

BLINDED BY SPECTACLE: DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LABOUR IN A LANDSCAPE OF JOSEPH WRIGHT OF DERBY, AND A PAINTER'S RESPONSE FOLLOWING MODERNISM

David Ainley

Joseph Wright (Wright of Derby) '*Matlock Dale, looking towards Black Rock Escarpment*' (between 1780 and 1785) in the Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT

David Ainley '*Portobello (Veins)*', 2010-11

These two landscapes are separated by a distance of just over a mile and by over two hundred years of art. The two paintings differ greatly in appearance and relate to very different interests in landscape painting, the recent work being concerned with the act of painting itself and the painting as an object, in ways that would have been unconsidered by artists in the late eighteenth century. They also reflect different objectives in the depiction of human endeavour, labour. What the paintings have in common is their response to an area of landscape in mid-Derbyshire.

'Landscape', introduced into English around 1600, deriving from the Dutch *landschap* signifying a picture of a view, came, in a period of around thirty years, to acquire the meaning of the view itself. Here the word refers to two paintings that have a shared topographical source. This paper explores the historical and artistic contexts in which these works were made and, in so doing, draws attention to characteristics of landscape concerning human labour that, for reasons that will be discussed, have been, and continue to be, widely ignored in this genre of painting.

It is important to acknowledge that Wright did depict labouring in his impressive group of paintings of a blacksmith's shop and an iron forge between 1771 and 1773.¹ These are not a concern of this paper as they are not landscapes, though the subjects are *from* a landscape. The *Earthstopper on the Banks of the Derwent* (exhibited 1773) is an exceptional painting among Wright's achievements and is, in his work, the clearest depiction of a labourer in a landscape where, as Stephen Daniels has observed "The earthstopper himself is portrayed less like one of Stubbs's submissive, immaculately costumed gamekeepers or grooms, more like one of Wright's industrious, independent blacksmiths in the moonlight forge scenes he exhibited in London at this time." Daniels notes how "...he puts his back into the task, with a spade that the light from his lantern shows is both cracked and carefully repaired."² The other notable work in this vein is *Landscape with Figures and a Tilted Cart: Matlock High Tor in the Distance* (c.1790) in the collection of Southampton Art Gallery. A tilted cart, Daniels explains, is used for unloading rocks from a quarry.³

¹ Daniels, Stephen *Joseph Wright*, London, 1999, pp.48-53.

² *Ibid.*, pp.21-22 See also Egerton, Judy. *Wright of Derby*, London, 1990, pp.104-106

³ Daniels, *op.cit.* pp. 69-70 (with reproduction) See also Egerton *op.cit.* p.193 (with reproduction)



Joseph Wright (Wright of Derby) *Matlock Dale, looking towards Black Rock Escarpment*
(between 1780 and 1785) in the Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art

Joseph Wright's painting *Matlock Dale, looking towards Black Rock Escarpment*,⁴ now in the Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, has as its viewpoint the southern end of Matlock Dale looking beyond Cromford towards Black Rocks. We may guess, correctly, judging by the light in the painting, that the view is to the South. On the left, and above the eastern banks of the River Derwent edged by woodland, Hagg Wood, is an impressive limestone outcrop, now known as Cat Tor. A large part of the view is as recognizable today as it was to Ebenezer Rhodes, writing in his "*Peak Scenery*" of 1824:

Nearly opposite Saxton's hotel, a broken rock, fringed with light foliage, rises majestically out of a group of trees that adorns its base: its topmost pinnacle is denominated Wild Cat Tor, and from its craggy summit a noble landscape is displayed.⁵

Depicted on the horizon, to the right of Black Rocks, stands an industrial chimney (unique in Wright's work), and slightly below that, the road at the top of Cromford Hill (the present B5036) that formed part of the Matlock Bridge and Cromford turnpike of 1759 is evident.⁶ It isn't known how Wright arrived in Matlock Bath but,

⁴ See Egerton *op.cit.* p.194 for an account of *Matlock Dale, looking towards Black Rock Escarpment* (with reproduction)

⁵ A photograph, produced as a postcard c. 1913, entitled 'Cat Tor, Matlock Bath' accompanies this text on the very informative and well-illustrated Andrews Pages: http://www.pd65.dial.pipex.com/matlock/pix/matlockbath_cattor1913.htm Saxton's has become the New Bath Hotel.

⁶ A good account of the development of roads in the area is given in by Anton Shone and Dean Smart in *The Street: A re-evaluation of the Roman road from Wirksworth to Buxton*, 2008,

as the turnpike between Cromford and Belper (the present A6 alongside the Derwent) was not constructed until 1817, it seems likely that he would have travelled from Derby via Wirksworth or Wirksworth Moor, and down this road as he approached Matlock Bath, looking onto a spectacular view almost as impressive as that seen from Black Rocks.

Black Rocks, known as Stonnis in Wright's time, is a large gritstone outcrop much famed from the early twentieth century as a challenging site for climbers who describe it as 'A dark imposing bastion with huge prows and impressive side walls, split by fine cracks and home to some of the best slopers on grit...Big history, follow in the footsteps of the gritstone greats...' (more than 135 climbs are currently listed having memorable names e.g. 'Fat Man's Chimney', 'Blind Man's Buttress', 'Queen's Parlour Gully', 'Meshuga', 'Gaia')⁷. The first recorded climb was made in 1890 by two Sheffield men, James W. Puttrell, credited as the innovator of the sport, and W.J. Watson. From the summit, relatively easily approached from the quarry side on the north, a view may be seen that is almost reciprocal to that in Wright's painting. A guide published in about 1876 remarked that "...most extensive and magnificent views may be obtained, for in that species of beauty, which the landscape approaches to grandeur, it is unequalled in Derbyshire."⁸ Nowadays, from the summit of Black Rocks, to the west a striking part of the spectacle is the 'scar' of a huge limestone quarry, Dene. Black Rocks is now a Country Park set below Cromford Moor and just above the High Peak Trail (formerly the Cromford and High Peak Railway, a line that opened in 1830 to carry minerals and goods between the Cromford Canal and the Peak Forest Canal at Whaley Bridge, initially using horses for motive power). These facts indicate a variety of ways that people have responded to the physical attributes of the landscape, and the interweaving of aspects of tourism and industry underpins the following discussion. This part of Derbyshire is what is now referred to as 'a cultural landscape' though, significantly in relation to matters considered here, although Wright's view of Cat Tor and the river lies within the area inscribed by UNESCO in 2001 as The Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site and its buffer zone, the distant view in his painting and the area in which Portobello Mine lies are outside.⁹



Joseph Wright (Wright of Derby) *Matlock Dale, looking towards Black Rock Escarpment*
Detail of industrial chimney and the top of Cromford Hill

Appendix 4 at www.conferencesdirect.co.uk/clacton/The%20Street.doc

7 The site UKClimbing.com lists these climbs at <http://www.ukclimbing.com/logbook/crag.php?id=97>

8 Holmes, Thomas H. (c. 1876) "*Holmes' Guide to Matlock and Neighbourhood*".

9 Information about the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site is to be found at www.derwentvalleymills.org The term 'cultural landscape', its origins and interpretations, are discussed in James, P.E. & Martin, G (1981) *All Possible Worlds: A History of Geographical Ideas*, pp.177,321-324.

The chimney in Wright's painting, no longer evident in the view, belongs to a lead mine. Judy Edgerton describes this as "...like a remote harbinger of a more widespread industrial age."¹⁰ Whether or not that was Wright's intention this feature is significant in the present discussion of this landscape/these landscapes. *Portobello (Veins)* takes its title from a lead mine in this orefield, which includes the Gang Vein (sometimes known as Dovegang) and Dene Hollow. Shafts of Cromford Moor Mines (Godbehere's Founder is one of these) are adjacent to the crags of Black Rocks and close to the ruined but preserved buildings of the mine, its chimney and a capped 150m (486 feet) deep shaft. There is a large spoil heap.



Black Rocks

A spoil heap of the Cromford Moor Mine is between and beyond the trees on the right



The remains of buildings at the Cromford Moor Mine, near Black Rocks, including the chimney

¹⁰ Egerton, *op.cit* p.194



John Mawe *Cromford Moor Mine*
 Depicted as at about 1800 (painted 1829)

The mine is at the Eastern end of the Gang Vein that stretches for about a mile West towards Middleton-by-Wirksworth over a landscape that now testifies to the former industry through its hollows, hillocks and capped mine shafts. Samuel Hutchinson's plan of c.1720-30 of Cromford Sough, the drainage system of the mine, and the Gang Vein lists over two dozen shafts, but there were probably many more shallow unnamed shafts from 16th century and earlier mining. Together with J. Wheatcroft's plan (1826) of mines in the Dene Hollow area this shows the intensity of mining in this landscape at the time when it was (just) in Wright's view.¹¹ The lead-mining industry in Wirksworth was at its height before the rapid down-swing at the beginning of the 19th century. Lynn Willies and Harry Parker have explained that "towards the last years of the sixteenth century new production and smelting methods led to Derbyshire becoming the leading producer, with its products being exported all over the world for the next two centuries, often by the Dutch and English East India Companies." "In around 1643 some 20,000 people in the peak, including families, were dependent on the lead business."¹² The Wirksworth Vicarage tithe books show a 'high, steady rate of production' in the 1770s. By the mid-1780s the Vicar was selling the ore to seven local smelters and nearly thirty mines were in production in Wirksworth.¹³

The exact date of Wright's painting is not known. It is catalogued 'c.1780-5' and was therefore made after his return from Rome to Derby where he became re-established in 1777 following his unsuccessful attempt to build a reputation as a portraitist in Bath. Benedict Nicolson speculates that an earlier painting of the area *Matlock High Tor, moonlight* (c.1777-9) may have been painted "...when the artist was doing his utmost to recover from the too sophisticated atmosphere of Bath by plunging back into his natural habitat of romance and solitude he had known as a youth."¹⁴ Wright had evidently been drawn to Matlock Dale before this and had made an early experiment in landscape, and one of his most successful paintings, *The Earthstopper* (1777), there. It has been convincingly argued by David Fraser that the setting of this is the River Derwent at Church Rocks, Matlock, at the Northern end of The Dale and further, Egerton postulates that it was shortly

11 Ford, Trevor D. *The Geology of the Wirksworth Mines: A Review* The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society, Vol. 16, No.2, Winter 2005 pp.13-16
 12 Willies, Lynn and Parker, H *Peak District Mining and Quarrying* Stroud, 1999 pp.8-9
 13 Gould, Robert '*Capital Formation in the Wirksworth Lead Mining Industry, Part 2*' The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society, Vol.7, No.1, May 1978, pp.21-27
 14 Nicolson, Benedict. *Joseph Wright of Derby. Painter of Light* Vol. 1, London, 1968, p.88

preceded by *Rocks with Waterfall* (c.1772)¹⁵ which in its adventurous painterly handling is almost as extraordinary a work in Wright's oeuvre as was John Constable's *On the River Stour* (c.1834-37) in the Phillips Collection in his. Nicholson observed that nothing of this kind was found in Wright's landscapes of the mid-'80s "where all scenery, however rugged, is tidied up and smoothed out."¹⁶ He notes "the spongy appearance" of the trees in the painting *View in Matlock Dale...* that is a focus in this essay. Nicholson discussed the change that took place in Wright's painting as a shift from the sublime to the picturesque¹⁷ whereas Egerton proposes that he was increasingly relying on observation. She describes the *View in Matlock Dale...* as "probably Wright's most literally transcribed landscape."¹⁸ Andrew Graciano concludes that Wright's tendency towards the careful observation and rendering of local landscapes in the 1780s and 1790s was "not merely a stylistic response to his own Italian sojourn, a shift from the sublime to the picturesque, but was clearly informed by both the geological theories and practical mining and industrial concerns circulating among the intellectual elite in the Midlands during the same period."¹⁹

Wright's enthusiasm for the Matlock Dale as a subject for painting was probably stimulated by his knowledge of the work of Alexander Cozens (1717-1786) and his son John Robert Cozens (1752-1797) who Constable regarded as "the greatest genius that ever touched landscape." Alexander Cozens made two oil paintings in 1756 *High Tor, Matlock* and *Vale near Matlock*, and between 23 May and 13 June 1772 (the year before Wright's *Earthstopper*) John Cozens was working in the area. His sketchbook includes 39 studies of Matlock, largely of cliff and rock scenes. Richard Arkwright's first mill (1771) was newly constructed in Cromford of stone taken from Steeple House, (now Steeple Grange) near Black Rocks, and Cozens drew at the smelting mills nearby. Kim Sloan observes that Wright may have met the Cozens as both Alexander and John Robert were working for Lord Scarsdale at Kedleston in the mid-1750s, and Wright and John Robert may both have been working in Matlock in the summer of 1772 and in Bath in 1776. Sloan considers that two of Wright's drawings in black ink in the collection of Derby Museum and Art Gallery indicate that he had seen a copy of Cozens' *Essay to Facilitate the Inventing of Landscips, intended for Students in the Art* published in 1759, significantly pre-dating his better-known *A New Method for Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* of 1786.²⁰ There is no suggestion that these depict Derbyshire nor, indeed, any specific landscape.

