

ART HISTORY RESEARCH PAPER

TURNER AND ROTHKO: SUBLIME ROMANTICS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"Indistinctness is my forte" Turner replied to a complaint about the sails in his painting, "Peace-Burial at Sea" (1841).<sup>1</sup> Indistinctness was most apparent in Turner's late works which increasingly baffled the public and the critics due to their unprecedented atmospheric vagueness. To Turner's contemporaries, his artistic vision was seen as a loss of form; a kind of blurred chaos. Yet, from his treatment of form emerged a new concept of atmospheric light and process. The mid-nineteenth century was a time when the general trend of artistic taste veered toward a descriptive realism. It was over one hundred years later at the retrospective exhibit of Turner's work in 1966 at the Museum of Modern Art that Mark Rothko complimented Turner's indistinctness. When questioned about the similarity between his overflowing atmospheric light and Turner's, Rothko responded: "Turner stole from me."<sup>2</sup>

This response reflects one of many similarities between the two artists. Both artists had romantic aspirations. J.M.W. Turner, an English landscapist of the early nineteenth century, was classified as a Romantic.

His works expressed the stylistic and aesthetic concerns of Romanticism, the prevalent movement during his time. Mark Rothko was a twentieth century American painter and has been identified with Abstract Expressionism. Yet his works convey a romantic spirit reminiscent of the nineteenth century genre.

In the early 1940's, Harold Rosenberg and Robert Motherwell made a statement that could have been written about either Turner or Rothko:

. . .through a conversion of energy something valid must come out, whatever situation one is forced to begin with. . . if one is to continue to paint or to write as the political trap seems to close upon him he must perhaps have the extremist faith in sheer possibilities. . .<sup>3</sup>

The idea that something significant might come out of what is realistically hopeless is reflected in both Turner's and Rothko's ambivalence toward their lives and their work. Their attraction to tragedy and their failure to accept human emotions is a particularly romantic aspect of their success. Though living one hundred years apart, Turner and Rothko painted in similar political, social and philosophical atmospheres. Both artists dealt with the fundamentals of the human condition; the imminence of death, the nature of sexual attraction, the significance of procreation and the disturbing feelings of fear, loneliness and mental anguish.

Early in his artistic career, Turner had a pre-occupation with the destructive energies of nature, most often manifested in fire and storm. The images of horror such as fire and storm, and those of light and color became the essence of his art and were embodied in the romantic emotions he wished to communicate. Fire and storm conveyed his sense of the insignificance of man in the face of the immensity and destructiveness of nature. Light and color were instruments which helped create an impact and which transported the viewer to the realm of the sublime.

Turner understood the unity of light and color. His magical use of color conjured up visions of sumptuous iridescence, creating images of earth, air, water and wind which are romantic elements.

Mark Rothko expressed similar romantic notions a century later:

. . . I'm interested only in expressing the basic human emotions--tragedy, ecstasy, doom and so on--and the fact that lots of people break down and cry when confronted with my pictures shows that I communicate with those basic human emotions. The people who weep before my pictures are having the same religious experiences I had when I painted them.<sup>4</sup>

Rothko, like Turner, turned to basic human emotions for inspiration. His works transcended the real world and reached a more mystical level. Rothko's expressionistic and symbolic application of color was a sensibility that neither his contemporaries nor the younger generation of

color field painters were able to approach. Rothko's color represented something larger than its own sheer physical presence. He came to think of color as the doorway to another reality; the sublime.

This paper will be an examination of the similarities between Turner and Rothko, particularly their expression of the sublime. The first chapter will examine the personalities of Turner and Rothko; the psychological, emotional and environmental forces that affected their perception. The second chapter will be a discussion of similar romantic elements in both artist's works. The definition of "the sublime" and an examination of sublime motifs in their work will be addressed in the third chapter. The final chapter will focus in detail upon the concept of "sublime light" and its presence in the works of both Turner and Rothko.



## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Joseph Mallard William Turner was born in 1775, the eldest son of a barber. His home life was not a happy one due to his mother's manic fits of anger, a condition which degenerated into insanity. She had to be put in Bethlehem Hospital in 1800, and died in a private asylum in 1804. Turner's sister, Mary Ann, died at the young age of eight when Turner was eleven. The slow disintegration of the family unit, that ended with his father's death in 1829, encouraged Turner to leave his father's barbershop in Maiden Lane. He took up residence with a widow, actress Sara Darby, and her four children. Turner continued to have affairs with other widows throughout his life.

Clues to his youthful personality are found in his sketchbooks dated 1808-1812. Jack Lindsay interpreted the books:

We see that he was unhappy in love, and felt crushed and outcast as a result of the bitter campaign led against him by the connoisseurs. He had lost all certainties with which he began doubting the role of Britain and moving to the position that unrealized conflicts undermined men's heroic endeavours; and he was desparately seeking to clarify his mind on aesthetic issues and achieve the power of defiantly standing along.<sup>6</sup>

He began his artistic career as a watercolorist by trade. Growing up in London, Turner was well acquainted with rigged shops and the play of light seen through the customary mist and fog. Topographical landscape emerged into a romantically wild, picturesque, ruinous or historical scene. A school of topographical watercolor painting developed as a result of the new found interest in the historical and the architectural remains of the medieval past, which had previously been regarded as barbarious. These paintings were tinted in watercolor, but had well-defined contour lines. Turner responded to the demand for these paintings illustrating archeological publications and albums of picturesque ruins. In pursuit of these subjects, Turner would cover twenty five miles a day.

In the first part of Turner's career, he was confined to the hills and valleys of Britain for visual inspiration. It was not until 1802 when the treaty of Armiens was signed putting a temporary end to the war between England and France, that Turner travelled outside of his homeland. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Turner travelled to Europe on two difference occassions. His first trip in 1802 was to the Swiss Alps. Later, Turner spent some time in the Louvre where Napoleon had installed his booty of art works brought back from Italy. It was here that Turner studied Poussin's powerful and massive ordering of forms. He also profited by the examples of Claude Lorraine in his treatment of atmospheric light.

In 1819, Turner made his second visit to the continent and made his way to Italy. This visit marked a significant turning point in the art of Turner. It happened almost exactly halfway in his professional career. Italy's subtle, harmonious atmosphere, which wrapped everything in mist, jolted Turner's atmospheric perception. At Venice he found freedom of space, brilliance of light, variety of color and simplicity of form.

The years 1828-1830 were critical in Turner's life. The death of his father was followed closely by the deaths of his most appreciative patrons, Walter Fawkes and Sir John Leiceston.<sup>7</sup> It was a time when Turner experimented with a range of styles and subjects, revealing his spiritual upheaval. Prior to this time, Turner had rendered tight and literal forms such as those seen in his "history paintings" ("The Fifth Plague", Illustration 1).

In the first half of his artistic career, Turner absorbed the significant trends current in the contemporary art world. He steadily assimilated the forms to be found in topography, the surviving elements of Roccoco, the content of eighteenth century poets and the art of Gainsborough, Wilson, Poussin, and Claude. Turner's driving force was enhanced by his anguish at home, and was overshadowed constantly by the incalculable rages of his mother. Art became for Turner a refuge in which he could feel safe. His need to seek romantic excitement was

linked to his love for all active manifestations of nature--wind, water, earth and light.

One hundred years later another visionary artist resumed where Turner left off. At the turn of the century the world's largest ghetto was the Russian Pale of Settlement. This vast area was the home of five million Jews. Dvinsk, the largest city of the province Vitelisk, was the scene of rape and rampage by the Czar's soldiers. Between 1902 and 1906, thousands of Jews in other cities of the Pale were slaughtered. It was during this period that Marcus Rothkowitz (Mark Rothko) was born to Jacob and Anna Golden Rothkowitz. The Rothkowitz's were part of an influx of two million Russian refugees, who managed to escape the Czar's atrocities and emigrate to America. They travelled to Portland, Oregon in 1913 where Mark spent his childhood. Three years later, Jacob Rothkowitz died.

