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Art Imitates Nature?: The Role of the Environment in the Works of John Constable (1776–1837)

C.A.M. Dalmijn
Master Art, Architecture, and Interior before 1800

Abstract: In recent times, climate awareness has become one of the most dominant elements in our society's conscience, and protest groups try everything to get attention for the ongoing climate crisis. The British painter John Constable (1776–1837) also lived in a period when the world was experiencing great changes due to the British Industrial Revolution. All over the country, major urbanisation was taking place, radically changing the relationship between man and nature. As we will see in this paper, Constable was greatly influenced by a growing awareness of the environment and the climate, as well as the growth of the discipline of meteorology. In his works, he made specific choices about his depiction of the weather and, in doing so, changed the British school of landscape painting forever.

Keywords: John Constable, British Art, Landscape Painting, Environmental Art, Meteorology, Romanticism

Introduction

On 4 July 2022, two climate protestors of Just Stop Oil glued themselves to *The Hay Wain* (1821) by John Constable (1776–1837) in the National Gallery in London.[1] Additionally, they covered the painting with an edited photo of the artwork, whilst calling out that we could forget our "green and pleasant land". The activists did so to get attention for the world's climate crisis. But where these protestors used Constable's art for their message on climate change, the painter himself used the concept of climate to his own advantage to strengthen his art works. During Constable's life, the world around him was rapidly changing. In 1821, the British Industrial Revolution was coming to an end, and people saw themselves waking up in a world that would never be the same again. This also meant a great change in the lives of the British working class, who thus far mostly were employed as farmers. Due to the Industrial Revolution, major urbanisation took place all over Britain, and the relationship between man and nature had changed inevitably.[2]

Constable was influenced by 17th-century Dutch and French painters like Jacob van Ruysdael (1628–1682), Aelbert Cuyp (1620–1691), and Claude Lorrain (1600–1682) and

[1] Gayle, "Climate Protestors."
[2] As an example, the population of Manchester grew from 10,000 people in 1717 to more than 300,000 people in 1851, mostly thanks to its blooming textile industry; H.B. Rodgers, "Manchester."

developed a unique style in his depiction of the English landscape.[3] His style was very different from the traditionalist academy school of the 18th century and Constable would become one of the most famous and influential British landscape painters.[4] This article aims to gain a better understanding of the way Constable employed nature in his landscapes by answering the question what role the weather conditions played in his work. For this, Constable's painting *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows*, on which he started working in 1830, will be used as a case-study [Fig. 1].

Figure 1. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows,* 1830–1831, oil on canvas, 153.7 x 192.0 cm. London, Tate Britain, inv.no. T13896. Wikimedia, public domain.

In doing so, we want to discuss whether the weather conditions in his paintings are merely a recording of what he witnessed himself at the moment, or that he specifically chose these conditions, and to what extent these artistic decisions change the meaning of his artworks. In the first part of this article, we will look at some of Constable's predecessors to be able to put Constable's works into context. After this, we will discuss his depiction of Salisbury Cathedral and look at Constable's view of nature and artistic production. Lastly, we will relate his works to wider contexts of Romanticism and the sublime.

Constable's oil paintings have been discussed extensively in scholarly literature. Some of the most important scholars on Constable include Beckett, Lambert, Peacock, Cormack, Parris and Fleming-Williams. We can see a growing interest for Constable's sketches and watercolours ever since the 1976 exhibition in the Tate Gallery.[5] Since then, curators seem to pay more attention to the preliminary sketches that he made for his paintings, as illustrated by

[3] Peacock, *John Constable*, 16; Clark, *Landscape into Art*, 147.
[4] For an explanation of this influence, see; Plomp, "John Constable en de oude meesters," 55–59.
[5] Parris, Fleming-Williams, and Shields, *Constable.*

the catalogue of the 2020 exhibition in the Teylers Museum.[6] Lastly, some of the most important articles dealing with Constable and the environment have been written by Kroeber and Robbins.[7] However, Constable's cloud studies and works have so far either been discussed within the context of Romanticism or with a focus on his scientific approach, but no author thus far has combined the two. This article therefore aims to fill this gap in the academic discourse on Constable.

