



- Good evening, this talk is from 20:00 to about 21:45 with a 20 minute break in the middle. I have allowed 5-10 minutes for questions at the end and I will stay behind afterwards in case anyone wants to discuss any of the issues raised.
- In the early nineteenth century, painting the British countryside was a new form of art that required artists to discover new symbols and create new conventions. This resulted in a plethora of types of landscape painting including topographic, pastoral, Romantic, picturesque and sublime. This artistic invention of the countryside took place when the land was being re-engineered and new farming practices introduced. These new practices resulted in rural poverty and, in due course, riots. This talk is about how artists, who were looking for ways to represent the land, dealt with or ignored what was going on down on the farm.
- Let me begin by taking you back to April 1809...

## Notes

### **Background**

- The industrial revolution meant that there was a mass movement from the farm to the town. At the same time there was increasing pressure to grow more food and conditions for rural workers deteriorated. Also, from the turn of the nineteenth century there was a growing call for a radical reform of democracy and poverty. Reform took a long time coming and social pressures grew culminating in riots and the closest the country has come to political revolution.
- This talk is about landscape painting during this turbulent period and how the issues crept into their work until representation of social problems became a category of painting in its own right.

### **A History of British Revolution**

- James Hargreaves, **Spinning Jenny** of 1765, Richard Arkwright's Water frame, 1768 and Edmund Cartwright's weaving machine of 1785.
- **Gordon Riots** of 1780 began as an anti-Catholic protest against the 1778 Papist Act and escalated into riots and looting. The President of the Protestant Association, Lord George Gordon, inflamed the mob of 40,000 to 60,000. The army was called in and 285 people were shot dead, 200 wounded and 450 arrested. On the walls of Newgate prison was the

- proclamation that the inmates had been freed on the authority of 'His Majesty, King Mob'.
- **Napoleonic Wars**, War of the First Coalition 1792-1797, War of the Second Coalition 1798-1802 headed by Napoleon from 1799, Treaty of Amiens, Third Coalition 1803-1815.
  - **Speenhamland System**, brought in in 1795 as an amendment to the Elizabethan Poor Law. Described as a 'universal system of pauperism' as it encouraged farmers and industrialists to pay below subsistence wages as the parish would make up the difference needed to keep workers alive. The payment was based on the number of children and the price of a gallon loaf and started at 3/- a week for a single man when bread was 1/- a loaf. It led to the introduction of the new Poor Law of 1834 and the workhouse.
  - **The Radicals**, in 1797 the Whig Charles James Fox called for 'radical reform' of the electoral system. Fox was a gambler and womaniser but a brilliant orator who opposed both William Pitt the Younger and George III, whom he regarded as a tyrant. He supported the American War of Independence and the French Revolution and was a well-known anti-slavery campaigner. Thomas Spence (1750-1814) advocated the common ownership of land, universal suffrage and the rights of children. He was the first to use the phrase the 'rights of man' and invented a phonetic spelling system so rich and poor would speak the same way.
  - **Thomas Malthus** argued in *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) that helping the poor was counter-productive and would lead to earlier marriages and an increase in the number of the poor.
  - **William Cobbett**, 1802, published his *Political Register* with a weekly circulation of 40,000. He was a conservative who turned radical after witnessing the starvation in the countryside. He was a difficult man who hated the Jews and opposed the emancipation of slaves.
  - **Peace of Amiens**, 1802, lasted only one year but gave a break in the Napoleonic Wars.
  - **Assassination** of the Prime Minister Spencer Perceval on 11 May 1812 by John Bellingham, a merchant with a grievance against the government. Although not political it brought about a period of repression and harsh punishments.
  - **Luddites** 1811-17, weavers breaking machines to protest against unemployment and decreasing earnings, signed by the mythical 'King Ned Ludd'. They often disguised themselves as women. In 1812, 8 men and later 15 men were hanged.
  - **Hampden Club**, 1812, of prominent Whigs and moderate Radicals sought political reform.
  - **Napoleonic Wars ended**, 18 June 1815, followed by a brief boom in textile industry then chronic depression. Napoleon seized control in 1799, became emperor in 1804, failed to invade Russia in 1812, abdicated and was exiled in 1814 and returned in 1815 before his defeat at Waterloo on 18 June 1815.
  - **Corn Laws**, 1815, kept the price of corn artificially high so the average worker could not afford bread. They were not removed until 1846.
  - **The Year without a Summer**, 1816, following the Mount Tambora eruption on 10 April 1815 in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). The largest recorded eruption in

- human history.
- **Spa Fields** meetings in Islington, Nov/Dec 1816, 10,000 people, first such mass meeting led to the 1817 **Gagging Acts** (the Treason Act and Seditious Meetings Act which controlled meetings of more than 50 people) and the Blanketeers march.
  - **March of the Blanketeers** 1817, Manchester, weavers, desperate state textile industry and suspension of Habeas Corpus, 5,000 marchers met at St Peter's Field. Each man carried a blanket and groups of 10 carried a page of a petition to London.
  - **Pentridge Rising**, 9/10 June 1817, 200-300 men, wanted to wipe out the national debt, 3 hanged.
  - **Peterloo Massacre**, 16 Aug 1819, cavalry charged 60,000-80,000 people 15 killed, 400-700 injured, which resulted in the *Manchester Guardian* and the **Six Acts** (which made any meeting for radical reform treasonable, speeded up court cases, radical newspapers were gagged, weapons could be seized and unauthorised military training was made illegal).
  - **Cato Street Conspiracy**, 1820, Arthur Thistlewood was hoodwinked by a government agent and a false notice in *The Times* into recruiting 27 men to kill the cabinet. They were caught, tried and hung, drawn and quartered for high treason. This punishment was later changed to hanging until dead before beheading and quartering and was not abolished until 1870. The death penalty for treason was not abolished until 1998.
  - **Pauperism**, during the 1820s Poor Law expenditure decreased, rural crime increased by 30%, mostly food thefts, and 1828, 1829 and 1830 were poor harvests. Many Victorians struggled to understand and explain poverty. Was it a result of personal misfortune, was it caused by social conditions beyond an individual's control, or was it the direct result of a person's character, their laziness and having too many children? Were the poor, therefore, 'deserving' or 'undeserving'? Who was responsible for those who became so poor that they could not maintain themselves
  - **Election** in 1830, brought about by George IV dying, highlighted the need for reform. In France there was a revolution and Charles X was replaced by Louis Philippe, the 'Citizen King'.
  - **Swing Riots**, 1830, agricultural workers did not disguise themselves but descended on farms in their hundreds demanding higher wages. 2,000 farm labourers were arrested and imprisoned and 19 were hung. Reform was needed but the Duke of Wellington, the Prime Minister thought the British system was ideal. His Tory government fell and Earl Grey's Whig government came into power. Grey's bill was rejected, the Whigs were re-elected, it was again opposed by the House of Lords leading to riots across the country and Dorset, Somerset and Leicestershire became ungovernable. Grey requested King William IV to create 100 new Whig peers, he refused and Grey resigned. William called on the Duke of Wellington but even he admitted the country was ungovernable and he resigned. The Great Reform Act was passed.
  - **Tolpuddle Martyrs**, in the early 1830s a group of six men formed a friendly society

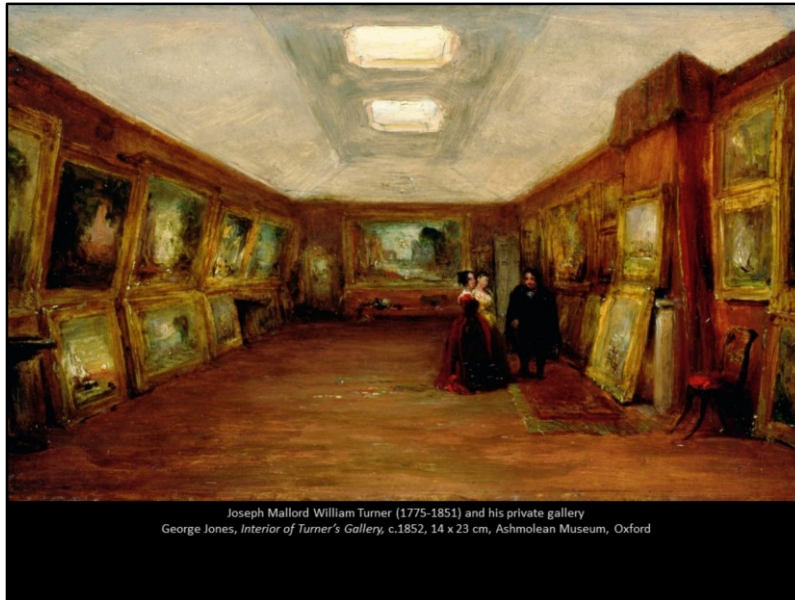
(which was now legal following the repeal of the Combination Act in 1824-5). They refused to work for less than 10s a week when the local rate was 7s a week. A local landowner wrote to Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, in 1834 invoking an obscure 1797 law prohibiting people from swearing oaths to each other. They were found guilty and transported to Australia. They became popular heroes, 800,000 signatures were collected and they were released in 1836 (James Hammett was released in 1837 as he had a previous conviction for theft). Four of the six returned to England and later emigrated to London, Ontario where they are buried.

- **Bristol, Queen Square Riots**, 1831, following House of Lords rejection of Second Reform Bill, 500-600 young men over 3 days, looting, destruction, 4 killed, 86 wounded, 4 hanged.
  - **Great Reform Act**, 1832, allowed one in five adult males to vote, gave big cities MPs and removed rotten boroughs.
  - **New Poor Law**, 1834, relief only given in workhouses whose conditions are designed to deter all but the starving. Based on the philosophy of Thomas Malthus (giving poor relief will only increase the problem), David Ricardo's 'iron law of wages' (wages fall to the minimum needed to sustain life) and Jeremy Bentham's belief that as people did what was most pleasant the poor would claim relief rather than work.
  - **Chartism**, 1830s and 40s, culminating in the multi-million signature petition to Parliament and the meeting on Kennington Common in 1848. The People's Charter was published in 1838 and called for six reforms, a vote for every man over 21, secret ballot, no property requirements for MPs, payment for MPs, equal size constituencies and annual elections.
- For more information on the Swing Riots see 'Echoes of Old Country Life' (1892) for the reminiscences of someone who lived through the Swing Riots as a child. At night from his bedroom at Uxbridge School in 1831 he could see three or four blazing homesteads a night. He pointed out that the **landowners** of parishes would **pull down cottages** of their tenants to force them into a neighbouring parish so they would **not** have to **pay the poor law**. One man had to walk to the neighbouring parish every day and he calculated that in his working life he had walked three times round the earth. (I calculate this is 5 miles a day, every day, for 40 years). He mentions the **disappearance** of the **old harvest home** festival where labourers and landowners celebrated together.
  - People enjoyed the old elections in '**rotten boroughs**' as the candidate paid an **exorbitant** amount for food and **drink** for the few voters. It could cost thousands of pounds and many inn keepers were dishonest with the accounts. He shows accounts for £545 for 420 voters so 26s a head! When travelling in France he noticed that **Frenchmen** did **not** get as **drunk** on wine as Englishmen on beer. **Englishmen** expected to get so drunk they would **fall over** and feel terrible the next day.

## References

- John Ruskin, *Modern Painters III* on landscape, and also see Kenneth Clarke, , *Landscape into Art*, 1949.

- Michele L. Miller, 'J. M. W. Turner's *Ploughing Up Turnips, near Slough*: The Cultivation of Cultural Dissent', *The Art Bulletin*, 1995
- John Barrell, *The dark Side of the Landscape*, 1983



George Jones, *Interior of Turner's Gallery*, c.1852, 14 x 23 cm, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

- It is **April 1809** and we have just entered Joseph Mallord William Turner's (1775-1851) private gallery in outbuildings attached to his house on the corner of Harley Street and Queen Anne Street in West London, just north of Cavendish Square.
- Turner was a well-established and **leading artist** of the day. He had been elected a Royal Academician in 1802 at the early age of 26. He never married and became increasingly eccentric as he grew older.
- In 1809 the **Napoleonic War was raging**, the country be besieged by the French and there were food shortages.
- Turner display 18 paintings that year. Let us look at one of them more closely ...

### Notes

- Joseph Mallord William Turner, RA (born between late April and early May, baptised 14 May 1775 – 19 December 1851) was an English Romanticist landscape painter. Turner claimed he was born on 23 April, which is both Saint George's Day and the supposed birthday of William Shakespeare, but this claim has never been verified. Turner was considered a controversial figure in his day, particularly the last 15 years of his life (aged 50 to 76), but is now regarded as the artist who elevated landscape painting to an eminence rivalling history painting. He left a vast legacy of work, including 550 oil paintings, more than 2,000 finished watercolours and 30,000 drawings.
- Every year from 1804 to 1816 Turner opened his private gallery to 'Dilettanti, Connoisseurs and Artists' and in April 1809 this painting was one of 18 included in those shown in his gallery.
- Turner moved from Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, where he was born, to lodgings on Harley Street in 1799, opening his own gallery in contiguous premises on Queen Anne Street in 1804; this he enlarged between 1819 and 1822. In 1805 he took a house at Isleworth, keeping a second home on the riverside at intervals for the rest of his life (Upper Mall, Hammersmith, from 1806 to 1811; Sandycoombe Lodge, Twickenham, from 1813 to about 1825; Cheyne Walk, from about 1846 onward).
- There was a watercolour artist called William Turner (1789-1862) who was called William Turner of Oxford to distinguish him.



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Ploughing up Turnips near Slough*, exhibited at Turner's Gallery in 1809, Tate Britain

- This is such an important painting that I will return to it a number of times but let me first provide some background.
- Kenneth Clark, in a series of lectures to the Slade School of Art, said that landscape painting was the "chief artistic creation of the nineteenth century," with the result that in the following period people were "apt to assume that the appreciation of natural beauty and the painting of landscape is a normal and enduring part of our spiritual activity." This is not the case. The English countryside is mostly artificially created and landscape painting involves the artists selecting and assembling a fictional story based on culturally accepted symbols derived from this artificial creation.
- But before we get too philosophical, what do we think of this landscape painting? It has gone through a series of interpretations over the last 200 and more years.
  - **Pastoral:** for the first 174 years it was seen by critics as a pure pastoral painting. Critics and art historians wrote about his "**genuinely national homely realism**" and a "juxtaposition of circumstantial rustic detail and **poetically heightened atmospheric effect**" (Andrew Wilton quoted by Michele Miller).
  - **Patriotic:** in 1983 John Barrell published *The Dark Side of the Landscape* in which he pointed out the patriotic elements which may have been too obvious to mention at the time.
  - **Political:** it was not until 1995 that another art historian questioned these positive readings and noticed a much more radical, progressive and political interpretation.

