severity, the awfulness, the ponderous globosity of Art. Milton, by one epithet, draws an oak of the largest girth I ever saw; – 'Pine and *Monumental* Oak' [*Il Penseroso*]: I have just been trying to draw a large one in Lullingstone; but the Poet's tree is huger than any in the park: there, the moss, and rifts, and barky furrows, and the mouldering grey, tho' that adds majesty to the lord of forrests; mostly catch the eye before the grasp and grapple of the roots; the muscular belly and shoulders; the twisted sinews. Many of the fine pictures of the 13th, 14th, and two following centuries, which our modern addlepates grin at for Gothick and barbarous, do seem to me, I confess, much deteriorated, by the faces, though exquisitely drawn, looking like portraits, which many of them are; and from the naked form, thwarted with fringes, and belts, and trappings, being generally neglected, or ill expressed, through a habit of disproportioned attention to secondary things, as the stuff and texture of draperies etc. which ended at last in the Dutch school; with this damning difference; that in the fine old works the Heads are always most elaborated; – on the Flemish canvas, the least finished of any part; and yielding to the perfected polish of stew-pans and chamber pots: a preference most religiously observ'd by the cleverest disciples of that style at present. An instance of this appear'd in the last exhibition; where was a painting, in which, against the sky and distance, beautiful, intense, and above the Dutch perception, there came a woman's head; hard to tell, whether quite neglected or laboriously muzzed: the least perfect object in the piece; with a careful avoidance of all shape, roundness, and outline. But nature is not like this: I saw a lovely little rustic child this evening, which took my fancy so much, that I long, with tomorrow's light, God sparing me, to make a humble attempt to catch some of its graces: if I can atal succeed, it will be nothing Dutch, or boorish. Temporal Creation, whose beauties are, in their kind, perfect; and made, and adapted by the benevolent Authour to please all eyes, and gladden all hearts – seems to differ from images of the mind. [. . .]

The perfection of nature is not the perfection of severest art: they are two things: the former we may liken to an easy charming colloquy of intellectual friends; the latter is 'Imperial Tragedy'. *That*, is graceful humanity; *This*, is Plato's Vision. [. . .]

General nature is wisely and beneficently adapted to refresh the senses and sooth the spirits of general *observers*. We find hundreds in rapture when they get into the fields, who have not the least relish for grand art. General Nature is simple and lovely; but compared with the loftier vision, it is the shrill music of the 'Little herd grooms, Keeping their beasts in the budded-brooms; And crowing in pipes made of green corn', to the sound of the chant and great organ, pealing through dusky aisles, and reverberating in the dome; or the trombone and drums and cymbals of the banner'd march. Every where curious, articulate, perfect, and inimitable of structure, like her own entomology, Nature does yet leave a space for the soul to climb above her steepest summits: as, in her own dominion she swells from the herring to leviathan; from the hodmandod to the elephant, so divine Art piles mountains on her hills, and continents upon those mountains.

However, creation sometimes pours into the spiritual eye the radiance of Heaven: the green mountains that glimmer in a summer gloaming from the dusky yet bloomy East; the moon, opening her golden eye, or walking in brightness among innumerable islands of light, not only thrill the optic nerve, but shed a mild, a grateful an unearthly lustre into the inmost spirits, and seem the interchanging twilight of that peaceful country, where there is no sorrow and no night. After all, I doubt not but there must be the study of this creation, as well as art and vision; tho' I cannot think it other than the veil of heaven, through which her divine features are dimly smiling; the setting of the table before the feast, the symphony before the tune, the prologue of the drama; a dream of antepast and proscenium of eternity. I doubt not, if I had the wisdom to use it rightly (and who can so well instruct me as yourself?) it would prove a helpful handmaid and comate of art, tho' dissimilar; as mercury sympathizes with gold, learning with genius, and poetry, with reverence to speak it, with religion. [. . .]

I remain Dear Sir
Your obliged affectionate Servant
Samuel Palmer.

