

In order to understand people and their relationships to landscapes, one must examine how society frames our experiences of place. Perceptions of place, including real, remembered and imagined landscapes, are augmented by personal contexts and varying experiences. The form of a text is influenced by the composer's social, historical and cultural background and is used to convey their ideas and beliefs, revealing their understanding of people and place, to the responder, effectively influencing the responder's construction and interpretation of landscapes.

The Art of Travel, by Alain de Botton, is a non-fiction text which explores the distinct stages and aspects of travel through a unique and contextually unusual manipulation of form in order to represent people and landscapes to the reader. The poem, The Solitary Reaper, is, by contrast, a lyrical ballad composed by William Wordsworth, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Romantic poet who promoted a 'revolutionary' spirit and favoured a re-evaluation of nature, the imagination, tradition and the working class. Wordsworth's manipulation of form demonstrates how our experiences of place can influence our personal and cultural identity, effectively rejecting the values of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century's Neo-Classical era and the rising ideals of industrialism and urbanisation.

De Botton's use of a conversational tone and extensive inclusion of personal reflections in The Art of Travel, conveys how we, as individuals within a broader society, are constantly longing, and searching, for an unfamiliar landscape. In 'On Anticipation', De Botton describes the transition into winter as 'gradual, like that of a person into old age' and also suggests 'occasional moments of reprieve' which '...were like false signs of recovery in a patient upon whom death has passed its sentence.' The tone of De Botton's reflection highlights his negative views of the bleak winter landscape, which he compares to 'old age' and an illness. He contrasts this image with his recollection of the previous summer through tactile and visual imagery such as '...intense heat...' and '...let my bare feet slip from my shoes to caress the grass...', as well as the effect of these desired sensations which is portrayed in the line '...and how this direct contact with the earth had brought with it a sense of freedom and expansiveness, summer breaking down the usual boundaries...', demonstrating his desire for the absent summer landscape. De Botton holds a stronger attraction to the remembered landscape of summer, than to the real and bleak landscape of winter with which he is presented. Through the use of a conversational and reflective tone in the text, De Botton illustrates how personal experiences and opinions shape understanding of

place, expressing the link between an individual's expectations and desire for lost landscapes, and their perception of real and remembered landscapes.

The Art of Travel is a multimodal text that integrates images in order to question the traditional views of landscapes present in society. The inclusion of Hopper's paintings such as 'Gas' and 'Automat' portray what De Botton describes as "...ignored, often derided landscapes..." with a common theme: loneliness. The paintings represent people who are isolated from the world. The characters "...seem far from home; they sit or stand alone...Their faces are vulnerable and introspective." Through the unusual settings of the paintings, De Botton suggests reasons for the characters' alienation such as 'They have perhaps just left someone or been left...'. De Botton's use of multimodal features such as paintings highlights how the portrayal of a landscape is directly linked to the audience's perception of the characters and stories depicted in a text or image, emphasising isolation in modern society, thus reflection modern alienation in society.

The Solitary Reaper conveys the connection between landscapes and personal identities, demonstrating how individuals are defined by place, and how it is through place that identities are developed. The poem is an eyewitness narration of a highland girl harvesting wheat in a field whilst singing. The poet adopts the fictional persona's perspective, reflecting nostalgia for the song, and more philosophically, ancient cultural traditions. Nostalgia for the song is shown through "The music in my heart I bore, /Long after it was heard no more". The 'music' symbolises lost values of Romanticism: nature and tradition.

The song of the reaper is compared, through metaphor, to the songs of the nightingale and the cuckoo, symbolising transcendence and implying faraway places. The persona longs for these distant lands which are alluded to through the lines '...shady haunt, /Among Arabian sands...', demonstrating the human desire for a different landscape. The clear nostalgia conveyed through the eyewitness narration and the distinctive form of Romantic lyric poetry allows the reader to understand how experiences with people and landscapes have influenced the persona's identity. Through his romantic lyrical ballad, Wordsworth comments on humanity's necessity for connection to land and traditional practices, implicitly critiquing industrialisation.

Alain de Botton's, The Art of Travel, and William Wordsworth's, The Solitary Reaper, are two texts composed in entirely different forms and historic contexts, which both represent people and

landscapes through the skilful manipulation of their text type, in order to shape our understanding of the connection between the individual and place.

