

Polysèmes

Revue d'études intertextuelles et intermédiales

22 | 2019

Landscapes/Cityscapes

Changing/Unchanging Landscapes: Stanley Spencer's "Peculiarly English" Landscapes

Des paysages changeants/inchangés : les paysages « étrangement anglais » de Stanley Spencer

Liliane Louvel



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/polysemes/5623>

ISSN: 2496-4212

Publisher

SAIT

Electronic reference

Liliane Louvel, « Changing/Unchanging Landscapes: Stanley Spencer's "Peculiarly English" Landscapes », *Polysèmes* [Online], 22 | 2019, Online since 20 December 2019, connection on 24 December 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/polysemes/5623>

This text was automatically generated on 24 December 2019.

Polysèmes

Changing/Unchanging Landscapes: Stanley Spencer's "Peculiarly English" Landscapes

Des paysages changeants/inchangés : les paysages « étrangement anglais » de Stanley Spencer

Liliane Louvel

AUTHOR'S NOTE

"Peculiarly English": the expression is used by a commentator in *The Scotsman* (9 February 1929) à propos the group of painters Spencer belonged to with his brother Gilbert, Carline, Nash, Lamb etc. (Bell 256).

- 1 Some thirty years ago I was taken to Cookham by friends and visited the Spencer Gallery and the site of *The Resurrection*. The village of Cookham in Berkshire is in itself a lovely part of England, South of London, in the Maidenhead area, as idyllic and idealized as some of Spencer's own paintings. I bought some reproductions of his landscapes printed on small wood panels. I remember there was the fascinating *Cottages at Burghclere*, which hung at home for some time before being discoloured and taken away. I would never have dreamt of doing the same with one of what he called his "figure paintings", first and foremost his *Resurrection*.
- 2 We know that the etymology of *land-scape* (*land+skip*, *landschaft*) actually points to a sight which encloses an expanse of land visible to one's eye. It is a way of measuring space, which is of course an extremely anthropomorphic definition designating sight as a cognitive instrument. Land-scape—the English language can offer multiple declensions of the term as in sea-scape, in-scape town/city-scape, photo-scape—designates a limited view cut off from an unlimited space. One remembers Iouri

Lotman's definition of literature as "a finite piece of the infinite" (Lotman) which curiously resonates with that of landscape.

- 3 A landscape then is the result of a visual operation and corresponds to a scenic concept. It is also a shared space, that of a community, and it works as a cultural construction answering Kenneth Olwig's attempt at a redefinition of it as "the substantive meaning of landscape as a place of human habitation and environmental interaction" (Olwig 630). A landscape is man-made, the result of man's action, so a countryside is not "natural" at all. Actually very few landscapes (at least in Britain) could claim to be wild. Time and History have prevailed in shaping them, which is something we can hear in the *schap* of (land)*scape*. They are the result of centuries of work inscribed/written on the landscape like handwriting on a page. A parallel Michel Serres comments on when he sees a lineage between the French words *paganisme*, *païen*, *paysage*, *pays*, *paysan* and then *page*. The English retained *pagan*, *paganism*, *page*, *peasant*, but not *paysage*. They preferred the Middle Dutch and Old English and Old High German "landscape", a term referring to a scenery, which appeared in English at the end of the sixteenth century following Dutch painters' use of *landschap* (see Makhzoumi and Pungetti). For Michel Serres:

L'ancien état de nos travaux revient dans le nouveau. Le mot latin *pagus* désignait le champ que l'agriculteur labourait : terme si ancien et vénérable que le paganisme des païens, comme le paysage d'un pays, modelé patiemment par les paysans, lui empruntèrent tous cinq leur nom, religieux ou culturel. Or la page sur laquelle j'écris et que le lecteur lit aujourd'hui, stockage d'informations le plus anciennement connu, et l'un des premiers circuits, dérive aussi et encore, du même vocable.

Les lignes de l'écriture paraissent mimer les sillons du labour. (Serres 56)

[The ancient state of our works comes back in the new one. The Latin word *pagus* used to refer to the field the farmer used to plough: such an ancient venerable term that the pagans' paganism, like the landscape of a country, patiently modelled by peasants, all borrowed their five names—be they cultural or religious—from it. Still the page I am writing on and the reader is reading today, the most ancient way of stocking up information, and one of the first circuits, also and still derives from the same word.

