

was er liebt, was ihn erhebt; Mancher thut es zugleich für Andere, für Gleichgesinnte, und dann wird er zum *Künstler*.⁵⁴

(In a practical view the principle of beauty leads to generalities, the principle of character to caricature. In a theoretical view it remains peculiar why the human being labors to imitate beauty which nature produces in a continuous infinite flow; why he forms miserable characteristic traits in clay and stone which the spiritual power overcomes in a radiant light in every fleeting moment. Art must have another need; we do not talk without reason about *immortalization* in a work of art, the evolving gains existence, at least it is possible here to enjoy a kind of *permanence* where in the spiritual life as in nature wave follows wave and sinks down in foam that vanishes soon. Everyone wants to preserve what he loves, what lifts him up; some do it for others who believe in the same and then he becomes an *artist*.)

Arnim also argues against the separation of genres, historical and religious paintings, which were accepted by the academy, and genre-painting or landscape-painting that had not yet gained recognition within the canon. He not only supports his artist friends, Ferdinand Olivier and Karl Friedrich Schinkel, in their endeavors to establish landscape-painting as an accepted genre, he also devotes part of his review of Waagen's *Verzeichniß der Gemälde des Museums zu Berlin* (Catalogue of the paintings in the Berlin museum) to clarify his ideas about genre-painting.⁵⁵ For him it is a mere question of pictorial attributes that distinguish the genres: the picture of children bringing flowers to their mother on her birthday can easily be turned into a religious painting by attaching wings to their shoulders and resting the mother's foot on a moon. A painting with gambling soldiers changes with the addition of the cross and the garment of Christ from the depiction of common life to a powerful statement about human greed.

Wenn nur Alle den Grundsatz festhalten wollten, daß Alles in der Kunst mit gleichem Rechte lebt, was wirkliches Leben hat, daß in der Kunst wie vor dem Herrn der Welt der Unterschied zwischen Gemein und Vornehm, zwischen Groß und Klein verschwindet.⁵⁶

(If only everybody would remember that everything in art that has real life lives by the same right, that in art as before the Lord the difference disappears between the common and the noble, between great and small.)

This essay has offered a condensed explication of Arnim's aesthetic and gives a few pertinent examples from his literary work. Although my study *Dichtung und Malerei bei Achim von Arnim* provides a more extensive analysis of Arnim's concern with the visual and verbal arts, the full extent of Arnim's range and integration of the other arts still waits investigation.

54 "Kunstbemerkungen": 998f.

55 "Genrebilder, Staffage." In: *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* CCCLVII (23 December 1830): 1427f.

56 "Genrebilder": 1428.

Bibliography at end of chapter

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Grounds for Change: Wordsworth, Constable and the Uses of Place

American artist Alan Gussow captures the essence of "place" when he calls it "a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings".¹ Such a claim was recognized in 1832, as three strangers travelled in a coach through the Suffolk countryside near Dedham. When one of the passengers remarked on the region's beauty, another agreed, saying "Yes Sir – this is *Constable's* country!"² This close identification of artist with place marks one of many correspondences between Constable and Wordsworth; with little revision, a characteristic assessment of the painter can be made to suit the poet – that "there is probably no other instance in the whole history of landscape painting of a major artist so passionately devoted to a particular geographical location."³ Forty years ago, Kenneth Clark pointed out that both men drew emotive power from the scenes of their boyhood, shared an interest in the elemental qualities of rustic life, and broke new ground in contemplating the natural world with "sufficient devotion" to reveal its "moral and spiritual quality".⁴ More recent critics such as Kroeber, Paulson and Heffernan have remarked on poet and painter's habit of revisiting known scenes, "mak[ing] place embody time"; their revolutionary tendency to seek "a basic change in [...] subjects and source of inspiration"; their shift from the "linear time" of public history to the "temporalized spaces" of natural history and autobiography.⁵

1 Alan Gussow: *A Sense of Place: the Artist and the American Land* (San Francisco: Friends of the Earth, 1972), 27.

2 *John Constable's Correspondence*, ed. R.B. Beckett, 6 vols. (Ipswich: Suffolk Records Society, 1967-8), IV, 387 (cited hereafter as: Constable).

3 Robert R. Wark: *Ten British Pictures, 1740-1840* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1971), 111.

4 Kenneth Clark: *Landscape Into Art* (New York: Harper and Row: 1949, rev. 1976), 151.

5 Karl Kroeber: *Romantic Landscape Vision: Constable and Wordsworth* (Wisconsin: Univ. of Wisconsin P, 1975), 29; Ronald Paulson: *Literary Landscape: Constable and Turner* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982), 107f.; James A.W. Heffernan *The Re-Creation of Landscape* (Hanover: UP of New England, 1984), 102.

