



Original research

The Water Remembers It All: Landscape, Memory and the Music of Colour in Joni Mitchell's Paintings of the 1990s and 2000s

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Abstract

This article examines Joni Mitchell's landscape painting of the 1990s and early 2000s as a sustained engagement with place and recollection. Through close visual analysis of *Glacier Lake* (1993), *Morning B.C.* (1993), an untitled mountain landscape (1994), *40 Below 0* (1995), *Edmonton* (1996), and two untitled works from 2002, the article argues that water functions not simply as recurring subject matter but as a formal and mnemonic principle. It structures pictorial space, mediates relations between near and far, and transforms recognisable settings into scenes in which temporal distance and sensory recollection become visible. The discussion brings phenomenology, memory studies, landscape theory and intermediality into dialogue with close visual analysis and contextual evidence from Mitchell's interviews and archive. It treats the paintings as autonomous visual works, using musical contexts as comparative rather than causal evidence. The article proposes that Mitchell's paintings preserve the experience of having encountered a place rather than the place itself.

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1. Introduction

Joni Mitchell is widely recognised as a singer-songwriter, guitarist and composer, yet painting has also been a sustained and significant part of her artistic practice. Her visual work is not merely supplementary to her recordings: paintings appear in album packaging and exhibitions, and Mitchell has repeatedly described painting as a personal mode of thought. In a 2013 conversation with Jian Ghomeshi, she characterised the landscapes as deeply personal and described her paintings as “memories on the wall”:

...the painting's pretty straightforward, ... they're all personal moments like, ... they're like memories on the wall or there's a lot of where I come from in here... [the] land that I love, you know, the landscapes are all very personal landscapes. (Ghomeshi, 2013)

This statement offers a useful point of departure, although it does not mean that each painting should be read as a transparent autobiographical record.

The paintings discussed in this article largely date from the 1990s and early 2000s. During this period, Mitchell's work revisited earlier places, songs, and experiences without simply reproducing them. Albums like *Turbulent Indigo* (1994), *Taming the Tiger* (1998), *Both Sides Now* (2000), and *Travelogue* (2002) are, in various ways, late-career attempts at looking back. The paintings from this period reflect a temporal quality. The mountains, rivers, roads, snow, and shorelines are recognisable enough to suggest actual places, yet they cannot be defined solely by topographical details. What matters more is the experience attached to the place. The uneasy persistence of an earlier landscape remains in the present with coldness, distance, solitude, movement, and return. This resists easy interpretation as reflective photographic representation, turning the paintings into sites where experiences collide. The article argues that Mitchell's visual art is not secondary to her musical career but rather autonomous yet intermedially connected works through which landscape becomes a temporal and affective experience.

The article contributes a comparative account of water as both motif and compositional operation. Across the selected works, water reflects, separates, connects, receives light and alters the apparent stability of forms. Snow and ice extend this argument by presenting water in states that seem fixed yet remain tied to change. These variations allow us to consider landscape as an afterimage: not a literal optical phenomenon or a concept attributed to Mitchell, but an analytical metaphor for how a place persists in altered form through recollection.

2. Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology provides the first element of the framework. Maurice Merleau-Ponty rejected the idea that a subject first encounters a neutral world and then adds subjective meaning to it. The world is encountered through a body situated within it, and seeing is already an active relation between perceiver and environment (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1964): “The presence and absence of external objects are only variations within a field of primordial presence, a perceptual domain over which my body exercises power.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 106). This distinction is useful here because her descriptions of landscape repeatedly involve bodily sensation. Mitchell's own phrase “sense memory” (Mitchell, 1999, as quoted in Joni Mitchell, n.d.), used in connection with *40 Below*

O, provides an unusually direct link to phenomenological analysis. Phenomenology therefore helps distinguish Mitchell's painting from photographic documentation. The question shifts from simply what the place looked like to how the place was lived.

