



- Good morning/afternoon/evening, this talk is from 10:00 to 13:00 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

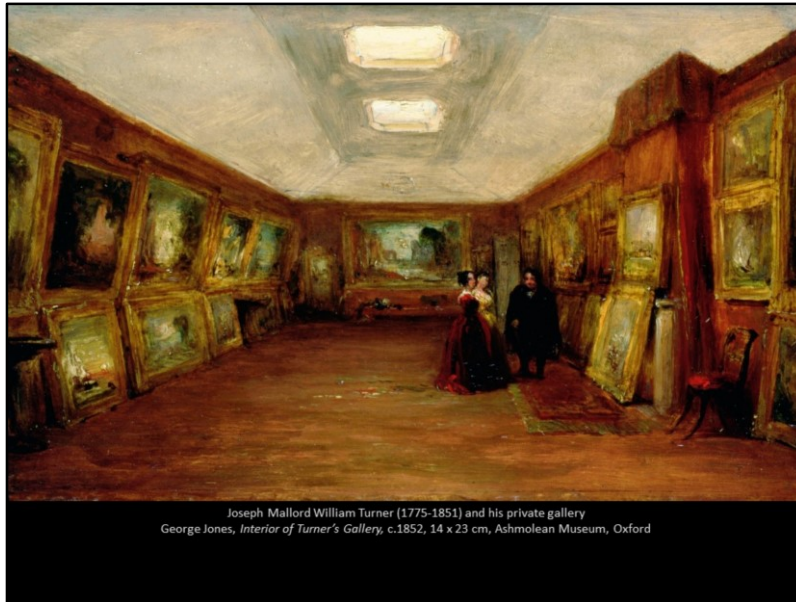
(which was now legal following the repeal of the Combination Act in 1824-5). They refused to work for less than 10s a week when the local rate was 7s a week. A local landowner wrote to Lord Melbourne, the Prime Minister, in 1834 invoking an obscure 1797 law prohibiting people from swearing oaths to each 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

- However, to some extent these are modern distinctions. I would like you to consider what is meant by the word 'beauty'. What comes to mind when you think of beauty. Well, at the time, as Kenneth Clark wrote, "Almost every Englishman when asked what he thought was meant by the word 'beauty' would begin to describe a landscape." And by landscape he would mean an English landscape and this was inseparable from a patriotic love of the countryside. Kenneth Clark also 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."

- 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" picture.

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.
- There 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 **Reynolds'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.

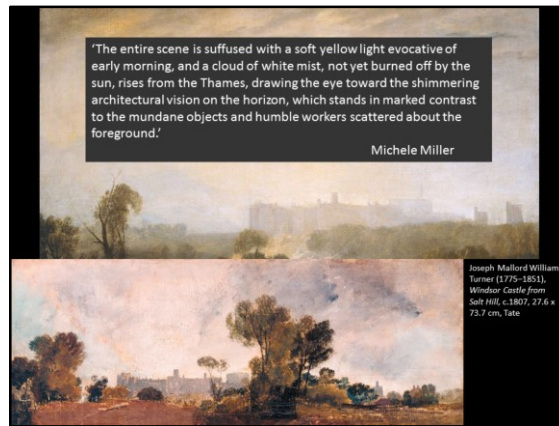
The Story of Isaac and Rebekah

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



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

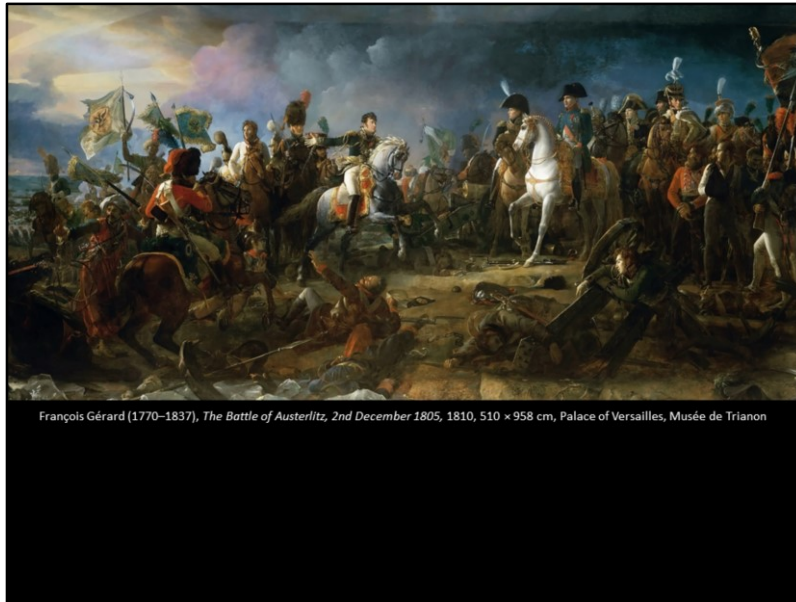
Pastoral

- 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

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

- **The Second Interpretation—The Patriotic**
- 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.



- 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

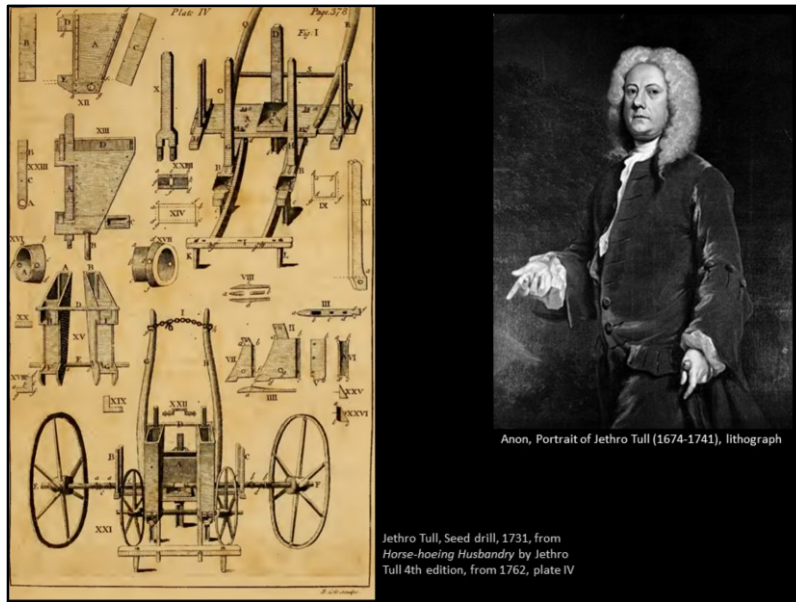
- Townshend promoted adoption of the Norfolk four course system, involving rotation of turnips, barley, clover and wheat crops. He was an enthusiastic advocate of growing turnips as a field crop, for livestock feed.
- From medieval times, peasants had used a system of three-year strip rotation of crops. 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 17th and 18th 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>



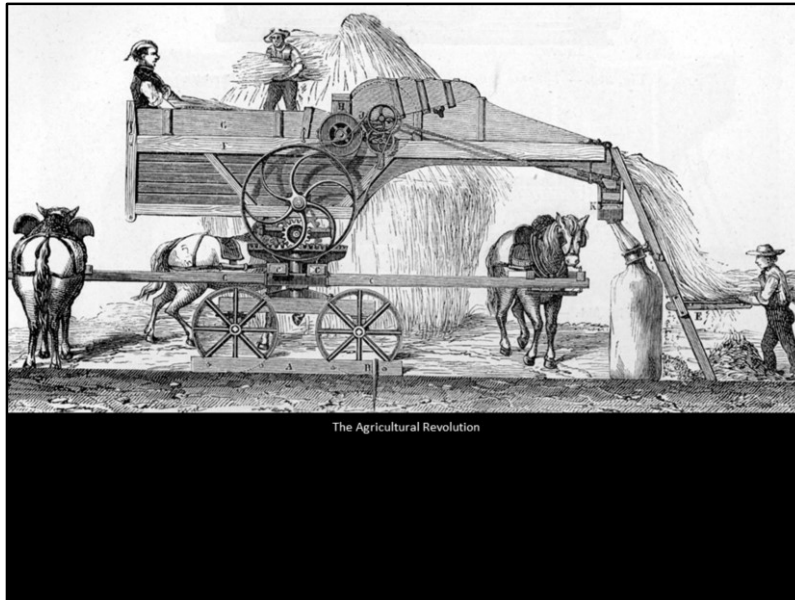
Anon, Portrait of Jethro Tull (1674-1741), lithograph

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 18th 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.



The Third Interpretation—The Political

- **So, let's look more closely.** The third interpretation I have called the political.
- This third level of meaning was suggested by the art historian **Michele Miller** in 1995. She said, if this is a patriotic painting showing a symbol of the King and the agriculture workers working hard to save the nature why is there a **plough broken in the centre of the painting directly below Windsor Castle**.
- With this thought in mind, if we look closely we see some surprising features, such as a bottle of wine or beer on its own, a lot of weeds, and dispirited workers. If this is a painting designed to promote new farming practices in a time of war what are these elements doing in the picture. Let us consider these subversive elements one by one and then look at **what was really going on down on the farm**.

'Farmer George'

- In the distance we see Windsor Castle, one of George III's palaces (the Regency was still two years in the future), who was known as **'Farmer George'**. During the late 1780s he had converted large parts of Windsor and Richmond into farms that used the latest agricultural techniques.
- The women are sitting on part of a **harrow** and one of the men next to the broken plough is carrying a **seedlip**, both indicators of progressive agriculture and that the field will be replanted with another crop as soon as the turnips have been gathered.
- **The King** was associated with turnips in a **negative** way. Popular **rumour** was that **George I** had been **hoeing turnips** in his garden when he heard of **Queen Anne's death** (1714). Satirical cartoons (**pop-up 3**) like this one linked **George III to turnips**. A farm-yard scene with Windsor Castle on a hill in the background. George III, wearing a smock frock, his Garter ribbon hanging down his leg, and holding a pitchfork, gives orders to two guardsmen who are taking his carrots and turnips to market. Outside a farm-building (left) **Queen Charlotte** scatters corn to chickens. George III's admirable farming activities in the Great Park at Windsor, on land reclaimed from marsh, were a favourite subject of **ridicule**. They were usually associated with insinuations of **miserliness**.
- Although the term **'Farmer George'** was at first **mocking** his interest in the mundane and homely it **later** portrayed him as a **man of the people** compared to his grandiose and profligate son George IV. George III was passionately interested in agriculture and its revolutionary new methods and science.

Enclosures

- The **main food** of the poor was **bread** and in **1815** the Government passed **Corn Laws to protect**

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

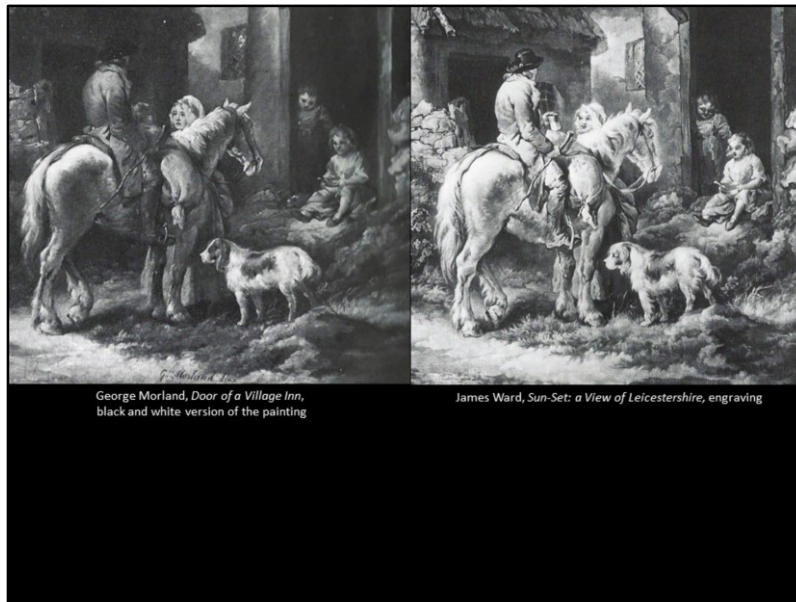
- There were very few artists representing the real conditions in the countryside. Most paintings showed an idyllic, pastoral scene. But there were other ways of seeing the land. A few artists, such as **George Morland** saw rural poverty and created popular art by representing the lives of the poor.
- 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;*

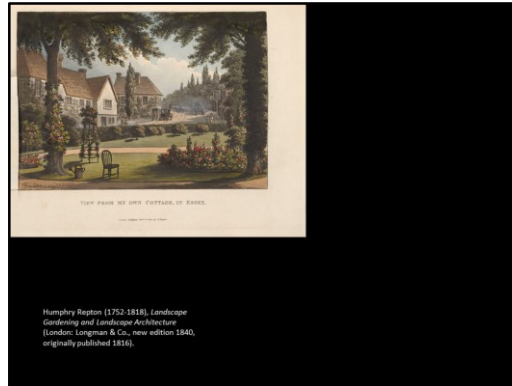
God made the country, and man made the town.

