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George Price Boyce and the Consolation of Landscape

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GEORGE PRICE BOYCE
AND THE
CONSOLATION OF LANDSCAPE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

The School of Art

by

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MANUSCRIPT THESES

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I would like to thank Judy Egerton, former Keeper at the Tate Gallery and author of the catalogue for the 1987 exhibition of the works of George Price Boyce, for her help in planning my trip to London in July, 1991, to research this thesis. She enabled me to see the maximum number of works by Boyce in museums in London, Cambridge and Oxford. Of particular value were her arrangements for me to meet Christopher Newall, a scholar and collector with a special interest in Boyce, and Michael Harvey, the genial great-grandson of Boyce's brother Matthias. I shall always remember her kindness.

I would also particularly like to thank Professor Richard Cox, whose unfailing good humor and generous encouragement helped bring this project to fruition.
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ABSTRACT

George Price Boyce (1826-1897) is little known today except by his diaries, which chronicle his association with the Pre-Raphaelite circle in London from 1851 to 1875. Yet in his own day Boyce was widely admired for his watercolor landscapes, and after 1864 was a leading member of the select Royal Water-Colour Society. His landscapes were thought to have a special, even eccentric quality, particularly his work from about 1859 to 1870, generally acknowledged to be his best.

Critics and art historians who take note of Boyce today almost always link him with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. This thesis, however, seeks to establish the importance of other influences on Boyce’s work. Boyce became an artist in 1849 after meeting the great English watercolorist David Cox. After a brief summary of Boyce’s life, Chapter I traces the tradition of watercolor landscape in England to Cox, taking note of the major traditions: topography, ideal landscape, and the picturesque. Chapter II examines Boyce’s association with the Pre-Raphaelites. After establishing the principles of the Brotherhood, it seeks to show that Boyce had other motives in his work of that period more important than Pre-Raphaelite “truth to nature.” Boyce’s efforts to fulfill John Ruskin’s expectations for artists are also
examined, especially Ruskin's idea of architectural record-making. Chapter III describes Boyce's most distinctive period, especially the Thames Valley drawings and some "empty" landscapes. Boyce's exposure to Japanese prints is put forward as an explanation for the unsettling qualities these share. Finally, Chapter IV looks at Boyce's last productive years, in which the drawings at last show the harmony which Boyce's writings suggest he had sought in landscape from the first.
INTRODUCTION

In June of 1987 the Tate Gallery in London mounted an exhibition of the work of George Price Boyce. It was in a room to one side of the Constable room, and the visitor, who in all likelihood had never heard of George Price Boyce but was perhaps attracted by the sign proclaiming the artist’s connection with the Pre-Raphaelite circle, was met with a collection of some sixty watercolor drawings, a few portraits of young women of the type known as “stunners” and the rest landscapes of considerable interest and charm. The most arresting were a succession of brightly colored, highly detailed landscapes, into which was often nestled an old building, but which always contained a number of tiny figures, human and animal. A fence would have a tiny cat sitting on it; or a hillock of grass, on closer inspection, could be seen to contain a rabbit. These watercolors seemed very "English" in their peaceable rusticity; and yet they sometimes had an odd, even startling quality.

This 1987 exhibition at the Tate was the first to be devoted exclusively to Boyce’s work.1 Indeed, although he had been included in exhibitions of Victorian watercolors or Pre-Raphaelite works from time to time, by 1987 he was remembered chiefly as the author of diaries chronicling, with some wit, the comings and goings of the Pre-

1
Raphaelites and their associates between 1851 and 1875.²
Yet in his own day he was a leader in watercolor
landscape, enjoying the high regard of many fellow
artists, who also perceived extraordinary qualities in his
work, at first glance so quiet.

His life too was outwardly quiet. He was born in
1826 at Gray's Inn Terrace, London, to George Boyce, a
wine merchant and later a pawnbroker, and Anne Price. A
younger sister, Joanna, shared his passion for sketching.³
The family, which eventually included five children,
became prosperous enough to move to a northwest suburb of
London with a view over the fields to Harrow. Young Boyce
was educated at a school in Essex, then, at the age of
seventeen, articulated to an architect. He studied in Paris
for a time; he also, in 1846 and 1847, made tours of
Germany, France, and the Low Countries, studying and
sketching buildings. In 1847 he joined the architectural
firm of Wyatt and Brandon as an "improver," but he did not
like the business side of architecture, or its desk-bound
routine, according to his nephew Arthur Street. Rather it
was the aesthetic side of architecture that appealed to
him.⁴

On a visit to Bettws-y-Coed in Wales in the autumn of
1849 Boyce met David Cox, a prominent English
watercolorist who was also a popular teacher. With the
encouragement of Cox as well as that of his sister Joanna,
who was already making a name for herself in London as an artist, Boyce abandoned the practice of architecture to pursue a career as a landscape watercolorist. (Apparently private means from the family business facilitated this decision.) Boyce’s diaries begin with his apprentice years as he commences his steady production of watercolor drawings, starts collecting work of his contemporaries in England and France as well as "Old Masters," including the seventeenth-century Dutch, and "larks about" with fellow artists. December of 1851 is a watershed as he moves from his parents’ house to a studio in Great Russell Street and a few days later goes for the first time to the studio of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who would become his closest friend. In 1854 John Ruskin first visits Boyce, becoming, for a time, mentor to the modest artist. In 1860 James McNeill Whistler joins the Chelsea set, bringing fresh influences from Paris. Meanwhile Boyce was developing his own idiosyncratic style, which reflected his passionate involvement with various places, notably the upper Thames Valley, and enjoying full participation in the rich artistic life of Victorian London. He exhibited with the Pre-Raphaelites and took part in their various associations, such as the Hogarth Club and "Anti-Scrape" (the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings). He was also, although his election was belated, perhaps because his private income made him seem less than
"professional," a member of the very small and select Old Water-Colour Society. Boyce regularly exhibited with the Society from his election as associate in 1864 until a few years before his death.

The last stage of Boyce's life is marked by the building of a handsome house in Chelsea-West House in Glebe Place, designed by Philip Webb—and his marriage in 1875 to a French girl, Caroline Soubeiran. His diaries end, like a Victorian novel, with their wedding. Boyce had been noted for his susceptibility to the charms of the many artists' models in the Pre-Raphaelite ambit, but this marriage, when he was forty-nine, proved remarkably happy. He continued to travel and work, although there is a distinct mellowing in these late pictures that some find anticlimactic. The artist's health began to fail in the 1880s: having suffered repeatedly from typhoid fever, he now began to have a series of strokes, and by 1891 he had ceased to paint. He died at West House February 9, 1897.
NOTES


2. Christopher Newall, Introduction to cat., 9 (hereafter cited as "intro. to cat.") This introduction is the most comprehensive biographical sketch of Boyce to date, using not only all the important published material on the artist but also much unpublished material, such as the biographical sketches by Boyce's brother-in-law, H. T. Wells, and Boyce's wife Caroline. It is, along with the diaries of George Price Boyce, the basis for the following account of Boyce's life.

The diaries of George Price Boyce were first published in 1941 in a version edited by Boyce's niece, Mrs. Arthur Street, in The Old Water-Colour Society's Club Nineteenth Annual Volume (London, 1941). The preface was a reprint of Arthur E. Street's short memoir of Boyce originally published in February, 1899, in The Architectural Review. Virginia Surtees, who annotated the published version for a new edition in 1980 [The Diaries of George Price Boyce (Norwich: Real World), cited hereafter as Diaries] calls the version published in 1941 "sorely mutilated by rigorous cutting" but does not specify how (p. vii). Unfortunately the original, along with a number of Boyce's works, was destroyed in 1942 when Mrs. Street's home in Bath was hit by a German bomb.


When Boyce met David Cox in Wales, he joined a long tradition of landscape watercolorists in England.¹ The tradition began in the seventeenth century with wide views of towns or cities called "prospects." At first the artists were foreign-born: they came from the Low Countries or central Europe to record views of an important trading partner. An example is the Czech artist Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677), whose shallow panoramas establish a format, sometimes called the "strip-picture," which would remain popular in the English watercolor school even into the nineteenth century [fig. 1]. Significantly, Hollar was primarily an engraver, as were many early watercolorists: his drawings, done in pen and colored with basic washes of Indian ink or sepia and occasionally some local color, were usually just preparatory studies.²

The purpose of Hollar's "prospects" was to record information about specific places, and his followers did much travelling around Britain and the world, usually at the behest of some royal or aristocratic patron. Francis Place (1647-1728), one of the first important English-born topographers, sometimes did "prospects" in the manner of Hollar. A wealthy amateur from York—one of the "York Virtuosi" with extensive talents in the arts and a passion
for collecting (not unlike Boyce)—he was one of the first artists to travel all over the British Isles, including Wales, in search of paintable views.  

Meanwhile, a second tradition grew up in the English watercolor school, that of the ideal or imaginary landscape. It was particularly important for amateurs, who figure largely in this branch of art. Watercolor was the favorite medium for landscape because of its convenience as compared to oils: it was easy to carry around, it was comparatively inexpensive, and, not unimportantly, it washed easily out of clothes. Ideal landscape flourished in the eighteenth century, the age of the Grand Tour, with Italy always the premier destination ("A man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority," proclaimed Dr. Johnson); and by the middle of the eighteenth century the dominant influence on the intense interest in landscape was Italian. In *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place*, John Barrell emphasizes the interest English gentlefolk took in Italianate landscape art, especially works ascribed to Nicolas and Gaspard Poussin, Salvator Rosa, and Claude Lorrain, both paintings and engravings ("'looking over prints' became a recognized way of getting through the afternoon"), and in looking at landscape itself, which came to be regarded as an art like writing a good letter or singing well.
he was capable of an amazing variety of effects, and is notable for his studies of the sky, which influenced John Constable.\textsuperscript{8} Also of interest is the work of his son, John Robert Cozens (1752?–1797), whose brilliant career was cut short by insanity. (Constable called him "all poetry, the greatest genius that ever touched landscape.").\textsuperscript{9} His landscapes, although mostly restricted in color to grey and blue, achieve a wonderful sweep and depth [fig. 4].

The other great figure in eighteenth-century imaginary landscape is Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), in whose watercolor work the "strong, diagonal, vibratory movement" represents a dynamic trend very different from the calligraphic neatness of the topographers.\textsuperscript{10}

Yet Gainsborough sometimes worked directly from nature, especially in his native Suffolk, and it is important to understand that while there is a clear distinction in theory between topographical landscape and the ideal or imaginary type there is no clearcut distinction in practice.\textsuperscript{11} Topographers engaged in imaginary reconstruction of the elements of a landscape, partly from a natural wish to make their subjects aesthetically pleasing but also partly because of the influence of Claude and the other Italianate view-painters, including Canaletto. The work of Paul Sandby demonstrates this.\textsuperscript{12} The foremost topographer of his day, Sandby issued immensely popular series of aquatints on
Wales [fig. 5]. His tinted drawings (like most eighteenth century topographers he overlaid a pen or pencil line with clear color, most often, in his case, blue or green) are, like those of Claude, conceived in terms of horizontal bands. He does not scruple to rearrange the elements of the scene to find a formal balance, and he emphasizes the light of the sky. Sandby and other topographers also came to adopt Claudean serenity and repose, easy to find in the gentle British landscape.  

Paul Sandby is also associated with another strain in the landscape art of late eighteenth-century England, the picturesque. Sandby had an especial liking for gnarled and twisted treetrunks, which sometimes become the focus of his compositions (in contrast to Claude's compositions, which always had a complex "unity in variety"). Iolo Williams sees even in Sandby's topographical work "a keen eye for the picturesque—which may be defined as that quality of attractiveness which resides in irregular broken surfaces and things seamed and roughened by the dilapidations of time, a quality different from the well-proportioned regularity of beauty" (p. 33). Williams offers as an example The Old Swan, Bayswater, a portrait of a place where Sandby nevertheless "appreciates, by apt placing, the effective contrast between the broken lines of a ruined building and the general structure of the masses of the composition" (pp. 32-33) [cf. fig. 6].
The notion of the picturesque was popularized by the Rev. William Gilpin, an indefatigable traveller and writer about travel who advised routes for the "picturesque traveller," providing watercolor illustrations by his own hand. Significantly, the tours he recommended included stops at country houses to see the works of the Old Masters, especially Salvator Rosa, the Poussins, and, most importantly, Claude. It was they who determined what was "picturesque" ("that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture"). Indeed, travellers often looked at views in "Claude glasses," mirror-like devices which helped compose the scene in a panoramic curve and imparted what was considered the proper bluish cast. Gilpin associated the "picturesque" with ruins, especially Gothic ones ("consecrated by time"). On the other hand, he was also interested in mountains, lakes, and rocks—or rather, as his writings make clear, ideas of these natural features. In books such as his Observations on the River Wye (1882) Gilpin laid down practical rules whereby the artist could rearrange real views into pleasing pictures, and in his own illustrations [fig. 7] he used generalized forms and a simplified Claudean structure of only three planes which governed the whole.

