

Would these lines, one wonders, have been written if Vitruvius had not set the precedent by his distinction of three types of scenes, which became three recognized types of scenery?

For the academic conventions of art, however arbitrary and illogical they may have been, were not only pedantic rules made to cramp the imagination and to blunt the sensibility of genius; they provided the syntax of a language without which expression would have been impossible. It was precisely an art such as landscape painting which lacked the fixed framework of a traditional subject-matter, that needed for its development some pre-existing mould into which the artist could pour his ideas. What had begun as fortuitous modes crystallized into recognizable moods, strains of sentiment which could be touched upon at will. The history of music provides the best parallel for the importance of such a framework for the development of a language. The dance forms of various social strata, for instance, became the vehicles of expression for absolute music. The relatively fixed sequence of moods in the sonata form that grew out of the dance suite proved an inspiration rather than a hindrance to the great masters.

It may be worth recalling that in the very years when Beethoven published his *Sinfonia Eroica* and his *Sinfonia Pastorale*, Turner was preparing the hundred plates of his *Liber Studiorum*. Each of its landscape compositions bore a letter referring to the category into which it fitted—H. standing for Historical, Ms. for Mountainous, P. for Pastoral (Fig. 153), E.P. for Elevated Pastoral (Fig. 152). Ma. for Marine and A. for Architectural. This attempted 'classification of the various styles of landscape' as the prospectus put it,⁶⁴ may not have been much more consistent than Lomazzo's system some two hundred and thirty years earlier. And yet it was no empty game.⁶⁵ The *Liber Studiorum* was meant as a deliberate challenge to the English facsimile edition of Claude's *Liber Veritatis*, in the preface of which Turner could read that Claude 'has not, indeed, in any sort composed in the heroic stile of landscape . . . his stile is altogether the rural stile'.⁶⁶ For Turner the way of progress beyond Claude went through a multiplication of categories to embrace more and more aspects of nature. It was to be the last attempt of this kind, for by that time the emotive associations were so firmly imprinted on the face of Nature that no letters, labels or categories were needed. But does not even Constable's struggle for the naïve vision derive its ethos and its pathos from the weight of tradition which had become his heritage?⁶⁷