Memory studies clarify the distinction between a place and its recollection. Maurice Halbwachs's (1992) theory of collective memory can explain how Mitchell's landscapes function as repositories of recollection. Following this theory, a landscape acquires significance through the memories and cultural associations of an individual's engagement with a place. Edward S. Casey's (2000) phenomenological account of memory can further explain this relationship. Remembering is not confined to an abstract mental space; it is anchored in the places where experiences unfold and acquire sensory and emotional significance.

We can be moved back into this place as much as, and sometimes more than, into the time in which the remembered event occurred. Rather than thinking of remembering as a form of re-experiencing the past *per se*, we might conceive of it as an activity of re-implacing: re-experiencing past place ... Our remembering/remembered bodies are ineluctably place-bound; they are bound to be in a place, whether this place be a common or a special one. (Casey, Citation1987/2000, pp. 201-2)

Paul Ricoeur (2004) emphasises the interpretive complexity of remembering. As he writes, "To memory is tied an ambition, a claim—that of being faithful to the past" (p. 21). This formulation explains why, in Mitchell's landscape paintings, remembered places may be reconstructed through present perception and emotional association.

Landscape theory further prevents the paintings from being treated as faithful views of nature. Denis Cosgrove (1984, 1998) conceptualises landscape as a culturally constructed way of seeing, shaped by historically specific social relations and assumptions: "The landscape idea represents a way of seeing—a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships with it, and through which they have commented on social relations" (Cosgrove, 1998, p. 1). Again, W. J. T. Mitchell (2002) has argued that landscape should be understood not merely as an object of representation but as an active cultural process through which identities are formed. As he writes, landscape operates "as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed" (p. 1). This approach shifts attention from the mere depiction of geographical settings to the ways in which place, perception and personal identity are constituted through visual representation.

Rajewsky (2005) distinguishes among media combination, medial transposition, and intermedial reference. These can be used for examining the relationship between Mitchell's painting and music. Media combination involves the coexistence of different media within a single work. Medial transposition, by contrast, describes the transformation of a work from one medium into another. Intermedial reference occurs when a work evokes the conventions or expressive possibilities of another medium without abandoning its own material form. The third category is particularly relevant to this study, as it investigates the affinities between Mitchell's visual and musical practices without assuming that her paintings reproduce her songs or that her music translates her images.

Whitesell's (2008) musicological analysis provides a useful framework for understanding the structural complexity of Mitchell's musical practice. Discussing "Both Sides, Now", he observes that she "exploits redundancy for expressive purpose", using the repetition of harmonic patterns to produce a "world-weary tone" (p. 143). Gerry (2011) extends the discussion into the interarts domain and argues that Mitchell's songs and paintings "attempt to create multidimensional effects" through their engagement with different artistic forms (p. 210). He further identifies rhythm, rhyme and repetition as structures shared by her music, painting and poetry (p. 217).

Mitchell herself provides a compelling basis for examining the relationship between her painting and music. In a 1998 interview, she explains that her musical harmony is selected according to the same intuitive principles that govern her choice of colours: "My harmony is selected by my own interest in the same way that I would select to put that colour next to that colour" (Mitchell, 1998). She subsequently describes herself as "a painter who writes music" (Mitchell, 1998). Her analogy identifies a shared compositional sensibility in which juxtaposition, tonal variation and intuitive selection operate across visual and musical forms. In another interview, she likens major chords to primary colours and minor chords to their darkened variations (Mitchell, 1995).

This article argues that Joni Mitchell's landscape paintings of the 1990s and early 2000s transform place into a medium of embodied memory, through which colour and composition reconstruct the sensory, emotional and temporal dimensions of geographical experience. By bringing phenomenology, memory studies, landscape theory and intermediality into dialogue, it demonstrates that Mitchell's landscapes are not documentary representations of places but autonomous visual works in which recollection, personal identity and the compositional sensibility shared by painting and music converge.

