

**The Gothic Gaze:  
The Perception of the Ruined Abbey and  
Anti-Catholicism in the Long Eighteenth  
Century**

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**Author's declaration**

The work contained in this thesis is entirely my own. The views expressed are entirely my own, and not those of the University of Stirling.

## *Abstract*

This thesis is an examination of the perception of the ruined abbey and its relationship to anti-Catholicism in the long eighteenth century. An analysis of antiquarian literature, Graveyard School poetry and Gothic novels will show how they collectively shaped the perception of the ruined abbey in the eighteenth century. This way of viewing the abbey is given the term 'the Gothic gaze' – a way of seeing the ruined abbey with a mixture of pleasure and fear, with a conciliatory attitude towards the Catholic faith. This thesis argues that the destroying of the monasteries in the sixteenth century was not an overwhelmingly anti-Catholic activity, accelerated more by opportunism rather than a desire to extinguish Catholicism from the country. This evaluation works as a backdrop to the rest of the thesis. It demonstrates that their appearance on the landscape was more than just a physical reminder of Britain's rejection of Catholicism. An analysis of antiquarian attitudes to the ruined abbey demonstrates a conciliatory relationship to the monastery's Catholic past. Even those vociferously opposed to acknowledging this past respond to the site with religious emotional resonance. Further study of Graveyard School poetry and Gothic narratives show how they shaped the perception of the ruin. Graveyard poems articulated the unquantifiable response to mortality and described ruinous scenes using tropes that became synonymous with the genre – the gloomy, mouldering pile, overgrown with ivy, harbouring the solitary animal, bathed in moonlight. Many of these tropes were borrowed by writers of the Gothic, some explicitly so. These stories contained anti-Catholic themes, yet this thesis will argue that they were not all written to embolden or further a religious agenda. Three case studies demonstrate how visitors to the ruined abbey, attracted in part by the gruesome and macabre anti-Catholic tales of the Gothic, took a respectful and earnest interest in the monastery's Catholic past. Assessing the perception of the ruined abbey challenges the way anti-Catholicism is considered and calls for a reassessment of the British anti-Catholic mindset in the eighteenth century.

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## *Dedication*

For Leia,  
2012 - 2020.  
You brought us so much joy.

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## Introduction

On a summer's day in 1799, the Wye Valley, in South Wales, reverberated to the sound of 'Rule Britannia'.<sup>1</sup> The Beaufort family had travelled down the river Wye with a twenty-piece orchestra. Upon arriving at the ruins of Tintern Abbey the family disembarked to explore, leaving the band to eat their lunch

and when the family returned to the boat, to proceed on their excursion, the band struck up the national air of 'Rule Britannia' – which, when the chorus parts united, the sound of the horns, added to the loud clangor of the cymbals, produced an effect in these high, rocky, woody, and confined regions, far beyond the power of language to express, adequate to its just reward.<sup>2</sup>

This effusive exhibition made in front of the ancient and ruinous Cistercian monastery was in sharp contrast to the abbey's subdued and pious beginnings. The above scene was a far more dramatic event than any that would have occurred regularly at the ruins of an abbey in the eighteenth century, but there is an aspect of truth hidden amidst the fanfare. The popularity for visiting ruined abbeys, the once forgotten objects of Britain's ancient religious past, grew considerably as the eighteenth century progressed. This is reflected in the production of large swathes of literature and artwork dedicated to them. Hundreds of paintings, etchings and engravings were made, depicting dramatic landscapes with the ruined abbey as their focal point. Typically, the ruins would be pictured sitting alone in a lushly green valley, draped in ivy, joined only by one or two lone figures and perhaps their dog, admiring the beauty of the decaying erstwhile monument built for God (see Figure 0-1).

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Ancient and Present State of Tintern Abbey* (Monmouth: Longman, 1828).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



Figure 0-1. Frederick Calvert, *The Grand West Entrance of Tintern Abbey*, 1815, aquatint, 41.6 x 53.8 cm, The National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, <http://hdl.handle.net/10107/1133754>.

This thesis will examine how these ruins came to be revered in a country where the Catholic religion which had built them was treated with suspicion, and at times fear. It will focus on the role played by the Gothic novel and its literary lineage, and how this helped shape how the ruins were perceived. This will be done through a concept known as the ‘Gothic Gaze’.<sup>3</sup> Through the lens of descriptions popularised by the Gothic novel, this thesis will show how language used in these stories shaped how the ruined abbey was viewed in the landscape. This way of gazing at the ruined abbey is given the label ‘Gothic’ in this thesis because perceiving ruins like this became popular by means of the Gothic novel. However, this thesis will show how the language used in these stories was influenced by antiquarian literature and the poets writing in the Graveyard School style, which preceded the Gothic genre. In conjunction with this will be a focus on the role which anti-Catholicism played amidst this perception of the ruined abbey.

<sup>3</sup> This term has been used in Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., ‘Framing the Gothic: From Pillar to Post-Structuralism,’ *College Literature* 28, no. 3 (Fall, 2001), but it is used briefly and left undefined.

The spectre of Britain's old religion loomed large over the ruins in an age where Catholicism was by no means universally accepted and was at the centre of civil disturbances such as The Gordon Riots of 1780, which were a reaction to the Papists Act of 1778, an act which called for toleration of Catholics. Diane Long Hoeveler argues that the authors of Gothic novels written from 1780 to 1880 'were politically and ideologically invested in the anti-Catholic campaign'.<sup>4</sup> This thesis challenges this stance by bringing nuance to Hoeveler's assertion. Gothic novels certainly contained anti-Catholic tropes, using monastic ruins as a backdrop to tales of the supernatural and the unknown, but many of the authors, such as Horace Walpole and Matthew Lewis, were writing not with an anti-Catholic agenda but as part of a style created in large part by antiquarian study and graveyard poetry. Whilst the terrifying tales of monkish superstition such as Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) inspired many to explore their local ruined monastery, these Gothic narratives were viewed as flights of fancy, rather than as serious anti-Catholic commentary. The popularity of the ruined abbey at the end of the eighteenth century was not despite its Catholic past, but because of it. Anti-Catholicism was not as endemic throughout society or certainly not as prevalent as Hoeveler has argued. The interest in ruined abbeys by the end of the eighteenth century was largely defined by an earnest and respectful interest in the building's past.

### *The Ruined Abbey and Anti-Catholicism*

The study of ruined abbeys within the landscape is a well-trodden path, as is the study of anti-Catholicism in Britain, yet there exists very little work which looks at how one influenced the perception of the other.<sup>5</sup> This thesis argues that anti-Catholicism in the context of the ruined abbey needs to be reassessed. This is not to discount the scale of anti-Catholic feeling in Britain in the eighteenth century. Hoeveler, whose work on the 'gothic

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<sup>4</sup> Diane Long Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 48.

<sup>5</sup> For anti-Catholicism: Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993); Diane Long Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014); Alison Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy and the English Literary Imagination, 1558 – 1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Edward R. Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London: Routledge, 2019). Significant contributions are also made within larger bodies of work, such as: Linda Colley, *Britons* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992). For perception of the ruined abbey: Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Alexandra Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin, 1991); Rose Macaulay, *The Pleasure of Ruins* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1953); Margaret Aston, 'English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973).

ideology' is a study of the development and growth of the popularity of Gothic novels in Britain in the eighteenth century, states that 'the ghost of Roman Catholicism continued to haunt the British Protestant imaginary'.<sup>6</sup> Tessa Watt considers how Protestant ideas were disseminated in England through ballads, chapbooks and woodcuts, and that these works are important as being a window into the process of 'culture formation'.<sup>7</sup> Hoeveler shows that in the eighteenth century anti-Catholic attitudes increased, specifically through the rise of the Whigs, who consciously used the Gothic as a means to demonise Catholics within the public sphere. They were playing on centuries old anti-Catholic stereotypes of the 'tyrannical and hypocritical inquisitor, the lecherous monk or the lesbian nun'.<sup>8</sup> Hoeveler argues that these vivid images were then able to be spread easily and quickly throughout society. This point is also made by Linda Colley who discusses the influence of such media. She argues that many believed what was being printed because of the amount of cheap printed matter that 'flooded from Britain's abundant printing presses'.<sup>9</sup> They were loaded with a jumble of sensationalist information combined with 'an endlessly popular diet of jingoism, abuse of Catholics, and predictions of the downfall of the Pope and the French'.<sup>10</sup> Anti-Catholic literature such as this were read by many, and for them became their source of history. These publications would certainly have had an impact on the way people perceived the Catholic faith, yet there is little consideration given to how influential the anti-Catholic sentiment in the literature was. Furthermore, there is little attention given over to the motivations behind writing what is perceived to be the most pervasive anti-Catholic literature, the Gothic novel. Through an exploration of the ruined abbey this thesis will demonstrate how anti-Catholic sentiment was either not as rampant in Britain as has been previously stated or that exceptions were made for ancient monuments which were seen as harmless.

Maria Purves takes a different stance from most; using a collection of Gothic novels, she argues that not all of their narratives were vehemently anti-Catholic, that in fact 'it was a climate of sympathy that made possible the sympathetic representations of Catholicism in the Gothic novels'.<sup>11</sup> She goes further and asserts that there was a multitude of opinions

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<sup>6</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 26.

<sup>9</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Maria Purves, *The Gothic and Catholicism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009), 2.

within Gothic literature concerning Catholicism and that they should be scrutinised and more questions need to be asked of famous Gothic novels which are considered to be entirely anti-Catholic. Purves argues that critics of novels such as Lewis's *The Monk*, published in 1796, become too obsessed with the virulently anti-Catholic opening pages.<sup>12</sup> This thesis will build upon her argument. Most Gothic stories contained anti-Catholic sentiment, but many were exaggerated versions which did not repulse but attracted many visitors to the ruined abbeys upon which the stories were based. This thesis demonstrates that most writers did not pick up their pens to send a direct anti-Catholic message. Instead, many used tropes and language which had their origins in the Graveyard School of poetry. The result of these stories was not the sowing of more fear of Catholicism, but the establishment of a fascination surrounding the ruined abbeys upon which many of the terrifying tales were based.

Deborah Kennedy considers how poetry itself affected the perception of the ruined abbey.<sup>13</sup> She highlights how the image of ruined monasteries became so popular in the eighteenth century that a poet could simply refer to an abbey in general, using a language of common features, many of which were similar to those found in graveyard poetry or poems about grottos or hermitages, with their comparable settings.<sup>14</sup> Kennedy also looks at how anti-Catholicism was one of the main tenets in the shaping of antiquarian literature, which she demonstrates had an influence on Gothic literature. Kennedy's work is detailed but some assertions are at times too general, and this thesis will expand on them in more detail.

There are far more romantic and sentimental assessments of the ruined abbey such as Rose Macaulay's *The Pleasure of Ruins* (1953), lamenting the loss of mystery and nostalgic awe from the ruined abbeys of Britain, due to the repurposing of the structures into manor houses or for farm use.<sup>15</sup> Macaulay writes in dramatic language about lost ruins in the English countryside. Her adoration for ruins is so strong she rejoices at the death of a Southampton builder who was in the process of dismantling parts of Netley Abbey but was 'crushed to death by the fall of the west window, and serve him right'.<sup>16</sup> This is of course an extreme view of the sanctity of ruined monasteries in the face of modernisation. It is the idea

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>13</sup> Deborah Kennedy, 'The Ruined Abbey in the Eighteenth Century,' *Philological Quarterly* 80, no.4 (2001).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 509.

<sup>15</sup> Macaulay, *The Pleasure of Ruins*, 335.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 340.

of modernity and the ruined abbey which Hoeveler highlights and places in the context of Gothic fiction. She asserts that there was a nostalgia for a lost architectural heritage that was mingled with an ambivalent embrace of a very different, vaguely modernising, and secularising ethos.<sup>17</sup>

Britain was certainly not a secular society in the long eighteenth century. Linda Colley uses examples of the influence of Protestantism; she highlights a protest in Kent in 1829 which was attended by sixty thousand people who were protesting the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act. Colley argues that these protests, which were by no means uncommon across Britain during this period, demonstrably show how important and significant 'Protestantism was in shaping the way that ordinary Britons viewed and made sense of the land they lived in'.<sup>18</sup> Colley's assertion is astute, yet it requires more nuance. As Colley herself states, the protests in 1829 were paltry compared to the mass unrest in response to the Papist Act in 1778 which sparked the Gordon Riots.<sup>19</sup> Colin Haydon stresses that the anti-Papist stance was more to do with a faceless 'other', rather than say a Protestant and their Papist neighbour.<sup>20</sup> Through all this tumult the interest in the ruined abbey with its Catholic baggage only increased. It may have been because it was only emblematic of a distant Catholicism from the past, rather than what was perceived to be the real threat, Catholics from Europe. This is comparable in sentiment to Eamon Duffy's assertion that the antiquarian movement of Tudor and early Stuart England, finding delight and reverence in ruins of the old religion, was a 'trojan horse' through embattled Protestantism deriving pleasure from Catholic buildings.<sup>21</sup> This pleasure that is derived from Catholic ruins in an eighteenth-century context is a key theme that runs throughout this study. It is explored by analysing both material and literary culture. This produces a more nuanced examination of how the ruined abbey, with its many symbols and reminders of Catholicism were perceived in an age when that religion was much maligned.