## Notes

- Formerly known as 'Windsor': the Castle is prominent in the background. The present title is that used in the catalogue of the 1809 exhibition in Turner's gallery.
- This picture was priced at £200 in a note, probably of c. 1810, in Turner's 'Finance' sketchbook. As Evelyn Joll points out this was Turner's usual price for his standard 36 × 48 in. picture.
- Kenneth Clark wrote, "landscape painting was an act of faith and in the early nineteenth century as values declined, faith in nature became a form of religion." and "Almost every Englishman when asked what he thought was meant by the word 'beauty' would begin to describe a landscape."

## **References**

Michele L. Miller, 'J. M. W. Turner's *Ploughing Up Turnips, near Slough*: The Cultivation of Cultural Dissent', *The Art Bulletin*, 1995





Claude Lorrain (born Gellée, c. 1600-1682), *Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah*, 1648, National Gallery

Claude Lorrain (born Gellée, c. 1600-1682), *Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah*, 1648, National Gallery, London. The only link to the biblical story is a tiny inscription on a tree trunk in the centre foreground, another earlier version of this painting without the inscription is called 'Il Mulino' ('The Mill') and is now in the 'Palazzo Doria Pamphilij' in Rome.

- **Pastoral:** let us start with the pastoral reading. What do we mean by the 'pastoral'? It was one of many types of landscape, such as the topographic, the picturesque, the sublime, the Romantic and the pastoral. The pastoral has its roots in ancient Greek mythology and the Golden Age. The Golden Age was one of what the ancient Greeks believed were the five ages of man—first the golden when gods and men shared the earth, then the silver, bronze, iron and human. Traditionally, pastoral refers to a romanticized and exaggerated golden age sometimes with people eating, drinking and playing musical instruments but it also often shows farming activities. If the pastoral paintings shows a herdsman with cattle or a shepherd with sheep it is sometimes called Georgic as described in Virgil's *Georgics* (from the Greek, 'On Working the Earth').
- The President of the Royal Academy, Sir Joshua Reynolds, selected this painting as an example of a good landscape painting produced by a recognised Old Master, Claude Lorrain. He criticized Thomas Gainsborough for a lack of precision and Richard Wilson for copying nature too closely. He explained that the ideal landscape is created from the artist's imagination not by copying nature.

## Notes

- The pastoral has its roots in ancient Greek mythology and the Golden Age. The pastoral was inspired by Hesiod's classical work *Works and Days* (c. 700 BCE) which is a farmer's almanac which also talks about a Golden Age when people lived in harmony with nature. This was expanded upon by the Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE-17/18 CE) in his *Metamorphosis* (8 CE, 'Transformations') which describes five ages of man—golden, silver, bronze, iron and human. Traditionally, pastoral refers to the lives of herdsmen in a romanticized, exaggerated, but representative way as described in Virgil's (70 BCE-19 BCE) *Georgics* (37-29 BCE, from the Greek, 'On Working the Earth'). If the pastoral paintings shows a herdsman with cattle or a shepherd with sheep it is sometimes called Georgic.
- It was the Roman poet Virgil in his *Ecloques* who first set the pastoral in the idealised location of *Arcadia*. In his second work, the *Georgics*, written before his *Aeneid*, he discusses agriculture and animal husbandry. The *Georgics* were written in 70 BCE-19 BCE, the Augustan period.

- This painting is part of a group known as the Bouillon Claudes. The Duc de Bouillon, general of the Papal army, commissioned Claude to paint both this painting and the *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* in 1647 and they were completed the following year. This painting and *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* inspired Turner to paint *Dido Building Carthage* and *The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire*, which Turner left to the nation as part of the Turner Bequest, on condition that they were hung besides Claude's pair of works.
- The pastoral is considered a mode rather than a genre so a genre such as landscape could be in the pastoral mode.
- This is a typical **academic pastoral landscape**. The landscape is a setting for presenting a mythological or, in this case, a biblical scene. An alternative was the invention by Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) of the *fêtes galante*, scenes of pastoral and idyllic charm, with a theatrical air.
- This type of painting was described by the President of the Royal Academy, **Sir Joshua Reynolds** as an example of a good landscape.
  - He gave as an example of **bad art** a landscape that was poorly finished and which had been **copied from nature** and he **criticised Thomas Gainsborough** (1727-1788) for a want of '*precision and finishing*'. He criticized **Richard Wilson** (1714-1782) for introducing gods and goddesses into a landscape that looks **too natural** to receive them
  - He said:
 

*... nature herself is not to be too closely copied. There are excellences in the art of painting, beyond what is commonly called the imitation of nature*
  - Reynolds believed a **good landscape** should be based **not on nature** but on the work of the **Old Masters, like Claude**.
- There was a tradition from Dutch art including **Peter Paul Rubens** (1577-1640) and followed in England by **Gainsborough** and **Richard Wilson** of representing the landscape for its own sake.
- Most artists, including **Turner**, followed **Reynold's guidelines** in the **early part** of the nineteenth century in order to produce landscapes that were **acceptable** to the **Royal Academy** as their annual exhibition was one of the few places an artist could present their work to a large audience.
- Reynolds praised the way that Claude **idealises** a scene. It is produced by a **poetical mind with imagination**. Idealization means removing the particular and the idiosyncratic but it also meant that the painting should be **ennobling**. It should cause the viewer to **contemplate** the **finer aspects** of life, such as **faith, hope and charity**, heroism and humility.
- There were also more specific rules to create beauty such as incorporating a **winding river** framed by **tall trees** and the look of the Italian countryside. The foreground, middleground and background should be clearly distinguished and the inclusion of farm animals references **classical literature**, such as Virgil's poem, the *Georgics* (29 BCE).

## Notes

- **Reynolds** gave a series of lectures (15 **Discourses** from 1769-1790) that have been

described as 'one of the most eloquent literary documents in the history of European art'.

### Claude ('Cload') Lorrain (c. 1600-1682)

- Claude Gellée is better known as Lorrain as he came from the Duchy of Lorraine.
- Claude Lorrain trained under Agostino Tassi (1578-1644) who is best known as the rapist of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593– c. 1656), one of the most progressive painters of her generation.
- Beginning around 1640 Claude began to make his compositions more classical and monumental. During this decade something like a formula establishes itself: tall trees on one side of the picture (a framing device called '**repoussoir**', from the French 'to push back') balanced by a classical ruin and smaller trees further back on the other; a foreground stage with figures; a low horizon; a winding river conducting the eye by stages through an open landscape to the horizon; and distant hills, often with a glimpse of the sea. The figures are not, as often before, in contemporary dress but are always represented in classical or biblical costume. Contrary to popular belief, virtually all of Claude's figures were painted by himself. Sometimes they are merely shepherds, but frequently they embody a subject from classical mythology or sacred history. The light is clearer than in paintings of the early or late periods. Spacious, tranquil compositions are drenched in an even light, as can be seen in this painting, *The Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah* (also called *The Mill*), dated 1648.
- The painting was originally commissioned by Cardinal Camillo Pamphili but he created a scandal by renouncing his orders in order to marry and he went into exile. Claude completed the painting for the Duc de Bouillon ('Boo-yon'), general of the Papal army, together with '*Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*'.
- In the 1650s he painted still larger and more heroic paintings, including *The Sermon on the Mount*. In the middle of the following decade, Claude's style moved into its last phase, when some of his greatest masterpieces were produced. The colour range is restricted, and the tones become cool and silvery. The figures are strangely elongated and by conventional standards ill drawn. The paintings of this period are solemn and mysterious and radiate a sublime poetic feeling. It was in this spirit that Claude painted his famous work *The Enchanted Castle*.
- The reason for the blanching found in many paintings by Claude is not known but could be when he mixed egg tempura and oil. *Embarkation* is oil only and only slightly blanched.
- Blue leaves in Dutch paintings is due to yellow lake fading leaving the blue.

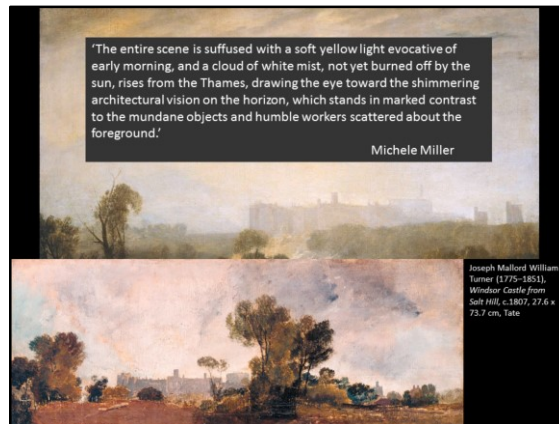
### The Story of Isaac and Rebekah

Abraham sent his servant with gold and camels to find a wife for his son Isaac. The servant decided to choose a wife as follows. 'May it be that when I say to a young woman, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too'— let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac.' Rebekah came out and offered him and the camels water.

Genesis 24: 'Then the servant told Isaac all he had done. 67 Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.'

## **References**

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude\\_Lorrain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claude_Lorrain)



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Ploughing up Turnips near Slough*, exhibited at Turner's Gallery in 1809, Tate Britain

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *Windsor Castle from Salt Hill*, c.1807, 27.6 x 73.7 cm, Tate

### Pastoral

- So we can see that Turner's painting is a particular type of pastoral landscape called the Georgic as it shows animal husbandry.
- Most descriptions of the painting by critics and art historians were formal and stylistic, for example, focusing on Turner's success in representing sunlight seen through haze and the 'circumstantial rustic detail and poetically heightened atmospheric effects' (Andrew Wilton). Michele Miller writes, '**The entire scene is suffused with a soft yellow light evocative of early morning, and a cloud of white mist, not yet burned off by the sun, rises from the Thames, drawing the eye toward the shimmering architectural vision on the horizon, which stands in marked contrast to the mundane objects and humble workers scattered about the foreground.**' (*The Art Bulletin*, 1995)
- **Where is it? We know that Turner made extensive preparatory work including the view from Salt Hill** near Slough. In modern terms we are looking towards the M4 motorway towards the Thames, Eton College and Windsor Castle. The motorway is three-quarters of a mile from Salt Hill and Windsor Castle about two miles away. There was a famous inn, called **Castle Inn** at Salt Hill named for its **view of Windsor Castle** and the Inn and its view were so **well known** that in 1814 the Prince Regent hosted a breakfast there for the **King of Prussia** and his three sons. But Turner did not call this painting 'A View of Windsor Castle from Salt Hill'. At the time Slough was a tiny hamlet of little significance so why did he refer to it in the title? **Is there something else going on here?**

### Notes

- Turner is suggesting that this area around Windsor Castle, which we see in the background, is Arcadia, the Eden of classical Greece. The Tate write, 'the painting has been seen as a celebration of progressive agriculture in an Arcadian English setting, beneath the benign gaze of

‘Farmer’ George III.’ But why was ‘progressive agriculture’ important?

- It was painted in the middle of the Napoleonic Wars. In 1809, Britain had been at war with France on and off since 1793.
- It is Romantic painting of the pastoral or bucolic type, a Georgic, and such paintings were very popular in the eighteenth century. The poem describes man's struggle against a hostile natural world and how hard work and animal husbandry can overcome setbacks. In the eighteenth century the agricultural revolution enabled farmers to increase the productivity of the land and produce more food. As we shall see extremely important at the time Turner painted this work.



François Gérard (1770–1837), *The Battle of Austerlitz, 2nd December 1805*, 1810, 510 × 958 cm, Palace of Versailles, Musée de Trianon

- Keep that question in mind and let me talk briefly about the Napoleonic Wars as they are relevant to the second interpretation of the painting.
- We had been at war with France since 1792 apart from a brief peace in 1802, called the Peace of Amiens. In 1803, Britain resumed war against France, this time against Emperor Napoleon. **In 1805**, although Napoleon's fleet had been defeated at Trafalgar four months previously his army **defeated three nations at Austerlitz** (now Czech Republic), perhaps his greatest victory. He defeated a larger Russian and Austrian army led by Tsar Alexander I and Holy Roman Emperor Francis II. The defeat led to the **dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire**, an empire which was founded by Charlemagne on 25 December 800, just over 1,000 years before.
- The following year, in 1806, following his overwhelming victory at Austerlitz, Napoleon established the **Continental System** to **cut off trade with Britain**. The result of not trading with Europe was disastrous and by 1809 Britain was isolated and was being starved into submission. **Maximising food production was therefore critical to our survival**.

### Notes

- Napoleon extended his political control over France until the Senate declared him Emperor of the French in 1804, launching the French Empire. Intractable differences with the British meant that the French were facing a **Third Coalition by 1805**. **Napoleon shattered this coalition** with decisive victories in the Ulm Campaign and a historic triumph at the **Battle of Austerlitz**, which led to the elimination of the Holy Roman Empire.
- In October 1805, however, a Franco-Spanish fleet was destroyed at the Battle of Trafalgar, allowing Britain to impose a **naval blockade of the French coasts**. In **retaliation, Napoleon established the Continental System in 1806 to cut off European trade with Britain**.
- Hoping to extend the Continental System, Napoleon invaded Iberia and declared his brother Joseph the King of Spain in 1808. The Spanish and the Portuguese revolted with British support. The **Peninsular War**, noted for its brutal guerrilla warfare, lasted six years and culminated in an Allied victory.
- **By 1811, Napoleon ruled over 70 million people** across an empire that had domination in Europe,



which had not witnessed this level of political consolidation since the days of the Roman Empire. He maintained his strategic status through a series of alliances and family appointments. He created a new aristocracy in France while allowing the return of nobles who had been forced into exile by the Revolution.

- Napoleon's Turkish officers wore a turban over a low cap, a short jacket over a long-sleeved shirt and a white heron or egret feather plume. An NCO wore a deep yellow turban.
- François Pascal Simon, Baron Gérard (1770–1837), was a French painter born in Rome, where his father occupied a post in the house of the French ambassador. His mother was Italian. As a baron of the Empire, he is sometimes referred to as Baron Gérard.
- Gérard became rich and famous for his portraits but he regretted abandoning his earlier ambition to become a great history painter. Perhaps, the high point of his struggle to become a great history painter is this *Battle of Austerlitz* (*Bataille d'Austerlitz*, 1810) which shows an imaginative breadth of invention and style.
- General Rapp (1771-1821) is presenting to an Olympian Napoleon the standards taken from the enemy. The composition, although broad and balanced, is almost too complex and shows Gérard at the limits of his ability as a history painter. At Austerlitz, Rapp led the Guard Cavalry in a counterattack that crushed the Russian Imperial Guard at a crucial stage in the battle. Daring and courageous, Jean Rapp managed to survive two dozen wounds in his legendary career as one of the best of Napoleon Bonaparte's generals.





