What is a Landscape?

- John Ruskin said that landscape painting was the '*chief artistic creation of the nineteenth century*'
- Kenneth Clark of Civilization fame, regarded it as the '*dominant art*' of the nineteenth century.
- About a **third** of all paintings at the Royal Academy annual exhibition were landscapes.
- We need to **start** by asking what we mean by landscape. It seems obvious, a painting of a scene, but how is a scene selected? It is often assumed that landscape simply involves going into the countryside and painting what you see but it is an artificial construction.
- Basically, there is land and we choose to represent one part rather than another based on complex criteria.
- There are two major factors – **aesthetic** and our **relationship** with the land such as ownership, farming, working the land and tourism. These result in many different approaches and types of landscape style and many innovations were made during the nineteenth century which is why I talk about the landscape reimagined.
- A landscape is a particular artistic, social and political construction based on the land.
- As Kenneth Clark points out, people who work on the land are often not aware they are in a landscape. A landscape must be discovered and then looked at or, if you are an artist, represented in a particular way. I look at the social and political issues surrounding land in order to be able to interpret nineteenth-century landscapes in a new light.
- There were topographical landscapes, pastoral landscapes, Romantic, picturesque, sublime and many others that will be examined.

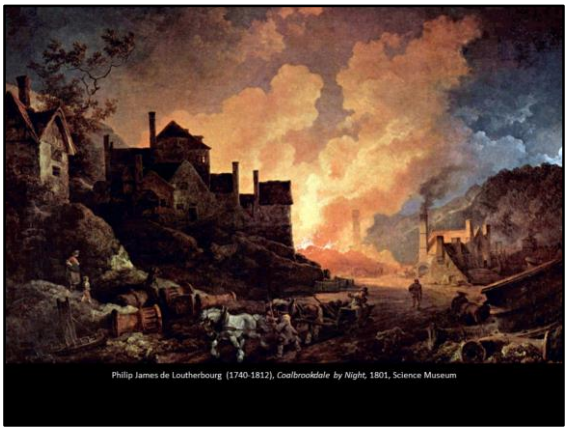
- The idea of the sublime goes back to antiquity and one of the earliest writers was Pseudo-Longinus, ***On the Sublime,*** 1st or 3rd century CE.

Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), *Rocky Landscape with a Huntsman and Warriors*, *c.* 1670

- Salvator Rosa is often mentioned as a precursor to Romanticism and the sublime.
- Romantic theorists saw **Salvator Rosa** (e.g. *Rocky Landscape with Hunstman 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.
- **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.

Notes

- 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.
- Burke's sublime predates Romanticism but both place importance of the irrational and upon human feelings as opposed to reason. The Romantic Sublime includes works by Turner, such as *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842) and by John Martin, such as his *Last Judgement* Triptych.



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

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

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**. It is held in the collections of the Science Museum in London. The blazing furnaces, the heat and the danger instil a sense of awe and terror. These are aspects of the sublime.

<u>Sublime</u>

- Edmund Burke's description of the sublime was an importance concept as it was beyond reason and this was 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.
- 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.

- Some argue the **sublime has returned** in terms of the interest in horror and **horror films**.

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

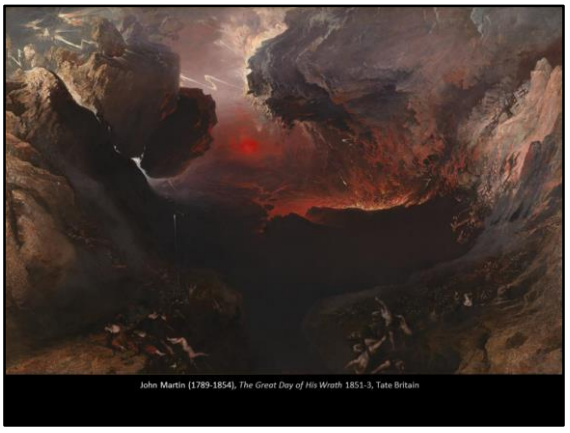
Philip James De Loutherbourg (1740–1812), *An Avalanche in the Alps*, 1803, Tate Gallery

- de Loutherbourg's *An Avalanche in the Alps* gives a sense of the massive scale of the natural world compared with the minute human presence. This is created in this composition by means of a contrast between the diminutive figures and the vastness of their surroundings and by the dramatic contrast of the white snow and the dark rocks.

References

- For more information see http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime

and http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/christine-riding-and-nigel-llewellyn-british-art-and-the-sublime-r1109418



John Martin (1789-1854), *The Great Day of His Wrath* 1851-3, Tate Britain

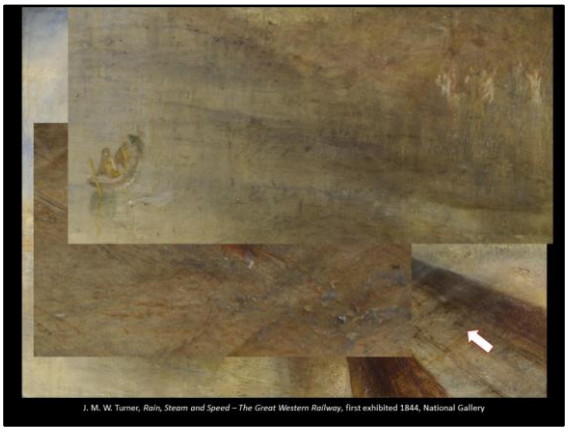
- The sublime was often associated with biblical stories and John Martin produced three paintings of the Last Judgement, the Judgement Series inspired by Revelation, the last book of the New Testament.
- This was **Romantic** and conveyed the **sublime forces of nature** and the helplessness of man to combat God's will.
- An entire city (according to some **Babylon**) is being torn down and thrown into the abyss.
- One art historian wrote, '*Catastrophic and apocalyptic visions acquired a remarkable common currency*'.
- His son said he was inspired to paint it after a journey at night through the Black Country (north-west Birmingham with a 30' coal seam, the thickest in Great Britain). Coalbrookedale was just west of the Black Country.
- The Book of Judgement is sealed with seven seals (white horse, red horse, black horse, pale horse, "under the later", sixth, interlude, seventh introduced the trumpets) and as each is broken terrifying events occur. When the sixth seal is broken:

  > *… and, lo, there was a great earthquake' and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;*
  > *And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.*
  > *And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places*.
  > (*Revelation* 6:12-14)
- The seven seals are followed by the seven trumpets, then the seven spiritual figures, the seven bowls, Babylon, Marriage Supper of the Lamb, Judgement of the Beast, Devil and Dead, the New Heaven and Earth and New Jerusalem.
- The three pictures became famous after his death were **toured** around

England and America.

