur: Containing an Account of Whatever is Curious in Painting, Sculpture, etc.*, as early as 1766. Robert Wells also sold “school of arts,” “complete drawing book,” *The Artist’s Vade Mecum*, and Hogarth’s *Analysis of Beauty*. His April 6, 1772 notice advertised “Designs of those eminent Masters, Watteau, Boucher, Le Brun, Bouchardon, Eisen, etc.” Advertisement. *South-Carolina and American General Gazette* (Charleston), August 22, 1766; March 20 and October 16, 1767; April 6, 1772; and August 13, 1779. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) Database.

⁵⁶ Thomas Coram’s brother, John, was a merchant who, according to an ad placed in the *South Carolina Gazette* in 1768, joined thirteen other merchants and planters to “continue the Importation of European and East-India Goods... [and] Negroes into this Province.” Notice. *South-Carolina Gazette*, Jan 11, 1768. When his loyalist brother was expelled from South Carolina following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Coram reluctantly consented to dispose of the remaining merchandise. In an ad for his brother’s possessions, Coram concludes the notice by reaffirming his non-mercantile aspirations: “N.B. He [Thomas Coram] intends following the ENGRAVING BUSINESS in most of its branches, and begs leave to inform those persons who please to employ him in that way, that they may depend upon his using every effort of his abilities (as he was never brought up to it) to give them satisfaction. He has now in the Press, a view of the memorable and victorious engagement at Sullivan’s Island, over the British Fleet on the 28th of June 1776, for a watch picture, which will be ready for sale in a few days.” Advertisement. *South-Carolina and American General Gazette*, July 2, 1778.

⁵⁷ Charles Fraser served as the executor of Thomas Coram’s Will upon the artist’s death in 1811. A complete list of books owned by Coram was not included in the inventory Fraser created. “A true and perfect Inventory of all the goods and Chattels and personal Estate of Thomas Coram late of Charleston deceased...” Charleston County, SC, Inventories, Vol. E, 1810-1818, p. 47. MESDA Database. Apparently Coram lent his books often and, occasionally, experienced

Fraser's artistic pursuits were temporarily redirected when his brother Alexander, who had supported the youth's initial foray into art, died in 1798. Frederick Fraser, another brother and the youth's financial guardian following their father's death in 1791, urged young Fraser to adopt a profession more appropriate for his social station – the law.⁵⁸

A third-generation South Carolinian, Charles Fraser was a member of one of the older established families in Charleston. He was the youngest of fourteen children born near the end of the Revolutionary War to Alexander Fraser (1722-1791) and his second wife, Mary Grimké (1738-1807). Alexander inherited his father's thriving mercantile business and used the profits to purchase property, including a plantation on Huspah Neck in Beaufort, just south of Charleston. His appropriation of vast tracks of land and slaves as well as his marriage in 1755 to Mary, a member of the prestigious Grimké family of Charleston, extended the Fraser family connections beyond the Scottish Presbyterian mercantile community into the elite planter class.⁵⁹ Mary's sister, Elizabeth Grimké, married John Rutledge, forging a connection with yet another planter family, while Fraser's siblings married into the equally prominent DeSaussure and Winthrop families.⁶⁰

difficulty retrieving them, as seen in a notice in which he asks that the person who borrowed his *Dictionary of Arts and Science with Cuts* return it. Notice. *South-Carolina and American General Gazette*, March 19, 1778.

⁵⁸ According to William Dunlap, "His [Fraser's] wish was to become a painter, but those on whom the care of his education devolved, did not yield to his desire for instruction in that art. They perhaps did not feel authorized to sacrifice any portion of his patrimony, to qualify him for a pursuit whose results they might deem less certain, than those of the law; and had him educated accordingly." Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:293.

⁵⁹ Alice Rutledge Huger Smith and Daniel Elliott Huger Smith, *Charles Fraser* (Charleston: Garnier & Company, 1924), 5.

⁶⁰ Fraser's aunt, Elizabeth Grimké, married Chief Justice John Rutledge in 1765. Fraser's sister, Mary, wed John Winthrop of the Boston Winthrops in 1788, while his brother, Frederick, was

As historian Lorri Glover notes in *All Our Relations: Blood Ties and Emotional Bonds Among the Early South Carolina Gentry*, kinship ties beyond the household constituted an emotional and economic support system.⁶¹ South Carolina planters were an unusually interrelated and homogenous class due to extensive intermarriages. They used these connections, Glover argues, to secure their status and authority.⁶² High mortality rates and the general precariousness of living conditions in eighteenth-century South Carolina further strengthened reliance on family. So when Fraser's father died in 1791, it was this elite kin network that he looked to for educational, cultural, and professional guidance.⁶³

The recent abolition of primogeniture following the American Revolution meant that planter families were forced to divide family assets among heirs upon the death of the patriarch, rather than the eldest son inheriting the entire estate. Though Fraser inherited property, his older brother, Frederick, managed it until he reached majority age.⁶⁴ Thus, Frederick would have been very influential to his younger brother's decision-making. Charles was expected to supplement his inheritance by practicing law. An extensive kin network, made up of siblings and those families they married into, would have further guided and bolstered his education and career.

married to Mary DeSaussure by 1792. For more information about Charles Fraser's family history, see Smith and Smith, *Charles Fraser*, 1-6.

⁶¹ Lorri Glover, *All Our Relations: Blood Ties and Emotional Bonds among the Early South Carolina Gentry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), xii.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶³ Fraser's mother outlived his father by sixteen years and died in January of 1807, but city records confirm that Fraser was in the care of his brothers, not his mother, after his father's death. *The Charleston Directory and Revenue System of the United States, 1790* (Charleston: Printed by T.B. Bowen, 1790), n.p.

⁶⁴ Glover, *All Our Relations*, 5, 28, and 32.

In her unpublished monograph, Anna Wells Rutledge speculates that young Fraser may have looked to his uncle, Revolutionary War hero and Chief Justice of the United States, John Rutledge, as a father-figure during his youth.⁶⁵ It was from Rutledge and the society in which he circulated that Fraser would have learned of the refinement and urbanity expected of Carolina gentlemen.⁶⁶ Courtesy books assisted efforts to appear refined. Fraser's scrapbook of newspaper articles, now owned by the South Carolina Historical Society, includes references to such texts.⁶⁷ But Fraser did not need a courtesy book to tell him that it was not acceptable for a member of the planter class to engage in an artistic profession.

In eighteenth-century America, painters were considered tradesmen. Acceptable professions for gentlemen derived from the model set by England and included ministry, medicine, and law.⁶⁸ In a nascent country in which the Old World notion of gentility (inheriting a title that brought with it wealth) was seldom a possibility, acquiring a degree in one of these professions conferred genteel distinction. Similar to Old World gentlemen, American professionals were granted what Alexander Hamilton and James

⁶⁵ The Honorable John Rutledge was Fraser's uncle by marriage to the artist's mother's sister, Elizabeth Grimké. Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser," 20.

⁶⁶ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 19 and 38. Bushman defines a genteel person as one who is known to be gracious, "disciplined, deferential, spirited, polite, knowledgeable, forceful." He notes that, "the courtesy books created an imaginary world, much as poetry or novels do, with plots, themes, characterizations, and myths."

⁶⁷ Fraser's scrapbook includes a clipping from part of George Washington's personal courtesy book, which urged the aspiring gentleman to "Wear good clothes. They open all doors to us, and procure a good reception. It is the exterior part, striking first the sight, that makes the first impression." Charles Fraser Scrapbook, ca.1843. South Carolina Historical Society.

⁶⁸ Susan Rather, "'The Limner': Harry Coswell, Newspaper Politics, and the Portraitist as a Public Figure in the Early Republic," in *Shaping the Body Politic: Art and Political Formation in Early America*, eds. Maurie D. McNinnis and Louis P. Nelson (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 238-239.

Madison described in *The Federalist* as an independence of judgment.⁶⁹ Celebrated as learned, unselfish, disinterested, and rational, these gentlemen would, it was believed, act in the best interest of their fellow citizens. Acquiring a law degree, as Fraser eventually did in 1807, enabled him to practice law, but also – and perhaps more importantly – prepared him to become a contributing member of the ruling class.

It is important to note that a learned gentleman was not synonymous with a scholar.⁷⁰ A gentleman's learning emanated from observations of nature and pleasant conversation; his discriminating taste was evidenced by the books in his personal library and the art displayed on his parlor walls.⁷¹ It may not have been appropriate to engage in art making as a profession, but promoting the arts signified cultural enlightenment.⁷² Indeed, Charleston society expected its upper-class citizens to display good manners, taste, and refinement.⁷³

Many planter youths acquired their cultural education abroad on the Grand Tour, commissioning and purchasing art as they traveled. McInnis suggests in *In Pursuit of Refinement: Charlestonians Abroad, 1760-1860* that a larger number of Charlestonians

⁶⁹ For more information on Hamilton and Madison's concept of gentlemanly behavior as described in *The Federalist*, see Samuel Haber, *The Quest for Authority and Honor in the American Professions, 1750-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 7-8.

⁷⁰ Clement Eaton, *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1940), 58-59.

⁷¹ Books in a southern planter's library traditionally addressed a broad range of topics from Shakespearean plays to John Locke's essay on human understanding. Fraser's friend Mitchell King had a particularly impressive library that included text by Italian and French authors, including Voltaire. Many southern gentlemen also subscribed to English and Scottish magazines, such as the *London Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review*. *Ibid.*, 60.

⁷² Interestingly, the vast majority of post-colonial American artists came from privileged families. Barbara Dayer Gallati, "Taste, Art, and Cultural power in Nineteenth-Century America," 33. Gallati's assertion is primarily applicable to artists working in the Northeast where no stigma was associated with manual labor. Such was not the case in the more socially restrictive, slave-holding South.

⁷³ This demand was met in part by the creation of numerous intellectual societies which hosted lectures that engaged with philosophy, science, literature, music and, later, the visual arts.

participated in the Grand Tour than other Americans.⁷⁴ Mimicking eighteenth-century British taste, these Charlestonians preferred Italianate, Flemish, and Dutch paintings in addition to contemporary works acquired on the Grand Tour that functioned as souvenirs of their time abroad.⁷⁵ The conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 renewed opportunities to travel and purchase European art as souvenirs. Those who could not afford original works purchased copies produced by highly regarded schools and artists. These collectors, McInnis asserts, were concerned with the moral attributes of art and therefore valued subject matter and abstract principles illustrated therein more than the hand of the artist.⁷⁶ Beyond serving a moralizing function, art also conveyed genteel status and refinement by attesting to its owner's ability to recognize work of superior quality. Having acquired a considerable cultural education abroad, most wealthy Charlestonians continued to seek itinerant European-trained painters at home.⁷⁷ As a fellow member of the planter class, Fraser could have seen the foreign art acquisitions of returning tourists and thus developed some familiarity with European artistic styles.

Although aspiring American artists overwhelmingly recognized the importance of certain European cities as cultural centers, some, like Fraser, chose not to travel abroad.⁷⁸ These artists viewed travel and study abroad as impractical or unnecessary, given their

⁷⁴ Seasonal labor and the rhythm of life in the low country made lengthy travel more manageable for planters. Mack and McInnis, *In Pursuit of Refinement*, 11.

⁷⁵ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 301.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 26.

⁷⁸ Fraser was presented with an opportunity to accompany his friend, Hugh Legare, to Germany in 1833, but he declined. In a letter written to Legare on January 20th of that year, Fraser explained that he would be poor company: "If I were there, I would leave you to enjoy the living attractions... for conversa[tion] with the Departed – Rubens – Vandyke..." Charles Fraser to Hugh Legare, January 20, 1833, South Caroliniana Library. Columbia, South Carolina.

humble ambitions.⁷⁹ Instead they relied solely on prints and copies after European masters. The modestly ambitious Fraser, who spent his artistic career painting on a small scale, conducted his own cultural education through imported manuscripts, travel guides, prints, and, later, during several tours through the Northeast. Fraser's moderate aspirations notwithstanding, his brother and financial guardian Frederick would not have permitted his youngest brother to travel abroad for the sake of artistic studies. Instead, in 1798 at age sixteen, Fraser began his legal training under the direction of John Julius Pringle, Attorney General of South Carolina and a family friend.⁸⁰ But even as he poured over legal texts in Pringle's office, Fraser refused to abandon his artistic aspirations. When he was not studying law, young Fraser was examining prints of the English countryside and traversing parishes on the outskirts of Charleston so as to apply what he learned from those prints to his own renderings of local estates.

Fraser's 1796-1806 Sketchbook

In 1796 fourteen year-old Charles Fraser made his first unguided foray into art making. It was in this year that Fraser drew his first miniature portrait depicting his cousin, Andrew Rutledge.⁸¹ At the same time he began work on a sketchbook that would occupy him for the next decade.⁸² Despite the planter elite's preference for portraiture

⁷⁹ Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 21.

⁸⁰ Although there was a long-standing tradition among South Carolina planters to send their sons abroad to London's Inns of Courts for their legal training, Charles Fraser did not participate in this educational system. As the youngest of fourteen children, Charles would not have received the same caliber of education and professional preparation that his older brothers had.

⁸¹ Charles Fraser, *Andrew Rutledge, Esq* (1796), watercolor on ivory, 2 ¼ x 1 7/8 in. Gibbs Museum of Art.

⁸² Charles Fraser Sketchbook, 1796-1806. Gibbs Museum of Art. Fraser's reliance on watercolors while creating this sketchbook was not unusual. Watercolors were portable and relatively inexpensive and so tended to be the preferred medium for amateur artists and scene

and Fraser's production of miniature portraits, it is landscape sketches that populate the pages of this sketchbook. In addition to exercises from drawing books and wash sketches after prints, Fraser's sketchbook also contains relatively finished watercolors of local estates and parishes.⁸³ When considered in its entirety, Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook offers a glimpse into the artist's early efforts to understand landscape composition and to use that knowledge to develop a rubric for creating his own work.

Fraser looked to British author and amateur artist Reverend William Gilpin (1724-1804), in his attempt to understand the picturesque, a mode as yet absent in early American landscape images. Begun in the 1770s, Gilpin's guidebooks and aesthetic treatises offered instructions and illustrations on how to portray picturesque landscapes.⁸⁴ In these volumes, Gilpin asserted his concept of "picturesque beauty," or a kind of beauty that is pleasing in a scene or image, in conjunction with the natural charm of the English countryside he toured. Gilpin encouraged artful intervention in rendering a natural view picturesque and, in so doing, attempted to reconcile nature with art through landscape painting. He discussed ideal compositional arrangements, viewpoints, perspective, coloring, and light, while offering exemplary illustrations by his own hand of idealized prospects and orderly, cultivated nature in the slightly modified tradition of Claude

painters who worked on a small scale as Fraser did. Martha Severens, "Waterworks: 150 Years of Watercolor" *American Art Review* 16, no. 5 (2004): 72 and 74.

⁸³ Fraser was likely encouraged to create such a sketchbook by his drawing instructor, Thomas Coram, who had created two of his own in 1791 and 1792. Yet this may not have been Fraser's first attempt to sketch local views. Fraser's 1793 sketchbook, co-authored with his brother Alexander, includes two portraits of Alexander's estate at Woodstock. "SKETCHES from NATURE by A. Fraser & C. Fraser," Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca.1700-ca.1905. On loan from the South Carolina Historical Society.

⁸⁴ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, made in 1770*, vol. 1, (London, 1782); William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery, and other woodland views of picturesque beauty, illustrated by the scenes of Newport Forest in Hampshire*, vol. 1, (London, 1791); and William Gilpin, *Three essays on Picturesque Beauty, on Picturesque Travel, and on sketching Landscape, with a Poem on Landscape Painting*, vol. 1, (London, 1792).

Lorrain. The resulting images range from topographically accurate renderings to more generalized compositions. As a student of Coram, Fraser would have had access to his copy of Gilpin's illustrated text and, perhaps, Coram's own sketchbook, in which he had copied some of Gilpin's illustrations.⁸⁵ Alternatively, Fraser could have perused Gilpin's books along with other supplementary texts at the Charleston Library.⁸⁶

Following Coram's example, Fraser sketched at least ten copies after William Gilpin. Fraser's sketches suggest that he was most drawn to *Observations of Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (1772) and, to a lesser degree, *Remarks on Forest Scenery, and other woodland views of picturesque beauty* (1771).⁸⁷ One notable example of a study after Gilpin can be found in Fraser's ink and wash rendering of Penrith Castle in Cumbria, England [Fig. 2.2]. Fraser's fortress ruins alongside a river framed by a Claudean tree at right is a very close copy of Gilpin's drawing of the same dilapidated fifteenth-century structure that he described in *Observations of Several Parts of England* as "a very noble ruin... [that] occasioned much speculation among antiquarians" [Fig. 2.3].⁸⁸ But Fraser's

⁸⁵ Coram's 1791 sketchbook is comprised of fifteen oil sketches, primarily exercises in perspective and landscape painting and copied after Gilpin. Thomas Coram, "Sketches Taken from W. Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye and several parts of South Wales*." Gibbes Museum of Art.

⁸⁶ The Charleston Library Society owned four illustrated books by William Gilpin. Also in the collection were: J.W. Alston, *Hints to Young Practitioners in the study of Landscape painting, illustrated by ten engravings intended to show the different stages of the neutral tint*, vo. 1, (London, 1804); and Edward Orme, *Picturesque Scenery in the Holy Land and Syria, delineated in 1799 and 1800, by F.B. Spilsbury, surgeon of Le Tigre. A Catalogue of the Books Belonging to the Charleston Library Society*, n.p.

⁸⁷ Martha Severens, "Charles Fraser of Charleston," *Antiques Magazine* 123, no. 3 (March 1983): 606. Roberta Kefalos, *The Poetry of Place: Landscapes of Thomas Coram & Charles Fraser* (Charleston: Gibbes Museum of Art, 1997), 3. Exhibition Catalogue. The Charleston Library collection owned both books by Gilpin from which Fraser copied illustrations. *A Catalogue of the Books Belonging to the Charleston Library Society*, 185.

⁸⁸ William Gilpin, *Observations of Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year*

architectural and geological forms are noticeably more generalized than those in Gilpin's composition, a distinction that is likely the result of the artists' varying techniques, intentions, and, of course, skillset. Although they employed the same medium, Gilpin relied on the blotting technique of British artist Alexander Cozens (1717-1786), in which shapes and forms are initially rendered quickly in an effort to capture the general appearance of the natural elements that are later more carefully modeled and defined through intricate brushwork.⁸⁹ There is no evidence to suggest that Fraser was aware of this technique and Gilpin did not offer an explanation of the method in his books. The absence of clearly delineated details and striking chiaroscuro in Fraser's rendering attests to his not employing this mode, as does his delicate brushwork evident in his shading of the tree at right when compared with the ink blotched silhouette of Gilpin's similarly placed tree. Fraser's somewhat rounded and simplified forms lend a dream-like quality that simultaneously reaffirms Fraser's secondhand approach to the subject and his adherence to Gilpin's suggestion: "it is enough if you express *general shapes*; and the relations, which the several intersections of a country bear to each other."⁹⁰ Gilpin later

1772, 3rd ed. (London: Printed by T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand, 1808), 2: 84-86. Martha Severens has suggested that Fraser's choice of Scottish and English countryside images emanated from his desire to be faithful to his Scottish roots. (The Fraser family migrated to Carolina from Scotland ca. 1700.) Severens, "Charles Fraser of Charleston," 606.

⁸⁹ Alexander Cozens introduced his blotting technique first in *Essay to Facilitate the Inventing of Landscips, Intended for Students in the Arts* in 1759 and again in *A New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Composition of Landscape*, published in 1785. Renzo Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze: Urban and Rural Vision in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 136. For more information about Cozens's blotting technique and William Gilpin's employment of it in his own work, see: Charles A. Cramer, "Alexander Cozens's New Method: The Blot and General Nature," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 1. (March 1997): 112-129.

⁹⁰ William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year of 1770 by William Gilpin* (London: R. Blamire, 1789), 64. Fraser would have encountered this text in the home of his mentor, Thomas Coram, who created a series of sketches after compositions in this edition by Gilpin. Fraser's efforts to cultivate a broad understanding of the picturesque is further evidenced

adds that it is only necessary to improve upon forms, to add “a degree of correctness, and expression in the out-line – and some effect of light,” if the sketch is intended to convey a particular idea to the viewer.⁹¹ That the purpose of Fraser’s sketch was to develop a preliminary understanding of landscape composition and not to serve as a finished product with a moralizing purpose, as Gilpin’s objective had been, explains the absence of some of the more striking details found in Gilpin’s work.

Although scholars have addressed Fraser’s interest in Gilpin’s publications, there is ample visual evidence that Fraser also looked to the work of other British artists, such as the engravings after Paul Sandby’s (1731-1809) drawings published in *A Collection of 150 Select views of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1781) and *The Virtuosi’s Museum* (1778).⁹² These illustrations, which also circulated in *The Copper Plate Magazine* between October 1780 and January 1781, offer a different interpretation of the picturesque that is more focused on variety than general views. Sandby’s *A View down the RIVER CLYDE. From the top of CORY-LIN* [Fig. 2.5] presents a scene marked by greater activity and vegetal variety than Gilpin’s views. Amidst a rolling landscape, minute figures variously engaged occupy the lower right foreground and are separated by swirling waters from rural stone structures denoting a village at left. Similar to his other copies after foreign prints, Fraser’s attempt to duplicate Sandby’s composition [Fig. 2.4]

by his lithograph scrapbook of lithographs, which includes prints, engravings, and guided illustrations. Charles Fraser Scrapbook of Lithographs. Gibbes Museum of Art. Charleston, South Carolina.

⁹¹ Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales*, 66.

⁹² A partial compilation of engravings after Sandby appeared in *The Virtuosi’s Museum, containing Select Views in England, Scotland, and Ireland, drawn by P. Sandby, Esq, R.A.* (London: G. Kearsley, 1778). John Boydell, whose books were favored by Charlestonians, issued a complete series three years later: *A Collection of 150 Select views of England, Scotland, and Ireland, Drawn by P. Sandby, Esq, R.A.* (London: John Boydell, 1781). Engravings therein measured approx 5 1/8 x 7 1/8. William Sandby, *Thomas and Paul Sandby: Royal Academicians; Some Account of Their Lives and Works* (London: Seeley and Company, Ltd, 1892), 103-104.

is characterized by his oversimplification of landscape elements and purposeful elimination of certain details, including figures, striking shadows, and textural distinctions, so that the organization of basic landscape forms within the picture plane becomes paramount. His relatively unvarying brushstrokes lend a rhythmic component. This coupled with the smoothness of forms creates a patterning effect in which the similarly delineated tree trunks at far left, the stone steps descending into the water, and the rippling water at the shoreline guide the viewer from one rhythmic subject to the next. Instead of the glimpse into a small riverside village offered by Paul Sandby, Fraser's naïve dreamscape presents a vacant town nestled so snugly into the natural landscape it occupies as to nearly disappear. The linear specificity of Sandby's engraving dissolves in Fraser's delicately rendered watercolor and comparatively abstract, yet neatly outlined, components.

Elsewhere in his sketchbook, Fraser utilized what he had learned from studying picturesque landscape prints by Gilpin and Sandby to create his own interpretations of southern estates and parishes.⁹³ Fraser's decision to focus his efforts on estates and landscape subjects at this juncture is remarkable. The significance of these views lies not in their artful rendering. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to argue that these early scenes convey any inherent talent for landscape painting on the part of their author. Fraser's estate portraits are simple, rudimentary compositions that reflect the aspiring artist's preoccupation with accuracy of architectural and topographical features. Lacking any noticeable atmospheric quality or mood, these sketches take on a documentary quality, though they do not function in this capacity. Their naïve appearance not

⁹³ Fraser may have looked to Coram for guidance, as his mentor had attempted something similar in his 1792 sketchbook.

withstanding, Fraser's landscape sketches are significant in terms of the moment of their creation, which predates the American art market's mid-1820s shift to landscape by approximately twenty years.

As young Fraser sketched nearby countryseats, he developed a paradigm for rendering plantation portraits – a subject with which Fraser, as a member of the planter class in Charleston, would have been familiar. While general landscape subjects did not appeal to southern planter patrons during the first decades of the nineteenth century, British estate portraits did. Initially exhibited at the British Royal Academy in 1797, drawings of estate portraits and views by John Preston Neale found a market among British and American buyers.⁹⁴ Engravings after Neale's drawings were sold as *Views of the seats of noblemen and gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland* in a six-volume set published between 1819 and 1823.⁹⁵ Engravings of British estates also appeared in *Scots Magazine & Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, issues of which could be found in the private libraries of many southern planters.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Edward J. Nygren, *Views and Visions: American Landscape before 1830*, ed. Edward J. Nygren (Washington, DC: The Corcoran Gallery, 1986), 22.

⁹⁵ Engravings after Neale's drawings were executed by John Charles Varrall (1795-1855), Charles Askey (active 1818-23), and William Ensom (1796-1832). John Preston Neale, *Views of the Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland*, vol. 1-6 (London: Sherwood, Jones, and Co., 1819-23). Neale's publication was just one of many that was widely distributed in America. Though such publications continued to circulate throughout the nineteenth century, the earliest examples date to the late eighteenth century. One such example is: *Picturesque Views of the Principal Seats of the Nobility and Gentry, in England and Wales: By the Most Eminent British Artists. With a Description of Each Seat* (London: Harrison and Company, 1786-1788). Following the example set by Neale and others, British-born artist William Russell Birch created twenty-eight views of Pennsylvania. His efforts were rewarded when, in 1800, his views were published and widely distributed throughout the United States. William Russell Birch, *The City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania, North America; as it Appeared in the Year 1800* (Philadelphia: W. Birch, 1800). Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 111.

⁹⁶ John E. Crowley, "The American Republic Joins the British Global Landscape," in *Shaping the Body Politic: Art and Political Formation in Early America*, eds. Maurie D. McNinnis and Louis P. Nelson (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 109.

Beyond signaling the presence of a market for such images, books illustrating and describing British country seats offered Charlestonian planters detailed visual examples of English architectural taste, while also providing aspiring artists, such as Charles Fraser, the opportunity to study estate portraits in a minute, and thus more manageable, form. Surely the general popularity of these publications, as well as the desire among Charlestonian planters to emulate everything British, would have played a part in encouraging Fraser to create his own sketches of local estates.

Fraser's watercolor, *The Seat of John Julius Pringle, Esq., on the Ashley River* [Fig. 2.6], a sketch that historian Alice Rutledge Huger Smith dated to 1800, exemplifies the artist's paradigm for painting estate portraits.⁹⁷ With few exceptions, Fraser's plantation portraits present a subdued natural landscape that, like Charleston itself, has been tamed and controlled (albeit indirectly) by the planter families who occupy it. An even, bathing light envelops these well-ordered estates. Lacking long shadows, striking chiaroscuro, or precise detailing of natural forms, Fraser's compositions own a timeless quality and sentimentality for southern plantation culture.

This particular rendering of Fraser's employer's countryseat presents a vast, neatly tended lawn in which is situated a stoic, white Federalist-style plantation manor. The immense structure is counter-balanced by a small outbuilding at far left, to which it is visually connected by a white picket fence. Two trees frame the composition, their contrasting renderings (the right tree being slightly more detailed than the comparatively generalized trees at left) suggesting an otherwise absent sense of depth. The plantation portrait is noticeably void of human life. The manor house attests to the function of this landscape as a bustling plantation. And yet, ironically, the dark windows of the seemingly

⁹⁷ Fraser and Smith, *A Charleston Sketchbook, 1796-1806*, 18.

vacant house and the expansive grounds absent of the slave labor that provided such wealth and prosperity undermine that fact so that the watercolor becomes a ghostly record of landed property.

The same basic tenets for composing estate portraits evident in *The Seat of John Julius Pringle* are also apparent in other images in the 1796-1806 sketchbook, including *Gabriel Manigault's Seat at Goose Creek* (1802) [Fig. 2.7]. It is perhaps not surprising that Fraser, in addition to looking to English prints as he composed this and other landscape watercolor sketches, also looked to his former drawing instructor, Coram. Evidence of this is borne out in some of Fraser's estate portraits, which share compositional similarities with those by Coram.⁹⁸ Nowhere is this more apparent than in Fraser's watercolor *Gabriel Manigault's Seat at Goose Creek* when considered alongside Coram's more opaque oil sketch *G.A. Hall's Seat at The Grove* [Fig. 2.8].⁹⁹ In both instances, the artist situates the viewer along the edge of a water element, across which can be seen a vast pastoral landscape with a plantation home just right of center. Coram's dreamy scene casts the viewer in a shadowy wilderness doubly separated – first by a fenced-off river, then fenced gardens – from the dusky atmosphere that envelopes the mansion beyond. The dark, clearly rendered tree, shrubbery, and dilapidated fence in the foreground are silhouetted against the comparatively warm, hazy appearance of the plantation gardens and looming mansion beyond. The dark foreground and blush toned background evoke a mood: a humid longing for that which seems out of reach and even mysterious.

⁹⁸ Coram's sketches were still smaller than those by Fraser. For example, each oil sketch in his Mulberry Plantation series (discussed in chapter three) measures to 4 1/8 x 6 5/8 inches.

⁹⁹ Sara Arnold, "Thomas Coram: Charleston's Earliest Landscape Artist" (Paper, Painters and Paintings of the Early American South Conference, Williamsburg, VA, November 2013). Sara Arnold is the Curator at the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1802, when Fraser sketched Manigault's property, he had not yet mastered the atmospheric quality of Coram's landscape. Fraser's foreground, like Coram's, is somewhat darker than the plantation grounds, which are bathed in an even light, though the contrast between the two is not overly conspicuous. The white plantation house appears more distant and less imposing than Coram's bichrome abode, which is presented from a slightly dwarfed perspective. And although both sketches allude to nature tamed by man, Coram confines his carefully ordered natural forms to the fenced terrain alongside the plantation house. The wilderness surrounding the grounds threatens to reclaim the territory beyond, including the poorly tended fence in the foreground. By contrast, order prevails in Fraser's rendering of a carefully manicured estate replete with partially tilled fields and paired scrub trees in the middle ground and oak trees in the foreground. Though absent in both compositions, the slaves who cleared and worked the fields would have been confronted with a somewhat more treacherous task in the dark unkempt foreground of Coram's *The Grove* than the rolling pasture lands of Fraser's *Gabriel Manigault's Seat at Goose Creek*.

Fraser's watercolor sketch initially appears to be documentary by comparison. In fact, local historians, including Huger Smith, have relied on Fraser's 1796-1806 plantation views in their efforts to visualize antebellum Charleston.¹⁰⁰ But this is not the case. In keeping with southern planters' aversion to manual labor, Fraser's paradigm for estate portraits noticeably excludes the slaves who tended the fields as Fraser sketched. When Fraser does incorporate figures into his compositions, they appear as only vague, simplified, forms engaging in leisurely pursuits, such as hunting or, as in *Gabriel Manigault's Seat at Goose Creek*, fishing.

¹⁰⁰ Fraser and Smith, *A Charleston Sketchbook, 1796-1806*, passim.

In this way, Fraser developed his early style of neatly rendered, naïve scenes characterized by flat coloring with linear details.¹⁰¹ Eventually, however, Fraser's sentimental, naïve approach would give way to a more mature, Romantic style with an atmospheric quality and mood that would rival those of Coram. These early plantation portraits, however, are the work of a young man just beginning his career as a landscape painter.

Unfortunately, Fraser's early endeavors into art making were complicated by his obligation to pursue a legal career. Unwilling to relinquish his artistic inclinations, Fraser worked on his sketchbook and painted miniature portraits even as he continued his studies in the law office of John Julius Pringle.¹⁰² By 1800, Fraser had begun receiving commissions for miniature portraits from members of the planter class. With the arrival in Charleston of Washington Allston and Edward Malbone in 1801, he put aside his legal studies temporarily to learn with these artists and focus on his own work.¹⁰³ When the opportunity to visit the Northeast arose five years later in 1806, Fraser again left his legal studies to learn more about the fine arts, particularly landscape painting, through

¹⁰¹ For more about Fraser's early style, particularly as pertains to his miniatures, see Kefalos, *The Poetry of Place: Landscapes of Thomas Coram & Charles Fraser*, 4. Fraser's later style has a more atmospheric quality associated with Romanticism.

¹⁰² Fraser passed the bar and began practicing law in Charleston in 1807. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:140. Fraser represented many South Carolina planters in his legal practice and mediated issues related to debt collection, trespassing, loss of property, and assault, among other issues. Commonplace Book of Charles Fraser, 1800-1819. College of Charleston Archives.

¹⁰³ Malbone and Allston stopped in Charleston while en route from Boston to the British Academy in London. Fraser did not study law between 1801 and 1804. According to Anna Wells Rutledge, this marks a three-year period during which Fraser attempted unsuccessfully to be an artist. Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," 20. On February 17, 1801, the first of five advertisements announcing Malbone's arrival appeared in the *South-Carolina Gazette and Timothy's Daily Advertiser*: "MINIATURE PAINTING. Edward G. Malbone has lately arrived here, and intends to practice the above art during his stay in this place, specimens of his work may be seen at his room at Mrs. Miot's boarding house at the corner of Meeting and Queen Street." As quoted in Ruel Pardee Tolman, *The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1958), 22.

interactions with established northern artists and by visiting art exhibitions. Fraser traveled north on several occasions, each time returning to Charleston to apply his newfound knowledge and fill commissions.

Artistic Exchange in Charleston

In 1801, an artists' circle developed in Charleston with Fraser at its center. This group, which consisted of visiting itinerant as well as local artists, was just one of many intellectual and social groups emerging, changing, and dissolving in antebellum Charleston.¹⁰⁴ In addition to Allston and Malbone, Fraser's artist circle also included South Carolinians John Cogdell, John Blake White, and, later James De Veaux, Alvan Fisher, and Samuel F.B. Morse, among others.¹⁰⁵ These artists shared ideas and critiqued each other's work to their mutual benefit. Fraser profited greatly from this exchange in his youth and, even after he achieved some success in painting, continued to encourage and promote the efforts of his artist friends as they had him.

Most significant to Fraser's budding career as a landscape painter was the arrival of Malbone and Allston in Charleston as they made their way from Newport, Rhode Island, to the British Royal Academy in London. As the leading miniaturist in America,

¹⁰⁴ George C. Rogers, Jr, "Charles Fraser Among Friends," in *Charles Fraser of Charleston: Essays on the Man, His Art and His Times*, eds. Martha R. Severens & Charles L. Wyrick (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, in association with the Gibbes Art Gallery, 1983), 19.

¹⁰⁵ Another member of this artistic circle about which very little is known is John Bowman. He is mentioned repeatedly in letters written by Washington Allston, John Blake White, and Charles Fraser. In these letters, Bowman is praised for his philanthropy, education, and worldliness. Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958. South Carolina Historical Society. Washington Allston to Charles Fraser, August 25, 1801, in Allston, *The Correspondence of Washington Allston*, 30. Based on early parish maps of South Carolina, Bowman's plantation abutted that of Fraser's family. Robert Mills, *Atlas of the State of South Carolina. A Facsimile Edition of the Original Published in 1822*, eds. Dan Millsaps, Jr., and Lucy Hampton. (Columbia, SC: Bostick & Fant H. Thornley, 1938).

Edward Greene Malbone (1777-1807) had no trouble locating patrons. During his almost three-month residency in Charleston, he painted thirty-three miniature portraits.¹⁰⁶ It was from Malbone that Fraser learned the stippling technique evident in some of his most celebrated miniature portraits.¹⁰⁷ In addition to guiding Fraser in the art of miniature portrait painting, Malbone, according to Dunlap, “occasionally amused himself with landscape.”¹⁰⁸ Although few examples of Malbone’s landscape images survive, one wash drawing, *Landscape with a Cliff and an Island* (1797-1807) [Fig. 2.9] is owned by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.¹⁰⁹ This composition, populated as it is with rock formations and with no other discernable landscape elements or figures, appears to be a study of geological forms not unlike Fraser’s own geological studies in his later sketchbook that dates to 1831-ca.1834. The flat-faced boulders rendered by Malbone bear a striking resemblance to Fraser’s somewhat crude 1831 watercolor sketch of two figures in discussion alongside two large slated boulders, one leaning against the other [Fig. 2.10]. Notes accompanying Fraser’s drawing describe the scene portrayed in a manner that suggests the artist’s intention to expand the sketch into an oil painting at a later

¹⁰⁶ Malbone recorded these commissions later in his account book, which he began during his second trip to Charleston. Only half of these commissioned minitatures have been located. Malbone created enough miniatures to pay his way to England with Allston in May 1801, though the precise dollar amount charged for each miniature is not recorded. Tolman, *The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone*, 22.

¹⁰⁷ For more on the stylistic similarities between Malbone and Fraser’s miniature portraits, see Tolman, *The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone*.

¹⁰⁸ The full quote reads: “He occasionally amused himself with landscape. His sketches in this way were but slight, and are valuable only as they show the extent of his powers. There is one little piece of his which is said to be a mere sport of imagination: it possesses a singularly pleasing effect of pastoral sweetness.” Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:154-55.

¹⁰⁹ Two other images are mentioned in a catalogue of Malbone’s work compiled by Ruel Pardee Tolman – *Landscape: Rocky River Scene* (undated) owned by the Boston Museum of Fine Art and *Landscape in Oil* (undated) owned by the Providence Athenaeum. Of the latter image, Tolman writes that it “is hardly more than a stain which resembles a landscape. It is included simply to clear up the subject of Malbone’s landscape painting in oil which is not worth serious consideration.” Tolman, *The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone*, 198.

date.¹¹⁰ The significance of Fraser's landscape sketches dating to the 1830s will be addressed in the following chapter, though it is worth noting that Fraser, who spent considerable time learning from Malbone about miniature painting, likely was also aware of the Rhode Island miniaturist's foray into landscape painting, however minimal it may have been.

The young and impressionable Fraser developed a close relationship with Malbone as well as his traveling companion, Boston-based South Carolinian Washington Allston (1779-1843).¹¹¹ Like Malbone, Allston also experimented with composing landscapes, though Allston favored oil on canvas and painted on a larger scale. In 1800, while working in Charleston, Allston created *Rocky Coast with Banditti* [Fig. 2.11] in the Romantic style of Salvator Rosa.¹¹² Allston's dark, sublime composition presents figures along the rocky coast of a placid body of water at dusk. Although landscape elements emerge from the water on the shoreline opposite the figures and their partially sunk boat in the foreground, these forms are generalized and suggest that the scene has no reference point in reality, but rather is purely imaginative. It was the first of the artist's increasingly

¹¹⁰ Below the image appearing in light pencil is a nearly indiscernible description: "Two singular rocks about right... miles from... the largest rock block is at least thirty feet..." Based on the description, the insertion of figures appears to be a matter of conveying scale. Charles Fraser Sketchbook, ca.1831-34. Gibbes Museum of Art.

¹¹¹ As a testament to their friendship, Malbone painted a miniature portrait of Charleston Fraser in 1801. He gave this miniature as well as three engravings to Fraser before leaving Charleston. Fraser preserved the engravings in his 1817 scrapbook of lithographs, noting in the column next to the engravings: "given to me by Malbone, 1800." Charles Fraser Scrapbook of Lithographs. Gibbes Museum of Art.

¹¹² Maurie D. McInnis, "Transatlantic Currents: Paintings at MESDA" *Antiques Magazine* 171, no. 1 (January 2007): 181. In addition to this landscape, Allston also worked on images inspired by romantic literature, including *Robbers Fighting with Each Other for the Spoils over a Murdered Traveller* and *Satan at the Gates of Hell Guarded by Sin and Death* from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. According to the artist's brother, William, the latter image Allston sketched on the floor of his room before transferring it to paper. Allston, *The Correspondences of Washington Allston*, 15. Interestingly, although Allston's preference for Romantic subjects was inspired by his youthful recollections of life in South Carolina, he did not borrow subject matter from that time in his life.

moody Romantic paintings. Allston would come to be considered an important forerunner of Romantic landscape painting in America, predating Thomas Cole and his followers. Fraser would have been aware, through ongoing correspondences with Allston, that the artist exhibited *Rocky Coast with Banditti* as well as other of his early landscape paintings (now lost) at the British Royal Academy the following year.¹¹³

No doubt inspired by Allston's landscape in oil, Fraser temporarily put aside his watercolors to produce his first oil painting in 1801. Aware of local patrons' preference for portraiture, however, Fraser painted an image of George Washington after Gilbert Stuart's famed rendition, rather than a landscape.¹¹⁴ This portrait, no longer extant, is yet another example of Fraser honing his painting skills by copying the well-known work of other established artists.

When Malbone and Allston left Charleston in 1801 for London, they did so with a letter of introduction from Fraser to friend and fellow Charlestonian John Blake White (1781-1859).¹¹⁵ Already a student of Benjamin West at the British Royal Academy, White introduced Malbone and Allston to his mentor, then president of the institution. It was difficult for Fraser to watch his friends travel abroad to pursue their dreams so freely

¹¹³ Washington Allston exhibited *Landscape; Banditti on Horseback* and *Sea Coast with Banditti* (*Rocky Coast with Banditti*) at the British Academy in 1802 and another painting titled simply *A Landscape* in 1803. Algernon Graves. *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from Its Foundation in 1769 to 1904* (London: H. Graves and Company, Limited, 1905), 28.

¹¹⁴ This portrait of George Washington is noted as follows: "Washington – portrait from Stuart. This is Mr. Fraser's first portrait in oil --- done 1801" in Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery*, 21.

¹¹⁵ In 1800 John Blake White (1781-1859) sailed from Charleston to England to become a pupil of Benjamin West. Jessie Poesch, *The Art of the Old South: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, & the Products of Craftsmen, 1560-1860* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1983), 55. White wrote about his encounter with Malbone and Allston: "Greatly to my satisfaction I found that several of my Countrymen were entering on the same pursuit with me – Sometime within the year 1801. Mr. Washington Allston, and Edward Malbone brought me letters of introduction from my Friend Charles Fraser of South Carolina..." "Journal, 1800-1802," John Blake White Papers. South Carolina Historical Society.

when his own resources for following suit were so limited. In a letter to Dunlap written thirty years later, Fraser explained that his familial pressure to return to his legal career obliged him to remain in Charleston while his friends studied in England:

It was to this timid and homebred feeling (if so I may call it), that I owe the circumstances of not having been educated as an artist. This unfortunate error by which the destiny of my life was directed, or rather *misdirected* will ever be, as it has always been, a source of regret to me.¹¹⁶

Correspondences from Malbone, Allston, and Blake reveal that they sympathized with their homebound friend's plight.¹¹⁷ In a letter to Fraser, and no doubt in an effort to encourage him to continue his artistic pursuits, Malbone enthusiastically recalled Benjamin West's encouraging words upon visiting his studio in London: "Mr. West has complimented Mr. Allston and myself, and tells us we shall excel in the art... He was surprised to see how far I had advanced without instruction."¹¹⁸ Lacking formal training himself, Fraser would have been proud of Malbone and heartened by the positive reception received by the untrained artist in London. Allston offered additional encouragement: "You have talents. Cultivate them; and it is not impossible that the name of Fraser may one day be as celebrated as those of Raphael or Michael Angelo."¹¹⁹

Emboldened by Allston's enthusiastic support, Fraser began cultivating a network of local and northern artists in his efforts to further hone his skills. Though Allston and

¹¹⁶ Charles Fraser quoted in Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:294. Diary of William Dunlap (1766-1839), vols. 1-3, New York Historical Society, as transcribed in Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art.

¹¹⁷ White, Malbone, and Allston became close friends. Dubbing themselves the Midnight Crew, the trio traveled to Bristol and Bath together, attended masquerades and balls, and periodically engaged in lively philosophical debates. "Journal, 1800-1802," John Blake White Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.

¹¹⁸ Edward Malbone to Charles Fraser [n.d.] quoted in Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:142.

¹¹⁹ Washington Allston to Charles Fraser, 25 August 1801, in Alexander Moore, "A Charleston Artist and a National Art" in *Art in the Lives of South Carolinians: Nineteenth-Century Chapters*, ed. David Moltke-Hansen (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1979), AM-2.

Malbone were gone, Fraser's artist circle continued to thrive and by 1819 two Massachusetts artists had joined the group, landscape painter Alvan Fisher and portraitist Samuel F.B. Morse. Following the example of other successful itinerant artists, these painters had left their homes in Massachusetts to try their luck in Charleston. Morse met with success almost immediately upon his arrival in January of 1818 and so wintered in Charleston each year until April of 1821, when he left the city for good.¹²⁰ Fisher arrived the following year in 1819 and remained for a single winter, during which he exhibited some of his landscape and genre paintings.¹²¹ Fraser soon became good friends with both Morse and Fisher. Before long the Charleston artist circle had created an informal academy of sorts. Morse described the arrangement to Allston in a letter dated February 4, 1819. Morse explained that, thanks to a Charleston patron, he had come into the possession of imported casts after the *Venus of Medici* and *Apollo Belvedere*, which, as Morse wrote: "make a good academy. Mr. Fraser, Mr. Cogdell, Mr. Fisher of Boston, and myself meet here of an evening to improve ourselves."¹²² Fraser benefited greatly from

¹²⁰ During his stays in Charleston, Morse filled commissions for portraits from local patrons, most notably John Ashe Allston (one of his more avid supporters and patron). He also played a pivotal role in the development of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts discussed at length in chapter four. Rutledge, *Artists in the Life of Charleston*, 130-131.

¹²¹ Young Fisher's potential was already beginning to be appreciated by fellow New Englanders. Upon his leaving Massachusetts, one resident remarked to a friend: "... a young man named Fisher now in Charleston who will one day add to the fame of American Artists[;] his fort[e] is home scenery: Cattle farmyards and land-scape & it is so truly American that Stewart [Stuart] hopes he may not go to Europe & lose this native touch. – I am sure his merit will not remain unknown or unnoticed in so enlightened a City as Charleston." Anna Wells Rutledge, "Visual Arts in South Carolina" (Unpublished Manuscript, n.d.), 28. Anna Wells Rutledge Papers, 1887-1996. South Carolina Historical Society. Alvan Fisher visited Charleston twice: in 1819-1820 and 1822-1823. Although the precise images he exhibited were not listed, a notice in the *Southern Patriot and Commercial Advertiser* praised Fisher's treatment of "Air, Water, Vegetation, and Animals." *Southern Patriot and Commercial Advertiser* (Charleston), February 13, 1819.

¹²² Morse acquired the casts from a wealthy Charlestonian, who did not see the value of a fragmented plaster Apollo. Morse explained that he mended the sculpture so that he and other artists in the Charleston community could benefit from creating drawings after them. Samuel F.B. Morse to Washington Allston, 4 February 1819, in Edward Lind Morse, ed. *Samuel F.B. Morse*,

this and other interactions with local and itinerant artists in Charleston. In this way he not only honed his artistic abilities, but he also cultivated friendships with artists in and beyond his hometown and, in so doing, vastly expanded his network of professional contacts. Fraser maintained and nurtured these relationships through ongoing correspondences, but also through periodic visits with fellow artists and patrons throughout the Northeast.

