Tragic Hope

Sentiment and Critique in the Art of J.M.W. Turner

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**Tragic Hope – Sentiment and Critique in the Art of J.M.W. Turner**

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**Abstract**

This is a study of historical meanings in J.M.W. Turner’s art. As a starting point, it examines the cultural backdrop and mission of theorists of the Royal Academy, specifically Joshua Reynolds, to improve society. This mission, I argue, owes much to a strand of thinking particularly current at the time, aligned with the recently formed utopian concept of the bourgeois public: sentimentalism. Turner’s art, this thesis proposes, pursued this utopian ideal throughout. While landscape art around 1800 tended to be interpreted in contexts which abstracted art from societal significance, Turner’s earliest composite works already guided their audiences’ understanding towards the moral effects of tragedy through their paratexts. Apart from these works, exhibited in 1798 and 1799, whose paratexts have been studied in the past mostly for their enhancement of aesthetic effects, this thesis studies three more groups of Turner’s works: a second body are composite works from around 1800, some with appended texts supposedly written by the artist himself, which bear references to an artist-persona and artistic mission and therefore help single out Turner’s artistic mission. Another body of works are selected from the period when Turner’s *Fallacies of Hope* were in use. They particularly promote a pacifistic, anti-heroic ideal. The fourth group is defined by its subject matter, Venice. This thesis proposes that all of the groups, but particularly the last two, use paratexts as means to mingle an educational mission with sharp criticisms of reigning aesthetic and ethical approaches.
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Abbreviations


B.I.  Exhibited at the British Institution


R.A.  Exhibited at the Royal Academy


Introduction

In this thesis, I seek to contextualise J.M.W. Turner’s art within a philosophical strand of thinking that has previously been marginalised in art historical research: sentimentalism. The project was initially intended as an investigation into the affinities between Turner and German Romanticism. These affinities I sought to define according to the iconographic frameworks offered in Turner’s art, specifically his composite works. While I was studying these, I realised that they in themselves provided the scope for a thesis. My engagement with Turner’s art went along not only with this change of my specific subject, but also with re-examinations of my initial perspective on writings on Turner and Romanticism, which was informed by my previous study of comparative literature, and, on the other hand, of the assumptions held by the existing scholarship on Turner, mostly conducted in the field of art history. This thesis examines Turner’s visual art, but it does so also with means that are derived from literary analysis, precisely because Turner’s works’ ways to generate meaning were to a huge part constituted through texts, and by allusion to texts. Following previous approaches to Turner’s work suggested, among others, by John Gage, Jerrold Ziff, Sam Smiles, Kathleen Nicholson and Eric Shanes, this study attempts a historical contextualisation of his art which takes its major cues from the interpretative hints that were added to many of his exhibited works.¹ My argument is based on readings of selected works by Turner which illuminate his didactic ideal and artistic mission. Before I expand on what I mean by this precisely, the specific nature of Turner’s art, and my methodology, which was derived from it, need further explanation.

¹ My approach seems to resemble most that of Kathleen Nicholson in Turner’s Classical Landscapes. Myth and Meaning, Oxford/Princeton, Princeton UP 1990. Nicholson focuses on works by Turner that refer to antiquity, and differs from this thesis also in the interpretive framework she offers: like me, she argues that some of Turner’s works were construed as “critical constructs that persuade his viewer to re-examine moral certitudes and assumptions”, but, as opposed to myself, she suggests that these mainly refer to “the natural world and our place in it” (p. xv). Like me, Nicholson does not refer much to Ruskin’s interpretations for her own readings (p. xv) – in my case, this choice is due to Ruskin’s notion of moral aesthetics which seems to rather contrast the one expressed by Turner’s art.
Reading Turner’s paratexts

Turner’s art was innovative in rhetorical and narrative ways, and developed these aspects through allusions and references that were often implied in appended texts. Many of these texts were printed next to the titles of the respective works in the exhibition catalogues of the Royal Academy. The catalogues were a fundamental acquisition for the visitors, as they gave the exhibited works’ titles and the names of the artists. The appended texts would naturally have had effects on interpretations. While in most cases, image and text would correspond with each other in unproblematic ways, Turner’s composite works often challenged their audiences. To derive meanings, they had to follow Turner’s clues, and establish interpretations in a way comparable to how Wolfgang Iser has described novelistic strategies of anticipating readers’ interpretative activity in eighteenth-century narratives: Iser argues that novels of the time consciously evoked generic conventions in order to deviate from them and guide readers on their own ‘quests for meaning’. 

Turner’s specific and idiosyncratic techniques of meaning-making did not correlate with the modes of interpretation that were actually applied to his art by critics of his time. This is why I isolate his art to a certain degree from the discourses that were spun around his works and persona directly. The analytic approach of this thesis hence differs from many former inquiries. My main interest lies in the discursive location of Turner’s art not as it was itself talked about in reviews and other preserved interpretive accounts, but as its own intrinsic

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horizons of meanings could have engendered. In terms of primary sources, I thus mostly refer to material which illuminates the thematic and topical links in Turner’s works, also to be able to derive structural parallels between the art and philosophical (in the widest sense) strands of thinking at the time. Although Turner’s immediate intellectual and cultural environment serves as a frame for my suggested interpretations, any biographical references that may be found in his work do not form a part of my analyses, since they would have escaped most recipients of his own time. Any implied meanings of societal relevance, in which I am interested here, would necessarily supersede the biographical.

I aim at understanding Turner’s art by contrasting his own interpretive approach to established modes of reading at his time, which I sketch in the first two chapters. Turner’s interpretive approach and ideology are partly hinted at in his lecture manuscripts and annotations to books that he read, notably those to Martin Archer Shee’s *Elements of Art* (1809) and John Opie’s *Lectures on Painting* (1809).\(^4\) Mostly, however, they can be derived from the texts which he appended to his exhibited paintings. These texts were tied to the specific time and place in which his paintings were exhibited – sometimes Turner changed the epigraphs and titles of his works for different contexts.\(^5\) Although I use the term ‘composite works’ to designate the paintings which were supplemented by texts in the respective exhibition catalogues, the nature of these works thus was only temporarily, performatively, constituted. The main exhibition platform which I am going to consider here are the annual exhibitions at the Royal Academy, as they

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\(^4\) Turner’s handwriting is notoriously incoherent and hard to decipher, and the scope of this project did not allow me to engage with the lecture manuscripts in full. I used Maurice Davies’ *Turner as Professor* as a guide to contents in general, and Jerrold Ziff’s transcriptions in “J.M.W. Turner on Poetry and Painting” (*Studies in Romanticism* 3:4 (1964), pp. 193-215), which were checked against the original for their specific contexts. Regarding the “Backgrounds” lecture, I rely on Jerrold Ziff’s transcription, published in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26:1/2 (1963), pp. 124-147 (abbreviated as BL). Turner’s annotated books are in a private collection and have not been available for study to me. I rely on the transcriptions by Barry Venning, published in *Turner Studies* as “Turner’s Annotated Books: Opie’s ‘Lectures on Painting’ and Shee’s ‘Elements of Art’” in three parts: *Turner Studies* 2:1 (1982), pp. 36-46; 2:2 (1983), pp. 40-9 and 3:1 (1983), pp. 33-44; 2. They are abbreviated as EA (I), EA (II) and EA (III).

\(^5\) Turner’s *Narcissus and Echo*, for example, was exhibited with a long quote at the Royal Academy in 1804, and only with the affix “(from Ovid’s Met)” two years later at the British Institution. *The Goddess of Discord choosing the apple of contention in the garden of the Hesperides* (B.I. 1806) was exhibited at Turner’s gallery as *Garden of the Hesperides* in 1808.
were the social events most predestined for statements of societal significance: the official mission of the Academy was not only to improve (and represent) the state of the arts in Britain, but also to improve the nation through the art it promoted. In this performative realm, the construction of meaning would most likely be related to issues of national concerns and broader cultural contexts.

The texts which Turner provided for his paintings can most usefully be understood as paratext, following a concept that has been established in literature studies. Paratext designates the texts framing the actual work (or text), such as titles, mottos, dedications, epigraphs and notes. The paratext forms the link between the artwork and its public, and situates it in its particular historical place and moment. Paul Magnuson has argued that in the Romantic period, the paratext was ascribed particular significance in the realm of literature. It was construed, he writes, as “the road of allusion to other works” which pointed and responded “to a public discourse that indicates subjects of social and political concern.” I follow his suggestion to “read them as forms of mediation, as gestures of address, and as paths of allusion” with my own method of analysing Turner’s works. While I do not limit my interest to composite works, I use Turner’s paratexts as the major guidance to interpreting his art in their historical contexts.

Through his paratexts, including his paintings’ titles, Turner could expand the associative richness of his works – something which was widely expected from good art. Moreover, however, they also enabled him to control the approaches of his audiences to his paintings to some degree, and to guide their interpretations. Importantly, the device also allowed him to detach his iconography from traditional codes and convey meanings that were – theoretically – still intelligible.

**Contextualising The Fallacies of Hope**

While Turner’s paratextual allusive techniques and contents were notoriously diverse, the philosophical framework into which they were embedded by Turner

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himself was relatively continuous throughout his career. From 1812 onwards, this framework was given a motto, dressed as the title of a manuscript poem by Turner (which was never found among his documents). He quoted from his *Fallacies of Hope* for some of the most evocative of his works, particularly in his late career. Chapter six of this thesis specifically focuses on paintings that were exhibited after 1812, and would have been associated with Turner’s philosophical motto, sometimes even if they had not been given a (supposed) quotation associated with it.\(^8\) However, the foundations of the *Fallacies of Hope* can already be identified in Turner’s earliest composite works, which constitute the subject of my chapters three and four.

*The Fallacies of Hope* are often interpreted as indicating Turner’s supposed ‘pessimism’. The title of this thesis, “Tragic Hope”, quotes the title of a sermon by Alan Gaunt, preached at the Turner Commemoration Service in 1977. In it, Gaunt suggested “tragic hope” or “tragic optimism” as an alternative understanding of *The Fallacies of Hope*.\(^9\) This understanding seems more appropriate, I suggest, because it takes account of the importance of narratives in Turner’s art. While pessimism designates a static worldview, tragic hope points at an implied (tragic) turn from hope to despair, and thus brings in the possibility of the affective response and educational effect that was (is) ascribed to tragedy.\(^10\) As this thesis aims to show, Turner seems to have been deeply concerned with the didactic effects of his art, and made particular use of tragic turns in it. His *Fallacies of Hope*, accordingly, mostly demand a contemplation of the loss of hope, rather than indicating a general pointlessness of hope.

The fact that most of the meanings which I derive from Turner’s paintings and paratexts in this thesis could have been identified by his contemporaries, but

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\(^8\) For the differentiation between motto and epigraph comp. Genette (1997), *Paratexts*, p. 144.


\(^10\) This educational goal of Turner’s art has been pointed out before. Sam Smiles, in his Kurt Pantzer Memorial lecture on Turner’s narratives (published in *Turner Society News* 77 (1997), pp. 4-8 and 78 (1998), pp. 10-16) has emphasised the interpretive guidance of Turner’s paratexts, too. By contrast to my argument, however, he suggests that the educational aim was to illuminate spectators and critics “about the truth of painting” (no. 77, p. 7), similar to that discussed in Schelling’s *System des transcendentalen Idealismus* (1800).
in reality were not, notably bears a link with Turner’s own aesthetic vision. It seems that the didactic messages in his art purposefully contrasted the realities of their reception, as they were aligned with an essentially utopian model: that of a politically viable public.

The notion of a public had emerged in the eighteenth century as a utopian concept which to some extent, as I explain in chapter one, was the ideological basis for forming a notion of the middle classes. This utopia was tied to the belief and hope that a society was possible whose members were both equal and felt mutually responsible for each other, without an imposed hierarchy of order. The tragic turn, ideally evoking sympathy for the sufferer in the observer, was ascribed particular powers regarding the achievement of the utopian goal: sympathetic bonds were thought to be the basis of a community of equals. Art, particularly history painting, supposedly inspired such ‘moral sentiments’. Theorists such as Joshua Reynolds, who was an important influence on Turner’s own theories, subscribed to this view. However, as I also show in chapter one, the rhetorical means enabling the educational effects of art were problematic especially with regard to visual representations. Moreover, they were increasingly considered as old-fashioned, and by the end of the century were mostly replaced by more autonomous models of aesthetic effects. Aesthetic pleasure in itself, I argue, in these theories, which were particularly applied to landscape (the subject of chapter two), lost its supposed didactic, societal function. I aim to show that Turner sought to bring in this function again, yet in doing so he complicated its functionality, since his tragic turns were mostly ‘hidden’ in the allusive structures of his works.

The fact that art such as Turner’s was not effective in its didactic purposes, and was exposed to criticisms which ignored its societal demands, became palpable in Turner’s art itself. The theme of frustrated hope, his major topic, sometimes specifically referred to the frustrated efforts of art’s improving effects. In chapter five I seek to delineate evocations of Turner’s authorship with regard to the artistic self-positioning they indicate. In these, I argue, Turner fashions his artistic role as that of the bard who is fundamentally opposed to militaristic
endeavours, and closely linked with the ideals of sentimentalism – he is presented as a mild, community-strengthening figure who counteracts the violence of tyranny with his message of peace. While juxtaposing these antipodes, Turner often also played out aesthetic modes against each other that were associated with these contents. The didactic effect here would only be achieved if audiences followed Turner’s intricate paratextual guidance and departed from established interpretive paths. Turner’s interpreters – as everyone else, in the sentimental and Christian ideology conveyed by Turner’s art – were inevitably part of a ‘fallen world’, a world which ‘needed’ education towards the ideal, yet would also inevitably tend to escape the subtle demands for change. The didactic claim thus in this sense had to be a ‘fallacy’, and would necessarily lead to the consistent ‘misreadings’ of Turner’s works. Particularly in some of his late works, which are discussed in chapter seven, Turner would incorporate visual clichés in his pictures to ‘lure’ those who were looking for them, and juxtapose them with (mostly unrecognised) moral alternatives.

**Turner beyond Romanticism**

Interpretations of art can never be entirely objective. Critical discourse on Turner in particular, as Sam Smiles discusses in *The Making of a Modern Artist*, has had its share of ideological bias. My own focus on sentimentalism makes this study biased, too. It may seem to be a farfetched focus to some, but it may seem so because sentimentalism is one of the cultural strands which have been neglected by research in the period in the past until recently. By marginalising it, or devaluing it, research partook in an ideological current that reflects a reigning polemic of Turner’s own time. I use “Sentimentalism” with a capital ‘S’ to name the ‘movement’ often defined in opposition to others, mostly in literature, and ‘sentimentalism’ as the term most relevant here, which differs in so far as it does not designate the sum of particular pre-classified cultural productions but rather their shared philosophical orientation.

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12 This is based on Janet Todd’s definition (comp. p. 25 of this thesis).
According to the conventional readings of its history, art took a turn from the traditional-minded and didactic towards the individual and original, at least discursively, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Turner’s standing within these changing parameters in art has long puzzled critics. According to a current view in Turner scholarship, his alignment with both of them is built on his innovative, non-traditional use of traditional elements, strategies and ideals in art. A popular explanation for his engagement with the old masters in his works and his use of classic themes, for his painting in several genres and also for adding ‘moralising’ texts, is that by doing this, Turner sought to prove his artistic superiority, or that he sought to ‘add’ authority to works that were mainly conceived for their aesthetic effects. Recent studies and exhibitions (notably Turner and the Masters, Tate Britain, Sept. 2009 – Jan. 2010) have even argued that a competitive attitude was Turner’s main ‘driving force’: they suggest that he was eager to prove that he could compete with the genre-painters of his day as well as the acknowledged great, such as Claude Lorrain. This argument acknowledges Turner’s ‘traditional’ orientation, yet at the same time interprets it as a means to assert his own ‘genius’, and thus allows for his alignment with a

13 Comp. David Solkin, “Turner and the Masters: Gleaning to Excel”, Turner and the Masters, ed. by David Solkin, London, Tate 2009, pp. 13-27 (exhibition at Tate Britain, 23 Sept. 2009 – 31 Jan. 2010); James Heffernan argues that in Turner’s own work, poetry served as a means to contrast the two arts and stress the singularity and quality of his own – the visual – medium, a hypothesis in line with the “contest debate” (or paragone) which was a traditional strand in the sister arts discourse (comp. Jean Hagstrum, The Sister Arts. The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray, Chicago, U of Chicago P 1958; Richard Wendorf (ed.), Articulate Images. The Sister Arts from Hogarth to Tennyson, Minneapolis, U of Minnesota P 1983, pp. 66-70). Turner, Heffernan contends, “believed that painting could withstand comparison with Claude’s, so he believed that painting could withstand comparison with poetry, and could thereby reveal its own particular power.” (p. 50). Heffernan more generally suggests that the perceived harmony of the sister arts poetry and painting as well as landscape gardening, regarding their common subject, landscape, was replaced in the romantic period by relations determined by “rivalry, independence, and antagonism.” (p. 36, James Heffernan, The Re-Creation of Landscape: A Study of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Constable and Turner, Hanover, UP of England 1984). Ronald Paulson has argued that Turner, “in his official Royal Academy paintings [...] in effect superimposed a public and literary meaning on a landscape of pure form and colour.” (Paulson, Literary Landscape. Turner and Constable, New Haven and London, Yale UP 1982, p. 69). Paulson more generally argues that Turner used verbal and visual expression to enhance the (i.e. his own) subjectivity manifested in his works, and speculates that the verbal aspects may have been used as means of ‘repression’ of Turner’s (romantic/modern) goal: They “may serve to repress something Turner cannot publicly acknowledge, the personal ego-energy he fears to own, the personal name of Turner that is his real subject, or, perhaps, his failure – his knowledge that his aspiration to paint the air is in fact impossible of fulfilment.” (p. 102).
traditional understanding of Romanticism. The notions of ‘influence and rivalry’ which are so current in the field of Turner studies, have in the broader fields of cultural and literary studies been associated with ‘romantic ideology’, meaning a set of assumptions which was used by the canonical poets of the period to form their identity as writers, and shared by the critical tradition in which their canonicity was subsequently established. This definition of ‘Romanticism’ with a capital ‘R’, which is partly based on rivalry and ‘the anxiety of influence’, as Harold Bloom famously put it, relies on the exclusion of numerous other cultural currents and poetics at the time, such as those of women’s poetry, popular prose, ‘the gothic’ – and sentimentalism.\(^\text{14}\)

With this thesis, I suggest that the often only implied alignment of Turner and canonical Romanticism in criticism cannot actually be derived from his artistic strategies and aesthetics, and that these were instead much closer to the ideology of sentimentalism. Instead of attempts to ‘outdo’ artists of the past and present, Turner’s art can be seen in the context which he himself subscribed to: as works signalling, and participating in, a sympathetic community of artists past and present. A focus on sentimentalism, as a specific strand of humanist thinking which remained current throughout Turner’s time, helps to recognise Turner’s art’s intellectual alignment with aspects of his culture that have hitherto been excluded from assessments of his work.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^\text{14}\) Harold Bloom’s \textit{Anxiety of Influence} famously argued for a Romanticism defined through the logic of rivalry and influence, and has been criticised for consolidating the ideological framework established in the romantic period. See, for example, Marlon B. Ross’ \textit{The Contours of Masculine Desire. Romanticism and the Rise of Women’s Poetry} (NY, Oxford UP 1989), which juxtaposes the ‘romantic’ male ideology with a ‘counter-ideology’ of the many female poets of the time. See also Michael Gamer’s \textit{Romanticism and the Gothic} (Cambridge, Cambridge UP 2000), which argues that a discourse of the ‘gothic’ provided the context in which Romanticism could be developed — in supposed opposition to it. In fact, Gamer contends, the gothic ‘haunts’, “as an aesthetic to be rejected, romanticism’s construction of high literary culture.” (p. 7). See also Jerome J. McGann, \textit{The Romantic Ideology. A Critical Investigation}, Chicago/London, U of Chicago P 1983. For the relevance of the term ‘Romanticism’ in a more specifically art historical context see Hugh Honour, \textit{Romanticism}, NY, Westview P 1979, pp. 21-55.

\(^\text{15}\) In its endeavour to align Turner with sentimentalism as a utopian concept this study resembles Emma Barker’s study \textit{Greuze and the Painting of Sentiment} (Cambridge/NY, Cambridge UP 2005), which re-contextualises the art of Jean-Baptiste Greuze within similar discourses in France.
1. History painting and the problems of sentimental education

This chapter discusses the relation between sentimentalism and history painting. As will be seen, this relation depended on the ethical impact of representations of suffering in art – a notion which seemed particularly problematic to many. In order to make suffering evoke ‘moral sentiments’ which could improve society, it had to be bound to tragic narrative. The point of the ancient idea of tragic pity, which was aligned with sentimental thinking, is that it engenders a compassionate action towards the alleviation of the suffering.¹⁶ Pity in that sense is based on the general wish that happiness is to be achieved, and suffering ended – ideally for all members of a society. History painting’s potential contribution to building that utopian society was questionable not only because visual representations of suffering were mostly rejected in the eighteenth century, but also because its incorporation of or dependence on narrative was by many perceived as a ‘threat’ to both its platonic heritage and its aesthetic autonomy.

Turner on history painting: the ‘dubious gloom’

Turner did not formulate a theory or system of art as comprehensive as Joshua Reynolds’, for example, and did not make explicit references to his own art practice in his lectures. However, his lectures, although on the subject of perspective,¹⁷ contained discussions of painting which reflect clear aesthetic preferences and ideals. In the last of his six lectures, Turner deviated most from his supposed subject in order to discuss the relevance of landscape for history painting. He criticised the common assumption that landscape should be treated as a mere “background”, i.e. subservient to the ‘subject’ of paintings. On the contrary: it should be regarded as equally important as the figures and objects in constituting the whole. Titian’s art, he explained, was an example of such a use of landscape. In his Diana and Actaeon (1556-59, pl. 1), landscape, according to

¹⁷ Summaries and a discussion of this can be found in Maurice Davies’ Turner as Professor. The Artist and Linear Perspective, London, Tate 1992.
Turner, “forms part of a whole in regard to light and shade, and a whole of everything appropriate. And so connected that [it] becomes one of the main objects of the Picture”,\(^\text{18}\) and particularly Titian’s *St. Peter Martyr* (1526-30, comp. pl. 2), Turner thought, exemplified how landscape can enhance the expression of the subject. In his description, lines, colours and human expression mingle to construe the picture’s overall effect:

Amplitude, quantity and space appear in this picture given by the means of Trees opposed to a blue sky and deep sunk Horizon not more than one-sixth of the height of the picture, across which rush the knotted stems of trees with dark brown and yellow foliage, stretching far their leafy honours. And their heads [are] lost in the effulgence of the angels descending to crown the dying Martyr, whose looks are directed upwards, and the sentiment is completely carried upward by the immense spreading trunks rearing their expiring and wounded branches.\(^\text{19}\)

Turner particularly stresses how the landscape contributes to expressing the ‘sentiment’ of the picture: its ‘striving upwards’ supports the striving towards heaven of the martyr’s soul, and the “wounded” branches partake in his suffering. This support of ‘sentiment’ is in some other examples narrowed down further by Turner with regard to a specific colour effect. Many of the paintings which Turner deemed best to his mind possessed a certain “dignified” and “indefinable” quality, termed by him “the Historical Tone”.\(^\text{20}\) He expanded on this describing, among other paintings, Correggio’s *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (1604-6, comp. pl. 3):

The truly dubious and undefinable tone of colour, that doubtful gleam of light that throws half an Image on the aching sight, that evanescent

\(^{18}\) BL, p. 135.
\(^{19}\) The end of this passage quotes from MS 16. The respective ending in MS 9 reads: “[...] upwards, as likewise [are] the flowing garments of the companion endeavouring to escape. The eye as soon as it enters into the picture becomes improper by its sentiments. [...]” BL, p. 140.
\(^{20}\) BL, p. 140.
twilight, is most admirably expressed by being tenderly blended, and each form co-mixed without destroying character, and uniting each tone without heaviness.\textsuperscript{21}

Significantly, not only subjects as generally highly regarded as Christ on the Mount of Olives or martyrdom could assume the historical tone. Rembrandt, Turner argued, was a master in ‘dignifying’ even ‘common’ subjects with such “mysterious doubt”.\textsuperscript{22} And this quality, according to Turner, is due to the fact that he “depended on his chiaroscuro, his bursts of light and darkness to be felt.”\textsuperscript{23} The choice of subject, accordingly, was not decisive. In fact, every genre of art could, by adding such “feeling” through colour, aspire to the ‘historical’ in meaning.\textsuperscript{24} Instead of the subject’s acknowledged significance, the ‘doubtful’ quality of twilight is pivotal to this. Regarding Rembrandt’s \textit{The Mill} (1645/48, pl. 4), Turner claims that although the depicted objects may seem “objectionable” to some,

\begin{quote}
[O]ver each he has thrown that veil of matchless colour, that lucid interval of Morning dawn and dewy light on which the Eye dwells so completely enthralld, and it seeks not for its liberty, but as it were, thinks it a sacrilege to pierce the mystic shell of colour in search of form.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

The ‘veiling’ of objects in twilight, Turner argues here, makes them seem significant, mystic, venerable. This view is to him associated not only with ‘gloom’ but also with doubt – a quality applicable to the clarity of form, but also linking to the heightened association of meanings. Moreover, it links with certain narrative developments – unsurprisingly perhaps, Turner expanded on the idea of the ‘Historical tone’ most when it was applied to tragic (or ‘gloomy’) narratives.\textsuperscript{26} Due

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{21} BL, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{22} BL, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{23} BL, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{24} Comp. EA (III), p. 35 (transcription) and p. 38 (Venning’s comment).
\textsuperscript{25} BL, p. 145.
\textsuperscript{26} Tragedy is a contested term, its “own word-puzzle of arguing critics and and incompatible definitions”, as Chris Murray has summarised (in \textit{Tragic Coleridge}, London, Ashgate 2013, p. 1). I
\end{footnotesize}
to Poussin’s handling of light effects, a doubt was cast, he argued, on his *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe* (1651, pl. 5). In Turner’s description, the ‘doubtful tone’ mingles with the development of the narrative:

whether we look upon the dark, dark sky sparingly illumined at the right-hand corner by lightening there rushing behind the bending trees and at last awfully gleaming, her power[?] is reborn, its dying efforts upon some antique buildings on the left, while all beneath amid gloom scatter’d foliage and broken ground lies the dying figure of Pyramus. And in the depth and doubt of darkness all is lost but returning Thisbe.²⁷

The setting, for Turner, encapsulates the emotional turns of narrative development in the myth. In its overwhelming darkness, the landscape mirrors the lost hope that is represented by Pyramus who, like the light, only in ‘dying efforts’ maintains himself. The audience would already be aware of the tragic turn, yet Thisbe is still full of hope. In Turner’s rendering of the picture, the light effect corresponds with the ‘darkness of fate’ and the metaphorical ‘dying light of hope’ which are related to Thisbe’s discovery.²⁸

use the term to signify narratives of catastrophe (independent of medium), i.e. which entail a tragic turn that is determined by forces beyond the protagonists’ control and bound to cause “great suffering”, as in Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz’ definition (*Greek Tragedy*, Blackwell 2008, p. 13). On the problems and history of defining tragedy see also Terry Eagleton, *Sweet Violence. The Idea of the Tragic*, Oxford, Blackwell 2003, pp. 1-22.

²⁷ BL, p. 143. Pyramus and Thisbe are characters from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. They are lovers who, because their families are against their union, make a plan to flee together. Thisbe is waiting at the agreed spot when she sees a lioness approaching whose mouth is bloody with cattle’s blood. She hides to save herself and loses her veil on the way. The lioness tears apart the veil, and when Pyramus arrives and sees the torn and bloody veil which he knows belongs to his lover, he infers that Thisbe has been killed. Mourning his loss and their sad fate, he kills himself – Thisbe returns and finds him dying. Seeing the bloody veil, she understands what happened and kills herself with her lover’s dagger (Ovid, book 4, *Metamorphoses*). With the painting, Poussin departed from the iconographic tradition of his time by not depicting the lovers’ last moments, as it was common, but showing instead the moment when Thisbe returns and realises that their escape has failed and their future is lost.

²⁸ Joshua Reynolds, whose *Discourses* Turner frequently referred to in his lectures (comp. p. 26, n. 36), had not put equal stress on such ‘gloomy’ twilight modes, but remarked in his second *Discourse* something to the same effect, with regard to the art of Carracci: “Stile in painting is the same as in writing, a power over materials, whether words or colours, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed. And in this Lodovico Carrache (I mean in his best works) appears to me to approach the nearest to perfection. His unaffected breadth of light and shadow, the simplicity of
The perishing of hope, which Turner here associates with the ‘historical tone’, later became the subject of a distinctive body of his works, among them those which included verses written by himself from the supposed manuscript poem called *The Fallacies of Hope*. This thematic complex certainly was the one employed with the greatest continuity in Turner’s career, hence it is particularly surprising that its ideological connection with one of the major cultural strands of the time has not been discussed to a greater degree in the past.\(^{29}\) Sentiment, by Turner defined as “the application of interlectual feeling, forming the poetic, Historic or perceptions gained from nature and her works”\(^{30}\) was fundamentally aligned with meaning for him. The intellectual stimulus expressed in this definition, and the tragic turn mirrored in the ‘dubious gloom’ of landscape so important to Turner, both constitute major aspects of what has been classified as sentimentalism, a cultural strand and philosophical orientation particularly current in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century.

**Sentimentalism: a definition**

I use the term “sentimentalism” as defined by Janet Todd, “to denote the movement discerned in philosophy, politics and art, based on the belief in or hope of the natural goodness of humanity and manifested in a humanitarian concern for the unfortunate and helpless.”\(^{31}\) Roots of sentimental thinking are found in empiricism, i.e. the idea that all knowledge humans have is derived from colouring, which holding its proper rank, does not draw aside the least part of the attention from the subject, and the solemn effect of that twilight which seems diffused over his pictures, appear to me to correspond with grave and dignified subjects, better than the more artificial brilliancy of sunshine which enlightens the pictures of Titian” (p. 32-3). Comp. also John Opie, “On Chiaroscuro”, *Lectures on Painting by the Royal Academicians Barry, Opie and Fuseli*, ed. by Ralph N. Wornum, London, Henry G. Bohn 1848, pp. 289-313 (reprint, 2005), p. 295.

\(^{29}\) Eric Shanes places Turner’s definition of “sentiment” at the center of his study, yet does not draw a connection to the cultural strand. Comp. Eric Shanes, *Turner’s Human Landscape*, London, Heinemann 1990, p. 11.

\(^{30}\) J.M.W. Turner, lecture manuscript MS 46 151, N, p. 23. All of my quotes from Turner adhere to the original spelling and phrasing.

\(^{31}\) Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction*, London/NY, Methuen 1986, p. 7. On the distinction between sensibility and sentiment with regard to aesthetic discourses comp. Barker (2005), *Greuze and the Painting of Sentiment*, p. 9: sensibility was used in the eighteenth century mainly to denote a person’s physical ability to feel (for others); sentiment could denote the moral dimension of a work of art as well as the intellectual insights it conveyed.
experience.\textsuperscript{32} With the acknowledgment of the validity of individual experience
and judgement, formerly supposedly rather solid notions of knowledge, but also of
moral values, seemed threatened. The potential for subjectivity to determine, or
rather undermine, the ethical principles of a society, was countered in sentimental
thinking by the notion that all humans shared a natural inclination towards moral
principles and behaviour. This notion was incorporated in the language of
experience through the term \textit{moral sentiments}. ‘Sentiment’, at the high point of
this wave of thinking around the middle of the eighteenth century, was perceived
to gain new significance, and received a number of positive meanings that merge
moral, intellectual and emotional refinement.\textsuperscript{33} “A sentiment” in the definition of
the time, Todd writes, “is a moral reflection, a rational opinion usually about the
rights and wrongs of human conduct”. However, the term’s definition varies in
Georgian culture and can also be understood as biased on the emotional side: “a
sentiment is also a thought, often an elevated one, influenced by emotion, a
combining of heart with head or an emotional impulse leading to an opinion or
principle.”\textsuperscript{34} Importantly, the term combined intellect and feeling to express a
commonly appreciated quality in humans that would, if realised to the full, raise
the general moral standard: it was understood as a component of the ‘humane’ –
sentimentalism itself can be understood as a variant of humanism.\textsuperscript{35} When Turner
in the early decades of the nineteenth century speaks of sentiment and feeling
with such high regard and aligns it with the highest meaning in painting, regardless
of the subject, his thinking does not seem far removed from sentimental ideals,
which, at that time, were rejected by many people. But the parallel goes further
than that, and can be drawn from Turner’s institutional ‘home’, the Royal
Academy. Sentimentalism is deeply entwined with the ideas that led to the
founding of the Academy in the first place, which were manifested in the lectures
of its first president – an important influence on Turner’s own theoretical

\textsuperscript{34} Todd (1986), \textit{Sensibility}, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{35} The term “humane” as the ethical variant of “human” was coined only in the eighteenth century. Comp. Brissenden (1974), \textit{Virtue in Distress}, p. 32.
thought. The very notion of history painting as a morally elevating art, promoted in Joshua Reynolds’ *Discourses on Art*, was linked to sentimental ideals.

Turner’s occupation with the thematic focus which became so important for him began at a time when sentimentalism was still current in his culture. As early as 1799, Turner had made a sketch of Poussin’s *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*, or a similar subject in a manner not unlike that of Poussin, with a dying figure lit by a ray of light (pl. 6). The fact that Turner quoted a passage for one of his exhibited paintings in 1799 which was later in his “Backgrounds” lecture named as a description of the pivotal ‘twilight moment’ (see chapter four, p. 108) seems also significant. The composite works exhibited by Turner in that and the previous year, both following the Academy’s newly introduced permission for artists to include appended texts in the exhibition catalogues, are analysed in detail in chapters three and four. In order to understand their cultural environment, this present chapter seeks to introduce the Royal Academy’s ideological alignment with sentimental thinking as it was introduced by Joshua Reynolds, and tracks the developments of the link in the theories of other Royal Academicians that were known to Turner.

**Reynolds’ Discourses: history painting between rhetorical function and ‘higher truth’**

The art promoted by the Royal Academy was intended to have a positive effect on society as a whole. Joshua Reynolds’ *Discourses* (1797, delivered between 1769 and 1790), representing the aesthetic founding principles of the Academy,  

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36 On Reynolds’ influence on Turner’s lectures comp. Davies (1992), *Turner as Professor*, p. 16, 31, 35, 39. This influence is also tangible in Turner’s various annotations to other books, for example his notes on Shee’s *Elements of Art* (comp. EA (III), p. 37).
37 The quote from *Paradise Lost* was appended to *Harlech Castle*. In his lecture, Turner argued that it matches “the grey, glimmering dawn from gloom” seen in Rembrandt’s *Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (1647). BL, p. 141.
38 Reynolds’ *Discourses* were delivered at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1790. The 1797 edition was the last in which Reynolds partook actively before his death in 1792, and it builds the basis for the version edited by Robert R. Wark which is the one I quote from (Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. by Robert R. Wark, New Haven/London, Yale UP 1997; abbreviated as D).
explained that art should ideally strive to raise the moral standards of a society – that, ultimately, art had a political function. His theory reframed earlier ideals in the visual arts, subscribing to civic humanism in a Shaftesburian sense, but also promoting the awakening of sympathy in the viewer as one of the most important aims of the painter – a key concept of sentimentalism. A great painter, Reynolds contends, must possess two kinds of genius: one general, belonging to all arts, which allows the painter to “conceive his subject with dignity”, the other one “the Genius of mechanical performance”, upon which Reynolds – speaking mainly to painters – spends most time expatiating. The amalgamation of neoplatonic ideas with sentimentalism is mostly implicit. Ideal art, to Reynolds, “excites ideas of grandeur, or raises and dignifies humanity; or” – here Reynolds quoted Goldsmith’s poem “The Traveller” – “which makes the beholder learn to venerate himself as man.” ‘Speaking to the mind’, in his third Discourse, is used analogously to “speaking to the heart”. Art, Reynolds argued, could either “enlarge the conceptions, or warm the heart of the spectator.” Thus while sometimes a distinction is drawn between the two claims, in other places they go together self-evidently. The acquisition of virtue, Reynolds argues elsewhere, is paralleled to that of great art:

The same disposition, the same desire to find something steady, substantial, and durable, on which the mind can lean as it were, and rest with safety, actuates us in both cases. The subject only is changed. We

40 The workings of sympathy had been introduced to the theory of art before. “[C]hiefly responsible” for making it popular, David Solkin writes, was George Turnbull, with his *Treatise on Ancient Painting* (1740). Like Reynolds, Turnbull subscribed both to sympathetic identification and the goal of expressing ‘higher truths’ in history painting. The more longstanding tradition in which both Turnbull and Reynolds located themselves had been initiated around 1700 in Britain and France. It emphasised the moral function of painting, and stressed that nature had to be ‘idealised’ in order to meet the highest demands, which were also valid regarding poetry. Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin were two of the most acclaimed painters who worked within this ideological framework (comp. Robert Jones, “Poetry and the Visual Arts”, *A Companion to Eighteenth Century Poetry*, ed. by Christine Gerrard, Oxford/Malden, MA, Blackwell 2006, pp. 83-96: 84-85).
41 *D* (XI), p. 191.
42 *D* (XI), p. 192.
43 *D* (VII), p. 130.
44 *D* (III), p. 50.
45 *D* (III), p. 41.
pursue the same method in our search after the idea of beauty and perfection in each; of virtue, by looking forwards beyond ourselves to society, and to the whole; of arts, by extending our views in the same manner to all ages and all times.\textsuperscript{46}

The genre most in line with the moral goal was traditionally history painting: pictures with a literary, biblical, mythological or historical narrative as their subject. It was the genre officially ranked highest by the Royal Academy long after Reynolds’ presidency, which is also reflected in Turner’s lectures. The genre stood in a long tradition already,\textsuperscript{47} but Reynolds’ understanding is special since it brings in sympathetic ideas. The narrative subject, Reynolds supposed, should be chosen with its potential for sympathetic identification in mind: “[t]here must be something either in the action, or in the object, in which men are universally concerned and which powerfully strikes upon publick sympathy.”\textsuperscript{48} With regard to the ideals of sentimentalism,\textsuperscript{49} as will be seen below, it is particularly relevant that the genre aiming at moral effect and thus the improvement of society depended on narrative. The idea of a sympathetic public that Reynolds wished to be addressed by artists, more generally, chimed with the recent developments of the notion of a ‘public’ itself in Britain.

With “publick sympathy”, Reynolds addressed as the highest aim of art two notions which were connected and particularly current in eighteenth-century discourses. It was the century, as Jürgen Habermas has argued, in which the very notion of a ‘public’ came into being, starting to replace older hierarchical

\textsuperscript{46} D (VII), p. 134.

\textsuperscript{47} The fact that the Earl of Shaftesbury offered history painting as the genre best representing his ideal model of society, in which a ‘disinterested’ privileged class of men rules over the rest, who are, due to their self-interest, in danger of partaking in the corrupt fashions of ‘the world’, has led to a more general association of history painting with this kind of hierarchic conservatism (comp. David Solkin, \textit{Painting for Money}, Leo Costello, \textit{Turner and the Subject of History}, and works of John Barrell). In the light of theories arguing that sympathy was the ‘glue’ of a society of equals, which are reflected in Reynolds’ Discourses, too, history painting, with its educational aims, I argue, is not necessarily tied to social hierarchies, but could hypothetically also contribute to the goal of establishing this society of equals.

\textsuperscript{48} D (IV), p. 57.

\textsuperscript{49} Particularly in the definition of Adam Smith, to which I mainly refer.
structures of discourse. The notion of ‘the public’ was intimately linked with the increasingly bourgeois nature of society.⁵⁰ According to Habermas, before a politically effective ‘public’ could be formed, in conscious juxtaposition with reigning powers or institutions, a new discursive realm was needed. Within such a paradigm-shift the idea of individuality would replace older inherited forms of communal identity in order to enable the middle classes to ‘practise’ the communicative structures that would be the basis of a more ambitious political function. The early forms of ‘the public’ are a fusion of the just newly ‘discovered’ private person and a general sphere in which those private voices claim or postulate their common identity. Its common denominator was defined as the ‘purely humane’, through which both old hierarchic structures and the dependencies and new hierarchies of the market are rendered obsolete.⁵¹

The emphasis on virtue for political agency was not altogether new. The notion of a ‘public’, too, had existed before. The main discourse in which these two were defined was that of civic humanism. In civic humanist discourse, government was tied to those classes in society who were not depending on labour to sustain themselves and would through education acquire a ‘disinterested’ mindset which would supposedly enable them to pursue what was best for everyone, regardless of personal interests. The ‘public virtue’ they should aim at was differentiated from the ‘private virtues’ that were later added – ‘public’ in this sense meaning exclusively those virtues which would bring public acclaim through heroic acts. Sentimentalism’s stress on the power of virtues such as benevolence, kindness and friendship – and a re-definition of the ‘public’ accordingly – could be understood as being part of an attempt to adapt the

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⁵⁰ Jürgen Habermas, Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 1990, p. 56.

⁵¹ Habermas (1990), Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit, p. 97. Habermas’ theory has been criticised for too little differentiation within that newly developing bourgeois public sphere, and also for neglecting the plebeian public sphere, based on entirely different premises. As this thesis is concerned with the early public’s alignment with the utopian ideals expressed in sentimental (bourgeois) thinking and not with the realities of political formation, these aspects seem not so relevant here. See on the author’s own revisions Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere”, transl. by Thomas Burger, Habermas and the Public Sphere, ed. by Craig Calhoun, Cambridge, Mass/London, MIT 1992, pp. 421-461.
discourse of civic humanism to a society in which the new middle classes were striving to gain political power, and to replace former ideals.\textsuperscript{52}

In \textit{The Political Theory of Painting} Barrell lays out the alignment of civic humanism with theories of art, arguing that all influential art theory of the eighteenth century was political in the sense that it endorsed the ‘public’ function of painting, mirroring the highest ideal in civic humanism. It was mainly Lord Shaftesbury’s influential theory of history painting that had promoted an art with the specific function of depicting acts of public virtue in a civic humanist sense, as acts of heroism. Since it was only the ruling class which could pursue such virtue, history painting was specifically addressed to them. The mode in which this address was expressed, Barrell shows, was ‘rhetorical’, meaning that paintings were supposed to resemble reality and by visual means inspire its privileged audience to follow the right path.\textsuperscript{53} This function of art contradicted the notion that art should also convey (platonic) ideas (in defiance of Plato’s contrary supposition in \textit{Politeia}) that were detached from mere resemblances – a contradiction which was only implied, but not discussed by contemporary theorists of art, as Barrell writes.\textsuperscript{54}

The rhetorical function of art correlates with the sentimental effect wished by Joshua Reynolds – an art which, through its immediate emotional effect, ‘strikes’ its audiences. At the same time, however, Reynolds also promotes the platonic ideal. The sentimental idea, relying on art establishing sympathy for

\textsuperscript{52} This civic humanist conception of a public was most influentially discussed by J.G.A. Pocock. This definition of a public contrasts Habermas’ in a way not dissimilar to the contrast of neo-platonic idealism and sentimentalism in Reynolds’ \textit{Discourses} discussed here. While one is aligned with a notion of virtue often associated with stoicism and manliness, the latter was, particularly in the late eighteenth century, (again) understood as a specifically ‘feminine’ virtue, and excluded from newly developing discourses of power. See J.G.A. Pocock, \textit{The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition}. Princeton, Princeton UP 1975, Comp. also Harriet Guest’s discussion of the two definitions of the public in \textit{Small Change. Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810}, Chicago/London, U of Chicago P 2000, pp. 5-14.

\textsuperscript{53} Barrell exemplifies this by Shaftesbury’s reading of \textit{The Judgement of Hercules}, which could be understood, he argues, as an allegory on the right reception of painting within this theoretical framework, as it demonstrates a turn away from pleasure and towards virtue (which are both present as female allegories in the painting). See John Barrell, \textit{The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: ‘The Body of the Public’}, New Haven/London, Yale UP 1986, pp. 27-33.

\textsuperscript{54} See Barrell (1986), \textit{The Political Theory of Painting}, pp. 24-27. Art, most writers suggested, was not (as Plato had suggested) a ‘mechanical’ but a ‘liberal’ art, aligned with the highest ideal in society by its means of representation.
depicted sufferers, sharpened the inherent contradiction. This becomes most clearly seen in the different effects aimed at by the two ideals regarding tragedy. Both conceptions could refer to tragic narratives, but would stress very different aspects: while the platonic ideal of the ‘heroic’ counted on stoic endurance, the sentimental renderings of tragedy aimed at sympathetic identifications with the suffering which, it was hoped, would be the motor of a society which pursued the happiness of all of its members. Turner, as will be shown in this thesis, aligned himself with sentimental understanding, and thus through his art opposed later theories of art that would promote the heroic over the social.

**Problematic suffering and the ‘sympathetic moment’**

‘The public’, in the early discursive sense sketched by Habermas, is constituted by a common moral goal, which at the same time is presupposed as the ultimate ‘common denominator’ of humanity. The emphasis on sentimental, or ‘private’ virtues, enabled the middle classes to participate in the civic humanist discourse of power through moral superiority, redefining the very nature of that virtue. It supposed that not detachment (also financial), but, on the contrary, the sympathetic involvement in society legitimised (shared) power through virtue. Sentimentalism works as a philosophical strand through which the idea of ‘the public’ could be discussed on the subjective and interpersonal basis that it assumed, and which subsumes the ethical grounds on which it could be created. Reynolds wanted the ideal painting to address the very moral foundations of the ‘new society’ and help educate ‘the public’ according to its suggested shared moral inclination. Turner’s prioritisation of ‘sentiment’ in paintings expressed in his lectures, too, carries the connotations of moral education towards a better society. ‘The public’ thus emerged as an effect and (however unconscious) expression of social utopia, just as ‘the human’ as a common denominator functioned, as Brissenden puts it, “as a concept at once empirical and idealistic.”

Art, reaching its audiences through sentiment, could be the didactic link towards that better society.

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Indeed, the theatre, concerts, and also the exhibitions of the Royal Academy in London, were at the centre of class-formative debates. Habermas argues that these cultural ‘goods’ were particularly apt to engage middle-class subjectivity as they implicitly claimed to be there ‘for their own sake’: public culture had no hierarchic role but was open for interpretation and for negotiations of identity-formation based on the idea of the subjectivity of its members.\(^56\) One of the major institutions of such negotiations within a fast developing writing-culture\(^57\) was art criticism in the widest sense: the discourse evolving around the question of what would make ‘good art’,\(^58\) which is also the subject of Reynolds’ Discourses.

The ‘purely humane’ as the common denominator of the public was reflected in Reynolds’ Discourses as he argued for ideal art to make “the beholder learn to venerate himself as man”,\(^59\) to “soften and humanise the mind”.\(^60\) Intricately linked to this aim was an emphasis on narrative art: audiences, Reynolds wished, should be “struck” in their supposed unity of sentiments\(^61\) by the ability to feel sympathy with the protagonists of a story. In order to gain this effect, he considered it pivotal that the artist chose a narrative that was generally known, such as “the great events of Greek and Roman fable and history, which early education, and the usual course of reading, have made familiar and interesting to all Europe, without being degraded by the vulgarisms of ordinary life in any country”, and “the capital subjects of scripture history, which, besides their


\(^{57}\) See Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing. Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins UP 1998. Siskin argues that what determined the age was writing as a new technique which paradigmatically generated change – itself driving the discourse on the change it generated and causing new orders of knowledge (p. 3-6).

\(^{58}\) It was supposed to be expressing ‘the public’s view’, while its authors at the same time acted, and saw themselves, as educators of ‘the public’. Habermas (1992), *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, p. 103.