- They were described as '*The most sublime and extraordinary pictures in the world valued at 8000 guineas*' but they quickly became outmoded to the Victorians and failed to find a buyer. The Royal Academy regarded them as **vulgar**.
- By the twentieth century he had fallen into obscurity and was known as 'Mad martin'.
- In 1935 the three paintings were sold for £7. They were reunited by the Tate in 1974.

For more information see http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/martin-the-great-day-of-his-wrath-n05613



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

Key point: Turner used the sublime to create an aesthetic experience from technological developments

J. M. W. Turner

- This is an example of one of Turner's late landscapes. It is not clear whether some of his late landscapes are finished works that were intended to be displayed but this is clearly the case with *Rain, Steam and Speed*.
- 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. My view is that this is a masterpiece precisely because it contains both contradictory interpretations.
- 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? Again it is up to you to decide.

William Dyce (1806-1864), *Pegwell Bay, Kent - a Recollection of October 5th 1858,* ?1858–60, Tate Britain

- This painting has been analysed in various ways. One interpretation is that it is about time and it therefore invokes **feelings of the sublime** concerning the **vast age of the earth**. Critics at the time described it as a travesty of the sublime because its microscopic detail prevents an overall unified view.
- It shows the middle class interest in geology. **Charles Lyell** had published his *Principles of Geology* in three volumes between 1830 and 1833, and the entire scientific community was interested in the controversial attempt to reconcile the implications of geological time with Biblical scripture.
- The **variety of ages** in the figures may represent the passage of time, while the **setting sun** and the **autumnal chill** in the air serve as a reminder of **death**.
- Dyce's painting was the product of a trip he made in the autumn of 1858 to the popular holiday resort of Pegwell Bay near Ramsgate, on the east coast of Kent. It shows his wife, her two sisters and his son gathering shells and fossils.
- The artist's interest in geology is shown by his careful recording of the flint-encrusted strata and eroded faces of the chalk cliffs.
- The barely visible trail of **Donati's comet** in the sky places the human activities in far broader dimensions of time and space. The **artist-scientist** on the right is holding a **telescope**.
- Discovered by Giovanni Donati on June 2, 1858, after the Great Comet of 1811 it was the **brightest comets** to appear during the 19th century. It has a period of about **2,000 years**.
- The geologically unstable cliffs along much of England's south coast were (and still are) a paradise for those in search of fossils, including the famous fossil hunter Mary Anning (1799-1847) of Lyme Regis, who is credited with the discovery of the first plesiosaur skeleton.

- The *Illustrated London News* considered the work to be
  '*a very curiosity of minute handiwork ... being painted in the finest of fairy like lines ... with a completeness and exactness which render every microscopic detail palpable to the naked eye*'
- but concluded that the ultimate effect of such representation was '*a rapid descent from the sublime to the droll*'.

<u>William Dyce</u>

- William Dyce (1806-1864) was born in Aberdeen, Scotland. After studying at the Royal Academy Schools in London and in Rome, Dyce became well known for his paintings, and between 1837 and 1843 was Superintendent of the Government School of Design. He later won a competition to complete fresco paintings for the newly rebuilt Houses of Parliament, a project that occupied him almost until his death. However, Dyce was also interested in intellectual and scientific pursuits, for example, writing a prize-winning essay on electro-magnetism in 1830.
- As a deeply **devout High Anglican**, Dyce probably intended these figures to elicit feelings of **wonder** in the viewer – an idea that connects with the poet and critic Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notion of the sublime in which individual consciousness is subsumed by a sense of the **eternal**. On the other hand, the **estrangement** between the figures and between the figures and the scene could be seen to undermine the reference to the sublime.

What do we mean by Romantic?

- Painting based on the artists **feeling**, a reaction against the Industrial Revolution and the aristocratic Age of Enlightenment. Placed new emphasis on intense emotion, horror, terror and awe particularly when facing sublime nature. At its peak from 1800 to 1850.
- Spontaneity was important and a rejection of the rational and Classical and a revival of medievalism**.**
- **Romanticism first showed itself in landscape painting**. From the 1760s artists turned to wilder landscapes and storms. For example, Turner and Constable.
- Some Romantic artists verged on the mystical such as William Blake and Samuel Palmer.
- Francis Goya (1746-1828, Spanish) is perhaps the greatest Romantic painter.
- The medievalism of the pre-Raphaelites grew out of an interest in the Romantic movement. Dreamy evocations of chivalry and romantic love. They were both Realists but also in their individual subjectivity, rebellion against authority, rejection of idealisation they were Romantic.
- **Brett** misjudged **Ruskin's** Romantic, **nature-worship** and failed to see that Ruskin demanded Turner's imaginative, **transformative** genius.
- The sense of the artists alienation from society shown in Ford **Madox Brown's** *Last of England* makes it a **Romantic** as well as a realist work.
- Romantic poets and novelists such as Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819).
- Realism was a rejection of Romanticism.

Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Windsor Castle from the Thames* c.1807-19

Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Windsor Castle from the Thames* c.1805

Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Windsor Castle from Salt Hill ('Sheep-Washing, Windsor')* c.1818

John Constable (1776-1837), *The Hay Wain*, 1821, National Gallery
For more information see http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/john-constable-the-hay-wain

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

Picturesque

The painting is **Romantic** and **picturesque** but 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.

