



# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## Weighing Down the Landscape: The Quarry as a Site of Rural Modernity

### Book Section

How to cite:

Shaw, Samuel (2018). Weighing Down the Landscape: The Quarry as a Site of Rural Modernity. In: Bluemel, Kristin and McCluskey, Michael eds. Rural Modernity in Britain: A Critical Intervention. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 69–83.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2018 The Author

Version: Version of Record

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](https://oro.open.ac.uk)

## Weighing Down the Landscape: The Quarry as a Site of Rural Modernity

*Samuel Shaw*

In 1932, the critic, artist and museum administrator D. S. MacColl reviewed the second volume of memoirs penned by his friend and contemporary, the artist William Rothenstein (1872–1945). The review provided an excuse to look back over the past thirty or forty years of art and to reflect upon Rothenstein's position within it. MacColl paints a swift but familiar picture of modern art, one in which 'representation has been having a poor time' and 'design has decided to set up for itself' (p. 76). In 'preaching a fuller immersion in the subject, and development of design from within it, instead of a clamp from without', Rothenstein appears to fall into what was, by 1932, something of an aesthetic hinterland – not abstract enough to be fully 'modern', yet clearly speaking the language of what, in response to Roger Fry's 1910 exhibition, we now call Post-Impressionism.<sup>1</sup> The obvious touchstone here, as MacColl realises, is Paul Cézanne, for whom Rothenstein had equivocal admiration. MacColl and Rothenstein clearly differ in their estimation of the French artist; nonetheless, MacColl recognises in this review that Rothenstein's critical doctrine was built on similar foundations, even if the results looked a little different.<sup>2</sup>

The review celebrates few specific examples of Rothenstein's work, but mentions in passing a painting to which MacColl refers, intriguingly, as having been 'born too soon' (p. 77). This painting, titled *The Deserted Quarry* (Plate 3) and completed in 1904, may seem a somewhat surprising work to be plucked out of the artist's oeuvre and be remarked upon for its innovation. *The Deserted Quarry* had hitherto, and has since, attracted much less critical attention than other works by Rothenstein; the more obviously modern subject matter of urban scenes has tended to suit popular narratives of early twentieth-century British art. This is not a surprise: the painting is distinctly gloomy and brooding, even romantic, and seems at first sight to have been born in the nineteenth century. Despite the Impressionistic handling and what

one critic described as its ‘curiously original’ design, exemplified by the high horizon and bold placing of the diagonal derrick that cuts across the top third of the canvas, the subject is not what most would expect from a modern painting.<sup>3</sup> The geological theme seems better suited to looking back than forward, to the consideration of origins rather than futures. The scene depicted – an abandoned quarry in Hawksworth, West Yorkshire – appears to be a rural rather than an urban subject, and even when one considers that the quarrying industry was not only flourishing in 1904, but also undergoing increasing modernisation, Rothenstein’s representation appears unwilling to engage with these features.<sup>4</sup> This is, as one alternative title for the painting reminds us, an ‘old quarry’ or, as yet another title had it (locating the scene securely in the nineteenth century), ‘A Deserted Quarry in Brontë country’ [sic].<sup>5</sup> Nostalgia appears to be the keynote here. As the artist recalled in his memoirs, in reference to another quarry in the region: ‘there hung about it that haunted atmosphere peculiar to places where men have once been quick and busy, but which, long deserted, are slowly readopted by the old earth’.<sup>6</sup> Read in the light of such comments, this painting feels like a disavowal, or at least a diffident apprehension, of modernity.

So why did MacColl alight on this painting in 1932 and make the claim that it was somehow ahead of its time? On what grounds *might* a representation of a quarry suit certain narratives of modern art? This chapter argues that these questions are worth asking, not merely as a means of understanding the art of William Rothenstein, but also as a means of understanding much wider concerns regarding the relationship between rurality and modernity, universality and regionality, modern form and subject matter.