As an adult, Rothko complained that he had never had the time for childhood's carefree pastimes and he had never learned how to play.<sup>8</sup> In the fall of 1921, Rothko attended Yale University. Rothko quit college shortly thereafter and enrolled briefly at the Arts League where he studied under Max Weber. Like Turner, Rothko always referred to himself as self taught. Although Rothko continued to make frequent visits to Portland during the twenties, he returned to New York for good in 1925. Rothko was preoccupied with social and political matters during

the twenties. His works were conventional but sensitive urban scenes. They reflected the realist trend dominant in American art of the time that had little to do with the revolution in painting taking place in Europe.

This trend continued well into the thirties. The majority of American painters concerned themselves with depicting the poverty and the disillusionment of the downtrodden urban masses. Everyday reality was the subject of artistic comment. Rothko's city scenes of the thirties were characterized by flat shapes of subtle color. Immobile figures were isolated and without contact. Rothko began outdoors with landscapes and scenes of bathers, but soon moved inside to subway stations and apartment rooms. In the painting "The Subway" (Illustration 2), the figure appears attenuated, almost disappearing into the vertical-horizontal patterns of the columns, platforms and walls. It was not until the late thirties that American painters turned toward the artistic trends developing in Europe. This came about for two significant reasons.

In 1939, streams of refugees poured into New York, and with the fall of Paris in 1940, Manhattan became the adopted cultural capital for the many artists, writers and musicians who had emigrated. Of all the artists in exile in New York, the Surrealists were the most influential. Personal contact with the Surrealists gave American artists the freedom and challenge they needed to cut the cord

binding them to a provincial American art. With Surrealist influences from Matta, Masson, de Chirico, and Max Ernst, Rothko abandoned his urban landscapes and subway interiors. He plunged into a new genre using idealized Greek gods, goddesses and archaic symbols as themes in his paintings. The world he depicted had a watery effect. It set up a background from which forms evolved. The painting "Slow Swirl at the Edge" (Illustration 3) sums up many of Rothko's concerns. Four hybrid figures rise out of a landscape-like zone at the bottom of the painting. They undergo many changes of shape and character as they merge and reemerge from the background. The "swirl" in the title refers to the rotation of these forms and other signs of energy.

A second significant event that spurred American artists forward was the creation of the Work Projects Administration. For Rothko and other progressive artists, the W.P.A. produced more than a paycheck and a reason for painting; it fostered a new unity. A spirit of comradeship developed among the painters during this period. Rothko would meet and converse about aesthetics and politics with Adolf Gottlieb, Milton Avery, Wilhelm de Kooning, Jackson Pollack and Arshile Gorky. This group spoke out against the art establishment and political, literal American painting.

In the mid forties, his drawing diminished in favor of shapes. Rothko no longer needed line to create form to express energy. Gradually in 1949 this energy settled into an arrangement of rectangular zones. These zones of varied shapes were reduced to the well known floating rectangles of the fifties and sixties.

## CHAPTER III

### ROMANTICISM

Turner and Rothko created in their work a complex level of emotions that expressed an unknown world. It is necessary to examine the emotional aspect of each artist's work. Furthermore, one must understand the Romantic aesthetic upon which the works of both artists were founded.

So various are its forms, its styles and its methods of expression, that it is difficult to reduce Romanticism to a convenient formula. Romanticism refers not to a style but to an attitude. Romanticism, an artistic movement during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, is described by John Canaday as:

. . . a revolt of the heart against Reason, of emotion against intellect, of the mysterious against the rational, of the individual against formulas--in short, of the senses and the imagination against everything else.<sup>9</sup>

Romanticism favored the revival not of one style but an unlimited number of styles. Revivals or the rediscovery of past forms became the stylistic principle of Romanticism.

The Romantics believed in the individual private experience, intuition, instinct, and the more inaccessible aspects of feeling which exceeded the boundaries of reason. The individuality of the Romantics was expressed



by Deleculuze:

Those who call themselves "Romantics" differ so much in their opinions, follow principles so contradictory, that it is impossible to extract one central idea from all this chaos. I myself have given up trying to understand it.<sup>10</sup>

Some Romantic principles were restlessness, yearning, self identification with nature, infinite distance, solitude, the tragedy of existence and the idea of growth. Literature, music and poetry, past and present, became an important source of inspiration for Romantic painters. The literature of Jacques Rousseau and Goethe; the poetry of Wordsworth, Heine and Byron; the music of Beethoven, Schumann and Berlioz were sources that provided the Romantics with a possible range of subjects, emotions and attitudes.

The Romantic painter's purpose was to conjure up a unified, almost a visionary atmosphere of human drama. In addition to the newly awakened interest in nature and landscape, the Romantic artist tended to historicize as seen in his revived interest in the gothic. This included a taste for the ghostly and cruel and a new wave of spiritual interest in the sublime. The Romantic spirit encouraged grandiose and violent effects in paintings.

The culmination of Romantic landscape painting occurred in nineteenth century England. It was in England that Turner would respond emotionally to the continuing and confused social and political crisis by painting

scenes of storm and destruction. Much like a Romantic, Turner resorted to several art forms to communicate his ideas. He lacked conventional education. This may be one reason why his lectures given at the Royal Academy in the early 1800's were a total failure as far as the public was concerned. This perhaps convinced Turner that it was useless to communicate his ideas in ordinary ways. He thereby retreated back to the aesthetic affect of his work to communicate his ideas. Turner's interest in eighteenth century poetry increased his yearning to express his emotions visually.

Turner's early reading of Thomson's "Seasons" and Akenside's "Pleasure of Imagination" formed his concept of nature as made up of dynamic processes and affected his theory of the function of the arts. Specifically, Thomson's poetry not only provided titles and quotations for many of his early exhibits but also suggested the choice and treatment of Turner's subjects. Akenside helped Turner to come to grips with the central question of eighteenth century philosophers: "is beauty a lie; a pleasing delusion?".

Turner was interested in the relationship between art and music. His growing appreciation of music helped him to strengthen the delicate harmonies of color in its infinite concords and contrasts. Through his work, he was a great composer; he could work independently of

nature in keys that varied from tranquil lyricism to an epic grandeur.

He poured his individual concern and anguish into his images of storm and sea. These in turn became complex and articulate images of social and spiritual crisis. His paintings "Hannibal Crossing the Alps" (Illustration 4), "The Burning of the Houses of the Parliament" (Illustration 5) and "Slavership" (Illustration 6) epitomize these Romantic concerns. A key work in Turner's early development, "Hannibal Crossing the Alps" combines a gloomy and majestic scene with menacing mountains and a wild storm. The sun, which later in Turner's development would be "abstracted" into a mysterious and subliminal force, pierces the tempestuous alpine atmosphere. Surrounding the sunlight is a spatial Turneresque device known as the vortex. In a vast funnel of churning fury, the foreground and distance are merged and separated by this spiralling vortex.

Turner placed a verse from his poem "The Fallacies of Hope" beside his painting which expressed his pessimistic mood:

Craft, treachery, and fraud--Salassian force,  
Hung on the fainting rear! then Plunder seiz'd  
The victor and the captive--Saguntum's spoil,  
Alike became their prey; still the chief advanc'd,  
Look'd on the sun with hope;--low, broad, and wan;  
While the fierce archer of the downward year  
Stains Italy's blanch'd barrier with storms.  
In vain each pass, ensanguin'd deep with dead,  
Or rocky fragments, wide destruction roll'd.  
Still on Campania's fertile plains--he thought,  
But the loud breeze sob'd, 'Capua's joys beware!<sup>11</sup>

The note of menace and gloom in this verse is borne out by the pictorial content of the painting.