Traveling North in Pursuit of Artistic Refinement, 1806 and 1816

In eighteenth and early nineteenth-century America, artists traveled in search of commissions, but also to gain a national reputation at a time when few Americans other than military heroes and statesmen were known beyond their native regions.¹²³ Fraser, like many artists, benefited from artistic exchange during his travels. Furthermore, success in another region helped bolster an artist's reputation among clientele at home.¹²⁴ Fraser traveled north on several occasions between 1806 and 1834. Letters to his siblings reveal that, when Fraser made his early voyages north in 1806 and 1816, he did so in part to visit relatives.¹²⁵ But the same letters also reflect Fraser's interest in expanding his artistic education.¹²⁶ More than socializing with friends and family, Fraser embarked on

His Letters and Journals, Edited and Supplemented by his Son, Edward Lind Morse (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, Co., 1914), 1:221-222.

¹²³ Harris, *The Artist in American Society*, 70. For more information about the inhospitable traveling conditions faced by travelers in the United States, see Bruce Robertson, "The Picturesque Traveler in America" in *Views and Visions: American Landscape before 1830*, ed. Edward J. Nygren (Washington, DC: The Corcoran Gallery, 1986), 191-193.

¹²⁴ Harris, *The Artist in American Society*, 71.

¹²⁵ Martha Severens, "Charles Fraser: Sketches and Oil Paintings," in *Charles Fraser of Charleston: Essays on the Man, His Art and His Times*, ed. Martha R. Severens and Charles L. Wyrick (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, in association with the Gibbes Art Gallery, 1983), 92-95.

¹²⁶ According to Lorri Glover, letter writing was a means of maintaining intimacy with family and friends, as well as conveying a "carefully constructed self." Because letters were often read aloud

these expeditions in which he visited artist friends, met other established artists, and attended art exhibitions, in an effort to learn more about the state of the fine arts, particularly landscape painting, in America. Fraser's New England relations through his sister Mary's marriage to Joseph Winthrop avidly supported his artistic endeavors by hosting the artist, guiding him through Boston society and, later, by purchasing his work and sponsoring his exhibition efforts.¹²⁷ But it was the sale during his second trip north of a series of landscape drawings to a Philadelphia publisher that would prove most significant to the artist's career. Fraser's 1816 sale of landscape images gave him the courage to leave the legal profession to pursue art more seriously.

It is difficult to determine the extent to which Fraser may have pursued landscape painting during his early northern travels. Scholars have suggested, however, that Fraser carried a sketchbook with him, in which he recorded the natural and urban landscapes he encountered with his cousin and traveling companion, Thomas Smith Grimké (1786-

to other parties and visitors, every letter functioned as a literary performance in which the correspondent self-consciously presented him or herself as socially aware and culturally refined. Glover, *All Our Relations*, 52-53. Ever concerned with his own public image, Fraser described the various prestigious personalities he engaged with during his stay with his Winthrop relatives in Boston during the fall of 1824.

¹²⁷ Mary married Joseph Winthrop, descendent of the first Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts Bay Colony, in 1788. Moore, "A Charleston Artist and a National Art," AM-1. In a letter to Mary dated September 17, 1824, Fraser describes an elegant ball he attended at the Winthrop mansion. There he was introduced to John Quincy Adams, William Bainbridge, and Robert Charles Winthrop (the Governor of Massachusetts who sponsored Fraser's submission to the Boston Athenaeum and became a primary proponent of the Fraser Gallery in 1857). Charles Fraser to Mary Fraser, 17 September 1824, Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. The Winthrops of Boston purchased many miniature portraits and some oil paintings by Charles Fraser, though execution and purchase dates prior to 1818 are difficult to determine, as they are not recorded in Fraser's Account Book at the Gibbes Museum of Art. According to the "Fraser Gallery" catalogue, however, Fraser created at least six miniature portraits of members of the Winthrop family in Boston. Only a miniature of Miss Jane Winthrop is officially recorded as having been created prior to 1818 – in 1802. Charles Robert Winthrop owned *Crypt of a Monastery* by 1857 and Joseph Winthrop owned nine paintings, including at least three landscapes (*Small Landscape*, *Trenton Falls*, and *Bridge at Lugano*). Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery*, 9-31.

1834).¹²⁸ Fraser's correspondences reveal the ardor with which he sought artistic instruction and validation from established artists and the enthusiasm with which he pursued art exhibitions. Certainly, in 1806, when Fraser first ventured north, there would have been few opportunities to view landscape painting and engage with landscape painters. Fraser nonetheless profited from his travels, which ultimately bolstered his reputation as a respected artist and determiner of taste among his fellow Charlestonians.

Fraser's letters are the sole means by which one can trace his first two northern tours in 1806 and 1816. During the summer of 1806, the artist arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, and then traveled south to Washington, D.C. After calling on his friend, Edward Malbone, in Newport, Fraser visited Providence, Boston, New Haven, New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.¹²⁹ Perhaps benefitting from one of the many guidebooks of the United States that listed artists' residences, art clubs, and art objects to be found in public venues, Fraser embarked on a journey that would strengthen his ties to the northern art scene.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Charles Fraser to Susan Fraser, 9 October 1806, Winthrop-Fraser Papers, South Carolina Historical Society. Both Martha Severens and Annie Storr allude to Fraser sketching during his 1806 travels, although those sketches have not been located. They were purchased in 1816 by Moses Thomas, owner of *Analectic Magazine* based in Philadelphia, and engraved for publication. Rogers, "Charles Fraser Among Friends," 32. Storr, "Ut Pictura Rhetorica," 569.

¹²⁹ Fraser lamented the effects of age: "Poor Malbone is not in a condition to Paint. I am afraid he is hastening to that bourne from whence no travelers return." Charles Fraser to Susan Fraser, October 1806, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. Indeed Malbone would die in 1807 during one last journey south per the advice of his doctor. In his letter, Fraser also mentioned visiting Newport, Providence, and Boston. Charles Fraser to Mary Fraser, 19 August 1806, in Mary Fraser Davies Collection, Duke University. Fraser mentioned Stafford Springs, CT, and New Haven in another letter to Ann Fraser. Charles Fraser to Ann Fraser, 25 September 1806, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. And finally, he mentioned New York City, and Philadelphia, as well as his intentions for Baltimore and Washington in another letter. Charles Fraser to Susan Fraser, October 1806, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society.

¹³⁰ Travel guides and favored destinations among American tourists are discussed further in chapter three.

In Boston, Fraser met acclaimed portraitist Gilbert Stuart, whose portrait of George Washington he had copied five years earlier in 1801. This was the first of many visits with the Boston-based artist and one in which Fraser approached the established painter as a novice, eager to learn from his forbearer's accomplishments.¹³¹ It was not until almost ten years later in 1824, that the more self-assured Charlestonian presented Stuart with a sample of his own work – not a landscape, but a miniature. Stuart, who was himself a painter of portraits, delighted in Fraser's work, proclaiming "he scarcely or never had seen a head on ivory which he preferred to it."¹³² That Fraser did not present Stuart with a landscape painting, for which he had begun receiving commissions by the mid-1820s, should not be misinterpreted as evidence of Fraser's indifference toward the genre or diminishing eagerness to learn more about it. Fraser offered a portrait for Stuart's consideration because this was Stuart's area of expertise and acquiring the approval of a noted artist in the field would benefit Fraser's reputation beyond Charleston. As a self-taught miniature portraitist and landscape painter, Fraser sought guidance from artists who specialized in both genres and who could educate him as to developing trends in northern art production and exhibitions.

Continuing his journey along the East Coast, Fraser visited the recently founded American Academy of Fine Arts in New York City and met its future president, history

¹³¹ Charles Fraser to Susan Fraser, October 1806, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. Fraser wrote: "I endeavored to recommend myself to him by some handsome compliments, but he is so accustomed to the adulation of the multitude that [he] received them with indifference & rather as his due, than as the free offering of admiration."

¹³² Charles Fraser to Mary Fraser, 17 September 1824, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. Fraser wrote to his sister that he visited Stuart often and that, "Mr Stuart received me rather as an old friend than a new acquaintance. He appears delighted with my pictures." According to Fraser, Stuart was particularly impressed by his miniatures on ivory and coloring. Charles Fraser to Susan Fraser, 8 September 1824, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society.

painter John Trumbull.¹³³ Fraser's recollection of Trumbull is brief: "He shewed me a great many of his original paintings... I was much pleased by the artist."¹³⁴ He was also impressed by the academy's "large exhibition of Pictures presented to the institution by the Emperor [Napoleon] – although copies they are very fine."¹³⁵ Here Fraser seems to refer to paintings, but, according to the academy's records, the art objects on display beginning in 1803 were in fact casts after famous antique sculptures taken from Italy by Napoleon and acquired by Robert Livingston for the academy.¹³⁶ Visiting the American Academy of Fine Arts provided Fraser with insight into the kind of art instruction available to aspiring artists in the Northeast and offered him a glimpse of some of the antique forms with which he had only been familiar through prints.¹³⁷

When he was unable to travel, Fraser bade other tourists visit particular exhibitions of interest and describe the art objects displayed to him. In one letter addressed to a sister in Philadelphia in 1810, Fraser threatened to withhold information concerning social happenings in Charleston until she visited the Pennsylvania Academy

¹³³ The American Academy of Fine Arts, its founding and ultimate failure are addressed in greater detail in chapter four.

¹³⁴ Charles Fraser to Susan Fraser, October 1806, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Joshua C. Taylor. *The Fine Arts in America: The Chicago History of American Civilization*, ed. Daniel J. Boorstin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 44. These casts were displayed in John Vanderlyn's Rotunda on Greenwich Street in Manhattan.

¹³⁷ Fraser's curiosity about exhibition practices in the Northeast extended to non-art objects, including natural artifacts. In a letter written upon his arrival in Philadelphia, Fraser expressed his intention to attend another exhibition at "the Museum – There are a great many objects to engage the attention of a visitor in the City and I must be industrious while I remain here." The museum to which Fraser refers is likely Charles Willson Peale's museum, where natural artifacts from the Lewis and Clark expedition were displayed. Charles Fraser to Susan Fraser, October 1806, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts did not initiate an exhibition program until the following year. The earliest catalogue published by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts describes an 1807 exhibition in which were displayed newly acquired plaster casts.

of Fine Arts, “where you will see two celebrated pictures of Mr. West & describe them to me. I am astonished at your having been so long in Philadelphia without seeing them.”¹³⁸

One of the most significant northern tours for Fraser as a landscape painter took place in 1816 when the artist attended exhibitions in New York and Philadelphia that included landscape paintings. Fraser likely visited the American Academy of Fine Arts’ exhibition of European and American art as well as the American Art-Union’s exhibition of paintings by Allston, Sully, and other contemporary American artists. There he would have encountered Allston’s *Landscape and Figures*, lent by a member of the Winthrop family, to the American Art-Union.¹³⁹ Perhaps inspired by the prominent display of Allston’s landscape in New York as well as the inclusion of a landscape by Thomas Doughty in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts’ summer exhibition, Fraser next met with some of the leading booksellers and engravers in Philadelphia to discuss creating a print series of his own landscape drawings created during his travels.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Charles Fraser to Mary Fraser, 7 September 1810, in Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. Fraser presumably refers to the Robert Fulton Collection, which included paintings by Benjamin West and was installed in the Academy in November 1807. <http://www.pafa.org/museum/Research-Archives/History-and-Timeline/59/>. The two pictures by West to which Fraser refers were likely a portrait of Robert Fulton and another somewhat unusual double portrait of West painting his wife. West gave both portraits to Fulton in 1806 as a testament to his regard for the aspiring artist and collector. Cynthia Owen Philip, *Robert Fulton: A Biography* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2002), 178.

¹³⁹ Rogers, Jr, “Charles Fraser Among Friends,” 32. In addition to displaying various portraits by Thomas Sully, the American Art-Union’s exhibition also included Allston’s *Landscape and Figures*, lent by F. Winthrop. Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union: Exhibition Record, 1816-1852* (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1953), 5 and 343. Charles Fraser to Mary Winthrop, 29 August 1816, in Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca.1700-ca.1905, South Carolina Historical Society.

¹⁴⁰ William H. Gerds and James L. Yarnall, *The National Museum of American Art’s Index to American Art Exhibition Catalogues from the Beginning through the 1876 Centennial Year* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1986), 1:40-41 and 2:1075-1078. The entry for Thomas Doughty’s *Landscape-Original* is handwritten into the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts catalogue for 1816 by a contemporary hand. No further description is given as to precisely which of Doughty’s early landscape paintings this may have been, though noting it as “original” implies that this was not a copy, but rather a work entirely composed by Doughty. There is no evidence to suggest that

In 1816, Moses Thomas, owner of the Philadelphia-based *Analectic Magazine*, purchased from Fraser twenty views of American scenery, including two southern scenes, which the artist likely sketched during his 1806 trip.¹⁴¹ A notice announcing Thomas's purchase and praising the artist's renderings appeared in an issue of the *Analectic Magazine* later that year and was reproduced in the *Charleston Courier* thereafter:

FINE ARTS. Charles Fraser, Esq. of Charleston, South Carolina has executed twenty very beautiful drawings of scenes, in different parts of the United States: the whole have been purchased by the proprietor of this Journal, and he assures us that some of the most interesting will occasionally accompany the work. The execution is, we think, as fine as any we have ever had occasion to inspect; and we hope that an amateur, who seems to be so well skilled in the use of the pencil, will extend its employment to other interesting portions of American scenery.¹⁴²

Only seven of the views were engraved and published between 1816 and 1818, but they introduced Fraser's landscape drawings to the national public while also stimulating America's tourism industry.¹⁴³ These carefully composed depictions of natural attractions and cityscapes, including a view of Passaic Falls in New Jersey, and cityscapes of New Haven, Boston, as well as Haddrils Point near Charleston, mark the first such attempt by

Fraser met Doughty during his visit. Although Doughty had begun dabbling in landscape painting by 1816, the Philadelphia directory of that year lists him as a painter (generally). It is not until 1820 that "professional landscape painter" appears alongside the artist's name in the Philadelphia City Directory. Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., *Thomas Doughty, 1793-1856: An American Pioneer in Landscape Painting* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1973), 12-13. Exhibition Catalogue.

¹⁴¹ Severens, "Charles Fraser of Charleston," 607.

¹⁴² Washington Irving, "FINE ARTS" *Analectic Magazine*, 8 (Philadelphia, 1816). Reprinted in *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), November 29, 1816. The term "amateur" applied to Fraser is likely a reference to his lack of formal training.

¹⁴³ These views included: "View of Passaic Fall" *Analectic Magazine*, 8 (1816); "View of West-Rock near New Haven," *Analectic Magazine*, 9 (Jan 1817); "View of Boston, Mass," *Analectic Magazine*, 9 (Mar 1817); "View of the James River," *Analectic Magazine*, 9 (July 1817); "Hadril's Point, SC," *Analectic Magazine*, 10 (Aug 1817); "View of the Shores of Rhode Island," *Analectic Magazine*, 10 (Jan 1818); "View of Richmond, Virginia," *Analectic Magazine*, 9 (1817); and "View of Boston, Mass," *Analectic Magazine*, 9 (Mar 1817). An ninth engraving, *Norman's Kill Falls* (Feb 1819), may also have been executed after a drawing by Fraser. Severens, "Charles Fraser of Charleston," 607.

an American artist to represent his own country, as opposed to a foreign or imagined landscape, in serial form. Earlier serial prints of the American urban and natural landscapes that then occupied library shelves and adorned parlor walls were overwhelmingly the work of British artists, such as William Birch.

An expatriated British émigré who worked as a miniaturist in Philadelphia, William Birch (1755-1834) is best known for the commercial success of his twenty-seven print series *The City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania as it Appeared in 1800*.¹⁴⁴ Initially conceived as a compilation of views of metropolises throughout the United States, the project was ultimately narrowed to focus on Philadelphia exclusively. *The City of Philadelphia* is comprised of sparsely populated street scenes with focus given to particular contemporary architectural and commercial features. *High Street, with the First Presbyterian Church* [Fig. 2.12], for example, presents a view of the Greek Revival façade of the First Presbyterian Church from a dwarfed perspective. The imposing, white structure stands in contrast to the smaller brick structures flanking it. Birch's exaggerated perspective, in which the market stalls at far left appear to extend the full length of High Street, creates a remarkable sense of depth and alludes to the expanse of a city still growing.

Birch's intimate urban scenes stand in contrast to Fraser's more generalized cityscapes. Charles Fraser's *View of Richmond, Virginia* [Fig. 2.13], engraved by British

¹⁴⁴ *The City of Philadelphia* was published in four editions (1800, 1804, 1809, and 1827-1828) – a testament to its popularity. Birch used profits from the 1800 and 1804 sales to finance a tour of the United States as far south as Virginia. During this tour, he recorded views of country estates that he would later compile and publish under the title *The Country Seats of the United States of North America* in 1808. He also planned to create a companion volume to *The City of Philadelphia* comprised of New York scenes, but this project never came to fruition. Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 240. Emily T. Cooperman and Lea Carson Sherck, *William Birch: Picturing the American Scene* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 76-78.

expatriate John Hill and published in the *Analectic Magazine* in 1817, offers a panoramic view of the city, as seen from across a somewhat treacherous portion of the James River where partially submerged rocks threaten passing vessels. Fraser emphasized the architecture of the city rather than the landscape elements, which serve as a kind of visual barricade between the viewer and the city itself. Though simply rendered, individual structures appear disproportionately large in conjunction with the nearby landscape elements. Prominent among the other structures is the Virginia Capitol Building, designed by Thomas Jefferson in 1788. As a model for other later Federalist-style edifices, Jefferson's impressive Capitol Building not surprisingly shares similarities with the façade of the First Presbyterian Church represented in Birch's print. But unlike Birch's scene of urban commerce, Fraser's Richmond is a sleepy town. In keeping with estate portraits from his 1796-1806 sketchbook, Fraser's geometric structures are vacant, the city quiet and still. Richmond appears smaller and more quaint than it was in reality. Fraser simplified the view, as he had when copying after prints by Gilpin and Sandby, so that the final composition was more manageable for an artist of his still limited skillset.

Unlike Birch's series, Fraser's was not limited to urban vistas. He also sketched *Haddrils Point, near Charleston* [Fig. 2.14], depicting a military camp along the South Carolina coast just north of Charleston, and *Passaic Falls, N. Jersey* [Fig. 2.15], in which water plunges over rocky cliffs and into placid water. The picturesque view of Continental Army General Francis Marion's troops stationed on the coastline just north of Charleston in the former image offers a historical perspective unlike the other drawings published in *Analectic Magazine*. In so doing, Fraser effectively reminds viewers of the important role his hometown played in securing the nation's

independence. By contrast, the sublimity of the wilderness rendered in the *Passaic Falls, N. Jersey* offers a contemporary vista of an important marker of America's natural resources and beauty that in time became a favored subject among later artists. The sublimity traditionally associated with great waterfalls is here tempered by the fall's placement at a distance and by the presence of finely dressed figures in the foreground, leisurely fishing and enjoying the impressive view before them. *Passaic Falls, N. Jersey*, engraved by C.G. Childs after Fraser's drawing, appeared as the frontispiece to the July 1816 issue of *Analectic Magazine*.¹⁴⁵ Given that Fraser sketched the scene during his northern tour with Thomas S. Grimké, it seems fitting that within the same issue one finds a poem by Grimké about Passaic Falls. The cousins would have visited this landmark together and presumably sat side by side as they each recorded the sight in their own manner.¹⁴⁶

That only eight of his twenty drawings were published by Moses Thomas did not hamper Fraser's enthusiasm for landscape imagery. Indeed, the opposite is true. After returning from his 1816 travels, Fraser's production of landscapes increased. In addition to making landscape drawings and watercolor sketches, Fraser also began using oils to create small-scale landscape paintings. The desire to pursue a career in the arts must have overwhelmed Fraser, as in 1818 he began keeping an account book in which he recorded commissions and sales received.¹⁴⁷ For many scholars, this action signals Fraser's abandonment of his legal profession for painting. Certainly, Fraser's account book

¹⁴⁵ It should be noted that the practice of engraving a drawing or painting after another artist often entailed certain modifications. Unfortunately, Fraser's drawings that served as a basis for the engravings by John Hill and C.G. Child that appeared in the *Analectic Magazine* are lost. They were purchased by Moses Thomas in 1816 and presumably disposed of once the engravings had been completed.

¹⁴⁶ Storr, "Ut Pictura Rhetorica," 569.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Fraser Account Book, Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art.

testifies to his considerable success as a miniature portrait and landscape painter. And yet, perhaps mindful of the pecuniary struggles of other American artists, including his friends Allston, Stuart, Sully, and others, Fraser continued to identify himself as a lawyer in the city directory and occasionally offered his services as a mediator or legal consultant.¹⁴⁸

Political office was the ambition of most members of the planter class who held a law degree. It was a means by which to ensure their political and social authority.¹⁴⁹ Fraser himself ran unsuccessfully for State Senate on the Federalist ticket for four consecutive election years, his final attempt occurring in 1818.¹⁵⁰ Between the last two elections of 1814 and 1818, Fraser's brother and financial guardian, who had mandated his pursuit of law, died.¹⁵¹ Newly free from familial obligations and increasingly frustrated by his political failure, Fraser reconsidered his chosen profession. No doubt his growing reputation and success as a miniaturist coupled with the encouragement he received from artists he encountered during his northern travels spurred Fraser to embrace art as his primary profession in 1818. Art historian Alexander Moore has rightly credited Moses Thomas's purchase of Fraser's drawings as an additional deciding factor

¹⁴⁸ Fraser does not seem to have listed himself as a lawyer purely for posterity. As late as 1822, Fraser's office on Tradd Street is distinguished from his King Street residence in the Charleston City Directory. *U.K. and U.S. Directories, 1680-1830* (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2003), accessed via Ancestry. com. Fraser served as executor of Miss Van Rhym's Will according to a letter seeking settlement and dated August 14, 1828. Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society. Another letter dated 1827 from the Gibbons Brothers of Birmingham, England, seeks Fraser's services in collecting and settling a debt owed locally. Frederick Fraser Papers, 1772-1876, South Carolina Historical Society.

¹⁴⁹ Frederick P. Bowes, *The Culture of Early Charleston* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 123.

¹⁵⁰ Fraser ran for office in 1808, 1812, 1814, and 1818. "City of Charleston General Election for State Representatives," A New Nation Votes: American Election Returns 1787-1825 Database, Tuft's Digital Library.

¹⁵¹ Frederick Fraser died from dropsy in 1816. Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958, South Carolina Historical Society.

in Fraser's decision to reconsider a career as an artist in 1818.¹⁵² Equally relevant to Fraser's professional shift was the support he received from friends and family members in different geographical areas, as evidenced by the sale of his work to members of the Winthrop family in both Charleston and Boston.¹⁵³

Increasingly recognized by northern-based artists and patrons, Fraser developed a reputation as a legitimate artist and man of superior taste that challenged Charlestonian patrons' prejudices against local, untrained talent.¹⁵⁴ Like Washington Allston, who was a great source of pride to his hometown, Fraser exhibited frequently in northern venues, including the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1819, the National Academy of Design in 1826, the American Gallery of Fine Arts in Boston, and the American Art-Union in 1849, among others.¹⁵⁵ That Charlestonian patrons embraced Fraser as a fine artist rather than a mere artisan (as they had Thomas Coram) may be due in part to what Barbara Gallati describes in *Making American Taste* as the increasingly elastic concept of taste and refinement during the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁶ She explains that notions of taste shifted and expanded to accommodate the varied political, social, and professional aspirations of individuals. Fraser's affiliation with the planter class would have further

¹⁵² Moore, "A Charleston Artist and a National Art," AM-3.

¹⁵³ Charles Fraser Account Book reprinted in Severens and Wyrick, eds., *Charles Fraser of Charleston*, 123-145.

¹⁵⁴ Anna Wells Rutledge listed some of Fraser's northern patrons, including Joseph Stanford Barker of Newport and Timothy Ford of New Jersey. Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," 11-13.

¹⁵⁵ Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p. Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, ed., *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1826-1860* (New York: The New-York Historical Society, 1953), 1:168. Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union: Exhibition Record, 1816-1852*, 138. According to *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America*, Fraser's work "was exhibited frequently at the Boston Athenaeum, as well as in Charleston, Philadelphia, and NYC..." George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 240. Gerdtz and Yarnall, *The National Museum of American Art's Index to American Art Exhibition Catalogues*, 1311-1328.

¹⁵⁶ Gallati, "Taste, Art, and Cultural Power in Nineteenth-Century America," 17.

established his reputation as a purveyor of taste in Charleston. Indeed, Fraser's genteel character was publically recognized in the *Charleston Courier* on January 21, 1836, when he was described "as a man of refined mind, classic taste, and skilful artist... well known in this community."¹⁵⁷

Upon returning to his southern hometown in 1816, after experiencing something of the northern art scene, Charles Fraser was soon overwhelmed with commissions. Though he welcomed such an auspicious beginning to his professional career as an artist, Fraser could not have been altogether pleased that the vast majority of these were portrait and miniature portrait commissions. Gradually, Fraser cultivated an artistic reputation and a patronage base that enabled him to do something no other southern artist before him had managed to do – exert some control over his art production. Although Fraser conformed to the demand for portraiture by creating hundreds of miniatures, he simultaneously created and promoted landscape paintings with success.

¹⁵⁷ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), January 21, 1836.

CHAPTER 3

THE ARTIST:

ACCOMMODATING NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN TASTES

Fraser's account book, begun in 1818 with a final entry dated 1846, reveals that the Charlestonian artist's hand was amply employed by southern planters, wealthy merchants, and by members of the gradually expanding northern middle class.¹⁵⁸ Fraser complained about his workload to friends and even used it to justify the tardiness of his written correspondences. In an 1834 letter to Robert C. Winthrop in Boston, Fraser explained: "The fact is, my pencil has been so constantly employed this spring, that it has scarcely left me an hour for any other occupation."¹⁵⁹ The majority of the commissions Fraser received during the 1820s and 1830s were miniature portraits. But the self-educated landscape painter was determined to add the landscape genre to his list of offerings for potential patrons.

It is worth noting that Fraser, like Malbone before him, occasionally incorporated landscapes into his miniature portraits.¹⁶⁰ In this way, Fraser was able to satisfy his clients' demands for miniature portraits, while also reminding his patrons of his services as a landscape painter. Two such examples are his miniatures of Charleston's Collector of the Port James Reid Pringle (1820) [Fig. 3.1] and New York gentleman Henry Brevoort,

¹⁵⁸ Charles Fraser Account Book, Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art.

¹⁵⁹ Charles Fraser to Robert C. Winthrop, 29 April 1834, in Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art.

¹⁶⁰ Examples of this are discussed in Tolman, *The Life and Works of Edward Greene Malbone*, 198 and 262.

Jr. (1828) [Fig. 3.2]. To the right of Pringle, Fraser painted a view of the Charleston harbor that Pringle managed, including Castle Pinckney; while Brevoort is depicted cross-armed in an interior setting, a distant lake and mountain just visible behind a drawn curtain.¹⁶¹ Within ten years of painting Brevoort's portrait, Fraser's production of miniatures declined in favor of landscape paintings and watercolor sketches.

In her biography of the artist, Martha Severens convincingly argues that this transition emanated from the development of the daguerreotype, which adversely affected the market for portraiture. By the early 1840s, the once highly sought genre of portraiture was no longer *en vogue*, as noted in an editorial in the *Charleston Mercury* praising photographic technologies:

There is something peculiarly comfortable in having one's face taken off by this lightning process... it is but to sit still one moment and lo! you are engraved... it looks exactly like you – neither better nor worse – no bungling – no daubing – no exquisite insipidity – no prismatic fog swallowing up all individuality and hiding the stupidity of the artist in a chaos of glorified millinery.¹⁶²

This veritable indictment against portraitists who subscribed to principles of idealization in an effort to appease their sitters, did not discourage Fraser, who had redirected his focus onto landscape painting by 1838.¹⁶³ The deterioration of Fraser's eyesight, which

¹⁶¹ Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p. The mountainous landscape just visible to the right of Brevoort in Fraser's miniature is general and cannot be definitively identified as a reference to the sitter's property or specific natural features of New York State. Although it bears mentioning that Brevoort, a resident of New York City, was also a successful farmer who owned eighty-six acres of land located just beyond the city limits in 1820. These lands now constitute part of the West Village. "Biographical Note," Brevoort Family Papers, 1760-1879. Brooklyn Historical Society.

¹⁶² *Charleston Mercury* (Charleston), December 13, 1843, quoted in Severens, "Charles Fraser of Charleston," 609.

¹⁶³ This approximate date is based on my own observations of Fraser's account book. Traditionally, scholars have suggested Fraser's transition to landscape painting took place in the 1830s. Martha Severens asserts a slightly earlier date for the transition (1832) in Severens, "Charles Fraser: Sketches and Oil Paintings," 75. It should be noted that Fraser did not stop painting miniatures entirely. His last miniature portrait depicting Frederick Grimké dates to 1852

would have made the precise detail portraiture demanded increasingly difficult, was likely another factor.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, the artist had already experienced success by selling drawings to Moses Thomas of Philadelphia in 1816. As this chapter will demonstrate, his success continued as he sold numerous landscape sketches and small oil paintings until his death in 1860. The evident trend in the Northeast toward landscape painting as a distinctly American genre offered additional incentive for Fraser to embrace landscape painting.

As a member of the planter class with a growing artistic reputation, Fraser found himself in the unique position of being able to exercise some control over his artistic production. Whereas preceding landscape painters in Charleston, including the artist Warwell mentioned in chapter two, were forced to supplement their income by painting signs or repairing canvases, Fraser exercised enough influence over his southern patrons so that he was able to focus almost exclusively on painting landscapes by 1838.¹⁶⁵

and was created after a daguerreotype of the sitter by C. L'Hom-Dieu. Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art. Fraser is thought to have painted his last miniature portrait in 1852. This miniature, depicting his nephew Frederick Grimké Fraser, was painted from a daguerreotype of the sitter. Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p.

¹⁶⁴ *Mercury* (Charleston), December 13, 1843. As quoted in Rutledge, *Artists in the Life of Charleston*, 164. Photography's adverse affect on the portrait market in the American South is discussed in Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 393. Anna Wells Rutledge noted that Fraser's eyesight had begun to deteriorate by 1840. In a letter dated October 6, 1860, Fraser's friend, Daniel Ravenel described Fraser as having been in a state of decay for some time. Daniel Ravenel to Mr. Peck, 6 October 1860, as quoted in Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p.

¹⁶⁵ Pecuniary struggle was all too familiar to artists during the early nineteenth century. Washington Allston's monetary difficulties, for example, were public knowledge. He was heavily reliant on patrons and friends who, in 1839, organized a retrospective exhibition of his work in Boston; the proceeds of which were given to the impoverished artist. "Allston's Gallery" *News/Opinions. Charleston Courier* (Charleston), June 8, 1839. John Blake White, upon returning to Charleston in 1803 following his training at the British Royal Academy, pursued a law degree so that he could better support his growing family. White enjoyed a successful legal career and eventually served on the South Carolina State Legislature. Nonetheless he continued to paint and exhibited his work at the Boston Athenaeum and the National Academy of Design, among others. William Kloss, Diane K. Skvarla, and Jane R. McGoldrick, eds., *United States*

Fraser's efforts were complicated, however, by the increasingly turbulent political atmosphere beginning in 1832 with the Nullification Crisis. After the federal government initiated a tariff in 1828 and 1832 designed to protect northern industry by raising taxes on imported goods, South Carolinians, whose cotton export sales suffered as a result, expressed their vexation by passing a state ordinance declaring the protective tariff unconstitutional and calling for its nullification. Though a compromise was reached in 1833 and South Carolina repealed the nullification ordinance, the mistrust between predominantly southern supporters of states' rights and those Northerners desirous of a stronger federal government continued to escalate, exacerbating regional tensions.

Fraser, as a member of the South Carolina planter class, would have been expected to side with the pro-states rights Democrats over the opposing Whig party. But, as this chapter contends, the artist adopted a different strategy altogether and one very much informed by his conciliatory sentiment and his desire for national success as a landscape painter. Eager to preserve and expand his bi-regional clientele base, the former Federalist chose not to favor either side publically and instead adopted a primarily anti-nullification approach and appealed to the artistic tastes of patrons in each region. It bears mentioning, however, that Fraser's private correspondences reveal him to be very much engaged with current events and opinionated. This is most apparent in the same 1834 letter to Robert C. Winthrop addressed earlier:

little as I am of a Politician it grieves me to see how rapidly that sympathy is passing away, which was so recently felt & expressed for the

Senate Catalogue of Fine Art (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2002), 32. And John Stevens Cogdell (1778-1847), like Fraser and White, held a law degree while continuing his work as a sculptor. William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:371. For more information about financial and other difficulties that confronted Antebellum American artists, see Harris, *The Artist in American Society*.

disinterested and patriotic... of the union party of S.Ca. ... the attachment of the party to the union and the Constitution (& that is their great offense) ought not to make them [culpable] for the sins of General Jackson, whose extraordinary assumption of power not to say his rapid strides towards despotic rule – find as few apologists amongst the Union party of So Carolina as amongst any other political class in the US.¹⁶⁶

Fraser's neutral stance was thus as much a matter of his inability to reconcile his preference for a strong federal government with his distain for a "despotic" president, as it was a necessity for him to maintain a favorable artistic reputation on a national level.

In terms of his artistic ambitions, however, Fraser managed to extract himself from the fray and to prosper by catering to the differing tastes for Romantic landscape painting among his northern and southern clientele. In addition to revealing Fraser's regional diplomacy, an examination of some of the artist's landscapes created for northern and southern patrons also elucidates the significance of landscape painting beyond the Northeast and the well-known work of the so-called Hudson River school.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ The full quote is as follows: "Perhaps you will say that I am claiming for So Carolina an interest to which she is not entitled, amidst the more important objects that occupy the councils of the Nation, & which so deeply affect the varied interests of its Citizens. – But, little as I am of a Politician it grieves me to see how rapidly that sympathy is passing away, which was so recently felt & expressed for the disinterested and patriotic... of the union party of S.Ca. --- The Constitution of the US is a nullity, or its obligations are paramount involving in them all those duties from the Citizens which are comprehended in the term Allegiance. The Nullifiers after having declared in their ordinance that Allegiance is not due to the US, require through their legislation, an oath of Allegiance to So Carolina – certain northern Editors may condemn or [not legible] at the Course of those who refuse to take this oath & may continue to do so – but can never reconcile it to the Conscience of any good Citizen --. In the meantime the attachment of the party to the union and the Constitution (& that is their great offense) ought not to make them [culpable] for the sins of General Jackson, whose extraordinary assumption of power not to say his rapid strides towards despotic rule – find as few apologists amongst the Union party of So Carolina as amongst any other political class in the US. -----." Charles Fraser to Robert C. Winthrop, Esq., 29 April 1834, in Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca.1700-ca.1905, South Carolina Historical Society.

¹⁶⁷ Angela Miller suggests an alternative designation for this group of artists and one, she argues, that is more suitable given how well they realized their proclaimed nationalist aims, the "first New York school." For a thorough explanation as to the intellectual components and visual structures used by this group of artists, see Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape*

Certainly the market for landscape paintings was slower to emerge in the American South than in the Northeast. But, as this chapter shows, by being among the first to introduce popular American landscape subjects to his southern clients, Fraser proved instrumental to the market's development in Charleston.

American Interpretations of European Romanticism and Landscape Painting

The death of neoclassical history painter Benjamin West in 1820 coincided with the birth of a new Romantic era in American art and ultimately a reconsideration of the landscape genre. Contrary to the ordered style and moral instruction of Neoclassicism, Romanticism emphasized freedom of imagination and emotive expression.¹⁶⁸ It was a literary and artistic movement that continues to defy attempts to concisely explain it, owing in part to its ambiguity and the lack of both uniformity of style and consistency of ideals. Instead of developing or adhering to a regulated artistic program, European Romantic artists privileged the individual and created compositions steeped in violence, sensuous eroticism, chaos, and emotion.¹⁶⁹ The transition from objective, rational observation to explorations of the subjective human experience precipitated the increased appearance of lower order subject matter, such as landscape and genre scenes, and

Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 75-105.

¹⁶⁸ David Blayney Brown, *Romanticism* (New York: Phaidon Press, Inc., 2001), 4-10.

¹⁶⁹ Much has been written and theorized about Romanticism. For a more in depth discussion of Romanticism and its many practitioners one good resource is Brown, *Romanticism*. For more information about the Romantic theory not discussed in this dissertation, see M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

facilitated the dismantling of the hierarchy of genres instituted by the French Royal Academy in the 1660s.¹⁷⁰

Romantic artists were not the first to challenge or attempt to modify the hierarchy of genres. Jean-Antoine Watteau's elegant *fête galante* paintings inspired the creation of a new genre in the early eighteenth century. Shortly thereafter Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's genre still-life paintings were deemed so charming as to be elevated to allegorical paintings and, by the late eighteenth century, Sir Joshua Reynolds had asserted an additional means of ranking the nobility of paintings based on how they were rendered (his "Grand Style" being superior to ornamental painting).¹⁷¹ National politics, such as Napoleon's rise to power in France at the turn of the nineteenth century, and shifting art markets, including the significant demand for portraiture, rather than history paintings, in England, affected artistic practice and ultimately the established hierarchy in Europe. Although Americans were mindful of events unfolding throughout Western Europe, they were most closely tied economically and culturally to those occurring in their mother country, England.

During much of the eighteenth century, portraiture dominated the English market as it did in America, but English landscape paintings enjoyed considerably more

¹⁷⁰ The hierarchy of genres was officially instituted by the French Royal Academy during the reign of King Louis XIV, when André Félibien asserted it as a fundamental component of Neoclassicism in a debate at the Academy. Claudia Moscovici, *Romanticism and Postromanticism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 65. John MacArthur, *The Picturesque: Architecture, Disgust, and Other Irregularities* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 41. Brown, *Romanticism*, 9-10.

¹⁷¹ Reynolds discussed his grand style as governed by liberal, intellectual ideas, as opposed to the more sensual ornamental approach. He favored generalization and idealization, arguing that beauty exists in the mind and is thus an intellectual pursuit. Reynolds did not dispute the hierarchy of genres, per se, but rather suggested a distinction between grand style history painting and ornamental history painting. He did not apply his observations with the same tenacity to the lower orders. For more information related to Reynolds's grand style and its application, see Discourses III and IV in Joshua Reynolds, *The Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London: James Carpenter, 1842). MacArthur, *The Picturesque*, 41-42.

popularity by the end of the century. The genre's ascent was in part owing to the success of Richard Wilson's classicized landscapes and paintings of country houses produced during the 1760s and 1770s, as well as the increased circulation of engravings depicting British country estates, such as those Fraser studied.¹⁷² The influence of seventeenth-century French and Italian painters Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, whose landscape paintings (or copies after them) were among the most coveted acquisitions for English collectors, further contributed to the genre's increasingly positive reception.¹⁷³ Claude and Rosa in particular became representative of two antithetical landscape tenets, the picturesque and the sublime.

Although Reynolds continued to consider landscape a lower order of subject, he nonetheless praised Claude for encouraging the study of nature and the *beau ideal* or the painting of general, idealized beauty. As Reynolds explained, "There is an absolute necessity for the Painter to generalize his notions... to paint particulars is not to paint nature, it is only to paint Circumstances."¹⁷⁴ The Claudean formula for landscape painting, as it came to be known, was characterized by the depiction of a darkened foreground, lit middle ground, and distant background painted in mellow tints and enclosed within framing devices. English landscape painters emulated this formula and,

¹⁷² Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 24-26.

¹⁷³ Reynolds deemed the landscapes of Claude, Rosa, and Poussin as superior to, for example, seventeenth-century Dutch landscapes, wherein natural details are carefully rendered at the expense of idealizing the natural world (and in so doing, conforming to Reynolds's Grand Style). The work of Claude, Rosa, and Poussin was well known to English travelers on the Grand Tour. Many purchased originals or copies for their own collections before returning home. By the early nineteenth century, more than eighty Claude landscapes and upwards of one hundred Rosa paintings were in English collections. Attribution aside, English collectors' enthusiasm for their work speaks to their popularity and significance in the art market. *Ibid.*, 26-28.

¹⁷⁴ Sir Joshua Reynolds, "Notes on the Art of Painting" as quoted in *Ibid.*, 34.

by the end of the eighteenth century, supplanted the ancient Roman ruins of Claude's landscapes with gothic ruins similar to those visible in the English countryside.

In contrast to the soothing, pleasant, picturesque visions supplied by Claude, Rosa's Abruzzo landscapes exuded desolation, solitude, and danger, evoking the sublime. Defined by British philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797) in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the sublime denotes to the human instinct for self-preservation. Darkness, obscurity, vastness, magnificence, and loudness, characteristics associated with Salvator's work, produced strong emotions particularly, according to Burke, awe and terror.¹⁷⁵ Published on the heels of Burke's treatise, German philosopher Immanuel Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764) asserted that the sublime refers to the subjective experience of encountering the immensity or boundlessness of a grand conception. The sublime was not a thing to be found in nature, but rather in one's mind. Whereas Burke alluded to the sublime as a characteristic of nature, Kant argued that because the vastness evoking the sublime as described by Burke is beyond any measurable scale, then it can only be compared to itself and, as such, is subject to an individual's own conception of it.¹⁷⁶ The sublime's association with an emotive response made it particularly appealing to Romantic landscape painters, who favored visions of subjective experience over topographical representations of the natural world.

¹⁷⁵ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. (London: Printed by J. Dodsley, 1767), 58-60. Andrew Wilton, "The Sublime in the Old World and the New," in *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States, 1820-1880*, eds. Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 13.

¹⁷⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 45-50. Wilton, "The Sublime in the Old World and the New," 13.

In 1846, French poet and critic Charles Baudelaire noted, “Romanticism is precisely situated neither in choice of subjects nor in exact truth, but in a way of feeling.”¹⁷⁷ Romanticism was not a distinct artistic style per se, but rather an attitude adopted by some artists. Romantic landscape painters incorporated drama, nontraditional vantage points, mood, and, at times, narrative, into their compositions. Many Romantic landscape painters, including English landscape painters, increasingly turned to Claude and Rosa for inspiration. John Constable’s picturesque paintings of the English countryside and pastures received high praise, while Joseph M.W. Turner’s ethereal land- and seascapes provoked discussion among critics as to coloring and gestural painting methods. Romanticism gradually made its way west through émigré English artists and travelers returning from the European Grand Tour. Napoleon’s defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 eased trade and travel between the United States and continental Europe and facilitated the importation of Romantic literature and visual art.¹⁷⁸ Although few Romantic European landscapes made their way to the United States during the 1820s and 1830s, American artists were able to study engravings after some of the more celebrated examples. Aspiring American landscape painters admired European, particularly English, landscape images, but the shift from topographical to interpretive landscape painting in the United States hinged on the existence of a demand for it.

For many early nineteenth-century Americans, interest in the landscape was, according to art historian John K. Howat, guided by “an almost naïve wonderment and

¹⁷⁷ Charles Baudelaire, “What is Romanticism?” in *The Salon of 1846*, as quoted in Brown, *Romanticism*, 8. In this instance, and as Brown notes, Baudelaire was commenting on the sense of disillusionment when hope and promises made by Napoleon were not realized.

¹⁷⁸ Eliot Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 48.

driving curiosity.”¹⁷⁹ Territorial expansion, economic growth, and basic mapping of the land had been of primary concern during the previous centuries, but by the 1830s, the American landscape became newly vested with emotional and spiritual significance. American landscape painters, like their English counterparts, relied on picturesque and sublime aesthetics to convey this. American picturesque landscape paintings offered visions of nature seemingly untouched and unchanged, bringing together complex forms with varying effect. Broken lines or surface deformations and contrasting colors and textures energized these views and seemed to create tension between striking sublime and generalized beautiful elements within the composition.¹⁸⁰ American sublime compositions conformed for the most part to Burke’s theory of the sublime. Because the American landscape had no cultural history or associations with antiquity, as did the European landscape, artists favored images of America as virginal or Edenic.¹⁸¹ Their visions of the terrain emphasized its wilderness and untamed nature. Because interpretive landscapes had less utilitarian value than portraiture, the decorative arts, and even topographical landscapes, its rise in popularity at this time is traditionally interpreted as evidence of America’s cultural development. That Americans embraced this more contemplative art emanated from increased wealth and leisure time, as well as the cultivation of refined taste, among its citizens.

Despite the wealth and refinement to be found in some southern societies, the market for American landscape paintings, which emerged in the Northeast during the mid-1820s, took longer to achieve similar success in the American South. That landscape

¹⁷⁹ John K. Howat, “Introduction” in *American Paradise: The Word of the Hudson River School* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), xvii.

¹⁸⁰ John Conron, *American Picturesque* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), 3-8.

¹⁸¹ Wilton, “The Sublime in the Old World and the New,” 14-15.

painting was most prevalent in the Northeast during the antebellum era was a direct result of the growing tourism industry in the region, increasing concern regarding natural preservation, and the production of landscape paintings of these sites by northern painters who would come to be known as Hudson River school artists.¹⁸² The American South, with its rough roads that discouraged tourism beyond port cities and the association of its land with agricultural and economic concerns, had little reason to elevate the landscape to a subject worthy of fine art at this early juncture. This changed, however, as the genre gradually gained significance as a purveyor of concepts related to the nation's cultural identity.

Just as the appeal of landscape paintings varied between regions, so too did the taste for Romantic art. As Romanticism began to dominate literature and the visual arts in America, fostering individuality and independence in the Northeast and Europe, the American South focused on sentimentality and nostalgia.¹⁸³ Broadly considered, the Romantic movement in America explored concepts of the heroic individual, the inevitability of change in an imperfect world, an ideal chivalric code of honor, and the sublime quality of nature.¹⁸⁴ As Estill Pennington notes in *Romantic Spirits*, all of these concepts held significance for nineteenth-century Southerners, but their interpretation of

¹⁸² Kevin Avery offers an extensive explanation of the problematic term "Hudson River School," which first came into use in 1879 in reference to the old and, by that time, outdated mode (according to a new generation of European-trained American artists) of painting landscapes. The term was applied to distinguish so-called "fogy" pictures from the more innovative work of a younger generation of artists. For a thorough exploration into this issue, see Kevin Avery, "A Historiography of the Hudson River School" in *American Paradise: The Word of the Hudson River School* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 1-20.

¹⁸³ Eaton, *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South*, 380.