Derbyshire was one of the first locales for landscape artists in Britain. Stephen Daniels cites engravings of the Peak District in the 1740s after Thomas Smith of Derby "...showing sublime crags and magnificent caves, and describing the mineral

15 Egerton, *op.cit.*, pp.21,105-6,176-7

16 Nicholson *op.cit.*, p.87

17 *Ibid.*,p.90

18 Egerton *op.cit.*, p.194

19 Graciano, Andrew *"The Book of Nature is Open to All Men": Geology, Mining and History in Joseph Wright's Derbyshire Landscapes* in *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, Vol.68, No.4, December 2005, 583-600, p.599

20 Sloan, Kim *Alexander and John Robert Cozens: The Poetry of Landscape* New Haven and London, 1986, pp. 83, 172 n.54
Joseph Wright *Blot Drawing in the manner of Alexander Cozens* ?c.1770 Derby Museum & Art Gallery (Reproduced in Egerton, *op.cit.*, p.138)
Joseph Wright *Landscape study developed from a blot* ?c.1770 Derby Museum and Art Gallery (Reproduced *ibid.*, p139)

wealth of the region" that "promoted a taste for British scenery."²¹ Warm springs had been known in Matlock Dale in the Middle Ages. Matlock Bath's prosperity as a tourist resort was initiated about 1698 when a bath was constructed on the riverbank, then enlarged with outbuildings to accommodate bathers. Daniel Defoe visited it around 1727, reporting favourably on the curative properties of the waters, "very pleasant to go into", but finding some amenities lacking. Trevor Brighton has a lengthy and detailed account of Matlock Bath by two visitors from London in 1749, 'a charming passage in the literature of tourism' which gives a wonderful description of the place and its amusements; "...in short, the whole place is surrounded with agreeable landscapes, fine woods, pleasant walks, high rocks, steep hills, and romantic views; which, together with the constant rolling of the Darwent (*sic*) Streams, render it a perfect Paradise."²² This is in contrast with Defoe's description of the Derwent as "a fury of a River" and "a frightful creature when the hills load her current with water."²³

Matlock Bath in 1749 apparently offered a much more favourable prospect than travellers in Derbyshire had found at the end of the previous century and certainly on moorland beyond Matlock Dale until late in the eighteenth century. Celia Fiennes had travelled on horseback between Chatsworth and Bakewell during her 1697/8 tour and wrote in her journal of "this strange, mountainous, misty, moorish, rocky wild country" with its "craggy ascents, the rocky unevenness of the roade, the high peaks and the almost perpendicular descents."

Fiennes wrote:

All Derbyshire is full of steep hills, and nothing but the peakes of hills as thick one by another is seen from most of the County which are very stepe which makes travelling tedious, and the miles long, you see neither hedge nor tree but only low drye stone walls round some ground, else its only hills and dales as thick as you can imagine, but tho' the surface of the earth looks barren yet those hills are impregnated with rich Marbles Stones Metals Iron and Copper and Coale mines in their bowels, from whence we may see the wisdom and benignitye of our greate Creator to make up the deficiency of a place by an equivalent as also the diversity of the Creation which increaseth its Beauty.²⁴

Defoe whose travels over previous years were published in 1726 wrote of an encounter in Derbyshire:

Travel with me through this howling wilderness...and I will show you all that is wonderful about it...to a valley on the side of a rising hill, where there were several grooves, so they call the mouth of the shaft or pit by which they go down a lead mine,...we were agreeably surprised with seeing a hand, and then an arm, and quickly after a head, thrust up out of the groove we were looking at...the man was a most uncouth spectacle; he was clothed all in leather, had a cap of the same without a brim, some tools in a little basket which he drew up with him...This person was as lean as a skeleton, pale as a dead corpse, his hair and beard a deep black, his flesh lank, and, as we thought something of the colour of the lead itself...he

²¹ Daniels, *op.cit.*, pp.61-62

²² This passage, quoted in Brighton, Trevor *The Discovery of the Peak District*, Chichester, 2004 pp.106-8 originally appeared in Rhodes, Ebenezer *Peak Scenery; or the Derbyshire Tourist*, London, 1824, pp.89-90

²³ Brighton *op.cit.*, p.14

²⁴ Celia Fiennes: *Through England on a Side Saddle in the time of William and Mary*, 1697, quoted in Cooper, Brian, 1983 *Transformation of a Valley: The Derbyshire Derwent*, Heinemann, republished 1991 Cromford: Scarthin Books, p.9

looked like an inhabitant of the dark regions below, and who was just ascending into the world of light.²⁵

Barren though much of the landscape on the heights surrounding Matlock Dale and Cromford may have appeared the mineral wealth below ground could, at the time of Wright's painting, provide great riches. The beneficiaries included Francis Hurt (1722-83) and his son Charles (1758-1834). Wright painted portraits of both men. Benedict Nicolson observed that in his portraiture Wright "instinctively associates each sitter with his profession or class, and whatever he holds or displays before him are the symbols of his standing or attainments".²⁶



Joseph Wright *Francis Hurt* (painted c.1780)

Detail of hands with lead ore on table

Collection of Michael Hurt Esq.

Francis Hurt, painted by Wright around 1780, is shown with a lump of lead ore, galena, on the table at which he sits.²⁷ He came from a landed Derbyshire family with interests in iron-making and lead-mining. Unexpectedly (his six elder brothers pre-deceased him) in 1767 he succeeded to the family estate at Alderwasley, a short distance from Wirksworth. He continued with the management of his lead- and iron-smelting works and, in 1780, the establishment of a coke-fired blast furnace, the earliest in Derbyshire, at Morley Park, near Heage, the remains of which are visible beside the A38.²⁸ Francis married Mary Gell, the daughter of Thomas Gell of Gatehouse, Wirksworth, in 1751. Their second son Charles Hurt, whose portrait by Wright is dated c.1789-90, married Susannah Arkwright, Richard Arkwright's only surviving daughter by his second wife. They lived at Wirksworth Hall, a house in Maxwell Craven's view²⁹ almost certainly built by the Derby architect, Joseph Pickford (1734-82) who was also responsible for the Derby

²⁵ Defoe, Daniel *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, London, 1726 quoted in Barnatt, John and Penny, Rebecca *The Lead Legacy: The Prospects for the Peak District's Lead Mining Heritage* Peak District National Park Authority, English Heritage and English Nature, 2004 Ch 1.1

²⁶ Nicolson, *op.cit.*, p.70

²⁷ Edgerton, *op.cit.*, p.203 describes this and the mistaken identification of the mineral as iron ore in Nicolson *op.cit.*, p.161

²⁸ See Cooper, *op.cit.*, pp.111-112 where there is also a photograph of the Morley Park furnaces.

²⁹ Craven, Maxwell *John Whitehurst of Derby: Clockmaker and Scientist 1713-88*, Ashbourne, 1996, p.75. Ch. 4, pp.53-71, 'Links with Joseph Wright and His Circle' is informative regarding the milieu in which Wright worked.

Assembly Rooms in 1763-4 and St Helen's House, Derby, 1767, built for Alderman John Gisborne. This is where his son, Wright's friend and patron Rev. Thomas Gisborne was brought up from the age of nine. In 1773 Pickford also built the Moot Hall, the home of the Barmote Court,³⁰ in the old Market Place, Wirksworth, near the Red Lion, and demolished in 1814. Two bas-relief plaques in stone showing miners' picks, scales and a trough were preserved and incorporated in the present building of 1814.³¹ Pickford ordered fire grates for work at Kedleston from Hurt's foundry at Alderwasley. These liaisons reflect relationships that were established between members of Derbyshire's land-owning families at the forefront of industrial development, all of whom had significant interests in lead-mining and smelting. After being trapped for eight days in Godbehere's Founder, the rescue in 1797 of a miner, largely due to Charles Hurt's expert knowledge as a mining engineer, is part of Derbyshire folklore.³² He had a significant role in the construction of the soughs tunneled to unwater the lead mines and the size of his library at his death reflected wide intellectual interests. Among the properties owned by Francis and Charles Hurt around Wirksworth, Charles owned the Cromford Moor smelters.³³



Joseph Wright *Charles Hurt of Wirksworth*
(c. 1789-90)
Private collection

Defoe visited the "large well-frequented market town" of Wirksworth and found:

There is no very great trade to this town but what relates to the lead works, and to the subterranean wretches, who they call Peakrills, who work in the mines, and who live all round this town every way.

³⁰ Riewerts, Jim H. *Glossary of Derbyshire Lead Mining Terms* Matlock Bath, 1998, pp.15,18

³¹ Cooper, *op.cit.*, pp.21-23

³² Derbyshire Advertiser, 10 February 1854, Supplement p.2. Col.3 (In newspaper cuttings held by the Peak District Mines Historical Society)
<http://www.pdmhs.com/PDFs%5CNewspaperCuttings%5C1854%5CFebruary%201854.pdf>

³³ Gould, *op.cit.*, p.21

The inhabitants are a rude boorish kind of people, but they are bold, daring, and even desperate kind of fellows in their search into the bowels of the earth; for no people in the world out-do them;...

This town of Wirksworth is a kind of market for lead: the like not known any where else I know of, except it be at the custom-house keys in London. The Barmoot court, kept here to judge controversies among the miners, that is to say, to adjust subterranean quarrels and disputes, is very remarkable:...³⁴

Andrew Graciano provides a fascinating and detailed reflection on how Wright's perception of the landscape was shaped by Whitehurst's geological investigations and makes the important point that "Wright's livelihood was also rooted in the Earth on a different level, his patronage often tied literally to the wealth that came from its mineral yields."³⁵

Wright's portrait c. 1782-3 of John Whitehurst FRS, the scientist and clockmaker, shows him with his drawing of the section of Matlock Tor from his *Inquiry into the Original State and Formation of the Earth* published to great acclaim in 1778. Craven provides a good account of this with Whitehurst's illustrations of strata. When he began his researches for these, Whitehurst's intentions were:

Not altogether with a view to investigate the formation of the earth, but in part to obtain such a competent knowledge of subterraneous geography as might become subservient to the purposes of human life, by leading mankind to the discovery of many valuable substances which lie concealed in the lower regions of the earth.³⁶

Whitehurst's famous *Section of the Strata at High Tor* clearly includes, and names, the shaft of Side Mine. Twentieth-century understandings of the geology that Whitehurst described, and particularly its place in history of mining, have now been well researched.³⁷

In his search for samples of earth and clay to perfect his porcelain, Josiah Wedgwood enjoyed the collaboration of Whitehurst, who had interests in Derbyshire lead mines. Uglow describes how, in 1772, Wedgwood identified the materials he needed for his jasper ware: feldspar, moorstone and the elusive 'spath fusible', carbonate of barium. "He finally discovered great masses in the lead mines near Matlock on an expedition with his father-in-law Richard in 1774."³⁸ Whitehurst, described by Egerton as "the keenest intelligence in Derbyshire in Wright's lifetime,"³⁹ was not only a scientist and clockmaker, but an expert in hydraulics, heating and ventilation, skills he employed in a number of buildings, but that also would have informed his insights into some aspects of lead-mining.⁴⁰

Lead mining had taken place in the Wirksworth and Matlock area since Romano-British times, and possibly even earlier. A significant number of 'pigs', or ingots of lead that can be traced to the county have been unearthed in Derbyshire and beyond. Jim Riewerts records that the first of these, dated to the period AD 117-138, was found "about a foot beneath the surface on Cromford Nether Moor in the

³⁴ Defoe, Daniel *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, London, 1726 Letter 8, pt 2.

