



Constable and Wordsworth: The Ecological Moment of Romantic Art

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rainbow in a version of Blake's *Ugolino and his Sons* which I have not been able to trace. It is not recorded in the list of Ugolino designs given by A. S. Roe, *Blake's Illustrations to Dante*, 1953, pp. 132f. However, the connotations given to the Ugolino design in *The Gates of Paradise* would support the conclusions on the materialism of the rainbow discussed above. The auras

and sky-modulations in the Beatrice watercolours are not strictly rainbows, although Dante refers to them as such (*Purgatorio* xxix), and Blake's colours are in the Newtonian sequence. Blake's view of Beatrice as Rahab, the fallen state of Vala (Roe, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-71), again reinforces the interpretation set out in this note.

CONSTABLE AND WORDSWORTH: THE ECOLOGICAL MOMENT OF ROMANTIC ART

An old critical problem which recently has taken on fresh interest for me is that of defining 'Romanticism', a term which I assume refers to a cultural or stylistic configuration. A configuration I distinguish from a pattern as being a meaningful arrangement of diverse and relatively autonomous elements. In a pattern the parts are all of the same kind. The unexamined presupposition underlying most debates about 'Romanticism' is that what it labels is a pattern. It is difficult, for example, to resolve the disagreement between Wellek, who argues for one Romanticism, and Lovejoy, who argues for discriminated romanticisms, because both scholars assume that what is at issue is a possible pattern, and they disagree only in their interpretations ('opinions') of the evidence.¹

I propose that it is more fruitful to think of 'Romanticism' as the name of a possible configuration. If we look for a substantiating definition in terms of an arrangement of disparate and autonomous parts, we will be seeking to delineate what Wordsworth calls 'similitude in dissimilitude'. Since poetry and painting are disparate and autonomous arts, I have undertaken a study of landscape poetry and landscape painting in Britain during the first years of the nineteenth century with the hope of determining a configuration of these diverse aesthetic presentations of nature.

I begin with a simple comparative analysis

¹ The argument was begun by A. O. Lovejoy's essay 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms', *PMLA*, xxix, 1924, 229-53 (later reprinted in *Essays in the History of Ideas*, Baltimore 1948, pp. 228-537. René Wellek's most significant rejoinder is to be found in his two-part essay 'The Concept of Romanticism in Literary History', *Comparative Literature*, i, 1949, 1-23, 147-72. A more recent restatement of his position, in which he also defends himself against some oversimplifications of his view, is 'Romanticism Re-examined', *Romanticism Reconsidered*, ed. Northrop Frye, New York and London 1963, pp. 107-33.

of two works, trusting that the result will provide a basis for more complex comparison-contrasts.² I have chosen Wordsworth's celebrated 'spots of time' passage in *The Prelude* and what is perhaps John Constable's best-known painting, *The Haywain*, for the initial comparison. Wordsworth and Constable are firmly established as 'Romantics', both frequently represent natural phenomena, many commentators have linked their names,³ and, best of all for a student of configurations, the natural scenes they represent could scarcely be more different. Although Constable did paint some views of the Lake District, the pictures upon which his fame rests are of scenes unlike those which Wordsworth describes in his best poetry. Wordsworth never depicts a rural farming scene, or a canal. Constable virtually never strives for 'visionary dreariness'. In overt subject-matter the two artists are as different as the landscapes of Cumberland and East Anglia. Any similitude between their work must be within this dissimilitude of subject-matter as well as within the dissimilitude of poetry and painting.

In the 1805 text of *The Prelude* the 'spots of time' passage runs from line 258 to line 389 of

² The larger study of which this essay is a part contains, beside other specific comparisons (including one between 'Peele Castle' and Constable's *Hadleigh Castle*, which owes something both to Wordsworth's poem and Beaumont's pictures which inspired the poem, an attempt to delineate in detail the fashion in which Constable and Wordsworth modified their respective traditions of landscape art and how the literary and graphic traditions interacted, this leading finally to examination of their accomplishments in relation to those of Turner and Shelley.

³ Among more than casual comparisons R. F. Storch's 'Wordsworth and Constable', *Studies in Romanticism*, v, 1966, 121-38, is perhaps the most profound, and I am much indebted to Professor Storch's insights. Russell Noyes, *Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape*, Bloomington 1968, pp. 64-68, presents a sensible survey of the artists' relations. Kurt Badt's fine book *John Constable's Clouds* (English translation, London 1950) includes several astute observations upon analogies between Wordsworth's and Constable's aims. Though not concerned with Constable, Alec King in his stimulating *Wordsworth and the Artist's Vision*, London 1966, studies the poet in the light of some basic principles of graphic art.

Book XI.⁴ Nearly half of these lines are devoted to reflection and comment upon two incidents and their function in mnemonic processes. Of the commentary the largest consecutive unit is lines 316–43, inserted (probably in 1804) by Wordsworth between accounts of the two incidents (probably composed in 1800). Even in the 1805 text, then, narration is not ‘pure’ but serves an illustrative function. Wordsworth begins by asserting that the occurrences are ‘Among those passages of life’ which ‘retain / A Vivifying Virtue’ because they convey the ‘deepest feeling that the mind / Is lord and master, and that outward sense / Is but the obedient servant of her will.’ But the illustrativeness of the incidents is peculiar. Of the girl with the pitcher on her head, Wordsworth says there is no language able to portray the ‘visionary dreariness’ which ‘Did . . . invest’ that ‘ordinary sight.’ The illustration is illustratively inadequate. The poet pictures what can not be pictured, and this is why comment and discussion are necessary.

