BURKE'S CONCEPT OF THE SUBLIME: THOMSON'S THE SEASONS AND TURNER'S PAINTING

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

College of Humanities

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

December, 1984

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Mary C. Sloane, Department of English. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Humanities and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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Title:	Burke's Concept of the Sublime: Thomson's *The Seasons* and Turner's Painting
Institution:	Florida Atlantic University
Degree:	Master of Arts
Year:	1984

Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* provided the latter eighteenth century with a systematic theory of the sublime that was based on the surge of enthusiastic emotion one experiences when observing the astonishing peril of nature's magnificence.

Burke concluded, a decade after James Thomson's final edition of *The Seasons*, that poetry, by its "most lively and spirited verbal description . . . raises a very obscure and imperfect idea" of landscape. Poetry, Burke wrote, produces stronger emotions than does painting, which he relegated to the neoclassic idea of a clear imaging of nature. Had he the timely advantage of experiencing the sketches and paintings of the neoclassically influenced painter, J. M. W. Turner, Burke would have acknowledged the sublime emotions, astonishment and terror.

Furthermore, Burke could have acclaimed Turner's sublime as more affective, as it identified a boundlessness achieved by a greater understanding of obscurity.

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INTRODUCTION: Burke's Ideas of the Sublime

In A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757), Edmund Burke claimed that poetry could more readily arouse feelings of the sublime in the reader than painting could in the observer.[1] James Thomson's The Seasons was accessible to Burke; but, of course, he could not have seen the paintings of J. M. W. Turner, who was born in 1775. Yet, The Seasons and Turner's paintings are similar in regard to the sublime as Burke defined it. Furthermore, if Burke had seen Turner's art, he might have found painting even more capable than poetry of achieving the sublime.

Burke's treatise presented a systemization of aesthetic ideas that were under much discussion in the eighteenth century. These ideas had been significantly influenced by interpretations of the Peri Hupsous, which was attributed to the ancient Greek critic known as Longinus. Although Longinus concluded that the sublime could be produced by a gifted writer capable of "great conceptions" and "inspired passions," he emphasized the rhetorical rather than the emotional aspects of the sublime.[2] The Frenchman, Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux, in the "Preface" to his translation of Longinus (1674), as William Bruce Johnson points out,

emphasized the notion that great thoughts expressed in poetry awaken strong emotions in the reader.[3] And John Dennis, in the early 1700's, expanded the idea to include passionate enthusiasm, astonishment, and terror caused by powerful things likely to hurt.[4]

Burke accepted the ideas of Dennis, but stressed pure emotion as the cause of sublimity, giving, as J. T. Boulton observes, a "physiological" explanation for sublimity.[5] Dennis's plea for emotion, passion, and warmth in poetry became an insistence on Burke's part that anything terrible or operating on terror was a source of sublime. He regarded the imagination as a recognizer of pleasureable images and as a combiner and reorderer of sense perceptions. With his essay, the sublime became the basis of a psychological study that emphasized human reactions to certain objects rather than qualities in the objects themselves. The sublime, according to Burke, results from a tension and a contraction within the human imagination as the mind observes painful sensations operating upon the body. The imagination, in turn, is responsible for arousing our passions (Enquiry III, vii). "Things affect us," wrote Burke, "not by any natural powers . . . but by association" (Equiry IV, ii). It is not the actual event that arouses the emotion, then, but he association of the stimulus with an event stored in the

memory and known to be productive of pain and death which cause terror. Burke wrote that it is these "associations made at the early season, which we find it very hard afterwards to distinguish from natural effects" (Enquiry IV, ii). Fear, or terror, and pain "approaching in violence . . . to the nearness of the cause," Burke observed, "are the dominant passions upon which the sublime is built" (Enquiry IV, iii).

Burke's physiological system developed from a synaesthetic approach, involving a perception by one sense stimulating other senses to react sympathetically (Enquiry III, xxiv - xxvi). "By this means," he wrote, the senses "bear witness to each other" (Enquiry IV, xi). Suggesting that poetry was capable of emotions similar to those evoked by everyday life, Burke said that this was achieved through a combination of sensory stimulations that one sense alone would reject as incomprehensible. Dixon Wecter claims that peotry for Burke was an "emotional substitution in verse for reality rather than an imitation of it."[6]

Non-literary ideas, however, also influenced Burke's thinking. For example, scientific experiments prompted by Sir Issac Newton's optical and light discoveries channelled Burke's notions, with light signifying for Burke a source of truth and sublimity. Marjorie Hope Nicolson writes that as a result of Newton's work, research on the blind in regard to

the association of sound and sensory experience was attempted during the early 1700's to determine if certain sounds were associated with particular colors.[7] Burke, himself, was most concerned with the sounds of words: a "warm and affecting tone of voice," which associates a sense of temperature (feeling) with a certain timbre of speech (Enquiry V, iii). Seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling in Burke's system, then, act in combination and produce a tension of the nerves to arouse a greater, more passionate emotional response. Thus strong sounds, excessively bitter tastes, and intolerable smells had considerable sublime power because they could cause distressful feelings (Enquiry, II, xxi).

Burke considered the sublime "as depending upon some modification of pain or terror" (Enquiry IV, xiv) and concluded that the removal of pain does not leave pleasure or indifference, but "delight" (Enquiry I, iv). He wrote that the human mind must sensually experience pain or pleasure in order to be aroused from its usual state of indifference, ease, and tranquility (Enquiry, I, iv). Upon escaping from some imminent danger, the mind finds itself "impressed with a sense of awe, in a sort of tranquility shadowed with horror" (Enquiry I, iii); and powerful emotions of self-preservation, which operate chiefly on ideas of imminent death, overwhelm reason. A relative safety zone must be maintained from the

source of violence that rushes in upon the mind and controls it. An experience, which resembles a delightful experience, is produced.

In his Enquiry, Burke stated that astonishment, with its surge of intense emotion, was the primary element of sublimity, while terror was the key emotion. Terror was especially affective when associated with apparently imminent danger. Burke explained that an apprehension of pain or death, operating as fear, resembles actual pain by replacing the thought process with a rapid emotion. As long as power or greatness, capable of inflicting pain or death, is present, it remains impossible for the mind to be free of apprehension (Enquiry II, v). The astonishing force on the imagination of great strength, violence, and pain are the ideas that rush in upon the mind and, with feelings of terror, control it. Terror rules most effectively when associated with danger (Enquiry II, ii; IV, viii).

The reaction to astonishment would affect similar feelings of terror, Burke surmised, whether the danger was immediately threatening to self, or was only imagined and brought about vicariously by association with a known, fearful event. Actually, he explained, ecstatic delight is experienced only at a certain distance. The association works because of the mind's lack of capacity to reflect at

the time of astonishment, which makes it difficult to distinguish what is being experienced from events known but not present. Astonishment, Burke explained, is the result of anxious feelings brought about by the eye moving with great celerity in its attempt to encompass the enormity of greatness, magnitude, succession, and privation; the rapid movements of the eye, effect vibrations along the optic nerve which translate in the brain as anxiety and tension (Enquiry IV, ix).

Burke wrote that when the mind is set in motion by fear, it vibrates between the ideas of repulsion and attraction that result from the inability of the imagination when they are astonished by a seeming crisis. The imagination (the ordering faculty) then attempts to restore order from the confusion of information presented to it by the senses. As the result of this attempt, the mind "understands" sublimity: because of the failure of the imagination to regroup the synaesthetic sensory images, the mind is unable to explain such images. What at first appears to be an emotional imbalance is actually the futile attempt of the mind to order and control terror (Enquiry IV, iii).

Burke attempted to establish that "delight" ensued as a negative pleasure form the threat to self-preservation, provided that the danger did not press too closely (Enquiry

I, iv). The most intense source of this negative pleasure involves the fear of privation of some sort, which operates with pain and danger (Enquiry I, vi). And in its highest degree, as astonishment, whatever excites this delightful horror, Burke stated, is sublime (Enquiry I, xviii). "All general privations are great," said Burke, "because they are all terrible: vacuity, darkness, solitude, and silence" (Enquiry II, vi). The release of privation, in other words, the preservation of self, brings this negative pleasure, or delight, as Burke termed it, to the imagination. The total sublime experience, then, involves the astonishing threat by a terrifying object and the subsequent removal of pain and danger.

Burke claimed that he knew "of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power" (Enquiry II, v). He insisted that pain is always inflicted by a superior power, as we would never willingly submit to pain, and that this power derives all of its sublimity from the accompanying terror. Terrible destructive powers are the most sublime, particularly those of "unmanageable fierceness" (Enquiry II, v). Although power can be found in natural phenomena and in such human beings as kings and commanders, it is associated especially with those ideas formed from contemplation of God. Since we "judge of these divine qualities," Burke wrote, "by

their evident acts . . . it becomes extremely hard to disentangle our idea of the cause from the effect" (Enquiry II, v). We become, figuratively, annihilated beside the majestic, omnipresent power capable of striking us with awe, fear, and devine horror. Our imaginations are totally inadequate to understand this power. As power, according to Burke, is the basic source of the sublime, then, it follows, the Deity, as the most powerful entity, becomes the principal energy capable of exciting the greatest responses of astonishment and terror. These responses include such inferior effects as passions of admiration, reverence, and respect. By considering the proper use of the passions as a hymn to the Creator, as a union of science and admiration, man discovers his own weaknesses and strengths. The sole purpose of understanding sublime emotions, Burke wrote, was the elevation "into the counsels of the Almighty by the consideration of his works" (Enquiry I, xix). The astonishing experience coming from the contemplation of the Deity's energy manifested in the universe, where our imaginations become lost, is filled with terror, Burke contended, and is therefore, not only the prime source of sublimity, but is also sublime itself.

His discussions of astonishment and terror led Burke to a third aspect of the sublime, obscurity. Having come to the

conclusion that the contemplation of divinity excites the greatest astonishment and terror, Burke considered the elements that were active in this emotional response. He affirmed that the function of his system was to elevate the mind's focus of attention. Magnificence, and its opposite, privation, are capable of raising ideas of greatness, vastness, and magnitude, and lead to considerations of infinity.

All objects in nature have form of which the mind has the ability to conceive. But for Burke is was not the object, primarily, that excited the passions: it was the idea about the object in the subject's mind that led to the vibrations and subsequent confusion or distress and to the ultimate sublime. Although Burke acknowledged that there was confusion as to the cause of sublimity, he backed away from any argument by emphasizing human responses. To him, the salient feature was that the mind cannot encompass the totality nor contemplate with ease the enormity of sublime situations. And terror precedes any excitation of love or devotion to the Diety.

Seeing a relationship between man's thoughts about the Deity and man's thoughts about infinity, Burke stressed that obscurity, confusion, and lack of definition increased the apprehensive terror necessary to sublimity (Enquiry II, iii).

He wrote that whatever inhabits the formless and limitless most profoundly involving terror, exemplifies the extremes of the power and infiniteness of creation, and is, therefore, sublime. Paraphrasing Burke, Pamela Kaufman says the "great art is obscure," for

> it rouses terror with its suggestiveness and forces us to recreate the suggested object in our own minds in order to put it in bounds, that is, within the realm of human experience and understanding, within our control.8

Claiming that obscurity was necessary for anything to be terrible (Enquiry II, iii), Burke said that clear ideas did not produce sublimity (Enquiry II, v) but that unclear ideas were highly productive of sublime reactions. For example, darkness added a dread of danger; fear was heightened by uncertainty and confusion; and, astonishment was greater and more terrible when gloomy and indistinct. If the imagination cannot grasp onto a clear image of a thing, the mind cannot grasp the significance of it nor weigh its consequences. "Great clearness," said Burke, "is an enemy to all enthusiasms" (Enquiry II, iv).

Burke attempted to prove that intense light could be as sublime as darkness. Extreme light, he said, as it overcomes the organs of sight with a strong impression, overwhelms the eye (Enquiry II, xiv). The image is unclear and confused and

can affect the mind with fear for the "mind is hurried out of itself by a croud of great and confused images" (Enquiry II, iv). A quick transition, especially from dark to light, has a great effect because the suddenness of change obscures the details of the newly visible and thus produces the privation of a lack of harmony. Light thought to stream from the Divinity, as brilliant sun beams, for example, stated Burke, results in the ultimate sublimity (Enquiry II, xiv). An excess of light, Burke said, can be as sublime as darkness because of the confusion and obscurity it produces. Making use of available scientific data, Burke concluded that intense light, upon its sudden removal, attracts its opposite, darkness, and actually manipulates the senses as would obscure blackness.

Also productive of sublime emotions were such things as succession and uniform repetition. Succession and uniformity cause an "artificial infinity" by their ability to "impress the imagination with an idea . . . beyond their actual limits . . . which alone can stamp on bounded objects the character of infinity" (Enquiry II, ix). Profusions of things disorder the imagination, as well, and curb the reason with a repetition of similar ideas (Enquiry IV, xiii). Sudden beginnings or cessations, dark, gloomy colors, and gray, cloudy skies, for example, are capable of arousing

sublime emotions (Enquiry II, xviii, xvi). Therefore, objects affecting the imagination to produce sublime reactions are vast rather than small, rugged and negligent rather than polished and smooth, bold rather than weak, dark and gloomy rather than cheerful, clear and pleasureable, and solid and massive rather than light and delicate.

At the core of Burke's notion of obscurity is the ability of words to strongly impress the imagination with limitless ideas and thus affect by their lack of preciseness. They cannot affect by an original power, Burke wrote, but by representation (Enquiry V, vii). Since words have no natural shape they affect by raising the mind an image of that for which they stand (Enquiry V, i, ii). They affect by sounds which carry impressions of things, verbal pictures or representations of things, and also can directly affect the soul by either sound or picture or a combination of the two (Enquiry V, ii, iv). Because the rapidity of speech and eye movements of the reader, a clear, precise image from sound or picture imaging is impossible, said Burke. This leaves us, then, he stated, with the words directly affecting our passions without any clear image (Enquiry V, v).