That anecdote from the Suffolk coach carries with it the clue to another, underinvestigated parallel between Wordsworth and Constable. We “know” it is true because Constable, the first traveler, wrote it in a postscript to David Lucas, the engraver for *English Landscape Scenery*. It belongs to a pattern of references which together demonstrate Constable’s process of artistic self-creation, a process remarkably similar to Wordsworth’s. In fact, the two men’s career choices, their artistic *personae*, may well be the most reliably comparable aspects of their works. Both Wordsworth and Constable decided to recognize in their art the importance of their personal landscapes; in focusing on home places both turned the common truth of local attachment into an artistic subject of deep moral significance to which they could dedicate themselves, promising that the resulting art would benefit future generations.

For the serious task of imparting beneficial understanding through one’s art to be sustained as a moral imperative, the artist needs a sense of mission—including a sense of just how influential he will become. Since their art risked deferred recognition in choosing to push against critical norms, both Constable and Wordsworth needed to declare their own artistic importance. To this end, they each began creating an artistic persona early in their careers, and continued the practice throughout their lives. And in both cases, their self-definitions were grounded in devotion to native scenes. This grounding validated a declaration of artistic independence, a deliberate turning away from accepted modes of proceeding with one’s career.

To illustrate the imaginative process by which both Wordsworth and Constable framed themselves as artists, I will focus on a crucial parallel from early in their professional lives: at similar, formative points of serious decision about their lives’ work, Wordsworth and Constable turned towards home. A return to the security of a familiar setting seems in many ways the opposite of a revolutionary act, yet these journeys were “retreats” only in the meditative sense of that word. Both men made their choice while in a program of self-preparation for their art; going home, or reclaiming place, was a way to continue the educational process. When Wordsworth realized that he wanted to find his dwelling place in Cumbria, when Constable declared that he would stop “running after pictures secondhand” and seek nature in East Bergholt, they were affirming the creative importance of these spots.

For Wordsworth, *finding* home was itself part of the process. In the years between 1787 and 1795, he was not bound to a particular geographic location; he came to know first Cambridge, then London, a good deal of Western Europe (France in particular), as well as many of the border regions of Britain. During these years Wordsworth remained a convinced radical, concerned with the effects of repressive and misguided political systems on those pow-

erless to change them, exercising his convictions in such texts as *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* and the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. Yet as he questioned the acts of government, the nature of man, and his own role and proper voice as a poet, he found himself with a heart “Misguiding and misguided, now believing, / Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed”.⁶ He also found himself living in England’s West Country. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth guides our understanding of just who and what rescued him from that state of confusion and hopelessness: Coleridge, the “precious friend” who helped to “regulate [his] soul”; Dorothy, the “beloved woman” who “preserved [him] still a poet”; and “Nature’s self, by human love assisted”.⁷ The rediscovery of nature which Wordsworth attributes to this time in the west of England was the first step of return; his claims for the benefits of a specific natural *place* to which he was uniquely bound developed more slowly.

Reuniting with Dorothy inevitably turned Wordsworth’s thoughts to the Lakes; she was a reminder of their shared youth and thus of the places which contained and preserved youth’s memories, that time-collapsing function of place with which Wordsworth connected her in “Tintern Abbey”.⁸ Though capable of waxing enthusiastic over *any* landscape (in her letters many spots are “the most beautiful ever I saw” or “the most beautiful on earth”), Dorothy reserves Cumbrian places as a measure of worth; while at Nether Stowey in 1797, she praises the locale by finding the “brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland” and the woods “as fine as those at Lowther”, while the country on the whole “has the character of the less grand parts of the neighborhood of the Lakes”.⁹

Coleridge’s early memories did not share space with Wordsworth’s, yet the two poets’ closeness during the Dorset and Somerset years produced an intricate “interbraiding” of their ideas and poetry which profoundly affected both.¹⁰ One particular thread in the pattern leads to Wordsworth’s connection

6 William Wordsworth: *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, eds. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), X: 888-93. Unless otherwise noted, citations are from the 1805 text, with book (Roman) and line (Arabic) numbers.

7 *Prelude* X: 905; 909; 921f.

8 In the spring of 1794, brother and sister had in fact begun their reunion in the North, spending almost two months together at Windy Brow in Keswick.

9 Letter presumably to Mary Hutchinson, [July 4, 1797]: *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 2nd ed. rev. by Chester L. Shaver, Mary Moorman, and Alan G. Hill, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967-82), I, 189.