### The Second Interpretation—The Patriotic

- This seemingly innocent pastoral landscape can be interpreted in a very different way if we consider the circumstances at the time.
- The art historian John Barrell, in *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, was the first to point out its celebration of progressive English agriculture. It was during the Napoleonic Wars and the French had blockaded our ports so we depended on farmers to produce our food. In this light we see the **Royal Palace at Windsor**, representing monarchy, **part of Eton** school representing education and the aristocracy and in the foreground the **labourers working to produce the food** needed by everyone during the war. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of increased agricultural productivity resulting from new scientific agricultural practices. Barrell drew attention to the labourers and the celebration of **progressive English agriculture** that was helping us win the **war against France**.
- How were agricultural yields increased? One key advance was **four-crop rotation**.

### Notes

- The painting was first exhibited in 1809 at the height of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815, started when Napoleon seized power in 1799 apart from the one year Peace of Amiens in 1802). In 1805 Nelson beat the French fleet at Trafalgar and in response the **French blockaded** European ports to **stop food** being imported into England. It therefore became critical for England to grow all its own food and agricultural productivity became critical for the war effort. The painting would therefore have been seen as patriotically supporting the war.
- The Tate says, 'As well as its distant view of Windsor Castle, this picture of a turnip harvest depicts current efforts to maximise yields and increase the food supply to serve the needs of a wartime economy'. There is a lot of history that was very significance at the time tied up in this sentence.

### References

- John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 1983



Ploughing farmer, c. 1200 BCE, 17 x 24 cm, burial chamber of Sennedjem, Thebes

After Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), *Portrait of Charles Townshend, 2nd Viscount Townshend* (1674–1738), circa 1715–1720, 125.7 × 101 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- Crop rotation started in ancient Egypt with two-crop rotation but this required the land to lie unused (fallow). It was believed that fallow land regained its fertility for religious reasons but we now know it is because nitrates in the atmosphere settle on the land and re-fertilise it.
- **Charles 'Turnip' Townshend** (1674–1738) introduced **four-crop rotation** (wheat, turnips, barley and clover) which allowed fertility to be maintained with much less fallow land. This is because clover fixes atmospheric nitrogen and re-fertilises the land. Clover and turnips are good fodder crops for livestock, which in turn improve the soil by their manure. This dramatically improved productivity and enabled cattle to be kept over winter rather than needing to slaughter them in the autumn and preserve the meat.
- However, four-crop rotation meant an end to common land which had to be **enclosed** to prevent one farmer's cows from eating another farmer's turnips.
- Between 1750 and 1850, the English population nearly tripled, with an estimated increase from 5.7 million to 16.6 million, and all these people had to be fed from the domestic food supply. There were other factors at work, Lord Winchilsea had noted a few years previously that farmers pressed for enclosure to keep labourers dependent.
- The **turnip** was our **atom bomb**, a **secret weapon** that could win the war as it enabled food or animal fodder to be produced continually on the same land. The turnip became a symbol of progressive agriculture but, as we shall see in a minute, it had other associations.

### Notes

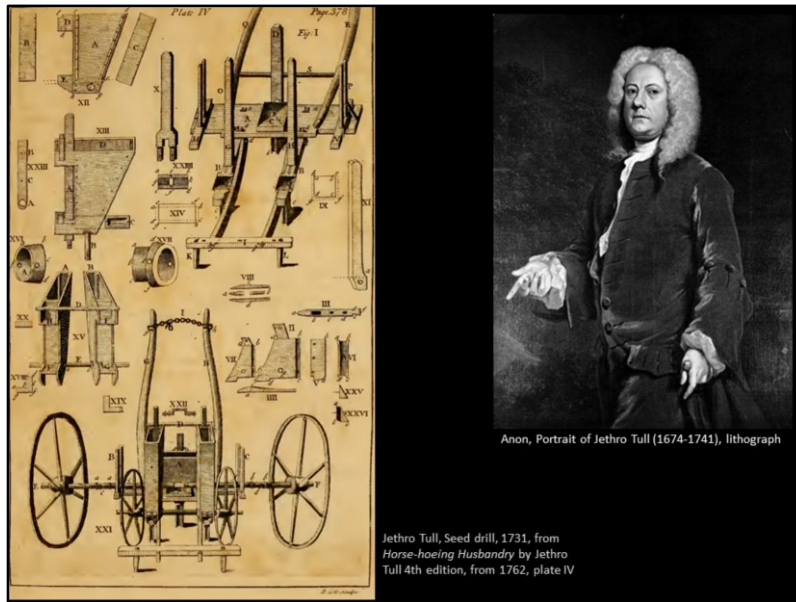
- Townshend promoted adoption of the Norfolk four course system, involving rotation of turnips, barley, clover and wheat crops. He was an enthusiastic advocate of growing turnips as a field crop, for livestock feed.
- From medieval times, peasants had used a system of three-year strip rotation of crops. At first each strip was about one acre and a peasant had about 30. Later they were further divided as the population increased.
- Between the 15th and 18th centuries there was a gradual increase in the amount of land being

enclosed. Enclosed literally meant that a field was surrounded by a fence or a hedge. It also meant that the enclosed field was worked as a complete unit and no longer divided into strips. The reasons for the increase in land enclosure were varied. In the Tudor period it was partly to enclose land to graze sheep. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries it resulted from the introduction of new farming techniques. The new landlords, either noblemen or the new landed gentry, turned the peasants off their land or cut their wages or only guaranteed work a week at a time as needed. Enclosure left many people without their strips and so without the means to grow food. This resulted in them being evicted and most were forced to beg in order to survive.

- Charles Townshend became the 2nd. Viscount Townshend of Raynham in 1687. He became Secretary of State in the reign of George I. When he retired from politics in 1730 he turned his attention to his estate in Norfolk and introduced a new type of crop rotation which was already practised in Holland. It rotated crops on a four-year basis and used turnips and clover as two of the crops in the rotation
- Turnips were not a new crop to English farming because they had been grown in East Anglia for use as cattle feed, fodder for livestock, during the winter months, since the 1660's. However, this was the first time they had been used in crop rotation. Charles Townshend was later to be known as "Turnip" Townshend because of his use of this crop in the four year rotation system.
- Clover is a plant which is able to add nitrogen compounds to the soil because its roots have special structures, called root nodules, attached to them. Inside these nodules are found symbiotic bacteria which feed by fixing atmospheric nitrogen and producing nitrates (nitrogen-containing salts). The clover, which is more nutritious than grass, was used for grazing the livestock. In turn, the livestock produced manure which could be ploughed back into the soil.
- The gradual enclosure of land, together with the four-year rotation system, had two major effects on agriculture. The first was that the harvest increased in yield. In 1705, England exported 11,5 million quarters of wheat. By 1765, wheat export had risen to 95 million quarters. The second effect was that livestock, which no longer needed to be slaughtered before the winter months, increased in both quantity and quality.

## **References**

<http://www.saburchill.com/history/chapters/IR/003f.html>



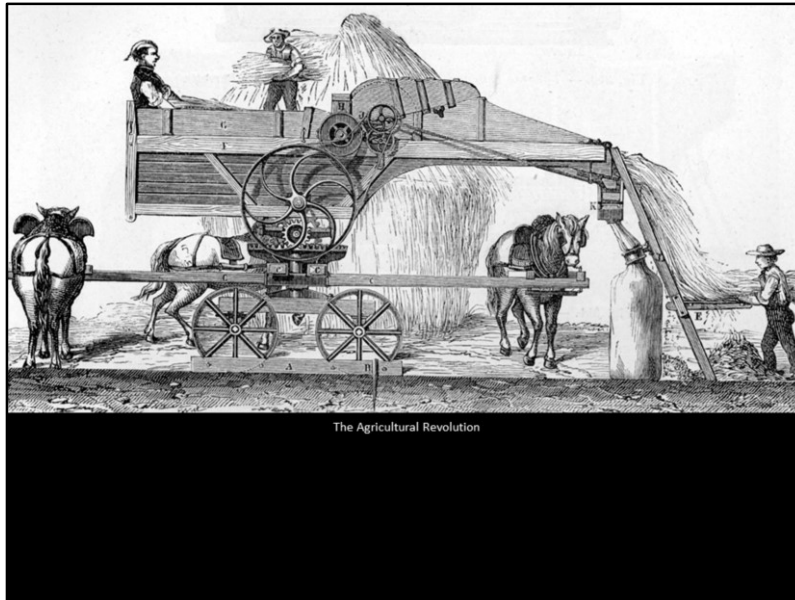
Anon, Portrait of Jethro Tull (1674-1741), lithograph

Jethro Tull, Seed drill, 1731, from *Horse-hoeing Husbandry* by Jethro Tull 4th edition, from 1762, plate IV

- Four-crop rotation was not the only innovation. There was also increased mechanization on the farm.
- **Jethro Tull invented an improved seed drill in 1701.** It was a mechanical seeder which distributed seeds evenly across a plot of land and at the correct depth. Tull's seed drill was very expensive and not very reliable and therefore did not have much of an impact. Good quality seed drills were not produced until the mid-18th century. However, it is Tull's name that has lived on as one of the key innovators that introduced machinery that led to the agricultural revolution.
- **However, all of this innovation came at a price. Farmers needed fewer farm workers and wages fell. At the same time common land, which had been used by farm workers to grow food for their families was being taken away by enclosure acts.**

## Notes

- The Agricultural Revolution resulted from not just crop rotation but also **improved farm machinery**, increasing use of manure and fertilizers, the Dutch swing (wheel-less) plough, enclosures, better road, canals and later rail transport, land reclamation and drainage, an increase in the number of capitalist farmers, selective breeding of livestock and the development of a national market. It is estimated that total agricultural output grew 2.7-fold between 1700 and 1870 and output per worker at a similar rate. For a time British farm yields were 80% higher than Continental yields (although still lower than those in China).
- The **Agricultural Revolution** in Britain proved to be a **major turning point in history**, allowing population to far exceed earlier peaks and sustain the country's rise to industrial pre-eminence. Towards the end of the 19th century, the substantial gains in British agricultural productivity were rapidly offset by competition from cheaper imports, made possible by the exploitation of new lands and advances in transportation, refrigeration, and other technologies.



#### Four Crop Rotation & Enclosures

- Crop rotation was practiced **8,000 years ago** in the Middle East but the ancient practice involved letting a field lie unused or fallow for part of the year. The big advance was **four-field rotation** which was first used in **Belgium** and came to England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was promoted by Viscount Charles Townshend or '**Turnip**' **Townsend** as he was known. It consists of growing wheat, then turnips or swedes (used as winter fodder), then barley and then clover or ryegrass (which was grazed) each year. Using four fields each one could be at a different stage of the rotation. **This enabled the land to be used all the time to grow a useful crop. Turnips leaves would feed the livestock in the autumn and the turnip bulbs could be stored over winter to feed the livestock. This in turn meant that livestock did not need to be slaughtered in the autumn but could survive over winter. This was a major innovation that led to higher crop yields and the excitement spread and was actively discussed in London clubs and in high society.**





**British farmers.** The Corn Laws imposed import duties and prohibitions that resulted in a **high, fixed price** for wheat which increased the price of a bread. At the same time land was being **enclosed** in the name of improved agricultural productivity. Four crop rotation enabled fields to be productive all the time, they no longer needed to lie fallow. However, the poor needed the common land to eke out their existence. It enabled them to grow crops and even keep a cow for milk and cheese. The **last wave of enclosures** was mostly in the South East - Kent and Sussex and later Essex - and it led to what became known as the **Swing Riots**.

- Over a period of hundreds of years **common land** had slowly been taken away by **enclosing it**. It was a major issue in the **Tudor period** and enclosures were constructed by the lord of the manor to create large fields to graze more sheep as our main export was wool. The final and most contentious wave of enclosures was later, between **1750 and 1850** and was justified by improving productivity. In this period **one sixth** of England was enclosed and this took the ability to grow food away from a large part of the population.
- Despite the new agriculture, wheat **production fell** during the war, mostly because of bad weather and in Buckinghamshire it fell after enclosure because enclosed fields were used to pasture livestock, an inefficient way to use the land. It seems many farmers were not maximising food production but maximising their profits, not the same thing at all. For example, farmers would enclosed fields to produce grain to feed cattle to produce meat for the monied classes as this was more profitable than selling grain to make bread for the poor.

### Slough

- The other word in the title 'Slough' is even more odd. Turner has made the **castle more prominent** that it would be from the site and for a while it was known as 'Windsor' but Turner explicitly named it as 'near Slough' even though the site is nearer Eton than Slough. **Slough** was a **very small hamlet** until the railway came in 1836 when it was known as the station nearest to Windsor. The site was known at the time as offering a fine vantage point to view Windsor.
- However, the word 'slough' means a muddy or boggy place. The most famous slough is the **Slough of Despond** in **John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*** (1678), which was the **most popular book** after the Bible. In the book the slough is **a place that cannot be mended**. Help explains to Christian that the King's labourers have been working on it for 16 hundred years but it remains the Slough of Despond. The area around Windsor was boggy and not fully drained. We can see a heavy four-horse Berkshire plough which in 1808 was considered old-fashioned and inefficient. Yet even this heavy plough has broken down. Like the Slough of Despond this turnip field resists the efforts of the King's labourers.

### Turnips

- The harvest we can see consists of a **small wheelbarrow of turnips** alongside a large area of **weeds**. Turnips were **not a miracle** crop and prefer light **sandy soils** and do not grow well in boggy soils. They also have low nutritional value. In the right soil they are an excellent preparation but in the wrong soil they '*will do more injury to the land than the turnips are worth*' (1794, Board of Agriculture, Arthur Young).

### Turnips = Extreme Poverty

- Viewers at the time would have understood everything I have been telling you. They would also have known that **turnips were associated with hunger**. They were used to feed livestock and as human food they implied extreme desperation. Many writers at the time use **turnips** as the example of **extreme poverty** in *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (Henry Fielding, 1749) Squire Western says '*the Hanover rats have eat up all our corn, and left us nothing but turneps to feed upon*'.
- There was not widespread starvation but the following year, 1809, the harvest was even worse driving up bread prices further and there were demonstrations in Cookham. The last wave of enclosures was mostly in the South East - Kent and Sussex and later Essex - and it led to what became known as the **Swing Riots**, of which more later. That was still in the future when this was painted but unrest was growing because of bad harvests and enclosures.