Poetry, Burke emphasized, being non-imitative, can raise stronger emotions by its very obscure and imperfect representation. Arbitrarily placing words in categories, Burke

wrote that his third classification, the "compounded abstract words," (such as virtue, honor, persuasion), stood for several abstract ideas combined into one symbol. These, he said, were capable of producing obscurity because of their complexity in structure and imaging. Descriptive poetry operates primarily by substitution, using the sound of its words to achieve an effect of events (Enquiry V, vi). Poetry, therefore, by the very nature of its complex verbalization, conveys emotions of the event and of the author. Words, and the power they transmit, remain intact over long periods of time, while the event or idea, expressed in compounded abstract words such as famine and death, is transient and shapeless. For Burke, the inclination of words to be obscure yields a tremendous impact by the combination of nonrepresentational words expressing shapeless things.

These conclusions led Burke to surmise that since painting as he knew it was an imitation of nature and was limited by space and time, it had not as much influence on the passions a did poetry (Enquiry II, iv). The images raised by poetry, on the other hand, were "always of this obscure kind" (Enquiry II, iv). He concluded that "the proper manner of conveying the affections of the mind from one to another, is by words" (Enquiry II, iv). It is our ignorance of things, Burke affirmed, the indistinct and

obscure ideas, which chiefly excite the passions.

Burke based his argument in regard to poetry's greater ability to affect the passions on the conclusion that hardly anything can strike the mind with greatness unless it approaches infinity. Nothing limited by perceptible boundaries can be boundless. Therefore, words could convey the unbounded and the limitless principally because of their inherent uncertainty and lack of clarity. On the other hand, painting, when it attempted representation of these same ideas, produced something ludicrous rather than sublime. Thus, to Burke, poetry alone had the potential boundlessness capable of venerating the Creator and achieving the ultimate goal of sublimity. Poetry enables us to comprehend our minuteness in comparison to infinite grandeur.

That both Thomson and Turner had set themselves goals of affecting the sublime in their works is substantiated by their own statements. In a letter to the poet, David Mallet, in 1726, Thomson wrote, "Sublimity must be the Characteristic of your Piece . . . what more affecting and noble?"[9] Turner scribbled in his sketchbook, about 1800, "what human breast E'er doubts, before the transient and minute, to Prize the Vast,the Stable, the Sublime?"[10] Through a study of Thomson's descriptive poetry and Turner's landscape painting in relation of Burke's notion of the sublime, we can assess

to what extent each artist fulfilled his goal. The poet and the painter, of course, each had his own unique method for arousing sublime passions. A comparison reveals how these methods were used to affect the emotions, to achieve terror and astonishment, and, finally, to arrive at that obscurity suggesting boundlessness and infinity.

Notes

[1]Edmund Burke, Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. J. T. Boulton (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), ii and iv. All further references to this work appear in the text.

[2]William Bruce Johnson, ed. On the Sublime: The 'Peri Hupsous' in Translations by Nicholas Boileau-Despreaux (1674) and William Smith (1739) Facsimile Reproductions (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1975), p. x.

[3]Johnson, p. x.

[4]Samuel Holt Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England (MLA, 1935; Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 55.

[5]Burke, p. 1 ii.

[6]Dixon Wecter, "Burke's Theory Concerning Words, Images and Emotion," PMLA 55 (1940), 178.

[7]Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Newton Demands the Muse: Newton's Opticks and the Eighteenth-Century Poets (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1946), p. 124.

[8]Pamela Kaufman, "Burke, Freud, & The Gothic," in Studies in Burke and His Time, 13, No. 3 (1972), 2185.

[9]James Thomson, James Thomson (1700-1748): Letters and Documents, ed. Alan D. McKillop (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1958), p. 40.

[10]Walter Thornbury, Life of J. M. W. Turner, R. A. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1862; 2nd ed. London: Chatto and Windus, 1877), p. 457.

Chapter I. Techniques of Arousing Emotion

Although James Thomson and J. M. W. Turner were influenced by neoclassicism, each artist also made a conscious dedication to the creation of the landscape sublime in poetry and painting. Thomson said in his "Preface" to the second edition of "Winter" (1726) that he wished to treat "great and serious subjects" within "wild romantic country." "I know no subject," he continued,

> more elevating, more amusing; more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflections, and the moral sentiments, than the works of Nature. Where can we meet with such variety, such beauty, such magnificence? All that enlarges and transports the soul! What more inspiring than a calm, wide survey of them? In every dress nature is greatly charming. But there is no thinking of these things without breaking out into Poetry; which is, by-the-by, a plain and undeniable argument of their superior excellence . . . and sing the Works of Nature.

Turner also, as Andrew Wilton has pointed out, "intended from the outset to use landscape as a vehicle for statements appealing to the emotions of a more intense level than that of gentle pastoral subjects."[2] In his copy of Martin Archer Shee's Elements of Art, Turner scribbled statements (about 1809) revealing that the believed nature spoke for herself,

provided the examples "however florid" that stimulated the artist's mind, and challenged "the recognition of a well-organized mind" to "draw his conceptions of her incidents."[3]

In his attempt to create a sublime landscape each artist, however, shifted the emphasis in regard to sublimity from the Longinian first source as a quality of conception in the writer to the kind of subject matter chosen. Thomson traveled in his poem to the remotest regions of the globe in order to present an all-inclusive landscape and distant vistas to arouse the greatest passions. Whether or not he had seen the landscape with his own eyes was apparently not as important to Thomson as the choosing of the most affective subject matter. In 1726, he wrote to his friend, the poet David Mallet:

> My idea of your Poem is a Description of the grand Works of Nature, raised, and animated by moral and sublime, Reflection. Therefor, befor You quit this Earth, You ought to leave no great Scene unvisited: Eruptions, Earthquakes, the Sea wrought into a horrible Tempest, the Alps amidst whose amazing Prospects, how pleasing must that be of a deep valley, covered with all the tender Profusion of Spring. Here if you could insert a Sketch of the Deluge, what more affecting and noble? Sublimity must be the Characteristic of your Peice.[4]

Turner used his abundant sketches made on sight-seeing excursions as ideas for future paintings. Although many critics label him as either pre-romantic or impressionistic,

Turner looked at nature and took from it what he wanted with the idea of ordering the landscape and raising it to a serious, universal level.[5] As he stated in one of his lectures at the Royal Academy, "Every glance is a glance for study."[6]

The source of emotion aroused in the spectator was not, then, the painter or the writer but was rather within the subject matter, which was rendered in order to stimulate the passions. Thus, the Longinian second source of the sublime, strong and inspired emotion, became as did the quality of conception, allied in Thomson's poetry and in Turner's paintings with subject matter.

Searching for appropriately sublime subject matter, Thomson and Turner borrowed heavily from such seventeenth-century painters as Claude Lorraine, Nicolas Poussin, and Salvatore Rosa. Thomson's descriptions of landscape were carefully composed to achieve an artful wildness reminiscent of a Claude or of a Poussin painting. As Thomson expanded the initial 405-line version of "Winter" (1726), which served as a model for The Seasons, he meticulously corrected, improved, and supplemented natural scenes to produce the final 1096 lines of "Winter." His methods reveal his neo-classical heritage while the subject matter that he chose indicates his moving away from neoclassicism.

Steeped in Dutch realism and the work of the Old Masters in the Louvre and nurtured by the work of Claude -- his Liber Studorium of 1807 indicates that he was influenced particularly by Claude's Liber Veritatis -- Turner spent a brief interlude from 1804 to 1805 intensely involved with the work of Nicolas Poussin. Quoting from the last six lectures Turner delivered at the Royal Academy as Professor of Perspective, Jerrold Ziff notes Poussin's considerable impact on Turner not only as a source for landscape material, but also as a painter of pure subject matter.[7] Directing his student's attention to Poussin, Turner noted that one of that artist's works, The Flight of Young Pyrrhus (Louvre, Paris), was "a tablet of his powers in landscape composition for grandeur and sublimity by simple forms and lines."[8] But, while urging respect for Poussin's picture, Turner mentioned that "whether from indifference or strength of his ground," Poussin's love for the antique often "removes his works from truth."[9] Although Turner continued to have high regard for Poussin in later years, only lingering planar organization of architecture dependent upon Poussin and evident in Turner's paintings (such as The Tenth Plague of Egypt, 1802, Yale Center for British Art, Mellon Collection) survived the short-lived, but important, involvement. Walter Thornbury attributes Turner's

"reprehensible untruthfulness" in relating nature in an "honest" fashion to the influence of the painter Richard Wilson, who had stimulated Turner's interest in Poussin during Turner's early training. Thornbury claims that Turner "improved" on nature in compliance with neoclassic dictums; that Turner built upon these neoclassic notions; and that the expression of the sublime soon became apparent in the artist's style.[10] Following Turner's trip to Rome in 1819, according to E. V. Lucas, outside influences were no longer evident in Turner's paintings.[11]

Although moving away from the formalism and restraint of the traditional framework of neoclassicism, each artist also found appropriate subject matter in the literary sources important to neoclassicism. Thomson leaned heavily upon John Milton, borrowing from him a stately tone presented in blank verse and paraphrasing "the British Muse" ("Winter" l. 535) throughout The Seasons. For example, in line 1007 of "Winter" Thomson wrote "While night o'erwhelms the sea," alluding to Milton's "While night invests the sea" (PL I, 207-08). Thomson also borrowed specific references and vocabulary from the Bible. For example, in line 192 of the 1726 "Winter," "the Almighty speaks," while in the second edition of the same year, attempting to make God more emotionally appealing within a natural setting, Thomson turns

this Biblical phrase to "Nature's King." The Psalms and the books of Job and Matthew also supuplied specific words and catastrophic images for Thomson. Not only did Thomson absorb the idea of a pastoral epic from Virgil's Georgics, in The Seasons he selected phrases and references to the zodiac found in the Georgics for his own use.[12] Geoffrey Tillotson notes that Virgil contributed such frequent words as "liquid," "refulgent," and "gelid," and that Thomson characteristically used them to enhance the sublime.[13] From such authorities as John Dennis and Joseph Addison, Thomson had learned that natural objects of astonishing magnitude could inspire elevated thoughts. From Shaftesbury he had captured an essence of rapturous heavenly musing. Thomson was the first, however, to combine these elements into one distinct nature-descriptive poem.

Biblical, classical, and poetic sources provided material for Turner as well: The Tenth Plague of Egypt and Ulysses deriding Polyphemus, 1829, (National Gallery, London) for example. A.J. Finberg points out that Thomson's The Seasons probably prompted Turner's interest in plagues and deluges.[14] Simultaneous to his interest in Poussin, Turner entitled many of his paintings and watercolors with passages from "Summer," the titles being illustrative of their content: Dunstanburgh Castle - Sunrise After a Squally Night

(National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne) was accompanied by the line "The Precipice abrupt . . ." (ll. 163 ff.), and Norham Castle - Summer's Morn (Royal Academy, London) by "But yonder comes the powerful King of Day" (l. 81). An evening scene showing the Dormitory and Transept of Fountains Abbey (British Museum, London) refers to "All ether soft'ning . . ." (ll. 1648 ff.), and the 1799 painting of Warwick Castle (Victoria and Albert, London) a vividly portrayed thunder-storm approaching at sunset, to "Behold, slow settling o'er the lurid grove . . ." (ll. 1103 ff.).

While the choice of subject matter made by Thomson and Turner depended greatly upon these influences, more important was the artists' interpretation of the emotive quality within the subject matter as he portrayed it in print and in paint. Pertinent to the selection of appropriately emotive material were the techniques used by the two artists to involve their audiences in the subject. Although not exactly duplicating nature in their descriptions, Thomson in poetry and Turner in painting used the technique of incorporating enough recognizable, believable details of particulars through minute descriptions and careful delineation of form to capture the attention of the reader/viewer and to convince him of the scene's authenticity. Although each artist incorporated into one scene ideas from several localities,

the descriptions were not so distorted or out of place as to be unfamiliar. Thomson saw natural phenomena with a literary eye that reflected the influences of Virgil, and an increased rural interest that sought out Claude vistas. He made greater use of this technique of embellishment and intensification of his natural scenes to make them more familiar by enlarging his descriptions with details and adjectives with each successive edition of "Winter." He wrote his ideas about creating sublime verse to Mallet:

> It strikes one forcibly, at first, and yet still enfolds brighter, penetrates to the Heart, and yet still deeper.[15]

Apparently, then, Thomson attempted to penetrate deeper and deeper into the hearts (emotions) of his readers with each revision; he was so adept at heightening the emotional content of his scenes that his embellishment almost went unobserved. In his preface to The Seasons in 1778, John Aiken wrote:

> Objects so vast and magnificent as planets rolling with even pace through their orbits, comets rushing along their devious track, light springing from its unexhausted source, mighty rivers formed in their subterranean beds, do not require, or even admit, a heightening from the fancy. The most faithful pencil here produces the noblest pictures; and Thomson, by strictly adhering to the character of the poet of nature,has treated all these topics with true sublimity, which a writer of less knowledge and accuracy could never have attained.[16]

Differing from the affection of a Claude vista, Thomson's vocabulary, his technique of using luxuriant language, emphasized the emotive aspects rather than the calm peaceful prospects of nature. He chose common words but extended them to their fullest meaning. For example "deluge" was a favorite word: in "Spring" (ll. 309-16) he described the flood as a deluge; the "dazzling deluge" of sun occurs in "Summer" (l. 435) a "leafy deluge" in "Autumn" (l. 994), and a "vapoury deluge" of snow in "Winter" (l. 226). In the first edition of "Winter", the "Fair Moon" riding "sublime" sheds a "pale Deluge" of silvery "Waves" (ll. 82, 92, 93), and forty lines later the storm-swollen "Muddy Deluge pours along" (l. 133).