John Constable, *The Valley Farm*, 1835, 147.3 x 125.1 cm., Tate Britain

For more information 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.

<u>Notes</u>

<u>Voting Reform</u>

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). Seats with less than 2,000 voters were removed.

<u>Samuel Palmer – Visionary Landscapes</u>

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.

Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), *Coming from Evening Church*, 1830, Tate Britain

- **Romantic**.
- Samuel Palmer moved to the rural village of Shoreham and founded an artistic community.
- There he produced his **now most famous** works such as *Coming from Evening Church.*
- At the bottom Palmer has painted '1830, Shoreham, Kent, S. Palmer'. He very rarely added the date to a painting. Surely this is his recording a time of change to his beloved Shoreham. This painting shows his view of the countryside, as enveloping the parishioners and protecting them.
- They are infused with a sense of **other worldly beauty** and painting was produced in 1830 the year the **Swing Riots** first reached Shoreham.

- To **explain the Swing Riots** I need to first 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 idyllic landscapes in the first part of the nineteenth century were produced against a background of rural riots

Notes

- Palmer lived in Shoreham for 7 years.

Swing Riots

- A shepherd and shepherdess tend their flock while harvesters gather the ripe corn by the light of the moon. Palmer was disillusioned by the less than idyllic countryside at the time. It began with the destruction of threshing machines in 1830 in East Kent near to where Palmer lived. In three weeks over 100 threshing machines had been destroyed, hay ricks were burned down and cattle maimed.
- Andrew Meikle (1719–1811) was an early mechanical engineer credited with inventing the threshing machine, a device used to remove the outer husks from grains of wheat. He also had a hand in assisting Firbeck in the invention of the Rotherham Plough (much lighter and the first to be made in factories). This was regarded as one of the key developments of the British Agricultural Revolution in the late 18th century. The invention was made around 1786, although some say he only improved on an earlier design.
- They were known as the Swing Riots and were led by the fictitious Captain Swing whose signature was appended to threatening letters sent to farmers, magistrates and parsons. One of the main reasons for the Swing Rots were the Enclosure Acts. These Acts removed land that had been used for centuries by poor people to graze animals and grow their own produce and so achieve independence. The Church also demanded cash payment of a tithe for the parson from everyone whether they were a member of the Church or not. The cash levy was rigorously enforced whether the poor person could afford it or not.
- Only one person is recorded as having been killed during the Swing Riots, a rioter killed by a soldier or farmer but 2,000 were brought to trial, 252 sentenced to death (though only 19 were actually hanged), 644 imprisoned and 481 transported to Australia. The aim was a minimum living wage not to overturn society although many people blamed the French as the French revolution of July 1830 broke out a month before the Swing Riots started. Ultimately the Swing Riots succeeded as they put pressure on the government that led to the Reform Act of 1832 and the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.
- It is interesting that although the Riots spread across the countryside and Constable mentions that he could see ricks burning almost every night there is no or little evidence of the social unrest in the landscapes of the period. If anything, Constable's landscapes reflect the farming conditions of twenty years previously when workers would be hired for a year at an annual hiring fair or mop rather than the one week contracts introduced later. In Turner's 1809 drawing 'Harvest Home' he shows the farmer and his family celebrating the harvest alongside the workers, something that had stopped by the 1830s as a gulf developed between the farmers and their workers.

Luddites

- Textile workers who protested about labour-saving machinery from 1811 to 1817. It started in Nottingham in 1811. The origin of the name is unknown but may be after Ned Ludd a youth who smashed two stocking frames in 1779. The name evolved into General Ludd or King Ludd, a person who, like Robin Hood, was reputed to live in Sherwood Forest. It was part of a rising tide of working class discontent and was associated with the harsh conditions during the Napoleonic Wars. The agricultural version was the widespread Swing Riots of 1830 in southern and eastern England.

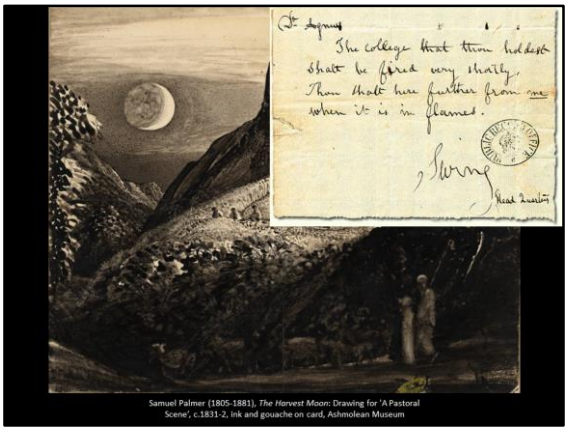
Tolpuddle Martyrs

- 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 (except for James Hammett who has a previous conviction for theft). The others moved to London, Ontario where they are buried.

References

See https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/palmer-the-harvest-moon-drawing-for-a-pastoral-scene-n03699/text-summary



Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), *The Harvest Moon*: Drawing for 'A Pastoral Scene', c.1831-2, ink and gouache on card, Ashmolean Museum
For more information see https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/palmer-the-harvest-moon-drawing-for-a-pastoral-scene-n03699/text-summary

Key point: all these idyllic landscapes in the first part of the nineteenth century were produced against a background of rural riots

Pastoral

- **Pastoral - man made beauty in nature**, became less popular at the end of the 18th century in England but flourished in the US. One exception was **Samuel Palmer** a follower of **William Blake**. The group of Blake-influenced artists were known as the **Ancients**.
- 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. He returned to London in 1835 and produced more conventional work for the rest of his life in order to sell it more easily to support his wife and children. Tragically his eldest son died at the age of 19, a blow from which he never recovered.

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- It is interesting that although the Riots spread across the countryside and Constable mentions that he could see **ricks burning almost every night** there is no or little evidence of the social unrest in the landscapes of the period. If anything, Constable's landscapes reflect the farming conditions of twenty years previously when workers would be hired for a year at an annual hiring fair or mop rather than the one week contracts introduced later.