3. Methodology

The study uses a purposive, interpretive sample of seven paintings dated between 1993 and 2002. The study selected works that feature water directly or through snow and ice, provide sufficient visual detail for close analysis, and are documented in Mitchell's official painting archive or the archive's associated interview material. The corpus comprises *Glacier Lake* (1993), *Morning B.C.* (1993), an untitled mountain landscape (1994), *40 Below 0* (1995), *Edmonton* (1996), and two untitled paintings from 2002. The method distinguishes three kinds of evidence: directly observable visual features; statements attributed to Mitchell in published or archived interviews; and the article's own interpretive inferences. The latter are considered readings rather than claims about authorial intention.

4. *Turbulent Indigo* (1994)

Released by Reprise Records on 25 October 1994, Mitchell's *Turbulent Indigo* emerged from her continuing engagement with artistic independence, social injustice and the responsibilities of creative expression. John Milward considered it "...Mitchell's best album since the mid-'70s and a work that is highly musical, poetic and very, very sad" (Milward, 1994). Her concerns are specific and varied. For instance, "The Magdalene Laundries" addresses the institutional persecution and

exploitation of women, "Not to Blame" confronts domestic violence, and "Sex Kills" examines the crises of AIDS, environmental degradation and social indifference. The title track, meanwhile, invokes Vincent van Gogh to explore the troubled relationship between artistic vision and public recognition, while "Sunny Sunday" and "Borderline" portray alienation and the divisions structuring modern life (Milward, 1994; Ruhlman, 1995). Mitchell herself commented on the album's ethical orientation in a contemporary interview, arguing that artists have "a big responsibility in every era to probe the rules by which we live, inquiring whether they serve us well" (Mitchell, 1994). The album cover, depicting Mitchell in the guise of Vincent van Gogh, makes the relationship between artistic vision and social rejection particularly explicit. (Kelly, 2000).

A 1994 Reprise promotional postcard booklet featuring reproductions of her paintings also documents the circulation of her visual work alongside the album. Rather than treating the paintings as visual counterparts to the album's lyrics, the discussion analyses selected artworks to show how colour, composition and spatial perception in Mitchell's painterly practice transform geographical settings into sites of memory and affect.

4.1 *Glacier Lake* (1993): Geological Time and Reflection in Solitude

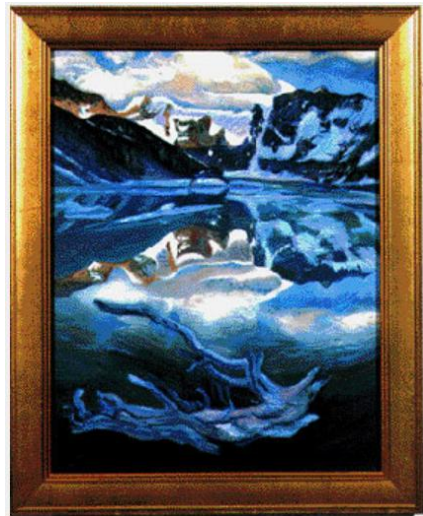


Figure 1. Joni Mitchell, *Glacier Lake* (1993), oil on canvas. Photograph reproduced from a 1994 Reprise Records promotional postcard booklet featuring Mitchell's original paintings to promote the release of *Turbulent Indigo* (1994). Source: Joni Mitchell Official Painting Archive.

<https://jonimitchell.com/paintings/view.cfm?id=108>

Mitchell's *Glacier Lake* (1993) brings geological scale into tension with the limits of human perception. The mountains dominate the upper half of the canvas, and their dark masses form a visual border around the distant snow-covered peaks. Their sheer scale minimises the implied presence of the human observer. The snow and exposed rock suggest accumulation and transformation that exceed the span of an individual life. Although the lake appears stable against this geological timescale, it remains inseparable from the movement of water and ice. The lake forms the compositional centre of the painting. Its blue surface reflects the surrounding mountains and sky, but it is not an immediate mirror image of the landscape. They appear as patches of blue, white and darker colours, creating a pictorial space. In this space, the represented landscape and its reflection remain visually connected without forming a replica, just like the

function of memory. Analysing any reminiscence involves returning to an experience, but this return is not simply the recovery of an untouched original. The past becomes noticeable through the conditions of the present, just as the mountains are encountered again in the altered form of their reflection. So the lake becomes a visual metaphor for recollecting memory, organising a relationship between presence and representation (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