Turner also scrutinized nature and transformed it on canvas to give it an emotional, yet believable, appeal. Having worked as a topographical tour-book artist early in his artistic career, he was accustomed to noticing the finer details of a landscape, as we can see by his often cluttered but precise foreground detailing and his architectural renderings. A good example that combines Turner's technique of a busy foreground with a meticulous drawing of buildings is the c.1832 watercolor of Rouen: the West Front of the Cathedral (British Museum, London) in which Turner has used a pen to more precisely delineate the structure. The

foreground is filled with a believable crowd of passers-by while the larger than life-size cathedral towers, with its familiar details, over the masses of people.

While meticulously detailing natural and architectural items, both artists used the technique of describing the human beings within the scenes in generalized and flat terms. We do not see Thomson's swain ("Winter" l. 278), for instance, as an identifiable individual, yet we can identify with his experience in the storm and with the pathos of the scene. As in the Rouen watercolor, Turner, in painting The Battle of Fort Rock, Val d'Aouste, Piedmont 1796, 1815 (British Museum, London) placed carefully delineated figures, with whom we can identify yet do not recognize as definite persons, in the foreground of an immensely emotional canvas. As in Thomson's poetry, we are aware that man is battling man but is involved with nature in a larger faceless struggle. The poet and the painter, then, while detailing with sufficient precision, never separated these descriptions from the total landscape but kept in mind the background as an integral part of the whole, which immensely aided the reader/viewer's identification with the described event.

In addition, both Thomson and Turner called attention to their statements with techniques designed to alert the audience to specific themes. Thomson peppered his poetry

with expletives enticing his readers not to overlook the sights, sounds, and sense of his verse. These directives called attention to specific, important items that the poet wanted us to "see," as Patricia Meyer Spacks says, with "emotional and intellectual significance rather than appearance."[17] Thomson's favorite expletives in "Winter," for example, were: "See!," "Now!," "Ah!," "Behold!," "Alas!,""Hark!," "Where?" and "What?".

Much as Thomson used his expletives to point out his important themes, Turner called attention to his statements with strong diagonals, massive structures, andatmospheric lights. In his Royal Academy Diploma Work of 1802, Dolbadern Castle (illustration page 28) Turner emphasized the plight of "hopeless Owen" by actually pointing to the captive with his use of light and architectural structures. Here he used broad sloping planes accentuated by the thin white strokes of the cascading stream that carry the eye from the haystack column of the castle silhouetted against the white-lit sky to the isolated group of figures at the base of the overwhelming mountains and rapidly back to the turret window and the amazing sky, thus concentrating the viewer's eye on captive Owen with the prison looming significantly over him.

Once they had chosen appropriate subject matter, made it believable, and called attention to its special affective

J. M. W. Turner,
R. A.:
Dolbadern Castle,
Diploma Work, 1802,
(Royal Academy,
London)
with poetic lines
which accompanied
the original ex-
hibition.

How awful is the silence of the waste
Where nature lifts her mountains to the sky
Majestic solitude beheld the tower
Where hopless OWEN long imprsion'd, pin'd
And wrung his hands for liberty in vain.

(J. M. W. Turner, MS. "Fallacies of Hope")

qualities, both Thomson and Turner used other techniques, within the framework of their intent, to produce sublime works that aided the arousal of emotions. Studying Thomson in reference to Burke's statements about arousing emotions by succession, uniformity, profusion, suddeness, and cessation, it is easy to see that in The Seasons Thomson devised his own rhythmic techniques to supply these effects. Percy G. Adams points out that in 1728, Thomson wrote to Sir John Clark that "he chose blank verse for The Seasons because it is 'far more harmonizing than rhyme' and . . . listed 'music' ahead of image, sentiment, and thought as one of the four characteristics of poetry."[18] Adams writes of Thomson's verse that "the oral appeal is related to the intellectual and emotional involvements."[19]

Thomson's luxuriant language, according to Adams, depends on echoes created by repetitions of sound through alliteration, assonance, consonance, anaphora, and onomatopoeia. Thomson improved on these echoes with each revision, although at times he gave up some to gain a new end. Two lines fomm "Winter" exemplify Thomson's use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance:

> The stars obtuse emit a shivering ray;
> Or frequent seem to shoot athwart the gloom
>
> ("Winter" 11. 127-28)

Each stressed syllable "starts or continues an echo of at least one phone," writes Adams.[20] The result of Thomson's description of the shooting stars is mind- and ear-filling, with the "o" assonance emphasizing the image of winter gloom by echoing the vowel. This is further enhanced by the repeated "m" of "seem" and "gloom." The "s" alliteration of these two lines accents the shooting stars, as does the consonant "t" of "emit," "shoot," and "athwart." The feeling of glittering coldness is further embellished by the repetitive sound if "i" and "e" of "emit" and "shivering," "frequent," and "seem." Thomson also used "w," "s," "f," "g," and "l" for alliteration abundantly in his verse. He manipulated anaphora, too, repeating "how many" nine times in nineteen lines ("Winter" ll. 327-46). In "Winter," he also achieved a kind of anaphoric alliteration by subtly repeating a word, although not exactly, but by meaning, combined with consonant and vowel echoes:

> How <u>dead</u> the vegetable kingdom lies
> How <u>dumb</u> the tuneful!

Although these lines are rich in echoes, he enhanced the representation of the winds by reducing the onomatopoeic "hoarser voice" to the increased repetitive values of "blunted point" in the 1744 version, which reads,

> Muttering, the Winds at Eve, with Blunted Point
> Blow hollow-blustering from the South
>
> ("Winter" 11.988-89)

In the later attempt, a discernible "i" continues to echo the necessary sound in "Winds," while the final stressed "t" of "muttering" is repeated a second time in "blunted." The dynamics usage of "blunted" further works as a vehicle for not only echoing the "b" sounds, but also carrying "muttering" to "blustering" with greater facility.

Thomson often overwhelms the reader with a rush of details and a flood of information. He made use, for example, of the neoclassic technique of cataloging as a form of rhythm. In "Winter," he listed the twenty-eight "sages of ancient time, as gods revered" (l. 433), that "incessant form/Those rapid pictures, that assembled train/Of fleet ideas, never joined before" (l. 611-13). He made lists of animals suffering in the cold ("Winter" 11. 80-93 and 11. 240-64). The over abundance of noisy images describing the continuous roar of the thaw ("Winter" 11. 988-1019) "rush on his nerves and call their vigour forth" ("Winter" l. 287) "in dire echoes bellowing" ("Winter" l. 1013). He contrasts this noise to the silence of the "bleak expanse" ("Winter" l. 917) of the polar regions, where men are frozen into statues and icy mountains of snow are "shapeless and white" ("Winter" l.

908) to the "shivering sailor" (l. 907). Thomson also accentuated the effect of silence by repeating the "s" sound twenty-five times in one sentence over seven lines (ll. 902-09). "Thomson's balanced pattern of sound within the line," says Josephine Miles, harmonizes "sound and sense in invocative as well as descriptive statement[s] [and] seems to reveal as well as to contrive the harmony of man and nature."[21]

So too did Turner express his ideas in techniques involving rhythms. Jack Lindsay relates these rhythms to musical consonance.[22] Turner worked with form, color, and light patterns to create repetition through the echoes of these patterns. By reinforcing diagonal movement, light, and shadow to compliment topographical structure, Turner created the effect of strong linear pattern, as we see in Dolbadern Castle, while never actually drawing a line. He was adept at echoing the sun's brilliance, or the moon's glow on the water's surface, and tinging ship's spars and wave tops with repetitive spots of light. These accents of color and light seem to reinforce the viewer's feelings. Windsor Castle c.1829 (British Museum, London) is a fine example of a Turner watercolor in which the artist has attempted to call forth a greater response by suffusing his subject matter with the radiance of the setting sun. He was able to render this

commonplace scene of everyday life more sublime with the uniting harmony of pure light. He did this, also with echoes of white in the watercolor, Zurich c.1842 (British Museum, London) where the misty light touches buildings and people and reflects the setting sun on the river to create an alliterative effect of rhythmic repetition. By the re-arrangement of forms, he manipulated nature to produce a simple echo of infinity. The silence of his spaces could be as emotive as the contrasting confusion of his massive mountains; the quietest of scenes glowed with vibrant color tones, much as did the quiet, pastoral scenes in Thomson's poem vibrate with rhythm and color, as in his description of the Arctic man, the "last of men . . . waste the tedious gloom" ("Winter" ll. 936-49).

Perhaps one of the most important techniques used by Thomson and Turner to arouse emotion was synaesthesia. Burke regarded the synaesthetic response as an emotive substitute that combined responses from the various senses to replace an actual experience based on the knowledge of a previous reaction. Both Thomson and Turner made great use of this technique to arouse emotions. The clearly expressed thought actually became the previously experienced event for them because the reaction to the described phenomenon was as real as the object described.

Thomson combined sensations of feeling, tasting, and seeing with emotions of joy and happiness, expecting the warmth of "enthusiastic heat" to arouse sublime responses to his poetry and the world he described. Characteristically, he described Spring as beginning with "softer" gales kindly dissolving snows, and mountains that "lift their green heads to the sky" ("Spring" ll. 15-17). One can, Thomson suggests in line 107, even "taste the smell of dairy." No longer is nature "cramped with cold,"

> But full of life and vivifying soul,
> Lifts the light clouds sublime, and spreads them thin,
> Fleecy, and white o'er all-surrounding heaven.
>
> ("Spring" ll. 29-31)

Thomson used the technique of watching nature through an eye that he expressed in various terms to set the emotional stage for what the eye beheld. He maintained that this "purer eye," in association with reason, will lead man's soul to nature's Creator ("Spring" ll. 859-60). His "creative eye" of the imagination receives a more vivid, more intense impression and can control the response to descriptive nature ("Autumn" l. 1016). And the "exulting eye" is united, as Thomson wrote at the beginning of "Winter," to the "judging ear/with bold description and with manly thought!" ("Summer" l. 1385, "Winter" ll. 28-9). The same "universal eye" beholds

> Every beauty, delicate or bold,
> Obvious or more remote, with livelier sense,
> Diffusive painted on the rapid mind.
>
> ("Spring" 11. 29-31)

Thomson's feeling "eye" brings us full cycle, through the seasons, from the chilling terror of winter to the exuberant heat of summer. "Winter" provides a plethora of examples of Thomson's extravagant vocabulary that is aimed at a synaesthetic response. He loved to represent things by sound, his words running the gamut from a roaring river "sounding far" (11. 9709) and a mountain that "thunders" (1. 176) to the silence of the ice that "rustles no more" (1. 727) in the "still night" (1. 743) and "shuts up" (1. 318) the "meddling senses" (1. 208). He represented the other senses, too, sight being glitteringly appealed to by "one wild dazzling waste" (1. 239) and "shining atmosphere" (1. 697). Using one of Burke's compounded abstract words, Thomson grimly described the snows as "ensanguined" (1. 825). The other senses--taste, touch, and smell--were combined for effect with sight and sound: Thomson writes of waves that "eat into caverns" (1. 150), winds that have a "hungry howl" (1. 1019), and shapeless bears that become "sourer" (1. 830). He writes of a heifer that "snuffs" (1. 133), of wolves that are "lured by the scent" (1. 409), and of snows that are

"slippery surface" (l. 759), a "slimy waste" (l. 997), a "feeble touch" (l. 784), and wolves "burning for blood" (l. 394). He hoped that all of his images would "send a hollow moan/Resounding long in listening fancy's ear" (ll. 70-1).

Turner also used the technique of synaesthesia to add the tactile and auditory senses to his visual statements. He was aware of Newton's theory that stimulation to the optic nerve produced reactions that can be felt by the other senses. Appealing through the sense of sight to that of touch, he made use of broad washes contrasted with finely hatched strokes which built up a seeming texture on the canvas. The effect was one of rugged mass and movement. In his painted skies around 1820, Turner used the wettest, softest blots for cumulus clouds and the driest scrumbles of light flecks for cirrus clouds. On the choppy waves, as he did in the watercolor, Hastings: Deep-sea Fishings: 1818 (British Museum, London) he appears to have created, along with a sense of the roughness of the frothy swells, a sense of the rough sound of the water. Later, around 1826, he adopted the use of gouache, a clay opaque paint; the gouache allowed Turner to create a denser atmospheric effect for his backgrounds and to make is easier for him to establish broad masses that would set the mood of the landscape. He used a soft quill pen for added details to emphasize specific

structures within the atmosphere. At times his fogs appear so dense, as in Snowstorm, 1842 (National Gallery, London), that it seems almost possible to smell the dampness of the mist.

In his paintings Turner compacted and realigned scenes. Freeing himself from constraints and predilections, he caught the remarkable effects of nature by selecting what to reveal and what to conceal. For example, he isolated the water tumbling over the rocks in the pencil and watercolor sketch of Melincourt Waterfall, 1775 (British Museum, London) by concentrating on the important sensuous aspects of this scene. (Note the tiny, faintly sketched fisherman in the foreground). The exaggerated height of the rough cliffs appears to give an added voice to the long waterfall as it drops to the stream below. A comparison with Melincourt Cascade by John "Warwick" Smith (1749-1831) shows here a quiet, formal composition, not at all emotive as is Turner's.[23] Turner has captured the essence, or as he wrote in a draft of his first lecture at the Academy, "a just perception of what is beautiful in nature."[24] Turner's genius was not only in intensifying scenes but in selecting appropriately "beautiful" spots to paint and adding to them a quality that appeals through the eyes to all the senses. Turner spoke to the eye but affected the imagination and the

heart. His paintings were creations on canvas that watched, listened to, touched, smelled, tasted, and attempted to retain these expressions of nature. Richard Payne Knight, in Landscape, A Poem (1794) described what Turner accomplished in his paintings:

> Tis not the giant of unwieldy size,
> Piling up hills on hills to scale the skies,
> That gives an image of the true sublime,
> Or the best subject for the lofty rhyme;
> But nature's common works, by genius dress'd,
> With art selected, and with taste express'd;
> Where sympathy with terror is combin'd,
> To move, to melt, and elevate the mind.[25]

Synaesthesia is part of association and, as Burke wrote, association with the scene by the spectator is productive of emotive energy. In their attempt to write and paint in the sublime mode, it was essential, then, for Thomson and Turner to not only coax their audiences to be at home in their scenes and to draw them through the landscapes in rhythmic patterns, but to have these spectators directly identify with the depicted emotional experience and associate these emotions in the verbal or visual scene with their own. In fact, the intent was that the association would be so rapid and complete as to short-circuit the conscious experience of association altogether and have the reader/viewer respond intimately and instantaneously. The technique of association (that of writing and painting recognizable, believable

scenery) worked for both artists because of their unique perception of nature. Thomson inspected nature under conditions differing from those of his peers and predecessors: not wanting to produce merely a duplication or idealization of nature, Thomson asked his readers to re-feel the same emotions that nature exemplified for him. He sought to accomplish this goal by associating, for example, "feeling" words with his images; his sky "saddens," his groves are "mournful," his clouds are "weary," his fields are "joyless," and his forests are "groaning." The reader is led to associate the sensation of the word with the image.

