

Foundation English Literature of the Romantic Period, 1798-1832
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Romantic Poetry 3
Visual Arts and the Romantics

Hello everybody as we continue our exploration of Romantic aesthetics 1798 to 1832 we move on from poetry, we have looked at Wordsworth, Shelly and Blake to something else. I want to focus this session on something whose aesthetics intersects with that of the poets. So this session is devoted to visual arts and the English Romantics.

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We have already seen the influence of the visual arts on English Romanticism.
Theories of :

The Picturesque
The Beautiful
The Sublime

Influenced both the poetry and the visual arts. Philosophical texts also drew on both the forms, literature and visual arts.

Earlier painters and artists such as Claude Lorrain (French, 1600-1682) and William Blake were also key figures in English Romantic poetry and painting.



We have already seen the influence of visual arts and English Romanticism, we have seen theories via Burk and others translation of (0:46). Theories are discussed that aesthetics of The Picturesque, The Beautiful and The Sublime just a quick recap The Picturesque is organise land quite systematic some ruins here and there, some melancholy, some poverty but it is harmonious variety.

The Beautiful is quieter it is passive. The Sublime is terror inducing it is large, vast, incomprehensible. Influenced both the poetry and the visual acts these theories were primarily coming out from philosophical text, so philosophical text influenced image making, poetry and (1:29) and military theories of such as during the time. Earlier painters and artists such as Claude Lorrain French painter 1600 to 1682 and William Blake whom we just looked at in earlier session were also key figures in English romantic poetry and painting.

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Perhaps the most influential genre in paintings was the landscape form.

John Constable
Richard Wilson
JMW Turner
Thomas Gainsborough



Claude Lorrain *Seaport at sunset* (1639)



Perhaps arguably the most influential genre in painting was the landscape form you had John Constable, Richard Wilson, JMW Turner, Thomas Gainsborough and some of these are already figured in our previous session as supplement to the poetic texts. They will begin here with Claude Lorrain's seaport at sunset 1639 and you will see specifically the use of light and shade in Claude Lorrain and he became a specialist in this kind of depiction. A sun setting into the sea and the sun's distance and the sea distance and you will see more or less symmetrical arrangement here with the boats and waters in the middle.

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Claude Lorrain *Sunrise* (1646-47)



Claude Lorrain *Landscape with a Piping Shepherd* (1629-32)



Lorrain's use of light when painting and drawing the landscape was very influential in theories of the picturesque (William Gilpin called Lorrain the 'Master'). Luminous, backlit and shaded landscapes, highlighting (mostly) quiet rural lands were poetic compositions for many Romantics, influenced by Lorrain. Even the landscape design, mostly of gardens, was influenced by his paintings.



The other one again this time reversing the time of the day Claude Lorrain sunrise 1646-47 displayed you will see the clarity of the blue up there in the sky and quite a landscape people relaxing. This is Claude Lorraine famous landscape with the piping Shepherd 1629 to 1632 again are quite idyllic setting there is light, trees framing, human being in the center. So if you go through the 3 slides that I have put up here for you Claude Lorrain's slide seaport at sunset, sunrise and landscape with piping Shepherd you will see that Lorrain use of light when painting and drawing the landscape is particularly significant.

This was very influential theories of the picturesque, William Gilpin call Lorrain 'The Master' actually in one of his text. If you pay attention to this it is luminous but it is also backlit like some of our electronic gadgets now you can see light in the background and if you look at the 3 paintings here all 3 sunset, sunrise and piping Shepherd has darker foregrounds and brightness in the back of the painting. Luminous, backlit, shaded landscape characteristics of Claude Lorrain.

They highlighted mostly quite rural lands there were poetic compositions for many Romantics and they were all influenced by Lorraine even the landscape design mostly of gardens was influenced by his paintings, so the point I am trying to make here is it is not only that Lorrain inspired poetry and other painters, Lorrain also inspired landscape designers, so they were also influenced by his paintings.

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John Constable (1776-1837), like Lorrain, focused on light and atmospheric effects in his paintings of rural England. Clouds, sunlight, shadows from trees populate his picturesque.

Constable also painted mills, rural labour, markets and roads.



The other one is John Constable 1776 to 1837 a very influential man also because of theories of paintings articulated and much of what John Constable said about paintings was circulated

among other artists and poets and very influential theories about say detail or the larger picture and things like that and there was constant debate between Constable and other as to whether we should focus on the details or we should have a focus which is much larger. Constable like Lorrain focus on light and atmospheric effects in his paintings and again Constable is focusing on rural England, so you will have clouds, sunlight, shadows, trees and the poor. He painted Mills, rural labor, markets and roads.