³⁵ Graciano, Andrew *op.cit.* pp. 583-600

³⁶ Hutton, Charles *The Works of John Whitehurst*, London, 1788 quoted in Craven, *op.cit.*, p.88

³⁷ Ford, Trevor D. 'The Geology of the Matlock Mines: A Review' in *Mining History: The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, Vol. 12, No.3, Winter 2001, pp.1-34

³⁸ Uglow, Jenny *The Lunar Men*, London, 2002, p.298

³⁹ Egerton, *op.cit.* p.298

⁴⁰ Craven, *op.cit.*, p.81

year 1777."⁴¹ Rev. Samuel Pegge, antiquarian and vicar of parishes near Chesterfield and a friend of Erasmus Darwin since childhood, wrote of this discovery the following year in the journal of the Society of Antiquaries, of which he was a fellow. As the find was on land in which Francis Hurt, who sat for Wright around 1780, had an interest, and Pegge was involved with the members of the Lunar Society with whom Wright was acquainted, it seems probable that this find was known to him and to Whitehurst who Wright had known well since his childhood. Anthony Tissington, a friend of Whitehurst, wrote extensively on mining and mining customs and was his earliest geological collaborator. Together with his brother and son-in-law he controlled a firm called Anthony Tissington Company that ran mining operations for copper, lead and coal in Scotland, Co. Durham, Swaledale in Yorkshire, and Derbyshire. Craven quotes a letter from Erasmus Darwin to Wedgwood on 2 July 1767:

I have lately travel'd two days journey into the bowels of the earth, with three most able philosophers, and have seen the Goddess of Minerals naked, as she lay in her inmost bowers.⁴²

Craven suggests that "We may legitimately see Tissington as the leader of a foray into the mines of Derbyshire" with the 'three philosophers' "likely to have been Whitehurst, Tissington, and perhaps, Burdett, by this time extremely familiar with the topography of the Peak through his recently-completed map-making activities."⁴³ Uglow identifies his companions as John Whitehurst and the two Tissington brothers.⁴⁴ Daniels, in his detailed discussion of Wright's painting of the cartographer and engraver Peter Perez Burdett and his first wife Hannah (1765) which has him holding a telescope, writes that he

literally put Derbyshire on the map, confirming its position at the centre of the world of technical expertise and the applied arts...Burdett's map was engraved and published in London in 1767 and sold in both London and Derby....Not only did it show routes and resources, especially forges and mines, but it omitted the most prominent features of conventional county maps, landowners' names and parks.⁴⁵

Wright and Burdett had houses close to one another in Derby and shared a love of music. Wright also supported Burdett's enterprise by the loan of money. It is hard to believe that Wright, through his network of contacts with so many men in some way associated with mines and mining in Derbyshire was ignorant of the industry and its hazards and rewards. Why, then, did evidence of it only appear in the small detail of a chimney on a horizon? Perhaps, though aware of its significance, he wasn't very interested in chthonic matters. He had, after all, written to his brother from Rome in November 1774:

When you see Whitehurst tell him I wished for his company when on Mount Vesuvius, his thoughts would have centr'd in the bowels of the mountain, mine skimmed over the surface only: there was a considerable eruption at the time, of which I am going to make a picture. 'Tis the most wonderful sight in nature.⁴⁶

41 Riewerts, Jim *Lead Mining in the Peak District*, Bakewell, 1968, p.7

42 Craven, *op.cit.*, p.75

43 *Ibid.*

44 Uglow, *op.cit.*, p.144

45 Daniels, *op.cit.*, p.15

46 Egerton, *op.cit.* p.226

Daniels explains Wright's concern that, despite the fact that volcanoes are 'complex cultural landscapes', for him "Pictorial effect was primary."⁴⁷ There is ample evidence that Wright had an interest in caverns, notably in two well-wrought drawings in black chalk made from observation in 1774 in the Gulf of Salerno.⁴⁸ These were developed into at least six paintings. In every case the view is from the inside towards the opening. This is understandable given the opportunities it offered to frame daylight in a manner that might have appealed to James Turrell. Egerton writes of *A Cavern Morning* and *A Cavern Evening* as "highly-finished pictures...on which Wright has bent the full force of his attention, using minutely-detailed brushstrokes and variations in colour to suggest the nature of rock and the reaction of its various surfaces to light."⁴⁹ Interesting correspondences and differences may be noted between these paintings and Philippe de Louthembourg's *Cave Scene* for the set of *The Wonders of Derbyshire*⁵⁰ (1778) and two works made by John Robert Cozens that same year in pencil and watercolour both entitled *Cavern in the Campagna*.⁵¹ Wright's drawing in pencil and wash of 1774 *Interior of a Cave, probably near Naples* is an exception in his choice of viewpoint. Egerton observes "Here Wright seems to be looking into a shallow cave, perhaps having crawled in to do so. The cave appears to be lit from above, presumably by a fairly large opening, for it admits sufficient light to sustain plant life on the rock face". "It is" she writes "characteristic of Wright to draw a subject because it interests his mind rather than because it is picturesque. The drawing has nevertheless a curious beauty."⁵² Though it may have served Wright's artistic curiosity it was a very tentative exploration into 'the interior of the earth.' Did Gilpin's appraisal in 1772 after entering a cave at Castleton in a tour of Derbyshire that "I never found any picturesque beauty in the interior of the earth" diminish Wright's interest in this subject matter?⁵³ Stephen Glover, in 1831, recorded that the two parts of Matlock Bath's Cumberland Cavern, related to the Moletrap Vein and Wapping Mine, had been "visited as objects of curiosity almost fifty years,"⁵⁴ so they would have been an attraction very close to the situation that Wright was in for his *View in Matlock Dale*... but there is no known record that he visited this or any other show cave. If he had, he might have seen "The extensive pick-marks on the walls and lack of drill holes suggesting that much of the mining was done before the days of explosives."⁵⁵ Perhaps the 'constant illness' that blighted Wright's life (he was unable to work through the summer of 1783 and in late Autumn 1784) prevented such adventures. Wright wrote many letters concerning his health and problems that included 'nervous fever', probably depression, and 'inflammation of the liver'.⁵⁶ As, by disposition, he was a 'painter of light' one imagines that the darkness of caverns may have been, at the very least, unattractive, though lit by candles they might have offered him subjects.

47 Daniels (*op.cit.*) pp.64-65

48 Egerton (*op.cit.*) pp.158-9

49 *Ibid.*, pp.161-2

50 Daniels, *op.cit.*, p.66

51 Sloan, Kim *Alexander and John Robert Cozens: The Poetry of Landscape* New Haven and London, 1986, p133

52 Egerton (*op.cit.*) p.150

53 Gilpin, William *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in 1772*, London, 1786 p212

54 Glover, Stephen *The History and Gazetteer of the County of Derby* 1831, p.18

55 Riewerts, 1968, *op.cit.*, p.91

56 Nicolson, *op.cit.* pp.18-19

Derbyshire's subterranean landscape had been popularized in 1779 at the Drury Lane Theatre in a spectacular scenic pantomime *The Wonders of Derbyshire* designed by Philip de Louthembourg. Amongst the magical events the 'Genius of the Peak' rises from his 'haunts profound' below Matlock Tor to endow miners with supernatural gifts to prospect for minerals.⁵⁷ Nellie Kirkham has described how superstitions were widespread in mining, some being common beyond Derbyshire.⁵⁸ The fairies, elves and spirits of dead miners, whose influence was not always considered benevolent, also offered warnings to receptive miners. These characters were known as 'knockers'.⁵⁹

Graciano⁶⁰, taking issue with David Fraser's explanation that "...Wright often used the raking light of an evening effect to articulate the surface of a limestone cliff, or scumbles and glazes to render the texture of stone"⁶¹ suggests that "Wright was influenced by the contemporary understanding that the Earth's surface disclosed a great deal about its depths." He supports this with an illuminating quotation from an eighteenth-century Derbyshire lead miner, William Hooson:

That I do not at all pretend to see into the Bowels and Concaves of the Earth, any more than a Physician can see into the Body of Man; but it is proper and apparent Signs and Symptoms at the Day, that indicates to us Miners the Nature of Places, whether they may contain Metalline Veins or not; and this has been the way practiced by the Antient and wisest Miners, who doubtless has been the most knowing and Skilful in that part of Mineing, having acquired it by long Practice and Experience.⁶²

Martyn Lynch reminds us that that the relationship between prospecting for ores and the physical endeavor in winning them is critical: "History shows us that it matters little what mineral wealth lies within a nation's borders or colonies. Of far more importance is the vigour with which any particular society goes about the task of extracting that wealth."⁶³

Richard Sennett, discussing craft, and particularly how craftsmen can work with resistance, referred to the importance of tunneling in all sorts of situations, including mining and drainage. He cites Lewis Mumford's argument that modern capitalism began in the act of systematically colonizing the ground and describes how the origins of modern mining technology lay in surgery:

Andreas Vesalius, the doctor in Brussels who founded modern dissection, published *De humani corporis fabrica* in 1533. In 1540 modern technology for working belowground was codified in Vannoccio Biringuccio's *Pirotechnica*, a treatise that urged its readers to think like Vesalius, using mining techniques that lifted plates of stone or stripped back strata of the

⁵⁷ Daniels, *op.cit.*, pp.66-67

⁵⁸ Kirkham, Nellie *Derbyshire Lead Mining through the Centuries* Truro, 1968, pp.27-28

⁵⁹ Riewerts, 1998, *op.cit.*, P.95

⁶⁰ Graciano, *op.cit.*, p.590

⁶¹ Fraser, David 'Fields of Radiance', in Cosgrove, Denis and Daniels, Stephen *The Iconography of Landscape*, Cambridge, 1988, p126

⁶² William Hooson, *The Miner's Dictionary: Explaining Not Only the Terms Used by Miners, But Also Containing Theory and Practice of that Most Useful Art of Mineing, More Especially of Lead-Mines* (1742; facsimile reprint, Yorkshire, 1979), "Introduction to Appendix" (unpaginated) in Graciano *op.cit.* who also includes in this footnote a reference to a work of 1769 concerning similar topographical clues in the location of coalfields and later in the text the account by William Efford (1769) about the discovery of important deposits of copper that were mined at Ecton.

⁶³ Lynch, Martin *Mining in World History* London, 2002, pp.321-2

earth rather than simply chopping through them. Working in this way, Biringuccio argued, would follow the path of least resistance in going underground.⁶⁴

The most important early work on mining, brilliantly illustrated with engravings, is Georgius Agricola's *De Re Metallica* of 1556.⁶⁵ This book, illustrated with numerous brilliantly detailed wood engravings concerning everything then known about mining remained the standard text on mining for two centuries. Here one is informed about equipment and machinery, means of finding ores - he rejected the use of divining-rods and other such magical means - methods of surveying and digging, assaying ores, smelting, mine administration, and even occupational diseases of miners. The book also contains descriptions of ores and of strata. The frontispiece of the earlier *Kuttenberger Kanzionale*, a manuscript book on vellum with biblical and mining illustrations, published around 1490, is attributed to an artist Mattheus Illuminator. Trevor Ford has explored the content of the painting in the light of Agricola and, interestingly, finds many connections with Derbyshire mining practices.⁶⁶

Though images of mining and quarrying have been made and exhibited in the context of fine art since the development of landscape painting they are relatively few. Many of them are in the tradition of topographical illustration and figures often appear as staffage, essentially for compositional reasons and to establish scale. There is a fine small drawing of *Lord Hopetoun's Lead Mine's* (1751) by Paul Sandby in the collection at the Yale Center. This piece, in watercolour, pen and black ink and graphite on medium, blued white, slightly textured laid paper, depicts two men apparently observing a huge piece of mining apparatus including a waterwheel by the top of a shaft at Wanlockhead, near Leadhills in South Lanarkshire.⁶⁷ Of course, there is a distinction between works made purely for record or to convey technical information, and works of art that are more complex in their content and intentions. It is interesting, however, to reflect on the limited extent to which human labour has been a significant subject in landscape painting and, when it has been included, how selective it has been. Images of agricultural workers befit pastoral idylls and are more common than miners or quarryworkers but, far from the uncomfortable facts of farming, George Stubbs' *Haymakers* of 1785 in the Tate Collection is a reminder of ways in which aesthetic priorities often dominate the idea of the subject: "the figures are orchestrated into a sort of rhythmic ballet which presents their labours as graceful rather than full of real effort."⁶⁸ The exhibition *Presences of Nature: British Landscape 1780-1830* had a section '*Landscape with Laborers*'. Among the paintings of haymaking and harvesting are two of limekilns. Turner's fiery *Limekiln at Coalbrookdale* of c.1797 is, in its night-time setting, noted as something of a novelty for this type of subject distinguishing it from occasional, more 'matter-of-fact' daytime kiln scenes by Sandby, Ibbetson, Munn and others, and is different in character from Wright's industrial night scenes such as *Arkwright's Cotton Mills at Cromford, by Night* (c.1793). Turner's painting was, it was suggested, without precedent. "I am unaware of any earlier night view (other than sketches) of this particular kind of

