

of Chartres Cathedral, which I had recently seen and could not buy a postcard of because it didn't even remotely suggest the experience of seeing the original.

It was an experience that dogged my whole tour, the inability to buy a postcard (or even a more expensive reproduction) of anything just after I had been looking at it because then it was so unsatisfactory. Yet till then I had survived on nothing but reproductions of the paintings I loved.

A certain 'Sketch for Salisbury Cathedral' by Constable, that I had vowed to see, eluded me in London. All they had at the Victoria and Albert Museum were the white ones; either the sky, or the spire, or both, too white for the other colours he used. The one I wanted to find had been reproduced in colour in a little book over the caption 'Painting did not again reach these heights until Cézanne', a sentiment I had heartily endorsed. It was in Birmingham I found it, in the art gallery there. It was beside the doorway between the eighteenth century and nineteenth century rooms. Dr Mary Woodward, the director, saw my reaction and asked me, 'Was that worth coming to Birmingham for?' Indeed, it was. Then I looked on the opposite side of the doorway and saw another Constable, even more wonderful. It was called 'Sketch for the Cornfield' but it bore little resemblance to the popular 'finished' painting of that title, with its engaging detail of the dog, and the boy lying down to drink from a puddle. This painting was too deeply self-concerned to surface in recognisable detail. The paint in its sky boiled like a grey scum, the tree trunks writhed upward as in some druidical forest. The atmosphere was timeless, prehistoric. The colours were right for one another in it, there was no discrepant note of obvious realism. We haven't had painting like that in New Zealand—nor, often, anywhere in the world.

I was away four months, not long enough to feel homesick. I felt I could have lived in any of the countries I visited, particularly Spain, and painted there. If I had, how different would my painting have been, I wondered, from what it is? I noticed, in Athens and in Florence, that art for tourists was no different from what we offer here in shops and in art society exhibitions. Only the subject is different. This low-level painting seems to have a universal style. I suspect that the same is true of painting at a higher level, too. Nationality, when discernible, is not the most important feature of painting.

After I had been back in New Zealand for a few years I was taken for a drive to Waihou at the eastern extremity of the Bay of Plenty. On the way back my host directed me to go and ask permission to look at the carvings at the Maori meetinghouse at Te Kaha for a quarter of an hour, while he visited a friend. But the Maori lady at