*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.



Humphry Repton (1752-1818), *Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture* (London: Longman & Co., new edition 1840, originally published 1816). The original title was *Fragments on the theory and practice of landscape gardening: including some remarks on Grecian and Gothic architecture, collected from various manuscripts, in the possession of the different noblemen and gentlemen, for whose use they were originally written; the whole tending to establish fixed principles in the respective arts.*

- **The picturesque in landscape design.**
- Another aspect of the picturesque was landscape design.
- In the late eighteenth century **Capability Brown** was **viciously attacked** by those promoting the picturesque as his smooth curving landscapes were thought to be '**bare and bald**' and lacking rough and irregular picturesque detail (1794, Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price attacked 'Capability' Brown).
- **Humphry Repton** defended Brown although as his career progressed he grew his designs became more and more picturesque.
- This is an example of Repton's design ideas applied to his own cottage in **Hare Street** near **Romford, Essex**. Top left is the 'before' view and bottom right the 'after'.
- I would like to draw your attention to the beggar as he is the **first person** we have seen connected with political events. The Napoleonic Wars ended with Waterloo in 1815 and after the war many soldiers returned to find a poor harvest, expensive food and no work. The **beggar** with an **eye patch** and the **wooden leg** was a familiar sight and here he is shown as an undesirable to be removed. Let's see how Repton did it.
- Looking at the after view we see that Repton has **bought the village green** and extended his garden.
- Repton wrote about '**appropriation**' which is **an exclusive visual command over the landscape**. This **exclusive right** includes '*the power of refusing that others should share our pleasure*'. We all want '*something we can call our own...our own Home*'. Notice that before the people on the coach and the beggar are looking and after they are concealed and excluded.
- Repton's small garden is a **metaphor** for the widespread **enclosures** that were taking place across the countryside.
- Although they were a major issue in **Tudor times** the final and most **contentious** wave of enclosures

was 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. The smallholders and commoners became dependent on **poor relief** and had to buy food. The old soldier may be **begging** because his right to grow food for himself has been taken away. I talk more about **enclosures later** as they were one of the causes of the **Swing Riots**.

Key point: Repton's showed how to create a picturesque landscape and his purchase of the village green is a metaphor for the **enclosures** taking place and the idea of **buying and owning a landscape of our own cut off from the political turmoil**.

Notes

Humphry Repton

- Humphry Repton coined the term 'landscape gardener' and created picturesque gardens.
- Humphry Repton was the last great landscape designer of the eighteenth century often regarded as a successor to Capability Brown. He is best known for Blaise Castle near Bristol, the themed gardens at Woburn Abbey, the 'home lawn' at Stoneleigh Abbey, Warwickshire and the central gardens in Russell Square.
- At first he defended Brown's rolling vistas he later added more rugged 'picturesque elements'. Repton also introduced the innovation of his 'Red Books'. These contained before and after watercolours views of the clients garden and Repton sold these as his business rather than carrying out all the work as a contractor like Brown. As a result Repton's ideas were often only partly implemented and he made little money compared with Brown.
- Repton believed that gardens should be **designed like paintings** with a foreground, middleground and background. The foreground is for the art, ornamental planting, the middleground like a Capability Brown park and the background should be wild and 'natural'.
- He was a designer not a contractor like Capability Brown so many of his designs were never implemented or were modified. This is his advice based on how he modified his own cottage. It is a **before and after picture** which he specialised in.
- He wrote about how his cottage faced a green often covered by cattle, pigs or geese and how he **appropriated 25 yards of garden** by taking the green and surrounding it with flowering shrubs and evergreens.
- ❖ He kept it open so that he could see the village scene unlike many owners of property as he enjoyed mankind and movement. But he **hid the butcher's** shop in preference to a basket of roses and he points out that a very small object may hid an offensive object that is ten times larger. The hedge hides the dirt of the road and prevents him being seen.
- ❖ He concludes by saying that he has *'lived to reach that period when improvements of house and garden is more delightful to me than parks, forests, landscapes or distant prospects'* (page 605).
- He ends his book and his life with the words 'Allons mes amis, il faut cultiver nos jardins' [Come along, my friends, and let us cultivate our gardens.] (Voltaire, *Candide*, Chapter 30: Candide buys a small farm and finds working the farm satisfying at last.)

Repton's Cottage

- These engravings are from one of Repton's books describing how he applied picturesque ideas to the landscape. They show the front garden of his modest cottage at Hare Street near Romford in Essex.
- Notice the people on the coach and the beggar are looking. Repton writes about '**appropriation**' which is command over the landscape visible from a window that denotes it is private property. The **exclusive right** of enjoyment is part of the charm '*with the power of refusing that others should share our pleasure*'. We all want '*something we can call our own...our own Home*'.
- He wrote about how his cottage faced a green often covered by cattle, pigs or geese and how he appropriated 25 yards of garden by taking the green and surrounding it with flowering shrubs and evergreens. He kept it open so that he could see the village scene unlike many owners of property as he enjoyed mankind and movement. But he hid the butcher's shop in preference to a basket of roses and he points out that a very small object may hid an offensive object that is ten times larger. The hedge hides the dirt of the road and prevents him being seen. He concludes by saying that he has 'lived to reach that period when improvements of house and garden is more delightful to me than parks, forests, landscapes or distant prospects' (page 605).

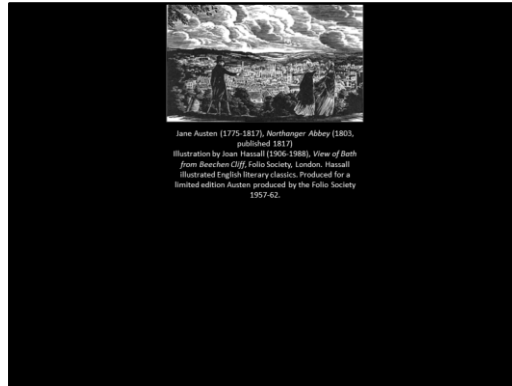


Illustration by Joan Hassall (1906-1988), *View of Bath from Beechen Cliff*, Folio Society, London. Hassall illustrated English literary classics. Produced for a limited edition Austen produced by the Folio Society 1957-62.

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.

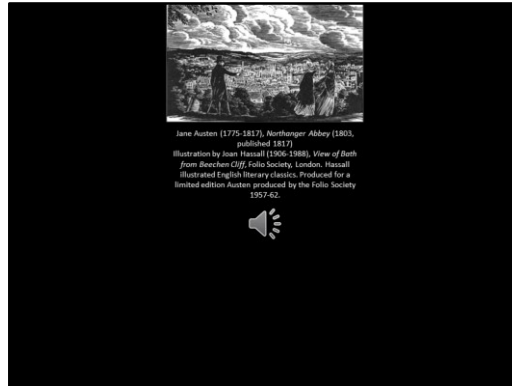
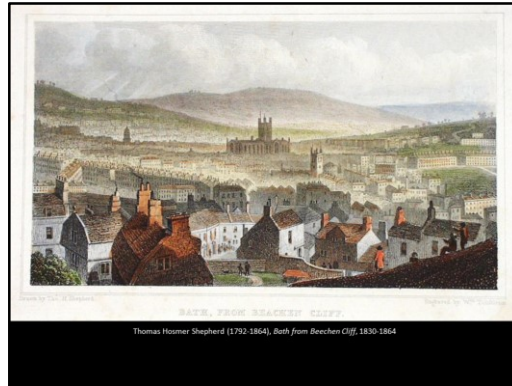


Illustration by Joan Hassall (1906-1988), *View of Bath from Beechen Cliff*, Folio Society, London. Hassall illustrated English literary classics. Produced for a limited edition Austen produced by the Folio Society 1957-62.

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*** (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).

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.



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

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.

Notes

- In the middle distance is Bath Abbey, a former Benedictine monastery founded in the 7th century. Rebuilt in the 12th and 16th centuries and restored by Sir Gilbert Scott in the 1860s (after this engraving was printed).
- The Royal Crescent is in the distance to the left. Designed by John Wood the Younger and built between 1767 and 1774. It is perhaps the greatest example of Georgian architecture in the country.
- The nearer church could be St Marks Church and behind it the priory of Benedictines of Downside Abbey (now the Church of St John the Evangelist, a Catholic Church built in 1861).



Thomas Girtin (1775-1802, died aged 27), *The White House at Chelsea*, 1800, watercolour, Tate Britain
 Henry Edridge (1769-1821), *Thomas Girtin*, watercolour on ivory, c. 1796
 Anon, *Old Battersea Mill*, 1800, engraved by William Henry Prior (1812-1882), published in "Old and New London" about 1880; the colouring is modern

- Thomas Girtin's *The White House at Chelsea* is a **topographical landscape**. This painting was produced in the first year of the century and many regard it as **one of the great** landscapes of the century.
- It accurately represents a particular stretch of the Thames. One reason such accurate **topographical** paintings were produced was to enable engravings to be made for the rapidly growing **market for travel guides** and the market for travel guides for Britain was **fuelled** by the fact we were at war and no one could travel abroad.
- In **1800** we were in the middle of the **Napoleonic Wars**. This meant that the Grand Tour of Europe was suspended and there was an increased interest in visiting sublime and picturesque sites in Britain. This idyllic scene gives **no hint of the conflict** abroad and it **inspires patriotic feelings** through invoking a mood. It is not just an accurate representation of a scene - it does something few earlier landscapes attempted which was to **invoke a mood**, of stillness, a reflective mood of lost time as the light slowly fades and the beauty of England.
- **(Click)** Girtin is little known today but an **anecdote** involving Turner shows us how just how well he was regarded.
- **Anecdote:** a dealer went to Turner's house and after looking through his drawings, had the audacity to say, '*I have a drawing out there in my hackney coach, finer than any of yours.*' Turner bit his lip, looked first angry, then meditative. At length he broke silence: '*Then I tell you what it is. You have got Tom Girtin's White House at Chelsea*'.
- **Turner knew Girtin well** as they were the same age and students together. Unfortunately Girtin died aged only 27. He died painting variously reported as asthma or 'ossification of the heart'. Turner said after his death in 1802, '*Poor Tom.....If **Tom Girtin had lived**, I should have starved*'.
- **Description:** on the right is **Battersea Old Bridge** and we are looking **upstream** across the Thames towards Battersea. The windmill known as the **Red House Mill** belonged to Joseph Freeman and the white house is where Battersea Park is today (opened 1858, formerly marshland popular for duelling,

and growing lavender and 'Battersea Bunches' of asparagus). The bridge is Old Battersea Bridge and on the other side of the river is **Chelsea Old Church** which was destroyed in the Second World War (1941).