The painting "Burning of the Houses of Parliament" represents one of the most significant experiences in Turner's life. A scene of fire and catastrophe, which he had imagined for years, was actually played out. The burst of flame and the flood of fiery radiance forms a luminous atmosphere around all of the objects nearby. This event provided Turner with the vital combination of vivid light and color effects.

Of the many storms at sea that Turner painted, none had quite the apocalyptic quality of the painting "Slave-ship". The themes of wind and sea, both symbolic of energy, are two of the elemental and destructive powers in Turner's work. The red of the sunset reflected in the stormy waves becomes merged with and synthesized into the blood of the victims and the ship itself. The light emanating from the sun represents a cosmic catastrophe that seems to engulf the slaves, the sea and the fish. The tense purity of color itself enhances the tragic quality. A startling verse from "The Fallacies of Hope" was placed next to this painting and seems to reflect the hope and despair of Turner's feelings:

Aloft all hands, strike the top-masts and belax;  
Yon angry setting sun and fierce-edged clouds  
Declare the Typhon's coming.  
Before it strikes your decks, throw overboard

The dead and dying--ne'er heed their chains,  
 Hope, Hope, fallacious Hope!  
 Where is thy market now?<sup>12</sup>

The verses from "The Fallacies of Hope" consistently portray man betraying his heroic achievements and being corrupted by the failure to confront fully his own nature.

Robert Motherwell, the Abstract Expressionist painter, spoke perceptively of ". . . the tragic quality in Turner's art which painting seeks now".<sup>13</sup> At one level he conveyed a growing fascination with the face of nature in convulsion. At another level his images are linked to his past--the suffering of his mother and his own failure to achieve a family despite his connection with Sarah. His relationship with Sarah held mysterious depths of resistance and betrayal against which he felt incapable of securing himself. This sense of insecurity was compounded by his growing alienation from the artistic society that gave him his initial success.

This alienation and insecurity was reflected in the seductive quality of his vortexes. The vortex became his main compositional form, superceding the old geometries of line and curve. This spatial device reveals in infinitely complex system of inner tensions, with its own subtle point of dynamic centralization. The vortex in some cases contained rich sexual symbolism in his landscapes. He defined a downward thrust against a simultaneously

ascending uplift. Combined with the tragic quality of his subject matter, the vortexes in "Hannibal Crossing the Alps", "Snowstorm", and "Slaveship" assume a personal womb-like shape for Turner that created an escape from a difficult and disturbing society. For Turner the womb was the tomb as illustrated in his painting "The Visit to the Tomb" (Illustration 7). Turner achieved a balance between the identifiable figures and the dissolving of architecture and landscape in a rich, golden haze.

Mark Rothko, though an Abstract Expressionist of the twentieth century, shared many of the romantic attitudes and visions of Turner. The tomb-like quality in Rothko's "Seagrams Murals" (dated 1958), was commented upon by Peter Selz in the catalogue for Rothko's 1961 retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art:

. . . The open rectangles suggest the rims of flame in containing fires or the entrance to tombs, like the doors to the dwellings of the dead in Egyptian pyramids behind which the sculptors kept the kings "alive" for eternity in the Ka. But unlike the doors of the dead which were meant to shut out the living from the place of absolute might. . . invite the spectator to enter their orifices.<sup>14</sup>

Like Turner, Rothko was influenced by music and poetry. Rothko was quoted once as saying:

I became a painter because I wanted to raise painting to the level of poignancy of music and poetry.<sup>15</sup>

Books such as Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy, stimulated and reinforced Rothko's interest in mythological and dramatic themes. Mozart, Schubert, Beethoven, Shakespeare,

Nietzsche and Kierkegaard continued to sustain and nurture him throughout his life.<sup>16</sup> When viewing Rothko's late work, one thinks of music due to its rhythmically articulated and subtle color, which expresses the tonal language more than any other. Rothko's orchestral leanings were like those of the great Romantics; simultaneously ponderous and heroic, often lyrical in mood but never sentimental. Dore Ashton noted after a visit to Rothko's studio in 1956: "Rothko claims that his is the most violent painting in America today".<sup>17</sup> He further noted that ". . . people often misinterpreted his bright, yellow and red paintings as being optimistic; Rothko said it represented tragedy."<sup>18</sup>

The pulsating atmospheric paragraphs (the rectangular shapes in Rothko's paintings) in the painting "Red and Pink on Pink" (Illustration 8), suggest the time preceding a storm when the clouds are about to close above. The heavy red shape contains an impending, ominous transformation and is suspended at the point of instability. The spectator senses an atmosphere of alarm.

In "Ochre and Red on Red" (Illustration 9) all movement seems to have eased. The restful, sensual, soft orange shape is surrounded by an ominous border of dark red that suggests the aftermath of once violent activities. The quiet surfaces which evoke contemplation are only

a mask for underlying turmoil and passion. The sense of tragedy, violence and doom was more apparent in Rothko's black paintings of the sixties. In "Painting 1961" (Illustration 10), the light fades into darkness suggesting a somber and ritualistic quality. Rothko expressed his growing pessimism which was reminiscent of Turner's "Fallacies of Hope":

As I have grown older, Shakespeare has come closer to me than Aeschylus who meant so much to me in my youth. Shakespeare's tragic concept embodies for me the full range of life from which the artist draws all his tragic material including irony; irony becomes a weapon against fate.<sup>19</sup>

Rothko wrote an introduction to a catalogue for Clifford Still, which in essence reflects his own paintings. He stated: "(his paintings are of the). . . Earth, the Damned and the Recreated."<sup>20</sup>

The mood of Rothko's paintings reflected his own personality. Rothko was uncomfortable with the social and political upheaval of the thirties. He was a rebellious individualist who was very sensitive to the occurrences around him. These qualities all mark the nature of a romantic. Rothko was a perpetual insomniac and prowled the streets late at night. His melancholy moods deepened into depression during the fifties. He leaned hard on his close friends.

His painting of the fifties and sixties consisted of color paragraphs, soft edged shapes with pulsating and



sensual surfaces stacked vertically on the canvass. Often the divisions and intervals between them suggest a horizon thus reminding us of landscape. Like Turner, these images alluded to the romantic elements of fire, water, air and earth, which were used to stimulate or arouse the senses. This format enabled Rothko to eliminate everything except spatial suggestions and the emotive power of color.

Living in Portland and Russia had a twofold visual impact for Rothko. In Russian, the expansive landscape influenced his spatial perception. He would later express the traditional Russian thirst for boundlessness, immensity and enormity, all of which are regarded as romantic attitudes. The blend of rivers, moss, mountains, and fog in Portland softened his atmospheric perceptions. The Northwest Indian culture with its magical, awesome and beautiful art also influenced Rothko's mythological and surrealist work of the forties. Surrealism, a more contemporary version of Romanticism, became the wellspring of Rothko's inspiration. Surrealism defined the unconscious and essential source of art, seeking the inner universe of the imagination, rather than the external. It opened up new possibilities as Rothko developed beyond myth to a concrete realization of the spirit.

The painting "Brown and Grey" (Illustration 11) suggests the prelude or the aftermath of Turner's "Snowstorm" (Illustration 12).