Nature in the Works of Constable's Predecessors

Before trying to understand the use of nature by Constable, we should take a quick detour to look at the landscape paintings that were produced by the painters in the century before Constable. One of the most well-known British painters of the 18th century was Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), founder of the Royal Academy of Arts. Reynolds is mostly known for his portraits that are situated within the calm British countryside, such as his *Portrait of Mrs. Elisha Mathew* (1777), in which Mathew is shown in a generic landscape with no striking characteristics, possibly her own estate, and below a sky showing neutral weather conditions [Fig. 2]. Another great example of the 18th-century depiction of the British landscape is the painting *Mr and Mrs Andrews* (c. 1750) by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) [Fig. 3]. This work depicts a wealthy couple in a landscape that is very typical for the Georgian era.[8]

To make a closer comparison to Constable's work, we should also look at the autonomous depiction of the landscape without being a part of a family portrait. We can, for instance, look at the Welsh artist Richard Wilson (1713–1782), who was influenced by the Italianate style of Lorrain.[9] His painting *View of Syon House across the Thames* (c. 1760–1770) shows a country house in a calm, idyllic landscape [Fig. 4].[10] The sky, as in most of Wilson's other works, is clear and the weather is very sunny. The focus in this work is clearly on the house, lit beautifully by sunlight. In contrast to Constable's work, as we will see, the clouds in Wilson's work serve mostly as a background, while not attracting the attention of the viewer.

In Constable's youth, landscape painting was not as appreciated as it is nowadays. It was not seen as a steady source of income, especially when it was focussing on nature itself. Joseph Farington (1747–1821), pupil of Wilson, wrote in 1799 that "portrait painting undoubtedly offers more certain employ than any other branch (…) there is a sort of Landscape *Portrait* Painting by which a good deal of money is got (…) but where the picture will only be purchased for its intrinsic merit few will be found to command an income."[11] With "landscape portrait painting" Farington refers to the kind of paintings that were discussed above. Because of the limited popularity of landscapes, Constable also worked on portraits and even religious works to secure himself an income.[12]

[6] Shields, Bower, Plomp, and Druten, *John Constable.*
[7] Kroeber, "Constable and Wordsworth," 377–386; Robbins, "John Constable," 50–76.
[8] Lambert, *John Constable,* 185–187.
[9] Lorrain travelled to Italy as well and is known to be one of the first painters who was deeply influenced by the Mediterranean climate and light. For more information, see; Tuyll van Serooskerken, "Claude Lorrain," 16–27.
[10] For more information on Wilson, see; Postle and Simon, *Richard Wilson;* Lambert, *John Constable,* 188.
[11] Diary Joseph Farington, entry 6 January 1799; Garlick and Macintyre, *The Diary of Joseph Farington* IV, 1129; Peacock, *John Constable,* 18.
[12] Shields, "Constable and his Critics," 13.

Figure 2. Joshua Reynolds, Portrait of Mrs. Elisha Mathew, 1777, oil on canvas, 146,3 x 237,5 cm. Houston, Texas, Museum of Fine Arts, inv. no. 89.253. Wikimedia, public domain.

Figure 3. Thomas Gainsborough, Mr and Mrs Andrews, between 1748 and 1750, oil on canvas, 69.8 x 119.4 cm. London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG6391. Wikimedia, public domain.

Figure 4. Richard Wilson, View of Syon House across the Thames near Kew Gardens, c. 1760–1770, oil on canvas, 103.5 x 139 cm. München, Neue Pinakothek, inv. no. 14559. © Neue Pinakothek, CC BY-SA 4.0. https://www.sammlung.pinakothek.de/en/artwork/apG90mJLZn

Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows (1831)

Before taking a closer look at the methodology of Constable, it is useful to further introduce our case-study, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows.* One can immediately see that this painting strongly diverges from the style of landscape painting that was popular in Constable's youth.[13] Though Salisbury Cathedral is located central in the composition, the threatening clouds almost make the church disappear into the background. Meanwhile, the viewer's attention is caught by the dark sky, rough nature, and the struggle of the farmer and his horses against the water in the meadow. It shows the battle of man against nature, and God right in the middle of it all. The painting, however, is not completely disheartening, as the rainbow above the church takes the viewer's eye to the lighter part of the sky on the right and gives us hope for a brighter future.