- One of the most interesting buildings is to the right of the Mill. I thought at first it might be the **pagoda** in Kew but that is further away. I then thought it was All Saints Church in Fulham as that had a similar structure on top in 1800.
- **(Click)** I now believe it is **Fowler's Mill**, a **horizontal windmill** erected in Battersea in 1788 (until c. 1825) on the site of Bolingbroke House (pulled down in 1763 and owned by Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, 1678-1751, pronounced 'bullingbrook'). It was **120 foot tall**, the **tallest windmill** in England (at Great Yarmouth there was one 102 foot tall) and a well known sight at Battersea. There were not many horizontal windmills in England, but there was another at Margate, and it is thought they were invented independently from the horizontal windmills in the Middle East.
- **Link:** let us next look at different type of topographical landscape...

Key point: Artists like Thomas Girtin responded to the Napoleonic War by producing illustrations for travel guides to the UK as young men were unable to tour Europe.

Notes

- **All Saints Church**, Fulham, "before 1845, as can be seen from many old paintings and prints, the tower was surmounted by a picturesque octagonal wooden spire enclosing the flagstaff and was popularly known as the 'pepper box'. This was eventually removed because it was considered to be 'incongruous'". This is unlikely as the church is two miles away but the structure seems nearer. It is not the pagoda at Kew although it was opened in 1761 (built by Sir William Chambers for George III) as it is in a slightly different direction and 7 miles away. Also, it is not Cremorne Gardens as they did not open until 1845-1877.
- **Bolingbroke** was a politician who took part in the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 to overthrow George I. He later returned and supported the monarchy. Died aged 73 and is buried in Battersea. He was a major influence on Voltaire and the founders of America such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Benjamin Disraeli praised Bolingbroke as the 'founder of Modern Toryism'. Bolingbroke wrote that we are 'free not from the law, but by the law'.
- **Fowler's Mill** was an 80 foot structure on a 40 foot base with 96 sails inside and shutters that could be opened and closed.

Napoleonic Wars

- The French Revolutionary Wars led to the Napoleonic Wars so historians call the wars from 1792 to 1814 the Great French War.
- Austria was one of our allies in the First Coalition when the war started in 1793 but was defeated and signed the Treat of Campo Formio in 1797 leaving Britain on its own. The Second Coalition was formed with Austria and others in 1798. France suffered from corruption but when Napoleon returned from Egypt he seized control in a coup in 1799 and then crossed the Alps and defeated the Austrians at Morengo in 1800 and then decisively at Hohenlinden leading to the Treat of Lunéville in 1801 forcing Britain to sign the Treaty of Amiens in 25 March 1802. Britain formed a Third Coalition and declared war

on 18 May 1803.

- Napoleon had returned from his campaign in **Egypt**, **seized control** of the **corrupt** French Government and in 1800 led his army across the **Alps** and **defeated** our ally, the **Austrians, at Marengo**. This led two years later (1802) to the **Peace of Amiens** when for a short period artists could travel to the Continent.

Thomas Girtin (1775-1802)

- Thomas Girtin's architectural and topographical sketches and drawings established his reputation and his use of watercolour for landscapes means he is credited with establishing watercolour as a reputable art form and creating the Romantic watercolour painting.
- In 1800 Girtin married the daughter, Mary Ann Borrett, of a wealthy London goldsmith and moved to Hyde park next door to the painter Paul Sandby. In late 1801 to 1802 he spent five and a half months in Paris and in the spring and summer of 1802 he produced an enormous **panorama** of London called the '**Eidometropolis**' (Greek for 'view of the mother city') which was 18 feet high and 108 feet long. That November he died while painting of either asthma or 'ossification of the heart'. His later bolder, spacious style had a lasting influence on English painting and the popular romantic and picturesque landscapes for which England became well known. The panorama was patented by **Robert Barker** (1739-1806) in 1787. He moved to the first purpose-built panorama building in Leicester Square in 1793 and made a fortune as people paid **3 shillings** to enter. They could also buy prints. 126 panoramas were exhibited by Barker and others between 1793 and 1863. Their popularity declined in the 1860s although in America they experienced a revival. The experience was intensified in the 1840s by the **moving panorama**, a canvas that was scrolled past and the **diorama** invented by Louis Daguerre.
- Turner was an introvert and often rude but Girtin was kind and considerate. As the pair of them went around together people tolerated Turner because of Girtin.
- Among his followers were John Sell Cotman (1782-1842) and John Varley (1778-1842) and through Varley, David Cox (1782-1859). Cox was one of the greatest but least recognised British artists and member of the Birmingham School, a precursor of Impressionism (e.g. Cox, Rhyl Sands, c. 1854, Tate).

'The Brothers'

Girtin was apprenticed to a water-colourist called **Edward Dayes** who did not appreciate his talent and had him imprisoned as a refractory apprentice. Girtin became friends with Turner and exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1794, when he was 19 (Turner was 15). Within five years he had acquired influential patrons such as **Sir George Beaumont** who helped create the National Gallery and Girtin was the leading member of **the Brothers** (or the 'Girtin Sketching Club'), a sketching society of professional artists. The Brothers used to meet at each of their houses in turn and in draw all evening based on a few lines of poetry that had been selected to produce historic landscapes. The host would keep all the sketches in exchange for providing everyone supper. Turner was an early member but thought his sketches were worth more than the cost of supper so he stopped attending.

Watercolour

Watercolour is a transparent medium and there is no white watercolour. Watercolours are created by starting with the lightest colours and adding increasingly dark colours. Girtin played a key role in establishing watercolour as a reputable art form but in the early part of the nineteenth century it was regarded as a lesser art form compared with oil painting and watercolour paintings were referred to as drawings which had been 'stained' or 'tinted'. In 1804 a group of watercolour artists formed their own exhibiting society, the Society of Painters in Water-Colours. They were anxious that the 'novel' term 'painters' in watercolour 'might...be considered by the world of taste to savour of assumption'.

Topographical Landscape

This is known as a topographical landscape, one that shows the land and often buildings accurately. The interest in topographical landscapes started by patrons wanting to show their country estate but was fuelled by the extraordinary growth in travel guides. The representation of travel locations evolved out of the need to bring reminders back from the Grand Tour of Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (flourished 1660 to 1840). The Grand Tour was a rite of passage for wealthy young men and they often brought back paintings of the cities they visited, such as Canaletto's (1697-1768) Venice. The eighteenth century was associated with a rise in travel and the need for travel guides. These guides described the landscape in terms of visual landscape conventions, such as bounding sidescreens and a receding foreground and the use of the term 'picturesque'. It was William Gilpin who first formalised the picturesque but it acquired a life of its own.

However, it is more than topographical. In 1852 The *Art Journal* claimed that Thomas Girtin was responsible for changing the merely topographical into an evocative composition. This painting, for example, does not just record a scene but creates an image that once seen cannot be forgotten.

Battersea

- Battersea is mentioned in Anglo-Saxon time as Badrices īeg = "Badric's Island" and later "Patrisey". As with many former Thames island settlements, Battersea was reclaimed by draining marshland and building culverts for streams. The settlement appears in the Domesday Book as Patricesy.
- The first Battersea Bridge was built on the bend of the river and was the last Thames London bridge made of wood. It opened in 1771 and was a danger to shipping and there were frequent collisions, so the two central piers were removed and reinforced with steel girders.
- "Fifty yards west of which Caesar crossed the Thames with the Britons scattering before him".
- "The [Horizontal] Mill at Battersea on the spot where [Henry] Bolingbroke [statesman and philosopher, friend of Pope] was born and died."
- The first Chelsea Bridge did not open until 1857 and was called Victoria Bridge but it was found to be structurally unsound and so was renamed Chelsea Bridge to avoid Royal Family associations with any collapse.

Henry Edridge Portrait

- Sold at Sotheby's in 2011 for £20,000. Watercolour with touches of gum Arabic on ivory, oval: 3 x 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches; 72 x 62 mm, the glazed reverse revealing a lock of Girtin's hair, painted c.1796. Now owned by the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

References

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/girtin-the-white-house-at-chelsea-n04728>



Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812), *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801, Science Museum

Lecture

- The painting depicts the Madeley Wood (or Bedlam) Furnaces, which belonged to the Coalbrookdale Company from 1776 to 1796.
- The picture has come to symbolize the birth of the Industrial Revolution in Ironbridge, England.
- The blazing furnaces, the heat and the danger instil a sense of awe and terror. These are aspects of the sublime.
- The sublime is the sense of terror or awe we get when we see certain sights in nature or a supreme human achievement, such as the first pictures of man on the moon or the earth from space. In 1801 this was the equivalent of man on the moon.
- Such sights are not beautiful but they move us and in the eighteenth century Edmund Burke wrote a book on the origin of our ideas of the sublime and the beautiful.
- Many people associated the sense of awe and beauty with God but they were also increasingly associated with the scientific quest and the man-made wonders of technology.

Key point: in the eighteenth century two types of aesthetic experience were defined – the beautiful and the sublime

Notes

Sublime

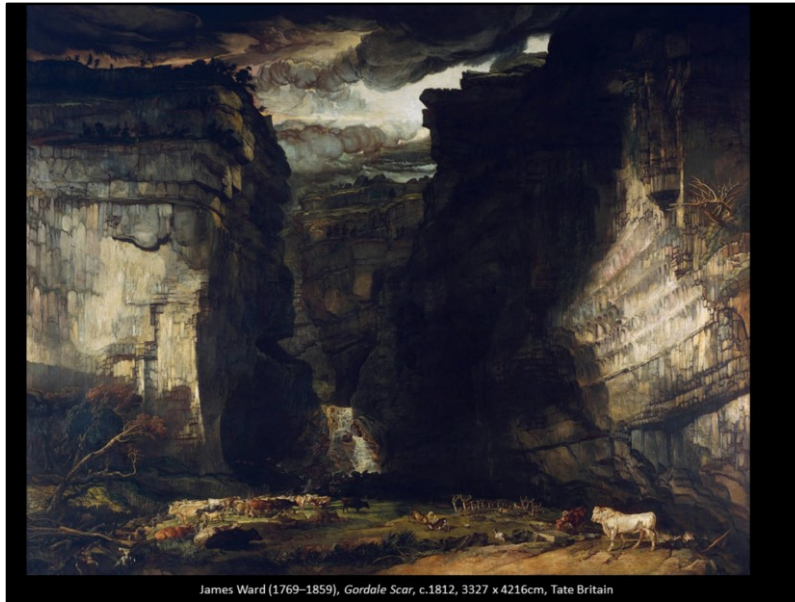
- Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the thrill and danger of untamed nature. Burke identified seven aspects - darkness, obscurity, deprivation, vastness, magnificence, loudness and suddenness. It was associated with terror, infinity, immensity, awe, horror and despair. Feelings invoked by journeys across the Alps in the 18thC. Greatness beyond calculation.
- It was an importance concept as it was beyond reason in an Age of Enlightenment when everything was subject to reason. It is when words fail us and involves painting the unpaintable and a oneness with nature. These days it is used to indicate a well executed performance, such as a good tennis shot or a delicious meal but in the eighteenth century it was an aesthetic experience distinct from beauty.
- The earliest writer about the sublime is Longinus (also called Pseudo-Longinus as his real name is unknown, he lived in the 1st or 3rd century CE and wrote *On the Sublime*) who saw it as an aspect of

eloquence, the ability to uplift the soul of the audience and provide a sense of joy such they thought they had produced what they heard. Other examples are the Bible (Longinus used it to provide examples), Dante Alighieri's (1265–1321) *Divine Comedy* and John Milton's (1608-1674) *Paradise Lost*. The Romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) were very concerned with the sublime. Modern theorists such as Barbara Claire Freeman have distinguished between the feminine sublime involving feelings of awe, rapture and the spiritual and metaphysical infinity of nature and the masculine sublime concerned with terror and domination. This painting is an example of masculine sublime.