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<sup>17</sup> Diane Long Hoeveler, 'The Heroine, the Abbey and Popular Romantic Textuality: The Romance of the Forest (1791)' in *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic*, eds. Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 109.

<sup>18</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 337.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>20</sup> Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England*, 11-12.

<sup>21</sup> Eamon Duffy, 'Bare ruined choirs: remembering Catholicism in Shakespeare's England' in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, eds. Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay and Richard Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 53.

### *The Ruined Abbeys of Britain*

The demise of Britain's abbeys and nunneries began with Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries which oversaw the dissolving and destruction of numerous religious houses in the 1530s and 40s, such as Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire and Glastonbury Abbey in Somerset. The monasteries were extremely wealthy institutions, and Henry seized the opportunity to both gain financially, by stripping them of their valuable assets, and also symbolically, by breaking from Papal authority. Those abbeys which were not repurposed for secular use were abandoned, with parts being intermittently purloined for building materials from the Dissolution onwards, such as Roche Abbey and Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire. Edward VI, Henry's son, was a devout Protestant and would ascend the throne in 1547. This would lead to further stripping back of Catholic iconography and ceremony within parish churches. Edward's reign would only last for six years, the end of his reign would herald in the Catholic Mary I, leading to a return of the Catholic mass as well as other symbols of the ancient religion which had been outlawed. The theological differences of the monarchs provide a small insight into the tumultuous path for religion in Britain.

The course for Catholicism, in the intervening years between Mary's reign and the eighteenth century, is incredibly complex. It is important to note also that throughout this tumultuous period Protestantism was not a homogeneous orthodoxy. Significant epochs such as the interregnum period including Oliver Cromwell's commonwealth, the restoration of Charles II, and the Glorious Revolution of the Protestant William and Mary in 1688, were all contributing factors in changing attitudes towards Protestantism as well as Catholicism in Britain. There were several splits within the Church of England itself, Puritan attitudes towards Calvinism varied, and Arminian Puritans were even deemed to be too similar to Catholics.<sup>22</sup> The most significant of these splits would lead to the English Civil War, as Charles I and Archbishop William Laud were accused of trying to undo the effects of the Reformation.<sup>23</sup> There also remained a minority of steadfast support for the Catholic church represented most overtly by the Jacobites. They were supporters of James II, deposed during the Glorious Revolution. The Jacobite cause lasted until the 1740s when it was ultimately put down in 1746 at the Battle of Culloden. The militant activities of the Jacobites helped to create a fear of Catholicism further intensified by continued wars with Catholic Spain and France. The complexity of religious differences throughout Britain therefore does not allow

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<sup>22</sup> Christopher Hill, *A Century of Revolution: 1603 – 1714* (London: Routledge, 2002), 80.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

for a thorough assessment of each denomination of the Church of England and their consequent attitudes towards Catholic ruinous remains on the landscape. Instead, this thesis will focus on literature in the eighteenth century and how they portrayed these monastic ruins. It will first ground the perception of the ruined abbey in the sixteenth century as the monasteries were being dissolved, in order to demonstrate their value to both the community and as a totem of the Catholic faith. It will then compare these attitudes to the language and tropes found in the literature of the eighteenth century focusing on antiquarian writing, graveyard poetry and Gothic novels. It shows that the hysterical and exaggerated version of the sixteenth century Catholic faith portrayed in this literature had very little grounding in the realities of that century.

The parameters of this thesis have been defined to within the 'long eighteenth century', commonly accepted as being from c.1700 to c.1850. This is to signify that the emphasis is placed on the perception of the abbey between these two dates. However, such is the complicated nature of defining the Gothic gaze, it will at times cross these boundaries in order to show more fully the origins or the legacies of the concept. The first chapter, concerning the start of the Reformation in England is one such example. This chapter provides necessary background and a counterpoint for how the dismantling of abbeys was perceived by those living through the Dissolution compared to the portrayal in Gothic novels. There are also sources featured in the Fountains Abbey and Melrose Abbey case studies which go much later into the nineteenth century, and this is to show the strength of certain legacies which had sustained past the long eighteenth century.

### ***Ways of Seeing the Ruined Abbey***

The practical location and context within which the ruins were seen is an important aspect of understanding how the ruined abbey was perceived throughout the long eighteenth century. This thesis will demonstrate that there was a prescribed idea for the best place to admire ruins, and this idealised way of seeing them became part of the language of viewing the ruined abbey. This study will emphasise the importance of William Gilpin and Thomas Gray as catalysts in changing how ruins were viewed in the landscape. Gray and Gilpin placed new values upon the experience of visiting the ruined abbey. Their influence upon literature and guidebooks respectively was substantial. They both toured through Britain individually, indeed it was Gilpin's manuscript of his trip along the River Wye which would inspire Gray to experience the landscape in a way which would be emulated by so many

others in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Gilpin's manuscript would be published as *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1782) over a decade after it had inspired Gray and would become a proto guidebook for tourists seeking out the picturesque. Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (1751) would inspire others to think and subsequently write about churchyards, cemeteries, and ecclesiastical ruins in a new way. Furthermore, both Gray and Gilpin contributed considerably towards language used in the Gothic novel to describe such sites.

As this is ostensibly a study on gazing upon and perceiving the ruined abbey it is important to establish how this was done in the eighteenth century. John Brewer explains how scientific development and the growing popularity for taxonomy in nature changed man's relationship to the natural world.<sup>24</sup> Brewer argues that this led to nature being experienced from the outside and increased the visual aspect of man's interaction with the landscape, this then meant that different values and views could be projected onto that surface.<sup>25</sup> A crucial tool, and one that influenced this way of seeing the ruined abbey was the Claude Glass (see Figure 0-2). Gilpin described it as a 'plano-convex lens', a pocket-sized mirror, used by artists and tourists alike.<sup>26</sup> The viewer would reach their chosen observation point on the landscape, turn their back and the glass would reflect the desired object clear at its centre, with the surrounding landscape given in a soft painterly hue. Although he is not known to have used any such device himself, it was given its name after Claude Lorrain as it reflected a style of image not unlike those painted by Lorrain in the seventeenth century. Thomas Gray was one of the first to extol the use of the mirror in his travel journals. Gray's method of viewing the landscape in this way became popular, leading influential literary figures such as Ann Radcliffe and William Wordsworth to carry his travel journal with them as a guide. This study will emphasise that Gilpin and Gray's way of viewing the ruined

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<sup>24</sup> John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2013), 493.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>26</sup> William Gilpin, *Remarks on Forest Scenery, and Other Woodland Views, (relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty)*, 3 vols (London: Printed for R. Blamire, 1791), vol 2, 224.

abbey influenced many who would follow in their footsteps and as a result would change how people saw and perceived the ruined abbey in the long eighteenth century.

### *Chapters and Sources*

Gothic narratives envisioned a hyperbolic and exaggerated version of monastic life: a confected Catholicism, filled with terrifying clergy and supernatural phenomena. This study will compare this unreality to that of the sixteenth century. The first chapter will do this by examining attitudes and behaviours towards the monasteries as they were being destroyed during the dissolution of the monasteries. This will act as a backdrop to demonstrate the disparity between the Gothic fantasy and reality. Grounding the thesis within the sixteenth century shows that there was not a groundswell of anti-Catholicism that swept over the country as the dissolution of the monasteries began. It will reveal how the transition from Catholicism to Protestantism across the country was a very slow one. It challenges the assertion by historians A.G. Dickens and E.G. Rupp that the Reformation began as a grassroots endeavour.<sup>27</sup> It will build upon the work of Christopher Haigh and Eamon Duffy amongst other historians who are part of the Reformation revisionist school and provide evidence of the persistence of Catholicism and the slow progression of the Protestant faith

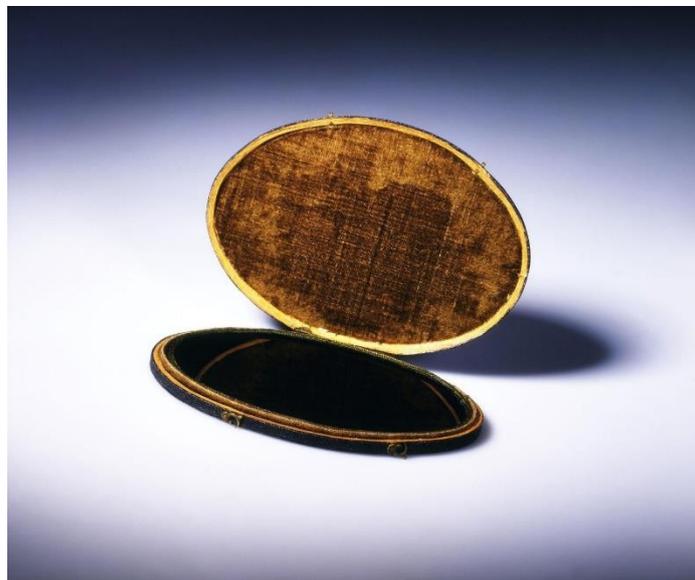


Figure 0-2 - Claude Glass, c.1775-1780, Blackened mirror glass, 21 x 14cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.  
<https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O78676/claude-glass-unknown/>.

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<sup>27</sup> E.G. Rupp, *Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947); A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1964).

across Britain.<sup>28</sup> Hitherto, there has not been a study which relates the realities of the dissolution of the monasteries to the embellished and hysterical versions seen in Gothic narratives. Providing a better context for the demise of the ruined buildings so admired in the eighteenth-century picturesque emphasises how different the realities were. There was no sudden popular urge to rail against the Catholic faith. An assessment of behaviours surrounding the physical dismantling of monasteries during the Dissolution will show that it was based on opportunism rather than a concerted effort to abolish Catholicism.

As mentioned above, the reigns of the reluctant reformer Henry VIII, the devout Protestant Edward VI, followed by the Catholic Mary I, meant that religion was in flux in the sixteenth century, as were popular attitudes towards it. To illustrate this instability and to highlight a hesitancy to embrace the Protestant faith the correspondence of the Crown's commissioners who wrote to Thomas Cromwell are analysed.<sup>29</sup> The publication of these letters was driven by a renewed interest in monastic traditions brought on by the Oxford Movement.<sup>30</sup> Attention is paid to the letters of Dr John London and Stephen Gardiner. Both were Catholics working to dissolve monasteries, and both reflect the attitude of the country: conflicted about what they were being charged to do in light of their own religious beliefs. Further to this, information about the spread of Protestantism can be gleaned from churchwarden's accounts which document what changes (or lack thereof) were being made to Catholic iconography inside parish churches during this tumultuous time. The account of Anglican priest Michael Sherbrook shows starkly that the motives to dismantle local monasteries was based more on opportunism and resourcefulness than a concerted effort to rid Britain of its ancient Catholic faith. There will also be a discussion of the importance of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* which will show that its impact in the sixteenth century has been overstated and that it became more potent as the Marian Burnings which it depicted were left further in the past. This chapter will function as a backdrop to the rest of the thesis, demonstrating how people either used the Dissolution as an opportunity to gain materials from the monasteries which were being dismantled or they ignored the changes altogether, unless pressed by the Crown's commissioners. These are two scenarios at odds with the

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<sup>28</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992); Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Wright, ed., *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Suppression of the Monasteries* (London: Camden Society, 1843).

<sup>30</sup> Stewart J. Brown, and Peter B. Nockles, eds. *The Oxford Movement: Europe and the Wider World 1830–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

perception of the monastery throughout dozens of eighteenth-century Gothic novels with their tales of oppressive monastic life and covetous clergy. Highlighting these disparities demonstrates that the maligning of the ruined abbey's Catholic past in the eighteenth century, a crucial aspect of the Gothic novel, did not have its roots in the sixteenth century.

Chapters two, three and four will create an understanding of how the perception of the ruined abbey was developed in literature through the long eighteenth century. Chapter two will analyse the antiquarian interest in the ruined abbey, chapter three will consider the Graveyard School of poetry and chapter four will show how these tropes manifested themselves in the work of the Gothic novel. The antiquarian emphasis in the second chapter will establish what part literature played in the burgeoning fascination with the ruined abbey whilst struggling with its Catholic past. It will build upon the seminal work by Margaret Aston, as well as that of Alexandra Walsham.<sup>31</sup> Aston was one of the first to analyse how the destructive actions on monasteries during the Reformation had affected how people saw the ruined abbey. She believes that the ruins on the landscape were part of the English consciousness of the past.<sup>32</sup> Walsham's work shares many of the same aims and themes of this project, by looking at how the beginnings of the Reformation affected how Catholics perceived their surroundings, yet by her own admission the study is sketched in broad strokes.<sup>33</sup> Walsham considers not just religious buildings, but the landscape in its wider context with its 'world of trees, woods, springs, rocky outcrops, caves, mountain peaks, and other striking topographical features'.<sup>34</sup> This study diverges from these works in three ways. It will firstly be concerned with the reaction to the ruined abbey from the perspective of the population in general, not specifically the Catholic minority. Secondly the focus will be solely on the ruined abbey, thirdly Walsham's work finishes in the middle of the eighteenth century, whereas this project includes the long eighteenth century. This study will also diverge significantly from both these works by looking at the indelible effect of the Graveyard School of poetry and its role in shaping the perception of the abbey through its influence in the Gothic genre.