### The quarry and Cubism

Although the link is not made explicit, it is very possible that, in his reference to *The Deserted Quarry*’s innovation, MacColl was thinking again of Cézanne, whose paintings of the abandoned sandstone quarries of Bibémus in Aix-en-Provence (created in the 1890s–1900s), though relatively unknown to British audiences in 1904, had by the 1930s come to be seen as foundational works in the development of modern art. He is, thus, entering Rothenstein’s name into a genealogy of modern quarry painting that begins with Cézanne (and, possibly, Van Gogh, who also painted quarries in the 1880s) and leads directly to the formal innovations of artists such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who, though they may not have represented quarries directly, mined a similar subject

matter in search of the particular formal characteristics that would come to be associated with Cubism.<sup>7</sup> As Gertrude Stein once suggested, Cubism could be read not merely as an analytical mode imposed on subject matter the artist chose, but also as a language drawn from patterns found, most frequently, in rocks, stone buildings, mountains and quarries.<sup>8</sup> The modern, formalist aesthetic was, in this sense, not created but found. Cézanne's so-called 'desire to give sculptural weight and volume to the instantaneity of vision achieved by the Impressionists' drew him, quite naturally, to the stones that gave literal weight and structure to the rural landscape.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Rothenstein's son, the critic and museum director John Rothenstein, pointed to Cézanne's obsession with the 'rocky or bony framework of things', hinting that the artist's approach was somehow akin to that of a quarryman, chipping away at the details to reveal the inner core.<sup>10</sup> The fact that Post-Impressionist art is often referred to as 'sculptural' extends this analogy: it is painting that aspires to being rock or stone, especially when the subject of that painting is, in fact, rock or stone.

Rothenstein, as suggested by MacColl and by this chapter, was attracted to his deserted quarry for many of the reasons that Cézanne was drawn to the abandoned quarries of Bibémus. Although Rothenstein's paintings have rarely been considered in the same breath as those of Cézanne, let alone Picasso and Braque, the critical language he was using around the turn of the century, as already noted, does suggest a nascent formalism, albeit one in which (as MacColl noted) 'design' was sought not simply on its own terms, but as a means of revealing the 'hidden forces' of existence.<sup>11</sup> Only a few years before painting *The Deserted Quarry*, Rothenstein had written the first English monograph on Goya (1900), in which he praised the Spanish artist for having 'brought back to painting the old architectural sense, and squareness of proportion and design, which the artists of the last century had allowed to dwindle into the vignette'.<sup>12</sup> A quarry was, arguably, a shortcut to a well-designed painting. You did not need to impose 'the old architectural sense' on a quarry: it was already there, in the heaviness and squareness of the stone. It was Cubism simply waiting to happen (given a slight push over the precipice of style). This is surely why, in MacColl's words, Rothenstein's painting was 'born too soon to deserve the praises given after 1910 to less solid and cubical inspiration' (pp. 76–7).<sup>13</sup>

MacColl's comment may have been somewhat tongue in cheek; however, it opens up an interesting line of enquiry: namely, the idea that the subject of the quarry, if appropriately framed, may, on account of certain formal qualities and regardless of wider social meaning, have been innately modern or have become so by virtue of

its visual similarities with the language of Cubism. The specificity of this landscape, or the quarrying industry in general, does not concern MacColl, although the basic subject (the quarry) does, as this seems to carry with it the promise of a new approach to form, as yet unappreciated in 1904, though well understood by 1932. Rothenstein is being praised not so much for creating an innovative painting but for finding the right landscape from which to extract it. Subject is important only so far as it yields itself willingly to a particular set of formal characteristics, typified (to use words MacColl employed to describe another painting by Rothenstein) by ‘weightiness of pose, and a certain gravity’.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, the quarry emerges as a site of modernity *despite* its typical rural setting. It offers weight and solidity to a subject sometimes regarded as soft and yielding.

