Eva ANGLESSY **N° étudiant : xxxxxxxx**

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UE 701 – Séminaires, Colloques et Conférences

FINAL REPORT

"Is it a rebellion? No, Sire, it's a revolution!"

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Within a timespan of sixty years, continental Europe faced not only the French Revolution of 1789 and its aftermaths, but also a social revolution spreading throughout several countries in 1848. Across the Channel, the monarchy remained on the throne, but the magnitude of these two blasts deeply stirred the consciousness of the British people, which was facing another type of revolution at home, both social and cultural, the Industrial Revolution.

In British culture, each of these revolutions gave birth to new artistic movements, respectively the Romantic poets and the Pre-Raphaelites painters, who not only rebelled against the aesthetics and the formal conventions established by their predecessors, but also against the environmental damage and social injustice brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation.

Centuries of critique and scholarship have been devoted to each of these movements; libraries are filled with books about their works. In this short report, I will only synthesise my understanding of the impressive mass of information collected from this series of lectures and give my personal response to them. First, I will underline a few common features among the characteristics of each artistic movement, including their "radical" or "rebellious" sides. Then I will focus on the relationship that the first generation of artists -- in each movement -- developed with Nature. What did they mean by "Let Nature be your teacher" or "Truth to Nature" and how did they apply these principles in the representation of Nature in their work?

Professor Jonathan Bate's lectures on "The Origins of Romanticism" and "Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Poetic Revolution" provided me with a dense introduction to the movement of the Romantic poets and a useful insight into *Lyrical Ballads* and its "revolution of the self". Breaking with the genteel poetry of the 18th century, its 'gaudiness and inane phraseology', Wordsworth intended to go back to the popular culture of medieval ballads and the plays of Shakespeare, and infused his poems with 'a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents'.

The BBC4 series "The Pre-Raphaelites", the exhibition tour "Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts and Crafts Movement" as well as Aurélie Petiot's interview "Les Préraphaélites, un monde rêveur" on France-Culture, gave me a general knowledge of this artistic movement. Its founders, then still students at the Royal Academy of Arts, broke with the traditional rules of painting they had been learning for years, and decided to go back to the Old Masters for inspiration, from the Italian medieval frescoes to Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*.

Elizabeth Prettejohn brilliantly demonstrates how these early works of art influenced the young painters, in a fascinating lecture "Modern Painters, Old Masters: the Pre-Raphaelites and Italy".

Contrary to the Romantics' notion of the artist as a solitary genius, most of the artists that I will refer to in this document used to work among peers or friends, to whom they presented their works in order to receive some feedback. William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey, the first generation of Romantic poets, worked together and were known as "the Lake poets". Concerning the second generation of Romantic poets, who all died young, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley often met when they lived in Switzerland as neighbours; John Keats was part of "the Cockney School", a group of poets and essayists writing in Leigh Hunt's periodical. In the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB), founded in 1848 by William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the painters also used to form groups in which they showed their works and asked for their peers' opinions. In these circles, essayists and critics also played an important role, and I dare say that the names of William Hazlitt (for the Romantics) and John Ruskin (for the Pre-Raphaelites) became as famous as the artists they wrote about. The second episode of the BBC4 series was particularly important for the orientation of my research: not only did it focus on the representation of Nature in their paintings, but it also opened my eyes on the influence of Ruskin on the Pre-Raphaelites. He managed to turn the hostile criticism they faced at the beginning of their careers into public praise, contributed to their artistic success, and even supported some of them financially.

While critics and scholars regrouped the Romantic poets into a single movement decades later, the founding members of the PRB deliberately decided to create a "brotherhood", working according to their own artistic and ethical principles, and creating their own mythology about their new methods of working and values. However, it is important to remark how different were the personalities of the various artists within each artistic movement, and how heterogeneous was the expression of their art. Both artistic movements counted two different generations of artists, the second generation defining their own directions and distancing themselves from the first one. When these young poets and painters burst on the artistic scene with their resolutely different, modern works, thus breaking with the previous conventions ruling their art, they all embodied what Hazlitt called "the spirit of the age". This did not remain true, nevertheless, for the few whose lives and careers were quite long, such as Wordsworth, who became a conservative, and Millais, whose engravings and paintings became more and more commercial. The third episode of the BBC4 series, as well as Paul Goldman's lecture "Millais, the Pre-Raphaelites and the Idyllic School" explain that several of these painters had to use their drawing skills in the more lucrative activities of book illustration and engraving,

because their demanding, time-consuming process of painting could not afford them a livelihood.