The division between the light and dark areas suggests a horizon; the bottom being sea, the top sky. The dark ominous and foreboding shape is in a state of flux; boiling, then subsiding. The mood is similar in Turner's work though not so violent. Even the tonality and the low horizon is similar in Rothko's work.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SUBLIME

J.M.W. Turner and Mark Rothko sought to convey their personal emotions in their work. The result was a romantic exploration into the nature of the sublime. When viewing their late works, one's eyes rest but a moment on the painting before transcending into its more elusive qualities. There is a vagueness which occupies the viewer and which results in a type of sublime meditation. According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, the "sublime" is defined as:

lofty, grand or exalted in thought, expression in thought, or manner; of outstanding spiritual, intellectual or moral worth; tending to inspire awe usually because of elevated quality (as of beauty, nobility, or grandeur).

In essence, the sublime is a spiritual experience. The Irish Romantic poet, Thomas Moore wrote about his first experience at Niagara Falls in a letter to his mother, July 24, 1804:

I felt as if approaching the very residence of the Deity; the tears started into my eyes; and I remained, for moments after we had lost sight of the scene, in that delicious absorption pious enthusiasm alone can produce. We arrived at the New Lakker and descended to the bottom. Here all its awful sublimities rushed full upon me. . . My whole

heart and soul ascended towards the Divinity in a swell of devout admiration, which I never before experienced. OH! bring the atheist here, and he cannot return an atheist. . .<sup>21</sup>

Moore's awe before this spectacle reflected his need to abandon measurable reason for mystical empathy. This same abandonment is necessary when viewing works of Turner and Rothko.

In clarifying what is and what is not the "experience of the sublime", we must refer to historical references. The subject of the sublime was explored in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by Longinus, Burke, Reynolds, Kant, Diderot and Delacroix. Edmund Burke, in his Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime (1757) stated: "Greatness of dimensions is a powerful cause of the sublime."<sup>22</sup> Other qualities which Burke considered in his definition included "vacuity", "darkness", "solitude", "silence", and "infinity". He also linked the sublime to "the passions which belong to self preservation, evoking an idea of pain and danger"<sup>23</sup> reminiscent of taking pleasure in tragedy.

Another viewpoint is expressed in Kant's essay Critique of Judgement (1790):

The beautiful in nature is connected with the forms of the object so far as in it, or by occasion of it boundlessness is represented.<sup>24</sup>

Eugene Delacroix was suspicious of Renaissance formal structure, which was marked by external calm and balance.

At the same time he mistrusted Greek-like form. Delacroix made vagueness a category of the sublime. "Painting is vaguer than poetry," Delacroix wrote, "in spite of the definite appearance it presents to the eyes."<sup>26</sup> When he made that remark, vagueness and indefinite emotion were romantic clichés. Sublimity was achieved by the use of dramatic means of expression and the use of the power of images to strike directly at the mind of the viewer.

The intention of taking art away from superficial and sensual meanings and basing it on momentous and powerful ones is analagous to Barnett Newman's philosophy of the sublime. In 1948 Newman wrote The Sublime is Now. Its content seems to be reflected especially in Rothko's work.<sup>27</sup> He defined the sublime as a series of rejections. The exaltation that he was after could not be found in Greek form or ideals of beauty. The sublime consisted of a desire to destroy form which is akin to Gothic and Baroque aesthetics. His version of the sublime can be connected with Delacroix's and the eighteenth century definition which was conceived as antithetical to the problem of beauty.

The sublime is not the known but the unknown. It is not beauty or taste. A sublime painting is mysterious not only because it is the image of a higher hidden experience, but it is also the product of a creative will. The sublime is not an existing state which is bestowed

upon the artist. Nor does it have ready made aesthetic rewards. Both Turner and Rothko shared the creative desire to monumentalize their own emotion; creating canvasses whose vastness, simplicity and clarity were the subject; non verbal and deeply human.

A painting that epitomizes the nineteenth century idea of the sublime is Caspar David Friedrick's "Monk by the Sea" (Illustration 13). The tiny monk in the painting exemplifies the contrast between the infinite vastness of a pantheistic god and the infinite smallness of his creatures. This figure is awed by the sheer magnitude of the sight before him. Turner's "Evening Star" (Illustration 14) expresses a similar spatial experience. The star, though minuscule, adds still another dimension to nature's infinity and to miss this is virtually to miss the painting. The paintings "Burning of the Houses of Parliament", "The Visit to the Tomb" and "The Slaveship" present examples of boundlessness. Turner's atmospheric heavens swirl around the minute figures in the foreground of each painting. A sense of awe is prevalent as expressed by their poses.

The heroic proportions of Rothko's paintings engulf and immerse the spectator in the totality of the overall image. In his painting "Light, Earth, and Blue" (Illustration 15), the life size scale with its floating

atmospheric shapes draws one into the elusive space that exists somewhere between himself and the picture plane. For Rothko, the literal details in Friedrick's work and in some of Turner's are not necessary. We ourselves are the monk by the sea, standing silent and contemplatively. Despite the majestic proportion, it remains intimate and emotionally accessible as Rothko points out:

I paint very large pictures. I realize that historically the function of painting large pictures is painting something very grandiose and pompous. The reason I paint them, however is precisely because I want to be intimate and human.<sup>28</sup>

The scale of Rothko's art, as he himself noted, is large in order to achieve intimacy. Small canvasses, unless they contain illusory distances as in the case of Turner, assert only a two dimensional quality. The large canvass passes beyond human scale, and forces the viewer to participate in the work.

Upon encountering a late Turner or Rothko work, the first impression is awe-inspiring. The paintings establish a rigid-stare or trance-like involvement. The monk in Friedrick's painting, the figures in Turner's paintings and the viewer of Rothko's works are struck by this phenomenon. The participants are confronted by something that is frontal and toward which they stare. The iconography of the "stare" can be traced back to primitive art which was characteristically frontal. Later

it became an element apparent in Byzantine art. The rigid stare is established by the Byzantine frontal figures and moderated light emanating from the golden mosaic surface. Rembrandt, a Baroque painter, confronted his viewer with a stare in his late self portraits.

The elusive quality found in Rothko's floating horizontal tiers of veiled light and in Turner's pulsating vortexes seems to conceal a remote presence that we can only intuit and never fully grasp. These infinite glowing voids carry us beyond reason to the sublime. When the level of the sublime is established and absorption is achieved, one loses his sense of place and bodily consciousness, no longer conscious of the passing of time. One can only submit to this phenomena in an act of faith, letting himself be absorbed into the radiant depths of the paintings.

The history of "enigma" in painting can be traced back to Romanticism surfacing later in Surrealism.<sup>29</sup> We are drawn to the atmospheric and enigmatic light of Turner and Rothko's paintings but are not as easily drawn into them. This may in part be due to the simultaneous sense of flatness and spatial opening, which is both eerie and puzzling in its ambiguity. Background and foreground are consistently interchangeable. What may at first appear to be in back of a particular element may seem to come forward as the shape that was forward



is seen to recede and become background. The reciprocal interplay of depth and flatness sets up tensions not readily apparent at first glance. This is achieved in Turner's case by the non-traditional system of intense color displayed freely to achieve an ambiguous spatial structure.

A striking painting by Turner, "Three Seascapes on One Canvass" (Illustration 16), immediately reminds us of Rothko's ambiguous spatial structure seen especially in his late works. Turner divided his painting much like Rothko, into rectangular shapes placed vertically. The horizontal paragraphs hover though deceptively attached to the painting's edge. Foreground and background elements are repeated three times and conceal any realistic spatial structure.