To understand how the ruined abbey was framed by antiquarians the work and influence of Gray and Gilpin will be assessed throughout chapter two. Gray's travel journal was used as

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<sup>31</sup> Aston, 'English Ruins and English History'; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*.

<sup>32</sup> Aston, 'English Ruins and English History', 232.

<sup>33</sup> Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, 17.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

if it were a guidebook by both Ann Radcliffe and Thomas West who refer to Gray himself as well as visit the same sites which he had described.<sup>35</sup> Gilpin's popular *Observations...* inspired many to go and seek out the picturesque, it also contained a prescribed idea of how the ruined abbey should look and how it should be placed within the landscape. Alongside Gilpin's work, as well as Radcliffe and West, other antiquarians will also be looked at, such as John Brand and Francis Grose.<sup>36</sup> Further to this there will be analysis of earlier eighteenth-century interpretations from Celia Fiennes and Daniel Defoe which act as a contrast to the later antiquarian texts.<sup>37</sup> Rather than only using their descriptions of the abbeys it is their motivations behind the literature which is of most interest to this thesis. Understanding what made them explore old and mostly forgotten ruins will help to demonstrate developing aspects of the Gothic gaze.

Throughout the second chapter there is an emphasis on the language used to describe the abbeys. Descriptions of the site were littered with feelings of reverence or veneration, words synonymous with the abbey's religious origins. Antiquarians such as Brand and Gilpin admonished their initial use, but still appreciated certain elements of this Catholic past despite their best efforts to the contrary. This aspect of Catholic acceptance also makes up part of the Gothic gaze. Even Gilpin, who did his best to eschew all traces of the building's original use, would still reference Catholicism. Trends in the language will indicate that there was partial negativity towards the building's Catholic past, but crucially there was an acceptance of it which instilled reverence for the site. This will contribute towards complicating the view of anti-Catholicism in the eighteenth century.

Chapter two will also look at the correspondence of George Henry Hutton which provides a sobering example of a tireless antiquarian unable to find information on hundreds of old monastery sites across Scotland.<sup>38</sup> These letters written to Church of Scotland ministers and fellow antiquarians have hitherto only been addressed at any length by the Reverend

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<sup>35</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, 1795); Thomas West, *A Guide to the Lakes* (London: Printed for Richardson and Urqhart, 1778).

<sup>36</sup> John Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (Newcastle: T. Saint, 1777); Francis Grose, *Antiquities of England and Wales*, 12 vols (London: S. Hooper, 1772-76), vols 1-6; William Mason, ed., *The Works of Thomas Gray, Esq* (London: Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, 1827); William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (London: Printed for R. Blamire, 1782).

<sup>37</sup> Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle* (London: Field and Tuer, 1888); Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, vol 2 (Dublin: For Messrs. D. Chamberlaine, J. Williams, 1779).

<sup>38</sup> George Henry Hutton, *Correspondence and Papers*, Adv.MS.29.4.2 (i)–(xiii), National Library of Scotland.

Anthony Ross in 1964.<sup>39</sup> Although Hutton's correspondents were almost unanimous in their inability to provide any information on monasteries, nunneries and priories, their letters contribute towards building a picture of attitudes and perceptions in Scotland of ruined abbeys at the end of the eighteenth century. An examination of these letters function as a contrast to the English antiquarian experience. There is a recognition that the Scottish Reformation was very different to that which took place in England, yet the perception of the ruins of dissolved monasteries are comparable in the eighteenth century. They show that the tradition for pilfering stonework from old monastery sites had carried on in Scotland since the Reformation and that there were residual Catholic ceremonies prevalent across the country. The Scottish example shows starkly that although some priories and monasteries had been carried off entirely, this was not a signifier of a rejection of the Catholic faith.

The third chapter will assess the Graveyard School of poetry and how it shaped the language used to describe ruined ecclesiastical grounds. Eric Parisot and Evert Jan Van Leeuwen's scholarly endeavours will be built upon as well as departed from.<sup>40</sup> They argue that it was the funeral sermon which the graveyard poem fed into; this thesis will show that this is not entirely the case and that the Gothic is closely related. The graveyard poem will be placed within the context of anti-Catholicism and how it affected the perception of the ruined abbey. The chapter will take a chronological approach as this will help to show how certain elements in graveyard poems developed across the eighteenth century. Essential to addressing how monastic life was portrayed in the eighteenth century is Joseph Addison's *Essay 110* from *The Spectator* and Alexander Pope's monastic epistle *Eloisa and Abelard*.<sup>41</sup> Addison ruminated on the existence of ghosts and what role the ruined abbey played as a part of that. Pope's monastic epistle created a new way to interpret life inside a monastery, as being a solitary and painful existence. The influence of both Addison's and Pope's work is evident throughout the poetry of the eighteenth century. By analysing the work of the poets they inspired, such as Edward Jerningham and William Shenstone, it is possible to see that

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<sup>39</sup> Anthony Ross, 'Three Antiquaries: General Hutton, Bishop Geddes and the Earl of Buchan,' *Innes Review* 15, no. 2 (1964).

<sup>40</sup> Evert Jan Van Leeuwen, 'Funeral Sermons and Graveyard Poetry: The Ecstasy of Death and Bodily Resurrection,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 3 (2009); Eric Parisot, 'Piety, Poetry, and the Funeral Sermon: Reading Graveyard Poetry in the Eighteenth Century,' *English Studies* 92, no. 2 (April 2011); Eric Parisot, *Graveyard Poetry: Religion Aesthetics and the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Poetic Condition* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Addison, 'Essay No. 110, Friday, July 6, 1711,' *The Spectator* in *Selections from The Tatler and The Spectator of Steele and Addison*, ed. Angus Ross (London: Penguin, 1982); Alexander Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard* (London: Printed by W. Bowyer, 1717).

their anti-Catholic poetry describing monastic life and abbey ruins was written without a vehement Protestant agenda, an assertion the content of their work belies.<sup>42</sup> Other poets and their work will be addressed, including a hitherto unrecognised poet writing in the Graveyard School, Edward Kimber. It is an acute example of how a poet was influenced to write a graveyard poem about the ruined abbey by both Addison and Pope.

The fourth chapter will consider Gothic works and their authors to show that they were influenced by the Graveyard School and thereby shaping the perception of the ruined abbey. It challenges the assertion by Hoeveler that these stories advanced a 'clear anti-Catholic agenda'.<sup>43</sup> This was not the case. Building on the work of Maria Purves, who believes that these novels need to be re-evaluated in the context of anti-Catholicism, four novels and their authors will be analysed. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Richard Warner's *Netley Abbey* (1785), Matthew G. Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).<sup>44</sup> As well as elements of the text being analysed it will be motivations and attitudes of the authors towards the ruined abbey and the Catholic faith that will be addressed. The chapter will establish that the entertainment aspect of the Gothic novel has been somewhat lost. Not all Gothic novels which contained virulently anti-Catholic symbolism were written to express a Protestant agenda. It will also show how the Gothic gaze was developed across this literature, that these stories expanded what had been created by the graveyard poems and provided a way of looking at the ruined abbey in a specific way.

### ***Case Studies***

Chapters five, six and seven will be case studies, and work towards gaining a practical and more specific understanding of the perception of the ruined abbey in the eighteenth century, three abbey sites have been chosen as individual case studies. These are the Cistercian monasteries of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders, and Tintern Abbey in Monmouthshire. They have been chosen as they were popular for visitors in the eighteenth century, they differ geographically, and the amount of literature dedicated

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<sup>42</sup> Edward Jerningham, *An Elegy Written Among the Ruins of an Abbey* (London: J. Dodsley, 1765).

<sup>43</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 200.

<sup>44</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto, A Story. Translated by William Marshal, Gent.* (London: Lownds, 1765); Richard Warner, *Netley Abbey: A Gothic Story*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1795); Matthew G. Lewis, *The Monk. A Romance*, 3 vols. (Waterford: J. Saunders, 1796); Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Constable, 1820), vol 1.

to each of them varies. By looking at how these abbeys were perceived in their different contexts, a theme emerges. Attitudes to Catholicism were clearly heightened in the eighteenth century, especially in the 1780s and 1790s, but the interest in the Catholic origins of these abbeys only increased. In conjunction there emerged a set way to view the ruined abbey, influenced by guidebooks and guided tours.

Fountains Abbey is discussed in chapter five, it has been situated in a curated garden since the seventeenth century. As such it is at odds with the portrayal of the sequestered, gloomy, and mouldering pile of the graveyard poem. Works of literature dedicated to the site are very few, yet both prominent antiquarians Arthur Young and William Gilpin went to view the ruins, and their impressions provide contrasting opinions on how the ruined abbey should look.<sup>45</sup> American sources in this chapter provide a non-native perspective of the ruined abbey, and their interactions with locals help to put together an impression of how they felt about the quarrying of stone from parts of the abbey buildings. *The Surprise*, a doorway overlooking the park with the abbey as its focal point, was a theatrical and novel way of viewing the abbey. This can be seen as contributing towards the creation and development of the Gothic gaze. However, it is the story of the adversity shown by the monks upon founding the abbey which is consistently the narrative which dominates the perception of the abbey, at odds with the portrayal of the clergy in Gothic tales.

The next case study in chapter six will be the ruins of Melrose Abbey. They were the subject of Sir Walter Scott's poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), which became strongly identified with the site. This study will show how the custodian of the abbey ruins, John Bower, helped to bring Scott's words to life and provide a practical example of the Gothic gaze. This chapter utilises the experiences of Washington Irving and Harriet Beecher Stowe and their visits to the abbey.<sup>46</sup> John Bower features heavily in Irving's account and helps to show what it was like for a visitor to be taken on a theatrical tour of the ruins of Melrose Abbey, as Bower used *The Lay* as his way into interpretation. Stowe's experience helps to bolster the argument that an archetypal view of the monastery was shaped through Scott's

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<sup>45</sup> Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England*, 2 vols. (London: W. Strahan, 1770), vol 2; William Gilpin, *Observations, on Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772*, vol.2 (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808).

<sup>46</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, 2 vols. (Boston: Philips, Sampson, and Company, 1854), vol 1; Washington Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1835).

work, so much so that she was disappointed when she first saw the ruins for herself. Henry Hutton's correspondence to Sir Walter Scott is also analysed. Rarely used in any scholarly work, it demonstrates a friendship and mutual enthusiasm for antiquity.<sup>47</sup>

Tintern Abbey has been the subject of numerous of works of art and study and is discussed in chapter seven. This third study closely considers Charles Heath's guidebook for the abbey, published in twelve editions from 1791 to 1828. Each of these editions shows how the perception of the ruins developed significantly over this time. It changed from descriptions of the ruins and poetry relating to the abbey to the last edition which had descriptions of the abbey coupled with historical charters and information about the founding of the monastery. The chapter demonstrates a waning in the popularity of graveyard and Gothic tropes and a growing interest in more historical and factual knowledge of the abbey. However, that is not to say that poetry had been rejected altogether; on the contrary, the poem which contributed significantly to the popularity of the ruins was William Wordsworth's *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798* (1798).<sup>48</sup> The interpretations and analyses of the construction and meaning behind this poem has been much debated. However, this has led to it becoming over-analysed and as a result clouding the initial motivations and influences of the poet himself. This study will argue that the influence of William Gilpin has been overlooked in scholarly work and that a comparison of the poem and his *Observations on the River Wye* shows a discernible link between them. Gilpin, whose *Observations* functioned as a proto guidebook for many antiquarians and searchers of the picturesque, is shown to have influenced one of the most popular odes to the ruined abbey.

The case studies establish the myriad of ways that the ruined abbey was viewed and perceived across the eighteenth century. It emphasises the role of the guide and the guidebook and how a distillation of the language of the graveyard poem and the Gothic shaped the way the ruined abbey was seen. This then calls into question the anti-Catholic attitudes of the viewer and contributes towards a complication of what is meant by anti-Catholicism in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>47</sup> *Correspondence to Sir Walter Scott*, MS.3874, 81-86, 126-127, 145-146, 162-163, 172-173, 188-189, 190-191, National Library of Scotland.

<sup>48</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798' *Lyrical Ballads with a Few Other Poems* (London: Printed for J. & A. Arch, 1798), 201.