Constable started working on sketches for this painting at the end of his career in 1829 and the painting was first exhibited in 1831 at the Royal Academy [Fig. 5].[14] But he continued to make changes to the work in 1833 and 1834. Constable made several paintings of the church throughout his career, but this version strongly differs from his earlier depictions [Figs. 6-7].[15]

[13] Robbins, "The Aesthetics of Climate," 62.
[14] Parris, Fleming-Williams, and Shields, *Constable*, 164.
[15] For an overview of Constable's depictions of the cathedral, see: Wilcox, *Constable and Salisbury.*

Figure 5. John Constable, Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows, 1829, oil on canvas, 36.5 x 51.1 cm. London, Tate Britain, inv. no. N01814. © Tate, CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0. https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/constable-salisbury-cathedral-from-the-meadows-n01814

Figure 6. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from Lower Marsh Close*, 1820, oil on canvas 73 x 91 cm. Washington, National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, inv. no. 1973.1.108. © National Gallery of Art, Public Domain. https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.115.html

Figure 7. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Ground,* 1823, oil on canvas, 87.6 x 111.8 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum inv. no. FA 33[O]. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O56227/salisbury-cathedral-from-the-bishops-oil-painting-constable-john-ra/

Druten and Reynolds argue that the painting reflects Constable's personal emotions during a hard period in his life. His wife Maria died on 23 November 1828 because of tuberculosis, when she was just 41 years old.[16] His friend John Fisher, later archdeacon of Salisbury Cathedral, advised him to start working on a painting of the cathedral, as he wrote in one of his letters: "some of the finest works of art, and most vigorous exertions of intellect, have been the result of periods of distress".[17] The rainbow in *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* even ends at Fisher's house, probably because of the emotional support given by his friend.[18] Because of this context, as Druten writes, it is not surprising that the interpretation of the painting became connected to Constable's "stormy emotional state after the death of his wife."[19]

Vaughan, however, gives a completely different interpretation, as he relates the painting to the politics of that time. Because, when Constable was working on this painting, the so-called Reform Bill was discussed at parliament and the conservatives were hoping it would not be

[16] Reynolds, *The Later Paintings*, no. 31.1; Van Druten, "Het leven van John Constable," 25; Vaughan, *John Constable*, 63.
[17] Leslie, *Memoires*, 169.
[18] Parris and Fleming-Williams, *Constable*, 367.
[19] "Stormachtige emotionele toestand na de dood van zijn echtgenote:" Druten, "Het leven van John Constable," 26.

passed.[20] Since Constable was a conservative himself, he may have wanted to include his hope through the rainbow that a revolution could still be avoided, according to Vaughan.[21] Although this interpretation seems less likely due to the fact that the rainbow ends at Fisher's house, Vaughan did give us some great insights into the political ideas of Constable and the fact that his work could also convey some of these. Perhaps, Constable also wanted to present the viewer with a realistic and traditional view of the British landscape, instead of the idealised versions of his predecessors.[22]

Constable's Working Method

In addition to the context of the painting, it is useful to get a better idea of Constable's artistic production and work process to understand how his works came into being. Constable was famous for being very perfectionistic, and he often spend years of sketching in both chalk and oil before creating his final version. David Pike Watts, one of his uncles, remarked on this by writing to Constable: "What is any thing *unfinished*? It is as it were *Nothing* because a Thing does not exist as a Whole, that is incomplete."[23] There are even instances known where he annoyed buyers by wanting to make changes to his paintings after selling them.[24] This also explains why more versions are known of some of his paintings and why he continued working on the painting of Salisbury Cathedral in the years after its exhibition.

Constable often created his paintings starting with earlier drawings or oil sketches, that could sometimes even have been made years before.[25] However, this makes it much harder to interpret what works or elements in his works were drawn after life on the spot or based on sketches that were sometimes made years before. Connected to this, Parris notes that "what actually *was* painted on the spot rather than in the studio is one of the largest questions of all" in the oeuvre of Constable.[26] Of Salisbury Cathedral, Constable had made numerous sketches as well, which can mostly be found at the Victoria & Albert Museum nowadays, and some of which were clearly used to make the composition of this painting [Fig. 8].[27] As we have seen, Constable also made a smaller-scaled oil sketch of 36.5 x 51.5 cm for his painting *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* in 1829, before starting on the final version that measures 153.7 x 192 cm [Fig. 5].[28]