- Romantic theorists saw Salvator Rosa (e.g. *Rocky Landscape with Huntsman and Warriors*) as sublime as his landscape was a vehicle of terror compared with Claude Lorrain (born Gellée, c. 1600-1682) as the antithesis of the sublime as he represented classical beauty, elegance, harmony and luminosity.
- Before Burke (back to Augustine of Hippo) the ugly lacked form and was therefore non-existent. Burke said that both beauty and the sublime invoke pleasure and are therefore not opposites. Burke harks back to Plato in so far as the ugly can create intense emotions that are ultimately pleasurable.
- In the latter half of the nineteenth century the sublime was abandoned by artists for reasons of taste, an interest in beauty and scientific realism.

References

See <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220>



James Ward (1769–1859), *Gordale Scar*, c.1812, 3327 x 4216cm, Tate Britain

James Ward (1769–1859), *Gordale Scar* (A View of Gordale, in the Manor of East Malham in Craven, Yorkshire, the property of Lord Ribblesdale), c.1812, 3327 x 4216cm, Tate Britain

- **The Sublime.**
- I need to step back into the eighteenth century to explain the nature of the sublime before describing the picturesque which combines the beautiful with the sublime.
- Eighteenth century society saw the land as a source of terror and this was associated with a form of pleasure, similar to the pleasure we get from watching horror movies. This form of pleasure was known as the sublime and it was sought out by artists.
- The importance of the sublime in art was described by **Edmund Burke** (1729-1797) in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, a **1757** treatise on aesthetics. It was the first complete philosophical exposition for separating the beautiful and the sublime into their own respective rational categories. It attracted the attention of prominent thinkers such as Denis Diderot and Immanuel Kant.
- In short, the **Beautiful**, according to Burke, is what is well-formed and aesthetically pleasing, whereas the **Sublime** is what has the power to compel and destroy us. The preference for the Sublime over the Beautiful was to mark the transition from the Neoclassical to the Romantic era.

Notes

- **Edmund Burke** served for many years as a Whig MP. He supported American Revolutionaries, Catholic emancipation but opposed the French Revolution and so was labelled an 'Old Whig'. Charles James Fox led the 'New Whigs' who supported the French Revolution. Burke associated with the leaders of intellectual thought in London such as Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Oliver Goldsmith, and Joshua Reynolds. Edward Gibbon described Burke as 'the most eloquent and rational madman that I ever knew'. Although Johnson admired Burke's brilliance, he found him a dishonest politician.
- **James Ward** was influenced by his brother-in-law George Morland and later by Rubens. From 1810 he painted landscapes which became very large scale landscapes of which *Gordale Scar* is an example. It is considered his masterpiece and a masterpiece of English Romantic painting. James Ward was an outstanding painter of the day and influenced many other artists. His gigantic work *Allegory of Waterloo* (1815-21, now lost) was regarded as a failure and may have embittered him.



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 Margent:
*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
- Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1956



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.

References

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 Hay Wain*, 1821, National Gallery

- Before I turn to Turner I thought you might be interested in **how topographically accurate** Constable's painting was. I recently took (**pop-up**) this photograph of the same scene and, as you can see, Constable created a fairly accurate representation.
- Constable made **Willy Lot's house** grander than it is. The banks are now more overgrown and trees have grown up blocking the view.
- The **red collar** on the horses would have been unlikely and was added to introduce a note of colour.
- A **horse and rider** on the shore that you can see in the full-size study were deleted. You can just see the outline of the figure.

Key point: John Constable's paintings were picturesque but broke with many of the traditions based on the Old Masters

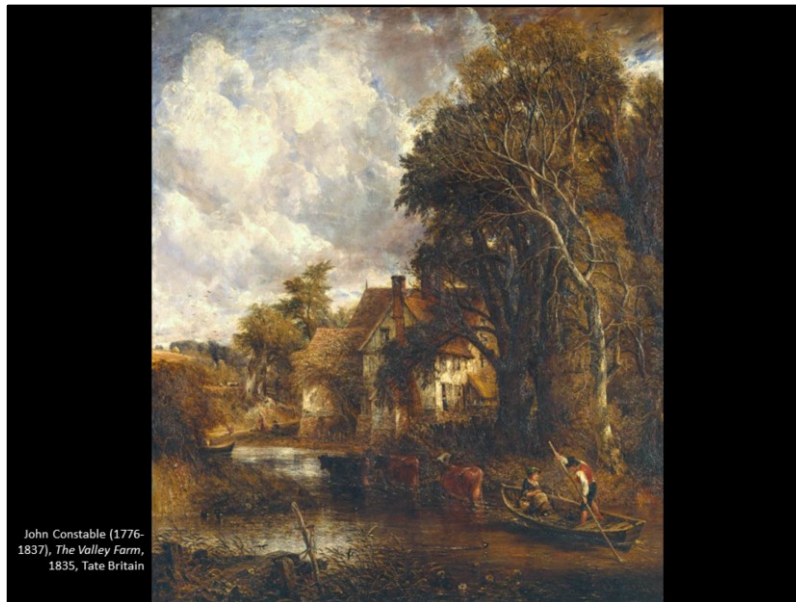
References

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



John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows*, 1831, Tate Britain, on loan to National Museum of Wales

- This is Constable's *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* of 1831. His beloved wife **Maria had died** of tuberculosis in **1828** and it seems like a personal statement of his turbulent emotions and his changing states of mind. They had only been married **12 years**.
- When it was **exhibited** at the Royal Academy he **included** nine lines from a **poem** about two young lovers out walking. As they walk through a wood a thunderstorm kills the young woman and she dies in her lover's arms.
- A simply interpretation is that Constable, like the **wagon driver**, is moving **away from death**, represented by the **grave marker**, towards a symbol of **resurrection** and faith, the Cathedral, and **renewal**, the **rainbow**. I can almost see a woman dressed in black alongside the wagon driver.
- In 1834 he gave a series of lectures on the history of landscape painting. Alluding to *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* he stated: "*I mean more than the rainbow itself, I mean dewy light and freshness, the departing shower, with the exhilaration of the returning sun.*" The rainbow then generates feelings of "freshness" and "exhilaration"
- Possible political meanings have been attributed to it, one of which being the **clash of industrialization and nature** represented through the **clash of elements**.
- The rainbow ends at **Leadenhall** where **John Fisher lived** and Constable stayed. The church of St Thomas is on the left.
- The painting was bought in May 2013 for £23.1 million as a partnership between the Tate, National Museum Wales, the National Galleries of Scotland, Colchester and Ipswich Museums and the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum.



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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

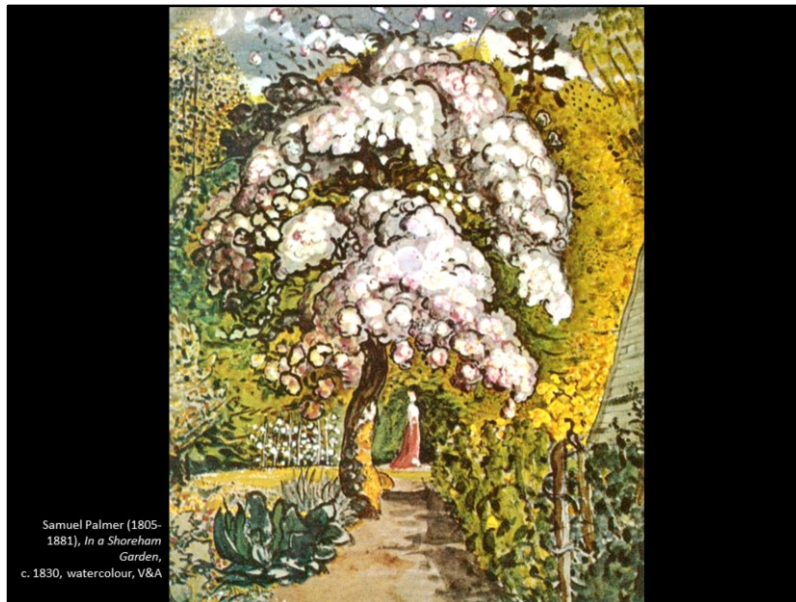
Notes

- 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.'

References

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



Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), *In a Shoreham Garden*, c. 1830, watercolour, V&A

- **The Romantic and the mystical.**
- Welcome back.
- This is Samuel Palmer's *In a Shoreham Garden*.
- **Samuel Palmer** was another born artist, although he had little formal training he first exhibited at the Royal Academy when he was only 14.
- In 1822, when he was 17 he met the artist **John Linnell** who introduced him to **William Blake** in 1824.
- ❖ Like Blake, Palmer had **visionary experiences** from childhood and the effect of Blake was to **intensify** his inherent **mystical leanings**.
- ❖ In 1826, he moved to Shoreham, near Sevenoaks, where he became the central figure of a Blake-inspired group of artists known as the Ancients.
- ❖ Palmer was an old-fashioned high Tory, he thought the Tories gave '*liberty to the poor*' but the Whigs were more cruel than the worst papists. He was deeply distrustful of any revolutionary principles. The ancient institutions, such as the Anglican Church, were sacred.
- ❖ In 1832 he wrote a pamphlet in support of his local Tory candidate who came last in the poll.
- ❖ Although his politics were reactionary his art was revolutionary.
- Graham Sutherland who was influenced by Palmer described him as '*essentially the English Van Gogh*', a comparison also made by Kenneth Clark.

Notes

Voting Reform

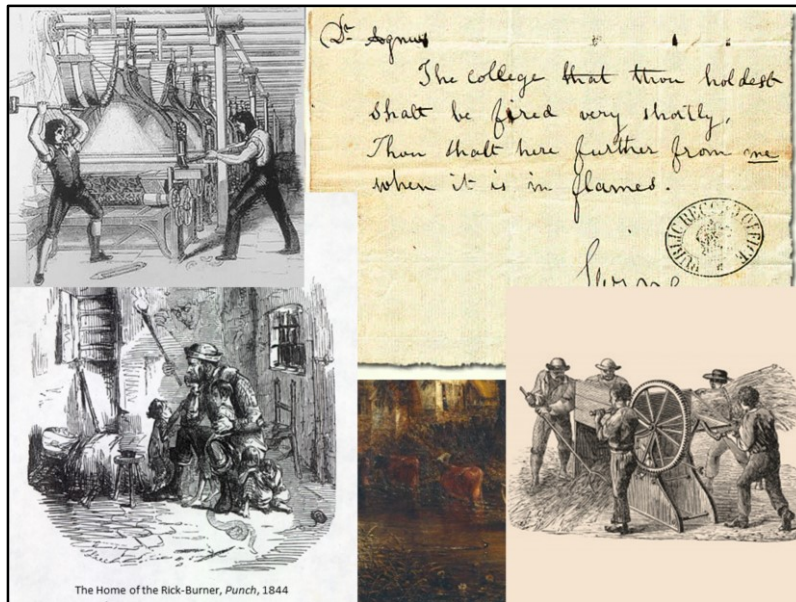
By the 1830s dissent had grown into the Swing Riots and part of the discontent was with the voting system. Birmingham and Manchester had no MPs to represent them yet Old Sarum returned two MPs to represent an abandoned medieval town. Lord Grey's Whig Government presented a reform bill in 1831 but it was rejected and eventually despite opposition the Great Reform Act of 1832 was passed. It gave the vote to only 18% of the total adult male population (in towns everyone whose home's rateable value was over £10 pa). 56 rotten boroughs (roughly less than 50 voters) and 130 pocket boroughs (one person owned at least half of the 'burgage' tenancies that included a right to vote) were abolished.

Samuel Palmer – Visionary Landscapes

Samuel Palmer was an **important artist** whose most original period was when he worked in Shoreham, near Sevenoaks in Kent. He purchased a rundown cottage he called '**Rat Abbey**' but later moved to a Queen Anne house called **Waterhouse**, which still stands. He lived in Shoreham there from **1826 to 1835**, producing some of his **greatest work**. He had little formal training but first exhibited Turner-inspired works at the Royal Academy at the age of fourteen. He met William Blake in 1824 and his Shoreham work is influenced by Blake's visionary and mystical approach.