### *Conclusion*

Gothic narratives would propel the ruined abbey into the forefront of the most popular tourist attractions in Britain in the long eighteenth century. This thesis will suggest that these Gothic stories led many to view and understand the ruined abbey in a very similar way, with specific criteria including geographical location and emotional resonance. It will show how the portrayal of ruins was based on a borrowed language and set of familiar tropes developed earlier in graveyard poetry and antiquarianism. Using the realities of the dissolution of the monasteries and the beginning of the Reformation as a backdrop to the fantasies found in Gothic tales, this study will reassess and question the strength of anti-Catholicism in the mainstream British mindset. An examination of antiquarian study and the work of the graveyard poets show that much of the anti-Catholic content, which made its way into the Gothic, was heightened as a means to entertain, rather than to proselytise against Catholicism. This study brings nuance to the subject of the Gothic and anti-Catholicism in Britain, that is hitherto missing from the current literature. It does so by using the concept of the Gothic gaze. The case studies demonstrate that visitors who flocked to see and experience the ruined abbeys in the long eighteenth century were motivated by a combination of the Gothic elements, yet as they went on their guided tours or followed their guidebooks, they wanted to engage with the religious history of the building, not to rail against it. This way of understanding the perception of the ruined abbey shows that the anti-Catholic attitudes of the eighteenth century need to be reassessed.

## Chapter 1 - Reformation

An amalgamation of antiquarianism, Graveyard School poetry and Gothic narratives heavily contributed to creating an interest in the ruined monasteries of England in the eighteenth century. As is shown in the following chapters the antiquarian and the poet helped to define the ruined abbey in the landscape. Many Gothic texts were influenced and inspired by them and created narratives with the ruined abbey as their backdrop. These stories featured monks and nuns as evil figures concerned with overseeing an oppressive environment within the walls of their monasteries and nunneries. As such these tales are seen as having been an amplifier of anti-Catholicism in the eighteenth century. Although fanciful exaggerations and embellishments of conventual life, their ubiquitous nature in the eighteenth century meant that the perception of life within a functioning monastery was in large part influenced by Gothic narratives. As a result, the ruined monasteries and nunneries dotted about the landscape were somewhat framed within the context of inaccurate and hysterical anti-Catholic narratives; yet the attitude towards their initial ruination in the sixteenth century had very little to do with a hatred of the Catholic Church. It is not the case therefore that the height of popular anti-Catholicism in England was when the most damage was being done to its ancient infrastructure by means of the dissolution of the monasteries. The Dissolution was not a direct result of anti-Catholic feeling sweeping the country. The physical dismantling of abbeys was more an indicator of opportunism than of anti-Catholicism. People took advantage of the building materials now available to them rather than a physical protest against Catholicism. When this reaction to the Dissolution is made clearer it is possible to show that Gothic literature was the main proponent of anti-Catholicism in the perception of the ruined abbey, and not the legacy left by the Dissolution.

This chapter will examine the actions and reactions of those who lived in the communities next to these monasteries and churches. It will argue that the majority of people made no sudden wilful moves towards Protestantism. Through an analysis of the Crown commissioners' accounts and those of the churchwardens who were overseeing the drastic change to their churches it is possible to see how people behaved during this time. There was no wave of anti-Catholic feeling that washed over England all at once making society suddenly despise their monasteries and parish churches. This analysis will provide much needed complexity and nuance required to understand how anti-Catholic sentiment towards the ruined abbey developed. Furthermore, this chapter will demonstrate how

inaccurate the anti-Catholic attitudes that are woven throughout Gothic writing were in relation to attitudes towards monastic life in the sixteenth century, as the abbeys and nunneries were being destroyed. Popular attitudes towards the dissolving abbeys had very little to do with anti-Catholicism and more to do with the acquisition of the subsequent building materials. The destruction was not exclusively the product of anti-Catholicism and the abbeys were certainly not demolished by raging hordes of Protestant reformers.

### *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*

The French diplomat, Charles de Marillac, wrote the following about the Catholic faith in England in 1539:

As to the sports and follies against the Pope [...] there is not a village feast nor pastime anywhere in which there is not something inserted in derision of the Holy Father.<sup>1</sup>

This version of the once devoutly Catholic England, now mocking and deriding the head of its church is a vivid one, but it was by no means accurate. The death knell for Catholicism in England had only started to ring four years earlier in 1535 with the commencement of the Suppression of Religious Houses Act. The Acts of Suppression would dissolve all the lesser monasteries, priories, and nunneries across England. This would include eradication of symbols and imagery of Catholicism and thus began the long process of Protestantism becoming the new faith. Although it was the case that 'anti-Popery' was on the rise, the suggestion that everyone was rejoicing at the implementation of the new Protestant faith was illusory.<sup>2</sup> The Reformation was slow and the conversion to Protestantism was gradual across the country, with numerous communities wilfully ignoring or in some cases rejecting the new faith. It would take until the reign of Elizabeth I from the middle of the 1550s onwards for there to be a far greater impact of Protestantism on the Catholic faith. People did not suddenly despise the abbey and everything it represented.

To understand attitudes at the beginning of the Reformation and Henry VIII's reaction to it, England's Protestant awakening needs to be placed in its wider European context. Martin

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<sup>1</sup> 'Letters and Papers: July 1539, 11-15,' in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, Volume 14 Part 1, January-July 1539, ed. James Gairdner and R H Brodie (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1894), 556.

<sup>2</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490-1700* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 35-52.

Luther, an Augustinian monk, created controversy in October 1517, when he protested indulgences within the Catholic Church by nailing his Ninety-Five Theses to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg.<sup>3</sup> This is widely recognised as being the starting point of the Reformation in Germany, which then spread quickly throughout Europe. However, this Protestant surge did not immediately take over England; indeed, the very opposite seems to have been the case. Henry opposed Luther's stance on the Catholic Church and the Papacy, accusing him of preaching 'moche false dotryne to the abusion of the grosse and unlernyd people'.<sup>4</sup> This feeling was echoed in English society as, for instance, people joined in this protest against Luther through a public burning of his books at St Paul's Church in London.<sup>5</sup> A treatise, to which Henry put his name,<sup>6</sup> entitled *Assertio Setem Sacramentorum*, in response to Luther's *De Captivitate Babylonica*, was published in July 1521, and a luxurious presentation edition was given to the Pope.<sup>7</sup> On receipt of his copy Pope Leo X bestowed upon Henry the title 'Defender of the Faith'.<sup>8</sup>

In his personal life, however, Henry had only managed to produce one heir with his wife Katherine of Aragon: Mary, who had been born in 1516. Further to this there was a miscarriage the following year and a still-birth in 1518; Henry began to worry that he would not have a male heir. He was also caught up in extramarital affairs, including his mistress Elizabeth Blount, and Mary Carey, the married sister of Anne Boleyn.<sup>9</sup> It was Henry's affection for Anne Boleyn and his desire to divorce Katherine in order to marry her that saw England split from Papal authority. His want for a divorce became public in 1527, amidst claims that his marriage had been victim to divine punishment, through the miscarriages and still-births brought on by the marriage itself contravening the book of Leviticus.<sup>10</sup> A detailed account of the machinations involved in Henry's divorce are too lengthy and complex to deal with here, but this power struggle with the Papacy led to a split with Rome in 1534.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>4</sup> Henry VIII, quoted in 'Letter 1328 from Sir Richard Wingfield to Wolsey, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1521' in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, 1519 - 1523*, Vol 3, Part 1, ed. J.S. Brewer (London, 1867), 531.

<sup>5</sup> Louis O'Donovan, ed., *Assertio Setem Sacramentorum* (New York, 1908), 42.

<sup>6</sup> It is understood that it was not written by Henry's hand, others put most of the work together and it is said that he put his name to it, see Louis O'Donovan, ed., *Assertio Setem Sacramentorum* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1908), 53; J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London: Penguin, 1968), 112; and Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 57.

<sup>7</sup> Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 111.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 115-116.

<sup>9</sup> Haigh, *English Reformations*, 89.

<sup>10</sup> Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 152.

In an attempt to strengthen his position as head of the Church of England and stamp out traces of papal authority, and as a means to benefit financially, Henry exerted his power by beginning to dismantle all the monasteries in England. The dissolution of the monasteries began in 1535 and led to the disbanding of all the large friaries and convents across England. The dissolving of monastic institutions was at times violent and made a demonstrable impact on communities across England. Monasteries were dismantled, their material and valuable goods auctioned off, and parish churches were stripped of their centuries' old Catholic imagery. Attitudes to the buildings themselves were fluid and were dependent on the meticulousness with which the eradication of Catholic iconography was executed within a particular parish; more often than not it was meted out with threats of force by Henry's commissioners. It is the popular reaction to the dissolving of the monasteries which is addressed in this chapter. By creating a better understanding of how people reacted to their local monasteries being dissolved it is possible to show that the majority took part in the Dissolution to gain material goods rather than to rid the country of Catholicism.

### ***Historiography***

The difficulties involved in studying this tumultuous period from the perspective of the society which lived through it are multifaceted. The most valuable method of ascertaining popular attitudes is through analysing activities and behaviour surrounding ecclesiastical buildings as they were being dismantled or altered. Historical analysis focused on local behaviour and reaction to the start of the Protestant Reformation around England has been through significant changes since A.L. Rowse wrote about *Tudor Cornwall* (1941) in the 1940s.<sup>11</sup> Along with Rowse, F. M. Powicke highlights the complex practicalities at a local level of changing the Catholic religious habits of the previous several hundred years.<sup>12</sup> A.G. Dickens' *The English Reformation* (1964) was one of the first to popularise this notion of the localities, with a very Protestant bent. It is similar to G.R. Elton's *Reform and Reformation* (1977), in that it gives little consideration to the strength of abiding Catholicism, and those who did not immediately welcome the change to their religion that was being forced upon it.<sup>13</sup> Eamon Duffy, along with others such as Christopher Haigh and Norman Jones challenged this view. They placed the attitudes and actions of common people at the centre

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<sup>11</sup> A.L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall: Portrait of a Society* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1941).

<sup>12</sup> F. M. Powicke, *The Reformation in England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941).

<sup>13</sup> Dickens, *The English Reformation*.

of their work, rather than merely focusing on zealot protestant theologians, and commissioners of the crown.<sup>14</sup> In doing so they helped to create a clearer picture of life within society as the monasteries were being dissolved. Viewing the Reformation in this way makes it possible to see just how perceptions of the local environment shifted and transformed. Eamon Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992) is an exhaustive exploration of ordinary lives in the Tudor period. Duffy created a new perspective with which to view the start of the Reformation. Norman Jones highlights the tumultuous and confusing time for English people, and how the dissolving of monasteries meant that they were forced to look at practising their religion in a different way. Jones contends that it took three generations for the effects of the Reformation to be assimilated into English institutions.<sup>15</sup> It is this generational progression that is important to understand when assessing the development of anti-Catholic attitudes in the sixteenth century: the Reformation was slow to spread across England.

Religious change was simultaneously national and localised, and in these respects differed significantly. Henry's new laws were of course outwardly adhered to, for fear of being accused of treason, but some parishes that were not under the immediate scrutiny of the crown took much longer to adopt Protestant practices. Haigh highlights a number of studies which show that Tudor villagers complained very rarely about their priests.<sup>16</sup> Adam Fox provides evidence of seditious rhymes and songs having been written and even printed, decrying the measures being meted out by the Crown and defending the Catholic faith.<sup>17</sup> The spread of devout Protestantism was certainly varied throughout England. David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell argue that as the Reformation continued there were no drastic changes to life, even under the ardent Protestantism of Edward VI, which they contend was an amalgam of Catholic traditions.<sup>18</sup> Jones agrees with this, explaining how English culture came to be based on Protestantism, but existed as an adaption of previously existing habits.<sup>19</sup> People did not just blindly devote themselves to Protestant ideology. Ethan H. Shagan asserts that there were varying degrees of reaction to the dissolution of church buildings,

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<sup>14</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1992); Haigh, *English Reformations*; Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaption* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Norman Jones, *The English Reformation*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Christopher Haigh, 'The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation' in *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 22.

<sup>17</sup> Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500 – 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 383.