\(^{59}\) D (VII), p. 130.

\(^{60}\) D (I), p. 14.

\(^{61}\) Comp. D (VII), p. 141.
general notoriety, become venerable by their connection with our religion.”\textsuperscript{62} To create an ideal history painting, he argued, was to depict the “mental picture” which forms in a mind “of the action and expression of the persons employed”\textsuperscript{63} in a story, and thus to enable each spectator to regain the emotional response which he or she had when they first heard of the story.\textsuperscript{64} Being “struck” sympathetically in response to a picture would thus necessarily involve the recollection of a narrative which legitimatized the emotions expressed in a history painting. This scheme mirrors the components of what Adam Smith in his \textit{Theory of Moral Sentiments} (1759) had described as the central scenario of sympathetic identification.\textsuperscript{65} Sympathetic identification can be achieved, Smith argued, when an observer gets to know a sufferer’s story: after seeing him or her, only when the pivotal question “What has befallen you?” is answered can the process of sympathy work and affect the moral behaviour of the observer. The whole \textit{Theory of Moral Sentiments} gravitates around this situation of a social encounter between someone who is in some way suffering and an ‘observer’, and the problematic relation between narrative and visual message – it poses problems which apply to both the real-life situation and to history painting.

The realisation of the utopian ‘public’, in Smith’s sentimentalist view, rests on the functioning of sympathetic identification with one another. This functioning, however, is not universally fulfilled yet. On the contrary, along with the ideal comes the immense task of an education towards the ideal – something which Reynolds was concerned with as well, believing in a general decline of art and society in his time.\textsuperscript{66} The educational effect, Smith argues, is achieved to a

\textsuperscript{62} D (IV), p. 58.  
\textsuperscript{63} D (IV), p. 58.  
\textsuperscript{64} Comp. D (IV), p. 58.  
\textsuperscript{65} A correspondence between Reynolds’ and Smith’s theories has been suggested by Elizabeth Bohls, “Disinterestedness and denial of the particular: Locke, Adam Smith and the subject of aesthetics”, \textit{Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art}, ed. by Paul Mattick, Cambridge/NY, Cambridge UP 1993, pp. 16-51. However, Bohls’ argument differs significantly from mine as she sees their theories’ similarities in their shared rejection of ‘detail’ and ‘denial of difference’ in the civic humanist sense (basing her argument of Pocock and Barrell), and thus aligns them with the supposedly conservative ‘regime’ of universalising morals, in this view aligned with oppressive politics.  
\textsuperscript{66} “Reformation is a work of time”, Reynolds wrote. “A national taste, however wrong it may be, cannot be totally changed at once; we must yield a little to the prepossession which has taken hold
certain extent through hardship in life, through biographical genesis. Yet sympathetic identification could also be tested and practiced through reading and identifying with suffering characters who go through such a moral formation themselves. The success of literature relying on the identificatory effect in the eighteenth century is well known. Art in the Reynoldsian vision had a similar function. Like Smith’s theory, it relies on the shared human capacity for sympathetic identification, which is the foundation of a hypothetical realisation of what in the notion of ‘public’ is already conceptualised as a utopian ‘reality’. Within the contexts of social utopia as universal ‘sympathetic bonding’, history painting could be seen as a ‘testing realm’ that was close to the social encounter between sufferer and observer which Smith had envisioned as the ur-situation of sympathetic identification. For history painting, the narrative, i.e. the answer to the question “What has befallen you?” was a given prerequisite. Depicted scenes would ideally ‘crystallise’, as it were, the sympathetic potential of a story – as opposed to the real-life social situation, this type of art could convey the narrative and the ‘instant that strikes’ the observer and calls for sympathy all at once. Any problems that come with the ambiguity of a scene that might be witnessed on the street are thus overruled by the ‘magical’ immediacy and non-ambiguity of the visual-narrative medium.

This was ‘magic’ indeed, as the moment of sympathetic identification and its relation to morals seemed so problematic that the very functionality of the sympathetic effect of the anonymous social encounter was indirectly questioned in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* itself – and indeed, in many works of literary Sentimentalism an ironic scepticism regarding people’s capability to feel for or with each other accompanied the very notion of sympathy’s utopian

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potential from the start. Sympathetic identification, Smith explains, does not only derive from what might by common sense be understood as lamentable facts, or from the actual suffering of the person who is sympathised with. Instead, a successful act of sympathetic identification depends as well on the ability of the sufferer to meet the (unconscious) demands of the potential sympathiser. The sufferer himself has to observe several rules of propriety in order not to clash too much with other people’s sensitivities – in fact, he has to prove his virtue in this way: while the observer can demonstrate his morality through “candid condescension and indulgent humanity”, the sufferer has to demonstrate “the virtues of self-denial, of self-government, of that command of the passions which subjects all the movements of our nature to what our own dignity and honour, and the propriety of our own conduct require”.

A well-developed character, Smith argues, has instated an ‘internal observer’ of his own behaviour who checks and controls the expression of feelings in accordance with propriety. In an actual ‘morally flawless’ encounter which sees both observer and sufferer on best behaviour, the important question about the background story might thus not be asked at all, as the sufferer covers his feelings politely. In fact, Smith expands on the striking effect of finding out accidentally about his or her predicament. If the story of someone who is suffering is found out through other sources, the act of sympathy is guaranteed, while a beggar in the street will – naturally, in Smith’s psychological argument – not gain, or

As in the works of Laurence Sterne, which often expand on the ‘looks of virtue’ and suffering, and the excessive self-reflection upon the sentiments it arises by its observers. Comp., for example, the protagonist’s encounter with a monk in Sterne, A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy by Mr. Yorick, London, Penguin 2005, pp. 7-8.

TMS, p. 30. Smith, it should be noted, is not writing a kind of guidebook, but analysing the ‘natural’ feeling of sympathy and how it is evoked. Occasionally, his analysis contradicts what is commonly understood as morally right. In a two-and-a-half-page footnote, he explains, for example, that sympathising with a feeling for revenge, which he has demonstrated to be ‘natural’, by no means at the same time needs to be right, too: “We are not at present examining upon what principles a perfect being would approve of the punishment of bad actions; but upon what principles so weak and imperfect a creature as man actually and in fact approves of it” (p. 93). The aspect of ‘natural’ feeling is subordinate to what Smith believes to be God’s design (comp. p. 152), yet a certain social conditionality of the ‘natural’ is, at least indirectly, brought in when Smith admits that in isolation from others, a person feels unsure about what is right and what is wrong, hence needs to observe the judgement of others before judging others, as well as instating the moral standards for himself (comp. TMS, p. 147 and 159).

TMS, p. 31.
deserve, as much pity. However, what is felt for the ‘polite sufferer’ if his lamentable state is uncovered, is in fact not sympathy at all, but admiration for his great strength in times of suffering. The very idea of moments that ‘universally’ evoke sympathy is thus undermined by Smith’s argument, which implicitly questions the ethical legitimacy of expressions of suffering.

The demand for moderation in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* comes, paradoxically, from a great acknowledgement of individual feeling, and indeed, as Smith argues, the experience of pain and suffering forms the very basis of the moral rules in a society. Admiration of those who suppress their feelings in order not to offend others results from the acknowledgement of how big a task that is, not from a common ideal of indifference. Suffering thus becomes an almost precarious good which can be handled in either a virtuous or in a foolish way – either contributing to moral education or to its ill-reflected immediate expression. The paradigmatic moment which forms a basis of Smith’s ‘theatrical’ theory of moral sentiments – the encounter between sufferer and observer – is not only rendered problematic because the relation of the sufferer’s story is needed in the first place to ‘read’ the situation, but also because the scene itself is potentially suspicious if it gives expression to suffering at all.

Smith’s theory in this inherent contradiction resembles the conflict ‘carried through’ the theory of history painting in the eighteenth century, as Barrell has argued, between the platonic ideal and the rhetorical effect. History painting could, however, at least hypothetically, avoid the problem, as it pre-assumed a narrative which would assure the audience of their protagonists’ virtue. However, the didactic value of “virtue in distress” in painting – and painting’s didacticism more generally – were increasingly questioned by later theorists of art.

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71 Comp. *TMS*, pp. 38-9, where he writes about physical pain: “The little sympathy which we feel with bodily pain is the foundation of the propriety of constancy and patience in enduring it. The man, who under the severest tortures allows no weakness to escape him, vents no groan, gives way to no passion which we do not entirely enter into, commands our highest admiration. His firmness enables him to keep time with our indifference and insensibility.”


Autonomous painting: Fuseli, Opie and Barry on history painting

In later theories of art associated with the Royal Academy, history painting was no longer seen so much in the context of the sympathetic ideal. The advancement of art and its contribution to an improvement of society was deemed to rely on shared human passions and inclinations, which Reynolds had assumed as well, but sympathy was no longer a pronounced link to social utopia. The notion of “the public” was not what it used to be: as Barrell has shown, around 1800, the definition of the term no longer entailed a supposed community, but meant a vaguely defined sum of people "who had appropriated the term to themselves, without also assuming the civic identity and the civic responsibilities of a true republic" – a group which was thus quite opposed to the idealised notion addressed by civic humanism, and, above all, by its ‘middle class’ version pursuing the ‘private virtues’ of sentimentalism. The theories of James Barry, Henry Fuseli and John Opie, which we know were taken note of by Turner, are examples of variations of the ideals expressed in Reynolds’ Discourses in line with this trend.

Fuseli, in his lectures given as Professor of Painting (1831), introduced a shift from the moral suggestiveness of history painting towards an immediate effect that would appeal not to the observer’s sympathy for the sake of moral generation, but to his or her capacity for sympathising with the expressed emotions, whatever they were. While for Reynolds, great art expressed higher truths that also mirror moral ideals, Fuseli distinguished between history paintings and ‘fancy pictures’, attributing to the latter the ‘moralising intentions’ that he wanted to remove from history painting proper. The ideal painting, Fuseli writes,

74 Barrell (1986), The Political Theory of Painting, p. 64.
76 Fuseli was elected Professor of Painting in 1799 and gave his lectures subsequently. The first three of them were published in 1801, the complete series of lectures was published in 1831.
77 These were usually thought of as ‘low life’ subjects of a Sentimental nature, including, for example, the ‘cottage door’ paintings by Thomas Gainsborough (comp. D (XIV), p. 254).
“finds its echo in all hearts, and imparts its charm to every eye”.\(^{78}\) However, he suggests that history painting should address not the universal ‘moral humane’ but instead the ‘natural’ emotions; it should, in his words, “draw its substance immediately from the lap of nature, to be as elemental as her emotions, and the passions by which she sways us”.\(^{79}\)

As opposed to Reynolds, importantly, Fuseli was critical of too much dependence on narrative contexts: he expressly claimed that every work of art should “pronounce its own meaning”, that “the essential part of its subject ought to be comprehended and understood without collateral assistance, without borrowing its commentary from the historian or the poet.”\(^{80}\) This ‘declaration of independence’ of painting from literature is made possible exactly because the narratives which history painting commonly relied on are deemed obsolete: the undeservedness of misfortunes, which could only be communicated through these narratives, and which Smith regarded as essential for the evocation of moral sentiments, seemed no longer a relevant component. What is declared by Fuseli as a liberation from the classical canon and could be understood in terms of the ‘democratisation’ of art, thus also promotes an art that has lost its ‘utopian’ potential to evoke “publick sympathy”. Instead of supposedly conveying moral insights, the figures of myth and religion to Fuseli epitomise ‘universal emotions’ of a much more general kind:

The Madonnas of Raphael; the Ugolino, the Paolo and Frances of Dante; the Conflagration of Borgo, the Niobe protecting her daughter; Haemon piercing his own breast, with Antigone hanging dead from his arm, owe the sympathies they call forth to their assimilating power, and not to the

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\(^{79}\) Fuseli (1848), Invention (continued), p. 437.

\(^{80}\) Fuseli (1848), Invention (continued), p. 435. Fuseli compares these supplements to painting with footnotes to a poem: “for as we are soon wearied with a poem whose fable and motives reach us only by the borrowed light of annexed notes, so we turn our eye discontented from a picture or a statue whose meaning depends on the charity of a Cicerone, or must be fetched from a book.” (435) Turner’s interest in poetry, by contrast, seems often to have been attracted particularly by footnotes (comp. Ann Livermore, “J.M.W. Turner’s unknown Verse-Book”, The Connoisseur Yearbook (1957), pp. 78-86: 81).
names they bear: without names, without references to time and place, they would impress with equal energy, because they find their counterpart in every breast, and speak the language of mankind.  

Fuseli promotes a visual art which has ‘emancipated’ itself from the paradigm of the narrative (associated with learning and religion), as he emphasises its self-sufficiency with regard to an expression of emotions.  

Significantly, Reynolds, we remember, had not suggested that reliance on narrative would add authority to a painting, but rather that it would aid in its popularity; the fact that the narratives were generally known would enable the majority of people to sympathise with the depicted emotional expressions.

John Opie later offered a kind of compromise between Reynolds’ and Fuseli’s suggestions. To him, poetry was the art most closely related to painting. Yet, he argued, their means of expression were entirely different, as painting needed to depict a single moment, which he described as follows:

a critical moment, in which all the most striking and beautiful circumstances that can be imagined are concentrated, – big with suspense, interest, passion, terror, and action; in short, the moment of explosion, which illuminates and brings at once into view the past, present, and future, and which, when well rendered, is often more than equivalent to all the successive energies of a poet.

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81 Fuseli (1848), Invention (continued), p. 437. On the role of emotions in Fuseli’s theory and art as well as its historical precedents see Matthias Vogel, Johann Heinrich Füssli – Darsteller der Leidenschaft, Zurich, ZIP 2001, which also discusses the problems of readability due to Fuseli’s (and others’) practice of ‘emotional interpretation’ (p. 22 ff.).

82 On Fuseli’s uses of quotation comp. Luisa Calè, Fuseli’s Milton Gallery, ‘Turning Readers into Spectators’, Oxford, Clarendon P 2006, esp. pp. 58-104. Calè aligns Fuseli’s strategy of combining words and images (and the literary galleries’ more generally) with a culture in which decontextualised reading (in anthologies, etc.) had become common, and where quotation, ‘freed’ from source texts, would be used by artists to inspire subjective trains of associations. While associationist ideas were certainly important for Turner, his own uses of quotations contrasts this approach, as will be seen in chapters three to seven.

Differing from both Reynolds’ and Fuseli’s theories, Opie stresses the relevance of narrative expression in a painting and declares it independent from reference at the same time: the plot should be illumined in its past and future developments, as it were, just through the one scene that is shown. No further questions, whose answering seemed so crucial to Adam Smith, and which Reynolds wanted to have answered beforehand, would arise.

More concerned with the educational effect of painting than Fuseli, Opie discussed the problems raised by ‘ambiguities’ that would remain in some cases if painters just offered visual renderings of what is described in the respective narratives. As an exemplary picture demonstrating the use of painting in order to convey the ‘divine truth’ he introduces Reynolds’ *Death of Cardinal Beaufort* (1789, comp. pl. 7). Reynolds had added a devil lurking behind the dying man which does not occur in Shakespeare’s play. By adding the figure, Opie contends, Reynolds “immediately clears up all ambiguity” which would be given if recipients only saw the cardinal on his deathbed. The devil signifies that what one sees depicted “are not bodily sufferings”, but that the figure’s pains result from “those daggers of the mind, the overwhelming horrors of a guilty and an awakened conscience.” Without such symbolical clarity, the observer could have been confused as to what precisely the moral message of the painting is, and this is to be avoided by any means: “it was absolutely necessary to be understood”, writes Opie. This also means that the sympathetic effect of the suffering in itself was not regarded as an essential aim of art.

Not accidentally, perhaps, Opie named a painting that depicts a person in physical pain – according to Smith, one of the most unlikely emotions to be sympathised with, especially when displayed for everyone to see. “In some of the Greek tragedies there is an attempt to excite compassion, by the

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84 The picture was painted for Boydell’s Shakespeare Gallery and became part of the collection at Petworth, it is thus very likely that Turner knew it.
85 Opie (1848), On Invention, p. 281.
86 Opie (1848), On Invention, p. 282.
87 Opie (1848), On Invention, p. 282.
88 “Nothing is so soon forgot as pain”, *TMS*, p. 37; “Pain never calls forth any very lively sympathy unless it is accompanied with danger”, *TMS*, p. 37.
representation of the agonies of bodily pain”, Smith writes, naming a few examples, among them Philoctetes. “In all these cases,” he concludes,

it is not the pain which interests us, but some other circumstance. It is not the sore foot, but the solitude [...] of Philoctetes which affects us, and diffuses over that charming tragedy, that romantic wildness, which is so agreeable to the imagination.89

Pain, both Opie and Smith argue, needs to be read as a symbol for something ‘more universal’, hence something with which it is easier to identify.90 Interestingly, Reynolds had no such problems with the expression of pain and praised the expression of it in the Laocoon group. However, he seems to have been aware of the precariousness seen by some in such display of pain, as he notes that: “[i]t has been observed in a late publication, that if the attention of the Father of this group had been occupied more by the distress of his children, than by his own sufferings, it would have raised a much greater interest in the spectator.”91 Reynolds, seemingly unwilling to go into the issue raised here more deeply, simply remarks that “such refined expression is scarce within the province

89 TMS, p. 38.
90 The most significant point of deviance in Opie’s lectures from the others before him is their stress on the imagination. Reynolds had emphasised the importance of the imagination as well, yet it went along – if unresolved – with the sympathetic ideal. Opie’s concern is not so much the moral education of the observer for the sake of social good, and he is also not stressing as strict a focus on perfection as Barry, but supposes that the address to the imagination, also regarding a storyline, the drama of an event, as he writes, would contribute to that striving towards perfection. In this, he comes closest to an aesthetic ideal that was much associated with landscape painting at the time, which will be the subject of chapter two.
91 D (X), p. 180. The Laocoon group had been the subject of an argument on the general acceptability of expressions of pain in art between Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who rejected it altogether and praised Laocoon’s stoicism, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, who in his Laocoon essay stressed that visual art should refrain from depicting direct expressions of pain because of their fleeting character – in his theory, such temporary phenomena were the domain of literature. On their arguments (in Winckelmann’s Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst (1755) and Lessing’s Laokoön oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerei und Poesie (1766)) comp. Oskar Bätschmann, “Laokoons Augenblick. Lessing installiert den fruchtbaren Betrachter”, Bild und Zeit. Temporalität in Kunst und Kunsttheorie seit 1800, ed. by Thomas Kisser, Paderborn, Fink 2011, pp. 21-48: 21-30.
of this Art”, and explains that the main expression is conveyed by the body, not the face, in any case.

The contempt for anything ‘base’ in painting and the self-sufficiency of painting was also promoted by James Barry. His theory, much more than Reynolds’, recurred to the platonic ideal of higher truths. Since moral excellence and perfection of form corresponded in Barry’s opinion, narratives were not of primary interest to him. A painter, he argued, was not confined, but privileged to exhibit just a moment in time that is independent of language and should employ his ingenuity upon such moments only as may sustain themselves, independent of words, and carry all their elucidation and energy in their exterior appearance with a force and precision that is in vain attempted by any language of mere words.

Painting, he contended, was in fact much more disposed than poetry to capturing those truths: whereas in poetry, the “detailed particulars are left to be supplied by the reader how he can” and thus would not have to be studied by the writer, a painter’s knowledge of the ideal necessarily covered its whole complexity. The labour going into a painting meeting that standard, Barry argued, is so immense, so various, and so foreign to the ordinary pursuits of life, that it is no wonder if the few examples of perfection which have appeared in this way, were ever regarded by the intelligent as the highest reaches of the human capacity.

The moral advancement enabled by such ideal history painting would be achieved through the contemplation of the perfection expressed in the ideal composition

93 D (X), pp. 180-1.
and design, in which sympathetic identification had no part. Barry’s ideal painting was a reflection of the painter’s moral and intellectual excellence, combined with ‘original genius’ much more than Reynolds had suggested. Indeed, Barry refused to give a lecture on invention altogether, for he believed that “it can hardly be considered as an acquirable quality; since the vigour, spirit, and felicity of invention are the peculiar emanations of that genius which shall be in vain sought for where heaven has not bestowed it.”

Autonomous painters: the concept of genius

All of the lecturers discussed here were concerned about what ‘genius’ means – itself, as a notion, made possible through the importance of subjectivity within the founding discourses of the middle classes. It designates the artist’s ability to conceive ‘greatness’ in art, and is supposed to be conveyed through his art. Furthermore genius is of course one of the terms that are still commonly associated with Romanticism, promoting the independence of the artistic individual as opposed to reliance on education and previous traditions – also including the sentimental ‘tradition’. William Blake’s annotations to Reynolds’ Discourses, it has been argued, exemplify the clash between ‘classical’ and ‘romantic’ doctrines in art (while at the same time asserting their common grounds). They also represent a clash between the belief in innate genius and a

96 Barry (1848), On Design, p. 112. Barry also mentions the relevance of ‘the heart’ in artistic conception, and commends sentiment as a principal quality of painting – he does not consider a limited range of ‘heroic’ subjects, but suggests that any subject should be pursued with regard to highest truths. The subject of Laocoon, he argues, should convey terror and pity, “which must arise from that climax of distress exhibited in the unavailing efforts of an agonizing father and his children, the children calling upon the father for assistance, and he upon Heaven that has abandoned him to his fate.” (“On Composition”, p. 156) The tragic effect, however, is not reflected as a privileged mode in history painting by Barry, but seen as one among others. The social viability of art, in his view, does not rely on pity with the suffering, but on the ‘higher truth’ expressed through that suffering.


98 As Barrell observes, this – as Romanticism has not been established as much as a term in art history – “has been characteristic rather of literary critics than of art historians (comp. Barrell (1986), The Political Theory of Painting, p. 223). See also Uphaus (1978), The Ideology of Reynolds’ Discourses on Art, pp. 59-73. Uphaus gives an account of the analogies in Reynolds’ understanding of genius and Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), which, like Reynolds, warned
belief in education which is very closely allied to a sympathetic bond with those artists who came before: Reynolds stated that only by studying nature, and on the basis of the study of old masters, who were “bound to the human heart by every tie of sympathetic approbation”\(^9\) (and in selecting and combining imaginatively what was best in both) could genius be \textit{developed}:

When we have had continually the great works of Art to impregnate our minds with kindred ideas, we are then, and not till then, fit to produce something of the same species. [...] The greatest natural genius cannot subsist on its own stock: he who resolves never to ransack any mind but his own, will soon be reduced, from mere barrenness, to the poorest of all imitations; he will be obliged to imitate himself, and to repeat what he has before often repeated.\(^{10}\)

Passages like this, in which Reynolds argued for the need for a ‘sympathetic education’ (meaning, quite literally, the endeavour to think ‘with’ the great minds of the past) to complement ‘original genius’, had been a particular affront to Blake, who saw in them the affirmation of an oppressive culture of inherited power, in which real minds of genius could not thrive. He commented, for example (exaggerating Reynolds’ point): “Reynolds Thinks that Man Learns all that he knows. I say on the Contrary that Man Brings All that he has or can have Into the World with him. Man is Born Ready Planted & Sown.” On Reynolds’ contrary statement that “The mind is a barren soil; a soil which is soon exhausted”, Blake’s reaction: “The mind that could have produced this Sentence must have been a Pitiful, a Pitiable Imbecility. I always thought that the Human Mind was the most Prolific of All Things & Inexhaustible. I certainly do Thank God that I am not like Reynolds.”\(^{101}\) The notion of artistic genius, as Blake defends and Reynolds defies it,

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\(^9\)D, (II), p. 28.

\(^{10}\)D (VI), p. 99.

\(^{101}\)D (Appendix), p. 310.
is based on self-sufficiency, on ‘native’, non-societal abilities. Just as the higher truths conveyed in ideal history painting ‘hovered’ above the realm of real forms, the artist who was able to conceive them, in Blake’s and Barry’s opinions, would be furnished with a mind that would not need to relate to others in order to receive those higher truths, whereas Reynolds imagines the Royal Academy and artistic existence in general ideally as subsisting in “that friendly intercourse which ought to exist among Artists, of receiving from the dead and giving to the living, and perhaps to those who are yet unborn.”

Turner’s views on genius, which he later expressed in annotations to Martin Archer Shee’s *Elements on Art* and also in his own lectures, were very close to those of Reynolds. Like him, he stressed the importance of incessant work and study, and he also believed that genius was not only something ‘given’ but had to be developed through the study of nature and the ‘friendly intercourse’ between artists and their works. My point is that the notion of individual ‘genius’ overrode former ideas of art not only – as commonly stated – by downgrading traditional, inherited forms of expression and introducing the individual itself as a legitimate theme, but also by declaring obsolete the social function of art made possible through the supposedly ‘magical’ act of sympathetic identification both with the endeavours of the old masters, and with their depicted protagonists. Reynolds’ discussions of genius ascribe to the term a definition that may retain analogies to old hierarchies, but it is also expressly aligned with the sentimental ideal which was deeply allied with the cause of social and political equality.

It is well-known that Turner followed Reynolds not only in theory, but also in his artistic practice. That he subscribed to the sentimental ideals to which this notion of genius was tied, and more expressly than Reynolds, not only in his

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103 Comp. EA (III), pp. 39-40, EA (I), pp. 36-38, EA (II), p. 41 (on Turner’s didactic emphasis of ‘practical study’). Opie’s views, too, resemble those of Reynolds. Comp. Opie (1848), On Invention, pp. 271-2; 289.
104 The recent exhibition *Turner and the Masters* (Tate Britain, Sept 2009 – Jan 2010) focused on Turner’s occupation with the Masters, whom he frequently thematised and referenced in his exhibited works. See the exhibition catalogue, ed. by David Solkin, Tate 2009.
writing but also in his exhibited works – as opposed to a then more current emphasis on ‘sublime genius’ in art – is the major argument of this thesis.¹⁰⁵

Endurance and virtue

During the course of the eighteenth century, Vivasvan Soni has argued, the idea of sympathy, being so central to the establishment of the middle classes, seems to have shifted more generally in the balance of emphasis from equilibrium between sufferer and sympathiser to a prioritisation of the sympathiser. As can already be seen in Smith’s theory, and in numerous works of literature that are today commonly classified as ‘sentimental’, the very operation of identification on which sympathy depends tends to betray its aim of feeling with the other, as the conception of the self and a concern with one’s own affective capabilities move to the centre of the experience.¹⁰⁶ Literature of the eighteenth century in general takes on a special role in this context. Ann Wierda Rowland has argued that it “largely becomes that category of writing which facilitates the function and experience of this new sentimental subjectivity: one in which the feeling self is open to and constituted through sympathetic and imaginative exchanges with other feeling selves.”¹⁰⁷ With its focus on subjective empathy identification tends to lose sight of ‘the other’. In its extreme form, empathy becomes the vehicle for an emotional enterprise that has nothing to do with alleviating anyone else of suffering, and thus, as Soni emphasises, helps remove individual responsibility for each other’s happiness in a society¹⁰⁸ – the opposite of what was originally aimed at with the humane ideal of sentimentalism.

¹⁰⁵ Reynolds mentions his definition of the sublime in his fifth discourse: “if, as Longinus thinks, the sublime, being the highest excellence that composition can attain to, abundantly compensates the absence of every other beauty [...]” (p. 84).
¹⁰⁶ For Soni, this type of sympathy is the one still dominant today. The moment in which sympathy is understood as identification, the goal of relieving the other of suffering tends to be accompanied by a new claim for the responsibility of the sufferer “not to place excessive demands on the enfeebled moral sentiments of those who might observe the situation.” (Soni (2010), Mourning Happiness, p. 310).
¹⁰⁸ Soni defines Sentimentalism itself along these lines, isolating it from the utopian potential inherent in tragic narrative. The latter, he argues, is aligned with an ancient understanding of happiness which is no longer in use. It was fundamentally tied to the communal, as it was not an
The overarching theory in Soni’s *Mourning Happiness* (2010) is that in fact, during the eighteenth century, the very idea of happiness went through a significant change which is closely linked to the changes in perception of sentimental thinking. Richardson’s *Pamela* is discussed as an exemplary novel that marks this change. Instead of the protagonist’s happiness, Soni shows that the logic of the narrative puts the stress on the proof of her virtuous character, which, according to the narrative’s logic, can only be given through her suffering. ‘Virtue rewarded’, the subtitle of the novel, indicates this emphasis. Ironically, the precondition for such a proof is that Pamela should suspend the pursuit of her own happiness for the time of this suffering, which in effect becomes a time of trial. Would she protest against the causes of her suffering in any way, this action of self-interest, as it were, would prevent the demonstration of virtue. Enduring the pain, she is rewarded with marriage. Thus, Pamela becomes a heroine who promotes not the sentimental ideal, but that which is the downside of it, resulting from the emphasis of the observer-position over that of the sufferer. Only because as readers, we know her inner life, this proof of virtue is given, while it would be denied to modes of visual representation, such as those of history painting.

The trial narrative therefore subverts the supposed aim of pity, that is, in the Aristotelian sense, “caring” for the sufferer rather than “feeling for” the sufferer. Sympathy with the sufferer in a trial narrative aims at a virtuous enduring and an effective suspension of happiness: “to the extent that one follows the narrative logic and concedes that the protagonist’s trials are necessary, pity or compassion is an inappropriate response”, writes Soni. The tragedies of sentimentality, in his argument, become socially ineffective as they aim at

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expression of a state of being or a personal goal, but a judgement made about a person after his death with regard to his part in and contribution to the community (the Solonian judgement of happiness).

109 Soni convincingly demonstrates that, as the narrative continues, the time of marriage is transformed into another time of trial. However, the ‘marriage plot’ of the eighteenth century, he argues, uses marriage – as long as it functions as happy end – as “the moment of passage that death itself is supposed to signal for heavenly happiness”, p. 272. Comp. chapter 7 (“Marriage Plot”), in Soni (2010), *Mourning Happiness*, pp. 267-289.

generating a community of sufferers rather than a dynamic relationship between those who feel pity and those who need help. Turner’s emphasis on the tragic in his definition of ideal history painting opposes this trend: the ‘dubious gloom’ which he promoted, ‘undecided’ between the maintenance or surrender of hope, as it were, points at the situation of the sufferer, as there is no momentum for endurance offered in the first place. For Turner, the decisive factor is in the unforeseen, changing the fortune once and for all: an undeserved loss of happiness, with no chance of proving virtue, but potential for an Aristotelian effect.

‘Public’ and ‘private’ virtue at the Royal Academy in the 1790s

The ideological shift towards the stoic ideal described by Soni, it can be assumed, was further consolidated by the events and developments following upon the French Revolution. The ‘public sphere’ could still be associated with a new order of things, in which everyone could theoretically participate, but “in the supercharged atmosphere of a nation plunged, unprepared and bewildered, into a general war”, Richard D. Altick writes, “the potentialities inherent in the press” – as the medium of a public – “spread alarm among the people who prized above all the settled stability of the nation.”111 The public spheres of hypothetical equality were less than before deemed as liberating, and raised more fears and worries about the quality of ‘public taste’ and power than before. From the 1790s on, such worries assumed a distinctively anti-Jacobin flavour.112

The very idea of equality had now developed more negative associations – the utopia of the public could now easily be envisioned as dystopia. The perceived political threat from within the nation even tended to outweigh that from ‘without’: “Compared with the threat of internal subversion”, i.e. the public’s claim for rights in a revolution – Altick again – “that of military invasion was

small.” However, British society, as Linda Colley has shown, underwent significant identity shifts at this time which resulted particularly from the threats of an ‘intrusion of the other’. The loss of the war with America, she argues, had raised a new patriotic consciousness in Britain. With it, the self-image as the nation of liberty was not sustainable anymore, as now it had been Britain’s ‘own people’ fighting for their independence from Britain. Suddenly, being a patriot and being a champion of liberty did not go together as smoothly as before. Britain now formed a more distinct self-image, “a sense of embattled identity”, as Colley writes. The result was a move to the political Right, and a new stress on patriotism. The press subsequently became pivotal in forming “a unified national identity” as David Hogsette put it. Both cosmopolitanism and the realisation of the public as a socially empowered body seemed (even) less attainable, and appeared less desirable.

One could also assume that the new stress on patriotism went along with an emphasis upon the role of the public, and hence the social utopia associated with it – particularly because, as Colley expands, the defence of Britain rested on a mobilisation of all social classes. Patriotism had itself become a form of public, not elitist, consciousness. However, this, Colley shows, did not enhance sympathetic ideals. Instead of rendering the idea of public opinion obsolete, the era ‘overwrote’ older, maybe more elitist notions of the public that were generated by visions of sympathetic identification with the less privileged, and replaced it with less sentimental paradigms. The notion of ‘Britain’ was construed, Colley argues, much by contrast with the supposedly ‘effeminate’ culture of the formerly fashionable court of Louis XIV at Versailles. The realities of political threat undermined the idea of ‘the public’ as a peaceful community bound together by

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113 Altick (1963), *The English Common Reader*, p. 72.
117 Colley on the “habit à la française” which was a European trend among eighteenth-century aristocrats: Colley (1994), *Britons*, p. 165.
the ‘merely humane’ and conversely ‘manly strength’ became a virtue that was
deed crucial. While a generation of men was raised within a new framework of
military ideals, moral values were increasingly projected onto the private realm
and the female sex, which, during these years, also formed a self-understanding as
‘the moral conscience’ of the nation. The utopian vision of society, formerly
encompassed in the very idea of public discourse, thus became a matter of
patriotic concern, and was increasingly stripped of its universal paradigm.

History painting took part in this enhanced ‘gendering’ of moral ideals. Depictions of military triumphs became more popular and more prominent at the
Royal Academy exhibitions. They often drew on the iconography of biblical
drawing, depicting members of the upper classes, glorified as heroes of the nation.
Benjamin West’s Death of General Wolfe (R.A. 1770, pl. 8), for example, became a
model for many later depictions. For Martin Myrone, this painting demonstrates
a ‘crisis’ of heroic masculinity as it was traditionally promoted by civic humanist
art theories, since it depicts the military leader and his bystanders as a ‘community
of feeling’. It is true that there is an emphasis on feeling in the painting, however, the notion promoted here is not that of unjust suffering, but that of a
military hero dying while leading his nation towards victory – similar to Reynolds’
Discourses, it seeks to endorse both a sentimental effect and the promotion of an
ideal detached from that effect – in its case, however, the idea of the patriotic
death essentially undermines the ‘means’ of sympathetic identification with the
sufferer.

121 Martin Myrone, Bodybuilding: Reforming Masculinities in British Art 1750-1810, New Haven,
Yale UP 2005, pp. 108-120. David Solkin has argued that this painting is exemplary for a new kind of
history painting which integrated a ‘heroic subject’ into a ‘polite’ context of ‘private virtue’, by
which he means sympathetic bonds that were upheld as middle class values (David Solkin, Painting
for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England, New Haven, Yale
UP 1993, pp. 212-3). Leo Costello, by contrast, has associated West’s painting with an affirmation of
the “elite male subject” whose power had been threatened by the emerging notion of a
politically viable public. Despite its display of historical detail, which in Costello’s view signifies the
‘informational language’ of the emerging public, he argues, it sentimentalises the death of Wolfe
(Sentimentalism, in Costello’s understanding, being associated, in an extension of Solkin’s and
Barrell’s argument, with the propertyed classes). Costello (2012), Turner and the Subject of History.
With this cultural backdrop in mind, it may seem an untimely move for the Royal Academy to re-instate the option for its artists to append quotations to their exhibited works at the annual exhibitions in 1798. Before quotation had been banned from the Royal Academy exhibition catalogues in 1786, it had somewhat fallen out of fashion, and it is striking that the small number of female exhibitors (Angelica Kauffmann and later Maria Cosway) particularly had made use of the facility of additional texts for their mostly ‘sentimental’ subjects. The mode of quotation was generally associated with the realm of sentimentality: “discussions of emotion”, as Adela Pinch has observed, “took place in a literary culture in which popular quotation flourished”. The reasons of the Academy for re-introducing texts in the exhibition catalogues, however, were probably just pragmatic: the decision to reinstate texts was part of a set of reforms and it went along with the introduction of a charge for the catalogue. Through them, printing costs were no longer to be held at bay by the prohibition of additional text – with the money raised through the sales, appended texts could again be included.

In 1798, when attaching texts to pictures was once again permitted, history paintings which corresponded with the ‘manly’ virtues would not make use of the new freedom as much as those depicting the realm of family and home. Depictions of more recent military actions usually were given extensive titles that indicated the main facts of the incident, as for example Henry Singleton’s painting *The engagement of the Glatton, 16th July, 1796, commanded by Capt. Sir H. Trollope, with eight ships of war, in which Capt Strangways of the marines was mortally wounded*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1799. History paintings

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122 Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*, Stanford, Calif., Stanford UP 1996, p. 165. For Pinch, this observation is primarily evidence for her argument about the problematic status of feelings’ origins and their ‘mobility’ in eighteenth century discourses. Quotations mirror, Pinch argues, “the tendency of affective life to get located among rather than within people, or in the interstices between different explanations and stories of their origins, arising as much from rhetorical or fictional situations as from the mind’s own motions.”

123 Comp. Royal Academy Minutes, RAA/PC/2, p. 26, 352, 355-6 (many thanks to Mark Pomeroy).

124 Comp. Exhibition of the Royal Academy, MDCC, XCIX. The thirty-first. London, J. Cooper 1799, p. 6. This was not new after the French Revolution: earlier examples are 1781, No. 230 and 231 (by T. Kettle and D. Serres); 1782, No. 59, 85, 222 and 438; 1783, No. 67, 79, 241, 228, 212, etc.; 1784, No. 8, 90, 93; 1785, No. 203, 406, 411, etc. – an example for heroism using quotation: 1782, No. 239 (a curse of Rome and praise of Britain), allegorical heroism: 1784, No. 76, 513.
like these by choice of their ‘factual’ titles, perhaps reminding their audiences of newspaper headlines, suggested a purely documentary concern with the specific event depicted. Matching quotations would be appended instead to paintings which through their titles – and enhanced by the quotations themselves – suggested a reading that was oriented towards more general values and themes, as in John Francis Rigaud’s *The nurse* (R.A. 1799), accompanied by the lines: “How oft has infant innocence imprest/ A mother’s fondness on a nurse’s breast.”

Turner’s earliest composite works representing landscapes, which will be discussed in chapters three and four, differed from these schemes in significant ways. Apart from them, however, in 1799 Turner also exhibited a painting representing contemporary history, whose title was formulated in the factual newspaper-style: *The Battle of The Nile, at ten o’clock, when the L’Orient blew up, from the station of the Gun Boats between the Battery and the Castle of Aboukir*. The whereabouts of this painting as well as its provenance are not known, and no photograph exists, therefore it is impossible to draw conclusions about any unconventional relations of text and image here. However, one thing certainly was exceptional regarding that relationship: unlike most other paintings referring to history in this way, Turner appended a quotation. It was taken from book VI of *Paradise Lost*:

> “Immediate in a flame,
> “But soon obscur’d with smoke, all heav’n appear’d.
> “From these deep-throated engines belch’d whose roar
> “Imbowel’d with outrageous noise the air,
> “And all her entrails tore, disgorging foul
> “Their devilish glut, chain’d thunderbolts and hail

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125 *Exhibition of the Royal Academy* (1799), p. 8 (the source of the quote is not given). Quotations before 1786 could be classified as follows: sentimental (1774, No. 246; 1776, No. 157 and 184; 1784, No. 206 (Maria Cosway); 1785, No. 34 and 224 (Maria Cosway)); to add dramatic effect (suddenness evoked through description/dramatic dialogue: 1773, No. 243 and 255), other modes (1779, No. 331 and 164); Landscape description (1781, No. 40; descriptive (1782, No. 17, 1783, No. 275); religious (1782, No. 31).
“Of iron globes.”

The passage is taken from a description of a battle in which angels fight against Satan’s troops, and captures a moment when an attack by the angels with burning reeds causes a great explosion of the military ‘engines’ used by their enemies. It bears a fairly obvious analogy to the action of the battle that is depicted: the British fired on the French Orient, whose loaded ordinance exploded destroying the ship and killing most of those who had been onboard. Through the reference, a clear analogy is drawn between the troops of Satan and those of the French, and the British are indirectly associated with the forces of heaven. However, in *Paradise Lost*, the explosion is not a victorious incident. The “devilish glut, chained thunderbolts and hail/ Of iron globes” affect the angels’ troops badly: “[t]hough standing else as rocks, but down they fell/ By thousands” (*PL* 140).

Since it is not known what the painting looked like, it is impossible to say if Turner relativised the patriotic reading in any way by pictorial means, too. By means of the appended text alone, however, the work pointed at a position not of clear superiority, but of fragility – something that is repeated in Turner’s other early composite works (which bear possible allusions to the threat of a French invasion at the time), as will be seen in chapters three and four. The following chapters will show how Turner consistently undermined the ‘winning’ narratives of heroism and pointed at instability and suffering instead.

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128 This contradicts Myrone’s suggestion that heroism was no longer deemed to be a viable ideal in the age of rising middle classes. The fact that there were nevertheless many heroic depictions and much praise of heroism, Myrone explains as a counter-effect of the public perception of the obsoleteness of the concept. See Myrone (2005), *Bodybuilding*, pp. 1-14. Leo Costello’s recent analysis of Turner’s *Battle of Trafalgar* (1806-8) supports my view. The picture quotes West’s *Death of General Wolfe* as it includes the respective scene as one among others, depicting a far more ‘contextual’ scene of battle. Costello argues that “the insignificance of the Nelson group can be seen as a structural element in its contrast with the size of the picture and the event as a whole” – an interpretation that would also support a relativisation of the ‘heroic’ as the sole bearer of meaning for such actions of war, although Costello argues that the latter is foremost expressed in
Once potentially considered a ‘most natural’ realm for negotiations of the individual and a potential ‘testing realm’ for the ethical capacities of a public, art’s more general discourses around 1800 seem to have moved away even more from the ethical (sympathetic) rendering of tragedy, towards the effect of identification in the sense of admiration – structurally contrasting sentimental identification with a suffering hero(ine), and aligned with notions of native genius. The idealised suppression of pain pre-supposes that it is possible to overcome the very constituents of a tragic plot, i.e. those ‘turns of fate’ that prove the vulnerability of a subject to forces that are beyond its own control, which Turner would make the most prominent theme of his art.

The actions of the surrounding soldiers (and, more generally, that Turner’s reference was to locate himself within the tradition of history painting, so that he could eventually ‘destroy’ it – an argument whose emphasis on violent action presents an alternative to my own thesis of Turner’s adherence to a sentimental ideal). Costello (2012), Turner and the Subject of History, p. 51.
2. Landscape hermeneutics

In the last chapter I argued that ideal history painting, in Reynolds’ *Discourses*, was conceived in its positive effects upon society as a combination of neo-platonism and sentimentalism, tied to aesthetic effects which are aligned with Aristotle’s notion of an ideal tragedy. Later theorists of the Royal Academy supported an understanding of art which depends less on narrative and sympathetic identification, and argued that art’s capacity for societal improvement could be achieved through the immediacy of its own intellectual and aesthetic effect. The conveyance of emotions themselves (Fuseli), ‘highest truths’ (Barry) or a moral art which would ‘strike the imagination’ (Opie) were all independent of narratives providing storylines for the depicted scenes. They went along with a general trend for endurance and heroism that rejected the ideals of sentimentalism as valid for society as a whole. This chapter delineates strands in hermeneutic approaches to landscape which correspond with these developments in the understanding of history painting. Both genres and their hermeneutic conventions are pivotal for gaining insights into Turner’s specific constructions of meaning, as his works consciously evoked – and deviated from – these conventions.

As observed in chapter one, the private realm was construed as a sphere which did not correlate with the heroism promoted at the end of the eighteenth century. It was aligned with female tenderness, family, and notions of the rural and ‘Arcadian’. The latter had been – and certainly still was to some extent –

129 Martin Myrone offers an alternative interpretation of these tendencies (comp. footnote 128). In *Bodybuilding*, he argues that heroism did not comply with newer forms of bourgeois male identity, and that the many heroic depictions and emphasis on the sublime of the time are part of an “aesthetic of crisis” promoting conservative ideals against the perceived threat of consumer culture with its alleged over-attention to material beauty (an anxiety which was shared by Turner, as I argue in chapter seven). “The interest of this Sublime revision of heroic masculinity”, Myrone writes, “is in its very vulnerability, incoherence and irresolution.” Myrone (2005), *Bodybuilding*, p. 12.

130 This idealised ‘private realm’ is often identified as a major characteristic of the emergence of politically significant middle classes and opposed to the ‘great style’ which Reynolds and others promoted in the name of history painting – not because these two are inherently contradictory, but mainly because it was these ‘private people’s’ taste and money which determined the art market and favoured small scales, portraiture and landscape over history painting. The isolation of such a ‘private sphere’ itself, I argue, is an effect of a shift that also happened within the understanding of history painting, from a genre that could be aligned with sentimentalism towards
the symbolical rendering of the utopian, ‘humane’ state of society. The idea of the private life as retreat from the ‘reality’ of the urban life had throughout the century been associated with ideas made popular by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The supposed ‘ideal nature’ of man, in his theory, went along with the appreciation of natural environments – the connection of the two would help uncover the ‘good nature’ of everyone. Nature, in his scheme, was embedded within symbolical negotiations of the moral and political: the notion of an obscured ideal ‘nature’ of man that is lost and to be recovered through the means of education was closely allied with the ideal of a democratic nation with a politically-active public. The three-stage scheme of an ideal origin and a detrimental present that aims at regaining the lost perfection, which mirrors the Christian notion of a paradise that is lost and must be regained, could be seen as one of the most pervasive structures of thinking at the time, and was closely linked with sentimental thinking.131 Neo-classical art was allied with this notion of harmony between humans and nature, rendering its landscapes according to ideals instead of realities, and thus emphasising its supposed underlying order. It could be interpreted within the framework of utopian thinking, but also as a reassurance of the order of things as they were at present. Any kind of interpretive guidance for the understanding of landscape representations could therefore have political dimensions, and help locate an artwork within those central discourses of the time.

one exclusively representing ‘stoic’ heroism associated with the ‘manly’ public sphere (see chapter one). The supposed ‘tragedy of British history painting’ (this is the title of chapter six in William Vaughan’s British Painting: The Golden Age, NY, Thames and Hudson 1999), meaning its clash with the market’s demands (as ‘ideal’ versus the ‘mundane’) is thus irrelevant here, as I trace aspects of history painting’s theoretic potential as ‘educator’ of the public in the sentimental tradition, which seemed, at this point, lost from the rhetorics of the genre. 131 Comp. Ana M. Acosta, Reading Genesis in the Eighteenth Century, Burlington, Ashgate 2006. Acosta argues for Genesis as a basic structural model for theoretical thinking in the eighteenth century. Paul de Man, in his Rhetoric of Romanticism, states that the “idea of paradise consciously regained after the fall into consciousness, [...] of a teleological and apocalyptic history [...] [is] one of the most seductive, powerful, and deluded topoi of the idealist and romantic period” (Rhetoric of Romanticism, NY, Columbia UP 1894, p. 267) – and Schiller’s theory, which will be discussed below, a “striking example of this ubiquitous model” (Constantin Behler, Nostalgic Teleology: Friedrich Schiller and the Schemata of Aesthetic Humanism, NY/Bern, Lang 1995, pp. 62-3). See M.H. Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism. Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature, London/NY, Norton & Company 1973, pp. 37-65.
The Romanticists in England and Germany, M.H. Abrams has argued, picked up the scheme of a paradise lost to be regained, and incorporated it within secularised poetics whose protagonist was the individual mind.\textsuperscript{132} Importantly, this also means that the ideals were no longer conceived of as societal – just as the renewed ‘privatisation’ of virtue with an enhanced division into male and female was a step away from the utopian goal of sentimentalism. Nature as the realm of utopian fulfilment, as will be seen in the next two chapters, was an important concept for Turner, especially in his earliest composite works which, as I suggest, directly comment on the neo-classical tradition of concordia discors (harmony underlying nature’s conflicting appearances). This chapter enquires about the ascription of meaning to landscape at the time more generally, when the utopian ideal was no longer deemed to be attainable.