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John Constable, *Dedham Vale* (1828)



Constable paints landscapes of amenity, the *locus amoenus*. They are serene landscapes. They suggest contemplative states of mind, as a result.



We will look at a couple of images from John Constable, coming up next on your screen one of Constable's famous ones Dedham Vale dated 1828, the landscape is clearly rural there is a little bit of uncultivated land here and what we would think off as jungle or unruly landscape.

Mostly Constable paint landscape of amenity, traditionally called the locus of amoenus, amoenus is the root of amenity.

In landscape which provides basic requirements for human sustains, they are serene landscapes. They suggest contemplative states of mind, some of you may recall what you said about Mont Blanc that in mind looking at the vast mountains is inspired because the mind is also taking on the characteristics of the sublime. In Constable a similar effect that the serene landscape engined the reflective or the contemplative state of mind, perhaps the next 2 coming up on the screen are Constable's most famous paintings.

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John Constable, *Wivenhoe Park* (1816)



John Constable here Wivenhoe Park dated to 1816 and you can very clearly see a picturesque there is water, land, some cattle in the distance there is a horizon with some trees and a fence. Now if you look at Wivenhoe Park what is it you notice? You notice it is a serene landscape there is reflection in the water, it is uneven, so you have harmony across various elements. This is a landscape that brings various elements together and that harmony of the variety is central to how we imagine a landscape, so Constable is emphasizing a landscape which reflects the human mind. What (())(6:59) the human mind to do? It should harmonise variety.

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John Constable, *The Cornfield* (1826)



Critics have argued that Constable symbolizes time via landscape. In *The Cornfield*, for example, commentators note that the reaper looking backward at the boy drinking from the stream is in fact looking at a former stage in his own life, a Wordsworthian moment. (Gillen D'Arcy Wood)



John Constable, *The Hay Wain*



Next one John Constable, *The Cornfield* 1826 yet again animals, sky and please note the distribution of light. Now critics have argued that Constable symbolises time via landscape in *The Cornfield*, for example, commentators note that the reaper looking backward at the boy and this is your *Cornfield*, the reaper looking backward at the boy drinking from the stream is in fact looking at your former stage in his own life and Gillian D'Arcy Wood for has made this argument says it is Wordsworthian and in moment, is o the man is looking backward but he is not really looking at the boy, he is looking at how he was as a boy.

So it is actually the man turning to look at this childhood, so the childhood is a shifting time because he is looking backward in time and the boy represents his earlier stage. Perhaps John Constable's most visible, most anthologised, most exhibited painting, *The Hay Wain*, rural England, a cart, a quite landscape and note again the color of the sky and the clouds, so clearly Constable landscape are instances of the picturesque.

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John Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), did [watercolours](#), prints and oil paintings. Among his famous works are *Snow Storm: Hannibal Crossing the Alps*, (1812); *Rain, Steam and Speed - The Great Western Railway* (1844), *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons* (1835).

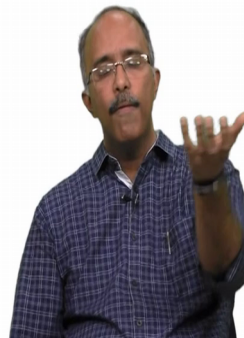




Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway* (1844)



The train just seems to burst into and out of the canvas, it has its own illumination, and seems to sit oddly with the rest of the setting. The engine/train is the only identifiable element in the composition.
But there is a bridge on one side, a hare on the other: nature and culture in the same frame.



I now move onto John Mallord William Turner, JMW Turner 1775 to 1851, he did watercolours, prints and oil paintings. Some of his most famous work and these are now legendary are *Snow Storm: Hannibal Crossing the Alps*; *Rain, Steam and Speed- The Great Western Railway*; *The Burning of the Houses of Lords and Commons 1835*. We will 1st look at Turner, *Rain, Steam and Speed- The Great Western Railway*. Notice here the background out of which the train seems to be coming towards us, the thing you see on your right is actually the engine heading towards you dated 1844.

The train just seems to burst out of the canvas and if you look carefully you do not see the remaining section of the train, so the canvas on what would be the left of the screen is smudged, covered and something is coming out of it, it is the suddenness and as you can see there is a little bridge on the left and there is a hound but what is important here is the train

just burst out of the canvas, it has its own illumination and it seems to sit oddly with the standings. The engine and the train has only identifiable element in the composition everything else is blurred.