10 For the statement that Coleridge’s poetry “quite literally interbraids with Wordsworth’s” see Paul Sheats: *The Making of Wordsworth’s Poetry, 1785-1798* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1973), 163. A number of critics have attempted an unweaving: see for example Thomas McFarland: *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981), esp. ch. 1,

of place with poetic creation: the development of the Wordsworthian childhood model or myth. Outside of a vague foretaste in *An Evening Walk*, this subject was not yet part of Wordsworth's oeuvre when Coleridge first recognized his friend's genius; his enthusiastic support was based on poems such as *Descriptive Sketches*, *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, and *The Borderers*. However, the evidence of letters, notebook and journal entries, and such poems as Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight", points to the Alfoxden/Nether Stowey circle's ongoing discussion of the ways in which "the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature." At this point their ideas so converged that Coleridge voices what could stand for Wordsworth's poetic creed:

I love fields & woods & mountains with almost a visionary fondness – and because I have found benevolence & quietness growing within me as that fondness [has] increased, therefore I should wish to be the means of implanting it in others.¹¹

"Tintern Abbey" has been found the essential expression of Wordsworth's belief that the love of nature is vitally connected with love of man and with a sense both of the individual consciousness and the divine. Yet "Frost at Midnight", which antedates Wordsworth's poem, clearly links autobiography to place in drawing a sharp contrast between a city childhood, "pent mid cloisters dim", and that most Wordsworthian childhood which Coleridge projects for his son. Coleridge has transformed conversations on association, early development, and education into a promise that his son will grow up "mid far other scenes" – scenes colored by Wordsworth's childhood stories. This suggests that Wordsworth's own thoughts were beginning to turn not just to "all that we behold / From this green earth", but to the local scenes of his boyhood for the instructive and imaginative power they could impart. The benefits Coleridge predicts for his child will soon be detailed by Wordsworth, when in Goslar he revisits his "dear scenes" for the first time as an autobiographical poet intricately involved with the landscapes of his youth.

Although Constable and Wordsworth have both been considered late starters, the painter actually found the way home somewhat earlier in his career – and there was never a question about his rootedness in the scenes around East Bergholt. Until his decision to return, Constable, unlike Wordsworth, was revolutionary only in studying art despite family opposition. As a London Academy student in 1799, he followed the expected round

¹¹ "The Symbiosis of Coleridge and Wordsworth"; Lucy Newlyn: *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); Paul Magnuson: *Coleridge and Wordsworth: A Lyrical Dialogue* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1988).

¹² Quoted in: *William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984), xvii.

of life classes and anatomy lectures, spending his evenings copying from acknowledged masters. Only the occasional comment when he writes to Dunthorne, his Suffolk mentor, suggests that he sometimes longed for more familiar scenes. In an often-quoted letter from 1801 he notes that the fine spring weather

almost makes me melancholy; it recalls so forcibly every scene we have visited and drawn together. I even love every stile and stump, and every lane in the village, so deep rooted are early impressions.¹²

The following year, in a letter complaining of the evils of London, he says that he paints

by all the daylight we have, and that is little enough, less perhaps than you have by much, I sometimes however see the sky, but imagine to yourself how a purl [sic] must look through a burnt glass.¹³

In the summer of 1801, Constable stayed in London through July and then followed both the responsible student's role and his patron Beaumont's particular taste by making a tour "in search of the picturesque" in the Peak District. This supposedly pleasant task kept him from a visit to Suffolk; he complains of this in his letters, and of the fact that when he is finally able to visit Bergholt in May of 1802 he is immediately called away to Windsor to interview for the position of drawing master at a military academy. The topographical particulars of Constable's itinerary are interesting because they seem to have helped precipitate the "manifesto" letter to Dunthorne which announces that "there is room enough for a natural painture", and that Bergholt is the proper place to discover and develop such a talent.¹⁴

Constable makes it clear to his friend how earnest a matter this is; he has, he says, been thinking "more seriously on my profession than at any other time of my life". Having just returned from again visiting Beaumont's private collection, he writes of his agreement with Reynolds' *caveat* that "there is no easy way of becoming a good painter"; it needs "long contemplation and incessant labour". Having said that, he then adds "however one's mind may be elevated, and kept up to what is excellent, by the works of the Great Masters" – such as the pictures he has just viewed – "still Nature is the fountain's head [...] and should an artist continue his practice without referring to nature he must soon form a *manner*."

This second indirect reference to his patron's collection suggests a telling dissatisfaction. Beaumont, who valued highly the examples of masterworks

¹² Constable, II, 24.

¹³ Constable, II, 26.