So too Turner perceived his nature differently from other painters of his day. He gathered and grouped his information about a landscape with the primary intent of having the viewer associate feeling, preferably the one the artist experienced, with the painted image. Turner said that "he wished to show what such a scene was like" when he painted Snowstorm.[26] Critics were not sure whether it was "vibrating between the absurd and the sublime," or creating a "frantic puzzle--where the steamboat is--where the harbour begins, or where it ends--which are the signals," or, "merely a mass of soapsuds and whitewash."[27] Turner, himself stated that he "did not paint it to be understood."[28] The meaning of the scene for Turner, and presumably for his spectators,

lay in the emotional response.

Another technique of arousing emotion by association is the use of personification. The whole substructure of Thomson's verse is his personification of nature: times of year and day, mountains, forests, rivers, clouds, celestial bodies, and the ultimate, or ruler, of all this creation, "the varied God." "Winter" supplies many examples: the sun, for instance, faintly spreads "his gleams" (l. 46), nature is a "great parent!" (l. 106), the moon wears a "wan circle round her blunted horns" (l. 125), and woods bow "their hoar head" (l. 236), Thomson asked what frost is "and whence are thy keen stores" (l. 714), night "holds o'er the glittering waste her starry reign" (l. 798), and winter holds "his unrejoicing court" (l. 895), and "spreads his latest glooms" (l. 1024). This technique became more than a device for Thomson. As Ralph Cohen points out, Thomson moved in his poem from particular natural detail to philosophical statements, "implying a world locatable in Newtonian successive space and time, leading . . . to an infinity beyond man's comprehension."[29]

Turner's use of personification is less obvious yet is as dramatically understood. He attempted to convey the notion of an animated world. In his work, we are aware of the implicit force of a creator in the waves and storms, and

we witness universal power in a rainbow arched across the atmosphere. Turner, in fact, painted the sun with a dazzling brilliant, magnificent color as the sublime personification of power.

Thomson and Turner, therefore, each in his own medium, presented nature in a way unique to his own work. Although the techniques differ as to how they sought to arouse passion the emotional effect achieved by their use of association is remarkably similar. Thomson's aim was to awaken poetical enthusiasm by his long leisurely descriptive verse; Turner's was to order landscape so that it could be felt by the viewer.

Notes

[1]James Thomson, The Seasons, in The Complete Poetical Works of James Thomson, ed. J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford Univ. Pres, 1908), p. 241. All further references to The Seasons appear in the text.

[2]Andrew Wilton, Turner and the Sublime (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980, Phoenix Edition, 1981), p. 37.

[3]Quoted in John Gage, "Turner and the Picturesque," Burlington Magazine, 57, No. 743, 76.

[4]James Thomson, Letters and Documents, p. 40.

[5]William Guant, Turner (London: Phaidon, 1971), p. 13;

R.H. Wilenski, English Painting, 4th ed. (London: Faber, 1933), p. 192; and

Thornbury, pp. 535-36.

[6]Quoted in Gerald Wilkinson, Turner's Sketches: 1789-1820 (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1977), p. 159.

[7]Jerrold Ziff, "Turner and Poussin," in Burlington Magazine, 55, No. 724 (1963), 315.

[8]Ziff, p. 315.

[9]Ziff, p. 315.

[10]Thornbury, p. 536.

[11]E.V. Lucas, British Picutres and Their Painters (New York: MacMillan, 1913), p. 220.

[12]James Sambrook in The Seasons and the Castle of Indolence, by James Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 130, 234, 134, and 151:

> "Winter" l. 43, "Aquarius:" Virgil Georgics III. 304;
> "Winter" ll. 72-80, "Father of the Tempest:" Georgics I. 322-31;
> "Winter" l. 182, "honours:" Georgics II. 404;
> "Winter" l. 836, "caurus:" Georgics III. 356.

[13]For examples see "Summer" l. 306; "A Hymn" l. 9, "Winter" l. 643, and "Winter" l. 782, "Summer" l. 461.

[14]A.J. Finberg, The Life of J. M. W. Turner, R.A. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) 2nd ed., pp. 460-63.

[15]James Thomson, Letters and Documents, p. 48.

[16]Quoted in Michael Martin Cohen, "James Thomson and the Sublime," Diss. Univ. of Arizona 1971, p. 53.

[17]Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Poetry of Vision (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 19.

[18]Percy G. Adams, Graces of Harmony: Alliteration, Assonance and Consonance in Eighteenth-Century British Poetry (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1977), p. 118.

[19]Adams, p. 135.

[20]Adams, p. 127.

[21]Josephine Miles, The Continuity of Poetic Language: The Primary Language of Poetry, 1540's-1940's (New York: Octagon 1972), p. 163.

[22]Jack Lindsay, J. M. W. Turner: His Life and Work (London: Cory, Adams, Mackay; Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1966), p. 110.

[23]Wilton, pp. 33-4.

[24]Quoted by Gage, 75.

[25]Quoted by Wilton, p. 65.

[26]Quoted by Finberg, p. 390.

[27]Finberg, p. 390.

[28]Quoted by Thornbury, p. 457.

[29]Ralph Cohen, "The Augustan Mode in English Poetry," Eighteenth-Century Studies, 1, (1967), 13.

Chapter II. Terror and Astonishment: The Sublime Emotions

Thomson and Turner were masters at producing, each in his own medium, Burke's primary element of the sublime, astonishment: the suspension of the motions of the soul "with some degree of horror" (Enquiry II, i). Thomson achieved astonishment both by presenting nature's elements in awesome and dynamic terms and by asking the reader to identify with finite man at the mercy of these elements. Turner achieved astonishment by painting the vast and spectacular aspects of nature and often by locating within these aspects an image of everyday man pursuing common- place occupations.

Thomson's intent was, as he wrote in the Preface to "Winter," "to please, instruct, surprise, and astonish" his readers.[1] He so flooded his verse with the descriptions and sensations of nature's calamities and of impending doom that he sometimes left slight margin for rational contemplation. In reference to his muse, he wrote in the 1730 "Winter:"

> And now among the Wintry clouds again,
> Rolled in the doubling storm, she tries to soar,
> To swell her note with all the rushing winds,
> To suit her cadence to the floods;
> As is her theme, her numbers wildly great.
> (11.23-7)

Turner communicated the energy that he found in the grandeur of nature convincingly and accurately. By the careful manipulation of light patterns, and selection of appropriate heightened color, he reduced nature to a simplicity that commanded attention and concentrated on the tense greatness of the landscape. One of his critics, in 1799, reported in the Morning Post that he understood the intent of Turner's painting was "to impress the mind with an idea of the terrible and sublime."[2] Both Thomson and Turner contrived their landscapes so that the reader and viewer would be impressed with the awesome magnitude of nature. Both sought the goal of astonishment and terror in their works by a combination of the sublime object, its description, and the intense emotion aroused.

Burke had written that an understanding of power resulted from feeling terror. If terror is pain, he conjectured, and man does not willingly submit to pain, then the source of discomfort must come from a deity, the only source affirmed more powerful than man (Enquiry IV, viii). Thomson attempted to astonish the minds of his readers with verse describing that which is naturally great in violence, grandeur, or size in order to elevate their thoughts. He demonstrates raw violence, for example, in "Winter" as "the murdering savages away,/Rapacious, at the mother's throat

they fly,/And tear the screaming infant from her breast" (11. 401-03). And, he describes the grandeur of the clear northern heavens illuminated by the aurora borealis reflected from the snow:

> By dancing meteors then, that ceaseless shake
> A waving blaze refracted o'er the heavens,
> And vivid moons, and stars that keener play
> With doubled lustre from the radiant waste,
> Even in the depth of polar night they find
> A wondrous day. (11. 859-64)

Thomson also used size, not only in the universal situations of The Seasons, but in the illustrative examples he chose. For instance, in his descriptive verse, as it travels over the globe, he speaks of "a bleak" expanse" ("Winter" 1. 917), and a "Horror [that] wide extends" (Winter" 1. 1027) in contrast to minute descriptions of "The wanderers of heaven," and "the household feathery people" seeking safety from the storm. The plethora of descriptions are part of Thomson's understanding of the use of of size, as this quantity of minute information supplies a more complete view of his world. Thomson apparently understood that the awe and terror with which we see the divine horror at work in the world precedes any adulation of the Supreme Power, and asked his readers to understand this also. He described his Deity as "Nature! great Parent! whose unceasing hand/Rolls round the Season of the changeful year," and, while asking the reader

to praise Him for his "mighty" and "majestic" works, seeks to stimulate this adulation from descriptions of His works so that his readers might feel "with what pleasing dread they swell the soul,/That sees astonished, and astonished sings" (Winter" 11. 106-10). As he wrote, "All nature feels the renovating force/Of winter--only to the thoughtless eye/In ruin see" (Winter" 11. 704-06.) Thomson attempts to worship his Nature--great Parent--Deity as this power reveals itself in astonishing destructive, magnificent, wide-spread, and cruel (especially to man) works.

Thomson's vocabulary of excitement and danger added force to his descriptions of the destructive aspects of nature. For example in "Winter," he prepares his readers for the approaching wintry storm: his sun "uncertain wanders" "the reeling clouds stagger," the moon is "blank," and the stars "emit a shivering ray" (11. 120-27). Thomson describes the greatness of the coming storm in terms filled with solitude and silence, two aspects of the greatness which Burke had said produced terror and caused the mind to be astonished. The day is "dejected" when the "weak, wan" sun's "faint" gleams struggle through the "thick air" to a "long, dark night" where "all the prostrate world resigns" (11. 44-51). Thomson tells us that the whole face of the earth is involved by winter's "heavy gloom oppressive o'er the world"

rousing "up the seeds of dark disease" (11. 58, 60). Thomson then brings forth the full strength of the storm, which finally arrives with "blind commotion" and "ethereal force" (11. 149-56). Within eleven lines, for instance, Thomson chose words describing nature at her wildest: "hurls," "lashed," "fierce," "raging," "burn," "dreadful tumult," "surge," "chaos," and "howling" (11. 154-65).

As well as being enriched with carefully chosen words, Thomson's minutely observed descriptions were filled with what he had learned from Newton's studies of color and light; thus making nature more visible, colorful, and understandable. Thomson's descriptions of the rainbow ("Spring" 11. 203-12) capture the power of "the grand ethereal bow [that] shoots up immense" "Bestriding the earth" in scientific terms borrowed from "awful Newton" ("fair proportion" and "prism"), using also the basic notion that the colors emerge from "the white mingling maze." His verse, abetted by the new physics, became for Thomson a way to approach infinity through fear.

Thomson himself said that he hoped his poetry would be "all that enlarges and transports the soul . . . and would become the delight and wonder of mankind."[3] Marjorie Hope Nicolson remarks in Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory, that

> The excursion poets . . . soared into the Newtonian heavens, then descended to earth where they flew to different lands . . . constantly reiterating their "delight," "wonder," "awe," and "astonishment" at the variety and profusion of a Nature made in the image of an exuberant Deity.[4]

"Thomson's panoramas became more spacious," Nicolson writes of Thomson's revision, "his mountains more majestic, Nature increasingly more rich, more diversified, more bounteous, more sublime."[5]

Furthermore, Thomson was not limited to what he had seen or heard; his poetic realm encompassed the entire universe. In its all-inclusive scope, The Seasons surveyed all times of year, all varieties of climates, all regions of the earth, all natural phenomena, and all celestial occurrences (see Chapter I, p.19). For example, the terror of the "circling typhon" and the "direful shark" that he describes in "Summer" (11. 980-1025) did not come from his own experience, Alan D. McKillop informs us, but from a travelogue.[6] Not even Thomson could understand the full extent of the power he described, thus he increased the potential for his poetry to stimulate terror. Following each description, Thomson returned to a statement relating his desription to the power of the Deity whose visible force he had written about. After asking "Can human force endure/The assembled mischiefs that beseige them round?--/Heart-gnawing hunger, fainting weari-

ness,/The roar of winds and waves, the crush of ice," ("Winter" ll. 1008-11) Thomson's "Providence, that ever-waking Eye," who, "Looks down with pity on the feeble toil/Of mortals lost to hope and lights them safe/Through all this dreary labyrinth of fate," ("Winter" ll. 1020-23) is that supreme power, that remains an ever-abiding constant with its powerful magnificence even throughout its most violent rampages. By describing the astonishing and terrible power of the Masterhand at work Thomson was exalting his God in an intense and meaningful fashion. Samuel Holt Monk sums up Thomson's expectations:

> Thomson filled each successive edition of The Seasons with increasingly long passages which aimed at evoking terror before the vast and destructive forces of nature . . . There is no doubt that these are 'sublime' passages, and that they are sublime because of the terror which they are intended to provoke.[7]