The lines drawn by writing seem to mimic the ploughing furrows. (my translation)]

- 4 At the origin of the *picturesque* and of *landscaping* clearly stands a visual ideology. The notion of landscape points to the fact that it has been *invented* (like in a treasure trove, the "inventor" of a treasure being the one who finds and excavates it) and with the advent of paint, available in tubes, the artist's work on nature and on the motif became possible. Then landscape painting broke away from its status as mere background for high subjects be they religious or mythological scenes for History painting, as in Giorgione's or Poussin's paintings, or for portraits of noble characters in Gainsborough's own work. It eventually became autonomous even if some "grand" subjects still loomed in the background: one can only think of Turner's 1810-1812 *Snow Storm: Hannibal crossing the Alps* [fig. 1]¹, or of the 1838 *Fighting Téméraire Tugged to her last Berth to be Broken up* [fig. 2], in which, clearly, the subject comes second to the majestic, sublime scenery. On the side of exceptions perhaps we would find the symbolical Garden of Eden doomed to be abandoned and the virginal protected *hortus conclusus* of the Virgin Mary. These exemplify two manifestations of a landscape turned microcosm.

- 5 To follow suit landscape gardening presented the garden as a microcosm, paving the way to later landscape art and "Land Art". National identities even became associated with types of gardens. Visiting the Ephrussi de Rothschild Villa near Nice, one can discover nine ravishing "national" gardens: beyond the English and the French gardens, the Italian, the Japanese, Provence gardens to quote but a few, display their colours, lines and recognizable patterns and schemes.
- 6 In his own strange way, Stanley Spencer offers an interesting instance of a kind of conflicting production concerning his work on landscape. On the one hand, he is famous for his bizarre distorted figures full of angst and fervour often set against strange backgrounds. On the other hand, he also sold a lot of landscape paintings celebrating the English garden: a type of figureless rural English landscape.² It is this apparent paradox I will try to explore and look into.

Spencer's backdrop landscapes for his "figure paintings"

- 7 Spencer's landscape "production" is paradoxical, in the sense that it goes against the grain, against *doxa*, when we realize that he painted two very different kinds of landscapes. Landscapes of happy springs and summers in the country provided idyllic pastoral settings and villages which contrast with the often disturbing backdrops of his figure paintings. Still some of the local sites he was so fond of are perfectly recognizable in both. So the issue does not concern the "reality" or the truthfulness of their models but their painterly treatment.
- 8 If Cookham, the nearby Thames, the village, its streets, its churchyard as in the famous Tate *Resurrection*, the moor, the common provide the recognizable backgrounds for most of his favourite imaginative figure paintings, they sometimes evoke villages in children's illustrated tales (or nightmares) in their choice of simplification or amplification of shapes and volumes, their bold colours and a luxury of details, the highly detailed contours of bricks or plants for instance. This is the case with *Swan Upping at Cookham* [fig. 3], *Zacharias and Elizabeth* [fig. 4], *St Francis and the Birds* [fig. 5], *Adoration of Old Men* [fig. 6], or *Unveiling the Cookham War Memorial* [fig. 7].
- 9 Although the landscapes in the background are often recognizable as Cookham or the Cookham area, their pictorial treatment contributes to the oneiric quality of the paintings. In *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* [fig. 8], people seem to be flying away in fright in a Cookham street. An *unheimlich* effect results from the seemingly impossible and weird "association" of people engaged in all kinds of hectic gestures or occupations. Religious scenes are often depicted with great violence like the 1958 *Crucifixion* [fig. 9], the background of which is typically "cookhamesque". This was also the case when Spencer's own private demons came into view like in *Love Among the Nations* [fig. 10] in which a long frieze depicts men and women of all ethnic origins engaged in embracing, kissing, talking, etc. in a most striking way. The background landscape of *Love on the Moor* [fig. 11] is the Cookham Moor as a previous drawing, a kind of preparatory sketch and other paintings, shows (Bell 295). The title of *A Village in Heaven* [fig. 12] clearly signposts Spencer's own quest and vision.
- 10 Even the beautiful *Swan Upping at Cookham* [fig. 3] with its decorated frame (the bridge) its fine colours (deep blue versus brown), its composition following a movement going

left to right then back to front, and its bucolic, mundane, almost pastoral theme (although the swans are captured and bound) is weird and slightly frightening. The figures are threateningly dwarfed and we may wonder where the swans are going to end. The female character behind the boat is a compound of Gauguin's Tahiti women wearing "missionary" dresses, whereas her headdress is like a flower garland reminiscent of Piero's or other Renaissance painters' subjects, painters Spencer greatly admired. The disproportion of the limbs, the distortions of perspective, the emphasis laid on details (material, fabric, stones, bricks, and above all foliage) at times turn both landscape and people into monster-like visions. As if putting under our own eyes our worst nightmares, those of another suppressed world appearing in a *chiaroscuro* light, with the texture of their clothes seen under a microscope.