In the inserted passage, lines 316–43, moreover, Wordsworth tells us that when ‘long after’ he ‘roam’d about’ in the ‘presence of this very scene’ the ‘golden gleam’ of pleasure and youth fell on the spot ‘with radiance more divine’ because of the ‘remembrances’ of the earlier events ‘and from the power / They left behind’. One would not expect ‘dreariness’, even of a visionary kind, to increase radiance. The poet is illustrating paradoxical, mysterious processes which render language ineffective to convey what he wants to convey. ‘So,’ he continues, ‘feeling comes in aid / Of feeling, and diversity of strength / Attends us if but once we have been strong.’ It is difficult to know what ‘strong’ means here and to what precisely it refers—‘been strong’ suggests something more than having had strong feelings. But such ‘imprecision’ is essential because Wordsworth is concerned with the

‘mystery of Man’. The poet is ‘lost’ but sees in ‘childhood’ the ‘base’ of man’s ‘greatness’ and feels ‘That from thyself it is that thou must give, / Else never can receive.’ Although the ‘days’ of his earliest youth ‘come back’ upon him and ‘the hiding-places’ of his ‘power / Seem open’ (the hiding-places recalling the ‘depth’ from which ‘Proceed’ the ‘honours’ of ‘Man’), at his ‘approach’ the hiding-places close. His vision is now imperfect (‘I see by glimpses now’) and while he ‘may, as far as words can give’, he would give ‘A substance and a life’ to what he feels, thus to ‘enshrine the spirit of the past / For future restoration’, because he fears that ‘when age comes on’ he ‘may scarcely see at all’.

The spot of time which is first said to ‘retain / A Vivifying Virtue’ appears capable of losing its ‘efficacious power’. Wordsworth says that he *now* wants to preserve, make permanent, ‘enshrine’, his present sense of the substantial vitality of his memory because he recognizes it to be weaker than it was and that, therefore, ‘as age comes on’ it may vanish. A celebration of memory has become a representation of the tendency of memory to fail.

Without unduly stressing ‘enshrine’, I observe that it refers back to Wordsworth’s faith that ‘the mind is lord and master’, that something beyond the physical is involved in significant experiences, even those of ‘simple childhood’. But the ability to ‘enshrine’ is made problematic by his insistence on the inadequacy of language to capture and preserve that which is beyond natural appearances. His remarkable accomplishment is to convey both the ‘feeling that the mind / Is Lord and master’ and the feeling that the mind does fail.

Grim overtones of the first incident carry across to the second through the bleakness of the scene and its connexion with Wordsworth’s father’s death, although it seems to me that it is the paradoxical development-deterioration of the mind’s mysterious power which more closely links the two events. The climactic revelation of the second episode is that in later years in other circumstances ‘unknown to me / The workings of my spirit thence are brought’—‘thence’ apparently referring to his memories of the vigil on the crag. The agency that ‘brings’ the ‘workings’ of the poet’s ‘spirit’ is unidentified, even as he is not fully conscious of the transformation of his spiritual actions. Here it would seem that language is necessarily inadequate to

⁴ Of the many analyses of this famous passage, the two to which my own criticism is most indebted are Herbert Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth’s Prelude*, Princeton 1963, esp. pp. 143–47, and Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth’s Poetry 1787–1814*, New Haven and London 1964, esp. pp. 211–19. Because in the larger study of which this essay is a part I treat the development in Wordsworth’s techniques, I cite in this discussion the 1805 text provided by Ernest De Sélincourt, *William Wordsworth: The Prelude*, 2nd edn., rev. Helen Darbishire, Oxford 1959. A summary of stylistic differences between the 1805 and 1850 versions, with ample references to others who have commented on the differences, will be found in Lindenberger, pp. 295–99.

the mystery Wordsworth would convey. All that is confirmed is that there is a psychic continuity which works against the declines and losses of time.

For modern readers, who are all dimly oriented towards Freudianism, Wordsworth's presentation of continuity is disturbing because it suggests the Freudian perspective upon human experience but simultaneously strikes us as radically different. Wordsworth, like Freud, emphasizes the paramount importance of seemingly trivial childhood events, but the poet locates their importance in their non-traumatic quality. They matter because they can be recalled. Though intrinsically 'mysterious' they are not concealed. Freud sees trivial events as not mysterious, rationally explicable, but hidden, that is, repressed.