¹⁸⁴ The following discussion of northern versus southern concepts of Romanticism is a brief synopsis that is explored more fully in Estill Curtis Pennington, *Romantic Spirits: Nineteenth Century Paintings of the South. The Johnson Collection* (Paris, KY: Cane Ridge Publishing House, 2012), 13-27.

theses ideas differed vastly from those of their northern counterparts.¹⁸⁵ Whereas northern transcendentalism emphasized moral self-reliance and individualism, southern plantation culture encouraged magnanimousness and a life of ease, rather than labor. Pennington argues that this southern heroic ideal, encompassing gentlemanly chivalry and the cavalier archetype, fostered a delusional value system that led to the deference of immediate demands and needs (one's economic reality, for example) to an abstract ideal that likened the southern planter to an English country gentleman.

The most significant difference between northern and southern Romanticism, however, is manifest in their opposing interpretations of nature. Romantic landscape paintings by the Hudson River school hint at the then radical transcendentalist notion that a return to nature, particularly the wilderness, offered the most promising path to enlightenment. The American South could boast no school of landscape painting akin to the Hudson River school, but the few Southerners who did paint landscapes, including Thomas Coram and, at times, Charles Fraser, tended to create picturesque records of estates that celebrated property ownership and wealth, rather than spiritual enlightenment.

Transcendentalism did not have as significant a presence in the American South as it would in New England.¹⁸⁶ Most Southerners did not associate the landscape, the source of their economic well-being, with spiritual enlightenment, but rather with material prosperity and paternalistic pride. For this reason, idle southern planters, eager to escape the monotony of plantation life, indulged in (and to some degree identified with)

¹⁸⁵ Pennington is careful to add that he agrees with art historian Edgar P. Richardson's notion that "Each man, each picture, was an individual and the whole atmosphere of life in the romantic period changed from year to year, and from city to city." Edgar P. Richardson, *American Romantic Painting* (New York: E. Weyhe, 1944), 14. As quoted in Pennington, *Romantic Spirits*, 13.

¹⁸⁶ Pennington suggests that Southerners did not seek the transcendental quality in nature until after the Civil War. Pennington, *Romantic Spirits*, 23.

melodramatic tales of the medieval era.¹⁸⁷ Rather than the reality of their natural surroundings, southern Romantic taste during the 1830s favored landscapes that offered remote, picturesque, even fanciful, though not entirely untamed, terrains peppered with classical or gothic ruins.¹⁸⁸ If a landscape had sublime characteristics, they were remarkably subdued so as to be less threatening. Distinct from earlier topographical landscapes that conveyed wealth and civic affluence, these imaginative landscapes served as markers of the owner's learning and cultural sophistication, while provoking thoughtful contemplation.

Fraser, eager to please his southern and northern clientele, painted both sublime views of the northeastern wilderness and picturesque visions of Old World monuments or mysterious ruins. Few artists at the time received patronage from both sides of the Mason-Dixon line and even fewer made a concerted effort to consider regional differences in taste when composing a landscape painting. That Fraser did his utmost to accommodate northern and southern preferences in his landscape paintings at a time of escalating sectional tensions, speaks to the artist's determination to perpetuate a politically neutral perspective that would bolster his national artistic reputation.

Northeastern Landscape Painting and the American Tour

Charles Fraser acquired an understanding of the northern taste for landscape when he ventured north in 1816 (as demonstrated in chapter two), and later in 1831 and 1833. Not only did Fraser visit exhibitions and engage with his artist friends during these

¹⁸⁷ Consumed by romantic literature, some southern planters compared their lives on the plantation to medieval nobility surrounded by serfs. Eaton, *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South*, 48.

¹⁸⁸ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 301-302. Pennington, *Romantic Spirits*, 25.

sojourns, but he also carried a blank sketchbook, in which he recorded the countryside he encountered in pencil, ink, and watercolors.¹⁸⁹ Correspondences composed while traveling, when considered alongside images recorded in his sketchbook and referenced in his account book, reveal that, more than casually meandering through the Northeast, Fraser was in fact embarking on the American equivalent of the European Grand Tour. Such an expedition has since come to be known as the American Tour. Between roughly 1816 and 1834, Fraser visited nearly all of the sites in New York, Connecticut, and New Hampshire that comprised the Tour.¹⁹⁰ Whether Fraser benefited from any particular guidebook is unknown as he made no mention of following one. Nonetheless, the artist may have been guided to some degree by the landscape paintings exhibited in the cities through which he traveled and, if his personal history of artistic exchange has any bearing, through information gleaned by encounters with fellow artists.

Even before he commenced his tour of the American Northeast, Fraser had acquired some knowledge of European landscape painting. Beyond studying prints after Gilpin and Sandby discussed in chapter two, Fraser, like so many other American artists, familiarized himself to some degree with Baroque landscape compositions by Poussin, Claude, and Rosa.¹⁹¹ Copies after, and occasionally, original works by these artists could be found in private American collections or on loan for public exhibition long before British Romantic landscape paintings were accessible. Though included in some private southern collections, to which Fraser would have had access, these landscape paintings

¹⁸⁹ Fraser also traveled north briefly in 1824, at which time he is believed to have stopped in Boston, Northampton, Salem, and New York. Severens, *Charles Fraser of Charleston*, 17. Surviving correspondences from this trip, however, reveal very little about Fraser's intentions or activities beyond attending social functions and so will not be discussed at length here.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 7.

did not appear in public exhibitions in Charleston until 1816, nearly twenty years after they made their 1794 debut at the short-lived Columbianum in Philadelphia.¹⁹² But, as Edward Nygren argues in *Views and Visions*, it was the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art's inclusion of landscape paintings in its first contemporary art exhibition in 1811 that suggested the potential significance of the genre to many aspiring American artists. This and other early exhibitions that Fraser visited during his early northern ventures included work by eighteenth-century European (primarily British) artists and contemporary American painters of estate portraits and topographical landscapes, as well as other genres of painting by lesser-known European masters.¹⁹³

Within twenty years, the landscapes on view in northern art exhibitions had changed significantly. During Fraser's 1830s trips, he visited the Boston Athenaeum where he saw Washington Allston's *Italian Landscape* on display in 1831 and Alvan Fisher's *New York Scenery* and Thomas Doughty's *Lake Outlet* in 1833.¹⁹⁴ In the same

¹⁹² The first landscape views of Europe to be publically exhibited in Charleston were panoramas of ancient ruins and urban landmarks publicized in the *Charleston Courier* sporadically between January 1816 and February 1835. Maurie McInnis, "The Politics of Taste: Classicism in Charleston, South Carolina, 1825-1840" (PhD. diss., Yale University, 1996), 52. These panoramas and their place in Charleston's exhibition history will be discussed further in the pages to follow. Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 41.

¹⁹³ Early exhibitors of American topographical landscapes and estate portraits prior to 1820 include: George Beck, Thomas and William Birch, Francis Guy, the Peale brothers, John Trumbull, and William Groombridge. Occasionally, landscapes painted by the younger generation of American artists, namely Washington Allston, Thomas Doughty, and Alvan Fisher, were also displayed. Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 43.

¹⁹⁴ Severens and Wyrick, eds., "Charles Fraser Timeline" in *Charles Fraser of Charleston: Essays on the Man, his Art, and his Times* (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, in association with the Gibbes Art Gallery, 1983), 16-18. William Dunlap notes that Fraser, who briefly returned to his law practice in the early 1830s, traveled north to Hartford for the purpose of representing a client. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:294. He presumably extended the trip into a Northern tour, during which he began a third sketchbook, which bears the date 1831. Charles Fraser Sketchbook, 1831-ca.1834, Gibbes Museum of Art. William J. Gavin III and Robert F. Perkins, Jr., eds, *The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index, 1827-1874* (Boston: The Library of the Boston Athenaeum, 1980), 60. The addition of Fisher and Doughty's work, as well as other landscape paintings, was noted in the

year, the Boston Athenaeum held a competition for the best landscape painting. Though he did not enter the competition, Fraser no doubt rejoiced when his friend Alvan Fisher won the \$200 prize for *The Freshet* (1831).¹⁹⁵ Although his letters do not suggest he journeyed south of Hoboken, the Boston Athenaeum directory lists Fraser's address as Philadelphia in 1831 and 1832.¹⁹⁶ Had Fraser been in Philadelphia during those years, he presumably would have attended the annual exhibitions hosted by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and there encountered a variety of landscape paintings by Fisher, Joshua Shaw, and Thomas Cole.¹⁹⁷ Had Fraser traversed New York City, as travel between Hartford and Hoboken suggests, he would have seen still more landscapes by

minutes taken by Isaac P. Davis, a member of the Boston Athenaeum's Fine Arts Committee. Mabel Munson Swan, *The Athenaeum Gallery, 1827-1873: The Boston Athenaeum as an Early Patron of Art* (Boston: D.B. Updike, The Merrymount Press, 1940), 17. Both of these paintings by Fisher and Doughty prove difficult to locate, beyond residing in the Boston Athenaeum until 1876 when much of the Athenaeum's art collection was turned over to the nascent Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Presumably these paintings were absorbed into that collection and their vague titles (*Landscape*) modified so as to facilitate identification of the scene depicted.

¹⁹⁵ Plate XVIII in Gavin and Perkins, eds, *The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index, 1827-1874*, xiii. The current location of Fisher's *The Freshet* is unknown. A notation appears in the 1831 record alongside all landscape paintings entered into the competition. Fisher's landscape painting was deemed superior to those by Robert W. Weir, Thomas Birch, and Joshua Shaw. Interestingly, Fraser, Cole, and Doughty did not compete. This may have been due to the late notice given to artists that such a competition was being held.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 59. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Fraser visited with any artists on this tour (beyond Washington Allston in Boston), it would not be inappropriate to speculate that the artist visited his previous traveling companion, Alvan Fisher (then in Boston) and childhood friend, Thomas Sully, in Philadelphia.

¹⁹⁷ According to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts exhibition records, the following paintings were displayed in 1831: Cole's *Sketch in Oil and Landscape, Sunset*; Alvan Fisher's *The Lost Boy; Landscape, composition, New York Scenery; Landscape "After a Summer Shower"*; and Shaw's *Landscape, "the Lace Sellers," A Ruin on the Banks of the Wye, South Wales, Landscape, Sunset, Landscape, Landscape, Morning*. The following were exhibited in 1832: Shaw's *Arcadian Landscape and Figures*, and *Dido and Eneas Going to the Hunt*. Salvator Rosa's *Landscape and Banditti* was also on display there in 1831 and 1832. No landscapes by Claude Lorraine appear in the exhibition records for either year. Peter Hastings Falk, ed, *The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1807-1870* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1988), 50 and 201.

Cole on exhibition at the National Academy of Design.¹⁹⁸ Fraser's timing seems to have been quite fortuitous, as his visits to various cities coincided with large exhibitions of work by some of the most important landscape painters working in the Northeast during the first half of the nineteenth century. Traditionally, the history of nineteenth-century American landscape painting has been told primarily from a northeastern perspective. Considering the interconnectedness of landscape painting's emergence as a coveted genre in American art during the mid-1820s and the simultaneous development of a thriving tourism industry that emphasized northern locales and vistas, it is not surprising that the Northeast is at the center of the story of American landscape painting.

American tourism began during the first decades of the nineteenth century when the Napoleonic Wars interrupted travel to continental Europe, particularly France. Early destinations included Niagara Falls and Hudson River Valley attractions, such as the Great Passaic Falls that Fraser sketched for *Analectic Magazine* in 1816. At this early juncture, tourism was a leisure activity enjoyed primarily by wealthy Americans. Those who lacked the financial resources to travel followed the published writings and recollections of those who did.¹⁹⁹ By the 1830s, the American Northeast boasted a thriving domestic tourism industry. The development of such an industry, as Richard Gasson demonstrates in *The Birth of American Tourism*, occurred in conjunction with cultural changes and, in order to flourish, required a reliable travel infrastructure to compelling destinations.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ In 1831, the National Academy of Design exhibited Cole's *Subsiding of the Deluge* and *Landscape*. Cowdrey, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1826-1860*, 1:80.

¹⁹⁹ Richard H. Gasson, *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790-1830* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 3.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 and 6.

Prior to 1820, bumpy roads and rickety carriages with little or no padding or suspension made travel uncomfortable.²⁰¹ By 1830, the construction of turnpikes improved stagecoach service, while the development of the steam engine facilitated ferrying passengers across waterways, and, later, the construction of railroads made travel more efficient and affordable.²⁰² To accommodate the increasing influx of tourists, lodgings ranging from hotels and spas to taverns and coffee-houses began to appear along major travel routes.²⁰³ Gradually, the expanding mercantile and middle classes joined wealthier Americans in their pursuit of various natural attractions.²⁰⁴

It comes as no surprise that the guidebook industry thrived during the antebellum period. Books and prints educated travelers as to what they might see on their expedition and where the weary traveler could find accommodations.²⁰⁵ They also advised tourists as to which sights would offer the most valuable experience. In his 1837 illustrated travel guide, Nathaniel Parker Willis suggested American tourists were eager for new adventures:

²⁰¹ Robertson, "The Picturesque Traveler in America," 191.

²⁰² The steamboat was introduced to the United States by Robert Fulton, who tested his contraption on the Hudson River in 1807. Travel by water was further eased in 1825 when the Erie Canal opened, granting access to the American interior – particularly Niagara Falls. Railroads began to stretch across the Northeast as early as 1830. John F. Sears, *American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 3 and 4.

²⁰³ Taverns and coffee-houses had dual functions as meeting places that also offered quarters for lower income travelers. Robertson, "The Picturesque Traveler in America," 190.

²⁰⁴ The spread of Jacksonian democracy during the 1820s gradually dissolved the strict social castes of the British Colonial period. Katherine Wolff, *Culture Club: The Curious History of the Boston Athenaeum* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), 1-12. Some citizens continued nonetheless to cling to more traditional class structures, most notably Boston's Brahmin class and Charleston's rice aristocracy.

²⁰⁵ Some early examples include: Jedediah Morse's *American Geography* (1789), John Melish's *Traveller's Directory* (1815), and Joshua Shaw's sparsely illustrated *U.S. Directory* (1822). After 1820, many guidebooks began to specialize in particular routes with specific destinations. Robertson, "The Picturesque Traveler in America," 191.

The interest, with regard to both the natural and civilized features of America, has very much increased within a few years; and travellers, who have exhausted the unchanging countries of Europe, now turn their steps in great numbers to the novel scenery, and ever-shifting aspects of this.²⁰⁶

The Old World, steeped in cultural history, offered a glimpse into the past; while America, with its natural phenomena, mysterious wilderness, and ever-changing landscape suggested an unknown future full of potential. Travel within the United States increased the value of American scenery at a time when many Americans were eager to define their national identity as distinct from Europe.²⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, American art and literature, in addition to tourism, were equally powerful proponents of this shift.

For antebellum American tourists, compelling destinations needed to offer more than merely pleasant scenery. Beyond the beauty of a place, it needed to tell a story, spark a romantic association, and ignite within the visitor a desire to see it first hand. Frivolous, unproductive leisurely pursuits were discouraged. Instead, travellers sought experiences that would lift the spirit, provoke moral improvement, and inspire patriotism.²⁰⁸ Novels by Washington Irving and James Fenimore Cooper as well as the poetry of William Cullen Bryant inspired laypersons and artists alike to rediscover America's wilderness. Two illustrated travel books, Joshua Shaw's *Picturesque Views of American Scenery* (1820-21) and William Guy Wall's *Hudson River Portfolio* (1821-25) tantalized readers with visions of the American countryside.²⁰⁹ The landscape paintings of Thomas Doughty, Thomas Cole, and later Hudson River school artists further stimulated tourism in the Northeast.

²⁰⁶ Willis and Bartlett, *American Scenery: or, Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature*, Preface. Preprinted in Sarah Burns and John Davis, *American Art to 1900: A Documentary History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 277.

²⁰⁷ Gasson, *The Birth of American Tourism*, 3

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 6.

²⁰⁹ Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 46.

Thomas Doughty (1793-1856) was the first American-born artist to devote himself to landscape painting.²¹⁰ Much like Fraser, Doughty was a self-trained artist who studied prints, learned from established artists he encountered, and perused landscape paintings in the collections of patrons, particularly Robert Gilmore, Jr.'s collection in Baltimore.²¹¹ Doughty is best known for his early topographical landscapes, which, although somewhat formulaic, were nonetheless praised for their fine detail and accuracy.²¹² American patrons interested in landscape paintings were drawn to Doughty's depictions of scenery in eastern Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and upstate New York, which in turn inspired travel to the Hudson River Valley, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, and other sites depicted.²¹³ Although Doughty exhibited his landscapes as early as 1816, it was not until the following decade that he received the recognition he deserved. In the *New-York Mirror's* review of the 1827 National Academy of Design's Annual Exhibition, which included the artist's composition, *Landscape: Delaware Gap* (1827), editor and art collector George Pop Morris celebrated Doughty as a pioneer of landscape painting: "if landscape painting be not one of the highest branches

²¹⁰ Doughty, who worked as a leather currier with his brother until 1819, is listed as a "landscape painter" for the first time in the Philadelphia city directory in 1820. Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 254. Goodyear, *Thomas Doughty, 1793-1856*, 13.

²¹¹ Gilmore's art collection included landscape paintings by Nicholas Poussin, Salvator Rosa, Cornelius Poelenburgh, Richard Wilson, Albert Cuyp, Jacob Ruisdael, and Jan Wynants. In addition to studying paintings within Gilmore's collection, Doughty also traveled abroad in 1837 and again in 1845. However, he embarked on the first European expedition at the height of his career and so likely did not do so for training purposes. Goodyear, *Thomas Doughty, 1793-1856*, 13, 18, and 19.

²¹² For a more thorough discussion of Doughty's early topographical landscapes as well as his later, more romantic, paintings, see Goodyear, *Thomas Doughty, 1793-1856*, 12-16.

²¹³ Doughty painted these scenes between approximately 1822 and 1830. They derived from drawings sketched during his outings with Thomas Sully, Alvan Fisher, Chester Harding, and others. Alan Burroughs, "A Letter from Alvan Fisher," *Art in America* 32, no. 3 (July 1944): 117. Goodyear, *Thomas Doughty, 1793-1856*, 15.

of the art, such works as his [Doughty's] will go far to convince that it is at least one of the most delightful."²¹⁴

At the forefront of the movement to visually celebrate the natural beauty of America, Doughty imbued his later compositions with atmospheric effects indicative of a shift within the genre from factual to interpretive landscape painting.²¹⁵ His work created after 1830, which includes American as well as European scenes, have a hazier atmosphere and one softly lit by morning or evening light. Doughty's *In the Catskills* (1836) [Fig. 3.3] is one such example, in which verdant trees frame a picturesque view of a mountain valley. Such quiet scenes of majestic terrain in which resides a gothic castle, classical ruins, or, as in the case of *In the Catskills*, a solitary figure, were closely aligned with the Romantic imagination.

During the antebellum years, roughly 1830 to 1850, the picturesque or sublime quality of a composition continued to signify a patron's taste and gentility as well as an artist's familiarity with European styles. The sublime and picturesque, when applied to specific American scenery, became further symbolic of the country's exceptionalism and health. Cultivated land signified safety, civilization, and progress.²¹⁶ The wilderness, initially incorporated as a protective barrier enclosing the cultivated landscape, as

²¹⁴ George Pop Morris, "The Fine Arts. National Academy of Design," *New-York Mirror* 4 (June 2, 1827): 351. Preprinted in David B. Dearringer, "Annual Exhibitions and the Birth of American Art Criticism to 1865" in *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1925*, ed. David B. Dearringer, (New York: University Press of New England and the National Academy of Design, 2000), 61. Doughty was made an honorary member of the National Academy of Design the same year. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 50.

²¹⁵ Nygren describes the visual psychology that developed following a shift in American landscape painting from functioning as colonial records during the Colonial and Early Republican years to perpetuating a cultural myth in the antebellum era. Not everyone was enthused about this shift. Baltimore collector Robert Gilmore, Jr., for example, complained about Doughty's mature style and art critic John Neal mourned the movement away from what he considered to be accurate depictions of nature. Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 65-70 and 254.

²¹⁶ Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 3 and 18.

evidenced in much of Doughty's work from the 1830s, or featured as dangerous, threatening terrain, gradually came to represent America as a new Eden: a place of endless natural resources and possibilities. The popularity of such landscape paintings in the Northeast, arguably begun with Doughty's Romantic wilderness scenes, reached its pinnacle in the work of a British-born artist almost ten years Doughty's junior, Thomas Cole.

John Trumbull, William Dunlap, and then engraver Asher B. Durand discovered Cole (1801-1848) shortly after the young artist relocated to New York City in 1825. The three companions were impressed by Cole's paintings inspired by the artist's recent trip to the Catskills that hung in the shop window of William A. Colman's bookstore during October of that year.²¹⁷ John Trumbull, then president of the American Academy of Fine Arts, determined to encourage Cole. He displayed Cole's landscapes at the Academy's exhibitions and recommended the artist to prominent art collectors, such as Daniel Wadsworth.

Though not the first landscape painter in the United States, Cole is nonetheless touted by many scholars as the "Father of American Landscape Painting."²¹⁸ This title, by no means arbitrarily assigned, conveys the significance of the artist to the evolution of landscape painting in America. Not only did Cole introduce large-scale serial landscapes,

²¹⁷ Kenneth John Myer, "The Public Display of Art in New York City, 1664-1914" in *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1925*, ed. David B. Dearringer, (New York: University Press of New England and the National Academy of Design, 2000), 35. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 52.

²¹⁸ For more on Cole, see the definitive monograph Ellwood C. Parry, *The Art of Thomas Cole: Ambition and Imagination* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988). Another reliable resource is William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, eds., *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History*, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press in conjunction with the National Museum of American Art, 1994). For an explanation as to Cole's relationship with his clientele, see Allan Wallach, "Thomas Cole and the Aristocracy" *Arts Magazine* 56, no. 3 (November 1981): 94-106.

but also two of his most celebrated series, *Course of Empire* (1833-36) and *Voyage of Life* (1842), elevated the landscape genre so that it was considered on par with the traditionally more esteemed historical painting.²¹⁹ For this reason, Cole is credited by scholars with creating a market for American landscape paintings in the Northeast by convincing the public of the significance of the genre.²²⁰ By the mid-1830s, cultural institutions, such as the National Academy of Design in New York and the Boston Athenaeum, began ranking emerging landscape painters in their annual exhibitions.

Other artists soon joined Doughty and Cole in their efforts. Designated in 1879 the Hudson River school, this loose group of painters, poets, and writers rose to prominence during the early nineteenth-century through their efforts to create a vision of the American landscape that hinged on the exploration of Nature.²²¹ Indeed, these painters were themselves travelers on the American Tour, traversing portions of the Northeast with pencils in hand.²²² For these artists, the natural world was a source of spiritual renewal as well as a manifestation of the nation's exceptionalism. Although the designation "Hudson River School" seems to suggest that their subjects were limited to

²¹⁹ Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 51.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

²²¹ The Hudson River school was neither a formal art school, nor an artistic style. It is a term that most commonly refers to those artists who took as their subject the Hudson River and surrounding areas between 1825 and 1875. Linda S. Ferber, *The Hudson River School: Nature and the American Vision* (New York: Skira International Publications, Inc. and the New-York Historical Society, 2009), 13. For more information regarding the problematic term "Hudson River School," its initial implication and subsequent efforts to change this designation, see Avery, "A Historiography of the Hudson River School," 1-20. Also see Miller, *The Empire of the Eye*, 75-105.

²²² In his early nineteenth-century travel guide, *American Scenery*, Nathan Parker Willis asserted the significance of travel to the landscape painter: "There is a field for the artist in this country... which surpasses every other in richness of picturesque. The great difficulty at present is, where to choose. Every mile upon the rivers, every hollow in the landscape, every turn in the innumerable mountain streams, arrests the painter's eye, and offers him some untouched and peculiar variety of an exhaustless nature." Nathaniel Parker Willis and William Henry Bartlett, *American Scenery: or, Land, Lake, and River Illustrations of Transatlantic Nature* (London: George Virtue, 1837), 2:Preface. Reprinted in Burns and Davis, *American Art to 1900*, 277.

this area of New York, such was not the case. European sites as well as American natural attractions elsewhere in the Northeast also appear on their canvases.²²³ Most venerated, however, were those paintings that depicted American scenery. The Hudson River school stimulated interest in the direct study of nature by representing American scenery that motivated viewers to see the real thing.²²⁴ Cole's and his colleagues' allegorical and literary paintings were also highly praised, but it was their vision of the American wilderness that most stimulated tourism. By removing civilization and emphasizing the wildness of the American landscape, Cole and others imbued their paintings with poetic overtones. These canvases, which emphasized American exceptionalism, inspired viewers to, as one New York tourist stated, "visit the falls and other spots that the magic touches of Cole the artist have brought to the public admiration..."²²⁵

Owing in part to the emerging market for American landscape paintings, certain destinations within the Northeast became so popular that visiting each of them during an extended expedition became known as embarking on the American Tour. Whereas its forbear, the European Tour, introduced travelers to the cultural history of the Old World, the American Tour highlighted the natural exceptionalism of the New World, specifically in regards to the Northeastern states. The American Tour, which included sights in New

²²³ Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 49. Ferber, *The Hudson River School*, 14.

²²⁴ As early as the mid-1820s, Cole noted that he had been practicing studies of single natural objects, trees, boughs, etc, and felt that he was on the right path to becoming a landscape painter. Dunlap, *History of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:352. Cole was not the first to embark on such excursions. Fraser, Fisher, and Doughty also engaged in similar activities, during which they created sketches of the scenery before them. Cole's studies, in contrast, focus on specific natural elements, such a tree or shrubbery, which he later incorporated into a more complex final composition. He also created pencil sketches of specific wilderness sites which he used to help him construct his landscape paintings.

²²⁵ A.T. Goodrich, *The North American Tourist* (New York: Published by A.T. Goodrich, 1839), 34.

York, Connecticut, and New Hampshire, neglected southern destinations. Of course the American South was not without its pastoral beauty and some natural phenomena, including Georgia's Tallulah Falls and Virginia's Natural Bridge, which attracted visitors as well as artists. But the South lacked the efficient travel infrastructure necessary to support a thriving tourist industry. Such internal improvements came late to the region, largely because many southern politicians, who might have otherwise engaged in public works projects, were preoccupied with the political sectionalism of the late 1820s and 1830s.²²⁶

The northeastern American Tour included earlier established tourist destinations, such as the Passaic Falls of the Hudson River and the Falls at Niagara, to which were added other attractions, including: the Catskills, Lake George, the Erie Canal, the Connecticut Valley, and, following a tragic avalanche at Crawford Notch in 1826, the White Mountains.²²⁷

Charles Fraser's American Tour and 1831-ca.1834 Sketchbook

It was not uncommon for members of the South's planter class to travel north for recreation, education, business, health reasons, or to simply satisfy their curiosity. In fact, more Southerners ventured north than vice versa. Some southern travelers eventually purchased seasonal homes in the Northeast and, in so doing, established small communities within northern urban centers.²²⁸ Newport, Rhode Island, a popular

²²⁶ Political sectionalism during the antebellum era is discussed later in this chapter as well as in chapter four.

²²⁷ Sears, *American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*, 4. Robertson, "The Picturesque Traveler in America," 194 and 204.

²²⁸ John Hope Franklin, *Southern Odyssey: Travelers in the Antebellum North* (New Orleans: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), xiv.

destination for southern planters fleeing the malarial summers on their rice plantations, was designated “Carolina Hospital;” while a strip of Spruce Street in Philadelphia frequently occupied by Carolinian travelers was dubbed “Carolina Row.”²²⁹ These transplant colonies offered southern travelers a welcome taste of home. On the first of his five northern tours, twenty-three year old Fraser expressed his own gratitude upon encountering fellow Carolinians in an otherwise unfamiliar culture, “So that I may be in Charleston wherever I please, as far as regards Society.”²³⁰

Fraser’s northern ventures were still more pleasant because of how they benefited his landscape painting career. The Charlestonian’s American Tour was divided primarily among several trips taken between 1816 and 1833. Sketches produced from his 1816 expedition, including one of the Passaic Falls discussed in chapter two, earned Fraser his first sale of American scenes at approximately the same time that Thomas Doughty, celebrated as America’s first landscape painter, began dabbling in the art and one decade before Thomas Cole began painting the Catskills. Shortly thereafter, in 1820, Fraser commenced several views of Niagara Falls.

While there is no clear record of Fraser having traveled to Niagara, he would have had ample opportunity to visit the site on one of his trips north. Martha Severens has suggested that Fraser may have traveled to Niagara in July of 1820 with his friend and fellow landscape painter Alvan Fisher (1792-1863).²³¹ Severens convincingly argues that

²²⁹ For more on “Carolina Hospital,” see Bowes, *The Culture of Early Charleston*, 9. “Carolina Row” was located in Philadelphia on Spruce Street between 9th and 10th St. Elle Shushan, “Southern Synergy: The Philadelphia-Charleston Collection” (Paper, Painters and Paintings of the Early American South Conference, Williamsburg, VA, November 2013).

²³⁰ This is Fraser’s description of Newport in a letter to his sister Mary. Charles Fraser to Mary Fraser, 19 August 1806, in Mary Fraser Davies Collection, Duke University.

²³¹ Martha R. Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art: The Southern Collection* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1995), 40.

Fraser's miniature portrait of Fisher, recorded in his account book for the year 1820, commemorated their friendship and, perhaps, their time together as travel companions to Niagara.²³² That notwithstanding, Niagara Falls was an increasingly popular tourist attraction by the 1820s and a subject that Fraser would have encountered in print form, if not in person.²³³

The appeal of Niagara Falls hinged on its singularity. The sheer magnitude of Niagara – the powerful force of water cascading over a steep precipice, the dense plume of mist ascending from below, as well as the precariousness of Prospect Point and Table Rock, which extended over the cataracts – had no equivalent in Europe or elsewhere in the known world at that time.²³⁴ Niagara Falls was evidentiary of America's exceptional natural history as well as its abundance of natural resources.²³⁵ For visitors to Niagara, both American and European alike, witnessing this awesome natural wonder evoked an intense emotional and, according to some, religious experience that they overwhelmingly associated with the Burkean sublime.²³⁶ As mentioned earlier, Burke described the sublime as an intense emotional (and ultimately pleasurable) experience evoked by a grand natural object. Focusing in part on its physiological effects, Burke identified the

²³² Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art*, 40.

²³³ Fraser may have seen any number of Niagara scenes, including John Vanderlyn's *A Distant View of the Falls of Niagara*, which was engraved and widely distributed in 1804. Crowley, "The American Republic Joins the British Global Landscape," 115.

²³⁴ Table Rock, a preferred vantage point by which to view Niagara Falls during the early nineteenth century, fell in 1850. The feature's demise actually began as early as 1818 as a result of rockslides. These events only added to the perceived sublimity of the Falls.

²³⁵ Even before the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, which granted better access to Niagara Falls, the importance of the locale as a national symbol was already well known. Sears, *American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*, 12.

²³⁶ Sears, *American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*, 13-14. For an expanded discussion of Niagara Falls' early association with the Burkean sublime, see also Elizabeth McKinsey, "'So Surprising a Cataract' – The Discovery of Sublime American Nature," in *Niagara Falls: Icons of the American Sublime* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 5-36.

experience of the sublime as one that oscillated between fear and attraction, awe and terror, life and death, on the part of the viewer.²³⁷ Early accounts of Niagara Falls employed distinctly Burkean rhetoric, describing its “astonishing height, enormous volume, stupendous force, and eternal sound.”²³⁸ Overtime, Niagara Falls became synonymous with the sublime in America.

Fraser’s attempts to capture Niagara Falls include watercolor sketches and small oil paintings.²³⁹ Four watercolor views survive from the portfolio sold to Sir James Wright of South Carolina in 1823 and are currently in the Greenville County Museum of Art.²⁴⁰ In her assessment of these compositions, Severens rightly explains the various perspectives of Niagara Falls as the artist’s attempt to reduce the vastness of the natural phenomenon into more manageable serial views.²⁴¹ Other landscape paintings and sketches by Fraser do indeed reveal his predilection for small-scale compositions. As an aspiring landscape painter early in his career, Fraser had managed potentially complex subjects by either generalizing forms (as evidenced in his watercolor copies after Paul Sandby) or by presenting a distant, simplified view of a vast area (as seen in his

²³⁷ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 58-60.

²³⁸ Sears, *American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*, 14.

²³⁹ Although Fraser’s paintings of Niagara Falls beyond those sold to Sir James Wright are not specified in his account books, several paintings of this subject, including *Falls of Niagara, from the American side*, *Rapids above Niagara Falls*, and three paintings titled *Falls of Niagara* are listed in the catalogue for the artist’s 1857 retrospective exhibition. None are dated or noted as copies. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 24, 26, and 27.

²⁴⁰ These are *Niagara Falls from Goat Island Looking toward Canadian Side* (1820); *Niagara Falls from Goat Island Looking toward Prospect Point* (1820); *Niagara Falls from Prospect Point* (1820); and *Niagara Falls below the Falls* (1820). Little is known of Sir James Wright (1799-1837), the third Baronet of South Carolina, beyond his genealogical affiliation with the Izard family of Charleston. John Burke, *A General and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage of the United Kingdom, for M.D.DDD.XXVI* (London: H. Colburn, 1826), 357. Henry A.M. Smith, “The Ashley River: Its Seats and Settlements,” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 10, no. 1 (1919): 45-46.

²⁴¹ Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art*, 40.

cityscapes created for *Analectic Magazine*). Niagara Falls, however, presented a new challenge for Fraser. Not only was the subject a sublime example of the American wilderness, in contrast to Fraser's more picturesque cityscapes and estate portraits, but it also demanded recognition of its power and majesty in pictorial form. To minimize or generalize the components of Niagara Falls would be to risk rejection by patrons and collectors who expected depictions of the sight to emphasize its well-known sublime attributes. Dividing the imposing subject into four more manageable views may have presented a reasonable solution.

The resulting images are topographical representations of Niagara that, beyond the subject, share little with his travel companion Fisher's compositions created the same year.²⁴² In fact, Fraser's images reveal that his efforts to accommodate northern taste for the sublime wilderness were not entirely fruitful. Fraser's watercolor renderings, *Niagara Falls from Goat Island Looking toward Canadian Side* (1820) [Fig. 3.4], *Niagara Falls from Goat Island Looking toward Prospect Point* (1820) [Fig. 3.5], *Niagara Falls from Prospect Point* (1820) [Fig. 3.6], and *Niagara Falls below the Falls* (1820) [Fig. 3.7] offer varying, somewhat intimate perspectives of the falls when compared to Fisher's *The Great Horseshoe Fall, Niagara* (1820) [Fig. 3.8]. Taking as its subject the cataracts from the Canadian side, Fisher's painting includes some of the most celebrated features of Niagara Falls, such as the Great Horseshoe, central to the composition, and Table Rock at far right. Dark storm clouds at left hover just above a delicately rendered rainbow,

²⁴² Fisher created two paintings of Niagara Falls in 1820: *A General View of the Falls of Niagara* and *The Great Horeshoe Fall, Niagara*. Both paintings are owned by the National Museum of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. He later painted at least eight other images of the falls, most of which are slightly varied versions of these original two paintings. Jeremy Elwell Adamson, "Nature's Grandest Scene in Art," in *Niagara*, ed. Jeremy Elwell Adamson. (Washington, DC: The Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985), 37.

another well-known feature of the falls. In addition to the storm clouds and the waterfall itself, a prominently placed (and slightly disproportionate) blasted tree stump in the foreground underscores the wildness of the scene and the sublimity of this natural attraction. Curiously, Fisher's composition, unlike other representations of Niagara Falls, is populated by a surprising number of well-dressed tourists whose gestures allude to the enormity of the waterfall and the deafening sound of its cascading waters. Two of Fraser's four watercolor images also include figures, though, in keeping with other traditional representations of the Falls, not nearly as many as Fisher incorporated. Interestingly, the same figure that Fraser includes rather prominently in his *Niagara Falls from Goat Island Looking toward Canadian Side* also appears on the far right foreground in Fisher's *The Great Horseshoe Fall, Niagara*. This flamboyantly gesturing, black top-hatted gentleman, believed to represent a popular Niagara tour guide and caretaker named Samuel Hooker, appears in many images of Niagara Falls that date between 1820 and 1840.²⁴³

Beyond the inclusion of Hooker, Fraser's compositions are otherwise dissimilar from Fisher's painting. Fraser's preference for watercolor means that his forms appear more lightly rendered and lack the striking contrasts that heighten the theatrical appearance of Fisher's painting in oil. Fraser's images, with their delicate coloring and linear details, have more in common with the early topographical renderings of such military artists as Thomas Davies, than with the comparatively more Romantic approach

²⁴³ Hooker makes an appearance in many Niagara Falls paintings, including other paintings by Fisher, those by William J. Bennett, and others. Adamson, "Nature's Grandest Scene in Art," 36-39. Adamson identifies Samuel Hooker as the top hated gentleman in Fisher's painting.

of Fisher.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, although three of Fraser's compositions incorporate sublime elements, such as the plume, a blasted tree stump, or a dangerous precipice, in addition to the cataracts, his *Niagara Falls below the Falls* offers a picturesque respite strikingly different from Fisher's exclusive focus on the sublime. At roughly 12 x 18 inches, Fraser's compositions are also significantly smaller than Fisher's 34 x 48 inch painting.²⁴⁵ Indeed, none of Fraser's surviving landscapes – watercolor sketches or oil paintings – exceed approximately 24 x 33 inches. This size would have been ideal for his many southern patrons who sought smaller cabinet landscape paintings. In fact, Fraser's account book records the sale of these images, listed as “Portfolio of the Views of Niagara,” in 1823 to Sir James Wright, a South Carolina planter.²⁴⁶

At this early juncture, the northern Romantic tradition as articulated by Hudson River school landscape painters had yet to be clearly envisioned. So Fraser's watercolors of Niagara Falls, though they share some commonalities with Fisher's painting, offer a comparatively more subdued sublimity. His somewhat generalized forms are reminiscent of those found in his 1796-1806 sketchbook of South Carolina parishes and estates. Ultimately, Fraser's Niagara Falls images from 1820 represent the artist's early and only

²⁴⁴ Thomas Davies' *Niagara Falls from Above* (ca.1762-1768), located at The New-York Historical Society, has little in common with Fraser's watercolor sketches compositionally. His care with fine details, particularly as concerns vegetation, also differs from Fraser's tendency to generalize forms. Davies' intention as a military artist to record sites in an objective and strictly informative manner explains this distinction. But both Fraser and Davies employ a style of painting that may best be described as linear and, to some degree, naïve.

²⁴⁵ Watercolor sketches are seldom very large in general. Differences in the medium employed may explain this difference in size. Though even when Fraser did paint with oil, his compositions were seldom much larger.

²⁴⁶ “A view of the Falls for Sr Jas Wright [\$]144” and “Portfolio of the views of Niagara to Sir James Wright for --- \$100” appear on page 125 in Fraser's account book. Charles Fraser Account Book, Charles Fraser Artist File, Gibbes Museum of Art. While the portfolio consisted of watercolors, Anna Wells Rutledge suggested that “A View of the Falls” noted in Fraser's account book was in fact an oil painting due to the considerable sum Fraser collected for it. Rutledge, “The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860,” 22.

moderately successful attempt to emulate trends observed in the work of Alvan Fisher and other early landscape painters of the Northeast. By 1831, however, Fraser had developed a better, though still somewhat rudimentary, understanding of northern Romanticism largely as a result of his completion of the American Tour on a trip commenced that year.

After considering landscape paintings by Joshua Shaw, Thomas Cole, Thomas Doughty, Alvan Fisher, and Washington Allston on exhibition throughout the Northeast, Fraser left the metropolises behind to explore the American countryside. Fraser's 1831-ca.1834 sketchbook suggests that he concluded his tour in New Hampshire where, according to notes therein, he spent the late summer weeks of 1831 drawing well-known tourist attractions such as the Franconia Notch in the White Mountains and Lake Winnepesaukee.²⁴⁷ Unlike his earlier 1796-1806 sketchbook of watercolor estate portraits and drawing exercises, these later watercolor and graphite landscape sketches accompanied by notes on coloring were seemingly created with the intention of later expanding them into larger landscape paintings.²⁴⁸ Fraser stated as much in a letter to friend and patron Robert C. Winthrop of Boston upon his return to Charleston. As his southern patrons embarked on their summer travels in 1834 and the prosperous season for portrait painters in Charleston came to a close, Fraser explained his plans for his 1831-ca.1834 sketchbook:

The season of patronage is wearing away vir proterit aestas & it will soon be left to the choice of its own subject – when I will endeavour to put upon Canvases some of the scenes I sketched last Summer. One of which I shall

²⁴⁷ Charles Fraser Sketchbook, 1831-ca.1834, Gibbes Museum of Art.

²⁴⁸ Ibid. Severens, "Charles Fraser of Charleston," 610.

not forget, is engaged to you, provided I can make it worthy of your choice.²⁴⁹

The commission to which Fraser refers is not noted in his account book and so its precise subject and any information related to its production remains unknown.²⁵⁰ However, paintings loaned by Fraser's patrons for his 1857 retrospective exhibition in Charleston (the subject of chapter five) suggest that the artist finished at least eight paintings with compositions derived from his 1831-ca.1834 sketchbook.²⁵¹

Within the artist's sketchbook, carefully rendered geological forms and detailed vegetation are interspersed among other broader landscape scenes. Fraser was careful to identify most of the locations he sketched. Occasionally a date for the image is also provided. Though the majority of compositions are unfinished, a few, including several views of the Notch in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, are remarkably polished.

²⁴⁹ Charles Fraser to Robert C. Winthrop, 29 April 1834, in Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art. Many planter patrons were seasonal residents of Charleston, visiting the town during the entertainment season, roughly November through May, at which time they attended horse races, music concerts, the Charleston Theatre, and social balls. Granville T. Prior, "Charleston Pastime and Culture during the Nullification Decade, 1822-1832," in *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1940* (Columbia: The South Carolina Historical Association, 1940): 37-39.

²⁵⁰ According to the Fraser Gallery catalogue, the Winthrop family owned many works by Fraser, which they loaned to the 1857 exhibition. Robert C. Winthrop owned an interior view titled *Crypt of a Monastery* and various other paintings, but none with a title that suggests distinctly northern scenery. A "Dr. Winthrop," however, did own *Small Landscape – view of Lake Winnipiseogee* in 1857. "Dr. Winthrop" is probably in reference to Dr. Henry Winthrop of Charleston, rather than Robert – or even Fraser's brother-in-law, Joseph – both of whom were lawyers by profession. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 21-22.

²⁵¹ The Fraser Gallery catalogue lists the following landscape paintings, which, though no longer extant, were undoubtedly derived from sketches made during the artist's 1833 tour: *Landscape – notch in the White Mountains*, *Landscape – view in the White Mountains*, *Gap in the White Mountains* (twice listed), *Landscape – view of the Schuylkill River, at Fairmount, Philadelphia*, *Mountain scenery in New Hampshire* (twice listed), and *Small Landscape – view on Lake Winnipiseogee*. It should be noted that other descriptive or vague titles, such as *Landscape – lake scenery*, *islands*, *village in the distance* or *Landscape – Eastern Scenery* may also be based, at least in part, on Fraser's sketches. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 21-31. Charles Fraser Sketchbook, 1831-ca.1834, Gibbes Museum of Art.

In the case of one untitled composition [Fig. 3.9], Fraser attached a strip of paper that, when folded back, reveals an expanded landscape with dimensions that exceed that of the page on which it appears. The scene presents a dirt path that guides the viewer toward a valley where a small white house appears in the distance. Fraser's writing along the top of the page identifies the rocky outcrop at left as "Sawyer's Rock, 10 miles from the Notch," by which he refers to the valley beyond. Rather than depicting either Sawyer's Rock or the Notch, Fraser brings both important sites together in this slightly contrived scene. Sawyer's Rock or the "Gate to the Notch" earned its designation in 1771 when local citizen Benjamin Sawyer and his friend Timothy Nash proved that this rocky obstacle could be overcome, thereby opening a northwestern commercial route through the White Mountains.²⁵² Thereafter the Rock symbolized the strength and perseverance of an individual determined to contribute to the nation's progress.

The Notch, a steep and narrow gorge within the White Mountains, did not become a noteworthy tourist destination, however, until fifty years later when a landslide on August 28, 1826 tragically killed the Willey family living in the valley. Later, it was discovered that the Willey family, upon hearing the rumblings of an avalanche, promptly abandoned their seemingly vulnerable home in search of shelter elsewhere. Sadly, in their efforts to find safety, the family was buried under a mass of rubble, while their home remained ironically unharmed.²⁵³ The Willey family tragedy captivated writers, painters, and tourists alike.²⁵⁴ It reinforced the American notion of the home as a place of warmth

²⁵² Randall H. Bennett, *The White Mountains: Alps of New England* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 45.

²⁵³ Bennett, *The White Mountains*, 64-66.

²⁵⁴ One of the first accounts of the Willey tragedy appeared in a travelogue written Theodore Dwight, a traveller from New Haven. Theodore Dwight, *The Northern Traveller: A Northern Tour*, second edition (New York: A.T. Goodrich, 1826). Scholar Robert McGrath suggests that

and safety (not to be abandoned), while also inspiring travellers to witness this lesson learned by visiting the place first hand. The story became the basis for Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest" (1835) and the location a favorite subject for landscape painters.²⁵⁵ The Notch in the White Mountains represented the sublime dangers of untamed nature, humbling visitors by reminding them of the awesome power and majesty of the natural world.

One of the most famed paintings of the Notch is Thomas Cole's *A View of the Mountain Pass Called the Notch of the White Mountains* (1839) [Fig. 3.10]. This large oil painting, derived from Cole's sketches created during a trip to the White Mountains with Asher B. Durand in the summer of 1839, shares little with Fraser's small sketch created eight years earlier. Mount Webster, which fades into near obscurity in Fraser's rendering, looms large in the background of Cole's solemn composition. In addition to the diminutive Willey House, brilliantly lit at center in Cole's painting, is Ethan Allen Crawford's Inn.²⁵⁶ Partially concealed behind tree foliage in the distant left side of the valley, the presence of Crawford's Inn signifies the importance of the Notch as a tourist destination, as does the carriage of tourists that appear bumbling down the dirt road just

the engravings in this travelogue, engraved by O.H. Throop, may have been based on drawings created by Dwight's traveling companion and amateur artist Daniel Wadsworth, who is best known for his patronage of Thomas Cole. Robert L. McGrath, "The Real and the Ideal: Popular Images of the White Mountains," in *The White Mountains: Place and Perceptions*, ed. Donald D. Keyes (Durham: University of New Hampshire, 1980), 60.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 70. Robert McGrath examines similarities between literary devices used to convey the sublime in Hawthorne's "The Ambitious Guest" with Alvan Fisher's painting *The Notch* (1834). Robert L. McGrath, *Gods in Granite: The Art of the White Mountains of New Hampshire* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 15-19. Some of the tourists and artists who visited the site recorded what they saw the emotions evoked by encountering the site of such an awful tragedy. The first illustrated publication to focus entirely on the White Mountains, including the valley where the Willey tragedy took place, was William Oakes, *Scenery of the White Mountains: With Sixteen Plates, from the Drawings of Isaac Sprague* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, 1848).