¹⁴ Constable, II, 31ff.

such as his beloved *Hagar and the Angel* [figure 63], also spoke out along with Reynolds for the value of observing nature. Yet when Beaumont painted or sketched from nature, it was with strong reference to the works which had gone before; and when he used words to depict the landscape, it was still as a draftsman for the picturesque. In his letters to Wordsworth from this period, he apprehends nature as if through a Claude-glass.¹⁵ When Constable continues with “for these two years past I have been running after pictures and seeking the truth at second hand,” he describes the traditional methods of Beaumont, or of Farrington. And his next statement, “I am come to a determination to make no more idle visits this summer,” seems to be an unspoken indictment of the previous summer’s picturesque tour – during which he had produced a number of sketches strongly influenced by Beaumont’s work (*Entrance to the Village of Edensor*, 1801 [figure 32]).

Constable’s lack of response to the picturesque scenery which automatically composed itself for the artist suggests that it was impossible for him to see such scenes as anything but “secondhand truth”, inseparable from the weight of previous depictions. This explains why his letter to Dunthorne can conclude by ingenuously equating Nature with Bergholt: “I shall return shortly to Bergholt where I shall make some laborious studies from nature.” Derbyshire hadn’t qualified as nature; there he had worked as Gainsborough or Beaumont would have, in a retrospective black and white chalk on tinted paper, or in pencil with sepia wash; now that he is returning to the Dedham area to find nature and his artistic home ground, he vows to “endeavour to get a pure and unaffected representation of the scenes that may employ me with respect to colour particularly”, adding with confidence, “drawing I am pretty well master of”. These resolutions herald a clear break from tradition – and the only place where it could have happened was Bergholt.

Wordsworth was farther away than Derbyshire when his thoughts turned to his boyhood scenes; he had accompanied Coleridge on a *Bildungsreise* to Germany. Like Constable, though, he was ill at ease, dissatisfied with a part of his program of self-education. Dorothy and William found themselves at a disadvantage in Germany; their decision to live in Goslar excluded them not only from Coleridge’s company, but from any other meaningful social contact. As a result they found themselves virtually alone, kept much indoors by the century’s coldest winter – and obliged, Wordsworth admitted to Coleridge, “to write in self-defense”. Continuing the conversation begun in England, Wordsworth produced detailed poetic descriptions of his boyhood.

15 For a discussion of the changes evident in Beaumont’s way of describing nature and the lakes in his correspondence with Wordsworth, see my “Coleridge, Beaumont, and the Wordsworthian Claims for Place.” In: *Wordsworth Circle* XXI (1990): 51-5.

These were rooted in the particular strength of the Cumbrian images he had retained, and they examined the role those images had played in the education of his mind and spirit. He had previously explored similar ideas through other characters: the Peddler in “The Ruined Cottage” speaks of “that which each man loved / and prized in his peculiar nook of earth”. But now, encouraged by the animating quality of the memories he was exploring, Wordsworth brought place, autobiography, and imagination together in the Goslar fragments with a completely new intensity.¹⁶ The resulting scenes – the woodcock-snaring, boat-stealing, skating episodes – would remain prominent parts of the *Prelude*’s 1805 and final 1850 versions, as would their central concern: the growth of the imagination resulting from the bond between the individual and that particular face of nature to be found in his home landscapes. Wordsworth was now clearly sensing that for him it was not just “fields and woods and mountains”, as Coleridge had written, which brought him the gift of joy; it was, as he specified, “my own fair scenes [...] the mists and winds that dwell among the hills where I was born.”¹⁷

In that crucial Goslar letter, both Dorothy and William indicate the importance of what she called “descriptions of William’s boyish pleasures”. For her part, Dorothy transcribes over one hundred and twenty lines of poetry, repeatedly saying she is *sure* Coleridge will not tire of them. For his, William asks their friend to “preserve any verses which we have sent you, in the fear, that in travelling we may lose the copy”. Another essential piece of information comes to light in this letter: the indication that the Wordsworths have quite recently decided to return to the scenes’ actual geographic location. At the beginning of their stay in Germany, William had hoped that Somerset might be their future home; now a scant two months later Dorothy presents their return to William’s Cumbrian scenes as a matter of record. She first admits that she and William “wish to decoy” Coleridge to accompany them “amongst the mountains”, and then says more specifically that the

nutting scene [...] is like the rest, laid in the North of England, whither [...] you must come to us at the latter end of next summer, and we will explore together every nook of that romantic country.