In Shoreham he fell in love with fourteen-year old **Hannah Linnell**, daughter of the then famous artist John Linnell and married her when she was nineteen. In 1832 what he described as his 'primitive and infantile feeling' began to fade and after returning to London in 1835 and **marrying** Hannah Linnell in **1837** we went on a **two-year honeymoon** to Italy. When he returned the break with his visionary period was complete and he painted more **conventional** topographical and pastoral paintings for the rest of his life. It is generally assumed he painted this way in order to sell the paintings more easily in order to support his wife and children. Tragically his eldest son died at the age of 19, a blow from which he never recovered.

Samuel Palmer was largely forgotten after his death. In 1909, many of his Shoreham works were destroyed by his surviving son Alfred Herbert Palmer, who burnt "*a great quantity of father's handiwork ... Knowing that no one would be able to make head or tail of what I burnt; I wished to save it from a more humiliating fate*". The destruction included "*sketchbooks, notebooks, and original works, and lasted for days*". It was not until the 1950s that his reputation began to recover and his rediscovered Shoreham work had a powerful influence on many English artists including Graham Sutherland and Eric Ravilious.



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

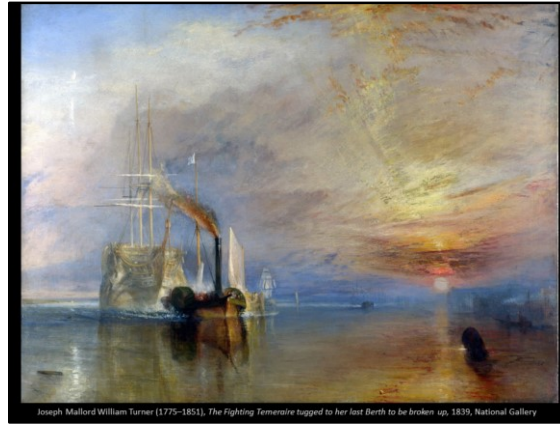
- **Swing Riots**, 1830, agricultural workers did not disguise themselves but descended on farms in their hundreds demanding higher wages. 2,000 farm labourers were arrested and imprisoned and 19 were hung. Reform was needed but the Duke of Wellington, the Prime Minister thought the British system was 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.'*

References

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>

James Greenwood, 'A Night in a Workhouse', *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 12, 13 and 15, 1866,

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



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

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. **James Mahoney** was an artist living in Cork, Ireland. In early 1847 he was asked by the *Illustrated London News* to tour the surrounding countryside and report on what he saw. The resulting articles and illustrations did much to alert the British public of the crisis.
- Terry Eagleton, a former professor of English at Oxford, called the Irish Famine "the greatest social disaster of 19th century Europe, an event with something of the characteristics of a low-level nuclear attack." Between 1845 and 1855 the Irish population of almost 8.2 million shrank by a third. Starvation and disease killed 1.1 million of us, and 2 million emigrated. At the end of the famine one out of every three people was gone, leaving the survivors reeling from the sheer scale of the loss. It was as bad as the worst famines we see in Africa today and 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.
- Following the Great Famine was what is called the **Great Silence** when grandparents refused to discuss it with their grandchildren. The Great Famine was associated with shame, bitterness and revolution. The rural Irish countryside still contains ruined cottages, workhouses and burial plots from that period.
- Few painters tackled the subject, for example, the Irish artist George Victor du Noyer (1817-1869) who was commissioned to paint realistic views of locations all over Ireland never depicted the

famine. One of the best known who did was George Frederic Watts albeit only in this one 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.

References

John B. Cunningham, *The Great Silence - The Famine in Fermanagh 1845 - 1850* (expensive, £60 on Amazon)



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

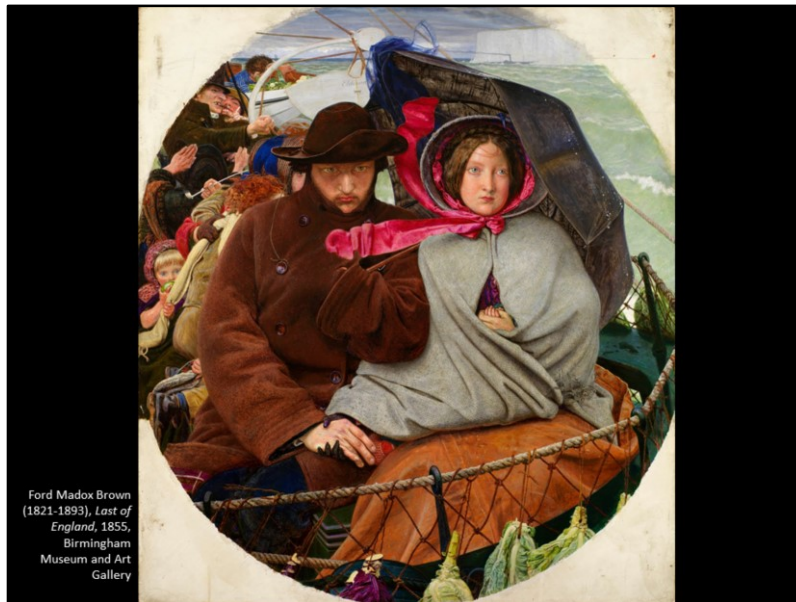
- This shows another aspect of **emigration**. It Richard Redgrave's *The Emigrants' Last Sight of Home*. The rural problems led to many people emigrating.
- Redgrave was a pioneer of **social realist** paintings with paintings such as *The Sempstress* of 1844 and *The Outcast* of 1851. He later turned 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, 9th 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**.



John Brett (1830-1902), *Stonebreaker*, 1857-8, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

- Another social issues we have not covered is the **workhouse**, introduced by the **Poor Law Amendment Act** of 1834.
- The aim of this act was to reduce the rising cost to the rate payer of poor relief. This was done by introducing workhouses and by making condition in them worse than not working.
- However, despite every effort they could not make them worse than conditions outside. They all tried and the conditions were so appalling it gave rise to scandals in the press.
- The basic assumption was that through hard work people could earn a good living so the poor were responsible for their own condition.
- This is John Brett's *Stonebreaker* and it returns us to the rural worker.
- Stone breaking was a soul destroying occupation but Brett shows us a well nourished smartly dressed boy accompanied by a playful dog.
- Traditionally, stone breaking was a task often given to the poor and destitute by local Parishes and they were used to fill in potholes.
- Every **detail** of this Surrey valley are captured with **scientific accuracy** and John **Ruskin** said it **went beyond anything** the Pre-Raphaelites had done previously.
- Brett worked on it **outdoors** with a few additions in the studio and the boy was modelled by his brother Edwin.
- Other symbols are the **blasted tree** signifying the boy's restricted future and the bullfinch symbolising the free human spirit.
- Across the Mole Valley we see **Box Hill** and the milestone shows the distance to London as **23 miles**. There is a railway bridge and embankment in the middle distance on the right and we are looking down on **St. Michael's Church**. The painting reflects Brett's interest in **geology**.
- Critics and historians disagree over the meaning. Some see a well-dressed boy in the sunshine, with a beautiful view and his playful puppy. Others see a boy sentenced to a lifetime of back-breaking work ending up like the blasted tree. He must work so hard he is oblivious to the sunshine, the view and the dog. Brett **wrote** on a sketch of the picture, 'Outside Eden' and it may refer to **God's curse** on Adam to external labour. The most interesting interpretation is from the historian Marcia Pointon

who sees it as a comment on the brevity of human life compared to the age of the earth indicated by the pile of flint, she sees it therefore as a *memento mori* ('remember that you will die').

Notes

- David Cordingly argues that there is a possibility that the painter knew of famous **Stonebreakers by Courbet**, which work had been shown at the Paris Salon in **1851**. One of Brett drawings depicts a standing boy in a position similar to one of the figures in Courbet's picture. This could be a coincidence, though.
- Brett may also have seen *The Stonebreaker's Daughter* which was painted by Landseer in 1830.
- Brett was both an **artist and a scientist** and later in life became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Astronomers. Brett was excited by the writings of John Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites.
- The painting was in response to another painting shown at the Royal Academy the previous year. Was this by Lewis?
- He shows a young boy breaking flints in bright sunlight. The stones were used to fill in potholes in the local Parish roads. The work could be a comment on child labour but the boy appears to be dressed in clean clothes and he has a playful dog to keep him company. From his letters it appears that Brett painted a great deal of the painting outdoors. The boy was modelled by Brett's brother Edwin.
- The painting was admired for its **accurate detail** and **John Ruskin** commented that it went beyond anything the Pre-Raphaelites had done particularly with regard to the thistledown, chalk hills, elm trees and far away cloud.
- The painting could refer to **God's curse on Adam** to external labour or the great length of geological time compared to the brevity of human life. The ancient tree refers to death and the bullfinch to the free human spirit.
- John Ruskin said of a later work by Brett (*Val d'Aosta*), 'I never saw the mirror so held up to Nature;¹ but it is Mirror's work, not Man's.' This is ironic considering he encouraged Brett to visit Val d'Aosta and paint in meticulous detail.
- Sir Edwin Henry Landseer RA had painted *The Stonebreaker and His Daughter* in 1830. The labourer is worn out but well dressed and his daughter is clean, well-dressed and sentimental and there is a cottage with smoke coming from the chimney in the background.



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

- This is Henry Wallis's ***The Stonebreaker*** 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.
- It is believed in this case that Wallis did paint 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.



Sir Hubert Von Herkomer, *Hard Times*, 1885, Manchester City Art Gallery

- This is by Hubert von **Herkomer** who had an **impoverished** childhood and **health** problems and only attended **school** for two months.
...Herkomer painted a number of pictures that revealed his sympathy with the poor and disadvantaged, a characteristic fostered in part by his own humble origins...
- His inspiration for this painting was probably the impoverished migrant workers he had seen near his home in Bushey.
- It shows **Coldharbour Lane**, Bushey in Hertfordshire. The road round the corner is now called Herkomer Road and Coldharbour Lane is now lined with **semi-detached** houses (**pop-up**).
- Herkomer wrote about his belief that he had an **obligation** to pictorially depict the **hard times** of the poor and the importance of such magazines like the *Graphic*, saying: '*...It is not too much to say that there was a **visible change in the selection of subjects** by painters in England **after the advent of the Graphic**.*' *The Graphic* was **first published in 1869** and by 1882 employed over 1,000 people. It was an illustrated newspaper that sold for 6d and employed leading artists including Luke Fildes, Hubert von Herkomer, Frank Holl, and John Millais.
- For this painting Herkomer used a **real family**, a labourer called **James Quarry** and his **wife Annie** posed with their two sons **Frederick George** and **James Joseph**. The outdoor setting was painted *en plein air* but the characters in the painting were painted later, indoors at his Art School.
- The wife looks sad and dejected but we could interpret the man's look **hopeful** that some work will turn up. Possibly from the group down the road. We can interpret the painting as one of **hopelessness** and destitution **or** one of **hope**. The interpretation is yours, the viewer, as we have found with many of these paintings.