Rothko's works have a similar tonality which is seen in his vertically placed paragraphs. They evoke simplicity yet are very deceptive, upsetting our comfortable equilibrium. One might question how Rothko's simplistic means can convey thoughts about the sublime. If the spectator approaches his work in a metaphysical or spiritual frame of mind, the sublime is perceptible. If he wants to look at it as an arrangement of color on a flat surface, the sublime may escape his grasp.

Rothko's Chapel paintings in Houston, commissioned in 1964 by John and Dominique de Menil would transcend

his last tragic human emotion before his untimely death. The non-denominational church designed by Phillip Johnson is an ideal setting for the meditation of the sublime.<sup>30</sup> The interior is serene and windowless. Rothko employed his theatrical instincts and created a spiritual environment in which fourteen large canvasses are distributed along the octagonal walls. For Rothko, the chapel commission conjured up his deepest, most soulful energies and emotions. It is like entering into the "silent darkness". Experiencing it is beyond the support of words and images. Each canvass is a hanging black and ominous field evoking a feeling of impending doom. In the "Centre Triptych for the Rothko Chapel" (Illustration 17) the same kind of dialectical spatial tension, spoken of earlier exists-- nothing and everything; entering and alienation. There is nothing there but stretched cotton duck, soaked with alizarin crimson and black. Aesthetically speaking, however, it expresses the infinite with the finite. The spectator at first is removed from its opaque, black tonality. Yet gradually the faintly glowing and mystical source of the sublime is revealed.

If the sublime can be attained by saturating such limitless expanses with luminous, hushed stillness, it can also be reached inversely by filling the void with a teeming, unleashing power. Turner presents both of these voids with sublime extremes. In "Northern Castle"

(Illustration 18) one is impressed by its atmospheric stillness. In the painting "Snowstorm" (Illustration 12) steam, wind, water, snow and fire spin wildly around the vortical rhythms that suck the spectator into a sublime whirlpool. Again, sheer force helps to produce the sublime.

Turner's works evoke an elemental power of creation. He aimed at nothing short of God's full power, upheaving rock, sky, clouds, sun and moon spiralling into one metaphysical force. The painting "Interior at Pentworth" (Illustration 19) with its molten paths of energy, evokes a state of sublime chaos. Turner's indeterminate shapes create a spectacle of nature's omnipotence, a scene of decay and ruin in which crumbling furniture and sunlit mirrors coalesce into a churning drama of light, heat, dust and moisture. Again, Turner translates the sublime into the fusion of nature's most intangible and elemental forces.

## CHAPTER V

### SUBLIME LIGHT

Contemplating a Turner or a Rothko painting, the viewer is bewildered by a perpetual sense of mysterious light and its source. This atmospheric, glowing light reveals a masked imagery concealed behind Turner's vortexes and Rothko's rectangular paragraphs. It is an enigma that sparks the individual mind making subliminal suggestions, yet revealing nothing. A critical analysis is needed to discover the source of this mysterious light (the sublime light) and how it is presented psychologically and physically to the viewer.

Light is often regarded atmospherically as a veil. It is a medium through which we perceive objects. Veiled imagery is traditional in art and is one way of presenting mystery through its qualities: atmosphere and color. Visually, light creates forms but the sublime light (i.e. veil) creates and dissolves forms simultaneously. This glowing light takes sublime revenge against all matter.

Sublime light has its source historically in medieval light (i.e. stain glass light permeating spiritual or celestial light into Gothic cathedrals). Medieval light reflects and glows bouncing from wall to wall. Sublime light

arouses desire, yearning and awe.

Among the objects of perception, light is the one that arouses the greatest desire.

Liber de intelligentus<sup>31</sup>

This mysterious light possesses a sublime and hypnotic quality and its glow is like the radiant energy of the Creator. Both medieval and romantic light share these mystical properties. There are perceptual similarities between Rothko's light and the subliminal and Godly light of medieval thinkers. Rothko's role as painter is like that of a god:

. . . one who made the universe, then just forgot about it and went on to make others. Inheriting this absurdity, the abandoned inhabitants invent a morality for their survival. Mortality, rage, impotence, sensuality, free-will, authority, transcendence- -these are the qualities inherent in Rothko's light, all of them related to that yearning which inevitably creates its own fatal idealism.<sup>32</sup>

In the painting "Black Maroons and White" (Illustration 20), the medieval-like light has no location and no perspective. It lacks modelling and shadows. The light vibrates between form and formlessness. The light, or lack of light depending on its color, intensity, and degree of visible strokes, moves from a dark and brushless surface to a loose and sensual surface. His blurred edges reflect the idea of boundlessness. The pulsating paragraph of red light suggests an ominous opening and entices the spectator to enter in, while the opaque paragraphs of

white repulse this feeling and float or hover over the atmospheric field of red light. Brian O'Doherty expands on the qualities of Rothko's light:

Rothko's light has the repertoire to tease and lead on that "desire" in a way that continually hovers between surface and pure light, between yearning and repose.<sup>33</sup>

There may be a visual kinship between Rothko's light and the evanescent phenomenon of the horizon at dusk or dawn found in Venetian light. When looking westward during sunset in Venice, there is a glowing mist before the observer's eye. He is hypnotically attracted to the jewel-like centrality between sea and sky. This combination of sea interacting with light gives radiance to the city. This vaporous radiance is like diffused matter suspended in air impairing its transparency. This causes the Venetian light to glow behind this suspended matter or atmosphere.

Turner, during his trip to Venice (1819), recorded the Venetian light, which would surface visually in his late works. He observed the interaction of water, light and form. But this acute observation was only a vehicle to express his emotions through the sublime light. Turner, like Rothko, shared the view of the spiritual light by writing a few weeks before his death that "The Sun is God".<sup>34</sup> Turner's "Shade Darkness: The Evening of the Deluge" (Illustration 21), shows a terrible and avenging God

which reflects his pessimism expressed not in darkness but in the sublimity of light. The words that Turner attached to the painting "The Angel Standing in the Sun" (Illustration 22) enforce the impact of the sublime light:

Light is not only glorious and sacred, it is voracious, carnivorous, unsparing. It devours impartially, without distinction, the whole living world.<sup>35</sup>

Light objectively creates forms and generates systems. But combined with atmosphere, its structural system is destroyed. Turner's and Rothko's spiritual light consists of three formal elements: color, light and atmosphere. Despite the exotic color found in their work, one cannot categorize them wholly as colorists in the sense that they were detained by its immediate properties. Rothko himself refuted the suggestions of being a colorist:

I'm not interested in relations of color or form. . . . And if you, as you say are moved only by their color relationship, then you missed the point.<sup>36</sup>

Actually, their color scheme suggests something else. It is impossible to tell whether color is being dissolved in light or light is being tinted and suffused with color. Color and light should be thought of as one and the same. Color reflects light and light refracted creates color. In effect both artists agreed with Goethe that "Colors are the deeds and sufferings of light".<sup>37</sup>

Turner and Rothko had no settled or exact process for using colors, choosing instead to move the colors

about until they expressed the idea. They refused to accept proven rules about the behavior of color (e.g. red and yellow makes orange). They created their own rules "re-inventing" color. (Turner more so, due to the period of the early nineteenth century when form was considered a priority over color). The subliminal, symbolic message was expressed in Turner's and Rothko's color scheme. Their muffled explosion of color, pulsing expansions of space were achieved by keying tone to hue.