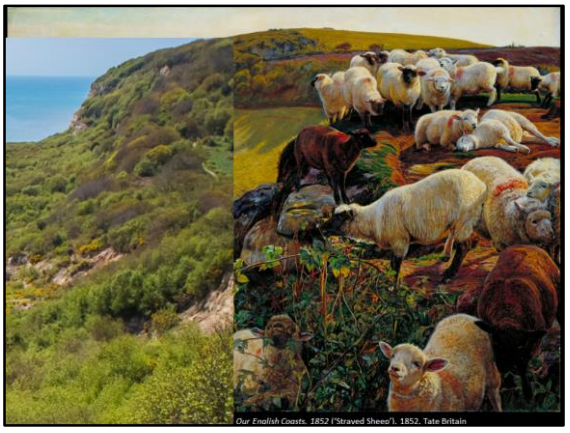
Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), *The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last Berth to be broken up,* 1839, National Gallery

- If you were born in the 1930s or 40s think how much the world has changed. This was turner's view as he was **64** in **1838**. He was born in 1775, 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. In 1839 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.
- 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.


PRE-RAPHAELITE LANDSCAPE



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), *Our English Coasts, 1852* ('Strayed Sheep'), 1852, Tate Britain

Key point: the Pre-Raphaelites demanded the faithful reproduction of detail and colour

<u>William Holman Hunt</u>

- John Ruskin (1819-1900) in *Modern Painters* (1847) urged young artists to

  > *…go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instructions; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth*.

- Following this advice William Holman created this painting, his greatest and most Pre-Raphaelite landscape. It is the **Lover's seat**, a beauty spot on the cliffs overlooking **Covehurst Bay**, near Hastings. Hunt paid attention to natural detail, although the cliffs, sheep and parts of the foreground were all painted from different viewpoints. The **butterflies** in the left foreground were painted **indoors** from a live specimen.
- F.G. Stephens, a critic and member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, suggested it '***might be taken as a satire on the reported defenseless state of the country against foreign invasion***'. In 1852 the press had created fears of an invasion because of Napoleon III's dictatorial régime.
- The original frame bore the inscription '*The Lost Sheep*', and when Hunt **sent** the painting to the ***Exposition Universelle*** **in Paris in 1855** he changed the title to *Strayed Sheep*, thus underlining the picture's religious symbolism.
- Critics noticed the treatment of light and Ruskin wrote in 1883 that

  > *It showed to us, for the **first time in the history of art**, the absolutely*

faithful balances of colour and shade by which actual sunshine might be transposed into a key in which the harmonies possible with material pigments should yet produce the same impressions upon the mind which were caused by the light itself.

Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *Pretty Baa-Lambs*, 1851-9, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

- This is one of the **first landscapes** including models posed and **painted outside**. His **second wife Emma** and their **daughter Cathy** posed for the mother and child, and Brown hired the sheep from a local farmer. Madox brown wrote '*The lambs & sheep used to be brought every morning from Clappam [sic] common in a truck. One of them eat [sic] up all the flowers one morning in the garden where they used to behave very ill. The background was painted on the common*.' He posed Emma in eighteenth century clothing as he had been working on.
- His finished picture was one of the most thoroughgoing exercises in the Pre-Raphaelite doctrine of '***truth to nature***'. A sense of its shocking novelty is evident even in a comment made over forty years after it was painted by the critic R. A. M. Stevenson. In 1896 he said to the artist's son-in-law Ford Madox Hueffer:

  > '*By God!* ***the whole history of modern art begins with that picture****. Corot, Manet, the Marises [three Dutch landscape painters], all the Fontainebleau school, all the Impressionists never did anything but imitate that picture*'.
- Although this comparison by Stevenson is not strictly accurate it does suggest that affinities between Barbizon, Impressionism and Pre-Raphaelitism are closer than might at first appear.

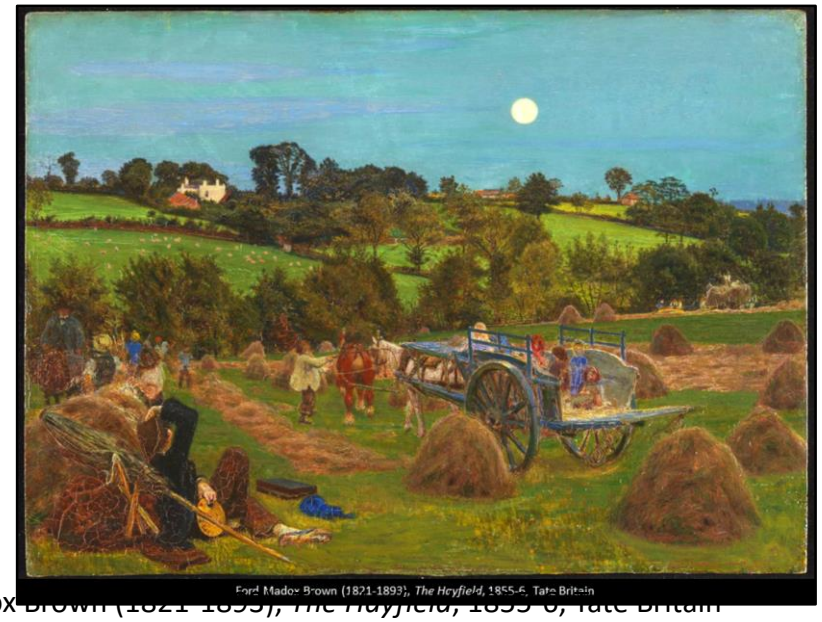
Key point: this painting has been said to have been the beginning of modern art

<u>Ford Madox Brown</u>

- His father was a purser in the Royal Navy and his grandfather a well-known medical theorist. Hs father married Caroline Madox, an old Kentish family from which Madox brown gets his name. His parents had limited resources and moved to Calais to find cheaper lodgings. Ford Madox brown was born in Calais in 1821.