The second half of the 18th century saw the development of sensibility and sentiment as cultural values in British society, and the expression of powerful feelings and emotions remained at the core of Romantic poetry, though reshaped by the aftermaths of the French revolution. At the same time emerged the notion of Englishness, based on the Whig attachment to liberty and the culture of politeness, and partly built against the French cultural values and political excesses. As Professor Andrew Malcolm explains in his lecture "English Landscape: The Picturesque", Horace Walpole first translated these notions into modern English gardening, whose aim was "to free the garden to return closer to nature" and called for a school of British landscape painters. John Constable and J.M.W. Turner would become the greatest landscape painters of the Romantic era, conveying on the canvas the **sublime** they saw in Nature. Turner was particularly fascinated by grandiose and pathetic scenes. He was certainly inspired by William Gilpin, who had expressed revolutionary new ideas about landscape and beauty: his book on the River Wye had become a key publication in the 1780s, thus launching picturesque tourism. For Gilpin, the aesthetics of the picturesque laid on **nature, untamed by art, and bursting wildly into all his irregular forms**. The epitome of the picturesque landscape was to be found in the Lake District, and Tintern Abbey, near the river Wye, inspired two young artists: Wordsworth in poetry, and Turner in painting. Wordsworth's poem "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey", added at the last minute before the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, is elegiac. The poet, who had been enthusiastic about the French revolution in his youth, changed his mind after he had witnessed the Reign of Terror. He retreated to the Lake District, where he became "an older and wiser man, responsive to what he calls the still, sad music of humanity". His perception of Nature was inspired by Spinoza's pantheism, the belief that there is no transcendent or personal deity, and that **God is to be found in Nature**: "A motion and a spirit, that impels/ All thinking things, all objects of all thought,/ And rolls through all things."

In *Modern Painters,* John Ruskin took the defence of Turner's revolutionary visions of the natural world, and developed, through his lectures on landscape painting, a pantheistic vision of Nature as the book of God, which echoes Wordsworth's. No wonder that he also championed the "Pre-Raphaelites painters, who tried to revive the art of the pre-Renaissance and its **celebration of simple nature in luminous detail**", as Professor Andrew's points out in his lecture "Ruskin at 200: The Art Critic as a Word-Painter".

According to Aurélie Petiot[1], "[t]he Pre-Raphaelites virtually reinvented the landscape genre. (…) Although landscape painting was at first conceived as setting and not as genre and although Ruskinian truth to nature also applied to portraits, efforts to paint "pure landscapes" gradually developed, primarily in the model of experimentation. (…) [T]he aim was now to **render the real with exactitude**, in order to achieve a higher reality. Photography (…) played an important role in the Pre-Raphaelites' redefinition of landscape painting and was in turn influenced by their works." (p. 103) "Truth to nature is thus **reality observed scientifically**, through the prism of experience" (p. 106), as in *John Ruskin*'s portrait by Millais (Annex 1, p. 8). This observation took place outdoors, an innovation brought about ten years before the Impressionists in France. Thanks to the invention of the tubes of paint, they did the pictures in their entirety, or at least their landscape elements, standing before the scene during long sessions that extended over several months. They treated both foreground and background with the same accurateness, painting with very small brushes usually used for aquarelle: Millais' *Ophelia* and Hunt's *Our English Coasts* are striking examples of the painstaking minutiae of their works (Annex 1, p. 9). Though Brown's *Pretty Baa-Lambs* and *The Hayfield*, are both remarkable for the treatment of light and shadow, be it under the summer sun or crepuscular light (Annex 1, p. 10), critics were shocked because he did not use the traditional chiaroscuro technique, and Ruskin once again took the defence of the Pre-Raphaelites. Then "a turning point occurred in the relationship between the Pre-Raphaelites and science in 1859, with the publication of Darwin's research. Whereas Hunt and Tupper retained the Ruskinian approach to nature, Rossetti and the second generation of Pre-Raphaelites renounced naturalism and turned to idealised subjects" (p. 126).