[20] The Reform Bill was officially called the Representation of the People Act 1832, and concerned the England's and Wales's electoral system. It introducted major changes, as it gave the right to vote to a much larger part of society. This concerned specific parts of the working-class, such as shopkeepers. Next to that, it put an end to smaller districts and, instead, shifted focus to the larger cities: Phillips and Wetherell, "The Great Reform Bill of 1832," 621–624.
[21] Vaughan, *John Constable*, 65–66.
[22] Thornes, "A Rough Guide to Environmental Art," 397; Robbins, "John Constable," 62.
[23] David Pike Watts to John Constable, 12 April 1810; Beckett, *John Constable's Correspondence* IV, 37.
[24] Parris, "Preface," 10.
[25] Clark, *Landscape into Art*, 150–151; Parris, "Preface," 9.
[26] Parris, "Preface," 10.
[27] Reynolds, *Catalogue of the Constable Collection.*
[28] Cormack, *Constable*, 120–121.

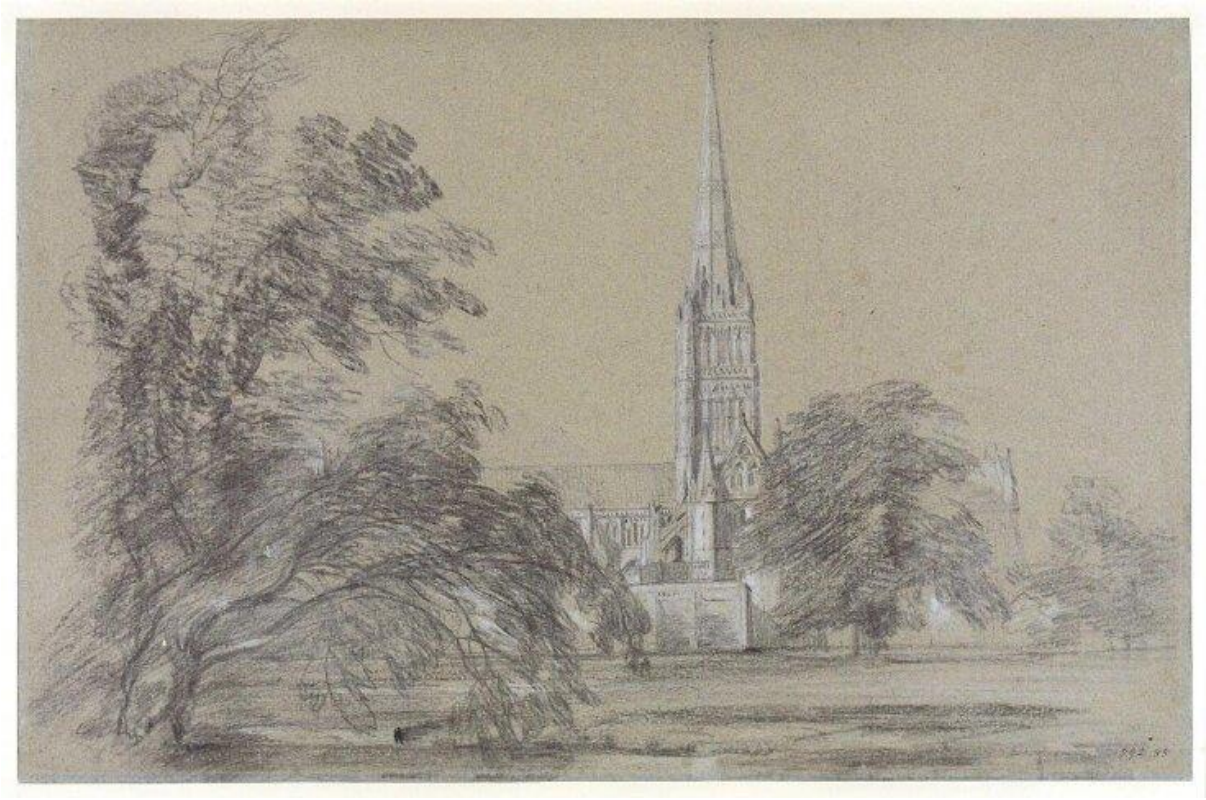

Figure 8. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral: Exterior from the south-west,* 1811, black and white chalk on grey paper, 195 x 299 mm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 292–1888. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O93453/salisbury-cathedral-exterior-from-the-drawing-constable-john-ra/