**Harmony in the ‘fallen world’: Thomson’s *The Seasons* and physico-theology**

In the eighteenth century, nature in its ‘current state’ to many seemed problematic, as it was perceived to be far removed from the ideal of harmonious order. In the biblical myth, it reflects the state of a ‘fallen humanity’ directly. But the notion of a perfect state that was associated with an ideal nature also found its secularised renderings in the many invocations of ancient Arcadia in the eighteenth century. Often, too, the two were combined. A very prominent, if not the most prominent example for the reflection of nature as a state of ‘fallenness’ and with both Christian and classical versions of a paradisiac idyll in view was James Thomson’s *The Seasons*, which was published in four parts – Winter, Summer, Spring and Autumn (in this order) – between 1726 and 1730.\textsuperscript{133} It is the literary work that was most frequently referenced by Turner. According to Thomson’s lyrical voice, the changing seasons mirror the “inward-eating Change” that governs man after he has been expelled from paradise, now obsessed with his extreme and ever-changing passions, hungry for power and inclined to exploit


the rest of nature. The existence of the changing seasons itself marks the end of ‘eternal spring’ – alternating with summer, autumn and winter, the postlapsarian spring too characterises the human condition in a now haphazard world. Thomson’s nature thus appears ‘as nature’ as well as in its symbolical capacities to represent eternal harmony.

In The Seasons, the ideal, and illusory (lost), state of peace is contrasted with several literally ‘dark’ scenarios depicting the realm of the ‘real’, as it were. For example, Thomson associates the beginning of night with an opening up of the unknown, the “dread immensity of space” encompassed in the night sky which accommodates unknown worlds. It awakens “superstitious horrors” in most people, but a “Joy/ Divinely great” in “th’ enlighten’d Few” (S 138). By the help of philosophy, those enlightened people are “intent to gaze/ Creation thro’; and, from that full Complex/ Of never-ending Wonders, to conceive/ Of the SOLE BEING right” (S 142). The passage goes on to explain that philosophy (personified) manages to rise above the complexity and seeming chaos of the world, as its first principle is abstract truth:

[...] With inward View,
Thence on th’ideal Kingdom swift she turns
Her Eye; and instant, at her powerful Glance,
Th’ obedient Phantoms vanish or appear;
Compound, divide, and into Order shift,
Each to his Rank, from plain Perception up
To the fair Forms of Fancy’s fleeting Train;
To Reason then, deducing Truth from Truth;
And Notion quite abstract; where first begins
The World of Spirits, Action all, and Life
Unfetter’d, and unmix’d. (S 142)

135 See also PL, p. 245.
Philosophy, then, epitomises the notion that within a seemingly arbitrary world (and mind), order is still possible, that there is a way for humans to transcend their perceptive and epistemological limitations: it bridges the gap between humans and God. The notion of ideal painting as described by Reynolds and later theorists of the Royal Academy, as a realm showing the world ‘as it ought to be’ according to a superior order, is structurally much aligned with this idea. However, Thomson’s poem does not end on this reconciliatory note. In fact, the lyrical ‘I’ continues, the very abstract realm which enables humans to be fascinated instead of scared by the wonders and complexity of the world(s), is not fully accessible through reason:

[...] But here the Cloud,
So wills Eternal Providence, sits deep.
Enough for us to know that this dark State,
In wayward Passion lost, and vain Pursuits,
This Infancy of Being, cannot prove
The final Issue of the Works of God,
By boundless Love and perfect Wisdom form’d,
And ever rising with the rising Mind. (S 142)

Personified Philosophy and Enlightenment, in Thomson’s The Seasons, are associated with a brightness or clarity that overcomes the ‘cloudy’, “dark state” which nevertheless can never be overcome by logic: Thomson’s conclusion to Summer is that while philosophy (meaning also science) can help us understand and raise ourselves above a chaotic and in many respects arbitrary world which does not abide by moral laws (in this philosophy resembles aesthetic perception), only faith in God’s providence promises to ‘conquer’ the fearful condition of human existence. Thomson thus presents a belief in the principle of concordia discors, that of an underlying order of the universe which is out of the reach of
human enquiry (although this view, as will be seen in chapter three, gains a particular ambiguity in *The Seasons*).  

The argument followed by *The Seasons* was congruent with strands of thinking that were subsumed under the label ‘physico-theology’ in the eighteenth century.  

Physico-theology was a religious current founded in England which became widespread across Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. Physico-theologists of the time believed that nature certifies God’s existence in the sense that its principles mirror the divine order. They argued that in its seemingly limitless detail and perfection, nature was a legitimate proof of God’s existence, and that by enquiring into its laws the necessity for reverence regarding the underlying divine order became increasingly apparent. This inference has

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138 Udo Krolzik states that the protestant European countries each had an estimated 800 physico-theological works published in the eighteenth century (Krolzik, “Physikotheologie”, *RGG: Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, vol. 6 of 8, ed. by Hans Dieter Betz, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck 2003, pp. 1328-30: 1329). Walter Charleton’s treatise *The darkness of atheism dispelled by the light of nature, a physico-theological treatise*, is among the most popular writings. An influential predecessor was Johann Arndt’s *Vier Bücher vom wahren Christentum* (1555-1621), translated into many languages.  
139 Physico-theology is here understood as the historical movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as opposed to the argumentative figure of physico-theology, which means the general search for something which helps man overcome the arbitrariness of nature. Comp. Krolzik (2003), Physikotheologie, p. 1328. Kant was a member of a physico-theological society, but, like Hegel, Goethe and Heine, distanced himself from it later (p. 1329). On Kant’s theoretical ‘overcoming’ of physico-theology see Heinz Pickartz, *Natur und Gott in der Philosophie Kants. Eine entwicklungsgeschichtliche Betrachtung*. Univ., Diss, Cologne 1995.  
140 In *Physico-theology, or, Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God, from his Works of Creation [...]*, William Derham for example presents a schematic description of the purposes of the creation according to scientific knowledge and derives from this purposefulness the ‘proof’ that it must have been made by God, and hence that God exists. Also, he infers that humans have the duty of praising the deity accordingly: in the final chapter on “practical inferences”, he argues that the “Publick Worship of GOD” is not something one chooses to do or not; “neither is it enough to read, pray, or praise God at Home [...] because the appearing in GOD’s House, on his Day, is an Act of Homage and Fealty, due to the CREATOR, a Right of Sovereignty we pay him.” William Derham, *Physico-theology, or, Demonstration of the Being and Attribute of God, from his Works of Creation [...]*, London, W. Innyx and J. Richardson 1754, p. 441. Derham and John Ray (*Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of Creation*, 1691) helped popularise physico-theology as a reading of nature against the emphasis on nature as a compendium of degenerating objects. (Krolzik (2003), Physikotheologie, 1329).
been termed the *argument from design*. In it, nature is understood as a signifier of God’s wisdom and foresight. The sciences (or natural philosophy) stood in the service of achieving knowledge of that divine order and help man to improve according to God’s will. This theological strand, as Walter Sparn states, ‘achieved a correlation between science and theology like none afterwards’. Its publications followed an educational purpose regarding religious and scientific ‘truth’: the typical physico-theological treatise would describe details of the world scientifically, and conclude with a praise of God derived from the wisdom that was ‘proven’ by the underlying principles of his creation. The various publications in the ‘genre’ served widely to educate the new middle classes. Their educational aim, however, always implied the acknowledgment of the limits of human knowledge. The physico-theological praises of God’s design arguably formed a philosophical antipode to later conceptions of nature, significantly those focusing on nature as a realm signifying or inspiring the (Kantian) sublime.

**The sublime and the imagination: abstracting from nature**

While in *The Seasons*, the fundamentally arbitrary force of nature features many times in its destructive and tragic potential, which, as will be seen in chapter four, bore special relevance for Turner’s art, theorists of the sublime, it could be said, sought to overcome this potential by framing it within concepts of aesthetic pleasure. Landscape aesthetics of the eighteenth century more generally bore a special tension with the Aristotelian effects of a tragedy, which, however, were still retained as some of the highest principles of art. While in the eighteenth century, ‘the sublime’ most often referred to a feeling of reverence and awe for the divine, later theories focused on the feeling of self-elevation above the realm of the real, of natural dependencies and threats, to explain the particular pleasure

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143 Comp. Krolzik (2003), Physikotheologie, p. 1329.
derived from witnessing the forces of potential danger while one was in the safe position of the observer.\footnote{Comp. for an overview of notions of the eighteenth century sublime and later definitions for example Philip Shaw, The Sublime, London/NY, Routledge 2006. Turner used the term in Reynolds’ sense to signify ‘superior greatness’ (see footnote 153).}

According to Edmund Burke’s \textit{Enquiry} a tragedy is ‘sublime’. Yet of ‘terror and pity’, the emotions it was supposed to evoke according to Aristotle, only the first would match his definition of the term, while pity would be associated with the beautiful – the category which was generally contrasted with the sublime in the \textit{Enquiry}: “for terror is a passion which always produces delight when it does not press too close, and pity is a passion accompanied with pleasure, because it arises from love and social affection.”\footnote{Edmund Burke, \textit{A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful}, ed. by Adam Phillips, Oxford, Oxford UP 2008, p. 42.} The social realm and love were generally associated with the beautiful – the \textit{Enquiry} could be understood as an example for the ‘gendering’ of public and private realms of experience and virtue.\footnote{The sublime, for Burke, is clearly a gendered discourse. He writes from an exclusively male perspective and associates beauty with (male) heterosexual attraction to women, as well as with attributes that characterise a female sphere of life. The sublime is in many ways opposed to this, and therefore based (among other assumptions) on the notion of gendered difference (comp. Ann K. Mellor, \textit{Romanticism and Gender}, Routledge 1993, pp. 85-106. I would not agree, however, with Mellor’s definition of a female sublime, but suggest that the sublime maintains its ‘masculine’ connotations also in Radcliffe’s \textit{The Mysteries of Udolpho}, Mellor’s main example. The “democratic dimension” of the Radcliffian sublime (p. 95) in my view derives from the fact that it is a form of religious address/adoration, i.e. conforming with the very different notion of the sublime current in the earlier eighteenth century).} Pity, aligned with the beautiful – although it is not questioned openly – seems to have a difficult standing within Burke’s attempt to explain why exactly it is enjoyable to watch a tragedy. At the same time, the very question of sublime pleasure is closely allied with that of tragic pleasure. When Burke asks ‘why do we enjoy (to see) things that seem to be threatening?’ to seek a definition of the sublime, the effects of the tragic seem necessarily implied. Burke stresses that the sufferers in a tragedy should be ‘worthy characters’\footnote{Burke (2008), \textit{Enquiry}, p. 42.} and also states that “the pain we feel” while watching their pain “prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer.”\footnote{Burke (2008), \textit{Enquiry}, p. 43.} The social effect of tragedy thus co-exists unresolvably with the supposed ‘elevating’ effect that is claimed most centrally for both the sublime and...
tragedy. Were the general differentiation between the beautiful and the sublime consistent here, pity would not partake in Burke’s notion of the tragic.

By ‘transferring’ the notion of the sublime into transcendental philosophy, Kant later not only removed it from the empiricist psychological view, but also separated it from deistic theories, to which Burke himself subscribed in his *Enquiry*, and, more importantly, from the effect of fear that was for Burke still shared by the sublime and tragedy (even if the sublime corresponds with a relaxation of fear). Kant denies the possibility of enlightened religion altogether, and instead contrasts his own view with a per se religious, ‘uncultured’, worldview. Against his elaboration of the sublime, he writes, the following argument seems to persist:

Daß wir Gott im Ungewitter, im Sturm, im Erdbeben u.d.gl. als im Zorn, zugleich aber auch in seiner Erhabenheit sich darstellend vorstellig zu machen pflegen, wobei doch die Einbildung unseres Gemüts über die Wirkungen und, wie es scheint, gar über die Absichten einer solchen Macht, Torheit und Frevel zugleich sein würde. Hier scheint kein Gefühl der Erhabenheit unserer eigenen Natur, sondern vielmehr Unterwerfung, Niedergeschlagenheit und Gefühl der gänzlichen Ohnmacht die Gemütsstimmung zu sein [...].

Religion, Kant argues, is commonly reigned by fear, and thus might just as easily be called superstition. Kant’s sublime, in contrast, establishes what he calls ‘inner religion’, which aims at realising that the idea of ‘infinity’ can be sustained by the human mind. The subject partakes in that idea itself: the natural world is not capable of arousing feelings of fear anymore because men partake in

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149 “God as exhibiting himself in anger but at the same time in his sublimity in thunder, storm, earthquake etc., where to imagine that our minds have any superiority over the effects and as it seems even over the intentions of such a power would seem to be at once both foolishness and outrage. Here it seems to be not a feeling of the sublimity of our own nature but rather submission, dejection, and a feeling of complete powerlessness [...].” Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, transl. by James Creed Meredith, Oxford, Clarendon P 1978, p. 146.

150 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. by Wilhelm Weischedel, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 1974, p. 188.
transcendent ideas. The notion of infinity was projected onto the ‘transcendental’ realm of selfhood that was detached from worldly relations and dependences. After Kant, the human self is potentially elevated (erhaben) over time and space – and nature.\textsuperscript{151} By this ‘narcissistic move’, a deistic view which derives from the very partaking in the natural world, and therefore features a perceived share in the suffering of its creatures through the ‘tragic’ effects of terror and pity, is declared obsolete.\textsuperscript{152}

The only theory of the sublime or tragedy which we are sure Turner read\textsuperscript{153} is a direct response to Burke and Aristotle, and it endeavoured to deconstruct the idea that pity could be reconcilable with feelings of the sublime: Richard Payne Knight’s \textit{Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste}, published in 1805. In the chapter “of the Sublime and Pathetic”, the author treats the sublime as an affection inspired by the suffering of others – much more distinctly than Burke. In Knight’s view, it does not derive from pity, but from a delight in beholding exertions of energy; and all feel curiosity to know in what modes of degrees, those exertions can be displayed, under the awful circumstances impending death. With those exertions they sympathize; and, therefore, feel an interest not in proportion to the sufferings, but to the heroism and gallantry of the person executed.\textsuperscript{154}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[153] Turner referred to it in his annotations to Martin Archer Shee’s \textit{Elements of Art}. (Comp. EA (II), pp. 38-9). In the \textit{Cockermouth} sketchbook, Turner mentioned a definition of the sublime by Tom Paine (\textit{The Age of Reason}, II, 1795) – the sublime “as is probably experienced by ordinary and uncultivated minds, and even by judicious without or are destitute of the vigour of imagination”. In this conception, the sublime is very close to ‘the ridiculous’ (comp. John Gage, “Turner and the Picturesque II”, \textit{The Burlington Magazine}, 107:743 (1965), pp. 75-81: 79). In preserved statements by Turner, the term is used in the sense of ‘superior greatness’ rather than in a strictly pictorial or philosophical manner (comp. EA (III), p. 39).
\item[154] Richard Payne Knight, \textit{An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste}, London, T. Payne/J. White\textsuperscript{2} 1805, pp. 322-3.
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Consequently, Aristotle’s claim that terror and pity are the principles of tragedy, does not hold true in Knight’s theory – his explanation for the pleasurable effect of tragedy expressly excludes the workings of pity and sympathy. “[H]ow any man, in his senses, can either fear from dangers, which he knows to be unreal; or commiseration for distress, which he knows to be fictitious, I am at a loss to discover”, writes Knight.\footnote{Knight (1805), *Analytical Inquiry*, p. 328.} Like Burke before him, he draws a categorical distinction between reality and art, which enables the abstraction of suffering, and an efficacious detachment from ethical responses. Knight, seemingly rephrasing Fuseli, maintains that he, or the general I, should “sympathize [...] with the expressions of passion, and mental energy, which those fictitious events excite; because the expressions are real”.\footnote{Knight (1805), *Analytical Inquiry*, pp. 328-9.} Pity for the suffering is literally replaced in Knight’s theory by an adoration of heroism: the adoration of someone who does not give in to pain, but elevates him/herself above the realm of physical concerns. This operation is perceived to inspire the ‘sublime’. The Aristotelian ideal is thus bluntly transformed into a praise of platonic stoicism, and tragedies deprived of their social function. What Turner thought of Knight’s theory in particular is not known. My argument of this thesis, however, supposes that Turner’s art was expressly against the sublime ideal conceived in this way, and that it instead promoted sentimental ideals.\footnote{This argument also implies a wider criticism regarding the employment of the sublime as a category ‘applied’ in the visual arts. Turner is often seen as one of the painters who most prolifically ‘made use of’ or ‘engaged with’ concepts of the sublime in the early nineteenth century. This is largely supported by the fact that many of his subjects – shipwrecks and storms, for example – and his “obscuring” late style seem to be intelligible with the lists of ‘sublime objects’ that were compiled by Burke and other theorists of the sublime. Andrew Wilton, in his book *Turner and the Sublime* (Chicago, U of Chicago P 1980) focuses on Turner’s engagement with motifs and themes included in such lists, such as the heroic, and natural forces (these being, in my view, not necessarily part of the same discursive strand). He assumes that Turner’s landscapes can be understood in the context of a late eighteenth century aesthetic discourse on the sublime which was largely separated from its religious and philosophical ‘roots’. As “[t]he vast, the remote, the obscure [...] can be enumerated in respect to landscape more easily and precisely than in connection with religious, mental or abstract ideas” (p. 30 ff.), Wilton writes, the ‘landscape sublime’ became a subject in itself, and was debated with regard to categories and effect rather than meaning. Turner’s ‘dark paintings’ of the 1790s, he argues, in that discourse could have been categorised as “Picturesque Sublime”, which Wilton associates with William Gilpin’s terminology. Wilton furthermore argues that, as his career proceeded, Turner increasingly sought to involve the viewer in experiences of sublime nature (in a double sense) by offering renderings of nature as it}
The sublime could be understood as a strategy that would enable one to overcome the physico-theological ‘multitude’ and the lack of knowledge and control regarding nature. The same could be said about the imagination – the psychological ability most commonly associated with landscape (that would also facilitate feelings of the sublime). The ‘aesthetic school’ after Addison in particular appreciated nature for its ability to trigger trains of association and the imaginative recombination of images and ideas – often ignoring its embeddedness in real-life contexts. In his famous essays in *The Spectator* (1712) Addison had praised ‘the Pleasures of the Imagination’ as something to be pursued through an aesthetic perception of the world for its own sake. Beauty for Addison is not aligned with a moral message, yet follows some general principles, whose causes, however, are inscrutable, and also irrelevant to the pleasure derivable from contemplation: “We are struck, we know not how, with the Symmetry of any thing we see, and immediately assent to the Beauty of an Object, without enquiring into the particular Causes and Occasions of it.” A man of polite imagination, according to Addison, is a man who has the ability to see beauty in things, to inhabit the world, as it were, with new eyes, and even overcome the most dreadful situations through it: “For by this Faculty a Man in a Dungeon is capable of entertaining himself with Scenes and Landskips more beautiful than any that would be perceived. The vortex-structure of Turner’s later sea storms, for example, could be understood in such terms. By doing that, Wilton argues, Turner aimed to overcome the aspect of ‘detachment’, which is central for example in Burke’s and Kant’s theories of the sublime (p. 47). It is debatable whether this lack of detachment is actually reconcilable with concepts of the sublime (this thesis suggests that it is not). Ann K. Mellor has argued that with his late paintings in which the outlines of depicted objects are particularly blurred, “Turner [...] visualized Burke’s concept of sublime obscurity and infinity” (Mellor, “Immortality or Monstrosity? Reflections on the Sublime in Romantic Literature in Art”, Frederick Burwick/Jürgen Klein (eds.), *The Romantic Imagination. Literature and Art in England and Germany*, Amsterdam, Atlanta, GA, Rodopi 1996, pp. 225-239: 228). It is certainly true that such a conventionalised use of the sublime as an aesthetic category existed at the time. However, Turner’s artistic strategies and implied horizons of meaning, I will argue, defy it.

158 In the *Derbyshire* sketchbook, Turner quotes from Addison’s essays, mediated through Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783) (Comp. EA (II), p. 41) – a passage in which Addison states that images trigger “the greatest variety of ideas” which “give us a notion of extension” (quoted in EA (II), p. 41).

159 *The Spectator*, June 21 (1712), p. 823 (Addison’s *Spectator*-essays cited here are listed in the bibliography with their later titles). Smith, by the way, gives the explanation that the reason for finding something beautiful can be its utility (*TMS* 207 ff.), and Burke argues that beauty results from associative qualities ascribed to the object (Burke (2008), *Enquiry*, pp. 39-40).
can be found in the whole Compass of Nature.” A man of polite imagination furthermore:

often feels a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows, than another does in the Possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of Property in everything he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated Parts of Nature administer to his Pleasures: So that he looks upon the World, as it were, in another Light, and discovers in it a Multitude of Charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of Mankind.

Imagination thus, according to Addison, means a capacity for appropriating the visual world by abstracting it from any economic or practical relations. The ability to enjoy a landscape without owning it might be read as a ‘democratic’ move, and Addison explicitly states that “a spacious Horizon is an Image of Liberty”. However, the privilege of such ‘pleasures of the imagination’ was usually granted to those who did not depend on work and income, and had the leisure to travel, and/or the money to own land.

Apart from being beyond the need to own anything, the men of polite imagination as Addison envisioned them – indifferent to physical confinement even – were also beyond the danger of actual suffering from circumstances (in Radcliffe’s literature, which will be discussed below, interestingly, the dungeon would be set in opposition also to imaginative freedom). Thus Addison’s

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162 The Spectator, June 23 (1712), p. 825. The motif of the captured knight is expanded on when Addison describes the capacity for aesthetic enjoyment by the following comparison: “we walk about like the Enchanted Hero of a Romance, that sees beautiful Castles, Woods, and Meadows [...].” The Spectator, June 24 (1712), p. 827.
163 Comp. Daniel Cottom, The Civilized Imagination, A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott, Cambridge/NY, Cambridge UP 1985, Introduction. Cottom argues that the idea of taste supported the upholding of the reigning aristocracy as a naturally superior class, whereas I argue with Habermas that aesthetics was a discourse through which the middle classes could form their identity (which does not deny that aristocratic values could be accommodated by it). His interpretation of the quoted passage from Addison differs from mine, too, in that he suggests that the landscape which is admired aesthetically is the actual object of property: “by ceding its
concept of the imagination, without stating so, implies that suffering is not something to be ended through the help of others, but by acquiring the ability to ‘transcend’ its reality through imaginative powers. Nature, perceived within this aesthetic framework, is abstracted from its actualities similar to the platonic ‘idealisation’ promoted in the Royal Academy’s theoretical tradition.

Significantly, Turner in his lectures often referred to a work which – by contrast to Addison – proposed that the pleasures of the imagination were intricately linked themselves with the moral nature of humans and religion. In his *Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), Mark Akenside drew on Addison’s Spectator-essays and combined them with Shaftesbury’s moral aesthetics. “Bright Imagination’s rays” to Akenside were the realm

Where virtue rising from the awful depth  
Of truth’s mysterious bosom, doth forsake  
The unadorn’d condition of her birth;  
And dress’d by fancy in ten thousand hues,  
Assumes a various feature, to attract,  
With charms responsive to each gazer’s eye,  
The hearts of men.

ownership of that property to the realm of the imagination”, he claims that the aristocracy “defends its property” (p. 11).

164 The combination of the ‘Addisonian’ imaginative act with a religious reading was a common practice, and can actually be found, through associative linking, in Addison’s theory itself: “wide and undetermined Prospects”, Addison stated, are “as pleasing to the Fancy as the Speculations of Eternity and Infinitude are to the Understanding.” (*The Spectator*, June 23 (1712), p. 825). The reason for our enjoyment of indefinite spaces is their analogy to God’s infinity, as he argues elsewhere: “The Supreme Author of our Being has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness [...], he has made [our souls] naturally delight in the Apprehension of what is Great or Unlimited.” (*The Spectator*, June 24 (1712), p. 827). In another essay, later entitled “An Evening Meditation”, Addison subscribes to the Newtonian idea that the world is the “Sensorium of the Godhead”, meaning that God is both present in the world and through it acquires an omnipotence which is unlike the limited epistemological grasp of humans. *The Spectator*, July 9 (1714), p. 1122.


The notion was for Akenside not only moral, but also political: he introduced it as a principle aligned with a state of “public power”, as he describes in a passage following shortly after the one above. The combination of the two is associated as the encounter of “[t]h’ ingenious youth” and the “virgin-muse” imagination “[t]hat wakes her lyre to some indulgent theme/ Of harmony and wonder” while to the more common people she “thro’ the rolls of memory appeals/ To ancient honour, or in act serene,/ Yet watchful, raises the majestic sword/ Of publick pow’r, from dark ambition’s reach/To guard the sacred volume of the laws.” Akenside’s concept of the imagination was in contrast to Addison’s notion of it (and in contrast to later theories of the sublime) aligned with the sentimental utopia. However, its ideals were not rooted for Akenside in societal relations, but, just as the platonic ideal, in an elevation above such relations. Turner’s art, by contrast, would bring in the societal sphere (as narratives) through his referential additions to his depicted landscapes.

Obscurity in nature was by many believed to ignite the imagination in particular, and one might suspect that Turner’s emphasis on the ‘dubious gloom’ in his lectures (see chapter one, pp. 16-20) relates to this aesthetic tradition which emphasised the pleasing effects of vague views – however, in its association with tragedy it expressly deviates from them.

In Gilpin’s Observations on the River Wye and several Parts of South Wales, &c., relative chiefly to picturesque beauty [...] (1782), we find a description of the imaginative process according to Addison’s theory which specifically refers to obscurity: expanding on the “magical capacity of light”, Gilpin gives examples for the softening of “incorrect rudeness” through different conditions of weather that entail a visual obscurity. Coming to “the grey obscurity of a summer evening”, he starts generalising the effects of such obscurity as ‘pleasing to the imagination’:

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A light of this kind [...] is very favorable to the imagination. This active power embodies half-formed images, which it rapidly combines; and often composes landscapes, perhaps more beautiful, if the imagination be well-stored, than any that can be found in Nature itself. They are formed indeed from Nature – from the most beautiful of her scenes; and having been treasured up in the memory, are called into these fanciful creations by some distant resemblances which strike the eye in the multiplicity of dubious surfaces that float before it.\textsuperscript{168}

Burke’s study of the sublime under sub-categories such as “vastness” and “darkness” gives similar examples for natural causes of the sublime effect. According to Burke, (like the imagination), the sublime is always caused by a certain degree of obscurity: “It is one thing to make an idea clear, and another to make it affecting to the imagination.”\textsuperscript{169} Literature is considered the privileged medium to convey this inspiring obscurity,\textsuperscript{170} yet Burke admits that:

even in painting a judicious obscurity in some things contributes to the effect of the picture; because the images in painting are exactly similar to those in nature; and in nature dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passion than those have which are more clear and determinate.\textsuperscript{171}

Being true to nature thus does not necessitate distinct outlines, on the contrary: choosing an ‘obscure object’ in nature will generate the ‘natural’ effect of the sublime although the mode is representational. Overall, it is argued, obscurity is to some extent necessary to produce the effect of fear, which is itself “in all cases

\textsuperscript{168} William Gilpin, Observations on the River Wye, and several parts of South Wales, &c. relative chiefly to picturesque beauty: made in the Summer of the year 1770 [...], London, T. Cadell and W. Davies\textsuperscript{4} 1800, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{169} Burke (2008), Enquiry, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{170} Burke (2008), Enquiry, p. 156

\textsuperscript{171} Burke (2008), Enquiry, p. 58.
whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime." Burke’s ‘obscurity’, as opposed to the ‘objects’ of the sublime he lists, seems not ‘securely’ bound to the sublime, as it tends to subvert the security of the observer: while it would keep him in doubt of the nature of the (supposed) threat, he cannot be sure of his escape. Turner’s ‘historic gloom’ seems to pick up this insecurity in order to (re-)connect it with tragedy: in his ideal history painting, obscurity serves the evocation of terror and pity.

The aesthetic appreciation of landscapes according to the more current aesthetic principles of Turner’s time would exclude narratives and the supposed educational effects they made possible. The practice of looking at a landscape aesthetically with an orientation towards ‘undetermined’ horizons, as opposed to determined (and possibly narrative) foregrounds, was, as John Barrell has argued, a standardised way of aesthetic landscape perception in the eighteenth century. It was supposed to particularly inspire ‘flights of the imagination’. Towards the end of the century, this aesthetic scheme was extended to include foreground objects with their potential “irregularity, variation, decay and wildness” as well. Numerous treatises and guidebooks were written which either suggested routes according to their alignment with the aesthetic principles of what was now termed “the picturesque”, like the widely read travel books by William Gilpin, which established rules of composition according to which the painter and the man of ‘polite imagination’ could create landscapes of particular visual allure. The picturesque offered a comprehensive, though inconsistent, grammar of adapting physical realities to an aestheticised view. In his Observations on the River Wye [...], William Gilpin expressly sought to introduce “the examining of the face of a

172 Burke (2008), Enquiry, p. 54.
country by the rules of picturesque beauty” as a new reason to travel at all.\textsuperscript{176} Turner was familiar with Uvedale Price’s and Richard Payne Knight’s views on the picturesque,\textsuperscript{177} and some of his earlier recorded remarks testify to his use of the term for landscape features appropriate for pictorial depiction. He also followed some ‘picturesque’ guide books on his tours\textsuperscript{178} – however, as I will argue in chapters three and four, his earliest composite works show that the category itself was rather a means than an end for his art, which in 1798 already put subject matter and its ‘sentiment’ first.

All of these aesthetic frameworks for the appreciation of nature as landscape with regard to the imagination are decidedly different from the physico-theological argument supported by Thomson, in which nature is seen as an inherently uncontrollable force, the ‘ordering facility’ of the human mind being subordinated to the immensely diverse and overwhelming environment that is following God’s inscrutable plans only. The imagination and the sublime, as the aesthetic perception of nature in general, could accommodate the moral and religious ideals of sentimentalism perfectly, as they followed the principle of associative linking which was open to all kinds of responses. Unsurprisingly perhaps, ‘highest ideas’ as they had been promoted by Reynolds and others, were associated quite frequently with beautiful landscapes and obscure views. The aesthetic enjoyment of landscapes, however, was still to many bound to the communal. In fact, the widespread assumption that a taste for ‘simple beauty’ (as opposed to a ‘worldly’, ‘affected’ one) reflected a taste for morals (following the

\textsuperscript{177} Comp. on their similarities and differences Stephanie Ross, “The Picturesque: an Eighteenth-Century Debate”, \textit{The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism} 46:2 (1987), pp. 271-279. One of Turner’s commentaries on Shee’s \textit{Elements of Art} could suggest that he was interested in a definition of the term, which, however, he did not find in Shee’s argument. Unevenness and “undulating lines”, which Uvedale Price gave as characteristics of the picturesque, Turner thought were already inherent in the category of “common pastoral”. Regarding Knight, Turner criticised his abstraction from objects regarding the category: “Mr Knight maintains that seeking for distinctions in external objects is an error, and that [...] such distinctions only exist in a well-organized mind; but surely they exist in both.” (EA (III), p. 38). For a more detailed analysis of Turner’s relation to the category see Gage (1965), Turner and the Picturesque (I and II), and EA (III), pp. 38-9.
\textsuperscript{178} Comp. (also regarding Turner’s use of the term) Gage (1965), Turner and the Picturesque I, pp. 20-1.
established correlation of the good and the beautiful), and also the more general association of the rural with the realm of family and morals, made it possible to communicate a common level of ethical agreement – as well as mutual understanding – through the aesthetic appreciation of landscapes in particular. One text which demonstrates this community-binding function of the aesthetic pleasure in nature is Ann Radcliffe’s immensely popular novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* of 1794. It seems particularly relevant with regard to the interpretation of Turner’s early composite works since – published just a few years before their exhibition – it also relates the notion of a (privatised) sentimental community to the practice of quotation as a reaction to landscape views. As Gérard Genette has observed, it apparently was the gothic novel (often sentimental at the same time) – and Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* is one of the most influential of them – which made epigraphs popular again, and inspired their uses in other kinds of prose narrative.\(^{179}\) Radcliffe’s novel exemplified the ‘reading’ of landscapes along the lines of the literary canon, and therefore would have been an important model for those engaging with Turner’s composite works beyond the paradigms of art criticism at the time.

**Elegiac nature and the private community: Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* / Schiller’s aesthetic theory**

The protagonists’ mode of perception in Radcliffe’s gothic romance *The Mysteries of Udolpho* matches that of the picturesque traveller in Gilpin’s terms. They are paradigmatic travellers, and among their most ‘meaningful’ gestures is their frequent ‘looking into the distance’. Their enjoyment of landscape perception extends from the haziness of the horizon towards things in general: a certain obscurity of shapes and sounds is one of the most pervasive motifs of the novel. Indistinctness and twilight are specifically tied to both the imagination and a melancholic state of mind (whereas the sublime is not understood in a post-Kantian way here, but as a mode of suspense and as religious sublime). Landscape presentations more generally in the novel are associated with the idea of looking

back rather than looking ahead, and display the ‘signs’ of the imagination as they are oriented towards their horizons. The first chapter begins:

On the pleasant banks of Garonne, in the province of Gascony, stood, in the year 1584, the chateau of Monsieur St. Aubert. [...] To the south, the view was bounded by the majestic Pyrenees, whose summits, veiled in clouds, or exhibiting awful forms, seen, and lost again, as the partial vapours rolled along, were sometimes barren, and gleamed through the blue tinge of air, and sometimes frowned with forests of gloomy pine, that swept downward in their base.¹⁸⁰

The ‘veiled’ prospect to the south not only indicates the (Claudean) ‘picturesqueness’ of the setting, but at the same time hints at the course of the plot which is towards an expressly ‘gothic’ south. The “awful forms, seen, and lost again” seem to represent, from a retrospective point of view, the future to come. From the very beginning of the novel, the landscape is introduced as a metaphorical setting for the major themes or emotional-structural elements of anticipation and looking back, which intersect here. The Mysteries of Udolpho offers a particular richness of readings of landscapes that are fundamentally tied to an ‘individualised’ three-step-scheme of lost and hoped-to-be-recovered ‘paradise’: the plot is driven and delayed by memories and anticipations of the main character Emily, her reflections of what she has lost, and what is to come, associated with the recurrent gesture of looking into the distance.¹⁸¹ Already in the first volume, which deals with the protagonist’s youth, portrayed as an ideal state of rural family life as a ‘community of feeling’ shaped by frequent communal reading and contemplations of nature, the wide landscape view is introduced as a

¹⁸¹ A scheme that became a much-mocked commonplace in the German genre Schicksalstragödie. The effect of ‘bad signs’ in nature like a developing thunderstorm often enters into the dynamics of a ‘superstitious’ anxious atmosphere – Radcliffe exploits this effect and also lifts it to another level, having her main characters constantly reflecting the superstitious origins of these effects, and gaining disbelief through their reflective distance.
paradigmatic nostalgic-teleological realm. In this first volume, a chain of losses is initiated by the death of Emily’s mother and, finally, of her father. The subsequent loss of the protagonist’s future husband Valancourt and her dependence on the villain Montoni (including her confinement in the castle of Udolpho) all indicate and enforce an expanding exposure to an antagonistic world that is construed in contrast to the ideal rural idyll of home.

There are many examples in the first chapter already which demonstrate how landscape observation ‘melts’ into specific reflective contents, how, on the other hand, “pensive melancholy” affects the appearance of the surrounding world – and how these moments are main generators of the communal ideal demonstrated by the protagonists’ bonds. The specific way of perceiving the ‘gloomy’ landscape is something Emily shares with her father from the start:

‘I remember that in my youth this gloom used to call forth to my fancy a thousand fairy visions, and romantic images; and, I own, I am not yet wholly insensible of that high enthusiasm, which wakes the poet’s dream: I can linger, with solemn steps, under the deep shades, send forward a transforming eye into the distant obscurity, and listen with thrilling delight to the mystic murmuring of the woods.’

'O my dear father,' said Emily, while a sudden tear started to her eye, 'how exactly you describe what I have felt so often, and which I thought nobody had ever felt but myself!' (MoU 15)

A “murmuring” of the woods and, again, “distant obscurity” are described as the sensual basis of the “transforming eye” of a poet’s mind: the trigger of the polite, and creative, imagination. The passage of this evening walk is interspersed without comment with two quotes from Thomson, the second one directly following on a sentence stating that St. Aubert has fallen “into a reverie, and they walk on in silence”:

182 Comp. MoU p. 28, 30 and 31.
A faint erroneous ray
Glanc'd from th' imperfect surfaces of things,
Flung half an image on the straining eye;
While waving woods, and villages, and streams,
And rocks, and mountain-tops, that long retain
The ascending gleam, are all one swimming scene,
Uncertain if beheld. (MoU 17)

The fact that this quotation is included in the description of the evening walk without any introduction or further explanation testifies to the naturalisation of a communal reading process – the quotation is incorporated into the reflections of father and daughter and also ‘disembodied’ from the voice of the narrator: the narrative voice, apparently itself engaged in the trains of thoughts of its protagonists, immediately ‘remembers’ and ‘shares’ a reading experience itself. It enhances the notion of a shared interpretative stance and at the same time reaches out to the contemporary reader who certainly would have known Thomson’s poem.

The quoted lines themselves speak of the transformation of clearly delineated objects into an obscure image which make the observer ‘uncertain’ of their shapes or even their existence. At the same time, the image is thematised as a mediated one: what would be seen are actually not the objects themselves, but rays of light that are reflected off their “imperfect surfaces”. The whole process of perceiving is thus – with the help of scientific knowledge – called into question in its epistemological merit. Interestingly, one line from this quote was also cited by John Opie in his lecture “On Chiaroscuro” – and by Turner when he exemplified his notion of the ‘historical tone’ as the “truly dubious and undefinable tone of colour, that doubtful gleam of light that throws half an Image on the aching sight”.¹⁸³ (comp. chapter one, pp. 17-18). While for Turner, however, this notion of half-

¹⁸³ BL, p. 141. John Opie wrote: “all the effects of solemn twilight and visionary obscurity, that flings half an image on the aching sight; all the terrors of storm and the horrors of conflagration” (Opie (1848), On Chiaroscuro, p. 295). Comp. S 138: “Flings half an Image on the straining Eye” (this was identified by Ziff as a possible source of Turner’s. comp. BL, p. 141, n. 60).
sight was associated with the tragic and sentiment, in Radcliffe’s novel it is introduced as a trigger of the (subjective) melancholic imagination: instead of the objects, the mediation of their – in any case questionable – status moves to the centre of attention and inspires the melancholy in which Emily and her father indulge. The lack of attention to (foreground-) objects remarked upon by John Barrell with regard to the standard perception of landscape in the eighteenth century is here given a scientific and ontological motivation. Interestingly, it goes along with an explicit act of mutual identification and understanding: Emily and her father share the same imaginative capacity, they read nature in exactly the same way.

Importantly, Emily’s and her father’s way to read is not one of many, but the one which is used by them with confidence to identify the likeminded in the world – including the readers. In the novel, these likeminded individuals are marked as the ‘good’ characters, above all Emily, her father and Emily’s future husband Valancourt. With him, the soul-community of father and daughter gains another member: he expressly formulates his own perception and affectedness by the ‘twilight mode’ in concordance with that of father and daughter, and offers a concise reading of indistinct landscapes to their liking. After a description of the setting, with “the distant perspective of the valley [...] lost in the yellow mist of moonlight”, the reassuring interpretive action follows:

The travellers sat for some time wrapt in the complacency which such scenes inspire. ‘These scenes,’ said Valancour, at length, ‘soften the heart, like the notes of sweet music, and inspire that delicious melancholy which no person, who had felt it once, would resign for the gayest pleasures. They waken our best and purest feelings, disposing us to benevolence, pity, and friendship. Those whom I love -- I always seem to love more in such an hour as this.’ His voice trembled, and he paused. (MoU 45)

St. Aubert and Emily agree – the memory of their lost mother and wife surfaces – and after the silence, St. Aubert picks up Valancourt’s thoughts on the subject:
He seemed by an effort to rouse himself. 'Yes,' said he, with an half-suppressed sigh, 'the memory of those we love—of times for ever past! in such an hour as this steals upon the mind, like a strain of distant music in the stillness of night;—all tender and harmonious as this landscape, sleeping in the mellow moon-light.' After the pause of a moment, St. Aubert added, 'I have always fancied, that I thought with more clearness, and precision, at such an hour than at any other, and that heart must be insensible in a great degree, that does not soften to its influence. But many such there are.' (MoU 46)

Radcliffe here, through St. Aubert, voices a link between obscure landscapes and both an intensified emotional sensitivity and the capability to think more precisely, in the manner of the utopian vision of sentimentalism. However, here it is associated not with a social vision, but with the notion of melancholy, or even explicit mourning for the closely related. The obscurity invites the association and regained emotional engagement with what has been loved and lost: it triggers the association of distance as that of enhanced meaning which necessitates leaving the world as it is, or as it is perceived, behind. 184 These travellers seek the idea of mediation and distance in nature – in the ‘shape’ of indistinctness it goes along with a general detachment form the physical realm itself, and thus a felt version of nostalgic teleology: mourning the lost, and yearning for an unreachable timeless future, while at the same time indulging in the shared interpretive activity, which emanates from father/daughter to Valancourt (who insures the continuity of the ‘happy family’ and rustic idyll), and, more generally, through the suggestive

184 Obscurity has often been discussed, with regard to Radcliffe’s work, in its relation to her specific kind of suspense-building, which she called terror, opposing it to horror. While the latter “contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates [the faculties]”, the first, according to Radcliffe, “expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life”. For this enlivening suspense, she argued, it is important that the source of potential danger remains unknown. With reference to Burke’s theory of the sublime, as well as Shakespeare and Milton, Radcliffe argues that obscurity is sublime in that sense, while the clarity which awakens nothing but horror is base. (Comp. Radcliffe, “On the Supernatural in Poetry”, New Monthly Magazine, 16 (1826), pp. 145-153: 149-151, in Robert Miles, Ann Radcliffe: The great Enchantress, Manchester/NY, Manchester UP 1995, p. 46).
interpretative descriptions, to the implied reader community. The ‘task’ of sympathetic identification with another person as discussed and problematised in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, within this worldview, seems irrelevant, because the immediate ‘sharing’ of the hermeneutics of landscape suggests a direct way to the hearts and minds of all fellow observers (observer-readers) of the same disposition. While the educational effect of history painting had relied, in Reynolds’ understanding, on the recognition of a well-known narrative, resulting, as Peter de Bolla has put it, in the audience’s “see[ing] or recogniz[ing] what one has, in effect, already seen”\(^{185}\) (and read), these communal landscape-readings suggested that the interpretive reaction was shared on the condition not of the consonance of outer signs, but of the ‘inner tuning’ of the viewers.

The term *nostalgic teleology*, which I have used in the preceding passage, I quote from Constantin Behler, who with it described a basic characteristic of the aesthetic theory which was written in the same decade as *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, by Friedrich Schiller.\(^{186}\) Schiller’s theoretical system is fundamentally tied to the idea that nature as a realm of arbitrary forces should be overcome by what he terms ‘freedom’ of the human mind, which is aligned with moral impeccability. In his theory of tragedy, Schiller promotes the ‘sublime hero’ who would stand out through his endurance of physical pain and of human violence, which to Schiller are both associated with the state of the world which should be overcome. Schiller’s theoretical writings present, as Vivasvan Soni has argued, the most succinct manifestation of the trial narrative as ideology. Nevertheless, Schiller does not straightforwardly promote stoic heroism. His aim – which, he argues, can be attained through art – is a society of equals, who as an effect of their liberty also live up to highest ethical standards: a model of society which is essentially aligned with that of sentimentalism.

Landscape as a symbolical rendering of ideal nature plays an important role in Schiller’s essay “On naïve and sentimental poetry”. In it, art’s options to


\(^{186}\) Behler (1995), *Nostalgic Teleology*. Schiller’s main aesthetic texts were all written between 1793 and 1796 (although some were published after that).
represent (symbolically) and inspire the achievement of a free, virtuous and equal society, in accordance with Schiller’s broader programme of aesthetic education, they were reflected and related to poetic genres. These options accounted for the predicament of the ‘lostness’ and future attainment of the ideal, symbolically represented by the idyll. As a subject in poetry, (ideal) ‘nature’ (that is here, more concretely, flora and fauna, and people who live in a self-sufficient way that is entirely ‘uncultured’), is ascribed a moral character and supposed to evoke a ‘moral’ effect on those who observe it: these (described) ‘natural’ people “are, what we were, what we should become again”, writes Schiller. The general alienation from the ‘natural’ state is Schiller’s presupposition of the reflection of contemporary existence and of any politically effective poetry (after the French Revolution). The elegy and the idyll both have as their subject ‘ideal nature’, yet in its generic stance, Schiller contends, the elegy is most distinctly differentiated from the idyll: while the latter celebrates a state of happiness characterised by the attainment of harmony between humans and nature, the poet of the elegy “searches for nature […] as idea, and in a state of perfection in which it never existed, even though he mourns it as something that did exist and now is lost.” The two forms deal with the same symbolical expression of the ideal, yet the ability to take on a reflective stance towards it, thus formulating its abstract merit which makes it ideal in the first place, is reserved for elegy. Schiller’s theoretical political activists thus exemplarily

187 In Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen (1794) Schiller argued that art had a pivotal educational role in educating humanity towards the ideal society, as it presented a ‘disinterested’ ideal of sensual, intellectual and moral harmony which the utopian society, too, would be constituted of.
188 Friedrich Schiller, Theoretische Schriften, ed. by Rolf-Peter Janz, Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 2008, p. 708.
189 Elegy originally refers to classical form of poetry, usually composed of distiches, defined later rather by its mournful or melancholic subject matter. Schiller’s essay participates in defining the form in the sentimental tradition, determined by writers like Edward Young and Thomas Gray, who influenced German writers like Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, and also Schiller himself.
190 Schiller (2008), Theoretische Schriften, p. 769.
192 The genres parallel Schiller’s more general conception of naive and sentimental, which are characterised by the same difference in abstraction.
‘mourn happiness’ in the way which Soni has observed as a trend for the whole century and beyond. The sentimental hero – as stoic hero – in his rendering would be as curiously passive as Radcliffe’s Emily, contemplating landscapes ‘of the past’. 193

In both Schiller’s aesthetic theory and Radcliffe’s Mysteries of Udolpho, moral perfection is gained not through an explicit educational act, but by perceptive refinement which enables humans to ‘experience’ the moral ideal, which, by implication, they already possessed. The immediacy of the ‘right association’ of ideas at the same time assures them of their belonging to a community that relies on shared morals and a sensibility that – this is assumed to be fact – is not given in ‘the world’ (the realities of an urban society), and nevertheless universal. In The Mysteries of Udolpho, this privileged community, which seems to meet all the requirements of the ideal notions of ‘public’, manifests itself by expressions of such associative concordance: in communal quotation. The immediacy of moral assurance provided by this act replaces the more complex procedure of sympathetic identification as theorised by Adam Smith and others, that attempted to understand ‘the other’ in his and her difference, and required the effort of narrative.