The foreground symbolically conveys inner conflict and vulnerability. Dark, wavy structures surround the lower part of the composition, interrupted by pale blue and white patches. These distinctive structures create a fragmented and irregular appearance that contrasts with the solidity of the mountains. The luminous blues and whites may suggest clarity, openness, and serenity, but the whole image also conveys darkness, fragmentation, and visual uncertainty. The experience of solitude may suggest the decentering of human existence in the larger material world. Thus, finally, Mitchell's painting can be interpreted as a meditation on the limits of perception and the persistence of material change.

4.2 *Morning B.C.* (1993): Water and the Poetics of Memory



Figure 2. *Morning B.C.* (1993). Oil on canvas. Reproduced from a 1994 Reprise Records promotional postcard booklet accompanying the release of *Turbulent Indigo* (1994). Source: Joni Mitchell Official Painting Archive.

<https://jonimitchell.com/paintings/view.cfm?id=178>

Mitchell's *Morning B.C.* (1993) offers an important point of departure for understanding water as a medium of memory in her visual art. It presents an expansive field of blue water beneath a layered, cloud-filled sky, with dark wooded forms in the foreground and small islands or landmasses receding into the middle distance. Mitchell constructs the canvas through successive spatial zones with vegetation, water, distant land and sky. The layers create visual movement from proximity to remoteness and draw the viewer into the landscape rather than merely surveying it. Water here mediates between the observing subject and the world beyond immediate reach. Again, blue connects water and atmosphere, making the boundary between material surface and sky fluid. The dark foreground, by contrast, provides a visual threshold from which the distant landscape appears available to contemplation. Through Edward S. Casey's (2000) perspective,

Morning B.C. becomes a visual articulation of place-memory, in which the landscape is recalled not as a static image but reconstituted through perception.

Paul Ricoeur's (2004) account of memory and forgetting further clarifies the theme of presence and absence in the artwork. For Ricoeur, recollection involves a complex relation between the past and its representation in the present and it does not simply restore what has disappeared. In *Morning B.C.*, the distant islands remain visible, yet their separation from the foreground prevents their full perceptual recovery. The water sustains this tension with its apparent stillness, thus becoming a condition of temporal ambiguity. Memory, like the painted water, makes the absent perceptible without abolishing the distance that separates it from the present.

4.3 *Untitled* (1994): Mountain, Luminous Water and Atmospheric Uncertainty



Figure 3. *Untitled* (1994). Oil on canvas. Reproduced from a 1994 Reprise Records promotional postcard booklet accompanying the release of *Turbulent Indigo* (1994). Source: Joni Mitchell Official Painting Archive. <https://jonimitchell.com/paintings/view.cfm?id=456>

Mitchell's *Untitled* (1994) presents landscape as a perceptual experience, marked by solidity and dissolution. She constructs the composition through dramatic contrasts of elevation, colour and light. An imposing formation of blue mountain peaks descends towards a luminous expanse of pale water. The mountain ridges occupy the foreground and middle distance, while successive ranges recede into a cooler, less sharply defined horizon. This spatial arrangement establishes depth, yet complicates the distinction between solid terrain and the surrounding atmospheric field.

The painting's most striking feature is its chromatic intensity. Deep cobalt and ultramarine blues dominate the mountain formations, articulating their angular surfaces and accentuating the steepness of the ridges. These colours, however, do not function exclusively as naturalistic descriptions of rock, shadow or snow. Their expressive force emerges through their juxtaposition with the luminous expanse to the left, where pale gold, cream and delicate pink tones suggest the diffusion of light across water, mist or a distant atmospheric surface. From Merleau-Ponty's (1964) phenomenology of painting, this mountain landscape can be understood as an encounter between the visible world and the perceptual activity through which it acquires significance.