7 John Constable (1776–1837) Introduction to *English Landscape*

In 1829 Constable undertook the publication of a series of plates from his own paintings, to be engraved in mezzotint by David Lucas under his supervision. The finished collection of 22 images was issued in 1833. In its full form the title announced *Various Subjects of Landscape, Characteristic of English Scenery, principally intended to display the Phenomena of the Chiar'oscuro of Nature.* Constable's introduction went through a number of drafts, reaching the definitive form represented here in May 1833. Composed self-consciously to fulfil a public function, the painter's prose lacks the spontaneity and directness of his letters. The principal argument is clear, however: an art nourished at the 'Primitive Source' of nature is more likely to result in an original style than one based upon 'departed excellence', and though it may be harder to assimilate will prove in the end of more lasting value. In fact it was not to be until the late 1880s that Constable's importance was first widely acknowledged in England. In its original form the introduction was prefaced by quotations of poetry by Virgil, Thomson, Wordsworth and Ovid. It is reprinted in R. B. Beckett (ed.), *John Constable's Discourses*, Ipswich: Suffolk Records Society, volume XIV, 1970, pp. 9–10, from which source this text is taken.

The Author rests in the belief that the present collection of Prints of Rural Landscape may not be found wholly unworthy of attention. It originated in no mercenary views, but merely as a pleasing professional occupation, and was continued with a hope of imparting pleasure and instruction to others. He had imagined to himself certain objects in art, and has always pursued them.

Much of the Landscape, forming the subject of these Plates, going far to embody his ideas (owing perhaps to the rich and feeling manner in which they are engraved) he has been tempted to publish them, and offers them as the result of his own experience, founded as he conceives it to be in a just observation of natural scenery in its various aspects. From the almost universal esteem in which the Arts are now held, the Author is encouraged to hope that this work may not be found unacceptable, since perhaps no branch of the Art offers a more inviting study than Landscape.

> Soul-soothing Art! whom morning, noon-tide, even
> Do serve with all their fitful pageantry.

The immediate aim of the Author in this publication is to increase the interest for, and promote the study of, the Rural Scenery of England, with all its endearing associations, its amenities, and even in its most simple localities; abounding as it does in grandeur, and every description of Pastoral Beauty: England, with her climate of more than vernal freshness, and in whose summer skies, and rich autumnal clouds, 'with thousand liveries dight', the Student of Nature may daily watch her endless varieties of effect, for by him it is, that these changes are particularly observed: '*Multa vident Pictores in imminentia et in umbris quae nos non videmus*' [Painters perceive much which we do not see in things impending and in the shadows].– Cicero.

It is therefore perhaps in its professional character that this work may be most considered, so far as it respects the ART; its aim being to direct attention to the source of one of its most efficient principles, the 'Chiar'-oscuro of Nature', to mark the influence of light and shadow upon Landscape, not only in its general effect on the whole, and as a means of rendering a proper emphasis on the 'parts', in Painting, but also to show its use and power as a medium of expression, so as to note 'the day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade'. In some of these subjects of Landscape an attempt has been made to arrest the more abrupt and transient appearances of the Chiar'-oscuro in Nature; to shew its effect in the most striking manner, to give 'to one brief moment caught from fleeting time', a lasting and sober existence, and to render permanent many of those splendid but evanescent Exhibitions, which are ever occurring in the changes of external Nature.

In the selection of these subjects, a partiality has perhaps been given to those of a particular neighbourhood: some of them, however, may be more generally interesting, as the scenes of many of the marked historical events of our middle ages. The most of these subjects, chiefly consisting of home scenery, are from Pictures exhibited by the Author at the Royal Academy during the past few years; they are taken from real places, and are meant particularly to characterize the scenery of England; the effects of light and shadow being transcripts only of such as occurred at the time of being taken.