His education was limited as the family moved between Calais and family in Kent. He showed artistic talent and the family moved to Bruges so he could study under Albert Gregorius. From there he moved to Ghent and then Antwerp to study under Egide Wappers. His mother died in 1839, his sister 1840 and his father 1842.

- He first exhibited at the RA in 1840 and then completed *The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots* with his cousin and future wife, **Elisabeth Bromley** as model. He married in 1841 and their first child died in 1842 and their daughter Emma Lucy was born in 1843. She suffered from consumption (pulmonary tuberculosis) and died in 1846 aged 27 and her way back from Rome. **Emma Hill** became a frequent model from 1848 and his mistress. They lived together but convention meant he could not marry the illiterate daughter of a bricklayer. Catherine Emily was born in 1850 and they eventually married in 1853. Oliver Madox brown (1855-1874) known as Nolly showed promise as an artist and poet but died of blood poisoning. It was a crushing blow and they kept his room as a shrine. Another son Arthur was born in 1856 and used as the model for the baby in *Work* but he died only 10 months old. Lucy and Catherine were competent artists and Lucy married William Michael Rossetti in 1874. Catherine married Francis Hueffer and their son was the novelist Ford Madox Brown and grandparents of the Labour Home Secretary Frank Soskice.
- He competed for the Palace of Westminster murals but was not successful but his early work was admired by Rossetti who asked him to become his tutor. Through Rossetti he met the PRB and adopted brighter colours and their realistic style.
- He was also influenced by Holbein and by Friedrich Overbeck and Peter Cornelius.
- He struggled to find buyers and considered emigrating to India.
- In 1852 he started work on *The Last of England* (inspired by Thomas Woolner emigrating to Australia) and *Work*. *The Last of England* was sold in 1859 for 325 guineas. He found patrons in the north including Thomas Plint (supported *Work*), George Rae, John Miller (Liverpool, tobacco merchant) and James Leathart (1820-95, Newcastle industrialist with lead factory, bought ***Pretty Baa-Lambs***).
- He lost his patience with the RA and founded the Hogarth Club in 1858 with William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Rossetti. He resigned in 1860 and it collapsed in 1861.
- He was a founding partner of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. in 1861 and designed furniture and stained glass. It dissolved in 1874 and Morris took over.
- The 12 Manchester murals were his last major work, took six years and he finished when he was 72.



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.

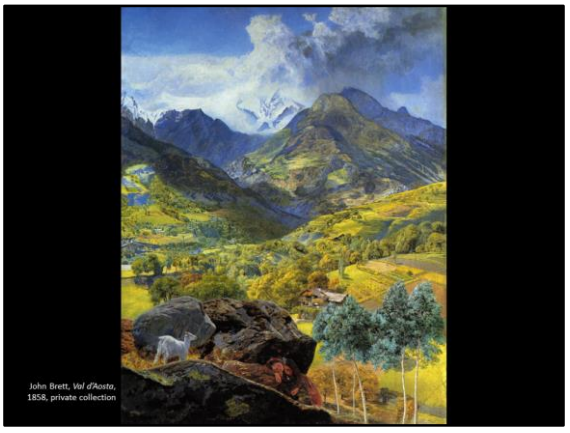
Notes

- 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.

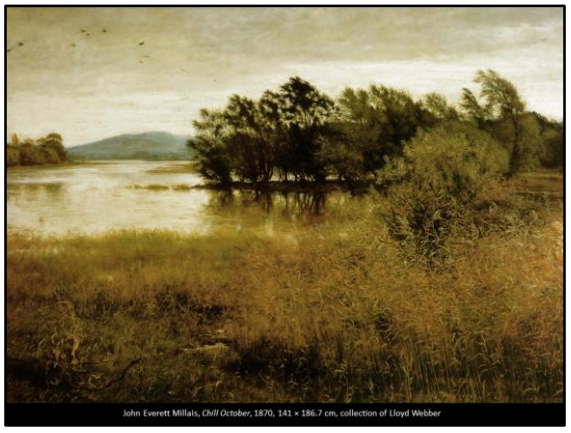
John Brett (1831-1902), *Glacier of Rosenlaui*, 1856, Tate Britain

- John Brett was a scientist and artist who was inspired by John Ruskin's book *Modern Painters*, particularly the fourth volume 'Of Mountain Beauty'.
- He spent the summer of 1856 at Rosenlaui in Switzerland and painted this scene with a Pre-Raphaelite attention to minute detail.
- The boulder in the centre foreground is granite and behind it a block of gneiss with its folding curves.
- The picture offers a sublime vision of nature with the massive glacier pushing rocks before it. The massive scale is shown by the tint conifer trees on top of the mountain.
- On his return it was seen by Dante Gabriel Rossetti who showed it to Ruskin who was delighted.



John Brett, *Val d'Aosta*, 1858, private collection

- Unfortunately this screen does not do justice to the painting. It could be examined with a magnifying glass and every scrap of lichen and tiny rock can be seen.
- This is perhaps the ultimate Pre-Raphaelite attention to detail. Scientific precision and a strict following of Ruskin precepts, or was it?
- Had Brett gone too far? His earnestness seems to go too far—faithful to the point of pedantry, realistic to the point of servitude. Ruskin criticized the work '*Mirror's work, not Man's'* and he later wrote about Brett that '*he took to mere photography of physical landscape'*.
- But was it mere photography or had Brett achieved a level of scientific precision that removed the mysticism surrounding Ruskin's pseudo-science?



John Everett Millais, *Chill October*, 1870, 141 × 186.7 cm, collection of Lloyd Webber

Key point: Convincing as landscape but monotone quality and dying light are emotional, painted after the death of his son.

- In the Edinburgh Review of 1872 the painting is thought to epitomise the change in landscape painting over the previous few years. Instead of the artist creating a particular beautiful scene the artist takes an ordinary aspect of the material world. The critic compares it with the difference between Elizabeth Gaskell's (1810-1865) 'Cranford' (1853) with its semi-comic, semi-serious characters, and George Eliot's (1819-1880, born Mary Ann Evans) 'Middlemarch' (1871-2) with its ordinary, everyday people, 'whom we might have met any day'.