This argument is an important and hitherto unheeded one, which goes some way to explain the presence of quarries among subjects regularly chosen by European artists in the early twentieth century. Despite the relative neglect of the subject in critical discourse, modern artists owed a lot to quarries. Many modern sculptures, of course, were literally born of quarries, especially in the years directly before the First World War when direct carving was in the ascendancy among modern sculptors. However, painters also regularly turned to quarries for inspiration. Representations of quarries can be found in the work of a wide range of painters working in Britain in the early twentieth century, from John Singer Sargent to Paul Nash, and Roger Fry to Philip Wilson Steer.<sup>15</sup> Yet, these artists did not seek or find the same things in their subject matter. Just as there are many types of quarry – from limestone and slate to gravel and sand – let alone methods of extraction, uses and associations, so there have been many different ways of representing them, from the gleaming and industrious quarry scenes of Sargent, to the dour and silent quarry depicted by William Rothenstein. For some artists, quarries were seen as romantic spaces presenting wide-open vistas; for others, they represented a disordered, claustrophobic environment. For all the quarries that are represented teeming with activity, there are an equal number that are, like Rothenstein’s, completely deserted and that could easily be confused (as Rothenstein liked to confuse them) with cliffs by the sea, especially in cases when the quarries had been filled.<sup>16</sup> When workers are depicted, it is again with great variety. In most paintings, men appear dotted about like ants, but in a few cases, such as those by Alfred Palmer (1877–1941), they take centre-stage.<sup>17</sup> As with images of the urban industrial scene produced during the same period, there appears to be great uncertainty as to how to position the worker within the landscape, an uncertainty to which most artists responded by not

including them at all. Palmer is rare in facing up to the realities of the Dorset quarrymen; however, while he highlights the physicality of their trade, he also slips into a heroic mode in which the shirtless workers lose their individuality and become just another regional variant on the rural everyman. Ultimately, the complexities of a working quarry seem to have resisted easy assimilation through art, which may explain why, despite its widespread popularity, few artists beyond Cézanne returned to it repeatedly.

### Unearthing rural modernity

Two further examples establish connections between British artists and the European modernist tradition. For the purposes of this argument, they offer a pathway for artists of the next generation seeking to tackle rural subjects and, to paraphrase Paul Nash's famous 1932 article, 'go modern'.<sup>18</sup> These examples are taken from the work of artists who are seen as central figures in competing narratives of modern art in Britain, in which modern form and subject matter bear significant but sometimes unequal weight.

The first is a drawing by the artist Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949), who shared William Rothenstein's West Yorkshire upbringing and who, from about 1910 onwards, pursued a self-consciously avant-garde approach to form that brought him into the orbit of Wyndham Lewis. Wadsworth's experiments in form, mostly produced between 1910 and 1920, revolved around a tight selection of subjects: cityscapes, harbours, aerial views and sites of industry, including quarries.<sup>19</sup> Wadsworth's drawing *Granite Quarries, Darby Hill, Oldbury* (1919) (Figure 4.1), has been described as 'regular forms reduced to simple planes', and it is evident that what we see is a distillation of what Wadsworth saw in a particular West Midlands landscape. Nonetheless, an element of abstraction was obviously innate in the man-made landscape itself: a form of land art, arguably, before such a term existed. This is a sculpted landscape, albeit one that has been formed not with aesthetics in mind, or by a single hand, but from collective industrial need. It is a landscape formed by men and by machinery, and yet dominated still by the raw materials of nature. There is enough nature visible, it could be argued, for it to be read, still, as a landscape.

Unlike Rothenstein's image, however, Wadsworth's *Granite Quarries* is not easy to read as a *rural* landscape. The granite quarries of Oldbury, located just outside West Bromwich, near Birmingham, covered an extensive site and, though no city is visible on the horizon of Wadsworth's drawing, this can hardly be categorised as countryside



Figure 4.1 Edward Wadsworth (1889–1949), *Granite Quarries, Darby Hill, Oldbury*, 1919, ink on paper. © Tate, London 2017.

either. In contrast to Wadsworth's ambiguously urban quarry painting, Roger Fry's almost-contemporary 1918 painting, *Quarry, Bo Peep Farm* (Plate 4), represents a small quarry located in a securely rural setting in the South Downs of Sussex.