For Wordsworth individual personality is shaped by its active continuity, the mode in which workings of the mind connect different temporal segments of life. It may be objected that in *The Prelude* Wordsworth treats the development of a 'healthy' personality, that he might agree with Freud that a 'diseased' personality is distorted by its repressions, which are symptoms of the broken continuity of the well-integrated psyche. To put it the other way around, is not Freud's healthiest personality the one with fewest repressions? The question is not easy to answer, because Freud has so little interest in 'healthy' personalities (whereas Wordsworth is not so interested in diseased ones). In Freud's view, it is fair to say, everyone is necessarily 'diseased'. Everyone is threatened by his unconscious, by unmysterious but repressed experiences, the ill effects of which can be mitigated only by rational analysis. Freudian therapy in a very real sense exorcizes the child in the man—which is exactly what Wordsworth wanted to preserve. He believes, literally, that 'highest truth' dwells in the depths of childhood from which man's 'honours' arise. From the vital process itself springs the mysterious fountainhead of human achievement, a diversity of strength, towards which poetry directs our attention by its very failure to picture what it would have us recognize. It is the poet's bafflement which leads us through sight to insight; poetic vision sustains us even as it fails.

The formal difference between Freud's rational analyses and Wordsworth's poetic revelations is keyed by their antithetical cosmologies. Freud sees life as an accidental phenomenon in a universe whose basic

characteristic is lifelessness.⁵ Wordsworth sees death as an accidental disruption of the eternal continuity which is the essence of a living cosmos. Freud's view is pessimistic; the stoic courage with which he confronts the bleakness of his own reasoning is perhaps his most admirable quality. He never flinches from the darkest implications of his own thought. But his view is not tragic. Tragedy is exactly what his analysis removes from the Oedipus story.

Wordsworth's 'optimism' permits him a more heroic and more truly tragic conception. What his poetry reveals is that man's awareness (dramatized by his mnemonic powers) makes possible a richer, because more fully interactive, participation in the continuity which is life. Simultaneously, that awareness carries with it the recognition that the individualism resulting from mnemonic power (the power which makes man, in fact, the most vital of living things) will and must diminish. The individual must die. The price of attaining the highest potency of which the life process is capable, consciousness, is the awareness that particular potencies fail and perish. Freud finds a grim destiny for both the individual and the species foreshadowed in the traumas of childhood. Wordsworth finds in the joy-giving power of recollection evidence that his losses as an individual affirm man's role as the most active participant in universal life. In formal terms, Freud's rigorous logicity leads him finally to rationalize the illogicality of mere inertness (the death instinct).⁶ Wordsworth's poetic language testifies to a permanent vitality by revealing its own inadequacy. For him the failure of language, like the 'failure' of the individual, points towards a potential adequacy, a grander success.

This opposition derives, as I have said, from Freud's and Wordsworth's understanding of the nature of the universe, and it is at this profound level of fundamental attitude that one finds the closest association of Wordsworth and Constable. Superficially their 'landscapes' are unlike. But, to put the matter boldly, Constable's pictures do not

⁵ 'At one time or another, by some operation of force which still completely baffles conjecture, the properties of life were awakened in lifeless matter.' Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, The International Psycho-Analytical Library, no. 4, London and Vienna 1922, p. 47.

⁶ Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, also *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *passim*.

yield much reward to any 'Freudian' analysis. In the ordinary terminology of criticism *The Haywain* shares with Wordsworth's barren scenes a certain 'simplicity'. Indeed, the picture is so simple, and so simply charming, that a modern critic is inclined to wonder if it can be significant art.⁷ This 'simplicity', or accessibility, merits attention. In the 'spots of time' passage Wordsworth deals with a familiar phenomenon, even though we have never had experiences identical with his, may never even have seen a northern moorland. But we all have childhood memories. Constable's scene is familiar and accessible in the same fashion. It looks ordinary and commonplace even today when few of us have actually seen such sights. It is familiar as a 'spot of time'.

The commonplaceness of the scene contains one slightly oddity. The wagon is where one wouldn't expect it, in the middle of the stream. Constable's picture is of a *passage*, as is suggested by its original title: *Landscape: Noon*. What is represented is a moment of transition. But of course the picture gives an impression of quiet, tranquillity, even stasis. The moment of passage evokes a sense of continuity. Analogously, *The Prelude* passage as a whole represents less the isolated quality of the spots of time than their beneficent function in connecting disparate phases of life, their 'Vivifying Virtue' springing from their contribution to the continuity of psychic experience.⁸ Constable's moment of passage from morning to afternoon creates in us a pleasant consciousness of the persisting rhythms of life.

Wordsworth speaks of his inability to 'paint' the visionary dreariness which invests the moorland scene. Constable has no means directly to plead the inadequacy of his medium. Yet perhaps he makes an analogous plea through the very 'completeness' of his painting. Critics have pointed out that all portions of a picture such as *The Haywain* are carefully painted.⁹ Nothing is slighted.

⁷ Among the most valuable studies of Constable are, besides Badt's work cited above, E. H. Gombrich's superb *Art and Illusion*, London 1960, esp. pp. 29-34, 150-52, 265-71, 320-29, and *passim*, and Lord Clark's perceptive comments in *Landscape into Art*, Beacon edition, Boston 1961, pp. 74-80. Like all students of Constable I am indebted to Graham Reynolds's *Catalogue of the Constable Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum*, London 1959, and his pleasant volume *Constable: The Natural Painter*, London 1965.

⁸ A spot is an area distinguishable, but not disconnected, from a surrounding area.