### Spoilt Milk

- The most important drink for the worker was not alcohol but milk. Because meat was too expensive milk was a critical supplement to their diet. Before the enclosures a family might own a cow and be self-sufficient in milk but with the common land gone they became dependent on earning a wage. The area around Windsor was famous for Merino sheep not cattle yet Turner shows us the cows that previously farm workers would have owned to provide milk and cheese for their families. When being fattened for market cattle require half their weight in turnips each day but sheep only one eighth. Also **when cows are fed milk it tends to spoil the taste** of the milk. Note that Turner shows the cow's udder hanging directly over the turnips.

### The Bottle

- At this time the poor were often blamed for their circumstances and one thing that distinguished the deserving from the undeserving poor was idleness and **drunkenness**. It is significant that a bottle is located in the middle of the brightest patch of land and the overseer's legs, the wheelbarrow handles and its shadow and the large weed all seem to point to the bottle. There is a tankard incongruously placed on the wheelbarrow which might be a play on words as the 'tankard' is a type of turnip. Farm workers would often be partly paid in ale but drunkenness was a problem so Turner is drawing our attention to the issue but without making a moral point.

### Class Differences

- **Class differences** are indicated by the lone figure in the white coat on the raised ground who has just dismounted from the white horse at the left. This **juxtaposition** of workers with a higher social class is **unusual** and it highlights the fact that they are working on another man's land as paid labour. Enclosing common land also had the effect of forcing workers to find employment as they could no longer grow their own food. Farmers were stopping annual contracts for labour and starting to introduce a system of weekly or daily contracts so the farmer only paid the worker when the work was needed.

### Weeds



- The harvest we can see consists of a small wheelbarrow of turnips alongside a large area of weeds. Notice the weeds vertically align with the broken plough and the palace. Turner tends to link important connected details using vertical alignment.

### Women Workers

- During the war the shortage of men meant that women worked the fields, known as the '**petticoat harvests**'. It has even been suggested that the development of farm machinery was a result of farmers' **dissatisfaction** with the **productivity** of the women compared with the men (*Women, Work, and Wages in England, 1600-1850*, Michael Roberts, ed. Penelope Lane). We see one of the women is nursing showing the farmer is desperate for labour and the women for work.

### Thomas Malthus

- There were many philosophical treatises dealing with the political and social issues of the poor but the most influential was Thomas Malthus's (1766-1834) *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). He argued that the population would always grow faster than food production and so poverty and starvation were inevitable (the Iron Law of Population). The book resulted in the first census of 1801 and the general belief that the existence of the poor was the result of the country being over populated. The 1801 census estimated the population of England and Wales to be 8.9 million, and that of Scotland was 1.6 million. Hindsight shows that increasing wealth resulting from the industrial revolution, when distributed to the poor, results in small family sizes and so it acts as a brake on population growth. In addition, the agricultural revolution has resulted in dramatic increases in farm productivity.

### Notes

- There are few representations of turnips, there is Constable's *Flailing Turnip-heads* and Gainsborough's *Going to Market* but generally they are poorly represented. Perhaps because they have little beauty or because they were a relatively new crop and did not represent timeless continuity but a new technique. In fact turnips were not a new crop but had been grown at least since the seventeenth century and in the Near East 4,000 years ago. It was grown as a human food in the southern states of America and the roots were eaten by the landowner and the turnip tops by the slaves (cooked like spinach).
- Turner has made the castle **more prominent** that it would be from the site and for a while it was known as 'Windsor'.
- Turnip tops are **rich in calcium**, four times more than kale or cabbage or broccoli. Also vitamin K and C.
- *The Domestic Encyclopedia or, a Dictionary of Facts, and Useful Knowledge* (1802) points out that feeding cows on turnips or rape will **taint the milk**. Solutions are to avoid feeding the cows the turnip tops or to process the milk using boiling water to clean the churn of pout the cream over boiling water. There is something called '**turnip butter**' which has a bad taste. In 1693 when corn was dear bread was made from turnips, '**turnip-bread**' by boiling, then mashing and mixing with flour 50:50.
- **Charlock** is a noxious (poisonous) weed that can grow with turnips and it has similar shaped leaves but sheep enjoy it if they graze a field when it is young.

- In the medieval period peasants had a number of rights which included the right to pasture cattle, horses and sheep, another was **turbary** – the right to take turfs for fuel and **estovers** – the right to take sufficient wood for the commoner's house.

### **References**

*The Complete Farmer Or a General Dictionary of Husbandry In All Its Branches, Containing the Various Methods of Cultivating and Improving Every Species of Land ...* The 4. Ed. Improved and Enlarged, 1793. "To take of the rankness of cream produced from turneps, the Norfolk dairy-women sometimes scald their cream ... putting a quart of boiling water into each pail of milk before it be set, is a more effectual and less wasteful remedy."



George Stubbs (1724–1806), *Haymakers*, 1785, 89.5 x 135.3 cm, Tate Britain

- Before the break let's look at three more artists of the period to see if other artists had hidden messages of rural revolt.
- In fact, farm workers were very rarely shown at all in paintings prior to the nineteenth century. There are a few exceptions worth considering.
- This is **George Stubbs *Haymakers*** painted over 20 years previously.
- It is a careful composition for which Stubbs made numerous studies and painted an earlier version with fewer figures and less direct lighting.
- This was painted before the Napoleonic Wars (the First Coalition was 1793) and before the French Revolution. The setting is idealised by the bright lighting, the clear lines accentuated by the use of enamel rather than oils, and the clean and tidy figures.
- The figures are engaged in activities although they appear frozen in time except for one female figure in the centre who, unusually, is **staring straight out at us**.
- Does Stubbs idealise the workers to deny the realities of rural poverty or to make them heroic figures? Their upright stance, classical poses and above all the challenging look of the central female figure suggests he admires them and wishes to **dignify their labour**.
- I could have gone back further and considered some of the landscapes by Thomas Gainsborough showing agricultural workers but there is one less well known artist of the period who tells us a lot more about the life of the farm worker and that is George Morland ...

### Notes

- Tate website, 'This is one of a **pair with *Reapers***. They were the only works Stubbs exhibited in 1786, and his first exhibited pictures since 1782. He had painted earlier versions of the subjects, in oil on panel, in 1783 (National Trust, Bearsted Collection, Upton House). For his second versions, Stubbs improved the compositions, reorganising the groupings and increasing the number of figures from four in *Haymakers* and five in *Reapers* to seven in each of the 1785 paintings. He reordered the landscape elements, thereby altering the lighting and overall mood of the scenes. The pictures were most likely based on preliminary drawings made from nature, which he then rearranged to suit the design. Numerous studies and drawings of the subjects were included in the artist's posthumous sale,

although they are now lost.

- Both the 1785 paintings were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1786, then shown at the second exhibition of the Society for Promoting Painting and Design, Liverpool, in 1787. Stubbs announced his intention to engrave the pictures in 1788-9, publishing the engravings in 1791. He later adapted the subjects to three oval versions painted in enamel: *Haymaking*, 1794 (Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight), *Haymakers*, 1795 (Lady Lever Art Gallery) and *Reapers*, 1795 (Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut).
- Picturesque rural subjects were popular during this period, and had been depicted by Gainsborough, Wheatley and Morland and some of the many illustrators of Thomson's *Seasons*. Stubbs's *Haymakers* is similar to an oval scene on the same theme painted in watercolour by Thomas Hearne, *A Landscape and Figures* from Thomson's *Seasons* of 1783 (Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester). This suggests that the two artists may have studied the same scene, or that Stubbs borrowed from Hearne the images of the girl pausing in front of the haycart with her hayrake upright, the woman raking in hay, and the man on top of the cart. Hearne's picture was exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1783, but Stubbs chose not to exhibit his early versions of *Haymakers* and *Reapers* that year, possibly to avoid the inevitable comparisons. The pictures' **unsentimental yet sympathetic observation** of work in the countryside, with little or no narrative content, is reminiscent of Stubbs's earlier depictions of groups of grooms and stable-lads rubbing down horses. The location of the scenes has not been identified. It is possibly in the south midlands, although such scenes could have been witnessed in fields on the outskirts of London, within a few miles of Stubbs's house at Somerset Street, London. Ozias Humphry noted in his manuscript 'Memoir of Stubbs' (Liverpool Central Libraries) that the artist was accustomed to walk eight or nine miles a day.'



George Morland (1763-1804), *The Comforts of Industry*, before 1790, 31.50 x 37.60 cm, National Galleries of Scotland

George Morland (1763-1804), *The Miseries of Idleness*, before 1790, 31.60 x 37.30 cm, National Galleries of Scotland

- This pair of pictures by Morland is typical of this period in his life and it shows the **distinction between the 'deserving' poor and the 'underserving' poor**. Instilling the twin virtues of industry and sobriety were seen as a way to prevent revolution and to increase agricultural productivity. His aim of highlighting the moral shortcomings of domestic life shows the influence of William Hogarth (1697-1764). The idle poor have only a bone left to eat but the empty cask and pitcher suggest an earlier indulgence in alcohol suggesting these people have only themselves to blame and their lack of self-control is to blame for their impoverished state and a tragic fate awaits them.
- **The irony is that Morland was a notoriously heavy drinker** and debtor who spent the final years of his life enduring intermittent bouts in prison and eventually died from alcoholism aged 41. Morland's flamboyant lifestyle became the subject of four anecdotal biographies immediately after his death.
- These paintings are not representative of Morland's entire output which was seen by his contemporaries as bordering on the 'unpatriotic and unsafe'.

## References

<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/object/NG-1835>

Michele L. Miller, 'J. M. W. Turner's *Ploughing Up Turnips, near Slough*: The Cultivation of Cultural Dissent', *The Art Bulletin*, 1995, p. 581



George Morland (1763-1804, died age 41), *Door of a Village Inn or A Traveller Resting at a Cottage with a Boy Burning Weeds to the Left*, 1790s, Tate Britain

George Morland (1763-1804, died age 41), *A Traveller Resting at a Cottage with a Boy Burning Weeds to the Left or Door of a Village Inn*, 1790s, Tate Britain

- There were very few artists representing the real conditions in the countryside. Most paintings showed an idyllic, pastoral scene. But there were other ways of seeing the land. A few artists, such as **George Morland** saw rural poverty and created popular art by representing the lives of the poor.
- This is an genre painting, that is one showing a group of people engaged in some activity. Often the activity has a moral lesson but that was rare with Morland, here a traveller has stopped at a cottage or an inn for a pint of ale.

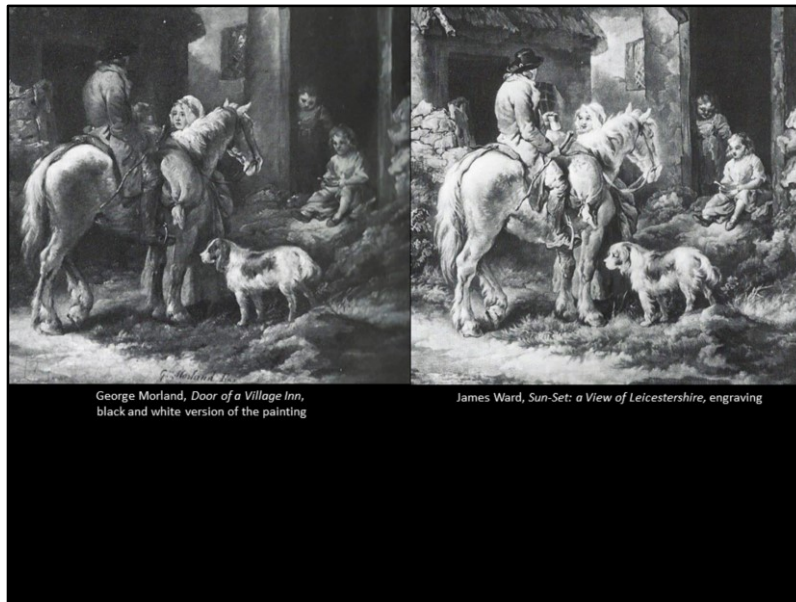
### Notes

- Morland began to draw at three and was an honorary member of the Royal Academy at ten. It is said his father locked him in an attic and forced him to copy paintings but Morland hid some drawings and lowered them out of his window at night. His friends would sell them and they would spend the money on drink. By the age of 17 he was well known among dealers and artists of repute and when he left home he started a life of hard work and hard drinking almost without parallel in the history of art. He married Anne Ward and during the 1780s was a reformed character. **Anne Ward** a beautiful and virtuous woman who was deeply attached to him despite his profligacy. She was the sister of James Ward whose *Gordale Scar* used to be prominently exhibited at Tate Britain. He broke with his wife and started drinking again although he paid her an allowance for the rest of his life.
- His art was so popular that, although he received only a fraction of what each painting was worth he could easily lived for a week on a day's work. He was besieged by dealers who came to him with a purse in one hand and a bottle in the other. The amount of work he got through was prodigious. He would paint one or two pictures a day, and once painted a large landscape with six figures in the course of six hours. Every financial demand that was made upon him was paid by a picture that was worth many times the value of the account to be settled.
- In November 1799, Morland was at last arrested for debt, but was allowed to take lodgings 'within the rules,' and these lodgings became the rendezvous of his most discreditable friends. During this confinement he sank lower and lower. He is said to have often been drunk for days and to have generally slept on the floor in a helpless condition. He was released from debtors prison but his health was ruined and he died in 1804 aged 41. His wife died three days later from convulsive fits

brought on by the news of his death according to Walter Gilbey in his *George Morland: His Life and Works*.

- In his last eight years he painted 900 paintings and over 1,000 drawings and over his life he painted over 4,000 pictures.