If landscape had become a fundamental feature of Englishness since the 1770s, the idea of preserving rural life in peril emerged with the Industrial Revolution, but as a radical voice amidst the triumphant capitalism in Victorian Britain. If the social and ecological impacts of industrialisation were particularly addressed by the rural poet John Clare and the rebellious poet William Blake, they were also treated by Wordsworth in *Lyrical Ballads*, in poems like "The Female Vagrant" or "Michael"[2]. He strongly dissented from the contemporary notion of 'happy poverty', of the rural poor as no more than part of the picturesque scene. As Professor Bate explains in his lecture "The Romantic Lakes: From Wordsworth to Beatrix Potter", after Wordsworth had settled in the Vale of Grasmere, he would work in the later part of his life, to develop a holistic approach in a touristic guide for preserving the area, and educating tourists

[1] *The Pre-Raphaelites*, by Aurélie Petiot, first published in the USA by Abbeville press in 2019
[2] In the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1802

and new landowners to care for the delicate ecosystem of the Lakes. He envisioned the district as "a sort of **National property**, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy". Professor Paul Sawyer introduces his lecture "The First Ecologist: John Ruskin and the Futures of Landscape", by linking Wordsworth and Ruskin as important actors in the birth of ecology in Britain. In his dense and captivating talk, he describes Ruskin's evolution from an art critic to a radical social critic, when he became obsessed by the damage wrought by rampant industrialism on both landscape and human welfare. Some of the Pre-Raphaelite painters also felt concerned with social problems and the poor, as in Henry Wallis' *The Stone Breaker*, Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* or Rossetti's *Found* (Annex 1, p. 11). This concern would become more pregnant in the Arts and Crafts Movement, led by William Morris, whose artistic thoughts, first inspired by Ruskin's theories in *The Stones of Venice*, would turn towards social reforms and Socialism.

Though I knew a little about the art of the Pre-Raphaelites since I visited the Museum of Art and Saint Philip Cathedral in Birmingham a few years ago, most of the lectures I watched for this assignment embarked me on a journey into visual art, offering me an invaluable insight into the work of the painters I already liked, though without fully appreciating the extent of their genius. I also "discovered" another type of genius, Ruskin's "word-painting"[3], and the two lectures on his work gave me an appetite for exploring it further. As Charlotte Brontë said in one of her letters, Ruskin seems to give us new eyes.

This first series of lectures was thus a general introduction to the Romantic poets and the Pre-Raphaelite painters, as well as an exploration of the relationships of both artistic movements with Nature. However, I only focused on the revolutionary techniques used by the Pre-Raphaelites to render on their canvas what they saw with the greatest reality. Next term, I will focus on the themes they chose to represent, and on how the narratives in many of their paintings were inspired by Romantic poems and Shakespeare's plays.

[3] According to Professor Malcolm Andrews, Ruskin's writing style can even mirror the "gorgeous extravagance" of Turner's image-making: his description of Turner's *The Slave Ship* in Modern Painters, volume 1, can be seen as the epitome of what Andrews calls "the organ-music" of Ruskin's prose.

