

Space into Time
English Canals and English Landscape Painting 1760-1835

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ABSTRACT

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Susanna Cole

*In a sense, it is always too late to
talk about time.*

--- Jacques Derrida¹

England's canal network, critical to the nation's predominance in the development of modern industry, goes largely unnoticed today except by some scholars of transportation. As I suggest in my introduction, one of the reasons may be that since the Second World War the canals have been cleaned up and turned into an attraction for boaters and tourists. With their brightly painted cabins occupied by families on vacation, the boats, now motorized, glide slowly and silently past the bucolic banks of the canals. These are, in appearance, as originally proposed by the development companies and drawn and engraved for the newspapers: beautiful country spaces to be admired and enjoyed by the public. Another reason may be the exertion of a willful nostalgia: because the comparatively slow-moving canals can appear pre-industrial we choose to think of them that way. These choices have made the English canal system part of a pre-modern England, imagined just as the canals were being built.

That England would always stand as "a living emblem" of itself remained for the most part uncontested (putting Cromwell to one side) until the

¹ *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1982), 42.

construction of the canals. No narrative was required to explain the meaning of the countryside of estates and villages: they were “taken as a given” and had “no apparent origins”.² The canals visibly introduced time into what was perceived as an unchanging landscape. Time entered not only in the speed of transport on the canals but also in the factories that ran by the clock and the canals that ran by timetable. The geological layers unearthed in the digging of the canals revealed the passage of eons of time and the instability of the earth itself. Time entered in the movement of people and goods in bustling new towns that were in the interior of the country, made prosperous in part by the access the canals gave them to the seas. There was enthusiasm for the progress of English industry and science, a sense of national pride, and great expectations for the wealth of the country. There was a sense that if the old landscape and the new could not be reconciled, the identity of the nation would be lost.³

The general ambivalence about the changes the canals would bring began at the top with the landed nobility who first financed and built them. Their desire to extract wealth from their own lands overcame their fear of a dynamic population. Gainsborough, in his Cottage Door paintings, appealed to his audience’s sense of nostalgia for the passing of the timeless English landscape at the very moment that the canals were being built and many of them were investing in them. Ambivalence is also present in Constable’s attempts to cope

² These are Raymond Williams’ remarks about the effect that Ben Jonson achieves in *Penshurst. The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University, 1975) 40.

³ It should be noted that fundamental change was a long time coming. “Land remained the ruling and governing classes’ principal form of wealth and revenue until 1914.... This was true even in England, where agriculture was radically reduced in economic importance.” Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 9.

with landscapes expressive of both time and space. The desire to return to an almost mythic prior time is palpable and his attempt to leap into the future with *The Leaping Horse* avoids the issue in the other direction.

The heyday of canals, from 1765 to 1835, is the interstice between the early days of modernity in England and modern England in its full-blown glory. It is also a curious period in which the development of one technology, the canal, as it was elaborated in the landscape, propelled two generations of artists to work on the same problem: the visual representation of time and space. If one sets a later date for modernity (which I believe would be incorrect), one has the additional liability of facing a closed system of a time-based society and visual culture. By setting the onset of modernity in the 1760's, the anxiety and the failure of artists to develop the presence of both time and space in their work. At the very cusp of the period, in a work such as Turner's *Dudley, Worcestershire*, time does not empty space of meaning, any more than the supremacy of space in pre-modern England truly nullified time.

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To my mother

Introduction

In 1766 Josiah Wedgwood installed a clock tower as the centerpiece of his new factory at Etruria to instill in his workers a knowledge of clock time and to demand that they work on a precise schedule, by the clock. In addition to the promptitude of his workforce, there were other important benefits for Wedgwood's modern manufactory to be derived from the regularity of the clock. Clock time allowed the many processes that led to a finished piece to be synchronized and thus made possible the compartmentalization of labor. Wedgwood was not the first manufacturer to introduce his workers to the discipline of clock time. In fact, Wedgwood had seen the same sort of clock just the year before in the new factory in Birmingham of his friend and collaborator, Matthew Boulton. However, Etruria was a different sort of factory that quite deliberately looked backward to the feudal estate even as it looked forward to modern manufacturing. Like the estates on which it was modeled, Etruria contained a manor house for the lord of the estate and a village complete unto itself with schools, churches, stables, shops and houses for its workers. By placing his clock like a watchful eye over his industrial estate, Wedgwood was conditioning his worker to a modern conception of time without which industrial life would not have been possible. The clock taught him that time was external, autonomous, continuous, quantitative, and linear. Clock time was neither interior to man nor derived from the natural, cyclical world he saw around him.

Time, motion, clock time and the look of the modern were first introduced into the English landscape by the vast network of canals whose construction began in 1757 on the Duke of Bridgewater's estate. A few years later, in the landscape of Wedgwood's Etruria, an industrial canal took the place of the then popular landscape feature of the serpentine river. My dissertation traces this infusion of time into the space of the English landscape and the representations of that landscape. The canal was introduced as simply another water feature of the estate because both the building of the canals and the mobility they made possible were thought to be a threat to the "fabric woven and kept by 50 generations of landlords and labourers". Englishmen depended on "insularity, artifice, stability and order" to maintain that rural landscape that was "the acme of nature"⁴ and the social and legal foundation and image of the nation.

Shaped by history, by six hundred years of English land law, by the cyclical constructs of nature, by systems of social discipline and by instruments of technology, this "cultural imaginary"⁵ valorized the myth of the static space of the landscape and devalued and was threatened by the introduction of movement and therefore of time into the landscape. This "cultural imaginary" was the light by which Englishmen and foreigners alike viewed the English landscape in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In regard to the English landscape, there is an irony in Foucault's characterization of modernity: "Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the

⁴ David Lowenthal, "European and English Landscape as National Symbols," in *Geography and National Identity*, ed. David Hoosin (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 21.

⁵ Peter De Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003), 151.

contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic.”⁶ These famous lines are a characterization of space that the English have sought to maintain throughout their history. For centuries their landscape and their land have been the sites of contestation between time and space, a conflict that became more acute towards the end of the eighteenth century and ended, as we know, with the domination of time over space.

The first challenge to the hegemony of time over space came in the middle of the twentieth century as cultural critics began to think about nature as a cultural production.⁷ Henri Lefebvre’s proposal that we think of “the production of

⁶ Michel Foucault, “Questions on Geography,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage, 1980), 70.

⁷ In *Space and Theory*, Russel West-Pavlov rehearses the history of the highly complex conceptualization of contemporary spatial theory. “Genette attacked... [“the tyranny of the diachronic perspective introduced by the nineteenth century” (Genette, 1969: 48)] and Pierre Dockès referred to the nineteenth-century vision of the social world as “a wonderland of no dimensions” (Dockès, 1969: 9).

With the rise of structuralism, this epistemological hierarchy was progressively reversed and the last thirty years have witnessed a turn towards analyses of space and away from historical analyses as the ultimate interpretative instrument. Edward Soja, for instance, has judged structuralism to be “one of the twentieth century’s most important avenues for the reassertion of space in critical social theory” (Soja 1989: 18).” Other critics who have abandoned the Bergsonian emphasis on time have asserted a preference for space as the most important medium of human consciousness. In Dosse (1995) (413) “temporality has toppled over into spatiality. Dick Hebdige has confirmed this trend for the English-speaking intellectual context, “diagnosing a broader growing skepticism concerning older explanatory and predictive models based in history [which] has led to a renewed interest in the relatively neglected ‘under-theorized’ dimension of space.” “Similarly Frederic Jameson claims that the dominant cultural mode is one defined by categories of space; we inhabit the synchronic, he claims, rather than the diachronic.”

“The new prominence of space was heralded by cultural geographers such as Derek Gregory with *Geographical Imaginations* (1993), John Urry with *Consuming Places* (1995), or Edward Soja, with his formative *Postmodern Geographies* (1989) and *Thirdspace* (1996). Doreen Massey in *Forspace* (2005) has summarized the developments of the past decade. “Comprehensive theories of space in society such as that offered by Henri Lefebvre have gained broad acceptance. Lefebvre posits that space is not a container, but rather, the very fabric of social existence, a medium woven of the relationships between subjects, their actions, and their environment. Space in its traditional sense is not a pre-existing receptacle for human action, but is created by that action: space, in turn, exerts its own variety of agency, modeling the human actors who have configured it. Spatial practices gather up both environment and actors into a single over-determined continuum. Furthermore, space is always already caught up in representational practices, with different groups vying for control of discourses about space, but

space” challenged “two or three centuries of western thought by rendering space not as an abstraction – a Newtonian absolute, or a Cartesian field – but rather as a malleable artifact.”⁸ While this necessary expansion of our conception of space has been crucial to the self-reevaluation of many disciplines, the dichotomy has maintained itself, “a single over-determined continuum”.⁹ Now as then, space (landscape) and time (movement) are seen as dichotomous, as the contemporary social geographers, Jon May and Nigel Thrift observe: “Within such a dualism, where Time is understood as the domain of dynamism and Progress, the spatial is relegated to the realm of stasis and thus excavated of any meaningful politics”.¹⁰ In *Timespace*, May and Thrift attempt to find an alternative to the “powerful and persistent dualism” of time and space.¹¹

Doreen Massey suggests as a strategy that we consider space as the site of interrelationships among incomparables:

What is needed, I think, is to uproot ‘space’ from that constellation of concepts in which it has so unquestioningly so often been embedded (stasis; closure; representation) and to settle it among another set of ideas (heterogeneity; relationality; coevalness... liveliness indeed) where it releases a more challenging political landscape.¹²

also of the messages which are coded in spatial artifacts themselves.” Russel West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory: Kristeva, Foucault, Deleuze* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 18-20.

⁸ Neal Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Productions of Space* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1984), 249.

⁹ Russel West-Pavlov, *Space in Theory*, 20.

¹⁰ Jon May and Nigel Thrift, eds., *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality* (London: Routledge, 2001), 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹² Doreen Massey, *ForSpace* (London: Sage Publications, 2005). 13.

Massey's association of space with "stasis, closure and representation" is exactly that association which landed Englishmen and others wished to preserve in the eighteenth century. Her suggestion to "embed" space in heterogeneity and relationality is exactly the threat posed by the canal, a vast network that brought into relationship parts of the country and varieties of people and motion to the stasis of the countryside.¹³ May and Thrift's description of space as a "constitutive part" of time could be a description of the canal network. They suggest we should envision space/time as "networks of time stretching in different and divergent directions across an uneven space".¹⁴ The concept of the network was developed in the eighteenth century and its imagery was influential in the conceptualization and growth of the canal "network".

The term "network" originated in the trade of weaving in silk thread. Its definition in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772) suggests its metaphoric use: "Plain needlework of gold, silver, or silk thread, woven in such a way as to obtain stitches and openings."¹⁵ "Network" was elaborated throughout the century by engineers, philosophers, scientists and physicians to describe the interconnectedness of diffuse places and people and the coherence of biological

¹³ Fear of the "floating multitude" that plied the canals was a political as well as social issue. Burke uses the term with vehement disapproval and deep suspicion to describe those who wish to change the status quo: "They have the more active part of the dissenters with them; and the whole clan of speculators of all denominations – a large and growing species. They have that floating multitude which goes with events and which suffers the loss or gain of a battle, to decide its opinions of right and wrong". Edmund Burke, "Observations on the Conduct of the Minority Particularly in the Last Session of Parliament," 1793, in *The Works of Edmund Burke*, (London:1906). III, 502.

¹⁴ May and Thrift, *TimeSpace*, 9.

¹⁵ Armand Mattelart, "Mapping Modernity: Utopia and Communications Networks," in *Mapping Modernity: Utopia and Communications Networks*, ed. Dennis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 170.

systems. It was used to describe the circulation of the blood in the human body and the channel patterns in various organs of the human body. As early as 1653, Sir Thomas Browne wrote of “this Reticulate or Net-work” that “was also considerable in the inward parts of man.”¹⁶ The term began to be used as it is currently by Vauban (1633-1707), Louis XVI’s principal engineer, to describe his military systems of fortification, undermining, and topography. Vauban was an advocate of the construction of canals and in 1802 in his biography, he described his interest in the “hydrological network”. By 1825, the term appears frequently. St. Simon writes of “the network of tissues that reveals the construction of organs” and, distinguishing between the natural and the man-made, notes that “human society” is “the product of an artificial network”.¹⁷ All of these sorts of “networks” integrate time and space, as by their means living organisms and moving systems are elaborated in space and related to one another.

The analogy that could be drawn between the natural networks and the communications “network” of canals and improved rivers and roads was used as a selling point in the promotion of canals in England and undoubtedly made the constructed network more understandable and appealing. And the utility of improved rivers and roads for business, for national unity and for the conduct of war was apparent to many people in England and abroad.¹⁸ For a variety of

¹⁶ Sir Thomas Browne, “The Garden of Cyrus” in *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, 1653, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes (London: Faber & Faber Limited,) I, 204.

¹⁷ For the history of the use of the term in France see Mattelart, “Mapping Modernity” 169-192.

¹⁸ France did not create such a network until the middle of the nineteenth century in part due to the greater size of the country and in part to the fact that its land was divided into many small farms. These made the raising of financing of canals more difficult and their usefulness less than in England. In this matter, the French often compared themselves unfavorably to the English, as

reasons having mostly to do with its geological and geographical constitution, England swept ahead of the French despite legal and cultural practices that worked against the very idea of the network.

The history and governance of England that was enacted in the stasis of its rural landscape changed only when local aristocrats understood that they could profit from the canals. Until the end of the eighteenth century, physical and legal obstacles enforced both the immobility and the localism of the working population and the power and importance of the local aristocrat. The greatest obstacle to movement was the disrepair of the roads, a condition that was not a matter of happenstance but rather a consequence of social organization and social policy. Under the control of the local landed gentry and aristocracy, the roads improved only at their pleasure and expense and thus almost always remained impediments to travel in all but the best weather. Most roads were too poor for travel for more than a few miles at any time of year. In winter when mud and flooding made the roads impassable “it was still possible for villages to be cut off from one another for months at a time”¹⁹ and “waggon were dragged on

in the amusing fantasy, *Voyage en Icarie* (1840), by Etienne Cabet in which his hero visits an imaginary land rich in a variety of networks. He is shown a map of the country that is described by his host: “The major railways are in red, minor ones in yellow, tramways in blue and all other roads in black. You can see also all the canals, big and small, all the navigable and canalized rivers. Here are all the working mines and quarries. Notice also the local roads on this map of the provinces and the communal paths on this parish map. Now tell me if you know of a more sophisticated and efficient communication system.” Our hero thinks, “*I was amazed because it was even better than in England...*” *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁹ Pamela Horn, *The Rural World, 1780-1850: Social Change in the English Countryside* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 15.

their bellies”.²⁰ Even in fine weather relatively good roads could not handle heavy loads like coal²¹ and such cargo had to be moved on rivers. But like the resources for the construction of a road, those for the enlargement of a river came not from London but from the landed aristocrats and country gentry who, as they improved the rivers on which they moved their goods, had little if any financial motivation to improve the roads. The centrality of the estate and its control of the condition of the roads elevated “the territorial aristocrat” who “wielded more power over his neighbours than the sovereign state operating from London...”²² and created “loyalties attached to the country house” even as it isolated dwellers in the eighteenth-century countryside.

In addition, obstacles to mobility intended to control the cost of labor and of charity had been written into English law for centuries. Laws of settlement, many of which remained in place through the end of the nineteenth century, were designed to prevent servants and laborers from moving from parish to parish to seek employment and imposed virtually feudal conditions on the working poor. Land-owning, tax-paying citizens tended to regard the working poor as locusts who would “settle themselves in those parishes where there is the best stock, the largest commons or wastes to build cottages, and the most woods for them to

²⁰ William Marshall, *The Rural Economy of the Midland Counties including the management of livestock, in Leicestershire and its environs: together with minutes on agriculture and planting in the district of the Midland station* (London: G. Nicol, 1796), I, 35.

²¹ R.K. Webb, *Modern England; from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1968), 103.

²² T. S. Ashton, *An Economic history of England : The 18th century* (London: Methuen, 1955), 18.

burn and destroy.”²³ In order to give individual parishes the power to fend off these ravaging hordes, the Poor Law Act of 1601 had put the administration of poor rates into the hands of the individual parishes that could grant as little as they wished to impoverished workers. Further impediments to movement were instated by the 1662 Act of Settlement which provided that a man had to give 40 days notice to a parish of his intention to move there and in addition had to meet other burdensome if not impossible requirements.²⁴ Although laws providing for limited forms of relief were passed in the eighteenth century,²⁵ laws restricting movement remained in place until the enactment in 1834 of the Poor Law Amendment Act. Even so both the earlier laws and the 1834 reform continued not only to privilege landowners and to hobble their tenants but also to continue to valorize these essentially feudal arrangements that Elizabeth Helsinger calls the old “pattern of rural labor attached to local, hierarchical social structures inseparable from particular landholdings.”²⁶

²³ <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/poorlaw/elizpl.html>. Also in Ann Cole, *An Introduction to Poor Law Documents before 1834* (London: Federation of Family History Societies, 1994), 12.

²⁴ In order to move to a new parish, a man had to meet one or more of the following requirements: to be hired continuously by a settled resident for more than a year and a day (this led to short contracts so people did not get a settlement); to hold parish office; to pay taxes on a property worth more than ten pounds a year; to have served a full seven-year apprenticeship to a settled resident; to have married into the parish. In addition, in order to leave his settled parish, a man had to bring with him a Settlement Certificate that guaranteed that his old parish would pay for him to be removed back if he claimed benefits from his new parish. Of course, parishes most often refused to issue these certificates. In addition, the laws of Settlement allowed estate owners who controlled housing to control the movement of labor: landowners could demolish empty houses to reduce the number of laborers on their lands.

²⁵ Knatchbull’s Act (1723) provided for poor houses and Gilbert’s Act (1782) allowed parishes to band together to finance poor relief. <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/poorlaw/testact.html>.

²⁶ Elizabeth Helsinger, “Turner and the Representation of England,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002), 107.

The enforced residence of the rural working poor on the estate was portrayed by the landed aristocrats and gentry not as a restraint on their claims to charity or a narrowing of their possibilities but rather as the foundation of a stable and enviable family life. The immobility of the working poor on the estate formed a below stairs tableau vivant of the politics of land owning: their permanence on the land, like that of their lord, was what made co-extensive their interests and those of the country. Considered as an inheritance, land was the form of wealth that for all time could not be relocated: the activities pertaining to the land were cyclical and not linear and therefore conservative rather than progressive and the permanence of land was believed to guarantee the patriotism of its owner since he could not take his wealth out of the nation.²⁷ When Lord Ashburton asserted in a political speech that “whenever England comes to be settled and made happy it must be done by councils of such who love their country and value their estates beyond anything else of any consideration whatsoever”²⁸ he was acknowledging explicitly, over and against the rising mercantile commercial interests and their portable wealth, the connection between patriotism and land owning: “the [Land] outlives its inhabitants, is immune from destruction by man, and therefore provides a suitably firm base for institutions of government and wealth.”²⁹

²⁷ Lawrence E. Klein, “Property and Politeness in the Early Eighteenth-century Whig Moralists,” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, eds. John Brewer and Susan Staves (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 223.

²⁸ Geoffrey Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 163.

²⁹ J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (London: Butterworth & Company, 1990), 255.

This idealized affective, patriotic and dynastic attachment of the landowner to his estate was enacted also in the laws governing the movement of the poor and the punitive charity to which the dispossessed were submitted. Earlier poor laws had utilized family ties to reinforce immobility when they stipulated that a man could move into a new parish for temporary work only if he “left behind a dwelling house or place in which he... inhabit and hath left Wife and Children.” In this way, social mobility could be restrained by limiting physical mobility. In the 1834 reform, families who could not or who did not remain on the land and became impoverished were parted when they entered the poor house: husbands, wives and children lived in separate dwellings.³⁰ Of course, these regulations were designed to demean and humiliate the recipients of charity and to discourage them from taking charity but they were also an explicit expression of an implicit belief that immobility on the land produced stability in the family.

The English land-owning upper classes and aristocracy had always been mistrustful of the socially destabilizing tendencies of any unlanded population. Now, in the wake of the loss of the American Colonies, in the midst of the French Revolution, and with the building of the canals, they were especially apprehensive about the unchecked circulation throughout the countryside of the tens of thousands of the laboring landless who were constructing and plying the canals. Sometimes called the “floating population”, in reference to their landlessness and to their mobility on the water, these laborers and canal workers created apprehension among estate owners and shopkeepers alike who saw them as men unattached to the land and its civilizing influence, unplaced and

³⁰ Norman Peel, *The Age of Peel* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), 78.

unmoored in tradition or law and consequently unbound by ties of loyalty, fealty or economic necessity. They feared that the canal workers could become an unruly mob of the sort they associated with the American and French revolutions and their leveling tendencies. However, motivated occasionally by liberal sentiments as well as by the desire to extract greater wealth from their land, estate owners and other investors managed somewhat to overcome their own mistrust and apprehension of this “floating multitude” in order to reap the windfall profits from canal investment.

In the first decade or two of canal construction in England, many of those who would become the floating multitude remained tied to the land, and became a fixture in eighteenth-century landscape painting where they were an object of sentimental nostalgia. They appeared at work or in the bosom of their families, in the cottage doorway on the grounds of the estate, embedded in the traditional signifiers of virtue, familial devotion, and personal and national identity. Their dislocation from these familiar settings made their landlessness overt, and required new visual narratives that could re-place them in the landscape and the nation. My dissertation assesses the power of both the real and the simulated estate in the works of the Duke of Bridgewater and of Josiah Wedgwood and evaluates the responses of Gainsborough, Constable and Turner to the canals and their floating population.

In Chapter One, I rehearse the English land law that since William the Conqueror has privileged the estate and made it, even today, the image of England and English landscape. Into this legal and visual context the first great

English Canal, the Bridgewater Canal was placed and Bridgewater's estate contextualized the canal as part of the old immovable order. Thus the Canal found a warm and enthusiastic reception even among those who were afraid of the movement of workers the canal would require and who envisioned a "floating population" cut loose from their ties to the land and therefore lawless. The Duke, who had paid for the canal himself, was celebrated in Horatian terms for his contribution to the nation's well-being although it accrued material benefits to Bridgewater alone.³¹ The canal was greeted as one of the new wonders of the world and as an object of national pride and the canal and its most spectacular features were seen in engravings, watercolors and paintings that were widely reproduced in popular publications. The most famous and most widely circulated portrait of the Duke in which he presents the canal to the nation, certainly does not hide the activity of the canal but keeps it apart from the person of the Duke and any question of Worsley's origin.

The many representations of the most spectacular features of the Canal moved it beyond the confines of the estate and altered people's expectations of what they might see and might hope to see in the landscape. Ironically, while the Duke elevated his own name and reputation as "the father of inland navigation", he increased the profitability of his estate and set in motion its demise. The Bridgewater Canal Company is the first corporation and it begins the

³¹ The Chichester Canal, opened in 1823 and built by the third Lord Egremont, is the only other canal to have been privately financed. Egremont, like Bridgewater, used his own estate workforce. The enterprise was however on a much smaller scale: the Chichester Canal was twelve miles long compared to Bridgewater's 93 miles. Egremont's truly benevolent intention was to improve local agriculture in the south. David Daniel Francis Gladwin, *The Canals of Britain* (London: Batsford, 1973), 50.

modernization of the British landscape as it “uproots and makes mobile that which is grounded, clears away or obliterates that which impedes circulation....”³²

Chapter Two examines the work of Josiah Wedgwood, the production of his pottery, the production of his estate and his canal and the production of his identity as a simulation of a landed aristocrat. I have discussed briefly the way in which Wedgwood insisted on the keeping of clock time in his factory and among his workers on his estate as a discipline that improved productivity and made it possible to synchronize an assembly line. He also bought, paid for with his own money, an extension of the Trent & Mersey canal to pass directly in front of his factory. The canal operated an extension of the assembly line, in that it transported pottery from one process to the next within the factory, but it also carried Wedgwood’s wares to every large port in England and thence overseas. Wedgwood’s use of the canal gave some visible structure and meaning to the abstractions of time, space and movement.

Nothing better illustrates Wedgwood’s understanding, production and dissemination of English culture than his design and rapid delivery to Queen Catherine of Russia of the “Frog Service” of over a thousand pieces that she had commissioned. With the Frog Service, Wedgwood served up on plates over a thousand views of English estates and landscape for an aristocratic patron, plates that were useful, exquisitely uniform, ready to be displayed and capable, in a second incarnation, of being mass-produced.

In Chapter Three I propose that Thomas Gainsborough’s cottage door

³² Jonathan K. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer : On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press,1992), 10.

paintings, their popularity and the subsequent English interest in the cottage arose out of the anxiety created by the encroachment of time into space. In these paintings, Gainsborough leads us backwards to an idealized prior, a time that his audience felt was just then slipping through their fingers. The cottages are as local as they can be. Tied to the spot on which we see them, they appear to be produced from the earth on which they stand and from the trees that overhang them. In these images, the landscape around them is immersed in the natural cycles of time and the cottage is bathed in the golden light of a perpetual sunset. Thus Hyppolite Taine described the English landscape, “all drowned in that luminous vapour which melts colour into colour and gives the whole countryside an expression of tender happiness”.³³ The cottagers have been given just enough by nature for their happiness and health and yet without any excess to excite in them a desire for getting and spending. Their immobility makes it possible for us to observe them: the artist and the viewer are not immobilized but pass by these cottages at a distance that allows them to be seen without encouraging interaction. In their happiness within the narrow circumference of their lives, Gainsborough reunites time and space by erasing forward-moving time. We are the privileged spectators looking with nostalgia at a past of which we may never have been part.

Even as Gainsborough’s cottage door paintings found great favor among the public, estates were enlarging themselves through enclosure, improving agricultural production of food that would be carried by the canals and driving the cottagers off the land. The subsequent incorporation of the cottage into the

³³ Hyppolite Taine, *Notes on England* (London: Holt & Williams, 1872), 232.

landscaping of the estate and the building by the wealthy of weekend “cottages” in the country evidences that in isolating these families in their cottages Gainsborough also placed them at the center of a mythical national landscape.

Chapter Four moves forward in time to an examination of the balance between the local and the national, between space and time that John Constable creates in *The Leaping Horse*. One of the consequences of canal construction and travel was the bringing together in close proximity to disparate social classes. This is treated comically and affectionately in Paul Sandby’s *River Ferry with Many Passengers and Animals* in which he presents an almost utopian scene of harmony, a cross between Noah’s Ark and a *Peaceable Kingdom*. Many of Constable’s Flatford paintings bring together the “floating population” that move on the canals with the rural inhabitants and the rural scene at Flatford. With the last of the six-footers that is the last of the Flatford paintings, Constable deals explicitly with the question of how to represent the floating population within the English landscape, how, that is, to grapple with the infusion of a forward-moving time into the rural space.³⁴ In *The Leaping Horse* the figures of the boy on the leaping horse and the woman on the canal boat who watches him create an honorable place in the English landscape and in the English nation for the families whose lives are passed moving on the canals. Her maternal watchfulness of him, added by Constable only in the final iteration of the painting,

³⁴ Elizabeth Helsinger finds that Constable’s Flatford paintings “form a network of intersecting visual paths” that “pursue a three-dimensional knowledge of the physical structure of the locality”. She implies Constable’s movement within an unchanging spatial structure. A bit further on, she describes the Stour Valley paintings as revealing Constable’s interest in the presence of both time and space in the landscape: “Relatively anonymous figures in the middle and far distance pursue a variety of activities. They are not employed as visual or narrative foci, but rather form points of orientation in the temporal and social mapping of the area that these studies also undertake.” “Constable: The Making of a National Painter,” *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. 2 (1989), 257.

connects her to the traditional, national heroism of his pose. She has not been cut adrift from the nation by her life in motion. And he is mobilized as well, forward-moving in time and space and yet also statue-like, frozen. Constable comes close to integrating the local landscape and the mobilized network of the canal. (So also does *Roses and Castles*, the vernacular art of the canal people with which they place themselves on the land, claim the English land, even as they move on the canals.) Constable's image of the woman on the boat, a variation on Gainsborough's woman in the cottage doorway, is reiterated in numerous engravings in books and articles about the floating population. These books, produced primarily by reformers appalled by the deteriorating conditions, later in the century, of those who live on the boats, finally sever all relationships between the floating population and the land.

Only in the work of J.M.W. Turner do we find time and space held together as if one. My fifth and last chapter is a detailed examination of the history, geology and landscaping of Dudley Castle and its environs, of the mining operations hidden in the hillside under the Castle, of the confluence of the many canals running under and around the Castle, of the ways in which Turner's contemporaries portrayed this most English of castles that predated the Magna Carta by three hundred years, and of the way in which Turner's *Dudley, Worcestershire* succeeds in avoiding the binary of time and space.

Of course, one could say that it is Dudley in all its ramifications that itself fuses time and space. For one, the digging of the mines and the canals revealed fossilized flora and fauna infinitely older than the castle, the previously invisible

residue of millennia past coming once more into the space of the living present. Digging for canals also gave rise to the geological survey map of William Smith that again made the visible landscape seen above the surface newly created by comparison to what lay hidden beneath. Although for most Smith's discoveries and map destabilized the seeming permanence of the land, some aristocrats conflated the antiquity of their estate with that of the land beneath it and with England itself. Fossils became part of every gentleman's personal collection and Luke Booker, the most thorough chronicler of the history of Dudley, wrote of a fossilized tree found in the Dudley hillside that it was, of course, an oak. Most deceptively, the landscaping of the castle was designed to hide the mining operations underneath it and to conceal the temporal sedimentation revealed in the strata beneath the hillside. I believe that *Dudley, Worcestershire* is the product of Turner's refusal to edit what he sees into a genre, a type, or a produced landscape.

In pursuing one aspect of modernity in English landscape painting, I have intentionally meandered along with the canals in order to some degree to escape from the space/time binary that plagues the study of modern landscape³⁵ and to take a look at some English landscapes that have only begun to feel the anxiety of space losing its primacy to time. I have set an early date for mobility and modernity, not without warrant; many historians of science and technology agree that in the last half of the eighteenth century canals "changed the face of the land as much as familiar and obvious symbols of the modern age like the factory

³⁵ Frederic Jameson, "The End of Temporality", in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 29, no. 4 (Summer, 2003), 695-718. Jameson discusses the transference of the dominance of time to the modern and space to the post-modern in the seemingly never-ending opposition of the two.

chimney, the railway, and the burgeoning city”.³⁶ In doing so, I meant to arrive at a heterogeneous idea of modern space, one that had not been bogged down for over a century in a narrative that begins with the railroad. That narrative established by the 1840’s an ordering of space and time that is continuous in many ways with our own today. We have also been misled by “the rise of enthusiasm for canals post World War II ”which presented the canal landscape in such a way as to suggest historic continuity, repose, reassurance and calm”.³⁷ Of course, this was certainly not the way canals were viewed by contemporary Englishmen or artists who saw before them the transformation of space and faced the problem of its representation.

³⁶ David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York: Norton, 2006), 5.

³⁷ Peter Bishop, *An Archetypal Constable: National Identity and the Geography of Nostalgia* (London: The Athlone Press, 1995), 179.

What a Splendid Whole

*Everything wears the face of dispatch.*³⁸
--The Rector of Warwickshire, 1767

*The land remains, at the present day, what it was seven centuries ago – the feudal basis of a society which exists no longer, the living emblem of a world defunct. These domains [estates] resplendent with luxury and cultivation, are not rare accidents, which are met with only here and there; they constitute the general state of the country, they succeed each other without a blank from one end of the country to the other.... This is the reason why England is so beautiful a country. What a splendid whole!*³⁹

--Gustave de Beaumont, 1839

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the English countryside was composed of small estates and isolated villages whose inhabitants rarely travelled more than a mile or two from home. The stasis of this landscape was the quality that, in the eyes of Englishmen and foreigners alike, made it look most English. The English Crown and English law had for more than 700 years located wealth, political power and individual and national identity in the land. Established by William the Conqueror and kept alive in one form or another for seven centuries, the laws governing the possession of land and the order of its succession were designed to preserve the estates of the nobility and to

³⁸ Henry Homer, *An Enquiry into the Means of Preserving and Improving the Publick Roads of This Kingdom* (Oxford: 1767), 8.

³⁹ *Ireland: Social, Political and Religious*, ed. W. C. Taylor (London, 1839), Vol. I, 233.

guarantee their loyalty to the Crown. The expansion of estates in the late eighteenth century gave panoramic corroboration that, as Gustave de Beaumont astutely observed, they constituted “the general state of the country”.⁴⁰ Thus, visible to all and unequivocal in its meaning, the English landscape of estates was a “splendid whole”, a “living emblem” of the unchanging, immovable order that constituted the self-understanding of England’s elite.

However, as the image and vehicle of social and national identity, the landscape of the estate could and did serve to introduce the means of its own transformation. During the last half of the eighteenth century, three thousand miles of canals were built, creating a network for the inexpensive transport of coal, lime and manufactured goods that covered most of the country. These canal projects, financed by private investment with the imprimatur of Parliament, were generally conceived of by members of the landed nobility for the benefit of their estates and located, at least in part, on and also under their estates. Canals transformed the estates through which they ran from essentially feudal domains into something that resembled modern, money-making enterprises. They transformed their possessors from feudal lords into forward-looking and patriotic men of business. The movement, both physical and social, that the canals brought with them, however welcome in point of business, was nonetheless inimical to England’s own sense of what its landscape should express: estates

⁴⁰ A French nobleman, Beaumont (1802-1866) was no ordinary traveler and observer. A judge and an advocate for prison reform, he is most often remembered as Tocqueville’s friend and traveling companion in the United States. Beaumont traveled with Tocqueville to America in 1831 and together they authored *Du système pénitentiaire aux États-Unis et de son application* (1832). Beaumont subsequently published *Marie, ou l’esclavage aux États-Unis*, a critique of slavery in the United States, in 1835. He was appointed Ambassador to England in 1848.

that promoted the canals also disguised them and made them acceptable by enveloping them in their own aura.

Just as the canals changed the look of the landscape of estates, they also changed the way in which that landscape was observed. In oils, engravings, watercolors and drawings, images of the canals and of the related systems of locks, aqueducts and tunnels proliferated and were reproduced in a variety of media. These images, by well-known artists and unknown artists alike, were disseminated widely. They put before the public not only the changes that were taking place in the landscape but also contextualized them. The canals took their place within the context of the estate: they found a new place in the old order. The images of the canals moving through the estates presented the English landscape both as fixed in meaning but also fluid, both timelessly static and also embedded in the forward movement of history that was being generated by English ingenuity.

The first of the great canals, the Bridgewater Canal, was built between 1757 and 1761 by Francis Egerton, the third Duke of Bridgewater. This remarkable canal system was designed to bring to market more efficiently and less expensively than overland or river travel the coal and lime buried under Worsley, Bridgewater's estate. Bridgewater had strong financial motives for building his canal and the canal repaid his investment of money and time not only in what it saved on transportation but also in the annual dividends of the canal company. The Bridgewater Canal Company is often considered the first modern corporation, although its setting was the estate. That setting was critical to the

enthusiasm and public admiration with which the Bridgewater canal was received. Bridgewater took care to be seen as a magnanimous version of the lord of the manor. He was hailed as a benefactor not only to his dependents on his estate but also to the nation.

Bridgewater conceived of the utility of canals in France where, although appearing much earlier, they were much less useful.⁴¹ In 1757, the twenty-one year old Francis Egerton had returned from France to assume the title of Earl of Bridgewater and to take possession of his estate near Manchester. Bridgewater immediately began to plan a great British canal, a project at once commercial and patriotic that would serve the needs of his own estate and of the nation. His inspiration for what would be the Bridgewater Canal came from his visit in 1754, to the Languedoc Canal in the southwest of France, two years before the beginning of the Seven Years War.⁴² Opened in 1681, the Languedoc Canal joined the Garonne near Toulouse to the Aude near Carcassone and created a passageway between the Mediterranean and the Bay of Biscay. The great success of canals in England is attributable to two factors. First, England's large landholdings covered a country of only 50,000 square miles and thus it was easier for estate owners, manufacturers and entrepreneurs to get the rights to canal routes that would service many parts of the country. Second, and most

⁴¹ Even earlier, in 1642, the French had built the Briare canal that joined the Loire to the Seine. But the French canal system, despite its one hundred year head start over the English system, never achieved the same success. With an area four times the size of England, many fewer large landholdings, less geographic concentration of natural resources and a larger agricultural output, France employed its canals primarily for hauling agricultural produce.

⁴² Francis D. Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, 1947, (New York: Schocken, 1968), 20.

important, the high concentration in certain areas such as the West Midlands of iron ore, limestone, wood, water and coal from which to make coke,⁴³ (all the natural materials for the production of pig iron), would make an English canal network very profitable.⁴⁴ The accident of geology that gave England the centralized resources for industry and that “altered both landscape and

⁴³ The West Midlands, for example, contains all the elements needed for the production of pig iron: iron ore, limestone, wood, water and coal but it was not until coke, slowly burned coal, was used for smelting that large quantities of high-quality iron could be produced. Iron ore, the pre-industrial forerunner to pig iron, had been smelted in the West Midlands, in Coalbrookdale, from the middle of the sixteenth century. Through the seventeenth century, forges like that at Coalbrookdale used charcoal for fuel. Keeping a large forge running could require 4,000 acres of trees per year and forge owners relied on wood from their own land. In the practice of coppicing, trees were cut to the ground and new trees planted which then required ten to twenty years' growth before they were cut down again. Even with coppicing, forges were often idle while stocks of wood were built up. Nonetheless, in the 1650's 100,000 tons of coal per year were mined in the Severn Gorge and transported on river barges to towns and cities along the Severn from Stourport to Gloucester.