<sup>18</sup> David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell, *Religion & Society in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Jones, *The English Reformation*, 31.

arguing that the majority saw it as an opportunity to gain materials, with only a minority questioning the theological aspects in a positive or negative light.<sup>20</sup> Shagan's analysis of the dismantling of Hailes Abbey, near Winchcombe, Gloucestershire is particularly illuminating on the attitudes of local people towards the physical dismantling of the abbey.<sup>21</sup>

It is local activity such as that highlighted by Shagan which is given focus in this chapter. It is shown that the Protestant message was disproportionate in spreading throughout the country and this resulted in a slow conversion to the Protestant faith. Patrick Collinson has pointed out the difficulties involved in working out how quickly, and in what manner, Protestantism spread throughout Britain from the start of the Reformation.<sup>22</sup> Collinson highlights the debate between whether the Reformation took place 'from above', imposed by the political elite, or whether it took root at the bottom of society and spread upwards. This is a debate that was first brought to prominence by A.G. Dickens who posited the idea that the Reformation progressed from a grass roots level.<sup>23</sup> Haigh concedes that Dickens work revolutionised modern historiography of England's Reformations, but points to scholarly work based on local archives since then, all of which suggests that Dickens overplayed the problems with the Catholic Church in England, and the popularity of the appeal towards Protestantism.<sup>24</sup> E.G. Rupp argues that the Reformation was a product from the survival of Lollardy, and that there was an underground movement throughout the fifteenth century which produced anti-clerical literature which the church had tried to put a stop to.<sup>25</sup> Haigh agrees with this, stating that most early Tudor heretics were descendants, often literal as well as spiritual, of early followers of Wycliffe.<sup>26</sup> Richard Rex argues in stark contrast to this, asserting that there is little to be said for Wycliffe paving the way for the Reformation.<sup>27</sup> Through an analysis of behaviours during the Dissolution this thesis shows that it was a top down Reformation, conceived of and executed by Henry VIII and his commissioners, principally for financial gain. The physical destruction of monasteries as part of the

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<sup>20</sup> Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>22</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'England' in *The Reformation in National Context*, eds. Bob Scribner, Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 82.

<sup>23</sup> Dickens, *The English Reformation*.

<sup>24</sup> Haigh, *English Reformations*, 335.

<sup>25</sup> E.G. Rupp, *Studies in the Making of the English Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1947), 7.

<sup>26</sup> Haigh, *English Reformations*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 27.

Dissolution was fuelled more by opportunism from locals than it was a desire to rid the country of Catholicism. This will provide better context for the way in which Graveyard School poetry and Gothic narratives filled these ruined monasteries with their descriptions of monastic life which were not a reflection of reality.

### *Life and the Catholic Church*

The Catholic Church formed much of the structure for social life in the late medieval period. It dictated the calendar, presiding over feast-days, festivals, and an abundance of rituals. Karen Stöber asserts that the religious houses in Wales were so inextricably linked to society that it is almost impossible to separate them.<sup>28</sup> Claire Cross uses Roche Abbey to demonstrate the diverse activities provided to the surrounding community by the monks, from overseeing wills, celebrating mass for paying patrons, to organising hunting parties.<sup>29</sup> Further to this, Cross shows what a significant fixture the abbey had been to the local ecclesiastical, political, and economic scene and that the beginning of the Dissolution in 1529 came as a shock to the whole community.<sup>30</sup> As the Dissolution began its progress through England, Catholicism, with its familiar and stringent routines, faced eradication. Thomas Cromwell, who held a number of offices during the reign of Henry VIII, had been placed in charge by Henry to oversee the dissolution of the lesser monasteries in the 1530s. The letters to Cromwell from his commissioners, who had been sent out to enforce the royal acts against the Catholic Church, are invaluable for shedding light upon perceptions and attitudes towards the buildings themselves. One letter starkly depicts the value of the monastery to the community which surrounded it. The correspondence pleads with Cromwell that the nunnery should 'stande and remayne unsuppressed', because

The town and nunnery standith in a hard soil and barren ground,  
and to our estimations, if the nunnery be suppressed, the town will  
shortly after fall to ruin and decay and the people therein to the

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<sup>28</sup> Karen Stöber, 'The Social Networks of Late Medieval Welsh Monasteries' in *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Burton and Karen Stöber (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 11.

<sup>29</sup> Claire Cross, 'The Last Years of Roche Abbey' in *Monasteries and Society in the British Isles in the later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Burton and Karen Stöber (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008), 231.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

number of vi or vii score persones are nott unlike to wander and to seke for their living.<sup>31</sup>

The prognosis of what would happen if the nunnery were to be dissolved is stark. It is indicative of how important monasteries and nunneries could be to the surrounding community. It is evident that many relied on this nunnery for their livelihoods, and this illustrates its importance as a supportive institution, both spiritually and practically.

The above monastery was saved from being pulled down, but most other monasteries during the Dissolution would not receive such leniency. Indeed, there were instances of violence, and this was at times a result of being met by opposition. Practical resistance to the commissioners implementing their royal duty was extremely rare, as the act was treasonous, yet there are examples of it. The most noticeable protest was the Pilgrimage of Grace, a popular uprising in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, during 1536 and 1537. The complex nature of this protest means that a detailed account cannot be undertaken here but it was a movement which gathered pace through the means of not just monks and notables, but laymen and women also. They believed that Henry and his corrupt councillors had created sacrilegious policies which were designed only to benefit financially from the dissolving of monasteries. They demanded that some monasteries be reinstated and they protested against Henry naming himself the head of the church in England. Richard Hoyle asserts that historians have failed to come to a consensus regarding the protest, but that the heart of the rising lay with the common folk.<sup>32</sup> Ethan Shagan highlights how there were some who would have died in order to keep their monasteries intact.<sup>33</sup> The grassroots nature and the level of passion against the dismantling of the monasteries reflects their importance to the communities. Hoyle's work reveals that it was not just one large protest but separate risings reacting to each other in the north of England. Shagan builds on this by asserting that the pilgrimage was a 'performance' and that ultimately the protest would have broken down as there was no consensus within the rebels on orthodoxy. After several months the protest was eventually put down, with many of the actors involved being executed. Diarmaid

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<sup>31</sup> The Commissioners Report to Thomas Cromwell is signed John Grevyll, Symond Mountford, Thomas Holte, Roger Wygston, George Gyffard, Robt. Burgoyne, in Wright, *Three Chapters*, 140.

<sup>32</sup> R.W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>33</sup> Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 99.

MacCulloch argues that the protest hindered the Catholic cause quite dramatically, by leading Cromwell to speed up the dissolution process in the North of England.<sup>34</sup>

There are other examples showing how the dissolving of monasteries was not widely accepted, especially in those places located away from the southeast of England where there was more scrutiny of the Crown. In Norton Abbey in Cheshire, canons who had been thrown out of their monastery managed to raise the neighbourhood to besiege the royal commissioners within the walls of the abbey.<sup>35</sup> At St Nicholas' Priory in Exeter in 1536, a protest was staged to resist the commissioners, where a mob of women, armed with spades and spikes, broke into the priory church to stop the destruction of the rood-loft.<sup>36</sup> Upon being asked to disperse by the alderman, Elizabeth Glandfield, who was said to be the leader assaulted him and 'sent him packing'.<sup>37</sup> Robert Whiting cites this case as being the sole example of obstruction to iconoclasm inside a church.<sup>38</sup> Given the disruption at Norton Abbey it is unlikely to have been the only obstruction to the removal of images. With that said, discounting the Pilgrimage of Grace, there is very little evidence of any other large protest against the dissolving of monasteries. Limited protest was surely due to the severe repercussions; therefore, it is difficult to create an accurate understanding of attitudes towards the Dissolution. It is possible, however, through an analysis of behaviour, to see how many took advantage of the building materials which were now becoming available as a result of the monasteries' demise.

### *John London*

The pulling down and destruction of religious imagery and sites of pilgrimage in many parts of the country was a long and laborious process, in some cases taking until the reign of Elizabeth I for them to be stripped of their Catholic images. In other places this change was far more rapid. A letter from Sir William Bassett, the owner of an estate in Langley Meynell, in Derbyshire, boasts of the swiftness with which he acted in confiscating images and relics

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<sup>34</sup> McCulloch, *Reformation*, 200.

<sup>35</sup> Haigh, *English Reformations*, 143.

<sup>36</sup> Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London: University College London, 1998), 84; Haigh, *English Reformations*, 143; Robert Whiting, *Blind Devotion of the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 75, 217.

<sup>37</sup> Whiting, *Blind Devotion*, 217.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

in his area, explaining that he took down the images of Saint Anne and Saint Modwen within 48 hours.<sup>39</sup> Bassett went on to state that he

nott only defaced the tabernaculles and placis where they dyd stande, butt allso dyd take away cruchys, schertes, and schetes, with wax offeryd, being thynges thatt dyd alure and intyse the ynignorantt pepull to the seyd offering.<sup>40</sup>

He was explaining that all the accoutrements relating to the site of pilgrimage had been destroyed including offerings and images. His reference to those who would have worshipped there as being 'ignorant people' was not explicitly pejorative; rather, it alludes to Bassett's attitude that Catholicism had been almost seducing people through the use of images. However, these were places of pilgrimage which had been visited for centuries. To have erased or damaged their images in such a short space of time would have been a shock but would not have eradicated the ancient religion upon which these sites were based.

John London's accounts of the dissolution of the monasteries provides similar insight to Bassett's but are illustrative of the wider attitude of Catholics during that tumultuous time. To his contemporaries London was a much-maligned figure by both Catholic and Protestant alike. He was a zealot against Lutherans, yet he was vociferous in his participation of the dissolving of the monasteries. Curiously, he would only be employed by Henry for two years to be responsible for the dissolving of houses at Oxford, Reading, Warwickshire, and Northamptonshire.<sup>41</sup> He was not involved in any other activities of the Crown either side of this employment. This was undoubtedly down to his Catholic beliefs. His willingness to be all things to all people would see him involved with a group in a plot against the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer and for this he would die in prison in 1543. He has been denigrated by historians, no more so than by Philip Hughes in the nineteenth century, who asserted that he was 'one of the vilest men of all this vile time'.<sup>42</sup> London's changeable attitude is somewhat representative of what was taking place to the country as a

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<sup>39</sup> Wright, *Three Chapters*, 143.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>41</sup> H.L. Parish, 'London, John (1485/6–1543), administrator,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16957>.

<sup>42</sup> David Knowles, *The Religious Houses in England*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), vol 3, 354.

whole – a devout Catholic unsure of how best to cope with the Protestant faith. In a letter to Richard Rich, who worked under Thomas Cromwell as chancellor for the Dissolution, London described in great detail his work dissolving Caversham Abbey at Reading, and explained how he had

pullyd down the image of your lady at Caversham, with all the trynkettes abowt the same, as shrowdes, candels, images of wexe, crowches, and brochys, and have thoroughly defacyd that chapel in exchunyng any farther resortt, ffor even at my being ther com in nott so few as a dosyn with imagies of wexe.<sup>43</sup>

The excitement and immediacy with which London had carried out the King's orders is palpable from this letter. Like the case of Bassett above, it demonstrates the speed and fervour with which some were willing to do the Crown's business. What is especially interesting is the inclusion of people presenting London with wax images. He insisted that it was his mere presence which had caused such an outpouring of images being brought to him to be destroyed. There needs to be caution exercised surrounding both this, and the Bassett account: their enthusiasm and minute detail may speak more to embellishment than accuracy. Their main purpose of writing to Cromwell was to recount how well they were executing their task, and they would want to accentuate their achievements and successes with vigour. The involvement from the locals is coerced, and it is not mentioned in any great detail. These are more accounts of a 'job well done' than a decisive transformation of Catholic buildings and sites of pilgrimage from their iconographic trappings. The changes that were being made were more cosmetic than theological.

More correspondence by John London reflects the attitude that material goods and not necessarily anti-Catholic compulsion were driving the Dissolution. London's letter to Richard Rich, which is given the subtitle '[T]he greediness of the common people every where in plundering the Friars' houses', depicts a scene at Warwick Abbey of looting.<sup>44</sup> He wrote:

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<sup>43</sup> John London to Sir Richard Rich in Wright, *Three Chapters*, 224.

<sup>44</sup> Henry Ellis, ed., *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, 11 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1824-1846), vol 3, 138.

At my being at Warwik thys man, with dyvers other the honest inhabitants ther, dydd help me all they cowed to save every thing, butt the power people thorowly in every place be so greedy upon these Howsys when they be supressed that by night and day, not only of the towns, but also of the country, they do continually resort as long as any door, window, iron, or glass, or loose lead remaineth in any of them.<sup>45</sup>

As detailed above, London had experience from four different counties, so he was well versed in the process of the Dissolution. It is clear from this account that looting and stealing was an issue throughout the country at monasteries that were being dissolved. What is most revealing about this account is that it was the practical items which were being coveted. These were not complaints of rampant iconoclasm, but evidence of stealing practical and more importantly valuable objects from a building which was being demolished. As evidenced by both Bassett and London, if there had been mass participation in iconoclastic behaviour they would have recounted this to Cromwell. This is indicative of a people whose compulsion towards the newly dismantled abbeys was driven more by a practical use of building materials than a desire to abolish Catholic symbols in their parish.