Landscape, within these schemes of interpretation, thus mirrors the immediacy of moral effect that was promoted by theorists of the Royal Academy (in different ways) with regard to history painting. Painting should educate the public without recurrence to narratives, Opie, Barry and Fuseli argued, because it had the ability to convey ideas of the highest order by and in itself. Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly has argued that in landscape descriptions of the eighteenth century, the interpretive act that seemed to operate ‘freely’ and associatively in the imagination in fact often relied on the (more or less) subtle integration of religious symbolism and its traditional meaning. 194 Similarly, Barbara M. Benedict

193 This certainly is not the case regarding Schiller’s actual dramatic heroes. Significantly, Schiller left his essay Über naïve und sentimentale Dichtung unfinished and subsequently abandoned his theoretical work in order to write drama.
194 Watanabe-O’Kelly has shown that in the seventeenth century, the iconography of melancholia tended to ascribe particular symbolical value to landscape: what had been a backdrop of the
has shown that in Radcliffe’s landscapes and also character renderings meaning is
mostly inscribed into descriptions which rely on iconographic codes that were
widely recognised at the time.\textsuperscript{195} The reliance on a literary canon, respectively,
was of course of major importance for the workings of communal quoting, which
would lead not to a happy community of souls but frustration, had just one of the
party read the respective text. As opposed to Smith’s more complex way of moral
generation, the ‘immediacy’ of any kind of certainty regarding the welfare of a
community seems suspiciously dependant on convention, and on a specific
education that would enable a reading according to such community-generating
practices. This convention it was which the oppositional ‘romantic’ voice raised by
Wordsworth in the preface to \textit{Lyrical Ballads} (1798) would protest against. The
‘new ways’ of ‘reading nature’ which were set against it, however, – as I have
similarly suggested with regard to Blake’s critique of Reynolds’ \textit{Discourses} – were
losing sight of the ‘other’, and thus of the utopian ‘public’.

\textsuperscript{195} Barbara M. Benedict, “Pictures of Conformity: Sentiment and Structure in Ann Radcliffe’s Style”, \textit{Philological Quarterly} 68:3 (1989), pp. 363-377. Benedict demonstrates how in Radcliffe’s novels action is subordinated to description in general, and how it often relies on conventionalised readings of pictorial composition. The meaning of these compositions, she argues, becomes a part of the descriptive register which draws on the iconography of visual art. ‘Purely visual’ associations with religious motifs, for example when the protagonist’s appearance is given “the contour of a Madonna” (p. 364), generate characterisations within a Christian moral understanding. The fact that Radcliffe’s female protagonists resemble each other so much, too, might be due to the fact that they correspond with the iconographical conventions of the allegorical mode in visual culture (on our lost ability to ‘read allegorisation’ like eighteenth-century readers see James Sambrook, in \textit{S}, p. xxx, incl. n. 2). The same unstated interpretative tendency can be observed in descriptions of gestures, such as the frequent “Looking up” of protagonists in Radcliffe. “When, for example”, Benedict writes, “the narrative records that Emily, at her casement, ‘looked, as if for intelligence, to the planet’” (p. 365), the reader will understand the religious allusion, which nevertheless comes across as ‘mere’ visual association.
The ‘inner’ landscape and loss of the other

A reflection of the self-sufficiency of ‘high art’ on the productive side, as mentioned in chapter one, is the notion of artistic genius. Thinkers that have been associated with British Romanticism tend to subscribe to this notion. Blake’s rage against the supposed dependence upon past masters has already been referred to in chapter one. Coleridge, drawing on Kantian ideas, later formulated a similar theory of the imagination, focusing on the artistic self. He famously argued for a re-definition of “imagination” in opposition to “fancy”, the two words which had been synonyms before, and had been defined as a single capacity by Addison and most authors of the eighteenth century. Fancy, to Coleridge, assumed the meaning which theorists like Addison and Gilpin had ascribed to the imagination – the imagination ‘proper’ he attributed to the artist’s invention instead. His theory was an attempt, it could be argued, to strip off from the idea its dependence on culturally inherited and shared symbolical readings, which could make it predictable, and turn its productions into cliché. Drawing on Kant’s Critiques, the artist’s self could be theorised with an emphasis on the singularity of his experience. This, however, did not necessarily entail a fundamental change in the metaphorical images used, but rather signified a shift in the perception of the creation of such meaning. Now belonging to the artist’s very own ‘genius’, and interwoven with an emphatically subjective experience of the world and its meaning, it was subversive to the social effects on which imagined reading communities, such as the limited family-units described in The Mysteries of Udolpho, relied.

196 In his study of imagination and subjectivity in Descartes, Montaigne, Pascal, Kant, Fichte, Novalis and Coleridge, Alexander Schlutz observes that, peculiarly, none of these authors writing on the imagination, brings in the capacity to imagine one’s self in another’s place and, with it, an ethical dimension of the imagination: “This aspect of the self […] is not directly addressed by the texts under discussion here, which are in this context mainly concerned with the autonomy of the individual subject and hence its freedom to follow a moral law that regulates its relations to others, not with the ability of the self to refrain from inflicting harm through an act of sympathetic identification.” Alexander M. Schlutz, Mind’s World. Imagination and Subjectivity from Descartes to Romanticism, Seattle/London, U of Washington P 2009, p. 13.
In Wordsworth’s poetics, the poet was not a mediator of divine truth, but a direct communicator of a truth which he himself possessed originally. It was the attachment to traditional imagery or concepts following the three-stage-model which Wordsworth attacked in a manuscript version of *The Prelude* (1850):

Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields – like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main – why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction which never was?

Wordsworth’s alternative was the paradisal as personal vision, directly conceived by the poet who, by divine empowerment, was united with the universe “[i]n love and holy passion”. As M.H. Abrams has put it, “[t]he vision is that of the awesome depths and height of the human mind, and of the power of that mind as in itself adequate [...] to create out of the world in all of us, in a quotidian and recurrent miracle, a new world equivalent of paradise.” As in Schiller’s theory, art is still ascribed a key function in achieving the perfect state, yet it is not merely the means through which to achieve it, but itself constitutes the realm in which the Edenic harmony of man, nature and God is manifested. The attributes of nature are – and this has of course often been understood as one of the defining traits of British Romanticism – in effect interchangeable with those of the mind; the language of the poet-prophet merges them to a reality which is both ‘natural’ and emotional.

Nature, in this poetic conception, is a pool of metaphoric expressions that reflect back on the mind and has hence finally lost the potential of an outer force which could not be controlled (however incontrollable the newly explored inner realm would prove to be). The very idea of tragedy as a form in which either

197 See Abrams (1973), *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 28.
199 Abrams (1973), *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 28.
human happiness, as in the Aristotelian notion, or the human will, as in Schiller’s view, is countered by external forces, is overcome. Resulting from this are fundamental problems regarding the representation and understanding of others in a sympathetic way which exceed the problems that go along with a neglect of detail, as promoted by the aesthetic perception of landscape within former aesthetic schemes of perception. Daniel Cottom has shown this with regard to Wordsworth’s poem “Resolution and Independence”, in which the lyrical ‘I’ is confronted with an old leech gatherer whom he meets while wandering and following his reveries. The old man, Cottom summarises, is introduced as “so decidedly a part of the landscape that the poet first distinguishes him ‘unawares’ and compares him to ‘a large stone’, ‘a sea-beast crawled forth’, and ‘a cloud’”. Essentially, Cottom argues, the old man is denied any kind of consciousness.200

While the leech gatherer replies to the (repeated) questions about his occupation asked by the lyrical ‘I’, the poetic voice, rather than listening, reflects on “mighty Poets” like Chatterton, who could meet with “[c]old, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills”. The lyrical ‘I’ repeats his question about the old man’s occupation, and he repeats his answer. Again, the poet “[w]hile he was talking thus”, instead of listening starts reflecting upon the man’s “shape, and speech”, and ‘in his mind’s eye’ sees “him pace/ About the weary moors continually,/ Wandering about alone and silently.”201 The poor man is thus transformed into an aesthetic emblem – his body and language are far more interesting to the observer in their form than in their content: Smith’s question “What has befallen you?” is made redundant as the observer’s associative train of thought continues on its own terms. When the poem concludes “I’ll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor”, this presupposes the leech-gatherer as a metaphor for the observer’s self, connoting the idea of continued work in the face of suffering – the poet’s suffering.

200 Cottom (1985), The civilized Imagination, pp. 43-4.
The focus on such ‘isolated’ suffering of the self reflects and radicalises the tendency to associate the private realm with virtue (proved by private suffering) around 1800. When Turner exhibited his first exhibited works, public utterances in Britain were under scrutiny regarding potential ‘democratic’ inclinations, and an invasion of French forces was constantly feared. In an atmosphere of such anxiety, the idealised notion of home and family life, but also the declaring of the autonomous self as was done by some Romantics, offered orientation which did not depend upon society, or the realisation of political ideals. This does not mean, however, that sentimentalism as a political utopia was done with at the time: it also informed the thinking of many who supported reform. Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), for instance, extended the notion of the ideal family, in which ideally members were tied to one another affectionately and were treated as equals, to formulate her idea of a benevolent society.²⁰²

The following chapters will show that Turner by no means subscribed to a ‘romantic’ view of landscape in the sense explicated above, and neither to former modes of associating the aesthetic with the moral by free ‘imaginative’ association. I will argue that Turner’s ‘interpretive guidance’ of his audiences through paratexts differed fundamentally from that introduced in Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*, demonstrating associative concord among exclusive communities. Instead, Turner’s art purposefully subverted its audiences’ expectations regarding such associative concordance between perception and meaning. Turner used associative links integrated in his works to guide his recipients towards narratives, particularly tragic ones, and thus pointed indirectly at the utopian version of sentimental thinking. What had been increasingly rejected by Academic theory as well as by discourses about the aesthetic appreciation of landscape at the time he thus brought back into painting in unprecedented ways. Chapters three and four give evidence for this as they analyse Turner’s composite landscape works of 1798 and 1799 with special attention to their paratexts. Chapter five then seeks to examine Turner’s aesthetic strategies with regard to his special techniques, and in the light of his own

conception of the role of an artist in society: not the Wordsworthian prophet, but Gray’s bard.
Preface to chapters 3 and 4: Turner’s early composite works

In one of his lectures at the Royal Academy, Turner quoted a longer passage from James Thomson’s *The Seasons* in order to exemplify ‘poetic truth’. His particular concern was the cohesion of the lines. Since the passage is about a river, he used it both as an example and a metaphor for the general ‘poetic flow’ in poetry. In order to maintain its ‘truth’, he argued, the literary description should not be fragmented: “any line possesses beauty, they are all poetic, but separate them, where (?) lies the majestic continuity of the Nile”.\textsuperscript{203} Poetry, Turner expounded several times, had very different means than painting to express the same.\textsuperscript{204} The fact that he was well aware of the gradual development of textual meaning suggests that he chose his quotations in awareness of their immediate contexts. Indeed, as I will show in the following two chapters, these immediate contexts could play a major role for the horizons of meaning which he suggested through paratexts for his own works. My argument thus offers an alternative to the assumption that in the earliest uses of quotation for his paintings, Turner sought to express visually the atmospheric effects he found described in Thomson’s and Milton’s literature.\textsuperscript{205} Instead, I suggest that his quoting from their texts also derives from the philosophical meanings they both negotiate. *The Seasons* and *Paradise Lost*, his main sources, are intrinsically linked regarding their

\textsuperscript{203} Turner, lecture manuscript MS 46 151 N, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{204} On the tradition of the ‘sister arts’, the tendency to define poetry and painting in comparative efforts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Hagstrum (1983), *The Sister Arts*. Turner’s artistic use of the two media might be closest related to the earlier emblematic tradition (see, for example, Arthur Henkel/Albrecht Schöne (eds.), *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. Und XVII Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart, Metzler 1996, esp. pp. IX-XXIV), a relation which is not well researched. However, the relatedness of poetry and painting, and the assumption that one complements the other, can also be linked with associationism (the most common way of describing the workings of the mind in the eighteenth century). Turner’s use of the two media thus does not seem to depend necessarily on pictorial-visual precedents.
\textsuperscript{205} Comp. Jerrold Ziff, “Turner’s first poetic Quotations: an Examination of Intentions”, *Turner Studies* 2:1 (1982), pp. 2-11. Ziff suggests that Turner revised the notion that poetry and painting should correspond in 1800, when he started to use quotations to introduce ‘drama’ to his scenes. See my chapter five on Turner’s composite works of 1800, which argues differently – I suggest that in fact, these later pictures, in which Turner introduced self-written verse, were less complex in their allusive potential than the earlier ones. My argument particularly contradicts Nicholson’s assumption that Turner, with his early quotations, “avoided references to the human episodes in favor of describing nature itself” and “robbed Thomson’s poem of its integrity as a separate work of art”. Nicholson (1990), *Classical Landscapes*, p. 49.
philosophical stances. Their use suggests that, at this early date already, Turner conceived of his exhibited paintings as series.206 Moreover, the thematic linkage between the two texts demonstrates that from these beginnings, Turner’s art’s philosophical orientation was already in line with that suggested in the later works which seem to evoke more complex meanings. Beyond the ostensibly ‘topographical’ nature of these early works, the motto of *The Fallacies of Hope* seems already implied.

3. Subversions of the ideal: Turner’s composite works of 1798

For his 1798 exhibits, Turner quoted two of the most familiar English texts of the century: John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) and James Thomson’s *The Seasons* (1730). The notion of the present world as ‘fallen’ is central to both texts. As discussed in chapter two, this notion was crucial in aesthetic and also political theories of the eighteenth century. The narrative of the Fall provided a bridge by which biblical myth could be linked to reflection upon humanity in the present day. Alongside the rural vision of Arcadia from Antiquity, the notion of biblical Eden became an arena onto which utopian visions of a peaceful and ‘sympathetic’ society were projected, and through which such visions could both be expressed and given cultural authority in the first place. Eden, moreover, was also used to represent the supposed underlying order of the present world: divine harmony as the ruling principle in a seemingly chaotic reality. Augustan painting and poetry were closely aligned with this worldview. They sought to represent nature as ‘restored paradise’. “In so far as he kept his eye on ideal Nature”, Martin C. Battestin writes, “the Augustan painter or poet could [...] be regarded as a kind of redeemer, offering us bright images of Paradise”.207 Such art would formally reflect an order which was supposedly indiscernible in ‘real’ nature, by moulding it into a general “harmony and symmetry of proportion.”208 In both Thomson’s *The Seasons* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, this aesthetic and religious ideal is undermined as they particularly emphasise the tension immanent within the *argument from design*.

As discussed in chapter two (pp. 53-57), the tension between a seemingly arbitrary and threatening natural world and the ideal of (moral) order is one of the most central themes of *The Seasons*. In the physico-theological scheme adopted by Thomson, the recurring doubts and threatening aspects of nature are frequently ‘sealed’ or overcome by praises of God that are mostly integrated in

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longer hymnal passages. Such praises were a very common element in Augustan poetry. Like the order which was often underlined formally (also in visual art), these praises can be understood as direct performative expressions of the possibility to overcome the supposed ‘chaos of the world’, thus partaking in the expression of the overarching aesthetic programme. Significantly, it was specifically this address to God – the means to ‘overcome’ frustration and fear – which Turner picked up in particular and which he juxtaposed with implied announcements of (metaphorical) imminent darkness in his works, thereby subverting the neo-classical ideal.

The focus on, and the undermining of the address to God also oppose strategies of enjoying landscape in an exclusively aesthetic way, as had been suggested by Addison, Gilpin and others. This aesthetic appreciation of landscape had become a popular way of perceiving nature in the late eighteenth century (see chapter two). As will be seen in this and subsequent chapters, Turner through his art purposefully frustrated the expectations of his audience and brought in the notion of nature and ‘the world’ as a tragic force interfering with human plans and hopes – aspects that were excluded both in theories of aesthetic landscape appreciation, and in the ideal landscapes of neo-classical art.

Thomson’s long poem, like the common physico-theological treatise, ends with a praise of God’s creation. This hymn, appended to the four poems Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter when they were first published in one volume in 1730, was one of the most striking references in the poem to Paradise Lost. Stefanie Lethbridge has shown that Thomson’s frequent evocations of Arcadian peace throughout the poem are often interwoven with direct quotes from Milton’s epic, which subtly underline the idea that the described paradisiac state is

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209 Among the various sub-genres employed in The Seasons, the hymn is the most frequent. The descriptive poetry, for which the poem is probably still best known, also alternates with forms of moral reflection, political comment, and narrative passages. See Ralph Cohen, The Unfolding of The Seasons, London, Routledge/Kegan Paul 1970, p. 158.
under threat.212 This immanent ambiguity seems even more subversive in the final hymn, as it presents the concluding (and conclusive) praise of God’s order, also by structurally superseding the heterogeneous nature of the long poem.213 Turner’s subversion of moments of praise thus is not foreign to his quoted texts either – in fact, the undermining of evoked peace marks one of the most striking parallels between them, which The Seasons emphasise in particular.

The praise to which Thomson’s final hymn refers is performed, in Paradise Lost, after the night of Satan’s first intrusion into Paradise, in which he has insinuated dreams to Eve that engross her doubt of God. When Eve relates her ‘dreams’ to Adam in the morning, he tries to console her, supposing that they were the work of “mimic Fancy”, producing “ill matching words and deeds”, as he puts it, in her mind (PL 104). The morning scene in nature, which they witness, Adam contends, gives rise to a new mood that sweeps away the ideas of night time:

Be not disheartened then, nor cloud those looks
That wont to be more cheerful and serene
Than when fair morning first smiles on the world,
And let us to our fresh employments rise
Among the groves, the fountains, and the flow’rs
That open now their choicest bosomed smells
Reserved from night, and kept for thee in store. (PL 104)

When the sun has risen, and “[d]iscovering in wide landscape all the east/ Of Paradise and Eden’s happy plains”, Adam and Eve, like every morning, are inspired to start praising their God, “[u]nmediated”, as “prompt eloquence”, with words “[f]low[ing] from their lips” instead of being studied or artificial (PL 105). The

212 Stefanie Lethbridge, James Thomson’s Defence of Poetry: Intertextual Allusion in The Seasons, Tübingen, Niemeyer 2003, pp. 90-101. Lethbridge concedes that threat is a common element of the pastoral mode in general. However, the tension between states of harmony and disorder, she contends, gain particular relevance for a few eighteenth-century poets, “and for Thomson in particular” (98).
prayer performs the continuation of a harmonious state of being that, as the signs of the Fall are already given, is marked as highly unstable. It thus also realises, as it were, Adam’s idea of “ill matching words and deeds” in a way that is not anticipated by the biblical couple. Because of its many quotations from and general similarity to this prayer, Thomson’s ‘hymn to the supreme being’ at the end of The Seasons takes on a similar ambiguity, or an ‘implied darkness’, as it were, that is communicated together with the praise of the “varied God”, appearing in the manifold forms of nature that are revealed by daylight (S 254).

This ambiguity is also inherent in the quotation which Turner chose for his oil painting Morning amongst the Coniston Fells, Cumberland, for the Royal Academy exhibition of 1798 (pl. 9). The particular passage marks a shift in the prayer from general praise and universal observations toward the actual scene of the morning in Eden. The “mists and exhalations” that surround Adam and Eve are addressed directly:

"Ye mists and exhalations that now rise
"From hill or streaming lake, dusky or gray,
"Till the sun paints your fleecy skirts with gold,
"In honour to the world’s great Author; rise.”

Turner seems to have amended the quoted text slightly: he added a semicolon before “rise”. This alteration, however, seems significant enough, as what in Milton’s text is a merely descriptive observation, in Turner’s quotation, through the semicolon, becomes an imperative. The imagined speaker puts himself in an active position towards the processes in nature – he asks the mists to rise, instead

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215 It is not always clear if Turner’s alterations of quotes were made on purpose, or if they are due to writing or reading mistakes in the process of the catalogue production. Artists usually submitted handwritten notes recording their appended texts (a collection of which is at the Royal Academy archive) which served as the model for the printer. Judging from Turner’s difficult handwriting, his submissions may not have been the easiest to decipher. Interpretations of Turner’s alterations therefore do not necessarily correlate with his intentions, yet they do address the art works’ horizons of interpretation as they were presented in the exhibition space.
of just observing them rise. The semicolon also sets apart the purpose of this rising: God’s honour. Thus the speaker here expressly appropriates a seminal position between this purpose and nature. The punctuation invites the audience to draw a parallel here to Turner’s own artistic role of creating the respective effect in his painting.

Turner’s painting shows a dark foreground with a waterfall, which takes up around two thirds of the canvas. The background features a more illumined extension of the landscape, and a human couple with a flock of sheep seem to be making their way down the hill, away from a house which can be seen among hills in the distance, and towards the darker foreground area (pl. 10). The biblical paradise evoked by the quotation from Milton is thus merged with the notion of Arcadian idyll, as was common in eighteenth-century poetry. The upright format which was (and still is) rarely used for landscape depictions helps to stress the couple’s movement from the background to the foreground. It thus counteracts the Claudean landscape perception which is oriented towards spatial depth and tends to neglect foreground details (see chapter two, p. 67). In Turner’s painting, both background and foreground are pivotal of the depicted view, and the foreground in particular plays a significant role in the pictorial narrative.

The ‘illumined’ day which is the setting of Milton’s (and Thomson’s) hymn performance, would also describe the setting of Turner’s humans. With the dark foreground which dominates the picture, their immediate future is given a ‘mood’, yet the reference to Paradise Lost gives it a more precise meaning. In Milton’s text (as in The Seasons) darkness characterises states of doubt and is opposed to the clarity of God’s wisdom, which, in the morning prayer, is signified by the perceived magnificence of nature. Darkness cuts off humans from that certitude and leaves, according to Thomson, either the cultivation of intellectual enlightenment or abandonment to a state of fear as options for the beholder. In Paradise Lost, the

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216 Comp. Kasper Monrad, Turner and Romantic Nature: 4 Sept 2004 – 9 Jan 2005, Copenhagen, Statens Museum for Kunst 2004, p. 28: “The scene appears to be viewed from a high vantage point, but our gaze is simultaneously directed downwards to the waterfall in the foreground and upwards the remote mountain peaks in the background. In other words, it would be impossible to take in the entire scene with a single glance.”
morning prayer is preceded by a darkness that is specifically determined by ‘satanic’ doubt. Through placing the dark sphere ahead of his couple, Turner, by contrast, marks it with the future. Whereas his protagonists cannot see it clearly from where they are located, it is seen all the more clearly by the viewers of the picture. The illusory nature of Edenic harmony with nature and God, ‘performed’ in the morning prayer is thus enhanced here also through a narrative development presented only in pictorial terms. By stressing darkness so pronouncedly in the painting, Turner brings out the instability of the assumed harmony to an extent that is not apparent from a mere reading of the quoted lines, yet implied in the narrative contexts of this quotation as well as its reception in Thomson, which would have been familiar to most visitors of the Royal Academy exhibition in 1798.

Turner’s reference and allusion to what were certainly two of the most well-known passages in Thomson’s and Milton’s texts in his quotation for Morning amongst the Coniston Fells, despite the striking interpretative associations they created, might be suspected to have been intended just as an authoritative appendix, adding gravity to the picture. However, the readings they invite do not stand on their own: also the other composite works by Turner exhibited in 1798 bore a particular relation to the hymnal mode and the physico-theological tension.

Norham Castle on the Tweed, Summer’s morn (comp. pl. 11) is another example.²¹⁷ It is much brighter in tone than the other exhibited paintings by Turner of the same year. The added text reads:

-------- “But yonder comes the powerful King of Day,
“Rejoicing in the East : the lessening cloud,
“The kindling azure, and the mountain’s brow
“Illumin’d ---- his near approach betoken glad.”²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Norham Castle was among the most frequently depicted subjects in Turner’s career. Sketches of the view can be found in sketchbooks from 1797 and 1801; it also became a part of Turner’s Liber Studiorum and was varied a couple of times again until late in his life (see B&J, pp. 301-2). It is not clear which of two similar watercolours that were finished around the time by Turner was exhibited. Comp. Wilton, “Retrospect: Norham Castle 1798-1840”, Turner 1775-1851, London, Tate 1975 (exhibition at Tate Gallery and The Royal Academy of Arts, Nov. 1974 – March 1975), pp. 172-4: 172.
The quotation differs from its source text more than Turner’s quotation for *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells*. The most significant change is in line three, where the original reads “Illum’d with fluid Gold”. Turner left out the gold-metaphor, possibly to avoid any expectations of a pictorial rendering of it: in one of his lectures at the Royal Academy, he would later explain that poetry and painting depended on different means to render the same effect, and illustrated this by indicating that a colour mentioned in a poem could carry entirely different connotations than when it was actually used in painting. The omission thus further supports my thesis that Turner’s quotes were not supposed to be illustrative at this early time in his career.

The “powerful King of Day” evoked in the quotation becomes the object of hymnal praise in Thomson’s following passages. Spreading over three pages, sunlight is hailed as “[e]fflux divine! Nature’s resplendent robe!/ Without whose vesting beauty all were wrapt/ In unessential gloom”, and the sun is described as the most immediate representation of God (“O Sun!/ [...] in whom best seen/ Shines out thy MAKER!”), the “Parent of Seasons” (5108), which causes both the mechanisms of living (comp. 5105/6) and its visual splendour. The quoted passage regarding its structural function in its context thus resembles the quote for *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells*: both mark the shift from a description of natural phenomena to a hymnal passage of extended praise.

In contrast to *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells*, the general tone of *Norham Castle* is brighter and thus seems to match the appended lines better. Regarding the dramaturgic relation of light/darkness and the human action, however, there are similarities. In the version of the subject now at the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, the movement is towards the darker area of the picture, albeit not as dominating a darkness as in *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells*. One boat

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218 *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy* (1798), p. 15. Comp. 562.
219 Turner’s possible changes in capitalisation cannot be taken into account because these changed in the numerous different editions of Thomson’s text, too.
221 The hymn even includes a praise of the beauty of gemstones (pp. 109-10).
is floating on the lake, precisely on the border between the sunlit and the darker areas. A group of people are just leaving with another boat in the same direction, being bade farewell by a woman who is holding a child – presumably the wife and mother who is staying at home while the men of the family pursue their daily fishing. At the centre of the sunlit area there are a group of cows which, together with the cows on the rocks to the right, help evoke notions of pastoral peace.

The text appended to Norham Castle is contextually linked with a quote appended to another picture exhibited by Turner in 1798. To Dunstanborough Castle, N.E. Coast of Northumberland. Sun-rise after a squally night (pl. 12) Turner added the final paragraph of the hymn to the sun that is initiated with the lines for Norham Castle. After the hymnal passage which abstracts from the actual natural scenery, it picks up the narrative impetus of the break of day again – the moment in which the sun appears and replaces the darkness of the night:

"The precipice abrupt,
Breaking horror on the blacken’d flood,
Softens at thy return. --- The desert joys,
Wildly thro’ all his melancholy bounds,
Rude ruins glitter; and the briny deep,
Seen from some pointed promontory’s top,
Far to the blue horizon’s utmost verge,
Restless, reflects a floating gleam.”

The only lexical change of the original is in line two, where Turner replaced “Projecting” with “Breaking”. While in Thomson’s text, through ‘projecting’, ‘horror’ can be read as an association awoken by the precipice’s dark shadow on the sea, or a metaphor for it, in Turner’s lines the ‘breaking precipice’ appears as an active force, associated rather with the breaking of waves at the foot of the cliff. The relation between the ‘blacken’d flood’ and the precipice is thus imagined

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as more dramatic, even violent, and ‘horror’ becomes much more tangible as an emerging outer force rather than an association of the mind.

The two appended texts of *Norham Castle* and *Dunstanborough Castle* refer to the descriptive ‘frame’ of a hymnal interpolation which, like Milton’s morning prayer, praises the (re-)appearance of the sun as an assurance of God’s presence in the world.\(^{223}\) While *Norham Castle* seems to ‘match’ the positive message of its appended text, *Dunstanborough Castle*’s light scheme is closer to that of *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells*. Just like the latter, it shows an overwhelmingly dark foreground. As Ursula Hoff has noted, Turner introduced foreground rocks into the picture that are not actually visible from this perspective of the castle.\(^{224}\) Compared to *Norham Castle*, the dispersal of light is reversed: here, the castle is illumined (also, its height is increased compared to its real extent\(^{225}\)), and the sea at the bottom of its hill lies in darkness. The sea is in stormy turmoil, as opposed to the immense stillness of the lake in *Norham Castle*, and there are no humans to be seen. While the quoted passage speaks of the return of the sun, in pictorial terms, darkness dominates. Again, the presence of darkness, which is supposedly overcome in Thomson’s passage, is particularly emphasised by Turner. Adding to the suggested narrative line formed by the two pictures’ appended quotes, this can be read as a turn towards darkness where, according to the texts, images of emerging light would be expected: the passage which in Thomson’s text marks the overcoming of darkness is met with a counter-narrative in these coupled works by Turner.

\(^{223}\) The passage in Thomson was probably inspired by Shaftesbury’s *The Moralists*, which features a similar invocation of the sun (Inglesfield (2000), Thomson and Shaftesbury, pp. 76-7 and 81 – see Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Early of Shaftesbury, “The Moralists, a Philosophical Rhapsody”, in Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. by Lawrence E. Klein, Cambridge, Cambridge UP 1999, pp. 231-338: 307 ff.). The praise of the sun as the “best image here below/ Of thy creator” is resumed in the hymn concluding *The Seasons*.

\(^{224}\) Ursula Hoff in *European Paintings before 1800 in the National Gallery of Victoria*, extract published on URL: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-dunstanborough-castle-ne-coast-of-northumberland-sun-rise-after-a-squally-night-tw0866/text-turner-worldwide (28.03.2013). In other versions of the subject that were not exhibited Turner particularly stressed the foreground rocks and a stormy sea, too (comp. his *Dunstanborough Castle* (c. 1798-1800) at Laing Art Gallery and *Dunstanborough Castle* (c. 1798) at Dunedin Public Art Gallery. The one exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1798 is the darkest known version of the subject.

\(^{225}\) Hoff, *European Paintings before 1800* (URL).
A similar tension between darkness and light, and also a reference to the hymnal mode, may be found in Turner’s watercolour *The dormitory and transept of Fountains Abbey*, also exhibited at the Academy exhibition in 1798 (pl. 13). In the painting, Turner deliberately omitted the back wall of the lay brother’s dormitory (the building facing the observer), as well as some hills that would be seen in the distance, so that the ruin’s empty windows ‘frame’ the evening sunlight directly.226 The appended text from Thomson’s *Summer* describes a sunset:

“ All ether soft’ning sober evening takes
“ Her wonted station in the middle air;
“ A thousand shadows at her beck ---
“ In circle following circle, gathers round,
“ To close the face of things.”227

Juxtaposed with its source texts the alterations become apparent:228

All Ether softening [soft’ning], sober Evening [evening] takes
Her wonted station in the middle Air;
A thousand Shadows [shadows] at her Beck [---] First This
She sends on Earth ; and then a Deeper still,
In Circle following Circle, gathers round,
To close the Face of Things. (S 134/136)

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226 I owe thanks to Tessa Goldsmith, Learning and Interpretation officer at Fountain’s Abbey, for checking the details of the actual view for me.

227 *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy*, (1798), p. 18.

228 Alterations follow the respective word or punctuation in square brackets. They are in italics, if the altered word is not, and plain, if the altered word itself is in italics. The passages which Turner left out are underlined. Additions by him (often re-located passages) are also inserted in italics and square brackets.
The lines which are deleted, in *The Seasons*, present a step in the gradual coming of personified evening, i.e. the gradually increasing darkness. By leaving out the ‘first step’ of the darkening described by Thomson, line five in Turner’s quotation is more directly associated with the shadows mentioned in line three. Darkness thus seems to break in more rapidly. The described gradual development in the original is deleted to form a more immediate causal connection and literal “close” of darkness at the end of the quotation.

Due to the many ‘gothic’ cultural productions that were popular at the time, a ruined abbey in the dark might have evoked associations of ‘gothic terror’ without any specific references. Turner’s quotation, taken from the last part of Thomson’s *Summer*, offers its own, more philosophical, ascription of meaning. The longer passage, a description of a summer evening, leads over to, and mixes with, an evocation of darkness as a state of fear and epistemological insecurity, which is channelled into, and juxtaposed with, the praise of Philosophy discussed in chapter two (pp. 54-55). The tension between this metaphorical darkness which is both triggered and represented by night is overcome temporarily in this passage, as generally in *The Seasons*, through the mode of the hymn.

The architectural subject of the painting itself entails a narrative which contrasts the idea of the sunset, and alludes to a re-assumption of the hymnal mode: the monks’ dormitory and the south transept of the church (separated by the Chapter House) would have been connected directly by the night-stairs below ground, which were used by the monks in early morning to get to the church for their morning prayer. However, actually shown on the picture are parts of the choir monks’ refectory (on the right) and the lay brothers’ dormitory and refectory.²²⁹ Apparently, the buildings were intentionally mislabelled in order to

²²⁹ With the specific view Turner chose to depict in the picture, he also seems to have turned against the fashion of embedding the facades of the Abbey within picturesque views. John Aislabie had begun to transform the landscape surrounding the Abbey ruins according to aesthetic ideals in the early eighteenth century (he built the still existent Water Garden). His son William Aislabie had purchased the ruins again in 1767, specifically “in order to increase the beauties of this delightful spot” (as wrote Charles Burlington in *The modern universal traveler; or, a complete and accurate tour through England, Wales, Scotland, and the neighbouring islands*, London 1799, p. 566). William Bray, in *Sketch of a tour into Derbyshire and Yorkshire, including part of Buckingham, Warwick, Leicester, Nottingham, Northampton, Bedford [...]* (London 1778) confirmed the success
combine associations of ‘the close of evening’ with associations of morning prayer.\(^{230}\)

The recurring references to prayer and the hymnal mode in these composite works by Turner suggest that the uses of the two quoted texts are indeed intricately linked through their shared themes. The hymnal scheme itself, as mentioned above, takes a significant role in the world-view mirrored in much eighteenth-century poetry and painting, which has been termed the principle of *concordia discors*.\(^{231}\) Although hymns themselves often mirrored the rhetorical turn from the perception of threat towards the assumption of order, within the narrative structure of *The Seasons*, the hymnal form contrasts the ‘darker’ scenarios of realities which the poem describes in its course. Apart from its general affirmative poetics, it differs from other included genres also because it invokes a communal utterance.\(^{232}\)

Hymns are traditionally supposed to be sung by a community of worshippers. Their association with morning prayer was (is) an established part of the Anglican liturgy.\(^{233}\) However, around 1800 hymnody would have been of Aislabe’s efforts by particularly stressing the beauty of newly created views onto the Abbey from the surrounding hills: “Before this purchase was made, only an imperfect view of the abbey was catched [sic] from the seats, much interrupted by the trees which stood immediately before it; these are now cleared away for us to give a full sight of the magnificent ruins.” (p. 148).

\(^{230}\) The figures shown in the painting are a man sketching, and another preparing for fishing, which, due to Turner’s profession and passion for fishing, may be read as a reference to his own stay at the place (comp. http://www.yorkshire.com/turner/trails/fountains-abbey, 01.04.2013).


\(^{232}\) Usually, two kinds of hymnody are distinguished: the congregational hymn with a religious purpose and a particular function in a church service, and the secularised poetic genre of the hymn (see J.R. Watson’s article on “hymn” in *The Encyclopedia of Romantic Literature*, ed. by Frederick Burwick/Nancy Moore Goslee/Diane Long Hoeveler, Chichester/Malden, MA, Wiley-Blackwell 2012). Norbert Gabriel, by contrast, suggests an understanding of the hymnal form according to its constituting principle, the dialogic address to a higher entity. As a privileged form of poetical expression it emerges, he argues, from the worldview of a divinely organised universe in which humans can, in principle, approach a god-like state (Gabriel, *Studien zur Geschichte der deutschen Hymne*, Munich, Fink 1992, pp. 1-2 and chapter III). The common thematic components of the enlightenment hymn with a physico-theological approach are a descriptive account of the varied creation of God and the creation myth itself, employing juxtapositions of the very small and the huge elements of the universe, and the praise of God through this account, with occasional comments on the inadequacy of the self to praise God worthily (Gabriel, pp. 39-43). Its structure resembles that of the common physico-theological treatise (comp. chapter two, p. 57).

\(^{233}\) Morning and evening prayer (Mattins and Evensong) are based on the Common Prayer Book. Part of Mattins usually is the song *Te Deum Laudamus*, beginning with “We praise thee, O God”
associated more particularly with Methodism, as it was one of the trademark practices of the extremely popular movement. Methodism had seceded from the Church of England only in 1795, but – despite it being an evangelical movement – had been construed widely as an antipode to the national church throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century. The movement put particular stress on sentiment and lived benevolence, and with its extensive missionary endeavours strove to establish a societal impact not unlike that imagined by sentimental thinking. Methodists, Misty G. Anderson writes, “used modern media, a discourse of self-improvement, an emphasis on reason, and Lockean theories of mind to define their ‘experimental religion’ as a modern mode of religious expression”.234 In her recent book on the popular imaginings of the movement, Anderson argues that Methodism was perceived as a threat to the notion of the autonomous ‘modern’ self because it promoted more liminal, spiritual and community-bound notions of subjectivity, while it was the same time very close to the philosophical premises that were the very basis of ‘modern’ autonomy.235

The form of the hymn seems to mirror this very perceived ‘threat’ to the autonomous self: through its communal, performative mode, it enables the self to leave the realms of doubt or perceived instabilities. In the embedded songs of praise in The Seasons, the poet’s ‘I’ merges both with the praised object (or God) and with an imagined community, which in this case merges with a hypothetical community of readers. Gabrielle Starr has argued that in fact the whole long poem, through the use of hymnal praise, promotes communal, shared experience of the natural world as the only option to overcome the general disorder and threat which it describes (and structurally reflects).236 The supposed harmony with nature, which philosophy and science can grasp to an unsatisfactory degree only,

\footnotesize{(comp. David L. Edwards, This Church of England, Westminster, Church Information Office; London/Liverpool, Birchall & Sons 1962, pp. 63-67). In May 1798, the second edition of John Shepherd’s Critical Elucidation of the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church of England was published.

235 Anderson (2012), Imagining Methodism.
is thus expressed not only by the specific ideals which are the objects of praise, but also through the constant re-performance of the communal.

The performative and communal character of the hymn resembles that of Sentimental quotation, so frequently evoked in Radcliffe’s Mysteries of Udolpho (see chapter two), and by many works which followed Radcliffe’s literary example. The two in combination had a particularly influential forerunner in Goethe’s Die Leiden des jungen Werther (1774), one of the European bestsellers that subscribed to the sentimental ideal in a wide sense. In a scene which gained particular fame, a reference to hymnal praise conveys the soul-mate relationship between Werther and Lotte:237 both are attending a ball, when a thunderstorm catches the attention of the crowd. When it has passed, Lotte and Werther step to the window and simultaneously utter a name: “Klopstock!”238 The widely recognised reference here was Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock’s ode “Die Frühlingsfeier” (1771).239 The poem systematically calls up traditional metaphoric readings of nature that rely on its threatening potential – above all, that of a thunderstorm – and replaces them with a vision of a peaceful overarching purpose which, although inscrutable, becomes tangible in every aspect of nature as the signature of God’s good will: the very act of such an interpretation is its main subject. Klopstock’s ode itself engages in hermeneutics, as it reads nature ‘like a book’. Evoking the name of the author of the ode while observing the aftermath of a thunderstorm thus not only marks Lotte and Werther as part of a reading community, but as partaking in a shared hermeneutic approach which transforms what is observed into a signifier of the divine.240

237 Comp. Meredith Lee, Displacing Authority: Goethe’s Poetic Reception of Klopstock, Heidelberg, C. Winter 1999, chapter six, pp. 161-188. Lee argues that Klopstock’s poetry is evoked not only here, but generally in the text: “Werther draws in key moments on sentiment and scenarios in Klopstock’s odes and elegies to construct and express his own ‘authentic’ emotion.” (pp. 161-2).
239 Three English translators of Werther, V. Stockley observes, rendered Goethe’s evocation of Klopstock’s ode, “die herrliche Ode”, as “the divine ode”. Comp. V. Stockley, German Literature as Known in England 1750-1830, NY/London, Kennikat P 1969, p. 44, n. 2. Klopstock’s poems were popular in England, too. Several works at the Royal Academy exhibitions in the 1770s referred to them.
240 In this, Thomson and Klopstock seem very close to the philosophy of Shaftesbury. Indeed, as Robert Inglesfield has shown, the lyrical ‘I’ of The Seasons resembles in many ways the deistic
Turner’s composite works, just by using the form of quotation in combination with landscape, might already have been associated with the Sentimental tradition of hermeneutic and emotional agreement by parts of their audience. However, since the works do not present congruent contents in images and texts, they disrupted, as it were, any hoped for consonance not only between words and image, but also among the imagined community of the audience, and author and audience. The communal interpretative act as it is performed so often by the limited communities in Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, which could be said to find its epitome in the “Klopstock!”-exclamation in *Werther*, is made impossible through Turner’s contrasting use of the two media. Turner’s consistent allusions to the hymnal mode through quotations reinforce this hermeneutic strategy and associate it with religious practice. The supposed harmony assumed by the (hymnal and quotational) ‘shorthand’ formats of communal, and also moral, agreement is effectively contrasted by Turner’s stress on epistemological uncertainty and singularity, conveyed both through his quotes’ specific contexts with their allusions to the ‘fallen word’ and his pictorial counter-narratives.

The fact that Turner undermined the representational ‘counterpart’ of hymnal praise – the neo-classical landscape, reflecting Arcadian peace – is also significant. Notably, the neoclassical ideal had been evoked in some of Turner’s art’s most direct stylistic precedents, the landscapes of Richard Wilson.²⁴¹ The pastoral world is present in Turner’s works, yet pronouncedly overshadowed by a turn towards darkness, metaphorical and pictorial. The realisation of this darkness’ taking over would logically annihilate the artwork itself, i.e. the representational – and educational – qualities of painting. When Turner with his altered quote from *Paradise Lost* for *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells* points at the artist’s partaking in the creation of morning, this implies that the danger of darkness concerns his own role as well.

The metaphorical potentials of Turner’s darkness cannot be reduced to a specific reading. The remaining ambiguities, one may argue, might be due to the restrictions imposed on artistic expression at the time. If an artist’s goal was to pursue with his paintings the educational goal of sentimentalism, which is suggested by Turner’s theoretical writings (and his later works, as will be seen in subsequent chapters), he would not have been able to express this in the climate of anxiety and suspicion which determined Britain in 1798, without literally endangering his existence as a painter: during the war with France, the situation of artists had become precarious, as some – particularly artists of the Royal Academy – were accused of ‘democratic’ inclinations, some even expelled from the Academy for it.\footnote{242} At a time of public censorship and extreme limitations to the art, insisting on the artist’s formative and peace-bringing abilities could of course have been understood as a direct comment on his own society. However, I suggest that the ‘secretive’ manner of Turner’s encoded meanings not only testifies to the limitations of expression at the time, but also enabled the artist to convey a critical stance towards the established ideals of landscape art in his own exhibited works. Invocations of a moral community and of divine order, Turner’s works seem to state indirectly, cannot themselves be the purpose of art. Instead, they incorporate both the ideal and the ‘adversarial reality’ – the conditions of the ‘fallen world’, which found a direct manifestation in the anxieties and the rhetoric of war at the time. Late eighteenth-century Britain had moved away considerably from the times when the sentimental utopia, particularly as one of equals, could be widely shared. This seems reflected by the ‘overshadowed ideal’, which Turner’s early composite works repeatedly evoke. The pictorial rendering of the utopia seems to merge in them with hints at its suppression, of endangering the very foundations of utopian thinking which once had been associated with the educational goal of art.

\footnote{242 See Eric Shanes, “Dissent at Somerset House: Opposition to the Political Status-quo within the Royal Academy around 1800”, \textit{Turner Studies} 10:2 (1990), pp. 41-6. Turner did not position himself explicitly, officially or privately, as far as is known, regarding the political debates of his time.}
Of Turner’s composite works at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1798 one remains to be discussed here: Buttermere Lake, with part of Cromackwater, Cumberland, a shower (pl. 14). It repeats the rhetoric of ideal and threat of Turner’s other composite works. Its references, however, seem more direct in their symbolical and referential qualities – its discussion stands at the end of this chapter for completeness, and as further reinforcement of the previous analyses. Buttermere Lake also picks up on the ‘darker side’ of nature expressed in The Seasons, while quoting from a rather ‘sunny’ passage. It does not refer to a hymn, but, as its quotation makes clear, is concerned with a pivotal metaphorical moment, picking up the very problem addressed by physico-theological hymns: the overcoming of a thunderstorm, read, as in Klopstock’s ode, as a sign both of God’s superior power and mercy. The painting’s quotation is from Thomson’s Spring:

“Till in the western sky the downward sun
“Looks out effulgent – the rapid radiance instantaneous strikes
“Th’ illumin’d mountains – in a yellow mist
“Bestriding earth – the grand ethereal bow
“Shoots up immense, and every hue unfolds.”

Here, Turner deleted a much longer part of the passage from which he selected his quoted lines. Again his omissions, marked by hyphens, make the rather gradual development described by Thomson seem much more rapid. In addition, Turner literally removes the happiness and perceived friendliness of the scene which Thomson emphasises several times (“gay-shifting to his Beam”; “in twinkling Myriads”; “the Landskip laughs around”; “every Musick wakes”; “the sweeten’d Zephyr springs”, S 12).

The longer descriptive passage from which the lines are taken in The Seasons focuses on the illumination of a landscape, caused by the setting sun. It concludes the description of a highly metaphorical rain shower: “lovely, gentle,

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kind,/ And full of every Hope and every Joy” (S 10) – the rain, as Robert Inglesfield has put it, is introduced here as “a reminder of [man’s] place in the benevolent order of the physical universe”244 – the scene is reminiscent of the one in Klopstock’s “Frühlingsfeier”. Turner’s painting, however, like most other paintings of that year, is not dominated by light. The foreground, which shows people in a boat on Buttermere Lake, lies in darkness. The lake faintly reflects a rainbow which seems to arise from the sunlit village (Buttermere village) in the background, or from the lake Cromackwater, a part of which is seen in the further distance. Buttermere village had in the travel literature of the time particularly been associated with the pastoral ideal. It was home to a shepherdess – the “Beauty of Buttermere” – who was idealised as a model of rural purity and beauty.245 In Joseph Palmer’s Fortnight’s Ramble to the Lakes in Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Cumberland (1792), the author’s description of an encounter with her follows directly upon the description of a rainbow in the area.246 The association of the rainbow with the paradisiac idyll was thus not only evoked by Turner’s reference to The Seasons, but also through this contemporary account of his depicted – supposedly idyllic – landscape.

The figures in Turner’s painting differ much from this idyllic notion, and also from the ‘human element’ chosen by Thomson to accompany the scene: he describes a little boy who “wondering views the bright Enchantment bend,/ Delightful” (S 12) and runs to chase the rainbow. Turner’s figures are not only not chasing the rainbow, but do not even partake in the sunlit world which appears after the rain, and which is described in the quoted verses. They merely would see the reflection of the rainbow, and no sun – thus they are literally placed on ‘the other side’ of the hopeful and blooming reality which is described in the text.

244 Inglesfield (2000), Thomson and Shaftesbury, p. 77.
245 Mary Robinson (also “Sally of Buttermere”), who was also evoked by Wordsworth in the Prelude (book seventh), later became famous for her marriage to the impostor John Hatfield.
246 The rainbow, although not given extensive attention and thought, was, just like Sally of Buttermere, listed among the subjects of the chapter (comp. Joseph Palmer, A Fortnight’s Ramble to the Lakes of Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Cumberland, London, J. Nichols 1795, p. 213 and p. 216).
Instead of vegetation, in the foreground we see the outlines of a dying tree whose roots are unearthed.