Even though Constable's paintings seemingly record a real-time view of the British landscape with its bad weather, we can conclude that these dark, cloudy skies were deliberate choices of the painter. Constable's dramatic depiction of the British landscape did not have a bad influence on his popularity. On the contrary, Constable grew to be one of the most famous British landscape painters and his paintings even earned him the title "master of the art of landscape."[29] In his writings, Constable regularly refers to what he calls the "chiaroscuro of nature."[30] With this he meant "the light - dews – breezes – bloom - and freshness; not one of which has yet been perfected on the canvas of any painter in the world."[31] The endeavour to achieve the reproduction of this in his paintings is one of the reasons that his style became so original – and famous. This also explains why his depiction of nature is oftentimes so rigorous and ferocious, using a palette knife to create *impasto* and not evading to use pure white and black paint to realise strong contrasts. We will continue to look at Constable's depiction of nature.

[29] Parris, "Preface," 11.
[30] Beckett, "Introduction to The Letterpress," 5; Clark, *Landscape into Art,* 148; Lambert, *John Constable,* 109–111.
[31] Thornes, *John Constable's Skies*, 153.

Nature in the Oeuvre of Constable

When looking at Constable's broader oeuvre, it becomes clear that he was widely interested in the depiction of nature. One of the things that greatly inspired Constable's passion for landscape was the tours of Derbyshire and the Lake District that he took in 1801 and 1806 respectively.[32] From these, he brought back a lot of sketches and watercolours, and in the years that followed he filled whole sketchbooks with drawings of nature. As mentioned earlier, he was influenced by Dutch and French painters in his rendition of nature. Constable even copied the works by Cuyp that were shown from 1818 in London at the British Institution and other places in England.[33] He was mostly inspired by his depiction of cows and the use of light and colours, commenting on a painting in a letter to George Constable: "a beautifull [sic] representation of a summer's evening – calm, warm, and delicious – the color on the man's face is perfect sunshine."[34] Constable's profound love for nature becomes especially clear in a letter to Fisher from 1826: "I at this moment hear a rook fly over my painting room (…) – his call (…) makes me think for a moment that I am speaking and not writing to you – it reminds me of our happy walks in the fields – so powerful is the voice of Nature."[35]

Constable did not only enjoy the personal experiences he had with nature and the technical challenges that arose when trying to reproduce its beauty, but he also had an intellectual interest in nature. This interest applied to all elements of nature and, as Cormack writes, "trees were always important to him (…) but in his mention of skies we find a further significant development."[36] In 1821 he started working on, what Parris calls, the "pure" sky studies.[37] These were mostly oil paint sketches of skies that he painted outside, often in Hampstead, where he made over 100 studies, such as *Study of Sky and Trees* of 24 September 1821 [Fig. 9].[38] Constable himself referred to this activity as "skying", and often talks about this in his personal documents.[39] To Fisher he wrote: "I am determined to conquer all difficulties and that most arduous one among the rest (…) that landscape painter who does not make his skies a very material part of his composition – neglects to avail himself of one of his greatest aids."[40]

[32] Reynolds, *The Early Paintings*, 186–195. Druten, "Het leven van John Constable," 21.
[33] Evans, "De kracht die ruimte schept," 133–135; Chong, *Aelbert Cuyp,* 366.
[34] John Constable to George Constable, 20 December 1833; Beckett, *Correspondence* V, 15–16.
[35] Peacock, *John Constable,* 26.
[36] Cormack, *Constable*, 133.
[37] Parris, "Preface," 9; Hawes, "Constable's Sky Sketches," 344–365.
[38] Stewart, "The Eye it Cannot Choose," 414–415; Thornes, "Environmental Art," 395.
[39] Cormack, *Constable*, 133–1398.
[40] John Constable to John Fisher, 23 October 1821; Beckett, *Correspondence* VI, 76–77.