Notes

- RA in 1890, knighted in 1907



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *Work*, 1852-1863, Manchester Art Gallery
See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work_\(painting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work_(painting))

- The interesting thing about this painting is that Ford Madox Brown wrote a detailed guide to the meaning he intended but let us start with the **form**. Looking at the formal properties is always a good way to start as it requires no knowledge of the artists, its history or the context.
- **What do we mean by a painting's formal properties:**
 - **Composition** – curves, diagonals, triangles, rhythm and spacing
 - **Space** – perspective, both aerial and linear, walking through the picture, how close are we to the picture space?
 - **Form** – such as the sculptural form of bodies, form achieved by chiaroscuro, form created by line and by colour
 - **Tone** – the contrast of light and shade, chiaroscuro.
 - **Colour** – and its use to create a mood and convey an emotion
- The first and simplest formal property is its **size**, it is a **big painting** and large paintings were reserved for history paintings, the highest genre of academic art.
- However, the style and approach are revolutionary which undermines the conventions of history painting.
- We will start with **composition**.
- Brown designed the frames and often used **an arched frame** or pictorial device reminiscent of religious altarpieces.
- To see the overall form it is best to **half close your eyes**
- There are **two versions** of this painting, one in **Manchester Art Gallery** and the other in **Birmingham Art Gallery**.
- The **Manchester** version is the one that **Brown exhibited**, it is the larger version and it was commissioned by **Thomas Plint** based on an early sketch he was shown by Brown.
- This is the **Manchester version** shown without its frame.
- The other version is smaller and was commissioned by **James Leathart** for **£315** in 1859. It is now in the **Birmingham Art Gallery**. It was completed the same year as the original. Brown replaced the

portrait of his wife Emma with one of Leathart's wife, Maria.

Socio-Political – Work and Cleanliness

- Overall, the painting is usually described as being about the **nobility of work** and the **social importance of clean water**.
- We have all heard about the Victorian work ethic and '**cleanliness is next to Godliness**' and this painting is based on those ideas and so to understand the painting as it was understood at the time we need to understand these Victorian values.
- The main theme and the title is the ennobling nature of **work** which is expanded upon in **Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present***. One of Carlyle extended metaphors likens work to digging an ever widening river that drains a pestilent swamp of ignorance.
- The workers divide into groups as we saw earlier including the idle rich and the 'brain workers', **Thomas Carlyle on the left** and **F. D. Maurice**, holding a bible on the right.
- **F. D. Maurice** the Christian reformer created Working Men's Colleges at which Ford Madox Brown lectured. **Maurice gave lectures** on the '**Great Unwashed**' and the relationship between cleanliness and godliness.
- Thomas Carlyle wrote in ***Past and Present***,
 - **Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work!** Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man.
- In the same book Carlyle creates the character of **Bobus Higgins, a corrupt sausage maker** who uses horsemeat in his product to undercut competitors. In the painting the billboards being carried down the road read 'Vote for Bobus'. Bobus is being portrayed as a corrupt politician.
- The other influence was Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (3 volumes in 1851, a fourth by 1861) and his 1849 article in the *Morning Chronicle* in which he wrote, 'I shall consider the whole of the metropolitan poor under three separate phases, according as they will work, they can't work and they won't work'.

Notes

Form

- Note there is a distinction between 'form' as a shorthand for the formal properties of a painting and 'form' meaning, for example, the shape of a figure in the painting.

Ford Madox Brown's Pamphlet Describing Work

This picture, on account of which, in a great measure the present exhibition has been organised, was begun in 1852 at Hampstead. The background, which represents the main street of that suburb not far from the heath, was painted on the spot.

At that time extensive excavations, connected with the supply of water, were going on in

the neighbourhood, and seeing and studying daily as I did the British excavator, or navvy, as he designates himself, in the full swing of his activity (with his manly and picturesque costume, and with the rich glow of colour, which exercise under a hot sun will impart), it appeared to me that he was at least as worthy of the powers of an English painter, as the fisherman of the Adriatic, the peasant of the Campana, or the Neapolitan lazzarone. Gradually this idea developed itself into that of "Work" as it now exists, with the British excavator for a central group, the outward and visible type of *Work*. Here are presented the young navvy in the pride of manly health and beauty; the strong fully developed navvy who does his work and loves his beer, the selfish old bachelor navvy, stout of limb, and perhaps a trifle tough in those regions where compassion is said to reside; the navvy of strong animal nature, who, but that he was, when young *taught* to work at useful work, might even now be working at the *useless crank*. Then Paddy with his larry and his pipe in his mouth.

The young navvy who occupies the place of hero in this group, and in the picture, stands on what is termed a landing-stage, a platform placed half-way down the trench; two men from beneath shovel the earth up to him, as he shovels it on to the pile outside. Next in value of significance to these, is the ragged wretch who has never been *taught* to work; with his gleaming eyes, he doubts and despairs of every one. But for a certain effeminate gentleness of disposition and a love of nature, he might have been a burglar! He lives in Flower and Dean Street, where the policemen walk two and two, and the worst cut-throats surround him, but he is harmless; and before the dawn you may see him miles out in the country, collecting his wild weeds and singular plants to awaken interest, and perhaps find a purchaser in some sprouting botanist. When exhausted he will return to his den, his creel of flowers then rests in an open court-yard, the thoroughfare for the crowded inmates of this haunt of vice, and played in by mischievous boys, yet the basket rarely gets interfered with, unless through the unconscious lurch of some drunkard. The bread winning implements are sacred with the very poor.

In the very opposite scale from the man who can't work, at the further corner of the picture, are two men who appear as having nothing to do. These are the brainworkers, who, seeming to be idle, work, and are the cause of well-ordained work and happiness in others. Sages, such as in ancient Greece, published their opinions in the market square. Perhaps one of these may already, before he or others know it, have moulded a nation to his pattern, converted a hitherto combative race to obstinate passivity, with a word may have centupled the tide of emigration, with another, have quenched the political passions of both factions—may have reversed men's notions upon criminals, upon slavery, upon many things, and still be walking about little known to some. The other, in friendly communion with the philosopher, smiling perhaps at some of his wild sallies and cynical thrusts (for Socrates at times strangely disturbs the seriousness of his auditory by the mercilessness of his jokes—against vice and foolishness), is intended for a kindred and yet very dissimilar spirit. A clergyman, such as the Church of England offers examples of—a priest without guile—a gentleman without pride, much in communion with the working classes, "honouring all men," "never weary in well-doing." Scholar, author, philosopher, and teacher too, in his way, but not above practical efforts, if even for a small result in good. Deeply as he is with the axiom that each unit of humanity feels as much as all the rest combined, and impulsive and

hopeful in nature so that the remedy suggests itself to him concurrently with the evil.

Next to these, on the shaded bank, are different characters out of work, haymakers in quest of employment; a stoic from the Emerald Island, with hay stuffed in his hat to keep the draught out, and need for his stoicism just at present, being short of baccy—a young shoeless Irishman, with his wife, feeding their first-born with cold pap—an old sailor turned haymaker, and two young peasants in search of harvest work, reduced in strength, perhaps by fever—possibly by famine.

Behind the Pariah, who never has learned to work, appears a group, of a very different class, who, from an opposite cause, have perhaps not been sufficiently used to work either. These are the *rich*, who have no need to work,—at least for bread—the "*bread of life*" being neither here nor there. The pastry-cook's tray the symbol of superfluity, accompanies these. It is peculiarly English: I never saw it abroad that I remember, though something of the kind must used. For some years after returning to England I could never quite get over a certain socialistic twinge on seeing it pass, unreasonable as the feeling may have been. Past the pastry-cook's tray come two married ladies. The elder and more serious of the two devotes her energies to tract distributing, and has just flung one entitled "The Hodman's Heaven, or drink for thirsty souls," to the somewhat unpromising specimen of navvy humanity descending the ladder: he scorns it, but with good nature. This well-intentioned lady has, perhaps, never reflected that excavators may have notions to the effect that ladies might be benefited by receiving tracts containing navvies' ideas! nor that excavators are skilled workmen, shrewd thinkers chiefly, and, in general, men of great experience in life, as life presents itself to them.

In front of her is the lady whose only business in life as yet is to dress and look beautiful for our benefit. She probably possesses everything that can give enjoyment to life; how then can she but enjoy the passing moment, and like a flower feed on the light of the sun? Would any one wish it otherwise?—Certainly, not I, dear lady. Only in your own interest, seeing that certain blessings cannot insured for ever—as for instance, health may fail, beauty fade, pleasures through repetition pall—I will not hint at the greater calamities to which flesh is heir—seeing all this, were you less engaged watching that beautiful tiny greyhound in a red jacket that *will* run through that lime, I would beg to call your attention to my group of small, exceedingly ragged, dirty children in the foreground of my picture, where you are about to pass. I would, if permitted, observe that, though at first they may appear just such a group of ragged dirty brats as anywhere get in the way and make a noise, yet, being considered attentively, they like insects, molluscs, miniature plants, &c, develop qualities to form a most interesting study, and occupy the mind at times when all else might fail to attract. That they are motherless, the baby's black ribbons and their extreme dilapidation indicate, making them all the more worthy of consideration, a mother, however destitute, would scarcely leave the eldest one in such a plight. As to the father, I have no doubt he drinks, and will be sentenced in the police-court for neglecting them. The eldest girl, not more than ten, poor child! is very worn-looking and thin, her frock, evidently the compassionate gift of some grown-up person, she has neither the art nor the means to adapt to her own diminutive proportions—she is fearfully untidy therefore, and her way of

wrenching her brother's hair looks vixenish and *against* her. But then a germ or rudiment of good housewifery seems to pierce through her disordered envelope, for the younger ones are taken care of, and nestle to her as to a mother—the sunburnt baby, which looks wonderfully solemn and intellectual as all babies do, as I have no doubt your own little cherub looks at this moment asleep in its charming basinet, is fat and well-to-do, it has even been put into mourning for mother. The other little one though it sucks a carrot in lieu of a sugar-plum, and is shoeless, seems healthy and happy, watching the workmen. The care of the two little ones is an anxious charge for the elder girl, and she has become a premature scold all through having to manage that *boy*—that boy, although a merry, good-natured-looking young Bohemian, is evidently the plague of her life, as boys always are. Even now he *will* not leave that workman's barrow alone, and gets his hair well-pulled, as is natural. The dog which accompanies them is evidently of the same outcast sort as themselves. The having to do battle for his existence in a hard world has soured his temper, and he frequently fights, as by his torn ear you may know; but the poor children may do as they like with him, rugged democrat as he is, he is gentle to them, only he hates minions of aristocracy in red jackets. The old bachelor navy's small valuable bull-pup, also instinctively distrusts outlandish-looking dogs in jackets.

The couple on horseback in the middle distance, consists of a gentleman, still young, and his daughter. (The rich and the poor both marry early, only those of moderate incomes procrastinate.) This gentleman is evidently very rich, probably a Colonel in the army, with a seat in Parliament, and fifteen thousand a-year, and a pack of hounds. He is not an over-dressed man Of the tailors dummy sort—he does not put his fortune on his back, he is too rich for that; moreover, he looks to me an honest true-hearted gentleman (he was painted from one I know), and could he only be got to hear what the two sages in the corner have to say, I have no doubt he would be easily won over. But the road is blocked and the daughter says we must go back, papa, round the other way.

The man with the beer-tray, calling beer ho! so lustily, is a specimen of town pluck and energy contrasted with country thews and sinews. He is humpbacked, dwarfish, and in all matters of taste, vulgar as Birmingham can make him look in the 19th century. As a child he was probably starved, stunted with gin, and suffered to get run over. But energy has brought him through to be a prosperous beer-man and "very much respected," and in his way he also is a sort of hero; that black eye was got probably doing the police of his master's establishment, and in an encounter with some huge ruffian whom he has conquered in fight, and hurled out through the swing-doors of the palace of gin prone on the pavement. On the wall are posters and bills; one of the "Boy's Home, 41 Euston Road," which the lady who is giving tracts will no doubt subscribe to presently, and place the urchin playing with the barrow in; one of "the Working Men's College, Great Ormond Street," or if you object to these, then a police bill offering £50 reward in a matter of highway robbery. Back in the distance we see the Assembly room of the "Flamstead Institute of Arts," where Professor Snoox is about to repeat his interesting lecture on the habits of the domestic cat. Indignant pussies up on the roof are denying his theory in toto.