So too Turner found inspirations of divinity and infinite power in the fearful torrents and destructive storms, in the awesome mountains and lakes, in the turbulence of cities, and in the gruesome force of war. His several sketches of The Deluge culminating in the oil painting of 1813, exemplify his interest in depicting the power of a deity, or universal force, working through natural elements to create an overwhelmingly fearful and terrifying situation

for the human participants. His use of a quotation from Milton ("Meanwhile the south wind rose" PL XI, 738) intensifies the drama. The oil painting Snowstorm: Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps, 1812 (National Gallery, London), is an excellent example of Turner's use of storms to show the force of nature capable of confounding man's adventures, particularly that of an army. Turner painted many scenes that captured the more wondrous and awesome qualities of mountains and lakes. As did Thomson, Turner incorporated into his works scientific information, principally discovered by Newton, that supplemented his own observations of light and color in nature. From Newton, Turner apparently was aware that white incorporates all colors; he appears to have expressed this all-in-one concept as the radiant universal force. The magnificent white-toned castle situated on its commanding perch overlooking the deep valley in A Ruined Castle on a Rock Above a Town by a River, c.1827 (British Museum, London) typifies the painter's use of white to emphasize the brilliant force or power radiating upon the enormous mountains. He painted many castles, for example, often reinforcing and duplicating their statement by the reflection of the buildings and mountains on the water as in Harlech Castle, from Twgwyn Ferry, Summer's Evening Twilight, an oil done in 1799 (now in a private collection); and he

again uses a quotation from Milton, "Now came still evening on, and twilight gray" (PL IV, 598). Newton's studies also gave to Turner the knowledge of the prismatic quality of the sun: its ability to break its light into a rainbow of colors. Turner's interest in using complex city scenes to reflect the ever-present majesty of universal power through the use of light, is shown for example, in the c.1842 watercolor of Zurich (British Museum, London); here the setting sun's shimmering glow touches buildings and inhabitants throughout the densely crowded scene with its radiant color and touches of white. Another theme in which Turner found inspirations of divinity was that of man in conflict withman, as well as with nature; in his oil of the battle at Val d'Aosta, Piedmont, nature nearly overwhelms man's battling forces. He presented these works as a harmony of form and color, of scale and technique, all functioning as one image of infinite power at work in the universe. Like that of Thomson, his main statement was astonishment through the emotion aroused by the object he saw or the object he represented. That it was the combined weight of the total sublime experience which was important to Turner is noted by Archibald Alison, who writes of Turner's paintings as those

> in which only the greater expressions of Nature are retained, and where more interesting emotions

> are awakened, than those we experience from the usual tameness of common scenery.[8]

Turner's interest in expressing the more terrifying aspects of nature had its roots in the late eighteenth century's taste for the wildly imaginative landscapes of Salavatore Rosa (1615-1673) , for mountain scenery, and for gardens containing rushing streams, waterfalls, ruins, and lofty piles of rocks. In the late eighteenth century, Henry Fuseli had used chiaroscuro to heighten the more terrifying effects of his melodramatic paintings; Richard Wilson, in his Niobe (British Museum, London) of 1760, had depicted a violent and threatening nature; Paul Sandby had painted ruins; and Edmund Garvey and George Barret had attempted astonishment in their topographical paintings. But Turner, closer to Thomson in the totality of his conceptions than he was to the painters who preceded him, went beyond them.

Rather than painting his landscapes with wild imagination or contrived and artifical scenery that employed unrealistic and melodramatic effects of light, Turner attempted to create sublime emotions by painting what he saw in nature heightened and intensified by the light and color that he observed functioning naturally. His emphasis of certain elements within a scene was reinforced by his study of nature, his understanding of how sunlight works, and

his knowledge of how masses create weight and substance. He studied what he saw in nature, then made sketches of his observations, noting carefully those particular elements that exemplified for him special emotive qualities; among these were turbulent brooks, rugged mountains, expansive and solitary vistas, still waters, brilliant sun scenes, and dark, troubled storms. As did Thomson, Turner represented nature in an honest, recognizable fashion, but, also working as did the poet, he intensified various aspects of his scenes and combined portions of several different views to achieve the effect he was attempting. Both artists presented scenes that were locatable within nature, yet both added the force of an intensified expression of nature. Turner sought to convince his viewers about the truth of the scene by controlling his subject matter, color, and techniques. He painted with sufficiently detailed precision, balanced with swirling mists (as in Snowstorm) or light-struck clouds (as in Dolbadern Castle), to give his viewer a sense of belonging in an astonishing natural scene. As were Thomson's descriptions, Turner's paintings were planned to capture the eye then startle the imagination with intense misgivings and a "delightful" terror. Both the poet and the painter planned that this attraction through the senses would lead to an imaginative fear productive of the confounding attraction-

replusion condition of the mind that Burke declared to be the basis of the sublime expression of terror, and therefore, of the basis also of the recognition of power.

Unlike Thomson, Turner made no direct reference to a deity. Nevertheless, one is always conscious of the power behind the natural scenes he depicts. Although Thornbury suggests that Turner had not formal religion, he points out that Turner accepted the sun as a moving force and as an energy with divine strength and beauty.[9] In Dolbadern Castle (illustration, p.29), for example, Turner emphasized the tremendous magnificence of the sun by the powerful force of its radiance from behind the castle, diffusing the sky and glittering in the stream, and thus touching each with its energy. Heavy, broad, planar masses and diagonals oppose open vistas and wide expanses of foreground space; sweeping washes of the sky oppose the delicate brush strokes in the figures; and the foreground detail opposes the grandeur of the scale in the background. Turner thus seems to portray the infinite power of the sun as dominant over both man and the strength of the mountains.

In regard to Poussin's Deluge (Louvre, Paris), Turner had remarked that "the colour is sublime. It is natural--is what a creative mind must be imprest with by sympathy and horror."[10] The power and emotional content in his own

painting was reinforced by color symbolism: the yellow of the sun and the scarlet of death, destruction, and ruin. The spectacular sunset canvas, The Fighting Temeraire, 1838 (National Gallery, London), the retiring of the famous fighting ship, is a powerful exhibition of Turner's ability to use color symbolically. The old veteran of Trafalgar, being drawn by a tug to her ultimate destruction, was seen by the artist one day late in 1839 as he was habituating his favorite haunt, the harbor along the Thames. Turner, in his preoccupation with colored light--pure force providing nature's hues--perhaps a result of his early watercolor training, suffuses the atmosphere with a golden glow that is reflected on the water. The sun setting below the dramatically scarlet sky echos on the waters and on the smoke belching from the laboring tug; the white-tipped spars, ships, sails, and flags repeat the sinking sun's power-packed whiteness and create an ethereal quality as the ghostly ship moves imperceptably up the Thames. The violent-tinged red of the sky contrasts sharply with the astonishing whiteness of the ship.

Turner studied the use of darkness, also, as a vehicle for astonishment. He often worked with night scenes that were highlighted by moonbeams on water, scarlet fire on water (as in Burning of the Houses of Parliament, 1835, Museum of

Art, Cleveland), or lightning against the dark sky. By using darkness, Turner discovered that the mood of the painting is heightened, its drama made more intense. Darkness and stillness, as in the c. 1825 mezzotint, Shields Lighthouse (Yale Center for British Art, Mellon Collection) of a moonlit night "is one of his profoundest conceptions," states Wilton, "executed with great breadth and simplicity of touch."[11]

Turner, in fact, opposed intense gloom to radiant light much as Thomson opposed the dark gloom of the storm to the bright glitter of ice. Turner painted with either sombre, toned-down colors highlighted by touches of brilliant light and bright colors in the form of lightning, the sun, flames, and rainbows (as in the paintings of the north country, in particular) or with pale yet golden-glowed hues, again touched with brilliant spots (as in his Italian paintings). Other examples of Turner's use of contrast, especially of light and mass, occur in many of his lake scenes, particularly the watercolors of England and Wales, which seem to inspire feelings of great space, solitude, and silence. In these, the eye travels easily and rapidly over the immense still surface of the water to the clearly defined borders of the hazy mass of mountains beyond. The emptiness of space enclosed with such clarity gives us a scale to measure its extent, while this same measured vastness creates an awesome

stillness. Turner attempts to draw the viewer's eye into the painting by the movement, hold it, and astonish it by the effect of greatness.

Having established the power of nature itself, Thomson and Turner reinforced that power by emphasizing man's insignificance. Thomson attempted to convey the impression that the enormity of nature's power is of such magnitude as to be incomprehensible to the common man. Using the antithesis of the calm, ordered scene to the raging storm in "Winter," he dramatically emphasized the reconciliation of these opposites as they harmonize in the oneness and power of the Creator that is beyond man's knowledge. In the midst of the turbulent storm, for example, Thomson inserts a quiet, homey scene of the little redbreast pecking at crumbs on the hearth while being watched by the smiling family ("Winter" ll. 246-56). Immediately following this passage is a calm, seasonal, Georgic-type instruction to shepherds. Thomson continues, then, with the description of the fierce storm. This juxtaposition of opposites created, for Thomson, the confusion and astonishment that is the avenue to a contemplation of divinity. Thus did Thomson write in a letter to William Cranstoun giving the first version of "Winter,"

> I sing of Winter and his gelid reign;
> Nor let a riming insect of spring
> Deem it a barren theme.[12]

Thomson obviously intended that the reader identify with the disaster of the shepherd perishing in the blizzard ("Winter" ll. 276-321) and feel the fear, the threat to self-preservation by the storm's fury, the apprehension of death, the despair and tender anguish, and that the reader sympathize with the orphaned children and their widowed mother. Earlier in "Winter," he presaged his objective: personifying the muse, he wrote, "As is her theme, . . could she fill thy judging ear/With bold description (ll. 28, 29-30). Thomson's emotionally charged vocabulary suggests that he hoped the reader would feel the force of the tempest upon the shepherd. As does the tempest, his words howl "o'er his head" rendering the "savage wilderness more wild" with "busy shapes" thronging "into his mind" ("Winter" ll. 29597). At the same time that the reader is being struck with astonishment by the "rushing" cadence of flooding words, as Thomson "wildly" described the "doubling storm," he is being repulsed by the fear of the possibility of disaster involving himself. But Thomson, consistent with Burke's analysis of the sublime, removes the reader from the immediacy of danger by shutting up all senses with the "creeping cold" (l. 318-19). When the shepherd dies, the reader is supposed to feel "delight" at experiencing the emotional surge and at the resulting relief from the very threatening danger. The experience becomes a

rationalization of a highly emotional situation when thus seen at a careful distance. Thomson, then, handled the sublime "delight" as the emotional relief from imminent danger: his descriptions become for his reader "a pleasing dread" that "swell the soul" ("Winter" l. 109).

Throughout these serene/stormy passages, Thomson maintains the impression of the harmony of orderliness in the universe with the inevitable rotation of the season and with the predictability of disasters. As part of this order, his poetry conveys the idea that while being insignificant in the face of all-powerful nature man has the possibility of avoiding disaster by altering his behavior. Thus Thomson unites a sublime reaction to a moral issue. Man for Thomson was engaged in a life and death struggle with a limitless power, and only by victory over his sins could he bear witness to God's greatness and bring about the more peaceful aspect of creation. With his passage describing Sir Hugh Willoughby's fatal expedition into the Arctic followed by a description of "the last of man" half alive in "tedious gloom" (Winter" 11. 925-49), Thomson contrasts death and half-death with the "heaven-inspired" mind of Peter, the Great, who, with "Sceptre laid aside "tamed" his people and land and "to more exalted soul" had "raised the man" (Winter" 11. 950-87). Thomson tells in words charged with

emotive energy ("wonder," "matchless prince," "glorious," "daring," "dazzling," and "frantic") how Peter "spurned the slothful pomp of courts" and brought his country out of sloth, ignorance, vice, and old dishonor. Thus the poet's words could astonish and awe, rouse up emotions, and show that within the orderliness of creation was a power that would reinforce man's efforts for good provided man's plans fit within the framework of nature's wisdom ("Winter" ll. 983-87). Nature, description, the moral issue, and instruction all combined into one orderly harmony of man before his Creator and worked for Thomson to produce sublimity through astonishment. Thomson implies that God's orderliness is disturbed by man's failure. The significance of Thomson's moralizations lies in his thrusting of the obligation for God's punishment upon man's behavior. When evil is assimilated and resolved into the grander whole, then the ascent to oneness from meaninglessness may commence. Man must continue, Thomson is saying, to revere God despite his lack of comprehension. It could be said that Thomson's goal was to astonish his readers and to venerate the Creator with natural sublimity in order to correct man's social actions that were the result of original sin. Indeed, Thomson's effort to perfect society may explain why he attempted in his verse to raise the sublime emotions of astonishment and terror, yet remained seemingly unmoved by his own efforts and aloof and

external to his own work. His apparent task as a poet was, for him, to call attention to the fact that God's judgment reigned on the just as well as on the unjust, to astonish men and, by using emotive techniques, to terrify them into action so that they would adjust their behavior and that of society at large. He asked in "Winter," for instance, during a moral sermon against prison conditions and poverty, "How many feel, this very moment, death/ And all the sad variety of pain" (11. 327-28). He continued by hoping to raise "the social tear" that "into clear perfection: would bring the day when "every man" would be "within the reach of right!" (11. 356, 357, 386). Thomson summed up man's finiteness within an orderly, infinite realm when he wrote "And what your bounded view, which only saw/A little part, deemed evil is no more" (Winter" 11. 1066-67). His function was to present a further glimpse of this order.