The picturesque became a vogue in England in the late eighteenth century for topographers and imaginary landscapists alike, and, although the concept is vague,
all the writers on the subject stressed two qualities, roughness and variety. "In any book on British landscape watercolors the late eighteenth century section gives the impression of being a series of compositions of shaggy trees crowding in on cottages angled to display the greatest possible variety in their roof lines," Lindsay Stainton has observed (p. 12). Inevitably, however, the limitations of such a methodology for seeing and transcribing nature came to be felt. The Reverend Gilpin became the object of satire in such works as Tour of Dr. Syntax in search of the Picturesque. William Wordsworth took issue with stock responses to nature in the preface to the 1802 edition of Lyrical Ballads, also in his long autobiographical poem The Prelude (1805), both of which expressed the poet's intense responses to the humble rural scenes of his childhood, later to inspire Constable. Other painters, too, began to rebel against the Picturesque and its "'deformed trees. . . rugged grounds. . . rough and ruined buildings. . . lean cattle and Vagabonds or Gypsies," most notably for the watercolor tradition Thomas Girtin and J. M. W. Turner, in, as it happens, watercolors made in Yorkshire and North Wales. Girtin and Turner met in the workshop of the London engraver John Raphael Smith, where they got their start, like many watercolorists, coloring prints. Both began with the sort of tinted drawings characteristic of the
eighteenth century, yet both developed original, personal visions which led the way to the development of the watercolor painting (as opposed to watercolor drawing) that was characteristic of the nineteenth.\textsuperscript{21}

Thomas Girtin (1775-1802), a short-lived artist whose working life spanned only six years, is often cited as one of the greatest English watercolorists. In fact, Martin Hardie sees his work as the turning point in British watercolor, both in vision and technique.\textsuperscript{22} By 1795 Girtin was working with his good friend Turner at the London home of Dr. Monro, teacher and patron to many watercolorists of the time.\textsuperscript{23} The work of John Robert Cozens, which Dr. Monro had set him and Turner to copying, influenced Girtin to move away from his earlier records of nature to more personal interpretations. Kirkstall Abbey—Evening gives the bold massing of forms and also the feeling of width and distance that became his hallmarks; and White House, Chelsea shows his mastery of broad, simple design [fig. 8].\textsuperscript{24} Such effects were achieved with revolutionary techniques: like Cozens, Girtin loaded his brush with loose, wet color, but Girtin would lay on the local color first, then shade with darker color—a reversal of the traditional method of making arbitrarily colored tinted drawings. Sometimes he broke his color up in spots or patches (perhaps the first British watercolorist to do so). The variety of his surfaces was promoted by the use
of a rough, absorbent cartridge paper, which had a warm tone and not unpleasing wire marks and flecks. The color dried without hard edges, and a second layer could be added without disturbing the first. The effect was clear, simple, and direct. For the first time in English watercolor landscapes, outline, color, and shade could no longer be separated.  

J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851) studied with Thomas Malton, the teacher of many architectural topographers, and his early work is the conventional tinted drawing, but by 1799, after his association with Girtin, a work such as Warkworth Castle shows a Girtin-like massing of forms and feeling for the grand vista. Turner's influential middle period began with his first trip to the Alps in 1802. The Great Fall of the Reichenbach (1804) [fig. 9] is a thoroughgoing romantic landscape, about which Williams says, "For sheer imaginative representation of nature in her most overpoweringly impressive mood, this drawing could hardly be excelled" (p. 114). Turner was now Girtin's equal in poetic power, but he had gone far beyond him in technique. Hardie describes it thus: "Fresh colour has been floated over portions that have been washed down; lights are taken out by the use of a wet brush and the application of blotting-paper or rag, and by free scraping with a knife. From now onwards he is increasingly prone to work in stipple or to break up tones
into innumerable spots, by the infinite labour in removing colour with the fine point of a wet brush" (2:28). Turner believed that watercolour should rival oils in boldness and force, and this work is a paradigm of that belief.  

Turner's Italian sojourns, beginning in 1819, produced watercolors of even more extravagant power. He became obsessed with nuances of light and atmosphere, which he sought to capture with ever-more brilliant use of color. (The fastidious Williams remarks that Venice "even more than Switzerland inspired Turner to bathe his very soul, as it were, in colour—and not always with discretion" [p. 115].) In his last two decades or so Turner's watercolor style became unprecedently rich and free, particularly in the Petworth series, where he used every possible technical trick to express the subtleties of light, but it is the large, grandly elaborate and detailed watercolor paintings of the middle period that Ruskin praised and that influenced Victorian notions of the heights to which watercolor might aspire.  

By the nineteenth century great numbers of English watercolorists, both amateur and professional, were travelling at home and abroad, particularly after the introduction of the railway in the 1830s. Most travellers in Europe were, for some reason, English. The British "swarmed everywhere," according to Jeremy Maas, and with a great sense of superiority. Their watercolor views were
often published in collections such as Britton and Brayley's *The Beauties of England and Wales*. Turner himself supplied drawings for publications such as *Provincial Antiquities of Scotland* (1819 to 1826), or *Picturesque Views in England and Wales* (1827 to 1838). After the invention of steel engraving about 1820, books of foreign views called *Annuals* provided watercolor artists with a lucrative new market, giving them greater status and fame. Another major development for watercolorists was the formation in 1804 of the Society of Painters in Watercolours, in time called the Old Water-Colour Society and still existing today. The society was small, with only twenty-four members and sixteen associate members, and it was conservative, sometimes ungenerous (even the peaceable Boyce took great umbrage at how his pictures were hung [*Diaries*, p. 40 and note 6, p. 100]). Rival groups sprang up, and watercolors themselves underwent fluctuations in popularity with changes in the market and, in the 1880s, an important debate over the permanence of watercolor drawings, but by and large the founding of the society in 1804 marks the beginning of the legitimization of the medium. Before this the Royal Academy had shunted watercolors into a side room at its annual exhibitions, and watercolor was actively discouraged by the academy schools; but from 1804 on watercolorists had at least one annual exhibition, and the
viewers who flocked there were eager to buy the landscapes on view."

The early nineteenth century saw an important new generation of watercolorists who, in the opinion of Martin Hardie, expanded on the innovations of Girtin and Turner by promoting "a more unhampered use of colour, more flexibility of method, more understanding of technique" (2: 190). These artists (all born between 1782 and 1793) are J.S. Cotman, David Cox, Samuel Prout, Peter De Wint, Copley Fielding, W. H. Hunt, John Linnell, and Clarkson Stanfield (Ibid.) It is interesting that the second entry in Boyce's published Diaries (May 3, 1851) records a visit to the Old Water-Colour Society Exhibition. "I was delighted with it. Copley Fielding, David Cox, W. Hunt and others have some exquisite works" (p. 1).

On August 5 of that same year Boyce writes, at Bettws-y-Coed, "while sketching, David Cox came and shook hands with me. He has put up here at the 'Royal Oak'" (p. 2)." Perhaps Boyce had chosen to go to Bettws because Cox habitually went there (very likely Boyce had seen pictures such as Watermill, Bettws-y-Coed, 1849, at the Royal Academy) [fig. 10]." In any case, according to Michael Clarke, "nearly every artist of note seems to have travelled to Wales, especially the north, as a sketching ground" (p. 53). Boyce, and his sister, might even have seen one of Cox's popular instructional books, such as A
Treatise on Landscape Painting and Effect in Water-Colours, published first in 1814 and reissued as late as 1841. In any case, Cox was very encouraging to Boyce, whose diary records how, on a rainy day in Wales, Cox "with the greatest kindness" gave himself and one Mr. Buck a watercolor lesson (Diaries, pp. 2-3).

Cox's early works were rather dry topographical views employing stock compositional devices (Cox got his start, like many artists, painting theatrical scenery), but after about 1820 he began to paint the kind of highly finished, realistic landscapes which dominated public taste at the time [fig. 11]. Yet even in this highly successful middle period Cox excelled at capturing transient atmospheric effects, and his use of "broken colours," pure color applied in separate little strokes like tesserae in a mosaic, causes Hardie to link him with Constable as a forerunner of the French Impressionists (2: 202). By 1849, however, the year Boyce met him, Cox was well into his third and final manner, broadly handled landscapes with remarkable power [fig. 12]. Cox called these generalized landscapes "work of the mind," which he valued much more highly than "portraits of places," even though most of Cox's contemporaries found them rough and blotty. One factor in Cox's new development was his discovery in 1836 of a certain rough wrapping paper of an unbleached linen blend manufactured in Dundee. Cox grew
deeply attached to the paper, with its grey color and specks which the enterprising Cox sometimes turned into birds.\(^40\) It would seem that the impressionable Boyce—who comes across in the pages of his diary as a humble, inquiring student—set out to emulate the master. "After dinner I made an evening sketch on grey wrapping-up paper," he wrote on August 5 (that first entry in Bettws). "David Cox saw it and approved" (p. 2).

Cox and other artists staying at Bettws pointed out subjects to Boyce. "Mr. Topham," an actor and painter of Irish peasant scenes, gave Boyce "a few hints on my sketch, using the brush upon it, warming the tone and giving serenity of colour and atmosphere to several parts" (p. 3). Boyce takes note of Mr. Topham's colors; he also dutifully records the free colors Cox employs: "purple lake and gamboge for foliage in middle distance," for instance (p. 2). Nevertheless, the diaries give no sense of intense discipleship or even close study of Cox's work. Some of Boyce's early work may resemble Cox's views of Wales. *A Road near Bettws-y-Coed*, 1851, a view of a road in the mountains, with broad areas of loosely-handled foliage and a drama-filled sky, is the wild sort of subject Cox chose in Wales [fig. 13].\(^41\)

Boyce seems to have done at least one Cox-like picture in Wales as late as 1855. Lindsay Stainton, Assistant Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British
Museum, owns a view of mountains by Boyce inscribed "Overlooking Llyn Helsi—after Sunset"—it is in the long shallow "prospect" format—which was exhibited at the Old Water-Colour Society exhibition in 1868 [fig. 14]. Mr. Stainton describes his picture as "painted in a style that is quite close to David Cox," but adds, "I should say that it is not very good, and were it not signed one would not necessarily attribute it to Boyce!" On the other hand, some of Boyce's early work has an attention to detail and naturalistic accuracy that Cox never had. Consider, for example, the Castle Rock, Hastings, 1850 [fig. 15], said by H. T. Wells, Boyce's brother-in-law, to be "the first serious piece of landscape study that George did." It is a close view of the face of the rock, with minute attention to light and shadow and the appearance of the grass sprouting from the crevices of the rock. On August 27, 1851, Boyce wrote in Wales, "Completed drawing from Church, which Mr. Cox said looked like a Pre-Raffaelite drawing" (p. 3).

Boyce may have read Ruskin's Modern Painters by this time (on June 9, 1852, he records having recommended the work to a Miss Helen Field at a dinner party, not necessarily proof of his having read the work himself [Diaries, p. 8]), but the early pages of the diary do not mention the study of Ruskin. Back in London, Boyce mentions Turner more than any other artist: on July 8,
1851 he goes to "Mr. Winder's at Tottenham," where he sees "the most glorious collection of drawings I ever beheld, mostly first-rate works of Turner's from about 1800 till within the last few years" (p. 2). On February 5, 1852 Boyce goes to the home of Thomas Girtin's son, with the object of seeing drawings by his father. He admires them for their "excellent colour," especially Kirkstall Abbey (though finding fault with one drawing for an implausible reflection), but he reserves his highest praise for a drawing by Turner Mr. Girtin had in his possession, a 1785 or 1796 view of Lincoln Cathedral "fine in every respect, purity of colour and effective light and shade, gradation of tones and faithfulness of drawing astonishing" (pp. 6-7). Boyce records his interest in hearing anecdotes about Turner (Diaries, pp. 2, 4), and on December 30, 1851 Boyce, along with his father and sister, attends Turner's funeral in St. Paul's Cathedral.

Perhaps most importantly, Boyce writes on January 23, 1852, "Copying Turner's 'Liber Studiorum'" (p. 6). This was a series of engravings by Turner inspired by the well-known engraved copies by Richard Earlom of Claude's Liber Veritatis, the book of drawings Claude made as a record of his paintings over a period of fifty years. The format of Turner's work was quite different: it was intended as a set of one hundred engravings illustrative of several types of landscape: pastoral, epic, marine, architectural,
mountainous, and historical. Beginning in 1807 Turner issued fourteen sets of plates; publication ceased in 1819. Thus the seventy prints are early Turner. Lines are firmly drawn, the color is monochromatic. Turner does use dramatic contrasts of light and dark, and while some of the landscapes possess a Claudean calm, many have a romantic turgidity and offer clues to Turner's developing interest in the flux, indeed the chaos, of nature [fig. 16].

On January 25, 1852, two days after the entry on the Liber Studiorum, Boyce wrote in his diary,

Mother spoke to me touching my gloominess. I had nothing to answer. How little do my friends with whom I make effort to be cheerful and pleasing suspect that my heart and soul are adrift and lost in a sea of unaccountable and indefinite longings and regrets. Music, and now and then a line of poetry, are almost the only things that seem to agitate the deeper springs of my nature. My dear and good father also spoke to me this morning, but some evil spirit within me prevented my confiding in him to the full—I told him I thought I should be happier if I could go into a beautiful part of the country and there live quietly and work diligently for a time (p. 6).