Detail, black and white, comparing his painting with an engraving by James Ward

- A detail from the painting is shown on the left and an engraving of the painting by James Ward is shown on the right. The engraving and prints were called *Sun-Set: a View of Leicestershire*.
- This is an example of '**spot the difference**'. On the left is the painting in black and white and on the right an engraving produced by his **brother-in-law** James Ward (1769-1859) RA, painter of animals and an engraver (he painted *Gordale Scar*, 1814-5, 'sublime' and enormous English Romantic work in Tate Britain, died in poverty).
- Look at the **left hand child** in the doorway and the **woman's face**. Morland was the most direct representation of the poor. There is **no idealisation**. The woman serving the farmer has a blank, **depressed expression**. The child on the left looks as if it is from a **horror movie**. The art historian John Barrell describes them as '**broken in spirit**'.
- James Ward has created an **engraving** from the painting which he thought would **sell better**. The engravings sold for between 3s 6d (17.5p) and 21s (just over a pound) to a wide market. In the engraving the woman and child are **smiling and welcoming** and John Barrell makes the point that their cheerful expression and the better condition of their clothes and surroundings would have reassured the viewer about the conditions and ultimately the governability of the poor at a time of increasing unrest.
- Ward has even **fluffed up** the hair of the **horse** and the **dog** to make them look more lively and alert and the seated child has a **larger necklace** and a **bigger bowl of soup**.
- The reality was the countryside was **not a pleasant place** to work for the poor, which is why many went to the cities and towns to find work despite the appalling conditions.
- Let us next look at how Constable and Turner handled the politics of the period.





William Gilpin (1724-1804, aged 80), *Tintern Abbey*, from William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* (1782), Huntington Library

- **The picturesque landscape.**
- This is another type of landscape. It as a **picturesque** view of Tintern Abbey from **William Gilpin's** book *Observations on the River Wye*. The word 'picturesque' has changed its meaning over the years but William Gilpin precisely defined what it means and explained how to examine the countryside 'by the rules of picturesque beauty'.
- The picturesque was essentially a combination of the **beautiful and the sublime**. Beauty was concerned with **smoothness** and gentleness, the **sublime** with **vastness** and **obscurity** and the picturesque by **roughness, irregularity** and **sudden variation**.
- He explained that the gable end hurts the eye with its regularity and suggested taking a **mallet** to make it more picturesque.
- This links back to the topographical engravings used in travel guides as Gilpin's argued the picturesque **could be found in Britain** and it was no longer necessary to go on the **Grand Tour**.
- It was an **exciting venture**. Gilpin made an **analogy with hunting** and talked about capturing **wild scenes**, fixing them as pictorial **trophies** and **hanging them** on their drawing room walls.
- **Picturesque-hunters** required a lot of **equipment** to control the **untamed landscapes** they encountered! One intrepid clergyman (James Plumptre, Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge) who went hunting the picturesque travelled 1,774¼ miles on foot as recorded by his trusty pedometer. He also took with him a piece of tinted glass, called a **Claude Glass**, a **telescope**, a **barometer**, **maps**, **memorandum books**, **tour journals**, **sketch books**, drawing pads, a **watercolour set**, pens and pencils, and a **pocket edition of William Cowper's** poems (1731-1800).
- **Link:** from the point of view of our modern world we may look back and **smile** at these **old-fashioned ideas** and even **crazy** ideas such as taking a **mallet** to a ruined church but there was **one astute person** at the time who also **saw the humour**.

**Key Point:** the idea of the **picturesque** was created by **William Gilpin** as another way to see the land.

The land had to be tamed and beauty had to be hunted.

## **Notes**

### **Tintern Abbey**

On the river Wye near the Severn Bridge M4/M48 crossing.

### **William Gilpin**

William Gilpin (4 June 1724 – 1804), an English artist, Anglican cleric, schoolmaster and author. The term **picturesque** now means a quaint or pretty style but it was originally an aesthetic ideal introduced by Gilpin in **1782**.

### **Picturesque Beauty**

There were rules of picturesque beauty that Gilpin defined and it was part of the emerging Romantic movement of the 18th century. Enlightenment and rationalist ideas about beauty were being challenged as beauty was regarded as a basic human instinct. In the eighteenth century Edmund Burke had defined both beauty and the sublime in his 1757 book *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*. He defines the sublime as any view that invokes terror and so appeals to our sense of self-preservation. The picturesque was defined as a mediator between the beautiful and the sublime. Whereas the beautiful was seen as associated with smoothness and gentleness and the sublime with vastness and obscurity the picturesque was associated with roughness and sudden variation in form, colour or light, i.e. the rustic. Gilpin's book *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the Summer of the Year 1770* was seen as an alternative to the Grand Tour of Europe. Instead picturesque hunters began crowding the Lake District in order to track down and capture wild scenes. Particular spots became associated with a picturesque view and local guides would take tourists to view from these spots. Artists would produce engravings of the views from these spots so tourists could take them home.

William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 1782.

*the most perfect river-views are composed of four grand parts: the area, which is the river itself; the two side-screens, which are the opposite banks, and lead the perspective; and the front-screen, which points out the winding of the river... They are varied by... the contrast of the screens...the folding of the side-screen over each other...the ornaments of the Wye... ground, wood, rocks, and buildings...and colour.*

Travellers in search of the picturesque were described by Gilpin as being like big-game hunters and he described the equipment they required. The essential items for their luggage were deemed necessary to control the untamed landscapes they encountered! They included a piece of tinted glass, called a Claude Glass, a pedometer, a telescope, a barometer, maps, memorandum books, tour journals, sketch books, drawing pads, a watercolour set, pens and pencils, and a pocket edition of William Cowper's poems were the essential requisites for a tour.

### **William Cowper Quotations**

*God moves in a mysterious way,  
His wonders to perform;*

*God made the country, and man made the town.*

*Variety's the very spice of life,  
That gives it all its flavour.*

*I am monarch of all I survey,*

**References**

Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain*, James Plumptre p. 67.

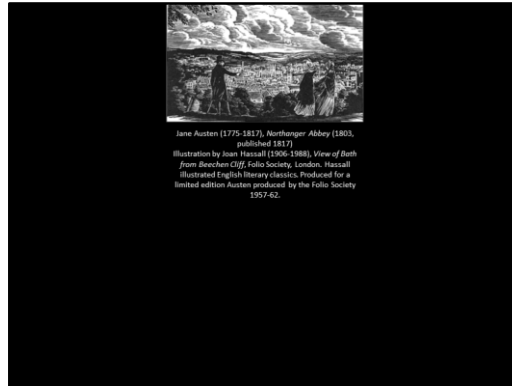


Illustration by Joan Hassall (1906-1988), *View of Bath from Beechen Cliff*, Folio Society, London. Hassall illustrated English literary classics. Produced for a limited edition Austen produced by the Folio Society 1957-62.

Thomas Hosmer Shepherd (1792-1864), *Bath from Beechen Cliff*, 1830-1864, Shepherd was a well-known topographical watercolour artist

- The picturesque was satirised by **Jane Austen** (1775-1817, died aged 42) in ***Northanger Abbey*** (1803 but published posthumously in 1817).
- She described how **Catherine Morland** (good natured, modest) is being shown round Bath by **Henry Tilney** (sarcastic but sympathetic clergyman) who relishes teaching a younger and inexperienced woman.
- This is **the view** of Bath Catherine and Henry would have seen from **Beechen Cliff**.
- I will now **play** you an **excerpt** from the novel. It is Catherine, she, *confessed and lamented her want of knowledge, declared that she would give anything in the world to be able to draw; and a lecture on the picturesque immediately followed, in which his instructions were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him, and her attention was so earnest that he became perfectly satisfied of her having a great deal of natural taste. He talked of foregrounds, distances, and second distances—side-screens and perspectives—lights and shades; and Catherine was so hopeful a scholar that when they gained the top of Beechen Cliff, she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath as unworthy to make part of a landscape* (Chapter 14, Libra Vox recording in the public domain).

**Key point:** the ability to **appreciate the picturesque** became a **social skill** (satirized by Jane Austen) and the landscape became something that had to be created.



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- The picturesque was satirised by **Jane Austen** (1775-1817, died aged 42) in ***Northanger Abbey*** (written 1798-99, sold to a publisher in 1803 but bought back and published posthumously in 1817). It was set in January-April 1798 and takes place in Bath, a leading resort town for the upper classes and 30 miles away at Northanger Abbey, a former church and Tilney's home.
- She described how **Catherine Morland** (good natured, modest, tomboy as a child and excessively fond of Gothic novels) is being shown round Bath by **Henry Tilney** (sarcastic but sympathetic clergyman) who relishes teaching a younger and inexperienced woman. Catherine is also involved with John Thorpe, a friend of her brother at Oxford and a vain and crude young gentleman. Catherine eventually marries Henry Tilney despite his father's, General Tilney's, initial objections.
- This is **the view** of Bath Catherine and Henry would have seen from **Beechen Cliff**.
- I will now **play** you an **excerpt** from the novel. It is Catherine, she,  
*confessed and lamented her want of knowledge, declared that she would give anything in the world to be able to draw; and a lecture on the picturesque immediately followed, in which his instructions were so clear that she soon began to see beauty in everything admired by him, and her attention was so earnest that he became perfectly satisfied of her having a great deal of natural taste. He talked of foregrounds, distances, and second distances—side-screens and perspectives—lights and shades; and Catherine was so hopeful a scholar that when they gained the top of Beechen Cliff, she voluntarily rejected the whole city of Bath as unworthy to make part of a landscape* (Chapter 14, Libra Vox recording in the public domain).

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Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Harvest Home*, c. 1809, Tate Britain

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Harvest Home*, c. 1809, Tate Britain

- This is another painting by Turner painted the same year and showing another aspect of life on the farm.
- This **unfinished** painting shows a **Harvest Home**, an **annual celebration** of the harvest where the **rural tenants** pay their **dues** to the landowner and everyone celebrates the harvest.
- It was painted at Cassiobury Park for Lord Essex and was in response to a painting by the up and coming **David Wilkie**.
- It may not have been finished because **Turner's patron** Lord Essex told him to **stick** to landscapes and stop trying to **do a 'Wilkie'**.
- The interesting thing however is that it shows the landowner mixing with the rural workers, a practice that was soon to stop.
- The Harvest Home was a dying tradition at this time. It was replaced by a harvest thanksgiving service invented by Rev. R. S. **Hawker** in **1843**.
- The other interesting point is that the painting shows a **black man** in an English rural setting.
- Half the land in England was owned by only 4,000 people.
- The **semi-feudal relationship** between landowners and rural workers was **starting to break down** partly because so many workers were moving to the cities.

## Notes

- David Wilkie (1785-1841) was a Scottish genre painter, famous for *The Chelsea Pensioners reading the Waterloo Dispatch*, a huge success in 1822. He was elected an ARA in 1809 aged 24 and an RA in 1811 aged 26.
- Turner entered the RA School in 1789 aged 14 and his first painting (watercolour, *A View of the Archbishop's Palace, Lambeth*) was exhibited the following year. He was made an ARA in 1799 aged 24, the youngest permitted age, and moved to a smart Harley Street address where he opened his own gallery and studio. Turner's private life was secretive, unsociable, and somewhat eccentric. In 1798 he began an affair, which was to last about 10 years, with **Sarah Danby**, a widow who probably bore him two children. In 1800 Turner's **mother** became hopelessly ill and was committed to a **mental hospital**. His **father** went to live with him and devoted the rest of his life to serving as his **son's studio assistant** and general agent. He became a RA in 1802. He was **criticized** even early on by

Benjamin West (PRA) and Sir George Beaumont for his 'crude blotches' and was described as a 'white painter' because of his luminous pale tones. In 1807 Turner began his great enterprise of publishing a series of 100 plates known as the ***Liber Studiorum***, inspired, in part, by Claude's own studio record, *Liber veritatis* (begun in 1635 and continued until his death in 1682). Turner's aim was to document the great variety and range of landscape including historical, architectural, mountainous, pastoral, and marine. The first part appeared in June 1807 and the last in 1819



John Constable (1776-1837), *Wivenhoe Park*, Essex, 1816, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

- There is another landscape painter of the first part of the nineteenth century that you might think I have left out. That is John Constable (1776-1837).
- This Constable's *Wivenhoe Park* painted in 1816, the year after the Napoleonic Wars ended. You might think from this painting that it was an idyllic period. Far from it.
- Let's look at the **politics and social circumstances** of 1816. The **war** against Napoleon had **finished the previous year**, (Waterloo was Sunday, 18 June 1815), and the war had left the country **close to starvation** when a terrible summer occurred the like of which had never been seen before. It was an **agricultural disaster** and **riots, arson, and looting** took place in many **European cities**.
- It was called the '**Year without a Summer**'—world temperatures dropped and crops died worldwide.
- We now know that it was caused by a combination of low solar activity and a series of volcanic events that winter capped by the **April 1815** eruption of **Mount Tambora** (in the Dutch East Indies now Indonesia). This was the most powerful eruption in recorded history, **four times** larger than **Krakatoa** in 1883. One third of the mountain, **38 cubic miles** of ash was ejected into the atmosphere, **ten times** more than then the eruption of **Vesuvius** that destroyed Pompeii.
- The summer had many interesting side effects. In Germany, the lack of oats to feed horses led inventor **Karl von Drais** ('Dray') to research horseless transport, which led to the invention of the **Laufmaschine**, velocipede (France) or **dandy horse** (which led to the invention of the **bicycle**). **Note that this clever chap also invented the first typewriter five years later.**
- In Switzerland **Mary Shelley** was on holiday but the bad weather and incessant rain meant she had to stay indoors and she spent the time writing the novel **Frankenstein**.
- The bad harvests lasted for **three years** and led to **riots** across Europe. Amidst all this chaos, Constable shows us a **tranquil** summer day.

### Notes

- The owner of the estate **Major-General Francis Slater Rebow**, a friend of Constable's father, asked Constable to paint his country house in Essex. In the distance we can even see **Mary Rebow**, his daughter, driving a donkey cart with a friend (Mary was 11 years old and Constable had painted her portrait four years previously).
- General **Rebow specified certain features** to be included and Constable has modified the location of



certain elements and changed the relationship between the lake and the house.

- Constable wrote, '**The great difficulty has been to get so much in as they wanted** to make them acquainted with the scene. On my left is a grotto with some elms, at the head of a piece of water – in the centre is the house over a beautiful wood and very far to the right is a deer house, which it was necessary to add, so that my view comprehended too many degrees.'

### John Constable

- John **Constable**, RA (11 June 1776 – 31 March 1837) was an **English Romantic** painter. Born in **Suffolk**, he is known principally for his landscape paintings of **Dedham Vale**, the area surrounding his home—now known as "Constable Country"—which he invested with an intensity of affection. "***I should paint my own places best***", he wrote to his friend John Fisher in 1821, "***painting is but another word for feeling***". His most famous paintings include Dedham Vale of 1802 and The Hay Wain of 1821. Although his paintings are now among the most popular and valuable in British art, Constable was never financially successful. He did not become a member of the establishment until he was elected to the **Royal Academy** at the age of **52**. His work was embraced in France, where he sold more works than in his native England and inspired the Barbizon school.
- As an aside, at a **personal level** Constable needed the income from this painting to justify his artistic career and obtain permission to marry his long-time love **Maria Bicknell** from her parents (and, in particular, her grandfather Rev. Dr. Rhudde, the rector of East Bergholt) who opposed it. They married shortly after this painting was finished and we might imagine it was the income from this painting that swung it but it is more likely that her parents were persuaded by the inheritance Constable received following his **father's death** the same year. Dr Rhudde was still not persuaded and said he would disinherit her although in the end, when he died, he did leave her money.