⁹ For example, C. J. Holmes in his unjustly neglected

Nothing is out of focus. Yet there is none of the microscopic accuracy we find, for example, in a Van Eyck landscape. Magnified sufficiently, every shrub, leaf, even every blade of grass, appears to have been rendered accurately in itself by Van Eyck. Equal magnification of a background segment of *The Haywain* reveals blurriness. Constable's care for each portion of his picture is care for that part's light or shadow contribution to the 'effect' of the picture as a 'chiaroscuro' totality.¹⁰ Because Constable's picture is much larger than any of Van Eyck's landscapes, he could without such painstaking drawing have rendered the same detailed accuracy. And Constable does care deeply about detail in a fashion which is foreign to Claude, Poussin, even Rubens. Magnify a small segment of one of Claude's paintings and you find less differentiation of minutiae than in Constable. Although Constable works with light and shadow rather than with the outline of volumes, he is closer to the originators of the landscape tradition than to seventeenth-century masters in doing justice to the minute details of landscape.

His care for detail establishes a counterforce to the central-focus tendency of his subject (another counter-force is the use of 'double-focus'). The equal integrity, if not importance, of all parts of *The Haywain* helps to create its 'mood' (about which more shortly), which is of more significance than the ostensible visual 'subject'. Evidence for this is Constable's insistence on making 'finished' versions of pictures for which he had made large, thoroughly painted 'sketches'. Many modern critics prefer the sketches, in part one suspects because of their lack of careful detail. Constable, however, wanted detail, wanted to contain the broad vigour of the sketches within a quieter, more articulated unity. He had a marvellous

Constable and his Influence on Landscape Painting, London 1902, p. 174. A sympathetic and illuminating discussion of how Constable actually painted will be found in Richard and Samuel Redgrave's still useful *A Century of British Painters*, of which a new edition by Ruthven Todd was issued by the Phaidon Press in 1947.

¹⁰ Constable's references to 'chiaroscuro' show that he meant by the term something slightly different from its conventional signification in his own day. The distinction can be indicated roughly by saying that Constable emphasizes the 'light' half of the fusion. The importance he attached to this quality in landscape art is evidence throughout C. R. Leslie's *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*—the edition by Jonathan Mayne, London 1951, is both handy and elegant—especially in the notes taken from Constable's lectures.

sense for the texture of living things, no landscapes are more 'tactile' than his, yet he tried to blend that tactileness into a more complete harmony, whose quietness seems analogous to Wordsworth's 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'.

In Wordsworth's presentation of the girl with the pitcher we have the *illusion* that nothing has been omitted. This illusion Wordsworth often creates—it is connected to his preference for bare, unfecond places. The 'world' of a poem or passage may not be rich, but we feel we are shown all that is encompassed in the scene. Everything that Wordsworth and Constable display is important, their central subjects no more so than the details of their context. Constable spatially and Wordsworth temporally establish the special meaning of a particular event without diminishing the value of that to which the event is related. Both portray how things *fit*. *The Haywain* represents man *in* nature and man and nature's reciprocal interaction. The wagon is in the river, which is in part canal, the buildings are overgrown, the hewn posts implanted in the stream are worn by water action, and so on. These physical features embody the continuities of natural existence in a transient human action so that we respond both to a tranquillity within movement and to a vitality within calmness. Thus in different media Wordsworth and Constable create enduring images out of transitory events.

It is fair to say that neither Wordsworth's nor Constable's scenes are presented so that we regard them as 'impressions'. There is a curious impersonality in *The Haywain*. Looking at the picture one does not think of the painter; one is not conscious of a special point of view. The effect in part derives from Constable's diffusion of focus, his refusal to concentrate emphasis. Analogously, Wordsworth prevents us from responding to his sight of the girl as a mere impression by embedding the sight in a context of subsequent memories and mental reflections. The point of view of which we are conscious is not that of the boy when he sees the girl but that of the adult poet towards the boy who had the vision. When one compares this technique with the tradition of 'topographical poetry' upon which Wordsworth drew, one sees this as the key to his 'originality'.¹¹ Wordsworth

¹¹ Actually Wordsworth seems to be following rather literally Edmund Burke's suggestion in the final section

is concerned with connecting past and present; poetry is what connects them. Poetry arises in 'tranquillity' because it links memory to actual sensation. Since poetry thus connects external physical to internal-psychic phenomena, it must 'fail' as pictorialization, representation of appearances.

Constable diverges from the main tradition of landscape painting in a parallel manner. In the landscapes of Claude and even of the Dutch and Flemish 'realists' much of the unity of scenes depends upon an underlying composition of geometrical forms. An important element in their harmoniousness is volumetric, mathematical. Constable seeks unity of mood. A mood is a pattern of feeling, but, we like to think, not merely a pattern imposed upon a specific environment but also expressive of some quality in the environment, a quality which subterraneously unites the various sensory impressions which make up the situation as a whole, the whole including the human in the situation.¹² A mood is not itself perceptible. The unity of mood can not be painted as can a harmony of shapes or volumes. Wordsworth is being literal when he says that he can not 'paint' the 'visionary dreariness' which 'did . . . invest' the scene on the moor. Constable deals with a different mood in *The Haywain*, but he creates a unifying mood which is in itself unpaintable. What is not visible is as much at the heart of Constable's picture as at the heart of Wordsworth's poetry. This is why, incidentally, Constable can afford to represent less dramatic and picturesque subjects than many of his predecessors.