Turner, likewise, looked to nature for some revelation of man's purpose and man's relevance to cosmic power. The meaning of his landscapes lay in the occupations of his pictorial people, in their dominance by the natural effects. As did Thomson, Turner combined the nature he perceived, his painted descriptions, moral issues, and, if not instruction, at least an attempt to "show what it was like" in order that the harmony of finite man within his universe could be docu-

mented. His painting, however, was always believable. He avoided a merely theatrical nature by concentrating on men's relevance to the experience of pursuing his everyday occupations surrounded by awesome nature. He universalized nature through his combination and embellishment of scenes to make it more emotionally effective for a greater audience. Based on association, a sympathetic dread common to all minds which makes it possible for us to identify with the depiciton and to experience that emotion expressed by the force of the painter's brush stroke and choice of color, Turner's paintings enable the viewer to identify with the power of nature. Thus astonishment and terror are achieved by the presentation of the relationship of finite man to cosmic harmony. For example, in the c.1820 watercolor, Windsor Castle (British Museum, London) men in the foreground are undertaking their mundane activities while the hazy castle on the hill beyond exerts an astonishing force. Above all, nature, as the white sun in the upper center of the painting and reflected on the water, dominates the scene with a sense of ever-present omnipotence. Another water color, Hastings: Deep-Sea Fishing, 1818 (British Museum, London), again showing man engaged in customary tasks of life, depicts these men surrounded by a more violent, yet believable, nature. The swirling, white-foam edged waves appear to nearly consume

the fisherman with their turbulent strength. The idea of detailing tiny foreground figures became for Turner an aspect of expressing the universality of a particular as a methodized generalization.

Not only were the astonishing aspects of man's insignificance within a formidable nature evident in these works, but Turner increased their power by, in some instances, coupling verse to his paintings. In Dolbadern Castle the viewer's fear of the ultimate defeat of all mankind's endeavors is aroused not only by his identification with the tiny figures overwhelmed by the mighty backdrop, but also by an accompanying verse of Turner's unpublished manuscript poem, Fallacies of Hope. The emotional effect is reminiscent of the feelings Thomson described in his account of the shepherd lost in the snowstorm ("Winter" ll. 276-331). As part of man's role in nature, perhaps as an attempt to control nature's power, Turner's verse pointed out the moral issue within the painting, as did the lines in Thomson's "Winter" immediately following the shepherd's scene. This inclusion of morality, as part of a sublime experience, was evident in Turner's translation onto canvas of Thomson's shocking "typhon"scene ("Summer" ll. 980-1025) in the painting Slavers throwing overboard the dead and dying--Typhon coming on, 1841 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). Here,

the painter boldly combined his passion for the sea and boats with his moralistic statement illustrating a universal issue. The terror of man combating man as well as the forces of natural elements and sharks and the fear of the loss of life are portrayed vividly and believably although Turner's scene is one that he never actually saw or experienced. In this respect, his work again parallels that of Thomson. Turner has created an almost apocalyptic atmosphere with the confusion of the seas crowded with drowning slaves and fantastic-looking fish. Against the identification with danger and the association with fear and death (are the jettisoned slaves expendible to lighten the ship's load?) are juxtaposed the indiscriminate violence of nature venting wrath equally on the just and unjust, and the strong moral argument of the typhoon as perhaps nature's retribution for the captain's greed and cruelty. This subject, it appears, was borrowed from Thomson. But judged by the amount of canvas Turner allotted to moralistic statements compared to the number of lines Thomson devoted to them, these issues were not as important to the painter as to the poet.

Particularly in his early years, Turner painted scenes showing man anguishing before nature's fury. Acutely aware of man's status as a lonely observer of nature, yet awakened by his unity with creation, Turner exhibited this tension by

the rhythms on his canvases. He was able to utilize a movement of light and color in his painting which permeated his images with a nervous energy. He crowded his flickering images of nature's changes and harmonized these with color and tone. During his brief interest as an Academy lecturer in Poussin, for example, Turner analyzed Poussin's painting The Deluge (Louvre, Paris) and found the earlier painter lacking in his effective use of light in combination with color and thus failing to embody sublime strength and astonishment. For Turner, the violence and terror of the subject called for more dramatic means than Poussin executed. His own interpretations of The Deluge (two studies with pen and brown ink, Turner Bequest, and two mezzotints, Yale Center for British Art, Mellon Collection, and one oil on canvas, 1804-05, Tate Gallery, London) consciously correct the errors he saw in Poussin's painting. Turner depicted every element of nature's fury: trees bent before violent winds, turbulent sky and water joined in their upheaval, while clusters of struggling figures anguished for survival. Flashes of lightning and a torrent of water replaced Poussin's "pale luminary," as Finberg notes, and the earlier artist's parallelism became opposing diagonals in Turner's stronger work.[13] By his use of harmonizing lines, shapes, and colors, human life became harmonized for him with its

interacting environment and therefore, with the infinite power of creation.

Turner dignified nature by imposing upon his scenes with his brush and scale techniques an emotional content that implied the harmony of the universe at work. The imagery of power pervaded even his skies and clouds with an evanescent glow. In the late, c.1840, oil painting, Sun setting over a Lake (Tate Gallery, London) Turner's use of intense yellow and red hues has so pervasively suffused the entire canvas as to obliterate man, his occupation, and any coherent element of nature other than the setting sun.

As did Thomson, Turner searched for the feeling of "delight" written of by Burke: the "pleasing dread" at experiencing an emotional surge as the result of the release from threatening danger. The fearful emotion with its resulting "delight" brings to mind the enormity of power present in nature, said Burke, and enables man to recognize his servitude to this power. Turner attempted to paint this reaction onto his canvases. He obviously sought this "delight" in the pencil and watercolor of The Lake of Geneva with the Dent d'Oche, from Lausanne: a funeral, 1841 (British Museum, London). The vastness and solitude stretch beyond the borders in the nearly motionless scene, as if the shadowy pallbearers were carrying their burden to eternity. Even

in the painting's restfullness, an implied energy exists. The eye moves from the stately procession marked by emphatically-stroked green 'trees' and across the expansive whiteness of the tranquil lake to the background mountains which are backlighted with crimson (death); the eye then is drawn horizontally from extending border to extending border and vertically from the trees to the crimson glow, almost as if in the sign of a cross. Once again, it is the occupations of the people and the solemnity of death that are the focus of attention. But there is a distance here also: notwithstanding the "delight" of peace that shrouds the scene for us now, perhaps this will be our death in the future.

Turner's ability to paint a startling human experience in universal terms implies his reverence for an unlimited creative power that provides and controls man's environment. Turner, in contrast to Thomson who secured his information greatly from travelogues, in most instances, painted from his own observations. Although he did not experience each human occupation that he depicted, he often made himself a part of nature's enactments. For instance, following the example of the masters Vernst and Backhuisen, Turner strapped himself to the mast of the boast, the Ariel, in order to see what the experience was like before he attempted to paint Snowstorm, 1842 (Tate Gallery, London). He became part of the universal

expression and was thus able to relate his own experience of astonishment and awe at universal power. Unlike Thomson, he did not remain aloof and remote from his painted expression.

Notes

[1]Thomson, Preface to "Winter," ed. Robertson, p. 240.

[2]Morning Post (London), 3 Apr. 1799, as quoted by John Gage, "Turner and The Picturesque," Burlington Magazine, 57, No. 742,23.

[3]Thomson, Preface to "Winter," ed. Robertson, pp. 240-41.

[4]Marjorie Hope Nicolson, Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1959), p. 331.

[5]Nicolson, Mountain Gloom, pp. 335, 358.

[6]Alan D. McKillop, The Background of Thomson's Seasons (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1942), p. 165.

[7]Monk, pp. 88-9.

[8]Wilton, p. 99.

[9]Thornbury, p. 359.

[10]Turner, as quoted by Wilton, p. 71.

[11]Wilton, p. 160.

[12]Thomson, Letters & Documents, p. 30.

[13]Finberg, pp. 195-96.

Chapter III: Boundlessness, The Sublime Obscurity

"To make anything very terrible," wrote Burke, "obscurity seems in general to be necessary" (Enquiry II, iii). Burke added that we lose our fear of things when we understand their full extent. Differentiating clear from unclear ideas, he explained that a clear idea belongs to the understanding and describes a thing as it is, while an unclear idea is a strong idea, belongs to the passions, and describes how a thing is felt. "If the affection be well conveyed," he wrote, "it will work its effect without any clear idea; often without any idea at all of the thing which has originally given rise to it" (Enquiry V, viii). Sublimity was found, then, for Burke, in formless and limitless objects.

Words were capable, stated Burke, of affecting us as strongly or more strongly than that which they represented (Enquiry V, vii). This was possible because they presented imperfect, unclear, and obscure ideas of objects; these ideas strongly affect our imaginations and provoke sublime emotions. Words could impress us with an unclear idea by their sound or picture representation, for they have no natural shape of their own.

Burke preferred poetry because, he claimed, it had a

greater capability to appeal to the passions. He stated that the images raised by poetry are always of the obscure kind because they have the ability to hurry the mind beyond understanding. Therefore, Burke concluded, poetry "has a more general as well as a more powerful dominion over the passions" while painting "can only affect simply by the images it presents." Thus, he wrote,

> the most lively and spirited verbal description I can give, raises a very obscure and imperfect idea of such objects; but then it is in my power to raise a stronger emotion by the description than I could do by the best painting, which . . . can affect only as [the subject] would have affected in reality (Enquiry II, iv).

It follows that if an outline is vague and obscure, then its borders are indistinct and have no limitations. Thus Burke concluded that obscurity leads us to a feeling of boundlessness which in turn prompts immediate thoughts of infinity and of a deity. And, Burke stated, we cannot approach infinity while the bounds can be perceived (Enquiry II, iv).

The idea of boundlessness implies, then, that the sublime cannot be understood. It is beyond the power of the imagination and has the capacity to excite a strenuous, exalted mental or emotional state; it produces, in other words, a dynamic state of mind. Boundlessness allows natural

dangers that are not at all pleasurable to become pleasurable as sublime emotions through the mechanism of the transference into words or onto canvas of a danger's inherent link with infinity. Terror experienced at an acceptable distance is pleasurable: and, when the distance is not outlined, it becomes sublime. Art, then, can demonstrate its relevance to us by working for us in our imaginations to remind us through natural phenomena of infinity's boundlessness.

Thomson and Turner, each in his own manner, expressed, sublimity in terms of boundlessness. In "Winter," for example, Thomson used the words "boundless", "bounded," or "unbounded" seven times.[1] He chose other words implying the sense of boundlessness: "resounding long" (l. 71), "pour flood upon flood" (l. 78), "far distant" (l. 116), "surge above surge" (l. 162), "of bonds impatient" (l. 993), and "wide extends" (l. 1027). Although he was working with paint instead of words, Turner also presented strong statements about landscapes in unclear terms. Increasingly through his career, Turner's work proclaimed his growing interest in obscure borders. Not only did the titles of his paintings often baffle his public, but he painted with less and less precision and clarity. Particularly in his later years, his descriptions were indistinct and muffled; seas became mists, and mountains melted into the atmosphere with no clear notion

of any form being established. His paintings illustrate a vagueness and uncertainty when he defines the borders of space.

Both Thomson and Turner, having formulated expressions of boundlessness by obscuring the borders of elements within their landscapes, were able to apply boundlessness to the ultimate goal of sublimity, a reverence for infinite power. Since the source of universal power is in itself obscure, to praise God meant, for Thomson, describing the manifestations of God as man could best sense them. By the use of a synaesthetic statement about nature Thomson could show his readers how to <u>feel</u> God in nature instead of confining belief solely to faith and rational contemplation. In his verse he associates his notion of a deity with the sensations of natural phenomena:

> By swift degrees the love of nature works,
> And warms the bosom; till at last, sublimed
> To rapture and enthusiastic heat,
> We feel the present Deity, and taste
> The joy of God to see a happy world!
> ("Spring" ll. 899-903)

Thomson not only expressed the boundless power of God in nature, he interpreted God as personally involved in this phenomena. As a part of his personification of God, he described Him in venerating, but such indirect, less clear terms as the "Father of the tempest" ("Winter" l. 72),

"Nature! great Parent" ("Winter 1. 106), "Nature's King" ("Winter" 1. 197), and "adore that Power/And Wisdom" ("Winter" 11. 1051-52). Hilbert H. Campbell summarized "Winter" as "embodying an excited search for God's order, harmony, and greatness in nature and seeking to explain the impact of nature on man.[2] Thomson himself stated his goal:

> Vapours, and clouds, and storms. Be these my theme;
> These, that exalt the soul to solemn thought
> And heavenly musing. ("Winter" 11. 3-5)

Thomson's method of stating his ideas with imprecise terms was a deliberate search for infinity and involved a creation suggesting a grandeur beyond self. Thomson used the technique of paraphrasing to excite ideas of an obscure infinity through unclear statement. The first edition of "Winter" has several examples of paraphrasing: within lines 228-40, Thomson uses "the Labourer Ox," "The Fowls of Heaven" "brown Inhabitants," and "The bleating Kind." That Thomson was also aware of an orderly universe and the placement of these animals within the Great Chain of Being is suggested by Spacks, who writes that these periphrases, as Thomson used them in alliance with "that Providence allows" and "more unpitying Men," rather than being more fully descriptive of birds, wild creatures, and sheep, are making a statement that all creatures, including men, participate in that cosmic

order.[3] While agreeing with this premise, Michael Martin Cohen suggests further that Thomson's periphrases also served poetic purposes of context.[4] These obscure, round-about references provide a setting for the fulfillment of the prayer which in lines 216-22 asks "thou Good Supreme" to "teach me Thyself" and "save me from folly, vanity, and vice"; as an answer, nature manifests on "earth's universal face" the "winter-robe of purest white," that "wild dazzling waste, that buries wide/The works of man" (11. 233, 238-40). This broader view is more likely closer to Thomson's own purposes.

In contrast to Thomson's deliberate expression of views about God, Turner did not characterize a specific God seen in the outpouring of natural phenomena but concentrated directly on the majestic power of infinity, a less defined force in the universal sense. Vaguenesss, for Turner, obscured the natural forms and was intended to evoke a sense of wonder as to their extent. His expression of nature in an unpretentious fashion appealed to his viewers because of its "single immense image of natural power," states Wilton.[5] In his lectures, Turner spoke about the "sublimity of the arrangement of lines," where "surely sublimity of the whole lies in the simplicity of its parts and not in historical color."[6] The simplest objects effected, for Turner, a sense

solemnity before the power and inevitability of nature: broad, majestic strokes describing mountains, the brilliance of intense sunlight and lightning, and the regrouping and focusing of nature to concentrate power. For example, in his c.1818-30 oil painting Rocky Bay with Figures (Tate Gallery, London) the forceful, albeit blurred, statement that Turner makes about nature when he paints a rocky coast, thick water, an indistinct shoreline, and clouds which seem to be also part of the foreground air, overwhelms the indefinite foreground figures with its vagueness. The lack of precise information, although each wave is distinctly outlined, helps to instill the idea of endlessness reaching into the horizon's whitish glow at the very center of the canvas.