As well as being stripped of their component parts there were other monasteries which had applied to be kept in one piece and have them repurposed for other uses. London, in a letter to Thomas Cromwell, posited the idea of turning Grey Friars at Reading into a town hall. He suggested that:

the body of the church of the Grey Fryers, wiche ys solyd with lath and lyme, wold be a very commodiose rowme for them. And now I have rydde all the fasschen of that church in parcleses, yimages, and awlters, it wolde mak a gudly towne hall.<sup>46</sup>

Charles Coates confirms that it was probably converted into a town hall, until it was then used as a schoolhouse in the reign of Elizabeth I in 1560. By 1578 it was then adapted into a

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<sup>45</sup> John London to the Lord Privy Seal in Wright, *Three Chapters*, 139.

<sup>46</sup> John London to Thomas Cromwell in Wright, *Three Chapters*, 223.

hospital or workhouse.<sup>47</sup> The changes that the building went through speaks to an attitude that the structure itself was no longer deemed to be sacred. In a similar vein to how the monasteries were stripped for their building materials it demonstrates that the community was making do with what they had. As with previous examples, the rapidity with which the parish church, the centre of community worship for generations, had been converted for a completely different purpose is remarkable. With the erasure of much of the imagery inside the church, it had transformed significantly in a short space of time. This demonstrates the speed at which the centre of worship had been eliminated. The constant changing is indicative of the process of the Reformation; meaning and significance denoted to the physical were always in flux.

In conjunction with destroying images as part of the dissolving process auctions were held for more practical and expensive items from the monasteries, to create income for the Crown. The accounts of John Scudamore, who was Henry VIII's receiver of goods for several counties, document the auction of items at various abbeys on the border of Wales, including Bordesley Abbey in Worcestershire, Grey Friars in Stafford, and Crokesden (or Croxden) in Staffordshire in 1539.<sup>48</sup> A great deal of information can be gleaned from looking at these records; the number of items sold, and the types of items themselves are revealing. Items such as monks' vestments were sold separately, as were the everyday items the monks had used, including brass pots, candlesticks, a spit and a trivet, a lamp, and ladders.<sup>49</sup> Other, far larger and expensive articles were sold off, such as alabaster tables, the church organ, as well as glass and iron from the windows, and even paving stones.<sup>50</sup> There would be sales of entire parts of the surrounding building, as is noted from the sale at Grey Friars at Lichfield where the 'bryck wall at the churche ende' was sold to a Thomas Fanne.<sup>51</sup> At Crokesden 'the roffe of the churche' was sold to sir Thomas Gylbert and Edmund Wetheryns.<sup>52</sup> The sale of a whole wall and the entirety of the roof being sold off, each to one person respectively, displays the ruthless, wholesale nature of the dissolution process. This mercilessness is further exemplified at Lichfield, where the removal and sale of headstones left graves unmarked for long periods of time. This led to the grisly discovery of 'many human

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<sup>47</sup> Charles Coates, *The History and Antiquities of Reading* (Reading: J. Nicols and Son, 1802), 312.

<sup>48</sup> John Scudamore in Wright, *Three Chapters*, 266.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-278.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-278.

<sup>51</sup> John Scudamore in Wright, *Three Chapters*, 274.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

skeletons' being uncovered a century or so later, when soil was removed to prepare the ground for the construction of a mansion upon the same site.<sup>53</sup> The relative ease and speed with which the building had been reduced to its base materials shows that it was merely being used as a quarry. Local landowners and gentry could take their pick from prepared stonework, as well as metals suitable for melting down. The building had been stripped of its pious symbolism with apparent ease.

The accounts of the auction at Greyfriars in Stafford provide a window into the amount of Catholic paraphernalia being sold to individuals. It is peculiar to note that these auctions contained the purchase of wax images, statues, and crucifixes: 'an image of Seynt Katerine, sold to Lee'. Catholic literature was also sold, a 'masse boke' and a 'missale' to a Mr. Whytgreve, and a Robert Doryngton purchased 'old bokes in the vestry'.<sup>54</sup> The Catholic mass had all but been abolished, so the selling of these books, although it made sense financially, went against the new Protestant teaching. Not only does this show the power of money and profit over Protestant ideology, but also a tangible display of people holding on to Catholic sentiment; they were keeping physical reminders of their Catholic past. Other reminders of this past were bought: James Loveson at Grey Friars in Stafford was sold the rood and 'pyctures of Cryst, Mary, and Johan'. The rood was used to divide the church up, and was a substantial fixture, which would have been painted ornately and usually contained a large carved crucifix, as well as Mary and Saint John the Divine. Due to its size, this is more than likely to have been purchased to be broken up and destroyed, to be used as building materials. The document stated that:

in the church of chauncell of the Austen Fryers ... surrendryd with all other superfluous edyfyes and buildings within the precinct of the seyde Fryers to be takyn downe, defacyd, and caryed away ... at there owne proper costs and charges.<sup>55</sup>

This was a complete decimation, of not just the abbey structure, but of all the buildings that surrounded it, drastically changing not only the landscape, but the routines of people who used these buildings on a daily basis. It is interesting to note that the images were taken

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<sup>53</sup> Thomas Rees, *The Beauties of England and Wales, Or, Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive, of Each County: pt. 1. Shropshire; Somersetshire* (London: J. Harris, 1813), 809.

<sup>54</sup> Wright, *Three Chapters*, 269, 271.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 272-73.

down and purposefully defaced before they were taken away, suggesting that the commissioners may have been worried that the images would have been kept and venerated in private. With the amount of interest in buying these images, and the private devotion which took place it was a valid concern.<sup>56</sup> Some Catholics were evidently holding on to physical reminders of their faith; their relationship had been changed with the building but not, perhaps, their faith.

### ***Preaching: Reaction to Hugh Latimer***

Holding onto this faith would become more difficult as Protestant theologians began to preach in earnest about the sinfulness of Catholic practices. Hugh Latimer (c.1487 – 1555), educated as a Catholic, became a vehemently Protestant preacher. He delivered a *Convocation Sermon* (1536) to an assembly of bishops and priests in 1536.<sup>57</sup> Within this speech he vociferously attacked the Catholic clergy. He was especially descriptive concerning their use of funds to decorate ecclesiastical buildings:

While they thus preached to the people, that dead images (which at the first, as I think, were set up, only to represent things absent) not only ought to be covered with gold, but also ought of all faithful and Christian people (yea, in this scarceness and penury of all things) to be clad with silk garments, and those also laden with precious gems and jewels; and that beside all this, they are to be lighted with wax candles, both within the church and without the church.<sup>58</sup>

Latimer also disapproved of the Catholic tradition of venerating images, admonishing them for the embellishments, and the money, time and effort that was put into their upkeep within churches. There is evidence to suggest that the attitude amongst the people does not entirely reflect this opinion. Duffy for instance, highlights contempt for Latimer's brand of Protestantism, providing an example two years earlier in 1534 when he gave a sermon in Exeter. A large crowd gathered to hear, yet he was met with a hostile reception, called a

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<sup>56</sup> Jan Rhodes, 'Private devotion in England on the eve of the Reformation illustrated from works printed or reprinted in the period 1530 – 40,' PhD Thesis, (University of Durham, 1974) <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/701/>.

<sup>57</sup> Hugh Latimer, 'Convocation Sermon, 1536' in *Sermons by Hugh Latimer*, ed. George Elwes Corrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-40.

'heretic knave', and even threatened to be pulled down by his ears.<sup>59</sup> It is unlikely that there would have been a similar reaction after the Dissolution began, but this hostile reaction belies any sort of blanket acceptance of new Protestant ideology within society, at least in the south west of England.

### *Churchwardens' Accounts*

Henry's dissolving of monasteries was far more financially motivated than theological. He wanted to do away with the worshipping of images and symbols within the church but had kept much of the worship and elements of the mass. This is in stark contrast to his son Edward VI who was a devout Protestant and wanted to rid the church of all its Catholic paraphernalia. Edward's ascension to the throne led to more aggressive implementation of Protestant ideology and the impact that this made on the church in England can be seen through churchwardens' accounts. These offer insight into the process of the Reformation and its effect on iconography and decoration inside ecclesiastical buildings. Some of the most detailed accounts are during the reign of Edward VI, and the resultant transition to the devoutly Catholic Mary I. The volume of accounts for English parishes that have survived from the late Tudor period is considerable, yet a substantial proportion have been lost to time, the elements, and even mice; their value was seen as negligible.<sup>60</sup> These records are a fascinating insight into the running of parishes across England throughout the sixteenth century, and they have been utilised by scholars to piece together a picture of life as the Reformation began and progressed.<sup>61</sup> The enormity of the task, and the challenges associated with implementing Protestant doctrine with veracity are displayed vividly within these accounts. However, largely missing from scholarly work concerning churchwardens' accounts is any assessment of what physical changes were made inside the buildings themselves, indicative of the new Protestant ideology, and what impact this may have made on the laity who used the church regularly.

As a means to get a broad view of what changes were taking place within the church, a select number of churches are examined at different locations across England, to see how

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Dymond, *The History of the Parish of St. Petrock, Exeter, As Shown by Its Churchwardens' Accounts and Other Records* (Plymouth: Reprinted for the Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, 1882), 55.

<sup>61</sup> Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, Ronald Hutton, 'The Local Impact of the Tudor Reformations' in Haigh, *The English Reformation Revised*.

distance from power in the South East affected the strength of Protestantism. The best period in the accounts for understanding changes inside the buildings themselves is during the reign of Edward VI, from 1547 to 1553. The hard-line Protestant action taken against Catholic traditions within churches can be seen acutely in many of the churchwardens' accounts. In most cases they provide stark evidence of Catholic items being removed or painted over. In contrast to this period of staunch Protestant action against idolatry, the accounts show the speed at which Catholic images and texts came back into the churches when Mary became queen. This strongly suggests that there had been no deep-rooted societal conversion to Protestant ideology across the whole of England, but that the churches were ready to return to Catholicism without too much trouble. This demonstrates the fluctuation and instability of faith during this time.

The parish of Ludlow, in Shropshire, provides a fascinating insight into how divisive the relationship with images could be inside the walls of a parish church. This can be seen through the activities concerning the rood screen, which separated the chancel of the church from the nave. The veneration of images was one of the points of attack for Henry VIII, and even more so for Edward VI. In the accounts for 1548, one year into Edward VI's reign, it is curious to note that 21s 8d had been spent on 'pentinge of the roode lofte'.<sup>62</sup> This is made a far more intriguing activity given that the very next entry in the accounts is an amount paid 'to the sayde Thomas and others for takynge downe of the roode and the images'.<sup>63</sup> Knowing at this point that their previous king, and more so Edward, were determined to rid England of all Catholic images, the painting of the rood loft makes very little sense. The painting of the rood was in vain as later in the same year it is stated that money was given to 'William Marteyne for a dayes worke makynge the rode loft playne'. This was the process of defacing the 'superstitious figures' which were depicted on the rood.<sup>64</sup> The rood underwent another change the year after, in 1554, as Mary I had come to the throne, and with her the return of Catholic imagery, and it is recorded that a John Allen is paid seven shillings for 'gildynge of the rode'.<sup>65</sup> This would have been to paint the now plain rood with gold flourishes, more in keeping with the Catholic tradition. Such unusual, and quite drastic changes within such a short period of time must have confused parishioners. The rood loft at Ludlow was kept in its entirety throughout the tumultuous period, which cannot be said

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<sup>62</sup> Thomas Wright, ed., *Churchwardens' Accounts of The Town of Ludlow* (London: Camden Society, 1869), 33.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

for other parishes. The parish of Cratfield, in Suffolk must have had their rood destroyed as someone was paid two shillings in December 1553 to make a new one.<sup>66</sup> At Saint Martin in the Fields, in London, the Great Rood, which would have been a prominent fixture within the church, had been broken up.<sup>67</sup> The accounts of this parish provide an extremely comprehensive description of the construction of a new rood, detailing such things as '[C]arvinge off the Roode wth the Marye and John', 'hondrethe and ffyve and twenty foote of boorde' and 'two Dayes for makynge of the skaffolde'.<sup>68</sup> The amount of detail, materials, and time required to construct the rood is very evident. The effort shown would arguably only be put in by people who had held on to their Catholic faith, and who were enthusiastic in recreating the decoration inside the church from before the Dissolution began in the 1530s. From these examples it is evident that well-established fixtures in the church, such as the rood loft were prone to lots of modifications over a short period of time, and even destruction. They also reveal that there was little problem in the ability to bring back the old Catholic imagery. This shows that the relationship to faith and its physical representations was variable and complex. Furthermore, it illustrates that the swiftness with which the Catholic paraphernalia was able to be brought back, in locations which were not under the duress of the Crown's commissioners, speaks to a lack of complete anti-Catholic attitudes throughout society as a whole.