Contrary to what many of Constable's admirers say or imply, he did not simply copy natural appearances. There is good reason why the painting of *The Haywain* occupied him for months, much of the time spent working in his studio. There is a good deal of 'mind' in Constable's 'nature'. Not only

of his *Inquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful* that what ought to be portrayed in 'descriptive' poetry is the poet's mind rather than the scene observed.

¹² I have not been able to find any satisfactory discussion of 'mood' by a modern psychologist, though it is apparent that most maintain that a mood is merely imposed on a scene, even though the ordinary person feels otherwise, that the 'fearfulness' of a dark chasm in the mountains, for example, is in part 'objective' and not solely the projection of his anxieties. Wordsworth and Constable come close to the 'popular' view, perhaps because they are never concerned with 'perception' in the abstract but only with specific perceptions of particular things. For them perception is interaction.

did he believe that one understands the earth by looking at the sky, but he also recognized that the processes of nature are predominantly manifested in fluid, impalpable, 'unfixed' phenomena. The foreground flat water of *The Haywain* reflects not so much the forms of objects as their colours, and the colours of the sky. And the sky contains clouds, clouds carefully studied and meteorologically appropriate to the season, time of day, and the oncoming nature of the weather. Clouds are important to Constable because they embody changes of weather. Clouds are shapes of natural transitions, and as such their variousness is not random but the expression of complicated, dynamic principles. As Kurt Badt has shown, Constable's clouds are not decorative and not symbolic but real—real not in the sense of reproducing a specific cloud formation once seen but in the sense of being the type of cloud which would take shape in the conditions of the imagined scene. Constable's clouds are realistic even though imagined because his imagined shapes accord with the principles of meteorology and cloud-formation.

Much Romantic art is realistic in this manner, imaginative creation in accord with the principles by which phenomena occur.¹³ Yet Constable's clouds are not mere scientific illustrations. A cloud is by definition something that changes, and a major function of the clouds in *The Haywain* is to endow the still scene with movement, a context of sky-processes connected with the water-processes embodied in the slow-flowing stream. Linking these are trees (earth-processes) which rise out of the water into the sky. In sum, *The Haywain* is the representation not so much of a 'genre scene' as of the harmonious interaction of diverse life-processes, including of course the animal and the human. It is a successful representation of a complex of transitions because it is organized to arouse our sense of that vital unity which merely accurate imitation of discrete physical appearances would obscure. *The Haywain* will have little value for us, except as a jig-saw puzzle or brewery advertisement, unless we recognize that it renders Constable's vision *into* the life-processes which are the essence of nature, into that which cannot merely be seen but must be felt inwardly and must be understood 'scientifically', that is, appreciated as a

complex ecological system of interdependencies.

Wordsworth presents us with the same kind of vision. I have pointed out that he distinguishes the adult poet from the boy who experiences so that the passage as a whole conveys not so much an impression as a representation of how sensation and recollection of sensation interact as a life process. And it is important that Wordsworth describes two spots of time, the later being his vigil on a crag watching for horses to carry him home, where ten days later his father died. There are similarities between the two episodes, the physical circumstances are lonely and desolate, death shadows each event, and so forth, but some contrasts are notable. The girl with the pitcher suddenly appears before the boy's eyes; on the crag he watches for hours 'straining' his 'eyes intensely'—in vain. In fact, the sight which he desired so fervently is not reported.

The impressiveness of the second incident, moreover, lies in its contingency to what followed, his father's death, whereas the first is independently memorable. The 'role' of each incident differs, too. The first is associated with a place around which Wordsworth later 'roam'd', touching it with a 'radiance more divine' from the 'golden gleam' of youth, which could fall on the spot because of the poet's antecedent experience there. The second incident, whose recollection conveys a chastisement beyond the 'trite reflections of morality', does not involve actual return to the physical location. Rather the poet returns mnemonically to 'drink as at a fountain'. From the second spot he *receives* nourishment; upon the first he *bestows* radiance. That the second incident literally occurred later than the first is less important than that the second is more mentalized, less directly and extensively determined by physical action and particularized location. The order of the incidents, in short, illustrates Wordsworth's assertion in the passage interpolated between them: 'That from thyself it is that thou must give, / Else never can receive.'

Sight dominates the first spot of time. In introducing the incident Wordsworth says that 'memory can look back', and he carries through this orientation in all details—the letters of the 'monumental writing', for example, are 'fresh and visible'. The essential nouns and verbs reiterate the predominantly visual quality of the scene:

¹³ Badt, p. 63, 66, 99, and *passim*, makes a strong argument for recognizing Constable's practice as 'typical of the age' of Romanticism.