4.4 *40 Below 0* (1995): Snow as Frozen Water and the Mass of Memory



Figure 4. *40 Below 0* (1995). Oil on linen, 28 × 32 × 1¾ in. Source: Joni Mitchell's official painting archive. <https://jonimitchell.com/paintings/view.cfm?id=4>

Mitchell's *40 Below 0* (1995), is an extension of her treatment of water as a medium of memory. The work originated in a winter journey through the Saskatchewan prairies near Prince Albert, where Mitchell encountered an apparently desolate landscape transformed by the interplay of snow, ice and low sunlight. In an interview with Renee Engel, she recalled the blues and lilacs of the snow, its loose drifts and the "glassy ice" beneath the road, describing the experience as a form of "sense memory" (Mitchell, 1995a). The central paradox emerges from the contrast between its title and its chromatic intensity. The extreme cold announced by *40 Below 0* suggests physical hostility, yet the winter landscape is illuminated by pink, lilac, yellow and gold. Mitchell recalled that the snow appeared pink in the setting sun and the skies lilac and yellow, producing an extraordinary rush of colour despite the potentially lethal temperature (Brooke, 2000). There is a discrepancy between environmental conditions and the visual appearance associated with winter, with monochromatic austerity. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962) phenomenology of perception offers a way to approach this contradiction. The luminous surface that preserves the fleeting effects of sunlight and renders the experience of cold visually elusive can be read as a kind of medium reflecting memory.

The road introduces a further tension between movement and suspension. Cutting through the snowy expanse, it directs the eye towards the distant horizon and establishes a trajectory through the landscape. However, its apparent emptiness cancels the expectation of arrival. The road is both a route through geographical space and a compositional line that holds the viewer within an extended present. Mitchell's attachment to Saskatchewan further complicates any reading of the painting as picturesque scenery. Robert Enright (2000) identifies the enduring significance of the prairie landscape in her visual art, while Brooke (2000) documents her practice of returning to Canada for renewal. Such accounts establish the biographical context within which the painting's landscape becomes meaningful.

4.5 *Edmonton* (1996): The River as Mnemonic Bridge

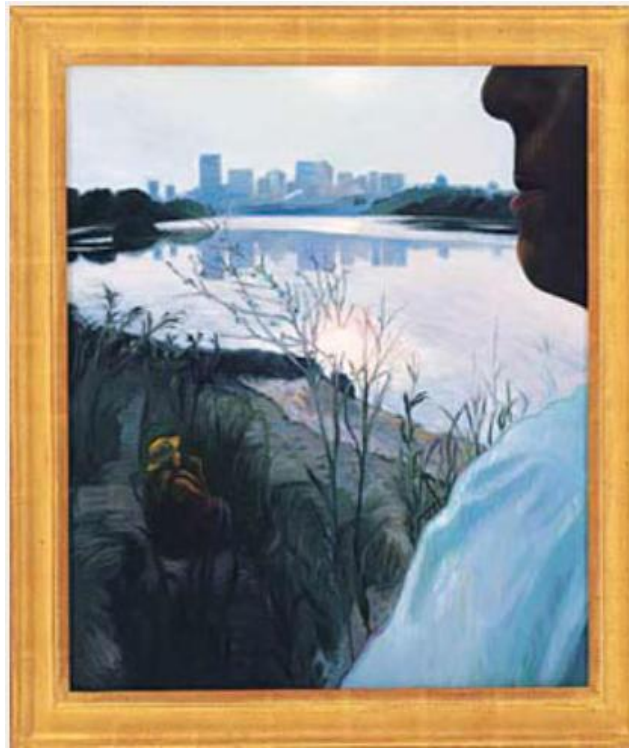


Figure 6. *Edmonton* (1996). Acrylic on canvas, 28¼ × 24¼ × 2½ inches. Source: Joni Mitchell's official painting archive. <https://jonimitchell.com/paintings/view.cfm?id=99>

Classified in the artist's official archive under "Late Figurative, Landscapes and Neo-Classicism", Mitchell's *Edmonton* (1996) offers one of the most explicit articulations of landscape as autobiographical memory in her visual art. In her 1999 interview with René Engel, Mitchell identifies the North Saskatchewan River, the Edmonton skyline, a footbridge and a bicycle path (Engel, 1999):

This is Edmonton, Alberta. ... The Edmonton skyline came up late and fast because of oil money and is mostly glass buildings, so from a distance the pink glass or blue glass... And in the bend in the river there is a foot bridge or a bicycle bridge, and there's a bicycle path that comes along this side, again, right at that point that stands out at the left-hand side...