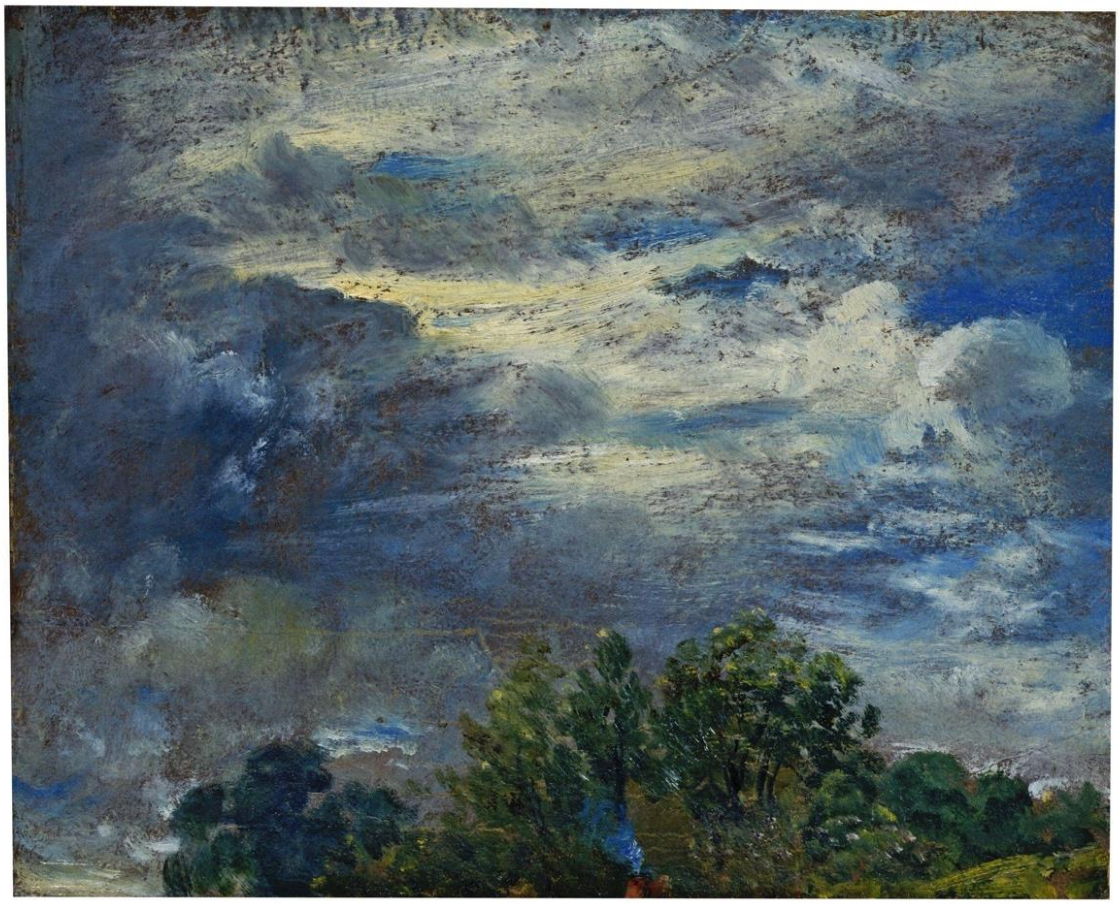

Figure 9. John Constable, Study of Sky and Trees, 1821, oil on paper, 248 x 305 mm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 167-1888. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O73059/study-of-sky-and-trees-oil-painting-constable-john-ra/

His attempt to meticulously record the skies and very structured approach have often even been called scientific. As remarked by Lambert, science in that time was understood differently than it is nowadays, namely as "systematic bodies of knowledge, methodically pursued under the aegis of some sort of theory."[41] With every study, Constable meticulously noted the weather conditions and circumstances of his observation.[42] On the aforementioned study of 1821 in Hampstead, for instance, he wrote on the back "Sepr. 24th. 10 o'clock morning wind S.W. warm & fine till afternoon, when it rained & wind got more to the north". Constable himself said in one of his lectures in 1836: "Painting is a science, and should be pursued as an inquiry into the laws of nature."[43] This was probably influenced by the fact that, at the start of the 19th century, the science of meteorology became very popular in Britain because of the scientist Luke Howard, who published extensively on the weather conditions.[44]

[41] Lambert, John Constable, 55.
[42] For instance: "Sepr. 12. 1821. Noon. Wind fresh at West. Sun very Hot. Looking southward exceedingly bright vivid and Glowing, very heavy showers in the Afternoon but a fine evening. High wind in the night;" taken from: Thornes, "Environmental Art," 395.
[43] Beckett, John Constable's Discourses, 66.
[44] Robbins, "The Aesthetics of Climate," 54–56; Janković, Reading the Skies.