Here the rocks are obscured by vegetation and topped with mossy green grass. However, it seems highly likely that Fry chose the subject for reasons similar to Wadsworth's. In fact, in Fry's case, it is probably fair to assume that this is a direct homage to Cézanne's quarry paintings. This is countryside, clearly, and yet it is also a man-made landscape in the sense of it representing both a wall of stone mined by human hands and an abstracted likeness of that stone formed by Fry, in which even the leaves of the trees take on the angular, hefty qualities of stone.<sup>20</sup> The painting is especially remarkable when seen in the context of an earlier representation of a quarry by the same artist: Fry's 1903 watercolour, *Betchworth Limeworks*, a distinctly picturesque landscape in which the far-off limestone quarries are not immediately recognisable as a site of rural industry.<sup>21</sup> The motive for this earlier image, it could be claimed, lay not in the formal characteristics of the stone, but in its pleasing whiteness: a quality that clearly attracted John Singer Sargent to the marble quarries of Carrara, where it is the reflectiveness rather than the weight of the marble that the artist values.<sup>22</sup> Sargent's approach,

arguably, typifies that of the artist preoccupied with an Impressionist approach to light, with passing effects rather than essential qualities.

By 1918, however, a shift had occurred, and thereafter most artists were much more interested in structure than surface and much more receptive in general to the aesthetics of the industrial. This shift is neatly expressed in a passage in Andy Friend's group biography *Ravilious & Co*, in which Virginia Woolf complains in 1932 (the same year that MacColl drew fresh attention to Rothenstein's 1904 quarry painting) of the appearance of '3 incredibly vast galvanised sheds at the foot of Asheham' in Sussex, part of a local quarry and cement works. She goes on: 'the entire marsh is commanded by these glaring monstrosities and all my walks that side, not only the downs, ruined'.<sup>23</sup> At the same time that Woolf was writing these words, locally based artists of the younger generation, such as Eric Ravilious and Peggy Angus, were setting up their canvases directly in front of the very same galvanised sheds. It was, surely, works such as Wadsworth's *Granite Quarries* and Fry's *Bo Peep Farm*, which took the examples of Cézanne and Rothenstein and ran with them, that made this shift possible, encouraging artists to see what one person considered an unwelcome intrusion into the rural landscape as something that not only belonged there but also was worthy of being pictured. The question remains as to whether Ravilious and Angus were drawn entirely by the form and colour of the cement works, which in Angus's resulting painting, *Cement Works* (1934), assume a distinctly Cubist assemblage, or whether they were also driven by a desire to record aspects of local industry.<sup>24</sup>

### Celebration and ambivalence

The so-called 'extractive industries' of quarrying and mining were central to the industrial revolution.<sup>25</sup> Many of the key quarrying sites in Britain had already existed for centuries; nonetheless, their output radically increased in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries as the expansion of cities, road and rail networks, harbours and related industries demanded larger and larger amounts of stone.<sup>26</sup> The history of the quarrying industry has proved difficult to tell, however. There was some uncertainty, well into the twentieth century, as to what even constituted a quarry, an issue that bedevilled those trying to compile national statistics. Nevertheless, it is clear that it was an industry that had an impact on thousands of people across the country. Inevitably, some regions contained more quarries than others; however, with an estimated 88,753 people employed in quarries in 1901, quarrying was evidently



crucial to the nation's modern identity at the turn of the century.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, during a period in which many industries went into decline, the quarrying industry continued to grow into the 1950s. Modernisation, best seen through the process of mergers and mechanisation, ensured that production expanded even while the number of firms, personnel and working quarries stood still or declined.<sup>28</sup> In light of this, though modern artists may have been attracted initially to the formal qualities of the quarry, they cannot have been entirely unaware of the site's significance within the wider national story.