In Art as in Literature, however, there are two modes by which men endeavour to attain the same end, and seek distinction. In the one, the Artist, intent only on the study of departed excellence, or on what others have accomplished, becomes an imitator of their works, or he selects and combines their various beauties; in the other he seeks perfection at its Primitive Source, Nature. The one, forms a style upon the study of pictures, or the art alone; and produces, either 'imitative', 'scholastic', or that which has been termed 'Eclectic Art'. The other, by study equally legitimately founded in art, but further pursued in such a far more expansive field, soon finds for himself innumerable sources of study, hitherto unexplored, fertile in beauty, and by attempting to display them for the first time, forms a style which is original; thus adding to the Art, qualities of Nature unknown to it before.

The results of the one mode, as they merely repeat what has been done by others, and by having the appearance of that with which the eye is familiar, can be easily comprehended, soon estimated, and are at once received. Thus the rise of an artist in a sphere of his own must almost certainly be delayed; it is to time generally that the justness of his claims to a lasting reputation will be left; so few appreciate any deviation from a beaten track, can trace the indications of Talent in immaturity, or are qualified to judge of productions bearing an original cast of mind, of genuine study, and of consequent novelty of style in their mode of execution.

J. C. 35, Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square,
May, 1833.

8 John Constable (1776–1837) from 'Discourses'

Immediately following the publication of his *English Landscape*, Constable was invited to lecture to the Literary and Scientific Society of Hampstead, where he was then living, and chose as his theme 'An Outline of the History of Landscape Painting'. He followed this with a second lecture two years later, in June 1835, using prints, drawings and painted copies to illustrate the works he discussed. That autumn he lectured on the same theme at the Worcester Institution for promoting Literature, Science and the Fine Arts, now extending the series to three. It was then arranged for him to give a series of four lectures to the prestigious Royal Institution in London, before an audience drawn from the world of science as well as the arts. These took place at weekly intervals between 26 May and 16 June 1836, with Constable drawing so far as possible on works that could be seen in the National Gallery in London. On 25 July he gave a final lecture to the Literary and Scientific Society in Hampstead. His biographer C. R. Leslie attended all five of the latter lectures in London, taking careful notes. He later used these to represent the lectures in his *Memoirs of the Life of John Constable*. R. B. Beckett (see IB7) provides a more complete account of the Discourses, supplementing Leslie's text from Constable's own record of the first lecture in Hampstead, from press reports of the lectures in Worcester and from further surviving notes in the artist's hand. The effect, however, is to prove Leslie a reliable witness and a discriminating editor. We have therefore taken our extracts from his texts of the second, fourth and last lectures, as given in the *Memoirs*, second edition, London, 1845, pp. 342–4, 354–5 and 356–61. In the first lecture Constable provided a survey of the origins and early development of landscape in art, paying particular tribute to the work of Dürer and of Titian. In an opening section of the second lecture he gave enthusiastic accounts of the work of Poussin and Claude. In the third he dwelt on four exceptional examples of the genre, by Titian, Poussin, Rubens and Rembrandt. His conclusion to the series at the Royal Institution – that landscape painting deserved to be considered an experimental science – was no doubt made with the mixed composition of his audience in mind.

From Lecture II, Royal Institution, 26 May 1836

[. . .] 'The deterioration of art has every where proceeded from similar causes, the imitation of preceding styles, with little reference to nature. In Italy, the taste was for the beautiful, but the beautiful in the hands of the mannerists became the insipid, and from that descended to the unmeaning. In Germany a clumsy imitation of Italian art, and particularly of M. Angelo, produced inflation and bombast, as in the works of Goltzius and Sprangher; while in Flanders and Holland, the taste for the picturesque, when colour, chiaroscuro, and execution were gone, left only the coarse and the mean.

'The decline of history was parallel with that of landscape. What is termed the 'French taste', (as opposed to good taste) and which may be characterized as *romantic hyperbole*, began with Lucatelli, a pupil of Pietro da Cortona, who died about 1717. He