The first person to use '**art for art's sake**' ('l'art pour l'art') as a slogan was Théophile **Gautier** (1811–1872) and this artistic creed was in **defiance** of many, such as **John Ruskin**, who thought the role of art was to serve a moral or didactic purpose. The slogan means that art is valuable simply as art and it justifies itself. Artists may be morally neutral or subversive.

James McNeill Whistler wrote:

> *Art should be independent of all claptrap —should stand alone [...] and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism and the like.*

The slogan was first used in England in 1868, by both Walter Pater, the critic, and Algernon Charles Swinburne, the poet.

James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne: Blue and Silver – Chelsea,* 1871, Tate Britain

Key point : Whistler's landscapes broke with many traditions and led to the Whistler v. Ruskin trial about the nature of art

<u>Art for Art's Sake Landscape</u>

- This is the first of Whistler's **Nocturnes**, a name suggest by his patron Frederick Leyland. Whistler's aim was to convey a sense of beauty and tranquillity. He wrote,

  '*By using the word 'nocturne' I wished to indicate an artistic interest alone, divesting the picture of any outside anecdotal interest which might have been otherwise attached to it. A nocturne is an arrangement of line, form and colour first*' (quoted in Dorment and MacDonald, p.122).

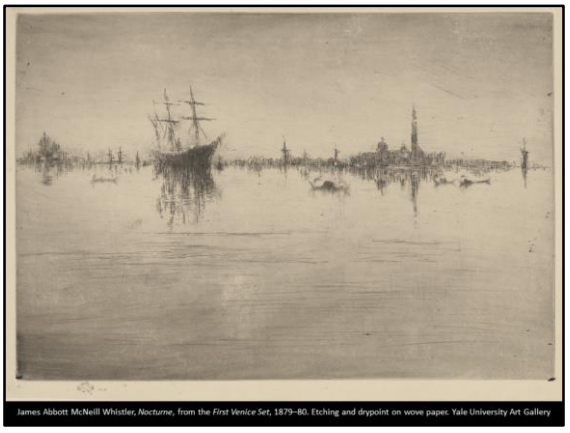
- Whistler had been inspired one evening while returning one **evening** by **steamer** from **Westminster**. He had a procedure for creating these riverscapes. He would go out on a **boat rowed** by his neighbour and boat builder **Walter Greaves** at 10 Lindsey Row Chelsea (Whistler lived at 7 Lindsey Row). Coincidentally **his father** had rowed J. M. W. **Turner** on the Thames at the same spot. Whistler would then look at the scene, **turn his back** on it and then try to verbally describe it building by building. If he made a mistake he would turn back and relearn the scene before trying again.
- Having **memorized** the scene the next day he would prepare the special '**sauce**' he used to paint the picture on a panel. It was essentially a thinned oil paint that was so runny he had to paint on horizontal panels. He would prepare the panels using dark grey paint and then apply the sauce to create a contrasting sense of luminosity. Typically, he would regard most attempts as failures and would start again. The paintings were therefore produced quickly but it took a long time to produce an acceptable picture.
- The view is **Battersea** looking **across to Chelsea**, and it is possible to make out the tower of **Chelsea Old Church** on the right which also features in **Girtin's watercolour**. In the foreground, a low barge and the figure of a

fisherman are indicated with the minimum of detail, and the influence of Japanese art is evident in the restricted palette and the economy of line. *The Times* (14 November, 1871), wrote,

> '*painting should not aim at expressing dramatic emotions, depicting incidents of history or recording facts of nature, but should be content with moulding our moods and stirring our imaginations, by subtle combinations of colour*.'

Walter Greaves

Whistler employed Greaves and his brother as studio assistants and taught them to paint in an **impressionistic** style. Later, when **Whistler** moved house he **broke off contact** with them. They had by then **abandoned boat building** and tried to make a **living as artists** but fell onto harder and **harder times** even though Walter Greaves paintings are of **high quality**. In 1911 his paintings were **discovered** by a dealer and exhibited creating an overnight **sensation**. However, when a critic suggested Greaves had **inspired Whistler** the latter's **American friends retaliated** and accused Greaves of **stealing** Whistler's half-finished paintings, finishing them and selling them as his own. Although **untrue** this damaged his reputation and the exhibition was closed. It was not until **1921** that three prominent artists **rescued Greaves** and his reputation and they found a retirement home for him at Charterhouse.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne*, from the *First Venice Set*, 1879–80. Etching and drypoint on wove paper. Yale University Art Gallery

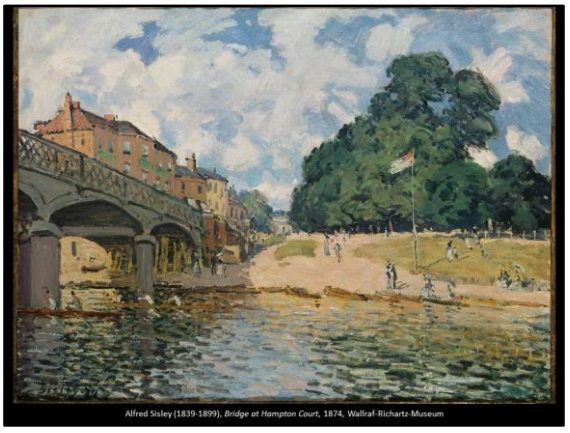
James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne*, from the *First Venice Set*, 1879–80, etching and drypoint on wove paper, Yale University Art Gallery

- James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), one of the most renowned artists of the 19th century, was one of the great draftsmen and engravers.
- There are three periods when Whistler focused on etching and engraving:
    - *French Set,* as a student in Paris, absorbing the lessons of his Realist contemporaries and the Old Masters;
    - *Thames Set,* as an emerging artist in London, forging a name for himself as an etcher;
    - *Venice Sets,* and as a well-known artist in Venice, trying to recover fortune and his reputation following the Ruskin trial and his bankruptcy.