⁶⁴ Sennett, Richard *The Craftsman* London, 2009, pp.215-216 Mumford's ideas are in Mumford, Lewis *Technics and Civilization* New York, pp.69-70

⁶⁵ Agricola, Georg *De Re Metallica* 1556, Trans. Hoover, H & L, London 1912

⁶⁶ Ford, Trevor D. '*15th Century Mining as shown in the Kuttenberger Kanzionale* The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society, Vol. 12, No.3, Summer 1994 Historical Metallurgy Society Special Publication: Mining Before Powder, pp.81-83

⁶⁷ Paul Sandby (1731-1809) Yale Center for British Art (Accession No. B1978.39.3)

⁶⁸ Tate Gallery text accompanying George Stubbs *Haymakers*

industrial subject by any British artist of note.”⁶⁹ Copley Fielding’s watercolour *Landscape with a Lime Kiln* (1809) is described as “a rather desolate industrial scene under a dramatic sky” and, though its location is uncertain (probably Wales) this and the Turner are a reminder of how Hurt’s Morley Park furnaces or lead smelters might, in full smoke, have appeared. Wright, as far as is known, didn’t adopt them as subjects. Though there are figures in these paintings they are depicted as associated with, rather than engaged in, labour, perhaps resting. In the same exhibition *Slate Quarry at Widdecombe, Devon* (1792) by John White Abbott, a surgeon and talented amateur artist, has men, clearly engaged in dressing already-cut slabs of slate, working by a building overshadowed by a great cliff. Also in the exhibition, as well as Wright’s *View in Matlock Dale...* (which, following Nicolson, was catalogued as *View of the Boathouse near Matlock*, a title corrected in Egerton following the mistaken suggestion that the rocks in the distance were High Tor), there was another work, *View near Matlock, Derbyshire* by Philippe de Loutherbourg (1785) made, it is widely accepted, at an almost identical spot and very close in time. Three labourers are occupied in washing lead ore beside the river over which there is a rickety conveyor from a mill on the opposite bank. In support of the faithfulness of this representation, the catalogue entry includes a description of the process of washing lead by John Pickin, Assistant Keeper of Industry and Technology at Derby Museums. De Loutherbourg had previously given his attention to this subject in a work *Labourers near a Lead Mine* (1783) shown, unlike the Matlock painting, at the Royal Academy. A print (1787) after this work, in the collection of the Science Museum, and entitled *A view of the black-lead mine in Cumberland*, is described as ‘A scene of miners at their break, possibly a family group; includes young woman raking trug of graphite pellets; spades and baskets; horses and carts; stages of mining from extraction from pit to washing of ore’.⁷⁰

De Loutherbourg’s *View near Matlock, Derbyshire with Figures Working beneath a Wooden Conveyor* (1785) in the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, is reputedly of Hagg Mine, a mine situated a short distance North of Cat Tor in Wright’s *View in Matlock Dale...* The mechanism of the engine at Hagg Mine was described by Eric Geisler in 1772-1773.⁷¹ Jim Riewerts writes:

The wheel was 9 to 10 feet in diameter and 4 feet in width. It was situated on the west side of the river, the rods carried over it on a trestle bridge. The connecting rods in the level were of iron, the pump drawing water from 42 to 48 feet. A surface scene, reputedly of Hagg Mine, was painted by the noted artist De Loutherbourg. The author does not subscribe to this interpretation. It has been postulated (Willies et al, 1977) that the enterprise was abandoned about 1783 the sale notice being as follows:

3rd July, 1783. For sale the Mine called Hag and Bullestree with all the wheeles, engines and utensils belonging to the above mine. Enquire of Mr. Richard Alsopp of Wirksworth. (Derby Mercury)

The combination of Hagg Mine and Bullestree in the sale notice suggests that the above may relate to the wheels and pumps at the Nether Hagg (Moletrap Great Rake) Mine. Perhaps failure of either, or both of the Hagg Mines coincided with the building of the weir for Masson Mills which resulted in raising the water level by several feet.⁷²

⁶⁹ Hawes, Louis *Presences of Nature: British Landscape 1780-1830* New Haven, 1982, p181

⁷⁰ Collections on line NMSI, Object Number 1981-393, <http://collectionsonline.nmsi.ac.uk>

⁷¹ Althin, T. *Eric Geisler och haus utlandska resa, 1772-1773*. Med Hammare och Fackla, xxvi, 1971

⁷² Riewerts, Jim H, *Lead Mining in Derbyshire: History, Development and Drainage, 3. Elton and the Via Gellia* Ashbourne, 2010, p.149

Trevor Ford records that Hagg Mine “was driven on a *scrin* trending southeast some 300 metres north of the weir by Masson Mill. The workings are all flooded, having been pumped using a water-wheel during the mid-late 18th century.”⁷³

It is interesting to speculate on reasons that Wright’s painting didn’t include Masson Mills, close to a site where in 1771-2 a paper mill, drawing its power from the Derwent, had been established. It would most likely have been in view though, of course, the doubt about the date of the picture between 1780 and 1785 makes this uncertain as building commenced in 1783 and was completed the following year and it must be remembered that the tall chimney dates from 1900. The depiction of Masson Mill in George Robertson’s 1790’s watercolour,⁷⁴ a design for a plate decoration for Derby China Manufactory, shows the scale of the mill at that time and, shown from the South with Hagg Wood and Cat Tor behind, provides insights into what Wright overlooked, at least in one sense, in *View in Matlock Dale...* If Wright determinedly omitted the Mill it calls into question Egerton’s and Graciano’s views that this painting is, in this aspect, a literally transcribed landscape. Wright’s painting of Arkwright’s first mills, built in 1771, *Arkwright’s Cotton Mills by Night* is dated c.1782-3. This extraordinary painting shows the spectacle of the mills at Cromford lit up for the night shift under a full moon. Daniels observes that “We see nothing of the technology of production, nor of the women and children working at the machines...”⁷⁵ It is, despite that or perhaps even because of it, one of Wright’s most memorable and imaginatively engaging testaments to human labour, at one with the Hon. John Byng’s observations at Cromford in 1790: “These cotton mills, seven stories high, and fill’d with inhabitants, remind me of a first rate man of war; and when they are lighted up, on a dark night, look most luminously beautiful”.⁷⁶

Rev. R. Warner (1802) extolled the beauties of the Matlocks: “Here a scene burst upon us at once, impossible to be described – too extensive to be called picturesque, too diversified to be sublime, and too stupendous to be beautiful; but at the same time blending together all the constituent principles of these different qualities.”⁷⁷ Warner’s difficulty in categorization reflects his struggle to relate his perceptions of the Matlock landscape to the aesthetic prescriptions of William Gilpin.



William Gilpin *Scenery at Matlock*
(c.1772)

Private collection, Matlock

⁷³ Ford, Trevor (2001) *op.cit.* p.27 A '*scrin*' is “a mineralized joint or small fault fracture. The minor form of a rake.” For a fuller description of this and the wonderful lexicon of mining see: Riewerts, 1998, *op.cit.*

⁷⁴ Reproduced in *The Derwent Valley Mills and their Communities* Matlock, 2001, p.13

⁷⁵ Daniels, *op.cit.*, p.58

⁷⁶ Quoted in Egerton, *op.cit.*, pp.198-200

⁷⁷ Warner, Revd R *A Tour through the Northern Counties of England and the Borders of Scotland*, London, 1802, p166 quoted in Brighton, 2004, p109

In 1768 he defined the picturesque as "that kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture" and in the 1760s and '70s toured Britain applying his principles to the landscapes he saw including 'Matlock Vale' (*sic*) where "the ideas of sublimity and beauty are blended in a high degree." His appraisal during his visit of 1772 included a reservation: "The woods are subject to one great inconvenience – that of periodical lopping. About seven years ago, I had the mortification to see almost the whole of this scenery displaying one continued bald face of rock. It is now, I should suppose, in perfection. More wood would cover, and less would dismantle it." He provides an 'update' in a footnote: "This whole side of the river is now, I am told, in the hands of a proprietor, who will not allow the wood to be lopped periodically any more. It may however be suffered to become too luxuriant; and efface the rock."⁷⁸ Henry David Thoreau having read Gilpin's *Lakes of Cumberland* in 1852 wrote in his journal: "I wish Gilpin would look at scenery sometimes not with the eye of an artist. It is all side screens and fore screens and near distances and broken grounds with him." A year-and-a-half later he was more severe: "He is superficial. He does not go below the surface to account for the effect of form and colour."⁷⁹

Defoe recognized that 'landscaping' could be used to conceal something that was, in the eyes of those who had the power and means to change things, disagreeable. This included evidence of labour. He observed that on the east side of Chatsworth there was

...a very high mountain on the top of which they dig mill-stones, and it begins so close, and so overlooks the house, being prodigiously high ...yet this mountain is so planted, and so covered with a wood of beautiful trees, that you see no hill, only a rising wood, as if the trees grew so much higher than one another, and was only a wall of trees, whose tops join into one another so close, as nothing is seen through them.⁸⁰

Charles Dickens in his Christmas book of 1845, *The Chimes*, had his labourer, Will Fern, address a gathering of the prosperous bourgeoisie on the Picturesque at Bowley Hall:

Gentlefolks, I've lived many a year in this place. You may see the cottage from the sunk fence over yonder. I've seen the ladies draw it in their books a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I've heard say; but there an't weather in picters, and maybe 'tis fitter for that, than a place to live in.⁸¹

John Robert Cozens made two drawings *At the Smelting Mills near Matlock* in 1772, notable for the fact that he seemingly turned his back on any evidence of the industry, let alone any signs of laboring, but for a whisp of smoke.

⁷⁸ Gilpin, William *Observations, relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year 1772* pp. 217-220

⁷⁹ Moellering, Kurt A.R. *William Wordsworth, Henry David Thoreau and the Construction of the Green Atlantic World* Boston, Mass. 2010, p.24 (Dissertation, Northeastern University)

⁸⁰ Defoe, Daniel *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, London, 1726 Letter 8, pt 2.

⁸¹ Dickens, Charles (1845) *The Chimes: The Third Quarter* Ware, 2010, p.141 quoted in Andrews, Malcolm *The Search for the Picturesque Landscape, Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* Stanford, CA, 1990 p.236 An engraving of Will Fern's Cottage and a group of tourists, one of them drawing, by Clarkson Stansfield 1844 illustrates this. See an image scanned by Philip V Allingham at <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/chimes/10.html>

Thomas G. Andrews has observed that "It takes work to erase labor from a landscape."⁸² Writing of tourism, labour and the Colorado landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, he refers to the letters of a manual labourer, John Watt, "that provide clues to a riddle that historians have yet to solve. How and why did physical work and the people who performed it become increasingly invisible in a modern world constructed, maintained, and creatively destroyed by human labor?" For many businessmen and laboring classes alike, in a landscape of heavy industry, of steel mills and smelters, 'smoke meant work'. Watt, however, had labored 'with hammer, pick and shovel' for around half a century. He had built railroads. By 1917 he had become too feeble to keep a job and turned to writing.

He remembered a truth that others had forgotten: The American Landscape, as he put it in a memorable phrase, had been 'Made by Toile' – not only constructed, but operated, serviced, even torn asunder through the manual labor of millions of men and women.

Watt's letters testify to the dignity of a hitherto-unheralded workman. No less important, they remind historians of the importance of probing beyond disciplinary subdivisions to recover the intermingled histories of labor, landscape, and memory in industrializing America. For only by combining approaches from landscape studies, tourism studies, environmental history, labor and working-class history, cultural history, science and technology studies, and other fields can we understand why manual labor became so easy to overlook in a nation that remained dependent on the muscle power, skill, and knowledge of laboring people.⁸³

Andrews describes how, in the eighteenth century, tourists were attracted to viewing working mines. A travel writer in 1867 is quoted, "The descent into a mine in one of the inevitable things which a traveller must perform."⁸⁴ Human work, writes Andrews, particularly men's work in the mines, but also their labour on farms and ranches, was one of the most notable features of the Colorado landscape. This enthusiasm waned in the late nineteenth century and representations of work, workers and working landscapes diminished and "became peripheral to the main narrative threads."⁸⁵ The success of the railroads was accompanied by

scripting Colorado as a leisure paradise where elite visitors could contemplate sublime creation, marvel at human ingenuity, and engage in rugged play. Changes inaugurated by the railroads but reinforced by other elements of the travel industry together eroded labor's place on the land.⁸⁶

As rail travel became faster and more affordable it also reduced the exposure of tourists to work, workers and working landscapes.