The withdrawing thunderstorm in the quoted passage could be seen as the signature and metaphor of the benevolent God who is also praised in Thomson’s hymn appended to *The Seasons*. The familiar analogy between nature’s and God’s ordering powers is established in this hymn when the seasons themselves are compared to the hues of a rainbow. They are described as follows:

**Mysterious**

Round! What Skill, what Force divine,
Deep-felt, in These appear! a simple Train,
Yet so delightful mix’d, with such kind Art,
Such Beauty and Beneficence combin’d;
Shade, unperceiv’d, so softening into Shade;
And all so forming a harmonious Whole;
That, as they still succeed, they ravish still. (S 254)

As Richard Terry has shown, the rainbow in eighteenth-century texts more generally often stood in for the principle of unity-in-diversity, based on the idea that a combination of the colours equals the immensity of light (of which the sun – symbol of God – was the source). The rainbow, with its biblical coinage as a symbol of hope, was thus a common symbol also for the *argument for design*. In Akenside’s *Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), too, the rainbow is praised as a phenomenon bringing together biblical meaning and science’s illuminating powers, as the lyrical ‘I’ states: “Nor ever yet/ The melting rainbow’s vernal-tinctured hues/ To me have shone so pleasing, as when first/ The hand of Science pointed out the path/ In which the sunbeams [...] Fall on the watery cloud [...]”. The fact that Turner’s rainbow seems peculiarly devoid of colour, as Joyce

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248 The rainbow also served as a metaphor for the ‘order in confusion’ brought about by the poetic form of the long poem, as it combined diverse parts to a ‘harmonious whole’. Comp. Terry (1992), Transitions and Digressions, pp. 507-8.
Townsend informs me, could be due to changes of the colours over the years. However, given Turner’s general tendency of counter-stating in the paintings of 1798, it might also have been an intentional denial of Thomson’s “every hue unfolds”.

In a passage subsequent to the ‘shower’ referred to with Buttermere Lake, a ‘pre-seasonal’, idyllic state of the world is thematised. Once, this part begins, “uncorrupted Man” lived in such a paradiiac state as that of (idealised, or metaphorical) spring – “Wisdom and friendly Talk, successive”, determined people’s time, and “Love breath’d his infant Sighs, from Anguish free”; “Reason and Benevolence were Law.” (S 14) This has now all changed:

The fabling Poets took their golden Age,
Are found no more amid these iron Times,
These Dregs of Life! Now the distemper’d Mind
Has lost that Concord of harmonious Powers,
Which forms the Soul of Happiness; and all
Is off the Poise within: the Passions all
Have burst their Bounds; and Reason half extinct,
Or impotent, or else approving, sees
The foul Disorder. [...] (S 16)

Eden is here associated with the Arcadian ideal, including a “golden Age” of poetry, now unattainable.

Buttermere Lake, which was not one of the most popular subjects at the R.A. exhibitions in the 1790s, had received its own pastoral ‘makeover’ in 1793, when Thomas Walmsley exhibited Part of Buttermere Lake, Cumberland, morning, which was probably the model for the print of 1801, now at the British Library (pl. 15). The painting had been hung next, or in close vicinity, to a painting by Turner.

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250 In a private e-mail, 23.01.2012.
at the exhibition. The print shows a sunlit space with several groups of people in a very peaceful rural environment, a small house, a mother with a child, and fishermen in a boat on the still lake – in fact, it might remind one of Turner’s figure scenes in *Norham Castle*. Nature and humankind seem to be in perfect harmony, as required by the pastoral ideal – and in complete opposition to Turner’s later painting of Buttermere Lake, in which the human figures are rather ‘dwarfed’ by the very dark and seemingly undomesticated environment. Turner might or might not have been inspired by Walmsley’s painting to offer his own contrasting, or dynamic, version of the subject – in any case, his painting of 1798 ‘opposed’ the pastoral idyll within its own referential framework.

The universal harmony manifested in pastoral landscapes and communities which Turner evoked through his allusions to the hymnal mode in other exhibited works of 1798, in *Buttermere Lake* finds a metaphorical epitome in the rainbow and a direct evocation of natural harmony in the image of the storm that is overcome – an image that would also be taken up by some of his composite works of the following year. In all of his composite works exhibited in 1798 Turner worked with rhetorical and pictorial hinges in *The Seasons* and *Paradise Lost* in order to evoke instability and to deconstruct further what is already marked as ambiguous in Thomson’s and Milton’s texts. By drawing repeatedly on the ‘critical moment’ within the *argument from design*, Turner evoked emphatically what had been an established landscape aesthetic, and also a ‘secure’ way of soul-to-soul communication, both resting on acknowledged interpretative patterns and contents, in order to subvert them. In 1799, Turner’s references would often evoke tragic narratives, thus bring in inter-personal relations that differed significantly from the hermeneutic communities established by the aesthetic traditions that his art subverted in 1798. Turner directly expanded on the narrative schemes of his composite works of 1798 by associating darkness with human

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251 Turner’s Gate[e] of St. Augustine’s monastery, Canterbury, was given number 316, Walmsley’s painting was number 315. Comp. *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, the twenty-fifth* (1793), p. 11.
suffering, thus establishing his art’s links with the sympathetic ideal of sentimentalism.
4. Twilight and tragedy: the composite works of 1799

At the Royal Academy exhibition of 1798, Turner systematically subverted aesthetic schemes that were commonly used to read landscape at the time. These subversions were associated with transitional moments in literature, marking turns from light to darkness. In 1799, the transitional was given further emphasis in Turner’s composite works. “Twilight” – incorporated in two titles of the exhibited works of that year – was now evoked as a notion in itself, and tied to tragic narratives: the combination which Turner later in a lecture discussed and praised as ‘the Historical Tone’ (see chapter one).

One of these composite works, Harlech Castle from Twgwyn Ferry, Summer’s Evening Twilight (pl. 16), depicts a scene whose light seems dimmed to a degree that makes silhouettes appear to be the main visual agents, as Malcolm Warner put it. Turner associated the view with a particularly famous and metaphorically loaded twilight moment in literature: for the appended quote he selected an excerpt from Book IV of Paradise Lost. It is a combination from six lines (598-9 and 605-8) describing the evening before the night in which Satan approaches Eve:

“Now came still evening on, and twilight grey,
“Had in her sober livery all things clad.”
“---------------------------- Hesperus that led
“The starry host rode brightest ’till the moon
“Rising in clouded majesty unveiled her peerless light.”

Turner later referred to the first two lines of this passage in one of his lectures, arguing that the colour evoked here corresponds with that determining the tone
of Rembrandt’s *Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (1647, pl. 17) – a grey which he associated with “the Historical Tone”, i.e. the colour mode most suitable for history painting. To Turner, it corresponded with an atmosphere of doubt and general gloom, and was mainly associated with paintings depicting tragic narratives (see chapter one, pp. 16-20). The lines from Milton, beyond the colour-association, carry their own ‘gloomy narrative’, as they are taken from a passage describing the evening before the night that will bring about the Fall of man. This night was referred to indirectly in Turner’s *Morning amongst the Coniston Fells* at the R.A. exhibition of 1798 (pl. 9), too, which was supplemented with some lines from the succeeding morning (see chapter three, pp. 89-91). The night of Satan’s intrusion has a special significance in terms of the epic’s plot, and the evening preceding it is construed as a symbolic focal sequence within the narrative. The idea of the end of the paradiasiac state is of course present in *Paradise Lost* from the very beginning: Milton’s conception of paradise is in any instance ‘overshadowed’ by its impending end and much of the narrative partakes in a sort of (metaphorical) ‘twilight mood’. Patricia A. Parker has shown that all scenes of evening in the epic in fact take on special significance regarding the foreseen discontinuity of Paradise. Particularly the motifs of evening mist and the setting sun, as Dustin Griffin has pointed out, are generally associated with Satan’s appearance and role in the epic.

The character of Eve – her name evoking ‘evening’ – partakes strongly in developing this symbolic meaning of evening, and gives particular associations to the evening before the expulsion from Paradise, which establishes the ‘twilight symbolism’ most pronouncedly. On this evening, Eve relates to Adam an

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254 As Dustin Griffin has shown, it had a huge impact on eighteenth-century poetry, being one of the models for the genre of the evening poem. Dustin H. Griffin, *Regaining Paradise: Milton and the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge/NY, Cambridge UP 1986, pp. 72-82. The idea of a slow evening (instead of a fast division between day and night), Griffin states, was new in Milton: he is supposed to have been “the first English poet to transform his shepherd into an evening wanderer” (p. 73).

255 Discontinuity can even be seen as one of the structural principles of the text itself, which is pervaded by what Parker calls “syntactic feint, the movement in which line endings become invisible turning points, interstices in which a mistaken continuity is reversed”. Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton UP 1979, p. 126.

256 Griffin (1986), *Regaining Paradise*, pp. 191-2. Thomson, as Griffin shows, in *The Seasons* often alludes to such ‘satanic’ passages in his own evening twilight scenes.
experience she had right after her creation, which seems to anticipate the later Fall. Before finding Adam for the first time, she remained gazing upon her own reflection in the water:

[...] I thither went
With unexperienced thought, and laid me down
On the green bank, to look into the clear
Smooth lake, that to me seemed another sky.
As I bent down to look, just opposite,
A shape within the wat’ry gleam appeared
Bending to look at me [...]
Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks
Of sympathy and love; there I had fixed
Mine eyes till now, and pined in vain desire,
Had not a voice thus warned me, What thou seest,
What there thou seest fair creature is thyself,
With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
And I will bring thee where no shadow stays
Thy coming [...] (PL 85-6).

In this instant, Eve is tempted to devote herself to a world which is only a ‘shadow’, a reflection of the real, and associated with narcissistic desire. The twilight characterising the evening scene is here mirrored by the metaphorical ‘twilight’ of Eve’s orientation – the “image of ‘evening’”, Parker writes, in *Paradise Lost* “unites the threshold of time with the threshold of choice”, which is also a choice between self-love and the love of another human being. The twilight which Turner is alluding to, thus, differs considerably from the idea of twilight as obscurity, praised by theorists of the imagination and the sublime for its abilities to trigger pleasing trains of associations. Milton’s twilight marks both the possibility and insecurity of human autonomy which alienate from the love of the

other and from paradisal harmony: Eve’s narcissistic illusion and isolation points directly at the Fall which is later initiated by her. Turner thus possibly invokes Milton’s image of twilight to signify the divide between the postlapsarian world, defined by self-love and the wish for autonomy, from the paradisiac state of mutual love and ‘shadowless’ existence.

_Harlech Castle_ does not depict Adam and Eve or an Arcadian couple like _Morning among the Coniston Fells_. Instead, we see a group of people in the foreground who, through their poses and implied relations, hint at a more specific narrative. To the right of the foreground cliff, there are three women with three children who, as Malcom Warner suggests, are probably waiting for a ferry. On their right sits another person waiting, with his head on his knees. Far in the background the castle is seen. In the middle foreground there is a shipyard; one ship is in the water, another one in a state of construction on the shore. One of the women seems to look out in their direction. Turner might have had in mind a specific narrative here, but it has not been established which one. In any case, the figures invite the recipient to transfer the biblical evening described in the referenced scene of _Paradise Lost_ to a different – and more contemporary – narrative. The absence of fathers in the foreground seems significant, as it is pictorially associated with the separation of two spheres: the brighter realm with the incomplete families is compositionally separated from the darker, ‘masculine’ sphere of the shipyard in the distance. In the years of the Napoleonic wars, this separation of families – together with the building of new ships – could readily have been associated with the military endeavours that Britain was involved in at the time, trying to prevent a French invasion. Harlech Castle, seen dimly in the background, would have evoked the reign of Edward I, who remained an important historical reference for Turner in the succeeding years, when he would relate his own artist persona to that of the Welsh bards who had supposedly been suppressed by the sovereign (see chapter five). Edward I more generally was associated with tyrannical rule and suppression, thus the fact that Harlech Castle,

258 Comp. Alexander/ Warner (1998), _This Other Eden_, p. 86.
259 Comp. Alexander/ Warner (1998), _This Other Eden_, p. 86.
built to consolidate his reign over Wales, marks the backdrop of this landscape, and – significantly – gives it its name, may possibly have hinted at politically-oppressive circumstances for its contemporary viewers.

The second painting exhibited in 1799 which was through its title directly associated with twilight was *Fishermen becalmed previous to a Storm, Twilight*, which is currently untraced. It had no appended lines, but in this case, the title partook in the interpretation of the depicted scene. Its “Twilight” is associated with the approach of darkness, preceding a storm at sea, and thus a sign of existential danger. Importantly, the painting itself – this is also indicated by its title – apparently did not portray the apprehension of the danger, but shows fishermen ‘becalmed’ before its outbreak. Their relation to the event thus mirrors the unanticipated turns of fate later evoked with Turner’s *Fallacies of Hope*.

There were two more paintings by Turner at the exhibition of 1799 which also implicitly referred to twilight before a storm and to which were ascribed more complex frameworks of meaning by their appended texts and pictorial symbolism. One of them is *Caernarvon Castle* (pl. 18). The castle had been quite a popular subject at Royal Academy exhibitions before Turner chose to exhibit his version, and was in general one of the most popular Welsh subjects depicted by artists at the time. Historically, it had been the administrative centre for Edward I’s control over Wales. In a later picture of the subject (*Caernarvon Castle, North Wales, R.A. 1800*) Turner would explicitly associate the castle with the bardic tradition, which, particularly because of Gray’s popular poem “The Bard”, was associated with Edward I’s tyrannical suppression of Welsh culture (see chapter five).

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260 Comp. Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque. Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, Aldershot, Scolar 1989, p. 131 ff. Previous depictions of the castle at the Royal Academy exhibitions were by Paul Sandby (No. 275, 1775 and No. 192, 1780); S. H. Grim (No. 135, 1778); Capt. Robertson (several, 1778); Joseph Farington (No. 204, 1793); G. Evans (No. 384 and 420, 1795); C.J. Pugh (No. 476, 1796); Edward Dayes (No. 97, 1799, as *Caernarvon Castle, North Wales, where Edward II. the first Prince of Wales was born*); H. Melbourn (no. 553, 1799).

Caernarvon Castle was the first exhibited oil painting by Turner which with its compositional structure directly quoted port-scenes by Claude Lorrain. Showing the sun at the centre of the composition, it certainly stood out among the many other versions of the subject. 

In Turner’s picture, the sun’s reflection spreads out into the middle and foreground, leaving no dark areas as in some of the paintings exhibited in 1798. There are boats on the right and left, and at the harbour on the right, at the foot of the castle, we see three men in the shadow of the castle who are about to embark on a fishing boat. A bit further to the right, and closer to the viewer’s position, a woman, presumably one of the fishermen’s wives, stands in the sunlight, watching them. The separation of the female and the male spheres, corresponding with the light scheme, as observed in Harlech Castle, is thus repeated here. The appended text speaks of the oncoming evening:

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“Now rose, 

“Sweet Evening, solemn hour, the sun declin’d 

“Hung golden o’er this nether firmament, 

“Whose broad cerulean mirror, calmy bright, 

“Gave back his beamy visage to the sky 

“With splendour undiminish’d.”

This passage is taken from David Mallet’s Amyntor and Theodora (1747). The poem’s protagonist is a refugee, Aurelius, who has escaped a tyrant’s rule to the island of Kilda. The sovereign has assumedly murdered his wife and daughter, leaving the exiled hero in a state of mourning. His island is portrayed as isolated not only geographically: it is also untouched by civilisation and its attendant woes, populated with ‘noble savages’. The natives are described in Mallet’s preface as “the most uncorrupted in their manners, and therefore the least unhappy in their

263 The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, (1799), p. 14. The most significant change from the original is Turner’s replacing of “day” for “sky” in line five of his quote, by which he locates the described effect more specifically in the depicted scene (comp. David Mallet, Amyntor and Theodora: or, the Hermit. A Poem, Dublin, George Faulkner 1747 (abbreviated as AT), p. 19).
Turner’s quote for *Caernarvon Castle* is taken from a passage which describes the exiled mourner’s coming to peace in his grief and ‘raising his hopes’ towards his own death. Shortly before, he has reminded himself of vanquished Leviathan, who was “sunk” by God (AT 19). This is the whole passage:

> Led by the day abroad, with lonely step,  
> And ruminating sweet and bitter thought,  
> AURELIUS, from the western bay, his eye  
> Now rais’d to this amusive scene in air,  
> With wonder mark’d; now cast with level ray  
> Wide o’er the moving wilderness of waves,  
> From pole to pole thro’ boundless space diffus’d,  
> Magnificently dreadful! where, at large,  
> LEVIATHAN, with each inferior name  
> Of sea-born kinds, then thousand thousand tribes,  
> Finds endless range for pasture and for sport.  
> Wak’d reverence lifts the Hermit’s thought: he owns  
> The hand Almighty who its chanell’d bed  
> Immeasurable sunk, and pour’d abroad,  
> Fenc’d with eternal mounds, the fluid sphere;  
> With every wind to waft large commerce on  
> Join pole to pole, consociate sever’d worlds,  
> And link in bonds of intercourse and love  
> Earth’s universal family. (AT 19)

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264 AT viii. The poem itself draws clear references to Thomson’s *Seasons* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Like Thomson’s *Spring*, which was published 21 years earlier, the comparatively short poem has a long description of migratory birds mating on the island (AT 18). The reference to vanquished Leviathan, who was “sunk” by God, might have reminded readers of Milton’s comparison of Satan to the biblical sea monster (comp. *PL*, p. 8, l. 200-2), and generally his initial situation, “vanquished” (l. 52) in a “burning lake” (l. 210).
The lines quoted by Turner for *Caernarvon Castle* start immediately after this passage. The moment of ‘finding peace’ of the protagonist is envisaged as a vision also of peace and harmony on earth, and lasting social bonds that are associated with a triumph over “the fluid sphere”. The natural scenery ‘diffuses’, as it were, a healing effect unto Aurelius, who “felt the smiling scene/ With awe-mix’d pleasure, musing as he hung/ In silence o’ver the billows hush’d beneath.” (AT 19)

This scene of inward calm and vision of universal peace is then harshly interrupted by a drastically contrasting event: “lo! Asound, amid the wave-worn rocks,/ Deaf-murmuring arose, and plaintive roll’d along/ From cliff to cavern” (AT 19) – the prequel of a thunderstorm, which transforms the setting into a dark, turbulent one:

On came, before her hour,
Invading night, and hung the troubled sky
With fearful blackness round ; when fierce upsprung,
Thick cloud and storm and ruin on his wing (AT 19)

From the island, Aurelius subsequently observes the raging storm on the sea, and witnesses how a ship is destroyed in its course. Turner’s quotation thus marks a moment of hope that is soon afterwards transformed into its opposite, the vision of peace and – interestingly – social love, is replaced by the terror of watching people die as the weather turns from sunny into the “fearful blackness” of “[i]nvading night” and a raging storm begins. Amyntor’s loss of wife and daughter seem to be annihilated for a moment in the first, and the reality of death is ‘re-performed’, as it were, in the latter.

The act of witnessing a shipwreck has a long history as a motif in literature and philosophy. It had often been used to illustrate a thinker’s detachment from the world – being ‘at sea’ was metaphorically coded as being involved in life’s unforeseeable (and undesirable) turns.  

265 In the eighteenth century, there was a

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sentimental strand of thinking which sought to alter the scheme into a setting of sympathetic identification, arousing pity and terror. David Hume described it as follows:

Suppose the ship to be driven so near me, that I can perceive distinctly the horror, painted on the countenance of the seamen and passengers, hear their lamentable cries, see the dearest friends give their last adieu, or embrace with a resolution to perish in each other’s arms: No man has so savage a heart as to reap any pleasure from such a spectacle, or withstand the motions of the tenderest compassion and sympathy.  

Hume imagines the scene that is usually characterised by geographic distance and therefore apt to enable an emotional distance of the observer, as one that is in sight. This of course changes the nature of the reception dramatically, as it allows for a sympathetic identification with the sufferers. Hume also associates it with the loss of loved ones, as he imagines the sailors as friends who lose one another in death. Hume’s shipwreck thus successfully evokes a tragic effect. If Turner had not read Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), he would probably have been familiar with a similarly sentimental rendering, offered by Mark Akenside in *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744), from which he quoted several times in his lectures (comp. chapter two, pp. 64-64 and n. 167). In the poem, the emotional/visual ties between the ship’s passengers and the onlookers are ensured as the wreck is “hurl’d upon the coast” –

[...] while sacred pity melts
the gen’ral eye, or terror’s icy hand
Smites their distorted limbs and horrent hair;
While every mother closer to her breast
Catches her child, and pointing where the waves

Foam thro’ the shatter’d vessel, shrieks aloud\textsuperscript{267}

The incident, expressly associated with pity and terror, the Aristotelian effects of tragedy, is directly linked by Akenside with an appeal to the reader’s own compassion:

\[
[
…] O deemest thou indeed
No kind endearment here by nature giv’n
To mutual terror and compassion’s tears?
No sweetly-melting softness which attracts,
O’er all that edge of pain, the social pow’rs
To this their proper action and their end?
--- Ask thy own heart […].\textsuperscript{268}
\]

This tragic effect is also evoked by Mallet’s \textit{Amyntor and Theodora}, as Amyntor’s previous personal loss is brought back into his consciousness by the shipwreck. And the narrative ‘confirms’ his feeling: as it later turns out, his own wife (still alive) was in fact on the ship. Even if there is no actual drama to be seen in the painting, the sunlit space of Turner’s \textit{Caernarvon Castle} is thus associated with a shipwreck that by Mallet is located within a specifically tragic, sentimental tradition. Because it contrasts the notion of paradisiac harmony, filling Amyntor’s thoughts just before the storm suddenly breaks out, the tragic turn is also associated with the postlapsarian reality, contrasting not only a hypothetical world without suffering, but also the world in which the population of the earth is imagined as ‘linked in love’ and as a ‘universal family’.

Turner’s scene of the fishermen embarking on sea, with the woman watching them from the shore, resembles the visual dramaturgy of Mallet’s text, and evokes an association with the poem’s depiction of potential loss. The fact that Turner placed the setting sun at the centre of the composition further

\textsuperscript{267} Akenside (1996), \textit{Pleasures of Imagination}, pp. 130-1, l. 697-702.
\textsuperscript{268} Akenside (1996), \textit{Pleasures of Imagination}, p. 131, l. 706-712.
emphasises the contrast of the anticipated state of darkness and drama, which are introduced in Mallet’s poem as the specific agents of peripeteia – the moment of reversal of the situation in which, in Aristotle’s words, “the action veers round to its opposite”. Through its paratext, the painting thus gains meanings that could not make it differ more from neo-classical evocations of the subject such as Richard Wilson’s Caernarvon Castle (1765-6, pl. 19), whose association with the pastoral realm remained ‘undisturbed’. In Turner’s picture, as in Harlech Castle, the presence of the castle – another stronghold that was built by Edward I – would have been associated with a state run by tyrannical rule, which was specifically thematised in Mallet’s poem as the cause of personal loss and suffering. The impossibility of the peaceful vision experienced by Amyntor just before the storm gathers is thus bound to political contexts, which by visitors of the exhibition could have been transferred to their own society at the time. Again, the evocation of the Fall is thus associated with a critique, which implicitly also allows for the reading of Amyntor’s vision not as illusion but as political – sentimental – utopia.

Turner’s Warkworth Castle – thunder storm approaching at sun-set, also exhibited in 1799 (pl. 20), more specifically refers to a thunderstorm which is anticipated through the paratext, but not comprised in the pictorial space. In the appended text, a composite quote from Thomson’ Summer, the signs of a thunderstorm are directly named as indicators of fate:

`“Behold slow settling o’er the lurid grove,“ Unusual darkness broods; and growing, gains
“The full possession of the sky; and on yon baleful cloud
“A redd’ning gloom, a magazine of fate,
“ Ferment.”`

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271 The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, (1799), p. 18.
Warkworth Castle features two figures in a boat. Unlike the boats in Buttermere Lake (pl. 14) or in Caernarvon Castle (pl. 18), this one is located in the sunlit area of the picture, yet directly next to the overshadowed part of the lake (in this it resembles Norham Castle (pl. 11), and also Kilgarran Castle, exhibited the same year). The two fishermen seem to be employed in their work, not perceiving the change of weather. Interestingly, the ‘dark shadow’ on the lake has no correspondent cloudy area in the sky – in the pictorial space, it seems to exist only as a reflection.

Warkworth Castle had received some praise for its picturesqueness before Turner exhibited his painting of the subject. Francis Grose remarked in his Antiquities of England and Wales (1772-76) that it awakened associations not of “one of those rugged fortresses destined solely for war, whose gloomy towers suggest to the imagination only dungeons, chains, and executions”, but instead reminded of “an ancient hospitable mansion” in which peace reigns. Grose might well have had a more specific narrative in mind, as only two years before, in 1771, Thomas Percy’s The Hermit of Warkworth had been published. The ballad tells the story of a hermit who helps out a young couple after they have lost each other during a thunderstorm near his hermitage. It turns out that the groom-to-be is the lost son of the Percy line who have abandoned Warkworth Castle, their once rightful residence. The couple ask the hermit to marry them in his chapel, and on entering it are struck by the tomb of a woman. Upon asking who lies buried there, the hermit breaks out in tears:

Alas! My children, human life
Is but a vale of woe;
And very mournful is the tale
Which ye so fain would know.  

The interpolated story of the hermit, which follows, reveals that he in fact is a friend of Percy’s grandfather named Bertram, who was himself tested “to try his constancy” (19) by his wife-to-be. The story, in a nutshell: The fiancé sends him off to fight the Scottish, and he is hurt badly in battle. His bride is sent for subsequently, but never arrives at his bedside. It turns out that she has been captured on her way by the Scottish. As soon as he is well again, Bertram and his brother start a search for her, both in disguise, and taking separate ways. Bertram finally finds his fiancé captured in a Scottish castle. To his surprise, he witnesses her escape with another knight. He attacks the latter and by accident kills his fiancé, just after she has revealed to him that the other knight is in fact his own brother. After the hermit has told the story, he marries the couple. As we are told, the Percy family is then restored to their old status by Henry V. 274

The hermit’s story offers a chivalrous ‘backdrop’, or supplement, to the ‘official’ history. As the Earl of Northumberland had fought against English rule on the side of Welsh rebels – thus on the side of the suppressed – he would have been perceived as a model for the defence of liberty. 275 His story was also dramatised in Shakespeare’s Henry IV. Some of the early scenes in part two of the play are set in Warkworth Castle, most notably the first one, in which Henry Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland, is under the illusion that the rebellion against Henry IV has been successful. Only later he is informed that in fact the king’s troops have defeated his own, and that his son Hotspur has been killed at the Battle of Shrewsbury. 276 Grose in The Antiquities of England and Wales mentions a historical source indicating that the Percys were in fact deceived by their fellow rebels, who fought for the king at Shrewsbury. 277 The “forlorn” state of the castle

274 The monograph includes a transcription of a historic chronicle to prove the truth of the story.
276 A clear reference to Shakespeare’s second part of Henry IV. was made at the R.A. exhibition of 1798 by Thomas Stothard, who exhibited A scene in the 2nd part of Henry IV – vide Robinson’s Shakespeare (no. 168) (The edition he referred to had been published in 1797: The Works of William Shakespeare: Containing his Plays and Poems, in Seven Volumes, London, G.G. and H. Robinson et al.). In 1799 J. Webster exhibited Lord Northumberland, and Lady Percy, with a quote from the play (no. 245).
277 Grose (1773), The Antiquities, pp. 159-60.
described in *The Hermit of Warkworth* might thus have awoken associations of deception and ‘false hope’ entertained by the Percy family. Interestingly, Thomas Girtin, who was a friend of Turner’s, exhibited a picture of the hermitage at Warkworth (pl. 21) the same year as Turner exhibited *Warkworth Castle*, and the picture was hung in the same room at the Royal Academy exhibition. Visitors of the exhibition are thus likely to have drawn a connection between the two, possibly via the plot of *The Hermit of Warkworth*.

The subject of *Warkworth Castle* thus resonates with at least two tragic narratives. The context of the quotation from Thomson’s *Summer* furthermore expands on the tragic connotations. It heightens and specifies, as it were, the symbolical meaning of the storm alluded to in the epigraph. The quoted lines occur after an elaborate description of a thunderstorm on a (foreign) sea (a part of which may have inspired Turner’s later *Slavers* (R.A. 1840, pl. 69)), and a description of the horrible effects of the plague, which ensues “[f]rom Ethiopia’s poison’d Woods” and “stifled Cairo’s Filth” (S 107). The lyrical ‘I’ has just turned its attention back to England, described gloomily as “[a] nearer Scene of Horror” (S 110). The passage from which Turner’s appended lines are taken initiates a description of the unfolding of another, particularly destructive thunderstorm in England. The full passage in *The Seasons* (Turner’s quote underlined) reads:

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BEHOLD, slow-settling o’er the lurid Grove,
Unusual Darkness broods ; and growing gains
The full Possession of the Sky, surcharg’d
With wrathful Vapour, from the secret Beds,
Where sleep the mineral Generations, drawn.
Thence Niter, Sulphur, and the fiery Spume
Of fat Bitumen, steaming on the Day,
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279 Turner’s painting more directly refers to an incident of 1781, in which a crew throw overboard slaves in order to receive insurance money for them. On this and Turner’s general attitudes regarding the slave trade see Sam Smiles, “Turner and the Slave Trade: speculation and representation”, *British Art Journal* 8:3 (2007), pp. 47-54 (on Turner’s *Slavers*: p. 52).
With various-tinctur’d Trains of latent Flame,
Pollute the Sky, and in yon baleful Cloud,
A reddening Gloom, a Magazine of Fate.
Ferment; till, by the Touch ethereal rous’d,
The Dash of Clouds, or irritating War
Of fighting Winds, while all is calm below,
They furious spring. [...] (S 110)

Turner intentionally avoided, it seems, the ‘earthy’ aspects of the gathering thunderstorm which are mentioned in the passage. The ‘vapours of the earth’ were connected by ancient meteorology to the development of thunderclouds, and the phenomenon itself was referenced by Newton and other later theorists (references can be found in Milton’s Paradise Lost as well). By leaving out the ‘earthy’ components of the developing thunderstorm, Turner subtracts any destructive or ‘fateful’ potential which, through Thomson, would be implied in the landscape itself.

The destruction caused by the storm in Summer distinctly marks the effacement of an idyll. Its harmony is destroyed completely as formerly grazing cattle lie spread out dead on the hills, uncannily still displaying “that same harmless Look/ They wore alive” (S 112). The scene is followed by an account of human tragedy, the story of Caledon and Amelia, which had been the subject of several paintings at the R.A. exhibitions in 1799 and previous years (comp. pl. 22 and 23). In his “Backgrounds” lecture, Turner later referred to Richard Wilson’s

280 Comp. Alan Dugald McKillop, The Background of the Seasons, U of Minnesota P 1942, p. 69.
282 In 1798 E. A. Rigaud exhibited Celadon and Amelia, from Thomson’s Seasons. The whereabouts of the painting are unknown. The artist appended the following verses from Thomson, marking the (most dramatic) moment: “Mysterious Heaven! That moment to the ground/ A blacken’d corse was struck, the beauteous maid.” (The Exhibition of the Royal Academy (1798), p. 12). In 1799, T. Taylor’s painting Storm coming on cited a passage describing the cattle, still alive, which “on the scowling heavens/ Cast a deploring eye, by man forsook” (The Exhibition of the Royal Academy (1799), p. 31). J. Downman exhibited Caledon and his Amelia, from Thomson’s The Seasons at the R.A. in 1797 (no. 261). William Hamilton had painted (but not exhibited) the same subject in 1793 (pl. 22). See Nicholson (1990), Classical Landscapes, p. 49. The subject had been introduced as a
painting of the subject (comp. pl. 24). \(^{283}\) The couple personify ideal, harmonious love – they represent a ‘modern’ Adam and Eve transferred into an Arcadian world. Their happy lives persists, the lyrical voice recounts, “till, in an evil Hour,/ The Tempest caught them on the tender Walk” \(S\ 114\). Amelia is afraid of the impending storm, but Caledon explains to her that she has no reason to fear it, as the storm won’t harm the innocent who are devoid of “inward Storm” \(S\ 115\):

“[…] that very Voice,
“ Which thunders Terror thro’ the guilty Heart,
“ With Tongues of Seraphs whispers Peace to thine.
“ ‘Tis Safety to be near thee sure, and thus
“ ‘To clasp Perfection!’ \(S\ 115-6\)

But of course, as the reader already foresees, this safety is an illusion. The line continues:

From his void Embrace,
\(\text{(Mysterious Heaven!)}\) that moment, to the Ground,
A blacken’d Corse, was struck the beauteous Maid. \(S\ 116\)

The scene is a drastic visualisation of a destruction of (classical) beauty by natural forces. It seems reminiscent of the moment before the morning prayer in \textit{Paradise Lost}, when Adam tries to console Eve by rendering the signs of evil as mere ‘fancy’. Indeed, as Stefanie Lethbridge has shown, the episode in \textit{The Seasons} directly alludes to the description of Adam and Eve’s walk through Eden in \textit{Paradise Lost}. \(^{284}\) The ‘mismatch’ of “words and deeds”, here and in \textit{Paradise Lost}, ironically turns out to be applicable to the reaffirming statements rather than to the doubts of the female counterparts. Importantly, as opposed to \textit{Paradise Lost},

\(^{283}\) Comp. BL, p. 147.
the misfortune of Thomson’s couple is not caused by a choice, but as an effect of natural laws which cannot be escaped. The loss of his love leaves Caledon in a desperate state:

But who can paint the Lover, as he stood,
Pierc’d by severe Amazement, hating Life,
Speechless, and fix’d in all the Death of Woe!
So, faint Resemblance, on the Marble-Tomb,
The well-dissembled Mourner stooping stands,
For ever silent, and for ever sad. (S 116)285

The depiction of the mourner resembles the state of the hermit as described in Thomas Percy’s ballad, yet there is a significant difference in the causes of their lovers’ deaths: While the hermit could be deemed responsible himself for the tragic death of Isabella, Caledon takes no part in Amelia’s death. Furthermore, the happy resolution found in The Hermit of Warkworth is missing in Caledon and Amelia’s story. By quoting the approaching thunderstorm in Summer, Turner seems to pick up the initial scene in The Hermit, when Percy and his fiancé loose each other in the thunderstorm, and associates it with the fateful outcome of the story of Caledon and Amelia – replacing the saviour hermit who both enables their union and secures the continuity of the Percy line,286 as it were, with the ‘unresolved’, seemingly meaningless, mourning in Summer, which matches rather the political state described in the second part of Henry IV. Turner’s Warkworth Castle, despite its seemingly uneventful scenery, thus abounds with allusions to narratives which bear several parallels. All of them evoke tragic turns that are not anticipated.

286 The ballad ends by stressing the successful outcome of the marriage: “The Earl still more and more/ Admir’d his beauteous dame:/ Nine noble Sons to him she bore,/ All worthy of their name.” Percy (1771), The Hermit of Warkworth, p. 46.
The thunderstorm, which is only anticipated – pictorially and textually – in *Warkworth Castle*, is set within a narrative and interpretative frame which emphasises a clash of the ideal of lasting happiness in a peaceful love relationship, associated also with a political state of liberty, and a turn of fate which is, both metaphorically and actually, marked by natural forces. The separation of lovers, which was in Turner’s other composite works of the year alluded to by separating the spheres of male and female figures pictorially, is in *Warkworth Castle* brought in through a paratext: the theme, and its political resonances, are thus consistent. In all of the (preserved) works discussed here, the state of peace is associated with liberty and egalitarian communities; the state of loss with tyranny.

The metaphor of the impending storm – a rather conventional choice for alluding to any kind of feared for event – was at the time much used for the feared invasion of French forces. In January 1798, a journalist for the *Oracle and Public Advertiser* expressed his deep astonishment at the capital’s calm atmosphere, given the enormous threat:

> In the present state of Public affairs, where the Country is menaced with an almost immediate Invasion, by our inveterate, daring and ambitious Enemies, I can no longer suppress my astonishment at the apathy [...] of the Inhabitants of the Metropolis. There is scarcely a City, Town or respectable Village throughout Great Britain, in which Volunteer Corps have not been established for the Defence of the Country. London alone stands aloof, and seems insensible to the Danger of the impending Storm.\(^{287}\)

The *Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner* published some “Lines written at the close of the year 1797” which started as follows:

> LOUD howls the storm along the neighbouring shore –

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\(^{287}\) *The Oracle and Public Advertiser*, January 24, 1798.
Britain indignant hears the frantic roar:
Her generous Sons pour forth on every side,
Firm in their Country’s cause – their Country’s pride!
See wild invasion threats this envied Land;
Swift to defend her, springs the Social Band;

[...]288

The rhetoric matches precisely Linda Colley’s observations about public discourses in the late 1790s: a male military sense is invoked as ‘Social Band’ to prevent the catastrophe. In a pamphlet called *The advantages resulting from the French Revolution, and a French invasion, considered*, the author described Britain’s situation in 1798 as a change from forming “offensive war” plans to a state of calm suspense: “[as our] continental exertions did not wholly justify our sanguine expectations, we have now withdrawn from the attempt; and calmly await at home the storm that hangs heavy in the horizon.”289 Another termed the threat of invasion “the storm which threatens us from the Gallic horizon”; and Alexander Balfour’s poem *The Genius of Caledonia: a poem on the threatened French Invasion* made exceeding use of the storm-metaphor.290 Henry Lloyd, too, in his *Political and Military Rhapsody, on the Invasion and Defence of Great Britain and Ireland*, appealed to the nation to “avert the storm which hangs over our heads, and baffle the efforts of our combined enemies.”291

The evocations of ‘the calm before the storm’ in Turner’s exhibits of 1799 specifically would thus probably have been understood as allusions to the threat of a French invasion by many of their viewers. With the specific contexts which the works alluded to through their paratexts, however, the threat was rendered not as

288 The *Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner*, January 15, 1798.
289 *The advantages resulting from the French Revolution, and a French Invasion, considered* Edinburgh, 1798, p. 37.
290 An appeal to the head and heart of every man and woman in Great Britain, respecting the threatened French invasion, and the importance of immediately coming forward with voluntary contributions, London 1798, p. 40.
one to ‘the nation’ associated with a patriotic concern, but rather as the threat to the families who would be separated by war – and to the (utopian) notion of the state in which such a danger would be eliminated. Turner’s landscapes all evoked the backdrop of tyranny for their stories of personal loss. In a ‘fallen world’, this seems to suppose, human existence is not by definition tragic because of the loss of harmony with the natural world, but rather because “Earth’s universal family” was linked by all but “bonds of intercourse and love” (AT 19): the vision of a ‘public’ as envisioned by sentimental theory, based on an ethics of compassion, Turner’s works suggest, is thwarted by the oppressive endeavours of a few.

Turner’s landscapes of 1799 engage with tragedies in very different ways than traditional history painting could. Instead of depicting the moment of peripeteia which was supposed to most effectively evoke the sympathy of the observer, they imply the tragic turn as an impending reality that is present in absentia, by paratextual indication. Through referential frameworks which give interpretative clues, Turner’s works made his audience imagine tragic turns rather than ‘witness’ them. Through paratextual guidance, they turned the ‘pleasures of the imagination’ thus into a ‘terror of the imagination’, as it were – in contravention of contemporary aesthetic theories. Turner’s twilight paintings are ‘tinged’ with human suffering, yet they circumvent the problems associated with the visual representation of suffering which seemed so fatal to Adam Smith and later theorists of painting: the ‘historical tone’, as rendered by Turner, indeed threw only “half an image” on its audience’s “aching sight” 294, as the actual scenes of suffering would have been created in their heads.

293 In his annotations to Shee’s Elements of Art, Turner associated ‘nationality’ with ‘littleness’. Comp. EA (II), p. 45.
294 Comp. chapter one, pp. 17-18, chapter two, pp. 72-73, and n. 184.
5. For peace and community: the artist as bard

“Why say the Poet and Prophet are not often united? – for if they are not they ought to be”, wrote Turner in a letter in 1811.295 This chapter discusses the poet-prophet as it was conveyed by some of his works which referred to the figure of the artist or poet in particular, and which often also implied reflexions of Turner’s own artistic role and aesthetic ideals. This artistic role was indirectly associated, I argue, with that of the bard, and it followed a distinctly sentimental mission.

Turner’s altered quotations as evocations of voice

The altering of quotations – even if they may not always be due to Turner’s own intentions296 – was something that remained characteristic of Turner’s composite art throughout his career. While in later years, appended quotations were altered to a much more palpable degree, or were even possibly made up,297 the alterations in Turner’s early quotations, as seen in the previous two chapters, were already significant. Not only did they alter the meaning of lines here and there but, notably, also changed their rhythms and enhanced or interrupted the flow of the texts by altered punctuation. For example, if we look at the quote for Norham Castle again:

[BUT] yonder comes the powerful King of Day,
Rejoicing in the East.
The lessening Cloud,
The kindling Azure, and the Mountain’s Brow
Illum’d with fluid Gold, his near Approach [betoken glad.]
Betoken glad. (S 62)

295 The letter was addressed to John Britton. Turner discusses some poetic lines in it, also mentioning that allusion is more poetic than direct expression. Gage (1980), Collected Correspondence, p. 51.
297 For example a quote from Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream for Queen Mab’s Cave (B.I. 1846). Comp. B&J, p. 265 (no. 420). The deviation from Shakespeare’s text, however, could also refer to a particular stage adaptation of the play, thus is not necessarily Turner’s own invention.
The overall effect of these changes is an approaching of the written words to the form of spoken language: Turner’s quotations evoke an actual utterance of the words.\textsuperscript{298} The ‘silence’ of the poetic form is thus left for a ‘closer-to-life’ mode, with implications like immediacy, intimacy, availability and presence of the speaker.\textsuperscript{299} “At its core”, Frederick J. Ruf has summarised, “the voice suggests that we are dealing intimately with persons from whose interiors (and concrete situations) multiple communications move to others.”\textsuperscript{300} The inserted pauses, above all, hint at an emotional and reflective involvement in the utterance – they imply a felt interaction between the speaking voice and the landscapes that were referenced in the works’ paratexts. For example in the quotation for \textit{Fountains Abbey},

“\begin{quote}
All ether soft’ning sober evening takes
Her wonted station in the middle air;
A thousand shadows at her beck ---
in circle following circle, gathers round,
To close the face of things.”\textsuperscript{301}
\end{quote}

By means of the inserted pause, the voice, in the middle of this descriptive passage, comes to a halt, falls silent – presumably reflecting on what has just been said. This also leads to an added emphasis on the last two lines. The insertion of a pause at the beginning of the epigraph of \textit{Norham Castle}, with its first line “But

\textsuperscript{298} According to Frederick J. Ruf, the three major effects of voice are embodiment, contextuality and sociality. Comp. Ruf, \textit{Entangled Voices: Genre and the Religious Construction of Self}, NY/Oxford, Oxford UP 1997. Ruf is arguing for a general understanding of genres as different modes of evoking a voice. His discussion of more and less pronounced ‘appearances’ of voice in these different modes helps to describe what changes when the notion of a voice or dramatic speaking is made ‘visible’ in a text, as it happens, in my view, in the mis-quotations of Turner’s works.

\textsuperscript{299} Ruf (1997), \textit{Entangled Voices}, pp. 8-9. New metres which would give a more natural sound to poetry were discussed widely at the time. Blank verse – the Miltonic and Shakespearean form – gained a lot of praise in this context.

\textsuperscript{300} Ruf (1997), \textit{Entangled Voices}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{301} \textit{The Exhibition of the Royal Academy} (1798), p. 18.
yonder comes the powerful King of Day” (emphasis by me), adds stress to the implications of “but”: to the darkness which would have preceded the arrival of the morning. These pauses hence combine the association of emotional involvement with impacts on the evocation of meaning.

In all cases, the notion of utterance implies a performative quality: the supposed personal engagement with the source text which it conveys was placed in the here and now of the Royal Academy exhibition – each recipient would be ‘addressed’ by the imaginary speaker, as by an actor in a play. Since Turner’s texts were taken from primary examples of the literary canon, the texts, moreover, would have resonated in most of the recipients’ minds. This implies not only a shared tradition or education, but also evokes a mutuality of response. Because of the sentimental tradition in which communal quotation stood, Turner’s quoting voice always also implicitly asked: ‘do you think and feel the same?’

As discussed in the previous chapters, the answer to that question is likely to have been no, since Turner’s paratexts purposefully subverted the aesthetics of such supposed ‘agreements of minds’. Instead of evoking, and possibly inspiring, a powerful emotional experience for their viewers, Turner’s works, by their complex references and mismatch of contents in words and pictures, deconstructed, as it were, the Sentimental overflow of feelings expressed by communal quotation. The audience was introduced to a speaker figure, inviting them to continue the tradition and feel as if they are part of a community, but instead of an illustrative visual space that would consolidate the event and successful act of communication, complex references drew attention to dawning isolation, frustration or loss.

The use of altered quotations is something which Sentimental culture shares with literature of the earlier eighteenth century, which often similarly ‘subverted’ the attribution of authorship by its distinctive intertextual practices.\(^3\)

\(^3\) David Hopkins has shown that the intertextual dialogue is central to ‘classicist’ texts of the eighteenth century. He suggests that much of this dialogic and productive use of the classical sources has been disregarded by more recent criticism because the classicist (Augustan) poetry was identified as conservative and as such juxtaposed with the supposedly ‘more progressive’
However, a striking difference lies in the maintenance of form in these earlier texts – they would not, like sentimental novels, incorporate quotations as markers of such closely defined small communities as those in the works of Ann Radcliffe. Augustan poetry often incorporated lines from other writers, and – like Thomson’s *The Seasons* – abounded with allusions to earlier texts, yet by doing this evoked a much larger community: all of society, or rather, humanity itself.

The ‘universal truths’ evoked in Augustan poetry, applying to all of humanity, were not derived from supposed singular and solitary geniuses. While the poet-persona and the poetic imagination often were the subjects of the reflections in the texts, particularly in Augustan odes, the poets’ identity was located within a discourse that was understood itself as an ongoing, communal one. This discourse implied the reflection of general social, political and/or religious issues and its ‘truths’, shared by the poets of the past and the present – much like Reynolds’ concept of the sympathetic bonds between the great masters dead and alive (see chapter one, pp. 39-41). The “imagined figure of the autobiographical poet”\(^\text{303}\) hence here appears specifically in the context of his traditional role within society. This role was frequently sketched as that of the poet-prophet or bard, who had a pivotal function as a medium for the reflection and description of the noteworthy, and the memorisation of what had been lost in a culture.\(^\text{304}\) The bard, like the hermit or the noble savage, was one of the solitary and wise types of figures who occurred so frequently in cultural productions of the late eighteenth century. These types, as Brissenden argues, were fundamentally associated with the notion that moral virtue was cultivated best in isolation from society. The bard specifically was imagined as existing in a harmonious state with nature, and could therefore allude to, or even personify, the paradisiac state

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\(^{304}\) See Cohen on Gray’s “Elegy written in a Country Churchyard”, one of the most famous examples, Cohen (2001), The Return to the Ode, pp. 210-11.
which sentimental thinking sought to re-establish.\textsuperscript{305} While he might be understood as a precedent of the “alienated artist” established later as romantic myth,\textsuperscript{306} the bard differs from this individualised type most distinctly with regard to the societal role which he was committed to – in contrast also to other solitary types of ‘his’ time.

If a bard would have been imagined as the supposed speaker of Turner’s earlier epigraphs, this would have altered the expectations towards their function considerably. More specific references to the figure would only occur in Turner’s exhibits in 1800. The fact that in them Turner also changed his textual mode from the seeming spontaneous overflows of emotions in his ‘dramatised’ (mis-)quotations to more coherent versifications of his own, already indicates that he aligned his authorial role more with that of the imagined Augustan poet than with Goethe’s Werther, or Radcliffe’s Emily. Given the peculiar aesthetic use of altered quotations in the earlier composite works, which helped subvert expected aesthetic responses, it seems particularly significant that Turner’s art’s most explicit allusions to the bardic role were drawn by texts written by himself, and in a very different mode. Not only are the poetic forms of these texts more ‘coherent’, but also their use is less ‘antagonistic’ to the images than that of the earlier quotations. The introduction of Turner’s poetic authorship went along with a thematic focus on the function of art that was also reflected in the form of the respective works. This chapter seeks to delineate the artist-persona that was conveyed in his particularly ‘self-reflexive’ works around 1800, and analyses the particular artistic means by which it was reflected.