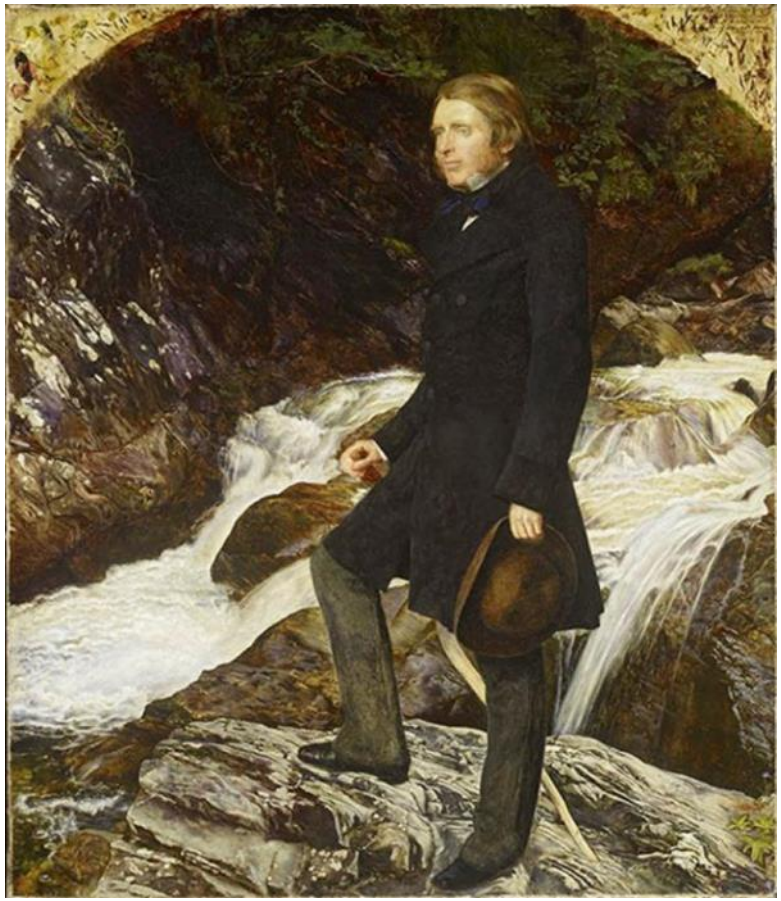
ANNEX 1

Illustration of Ruskin's principle "Truth to Nature"

in the painting of the Pre-Raphaelites

1. Scientific observation
2. Accuracy in painting natural details
3. Light and shadow
4. Social problems in Victorian society

1) Truth to Nature: Scientific observation



Portrait of John Ruskin, by John Everett Millais (1829–96)
painted in 1853–54: https://www.ashmolean.org/portrait-john-ruskin

John Ruskin (1819–1900), Study of Gneiss Rock, Glenfinlas, c.1853–1854
http://ruskin.ashmolean.org/collection/8979/object/14350

2) Truth to Nature: Accuracy in painting natural details (foreground as well as background)

John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, (1851-52), wikipedia

William Holman Hunt - Our English Coasts, 1852 (`Strayed Sheep'), wikipedia

3) Truth to Nature: Light and Shadow

Ford Madox Brown - Pretty Baa-Lambs (1851), wikipedia

Ford Madox Brown, The Hayfield (1855–6)[4]

[4] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/brown-the-hayfield-t01920

4) Truth to Nature: painting social problems of contemporary society

The Stonebreaker, by Henry Wallis (1857) - wikipedia.

Found by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (unfinished, 1854–1855, 1859–1881) – Wikipedia

ANNEXE 2

Université de Lorraine - ERUDI-M1 Mondes Anglophones, Année 2020/2021

UE 701 – Séminaires, Colloques et Conférences

CORPUS OF LECTURES/WEBINARS

"Is it a rebellion? No, Sire, it's a revolution!"

Within a timespan of sixty years, continental Europe first faced the French Revolution of 1789 and its aftermaths, and then a social revolution spread throughout several countries in 1848. Across the Channel, the monarchy remained on the throne, but the magnitude of these two blasts deeply stirred the consciousness of the British people, which was facing another type of revolution at home, both social and cultural, the Industrial Revolution.

In British culture, each of these revolutions gave birth to new artistic movements, respectively the Romantic poets and the Pre-Raphaelites painters, who not only rebelled against the aesthetics and the formal conventions established by their predecessors, but also against the environmental damage and social injustice brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation.

From this first series of lectures, I will draw a general understanding of the various characteristics of each artistic movement, including their "radical" or "rebellious" sides, and I will underline a few common features, which resonate and echo in their works. Then I will focus my research on the relationship of both groups of artists with Nature. What did they mean by "Let Nature be your teacher" or "Truth to Nature" and how did they apply these principles in the representation of Nature in their work?

List of lectures/webinars

Exhibition (virtual) Tour - "Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts and Crafts Movement", May 2020 - narrated by Tim Barringer, Paul Mellon Professor of the History of Art at Yale

"In February 2020, the Yale Centre for British Art opened an eagerly anticipated exhibition focused on the revolutionary work of three generations of young rebellious artists and designers that revolutionized the visual arts in Britain". Since the Centre had to shut its doors because of the Covid19 pandemic, a virtual tour has been posted on the internet, thus allowing the public to appreciate some representative artefacts of the Victorian era.