²⁵⁶ Parry, *The Art of Thomas Cole*, 219-221.

right of the structure. Fraser also alludes to Crawford's Inn, but deemphasizes its presence by placing it farther in the distance and minimizing color contrast between it and the mountain beyond. Whereas Fraser's sketch is vacant of figures, Cole depicts tourists in the distance and one lone figure on a bucking horse exploring the otherwise still valley and placid river of Cole's composition. Although Cole's sketch of the Notch [Fig. 3.11] is dated July of that year, his final composition offers an autumnal scene not uncommon among Hudson River school artists eager to celebrate the unique coloring of fall foliage in the American Northeast. Here, Cole's autumnal coloring also signifies the end of the life cycle and, more specifically, the tragic demise of the Willey family. Cole emphasizes the sublimity of the sight in a way that Fraser still does not, by incorporating dark, foreboding storm clouds at left and blasted trees on either side of the foreground, as well as throughout the valley beyond, alluding to the deadly avalanche.

Fraser's sketch has far more generalized forms than Cole's finished painting, but one must remember that Fraser's work is indeed a preparatory drawing and so not indicative of the degree of finish one might expect from a final composition. Fraser's watercolor is, in terms of coloring at least, more finished than Cole's preparatory sketch. Accurately capturing the coloring of the scene appears to have been of utmost importance to Fraser, as he notes certain color contrasts he observed on the top right of the sketch. Certainly, Fraser's eagerness to be as accurate as possible in his rendering indicates that he took to heart the Hudson River school's preference for depicting *real* American sights. Cole, too, made small notes to himself as he sketched the scene before him. Though a graphite sketch entirely absent of color, Cole's drawing does offer some detail of form – particularly in regards to the badly damaged tree trunk in the foreground. Although he

seems to have spent more time on this form than others in his sketch, the tree does not appear in his final composition. Instead, it is replaced by two more expressive, anthropomorphic trees that frame the scene. Cole also moved the Willey House farther away from the Crawford Inn and cast it in a brilliant light, distinguishing it from the structure denoting tourism and, in so doing, insuring the viewer's focus on the dual themes of tourism and sublimity.

The most significant difference between Cole and Fraser's depictions of the Notch is the vantage point presented. Cole places the viewer in the treacherous wilderness with blasted forms and tree stumps hindering passage into the valley beyond. Fraser, by contrast, places the viewer directly on an easily navigable dirt path that presumably leads one safely into the valley pictured. The subject of Fraser's sketch, like that of Cole, appears to be the tragedy of the Willey family and the horrible awesomeness of nature, and yet he composes the scene in a way that minimizes any potential threat. Instead, the artist offers a more truthful rendering than Cole's in that the viewer's perspective is aligned with that of the artist as tourist. A Charlestonian tourist's description of her experience visiting the Notch nicely compliments Fraser's sketch of the sight:

The White Mountain House stands in a green valley just at the entrance of the Notch... Nothing can exceed the lonely grandeur of the scene... The Willey House is plainly seen, and the tragic tale connected with it, gives a kind of human interest to the wild and desolate landscape.²⁵⁷

The viewer of Fraser's sketch, therefore, like the artist himself, approaches the scene as a tourist observing the remnants of a *past* event. Fraser did not modify colors or the

²⁵⁷ The author, a Charleston tourist named Cecilia, goes on to describe the tour of the house provided by a member of the Crawford family who stayed there during the summer months. Cecilia, "Memories of Home Travels," *Southern Literary Messenger* 10 (Richmond, VA: MacFarlane, Fergusson, & Co., 1854): 31.

placement of forms within the composition to evoke a mood or to heighten sublimity as Cole did. Purposefully or not, Fraser's watercolor sketch reflects the southern Romantic predilection for nostalgia and subdued sublimity. Instead of a scene fraught with impending danger, Fraser depicts a memorial. The Willey family home appears distant and tomb-like, a ghostly reference to the Willey family and a solemn reminder of the dangers that confront pioneering Americans.²⁵⁸

Tourists flocked to White Mountain locales, including Lake Winnepesaukee and the Notch recorded in Fraser's 1831-ca.1834 sketchbook.²⁵⁹ If he did not study paintings of the American Northeast by Cole, Fisher, Doughty, and others exhibited toward the end of his northern tour, Fraser, an otherwise well-traveled artist who kept abreast of northern exhibitions and avidly collected prints, would have been aware of their favorable reception.²⁶⁰ At the very least he would have known of the success experienced by Fisher and Doughty when they joined a small group of artists to organize what became known as "The Artist's Exhibition" at Chester Harding's Gallery in Boston during May of 1834. This exhibition of over one hundred and thirty-one paintings included forty painted and

²⁵⁸ The stratified boulders that appear at the far left of the composition can be interpreted as suggestive of the avalanche that killed the Willey family. But such an analysis must also consider other sketches of rock formations in the same sketchbook, wherein Fraser rendered the rocky forms in a similar manner. Charles Fraser Sketchbook, 1831-ca.1834, Gibbs Museum of Art.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ In 1828 and 1833, three paintings of Lake Winnepesaukee and the surrounding landscape, including *View in New Hampshire*, by Thomas Doughty, were exhibited at the American Academy of Fine Arts. Lake Winnepesaukee was called "Lake Winnepiseogee," Winnepisogn Lake," or "Winnepisiogee" during the early nineteenth century. Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union*, 81 and 11. Cole's *View in the White Mountains*, *View of the Catskill Mountains*, *View of the Round-top in the Catskill Mountains*, and *View on Lake Winnepiseogee* were exhibited at the National Academy of Design in 1828 and 1829. Cowdrey, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1826-1860*, 1:87-88.

sketched landscapes by Doughty (five of which where New Hampshire scenes) and thirty-six by Fisher (including three views of America's natural attractions).²⁶¹

In addition to this landmark exhibition, which signaled an attempt by a group of Bostonian artists to challenge the authority of the Boston Athenaeum, Fraser would also have been aware of the success of Joshua Shaw's *Picturesque Views of American Scenery* (1820-21).²⁶² In fact, Shaw's publication could be considered a possible source of inspiration for Fraser's 1831-ca.1834 sketchbook. Certainly Fraser's preference for views of the American wilderness, when considered alongside Shaw's own, lends itself to such a comparison. Furthermore, Fraser would have had access to a copy of Shaw's publication held at the Charleston Library as early as 1826.²⁶³ However, the date of Fraser's sketchbook suggests he was responding in part to recent exhibitions of paintings that depicted similar subject matter, rather than Shaw's drawings. Thanks to ongoing correspondences with his northern artist friends, his growing collection of prints, and his own northern travels, Fraser was well informed about recent exhibitions of landscape paintings and the northeastern market's shift toward reconsidering the genre. He, like Fisher and Cole, commenced a tour of the White Mountains so that he could explore the sights described in tour books and, ultimately, to record views in pencil and watercolor for later use with composing larger, oil landscape paintings. If Fraser did seek to publish his drawings as Shaw had his own, then Fraser would have presumably sought out

²⁶¹ Doughty's New Hampshire landscapes included: *View of Winepiseogee Lake, Squam Lake, N.H.*, *Study of White Mountain Scenery*, *New Hampshire Lake Scene*, and *Winter in New Hampshire*. Fisher's landscapes included *The Rapids – a Composition*, *The Bowl of the White Mountains*, and *Berkshire Scenery, a Study*. *Catalogue of Paintings at the Artist's Exhibition in Harding's Gallery, School Street, Boston* (Boston: J.H. Eastburn, 1834), 3-4. Exhibition Catalogue.

²⁶² Crowley, "The American Republic Joins the British Global Landscape," 116. Nygren, *Views and Visions*, 46-49.

²⁶³ *A Catalogue of the Books Belonging to the Charleston Library Society*, n.p.

printers and engravers in Philadelphia, perhaps those same individuals with whom he engaged in 1816. Although he may have considered it, there exists no evidence to suggest that he pursued such an opportunity.

Fraser did, however, exhibit and sell his work, both miniature portraits and landscape paintings, while traveling in the Northeast. There was first the 1816 series of views Moses Thomas purchased in Philadelphia and, fifteen years later, the Boston Athenaeum's exhibition and purchase of Fraser's *Interior of a Chapel* in 1831.²⁶⁴ Three years later, Isaac P. Davis, a Boston statesman and member of the Boston Athenaeum's Fine Arts Committee, requested that Fraser send more paintings for exhibition.²⁶⁵ These landscapes, however, likely predated Fraser's 1830s northern tours.²⁶⁶ The compositions, which included three oil paintings and one sketch, prompted encouragement from Allston, who, following a visit from Fraser in 1833, wrote to their mutual friend, John Cogdell: "I have had a pleasant visit from Fraser; he brought with him several landscapes that do him honor."²⁶⁷ Robert C. Winthrop purchased these landscapes from Fraser and exhibited them at the Boston Athenaeum the following year, in 1834.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ The Boston Athenaeum purchased *Interior of Chapel* from Charles Fraser in 1831 for \$100. The price was comparable to that paid by the same institution for Annibale Carracci's *Self-Portrait*, Correggio's *Charity*, and Allston's *Head of a Jew*. The first two were likely copies. Swan, *The Athenaeum Gallery, 1827-1873*, 17. Perkins and Gavin, eds, *The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index, 1827-1874*, 60.

²⁶⁵ In a letter to Robert C. Winthrop in Boston, to whom Fraser entrusted his paintings for exhibition, the artist specified precisely how he wanted his work displayed: "Let me request that the frames may be handled carefully... As for their position in the exhibition, I would request that they may be placed about the height that they are in your room. – at all events that the base of the landscapes be not lower than the level of the eye." Charles Fraser to Robert C. Winthrop, 29 April 1834, in Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbs Museum of Art.

²⁶⁶ The specific landscape compositions by Frasers that were included in this exhibition have not been identified.

²⁶⁷ Washington Allston to John Cogdell, 9 October 1833, reprinted in Allston, *The Correspondence of Washington Allston*, 337.

²⁶⁸ Perkins and Gavin, eds, *The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index, 1827-1874*, 60. In the same letter wherein Fraser describes how he would prefer Winthrop hang his landscape paintings

The critical reception of Fraser's paintings in the Northeast is, unfortunately, difficult to ascertain largely because, as David Derringer notes in *Rave Reviews*, meaningful art criticism prior to the late 1830s is largely non-existent.²⁶⁹ Instead, most exhibition reviews simply list some of the art objects displayed and briefly describe select works. A reader might come across some criticism regarding subject matter, but the artist's technique was not discussed. This deficit, Derringer argues, was amended by 1840 when the Hudson River school's productions began to be recognized as signifying a distinctly American art movement. As writers visited more exhibitions, they became more experienced with the act of viewing and analyzing art. Overtime, new periodicals and journals dedicated to art began to appear, including *Transactions* (founded by the Apollo Association in 1839) and the *Crayon* (established in New York in 1855).²⁷⁰ These publications offered longer articles with more in-depth discussion of specific art objects, artists' biographies, and aesthetic theories. Fraser's early exhibition efforts in the Northeast predate the development of American art criticism, so little is known as to how his landscape paintings were received beyond various institutions' exhibition records and catalogues, commissions noted in Fraser's account book, and correspondences between patrons and artists.

The absence of critical reviews related to Fraser's work and his only partial conformity to northern Romanticism, traditionally generalized as "American Romanticism," explain the artist's absence from our canonical understanding of the

at the Boston Athenaeum, the artist acknowledges receiving Winthrop's request for another landscape painting – this one modeled after a sketch in his 1831-ca.1834 sketchbook. Charles Fraser to Robert C. Winthrop, 29 April 1834, in Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art.

²⁶⁹ Derringer, *Rave Reviews*, 18.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

American landscape painting tradition. But Fraser's landscapes cannot be easily dismissed as the work of an untrained and uninformed artist. Rather, Fraser's landscape images, considered in their entirety, exemplify distinctions between northern and southern taste for Romantic landscape painting and the artist's struggle to clarify those differences in his work.

Southern Romantic Taste and Landscape Painting in Charleston

In his hometown of Charleston, Fraser was confronted by an obstacle that he did not encounter during his northern travels – the continued preference for portraits among patrons. But creating a southern market for landscape painting required more than earning a reputation among planters with whom Fraser shared familial and intellectual connections. It also required appealing to the aesthetic ideals of his planter patrons – something that Fraser would have learned from the example set by his friend, Washington Allston. The Allston family, wealthier than the Frasers, owned numerous plantations and tracts of land in and around Georgetown, just north of Charleston.²⁷¹ Allston, a permanent resident of Boston by 1818, received high praise for his allegorical, historical, and landscape paintings. He did not choose to depict specific American locales, as did painters associated with the Hudson River school, but instead preferred imaginary vistas inspired by European landmarks.²⁷² His poetic landscapes, such as *Rocky Coast with Banditti*, painted during a visit to Charleston in 1800 [Fig. 2.11], project a moody and timeless quality, evoking a sense of reverie. Allston was the model for American artists attempting to create work that would rival European Romantic

²⁷¹ Plat of Georgetown District in Mills, *Atlas of the State of South Carolina*, n.p.

²⁷² Nygren, *Views of Visions*, 71.

paintings. For many artists, Allston, a Romantic painter and writer, represented a link between northern and southern painters, between the Anglo-American literary and visual art worlds.²⁷³

But while Allston's paintings were highly praised and Charleston newspapers celebrated him as a proud product of South Carolina, seldom did southern patrons purchase or commission work from the artist.²⁷⁴ His Romantic, often sublime, landscapes did not appeal to the planter class at that early juncture.²⁷⁵ Fraser, deeply immersed in Charleston's high society, embarked on a different path. Dependent on the approval of his southern clientele to maintain his status as a determiner of taste in Charleston, Fraser nonetheless encouraged them to reconsider the landscape genre, while also carefully considering the aesthetic values of the planter elite and their preference for certain literary and historical subjects.

Well versed in Platonic, Aristotelian, and Ciceronian aesthetic theories, southern patrons concerned themselves with art's relationship to ethics and human conduct more than the art object's appearance or the technique employed in its production.²⁷⁶ In their minds, fine art was not merely decorative or entertaining, but, more importantly, high art

²⁷³ In addition to painting allegorical and romantic landscape paintings, Washington Allston also wrote poetry, art treatises (color was of particular interest to him), and a novel, *Monaldi* (1842). Artist friends praised Allston's abstract thinking.

²⁷⁴ The best known exception to this general rule is *Spalatro, or Vision of the Bloody Hand* (1823), which Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Swinton Ball of Charleston commissioned from Allston. The Balls loaned *Spalatro* for exhibition on several occasions, most notably to the National Academy of Design in 1832 and the Carolina Art Association in 1860. In 1860, almost twenty years after Allston's death, his distant cousin and co-founder of the Carolina Art Association, John Ashe Alston, acquired two of the artists' paintings: *Marine View* and an untitled landscape. Rutledge, "Visual Arts in South Carolina," 27.

²⁷⁵ Rutledge, *Artists in the Life of Charleston*, 102. Although Allston created landscape paintings, he is better known for his history and religious paintings.

²⁷⁶ McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 81. For a more thorough examination of significance of ancient and eighteenth-century philosophers to developing aesthetic ideologies among American patrons, see Storr, "Ut Pictura Rhetorica," 1-8.

had a moralizing component that would provoke contemplation and improve the manners and decorum of its beholder.²⁷⁷ For these reasons, southern patrons favored aristocratic portraiture, even miniatures, which represented exemplary relatives, military heroes, and patriotic statesmen. History paintings were nominally interesting, but only if they were produced in the classical style of Benjamin West or John Singleton Copley and represented a subject deemed virtuous to Southerners.²⁷⁸ American genre scenes with social or humorous content were dismissed as smut, while old master paintings – be they originals or copies – were the highlight of a southern art collection. Before 1830, if one found any landscape paintings in a southern collection, they would have been classical, picturesque compositions after Claude or Poussin.²⁷⁹ If a collection included other landscapes, they would have been small-scale, cabinet-size watercolor views, such as those created by Thomas Coram or Charles Fraser as a youth.

The estate portraits in Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook (discussed in chapter two) undoubtedly assisted in his early efforts to appeal to potential southern patrons of landscape images. Certainly a picturesque landscape sketch of one's plantation modeled after British estate views, would have appealed to its owner. Fraser may have even aspired to compile and publish these estate portraits as William Russell Birch (1755-

²⁷⁷ Northern and European artists and patrons generally shared these general views about the moral implications of art. This is evident in the morally instructive aspect of history paintings and in some landscape painters' attempts to imbue their work with spiritual or ethical significance. Where southern patrons differed was in their aristocratic, almost paternal outlook. They understood themselves to be responsible for insuring that art lived up to these high ethical standards so that future generations and lower class individuals could learn from them. Ironically, most of these exemplary works that became part of southern collections were not publically exhibited, but displayed in one's private residence for the viewing pleasure of the owner and his upper class visitors.

²⁷⁸ Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 127.

²⁷⁹ Salvator Rosa's paintings were too overtly sublime to appeal to most southern collectors, although prints after his work can be found in some collections.

1834) did his own drawings of northern manors in *The Country Seats of the United States of North America* (1808).²⁸⁰ At the very least, Fraser would have known of Coram's success selling his similarly sized oil sketches of Mulberry Plantation to the estate's owner, Thomas Radcliffe. Coram's views of the planter's property, created in the 1790s with gilded titles painstakingly inscribed on a mat beneath each scene, were framed and displayed in the foyer of Radcliffe's Charleston residence.²⁸¹ These plantation portraits did more than remind the patron of his country estates, they also convinced visitors to Radcliffe's city abode of his wealth and social standing.²⁸² The emerging market (however small) for cabinet-size landscapes would have appealed to Fraser, who seems to have been most comfortable painting on a small scale.²⁸³

For the most part, however, what experiences Charlestonians had with the landscape genre prior to 1830 was through panoramas exhibited by entrepreneurs or artists passing through town.²⁸⁴ Panoramas displayed in Charleston between 1816 and 1833 provided visitors with a glimpse of Europe without wandering far from home. Although some panoramas depicted American vistas, those of foreign, particularly

²⁸⁰ A key inside the cover of the sketchbook assigns colors to numbers that appear throughout the unfinished graphite drawings that follow. Such notations suggest Fraser's intention to create finished compositions derived from these sketches at a later date. Birch's publication was the first color plate book of American scenes. William Russell Birch, *The Country Seats of the United States of North America* (Bristol, PA: W. Birch, 1808). For more on Birch's publication, see Crowley, "The American Republic Joins the British Global Landscape," 112.

²⁸¹ Lucretia C. Radcliffe Inventory, December 5, 1821. Charleston City Inventories, Book F, 1819-1824, South Carolina Department of Archives and History. These generalized, yet accurate, views include among them one of the few depictions of eighteenth-century slave quarters. This image is signed on the back: "Thomas Coram Artist." All Mulberry plantation views are held at the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston, South Carolina.

²⁸² Weekley, *Painters and Paintings in the Early American South*, 25.

²⁸³ Fraser's largest sketches measure to approximately 10 x 16 inches, while his paintings were only slightly larger, the larger canvases measuring to 24 x 32 inches.

²⁸⁴ Invented in 1789 by Robert Baker of Ireland, panoramas enjoyed popularity in Europe as well as in the United States throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 50.

European, scenes were far more popular in southern towns. Some of the most highly praised views included cityscapes of Rome, complete with modern churches, palaces, and ruins, as well as more general scenes representing portions of Russia, Holland, France, Egypt, and even China.²⁸⁵ In addition to entertaining audiences and in conjunction with southern patrons' interest in the moral value of art, these wide-angled representations of specific locales comprised an educational component. Historical events, societies, and monuments that appeared within these scenes were thought to enlighten audiences. They reminded those who had embarked on the European Grand Tour of places visited and offered new visual information to those who had not experienced the sights first hand.

As well received as these European panoramas were in Charleston, those that included views of the American Northeast were comparatively unsuccessful. While John Vanderlyn's *Panorama of the Palace and Garden of Versailles* (1818-19) received enthusiastic accolades when it made its southern debut in Charleston in 1822, *Panorama of Boston* shown in the same year and displayed alongside a collection of exotic animals was entirely ignored by the Charleston press.²⁸⁶ This public disregard for northern scenery did not last long, however, thanks in part to the Fraser's efforts. The persistent artist found a market for his Niagara Falls paintings and sketches in the person of former Baron, now South Carolina resident Sir James Wright and, later, avid art collector Dr.

²⁸⁵ Some of the panoramas exhibited in Charleston included: Rome (*Courier*, Jan 16, 1816); Mr. Ardemon's exhibition of Russia, Holland, France, Italy, Spain, Egypt, and China (*Courier*, Jan 9, 19, 28 & Feb 6, 1819); Florence (*Courier*, Dec 29, 1823); and Robert Burford's views of Mexico (*Courier*, March 15, 1830, March 17, 1835; *Mercury*, March 17, 1830) and Geneva (*Courier*, Jan 17, 22, Marc 18, 1835; *Mercury*, Jan 5, 26, Feb 28, 1835). McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 52.

²⁸⁶ Vanderlyn's *Marius* and *Ariadne*, exhibited at the same time, were also praised by Charlestonians. The Boston panorama display was organized by a team that called itself Smith and Warrall. The images displayed therein were painted by H.A. Baker and John and Robert Burford. McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 51-52.

Robert W. Gibbes. The Charleston market was quick to respond. An advertisement in the *Charleston Courier* dated August 27, 1821 stated that local art auctions had begun offering northern landscape paintings by Shaw, Doughty, and Birch.²⁸⁷ Positive reception of northern scenes was brief and quickly diminished by the 1830s, when the Nullification Crisis sparked regional tensions and Southerners became increasingly sensitive to feeling politically and culturally isolated from the Northeast.²⁸⁸

Though northern scenes did not appeal, neither did southern-specific views, which only served to remind patrons of the land they saw everyday and thus called to mind their agrarian responsibilities. Unlike many Northerners, who on some level felt the desire to preserve the wilderness increasingly threatened by expanding urban centers and, in a few cases, the transcendentalist desire to commune with Nature, Southerners, immersed in agrarian societies, felt no real sentimental attachment to the land during the 1830s.²⁸⁹ En lieu of distinctly American scenes, these southern patrons favored contrived picturesque views of either ancient roman ruins in the style of Claude or mysterious gothic castles reminiscent of the English Romantic landscape painting style discussed earlier. These Romantic landscape paintings, cloaked in nostalgia, offered an escape or respite from the planter's reality and in so doing served a purpose not entirely dissimilar to that of northern wilderness landscapes for northern patrons.

²⁸⁷ This auction included Doughty's *A Hunt*, *View on Lake Champlain*, *View on the Canal Road*, *Philadelphia*, *View near the Falls of Schuylkill*, *A view of a Fish House on the Schuylkill*, *View of the Woodlands near Philadelphia*, *Capture of the Macedonian*, *Capture of the Guerriere*, *Capture of the Frolic*, and *View of the Natural Bridge in Virginia*, as well as *The Deluge* by Joshua Shaw. *Courier* (Charleston), April 27, 1821.

²⁸⁸ John Earl Bassett, ed. *Defining Southern Literature: Perspectives and Assessments, 1831-1952* (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), 15. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 127.

²⁸⁹ It was not until after the mid-nineteenth century, when the Civil War devastated the southern landscape and threatened to destroy their agrarian way of life, that Southerners became nostalgic and sentimental about the land.

An oil painting attributed to Fraser, *Landscape at sunrise with water, figure, boat, ruins* (1830-40) as well as his lesser known *Untitled (Landscape with Mossy Trees and Distant Ruins)* (ca. 1840) reveal the artist's familiarity with his Charlestonian patrons' preference for distinctly southern Romantic landscapes. Embarking on this trajectory, Fraser sought guidance composing *Landscape at sunrise with water, figure, boat, ruins* (1830-40) [Fig. 3.12] from Doughty's *Ruins in a Landscape* (1828) [Fig. 3.13]. Though Doughty is traditionally linked to the Hudson River school, some of his more imaginative landscape paintings complimented the southern Romantic taste in a way that the allegorical and wilderness landscapes by Cole, for example, did not.

Doughty's *Ruins in a Landscape* is a serene representation of an imagined scene in which two figures in a boat navigate the shoreline of a placid lake from which emerges the ruins of a stone structure positioned in the center of the composition. The warm glow of a setting sun tinges the uppermost foliage of the Claudean trees flanking the well-lit foreground. Parallels between Fraser's arrangement of forms in *Landscape at sunrise with water, figure, boat, ruins* attest to his having seen Doughty's painting. In both compositions, centrally located stone ruins are reflected in a placid lake occupying the middle ground. Yet Fraser's comparatively darker rendering of forms cast in shadow by a dilapidated stone structure heightens the drama of the scene. Noticeably absent of figures, Fraser's composition places greater emphasis on the crudely articulated ruin at center. Rays of sunlight, with their point of origin just beyond the castle, extend across a brilliantly lit sky, drawing the viewer's attention to the mysterious ruin. Thick, foreboding clouds threaten to cast Fraser's scene in complete darkness, while in Doughty's work, soft, ethereal clouds seem to dissipate, permitting a soft light to

permeate the landscape. Doughty's composition offers entry into the scene by placing the viewer on a level dirt path that leads to the boaters. The viewer of Fraser's painting, in contrast, is presented with an impenetrable, somewhat treacherous terrain. A stream guides the viewer visually into the composition, while partially submerged, blasted tree trunks simultaneously deny entry.

Fraser's dark, brooding depiction of ruins within a seemingly uninhabitable landscape prefigures the southern gothic movement of the post-bellum era and later, which concerned itself with denying the unpleasant realities of the present in favor of romanticizing the glories of the past.²⁹⁰ The southern gothic tradition typically involved romanticizing the antebellum past, but here Fraser, a southern antebellum artist, applies a similar sentiment to an imagined prospect reminiscent of the Old World. In so doing, he created a composition that would have appealed to his southern patrons' romantic taste by offering a fantastic medieval diversion from their reality.

A similar sentimental nostalgia touched with sublimity is evident in Fraser's *Untitled (Landscape with Mossy Trees and Distant Ruins)* [Fig. 3.14], an oblique composition that places the viewer in a dark, swampy woodland at dusk. The oval format, atypical of Fraser's landscape paintings, creates the illusion that one is peeking into a distant, unattainable realm. Moss-laden tree branches engulfing the foreground, part to reveal a gently flowing stream. In the distance, the soft blush of a setting sun draws attention to the ruins of a medieval castle, its tiered roofline just visible beyond the dense foliage. Unlike *Landscape at sunrise with water, figure, boat, ruins*, this untitled composition is pure fantasy, not having been inspired by an earlier painting or print. The

²⁹⁰ Estill Curtis Pennington, *A Southern Collection* (Augusta, GA: Morris Museum of Art and Morris Communications Corporation, 1992), 152.

simplified, untextured appearance of some organic forms, are reminiscent of the otherworldly quality that characterizes many of Fraser's earlier landscape drawings from his 1796-1806 sketchbook. This is most evident in the linear quality of the water's rapids and its rhythmic ambling downhill, the perfect smoothness of the rocks in the foreground, the rubbery appearance of the tree trunks, and the fading façade of the distant structure. But the untrained painter's composition also shows signs of his artistic maturation. The flat coloring of his early works is replaced by a greater reliance on chiaroscuro. This effect, coupled with a variation of brushstrokes that permitted the artist to carefully articulate leafy vines and hanging moss in the foreground and broadly define the ruin in the background, work together to create a more convincing illusion of depth than Fraser had been capable of in his youth. Both of these formal enhancements are also, of course, owing in part to Fraser's use of oil paints, which offer greater tonal variation than do watercolors.

Fraser's account book attests to his popularity among South Carolina's planter class, but perhaps his most avid patron was Dr. Robert Wilson Gibbes (1809-1866), who began commissioning work from the artist in 1830.²⁹¹ It is not known how Fraser met the physician, but historian Walter Edgar suggests that James DeVeaux, Fraser's friend and a favorite artist of the Gibbes family, may have facilitated the connection before the artist's death in 1844.²⁹² Indeed, when Gibbes wrote *A Memoir of James De Veaux, of*

²⁹¹ Under the year 1830, two commissions are recorded for Robert W. Gibbes; one was a miniature of Gibbes himself, the other a miniature of his wife. Charles Fraser Account Book reprinted in Severens and Wyrick, eds., *Charles Fraser of Charleston*, 130.

²⁹² Walter Edgar, "Robert Wilson Gibbes: Columbia Patron and Collector" in *From Artist to Patron: The Fraser Collection of Engravings presented to Dr. Robert Gibbes*. (Columbia, SC: McKissick Museum and The Institute for Southern Studies with University of the South Carolina, 1985), 3.

Charleston, S.C. (1846), the first publication to focus on a southern artist, he dedicated the book to Charles Fraser:

In giving to the public this tribute of friendship to a son of your native city, I would do injustice to my feelings, were I to omit inscribing it to you. South Carolina, the mother of your distinguished friend, the illustrious Allston, has reason to be proud of the names she has furnished to Art, and yours has ever been prominent in its history in the United States. The accomplishments of the scholar, the fine taste of the artist, and the successful versatility of your pencil, require this testimony of respect and esteem.²⁹³

As expressed in his dedication, Gibbes appreciated Fraser not only for his artistic ability, but also for his aesthetic taste. The Columbia-based physician purchased both miniature portraits and landscape paintings from Fraser.²⁹⁴ According to a catalogue published in honor of Fraser's 1857 retrospective exhibition in Charleston, Gibbes loaned nearly 10% of the landscape images displayed in addition to various portraits and miniatures.²⁹⁵ Among these were two paintings of Niagara Falls. Fraser, it seems was able sell his northern scenes as easily as any other to his southern patrons. In fact, a writer for *Chicora Magazine* praised Fraser's Niagara views displayed in an exhibition sponsored by the Apprentice's Library Society of Charleston in 1842. The reviewer, who celebrated Fraser's ability to realize "all the grand, yet tranquil majesty of the scene," described the shared sense of pride felt by the Charleston community, who eagerly claimed Fraser as

²⁹³ Robert Wilson Gibbes, *A Memoir of James De Veaux, of Charleston, S.C.* (Columbia, SC: J.C. Morgan, 1846), dedication.

²⁹⁴ Charles Fraser Account Book reprinted in Severens and Wyrick, eds., *Charles Fraser of Charleston*, 130.

²⁹⁵ Gibbes is listed as owner of at least eight landscapes listed in the Fraser Gallery catalogue. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 22, 26, and 28. According to Gibbes' catalogue, he also owned *Shade of Blandusia* (one of Fraser's last works), not listed in the Fraser Gallery catalogue. *Catalogue of Paintings, Marbles and Casts, in the Collection of R.W. Gibbes, M.D., Columbia, S.C.* (Columbia: Robert Wilson Gibbes, ca.1860), 9. Edgar, "Robert Wilson Gibbes," 4.

their own.²⁹⁶ Fraser's Niagara Falls paintings appear to have been the most favored of his northern scenes among southern patrons. But they were not the only northern views collected by Fraser's Charleston clientele. In her informal 1838 assessment of South Carolina planter Elias Ball's art collection titled "A Southern Sketch," Mary Elizabeth Lee described Fraser's *Squam Lake* (another northern scene) as having a coloring "so true to nature as to seem cold, for that is the actual peculiarity of these scenes." She goes on to note her preference for the artist's Niagara scenes: "The warmer pictures of this accomplished artist give me more pleasure, particularly his views of Niagara, which Allston once said looked like water rushing out of space."²⁹⁷

Unfortunately, the views of Niagara owned by Gibbes no longer exist. The vast majority of Gibbes' art collection, including many of Fraser's landscapes, was destroyed when General William Sherman set fire to it at the close of the Civil War.²⁹⁸ However, a surviving catalogue lists paintings, sculptures, sketches, and engravings within the collection, which also included a considerable number of works by members of Fraser's artist circle.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ The full quote, as transcribed by Anna Wells Rutledge, reads: "he [Fraser] has realized, unsurpassed by others, all the grand, yet tranquil majesty of the scene... Need we mention how our pride rose within us, when, for the first time, we heard his name, with those of Trouche, and Cogdell, thus honorably mentioned, along with Washington Allston, as artists of whose reputation our city might boast?" *Chicora Magazine* (July 1842) as quoted in Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p.

²⁹⁷ Mary Elizabeth Lee, "Southern Sketch: Private Collection of Paintings" in Caroline Gilman, *The Poetry of Travelling in the United States* (New York: S. Coleman, 1838), 260.

²⁹⁸ Georgia Brady Baumgardner, "Print Collecting in Antebellum America" in *From Artist to Patron: The Fraser Collection of Engravings Presented to Dr. Robert Gibbes* (Columbia, SC: McKissick Museum and the Institute for Southern Studies with the University of South Carolina, 1985), 25.

²⁹⁹ The collection included: "62 paintings, 18 portraits, 4 bust, 1 marble statuette, 5 casts, 140 engravings in 'The Fraser Collection of Engravings,' 44 engravings in 'The Forster Collection of Engravings,' 12 engravings of 'Outlines and Sketches by Washington Allston' and other engravings after works by Titian, Corregio, Rubens, Raphael, Van Dyck, Veronese, Annibale, Velasquez, Fuseli, Gainsborough, Lawrence, etc." Edgar, "Robert Wilson Gibbes," 5.

Perhaps as a final gesture of gratitude to his esteemed patron, upon the artist's death, Fraser bequeathed to Gibbes one picture and his personal portfolio of engravings.³⁰⁰ These one hundred and forty engravings are grouped together in the catalogue and designated "The Fraser Collection of Engravings." They comprised portrait, religious, allegorical, as well as landscape prints ranging from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Most appear to have been English reproductions of Renaissance and Baroque paintings by Raphael, Guido Reni, Rubens, and others.³⁰¹

Fraser collected a wide array of engravings from the sublime landscapes of Rosa to the picturesque views by Claude.³⁰² Like so many other American landscape painters, Fraser himself oscillated between the sublime and the beautiful and picturesque throughout his career. The rugged wilderness of his untitled landscape, for example is more akin to Rosa's tempestuous landscapes rife with danger than the pastoral Claudean estate portraits of his youth.

³⁰⁰ Fraser also left Gibbes "___ picture of the pilgrim" Charles Fraser's Will, Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca. 1700- ca. 1905, South Carolina Historical Society.

³⁰¹ No documentation exists that explains how Fraser obtained prints or his method of acquisition. Some prints may have been purchased in lots. Like many collectors, Fraser likely purchased prints from various venues visited in the many cities through which he traveled. Baumgardner, "Print Collecting in Antebellum America," 26.

³⁰² According to Fraser's scrapbook of lithographs, the artist began collecting prints during his 1816 trip north. Although some engravings are missing from his scrapbook, handwritten notes testify to his collecting prints after Salvator Rosa, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and others. See Charles Fraser Scrapbook of Lithographs, Gibbes Museum of Art. Upon his death, Fraser bequeathed a large number of some of his more valuable engravings to one of his most avid patrons, Robert W. Gibbes. See Charles Fraser's Will, Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca. 1700- ca. 1905, South Carolina Historical Society. Included in an undated catalogue listing objects within Gibbes' art collection (before it was destroyed by Sherman in 1861), is a section titled: "The Fraser Collection of Engravings." Listed therein are various European views as well as the following prints of interest to this discussion: *Belisarius* engraved by Robert Strange after Salvator Rosa, *Landscape by Claude* engraved by William Woollett after Claude, and *Landscape* engraved by Viveres after Claude. Unfortunately, because of the vague, non-descript titles given to these no longer extant Claude prints, it is impossible to ascertain precisely which Claudean compositions Fraser may have studied. "Catalogue of Paintings, Marbles and Casts, in the Collection of R.W. Gibbes, M.D., Columbia, S.C." (Columbia, SC: n.d), 9-19.

Fraser's embrace of the picturesque and fluctuation between the sublime and the beautiful is something that he shared with other landscape painters based in the Northeast. But it was also a practice that he would have learned from studying British prints, including those modeled after John "Warwick" Smith's work. The bathing light and calm scene in Fraser's *Pausippippo, near Naples* (ca. 1840) [Fig. 3.15], for example, is distinct from the wild and gloomy storm in *Rock of Scylla* (ca. 1830s) [Fig. 3.17], but both compositions are derived from similarly titled engravings [Figs. 3.16 & 3.18] after watercolors by Smith that were published in *Select Views in Italy* (1792-99). Fraser's persistent paraphrasing of prints, particularly when composing his European scenes, lends a stiff, stoic, and, as Severens has noted, a "wooden" quality to his paintings that has become part of his signature style.³⁰³ Figures, when present, appear awkwardly placed within these compositions.³⁰⁴ And, although Fraser's later landscape paintings are characterized by improved coloring and more intricate brushwork, forms are nonetheless seldom harmoniously integrated, and textural distinctions, if any, are minimal. Occasionally, as in *Rock of Scylla* and other of his compositions modeled after engravings, the light source is vaguely inconsistent. Fraser's apparent lack of pictorial imagination in the 1840s when northern artists, eager to assert their cultural independence, were beginning to discourage a reliance on Europe for visual source material, may explain why so many scholars have overlooked his landscapes. And yet Fraser's account book and correspondences testify to the fact that Fraser continued to sell these paintings.

³⁰³ Martha Severens has also suggested that Fraser looked to Jacques Callot and James Murphy when composing some of his paintings. Severens, "Charles Fraser: Sketches and Oil Paintings," 76.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-87, 91-92.

Support from Gibbes, Ball, other southern planters, as well as northern clients confirmed Fraser's reputation among the Carolinian elite. It was a respectable position that Fraser did not take lightly, and one that he would not risk losing. As a result, Fraser exercised some degree of caution when creating his landscapes, making a concerted effort to consider the preferences of his intended audience or patron. Although he sought to conform, at different times, to northern and southern tastes for Romantic landscape paintings, Fraser could never entirely relinquish his southern Romantic inclinations, as exemplified in his watercolors of Niagara Falls and the Notch in the White Mountains. Despite his failure to represent northern and southern taste with equal success, Fraser's political neutrality paid off. As relations between the North and South fluctuated between threats and compromise, Fraser maintained some semblance of neutrality. Thus, his career flourished and his reputation remained untarnished on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line.

CHAPTER 4

THE CULTURAL AUTHORITY:

CONDITIONAL PROMOTION OF THE VISUAL ARTS

By the mid-1820s Charles Fraser was in the unique position to encourage the fine arts as he saw fit. He used his newfound influence over artistic taste in Charleston to promote artistic training and, to a lesser degree, encourage aspiring artists' pursuit of landscape painting, which was already gaining credibility in the northern states.

Traditionally, Fraser is praised by scholars for being a great promoter of the fine arts in Charleston during the antebellum era and rightly so. Not only did the artist help organize local art exhibitions to be addressed later in this chapter, but he also avidly supported and kept abreast of the careers of his artist friends throughout his career. In fact, a letter in Fraser's scrapbook reveals that he conspired with South Carolina state legislator Henry W. De Saussure in November of 1825 to convince the president of the State Senate to publically display John Blake White's *Battle of New Orleans* (1816). In addition to ongoing correspondences in which he praises their work, Fraser preserved letters, newspaper and journal clippings that made reference to the accomplishments of his friends.³⁰⁵ Elsewhere in his scrapbook, for example, a clipping announces that Fraser's childhood friend, Thomas Sully (then in Philadelphia), had received a commission from the St. George Society to paint a portrait of Queen Victoria that would become one of his most acclaimed paintings. Another offers an anecdote regarding Malbone's highly

³⁰⁵ Charles Fraser Scrapbook, ca.1843, South Carolina Historical Society.

praised ivory painting, *The Hours*.³⁰⁶ Fraser was thus very much engaged with the art scene in Charleston, while maintaining his artist network that extended far beyond his hometown and supporting the work of fellow artists of his own generation.

A close examination of Fraser's essays related to art instruction and his involvement with the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts, however, indicates that Fraser's enthusiastic promotion of the visual arts, particularly as relates to art instruction, was in not entirely absolute. The Charlestonian artist was emphatic in his support of national institutions, such as the National Academy of Design. And yet, this avid encouragement did not extend to the similarly structured South Carolina Academy of Fine Art. Fraser's indifference to the South Carolina Academy, an institution founded by his artist circle during the 1820s, remains largely unexplained by scholars.

This chapter explores the extent of Fraser's promotional efforts, which were focused on artists and collectors more so than on the local art institution. More than simply a promoter of the fine arts, Fraser was also a savvy businessman with his own agenda that was tempered by southern planter social ideals. Having confirmed his role as a purveyor of taste, Fraser was reticent to promote any artistic endeavors that threatened his standing with the community or, more broadly, the social status quo endorsed by his wealthy southern clientele. As this chapter will demonstrate, Fraser would not risk his hard-earned status in order to convince a reluctant planter elite intent on perpetuating a strict social hierarchy that relied in part on withholding power and education (cultural or

³⁰⁶ The anecdote concludes with Benjamin West examining Malbone's painting and declaring to him: "you may go home by the first vessel, sir, there is not a man in Europe that can paint a picture like this." Appearing below the excerpt in Fraser's own hand is: "This is not true. Malbone copied his 'Hours' in London from Sh[e]lly's picture. As he himself told me. It is true that West admired it." Page 126 in Charles Fraser Scrapbook, ca.1843, South Carolina Historical Society.

otherwise) from the majority population to shift their support to a local art institution bent on democratizing art, such as the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art.

Charles Fraser and Art Instruction

Fraser, like his southern patrons, advocated the moral purpose of fine art and supported public exhibitions. He himself had benefitted from attending art exhibitions when no other artistic training was available to him. So when his friend Samuel F.B. Morse's National Academy came under attack, Fraser supported the institution, but qualified that support by emphasizing that traditional art instruction, learning to draw from antiquity, for example, was not in itself sufficient. Exhibitions presented students with examples of contemporary work and encouraged a competitive atmosphere in which they were pushed to achieve excellence. It must be remembered that Fraser was himself a gentleman artist. He was at once a member of the planter class that patronized the arts and an artist who worked to appeal to that class. Thus, he was constantly torn between encouraging opportunities in which aspiring American artists could acquire proper art instruction and the desire to maintain the authority of the patron as the determiner of taste. Submitting to his conciliatory nature, Fraser sought a negotiation between the two.

Though more vocal than most South Carolinians in his support of the fine arts, Fraser was not the first to encourage the arts in Charleston. Calls for the establishment of a local art institution began as early as 1784, when the *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser* encouraged the South Carolina Assembly to foster the arts in addition to their ongoing efforts to raise funds for the recently established College of

Charleston.³⁰⁷ Art, the periodical argued, was a harbinger of refinement, entertainment, and “recreation of liberality of sentiment.”³⁰⁸ As such, it was worthy of public protection and encouragement. This printed appeal led to Charleston’s first art exhibition in October 1784.³⁰⁹ Little is known of this exhibition. The only review, published in the *Gazette*, described the subjects of the paintings therein as “taken from the designs of celebrated writers.”³¹⁰ Other exhibitions followed, with the College of Charleston hosting a similarly non-descript show to raise funds in 1791.

These events must have fared well despite the lack of press support, because by 1797 another periodical, the *South Carolina Weekly Museum* began suggesting the creation of a permanent picture gallery. Such an establishment would improve taste and inspire “virtuous emotions and interesting thoughts.”³¹¹ A collection of work by the best artists, the author argued, would provide an opportunity for visitors to “pass away a leisure hour without running into the violence of party rage and hold a conversation with one of opposite politics, without offending manner.” Such fine art, which promoted diversion and cultivated refined taste without relaxing virtue, the author believed, would undoubtedly receive support from men of wealth and taste.

The author’s optimism was not entirely unfounded. As Sallie Doescher explains in her essay, “Art Exhibitions in Nineteenth-Century Charleston,” most of these art exhibitions fell into one of two categories: they were either sponsored by organizations

³⁰⁷ *South Carolina Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston), February 27, 1784.

³⁰⁸ *South Carolina Gazette and General Advertiser* (Charleston), February 5-7, 1784.

³⁰⁹ Sallie Doescher, “Art Exhibitions in Nineteenth-Century Charleston” in *Art in the Lives of South Carolinians: Nineteenth Century Chapters*, ed. David Moltke-Hansen (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1979), SD-1.

³¹⁰ *South Carolina Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston), October 26-28, 1784.

³¹¹ Ephebos (alias), “Some Observations on Pictures: With a Proposal,” *South Carolina Weekly Museum* 1, no. 22 (June 3, 1797). Anna Wells Rutledge Papers, 1887-1996, South Carolina Historical Society.

that encouraged the fine arts or they were organized by artists or traveling entrepreneurs.³¹² Charleston's Literary and Philosophical Society, founded in 1814, became one of the primary supporters of public art exhibitions. Members of the Society, like those of any other intellectual group during the antebellum years, gathered regularly to converse on topics of shared interests and learning. At the core of their ideology was the belief that such exchanges would ultimately encourage cultural advancement.³¹³ The Society, which broadly supported the liberal arts, contended that art principles should be studied as avidly as any other. Doing so would, they believed, advance public welfare and elevate the national character.

Annie Storr explores the significance of learned societies to the advancement of the fine arts in her dissertation, "Ut Pictura Rhetorica." She explains that learned men joined these societies (what Storr describes as natural extensions of collegiate practice) because it was deemed beneficial to their personal growth and requisite for becoming a leader in the community.³¹⁴ Given the economic circumstances that challenged private patronage in the early nineteenth century, establishing corporate collections seemed more feasible to many learned gentlemen. By "illuminating the learned subjects that interested members," art objects within the collection would educate the community while also assisting the development of the fine arts in America.³¹⁵

³¹² Raphael and Rembrandt Peale exhibited their work at the State House in 1796, and in a small venue at 118 Broad Street in 1804. Itinerant artists, such as Samuel F.B. Morse during his winters in Charleston between 1818 and 1821, periodically opened their studios to the public. Doescher, "Art Exhibitions in Nineteenth-Century Charleston," SD-1.

³¹³ Storr, "Ut Pictura Rhetorica," 259.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 259-266.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 266.

Fraser, who subscribed to such beliefs, was a member of Charleston's Literary and Philosophical Society as well as many other local intellectual groups.³¹⁶ As such, he would have been present when Stephen Elliott, president of the Society, delivered an inaugural address in 1814, in which he appealed to the planter elite of Charleston to support the Society's efforts to encourage the liberal arts, including the fine arts. To ignore this calling, Elliott argued, would be tantamount to "neglecting the duties they owe to society, and to their country; and debase those faculties, by which alone they are honorably distinguished in the works of creation."³¹⁷ By pandering to the planter class's Platonic belief that the fine arts must be controlled by the community's most cultivated citizens (that is, themselves), Elliott echoed sentiments expressed in earlier calls for an art institution. He asserted the importance of the elite's role in actively determining the morally instructive value of art, which "should rise above the sordid or criminal pursuits of man. They [art objects] should assume the tone of a master, not proffer the adulation of a slave."³¹⁸ Thus, guided by refined taste, art was capable of promoting noble sentiments in its viewers.