Railroad travelers spent more of their itineraries moving through landscapes where the marks of human labor tended to be lighter and easier to ignore. That most gold and silver mines now plunged into the earth and out of sight further tempted travelers to overlook labor, as did the fences, gates, and guards employed by industrial corporations to shield factories, mills and company towns from prying eyes.⁸⁷

⁸² Andrews, Thomas G. Made by Toile"? Tourism, Labor, and the Construction of the Colorado Landscape, 1858-1917 in *The Journal of American History*, December 2005, pp.837-863

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.839

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.842 The travel writer quoted here is the poet Bayard Taylor.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.846

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.847

As bourgeois tourists were increasingly attracted by the romantic sublime there was an associated desire to efface evidence of labour in the landscape in ways that have importantly been challenged by Raymond Williams,

Once we begin to speak of men mixing their labour with the earth, we are in a whole world of new relations between man and nature, and to separate natural history from social history becomes extremely problematic.⁸⁸

Andrews concludes by venturing that we might re-envision the world from John Watt's point of view – "one from which we can learn to see labor and landscape, a diverse humanity and a still more 'varied and variable nature,' as interconnected, interdependent elements of a larger and profoundly troubled whole."⁸⁹

It is understandable that artists who vie for viewers' attention make much of spectacular subjects. Wright is unexceptional in this as his volcanic eruptions, iron forges, firework displays, mill lit at night and cottage on fire show. Arguably though, this blinds spectators to more subtle aspects of their surroundings. This is not to disparage Wright's work as, after all, it was made in the context of an eighteenth century aesthetic. It is interesting that, though he painted Arkwright's Mill at Cromford he apparently never turned his artistic attention to the earlier Lombe's Mill, Derby Silk Mill, 'the first great landmark of the industrial age', designed by George Sorocold in 1718 and built on the banks of the Derwent almost a stone's throw from Wright's birthplace in Irongate and his house, Old St. Helen's House, in King Street. It would have been a more familiar sight for Wright than was Arkwright's creation but, of course, it wasn't spectacularly set in a romantic landscape.

(Re)figuring Landscape

Johanna Schopenhauer was one of Derbyshire's most noteworthy tourists at the beginning of the nineteenth century. German interest in Britain extended beyond its topography and since the 1750s technological advances had motivated travel. Alison Martin explains that Johanna's merchant husband set an itinerary that included the Midlands "precisely because it allowed them to visit the mines, furnaces, and rolling mills of Britain's industrial heartland". Her original account was published in 1813. Travelling northwards from Dover her tour took her to Birmingham, Derby, Matlock, Castleton and beyond. Martin observes that "...she chose to engage directly with one highly problematic aspect in the representation of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century landscape: the encroachment of industry and industrial labour on it."⁹⁰ In Joseph Wright's paintings "the influence of industry on landscape could be benign and unthreatening, if industrial features such as the mills, or the chimney of a local lead-mine on the horizon, were introduced into the picture using a sense of scale which kept in check their influence on the landscape."⁹¹ By comparison, Martin says, De Louthembourg's *Coalbrook Dale by Night* (1801), "an infernal apocalyptic scene" of a blast furnace, is a more troubled prospect. Martin continues: "The incorporation of factories and industrial labour into

⁸⁸ Williams, R. 'Ideas of Nature', from *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays*, London, 2005 p.77 quoted in Andrews, 2005, p.837

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.863

⁹⁰ Martin, Alison E., 'Sympathy and Spectacle: Visual Representation in Johanna Schopenhauer's *Reise durch England und Schottland*' in Martin, Alison E. *Moving Scenes: The Aesthetics of German Travel Writing on England 1783-1830* London, 2008, Ch.5, pp. 114-139

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.116

the landscape was therefore potentially problematic, but the entry of a mine, mill, and factory workers into the aesthetic domain raised still more difficult issues about the relationship between the artist and the laboring poor, which addressed complex notions of sympathy and of social criticism.⁹² Though Wright's work rarely, if ever, engages viewers in complexities of this order, undoubtedly they lay behind the industrial scenes he painted. When journeying to Castleton, Schopenhauer recorded:

Initially we still saw from time to time impressive factory buildings of considerable size, but these soon disappeared. We were now travelling through the most miserable, empty, and wretched landscape in England, the Derbyshire lead mines.⁹³

Schopenhauer's writing was distinguished by its human interest. She was not content to describe scenery alone, however impressive it was, and was not prepared for human figures to become insignificant 'staffage', writing of "inhabitants of this wasteland, exhausted by the dreadful work in the lead mines."⁹⁴ Martin concludes that:

In the *Reise durch England und Schottland*, Schopenhauer was concerned to describe the British landscape in terms which railed against the potentially more trivial nature of picturesque tourism. Her work challenged in particular the tenets of disinterested contemplation and the autonomy of the aesthetic domain from moral, political, or utilitarian concerns and activities that had hitherto characterized German aesthetic discourse.⁹⁵

Some of the best known representations of mining are those drawings made by Henry Moore whilst an official war artist in the Second World War. After he had completed the 'Shelter drawings', he visited Wheldale Colliery in his home town of Castleford in West Yorkshire where he recorded the miners' labours. Graham Sutherland, who had worked as an engineering draughtsman at Derby railway works before studying etching at Goldsmith's College of Art, went on to show interest in romantic depictions of empty and desolate parts of the country including Welsh valleys that had apparently hardly been touched by the presence of man. Richard Dormont comments: "It is as if Sutherland has looked at the countryside with such intensity that he sees through its surface to geological bones beneath the earth's skin."⁹⁶ Sutherland did turn to depicting evidence of industry in landscape. Discussing the many open quarries and tin mines in a new exhibition of Sutherland's work on paper at Modern Art Oxford (curated, with an insightful catalogue essay, by George Shaw) Laura Cumming writes:

Underlying structure is his technical forte. But from first to last there is also this dark internalized excitement.

It is there in the three *Studies of a Mountain*, in which the mountain swells to bursting point with blood-coloured emissions. It is there in the mines that open like raging infernos and the heaps of stones that seem to hold the contours of human faces. But most of all it is here in Pembrokeshire and what lies beneath its surface.⁹⁷

92 *Ibid.*

93 Johanna Schopenhauer *Reise durch England und Schottland*, in *Sämmtliche Schriften*, 24 vols, Leipzig, 1830-31, xv, (1830), 190-91, quoted in Martin, *ibid.* p.118

94 *Ibid.*, p.118

95 *Ibid.*, p.136

96 Dormont, Richard Graham Sutherland: An Unfinished World A review of an exhibition at Modern Art Oxford 10 December 2011 - 18 March 2012 The Telegraph 3 January 2012

97 Cumming, Laura 'How grim were his valleys...' Graham Sutherland: An Unfinished World at Modern Art, Oxford 10 December 2011 - 18 March 2012 The Observer, 18 December 2011

Sutherland's work at the time of his commissions for the War Artist's Scheme included bomb damage in South Wales and London; iron and steel manufacture in South Wales; Cornish tin mines; opencast coal production, and limestone quarrying in Derbyshire.

At the time of writing this essay (January 2012) a forthcoming exhibition of new landscape works by David Hockney RA, is the subject of a number of articles. The show features "vivid paintings inspired by the East Yorkshire landscape", large-scale works created especially for the galleries of the Royal Academy of Arts.⁹⁸ Charles Saumarez-Smith begins:

Once, the English landscape was a prime subject for British art. From the time of the pioneering watercolour artist Paul Sandby in the mid-18th century right into the early 20th century, British painters responded keenly to particular features of the nation's countryside, beginning with fields and hills, and soon enough, as travel writer and painter John Brown put it in 1753, to "the beauty, horror and immensity" of the Lake District, Scotland and Wales...

For two centuries, to go out into the countryside and capture the land on canvas was an indisputably legitimate form of British art. Now, however, the painting of landscape is effectively taboo. It is regarded as too cosy, too much a part of an old, stolid tradition...⁹⁹

Saumarez-Smith goes on to acknowledge strengths in that tradition, mentioning Alexander Cozens, Paul Nash, and Eric Ravilious. Of Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson he notes,

Even they were deeply influenced by the stiffly bleak landscapes around Zennor in north Cornwall.

In the 1950s, this element vanished from the mainstream. What began to count, and to sell, was introspective and urban. Wrestling with abstract ideas, artists lost interest in observation and faithfully mapping the world in two dimensions.¹⁰⁰

The article continues with recognition that traditional artists continued to paint realist landscapes "with barely a nod what was happening in the mainstream."¹⁰¹ This was not only evident in Britain. "In our own time" writes Dushko Petrovich, "landscape painting retains an unquestionable popular appeal. As civilization pulls us further and further from nature, it is no surprise that we cherish glimpses of arcadia...There is a place, however, where landscapes have almost disappeared: serious contemporary painting."¹⁰² Saumarez-Smith, citing Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy, reflects that the return to prominence of landscape in the 1970s was, "not through painting but conceptual art". "Refreshingly anti-conceptual" were the Brotherhood of Ruralists who emerged in the mid-1970s, but whose work now appears "sentimental and nostalgic...All said, very few major artists in the postwar period have *wanted* to paint the British landscape."¹⁰³ David Hockney is, he writes, "the significant exception" who "has done exactly what pioneering landscape artists

98 *David Hockney RA: A Bigger Picture* at Royal Academy, London, 21st January to 9th April 2012.

99 Saumarez-Smith, Charles '*Country Strong*', Prospect Magazine, Issue 190, January 2012.

100 *Ibid.*

101 *Ibid.*

102 Petrovich, Dushko *Where Nature went: Landscape painting shaped the direction of art for a century, then all but vanished. What happened?* Boston Sunday Globe, Ideas Section, 1 March 2009

103 Saumarez-Smith, *op.cit.*

did 250 years ago...he has gone out and captured British nature, 21st-century nature in this case, for posterity."¹⁰⁴

Martin Gayford, the art historian who has published a book of conversations with Hockney, observed:

He has always had an inner certainty that gives him the confidence to challenge orthodoxy about anything he feels strongly about. That has shown throughout his career, including in his decision to take on landscape painting. People said landscape painting was over and he took that as a challenge, as can be seen in this new exhibition.¹⁰⁵

There is little to disagree with in any of this. Saumarez-Smith acknowledges that though Hockney's pastoral paintings are "bold and eye-grabbing" they are "at the same time traditional". Hockney is "a master of perspective and mood, of trees and fields in their natural place. On his own Hockney seems to have reinvented a genre that practically died after the second world war".¹⁰⁶ In Gayford's conversations Hockney says that abstraction "...can't go anywhere. Even (Jackson) Pollock's painting is a dead end." "The alternative he has chosen", writes Gayford, "is heightened naturalism."¹⁰⁷

Whilst accepting Hockney's accomplishments, surely Saumarez-Smith's claim regarding his achievement in reinventing the genre is an exaggeration?

Saumarez-Smith points to a disjuncture that occurred in contemporary art when conceptual art was widely seen to be at odds with tradition in every respect. Undoubtedly the most interesting work in landscape that was done in the second half of the twentieth century was by so-called 'Land Artists' who were engaged with, to adopt the title of a significant publication of 1987, "The Unpainted Landscape".¹⁰⁸ One of the most enduring influences has been Robert Smithson (1938-1973) whose fascination with industrial sites distinguishes him from those British artists who have often concerned themselves with the pastoral or relatively remote landscapes such as, in the work of Richard Long, Dartmoor. Ben Tufnell writes of Smithson:

Quarries were important to him because in them the strata of rock is laid bare – thus revealing the intoxicating passage of time – but also for their cultural implications. Smithson was fascinated by the way in which landscape is marked by man's use of it, seeing this as a wholly natural process. For him, such sites embodied the sense of collapse – of entropy – that he felt was a guiding principle of existence.¹⁰⁹

Smithson would probably have been surprised to know that the phrase "entropy tourism" has been coined.¹¹⁰

104 *Ibid.*

105 Martin Gayford quoted in Booth, Robert 'Hockney by Royal appointment...at last', *The Guardian*, 2 January 2012, p.3

106 Saumarez-Smith, *op.cit.*

107 Quoted in Prodger, M 'David Hockney: A life spent looking' *Standpoint*, December 2011

108 Cutts, Simon et al. *The Unpainted Landscape*, Coracle Press, London, 1987

109 Tufnell, Ben *Land Art* London, 2006 p.32

110 This was first spotted by the author in a review by Iain Sinclair of 'Savage Messiah' by Laura Oldfield Ford, *Guardian Review*, 24 December 2011, p.8. Sinclair, fulminating against the ravages, as he sees them, of the Lower Lea Valley (the site of the 2012 Olympics) he writes that the invasion "by fork-tongued instruments of global capitalism, hellbent on improving the image of destruction, has been duplicated by raiding parties bearing cameras and notebooks, the tattered footsoldiers of anarchy: retro-geographers, punk Vorticists. Sentimentalists of every stripe are undertaking knotweed rambles as pilgrimages to rescue the last remnants of locality...".