'espy', 'saw', 'sight', 'look'd'. The second incident is richer. The boy 'watch'd' from a crag which 'overlook'd' the two roads, 'straining' his eyes, yet there is no visual equivalent of the pictorialized girl with a pitcher, only the mist advancing in 'indisputable shapes', the 'picture' of these two words itself defeating simple visualization. Other sensations and more complex associations appear. There is the personification of the 'whistling hawthorn' and 'naked wall'; the 'day' is, so to speak, textured, 'stormy and rough and wild', that tactileness reinforced by 'wind and sleety rain' and enriched by 'the noise of wood and water'; the synaesthesia of 'bleak music' is supported by the peculiarly Wordsworthian verbal transfer of 'the business of the elements'. To this extraordinary complex of 'spectacles and sounds' the poet can 'repair' and 'drink' when 'storm and rain / Beat on my roof' or when, simply, 'I am in the woods', because the 'workings' of his 'spirit' are 'brought' to him. As giving leads to receiving, so visual sensation leads towards mentalized, spiritualized, polymorphous sensory experience. 'Outward sense' is psychically transfigured. The movement from single to multiple, limited to enriched sensation both concretizes and counterpoints the movement from giving to receiving. In the second incident Wordsworth, though receptive, is more actively participative. In the first episode his vision is the result of inadvertent loss of his guide, he 'chanc'd to espy' the scene. In the second incident he deliberately climbs the crag and remains for a long time in the special vantage point: to a degree he determines the situation he experiences. The simple autobiographical progression from spot to spot, and their superficial unification through overt similarities, conceals a more intricate, dynamic, and meaningful patterning which illustrates how the visual is transformed into the visionary.

The Haywain's simplicity likewise conceals dynamic patterning. The painter, of course, can not utilize the temporal sequentiality the poet exploits. But a full response to the picture is not instantaneous. It is true that we 'see' the whole picture more quickly than we read all of Wordsworth's 130 lines. Yet as we continue to look at the picture we become aware of something beyond the visual. First, I think, arises a consciousness of tactile attributes, the texture of the rough wood of the wagon, the water-eroded posts, the furred mossiness of the mill walls, the muckiness of

the river bank, the sluggish mobility of the water, the fibrous strength of the plants, especially the trees. From this awareness of textures emerge, however faintly, imagined impressions of the smell of the scummy water and the warm air and of the unobtrusive sounds which must be part of such a scene, the almost inaudible movement of the leaves, the slow sibilance of the water, the hum of invisible insects.

Possibly I am eccentrically impressionistic, but I find it difficult to explain the durable satisfaction of *The Haywain* without suggesting that its visual effect is so arranged that it evokes more subtle mental satisfactions deriving from my creation of polymorphous sensory imaginings. And whether or not one accepts my contention that the spots of time and *The Haywain* contain analogous patternings which carry us from superficial sight into a realm of diverse and intricately interplaying imaginative sensations, it is clear the two artists employ similar modes of contrast. The most obvious of these is that between movement and quiescence, the halted wagon under clouds moving overhead, the boy seeing the girl with her wind-vexed garments against the silent immobility of pool, hill, and beacon. This contrast, of which the 'spot of time' itself is an embodiment, being the moment of time which emerges out of the flow of time (as Constable's *Noon* is one particular noon), is sustained by subtler oppositions. The 'spots of time' retain their temporality. They are narrative incidents, not epiphanies, and Wordsworth's memories of them follow historical sequence, undergoing modifications in time. This perhaps accounts for the 'reality' which his personal reminiscences convey. We believe in Wordsworth's memories because he does not simply claim that they are unchanging: they, too, are vital.

Constable provides us with a 'static' scene of the 'flow' of natural processes; indeed, the stacticness of the scene is impressive because it encompasses the power of that flow. The dog, for example, in the act of moving supplies a measure of motion different from that of the stream, the men with the wagon, the shifting clouds in the sky. More subtly, movement in stasis is captured by the shapes of the trees, the twisting of whose branches and the clustering of whose foliage records the complex processes not only of external forces such as wind but also of inner growth. Picture and poem are alike and different

because Wordsworth reveals the fixedness that exists within life's movement, whereas Constable reveals the movement that exists with life's fixedness. But the vision of life as a coherence of change and permanence, a coherence in which man has a place, is shared by painter and poet, who are perhaps constrained by the difference between their media to represent a similar vision diversely.

Painting is static; its 'movements' must be represented by that which does not itself move. Poetry 'moves', in that the effect of its words depends upon their relations in temporal sequence. Poetry is auditory, and the too rapid imposition of one sound upon another destroys the possibility of meaning. But, without plunging into the philosophical problems such comparisons arouse, I want to suggest that these distinctions are largely arbitrary. I doubt, for instance, that one can meaningfully 'see' two contrasting things in a picture simultaneously any more than one can meaningfully 'hear' two contrasting sounds simultaneously. The 'movement' of poetry is to a degree metaphoric. There is probably as much 'time' between our perception of a red spot and a blue spot as between our perception of a noun and a verb. I raise these points because what I have said of stasis and motion suggests that Wordsworth and Constable are alike in straining, however unobtrusively, the limitations imposed by their respective media.