- 11 *The Resurrection, Cookham* [fig. 13]—several versions of which were painted—displays Cookham's church and its typically English adjacent churchyard as an overwhelming milieu for the gruesome and quasi grotesque scene taking place in their compound. They are clearly visible in the background together with graves, crosses, flowers, trees, the church porch, grass and landscape at the back. Spencer went on being fascinated by churchyards as late as the 1940s and even when commissioned as a war painter still painted one in the Port Glasgow Series kept at the Imperial War Museum in London. His manner slightly altered. After the war, in 1945, he painted the hallucinatory *Temptation of Saint Anthony* [fig. 14], which he set in another English churchyard. This obsession of his enabled him to combine his private (religious) vision and his taste for landscape, a grim one in this instance. Another later churchyard painting will strikingly appear, as an omen, in another work, that of a double portrait, I will show later.
- 12 Stanley Spencer most valued his figure paintings, which he found innovative and creative, and deeply regretted having to paint landscapes and still lifes to make a living. Bell reports that after the Tate Gallery bought *Terry's Lane, Cookham* in May 1933, he complained to Dudley Tooth, his gallery dealer: "As I feared everyone as usual wants my landscapes [...] I am very sorry that public galleries are taking [them] as being representative works of mine" (Stanley Spencer to Dudley Tooth, letter dated 12 June 1933 [Tooth Collection], quoted in Bell 278).

"It so happened that I was born in Cookham"³

- 13 The seemingly apparent paradox of this divided production reflects the artist's makeup and his own private division between his own self and his "other selves", as he himself called them. He even drew up a family tree of his different selves (Spencer 215) and acknowledged his "conflicting wants" (Spencer 225). His ambivalence was perceptible when he wrote: "I want to make love to everything at the same moment and yet be traditional" (Spencer 215, August 1943). He declared himself puzzled about his being in two minds about the two types of subject-matter (Bell 272). Bell sums up a letter he sent to Desmond Chute in 1927:
- He usually found landscapes "dull and empty", devoid of the spiritual exaltation of a "resurrection or a visitation..." which had "something marvellous" about it. This "unevenness between the two types of subject-matter left Spencer feeling "dubious of myself altogether" as he felt that both should move him equally.⁴
- 14 Cookham (and later for a time Wangford following his disastrous second marriage to Patricia Preece) was a place he inhabited but which also haunted him all his life. It

embodied his desire for fusion with people, places, objects, landscapes or animals and is part of his pantheistic-like vision.

- 15 Stanley Spencer's strong link with the "English" landscape is particularly obvious in his desire to be called "Cookham", the name of his Berkshire native village. He even went as far as signing his letters with: "Love from Cookham" (Spencer 50). He strongly felt for it seeing it as his "heaven" and kept painting rural landscapes all his life. Although he often had to do so as a potboiler, he did enjoy sitting out painting in the open watching and relishing the view. The landscape paintings he did before the war and in the 1920s with the Carlines, Nash, Lamb and Augustus John and his brother Gilbert show a difference in kind and style with those he did when he went on painting expeditions to Dorchester, Dorset with Gilbert, and Henry Lamb a bit later.
- 16 Not only was Spencer's *œuvre* split into two distinct styles but it was also appreciated by two very different sets of art lovers: the art critics mostly commented on and took issue with his figure paintings while the public at large bought his landscapes. My take is that we can also see this paradox in terms of a conflict of times and a kind of anachronism. On the one hand, Spencer is tied to the (national and artistic) past, which he celebrates and recreates although at times unwillingly, on the other hand his figure production is singular and original. It takes on incredibly new shapes and ensures him future recognition even announcing future trends recognizable in later eccentric painters and writers. This is the true instance of a fight between a much-loved tradition and the need to emancipate oneself from it while following one's own aesthetic choices and vision rendering.