³¹⁶ Other members of the Literary and Philosophical Society included many of Fraser's southern patrons (such as Martin Strobel, Dr. Henry R. Frost, Dr. B.B. Strobel, and James Julius Pringle) as well as his friends, Stephen Elliott, Thomas S. Grimké, Mitchell King, Samuel Gilman, and John S. Cogdell. "List of Members of the Literary and Philosophical Society, February 8, 1832," South Carolina Historical Society. Fraser was a member of various societies during his lifetime, including: the Charleston Library Society (president, 1840-1842), the St. Cecilia Society (manager), the Apprentice's Library Society, and the Euphradian Society. He also participated in many other organizations, such the American Lyceum in New York and the New England Society in Charleston, though his membership is not confirmed. Additionally, Fraser served as a trustee of the College of Charleston and its Secretary-Treasurer from 1817 to 1855. Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p.

³¹⁷ Stephen Elliott, *An Address to the Literary and Philosophical Society of South-Carolina, Delivered in Charleston, on Wednesday, the 10th August, 1814* (Charleston: W.P. Young, 1814), 16.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

Perhaps inspired by Elliott's plea, the planter-sponsored Charleston Library Society began incorporating art into its collection and holding sporadic exhibitions in 1816.³¹⁹ Three years later, in 1819, Fraser and his artist circle, eager to contribute to the growing art community in Charleston, created their informal academy mentioned in chapter two. The group of artists, which included Fraser, Morse, John Cogdell, and Alvan Fisher, met nightly to draw from fragmented plaster casts after antiquity.³²⁰ Fraser's participation in this endeavor reflects his belief in the benefits of the traditional academic practice of drawing from antique sculpture.

Additional evidence of the artist's support for formal artistic training appears in an article published in *Southern Review* ten years later in 1829, in which he defends attacks launched against Morse and the nascent National Academy of Design he had co-founded in New York.³²¹ In 1825, Morse had joined other artists and disgruntled students of the American Academy of Fine Art to establish the New York Drawing Association.³²²

³¹⁹ The 1816 loan exhibition sponsored by the Charleston Library Society and held in South Carolina Society Hall was intended to serve as a foundation for a permanent art institution that never materialized. *Courier* (Charleston), March 11, 18, 19, 1816. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 135.

³²⁰ Morse acquired the casts from a wealthy Charlestonian, who did not see the value of a broken plaster Apollo. Morse explained that he mended the sculpture so that he and other artists in the Charleston community could benefit from creating drawings after them. Samuel F.B. Morse to Washington Allston, 4 February 1819, in Morse, *Samuel F.B. Morse, His Letters and Journals*, 1:221-222.

³²¹ Charles Fraser, "Fine Arts. A Reply to Article X. No. LVIII. in the North-American Review, entitled 'Academies of Arts,' &c. By Samuel F.B. Morse, President of the National Academy of Design. New-York. G. & C. Carvill. 1828." *Southern Review* (August-November 1829): 70-86.

³²² William Dunlap, keeper at the American Academy of Fine Art in 1825, described the incident that provoked the break from the institution almost two decades later in his *History of the Arts of Design*. One morning, Dunlap wrote, he came across two students (Thomas S. Cummings and Frederick S. Agate) waiting for the negligent janitor to open the doors to the Academy's gallery so that they could study the casts therein. When the janitor refused them entry, Trumbull, president of the institution, was notified and he tersely responded, "When I commenced my study of painting, there were no casts to be found in the country. I was obliged to do as well as I could. These young men should remember that *the gentlemen* have gone to a great expense in importing casts, and that they (the students), have no property in them. They must remember that beggars

When attempts to merge with the American Academy and negotiate the right for artists to be represented on the board of directors failed in 1826, the group of artists, led by Morse, formed the National Academy of Design.³²³ This institution, managed entirely by artists, sponsored annual exhibitions of contemporary American art and offered formal art instruction to aspiring American artists when none could be had at the American Academy.³²⁴

Morse's ceremonial address delivered to National Academy members in January of 1827 ignited an oratorical battle as to the merits of art institutions in the United States. In his address, Morse argued for the legitimacy of an academy led by artists rather than patrons, reminding his audience that many respected European art academies were established on similar grounds.³²⁵ If a fundamental principle of an art academy is to elevate public taste, then the artist logically emerges as a cultural leader, because, according to Morse, "individuals of a particular profession should best know how to manage what relates to that profession."³²⁶ Urging "tolerance and cooperation" among artists, Morse cautioned that dissension and professional jealousies would injure the arts

are not to be choosers." Appalled by Trumbull's response, Cummings, with the support of Academician Henry Inman, wrote a petition that eventually made its way to Samuel F.B. Morse, inspiring the artist to offer an alternative. Dunlap, *History of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:280. Founding members of the organization included: Samuel F.B. Morse, Henry Inman, Asher B. Durand, William Guy Wall, William Dunlap, and Thomas Cole. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 9-10.

³²³ Initiated in 1826, the National Academy did not receive its charter until 1828. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 12-13. For more information related to the early history of the National Academy of Design, see Thomas Seir Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design, the New York Drawing Association, Etc.* (Philadelphia: G.W. Childs, 1861).

³²⁴ Three copies were made of the original constitution for the National Academy. Unfortunately, none are known to be extant. The second constitution written in 1829, however, does survive. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 14-16.

³²⁵ Address delivered by Samuel F.B. Morse to National Academy student in May 1827 appears in its entirety in Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 37-45

³²⁶ Morse's address as printed in Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 42.

in the eye of the public and potentially divert resources necessary for the cultivation and improvement of contemporary American art, which, he lamented, had been too long overshadowed by the work of European masters.³²⁷

Attacks against the National Academy began to appear in the press and periodicals almost immediately thereafter. The most often cited response is known as “Article X” and was submitted anonymously and published in the January 1828 issue of *North American Review*. This critic found the designation of the institution troubling:

A *National* Academy may be understood to mean a public institution, founded and supported by the nation, or a private association of the first artists of the country. This Academy is of neither of these kinds. It is simply a society of artists in the city of New York, organized for the purposes of exhibition and instruction... To call themselves *National Academicians*, is making a claim of distinction which, we must say, is out of proportion to their merits.³²⁸

Beyond the author’s concern that the public might mistake the institution as representative of American art in its totality, he warned that an academy run by artists could never succeed. Patrons determined taste and so were pivotal to the success of an art academy. “Artists,” the critic argued, “cannot establish themselves in defiance of that portion of the public best qualified to judge of their work; nor hold themselves entirely independent of those who support their exhibitions and buy their pictures.”³²⁹ Other, similarly incendiary criticisms followed. American Academy supporters, no doubt

³²⁷ Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 43-44.

³²⁸ “Article X,” *North American Review* 26 (January 1828). This essay responding to Morse also appears in its entirety in Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 45-54. The quote cited is located on page 45. To his own credit, Morse defended the name of the organization by responding, “Any less name than National, would be taking one below the American Academy, and therefore is not desirable. If we were simply the Associated Artists, their name would swallow us up – therefore, National seems a proper one...” Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 27.

³²⁹ “Article X” as reprinted in Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 48.

fearing the impending decline of their institution, became deeply embroiled in the battle, with many of them labeling the upstart National Academy as mutinous.³³⁰

In the fall of 1829, Fraser, who kept abreast of the ongoing debate, submitted his *Southern Review* essay, in which he asserts the importance of offering artistic training in the United States so “that our painters and sculptors will not be compelled to become the nurselings and protégés of foreign wealth and patronage, and to seek abroad those distinctions and rewards, which ought to await them at home.”³³¹ “Mr. Morse’s Academy,” as Fraser called it, was evidentiary of a willingness to remedy this deficiency by providing art instruction.³³² Perhaps recollecting those winter evenings spent drawing from casts alongside Morse, Fisher, Cogdell, and other artists ten years earlier, Fraser wrote broadly of academies: “In our academy rooms are to be found perfect casts of all the celebrated statues which, although divested of the associations that accompany the originals, are not less useful for the purposes of the student and amateur.”³³³

But, while Fraser supported the establishment of the National Academy, he did not agree with Morse on all counts. Morse was critical of other academies, including the American Academy, which did not provide art instruction, as its designation suggested. While Fraser argued that training was indeed important, he considered it ultimately

³³⁰ Storr, “Ut Pictura Rhetorica,” 472. The decline of the American Academy of Fine Art was gradual. The final blow to the institution occurred in 1832 when they were ordered to vacate the galleries of the Old Alms House where they had rented space free of charge for sixteen years. Various attempts were made to reinvigorate the American Academy, but by 1842 the Academy’s collection was auctioned off. Myer, “The Public Display of Art in New York City, 1664-1914,” 38. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 37-38.

³³¹ Charles Fraser was elected an honorary member (meaning he was a nonresident professional artist) of the National Academy of Design in 1830, at which time the institution began including his work in their annual exhibitions. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 16, 255. Fraser, “Fine Arts. A Reply to Article X,” 73.

³³² Ibid., 83.

³³³ Ibid., 80.

subordinate to the significance of tasteful art exhibitions. By providing artists with opportunities to display their work, exhibitions bred competition and, Fraser contended, could lead to the emergence of master painters.³³⁴ Furthermore, honing one's artistic skills served no purpose if a taste for such productions was not also cultivated. Echoing Morse's plea for cooperation, Fraser directed these sentiments toward the National Academy, which, he thought, ought to take an interest in the American Academy, whose genteel board members prioritized exhibitions and patronized the fine arts.³³⁵

Through loan exhibitions, such as those sponsored by the American Academy, the public gained access to art objects that would have otherwise remained hidden. Many of the images displayed in these exhibitions were works by or after European Old Masters. In contrast to Morse, who disapproved of American patrons' preference for Old Master paintings, Fraser, subscribing to the Charlestonian taste for European art, contended that contemporary American artists had nothing to fear from the European masters.³³⁶ Fraser reassured skeptics that American art was still in its developmental stage, but even so, he argued, some American artists had shown that they could surpass their European predecessors:

We have seen many a Poussin and Wouvermans, with their brilliant skies, their mountains and rocks and waterfalls, and shepherds and shepherd's dogs, fading before the superior but unpretending beauties of a Doughty and a Cole.³³⁷

American art, such as the landscape paintings of Doughty and Cole, cultivated character and public taste, thereby enabling them to triumph over their enemy, "Old Pictures."³³⁸

³³⁴ Fraser, "Fine Arts. A Reply to Article X," 81-82.

³³⁵ Ibid., 83.

³³⁶ Ibid., 84.

³³⁷ Ibid., 85.

³³⁸ Ibid., 86.

Fraser also disagreed with Morse on the importance of formal instruction and European art, but two matters he did not dispute were the authority of the artists managing the organization and the institution's title. As far as Fraser was concerned, Morse, as a professional artist, should not be questioned in regards to his leadership of the National Academy. Falling back on his legal training, Fraser reminded his audience of the legal maxim "*Cuilibet in arte sua perito est credendum*," that any person skilled in a particular art or profession should be believed in matters related to their area of expertise.³³⁹ So if Morse sought to label the institution the "National Academy," none should argue. To this, Fraser added: "This ["National"] is merely a name, and any style assumed by the members and associates of such an institution, would be altogether innocent and harmless."³⁴⁰ It was important to Fraser that such an institution existed. It mattered less where it was established. He conceded: "In this behalf at least, we are heretic enough to surrender our state rights, and to wish that a grand system of internal improvement could be adopted, by which all the talent of the country might find a high road to its just reward."³⁴¹ This last remark is an interesting statement on Fraser's part, and one that reflects his lifelong desire for national peace and prosperity addressed in chapter three.

Negotiating between retaining his gentlemanly social status and his professional reputation as an artist proved difficult for Fraser. But by the time Fraser wrote his article in support of "Mr. Morse's Academy," the artist had already quieted this inner turmoil thanks to his having already dealt with an earlier, similar art institution and one that was closer to home. Fraser's conflicted engagement with the South Carolina Academy of Fine

³³⁹ Fraser, "Fine Arts. A Reply to Article X," 82.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 81.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

Art was complicated by his close professional ties to the founders of the institution and its location in Charleston, where he was a celebrated cultural authority.

The First Art Academy in the American South

Established in 1821, five years before the National Academy of Design, the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art was incorporated into the state of South Carolina in 1822.³⁴² Founding members, including John S. Cogdell, John B. White, and Joel R. Poinsett, were also members of Charleston's Literary and Philosophical Society and well-known supporters of the fine arts locally. A lawyer by profession, Cogdell was also a sculptor by avocation.³⁴³ White, a practicing attorney, had received formal instruction at the British Royal Academy alongside Edward Malbone and Washington Allston and worked as an amateur painter of small-scale historical paintings prior to pursuing a legal career.³⁴⁴ Though not an artist, Poinsett, was a local planter, collector of fine art, and promoter of education in the liberal arts.³⁴⁵ Together, and with the assistance of Morse, then painting portraits in Charleston during the winter seasons, the group worked hard,

³⁴² *Courier* (Charleston), Feb 17, 1821 and Jan 14, 1822. Cogdell wrote to Morse that the "Society has been incorporated: the lottery had been sold... The Society is now called the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts. & the Rules have been committed" John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 26 June 1822, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁴³ Cogdell's bust portraits were incorporated into the collections of the American Academy of Fine Art and the Boston Athenaeum by 1827. Frederic DePeyston to John Stevens Cogdell, 6 April 1827; Henry Codman to John Stevens Cogdell, 9 April 1827, in John Stevens Cogdell Notebook, South Carolina Historical Society.

³⁴⁴ White is best known for his paintings of revolutionary battle scenes, including *Battle of New Orleans* (1816) and *General Francis Marion Inviting A British Officer to Share His Meal* (1810), the latter of which was engraved and published by the Apollo Association in New York. Rutledge, "Visual Arts in South Carolina," 25.

³⁴⁵ While the Minister to Mexico from 1825 to 1830, Poinsett collected Mexican artifacts and presented them to Charleston's Literary and Philosophical Society. He also collected paintings, producing a catalogue of his extensive holdings by 1850. Also during the 1850s, Poinsett used his political influence to establish an institution in Washington, D.C. and a precursor to the Smithsonian Institution. Rutledge, "Visual Arts in South Carolina," 30. J. Fred Rippy, *Joel Poinsett, Versatile American* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1935), 198.

though ultimately unsuccessfully, to encourage local support for this first art academy in the American South.

There was some precedence for art academies in the United States by 1821, most notably the American Academy of Fine Art in New York and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art in Philadelphia.³⁴⁶ Before the emergence of the National Academy in 1826, the American Academy flourished. Founded in 1802 by a group of wealthy gentlemen and patrons led by Robert R. Livingston (then Minister to France) and his brother, Edward Livingston (Mayor of New York), the American Academy sponsored loan exhibitions that included casts after antique statuary, European Old Master paintings, and, to a lesser degree, contemporary art loaned or produced by its members.³⁴⁷ Membership was primarily limited to wealthy patrons, though a few artists were also granted admittance, including John Trumbull, who served as president of the organization from 1817 to 1836, as the institution's popularity declined in favor of the National Academy.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ The Boston Athenaeum was in existence by 1805, but it was primarily a private library for its elite members, akin to the Charleston Library Society, during the first two decades of its existence. Although local artists, including Gilbert Stuart, created portraits of some more notable members to adorn the reading room, it was not until 1826 that the Boston Athenaeum initiated plans to collect art and construct an exhibition gallery. For more information related to the history of the Boston Athenaeum Gallery, see Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Athenaeum Centenary: The Influence and History of the Boston Athenaeum, From 1807-1907* (Boston: Boston Athenaeum, 1907), 23-32; Pamela Hoyle, *A Climate for Art: The History of the Boston Athenaeum Gallery, 1827-1873* (Boston: printed by Thomas Todd Company, 1980. Exhibition Catalogue.; and Swan, *The Athenaeum Gallery, 1827-1873*.

³⁴⁷ The American Academy of Fine Art grew out of the Society for the Promotion of the Useful Arts, also founded by Robert Livingston (then Chancellor of New York) almost ten years earlier in 1791. Myer, "The Public Display of Art in New York City, 1664-1914," 34. For more information related to the early years of the American Academy, its collection of casts after antique sculpture, and organizational infrastructure, see Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 6-8.

³⁴⁸ By 1816, the by-laws of the American Academy had been modified to allow for more artists to serve on its board of directors. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 8.

Similar to the American Academy, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art considered the exhibition of art more important than formal instruction.³⁴⁹ The institution, emerging from the failure of the Columbianum founded by Charles Willson Peale, was formally established in 1805 with the goal of cultivating the fine arts and assisting aspiring artists with their studies.³⁵⁰ Although membership to the Pennsylvania Academy was initially limited to collectors, within seven years of its founding, artists as well as patrons were admitted.³⁵¹ Annual exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy began in 1807 and included American art as well as European copies and original old master paintings.³⁵²

The South Carolina Academy, like the American Academy and the Pennsylvania Academy before it, sought to cultivate public taste and improve moral character. But whereas patrons of the fine arts had been instrumental to the establishment of its predecessors, the South Carolina Academy, a precursor to the National Academy, was founded almost entirely by a group of artists who created by-laws that insured that they – not their patrons – retained control over the institution. Morse spearheaded the committee

³⁴⁹ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 136

³⁵⁰ Crowley, “The American Republic Joins the British Global Landscape,” 109. For more information about the Columbianum, its objectives and failure, see Rembrandt Peale, “Reminiscences. Exhibitions and Academies,” *The Crayon* 1, no. 19 (May 9, 1855): 290-291. The Columbianum’s first and only exhibition in 1795 is described in Derringer, “Annual Exhibitions and the Birth of American Art Criticism to 1865,” 55.

³⁵¹ Charles Willson Peale was the only artist who was also a founding member of the Pennsylvania Academy. By 1812, he was joined by Thomas Sully, Rembrandt Peale, Gilbert Stuart, Washington Allston, John Vanderlyn, Benjamin West (honorary member), and John Singleton Copley. Derringer, “Annual Exhibitions and the Birth of American Art Criticism to 1865,” 55.

³⁵² Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., “A History of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1805-1976,” in *In This Academy: The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1805-1976*, ed. Frank H. Goodyear, Jr. (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, 1976), 16-26.

that wrote the South Carolina Academy's by-laws.³⁵³ Indeed, Morse claimed credit for the effort in a letter to his wife: "I sent yesterday, to father, the (*Courier*) Feb. 18th in which you will see the notice of our Academy of Arts, the rules were drawn up principally by myself."³⁵⁴ Morse's by-laws, published in the *Charleston Courier* on February 18, 1821, declared the intentions of the Academy and outlined its infrastructure. Considering the founders' membership to the Literary and Philosophical Society, it is not surprising that the South Carolina Academy's desire to encourage the fine arts through exhibitions, lectures, and the establishment of an art school was consistent with the objectives outlined by the Society's president, Stephen Elliott, five years earlier. The Academy sought to grant public access to its collection, which would include "pictures, sculpture, drawings, casts, engravings, and books."³⁵⁵ Membership, the by-laws stated, was available to professional and amateur artists or "any individual professing any of the liberal arts."³⁵⁶ Non-artists could be admitted into the Academy only if they paid a twenty-dollar membership fee. They could even serve as officers, as did Poinsett, the institution's first president; but the Academy's by-laws made clear that only artist members could serve on the board of directors.³⁵⁷

³⁵³ In a letter to his wife, Morse apologized for the tardiness of the letter, which, he said, was owing to his devotion to "our Newborn academy:" "they have made me a principal in this business and I am now one of the committee to draw up the laws of the academy, which engages all my attention that I can spare from my profession. I think the Infant [the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art] looks healthy and promises well." Samuel F.B. Morse to Lucretia Morse, 5 February 1821, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ *Courier* (Charleston), Feb 18, 1821.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ The first officers of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art were Joel Poinsett (president) and John S. Cogdell (Secretary and Treasurer). The first board of directors consisted of Samuel F.B. Morse, John B. White, John S. Cogdell, William Jay, William Sheils, Joshua Cantor, Charles C. Wright, James Wood, and Charles Simons. Ibid.

Trouble loomed early for the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art. When the state legislature granted its charter in 1822, it did not designate public funding for the institution. President Poinsett, who also served as president on the Board of Public Works in South Carolina, could have assisted with amending this oversight, but he was too often absent on diplomatic service abroad as Minister to Mexico.³⁵⁸ The Academy was, therefore, plagued by money troubles from its inception. According to Cogdell, the institution boasted eighty-four members in its first year, but subscribers refused to issue payment.³⁵⁹ Instead, the Academy was forced to rely on proceeds from their annual exhibitions to help defray the institution's mounting expenses. Held during the spring months beginning in 1822, the Academy's annual exhibitions featured art objects loaned by the city and a very small number of local collectors.³⁶⁰ In anticipation of the first exhibition, the *Courier* published a notice on January 16, 1822, requesting "artists and amateurs at home and abroad" to send their "paintings, casts, models, and etc." by the first of February.³⁶¹ Only the cover of the 1822 exhibition catalogue survives, but a review that appeared in the *Courier* in April of that year listed some of the one hundred and fifty-one art objects that were on display, many of which had been exhibited

³⁵⁸ Rippey, *Joel Poinsett, Versatile American*, 199. Samuel F.B. Morse, William Jay, and William Shiels (all members on the first board of directors) only supported the Academy during its first year, while the rest of the founding members saw art strictly as an avocation. McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 89.

³⁵⁹ "We have at present about 84 members. Directors & all – your subscribers have not paid up." John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 8 September 1821, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress. Unfortunately, there is no surviving membership list for the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art.

³⁶⁰ Every year the City of Charleston loaned two paintings, John Trumbull's *George Washington* and Samuel F.B. Morse's *Monroe*, which otherwise hung in city hall. Morse also sent pictures from his new residence in New Haven. Paul Staiti, "The 1823 Exhibition of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts," PSb-3-4.

³⁶¹ *Courier* (Charleston), Jan 16, 1822.

previously in Charleston.³⁶² The review described the inaugural show as a great success, a fashionable event, and popular topic of conversation.

The following year's exhibition in 1823 was equally successful, though proceeds were not enough to help the struggling art academy. The 1823 exhibition catalogue attests to an emphasis on seventeenth-century Flemish, Dutch, and Italian paintings.

Contemporary work, including Fraser's interior scene, *Interior of a Chapel* (n.d), also appeared amidst the one hundred eleven objects on display.³⁶³ The subjects represented were remarkably diverse and included over thirty landscape scenes.³⁶⁴ Despite the organizers' best efforts, however, only \$430 was collected over a twelve-week period from almost two thousand visitors.³⁶⁵ Profits declined thereafter, largely because the exhibitions featured the same paintings year after year and bored the public.³⁶⁶ Other art institutions experienced similar difficulties, but, with the exception of the American Academy (which never actively sought a solution), were able to overcome this setback by expanding their art holdings and encouraging more patrons to loan other work from their

³⁶² *The Second Exhibition of the South-Carolina Academy of Fine Arts, February, 1823* (Charleston: Archibald E. Miller, 1823). Exhibition Catalogue. Among the art objects listed were several landscapes by John Lucas, Jr., a portrait by Morse, and copies after European masters. Admission cost \$0.25 for a single ticket and \$1 for a season ticket. *Courier* (Charleston), April 17, 1822. McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 89.

³⁶³ Fraser's interior scene was accompanied by paintings by John Wesley Jarvis, Thomas Coram, Thomas Sully, William Shiels, Samuel F.B. Morse, Washington Allston, and Alvan Fisher. *The Second Exhibition of the South-Carolina Academy of Fine Arts, February, 1823*, n.p.

³⁶⁴ Although none of Fraser's landscapes appear to have been on display, several by Alvan Fisher, all vaguely titled *Landscape* or *Landscape with Cattle*, appeared. Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Cogdell reported to Morse that \$429.48 was received from proceeds. \$129 was paid to the Keeper, leaving \$310.48 remaining for the Academy. He considered this quite a success and reassured Morse, "There is now more of Zeal for its continuation & extension." John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 20 June 1823, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress. 1800 individuals visited the 1823 exhibition over a twelve-week period. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 140. McInnis surmises that approximately 11,000 of the Charleston's 25,000 citizens were white and therefore eligible to attend the Academy's art exhibitions. Thus the exhibition appears to have attracted more than 16% of the eligible population, suggesting its popularity.

³⁶⁶ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 141.

collections.³⁶⁷ The Boston Athenaeum, for example, began collecting and exhibiting more contemporary American art by Sully, Allston, Harding, and others, following their first exhibition.³⁶⁸ Three years after the South Carolina Academy's 1823 exhibition, Morse, perhaps learning from mistakes made with that institution, specified in the National Academy's by-laws that its annual exhibitions would feature the works of living artists only and that no art object could appear in multiple exhibitions.³⁶⁹

The South Carolina Academy, situated at a distance from the larger number of artists in northern metropolises, would have struggled to acquire new contemporary American art annually. Further exacerbating any effort in this regard, was the absence of art instruction, an endeavor the Academy proposed in its by-laws, but never formally addressed. Therefore, the South Carolina Academy was almost completely reliant on local collectors, the majority of whom refused to loan work to their annual exhibitions.³⁷⁰ Instead, local collectors' paintings by Gilbert Stuart, Benjamin West, and British artists,

³⁶⁷ Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 124.

³⁶⁸ The Athenaeum's trustees were most active in collecting art for their new gallery space in 1826. Some of their most prized additions during the late 1820s and early 1830s were Gilbert Stuart's unfinished portraits of George and Martha Washington, sculptural work by Crawford and Greenough, and Audubon's engravings of birds. Bolton, *The Athenaeum Centenary*, 32-33. When proceeds declined again in 1845, the Boston Athenaeum began co-sponsoring exhibitions with the Boston Society of Artists, an institution founded by Washington Allston, Chester Harding, and other local artists. The two organizations continued their successful partnership until 1849. Hoyle, *A Climate for Art*, 14.

³⁶⁹ Bolton, *The Athenaeum Centenary*, 33. Derringer, "Annual Exhibitions and the Birth of American Art Criticism to 1865," 57. This rule was celebrated in the press. The *Critic* praised the National Academy's concentration on contemporary American art over "the trash, under the name of old pictures, which was imported... into the city from the garrets and lumber-rooms of Europe." "Fine Arts. National Academy of Design. Fourth Annual Exhibition," *Critic* 2 (May 23, 1829): 46. Meanwhile, the *New-York Mirror* praised the decision not to show the same work twice in its galleries. "Fine Arts. Fourth Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design," *New-York Mirror* 6 (May 16, 1829): 354.

³⁷⁰ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 140. McInnis speculates that some Charleston collectors may have feared damage to their work if mishandled by organizers.

such as Allan Ramsay, Joshua Reynolds, and Thomas Gainsborough, remained locked away in their private collections.

The Failure of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art

The Charleston planter class looked on indifferently as the South Carolina Academy struggled in vain to gain financial stability. Not only did these politically influential individuals deny financial support to the institution, but they also, on occasion, challenged the institution outright. Such was the case with Henry Ravenel. When the city provided the Academy with land on which to build near City Hall in 1821, the South Carolina planter protested the placement of the Academy so near to his Charleston residence and convinced the City Council to mandate that the Academy move elsewhere.³⁷¹ Poinsett and Cogdell responded by initiating the erection of a structure on land they rented near the corner of Broad and Friend Street.³⁷² McInnis points to the error of this project, begun before moneys had been acquired to finance it, in *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*. Certainly no other American art institution had built a structure prior to their establishment. The American Academy and the National Academy had built up capital before purchasing property or building.³⁷³ Whether the South Carolina Academy sought other accommodations before undergoing building efforts is

³⁷¹ John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 14 April 1821, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress. The agreement for the Academy's lease is filed at the Register Mesne Conveyance in Charleston, SC, F9, 459-61.

³⁷² McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 137.

³⁷³ The American Academy of Fine Arts was provided with rooms in the old Alms House in New York free of charge for sixteen years. The National Academy rented exhibition space from the Historical and Philosophical Societies during its early years and ventured to the American Museum on the first floor of the Alms House to study casts and paintings. Clark, *History of the National Academy of Design, 1825-1953*, 6-11.

unclear, but by September 1821, construction of the Academy's building had begun.³⁷⁴ Designed by William Jay, a Director at the Academy, and completed by June 1822, the no longer extant structure was described by McInnis as one of the first Greek Revival buildings in Charleston and a very expensive project.³⁷⁵ The Academy, now more than ever desperate for funding, held annual lotteries in partnership with the Literary and Philosophical Society. But prizes offered to the public could not compete with foreign sponsored lotteries and interest soon waned.³⁷⁶

Part of the failure of the South Carolina Academy and its lack of funding was owing to poor publicity. Although the *Charleston Courier* and, to a lesser degree, the *Mercury* published notices and reviews pertaining to the Academy's exhibitions, knowledge of the institution seldom extended beyond Charleston.³⁷⁷ Northern art institutions, however, appear to have been well supported by the northern press, which printed reviews and notices that reached a wider audience. The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art, for example, received support from *Port Folio Magazine*, while the National

³⁷⁴ Cogdell reported to Morse in September of 1821 that construction on the Academy's building had begun. The cost, he complained, was more than initially thought. John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 8 September 1821, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁷⁵ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 137. Cogdell wrote to Morse: "our Building is done: and with Lumber & Labor & et. Cost about \$4500: instead of the 14 or 1600 Mr. J told us..." Cogdell adds that he has had to borrow \$3000 from the U.S. Bank to pay the Academy's bills. John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 26 June 1822, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁷⁶ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 140. The success of this lottery to generate income remains unclear.

³⁷⁷ Although local newspapers reprinted information related to happenings beyond Charleston, northern papers did not notify their readers of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art. This lack of awareness is evident in a letter from Massachusetts painter Nathan Negus (1801-1824), who, writing to his sister upon his return from a trip to New Orleans in 1824, mentions his "plan of becoming a professor of Drawing and Painting and of establishing an academy in the City of Charleston, S.C." Quoted in Agnes M. Dods, "Nathan and Joseph Negus, Itinerant Painters," *The Magazine Antiques*, 76 (November 1959): 434-436. Negus died before he could pursue these plans and before discovering the existence of the South Carolina Academy. Rutledge, "Visual Arts in South Carolina," 21.

Academy was celebrated in the pages of the *New-York Mirror*, *Evening Post*, *Morning Courier*, and *Knickerbocker*.³⁷⁸ Southern periodicals that in part attended to the fine arts, including the *Southern Quarterly Review* and the *Magnolia or Southern Appalachian* (both Charleston publications) did not appear until after the South Carolina Academy had closed its doors in 1830. Like the South Carolina Academy before them, these periodicals struggled to locate support among its southern audience.³⁷⁹

Provisions necessary to promote the liberal arts were most sparse during the Nullification Crisis of the early 1830s. South Carolina suffered in particular. Charleston, no longer the primary seaport in the American South following the War of 1812, began losing business to New Orleans.³⁸⁰ Wealthy merchants and planters, the primary patrons of the fine arts, experienced significant economic hardship as a result. Struggling itinerant artists, finding patronage increasingly difficult to locate, left Charleston in droves.³⁸¹ Beyond the economic depression, Charlestonians were overwhelmingly more concerned with political debates related to the issuance of federal tariffs deemed harmful to the

³⁷⁸ Burns and Davis, *American Art to 1900*, 150-151. For more detailed information related to the National Academy's exhibition published in the *New-York Mirror* (founded by art collector George Pop Morris during the 1830s), William Cull Bryant's support of the institution as editor of the *Evening Post* after 1829, and the *Knickerbocker*'s celebratory reviews, see Derringer, "Annual Exhibitions and the Birth of American Art Criticism to 1865," 57-64.

³⁷⁹ The *Southern Quarterly Review* was established in Charleston in 1842, while the *Magnolia* began publication in the 1840s. Other southern periodicals, including the *Southern Literary Messenger* (founded in 1834 in Richmond, VA) and the *Southern Literary Journal* (established in 1835 in Chapel Hill, NC) struggled similarly. Bassett, *Defining Southern Literature*, 18-20. These periodicals were begun in an effort to give voice to the southern perspective increasingly drowned out by northern writers.

³⁸⁰ Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 126. Between 1812 and 1860, Charleston's imports made up less than 1% of the total imports into the United States. Their exports amounted to 7% of the nation's total.

³⁸¹ Morse experienced considerable difficulty collecting debts owed him by patrons even after he had left Charleston. Morse, like other itinerant artists, looked to northern cities with their comparatively booming economies as a more promising alternative. John B. White, who had experienced some success in Charleston as a history painter, changed his profession to law. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 127-128. Rutledge, "Visual Arts in South Carolina," 24.

southern economy than they were with financing the fine arts. Despairing of the threats of violence issued by some nullifiers set on seceding from the Union if their state rights were not recognized, Fraser wrote to friend and South Carolina politician Hugh S. Legare in 1833:

The present period is in my opinion one of more decided gloom than any that has occurred since the commandment of the war of parties. As the circle widens the agitation seems to increase – the fire brand has been thrown into the halls of Congress and threatens to light a conflagration... Alas, poor Carolina, There was a time when the intelligence & refinement of her social character were [proverbial].³⁸²

Despite his love for his state, Fraser maintained his firmly conciliatory approach to increasing sectional tensions.

Fraser's promotion of the fine arts in Charleston and his support of the similarly structured National Academy in 1829 might lead one to assume his involvement in the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art, particularly during their time of need. But such was not the case. He was indeed a member of the Literary and Philosophical Society, as were the founders of the South Carolina Academy. He was also good friends with those who actively supported the institution. And yet, there is no evidence to suggest that the artist encouraged its survival. Fraser, who enjoyed a reputation as a determiner of taste and who, more importantly, served as a liaison between artists and the wealthy planter class, would have been a pivotal component to the Academy's success. Although his artist friends eagerly sought his participation in the South Carolina Academy, letters exchanged

³⁸² Fraser to Hugh S. Legare, 30 January 1833, in Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art. Fraser, though a proud South Carolinian, was firmly anti-secession/pro-union. He wrote of local nullifiers' attempts to force South Carolina citizens to pledge their allegiance to the state over the nation: "when they would require others to subscribe to it, who have been educated in the belief of the constitution... and laws passed in pursuance of it are the supreme law of the land. That our government is both a rational and a federal system... they invade the rights... of the citizens." Charles Fraser to [unknown], 8 July 1834, in Pennsylvania Historical Society.

between Cogdell and Morse (residing in New Haven by the spring of 1821), reveal their failure in this endeavor. Fraser, as Cogdell explained to Morse in April of 1821, “is so cold and seldom speaks to me, that I know not what to make of him... altho he says he will be a member he has never confirmed by paying up or presenting his name to any list.”³⁸³ Fraser’s unexpected indifference stunned his friends. When he was offered a position on the board in the fall of 1821, Fraser again refused, as Cogdell notes in another letter to Morse:

Fraser’s behavior is very singular. He has now become distant with me --- & yet holds his Certificate [of membership] --- ... he refuses to be a Director --- but to be a Member --- before the Board of Directors --- they informed [him that] if he wished to resign he could do so & I would take back the Certificate --- but they receive no money from him --- he has held the Certificate & says he will keep it. --- but is not brotherly in his body nor deportment to me.³⁸⁴

The artist’s behavior continued until 1823, when his work appeared in the Academy’s exhibition and the artist permitted himself to be elected to the board of directors.³⁸⁵ A letter from Washington Allston to Cogdell dated June 21, 1827, reveals that Fraser, who had seemingly absented himself from his artist circle in Charleston during the early 1820s, had revived his friendships with the Academy’s founders: “It gave me pleasure to hear that little differences between yourself and Fraser are so happily at an end. Those who love the arts should... be friends.”³⁸⁶

³⁸³ John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 14 April 1821, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ *The Second Exhibition of the South-Carolina Academy of Fine Arts, February, 1823*, n.p.

³⁸⁶ Allston goes on to express his desire to reunite their artist circle in Boston: “It has been a great source of gratulation [sic] to me that some of my nearest friends are Artists. Does Fraser or our friend White, think of making a northern tour this summer? It would give me great pleasure to meet you all together here.” Washington Allston to John S. Cogdell, 21 June 1827, in John Stevens Cogdell Notebook, South Carolina Historical Society.

Fraser may have been reunited with his friends and served on the board of the South Carolina Academy in 1823, but he nonetheless seems to have remained largely indifferent to the institution. The artist made no mention of the South Carolina Academy in his essay in support of the National Academy in 1829, nor did he include the institution in his *Reminiscences of Charleston*, published in 1853. Notices related to the Academy are also absent from his periodical scrapbook and correspondences. And, while his paintings appeared in the Academy's annual exhibitions, these were likely loaned by their owners and required no involvement on Fraser's part.

The few scholars that do acknowledge Fraser's indifference toward the South Carolina Academy remain baffled by this apparent inconsistency in his demeanor toward the fine arts. One possible explanation for Fraser's withdrawal was suggested by Cogdell in his letter to Morse written shortly after the Academy's founding in 1821: "I have always allowed the idea to exist [that Fraser] was mortified at not being made Pres. --- for he emphasized Mr. Poinsett's name..."³⁸⁷ Perhaps, then, Fraser, reassured by his local reputation and eager to appeal to the planter elite, had nominated Poinsett for presidency as a gesture of respect, all the while expecting the planter-politician to defer to his own nomination. Certainly Poinsett was a practical choice for leader. Not only was he a collector of art, but he was also a member of the planter class and an influential politician. Furthermore, in 1821, Poinsett was President of the Board of Public Works in South Carolina, which had recently acquired funds to commence the construction of a complex of buildings adjacent to Washington Park, one of which, the Academy members

³⁸⁷ John S. Cogdell to Samuel F.B. Morse, 14 April 1821, in Morse Papers, Library of Congress.

hoped, would be a building to house their nascent institution.³⁸⁸ Poinsett had also convinced the state legislature to hold a lottery that would raise funds for the establishment of a picture gallery in 1820, thereby proving his value as a fundraiser.³⁸⁹ Poinsett, then, was a logical and advantageous choice for president of the Academy. Fraser, however, must have realized that his own election to President of the South Carolina Academy would confirm his role as a leader in the Charleston art community; whereas his denial of such stature threatened his position as a determiner of taste, which would have potentially been usurped by the Academy if it proved a success.

One might also consider professional jealousies and rivalries as an explanation for Fraser's lack of support. The committee's decision to place Morse – not Fraser – at the helm of the committee tasked with creating the Academy's by-laws may have bothered the native Charlestonian painter. Morse and Fraser were the most successful artists living in Charleston at the time. But Morse was academically trained where Fraser was not, and so was a logical choice for spearheading the committee to write the Academy's by-laws. Morse, however, was an itinerant artist who only resided in Charleston during the winter months and, by the summer of 1821, had abandoned Charleston entirely to rejoin his family in New Haven. Fraser, a locally trained artist familiar with southern artistic taste, no doubt considered himself more knowledgeable of what kind of institution the fickle planter class might support. With this in mind, Fraser may have recognized that the Academy's infrastructure, as outlined by Morse, would prove more successful in the more liberal northern metropolises, than in the deeply socially stratified Charleston. Although Fraser expressed his support for art instruction in his 1829 essay, he was

³⁸⁸ McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 79. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 101.

³⁸⁹ Doescher, "Art Exhibitions in Nineteenth-Century Charleston," SD-2.

careful to specify that a *national* academy would be most beneficial, *regardless of its location* within the United States.³⁹⁰

The consciously diplomatic Fraser enjoyed patronage from wealthy American citizens in both northern and southern cities, so aligning himself with one region over the other politically would have been bad business and may further explain his withdrawal from the South Carolina Academy. To support a southern institution during this turbulent period would have conceivably alienated his northern clientele. By distancing himself from ongoing political debates, Fraser was able to maintain his appeal to patrons on either side of the Mason-Dixon line.

Although the artist strove to appease his northern and southern clientele, he relied most on his South Carolina patrons. In fact, Fraser's desire to concede to the whims of his southern clientele provided the most powerful incentive for him to remain aloof from the South Carolina Academy. As noted earlier, the wealthy citizens of Charleston and the surrounding areas generally did not support the South Carolina Academy. The institution's pro tem president, Stephen Elliott stated as much in a letter to absentee president Poinsett in 1822: "We meet with so little encouragement from our wealthy and fashionable citizens that we can only look forward to months, perhaps years, of embarrassment."³⁹¹ The patronage so anxiously sought by the floundering Academy never appeared. In 1830, as the Academy closed its doors, the *Charleston Mercury* chastised Charlestonians for not supporting the institution, but lavishing support on northern churches and schools.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Fraser, "Fine Arts. A Reply to Article X," 81.

³⁹¹ Stephen Elliott to Joel R. Poinsett, 7 January 1822, as quoted in Rippey Joel Poinsett, *Versatile American*, 198.

³⁹² *Mercury* (Charleston), June 29, 1830.

McInnis argues quite convincingly that Morse's by-laws, which placed authority of the Academy in the hands of artists to the exclusion of wealthy patrons, were the primary reason why the planter elite withheld support from the institution.³⁹³ Unlike the Northeast, no powerful social advocates or reform groups emerged in the American South to challenge the social and urban landscape during the decades following the Revolutionary War.³⁹⁴ Thus, throughout the antebellum era, wealthy Charlestonians' energy and resources, like those of many other planters throughout the American South, were dedicated to erecting private homes, educational institutions, and buildings that served high society.

The South Carolina Academy challenged this status quo by shifting focus from the genteel enjoyment of the fine arts to the professionalization of artists and the popularization of the arts. Art historian Paul Staiti describes the Academy in his essay "The 1823 Exhibition of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts: A Paradigm of Charleston Taste?" as a "public works project that drew on and drew together all disparate parts of the community," including professional artists, amateurs, women, men, collectors, and laymen.³⁹⁵ Wealthy aristocratic patrons, uncomfortable with any form of social democratization, would have perceived in the Academy a threat to their control over local art and culture. Class division, McInnis explains, was an important component of antebellum southern culture. Charlestonian art collectors were familiar with each other's collections and uninterested in sharing their acquisitions with the general

³⁹³ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 136.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., 91.

³⁹⁵ Staiti, "The 1823 Exhibition of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts," PSb-2.

public.³⁹⁶ The South Carolina Academy's annual exhibitions, held at the height of the social season, were intended as a form of entertainment for the planter elite, akin to society balls and horse races. But wealthy South Carolinians, who strictly adhered to the social hierarchy in place, were unwilling to mingle with the other social classes that would have been present at the Academy's exhibitions.³⁹⁷ Thus, the Charlestonian planter elite, uncomfortable with the democratization of art and eager to retain control over cultural entrepreneurship, refused to support the institution.

Sponsoring the fine arts nonetheless remained an important component of genteel behavior. So some Charleston gentlemen, including art collectors Joseph Allen Smith and John Izard Middleton, though they did not support the local Academy, offered encouragement to other less controversial northern institutions by loaning and even donating art. Smith (1769-1828) acquired an impressive collection of sculpture as well as paintings by Rosa, Reni, and other European painters during his tours of Europe in 1800 and 1813.³⁹⁸ Although Smith divided some of these acquisitions between his Philadelphia and Charleston residences, the majority were crated and shipped to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts during his first European expedition.³⁹⁹ Smith's substantial gift to

³⁹⁶ Staiti, "The 1823 Exhibition of the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts," PSb-4-5. With this in mind, one cannot consider the exhibitions sponsored by the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art as representative of Charlestonian taste in the same way that New York City exhibitions were considered a reflection of local taste.

³⁹⁷ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 141.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 142. For a more detailed explanation of Smith's collecting efforts, see Mack and McInnis, *In Pursuit of Refinement*, 44-46.

³⁹⁹ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 143. Much of Smith's acquisitions intended for the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts were confiscated by Napoleon's troops, which invaded Italy shortly after Smith left the country. The crates, mostly intact, were eventually turned over to the Pennsylvania Academy beginning in 1807. For further discussion of Smith's relationship with and patronage of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, see Edgar P. Richardson, "Allen Smith, Collector and Benefactor," *American Art Journal* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1969): 5-19. No list of Smith's entire collection exists, though fellow planter Gabriel Izard Manigault's collection in Charleston was described by relatives as "about forty oil paintings and a

the Pennsylvania Academy predates the establishment of the South Carolina Academy, but even after the Charleston institution became known to him, the planter still withheld his support, only loaning a single painting for exhibition – his *Dying Magdalen* by Correggio. Later, in 1823, Middleton (1785-1849) followed Smith's example and, snubbing the South Carolina Academy, loaned a substantial portion of his private collection (sixty-three paintings he acquired during his own tour of Europe in 1807 and the 1820s) to the Pennsylvania Academy, rather than the academy in Charleston.⁴⁰⁰ Both Smith and Middleton's art collections consisted of exclusively European art and therefore would have been well received by a Charleston audience that shared their taste. But the South Carolina Academy was managed by artists, whereas the Pennsylvania Academy was guided by a committee that included patrons, which collectors, such as Smith and Middleton, trusted to represent their own interests.

Some of Charleston's wealthy citizens did indeed support the fine arts in Charleston, but on their own terms. For example, the Charleston Library Society, a private organization to which many planters belonged and one in which Fraser served as president in 1839, received considerable support from the planter elite for the acquisition and exhibition of art.⁴⁰¹ Most of the Charleston elite believed that a true appreciation for

large number of beautiful aquarelles, mostly of nude figures, which were kept in portfolios... a revelation to his untraveled friends." Gabriel E. Manigault, "History of the Carolina Art Association," in *Year Book, City of Charleston, S.C., 1894* (Charleston, 1895), 247.

⁴⁰⁰ Documentation identifying the paintings Middleton lent to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts is limited, though some artists are mentioned, including Correggio and Claude Lorrain. After their exhibition at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1825, 1826, and 1826, Middleton's paintings were split between his residence in Paris and his plantation home, Middleton Place, located on the outskirts of Charleston. Mack and McInnis, *In Pursuit of Refinement*, 47. For more detailed information related to Middleton's collecting efforts, see Mack and McInnis, *In Pursuit of Refinement*, 46-47. McInnis describes Middleton's collection as reflecting a strong interest in landscape and marine views - primarily those created by seventeenth-century Dutch painters. The majority of Middleton's collection in Charleston was destroyed by Union troops in 1865.

⁴⁰¹ Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p.

and understanding of fine art was limited to their own social class. Only refined, highly educated individuals could identify the beauty and virtue in art.⁴⁰² If fine art were to be publically displayed, the Charlestonian elite believed it was their duty to insure that the art objects chosen were of high quality and virtue so as to exercise a moralizing influence on society. Artists, as creators of these products, were hardly uninterested and, some Charlestonian patrons thought, could conceivably use the visual arts under the guise of an academy to suit their own ambitions.