Given this history, it is especially important to register the fact that images seeking to engage directly with the quarrying industry – as opposed to images in which quarries simply appear – remain rare. There is, for instance, no obvious twentieth-century equivalent to Henry Hawkins's dramatic painting *The Penrhyn Slate Quarry* (1832), painted on the cusp of the Victorian age and at the heart of the industrial revolution. This grand painting depicts the huge slate quarry in Bethesda, Wales, being worked over by hundreds of men. It is a triumphant, perhaps unintentionally intimidating record of a thriving industry, which takes particular pleasure in the epic, shadowy sweep of the hollowed location swarming with life. As Annie Ravenhill-Johnson has noted, 'In this painting, nature is being conquered'; modernity is reshaping the rural (p. 37). Hawkins's painting celebrates a modern industrial spirit ignored in later works: not too surprising, perhaps, as the painting was commissioned by the quarry's owner, Lord Penrhyn. Even Wadsworth, whose work is perhaps closest in spirit to this brooding canvas, tended to depopulate his quarries, following a general trend noted above, in which quarries are represented as being tended by a small collection of relatively calm-looking men usually seen from a distance and rarely involved in active industry. Once the image is populated, it reads less as a landscape in which the quarry could still be mistaken for a mountain, and more obviously as a social document. The process of modernisation is evident, and the possibility of the rural and the modern co-existing seems less likely. De-population of the industrial space, regardless of whether or not it reflects a social reality, offers the viewer a kinder vision of rural modernity. This is not to say, however, that the social history of the quarrying industry cannot be recovered through modern paintings of quarries: simply that it is obscured, as further examples will reveal.

Following his early explorations of the industrial Midlands, Edward Wadsworth would return to the quarry theme much later in his career in his 1942 painting *A Limestone Quarry*.<sup>29</sup> As before, the artist derives obvious pleasure from the sharp lines of the man-made quarry,

contrasting here with the soft curves of the landscape that surrounds it. However, unlike *Granite Quarries, Darby Hill, Oldbury*, this quarry is situated in an uneasy relationship to the landscape around it, creating an image that, like much of Wadsworth's later work, bears the mark of Surrealism. Here the artist appears to be thinking about the quarry as a subject with its own claims to modernity, beyond a sculptural quality that happened to meet the demands of artists searching for some ballast against the broken brushstrokes of Impressionism. This painting engages with the strangeness of quarries, their liminality as sites that tend to exist in rural settings or in semi-rural suburbs, but which take on qualities associated with the urban. *A Limestone Quarry* is said to represent Topley Pike quarry, located outside Buxton and within the boundaries of the Peak District National Park. This is a site of industry carved into the rolling hills of a national park, blowing black smoke across the Derbyshire landscape. The lack of any human figures adds, seemingly, to the quiet menace of the image. The quarry is not contained within the hills but is inflicted upon the landscape like a wound. As so often in Wadsworth's work, modern industry, even in the depths of the Derbyshire landscape, carries with it echoes of modern warfare. This painting does not welcome modernity, though it does seem to enjoy the incongruity it offers the rural.

If Wadsworth's 1942 quarry is a dreamlike battlefield, Walter Bell's *Derbyshire Quarry* of 1937 strikes a completely different note. Bell's industrial buildings are clad in the same colours of the landscape and nestle neatly within the surroundings. The smoke that rises from the chimneys, on the far left of the canvas, is pale chalky brown rather than a choking black. Modernity has not been inflicted upon the rural landscape but lives naturally within it. This is as calm an image of a working quarry as you might expect to see: a measured celebration of rural modernity, perhaps, that nonetheless keeps its distance from the site itself. Bell's image is rare, among modern paintings at least, in making the quarry seem like a natural part of the landscape. It is reminiscent, indeed, of images made prior to the industrial expansion of the mid-nineteenth century, in which a quarry might exist as a background feature of a picturesque rural landscape – see, for example, *Landscape with a Woman in a Quarry* by William James Müller, c.1830 (National Trust). Such representations give us industrial sites bearing little sign of actual industry. You might be forgiven, looking at Bell's image, for still believing that the quarrying industry of Britain remained a contained, small-scale affair.

## The liminal quarry

Ambivalence over the significance of the modern quarrying industry is the keynote of most modern representations, with many such images anticipating the post-industrial landscape long before it became a widespread reality. A set of images related to a particular site, that of Craigleith in Edinburgh, a large sandstone quarry that flourished in the nineteenth century, provides rich illustration of this quality. Stone from Craigleith was exported to Europe and the United States, as well as providing the raw material for many of Edinburgh's buildings.<sup>30</sup> The relationship between the city and the quarry, indeed, appears to be the subject of John Bell's painting of this site, *Edinburgh from Craigleith Quarry* (c.1860, City of Edinburgh Council), in which the sunken quarry dominates the foreground with the city rising up in the distance. Sunlight breaks through the clouds and bathes the sandstone in a warm protective glow. Though the chasm that has been opened up by several decades of quarrying is substantial and could be read as a vast and violent scar on the landscape, it does not seem as though Bell is encouraging such a reading. The painting seems instead to take great pleasure in the quarry as a geological wonder, nestled within a bucolic landscape only partially disfigured by the apparatus of industry. Water lies at the bottom of the pit – the quarry was subject to regular flooding – and trees bend lovingly over it, creating the sense that industry is simply passing through this landscape as opposed to irrecoverably altering it. Modernity, industry and rurality are allowed to co-exist so long as the first two are tucked away.