### Wivenhoe

- This work is of Wivenhoe Park in Essex but is it topographical? It appears to radiate clarity, the precise recording of the estate and the expansive perspective. The brushstrokes are tighter compared with his later paintings giving it the air of accuracy. All is content and self-sustaining nature. However, Constable modified the view as the park and lake are not part of the same view.
- In the far left distance is Mary Rebow, daughter of the owner Major-General (a 2-star general) Francis Slater Rebow. She is driving a donkey cart with a friend. The painting contains light and dark and has a strong open feel to the sky, what Constable called the 'chiaroscuro of nature'.
- In the late 1770s, Major General Rebow's father-in-law, Colonel Isaac Martin Rebow, had employed the landscape architect **Richard Woods** to undertake extensive alterations and additions to the parkland surrounding the house at Wivenhoe. He added many picturesque elements including a lock, a rustic arch and a brick bridge with an oak balustrade.
- Wivenhoe Park is 55 miles northeast of London and east of Colchester now part of University of Essex and Wivenhoe House Hotel. The owner was a friend of Constable's father and commissioned Constable. Constable needed the income from this commission

to justify his marriage Mary Bicknell as her parents did not approve. It was finished in September and they married in October 1816. A more significant factor was that his father, Golding Constable had died on 14 May 1816 aged 77, and he had left all six of his children equal shares in his assets. The youngest son, Abram, took over the running of the family business on behalf of all six brothers and sisters and not just for himself – his work provided each of his siblings with an annual income of about £200. The oldest son, Golding, had a disability that prevented him from taking over the farm and John showed no interest or aptitude.

- Constable wrote,  
*The great difficulty has been to get so much in as they wanted to make them acquainted with the scene. On my left is a grotto with some elms, at the head of a peice [sic] of water – in the centre is the house over a beautiful wood and very far to the right is a deer house, which it was necessary to add, so that my view comprehended too many degrees.*
- Constable added strips of canvas of 3-4 inches on the left and right to incorporate all the details.

#### The Year Without a Summer

- Part of a poem by Eileen Margeut:  
*The cows and horses had no grass, no grain to feed the chicks.  
 No hay to put aside that time, just dry and shriveled sticks.  
 The sheep were cold and hungry and many starved to death,  
 Still waiting for the warming sun to save their labored breath.*

#### John Ruskin on Constable (Modern Painters 1, p.191)

- “I have already alluded to the simplicity and earnestness of the mind of Constable; to its vigorous rupture with school laws, and to its unfortunate error on the opposite side. **Unteachableness** seems to have been a main feature of his character, and there is corresponding want of veneration in the way he approaches nature herself. His early education and associations were also against him; they induced in him a morbid preference of **subjects of a low order**. I have never seen any work of his in which there were **any signs of his being able to draw**, and hence even the most necessary details are painted by him inefficiently. His works are also eminently **wanting both in rest and refinement**, and Fuseli’s jesting compliment (‘I am going to see Constable; bring me mine ombrella’), is too true; for the showery weather; in which the artist delights; **misses alike the majesty of storm and the loveliness of calm weather**; it is great-coat weather, and nothing more. There is strange want of depth in the mind which has no pleasure in sunbeams but when piercing painfully through clouds, nor in foliage but when shaken by the wind, nor in light itself but when flickering, glistening, restless and feeble. Yet, with all these deductions, **his works are to be deeply respected, as thoroughly original, thoroughly honest, free from affectation, manly in manner, frequently successful in cool colour**, and realizing certain motives of English scenery with perhaps as much affection as such scenery, unless when regarded through media of feeling derived from higher sources, is calculated to inspire.”

## **References**

- Alison Inglis, "The heroine of all these scenes': John Constable and the Rebow family in 1816", National Gallery of Victoria website
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John Constable (1776-1837), *The Hay Wain*, 1821, National Gallery

- **Constable** was a Romantic painter and saw the land as a **source of feelings**. This, of course, is *The Hay Wain* painted in 1821. The war had finished six years ago and the post-war depression was over but there were peasant riots in East Anglia. Constable knew that the **stability** of his beloved Suffolk countryside was **under threat**. In 1822 he reported his **brother Abram** as saying,
  - *'never a night without seeing fires near or at a distance'*.
- The fires were farm labourers setting fire to hay ricks and barns. **But why** were there **riots**? There are many causes including **poor harvests**, the growth in the **enclosure** of common land that removed the ability of the poor to grow their own food and an **agricultural revolution** in which Britain led the world. The agricultural revolution meant higher yields using fewer workers.
- As the riots escalate Constable increasingly adopts a pastoral vision of a rich and peaceful land, a nostalgic vision of 'Merrie England', a term popularized by William Hazlitt in his 1819 essay of that name. Merrie England was a utopian vision of an England which had never existed but one which represented Constable's childhood memories and deep feeling for the Suffolk countryside. To achieve this feeling he isolates the workers and pushes them into the background (**see pop-up**). We cannot see if they are happy, they are what is called **staffage** – figures simply added for compositional or decorative reasons. The figures in Constable's landscapes are **never social animals** and they never intrude or have their own life. They are part of the landscape, part of the natural world. The figures become part of the **timeless scene or rather a scene out of time**, not an accurate historical record.

#### Constable was revolutionary in his art not in his subject matter

- Constable avoided showing the revolution in the fields but his **art was revolutionary**. English critics complained about the **bright colours** which were not used by the Old Masters and the **flecks of white paint** that were described as **distemper** or **snow**.
- However, when *The Hay-Wain* was shown in **Paris in 1824** it caused a **sensation** and was awarded a **gold medal** by Charles X of France. Constable's revolutionary work inspired a new generation of French painters including Eugène **Delacroix** who in turn profoundly influenced the **Impressionists**.
- **Constable's work was revolutionary in its technique not in its subject matter.**

### Notes

- This was the time of the Romantic movement, of **William Wordsworth** (1770-1850) and **Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (1772-1834) and later **Percy Bysshe Shelley** (1792-1822), **John Keats** (1795-1821) and **George Gordon (Lord) Byron** (1788-1824). It rejected the cold scientific logic of the Age of Enlightenment in favour of individual feeling.
- William Hazlitt wrote an essay in 1819 called 'Merry England' which popularised the term and introduced the iconic figure of Robin Hood and the epigraph 'St George for merry England!'.

### Picturesque

- The painting is Romantic and picturesque and was very innovative from the point of view of the techniques used but conservative in terms of the representation of land. The technique was increasingly criticized by English critics during the 1820s but *The Hay Wain* was awarded the gold medal when it was shown in Paris in 1824. English critics complained about the bright colours which were not used by the Old Masters and the flecks of white paint that were described as distemper or snow. In terms of its subject matter we see farm labourers in the far distance manually cutting and lifting the corn. Farms were increasingly being automated and manual labour like this was 20 years out of date as Constable would have been well aware.
- An artist could therefore be innovative in their style but conservative in their subject. Let us look at an artist that was innovative in both, particularly in his later years after he had become successful.

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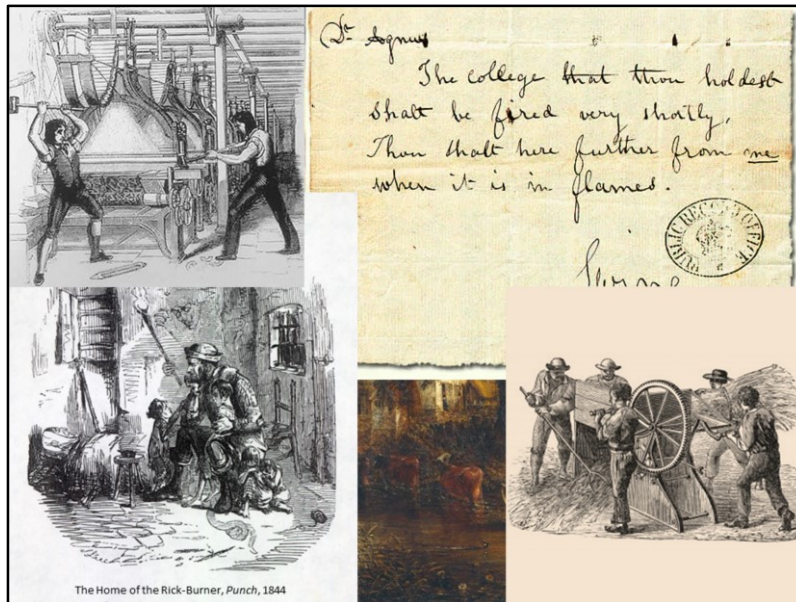
For more information see <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/john-constable-the-hay-wain>



BREAK

Next: from Captain Swing to 'revolution'





John Constable (1776-1837), *The Valley Farm*, 1835, Tate Britain

Later interpretation of machine breaking (1812), showing two men superimposed on an 1844 engraving from the *Penny* magazine which shows a post 1820s Jacquard loom.

A Swing letter addressed to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: "Dr. Agnus, The college that thou holdest shall be fired very shortly. Thou shalt here further from me when it is in flames. Swing Head Quarters"

- This painting is a late Constable, *The Valley Farm*, painted in 1835. It has been interpreted as a more **solemn** view of the countryside he loved. It is one of his **last** paintings.
- The figures in Constable's landscapes are never social animals and they never intrude or have their own life. They are part of the landscape, part of the natural world but in this painting they start to intrude. Years early, Constable wrote that he liked **Flatford Mill** as **beggars and idlers** never found their way there but there is now a beggar is at the gate. The man at the gate has been suggested as the stranger waiting to come into Constable's private world.
- The crows wheeling above the field in the background remind me of Vincent van Gogh (1853-29 July 1890), *Wheatfield with Crows* (July, 1890) with its an equally bad omen of death.
- As early as **1822** Constable wrote to his friend Fisher quoting his brother as saying there was '**never a night without seeing fires near or at a distance.**' Constable was not sympathetic with the plight of the farm workers, he wrote that almost every one is a 'rebel and a blackguard'. Eventually, this unrest grew until in 1830 it led to what were called the 'Swing Riots' but to understand I first need to set the scene
- Between 1802 and 1809 the **harvest had been terrible** at the same time that **France** was imposing a **blockade** on food imports.
- In **Nottingham** in **1811** the first **smashing of textile** machinery (**popup**) took place and the revolutionaries became known as **Luddites**.
- The name was possibly based on a youth called **Ned Ludd** who first smashed a textile machine in 1779. This became expanded into a legend of **General or King Ludd** who lived in Sherwood Forest.
- In the countryside **rural workers** were **worse off** than **textile workers**. The introduction of **farm machinery** resulted in machinery being **destroyed** and **hay ricks burned**. This was done in the name of **Captain Swing** and letters like this (**popup**) from Captain Swing were sent to farmers and

magistrates threatening them with **violence**. They became known as the **Swing Riots**. (This letter was sent to Dr. Agnus of Kings College Cambridge and we have it as it was forwarded to Lord Melbourne the Home Secretary.)

- This was at the same time as the **Tolpuddle martyrs**. In 1834 a group of six found guilty of illegally swearing oaths of allegiance and transported to Australia. A petition with 800,000 signatures led to their release.
- It was also the time of the **Great Reform Act** which was eventually passed in 1832.
- So, all these apparently idyllic landscapes in the first part of the nineteenth century were produced against a background of rural riots

### Notes

- **Swing Riots**, 1830, agricultural workers did not disguise themselves but descended on farms in their hundreds demanding higher wages. 2,000 farm labourers were arrested and imprisoned and 19 were hung. Reform was needed but the Duke of Wellington, the Prime Minister thought the British system was ideal. His Tory government fell and Earl Grey's Whig government came into power. Grey's bill was rejected, the Whigs were re-elected, it was again opposed by the House of Lords leading to riots across the country and Dorset, Somerset and Leicestershire became ungovernable. Grey requested King William IV to create 100 new Whig peers, he refused and Grey resigned. William called on the Duke of Wellington but even he admitted the country was ungovernable and he resigned. The Great Reform Act was passed.
- **Bristol, Queen Square Riots**, 1831, following House of Lords rejection of Second Reform Bill, 500-600 young men over 3 days, looting, destruction, 4 killed, 86 wounded, 4 hanged.
- **Great Reform Act**, 1832, allowed one in five adult males to vote, gave big cities MPs and removed rotten boroughs.
- **Tolpuddle Martyrs**, in the early 1830s a group of six men formed a friendly society (which was now legal following the repeal of the Combination Act in 1824-5). They refused to work for less than 10s a week when the local rate was 7s a week. A local landowner wrote to Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, in 1834 invoking an obscure 1797 law prohibiting people from swearing oaths to each other. They were found guilty and transported to Australia. They became popular heroes, 800,000 signatures were collected and they were released in 1836 (James Hammett was released in 1837 as he had a previous conviction for theft). Four of the six returned to England and later emigrated to London, Ontario where they are buried.
- **New Poor Law**, 1834, relief only given in workhouses whose conditions are designed to deter all but the starving. Based on the philosophy of Thomas Malthus (giving poor relief will only increase the problem), David Ricardo's 'iron law of wages' (wages fall to the minimum needed to sustain life) and Jeremy Bentham's belief that as people did what was most pleasant the poor would claim relief rather than work.
- **Constable**. In 1802, Constable wrote: *'There is room enough for a natural painter. The great vice of the present day is bravura, an attempt to do something beyond the truth'*. He consistently painted the natural world without bravura and without copying the Old Masters although he was inspired by Thomas Gainsborough, Claude Lorrain, Peter Paul Rubens, Annibale Carracci and Jacob van Ruisdael. Constable liked the result but it was not

well received, one critic wrote: *'He ought to be whipped for thus maiming a real genius for Landscape'*. Nevertheless he sold it for £300, the highest amount he ever received for a painting (to Robert Vernon, later donated to the National Gallery in 1847).