Notes

- The great engravers are the great German printmaker Albrecht Dürer (1471 - 1528), the highly experimental printmaker Rembrandt van Rijn (1606 - 1669), the Spanish artist Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746 - 1828) and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903).
- Etching uses an etching needle to scratch through wax on a metal plate to form the image. The metal plate is then put in acid (called the mordant) which eats lines into the metal where the wax has been scored. The wax is then washed off and ink rolled over the plate. The ink is wiped off leaving it in the lines created by the acid so that when a piece of paper is pressed hard against the plate the ink transfers from the lines onto the paper, creating an etching.
- Engraving consists in incising lines into a metal plate using a sharp tool called a burin instead of using acid. Glass and metals can be engraved with a visible design and deep cuts into a metal plate can be used to produce a print using a similar technique to etching. Engraving is a general term that is sometimes used to include etching. It is also sometimes called intaglio as opposed to relief printing. In relief printing the ink sits on the plate and does not go into the lines.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a number of English artists worked in the French Impressionist style and later took it forward in new directions.



Alfred Sisley (1839-1899), *Bridge at Hampton Court*, 1874, Wallraf-Richartz-Museum

Key point: Sisley was a British Impressionist artist working in France.

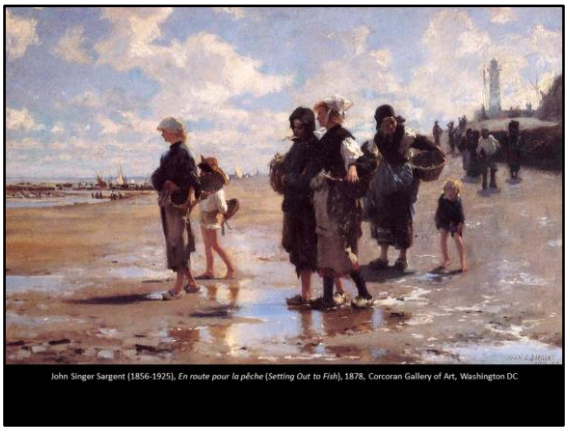
<u>Alfred Sisley</u>

- **Sisley** was an **Impressionist** landscape painter who was born and spent most of his life in France, but **retained British citizenship**. In 1870 the **Franco-Prussian War** began and as a result his father's business failed and he had to **support himself** for the rest of his life from his paintings. He lived in **poverty** but his patrons paid for him to **visit England** in **1874** which resulted in nearly **twenty paintings of the upper Thames near Molesey**. The art historian Kenneth Clark later described it as '*a perfect moment of Impressionism*'.
- This painting is of the **third bridge** that was built across the Thames at Hampton Court between 1864 and **1865**. It was a stone bridge with wrought **iron lattice** work and four **cast iron columns**. The approach walls of this bridge can still be seen at the end of Bridge Road. It was replaced by the current Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944) designed bridge in 1933.

Hampton Court Bridge

- Ferry crossing since Tudor times
- First bridge – 1752-3 owned by James Clarke, seven wooden arches, Chinoiserie design, willow pattern
- Second bridge – 1778, eleven arches, described as '*crazy, hog-backed, inconvenient and obstructive of the navigation*'.
- Third bridge – 1864-5 first stone bridge, designed by E. T. Murray, wrought iron lattice, four cast-iron columns, battlemented approach
- Fourth bridge – 3 July 1933, three wide arches, reinforced concrete, red brick and white Portland stone, opened same day as Chiswick and Twickenham bridges. Designed by W. P. Robinson and Sir Edwin Lutyens reflecting Sir Christopher Wren's design of Hampton Court Palace. The Old

Castle hotel was demolished and the River Mole diverted into the River Ember.



John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *En route pour la pêche* (*Setting Out to Fish*), 1878, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Key point: Sargent was an American who worked in Paris and London and his landscapes created a lively, sunny style

<u>English Impressionism</u>

- Another artist associated with England was **John Singer Sargent**. His parents were **American** but he trained in **Paris** before moving to London. His **early enthusiasm** was for **landscape** but he became a renowned international portrait painter working in the grand manner. In later life he became ambivalent about formal portrait work and devoted more of his time to working *en plein air.*
- *The Oyster Gathers of Cancale* was painted when he was 21 and living in Paris. It was based on sketches he made at Cancale, a fishing village in Brittany. He made two versions, *En route pour la pêche* (*Setting out to Fish)* and *The Oyster Gathers at Cancale* which he submitted to an American exhibition and to the Paris Salon (*En route pour la pêche,* now in the Corcoran Gallery, Washington DC) and they both received warm reviews (it received an 'Honourable Mention' in Paris). His ability to paint the reflections in the pools, the light sparkling on the figures and the clouds dazzled viewers.
- Sargent was taught to paint ***alla prima*** (Italian, meaning '***at first attempt***', layers of wet paint are applied directly onto wet paint) directly on the canvas with a loaded brush in the style of Diego **Velázquez** (1599-1660). This gives the painting the **spontaneity** of a sketch. The artist Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919, an American impressionist painter) met Sargent in 1874 and noted that Sargent was "*one of the most talented fellows I have ever come across; his drawings are like the old masters, and his color is equally fine*." However, both these artists were closely associated with French

Impressionism and true English impressionism took a different direction.

George Clausen, *Girl at the Gate*, 1889, Tate Britain

- Painted at Cookham Dean, Berkshire where he lived. Mary Baldwin modelled for the girl at the gate, she lived in the village and worked as their nanny. Was a 'rural naturalists' who painted realistic scenes of everyday country life, late nineteenth century, influenced by Jules Bastien-Lepage (founder New English Art Club, promoted Glasgow Boys including Charles Rennie Macintosh, Herbert McNair).