But what of a man who straddled both worlds? Fraser, as a gentleman and an artist, was a liaison between the two. He was an anomaly in Charleston at the time – an artist respected as a peer by his patrons. Other itinerant artists, such as Samuel F.B. Morse, also earned the esteem of their Charleston patrons, but Fraser, as a member of their social class and a permanent resident of the city, was familiar with his patrons' social and cultural values in a way that visiting artists were not. Surely if Fraser had more influence in the structuring of the South Carolina Academy, he would have modeled it after the patron-run American Academy of Fine Arts in New York. Not only had Fraser visited the institution during his northern tours, but he also owned pamphlets of addresses given by officers of the American Academy.⁴⁰³ However, by the 1820s, when the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art was struggling to establish itself, the American Academy had already begun to decline. Its exhibitions focused on European art bored an audience that was increasingly interested in American art. The National Academy of Design, because it responded to the desires of this new generation of Americans, quickly eclipsed

⁴⁰² McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 82.

⁴⁰³ Fraser owned several pamphlets produced by the American Academy of Fine Art, including De Witt Clinton, *A Discourse Delivered before the American Academy of the Arts* (New York: T. and W. Mercein, 1816); and Gulian C. Verplanck, "Address delivered before the American Academy of Fine Arts" (New York: Charles Wiley, 1824).

the American Academy. But the organization of the National Academy, so similar to that of the South Carolina Academy, was too liberal for Antebellum Charleston. Charles Fraser recognized this distinction. Hence his support of the National Academy in his 1829 essay even as he denied similar encouragement to the South Carolina Academy.

The institution's pecuniary difficulties ultimately led to its collapse within a decade. On July 22, 1830, an obituary for the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art appeared in the *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*. Chastising the citizens of Charleston for their apathy, author William Gilmore Simms lamented the loss of the cultural institution, which "[S]ickening with neglect... perished in the dusty sanctuary of its own abode."⁴⁰⁴ By 1833, the Academy had sold its land, buildings, and art collection to cover its remaining debt.⁴⁰⁵

Fraser's Promotion of Art In and Beyond Charleston

Charles Fraser, having distinguished himself from the failed South Carolina Academy of Fine Art, continued to promote the arts on his own terms. In Charleston, Fraser worked hard to meet the demands of his growing clientele. In May of 1841, the *Courier* noted the artist's accomplishments in landscape painting: "Fraser, excelling in the miniature and the landscape, is multiplying the proofs of his genius in the latter

⁴⁰⁴ William Gilmore Simms, *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Charleston), July 22, 1830.

⁴⁰⁵ McInnis, "The Politics of Taste," 92. The Academy's property was sold, in its totality, to a small group of supporters that included John S. Cogdell and Joel R. Poinsett. The group hoped to re-establish the Academy at a more auspicious time, but never did. Doescher, "Art Exhibitions in Nineteenth-Century Charleston," SD-5.

department.”⁴⁰⁶ Though landscape painting kept the artist busy, Fraser found time to support local exhibitions, such as those sponsored by the Apprentice’s Library Society during the early 1840s.⁴⁰⁷ In fact, Lillian Miller claims in *Patrons and Patriotism* that Fraser actually spearheaded some of the loan exhibitions that occurred during these years.⁴⁰⁸ Intended to inspire local artists to display their work and provoke patronage, these exhibitions, most notably those in 1842 and 1843, included loaned paintings attributed to Rembrandt, Rubens, and Salvator Rosa, alongside the contemporary work of Allston, Sully, White, Cogdell, Doughty, Morse, and, of course, Fraser.⁴⁰⁹

Beyond Charleston, Fraser assisted William Dunlap’s efforts to record the development of the fine arts in America. The Charlestonian artist frequently corresponded with Dunlap in New York, providing the author with biographical material pertaining to Gilbert Stuart, Malbone, Allston, as well as himself.⁴¹⁰ In so doing, Fraser

⁴⁰⁶ *Courier* (Charleston), May 20, 1841. The full quote reads: “The FINE ARTS. – The creations of the pencil are again crowding our city with attractions. Fraser, excelling in the miniature and the landscape, is multiplying the proofs of his genius in the latter department.”

⁴⁰⁷ Founded in 1824, the Apprentice Library Society sought to develop a library of information related to specific trades and to diffuse that knowledge. The Society held its first exhibition (consisting primarily of loaned copies after European paintings) in 1841. By then the organization boasted 400 members, 7000 volumes in its library, and a collection of maps, drawing, and prints. Doescher, “Art Exhibitions in Nineteenth-Century Charleston,” SD-7.

⁴⁰⁸ Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 125.

⁴⁰⁹ A review of the 1842 exhibition praised Allston’s *Spalatro*, Sully’s *Departure*, and Fraser’s *Rapids*. According to the anonymous author, 312 paintings appeared in the show. *Courier* (Charleston), August 27, 1842. The 1843 exhibition was equally successful and featured over 200 paintings. Charles Fraser, John B. White, and Thomas Sully were also represented in this exhibition. *Courier* (Charleston), September 27, 1843. In this 1843 review, the author explained why s/he elected not to comment on locally produced work. S/he did not want to offend the creators of those whose work he might have neglected in a review.

⁴¹⁰ Diary of William Dunlap (1766-1839), vols. i-iii. New York Historical Society. As transcribed in Charles Fraser Artist Files, Gibbes Museum of Art: “I have written to W. Alston [sic, meaning Washington Allston] to announce intention of writing History of the Arts of Design in US & ask his Aid. Same effect to C.B King & Frazer [sic].” (Nov. 18, 1832). Later, Dunlap notes the dates when he received further correspondence from Fraser related to the following artists: Gilbert Stuart (Dec 19, 1832); Charles Fraser and Edward Malbone (Dec 29, 1832); “various other painters” (May 4, 1833).

played a role in shaping perceptions of American art informed by Dunlap's 1843 publication, *The History of the Arts of Design in the United States*. Fraser's promotion of art and his interest in artistic training, as exemplified by his 1829 essay, brought him to the attention of the American Lyceum in New York City.

In May of 1835, the American Lyceum organized a conference for its delegates from across the United States. As part of a movement for educational reform and the national dissemination of knowledge, the American Lyceum sought to address, among other issues, the means by which a taste for the fine arts may be generally cultivated among the classes.⁴¹¹ Thomas Smith Grimké, Fraser's cousin and Vice President of the American Lyceum, invited Fraser and Thomas Cole to offer their expert opinions on the issue.⁴¹² Fraser's address, "An Essay, on the Condition and Prospects of the Art of Painting in the United States of America" was the first presented in this panel and was followed by Cole's "Essay on American Scenery," delivered at Clinton Hall on the evening of May 9, 1835.⁴¹³ Neither Fraser nor Cole offered a clear answer to the question posed, but both asserted their opinion as to the state of American art and its potential.

Fraser's address reveals that his perspective on the democratization of art had changed substantially from when he wrote his essay in support of the National Academy six years earlier. Excellence in art, Fraser argued, depended on the intellectual discernment and taste of the people. Fraser expressed his support for art academies as contributing to artistic culture. Perhaps recollecting the failure of the South Carolina

⁴¹¹ Storr, "Ut Pictura Rhetorica," 567.

⁴¹² Ibid., 566. William Dunlap was also part of this panel, though his speech, titled, "Essay on the Influence of the Arts of Design; and the True Modes of Encouraging and Perfecting Them," will not be addressed here. Unfortunately, shortly after organizing the panel of speakers, Thomas S. Grimké died while touring the Midwest in October 1834.

⁴¹³ Fraser did not travel to New York to give his address. Instead, his essay was read aloud by William A. Duer, President of the American Lyceum. Ibid., 568.

Academy, he added that those academies which have failed have only done so because of the “zeal in which they originated was in advance of that state of public taste, and those means of encouragement [patronage], which could alone prosper the experiment, and crown it with success.”⁴¹⁴ But whereas one might expect Fraser to emphasize the importance of elite patronage, instead Fraser claimed that the presence of an enlightened society, rather than elite patronage, encouraged artistic greatness:

Without the enlightened spirit which education diffuses insensibly over a community, even wealth with all its fostering means, can never raise the art beyond the level of vulgar ornament. Its patronage may produce artisans, but will never create artists. For wealth without refinement ministers only to the grosser parts of our nature, and not to the culture of the ethereal [sic] mind. It neither improves the taste – nor enriches the understanding – nor ennobles the heart.”⁴¹⁵

Fraser, attempting to situate the fine arts within a nation increasingly divided by regional differences, now believed the language of fine art was universal. Art objects were capable of being appreciated by anyone with the proper education. Furthermore, Fraser’s sentiments are clearly aligned with republican concerns expressed since the founding of the nation that luxury and wealth can corrupt the soul if it is not directed toward improving the greater community and cultivating moral taste.

Sympathizing with struggling American artists who sought to inspire public taste for native art, Fraser advised artists to consider a genre he deemed more amenable to the American character – landscape painting. He encouraged artists to converse with nature in her “unwalled temple,” for there they would find inspiration not to be found elsewhere:

If our country were favored in no other respect, it would be remarkable for the variety of its scenery, exhibiting every feature of grandeur and beauty that taste delights to dwell on. A single view has been pronounced worth a

⁴¹⁴ Charles Fraser, “An Essay, on the Condition and Prospects of the Art of Painting in the United States of America,” *American Monthly Magazine* 6, no. 4 (New York, 1835): 213.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 216.

voyage across the Atlantic. And how many others would deserve the same tribute. In our mountains and cataracts, our forests and lakes, our rivers and bays – our rocks and shores, the lofty and majestic, the wild and picturesque – the simple and beautiful abound. If to this rich diversity of objects that every where meets his eye, be added our pure skies, and our sunsets as cloudless and glowing as were ever beheld from the Pincian mount; -- the American landscape painter may be said to imbibe the principles of beauty and sublimity with his earliest perceptions.⁴¹⁶

Fraser saw in landscape painting a genre in which American artists could surpass their European forbearers. The artist's reference to the Pincian Mount suggests that the American landscape is as magnificent as any Claude painting with its Roman ruins. Yet there is an untainted purity, an Edenic quality that is unique to America, so much of which was still, in 1835, untouched by Euro-American settlers.

Cole also celebrated the nation's natural wonders in his "Essay on American Scenery." Much of Cole's essay consists of elaborate descriptions of the northeastern landscape as well as specific sights in a way that suggests an endless terrain of expansive land and rushing waters.⁴¹⁷ Instead of offering a general curriculum by which to diffuse a taste for the fine arts, as the question posed by the American Lyceum suggested, Cole's essay reinforced ideas conveyed by Fraser and emphasized their application by artists at specific sites, such as Niagara or the Catskill Mountains. Cole focused on the Romantic notion of the individual subjective experience in Nature. Alluding to the transcendental potential of the environment, Cole, like Fraser, described the American wilderness as a new Eden:

for those scenes of solitude from which the hand of nature has never been lifted, affect the mind with a more deep toned emotion than aught which the hand of man has touched. Amid them the consequent associations are

⁴¹⁶ Fraser, "An Essay, on the Condition and Prospects of the Art of Painting in the United States of America," 245.

⁴¹⁷ Thomas Cole's "Essay on American Scenery" is traditionally interpreted as a seminal representation of the romantic attitude toward nature in America.

of God the creator – they are his undefiled works, and the mind is cast into the contemplation of eternal things.⁴¹⁸

For Cole, the American landscape, particularly the wilderness, was the artist's academy and the layperson's moral instructor. Experiencing the natural environment, be it first hand or through landscape painting, sparked contemplation and, ultimately, fostered refinement and improved taste. He encouraged his audience to remain faithful to humanist values, which he worried were threatened by a growing preoccupation with utilitarian pursuits. Popular education, he suggested, should have intellectual as well as spiritual value:

The spirit of our society is to contrive but not to enjoy – toiling to produce more toil – accumulating in order to aggrandize. The pleasures of the imagination, among which the love of scenery holds a conspicuous place, will alone temper the harshness of such a state...⁴¹⁹

Immersion in American scenery grounded and enlightened the individual and therefore was not only a worthy genre within the fine arts, but also, as Fraser implied in his own speech, an important component of one's moral and spiritual education. Cole closed his essay by reminding his audience that: "We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly."⁴²⁰ Nature, thus, welcomes the contemplative artist or poet. Those who do not engage with the American landscape as Cole advised are at a distinct disadvantage to those who seek its benefit.

Both Fraser and Cole touted the significance of art as integral to American culture. It elevated taste, improved intellectual judgment and encouraged noble values. Cole found this to be particularly true of American landscape painting, as evidenced by

⁴¹⁸ Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," *American Monthly Magazine* 7 (January, 1836): 5.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 3-4.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 12.

his emphasis on American scenery. Both artists' essays reflect a liberal idealism in regards to the potential of American art, though Fraser's phrasing reveals that he more cautious than Cole in his assertion of such views.

Shortly after Fraser's essay was printed in *American Monthly Magazine* in December of 1835, the Literary and Philosophical Society solicited the artist to read the essay aloud at their next meeting. A notice in the *Courier* on January 21, 1836 summarized Fraser's argument and announced its having been almost unanimously embraced by the Society. The *Courier* was extremely concise in its list of Fraser's key points. It emphasized the artist's role, while altogether neglecting to mention Fraser's ideas regarding the universal ability to appreciate art:

education and refined taste are essential to constitute the accomplished painter; -- that the mechanical pursuit, without the proper endowment of mind can never make the successful artist; -- that discipline of mind by appropriate education, can only embody on canvas, or personify to the eye, the beauty, order, and symetry [sic], of God's creation: particularly as displayed in his noblest works, -- and, that the moral tendency in this pursuit was inspiring and conspicuously grand in the attainment of this elevating and noble art.⁴²¹

Instead of reiterating Fraser's point that wealth alone does not guide taste, but rather enlightened understanding combined with refinement, this *Courier* article focused on the importance of education and refinement to an artist's success in creating an art object deemed noble by their planter patrons. Though Fraser's audience, composed of members of the Literary and Philosophical Society, undoubtedly shared his more liberal perspective, surely his tradition-minded patrons would have objected. The *Courier's*

⁴²¹ *Courier* (Charleston), January 21, 1836.

summary, however, appears to have couched Fraser's argument in such a way that it would prove more palatable to the planter elite.⁴²²

As Fraser entered his sixties, his optimism regarding the potential refinement of society waned. In a letter to Hugh Legare in 1843, Fraser lamented what he understood to be a loss of refinement among the younger generation in Charleston:

The framework of society is very different from what it once was... there was a great deal of aristocratic pride in every domicile of the olden time, yet it was based upon the pretensions of fortune or education and withal there was with it a self respect which kept up good manners and have a polish to intercourse. But... it was the germ of all we see realized in the swaggering independence, and uncourteous being of the present day. It was the plague spot upon our social refinement.⁴²³

Fraser suggests here that, though the elite society of his generation was highly educated and well-mannered, their comfortable existence bred a generation of planter youths who, being so far removed from the struggles of the Early Republican years and the dangers of the War of 1812, lacked an appreciation of their own good fortune and independence. Thus, despite the brief lull in sectional tensions during the 1840s, the once optimistic Fraser nonetheless adopted a more cynical perspective.

⁴²² Charles Fraser's "On the Condition and Prospects of the Art of Painting in the United States of America" was published a second time in the April-June 1826 issue of the *Southern Literary Journal*.

⁴²³ Charles Fraser to Hugh S. Legare, 4 April 1843, in Anna Wells Rutledge Papers, 1887-1996, South Carolina Historical Society. The full quote, in response to an earlier letter from Legare, reads: "Your remarks upon the decadence of those qualities which marked the former society of Charleston, however forcible & mortifying, are not too much so for the reality. But they were the growth of causes moral & political which have long ceased to exist. The framework of Society is very different now from what it once was. And altho: the change is, I presume very perceptible every where, yet Primogeniture was worth more in the South and we feel the loss of it more. Montesquieu, I think, says that government is pictured in every family that composes it. Not altho: there was a great deal of aristocratic pride in every domicile of the olden time, yet it was based upon the pretensions of fortune or education and withall there was with it a self respect which kept up good manners and have a polish to intercourse. But not withstanding old Abbott's commentary on the Clause of the Declaration (visa l'egalite) it was the germ of all we see realized in the swaggering independence, and uncourteous bearing of the present day. It was the plague spot upon our social refinement."

Fraser's concern for the political and cultural future of South Carolina, as well as the nation more generally, intensified as he aged. In an address titled "American Journalism" delivered before the South-Carolina Lyceum in November of 1848, the artist expressed his concern that the press, increasingly preoccupied with sectional politics reignited by the Mexican War and neglectful of cultural improvements, stirred up regional discord to the detriment of the nation.⁴²⁴ A review published in the *Courier* summarized this argument as presented by the "rife scholar and elegant writer:"

He discussed the daily and periodical press as a political affect and all its diversified relations with morals, religion, literature, and science. --- and graphically portrayed its vast and rapid diffusion of intelligences, its championing of freedom, its control over the destinies of nations, and its intimate connection with all the concerns of society...⁴²⁵

As sectional disputes intensified during the late 1840s, Fraser worried that the press held too much sway over its readership. In a state such as South Carolina, where a new generation characterized by what Fraser described as their "swaggering independence, and uncourteous being" was quickly gaining political and cultural influence, articles, essays and pamphlets that encouraged freedom from oppression, states' rights, and even secession could prove disastrous.

⁴²⁴ The South-Carolina Lyceum was a product of an address distributed to the citizens of Charleston on behalf of the Literary and Philosophical Society. *Address of The Literary and Philosophical Society of South-Carolina, to the People of the State, on the Classification, Character, and Exercises, of the Lyceum System* (Charleston: Observer Office Press, 1834).

⁴²⁵ The review in its entirety states: "The Introductory Lecture of the South-Carolina Lyceum, was delivered, at the College Chapel, on Tuesday Evening last, by that rife scholar and elegant writer, CHARLES FRASER, ESQ. Its subject was "American Journalism," and he made it the theme of a noble and interesting discourse to all intellectual and highly gratified auditory. He discussed the daily and periodical press as a political affect and all its diversified relations with morals, religion, literature, and science. --- and graphically portrayed its vast and rapid diffusion of intelligences, its championing of freedom, its control over the destinies of nations, and its intimate connection with all the concerns of society and the improvements and refinement of our race. We trust that [?] performance will be published in pamphlet form in order that its merits may be more widely known and appreciated, or that it will, perhaps more appropriately, occupy a place in our periodical literature." *Courier* (Charleston), November 30, 1848.

Despite escalating sectional tensions, Fraser struggled to maintain a neutral veneer – and with considerable success. At no point in his career did support from patrons in either region diminish. But occasionally sacrifices were made on Fraser's part, as was the case with the South Carolina Academy of Fine Art. Supporting the institution was a risk to Fraser's career that he simply could not afford. Nonetheless, Fraser, like Thomas Cole, Stephen Elliott, and even his fellow planter elite, continued to believe in the ability of the fine arts to inspire virtue and moral improvement. Art, as Fraser explained in his 1835 address to the American Lyceum, held universal appeal. It could bring people together. Even as Fraser's eyesight deteriorated further and his production of miniatures and eventually landscape paintings decreased, his resolve to foster understanding between the two regions never faltered.

CHAPTER 5

THE RETROSPECTIVE ARTIST:

EXHIBITING CONCILIATION IN THE FRASER GALLERY

On January 28, 1857, South Carolina Society Hall in Charleston introduced a retrospective exhibition, what came to be known as the Fraser Gallery, to the American public. Several art exhibitions, including those mentioned in chapter four, preceded this one in Charleston. The South Carolina Academy of Fine Art, for example, had initiated exhibition efforts in 1822. But whereas the Academy received very little support from the affluent planter class, the Fraser Gallery was enthusiastically advertised and attended. Other exhibitions, unaffiliated with the Academy appeared in Charleston between 1822 and the Fraser Gallery in 1857. In 1833, as the sale of the Academy's property was under negotiation, art dealer James Warrell, debuted his "Exhibition of Oil Paintings by the Old Masters," previously shown in Richmond, Virginia.⁴²⁶ By 1849, the newly established South Carolina Institute had begun including fine art in its annual exhibition of state products ranging from agricultural goods and scientific discoveries to textiles and daguerreotypes.⁴²⁷ And in 1851, "A small Collection of Cabinet Paintings, in the

⁴²⁶ *Richmond Commercial Compiler*, February 27, 1822. Gerdtz and Yarnall, *The National Museum of American Art's Index to American Art Exhibition Catalogues from the Beginning through the 1876 Centennial Year*, 1:46.

⁴²⁷ Fine art, most of it loaned by local collectors, was featured most prominently in the South Carolina Institute's exhibitions of 1849, 1852, and 1855. "An Address Delivered before the South-Carolina Institute, at its First Annual Fair, on the 20th November, 1849. By James H. Hammond, a member of the Institute." Fine art entries are listed on pp. 39-55 of the "Report of the Committee on Premiums." "Second Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the South-

possession of an Amateur” intrigued its Charleston audience.⁴²⁸ Unfortunately only sparse information related to these exhibitions survives. However, ample evidence related to the Fraser Gallery, including an exhibition catalogue, are archived at the South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston. And yet, this, the first retrospective of a local artist in Charleston, has not until now been addressed in scholarship.

Despite this neglect, the Fraser Gallery was an event that received considerable attention in its day. Notices published in periodicals such as the *Charleston Courier* and the *Boston Transcript* encouraged the public in and beyond Charleston to attend the exhibition, which offered a rare opportunity to peruse the life’s work of an artist with the creator present.⁴²⁹ Upon entering the white neoclassical South Carolina Society Hall that housed the exhibition, visitors ascended a grand staircase to a large meeting hall and ballroom in which were displayed almost three hundred miniature portraits and one hundred and fifty landscape, portrait, and fancy paintings.⁴³⁰

Carolina Institute, November, 1850.” Entries appear on pp. 24-40 of the “Report.” South Carolina Historical Society. According to James Yarnall and William Gerds, four landscape paintings by Fraser were loaned by their owners to the exhibition in April of 1855. The items loaned were noted as follows: *One Landscape* (owned by Dr. J. Moultrie, #48); *One Landscape* (owned by Dr. J. Moultrie, #49); *One Landscape* (owned by Hon. T.L. Hutchinson, #61); *One Landscape* (owned by Hon. T.L. Hutchinson, #62). Gerds and Yarnall, *The National Museum of American Art’s Index to American Art Exhibition Catalogues from the Beginning through the 1876 Centennial Year*, 2:1311-1328.

⁴²⁸ This appears to have been a small exhibition, including only about ten paintings. All of the compositions on display were products of European artists, including an allegorical painting by Angelica Kauffman and a copy after Claude Lorrain. The one exception was *A Gipsy*, by Thomas Sully. *A Descriptive Catalogue of a Small Collection of Cabinet Paintings, in the Possession of an Amateur* (Charleston: Samuel Miller, 1851). Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts Archives.

⁴²⁹ Advertisement. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), December 15, 1856; January 28, 31; February 6, 7, and 11, 1857. Advertisement. *Charleston Mercury* (Charleston), December 15, 1856. Advertisement. *Boston Transcript* (Boston), January 16, 1857.

⁴³⁰ South Carolina Society Hall was erected on Meeting Street in 1803 through the charitable donations of a fraternal society of local French Huguenots known for giving aid to families in need. Gentleman architect Gabriel Manigault designed the structure so that the lower level comprised small rooms, which served as classrooms for a small school that operated there. The second floor ballroom (27 x 72 feet) and meeting hall hosted balls during the social season and,

Visitors were initially confronted with a large portrait of the featured artist, Charles Fraser, painted by Washington Allston's nephew George Whiting Flagg, which was prominently displayed on a panel at the entrance to the gallery space.⁴³¹ Members of the Ladies Committee, who had assisted with hanging the exhibition, greeted new arrivals and issued tickets.⁴³² Some visitors had the good fortune of engaging with the artist himself.⁴³³ In an effort to accommodate the aging Fraser, organizers arranged for a small table and chair to be placed at the center of the room for his use. From his perch, the seventy-four year old Fraser chatted with visitors while his dog Julia, the "only quadruped allowed" in the gallery, sat at his feet.⁴³⁴

An exhibition catalogue, published approximately one month after the opening, declared the Fraser Gallery to be a celebration of the artist and his accomplishments,

occasionally, public art exhibitions. Jonathan H. Poston, *The Buildings of Charleston: A Guide to the City's Architecture* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 10. The term "fancy painting" was used in the nineteenth century to refer to images that depicted allegorical figures or settings.

⁴³¹ George Whiting Flagg's portrait of Charles Fraser is believed to be non-extant. Samuel Gilman briefly mentioned the painting in the exhibition catalogue: "An exact and spirited likeness of Mr. Fraser had just been painted by Mr. G.W. Flagg, at the request of the Committee, for the special purpose of gracing this exhibition. Placed on a panel opposite the door, it seemed to invite every entering visitor to a free inspection of the numerous works of its gifted original." Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 7.

⁴³² The exhibition was open to the public daily from 10am to 3pm. Season tickets could be purchased for 30 cents and a single ticket for 25 cents. Women and children were admitted free of charge. Advertisement. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), January 31, 1857.

⁴³³ Fraser was publically invited to attend the exhibition as often as he liked. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), January 31, 1857. Fraser publically accepted the invitation a week later. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), February 9, 1857.

⁴³⁴ According to Caroline Gilman, one of the organizers of the exhibition, Charles Fraser visited the Gallery almost daily: "A unique feature of the Fraser Gallery, adopted to prevent formality and give to the beloved artist a feeling of social intercourse, was that a few ladies were daily on the spot to welcome him [Fraser] on his entrance. Here, seated with them around a little centre-table, he enjoyed friends, welcomed strangers, and yielded himself to the genial atmosphere of respectful admiration... Often, leaning on the arm of a young companion, or old friend, he walked around the gallery, calling up reminiscences of his artist life, criticizing his own pictures, and as they loomed up through the long area, pausing with dreamy wonder, as if he were in some enchanted vision." Caroline Gilman as quoted in Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 64.

“that his [Charles Fraser’s] friends and other lovers of art may be indulged with the privilege, not otherwise to be procured, of beholding, at one favorable opportunity, the principal achievements of his long and industrious life.”⁴³⁵ Toward the end of this catalogue essay, the author, lead organizer of the exhibition, and Fraser’s friend and contemporary, Samuel Gilman, suggests a correlation between the Fraser Gallery and an earlier retrospective exhibition at Chester Harding’s Gallery in Boston that honored fellow South Carolinian, Allston.⁴³⁶ Indeed “Allston’s Gallery” of 1839 was quite a success, according to a *New York Post* review republished in the *Courier* two weeks later in June of 1839, which estimated that nearly ten thousand visitors had purchased tickets within the first three weeks of the exhibition. Just as the Fraser Gallery brought together hundreds of Fraser’s works, Allston’s retrospective presented forty-five paintings, which, the correspondent lamented, “will soon be scattered again, and scarcely any besides Bostonians and their nearest neighbors, will have had this concentrated, blessed influence shed upon them.”⁴³⁷ The “blessed influence” the correspondent mentions refers to the celebrated genius of Washington Allston and the author’s belief that Allston’s religious, allegorical, and landscape compositions could evoke a spiritual reverie in the viewer. Experiencing Allston’s work was not only important for the layperson, but also, as Gilman noted, a significant opportunity for aspiring artists to learn about coloring and painting technique from an American master.

⁴³⁵ Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 5. A similar declaration appeared in advertisements for the Fraser Gallery. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), January 31, 1857; February 6, 7, and 11, 1857. The exhibition catalogue was published the week the exhibition closed. Rutledge, *Artists in the Life of Charleston*, 135.

⁴³⁶ Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 6.

⁴³⁷ “Allston’s Gallery” News/Opinions. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), June 8, 1839. “ART. III. Exhibition of Pictures Painted by Washington Allston at Harding’s Gallery, School Street” *The North American Review* 50, no. 107 (April 1840): 368.

In addition to promoting art criticism, Allston's retrospective, held just four years before his death in 1843, was also intended to raise money for the financially strapped artist.⁴³⁸ Retrospective exhibitions, such as Fraser's and Allston's, were unusual in antebellum America. The only other significant retrospective was given posthumously in honor of Gilbert Stuart in 1828. The portraitist died just a few months earlier, leaving behind a rather large family with no means of financial support. The Boston Athenaeum, where the retrospective took place, donated all proceeds to Stuart's impoverished survivors.⁴³⁹

Thanks in large part to his planter status and legal training, Fraser did not experience pecuniary difficulty to the same extent that Stuart and Allston had. Lacking a fundraising component, the Fraser Gallery, as described by Gilman, sought to celebrate the accomplishments of a local artist nearing the end of his career. Just as Allston's Gallery had a didactic purpose by providing students an opportunity to study Allston's work, the Fraser Gallery also proved to be an edifying event – though not in regards to artists' education, but rather in terms of political peacekeeping. Beyond its celebration of local artistic talent, the Fraser Gallery becomes more meaningful when one considers the tense socio-political climate of Charleston at the time, the personal ideologies of the exhibition's organizers, and the visual content of the exhibition itself.

The opening of the Fraser Gallery in the spring of 1857 coincided with and, as this chapter argues, responded to deepening regional divisiveness, which had steadily intensified since approximately 1820. Following the Nullification Crisis and between the

⁴³⁸ "ART. III. Exhibition of Pictures Painted by Washington Allston at Harding's Gallery, School Street," *passim*.

⁴³⁹ *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Portraits, Painted by the Late Gilbert Stuart, Esq.* Boston Athenaeum (Boston: Eastburn, 1828). Exhibition Catalogue.

years of roughly 1836 and 1843, most Americans were united in their focus on shared national goals, which comprised: discussing land policy; negotiating protective tariffs; initiating internal improvements; regulating banks; and establishing a currency policy.⁴⁴⁰ Though cognizant of regional differences, most Americans were not preoccupied with sectarian interests. Fraser's negotiation between northern and southern taste during these decades attests to the widespread awareness of regional differences. This began to change in 1843 when debates pertaining to the annexation of the Republic of Texas revealed opposing attitudes toward westward expansion. At issue was the incorporation of slaveholding versus free states into the Union. The Mexican-American War (1846-1848), which precipitated Mexico's forced cession of present-day California and New Mexico to the United States and, subsequently, the repeal of the Compromise of 1850, added fuel to the fire. The corresponding fervor of the abolitionist movement clashed with southern planters' equally zealous determination to maintain and perpetuate a regional status quo.

The passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which undid the Missouri Compromise of 1820, created an even greater divide within the political parties between North and South.⁴⁴¹ Each region understood the other's interests to be not only in opposition to their own, but also, and somewhat more significantly, a threat to their very way of life. Southern politicians staunchly defended their states' right to hold slaves and,

⁴⁴⁰ Robert Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1979), 180-181.

⁴⁴¹ Drafted by Henry Clay, the Missouri Compromise of 1820 sought to settle debates regarding the expansion of slavery westward. It proposed that all Louisiana territory north of the 36-30 latitude would be free, excluding the proposed state of Missouri. Thirty-four years later, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, proposed by Stephen Douglas, repealed the Missouri Compromise and replaced it with popular sovereignty. The Democrat and Whig political parties became divided as a result and a new, albeit short-lived political party formed, the Free Soil Party, which was composed of moderate abolitionists, northern Democrats and Whigs. Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics*, 180-183, and 197.

more than that, sought to expand slavery into other states and territories farther west. It seemed to many Northerners that Southerners were aggressively (even violently) pursuing their own “slavocracy” at the expense of republicanism, which was founded on the principle of natural freedoms. They considered the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law (1850) as evidence of the slavery system’s invasion northward. For their own part, Southerners resented northern politicians’ attempts to limit or abolish slavery and thus the power of the planter elite. For Southerners, this exemplified what they referred to as northern imperialism.⁴⁴²

By 1857, North and South were firmly pitted against one another and civil war was on the horizon. Contributing to escalating sectional tensions were periodicals and other circulating literature that defined the character of Northerners and Southerners in opposition to one another.⁴⁴³ According to historian Daniel Aaron, because there existed more publishing companies in New England than in the Southeast, northern writers more successfully influenced the development of regional identities.⁴⁴⁴ James C. Cobb explains in *Away Down South* that, as political divisions widened, the South was increasingly defined in opposition to the North, with some northern writers designating undesirable, un-American traits as “southern.”⁴⁴⁵ For example, Southerners were overwhelmingly condemned as lazy, unrefined, and fiery tempered.

⁴⁴² Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics*, 209-210.

⁴⁴³ James C. Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10.

⁴⁴⁴ Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War: American Writers and the Civil War* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 2.

⁴⁴⁵ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 3. In his discussion of the northern concept of the South as “other,” Cobb is careful to note that black Southerners were excluded from developing concepts of “southernness.”

This chapter discusses the Fraser Gallery, never before addressed in scholarship, as the realization of Fraser's conciliatory, anti-secession vision of the United States as guided by the literary minds of Unitarian Reverend Samuel Gilman and his wife, Caroline.⁴⁴⁶ The couple left their home in Boston in 1819 for Charleston when Samuel Gilman (1791-1858) filled a recently vacated position in Charleston's Second Independent Church.⁴⁴⁷ It was not long before the Gilmans embraced their new environment and even became slaveholders.⁴⁴⁸ Gilman and his literary-minded wife felt torn between admiration for southern culture and nostalgia for their New England childhoods. Caroline Gilman (1794-1888) was particularly determined in her literary efforts to ease the growing animosity between North and South. This tension, she believed, was due to each region's lack of knowledge and familiarity with the everyday life, habits, and manners of the other region's inhabitants.⁴⁴⁹ By 1857, both Samuel and Caroline Gilman, approaching their mid-sixties, had witnessed the escalation of tensions and, like Fraser, feared that war between the states was inevitable. At a time when American landscape painting was closely associated with national identity, and art, more

⁴⁴⁶ Samuel Gilman was credited with initiating the event. Other notices further corroborate this: "We believe we do not detract from any merit or credit due to others, when we say that to Dr. GILMAN, we are indebted for the first suggestion and proposal for an exhibition of Mr. FRASER'S works." *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), March 17, 1857. Samuel Gilman was not alone, however, in spearheading the project. In a review of the exhibition and its catalogue, the *Courier* concluded: "... to him [Samuel Gilman] and his truly worthy and well consorted "helpmate" we are indebted much for the direction and assistance that organized and successfully conducted the exhibition... CAROLINE GILMAN and SAMUEL GILMAN have by this demonstration acquired... a new claim to the affectionate admiration and cordial esteem of the community." *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), March 17, 1857.

⁴⁴⁷ Daniel Walker Howe, "A Massachusetts Yankee in Senator Calhoun's Court: Samuel Gilman in South Carolina" *The New England Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1971), 198.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 202. The Gilmans purchased a large, white home at 11 Orange Street in Charleston and housed their domestic slaves in outhouses behind the main residence. Though he avoided the topic of slavery while in his pulpit, Gilman was known to defend the institution privately among peers.

⁴⁴⁹ Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 63.

generally, with refinement, an art exhibition such as the Fraser Gallery presented an opportunity to remind a predominantly secessionist audience of *shared* American values and national exceptionalism.

Fraser, a local painter who had sketched both northern and southern landscape subjects and who had maintained an air of neutrality throughout the tense decades, was the ideal artist with which to partner in such an endeavor. Not only did Fraser appeal to the planter elite, being himself a member of a planter family and having painted countless miniature portraits of elite South Carolinians and their estates, but Fraser was also a former pro-union Federalist who had run for State Representative on four separate occasions.⁴⁵⁰ Although unsuccessful in the political arena, Fraser continued to keep abreast of current events.⁴⁵¹ It is possible that Fraser shared his political views with Caroline and Samuel Gilman, with whom he maintained a close friendship. Although as a Presbyterian he was not a member of Gilman's Unitarian congregation, Fraser was active in the same intellectual societies in which Samuel Gilman participated. As further testament to their friendship, Fraser created a small painting, *Girl with Kitten* (1841), as a gift for Caroline and in honor of the author's novel, *Love's Progress*, published the year prior.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ The law book Fraser fingers in his well-known 1820 miniature self-portrait alludes to his legal profession, which he put aside in favor of pursuing a career in the arts after having lost each of the four elections.

⁴⁵¹ This is evidenced by his scrapbook of newspaper clippings as well as his many letters to family and friends. Charles Fraser Scrapbook, ca.1843. South Carolina Historical Society. Charles Fraser Family Papers, 1782-1958. South Carolina Historical Society. Fraser was particularly vocal about his political leanings in letters exchanged with friends Robert C. Winthrop and Hugh S. Legare, as addressed in chapters three and four.

⁴⁵² *Girl with Kitten* (1841), oil on canvas, 23 3/8 x 20 1/2 in., Gibbes Museum of Art. The painting depicts Ruth Raymond and her kitten, Perdita. Both were characters in Caroline's novel, *Love's Progress*, published in 1840. This image is listed as #133 in the Fraser Gallery catalogue. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 31.

Charlestonians held Fraser in high regard as one of only a few South Carolinians of the revolutionary generation still living. Though barely a year old when the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783 acknowledging America's independence, Fraser had witnessed the social, political, and economic changes that followed. He recorded these memories and, at the request of friends, published them under the title *Reminiscences of Charleston* in 1854.⁴⁵³ Local enthusiasm that accompanied Fraser's memoirs, published just three years prior to his 1857 retrospective exhibition, is indicative of the planter elite's eagerness to construct a regional identity distinct from the one imposed on them by their northern neighbors.

Under the Gilmans' supervision, the Fraser Gallery proclaimed Charlestonians' refined appreciation for the visual arts, while also asserting a conciliatory sentiment that was very much alive in Charleston, the symbolic "heart of the Confederacy."⁴⁵⁴ In fact, an early review of the Fraser Gallery suggests an awareness that the exhibition had an extra-artistic agenda: "The origination, promotion, and successful progress of such an exhibition suggests and involves lessons and influences far beyond the gratification of a leisure hour, or satisfaction of an idle curiosity."⁴⁵⁵ Subsequent reviews echo this sentiment and recognize the participation of Fraser's planter patrons. That influential Charleston planters and patrons gladly loaned precious family portraits indicates their

⁴⁵³ Charles Fraser, *Reminiscences of Charleston*, passim. Fraser composed these memoirs at the request of friends. They were initially read aloud to his friends during successive meetings of the Charleston Literary Club. Soon thereafter, portions appeared in the *Charleston Courier*. At the request of friends, Fraser finally compiled his memoirs for publication in 1854.

⁴⁵⁴ The appellation "heart of the Confederacy" was coined by Maurie D. McInnis. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 1.

⁴⁵⁵ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), January 29, 1857, as quoted in Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860, n.p.

eagerness to support the artist's retrospective in a way that they had not supported earlier attempted public exhibitions.⁴⁵⁶

This retrospective brought together Fraser's landscape and fancy paintings of southern, northern, and European scenery loaned by patrons from both sides of the Mason-Dixon line at the height of the sectional crisis and displayed them alongside approximately three hundred miniature portraits of notable local and non-southern Americans. The Fraser Gallery's showcase of regional landscapes – a genre at this time associated with concepts of American cultural identity – marked a subtle attempt to nudge the art-viewing and politically affluent Charleston planter class toward reconsidering the multifaceted character of America and its inhabitants' shared national values. Charleston was not only the home of fire-eating secessionism; it was also the self-proclaimed center of southern culture and refinement. By the 1850s the politically influential planter class was eager to assert a refined cultural identity to counter how they were perceived by their northern neighbors. What better way for outnumbered peace-seeking Charlestonians to appeal to the authoritative planter class than through the moralizing power of art?

Disputing the Southern Stereotype

Sectional tension brought on by conflicting political and economic interests fueled a desire to distinguish North from South. At the height of the sectional crisis, when Samuel Gilman and his organizing committee initiated plans for the Fraser Gallery in 1856, northern perceptions of southern culture were, with few exceptions, remarkably

⁴⁵⁶ It is notable that duplicates of miniatures were not uncommon in the Fraser Gallery. Their inclusion may reflect the committee's reluctance to turn away loaned portraits from upper class Charlestonians and therein risk antagonizing this politically and culturally influential social class.

negative. Two images of the South co-existed in the northern mind during the antebellum era.⁴⁵⁷ Both involved the slaveholding planter class. Northerners perceived these Southerners as either cultivated and kindly aristocrats, concerned for their slaves' welfare and surrounded by loyal black servants, or, conversely, as violent, fiery tempered slave drivers, arrogant and determined to have their way at all costs. As the antebellum era came to a close, and tension between regions increased, the latter image began to dominate. As Bostonians who had recently relocated to Charleston, Samuel and Caroline Gilman, like Fraser, were torn between increasingly divisive political factions. They were eager to promote peace, but also felt protective of their new home, as evidenced in their literature. Their determination to assert that Southerners were indeed refined was also made apparent in the Fraser Gallery.

No record exists to provide insight into how Fraser's paintings were arranged or treated within the gallery space. However, a catalogue itemizing all images exhibited in the Fraser Gallery survives. Within the catalogue, miniatures are listed first and are arranged in family groupings as often as possible, though no hierarchy or strict method of categorization is otherwise evident.⁴⁵⁸ Displayed together, these miniatures offer a harmonious microcosm of Charleston society and beyond – one that included planter families, influential merchants and professionals, local intellectuals and artisans, as well as northern relatives and patrons. The inclusion of prestigious South Carolinians who,

⁴⁵⁷ Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics*, 209.

⁴⁵⁸ Grouping Charles Fraser's miniatures strictly by family would have been quite challenging, considering the complicated network of inter-marriage among the planter classes in particular. However, the catalogue is careful to note each sitter's relation to well-known Charlestonian contemporaries, as lineage was important and suggested the civic importance of the individual depicted. For more information regarding social relations within the South Carolinian planter class, see Glover, *All Our Relations*.

like Fraser, actively supported the visual arts in Charleston, attests to the refinement of Southerners deemed intellectually inferior by northern writers.

One such author was northern landscape architect and social critic Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) who published a damning assessment of southern character derived from his travels through the region during the 1850s. In *Cotton Kingdom*, Olmsted described his interactions with members of the planter class and made the argument that while Northerners find happiness in laboring to acquire success and actively work to support and improve their communities, Southerners, because of their reliance on slave labor, are comparatively lazy, impatient, less intellectually curious, and uncreative.⁴⁵⁹ Olmsted's assessment fueled the northern perception that the institution of slavery produced overindulgent white Southerners who were not only unfamiliar with the American concept of a Protestant work ethic, but were also uncharitable and void of the cultural refinement to which they laid claim. Such a lax environment was not, as fellow New Yorker and historian William Dunlap noted in his 1834 biography of Washington Allston, salubrious to the creative and intellectual spirit.⁴⁶⁰

Like so many universal assumptions, the late antebellum northern perception of the South was not without basis, for undoubtedly there were those planters who fit this stereotype. Yet, this assumption must be recognized for what it was. There were those Southerners, some planters, others merchants or professionals – even yeoman farmers – whose activities, writings, and communal contributions refute such a blanket assessment.

⁴⁵⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861), passim.

⁴⁶⁰ Dunlap describes Washington Allston as having been “preserved from disease” rampant in South Carolina by moving to the salubrious atmosphere of Rhode Island, where Allston attended school as a youth. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, 2:299.

Southerners were not ignorant of European and northern art and culture, as demonstrated in the preceding chapters. Certainly the accomplishments of Fraser testify to this. Familiarity with European, particularly British, literature, politics, manners, and cultural monuments was vital if one was to be considered culturally refined in Charleston. Certainly, some planters, following their Grand Tour abroad, returned to their Charleston home with little thought for how their newfound knowledge or art acquisitions might benefit the community. But those who participated in the Fraser Gallery show that others assumed a more active role in disseminating cultural information.

Thomas Middleton, for example, was a product of one of the more culturally affluent planter families, an amateur painter (he created *Friends and Amateurs in Musick* [Fig. 1.1] discussed in the introduction), and an avid supporter of South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts.⁴⁶¹ His 1822 miniature portrait [Fig. 5.1] by Charles Fraser, in which he appears in the same attire worn by his father in his portrait by Benjamin West, was prominently displayed in the Fraser Gallery.⁴⁶² Robert W. Gibbes of Columbia, South Carolina, whose name precedes Middleton's in the list of miniatures on exhibition, was an art collector and one of Fraser's more distinguished patrons.⁴⁶³ In addition to

⁴⁶¹ Bowes, *The Culture of Early Charleston*, 117. Middleton, along with Steven Cogdell, was one of the more active advocates for the South Carolina Academy of Fine Arts. Rutledge, *Artists in the Life of Charleston*, 139.

⁴⁶² Appearing as #245 in the list of miniatures, *Thomas Middleton* (1822) is recorded as depicting the sitter "in costume." Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 17. The "costume" attire worn by Middleton in this miniature is based on that worn by his father and namesake in his portrait painted by Benjamin West painted in 1770, titled *Thomas Middleton of the Oaks*. MESDA Catalogue of Early Southern Decorative Arts. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

⁴⁶³ *Robert W. Gibbes, MD* (1829) appears as #106 in the list of miniatures. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 13.

loaning Fraser's paintings from his own collection, Gibbes also created a biographical sketch of the artist that appears at the end of the exhibition catalogue.⁴⁶⁴

Many of the planter class aided the Fraser Gallery, including Daniel Ravenel, John Ashe Alston, and Alfred Huger, who were also active members of intellectual societies, such as the Charleston Literary Club and the Charleston Library Society. The Charleston Literary Club, composed of planters, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and merchants, met periodically to discuss literature, science, foreign affairs, art, and social issues.⁴⁶⁵ It was to this intellectual society that Fraser presented his memoirs, which were eventually published under the title *Reminiscences of Charleston*. During the months when the club did not meet (May through October), some of its members continued similar meetings under the guise of the Charleston Library Society or Conversation Club.⁴⁶⁶ In addition to addressing political and social issues of the day, members of this

⁴⁶⁴ Gibbes appears to have been rather restless. In addition to writing for the *Carolina Planter*, editing a local paper (*Palmetto State Banner*) he had purchased, and collecting art, Gibbes also worked as a surgeon, eventually serving two terms as mayor of Columbia and Surgeon General of South Carolina during the Civil War. Unfortunately, Gibbes' entire art collection was sacked and much of it destroyed when Columbia was invaded by General Sherman's troops in 1865. Debra Reddin van Tuyl and Patricia G. McNeely, "Robert W. Gibbes: The Mind of the Confederacy," in *Knights of the Quill: Confederate Correspondents and Their Civil War Reporting* (Purdue University Press, 2010), 95, 97, and 102.

⁴⁶⁵ Founded in 1820, the Charleston Literary Club addressed various topics, barring politics and religion. Lectures given at these meetings offered insight into a breadth of topics, including Hugh Swinton Legare's lecture on Greek Republics and Joel R. Poinsett's discussion of South American Republics. Scholars visiting the area were also invited to speak. Virginian Mathew Fontaine Maury lectured on the hydrography of the seas and Harvard Professor Louis Agassiz spoke on coal measures. Mrs. St. Julian Ravenel, *Charleston: The Place and the People* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), 474-475.