In London, where the watchful eye of the crown was more prominent, orders were far more likely to be carried out. On 22 September 1547, the Lord Mayor, Sir Henry Hubberthorne, passed an order for the removal of images.<sup>69</sup> The parish of St Michael, Cornhill, took heed of this, and sold off all the timber panels belonging to the rood loft.<sup>70</sup> Northeast of London, in the parish of St Michael, Bishop's Stortford, there is no record of the rood loft being destroyed, only of the painting of cloth to be placed over it between 1549 and 1550.<sup>71</sup> It must have been destroyed, however, as it is recorded that twenty shillings was paid for the

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<sup>66</sup> William Holland, ed., *Cratfield: A Transcript of the Accounts of the Parish, from A.D. 1490 to A.D. 1642, with Notes* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1895), 83.

<sup>67</sup> John V. Kitto, ed., *St Martin in the Fields: The Accounts of The Churchwardens 1525 – 1603* (London: Simpkin, 1901).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>69</sup> William Henry Overall, ed., *The Accounts of the Churchwardens of the Parish of Saint Michael, Cornhill, In the City of London, From 1456 to 1608* (London: Printed for Alfred James Waterlow, 1871), xxi.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>71</sup> J.L. Glasscock, ed., *The Records of St. Michael's Parish Church, Bishop's Stortford* (London: Elliot Stock, 1882), 50.

making of a new one.<sup>72</sup> In some parishes, further away from the southeast, it is clear that the change in doctrine had had very little effect, even in the light of Edward's ascension to the throne. It seems not to have been prominent in the Parish of Morebath, in Devon, when in 1547 they purchased 'ii clappers for ii sacryn bellis', and when a John Creche was paid 'for his fee for clensyng of the imagery'.<sup>73</sup> Requiring bells for saying mass, and cleaning of imagery does not speak of a willingness to rid themselves of the trappings of Catholicism. Given that Edward was a far stauncher Protestant than Henry, it is noteworthy to highlight the amount of money being spent on music and accentuating church decorations. In Ludlow, in the northwest, closer to Wales, in 1547 there was money being spent on 'blowinge the organs', '11lbs of smalle candelles for the first masse' and 'singinge brede', which was used as part of the Eucharist.<sup>74</sup> This was a parish actively participating in Catholic services against the direct instruction of the Crown. This seemed to come to a halt after they were visited by the Crown's commissioners in the same year.<sup>75</sup> There is then a list of venerated items that were sold off, including an 'image of Jhesus', 'image of saynt Kateryne', and 'tabernacle that saynt Anne stode in', amongst a host of others. This was an eradication of imagery on a large scale. The disappearance of such significant and venerated items within the body of the church probably caused consternation amidst the congregation.

### ***Stephen Gardiner***

The account by Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester, regarding iconoclastic behaviour provides examples of the type of visits from the Crown that Ludlow would have experienced. Gardiner was a prominent figure in Tudor politics, and his involvement in the Reformation is highly complex. He served Henry VIII in the role of ambassador to France from September 1535 until 1546. Unlike John London, Gardiner was forthright in his defence of Catholic orthodoxy and this caused him to fall out of favour with Henry who thought him 'too wilful in his opinion, and much bent to the popish party'.<sup>76</sup> This was primarily due to his involvement in the attempt to have Cranmer arrested for heresy, which saw London die in prison. Gardiner was saved by an intervention from the Duke of Norfolk.<sup>77</sup> He was favoured by Edward in the first few months of his reign but Gardiner's irascibility and

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> J. Erskine Binney, ed., *The Accounts of the Wardens of the Parish of Morebath* (Exeter, 1904), 157.

<sup>74</sup> Wright, *Churchwardens' Accounts of The Town of Ludlow*, 33.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Reed Cattley, ed., *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe* (London: Seeley and Burnside, 1831), 163.

<sup>77</sup> C.D.C. Armstrong, 'Gardiner, Stephen (c. 1495x8–1555)' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10364>.

bullheadedness with regards to ideological and theological differences saw him placed in Fleet prison throughout the rest of Edward VI's reign until Mary I's accession in August 1553.<sup>78</sup> As a devout Catholic experiencing the start of the Reformation from its centre, his perception of the destruction of images as part of the Dissolution of the monasteries is particularly enlightening. He opposed Luther, yet stated how he had seen Lutheran churches where there were images still in situ.<sup>79</sup> His letter of June 1547 to a Captain Edward Vaughan recounts his reaction to seeing iconoclastic behaviour in Portsmouth where 'the images of Christ and his saints have been most contemptuously pulled down, and spitefully handled'.<sup>80</sup> In another letter written to Edward Seymour, the Lord Protector, Gardiner detailed more of what he had seen. He stated that he travelled with this Captain Vaughan and his armed forces in April 1547 to Portsmouth, not long after Edward VI's reign had begun. This journey being made by armed forces of the Crown indicates that the conversion to the Protestant faith was not being adhered to across the whole of the country. Gardiner described the scene in the church:

the image of Saint John the Evangelist standing in the chancel by the high altar was pulled down, and a table of alabaster broken: and in it an image of Christ crucified so contemptuously handled, as was in my heart terrible, to have the one eye bored out, and the side pierced; wherewith men were wondrously offended, for it is a very persecution beyond the sea, used in that form where the person cannot be apprehended. And I take such an act to be very slanderous, and esteeming the opinion of breaking images, as unlawful to be had, very dangerous, void of all learning and truth.<sup>81</sup>

The amount of Catholic paraphernalia still inside the church demonstrates clearly that they had not been adhering to the new Protestant doctrine and that the images had to be removed only with the help of the crown. Gardiner's exclamation to Vaughan that '[T]he destruction of images, containeth an enterprise to subvert religion, and the state of the world

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Cattley, *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>81</sup> Bishop Gardiner, 'STATE TRIALS, 5 Edw. VI. 1551. Proceedings against Bishop Gardiner,' in *Volume 1 of Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials, and Proceedings for High Treason and Other Crimes and Misdemeanours from the Earliest Period [1163] to the Present Time [1820]*, ed. Thomas Bayly Howell (London: Longman, 1809), 575.

with it'.<sup>82</sup> He continued, that only one in a hundred were able to read, and that removing images was like removing books for the literate – 'if the cross be truth, and if be true that Christ suffered, why may we not have a writing thereof, such as all can read, that is to say, an image?'<sup>83</sup> Gardiner's account, although a more learned version than most, provides some idea of the attitude felt by Catholics as their monasteries and churches were being dismantled and destroyed. Gardiner was so offended by what he had witnessed that he sent letters to reformers such as Somerset and Ridley, entreating them for a moratorium on more changes to the church, at least until Edward had reached his majority. Gardiner's account creates a vivid picture, showing the force that was necessary to implement Protestant faith within ecclesiastical buildings. As shown through the Pilgrimage of Grace above, there existed a geographical element to the strength of force required to those locations away from the Crown's immediate power in the southeast of England.

Not only were images taken away and destroyed, but they were also replaced by whitewashed walls. In the parish of Ludlow in 1548 money was spent on 'whitlymyng the church ij. Dayes worke, and for a busshelle and a whop of lyme'.<sup>84</sup> The whitewashing was taken up by many other parishes such as St Michael, Cornhill where 'Sheppard' the plasterer, was paid ten shillings for 'whytyng of the Church' and then a further three shillings and four pence for doing the same to the library.<sup>85</sup> The same was done at North Elmham, in Norfolk, 'for lyme & breke for the panes of the seyde window'.<sup>86</sup> Also mentioned here are bricks required to fill in a window, most likely of stained glass. It is not possible to gauge the reaction to such abrasive and sudden whitewashing of the inside of churches. That said, knowing that they were extremely ornate, and took a substantial amount of time and money to create, their obliteration in such a short space of time must have made a significant impact. This should also be considered in light of the amount of time taken to erase Catholic imagery, which was well into the reign of Edward VI, and, as shown above, how little time it took to revert back to Catholic traditions once Mary I had claimed the throne. This was a nation in flux, not only with its faith, but with its relationship to the centres of that faith, and the images which represented it.

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<sup>82</sup> Cattley, *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*, 27.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> Wright, *Churchwardens' Accounts of The Town of Ludlow*, 35.

<sup>85</sup> William Henry Overall, *The Accounts of the Churchwardens of the Parish of Saint Michael, Cornhill, In the City of London, From 1456 to 1608* (London: Printed for Alfred James Waterlow, 1871), 65.

<sup>86</sup> Augustus George Legge, ed., *Ancient Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of North Elmham From A.D. 1539 to A.D. 1577* (Norwich: Agas H. Goose, 1891), 41.

John Foxe's book *Acts and Monuments* (1563), which is discussed in more detail below, was written with a clear anti-Catholic objective, and cannot be considered a reliable historical document, but it illustrates the conflicting and contradictory attitudes towards faith in the sixteenth century.<sup>87</sup> This was especially acute during the restoration of the Catholic faith which came in with the reign of Mary I. Foxe described the scene in Hadley, Shropshire, on the days following the death of Edward VI, and the beginning of Mary's reign. A lawyer called Foster, along with a man named John Clerk, are described as always having been in favour of Romish idolatry and 'conspired ... to bring in the pope and his image worship again into Hadley church'.<sup>88</sup> They brought in a minister, who was a 'popish idolater' to 'begin again the Popish mass'.<sup>89</sup> A struggle is then described when they built an altar in the church:

they built up with all haste possible the altar, intending to bring in their Mass again, about the Palm Monday. But this their device took none effect: for in the night the altar was beaten down. Wherefore they built it up again the second time, and laid diligent watch, lest any should again break it down.<sup>90</sup>

It is not possible to ascertain whether or not it was a single person, or a group involved in the destruction of the first altar, but what this demonstrates is an instability in bringing back physical reminders of the Catholic mass. As has been shown in the churchwardens' accounts there was interest in returning Catholic iconography inside the church; the fervour with which the rood lofts had been built after the return of Mary I attests to that. Foxe goes on to declare that the following day they came back and brought with them a 'popish sacrificer' who had to have men guarding him with 'swords and bucklers, lest any man should disturb him in his missal sacrifice'.<sup>91</sup> Foxe reinforces this anti-Catholic atmosphere by describing an incident which happened on 13 August 1553, at St Paul's Cross in London. He describes Master Bourn making a 'seditious sermon' in order to 'set popery abroad' and that people who had gathered were so enraged by this that he had to cut his sermon short for fear that

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<sup>87</sup> Cattley, *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe*.

<sup>88</sup> John N. King, ed., *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: Select Narratives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 74.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

they would 'pull him out of the pulpit'.<sup>92</sup> Foxe also depicted the treatment that Edwin Sandy, Archbishop of York, received on his journey through London to the Tower, as a prisoner of Mary I. Foxe describes a tumultuous crowd, creating a caustic atmosphere with the 'people being full of outcries'.<sup>93</sup> He recounted that 'a milk wife hurled a stone at him, and hit him on the breast with such a blow, that he was like to fall off his horse'. Foxe insists that this action so mortified Sandy that at that moment he would rather die than live.<sup>94</sup> This is in stark contrast to the attitude of the crowd who were ready to pull Master Bourn out the pulpit. The existence of such polarising reactions starkly illustrates that there was no single attitude relating to both the Catholic and Protestant faiths, let alone a unified anti-Catholic hatred of the monasteries and nunneries. It is this nuance which needs to be considered when approaching an assessment of the perception of the ruined abbey: their demise was not defined by anti-Catholicism as portrayed in Gothic texts.

### *Michael Sherbrook's Account*

One of the most valuable accounts for understanding attitudes at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries is that of Anglican priest Michael Sherbrook.<sup>95</sup> He was ordained a priest in 1563 and remained at the rectory of Wickersley until his death 43 years later in 1610.<sup>96</sup> He provides evidence of the dismantling of Roche Abbey, near Rotherham, South Yorkshire. He was born in 1535, meaning that he was four when the dissolution of the monasteries began. A.G. Dickens has highlighted that Sherbrook was not a Catholic, yet he refers to 'Protestants' multiple times as though he did not count himself amongst them - 'for the Protestants have spoken enough thereof; yea more than enough: as they do in all things they go about, when they are disposed and sett [sic] to tell Untruths'.<sup>97</sup> His use of the word 'Protestant' was arguably in reference to the initial reformers of the church, and those responsible for destroying the monasteries. Dickens is overly cautious of Sherbrook's account, based on what he considers to be many factual inaccuracies. There are indeed a number of inaccurate figures and more than a sympathetic bent towards the monks, but it is still a hugely valuable document for understanding attitudes as Roche Abbey was being dissolved.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>95</sup> Martin Heale, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 229.

<sup>96</sup> A.G. Dickens, ed., *Tudor Treatises* (Wakefield, 1959), 29.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Sherbrook, 'The Fall of Religious Houses' in Dickens, *Tudor Treatises*, 98.