This leaves us with an interesting paradox. Where art is usually seen as a recording of a specific moment and science as a timeless recording of data, Constable combines the two. The weather, an element of painting that is normally based on luck and rather liberal, is carefully recorded and chosen by Constable.[45] Kroeber related the works of Constable to ecology and explained his method as a "vision *into* the life-processes which are the essence of nature, into that which cannot merely be seen but must be felt inwardly and must be understood 'scientifically', that is, appreciated as a complex ecological system of interdependencies."[46] In doing so, Kroeber explains how Constable depicted "the landscape" in his paintings as a scientific system, rather than a mere romantic background. However, we must take into account that the Romanticism of his time still had a great impact on his works.

The Romantic Experience of Nature in the Works of Constable

During Constable's life, Romanticism was at its peak in Europe, and there was a growing interest in the relationship between man and nature, including the inner feelings connected to this. Within this context, clouds were already being associated with certain romantic and emotional experiences. In 1824, for instance, William Hazlitt describes clouds as "that endless airy space, where the eye wanders at liberty."[47] Although most literature discusses Constable's fascination for clouds, his love for nature was much broader. He, for instance was also very passionate about the sea, a passion that he shared with his contemporary and concurrent J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851).[48] He made a lot of sketches of the sea and its beaches near Brighton, and in 1814 he wrote in a letter: "I was always delighted with the melancholy grandeur of a sea shore."[49] This quote illustrates that Constable not only associated clouds with an emotional sensation, but also other elements in nature.

Constable himself also strongly related the medium of painting to emotions, and he even said that "painting is another word for feeling."[50] The contemporary artist and writer William Blake (1757-1827) noted, when looking at one of Constable's sketch books: "why, this is not drawing, but *inspiration.*"[51] Constable was a big admirer of the Romantic poet William Wordsworth who, remarkably, became famous because of his incorporation of nature into his work.[52] He described nature as "a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused; Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns; And the round ocean and the living air; And the blue sky."[53]

The use of nature in Constable's work can also be connected to the 18th century concept of the sublime. Already in the 18th century, Joseph Addison remarks on his trip to the Alps that his surroundings filled him with "an agreeable kind of horror".[54] The concept of the sublime would later be further defined by Edmund Burke when he writes his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas and the Sublime and Beautiful* in 1757. Here, he describes how nature can overwhelm us to such an extent that there is no space for other thoughts of emotions,

[45] Robbins, "The Aesthetics of Climate," 50.
[46] Kroeber, "Constable and Wordsworth," 382.
[47] Hazlitt, Criticism on Art.
[48] Clark, Landscape into Art, 153.
[49] John Constable to Maria Bicknell, 1814; Beckett, Correspondence IV, 127.
[50] Beckett, Correspondence VI, 82.
[51] Peacock, John Constable, 43.
[52] Kroeber, "Constable and Wordsworth," 377–386; Lambert, John Constable, 105–106.
[53] Wordsworth, Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798, line 97–101; published in Wordsworth and Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads, no. 4.
[54] Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, 26.

and even rationality.[55] In his view, the experience is so intense because fear is man's strongest emotion.[56] Lastly, it is important that the viewer himself does not experience any pain himself, which was described by Bullough as the concept of "delightful horror."[57] Painting is an excellent medium to still give us this overwhelming experience of nature, without causing us any pain or discomfort. That's why the concept of the sublime is often applied to paintings by artists like Constable.[58]