Looking back on the past: celebrating British villages and landscape painting

- 17 Very surprising when compared with what at times reflects the ferociousness and violence if not of the subjects, at least of the deformations the figures are subjected to, is the other part of his production dedicated to landscapes, flowers, and still life paintings. These were often the result of a commission or made under pressure from his gallery owner Dudley Tooth. A fact Spencer repeatedly complains about although he direly needed the money after the split from his family.
- 18 Spencer's landscape paintings were painted in the manner resembling that of the Pre-Raphaelites (with a lot of details and brilliant colours as well as a very present foreground seen at close range), a fact widely acknowledged by critics of the time. What is also particularly striking and may make one giddy is his singular use of perspective: he often chose to paint from an elevated position thus favouring a high angle close to a bird's eye view and a lot of the scenes are captured from high up.
- 19 The paintings of cottages, farmhouses, moors, woods, fields, Thames Valley sites, and villages snugly tucked away down hillsides, are rendered in a highly detailed realistic manner which was a favorite of collectors, who enjoyed these less controversial and disturbing subjects. They are reminiscent of some of John Constable's landscapes, which also favoured a high viewpoint, like the 1828 *Vale of Dedham* [fig. 15]. They have a strong foreground which in the case of Spencer acted as a kind of frame but also as a barrier obstructing vision, forcing the eye to make the effort of going beyond the often highly detailed obstacle, foliage or hedge. It gave pride of place to a peaceful valley

softly unrolling beneath the eye in tones of yellow and green. This was the very type of village used during the Second World War for propaganda aiming at defending the country and rallying people's national feeling. It symbolized undying Old England, an instance of which can be seen in Frank Newbould's 1942 *The South Downs/Your Britain fight for it now* sponsored by the Army Bureau of Current Affairs [fig. 16].

- 20 Writing about *Cottages at Burghclere* [fig. 17], in 1927-1930, *The Times* critic described this work as "the work of a Pre-Raphaelite who has looked at Cézanne [...] without a moment disparaging the intelligent applications of lessons from France [...]. [I]t may be questioned if Mr. Spencer is not showing a better way in working towards unity through what may be called the rough of his native talents" (*The Times*, undated cutting, anon., 7.33.12.1 [Tate Gallery Archives Stanley Spencer collection]). "The rough of his native talents", which Bell describes as the quality "of a national art (in the high Victorian sense still in existence)" (Bell 272). Critics found such traditional "English" landscapes reassuring after all in front of Fry's, Bell's, Grant's and other Modernist painters' works and experiments which seemed much too European-oriented.

Nostalgia

- 21 Spencer's paintings also corresponded to a renewal "of interest in the English garden, best represented by Gertrude Jekyll's designs and books" (Bell 284). A fact which also might explain why they were so popular and sold well. This was also attuned to the English Heritage series in 1929 broadcast by the BBC and devoted to the "national character", and the taste for "the cultural cottage" (Osbert Lancaster). The long-running *Country Houses* also set the tune for desirable properties and gardens with herbacious borders, a luxuriance of well watered plants and flowers, and abundance of green grass to sit on in summer to have tea. Let us remember that the opening scene of *Portrait of a Lady* is set in such surroundings with the country house standing in the background.
- 22 Spencer's landscapes responded and contributed to the fashioning of a particular nostalgia for a quickly disappearing rural world people could still connect with, reminiscent of happy memories and times gone by (see Tinniswood). Literary equivalents could be found in Thomas Hardy's Wessex and E.M. Forster's disparaging of buildings and cities, hailing an ideal England in *Abinger Harvest*:
- Houses, houses, houses! You came from them and you must go back to them. Houses and bungalows, hotels, restaurants, and flats, arterial roads, by-passes, petrol pumps and pylons—are these going to be England? Are these man's final triumph? or is there another England green and eternal, which will outlast them? (Forster 384)⁵
- 23 Nostalgia and jingoism explain the success of those "lovely" pictures, although people did not perceive the slightly or discreet uncanny elements one may perceive in them: for Spencer never gave up his singular vision of his ordinary world in spite of its peculiar perspective and crowded in details. In the beautiful gardens and landscapes he painted which were so popular and admired as truly English, some uncanny element may be described: huge squat massive jars, too brilliant colours, gardens overrun with vegetation gone wild smothering houses, iron scraps left to rust, strange twiglike distorted tree limbs, a bowl of captive fish solitary left on flags in front of boats, an unexpected leg of mutton in a nude painting of Patricia Preece [fig. 18]... The leg of

mutton refers to a typical English feature and institution characteristic of a typically English rural landscape. "The Leg of Mutton" was the name of a country pub Hilda Carline, Stanley Spencer's first wife, and the painter used to go to. In the painting representing Patricia Preece in the nude, the leg of mutton quaintly appears as reminiscent of the estranged Hilda. Thus, the pub and its name evoke past memories under the aegis of one of the British people's favourite places. A fact which has not escaped Jonathan Coe in *Expo 58* when he whimsically focuses on the pub to be lodged in the British Pavilion in the Brussels World Fair. For it then represents the epitome of Britishness under the name of ... "Britannia", aptly chosen by the Central Office of Information (COI), as one of its leaders explains:

"The idea is to sell—or should I say to *project*—an image of the British character. Looking at things [...] looking at things, as I said, both historically and culturally—and also scientifically. We're trying to look back, of course, on our rich and varied history; but we're also trying to look forward. Looking forward to the...to the ...
[...]