Turner was attracted to the three primary colors (i.e. yellow, red, and blue) during his late artistic career. He wanted his pictures to express an idea of light and matter, and he regarded the primaries as symbolic of them. He was also less concerned with expressing chromatic harmony than the conflict of light and dark through color. For him, the primaries were emblematic not of harmony but of disharmony. This light and dark relationship was transmitted in purity of color through the relationship of cool and warm. This resulted in a warm palette due to the two to one ratio of warm color existing in the primaries. In his fifth lecture given at the Royal Academy, Turner made an attempt to deal with the symbolic use of color:

. . . Yellow has been taken to Express Glory; Blue, Duty; Red, Power.<sup>38</sup>



He went on to say:

Comparatively, Red possesses the utmost power attracting vision: it being the first ray of Light, received and the first which acknowledges the dimension of light in aerial perspective yellow would be medium; Red material; Blue, distance: White in prismatic order is the union. . . Light is therefore Color, and Shadow the Privation of it by the removal of these rays of Color.<sup>39</sup>

Like Turner, Rothko's color scheme tilts to the warm palette due to his intense interest in the use of the primary colors. Unlike Turner, Rothko's abstract luminous hues carry the full burden of evoking the sublime's emotion and mystery. To evoke these feelings Rothko relied on the responses that color summoned up in the spectator. The hues of a sunset in the painting "Unititled 1964" (Illustration 23), prompt feelings of elation mingled with sadness of unease as the dark shapes of night close in. Rothko's color evokes mixed feelings of joy, gloom, anxiety or peace. His edges fade in and out like memories.

Color, although not a final aim in itself, serves as the vessel which holds the content. Peter Selz, a critic of Rothko, attempts to establish the relationship between Rothko's color and the emotions it evokes:

The color may be savage, at times burning itself like sidereal landscapes, at others giving off an enduring after-glow. There are paintings whose reds are oppressive evoking a mood of foreboding and death; these are reds suggesting light, flame, or blood. There are pictures with veil like blues and whites and suggesting empty chambers and endless halls. At times the color

has been gayer, with greens and yellows reminiscent of spring in its buoyant, almost exultant delight. There is almost no limit to the range and breadth of feelings he permits his colors to express.<sup>40</sup>

Red fascinated Rothko above all colors just as yellow fascinated Turner. His dark reds can be just as stimulating as Turner's luminous yellows. Rothko's reds, unless diluted, are so potent optically that they overwhelm or obliterate other hues. Turner would dilute red and other colors to exploit the bright, luminous yellows. It is possible that Rothko used red because of its basic associations. Red can be identified with the elements fire and blood; with life, death, and the spirit.

Both artists were extremely interested in the watercolor medium to enhance the luminosity of their work. Turner began and ended his artistic career essentially as a watercolorist. In the 1820's, the medium encouraged Turner to break from his early dependence on chiaroscuro in order to pursue watercolor at its purist in the "Color Beginnings Series". Observing these unique watercolors, as incomprehensible as they may be, we realize that the private Turner of the sketchbook is the real Turner. In viewing the watercolors "Color Beginning" (Illustration 24), "Pink Sky" (Illustration 25) and "Color Beginning: Sunrise over the Water" (Illustration 26), it is possible to regard these remarkable, nearly abstract designs as ends in themselves rather than the "beginning"

as suggested by the title. Whether Turner would have agreed remains unknown. But the fact that he kept them all to himself may suggest that he valued them.

It is quite remarkable to note the visual similarities between Turner's watercolors and Rothko's paintings. These watercolors, are divided into zones of atmospheric color. Turner maintained the management of light in his use of bright color and sensuous atmosphere. Though his vortex or funnel images are non-existent, there still exists the mysterious energy and light emanating from their surfaces. These watercolors also show the fascination for the immaterial vehicles of color, steam, smoke and mist. He introduced his watercolor techniques into his paintings (i.e. in "Stormy Sea", Illustration 27). He composed in color, dissolving, suggesting and only half defining it with washes. With the assistance of this medium, the blurring of the distinction between the forces and the supposedly solid forms on which they impinged was fused.

Watercolor also gave some meaning to Turner's water. The wetness of the medium would bleed and drown images into a sensuous atmospheric effect. The uncontrollable hazards of watercolor were used to Turner's advantage. He was at home with them and trusted them. In the 1830's and 1840's, the distinction between his watercolors and

and oils often nearly disappeared. His delicate glazes of oil were floated over the white ground much like the character of the watercolor medium.

Rothko also loved watercolors, painting them throughout his life (especially in the thirties) and toward the end of his life he would say wistfully: "I could have been a great watercolorist, you know."<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Rothko's handling of paint was basically a watercolor technique. Paint was soaked into the very fibers of the canvass so that the color dematerialized. Rothko applied many thin washes of paint, one over another and often allowed some of the colors in the bottom layers to appear through the top coat of pigment, which resulted in a soft, translucent, and "deep" surface.

By moving large areas of color in swift washes, Turner and Rothko created a quality of inner light which seemed to emanate from the very core of their work--a quality that calls to mind the palpable and spiritual light of Rembrandt and medieval light.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Much like the spirit of the Romantics, Turner and Rothko reacted emotionally to their environment by communicating visually their own feelings in a time of despair. Both artists were exposed to wars, political anarchy, deaths, suffering and identity crises due to the industrial and technological revolutions during their lives. A feeling of desparation and hope existed not only in their personalities but also in their works. They would find comfort and inspiration in Romantic literature, poetry and music. These political, social and psychological forces would influence Turner's and Rothko's taste for the tragic and the desire for a work of art to produce a reaction; expressed through nature and its elements. These natural and romantic elements: fire, air, water and earth, became complex images of social and spiritual crisis.

What is revealed in their painting is a continual search for the unknown dimension, the sublime. The need to abandon measurable reason for mystical empathy is the ingredient that palces Turner and Rothko into the sublime category. Both artists monumentalized their emotions by linking the sublime to the passions that evoked pain

and danger. For each, the sublime provided a semantic container for the romantic experiences of awe, terror, boundlessness and divinity. Sublimity was achieved by the use of dramatic means of expression and the use of the power of images to strike directly at the mind of the viewer.

When viewing Turner's or Rothko's work, we seem to lose ourselves in great distances. Both artists placed the spectator on the threshold with shapeless infinities (the vortex for Turner, the paragraphs for Rothko). These figures who represent mankind, and whose backs are toward us are absorbing the awesome sublime forces of nature. This pose licenses our entry into the picture by making us conscious of our presence before it. Turner's figures visually stand static and immobile much like the monk in Friedrich's painting. However, when Turner did not paint for patrons or exhibitions, he excluded the figures in the same manner that Rothko would do later. Rothko's figure is the viewer who becomes ". . . (a) picture of a single human figure--alone in a moment of utter immobility."<sup>41</sup> What transpires is a feeling of being engulfed and surrounded by symbolic space of a powerful sort; the sublime light. This elusive quality seems to conceal a remote presence that we can only intuit and never fully grasp. This is established by the faint halations, which appear from beneath the surfaces of

Turner's and Rothko's works. Turner's energetic vortexes and Rothko's translucent paragraphs suggest tomb-like or womb-like images from which an awesome and spiritual atmosphere glows. It is as though both Turner and Rothko attempted to make art return to the elemental power of creation, seeking the origins of life itself.

This sense of mysteriousness is revealed largely because there is an illusion of transparency and translucence on the surface. This is due to their transcending the inherent properties of painting--color, light and atmosphere and their knowledge and handling of watercolor. The use of translucent tints on white paper in Turner's "Color Beginnings Series" may help to explain his pre-occupation with color and light. His forms became less and less material, shedding weight and opacity until all substance was dissolved into iridescent mists as reflected in his watercolor treatment. Rothko expressed the elusive, iridescent mist by applying many thin washes of paint one over another and allowing some of the colors in the bottom layers to appear through the top coat of pigment. In essence, both Turner and Rothko interchanged watercolor with oil techniques. Turner's use of glazing and Rothko's use of staining did not thicken light or add weight to the atmosphere, thus inducing a spiritual presence.