This letter is the closest Wordsworthian equivalent to Constable’s epistle to Dunthorne; in it are brought together the heart of what will become some of Wordsworth’s greatest poetry, a sense of that work’s serious importance, and

16 My reading of Wordsworth’s sense of joy in his discovery contradicts Jonathan Wordsworth’s interpretation of the 1798 question “Was it for this?”, which he sees as Wordsworth’s guilt at his inability to write *The Recluse* (see *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1982], 105).

17 *Prelude* (from the 1799 *Prelude*), II: 470-2 (p. 26).

the decision to return to the scenes themselves as the proper setting in which to carry on.

Just how fruitful the decision and the move were for Wordsworth's poetry is indicated by the inscription in his nephew's copy of the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*:

This second volume consists exclusively of Poems composed by me either during my residence in Germany or in the course of a few months after my Sister and I came to live in the Vale of Grasmere.¹⁸

Within the year Wordsworth had also expanded the "descriptions of his boyhood pleasures" into the Two-Part *Prelude*. Addressed to Coleridge, this poem is Wordsworth's concentrated, unified exploration of the growth of the individual consciousness and the imagination as they are influenced by nature's "forms [...] beautiful or grand"; the proofs for his conviction are supplied by a constant round of minutely remembered scenes from what Wordsworth was now seeing as a youth privileged by nature. The poem is also an early stage of a life-long project, both in itself and as a part of *The Recluse*.

The year 1800 saw more work on this projected epic in the form of *Home at Grasmere*, an exultant and very personal celebration of the decision to return and the benefits it had brought:

[...] the sense
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual spot
[...]
Perfect contentment, Unity entire.

Here, the move to Grasmere's vale so merges with Wordsworth's sense of poetic vocation and strength that they function as dual antecedents for the poetic question

And did it cost so much, and did it ask
Such length of discipline, and could it seem
An act of courage, and the thing itself
A conquest?¹⁹

Kenneth Johnston has called the 1800 sections of *Home at Grasmere* "a Romantic Ode to Joy written in one of the highest keys ever attempted", and he points out that it combines with the 1799 *Prelude* to paint a picture of Wordsworth's life which avoids the troubled decade of Cambridge, the revo-

18 Mark L. Reed: *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Middle Years, 1800-1815* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1975), 55, n. 1.

19 In: *Wordsworth*, ed. Gill, 175-8, lines 161-170, 64-66.

lution, and Annette Vallon.²⁰ Wordsworth would soon face those intervening years, and question as well his relationship to his earthly paradise. Yet this moment of exultant return doesn't lose its importance, for it is here that Wordsworth creates a sense of himself as his generation's Milton, who would find fit audience, though few.

By acknowledging the sense of empowerment he found in his native scenes, Wordsworth justified a greater independence of spirit than he had acknowledged before. Although he had previously declared himself careless of critical recognition, he now found himself willing to separate not just from the centers of publishing but if necessary from his friends – even Coleridge, who was prompted to write that "dear Wordsworth appears to me to have hurtfully segregated and isolated his being." This self-imposed poetic independence later enabled Wordsworth to turn aside censure by saying that he knew he would have to create the taste by which he was appreciated.²¹ Admitting a strong identification with his landscape also strengthened his claims of significance as a poet, since he declared that his mind and biography were intimately connected with "the grand and beauteous forms of nature".

Constable's return to East Bergholt reflected goals similar to Wordsworth's; he sought to enrich and develop an art which draws much of its strength from the personal meaning of landscape, and he indicated the rebellion inherent in choosing them as inspiration and subject matter for influential art. The art immediately resulting from these points of return, however, resists easy comparison. *Home at Grasmere's* extreme confidence and its immoderate accounts of the place's qualities have evoked critical dispute, yet all interpretations must originate with the text, which asserts the poetic wisdom of settling in Grasmere. No such text attends Constable's group of 1802 oil studies: no letter reveals his immediate assessment of the venture's success, although the following spring he will admit a new-found confidence in his professional future.²² Nor can the studies themselves herald the significance of place as triumphantly as *Home at Grasmere*, even though Constable may have felt he had chosen the right direction for his art in

20 "'Home at Grasmere' in 1800." In: *William Wordsworth, Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1985), 178.

21 See for example the letter to Lady Beaumont, *Letters*, 2.1:150.

22 Letter of 32 May, 1803, to Dunthorne, Constable, II, 33-4. The pictures which can most probably be dated to the summer and autumn of 1802 are *A Lane Near Dedham* and *Dedham Vale*, Yale Center for British Art; *Dedham Vale: Evening*, the vertical *Dedham Vale, Valley Scene, with Trees*, and *A Wood*, The Victoria and Albert Museum; and *Willy Lott's House*, The Lord Binning. This last picture seems to me a questionable inclusion for the early date of 1802; however, I am including it on the basis of its inclusion in the Tate catalogue (50). It also appears in Robert Hoozee: *L'opera completa di Constable* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1979), 89.