The complete shift from wood to coal as a fuel for the iron industry was accomplished only with the introduction in the smelting process of coke, slowly burned coal. The extraction of iron from the rocks in which the iron ore is embedded –smelting -- is accomplished by firing the rocks in a furnace using a carbon-based fuel. The carbon in the fuel attracts the oxygen in the iron ore and together they escape the furnace as a gas, leaving behind the molten iron that is then poured out of the bottom of the furnace into a mold. (The mold resembles a line of nursing piglets – hence “pig iron”.) Limestone helps the slag (the rocky part of the ore) to melt. Coal is not, however, a good fuel for making iron because the sulfur it contains mixes with the molten ore and makes the iron brittle. Coke, made from slowly burned coal (just as charcoal is made from wood), is ‘sweet’, that is, low in sulfur. It was first used for roasting malt in the middle of the seventeenth century. And in 1709, Abraham Darby employed coke in his blast furnace to produce iron.

Iron produced with coke is much stronger and less brittle than that produced with coal and the effect of this can be seen in the records of the sorts of implements that were produced in Coalbrookdale. Before 1709 most of the iron produced was wrought iron in the form of nails, bolts, brackets, locks, horseshoes, barrel hoops and tools. Cast iron was used almost exclusively for cannon and fire backs. By mid-century the Coalbrookdale forge was casting iron cylinders for the Boulton and Watt steam engines. The manufacture of iron became even more profitable with the construction of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal in 1772 that was part of James Brindley's “Grand Cross” plan and connected the Severn to Hull, Liverpool and Bristol. During the Napoleonic Wars, the Severn valley could supply much of the fuel and cannon England required. For further reading see W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 211-232, also Richard and Wendy Horton Hayman, *Iron Bridge: History and Guide* (Brimscomb Port Stroud, England: 1999, Tempus), 21-41.

⁴⁴ From 1806 to 1826, the Bridgewater Canal Company earned the Duke an average of 13 percent per year on his investment. In 1824, its best year, it paid 23 percent. F.C. Mather, *After the Canal Duke: a Study of the Industrial Estates Administered by the Trustees of the Third Duke of Bridgewater in the Age of Railway Building, 1825-1872* (London: Clarendon P, 1970), 7.

consciousness⁴⁵ was fully exploited with the introduction of canals⁴⁶ and England came to regard coal as an “inexhaustible” source of fuel⁴⁷ providentially bestowed upon the nation.⁴⁸

From the outset the canals promised a vast expansion of commercial enterprise. But they also became part of the controversy about the character and

⁴⁵ Schivelbusch contrasts the English and the French coal industries in the early nineteenth century: “Unlike the English, whose coal industry was centralized in a way that altered both landscape and consciousness, the French were unable to perceive coal as *the* endlessly available fuel. It was precisely because of the physical reality of the concentration of English coal production, and their awareness of it, that the English were able to mechanize motive power with such ease.” Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey : the Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986), 67.

⁴⁶ The text accompanying Louthenberg’s drawing of Coalbrook Dale presents, as of 1805, a clear causal relation between the building of the canals and the ability to exploit the area’s natural resources: “It is a striking circumstance, notwithstanding Coalbrook Dale is the centre of the most extensive iron-works in the kingdom, the one found in it is for the most part so poor in metal that in a less favourable situation it would scarcely pay for reducing: but here, where fuel is abundant, limestone, the proper flux for reducing the ore, everywhere at hand; and an extensive inland navigation renders the conveyance of such a heavy material cheap and easy, this one becomes the source of astonishing wealth....” Phillipe-Jacques de Louthembourg, *Romantic and Picturesque Scenery of England and Wales* (London: R. Bowyer, 1805), unpagued.

⁴⁷ An anonymous pamphlet of 1798 on the benefits of inland navigation portrays the area around Birmingham as a “reservoir” of heat that would serve the needs of the nation for a thousand years: “The supply of coals in part of the island is inexhaustible. The estates which have been already surveyed by skilful persons, and their actual produce ascertained, will yield a supply, from sources hitherto unopened, of 600,000 tons of coals per annum, for many centuries: and other estates, which have been less correctly examined, but of which the produce is stated far beneath what may with certainty be obtained, will extend this supply from sources unopened for some thousand years – a term beyond which the warmest patriot will scarcely pretend a care.” *Reflections on the general utility of inland navigation to the commercial and landed interests of England; with observations on the intended canal from Birmingham, Worcester, and some strictures upon the opposition given to it by the proprietors of the Staffordshire canal.* (London: A. Grant, 1798), 10.

⁴⁸ In a charming contemporary note, Luke Booker writes of the mixture of coal, limestone, wood and water found in the district of Dudley Castle as part of Providential design: “A very small difference in the arrangement and combination of those same materials, of which this District is composed, would have prevented the existence of all the Works, and of all the activity by which Dudley is so prosperously surrounded. ---What advantage, for instance, would be derived from living in “a land whose stones are Iron,” were Coal and lime not also deposited near, to flux the stubborn ore? --The disappearance of *vegetable* fuel from the neighbourhood, plentiful as it was in its chases and woods, some centuries ago, -- proves *that* could not have been the material intended by Divine Providence for the purposed....” Luke Booker, *A Descriptive and Historical Account of Dudley Castle, and its Surrounding Scenery; with Graphic Illustrations: by the Reverend Luke Booker* (London, 1820), 130.

loyalties of the landed man and the commercial man. Landowners, who had for centuries been at odds with the Crown over the restrictions placed on their ability to sell or bequeath their land, were now seen to support the Crown in maintaining English values, character and interests over and against the “new men”⁴⁹ and their commercial enterprises while “conservative political theorists elaborated the analogy of the State with a landed estate.”⁵⁰ In comparison to commercial men and their ephemeral wares, the land and those who possessed it had a greater and more enduring value than could be found in the marketplace. Land “was a form of wealth that insured the reliability of the owner,” since the permanence of the land and its very immobility rooted him in the nation and made his interests at one with those of the nation. In contrast, in a nation in which mobility itself was viewed with suspicion, the possessor of commercial wealth, portable wealth with which he could remove himself to another country, was thought to be less solidly attached to England.⁵¹ The inalienability of land under entail⁵² removed it from

⁴⁹ “New men” was the common term to describe those newly rich men of commerce. Here is a description of them in *The Topographer*: “Every year produces an inundation of *new men*, that over-run almost every county in the kingdom, expel the ancient families, destroy the venerable mansions of antiquity, and place in their stead what seemeth good in their own eyes of glaring brick or ponderous stone.” *The Topographer, for the year 1789* (London: 1789), iii.

⁵⁰ Stephen Daniels, “The Political Iconography of Woodland in later Georgian England” in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic, Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, eds. Dennis and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988), 45.

⁵¹ Klein, “Property and Politeness,” 223. A contemporary advocate for inland navigation advanced the certainly specious but almost certainly winning argument that commerce and canals would accrue more benefit to the “landed gentleman” than to the merchant because the landed gentleman was bound to remain in England: “The national success of commerce more deeply concerns the landed gentleman, than the merchant himself; as the merchant can at any time remove with his effects, and try his fortune in a more advantageous situation; while the landed gentleman is bound down to the soil and cannot remove his estate, though the persons are gone who used to consume its produce. Thomas Bentley, *A view of the advantages of inland navigation: With a plan of a navigable canal, intended for a communication between the ports of Liverpool and Hull* (London, 1765) 5.

the marketplace and thus the land and its owner were seen to be inescapably, fundamentally English. “Land,” as Trollope’s Archdeacon Grantley opined, “is about the only thing that doesn’t fly away.”⁵³

The widespread acceptance of and enthusiasm for the Bridgewater Canal derived from the peculiar and particular meaning of the estate and its landscape from the very beginning of English history. When William the Conqueror divided up the lands of England among his followers and granted them titles that

⁵² The entail, a legal device dating to the fifteenth century, took an end run around the fact that since the King owned all the land, the Lord of the Manor simply had the right to occupy it during his lifetime and could not bequeath it or sell it. The entail figured widely in public debate about primogeniture, the rights of the aristocracy and the character of the nation and its economic wellbeing. Among conservatives, the entail and the system of trusts that surrounded it were no longer seen as a legal charade designed to defraud the Crown of its revenues and feudal services. The term entail is from the Old French *taillier*, to cut or shape, and indicates in itself the way in which the interest of the Lords were opposed to those of the Crown. The entail attempted to conceptualize land as a sum made up of parts that could be subtracted or cut up from the whole in point of time and interests in the land. Of course, from the point of view of the Crown this was an impossibility: the land, entire and for all time, must remain as one, as England. Susan Staves, *Married women's separate property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1990), 255.

The aim of the entail was at odds with the very conception of the “new man” who was rising through his own efforts. Jane Austen makes this point neatly in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) when Mrs. Bennet complains of “the cruelty of settling an estate away from a family of five daughters.” (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 42. Of course Mrs. Bennet is very amusingly illogical in personalizing the nature of the entail, since the entailer knew neither her five girls nor the fact that there would be no Bennet son. But she is also logical. It is precisely the point of the entail that beyond the fact that there is a collateral male heir nobody knows or cares anything about his character or circumstances. The entail does not recognize the value of the individual so central to both the philosophy of the Enlightenment and the development of a commercial society. The entail does not work to recognize value: it is not a reward for hard work or merit. Rather, the entail confers value, identity and place on the heir of the estate precisely because it is impersonal in its considerations and that which it bestows is unearned by labor and untainted by any commercial behavior, by having been looked for, worked towards, or sought after.

⁵³ The immobility and durability of land is emphasized by Baker in his description of the English attitude toward land: “Land is a place to live for man and beast, a source of food and of all other commodities, including – if one has enough to let – money. It outlives its inhabitants, is immune from destruction by man, and therefore provides a suitably firm base for institutions of government and wealth.” The distinction between property and real property is therefore the “most fundamental” in English law. Baker, 255. When the son of Trollope’s Archdeacon Grantley muses “I wonder people are so fond of land,” Trollope gives the Archdeacon the opportunity to summarize the advantages of property in a most English and most amusing way: “Land gives so much more than the rent. It gives position and influence and political power, to say nothing of the game.” Anthony Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset*, 1867 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1964), 454.

bespoke their rights as lords of the land, he superadded the power of the Crown. The right of the Lord to occupy the land was contingent on his payment of taxes to the Crown and, equally importantly, on his service to the Crown in war and in peace. In this scheme of mutual dependency, benefit, protection and obligation, that extended also from the Lords to their feudal dependents, the Crown maintained the legal proposition essential to its interests -- that all the land was owned by the King. Thus, while the Lords had the right, subject to their fealty to the King, to the beneficial enjoyment of the land, to occupy and govern the land and to reap its profits, the land itself was England.⁵⁴ As Beaumont notes, this was still English law in the middle of the nineteenth century: "The king, under the existing law, is indeed still presumed to be the proprietor of the soil, whose occupants are merely possessors, under secondary titles; but this is a fiction without any reality. ...The royal privileges in this matter have all been abolished; the laws which constitute the privilege of the aristocracy alone remain in force."⁵⁵ Nonetheless the devotion of the English aristocracy to the idea of the estate and to the landscape of the estate is evidenced by their determination throughout the nineteenth century to retain the remaining fragments of law that preserved them,

⁵⁴ Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, 62. The use of land by the Crown as an instrument of control appears in aspects of the law not directly related to land. For example, William put into effect a law that stipulated that a traitor forfeit the use his property and another that allowed him to seize the land of any who opposed him. The identification of the land and its owner with England that persisted into the beginning of the twentieth century is explicit in this editorial from the *London Evening Post*, June 23, 1753, commenting on a proposed Jewish Nationalization Act: "A Jewish landed interest? ...Will not dominion follow property?" Alan H. Singer, "Great Britain of Judea Nova?" in *British Romanticism and the Jews: History, Culture, Literature*, ed. Sheila A. Spector (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 31.

Until 1926, aliens, which category included English-born Catholics and Jews, could only own land leasehold, not freehold. J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*.

⁵⁵ Beaumont, 64.

even to the disadvantage of their own children.⁵⁶ This enduring legal relationship of the English to their land endowed the vistas “of the traditional English landed estate” with the quality of a “half-timeless world”⁵⁷ in which all of English history was perpetually present and naturalized into the landscape that each and every citizen saw around him. Bridgewater, as the heir of Worsley and the very opposite of a “new man”, was perfectly situated to introduce a large, commercial canal into the landscape of the estate. Just as the landscape of estates presented the social and economic relations it supported as eternally and essentially English, so would it give its imprimatur to this new enterprise, would certify that canal technology was firmly under the control of the old order and that

⁵⁶ The long and convoluted history of the legal devices the Lords attempted in order to take legal and not just beneficial control of the land and to have the right to alienate or bequeath land extends well past the entail that effectively came to an end in 1660. The laws that held that it was “against the nature of land to be devisable by will (in *Re Lord Dacre of the South*, 1535) were abolished in 1660 after which men were free to will their lands. Baker, 291. The abolition at the Restoration of military tenures “which had been profitable to the Crown but intolerable” to the land owners coincided with “the reappearance of the family settlement... which enabled them to tie up their lands and keep them in their families.” W.H.R. Curtler, *The Enclosure and Redistribution of Our Land* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 128.

Subsequently, the device of the “strict settlement”, entered into voluntarily as part of a marriage contract, was employed as a method of preserving estates within a family from one generation to the next although in the absence of an immediate male heir the estate would pass to the nearest collateral male relative. The only function of this type of settlement, entered into voluntarily by the owners of estates, was to preserve the estate entire. The desire to leave an estate away from female children and to impoverish younger male children in order to preserve the estate entire evidences the truth of Beaumont’s observation that “in England men love the feudal soil and the institutions that perpetuate it.” Beaumont, 59. Remarkably, the legal devices that ensured that an estate remained in tact and in the line of peerage title remain in place today. The device of strict settlement simply fell into disuse after World War I when death taxes began to rise and estates under strict settlement were increasingly exposed to inheritance taxes. See Baker, 334-5.

⁵⁷ David Sugarman and Ronnie Warrington, “Land Law, Citizenship, and the Invention of ‘Englishness’: The Strange World of the Equity of Redemption” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, eds. John Brewer and Susan Staves (London: Routledge, 1996), 111. They add, “Land was not just the most valuable form of property; both to its owners and to non-owners it was a socio-political nexus, a way of life.”

in the realizing of its commercial value the estate itself would remain intact and unharmed.

It was feared that any change in that old order must include change in the appearance of the estate and its village. One of the primary concerns about the canal, as it had been for two centuries about the improvement of rivers, was that it would alter what was taken as the 'natural' appearance of the landscape. At the same time, the ease and utility of river travel had not escaped the attention of the English who, in a countryside abundant with rivers, focused on their enlargement. In 1665, the Speaker of the House of Commons addressed the House of Lords with a plea and a rationale for making certain rivers more navigable:

Cosmographers do agree that this island is incomparably furnished with pleasant Rivers, like Veins in the Natural Body, which conveys [sic] the Blood into all the Parts, whereby the whole is nourished and made useful; but the Poet tells us, he acts best, *qui miscuit utile dulci*. Therefore we have prepared some Bills for making Rivers navigable; a Thing that in other Countries hath been more experienced, and hath been found very advantageous....⁵⁸

The Speaker appeals to patriotic pride in his allusions to "other Countries" which have been in the advance of England⁵⁹ while the analogy of the country to the body and the rivers to the veins implies that the improvement of the rivers is a

⁵⁸ *The Journals of the House of Lords* in Thomas Stuart Willan, *River navigation in England, 1600-1750* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1936), 26.

⁵⁹ In 1765, arguing for the creation of canals, Thomas Bentley, Josiah's Wedgwood's partner, reminded his readership of the competitive advantage canals had given the French: "The advantages arising from inland navigation to manufacturers, commerce, and agriculture, are generally acknowledged and illustrated by those who have written on the commercial interests of nations: and many of our own writers have lamented that, in this respect, we are outdone by the French, our chief rivals in trade and manufactures." Thomas Bentley, *A view of the advantages of inland navigation: With a plan of a navigable canal, intended for a communication between the ports of Liverpool and Hull*. (London, 1765), 11.

natural matter, simply the bringing of a healthy flow of life's blood to the body of the country. The preference for the "natural" in the choice between improving rivers or building canals was still evident in 1754 when Henry Berry was appointed by the Liverpool Common Council to survey the "unimpressive" Sankey Brook. Berry was to ascertain if it were possible to improve this "small stream" running between St. Helen's and the River Mersey⁶⁰ and thus to bring coal down from the local mines. Although it certainly must have been apparent to Berry that the Sankey "was capable of taking nothing much bigger than a toy boat"⁶¹ he obtained an enabling act from Parliament in 1755 for "making navigable the River or Brook called Sankey Brook" and to "make such new cuts... as they shall think proper and requisite."⁶² So great was the desire to maintain the fiction of an unchanged landscape that the subterfuge continued throughout the construction of the Sankey, as fewer and fewer sections of the brook were used. When the Sankey opened, although it followed alongside the "modest wanderings" of the brook, it was constituted almost entirely of man-made cuttings. Nonetheless, the perception of the Sankey as a river improvement persisted after its opening: it was generally regarded not as the first English canal but as a large river expansion that brought nothing new to the

⁶⁰ The river Mersey had been improved decades earlier. In the late 17th century, the Warrington businessman, Thomas Patten, had made the River Mersey navigable as far as Warrington and suggested that there would be significant commercial value in extending this along the Irwell as far as Manchester. In 1721, Parliament authorized the alteration with the Mersey and Irwell Navigation Act, and by 1736 work had been completed by creating eight canal locks along the 20 miles (32 km) route from Warrington to Manchester, allowing access to boats of up to 50 tons. Charles Hadfield, *Canals of the West Midlands*, 17.

⁶¹ Anthony Burton and Derek Pratt, *The Anatomy of Canals: the Early Years* (Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2001), 20.

⁶² Charles Hadfield, *The Canal Age* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1968), 23.

landscape. And despite the sleight-of-hand presentation of the Sankey it was indeed the case that by the mid-eighteenth century, “water transport had been only modestly extended past its natural confines”.⁶³

In terms of their design and the transportation they offered, the early canals looked and functioned more like rivers than canals. If this made them more acceptable as a feature in the landscape it also made them less useful. Before the Bridgewater Canal, the Sankey and others were “contour canals”, following the paths of rivers and winding through the countryside for miles in order to pass around a hill.⁶⁴ The directness and efficiency of the route of Bridgewater’s canal was demonstrated in a map that appeared in *Gentleman’s Magazine* in 1766, illustrating the meandering path of the old River Irwell navigation and the directness of the new Bridgewater Canal. (Figure 1) In addition to their erratic paths, those who navigated river improvements were at the mercy of an ebbing and flowing supply of water. The merchants of Staffordshire complained of this in regard to the Trent when, in the presentation of their petition to Parliament in 1766 to allow the Trent & Mersey canal project, they testified that they had “suffered greatly in their Trade, for many Years, by the

⁶³ Gerald Turnbull, "Canals, Coal and Regional Growth during the Industrial Revolution" in *Economic History Review* XL (4): 1987, 538.

⁶⁴ Hoskins, 253. R.K. Webb describes the canals built in the eighteenth century as “gracefully curving waterways”. Webb, 103. Anthony Burton discusses the way in which “a second generation of canal engineers followed the pioneers and brought new notions and new methods of construction to the canal scene.” His prime example is the straightening of the Oxford Canal: “Planning began in 1828 for shortening and straightening the line with new cuts across some of the more extravagant curves. The new straight line was achieved by building embankments over low-lying ground and by digging deep cuttings through rising ground.” The “cut and fill” technique, digging deep trenches and using the soil to build embankments, would be used in railroad construction and many of this generation of engineers, would become the engineers for the great railway lines such as the Liverpool & Manchester. Anthony Burton, “Canals in the Landscape” in *Canals: A New Look*, eds. Mark Baldwin and Anthony Burton (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore & Co, 1984), 11-12.

Badness of the Navigation” that was “greatly obstructed by Floods in Winter, and by the Shallows in Summer, so as to render the Carriage of Goods upon it uncertain and precarious....”⁶⁵ These early canalized rivers also had numerous locks which slowed the boats in their passage.⁶⁶ The irregularity of the water flow in both improved and unimproved rivers and in early contour canals, as well as the numerous locks they required to make grade, would become the most important impetuses to the creation of the Bridgewater Canal and its successors.

Canals and rivers might look alike but the immense difference between them would be made apparent by a new technology that would free canals from “natural hydrology”⁶⁷ and that would change the look of canals and add new, and never before seen features to the landscape. James Brindley, estate manager and the engineer and moving force behind many of the most spectacular and useful English canal projects from 1755 to his early death in 1772,⁶⁸ was prophetic when he appeared before Parliament to argue that the Bridgewater

⁶⁵ Hadfield, *The Canals of the West Midlands*, 17, as cited in *The Journal of The House of Commons*, XXX, 720-1.

⁶⁶ The Sankey is typical here. Opened in 1757, it had twelve locks over the course of its twelve mile length and used only the Brook for water supply. Of course, it did carry large quantities of coal up and down the Mersey and was faster and more efficient than any previous overland route. John Phillips, *A Treatise on Inland Navigation: Illustrated with a Whole Sheet Plan, Delineating the Course of an Intended Navigable Canal from London to Norwich and Lynn, through the Counties of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, denoting Every Town and Village through which it is Proposed to Pass* (London: 1785), ix.

⁶⁷ Turnbull, 539.

⁶⁸ Ultimately, Brindley extended the Bridgewater Canal to the Runcorn and linked it to his next major work, the Trent and Mersey Canal. Work on what Brindley conceived of as a “Grand Cross” Canal that would form the junction of all the major canals in the country began in 1766. The design included a three thousand yard-long tunnel that took eleven years to complete. Although Brindley did not live to see the completion of the Grand Trunk Canal in 1777 or the transport of coal from the Midlands to the Thames at Oxford in 1790, he did live to complete the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, the Coventry Canal, and the Oxford Canal. Samuel Smiles, *James Brindley and the Early Engineers* (London, 1864), Chapter X.

Canal should be independent of the River Irwell navigation. A member asked him, “Pray... what then do you think is the use of navigable rivers?” Brindley’s response anticipated the fate to which his own work would consign the navigable river: “To make canal navigations, to be sure.”⁶⁹ Both the merchants of Staffordshire and Brindley had envisioned in canals and canal travel an overgoing of the cycle of the seasons and the rivers by a man made device that would impose a man-made time. In Bridgewater, Brindley found the perfect sponsor in terms of finance and social position to make England embrace this new technology.

The construction of the Bridgewater Canal could hardly have begun at a moment more auspicious for its reception or under circumstances more likely to elevate Bridgewater’s reputation. In March of 1759, England had finally achieved significant victories in the Seven Years’ War.⁷⁰ That war had begun so badly for England that one diarist in 1755 concluded that the country “was sinking by degrees”⁷¹ and early in 1757, with a French invasion seemingly imminent, Bishop Warburton wrote to a friend, “Never did public affairs wear a more melancholy aspect.”⁷² The conduct of the war and the sense that England was in

⁶⁹ Samuel Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers* (London: J. Murray, 1874), 9-10. Also Klingender, 14.

⁷⁰ Webb, 66-69. The Seven Years’ War began when Britain officially declared war on France on May 15, 1756. It ended with the Treaty of Paris on February 10, 1763.

⁷¹ George Bubb Dodington and Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, *The Diary of the Late George Bubb Dodington, baron of Melcombe Regis; from March 8, 1749, to February 6, 1761; with an appendix, containing some curious and interesting papers, which are either referred to, or alluded to, in the diary. Published from His Lordship’s original manuscripts* (London: J. Murray, 1823), entry for May 27, 1755.

⁷² William Warburton, Richard Hurd, and Charles York, *Letters from a late eminent prelate to one of his friends* (New York: Sargeant, 1809, letter of February 7, 1757 to Richard Hurd.

decline became part of the ongoing eighteenth century debate about ancients and moderns and whether England was “by a gradual and unperceived Decline... gliding down to Ruin” just like “degenerate and declining *Rome*.”⁷³ Most often the decline of the nation was attributed to the particular vices of the English “moderns”: the love of luxury generated by the newly commercialized economy and the new, suspicious passion for getting and spending.⁷⁴ When between 1757 and 1759 the tide of war turned, England became the dominant colonial force in India and took possession of Canada and many sugar cane islands in the Caribbean. These victories changed, momentarily at least, the pessimistic mood in England. To many, England seemed the greatest of the exemplary nations of Western history and Horace Walpole could, in 1762, write with national pride: “I shall burn all my Greek and Latin books; they are histories of little people!”⁷⁵

⁷³ The words are those of the Rev. John Brown, one of the best-known doomsayers of the day. David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-century Britain* (New Haven, Yale UP, 1990), 215. Brown’s *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757) was reprinted at least a dozen times in the years after its publication. James Raven, “Defending Conduct and Property: The London Press and the Luxury Debate” in Brewer and Staves, 304.

⁷⁴ In one widely popular book, *The Tryal of Lady Allurea* (1757), luxury, commerce and commercial behavior are clearly not native to England but foreign feminizing and corrupting influences; and the “perpetual Circulation” of goods and money is unnecessary motion that brings undesirable change; land ownership, stability and patriotism go hand in hand. Lady Allurea is an enticing foreigner who is prosecuted by Sir Oliver Roastbeef, Bart., for “corrupting the morals of our people.” The husband of the accused testifies that after she came into his house, “my old English hospitable Table was covered with nothing but Frenchified disguised Dishes” and that she corrupted tradesmen and merchants, told sailors to stay at home, and “used every Stratagem to corrupt, and render effeminate and cowardly, the B---h Soldiery.” He concludes that luxury encourages “a perpetual Circulation of Business,” and that “we had neither Trade nor Wealth, till she came amongst us.” *The Tryal of Lady Allurea Luxury*, (London: Noble Brothers, 1757), 17 as cited in in Raven, 301.

⁷⁵ Webb, 73. Only fifteen years earlier in 1745, Walpole had described himself as “one of the *ultimi Romanorum*” left alive at the tail end of his country’s greatness. Spadafora, 213.

In the midst of this rising tide of hope for the future of the nation, Bridgewater in 1759 began actively pursuing his canal project. He may in part have been driven to it rather than drawn to it, as at least two sources indicate.⁷⁶ It is certain that the original inspiration for the project was not his. Bridgewater's father had gotten a Parliamentary Act in 1737 to allow him to make the Worsley Brook navigable from the Worsley mines to the River Irwell but perhaps because the enterprise would have been very expensive he allowed the Act to elapse. Almost immediately upon his arrival at Worsley, Bridgewater revived the plan and in March 1759 Parliament again passed a bill authorizing the construction of a canal that was to pass from the mines at Worsley by a series of locks into the River Irwell – a plan similar to what his father had envisioned. At the same time, in an early example of the social, political and economic networks that were to be formed by those who built and those who used the canals, Bridgewater's brother-in-law, Lord Gower, one of the largest landholders in the West Midlands⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Both Smiles and the *Dictionary of National Biography* with some variations tell a rather romantic story about the redemption of a life from self-indulgent pleasure and its rededication to national service. The Duke, returning from the Continent in 1756 at the age of twenty took up residence in London and devoted himself to raising and riding racehorses. He successfully courted Elizabeth Gunning, one of three sisters of a less than well-to-do Irish family all of whom were the reigning beauties of London society. The Duke (and he was not alone) heard of immoral carryings-on of the eldest, married sister and demanded that after their marriage Elizabeth cut off relations with her. She refused to comply and when their engagement was broken off in January of 1759 the Duke removed himself to Old Hall, Worsley and began immediately to make plans for a canal. Completing this portrait of a man who turned from the selfish and dubious pleasures of London life to devotion to his dependents and his country, Smiles adds that Bridgewater after his retreat from London and from married life never allowed himself to be waited on by female servants and never had a sustained conversation about anything other than canals. Smiles, 191-207.

⁷⁷ Granville Leveson-Gower (1721-1803), the Second Earl Gower, Marquis of Stafford was a large landholder in the West Midlands and a large investor in the Trent and Mersey Canal who was married to Bridgewater's sister, Louisa. His nephew, George Granville Leveson-Gower (1758-1833), the Second Marquis of Stafford and First Duke of Sutherland was the wealthiest man in England due to the shares he inherited in the Bridgewater Canal Company. Mather, 52.

brought him together with James Brindley. Gower had been promoting a canal to link the Mersey and the Trent, and his plans had been formulated by James Brindley, a poor but visionary young millwright.⁷⁸ It was Brindley who persuaded Bridgewater to abandon the plan to have locks to access the Irwell and instead to build a spectacular aqueduct. It was this central feature of the canal that seemed to contemporary observers to join England's past to its future.

In the England that could boast that until recently “had neither Trade nor Wealth”⁷⁹ the idea that a member of the landed nobility might have economic importance was to impute to him a new, suspect identity that would, however, be tempered by his stewardship of his land and its resources for the national benefit. Thus, Phillips praised Bridgewater as having undertaken labors “worthy of a prince”, and exhorted “Noblemen and other Land-owners” to follow his example.⁸⁰ Of course, noblemen had for centuries extracted mineral wealth from their land but the Bridgewater Canal, as a contemporary commentator noted, was seen as an enterprise for the public good: [Bridgewater's undertakings] “must command our admiration” because they “tend so greatly to advance the agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, of an extensive neighbourhood” and

⁷⁸ The profession of civil engineer was invented during the building of the canals: “The great names were men of many origins, who because of their ability had become expert in the new problems: Brindley learned his trade as a millwright; Telford was a working mason; Rennie a mechanically minded farmer's son; Smeaton the son of an attorney; Outram of a ‘gentleman’.” Charles Hadfield, *British Canals: an Illustrated History* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1966), 42. Klingender, 10, observes that the millwright was the ancestor of the modern engineer. Canal construction and enclosure also brought with it a an increased demand for men who could survey canal routes and divide up newly enclosed commons and wastes – and with it the profession of surveyor. Horn, 56.

⁷⁹ Raven, 304.

⁸⁰ Phillips, 1785, 2.

“improve and adorn his country.”⁸¹ In what was no longer a feudal model but still hearkened back to it, the Bridgewater Canal was the first and only canal to be built solely by the investment of a single individual⁸² and Bridgewater was praised for his exemplary exercise of his responsibilities to his dependents, for his service to the Crown, and for his use of his land in a manner than was beneficial not only to himself but also to his neighborhood and to his nation.⁸³ Bridgewater was conceived of and portrayed as a new sort of English Lord, a forward-looking landed aristocrat whose undertakings linked his private good and those of his dependents to the national enterprise and welfare.

⁸¹ Arthur Young, *A six months tour through the North of England containing, an account of the present state of agriculture, manufactures and population*, (London: W. Strahan, 1770), 288. The same sort of praise that was heaped on Bridgewater as a patriotic public benefactor would be given to later canal developers as well. In 1782, a Birmingham historian wrote of that canal, “It is happy for the world that public interest is grafted upon private and that both flourish together.” Hadfield, *British canals: an illustrated history*, 92.

In 1795, another commentator wrote that “Every exertion to render the inland navigation of this country more complete, deserves much praise; and there can be no doubt but the patriotic undertaker of this canal will not only benefit his own lands and estates, but receive the thanks of the neighbouring country, for so noble an exertion for their accommodation.” John Phillips, *A Treatise on Inland Navigation: Illustrated with a Whole Sheet Plan, Delineating the Course of an Intended Navigable Canal from London to Norwich and Lynn, through the Counties of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, denoting Every Town and Village through which it is Proposed to Pass* (London: 1795), 273.

⁸² Daunton observes that “Canals were built by joint-stock companies, with the single exception of the aristocratic Bridgewater Canal.” M.J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty : an Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 90. With the exception of the Bridgewater Canal, the funding of canals came from a large number and a wide variety of investors, including noblemen, estate owners, manufacturers and businessmen. In the early years of canals, 1760-1775, when investments in canals were highly speculative, many noblemen felt it a civic duty rather than simply a matter of profit that they invest in canals as a way of encouraging others to do so. Mather, xv.

⁸³ Bentley presents the Canal as though it were a gift to the nation and praises Bridgewater as the nation’s benefactor: “The use of navigable canals and the facility of carrying them into execution, have long been known and experienced in other countries; but this nation is peculiarly indebted to the *Duke of Bridgewater*, for very great improvements in the construction and management of them; and especially for *ascertaining the expense of completing these noble works*; on which account this grateful people will never fail to rank him in the number of their illustrious benefactors.” Bentley, 12.

Although there are many portraits of Bridgewater, the image of him that was most widely circulated is an engraving that attempts to balance the tension that his enterprise created among previously incongruous elements—the stasis of the ancient tradition of the estate and the forward movement of the new technology of the canal. The portrait, of which there remain today many different reproductions in many different libraries and volumes, is most often undated and unattributed.⁸⁴ It was a widely circulated image, known and shared among a large and diverse reading audience such as the subscribers to *The Gentleman's Quarterly* where it appeared.⁸⁵ The anonymity of the artist and the modifications that were made to the composition speak to the entrance into the public domain of the image of “the Canal Duke” and that of Worsley “the first great industrial estate.”⁸⁶

The image itself separates the figure of the Duke from the bustle of the work of the canal in the landscape behind him. (Figure 2) The image preserves, in the figure of the Duke, the old order of the estate while it reveals the work of the estate. The engraving presents the Duke as a very young man with the softly

⁸⁴ A small sample of the still available iterations of this engraving suggests the variety of guises and venues in which it appeared. The National Portrait Gallery gives the engraving the date of 1766 and the artist as “unknown.” It appears to be from a newspaper or magazine. The National Transport Archive has two versions of the engraving. One appears to be the same engraving but is in the form of a vintage postcard. The other has some lines from an Horatian Ode engraved into the hillside, as does the version in Smiles. In the versions with the lines from Horace Bridgewater’s face is older. The same engraving (without quotation) appears in “James Brindley” by Harold Bode and is attributed to T.D. Scott. Spadafora reproduces an engraving with the lines from Horace from Richard Whitworth’s *The Advantages of Inland Navigation*, London, 1766.

⁸⁵ *The Gentleman's Quarterly* was an immensely successful magazine that published for more than two centuries. From the outset in 1731, it developed an extensive distribution system throughout the English-speaking world. It has the distinction of having given Samuel Johnson his first employment as a writer.

⁸⁶ Mather, xv, describes Bridgewater as “the most notable English aristocrat to link his fortunes with the industrial revolution.”

contoured features and Cupid's-bow lips of a sweet and tender youth that implicitly disclose his nobility: he is too young and soft to be a "new man" and to have earned his place. He stands alone on an elevation and is clearly lord of all the land and works that spread out behind and below him. Despite his obvious wealth and nobility, his gaze is neither haughty nor proud but somewhat averted and modest. His pose is frontal and open, allowing examination of his person. Still, for all of the lack of reserve in his image, the engraving does not present the Duke intimately. His left hand, palm open and upward, invites our examination of all he has built on his estate but he shows in his person none of the effort that went into it. The Duke's image reflects the traditional social order of the estate and a "consequent way of seeing" but varies from it in also including the work of the estate. Raymond Williams, in his analysis of *Penshurst*, asserts that portraits of the estate kept work out of view in order to present a pre-lapsarian vision in which the house is praised for its "natural bounty" and "willing charity":

Yet this magical extraction of the curse of labor is in fact achieved by a simple extraction of the existence of labourers. The actual men and women who rear the animals and drive them to the house and kill them and prepare them for meat; who trap the pheasants and partridges and catch the fish; who plant and manure and prune and harvest the fruit trees: these are not present; their work is all done for them by a natural order.⁸⁷

Williams concludes that "Jonson looks out over the fields of Penshurst and sees, not work, but a land yielding of itself." The beauty and fertility of the estate in the absence of labor is certainly a feature of portraits by Reynolds and Gainsborough and present an important contrast to the Bridgewater portrait in which Bridgewater has absorbed labor into the estate but not into his personhood. His

⁸⁷ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford UP: New York, 1973), 32.

own gesture distances himself from the labor of the mines and the canal while putting it under his command.⁸⁸ Unlike so many portraits of famous men, this portrait does not celebrate past glories or accomplishments. The canal is a present and ongoing project insofar as it will influence the future of the country and, as his youth indicates, the Duke's fame and distinction is vis-à-vis the future. He has engaged with the forward movement of history without appearing to yield any of the timelessness with which the estate is endowed. Significantly, the variation introduced into the Duke's portrait casts him in an antique light.

In some of the iterations of the Bridgewater engraving, lines of poetry hover in the hillside behind the young Duke, placing him in a classical and historical context. (Figure 3) To the left of the Duke's right elbow, a canal boat emerges into Worsley basin from the hillside entrance to the mine and these lines from Horace have been engraved: "Perrupit Acheronda / He[r?]cules labor": "And on his last labor did not Hercules cross the Acheron?"⁸⁹ Bridgewater, despite what his biographers portray as a complete indifference to

⁸⁸ There are many eighteenth century etiquette books that devote sections to the nature and art of the gesture. The gesture was considered both a natural, involuntary, somatic expression of an interior state and also indicative of social polish and good taste. Anne Bermingham discusses some of these books and gestures at length in relation to the attitudes of the subjects of conversation pieces by Zoffany, Devis, Gainsborough and others. Bermingham demonstrates the way in which gestures taken to be natural are employed by the artists in order to integrate their subjects with the landscape and the way in which this production of the "organic union of men and nature" in the work of Gainsborough casts a humorous eye at its own artifice and fictiveness. Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: the English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986), 14-33.