Dushko Petrovich, considering how landscape painting might be remade in the light of threats to the global environment, writes:

What has changed, clearly, is how we see nature itself. The traditional model – in which we were separate from nature and enjoyed its representation as a form of escapism – won't work anymore. No longer able to see our world as simply beautiful, artists also have to see what humans have done to imperil it, which will necessarily change the way it is depicted, and the point of depicting it...

And painting, with its long tradition, might have a special – if difficult – role to play. With pure formal innovation having exhausted itself in the last century, and with scientific or political remedies clearly beyond its purview, contemporary landscape painting faces a task that is both humble and daunting. But the project also represents an enormous opportunity, given landscape's immense popularity with the general public, and our increasingly shared concern with the environment.¹¹¹

Petrovich's remarks concern landscape on a grand scale, nature indeed. This can conceal, as has happened in the past, the role of individuals and communities in landscape, occluding images of labour.

Tom Mitchell cites Raymond Williams, "A working country is hardly ever a landscape," and John Barrell who showed how labourers are kept in the "dark side" of English landscape to keep their work from spoiling the philosophical contemplation of natural beauty.¹¹² He quotes Emerson: "You cannot *freely* admire a noble landscape, if laborers are digging in the field hard by."¹¹³

The artist who most significantly might be credited with infusing landscape painting in Britain with new blood was the Cornishman, Peter Lanyon (1918-1964), inexcusably omitted from Saumarez-Smith's list of noteworthy twentieth century British landscape painters, brief though that is. One has to be careful because Lanyon was an uneven painter and his influence hasn't had the effect on the genre of landscape that his best work presaged. In the context of any discussion of the depiction of human labour in landscape painting, Lanyon's *St Just* (1952-3), and associated works in the early '50s, should be pre-eminent. Margaret Garlake describes *St Just* as:

...the most richly allusive of all his paintings. The subjects of the painting are the small, grey, granite town, St Just, which has a Wesleyan amphitheatre at its centre, and a notorious mining disaster that occurred in 1919, when thirty-one men were killed by defective machinery in the nearby Levant Mine. The painting is intensely Cornish, historically specific, a protest against exploitation and greed, combined with a Christian theme.¹¹⁴

Lanyon is reported to have said "I paint the landscape, it's all mining country and fishing country and I'm really painting the face of working people".¹¹⁵ Though Lanyon declared that "I think of myself as a landscape painter in the tradition of Constable and Turner", following the route of so many innovative artists, he had to risk abandoning something of that tradition to which he was attached. Without the

111 Petrovich, *op.cit.*

112 Williams, Raymond *The Country and the City* London, 1973, p.120
Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape*

113 Emerson, Ralph Waldo *Nature* (1836) in *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures* ed. Spiller, Robert E. and Ferguson, Alfred R, Cambridge, Mass. 1971) p.39 quoted *ibid.* p.15

114 Garlake, Margaret *Peter Lanyon* London, 1998 pp.13,39-40.

115 Quoted by Norman Levine in 'The First of the Cornish Painters', BBC radio programme, broadcast 18 Jan 1965, National Sound Archive 29506 and in Stephens, Chris *Peter Lanyon: At the edge of landscape* London, 2000 p.101

conventional fixed viewpoint and spatial structure that had typified landscape painting, and drawing on some lessons from Cubism, perhaps with insights into phenomenology in the work of Maurice-Merleau Ponty,¹¹⁶ Lanyon was freed embody a range of concerns in this work without resorting to illustration. This adventure, of course, had the hazard that the unfamiliarity of the form might make the work unintelligible to viewers with expectations of what a landscape painting should be. John Berger, whilst admiring the pictorial qualities of Lanyon's works posed questions around the legibility of their content.¹¹⁷ One might observe that learning to read takes time, and just as we are now more familiar with considering landscapes as 'texts' that may be read, so viewers are increasingly accustomed to engaging with multi-faceted artworks, and gestural abstraction is commonplace in contemporary landscape painting (for, despite Saumarez-Smith's observations about the decline of landscape painting there is still widespread practice, both amateur and professional, that engages in it).

David Crouch observed that "The presence of people in Lanyon's art is not usually translated into marks on the painting's surface, but their lives are inscribed in the selection of knowledge used, as in *Lost Mine* (1951)"¹¹⁸. "Lanyon believed," Crouch writes "that the social practices revealed in 'landscape' provided the setting which justified memory."¹¹⁹

My desire has indeed been to know the place, to be able to read the codes of, for example, the public footpaths and bridleways; to have a competence with respect to this landscape...to be local and party to its stories, in a sense here is a desire to 'know' what cannot be seen.¹²⁰

Crouch¹²¹ explains that the ideas of Naum Gabo regarding spatiality helped Lanyon towards an approach in which:

By removing the static viewpoint from landscape and introducing an image constructed or in my case evolved out of many experiences the problem of landscape becomes one of painting environment, place and a revelation of a time process as an immediate spatial fact on the surface.¹²²

Andrew Causey¹²³ has written at length about *St Just* quoting extensively a letter by Lanyon in 1952:

The miner extracts inside the earth; his trolleyings in the galleries, a shuttling within the earth and his laborious incisions eventually brought 'to grass' (a miner's term for the surface)...But the mine is also hollow and men have their being therein and the miner also comes up to grass and he brings with him the ore in his legs and is a body of it and he passes it all upward and is an optimist.¹²⁴

116 Stephens, *op.cit.* p.100

117 John Berger 'Landscapes and Close-ups', *New Statesman and Nation*, vol 47, no 1204, 3 Apr 1954, p.436 quoted in Stephens, *op.cit.* p.102 Berger's point is discussed in Causey, A. *Peter Lanyon: Modernism and the Land* London 2006, Ch. 4, pp.143-144

118 Crouch, David *Flirting with Space: Journeys and Creativity* Farnham, 2010 p.33

119 *Ibid.*

120 *Ibid.* Crouch quotes Lanyon from Game A. *Undoing the Social: Towards a Deconstructive Sociology* Buckingham 1991, p.184

121 *Ibid.*, p.36

122 Lanyon, P. quoted in Lanyon A., *Peter Lanyon* Newlyn, 1993, p.290 and cited *ibid.* p.36

123 Causey, A *op.cit.* pp.113-151

124 *Ibid.* quoting Peter Lanyon's letter to Roland Bowden, 20 April 1952.

Considering Lanyon's "immersion in landscape" Causey reflects on Nina Lübbren's observation that in writing of nineteenth-century artist colonies many critical texts concentrate on the gaze, "the *visual* apprehension of the world." "The gaze is predominantly figured as active, masterful and distanced from its object. This is the controlling gaze of the panorama painter, situated on a look-out point and viewing the scene spread out beneath him."¹²⁵

Causey concludes that Lanyon's intention was not to be 'controlling', on a look-out point, but "to be an embodied presence in a landscape that is itself a more extensive body."¹²⁶

Prunella Clough (1919-1999) a British artist much less regarded than her work merits, spoke of her interest in particular types of landscape:

I work from subject matter, things perceived, and the things that I see tend to be somewhat murky. I am not interested in fields and woods even though they are man-made. I prefer to look at the urban or industrial scene or any unconsidered piece of ground.¹²⁷

Clough's approach was rooted in her engagement with landscape: "I can locate all the ingredients of a painting in the richness of the outside world, the world of perception." She said "I'm trying to reach beyond the mere manufacture of a painting, the getting-it-all-together, and this takes time. Paintings are made slowly because I work on many things at once. Time is part of the factor of change."¹²⁸ Margaret Garlake has written of the way in which Clough "returned frequently to the conventionally beautiful landscapes of Dorset and Wiltshire, Derbyshire, the Yorkshire Moors, Northumberland, and in later life the Scottish Highlands."¹²⁹

On these often complicated if not chaotic journeys Prunella would pass abruptly from the ancient places marked by stone circles, abbeys and churches to walk on a slag heap or scrutinise a mining area. She chose not to paint the lush, dramatic landscapes of conventional tourism, though they were evidently important to her...¹³⁰

I have known the area around the Gang Vein and Dene Hollow for over fifty years and have witnessed many changes, both in its physical character and in people's regard for it. It is a landscape that is, in its relation to the spectacle of Matlock Dale, rather like the coastal strip of Cumbria between Morecambe Bay and St Bees Head is to the Lake District that has been the subject of photographs by the artist Jem Southam. Nicholas Alfrey writes:

The scenes photographed by Southam along this part of the coast take their place within the foreground of that mighty panorama evoked in Wordsworth's lines on Black Combe. This coastal strip, however, is a place that most later visitors to the Lakes have preferred to regard from a distance, an industrial belt between the sea and the boundary of the National Park, an overlooked poor relation to the most celebrated area of scenic beauty in the country. The activities carried on in this zone, moreover, are not the kind calculated to soothe the

125 Lübbren, N. *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe, 1870-1910* Manchester 2001, p.90

126 Causey *op.cit.* p.146

127 Prunella Clough 'Interview with Bryan Robertson, 1982' from an exhibition catalogue *Prunella Clough: New Paintings 1979-82* Warwick, London 1982 in *Prunella Clough* London, 2007

128 Prunella Clough 'Interview with Bryan Robertson, 1996' from 'Happiness is the light' in *Modern Painters, Summer 1996 Ibid.*, p53

129 Garlake, Margaret 'Fishermen and Velvet Kebabs: Prunella Clough's Subjects' *Ibid.*, p100

130 *Ibid.*

sensibilities of the latter-day picturesque tourist...But this is just the kind of morally and environmentally complex space to which Southam has always found himself drawn.¹³¹

As a student in the 1960s I made a painting of the two miners trapped in Godbehere's Founder in 1797 one of whom was rescued alive though the agency of Charles Hurt.¹³² The approach was drawn from an interest I had then in Sidney Nolan's folk storytelling in paintings of the Australian outlaw Ned Kelly. My attempt at narrative was unsuccessful and the painting was never exhibited and subsequently destroyed.

On leaving art school my paintings were concerned with the depiction of organic forms of my own invention. A strong influence on this approach lay in my response to the ideas of Paul Klee as expressed in his wonderful notebooks and being introduced to "On Growth and Form" by Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (1917), a book that was to have an influence on many artists but had been drawn to my attention through the work of Richard Hamilton and the exhibition *On Growth and Form* at the ICA, London, in 1951.¹³³ In 1969 I became fascinated by the 'Game of Life' of the mathematician John Horton Conway, then at Cambridge. I had read about this in articles by Martin Gardner in 'Scientific American'¹³⁴ and, though it seemingly had nothing to do with art, determined to embrace it in my approach to painting. In mathematical terms it is a cellular automaton.

The 'game' is a 'zero-player game' meaning that its evolution is determined by its initial state, requiring no further input. One interacts with the Game of Life by creating an initial configuration and observing how it evolves.¹³⁵

What appealed to me about this was the way in which it was concerned with change and decay and their 'histories', which I interpreted analogously relating to, for example, communities of people or plants. Thus, though my works had a very different appearance to what I had done before, there were conceptual links. It also interested me to adopt a 'systems approach', the roots of which lay in my earlier biomorphic work, but by more determinedly following 'rules' imposed by the 'Game' and my associated systems of applying colour. This was, of course, completely at odds with the intuitive approaches involving qualitative problem solving that I, and most other artists, had been used to. My interests in this were nourished by knowledge of the work of the British, now American, artist Mark Lancaster (e.g. *Cambridge Michaelmas*, 1969).¹³⁶

¹³¹ Alfrey, Nicholas *Overlooked from Black Combe* in Southam, Jem *Clouds Descending* Salford Quays, 2008, p.24

¹³² Glover, Stephen (Noble, Thomas, Ed.) *The Peak Guide: containing the topographical, statistical, and general history of Buxton, Chatsworth, Edensor, Castleton (sic.) Bakewell, Haddon, Matlock and Cromford: with an introduction, giving a succinct account of the trade and manufactures of the county; a alphabetical list of noblemen and gentlemen's seats, and several road sketches...* Derby, 1830 pp.128-130 This is a full account of the rescue.