Clearly Boyce sought and found consolation in landscape. Later that same year he wrote with regard to Miss Field, "She looked over my Welsh sketches and was much interested in some of them. How I should like to have told her that I could think of no greater pleasure than roaming about with her in these lovely lonely places" (p. 8).

Turner, and the ideal landscapists coming before him who looked to the beautiful world of Claude—"pure as
Italian air, calm, beautiful and serene," as Turner described it—had excelled at portraying "lovely lonely places." Boyce went to school to Cox, Girtin, and Turner, artists at the apex of the tradition of romantic watercolor landscape in England. It may be that the Liber Studiorum was the last step in this phase of his education.
NOTES


2. See Williams, 2-12; Clarke, Ch. 1, "The Prospect" 21-30; and Stainton, 8-10, for accounts of the early topographers, including Hollar.

3. On Place, see especially Clarke, 27-30, and Stainton, 9.

4. See Egerton, p. 4, for a humorous expression of this point. ("'Pont' of Punch singled out 'The Gift for Watercolours' as as much a part of the British character as 'Absence of Gift of Conversation' and 'Strong Tendency to become Doggy'; he portrayed the popular idea of the watercolourist as a maiden lady abroad, imperturbably recording the picturesque elements in what in fact looks like a rather louche district.") See also Clarke, Ch. 6, "Amateurs," 103-22, and Williams, Ch. 12, "A Note on Amateurs," 230-48. On the importance of travel in the development of imaginative landscape, see Clarke, Ch. 2, "Travellers at Home," 31-53, and Ch. 3, "Travellers Abroad," 54-73. Clarke quotes Dr. Johnson on p. 54.

5. See Clarke, 9-20, for an interesting discussion of the practical aspects of the medium.


9. Ibid., 80-83. Constable is quoted p. 80.
10. Ibid., 69-72.
11. Ibid., 5.
12. Williams, 30-32; Clarke, 37-44, 124; and Stainton, 10-11.
15. See Clarke, 31-53, and Williams, 233-35. The quotations from Gilpin are in Clarke, 45 and 33.
16. William Gilpin, Observations on the River Wye (London: R. Blamire, 1882). His subscribers were not satisfied, however, according to John Barrell, "because no individual view was recognizable among them" (p. 51).
17. Clarke, 48.
18. K. Clark, 151-52; Stainton, 18.
19. John Gage, "Turner and the Picturesque—II," Burlington Magazine 107 (February 1965), 75-81; and Stainton, 12-14. The negative catalogue of Picturesque features was given by Gerard Lairesse, an opponent of the Picturesque and a classicist cited by Turner in the lectures he gave at the Royal Academy in the first decade of the 1800s (quoted by Gage, 79).
20. Clarke, 135.
23. Clarke, 131-32.
24. Williams, 106; and Hardie 2: 12-13.
26. On Turner, in addition to the chapter in Vol. 2 of Hardie, see Williams, 108-16; Maas, 32-34; and Clarke, 139-52.

27. Williams, 114.


29. Maas, 89 ("Knowledge of the language was not considered a necessity: one English lady found she needed only two words of Italian, 'Quanto?' and 'Troppo'; and one gentleman considered that the word 'Anglais' met his needs throughout France").

30. Hardie 2:32 (on Turner) and Williams, Ch. 4, "The Topographical Tradition," 40-66. Sometimes amateurs sold the drawings from their travels to professional engravers for these collections (Clarke, 121). Maas, Ch. 7, "Painters Abroad," 88-102, gives a good thumbnail sketch of the Victorian topographical tradition.


32. Good accounts of the checkered history of the Old Water-Colour Society are found in Williams, Ch. 11, "The Old Water-Colour Society," 211-29; Clarke, Ch. 4, "Societies and Clubs," 74-89; and Newall, Ch. 2, "Professional Life," 23-30. See also Clarke, Ch. 7, "Patronage and Collecting," 123-52.

33. Clarke, 87-88.

34. Presumably Boyce is the one who was sketching. Cf. Diaries, p. 13: "While working on drawing in Edward the Confessor's Chapel, a sociable intelligent looking American gentleman accosted me and asked me to make him two sketches...." Boyce wrote well, but he did dangle the occasional participle.

35. Hardie, 2: 198-99; Clarke, 53. Accounts of Cox's life and works are found in Williams, Ch. 9, "Cox and De Wint,; 172-78, and Hardie 2: Ch. 12, "David Cox," 191-209.


37. Cox is recorded as being exceptionally accommodating to students. Hardie recounts a story which has Cox providing a student with compositional ideas in advance of her sketching tour on the Rhine, notwithstanding the fact that he had not seen the Rhine (2: 195).

39. Hardie 2: 207-08; Williams, 177-78.

40. Hardie 2: 196-98.

41. Cf. Landscape near Trefriw, North Wales, 1851, cat. no. 10, a view of another road and a bare mountain. Judy Egerton comments that the influence of David Cox "pervades this and most of Boyce's Welsh subjects" (cat. p. 45).


43. Quoted in cat., p. 45.


CHAPTER II

In December of 1852 Boyce moved into his own studio at 60 Great Russell Street, having explained to his parents, "it would be of great advantage to me in my professional progress" (Diaries, p. 8). The following week he paid his first visit to Dante Gabriel Rossetti's rooms in Chatham Place, meeting the members of Rossetti's social circle and examining Rossetti's work.

"Conversation throughout delightful," Boyce wrote, "resulting methought from the happy and gentlemanly freedom of the company generally" (p. 9). Boyce was absorbed quickly into the social whirl of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, an association of artists formed in 1848 by John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, and Rossetti, but widened by 1851 to include other artists such as Thomas Seddon, Ford Madox Brown, and Arthur Hughes.¹ Boyce's diaries reflect constant social and professional contact with Pre-Raphaelites, especially Rossetti, who became his closest friend.² Boyce exhibited with the Pre-Raphaelites in the 1850s; he was also a founding member of the Hogarth Club (1858-1861), formed with the aim of providing exhibiting space for the Pre-Raphaelites as well as other artists of compatible aims. Indeed Boyce enjoyed such a close association with the
Brotherhood that he is often labelled a "pre-Raphaelite," or at least a follower of the Pre-Raphaelite school. 3

The exact beginning of Boyce's involvement with the Pre-Raphaelites is unclear. Two men who knew Boyce—his nephew Arthur E. Street and F. G. Stephens, the latter a member of the original brotherhood and an art critic for the Athenaeum who frequently reviewed works by Boyce and wrote a long, laudatory obituary of the artist in 1897—were very firm on the point that Boyce decided to abandon the practice of architecture and become a landscape painter the summer of 1849 while on a visit to Bettws-y-Coed in Wales, and that David Cox influenced this decision. (There is no record of this decision, as the published version of Boyce's diaries begins May 1, 1851.) In 1849 Boyce also met Thomas Seddon, a year before he painted Castle Rock, Hastings [fig. 15], a close study of a rock formation that bears some resemblance to Seddon's barren-looking landscapes. 4 Boyce and Seddon would travel together to Dinan, Brittany, in the summer of 1853. Later Boyce would purchase Seddon's watercolor The Great Sphinx at Giza.

Perhaps it was Seddon who introduced Boyce to Rossetti at the life classes conducted at his house in London; on the other hand, H. T. Wells, the husband of Boyce's sister Joanna, claimed that he introduced Boyce to Rossetti. 5 In any case Seddon seems to have been the
first close associate of the Pre-Raphaelites Boyce met and
worked with, and an influence on Boyce's early work might
well be seen. None of Seddon's early work survives
(Lehon, from Mont Parnasse, 1853, is the earliest work
that can be identified), but a memoir by his brother John
Pollard Seddon asserts that from the first he was far more
concerned with careful detail than "painterly breadth,"
devoting weeks to a canvas instead of the usual day. 6

When the Diaries open in 1851 Boyce is clearly aware
of Ruskin and Pre-Raphaelite work. Several entries note
discussions about Ruskin's ideas, but Boyce never
characterizes the critic's ideas or discusses how he came
to know them (Diaries, pp. 3, 10, and 35). By 1851,
however, John Ruskin was certainly a prominent art critic
in England, perhaps the preeminent one. 7 The first two
volumes of Modern Painters, Ruskin's magnum opus, which
had begun as a defense of Turner but had enlarged to cover
the sententious critic’s views on all aspects of painting,
were reissued in the autumn of 1851. In view of Boyce's
veneration of Turner, it is not unlikely that he had at
least tried to read them. 8

And certainly Ruskin was closely associated with the
Pre-Raphaelite movement himself: in a sense he was its
catalyst. In 1847 William Holman Hunt read a passage near
the end of Volume One of Modern Painters: the young
artist, Ruskin decreed, "should go to Nature in all
singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scorning nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth."

Actually, the famous passage does not express Ruskin's ultimate goal for the artist. As David Barrie points out, this is Ruskin's advice to the young artist, and only one step in the painter's advancement toward the ability to capture imaginative truth, a much higher thing than mere imitation. But Holman Hunt took the stirring words as an injunction to minute and painstaking realism. Moreover, he saw such realism as a moral imperative. "It was the voice of God," Hunt said in a later letter to Ruskin about his 1847 conversion. Ruskin himself, who had experienced a similar revelation drawing some ivy in 1842, conceived of truthful seeing as a moral imperative: the facts of nature reveal the order of God. He would write in Modern Painters that "the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way.... To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion—all in one." Ruskin, a voluble, didactic critic who often contradicted himself, had a deceptively simple-sounding guiding principle for the artist: truth to nature. Ruskin was advocating (at
least part of the time) "the innocent eye," which is to say having the artist look directly at nature without reference to the art of the past. Later theoreticians denied that this is possible, and perhaps even Ruskin did not believe it was possible, but what Ruskin seemed to want was for artists to look long and hard at nature, then try to paint exactly what they saw.15

Pre-Raphaelite entries in Royal Academy exhibitions in 1850 and 1851 evoked a critical storm. Coming to the aid of the embattled brotherhood in a letter to the Times on May 13, 1851, Ruskin praised them for painting what they saw—"stern facts," not "fair pictures."16 In any case, the first phase of Pre-Raphaelitism begun in 1848 was characterized by what Hardie calls "romantic subjects and punctilious treatment" (3: 124). Landscape was not a principal concern for any of the original three, though Hunt and his friend Thomas Seddon took two trips to the Holy Land and painted minutely detailed scenes with the aim of conveying their mystical significance.17 Rossetti hardly ever did landscape, having little inclination for the plein-air-method. In fact, when Rossetti desired to include a landscape background in one of his watercolors, he borrowed two sketches by Boyce of Babbacombe Bay, though the big muzzy forms of Writing on the Sand, 1859, bear no resemblance to Boyce's meticulous renderings.18 Otherwise Pre-Raphaelite landscapes were primarily
backdrops for historical or literary subjects, and these were mainly oils.

But the working methods of Hunt and Millais in the oils, which embodied their understanding of Ruskin's ideas of "truth to nature," had important consequences for the styles of their watercolors as well. The central fact is that they worked in the open air. Some painters, particularly watercolorists, had always done at least part of their work outside, but apparently the Pre-Raphaelites were the first artists to make it a principle to work outside from start to finish. 1 Trying to paint what they saw, in sunlight (the early Pre-Raphaelites did not seem to be interested in the change and shift of atmospheric effects), they used bright, intense colors rather than the conventional harmonious tonalities, and the effect of these was further heightened by the use of a white wet ground. Nor were they interested in the quick glimpse: they sat outside all day, day after day, working slowly on a picture. Millais said a day's work was about the size of a five-shilling piece. 20 This produced not only incredible detail but also a lack of compositional focus, so that, in the words of Kenneth Bendiner, "a blade of grass receives as much attention as a hero's head" (p. 61). The intention was to produce utter truth; but the effect, ironically, was to produce an intricate all-over pattern without illusionistic depth. 21
The purest examples of the Ruskinian tenet of truth to nature are landscapes of an eerie clarity. Staley has a fascinating discussion of Thomas Seddon’s 1854 Jerusalem and the Valley of Jehoshaphat from the Hill of Evil Counsel, viewed even then as an almost perverse extreme of Pre-Raphaelite attention to minute physical fact to the exclusion of other considerations (Staley sees “a remarkable quality of calligraphic fantasy”) (pp. 101-06) [fig. 17]. Bendiner considers John Brett’s 1856 Glacier of Rosenlaui (an oil) the quintessence of Ruskinian particularly, a break with the entire tradition of British topographical landscape, which had always, in one way or another, sought to generalize, even aggrandize the scene [fig. 18]. All the early Pre-Raphaelite landscapes, with their minute detail and bright color, represent the antithesis of the classic topographical tradition as represented by, for instance, Paul Sandby, who emphasized architectural construction and clear geometric space, shaping the whole with artificial light and shade.\textsuperscript{32}