The less important characters in the background require little comment. Bobus, our old

friend, "the sausage-maker Of Houndsditch," from PAST AND PRESENT, having secured a colossal fortune (he boasts of it *now*), by anticipating the French Hippophage Society in the introduction of horse flesh as a *cheap* article of human food, is at present going in for the county of Middlesex, and, true to his old tactics, has hired all the idlers in the neighbourhood to carry his boards. These being one too many for the bearers, an old woman has volunteered to carry the one in excess.

The episode of the policeman who has caught an orange-girl in the heinous offence of resting her basket on a post, and who himself administers justice in the shape of a push, that sends her fruit over the road, is one of common occurrence, or used to be—perhaps the police now "never do such things."

I am sorry to say that most of my friends, on examining this part of my picture, have laughed over it as a good joke. Only two men saw the circumstance in a different light, one of them was the young Irishman, who feeds his infant with pap. Pointing to it with his thumb, his mouth quivering at the reminiscence, he said, 'that, Sir, I know to be true.' The other was a clergyman, his testimony would perhaps have more weight. I dedicate this portion of the work to the Commissioners of Police.

Through this picture I have gained some experience of the navvy class, and I have usually found, that if you can break through the crust of *mauvaise honte* [bashfulness], which surrounds them in common with most Englishmen, and which, in the case of the navvies, I believe to the cause of much of their bad language, you will find them serious, intelligent men, and with much to interest in their conversation, which, moreover, contains about the same amount of morality and sentiment that is commonly found among men in the active and hazardous walks of life; for that their career is one of hazard and danger, none should doubt. Many stories might told of navvies' daring and endurance, were this the place for them. One incident peculiarly connected with this picture is the melancholy fact, that one of the very men who sat for it lost his life by a scaffold accident, before I had yet quite done with him. I remember the poor fellow telling me, among other things, how he never but once felt nervous with his work, and this was, having to trundle barrows of earth over a plank-line crossing a rapid river at a height of *eighty feet* above the water. But it was not the height he complained of, it was the *gliding motion of the water underneath*.

I have only to observe in conclusion, that the effect of hot July sunlight attempted in this picture, has been introduced, because it seems peculiarly fitted to display *work* in all its severity, and not from any predilection for this kind of light over any other. Subjects, according to their nature, require different effects of light. Some years ago, when one of the critics was commenting on certain works then exhibiting, he used words to the effect that the system of light of those artists was precisely that of the sun itself—a system that would probably outlast, &, &. He might have added, aye and not of the sun only, but of the moon, and of the stars, and, when necessary, of so lowly a domestic luminary as a tallow candle! for tragedies dire as the Oedipus, and tender joyful comedies melting to tears, have ere now been acted to no grander stage-light, I imagine.

For the imperfections in these paintings I submit myself to our great master, the public, and

its authorised interpreters, pleading only that first *attempts* are often incomplete. For though certainly not solitary, attempts of the kind have not yet been so frequent as to have arrived at being out in academic plans. But in this country, at least, the thing is done, "la cosa muove," and never again will the younger generations revert to the old system of making one kind of light serve for all the beautiful varieties under heaven, no more than we shall light our streets with oil, or journey by stage-coach and sailing-packet. "Lo que empieza el hombre para si mismo, Dios le acaba para lo otros." "Ce que l'homme commence pour lui, Dieu l'acheve pour les autres," ["What man begins for himself, God completes for others"] being in a somewhat more Christian if less Catholic tongue, for the benefit of those who, like myself, don't read Spanish.

Finally, if in this Catalogue, I have been somewhat profuse in assigning dates, be it borne in mind that strictly, my only claim is, *not to plagiarise*. Poor must be the country that could boast of only one original thinker for each profession; but England, I rejoice to know, owns many a glorious painter.



Meaning

Floral symbolism

- The Victorians and in particular the Pre-Raphaelites were consumed by floral mania and the meaning of flowers. Brown, a keen gardener painted with botanical accuracy. However, because of the number of floral dictionaries published there were often conflicting meanings. Along the bottom of the frame is a quotation from Genesis (3:19), 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'. This refers to Adam and Eve's labour as punishment for eating from the Tree of Knowledge. In the centre of the painting a young red-headed labourer carries a pail of water and in his right hand is an apple held up to be seen. This is the symbol of temptation and is a reminder that labour leads from Original Sin to redemption and so the apple represents the dignity of labour.
 - Many Victorians and Victorian artists were **obsessed** with the '**language of flowers**', including Thackeray, Edward Lear, John Ruskin and Christina Rossetti and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Particularly the Pre-Raphaelites including Ford Madox Brown.
 - It linked contemporary polite social with scientific observation.
 - Brown was a **keen gardener** and always painted with botanical accuracy.
 - Decoding flowers must be used with care as there were many **contradictory** floral dictionaries in the Victorian period. Charles Dickens makes fun of this in *Nicholas Nickleby*. His mother asks Nicholas what she should do about the attentions of her next door neighbour who has been throwing cucumbers over their garden wall and Nicholas says, with a certain pre-Freudian naivety, he knew of no '**language of vegetables which converts a cucumber into a formal declaration of attachment**'.
1. A young labourer carrying a pail full of water **holds out an apple**, this symbol of Temptation and original sin reminds the Victorian that work is part of God's punishment and it leads to redemption from original Sin. The apple emphasises the dignity of labour.
 2. Next to him a girl with **red hair holds a carrot**, long associated with red hair. Red hair was a fetish of the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Rossetti. Red hair was also associated with the Irish and a large proportion of the navvies in England were Irish. The Great Irish Famine of 1845-8 resulted in millions over Irish families emigrating. On the bank to the right Brown shows an unemployed 'young shoeless Irishman' and his wife. As they were so poor the Irish were often the first to contract cholera and fever. In fact many thought the Irish were responsible for generating and communicating diseases. Two of the peasants on the bank Brown tells us are reduced in strength by fever.

3. The young orphaned child modelled by Brown's son Arthur (who died in infancy prior to the completion of the painting) **carries daisies**, the flowers of childhood and innocence.
4. The **elm trees** in the background are symbols of **dignity** and frame the dignity of work.
5. The **potman** wears a small buttonhole of **fuschias and sweet peas**, emblems of **taste and departure**. This supports Brown's comment that he has 'vulgar tastes' and his wares (beer) are transitory compared with the infinite nature of water.
6. The labourer on the left shovelling **chews the stem of a china or species rose**, symbolising beauty and emphasising the beauty of his labours.
7. The **tract distributor** wears a spray of **Hepatica flowers** in her bonnet a symbol of **confidence** used to establish her haughty character.
8. The woman in front modelled on **James Leathart's wife Maria** (on Brown's wife Emma in the Manchester painting) holds a leaf-shaped parasol and **feminine beauty** as Brown notes is a '**flower that feeds upon the sun**'. But it is a symbol of **Vanitas**, Brown warns '**health may fail, beauty fade, pleasures through repetition pall—I will not hint at the greater calamities to which flesh is heir.**'
9. **On the left is a chickweed seller** or what was colloquially called a 'Botany Ben'. Brown tells us he lived in 'Flower Street' and sold wild flowers and herbs for culinary, medicinal and decorative purposes. In his hat is a spray of wild grain, straw and plantain and he carries **chickweed, symbol of ingenious simplicity** to match his 'effeminate gentleness'. The **straw** was often used, for example, by Hogarth in his painting of Bedlam Hospital, to **signify madness** and Henry Mayhew in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861, Vol. 4) tells us that beggars and those on the bottom rung of society often feigned madness to gain sympathy and greater sales.



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *The Hayfield*, 1855-6, Tate Britain

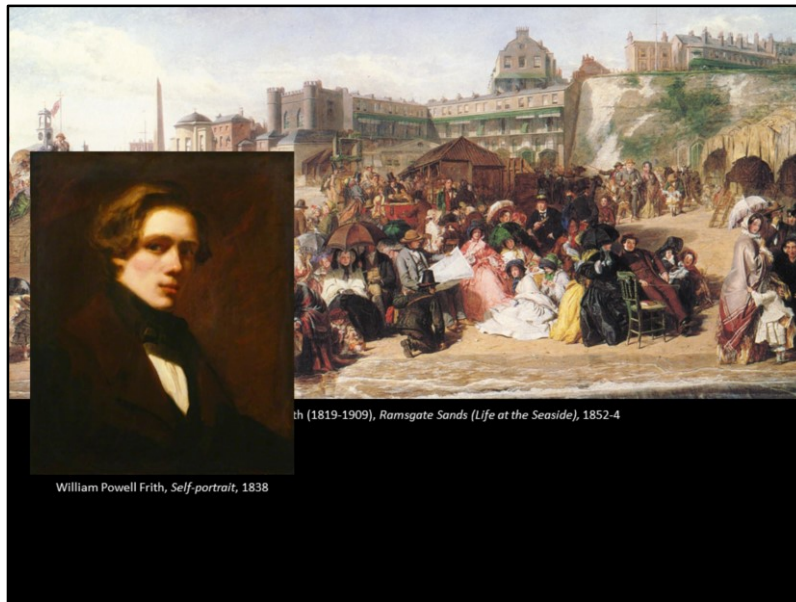
- This dreamlike view of the countryside is by Ford Madox Brown and is called *The Hayfield*. In it he shows us a **hayfield** in the **evening** with the **full moon** risen and the **sun** just **setting** in the west.
- He painted much of the scene **on the spot** and had to **14 miles a day** twice a week every evening from July to September 1855.
- Farm workers sometimes worked by the full moon to gather the corn before the weather changed.
- To the left of the picture, a **farmer on horseback** talks to the haymakers, who have almost completed the day's work. Another farm worker tends the horses, while a group of children await a lift home in the haycart.
- The last patch of corn or wheat standing in the fields was known as the "**Mell**" or "Neck". Cutting it signified the end of the harvest and the beginning of the feast sometimes called the **Mell-supper**.
- It was **bad luck** to be the person to cut the last stand of corn and so farmers and workers would race against other farms to be first to complete the harvest, shouting to announce they had finished.
- In some counties the last stand of corn would be cut by the workers **throwing** their **sickles** at it until it was all down, in others the reapers would take it in turns to be **blindfolded** and sweep a scythe to and fro until all of the **Mell** was cut down.
- It looks here as though the harvest is in and therefore it is time to celebrate.
- However, even though he includes himself in the painting as another worker I don't think the celebration will include him as it is getting late and he has seven miles to walk home. Perhaps he will get a **cab home**, as he admits in his diary he occasional did.

Notes

- The 'moon piece' as Brown called it in his diary.
- This is the rural counterpart of the urban labour shown in *Work*.
- The total time he spent painting was 100-120 hours.
- In September he found the sky had cracked probably because he did not prepare the zinc white underpainting sufficiently well and he had to repaint it.
- In keeping with the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic of 'truth to nature', much of this landscape was painted entirely on the spot.
- It is a twilight view, looking east across rolling green fields on the Tenterden estate at Hendon in

Middlesex.

- In the left foreground the artist himself rests against a small haystack, his equipment scattered about him.
- A full moon has just risen, and the setting sun strikes a distant house on its west side.
- Brown's aim in this picture was to achieve the effect of evening light, '*the wonderful effects...in the hayfields, the warmth of the uncut grass, the greeny greyness of the unmade hay in furrows or tufts*' (Surtees, p.145).
- He began work at 5pm each evening, returning to the same spot about **twice a week** from the end of July until early September 1855.
- In October, after moving from Finchley to Kentish Town, he returned on several more occasions, and was sometimes forced to walk the **fourteen miles** there and back.
- During the **winter months** Brown worked in the **foreground** details. He sketched a hay cart at Cumberland market. He then painted in the artist and his props, working from a set in his conservatory, but he apparently used no models for the farmer, workmen and children.
- Many of these later features lack the freshness of the landscape setting.
- The picture attracted criticism because of its unusual palette. In his 1865 catalogue Brown explained that '*the stacking of the second crop of hay had been much delayed by rain, which heightened the green of the remaining grass, together with the brown of the hay. The consequence was an effect of unusual beauty of colour, making the hay by contrast with the green grass, positively red or pink, under the glow of twilight*' (quoted in Parris, p.134).
- Brown's dealer, White, refused to buy the picture, claiming that the hay was too pink. Brown retouched (darkened the hayfield) the picture and later sold it to his friend and fellow artist, William Morris (1834-96), for 40 guineas while Morris was still an Oxford undergraduate.