¹³³ *Pop Daddy: Richard Hamilton* Tate Magazine, Issue 4, March-April 2003, includes Hamilton's own description of the exhibition 'On Growth and Form' (1951), the ICA's contribution to the Festival of Britain, which is useful in explaining what follows here.

¹³⁴ Scientific American, October 1969, February and April 1970

¹³⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conway's_Game_of_Life

¹³⁶ Reproduced in *British painting and sculpture 1960-1970*, an exhibition organized by the Tate Gallery and the British Council, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC 12 Nov 1970 - 3 January 1971, London, 1970 p.50.

The permutations of colour to be found in his work are not the product of sudden impulse. Each painting is carefully planned beforehand, and each painting is a part of a continuous process of thought, embodied and made visible.¹³⁷

The place of process in landscape has been much discussed in cultural studies in geography. Tom Mitchell introduced his influential 'Landscape and Power' with: "The aim of this book is to change 'landscape' from a noun to a verb" and, as a thesis on landscape, "Landscape is not a genre of art but a medium".¹³⁸

One of the 'Game of Life' paintings to which I devoted much time, and about which I have written, was *Stratiform, 5 x 2, 1971*.¹³⁹ Though not a landscape, its title does suggest characteristics that might be associated with geological stratigraphy.

Returning to that landscape in which the chimney in Wright's *View in Matlock Dale* is located, the Gang Vein and Dean Hollow: in recent years I have become aware of the Derbyshire poems of the Cambridge poet, Peter Riley who lived in Bolehill, close to Black Rocks. An important lead mine, Bage, is situated in this small village and the place name 'Bolehill', quite common in Derbyshire, testifies to it as a site where smelting was done, often, as here, taking advantage of the prevailing winds and western facing slopes. 'Kings Field'¹⁴⁰, in Riley's anthology (1983) 'Tracks and Mineshafts' reflects the lead-mining landscape around Wirksworth.

Patches of bare earth on the far hillside: abandoned mines, standing / out like sores through the rough mingling pastoral surface – / scorched by the core of the earth as by a passing meteor. Sites of / encounter, engagement, victory and defeat, where a piece of nature / split against humanity, into metal and slag. (1-5) ¹⁴¹

Riley's anthology '*The Derbyshire Poems*' includes an outstanding piece 'A Note on Vein Forms' that is wholly relevant to an understanding of this mined landscape.¹⁴²

137 *Ibid.*, p.57

138 Mitchell, W.J.T.(Ed) *Landscape and Power* Chicago and London, p.1

139 David Ainley *Stratiform, 5 x 2 1971* (Unpublished exhibition handout, 1971)

140 'The Kings Field' Much of the mining area around Wirksworth was part of 'The King's Field'. Kirkham, N, *op.cit.* pp.13-16.

141 Riley, Peter *Tracks and Mineshafts* Matlock, 1983, p. 23. The poem also appears in Riley, Peter *The Derbyshire Poems* Exeter, 2010, p.27. The poem is not set out here, line by line, as it is in the anthologies (apologies).

142 *Ibid.*, pp.175-186



Hillocks and hollows on the Gang Vein (2012) Photograph: David Ainley

For many years I walked over the Gang Vein and, rather than following Psalm 121.1 and lifting up my eyes to the hills and regarding the spectacle of High Tor and Cat Tor in Matlock Dale to the North, in the early days of my walks I had to keep my eyes to the ground for fear of falling down one of the many open mineshafts. Drops, sometimes of hundreds of feet, were sometimes concealed by only a few twigs overgrown by grass. Most, but not all, of the shafts in the area have now been capped, but walkers should still be wary. I dropped stones down these abandoned shafts, as the 12-year old Auden had done in Weardale, when he had a civilizing and creative epiphany that awakened his poetic sensibility:

There I dropped pebbles, heard / The reservoir of darkness stirred¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Auden, W.H. *New Year Letter* London, 1941, p56



David Ainley *Quarrying # 4 (Derbyshire)* (1995)

David Ainley *Quarrying # 11* (1995)

My response to this and the nearby Dean Quarry and Middleton Mine, a massive limestone mine beneath Middleton Moor, was to make a series of paintings, *Quarrying*, that were as unlike a conventional landscape format as possible. Each was six feet high, my height, and about as wide as a hand span. Most of them had what appeared to be a single brushstroke (though in fact it was painted in layers) stretching from top to bottom, and some had a strip of previously painted canvas wound round this vertical, spiralling down, an idea about drilling into the earth.



Dene Quarry (2012) Photograph: David Ainley

Dean Hollow is now a vast quarry, begun, as a plaque now records, when Don Harris "on 6 May 1942 walked onto this hillside with a wheelbarrow and hard shovel and started Dene Quarry." Drilling in preparation for blasting is a common sight. In milliseconds 300 million years of geological history and evidence of probably over 500 years of mining is destroyed on a regular basis, and yet each time something is revealed. Though it now largely produces roadstone, the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank is one of many important buildings in which Dene's dimension stone has been used.¹⁴⁴

J. Wheatcroft's *Plan of Mines and Veins in the Dene Hollow Area, Cromford, Derbyshire* (1826)¹⁴⁵ shows how extensive were the veins in this area, now quarried out. *Portobello (Veins)* refers to a large vein and mine that lie just beyond the western boundary of Dene Quarry, and some evidence of it remains at surface. Like so many of the wonderful mine names that I use in the series of drawings *Reservoirs of Darkness* the source of this name is uncertain, though the Battle of Portobello was fought in 1739 by the British navy who gained a popularly acclaimed victory over the Spanish defenders of the port in Panama. The name was frequently used to commemorate the battle, hence Portobello Road in London and the Portobello district of Edinburgh. The poet Peter Riley made a preliminary survey of mine names in 1977. "Generally speaking, we could consider a mine's

144 Photographs and information about Dene Quarry is on the British Geological Survey site at <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/foundation-web/AggregatesDean.htm>

145 Reproduced in Ford, T (2005) *op.cit.*, p.14

name as part of its history, and as such due as much respect as any piece of rusted machinery or hole in the ground.”¹⁴⁶



Dean Hollow Barmaster’s Map 1899 Portobello Mine and veins at top left

The Gang Vein and Dene Hollow is the landscape that Wright apparently didn’t visit, though it seems likely that he would have known of it and the extraordinary feats of the soughers who tunneled into the rock to lower the water table to enable mining to take place at greater depths. Researches indicate that the sough driven by Sir Cornelius Vermuyden in 1632 from Cromford Hill into the Gang and Dovegang mines had been preceded by at least one and possibly three others.¹⁴⁷ These soughs were particularly significant not only in draining the mines but in supplying water power to Arkwright’s Cromford Mill. The mighty Meerbrook Sough between the Wirksworth lead mines and the Derwent near Whatstandwell was first driven between 1772 and 1813 and the principal proprietor of the Meerbrook Sough Company was Francis Hurt of Alderwasley Hall (who sat for Wright around 1780).

¹⁴⁶ Riley, Peter *Peak District Mine Names: A Preliminary Survey* in Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society, Vol. 6, No.5, pp.241-248 April 1977

¹⁴⁷ Ford, T and Riewerts, J, *op.cit.* p.34

The arch keystone on the sough tail is "FH 1772". As the new sough was more than 30m lower than Cromford Sough it greatly reduced the flow of that watercourse, and drastically diminished a source of power on which Arkwright relied as well as lowering the level of both the Cromford Canal, started in 1789 to transport goods, and the River Ecclesbourne in Wirksworth. This led to a bitter legal dispute and it required an Act of Parliament to restart work on the Meerbrook Sough in 1841. It took the soughers until 1845 to reach Bolehill, only two miles from the sough tail.¹⁴⁸ The progress made by miners before the use of explosives was painfully slow, averaging about 1½ inches (3.8 cm) per shift in 1670, reaching only 2½ to 3 inches (6.4 to 7.6 cm) per shift almost half a century later.¹⁴⁹

In a statement of September 2007 I described something of my approach to two ongoing series of works:

My paintings and drawings are the product of lengthy and complex processes. The form of a cross in the *Landscape Issues* series is cut from the support on which the painting is to be made and, in the *Veins* series the lines depicting the mineral deposits are sawn right through the panel. Following this a succession of layers of monochrome are painted, between each of which hundreds of horizontal lines are cut through to what lies beneath. At each stage the surfaces are scraped down and re-painted. Paradoxically though there is a considerable thickness of paint (perhaps thirty layers) the surfaces of the paintings appear relatively flat. This approach to painting, in which the process is an aspect of the content, involves order, chance, surprise, creation and destruction. Often something visually appealing is completely overpainted as a prelude to making further discoveries in the work. Many colours underlie what eventually has, at first sight, some characteristics of a minimalist monochrome. These are not, however, minimalist paintings, but the outcome of something akin to the concerns of the American poet, Lorine Niedecker, who spoke of her work as 'condensery'. When much that is communicated nowadays has the longevity of a sound-bite, when 'heritage' risks over-commercialisation and excessive interpretation, and when painting and drawing are often seen as less appropriate media than moving, digital, imagery, I have a commitment to making still, quiet, images which, like the landscapes to which they relate, have the potential to educe responses and reveal their content over time.¹⁵⁰

The slow repetitive work in drawing the horizontal lines, layer by layer, in these paintings (and in the *Reservoirs of Darkness* drawings) echoes the laborious efforts of miners as they searched for ore. Particularly impressive examples of this are in the Masson Mines complex, which included the show caves across the valley opposite High Tor, where distinctive "woodpecker work" is evident:

Each cavity is around 2m long and is characterized by numerous pick marks, sometimes known as "woodpecker work". Before the days of using explosives in mining this was the usual means of extracting minerals. Some of the smaller pick-marks may date back to Roman times...Most of the visible woodpecker work is probably mediaeval. Galena lined the walls of the cavities and was carefully picked off with long chisels...these ancient workings are part of Nestus Pipe, recorded as the Breakholes as early as 1470.¹⁵¹

148 James, Roger 'Mine Drainage and Water Resources' in *Mining History: The Bulletin of the Peak District Mines Historical Society*, Vol. 13, No.4, Winter 1997, pp.77-79

149 Ford and Riewerts, *op.cit.*, p 29

150 David Ainley Exhibition Handout, September 2007

151 Ford and Riewerts *op.cit.* p.141-144 See also Ford (2001) *op.cit.* p12, plate 16, for a photograph 'Pick-marks in a pocket lined with galena in the Lower Nestus Mine'.