But other artists had scrutinized nature before the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly William Henry Hunt, whose closely observed nature studies, admired by Ruskin as "microcosms of landscape," had earned him the sobriquet "Bird’s Nest" Hunt.\textsuperscript{31} The real Pre-Raphaelite innovation in watercolor was how they used the materials.\textsuperscript{34} No one but Millais knew anything about the watercolor tradition,
according to Hardie; Rossetti, especially, and also Edward Burne-Jones, who were at the head of the second, mythic-medieval phase of the Pre-Raphaelite movement beginning about 1860, just experimented with watercolor, using colors straight from tubes (available since 1846), laying them one over the other, rubbing and scrubbing them for various surface effects to achieve a new depth and glow.\(^\text{25}\) (This was "body-color," that is, opaque water color or gouache, which is rather controversial in the literature of watercolor: some think it sullies the unique transparency of the medium.)\(^\text{26}\) The Pre-Raphaelites also used Chinese White, which added texture to watercolor and allowed much finer detail.\(^\text{27}\) Sometimes the results looked like oils, sometimes like tempera (in fact oil or tempera might be mixed in with bodycolor). And both Burne-Jones and Rossetti occasionally worked a chalk drawing over with watercolor, which added to the obfuscation. The colors were the most brilliant available. Rossetti had a particular liking for viridian green and a certain yellow tone (causing Hardie to see the possible origin here of "the 'greenery-yallery' aestheticism of the later eighties" [3: 121]). And it should be remarked that neither Rossetti nor Burne-Jones seemed particularly interested in watercolor landscape. Boyce greatly admired the work of Rossetti and collected it, but it had no observable influence on his own work.
It was the first phase of Pre-Raphaelitism, however, with its emphasis on brilliant local color and minute detail, that became the dominant style of landscape watercolors in the 1850s and 60s. By then many watercolorists having no connection with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood adopted the Pre-Raphaelite mode. This mode or style had gradually, with Ruskin's backing, gained respectability in the 1850s (Millais was made an associate of the Royal Academy in 1853 and a member in 1863), and it developed its own conventions. "Hedges, ivied walls, rocks and pebbles, and an emphasis on detailed foregrounds became the conventional signifiers of unconventional realism in mid-nineteenth-century Britain.... Paintings of stones and overgrown walls proliferated," Bendiner has observed (p. 52). Boyce's Babbacombe Bay, Devon, 1853, a view of a rocky beach, may reflect these "Pre-Raphaelite" conventions [fig. 19]. It is notable for bright color, observed in full sunlight, and minute detail. On the other hand, Boyce seems to have employed pure watercolor, the conventional technique. It has a conventional pictorial space, too: there is no sense that the artist was so obsessed with detail that he produced an overall design. And there is one feature of Babbacombe Bay with no relation to Pre-Raphaelite tenets: Boyce includes at least three human figures among the rocks on the beach. They are difficult to discern; for
this reason, perhaps, their presence seems mysterious and strange.

For Ruskin, a prolific artist as well as writer, "truth to nature" came, in practice, to mean exceedingly close views. In The Elements of Drawing (1857), a collection of his lectures at the Working Man's College, he wrote:

In general, all banks are beautiful things, and will reward work better than large landscapes.... Nearly every other mile of road in chalk country will present beautiful bits of broken bank at its sides; better in form and colour than high chalk cliffs. In woods, one or two trunks, with the flowery ground below, are at once the richest and easiest kind of study....

Many artists were influenced in their choice of subjects by Ruskin's Elements, and even a number of artists who were not primarily landscapists were inspired to do the kind of minute nature studies Ruskin recommended, such as the illustrator Kate Greenaway and the Aesthete Albert Moore. It is interesting that Boyce did two rather atypical works which seem to fulfill these requirements of Ruskin's: On the West Lynn, North Devon, 1858, a close study of rocks and brush on the top of a cliff [fig. 20], and an even more Ruskinian closeup of rocks and brush called An Autumn Study on the Welsh Hills included in the 1991 exhibition "John Ruskin and His Circle" at the Maas Gallery in London.
In 1852 Boyce did a drawing of another type called *The East End of Edward the Confessor’s Chapel and Tomb, as They Now Stand* [fig. 21]. It is not recorded whether this work, an architectural study of an interior at Westminster Abbey, was inspired by Ruskin, although it certainly accorded with Ruskin’s interest at the time in architectural record-making, which was based on a fear that the important architectural monuments of Europe were about to be ruined by time or, worse, restoration. Of course, there was a long tradition of architectural draftsmanship in English watercolor. Ruskin himself was deeply influenced by the work of Samuel Prout, a watercolorist of antiquarian bent celebrated for his power to depict crumbling masonry. He was of course deeply influenced too by the early architectural drawings of Turner, who could suggest microscopic detail simply by the variety of his surfaces. In any case Boyce himself was perennially interested in old buildings and also had a horror of restoration (he would be a leading member of the Medieval Society and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings—“Anti-Scrape”—in the 1870s). Boyce had always taken aesthetic pleasure in architecture. Even his work as an “improver” for the firm of Wyatt and Brandon manifests this pleasure, as recounted by Arthur E. Street:
A pencil sketch of a pulpit, dating from 1848, is chiefly remarkable for the evident gusto with which the red velvet cushion had been seized upon as a point of interest; an inch-scale elevation of a decorated window again betrays a lapse from the strict paths of architectural virtue in the loving realism of the random work of the surrounding wall face, and in the subtle gradation of tone and colour (p. 2).

In Edward the Confessor Boyce lovingly delineates the complicated Gothic forms, particularly (as in the upper left-hand corner of the tomb) where the stone is broken or worn. He seems to include every detail, like a photograph. (In the original the tomb can be seen to bear the inscription "Moriens 1669.") The scene, which apparently interested Boyce very much (he worked on this drawing in 1852 and again in 1873, according to an inscription on the back, and he did a second drawing of the same chapel in 1854), gave to Boyce the opportunity to observe the effects of light and shadow; it also allowed him to explore the interesting compositional effects created by the chapel's niches and alcoves. This may be Boyce's most public-spirited drawing. In 1894 Webb wrote Boyce that "it is a perfect piece of work, and ought to be in the National Collection." In fact, the Victoria and Albert Museum did purchase this drawing in 1898 (perhaps Boyce's first work to be acquired by a museum), and it was reproduced in a 1937 Connoisseur in a glossy color plate on the occasion of the coronation of King George VI.

Yet even in this most solemn and faithful rendering of a
national shrine Boyce includes a human touch: the small object in the foreground, lower left, is a rose-colored cushion (a kneeler?) on which papers and pencil sit.

On April 21, 1854, Ruskin and his father came to Boyce's studio to see some Rossetti drawings, but they stayed to admire Boyce's own work, including "the study of the twisted birch tree" and "the Welsh sunset study" (Diaries, p. 13). (The latter could be Bettws Evening or something similarly Coxian.) "On my expressing my liking for after sunset and twilight effects, he said I must not be led away by them, as on account of the little light requisite for them, they were easier of realization than sunlight effects," Boyce recorded (Diaries, p. 13). Ruskin clearly felt entitled to instruct Boyce, as he did other artists. Yet Boyce liked Ruskin ("He was very friendly and pleasant and encouraging in manner, and showed no conceit, grandeur, or patronising mien [p. 13]). The more acerbic Rossetti thought Ruskin not only "hideous" but "an absolute Guy—worse than Patmore" (Diaries, p. 13, and note 12, p. 76). And by 1857 Boyce would refer to Ruskin in his diary as "Roughskin" and find much amusement in the Frederick Sandys satire of Millais's Dream of the Past, which portrayed Hunt, Millais and Rossetti riding an ass with the unmistakable mien of the sage (Diaries, pp. 17-18).
But in 1854 Boyce seemed to submit eagerly to Ruskin's authority. He went to Venice and Verona to draw the important monuments, as Ruskin had recommended."

Boyce had written to Ruskin that he wanted "near subject—good architecture—colour—& light & shade," and Ruskin felt it hardly necessary to recommend St. Mark's as such a subject, its exterior, that is (the interior having been done so well before). Boyce did a large formal study from the southwest (it is 21 and 1/2 inches by 15 inches, an inch or so larger than the Edward the Confessor and possibly Boyce's largest drawing) [fig. 22]. It has a simpler air than the elaborate Edward, but then the Byzantine architecture of St. Mark's has comparatively broad and simple planes. It was the color and texture of the marbles and porphyries that excited Ruskin's interest ("it is just the difference between this permanent & delicate colour, and our rough surfaces, which has never been illustrated" [p. 120]), and again Boyce dwells lovingly on the sensuously colored stones of the building and the pavement, the encrusted ornamentation of the free-standing column. There is also a distinct interest in the play of light and shade. Birds are seen in the foreground and scattered on the facade and—one is likely not to see these at first—there are at least eight human figures in the scene, some nearly invisible without a magnifying glass. The presence of human figures in topographical
watercolors is not in itself unusual; it is unusual, however, when the avowed object is record-making. 40

Ruskin was obsessed with Venice (he went there nine times between 1841 and 1888) but, perhaps because he had recently published *The Stones of Venice* (1851-53) and temporarily spent his passion, Ruskin recommended that Boyce leave Venice after drawing St. Mark's and study the more rewarding monuments of Verona, which Ruskin adjudged to be more vulnerable to destruction, or even go on to Rouen and other places in northern Europe that were even more endangered, according to Ruskin, who really seems in these two letters to want to spirit the younger artist out of Italy. Boyce's major Verona drawing, *The Tomb of Mastino II della Scala, Verona,* a 15 and 1/2 inch by 10 and 5/8 inch watercolor now in the collection of Christopher Newall, is less detailed than the drawings of Westminster Abbey or St. Mark's [fig. 23]. The filigree ironwork of the gate (surely an opportunity for finicky detail work) is sketchy in comparison with the Abbey's Gothic tracery. Carved details in the stonework are merely suggested, and, most striking, the windows and their shutters are really just sketched. (In fact, Boyce seems to be referring to this work as one of the nine "sketches" he took to the Old Watercolour Society in November of 1872 [p. 55].) Boyce's primary interest in *The Tomb of Mastino* seems to be not architectural record-
making so much as the depiction of light and shade (rendered in mauve) on a particular color of orange-brown stone. In passing judgment on drawings, Boyce always praised color. The composition seems odd: the view of the tomb, from an angle, includes the overhang of a roof in the upper left-hand corner. There is also the Boycean human detail: two figures emerge from the composition, and, again, these presences in the picture have a peculiar quality. They are not staffage; they seem, on the contrary, since they are barely discernible against it, to be at one with their setting.

Other works in Venice, however, make no pretence of recording threatened monuments: they are atmospheric views of the city in afternoon or evening light. Forms are broad and loosely handled (indeed the details, including human figures, of Sacca della Misericordia, are mere blobs or dabs, very like James McNeill Whistler would do later in his watercolors [fig. 24]. Near the Public Gardens, Venice, 1854, now in the collection of the Tate Gallery, has a remarkable dappled sky at sunset, though the palette centers on blues and greys, which recall Cox [fig. 25]. Also like Cox is the coarse paper Boyce used, although Christopher Newall observes that Boyce used coarse paper—"practically wrapping paper"—throughout his career. Ruskin liked one of Boyce's tomb drawings from this Italian sojourn, as well as several drawings from an
1856 visit to Giornico, Switzerland. But on December 21, 1857, Ruskin visited Boyce and "said I should apply myself earnestly to drawing with the point," Boyce wrote in his diary, "should put more detail in my drawings; give distinction to distant parts by quantity of mysterious detail" (p. 20).

Ruskin seems to have worried about Boyce's orthodoxy in the Pre-Raphaelite faith. In 1854, when Boyce told him he could view the drawings from Italy "in about a fortnight," Ruskin replied, "'Not before? Pray don't go and botch them in the studio.' Hoped I was a confirmed Pre-Raphaelite, etc." (Diaries, p. 14). But Boyce continued to subscribe to the conventional distinction between a sketch and a finished watercolor (the first often executed quickly, on the spot, the second done in the studio at more leisure). In May of 1857 Boyce referred to "the crypt of St. Niccolo at Giornico" as a "sketch." He was vexed with Rossetti for carrying it off, along with "that sunset sketch," to exhibit with Pre-Raphaelite work rather than "better things" ("They will look ridiculously small and mindless by the side of Rossetti's and Millais' and Hunt's work") (Diaries, p. 17).

In fact Boyce would never again do such elaborate drawings as Edward the Confessor or St. Mark's, nor anything so purely Ruskinian as West Lynn. Still he did
do another kind of picture in the 1850s that, while not particularly "Ruskinian," was related to a minor theme in Pre-Raphaelite landscape. In his analysis of watercolor landscapes by Pre-Raphaelite painters, Christopher Newall notes their interest in urban and rural life, but he offers only one example of this preoccupation, *Hampstead—a Sketch from Nature* (1857) by Ford Madox Brown. This painting, which is simply a view from Brown's second-story window, with a high viewpoint and a dense screen of trees, has a noticeable resemblance to an 1857 work by Boyce called *From the Garden of Sherford Cottage*, a random-seeming view of a cottage quite unlike anything else he is known to have done in the 1850s [fig. 26]. Boyce certainly knew Brown and admired his works, although the diary provides no evidence of direct influence.