"To the future?" Mr. Ellis suggested. (Coe 6)

- 24 Spencer's paintings sold quite well and thus in their turn can be said to have contributed to the construction of the national myth of British identity. Doesn't the front cover of Norton's *Anthology of English Literature's* seventh edition, volume 2, dedicated to the romantic period, Victorian literature and the twentieth century, reproduce *Swan Upping at Cookham*? Thus, the publisher Norton acknowledges the British quality of the painting and its subject, but it also cleverly promotes one of the close-to-cubism or Gauguin-inspired pictures by Stanley Spencer in keeping with modernism and its literature.
- 25 Spencer slowly became a national artist acknowledged as such. One of his most famous series, commemorating the First World War, painted on the walls of the Burghclere Memorial, was presented to the National Trust by its owners Mr and Mrs Behrend in 1947, when the artist was still alive. Quite a number of his paintings were bought by The Tate Gallery and can be seen there nowadays. The Tate keeps his letters (sometimes including drawings) and all kinds of material in its archives and Adrian Glew was entrusted with the publication of some of them. The Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge) bought *Cottages at Burghclere* [fig. 17] in 1930 at the Goupil Salon, quite a number of his paintings are kept in The Ferens Gallery in Hull. An exhibition of his work was held in 1980 at the Royal Academy and then a retrospective in 1997 in Washington DC under the title *Stanley Spencer: An English Vision* (1997) organized by the Hirshborn Museum and Sculpture Garden.
- 26 K. Bell's comprehensive complete *Catalogue* was published by Phaidon in 1992. One of the flaps of it reads:
- Stanley Spencer (1891-1959) is one of the outstanding painters of the twentieth century. Highly controversial and single minded in the pursuit of his personal vision, he often suffered neglect and hostility, and he has tended to be seen as an eccentric visionary working within an essentially English tradition. However, with the recent rapid growth of his reputation, his contribution to British art and his true stature as an artist are now internationally recognized.
- 27 So, surprisingly this paradoxical "eccentric" artist has been recognized as typically English (and eventually British), that is one belonging to the centre and the establishment as opposed to the margin as the word "eccentric" suggests. It is true that his work, deeply rooted in the English soil, space and history, seems for a major part

relatively immune to foreign influence, although he had his post-impressionist moment, something visible in *Mending Cows*, *Cookham* [fig. 19], or some of his still lifes. "An artist who had seen Cézanne" as a critic put it, but his mature work is more in the manner of the Pre-Raphaelites and a realistic rendering often close to photographic extreme precision.

A twist into the future

- 28 The idealized vision of an English village and its cottages promoted by *Country Life* was after all re-captured in such popular productions as twentieth and twenty-first centuries TV series such as *the Miss Marple series*, *Downton Abbey* or *Midsomer Murders*. The Berhends who commissioned the memorial chapel in Burghclere, and bought quite a lot of Spencer's landscapes—which were familiar to them—belong to this rural part of moneyed society close to the eighteenth-century gentry, who enjoyed residing in their fine country houses far from "the madding crowd". Actually, Burghclere stands next to Highclere where *Downton Abbey*—the media embodiment of this nostalgic evocation of Edwardian England that modern British TV viewers enjoyed so much—was shot.
- 29 And other artists will discreetly but nonetheless effectively follow this trend: Lucian Freud in particular if we compare some of his work to Spencer's nude paintings we can find a common taste for the blue, white red nuances of flesh. Even in Freud's landscapes we may find similarities: for instance if we compare Spencer's *Merville Garden Village Near Belfast* [fig. 20] and Freud's *Factory in North London* [fig. 21]. We can also think of Francis Bacon's paintings of spilling out flesh. Strikingly too some of David Hockney's portraits, like the portrait of his parents [fig. 22] or *Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy* [fig. 23], could compare with *Mr and Mrs Baggett* [fig. 24], all partaking of conversation pieces opening onto windows. *Mr and Mrs Baggett* offers a fascinating double portrait set against a window opening onto a churchyard looming in the background in the most uncanny way. Even some of Hockney's recent Yorkshire landscapes strikingly share formal traits with Spencer's views of Cookham's fields and meadows seen from a distance, for instance Hockney's 2006 *The Road to Thwing* [fig. 25]. Paula Rego's disjointed fairy-tale characters also come to mind and are to a certain extent reminiscent of Spencer. In 2018, the Tate Gallery dedicated an exhibition entitled *All Too Human* to Lucian Freud, Frank Auerbach, Francis Bacon and Paula Rego, among others. Two portraits of Patricia Preece by Stanley Spencer featured in the very first rooms acknowledging the link between his work and these artists'.
- 30 The English village and the Thames Valley area which Stanley Spencer kept close to his heart and painted all his life, and which he practically never left—except during the wars and for the occasional trip abroad with friends—pervaded even his "figure paintings". These, which he liked so much and rated higher than all other creations, as being his true achievement as an English painter, still retain the flavour of Cookham, his—paradoxical—heaven. So that this controversial artist who was labelled as an "eccentric" for his—often bewildering—formal inventions, was nevertheless endowed with a trait often attributed to the English character as a rule. Deeply "eccentric" in inspiration, he was also deeply of his nation in his love for fine landscapes, which he painted and rendered unto his fellow countrymen for keeps, in celebration of:

This royal throne of kings, this scepter'd isle,
 This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
 This other Eden, demi-paradise,
 This fortress built by Nature for herself
 Against infection and the hand of war,
 This happy breed of men, this little world,
 This precious stone set in the silver sea...
 (*Richard II*, Act II, scene 1)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bell, Keith. *Stanley Spencer* (1992). London: Phaidon, 2011.
- Coe, Jonathan. *Expo 58*. London: Penguin Books, 2013.
- Forster, E.M. *Abinger Harvest* (1934). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972.
- Lotman, Iouri. *La Structure du texte artistique*. Paris : Gallimard, 1973.
- Matless, David. *Landscape and Englishness* (1998). London: Reaktion Books, 2016.
- Makhzoumi, Jala and Gloria Pungetti. *Ecological Landscape Design and Planning*. London: Taylor and Francis, 1999.
- Olwig, Kenneth R. "Recovering the Substantive Meaning of Landscape". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86.4 (December 1996): 630-653.
- Serres, Michel. *La Légende des anges*. Paris : Flammarion, 1993.
- Spencer, Stanley. *Letters and Writings*. Selected and edited by Adrian Glew. London: Tate Publishing, 2001.
- Tinniswood, Adrian. *The Long Weekend: Life in the English Country House 1918-1939*. New York: Basic Books, 2016.

APPENDIXES

Figure 1: J.M.W. Turner, *Snow Storm: Hannibal crossing the Alps* (exhibited 1812), oil on canvas, 146x237 cm, Tate Britain, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-snow-storm-hannibal-and-his-army-crossing-the-alps-n00490>, last accessed 1 November 2019

Figure 2: J.M.W. Turner, *The Fighting Téméraire Tugged to her last Berth to be Broken up* (1839), oil on canvas, 91x122 cm, National Gallery, London, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/joseph-mallord-william-turner-the-fighting-temeraire>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 3: Stanley Spencer, *Swan Upping at Cookham* (1915-1919), oil on canvas, 148x116.2 cm, Tate collections, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-swan-upping-at-cookham-t00525>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 4: Stanley Spencer, *Zacharias and Elizabeth* (1913-1914), oil on canvas, 142.6x142.8 cm, Tate collections, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-zacharias-and-elizabeth-t07486>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 5: Stanley Spencer, *St Francis and the Birds* (1935), oil on canvas, 66x58.4 cm, Tate collections, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-st-francis-and-the-birds-t00961>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 6: Stanley Spencer, *Adoration of Old Men* (1937), oil on canvas, 90.6x110.5 cm, New Walk Museum and Art Gallery, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/adoration-of-old-men-81495>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 7: Stanley Spencer, *Unveiling the Cookham War Memorial* (1922), oil on canvas, private collection, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/unveiling-cookham-war-memorial>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 8: Stanley Spencer, *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem* (c. 1920), oil on canvas, 114.2x144.8 cm, Leeds Art Gallery, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/christs-entry-into-jerusalem-37832>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 9: Stanley Spencer, *Crucifixion* (1958), oil on canvas, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/the-crucifixion-1958s>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 10: Stanley Spencer, *Love Among the Nations* (1935-1936), oil on canvas, 91.1x280 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, <https://www.artuk.org/discover/artworks/love-among-the-nations-4599>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 11: Stanley Spencer, *Love on the Moor* (1949-1954), oil on canvas, 79.1x310.2 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, <https://www.artuk.org/discover/artworks/love-on-the-moor-4600>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 12: Stanley Spencer, *A Village in Heaven* (1937), oil on canvas, 43.5x183.5 cm, Manchester Art Gallery, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/a-village-in-heaven-206089>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 13: Stanley Spencer, *The Resurrection, Cookham* (1924-1927), oil on canvas, 274.3x548.6 cm, Tate collections, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-the-resurrection-cookham-n04239>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 14: Stanley Spencer, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, oil on canvas, 122x 91.5 cm.