In order to achieve the desired emotional reaction to obscurity, it was necessary for Thomson and Turner to interpret for their audiences the implications of boundaries with limitless obscure borders. To achieve boundlessness, Thomson wrote with words that implied vastness, magnitude, and greatness. Spacks notes that Thomson extended the sensual impression of his poetry by his use of "aurical words," which suggest enormity, strength, and power.[7] Thomson coupled adjectives and nouns: two-thirds of his nouns are modified, Miles reports, most of them with adjectives that enhance the emotional impact.[8] For example, Thomson chose these adjec-

tives within the first 250 lines of "Winter": "farthest verge of heaven" (l. 44), "far-distant region" (l. 116), "immense around" (l. 158),"tremendous roar" (l. 163), "mighty waters" (l. 166), "huge uproar" (l. 195), "Piercing north" (l. 224), "continual flow" (l. 232), "universal face" (l. 238), and "embroiling sky" (l. 247). In "Winter," Thomson also modified nouns with superlative adjectives that were calculated to stretch to the limits the imaginations of his readers: "noblest name" (l. 461), "smoothest stream" (l. 602), and "happiest of all" (l. 764). Thomson's choice of adjectives expand the meaning of his words describing a winter that is "wide stretching" (l. 951), "wide resounding", (l. 996), "vast" (l. 804), "unfathomably deep" (l. 298), and "resistless" (l. 841), with an "all-invading power" (l. 715) and "renovating force" (l. 704). His luxuriant words create the image of a boundless season "pouring o'er the country" (l. 396) on the "hollow-sounding plain" (l. 737) by their creation of a "stupendous scene" (l. 892) or a "cheerless void" (l. 918).

Thomson used these words of vastness, magnitude, and power to create a sense of his Deity. His belief in the Divine order of the Great Chain of Being, with animals being, for example, the "helpless charge" of man ("Winter" l. 265), is accommodated by the physio-theological scheme of his verse

which strives to describe the witnessing of God's power through natural events. Man's place below the angels nevertheless warranted him, in Thomson's world, a "Godlike face" (Winter" l. 404).

Turner, too, used terms that implied vastness, magnitude, and greatness. His apparent objective was to overwhelm his audience: the cold and lifeless ornamentations of nature were transformed in Turner's medium into vivid and majestic statements. He comprehended the more sublime aspects of scale, knowing that the illusion of greatness in a painting did not depend on a life-size duplication on canvas, nor on the enormity of the canvas itself: objects on canvas depended upon perspective and scale to give the illusion of greatness and grandeur. His technique of building up minute stroke upon minute stroke with a fine brush, where most painters would use a broad, flat stroke, allowed Turner to crowd into one confined space on the canvas many thousands of strokes which gave the suggestion of bulk and weight. The watercolor, Caudebec, c.1832 (British Museum) is a fine example of how this technique seems to add substance to the mountains. Often he worked with the customary wash technique to effect distance, especially in atmosphere and water views, but so infused were these washes with bright tones that they seemed to represent an endless source of light. This is

exemplified in the oil painting Rocky Bay with figures in which so much of the sky is washed with intense color that it is difficult to discover an exact source of the light. Turner scratched at paint and rubbed it away to create a suggestion of primitive power, particularly in painting rough seas and tree-grown crags. In the left foreground of Rocky Bay with figures, he used this technique to make a forceful statement with a dominant tree on a cliff overhanging the beach and sea. His broad sweeping diagonal statements depicting mountain vistas were accentuated by his dramatic use of light as in Marly-Sur-Sein, ac.1831 watercolor (British Museum, London), in which he made use of light to highlight the sombre colors which create the planar movement of the massive shapes of the mountains. In Dolbadern Castle (illustration, p. 29) we can see that grandeur lay in the scale that Turner created on the canvas: the ponderous and rugged mountains fade into the ethereal glow of sky. Turner used his broad tinted washes, contrasted with finely hatched brush strokes and a sombre restricted color range, to emphasize the immensity of the mountain range, the faint stream threading downwards, and the nearly unnoticed yet focal huddle of figures in the foreground. The castle's dark haystack column adds a stately, powerful comment to the canvas. Turner's statement is a simple one which expresses a grand

idea through its heroic scale on canvas.

In addition to their descriptions implying vastness and magnitude, Thomson and Turner both made use of startling, intense light to obscure boundaries and suggest limitlessness. The importance of intense light was obviously enhanced by Newton's discoveries; Burke had also mentioned the sublimity of intense light and its ability to cause startling effects by delimiting forms.

Thomson's "effulgent" sun blinded and confused the people in his verse. The glittering ice in "Winter" and the shock of lightning in "Summer" presumably dazzled the eyes of his readers. He used the sun as the source of light, personifying it in "Summer" as a "servant-sun" of "that Power/Whose wisdom shines as lively on our minds/As on our smiling eyes his servant-sun" (ll. 341-42). And Summer is the "child of the Sun" ("Summer" l. 2). Thomson used white (the absence of color) in the same fashion, to dazzle the eye of the reader: Winter's "whitening shower descends" (l. 229) blanketing the fields with a "winter-robe of purest white" (l. 229). He chose words like "shines" (l. 740), "shining" (ll. 673, 697, 810, ff.), "brighter" (l. 678), "glitter" (l. 741), "glittering" (l. 798), and "radiant" (l. 862) to effect an image of the brightest illumination. Writing about the simple, uncomplicated, and virtuous life of the sons of

Lapland, Thomson chose words that seem to vibrate with a glowing light. He describes, for example, the aurora borealis that supplies for the Laplanders sufficient light within the depths of their polar night to "guide their daring steps:"

> A waving blaze refracted o'er the heavens,
> And vivid moons, and stars that keener play
> With doubled lustre from the radiant waste.
> (11. 860-65)

The sun and its light effects became an important source of power for Turner, too. He rendered commonplace scenes grand with his use of light patterns to draw the spectator in and to raise ideas in his spectators "like the ignited spark," he said in his lectures, "from Earth towards Heaven."[9] He commonly associated lightning, for example, with monuments of dead religions, as in Stone Henge, 1829 (Yale Center for British Art, Mellon Collection) in which a shepherd is struck dead by lightning during a violent storm; this is reminiscent of Thomson's verse in Summer," l. 1169-1222 Turner attempted a dazzling sense of light in such works as Venice from the Porch of the Madonna della Salute, c.1830 (Metropolitan Museum, New York) and Goldau, 1843 (Private Collection), in which a brilliant light dominates the canvases. Turner, painting with intense hues, often arched a rainbow across the misty atmosphere as in the oil

Ehrenbrietstein, 1835 (Private collection); flashed a bolt of lightning through dark and troubled skies as in The Fifth Plague of Egypt, 1800 (John Herron Museum, Indianapolis), or spilled a silvery cascade of water over a cliff as in the watercolor, Melincourt Cascade. He made extremely effective use of fire, as well, to obscure outlines and to create a sense of endless scarlet flames with their reflection on water, as in the Burning of the House of Parliament.

Following his Italian excursion in 1819, Turner, apparently affected by the intense Mediterranean sun, became more innovative and attempted unique effects of light and color in his paintings He loved to watch the sun, particularly in elusive glimmerings at sunrise and sunset, and its shimmering through mists and on water. The portions of Thomson's "Summer," for instance, that intrigued him were mainly sun scenes. He made use of light playing through ruined fortresses and along mountain roads which lent a sensation of endless solitude and decay as in Dolbadern Castle. He effected perspective adroitly by drawing the eye through to immense distance with his use of light and brilliant colors, as in Snowstorm 1842 (National Gallery, London), for example, thus amplifying nature's immensity and grandeur by his own skillful handling of light and space.

Darkness as well as intense light served as a vehicle

for Thomson and Turner to illustrate indefiniteness, vagueness, and infinity. Thomson made much use of darkness and gloom: he was a master at leaving a landscape dark, cloudy, and vague. His description of the shepherd, for example, has the confused and terrified man lost in the "billowy tempest" of the snowstorm's shapeless drifts" where plains are "trackless" and rivers and forests are "hid beneath the formless wild" ("Winter" ll. 268-32). All visual features are obscured as Thomson emphasizes the loss of direction-finding landmarks in the "bleak" expanse of the "waste of snow" ("Winter" ll. 967, 880). Thomson appears to have successfully illustrated boundlessness, for example, with dark colors accentuating "A heavy gloom oppressive o'er the world" ("Winter" l. 58); he also used "Dark disease" (l. 60), "black" souls (l. 62), "dun discoloured flocks" (l. 64), "black glooms" (l. 73), and a "brown deluge" (l. 77). In his description of the winter storm freezing the ocean, he synaesthetically combines sightlessness with soundlessness to create a sense of endless darkness:

> Ocean itself no longer can resist
> The blinding fury; but, in all its rage
> The tempest taken by the boundless frost,
> Is many a fathom to the bottom chained,
> And bid to roar no more--a bleak expanse
> Shagged o'er with wavy rocks, cheerless, and void
> Of every life.
>
> (ll. 913-19)

Here Thomson uses such words to denote darkness as "blinding" and "bleak," and ties them with alliteration to his theme of the "boundless" fury of the storm.

Turner's frequent night scenes and his use of sombre, restricted colors document his interest in darkness as an agent of obscurity. The effect is to limit our perception, obscure the exact nature of the thing, and create within us impressions of apprehension and uncertainty; these are sublime expressions, that are, according to Burke, "mental rather than corporeal" (Enquiry IV, xvi). For example, Turner's Portsmouth 1824 (British Museum, London) is a water-color of the stormy harbor in which the entire canvas is painted in a leaden-toned blue with accents of a brownish-yellow and a light tone suffused with a greyish-mauve. The sombre tones, alone, increase the vague awareness of impending trouble and of the power the sea can exert even within the harbor confines. The fact that the lighter tones are subdued and darkened intensifies this awareness by limiting the visibility of borders.

The period just before Turner's death in 1851 was marked by an increasingly uncertain handling and impurity of color. Thornbury tells us that Turner blurred the edges of his colors and that his canvas surfaces were rubbed and disturbed, further contributing to a sense of uneasiness and

restlessness.[10]

Movement, however, in the works of Thomson and Turner, brings out the difference in their treatment of boundlessness. In addition to vastness, light, and darkness, the creation within a work of a sense of movement was particularly important to the effective use of obscurity. Movement is the essence of the energy that Burke said contained the ability to hurry the mind beyond understanding: that is the motion that carries one towards incomprehensible eternity. Because of his own ideas about cosmic order and God, Thomson appears to have placed boundaries on God and, thereby, limited movement towards eternity. For example, during the gloom of the tempest in "Winter," from far offshore is heard the "hungry howl/Of famished monsters." Instead of allowing the movement toward bleak terror to continue, Thomson returns in the very next line to God, the "Providence, that every waking Eye" (ll. 1018-20). Again, in recounting the various historical sages with whom he would pass his leisure time, Thomson brings his cataloging to a point of creating a sense of "nature's boundless frame" springing eternally from "the Eternal Mind." Yet here also, in the line following, he calls God "its end." He, in effect, short-circuits the movement toward an indefinite infinity by placing upon it limitations of cosmic order from his understanding of the Deity and the

Great Chain of Being. Thomson venerated God, but his adulation did not stretch endlessly or boundlessly into infinity.

In contrast, Turner not only sought on canvas to imbue motion with meaning and significance, but he also sought to carry it endlessly on without bounds. Capitalizing on the effect of obscurity to hurry the mind out of itself, Turner studied the painter's problem in representing motion (Enquiry II, iv). Quoting the notations Turner made in a sketchbook around 1801, Ziff describes the difficulty Turner experienced in reproducing the visual sensations of the phenomena of motion in paint. Turner had noted that in contrast, the poet need only to speak of movement in order to be fully capable of representing the sensation. The poetic term "wavy air" (the wind) apparently gave Turner the greatest trouble. But he nevertheless concluded his statements by writing that the "painter succeeds when he represents motion."[11] Turner appears to have succeeded in his struggle to produce motion by using obscurity, when the 1842 painting, Snowstorm is compared to the early, 1813 Deluge. Although motion is apparent in the curling of the waves in the earlier work, it cannot represent the sensation of eternal movement that is seen within the undefined borders of water and clouds in the 1842 work.

Turner concerned himself with the rapidity of unbounded movement within his works. By obscuring the outlines of the objects he painted, he created a sensation of restlessness about the object that permitted it to express to the viewer an immediate feeling of motion in space. Not being limited by any definite idea of God, Turner could freely interpret the movement of eternal power within nature as he saw it active in mass, light, air, space, and color. He enhanced the feeling of motion by the opposition of mass and space converging along strong diagonal planes. For example, in the 1840 watercolor, Venice: the Grand Canal looking towards the Dogana (British Museum, London), the perspective lines of the buildings along the banks of the canal converge at a point that is muffled in the distance, the point also being the convergence of the blank sky and the glassy canal water. Although the painting is of a quiet, gentle nature, the motion is nonetheless rapid as the eye travels along the strong diagonals towards infinity. Turner's atmospheric paintings later in life created a sense of restless motion through the swirling vapors that he painted; the dense confused movement in Snowstorm is, for example, so intense that the swirls appear to create a three-dimensional, though obscured, object that moves within the tinted mists. Most impressively, however, Turner's concentration on painting the

sun witnessed his preference for its moving force as a divine energy. As Thornbury pointed out, the sun symbolized, for Turner, the movement of the life force in every day living.[12] A contemporary critic, commenting on Turner's architectural paintings, said that the painter "effected his perspective adroitly, fashioning it to draw the eye through immense ranges of magnificent edifices with such rapidity that the artist and his work became subsidiary to the historical vision."[13] Much the same could be said about Turner's paintings of the sun that he seemingly employed the sun's energy to create vast energy and movement within his canvases. There is so much sun, color, movement, and obscurity in the 1840 oil of the Sun setting over a Lake (Tate Gallery, London) for example, that the mind is stretched to determine which way the canvas should be hung.