It is the *Sherford Cottage*, a familiar scene without a conventional formal composition, that contains a hint of the work Boyce was soon to do.
NOTES


2. See letters from Dante Gabriel Rossetti to Boyce in the University College Library, University of London (Ogden 82).


4. See Staley, 97 and 107, and Newall, intro. to cat., 12.


7. Maas, 16-17.

8. See *Diaries*, note 13, p. 72.


11. Staley, 7-9, 61.


15. Staley discusses Ruskin’s concept of the "innocent eye" (and Ernst Gombrich’s quarrel with it in Art and Illusion) pp. 184-85.

16. Quoted by Staley, p. 16.


19. Staley is particularly interesting on the working methods of Hunt and Millais (see pp. 22-26).

20. Ibid., 25.

21. See Staley, 184-85. Boyce saw the work Hunt and Millais did in 1851 and commented, perhaps wryly, "Wells and I joined in admiring the earnest and persevering study of Millais and Hunt, who have been for several months together in a retired part of the country painting minutely from nature the backgrounds to their pictures" (Diaries, p. 4).


23. Hardie 3: 103-09; Maas, 171-73; and Newall, Victorian Watercolours, 32.


26. See Williams, 1-2, for a good definition of transparent and opaque watercolors, and Clarke, 9-20, for the history of their development.


29. See cat. entry by Judy Egerton (no. 12, p. 46): "watercolour."


31. Newall, Victorian Watercolours, 76 and 82 (on Greenaway), and 56 and 58 (on Moore).


33. Newall, Introduction to John Ruskin and His Circle, 3-4.

34. Williams, Ch. 4, "The Topographical Tradition," 40-66; Hardie 3: Ch. 1, "Foreign Travel: Architectural Draughtsmen," 1-21, and Ch. 2, "The 'Annuals' and Their

35. Newall in intro. to cat., 19 and 24. See also Diaries, note 9, p. 112.

36. Quoted in cat., 46.

37. See entry for cat. no. 11, and Connoisseur 99 (May 1937), 245.

38. Newall, Introduction to John Ruskin and His Circle, 3.

39. See two letters Ruskin wrote Boyce in Italy, quoted by Surtees as an appendix to the Diaries, 119-21.

40. See Hardie 2: Plates 1-31 and passim. According to Newall, Boyce set a standard for the many artists who would make records under the aegis of Ruskin, especially in the service of his Guild of St. George from 1878 to 1886 (Victorian Watercolours, 70-71).

41. Diaries, e.g. pp. 22, 29, 53, and 80.

42. Hardie 3: 166-68 and Plate 196.


45. See John Ruskin and His Circle, cat. no. 49, p. 31.

46. The Diaries mention Brown occasionally. Boyce admired his work, especially his ambitious Work (see p. 25: "some fine stuff in it, but it will scarcely be appreciated but by few"). Cf. also Boyce's 1871 drawing From a Window at Ludlow, which is remarkably like Brown's Hampstead (Staley, Plate 57b).
CHAPTER III

In 1860 Arthur Hughes, a member of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, wrote to William Allingham, "On Friday I saw the Rossettis, Stephens, and all your artistic friends, I think, at the Hogarth, where Boyce has some marvelously lovely things: has made a great stride tho' his things were always remarkably good" (quoted in Diaries, p. 89). There was, in fact, a shift in Boyce's work about 1859 with the appearance of certain pictures of scenes in the Thames Valley such as Streatley Mill at Sunset, 1859, a view of a rambling old mill with two figures in the foreground, and three oddly positioned trees [fig. 27]. The shift in Boyce's career is often noted, and commentators usually think the work of the next eight or so years to be his best.¹

The shift in style is presaged by certain features of the Girl by a Beech Tree in a Landscape, 1857, the only known oil painting to be securely attributable to Boyce [fig. 28]. The wooded scene is composed asymmetrically: on a path entering the picture from the right foreground is a single small figure, carrying a bonnet, and just left of center is a very large tree. The tree dominates the composition, and, curiously, it is cropped just above the fork of the branches: the subject of the painting, then, seems to be the trunk of a tree. Judy Egerton remarks,
"As one might expect from an artist who is primarily a watercolourist, it is very thinly painted, with the ground visible in the foreground" (cat. p. 50). The brushwork is fine, each leaf of the beech trees and each blade of grass rendered with tender delicacy. The bright colors are used with obvious relish for the effects of sunlight and shade. Only after prolonged examination can at least five tiny figures be described beyond the trees to the left.

The Beech Tree is unusual for Boyce in not bearing the name of a specific place. The explanation may have some relation to the unwonted medium of oil: perhaps he was trying, in this grander medium, for a more general pastoral view. In any case Boyce's new phase, "the great stride," invariably involves specific sites. Streatley Mill at Sunset (1859) establishes a pattern. A rambling old brick mill is portrayed, from a distance and through some trees; the viewer seems to be looking at the mill from an angle at the rear. Its tiled roof and brick walls, old and parti-colored, are carefully observed, and tiny figures, both human and animal, populate the scene. Two larger figures recline in the foreground in postures reminiscent of the foreground figures of Ford Madox Brown's An English Autumn Afternoon, though Brown's figures are much more emphatic and individualized than Boyce's, and have a more anecdotal quality. Christopher Newall has termed Streatley Mill a "classic example" of
Boyce's idiosyncratic style. Most landscape painters would stand back from the trees in a scene and render the whole tree or most of it. Boyce, though, draws nearer to the trunks and uses them as a framing device. His peculiar motif is the use of the trees' strong verticals as a screen across the foreground, the treetops zooming out of the picture space; this is "an original vision," according to Newall.

The Thames pictures signify a change in the way Boyce worked. Early on he had gone searching for views in Wales and Italy, not unlike one of the Reverend Gilpin's "picturesque travellers." In Bettws-y-Coed, August 10, 1851, Boyce had written "Met Mr. Cox... who took me some way along the road down to the Llegwy to show me a subject" (Diaries, p. 2). In the late 1850s and the 1860s, however, Boyce stayed mainly in England and began painting local scenes in a new way. He concentrated on villages by the Thames: Streatley, Pangbourne, and Mapledurham, among others, staying in these places for months on end.

In this phase Boyce usually chose an old building to draw—not necessarily a house, but often an old barn or mill. Christopher Newall, who has explored and photographed all these sites, speaks of the "uncanny accuracy" of Boyce's depiction of these places, the sense he can give of actually being there. A fine example is
The Mill on the Thames at Mapledurham (1860) [fig. 29], which, like most of Boyce's Thames Valley subjects, is not a simple foursquare structure but long and multi-levelled, rambling, and irregular, inhabited, in its little nooks and crannies, by tiny people and animals. This time the screen of trees is behind the building, serving to cut off the space and enclose the composition. On the left are five figures, three of which seem involved in the loading of grain. The Mill exhibits another Boyce specialty, the subtle subsidiary view. The trees on the left screen the view of a church. Another artist, says Newall, would make straight for the church at Mapledurham, which is very picturesque, but Boyce avoided the cliches and obscured the conventional view with a screen of trees. As in Streatley Mill the brushwork in The Mill at Mapledurham is exceedingly fine, the foliage and the long grass in the right foreground being rendered with especial delicacy. Colors, especially the green, are bright.

The meticulous detail and the strong vibrant colors are what lead most commentators to label this period in Boyce's work "Pre-Raphaelite." Indeed, Christopher Newall calls Streatley Mill and The Mill on the Thames at Mapledurham "thoroughgoing exercises in the Pre-Raphaelite method," commenting on the careful study of the structure of each building, the patient observation of the materials of the clapboarding and plaster and the roofs of tile or
stone-slation (cat. p. 25). One is reminded of Ruskin's adjurations to Boyce in Venice to observe and illustrate the distinct nature of the marbles of St. Mark's. Boyce does dwell lovingly on the mellow bricks and tiles of the Thamesside buildings; yet it is debatable whether the delineation of the texture of brick and tile is really Boyce's primary aim. In a picture such as Mapledurham House: Early Morning, 1860 [fig. 30], the artist takes a close view of the rambling old structure. Typically, his vantage point is somewhere behind the house, beyond a fence. Atypically, Boyce chooses a view without trees, except for the very edge of a tree on the extreme left, although a brick wall functions as a kind of screen, separating the viewer from the subject and at the same time enclosing it. Here, where the old brick house almost fills the picture, Boyce would, if anywhere, demonstrate an interest in the exact reproduction of materials. Yet there is a vague softness about his rendering of bricks and tiles and weathered wood. The flowering creeper along the low brick wall looks soft, like moss. Even more significantly, there is a peacock on the fence, and this most distinct of birds, while rendered in a purple hue that is distinguishable from the grey boards behind it, is at first scarcely visible in the dense pattern of tiny strokes.
Also, a remarkable feature of many of the pictures is a sense of natural freshness that, while being "true to nature," differs from the landscape work of Hunt, Millais, and others in the Pre-Raphaelite circle which, for all its outdoor method, has an airless atmosphere. Boyce's At Binsey, near Oxford, 1862, for example, depicts another mellow old complex of buildings mostly obscured by a fence [fig. 31]. The upper third of the composition is a dense screen of leaves, minutely rendered in multitudinous shades of green and gold, which seem to sparkle in the sun. "There are, of course, birds in the branches," says Staley (p. 109), also an egg in the fork of the tree. Yet Boyce's colors, while bright in this period, are never harsh or acidic like so much Pre-Raphaelite work. Hunt, Millais, even Rossetti seemed in the 1850s to regard harsh colors as an integral part of "truth." And while Boyce's At Binsey is certainly highly detailed, it still does not have the labored, obsessive quality of the early landscapes of Hunt and Millais, nor that absence of overall pictorial design that comes from toiling earnestly over a picture, piece by piece. Boyce's interest is not in the details, I would suggest, but rather in the drama of the view: the strong presence of the two trees in front, and the odd little vignette in the right-hand corner of a mother and child next to a tree bending out of the picture, as contrasted with the almost completely
hidden house. The viewpoint on this scene is very different from the traditional picturesque view of a house, where the landscape is organized in horizontal planes and the house is seen straight on, as if center stage, with trees forming a coulisse or wings on either side. The viewer is not like a spectator at a theater, witnessing a carefully rehearsed performance; rather he is a casual passerby seeing an apparently casual view.

In any case, the highly detailed, brightly colored Thames Valley pictures are only one type of drawing Boyce was doing in the 1860s: he also did another sort of picture, less noticed by the commentators, which at first glance seems to be about nothing at all. These might be called "the case of the empty foreground." Boyce did take one trip abroad during this period, a six-month sojourn in Egypt from October 1861 to April 1862, and an early example dates from this trip. It seems to have been a traditional view-finding expedition, on the model of John Frederick Lewis and Edward Lear, perhaps more specifically on the model of Thomas Seddon, who had died in Egypt in 1856. The subjects of several of the extant pictures from Boyce's Egyptian sojourn are similar to Seddon's Egyptian pictures. The Edge of the Great Desert, near Gizeh (1861) depicts a scrubby sunlit desert vista not unlike Seddon's notorious Jerusalem and the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Boyce's The Great Sphinx of Gizeh (1862),
on the other hand, is almost a direct quotation of Seddon's *The Great Sphinx at the Pyramids of Giza* (1854), a watercolor which Boyce himself owned (cat. no. 34).  

Indeed, Rossetti thought all Boyce's work in Egypt run-of-the-mill. "Did not like what I had done in the East," Boyce wrote in his diary with regard to Rossetti on April 14, 1862 (p. 34). "Said that all the things that artists brought from the East were always all alike and equally uninteresting."

But one of Boyce's Egyptian pictures is startling for its lack of a conventional "subject": *Dust Heap near the Babel nasr, Cairo*, four-fifths of which seems to be dark mounds of rubbish [fig. 32]. No documentation exists on this picture, as the *Diaries* have no entries in Egypt, nor is it on public view (the British Museum has a print of the picture, last documented as being in the collection of Boyce's friend F. G. Stephens), but it too establishes a pattern for an approach Boyce took in his drawings of the 1860s. The compositional focus is on a stretch of ground which seems to be barren. Rendered minutely in the background are buildings which probably have what is usually thought of as artistic importance. Perhaps the original of *Dust Heap* yields more details: sometimes Boyce's work does seem to contain hidden features, as in another Egyptian sketch, *The Nile Valley, Mokattam, and Citadel of Cairo, from the neighborhood of the Pyramids of*
Gizeh (1861), presently in the Ashmolean Museum. This small sketch, in the long "prospect" format, shows the plain and the sky, with some salmon steaks on the horizon. With a magnifying glass, it is possible to see that the "salmon steaks" are actually a range of clay mountains with a faint but unmistakable citadel on top. Yet the print of the Dust Heap in the British Museum is as dark and featureless as the photocopy. The broad foreground in blank.