David Ainley *Portobello (Veins)* 2010-11

In the paintings such as *Portobello (Veins)* the drawing of the horizontal lines, is undertaken with blades. Each line has a particular character determined by the quality of the blade used (steel varies in its durability), the wear it has had previously, the speed of drawing and the pressure applied, together with the hardness of the paint layer determined by the time it has dried and the addition of specific acrylic mediums. This approach to painting has many analogies with mining through, for example, shared concerns in prospecting, adventuring, and proceeding with a notion of what will be found associated with elements of chance that frustrate or facilitate progress. In this respect the systems approaches adopted in my work in the early '70s have become more open to intuition, responding to a feeling for the work as it proceeds rather as those old miners of William Hooson's ilk did. The idea of 'winning' in mining associated with 'the hard-won image' in painting is appealing.¹⁵²

152 'The Hard-Won' image is a phrase I like, though most of the paintings shown in the exhibition of that name at Tate Gallery in 1984 had works that don't particularly interest me. A review by Richard Shone in the Burlington Magazine, Vol. 126, No.979, Oct 1984 pp.651-650 observed that in a show "used as a stick to beat the Modernists, the non-figurative and conceptual...the well-intentioned work failed to convince" because "The image has not been returned to us

Of the many derivations of 'landscape' from various languages one that seems particularly relevant to ideas with which I work is given by the philosopher Edward S. Casey. He pointed out that landscape is not only a matter of visibility but in etymological terms 'landscape' is very much a 'landshape':

Skep-, a likely root of 'scape', means to cut, to scrape, and even to hack. Landscape possesses the sculpting power of a *hapjo*, Germanic for 'cutting tool' and a close relative of *skep*-... Landscape is also *what is cut out*, the *skopo* – another Germanic word, one that means 'container', as does Middle Dutch *shope*, a cousin of English 'scoop'. As cut out from the earth, scraped within its surface, a landscape becomes a container; the scrape is also the scoop. Thus telluric violence gives way to conservation, allowing landscapes to hold and retain things (and memories of things).¹⁵³



David Ainley *Portobello (Veins)* Detail

Crouch writes of paintings in the *Landscape Issues and Veins* series: "Ainley's work seeks to express the work of mining and minerals...he is not seeking to emulate or shadow the miner's work but to express the experience of hard, serial, habitual labour and offer their practice through his own gesture. The layers facing miners and the labour emerge, now familiarly unnoticed from above."¹⁵⁴

This has always been a politicized landscape in which, for example, the competing demands of different industrialists in the past (for example, Arkwright and the Wirksworth miners) and of present-day quarry-owners, conservationists and tourists are apparent. The approach that the artist and film-maker Patrick Keiller has in

'reinvented'." When I think of 'hard-won' work I am more inclined to go to the paintings of, for example, James Hugonin. See: Davey, Richard *James Hugonin* Edinburgh 2010

153 Casey, Edward S. *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* Quoted by David Ainley in 'Legacy: Paintings and Drawings', Exhibition handout, Bolehill, 2007

154 Crouch *op.cit.* p.90

reflecting, with great subtlety and power, the complexity behind an outwardly untroubled landscape provides many insights into how relationships of this kind might be explored.¹⁵⁵

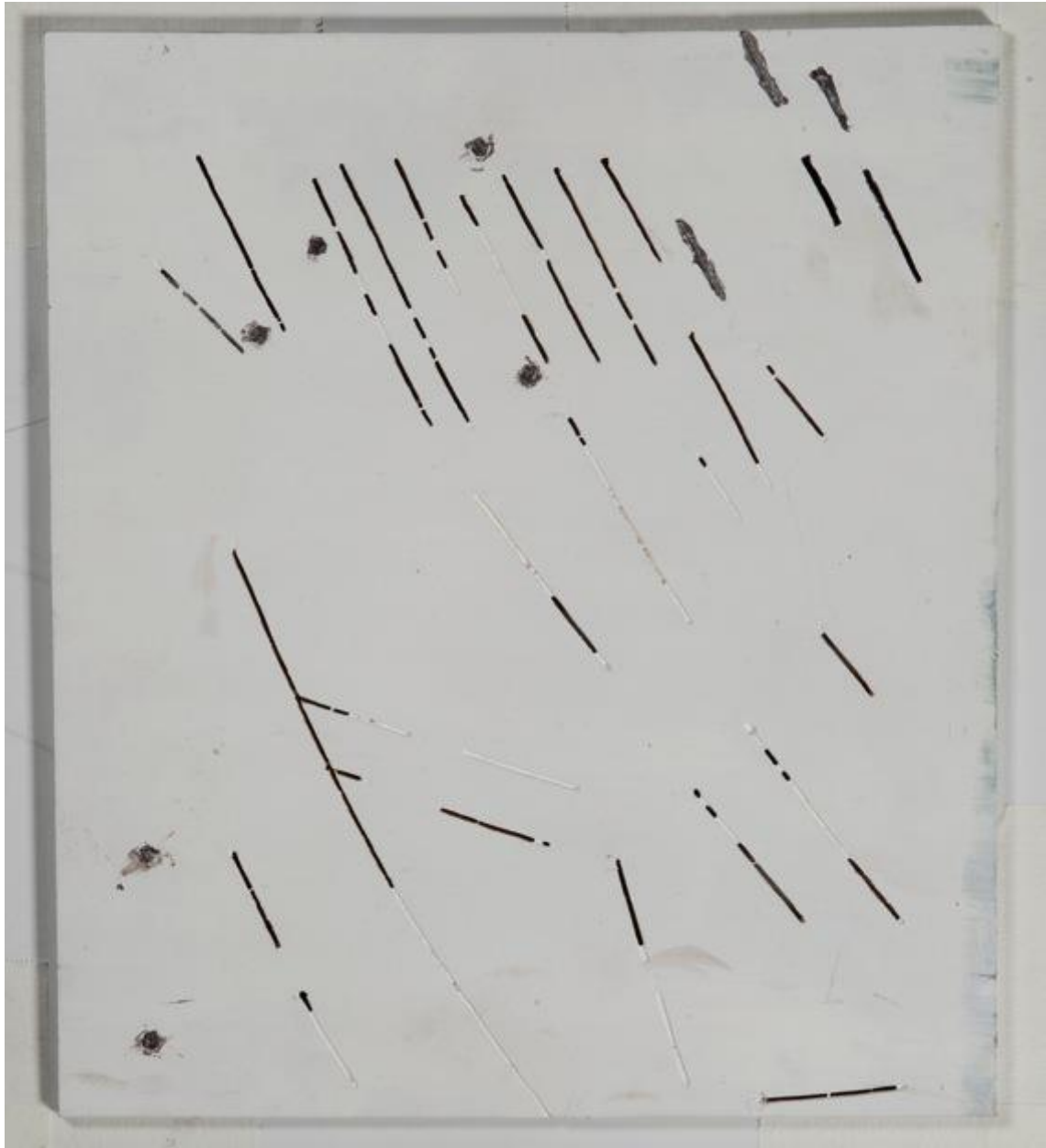


Portobello Mine 2010 A capped shaft is situated on the mounds in the middle-distance, behind the wall
Photograph: David Ainley

Portobello (Veins) and other paintings from this part of Derbyshire including *Rough Pasture (Veins)* (2004-5), *White Peak (Landscape Issues)* (2004) and *Dark Prospect (Landscape Issues)* (2004) are a response to that landscape that Wright overlooked, and many visitors and even local residents disregard, in favour of the spectacle of scenery. In mining one has to lose something to win something. There is a sacrifice: this is one of the thoughts behind the crosses in the *Landscape Issues* paintings. Rothko, for different reasons than I abandoned painting the figure: "It was with the utmost reluctance that I found the figure could not serve my purposes...".¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Patrick Keiller's films include *Robinson in Space* (1997) (which had some frames of the stone conveyor from Middle Peak Quarry to Ravenstor, and was an unmissable feature in Wirksworth between the 1950s and 2005 when it was demolished, sharply dividing local opinions) and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010). Michael Sicinski's review of the film in 'Cinemascope, Spotlight - Robinson in Ruins' is at <http://cinema-scope.com/wordpress/web-archive-2/issue-44/spotlight-robinson-in-ruins-patrick-keiller-uk-2/>. Mark Fisher's review 'English Pastoral: Robinson in Ruins' is in *Sight and Sound*, November 2010.

¹⁵⁶ First published in an article by Dore Ashton in *The New York Times*, 31 October 1958. This and other statements by Rothko are included in the Tate Gallery catalogue *Mark Rothko* London, 1987 pp.76-89. See also Harris, Jonathan 'Mark Rothko and the Development of American Modernism 1938-1948' in *The Oxford Art Journal* (1988) 11 (1) pp. 40-50



David Ainley A painting in the Veins series ***Dene Hollow (Veins)*** at an early stage



David Ainley A painting in the *Landscape Issues* series at an early stage showing the edge of the central cross and incised lines

Avoiding the particularity of depicting individuals at their labour, or without foreground, middle distance and horizon lines, I am concerned to engage viewers in the contemplation of landscape as evidence of human endeavor. This is, like the landscape itself, not easy viewing. As landscape paintings they will challenge the expectations that many people have of that genre. Many viewers of landscapes and paintings of landscape, and artists with an excessive concern to make their communication immediately appealing, are regrettably blinded by spectacle. The great French writer and filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet explained the situation:

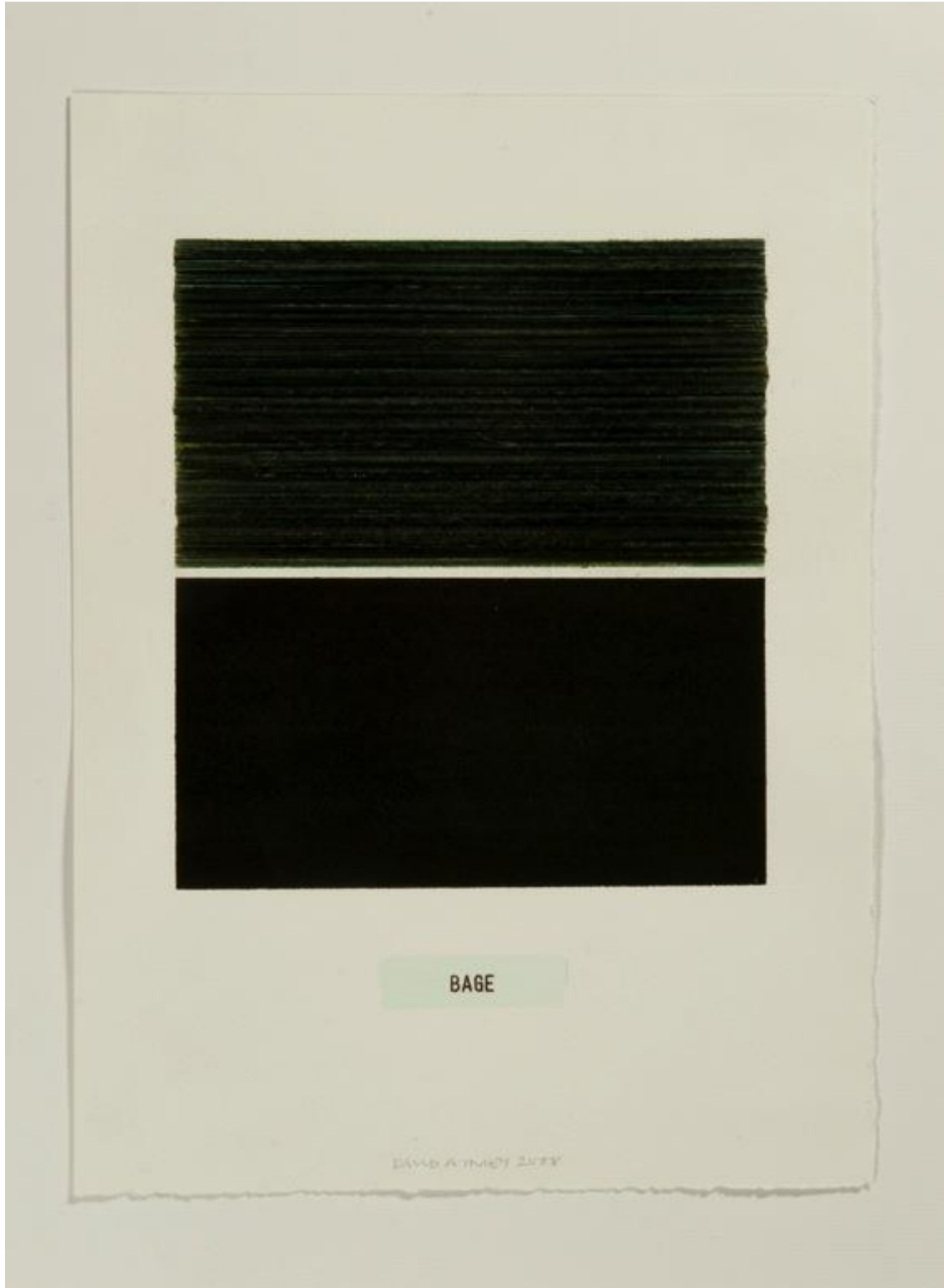
The minds best disposed to the idea of a necessary transformation, those most willing to countenance and even to welcome the values of experiment, remain, nonetheless, the heirs of a tradition. A new form will always seem more or less an absence of any form at all, since it is unconsciously judged by reference to the consecrated forms.¹⁵⁷

Creative artists, themselves risking disregard, have a responsibility to attempt ground-breaking work. Some viewers will begin to look behind the spectacle and beneath the surface.

David Ainley

Bolehill January 2012

¹⁵⁷ Robbe-Grillet, Alain 'A Future for the Novel' (1956) in *For a New Novel: essays on fiction* Trans. Howard, R, 1965 New York, Ch.p.17



David Ainley *Reservoirs of Darkness – Bage*
Drawing 2008

Acknowledgements: I am grateful to the Digital and Material Arts Research Centre at The University of Derby and especially Professor John Goto, organizer of the conference 'New Perspectives on Joseph Wright of Derby' (12 January 2012) for inviting me to write this paper to be presented online, and to Matt Howcroft for help with photography of the paintings and Dr. Matthew Leach for assistance in putting the work online. Thanks also to Rodger Brown of the University for support in the exhibition of my paintings, *(Re)figuring Landscape*, shown to coincide with the conference. DA