**Bards: Turner’s **\textit{Dolbadern Castle and Caernarvon Castle}\**

Turner’s diploma work \textit{Dolbadern Castle, North Wales} (pl. 25), when shown at the Royal Academy exhibition, was supplemented by the following lines, apparently written by Turner himself:

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
How awful is the silence of the waste,
Where nature lifts her mountains to the sky.
Majestic solitude, behold the tower
Where hopeless OWEN, long imprison’d, pin’d,
And wrung his hands for liberty, in vain. 307

"Owen" probably refers to Owain Goch ap Gruffyd, brother of Llewelyn the Last, who resisted Edward I’s invasion of Wales for some time. Owen was finally liberated by his brother’s enemy, who, in some of Turner’s other paintings, was evoked as an oppressive tyrant (see chapter four, pp. 111-118). 308 The fact that in this work, Edward I is evoked as liberator, suggests that Turner’s art did not side with a particular political grouping, but criticised any kind of oppressive behaviour. As in the composite works of 1799, Dolbadern Castle drew its audience’s attention to suffering.

Significantly, Owen is not enduring his ‘hopeless’ state stoically, but, the appended text tells us, “wring his hands for liberty, in vain”: the view onto the castle, with the association of the prisoner, is obviously not intended to inspire thoughts of virtuous endurance. Needless to say, Owen contrasts the ‘man of polite taste’ who, according to Joseph Addison, would be able to make the existence in a dungeon enjoyable by calling up pleasing images (comp. chapter two, pp. 62-63), or who, like Radcliffe’s Emily, would frequently ‘raise his thoughts to God: Owen is “hopeless”’. The appended lines nevertheless start by evoking the notion of sublimity: “silence of the waste,/ Where nature lifts her mountains to the sky” – a statement easily associated with the rocky landscape shown on the picture. The “Majestic solitude” serves to personify ‘awful nature’ which is opposed to cultivated and populated places. 309 The notion of wild, isolated nature

309 Gilpin had described Dolbadarn Castle’s tower as “an emblem of solitude” and might have inspired Turner therefore. Comp. Andrews (1998), The Search for the Picturesque, p. 135.
here corresponds with the definition of the aesthetic sublime by Burke, as a potentially threatening realm with an awe-inspiring effect on detached observers. What follows in Turner’s text, however, turns around the expectations created by this kind of ‘sublime nature’: “Majestic solitude” is addressed as an observer to “behold the tower” in which Owen suffered. By addressing it, Turner effectively ‘subtracts’ personified solitude from the awe-inspiring view, as it were, and parallels it with the audience, the actual observers of the picture. Where they were invited to see “Majestic solitude”, now they are themselves associated with this solitude, and asked, with it, to “behold the tower/ Where hopeless Owen [...] wrung his hands for liberty in vain.” Owen may have had liberty in Schiller’s terms, of turning his will against the conditions of his living and upholding the moral principle, but not in a way that would give him the actual freedom to leave the confinement. When the text appeals to Solitude and directs its ‘attention’, it also appeals to the observer who would judge the picture in line with the common aesthetic vocabulary of the sublime. The solitary spot turns into one of suffering, and becomes a setting for a potential sympathetic identification. Where there was “terror” evoked in the Burkean sense, now there also is the possibility of pity – the combination which makes an Aristotelian tragic effect.

The two responses addressed here are not necessarily complementary: Owen’s ‘wringing’ of hands “for liberty, in vain” in fact starkly contrasts the notion of ‘majestic’ solitude ascribed to the tower in which he was captured; ‘majestic’ it would not be if the condition of real confinement was taken into account. An ‘elevation of the soul’ either by associating pictures, memories or the divine, or admiring its picturesqueness, as evoked for example in the earlier depictions of the castle by Richard Wilson and Paul Sandby (pl. 27 and 28), which both include figures who share the view of the observer and thus would have evoked the ‘purpose of looking’ themselves, is subverted by Turner’s picture. The ‘narrative

The picture has frequently been identified as one of Turner’s engagements with ‘the sublime’. Comp. Shanes (1990), Human Landscape, p. 71 (although Shanes concedes that “[t]he sublimity of the scene [...] is subtly but clearly directed towards associatively furthering our awareness of the oppressiveness of imprisonment” (p. 71). The two notions do not seem to be contradictory to Shanes. In combining them, his interpretation resembles that of Holcomb (1974), The Bridge in the Middle Distance, pp. 43-44 and also Wilton (1980), Turner and the Sublime, pp. 40-41.
intervention’ places suffering Owen in view, and makes this a place of human interaction.

The ‘turn towards the human’ which is performed in the text, is also, in a sense, implied in the painting through the foreground figures, which will be spotted only at closer investigation (pl. 26). Four figures are seen: two soldiers in armour, an enchained man who is kneeling down at a tree trunk, and an old man who, apparently speaking to the prisoner, points at the hill with the ruined castle. Turner’s text would probably have been associated with the portrayed speaker figure, the old man. By introducing a scene of actual imprisonment and a speaker-figure addressing it, the figures intervene in the aesthetic response-pattern just as the text does: this visualisation of confinement opposes the notion of “majestic solitude” on its own terms.

_Dolbadern Castle_’s upright format resembles that of _Morning amongst the Coniston Fells_, where, I argued, the format supports the narrative movement towards the dark foreground (see chapter three, p. 90). Here, this scheme seems inverted, as the attention is led towards the distance, following the old man’s pointing gesture. The direction corresponds with that of the ‘Claudean scheme’ in which the spatial orientation is drawn towards the horizon, inviting a free play of ‘the pleasures of the imagination’ (see chapter two, p. 67). Here, however, instead of the blurred wide view expected within a Claudean landscape view, the tower of the castle – a pronounced place of confinement – ‘imposes itself’ on the view and thus purposefully frustrates the ‘polite observer’s’ expectations. Both the ‘sublime’ and the more generally ‘aesthetic’ appreciation of the visual space are strategically ‘blocked’ through these ‘insurmountable’ references to an actual loss of freedom by Turner.

311 John Gage and Eric Shanes have suggested that the prisoner could also be identified as Owain Goch. (Comp. Shanes (1990), _Human Landscape_, p. 60, and John Gage, _J.M.W. Turner: A Wonderful Range of Mind_, New Haven, Yale UP 1987, p. 188). In that case, the composite work would merge a future perspective (Owain before his confinement in the castle) represented in the picture with a retrospective perspective (“OWEN, long imprison’d […]”) pursued in the appended text.

312 The tower, as Eric Shanes has pointed out, is significantly larger than the original – “[t]he mountains are also raised, and make the whole valley seem much narrower than it appears from the spot in reality”, heightening “the sense of imprisonment”. Shanes (1990), _Human Landscape_, p. 61.
The subversion of aesthetic response is thus in Dolbadern Castle achieved in text and image on their own terms: Turner’s own text, aligned with the imagined voice of the old man, doubles and reinforces what the picture communicates. The two media are thus juxtaposed here in a way which perfectly illustrates what Turner emphasised in a lecture some years later: that poetry and painting, “reciprocally improved, reflect, and heighten each other’s beauties like [...] mirrors.” Picture and text, Turner supposes here, can be used to enhance each other’s effects. It may have been exactly this resonance of the media which Turner wanted to convey with Dolbadern Castle in particular, and what may have made him choose this composite work as his diploma piece.

Due to the reference to Owain Goch and (indirectly) Edward I, the ‘old man’ in the picture might well have been identified as a bard: the Welsh bards would lose their liberty exactly at the time when Owen would regain his. Importantly, the bard is presented as a ‘voice of history’ here, pointing out a ‘pitiful story’ to the observer, while at the same time – by his presence – calling to mind the fate of the artists under the later ruler. Without him, the picture would be ‘reduced’ to a sublime view, just as without Turner, the supposed author of the appended text – there would be no ‘historical landscape’ at all: indirectly, the picture thus points out the importance of ‘bardic’, i.e. historical and thus political art. The critique of confinement expressed through the emphasis on Owen’s suffering seems, by extension, to be a critique of any measures that would prevent the arts from fulfilling their societal function – a critique that must have seemed quite current in Britain at the time, when any expression of ‘democratic’ inclination was identified as ‘Jacobin’ and likely to be censored.

Turner’s second work supplemented by his own lines, exhibited also in 1800, presented another view of Caernarvon Castle (Caernarvon Castle, North Wales, pl. 29). The painting shows a bard in the foreground, singing to a group of

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people who are sitting on the grass. The castle can be seen in the background. The appended verses read:

And now on Arvon’s haughty tow’rs  
The Bard the song of pity pours,  
For oft on Mona’s distant hills he sighs,  
Where jealous of the minstrel band,  
The Tyrant drench’d with blood the land,  
And charm’d with horror, triumph’d in their cries.  
The swains of Arvon round him throng,  
And join the sorrows of his song.\(^{314}\)

In this case, Turner’s words cannot be taken as those of the bard shown, as they make the bard their main subject. However, the lines do not describe the depicted peaceful scene, but focus instead on the juxtaposition of the bard’s role with that of a tyrant: the peaceful bonding (and soothing) powers of the former are set in contrast to the violent assaults of the latter. Turner, the author, himself takes on the ‘bardic’ role of sketching history here with his verses, just as the bard in the picture supposedly does.

The bard in association with Caernarvon Castle would again have evoked the persecution of bards by Edward I. It had famously been described by Thomas Gray in his ode “The Bard” of 1757.\(^{315}\) Gray had described the bard’s appearance as follows:

On a rock, whose haughty brow  
Frowns o’er old Conway’s foaming flood,  
Robed in the sable garb of woe,  
With haggard eyes the Poet stood;

\(^{314}\) *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy*, (1800), p. 18.  
\(^{315}\) Reynolds also referred to the “sublime idea of the indignant Welch bard”, albeit in passing (*D* (XV), p. 271).
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Stream’d, like a meteor, to the troubled air)
And with a Master’s hand, and Prophet’s fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.  

Turner’s verses and painting strikingly contrast this passionate appearance. Both image and text introduce the bard as the opposite of the warrior-tyrant also in terms of his temper. Instead of cursing Edward I and expressing his anger, as Gray’s bard does, Turner’s peacefully unites people through his song, disseminating their common history: he ‘pours the song of pity’ and therefore pronouncedly binds society by the principle that counts on people’s ability to feel for one another, as opposed to hierarchical rule.

The juxtaposition of the tyrant and the bard, which by Turner was evoked particularly in his appended text, had in the (young) pictorial history of the theme been a common visual feature. Philippe James de Loutherbourg, Henry Fuseli and Benjamin West had all depicted the bard placed on a rock, looking down on Edward’s army (pl. 30 and 31). In all of these visual precedents, the bard is shown as a passionate figure, aligned formally with the natural forces around him whose energetic turmoil matches his own emotional features – just as Gray had envisioned the figure. Turner’s painting of the bard is drastically different from the poet’s description and these former artistic depictions, as he places his protagonist in a sunny valley. His listeners are compositionally on one plane with the castle, contrasting the immense differences in height evoked in the other images. Turner’s bard is not an outraged loner, but a storyteller integrated into a community, ‘pouring the song of pity’ rather than cursing his opponent as part of a violent storm in which he clashes against the armed forces metaphorically.

317 Fuseli exhibited The Bard, from Gray in 1800, with appended lines: “On yonder cliffs, a grizzly band/ See them sit, they linger yet,/ Avengers of their native land:/ With me in dreadful harmony they join,/ And weyve with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.” The Exhibition of the Royal Academy (1800), p. 5.
That Turner was aware of the pictorial tradition is proven by his use of analogical shapes of the bard and his surrounding nature: the curved shape of his harp, as Eric Shanes has noted, is repeated by the tree behind the figure, both seemingly ‘leaning against’ the castle of his oppressor. By drawing this analogy, Turner seems to place himself within the tradition, yet at the same time set his own vision apart from it. Making the tree “a pine rather than an oak” in a peaceful scene with a Claudean touch, as Shanes has observed, he brings in expressly gently what other painters had made their most prominent structural feature, conveying most of the energy or emotional violence brought up by the bard against the army. While former artists alluded to the imminent suicide of the bard, moreover, Turner with his picture also deflected the attention from the bard’s dramatic individual fate to his role in society.

With both Dolbadern Castle and Caernarvon Castle, Turner associated his own verses with the role of the bard and thus indirectly marked his own artistic mission as related to that of the pacifying (and pacifistic) poet-prophet who is a central figure in his society. These paintings of his, too, were narrating the past, and interpreting the historical place for a ‘present audience’. For some time, these self-reflexive works would stand alone in Turner’s oeuvre. The next time that he appended text by himself to a painting would be nine years later, with Thomson’s Aeolian Harp (Turner’s gallery 1809) – a work that again focused on the bardic tradition and the function of poetry in society, but put more stress on the sympathetic community of artists than the two earlier works.

318 Comp. Shanes (1990), Human Landscape, pp. 63-65.
319 Shanes (1990), Human Landscape, p. 66.
320 In 1799 or 1800, Turner painted a scene in the Welsh mountains with an army, which may have been intended as a companion piece for Caernarvon Castle (pl. 32). A sketch for the painting included the figure of a bard. Andrew Wilton has suggested that these different scenes testify to Turner’s plan to illustrate Gray’s poem at the time (Comp. Andrew Wilton, Painting and Poetry. Turner’s Verse Book and his Work of 1804-1812, London, Tate 1990, p. 115). They also testify to Turner’s further engagement with the pictorial tradition of the subject. The interest in military action and in mountain scenery at the time, as Lynn R. Matteson has argued, is likely to have been related to Napoleon’s invasion of Switzerland in 1798, which was widely reflected in British cultural productions. Lynn R. Matteson, “The Poetics and Politics of Alpine Passage: Turner’s Snowstorm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps”, The Art Bulletin 62:3 (1980), pp. 385-398: 394.
**Bonds between the artists: Thomson’s Aeolian Harp**

*Thomson’s Aeolian Harp*, exhibited at Turner’s own gallery in 1809 (pl. 33), was his most explicit self-positioning within the bardic tradition. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the image of the Aeolian harp was frequently used as a symbol for the mediating role of the artist: as the harp is played by ‘nature itself’, it symbolically conveys that what is given to him comes from a source more powerful than himself – it is thus closely tied to the notion of the poet-prophet. Turner’s painting shows a harp on Thomson’s (supposed) grave, and, through the appended lines, written by Turner himself, indeed reflected the idea of the artist as a mediator of sacred truths – but also as a member in a perpetual bond of poets dead and alive.

In James Thomson’s own “Ode on Aeolus’s Harp” (1748), which would have been evoked by Turner’s title, the lyrical ‘I’ imagines over five stanzas which different “inhabitants of air”\(^{321}\) can cause an Aeolian harp to play in different emotional modes: an “unhappy maid/ Who died of love”, a hermit, or “the sacred Bard, who sat alone/ In the drear waste and wept his people’s woes”.\(^{322}\) Finally he suspects to hear “the full celestial choir/ Through Heaven’s high dome their awful anthem raise.”\(^{323}\) In the sixth and final stanza, the lyrical ‘I’ addresses those supposed voices himself and lays out their role in his creative process:

> Let me, ye wandering spirits of the wind,
> Who, as wild fancy prompts you, touch the string,
> Smit with your theme, be in your chorus joined,
> For till you cease my muse forgets to sing.\(^{324}\)


\(^{323}\) Thomson (1951), An Ode, p. 433.

\(^{324}\) Thomson (1951), An Ode, p. 432.
Thomson’s poet assumes the origin of the “spirits” in “wild fancy” – not his own, but those of others whom he ‘joins’ with his song. The Aeolian Harp thus becomes an image for the poet’s own capability – and function – to sympathise with significant feelings and ideas of his surrounding world: Thomson introduces the poet as a communicator of suffering, a historian and a secular priest, who sympathetically transfers ‘sacred’ themes to his audiences.

In 1749, William Collins made the Aeolian Harp one of the major themes in his epitaph to James Thomson – the poem which, as Adele Holcomb has suggested, was a major inspiration for Turner’s painting. Collins’ poem imagines Thomson’s harp as a medium retaining the deceased poet’s presence in the world:

In yon deep Bed of whisp’ring Reeds
His airy Harp shall now be laid,
That He, whose Heart in Sorrow bleeds
May love thro’ Life the soothing Shade.

Then Maids and Youths shall linger here,
And while it’s [sic] Sounds at distance swell,
Shall sadly seem in Pity’s Ear
To hear the WOODLAND PILGRIM’S Knell.

In Turner’s painting, we indeed see ‘maids and youths linger’ at the harp above the Thames, and girls that “dress/ With simple Hands thy rural Tomb”, as Collins also writes. Collins picks up Thomson’s suggestion that the poet’s creative power dies with fancy’s evocations, yet turns it around, proclaiming that “With Him, Sweet Bard, may FANCY die”. Thomson has thus here not only become the embodiment of fancy itself, but is imagined himself now as the patriotic bard who

325 Comp. B&J, p. 64 (no reference provided).
327 Collins (1977), Ode Occasion’d, p. 166.
328 Collins (1977), Ode Occasion’d, p. 166.
he described in his own poem as one of those whose fancy he would like to join. Thomson’s tomb “Shall melt the musing Briton’s Eyes”, 329 implies Collins, as that of a dead poet-prophet.

Turner’s painting shows the Aeolian Harp, being decorated with garlands. 330 While around the supposed tomb he placed pensive figures, the scene surrounding the harp on the left side seems celebratory, as the ‘maids and youths’ are dancing to the assumed tunes of the harp. Turner’s poem sets out to mourn the lost memory not only of Thomson, but also of Alexander Pope: 331

His pastoral reeds untied, and harp unstrung,
Sunk is their harmony in Twickenham’s glade,
While flows the stream, unheeded and unsung.

The poet was the one, Turner goes on to describe in the following stanzas, who could give expression to the surroundings that are now ‘unheard’. The installation of an Aeolian Harp, however, makes their sounds audible again:

Then kindly place amid thy upland groves
Th’Æolian harp, attun’d to nature’s strains,
Melliferous greeting every air that roves
From Thames’ broad bosom or her verdant plains.

The harp will then, as Thomson did with his Seasons, ‘greet’ each of the seasons, each of which is evoked by a stanza in Turner’s own poem. It ends with the stanza on winter, taking up its initial theme of memorising the dead poet(s):

329 Collins (1977), Ode Occasion’d, p. 166.
330 Reynolds’ Three Graces decorating a Term of Hymen (1773) has been suggested as a model for Turner’s work, as well as Claudean figures, appearing for example in Landscape with the Adoration of the Golden Calf (1653). Comp. Kitson (1983), Turner and Claude, pp. 9-10.
331 The picture’s theme is linked with Turner’s painting Pope’s villa at Twickenham (Turner’s gallery, 1808) – it was Turner’s reaction to the demolition of Pope’s house at the time: another act of commemoration for a poet. For this painting, Turner also wrote a poem which however he did not print in his exhibition catalogue. See Wilton (1990), Painting and Poetry, p. 150.
Winter! Thy sharp cold winds bespeak decay;
Thy snow-fraught robe let pity ‘zone entwine,
That gen’rous care shall memory repay,
Bending with her o’er Thomson’s hallow’d shrine. 332

In the face of “decay” which winter represents here (as in Thomson’s poem), pity with the decayed will once more awaken the memory of the poet, and render the place hallowed – sacred – again. Implicitly, by presenting his own poem of the seasons, Turner himself becomes the poet that is inspired by the harp’s tones, reviving the memory of Thomson. By different means, he carries on Thomson’s message, and promotes the veneration of his work. As the work refers to Collins’ poem, and also includes Pope in the commemorative effort, Turner’s own artist-persona would have been evoked as part of a ‘sympathetic community’ of poets. The Aeolian Harp, being their main subject, is at the same time presented as a literal medium for the transition from one generation to the other, stressing their shared bonds both with sentimental themes (which is the theme of Thomson’s poem) and with the earlier poets. 333 The bonds of sympathy, which Thomson introduces in his poem as the ideal way to be poetically inspired, thus is extended to encompass the poets who feel indebted to the same ideal – similar to Reynolds’ idea that the old masters were, or should be, “bound to the human heart by every tie of sympathetic approbation”. 334 The invocation of that imaginary community seems vital for the achievement of the ideal, as it defies the notion of ‘independent genius’ just as the sentimental vision of society defies the ‘ambition’ of the solitary hero and tyrant. By contrast to previously discussed works by Turner, Thomson’s Aeolian Harp does not seem to employ an oppositional principle to this ideal, but adheres to the (neo-)classical ideal also compositionally.

334 D (II), p. 28.
By adapting the Thames valley to the principles of this pictorial tradition (associated rather with landscapes of Italy), Turner pictorially hints at the continuity which is also expressed in the generational bonds between the poets.\(^\text{335}\)

The vision of the peaceful community, which was evoked as an ideal indirectly in his earlier composite works, is in this and the other self-referential works by Turner particularly emphasised. As Turner’s version of the Aeolian harp indirectly claims, this community rests on efforts of communal commemoration. It furthermore depends – this is conveyed by all of these self-referential works – on the artist and his ‘song of pity’ in order to maintain its peace and sympathetic ties.

Frustrated hopes: *Morning, from Dr. Langhorne’s Visions of Fancy*

The role of the bard was in Turner’s self-referential works of 1800 not exclusively presented as a saving force, but also as something that is itself endangered.\(^\text{336}\) The work most explicitly drawing attention to the precarious situation of the bard or poet of the time is the now untraced (or unidentified) watercolour *Morning, from Dr. Langhorne’s Vision of Fancy*, exhibited by at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1799.\(^\text{337}\) In this work, Turner juxtaposed the hope for eternal communal happiness to its seemingly inevitable frustration from the interpretive perspective of a lyrical self, as conveyed in Langhorne’s poem. The poem is not only quoted, but also gave the painting its title. The appended text reads:

> “Life’s morning landscape gilt with orient light,
> “Where Hope, and Joy, and Fancy hold their reign,
> “The blythe hours dancing round Hyperion’s wain.


\(^336\) In this his art resembles Thomson’s, and also Thomas Gray’s poetry (as opposed to Akenside’s), who stress the isolation and eventual frustration of the poet, as Paul Whiteley points out ("Gray, Akenside and the Ode", *Thomas Gray. Contemporary Essays*, ed. by W.B. Hutchings/William Ruddick, Liverpool, Liverpool UP 1993, pp. 171-187).

\(^337\) It may be unidentified because the painting might have been changed and/or retitled later by Turner.
“In radiant colours youth’s free hand pourtrays,
Then hold [sic] the flattering tablet to his eye,
Nor thinks how soon the vernal grove decays,
Nor sees the dark cloud gathering o’er the sky.
Mirror of life thy glories thus depart.” 338

The lines are from the fourth and second elegies of John Langhorne’s Visions of Fancy. 339 In the poem, the lyrical ‘I’ presents a retrospective view of its youth, which it imagines as a paradisal idyll, reigned by the ‘Children of Fancy’. However, it is those very ‘children’ which, as it recounts, took away the “Hope-enliven’d Hours” when they introduced a feeling hitherto unknown to the young self: “the Tyrant, LOVE, / With Fear and HOPE and FOLLY in his train.” 340 The literal ‘taking-over’ of this ‘foreign despot’ is described as an illusory dream of eternal spring and happiness, and “ever-young Desire” (VF 39): the artist-self has ‘carelessly’ left his lyre “on some pale branch of the osier shade” (VF 37) and fallen asleep. The ‘children of fancy’ subsequently take possession of the instrument and start playing a “lulling” (VF 37) tune speaking of the everlasting joys of love. It ends:

“Extatic hours! So every distant day
Like this serene on downy wings shall move;
Rise crown’d with joys that triumph o’er decay,
The faithful joys of Fancy and of Love.” (VF 40)

338 The Exhibition of the Royal Academy (1799), p. 15.
339 Only the last line is taken from the second elegy (stanza three, l. 1). See Jerrold Ziff’s Note “John Langhorne and Turner’s ‘Fallacies of Hope’”, Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 27 (1964), pp. 340-2, where Ziff argues that Langhorne’s “Visions of Fancy” and also his poem “Hymn to Hope” gave Turner several expressions which he employed in his own Fallacies of Hope verse until late in his career (among them the term “fallacious hope” which, however, appears in Paradise Lost and Thomson’s The Seasons as well. Comp. Pl., Book II, l. 568, pp. 39 and S 197, l. 1258).
The second elegy goes on to describe the crude ‘awakening’ from the dream, shifting to “scenes where PEACE in RUIN’S arms expires” and “Fallacious HOPE deludes her hapless train.” (VF 42) The ‘I’ disapproves of this new awareness and longs for peace from the passions, an “INSENSIBILITY” (VF 43) in which the care for love, and also fame, will be abandoned. This peace becomes a social fantasy as well, the alternative to an “eternal war” which “man with man [...] will wage/ And never yield that mercy which he wants” (VF 44), and to malicious intentions that result from passion. As in Thomson’s *The Seasons*, an education in philosophy is introduced as a way out of these harmful human passions. The poem then sketches a vision of a society which seems to fulfil the sentimental ideal, and is associated with the signs of morning. With this ‘vision’ comes the hope for the lyre to be taken up again, and to let it resound, inspired by feelings of pity:

“So may sweet EUTERPE not disdain
“At Eve’s chaste hour her silver lyre to bring;
“The muse of pity wake her soothing strain,
“And tune to sympathy the trembling string. (VF 48)

This ‘pre-sexual’ age going along with renewed poetic inspiration and production is introduced as one aspect of the social utopia that is now illustrated further: pity and sympathy mark an age of love which is bound to “heart-enlarging” friendship, “elegance of mind”, “the native beauties of the soul” and “[t]he simple charms of truth” (VF 48).

This vision of the ideal society, and of overcoming the passions for a quiet and virtuous life, however, is exposed as utopia at the beginning of the fourth elegy, from which Turner took most of his quotation. As the “[f]ond hopes” for peace seem illusory, the lyrical ‘I’ would prefer to “cast these waking thoughts away,/ For one wild dream of life’s romantic morn.” (VF 51) With the lines that were taken over by Turner,341 Langhorne evokes the morning landscape as an allegory for youth’s untainted hopes. Instead of continuing with (parts) of

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341 The slight alterations only concern punctuation and orthography.
Langhorne’s final two stanzas, which give a ‘translation’ of the scenic, metaphorical landscape into the concepts touched upon in the poem, Turner for his last line turned back to the second elegy, to the passage which describes the awakening from the dream of everlasting happiness in love, and from it only added: “Mirror of life thy glories thus depart.” The original reads “Mirror of life! The glories thus depart.” (VF 41) – Turner’s version thus ascribes the glories directly to the ‘mirror’, while Langhorne’s text introduces no such relation.

Of all passages in the poem, Turner chose for his appended lines the one that entirely blends the ideas of youth and landscape by naming it one single phenomenon, “Life’s morning-landscape” (VF 52). His second stanza communicates that this ‘scenic’ image of youth is actually mirrored in the poetic production it generates: the unity of ‘I’, landscape and creative production is portrayed as a self-contained cosmos which excludes the obvious signs of decay that it (paradoxically) already contains. Turner, by adding his last line on the “mirror of life” whose ‘glories depart’, however, breaks up this unity to point specifically, it seems, at the lost power of the creative product in the heralded post-dream state, associated with the realities of a ‘fallen’ world. As in his other composite works of 1799, discussed in chapter four, this break with a hopeful state is imagined as an oncoming storm. *Morning, from Dr. Langhorne’s Vision of Fancy* differs from these other works in its direct association of paradise with artistic production. In the passage Turner chose to quote, Langhorne, as opposed to other passages of the poem (which introduce images of music and poetry), uses metaphors of painting to describe a mimetic (and ‘psychological’) art. Because of these metaphors of painting, the lines appended to *Morning, from Dr. Langhorne’s Vision of Fancy* imply an aesthetic reflection of the artwork through which they are conveyed. The landscape that was (probably) shown in Turner’s picture, through the appended lines, itself became an allegorical landscape

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342 As opposed to earlier passages in the poem, which allude to poetry/music.
343 Eric Shanes has argued that, given the title and appended verse, this “may have been Turner’s first allegorical work and the first picture in which he employed a time of day and light-effect to complement and extent the meaning of the subject.” (Shanes (1990), *Human Landscape*, p. 59) My
which – as in Langhorne’s poem – comprised the signs of its ephemeral and illusory status. In a way, it would open up a temporal realm which entails a ‘looking back’ not only on this lost state as lost Arcadian landscape, but also on the picture which represents it, ‘overshadowed’ with reality.

With Dr. Langhorne’s Visions of Fancy, thus, Turner transfers the narrative structures of his early composite works of 1798 and 1799 to the theory of painting. While he paratextually referred to tragic turns, suffering and ‘magazines of fate’ which would befall protagonists in his referenced texts in the earlier works, suffering was now introduced as the pre-condition of art production. At the same time, it is understood as an ‘ennobling’ experience which enables the poet and painter to surpass the level of the personal and assume a ‘public’ voice. The ideal or pastoral idyll, it is implied, however, can only work as projection, or lamented past. This meta-reflective picture on Langhorne’s poem thus opens up a peculiar parallel to Schiller’s theory of the elegy as a genre (not) inspiring a change towards the ideal society of equals. Turner’s mode of ‘pastoral elegy’, reflecting, as the allegorical Morning supposes, the ‘state’ or function of his own art, implies that what later became the important Fallacies of Hope-theme was from the beginning also related to Turner’s notion of his own role in society as a (political) artist. This artist is defined here as someone who raises himself above the illusory hopes of his own life to promote the overcoming of the illusions in his society for a peaceful, sympathetic mode of communal existence, freed from adversarial passions. In Turner’s artistic practice, this did not entail neo-platonic evocations of ‘transcendence’, but constant juxtapositions of the ideal with its ‘realities’, and thus employing it as a critique that is very expressly addressed to the imperfect world.

Thomson’s Aeolian Harp, Dolbadern Castle and Caernarvon Castle, for which Turner apparently wrote texts himself, and also Morning, from Doctor Langhorne’s Vision of Fancy, all introduce Turner’s artistic persona as standing in a

analyses of the composite works of 1798 and 1799, however, suggest that there were many earlier examples.
tradition with the ‘national bards’ who were singing ‘songs of pity’ to counter adversarial forces in a society. Only one other exhibited work (*View of London from Greenwich*, Turner’s gallery 1809, see chapter seven, pp. 181-182) featured appended verses (supposedly) by Turner’s own hand before he started quoting from his *Fallacies of Hope* in 1812. With the establishment of this ‘motto’ of Turner’s art, the level of self-reference implied in the works discussed here was mostly ‘subsumed’, one may argue, in the texts of *The Fallacies of Hope*, which conveyed Turner’s poetics of sentiment and critique as the main thematic focus of his art.
6. Anti-heroism

This chapter discusses works by Turner which feature juxtapositions of the sentimental ideal with evocations of war and violence. Some of them, but not all, were associated by Turner with his alleged manuscript poem *The Fallacies of Hope*. In these works, Turner developed further his artistic expressions of a critical stance by means of contrast. These contrasts were philosophical in essence, yet, as in Turner’s earlier composite works, involved the subversion of aesthetic codes as well, above all those of the sublime and ‘heroic suffering’.

Representations of war and suffering

The first work referencing the *Fallacies of Hope* was Turner’s *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1812 (pl. 34). Its audience would have associated the historical subject with the more recent crossing of the Alps by Napoleon. The painting’s added text stresses how several forces of destruction follow upon each other, annihilating in turn former supposed moments of success. First Hannibal’s (‘the chief’s’) troops are attacked by the Salassians, then storms ‘attack’ both parties. Hannibal, gathering hope again and thinking of the “fertile plains” of Italy, is corrected by “the loud breeze” which warns him of “Capua’s joys”:

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344 Turner seems to have admired a picture by John Robert Cozens of a similar subject which had been exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1776: *A Landscape with Hannibal in his March over the Alps, showing to his Army the fertile Plains of Italy* (this was noted by C.R. Leslie in *A Handbook for Young Painters*, London 1855, comp. Matteson (1980), *The Poetics and Politics of Alpine Passage*, pp. 386-7, and n. 4). The picture is untraced today. Furthermore, Thomas Gray had included “Hannibal passing the Alps; the mountaineers rolling rocks upon his army; elephants tumbling down the precipices” in a list of paintings which he wished to have been depicted by famous painters – this one by Salvator Rosa. Comp. Matteson (1980), *The Poetics and Politics of Alpine Passage*, pp. 390-393. The subject had occupied Turner from around 1798, when he drew a first sketch of Hannibal. Napoleon himself had fostered associations between him and Hannibal by having Hannibal’s name (alongside with Charlemagne’s) inscribed into the rock at his horses’ feet in Jean-Louis David’s portrait *Napoleon at the St. Bernard Pass*, indicating that he was his direct predecessor. Turner had seen the painting at David’s studio when he was in Paris in 1802. Richard Corbould exhibited the now lost *Hannibal on his Passage over the Alps Painting out to his Troops the fertile Plains of Italy* at the Royal Academy in 1808. Comp. Matteson (1980), *The Poetics and Politics of Alpine Passage*, p. 394.

‘Craft, treachery, and fraud – Salassian force,
Hung on the fainting rear! Then Plunder seiz’d
The victor and the captive, - Saguntum’s spoil,
Alike, became their prey; still the chief advanc’d,
Look’d on the sun with hope; - low, broad, and wan;
While the fierce archer of the downward year
Stains Italy’s blanch’d barrier with storms.
In vain each pass, ensanguin’d deep with dead,
Or rocky fragments, wide destruction roll’d.
Still on Campania’s fertile plains – he thought,
But the loud breeze sob’d, “Capua’s joys beware!”’

The picture’s compositional structure mirrors the text’s narrative trend towards the worse, with the Alps and the developing snow storm on the right, wave-like ‘reaching out’ to the brighter left area of the picture, which, as this suggests, will soon lie in darkness too. Within the circling top sections of the storm the sun can be seen. It is already dimmed by the dark tumult. In the foreground, at the centre of the composition, there is a group of figures which is placed on a vertical line with the sun (pl. 35). It consists of two soldiers (of the Salassians) massacring two apparently unarmed persons, one of them a woman – some of the Carthaginians’ captives. One of the soldiers seems to be currently distracted, has turned towards the army in the background, and touches his companion’s shoulder to make him take notice too. In his line of sight, much further in the distance, among the army, the outlines of a figure on an elephant are seen, flinging one hand in the air – supposedly “the chief” Hannibal, giving a signal for his troops. This way, the agency of the picture is deferred, as it were, to the

346 Quoted after B&J, p. 89.
348 Theresa M. Kelley agrees: “a barely discernible Hannibal, well below the summit and about to be engulfed by the approaching storm”, Theresa M. Kelley, Reinventing Allegory, Cambridge/NY,
background, and the golden section (slightly to the right of the dead/dying woman) is dynamically associated with the narrative evolving from the top to the bottom of the picture, and reaching into its depth through the gesturing general who is capturing attention. With the supposed hero out of focus, moreover, Turner deliberately prevents his audience’s identification with him. Instead, the lifeless body of one of the captives in the foreground is the one ‘facing’ the viewers. It is placed in a direct vertical line with Hannibal, hence visually associated with him. More than in the previously discussed composite works, the dynamics of *Snow Storm* thus imply a parallel between human and natural agency. Here, it is not only conveyed through the paratext, but also by the image alone: as not only the storm evolves, but also Hannibal and the Salassian soldiers act, the metaphorical meaning of darkness is paralleled with a cruelty implied in human (military) action. Destruction, here, is not resulting from uncontrollable forces whose precise nature remains open to interpretation, but clearly from the endeavours of war.

Turner’s likely sources for the subject, as Kathleen Nicholson has shown, tended to interpret Hannibal’s crossing of the Alps as a “hard-won victory.” However, Turner focused on a tragic moment: the compositional structure of the painting did not invite its viewers to contemplate on ‘hopes raised and frustrated’, as might be inferred from the epigraph of the painting, but to sympathise with those who are suffering the consequences of military action. The cyclical nature of

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349 Nicholson (1990), *Classical Landscapes*, pp. 97-103: the sources she names are Oliver Goldsmith’s *Roman History* (1769), of which Turner owned a copy, John Robert Cozens’ now lost painting of 1776 (see this chapter, n. 344), and Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. 

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‘rise and fall’ expressed in the epigraph, thus, furthermore, is contrasted with a
notion of finitude that lies beyond its rhetoric.350

A woman in a very similar pose to that of the dead woman in the
foreground of Snow Storm can be seen in Turner’s The Field of Waterloo (R.A.
1818, pl. 36 and 37). The picture shows the mourning wives who have come to
seek out their husbands among the dead and dying soldiers who are covering the
ground after the battle. The woman whose body is turned towards the audience
seems to be fainting: her right arm does not support the child which seems just to
have lost hold of her neck. This woman stands out, not just because she is placed
at the centre of the immediate foreground, closest to the viewer, but also because
she is the only one of the women who is not occupied by searching for someone.
As the woman right behind her is raising her arm with a torch, the formal
composition of the group resembles that of the foreground group in Snow Storm,
in which the soldier’s raised arm is placed in a similar proportional relation to the
dead woman. Both paintings implicitly refer to the same subject: Napoleon’s
endeavour to conquer the whole of Europe. The Field of Waterloo is pronouncedly
unpatriotic, as the painting renounces any allusions to (the British) victory.
Instead, the victims are in focus. Turner quoted Byron’s Childe Harolde’s
Pilgrimage, Canto III (1816), for the picture. In the chosen lines, the soldiers are
imagined in a non-heroic and meta-national context:


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“Last noon behold them full of lusty life;
Last eve in Beauty’s circle proudly gay;
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350 Turner later cited David’s portrait of Napoleon in the vignette Marengo for Samuel Rogers’
poem Italy (1830). Napoleon is depicted here in the same pose as on David’s portrait, yet he is
diminished in scale, with his troops in the background taking in most of the pictorial space. Sheila
Smith has suggested that Napoleon is shown deliberately as someone “indifferent to the
sufferings” of the soldiers which are emphasised in Rogers’ text. Sheila M. Smith, “Contemporary
Politics and the ‘Eternal World’ in Turner’s Undine and the Angel standing in the Sun”, Turner
Studies 6 (1986), pp. 40-50: 42. Theresa M. Kelley has emphasised the change in scale that is given
to Napoleon by Turner within the pictorial space: “The vignette quite literally puts Napoleon into
perspective by situating him in a recessional plane that includes the stonemarker in front of him,
the scene of battle behind him, and behind these the Alps, which further define the depth of field.”
Kelley (1997), Reinventing Allegory, p. 206. In his later illustrations for Walter Scott’s Life of
Napoleon, the small scale and the isolation are both prominent features of Turner’s depiction of
The midnight brought the signal—sound of strife;
The morn the marshalling of arms—the day,
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder clouds close o'er it, which when rent,
The earth is covered thick with other clay
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse—friend, foe, in one red burial blent!"\textsuperscript{351}

As the quoted lines apply not just to the Battle of Waterloo, but to any war, Turner’s painting gains allegorical potential. The focus of the picture defers from that of the appended text in a way similar to that of \textit{Snow Storm}: while the epigraph is about the soldiers’ sphere, the painting’s compositional structure guides the audience’s attention to the suffering of those who stand outside the military context. The shown suffering of the women, again, deflects from potential readings of the violence of war in terms of heroic endurance. Instead, it renders this violence as a tragic force evoking terror and – above all – pity with the women’s undeserved pain.\textsuperscript{352}

In a later painting which referenced \textit{The Fallacies of Hope}, Napoleon would again be introduced in this allegorical context. \textit{War. The exile and the rock limpet} (R.A. 1842, pl. 38) shows him as a lonely military leader on St. Helena. The appended verse reads:

\begin{quote}
“Ah! Thy tent-formed shell is like
A soldier’s nightly bivouac, alone
Amidst a sea of blood ------------------
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{352} Philip Shaw has pointed out that Turner’s decision to place the mourning women on the field of battle “was daringly radical”: the space, “at least in representations of war”, would normally have been reserved for “the exercise of masculine virtues of bravery, generosity, and endurance.” Philip Shaw, \textit{Suffering and Sentiment in Romantic Military Art}, Farnham/Burlington, VT, Ashgate 2013, p. 35.
but you can join your comrades.”

Napoleon is facing his own mirror image in the sea, but looking at the supposed rock limpet, positioned beneath this image of himself. The verse addresses the animal directly, which suggests that it represents Napoleon’s thoughts in the very situation. Napoleon thus seems to identify with the limpet’s situation, but envies it for the fact that, by contrast to himself, it ‘can join his comrades’. Compositionally, the picture alluded to Benjamin Robert Haydon’s *Napoleon Musing at St. Helena* (1831, comp. pl. 39), which shows the emperor from the back, standing on a cliff and looking out to the open sea. In Haydon’s painting, Napoleon throws a distinct shadow that is cut by the frame in the left foreground. In Turner’s picture, this notion of ‘prolonged’ appearance was picked up, it seems, with Napoleon’s reflection in the water that ‘doubles’ him completely – on the opposite side. Turner’s painting not only reverses the perspective of Haydon’s, but also ‘turns the ocean into a swamp’, as it were, and has the sun set behind Napoleon instead of showing him watch the sun rise, as in Haydon’s picture. While Haydon’s composition might have invited viewers to wonder about the content of the emperor’s ‘musings’, Turner’s work’s epigraph bluntly ‘reveals’ them. This logic of reversal goes further, as it encompasses the picture’s audiences, too. Haydon’s viewers watch Napoleon’s back – a position which is covered in Turner’s painting, too. Significantly, it is taken in by a guard: another soldier. Turner’s work thus seems to make a statement about the implied status of Haydon’s anticipated audience, suggesting that it shared the ‘military’ perspective that is subtly criticised by all the other reversals it puts into effect.

354 Comp. The Art-Union, 1 June 1842. The critic described the picture as follows: “Napoleon apostrophizing a rock limpet. An extravagant picture, in which there may be much meaning, but it does not appear.”
The sum of the reversals brings about a systematic reduction of the scales represented in Haydon’s picture, actual and metaphorical. This reduction finds its epitome, as it were, in Napoleon’s sight’s fixation upon the rock limpet, which starkly contrasts the width of his view in Haydon’s work.\textsuperscript{356} The replacement of the number one ‘sublime phenomenon’, the ocean, with a tiny and certainly not terror-evoking animal seems to be a conscious statement of the ‘anti-sublime’ here. Significantly, it goes along with an emphasis on Napoleon’s social isolation, expressed by his exile, and also his evoked envious musings upon the rock limpet’s ‘comrades’. The painting’s point is not, it seems, to ridicule the military leader by means of its reductions of ‘heroic scale’, but rather to indicate a lack of ‘private’ or female virtues (associated with the beautiful by Burke), manifested in social ties and sympathetic bonds with others. A sympathetic perspective of course would not naturally be taken by the soldier-observer whom Turner imagines for Haydon’s \textit{Napoleon Musing}: the sublime view, Turner’s work implies, counts on a receptive scheme that indirectly supports the anti-social values of war. The indication of Napoleon’s lack of company, on the other hand, not only exposes him as a social being, but also ‘reveals’ heroism as a construct that is (wrongly) abstracted from the social realm. While the soldier – like the audience of Haydon’s painting – might identify with the great man and his ambitions, those who view him ‘face to face’, Turner’s work suggests, might be able to recognise the actual proportions, pity him for his sad state – and possibly come to criticise the supposed ‘virtues’ of war.

\textbf{No hero of a hundred fights}

The critique of acknowledged heroism and emphasis on the suffering resulting from the ‘heroic’ ventures of war are both expressed, albeit in a much more intricate way, by Turner’s \textit{The hero of a hundred fights}, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1847 (pl. 40). The painting shows a dark, brownish industrial

\textsuperscript{356} Theresa M. Kelley has made an argument based on the scales represented in the picture by Napoleon, enlarged by his reflection, and the tiny limpet. These proportions, she states, constitute the allegorical structure of the picture: the “stilt-like reflection connects Napoleon to the rock limpet in the unrealist register of the painting, it suggests that both figures constitute Napoleon’s double image, colossal before his final exile and microscopic since.” Kelley (1997), \textit{Reinventing Allegory}, p. 212.
interior with a woman in the foreground, seated in front of a machine with huge cog wheels (presumably a tilt hammer\(^{357}\)). Vegetables are spread in the immediate foreground. The upper left centre of the painting is filled by a yellow and orange glow, in which the outlines of working people and, at its centre, an equestrian figure can be seen. This equestrian figure, to Turner’s contemporary audience, was recognisable as the statue of the Duke of Wellington that had been installed in London’s Hyde Park Corner in 1846 (comp. pl. 41). Turner’s appended text reads:

> An idea suggested by the German invocation upon casting the bell: in England called tapping the furnace. – *Fallacies of Hope.*\(^{358}\)

Although the epigraph does not explicitly refer to Schiller’s popular “Das Lied von der Glocke” (1799), it seems to have been associated with this ballad by the contemporary audience: “Had Schiller lived to see this picture he might have objected to one or two passages in it”, commented the *Art-Union*.\(^{359}\) The poem had been published as a part of Edward Bulwer Lytton’s translations in *The Poems and Ballads of Schiller*, which was the first edition claiming completeness in its transcription of this part of Schiller’s work. It had been discussed and reviewed widely in 1844.\(^{360}\) Schiller’s ballad relates the story of a (representative) male peasant going through stages of his life, from youthful wanderings to married life, to the loss of possessions through fire and the loss of the beloved wife. It praises the blessings of labour, and the peaceful harmony within the community which, it stresses in particular, should not be threatened by violent revolutionary action. All this is paralleled with the process of casting a bell, which in the end becomes a symbol of the ephemerality of all living things:

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357 A very similar one can be found in Turner’s Swans sketchbook (c. 1798, Finberg XLII).
358 *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, 1847: the seventy-ninth*, London, W. Clowes and sons 1847, No. 180. Tate Britain’s conservation record (and the picture’s frame) name the picture as “The Hero of a Hundred Fights or Tapping the Furnace”, thus rendering Turner’s epigraph into an (included) alternative title, or a supplementary description of what the subject of the picture was (and still is) presumed to be.
359 *The Art-Union*, June 1847, p. 190.
360 *The Morning Chronicle* printed two of Bulwer Lytton’s translations on March 28, 1844, but “The Lay of the Bell” was not among them. A second, revised edition of *The Poems and Ballads of Schiller* was printed in 1852.
Und wie der Klang im Ohr vergehet,
Der mächtig tönend ihr entschallt,
So lehre sie, dass nichts bestehet,
Daß alles Irdische verhallt.\(^{361}\)

In Bulwer Lytton’s translation:

So she may teach us, as her tone,
But now so mighty, melts away —
That earth no life which earth has known
From the last silence can delay \(^{362}\)

In the very last stanza, the bell is lifted up from the “Gruft”, the grave, into ‘heaven’. However, Schiller does not represent the bell’s sound as a transcendent force. Instead, he stresses that it is an object without a heart, devoid of sympathy, which as a stable entity accompanies the ever changing events of human life. Not only in this last image, but throughout its narrative course “The Lay of the Bell” intersects notions of endings and beginnings (the portrayed human life is significantly marked by endings such as the loss of youth, the loss of possession, and the loss of the wife, which are rhythmically interpolated by the description of the very tangible, ‘earthbound’ process of the casting) – a thematic focus which is obviously very close to Turner’s \textit{Fallacies of Hope}.\(^{363}\)

With ‘the invocation upon casting the bell’, Turner seems to have referred to the end of the ballad, which is written in the tone of an invocation. Schiller’s poem, and Bulwer Lytton’s translation respectively, do not end in pessimism, but


\(^{363}\) Comp. also Thomas Gisborne’s poem “Stanzas to a Church-Bell”, which Turner is also likely to have known. It is thematically close to Schiller’s ballad, and also bears strong relations with Turner’s motto of \textit{The Fallacies of Hope}. Gisborne (1813), \textit{Walks in a Forest}, p. 175.
rather with the very hopeful statement that the first time the new bell may ring should be to announce peace. With regard to Turner’s work’s reference to Wellington, this final expression of hope seems significant. Interestingly, Bulwer Lytton distanced himself – and his English readers – from the idea that the hoped-for peace should be a universal one: he provided an extensive footnote to the word “peace” (the very last word in his version), stressing the importance of contextualising the poem’s claim within German culture. The footnote starts by naming the poetic losses through translation, then illustrates the specific ‘Germanness’ of “The Song of the Bell”:

Much of its beauty must escape in translation [...] For that beauty which belongs to form – “the curiosa felicitas verborum” – is always untranslatable. [...] Though the life of Man is portrayed, it is the life of a German man. The wanderings, or apprenticeship, of the youth are not a familiar feature in our own civilisation; the bustling housewife is peculiarly German; so is the incident of the fire, a misfortune very common in parts of Germany, and which the sound of the church-bell proclaims. Thus that peculiar charm which belongs to the recognition of familiar and household images, in an ideal and poetic form, must be in a great measure lost to a foreigner. The thought, too, at the end – the prayer for Peace – is of a local and temporary nature. It breathed the wish of all Germany, during the four years’ war with France, and was, at the date of publication – like all temporary allusions – a strong and effective close, to become, after the interest of the allusion ceased, comparatively feeble and non-universal.364

In his epigraph, Turner, just like Bulwer Lytton, refers to the alterations of meaning in translation: “casting the bell – in England called tapping the furnace” seems to

364 Schiller/Bulwer Lytton (1844), The Poems and Ballads of Schiller, p. 70. Mary Favret has explained how, paradoxically, in Britain, war could be understood as a ‘service to peace’– meaning peace on English grounds – at the time, and that the want for peace could thus be transformed into a euphemistic reference to war. Bulwer Lytton seems to pick up on these positive associations of war. Mary Favret, “Coming Home: The Public Spaces of Romantic War”, Studies in Romanticism 33:4 (1994), pp. 539-548: 541.
be the explanation of either a specific process in casting which has a different name in German, or a German proverb, whose meaning is expressed differently in English. Neither of them is the case: ‘casting’ is the English term for describing the process as well and in neither of the languages do or did these proverbs exist apparently. By rendering an expression that is closer to Schiller’s title into one that is more prosaic and technical, and calling the latter definition ‘English’, Turner seems to be alluding to the process of translation itself. His epigraph was therefore not only a comment on the poem itself, but on the specific edition, which provided the extensive footnote on supposed ‘Germanness’. By inventing a proverbial or technical ‘translation’, Turner seems to indirectly ridicule Bulwer Lytton’s nationalistic rendering of the priority of peace.