The explanation for some of the qualities in Boyce's new phase that are distinct, sometimes unsettling, may lie in another little-known picture Boyce did in Egypt. That is The Nile at Gizeh with the Pyramid of Saqqara on the Horizon (1861), reproduced by Virginia Surtees in her edition of the Diaries in 1980 and attributed to a private collection (pp. 96 and v) [fig. 33]. The drawing takes an oblique view of an embankment on the river, perhaps from a bridge or window (just the edge of some structure is visible on the right). Big reeds in the foreground are answered by the curve of a more distant sail. The stepped pyramid (probably not noticeable without knowledge of the full title of the picture) is just a speck in the distance. This picture, perhaps coincidentally, resembles Thomas Seddon's View on the Nile, 1855, an unusually picturesque picture for Seddon, with its rhyming curves, and one which he seems to have done not on the spot but,
in a manner to horrify his mentor William Holman Hunt, when he got back home [fig. 34]. Seddon's picture is not particularly distinctive, recalling commonplace Dutch river landscapes. Boyce's work, on the other hand, attempts more drama with the close view of the reeds, the distant view of the pyramid. This drama of near and far, the oblique viewpoint, and the forms themselves, simplified and rendered in pleasing rhythmic patterns, suggest the influence of Japanese prints. Indeed, the very subject reminds one of Hiroshige, whose One Hundred Views of Edo, published in 1857-58, features many twilight river scenes. It is interesting that Boyce calls his pictures of Egypt, following the custom of the time, what he "had done in the East" (Diaries, p. 34).

In March, 1860, Boyce met "a gallicized Yankee, Whistler by name, who was very amusing, and with whom I walked part of the way home" (Diaries, p. 29). James McNeill Whistler had been introduced to Japanese prints in Paris around 1856, probably by Auguste Delatre, a prominent engraver whose workshop was a center of interest in things Oriental. Delatre owned a copy of Hokusai's Manga, the multi-volumed sketchbook by the famous early nineteenth-century Japanese artist of the Ukiyo-e school. Woodblock prints in this tradition were realistic depictions of "the floating world," the life of Edo (now Tokyo), especially its world of pleasure and entertainment
and also its landscape, dominated by the waters of a complex of rivers and canals. The Ukiyo-e school had developed a tradition of ideal landscape, with "canons of beauty that were universally held," but Hokusai rejected these, preferring to travel around with a sketchbook recording views of interesting places. But a stronger influence on Whistler probably came from Hiroshige and his One Hundred Famous Views of Edo. Hiroshige had been affected by Western notions of perspective, so that his prints are not "flat"; nevertheless they have strong two-dimensional designs employing bands of color and sometimes (Hiroshige's hallmark) startling asymmetrical compositional devices, such as figures or objects that are cropped and very close to the picture plane [fig. 35]. Often such objects are trees: Hiroshige seems to have followed a tradition in Japanese art which puts trees in the foreground to establish a near point in space to be contrasted dramatically with a much more distant one, often a little vignette of everyday life, though Hiroshige, expanding on this tradition, put all sorts of objects close to the viewer, even a portion of hairy leg [fig. 36]. Often the objects are drastically cropped. One explanation for this is the custom of using prints to decorate sliding screens in Japanese houses. Prints were frequently split by the screens, and artists, intrigued by the bizarre compositional effects thus produced, began to
use truncated figures and objects in single compositions.\textsuperscript{19}

Whistler was not interested in a major characteristic of the prints of Hiroshige and others: distinct areas of color surrounded by dark contour lines; Whistler’s work, as it would develop in the Nocturnes and other landscapes from 1866 onwards, was altogether more ethereal. He became interested in pure painting, achieved by compositional simplicity in an almost monochromatic tonal harmony. Yet the effect not only of Japanese stylistic devices—asymmetry, oblique angles, and simplified forms—but also the subject matter of broad, simple landscape, especially rivers and bridges, is unmistakable in the later work of Whistler.\textsuperscript{20} The Japanese influence on Boyce too is unmistakable, as in The Nile at Gizeh, with its stylized pattern and riparian subject. Apart from the detail in the brickwork, which betrays a very Western, very Ruskinian concern for the texture of the surface, this picture could be Japanese.\textsuperscript{21}

Other pictures show a Japanese influence as well. As early as 1857 The Beech Tree shows a Ukiyo-e-type drama of near and far with the prominent tree in the foreground placed off-center and cropped [fig. 28]. This offers egress into a gentle landscape inhabited by a faceless character and the minuscule figures in the rear to the left. Streatley Mill, 1859 [fig. 27], features a screen
of trees, a very Oriental idea. The angled viewpoint is deceptively casual. It suggests a glimpse by an "artist-rambler" who wanders past the old mill, and might have been inspired by the desire, common among Chinese and Japanese landscape artists, to express the sudden elation of the wanderer who encounters a fresh view. This motive has been linked to Zen Buddhism.\(^{22}\)

The *Mill at Mapledurham*, 1860 [fig. 29], has this accidental quality too, with its rear view of the house and the mere backhanded suggestion, in a subordinated view, of the picturesque church. As with most of Boyce's Thames Valley pictures, the *Mapledurham* has many small anonymous figures engaged in some action; they are mere genre figures, and their attitudes, while not exactly static, are stylized. (Few figures in Boyce loll like the figures in the foreground of *Streatley Mill*; often they are seen in profile or, even more often, from the rear.) They are part of the landscape—indeed, sometimes they are embedded in the landscape, just barely visible. The artist, and viewer, are separated from this distant scene—the screen of trees accomplishes this—as in Hiroshige's landscapes, where the close truncated object achieves the same effect of distancing viewer from a distant scene.\(^{23}\) This dramatic distance between viewer and scene is not staged or contrived by Boyce, as it was not by Hiroshige: both painted recognizable scenes.\(^{24}\)
Nevertheless both chose vantage points which offered this drama of near and far. The significance of such a choice, apart from its compositional interest, is problematical. Hiroshige's compositions may have been intended to explore different personalities or emotional aspects of a single scene, or they may reflect Hiroshige's own Zen-like detachment from the scene. In Boyce, the Thames Valley pictures offer passing glimpses of a stable pastoral order, where the old buildings convey a sense of comfortable permanence. The signs of life in the scenes—the squat little human figures, the cats and the ducks—contribute a note of informal cheer. The figures are at home in the scenes, so much so that they (like the figures in Boyce's work from the start) sometimes blend right in.

Boyce's concentration on the villages of the Thames Valley bears a striking resemblance to Hiroshige's images of the floating world. Rarely does Boyce portray the river itself, but the viewer familiar with the spots Boyce selects must be conscious of its proximity. The empty landscapes, beginning with the Dust Heap, also might have Oriental sources. In Oriental art, empty space is not negative, but rather has positive value in its relation to the other elements. Many of Hiroshige's prints have empty foregrounds, with stretches of water, which produces a pleasant melancholy and peace.
Nowhere in Boyce's diary does he mention Hiroshige or Japanese prints, but he was almost certainly familiar with them. The opening entries of Boyce's diary are about going to the Great Exhibition of 1851, then going back again, to "the India, China, Africa, Persia, & Turkey departments" (p. 1). The Diaries, for all their lack of depth, establish Boyce as a great enthusiast for exhibitions and spectacles of all kinds: Boyce was interested in anything new. He was also an avid collector of pictures and other beautiful objects. No accounts of his picture collection include prints, but he was in the thick of the craze for collecting the Oriental porcelain known as "blue and white." The painted designs on blue and white might well have introduced certain aspects of Oriental design to Boyce. More specifically, Japanese prints, though not officially exhibited in London until the exhibition of 1862, had been available in London shops since about 1850. The first major collector of the prints in London was the architect William Burges, an intimate of the Pre-Raphaelite circle and a friend of Boyce's who is mentioned often in his diary. Whistler also collected prints (indeed the whole decor of his various abodes in London was Japanese, and he was popularly known as "the Japanese artist"). William Michael Rossetti, the brother of Dante Gabriel and intimate of the circle, bought great quantities of the prints in Paris, where they
were very cheap, and brought them home. Even in London the prints were cheap. In the 1850s, the early days of the vogue, the prints were used as wrapping paper for exports from Japan. It was only later that connoisseurs recognized their value and prices rose.

Besides, another sort of picture Boyce did in the early 1860s also bears a strong resemblance to the works of Hiroshige, Boyce's nocturnal views of the Thames. These began when he lived in rooms at 15 Buckingham Street overlooking the river near the Hungerford Bridge, between 1856 and 1862. Night Sketch of the Thames near Hungerford Bridge, c. 1860-62 [fig. 37], now in the Tate Gallery, depicts a long low line of warehouses and other buildings seen from across the river. The composition is simple, three bands representing the sky, the buildings, water. The colors are dark blue and brown, with stars of spared paper, and few details are visible in the low evening light. Paint handling is loose and broad (the paper is notably coarse and rough). The main thrust of the composition is horizontal, though there are a few irregularly placed vertical accents. Three boats in the water supply interesting curves. Robin Hamlyn, keeper of Pre-Raphaelite paintings at the Tate, called it "extraordinarily Whistlerian," although Hamlyn also notes that Whistler's finished nocturnes probably date no
earlier than 1866. It also has affinities with the many river views in Japanese art.

In 1862 Boyce moved to Chatham Place, Blackfriars (Rossetti's old rooms), from which he continued to sketch the river. *Blackfriars Bridge: Moonlight Sketch*, from 1862 or 1863, is an even more loosely handled, coarser-grained view of the river, this time focussing on the bridge itself [fig. 38]. The artist shows the bridge up close, at an angle (two and one-half arches are visible). The lights on the bridge and the buildings on the opposite bank provide vertical details. There is some light on the horizon, and a few highlights on the water; but by and large the blue and brown colors are somber, almost muddy. The main impression is roughness (possibly the paper, a "wove paper," according to Hamlyn's catalogue entry, is even more coarse than usual). Christopher Newall dismissed this work as "insignificant," painted in a "relaxed spirit" with no new ideas. Robin Hamlyn is more positive, describing it as "a more somber study than NO5000 [Night Sketch], and arguably . . . [having] more immediacy." At least two other such twilight studies exist in private collections, testifying to Boyce's preoccupation at this time with this Oriental subject.

In 1864 Boyce wrote in his diary, "W. [Whistler] has begun 2 pictures on the Thames, v. good indeed" (p. 39), and it has been speculated that Boyce's twilight scenes
might not only have anticipated Whistler's "Nocturnes," but to some extent inspired them. On the other hand, there is a long tradition of moonlit scenes in English art—the work of "Moonlit" Pether is only one example—and Whistler had many forerunners in moonlit river scenes other than his good friend Boyce, not to mention the potent Japanese model. In any case, whereas such twilight views represent for Whistler the beginning of an interest in a tonal harmony that would lead him eventually to near abstraction, such views were a mere sideline for Boyce, perhaps just a holdover from the crepuscular flights of his apprentice years in Wales and Italy.

It could be argued, however, that the influence of Japanese prints lingered on in Boyce's work, showing up in subtle, sometimes transmogrified ways as japonisme rather than as the more overt use of Oriental motifs known as japonaiserie. As the decade went on Boyce did both the brightly colored views of the Thames Valley and the "empty" landscapes," as well as other types of pictures, notably views of London, all of which have decided Oriental elements.

The various types of drawings do not seem to have been produced in any particular pattern. Boyce wandered the Thames "for months on end," staying in villages and immersing himself in these places as Cox had done in Wales; he was not a mere visitor on the weekend.
1858, Boyce was asked "to be a trustee and then a member of the Hogarth Club, but refused on account of being so long out of town" (Diaries, p. 22) One of these villages was Pangbourne, near Oxford, the village most often depicted in pictures presently on public view. In Our River (1888) G. D. Leslie described how Boyce situated himself there:

At Pangbourne I met my friend G. P. Boyce, the water-colour artist, who was lodging at Champ's picturesque little cottage on the edge of the weir pool; the rooms were very old and small, and it pleased Mr. Boyce's taste to hang amongst the humble cottage pictures one or two precious little works by D. Rossetti. He had brought with him also some of his favourite old blue teacups and plates. He painted two very fine works whilst I was at Whitchurch: one of Champ's Cottage itself and the weir pool with a twilight effect, and the other of a large old barn half-way up the hill at Whitchurch.39

Christopher Newall owns three of the works Boyce painted at Pangbourne. Two are of old buildings, the first entitled Champ's Cottage, of the half-timbered Elizabethan-style house where he lodged, another, called The White Swan at Pangbourne, 1863-64, of a public house the sign for which can be seen in the left-hand corner of Champ's Cottage.40 The viewpoint of Champ's Cottage is unusual, as it so often is in Japanese prints: it is very low, a "squirrel's eye view," so that the viewer looks up to the back side of the cottage [fig. 39]. Newall, who has thoroughly scouted and photographed Pangbourne, declares that to achieve this odd angle the artist must
have broken through a garden. The cottage, engulfed in bright blue-green verdure, is heavily populated with figures. Boyce's figures are usually mere human touches, signs of ongoing life in the landscape. Here, though, the male figure looking out the upstairs window has a beard, and one is tempted (for the only time with Boyce's landscape work) to identify this figure as Rossetti. 41

Boyce did one of his most notable "empty" landscapes at Pangbourne, Christopher Newall's Black Poplars at Pangbourne, Berkshire, 1868? [fig. 40]. It is a picture of a reach of grass and a stand of trees. The site is an island in the Thames, according to Newall, and in an area so picturesque that Boyce's composition is "amazing for its non-subject." 42 Boyce had done this sort of thing before: in 1866 the reviewer in the Art Journal had written, "Mr. Boyce is singular in the choice of his subjects, inasmuch as he loves to plant his sketching stool just where there is no subject. Yet does he manage to make out of the most unpromising of materials a picture which for the most part is clever and satisfactory." 43 At first glance the picture appears to be of nothing at all, though closer examination shows the woods, in subtly modulated tones of green, to be full of life.