⁴⁶⁶ Many wealthy South Carolinians fled the intense heat of the summer months to vacation in cooler, less humid climes. Popular vacation locales included spas and resorts in the mountains of North Carolina and Virginia or family and friends' residences farther North, particularly in Philadelphia and Newport. Franklin, *Southern Odyssey*, xiv-xv. Initiated by Mitchell King in 1842 and dissolved with the onset of the Civil War, the Conversation Club was composed of men of letters, including planters, merchants, and professionals. One member, Frederick Porcher, included in his memoirs a list of members of the Conversation Club. Porcher's list includes (in addition to himself) the names of several men also on the Fraser Gallery's organizing committee:

club, which included Samuel Gilman, sponsored the creation of the Charleston Library and the Apprentice's Library, of which Fraser was a member. Despite their interest in and discussion of cultural events occurring in the northern states, these intellectual, literary, and art societies and their activities in Charleston went largely unnoticed by northern periodicals.

The accomplishments of non-planter Southerners also went unnoticed by the northern press. The Gilmans, in opposition to this, presented the multifaceted talents of Charlestonians by displaying portraits of upstanding middle-class citizens alongside likenesses of the planter elite. Miniatures of middle-class Charlestonians, such as Aaron Smith Willington, founder and editor of the *Charleston Courier*, and Stephen Elliott, a distinguished naturalist and lecturer, attest to the intellectual and entrepreneurial capabilities of Southerners otherwise deemed lethargic and ignorant.⁴⁶⁷ Elsewhere in the list of miniatures are South Carolinians notable for their contributions to the creation and preservation of the United States. Miniatures of the recently deceased Colonel William Alston, aid to local revolutionary war hero General Francis Marion, and the so-called “heroine of the revolution” Mrs. William Branford [Fig. 5.2], reminded visitors of sacrifices made on their behalf in the War for Independence.⁴⁶⁸ Likenesses of contemporaries, such as Joel R. Poinsett, Secretary of War and Minister to Mexico, and

Mitchell King, Daniel Ravenel, Samuel Gilman, Samuel Dickson, George S. Bryan, and James H. Taylor. O'Brien, *Conjecture to Order*, 1:402-428.

⁴⁶⁷ *A.S. Willington* (1834) is #101 on the list of miniatures. *Stephen Elliott, LL.D.* (1822) appears further down the list as #112. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 13.

⁴⁶⁸ *Col. William Alston* (1839) is listed as #74 in the catalogue of miniatures. Alongside his entry appears “aid to Gen. Marion, copy from Morse.” *Mrs. Branford* is noted as “heroine of the revolution” and listed as #26 in the catalogue of miniatures. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 10 & 12.

Henry Deas, President of the South Carolina State Senate, demonstrated continued participation in the democratic experiment begun almost seventy years earlier.⁴⁶⁹

The contributions of such Southerners to the larger United States were nonetheless overwhelmed by the inflammatory opinions of some northern writers regarding southern character. America's early literary and publishing industries were based in the Northeast, so that northern sensibilities and perceptions of American values dominated.⁴⁷⁰ Moreover, essays, poems, and journals, printed by larger, established publishers, were widely distributed to a broader audience – one that included southern readers.

Articles in prestigious northern publications, including the *New England Magazine*, reveal that negative feeling toward the South gradually intensified during the later antebellum years. *New England Magazine* was unbiased, even kind to the South in the early antebellum years. Issues published in 1831 paid tribute to wealthy and intelligent Southerners, equating plantation owners with English country gentlemen. Contributors described South Carolinians specifically as having many virtues. These Southerners were portrayed as trustworthy, generous in their spending, and fervently patriotic.⁴⁷¹ In 1833 and 1834, during the Nullification Crisis, the *New England Magazine*

⁴⁶⁹ *Hon. Joel R. Poinsett, M.C.* [n.d.] appears as #46 on the list of miniatures. His occupation is noted alongside this entry. *Hon. Henry Deas* [n.d.] appears later at #178 and his occupation is also acknowledged. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 11 & 15.

⁴⁷⁰ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 3.

⁴⁷¹ Articles and sketches published in the *New England Magazine* during early 1830s celebrated the heroism of Carolinians during the Revolutionary War. The institution of slavery in which they engaged was blamed for their flaws, including lack of industry and thrift. Black residents of Charleston were described as being better fed and clothed than those of New York. The evils of slavery, these writers claimed, was lessened by the beneficent treatment of the "negro." "South Carolina," *New England Magazine*, I (September 1831), 246-250. "South Carolina," *New England Magazine* (October 1831), 337-341. Howard Floan, *The South in Northern Eyes, 1831-1861* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1958), 92-95.

encouraged mutual respect and understanding between North and South. Contributors reminded readers that America was a cultural experiment. Denouncing impassioned, excited feeling, these writers instead urged candid and informed discussions of sectarian issues.⁴⁷² Educating the public on key issues would promote mutual understanding and, they believed, facilitate the dissolution of distrust and prejudice on both sides. But not even the *New England Magazine* could remain impartial for long; by 1835, a distinctly anti-southern tone pervaded its pages.⁴⁷³ Northern accounts of Southern atrocities appeared more frequently during that year. One particularly disturbing article described a Northerner's experience of being tarred and feathered during his visit to the South on account of his being suspected of harboring abolitionist sympathies.⁴⁷⁴

Writers from both regions submitted work for publication to large northern publishers. But as sectional tensions strengthened during the 1850s, southern writers who engaged with themes related to southern cultures and lifestyles faced rejection from northern printers.⁴⁷⁵ As a former Bostonian residing in Charleston who wrote about regional topics that appealed to Northerners and Southerners, Caroline Gilman was one of the few southern writers who enjoyed a national readership.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷² *New England Magazine*, 5 (August 1833), 122-129. *New England Magazine*, 7 (November 1834), 407-408.

⁴⁷³ Floan, *The South in Northern Eyes*, 96.

⁴⁷⁴ "The Inconveniences of being Lynched," *New England Magazine*, 9 (Oct 1835), 270-273. No later examples from this publication are available, as *New England Magazine* was absorbed into the *American Monthly Magazine* (a New York publication) in 1835. Because of its close economic ties with the South (New York factories and businesses profited considerable from cheap raw materials produced on southern plantations), New York-based publications, such as *American Monthly Magazine*, abstained from publishing overtly anti-southern text until well into the Civil War.

⁴⁷⁵ During the decade prior to the Civil War, there was very little cross-sectional publication of writers. Bassett, *Defining Southern Literature*, 16.

⁴⁷⁶ Jonathan Daniel Wells, *Women Writers and Journalists in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 106.

Caroline's widely read *The Poetry of Travelling in the United States* (1838), composed while accompanying her husband as he attended Harvard's bicentennial celebration in 1836, exemplifies an early, though failed, attempt on the author's part to assuage sectional tension. In her introduction to the text, Caroline blamed lack of knowledge rather than regional difference for the political crisis. She prefaced the book by making clear her motivation to alleviate sectional tensions by educating her audience as to the habits and manners practiced in each region.⁴⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the text that follows is divided into two separate volumes: "Travel in the North" and "Travel in the South." In *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture*, Elizabeth Moss offers a persuasive explanation as to why Caroline's book failed in its proposed mission. Moss notes that, despite her self-proclaimed conciliatory intentions, Caroline described her journey in a way that reaffirmed pre-existing regional stereotypes and emphasized the mutual exclusivity of these regions.⁴⁷⁸ Caroline's description of the "fast-paced, frenzied" North, peopled by "calculating merchants" contrasts with her portrayal of a "leisurely, ordered" South, peopled by aristocratic planters. In so doing, Caroline inadvertently undermined her own pro-union efforts and, instead, reinforced cultural differences articulated in her earlier publications, while alluding to her own preference for the southern way of life as she experienced it.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Gilman, *The Poetry of Traveling in the United States*, preface (n.p.). For a more detailed discussion of the preface and its implications, see Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South*, 58-63.

⁴⁷⁸ Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South*, 60-70.

⁴⁷⁹ Elizabeth Moss goes on to explore the didactic nature of Caroline's other notable publications, *Recollections of a Housekeeper* (later, *Recollections of a New England Housekeeper*) (1834) and *Recollections of a Southern Matron* (1838). Moss convincingly argues that these novels, when considered together, suggest Caroline's belief that geographical and intellectual isolation produced Southerners who were more morally virtuous than their northern counterparts. *Ibid.*, 65-67 & 70-72.

Another Charlestonian author, William Gilmore Simms, who had received positive reviews from northern critics earlier in his career, was still more explicit in his resentment of the South's exclusion from a developing national image increasingly dominated by Boston and New York. In fact, as early as 1834, when the abolitionist movement strengthened and regional divisions widened, newly founded southern magazines and journals in Richmond and Charleston began calling for a distinctly southern literature that would make a meaningful contribution to American literature.⁴⁸⁰ But, as Simms, the editor of the *Southern Literary Gazette* during the early 1830s, noted with some irritation, Southerners simply did not purchase locally printed journals and books at a rate that would sustain a regional literary movement.⁴⁸¹ Thus, northern literature overwhelmed bookshelves nationwide and dominated Americans' conception of national identity.

Most northern writers never ventured south of Washington. But this did not deter some of them from asserting their authority on southern culture. Northern journalists described the southern landscape as dangerous, unhealthy, even miasmic, illustrating their articles with images of dangerous southern swamplands. One such image [Fig. 5.3], depicting Union troops navigating a treacherous Louisiana swamp, appeared as on the cover of *Harper's Weekly* on May 9, 1863, six years after Fraser's retrospective.⁴⁸² Instead of the vibrant, grand paintings of the northern wilderness rendered by Thomas Cole that helped spur America's tourism industry almost three decades earlier, *Louisiana*

⁴⁸⁰ Bassett, *Defining Southern Literature*, 15.

⁴⁸¹ Simms did much to challenge what he understood to be northern dominion over American literature and public perception of the South. A staunch supporter and promoter of his home state, Simms was not only a prolific writer in his own right, but he also openly challenged the editors of the *Knickerbocker* in 1842 and the *North American Review* in 1845 in response to their publications of distinctly anti-southern articles. Bassett, *Defining Southern Literature*, 18 and 38.

⁴⁸² [Cover] *Harper's Weekly*. vol. VII, no. 332. (May 9, 1863).

Swamp presents a terrifyingly sublime depiction of the southern wilderness that discourages entry. Although dense vegetation overwhelms much of the foreground, death resonates in the form of felled trees and limbless trunks, and sharply leaved wild palm trees at the left side of the composition appear threatening. Massachusetts Senator Daniel Webster evoked similar imagery when addressing sectional issues. In a speech given in 1851 at Capon Spring, Virginia, for example, Webster compared secession with the notion of the swamp as one of dispersal, infection, and death:

Secession and disunion are a region of gloom, and morass and swamp; no cheerful breezes fan it, no spirit of health visits it; it is all malaria. It is all fever and ague. Nothing beautiful or useful grows in it; the traveler through it breathes miasma, and treads among all things unwholesome and loathsome.⁴⁸³

Webster, struggling to convince Virginians to forego secession, assigned the swamp the role of a moral barometer during a time of national crisis.

The pervasiveness of southern swamp imagery in northern publications and political orations during the mid-nineteenth century should not be interpreted as evidentiary of Northerners' lack of familiarity with the southern landscape. Certainly most Northerners, even those less traveled, did not presume that the American South consisted of swampy wastelands exclusively. But by 1860, the gloomy swamp, with its marshy canals, dense green foliage, moss-laden trees, and predatory animal inhabitants, signified the South's social decay and depredation for many Northerners.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸³ Daniel Webster's speech about disunion at Capon Springs, VA, in 1851, as quoted in David C. Miller. *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 10.

⁴⁸⁴ David C. Miller. *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 56-7. For more information related to mid-nineteenth century notions of southern identity as conveyed through images of southern swamps, see Anthony Wilson, *Shadow and Shelter: The Swamp in Southern Culture* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi), 2006.

While the southern landscape was condemned as diseased and dangerous, Southerners themselves, as products of this difficult climate, were characterized, in accordance with Olmsted's assessment, as lazy, self-indulgent, and hot-tempered.⁴⁸⁵ Though the planter elite were undoubtedly the target of such denouncements, the unfavorable reputation of this minority population extended to all Southerners, including the two-thirds majority of the white southern population who did not own slaves.⁴⁸⁶ These northern writers confused their hatred for the institution of slavery with a distain for southern culture in general.

This conflation of southern character with the evils of slavery is evident in the work of even the most distinguished of northern writers. New Englander Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), a former Unitarian minister, had a particularly tumultuous relationship with the region. Linda T. Prior explores the circumstances of Emerson's temporary distaste for the American South in her essay, "Ralph Waldo Emerson and South Carolina." Aptly titled, Prior focuses on Emerson's ties to this particular state, which, by the 1840s, symbolized the exotic decadence Emerson associated with the entire

⁴⁸⁵ These regional traits, many believed, were evidentiary of the negative effects of the southern climate on culture and character. Cobb, *Away Down South*, 10. Thomas Jefferson was among the earliest Americans to assert differences in character between northern and southern Americans. In his letter to the Marquis de Chastellux (written in 1785) titled "Climate and American Character," Jefferson asserted that character distinctions between Northerners and his fellow Southerners emanated from differences in regional climate. The cooler Northern climate, according to Jefferson, causes residents to be "cool, sober, laborious, independent, jealous of their own liberties, and just to those of others, interested, superstitious, and hypocritical of their religion." Conversely, Jefferson writes, residents of the warmer southern region tend to be "fiery, voluptuary, indolent, unsteady, jealous of their own liberties, but trampling on those of others, generous, [and] without attachment or pretensions to any religion but that of the heart." Jefferson's distinction between regional characteristics is a more lighthearted observation than the mid-nineteenth-century writings offered. Thomas Jefferson to the Marquis de Chastellux in Paris, 2 September 1785, in *Letters of Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826*, University of Virginia.

⁴⁸⁶ Cobb, *Away Down South*, 79. The most powerful literary condemnation of the institution of slavery was, of course, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* published in 1852. For more information regarding sectional ideals as expressed in the characters of Miss Ophelia and St. Clare of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see Cobb, *Away Down South*, 30.

American South. Thus in his journals, Emerson used the term “Carolinians” in reference to all Southerners, not just those residing in the two states.⁴⁸⁷ Emerson did not always take issue with the region. Indeed, many of his Harvard classmates were South Carolinians.⁴⁸⁸ One classmate, Mellish Irving Motte, even entertained Emerson when, for health reasons, he visited Charleston during the winter of 1826-1827. It was also during this trip south that Emerson twice accepted Reverend Samuel Gilman’s invitation to lecture at the Unitarian Church of Charleston.⁴⁸⁹ Although Emerson was impressed by the manners and hospitality shown him by Southerners he encountered, the humid climate did not improve his troubling respiratory condition and so left him with a somewhat poor opinion of the region.

By the 1850s, Emerson was a staunch abolitionist. But during his Charleston visit twenty-five years earlier, he never condemned slavery in his journal entries. It was not until the 1830s and 1840s that Emerson began to express openly his objection to slavery on moral grounds. Still he remained separate from the abolitionist movement during those decades. Prior explains that the very same philosophy that inspired Emerson’s denouncement of slavery also inhibited his joining the abolitionists: his belief in personal freedom, in individual rather than communal reform, and his notion that an artist such as himself should abstain from politics. But a series of unfortunate events during the 1840s and 1850s prompted Emerson to reconsider joining the abolitionists. Emerson was

⁴⁸⁷ Linda T. Prior, “Ralph Waldo Emerson and South Carolina,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 79 no. 4 (October 1978): 257 and 260.

⁴⁸⁸ Emerson’s South Carolinian classmates included: John G.K. Gourdin, Robert Marion Gourdin, Mellish Irving Motte, Robert Woodward Barnwell, William George Read, Samuel Cordes Prioleau, Allard Henry Belin, Andrew Turnbull, William Parker Coffin, and Henry M. Neyle. John Gourdin and Emerson were roommates during Emerson’s junior year at Harvard. *Ibid.*, 254.

⁴⁸⁹ Emerson lectured at the Unitarian Church in Charleston in December of 1826 and again in April of 1827. *Ibid.*, 255 and 258.

appalled when, in 1844, a Massachusetts statesman accompanying a ship to Charleston harbor to insure safe passage for the black seamen onboard was forcibly expelled from the state. The annexation of Texas the following year and the Mexican War that it engendered further frustrated the Concord writer. When the Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850 and, four years later, the Kansas-Nebraska Act negated the 36-30 latitude rule in place since 1820 and legislated that new territories joining the United States could determine their own status as free or slave, Emerson set aside portions of his personal philosophy to join the abolitionists. His disgust with the institution of slavery bled into his feelings about southern manners and culture. Seemingly forgetting his southern friends and the months spent in Charleston in their company, Emerson condemned all Southerners for permitting slavery to thrive.

Many of Emerson's attacks were lodged against southern politicians, who he referred to collectively as "spider-man," arguing the group should "be dealt with as all fanged animals must be."⁴⁹⁰ Using South Carolina as his point of reference, Emerson described the region as lawless and wild. Referring to the vigilante tradition that provoked southern gentlemen to defend (often violently) their own and their community's honor, Emerson likened South Carolina's relationship with the United States to that of Algiers with Turkey or Calabria with Naples. South Carolina, like

⁴⁹⁰ Noted by Porte as having been written during the winter of 1857, the full undated quote, which expresses Emerson's concern regarding the power of southern politicians, particularly in light of the attack on Charles Sumner less than a year earlier, reads: "The shooting complexion, like the cobra capello & scorpion, grows in the South. It has no wisdom, no capacity of improvement: it looks, in every landscape, only for partridges, in every society, for duels. And, as it threatens life, all wise men brave or peaceably run away from the spider-man, as they run away from a black spider: for life to them is real & rich, & not to be risked on any curiosity as to whether spider or spider-man can bite mortally, or only make a poisonous wound. With such a nation or a nation with a predominance of this complexion, war is the safest terms. That marks them, &, if they cross the lines, they can be dealt with as all fanged animals must be." Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Emerson in His Journals*, ed. Joel Porte (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), 479.

Algiers and Calabria, was a troublesome, crime-infested society. He forebodingly suggests that visitors “go there in disguise & with pistols in our pockets leaving our pocketbooks at home, making our wills before we go.”⁴⁹¹ At the heart of Emerson’s frustration with the region was what he understood to be its citizens’ seemingly complete agreement with John C. Calhoun regarding slavery and states’ rights. Emerson wrote in 1845, “In all S.C. there is but one opinion, but one man: Mr. Calhoun. Its citizens are but little Calhouns. In Massachusetts there are many opinions, many men.”⁴⁹² Unfamiliar with the deeply stratified social hierarchy in place in cities throughout the Southeast and the extent of the vigilante tradition that helped to maintain it, Emerson could not understand why Charleston citizens or the two-thirds majority of non-slaveholding white Southerners did not speak out against the powerful and wealthy planter class. Because they did not do so, in Emerson’s mind, they were complicit and so equally guilty of the planters’ transgressions. For Emerson, this crime condoned by Southerners infected their regional culture and therefore he condemned it as well.

To be fair, not all northern writers denounced the American South. Some of the most celebrated literary minds of that generation, including Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Oliver Wendell Holmes, recognized this slippage and were careful not to

⁴⁹¹ Emerson wrote this portion about South Carolina between January and March of 1845. The full quote reads: “In every government there are wild lawless provinces where the constituted authorities are forced to content themselves with such obedience as they can get. Turkey has its Algiers & Morocco, Naples its Calabria, Rome its Fondi, London its Alsatia, & Bristol Country its Slab Bridge, where the life of a man is not worth insuring. South Carolina must be set down in that infamous category, and we must go there in disguise & with pistols in our pockets leaving our pocketbooks at home, making our wills before we go.” Emerson, *Emerson in His Journals*, 334.

⁴⁹² This section of Emerson’s journal is dated, “January-March 1845.” Ibid., 335.

make the same generalizations when speaking out against the institution of slavery.⁴⁹³

Meanwhile, William Cullen Bryant and Walt Whitman defended non-slaveholding southern citizens even as they denounced slavery.⁴⁹⁴

Samuel and Caroline Gilman, for their part, united Northerners and Southerners on the Fraser Gallery walls by displaying portraits of native Southerners alongside those of displaced Northerners and New England relatives. One portrait, for example, depicted Joseph Winthrop [Fig. 5.4]. Born of a prestigious Massachusetts family, Winthrop relocated to Charleston in 1797, where he became a prominent merchant, and eventually married Fraser's older sister, Mary.⁴⁹⁵ The artist painted his sister and brother-in-law as well as Winthrop's two sisters, and nephew, all of which were also included in the exhibition.⁴⁹⁶ The last of these, Robert Charles Winthrop [Fig. 5.5], was a patron of and friend to Charles Fraser. He not only loaned several landscapes to the Fraser Gallery, but

⁴⁹³ Longfellow's *Poems on Slavery*, published in 1842, constitutes his first public anti-slavery statement. His poems criticize the institution of slavery, but do not condemn Southerners generally. Though such caution made his work more palatable for Southerners, many Northern critics were displeased. Nonetheless, the New England Anti-Slavery Association must have approved, as they reprinted it. Lawrence Thompson, *Young Longfellow (1807-1843)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 332. Edward Wagenknecht, *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: Portrait of an American Humanist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 56. Unlike his Bostonian friends, Holmes was not an abolitionist. In keeping with the philosophy he shared with Emerson, Holmes was anti-slavery, but considered the abolitionist movement too radical. Though Emerson eventually changed his mind, Holmes did not. Instead, Holmes favored a more gradual, peaceful, and legal dissolution of slavery. Edwin Palmer, *The Improper Bostonian: Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes* (New York: Morrow, 1979), 144. Sheldon M. Novick, *Honorable Justice: The Life of Oliver Wendell Holmes* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1989), 15.

⁴⁹⁴ Walt Whitman in particular, was careful not to condemn all Southerners. But he did fault slaveholding Southerners as well as certain northern institutions that profited from slavery and therefore were complicit in its perpetuation. Aaron, *The Unwritten War*, 4 and 60-76

⁴⁹⁵ Joseph Winthrop was a member of the Winthrop family, which founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

⁴⁹⁶ *Joseph Winthrop* appears twice in the catalogue. The image listed #48 is dated 1826, while the duplicated (noted as such) is listed #60. Preceding the second entry are Winthrop's family members, including: *Charles Winthrop* (1827), *Miss Mary Winthrop* [n.d.], and *Miss Jane Winthrop* (1802) listed as #57, #58, and #59 respectively. Fraser's miniature of his sister (Winthrop's wife) appears as *Mrs. Mary Fraser* and is grouped with other likenesses of his siblings. It is listed as #52 and is dated 1841. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 11.

he also donated a copy of the exhibition catalogue to the Harvard Library later that same year.⁴⁹⁷

A relative of Fraser through marriage, Joseph Winthrop was also a good friend of Samuel Gilman and fellow member of the New England Society in Charleston. A miniature of Mitchell King, founder of the same New England Society, was also on display.⁴⁹⁸ This intellectual group to which Gilman belonged and in which Fraser, known for his involvement with similar local societies, likely participated, was praised for its local charitable endeavors. Its members patronized the arts and promoted political bipartisanship.⁴⁹⁹ Miniatures of Northerners and Charlestonians known for their affiliation with the New England Society signified the interconnectedness – economically and socially – between the two clashing regions.

A Visual Plea to Reconsider Secession

Charles Fraser's miniature portraits of wealthy and noteworthy Americans from both northern and southern states displayed as they were alongside one another with no suggestion of hierarchy or division, asserted the notion that the inhabitants of each region had contributed to the American experiment in an equally meaningful way. Complimenting these miniatures, Fraser's "Landscapes and Other Pieces" perpetuated a similarly conciliatory ideal. This display of Fraser's northern and southern scenes with no implied hierarchy was well timed.

⁴⁹⁷ This information is handwritten on pages between the frontispiece and the catalogue text. Samuel Gilman's name is underlined several times and "Hon. Mem. of [illegible] Soc'y" appears beneath Fraser's name. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, n.p.

⁴⁹⁸ *Hon. Mitchell King* (1826) is listed #193 in the miniature section of the catalogue. Ibid., 16.

⁴⁹⁹ William Way, *History of the New England Society of Charleston, South Carolina, for One Hundred Years, 1819-1919* (Charleston: The New England Society, 1920), 8-14.

In 1856, the same year that Samuel and Caroline Gilman initiated efforts to organize the Fraser Gallery in Charleston, sectional tension reached a crescendo with the caning of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner by South Carolina Congressman Preston Brooks on the Senate chamber floor in Washington, D.C.⁵⁰⁰ The incident, while applauded by many Southerners, was condemned by northern abolitionists and is considered to be one of the more significant mid-century events that extinguished what spirit of compromise remained.⁵⁰¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had long struggled to separate his condemnation of slavery from his feelings about the American South, became so enraged upon hearing about the assault of his friend that he boldly declared in a town meeting held in Concord, Massachusetts:

I do not see how a barbarous community and a civilized community can constitute one state... The whole state of South Carolina does not now offer any one or any number of persons who are to be weighed for a moment in the scale with such a person as the meanest of them all have now struck down... It is the best whom they desire to kill.⁵⁰²

The Fraser Gallery, which made its debut fewer than eight months later, can be understood as Charleston's response to absolute proclamations such as this one, which accused South Carolinians of cultural ignorance and of being violently anti-progressive.

⁵⁰⁰ Three days before the incident, Sumner, an anti-slavery Republican, had given a speech mourning the violent events taking place in Kansas as part of the debate over whether to admit the territory as a slaveholding or free state. In his speech Sumner mocked the chivalrous character of one Democratic Senator, Andrew Butler of South Carolina, in particular. Butler was not present to defend himself. Representative Preston Brooks, Butler's nephew, sought to redeem his uncle's good name by viciously pummeling the unsuspecting Sumner with a cane as the Senator was gathering his papers following the adjournment of the Senate. Prescott's violent assault exemplified the southern vigilante tradition of defending family and communal honor. His punishment was negligible and he was re-elected as a Representative the following term.

⁵⁰¹ For a recent in-depth study of the effects of the caning of Sumner, see William James Hull Hoffer, *The Caning of Charles Sumner: Honor, Idealism, and the Origins of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

⁵⁰² Ralph Waldo Emerson as quoted in George Willis Cooke, *Ralph Waldo Emerson, His Life, Writings, and Philosophy* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1881), 138-139. This speech titled "The Assault Upon Sumner" was given at a town meeting in Concord, Massachusetts, on May 26, 1856 – just four days after the assault took place.

The 1857 exhibition asserted Charlestonians' ability to identify and their eagerness to celebrate local artistic talent. Having failed in their conciliatory efforts thus far, Samuel and Caroline Gilman also recognized in the Fraser Gallery one more opportunity to elucidate the shared and multifaceted character of American identity: this time, through visual representation rather than literary means.

As a former New Englander and a Unitarian minister, Samuel Gilman exercised caution when advocating conciliation. Although southern clergymen held considerable sway over local politics, Unitarianism, because of its association with abolitionism, was perceived as a means of imposing unwelcome northern values on southern society.⁵⁰³ According to the methodology Gilman would have learned while studying theology at Harvard, a good clergyman was expected to be a moral and intellectual leader, illuminating the path of progress, and supervising his congregation's pursuit of it.⁵⁰⁴ However, Charleston's conservative atmosphere impeded Gilman's efforts. Instead, Reverend Gilman seems to have heeded the example of James Freeman Clarke, a Unitarian minister in Kentucky, whose essay in the *Western Messenger* in 1840 advised: "a Christian Minister in a slave holding State, ought not, under present circumstances to preach on the subject of slave-holding."⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰³ Jay B. Hubbell, "Literary Nationalism in the Old South" in *American Studies in Honor of William Kenneth Boyd*, ed. David Kelly Jackson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), 192. Richard D. Arnold, a Unitarian physician in Savannah, wrote his pastor in 1837 discouraging abolitionism's place in Unitarianism: "Before God, I believe that Dr. Channing [a vocal New England abolitionist Unitarian] is opening a path over which torrents of bloodshed are destined to roll. We do not wish Dr. C. to become the keeper of our conscience." David K. Jackson, "Philip Pendleton Cooke: Virginia Gentlemen, Lawyer, Hunter, and Poet" in *American Studies in Honor of William Kenneth Boyd*, ed. David Kelly Jackson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1940), 331.

⁵⁰⁴ Howe, "A Massachusetts Yankee in Senator Calhoun's Court," 202-203.

⁵⁰⁵ Jackson, "Philip Pendleton Cooke," 332.

Beyond the maintenance of his church, Gilman would have also been concerned for the safety of his person and his family, and for good reason. The longstanding vigilante tradition to which Emerson alluded in his *Journals* was a powerful force in South Carolina and other parts of the American South. Sanctioned by the planter class who lived in constant fear of a slave insurrection, community members punished individuals believed to have committed certain transgressions that offended their southern sense of honor. An individual suspected of supporting abolitionism, for example, could be lynched, tarred and feathered, or otherwise publicly humiliated.⁵⁰⁶ Gilman would have been aware of this threat. Two decades earlier, Dr. Thomas Cooper (1759-1839) had been removed from his position as president of South Carolina College in Columbia precisely because of his perceived affiliation with New England (where he vacationed regularly), his avoidance of the topic of slavery, and his unorthodox deist beliefs.⁵⁰⁷ Elsewhere, in North Carolina, Hinton Rowan Helper, author of *The Impending Crisis of the South* (1857), had been less fortunate. Helper advocated that slavery oppressed the white yeomanry and called for that social class to unite and oppose secession. Not only was Helper's book banned in the South, but the author himself was forced to relocate to the North upon threat of death.⁵⁰⁸ Bertram Wyatt-Brown explains in *Honor and Violence in the Old South* that, for Southerners rich and poor alike, "honor was inseparable from hierarchy and entitlement, defense of family blood and community needs."⁵⁰⁹ Honor

⁵⁰⁶ For a thorough discussion of the relationship of southern honor and chivalry to violent vigilante behavior, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁵⁰⁷ Dr. Thomas Cooper was president of South Carolina College from 1820 to 1834. Eaton, *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South*, 58.

⁵⁰⁸ Interestingly, *The Impending Crisis of the South* was reissued in the northern states as a Republican political tract in 1859. Cobb, *Away Down South*, 52-53.

⁵⁰⁹ Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South*, 4 and 14.

functioned as the ethical mediator between an individual and his community. To be accepted within southern society, one was expected to adhere to communal principles.

With this in mind, Gilman avoided specific social and political issues while in his pulpit.⁵¹⁰ Gilman, who was known for “his gracious and conciliatory bearing,” commended like-minded northern orators and, in so doing, worked to assuage southern fears regarding the pervasiveness of northern radicalism.⁵¹¹ In an essay published in the *Southern Quarterly Review* in 1851 titled “Critical Essay on the Oratory of Edward Everett,” Gilman called attention to the presence of restraining forces in the radical North. He praised the Massachusetts statesman’s 1836 speech at Harvard, wherein he avoided “coarse political excitement” and instead encouraged the tempering of strong emotion with reason.⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ Daniel Walker Howe argues that Gilman was an abolitionist at heart. Howe cites the following quote from Gilman’s *Contributions to Religion* to bolster his argument: “Woe to that people who pour contempt on the cause of reform, who cherish, like a serpent in their bosom, what they must know and acknowledge to be wrong.” Samuel Gilman, *Contributions to Religion: Consisting of Sermons, Practical and Doctrinal* (Boston: Evans & Cogswell, 1860), 390-391. This remonstrance, Howe contends, is a carefully couched anti-slavery statement. And yet the Gilmans owned domestic slaves who lived in outbuildings behind their residence on Orange Street. Howe explains that owning slaves was a necessity and contends that other domestic hirelings would have been difficult to procure in Charleston. He goes on to assert that the Gilmans were likely ashamed of owning slaves, as evidenced by their close ties to New England relatives, some of whom were abolitionists. Howe, “A Massachusetts Yankee in Senator Calhoun’s Court,” 204-206. But in truth the Gilmans maintained close relations with all of their relatives North and South, including Caroline’s brother who was a planter in Savannah. Gilman’s literary reprimand is more likely a reference to Christian charity, something he found lacking in his congregation. He consistently urged able members to embark on social welfare projects, while simultaneously warning against over zealous acts of reform. Continuing with his argument, Howe proposes that the Gilmans freed slaves and sent them North along the Underground Railroad. Yet the author also admits that evidence of the Gilmans’ supposedly active abolitionism is fragmentary at best and the Gilman’s financial resources would have limited their ability to purchase slaves only to free them. Howe also acknowledges that, according to an 1820 South Carolina statute, freeing slaves was prohibited.

⁵¹¹ Way, *History of the New England Society of Charleston*, 98.

⁵¹² In this essay, Gilman refers specifically to a speech he witnessed Everett give to Harvard’s Phi Beta Kappa Society during a visit to New England. Samuel Gilman, “Critical Essay on the Oratory of Edward Everett” in *Contributions to Literature: Descriptive, Critical, Humorous*,

Samuel Gilman also championed reason and reassured his friends of his conciliatory sentiment in a speech given to the New England Society of Charleston the year following the Fraser retrospective. He advised that the enormity of secession should only inspire more earnest efforts to pause and consider how to proceed. Reminding his comrades that democracy was an ongoing experiment, Gilman urged temperance:

may not the very grandeur and extent of the arena constitute on this occasion our safeguard, and may they not be a sort of blessed *vis inertiae* harmonize, sway, and reconcile the combatants, just as the central attraction of the great globe itself draws to one point and one poise the most variant tribes that move upon its surface?⁵¹³

In effect, Gilman encouraged his brethren to focus on values shared among a diverse American population. The dissolution of the Union, he argued, was impossible, “as we cannot deny our similarities in hopes, language, history, and tradition.”⁵¹⁴

Gilman’s accomplished wife and co-initiator of the Fraser Gallery shared his conciliatory sentiments, as expressed in her 1838 publication. Caroline enjoyed a national reputation as a novelist, even as she supported her husband in his own religious, charitable, and literary pursuits. For his part, Samuel Gilman encouraged his wife’s literary ambitions.⁵¹⁵ In nineteenth-century America, upper-class women were generally considered more delicate, sensitive, and open to refinement than were men. Women were the guardians of culture in the home. Indeed, they were thought to exemplify gentility and moral virtue and were tasked with the duty of educating their children in this regard.

Biographical, Philosophical, and Poetical (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, & Company, 1856), 231-283.

⁵¹³ Way, *History of the New England Society of Charleston*, 221.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 223-224.

⁵¹⁵ Samuel Gilman makes occasional reference to Caroline’s carefully composed poetry in letters to his children and relatives. Samuel Gilman Papers, The Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina at Columbia. Samuel Gilman emphasized the importance of “the role of women as custodians of family solidarity and social morality.” Howe, “A Massachusetts Yankee in Senator Calhoun’s Court,” 212.

Richard Bushman explains in *The Refinement of America* that women were thought to be drawn to beauty because it reflected their own nature. They were thus perceived as the most genteel of creatures. This feminine attribute was publicly declared, universally recognized, and always honored.⁵¹⁶

Perhaps on this basis, Samuel Gilman and the organizing committee for the Fraser Gallery offered free admission to women and children. Charlestonian women repaid this generosity by forming a Ladies Committee to assist with organizing and hanging the exhibition as well as composing an accompanying exhibition catalogue.⁵¹⁷ Given Caroline's enthusiastic support for her husband and the conciliatory ideals she clearly shared with him, it is not surprising that she spearheaded this committee.⁵¹⁸

In this position, Caroline could have insured that Fraser's images were displayed in such a way as to convey the appropriate message. Reviews of the exhibition do not describe the arrangement of images on the walls, but the exhibition catalogue does offer some insight. Landscape paintings recorded in the catalogue, like the miniatures of the previous section, were not subdivided into categories.⁵¹⁹ Instead, European, northern, and

⁵¹⁶ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 190 and 140-142.

⁵¹⁷ Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 7.

⁵¹⁸ *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), March 17, 1857. Caroline Gilman was active in ladies groups in South Carolina. She was undoubtedly involved in the Ladies Working Society, which was founded by her husband and consisted of one hundred female members of Gilman's congregation. In 1862, after relocating to Columbia with the onset of the Civil War, Caroline continued her involvement in local charities by becoming the Directress of the Greenville Ladies' Association in Aid of the Volunteers of the Confederate Army. William Stanley Hoole, "The Gilmans and the Southern Rose" *Northern American Review* 11, no.2 (April 1934): 117 and 127.

⁵¹⁹ In addition to landscape images, this inventory also includes formal portraits of Revolutionary War heroes, *trompe l'oeil* still-lives (created in the style of Charles Willson Peale), and literary-inspired or imagined scenes (what nineteenth-century artists referred to as "fancy sketches"). Most of those that survive are currently in the possession of the Gibbes Museum of Art. Inconsistencies in formatting with regard to identifying, dating, and describing images in the exhibition suggest that three, perhaps more, individuals compiled the information with little or no assistance from an editor. Some images, for example, are titled and dated, while others are

southern scenes appear interspersed throughout a list of over one hundred and thirty paintings. It is probable that, had the images been arranged in a way that separated southern from northern and European subjects, thereby implying the region's exceptional or even superior character, it would have been noted in the catalogue, accompanying essays, or in any of the various advertisements describing the exhibition. Instead, a conciliatory sentiment pervades.

The European scenes depict favored subjects within the landscape painting tradition, which reflect the artist's familiarity with and Charlestonian patrons' awareness of shifting artistic trends within the genre. In addition to Romantic English scenes, visitors encountered views of ancient architectural monuments, including the Coliseum and St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the Castle of Chillon in Switzerland, and the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter Panhellenius in Greece.⁵²⁰ Ever cognizant of American patrons' taste, Fraser would have known that such scenes held particular appeal for those who had embarked on a Grand Tour of Europe. Though Greece, occupied by the Ottoman Turks

flimsily identified through a vague description of the scene depicted. These inconsistencies challenge attempts to definitively identify some compositions. However, exhibition labels adhered to the back of some framed images [Fig. 5.7] assist with this. Information provided in the catalogue attests to the inclusion of oil paintings as well as watercolor and India ink sketches. Dimensions are not provided, though Fraser's landscape paintings would have been considered small by the standards of the day, measuring on average no more than 30" wide and 24" high.

⁵²⁰ Although Fraser never traveled to Europe himself, he was familiar with these subjects rendered by British artists Paul Sandby and John "Warick" Smith, as discussed in chapter two. *Landscape – English Scenery*, owned by E.N. Thurston, is listed as #128. It is described in the catalogue as "woods, running water – a gentleman throwing his line for trout – a man smoking beneath a tree – cattle on a hill." (pg 31) This entry is followed by another also titled *Landscape – English Scenery*. This second image was owned by S.G. Barker, Esq. and is listed as #137. Its description is as follows: "water and cliffs of rocks – below, a man on a white horse, with a dog – castellated buildings in the distance." (pg 31) *View of St. Peter's from the East, and the Bridge of St. Angelo*, owned by Judge Frost, is listed as #18. *Interior View of a part of the Coliseum*, owned by Dr. W.T. Wragg, appears as #27 on the list, while another entry with the same title but owned by Mr. Conner is listed further down the list as #77. *Castle of Chillon*, owned by Daniel Ravenel, is listed as #7. *Landscape – view in Egina, with the ruins of the Temple of Jupiter Panhellenius*, owned by Daniel Heyward, Esq, is listed as #45. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 22-25, 28, 31.

until 1832, was not a locale often visited on the Grand Tour, representations of ruins there would have appealed to Americans broadly who associated ancient Athens with the democratic ideal and to Charleston's planter elite specifically, who also embraced Ancient Greece's stratified society and patronage system as a means of justifying their own strict social hierarchy.⁵²¹

Other European subjects can be understood as visual metaphors for sectional tension. *Eruption of Vesuvius, south-east view* (n.d.), though not an uncommon subject for eighteenth-century British painters following the mid-century excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum, takes on new significance within the context of Charleston at the height of the sectional crisis.⁵²² Although the painting is believed to be no longer extant, thus denying an attempt to analyze the composition, its title and inclusion in the exhibition imbue it with a socio-political meaning more akin to Frederic Edwin Church's *Cotopaxi* (1861) depicting an erupting volcano alongside a fiery sun, which is traditionally discussed by scholars as a metaphor for the climax of sectional tension that culminated with South Carolina's secession from the Union and the precipitous outbreak of civil war.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Cobb *Away Down South*, 42. Richard L. Bushman offers a detailed explanation as to why and in what ways Ancient Greek society appealed to Southerners. The North, Bushman argues, was associated with Sparta, while Southerners compared their own society with that of Athens, Greece. For a detailed analysis of this dichotomy, see Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 192-195.

⁵²² *Eruption of Vesuvius, south-east view*, owned by J.J. McCarter, is listed as #73 in the catalogue. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 27.

⁵²³ David C. Huntington, "Church and Luminism: Light for America's Elect," in *American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850-1875*, edited by John Wilmerding (Washington, D.C.: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), 182-183. Franklin Kelly, "A Passion for Landscape: The Paintings of Frederic Edwin Church," in *Frederic Edwin Church*, exh. cat. edited by Franklin Kelly (Washington, D.C: National Gallery of Art, 1989), 58-61.

Similar in meaning to Church's depiction of two natural forces at war, is another of Fraser's compositions, *Rock of Scylla* [Fig. 32], which refers to the warring of two mythological sea monsters, Scylla and Charybdis, mentioned in Homer's *Odyssey*. Homer described Scylla as a six-headed sea monster (which in the nineteenth century was represented by a craggy precipice) and Charybdis as a whirlpool placed so close to one another that Odysseus was forced to confront one or the other monster. During the antebellum era, when classical education dominated, particularly in the American South, Homer's epic and the mythological creatures he described were well known.

Appearing just after *Eruption of Vesuvius* in the catalogue's list of landscape paintings, *Rock of Scylla* (1840) offers a somber, sublime scene, wherein a violently swirling sea (Charybdis) crashes against jagged rocks that protrude along the coastline. An immense cliff (Scylla), on top of which appears a dark, medieval structure, looms over the ragged coastline below, while dark storm clouds enter from the top left corner of the composition, threatening the already foreboding scene. The shadow cast on the dwelling atop the rocky outcrop echoes the dark depths of the sea in the foreground. The visual depiction of Charybdis and Scylla as representative of political conflict is not unique to Fraser and further attests to the artist's familiarity with British visual culture. Beyond the subject's popularity among Romantic painters, such as Henry Fuseli, it was also a favored reference among British caricaturists. James Gillray's *Brittania between Scylla Charybdis* (1793) [Fig. 5.6], for example, depicts Prime Minister William Pitt with the female personification of Brittania. Their ship labeled "Constitution" negotiates passage between the whirlpool of arbitrary power (shaped like an inverted crown) and the

rock of democracy (on which a liberty cap appears) as it makes its way toward a distant marker labeled “haven of liberty.”⁵²⁴

A more contemporary reference to British-American political relations appears in John Tenniel’s caricature published by *Punch* magazine in October of 1863 [Fig. 5.7].⁵²⁵ Tenniel presents Prime Minister Lord Palmerston navigating a British ship, on which appears the label “Neutrality,” between Scylla, shaped like a stern-faced Abraham Lincoln, and Charybdis, resembling Jefferson Davis. Though not as politically explicit as Gillray or Tenniel’s cartoons, Fraser’s *Rock of Scylla*, painted during the 1840s, but publically exhibited at the height of the sectional crisis in 1857 undoubtedly suggested to its audience the dangers faced when navigating American politics at a time when war between the regions seemed inevitable. Charleston’s planter class, educated in the classics and knowledgeable of British culture, would have no doubt understood the newly imposed political implications of Fraser’s paintings.

Interspersed within the European subjects displayed at the Fraser Gallery were southern landscape scenes, which were equally familiar to the planter class. These southern landscape paintings and sketches were primarily specific to South Carolina, particularly Charleston and the surrounding low country. Two prominent examples of low country scenes were owned by Dr. Benjamin Beard Strobel (1803-1849), a local physician and amateur naturalist who is perhaps best known for his collaboration with

⁵²⁴ *Brittania between Scylla and Charybdis* was published by H. Humphrey in London on April 8, 1793. Ian Hampsher-Monk briefly addresses Gillray’s cartoon as a visual representation of the impact of the French Revolution on British politics in Ian Hampsher-Monk, ed, *The Impact of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), iii-vi.

⁵²⁵ John Tenniel, *Charybdis and Scylla*, *Punch Magazine*, October 10, 1863.

John James Audubon.⁵²⁶ These undated watercolors, titled *Mount Pleasant* and *Mount Pleasant, another view*, depicted Georgetown County, a parish just north of Charleston's urban center.⁵²⁷ Sadly, they did not survive the Civil War. Watercolor sketches such as these, as well as others assigned somewhat more descriptive titles, were likely polished reproductions of images from Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook.⁵²⁸ This early sketchbook, composed of exclusively southern scenes, includes watercolor sketches, which fit the descriptions of some otherwise unidentified landscapes listed in the Fraser Gallery catalogue. Other descriptively titled paintings, such as *Untitled (Landscape with Mossy Trees and Distant Ruins)* [Fig. 3.14] imbue stereotypical southern imagery with Romantic sentiment.⁵²⁹

Romanticism, preoccupied as it was with nostalgia, appealed to white Southerners fascinated with the ancient and medieval past.⁵³⁰ As discussed in chapter two, *Untitled (Landscape with Mossy Trees and Distant Ruins)*, with its sublime swampland and

⁵²⁶ Audubon makes repeated reference to Strobel's assistance with preparing his *Ornithological Biography*, a five volume series published 1831-1839. E.A. Hammond, "Dr. Strobel's Account of John J. Audubon," in *The Auk*, 80, no. 40 (1963): 463.

⁵²⁷ *Mount Pleasant* is listed as #99, while *Mount Pleasant, another view* is listed directly after as #100. Both are described as watercolor sketches owned by Dr. Strobel. Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 29.

⁵²⁸ Caroline Gilman lists a selection of sketches from Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook (which, she notes, was not on display) in the exhibition catalogue. Among the entries are various views near Charleston, which she dates between 1802 and 1805. Caroline Gilman, as quoted in Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 62-63. Other sketches listed, including *View of an Ancient Bath*, which was the basis for larger compositions by Fraser, are no longer bound with the sketchbook located at the Gibbes Museum Art and so are presumed lost. It is possible that if these views of Mount Pleasant (located just north of Charleston) were not enlargements of the views near Charleston, then they originated from other drawings no longer extant.