The Bridgewater image utilizes one of the same codified gestures of "giving" or "offering" but not to the same purpose. For the gesture of giving and receiving see Francis Nivelon, *Rudiments of Genteel Behavior* (London, 1737). Here, Bridgewater is opening his estate and his person to the eye of the viewer in a revealing pose rather than a mimetic act of integration.

⁸⁹ Horace, *The Complete Odes and Satires of Horace*, trans. Sidney Alexander (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999) Ode III, line 37, p. 8.

literary or artistic matters, would almost certainly have recognized these words, as would his contemporaries.⁹⁰ Of course, in that neo-classical age the classics were standard school fare but Horace enjoyed a particular popularity, having replaced Ovid in the school curriculum as the most read and influential Latin poet. Horace offered to pupils what Bridgewater offered to the country, a model of “the idealized self-image of the eighteenth-century aristocrat: rural, rational, rich, leisured, critical but unpretentious, the pattern of the educated country gentleman.”⁹¹ Francois Xavier Vispre’s portrait, *John Farr reading Horace’s Odes*, painted within years of Bridgewater’s image, shows just such a gentleman, at ease, his books at his feet and his volume of Horace in his hand. (Figure 4)

Apart from such general connotations, those lines of Horace had a particular application to the engraving. Many essays and articles had been published about the Canal and all took some time to describe one of the most spectacular features of the Canal, a feature that was hidden from view – the subterranean canals that went directly into the hillside and into the Duke’s coal mine and made it possible to load coal directly onto barges that were then hauled to Manchester.⁹²

⁹⁰ Like his contemporaries, Bridgewater’s education was infused with Greek and Latin literature and archeology. He had been accompanied on his grand tour by Robert Wood (1717?-1771), a “celebrated traveler” and “accomplished scholar” who had written a well-known work on Homer. Smiles, 189.

⁹¹ Christopher Tyerman, *A History of Harrow School 1324-1991*, Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 81.

⁹² A contemporary description demonstrates the efficiency of the process: “At the entrance the arch is about six feet wide, and about five feet high from the surface of the water; but as you come further in it is wider, and in some places opened, so that the boats, that are going to and fro, can pass each other; and when you come among the pits the arch is ten feet wide.

The coals are brought from the pits to this passage, or canal, in little low waggons, that hold near a ton each, and as the work is on the descent, are easily pushed by a man, on a railed way, to a stage over the canal and then shot into one of the boats already mentioned, each of

The depiction of the entry to the mine was an acknowledgement of the purpose of the canal and also of the fact that there was as much activity, as much motion, taking place unseen, underneath the ground, as appears in the landscape.⁹³ The lines of Horace refer to Hercules' last labor, his descent into the underworld and his crossing of the Acheron to bring back Cerberus. Deep underground itself, it occurred to more than one contemporary visitor that the canal was similar to the classical Underworld.⁹⁴ An English tourist who was one among the "crowds of people from all parts" who flocked to see the canal wrote to "a Lady" a lengthy account of his visit that includes a comparison of the canal and mine to the classical Underworld:

When you first enter the passage, and again when you come among the colliers, your heart will be apt to fail you: for it seems so much like leaving this world for the regions of darkness, that I could

which holds about eight tons. They then, by means of the rails, are drawn out by one man to a bason at the mouth of the passage, where four, five, or six of them are linked together, and drawn by one horse or two mules, by the side of the canal, to Manchester.... There are also, on the canal, other broad boats, that hold about fifty tons, which are likewise drawn by one horse." James Brindley, *The history of inland navigations. Particularly those of the Duke of Bridgwater, in Lancashire and Cheshire; and the intended one promoted by Earl Gower and other persons of distinction in Staffordshire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire* (London: T. Lowndes, 1769), 51.

⁹³ Although there was a single canal that went into and came out of the mine at Worsley, there were underground many branches of the canal: "The canal at Worsley was driven deep into the mines. From the main level, as it was called, side arms were cut, to which the coal was dragged in baskets shod with runners. Then, 56 yd below the main level, a second canal was dug, and at 83 yd below, a third. Containers of coal were winched up a vertical shaft to the main level to be put into boats there. Then a fourth canal was made, this time higher than the main level, again linked to it by shafts, though later John Gilbert designed an underground inclined plane or railway on which boats could be exchanged between the two levels. In all, some 42 miles of underground canal was built...." In extent and execution it was a staggering feat. Hadfield, *The Canal Age*, 30.

⁹⁴ Another anonymous letter from Birmingham that Brindley reproduces describes his visit to the Worsley basin and canal mine in Miltonic terms: "This lake, which leads to the head of the mines, is arched over with brick, and is just wide enough for the passage of the boats: at the mouth of it are two folding doors, which are closed so soon as you enter, and you then proceed by candle-light, which casts a livid gloom, serving only to make darkness visible." Brindley, 43. This letter appeared originally in *The London Magazine or Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* in London in 1766.

think of nothing but those descriptions of the infernal shades which the poets have drawn for Ulysses [and] Aeneas....⁹⁵

The canal, which ran for a remarkable three miles through the Duke's hillside, probably made it possible for the first time for spectators to visit this or any mine with relative ease. The gentleman above comments on this indirectly when he observes that the hospitality of this underworld was superior, for "should your spirits sink, the company are ever ready to aid you with a glass of wine" and "even Charon himself will offer you a cup." The experience of these casual visitors of the oppressive and terrible gloom of the mine did give rise from time to time to thoughts about those who worked in the mine there day in and day out. Still, the lines from Horace signaled that this was an occasion for pride rather than reflection not only for the Duke and his sponsorship of this architecture of innovative commerce but also for England. In the Bridgewater Canal and Brindley's subsequent engineering feats, the English saw the promise of a glorious future. It was in this light that Walpole called the Romans "little people" and that Arthur Young called the planned crossing of the River Mersey "the greatest undertaking... that was ever yet thought of [which] will exceed the noblest works of the *Romans*, when masters of the world...."⁹⁶ With Bridgewater's example before them, the English felt they could embody the Roman virtues to which they were heir and in his Canal they felt that in the future they could outshine the Roman achievements of the past.

⁹⁵ Brindley, 50.

⁹⁶ Young, 290.

The most spectacular feature of the Bridgewater Canal, the Barton Flyover, became a feature of the estate – like a Repton pagoda – that for the moment made the estate a point of origin of England’s future greatness. The many and varied engravings of the Barton Flyover became in the popular imagination an image of the future of the estate and the nation. Although it created an enormous sensation, Brindley had not constructed the Flyover only to be sensational. This aqueduct had been conceived as an answer to two engineering difficulties: first, it made it unnecessary to intermingle the waters of the canal with those of the River Irwell and thus the canal was protected from the vicissitudes of drought and flooding natural to a river; second, it obviated the need for locks to make up the difference between the level of the canal and that of the Irwell and without locks travel on the canal was much faster. *View of part of the Duke of Bridgewater’s Navigation cross the Irwell* (Figure 5) shows the advantages, not lost on contemporary authors, of canal over river travel, of a currentless body of water engineered for the purpose over a river following its own course. It also places England as the heir to the glory of Rome:

This advantage can hardly any where appear in a more full and striking light, than at *Barton Bridge*, in Lancashire; where one may, at the same time, see seven or eight stout fellows labouring like slaves to drag a boat slowly up the River *Irwell*; and *one* horse drawing *two* or *three* boats at a great rate upon the *Canal*; which is carried over the river at this place, like a magnificent roman aqueduct.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Bentley, 14. Bentley begins with a succinct summary of the advantages that canals have over rivers: “The reasons for preferring [sic] a *canal* to a *river navigation*, are many and important. The shortness of the voyage on the former, which is protracted on the latter by the winding course of the stream; the absence of currents, which in rivers impede the upward navigation more than they assist the downward, and hourly undermine and wear away the banks; the security from the mischief and delay occasioned by floods; the easier draught for the horses, as the boats will in a canal move nearer the towing path.” 13-14.

The appearance of the Flyover was so startling that when the plan for it was presented there was doubt it could be built. In fact, when Brindley first proposed the Flyover as an element of the Canal, the eminent engineer John Smeaton wrote to the Duke in his skeptical review of the plan, “I have often heard of castles in the air; but never before saw where any of them were to be erected.”⁹⁸

The strong impression made by the Flyover came precisely from its marriage of technological know-how with daring imagination, of the useful with the fantastic, both aspects of which were captured in its popular name.⁹⁹

The nickname “Flyover” seems to have been chosen because boats under sail or under tow could fly, in the air as it seemed, over the Irwell while other boats passed beneath it. As one contemporary and anonymous poet described the amazing visual effect, it was “Vessels o’er vessels, water under water”.¹⁰⁰

The freedom, efficiency and speed of this mode of travel are indeed emphasized in contemporary images. They do so in part by exaggerating the size of the boats on the canal. In *View of Barton Bridge* (Figure 6) the sailboat traveling on

⁹⁸ Smiles, 210. At its opening, the aqueduct was called “the Castle in the Air”.

⁹⁹ The construction of the Great Western Railway in the 1830’s that ran from London to Bristol shared the same combination of qualities as these first canals: the “superiority of English industrial technology”, the “extraordinary progress the English had made in analyzing the connections between budget and program”, and the joining of these achievements in engineering with “a romantic ambience”: “The success of the project seems even more extraordinary in the light of the complex hydrological difficulties that were encountered along the entire railway.... Enormous causeways were constructed to keep the railroad level and protect it from floods; in other places the tracks were laid in a trench lower than the level of the surrounding land. [Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the project’s engineer] gave each of the stone entrances to the tunnels an architectural character of its own, alternating between Gothic, Romanesque, and classical styles.” Renzo Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze: Urban and Rural Vision in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002), 173.

¹⁰⁰ Spadafora, 58.

the canal is somewhat outsized. Its size is heightened because it is illuminated by the sun and its mast parts the clouds above it while the boat on the Irwell and the rider on the river path are in shade. The sail is towed by two horses that do not strain in their labors while a boat on the river is being rowed somewhat laboriously. The sense of wonder at the passage of this boat on the canal aqueduct is underlined by the admiration of a well-dressed lady and gentleman out for a walk on the canal towpath. Their experience as recounted by those who first visited the canal and took the same walk was one of admiration and disbelief as well as some apprehension about the height of the aqueduct:

Brindley has erected a navigable canal in the air; for it is as high as the tops of trees. Whilst I was surveying it with a mixture of wonder and delight, four barges passed me...dragged by two horses who went on the terrace of the canal, whereon, I must own, I durst hardly venture to walk, as I almost trembled to behold the large river Irwell underneath me.¹⁰¹

The appearance of size and speed of the boats on the aqueduct is even more pronounced in *View of part of the Duke of Bridgewater's Navigation cross the Irwell*. (Figure 5) The boats on the aqueduct are in full sail, their speed measured by their pennants that fly horizontally in the wind and their size is impossibly large in comparison to the tiny boat in the Irwell. The two towing horses, also impossibly independent of human direction, are at a full trot in sharp contrast to the progress of the sail under tow by two men on the Irwell. For all their exaggerations, however, neither of these representations are fictions. They reflect the vision of speed, movement and startling innovation the canal aqueduct

¹⁰¹ Hadfield, *The Canal Age*, 29. Hadfield adds that "though bigger canals aqueducts had been built on the Continent, Barton Staggered contemporaries." The bridge consisted of three arches, and measured 39 feet high, 656 feet long and 36 feet wide.

brought into the landscape without, unlike the railroad, destroying the human environment. They turned people's thoughts to the future and to the desirability and novelty of change and of motion.

This is the case with Thomas Stothard's deliberately, optimistically futuristic representation of what the aqueduct might someday look like. (Figure 7) At the opening of the Bridgewater Canal, Arthur Young had written with enthusiasm, "What would it be if his grace was to extend it [the Barton Aqueduct] over a boisterous arm of the sea; -- to exhibit a navigation afloat in the air, with ships of a hundred tons sailing full masted beneath it. What a splendid idea!"¹⁰² No such project was ever attempted, but Dr. John Aikin, physician and topographer, was inspired by the idea and persuaded Stothard to create a vignette for the frontispiece of his treatise, *A Description of the country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester* (1795), in which canals figured prominently.¹⁰³ In Stothard's representation, a three-masted boat passes in full sail underneath the gigantic arch of an aqueduct over which a two-masted boat moves under its own power. Most startling is the long perspective under the aqueduct in which boats pass out to what appears to be the open sea. Moving closer towards the conventions of the sublime, the whole effect of this image is monumental, as though this imaginary aqueduct were already a national icon. Stothard's image does indeed appeal to the nation's pride partly on account of what it does not depict. Sprung loose from its setting on the estate, this aqueduct which carries domestic ships safely over great ocean-going boats depicts a nation that controls

¹⁰² Young, 288-89.

¹⁰³ Klingender, 15.

the waters. As an island nation, the English had always regarded the navy as their first line of defense against invasion, as it was in 1588, as well as of the first importance in the creation and maintenance of its growing empire. In fact, one of the most familiar arguments for the development of canals was that “it breeds up a Nursery of Watermen, which, upon Occasion, will prove good Seamen.”¹⁰⁴ In 1795, when Aikin’s volume was published, this vision of British ships sailing out of canals and into the ocean depicted an England impregnable from its center to the farthest reaches of the seas, “perfectly secure in times of war from the depredations of enemy’s ships of war and privateers,”¹⁰⁵ safe from the feared French invasion because England controlled the waters.

Just as the image of the canal broke loose from the estate and moved into the open seas, so did James Brindley, during just a few years after the construction of the Bridgewater Canal, move the canal beyond its containment within the confines of the estate. The transformation in contemporary engravings of Brindley’s aqueduct into the image of the mythic technology of an idealized and triumphant English future was matched by the elevation to myth of Brindley’s great and natively English genius. This was confirmed by his lack of education and semi-illiteracy that was much discussed in print to demonstrate the untutored nature of his talent. Smiles quotes extensively from Brindley’s day book, and calls attention to entries from November, 1757, such as “Bad louk”, “midlin louk”

¹⁰⁴ Willan, 26. This rationale was also offered in the Mersey & Irwell Act, the authorization in 1721 for a company of undertakers to make the rivers navigable as far as Manchester. The navigable river “will be very beneficial to Trade... and will very much tend to the Imploying and Increase of Watermen and Seamen....” As quoted in Hadfield, *British Canals*, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Phillips, 1785, 8.

and “Engon at work 3 days... driv a-Heyd!”, entries to which Smiles calls further attention by “translating” them into English.”¹⁰⁶ Phillips characterizes Brindley as a child of nature, a natural genius:

[Brindley was] one of those great geniuses which nature sometimes rears by her own force, and brings to maturity without the necessity of cultivation: ... his whole plan was admirable, and so well concerted, that he was never at a loss, for if any difficulty arose, he removed it with a facility that appeared like inspiration.”¹⁰⁷

Brindley’s apotheosis was facilitated by his death at an early age. Although he had, in the ten or so years after he finished the Barton Aqueduct, gone on to build structures equally miraculous he was permanently linked in the public imagination with Barton. Thus his portrait, painted by Francis Parsons in 1770, two years before Brindley’s death, shows Brindley with his trademark theodolite, a tool for measuring horizontal angles, in front of a landscape with a view of the Barton aqueduct. (Figure 8) This portrait was engraved in 1773, the year after Brindley’s death, by Robert Dunkarton and reproduced after that innumerable times. (Figure 9) The adoration of Brindley did not detract from that of Bridgewater who was still memorialized as “the father of hydrology” but it did celebrate Brindley for having moved the canal off the estate.

Brindley’s untutored mind allowed his accomplishments to be claimed by many disciplines. John Aikin saw in Brindley a chance to claim inspiration for engineering and science:

¹⁰⁶ Smiles, 183.

¹⁰⁷ Phillips, 1785, 5. This same idea, almost word for word, appears in Brindley’s book, in a letter from a gentleman, signed M.N. It may be that Phillips lifted these words from “M.N” but it nonetheless speaks to the felt rightness of this description of Brindley. Brindley, 54.

It was his [Brindley's] custom to retire to his bed, where in perfect solitude he would lie for one, two, or three days pondering the matter in his mind, till the requisite expedient had presented itself. This is that true inspiration, which poets have almost exclusively arrogated to themselves.¹⁰⁸

Brindley's creative talent, his genius that seemed to so many a species of divine inspiration, recommended him as a subject to Erasmus Darwin who wanted to expand the field of the divinely inspired to include scientists and inventors as well as poets. In Darwin's epic poem *The Botanic Garden* (1791), intended to be "doctrinal and exemplary to a nation,"¹⁰⁹ Brindley is celebrated as a great man still known throughout England by his own brilliant engineering works that were "visible" as Darwin put it, "in every part of this island" and memorialized him to all who lived in or traveled through the English countryside.¹¹⁰ If today both the rhetoric of the poem and the accomplishments attributed to the object of its homage seem overblown, at the time the poem itself was highly acclaimed. Darwin was compared to Ovid, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton. Cowper composed a prefatory poem to the author and Horace Walpole wrote, "Dr.

¹⁰⁸ John Aikin, *A description of the country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester : containing its geography, natural and civil; principal productions; river and canal navigations ... buildings, government, &c.* (London: John Stockdale, 1795), 144.

¹⁰⁹ John Milton, "The Reason of Church Government Urged Against Prelaty", in *The Complete Poetry and Essential Prose of John Milton*, eds. William Kerrigan, John Rumrich and Stephen N. Fallon (New York: Random House, 2007), 841.

¹¹⁰ Sir Christopher Wren's epitaph, carved on a stone in the floor of St. Paul's cathedral, reads "Si monumentum requiris circumspice". Brindley's canals, aqueducts and tunnels constituted in 1791 the same sort of monument. All the same, Darwin anticipated the obscuring mist of time by adding a footnote that memorializes Brindley's name and reputation: "The life of Mr. Brindley, whose great abilities in the construction of canal navigation were called forth by the patronage of the Duke of Bridgewater, may be read in Dr. Kippis's *Biographia Britannica*, the excellence of his genius is visible in every part of his island. He died at Turnhurst, in Staffordshire, in 1772, and ought to have a monument in the cathedral church at Lichfield." Note, Book I, Canto III, line 341.

Darwin has destroyed my admiration for any poetry but his own.”¹¹¹ In the following lines about Brindley we can see how closely Darwin cleaves to the Miltonic line, to the last great English epic in whose wake his epic follows, while at the same time he keeps to his stated intention to “inlist [sic] Imagination under the banner of Science”:¹¹²

So with strong arm immortal Brindley leads
His long canals, and parts the velvet meads;
Winding in lucid lines, the watery mass
Mines the firm rock, or loads the deep morass,
With rising locks a thousand hills alarms,
Flings o'er a thousand streams its silver arms,
Feeds the long vale, the nodding woodland laves,
And plenty, arts and commerce freight the waves.”¹¹³

That the winding lines of the canals are not serpentine here but rather “lucid” is deliberately reminiscent of the way in which Milton exploits the tensions in postlapsarian language to gesture towards prelapsarian understanding. It also affirms the way in which science and technology bring light, clarity and understanding. Darwin eschews Miltonian paradox even as he alludes to it. The “rising locks” are also a playful pun. They conjure up, of course, the many wonderful ‘stairs’ of locks that Brindley designed, as well as the traditional epithet – the dark locks of Poseidon or the oozy locks of Lycidas. Here Darwin once

¹¹¹ Barbara Wedgwood and Hensleigh Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle 1730-1897* (Westfield, NJ: Eastview Editions, 1980), 94.

¹¹² Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden; a poem, in two parts. Part I. Containing the economy of vegetation. Part II. The loves of the plants. With philosophical notes* (London: printed for J. Johnson, 1791). The prefatory poem written by a clergyman, the Reverend W.B. Stephens, makes it clear that Darwin’s science does not displace God, but in fact culminates in some sort of vision of that first cause: “Though willing Nature to thy curious eye,/ Involved in night, her mazy depths betray/ Till at their source thy piercing search descry/ The streams, that bathe with life our mortal clay....” Darwin, v.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* I, 3.349-356.

again acknowledges his classical antecedents and brings to the fore the new technology. His allusions and overtones are classical but his import is scientific.

It is an easy stretch for Darwin to present Brindley as a type of Moses – after all, both controlled the waters¹¹⁴ and each selflessly led his nation to assume its rightful place. Like Moses, who “brought out Israel... with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm”,¹¹⁵ Brindley leads “with a strong arm” and just as Moses parted the Red Sea so Brindley “parts the velvet meads.” It is not of course divine inspiration but inspired technology that allows Brindley to lead and command “the watery mass” and “the firm rock” in order to create waterways and, as one contemporary observed, to handle “rocks as easily as you would plum pie” and make “the four elements subservient to his will.”¹¹⁶

Brindley’s supposed generosity and disinterested self-sacrifice for his nation was also the subject of myth, a myth that anticipates the scientific norm of disinterestedness:¹¹⁷ “...having no sinister ends to gratify, no contracted notions, nor jealousy of rivals, he concealed not his methods of proceeding, nor asked

¹¹⁴ Brindley not only controlled the flow of waters by creating canals but also, famously, by using water drained from mines, water that hampered and endangered the miners, to supply the reservoirs and the canals that went directly into the mine face. Hadfield, *Canal Age*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Psalm 136, *KJV*.

¹¹⁶ Burton and Pratt, 35. The words are from an anonymous article in *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette*, 14 September 1767 about the digging of the Harecastle Tunnel as cited also by Hadfield, *Canals of the West Midlands*, 30: “Gentleman come to view our Eighth Wonder of the world – the subterraneous Navigation which is cutting by the great Mr. Brindley who handles Rocks as easily as you would Plumb Pyes and makes the four elements subservient to his will... he has cut...about a Quarter of a Mile into the hill..., on the side of which he has a pump, which is worked by Water, and a Stove, the Fire of which sucks through a Pipe that Damps that would annoy the Men who are cutting towards the Centre of the Hill.” Brindley’s pumps were one of his tools that inspired Darwin to see him as a type of Moses. The pumps, such as those he used to empty water from the Bridgewater mines, both eased the working conditions of the men and supplied the water used in the reservoirs of the canals.

¹¹⁷ NOTE TO ROBERT K. MERTON “The Normative Structure of Science” 1942

patents to secure the sole use of the machine which he invented and exposed to public view.”¹¹⁸ To the contrary, Brindley does appear to have taken out patents on his inventions but the fiction that he did not speaks to the widespread belief that Brindley worked on commercial projects not out of commercial interest but as a benefactor to the nation: Brindley’s works would allow England to take its rightful place as the chosen among nations, a modern land “flowing with milk and honey”.¹¹⁹

Darwin’s evocation of England as a land of “plenty, arts and commerce” purposefully goes beyond the Biblical vision of a bountiful land to assert that technological innovation and flourishing commerce are not at odds with or deleterious to traditional English virtues, values and character. The idea that a commercial economy and the consequent rise of the unlanded and untitled would create a luxury-loving, feminized, unpatriotic, unrefined, and boorish English populace had been in circulation from early in the century. In his 1752 essay, “On Luxury”, Hume argued to the contrary, that innovation in technology and commerce fostered excellence in the arts and refinement in the public taste and that “the spirit of the age affects all the arts” and that “the same age, which produces great philosophers and politicians, renowned generals and poets,

¹¹⁸ Phillips, 1785, 5. Phillips seems to be in error. In fact, Brindley did patent the steam engine used to pump out the mines at Worsley and to pump that water into the canal. The application of “James Brindley, of Leek, in the country of Stafford, Millwright” is in the records of the Staffordshire Patent Office for Dec 26th, 1758 with the following specifications: “A Fire-Engine for Drawing Water out of Mines, or for Draining of Lands, or for Supplying of Cities, Townes, or Gardens with Water, or which may be applicable to many other great and usefull Purposes, in a better and more effectual Manner than any Engine or Machine that hath hitherto been made or used for the like Purpose.” Smiles, *James Brindley*, 184.

¹¹⁹ Exodus 3:8, *KJV*.

usually abounds with skillful weavers, and ship-carpenters.”¹²⁰ Hume, like Darwin, saw achievement in the arts and refinement in matters of taste as the accomplishments of a society active and dynamic in every art and science and in each of its members. In fact, a frequent contemporary argument presents commercial development as critical to the establishment and maintenance of a free society because it creates a large group of what Hume called that “middling rank of men, who are the best and firmest basis of public liberty.”¹²¹ Thus, far from representing a material achievement at the expense of the cultural or political well-being of the nation, the new science and technology would foster a society at once progressive and forward looking while preserving, and even improving on the work of their cultural forebears. Darwin’s own epic was praised by the poet Anna Seward (1747-1809) for just such accomplishment:

Adapting the past and recent discoveries in natural and scientific philosophy to the purpose of heroic verse, the Botanic Garden forms a new class of poetry, and by so doing, gives the British Parnassus a wider extent than it possessed in Greece, or in ancient, or modern Rome.¹²²

¹²⁰ David Hume, "Of Luxury" in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* (London, 1752) IV, 23. Hume changed the title in 1760 to "Of Refinement in the Arts".

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 31. In line with Hume, Priestly argues that “a rich and flourishing state of society is the object of all wise policy” and that “it were absurd to suppose that the proper use of riches was necessarily, and upon the whole, hurtful to members of it” because “in a country where there are more riches, there may generally be expected more improvements of all kinds, and consequently more knowledge” and that therefore “the arts of luxury are, to a certain degree, favorable to liberty” in that men are led to seek the enactment of “equal laws to secure that property.” Joseph Priestley, *Historical Account of the Navigable Rivers, Canals, and Railways, throughout Great Britain*, 1788 (New York: A. M. Kelley Publishers, 1968), Lecture XLIX in *Works*, Volume 24, 304.

¹²² John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997) 595.

Like Bridgewater and Brindley, Darwin is a creative innovator whose work advances both its own field and the nation. *The Botanic Garden* gives British poetry and poets a greater scope, audience and influence than the poets of Greece or Rome. Swards' point about Darwin, Darwin's point about Brindley and the widespread perception of Bridgewater is that these are men who bring to the public history making, modernizing innovations. In Hume's words, their works put "the minds of men" into "a fermentation" that moves them and the nation forward into pre-eminence, perhaps towards perfection. They surpass their forebears without damaging or sacrificing one iota of traditional English values or one vista in the English landscape that was the visual representation of those values. At mid-century that narrative was understood by no one better than by Josiah Wedgwood who employed its visual representation to advantage with the greatest skill and success.

Chapter Two

A World of Moving Objects

[The factory] helped to express a new sense of social time that was then just coming into acceptance. I do not refer here to the process of instilling time-discipline within the factory.... Rather, I refer to its role in becoming an obligatory point of passage that led to the idea that society progressed as it moved forward in time. This discourse was expressed through the idea of the improvement of place.... *Timespace*, 53.

The [eighteenth] century... witnessed the rise in Western thought... of an ideology and a perception of history which depicted political society and social personality as founded upon commerce: upon the exchange of forms of mobile property and upon modes of consciousness suited to a world of moving objects. – J.G.A. Pocock (1985)

I returned to Burslem, how is the whole face of the country changed in about twenty years: Since which inhabitants have continually flowed in from every side. Hence the wilderness is literally become a fruitful field. Houses, villages, towns, sprung up, and the country is not more improved than the people.
-- John Wesley (1781)

When Josiah Wedgwood was garnering support for the Trent and Mersey Canal and planning for his own manufactory and estate on its banks, he paid a day's visit to the Earl of Bridgewater. The operation of Bridgewater's estate, coalmines and canals were the first and at that point the only model for what Wedgwood had in mind. Bridgewater and Wedgwood's meeting is the prime instance of the confluence of old men and new, of old money and new, and of the

forward movement their of cooperative efforts. The visit on July 6th, 1765, had several points of interest that Wedgwood describes in a letter to his partner,

Thomas Bentley:

We were most graciously recd spent about 8 hours in his Grace's company & had all the assurances of his concurrence with our design that we could wish. His Grace gave me an order for the completest table service of cream colour that I could make, shewed us a Roman Urn fifteen hundred years old at least, made of red china & found by his workmen in Castlefield near Manchester.¹²³

Wedgwood reports two instances of Bridgewater's condescension that were, in fact, and as Wedgwood probably knew, simply a way of his keeping up with his aristocratic contemporaries. As to his support for the Trent and Mersey project, Lord Gower, Erasmus Darwin and Thomas Anson had agreed to support the petition for the canal three months earlier, in April. And the "cream color" was becoming all the rage since Queen Anne had ordered a set of cream color just a month before, in June. In both of these matters Bridgewater was in the arrièregarde. But the Roman urn may have given Wedgwood an important idea and certainly illustrates for us the way in which Bridgewater, unintentionally and unwittingly, suggested the means by which Wedgwood could camouflage his own designs.

The incident is not, as it has appeared over the years, one in which Bridgewater passes his sense of English history to Wedgwood. Bridgewater is indeed the aristocratic landowner who engages in the questionable business of industry but, as his recovery and appreciation of the vase reveals, preserves the unbroken line of English history on English land. The discovery of the vase on his

¹²³ Julie Wedgwood and Charles Harold Herford, *The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood, the Potter* (London: Macmillan, 1915). 78.

own land lends him its imprimatur, makes his lineage as ancient as its own. That his workmen dug up the vase adds to the story the right note of continuity with the feudal order. For Wedgwood, the circumstances surrounding Bridgewater's vase must have suggested the commercial use that such admired and revered antiquities could be put to. Subsequently, Wedgwood chose carefully and methodically to cloth himself and his product in the sort of antique garb to which Bridgewater was entitled. By his efforts, Wedgwood made both himself and his pottery the embodiment of the most refined taste of antiquity as well as the most up-to-date in terms of quality and consumer desire.

Josiah Wedgwood's promotion and embrace of the Trent and Mersey Canal had widespread effects that the perspicacious Wedgwood could have anticipated. Wedgwood had been preceded in planning for such a canal by two wealthy and influential owners of coal-producing estates, Lord Gower of Trentham who was Bridgewater's brother-in-law and Thomas Anson of Shugborough. In 1758, before the Bridgewater canal had been begun and before Etruria had been built, Trentham and Anson had asked Brindley to survey a canal between the Trent and the Mersey Rivers that would link them to the seaports of Hull and Liverpool.

galvanized into motion canal transport, modern manufacturing processes, the pre-eminence of English pottery and Wedgwood's own career. link Hull and Liverpool and effect a "uniting", as Wedgwood wrote to Bentley, "of seas and

distant countrys [sic]".¹²⁴ Their progress would turn out to be much slower than that of Bridgewater because while Bridgewater supplied all the land and all the money for his canal, Gower and Anson chose to raise the money for the project and had to persuade landowners to sell their land before they could receive Parliamentary approval.¹²⁵ At the same time, Wedgwood had also for many years contemplated the utility to himself and to the Burslem potters of a canal and early in 1765, he wrote to Erasmus Darwin urging him to lead the effort for a canal linking them to Hull.¹²⁶ Wedgwood's closest ally was Thomas Bentley, a cultivated and influential Liverpool businessman who would become Wedgwood's partner. Wedgwood and Bentley worked together with James Brindley on a proposal for a canal. As Wedgwood's reputation was waxing and his intelligence, energy and persuasiveness came to be appreciated, the first governing committee of the Trent and Mersey project, Lord Gower and Thomas Anson decided to back Wedgwood's version of the canal and in April of 1765 asked him to join the committee.¹²⁷ By all accounts Wedgwood's energy was

¹²⁴ The canal allowed the raw materials to be brought from the Mersey to Wedgwood's doorstep and finished products were carried away in either direction as far as Liverpool or Hull. Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002), 114.

¹²⁵ Mill-owners were another group of riparian owners who had to be persuaded of the benefit to them of canal. They feared that water levels would be adversely affected and had to be reassured that reservoirs would be built to control and maintain the flow of water. Uglow, 111.

¹²⁶ Letter from Josiah Wedgwood to Dr. Erasmus Darwin, 3 April 1765. *Correspondence of Josiah Wedgwood*, ed. Katherine Euphemia Farrer (Cambridge: Cambridge UP: 2011), Vol. III, 227.

¹²⁷ In fact, with John Gilbert, the Duke of Bridgewater's agent, his brother, Thomas Gilbert, formerly Lord Gower's agent and by then MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Samuel Garbett, a wealthy Birmingham manufacturer, Gower and Anson tried to promote their project rather than Wedgwood and Bentley's. Wedgwood persuaded Gower to back his, Wedgwood's project. Uglow, 108-115. Also Hadfield, *West Midlands*, 18-22, and Brian Dolan, *Wedgwood the First Tycoon* (New York: Viking, 2004), 142-148. In addition to Garbett, manufacturing interests were represented on the committee by James Falconer and Edward Sneyd of Litchfield, and Sir

critical in the passage in the House of Commons of the bill for the Trent and Mersey.

By the time the bill was passed on April 28th, 1766, the thirty-six year old Wedgwood had become immensely successful through his innovations in the design, manufacture and material composition of pottery. From a family of Burslem potters, Wedgwood was at first apprenticed to his older brother and then began his own business in 1758. His invention of a cream colored earthenware that was uniform in color and was susceptible to crackling -- far superior in refinement of design and glaze to the staple salt-glazed stoneware -- saw his business grow by leaps and bounds. In 1764, he was able to marry his cousin by meeting her father's demands that he match her dowery of 40,000 pounds. And in June, 1765, when Queen Charlotte ordered a complete tea set of his cream ware pottery, the style was subsequently at her request named Queen's Ware. Thus, in June 9th, 1766, just as plans were going forward for the Trent and Mersey, Wedgwood was able to advertise himself in *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* as "Her Majesty's Potter".

The primary obstacle to the continued growth of Wedgwood's business was the cost and difficulty of transporting his pottery overland. Wedgwood's transportation difficulties sprung from the condition of the roads around Burslem that was typical of the time and that fragmented and thus slowed Wedgwood's production process. In 1760, Burslem was "a half-savage, thinly peopled district

Richard Whitworth. John Brindley of Burslem (James' brother) and James Brindley himself were also members. Hadfield, *West Midlands*, 29.

of some 7000 persons, partially employed”,¹²⁸ living in thatched cottages. The roads were narrow, rutted muddy tracks that were impassable by carts in the winter. Over these roads, Wedgwood’s vast quantities of raw materials, 50,000 to 60,000 tons of clay and flint per annum,¹²⁹ “came mostly by sea from Cornwall and Devon to the Mersey, by barge up the Weaver to Winsford Bridge, and then over those roads by pack-horse to the Potteries.”¹³⁰ Then the undecorated ware had to be sent, packed in panniers and carried on the backs of donkeys, to Liverpool for processing and then once again brought to Burslem for firing.¹³¹ The canal as Wedgwood conceived it, would allow the raw materials to be brought from the Mersey to Wedgwood’s doorstep and the finished products would be carried away by canal boats in either direction as far as Liverpool or Hull. However, the efficiency that Wedgwood envisioned for the transportation of his product depended not only on the canal but also on its location in relation to his factory. His success depended on a series of maneuvers, complex both in conception and execution.

Wedgwood’s actions while serving on the canal committee reveal his understanding of the cultural ideology of the moment: he had beforehand fully conceived his business in terms of its location, the organization of its workers and the public face of the Potteries and the Wedgwood family. Wedgwood’s

¹²⁸ Smiles, *James Brindley*, 274.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹³⁰ Hadfield, *British Canals: An Illustrated History*, 79.

¹³¹ For the history of Burslem and the Wedgwood family in Burslem in the early eighteenth century, see Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle 1730-1897*, 7-21. Also, Uglow, 107-121, and Dolan, 16-18.

foresight, tenacity and good luck all come into play in his purchase of the land for his factory and house. In July of 1766, three months after the Trent and Mersey Canal Project received Parliamentary approval, he purchased for 3,000 pounds the Ridgehouse estate, 350 acres between Burslem, Hanley and Newcastle, owned by the elderly Mrs. Ashenhurst, with the stipulation that she have a tenancy for life. Mrs. Ashenhurst died in December, 1767, and Wedgwood immediately hired Joseph Pickford to design a neoclassical house and factory for him.

Wedgwood had chosen Ridgehouse strategically as the most level land in the neighborhood and therefore the most convenient for the canal to traverse. The selection of the route for the canal was of course the object of politicking. Bentley promoted the choice of route that he and Wedgwood favored by presenting it as the unanimous choice of the concerned and knowledgeable nobles, Lord Gower and Admiral Anson, and the experienced and expert engineers, John Smeaton and James Brindley:

And the public is indebted to the Earl *Gower* and the late Lord *Anson*, for another survey of the intended course of this canal, made by Mr. Brindley in 1758, and afterwards reviewed by Mr. Smeaton, F.R.S. and Mr. Brindley jointly; and these surveyors concurred in opinion, that no tract of land in the kingdom was naturally better adapted for the purpose of an inland navigation, that none stood in more need of it, or was so convenient for an union of the east and west seas.¹³²

In addition to securing the general route of the canal, to realize its benefits Wedgwood had to have it run right through his property. In the end, Wedgwood paid for the section of the canal that went through his property but the other local potters complained nonetheless that Wedgwood had taken advantage of his

¹³² Bentley, 13.

official position in the canal company to get this costly and unnecessary detour through Etruria.¹³³

In the same year Wedgwood purchased Ridgehouse, he also visited Matthew Boulton's new ironworks, completed in 1766, outside of Birmingham to which Wedgwood's Etruria would bear a number of similarities and one critical difference.¹³⁴ Boulton's factory, designed by Samuel and James Wyatt, well known for their neoclassical style, was a grand, three-story building. A pre-existing canal ran next to the factory and 150 yards away Boulton had built his own house.¹³⁵ Boulton's factory was innovative and must have influenced Wedgwood who also built his factory next to a canal and his home just across the canal and up a hill. Wedgwood followed Boulton's lead in installing a very large clock on the façade of his factory, to educate and regulate his employees to a sharper observance of and conformity to the demands of the conventional divisions of time that modern manufacturing required of its labor force. He, as did Boulton, compartmentalized his labor force with remarkable specificity both in tasks and wages and in keeping with their skills and the necessities of the assembly line.¹³⁶ Wedgwood's meticulous methods and high standards as a manufacturer that he enforced with impartial strictness among his workers

¹³³ Burton and Pratt, 78.