Turner begun painting what would later become The hero of a hundred fights between 1800 and 1810. During these years he exhibited some genre pieces, and it seems likely that The hero was planned to be a genre piece in the manner of A country blacksmith disputing upon the price of iron, and the price


366 Turner probably would not have disagreed too much with Bulwer Lytton’s political orientation when he was an active politician, as he had stood in for libertarian interests as well as artistic freedom. Since 1841, however, Bulwer Lytton had retired from politics to continue his extremely productive and successful literary career. His political attitudes shifted towards conservatism (comp. Charles W. Snyder, Liberty and Morality. A Political Biography of Edward Bulwer-Lytton, NY, Peter Lang 1995, pp. 69-97). Moreover, Bulwer Lytton’s ex-wife published works which exposed his supposed neglect of his family – something which might have woken Turner’s interest. Bulwer Lytton was frequently attacked by critics for his patronising tendency when it came to his audiences’ understanding of his works, and also for the supposed simulation of intellectual depth by superficial means. In 1842, The Athenaeum, for example, complained that, in his writing, “obscurity passes for elevation of thought” (quoted after Andrew Brown, “Bulwer’s Reputation”, The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton, ed. by Allan Conrad Christensen, Newark, U of Delaware P 2004, pp. 29-37: 31) – a comment which Turner’s history paintings – had they been more popular at the time – might have received just as well. In May 1847, when Turner’s painting was exhibited, Bulwer Lytton’s most recent publication was the pamphlet A Word to the Public, written in response to the criticism he had received for his novel Lucretia, or, The Children of Night (1846). Bulwer Lytton thus was already involved in a direct dialogue with audiences at the time when Turner’s work sought to ‘expand’ it. A further investigation of their art’s (and personal) relations might produce fruitful insights into Turner’s (and possibly Bulwer Lytton’s) works. It is known that Turner owned a presentation copy of Bulwer Lytton’s King Arthur (the second edition of 1849).
charged to the butcher for shoeing his poney (R.A. 1807, pl. 42) and The unpaid bill, or the Dentist reproving his son’s prodigality (R.A. 1808, pl. 43). These genre paintings share a focus on communal and family life. In The hero of a hundred fights there is no such ‘genre scene’ included – the woman seated in the foreground is not part of a group, and not involved in the background action of the casting. Instead, her gaze addresses the viewer of the picture. Her ‘rustic appearance’, the interior, as well as the vegetables in the foreground, however, still allude to genre painting.\footnote{Turner’s composition seems to particularly resemble Rotterdam Stable interiors, which usually depicted peasant scenes in rather dark rooms (barns, stables or farm houses) with still life elements (Bob Haak, The Golden Age. Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century, London, Thames and Hudson 1984, pp. 407-415). Examples of these interior scenes hung in many art collections in early nineteenth-century London (comp. Frank Hermann, The English as Collectors: A Documentary Chrestomathy, London, Chatto and Windus 1972, p. 13; 239). Egbert van der Poel’s Lovers in a Barn (1648), Cornelis Saftleven’s Feeding the Chickens in a Cottage (1678) and Caspar Netscher’s Chaff with a Woman Spinning and a Young Boy (c. 1662-64) are exemplary stable interiors. Typical are scenes of domestic life with vegetables spread out on the floor. The division in two areas (either showing different scenes or one scene and a still life arrangement) is also a common feature of these paintings. Turner’s picture does not show the interior of a barn, but obviously cites many features of these stable interiors. His seated woman belongs to the context of this pictorial tradition as well.} The ‘genre’ scene is literally ‘broken’ by the presence of the statue: compositionally, as the casting seems to effect the blurring of the background which ‘isolates’ the woman from the rest of the scene, and generically, as it ‘imposes’ the ‘hero’ who would conventionally be introduced as the subject of a history painting, upon a ‘low life’ interior.

The Duke of Wellington – represented by the statue as the victor of Waterloo, thus a figure of war\footnote{The equestrian statue by Matthew Cotes Wyatt shows Wellington on his horse Copenhagen, which he had ridden at the Battle of Waterloo.} – metaphorically ‘destroys’ the idea of rustic peace that is central in genre painting, and also in Schiller’s ballad. By its allusions to genre painting, The hero of a hundred fights evokes a lively community scene, and subverts them effectively, introducing as the ‘disruptive element’ a military leader. The combination of the two ‘spheres’ of the hero and the (incomplete) social community, which were also juxtaposed in Turner’s Snow Storm: Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps, The Field of Waterloo, and War. The exile and the rock limpet, brings together those who suffer and those who cause the effects of war, and exposes the destructive powers of military conflict. The implied critique
was enforced by Turner’s epigraph, siding with Schiller’s praise of the community and universal peace.

Two ways to utopia: The Angel and Undine

At the Royal Academy exhibition of 1846, Turner exhibited two paired paintings which allegorised the spheres of the family and the military in particularly ‘dramatic’ ways. The Angel standing in the sun and Undine giving the ring to Massaniello, fisherman of Naples (pl. 44 and 46) associate the two spheres with two distinct models of society, and link them with a distinctly Christian worldview, as they indirectly associate the sentimental utopia with the realisation of God’s reign on earth.

To The Angel, Turner appended two quotations, one from Samuel Rogers’ Voyage of Columbus and another one from the Bible. The one from Rogers read:

“The morning march that flashes to the sun;
The feast of vultures when the day is done.”

Turner had illustrated Rogers’ Voyage of Columbus for an edition of the poem that was published in 1834. With his vignettes, as David E. Latané has argued, Turner tended to contrast the optimistic tendencies of the poem and “extract the latent discord” in it. In this, the vignettes resemble Turner’s earliest composite works, which stressed the latent ‘darkness’ in Thomson’s The Seasons and other texts (see chapters three and four). The quote for The Angel was taken from the beginning of Canto VI, in which the narrator reflects on his own role. In his personal copy of Rogers’ Poems, Turner had marked the respective passage. In context, it reads:

War and the Great in War let others sing,
Havoc and spoil, and tears and triumphing;
The morning-march that flashes to the sun,
The feast of vultures when the day is done;
And the strange tale of many slain for one!  \(^{372}\)

Transferred to the role of painting, this passage would be a refutation of traditional history painting in the civic humanist understanding, as it clearly rejects the representation of military heroes. Turner’s choice of lines emphasises the contrast between the hopeful army marching and the eventual assemblage of dead bodies, which he had depicted himself in *The Field of Waterloo*.  \(^{373}\) The second quote for *The Angel*, from *The Book of Revelations*, was altered by Turner in a way that matches Rogers’ message. This is it:

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

“That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, both free and bond, both small and great.”  "Revelation, XIX., 17, 18."  \(^{374}\)

\(^{372}\) Rogers (1816), *Poems*, p. 199. The 1834 edition, illustrated by Turner, was not available to me (the only copy, according to WorldCat, is at Huntington Library, US).  

\(^{373}\) Comp. Byron (2008), *The Major Works*, p. 112. The lines were taken from a passage in Rogers’ *Voyage of Columbus* headlined “The flight of an Angel of Darkness”. In a footnote of one of the editions illustrated by Turner, as Ursula Seibold has pointed out, this Angel (identified as Merion, a native God of America who wants to prevent Columbus’ landing and the spread of Christianity) is associated with Satan (Comp. Ursula Seibold, *Zum Verständnis des Lichts in der Malerei J.M.W. Turners*, Univ., Diss., Heidelberg 1987, p. 170). Since Turner’s painting’s title coincides with the beginning of his Bible-quote, however, the Angel depicted would have rather been identified as that of the Apocalypse.  

The last lines of the original passage in the King James Bible differ: among the flesh of those who are eaten by the birds is also enumerated “the flesh of all men.”\(^{375}\) By omitting it, as Sheila M. Smith has observed, Turner transformed the apocalyptic theme into a cruel feast upon the flesh exclusively of military men and of those in power.\(^{376}\)

Rogers’ Voyage of Columbus ends with a “Vision” presented by an angel who informs Columbus of the effects of his actions. While at first they will cause wars, in the long run, they will contribute to the Second Coming: “Untouched shall drop the fetters from the slave; And He shall rule the world he died to save!”\(^{377}\) Turner’s last vignette refers to this part of the poem. It combines two views, one of a ship in a storm, and another showing an angel seen from the back, in front of fighting armies (pl. 45). He has raised his arm, pointing, as the text suggests, towards a better future.\(^{378}\) The angel in Turner’s later oil painting repeats this gesture. However, while the one of the illustration holds a torch, Turner’s ‘Angel standing in the sun’ holds a sword, reminiscent of the prophecy given by the angel to Columbus in Rogers’ poem, which describes the near future: “not thine the olive, but the sword to bring, Not peace, but war!”\(^{379}\) While Rogers’ narrative ends on a positive note, in Turner’s Angel standing in the Sun the torch – symbol of hope – is replaced by the sword, helping to evoke the Last Judgement described by the Book of Revelation (which, however, is of course related to the Second Coming of Christ).\(^{380}\)

The figures shown beneath the angel in Turner’s painting are probably Adam and Eve, discovering the dead body of Abel, Delilah cutting Samson’s hair,

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377 Rogers (1816), Poems, p. 225.
378 The Angel of the vignette, as Smith has shown, might also refer to an earlier passage in the poem which describes how Columbus lets God’s angel lead his way. In his own copy, Turner marked the passage and added a sketch of an angel. Smith (1986), Contemporary Politics, p. 42.
379 Rogers (1816), Poems, p. 224.
380 Here my argument deviates from Smith’s who argues that due to their similarity, the positive note of the Rogers-vignette is doubled in The Angel standing in the Sun. Comp. Smith (1986), Contemporary Politics, p. 42.
and Judith with the beheaded Holofernes. The murder of Cain follows directly upon the description of the Fall in *Genesis*. Cain, who out of jealousy kills his brother, is according to the Bible the first murderer in human history – and also the forefather of all humanity. Augustine, in his *De Civitate Dei* (413-426), had famously associated the two brothers with two states (allegorised as cities) – one of human organisation, characterising the ‘fallen’ society founded by the surviving murderer, and the other under the rule of God, beyond the visible world. The argument would have been well-known at the time, and might have been of particular associative relevance for Turner, as the theme of fallen empires (Augustine was referring to Rome in particular) and fallen humanity was so important in his oeuvre. With the other figures in the painting Turner took up the theme of murder, too, and put it in the context of subsequent military conflict: both Judith and Delilah kill men who themselves killed thousands of people in their roles as military leaders. Not the motif of ‘false love’, as Gerald Finley has argued, but the motif of murder as a reigning principle (even to fight it) seems to be the main theme linking these motifs.

Charles F. Stuckey has suggested that the angel in Turner’s painting may bear a self-reference to the artist, as Turner had been enthusiastically described as “the great angel of the Apocalypse” who was sent by God in order “to reveal to men the mysteries of His universe” by Ruskin, and had been ridiculed in

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382 Comp. Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, vol. 4 of 7, ed. by T.E. Page et al. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard UP/London, Heinemann 1966, particularly book XV, pp. 410-5. (“Cain [...] belonged to the city of men; Abel was born later and belonged to the city of God. [...] – hence everyone, arising as he does from a condemned stock, is first inevitably evil [...] but if he starts to progress through rebirth in Christ, he will later be good and spiritual. The same thing is true of the entire human race.” (p. 413). In Augustine’s interpretation, God rejects Cain’s sacrifice because it was given as a ‘bribe’ to God, thus in self-interest, not as sacrifice (comp. Gerard O’Daly, *Augustine’s City of God. A Reader’s Guide*, Oxford UP 1999, p. 165). Thanks to Paul Hörenz for making me aware of this reference.

383 Comp. Finley (1979), Turner, the Apocalypse and History, esp. p. 688.
Since it was a reaction to a public debate, the supposed reference would have been recognised by part of Turner’s audience. It seems to suggest a ‘correction’ of Ruskin’s belief that Turner had come to reveal the mysteries of the (natural) universe. By showing the angel of the Apocalypse in his (actual) biblical role of punishing humanity for its sins and help reinstate God’s kingdom, Turner’s picture ‘re-located’ the figure in its original context. The Angel may be understood as a ‘correction’ of Ruskin and Eagles, but could moreover also be interpreted as an illustration of the educational mission which Turner’s art actually pursued. Turner’s angel, importantly, is not concerned with ‘truth’ in a perceptive or aesthetic sense, but with divine and moral action that is, in Turner’s specific version, particularly associated with the punishment of military men. The painting therefore could be read as a statement about Turner’s art’s pacifistic, moral ideal, which is constantly addressed to a ‘fallen’ world.

The Angel’s pendant painting, Undine giving the ring to Massaniello, fisherman of Naples (pl. 46), suggests a ‘counter-narrative’ to the vicious cycles of violence hinted at in The Angel standing in the sun. The theme of Undine would have been associated with (and was probably inspired by) Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué’s novella of the same name, and also with the ballet Ondine which was based on Fouqué’s tale. Both were immense successes at the time. The plot of the novella is as follows: Undine is a water sprite who has been raised by a fisherman and his wife. Her relatives replaced her with their actual child to enable Undine to marry a human and thereby gain a soul. The knight Hulbrand falls in

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385 The following interpretation is an alternative to that put forward by Finley and Seibold, who both associate Turner’s Undine with the principle of seduction and (Finley) ‘false love’. Comp. Seibold (1987), Zum Verständnis, p. 168; Finley (1979), Turner, the Apocalypse and History, p. 688.
386 George Soane was the first to translate the novella into English (his father, John Soane, was a friend of Turner’s) – his Undine, a Romance, was published in 1818 and much praised by critics. In 1825, George Soane also published a play about Massaniello which was staged with Edmund Kean as the protagonist (Massaniello, or the Fisherman of Naples). The ballet had been praised in particular for its beautiful stage sets and ‘poetical’ treatment of the subject matter. Comp. Jan Piggott, “Water, Fire and the Ring. Turner’s Undine giving the Ring to Masaniello”, Turner Society News 82 (1999), pp. 14-20: 15.
love and marries her, breaking his engagement with another woman, who later turns out to be the fisherman’s real daughter. Gaining a soul with their marriage, Undine becomes a morally impeccable creature. She and Huldbrand live together with Bertalda, the fisherman’s real daughter, and the knight’s affections for her grow again, while Undine is increasingly distrusted and construed as an ‘outsider’ figure because she is still in contact with the spirit world (mainly to protect the others, who are punished by her relatives whenever they have been unkind to Undine). When Huldbrand one day insults Undine, she is ‘called back’ by the spirits and dissolves into water. Huldbrand knows that, according to the spirits’ law, he is supposed to die if unfaithful to Undine, but marries Bertalda nevertheless. Undine is hence forced by ‘her world’ to kill him: the book ends with her sadly ‘kissing him to death’.

The novella’s plot is much more complex than the ballet by Cesare Pugni and Jules Perrot which was based on the tale. In it, Undine is portrayed as a child-like seducer who tries – and is eventually successful in – winning the love of a fisherman, Matteo, who is supposed to marry the next day. The ballet ends with the two human lovers being reunited, and Ondine returning to the sea. While Fouqué’s Undine becomes an exemplary Christian character to whose virtue the others cannot live up, Perrot’s and Pugni’s apparently remained an ‘evil’ seducer who seeks to prevent the Christian marriage and life of Matteo. In Turner’s Undine, the two seem to come together, as it picks up the mermaid’s name from Fouqué’s tale (in the ballet, she is called “Ondine”), and depicts her giving a ring to

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387 The female figure in the right foreground of Turner’s painting, who is holding a mirror, might be an allusion to Fouqué’s Bertalda, who refuses to close the fountain (as Undine advises: it endangers Bertalda’s and Huldbrand’s safety) because the water is good for her skin. In contrast to Undine, she is introduced as someone much interested in ‘earthly’ beauty. The scene on the Danube, in whose course Undine dissolves into water, stresses this aspect of her character, too: the reason for Huldbrand’s insult is that she loses a golden necklace whose mirror image she admired in the water (Huldbrand accuses Undine of conspiring with her relatives, who took it).


a fisherman, whose name Massaniello resonates with the ballet’s Matteo.\textsuperscript{389} This association, however, is ‘overwritten’ by another one.

Massania\textumlaut{o}llo would primarily have been identified as the neapolitanian revolutionary. His life was portrayed in the opera \textit{La muette de Portici} by D.F.E. Auber, which was popular on London stages at the time, too.\textsuperscript{390} It presented its main character as an exemplary Christian who, being against the mindless violence emerging in the course of the dynamics of the revolution, protects his king and queen from the angry people. The king attacks the rebels, and Masaniello (poisoned) is driven to lead them against him, before he is eventually killed by his own companions.\textsuperscript{391} Masaniello’s story was told in Sidney Morgan’s \textit{Life and Times of Salvator Rosa} (1824). Here, too, he was described as an exemplary character and leader with “almost superhuman abilities and capabilities”\textsuperscript{392} which he invests disinterestedly for the public good. He seeks to achieve the end of a famine through a non-violent revolution that would put an end to the high taxes on food.\textsuperscript{393} When the nobility starts spinning intrigues against him, the cause of the revolution as well as his life seem endangered. Morgan has him say to the people:

\begin{quote}
As soon as the nets I have cast shall bring that liberty to shore, for which I have so long fished in troubled waters, you shall behold me in my old garb
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{389} 1845, as Wallace observes, was the first year in which the two were performed in one season. Comp. Wallace (1979), Circular, Octogonal and Square Paintings, p. 114. The action is an interesting reversal of the Venetian tradition of the Doge marrying the sea, in whose course the Doge would throw a ring into the sea (Turner started working on a picture of the subject, which he left unfinished (\textit{B&J}, no. 501)).

\textsuperscript{390} Like Perrot’s and Pugni’s \textit{Ondine}, the opera was cherished particularly for its stage settings and beautiful effects. Comp. Piggott (1999), Water, Fire and the Ring, p. 18-19. The opera’s tragic ending was marked by an on-stage-eruption of Vesuvius, presented also in Turner’s painting.

\textsuperscript{391} Comp. Smith (1986), Contemporary Politics, pp. 43-4. Smith suggests that Turner alluded to the several rebellious movements of Naples and Italy more generally with the reference (comp. pp. 44-5).


\textsuperscript{393} Morgan (1824), \textit{Life and Times of Salvator Rosa}, pp. 372-405. The book amalgamates the states of the arts and politics and introduces Rosa – a Napolitanian like Masaniello – as a political figure fighting for liberty with Masaniello. Since the historical Masaniello started his rebellion in protest of food taxes, Turner’s painting could also imply a reference to the maintaining of the Corn Laws despite the famine in Ireland. Morgan in her Rosa-biography (in 1824) herself draws a parallel between the misery of the people of Naples and “unhappy Ireland” (p. 365).
and calling, demanding of you, my people, nothing, save that at my last hour, you will each and all say an Ave Maria for my soul’s peace.\(^{394}\)

Fouqué’s Undine and Auber’s Masaniello resemble each other in their ‘superhuman’ moral integrity and devotion to the good, and in being finally destroyed by their own companions/ally.\(^{395}\) Turner’s picture, then, by showing how (instead of liberty), Mas(s)aniello ‘catches’ Undine, and her offering of a ring, most probably to marry him, could have suggested an imaginary union between two figures that both epitomise the non-violent Christian ideal. Their marriage would possibly avert the fate which both fall victims to, and thus provide a glimpse of a world in which a happy ending still seems possible. *Undine giving the ring to Massaniello, fisherman of Naples* would, in this reading, suggest the founding of a society (significantly rendered as the founding of a family) which contrasts the existing one. The end of this existing society, allegedly descended directly from a biblical murderer, is also evoked in *The Angel standing in the sun*. Both paintings, thus, depict the initiation of utopian states: one realised by humans, the other by God.

**Peace**

*Undine* was not the only allegorical companion piece introducing a counter-narrative to war and violence in association with a Christian ideal. Together with *War – the exile and the rock limpet*, Turner had exhibited *Peace – burial at sea* (R.A. 1842, pl. 47), a work which picks up the central role of the artist in society that had also been stressed by Turner’s ‘bardic’ paintings around 1800 (see chapter five). The picture shows two ships in the half distance whose black strongly contrasts the blue sky and sea. At the centre is a vertical light axis,

\(^{394}\) Morgan (1824), *Life and Times of Salvator Rosa*, pp. 398-399.

\(^{395}\) Wallace, referring to the opera alone, has called Masaniello’s representation “savior-like”, and his circumstances of death, she writes, in particular “bring to mind Christ’s career on earth.” Her overall interpretation of the painting, however, differs from mine, as she argues that “Turner joined Undine and Masaniello as personifications of hopeless expectations and wrecked aspirations in an allegory concerned with what he perceived as the Christian myth of eternal life.” Wallace (1979), *Circular, Octogonal and Square Paintings*, p. 114 and 115.
expanding from the very centre of the composition. Through Peace’s pairing with War, this light would naturally have contrasted the setting sun at the centre of its companion piece. The burial depicted here was by Turner’s contemporaries recognised as that of his former colleague David Wilkie, as the ship’s name was legible as “Oriental”, on which he had died. Wilkie had travelled to the Middle East in order to paint the locations of the New Testament from on-the-spot observations to achieve ‘historical’ (topographical and cultural) accuracy. His plan was to start a ‘reformation’ in religious painting, which, to his mind, needed a detachment from the Catholic pictorial tradition: a “Martin Luther in painting” was what he thought was needed. However, as Wilkie died in its course, the journey resulted in no finished paintings. Napoleon had died on St. Helena in 1821, but his body was brought to Paris only in 1840 – both War and Peace thus reflected on the ways in which recently buried public figures had ended their lives. While Wilkie’s journey had been motivated by his conviction that art was serving Protestantism, and could indeed have evangelical effects, Napoleon’s stay on St. Helena was the result of his effort to build an empire. Coupling the pictures implicitly suggested that Wilkie’s endeavour had been the exact opposite to Napoleon’s. However, as much as the painting’s names evoke states of a society,

396 Comp. B&J, p. 248 and 249 (no. 399 and 400). The sea burial had been described by the press in terms of visual spectacle. The Examiner, for example, wrote that a “grander, a more beautiful, a more appropriate spot, could not have been selected for the mournful scene.” The Examiner, 13 June 1841. The Morning Post described the burial as “most solemn and impressive” (11 June 1841, p. 5), R. R. Haydon, in his obituary, called the burial “romantic” and poetically asked his readers “What Briton/ ‘Whose march is on the mountain wave/ And home is on the deep, ----’/ Would not glory in life at the anticipation of such an entombment?” The Morning Chronicle, 14 June 1841. Both War and Peace were mostly dismissed by the press for their perceived lack of formal finishing and supposed lack of meaning. 397 This endeavour, however, was relativised by Wilkie himself during his travels, when he noticed the clash between local customs and the iconographic tradition. See Jo Briggs, “‘A Martin Luther in Painting’: Sir David Wilkie’s Unfinished Christ before Pilate”, Visual Culture in Britain 12:1 (2011), pp. 33-56: 45. 398 A fact which led to the relative neglect of the significance of this journey in art historical research (as opposed to the extensive study of Holman Hunt’s later, similar endeavour). Comp. Briggs (2011), ‘A Martin Luther in Painting’, pp. 33-4. Some of Wilkie’s pictures were exhibited at a memorial exhibition at the British Institution in September 1842. 399 The setting sun Turner had often used to mark the idea of decline. Comp., apart from War. The exile and the rock limpet, for example the appended text for The Decline of the Carthaginian Empire [...] (R.A. 1817), which associates “th’ensanguin’d sun” with the picture’s theme, as well as The Fighting Termeraire, tugged to her last berth to be broken up, 1838 (R.A. 1839).
due to their attribution to *The Fallacies of Hope*, they would probably have been applied primarily to the two individuals ‘portrayed’ by Turner: while both failed in their missions, Wilkie could go in peace, and Napoleon, supposedly, remained at ‘war’ with himself. While *War* implies critique, *Peace* could have been understood as a salute of one artist to another, and possibly as a hint at their shared ethical mission.

The year before, Turner had exhibited *Glaucus and Scylla – Ovid’s Metamorphoses* (pl. 49) together with *Dawn of Christianity (Flight into Egypt)* (pl. 48), which anticipated the colour contrast of *War* and *Peace*: the first is dominated by red and yellow, the latter by white and blue. While the red tone and setting sun of *Glaucus and Scylla* are associated with the sad fate of Scylla, as described in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (she is turned into a monster by a woman who is jealous of her), the blue colour and rising sun in *Dawn of Christianity*, as well as the star above Christ, were identifiable as signs of Christianity. The appended quote, from Gisborne’s *Walks in a Forest*, supported the title’s attribution: “That star has risen”. In the poem, this is a metaphor for Christ. More obviously than in *War* and *Peace*, the colour contrast of the paintings is here tied to the contrast of the destructive powers of ambition and the salvational effect of Christianity. The latter is associated with white light, as was commonly done in theoretical contexts at the time – the white light also marking the central axis in *Peace – burial at sea*. The indirect association of Wilkie with Christ calls to mind Turner’s vision of the artist as prophet. In the linking of the two with the ideal of peace, Turner’s artistic

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400 Marcia Briggs Wallace has suggested that the paintings could also be understood as an ironic comment on the differences between Wilkie’s and Napoleon’s burials: while many people regretted not having been able to pay Wilkie last respects, Napoleon had been given a state burial in Paris. Comp. Wallace (1979) *Circular, Octogonal and Square Paintings*, pp. 112-3.


403 Comp. Gisborne (1813), *Walks in a Forest*, pp. 4-5.

404 Turner was apparently a Christian. However, there are no statements preserved by him other than his works that would testify to his religious beliefs more specifically. Comp. Cecilia Powell, “The Sun is God – or is it? J.M.W. Turner and Christianity”, *Turner Society News* 116 (2011), pp. 20-26.
mission, as it had been expressed in his self-referential works around 1800 (discussed in chapter five), found another artistic expression.

**Regulus**

*Regulus* (pl. 50) is probably the most famous among Turner’s paintings which promote anti-heroism. It was exhibited in 1829 in Rome, reworked and exhibited again at the British Institution in 1837. Atilius Regulus was a Roman military leader who was kept as a prisoner by the Carthaginians and, after some years in confinement, sent home to negotiate peace with his countrymen. When the Romans asked him for his own opinion on the matter, he held a passionate speech in support of the war. Instead of staying in Rome, he kept his promise to the Carthaginians and returned, expecting his sure death. Turner’s picture was later engraved under the title *Ancient Carthage – the Embarkation of Regulus* (pl. 51), however, the exhibited oil painting lacks an indication of the setting which is shown: did Turner depict Regulus departing from Rome or from Carthage, or his arrival in any of the places? Two famous precedents of the subject, paintings by Richard Wilson (1752, pl. 52) and Benjamin West (1769, pl. 53) had both been called *The Departure of Regulus*, thus resembling Turner’s in the vagueness regarding the reference to place. Both paintings, however, would have been identified as depictions of Regulus’ departure from his home country, as the presence of pleading men and women indicates. The later engraving’s title of the painting by Turner, too, suggests that the scene would have been identified as Regulus’ leaving of his home country to go back to Carthage and meet his death.

The classical sources for the story differ regarding the means by which they suppose Regulus was killed by the Carthaginians. Turner owned a copy of Oliver Goldsmith’s *Roman History*, which described Regulus’ death as follows:

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405 Ursula Seibold has suggested that the symbolical colour contrast could have been modelled on a passage in Shee’s *Elements of Art* (Canto 9, l. 257-66, comp. Seibold (1987), *Zum Verständnis*, pp. 134-5). On the association of lead white with the divine by some theorists comp. Seibold p. 161, and also Wallace (1979), *Circular, Octogonal, and Square Paintings*, pp. 111-113.

406 Comp. Nicholson on the matter, who concludes that the vagueness was intended by Turner in order to invite his viewers to speculate. Nicholson (1990), *Classical Landscapes*, p. 111 ff.

407 The book was annotated by Turner, so he read at least parts of it.
Nothing could equal the fury and the disappointment of the Carthaginians, when they were informed by their ambassadors, of Regulus, instead of hastening a peace, having given his opinion for continuing the war. First, his eyelids were cut off, and then he was remanded to prison. He was, afterwards some days brought out and exposed with his face opposite the burning sun. At last, when malice was fatigued with studying all the arts of torture, he was put in a barrel stuck full of nails that pointed inwards, and in this painful position he continued till he died.\textsuperscript{408}

The accounts of Regulus’ death are particularly relevant as Turner’s picture shows two of the means of torture that are described in the sources: in the left corner we see several men holding a barrel and, more strikingly, the whole composition is bathed in sunlight. John Gage has famously suggested that Turner omitted the figure of the hero from the picture and thus deliberately put the viewers in his place to confront the sunlight in its full power.\textsuperscript{409} There is, however, one figure that stands out in the composition which might therefore be associated with Regulus: right in front of the barrel on the left we see a man who is isolated from the group of men behind him, and all other groups in the painting. He is turned towards the crowd that is gathered along the shoreline and seems to be cheering at it. If this figure was identified as Regulus, Turner’s painting would have drawn a strong contrast with Salvator Rosa’s \textit{Death of Atilius Regulus} (c. 1652, pl. 54). The oil painting and respective etching show a motionless Regulus lying in a barrel

\textsuperscript{408} Oliver Goldsmith, \textit{Roman History, from the Foundation of the City of Rome, to the Destruction of the Western Empire}, vol. 1 of 2. Abridged for the use of Schools, J. Williams, 1781, p. 158. Turner owned and annotated a copy of a 1786 edition.

\textsuperscript{409} Comp. Gage (1969), \textit{Colour in Turner}, p. 143. This has become the most ‘authoritative’ interpretation (yet Gage does not explicitly say that the viewer ‘becomes’ Regulus, he just states that he is not depicted). See also Gage (1987), \textit{A Wonderful Range of Mind}, pp. 226-8. See Nicholson (1990), \textit{Classical Landscapes}, p. 139, n. 51, for an overview of subsequent alternative interpretations. Gage’s suggestion was contested, for example, by Andrew Wilton, who identified a peculiarly dressed figure in the background as Regulus. Eric Shanes has agreed with Wilton, but has also cast attention towards the group with the barrel in the foreground, stating that the man in the foreground’s gesture “suggests the act of seizure which will later befall Regulus”. Gage (1969), \textit{Colour in Turner}, p. 143; Shanes (1990), \textit{Human Landscape}, p. 135.
while nails are hammered into it. The lid with several nails in it pointing towards the Carthaginian’s head, is about to be closed. The cheering protagonist would radically invert this constellation as not only is he the most energetically moving figure of the composition, but also has a hammer in his own hand.

On the right side of the composition there are several groups of women with their children to be seen. The woman who is closest to the viewer looks directly towards the cheering man on the left. Eric Shanes has observed that she, unlike the groups around her, strikes a huge shadow towards the viewer. This woman, who is protecting her child from the sun, starkly contrasts the women with children frequently depicted in Claude’s seaport views, such as *Port de mer au soleil couchant* (1639, pl. 55 and 56), *Port de mer, effet de brume* (1646, pl. 57 and 58) and *Port de mer avec la villa Médicis* (1637, pl. 59), which is the supposed model for the painting, as Turner sketched it during his visit to the Uffizi in 1819. In these Claudean seaports, particularly *Port de mer au soleil couchant*, the women are turned towards the sun, and their children are mostly characterised by their lively gesturing (comp. pl. 56 and 58). *The Spectator* noted in a review of Turner’s picture that it, though similar in style, overall seemed to be the reverse of Claude’s pictures: “instead of the repose of beauty – the soft serenity of mellow light of an Italian scene – here all is glare, turbulence, and uneasiness.” This remark on the general composition would also work as a description just of Turner’s women in the foreground, whose children are holding on to them anxiously. The internal movements of the scene generally reflect such anti-Claudean ‘uneasiness’, but these groups in the foreground particularly channel a reverse of the joyful turns towards the harmonious sunsets articulated by the woman-and-child groups in Claude’s pictures.

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411 Shanes (1990), *Human Landscape*, p. 135.
412 ‘Rome and Florence’ sketchbook (CXCI-60), see B&J, p. 173.
413 *Spectator*, February 11, see B&J, p. 173.
In Goldsmith’s *Roman History* the efforts of the Romans to keep Regulus at home and thus save him from his death are described with a particular stress on his refusal to see his family before his departure:

It was in vain that the senate and all his dearest friends entreated his stay, he still repressed their solicitations. Marcia his wife, with her little children, filled the city with her lamentations, and vainly entreated to be permitted to see him; he still obstinately persisted in keeping his promise, and though he was sufficiently apprized of the tortures that awaited his return, without embracing his family, or taking leave of his friends, he departed with the ambassadors for Carthage.\(^{415}\)

It was precisely Regulus’ waiving of the opportunity of a final encounter with his wife and children which Turner himself had made a topic in a poem which he drafted in 1811.\(^{416}\) By emphasising the two ‘parties’ in the foreground, Turner’s painting may have staged a confrontation of the supposed hero with his family, which implies the contrasting of oppositional principles: Regulus’ absolute patriotism and heroic stoicism versus the family ties or domestic love that we see enacted by the women with their children to the right. The fact that Regulus – just like the men who were employed to fix the nails in the barrel that would torture him to death – holds a hammer in his hand, bluntly seems to suggest that the hero is responsible for his own death. Iconographically, *Regulus* thus draws a counter-vision to West’s and Wilson’s renderings of the Roman hero as a dignified man who bravely resists the temptation to stay with his family. The sunlight in which the whole composition is bathed, apart from making the viewer partake in Regulus’ fate, in its all-encompassing quality might also indicate that it is not

\(^{415}\) Goldsmith (1781), *Roman History*, p. 158.

\(^{416}\) This was part of Turner’s long ‘Southern Coast’ poem in the Devonshire Coast No.1 sketchbook, TB CXXIII, p. 90a. Transcription in Wilton (1990), *Painting and Poetry*, p. 170 ff: “But his firm soul did not the Romans lower/ Not wife or children dear or self could hold/ A Moments parley love made him bold/ Love of his country for not aught beside/ He loved but for that love he died” (p. 172). The passage follows a longer reflective part on hope and love (both of country and people), understood as futile endeavours.
Regulus alone who is suffering from his decision, but that it has effects far surpassing the narrative accounts fitted for heroic biography. By ‘blinding’ his audience and thus evoking Regulus’ torture as part of the aesthetic experience, Turner’s painting makes its viewers participate in the narrative, especially in its moral dimensions. Based on this inclusion of the viewer into the painful experience, Martha Nussbaum has suggested that the viewer’s “belief in his own completeness” is refuted here.\(^{417}\) This implied message is particularly significant because it refers to the ultimate aesthetic issue regarding tragedy, decided by authors along the lines of either sentimental (sympathetic) identification or (more often) admiration of the stoic endurance of pain at the time. ‘Blinding’ its observers, *Regulus* implicitly ‘forces’ upon them the notion of pain which it could not inspire by offering a suffering hero, who would be associated with ‘the sublime’ instead of the sentimental. The suffering, significantly, is expressed by the women in the picture, and counteracted by the figure who seems to be Regulus. While the supposed hero seems to parody any idea of pain or death by his pose of triumph, these women, shielding the eyes of their children, and also Turner’s audience, become the emotional bearers of the consequences of the ‘heroic’ act – they, too, this seems to suppose, would suffer from the wars which are driven by the heroic ambitions of a few.

The paintings discussed in this chapter share an anti-heroic rhetoric. Often in puzzling ways, they guided their audiences towards the ideal of the happy community, associated with the happy family, and strongly criticised military action. Any supposed heroes – as in *War* and *Regulus* – are rendered pitiable or ridiculous. The only avenging ‘hero’ (who of course is no hero) is seen in *The Angel standing in the sun*, which, significantly, evokes the Last Judgement. Turner’s works allowed their audiences to pity, but not to admire, as they conveyed a criticism both of the ideal and the aesthetics of heroism. Violence and war, all the works communicate, do not allow for ‘meaningful’ suffering, since the actions

involved in it cause more of it than could be compensated by any virtue of endurance.

The denial of representations of heroism, significantly, goes along with the subversion of established iconographic codes that were traditionally aligned with the promotion of heroic virtue. Turner’s compositions grant particular presence to the suffering emanating from its principles: by placing suffering women at the centre of battlefields (as in *Snow Storm* and *The Field of Waterloo*), by evoking irreconcilable disruptions to families and peace caused by a ‘hero of a hundred fights’, and finally, in *Regulus*, by marking the all-pervasive sunlight as a means of torture that causes the undeserved suffering of civilians, including – by extension – Turner’s own exhibition audiences.
7. Display and virtue: Turner’s Venice as an ethical testing realm for the British

War was a reality in Britain during much of Turner’s lifetime. As I have shown in previous chapters, the glorification of war was criticised by many of his works. Against it, they promoted sentimental and Christian virtues. This chapter discusses a body of Turner’s work which criticised another reality of his culture: the logic of the market and the alleged merit of display. Venice, I am going to argue, served as a topos onto which the perceived realities of Turner’s own society could be projected. The modes of critique employed in his Venice-works again also engage with the conventions of art, and with those of art consumption. Art, too, was produced according to the logic of its market, and the implied critiques often concerned Turner’s very immediate public in their role as judges of painting. Some of the Venice pictures employed cunning devices to confuse – or, rather, mislead – their audiences, whose very admiration of any ‘superficial’ effects they sought to ridicule. These paintings, as those broadly concerned with war and peace, worked with binary principles, as they juxtaposed ‘wrong’ with ‘right’, both associated with the conditions and aesthetic habits according to which they were perceived.

Countering Canaletto

At the time when Turner exhibited his first views of Venice at the Royal Academy, Canaletto’s paintings remained the key point of reference for painters and critics in evaluating artistic visualisations of the city (comp. pl. 60). Some painters, like William Etty and Clarkson Stanfield, had developed their own renderings of Venice that differed from this tradition, but it was only Turner who produced views of the city that seemed incommensurable with, or even opposed to, Canaletto’s style. While one of his earliest exhibited oil paintings of a Venetian view, Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom-House, Venice: Canaletti painting (R.A. 1833, pl. 61),

419 Turner’s works also contributed to the general increase of Venice-subjects shown the Royal Academy: while Venetian views had become a common element at the exhibitions of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, they “remained surprisingly rare at the Royal Academy until the second half of the nineteenth century”, as Stainton observes. Stainton (1985), Turner’s Venice, p. 20.
referred to Canaletto both literally and pictorially,\textsuperscript{420} Turner had distanced himself from the visual tradition already with his early watercolours of Venice, produced in 1819, when he first visited the city.\textsuperscript{421} 

\textit{Bridge of Sighs, Ducal Palace and Custom-House, Venice: Canaletto painting} shows a painter at work who, due to the painting’s title, would have been identified as Canaletto himself. By integrating Canaletto as a figure, the picture introduced a reference to him that was altogether different from the more common, stylistic, references: it took in a ‘meta-perspective’, as it were, depicting the very production of the common Venice-view as a historical incident.

Turner’s other exhibited oil paintings of Venice decidedly moved away further from the Canaletto tradition, showing a version of Venice that seemed altogether new. “No previous artist”, as Lindsay Stainton observes, “had attempted to paint the effect of Venetian buildings veiled in mist or partly dissolved by the glare of sunlight, or seen from a distance at sunrise or sunset”.\textsuperscript{422} In literature, however, there were precedents, for example in Radcliffe’s \textit{The Mysteries of Udolpho}, which ascribed particular meaning to the twilight view of Venice, and thus may serve here as a contrast with Turner’s art’s readings of it. Significantly, the description of the protagonist’s first visual impressions of the city performs a transformation from ‘Canaletto’s Venice’, i.e. a Venice of clear outlines, as it were, to a blurred Venice which ignites the melancholic imagination (comp. chapter two, pp. 71-73). It begins: “Nothing could exceed Emily’s admiration on her first view of Venice, with its islets, palaces, and towers rising out of the sea, whose clear surface reflected the tremulous picture in all its colours” (\textit{MoU} 174).\textsuperscript{423} The enumerative style and evocation of a ‘clear picture’ of the city which is reflected in the sea indicate the undiminished detail in which it is

\textsuperscript{420} Ian Warrell has suggested that Turner’s main motivation in quoting Canaletto was his wish to compete with artists who were producing Venetian views at his time. Comp. Warrell (2009), Painters Painted, pp. 179-80. See also B&J, pp. 200/1.

\textsuperscript{421} For information on Turner’s travels to Venice and detailed information about the Venetian views he produced in sketches, watercolour and oil, see Stainton (1985), \textit{Turner’s Venice}.

\textsuperscript{422} Stainton (1985), \textit{Turner’s Venice}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{423} Radcliffe herself modelled her rendering of Venice much on Thrale Piozzi’s \textit{Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany}, 2 vols. (London 1789). Comp. Terry Castle’s notes, \textit{MoU} 684.
seen – a hallmark of Canaletto’s style. The view changes as “the melancholy purple of evening” covers the city “like a thin veil”. Venice is now “wrapped” in a “beautiful [...] tranquillity”, which inspires Emily to shed “tears of admiration and sublime devotion” (MoU 175). The effect is heightened when a female voice is raised which seems to capture the emotional suggestiveness of the scene. Eventually, this becomes a moment of ‘spiritual concord’ reminiscent of Emily’s soul-to-soul connection with her absent lover Valancourt (comp. chapter two, pp. 73-75):

They now distinguished a female voice [...] singing a soft and mournful air; and its fine expression, as sometimes it seemed pleading with the impassioned tenderness of love, and then languishing into the cadence of hopeless grief, declared, that it flowed from no feigned sensibility. Ah! Thought Emily, as she sighed and remembered Valancourt, those strains come from the heart! (MoU 175)

After Emily’s emotions have been stirred in this way, the view of the city again enters her mind: “She looked round, with anxious enquiry; the deep twilight [...] that had fallen over the scene, admitted only imperfect images to the eye” (MoU 175). Canaletto’s Venice has thus been transformed into a Venice that in its vagueness seems close to Turner’s late depictions of the city, and also to his own invocations of the historical tone, “that doubtful gleam of light that throws half an Image on the aching sight” (comp. chapter one, pp. 17-18). The transformation to that tone, for Radcliffe’s Emily, goes along with the potential for greater meaning and emotional suggestiveness, as it alludes to the nostalgic teleology idealised in the novel, which is tied to a moral ideal (see chapter two, pp. 69-77). For Turner, as I am going to argue, the vague views of Venice were not associated with the

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424 To make the train of associations complete, Emily succinctly also remembers her father and quotes some lines which she associates with his presence, as well as the connection with the deceased: “Oft I hear/ Upon the silence of the midnight air,/ Celestial voices swell in holy chorus/ That bears the soul to heaven!” (MoU 175).
'historical tone' he had praised, but with an aesthetic trend that was clearly rejected in the paratextually guided meanings of his other Venice-works.

Just one composite work by Turner had London as its subject: View of London from Greenwich (Turner’s gallery 1809, pl. 62). Interestingly, it evoked the city in a way not dissimilar to Turner’s later depictions of Venice: it is seen through a “murky veil”, as the appended lines indicate. However, this haziness is not caused by the dawn of evening, but by the effects of London’s daily life. Turner wrote the appended text himself:

Where burthen’d Thames reflects the crowded sail,
Commercial care and busy toils prevail,
Whose murky veil, aspiring to the skies,
Obscures thy beauty, and thy form denies,
Save where thy spires pierce the doubtful air,
As gleams of hope amidst a world of care.  

Turner’s vantage point, with the Greenwich Hospital for naval veterans in view, would have been associated with national pride at the time – it therefore seems particularly striking that Turner with his verses refracts the view from the peaceful overall impression of his painting. Where Radcliffe has her heroine, inspired by the twilight view of Venice, raise her eyes that are “filled with tears of admiration and sublime devotion […] over the sleeping world to the vast heavens” (MoU 175), Turner has his audience contemplate the clarity of sight granted to the spires which “pierce the doubtful air” as “gleams of hope”, juxtaposed with the “world of care” beneath. The dustiness obscuring his hometown is thus negatively

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425 Quoted after Finberg (1961), The Life of J.M.W. Turner, p. 471. A copy of the exhibition catalogue was not available for study to me.
426 Comp. John Bonehill/Stephen Daniels, “Projecting London: Turner and Greenwich”, Oxford Art Journal 35:2 (2012), pp. 171-194: 171. This article focuses on Turner’s later drawing View of London from Greenwich (1825), which is particularly rich in historical, cultural and political references, and with its “spectrum of acts of observation, from vain theatricality to more virtuous absorption” (p. 191) seems very close both in its rhetoric and message to some of the Venice-paintings discussed in this chapter.
associated with commercial business, and the doubts and cares of its inhabitants, while beauty is related to a clear view.