Turner's fire and storms conveyed his sense of man's insignificance in the face of the immensity and the destructiveness of nature. This catastrophic phenomena eventually dissolved froms into the spiritual presence of the sublime light. For Rothko, his continual spiritual crisis and the anxieties of political and social events seemed to correspond with the romantic tradition of the irrational and the awesome. It also corresponds with the sublime vocabulary of boundless energies and limitless spaces. Finally, Turner's work is continued into Rothko's images. The art of Turner and Rothko reminds us that the inheritance of the sublime Romantics has not yet become exhausted.

Some interesting questions may be raised as to Rothko's knowledge of Turner, particularly of his water-colors. While this relationship may never be proven one cannot deny the romantic kinship.



#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Louis Hawes, "Turner in New York," Burlington Magazine, June 1966, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Brian O'Doherty, "Rothko Chapel," Art in America, January 1973, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Dore Ashton, The New York School (New York: Viking Press, 1973), p. 163.

<sup>4</sup>Ivan Dunlop, "Edvard Munch, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko: The Search for the Sublime," Arts, February 1979, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>6</sup>Jack Lindsay, "Turner's Light: A New Perspective," Studio International, June 1966, p. 265.

<sup>7</sup>Mark Butlin, Turner Watercolours (New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 1962) p.129.

<sup>8</sup>Lee Sheldes, The Legacy of Mark Rothko (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), p. 12.

<sup>9</sup>John Canaday, Mainstreams of Modern Art (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1959), p. 30.

<sup>10</sup>Marcel Brion, Romantic Art (New York, Toronto and London: McGraw-Hill Book Co., INC., 1960), p.8.

<sup>11</sup>Graham Reynolds, Turner (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1969), p. 86.

<sup>12</sup>Jack Lindsay, J.M.W. Turner: A Critical Biography (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1966), p. 189.

<sup>13</sup>Lawrence Gowing, Turner: Imagination and Reality (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966), p. 53.

<sup>14</sup>Lee Sheldes, p. 48.

<sup>15</sup>Diane Waldman, Mark Rothko: A Retrospective (New York: Harry Abrams Inc., 1978), p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>Dore Ashton, "Rothko's Passion," Art International, February 1979, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup>Lee Sheldes, p. 111.

<sup>19</sup>Peter Selz, Mark Rothko (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), p.12.

<sup>20</sup>Dore Ashton, "Rothko's Passion," p. 8.

<sup>21</sup>Robert Rosenblum, "The Abstract Sublime," Art News, February 1961, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence Alloway, Topics in American Art Since 1945 (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1975), p. 33.

<sup>24</sup>Robert Rosenblum, p. 40.

<sup>25</sup>Walter Friedlaender, David to Delacroix (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 110.

<sup>26</sup>Brian O'Doherty, "Rothko," Art International, October 1970, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup>Lawrence Alloway, p. 33.

<sup>28</sup>Diane Waldman, p. 62.

<sup>29</sup>Brian O'Doherty, "Rothko," p. 30.

<sup>30</sup>Ann Holmes, "The Rothko Chapel Six Years Later," Art News, December 1976, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>34</sup>John Cage, Color in Turner (New York and Washington: Fredrick A. Praeger Publishers, 1969), p. 184.

<sup>35</sup>Lawrence Gowing, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup>Diane Waldman, p. 58.

<sup>37</sup>Max Kozloff, "The Lord Nelson of Painting,"  
Art Forum, May 1973, p. 59.

<sup>38</sup>Jack Lindsay, Biography, p. 207.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>40</sup>Peter Selz, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup>Lee Sheldes, p. 19.

<sup>42</sup>Brian O'Doherty, "Rothko,", p. 34.

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Illustration 1. J.M.W. Turner. "The Fifth Plague of Egypt". 1800.



Illustration 2. Mark Rothko. "Subway Scene". 1938.





Illustration 3. Mark Rothko, "Slow Swirl at the Edge of the Sea", 1944.

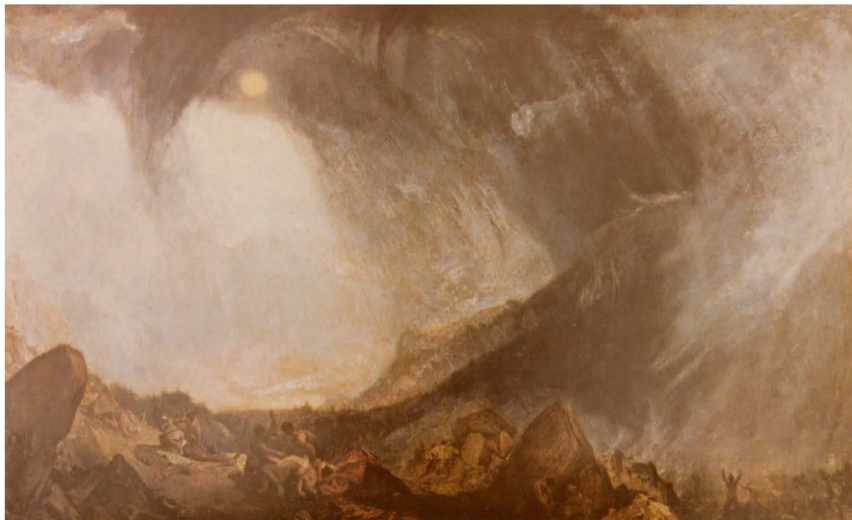


Illustration 4. J.M.W. Turner, "Snowstorm: Hannibal and his army crossing the Alps". 1812



Illustration 5. J.M.W. Turner. "The Burning of the Houses of Parliament". 1834-1835.



Illustration 6. J.M.W. Turner. "The Slavership". 1840.



Illustration 7. J.M.W. Turner. "The visit to the Tomb". 1850.

Illustration 8. Mark Rothko.  
"Red and Pink  
on Paper". 1953.



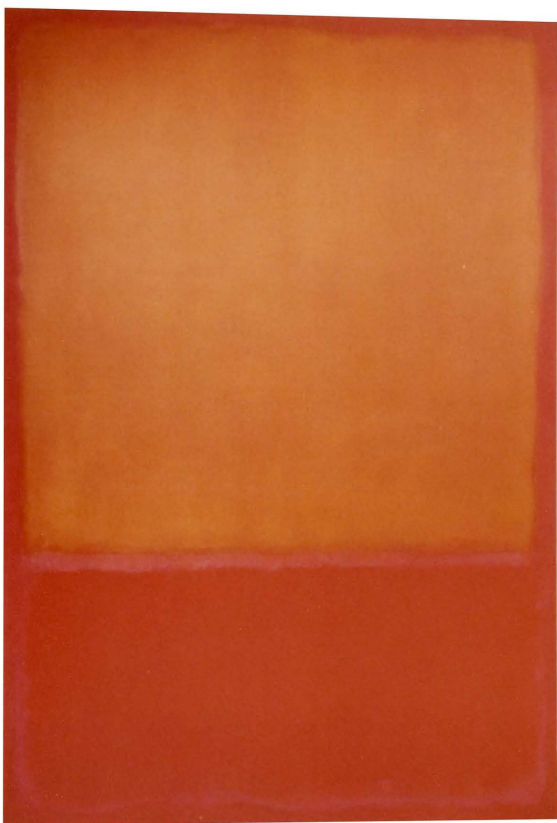


Illustration 9. Mark Rothko.  
"Ochre and Red on Red".  
1954.

Illustration 10. Mark Rothko.  
"Painting".  
1961.







Illustration 11. Mark Rothko.  
"Brown and Grey".  
1969.