Boyce seems to have had one commission in his career (usually his diary describes people coming to his studio and buying his pictures). 44 Christopher Newall has
written that Boyce was "encouraged by certain North Country industrialists, most notably Lowthian Bell. . . to describe the sublime beauties of a landscape in the process of industrialization" (intro. to cat., 24). Two of Boyce's North Country pictures were in the 1987 exhibition. The first is *Near the Ouse Burn, 1864* [fig. 41], which Newall describes as one of Boyce's views of the Tyne Quays, "swarming with commercial activity and the site of stupendous feats of engineering" (p. 24). In fact, however, any "activity" or "feats" Boyce observed are relegated, Japanese-style, to the background: Ouse Burn focuses on an almost featureless side of a hill. The second, *From the Windmill Hills, Gateshead-on-Tyne, 1864-65*, a picture Boyce painted while staying with the Bells, contains one of Boyce's idiosyncratic screens of trees [fig. 42]. Behind six thin, irregularly spaced trees, the tops of which are cropped, one sees a rise with small farm buildings, the most prominent being the side of a barn. The sky, with streaks of purple clouds, is remarkably dramatic for Boyce. In *Windmill Hills* Boyce "shows a distant view of the smoky city of Newcastle" (intro. to cat., 24), but the view—miniscule and spectral silhouettes embedded in a cloud on the left—is even more subtle than the stepped pyramid in Boyce's 1861 *Gizeh*. The "sublime beauties" of industrial Newcastle can be taken as the subject of *Windmill Hills* only by some sort of witty
inversion of Byzantine subtlety. The real subject seems to be the almost lurid sunset and the rhythm of the odd rolling hill as seen through the screen of trees. The effect is remarkably similar to Hiroshige’s Oji Inari Shrine [fig. 43]. Occasionally in the 1860s Boyce displays an antiquarian’s interest in old buildings. He underwent a dovecote phase, for example, and such drawings as Dovecote at Streatley evince an antiquarian’s interest in the brickwork of these old structures, how the mortar lay, and how it had worn [fig. 44]. Clearly Boyce was interested in making precise records of particular places, even though these sites might not be generally regarded as significant. When Boyce was painting a place called Stagshaw Bank in Northumberland Philip Webb wrote to him, “I shall know more of the place when I have seen your drawing, as, happily, one has not to translate your work & ask how the thing looks in reality.”

On the other hand, some of Boyce’s drawings show a concern for the more formal values of watercolor painting. Old Barn at Whitchurch, 1863 [fig. 45], shows a mound of gold hay in the foreground. Pigs are frolicking in it (indeed Staley observes that “small pigs seem to swim, their black silhouettes rising gracefully out of the straw like porpoises out of the sea”) (p. 109), or like the sails in Boyce’s Nile at Gizeh. The swirls of hay are answered by the swirls in the clouds; a white chicken sits
on a mound, next to it a black one. To the right, a figure loads a cart with bright red wheels. The reviewer in the Athenaeum noticed the "absolute truth" with which this commonplace scene was rendered, but also the "grandeur" which elevated it to "the poetic class of art." The "dignity" which the reviewer found in the barnyard scene is surely related to the (unusual for Boyce) formal balance of the composition.

*Old Barn at Whitchurch* is seen from the rear, apparently, but it is parallel to the picture plane and dominates the middle ground. As the decade goes on, Boyce's compositions were usually more oblique, as two cityscapes from 1866 attest. In *Backs of Some Old Houses in Soho* [fig. 46], the subject is seen from afar. Recording the view out of the first floor window of a house in Prince's Street, the foreground is the brick wall of the churchyard of St. Anne's (a parish noticeboard, complete with announcements, is dimly visible in the lower left); in the background is a row of red brick houses having the sort of irregular roofline, replete with chimneys, that Boyce seemed to favor. The middle of the picture is dominated by a screen of trees, the foliage of which is rendered in bright splashes of green and gold. (The riot of spring color in this picture is flashier than the usual Boyce, and Rossetti took a special liking to it, offering one of his own works in exchange.) It is the
odd, Oriental obliqueness of *Houses in Soho* that intrigues. The *Athenaeum* reviewer perceived that Boyce had found "the secret beauty of a dingy place, such as the Churchyard of St. Anne’s, Soho, where a flash of smoky sunlight on a soot-grimed wall, a line of grimy, old red houses and the struggles of town foliage into verdure, are, with a gas-lamp and a mural gravestone, made by his feeling and skill into a poem and a picture. This speaks to the wise." *

Another interesting composition from 1866 is *Bridewell Precincts*, or, as it was titled in the OWCS Winter Exhibition 1898-99, *Where Stood Bridewell Hospital and Prison*, 1866 [fig. 47]. The foreground is empty (the buildings of the old Bridewell Palace had been demolished three years before), and it is rather scrubby-looking ground which houses two or three of Boyce’s little animals. In the background, beyond a line of red brick houses, is the steeple of St. Bride’s, the tallest of Christopher Wren’s steeples and famous since the late eighteenth century as the model for four-tiered wedding cakes. Typically, Boyce avoids any suggestion of a cliche, placing the spire off to the left at an angle, cropping off the topmost of its four arcades.

Another of the 1860s landscapes which tucks a building into the background is Boyce’s *Landscape: Wotton, Autumn 1864-5* [fig. 48]. This landscape
emphasizes a broad stretch of grass, intersected at an angle by a long wooden fence. At first glance it might seem to be a Ruskinian study of verdure, but the colors—golds, browns, and greens—are too soft and mellow to lay claim to Pre-Raphaelite "intensity." The subject seems to be a non-subject, an apparent emptiness which as usual contains Boyce's little signs of life, here blackbirds.

Oddly, the county of Surrey seemed to attract Boyce for its "emptiness" rather than its plethora of beautiful houses. In his 1899 article about Boyce Arthur E. Street selected the "empty" Landscape near Abinger, Surrey [fig. 49] for special praise.

The sky in the Abinger, familiar to everyone in Nature, but rarely ventured upon in art, is a perfect rendering of sunlight, half piercing, half baffled by a broken canopy of cloud. It is of this picture that the story is told, illustrative of the tender regard which invests Boyce's work, for those who are privileged to live with it, with an almost talismanic power to soothe, occupy, and delight, how the late Sir William Bowman, finding a friend lying ill, with little to break the monotony of the long hours, took the drawing off his own walls, and, without a word, hung it in the sick man's room, so that his eyes should rest naturally on it as he lay in bed (pp. 4-5).

I would suggest that it is this soothing quality that Boyce sought in the "empty landscapes" and perhaps even in his more conventional architectural views, a quality for which Oriental landscape is known. This quality is still present even in the late 1860s when Boyce's style began to change. His colors became milder, his brushwork
looser. He began to use dabs of color rather than fine, meticulous strokes, sometimes in complementary colors in mosaic-like patterns, as in the genre-like Oxford Arms, Warwick Lane, City of London, c. 1868 [fig. 50]. In this oblique view of the old inn, the vantage point is the inn-yard, with a bit of bannister on the left. Dominating the picture is the rambling three-story structure with interesting balustrades and an irregular, variegated facade. Seven human figures are disposed about, along with the usual dogs and cats; laundry hangs in the sun. This is one of Boyce's largest pictures (14 and 1/2 by 13 and 1/2 inches), and the colors seem unusually warm, the building a strong golden color, the roof a warm red. The suspicion that Boyce altered the color to create a mood of warmth is strengthened by observing the coloration of the paving stones: the cobblestone street is a dense pattern of multi-colored touches or dabs of watercolor, most in golden brown but some in pale red or blue which echoes the reds and blues of the figures' clothes. Again Boyce shows an interest in mellow light. The sky is almost white, but the play of sunlight and shade adds interest to the variegated surfaces of wood, brick, and stone.

The same is true of Farm Buildings, Dorchester, Oxfordshire, 1869?, a more typical view of rambling old farm buildings with steep-pitched tile roofs [fig. 51]. The subject is very like the early pictures of this period
of Boyce's work, *Streatley Mill* and the Mapledurham drawings, but the colors are warmer, at the same time more muted, and the forms, constituted by soft dabs or dots, like those in *Oxford Arms*, sometimes depart from local color. For example, the roof is made up of dabs of oranges and greens, the bricks of oranges and greens, and the grass of greens and purples. The mood is quiet—there is a harmonious stillness about this Dorchester farm which forecasts the direction his last work would take and may, I would suggest, have been Boyce's goal from the beginning.
NOTES


2. In 1853 Boyce wrote in his diary "Tom Seddon called on me and said he and Gabriel Rossetti had been speaking about me and thinking it would be good for me to try painting in oil" (Diaries, p. 9). Apparently Boyce exhibited some oils along with watercolors at the Royal Academy during the 1850s, two in 1858, for example, A Farmhouse in Surrey and Heath Side–Surrey–an Autumn Study, although these have not been traced.

3. Staley makes this comparison, p. 109. It should be noted that while none of Boyce's known pictures is anecdotal, he refers in his diary to a work of his called An Impending Catastrophe, a title certainly implying a story (p. 22). Virginia Surtees's extensive notes are silent on this work, the whereabouts of which are apparently unknown.


6. Ibid.

7. See Note 3 to Chapter II, above.

8. Hardie 3: 120-21; Staley, 25. See, for example, the phosphorescent Scapegoat by William Holman Hunt, in The Pre-Raphaelites (cat. no. 84, p. 155).


10. See Boyce cat., no. 33, p. 54. For Seddon, see Staley, Plate 51b.

11. See Boyce cat., no. 34, p. 54. For Seddon, see Staley, Plate 50b.

12. A photograph of the print in the Witt Library, Courtauld Institute, London, identifies the buildings, which are on the outskirts of Cairo, as the Tombs of the Khalifs and the Citadel, Mosque and Tomb of Mehemet Ali.

13. Staley, 103.


17. Dufwa, 172-76.


22. Dufwa, 24.


27. Hiroshige, Plates 9, 20, 50, 54, 107, 109, and 115. Cf. also Sutton's discussion of Whistler's deserted seashores as a romantic idea (p. 52). Sutton quotes Shelley: "I love all waste/And solitary places; where we taste/The pleasure of believing what we see/Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be."

29. See Diaries, pp. 21, 35, 47, 83 note 12, and passim. Burges lodged in the same house as Boyce in Buckingham Street, 1856-62 (note 14, p. 79). Information on knowledge of Japanese prints in London is found in Sutton, 46-47; Whitford, 21-25 and 98-104. Whitford stresses the importance of Liberty’s, the Regent Street emporium which opened in 1875, in promoting the vogue for Japanese arts and crafts in England.


31. Conversation with author July 22, 1991. In a letter to the author September 8, 1991, Hamlyn supplied entries on two Boyce works which will appear in a forthcoming catalogue of new acquisitions by the Tate (hereafter referred to as “cat. of Tate acquisitions”). The entry on Night Sketch of the Thames makes this point.

32. Cf. Dufwa, 170-78, and Whitford, 131-47. For examples of Hiroshige’s many river views, see note 14 above.


34. Cat. of Tate acquisitions.

35. Judy Egerton in cat., 53; Hamlyn in cat. of Tate acquisitions; and Dorment, n. p.

36. In conversation July 17, 1991, Christopher Newall emphasized the English tradition of moonlit views. Whistler’s forerunners in this tradition are discussed by Sutton, 68-70.


39. Quoted in intro to cat., 23.

40. See cat. no. 39. It is The White Swan that has the weir pool (a figure in the foreground poles a boat); clearly it is another version of Champ’s Cottage to which Leslie refers.
41. The *Diaries* do not document these trips to the countryside; any reference to them is incidental, as in an 1863 entry: "Aug. 1. (At Pangbourne.) Letter from Lizzie G. to say she is to be married in five weeks" (p. 39).


43. Quoted in intro. to cat., 26.

44. See, for example, p. 29, referring to a sale to Major Gillam. Lowthian Bell and his brother called on Boyce in April of 1864 and bought three drawings (p. 40).


47. Quoted in cat., 55.

48. *Diaries*, 44.

49. Quoted in cat., 57-58.


51. *Sandpit near Abinger, Surrey, 1866-67,* exhibited at the Tate in 1987 (cat. no. 46), is another remarkable "non-subject" (described by the *Athenaeum* reviewer as "a hollow bank of rich orange sand, masses of furze and fern, a fringe of darker woods" (cat., p. 58).