“endeavor[ing] to get a pure and unaffected representation of the scenes” near Bergholt that would “employ” him.

Critical judgments suggest this difficulty in “reading” the 1802 studies, which are variously seen as highly innovative, embodying “an original awareness of reality, of space and the texture of things, as if seen and felt for the first time”²³ or as a less emotionally-charged exercise, “picturesque studies” which show Constable taking “mainly a formal interest in his native scenes”.²⁴ The images, the “laborious studies” he determined to make, can only be said to announce the rightness of his return if their relation to Constable’s past and future art shows him to be at a significant stage in his development. And they can only suggest by their faithfulness to certain key scenes of his youth how fond their author is of them. He does not, after all, tell Dunthorne he is going to make studies of known and loved landscapes; his “manifesto” letter focuses on *truth* and *nature*. But by seeking nature’s truth in his most thoroughly claimed places, he indicates how essential this attachment is to his artistic program.

The oils dated from that summer, all approximately thirteen by seventeen inches, show an uncharacteristic uniformity of size, suggesting that they are conceived as parts of a single project.²⁵ Despite Constable’s declaration of artistic independence, the pictures clearly reflect his studying and copying from traditional masters of landscape. Commentators have often noted the relationship of the Victoria and Albert’s 1802 vertical *Dedham Vale* [figure 30] to Claude’s *Hagar and the Angel* [figure 63]; the early Gainsborough also provided models, seen in compositional similarities between such pictures as Gainsborough’s *Wooded Landscape with Peasant Resting* [figure 42] and the Yale Center’s *Dedham Vale* [figure 31]; a number of Gainsborough’s canvases could also have suggested the composition of Constable’s *A Wood* [figure 37].²⁶ Although a number of the scenes are *organized* according to

23 Malcolm Cormak: *Constable* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge UP, 1986), 41.

24 Michael Rosenthal: *Constable: The Painter and his Landscape* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1983), 34-7. In Rosenthal’s more recent *Constable* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987) he finds the studies “unexpectedly assertive [...] exceptional paintings which, in their concern with actualities, anticipated much later work” (38ff.). Ann Bermingham suggests that in Constable’s attempt to convey a realistic representation, his “individualizing produces a landscape in which all objects stand out with equal force”; the result is “a formal deadpan that frustrates our received expectations” (*Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1986), 119ff.).

25 Rosenthal (1983), 30.

26 See for example *Wooded Landscape with Winding Path* or *Hilly Wooded Landscape with Country Cart* in John Hayes: *The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough: A Critical Text and Catalogue Raisonné*, cat. nos. 4 and 7. Similar comparisons are possible with other landscape artists whose principles of composition Constable had been exposed to, such as

compositional principles Constable had absorbed, it is important to remember that they were not *chosen* for conforming to a formal ideal. They were chosen for their personal significance, which translated them into “Nature” scenes which Constable felt meant more than those he had seen belied by bravura effects.

Unlike their models, Constable’s 1802 oils insist that setting – specific place – is subject; they present scenes unmediated by narrative incident or by elevating allusion. Claude’s figures of Hagar and her angel take up little of their picture’s area, but they govern its familiar title because they focus viewer attention and ennoble the landscape with biblical association. Even the resting peasant in Gainsborough’s *Wooded Landscape* becomes our guide as we follow his gesture and gaze to the distant town. In contrast, Constable’s two figures, the only staffage in the 1802 oils, are unassuming; although they have been called conventional, they perform no mediation between viewer and landscape. One, a field-laborer in *A Lane Near Dedham* [figure 33], blends so thoroughly with his setting that he has often been overlooked.²⁷ The other, though placed in the same relative position in *Dedham Vale* as Gainsborough’s pastoral guide is in his setting, has a very different relationship with both the landscape he inhabits and the viewer. Absorbed in whatever brought him there, he ignores our glance; looking down, he fails to suggest our focus by his line of sight. Nor does he sport the generic disheveled clothing and large, shapeless hat which signify pastoral indolence; he is simply a man in a field.²⁸ Constable departs not only from his predecessors here, but from his own recent practice. The panoramas of Dedham Vale he produced as a wedding commission for Lucy Hurlock in 1800 are decorated with reclining, floppy-hatted peasants and scattered cattle; here, where the pictures are self-commissioned and the scenes themselves the subject, such foreground detail is largely beside the point. Given Constable’s stated program of that summer, it is tempting to presume that he has painted these two figures because they were there: part of the “natural” scene.²⁹

Wilson and Rubens.