"Featuring the work of Edward Burne-Jones, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, William Morris, Mary Jane Newill, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Simeon Solomon (among others), "Victorian Radicals" celebrates the skill and still-relevant ideas of these thinkers and makers".

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qedlVaido5s&ab_channel=YaleBritishArt

Duration: 1h00

"Modern Painters, Old Masters: the Pre-Raphaelites and Italy", a lecture by Elizabeth Prettejohn, March 2018

Elizabeth Prettejohn (York) delivers a lecture posing the theory that the Pre-Raphaelites were at their most original when they reflected most deeply on the art of the Italian past. She first demonstrates how Piero delle Francesca's The Nativity, and Van Eyck's Arnolfini Portrait, acquired by the National Gallery in the early 1840s, inspired the young painters. Then she details the influence of Botticelli's work in several Pre-Raphaelites' pictures, concluding with a fascinating study of Burne-Jones' monumental painting The Wheel of Fortune.

This lecture took place at the British Academy, the UK's leader for the humanities and social sciences, on 6 March 2018.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6c5b2xzB8NQ

Duration: 1h14min (including a Q&A session)

The two following short lectures usefully complement Elizabeth Prettejohn's lecture "Modern Painters, Old Masters: the Pre-Raphaelites and Italy", by focusing on Van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait*, and explaining its influence on the work of the Pre-Raphaelites through the two following examples:

***The Lady of Shalott* –** "Reflections: Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites" (National Gallery, October 2017)

"What attracted the Pre-Raphaelites to Alfred Tennyson's poem 'The Lady of Shalott'? And how did the convex mirror from van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Portrait' come to play an essential role in their depictions of the mysterious weaver and her deadly curse?" -- Duration: 4 min

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8usTwS2tw3Y&ab_channel=BritishSchoolatRome

"Mirrors in Pre-Raphaelite paintings" – "Reflections: Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites" (National Gallery, October 2017)

"The convex mirror at the heart of van Eyck's 'Arnolfini Portrait' intrigued the Pre-Raphaelites; this film explores its link with the recent invention of daguerreotypes, and Victorian trends in interior design." -- Duration: 4 min

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoRhJTcamj0&ab_channel=TheNationalGallery

"Millais, the Pre-Raphaelites and the Idyllic School" by Dr Paul Goldman, Gresham College, London (October 2010)

"The final and 'most indispensable' founding principle of the Pre-Raphaelites was: "to produce thoroughly good pictures and statues". Derided by the establishment (including Charles Dickens) for producing art, which was ugly and backward, the works of John Everett Millais, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Holman Hunt have since come to take their place as perhaps the most important point of British art in the 19th Century."

This lecture looks in particular at the illustrative art of these movements and artists.

https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/the-art-of-illustration-millais-the-pre-raphaelites-and-the-idyllic-school

Duration: 52 min

« Les préraphaélites, un monde rêveur », part of the series « L'Art est la Matière », by Jean Loisy, France-Culture (28 April 2019).

Dr Aurélie Petiot, who wrote a French book on the Pre-Raphaelites in 2019, discusses this British artistic movement with Jean Loisy. She introduces it to a French audience, presenting the historical context and the main characteristics of the paintings which were produced between 1848 and 1907. Interestingly, her comprehensive book has recently been translated in English under the title "The Pre-Raphalites".

https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/lart-est-la-matiere/les-preraphaelites-un-monde-reveur

Duration: 59 min

BBC 4 series in three parts: The Pre-Raphaelites

This three-part documentary was first broadcast on BBC 4 in 2009; it examined the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB), "who brought notoriety to British art in the 19th century, bursting into the spotlight in 1848 and shocking their peers with a new kind of radical art."

Note: This series focuses on the artistic evolution of the founders of the "Brotherhood", but does not elaborate on the second generation of the Pre-Raphaelite painters (such as Solomon, Burne-Jones, etc.)