- Another critic said what *'a sinister object it is. The picture bears all the marks of obsession.'*
- **Willy Lot's** cottage is much larger and one critic said it had be turned into a *'sinister, rambling place'*.
- The **ferry man** (Charon) reminds us of the River Styx (originally Acheron).
- The trees on the right are larger than an earlier sketch and the cottage is grander and the canvas is heavily worked. He spent a lot of time **reworking** the image and there is a sense of **time lost** or time he is **trying to recover**.
- Constable is a Romantic painter. Not a social realist. He represents his inner feelings not the conditions of the working poor.
- Constable wrote: *'painting is with me but another word for feeling'*.
- Constable wrote: *'In such an age as this, painting should be understood, not looked on with blind wonder, nor considered only as a poetic aspiration, but as a pursuit, legitimate, scientific, and mechanical.'*

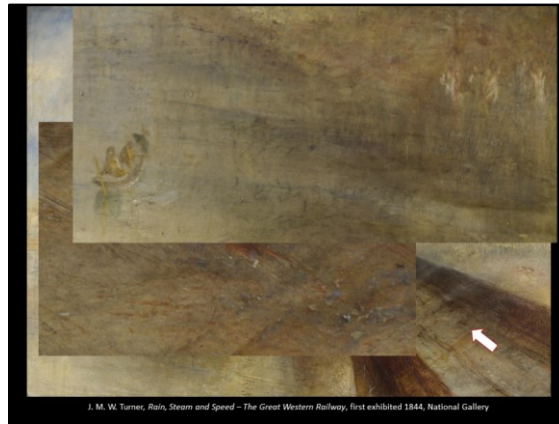
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see <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/constable-the-valley-farm-n00327/text-summary>



Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last Berth to be broken up*, 1839, National Gallery

- The Temeraire was retired in 1812 and became a prison ship and storage depot and was decommissioned in 1838. She was towed 55 miles **up river** to London to be broken into scrap.
- Regarded by Turner and critics as one of his greatest painting. In 2005 voted Britain's "greatest painting" (BBC poll). He never sold it and bequeathed it to the nation.
- The Temeraire came to the aid of the Victory in the battle of Trafalgar (1805).
- The scene is Romanticized. The **masts** had been **removed**, it was pulled by **two tugs** not one and Turner has added a sunset, or, from the direction, a sunrise.
- The great ship is painted in white, grey and brown and looks like a ghost ship that is pulled by a much smaller but stronger black tugboat. Tugboats were so new there was not even a word for them and Turner's use of the word 'tugged' is the first ever recorded use according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
- Sailing ships were being replaced by steam and steel so this represents the passing of an age.
- Turner used light and loose brushstrokes to invoke an elusive feeling of old age and nostalgia.
- Turner modified from a poem by Thomas Campbell's "Ye Mariners of England":  
*The flag which braved the battle and the breeze  
 No long owns her*
- This was literally true: Temeraire flies a white flag instead of the British flag, indicating it has been sold by the military to a private company.



J. M. W. Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway*, first exhibited 1844, National Gallery

- Let us now step back from these rural riots and look at the bigger picture.
- Turner was born at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1830) and this had brought factories, steam power, gas lamps, affordable consumer goods, and an rapidly growing middle class. By 1844, when Turner was 69, there was a real feeling that the world was changing fundamentally and changing forever. But there were many terrible consequences, standards of living fell for most people, child labour was expected and women had few rights.
- **One of the biggest revolutions of the industrial period was the railway revolution. It made and lost fortunes. It brought the country together, it connected people and businesses, created new leisure activities, such as the seaside holiday, and fundamentally changed the way people lived.**
- However, many of the benefits of the railway and the industrial revolution did not help the poor until the end of the century.
- So, does this painting glorify technology or oppose it. Interestingly, both interpretations have been made and Turner was silent on the matter. The fleeing hare either shows the danger of technology, it is killing nature, or it glorifies the speed of the train, it can outrun a hare. The dancers on the shore are either the last of the old ways or they are celebrating the new technology. I will leave it up to you to decide.

### Notes

- Turner redefined landscape painting by pushing the boundaries of how we appreciate colour and light. In this painting, a **conventional** interpretation is that it is a celebration of **power and progress** and the new scientific age. It shows Maidenhead Railway Bridge, across the River Thames between Taplow and Maidenhead and the view is looking east towards London.
- The **bridge** was designed by **Isambard Kingdom Brunel** (1806-1859, died aged 53 of a stroke) and completed in **1838**. The Great Western Railway was one of a number of private British railway companies created to develop the new means of transport.
- A **tiny hare** appears in the bottom right corner of the painting. Some have interpreted this as a **positive statement** about technology as the train is able to **outrun** what was the fastest animal before the steam train. Others see the hare **running in fear** of the new machinery and Turner

warning us of the **danger** of man's **new technology** destroying the beauty of nature. The other interesting element of the picture is the **boat** on the river. It looks possible that this is an artist on the river with a parasol to keep off the sun and sketching a group of wild, **bacchanalian dancers** on the shore. Is this this Turner saying he prefers a **bucolic** scene of dancers to the new technology **or** are they **celebrating** the wonders of the new form transport that was changing the face of Britain? My view is that Turner was showing us these contradictory interpretations otherwise it would have been a work of propaganda.





Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), *The Sempstress*, 1846

### Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), *The Sempstress*, 1846

- This painting is **the fountain head** of a whole tradition of social realist painting in Victorian England.
- This painting is based on a poem of the same name and the two had a profound effect.
- You can see it is 2:30 in the morning and the sky is streaked with moonlight. The lit windows opposite indicate that the same thing is happening all over London. The seamstress's eyes are swollen and inflamed as she must do close work by the light of a candle. The morsel of food on the plate indicates she has to eat while she is working and on the mantelpiece you can see medicine bottles. One has a label saying 'The Mixture' and it is supplied by Middlesex Hospital so she is unwell.
- This is one of the first paintings in which art is used to campaign for the poor. Richard Redgrave did not come from a wealthy family and his sister had been forced to leave home and find a job as a governess. She became ill when in service and had to be nursed by his family until she died. It was painted in 1843, the year that Punch appeared and in the Christmas issues there was a poem that struck a nerve. By Thomas Hood and called *The Song of the Shirt*. It began:

*With fingers weary and worn  
With eyelids heavy and red  
A Woman sat, in unwomanly rags  
Plying her needle and thread –  
Stitch! stitch! stitch!  
In poverty, hunger and dirt,  
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch  
She sang the "Song of the Shirt"*

- The verse that inspired Redgrave. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844 (this is the 1846 version). The poem continues that she is sewing a shirt but also her own shroud.



- Redgrave was an Academician, art director of the South Kensington Museum (now the V&A), received the cross of the Legion of Honour and was surveyor of crown pictures for 24 years and produced a 34 volume catalogue. He declined a knighthood in 1869.
- It is impossible today to **understand the impact** it had. Thackeray described it as '***the most startling lyric in our language***'. It was set to music, the subject of a play and of many sermons. Sempstresses often went blind and if a single stitch was wrong their wages were docked. Articles appeared saying British citizens were being subjected to a **form of slavery** and a German living in England called **Friedrich Engels** showed a study he had written of the **horrors** of the situation to a **friend** living in **Paris** called **Karl Marx**.
- Redgrave had created a **new category of painting** but it is not based on visiting the poor but the interior is borrowed from a 17th-century Dutch work and the **swollen eyes** looking **heavenward** is typical of many Baroque images of **swooning saints**. Redgrave realised that unless he made the subject **respectable** it would not be accepted. He **succeeded** brilliantly.



Samuel Luke Fildes (1843-1927), *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Ward*, 1874, Royal Holloway College

- The Victorians did not know how to deal with the poor. They argued about whether the poor were lazy and deserved their fate or whether they were poor because of circumstances beyond their control. Their views were coloured by the philosophy of Thomas Malthus which was that helping the poor was futile as it would only result in larger families and increase the problem. Jeremy Bentham added that as he believed that people always did what was most pleasant the poor would claim relief rather than work. In 1834 a New Poor Law was introduced which ruled that relief could only be given in workhouses whose conditions were designed to deter all but the starving.
- The new poor law was welcomed by the wealthy as they thought it would reduce the cost of looking after the poor, take beggars off the streets and encourage poor people to work hard to support themselves.
- The new Poor Law resulted in the establishment of workhouses where the conditions were designed to be worse than the worst slums of the poor to discourage them from seeking benefits.
- This is an example of a type of painting called 'social realism'. The first painting of this type was not exhibited until 1846 and was Richard Redgrave's (1804-1888), *The Sempstress*.
- This painting by Luke Fildes (pronounced to rhyme with 'childs') shows a wide mix of people queuing to spend the night in a workhouse. In 1869 a new, weekly illustrated newspaper was launched called *The Graphic*. It used leading artists like Luke Fildes, Frank Holl, Hubert von Herkomer and John Millais and writers such as George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Anthony Trollope. It explored social subjects, such as the plight of the poor.
- The slums in the cities were so appalling that even the worst workhouses could not match them without causing a public outcry. The poor hated and feared the workhouse so much that there were riots in northern towns.

## Notes

### **Luke Fildes**

- Samuel Luke Fildes was an English painter and illustrator who was born at Liverpool and trained in the

South Kensington and Royal Academy schools.

- The Houseless Poor Act (1864) permitted homeless people to sleep in the **casual wards of workhouses**. In this painting, Fildes shows a group of poor people queuing up to receive one of the prized tickets handed out by the police that allowed them to sleep in the workhouse. The original drawing was first published in *The Graphic* newspaper with information about the Act.
- Fildes, wrote:  
*I had been to a dinner party, I think, and happened to return by a police-station, when I saw an awful crowd of poor wretches applying for permits to lodge in the Casual Ward. I made a note of the scene, and after that often went again, making friends with the policeman and talking with the people themselves. The was my chance, and I at once began to make studies for my Graphic picture. From that I elaborated the large canvas afterwards exhibited at the Academy.*
- The artist got to know some of the people he met in the line and invited them to his house to sit for him so these are portraits of the poor but we do not know their names.

### **Poor Law 1834**

- "Following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, a uniform public strategy for helping the poor, based on the development of workhouses, emerged but the primary aim of the act was to reduce the poor rates. This was to be accomplished by making the conditions in the workhouses so harsh that the poor would be dissuaded from applying for relief. This was done by largely adhering to a policy of providing a living standard below that of the poorest labourer.
- The grudging benefits of the workhouse system were to be available to those who lived in the Parish. As a result, no aid was available to those who might need very short term help, beggars, tramps, wayfarers and what Victorians referred to as "casuals" or "vagabonds." By 1837, however, it was apparent that something needed to be done to provide assistance, particularly for those indigent wayfarers from other parishes. The Poor Law Commissioners recommended that this should be provided as short term shelter (usually for a single night) and a meal in return for work. In addition to the wayfarers, there were those local, urban homeless who were unwilling to go into the workhouse. This might have been because they valued their freedom or, more probably because conditions in the workhouse were seen as being more onerous than being on the street or even in gaol. Rather than claim workhouse relief they might take a night's accommodation in a casual ward in order to avoid foul weather or to get the meagre supper that was provided.
- Those who sought such short term accommodation were separated from the longer term residents of the workhouse confined to the "casual" wards. According to Norman Longmate, the "standard policy" which was developed to deal with such short term applicants was "to make the vagrant's life so disagreeable that he would hesitate to come back."

### **References**

See <http://vichist.blogspot.co.uk/2012/12/the-victorian-casual-ward.html>

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<http://ia600309.us.archive.org/23/items/anightinaworkhouse/workhouse.pdf>



Henry Wallis (1830-1916), *The Stonebreaker*, 1857, Birmingham Art Gallery

- This is a bleaker landscape showing a stonebreaker from a workhouse. Breaking stones for road repair was a common task given to men.
- It is believed that Wallis painted it as a commentary on horrors resulting from the **Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834** which discouraged any form of relief for the poor and introduced the workhouse.
- Henry Wallis's *The Stonebreaker* was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858. The man is wearing **agricultural labourer's clothes** so it shows what happened to out-of-work **rural workers**. Many critics assumed the man was **sleeping** after a hard day's work and although Wallis never confirmed it there are many indications that the work has **killed him**.
- The frame was inscribed with a line paraphrased from Tennyson's *A Dirge* (1830): "*Now is thy long day's work done*"; the muted colours and setting sun give a feeling of finality; the man's posture indicates that his hammer has slipped from his grasp as he was working rather than being laid aside while he rests, and his body is so still that a stoat, only visible on close examination, has climbed onto his right foot.
- A **grim painting** of a grim subject.

### Notes

- Wallis's father's name and profession are unknown as when his mother remarried the wealthy architect Andrew Wallis in 1845 Henry took his name. He enrolled in the Royal Academy School in 1848 and studied in France and was a friend of the Pre-Raphaelites.
- Henry Wallis is best known for *The Death of Chatterton* (1856). His next major work, *The Stonebreaker* (1857, exhibited in 1858), consolidated his reputation as a true Pre-Raphaelite. When Wallis was short of money he painted another version of *The Death of Chatterton*. He once said that dead poets are more saleable than dead labourers (referring to *The Stonebreaker*).



George Frederic Watts, *Irish Famine*, 1850, Watts Gallery, Compton

George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Irish Famine*, 1850, Watts Gallery, Compton

### Hungry Forties

- The 1840s were known as the 'Hungry Forties' because of poor harvests but the situation in Ireland, which was then part of the United Kingdom, became much, much worse.
- More than a **million people died of starvation** and disease in the Great Famine between 1845 and 1852 and about **one and a half million people emigrated** reducing the population by about a third (8 million to 5.5 million).
- The Irish population depended on **potatoes** as they gave the highest yield of food per acre. The potato blight destroyed the crop from 1845 onwards and the famine was reported in *The Illustrated London News* throughout. The real outrage was that **enough grain was being exported from Ireland throughout the famine to feed the entire population**. At this time the whole of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom yet the Government allowed grain and butter exports to continue. This is why the famine is regarded by many today as direct or **indirect genocide**.
- John Mitchel (1815-1875), Irish nationalist and author, wrote the famous line: '*The Almighty, indeed, sent the potato blight, but the English created the Famine.*'
- The famine led to a **failed uprising** in 1848 and eventually to an independent Ireland.
- Few painters tackled the subject but the best known was George Frederic Watts in this picture, *Irish Famine*.

### Notes

- After the Great Famine (1845-1852), Irish independence was inevitable. More than 1 million of Ireland's 8 million people perished of starvation or disease. Another 1.5 million (some say 2 million) Irish emigrated. The population of Ireland was reduced by nearly a half, this at a time that the population of nearly all other European populations were rapidly expanding. As nothing before in Irish history, it created a burning hatred toward the English, both among those who survived in Ireland and the immigrants who fanned out around the world.
- *Phytophthora infestans* or potato blight is still a major problem worldwide and potatoes are the third most important food crop worldwide. In 2012 the potatoes lost to blight would have fed 80 million people.