She identified the foreground figure,

The figure in the foreground is my boyfriend who's from my hometown. Donald and I grew up playing on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River, and one of the reasons that a lot of these images of he and I -- well, they're not all here -- they take place -- we have a Saskatoon, Saskatchewan thing about walking in parks.

The painting brings two distinct geographies into a single pictorial field. The North Saskatchewan River belongs to the immediate circumstances of the depicted scene, whereas the South Saskatchewan River evokes the landscape of Mitchell's childhood. Geographically separate, these rivers become connected through the presence of the figure and the act of recollection. The place

represented becomes a point of return to another place, making the landscape simultaneously local and autobiographical.

Read in terms of Edward S. Casey's (2000) phenomenological account of remembering, *Edmonton* does not simply reproduce a remembered childhood landscape. Instead, the present environment activates associations through which an earlier landscape becomes perceptually and emotionally available. Donald's presence is crucial to this process. As a companion associated with Mitchell's formative geography, he links the depicted scene to experiences that precede it. The skyline signifies economic development and urban transformation, while the river provides a geographical continuity against which such change becomes perceptible. The composition also encourages a temporal experience of looking. The foreground figure, the river, the bridge and the distant skyline establish successive points through which the eye travels. This movement may be read as a visual analogue of recollection, carrying the viewer from immediate presence towards a more distant horizon of personal history. Such an interpretation matches with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1962) understanding of perception as embodied engagement rather than detached observation.

5. *Travelogue* (2002)

Released by Nonesuch Records on 19 November 2002, Joni Mitchell's *Travelogue* revisits her earlier songwriting through newly arranged orchestral versions of songs. Developed with arranger and conductor Vince Mendoza, the double album transforms familiar compositions through orchestral textures, altered tempos and reflective vocal performances. Rather than simply reproducing earlier recordings, *Travelogue* reinterprets them from the perspective of an artist looking back across her creative life. Its recurring concerns with place, departure, memory and the passage of time make it relevant for examining Mitchell's landscape paintings from the same period. Two separately catalogued landscapes from 2002 in her official painting archive establish this contemporaneous presence of painting within her artistic practice (JoniMitchell.com, n.d.). These works are considered here not as illustrations of particular songs, but as independent visual compositions in which colour, atmosphere and spatial relationships evoke the experience of recollection.

5.1 *Untitled* (2002): Moonlight and the Temporality of Memory

Joni Mitchell's *Untitled* (2002), which "accompanied the 2002 release 'Travelogue' but wasn't featured in the package" (Mitchell, 2002) presents a nocturnal scene in which a luminous moon occupies the upper portion of the composition and its reflection illuminates a narrow expanse of water below. Dark coniferous trees frame the scene on either side. Their irregular silhouettes enclose the distant shoreline and the luminous centre. The moon and its reflection establish the painting's principal axis. Positioned above the distant horizon, the moon appears relatively contained, its pale centre surrounded by concentric halos of blue and muted white. Its reflection, however, expands across the water into an irregular column of white, pink and warm reddish light. The relationship between the two therefore introduces a productive distinction between presence and representation.