Turner's expression of the sublime was intended to be a boundless document worshipping creation. The painter did not intrude on the boundaries of infinity. He reproduced the movement that he saw in his every-day surroundings as authentically as he could, and his genius gave it credibility because he understood boundlessness. He captured the essence of motion on canvas and led his viewers' eyes rapidly through that motion to infinity.

Turner's works show, then, that he was as a painter,

capable of raising very obscure ideas about the powerful forces of nature. Noting this, it is therefore possible to make the statement that painting can produce, as can poetry, identifiable landscape and by the use of certain, often similar, techniques can affect on canvas the same strong emotions and can raise as dynamic and moving an idea as does poetry. Turner in his paintings not only expressed obscurity, but carried his sublime expression beyond Burke's notion with his own perception of universal movement.

Notes

[1]"Winter" ll. 428, 575, 799, 858, 915, 1066, 1069.

[2]Hilbert H. Campbell, James Thomson (Boston:Twayne, 1979), p. 63.

[3]Patricia Meyer Spacks, The Varied God: A Critical Study of Thomson's "The Seasons" (Berkeley & Los Angels: Univ. of California Press, 1959), p. 58.

[4]Michael Martin Cohen, p. 65.

[5]Wilton, p. 98.

[6]J. M. W. Turner, British Museum Add. Mss. 46151, Box 1, II, p. 32, as quoted by Wilton, p. 71.

[7]Spacks, Varied God, p. 112.

[8]Josephine Miles, p. 219.

[9]Turner, Mss., as quoted by Wilton, p. 71.

[10]Thornbury, p. 509.

[11]J. M. W. Turner, "Perspective" Sketchbook, Inventory I, 287-291, as quoted by Jerrold Ziff, "Turner on Poetry & Painting" in Studies in Romanticism 3, No. 4, 197-98.

[12]Thornbury, p. 359.

[13]Wlton, p. 71.

Conclusion

If Burke had known Turner's works, his ideas about sublimity would have been different: poetry would no longer stand alone in its ability to raise stronger emotions than could painting. Burke would have observed similarities between the poet and the painter in their expression of sublimity. He may also have noticed the contrasting expressions, those differences that placed the painter, Turner, in a position to express a purer, more Burkean sublime.

Observing the poetry of Thomson and the paintings of Turner, Burke would have understood that each artist was influenced by neoclassicism. Typical of the neoclassic period, both artists minutely scrutinized nature and used nature's examples to stimulate their creativeness and as a vehicle for statements appealing to the emotions. They incorporated into their works the latest scientific theories, particularly the optical physics of Sir Isaac Newton.

Living in the eighteenth century literary milieu when it was the custom to discuss the ideas of the ancients, Thomson and Turner were familiar with Longinus and his description of sublimity. Unlike Longinus, however, each artist chose to emphasize sublimity as a quality in the

subject matter. Their ideas for subject matter were chosen from world-wide sources: no land or event was too remote, too distant in time, or too unusual to incorporate into their works. Thomson borrowed material from travelogues for his poetry, while Turner incorporated into his paintings the abundant sketches he made while touring different countries. The artists sought inspiration for their work from Biblical sources as well as classical sources; Milton and Virgil, too, were favorites for these artists. Turner often used Thomson's poetic lines to fortify the theme of a painting.

Compacting and realigning his scenes by careful selection, each artist intensified the landscape art for greater emotive stimulation. Each borrowed heavily from seventeenth-century painters. Thomson, for example, conceived of his poetry as an artful, contrived wildness, such as Nicolas Poussin or Claude Lorrain created, which revealed the poet's heritage, while the subject matter he chose, the extremes of nature's violence, exhibited his move away from neoclassic influence. Turner was also intensely involved with Poussin for a brief period, yet strove toward a more exact representation of nature as he saw it with the emotional quality intact. He borrowed for this from the wild, imaginative landscapes of Salvatore Rosa and the melodramatic effects of Henry Fuseli. However, Turner interpreted the emotive

qualities in the subject matter, as did Thomson, and combined these elements into believable works of art.

Burke would have also become aware of the similar techniques these artists used to involve their audiences in their subject matter. Thomson strove to awaken poetical enthusiasm by his verse, while Turner ordered his landscapes to be felt by the viewer. While not exactly duplicating nature each artist created believable scenes in his poems and paintings; the spectators would identify with the scenes. Thomson embellished his descriptions with details and adjectives, and, by using his luxuriant language, extended common words to their fullest meaning. Turner transformed nature on canvas and gave it an identifiable appeal by using precise foreground detail. Although never separating his careful depictions from the background, which remained integrated into the whole presentation, nevertheless each artist described man in general, imprecise terms. The people created by the artists were, however, as believable as the scenes in which they acted, because of the emotional overtones incorporated into the poetry and painting.

Thomson and Turner signalled their audiences to notice these techniques of emotional involvement, one working with words, the other with paint. Thomson's expletives alerted his readers to the emotive sensory qualities of his lines;

Turner's use of strong diagonals, massive structures, and atmospheric light called attention to these elements within his works.

Although he preceded Burke, Thomson was aware of the rhythmic techniques that Burke later wrote about, the techniques of succession, uniformity, and profusion that drew spectators through the poetic episodes in rhythmic patterns. He made use of echoes that appealed to the ear: repetitions of sounds by alliteration, consonance, anaphora, and onomatopoeia. He used the neoclassic technique of cataloging people, places, and things. Postdating Burke, Turner likewise made use of rhythmic patterns. His form, color, and light patterns suggested rhythmic echoes in his paintings similar to the repetitive consonances in musical compositions. He contrasted massive weighty structures to quiet scenes glowing with color. His echoes of the silences of space are reminiscent of the echoes of infinity.

Part of the association with the event or scene that draws the spectator in, wrote Burke, is the role synaesthesia plays in the production of emotive energy. Spectators identify with the depicted emotions and associate these emotions with their own. Burke wrote that this emotive substitute, found in the artistic work, provided a replacement for a previously experienced emotion. These substitute

emotional responses, Thomson and Turner discovered, could be stimulated through the sensory organs. The artists were also aware of Newton's theory that sight stimulates the other senses, such as the tactile and auditory senses, into activity and used this theory to set the mood of their landscapes. By writing about emotion-filled situations, Thomson asked his readers to re-feel their deepest emotions. Turner wanted to show in his paintings that a scene was to be felt, but not to be intellectually understood. These artists became so adept at this technique of presenting sensory stimulations that their spectators would rapidly and completely associate with the event depicted, thus short-circuiting any conscious experience of the association.

Another important technique of association used by these artists was the association with nature through personification. Thomson was able to take a particular natural detail and, by using personification and the reader's association, identify the subject with philosophical statements about God. Turner's paintings conveyed the notion of an animated world in which the sun is witnessed in dazzling, brilliant color as the sublime personification of universal power.

Building upon the technique of association, Burke theorized that it was possible to awaken the emotions with

the more terrifying and astonishing aspects of nature in order to, as he wrote,suspend "the motions of the soul with some degree of horror" (Enquiry II, i). Thomson achieved the sublime emotions of terror and astonishment by presenting natural elements in awesome and dynamic terms and by asking the reader to identify with finite man at the mercy of these elements. He intended to "please, instruct, surprise, and astonish" his readers, and thus he filled his verse with descriptions of calamities and impending doom.[1] Turner achieved terror and astonishment by painting the vast and spectacular aspects of nature and often by locating within these aspects an image of everyday man pursuing commonplace occupations. He communicated the energy he found in the grandeur of nature convincingly and accurately and was able to impress upon the observer's mind an idea of the terrible and the sublime.

Burke wrote that an understanding of power was the result of experiencing the emotion of terror; awe and terror precede adulation and, therefore, infinity can be approached through fear. Fear leads to a confusion of the mind, Burke wrote, a confusion caused by the opposite forces of attraction and repulsion. Thomson used descriptions of things and events naturally great in violence, grandeur, and size in order to elevate the reader's thoughts to an all-powerful

being. His vocabulary is full of words expressing excitement and danger. So great is the effect of his words that Thomson himself did not fully comprehend the power he wrote about.

Turner found inspirations of divinity in fearful torrents, destructive storms, the turbulence of cities, the gruesome force of war, as well as in the overwhelming solitude of vast still waters, and darkness. He painted scenes depicting nature confounding man's adventures and intensified the drama by manipulating nature's color, light, mass, and space for a heightened effect. The infinite power of the sun dominated over nature and over man in Turner's painted world.

Power was further exemplified by Thomson and Turner as they depicted their understanding of man's insignificance before nature. Thomson pictures in his verse a unified, harmonious universe exceeding man's comprehension, a universe that can juxtapose a turbulent storm to a quiet, homey scene as an expression of the variety and extent of nature's power. The poet inserted distance between the disaster and the reader as an emotional relief from impending danger that, Burke later wrote, enabled astonishment and terror to produce, as Thomson wrote, "a pleasing dread" ("Winter" l. 109).

For Turner, the meaning of his landscapes lay in the occupations of his painted people surrounded by an awesome,

universalized nature. He saw man as the lonely observer before nature's fury. He detailed tiny men in the foreground as an expression of this universality of a particular in the form of a methodized generalization.

As part of their sublime expression of man existing within a nature controlled by a universal power, both artists included morality in their scheme of arousing emotions. Here, Burke could have noticed a contrast in the methods of treating morality in the works of Thomson and Turner, and in the emphasis each placed on moralizing. Thomson's man has the possibility of avoiding disaster by altering his behavior: a victory over his sins bears witness to God's greatness and magnanimity. God's orderliness is disturbed by man's failure, but man has the opportunity to correct his behavior. Thomson combined nature, description, moral issues, and instruction into one ordered harmony of man before his creator. Thus he sought to astonish his readers and venerate his creator with natural sublimity in order to correct man's social behavior.

Turner also harmonized human life to its interacting environment by use of harmonizing colors, lines, and shapes. However, although the man in the world of Turner's paintings is harmonized with the infinite power of creation, the sun, as the depiction of that universal power, can obliterate man

with the intensity of its light. Turner, as Thomson did, combined the nature he saw, the descriptions he painted, moral issues, and an attempt to show what nature's events were really like in order to document this harmony of finite man within his all-encompassing universe. However, Turner did not remain aloof to this experience; although he did not set himself the task of altering man's behavior, he allowed himself to become involved as a part of the experience itself.

To explain how power is understood as a reaction to fear, Burke wrote that to be very terrible a thing must be obscure. If it has no boundaries, it is limitless. Vague and indistinct outlines of objects and events lead the observer to feelings of boundlessness which in turn lead to ideas of infinity and a diety. Imperfect, unclear ideas of things could, therefore, strongly affect the imagination and provoke sublime emotions. Burke preferred poetry to painting because words could impress the reader with unclear ideas appealing to the passions and hurry his mind beyond understanding. Burke did not believe that painting was capable of doing this.

The descriptions written and painted by the artist each in his own medium implied boundlessness, vastness, and magnitude. Thomson used the words "boundless," "boundlessness,"

and imprecise terms as well as aurical words to suggest endlessness, hugeness, and vastness to create a sense of his Diety. He shows readers synaesthetically how to "feel" God. The poet also made use of periphrasis, using these unclear statements to obscure exact definitions of things.

Turner painted with increasingly unclear terms using indistinct borders with less and less clarity. He evoked a sense of wonder as to the extent of the forms he depicted; the endlessness of his forms extended into infinity. As for depicting size, he overwhelmed his audiences with his sense of magnificent scale achieved by his adroit manipulation of perspective.

Both artists applied boundlessness to the ultimate goal of sublimity that, as Burke had written, was a reverence for infinite power. Each artist made careful use of startling, intense light as a source of power obscuring the boundaries of the description. Thomson's words dazzled the mind's eye of the reader with sparkling, glowing light, while Turner's equally dazzling canvases drew his spectators' minds towards heaven by his use of light patterns, fire, lightning, and the sun's rays. These artists used this dazzling brilliance to reinforce the immense distance between man and his creator. An effort to effect boundlessness is also evident in the artists' use of darkness as a vehicle to express indefinite-

ness, vagueness, and infinity. Darkness and gloom also tended to create for these artists a sense of apprehension and uncertainty, two important aspects of a sublime response.

The use of light and darkness emphasizes the distance that man must move in order to approach infinity. It is this motion that is the essence of the energy pushing the mind beyond reason to reach sublimity. A contrast of the artists' expression of movement emphasizes the differences in the ideas of Thomson and Turner that could have influenced Burke to arrive at other conclusions than those in the Enquiry. By allowing man to control God's power by altering his earthly behavior, Thomson placed boundaries upon God and thus limited man's movement toward infinity. Thomson's God represents the end of nature and of movement.

In contrast, Turner depicted the meaning and significance of motion continuing endlessly. He experienced difficulty in expressing motion, yet tackled the problem of visually reproducing the phenomenon in paint. He succeeded in expressing motion by his use of obscurity; the more complete the obscurity, the greater was the movement toward infinity. Turner concerned himself with how to paint unbounded motion on canvas. Not being limited by ideas of a deity as a judgmental, retributive God as was Thomson, Turner was free to interpret the movement of eternal power in nature

as he saw it in relation to the movement of the human spirit toward the power. Motion was for Turner an expression of divine energy, which expression, as Burke had noted, was the goal of sublimity. If Turner did not limit motion in his depiction of nature on canvas, as Thomson limited his expression in verse, but instead increased the rapidity of movement toward infinity in terms that were obscure and boundless, then Burke could have claimed that his own ideas of sublimity were better met by the painter than by the poet.

Notes

[1]Thomson, Preface to "Winter", ed. Robertson, p. 240.

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