There is a bridge, a hare on the other, so nature and culture are in the same frame, the point I am making here is Turner seems to merge bits of the picturesque and bits of the sublime here. The turbulence on one side and the engine coming out from here and the engine represents industry, industrialisation, culture, modernity basically human culture and that bridge on the other are both instances of this in the middle there is hare, so you have the hare, the bridge and technology all in the same plane roughly speaking and it is the suddenness of it that should allow us to see the merger of the picturesque and the sublime.

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Turner *Snow Storm:
Hannibal Crossing the Alps* (1812)

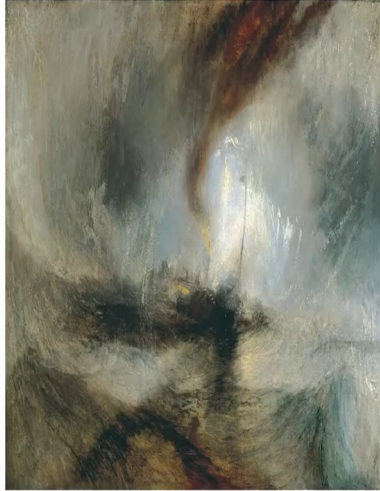


This is a classic sublime painting, Turner *Snow Storm: Hannibal Crossing the Alps* dated to 1812 and you can see the legendary story of Hannibal crossing the Alps with his animal and his troops, how the hell did they actually move across over from top of the mountain down to invade the countries below his source of considerable historical interest and curiosity but what Turner is showing here is humanity is tiny, is small, nature is huge.

What you are looking at is nature that is simply overwhelming but the fact that Hannibal move through the Alps if you know the history of it tells you that the painting is doing something else, it is overwhelming nature, it is sublime nature but man tamps and you will recall what we said early in another session that the sublime is an aesthetic which is primarily masculine and that is the politics of it, it is a patriarchal gender driven aesthetic because it is

meant to show the heroic nature of man, man as gender, so it is nature meant to be sublime which has been conquered and conquest is a masculine ethos.

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[Turner](#),
Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth (1842)



Turner's images of storms at sea, the Parliament buildings on fire, and Hannibal's crossing are examples of the Romantic sublime.





Turner, Tintern Abbey: The Crossing and Chancel, Looking towards the East Window (1794)



Next on your screen Turner, Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth 1842. The image here is of something being tossed and captured and here is human culture embodied in a ship tossed this way that way and nature sublimity overwhelms everything else. Turner's image of storm at sea, the Parliament building on fire and Hannibal Crossing of the Alps are examples of the romantic sublime, vast incomprehensible but I want to take a look now at one picturesque instance out of Turner.

This is Tintern Abbey: The Crossing and Chancel, Looking towards the East Window dated is 1794 quiet and you might find it beneficial and profitable not to say interesting to situate words with writing on Tintern Abbey and Turner's depiction of Tintern Abbey. As you can see the Abbey is more or less in ruins and we do know that the picturesque did ask for some ruins to be installed as in the landscape and the paintings invariably captured poverty and ruins and hovels and cottages. Sure you can see that the visitors passing through Tintern Abbey it is (()) (12:58) covered it is ruined effectively but it is quitter. There is nothing disturbing about it except the melancholy around the ruin.

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Henri Fuseli, *The Nightmare* (1781)



Additional /Recommended Reading

Sophie Thomas. *Romantic Visualities: Fragments, History, Spectacle*. Routledge, 2007.

Gillen D'Arcy Wood, *The Shock of the Real: Romanticism and Visual Culture, 1760–1860*. Palgrave/Macmillan, 2001.



I want to the load with a specific image Henri Fuseli, *The Nightmare* 1781, there is a Gargoyle like figure sitting on top of a women who is asleep or drunk or stoned or whatever you want to call it and there is a hideous Horsehead in a corner. There is a table with some things on it either substances she took but Henry Fuseli in *The Nightmare* not strictly speaking within the ambit of what we have been discussing so far by way of aesthetics is the source of much Gothic traditions, *The Nightmare* with the animals with the Gargoyle with people argue...demon is the other side of romanticism, the darkness, the anxiety but it also implies or suggests symbolises the nightmares people have.

So the gargoyle is not sitting out there, the horse is not out there, the gargoyle sitting on top of the women's stomach might actually be something she is imagining. The Gothic as we

know explore the darker side of the human mind, Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* with the nightmare sequences and several of the Gothic novels, *The Castle of Otranto*, the *Arabian Nights* (14:20), Maria Edgeworth, we have Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis as *Monk* all text that spoke about Nightmares, disease, decay, madness, so Henry Fuseli *The Nightmare* and several other text that he did I pun in here to show you the contrast between the sublime of nature the picturesque in cultivated landscape and nature and hear the Gothic. The Gothic is the counterpart to the aesthetic of beauty, it is the counterpart of the picturesque.