¹³⁴ In the late 1770's, Boulton would go on with his partner, James Watt, to invent the modern steam engine. He also collaborated with Wedgwood on metal settings for the Wedgwood pottery plaques and ormolu fittings for the Wedgwood vases.

¹³⁵ Wedgwood, *The Wedgwood Circle*, 31.

¹³⁶ Grinders were paid 7 Shillings per week, washers and breakers 8 shillings, throwers 9-12 shillings, engine lather men 10-12 shillings, handlers 9-12 shillings, Men gilders 12 shillings, women gilders 7 shillings, pressers 8-9 shillings, painters 10-12 shillings, molders in plasters of paris 8 shillings and modelers and apprentices 100 pounds. Young, 254-255.

became a model of the relationship between rational production and quality of product.¹³⁷

If Wedgwood conceived of the canal as a solution to his transport problems, he seemed to have intended also from early on to set his factory on the grounds of his own English estate. Of course many of the landed gentlemen, Bridgewater, Gower and Anson among them, planned to have canals running through their estates. Bentley suggested that it was delightful for a gentleman to have a lawn that terminated in a canal and also that estate owners might like to have their own gondolas.¹³⁸ Bridgewater was establishing a large and highly profitable coal-mining operation, but Wedgwood was the first to build a new factory complex on a new estate and thus to position his pottery as the latest manifestation of ancient English good taste. Wedgwood showed the keenest appreciation for the associations that the antique and the traditional could open up for new men and their new enterprises. To establish his product as the epitome of good taste, Wedgwood employed images of the estate and of the antique world. In this way, Wedgwood gained access, as a commercial man of the highest sensibilities, to the nobility of England. His was the first industrial

¹³⁷ At the dedication of the Wedgwood Institute in 1863, William Gladstone praised Wedgwood's methods as a benefit to the nation: "But it is for another and a broader reason that I desire to treat the purpose you have now in hand as a purpose of national rather than merely local or partial interest. It is because there are certain principles applicable to manufacture by the observance or neglect of which its products are rendered good or bad. These principles were applied by Wedgwood with the consistency and tenacity that cannot be too closely observed. These principles, being his and being true, were also in no small degree peculiar to his practice and deserve to be in the permanent annals of art especially associated with his name." William Gladstone, May 26, 1863, *Journal of the Society of the Arts*, no. 571, vol. xi, October 30, 1863. In fact, Wedgwood was known for dashing to the floor pieces that were less than perfect.

¹³⁸ Bentley, 13.

estate built in England but its name and appearance spoke of old England and even older Roman England.

The happy confluence of modern industry, traditional English life, and a taste for the antique is well represented in the outdoor conversation piece of himself and his family that Wedgwood commissioned from George Stubbs in 1780.¹³⁹ Although Wedgwood was not pleased with the portrait, it does exemplify the elements of Wedgwood's brilliant strategy to identify himself as a significant landowner, an Englishman of lineage and inbred good taste.¹⁴⁰ The painting (Figure 10) blurs the line between the commercial and the familial, the public and the private. Wedgwood sits on the right hand side of the painting under a tree that visually divides him from his family.¹⁴¹ At his left elbow an

¹³⁹ Stubbs, well known as a horse and animal painter but desirous of making a wider and higher reputation for himself as a portraitist, had been employed by Wedgwood to enamel large Queens ware plaques with paintings of horses, lions and animals from history and mythology. Wedgwood had considered commissioning Joseph Wright of Derby for the portrait but seems to have settled on Stubbs because Stubbs owed him money for the large (36 by 24 inches) tablets and the larger kilns required to fire the large tablets Stubbs wished to create. Judy Egerton, *George Stubbs, Painter: Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2007), 67. Also in Ann Finer and George Savage, eds. *The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood* (London: Cory, Adams & Mackay, 1965) 31.

¹⁴⁰ Bruce Tattersall, *Stubbs & Wedgwood: Unique Alliance between Artist and Potter* (London: Tate Gallery, 1974) 114. Wedgwood exchanged many letters with Bentley while the portrait was in progress. On 14 September, 1780, he wrote that as the painting approached a finished state, "the likenesses... grow weaker. Mrs. Stubs says the likeness will come in & go off many times before finishing so I can say nothing to this matter at present..." Ten days later, on 25 September, 1780, he gave Bentley an account of his motivation in hiring Stubbs: "Mr. Stubbs came to us again last night after finishing a portrait of Mr. Swinnerton which is much admired, & I think deservedly so by all who have seen it, & I hope this, with our family picture, & some others which he will probably paint before he leaves us will give him a character which will be entirely new to him here, for nobody suspects Mr. Stubs of painting anything but horses and lions, or dogs and tigers, and I can scarcely make anybody believe that he ever attempted a human figure. I find Mr. S. repents much his having established this character for himself. I mean that of horse painter, and wishes to be considered as a history, and portrait painter. How far he will succeed in bringing about the change at his time of life I do not know. The exhibition may do wonders for him." As far as we know, the painting of the Wedgwood family was not exhibited at the time and Wedgwood never paid Stubbs for it entirely.

¹⁴¹ I am grateful to Professor Anne Higonnet for our conversation on this topic.

incongruously placed table holds a basalt vase, made by a process that Wedgwood had not invented but had perfected and with which he was identified.¹⁴² Wedgwood had named the material “basalt” after the black, hard, mirror-like volcanic rock that was associated with the antiquities being uncovered in Italy in the neighborhood of Vesuvius. In fact, at the opening day’s festivities of the Etruria factory on June 13, 1769, Wedgwood himself threw six “First Day’s” vases. In black basalt with encaustic decoration, they bore the motto “Artes Etruriae renascuntur”, the arts of Etruria revived.¹⁴³ (Figure 11) Etruscan art had recently been admired in England for its own qualities and also with the idea that it had a special role to play in educating the taste of the middle class.

Interest in Etruscan art had been revived with finds at Herculaneum and Pompeii and especially with the publication of Sir William Hamilton’s collection of antiquities.¹⁴⁴ Hamilton hoped that the “two hundred forms” of vases and urns reproduced in his volumes would serve as models for English potters, who he felt were “in great want of models” from which they could “draw ideas which their ability and taste will know how to improve to their advantage, and to that of the

¹⁴² Wedgwood experimented with a black ceramic material that had been made for some time in Staffordshire. By changing its composition he discovered he could create a material that could withstand firing at high temperature and that became so dense and hard that it could be polished with a lapidary wheel. *Josiah Wedgwood: The Arts and Sciences United. An Exhibition of Josiah Wedgwood's correspondence, experiment books and the ceramic products he developed and manufactured Held at the Science Museum, London 21 March to 24 September 1978* (Barlaston, Staffordshire: Josiah Wedgwood & Sons, 1978), 14.

¹⁴³ Encaustic decoration is an antique process recovered by Wedgwood. Hot wax impregnated with pigment is burnt into pottery as an inlay.

¹⁴⁴ Sir William Hamilton was the English Ambassador to Naples. He and his wife, Lady Emma Hamilton, who would be best remembered for her liaison with Horatio Lord Nelson, collected antiquities by the hundreds. He employed the Baron d’Harcenville to produce *Antiquités, Etrusques, Grecques et Romaines*. In five volumes with 450 engraved plates, the first volume appeared in 1767.

public.”¹⁴⁵ The improvement of public taste was still an issue for Darwin in 1791 when he praised Wedgwood for molding “Rich with new taste, with ancient virtue bold,” and sang of the “new Etruria” that “decks Britannia’s Isle.”¹⁴⁶ Darwin noted that the “general taste of the inhabitants” of Nola, “at the foot of Vesuvius” was still today “elegant”, under the Etruscan influence and believed that Wedgwood’s vases would exert a similar influence in England.¹⁴⁷ And although the great fashion in ornamental vases, sometimes called “vase mania” had peaked in the early 1770’s among the fashionable upper classes, there was still a great demand among those that Wedgwood called “the *Middling Class* of People” for vases that had the flavor of antiquity and of upper class good taste.

It is difficult to untangle whether Wedgwood pursued the marriage of good taste and commercial success as an ideal or simply found that selling good taste was a profitable business – or both. Throughout his career, Wedgwood had self-consciously used the upper classes as stalking horses for the large number of middle-class people who had so recently become consumers. In his 1774

¹⁴⁵ D’Harcenville, *Collection of Etruscan, Greek and Roman Antiquities, 1766-76* I, viii, quoted in Nicholas Goodison, *Ormolu: the work of Matthew Boulton* (London: Phaidon, 1974), 55.

¹⁴⁶ Darwin, *The Botanic Garden, Part II, Canto II*, lines 314, 304, page 34.

¹⁴⁷ “Etruria may perhaps vie with China itself in the antiquity of its arts. The times of its greatest splendour were prior to the foundation of Rome and the reign of one of its best princes, Janus, was the oldest epoch the Romans knew. The earliest historians speak of the Etruscans as being then of high antiquity, most probably a colony from Phoenicia, to which a Pelasgian colony acceded, and was united soon after Deucalion’s flood. The pedular character of their earthen vases consists in the admirable beauty, simplicity, and diversity of forms, which continue the best models of taste to the artists of the present times; and in a species of non-vitreous encaustic painting, which was reckoned, even in the time of Pliny, among the lost arts of antiquity, but which has lately been recovered by the ingenuity and industry of Mr. Wedgwood. It is supposed that the principal manufactories were about Nola, at the foot of Vesuvius; for it is in that neighbourhood that the greatest quantities of antique vases have been found; and it is said that the general taste of the inhabitants is apparently influenced by them; insomuch that strangers coming to Naples, are commonly struck with the diversity and elegance even of the most ordinary vases for common uses.” *Ibid.*, Part II, Canto 11, line 291, note.

exhibition of The Frog Service, Wedgwood kept to a very restricted and elegant guest list.¹⁴⁸ In a letter to Thomas Bentley on 23 August 1772, Wedgwood explains his strategy of first marketing his pottery at high prices to important people:

The Great People have had these Vases in their Palaces long enough for them to been seen and admired by the *Middling Class* of People, which Class we know are vastly, I had almost said, infinitely superior, in number to the great, and though a *great price* was, I believe, at first necessary to make the vases esteemed *Ornament for Palaces*, that reason no longer exists. Their character is established, and the middling People would probably buy quantitys [sic] of them at a reduced price.¹⁴⁹

The idea of using the “Great People” as trend-setters who whet the appetite of the “Middling Class” for certain styles of articles, lesser models of which are then sold at reduced prices to the vast numbers of the middle class is a form of marketing still in use. But it would have had a special, extra-commercial appeal at that time when the rising middle class seemed to the upper class so much in need of education in the conduct of a mannerly and tasteful life. Wedgwood was also very well aware of the consumer’s need for novelty that he explains in another letter to Bentley:

Your idea of the *creamcolor* having the merit of an original, and the *pearl white* being considered as an imitation of some of the blue and white fabriques, either earthenware or porcelain, is perfectly right, and I should not hesitate a moment in preferring the former if I consulted my own taste and sentiments: but you know what Lady Dartmouth told us, that she and her friends were tired of creamcolor, and so they would of Angels if they were shewn for sale in every chandlers shop throughout the town. The pearl white

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth A. Fay, *Fashioning Faces: the Portraitive Mode in British Romanticism* (Lebanon, NH: U New Hampshire P, 2010), 111.

¹⁴⁹ The Wedgwood Archives, Special Collections, University of Keele, E25-18392 as quoted in Uglow, 201.

must be considered as a *change* rather than an *improvement*, and I must have something ready to succeed it when the public eye is palled...¹⁵⁰

Wedgwood's contempt for his aristocratic clients' craving for novelty and their consequent disregard for the creamcolor preferred by Bentley and Wedgwood simultaneously makes Wedgwood's pretensions to the landed gentry seem both cynical and sincere: although he caters to his clients his is the more genteel taste. Stubbs' painting reconciles these strains.

Stubbs' painting is a visual narrative about Wedgwood's career told by the landscape that Wedgwood had so meticulously staged. Wedgwood's left forearm rests lightly on the table that holds the basalt vase, pointing us to it. The slightly crumpled piece of paper on the table and the pencil held loosely in his right hand identify Wedgwood as the designer of the vase.¹⁵¹ The place of the labor of making the vase appears in the distant background above the vase: a plume of white smoke emanates from a large, grey shadowy building that is the Etruria factory. Balancing that plume of smoke, on the far left side of the painting, the side devoted to his well-dressed wife and children on horseback on the grounds of Etruria, the spire of a church suggests that this is indeed an estate with its own village. Against the strong vertical line of the tree trunk, Wedgwood stands balanced between the life of labor from which he has come and the life of landed leisure his children enjoy. The canal is quietly visible in the distance,

¹⁵⁰ Wedgwood to Bentley, 6 August, 1779. *Finer and Savage*, 237.

¹⁵¹ Zoffany's portrait of Lord Towneley shows him "surrounded by the spoils of the villa Hadrian" and Reynold's portrait of Sir William Hamilton has him displaying his prized antique pots. In including his own basalt pot, Wedgwood is claiming a very privileged place for his work. *McKendrick*, 100-145.

appearing beneath the legs of the horse of Susannah, Wedgwood's eldest child.¹⁵² There is nothing incongruous in these various elements: this family tableau produces an integrated landscape of public and private, commerce and wealth. It says that industry is not antithetical to or deleterious to the landscape or to the culture of the English estate and that commerce and the rise of new men can in fact enhance the culture of the English estate. We have seen in Bridgewater's case that an "aristocracy rooted in the soil" came "to terms with industrial progress by participating in it"¹⁵³ even as the aristocracy's reassuring, unquestionably English presence in the land provided the canvas on which change could be drawn. The Stubbs portrait diverges from Hume that "industry" and "refinements in the mechanical arts" bring with them "refinements in the liberal". The portrait, like Wedgwood's basalt vase, was at the time an item in a somewhat outmoded genre popular still among provincial squires¹⁵⁴ that spoke

¹⁵² Once Wedgwood had made certain that the canal would pass directly through his estate, he turned his mind to landscaping and asked Hugh Henshall, Brindley's project manager, to plan a fashionably curving, serpentine line for the canal. Henshall refused on grounds of efficiency as Wedgwood reported to Bentley in a letter of 24 December, 1767: "The fields are unfortunately so very level that the Canal will run in a straight line thro' them, at least so it is set out, for I could not prevail upon the inflexible Vandal to give me *one line of Grace* – He must go the nearest & best way, or Mr Brindley wo'd go mad." Wedgwood and Wedgwood, 36. Also Uglow, 116, and Burton, 78.) Thomas Anson had better luck at Shugborough where Henshall did give the canal a serpentine line as is evident in the eight views of Shugborough and the Canal in Catherine the Great's Frog Service. See Figures 14 and 15. In the proposal for the Trent and Mersey Bentley had written that estate owners could have a "Lawn terminated by a Canal." Darwin wanted him to use instead "water" on the grounds that "a Canal is as straight as *Fleet Ditch*." Burton and Pratt, 56.

¹⁵³ Mather, *After the Canal Duke*, xv.. Ann Bermingham observes that "the old established landowners were generally complicit with the forces of industrial capitalism" and that "as a result, the older paternalistic relationships between landowner, farmer and laborers deteriorated, to be replaced by wage-mediated relationships." Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: the English Rustic tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1986) 75-6.

¹⁵⁴ The outdoor conversation piece had its heyday among sophisticated, fashionable Londoners, in the 1730's and 40's. Thereafter although it continued to be practiced well by such artists as Arthur Devis in Lancashire or Gainsborough in Ipswich. For an history of the genre see William

all the more forcefully about old-fashioned country values even as it advanced the propriety of commerce.

The best opportunity for Wedgwood to cloak his commercial life and product in the aura of the landscape of the English estate and its history presented itself in 1773 when Catherine II commissioned him to produce a china service for fifty for La Grenouillère, the Gothic Revival country palace she had built for herself outside of St. Petersburg. At the time, Catherine and other Russian nobility were assembling art collections to aid in establishing Russia as a European power: special exhibits were staged throughout Europe especially to sell to Russian collectors.¹⁵⁵ Catherine, whose personal collection of paintings would eventually number over four thousand, became a particularly avid collector of things English. Her admiration of England extended to the architecture of The Frog Palace, the first significant building in Russia in the Gothic Revival style that had been imported to Russia from England.¹⁵⁶ Catherine also admired the new style in the English garden that did away with the *jardins symétrisés*, as she explained in a letter to Voltaire: "I love English gardens to the point of folly: serpentine lines, gentle slopes, marshes turned into lakes... and I deeply despise

Vaughan, *British painting : the Golden Age from Hogarth to Turner* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 50-65.

¹⁵⁵ Anthony Glenn Cross, *"By the Banks of the Thames": Russians in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1980) 21.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Hayden, "British Seats on Imperial Russian Tables", *The Garden History Society* 13 (No. 1, Spring: 1985): 17-32.

straight lines. ...in a word, my plantomania is dominated by anglomania.”¹⁵⁷ The studied informality of the English garden that Catherine describes had become widely regarded as the visual expression of English liberty because it allowed each tree great latitude to grow and assume its characteristic shape.¹⁵⁸ Given her anglophilia, it was to be expected that Catherine would turn to Wedgwood, the leading English potter, for her dishes. In regard to the service, Catherine stipulated only that each piece have a topographically accurate depiction of an English site – an estate, a ruin, a castle – in the gothic style and that there be no repetition of images.¹⁵⁹ As Catherine conceived it and Wedgwood executed it, the service was more particularly purposeful than any general collection of English pottery: it was a collection that infused this newly built, neo-gothic Russian country palace with the vistas and the history of the English countryside and estate. Catherine’s service was large enough to encompass all the built relics of England and yet small enough to be contained within her household and to be eaten off of. Dining on The Frog Service, The Queen and her guests at La Grenouilliere consumed Englishness both as an homage and a triumph.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Catherine, Voltaire, et al., *Documents of Catherine the Great; the Correspondence with Voltaire and the Instruction of 1767, in the English text of 1768* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1931). Letter sent from Peterhof, June 25. 1772.

¹⁵⁸ Raeburn, *The Frog Service*, 134.

¹⁵⁹ Catherine’s desire for Gothic sites was immediately countered by Wedgwood who wrote to Bentley “there are not enough I am perswaded [sic] in Great Britain to furnish objects for this service.” Letter 27 March, Wedgwood Mss in Keele University Library, 18451-25 cited in Hayden, 20.

¹⁶⁰ According to court records and to guests of Catherine, the Frog service was used rather than simply put on display. On June 6, 1777, lunch was served off the service to thirty-six guests including Catherine’s cousin, Gustav III of Sweden. On June 24, 1780, fifty-six guests dined off the Frog ware dishes when Catherine was host to Joseph II of Austria. Hayden, 23.

The service Wedgwood designed for Catherine referenced with specificity both the identity of the collector and the items in the collection. At the time it was usual for Russian royals to move their china with them in their progress from palace to palace. But, the Wedgwood china would be used only at La Grenouillère. It thus became known as the “Frog Service” in reference to that estate but also because each piece had on its border a green frog in an escutcheon that marked it for its specified place and made its use elsewhere impossible. Its elegant simplicity was in part created by the high degree of its finish: “Technically the service is perfect. The creamware paste is even and immaculate in color and composition.... There is not a single malformed piece in the entire Service.”¹⁶¹ It was in fact an eminently usable service that was light in weight and easy to handle. Its manufactured perfection made it stackable (dozens of dishes could be piled up)¹⁶² and was plainly colored in green and black against a cream ware background, without the heavy gilding characteristic of French china. Also, the set did not include the large, showy and largely functionless pieces typical of many services of the day. That it was used and not just displayed indicates Catherine’s ability not merely to absorb things English in a series of imperial acts of collection, but, as the dishes achieved a utilitarian

¹⁶¹ Ludmila Voronikhina, “The Green Frog Service and its History in Russia” in *The Green Frog Service*, eds. Michael Raeburn, Ludmila Voronikhina, and Andrew Nurnberg (London and St. Petersburg: Cacklegoose Press, The State Hermitage, 1995), 9.

¹⁶² Fifty years later William Gladstone commented approvingly that Wedgwood’s dishes “fit one another as closely as the cards in a pack.” William Gladstone, *Gleanings of Past Years*, 204.

function, to become more English. Of course, these dishes were not merely useful: they married utilitarian design and function to art.¹⁶³

The piecemeal process by which Wedgwood and Bentley procured the images for the service reflects the project's dual origin and dual aspiration in both commerce and art. For the body of the nine hundred and fifty-two pieces, some of which had lids or saucers, a total of one thousand two hundred and forty-four original topographic sketches were required,¹⁶⁴ including views of English estates and locales that had never before been recorded. At the outset Wedgwood and Bentley did not know the exact number of works of art or their placement on the dishes because, in order to proceed in a timely way, production began before the art had been decided upon. Nonetheless the approximate numbers were daunting and Wedgwood wrote to Bentley that "all the gardens in England will scarcely furnish subjects sufficient for the sett [sic], every piece having a different subject."¹⁶⁵ The choice of artists also proceeded somewhat haphazardly. Wedgwood hoped to have original watercolor drawings for each scene but soon realized this would not be possible. Having hired the artist Samuel Stringer (1750-84) and having watched his progress in the neighborhood of Etruria,

¹⁶³ A century later, at a ceremony dedicated a Burslem Museum and Institute in Wedgwood's honor, William Gladstone succinctly stated Wedgwood's genius: "Wedgwood was the greatest man who ever, in any age or country, applied himself to the important work of uniting art with industry." Robin Reilly, "Josiah Wedgwood: a Lifetime of Achievement" in *The Genius of Wedgwood*, ed. Hilary Young (London: The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1995), 57.

¹⁶⁴ Never losing an opportunity to promote business, on December 17, 1773, Wedgwood wrote to a Mrs. Talbot exaggerating the size of the service: "We are now executing a commission for the Empress of Russia. It is for a Table service consisting of near two thousand pieces, upon each of which is to be a real view of English Gardens & pleasure grounds painted in enamel...." Gaye Blake Roberts, "Josiah Wedgwood and Queens Ware" in Raeburn, Boronikhina and Nurnburg, eds., *The Green Frog Service*, 39.

¹⁶⁵ Finer and Savage, eds., 146. *Letter of March 23, 1773*, Wedgwood Collection at Keele, E. 18450-25.

Wedgwood calculated that, since each view took 2 days to complete, it would take seven years to finish the roughly 1,244 views that would probably be required. Over the course of two years Wedgwood and Bentley hired many artists of varying abilities to do some of the sketches.¹⁶⁶ In addition, they hit on the scheme of borrowing art from estate owners who had previously had their properties painted, “the paintings in most noblemen’s and gentlemen’s houses of real Views” as Wedgwood wrote to Bentley.¹⁶⁷ And despite the provision that these be original views, they also came to rely on “published views”, prints that Wedgwood collected in volumes and which, in his own words “may be picked up and go a great way.”¹⁶⁸ These compromises that Wedgwood and Bentley made in the acquisition of art for the Frog Service had all to do with the necessity for speed. Catherine’s demand for the fast delivery of the service was yet another way in which she was in the avant-garde: she was a consumer who wanted to be gratified with the rapidity that modern commercial practice promised. In the end, Wedgwood could deliver her English service almost immediately by contemporary standards. This is not to suggest that the art on the dishes is of a lesser order than it might have been but only that as a collection it came together

¹⁶⁶ Among the artists they employed were Samuel Stringer, Anthony Devis, Thomas Smith (d. 1767), William Shuter. Many sources (Dolan among them) report that Stringer and other artists used a camera obscura for their initial sketch of a view or property. However, Roberts asserts there is no documentary evidence that the camera obscura was ever used in the production of art for The Frog Service. Roberts, 39.

¹⁶⁷ *Collected Letters*, 152. July 30th, 1773—Keele, E. 18484-25. Among the art they borrowed were 15 views of Shugborough Hall, watercolors by Moses Griffiths lent to them by Thomas Anson, as well as 12 views of Enville done by Arthur (or possibly Anthony) Devis and lent by Lord Stamford. Alison Kelly, "Wedgwood's Catherine Services", *The Burlington Magazine* 122 (No. 929, August, 1980), 557.

¹⁶⁸ *Collected Letters*, 152. July 30th, 1773 – Keele, E. 18484-25.

with a speed and by a variety of hands that is characteristic of modern commerce and manufacturing.

The images themselves reflect the rapidity with which the canal and canal technology had been integrated into the traditional English estate landscape. Of course, many of the scenes selected for *The Frog Service* are simply great English estates chosen in part because their gothic architecture would complement and legitimize that of La Grenouillère. But there were also a good number of images of canals and of estates with canals running through them, including one view of Worsley Bridge over the Bridgewater Canal, (Figure 12) one view of the Barton Flyover of which the engraving and aquatint survive but the dish was destroyed, (Figure 13) eight views of Shugborough Park with the Trent and Mersey Canal running through it, (Figures 14 and 15) and one view of Etruria Hall that includes the Trent and Mersey in the foreground. (Figure 16) All of these were on large dishes of fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter or length in keeping with Wedgwood's policy of giving good space to the images of the properties of his friends.¹⁶⁹ Friendship was not however the sole criterion for inclusion: there were other industrial images from owners less intimately connected with Wedgwood such as the forge at Coalbrookdale. While with Wedgwood questions of influence in the promotion of business can never be irrelevant, the prominent inclusion of these canals occasioned no comment or expressions of dismay from those who saw the service. Peter Perez Burdett, the artist who did the engravings and aquatints for the two Bridgewater dishes,

¹⁶⁹ In his letter of November 22, 1773, Wedgwood wrote to Bentley, "I am most afraid of our not having large Dishes, and other large pieces, enough left to oblige our Friends...." *Finer and Savage, eds.*, 154.

claimed that the drawings for the dishes had been done by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This seems not to have been the case. Nonetheless that it seemed plausible that Rousseau would have sketched the Bridgewater Canal speaks to the extent that the Canal loomed large in the public imagination and had become a scenic feature of the English estate and of the English landscape.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, Thomas Anson used the Trent and Mersey as an adornment of Shugborough and Shugborough and the Trent and Mersey were featured on eight dishes in The Frog Service. This was still the case in 1793 when G.F. Yates inscribed a watercolor of the Flyover to his friend J.C. Hurter.¹⁷¹ (Figure 17) Only a few years later, canals would come to be seen as “unpicturesque” and “new men” who had made their money in commerce would not want their newly purchased estates overrun by “noisy boatmen”.¹⁷² And eventually of course canals would

¹⁷⁰ Shugborough also featured a Chinese pagoda, an Orangerie, the ruins of a Greek temple and two Chinoiserie bridges. All these fashionable features and items would have been seen by his brother, Admiral George Anson, as he circumnavigated the globe. Jeremy Black, *A Subject for Taste : Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 68-9. Fifteen views of Shugborough were required to capture all its ornaments. Nicholas Dall's drawings and paintings of the landscaping at Shugborough were a great convenience to Wedgwood and Bentley. Both the drawing and the painting based on it for Figure 14 (which is signed and dated 1768) are still at Shugborough.

¹⁷¹ The inscription to the painting (Figure 17) reads: “To Mr J C Hurter, this view of the Aqueduct at Barton, 4 miles from Manchester, is dedicated by his friend G F Yates”.

¹⁷² Anne Bermingham distinguishes the aesthetic of the estates of early manufacturers from those who came into prominence in the '90's: “Whereas early manufacturers like Josiah Wedgwood built their estates close to their factories so as to command a view of them from the house and grounds, after 1795 these self-made men were careful to live far away from such unpicturesque sights.” Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 74. Phillips, writing in 1795, is scornful of the aversion of these new men to having canals on their properties: “Those fine gentlemen would not suffer their villas to be disturbed by noisy boatmen, or their lawns to be cut through for the accommodation of trade and commerce, though it was from that only that most of those villas and lawns had existence.” Phillips, *A general history of inland navigation*, 109. William Cobbett uses the term “new man” to describe those who have rented or bought estates with newly made money: “We came out into the road just mentioned, at the lodge-gates of a *Mr. Weston*, whose mansion and estate have just passed (as to occupancy) into the hands of some *new man*. At Merrow, where we came into the Epsom road, we found, that *Mr. Webb Weston*, whose mansion

come to be seen as part and parcel of the industrial downgrading of the landscape, still in the 1770's in its inclusion in The Frog Service the canal was classified,¹⁷³ along with stately homes and gothic ruins, as a feature in the long history of the English countryside.

Before The Frog Service was shipped to Russia, Wedgwood, a manufacturer not only of goods but also of desire and taste, took the opportunity to gratify those whose estates had been depicted and to whet the appetite of the "Nobility and Gentry"¹⁷⁴ for his china by displaying the entire collection in an elegant showroom at Portland House in Greek Street, London in June, 1774. The exhibit attracted both men and women: women seem to have been more interested china¹⁷⁵ and Wedgwood had written to Bentley that the exhibition would please the ladies, but the exhibition also attracted an elegant male audience (including Queen Charlotte's brother, the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz) who were interested in land and property and collected prints and antiquities.¹⁷⁶ The rooms had been chosen in part because they had very little street frontage

and park are a little further on towards London, had just *walked out*, and left it in possession of another *new man*." Cobbett, 5.

¹⁷³ Collections such as that of the images for The Frog Service involve acts of classification that are never completely idiosyncratic but rather reflect a cultural point of view. Stephen Jay Gould calls the science of classification "the mirror of our thoughts" and "its changes through time." And "collecting" he adds "is classification lived...." John Elsner and Roger Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994), 2.

¹⁷⁴ On June 1, 1774, Wedgwood advertised the exhibit in *The Public Advertiser*. The advertisement is reproduced in Malcolm Baker, "A Rage for Exhibitions: The Display and Viewing of Wedgwood's Frog Service", in *The Genius of Wedgwood*, ed. Hilary Young (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1995) 121.

¹⁷⁵ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping, and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), 54-55.

¹⁷⁶ Baker, "A Rage for Exhibitions", 127.

and therefore were clearly intended for the knowledgeable and not designed to attract passersby. Those who had been invited, as had the well-known gossip, Mary Granville Delaney, a friend of Swift's and a great favorite of George III and Queen Charlotte eagerly wrote to their less fortunate friends:

I am just returning from viewing the Wedgwood ware that is to be sent to the Empress of Russia. It consists, I believe, of as many pieces as there are days in the years, if not hours. They are displayed at a house in Greek Street, Soho, called Portland House. There are three rooms below, and two above, filled with it, layed out on tables; everything that can be wanted to serve a dinner. The ground, the common ware, pale brimstone, the drawings in purple, the borders a wreath of leaves, the middle of each piece a particular view of all the remarkable places in the King's dominions, neatly executed. I suppose it will come to a princely price; it is well for the manufacturer, which I am glad of, as his ingenuity and industry deserve encouragement.¹⁷⁷

Wedgwood had wisely left a few undecorated pieces back at the factory so that when, inevitably, he received anguished communications from people whose property had not been selected, he could produce the desired piece.¹⁷⁸ Since the dishes had not been captioned, each dish had a number on its reverse and referred to a catalogue, handwritten in French by Bentley, that accompanied the service and of which there is only one copy extant.¹⁷⁹ There is no discernable

¹⁷⁷ William Burton, *Josiah Wedgwood and his Pottery* (London: Cassell & Company, 1922), 92. Mrs. Delaney erred only in her pleasure at the large sum Wedgwood would receive. Queen Catherine never paid Wedgwood for the service.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Raeburn, "The Frog Service", 147. To be included in the service, the Marchioness Grey sent views of her gardens at Wrest and Wimpole painted by her daughter.

¹⁷⁹ The one original catalogue is in The Wedgwood Archive at Keele University Library. There is an English translation from 1909 in George C. Williamson's *The Imperial Russian Service*. A second English translation appears in Michael Raeburn's "The Frog Service and its Sources". According to my correspondence with Lynn Miller of the Wedgwood Museum, Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, these are the only two English translations of the catalogue. Ms. Miller points out that Williamson's translation is somewhat misleading because of a conflation of two services Wedgwood produced for Catherine, The Husk Service (1770) and The Frog Service.

order to the catalogue; the dishes are not ordered according either to type or to the scenes they portray. This is probably because the dishes were painted and numbered as they were produced, without reference to any larger plan. And if a dish were rejected, its number would be given to another piece.¹⁸⁰ In the absence of a grand design and given its concession to the necessities of manufacture, the catalogue obliquely represents both aspects of the service, as items of fine art and as the product of modern manufacture.¹⁸¹

In this way, The Frog Service worked not only to enhance Catherine's collection of things English but also to signal her appropriation of English-ness itself. Catherine understood that Wedgwood's genius as a manufacturer lay in marrying the beauty of the modern, of the fine regularity of high quality manufacturing with the impeccable lineage in design of the traditional and the antique. Wedgwood's inclusion of canals and large estates along with the images of gothic buildings that Catherine had requested, placed the canals in the long and venerable history of England up to the present moment. The Frog Service thus represented the enduring stability of England and the evidence in itself of England's triumph in the perfection of industrial process. The service

¹⁸⁰ Raeburn, *Genius*, 235.

¹⁸¹ Raeburn, *Genius*, 143. Etruria itself became something of a tourist spot for visiting Russian nobility, a hybrid mecca of art and commerce something like our own museums. Edmund Radcliffe wrote to Wedgwood advising of a possible visit: "Some gentleman from Petersburg are gone from my House, Northwards - I shall return with them next Month as far as Birmingham when I hope to see my friends and Etruria". 9 January, 1774. Roberts, 38. Thomas Byerley, the husband of Wedgwood's niece who eventually became manager of Etruria, wrote to someone at Etruria, probably in the 1790's, about Russian visitors: "His Highness Prince Gallitzin, a Russian Prince of Great distinction, proposes to visit Etruria, and I have assured him here he will meet with the most respectful attention which he no doubt will for his own sake and for ours - for it is of very considerable consequence to keep well with the Russian Foreigners of Distinction who travel". Wedgwood Museum Archives.

was a catalogue that exhibited for the world and for the English their claim to both a glorious past and future.

Both Bridgewater and Wedgwood, each in his own way, made use of the past in order to move into the future. Bridgewater in his noble person and on his estate, appears with his aqueduct and canals, the newest technology, and earns the title of Canal Duke, a title in which the new and the old meet but in which the old view – his rights in his property and his civic virtue – is prioritized.

Wedgwood appears on a new estate with a factory, canal, and his newly made Etruscan vase at his elbow. He, like Frogware, has appropriated English history. In him and in his work, the representation of the old and the new meet – but with a tilt towards the new, towards commerce and the necessity of cultivating social style and taste. The canals that Bridgewater and Wedgwood sponsored and built, the work that flowed from their construction, the men of different classes and professions they brought together, and the new towns and cities that grew up, introduced an enlarged and interconnected sense of the space of their own country to its citizens. John Wesley's description in 1781 of the enlargement and improvement of Burslem evokes a sense of the ceaseless migration of the population as "inhabitants have continually flowed in from every side." That they have "flowed", literally and imaginatively links their movement to that of the canals on which they traveled. That they have come from "every side" evokes the spaciousness of the countryside, now awakened. Out of this seemingly unexplored space, the people have brought, despite expectations, fertility,

prosperity and domestic order.¹⁸² Along the sides of the canals, “houses, villages, towns”¹⁸³ sprang out of nothing as Wesley writes, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that “the wilderness is literally become a fruitful field.”¹⁸⁴

Just as much as The Frogware allowed Catherine to collect England, so it represented the way that alliances between commerce and art would allow the English to conceive of themselves as a nation rather than a group of localities. It put on display not, as it would be in the British Museum or the Victoria and Albert, the great treasures from foreign parts that bespoke empire but rather a collection of places interior to the island that began to give England the idea of itself in all its parts as a nation, a pleasing and coherent view that embraced both the relics of its history and the canals and aqueducts that propelled England forward. In the movement of goods and people that Bridgewater and Wedgwood effected, we see what J.G.A. Pocock called “the spectacle of property moving from a situation in a structure of norms and rights to a situation in a process of history”.¹⁸⁵ At its heart, the “enliven’d”¹⁸⁶ English landscape, the exhilarating sense that

¹⁸² Smiles strikes much the same note, emphasizing the increase in the population of numbers, of civility and of prosperity: “The moral and social influences exercised by the canals upon the Pottery districts were not less remarkable. From a half-savage, thinly peopled district of some 7000 persons in 1760, partially employed and ill-remunerated, we find them increased in the course of some twenty-five years, to about treble the population. Abundantly employed, prosperous, and comfortable.” Smiles, *Brindley & the Engineers*, 274.

¹⁸³ John Wesley, *The Journal of the Reverend John Wesley, in 4 Vols.*, ed. Ernest Rhys (London: Dutton, 1906), IV, 202.

¹⁸⁴ *Isaiah, KJV, 32:15.*

¹⁸⁵ J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1985), 115.

¹⁸⁶ James Thomson, *Liberty, a Poem in Antient and Modern Italy Compared: Being the First Part of LIBERTY, A POEM* (London: 1735).
“See! long CANALS, deepen’d rivers join

“everything wears the face of dispatch”, came from the construction of a landscape in which both commercial and private property came to be in play and in which the network of canals began to release goods, people and wealth previously held on the land. In the 1770’s, anticipation of changes in the traditional rural life of the cottagers made the material circumstances of their lives the object of a collective nostalgia.

Gainsborough: “Excessively Fond of A Cottage”

“Nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space.”

Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*

“For my own part,” said he, “I am excessively fond of a cottage; there is always so much comfort, so much elegance about them.”

Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*

In his “cottage door” paintings, which he produced in the 1770’s and `80’s, Gainsborough presented a mythic prior that soothed fears about the construction of canals, the loss of traditional rural life and its consequences for the nation. He made himself the first artist of “indigenous pastoral painting” in England,¹⁸⁷ the first to paint representations of English village and cottage life,¹⁸⁸ and the first to bring to the forefront a genre that would come to be seen as “essentially English,”¹⁸⁹ in the creation in the cottage door paintings of what is now *the*

¹⁸⁷ Although Gainsborough’s *The Cottage Door* was an immense success in London in 1780, it was first grouped and shown with other paintings of Gainsborough’s of rural cottage life at the Yale Center for British Art in 2005. The essays in the exhibition catalogue, *Sensation and Sensibility, Viewing Gainsborough’s Cottage Door*, identified “the cottage door” as a genre in eighteenth-century English painting. See Anne Bermingham’s *Introduction* to the catalogue, p.25.

¹⁸⁸ John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape : the Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 9.

¹⁸⁹ Kay Dian Kriz, *The Idea of the English Landscape Painter: Genius as Alibi in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997) As cited in Anne Bermingham, ed., *Sensation & Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough’s Cottage Door* (New Haven, and Pasadena: Yale Center for British Art and The Huntington Library, 2005), 156.

mythical English pastoral prior. He replaced the landscape of religion and classical myth, of Claude and Poussin, and the landscape of estates and estate owners in which he himself excelled, with a landscape of people immemorially rooted in the land. These paintings found a large audience and popularity just as rural cottagers who were driven off the land by enclosures took up as canal workers and with their families began to move freely around the countryside.¹⁹⁰ As historical, linear time continued to insinuate itself into daily life, Gainsborough idealized the English countryside and its peasantry, and held them in a pre-modern order of time. The great popularity of these paintings was the expression of a collective nostalgia for pre-modern England, of England before the advent of the canals. In looking back to this very recent past, and in valorizing the passing of what was not yet completely gone, Gainsborough conjured up deeply interior places at the heart of the nation where the relationship to the land endured unchanged. Gainsborough and his viewer revisit that timeless time just past as though it were the space in the cottage doorway.¹⁹¹

In *The Cottage Door, 1780-86*, (Figure 18) the golden light of perpetual summer twilight in which they are enveloped is the aura of the timeless virtue of the rural families of Gainsborough's cottage door paintings. mother and children

¹⁹⁰ Oliver Goldsmith had in 1770 bemoaned the fate of Auburn, his boyhood village, and of its rural cottagers dispossessed by enclosure acts. With their movement off the land Goldsmith saw "the rural virtues leave the land", among them the "self-dependent power" that "can time defy". Oliver Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village", 1770, ll. 398 and 429. There is for us an irony in Goldsmith's words as he praises the villagers for having "self-dependent power". Placed and kept in place by a social and legal hierarchy that made them dependent, if anything, they possessed endurance.

¹⁹¹ Later, during the war with France, the English cottage was used self-consciously as a symbol of England. It then also became what Barrell calls "a site of contestation" as a symbol of the exploitation of the poor. Barrell, *Dark Side*, 58.

sit bathed in the almost tangible light that permeates every part of the painting and holds the figures, the landscape, and the house in place. The saturation of the image by this light gives the fleeting twilight moment an enduring quality: there is no hint of the coming of the darkness of night. The painting creates a stasis between day and night, just as the paintings themselves were produced in a moment suspended between the old order they celebrated and a new order of money and manufacturing. The permeating summer twilight gives the painting continuity in space and suspension in time. The wellspring of the family's virtues and blessings lies precisely in this spot, geographic and social, and in this light.

Gainsborough's peasant families, healthy, fertile, living in harmony with one another and the woodland they inhabit, do not so much "give the landscape meaning through the way they abide in it"¹⁹² as they derive their meaning, their health, their virtue from the land in which they are rooted: the way in which they live on the land expresses the virtue of the land. The family in *The Cottage Door* though poorly dressed displays a tenderness and care for one another that is natural to uncorrupted human nature: the older boy feeds the younger children; the nursing baby is well-bundled up in his mother's arms and the mother, beautiful, clean and brushed, has gathered them on the steps to attend the home-coming of their father after his day's work. They could be the models for Goldsmith's virtuous peasants among whom one finds "contented toil",

¹⁹² In "The Cottage Door" (1780-86) (Figure 18) as in Dutch landscapes, figures are "dramatis personae who amplify the mood of the landscape and give it meaning "through the way they abide in it." Ann Jensen Adams, "Competing Communities in the "Great Bog of Europe: Identity and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Landscape Painting" in *Landscape and Power*, W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1994), .

“connubial tenderness”, and “steady loyalty and faithful love.”¹⁹³ As Goldsmith describes them, it is the land both in its bounty and in its denials that makes them virtuous:

...every rood of ground maintained its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.¹⁹⁴

The land “maintains” men in their inborn wholesomeness by preventing excess of every kind: the peasant earns for his “light” labor just enough to maintain life and health: excess “wealth” sets in motion acquisitive desires that destroy both innocence and health. In addition, “wealth” and those who accumulate it create motion: they move off the land and through the ranks of old and new social hierarchies, they can take their money and leave the country itself. The peasant is prevented by the parsimony of the land itself from the spiritually draining pursuit of wealth, from the “getting and spending” by which he would “lay waste his powers”.¹⁹⁵

So far removed from the corruption of the commerce of getting and spending, very little in *The Cottage Door* appears to be man-made. The unified palette, fluid structure and golden luminosity of *The Cottage Door* present the family as if they had emerged from the landscape just as they emerged from the door of their cottage. Gainsborough’s relatively limited unified palette eliminates

¹⁹³ Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, 404.

¹⁹⁴ Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, ll. 58-62.

¹⁹⁵ William Wordsworth, “The world is too much with us; late and soon”, in *William Wordsworth Selected Poetry*, ed. Mark Van Doren (New York: The Modern Library, 1950) 536, l. 1.

the prioritization of the foreground to the background as well as the usually pronounced difference in his coloration of the natural world and the built world. Thus there appears very little man-made about those elements that are in fact man-made. The children are built up out of shades of ocher and brown, as are the woodlands around them. Their clothing adds no texture of velvet or sparkle of silver to the composition. The materials that have gone into building their house seem to have been gathered on the spot: the wood for the door lintel looks as if it had been taken from the dead tree that overhangs the house and the roof appears to have been made of the sod in the foreground of the painting. As Gainsborough was painting, the use of local materials for building was waning with the flourishing of the canal and the inexpensive transportation of wood, tile, slate, bricks and stone. People's sense of the typical look of their county or village began to be confounded.¹⁹⁶ To the contrary, *The Cottage Door* accentuates, tinges with nostalgia and elevates to myth the time when houses of the working poor were constructed of materials that indicated the limited scope of its inhabitants and the inaccessibility of any world that was beyond them more than a few miles. Gainsborough's cottage door paintings adhere to this truth of the use of local materials for building while at the same time romanticizing the fact, turning it into a sentiment-tinged statement about the virtuous contentment of those who are attached to the land that is England.

¹⁹⁶ "By vastly cheapening the carriage of heavy materials over long distances, the canals also brought about indirect changes in the landscape. Thomas Pennant enthusiastically observed in 1782 that the Grand Junction Canal, between Trent and Mersey, had brought in new building materials: 'the cottage, instead of being half covered with miserable thatch, is now covered with a substantial covering of tiles or slates, brought from the distant hills of Wales or Cumberland.'" Hoskins, 254.

Gainsborough evokes the ease and contentment of cottage life while keeping the spectator at a distance that aligns the cottagers with the landscape rather than the viewer. Bathed in the golden, humid light of the end of a summer's day, the figures and landscape are immersed in a luminosity that softens edges and lines of demarcation and blurs detail. This lack of clarity and of detail leaves the eye of the viewer unchallenged, soothed and pleasantly at ease. But part of the pleasant ease of the viewers comes also from the figurative distance from which they view the cottagers. Gainsborough paints the cottagers at a moment when they are, as it were, on display, open for viewing. These summer sunsets that are a moment of comfortable outdoor leisure for the cottagers are also, importantly for the painter and his audience, the moment when they could all be easily observed, together, out of doors. The viewer observes the cottagers from a middle distance from which a man on foot or on horse could pass them by without interaction. The viewer does not enter the cottage.¹⁹⁷ His relationship to the cottagers is not, as it would become in

¹⁹⁷ That the interior of the cottage is inaccessible to the gaze of the painter and therefore hidden from public view speaks to the integrity of the family as defined by its separateness from the world at large. In his poem, *The Village* (1783), George Crabbe's scathing portrait of the poor house links the door that cannot close to the dissolution of the family:

Theirs is yon house that holds the parish-poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;

There children dwell who know no parents' care;
Parents, who know no children's love, dwell there!

The broken door of the poor house cannot effect the separation of the family from the world in a private territory, in their own version of the estate. George Crabbe, *The Village*, 1783. Book I, lines 228-229 and 232-233. The privacy without which the family cannot be realized is also celebrated in William Collins' "An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, considered as the Subject of Poetry" (1749-50):

"For him, in vain, his anxious wife shall wait,
Or wander forth to meet him on his way;
For him, in vain, at to-fall of the day
His bairns shall linger at the unclosing gate

nineteenth century art as well as in novels, that of a person visiting in order, for example, to dispense charity:¹⁹⁸ he has not come to inquire after the well being of the inhabitants or to bring them some bread or a covered dish or to scrutinize their living conditions in order regulate their morals. By keeping their distance, the painter and viewer enhance the cottagers as a romantic subject, something akin to the golden light in which they move. The cottagers are physically rooted in the land, corporally a part of it, while the passing by of the artist and the viewer speaks to their larger view and comprehension of the meaning of the English landscape. The cottagers are aligned with the landscape, almost a part of it: the viewer moves through the countryside while the cottagers remain at their doorstep. The wider world of the nation in which the cottagers take no active part (something to be desired, given the unrest on the continent),¹⁹⁹ is indicated in

Ah, ne'er shall he return! "

In the aftermath of the French revolution, war with France and the ensuing shortages of food and fuel, artists such as David Wilkie began from about 1815 to portray the inside of the cottage with the cottagers posed in scenes such as "Sunday Dinner". These are moral vignettes designed to prescribe good, moral conduct to a population that the middle and upper classes feared.

¹⁹⁸ Anne Bermingham points out that English painters of the nineteenth century did increasingly paint cottage life from inside the cottage. She attributes this shift to the declining influence of Gainsborough and the increasing influence of Dutch and French painters such as Jean-Baptiste Greuze and David Teniers who employed interior scenes as commentary on the morals and manners of cottagers: "What had been an appeal to feelings of sympathy and benevolence in Gainsborough becomes instead a sermon on piety and dutiful domesticity." 32. The interest in painting interior scenes of rural life was probably equally the result of the ascendancy of the middle class and the consequent emphasis on the teaching of manners and morals as well as England's increasingly imperial sense of the importance of charitable works abroad and at home.

¹⁹⁹ During war with France, local militia were formed not only to fight off an invasion but also to prevent local uprisings among the English. Thomas Pennant's comments on the canals make clear the unifying effect of the canals and their particular utility during war: "Places which rarely knew the use of coal, are plentifully supplied with that essential article upon reasonable terms and what is of still greater public utility, ...the line of the canal being through countries abundant in grain, it affords a conveyance for corn unknown to past ages. At present, nothing but a general dearth can create a scarcity in any part adjacent to this extensive work." 76.

the cottage door paintings in the glimpses of open fields and sky, of cultivated mowed land that they do not occupy and away from which their gaze is turned.

Nonetheless, while Gainsborough depicts these cottagers as contentedly marginalized he also places them at the hidden heart of the nation. Landscape paintings have the power, as Ann Jensen Adams argues, to offer “a communal identity”²⁰⁰ to societies being reconfigured by new forms of economic development unanchored in the land. Certainly, in late eighteenth-century England, the increasing mobility of the population and the rise of portable wealth had begun to undermine land as the principle source of wealth and agent of social organization and cohesion of the nation. In the cottage door paintings, Gainsborough does not create an English communal identity through the cottagers, who are, as John Barrell points out, an isolated peasantry that is “entirely defined by their domestic identity, each family inhabiting its own sequestered paradise, quarantined from contamination by any notion of collective life, even of collective labor.”²⁰¹ Nor does Gainsborough acknowledge seasonal labor or the cycle of the seasons as part of a vital rural community. Rather, the cottage door paintings are images of what Gainsborough and his audience found to be the imperishable condition of national collective life -- the attachment of

²⁰⁰ In her essay on seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painting, Adams argues that in the seventeenth century, at a time that Dutch society was extraordinarily fragmented, Dutch landscapes “offered a communal identity on several levels... overlooking the potential social disruption caused by private joint economic speculation and land development, a new form of economic activity that certainly had no social location.” Adams, “Competing Communities in the ‘Great Bog of Europe’”, 66.

every family unit to the land on which they stand: the land binds them, past and present, to the Crown and thus to one another.²⁰²

Within a few decades, both cottage life and that of the traveler-observer that Gainsborough celebrated in these paintings would become modes of recreation for the well to do, modes that persist today. Although the laborers who built the canals and the men and women who supplied their needs were the first large wave of travelers through the countryside, the canals themselves made tourism easy and popular. By the 1820's, the Rector of Camerton could take his guests on an outing on the Somersetshire Canal that included a tour of an estate:

Having engaged one of the coal barges, I had it fitted up for the ladies with an awning and matting against the sides, and tables and chairs from the public-house, in which we proceeded about eleven o'clock to Combe Hay, where we visited the Mansion House, walked round the premises, and afterwards dined under the trees near the cascade. As the day was delightful the whole party much enjoyed the excursion.²⁰³

The ability to travel, to "break the bounds of locality", is understood among the middle and working classes as "a route to the possession of England, a claim to membership in the nation."²⁰⁴ The travel books produced in the 1820's and 1830's by Turner, Pugin and many others also functioned to give an increasingly urban population a view of the English countryside and a conception of the English nation. Visiting noble estates became a popular form of tourism as we

²⁰² In his discussion of the increasingly politically fractured life in the eighteenth-century English countryside, John Barrell notes among English painters the "increasing concern to present an apparently more and more actualized image of rural life [that] attempts to pass itself off as an image of the actual unity of an English countryside innocent of division."

²⁰³ *The Diary of the Rector of Camerton*, 1823, quoted in Hadfield, *Canal Age*, 93.

²⁰⁴ Helsing, *Turner and the Representation of England*, 107.

can see as early as 1813 in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in which Lizzie Bennet and her Aunt and Uncle visit D'Arcy's estate as tourists and are taken by his housekeeper for a tour of his home.²⁰⁵ This is clearly an instance, as the rest of the book bears out, of the ability of the country gentry to move freely throughout England, and of the gentry beginning to take the upper hand from the aristocracy who even at home become exposed to the gaze of their social inferiors. Thus, the privileged view implicit in Gainsborough's cottage door paintings, the ability to travel and to see into the homes of others, became the privilege of many.

Similarly, the cottage itself, which Gainsborough's paintings had made an icon of the simple virtues and joys of country life, as well as of the nation itself,²⁰⁶ becomes (ironically) a consumer item for the well to do who are eager (at least on weekends) to escape from urban life but who in fact bring those excesses along with them into the countryside. As enclosures and evictions enlarged estates and emptied many of the cottages, it became the fashion to build a cottage in the country.²⁰⁷ Francis Stevens in his *Views of Cottages and*

²⁰⁵ Elizabeth and her aunt and uncle are also taken on a tour of D'Arcy's picture gallery, the contents of which seem to be primarily family portraits. Anne Higonnet points to this episode as an early instance of the opening of private collections to interested members of the public, a practice that predated and prefigured the conversion of these collections to public or semi-public museums. Anne Higonnet, *A Museum of One's Own* (Pittsburgh: Periscope Publishing, 2009)

²⁰⁶ John Barrell discusses print images and coins from 1795 in which the cottage and its inhabitants are presented as an image "not just of rural virtue but of Britain itself." "Spectacles for Republicans", in *Sensation & Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough's Cottage Door*, ed. Anne Bermingham (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 2005)

²⁰⁷ In *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Elinor Dashwood, dispossessed from the family estate by an entail and living in an old country cottage, meets her half brother, John Dashwood, who has inherited the estate. He fatuously praises "their species of house", the cottage to which Elinor and her mother and sister have been relegated, with this observation:

Farmhouses in England and Wales (1815) characterized a cottage as “a spot sequestered from the habits of a populous town.”²⁰⁸ He included in his compendium views of dilapidated farmhouses which he described as sites of “timeless, domestic, peaceful and productive performance of everyday tasks by contented members of the rural lower classes” and deplored the way in which profiteering agrarian improvement had “destroyed the old rural values based upon paternalistic ties of responsibility and loyalty.”²⁰⁹ However, for Gainsborough and his contemporaries, only twenty-five years earlier, such sentiment about the village and the cottage could still seem perfectly heartfelt. In what must be one of his most often-quoted letters, on June 4th, 1785, to a musician friend of his, William Jackson of Exeter, Gainsborough conjured up what would become the myth of cottage country life:

I'm sick of Portraits and wish very much to take my Viol da Gam and walk off to some sweet village where I can paint Landskips and enjoy the fag End of Life in quietness & ease. But these fine Ladies

“For my own part,” said he, “I am excessively fond of a cottage; there is always so much comfort, so much elegance about them. And I protest, if I had any money to spare, I should buy a little land and build one myself, within a short distance of London, where I might drive myself down at any time, and collect a few friends about me, and be happy.”

Dashwood’s idea that the cottage offers “comfort” and “elegance” has nothing to do with the real conditions of life in rural cottages, but with those simulachra of cottages built by his wealthy friends in which, for example, the “dining parlour will admit eighteen couple with ease.” Elinor’s response to Dashwood guides Austen’s readers: “Elinor agreed to it all, for she did not think he deserved the compliment of rational opposition.” Austen, J. (1811, 1991), *Sense and Sensibility*. London, Penguin Books. 212.

²⁰⁸ Francis Stevens, *Views of Cottages and Farmhouses in England and Wales*. London, 1815.

²⁰⁹ Ann Pullan, “For Publicity and Profit”, in *Prospects for the Nation: Recent Essays in British Landscape, 1750-1880*, eds. Michael Rosenthal, Christina Payne and Scott Wilcox. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997. 279.

and their Tea drinkings, Dancings, Husband huntings etc etc etc
will fob me out of the last ten years....²¹⁰

For Gainsborough, the contrast between the complexities of upper class city life and the simplicity of village life had at least in part to do with the contrast between working at the pleasure of those “fine Ladies” and being a man of independent leisure: it is the difference between painting portraits and painting “Landskips”. Gainsborough’s belief in the village and the cottage as the wellspring from which flowed the virtue of the nation was both the source and the content of his iconography of the English landscape.

Part of the immense popularity Gainsborough’s cottage door paintings enjoyed must be attributed to the nostalgia they evoked, nostalgia that worked to preserve land as the basis of privilege. But this nostalgia for an English way of life that was passing in the face of the new economy should not be understood simply as an exercise in sentimentality. Nostalgia glances backwards in order to serve a function in the present moment:²¹¹ Gainsborough’s cottage door paintings celebrated the centrality of land in English law and English life in order to perpetuate that faith even as the new economy of portable wealth began to gain ascendancy. Ironically, as the rate of enclosure increased, the look of the landscape came more and more to affirm that faith.

²¹⁰ John Hayes, Ed., *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough* (New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre of British Art, 2001), 68.

²¹¹ Observing that “nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations,” Svetlana Boym confirms the way in which nostalgia operates to influence the future: “Nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past determined by the needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future.” Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xvi.

Enclosure, the taking and selling by Parliament of common and waste lands, was ever more heavily promoted at the end of the century as a way of rationalizing agricultural production in the face of a growing population and of shortages created by the war with France. England, in which there had not been a serious famine throughout the eighteenth century, could point a cautionary finger at France, a nation of small farms that had suffered sixteen nationwide famines between 1700 and 1789.²¹² After the French Revolution, the enlargement of estates and the preservation of the rights of the landed took on additional ideological significance in England. For example, Edmund Burke justified the expense of war with France by painting a vivid picture to his fellow MPs of the loss of their properties and prerogatives at the hands of the French. He asked them to imagine what it would be like

“...to have their mansions pulled down and pillaged, their persons abused, insulted and destroyed, their title-deeds brought out and burned before their faces, and themselves and their families driven to seek refuge in every nation throughout Europe, for no other reason than this, that, without any fault of theirs, they were born gentlemen and men of property, and were suspected of a desire to preserve their consideration and their estates.”²¹³

Their imagined exile from England follows inevitably on the burning of their title deeds: disinherited from their land they are disconnected from England. During the Napoleonic Wars, shortages of grain and corn and high prices in England inspired Sir John Sinclair, President of the Board of Agriculture in 1803, to treat

²¹² In addition to these nationwide famines, there were local famines in France that occurred almost every year in various places throughout the country. Thus, “the stereotype cherished by the British of the starving French peasant was by no means simply the product of prejudice and ignorance.” Linda Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London: American Council of Learned Societies, 2003), 37.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 150.

common and waste lands as a domestic enemy and to compare enclosure to the liberation of lands held by the French:

Why should we not attempt a campaign also against our great domestic foe, I mean the hitherto unconquered sterility of so large a proportion of the surface of the Kingdom? ...Let us not be satisfied with the liberation of Egypt or the subjugation of Malta, but let us subdue Finchley Common."²¹⁴

The need for England to be and to see itself as an abundant agricultural producer became even more pressing after the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and Napoleon's subsequent Continental blockade which prevented England from trading on the continent.²¹⁵ In this context, Gainsborough's cottage paintings became more and more popular as images of national identity, of the abundance of the English countryside and of the health of even its most humble citizens.

As enclosures created larger and larger estates, many of them bought up by men made rich by the new commerce, the English countryside came in fact to appear to be what it had been in law, a nation of estates. The loss of a paternalistic and communal rural community and the weakening of localism proceeded hand in hand. The enlargement of estates through enclosures expelled cottagers and small farmers from a social and legal context that had given them rights and obligations that extended in both space and time. This highly organized communal system was regulated by a local assembly under a

²¹⁴ Michael Williams, "The Enclosure and Reclamation of Waste Land in England and Wales in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries" in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 51 (1970): 55-69, 57.

²¹⁵ In the period between Trafalgar and Waterloo, William Vaughan finds "a decade of unprecedentedly detailed and naturalistic representations of agricultural scenes" which he attributes to the need in England to be self-sufficiently productive. Vaughan, *British Painting: The Golden Age from Hogarth to Turner*, 211.

manorial court in which the farmer and the cottager had a well-defined place in a “hierarchy of use rights”.²¹⁶ The village and church lay in the middle of strips of land owned by individual farmers that were scattered between two or three large, unfenced open fields that grew different crops or lay fallow according to a system of rotation agreed upon communally. Animals were allowed to graze on the harvest stubble or the fallow also in a system of rotation. Families who did not own land were nonetheless free to glean in the open fields after the harvest, to graze a few animals and to forage for windfall. As estates enlarged themselves, they did so piecemeal by incorporating into themselves those adjacent common and waste lands that had previously made it possible to work small farms profitably.²¹⁷ They appropriated to themselves not only the land to which small farmers had had a right but also violated the orderly succession of these rights which had been passed down through families in much the same way as estates

²¹⁶ Dauntton, 93.

²¹⁷ In *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), Jane Austen reveals with the lightest narrative touch the contempt in which she holds wealthy landowners who are buying up commons. The dialogue is between the intelligent, skeptical and impoverished Elinor and her half brother, John, who has inherited Norland, their father’s estate. John begins:

“The inclosure of Norland Common, now carrying on, is a most serious drain. And then I have made a little purchase within this half year; East Kingham Farm, you must remember the place, where old Gibson used to live. The land was so desirable for me in every respect, so immediately adjoining my own property, that I felt it my duty to buy it. I could not have answered it to my conscience to let it fall into any other hands. A man must pay for his convenience; and it *has* cost me a vast deal of money.”

“More than you think it really and intrinsically worth.”

“Why I hope not that. I might have sold it again the next day, for more than I gave....”

With characteristic economy, Austen lays out the process and consequence of enclosure: despite his protests, John’s estate has become much larger and much more valuable through his purchase of Norland Common and of East Kingham farm: enclosure did indeed result in a massive redistribution of wealth. He has also driven out “old Gibson” a farmer clearly well known to both him and Eleanor and an ancient fixture in the village. The point of Eleanor’s remark is, of course, that John was able to buy the land cheaply. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 190.

had been inherited: “Mansions once / Knew their own masters, and laborious hands/ That had survived the father, served the son.”²¹⁸ In this way, enclosure brought to an end the faith that every man, no matter how humble, was attached to the land and that he had paternal care of his land and paternal rights to the land in relation to his children who would, in turn and in time, farm the same fields. It does not seem that the village farmer felt that he owned the land but that, as Thompson puts it, “What he inherited was a place within the hierarchy of use-rights” and that “hence he must inherit a certain kind of social or communal psychology of ownership”.²¹⁹

The intended effect of enclosure, to make farmland more productive, may or may not have been achieved but its unintended consequences seem to have been obvious to all as the rich got richer and the poor poorer. Arthur Young, a prolific English writer on economics and agriculture (his *Annals of Agriculture* runs to forty-six volumes) and an early advocate for enclosure, in 1801 lamented the small farmer’s inability to graze a cow or a few geese: “I had rather that all the commons of England were sunk in the sea than that the poor should in future be treated on enclosing as they have generally been hitherto.”²²⁰ Young deplores that enclosure, rather than providing more food for all, has increased the disparity between rich and poor. Others, such as Oliver Goldsmith, bemoan not only the further impoverishment of the small farmer but also his alienation from the land:

²¹⁸ William Cowper, *The Task: A Poem in Six Books* (Philadelphia, 1806), III, 749-51.

²¹⁹ Edward Palmer Thompson, “The Grid of Inheritance”, in *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe*, eds. J.R. Goody, Joan Thirsk and Edward Palmer Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976), 337.

²²⁰ Young, A. (1801). *Annals of Agriculture*. London.36, 214.

“A time there was, ere England’s griefs began, / When every rood of ground maintained its man....”²²¹ This is a compact statement of the mutual dependency and ownership between an Englishman and the land: every quarter acre of English land maintains the man that is its own.

Even as Gainsborough’s rustic scenes and cottage door paintings were being admired as the quintessential image of the countryside, more and more cottages were being abandoned by families who were forced off the land by enclosure. Many of those homeless workers went to work on the canals.²²² Previously unimaginable numbers of workers were employed because the canals themselves allowed workers to be transported in the interior of the island and to be supplied with food and fuel.²²³ Through the 1770’s, these workers and the canals they built were welcome additions to estates, as we have seen in the cases of Bridgewater and Wedgwood. Having a canal on one’s property was a sign that one was progressive, forward-looking. Thomas Anson, an acquaintance of Wedgwood’s, created a canal that ran through his estate in Shugborough and in front of his house. Out of pride in his canal, he had his

²²¹ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village, A Poem* (London, 1770), 57-58.

²²² Citing critics who praised the cottage doors scenes as Edenic ideals of beauty and virtue, Michael Rosenthal concludes that Gainsborough’s condemnation of the new economy and elevation of “an independent peasantry as the foundation of national greatness” were misunderstood by many in his contemporary audience. Michael Rosenthal, “Gainsborough’s Cottage Doors”, in *Sensation & Sensibility: Viewing Gainsborough’s Cottage Door*, ed. Ann Bermingham (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 95.

²²³ Gerard Turnbull notes that “as canals took inland routes and massively extended the logistical support role of ‘food and fuel’ previously confined to coast and river” that the “supply of labour, too, became more mobile: it could be sustained at sites and in numbers which had previously been impossible.” “Canals, coal and regional growth during the industrial revolution”, *Economic History Review* XL (4): 545. Other large groups of canal workers were drawn from fenmen who were expert in digging and embanking drains and from poor and unemployed Scottish, Irish and English vagrants. Hadfield, *British Canals: an Illustrated History*, 39.

portrait painted in front of it.²²⁴ However, in the next two decades many estates were bought up by newly rich mercantile types who did not want to see their properties overrun by itinerant workers or to have their estates associated with the commercial enterprise associated with canals. In 1795, J. Phillips who was a strong advocate for canals records one such incident:

[Brindley] was employed in particular by the city of London, to survey a course for a canal from Sunning, near Reading, in Berkshire, by Monkey Island, to near Richmond; but when application was made to Parliament for leave to effect their designs, the bill met with such a violent opposition from the land owners that it was defeated. Those fine gentlemen would not suffer their villas to be disturbed by noisy boatmen, or their lawns to be cut through for the accommodation of trade and commerce, though it was from that only that most of those villas and lawns had existence.²²⁵

Phillips' irony derides the pretensions of the newly rich estate owner who wanted his estate to be "taken as a given", to have "no apparent origins" and "no apparent work".²²⁶ Despite the new owners' squeamishness about having earned rather than inherited their estates and about having on display anything as commercial as a canal, a canal on one's estate did improve its value²²⁷ and as

²²⁴ Any number of sources, including Charles Hadfield in *The Canal Age*, mentions this portrait but there is now no sign of it. The National Trust at Shugborough has no knowledge of the whereabouts of the portrait. Nonetheless, Anson is a prime example of the early enthusiasm among the educated and wealthy for canals. Anson was one of the founding members of the Dilettanti Society, MP for Litchfield, and friends with Matthew Boulton, Josiah Wedgwood and James Brindley and a member of The Lunar Society. His older brother, George, was an Admiral famous for circumnavigating the globe. Anson subscribed 800 pounds for the construction of the Trent and Mersey, was a member of its committee, and supported and took shares in the building of the Birmingham Canal. Hadfield, *The Canal Age*, 39.

²²⁵ John Phillips, *A general history of inland navigation*, 109.

²²⁶ These are Raymond Williams' remarks about the effect that Ben Jonson achieves in *Penshurst. The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University, 1975) 40.

²²⁷ Among the arguments Phillips advances in his *Treatise* for the construction of a canal from London to Norwich is that "The Lands through which the Canal is proposed to pass will double, and in many Parts reble their present Value...." John Phillips, *A Treatise on Inland Navigation*,

more and more estates were bought and sold, the presence or proximity of a canal became a selling point.²²⁸

An estate became a commodity, an accessory for the rich to be bought and sold, rather than a birthright that entailed civic responsibility and paternal care of one's workers. Even as enlightened a man as Thomas Anson, friend of Wedgwood and Matthew Bolton and a member of The Lunar Society, in order to create open parkland at the front of his house, bought up and demolished the entire village of Shugborough thus, presumably, ending his responsibilities to its residents.²²⁹ Goldsmith clearly puts the blame for the loss of paternal care on the mentality that followed the ascendancy of trade, a graspingness for money that rendered the individual insensible to other obligations and higher ideals: "times are altered; trade's unfeeling train / Usurp the land and dispossess the swain".²³⁰ Goldsmith's language suggests that pecuniary value and the changes of time

x. In the same treatise Phillips gives us a sense of the economic importance of canals when he refers to "the rich and flourishing city of Norwich." The proposal Phillips supported for a canal for Norwich, known for its textile manufacturing, which would have connected it with London was never approved and the economy of Norwich declined. Phillips, 20.

²²⁸ As in this advertisement from *The Times*, February 22, 1797 for an 1100 acre estate in Lincolnshire: "On the north, this estate is bounded by the river Witham, opening navigable communications with the Lincoln, the Trent, and the Yorkshire rivers: on the south and south west, it is bounded by the North-forty-foot drain, opening a navigable communication with Bourn and Boston. On private canals belonging to the estate, the produce is shipped at the barn door, and the estate is intersected by a turnpike road." Horn, 18.

²²⁹ Black, *A Subject for Taste*, 143. Goldsmith describes Anson perfectly:

The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;
Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;
The Deserted Village, 275-78.

²³⁰ Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, II, 63-4. Anne Bermingham places equal blame on the older, established landholders: "Even as they maintained their distinction from the new squires, the old established landowners were generally complicit with the forces of industrial capitalism. As a result, the older paternalistic relationships between landowner, farmer and laborers deteriorated, to be replaced by wage-mediated relationships." *Landscape and Ideology*, 75.

were antithetical to the older meaning of the estate and that their entry into the space of the estate is usurpation, a seizing of property without right and therefore a violation of an ordained line of inheritance. The “train” of attendants who follow in trade’s wake are “unfeeling” because in the world of commodities an object acquires luster and inspires desire by its value in the marketplace rather than by the feeling it inspires by its own particular virtue.

Such enlargement of estates to the detriment of the tenants and villagers is one of the themes of Humphrey Repton’s last work, *Fragments on the theory and practice of landscape gardening* (1816) and the subject of starkly clear representation by Repton. Repton recounts the history of an estate sold by an aristocratic “ancient proprietor” to a newly rich man and illustrates, in before and after portrayals of the estate, a national decline in social and moral values. (Figure 20) In the “before” picture, we see a unified and hospitable landscape. The boundary of the estate is marked by a loosely constructed low fence in some disrepair that can be gotten over by the stile provided for the public or simply by climbing over it. The large and ancient trees that overhang the road and dot the estate match the antiquity of the estate and implement its societal role by providing shade to travelers. They are exemplars of the continuity of English history as it is lived day by day. At the right, a couple rests on a thoughtfully placed bench from which they can view the grounds of the estate. In sharp and bleak contrast to the pleasant inclusiveness of this scene, the landscape after improvements excludes the estate from view, disengages the workers and

villagers who pass by and makes their lives more laborious. Here is Repton's analysis of his own drawings:

By cutting down the timber and getting an act to enclose the common [the area to the right of the road], he [the new, rich owner] had doubled all the rents. The old mossy and ivy-covered pale was replaced by a new and lofty close paling; not to confine the deer, but to exclude mankind, and to protect a miserable narrow belt of firs and Lombardy poplars: the bench was gone, the ladder-stile was changed to a caution about man-traps and spring-guns, and a notice that the footpath was stopped by order of the commissioners. As I read the board, the old man said `It is very true, and I am forced to walk a mile further round every night after a hard day's work'.²³¹

Of course we see this old man, or his double, walking with a cane alongside the blank and inhospitable fence²³² while at the end of the road there is a man on horseback, probably the new owner or his estate manager, discussing the farming work being done on the commons, now bare of trees. This is a landscape of exclusion and exclusivity that expresses the owner's desire for separation and privacy from the community around him.

The sense of a shared landscape that expressed the paternal responsibilities of the estate owner was never revived. A hundred years later, that model of paternal care and a shared landscape had been sufficiently lost from sight that Tietjen, the aristocratic and conservative hero of Ford Maddox Ford's *Parade's End*, needs to explain his own sense of them both to his fiancé and, by the by, to Ford's reader:

²³¹ Although Repton claimed to have seen the two vistas he depicts and to have had conversation with this old worker, in fact "his account is actually a pastiche of his own observations and other polemics on landscape improvement, notably by Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight." Daniels, "The Political Iconography of Woodland", 70.

²³² The law required that the new owner construct a boundary fence or hedge within two months of taking possession. Daunton, 108.

You had to set to the tenantry an example of chastity, sobriety, probity, or you could not take their beastly money. You provided them with the best Canadian seed corn; with agricultural experiments suited to their soils; you sat at the head of your agent; you kept their buildings in repair; you apprenticed their sons; you looked after their daughters, when they got into trouble and after their bastards, your own or another man's. But you must reside on the estate. *You must reside on the estate.* The money that comes out of those poor devils' pockets must go back into the land so that the estate and all on it, down to the licensed beggars, may grow richer and richer."²³³

In enumerating all the instances of care that a landed gentleman owes to his tenants, Tietjien's speech illuminates the proprietary interest the tenant took in his place on the estate. Like the elderly couple in Repton's "before" picture, the tenants enjoy not only the paternal care of the owner but can with some sense of possession enjoy the view of the parkland of the estate, rest in the shade of its trees and, if they like, go over the fence and enjoy the grounds.²³⁴ The dismantling of this landscape of inclusion and the increased scope offered by the

²³³ Ford Maddox Ford, *Parade's End* (London: 1924-28) 635. Contrasting the old and new landowners, William Cobbett sounds the same note when he draws the distinction between "a resident *native* gentry, attached to the soil, known to every farmer and labourer from his childhood, frequently mixing with them in those pursuits where all artificial distinctions are lost, practicing hospitality without ceremony, from habit and not on calculation; and a gentry, only now-and-then residing at all, having no relish for country-delights, foreign in their manners, distant and haughty in their behaviour, looking to the soil only for its rents, viewing it as a mere object of speculation, unacquainted with its cultivators, despising them and their pursuits, and relying, for influence, not upon the good will of the vicinage, but upon the dread of their power." Cobbett, 46.

²³⁴ John Clare in his poem "The Village Minstrel" laments that the "paled road" is the "only path that freedom's rights maintained" and that villagers' movements are restricted by the tyranny of the estate owners: "There once were lanes in nature's freedom dropt, / There once were paths that every valley wound--/ Enclosure came and every path was stopped;/ Each tyrant fixed his sign where paths were found,/ To hint a trespass now who crossed the ground." John Clare, *"I Am": the Selected Poetry of John Clare*, (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003) Stanza 94.

canals did however work against the circumstances of extreme localism²³⁵ and narrow visual and affective field in which most people lived their lives.²³⁶

While the role of enclosure in changing the appearance and social organization of the countryside has been discussed from a variety of points of view, its role in the relative homogenization of the countryside has not.