27 Such a description inevitably evokes John Barrell: *The Dark Side of the Landscape: the rural poor in English painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), which has added an essential dimension to our understanding of Constable’s art by dealing instructively with his tendency to merge working figures with their setting. However, interpreting all his landscapes solely through his family’s class need to depersonalize laborers in order to maintain control over the land ignores the complexities of Constable’s response to place.

28 For comparison, see the figure in Beaumont’s *Leasehold Farm, Boxstead*, whose awkward seated position is mirrored by Constable’s figure.

29 Here he could have been following the advice of an early mentor, J.T. Smith: “Do not set about inventing figures for a landscape taken from nature, for you cannot remain an hour in any spot, however solitary, without the appearance of some living thing that will in all

In formulating his program, Constable seems to have remembered a text recommended to him years earlier: Gessner's "Letter on Landscape Painting". The Swiss artist recommends "recording the truth of an interesting subject in nature" by making *studies*, rather than "mere sketches [...] to be finish'd at leisure". Dashed off sketches, he complains, allow a painter's "accustomed manner [to take] place of the idea too lightly impress'd on the mind, the characteristic of the object disappears, and is lost."³⁰

Constable's manifesto letter also specifies the danger of forming "a manner" in its determination not to "seek the truth at second hand", but rather to "represent nature with elevation of mind". The 1802 oils *are* studies, not sketches; they declare their serious intent by their medium and detailed handling, and it is possible that Constable thought enough of them to exhibit one or more at the Royal Academy in 1803.³¹ Yet because of their attention to the scene and their attempt to preserve a "pure and unaffected representation", they share a sketch's interest in the artist's immediate perception of the subject before him. In this way they paradoxically foreshadow Constable's innovative oil sketches, and draw attention to a concern which would vex his entire career: the conflict between that finish which for Gessner signals truth, and which the majority of Constable's critics would demand, and the evanescence of both nature's effects and the moment of perception – another kind of "truth" which also engaged Constable's attention.

The 1802 studies do mark an awareness of the presence, the present sense of the subject before the painter's eyes, in a manner new to Constable. The greens of the vertically composed *Dedham Vale* and *Valley Scene, with Trees* [figure 36] are particularly fresh, though on the whole his palette in this series of pictures is less innovative than his letter to Dunthorne would lead us to expect. Cormak has pointed out his use for the first time of "a reddish-brown ground, out of which the banks of the earth, the trees, the foliage, and the distant fields emerge"; he also notes that Constable uses the texture of both paint and canvas to represent the various densities of the natural scene.³² Innovative use of various tones of ground will become a major feature of Constable's later oil sketches; here, the earth tone contributes much to the

probability accord better with the scene and time of day than will any invention of your own." Constable, II, 4.

30 *New Idylls, with a letter to M. Fuslin on Landscape Painting* Trsl. W. Hooper, M.D. (London, 1776), 95.

31 Graham Reynolds: *Victoria and Albert Museum: Catalogue of the Constable Collection* (London: HMSO, 1960; rev. ed. 1973), 48. On the important distinction of "sketch", "study", and "scene", cf. Rosenthal (1987), 38-41, and Bermingham (1986), 119-21, as well as her article "Reading Constable." In: *Art History X* (1987): 38-58.

32 Cormak, 41.

studies attempt at a near-tangible sense of "true" representation.³³ In the vertical *Dedham Vale*, the ground forms the soil visible along the Stour's banks; as vegetation thins near the river's edge, so does the laying on of paint, so that in the picture, as in nature, the "ground" becomes more apparent as one nears the water. In the largest of the right-hand framing trees, the ground also indicates the dried vegetation at the interior of its higher mass, an effect characteristic of certain trees at late summer.³⁴ His study of both Claude and Gainsborough would have shown Constable the technique of leaving the ground exposed, but not with the aim of recording such botanical particulars.