- One Quaker (Joseph Crosfield) wrote in 1846 that he saw:  
*heart-rending scene [of] poor wretches in the last stages of famine imploring to be received into the [work]house...Some of the children were worn to skeletons, their features sharpened with hunger, and their limbs wasted almost to the bone..*
- **George Frederic Watts** (1817-1904) was a popular English Victorian painter and sculptor, perhaps the most popular. He wrote that he painted ideas not things. In 1847 he returned from Florence and painted the massive fresco in the Great Hall of Lincoln's Inn. Between 1848 and 1850 he painted four social realist pictures. All had melancholy themes, the others are *Found Drowned*, *Under the Dry Arch* (an old woman kneels and leans against an arch) and *Song of the Shirt* (also known as *The Seamstress*, a woman sits holding a shirt in her lap and holds her head in her other hand). In 1850 he met the Prinseps and helped them secure a lease on Little Holland House and moved in and lived with them for the next 21 years.





Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), *The Emigrants' Last Sight of Home*, 1858, Tate Britain

Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), *The Emigrants' Last Sight of Home*, 1858, Tate Britain

### Lecture

- This shows another aspect of **emigration**. It Richard Redgrave's *The Emigrants' Last Sight of Home*. The rural problems led to many people emigrating.
- Redgrave was a pioneer of **social realist** paintings with paintings such as *The Sempstress* of 1844 and *The Outcast* of 1851. He later turned to landscapes and frequently painted in the open air.
- This is Leith Hill where the Redgrave's owned a cottage and spent each summer.
- In the painting, the father has a **carpenter's bag** 'a modern Joseph escaping with his family to a new land and life'.
- Underlying the family's sadness is perhaps a sense of optimism reflected in the sunshine.
- Halfway down the hill a crippled boy stands forlorn, unable to accompany them. Perhaps he loves the girl who half turns towards him encouraged by her sister.
- Redgrave made an interesting point about British landscape painting. After visiting the International Exhibition in Paris in 1855 he found French landscapes full of '*passion, strife, and bloodshed*' perhaps reflecting the history of revolution. British landscapes were '*the peaceful scenes of home*'. The English landscape has become a symbol of peace in contrast with the strife and turmoil of post revolutionary France.
- The **Wordsworthian** landscape of rural harmony has become a **symbol of England**.
- The art critic **John Ruskin**, who described **this painting's** '*beautiful distance*'. He believed that only by representing the beauty of the English landscape could English painters succeed in capturing any form of beauty and he denigrated those artists that sought to find it in Italy.
- This may be one reason we have been unable to find British paintings showing the passion and strife of the countryside. It had become an icon representing home, peace and beauty whatever the reality.

### Notes

- As a result of the industrial revolution there was widespread unemployment in the 1830s and 1840s resulting in mass emigration to the British colonies and to America.
- One incentive was the discovery of gold in Australia and America and the possibility of making a

fortune.

- There were many paintings depicting this and some show hope, some foreboding but all with a sadness of never seen home, family and friends again.
- The bright colours and detail are perhaps the influence of the Pre-Raphaelites.
- On the hill opposite the inhabitants of the village, their friends, have come out to wish them goodbye.



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *Last of England*, 1855, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

- As I mentioned, 1.5 million people **emigrated** from Ireland but many people were emigrating from England to find a better life not just hungry farm workers but also the middle-class. One positive reason was the gold rush in Australia in 1851 and the Californian gold rush from 1848 to 1855.
- In *Last of England* by Ford Madox Brown we see a **middle-class couple** with a **baby**.
- The man was modelled on Brown himself and the woman on his wife Emma. The model for the **fair-haired child eating** the apple was Brown's daughter **Catherine** (Cathy) born in 1850. The hand of the **baby** was supposedly modelled by their second child, their son **Oliver**.
- Although Brown was never officially one of the seven Pre-Raphaelites they were all close friends. In 1852 one of the group, the sculptor **Thomas Woolner** (1825-1892) was forced through lack of work to emigrate to Australia and this is thought to have inspired this painting. Woolner returned after a year and became a successful sculptor and was elected to the Royal Academy in 1875.
- **The social disruption of the 1850s was not immigration but emigration.** Emigration was at a peak in 1852 and **350,000** people left that year.
- Like the Impressionists Brown  **painted** the scene **outside** in his garden and in his diary Brown noted that the '*...ribbons of the bonnet took me 4 weeks to paint.*' Brown loved to pose on the **coldest** days with snow on the ground in order to achieve the right degree of **blue skin**. According to his biographer '*He was the first painter in England, if not the world to attempt to render light exactly as it appeared to him.*' (biography, Ford Madox Brown)

### Notes

- There are two versions, one in the Fitzwilliam Cambridge (1860, red cape) and the other in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (grey cape). A small watercolour replica of the Birmingham version is in the Tate. There is also a fully worked study and a detailed compositional drawing.
- All are in the form of a tondo, or round panel. The circular, porthole theme is reinforced by all the circular elements of the painting.
- Brown himself considered emigrating to India to find a better life.
- Another trigger was the discovery of **gold** in Australia (Victoria gold rush was 1851 onwards) and California (1848 onwards). The work was extremely arduous and most made little money from gold

although a few, such as Samuel Brannan in California, made a fortune from selling equipment to the miners. However, 1,900 tons of gold were mined in Victoria in the nineteenth century paying off the national debt and helping to create the British Empire.

- Through his brutal honesty of vision and acute representation of light and colour he presents us with a universal theme of loss, travel, fortitude, love and despair hinting at Mary and Joseph and their flight out of Egypt.
- On completion it sold for £150 to dealer David White. In 1859, *The Last Sight of England* as it was then known was sold by Benjamin Windus to Ernest Gambart for 325 guineas.
- Brown's courtship was unconventional, when he started the painting in 1852 he had been living with Emma for three years, Catherine was born in 1850 and they married in 1853.
- It was voted Britain's eight favourite painting in a BBC poll.



William Edward Kilburn (1818-91), Chartist rally, Kennington Common, daguerreotype, 10 April 1848, Royal Collection

- This is the event I have been leading up to. On Monday 10 April 1848 an enormous crowd gathered on Kennington Common.
- It was a Chartist meeting and a petition with **six million signatures** was handed in to Downing Street.
- A disaster and possible revolution was avoided by hair's breadth.
- In the morning people started to arrive by train and walk from all over London and they gathered on **Kennington Common**. The organiser, Feargus O'Connor an MP said there were 300,000 but the Government said it was only 15,000. Historians generally agree there were about **20,000 to 50,000**. It was a **peaceful** demonstration and the organisers intended to hand in the petition a 5.7 million signatures to Parliament. About 50,000 (some historians say 170,000) special constables and soldiers were prepared to **do battle** to prevent the demonstration from crossing back over the Thames. The **special constables** included **Gladstone, Robert Peel** and, most **strangely, Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte**, the future **Napoleon III**. The army had cannons prepared to open fire. Any small incident or skirmish could have resulted in a riot and many deaths but in the event the rally was peaceful and afterwards the **crowd melted** away and by two o'clock the crowd was gone and only a few boys playing ball games remained. There were skirmishes on **Blackfriars Bridge** (1769) and many arrests were made and at one point **sabres were drawn** by the cavalry but the violence was contained. Waterloo Bridge and Charing Cross Bridge were toll bridges and the special constables enjoyed the afternoon lounging and 'enjoying the pleasures of a pipe' (from *Illustrated London News*). The rally's orator and rebel rouser, Feargus O'Connor, MP, was told that his followers could not cross the river and the bridges were well protected so he humiliatingly allowed the petition to be taken the new Palace of Westminster.

### Notes

- Just over 70 years later both my father and my mother were born just beyond the large houses on the left.
- The Kennington Common demonstration was watched by the artists John Everett **Millais** and William **Holman Hunt** and six months later (an evening in early September, 9<sup>th</sup> was Saturday) they

founded the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood with **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** (who was living with Hunt) in Millais's parents house at **83 Gower Street**. On the 20 August they met to examine Lasinio's engravings of the Campo Santo frescoes at Pisa. **James Collinson, Frederic George Stephens**, poet and critic **William Michael Rossetti**, and sculptor **Thomas Woolner** joined to form a seven-member-strong brotherhood. Mr. Hunt says—and he must be correct—that the **word Præraphaelites** "had first been used as a term of contempt by our enemies". Rossetti added 'Brotherhood' which he preferred to 'clique' or 'association'. ...

- The 1848 revolutionary wave began in France in February, and immediately spread to most of Europe and parts of Latin America. Over 50 countries were affected, but with no coordination or cooperation between their respective revolutionaries. There were revolutions in France, German states, the Austrian Empire, Hungary, Italian states, Denmark and Poland. So, why England did not have its own revolution despite the existence of social tensions? Three principal reasons, first, the success of reformist political measures albeit limited, secondly, the existence of a non-violent Chartist movement and finally the elaboration of a British self-identity founded upon a notion of respectability. The British national identity was associated with reform not revolution because 'we are respectable'. The millions who signed the petition saw it as a moral argument to convince those in power to do what was right. They are not absolutists, they are not Roman Catholic, they believe in reform and gradual change. It was another **19 years** before the **Second Reform Act** (1867) doubled the male franchise to about **one third** of adult males.
- If there had been a revolution it would have been brought about by the Irish who were still suffering from the Great Famine.

### Notes

- **Chartists**. Vote for every man over 21 (not undergoing punishment for a crime), secret ballot, no property qualification for MPs, payment of MPs, equal size constituencies, annual elections.
- **Voting**. Second Reform Act (1867) doubled the male franchise to about one third of adult males. Women did not gain the same voting rights as men until 1928.
- **Waterloo Station**. 11 July 1848, three months later, Waterloo Bridge station opened. It was designed by William Tite and built over marshy ground. Waterloo Station was intended as a temporary station to be extended into the City and so sub-stations were created in a ramshackle way and it became the butt of music hall jokes. At one point there were three stations, South (now platforms 1 and 2, nicknamed Cyprus station), Central and North (nicknamed Khartoum Station) with overlapping platform numbers. The line for Waterloo East went above one of the platforms (2 now 4). The entire station was rebuilt and opened in 1922. From 1897 there was an adjoining Necropolis Company station that ran trains to Brookwood Cemetery bearing coffins for 2/6 but it was destroyed in World War II. More people go in and out of Waterloo station each year than the entire population of the UK (96 million).
- **Kennington Common** was a sacred place of national assembly from ancient times (sharp bend in the River Effra, strategic mound or tumulus now levelled, fork in main road from



London Bridge). It was the South London equivalent of Tyburn (now Marble Arch).

**Kennington Park** was created in 1854, the first park in south London, to prevent it being used again for large meetings.

- The photograph was taken from the top of the **Horns Tavern** where Feargus O'Connor met the police. Looking across to the '**Oil of Vitriol Manufactory**' (Sulphuric acid). 'A manufactory for oil of vitriol, on the east side of Kennington Common, occupies three acres of ground; and between that and the Kent-road are, a smelting-house for lead and antimony, a tannary, a manufactory for glue, another for tobacco-pipes, with manufactories for floorcloth and for carriages.'
- **William Kilburn** opened his portrait studio on London's Regent Street in 1846. He was commissioned to make daguerreotype portraits of the Royal Family between 1846 and 1852 as the **Royal Photographer**, and was awarded a prize medal for his photographs at the 1851 Great Exhibition. The Chartists who took their name from *Magna Carta* were the first British national working class movement. Their meetings had a carnival-like atmosphere.
- **Petition**. The petition was boasted to have 5,700,000 signatures but House of Commons clerks said the petition was 'only' 1.9 million valid signatures but they did not have time to count them all. Some of the names were amusing or forged. The Chartists were a source of fun for the media and it discredited the petition as it included falsely signed names of Queen Victoria, Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington and names such as Mr Punch, Pugnose and No Cheese.
- **Feargus O'Connor** never recovered from the indignity of it all and went insane four years later as the result of syphilis. O'Connor never married, but had a number of relationships and, it is believed, fathered several children. He is said to have drunk a bottle of brandy a day. Early historians attributed the failure of the Chartist movement to O'Connor but more recently he has been reassessed in a more favourable light. He died in 1855 and is buried at Kensal Green Cemetery.
- **Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte** was wealthy and lived in London from 1838, attempted a coup in France in 1840 and was imprisoned in France, escaped to London in 1846, returned to Paris after the February revolution but went back to London on 2 March and returned to Paris on 24 September after receiving more votes than any other candidate in Paris. He was therefore in London during the June Days Uprising in Paris and so could not be associated with it. On 2 December 1848 Louis Napoleon was elected President of the Second Republic largely on peasant support. Exactly four years later he suspended the elected assembly and established the Second French Empire which lasted until 1871.
- **Ireland**. The Act of Union of 1800 created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801. Opposition during the nineteenth century was mainly Roman Catholic. Charles Parnell campaigned for autonomy within the Union or 'Home Rule'. The Home Rule Bill of 1914 excluded the six counties of Ulster. Ireland became independent in 1921.





Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *Ploughing up Turnips near Slough*, exhibited at Turner's Gallery in 1809, Tate Britain

- Let me recap.
- As I said at the beginning, in the early nineteenth century, painting the British countryside was a new form of art that required artists to discover new symbols and create new conventions. This artistic invention of the countryside took place when new farming practices resulted in rural poverty and, in due course, riots. Starting with Turner I have shown how artists dealt with or ignored what was happening on the farm and how the representation of the poor and their plight became a subject in its own right.
- Apart from Morland and perhaps Stubbs, Turner was one of the few artists that even hinted at social problems at the beginning of the nineteenth century and painting the real conditions of the poor did not become a subject for nearly forty years (1846). That is what makes this painting revolutionary. Turner may, for the first time in British art, have been suggesting that **all is not right** with the farming world. I do not mean this was an overtly revolutionary painting, it obviously was not as it took about 200 years for the clues to be spotted.
- Like any great painting it is not propaganda, the clues are ambiguous. One of the joys of art history is discovering these clues that open up a world of social history but one of the frustrations is that, like the real world, there is no simple answer, no single interpretation, it is **neither patriotic nor unpatriotic**, it shows **beauty and ugliness**, power confronting poverty, **agricultural advances and their negative impact**, hard work and idleness, patriotism and the causes of revolution. I believe it is these **levels of meaning** and this **ambiguity** that make it a **masterpiece**.

# TURNER AND TURNIPS

ANY QUESTIONS?

Dr. Laurence Shafe



Thank you.

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