Wordsworth utilizes the 'movement' of verse to evoke feeling for what is enduring even though changing, what does not of itself 'move', a mnemonic image. He takes advantage of poetry's fluidity and impalpability to represent how (and with what rewards) we create lasting images out of the perpetual streaming in of sensations. Constable utilizes the palpability of his medium to evoke feeling for the mobile transparence of natural life. Although the light spot in the background of *The Haywain* is caused by the reflection of sunlight off grass, the effect is of a brightness in the air. The luminosity of the 'invisible' atmosphere, when our eye returns to the reflected sheen in front of the wain, stimulates our awareness of the brightness of the air we see *through* as we see 'into' the painting. Our sense of this omnipresently impalpable medium, the breath of life, helps to evoke our feeling that all the distinct objects in the picture are subtly united in a living activity more significant than their isolating outlines.

One recognizes, also, a similarly expansive rhythm in both poem and painting. One begins with immediate physical details and progresses to an encompassing 'vision'. The local and particular becomes a focus for thoughts and feelings which carry far beyond the 'frame' of the specific scenes. The structure of Wordsworth's passage assures that we are not confined to one moment. Constable's painting is organized so as to force our imagination beyond the limits of what is depicted. The edifice on the viewer's left is 'incomplete'; the stream comes from the back of the picture and flows away (over eroded and half-submerged structures) to the right; the trees rise towards a clouded sky moving up and to the right out of the frame.¹⁴ In both passage and painting insignificant physical details are arranged so as to develop our sense not merely of the vast, 'surrounding' dimensions of nature but also of their diversity. Both make us feel a rhythmic coherence between the singular-specific and multiplex-universal.

The establishing of this coherence is in large measure due to an aesthetic 'diffusiveness'. There are two spots of time, so we are encouraged to respond to a pattern of relation rather than to one event in itself. Constable's equivalent is the bright sunlight in the background beyond the trees, which attracts the eye as imperatively as the wagon and glinting water in the foreground. Another kind of diffusion is provided by the red on the horses' collars. In many of Constable's pictures he uses this dark red, a colour which does not occur in natural objects, to focus attention on the human participants. By this mode of emphasis (which in *The Haywain* is echoed by the two tiny figures in the background which carry the human 'farther' into nature) he is able to keep his figures small in relation to the landscape yet to assure their importance. And landscape 'size' is important to both Wordsworth and Constable, who do justice to all three of the dimensions: neither height nor depth nor width is stressed at the expense of the others.¹⁵ Both painting and poetry,

¹⁴ The fashion in which Constable's pictures carry the 'imagination' beyond their frames may be illustrated by placing a piece of cardboard over the central portion of a painting. The 'expansiveness' of the visible edges, particularly in contrast to the edges of earlier landscape pictures examined in the same manner, is immediately apparent.

¹⁵ In another part of my larger study I point out that there is an observable correlation between the relative

then, urge us beyond concentration on things in themselves, in their exclusiveness, and make us extend our vision from minute particulars to the less tangible but no less 'real' dimensions of an inclusive unity.

The specific is not rejected; it is loved by the artist for itself. But the specific is connected to, made a part of, larger rhythms. The exhilaration some feel as their response to Wordsworth's and Constable's 'trivial' subjects derives from this expansive thrust. In the work of neither, despite their parallel limitedness of ostensible subject-matter and the restricted locales in which each felt at home, does one feel confinement or a claustrophobic atmosphere.

For each home is where he feels at home. Neither really cares much for tradition, for conventional rootedness, for home as a place for generations of family. What they love is what is familiar—to them. And they love it because it is familiar. Because they love it, their vitality expands and intensifies within its influence. The limited localities in which they flourish are their means for feeling at home on the earth. And their art makes us feel not that we would enjoy Cumberland or East Anglia but that *we* are at home on the earth.

Their success at conveying such comfort deserves examination. They create a harmony between the rhythmic unity in scenes and incidents, physical patterns 'out there', and a correspondent rhythmic unity in the mind, psychic patterns 'in here'. Wordsworth explicitly asserts that spots of time testify to the fact that 'the mind is lord and master' and 'outward sense' an 'obedient servant'. In part this means, of course, that the incidents are important because remembered. They are notable because they have become psychic places. But why should we be interested in his memories? What interests a reader of the 'spots of time' passage is a principle which it reveals, making the reader aware of a potential power in himself. The nature of the power is indicated by the phrase 'outward sense', which implies a corresponding 'inward sense'. The passage depicts how sensations deriving from the external, physical world provide means by which the mind creates an 'inner' world every bit as real as the outer one, and one which can affect the outer as surely as it affects the inner.

width of landscape paintings and the degree to which the temporal dimensions of the scenes depicted is emphasized.

Neither outer nor inner world is superior; both are necessary, because each meaningfully exists only in relation to the other; without both there can be no working of 'spirit', which is an interchange of energy. What we learn in *The Prelude* passage is how geographical locales where Wordsworth saw the girl and waited for the horses have become foci of this interaction. As such they are invisible to anyone else but they are entirely 'real' to the poet. Certain geographical localities have become identified for him as features of his temporal experience because past incidents have become places in his mind: a memory by definition is something located in the mind. In an extraordinarily literal fashion, then, Wordsworth's 'spots of time' are life-enhancing.