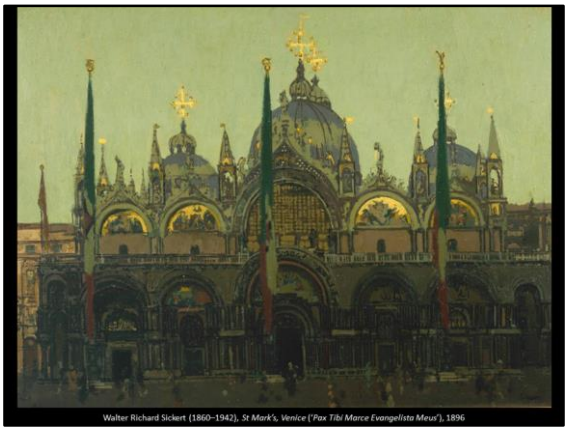
Henry Herbert La Thangue, *The Return of the Reapers*, 1886, Tate Britain

- For more information see http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/la-thangue-the-return-of-the-reapers-t03413
- Key point: La Thangue, like many artists, followed the inspiration of Bastien-Lepage and the conventions of photography.

<u>Henry Herbert La Thangue</u>

- One direction was **La Thangue**, who although his name sounds French **was English** and born in **Croydon**. He studied at the **Lambeth School of Art** and the **Royal Academy** winning a **gold medal** for his work. This led to a scholarship in Paris where he **met** the Barbizon School (1830-70, French artists who followed Constable's ideas, making nature the subject of their paintings, Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, and Charles-François Daubigny) of open-air landscape painters such as **Bastien-Lepage**. He returned to England and exhibited in many galleries and became involved in an attempt to **reform** the **Royal Academy in 1885**, which by this time had lost touch with the changing art world. The attempt failed and he helped found the **New English Art Club in 1885**. He moved to **Norfolk** where he painted *The Return of the Reapers.*

- The painting shows his **interest in photography** and photo-realistic depictions and the '***square brush***' technique of Bastien-Lepage. He characteristically placed the figures against a **high horizon**, **flattening** the picture space.



Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942), *St Mark's, Venice* ('*Pax Tibi Marce Evangelista Meus*'*), 1896 ('Pax teebee marchay evangelista mayous')

- Key point: Sickert took Impressionism in new directions with his musical hall scenes, his views of Venice and, later, his domestic interiors

<u>Walter Richard Sickert</u>

- The artist who most clearly shows how far English art had **moved away** from French **Impressionism** is Walter Sickert. He has been described as the '***father of Modern British Art***'. Most of his work is of interiors, such as music halls and seedy boarding rooms. He focused on street scenes in Dieppe and Venice and between 1894 and 1904 he made a series of visits to Venice. John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (1851-3) had made the city very popular and built a passion for all things Venetian.
- The painter Alfred Thornton's recollection that Sickert worked 'early and late' bears out this timing. But it seems likely that a canvas of this size and complexity, with a carefully built up paint surface where each layer of paint has been allowed to dry fully, would more likely have been one that Sickert worked on after his return to London in the summer of 1896. He had a large amount of reference material on which to base such pictures, including both photographs and drawings. Indeed, Sickert's full-frontal, planar approach to *St Mark's, Venice*, with the building occupying almost all the picture space and the foreground reduced to a minimum, is like an illustration in a guidebook.
- Sickert wrote to his friend Philip Wilson Steer:

> *Venice is really first-rate for work ... and I am getting some things done. It is mostly sunny and warmish and on cold days I do interiors in St Mark's ... St Mark's is engrossing and the Ducal Palace and 2 or 3 Renaissance gems, the Miracoli and S. Zaccharia and the Scuola di San Marco. Of course one gets familiar with Tintoretto and Titian and Veronese ... The more one sees of them ... the more preposterous is the pessimistic*

contention that we who live now should not paint. We aim at and achieve totally different results, results that they neither dreamt of nor could compass. A fine Whistler or Degas or Monet could hang with any of them. It would be intrinsically every bit as good, and for us have the added sparkle and charm of novelty.

- [* The Latin is the motto of Venice meaning 'Peace be unto you, Mark my Evangelist'.]

Philip Wilson Steer (1860-1942), *The Bridge*, 1887-8, Tate Britain

Key point: an influential Post-Impressionist English artist who is **little known today** is Philip Wilson Steer

<u>Philip Wilson Steer</u>
Steer was **rejected** by the **Royal Academy** school and so trained in **Paris** before returning to London. He exhibited at the Royal Academy on his return and became a **founder** of the **New English Art Club**. This painting, *The Bridge*, is now considered to have been painted in **Walberswick**, Suffolk. With Walter Sickert he became a leading British Impressionist who were influenced by Whistler, Gainsborough, Constable and Turner.

This picture was **strongly attacked** by the critics when it was first exhibited in **1887**, and dismissed by one as '***either a deliberate daub or so much mere midsummer madness***'. Steer considered giving up painting in the wake of this disapproval. With its exploitation of the **creamy fluency** of oil paint, its **atmospheric lighting** and **subdued colouring**, *The Bridge* is like Whistler's landscapes he called 'Nocturnes'. It was unusual in London at the time for its lack of detail, and for the uncertainly about its subject.

1. The Old Masters - Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin
2. Topographical for owners and guidebooks, John Constable, J.M.W. Turner, Thomas Girtin
3. The Panorama, Thomas Girtin
4. The invented Picturesque, William Gilpin (based on Humphry Repton's gardens)
5. Pastoral and J.M.W. Turner
6. Social Realism

7. The Sublime and Philip de Loutherbourg
8. Romantic, Samuel Palmer, John Constable and J.M.W Turner
9. Sublime, Philip James de Loutherbourg, J.M.W. Turner, (John Martin, not discussed)
10. Pre-Raphaelite, William Holman Hunt, John Brett, Ford Madox Brown, John Millais
11. Art for Art's Sake, Whistler
12. English Impressionism, Alfred Sisley, John Singer Sargent, Henry Herbert La Thangue, Walter Richard Sickert , Philip Wilson Steer