Episode 1:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkWONORqHZw&ab_channel=VelislavIvanov

"The opening programme explores the origins of the Brotherhood and their initial achievements, and looks at some of their key early works, the hostile criticism they faced and the centuries of academic dogma their paintings overturned." Duration: 29 min

Episode 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe9JOWEYldU&ab_channel=VelislavIvanov

"This second part looks at how they continued by transforming landscape painting with a microscopic examination of the natural world, some ten years before the French Impressionists." Duration: 29 min

Episode 3: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSCRU73LIms&ab_channel=VelislavIvanov

"The final part looks at how the Pre-Raphaelites had outgrown the avant-garde in their later years and began to embrace fame and fortune with art designed to please the masses. In so doing, they attained riches and celebrity and became the forefathers of the commercial modern artist". Duration: 29 min

"The First Ecologist: John Ruskin and the Futures of Landscape", by Professor Paul Sawyer, Cornell University, 2012

"This lecture traces John Ruskin's dramatic and contradictory career, from his exquisitely precise drawings of clouds, rocks, leaves, and sculptured walls and niches, into his storm-driven middle years, when his despair over the deterioration of landscape matched his fierce belief that science, art, and writing were but differing routes to the same truth: Nature as the source of the greatest art and the ultimate guarantor of human values."

https://www.cornell.edu/video/the-first-ecologist-john-ruskin-and-the-futures-of-landscape

Duration: 1h 17 min

“Ruskin at 200: The Art Critic as Word-Painter”, by Professor Malcolm Andrews, Gresham College, February 2019

To mark Ruskin’s Bicentenary on 8 February 2019, Professor Andrews’ talk starts with an assessment of Ruskin’s achievement as an art critic. “Then, with a close focus on four or five particular paintings, the lecture will explore Ruskin’s distinctive genius in evocative word-painting as he celebrates and critiques Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites.”

https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/ruskin-200

Duration: 46 min

“The Origins of Romanticism”, by Professor Sir Jonathan Bate, Gresham College, September 2018

“The historian Isaiah Berlin described the Romanticism of the late 18th and early 19th centuries as 'the greatest single shift in the consciousness of the West that has occurred'. What is the justification for this claim, what do we mean by 'Romanticism', and when did it begin? In the first of a series of lectures on English Romanticism, Jonathan Bate goes on a journey from the Scottish Highlands to a teenage suicide in London to the Geneva of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in search of the origins of Romanticism.”

https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/origins-of-romanticism

Duration: 49 mn

“The Romantic Lakes from Wordsworth to Beatrix Potter”, by Professor Sir Jonathan Bate, Gresham College, December 2018

“When Daniel Defoe rode through the Lake District in the early 18th century, he described the area as ‘the wildest, most barren and frightful of any that I have passed over in England.’ But for Victorians such as Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin, the Lakes offered a landscape of supreme beauty. How did this change come about?

Jonathan Bate follows in the footsteps of the 18th-century inventors of the ‘picturesque’ and show how Wordsworth shaped the vision of his native region, leading to the foundation of the National Trust and the idea of a National Park.”

https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/romantic-leakes-wordsworth-beatrix-potter

Duration: 46 min

“English Landscape: The Picturesque”, by Professor Malcolm Andrews, Gresham College, October 2017

“The late eighteenth and early nineteenth- century vogue for the Picturesque and for forging an English landscaping tradition (with frameable landscape scenery and managed wildness) is the starting point for discussion.

Proponents of the Picturesque, preferring to explore British scenery rather than go on the European Grand Tour, explicitly cultivated notions of Englishness and stressed the native elements in landscape scenery, such as castle or abbey ruins (real or folly) in grand gardens, not classical temples.”

https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/english-landscape-the-picturesque

Duration: 55 min

“Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Poetic Revolution”, by Professor Sir Jonathan Bate, Gresham College, October 2018.

'The sense of a new style and a new spirit in poetry came over me', wrote William Hazlitt, recalling the day in 1798 when he heard William Wordsworth reading aloud from Lyrical Ballads, 'It partakes of, and is carried along with, the revolutionary movement of our age'.

Jonathan Bate explains what Hazlitt meant and why Lyrical Ballads, the product of Wordsworth's intimate friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, is one of the greatest and most influential volumes of poetry ever written.

https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/wordsworth-coleridge-poetic-revolution

Duration: 47 min

Total duration: 660 min or 11 hours