Berenson's phrase is appropriate because the thesis of *The Prelude* is that the poet's power is enhanced by his creation of an image of his imagination's growth. And an analogous enhancement is what Constable affords us in *The Haywain*. Its original title, *Landscape: Noon*, indicates that he portrays both a place and a time. And our pleasure in it is not derived primarily from its accurate representation of bucolic objects but rather from the power it arouses in us to relate the external scene to our inner life. What is involved is not merely empathy. Constable's painting reveals how physical things in themselves and in one of their infinite number of possible arrangements embody invisible processes and convey through the embodiment the rhythmic compatibility of mental, 'conscious' activities and physical, 'unconscious' activities. The painting, that is, is structured to sensitize us to the pleasure of imaginative perception. It satisfies because it dramatizes emotionalized perception as a mutual interchange of that which is intangible and inner with that which is tangible and outer. We belong to the scene and it belongs to us. Although we have never before encountered this situation, we are at once at home in it.¹⁶

¹⁶ Most of the mills on the Stour in Constable's best-known pictures were, or had been, the property of his family, yet the pictures do not impress one as 'private'. There is nothing 'possessive' in Constable's vision; if anything, he (like Wordsworth) is 'possessed' by the place he loves. Yet it seems to me misleading to define the relation simply as 'religious' or, worse yet, as 'mystical'. Wordsworth and Constable stress that what they see is 'in truth / An ordinary sight,' richly meaningful in its ordinariness. I am tempted to say that they represent that responsiveness to the natural

In claiming that *The Haywain* and the 'spots of time' passage enable us to experience what Coleridge calls 'the one Life that is within us and abroad', I do not deny that Wordsworth works through the psychological to render the rhythmic interchange that is 'life', nor that Constable works through the physiological. The difference defines the difference in the artists' media. It is the similitude in their aims and results within the dissimilitude of their methods that matters, which enables one to define one aspect of their shared culture, their 'Romanticism'.

Their Romanticism is obsolete. In every year since their time the quantity of landscapes they loved has been diminished. Their silence has been filled with noise. More people have crowded into what for them were sparsely populated vistas. There have been more subtle transformations, too. Most of us today do not desire the life represented in *The Haywain*. Nobody wants to be a farmer. We do not want to think the way Wordsworth thought, we do not now value his kind of memory. Hence Wordsworth's and Constable's relations to their artistic successors is ambiguous. The ultimate impact of their work, one must admit, had been considerable, but their specific followers are few, and in some respects they are hostile to dominant later trends. The art of neither is hospitable, for instance, to abstraction or symbolism.

Probably one can define their accomplishments best by observing that their concern with the simple, even the elemental, does not

world upon which depends our capacity to make places sacred. They are 'unmythic' (as I suggest in the final paragraph) because they treat of the experience which gives rise to myth-making power.

TURNER AND SCOTT

Among the series of literary illustrations that claimed a large share of Turner's attention in the 1820's and 1830's, his engravings to the 1832-34 edition of Sir Walter Scott's *Poetical Works*¹ are unique in that they

I should like to acknowledge the suggestions and criticisms of Professor Jerrold Ziff. I am also most grateful for the extensive help of Mr. I. C. Cunningham, Department of Manuscripts, National Library of Scotland, who brought to my attention the typescripts of Scott's unpublished letters on the Turner illustrations and who has answered many inquiries regarding the Scott-Cadell correspondence.

¹J. G. Lockhart (ed.), *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter*

carry through to celebration of the primitive. Neither is mythic. Neither goes beyond ecological actuality. What they represent are the rhythms and qualities basic to human life from the Neolithic Age until the nineteenth century, from the establishment of the agricultural revolution to the emergence of industrialized civilization. They were born in time to avoid mere nostalgia. Yet the freshness of their poetry and painting is today oddly like the freshness of, say, recovered Minoan frescoes—hauntingly familiar but inescapably alien. And the alienness and strength of their art lies in its unmythicalness, its refusal to follow the modern highroad into metaphysical primitivism, into the aesthetics of essences and archetypes and eternal forms. To say this is to define one segment at least of the Romantic configuration. Constable belonged to the first and last generation which could feel the urgency of loving an old wooden wagon simply because as an old wooden wagon it embodied recurrent modes of man's interactions with the processes of the natural world. Wordsworth belonged to the first and last generation in which one could delight in the song of a solitary reaper not as a quaint curiosity and not as a timeless symbol but simply as living expression of the rhythms by which mankind, not forever, but only for millennia, had shared his life in nature:

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

KARL KROEBER

brought about his collaboration with a figure of the first rank in Romantic literature. The circumstances of Turner's commission are, moreover, quite fully documented in correspondence, much of it unpublished, between Scott and his publisher, Robert Cadell.²

Scott, with twenty-four engravings after designs by J. M. W. Turner, Edinburgh, Robert Cadell, 1832-34, 12 volumes. Turner produced one other series of Scott illustrations, subsequent to the author's death in 1832; it consisted of forty-one engravings, interspersed among plates by other artists, to the *Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, Edinburgh, Robert Cadell, 1834-36, 28 volumes.

²In the Department of Manuscripts, National Library of Scotland, MS 3917, 3918 and 3919.