William Powell Frith (1819-1909), *Ramsgate Sands (Life at the Seaside)*, 1852-4
 William Powell Frith, *Self-portrait*, 1838

- **Leisure**
- The nineteenth century was a time of massive **population growth** (Britain grew from 9 million in 1801 to about 41 million in 1901 despite about 15 million emigrating) and a move from the **countryside to the towns** (20% lived in towns in 1801, 50% by 1851 and 75% by 1881).
- In the 1840s the **railways** started to provide low cost access to the countryside. This associated with higher wages and more time off created **leisure time**.
- The railways enabled people to travel and **take holidays** and **weekend breaks** by the **seaside**. Previously it had only been the wealthy who could benefit from what were considered to be the healthy pursuit of sea bathing but now an increasing number of middle class could participate.
- This is William Powell Frith's ***Ramsgate Sands***, a painting that caused a sensation.
- Trains first reach Ramsgate in **1846** and although it involved changing at Canterbury the old station was in the centre of the town near the beach.
- Many of Frith's fellow artists were **against** the idea of painting **modern-life** and one called it '*a piece of vulgar Cockney business*' and another '*a tissue of vulgarity*'. However, the **public loved it** and it was an immediate and enormous success. It was one of the **few** paintings at the Royal Academy for which a **guard rail** had to be installed to keep the **public back** – the ultimate sign of success.
- Before *Ramsgate Sands* Frith depicted **figures from history** or literature but this was the first time the contemporary Victorian crowd had been painted. The idea of painting modern life was a **revolutionary idea** of the Impressionists inspired by the writing of Charles Baudelaire, but Frith's pictures predates the Impressionists by twenty years.
- The **bathing machines** had a curtain that could be lowered to sea level but men were allowed to **bathe nude** until the 1860s. Some resorts employed a **dipper** whose job was to push people under water and then help them back into the bathing machine.
- The bathing machine was developed in **Margate** about **1750** when most people **bathed naked**. Legal **segregation** of bathing areas did not end until **1901** and the machines became extinct by **1820**.
- Poorer people from London came to the seaside by train and as they **could not afford bathing machines** they often **bathed naked**. In **1874** a **rector** wrote in his diary that he had to adopt the

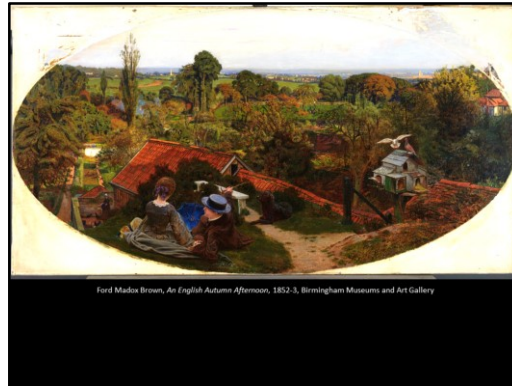
detestable custom of bathing in drawers, he wrote, *'If ladies don't like to see men naked why don't they keep away from the sight?'*

- Boys and young men would bathe naked even in the Edwardian Era but middle class girls and women always had to be fully covered with clothes that did not expose their shape.
- Frith is showing a world of **mixed sexes, ages, classes and occupations** but he **maintains** the important **class distinctions** and generally the lower classes are shown as deferential and respectful. There is an intellectual air among the entertainment and seven women are reading books. One man is an idler and another appears to be flirting and two people are potentially **voyeurs** with telescopes watching **women bathing**. However, one is an **old man** and the other a **young girl**. No bathers are shown in the painting and there are **no coarse or vulgar displays**.
- Queen Victoria bought it for £1,000 and had stayed in the tall house, Albion House.
- He used **real people** and friends rather than models. Can you see the self-portrait? (**pop-up**)

Key point: an important painting that reflected the way in which Victorian life was starting to change.

Notes

- It was bought from the artist by Messrs Lloyd who sold it to Queen Victoria the same year, 1854, for £1,000. Although this was the price they paid they retained engravings and print rights so it was a highly lucrative deal. Victoria had stayed in Albion House in Ramsgate before she became Queen. This is the highest house in the middle of Frith's painting. Victoria had also entered the sea from a bathing machine in Osborne, Isle of Wight for the first time in 1847.
- It was inspired by a holiday Frith and his family took to Ramsgate in 1851. He always painted from real people and liked to use friends and family as he found professional models often turned up drunk and had no sense of responsibility. The artist included a self-portrait (peeping over the shoulder of the man on the far right), while the little girl paddling in the centre staring directly at the painter is thought to have been his daughter. He also shows himself, if I display his portrait can you find him?
- My professor at the Courtauld devoted a large part of her doctoral thesis to this painting and she examined and analysed every person and their social role within society. Seaside holidays or weekends had become possible with the advent of the railway.
- Frith went on to paint many other scenes of everyday life such as *The Derby Day* (1858) and *The Railway Station* (1862) for which Frith was paid an astonishing 8,000 guineas. So 15 years before Claude Monet (1840-1926) was brave enough to paint a modern-life railway station (*La gare Saint-Lazare*, 1877) Frith was making a fortune from the same daring subject matter.



Ford Madox Brown, *An English Autumn Afternoon*, 1852-3, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery

- By the **1850s social conditions** were **beginning to change**, **harvests improved**, the economy improved, conditions slowly improved and we enter a more modern period particularly for the middle class. The concept of leisure was created and the railways enabled far more people to get into the countryside as a pleasurable, leisure activity.
- At the beginning of the century the countryside was visited by a few wealthy people looking for the picturesque. By mid-century workers in London could afford to travel to Margate or Southend for a day out.
- But there were still **many social issues** and the **Crimean War** was about to start in October 1853 but I think we can leave this happy couple contemplating the peaceful scene with a feeling that British society had come through a **disastrous period** but was about to enjoy a period of **relative prosperity**.
- Art had also come a **long way**. At the beginning of the **century** it was dominated by the **Royal Academy** and the ideal landscape was based on copying the style of the **Old Masters** such as Claude and Poussin. By **mid-century** the Pre-Raphaelites had dramatically changed things with their '**truth to nature**', bright **colours** and acceptance of the beauty of the everyday, **modern world**.
- Ford Madox **Brown** was an artist **ahead of his time** and ahead of John Ruskin. **Ruskin's advice** to artists was to paint a scene, '*rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, scorning nothing*' but after seeing this painting exhibited at the British Institute in 1855 Ruskin commented:
What made you take such a very ugly subject? It was a pity, for there was some nice painting in it.
- Brown replied **contemptuously**: '*Because it lay out of a back window.*' Perhaps he meant that if we follow Ruskin's advice and go to nature **scorning nothing** then we see **all nature is beautiful**.
- **Ruskin** wanted paintings to teach us a **moral lesson** but Brown **celebrates** the **ordinary** and **unpretentious**.
- There is also a little known sub-text. The aristocratic owner of Hampstead Heath wanted to build villas where the sandy path can be seen and there was a public outcry and a debate about whether land was for the privileged few or open to all. As we know Hampstead Heath is still an open space for the public.

- We have come a long way from the **Napoleonic Wars, turnip growing** to feed the nation, land **enclosures, the Hungry Forties**, to the **workhouse**. We have seen riots, starvation and emigration but through it all the artist has found ways to represent the land, tell a story and show the beauty of the English countryside.
- Thank you.

Notes

- The painting is also concerned with the **democratisation of leisure**.
- The couple are an ordinary middle-class couple taking pleasure in the open land and Brown would often walk across the Heath to visit Emma in Hendon.
- Many of the '**modern**' subjects Brown chose to paint were inspired by places and events from his own life but Ruskin looked for scenic beauty or historical associations.
- Brown described this as a literal transcript of the scenery around London at 3:00pm in late October. It was his largest and most ambitious painting painted from the first floor window of his flat in Hampstead looking across the Heath to Highgate. He painted it over two autumns and finished it the following year. He painted a 'literal transcript' rather than the 'scenic effectiveness' of a Claudian landscape. He has a high horizon, strong colours in the distance, he has two competing areas of attention and a horizontal band of foliage with no repoussoir or framing device. The oval shape mimics the human visual field but the two figures looking over the scene is a traditional device to lead the viewers eye into the picture.
- It was originally called *An English Autumn Afternoon, Hampstead – Scenery in 1853*, a very specific time and place and by dropping the that designator he turned it into a generalized scene about landscape and leisure.



David Cox (1783-1859), *Rhyl Sands*, c.1854, Tate Britain

- I end with a different type of English landscape. This is by **David Cox** and was painted in **1854, twenty years before the Impressionists** came to prominence.
- It was ten years before four young painters—Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Frédéric Bazille—met while studying under the academic artist Charles Gleyre.
- David Cox was an English landscape painter, one of the most important members of the Birmingham School of landscape artists and an early precursor of impressionism. He is considered one of the greatest English landscape painters who painted over 300 works in oil towards the end of his career. His oils are now considered "one of the greatest, but least recognised, achievements of any British painter."
- He had earlier painted Rhyl sands in watercolour in 1842 but his later oil paintings of Rhyl sands painted in 1854 when he was 71 are considered his greatest works.

Notes

- Terry Riggs, Tate website (1998): Three oils by Cox of Rhyl sands have survived, although it is known from sales records that he made others. Closest in style to the Tate's painting is the picture in Manchester City Art Gallery, which shares the same light palette and sketch-like handling. In the Manchester version the buildings at the right of Rhyl Sands are seen from a wider angle and given greater prominence, while the sky is more uniformly painted and less broken up by clouds. A much larger and more conventionally finished canvas, dated 1854-5, is in Birmingham City Art Gallery. Unlike the Manchester and Tate pictures, this shows Rhyl sands at or near high tide. The sea is a principal feature of the composition and the figures are concentrated on what remains of the beach at the right-hand side. The date of the Tate Gallery and Manchester paintings is not known, but the pictures may well have been the starting point for the more elaborate Birmingham canvas of 1854-5 and can therefore reasonably be associated with Cox's visits to Rhyl in 1854. Neither appears to have been sold in Cox's lifetime. Several watercolours by Cox of Rhyl sands are known, including one, dated 1854, which corresponds approximately in composition to the Manchester and Tate paintings. It is difficult to say whether this or possibly other watercolours were used in any way as preparations for the two oils or whether the latter were painted directly on the spot, which is the impression they give.

- Primarily a watercolorist, Cox only took up oil painting seriously around 1840, when he took lessons from William M-4ller. Rhyl Sands shows him working with total mastery in the medium. According to his friend and second biographer William Hall, Cox 'had misgivings that his method of working was not in accordance with the accepted practice - he cherished the notion that there were secrets which "the oil men" would not tell him ... He suspected that something was wrong, or at least odd and unusual in the manipulation, or in the laying on of his colours' (J.T. Bunce, ed., *A Biography of David Cox*, 1881, pp.153-4). Cox's technique in the Tate and Manchester pictures, and indeed his whole approach, is certainly unique in British landscape painting of the 1850s.

TURNER AND TURNIPS

ANY QUESTIONS?

Dr. Laurence Shafe



Thank you.

Course: Modern British Art: 1900-Today

Held at: The White House, 45 The Avenue, Hampton
TW12 3RN (free parking, café on site)

Dates: Term 1: 1900-1950
Wednesday 21 September – 30 November 2016
Term 2: 1950 – Today
Wednesday 4 January – 15 March 2017

Time: 10:45-12:45 (with a 15 min coffee break)

Fee: £70 each term of 10 classes
Contact: Laurence Shafe
Laurence@shafe.co.uk