Figure 5. *Untitled* (2002). Oil on canvas. Source: Joni Mitchell's official painting archive.
<https://jonimitchell.com/paintings/view.cfm?id=342>

Mitchell uses various colours to intensify this ambiguity. Deep blues dominate the sky, the distant landscape and the shadows of the trees and establish a chromatic continuity that binds the different elements of the composition. Against this cool field, the moon's pale radiance and the reflection's pinkish-white luminosity acquire exceptional intensity. The association with *Travelogue* (Mitchell, 2002a) adds a further temporal dimension. The album revisits earlier compositions through new arrangements. This shows how artistic return can transform familiar material through a later perspective. So, the painting can be considered alongside this process without assuming a direct correspondence between particular songs and pictorial presentation. Its moonlit water similarly invites an understanding of return as transformation. Light reappears in reflection, but never in precisely the same form. The past, like the moon's image upon the water, becomes perceptible through mediation rather than recovered intact.

5.2 *Untitled* (2002): Landscape as Afterimage

In Mitchell's landscape paintings, place persists not merely as a remembered geographical setting but as an afterimage, a visual impression transformed by temporal distance, emotional experience and the act of recollection. *Untitled* (2002) attests to this statement. It presents a seascape organised around the contrast between turbulent foreground waves and a golden expanse of water beneath a muted, cloud-filled sky (Mitchell, 2002c). A small orange sun hovers above the distant horizon, and indistinct landforms establish a barely perceptible boundary between sea and sky. Unlike the nocturnal atmosphere of the previous painting, this work derives its expressive force from the interaction of warm luminosity and restless movement. Its significance lies in the way the changing surface of water becomes a medium through which distance, atmosphere and the temporal experience of looking are brought into relation.



Figure 6. *Untitled* (2002). Oil on canvas, landscape painting associated with the release of *Travelogue* (2002). Source: Joni Mitchell's official painting archive. <https://jonimitchell.com/paintings/view.cfm?id=345>

Mitchell structures the canvas by a pronounced contrast between foreground and distance. In the lower portion of the canvas, dark-edged waves, grey-blue passages and broken white brushes accentuate the instability of moving water. These irregular forms have a material intensity that draws the viewer toward the immediate surface of the sea. Beyond them, however, the water, reflecting the subdued light of the sun, takes a predominantly golden-yellow appearance. The sea thus becomes a field of changing tonal relationships in which turbulence gradually gives way to luminous expansiveness. This movement encourages the eye to travel from the tactile immediacy of the foreground towards the distant horizon, where the landscape loses definition and merges with the sky.

The golden water contrasts with the cooler grey-blue waves and the subdued pinks, creams and blues of the sky. The small orange sun provides a concentrated point of warmth without becoming the sole centre of attention in the composition. Its modest scale is particularly significant. It suggests that the sun's visual influence extends far beyond its physical presence. Light is represented as an agent of pictorial change. The sea receives and disperses its illumination, producing a surface that appears simultaneously material and transient. Mitchell's handling of colour thus makes the landscape legible through relationships rather than through sharply delineated objects.

6. Conclusion: What the Water Remembers

The discussion reveals that water functions as a unifying medium through which Joni Mitchell explores the relationship between geographical place, temporal distance and remembered experience. Across the landscapes associated with *Turbulent Indigo* (1994) and *Travelogue* (2002), water connects otherwise distinct scenes without erasing their differences. Its changing forms and appearances provide visual continuity, allowing the experience of place to acquire meaning

beyond its immediate geographical setting. What emerges is not a single autobiographical narrative but a network of associations in which landscape becomes inseparable from the act of remembering.

This continuity depends on transformation rather than repetition. Water, whether encountered as a reflective surface, a river, frozen snow or a restless sea, makes visible the relationship between persistence and change. Its capacity to receive and alter images offers a compelling analogy for recollection, through which the past becomes perceptible without being restored intact. Water also provides a point of continuity between Mitchell's visual and musical practices. As her own comparison of harmonic selection with the arrangement of colours suggests, painting and music can share compositional principles while retaining their distinct expressive possibilities (Mitchell, 1998). The recurrence of water across the paintings may therefore be understood as a form of visual variation: a familiar element acquires different meanings through changes in colour, composition, atmosphere and spatial arrangement. Ultimately, water unifies these paintings through its capacity to make the relationship between presence and recollection visible. Water thus becomes a mnemonic thread binding landscape to memory and continuity to transformation.

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