Figure 15: John Constable, *The Vale of Dedham* (1828), oil on canvas, 144.5x122 cm, National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh, <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/4766/vale-dedham>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 16: Frank Newbould, *The South Downs/Your Britain fight for it* (1942), lithograph, 50.4x75.5 cm, Imperial War Museum, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20289>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 17: Stanley Spencer, *Cottages at Burghclere* (1927-1930), oil on canvas, 62.2x160 cm, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/cottages-at-burghclere-4595>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 18: Stanley Spencer, *Double Nude Portrait: The Artist and his Second Wife (The Leg of Mutton Nude)* (1937), 91.5x93.5 cm, oil on canvas, Tate Modern, London, <https://>

www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/double-nude-portrait-the-artist-and-his-second-wife-the-leg-of-mutton-nude-1937, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 19: Stanley Spencer, *Mending Cows*, Cookham (1915), oil on canvas, 109.2x109.2 cm, Tate collections, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/spencer-mending-cows-cookham-t00530>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 20: Stanley Spencer, *Merville Garden Village Near Belfast* (1951), oil on canvas 59.5x91 cm, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/stanley-spencer/merville-garden-village-near-belfast-1951>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 21: Lucian Freud, *Factory in North London* (1972), oil on canvas, 71x71 cm, private collection, <https://www.wikiart.org/en/lucian-freud/factory-in-north-london>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 22: David Hockney, *My Parents* (1977), oil on canvas, 182.9x182.9 cm, Tate collection, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hockney-my-parents-t03255>, last accessed 11 December 2019.

Figure 23: David Hockney, *Mr and Mrs Clark and Percy* (1970-1971, acrylic on canvas, 213.4 x 304.8 cm, Tate collections, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hockney-mr-and-mrs-clark-and-percy-t01269>, 1 November 2019.

Figure 24: Stanley Spencer, *Mr and Mrs Baggett* (1956-1957), oil on canvas, 61x91.5 cm, Stanley Spencer Gallery Cookham, <https://www.artuk.org/discover/artworks/mr-and-mrs-baggett-27350>, last accessed 1 November 2019.

Figure 25: David Hockney, *The Road to Thwing* (2006), see <https://thedauidhockneyfoundation.org/resources/film/the-road-to-thwing>, last accessed 11 December 2019.

NOTES

1. See list of paintings at the end of the article.
2. I shall use the word "English" to refer to Spencer's paintings, for they are particularly indebted to the English landscape tradition and are set in a very "English" area of England. His paintings also aim at rendering its traditional views and scenes and were acknowledged as the epitome of South-West London rural landscape. Also see Matless.
3. Stanley Spencer, *Letters and Writings*, selected and edited by Adrian Glew (London: Tate Publishing, 2001).
4. Bell 272, quoting the letter from Stanley Spencer to Desmond Chute, letter n°52 c. 1927, SSG (Stanley Spencer Gallery)
5. E.M. Forster's "Abinger pageant" celebrated the life of the Surrey village of Abinger, as well as national identity and history. On 15 July 1934, *The Observer* remarked that "to those interested in preserving the beauty and the native occupations of the English countryside, the Pageant of Abinger [...] should make an insistent appeal" (19). See Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton, Paul Readman, "The Pageant of Abinger", *The Redress of the Past*, <http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/948/>, last accessed 14 November 2019.

ABSTRACTS

Stanley Spencer strongly felt for the English landscape and in particular for Cookham, his native village in Berkshire, which he called his "heaven". He kept painting rural landscapes all his life. Although he often had to do so as a potboiler, he did enjoy sitting out painting in the open, watching and relishing the view. Spencer's landscape "production" is complex and paradoxical. Two very different modes of landscape painting can be described. First, Cookham, the Thames, the village, its churchyard, such as in the famous Tate *Resurrection*, provide the backdrop for his favourite imaginative "distorted" figure paintings. Very surprising is the other part of his production dedicated to landscapes, flowers, and still life paintings. These were often the result of commissions. They are reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelites' manner (with a lot of details and brilliant colours). They also corresponded to a renewal of interest in the English garden. This was also attuned to the English Heritage series broadcast in 1929 by the BBC and devoted to the "national character", reflecting the taste for "the cultural cottage" (Osbert Lancaster). The paintings of cottages, moors, Thames valley sites, villages tucked down hillsides, are rendered in a highly detailed realistic manner, a favourite of collectors'. This study will focus on Spencer's two "manners" and analyse the extent to which his landscapes contributed to the fashioning of a nostalgic yearning for a quickly disappearing world also celebrated in E.M. Forster's taste for "England green and eternal" (*Abinger Harvest*) for instance. The idealized vision of an English village promoted by *Country Life* was also after all re-captured in such TV popular productions as the *Miss Marple* series, *Downton Abbey*, or *Inspector Morse*.