Enclosure has also obscured the role, at least equally important, of the construction of canals and of the ways in which they began, immediately and

²³⁵ As late as 1826, William Cobbett had no difficulty finding subjects to interview who lived lives of extreme localism. In August of that year, Cobbett reported a conversation with a woman of about 30 years of age at her garden gate “in, or near, a place called Tangley”:

[I] asked the woman... which was the way to LUDGARSHALL, which I knew could not be more than about *four miles* off. She did *not know!* ... ‘Well, my dear good woman,’ said I, ‘but you *have been* at LUDGARSHALL? -- ‘No.’ ‘Nor at ANDOVER?’ (six miles another way) – ‘No.’ – ‘Nor at MARLBOROUGH?’ (nine miles another way) – ‘No.’ ‘Pray, were you born in this house?’ – ‘Yes.’ – ‘And, how far have you ever been from this house?’ – ‘Oh! I have been *up in the parish*, and over to *Chute*.’ That is to say, the utmost extent of her voyages had been about *two and a half miles!*

²³⁶ The poet, John Clare, (1793-1864) first set out from his native Peterborough in 1807 at the age of fourteen in “hopes of bettering [his] station”²³⁶ reveals in his narrative his narrow visual and affective scope. Clare was traveling from Peterborough to Wisbeach where his uncle was footman to an attorney. It was a journey of twenty-one miles by a “towed canal boat” that ran once a week on Friday:

I started for Wisbeach with a timid sort of pleasure and when I got to Glinton Turnpike I turned back to look on the old church as if I was going into another co[u]ntry. Wisbeach was a foreign land to me for I had never been above 8 miles from home in my life and I could not fancy England [sic] much larger than the part I knew.” *John Clare’s Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Eric Robinson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983,) 18.

The “old church”, no doubt the tallest structure in the village and the object of Clare’s farewell glance, will become either a cliché or an icon of the local, of the village, as it is in many of John Constable’s paintings of Flatford. More to the point here is Clare’s sense that Wisbeach, all of twenty miles from his home, is a “foreign land” and that his visual experience and conception of England lies within the eight-mile radius around his home. This sense of “home” arises from visual, unabstracted experience, of the very sort that Gainsborough’s first biographer reports of his subject:

Mr. G. ...told me, that during his *Boy-hood*, though he had no idea of becoming a Painter then, yet there was not a Picturesque clump of Trees, nor even a single tree of beauty, no nor hedge row, stone, or post, at the corner of the Lanes, for some miles round about the place of his nativity, that he had not so perfectly in his *mind’s eye*, that had he *known he could use* a pencil, he could have perfectly delineated. Phillip Thickness, *A Sketch of the Life and Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough, Esquire*, (London: 1788) 5-6.

obviously, to obliterate the distinctiveness of localities.²³⁷ Canals broke down “the ties of location” which “had previously bound the economy.”²³⁸ By making the transportation of heavy materials over long distances relatively inexpensive, canals allowed exotic materials to be used in the construction of houses. In 1782, the Welsh naturalist Thomas Pennant wrote of the change (of which he approved) in building materials brought about by canals: “the cottage, instead of being half covered with miserable thatch, is now covered with a substantial covering of tiles or slates, brought from the distant hills of Wales or Cumberland.” Even though the age-old building materials would not be completely replaced with standardized brick and slate until the advent of the railroad,²³⁹ these changes in the look of buildings were very apparent. In fact, one present day critic praises the local look of the Oxford Canal bridges that “remain as poignant reminders of a past when regional identity was to be seen displayed in every village and town, when buildings were an accurate reflection of the intrinsic nature of the ground on which they stood.”²⁴⁰ The canals also gave rise to large new towns²⁴¹ that filled the blank spaces in the map of England and were also

²³⁸ Turnbull, 545.

²³⁹ Hoskins, 254.

²⁴⁰ Burton and Pratt, 11. The local look of these bridges was also somewhat idiosyncratic since local contractors were, within guidelines, allowed to build whatever they fancied. The newer bridges were mass-produced using cast iron parts for bridge building pioneered by the Darbys of Coalbrookdale.

²⁴¹ Stourport, which stands at the convergence of the Rivers Stour and Severn, was transformed from a tiny village into a large inland shipping center by the construction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal in 1772. Hoskins, 251. In a contemporary description of the growth of towns around canals, the Reverend Shaw described the “market town of Stone” which “from a poor insignificant place is now grown neat and handsome in its buildings and from its wharfs and busy traffic, wears the lively aspect of a little seaport.” By 1773 the Bridgewater Canal

the cause of much of the change in the characteristic looks of neighborhoods. In an additional and unintended consequence of the canal network, there was also a gradual change in the flora and fauna that had characterized each locality as a variety of plants and fish made their way through the canals to new locations.²⁴² For the first time, the inland population of England had access to fresh fish so that even local diet changed.²⁴³

The construction of canals and enclosures were both responsible for the cutting down of large swathes of trees and the obliteration for the working poor of what Stephen Daniels' aptly calls "the benevolent landscape".²⁴⁴ Aiming to get local approval for their plans, canal companies often included in their prospectuses promises to reforest the land. In this passage from J. Phillips' proposal for a navigable canal from London to Norwich and Lynn, Phillips

[Bridgewater] was so successful that Josiah Wedgwood, paying a visit to Worseley, could note in his diary: 'We next visited Worseley which has the appearance of a considerable seaport town.'" Eliza Meteyard, *The Life of Josiah Wedgwood, 2 Vols.* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1865-66), I, 249. Gladstone at the opening of the Wedgwood Institute in 1863, reminded his audience that thanks to Wedgwood's excellence but most especially to the opening of the Grand Trunk Canal, Wedgwood raised "a half-civilized district of seven thousand people, partially employed and poorly paid, to a prosperous and skilled community of twenty thousand." "The wilderness" he added with Biblical overtones "was if by a stroke of magic was suddenly transformed into a fruitful field." Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991), I, xi.

²⁴² In an excellent article on the ecological and economic downside of canal construction, Bella Galil and Dan Minchin characterize canals as "invasion corridors" for the movement of species, frequently with disastrous consequences. "Snakes and Ladders: Navigable Waterways as Invasion Corridors" in *The Ecology of Transportation: Managing Mobility for the Environment*, eds. John Davenport. and Julia Davenport (New York: Springer, 2006), unpagged preprint. Canals also spread diseases as, for instance, in 1835 when there was an outbreak of cholera among boatmen and shore workers along the Grand Junction Canal. Hadfield, *British Canals*, 231.

²⁴³ John Phillips, 1795, 25.

²⁴⁴ Stephen Daniels points out that Repton's landscaping builds on "a tradition of benevolent landscape that had since the seventeenth century consciously obscured the clarity of long views with enveloping shade." "The Political Iconography of Woodland", 72.

presents the canal company as the restorer of the “benevolent landscape” and preserver of the traditional laws of conservation:

Our ancestors made wise laws for the encouragement of the growth of timber but, through the centre of these three countries, so good a market is found for fuel, that little regard is paid to those invaluable laws; (for which reason, it is intended to plant 28,000 young oaks on the banks of the Canal.)²⁴⁵

In Phillips’ narrative, the canal companies are taking on the ancient and traditional role of those wise ancestors, the lords of the manor, by planting trees for shade and for timber and also, as he goes on to point out, by supplying coal at such a low price that every man will be able to keep his family warm in winter: “were the overseers of the poor ever so much disposed to show compassion to the poor, they have it in their power to procure them fuel.”²⁴⁶

Nonetheless, the promises of the various canal projects did little to assuage the sense of the locals that the landscape bequeathed to them by their ancestors had been changed for the worse and forever. John Clare, an agricultural worker born in 1793 in Northamptonshire, who became known as the “peasant poet” recorded this sense of loss:

Ye fields, ye scenes so dear to Lubin’s eye,
Ye meadow-blooms, ye pasture-flowers, farewell!
Ye banish’d trees, ye make me deeply sigh –

²⁴⁵ This canal was never built and that failure marks the beginning of the downhill run of Norwich as a manufacturing city. John Phillips, 1785, 19.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* In fact, many of the Parliamentary enabling acts for canals, such as that for the Darby Canal in 1793, regulated the rates of tonnage for the prospective canal. And, as with the Darby Canal, some of the rates were set with an eye towards the public good. Thus, on the Darby Canal, five thousand acres of coal annually were allowed to pass for free for the benefit of poor people – perhaps a self-serving charity since farmers often destroyed hedgerows for fuel. In addition, any quantity of manure passed for free, a measure to promote the productivity of English farming. *The History and Gazetteer of the County of Darby: Drawn up from actual observation and from the Best of Authorities; containing a variety of Geological, Minerological, Commercial and Statistical Information* (Darby: 1831), II, 231-4.

Inclosure came, and all your glories fell:
 E'en the old oak that crown'd yon rifled dell,
 Whose age had made it sacred to the view,
 Not long was left his children's fate to tell;
 Where ignorance and wealth their course pursue,
 Each tree must tumble down -- `old Lea-Close Oak' adieu!²⁴⁷

Clare describes the desecration of the landscape. The “old oak” whose destruction Clare laments was not only a source of shade or part of a pleasant vista. It was, as he puts it, “sacred to the view” because it presented and represented the abiding order of England and “crown’d” the dell, the natural world, just as the king was crowned as God’s anointed. The continuity of English history and its disruption is figured in the fate of the old Oak’s children, who themselves in turn will be cut down by the forces of “ignorance and wealth”. The new landscape introduced an alien rationality and uniformity that was the visual sign of the mechanical:

...in the great majority of the parishes, it was a complete transformation, from the immemorial landscape of the open fields, with their complex transformation, from the immemorial landscape of the open fields, with their complex pattern of narrow strips, their winding green balks or cart-roads, their headlands and grassy footpaths, into the modern chequer-board pattern of small, squarish fields, enclosed by hedgerows of hawthorn, with new roads running more or less straight and wide across the parish.²⁴⁸

The new pattern of fields overthrew the accumulated visual pattern of centuries of tradition and usage and replaced it with a rational, ahistoric, modern grid. Equally modern in the clarity of its outline and the speed of its movement was the improved river. The eighteenth-century river “meandered over its floodplain or

²⁴⁷ John Clare, *The Village Minstrel* (London: 1821), Stanza 96. Jonathan Bate, in *The Song of the Earth*, has a literary biography of Clare. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000) 162-175.

²⁴⁸ Hoskins, 179.

made its way through hundreds of separate channels divided by sandbars, gravel banks, and islands.” It “ran fast or slow according to the season, not at a pace adapted to the needs of year-round navigation.”²⁴⁹ In contrast, the canals would in a few years be run by the clock.

The violation of the cycle of the seasons and of the years also occurred in the forests of the estate. The cultivation and preservation of trees for building and for firewood had always been part of the portfolio of the lord of the estate but recently trees had been cut down and sold wholesale by the newly-moneyed owners for quick profit without consideration for the needs of future generations.²⁵⁰ In “The Task”, Cowper inveighs against these new and “transient” owners who have neither the time nor the inclination to harvest trees properly and who sell young trees as quickly as possible for a fast profit:

Mansions once
Knew their own masters, and laborious hands
That had survived the father, served the son.
Now the legitimate and rightful lord
Is but a transient guest, newly arrived
And soon to be supplanted. He that saw
His patrimonial timber cast its leaf,
Sells the last scantling, and transfers the price
To some shrewd sharper, ere it buds again.
Estates are landscapes, gazed upon awhile,
Then advertised, and auctioneered away.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Blackbourn, 4.

²⁵⁰ The preservation of trees for fuel by “coppicing” was practiced both by forges and potteries as well as estates. In coppicing, a forest was divided into twenty parts, with one part being harvested each year for coal. New trees grew from the stumps of the old and in twenty years when that section’s time came around for cutting they were large enough to be used again.

²⁵¹ Cowper, *The Task*, III, 746-57.

Just as Clare bewails the overthrow of the oak that “crowned” the dale, so Cowper portrays the buying and selling of estates by new men as the “supplanting” of the “legitimate and rightful lord”. With the overthrow of the rightful heir, estates have become only “landscapes”, pleasant vistas for the wealthy and subjects for the artists in their pay, rather than the locus of the law and communal work.

Gainsborough’s cottages and cottagers that had been beloved because they represented the happiness, the rightness of English lives lived locally, tied to the land, are in process of being relegated to the past and simulated in the present. For Repton, it had already become, even as Gainsborough was painting, part of the picturesque repertoire: the simulacra of a cottage was a feature in the landscape of the estate. Repton’s design for a cottage for Holkham, a Norfolk estate, included a cottage (that was to be inhabited) but was never built. His illustration in *The Red Book for Holkham*, shows a cottage very similar to Gainsborough’s, if somewhat tidier. (Figure 19) The palette of the painting that emphasizes the unity of the natural landscape and the built environment alludes to Gainsborough: The cottage and the densely wooded area surrounding it are of a piece. Repton’s cottage has certain refined touches: the cottage has glass windows and is made of brick, the smoke from the chimney suggests a warm interior. Even so, as we gaze on it from the middle distance and do not enter it, this simulation of a cottage is meant to summon up the illusion that the basis of English life and law remains unchanged. The incorporation of the cottage into the estate as a landscape feature betrays a self-consciousness

about the meaning of the cottage that indicates that its moment of authenticity has passed.

The English romance with the cottage of which Gainsborough was the master had, from its outset, a certain tone of nostalgia. Although the building of canals and the movement of people and goods through the country had just begun, it was nonetheless apparent that a life lived in isolation on the outskirts of an estate would become less and less possible, and that time was intruding on the timeless landscape of the estate. The canal network that reached from coast to coast, its movement of vast quantities of goods and large numbers of people, and the role the canals played in navigating the interior of the island during the war with the French,²⁵² all began to shape a new idea and a new image of the nation and of its citizens that we see clearly in Constable's Flatford Lock paintings.

²⁵² Thomas Pennant's comments on the canals make clear the unifying effect of the canals and their particular utility during war: "Places which rarely knew the use of coal, are plentifully supplied with that essential article upon reasonable terms and what is of still greater public utility, ...the line of the canal being through countries abundant in grain, it affords a conveyance for corn unknown to past ages. At present, nothing but a general dearth can create a scarcity in any part adjacent to this extensive work.

THESE, and many other advantages, are derived, both to individuals and the public, from this internal navigation, and when it happens that the kingdom is engaged in a foreign war, with what security is the trade between those three ports carried on; and with how much less experience has the trader his goods conveyed to any part of the kingdom than he had formerly been subject to, when they were obliged to be carried coastways and to pay insurance?" Pennant, 76.

The Floating Population Represented: John Constable's Flatford Mill Paintings

I had never been above 8 miles from home in my life and I could not fancy England much larger than the part I knew.

-- John Clare (1793-1864)

"The floating population is so difficult to catch and count."

-- *The Daily News*, September 28, 1874

Landscape artists, John Constable the most prominent among them, borrowed from earlier visual vocabularies to place on a firm English footing the floating multitude that lived and worked in and on the margins of the fluid, liminal spaces of the canals of England. The families that themselves came to live on the canal boats created their own vernacular art with which they decorated their floating homes and adorned their possessions and which defined them as English and anchored them in England. Unfortunately, the canal's promise of citizenship, patriotism and national purpose that was not tied to the land was in the end not realized. Nonetheless for several decades the possibility was represented by its image, nowhere more vividly than in John Constable's Flatford Lock paintings.

The product of close observation of the Dedham scenery, its fields, cottages, canals, skies and local details and customs of the canal, it has been tempting to see the Flatford Lock paintings as recording in charming detail the very local life of certain English people and rural settings at a certain moment in time that is so fixed in a social order and in the natural order of the seasons that

it approaches the timeless. And certainly they do that. However, the canals themselves and the people working on the canal boats are intruders into Constable's rural landscape, bringing with them a new conception of public space, of nation and of national geography, of civic virtue and of being English. In ways that Constable brings to the fore and celebrates, their very presence hybridizes the landscape as it introduces changes in the ideas of citizenship and property upon which England and English law rested. The landscape that had expressed virtue, valor, privilege and national identity as a timeless function of property begins to be part of the "process of history".

We are accustomed to think of the introduction of the railroad in England as the advent of the modern, of modern speed, modern circulation, and modern ideas about time. Turner is often seen as one of its herald in England. However, for fifty years before the coming of the railroad, the canal was the fastest, most advanced form of transportation and the first to create a countrywide network that would change ideas of place, time, territory and nation.²⁵³ Even before they were built, the canals began to introduce these new ways of conceiving self and country by bringing together odd bedfellows for the purpose of planning and investment. In 1785, in his *Plan for a Navigable Canal*, J. Phillips lobbies for the support and investment of the men of Middlesex, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk in a new canal to run to Norwich and Lynn.²⁵⁴ The diversity of interests and classes of men who came together to invest in canals is evident in Phillips' title page

²⁵³ Turnbull, , calls England's canal network "an economic development of the first order".

²⁵⁴ As just noted, the canal was never built and as a consequence Norwich, which had been the center of textile manufacturing in England, went into decline.

where he addresses “the Nobility, Gentry, Landholders, Farmers and Manufacturers of the interior parts of the Counties of Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk... upon a subject in which we all stand immediately interested.”²⁵⁵

Phillips’ list of subscribers contains the same sort of diversity: in addition to many titled men, we find “Rev. Mr. Priest, Under-Master of the grammar School, Bury St. Edmund’s,” “Mr. John Crouse, bookseller, Norwich,” and many more.²⁵⁶ In fact, part of the pitch made to potential donors usually contained a rather mild egalitarian appeal. This was certainly true of Lord Gower’s²⁵⁷ presentation in December of 1765 to a group of potential investors in a proposed canal from Liverpool to Birmingham:

Lord Gower opened the meeting: he expressed his satisfaction in seeing such a number of gentlemen met together upon so great a design; that he looked upon it as of the utmost consequence to the manufactures of that and the adjacent counties, and to the kingdom in general; and that, ever since he had heard of the scheme, it has been his determination to support it with all his interest, both provincial and political; for he was satisfied that the landed and trading interests were so far from being incompatible, that they were the mutual support of each other....²⁵⁸

The suggestion that tradesmen and landed gentlemen were the “mutual support” of one another would have been a surprising proposition but in this case an accurate one. The merchants brought to the table money, desire to profit, and administrative ability while the landowners controlled parliament and could force through canal bills that gave them the right to compel the sale of land and to form

²⁵⁵ John Phillips, *A Treatise on Inland Navigation*, 1.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, unnumbered pages.

²⁵⁷ Gower was the brother-in-law of the Duke of Bridgewater.

²⁵⁸ John Phillips, *A Treatise on Inland Navigation*, 6.

canal companies. Thus, the planning and promoting of canals was the “first time with any frequency” that “landed men met manufacturing men” and “each group learned more about the other.”²⁵⁹ Bringing together varieties of men served intellectual and innovative interests as well as financial. The Lunar Society (so-called because they met each month on the night of the full moon by whose light they could travel home) was certainly the most distinguished and productive result of these new linkages. Erasmus Darwin, Josiah Wedgwood and Matthew Bolton and Joseph Priestly, men of very different backgrounds and skills came together in Birmingham in 1765 over their support for the Trent and Mersey Canal. Together they founded the Lunar Society, credited with many inventions critical to the Industrial Revolution.²⁶⁰

In yet another of the unintended consequences of the building of the canals, the boats themselves offered a space that not only drew new combinations of people together but also promised, both literally and figuratively, mobility and freedom from the control and traditions of the land. Paul Sandby's (1731-1809) *River Ferry with Many Passengers and Animals* (Figure 21) shows this space in a format and a mood that marks it as modern, even as he gives it a gentle pastoral charm. At 5" x 17 3/8", the painting is as markedly horizontal as

²⁵⁹ Hadfield, *The Canal Age*, 38-9.

²⁶⁰ Like Josiah Wedgwood, the members of The Lunar Society were exuberantly creative in ways both practical and, sometimes, whimsical. Erasmus Darwin invented a canal lift for barges, a minute artificial bird, a carriage that would not tip over, a horizontal windmill that he designed for Josiah Wedgwood, and a copying machine. Matthew Boulton, originally a buckle maker and toy maker, invented the Watts steam engine, various thermometers, barometers, as well as many different types of waterworks, and clocks. Joseph Priestly invented soda water, and discovered several different gasses including oxygen. Samuel Galton was a Quaker and an inventive gun maker. John Wyatt invented the mechanical spinning machine. Richard Edgeworth, father of the gothic novelist Maria Edgeworth, invented a machine to measure the size of a plot of land.

the ferryboat it depicts. Its panoramic format and internal structure would have been familiar both from the proliferation of topographical views being produced at the time as well as from the popular panoramas and optical devices of the period. Sandby himself was an expert in the art of topography, having worked for years for the Board of Ordnance's Military Survey of North Britain for whom he drew the maps from the sketches done by the surveyors in the field.²⁶¹ The panoramic format would have been associated by his viewers with tourism and armchair tourism: horizontal space invites the eye and the mind to move through the landscape. In *River Ferry*, it is also clear that we, the viewers, are on the water, are in motion, as well as the passengers on the boat. The forward motion of the boat is emphasized not only by the rower at the back and the dog on the bow, but also by the stretch of empty water at the bow. The viewer meets these people as both he and they are on the move. This meeting on the water suggests a new fluidity in social relations that are no longer tied to the land.

In mood, the painting is self-consciously pastoral and humorous. The assortment of docile animals on board and the easy relationships of the widely assorted passengers give the scene the feel of a peaceable kingdom. The figure type of a woman with an infant in arms we last saw in the doorway of one of Gainsborough's cottages and she will reappear on the deck of Constable's canal boat. Fixed in Gainsborough's cottage doorway, she is the image of a nation based on the possession and cultivation of land. Here, she is in transit, an accomplishment made less threatening, more acceptable because with her

²⁶¹ John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels, eds., *Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2009), 83.

cloaked figure and the donkey at her side, she reminds us of the Virgin Mary. Other elements, such as the romantic young couple, evoke Arcadian themes. Each pair of figures engages only with one another while the single folk keep to themselves. This is true also of the dogs, the horse, the donkey, and the goats. Yet the group maintains a peaceful and harmonious mood. It is an image of a new sort of society, a modern society, in which widely different people who do not know each other occupy shifting public spaces with ease and civility. Sandby's evocation of this pastoral mood would make the vision of this group palatable to those who feared a new social order²⁶² and congenial to those who did not.

The canals themselves, as they were first built, tended not to disrupt the visual experience of the local landscape however distressing the movement of people might have been to some. First and most obviously, canals could be seen to look like rivers: they fit into their surroundings both in their own appearance and in the materials in which they were built. This is the view that prevailed for thirty years after the construction of the Bridgewater Canal when there was little if any dissension about the appearance of the canals and the buildings that sprung up around them because they were built of local materials in accordance with the traditional construction of the countryside through which each canal passed. A description of the structures of the southern section of the Oxford Canal as it was constructed specifies how this worked in practice:

²⁶² Linda Colley discusses that many of Sandby's works can be interpreted as images of the unification of Britain across regional and class boundaries in the belief that "a more united Britain will bring forth economic advance and a rise in civility and manners." "Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain."

The canal begins its northern progress with a passage through the Oxford clay vale; it then passes on into a band of ironstone and oolite, which ends at Banbury with the arrival of the lias plain. These geological differences are reflected in the materials of the canal structures. The southernmost clays ensure the predominance of brick building. Brick, in this context, means brick fired in local kilns, resulting in a rich mixture of colours and textures in the brickwork, quite different from the drab standardization that was to follow the establishment of the huge brickworks of a century later. As the canal penetrates the stone belt, so the structures reflect the underlying structures of the land; stones replaces brick as the primary building material, until brick again establishes a dominance on the lias plain.²⁶³

However, as building materials were moved around the countryside on the canals, the canals and their associated structures tended towards the “drab standardization” characteristic of industrial practice. As early as 1795 a didactic poem by Richard Payne Knight attacked the uniformity imposed on the abundant variety of nature by the builders of canals. Payne Knight was a Member of Parliament and a scholar of antiquity who favored the eccentricities and singularities of both nature and art:

But, ah! In vain: -- See yon fantastic band
 With charts, pedometers, and rules in hand,
 Advance triumphant, and alike lay waste
 The forms of nature, and the works of taste!
 T'improve, adorn, and polish they profess;
 But shave the goddess, whom they came to dress;
 Level each broken bank and shaggy mound,
 And fashion all to one unvaried round;
 One even round, that ever gently flows,
 Nor forms abrupt, nor broken colours knows;
 But, wrapt all o'er in everlasting green,
 Makes one dull, vapid, smooth, and tranquil scene.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Burton, “Canals in the Landscape”, 10.

²⁶⁴ Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem in Three Books: Addressed to Uvedale Price, Esq.* (London, 1795), 261-272. Earlier in his career, Payne-Knight had published a book on phallic worship in ancient pagan societies. The leveling of the “shaggy mound” and the shaving of the goddess might be Payne Knight’s own form of worship of the goddess nature.

Payne Knight's disgust, both with the builders of the canals and with the canals themselves, clearly has to do with his sense that the appearance of canals, their dull uniformity, reveals their manufactured origin whereas nature, or, rather, nature engineered according to a Picturesque aesthetic, displays abundant variety in color, movement, and growth.²⁶⁵ Still, before they became capable of moving building materials around the nation, canals reflected not only local building traditions but also local geology and made little if any challenge to regionalism.

Of course, within a decade or two, the movement of people and of industrial and agricultural cargo, of goods raw and manufactured, and of indigenous building materials changed the characteristic look of local

²⁶⁵ The difference between nature man-made for industrial purpose and nature gently coaxed over time for picturesque effect had clearly become a subject of heated opinions in the 'picturesque debate' of the 1790's. Uvedale Price, Knight's neighbor and friend, joined him in 1795 in an attack on the smoothness and regularity of the Brownian landscape: '...a stone or rock polished by water is smoother but less soft than when covered with moss, and upon this principle the wooded banks of a river //have often a softer general effect than the bare shaven border of a canal. There is the same difference between the grass of a pleasure-ground mowed to the quick and that of a fresh meadow....' Uvedale Price, *An essay on the picturesque: together with practical remarks on rural ornament* (London, 1795), 87. At its heart, the debate over the picturesque versus the Brownian landscape was at least in part about the bad taste of new money, as Price makes evident in his *Essay on the Picturesque* in his discussion of estate gardens: Price loathes the "mechanical and commonplace operation" in the creation of the Brownian garden that "in a few hours, the rash hand of false taste completely demolishes what time only, and a thousand lucky accidents can mature, so as to make it become the admiration and study of a Ruisdael or a Gainsborough and reduces it to such a thing as an oilman in Thames Street may at times contract for by the yard...." (As cited in Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 66-7.) This is hardly a new theme in English poetry. Allowing for Payne Knight's 19th century insistence on nature's modesty, his complaint is exactly that of Andrew Marvell's mower in *The Mower against Gardens*: 'Tis all enforc'd; the Fountain and the Grot; / While the sweet Fields do lye forgot: / Where willing Nature does to all dispence / A wild and fragrant Innocence." *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, *Third edition* (Oxford, Clarendon P, 1971) I, 43-44, ll 31-34.

landscapes.²⁶⁶ In this way, localities became less local, looked less distinctively representative of their geographical place, even as they more and more became locations within a nation, in the process of being reconceived or discovered and established. Constable's *The Leaping Horse* (Figure 22) attempts to reconcile this tension between the intensely local, static focus of the past and the more national, dynamic focus of England after the Napoleonic wars. *The Leaping Horse* was the last of the six large Stour Canal paintings that Constable showed at the Royal Academy between 1819 and 1825 and it seems both a logical development from the earlier paintings and a grand, final gesture that in its reach over goes its predecessors.²⁶⁷ Of all the Flatford paintings it is the one that aims most at "embodying Englishness".²⁶⁸

In *The Leaping Horse*, one of Constable's achievements is his close and keen observation of the scene of his childhood along the River Stour and at Flatford Lock. The painting is set in an identifiably local spot and depicts a custom virtually peculiar to Stour transport. We are upstream from (west of) Flatford lock at the point where the old river Stour takes a brief southern turn away from the canal only to rejoin it a little way further east. Because the towpath was on the southern side of the canal, horses must needs have either

²⁶⁶ Canals move not only that which is carried in boats, but also always move flora and fauna in the canal channels as well, thus changing not only the look of a locality but its plants and wild life as well. Galil and Minchin, "Snakes and Ladders"

²⁶⁷ Joshua Reynolds writes that in *The Leaping Horse* "Constable reached the climax, both pictorial and emotional, of the sequence of canal scenes." Reynolds has in mind Constable's bold technique but also he praises his handling of the horse preparing to jump as "the most violent gesture in his paintings." *Discourses on Art* (New York: Collier Books, 1966), 77.

²⁶⁸ Constable had in mind for himself the "painting of the landscape of the nation" and "embodying Englishness". Michael Rosenthal, "Constable and Englishness", in *The British Art Journal*, Vol VII, No. 3, 40. 40 45

swum or passed over the old river Stour. The banks of the Stour, however, were too steep for the horses to negotiate and so they had to cross over the river. To this end a so-called “float bridge” had been constructed which had at its center a barrier to prevent cows from crossing.²⁶⁹ (Figure 23) In a practice almost exclusive to the Stour, canal horses were specially trained to jump this barrier. *The Leaping Horse* constitutes a lesson in the practice. The horse is very loosely attached by a towrope to the canal boat behind him, the one he has been pulling. The rope can be seen trailing in the water, draped over the lock that is handled by a man partially obscured by the tree, and then coming around on the ground, through the swingletree and up the side of the horse’s belly.²⁷⁰ The swingletree lies on the ground behind him, detached from the traces. He wears the horse collar in the red that was traditional for canal horses and that can also be seen in *The White Horse* with the addition of the crimson fringe, a custom of the Suffolk horses on the Stour.²⁷¹ The horse itself is identifiably a Suffolk Punch (Punch for its strong chest), a breed developed for agricultural work in Suffolk and Norfolk a few hundred years earlier and one that remained peculiar to the area. In these and in many other respects, some of which have been often remarked upon, Constable was a meticulous recorder of local sights and customs particular to the

²⁶⁹ Sarah Cove and Anne Lyles, Eds., *Constable: The Great Landscapes* (London: The Tate National Gallery, 2006), 156.

²⁷⁰ The swingletree was a piece of wood, often brightly painted, which hung behind the horses back legs and to which the traces were attached. The traces were also often covered with brightly painted wooden bobbins that protected the horse’s flanks from irritation. The equipage of the horse collar, the traces and the swingletree made it possible for the horse to pull the boat by pushing with his strong hind legs rather than having the weight on his neck. Avril Lansdell, *Canal Arts and Crafts* (Buckinghamshire: Shire Publications, 2004), 35-37.

²⁷¹ Carlos Peacock, *John Constable: The Man and His Work* (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1971), 16.

Stour and the Mill at Flatford.²⁷² Yet, in *The Leaping Horse*, although the Stour Canal is a local, rural place, its inhabitants and their actions have national importance and historical consequence.

Canals gave England strategic and practical advantages in the Napoleonic Wars. From the outset, canals had been promoted not only as efficient transportation for goods and people but also as a significant advantage in time of war because they would enable England to maintain its intrinsic geographic advantage. As John of Gaunt's deathbed speech witnesses, England had early and long felt itself set apart, protected by a geography devised by God: a "fortress built by Nature for herself/ Against infection and the hand of war" made all but impregnable by the "silver sea".²⁷³ Particularly after the Act of Union in 1707, as one clergyman put it, Britain felt "fenced in with a wall which knows no master but God only."²⁷⁴ The limits of this God-given natural defense revealed itself when boats that had to navigate around the coast of the island in open seas were subject to attack. Phillips had exploited this well-known vulnerability in his proposal of 1785 urging the construction of canals. He promised that canals would allow "internal national commerce be carried on with much more ease and

²⁷² Two other bits of local practice appear in *The White Horse*. The towpaths at Flatford were owned by Abram Constable and had been made separately from the canal, thus entitling Constable to charge "hauling rents". However, west of the lock the towpath changed sides of the canal. In such cases, canal companies often built a "turnover bridge". In *The White Horse*, the horse is being ferried from side to side in the canal boat he has been towing although sometimes horses were carried in a boat made for that purpose. Hadfield, *British Canals: An Illustrated History*, 58-62. Second, the banks of the Stour, unlike many other canals, were too steep for horses to clamber up and so they could not swim across.

²⁷³ William Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act 2, Scene 1, ll. 40-41.

²⁷⁴ Horn, 17. In France and Europe boundaries fluctuated throughout eighteenth century. As an island, England felt its British borders were fixed after 1707, and its boundaries seemed "clear, incontrovertible, apparently pre-ordained." Colley, 17.

dispatch... and would be perfectly secure in time of war from the depredations of enemy's ships of war and privateers."²⁷⁵ Indeed, as predicted, during the war with France, the canals were of great military importance. Since French privateers hovered around the coast, trade ships were diverted to interior waterways.²⁷⁶ Thanks to the canals, the distribution of coal and agricultural produce throughout the interior of the nation proceeded largely without interruption,²⁷⁷ and as canals proved the fastest way to move troops around the county,²⁷⁸ they were often commandeered for the purpose.²⁷⁹ In the face of a general fear of a French invasion,²⁸⁰ the canals promised that troops could be

²⁷⁵ This seems to have been a standard clause in canal proposals. In the Prospectus of the Imperial Ship Canal Company in 1829, the author notes that canals serve "a national point of view, for the conveyance of military stores, by a safe and expeditious passage, free from the delays and dangers of coast-navigation, and from annoyance in time of war." *Prospectus of the Imperial Ship Canal Company*: 5.

²⁷⁶ Hadfield, *British Canals*, 115. In response to the British declaration of war on France in May of 1803, the Caledonian Canal was approved by an act of Parliament the following July. The Canal was to traverse Scotland from the Atlantic to the North Sea in a run of 62 miles. Due to the difficulties presented by the terrain, the canal was not completed until 1822 and thus proved useless against Napoleon.

²⁷⁷ Phillips, *A Treatise on Inland Navigation*, 8.

²⁷⁸ *The Times of London* on 19 December 1806 reported that "The first division of the troops that are to proceed by the Paddington Canal for Liverpool, and then by transports for Dublin, will leave Paddington today, and will be followed by others to-morrow and Sunday. By this mode of conveyance the men will be only seven days in reaching Liverpool, and with comparatively little fatigue, as it would take them above fourteen days to march that distance." As quoted in Hadfield, *British Canals*, 116-117.

²⁷⁹ "On 18 June 1798 the Grand Junction Company issued a notice to its men that a considerable body of troops were to embark at Blisworth for Liverpool, and that the locks and canal were to be kept clear for the urgent movement of fifteen boats on each of two days." Hadfield, *British Canals*, 121.

²⁸⁰ As early as 1797, the French had indeed invaded England with 1400 men at Fishguard in the south of Wales. M.E. James, *The Fishguard Invasion by the French in 1797* (London, 1893), 18-19. This is the last time England has been invaded. Badly trained and undisciplined, the French were routed by a small, untrained, barely armed troop of local men recruited by the local gentry. In the summer of 1803, after the collapse of the peace of Amiens, rumors spread that Napoleon was planning an invasion of England. Mrs. Francis Chomeley, patron of John Sel Cotman, who

delivered quickly wherever they were needed, either to fight the French or to put down fearfully anticipated local rebellions inspired by the French example.²⁸¹ It is partly in relation to the association of canals with the war with France that the heroic, military pose of the boy on the leaping horse is can be understood.²⁸²

While the connection between of canals with and wartime purposes would have made the heroic, military pose of the boy on the leaping horse somewhat more congruous with the setting, it also reflects changes, either real or mythic, in the boy's prospects as a citizen and in our regard for him. During the building of the first canals, canal work had been promoted, somewhat obliquely, as a way of raising one's financial and social standing. Canal work was recommended as a means of training men for the navy. In turn, service in the Navy during the Napoleonic wars in fact had allowed some men of small means to make fortunes, rising by their own merit and boldness and creating their own naval community based on occupation rather than birth.²⁸³ But while men did indeed make money

was summering in Yorkshire, wrote to her son in Scotland that "he seemed to be under no apprehension about Bonaparte and his invasion" while "we are a good deal alarmed on this Coast which is very ill guarded." David Hill, *Cotman in the North: Watercolours of Durham and Yorkshire* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005), 39.

²⁸¹ Members of the militia were recruited by the local gentry from the local working poor. They were unclothed, unarmed, untrained and undisciplined. Already suffering from the shortages of war, the absence of able-bodied men caused even more hardship among their families. Thus, one of the uses foreseen for local militia was to repress local uprisings. In a plea for better equipment for the men, Captain Ackland of the Pembroke Company wrote "they cannot be of any use unless they are *cloathed & armed* & their service can be *depended* on any where *within the County* to repress tumults." In 1803, Mrs. Cholmeley, John Sel Cotman's patroness, wrote to her son Francis that there was unrest among the working poor: "nor do they submit [to privation] with a perfect good grace even in these quiet parts" and that it was "incumbent on the rich for their own sakes to keep them loyal and in good humour." Cotman, 47.

²⁸² The resemblance of the boy's pose to that of an equestrian statue has often been noted but never in relation to the canal and its various associations.

²⁸³ Jane Austen's novel, *Persuasion*, (1816) weighs Anne Elliot's family who have sold the future of their estate, against Captain Wentworth who has returned having made his fortune in the Navy

in the Navy, there was in practice very little if any connection between the men who worked the canals and those who served in the Navy and amassed the spoils of the French war. The possibility that there might be a link did, however, serve to increase support for the building of canals, to allay the fears of the public about this mobile and possibly rebellious work force and to hold out the possibility that through canal work one might rise by merit.