⁵²⁹ *Untitled (Landscape with Mossy Trees and Distant Ruins)* is believed by Estill Pennington to be the same *Landscape – ruins, castle on a hill*, owned by James H. Ladson in 1857 and listed as #85 in the exhibition catalogue. Compositionally, this oil on canvas, currently owned by The Johnson Collection in Spartanburg, SC, fits the descriptive title aforementioned in the Fraser Gallery catalogue. Pennington, *Romantic Spirits*, 42.

⁵³⁰ Cobb *Away Down South*, 46.

distant castle ruins, attests to Fraser's familiarity with a distinctly southern Romanticism. The oval painting simultaneously conjures images of southern swamps as depicted in northern publications, such as *Harper's Weekly*. Those marshy wastelands, which threatened one's health in a literal sense, as evidenced by occasional outbreaks of malaria, and, as symbolic of regional decay and depredation, endangered the healthy progress of the nation, are not depicted here. Instead of a congested swamp, overwhelmed by algae, dense vegetation, and rotting trees, Fraser's paintings offered a comparatively Romantic woodland imbued with a subdued sublimity. Spanish moss reminiscent of southern swamps hangs from tree limbs overhead, while the trees themselves, far from decayed, support a mass of dark green foliage as leafy vines twist and tangle around them. In lieu of *Louisiana Swamp's* eerily placid marsh populated by predators lying in wait, Fraser presents a babbling brook, gently illuminated by the soft glow of a setting sun. Whereas *Louisiana Swamp* places the viewer alongside soldiers trapped within a foreign wilderness, *Landscape – ruins, castle on a hill* guides the viewer away from the wild foreground toward a medieval ruin occupying a clearing in the distance. Fraser's landscape is sublime, but its oval format distances the viewer from the landscape by creating the illusion of peering into another world. Thus, the awestruck terror associated with the sublime is effectively minimized.

To be clear, Fraser, who painted *Untitled (Landscape with Mossy Trees and Distant Ruins)* during the early 1840s, was likely not composing this painting as a response to northern perceptions of the southern swamp. It is far more likely that he painted this imagery in a way that would appeal to his southern planter patrons. And yet,

in this painting, Fraser offers a Southerner's perception of the swamp as distinct from the prevailing northern concept. Fraser renders it less threatening, but no less mysterious.

Fantastic scenes, such as Fraser's untitled painting, appear alongside landscapes depicting real American scenery. Noticeably absent from the Fraser Gallery, however, were estate portraits from Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook.⁵³¹ If such scenes were included, the identity of those locations would have been specified in the catalogue as they are in the sketchbook. This absence of plantation homes, visual harbingers of slavery, impeded nostalgic longing for a southern lifestyle founded on the institution of slavery and, in their absence, visually separates southern culture from the transgression of slavery at the heart of sectional tension.

The southern landscapes included in the exhibition did indeed offer pastoral southern vistas of lush, rolling landscapes, but equally prominent were popular northern subjects, such as Niagara Falls, the Franconia Notch in the White Mountains, and the Hudson River Valley discussed in chapters one and two. These northern and southern scenes exhibited in the same space represent the visual unification of these contentious lands in a way that simultaneously underscored each region's contribution to the concept of American exceptionalism.

By the mid-nineteenth century, most Americans understood landscape images as visual signifiers of American character. They had been convinced of Thomas Cole's assertion that landscape painting was a form of instruction that transformed nature into a moral message, and that, as Cole wrote in his "Essay on American Scenery," "the good,

⁵³¹ Caroline Gilman lists select sketches from Fraser's 1796-1806 sketchbook in the Fraser Gallery catalogue, and adds, "This book, closed of course to the public eye in its present form, would be a treasure to an illustrated collection of Southern scenery and residences." Caroline Gilman as quoted by George S. Bryan in Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 62.

the enlightened of all ages and nations, have found pleasure and consolation in the beauty of the rural earth.”⁵³² The significance of landscape painting to the development of a national identity owes something to the popularity of the American Grand Tour in the 1830s and 1840s, as discussed in chapter two. In response to the European Tour, which emphasized cultural antiquity, the American Tour featured natural antiquity and national progress. Among the locales to be visited were the White Mountains, the Hudson River Valley, and Niagara Falls. Fraser’s paintings of these and other locales indicate his participation in the American Tour and his knowledge of its significance to the construction of a national identity. For early nineteenth-century Americans, the Franconia Notch located in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, four views of which appeared in the Fraser Gallery, was more than the site of a tragedy wherein an entire family was killed in a landslide; it also symbolized the settlement and expansion of American territory and trade routes as well as the importance of the American home and hearth.⁵³³ The Hudson River in New York served as the picturesque gateway to tourist destinations and, by the 1850s, a well-known source of inspiration for American landscape painters.⁵³⁴ In contrast to the tame Hudson River, Niagara Falls represented the sublime and primal

⁵³² Korzenik, *Drawn to Art*, 20. Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” 5. For a more in-depth discussion of Thomas Cole and his “Essay on American Scenery,” see chapter four.

⁵³³ The four paintings of the White Mountains were undoubtedly based on extensive watercolor sketches in Fraser’s 1833 sketchbook. They are listed in the catalogue as follows: two were titled *Gap in the White Mountains* (both owned by Richard Yeadon, Esq., #29 and #57), *Landscape – notch in the White Mountains*, and *Landscape – view in the White Mountains* (both owned by Mrs. Elias Ball, #122 and #123, respectively). Fraser and Gilman, *Catalogue of Pictures Exhibited in the Fraser Gallery, Charleston, 1857*, 24, 26, and 30.

⁵³⁴ The Gibbes Museum of Art owns Fraser’s painting of the Hudson River Palisades titled *View of the Hudson River* (1818). Though it has not been definitively linked to any landscapes exhibited at the Fraser Gallery, it may have been exhibited under a more ambiguous title, such as *Landscape – Eastern Scenery* (which appears twice in the catalogue, as #81 and #82) or *Landscape, with water scenery* (#87). However, clearly identifiable among the landscapes listed in the catalogue is an image of the Mohawk River, a tributary of the Hudson River. Owned by Mrs. Grimké, it is listed as *Scene of the Mohawk*, #65. *Ibid.*, 27.

American wilderness. The Fraser Gallery included five different views of Niagara Falls, the epitome of American sublimity.⁵³⁵ The American Tour was comprised of northern destinations exclusively. This is not to suggest that tourists never ventured south. Indeed, some travelers included Virginia in their tour and still others ventured farther south.⁵³⁶ The inclusion of southern vistas alongside scenes associated with the northern-centric American Tour asserts Charleston's rightful place within this tour that did so much to help define national culture in the minds of tourists.

Locke, Brown, and Theories of Reason in the Fraser Gallery

In addition to perpetuating Fraser's regional diplomacy, the interspersing of northern and southern images in the Fraser Gallery also attests to Samuel Gilman's interest in Lockean and Lockean-derived theories of reason. Reverend Gilman's *Contributions to Literature*, published just one year prior to the Fraser Gallery, reveals the author's preoccupation with Thomas Brown's moral philosophies as supplemental to John Locke's theory of human understanding. The introduction to Gilman's essays suggest that his approach to Brown's and Locke's theories was not purely objective. Rather, he considers their relevance to the political issues at hand:

We are anxious for uniformity, though not in the way by which legislative theologians would enforce it. Perhaps such a rule is never to be discovered

⁵³⁵ Four of the five views of Niagara Falls are listed sequentially in the catalogue as follows: Three images share the title *Falls of Niagara* (Dr. R.W. Gibbes owned #60 and #61. Professor Samuel H. Dickson owned #62), while the fourth is titled *Rapids Above Niagara Falls* (owned by the Honorable R.B. Rhett, #63). Though they share a title, each of the first three paintings offers different perspectives of Niagara Falls. The fifth painting is listed separately as #41 on the list of landscapes. It is titled *Trenton Falls* and was owned by Dr. Winthrop. Ibid., 25 & 27.

⁵³⁶ For further discussion of narratives composed by northern tourists who traveled in the American South during the antebellum era, see John D. Cox, *Traveling South: Travel Narratives and the Construction of American Identity* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

in our imperfect world, where, from unavoidable circumstances, different conceptions must necessarily arise in different minds.⁵³⁷

Gilman reluctantly concedes the subjectivity of perception and its effect on the course of reasoning: namely, that reason cannot be controlled or harnessed. But reason, Gilman contends, is susceptible to outside influences.

Eighteenth-century philosopher John Locke contended that there are no innate ideas, but that all knowledge develops through the senses or, more specifically, by way of apprehension and comparison of sense data through reasoning.⁵³⁸ Landscape images in the Fraser Gallery, displayed as they were with no implied hierarchy, implicitly encouraged the visitor to see, assess, and form comparisons in accordance with Locke's theory. In his own musings, Gilman acknowledges Locke's postulation that individuals own a "certain sagacity," by which they make discoveries in the course of reasoning.⁵³⁹ But, Gilman adds, that sagacity, according to philosopher Thomas Brown, varies between individuals based on emotional temperament.⁵⁴⁰

Brown explains, in accordance with his theory of Ethical Sentimentalism, that passion can temporarily overwhelm the emotions that arise when considering moral or immoral actions. Furthermore, persons or nations can sometimes misperceive, or have only a partial or imperfect view of, the true "tendencies of certain actions, in which there

⁵³⁷ Samuel Gilman, "Brown's Philosophical Writings" in *Contributions to Literature: Descriptive, Critical, Humorous, Biographical, Philosophical, and Poetical*. (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, & Company, 1856), 397.

⁵³⁸ This is, of course, a distilled synopsis on just one of Locke's theories. In an effort to remain firmly within the parameters of this discussion of the conciliatory function of the Fraser Gallery, the complexities of Locke's theories are not here addressed in-depth, but only as they informed an understanding of Thomas Brown's philosophy.

⁵³⁹ Gilman, "Brown's Philosophical Writings," 395.

⁵⁴⁰ Different from his theory of Ethical Sentimentalism, Brown's theory of Relative Suggestion, when considered in conjunction with the former, reveals the philosopher's preoccupation with the relationship between reason and emotion. *Ibid.*, 396.

is a mixture of good and evil.”⁵⁴¹ This is made evident by the fluctuation in morality in different times and places. Finally Brown argues that associations can modify or pervert emotions produced by certain actions. Thus, concepts of morality are inevitably governed in some part by personal and cultural preferences and beliefs. It follows that efforts to modify an individual’s or group’s moral concept of an action – secession, for example – demands consideration of their shared values and concerns, as well as the tempering of passionate emotions through the imposition of reason.

Samuel and Caroline Gilman were equipped to make such a consideration. Though not members of the planter class whose value system was the basis for political and social activities, they were on friendly terms with members of that class and would have been familiar with their expectations and anxieties. At the heart of the desire for secession was the perceived threat to the institution of slavery and the South’s political and economic power, which relied to such a great degree on the continuance and, some argued, the expansion of that institution. By excluding from the exhibition the looming plantation homes that populated Fraser’s early sketches, the gallery organizers visually eliminated the contentious issue of slavery that stirred impassioned calls for secession. Instead, the visitor is presented with a microcosm of Euro-American civilization that included bucolic southern landscapes alongside northern and European tourist destinations. Such an exhibition glorified the peaceful co-existence of various regional and national cultures while encouraging visitors to reconsider shared values and traditions, instead of focusing on political differences.

⁵⁴¹ Gilman lamented that Brown confined his study to actions, which constitute only the occasional evidence of virtue or vice. He expressed disappointment that Brown did not address the state of mind that lends the action its moral character or, conversely, leads to inaction. *Ibid.*, 409, 410-412.

Samuel Gilman was not the first Southerner to arrange the display of art in accordance with Lockean theory. In his essay “Mr. Jefferson as Museum Maker,” Roger B. Stein suggests that Thomas Jefferson’s arrangement of art objects and artifacts in the entrance hall and parlor of his Monticello home indicates his familiarity with Locke’s theory.⁵⁴² Stein argues that Jefferson purposefully brought together artifacts of American natural antiquity with modern European art objects so as to encourage a comparison and appreciation of each. Enlightenment philosophers, such as Locke and Brown, may have been of considerable interest to Southerners during the years of the early republic when Jefferson constructed Monticello, but by the 1830s, Methodist and Episcopalian revivals brought on by the Great Awakening had provoked intolerance in the South that significantly reduced enthusiasm for enlightenment thinking. Clement Eaton explains in *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South* that antebellum southern Romanticism and impassioned political agendas gradually overwhelmed the deeply philosophical and reasonable deism of the early republic years.⁵⁴³ And an increasingly defensive stance on slavery promoted religious uniformity in the region.

Nonetheless, the Fraser Gallery suggests continued exploration into the Lockean theory by some Southerners, such as Samuel Gilman. In his essay “The Influence of One National Literature Upon Another” in *Contributions to Literature*, Gilman contends that no one voice, method, or theory should overwhelm the others. Instead he suggests presenting the public with various perspectives so that readers (or, in the context of the

⁵⁴² Roger B. Stein, “Mr. Jefferson as Museum Maker,” in *Shaping the Body Politic: Art and Political Formation in Early America*, eds. Maurie D. McNinnis and Louis P. Nelson (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 199.

⁵⁴³ The violence of the French Revolution discredited skepticism as an exclusively aristocratic pastime in the minds of many Southerners. Eaton, *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South*, 300-304, 312.

Fraser Gallery, visitors) may expand their minds and ideas.⁵⁴⁴ Every nation has an intellectual and moral character peculiar to itself. No nation, Gilman asserts, is beyond improvement through foreign exchange. Through such cultural transactions both communities elevate their “habits of thought,” develop more effective means of expression, and reduce the imperfections of their literature. Both cultures flourish as a result. Gilman cautioned against cultural emulation, however, as this could lead a nation to sacrifice their cultural uniqueness for the sake of assimilation. Instead, some independence of character ought to be maintained.⁵⁴⁵ Extended to the sectarian issues of the day, Gilman’s essay suggests that North and South, though in many ways culturally distinct from one another, mutually benefit from their united state. So it was in the Fraser Gallery. Recognition of regional distinction, Gilman suggests, was inevitable and even welcome, but disunion would only threaten the wellbeing of both entities.

The Fraser Gallery, located as it was in the heart of the secessionist South at the height of the sectional crisis in 1857, represented a cautious but decisive anti-secession, pro-conciliatory effort, a visual plea to reconsider secession. In antebellum Charleston, contradicting or challenging a southern gentleman outright was considered ungentleel, uncivilized, northern-esque, and therefore dangerous.⁵⁴⁶ Samuel and Caroline Gilman and their associates were therefore cautious but deliberate in their creation of the Fraser Gallery. The Gilmans understood that the success of the exhibition hinged on its appeal to the socially and politically affluent planter class. Charles Fraser’s favorable reputation

⁵⁴⁴ This essay, though published in 1856, was written by Gilman twenty years earlier in 1836. Samuel Gilman, “The Influence of One National Literature Upon Another” in *Contributions to Literature: Descriptive, Critical, Humorous, Biographical, Philosophical, and Poetical*. (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, & Company, 1856), 125.

⁵⁴⁵ Gilman, “The Influence of One National Literature Upon Another,” 93-94.

⁵⁴⁶ Eaton, *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South*, 381.

as an amateur historian and accomplished artist may have assisted in this regard. Surely the fact that the exhibition committee included at least three planters is testament to their approval.

To her credit, Caroline Gilman, as a vital component of the Ladies Committee in charge of hanging the images and organizing the catalogue, was careful not to repeat her earlier mistake. North and South were not depicted as mutually exclusive in the Fraser Gallery, but rather as two equally important parts of a united nation. Moreover, the process by which the Gilmans acquired the art exhibited in the Fraser Gallery was itself an act of unification. In advertisements for the exhibition, Samuel Gilman implored patrons nationwide to loan their images by Fraser for display. Even the most cursory of glances at the list of images in the exhibition catalogue reveals that many patrons from Boston, New York, and Rhode Island to Virginia, North and South Carolina obliged. Gilman's advertisements also encouraged citizens from other areas of the United States to visit Charleston and experience the Fraser Gallery in person.

The success of this conciliatory project is difficult to measure, as reviews of the exhibition seem to be inseparable from advertisements for it. A toast given at a dinner honoring Charles Fraser in February 1857 (while the exhibition was still open) attests to the popularity of the Fraser Gallery:

an event has lately occurred, which deserves to be ranked as an era in the history of our city. Crowds of our fellow citizens have thronged daily to the Carolina Hall; and Why? Is it to behold some strange importation from distant lands? Some curious production of ingenuity or skill? Some contest of wit or of arms? No! It contains a simple gallery of paintings. This work of no foreign artist, recommended by... no European criticism. They have been produced silently, in our midst... They have nothing to recommend them, save their intrinsic excellence. Yet, all have eagerly pressed forward

to read the pictured page of Carolina history. It is an homage, rendered not by one or by a few, but by an entire community...⁵⁴⁷

The press and public lavished praise on the Fraser Gallery and acknowledged a nostalgic component, which is inherent of any retrospective. But the bi-regional nature of the exhibition and any conciliatory message therein is absent. Certainly local Charleston newspapers mentioned the interest expressed by Fraser's northern patrons and applauded their contributions, but these were small articles and likely contributed to the periodical by Samuel Gilman himself.⁵⁴⁸ The public's perception of the Fraser's Gallery's import at this juncture in American history is therefore difficult to measure, though the popularity of the exhibition is not. Initially advertised as a February event, the retrospective was extended through March.⁵⁴⁹ The publication of a leather-bound exhibition catalogue, which was distributed as far north as Boston, further attests to the retrospective's significance.

Reflecting on the disparity between North and South in the 1850s, southern historian Clement Eaton rightly noted, "Only an atmosphere of good will and understanding could have led to an interchange of ideas and fruitful reforms between the

⁵⁴⁷ Quote taken from a toast given by James Johnson Pettigrew during a dinner in honor of "Charles Fraser – the artist" and hosted by the Washington Light Infantry on February 23, 1857. Pettigrew Family Papers, 1776-1926, Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁵⁴⁸ Distant patrons of Charles Fraser expressed their interest in the exhibition. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), February 3, 1857. Many of the images included in the exhibition were loaned by New Englanders. Captain Duncan Nathaniel to Charles Winthrop, January 21, 1857; Charles Winthrop to the Fraser Gallery committee, January 19, 1857, as quoted in Rutledge, "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p.

⁵⁴⁹ A poem bidding farewell to the Fraser Gallery was published in the local newspaper in March, which this and other newspaper notices described as having been so popular as to have prompted the exhibition's extension. *Charleston Courier* (Charleston), March 14, 1857.

radical North and the conservative South.”⁵⁵⁰ Samuel Gilman, his wife, and their collaborators were similarly motivated when they initiated the Fraser Gallery. In a speech conferred in 1858 to the New England Society in Charleston – the last he would give before his death later that year – Samuel Gilman persisted in his pro-union rhetoric, proclaiming: “It is impossible that this Union can be dissolved – this Union which has begotten in the breasts of all its children a sentiment of mysterious and indestructible loyalty.”⁵⁵¹ Although the Gilmans and Fraser could do nothing to stop the onset of civil war, the Fraser Gallery was successful in bringing together Northern and Southern art patrons and the visual representations of their regions – if only for a moment.

⁵⁵⁰ Eaton, *The Freedom-of-Thought Struggle in the Old South*, 351.

⁵⁵¹ Samuel Gilman as quoted in Howe, “A Massachusetts Yankee in Senator Calhoun’s Court,” 212.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Charles Fraser died on October 5, 1860, just three years after the Fraser Gallery's debut. His beloved state of South Carolina seceded from the Union two months later, on December 20, 1860. Fraser did not live to witness the temporary dissolution of the Union and the violent Civil War that followed. Although wartime destruction and southern defeat at the hands of the North would significantly alter Fraser's artistic legacy and, more broadly, the South's perceived significance to the story of American art, the Charlestonian artist died reassured that his efforts to promote art had reached fruition in the form of a permanent art gallery in Charleston.

Within six months of the much lamented closing of the Fraser Gallery in March 1857, some of the planters who had assisted the Gilmans with organizing the retrospective initiated efforts to establish what is now known as the Carolina Art Association. The group received a charter from the state on December 21, 1858.⁵⁵² Led by John Ashe Alston, a prominent art collector and nephew of Washington Allston, the founding members included gentlemen such as James Rose and Governor Robert Francis Allston (Alston's cousin), Professor A. Sachtleben, as well as northern transplants James H. Taylor and Timothy Pickering Dodge.⁵⁵³ Though none within the group could be considered a connoisseur, all agreed that a picture gallery was an imperative feature of

⁵⁵² Harold A. Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association: Its First Hundred Years" *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* vol. 59 no. 3 (July 1958): 126.

⁵⁵³ Manigault, "History of the Carolina Art Association," 247.

any modern city.⁵⁵⁴ The recent success of the Fraser Gallery seemed to reaffirm this and to insure a positive response from the public.

The Association's leader, John Ashe Alston (1817-1858), had accumulated an impressive private collection that he was eager to share with the public. Alston's collection attested to his preference for landscape, still life, and genre scenes created by contemporary American artists, including Charles Fraser.⁵⁵⁵ Thanks to donations from co-founders and the mandatory ten-dollar membership fee, Alston and his peers were able to amass a considerable collection of art and secure exhibition and storage space on the upper floor of Charleston's Apprentice's Library within a year of receiving the charter.⁵⁵⁶ Their efforts culminated in the Carolina Art Association's first exhibition in April of 1858. Comprised of 250 paintings, many of them loaned by local collectors, the show featured work attributed to European masters, such as Watteau, Rosa, and

⁵⁵⁴ Professor A. Sachtleben, a German-born Charlestonian intellectual, had acquired a small collection of paintings while traveling in Europe. Neither James Rose nor Governor Allston had any special knowledge of art, but both were "educated and elegant gentlemen, who, as such, recognized the necessity of an appreciation for painting." James H. Taylor was a "public-spirited" Northerner, while Timothy Pickering Dodge, a native of Massachusetts, had purchased several oil paintings (primarily pre-Raphaelite pictures) in Europe and was eager to incorporate them into a public collection. Manigault, "History of the Carolina Art Association," 248. Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association," 126.

⁵⁵⁵ Maurie McNinnis notes that Alston's inventory lists forty-six paintings. Twenty-one were landscape paintings of various subjects. Thirteen represented identifiable Italian locales. He also collected marine and seascapes, such as that which appears over the mantel in Thomas Middleton's *Friends and Amateurs in Musick* (1827). McNinnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 301.

⁵⁵⁶ Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association," 127. According to the Association's by-laws, women could apply for membership. To do so, they were required to prove their good standing in the community and acquire endorsement from two members of the Association in advance of being presented to the Chairman of the Membership Committee. Meetings were held during the afternoons of the second Tuesday of every month between November and May. The Carolina Art Association's annual meeting was held in February. *By-Laws of the Associate Members of the Carolina Art Association* (Charleston: JJ. Furlong Printing House, n.d.), n.p. The Apprentice Library, where the Carolina Art Association was located during the first three years of its existence was centrally located on Meeting Street, just south of Horlbeck Alley and in close proximity to its current location, the Gibbes Art Museum. Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association," 126.

Veronese, displayed alongside paintings produced by American artists Allston, John Singleton Copley, Morse, Stuart, Sully, Cogdell, and Fraser.⁵⁵⁷ Local artists, including Fraser himself, were encouraged to show one additional picture of their choosing.⁵⁵⁸

Because of his deteriorating eyesight, the seventy-six year old Fraser was unable to praise or promote the newly formed Carolina Art Association in writing. But the artist was undoubtedly thrilled with the establishment of a permanent art gallery in Charleston that included paintings of genres other than portraiture, such as landscape images, produced by artists of varying origins, including local painters. In this sense, the Carolina Art Association was the culmination of his promotional efforts, effected by the next generation, who, upon participating in and experiencing the success of the Fraser Gallery, were inspired to take action.

Like other art cooperatives, the Carolina Art Association suffered its share of setbacks. As sectional tensions increased, more and more planters closed ranks in an effort to maintain control and reaffirm their role as tastemakers in Charleston.⁵⁵⁹ William Aiken Jr., for example, created an art gallery within his home so that he and his visitors could enjoy his collection in complete privacy.⁵⁶⁰ Fortunately, other planters, such as Alston continued their promotion of public endeavors. In addition to grappling with the

⁵⁵⁷ Among the images by American artists specifically mentioned in the catalogue were: Fraser's *A Dog Before a Rat-Trap*, Allston's *Marine View*, a still life by Cogdell, and Copley's portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Izard. In his history of the Carolina Art Association, Manigault suggests that not all European paintings were genuine originals. Manigault, "History of the Carolina Art Association," 249. In fact, the exhibition catalogue includes a disclaimer that the Association "affixed such names to the paintings exhibited as have been furnished by their owners, but... they are not responsible for their correctness." *Catalogue of the Carolina Art Association, Published by the Art Committee* (Charleston: Steam Power Press of Walker, Evans, & Co., 1858), n.p. Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association," 127.

⁵⁵⁸ Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association," 127.

⁵⁵⁹ McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston*, 280.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 299.

vacillating support from some planters, the Carolina Art Association also confronted a natural disaster. In December 1861, fire swept through lower Charleston, destroying much of the Apprentice's Library and, with it, the Association's gallery space and collection.⁵⁶¹ The Association did not immediately recover and lay dormant during the chaos of the Civil War and early decades of Reconstruction until 1878, when members deemed its reorganization financially feasible.⁵⁶² Eventually, the Carolina Art Association would initiate the establishment of the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston. Because he died the year prior to the 1861 fire, Fraser only ever knew of the Carolina Art Association's initial success. The artist died in his residence on King Street at age seventy-eight a celebrated artist and cultural leader with enough capital to assist not only his surviving relatives and friends, but also local institutions, intellectual societies, and, notably, former patron Robert W. Gibbes, who received a portfolio of engravings and his choice of Fraser's paintings.⁵⁶³

Within six months of the artist's death, in April 1861, the country Fraser had represented in his many landscape paintings was torn apart by civil war. In addition to the mass devastation and death caused by war, the art community in Charleston suffered considerably. Many wealthy southern patrons, now Confederate supporters, escaped the

⁵⁶¹ Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 126. Emil Leutze's heroic painting of Sergeant Jasper rescuing the flag at Fort Moultrie was one of the casualties of this fire, as were several of Fraser's paintings in the Association's collection. Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association," 127.

⁵⁶² Initial efforts were made to rebuild the Apprentice's Library and gallery spaces, but South Carolina's secession from the Union and the onset of the Civil War distracted from the arts. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, 126. Mouzon, "The Carolina Art Association," 127.

⁵⁶³ Charles Fraser left over \$16,000 to be divided among the College of Charleston, Ladies Benevolent Society, and other intellectual societies. Allowing for inflation, \$16,000 in 1860 would be equivalent to roughly \$462,000 today. Fraser's friend, John Blake White received \$5,000 (roughly \$108,000 today). The remainder of his liquid assets, stocks, and bonds were divided among nieces and nephews. Charles Fraser's Will, Fraser-Winthrop Papers, ca.1700-ca.1905, South Carolina Historical Society. Inflation calculated according to Samuel H. Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to present," *MeasuringWorth*, 2015, www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/.

conflict by fleeing to England and Europe during these years. They took with them the market for paintings that offered a southern perspective of events. What market remained in South Carolina quickly disappeared as funding was increasingly diverted to assist with fighting for the southern cause.⁵⁶⁴

Physical destruction brought on by the Civil War further injured South Carolina's reputation in the art world. Countless documents, art objects, and collections were lost. Perhaps most detrimental to Fraser's artistic legacy was the near complete annihilation of Gibbes' collection in Columbia on February 17, 1865, when General William Tecumseh Sherman, upon being informed of the vastness of the art collection, instructed his troops, "Let the house burn."⁵⁶⁵ Violent measures such as those taken by Sherman, were not soon forgotten by Southerners, some of whom resisted (at times misguided) efforts to reunite the nation during the post-war decades. Indeed, it was during these post-bellum years that differences between Southerners and the rest of the nation were felt most acutely in the defeated South.⁵⁶⁶

It has been said that history is written by the victors. The history of American art is no exception. Because the northern economy thrived after the war, artists based in those states prospered.⁵⁶⁷ Destruction, devastation, and displacement in the South reduced

⁵⁶⁴ Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with Smithsonian American Art Museum, 2012), 3.

⁵⁶⁵ Gibbes' collection comprised "62 paintings, 18 portraits, 4 busts, 1 marble statuette, 5 casts, 140 engravings in 'The Fraser Collection of Engravings,' 44 engravings in 'The Forster Collection of Engravings,' 12 engravings of 'Outlines and Sketches by Washington Allston' and other engravings after works by Titian, Corregio, Rubens, Raphael, Van Dyck, Veronese, Annibale, Velasquez, Fuseli, Gainsborough, Lawrence, etc," as well as at least ten paintings by Charles Fraser, four by Thomas Sully, one by Gilbert Stuart and another by John Trumbull. *From Artist to Patron*, 5-9.

⁵⁶⁶ Jessie Poesch, "Painting and Painters, 1860-1920" in "Art and Architecture" *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, eds. Judith H. Bonner and Estill Pennington (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2013), 25:125.

⁵⁶⁷ Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art*, 3.

opportunities for resident artists to exhibit and sell their work. Thus northern landscapes and genre paintings that emphasized northern ideals received more public recognition and, gradually, shaped the prevailing perspective of American art.

Meanwhile, southern artists continued to struggle. And their choices of subject matter changed accordingly. During the decades following the Civil War, paintings that referred to the Lost Cause became popular in the American South. Portraits of Generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, as well as scenes depicting the death of other wartime heroes, noble women tending to their homes and their community in the absence of their men, and defeated soldiers returning to ruined abodes united Southerners in their shared sense of loss.⁵⁶⁸ A favored subject among post-bellum landscape painters in the South, including Flavius Fisher, Clarence Boyd, Carl Christian Brenner, and Joseph Rusling Meeker, was rural life around the bayous of Louisiana, the swamplands along the Gulf Coast, and the southern wilderness in general.⁵⁶⁹ These often gloomy, somber scenes, absent of humanity, are equally mournful. Yet, the profuse vegetation of the wetlands and the strong, healthful appearance of leafless trees in winter, suggest the resilience of Southerners and the presence of a rich cultural heritage that deserves greater consideration by scholars.

Thus Charles Fraser, the subject of this dissertation, should be understood as not only a pro-active southern landscape painter who sought a national reputation, but also as an important precursor to later southern landscape painters who would, like Fraser himself, actively seek an artistic education and career in and beyond their hometowns

⁵⁶⁸ It should be noted that African Americans in both southern and northern scenes were depicted as analogous to the European peasants, passive and untroubled as they went about their work. Poesch, "Painting and Painters, 1860-1920," 127.

⁵⁶⁹ For more information related to the artists who depicted these locales during the Reconstruction decades, see Poesch, "Painting and Painters, 1860-1920," 125-130.

and, in so doing, undermine the all too often evoked stereotype of the idle, backward, fiery-tempered Southerner. It is not Fraser's work per se that justifies his consideration along these terms. Certainly the untrained artist's sketches and oil paintings need not be touted as groundbreaking nor incorporated into the canon of American art. But Fraser's promotional efforts, which far surpassed the efforts of his southern predecessors and contemporaries, who, despite their own artistic aspirations, were unable to shake the label "artisan" and were thus subject to their patrons' demands for portraits, and portraits alone.

Fraser's familial connections with Charlestonian planter patrons helped elevate him from mere artisan to gentleman artist and cultural purveyor, thereby enabling him to exert some control over his own career and to ultimately become a landscape painter. But family alone did not foster his success. As this dissertation demonstrates, more significant were Fraser's determination to learn about landscape painting, his cultivation and preservation of a national network of artist friends and clientele, and his promotion of the visual arts, particularly landscape painting, all while carefully navigating the increasingly volatile political climate. During his youth, the artist eagerly sought an education in landscape paintings when none was to be had in the United States. He studied English prints to develop a better understanding of composition and traveled north to familiarize himself with the artistic endeavors of his contemporaries, while marketing his early drawings to a popular northern publication. He utilized his knowledge of the burgeoning northern market for landscape painting to promote the genre among his southern patrons traditionally preoccupied with portraiture.

Cognizant of emerging regional divisiveness, Fraser spent much of his landscape-painting career catering to the differing tastes of his northern and southern patrons, oscillating between northern preferences for local, sublime wilderness scenes and Southerners' desire for picturesque, imagined views with ruins. In addition to painting for a national clientele, Fraser also promoted the visual arts and art instruction on the same level. Yet, the artist was not without his flaws. Though he supported progress in the arts, the cultivation of a taste for fine art, and the prosperity of National Academy of Design, Fraser was largely unresponsive to local efforts to establish an art academy in Charleston. Determined to maintain his political neutrality and, as chapter four suggests, unable to detach himself from his planter-derived subscription to a strict social hierarchy, Fraser refused to align himself with a southern institution that seemed to foster the democratization of art. His own professional aspirations notwithstanding, Fraser undoubtedly foresaw – or at least suspected – the inevitable failure of such a contradictory institutional agenda. As sectional tensions mounted, Fraser sought safety in his political neutrality.

By extracting himself from the political fray, Fraser successfully maintained a national reputation throughout his career. An 1857 retrospective exhibition, the Fraser Gallery, celebrated the artist's painting career and, in so doing, perpetuated Fraser's political neutrality. Organized by Samuel and Caroline Gilman, both of whom shared Fraser's fear regarding the impending dissolution of the Union, the Fraser Gallery's visual unification of northern and southern landscape paintings represented a subtle, but decisive plea for reconciliation at the height of the sectional crisis.

Charles Fraser's efforts did not go unnoticed. Upon his death, his friend and patron, Robert C. Winthrop dictated a short eulogy before the Massachusetts Historical Society in which he described the artist as a "well known and valued friend... intimate friend of Allston, Sully, and the distinguished miniaturist, Malbone."⁵⁷⁰ Recollecting the Fraser Gallery, Winthrop applauded the painter's "landscapes and portraits in oil, illustrating the history and scenery of his country." Fraser's New England compatriots evidently appreciated his concerted diplomatic efforts. Closer to home, Fraser's Charleston supporters mourned the loss of a local cultural leader. Robert W. Gibbes, for example, celebrated Fraser, the "accomplishments of the scholar, the fine taste of the artist, and the successful versatility of your pencil, [which] require this testimony of respect and esteem..."⁵⁷¹ This dissertation represents a step toward recognizing the full significance of Charles Fraser to American art history, as it was known in his time. He is not the only southern artist to have been swept under the rug, however. It is left to current and future American art history scholars to rediscover these historical figures and make their contributions known.

⁵⁷⁰ Robert Winthrop's eulogy was later published in Boston newspapers. Rutledge. "The Life and Work of Charles Fraser, 1782-1860," n.p.

⁵⁷¹ Gibbes, *A Memoir of James De Veaux, of Charleston, S.C.*, dedication (n.p.).

FIGURES



Figure 1.1 Thomas Middleton, *Friends and Amateurs in Musick* (1827), wash drawing with touches of white on paper, 13 $\frac{3}{5}$ x 23 $\frac{3}{10}$ in. Signed, lower left: "Middleton, 1827." Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art/Carolina Art Association, gift of Henry Cheves. Illustrated in David Moltke-Hansen, *Art in the Lives of South Carolinians: Nineteenth-Century Chapters*, plate 43, non-paginated.



Figure 2.1 Charles Fraser, *A Scene in the Theatre Charleston* (ca.1793), graphite on paper. From Alexander Fraser and Charles Fraser, "SKETCHED from NATURE," ca.1793. Owner: South Carolina Historical Society. Illustrated in Severens and Wyrick, *Charles Fraser of Charleston*, 25.



Figure 2.2 Charles Fraser, *Penrith Castle* (1796-1805), ink and wash, 3 ¼ x 6 ½ in. From Charles Fraser, 1796-1806 Sketchbook. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection.



Figure 2.3 William Gilpin, *Untitled (Penrith Castle)* (1772), ink and wash. Illustrated in William Gilpin, *Observations, on Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772*, Vol. 2, Section XIX (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, Strand, 1808), non-paginated insert.



Figure 2.4 Charles Fraser, *River Clyde from the Top of Cory-Lin* (1796-1805), watercolor, 3 ¼ x 6 ½ in. From Charles Fraser, 1796-1806 Sketchbook. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection.



Figure 2.5 William Walker after sketch by Paul Sandby, *A View down the RIVER CLYDE, from the top of CORY-LIN* (1777-1781). Paul Sandby, *The Virtuosi's Museum* (London: George Kearsley, 1778), plate 57, non-paginated. Image from www.britishmuseum.org.



Figure 2.6 Charles Fraser, *The Seat of John Julius Pringle, Esq., on the Ashley River* (1800), watercolor, 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. From Charles Fraser, 1796-1806 Sketchbook. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from Charles Fraser and Alice R. Huger Smith, *A Charleston Sketchbook, 1796-1806: Forty Watercolor Drawings of the City and the Surrounding Country, including Plantations and Parish Churches*, by Charles Fraser (Charleston: Carolina Art Association, 1971), plate 18, non-paginated.



Figure 2.7 Charles Fraser, *Mr. Gabriel Manigault's Seat at Goose Creek* (1802), watercolor, 3 ¼ x 6 ½ in. From Charles Fraser, 1796-1806 Sketchbook. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection.



Figure 2.8 Thomas Coram, *The Grove, Seat of G.A. Hall, Esquire, Charleston Neck* (ca. 1800), oil on paper, 5 x 7 5/8 in. From Charles Fraser, 1796-1806 Sketchbook. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art, transfer from The Charleston Museum. Image from their collection: www.gibbesmuseum.org.



Figure 2.9 Edward Malbone, *Landscape with a Cliff on an Island* (1797-1807), brush and India ink on paper, 5 3/6 x 6 7/16 in. Owner: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Image from their collection: www.mfa.org.



Figure 2.10 Charles Fraser's untitled sketch dated September 21, 1831. From Charles Fraser, 1831-ca.1834 Sketchbook. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image photographed by author, courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art.



Figure 2.11 Washington Allston, *A Rocky Coast with Banditti* (1800), oil on canvas, 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 19 in. Owner: Museum of Early Southern Decorative Art, Winston-Salem. Image from their collection: www.mesda.org.



Figure 2.12 William Russell Birch, *High Street, with the First Presbyterian Church* (1799), engraving, From William Russell Birch, *The City of Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania as it Appeared in 1800* (Philadelphia: W. Birch, 1800). Illustrated in Cooperman and Sherk, *William Birch: Picturing the American Scene*, 114.



Figure 2.13 John Hill after drawing by Charles Fraser, *View of Richmond, Virginia* (1816), aquatint engraving, 3 1/8 x 4 5/8 in. From *Analectic Magazine* 9 (1817): frontispiece. Image from The Philadelphia Print Shop, Ltd.: www.philaprintshop.com.



Figure 2.14 John Hill after drawing by Charles Fraser, *Haddrils Point, near Charleston, S.C.* (1817), engraving, 2 7/8 x 4 1/2 in. From *Analectic Magazine* 10 (1817): 266. Image from University of Pittsburgh: images.library.pitt.edu

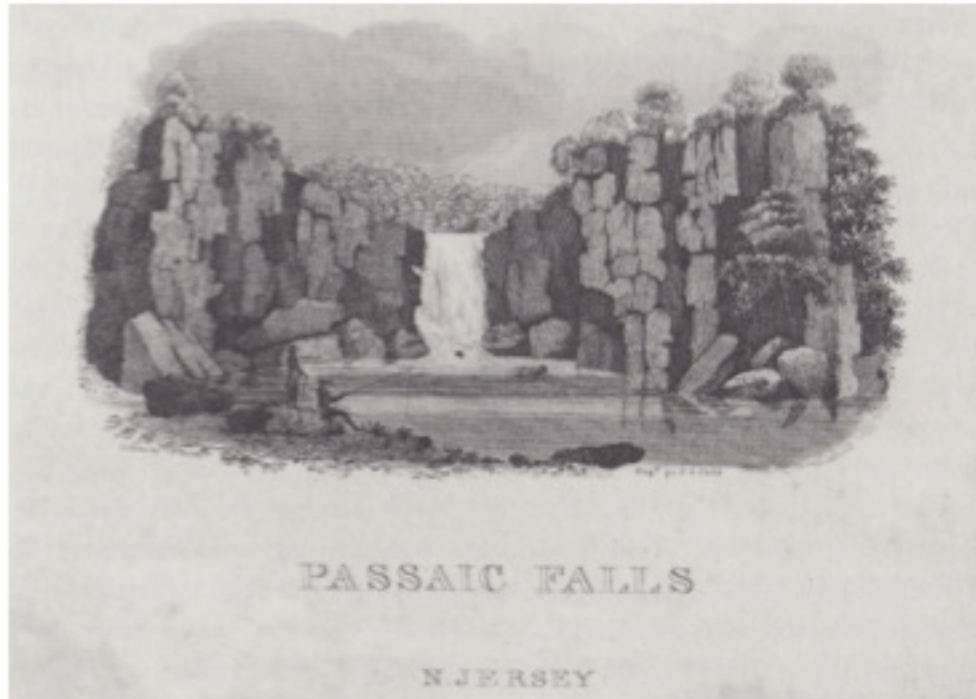


Figure 2.15 C.G. Childs after drawing by Charles Fraser, *View of Passaic Falls* (1816), engraving, 3 1/8 x 4 5/8 in. From *Analectic Magazine* 8 (1816): frontispiece. Severens and Wyrick, *Charles Fraser or Charleston*, 33.



Figure 3.1 Charles Fraser, *James Reid Pringle* (1820), watercolor on ivory, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Signed, lower left. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection: www.gibbesmuseum.org.



Figure 3.2 Charles Fraser, *Henry Brevoort, Jr.* (1828), watercolor on ivory. Signed, lower right: "C. Fraser 1828." Location unknown. Photograph of image from the Frick Art Library: images.frick.org.



Figure 3.3 Thomas Doughty, *In the Catskills* (ca.1835), oil on canvas. 25 x 35in.
Owner: Reynolds House Museum of American Art, North Carolina. Image
from their website: www.reynoldshouse.org.



Figure 3.4 Charles Fraser, *Niagara Falls from Goat Island Looking toward Canadian Side* (1820), watercolor on paper, 10 15/16 x 17 7/8 in. Owner: Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina. Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art*, 39.



Figure 3.5 Charles Fraser, *Niagara Falls from Goat Island Looking toward Prospect Point* (1820), watercolor on paper, 10 15/16 x 17 15/16 in. Owner: Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina. Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art*, 39.



Figure 3.6 Charles Fraser, *Niagara Falls from Prospect Point* (1820), watercolor on paper, 11 15/16 x 17 15/16 in. Owner: Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina. Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art*, 40.



Figure 3.7 Charles Fraser, *Niagara below the Falls* (1820), watercolor on paper, 10 15/16 x 16 3/8 in. Owner: Greenville County Museum of Art, South Carolina. Severens, *Greenville County Museum of Art*, 40.



Figure 3.8 Alvan Fisher, *The Great Horseshoe Fall, Niagara* (1820), oil on paper, 34 3/8 x 48 in. Owner: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Image from their collection: american.si.edu.



Figure 3.9 Charles Fraser, *Untitled* (ca.1833), watercolor on paper. From Charles Fraser, 1831-ca.1834 Sketchbook. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image photographed by author, courtesy of the Gibbes Museum of Art.



Figure 3.10 Thomas Cole, *A View of the Mountain Pass Called the Notch of the White Mountains* (1839), oil on canvas, 40 x 60 ½ in. Owner: National Gallery of Art. Parry, *The Art of Thomas Cole*, 220.



Figure 3.11 Thomas Cole, *Notch in the White Mountains from Above with the Notch House* (1839), pencil on paper, 11 ½ x 16 7/8 in. Owner: The Art Museum, Princeton University. Parry, *The Art of Thomas Cole*, 220.



Figure 3.12 Charles Fraser, *Landscape at sunrise with water, figure, boat, ruins* (1830-1840), oil on canvas, 17 ¼ x 48 ½ in. Owner: Private Collection. Image from Brunk Auction House: www.brunkauctions.com.



Figure 3.13 Thomas Doughty, *Ruins in a Landscape* (1828), oil on canvas, 16 ½ x 22 in. Owner: Private Collection. Image from artnet: www.artnet.com.



Figure 3.14 Charles Fraser, *Untitled (Landscape with Mossy Trees and Distant Ruins)* (ca.1840), oil on canvas, 19 3/4 x 24 in. Owner: The Johnson Collection, Spartanburg, SC. Image courtesy of The Johnson Collection.



Figure 3.15 Charles Fraser, *Pausipippo, near Naples* (ca.1840), oil on canvas, 24 x 34 1/4 in. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection: www.gibbesmuseum.org.



Figure 3.16 John "Warwick" Smith, *From Pausilipo* (1778-1779), graphite and watercolor on paper. From John Smith, *Select Views in Italy* (1792-1799): non-paginated. Owner: Tate Museum, London. Image from their collection: www.tate.org.uk.



Figure 3.17 Charles Fraser, *Rock of Scylla* (ca.1830), oil on canvas, 20 5/8 x 28 5/8 in. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection: www.gibbesmuseum.org.



Figure 3.18 Benjamin Thomas Pouncy after drawing by John “Warwick” Smith, *Scylla* (1778-1779) engraving. From John Smith, *Select Views in Italy* (1792-1799): non-paginated. Owner: Tate Museum, London. Image from their collection: www.tate.org.uk.



Figure 5.1 Charles Fraser, *Thomas Middleton* (1822), watercolor on ivory, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection: www.gibbesmuseum.org.



Figure 5.2 Charles Fraser, *Mrs. William Branford (Elizabeth Savage)* (1845), watercolor on ivory, 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. Owner: Gibbes Museum of Art. Image from their collection: www.gibbesmuseum.org.



Figure 5.3 [Cover] *Harper's Weekly* 7, no. 332 (May 9, 1863). Image from website: www.sonofthesouth.net.



Figure 5.4 Charles Fraser, *Joseph Winthrop* (1825), watercolor on ivory, 3 3/4 x 3 1/8 in. Owner: Gibbs Museum of Art. Image from their collection: www.gibbesmuseum.org.



Figure 5.5 Charles Fraser, *Robert Charles Winthrop* (1827), watercolor on ivory. Location unknown. Image from website: www.portrait-miniature.com.



Figure 5.6 James Gillray, *Brittania between Scylla & Charybdis* (1793), hand-colored etching, 11 7/8 x 14 1/4 in. Published by Hannah Humphrey, April 8, 1793. Owner: National Portrait Gallery, London. Image from their collection: www.npg.org.uk.



Figure 5.7 John Tenniel, *Scylla & Charybdis, or the Modern Ulysses* (1863). Published in *Punch Magazine* (1863). Owner: *Punch Magazine*, London. Illustrated in *Punch Magazine* (October 10, 1863), non-paginated.



Figure 5.8 Labels from the Fraser Gallery placed on the back of art objects exhibited in the 1857 retrospective. Images from the Gibbes Museum of Art.

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