In the early twentieth century, several artists, including J. D. Fergusson (*Craigleith Quarry*, 1900) (Plate 5) and James Paterson (*Edinburgh from Craigleith Quarry*, undated, c.1900), returned to Craigleith, now coming towards the end of its long life as a site of industry.<sup>31</sup> Armed with a very different approach to laying paint on canvas and dealing with a different industrial reality, these two painters nevertheless shared Bell's basic vision. Craigleith, now more of a lake than a working quarry, allows Fergusson and Paterson to engage with the industrial landscape at one remove. The post- or inter-industrial site offers a landscape that is, or was, modern, but which is also arguably still rural enough to qualify as a landscape.<sup>32</sup> There is anxiety in these images: the anxiety of the post-industrial suburbs, where once busy quarries lie waterlogged and tall derricks stand abandoned. There is recognition here that a modern landscape necessitates some sort of engagement with the conditions and apparatus of modernity, even if industry has moved on

and that apparatus is rendered in loose, hazy brushstrokes. However, the painting's style ensures that the heavy machinery used to lift rocks from the quarry in Fergusson's painting, despite or because of its centrality, could nonetheless be mistaken for a tree or the spire of a church – just as Paterson's quarry can equally easily be misidentified as a reservoir or lake. The creamy rock carries no weight here and there are no straight lines to be found. Geometric rocks and hard stone buildings would go on to feature heavily in Fergusson's art, confirming his place as a major force in Scottish Post-Impressionist painting. Here, however, even in the face of a quarry, design dissolves and the landscape remains fluid. If the painting engages with the history of Craighleith, it does so by drawing attention to its liminality: the quarry is an uncertain presence in the picture, glimpsed but not fully comprehended, central but fragmented.

### The quarry and modernism/s

The suburban quarry is also explored in James Dickson Innes's 1906 painting *View of Llanelli from the Furnace Quarry*, in which the city is, again, seen from the viewpoint of the quarry, the source of materials for many of its buildings. Innes's painting, like those of Paterson, Fergusson and Bell, is clearly fascinated by the unusual space of the quarry, which rises like a mountain in the foreground, blocking off the sun. It is a site of industry posing as a natural wonder. Like Rothenstein, it would seem, Innes is also attracted by the weight and solidity of the rocks, finding in them something that is both romantic and challenging in a purely formal sense. And yet there is, of course, a third meaning here, which lies – like so many of these images – in the title of the work: its regional specificity.

Until recently, discussion of the local has rarely featured in narratives of modernism. If Rothenstein's *The Deserted Quarry* is to be understood as a formal exercise, does it matter where that quarry is? Rothenstein's changes of title (only in one of the three does he specify the exact location of the quarry) suggest that he himself was unsure, and it is rare to find critics paying any attention to such details, typically writing to a national, largely metropolitan audience. After all, if Rothenstein is to form part of a wider narrative of European modernism – and gain wider popular recognition – it is probably going to be on the grounds of the formal qualities that were central to his artistic vision and not any preoccupation he may have had with the particularities of the quarrying industry in West Yorkshire around 1900. However, if we are serious about expanding our understanding of modernity, as we should be, beyond the usual artistic suspects, sites and centres, we should

still pursue the latter reading, not just in this case but in all images representing quarries created during this period, almost all of which wear their locality on their sleeve. While a comparison of representations of quarries, as offered above, reveals key unifying themes, it should be underlined that there is no universal quarry image, as material (along with the means of extracting it) varies from region to region, bringing a host of local associations that will not be immediately apparent to all viewers. Slate from Wales, granite from Scotland, sandstone from Yorkshire, chalk from Sussex – all carry their own meanings.