The boy on the leaping horse not only figures forth that possibility but also illustrates the means of its achievement in the movement and composition of the painting. Although the leaping of the powerful draft horse that he urges over the barrier is muscular and almost violent, the boy seems easily in control. Both he and the horse look straight ahead as if they were going to ride away into the largely open landscape in front of them. Above them towers a grey sky filled with swirling clouds. The freedom and power of the boy's movement towards the right on the horse is accentuated by the left side of the painting that is crowded and closed in: boats wait in the canal to be towed, cows graze in the meadow and the dense foliage of the trees overhang the river. All this lies behind the boy. Thus, although the particulars of the painting are faithful to its origins in canal scenes, they are becoming background set pieces for the ordinary tale of English identity rooted in English land. In the foreground, in the present day, the boy in *The Leaping Horse* is released from the land and moves forward in space.

The stages in Constable's composition of the painting suggests how the painting took shape and meaning for him around the figure of the boy and,

during the war with the French. As usual, in Austen's novels we see the self-abasement of the landed aristocrats and the rise of the meritorious members of the middle class.

equally important, the figure of the woman in the boat who watches him. In the First Study for 'The Leaping Horse' (1824) (Figure 24) the boy sits sideways over the back of the horse that stands patiently at the barrier, the two figures involved in a rather leisurely country business. In the Second Study for 'The Leaping Horse' (1824) (Figure 25) the horse leaps over the barrier without a rider: possibly a verisimilar pose since Stour horses were specially trained to make that leap but a vignette without any heroic tones. Both of these sketches focus on the collective activity of daily life on the canal. It is only in the full-size sketch (1824) (Figure 26) that the boy mounts the horse and urges him over the barrier. Still, however, the sketch is filled with other incidents and details that detract from the centrality of the boy and prevent a coherent story from emerging: a cow drinks from the canal; a man works on the float bridge and another on a boat hauls a tow line while a woman watches him, and the willow tree appears in front of the boy, visually blocking his forward motion. Only in the final painting does the woman's attention (and our own) turn fully to the boy: within the painting she is the only person who sees the boy's gallantry. Constable added her, her babe in arms and the child at her side, in the full-size sketch but only in the final painting did he turn her towards the boy and add the mast and swathe of white sail that frames her and calls attention to her and to her attention to the boy. Her presence in the painting and her relationship to the boy alludes to the past as well as to the future and places the painting both within and beyond the narrative of Gainsborough's cottage door paintings.

Constable's floating mother offers some continuity with the mothers in Gainsborough's cottage doorways while the discontinuity between them speaks to and encourages the new possibilities in England of physical and social mobility. In *The Leaping Horse*, we have a family configuration similar at first glance to that in Gainsborough. The boy's action, like that of the father of the Gainsborough family, is performed for the family's benefit. Here, the boy leaps the barrier under the watchful eye of a woman who stands next to the mast of the canal boat. She is probably not his mother because very few families lived together on canal boats until mid-century.²⁸⁴ Nonetheless, she is taking a maternal interest and pride in the boy. More importantly, she herself and possibly the boy are unmistakably part of "the floating population", visibly making their livings and constituting their families without attachment to any particular piece of land or locality. Contrary to the fears of many, the boy, once off the land, is still loyal to the larger conception of the land. The value of an individual who has agency is based on his actions and not on his place in a social structure. If, in Gainsborough's cottage door paintings, the viewer passing by occupies, by virtue of his mobility, the position of privileged observer, here the tables are turned: both the boy and the woman move past the viewer who stands still on the banks of the canal. A few decades earlier, in 1795, Hannah More's shepherd of Salisbury Plain defines his own limited land-bound possibilities: – "a

²⁸⁴ Until competition with the railroads forced down freight rates and with them the boatmen's wages, most boatmen earned enough to keep their families in cottages. Bishop dates the boatmen's impoverishment by the railroads to 1825. Bishop, 141. Hadfield states that by the mid-century many had left their cottages and taken their families with them on the boats. Hadfield, *British Canals*, 74. Women were however known to manage family boat businesses even in the eighteenth century. Barrie Trinder, *Barges and Bargemen: A Social History of the Upper Severn Navigation 1660-1900* (Chichester, England: Phillimore & Co., 2005), 66.

poor man like me is seldom called out to do great things, so it is not by a few great deeds his character can be judged by his neighbours, but by the little round of daily customs he allows himself in.”²⁸⁵ The scope of the fictional shepherd’s activities and possibilities and the expression of his character are circumscribed by that “little round” in which he moves. By contrast, in *The Leaping Horse*, the boy and the boat people are rural participants in a much larger enterprise, a nation-wide, man-made system for the circulation of goods and people that depends for its operations on them and that offers a national scope to the deeds of even the least of its participants. Thus, although any given stretch of canal could seem local and rural, it served a function for the nation and its very sight called to mind the system of which it was a part and within which it functioned.

In the transition from an extreme localism and a land-based standard of value to a more mobile, fluid and nationally oriented and mercantile society, *The Leaping Horse* holds a middle ground by reconfiguring the elements of the landscape rather than by eliminating any of them. It has frequently been remarked that Constable relocates Dedham Church at will, presumably to improve the composition of a painting. In effect, Dedham Church becomes a prop, a signifier of the English village, rather than a record of it. When John Clare leaves his hometown he does so with a backward glance at the church spire – the stable visual marker of his local, rural place, rich in spiritual content and conveniently the only structure tall enough to be seen at a distance.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Hannah More, *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, 1795, (London, 1874) 44.

²⁸⁶ Jonathan Bate, 152, aptly describes Clare as “among English poetry’s subtlest knowers of what the philosopher Edmund Husserl calls ‘thing-experience’, *Dingerfahrung*. Clare’s world horizon

Constable's movable church spire is a simulation of Clare's church spire: Clare's church spire is an emotional symbol of local life whereas Constable's is an allusion to that symbol. Of course, Constable does not abandon local rural life: in fact, his repetitive painting of the area in and around Flatford Mill speaks to his own attachment to place and of his sense that these spots were quintessential Suffolk landscapes. Nonetheless, in the six-footers, he moves the cows, the crops, the fields and the church well into the background and places the life of the canal in the foreground. He consigns the land as the unchanging source of rights, obligations, and wealth to the background as he foregrounds the lives of unlanded men and women and presents the possibility of their importance, of their significance to themselves and to the nation. The land begins to recede into the background and into the past even as the foreground, moving forward though time, assumes a position in the "process of history."²⁸⁷ Yet even as these elements of the rural landscape move to the rear, it cannot be but that their nostalgic significance is enhanced: these pieces of landscape become visual signifiers of the old and enduring England.²⁸⁸ At the same time, the presence of the boy and the woman in the boat and, indeed, of the other boat people in other paintings, creates a new landscape of Englishness. In painting his six-footers,

was the horizon of the things – the stones, animals, plants, people – that he knew first and knew best. When he went beyond that horizon, he no longer knew what he knew."

²⁸⁷ Pocock, 115.

²⁸⁸ Elizabeth Helsinger goes one step further in making the paintings themselves sentimental pieces in an economy in which portability is commodified: "Constable's paintings *depict* the rural as a social scene naturalized by the dominating fact of the land itself... but they *embody* a concept of property that is not equated with land or even rooted in local interests. The paintings are portable property, objects made to be bought and viewed by those who, like Constable himself, have left the places of their rural origins. As such, the paintings testify that the local and rural is reproducible anywhere." Elizabeth Helsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representations: Britain 1815-1850* (Princeton NJ: Princeton UP, 1997), 56.

Constable sought recognition on a large scale. Displeased by the course of the first thirty years of his career, he sought to create works on a par with history painting, to create images of national importance. If, as one critic put it, “Constable’s canal scenes celebrated [the canals] revolutionary place in the landscape of Englishness”,²⁸⁹ in celebrating them in *The Leaping Horse*, Constable’s own painting assumed a revolutionary place in the understanding of the genre of the landscape of Englishness.

The Leaping Horse is certainly the high point in the elevation of the floating population. Even as the canals assumed primary importance in the burgeoning English economy and the canal people became a distinctive and previously unknown type of English person, the mechanisms of their degradation, both personally and as a class, were being set in motion by the advent of the railroad. As early as the turn of the century, George Stephenson, regarded as the father of the English railway, was working on developing a steam engine that could speedily haul large quantities of heavy freight such as coal as well as transport passengers. In 1821, after two decades of successful, small-scale work, Parliament commissioned him to built the Stockton and Darlington Railway, to haul both coal and passengers over twenty-five miles.²⁹⁰ Thus, in 1825 just as Constable was preparing *The Leaping Horse*, a “canal scene that celebrated

²⁸⁹ Bishop, 34.

²⁹⁰ Stephenson worked on this problem for twenty-five years. In 1814, he developed his first engine that could haul 30 tons of coal up a hill at four miles per hour and in 1820 he built the first railway (of eight miles) that used no animal power. Both the length and the strength of the railroad were unprecedented. At its opening, the engine demonstrated that it could haul an eighty ton load over fifteen kilometers in two hours and achieve a speed of twenty-four miles per hour. Samuel Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers: the Locomotive: George and Robert Stephenson* (London, 1879), 123.

their [sic] revolutionary place in the landscape of Englishness”,²⁹¹ the decline of the canals was set in motion by the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway.

The effect of the railroad on the canals over the next three or four decades was slowly and steadily to force the canals and the canal people to occupy a liminal social and legal space.²⁹² As the profitability of the railroad increased, that of the canals decreased. As a consequence, in order to save rent money, more and more of the canal families abandoned the cottages that their wives and children had occupied²⁹³ and moved into the cramped quarters of the canal

²⁹¹ Bishop, 34.

²⁹² In terms of the space they occupied in the landscape, the canals and the railroads achieved a type of symbiotic relationship. They tended to appear together in the landscape because the railroad companies, in order to spare themselves the cost and difficulty of negotiating for rights of way, often bought them from the canal companies. The following account from *The Morning Chronicle*, December 13th, 1849, gives a view of the canal landscape from a train and as well strikes an elegiac note for the canal men:

I should devote a few words to the life and toil of the men, who, before the era of railroads, were chiefly concerned in the conveyance of heavy goods from place to place, and who still transport by water-carriage a very considerable portion of our manufactured and mineral wealth – I mean the bargemen engaged in navigating our inland canals. The railway passenger will be familiar with the aspect of these men and their boats. The canal and the rail often run together for many a mile, each crossing the other in its windings. Thus, as the train puffs across the viaduct, the passenger may often mark the shining course of the canal, glittering in its long serpentine undulations beneath him, the unruffled clayey water, the mud-trampled towing path, and the green meadows sloping on either hand to the brink, with here and there a fringe of willows or rushy plants rising from the water. Gliding along these tranquil channels come barges, which, creeping, slowly but surely along, make their gradual way....

In two decades, the train has become the mechanical presence in the natural landscape, intruding with unnatural speed, while the canal is viewed with pastoral nostalgia.

²⁹³ “The Canal Boat Act and the Bargemen”, *Liverpool Journal*, September 15, 1877. The author of this article reports a conversation with a canal boat woman about the provision of the Reform Act that would remove women and children from the boats so that the children could go to school: “Master,” she began, “they’s got to recompense us, They’s got to gi us more money. They’ll ave to do som’at for us when they take the childr’n out of the boats, or us can never live. ...they’ll have to pay the boatmen reg’lar weekly wages. That’s what theys got to do, we’d like to be ashore and ave the childr’n to school, but us can’t live ashore without more wages.”

boats.²⁹⁴ The canals themselves deteriorated from neglect and became polluted with industrial, animal and human waste.²⁹⁵ Far then from being indistinguishable from rivers, they were nonetheless the source of drinking and bathing water²⁹⁶ for the canal people, whose degradation, drunkenness, disrepute, irreligiousness, and cruelty to animals and children became a legendary part of the underbelly of Victorian England and inevitably the object of reformers. In the eye of the public canal people had become that which many had feared at the beginning of canal development: a floating population, unknown to the social, legal, religious or educational authorities; a landless and lawless population that floated through the countryside free from control and observation.²⁹⁷ Yet even in their undeniably degraded situation as a floating population, the canal people created

²⁹⁴ D.J. Smith, *Discovering Craft of the Inland Waterways* (Aylesbury: Shire Publications: 1977), 60. The living cabin of a canal narrowboat, the kind most commonly used on all but the largest canals, measured six feet six inches wide and ten feet long. Every bit of space was engineered to serve a double purpose but no engineering could have made the space comfortable or sanitary for more than two people.

²⁹⁵ *Rob Rat*, a novel aimed at reform, opens with description of a canal that has come to bear no resemblance even to those clean-shaven banks that so offended Uvedale Price: "...the roads were choked with mud, leading down to muddy quays with heaps of brick and coal and less fragrant manure, and slabs of slate and great blocks of building stone. Rotting refuse lay thick and fever-breeding where the barges had not made a way through it. Bubbles of ill-smelling, poisonous gas came up from the foul depths of the canal." Mark Guy Pearse, *Rob Rat: A Story of Barge Life* (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1878), 11.

²⁹⁶ George Smith, *Our Canal Population: A Cry from the Boat Cabins, With Remedy*, 1875 (East Ardsley, England: EP Publishing Limited, 1974). Smith includes an article that appeared in the September, 1875, number of the *Argonaut* in which an unnamed author with an eye towards reform describes the futility of bathing and washing in the canals: "Their habits are filthy and disgusting beyond conception. I have frequently seen women in a half nude state washing over the sides of the boat as it was moving along, out of the water of the canal, upon the top of which has been floating all manner of filth. They wash their clothes – those that do wash – out of the canal water, and instead of their being white, or near to it, they look as if they had been drawn through a mud-hole...." 95.

²⁹⁷ There were, of course, incidents of crime by boatpeople along the route of the canal, crime that ranged from poaching to large robberies. The Canal Police Act of 1840 that gave constables jurisdiction of up to a quarter of a mile on each side of the canal was an unsuccessful attempt to put a stop to these crimes. Gil Foster, "The Power of the Word: How Writings about Boatpeople affected Perceptions", *Railway and Canal Historical Society Journal* 7: 1957, 304.

and maintained a *sui generis* form of art known as Roses and Castles that expresses their own continuing attachment to the idea of land, if not to the land in fact, and to their citizenship, even on account of rather than despite their mobility.

Although we do not know the origins or the moment when this style began,²⁹⁸ it had to have been some considerable time before the first print reference to Roses and Castle art that appeared in an essay in 1858 in Dickens' *Household Words*. Presumably reflecting his readers' interest in the subject, Dickens published a long essay by John Hollingshead, "On the Canal." Hollingshead, contrary to the preconceptions of the general public, finds the boat of which he writes, The Stourport, to be neat, clean, and properly run in every way. He begins with an admiring description of the painting on the boat:

The Stourport is rather faded in its decorations, and is not a gay specimen of the fly-barge in all its glory of cabin paint and varnish; but still enough remains for it to show what it was in its younger days, and what it will be again when it gets a week in dock for repairs, at Birmingham. The boatman lavishes all his taste: all his rude, uncultivated love for the fine arts, upon the external and internal ornaments of his floating home. His chosen colours are red, yellow, and blue: all so bright that, when newly laid on and appearing under the rays of a midday sun, they are too much for the unprotected eye of the unaccustomed stranger.²⁹⁹

Hollingshead allows the boatman an exemplary if primitive, "uncultivated" instinct for art: the extreme brightness of his colors speaks to the boatman's untutored

²⁹⁸ Various historians of canal culture offer many theories of the origin of Roses and Castle art: Roses and Castle art was begun by the Romany Gypsies who worked on the canals; the art was created to add beauty to lives spent in an industrial landscape; the tradition began with one man who selected the dog-rose as his subject because it was simple to paint; the tradition began in order to mark the separateness of the community of boaters. The best summary of these various speculations is to be found in two works of Tony Lewery: "Rose, Castle and Canal: An Introduction to the Folk Art of English Narrow Canal Boats" in *Folklore* 106: 1995, 43-56. 43, and *Flowers Afloat: Folk Artists of the Canals* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1996) 12-14.

²⁹⁹ John Hollingshead, "On the Canal" in *Household Words: A Weekly Journal*, September, 1858, 322.

enthusiasm for “the fine arts” while it assaults the more educated and refined eye of the “unaccustomed stranger.” Especially significant is Hollingshead’s reference to the boat as a floating “home”, a designation that many of his readers would have disputed. Hollingshead’s description of the figures painted on the Stourport is, again, appreciative of the creative instinct behind them and patronizing about their ordinariness:

The two sides of the cabin, seen from the bank, and the towing-path, present a couple of landscapes, in which there is a lake, a castle, a sailing-boat, and a range of mountains, painted after the style of the great teaboard school of art. If the Stourport cannot match many of its companions in the freshness of its cabin decorations, it can eclipse every other barge upon the canal in the brilliancy of a new two-gallon water-can, shipped from a bank-side painter’s yard, at an early period of the journey. It displayed no fewer than six dazzling and fanciful composition landscapes, several gaudy wreaths of flowers, and the name of the proud proprietor, Thomas Randal, running round the centre upon a background of blinding yellow.³⁰⁰

His phrase, “the great teaboard school of art” is certainly mocking: inexpensive tea boards or tea trays as well as trinkets and boxes were decorated with common and highly stylized commercial art sometimes disparagingly called “chocolate box art.”³⁰¹ Certainly, by the time of Hollingshead’s essay, canal boat art had achieved a high degree of stylized uniformity. Depictions of castles and of roses, painted with only small variations, covered almost every inch of canal boats, inside and out. Roses and castles wallpapered the interior panels of the tiny six by ten foot cabins, covered the water buckets and barrels that rode on top of the cabin next to the chimney, and decorated the panels on the exterior of the

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 322.

³⁰¹ Harvey Sawler, *One Single Hour* (Renfrew, Ontario, Canada: General Store Publishing House, 2004), 97.

boats and the tillers and bulwarks. (Figure 27 and Figure 28) On the whole, Hollingshead means to indicate that despite any shortcomings in the taste or education of the boatmen, their Roses and Castle art indicates the innate interest in art and beauty of people whose sensibilities have not been irretrievably damaged.

The ubiquity and relative uniformity of Roses and Castles art reveals the extent to which the canal population had become a community unto itself, based on occupation rather than locality.³⁰² Moving through the countryside, exposed to many different parts of the country, they took their subject matter in part from what they saw and what they experienced of the landscape they shared as a floating population. Although there were small stylistic differences among the different boat companies,³⁰³ Roses and Castles art is nonetheless quite uniform; a highly mannered and abstracted representation of the more elegant parts of the landscape through which the canal people traveled. Unlike Wedgwood's Frog Service, whose claim to excellence and commercial appeal lay in the meticulousness specificity with which it represented great English homes, canal boat representations of castles are obviously not of specific structures or locations and the roses are generic. Rather, they represent the idea of the English castle and the English landscape. In this respect, they carry Constable's practice of moving landmarks to a logical extreme. They create a record, not of a

³⁰² Roses and Castles were sometimes painted by boat companies and sometimes by individuals. Well-versed experts can ascribe different styles to different boatyards although with the painting by canal companies this is more common in the early 20th century. Lewery, *Flowers Afloat*, 52-101.

³⁰³ Experts in the art form can distinguish the work of one artist from another much as a game keeper in Africa can distinguish one particular elephant in a herd but in the eye of the ordinary beholder the similarities are more striking than the differences.

specific English landscape, but rather an obliteration of the local, a refusal of all specific English landscapes.

Part of the traditional visual vernacular, castles and roses and its obvious “Englishness” is put to a new and ingenious use on the canal boats as part of the floating population’s claim to a place in the nation. The extensive decoration of their boats, both inside and out, as well as the decking out of their horses, presents their pride in and care of their homes, much as the ladies’ who purchased Wedgwood tea sets demonstrated their gentility and good taste. In this and other ways, the painting of the canal boats reveals the floating population’s sense of being observed, and of what they wanted others to observe about them. The advertising displayed on the sides of the boats (Figure 29) shows an awareness of audience. The crenellated castles appear not only in the countryside as somewhat antique features but also in the coats of arms of many of the English royal families as well. Roses, the national flower of England, may also recall the War of the Roses. Ranged in profusion around the tiny cabin of the canal boat, painted on every cupboard door and panel, the castles and roses were not only the scenic views the boat people looked at in their homes, but also the views in which they were seen. (Figure 30) The importance of their presence in the foreground of these scenic views is underscored by the fact that not one of the panels depicts a person. Without a population of their own, the castles and roses panels become the backdrops, the stage sets in front of which the boat people enact their home life, in front of which they cook, clean, eat and sleep. In addition, the panels depict their means of access to this landscape:

every castle has its body of water, usually directly in front of it.³⁰⁴ (Figure 31 and Figure 32) These panels disclaim the importance of land and landholding by portraying de-localized land, that is, English land and property that exists everywhere and nowhere. The roses and castles panels are the boat people's self-generated visual depiction of their place in England, not despite but rather on account of their mobility.

Part of their claim rests on the belief, explicit both then and now, that the picturesque aesthetic is an education of the individual capable of citizenship, that the picturesque forms both the landscape and its inhabitants. In the circuit walk, the prescribed method for viewing the picturesque landscape, a series of scenes or views present themselves as the observer moves through the landscape. The eye of the observer is the privileged and only seeing eye:

In the world of the picturesque view, labor is fixed, as a subject of representation, while the viewer is mobile, like a tourist. Moreover, geographic and social mobility often figure each other, and both are understood as the privilege of private property and a prerequisite for claims on a national property.³⁰⁵

However, both the mobility of the observer and the narrative of the unfolding views were seen as potentially radical: did the circuit walk speak to the educated eye or did it enable the education of the eye and thus provide a "framework for structuring the subject's coming into self-awareness, becoming a citizen within

³⁰⁴ "Even though their work could be shown in isolation in a gallery setting, it would be diminished; the setting would ignore the context it was designed for, both physical and social, and would subtract an important layer of its meaning and purpose." Lewery, 55.

³⁰⁵ Helsinger, "Turner and the Representation of England", 106.

the public sphere?"³⁰⁶ Hollingshead's observation that his canal trip was an opportunity for "examining the slow moving panorama of the country"³⁰⁷ suggests that such a journey gave the traveler a step up on Gainsborough's passer-by and on the circuit walker: the "panorama" of the country moves slowly past him, unfurling itself for his leisurely inspection.³⁰⁸ But as canal transport declined and with it the fortunes of those who plied the canals, Constable's heroic image of the young citizen on horseback became outmoded. Rather, the liberty of the floating population was reconceived as the source of their debasement.

After the 1840's the canal people were most often depicted as a population that floated so freely and without civilized restraints of any sort that they were virtually subhuman, literally diseased and morally debased. Canal boats were referred to as "piggeries", doubly distressing because they floated in sight of those citadels of church and state, St. Paul's and Parliament. In one of the most popular of the reforming novels, *Water Gipsies or The Adventures of Tag, Rag and Bobtail*, the author, L.T. Meade, describes the boat people as alien outsiders:

The canal boat people are a distinct race, a race almost unknown. They have no parish, are reckoned in no 'cure for souls'. The

³⁰⁶ Peter De Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape, and Architecture in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Stanford, Calif., Stanford UP, 2003), 111. The circuit walk was regarded by Walpole among others as a "threat to elite culture".

³⁰⁷ Hollingshead, 318.

³⁰⁸ This is, as Jonathan Crary observes, the case with the viewer of the panorama painting: "The circular or semicircular panorama painting clearly broke with the localized point of view of perspective painting of the camera obscura, allowing the spectator an ambulatory ubiquity." *Techniques of the Observer*, 113. Travel and observation on the canal is certainly a break with "the localized point of view".

overseer and the tax-collector are people they have never heard of.³⁰⁹

Here the canal people float through England like ghosts, a separate species of being unknown to all the institutions that are charged with accounting for the citizens of England: they belong to no parish, have no curate, they have heard neither of the poor house nor of the overseer who administers it nor of the state's tax-collector.³¹⁰ They live outside of all the administrative controls of the state. Even more ominously, their floating lives allow them to threaten the institutions that fail to regulate them:

...the boats...go to and fro, carrying not only human beings of all ages, and cargoes of filth and manure and the refuse of our large towns, but carrying also small-pox and deadly fevers, -- carrying vices too that are a thousand times deadlier.³¹¹

Now surely there is some great wrong somewhere, in which it is possible you and I may have a share, that we can suffer thousands of these floating hovels to be going day and night through our cities, past our own homes, and along by our churches and chapels. Think of them; picture them going silently along the waterways of our land, ...carrying *half a million souls*, to whom a decent life is *simply impossible* – mother, father, boys and girls herded together in a common den.³¹²

³⁰⁹ L.T. Meade, *The Water Gipsies or The Adventures of Tag, Rag, and Bobtail* (London, 1883), 306.

³¹⁰ Although this is most often the case, occasionally the outsider status of the canal people is presented as giving them access to valuable outsider information. H.R. Robertson, author of *Life on the Upper Thames*, praises them for their knowledge of herbal medicines and cites the *Lancet* as corroboration. *Life on the Upper Thames* (London: Virtue, Spalding, and Co., 1875) 3-4.

³¹¹ Pearse, *Rob Rat*, 24.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 25-26.

Like the arteries of the body, to which the canals were so often likened, the floating population circulates “silently” through the nation carrying with it both moral corruption and physical contagion.³¹³

The reform efforts that aimed at Parliamentary regulation of the floating population attempted to shame Englishmen in order to persuade them to save the “bargees”. A scathing rebuke to the nation appeared in the satirical magazine *The Hornet*³¹⁴ in December, 1874:

There is no need to make a journey to Zulu-land, or to the American prairies, for the purpose of seeing how low mankind can sink in the scale of civilization; a few hours on an English canal will answer equally as well. We are not exaggerating the true state of the case. We could not do so if we wished! The English bargee, in his ignorance, his brutality, and his utter recklessness, is a reproach to our boasted civilization.³¹⁵

That England, the richest, most powerful nation in the world and the bearer of light to its darkest parts should harbor in its own land and among its own citizens a savagery comparable to that of Africa or the Western United States was horrifying to a nation that prided itself on its “far-sighted philanthropy” that saw into all corners of the world. In *Bleak House* (1852-3), Dickens satirizes what he

³¹³ In February of 1874, *Fortnightly Review* published an essay by George Smith in which he reports the epidemiological findings of John A. Davenport, the inspector of the Nantwich sanitary authorities: “A case was brought under his notice of some persons suffering from small-pox being conveyed through his district in these boats, and within his knowledge was a case where the boy of a child that had died of typhus fever was on board a boat; the mother was ill with the same fever in the cabin, and another child had died just before from the same cause. Small-pox cases and dead bodies were frequently carried through the Nantwich district....” *Our Canal Population*, 67-68. The conception that contagious disease was no respecter of persons had been a central argument in Victorian efforts to promote better public health measures. The point is made dramatically and poignantly in Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1852-3) when Esther, the middle-class heroine, catches small pox from Jo, a homeless boy who lives in the slums of London.

³¹⁴ *The Hornet* was best known and is best remembered for its caricature of Darwin as an ape that appeared in the issue of March 22, 1871.

³¹⁵ George Smith, *Our Canal Population*, 45. *The Hornet*, December 2nd, 1874.

calls “far-sighted philanthropy” in the character of Mrs. Jellyby who is endlessly active on behalf of the natives of the fictional Borio-boola-ga while her house and children are in chaos because she neglects them. When George Smith and his reform movement finally succeeded in focusing philanthropy’s gaze closer to home on the boat people the resulting legislation bore at its heart the spirit of eighteenth-century land law.

The reform laws of 1877 and 1884 attempted to get both a moral and a legal grip on the floating population.³¹⁶ Of first importance was to find a means by which government could make the floating population more like land-dwelling citizens. An article in the *Daily News*, September 28, 1874, enumerates the essential differences between the children of the floating population and their land-bound counterparts:

These children belong nowhere. No School Board is responsible for their education; no clergyman or district visitor looks them up; no sanitary inspector sees that their dwelling is wholesome.³¹⁷

Several regulations remedied these oversights. First, all boats had to be registered as dwellings in some locality and once registered its inhabitants, as well as the vessel, had to abide by the regulations of the local governing board.³¹⁸ This requirement was a double-edged sword: on one hand it recognized that there could be homes without land and that the boat people therefore had the right to consideration and regulation by the state: on the other

³¹⁶ George Smith, *Canal Adventures by Moonlight* (London, 1881), 152. The 1877 act gave Parliament the power to regulate the boat people and the 1884 act that made it mandatory that they do so.

³¹⁷ *Daily News*, September 28, 1874.

³¹⁸ Foster, “The Power of the Word”, 301.

by attaching each boat to a particular local governance it hearkened back to the time-honored land-based English law and tradition. Following from this regulation, parents were required to send their children to the local school and to obtain certification from the local school board that their children were indeed in attendance. Again, as of old with landlords and tenant farmers, local authorities were to monitor the boat people and to enforce the laws by which they lived. With an eye towards the reports of routine debauchery among families to which their over-crowded conditions gave rise, many of the laws of the Reform Acts regulated moral conduct on canal boats. In response to reports that young girls were having the children of their own fathers³¹⁹, the Act of 1877 required sleeping compartments for adults that were separate from those of children under the age of eighteen and the separation of unmarried males and females eighteen or older.³²⁰ The anchoring of the floating home in a locality and the enshrining of the virtue of the young woman within that anchored home seems to bring us partly back to Gainsborough, to the woman in the cottage doorway, immobile and timeless as the land that surrounds her or back at least to Constable's heroic moment in *The Leaping Horse*.

The portrayal of the boat people as part of the continuity of English history rather than as an aberration was central to the strategy of George Smith and his fellow reformers. The tension inevitably at the heart of this approach shows itself

³¹⁹ Pearse, *Rob Rat*, 24. Pearse gives this account: "In the boat cabins – *hell-holes* as some of the women call them – co-habitation takes place. Father, mother, sister, brother sleep in the same bed and at the same time. In these places girls of seventeen give birth to children, the fathers of which are members of their own family."

³²⁰ Smith, *Our Canal Population*, 174-5. In *Rob Rat*, it is an innate sense of propriety and not regulations that prompts Noah to separate Lizer's sleeping compartment by a curtain.

much earlier in *The Leaping Horse*. Here, Constable produced, as a culmination of his repeated interrogation of the scenes at Flatford Lock, an imagined moment of the liberation of the floating population and of the larger English nation whose influence and meaning could be discerned even in this country scene. The young boy on horseback leaping over the stile and the woman with her baby in her arms who watches him become heroic and faithful in Constable's realization of the possibilities of the moment from which he creates a fully realized imaginary present. Ironically, this visualization of the relationship of movement and mobility is evoked through stasis and immobility. Frozen in mid-air, the boy acquires the clarity of identity and meaning that social immobility insures. After the decline and abjection of the floating population it is this stability of meaning that creates an imaginary prior for reformers like George Smith which they can offer up in their appeals. To the original and essential goodness of the boat people, the reformers' appeals also offered the illusory charm of a return to a clarity of identity that had been lost in England's mobile, mercantile society.³²¹

In order to persuade Parliament that the floating population could be saved, and were worth saving, popular novels and periodicals employed rhetoric and illustrations that portrayed the women of the canal as the spiritual heirs of both Gainsborough's woman in the cottage door and Constable's woman on the canal boat deck. Variations on Constable's image of the woman on the boat deck continued to be turned out in the decades after *The Leaping Horse*.

Reflecting and creating the impetus to incarnate a stable moral domestic center

³²¹ The best nineteenth-century document of the endless and dysfunctional ramifications of an opaqueness of identity must be Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*.

for England's expansive empire, she appeared as illustrations in magazines and in the many reforming novels about the canal people.³²² Her first appearance was in *The Graphic*. At the forefront of the mass-production of images, *The Graphic* was founded in 1869 as an outlet for original art³²³ by William Lusson Thomas, perhaps the most highly esteemed engraver in England. It was the first illustrated weekly journal to reproduce original art on a large scale.³²⁴ The image of the woman on the deck, drawn by William Lusson Thomas, appeared in *The Graphic* in its March 20th, 1875 edition accompanying the article "Canal Boat Life in England", and spawned a number of offspring. (Figure 33) First, the identical image was used by George Smith as an illustration for his book, *Our Canal Population*, published in the winter of the same year. (Figure 34) In 1876, the same image was used for both the cover and an interior illustration in *Rob Rat*. In addition, in 1875, a derivative image, *Pride of the Thames*, by Herbert Johnson, was the frontispiece for *Life in the Upper Thames*. (Figure 35)

³²² The earliest movements for the relief of canal workers were undertaken by various evangelical groups and by the canal companies themselves in the 1830's and 1840's. Churches were built and schools established for the children. But only in the seventies with George Smith's campaign and a flood of illustrated articles and novels were parliamentary reforms enacted. Hadfield, *The Canal Age*, 137-8.

³²³ Original art made by wood block printing had appeared in journals previously to a limited degree. *The Graphic* employed a stable of engravers as well that expanded the range and the quality of the art it could print. Among the artists who contributed to *The Graphic* were John Millais, Sir Alma-Tadema, Herbert von Herkomer and Luke Fildes. The authors who wrote for *The Graphic* included Thomas Hardy, (Tess of the D'Urbervilles was serialized in it), George Eliot, Rider Haggard, and Anthony Trollope. For a brief history of *The Graphic*, see *The Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism*, eds. Laurel Broke and Marysa Demoor (London: Academia Press, 2009), 623.

³²⁴ John Everett Millais' painting, *Cherry Ripe*, was engraved for the centerfold of the 1880 Christmas annual of *The Graphic*. Seductively innocent, large and in color, *Cherry Ripe* sold 500,000 copies of *The Graphic*. Thomas wrote that "judging from demand, that number could easily have been doubled if printing technology had been up to the task." (Victorian Studies, Vol 34, #2, Winter 1991), p 179-203 Indiana UP -- "From Eden to Empire: John Everett Millais' "Cherry Ripe"" by Laurel Bradley

The first image, in which the boat is named *Pretty Jane*, displays everything that the reformers wanted the public to think about a woman on the canals. The woman is neatly and cleanly dressed. Her head is covered by a clean, white bonnet and she stands erect and alert. In her firm grasp is an infant, well bundled up in a large shawl or blanket. The canal boat is her home and in it all is as it should be. She is, as the caption announces “At the Tiller”. Another home appears in the background, a traditional home on the land, a warm home suggested by the smoke coming out of its chimney. The image asserts the authenticity if not the equality of both homes. Each is truly a home: it is the figure of the woman on the deck of the *Pretty Jane* that makes the assertion and allows the conclusion.

The good housewife on the *Pretty Jane* was apparently a successful image for reformers because she appears again less than a year later as the cover illustration for *Rob Rat*. (Figure 35) *Rob Rat*, one of the most popular of the reforming novels, was written by an admirer of George Smith in an effort to win support for the Reform Acts that Smith successfully championed.³²⁵ William Luson Thomas was the printer of the illustrations for both books and it is not far-fetched to assume that his re-use of the image, changing only the name of the boat, was convenient for him. However, the unnoted fact that the image does not fit well with the narrative of *Rob Rat* is indicative of the independent importance

³²⁵ The most successful of the reformers was George Smith (1831-1895), who himself had been sent to work in a tile factory at the age of seven years. Smith's religiosity made him a relentless advocate for improving both the living and the spiritual condition of the boat children, who, along with their families, were often treated in the press as an alien species, as gypsies or worse. For a brief life see Edwin Hodder, *George Smith of Coalville: A Chapter in Philanthropy* (London: Houghton & Co., 1881).

of the image. In *Rob Rat*, the mother is an alcoholic slattern who could not be represented by this image. The only other grown female on *The Water Rat* is the daughter, `Lizer, who has been crippled in an instance of her parents' drunken bestiality.³²⁶ Thomas's engraving could not be a representation of either of these women. Nonetheless, the text does give us an example of a well and virtuously run canal boat in *The Noah's Ark*, a shining and immaculate boat, that speaks for the good character of its owner. The narrator invites the reader into the "snug cabin": "In the dancing light that flickers from the little stove, you can see the shining brass knobs winking back. You can see the shadows dancing over the pictures that decorate the little place"³²⁷ and enjoy "the delicious fragrance"³²⁸ of Noah's supper. The woman at the tiller of *The Pretty Jane* and of *The Water Rat* is meant to evoke the virtues and simple pleasures of everyday life and the

³²⁶ Little `Lizer becomes a cripple through the same circumstances that George Smith describes in one of his essays. Smith's account appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, February, 1874, in an essay entitled "A Dark Picture": "The boatmen are great drinkers, and almost, as a natural consequence, a large number of their wives can do quite as much in that way as their husbands. This is not the worst feature of that degrading vice as they practise it. The parents will give their children as much liquor as they like to drink, and if they are unwilling to take it, are sometimes known to force it upon them out of pure mischief and wickedness. A case of this kind came under my notice a short time since at Nuneaton. The father and mother were very drunk, and they had given a little child of about three or four years old some of their liquor. The effect may be imagined. When I saw the child it could not stand and the parents, as the poor little thing fell, picked it up again, in order to see it fall forward time after time. While the child was tumbling about, the father and mother enjoyed the disgusting scene with boisterous shouts and laughter." Here is the account from *Rob Rat* of Liza's crippling: "There [a pub] it was that one night the father and mother were drunk; and little Lizer, a toddling maiden, was going from one to another of the noisy company, making friends among them, clapping her hands and prattling innocently. The drunken father laughingly caught hold of her and forced her to drink the rum from his glass until she could not stand. The whole set of them, hardened by their miserable life and the cruelties of every day, roared aloud at the sport, and set her up again and again to see her ramble and fall. But presently she fell and could not rise. In vain her own mother hiccupped her oaths at her, and in vain the father pushed her with his great heavy boot. They managed to carry her somehow to the cabin and lay her on the floor; and there she was for many a day and night. Her hip was injured, and when she came out again she was lame for life." 29-30.