Stanley Spencer a toujours manifesté un attachement profond pour les paysages anglais et en particulier pour celui de Cookham, son village natal du Berkshire qu'il appelait son paradis. Toute sa vie, il peignit des paysages de campagne. Bien qu'il dût souvent le faire pour des motifs économiques, il aimait cependant s'asseoir en plein air pour peindre sur le motif. La production de paysages de Spencer est complexe et paradoxale. On peut distinguer dans son œuvre deux façons très différentes de peindre le paysage. Tout d'abord, Cookham, la Tamise, le village, le cimetière visible dans la célèbre *Résurrection* conservée à la Tate, fournissent l'arrière-plan de ses figures d'imagination « distordues » et fiévreuses. D'autre part, des paysages, des fleurs, des natures mortes, sont peints sans figures. Il s'agit là souvent d'œuvres de commande. Elles évoquent la manière des préraphaélites (abondance de détails, couleurs vives). Elles correspondent aussi à un regain d'intérêt pour le jardin anglais. La série d'émissions de la BBC diffusées en 1929, dédiée au « caractère national », reflétait le goût pour le « cottage culturel » selon Osbert Lancaster. Les tableaux de « cottages », de landes, de la vallée de la Tamise, de villages enfouis au creux de collines, sont travaillés dans une manière réaliste très détaillée, celle qu'affectionaient les collectionneurs. Je m'attacherai à observer les deux manières de paysages de Spencer et j'analyserai dans quelle mesure ses paysages participèrent d'une aspiration toute nostalgique à un monde qui disparaissait rapidement. On en trouve des équivalents littéraires chez E.M. Forster par exemple et sa célébration d'une « Angleterre verte et éternelle » (*Abinger Harvest*). La vision idéalisée d'un village anglais entretenue par *Country Life* fut plus tard remise en scène dans des séries télévisées comme *Miss Marple*, *Downton Abbey* ou *Inspector Morse*.

INDEX

Keywords: nostalgia, heritage, paradox, cottage, English countryside, landscape, English garden, national character

Mots-clés: patrimoine, nostalgie, paradoxe, cottage, campagne anglaise, paysage, jardin anglais, caractère national

AUTHORS

LILIANE LOUVEL

Liliane Louvel est professeur émérite de littérature britannique à l'université de Poitiers. Son champ de recherche est la littérature britannique contemporaine et les rapports texte/image. Elle a publié six ouvrages sur les rapports entre texte et image : *L'Œil du texte* (PU du Mirail, 1998), *The Picture of Dorian Gray : le double miroir de l'art* (Ellipses, 2000), *Texte/image, images à lire et textes à voir* (PU de Rennes, 2002), *Le Tiers pictural, pour une critique intermédiaire* (PU de Rennes, 2010), *Poetics of the Iconotext* (trad. Laurence Petit, ed. Karen Jacobs, Ashgate, 2011) et *The Pictorial Third: An Essay into Intermedial Criticism* (Routledge, 2018). Elle a également dirigé ou co-dirigé plusieurs recueils d'essais sur le même sujet : *Like Painting...* (PU de Rennes, « La Licorne », 1999), *Actes du colloque de Cerisy : Texte/image : nouveaux problèmes* (co-dir. Henri Scepi, Rennes : PUR, 1999), *Photographie et littérature* (co-dir. J.-P. Montier, D. Meaux and P. Ortel, PU de Rennes, 2008), *Carrefour Stieglitz* (co-dir. J.-P. Montier & Jay Bochner, PU de Rennes, 2012), *Intermedial Arts Disrupting Remembering and Transforming Media* (co-ed. Leena Leilitta & Sabine Kim, Cambridge Scholars, 2012), *Musing in the Museum* (co-ed. Laurence Petit & Karen Brown, Word/Image, Taylor and Francis, 2015). Elle est actuellement présidente de IAWIS/IAERTI (International Society of Word & Image Studies).