To return once more to Rothenstein's image, there is no doubt that this quarry had personal connections for the artist; he recalled playing in local quarries as a child and remained deeply attached to the colours and textures of West Yorkshire stone.<sup>33</sup> In 1897, Yorkshire produced 746,517 tons of sandstone – more than any other county – ensuring that quarries were a crucial contributor to the local and national economy.<sup>34</sup> The contemporary urban landscape of Bradford, a city whose population expanded from around 13,000 to 200,000 during the nineteenth century, was constructed from stone carved out of quarries like this, with the quality and colour of quarried stone a key source of regional pride. The year 1904, when this image was painted, was an important year for the city of Bradford, owing to the Exhibition of Art and Industry held at Lister Park from May to September, which showcased the city's notable contribution to the textile industry (the industry in which Rothenstein's own father had thrived since his emigration from Germany in the 1860s). The year 1904 also marked the inaugural exhibition of a magnificent new art gallery, the Cartwright Hall, named after the industrialist Edmund Cartwright, inventor of the power loom. Rothenstein helped organise this show and many of his works featured in it. The gallery, designed by J. W. Simpson and E. J. Milner Allen, was built in local sandstone, sourced from over twenty quarries.<sup>35</sup> It is possible that the Hawksworth quarry pictured by Rothenstein was one of these. G. A. T. Middleton's 1905 *Building Materials: Their Nature, Properties and Manufacture*, one of the best contemporary guides to quarried stone in Britain, describes Hawksworth sandstone as especially appropriate for building: 'varies from light yellow to dark grey [. . .] good weathering stone, becomes harder with exposure; close-grained' (p. 89). Though it seems a little strange that Rothenstein should have chosen, in the summer of 1904, to ignore the festivities in Lister Park or the tall mills of the city centre and set his canvas up beside a deserted quarry outside of the city boundaries, it can nevertheless be argued that he still had the city in his sights. Paradoxically, the notable expansion of the quarrying industry through the 1900s, belied as it is by the post-industrial sites pictured

by Fergusson and Paterson, was not stalled by quarry closures such as this one, but stimulated by them. At the root of the expansion was the increased number of conglomerates, encouraging a lesser number of larger quarries over a larger number of small ones. It seems improbable that Rothenstein was consciously drawing attention to this peculiarity by picturing a deserted quarry or that he saw in the quarry's abandonment a metaphor for the subsequent demise of Bradford's industrial prowess post-1904. Nevertheless, he was obviously interested and invested in the particular character and popularity of Yorkshire sandstone, reminding us that this is not just any old quarry, but a specific place, captured at a very particular moment. It is a quarry that lies at the intersection between at least three possible narratives of modernity: a pan-European narrative of formal innovation, a national narrative of industrial modernity and the narrative of modernity in West Yorkshire.

The local associations here drawn out of Rothenstein's 1904 painting can be found in many other representations of quarries, to such an extent that a single chapter could not possibly promise to extract them all. The benefits of embarking upon a wider study of such images should, however, be clear, as other studies also suggest. An especially challenging model can be found in one of the only previous examinations of the quarrying industry in relationship to rural modernity, James Wilkes's remarkable study of Purbeck in Dorset, which devotes a whole chapter to quarrying. Wilkes's close attention to a single, small region speaks to wider concerns over the narrow, exclusive narrative of modernity in which local variations, non-urban subject matter and cultural products that fall outside of a very specific style are given short shrift. Aside from the close study of Rothenstein's painting, the boundaries of this chapter have been slightly looser in an effort to accommodate as many readings as possible and to cover a wider (though far from comprehensive) range of images. It argues both for the importance of local readings and for an understanding of the wider social history of quarries while drawing attention to a disciplinary narrative in which such meanings have been flattened in favour of a more universal, formalist account, albeit one in which subject matter remains strangely fundamental. The relationship between a representation of a quarry, a rural landscape and a modern landscape has proven hard to define: therein lies the significance of images that challenge the secure boundaries scholars have traditionally used to categorise twentieth-century art.