Illustration 12. J.M.W. Turner. "Snowstorm: Steam Boat  
off a Harbour's Mouth..." 1842.



Illustration 13. Caspar David Friedrich. "Monk by the Sea". 1810.

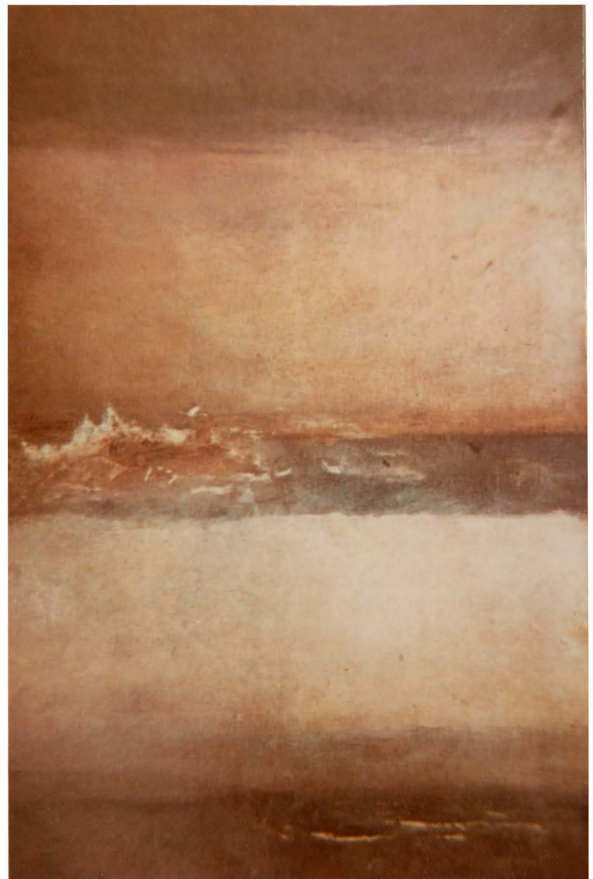


Illustration 14. J.M.W. Turner. "Evening Star". 1830.



Illustration 15. Mark Rothko.  
"Light Earth and  
Blue". 1954.

Illustration 16. J.M.W. Turner.  
"Three Seascapes on One  
Canvas". 1827.



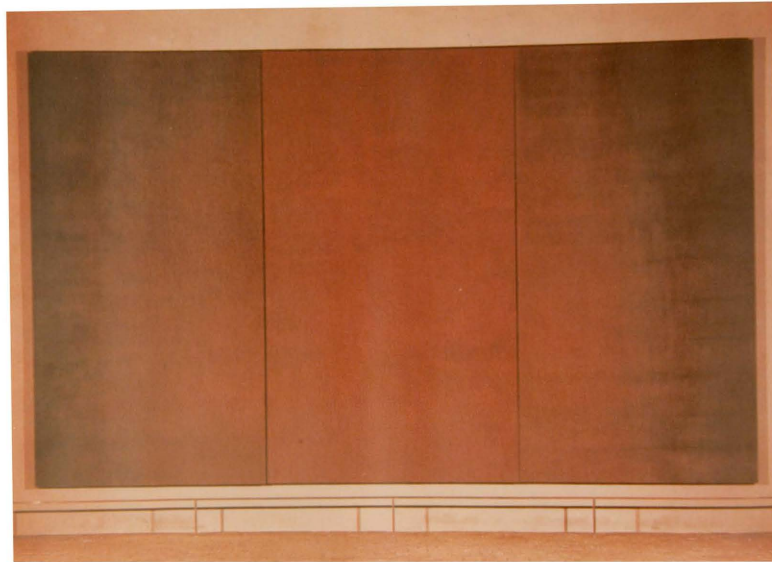


Illustration 17. Mark Rothko. "Centre Triptych for the Rothko Chapel". Late 1960"s.



Illustration 18. J.M.W. Turner. "Northam Castle, Sunrise". 1840-1845.





Illustration 19. J.M.W. Turner. "Interior at Pentworth".  
1837.



Illustration 20. Mark Rothko. "Black Maroons and White".  
1958.



Illustration 21. J.M.W. Turner. "Shaded and Darkness - Evening of the Deluge". 1843.



Illustration 22. J.M.W. Turner. "The Angel Standing in the Sun". 1846.

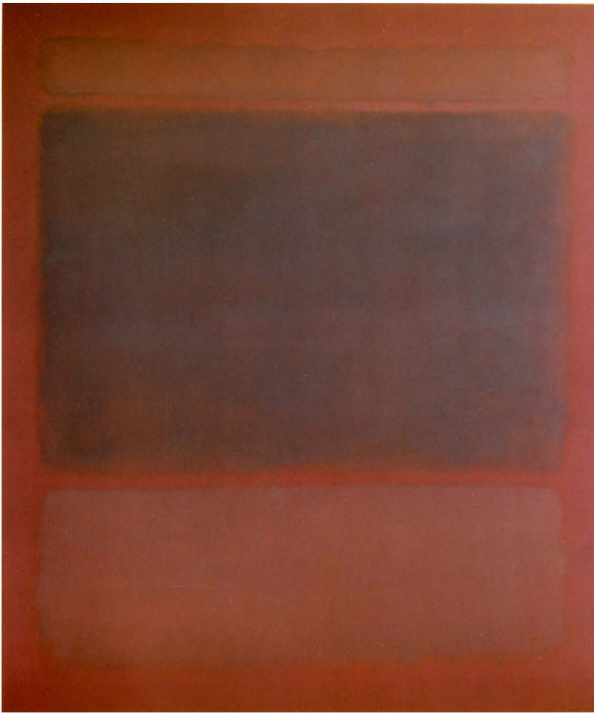


Illustration 23. Mark Rothko.  
"Untitled".  
1964



Illustration 24. J.M.W. Turner. "Color Beginning". 1819.



Illustration 25. J.M.W. Turner. "Pink Sky". 1825.

Illustration 26. J.M.W. Turner.  
"Color Beginning: Sunrise  
over the waters". 1825.

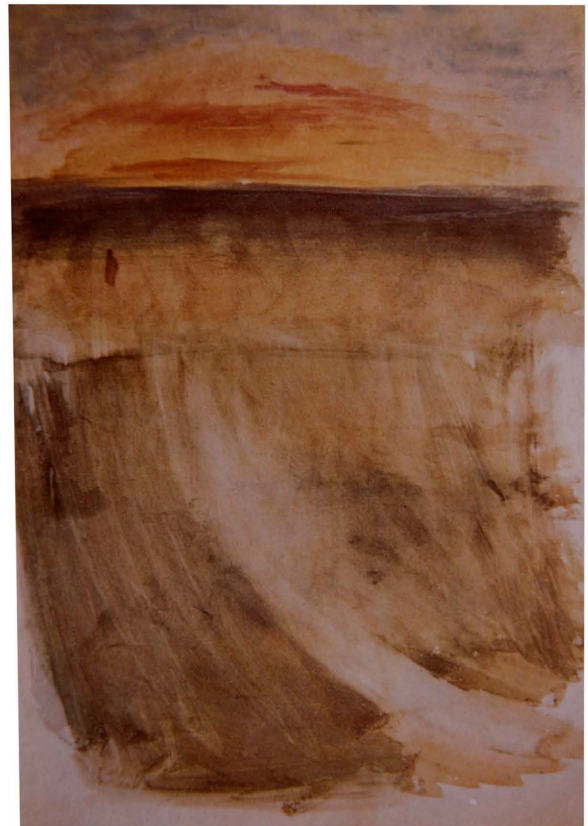






Illustration 27. J.M.W. Turner. "Stormy Sea". 1835-1840.