If the Stour valley itself is Constable's "claimed place", beloved because of its association with his early life, the 1802 studies record the point at which the claim becomes a professional one. As his letter to Dunthorne predicts, nature and place will be Constable's serious chosen subject, worthy of "elevation of mind", and the landscapes which can bear the weight of this program are largely those fortified by his attachment to them: the road he took to school (*A Lane Near Dedham* [figure 33]); the cottage he would paint in various guises until the end of his life (*Willy Lott's House*); the highest prospect available in his valley (*Dedham Vale*). They set up a store of images to which Constable can return throughout his career – much like the spots of time Wordsworth sketched out for the first time in Goslar. Sometimes Constable will use them directly, as when the vertical *Dedham Vale* becomes the model for his 1828 Academy picture of the same name [figure 34]. More often, though, the connection is of a lifetime of "serious" work based upon these scenes, even when his later exhibited pictures are far from attempts at pure unaffected representation, as in the transformation of Lott's cottage into 1835's nostalgic *Valley Farm* [figure 35].³⁵

Some similarities between Wordsworth and Constable were striking enough to be recognized by their contemporaries. In a letter of 1826 to

33 Graham Reynolds has noted that within ten years Constable would vary his choices, picking a browner ground as part of his unusual palette for the storm-ridden atmosphere of the Victoria and Albert Museum's *Barges on the Stour* (Constable: *The Natural Painter* [New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1965], 41); Rosenthal, in discussing the same sketch, points to the ground's part "in establishing reflections in water" (1983, 45).

34 In painting trees, Constable seems often to have left blank an area of ground, filling in the trees after the surrounding pigment – an effect visible in a number of his later oil sketches, but not necessarily used to preserve this particular and specific detail.

35 Although he was a consistent visitor at Bergholt until at least 1817, Constable did not choose, as Wordsworth did, to live in his "dear vale". Later in that 1803 letter to Dunthorne he says he "shall soon be at home again" – but adds that much in London tempts him "at this busy time of the Arts", so he will remain another week or two. The urgency of the year before is missing, I think, because Constable has *already* returned in a way which has permanently affected his art.

Fisher, Constable includes a poem from amateur artist Rev. Thomas Judkins; in verses with little felicity of expression but much sincerity, Judkins shows that he has accepted the idea that Constable's art embodies a high moral seriousness. Constable's receiving "a Medal from the King of France", is deemed a "triumph and prize" well-earned; Constable's "course has been heroic". In one admittedly unfortunate image in his address to Constable, Judkins recognizes the process of creating a place for one's art: "thine hand / Hath carved from rock the pedestal where stand / Thy daring feet." He further finds that Constable's genius places the painter among "the great and wise / In Art [...] with gifts so masterfull and close allied [...] at my Wordsworths glorious side / Alike for mocked at".³⁶ In linking the two artists, Judkins demonstrates that each has been successful in creating an audience as well as an artistic persona which valorized the struggle against conformity. This business of self-creation continued for Wordsworth and Constable throughout their lives. They enlisted friends – the "fit audience" – for recognition and reassurance: Archdeacon Fisher and later C.R. Leslie and Lucas for Constable, Beaumont and later Isabella Fenwick for Wordsworth. Their letters and dictated notes show them revisiting and revising their respective "lives", artistic constructions necessitated by the pressure of working against critical judgment; in both their cases, the connections between autobiography, place, and creative imagination are upheld as strongly at the close of their careers as their beginnings.

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³⁶ Quoted by Constable in: Constable, VI, 224.

NORMA S. DAVIS

Poet and Painter: Beaumont's Illustrations in the Poetry of William Wordsworth

In 1815, two poems by William Wordsworth appeared with engraved illustrations from paintings by Sir George Howland Beaumont: *Peele Castle in a Storm* [figure 1] in a two-volume edition of the *Poems* and *The White Doe of Rylstone* [figure 2] in a special quarto edition of a poem of the same title. Although they appeared in separate publications, the two poems and two paintings are historically and artistically interdependent. Coupled together, they document an interesting episode in the growth of artistic powers for both the poet and the painter.

They first met in the summer of 1803 while the Beaumonts were living in Keswick as neighbors to Wordsworth's friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The friendship between Beaumont and Wordsworth is well documented because it developed principally through correspondence. It is supported further by letters exchanged between Lady Beaumont and Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy. Early in their acquaintance, Sir George gave Wordsworth two of his landscape sketches and sent him the *Discourses* of Joshua Reynolds. Reynolds' ideas and Beaumont's sketches immediately became the topic of conversation between the two men and this was the beginning of Wordsworth's art education. By the same token, Wordsworth responded to Beaumont's gifts by sending him copies of his new poems or translations he was making of the poetry of Michelangelo which helped to expand Beaumont's vision of the potentials of landscape as a subject for art. Wordsworth called Beaumont "one of my most intimate friends" and described their friendship as an "interchange of knowledge and delight". Beaumont responded by writing "[...] I never see you or read you but I am the better for it."¹

¹ Ernest de Selincourt (ed.): *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* 2nd ed. revised by Mary Moorman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969) (cited as: *EY* = Early Years; *MY* = Middle Years), footnote to *MY*, 92.