53. The Dorchester drawing, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, was not sold during Boyce’s lifetime (it was part of the Boyce sale at Christie’s in 1897). Someone (Boyce himself?) seems to have simply tacked it up; it has holes in the four corners and the center!
CHAPTER IV

By the late 1860s Boyce had a solid reputation as a landscape watercolorist. He had been made an Associate of the Old Water-Colour Society in 1864 and, although he would not be made a full member until 1878 (a delay which became "a matter of embarrassed comment amongst those who knew him"), Boyce was a steady exhibitor with the society and one of its leaders.¹ Boyce generally enjoyed good reviews, especially during the years that his friend F. G. Stephens was art critic for the Athenaeum.² At least once Boyce did receive an unfavorable review, a notice in the Illustrated London News, which referred to Evening Sketch on the Thames as "a hideous vista of tarred sunken piles; a purposeless record of unmitigated ugliness, unsusceptible of possible moral or pathos as devoid of beauty."³ But Boyce took the review in good part, calling it in his diary "an amusingly abusive and spiteful paragraph" (p. 48). (Indeed the review condemns almost all current English watercolor landscapes as "weak" and "superficial," citing the insidious influence of Ruskin.)⁴ By and large Boyce's work was well received, although he was never satisfied with it, for "he had the artistic temperament in excess which is always in the throes with the shortcomings of its performance, and almost despairing of anything better."⁵

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Around 1870 Boyce's work became quieter, simpler, and less adventurous. *A Street Corner at Ludlow, 1872,* is representative of this final period [fig. 52]. It is a view of a narrow street in a midland town, down which a single figure walks. The view is oblique, not head-on, and it does seem to be the back of the house we see, but the composition is more balanced and conventional than Boyce's work of the 1860s. The left-hand side of the composition contains a fragment of a building which serves, with the wall and tree on the right, to frame the view almost like a traditional *coulisse.* The effect is not unsettling, as in some of the earlier work of Boyce, but quiet. The reviewer for the *Art Journal* observed that "it invites attraction by its peculiarities, which refer immediately to the Dutch school. It may be considered that the artist has been sitting at the feet of Peter Neefs or some similarly renowned Dutchman." The style of *Street Corner* promotes this quietness: continuing the trend seen in the drawings of the late 1860s, Boyce uses warm, mild colors of green, tan, and brown, suggesting the weathered mellowness of old brick and stone. The handling of the watercolor, compared with the tight, meticulous mode of the "Pre-Raphaelite" drawings of the late 1850s and 1860s, is relaxed and free.

It is possible to see a slackening of power in the work of Boyce's last twenty years of production. The
health of the artist deteriorated: having contracted a serious case of typhoid fever in 1868, he suffered continual relapses of the illness which, as Arthur Street put it, "robbed him of the buoyancy and elasticity of early days" (p. 5). Yet it is also possible to see a new harmony in the late work, a balance of spirit. In 1870 Boyce moved into a new house in Chelsea designed for him by his good friend Philip Webb. The house seems to have expressed his very self.

Such as he was, uniting to a mind of real and extensive culture a nature fresh and simple as the things in which he took delight, full of generous pity for the oppressed, . . . modest as regarded his own attainments, full of enthusiasm for the work of others, indulging an amiable Quixotism, it may be, with a half smile at his own weakness or temerity, he had expressed himself exactly and exhaustively in the house which Mr. Philip Webb built for him. . . . Without extravagance he had made his rooms a delight to the eye, an oasis where the vulgar and blatant were unknown."

Then, in 1875, Boyce married a young Frenchwoman Caroline Soubeiran. He had met her in Ludlow in November of 1872, according to the Diaries (p. 55), and although Boyce records little about her or their courtship, which involved long separations, he does describe a climactic reunion at which he was in "a most painful state of mind" (p. 63). The next day Boyce records how he "saw Caroline, and after a while was prompted by some good angel or some divine influence within me, to plight my troth to her
again. Having done so, felt, almost as by a miracle, happier and better" (p. 63).

During this final period Boyce continued his peregrinations around England and, once again, France. His main interest seems to have been old buildings. He had always loved old things ("This passion for things old," said Street, "not only because of the poetry which clothes age, but because of a simplicity, a refinement, almost a reserve, which is nearly always an integral part of them, pervaded Boyce’s whole life, and was the index to his character" [p. 6]). Perhaps his abiding interest in ancient architecture was given sharper focus now by the formation in 1872 of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. The society was organized by William Morris, Philip Webb and others to oppose the highhanded methods of Sir Gilbert Scott, who strove to restore England’s historic buildings to their "pure" state, often the Norman style. It came to be known as "Anti-Scrape" because of its opposition to Scott’s practice of scraping the weathering off the stonework of churches, leaving them smooth and without character. Boyce was a leading member of Anti-Scrape; some of the early meetings were held in his home.

Boyce’s work memorialized old architecture. The obituary by F. G. Stephens commends Boyce’s Chapel of Edward the Confessor, 1852-73 [fig. 21], for showing the
beauty of the Abbey interior "before it was degraded by Sir Gilbert Scott" (p. 221). Philip Webb told Boyce in a letter, with regard to Ancient Tithe-Barn and Farm Buildings near Bradford-on-Avon, 1878 (cat. no. 57), "You have left for future generations an historic representation of what the Architects and others had not then destroyed, but will soon do so." Though Boyce says almost nothing in his diary about his intentions as an artist, one wry remark suggests that he saw his work as at least a small weapon in the fight against new architecture as well: "June 20 [1872]. Called upon Mr. Robson and Mr. J. J. Stevenson about the proposed School Board school next door to me. Mr. Stevenson produced my 'Back of an Old House, Dorchester' drawing, which seemed to be in his office for the sake of making people who would otherwise prefer purple slates on drab stocks and cement and thin window bars and plate glass, swallow red tiles and red brick and thick window bars" (pp. 54-55).

Four representative pictures from this final period are in the collection of Michael Harvey, great-grandson of Boyce's brother Matthias. It is in fact through Harvey's efforts that the 1987 Tate exhibition came about. A Street Corner in Ludlow belongs to Mr. Harvey. So does Church and Ancient Uninhibited House at Ludlow, 1871-72 [fig. 53], perhaps Boyce's strongest composition of this period. In a manner recalling Champ's Cottage [fig. 40],
the artist takes a squirrel's-eye view of a half-timbered Tudor house which almost fills the picture space. The composition focuses on an apparently ordinary scene—anonymous women hanging laundry—while a grand subject, the church, is subordinated to the background. Yet the colors are much softer in the Ludlow drawing than in Champ's Cottage, which featured grass of an intense blue-green. Apart from the high contrast offered by the house's dark half-timbering, the House at Ludlow has a mellow granular quality which, again, is quiet.

Two other drawings in Mr. Harvey's collection illustrate the harmonious mildness of the final period. Aydon Castle, Northumberland, July, 1869, is simply a sketch of the old structure. The colors are soft browns and greens, with touches of rose, applied in a loose, dappled manner [fig. 54]. (Cf. fig. 55, Catterlen Hall, Cumberland, 1884, a more elaborate drawing in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, which has a similar subject and style.)

More interesting is an undated work, In the Auvergne. From a point on the side of a hill the viewer looks down into a valley. The colors—purples, green and golds—are mild, the technique loose. Indeed, Harvey, who inherited this picture, expressed the fear that, because it had been hanging in various rooms with ordinary light at least since he was a boy, it had faded. But there is a
similar drawing, also called *In the Auvergne, 1880-81*, at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge [fig. 56]. This version of the scene is stored in a box, away from the light, and its colors, I believe, are equally subdued.\(^{13}\) Mr. Harvey's drawing is a fairly tame view of a valley. The Fitzwilliam version has the more interesting composition, the dark side of the hill in the foreground and the distant pale valley providing a subdued version of the near-far drama of the earlier Boyce and suggesting (as not many drawings in this final period do) a parallel with Hiroshige [fig. 57]. In addition, this picture contains some of Boyce's old wit: there is a road through the valley, and to its right is a row of farm buildings and houses that are scarcely visible at first and seem to emerge from the picture only after prolonged examination. Other Boycean signs of life emerge too: tiny figures walk down the road; there is a bird on the top of the uppermost tree. Such subtlety—for surely it is deliberate—is furthered by the technique of stippling Boyce developed in this last twenty years. The color, which seems to be transparent watercolor, is laid down in separate little spots, dots on the hill and dashes in the valley. The method has affinities with divisionism, although it would be three or four years before Georges Seurat would use this technique. In any case there is no evidence of any contract between Boyce and the French avant-garde.\(^{14}\) Nor
is the technique necessarily original with Boyce: as far back as Thomas Girtin English watercolorists had used broken colors; his old mentor David Cox had used separate spots of color in mosaic-like patterns, and of course John Constable fully explored such *floquetage*.\(^\text{15}\)

In any case *In the Auvergne* achieves a "harmonisation of elements," according to Christopher Newall, who admires these last pictures.\(^\text{16}\) The Fitzwilliam version has a quintessential Boyce subject: a deceptively "empty" landscape which yet contains many signs of life. The buildings in the landscape are the old rambling structures Boyce always loved. The human figures, barely visible at first, belong completely to this world. But the technique is not striking: one is no longer tempted to talk first about the "bright color" and the "meticulous detail," both of which Boyce employed with the skill of a virtuoso in his so-called "Pre-Raphaelite" phase. He had adopted these techniques from the Pre-Raphaelites and their theoretician Ruskin, although he never duplicated their obsessively slow open-air methods or invested his works with their moral fervor.

Boyce derived his initial inspiration from the great romantic watercolorists—Cox, Girtin, and Turner. It is the use of light and color, the enlivening spirit, which gives interest to his drawings, not their topographical accuracy. Then, by 1857, Boyce became aware of Japanese
prints. His work shows new subjects—old buildings along the Thames, river scenes, even some "empty" landscapes, the last of which have no precedent in English landscape watercolor but, like river scenes, are commonplaces in the Japanese art just beginning its vogue in London and Paris. The stylistic changes observable in this period—the oblique views, the screens of trees, with the trees often cropped—are also common in Japanese prints. Boyce was an enthusiastic, gregarious person, as the Diaries show, but he endured an underlying melancholy which seems to be a mainspring of his art. He refers to himself in a letter as an "artist rambler" (Diaries, p. 15). He began in the tradition of English watercolor art, going to North Wales for subjects other artists pointed out; he ended with places nobody went but himself, "lovely lonely places."¹⁷

In these final works technique and subject are in harmony, as in Port Neuve at Vézelay, Burgundy, from Outside the Walls, 1878-79 [fig. 58]. The repose to the spirit that the contemplation of landscape can offer has been a primary goal of landscape art (except in the most narrowly topographical works) from its beginnings, whether the Western tradition so imbued with the Italianate ideas of Claude or the Eastern tradition to which Boyce was exposed by means of Japanese prints. It is to be hoped that in such harmonious landscapes as Port Neuve Boyce found, as perhaps he did in life itself, safe harbor from
his "sea of unaccountable and indefinite longings and regrets."
NOTES

1. Newall, intro. to cat., 28. See also Street, 8.

2. See Diaries. Boyce's first great success seems to have been in 1854 with Anstey Cove (untraced), which evoked an enthusiastic review from Coventry Patmore (pp. 12, 75-76). In an 1857 letter to William Allingham Boyce wrote, "I am very glad that 'Anstis [stet.] Cove' continues to please. It is so much more than I dare to hope for my drawings in general" (quoted in Diaries, p. 16). Boyce was also favorably reviewed by Ruskin (pp. 22-23).

The exhibition catalogue quotes liberally from the Athenaeum reviews and the Art Journal. The introduction by Newall discusses their generally favorable tone and the effort of the critics to explain "the strange quality with which he invested the landscape" (p. 26).

3. Illustrated London News (5 December 1868), 551. It is not clear what drawing this Evening Sketch is (it would not seem to be fig. 38).

4. Ibid.

5. Street, 7.

6. Quoted in cat., p. 60. Perhaps, it is the quiet quality of these late works that led the Athenaeum's critic (presumably F. G. Stephens) to call Boyce's pictures "quakerish" (quoted in cat., p. 62).

7. Street, 6.


9. Diaries, note 9, p. 112. See also Newall, intro. to cat., 18.


11. In a conversation with the author in London July 24, 1991, Harvey explained that few works by Boyce were in public collections: most had been bought by family members at the Boyce sale at Christie's in 1897. Harvey contacted many of the present owners (using, among other means, an advertisement in Country Life) and was able to trace about one hundred works.

13. The provenance of this second Auvergne is, interestingly, Harvey's great-grandfather Matthias Boyce.

14. Boyce spent time in Paris as a student in the early 1840s and then in 1856 for treatment for the injury in Switzerland (see Newall, intro. to cat., 10, and Diaries, 15). There is no record of his meeting other artists, though.


17. K. Clark, 10, and passim. See also Ch. III, note 50 above.
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John Robert Cozens. View in the Isle of Elba, 1780?
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