The ‘fallen empire’

Turner’s views of Venice form the main thematically homogenous body of works in the last two decades of his life, and have often been discussed in isolation from his other work. As Leo Costello has observed, these Venice paintings in particular were often related to a supposed ‘modernist’ agenda or anticipatory role of Turner’s with regard to later artistic movements such as Impressionism. One reason for this may be their seeming lack of narrative references. As Costello has shown, not only later critics, but also Turner’s contemporary reviewers appreciated this supposed lack of referentiality, as the references in many of Turner’s other exhibits at the time were both overly apparent and overly confusing. The Venice-views were praised as showing the city in its ‘natural’ beauty, and rendering nicely the atmospheric effects that were perceived as unique to the former city-state. However, some of these seemingly ‘narrative-free’ paintings were associated with Turner’s Fallacies of Hope: at the R.A. annual exhibition of 1845, four of his views of the city – Venice, evening, going to the ball and Morning, returning from the ball, St. Martino, Venice – noon (pl. 63), and Venice – sunset, a fisher (pl. 64) – were shown with the annex “MS. Fallacies of Hope” and no further appended texts or references, suggesting that their hazy views of the city could be associated with something other than ‘naturalism’. How and why The Fallacies of Hope applied, I seek to understand by analysing some

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427 Turner’s view was shared by continental visitors of London at the time, who saw it as a kind of ‘modern-day Babylon’. However, the judgement was by many relativised, as A.D. Potts has argued: seen in its details, many perceived chaos and ugliness, but through the fog, seen as a whole, it was judged generally, by contrast to Turner’s view, as aesthetically pleasing. Comp. A. D. Potts, “British Romantic Art through German Eyes”, “Sind Briten hier?” Relations between British and Continental Art 1680-1880, ed. by Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in München, Munich, Fink 1981, pp. 181-205:185.

other Venice-subjects by Turner which through their intricate references drew clearer horizons of meaning.

Leo Costello has stated that the evidence regarding the significance of Venice as subject matter for Turner personally is “not entirely straightforward”. The artist spent comparatively little time visiting the city, and did not seem too fond of his own Venice-views, as after he had sold *Venice, Bridge of Sighs* (R.A. 1840, pl. 65) for a relatively high amount of money, he raised the prices for other views of the city, commenting to a colleague: “if they will have such scraps instead of important pictures, they must pay for them.” While Costello argues that Venice was nevertheless of great significance to Turner, I will argue that the ‘insignificance’ he apparently ascribed to it was reflected in his art’s evocations of the city’s meaning. Precisely the cynical view regarding the market which is expressed in his comment became a component of the narratives he spun in his works, which thereby gained the capacity for serving as meta-comments both on commerce and on the ethical state of his own nation, as well as on the more immediate context of the Royal Academy exhibitions.

With Gage and later commentators like Costello, I argue that the discursive framework that is the most likely to have been associated with this negative view of Venice at Turner’s time is that of the rise and fall of empires. Due to its (former) mercantile and naval power as well as the notion of liberty that its constitution was associated with, Venice had habitually been compared to Britain in the eighteenth century. The liberty it once stood for had of course been lost with Napoleonic occupation. As a result of the Peace of Campo Forno between Austria and Napoleon (1797) it became Austrian first, then part of Napoleon’s Kingdom of Italy (1805-1814), then a province of Austria again: Venice was by many seen as an empire that had ‘fallen’. William Wordsworth, for example, in his poem “On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic”, had addressed the city as “the

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eldest Child of Liberty” that was to be mourned now by all men. Venice had also been renowned for its ethnical diversity and the wealth it openly displayed, moreover for the corruption of its politics and the ‘voluptuousness’ associated with its carnival, which then lasted for six months of the year – two supposed characteristics which were thought to have contributed to its ‘decline’. A common suggestion was that Venice’s eventual ‘fall’ in 1797, when it was taken over by Napoleon’s troops, had been the result of a much longer process of degeneration which went along with moral laxity and an over-indulgence in the luxury that resulted from the city’s wealth.

Venice’s ‘loss of liberty’ had altered the perception of the city by British travellers, who still visited it as an obligatory stop on their updated versions of the ‘Grand Tour’. John Chetwode Eustace, writing after 1797, purposefully countered the descriptions of the architectural splendour of the city which had been a standardised part of earlier travel literature. In his Classical Tour through Italy (1802) he wrote:

[WH]y enlarge on the beauty, on the magnificence, on the glories of Venice? or, why describe its palaces, its monuments? That Liberty which raised these pompous edifices in a swampy marsh, and opened such scenes of grandeur in the middle of a pool, is now no more! That bold independence which filled a few lonely islands, the abode of sea-mews and of cormorants, with population and with commerce, is bowed into slavery; and the republic of Venice, with all its bright series of triumphs, is now an

433 From then on, the unique Venetian traditions, most notably the marriage of the Doge to the sea, which had been celebrated annually as a symbolic assertion of Venetian power, were carried on for the sake of tradition – and for the tourists.
435 See, for example, Johann Georg Keyssler, Travels through Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, and Lorrain. Giving a true and just description of the present state of those [...], vol. 4, London 1760; Monsieur de Blainville, Travels through Holland, Germany, Switzerland, but especially Italy: by the late Monsieur de Blainville [...], vol. 3 of 3, London 1757; Gilbert Burnet, Burnet’s travels: or, a collection of letters to the Hon. Robert Boyle, Esq; containing an account of what seem’d most remarkable in travelling [...], London 1737.
empty name. The City, with all its walls and towers, and streets, still remains; but the spirit that animated the mass is fled. *Jacet ingens littore truncus*. [“A huge trunk lies at the beach”; Virgil, *Aeneid*, II, 557]  

Turner owned and annotated a copy of Eustace’s text. Given the stress on liberty in his own works, it can be assumed that the artist’s fascination with Venice, too, was related to its recent loss of this political characteristic, and that passages like the quoted one resonated with his interest. In Eustace’s view, as in that of many others, Venice itself was partly responsible for its end as a republic. The decline of its power in the eighteenth century was clearly associated, he thought, with the over-luxuriant lifestyle of its nobility (a notion which, by the way, had also been used by Napoleon to legitimise his claim of power over the city). Eustace summarises:

Luxury had corrupted every mind, and unbraced every sinew. Pleasure had long been the only object of pursuit; the idol to which the indolent Venetians sacrificed their life, their fortune, their talents. […] To accompany their chosen ladies, to while-away the night at their casinos, and to slumber away the day in their palaces, was their usual, their favourite employment. Hence Venice, for so many ages the seat of independence, of commerce, of wisdom, and of enterprise, gradually sunk from her eminence, and at length became the foul abode of effeminacy, of wantonness, and of debauchery.

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436 John Chetwode Eustace, *A Classical Tour through Italy*, I, p. 177. Quoted after Manfred Pfister (ed.): *The Fatal Gift of Beauty*, p. 343 (the translation of the Virgil-quote is also a part of the source).

437 Comp. Gerald Finley, *Angel in the Sun: Turner’s Vision of History*, Montreal, McGill-Queen’s UP 1998, p. 32. Turner’s copy, like the rest of Turner’s preserved books, has not been available for study to me.


During Turner’s lifetime, Venice was an obvious metaphor for what might become of Britain in a political sense, but could also be used as an image for the supposed decay of its moral values. It was evoked as a kind of modern-day Babylon as it seemed to represent the very opposite of the utopia of an ideal Christian – and sentimental – society.

In the late eighteenth century Venice had been a popular setting for literary texts that made relations between a rational agenda and the loss of moral integrity their topic. Where rational thinking was divided from emotional ‘truth’ – the two elements that were brought together by the conjoining notion of ‘sentiment’ in the sense in which Turner used it – decline, these works suggested, was inevitable. Schiller, an author who we know Turner was interested in later in his career (see chapter six, pp. 156-162), negotiated the link in his The Ghost-Seer (translated into English in 1795). Thematically, the novella focuses on the conflicts between temptation and virtue, reason and illusion. In the first part of the novel, its protagonist, a prince of ‘natural virtue’, is taken in by a traitor who fakes supernatural incidences. His initial fascination with these powers is overcome through his rationality when he finally analyses and sees through the trick that was played to him – and made him see a ghost where there was none. In the second part of the novel, which is open-ended, the Prince becomes a member of one of Venice’s secret societies with very liberal statutes. This society, as one of the narrator-voices (a character from the Prince’s entourage) relates, “behind the outward appearance of a noble and rational freedom of thought, fomented the most unrestrained licentiousness of opinions and morals.”

Under the society’s influence, the prince becomes a scholar of modern-day theories based on rational thought and starts to indulge in Venice’s notorious lifestyle of pleasure until he is financially ruined. It becomes obvious to the reader that, again, someone is acting out an intrigue on the prince, but this time one that apparently is not detectable through the mere ‘power of reason’: it seems to require a commitment to virtue and sentiment. The theme of deception ‘in the name of reason’ charts the limits of Enlightenment thought just after the necessity of it has been established in the

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first part of the novella. Sentimentalism, promoting the combination of rational thought and sympathetic insight, is indirectly construed as an ideal and antipode to the ‘degenerate state’ of the mind that finds its supposed ‘natural home’ in Venice – a view which, I will argue, was also conveyed by Turner’s art.

Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1604) uses Venice as a drawback for a story of deception, too. Given his frequent references to Shakespeare and his plays’ presence on London stages at the time, Turner probably knew the play. The city is introduced in it as a place which seems exceptional both regarding the liberties it grants its citizens (enabling Othello, a foreigner, to occupy a high position in the military) and concerning the corruption that springs from its people’s want of money and power (as represented by Iago). The factual ‘conditions’ of Venice are, however, just the preliminary of the action not only in a geographical (only the first act is set there) but also in a figural sense – in the course of the action, it becomes the metaphorical membrane onto which Othello’s fantasies are projected by Iago:

> Look to your wife. Observe her well with Cassio.
> Wear your eyes thus: not jealous, nor secure.
> I would not have your free and noble nature
> Out of self-bounty be abused. Look to ‘t.
> I know our country disposition well.
> In Venice they do let God see the pranks
> They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
> Is not to leave’t undone, but keep’t unknown.\(^{442}\)

Venice here serves as an effective metaphor for the ‘condition’ of the human mind at its worst, which takes the deception of others and the ‘masquing’ of the evil self as fact (Iago himself of course being the prime example of this behaviour): it is introduced as an image for the person who paradigmatically follows his/her own

interests. The tragic outcome of the play, as is well-known, results from the acceptance of this understanding of human nature. In this and other literary evocations, Venice’s Fall is the analogue of humanity’s fall, as it becomes the setting for ethical voids, thriving in the supposed height of cultural development. It is Turner’s works’ backdrop for delivering lessons about the particular threats to virtue caused by a culture which attributes merit to mere display and exists by the rules of the trade.

**Fatal trade: Turner juxtaposing Britain and Venice**

In 1834, with two paired paintings, Turner would himself suggest a direct comparison of Britain and Venice, picking up on both states’ mercantile endeavours. *Venice* (pl. 66), presenting a view of the city-state with traders in the foreground, he coupled with an English view which shows a group of people busy in pulling a wrecked boat to the shore, off a stormy sea.\(^4\) In the background, the latter, called *Wreckers – coast of Northumberland, with a steam-boat assisting a ship off shore* (pl. 67), shows a castle which resembles Dunstanborough Castle.\(^5\) In 1798, it had been associated with a turn towards a metaphorical darkness by an early composite work of Turner’s (comp. chapter three, pp. 93-94). *Wreckers* depicts the destructive results of a storm at sea, which had also been evoked by the earlier picture. In conjunction with *Venice*, it was likely to inspire interpretations involving the decline of a naval empire which, like Venice, relied on trade for its wealth.

A year later, *Venice* was given an alternative companion piece called *Keelmen heaving in coals by night* (R.A. 1835, pl. 68). It was possibly produced specifically for the collection of Henry McConnell.\(^6\) The pairing of these two paintings drew a more intricate contrast between the Venetian and the British settings, which is manifested stylistically, too. The later picture shows an

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atmospheric coal industry-working environment in Britain. Its figures are all obscured and appear merely as black shapes against the fires of the worksite and the moonlight. The figures of *Venice*, by contrast, are clearly delineated. Interestingly, thus, in this particular pair of pictures, Turner did not show Venice obscured in mist as he did so often. Instead, the English coast is obscured, literally by the effects of “[c]ommercial care and busy toils” which produce the misty, “doubtful air” that had been associated with London in the appended verses of Turner’s earlier *View of London from Greenwich* (pl. 62).

Significantly, a majority of the figures in *Venice* are directly looking at the imagined viewers of the picture. At the very centre of the composition a gondola is placed, seen from the back, and with its door opened, so that it is possible to look inside. The gondolier is looking out at the audience, as if inviting them to be the next passengers. The shape of his open gondola’s compartment is repeated at the left side of the picture as the shape of a mirror, which a woman holds up, it seems, to the viewers, herself fixating them with her gaze. Not only these, but many of the other figures, too, are looking out at the picture’s observers: the whole scene seems to be a staging of a direct address, as it were, which has put the life on the canal on hold for a moment. The pictures’ ‘reaching out to the viewers’ suggests that the Venetian scene implied a reflection of Turner’s audience, and that it could be imagined as an extension of the exhibition space – or the whole of Britain.

If wealthy and supposedly decadent Venice ‘reflected’ the state of Britain, what was Turner’s *Keelmen* supposed to add to the meaning? Butlin and Joll have argued that “*Keelmen* may [...] have been intended by Turner to stand as a warning to Britain that she must strive to maintain both her naval supremacy and her industrial expansion lest she, too, suffer the same fate as Venice”.

I suggest that, on the contrary, with *Keelmen* Turner probably sought to criticise the conditions of industrial expansion. Given his earlier association of labour and cares

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446 McConnell, a Manchester textile manufacturer, may have suggested to Turner that he should paint a pair of pictures contrasting the sunlit indolence of Venice with the smoke and bustling activity, carried on by night, of the industrial north of England”, hypothesise B&J (pp. 210-11).

with obscurity, the painting might also have suggested to his audience that the nation’s wealth comes at the price of the ‘obscured labour’, toil and cares of those who had no share in it. As a matter of fact, the keelmen of Newcastle-upon-Tyne had been in the news because of the inhuman amount of working hours that was expected of them. They had been on strike for ten weeks in 1822, but problems seem to have been unresolved still in 1832. Instead of praising British advancements in trade or warning Britain of ‘Venetian indolence’, it seems possible that Turner, as later with his *Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying – Typhon coming on* (R.A. 1840, pl. 69), was actually criticising the inhuman effects of the trade.

Turner had long before privately expressed his critical view of the universal ‘commercial goal’ on which, as many people argued, even the arts should depend in a state. In a long note included in his annotations to Shee’s *Elements of Art*, he wrote that “art is commercial only by diffusing its ornament to civilise, amend and inspire; to promote and regulate the aspiring mind to exert and maintain the dignity of art”. In his annotation, above all, he criticised the fact that connoisseurs and patrons of the arts were given the right to judge over it, and could thus lead young artists astray with their dilettantish ideas. The difference between a real encourager of the arts and a patron of this sort, for Turner, lay in their attitude towards art and artists: “Friendly respect for mutual talents would be the promoters of merit, if not the encourager; the friend not the patron.” The patron’s praise, he argued, encouraged a self-love of the artist that reflected the conceit of the patron, and this was fundamentally opposed to the more magnanimous and universally beneficial goals of art. Turner was aware that his ideal of a friendship between artist and patron was rather rare: “it is natural that there should be more dictators than encouragers, more critics than students,

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448 *The Times*, March 16, 1832.
449 See Costello (2012), *Turner and the Subject of History*, pp. 203-232, which includes discussions of previous literature on the painting.
450 EA (III), p. 33-4. In this his views were aligned with those of Reynolds (comp. *D* (I), p. 1).
451 EA (III), p. 34.
more amateurs than artists”. The ‘patronising’ relationship was common, and sentimental art rare. Commerce to Turner’s mind was closely tied to this detrimental way of promoting the arts. In one of his poems he asked:

Can commerce so engross her only thought
That Taste like Lead by weights, not thought be bought

From this early point in his career, Turner’s criticism of commerce’s power over the arts went together with a general criticism of a culture whose values are based on commercial principles. It is in his later paintings, particularly the ones involving Venice, in which this criticism would particularly manifest itself.

**Politics of display: The Merchant of Venice**

The text most frequently quoted for Turner’s Venetian subjects is Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* (1605). Turner’s first recorded reference to the drama was drawn in one of his lectures given at the Royal Academy, possibly as early as 1811 (this is the year of the first lecture given, but relying on the manuscript only, it is impossible to be certain that Turner did not add this section at a later time). He drew the audience’s attention to “Shakespeare’s beautiful ballad that fancy, when established, dies”, most probably alluding to the song that is sung in the play while Bassanio chooses a casket, which he hopes will be the key to the wealthy wife (and life) he fancies:

**[ONE FROM PORTIA’S TRAIN]**

Tell me where is fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head?
How begot, how nourishèd?

[ALL] Reply, reply.

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452 EA (III), p. 34.
453 EA (III), p. 35 (see also p. 43 n. 21).
454 Turner, lecture manuscript MS 46 151 N, p. 24.
The song had been given several musical sets in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and was frequently performed outside the context of the play. “Tell me where is fancy bred” was in fact one of the most popular glee s of the time, so Turner’s reference would not necessarily have been associated with Shakespeare’s play. Since the lecture does not refer to the play more specifically, the fact that Turner mentioned the song does not necessarily suggest that he knew Shakespeare’s play well at this point. However, the casket-scene in which the song is sung was ascribed particular significance through Turner’s next public reference to The Merchant of Venice: his first exhibited Venice-subject, Jessica (R.A. 1830, pl. 70).

In Shakespeare’s play, “Tell me, where is fancy bred” is sung in Portia’s interest, who wants Bassanio to choose the right casket and marry her. It is about the deceptiveness and transience of desire in general, but the scene, and the purpose for which it is sung, define that desire more specifically as the desire

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456 Comp. Brian Robins, Catch and Glee Culture in Eighteenth-Century England, Woodbridge/Rochester, NY, Boydell P 2006, p. 147. Among the composers were Thomas Arne, R.J.S. Stevens, and Matthew King.
457 Turner uses the song to describe a passage in Thomson’s The Seasons regarding its particular ‘literary’ qualities, i.e. the associative effects which a painter would not achieve in his medium. “[T]he kindling azure” in the passage, he argues, “resembles Shakespeare’s beautiful ballad that fancy, when established, dies.” (MS N, p. 24) – the reference therefore underlines poetry’s ability to suggest ephemeral phenomena in nature. Shanes is probably right to assume that Turner defines fancy as ‘imagination’, as which it is also used in Langhorne’s Visions of Fancy, for example (comp. Shanes (1990), Human Landscape, p. 28).
458 There are three caskets, one made of gold, one of silver, and a third one of brass – the brass being, as it turns out when Bassanio chooses it, the key to marriage.
for physical beauty. The concrete ‘object’ that is ‘meant’ by the caskets is twofold – Portia as body and Portia as the bearer of her father’s wealth. The metaphorical use of the small casket, or jewel-box, signifying both precious possessions and female chastity, was common also in iconographic contexts, as Marcia Pointon has shown. By associating the leaden casket with his daughter’s hand, Portia’s father seeks to subvert this supposed co-relation of display and content – the one choosing it would prove that he can resist physical (or material) attraction to seek intrinsic values instead. Bassanio understands and elaborates on the idea:

So may the outward shows be least themselves.
The world is still deceived with ornament.
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt
But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
What damned error but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
[...] Thus ornament is but the guilèd shore
To a most dangerous sea, [...]  
[...] in a word,
The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest. (Aloud) Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee. (MoV 467, 3.2, l. 73-80; 97-102)

Interestingly, and not coincidentally, Bassanio picks up two of the central discourses which partake in the main conflict in Shakespeare’s play: law and  

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459 Comp. Marcia Pointon, Brilliant Effects. A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery, New Haven, Yale UP 2009, chapter three (pp. 67-105). The metaphor was still current in paintings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Pointon demonstrates. She also discusses Jessica, yet does not relate the painting to the casket-scene in Shakespeare’s play, as she excludes the textual reference and context from her analysis. However, Turner’s Two Women with a Letter is discussed. In The Loretto Necklace and Rome from the Vatican, Pointon shows, jewels are associated with sexuality (in the first, they are also linked with ‘catholic decadence’). See Pointon (2009), Brilliant Effects, pp. 266-82; pp. 285-6.
religion. Both can be manipulative, Bassanio explains here, by making sound or look good what is ethically wrong. ‘Ornament’, be it material or figurative, is not to be trusted, he concludes, and thus chooses the leaden casket.

Significantly, Bassanio and Antonio are themselves associated with such ‘ornaments’: Bassanio, of course, because his aim is to marry Portia for her wealth and beauty. Antonio, we learn, does not act like a Christian and love his neighbour, but rather uses Christianity as a ‘label’ while cultivating a hatred of Jews and keeping slaves – thus inspiring Shylock to suggest his cruel contract. A plea “tainted with a gracious voice” is uttered in court when Portia finally saves Antonio from fulfilling the contract, i.e. from having his flesh cut out. The idea of deception through ornament, which is Bassanio’s key to material wealth, is thus itself treated here as an ornament, not as an ethical principle. This is significant with regard to Turner’s works, as they focused particularly on the association of display with the lack of virtue.

Turner’s first epigraph inspired by The Merchant of Venice was introduced at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1830, with his oil painting Jessica. This is also the first Venetian subject to be exhibited by Turner – three years before he showed his first view of the city itself to the public. Significantly, 1830 is also the year in which campaigning for Jewish Emancipation was taken up in Britain. Turner’s epigraph for Jessica reads:

460 Comp. MoV, p. 458 (1.3, l. 105-140). In the court scene, when Shylock is asked for mercy, he argues that his contract’s cruelty does not differ from the merchants’ ownership and treatment of slaves: “You have among you many a purchased slave/ Which [...] [y]ou use in abject and in slavish parts/ Because you bought them. Shall I say to you/ ‘Let them be free, marry them to your heirs.” Comp. MoV, p. 472 (4.1, l. 89-93)) – A statement which must have been associated at Turner’s time with the abolitionist cause.

461 The picture has been interpreted primarily within more strictly art historical contexts. See, for example, Michael Kitson, “Turner and Rembrandt”, Turner Studies 8:1 (1988), pp. 2-18: 12-4.

462 It is not included in the list of pictures with a ‘Venetian subject’ in Stainton’s Turner’s Venice, neither is it discussed in the book, as it focuses on Venice as a geographical subject. A.J. Finberg, in his earlier publication In Venice with Turner (London, Cotswold Gallery 1930), and also Leo Costello’s Venice-chapter in Turner and the Subject of History follow the same idea. Ian Warrell discusses it mostly in view of comparable literary scenes that were exhibited at the time (Stainton (1985), Turner’s Venice, pp. 70-1).

463 Petitions were presented early in the year, and the bill was discussed in Parliament many times subsequently. The Duke of Wellington was one of the bill’s well-known opponents. Jewish Emancipation was finally realised in 1858.
“Shylock – Jessica, shut the window, I say.”

*Merchant of Venice.*

The picture clearly refers to act 2, scene 5, when Shylock admonishes his daughter to shut all doors and windows of the house in order to keep her away from Christian men:

What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica,
Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum
And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife,
Clamber not you up to the casements then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street
To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces,
But stop my house’s ears – I mean my casements.
Let not the sound of shallow fopp’ry enter
My sober house. (*MoV* 462 - 2.5, l. 28-36)

While Shylock is saying this, Jessica is already, in fact at the same time, planning to escape his house that very night and marry the Christian Lorenzo. She will escape through one of the windows. The picture shows her looking out of a window in broad daylight, presenting not only herself, but also her father’s wealth, displayed by her jewellery. Pointon has noted that this jewellery was probably “far surpassing anything Turner is likely to have seen (unless on the stage)” — Turner’s Jessica thus in a way personifies the (slightly theatrical) golden surface that not only Portia’s father, but also Shylock do not want the world to see. The ‘golden’ background of the portrait in fact seems to allude to the golden casket explicitly. Pointon’s added remark, that the theatre was the only place where Turner is likely to have seen such a glamorous display of dress and jewellery, seems interesting because it was exactly the “theatrical pomp and parade of dress

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and attitude” which Reynolds had identified in his *Discourses* as belonging to the theatre’s proper mode of expression, 466 which, he argued, should by no means be ‘transplanted’ to the art of painting, as its quality depended on timelessness – also expressed by the simplicity of dress and style. 467 Turner’s *Jessica* thus deviated decidedly from what was understood to be a ‘proper’ representation in portraiture – and did so, I suggest, in order to mobilise the metaphorical contexts of Shakespeare’s play for his own work’s implied meaning.

With her non-spiritual ‘halo’ of a hat, the mask-like face and “jewel-encrusted” body, 468 Jessica embodies her father’s wealth and ignites ‘material’ temptation. 469 As the window literally fills all of the canvas, the picture clearly also takes the theme of exhibition to a meta-level, associatively turning its audience into those “Christian fools with varnish’d faces” who Shylock despises (and who also, eventually, effect his tragic end). At this meta-referential level, with its implied critique of vanity, the picture could have been understood as a commentary on the overwhelming amount of portraiture which adorned the Royal Academy’s walls at the annual exhibitions – testifying, as many supposed at the time, to their patrons’ self-adoration. 470 Turner’s *Jessica* – the only portrait ever exhibited by Turner – seems to have used the genre as a vehicle to criticise precisely the ‘superficial’ ideals which supposedly caused its outnumbering presence at the annual exhibitions – the same (false) ideals which, in the *Merchant of Venice*, are criticised as ‘ornament’. The art market’s ideals, Turner’s work

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466 D (XIII), p. 240.  
469 Pointon states that Turner doubled the materiality of his subject in his painting technique, as he applied thick impasto to create a tangible surface structure (comp. Pointon (2009), *Brilliant Effects*, p. 291). Turner is believed to have painted the picture in order to prove that a yellow background could be employed effectively not only in landscapes, but in subject pictures as well (comp. *B&J* 186).  
470 Comp., for example, Marcia Pointon, “Portrait! Portrait!! Portrait!!!”, *Art on the Line. The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780-1836*, ed. by David Solkin, London/New Haven, Yale UP, 2001, pp. 93-109. Turner, as expressed in earlier private notes, did not share a general criticism of the genre, but claimed that, as in any other genre, there are painters who pursue with it a general truth and those who use it as a medium of ‘mere imitation’ (Comp. EA (III), p. 35 (transcription) and p. 37 (Venning’s comment)). The criticism conveyed through *Jessica* was thus most probably not aimed at a class of painting or painters, but at a specific mode of art appreciation and consumption.
suggests, are not concerned with moral improvement, but with the effective
disguise of moral decay. Turner’s first Venice-subject thus implied an intricate
connection of references both to the immediate literary context of Shakespeare’s
play and to the commercial space in which his picture could be seen. As luxury and
moral decline were generally linked to Venice’s supposed ‘cultural decline’, it
seems particularly significant that Turner introduced the setting in this way.

The second of Turner’s paintings which referred to The Merchant of Venice
was The Grand Canal, Venice, whose title was in some of the exhibition catalogues
given as Scene – a street in Venice (R.A. 1837, pl. 71).\textsuperscript{471} It shows the canal filled
with busy traders, and also includes representations of the play’s protagonists,
Shylock and Antonio. The modes of representation of Shylock’s character on the
stage had been a particularly contested issue in previous years. Turner’s painting,
as will be seen, specifically drew on these debates to convey another harsh
critique of the ethical parameters associated with aesthetic consumption. In 1817,
William Hazlitt described the common depictions of Shylock on the stages of his
time as follows:

a decrepit old man, bent with age and ugly with mental deformity, grinning
with deadly malice, with the venom of his heart congealed in the
expression of his countenance, sullen, morose, gloomy, inflexible, brooding
over one idea, that of his hatred, and fixed on one unalterable purpose,
that of his revenge.\textsuperscript{472}

This is what Hazlitt expected when he went to see a staging of the play with
Edmund Kean in the role of Shylock (first performed at Drury Lane in 1814\textsuperscript{473}). But

\begin{footnotes}
\item[471] Comp. B&J, p. 219 (no. 368).
\item[473] On 26 January. Hazlitt’s review of Kean’s impersonation was his breakthrough as a critic, and
the public interest it triggered saved the theatre from financial ruin. In his review, he particularly
stresses that Shakespeare never makes explicit that Shylock is an old man. In this, he seems to have
been responding to a critic of the Morning Post, who had criticised that Kean’s was a “too active”
Shylock and that he apparently “forgot the age of the inveterate Jew” (Morning Post, 27 January
\end{footnotes}
to his own surprise, he got something very different – a Shylock who was a deeply ambiguous figure: “[S]o rooted was our habitual impression of the part from seeing it caricatured in the representation”, wrote Hazlitt, “that it was only from a careful perusal of the play itself that we saw our error.” In line with (Shakespeare and) Kean’s interpretation of the character, in his Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays, Hazlitt presented Shylock as “A good hater, ‘a man no less sinned against than sinning’”.

He seems the depositary of the vengeance of his race; and though the long habit of brooding over daily insults and injuries has crusted over his temper with inveterate misanthropy, and hardened him against the contempt of mankind, this adds but little to the triumphant pretensions of his enemies. There is a strong, quick, and deep sense of justice mixed up with the gall and bitterness of resentment. The constant apprehension of being burnt alive, plundered, banished, reviled, and trampled on, might be supposed to sour the most forebearing nature, and to take something from that ‘milk of human kindness’, with which his persecutors contemplated his indignities. The desire of revenge is almost inseparable from the sense of wrong; and we can hardly help sympathising with the proud spirit.

The character of Shylock, to some degree, had been in need of reinvention in 1814, as the most popular among his performers were gone: George Cooke had died, and John Philip Kemble had left London. Kean introduced a whole new, sympathetic interpretation of the character. But this did not mean that the iconic earlier impersonations were forgotten. In 1815, for example, a staging of The

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1814). The same newspaper (probably the same critic) subscribed to the image of the ‘bad Jew’ embodied by Shylock. In a review of another actor’s Shylock just a month before (which did not receive any praise) a “brooding malignity” was taken as a definite attribute of the character, and a “ferocious grin and savage muttering growl” named as “sure cards in a character of this description” (The Morning Post, 30 December 1813).

474 Hazlitt (1838), Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays, p. 255.
475 Hazlitt (1838), Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays, p. 248.
477 The Morning Post, 30 December 1813.
Merchant of Venice was advertised with the information that Shylock will be played by a “Gentleman who will perform the part in exact imitation of the late admired George Cooke”.478 The ‘two types of Shylock’ would also feature in Turner’s painting of 1837.

The Grand Canal, Venice was accompanied by the following lines, evoking a dialogue between Shylock and Antonio:

“Antonio. Hear me yet, good Shylock.
Shylock. I’ll have my bond.”

Merchant of Venice, Act III, Sc. 3.479

The lines draw the viewer’s particular attention to a group of figures in the immediate foreground of the picture (pl. 72). On the right side we see the back of a man who seems to be talking to another man in front of him – a figure that in its peculiarity very much coincides with Hazlitt’s description of the ‘common Shylock’ on stage, resembling a buffoon. He seems to have turned away from what is presumably Antonio, apparently ending the conversation with a gesture. The supposed scene of a conversation, however, turns out to be just a coincidental concatenation of figures as soon as one realises that the conversation which Antonio is engaged in must actually take place between him and the man leaning out of a window, slightly above the other two men’s heads – as opposed to the ‘buffoon’ figure, this man is evidently engaged in a conversation himself, and presents a script to Antonio: this must be Shylock. Similar to Turner’s Snow Storm and The Field of Waterloo discussed in the previous chapter, The Grand Canal thus, through the visual composition’s rhetoric, subverted the expectations drawn from its appended text. By contrast to these paintings, however, it also offered an alternative ‘misleading’ visual narrative matching the appended lines. Kean’s Shylock would have been pointed out as the ‘right’ version only to those who were

478 The Morning Post, 25 February 1815.
prepared to engage with the painting beyond the conventions which Turner himself purposefully invoked.\(^{480}\)

Turner’s visual ‘trap’ seems to have worked, since *Blackwood’s Magazine*’s critic readily identified the ‘buffoon’-figure as Shylock:

In this picture there is really one exact portrait and doubtless it was studied. His Shylock, an undoubted portrait of Punch, the common Street Punch; and there he is at the side of the picture as looking out of his box, with his very lean and his jointless arms holding the scales, while Antonio’s fate “like a clipt guinea, trembles in the scales”.\(^{481}\)

Wilton’s suggestion, that Turner’s figures were supposed to be expressive rather than ideal on purpose,\(^{482}\) rings true for this ‘mock-Shylock’ in a special way, as he was employed to ‘hold up a mirror’ to the observer’s prejudiced view.

Another interesting feature of the painting is the monk who stands opposite the group, looking towards it (pl. 73). Following his view, one actually arrives at the ‘false’ Shylock, who is even turned towards the monk and could be believed to be talking to him. When this figure is identified as a ‘visual trap’, the scene changes significantly: The monk, seemingly begging for mercy regarding the cruel conditions of the bond, with the ‘trap-Shylock’ ignored, seems to be addressing Antonio. The object of the monk’s begging for mercy, accordingly, would not be Shylock’s contract, but, by anticipation, Antonio’s own behaviour, which contrasts with Christian ideology: in the later court scene, Antonio (finally being exempt from fulfilling the contract), turns against Shylock and – in agreement with the community present – forces him to convert to Christianity and give up his possessions. Turner’s painting thus would also point to the use of Christianity as a ‘label’ that does not correspond with actions: it exposes it as the ‘ornament’ that is criticised in Bassanio’s speech in the casket-scene.

\(^{480}\) Comp. Warrell (2003), *Turner and Venice*, p. 74.

\(^{481}\) Quoted after B&J, p. 220.

\(^{482}\) See Andrew Wilton, “Sublime or Ridiculous? Turner and the Problem of the Historical Figure”, *New Literary History* 16:2 (1985), pp. 343-376.
'Reading’ Turner’s *Scene – a Street in Venice* according to its interpretive cues meant indeed to ‘read’ the work like an argument: it comprises the issue that is criticised as well as the suggested, alternative view, and it gradually guides its viewers towards a critical evaluation of their first (mis-)conception. The moral message implied here was thus integrated into a drama-like experience, enabling the audience to ‘learn for themselves’. The hidden message of the painting mirrors that of *Jessica* in that it challenges a prejudiced and ‘false’ judgement of those who observe. Significantly, this judgement does not only refer to that of art critics, but to moral judgements in general. The audience of *Scene – a Street in Venice* unexpectedly finds itself entangled in the very issues that lead to *The Merchant of Venice*’s (hidden) tragedy: involuntarily, through Turner’s associative links in the picture, they become inhabitants of Venice who are asked to abandon their pre-formed misconceptions of right and wrong which match certain iconographic conventions.

The parallel drawn here between Venice and Britain is based on this association of the principles of aesthetic and ethical judgement. Misinformed judgements drawn from ‘appearances’, the paintings imply, characterise a generally low moral standard – a message applicable both to Turner’s art’s immediate environment and to his society at large, whose wealth had supposedly weakened its capacities to feel for others. Turner’s ‘didactic’ and rhetorical strategy to convey this message defies that of ideal painting conceived of in the tradition of the Royal Academy and civic humanist art theory more generally, yet it complies with the sentimental ideal which history painting was also aligned with in Reynolds’ times. Not through ‘moral elevation’ but, on the contrary, through the exposure of ethical (and aesthetic) mis-judgements naively relying on the equivalence of ‘beauty’ and virtue, he attempted to improve his audience.

**Juliet and her nurse**

Six years after *Jessica*, and one year before *Scene – a Street in Venice*, Turner presented a painting at the Royal Academy exhibition that in a sense showed an inversion of the spatial constellation of the *Jessica* scene. *Juliet and her nurse* (R.A.
1836, pl. 74) depicts St. Mark’s Square in Venice, seen from above, with many masked people gathered for the festivities. This view is shared by Juliet who can be seen in the foreground, leaning towards the Square from her balcony which fills the right lower corner of the image. In Shakespeare’s play, the balcony scene takes place after Romeo and Juliet have met for the first time at the Montague’s fancy dress ball – the viewers would have identified Juliet’s dreamy posture as a sign of her thinking of Romeo, who in the play would be climbing the balcony shortly after. With her specific pose – resting her chin on her hand – the picture actually directly evoked the very presence of Romeo, who, unseen by Juliet, looks up to the balcony with the words: “See how she leans her cheek upon her hand./ O, that I were a glove upon that hand,/ That I might touch that cheek!”

The scene continues:

**JULIET**

*Ay me.*

**ROMEO (aside)**

*She speaks.*

O, speak again, bright angel; for thou art
As glorious to this night, being o’er my head,
As is a wingèd messenger of heaven
Unto the white upturnèd wond’ring eyes
Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him
When he bestrides the lazy-passing clouds
And sails upon the bosom of the air.

**JULIET**

O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I’ll no longer be a Capulet. (*R&J* 379, 2.1, l. 68-78).

Juliet’s speech mirrors the nature of Jessica’s motifs in *The Merchant of Venice* to leave her father for good. She is not ‘on display’ like Jessica in Turner’s earlier

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painting. Instead, she is watching a display that takes place on St. Mark’s square, most likely an open-air theatre, which seems to link her with the culture of ‘ornament’. The theatre is the major identifiable light source in the picture. This is important, as Romeo’s balcony speech begins: “[...] what light through yonder window breaks?/ It is the east, and Juliet is the sun./ Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,/ Who is already sick and pale with grief/ That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she.” (R&J 379 (2.1, l. 44-48) Juliet, in the painting, indeed appears to be one of three light ‘sources’, the other two being the theatrical display to her left, and a firework display to her right. Due to Romeo’s words, this constellation seems to allude to the atmospheric phenomenon of the sun dog, or mock sun, in which two or more additional suns are seen on the same radius around the sun (comp. pl. 75).

Given Turner’s intense interest in refractions of light demonstrated in his lectures and his general metaphorical uses of light effects in his paintings the idea does not seem far-fetched. If detected in his painting, the allusion would put the following part of Romeo’s speech into a new light:

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in their head? –

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484 A ‘mock sun’ or parhelia was observed, The Morning Post reported on 23 August 1828, in Plymouth the preceding week: “A Mock Sun was observed by several persons on the Hoe [...]. It had something of the appearance of part of a rainbow, but it had only two colours, blue and red, and was infinitely more brilliant.” Turner was on his way to Italy at the time, but might have been told about it. The mock sun was mentioned by Greek and Roman authors and had played a particularly prominent part in English history, as one had supposedly been seen before the troops of Edward of York, later Edward IV, won the battle at Mortimer’s cross (Edward VI later incorporated the ‘three suns’ into his personal badge). The event had been dramatised in Shakespeare’s Henry VI, Part 3. Moreover, and probably interesting to Turner, in the seventeenth century, it had been a commonplace assumption that parhelia foretold the destruction of empires, signifying princes striving for their father’s crown, or rebellion against the crown more generally – a notion that was picked up in the context of the Glorious Revolution. Comp. Ann Geneva, Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind. William Lilly and the Language of the Stars, Manchester/NY, Manchester UP 1995, p. 223-234. Geneva focuses on William Lilly’s predictions in The Starry Messenger (1645).

485 On Turner’s ‘experimental’ interest in the refraction of light upon diverse surfaces and transparent bodies see Davies (1992), Turner as Professor, pp. 52-5.
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night. (R&J 379, 2.1, l. 57-64)

The painting’s night scene indeed is illuminated so much as to resemble daylight conditions. However, it is not stars from heaven that entreat Juliet’s eyes here, but mundane entertainments, which are shining brighter, and farther, than she. The ‘mock suns’ in Juliet and her nurse thus indeed seem to ‘mock’ the musings of Romeo’s soliloquy. They would equally be ‘mirrored’ in the eyes of the painting’s audience.

In making display itself its subject, Juliet and her nurse resembles Jessica and Scene – a Street in Venice. Indeed, this thematic parallel might have been the reason for Turner to locate his Juliet in Venice and not in Verona, as Shakespeare’s play advises: Venice was ‘naturally’ associated with the culture of display, and thus helped enforce the painting’s implied meanings. Juliet’s sad fate is marked in the picture already, as in the right corner of the balcony – in striking contrast to the several illuminated displays – her nurse can be seen in a dark cowl, the phial with poison in her hand.

Turner’s Juliet and her Nurse was engraved later under the title St. Mark’s Place – Juliet and her Nurse (1842, pl. 76). In it, the blazing light on St. Mark’s Square includes a cross which is apparently burning: like the supposed Christian attitude criticised in Venice – A Street through the presence of the monk, and the Christian observers alluded to in Jessica, this, too, seems to hint at an association of decayed or ‘ornamental’ religion and a culture of display. More pronouncedly than in the oil painting, Juliet is shone upon by the glowing phial here which

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486 I offer an alternative interpretation to that suggested by Eric Shanes. He draws a parallel between Romeo and Juliet and Venice’s culture on the basis that both are associated with “difficulties concerning identification” (Shanes (1990), Human Landscape, p. 34).

alludes to the lovers’ unhappy ending. Juliet and her nurse again brought together the thematic lines of ethics and aesthetics which seem to have been fundamentally tied to the image of Venice by Turner.

Another ‘false sun’: The Sun of Venice going to sea

Yet another example for Turner’s association of display and moral decline with Venice is his The Sun of Venice going to sea (R.A. 1843, pl. 77). The painting shows a sail boat which has a sun painted on its sail that fills in exactly the central place of the painting where the actual sun would be expected. It is apparently leaving the harbour of Venice. Turner’s appended lines tell us that we are looking at a morning scene:

“Fair shines the morn, and soft the zephyrs blow,
Venezia’s fisher spreads his painted sail so gay,
Nor heeds the demon that in grim repose
Expects his evening prey.” ----- Fallacies of Hope, M.S.

The painting’s title seems to be descriptive, informing the audience that it is shown a boat named “The Sun of Venice” which is going to sea. Yet it could also mean that the sun is setting over Venice, which would expand the painting’s allusive horizon significantly. With this double-meaning, and the appended lines which tell us that it is morning, the work combines notions of beginning and end, and associates a personal tragic fate with that of the city-state. The appended text predicts that the boat will fall prey to a “demon” of uncertain nature. Its phrasing resonates with a passage from The Seasons from which Turner had quoted earlier.

488 Unlike in the painting, the contrasting figures of Juliet and the nurse are paralleled by a pair of two cats (one black, the other white) on the roof of the Procuratie Vecchie, seen between the heads of the two protagonists. Eric Shanes has suggested that the white cat is dead – which would suggest that they prefigure Juliet’s tragic ending. Comp. Shanes (1990), Human Landscape, p. 35.
489 Quoted after Finberg (1961), The Life of J.M.W. Turner, p. 507. Martin Davies mentions that “there are said to be variants” of the text in different editions of the catalogue. Which, however, I was not able to find out. Comp. Davies, The British School, London, National Gallery 1946, pp. 151-2, n. 2.
490 As The Times noted, rejecting the strategy: “The Sun appears to be a fishing vessel. It is a very silly sort of craft”. (The Times, 9 May 1843, p. 6).
in his career (see chapter four, pp. 122-124) and which probably was an inspiration also for his *Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying – Typhon coming on* (R.A. 1840, pl. 69). In this passage, storms on southern seas and in the desert are ascribed to “Commission’d Demons […], Angels of Wrath” (S 104). Turner’s verses seem to have been modelled more directly, however, on Gray’s “The Bard”. The respective passage recounts the bard’s prophecy of the fate of Edward I’s descendants. It refers to Richard II’s reign, which was perceived to be an age of plenty. The king, however, as the editor of a 1799 edition explained, later “was starved to death”. The passage reads:

“Fair laughs the Morn, and soft the Zephyr blows,
“While proudly riding o’er the azure realm
“In gallant trim the gilded Vessel goes;
“Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
“Regardless of the sweeping Whirlwind’s sway,
“That, hush’d in grim repose, expects his evening-prey.”

The uncertain nature of Turner’s “demon” in Gray’s poem is specified as a “Whirlwind” which will swallow the king’s “gilded Vessel” – a definition which matches that of Thomson, whose Demons cause “sudden Whirlwind[s]” (S 104) as well. The king’s fate is through Turner’s allusion transferred to that of a Venetian fisherman who has ‘gilded’ his own vessel with an image of the sun. Thomson’s description of the ‘demon’s attack’ seems to resonate with Turner’s interpretive strand:

[...]. A faint deceitful Calm,
A fluttering Gale, the Demon sends before,

To tempt the spreading Sail. Then down at once,
Precipitant, descends a mingled Mass
Of roaring Winds, and Flame, and rushing Floods.
In wild Amazement fix’d the Sailor stands.
Art is too slow. By rapid Fate oppress’d,
His broad-wing’d Vessel drinks the whelming Tide,
Hid in the Bosom of the black Abyss. (§ 105-6)

As Thomson also calls his demon an “Angel of Wrath”, the thunderstorm in this case implies a punishment, similar to that evoked by Turner’s Angel standing in the Sun. Venice’s downfall as a republic is thus indirectly characterised as a deserved fate. With this painting, Turner finally seems to have picked up his theme of the tragic turn epitomised by the oncoming storm again, yet ascribed its destructive powers to a punishing force. The ‘fallen humanity’ addressed and depicted with Turner’s Venice-scenes is not subject to unforeseen losses and tragedy of a general nature, but to those caused by human vanity and moral decline. Similar to the supposed heroes of the paintings discussed in the previous chapter, the inhabitants of Venice are denied representations of suffering, as their unhappy endings seem self-imposed.

With these referentially rich scenes set in Venice, Turner repeatedly ‘exploited’ the notion of display, falseness and moral decay, which the city seems to have epitomised to him in particular. His audiences were literally ‘tempted’ into the admiration of such beautiful displays as Jessica in jewels, watching out for a lover, or the magnificent splendour of St. Mark’s Square, paralleled with Juliet’s beauty – or the much more common view of Venice in mist, as shown in Turner’s four “Fallacies of Hope”-views of 1845. As I have shown, Turner deliberately placed referential clues within some of these displays which, if noticed, would have inverted the ‘heedless’ enjoyment of mere aesthetic resplendence. Those who noted the clues could have experienced a transformation of moral judgement and of their mode of aesthetic consumption, towards sentimental ideals. Those
who ignored the clues were cynically invited by Turner to indulge in the aesthetic appreciation of what metaphorically mirrored their own deprived state. To some extent, the logic of the juxtaposition of the two modes precluded any turns towards the educational effect, too.

Turner’s paintings rarely seem to have achieved educational effects regarding ethical matters. The Venice-works are no exception. Turner’s strategy to invite with his paintings an aesthetic approach which they, on other levels, harshly rejected, could also be understood as a deliberate obstruction of possible moral insights, and an expression of a profoundly cynical worldview. The failure of art’s mission of ethical improvement seems inscribed into, and anticipated by these works. Venice in mist, sold for high prices, could be understood, then, as a cynical acknowledgement of the ‘fallacious hope’ that “important pictures” would ever be recognised.
Conclusion

This thesis has pointed out the continuity of the didactic concern with human and societal improvement in Turner’s art. The problems going along with the achievement of sympathetic bonding through visual representations, as discussed in chapter one, were certainly not solved by Turner. Rather, his art introduced ways in which it could accommodate the problematic nature of such educational goals alongside expressions of the sentimental ideal. Turner’s artistic mission, aligned with that of the bard who promotes peace and liberty and takes in a central cultural role in society, was in his works constantly juxtaposed with the adversarial forces that would (effectively) undermine the realisation of the hoped-for utopian ‘(re)public’, complying with Christian and sentimental values. From the very beginning these juxtapositions implied criticisms of the ‘modes of the world’ that also determined the reception of art. From the early supposedly ‘topographical’ views to the late Venice-pieces, in which Turner went so far as to turn his critique against his own style – the ‘fallen world’ ‘overshadows’ the ideal, including ideal art. This thesis has suggested that the re-evaluation of these constituting principles as sentiment and critique could lead to a general re-interpretation and re-contextualisation of Turner’s art.
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