Both the general Romantic emphasis on personal experience and Burke's concept of the sublime are easy to recognise in Constable's painting of Salisbury Cathedral, where the dark, looming sky impresses and threatens the viewer, and there enhances the personal experience of the viewer when looking at the painting. Peacock relates the Romantic ideas very eloquently to the work of Constable: "When he paints (…) a view of Salisbury Cathedral he is doing more than depict a particular scene: he is embodying in the picture his personal philosophy which was also the artistic philosophy of the age. (…) Constable was a Romantic. (…) Throughout his life his aim was truth to nature, not truth in the photographic sense as we tend to think of it now, but truth as a kind of dual vision in which the outward forms of nature were seen as imbued with a spiritual significance."[59]

Conclusion

In this article, we have seen that John Constable broke with the English landscape tradition, as he chose to no longer depict idealised versions of landscapes, but presented the viewer with a more realistic and harsher version of nature. In addition to that, he took a structured and scientific approach to studying nature, and especially clouds. Constable often used earlier sketches and studies for his painting and therefore, his works are not views painted after life, but rather views that he constructed by combining different situations that he had encountered before. Our case-study *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* combined three important aspects of Constable's style. First, he depicted a realistic British landscape, showing the suffering farmer and the threatening sky above Salisbury Cathedral, which was a popular landmark at the time. Secondly, the painting is thought to convey his personal ideas and emotions, because he befriended the later Archdeacon of Salisbury Cathedral, and the painting was made during the hard period in his life following the death of his wife. Lastly, Constable shows his interest in studying and depicting the nature that surrounded him, by employing what he called *chiaroscuro* and basing the painting on cloud studies.

Using this information, we can now return to the central question of this article, namely what role the weather conditions played in Constable's work. We can conclude that Constable's work can be seen as a realistic, almost scientific rendering of nature, combined with a romantic notion and a profound understanding of the effect of his works on the viewer, in line with the Romantic notion of the sublime. By choosing specific weather conditions, Constable tried to evoke an emotional reaction on the side of the viewer and enhance their interaction with the painting. Therefore, Constable not only depicted the visual elements of the British landscape, but also captured the sensations and deeper meanings attached to it, and the weather conditions were an essential element to convey the message of his paintings to the audience.

[55] Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 39 and 53.
[56] Ryan, "The Psychological Sublime," 275.
[57] Bullough, "Physical Distance," 87–88.
[58] For the sublime in the work of Constable and his contemporaries, see: Plumly, *Elegy Landscapes.*
[59] Peacock, *John Constable,* 41.

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Credits illustrations Constable

1. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows,* 1830–1831, oil on canvas, 153.7 x 192.0 cm. London, Tate Britain, inv.no. T13896. Source: Tate Britain. Copyright: replaced by Wikimedia
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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joshua_Reynolds_-_Portrait_of_Mrs_Elisha_Matthew,_1777.jpg

3. Thomas Gainsborough, *Mr and Mrs Andrews,* between 1748 and 1750, oil on canvas, 69.8 x 119.4 cm. London, National Gallery, inv. no. NG6391. Source: wikimedia.com. PD
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_Gainsborough_-_Mr_and_Mrs_Andrews.jpg

4. Richard Wilson, *View of Syon House across the Thames near Kew Gardens,* c. 1760-1770, oil on canvas, 103.5 x 139 cm. München, Neue Pinakothek, inv. no. 14559. Source: Neue Pinakothek. Creative Commons
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5. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows,* 1829, oil on canvas, 36.5 x 51.5 cm. London, Tate Britain, inv. no. N01814. Source: Tate Britain. Copyright? Or CC 3.0
https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/constable-salisbury-cathedral-from-the-meadows-n01814

6. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from Lower Marsh Close,* 1820, oil on canvas 73 x 91 cm. Washington, National Gallery of Art, inv. no. 1973.1.108. Source: National Gallery of Art. CC
https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.115.html

7. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Ground,* 1823, oil on canvas, 87.6 x 111.8 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum inv. no. FA 33[O]. Source: V&A. PD
https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O56227/salisbury-cathedral-from-the-bishops-oil-painting-constable-john-ra/

8. John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral: Exterior from the south-west,* 1811, black and white chalk on grey paper, 195 x 299 mm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 292-1888. Source: V&A.
https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O93453/salisbury-cathedral-exterior-from-the-drawing-constable-john-ra/

9. John Constable, *Study of Sky and Trees*, 1821, oil on paper, 248 x 305 mm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, inv. no. 167-1888. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O73059/study-of-sky-and-trees-oil-painting-constable-john-ra/

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