³²⁷ Pearse, *Rob Rat*, 36.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

repetition and circulation of her image, regardless of its strict appropriateness to the text, makes her the sympathetic heroine of the reformers' narrative. She also hearkens back to Gainsborough's cottage door woman, in front of her home with her infant in her arms. That the woman at the tiller can evoke those same emotions and still be on the move, off the land, is of course the first step in the reformers' campaign to bring her back to land.

These prints, cannot evoke however, the charm of the local or the nostalgia for it. First, the singularity of place that John Clare eulogizes in his "adieu" to the "old Lea-Close Oak" has been erased by the canals, the railroad and the growth of large estates and second, the women depicted in these prints have no relationship to the land. They exist only in time. The repetition and circulation of the mass-produced image erases singularity: the same image accompanies different texts and is identified differently. It becomes impossible to place the image in space or to fix their identity. Constable had succeeded in elevating, in heroicizing his woman on the boat and the boy on the leaping horse because even as they moved forward in time, they were still firmly placed within Constable's landscape. These later prints of the canal women, even as they allude back to Constable, cannot escape the forward trajectory he established for them. They are fraudulent, allusive without depth of their own. The most dishonest and the most appealing is the *Pride of the Thames* in which the young woman is composed of a plethora of surface signs that detach her from any relationship to the land: her pose is nautically heroic; her boat is decorated with Roses and Castle art; she has no child; we do not see her house and there is no

house behind her in the bleak, reedy marsh. No matter how many iterations of her are produced, no matter how many material signs surround her, without a fixed location she can never be the woman of Constable's *Leaping Horse* or Gainsborough's cottage door. Her image, revisited with great frequency and reprinted with layer upon layer of variations, has moved her off the land and into the flux of time.

Here, Space turns into Time:
Turner's *Dudley Worcestershire*

You see, my son, here time turns into space.
Wagner, Parsifal Act I, Scene I

God beholding from his prospect high,
Wherein past, present, future he beholds...
John Milton, Paradise Lost, III, 77-78

Parsifal will “see” time turn into space and Milton’s God “beholds” the past, present and future simultaneously because the translation of time into space is a metaphorical method of making divine knowledge accessible to the understanding of man, bound and darkened as he is by the process of time. The clarity of vision when time becomes space, when there is no becoming and no receding, when all that is to be known lies in sight, is exactly that which the portrait of the Duke of Bridgewater (discussed in Chapter I) aims at, even though all such productions must of necessity be approximations. The irony in the Duke’s portrait, as we have seen, lies in the unanticipated consequences of his own canal and those that followed. Even as the Duke’s canal vastly increased the wealth of his own estate it also mobilized the English landscape and its inhabitants, and introduced rationalized time into the more or less static English space. At the end of that process lay the now familiar intrusion of the railroad in September of 1830 with the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, meant to compete with Bridgewater’s canal boats. Despite the drama of its speed and steam, the railway was simply a continuation of the development of

transportation begun with the canals in the eighteenth century: in fact, railway development was useful because of the industrialization that canal transport had enabled.³²⁹ The railroad followed in the tracks of the canal because the railroad companies bought rights to land over which to run their lines from the canal companies. In August of 1830, just a few weeks before the opening of the L&MR, J.M.W. Turner visited Dudley, Worcestershire, and began a watercolor study of the canal and castle at Dudley, an engraving of which by Robert Wallace, one of Turner's uniquely trained engravers, would be published in 1835 in *Picturesque Views of England and Wales*.³³⁰ *Dudley, Worcestershire* has often been interpreted as an industrial landscape that is nostalgic for England's pre-industrial past and apprehensive about the future of an industrialized England. The castle and estate of Dudley, older than England itself, stood amidst and was a part of the ceaseless activity of its own canal. By its own making it was engulfed day and night in industrial activity which its own landscaping deliberately denied and to which the many artists who painted it turned a blind eye. Only Turner looked

³²⁹ "There were significant changes in the organization and efficiency of transport throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which the railways continued rather than initiated. Canals and turnpikes laid the basis for the mobilization of savings to fund the railways, which were beneficiaries as much as creators of an active capital market." Daunton, 314.

³³⁰ "Over the years Turner succeeded in creating a "school" of engravers, about eighty in number, sympathetic and responsive to his requirements while nevertheless allowing their individual artistic personalities to flourish. Once selected, often while still young, these engravers would be subjected by Turner to a rigorous course of training. Certainly the unique relationship established between artist and engraver, and the close collaboration on which the quality of these prints depended, was not to be seen again after Turner's lifetime." Anne Lyles and Diane Perkins, *Colour into Line: Turner and the Art of Engraving* (London: The Tate Gallery, 1989), 11-12.

unblinkingly at the modern kaleidoscopic landscape of Dudley that integrated space and time.³³¹

Dudley was in 1830 at the center of the English coal and iron trade both geographically and in terms of importance. This fact may have misled many scholars to take *Dudley Worcestershire* as documentation of an industrial landscape.³³² External and internal evidence suggest otherwise. First of all, there were a host of artists who painted essentially bucolic landscapes of Dudley Castle at approximately the same date. David Cox, the elder (1783-1859) was a member of the Birmingham School who painted an entire volume of watercolors

³³¹ Jonathan Crary points out that the kaleidoscope, invented by Sir David Brewster in 1815, becomes emblematic for the early nineteenth-century, of visual practice in modernity exemplified by Baudelaire's view of the kaleidoscope as a "machine for the disintegration of a unitary subjectivity..." *Techniques of the Observer*, 113. The Kaleidoscope quickly found applications in the fine and applied arts including, in one treatise, for the design of "architectural ornaments", "ornamental painting", and "carpet design". "The use of the kaleidoscope in the decorative and ornamental arts was not the result of chance: the kaleidoscope had its own grammar and canons as well as process and technique. These enabled the creation of a kaleidoscopic aesthetic." Arnaud Maillet, "Kaleidoscopic Imagination", in *Grey Room* Summer 2012, No 48, 37.

³³² The most famous critic of the sort was John Ruskin who saw *Dudley Worcestershire* as a lamentation for the "passing of the Baron and the Monk." *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, eds. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London, 1904) Vol. XIII, 485. Many other critics, such as Andrew Wilton, find in it the balance of the "industrial sublime." *Turner and the Sublime*. (London, 1980), 97. W.G. Rawlinson describes the work as capturing "the pathetic beauty of the once dominant, but now ruined feudal castle... and the busy life of the nineteenth century below." *The Engraved Work of J.M.W. Turner* (London, 1913), I:158. James Hamilton describes *Dudley, Worcestershire* as an "evocation of the beautiful hellishness of industrial development in Britain." *Turner and the Scientists* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1998), 97. John Robert Gold and George Revill see *Dudley, Worcestershire* as a representation of a symbiotic relationship between industry and history but conclude ultimately that it's an indicator of environmental anxiety about the effects of the downgrading of the environment. *Representing the Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2004) 48-9. William Rodner believes that at this date, Turner still held a primarily romantic view of the possibilities for industrial progress in England. He cites, Zachariah Allen, an optimistic American visitor to Dudley in 1825, who admired the industry at Dudley as a useful art that would bring riches to all men. His description of Dudley at night, a view in which many found the horror of 'the fires of hell' reveals his romance with industry: "As the obscurity increases, these fires all begin to brighten to the view, and when darkness finally prevails, the lights resemble stars reflected from the surface of a dark lake spread out before you." *J.M.W. Turner: Romantic Painter of the Industrial Revolution* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997), 110. Jonathan Crary rejects the labeling of Turner as a "poet of industrialization" and sees for him an expansive role that exceeds categorization: "No other modern painter has ever come close to approximating Turner's fusion in the same work of a sweeping engagement with the plenitude of geological, mythical, imperial and social history...." "Memo to Turner", *Artforum*, 2008.

of Dudley that all have a more or less picturesque character, as in his *Dudley Castle with Lime Kiln*. (Figure 36) His son, David Cox the younger (1809-1885) painted a rural scene of *Dudley Castle* (Figure 37) that, although undated, must be from 1828 at the earliest. It shows the canal in the foreground looking like a meandering country stream. Somewhat earlier works, such as Thomas Cartwright's engraving of *A View of Dudley Castle and Dudley Priory* (1815-1818) (Figure 38) and J. Wallace's engraving of *Dudley Castle from the East* (1818) (Figure 39) are entirely rustic and show no signs of canalization or of mining activity. This is true also of Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg's watercolor (Figure 40), a picturesque representation of what appears to be one of Dudley's best-known features; three close-set gates built around 1335 each of which was portcullised.³³³ These works cannot, however, be taken as "true" representations of a pre-industrial Dudley. The estate may have been mined for limestone and coal as early as the eighth century and was certainly mined extensively after the construction of the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal, 1766-72, the Stourbridge and Dudley Canals, 1776-82, and the Dudley Castle Canal Tunnel, 1785-92, which linked the Dudley and Birmingham Canals.³³⁴ Thus, by 1805 one might have had to choose carefully to find a view that was absent some sign of industrial activity. Since Turner dedicated his watercolor of Dudley to David Cox the elder, Turner was familiar with at least some of these

³³³ The text that accompanied the engraving of Louthembourg's watercolor describes the castle in a rustic environment: "The castle stands on the summit of a rocky hill, the sides of which are beautifully wooded. From its windows it commanded an extensive prospect over five counties, beside part of Wales." Louthembourg, unpagued.

³³⁴ T.J. Raybould, "The Development and Organization of Lord Dudley's Mineal Estates, 1774-1845" in *The Economic History Review* 21(3 Dec. 1968): 529-530.

pastoral images of Dudley that maintained the spatial organization of the picturesque landscape. In *Dudley Worcestershire*, ironically published in a volume of “picturesque views”, Turner, a master of the picturesque vocabulary, nonetheless portrays Dudley as the site of a momentary conflux of the elements of “a world of moving objects”.

Seemingly the most stable and the most enduring element in Turner’s landscape is Dudley Castle, whose history, much written about and well known to Turner’s contemporaries, extended beyond England’s history into England’s mythic past. The earliest mention of a castle at Dudley is in Camden’s *Britannia*.³³⁵ Camden, without reference to a source, either repeats or gives rise to the originary myth of Dudley: that it was founded by a Mercian lord, one Dudd, Dodo, or Duds, in the year 700 and that William the Conqueror allowed him and his heirs to retain their rights in the land.³³⁶ Few mention that Dudd (if there was a Dudd) lost the lands after he participated in an attempt in 1071 to overthrow William. Subsequently the Dudley lands were given to one of William’s staunch supporters, William Ausculf who possessed it when the Doomesday survey was made.³³⁷ Dudley had, quite literally, its ups and downs: it was demolished by Henry II in 1173 for the disloyalty of its then lord, Gervase Paganel, and, having

³³⁵ William Camden, *Britannia: Or, a Chronological Description of the Flourishing Kingdom of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the islands adjacent; from the earliest antiquity* (London 1586). I, 260.

³³⁶ The legend of Dudd is to be found in the Habingdon (or Habington) MS, a collection of papers pertaining to the history of Worcestershire found in the library of Jesus College Oxford by Thomas Habingdon. Habingdon had been condemned to death for a minor role in the Gunpowder Plot and his sentence was commuted on terms that he never leave Worcestershire and should devote himself to the history of the area. Jabez Allies, J. *On the Ancient British, Roman and Saxon Antiquities and Folklore of Worcestershire* (London, 1852), 170.

³³⁷ Charles Twamley, *History of Dudley Castle and Priory, including a genealogical account of the families of Sutton and Ward* (London, 1868), 4.

been rebuilt by royal dispensation, was de-fortified after the Civil War in retribution for its support of the royalists. Nonetheless, the meaning of Dudley, that which it stood for as one saw it in the landscape, was its uninterrupted descent by inheritance and marriage from the very beginning of English history. It represented the estate as the central fact of English history, law and landscape and its immunity to time.

Still, in its more recent history, Dudley had become the locus, both regionally and nationally, of networks of mines and of canals that gave the castle on the hillside new and plural meanings. John Ward, the second Viscount Dudley and Ward, took custody of the estate in 1774 just as the success of the Bridgewater Canal was inciting growth of the canal system. He appreciated that his estate was richer than any other place in England in that blessed combination of limestone, coal, iron ore and clay, that it stood high atop the central watershed of England³³⁸ without any navigable rivers for transport and that Dudley was, as it were, the estate for which canal transport had been designed.³³⁹ The second

³³⁸ Rev. John Marius Wilson, *The Imperial Gazetteer of England and Wales* (London, 1870-72), entry for Dudley.

³³⁹ T.J. Raybould writes of the influence of Dudley's situation on its economic development: "...its elevated position and lack of water communications also influenced the economic development of the region. No navigable rivers flow through or within easy reach of the Black Country as it lies on the main watershed between the Bristol Channel and the North Sea. Its rivers and streams, the Smestow, Stour and Tame, do flow into the Severn and Trent but were not navigable, even in the eighteenth century. The hilly nature of the district and its numerous [sic] streams did provide ample water power for industry but full development of the area was only possible after canals linked it to the navigable rivers." Raybould, 24. Luke Booker writing of Dudley in 1825, attributes the composition of "the minerals under our feet" at Dudley and Dudley's subsequent prosperity to Providence: "Had the Lime, the Iron, the Clay, and the Coal been blended in one indistinguishable mass, as they might have seen, we should not have seen the busy Works with which this country is studded, nor the multitudes of men whom these Works employ; nor the groups of populous towns, -- of pleasing villages and hamlets, which every where meet and cheer the eye. *A very small difference in the arrangement and combination of those same materials*, of which this District is composed, could have prevented the existence of all the Works, and of all the activity by which Dudley is so prosperously surrounded. --What advantage, for instance,

Viscount, using the full extent of his political power as a leading parliamentarian and his very ample pocket book, vigorously pursued new profits for his estate along two lines, enclosure and canal construction. For much of the land the second Viscount acquired through enclosure he already owned the mineral rights but enclosure gave him the right to farm the land in a rational way that allowed him to provide food for his workers during the famines of the Napoleonic Wars and thus to avoid unrest or rebellions. Second, Dudley helped push through Parliament the enabling acts for and invested heavily in the Stourbridge Canal, the Dudley Canal and the link between the Dudley and Birmingham Canals, giving him direct access to the large Birmingham market. In all these projects, he invested heavily. Like the Duke of Bridgewater at his Worsley coalmines, Dudley had from 1775 to 1778 driven a canal tunnel into his limestone works at Castle Mill that was now linked by a private tunnel to the Birmingham Canal. Dudley's energy, shrewdness and persistence in turning the land under Dudley Castle into a large and eventually efficient money-making enterprise³⁴⁰ was an accomplishment that was also notable for the extent to which these activities were hidden.

In pursuing the construction of canals and tunnels under his estate, the second viscount of Dudley and Ward made it possible for his successor to conceal the mining activity taking place directly under the estate and thus to

would be derived from living in "a land whose stones are Iron," were Coal and Lime not also deposited near, to flux the stubborn ore? The disappearance of *vegetable* fuel from the neighbourhood, -- plentiful as it was in its chases and woods some centuries ago, -- proves *that* could not have been the material intended by Divine Providence for the purpose". Booker, 130.

³⁴⁰ By 1800, the Dudley Estate was producing a million tons a year of coal and 85,000 tons per year of limestone. Booker, 118.

conduct his enterprise under the seemingly unchanged sign of the castle and its environs. Before the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when tunneling became the mode of extracting limestone, “open work” was the method of digging. This involved quite simply digging away at the surface of the earth.³⁴¹ And since the castle stood on top of one end of two beds of limestone (the other end came to the surface a mile or so away), (Figure 41) digging took place within the walls of the castle, giving parts of the grounds the appearance of quarries. At some time shortly after 1800, William Ward, the third Viscount of Dudley and Ward, undertook the landscaping of these quarries and transformed them into areas of “tufted little knolls, covered, throughout the greatest part of the year, with lively verdure.”³⁴² The viscount also ordered “miners’ cots” “to be built, that the miners, employed in the contiguous subterranean Quarries, might, at their meal-time, inhale wholesome air, while they partake of wholesome food.”³⁴³ The Reverend Luke Booker describes Viscount Dudley as “the poor Miner’s late kind Lord” and employs Biblical quotations and connotations and literary allusions in his description of the miner’s midday meal to invoke a feudal order:

Thus doubly refreshed, they “go forth to their work and to their labour until the evening,” not forgetful, it is presumed, of the Memory of Him who never forgot *them*. –So full of humane and generous acts was his lengthened day of being, and so justly are

³⁴¹ Booker explains to his readers that the limestone mines and the four subterranean canals under the estate have been “torn, by explosion with gun-powder, from the bowels of the earth, under the neighbouring hills. This method of extracting the Stone is termed *tunneling*.” Booker, 11.

³⁴² Booker, 7.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7.

they appreciated by the wise and good of all classes, that “Nature may stand up before the world and say, THIS WAS A MAN.”³⁴⁴

Booker’s quoting from Psalms and his capitalization in the phrase “the Memory of Him” conflates the Lord and the Lord of the Manor and further justifies the continuation of the order of the estate and its beneficent design by the Viscount.³⁴⁵

Booker had been hired by the Dudleys to write a book about the Castle and mines that would serve as an incentive for people to visit Dudley and as a guide for their visit. Booker’s text is not only the most detailed description of Dudley left to us, but also evidences in many ways the desire of the Dudley’s to maintain the image of the old estate even as they promoted their mining interests. At its heart, Booker’s guide was meant to maintain that “mystical equation between property and person”³⁴⁶ that the estate conferred on its Lord.³⁴⁷

Visitors to the castle, perhaps using Luke Booker’s volume and annotated map as a guide (Figure 42), were meant to follow a circuit walk in which the Lord

³⁴⁴ Booker, 8. The first quotation is from Psalm 104, verse 23, and the second is Marc Anthony’s words over Brutus’ body in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, Act 5, scene 5.

³⁴⁵ Stephen Daniels makes this point about the landscaping of Georgian non-industrial estates: “The very attention lavished on mansions and grounds, both on the ground, and written and pictorial representations of polite society, helped obscure the gentry’s involvement in a diverse and dynamic economy. Estate portrayal and design did not eclipse the gentry’s economic interests; rather they codified these interests in terms of landscape.” *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993), 80.

³⁴⁶ Edward St. Aubyn, *The Patrick Melrose Novels* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012), 311.

³⁴⁷ “The dominance of Britain’s old landed elite is unique in Europe. Only here do repute and identity normatively equate with rural residence.” Lowenthal, 26.

of the estate (and his landscaper) presented the mines, the miners, and the landscape of the mines as firmly under the aegis and control of the estate. More unsightly parts of the mines were wholly or partially concealed. One could observe the miners in their lunch-time cottage at the same sort of distance Gainsborough achieved from his cottage dwellers without realizing that “those caverns, where they ply their Herculean labours, are near; as is also the pass-way to and from the caverns, though invisible, till the steps to the Cot be descended.”³⁴⁸ The invisibility of the entrance to the mines reinforced the illusion that the visitor is touring a happy semi-feudal landscape. As a complete survey of landscape style, the castle had also provided for carefully staged moments of the sublime, evoked by Booker with exclamation points and capitals. There was a “sinuous path” which led to a “wooden Seat, placed directly opposite a Gulf, which seems the very Den of Horror! – What a contrast to the pleasing sylvan picture just contemplated! Such is the entrance into THE CAVERNS.”³⁴⁹ This carefully orchestrated landscaping kept the Dudley mines embedded within the ethos of the ancient estate while at the same time the portable wealth, the corporate organization, the innovations in engineering and the interest and advances in natural and geological science that mining brought to estates like Dudley moved it into the future.

Among estates that supported canals and mining, Dudley played a significant role in the development of geology and geological mapping that was part of the general movement at the end of the eighteenth century towards the

³⁴⁸ Booker, 7-8.

³⁴⁹ Booker, 9.

specialization of knowledge. Carl Linnaeus and Alexander von Humboldt were developing the fields of natural history and taxonomy through “the nomination of the visible”³⁵⁰, that is, through the collection and classification of animal and mineral samples, fossils, remains and oddities. In England the construction of canals and the blasting of mines brought to light strata of rock and earth and the fossils they contained and inspired their collection and analysis along Linnean lines.³⁵¹ Booker’s description of the collection of fossils is typically respectful of the antiquity and presumed significance of these suddenly visible relics:

Specimens of this sort are now before our eyes, removed from their ancient graves with the care almost of *apothecoses*, to the tutelary Gardens of Gentlemen who duly appreciate their worth; and whose delight it was to rescue such precious fragments of the Old World from the devouring Furnaces of the New.³⁵²

The collecting of these fossils by the landowner on whose estate they were found became part of what made his estate distinctive, valuable and ancient, as with Bridgewater’s vase. These antique vases and fossils simultaneously added their antiquity to the estate, incorporated as they were into it, and also brought the estate forward into the age of the museum and of natural science and archeology.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Random House, 1970) 132. Foucault writes with irony that “Natural history is nothing more than the nomination of the visible. Hence its apparent simplicity, and that air of naivete it has from a distance, so simple does it appear and so obviously imposed by things themselves.”

³⁵¹ Gerald Finley notes Turner’s interest in geology and his incorporation of fossil-like creatures into even his imaginative works such as *The Garden of Hesperides. Angel in the Sun: Turner’s Vision of History* (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1999), 165.

³⁵² Booker, 122. Dudley’s deep layer of limestone made it especially rich in invertebrate marine fossils.

³⁵³ Characteristic of the desire to move forward into a more scientific age are Booker’s postscripts of the “Ornithology (Classification according to Bewick)” and “Entomology (Classification

The first geological survey map of England, published in 1815, was the direct result of the construction of the English canals. Although it had long been known that there were strata under the earth of minerals, ores and metals, until the construction of canals opened deep trenches across large tracts of the English countryside the continuities of the strata remained invisible. Even then, it seems to have occurred only to William Smith, a surveyor for the canal companies, that there was a pattern to these strata, a pattern that lay underneath all of England, a pattern that told the story of its own creation. Smith grew up in Oxfordshire and in 1787 found himself an apprenticeship with a surveyor who had been hired by the local squires and wealthy farmers to survey wasteland for enclosure. His proficiency earned him the appointment in 1794 of the official surveyor for the Somerset Canal.³⁵⁴ From his work in mines, Smith had hypothesized that the order (if not the thickness) of strata and the fossils found within them were uniform, although sometimes a stratum was twisted and folded back on itself. While constructing the Somerset Canal, he observed that the strata all slanted down towards the southeast with the consequence that in the

according to Samouelle)" of Dudley. The classifications he employs are the binomial nomenclature originated by Linnaeus. Before the professionalization of scientific disciplines and their inclusion in the university curriculum, collecting of fossils and conducting amateur science became a hobby of landed gentlemen. Some of them became the object of ridicule as did Willoughby Patterne in George Meredith's *The Egoist*.

³⁵⁴ Simon Winchester, *The Map that Changed the World: William Smith and the Birth of Modern Geology* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 51-58. Smith's history is similar to that of John Clare's and probably to many talented young men growing up during the heyday of the canal. Smith grew up in a tiny village from which few traveled more than a couple of miles in their lifetimes. His work for various canal companies expanded his knowledge of England both above and below ground. His geological map of England made England a more coherent space, a space permeated by the traces of many different periods of time, time long past.

northeast older strata were higher up.³⁵⁵ Smith also developed the ability to tell by the appearance of the local fauna and the contours of the earth what the topmost strata would be composed of: he became able “to imagine, on the basis of what he saw above ground, just what the world looked like underneath.”³⁵⁶ Looking at a landscape, he saw not only the present moment, but also the hitherto hidden, residual landscape of the past, of many pasts, each moment still exerting its influence on the appearance and the necessities of the present moment.

The geological map of England that Smith created is not only the first of its kind in the world and not only beautiful but also invites its observers to see England in a new and dynamic way.³⁵⁷ (Figure 43 and Figure 44) We have an indirect gauge of its influence in that the great public interest in the map led to its being plagiarized and widely circulated after Smith published it. In addition to explaining the visible differences in various parts of the English countryside in terms of their geological composition, the map links parts of England to other, non-contiguous parts. For example, North York, Lincoln, Warwick and Gloucestershire are represented in the same light blue that indicates they share a predominance of blue marl. The separate regions of Durham and Denbigh are

³⁵⁵ Older strata are lower and newer are higher. If these strata slope towards the south-east and the top has been sliced off to make the surface of the earth more or less level, the uppermost strata in the north-east will be older than those in the south-east.

³⁵⁶ Winchester, 89.

³⁵⁷ Smith’s geological survey map presents a vast contrast and departure from earlier strip maps that were designed to allow a traveler to get from point A to point B. Strip maps gave the traveler a sense of the scenery of the route but no larger context, either spatial or intellectual, of the territory he traversed. Vittoria Di Palma, “Flow: Rivers, Roads, Routes and Cartographies of Leisure” in *Routes, Roads and Landscapes*, eds. Mari Hvattum, Janike Kampevold Larsen, Brita Brenna and Beate Elvebakk (London: Ashgate Press, 2011), 34-35.

in the rose color that indicates granite. A locality finds itself geologically interconnected in the context of its geological place in the larger nation rather than geographically isolated and defined by its own very local sights such as the steeple of John Clare's church or his "old Lea-Close Oak." Smith's map also represents an expanse of time that diminishes the primacy of the estate. The past no longer persists unchanged into the present. Time relates to the history of the estate as well as to the characteristics of the land itself. These two ways of looking at the landscape both begin to count. Perhaps most importantly in terms of this dissertation is that Smith's geological map requires a new relationship to space and to the space of the landscape. Space has become the field on which and through which time expresses it and continues, without stop, to do so, leaving its traces everywhere to be seen both by the eye and the mind.³⁵⁸

The expression of time appears in *Dudley, Worcestershire* most clearly to every eye in the fires, the lights and the labor of men that continues throughout the night. (Figure 45) Depending on one's aesthetic point of view, Turner presents us with the beauty, the horror or the thrill of the lights and fires at night but most importantly he shows us that they continue without cessation, without regard for the circadian rhythms of men, the cycles of agriculture or the calendar of the church. The timing of work on the canals and the extension of the time of work arose from two interrelated sources: the canals and the factories whose growth they made possible. On the canals, the regulation of workers in terms of the speed at which they traveled became necessary to maximize the efficiency of

³⁵⁸ Dudley is the material expression of the "density and sedimentation of the structure of visual memory" that characterizes vision in the nineteenth century. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 21.

travel. First, there were long tunnels, such as the Lapal tunnel of the Dudley/Birmingham system that could only accommodate travel in one direction. Initially each boat was allowed four hours to pass through the tunnel before the direction was reversed but in 1830 the rule was changed to three hours and it became the timesaving practice to attach several boats and bring them through the tunnel together. Some canals required boats to hire professional leggers³⁵⁹ who could bring the boat more quickly through a tunnel than the boat crew. Most of the expansion of working hours on canals came after the Napoleonic wars when locks and lock keepers were increasingly required to be open and available during longer hours. Before 1816, normal hours for boats were from 5 AM to 9 PM on moonlit nights and from 6 AM to 8 pm otherwise. In 1820, hours were extended to 4 AM to 10 PM. with boats paying a small fee if they wished to pass a lock during off-hours. In 1830, as manufacturing grew and before railroads were introduced, locks were open twenty-four hours a day.³⁶⁰ Although *Dudley Worcestershire* is often characterized and praised as a nighttime picture, its

³⁵⁹ Canal tunnels were not constructed with towpaths and therefore the boats could not be drawn through the tunnels by horses. Instead, one or two men of the crew of the boat would lie on their backs on the top of the boat, press their feet into the top of the tunnel which was not more than two or three feet above them, and “walk” the boat through the tunnel. This process was known as “legging” and the men who did it were called “leggers”. Hadfield, *British Canals: An Illustrated History*, 58.

³⁶⁰ For a complete history of the operating times of canals, see Hadfield, *British Canals: an Illustrated History*, 63-150. Initially the railroads and the canals operated symbiotically, with many of the early rail lines operated by the canal companies without Parliamentary imprimatur or regulation. The first railroads or “tramroads” were those used to take minerals from the mouth of the mining pit to the canal where they were to be shipped. It was only between 1845-47 when Parliament authorized 8,600 miles of new railways that the canals began to lose their importance. Even so, for many decades they remained the means of choice for shipping large quantities of heavy materials. A. Kaye Butterworth and Charles Edward Ellis, *A treatise on the law relating to rates and traffic on railways and canals : with special reference to the Railway and Canal Traffic Act, 1888, and the practice of the railroad and canal commission, with an appendix of statutes, rules, etc.* London: Butterworths, 1889. 3-9.

importance lies in the fact that it is a representation of a moment in the procession of hours, a partial representation of a landscape defined by the twenty-four hour clock.

A landscape saturated with time, that is, with motion and change, is difficult if not impossible to make orderly and comprehensible or to represent spatially. The finger of blame is often pointed at the rapidity of change, at the rapidity of the departure of the old and the arrival of the new, whereas in fact the difficulty, as Turner shows us in *Dudley Worcestershire*, is that what is past is still present and what has become invisible is visible to the mind's eye. The present past is that which allowed John Ruskin, in a few famous and often-quoted lines, to find in the painting his own yearning for feudal England:

One of Turner's first expressions of his full understanding of what England was to become compared the ruined castle on the hill and the church spire scarcely discernible among the moon-lighted clouds, as emblems of the passing away of the baron and the monk....³⁶¹

Of course for Ruskin, the lure was not the "baron and the monk" *per se* but of a time before the machine and mass-production when every creation had the honesty of its imperfections that reflected the hand of the maker. Here, however, as in other places, Ruskin misaligns himself with Turner. The ceaseless activity in the foreground of the painting has not obliterated either Dudley Castle or the Priory. They are of the past, and truly so especially since the Dudley family had

³⁶¹ John Ruskin, XIII,436.

not lived there since the mid-eighteenth century³⁶² and yet they are also present. In the same way, we know that the Castle and Priory and the entire hillside on which they sit contains vast mines in which are fossils of animals who, long dead and extinct, are still present to us. In the discovered remains “of what, thousands of years ago, were beings endowed with life and sensation,” Booker gives us an example of the way in which the past persists into the present. He imagines that there were “creatures, that moved on the bottom of the great Deep, or sported on the surface of the wave; that spread their tentacula to catch their prey, or burrowed in the slime to avoid a rapacious foe.”³⁶³ “He sees” he says, that is, sees the past present, “beneath his feet in innumerable Forms, now insensate, but once endued with feeling; which, in successive generations must have had their birth, and enjoyed their life.”³⁶⁴ In the foreground of the painting, the vividness of the lime kilns and the coke fires and the detail of the “Dudley” boat with roses and castles speak of their presentness in this landscape in which nothing is lost.

Before the eighteenth century England had not remained unchanged for centuries, but this is nonetheless the myth that was embraced by the English estate and supported by English land law. Booker writes of the Castle that nothing of note seems to have occurred between 700 and 1643: “From the reputed Era when this Edifice was founded, we pass down the stream of Time

³⁶² In the mid-eighteenth century the Dudley family had relocated the village of Himley and built a Palladian mansion for themselves that would be landscaped by Capability Brown. Himley is several miles to the west of Dudley.

³⁶³ Booker, 115.

³⁶⁴ Booker, 119.

through a long series of ages, without perceiving any remarkable object in our course.”³⁶⁵ Booker’s metaphor of passing down “the stream of Time” without “perceiving” anything remarkable speaks to the importance of the appearance of stasis. This is also Beaumont’s point about English landscape at large: “...the land remains, at the present day, what it was seven centuries ago – the feudal basis of a society which exists no longer, the living emblem of a world defunct.” In his attempt retain this “living emblem” of an unchanging England, Booker lights upon three trees turned to stone and found in the mines, that are “now before our eyes.” Two of these trees were unknown foreign species, but the “largest and most perfect” of them was “standing erect as if still retaining its ancient Birth-right: and, what must endear it to an Englishman, that specimen is an OAK: -- a Specimen, which, in its transformed more imperishable state, is, we trust, an Emblem of England’s Constitution.... It was discovered proudly standing.”³⁶⁶ For Booker, the discovery of this oak in the Dudley Mines cannot help but put him in mind of the old collective point of view. He reinserts the Dudley estate into its historical function as the “living emblem” of England, even as his own enthusiasm for natural history, for geology and for the conversion of the estate into, as he puts it, “this interesting Branch of National Wealth”³⁶⁷ betrays his inability to hold these two views simultaneously.

In *Dudley Worcestershire*, Turner embraces the possibilities presented by this sedimented landscape. Like the geological substrata on which the

³⁶⁵ Booker, 91.

³⁶⁶ Booker, 123.

³⁶⁷ Booker 132.

landscape of which his image stands, Turner builds his landscape out of layers, out of the sediment of history, memory and sight into a world of interrelated historical and perceptual moments. The composition of the painting creates space that is difficult to understand, first because it moves in two directions at once, both into the hillside and up it. Second, the landscape is not visually continuous: it has two sources of light, the mining fires and the moon, that leave a swathe of darkness across the center of the hillside. The foreground contains the present moment, the work and the workers of the mines and the canal. Their work is the only human activity in the painting, made vivid by the fires and by the Turner's. In the background, hovering over the mine and the canal, is the hillside of limestone on which rests Dudley Castle, and two churches, one from the eighteenth and another from the nineteenth century.³⁶⁸ These are lit by the new crescent moon almost setting in the west and casting a soft and lovely light on the clouds, the Castle and the top of the hillside. The entire engraving, beginning with the water in the canal which ripples oddly across the width of it, from left to right, is composed of overlapping layers of canal, boats, mine entry, equipment, factories, wooded hillside, churches and Castle arranged in ascent in strips that cross from left to right across the composition. Each layer has its own narrative, each is only partially visible and the bounds between each are at best unclear, so that the engraving does not articulate a linear history or chronicle of the space it represents. Both in memory and in sight, the changes that time brings may be somewhat obscured, may not be as vivid in detail as the foreground of this

³⁶⁸ St. Thomas' Church with spire 1815-18 and St. Edmund's (square tower) from 19th. Rodner 113.

engraving, but nothing disappears. In *Dudley, Worcestershire*, Turner, with eyes wide open, presents a visual field in which neither time nor space is prioritized, in which we see the momentary fusion of time and space in a single, disorienting, dynamic landscape.

Afterword

In a sense, it is always too late to talk about time.

--- Jacques Derrida³⁶⁹

England's canal network, critical to the nation's predominance in the development of modern industry, goes largely unnoticed today except by some scholars of transportation. As I suggested in my introduction, one of the reasons may be that since the Second World War the canals have been cleaned up and turned into an attraction for boaters and tourists. With their brightly painted cabins occupied by families on vacation, the boats, now motorized, glide slowly and silently past the bucolic banks of the canals. These are, in appearance, as originally proposed by the development companies and drawn and engraved for the newspapers: beautiful country spaces to be admired and enjoyed by the public. Another reason may be the exertion of a willful nostalgia: because the comparatively slow-moving canals can appear pre-industrial we choose to think of them that way. These choices have made the English canal system part of a pre-modern England, imagined just as the canals were being built.

That England would always stand as "a living emblem" of itself remained for the most part uncontested (putting Cromwell to one side) until the construction of the canals. No narrative was required to explain the meaning of the countryside of estates and villages: they were "taken as a given" and had "no

³⁶⁹ *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1982), 42.

apparent origins".³⁷⁰ The canals visibly introduced time into what was perceived as an unchanging landscape. Time entered not only in the speed of transport on the canals but also in the factories that ran by the clock and the canals that ran by timetable. The geological layers unearthed in the digging of the canals revealed the passage of eons of time and the instability of the earth itself. Time entered in the movement of people and goods in bustling new towns that were in the interior of the country, made prosperous in part by the access the canals gave them to the seas. There was enthusiasm for the progress of English industry and science, a sense of national pride, and great expectations for the wealth of the country. There was a sense that if the old landscape and the new could not be reconciled, the identity of the nation would be lost.³⁷¹

The general ambivalence about the changes the canals would bring began at the top with the landed nobility who first financed and built them. Their desire to extract wealth from their own lands overcame their fear of a dynamic population. Gainsborough, in his Cottage Door paintings, appealed to his audience's sense of nostalgia for the passing of the timeless English landscape at the very moment that the canals were being built and many of them were investing in them. Ambivalence is also present in Constable's attempts to cope with landscapes expressive of both time and space. The desire to return to an

³⁷⁰ These are Raymond Williams' remarks about the effect that Ben Jonson achieves in *Penshurst. The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University, 1975) 40.

³⁷¹ It should be noted that fundamental change was a long time coming. "Land remained the ruling and governing classes' principal form of wealth and revenue until 1914.... This was true even in England, where agriculture was radically reduced in economic importance." Arno Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 9.

almost mythic prior time is palpable and his attempt to leap into the future with *The Leaping Horse* avoids the issue in the other direction.

The heyday of canals, from 1765 to 1835, is the interstice between the early days of modernity in England and modern England in its full-blown glory. It is also a curious period in which the development of one technology, the canal, as it was elaborated in the landscape, propelled two generations of artists to work on the same problem: the visual representation of time and space. If one sets a later date for modernity (which I believe would be incorrect), one has the additional liability of facing a closed system of a time-based society and visual culture. By setting the onset of modernity in the 1760's, the anxiety and the failure of artists to develop the presence of both time and space in their work. At the very cusp of the period, in a work such as Turner's *Dudley, Worcestershire*, time does not empty space of meaning, any more than the supremacy of space in pre-modern England truly nullified time. Turner layers time into the spatial idea of the nation. Thus he asserting that time and space cannot exist without one another, even in moments when time is in fashion or when readings of space are in the ascendency.

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