**In dialogue with:** Chapter 1 'Ringing the Changes' (I: Networks) [representing rural technologies]; Chapter 11 'Beyond Portmeirion' (IV: Heritage) [rural romanticism; design and the material environment].

## Notes

1. MacColl, p. 76.
2. For Rothenstein's opinion of Cézanne, see his memoirs: William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories, Vols I and II and Since Fifty*.
3. Symons, p. 23.
4. The quarry in the painting is probably the one located off Odda Lane in Hawksworth, since reopened. For the most recent and comprehensive history of the modern quarrying industry in Britain, see Spires.
5. The painting has also been catalogued as *An Old Quarry, Hawksworth*. The title referencing the Brontës was used for an exhibition held at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1912.
6. William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories, Vol. I*, p. 14.
7. See, for instance, Van Gogh's *Entrance to a Quarry*, 1889 (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam). Picasso painted a quarry in 1896, well before his Cubist period.
8. John Rothenstein recalls Stein saying of Picasso's early Cubist landscapes, "it was the sheer austere *squareness* of buildings like *that* which set him off along the road to Cubism rather than any ideas about form". See *Brave Day*, p. 25.
9. See Spector.
10. John Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, p. 21.
11. William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories, Vol. II*, p. 226. 'Form is the discipline imposed on the universe by the hidden God,' he wrote in *Men and Memories, Vol. I*, p. 326.
12. William Rothenstein, *Goya*, p. 27.
13. The reference here is clearly to Roger Fry's 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition.
14. MacColl, p. 77. He is quoting an earlier review here, written – he claims – in 1900.
15. Examples of works by all of these artists, and many others mentioned later in this essay, can be found in the catalogue of paintings in public ownership in the UK: see the website 'Art UK'.
16. Rothenstein noted, in recollection of quarries in the Bradford area, 'To climb among the ledges of these old quarries . . . was like climbing among cliffs and rocks by the sea.' See William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories, Vol. I*, p. 14. Shortly after he painted *The Deserted Quarry*, he embarked upon a series of paintings of actual cliffs by the sea, such as *Nature's Ramparts* (1908) and *White Cliffs, Vaucottes* (1908).
17. See, for example, Palmer's *Purbeck Cliffside Quarrymen* (1920s) and *Dorset Quarrymen, Three Workers* (1940s).
18. Nash, "Going Modern" and "Being British". Nash contributed to the history of quarry painting in the form of a mural design overseen by William Rothenstein. The mural was never completed but the design is owned by Leeds Art Gallery.
19. For a recent discussion of Wadsworth's early work, see Black, pp. 89–101.
20. Margaret Morris's *The Quarry, Wrenfaur, Harlech* (c.1920) appears to share Fry's debt to Cézanne.

21. For illustration of this watercolour and further discussion of Fry's art, see Spalding, *Roger Fry*.
22. For recent discussion and reproduction of Sargent's Carrara paintings, see Hirshler and Carbone.
23. Friend, *Ravilious & Co*, p. 150.
24. Ravilious's friend and fellow artist Helen Binyon describes the cement works primarily in terms of the challenge they set the artist in terms of colour and mood; though she notes that the 'cement gets everywhere', this is not seen as an inconvenience for the workers so much as a point of interest for the artist. Friend, p. 152.
25. Burt, pp. 417–50.
26. Spires, p. 10.
27. Spires, p. 167. If these numbers are correct, roughly 1 in every 200 employed people worked in a quarry at that time.
28. Spires, pp. 178–83.
29. The painting is now in a private collection. For a recent auction record, see 'Paintings – Lot 203' at the website 'Wooley and Wallis'.
30. See Arkley, Browne and Hyslop.
31. Though it did not close until 1942, the quarry was inactive for large periods after 1900; in the 1920s, for instance, only twelve men were employed. The site was covered over after the Second World War and is now occupied by a Sainsbury's supermarket. See Arkley, Browne and Hyslop.
32. The use of the term inter-industrial alludes to the fact that quarries frequently open and close according to demand; an abandoned quarry has not necessarily come to the end of its industrial life.
33. William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories*, Vol. I, p. 14.
34. Spires, p. 200.
35. Bishop, 'Cartwright Memorial Hall', pp. 26–38.