In the first portion of his account Sherbrook argued that the monasteries should not have been dissolved for it was only a small minority of them had been involved in misdemeanours, and that 'if such persons as builded Monasteries, Colleges and Hospitals, for sick, lame, fatherless Children, strangers, old people, maimed Soldiers and such like, were godly Persons; then such Acts must be godly'.<sup>98</sup> He also commended monasteries in general for their benevolence to their local communities, and claimed that:

If any poor Householder had lacked Seed to sow his Land, or Bread corn, or Malt before Harvest, and come to a Monastery either of Men or women he should not have gone away without Help.<sup>99</sup>

Sherbrook's position was clear that the intentions of founding the monasteries was good.<sup>100</sup> He would go on to falsely claim that the monasteries did not charge any rent for those living on their land. This is evidently not true, but this shows how well Sherbrook thought of the monasteries, as well as hinting at how important the abbeys were to the surrounding communities. It demonstrates that there was not wide acceptance to the dissolution as the disappearance of these abbeys would cause irreparable damage to the community's livelihood. He was upset at the disappearance of abbeys and nunneries from the landscape and that it was difficult to know where some had been located, as 'their lands are so dispersed abroad into so many Persons Hands that there be few subjects of any Living that have no some part thereof'.<sup>101</sup> This is indicative of the wholesale nature of some of the dismantling of some monasteries, as he went on to describe.

Sherbrook shared a conversation he had with his father about the purchasing of timber from a dissolved monastery. It is worth quoting in full:

I demanded of my Father, thirty years after the Suppression, which had bought part of the Timber of the Church, and all the Timber in the Steeple, with the Bell Frame, with other his Parteners[sic] therein (in the which steeple hung viii, yea ix Bells; whereof the least but one, could not be bought at this Day for xx, which Bells I did see

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 121.

hang there myself, more than a year after the Suppression) whether he thought well of the religious Persons and of the Religion then used? And he told me Yea: For said He, I did see no Cause to the contrary: Well, said I, then how came it to pass you was so ready to destroy and spoil the thing that you thought well of? What should I do, said He: might I not as well as others have some Profit of the Spoil of the Abbey? For I did see all would away; and therefore I did as others did.<sup>102</sup>

His father was evidently still of the Catholic faith but admitted to taking part in the stripping of a monastery as an act of almost mob mentality. Everyone else was doing it, and the materials were being taken away anyway, so he joined in. Dickens is heavily critical of the veracity of his account yet concedes that it is a valuable 'witness speaking to us from the monastic past'.<sup>103</sup> Dickens is correct in that it is Sherbrook's value as a voice from the sixteenth century that is most important. His account also helps to reaffirm that not all dismantling of monasteries was conducted with an anti-Catholic agenda. He reveals that at Stafford there had been 'loud discontent' at the threatened dissolutions of the friaries there, the 'townspeople did not hesitate to profit by the sales any more than the country people did in the case of the monasteries'.<sup>104</sup> For Sherbrook, the ideology of Protestantism itself was not a significant influencing factor in the physical destruction of ecclesiastical buildings. He added that many would have regretted the acts conducted during the Dissolution, 'for no doubt there hath been Millions of Millions that have repented the Thing since; but all too late'.<sup>105</sup> This is again more exaggeration, yet it shows that there existed an element of remorse and that they acquiesced with the destruction of their local monastery as a means to benefit financially or materially, rather than make a conscious effort to resist. Their perspective of the building changed: from pious centre of worship into a structure which could be stripped of its many useful and practical materials.

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>103</sup> Dickens, *Tudor Treatises*, 39-40.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>105</sup> Michael Sherbrook, 'The Fall of Religious Houses' in Dickens, *Tudor Treatises*, 125.

### *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*

A book that was known to Sherbrook, the author of which he dubbed 'an enemy to Monasteries' was John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.<sup>106</sup> At points during his account it is as though Sherbrook was replying to Foxe directly, through his robust defence of monastic life. Foxe's book is a controversial text as its contents are largely unreliable, yet it is the effect that this book had upon the perception of Catholicism which is of most importance to the study, rather than its historical accuracy. This book is also significant as it was a proto-Gothic text, conjuring up images of Catholics as evil persecutors and through this influenced the way that Catholics were perceived from the sixteenth century onwards. It is the potency of this influence which is considered here.

Foxe's book was written as a response to the persecution of Protestants under the reign of Mary I. The death of the Protestant Edward VI in 1553 saw the Catholic Mary I come to the throne, and this led many Protestants to flee to the Continent; Foxe and his family were part of that exodus. During her reign, between February 1553 and November 1558, Mary oversaw the burning of three hundred Protestant men and women at the stake. These persecutions affected Foxe deeply and he was moved to write the *Acts and Monuments* as a martyrological history. It contained transcripts of testimonials from those interrogated and executed throughout the Marian burnings. In conjunction with these accounts was Foxe's version of the history of the church in England, portraying a lengthy struggle against papal authority. Adrian Hastings describes the book as almost 'a sort of additional biblical testament'.<sup>107</sup> It was a multi-volume publication, expanding from around 1,900,000 to 3,800,000 words in Foxe's lifetime.<sup>108</sup> The main appeal of the book came from the gruesome and graphic woodcuts which accompanied the accounts of execution. Due to the high illiteracy rate, it was these images which had a lasting effect – Leslie M. Oliver asserts that they were 'more persuasive, even, than the crabbed text'.<sup>109</sup>

These explicit images and descriptions were combined with fervent anti-Catholicism and it is this which has given it a reputation as being a proto-Gothic text.<sup>110</sup> This statement needs to

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>107</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 58.

<sup>108</sup> King, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, xii.

<sup>109</sup> Leslie M. Oliver, 'The Seventh Edition of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*' in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 37 (1943).

<sup>110</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*.

be considered in the context of its potency in the sixteenth century. It is unarguable that *The Book of Martyrs*, as it came to be known, was a disseminator of potent anti-Catholicism, yet its power of influence in the sixteenth century is not clear. Patrick Collinson contends that only a minority of the population would have ever been directly exposed to Foxe.<sup>111</sup> Oliver, on the other hand, maintains that there would have been few who would not have had the opportunity to 'thumb through it', such was its apparent omnipresence, but that its effect on the public was limited.<sup>112</sup> Writing in 1943, Oliver also questions and eventually rejects the veracity of the accepted belief that the book was ordered by law to be available in every church in England.<sup>113</sup> It is true that many churches had the book alongside *The Bible* and the *Book of Common Prayer*, but it is unclear as to whether this was canonical law. Hastings accentuates the appeal the book had, that those who read it would see persecution being meted out upon ordinary men and women and this, coupled with the anti-Catholic message, would have resonated with them.<sup>114</sup> Collinson advocates caution when it comes to the accuracy of the number of copies in circulation in the sixteenth century.<sup>115</sup> He also directly challenges Warren Wooden's assertion that the 10,000 copies of *Acts and Monuments* in the public domain by 1684 was a large enough number to have had considerable impact.

The effect of the book was evidently more acute in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Linda Colley shows, the importance of the book grew rapidly in the eighteenth century.<sup>116</sup> Colin Haydon agrees and cites the book as one of the many methods by which anti-Catholicism had spread.<sup>117</sup> More recently, Diane Long Hoeveler has argued that *The Book of Martyrs*, along with Henry VIII's *Compendium compertorum* (1536), the report enabling the dissolution of the monasteries, were the two main texts responsible for anti-Catholic tropes in Gothic literature.<sup>118</sup> Hoeveler's argument is convincing but it is focused on the eighteenth-century perspective of the book. Just as the dissolution of the monasteries was not spurred on by overriding anti-Catholic sentiment across the country as a whole, it took a long time for the effect of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* to percolate through society. It evidently shaped attitudes towards Catholicism, and did so in a graphic way, but its power was not

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<sup>111</sup> Patrick Collinson, 'John Foxe and National Consciousness' in *John Foxe and his World*, ed. Christopher Highley and John N. King (St. Andrews, 2017), 10.

<sup>112</sup> Oliver, 'The Seventh Edition of John Foxe', 243.

<sup>113</sup> This is still used in recently scholarly work regarding Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

<sup>114</sup> Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 59.

<sup>115</sup> Collinson, 'John Foxe and National Consciousness', 10.

<sup>116</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 27.

<sup>117</sup> Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England*, 29.

<sup>118</sup> Diane Long Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 6.

felt until the eighteenth century, when Gothic narratives had awoken similar Reformation ghosts of the past.

### *Conclusion*

Henry VIII's Dissolution included the physical destruction of monasteries and nunneries, and the alteration of parish churches. However, the thoroughness of this project was only possible through authoritarian means. Contrary to Dickens's argument, the Reformation was administered from above. The participation of local people in the destruction of their monasteries was not to accelerate the eradication of their Catholic faith, but instead they used it to gain practical materials, or to repurpose the building, stripped of its religious symbolism. Parish churches also went through significant changes, but the lack of enthusiasm for the new Protestant faith meant that many did not adhere to its doctrine until decades after the Reformation began, and most only changed when forced to by commissioners. Except for *The Pilgrimage of Grace*, there were no grand displays of resistance against the development of Protestantism, yet some resisted by holding on to physical reminders of their old faith. This is exemplified by the ease with which Catholic objects were able to return to the churches when Mary I came to the throne.

To return to the statement made by Charles de Marillac at the beginning of this chapter: it is inaccurate and a vast generalisation, depicting only a small fraction of the country. The Catholic faith of the people was not suddenly deracinated by seeing the symbols of their faith significantly altered or erased by the dissolution of the monasteries. Many continued to practice their faith in churches still decorated in the Catholic style, until forced to do otherwise. The adherence to the new Protestant faith depended more upon how much pressure was being applied by the Crown's commissioners, than by a sudden disgust at the practices of their old faith. For the people living through the Reformation the destruction of their local monastery had more to do with opportunism than their relationship to Catholicism or Protestantism. For many the chance to acquire practical building materials was too great to pass up, and this resulted in monasteries being left to ruin.

This assessment of the dissolution of the monasteries and the beginnings of the Protestant faith in England works as a backdrop to the rest of the thesis. It provides a new context for the ruined abbey against which the work of the antiquarians, the Graveyard School poets, and the Gothic writers can be compared. Their work in the eighteenth century coalesced and

created ways of viewing and understanding the ruins of these monasteries which in many cases invoked an inaccurate representation of their Catholic past. The result of this literature was an increase in the fascination with the ruined abbey, with a keen interest in its religious past. The next chapter demonstrates how the eighteenth-century antiquarians wrestled with the troublesome and problematic Catholic past of the ruined abbey. Through their descriptions of the abbey and the advice they gave on how to view the ruins it is shown that they were constructing the Gothic gaze; demonstrating how they shaped the way the ruined abbey was viewed in the landscape.

## Chapter 2 - Antiquarianism

I wished monastrys had not been putt downe, that the reformers would have been more moderate as to that point ... The reformers in the Lutheran countrys were more prudent then to destroy them, (they) only altered the religion.<sup>1</sup>

– the seventeenth-century antiquarian John Aubrey’s lament for the destroyed ecclesiastical buildings of England.

As described in the introduction chapter, the intervening years between the dissolution of the monasteries and the eighteenth century, Britain’s relationship to its ancient religion had been tumultuous. The relationship with Catholicism had altered, and the totems of this religion had diminished dramatically through the form of the ruined abbey. The dissolved monasteries were left to ruin and as time passed, they became objects of study for the antiquarian interested in Britain’s past. Men who were deeply intrigued in ancient cultures, usually Roman, began to look at ruins in their own localities.<sup>2</sup> What began in the sixteenth century as a simple and practical method to document the monasteries before they faded from memory, then progressed and expanded from the seventeenth century onwards into an antiquarian movement, obsessed with Britain’s ruined structures. This examination was a product of Enlightenment thought, discovering new ways to shed light upon the country’s history. As the study of the monasteries became more nuanced, all aspects of their past were explored, not least of all their Catholic past. Antiquarians would criticise or praise their ancient pious traditions, depending on their personal beliefs. It is their perception of these abbeys which is assessed in this chapter. It analyses how the antiquarian understood and interpreted the ruined abbey within the context of anti-Catholicism. Doing this will act as a way to bring a new perspective to what is perceived as rampant anti-Catholicism in the eighteenth century. This is not to suggest that there was no anti-Catholicism or indeed fear of Catholics, especially towards the end of the eighteenth century. However, this attitude

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<sup>1</sup> John Aubrey quoted in *‘Brief Lives’ Chiefly of Contemporaries, Set Down by John Aubrey, between the years 1669 & 1696*, 3 vols, ed., Andrew Clark (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1898) vol 1., 41.

<sup>2</sup> Rosemary Sweet emphasises that it was an unequivocally male pursuit in *‘Antiquaries and Ruins’* in *Writing Britain’s Ruins*, ed., Michael Carter, Peter N. Lindfield and Dale Townshend (London: The British Library, 2017), 44.

was not universal. The perception of the ruined abbey reveals the complexity and nuance of attitudes bound up in the physical reminders of Britain's Catholic past.

The pursuit of the antiquarian was of little interest to society more generally until the end of the eighteenth century, when exploring the local landscape in search of the picturesque, in part prompted by William Gilpin's popularity, became a prevalent pastime. This chapter will demonstrate how these buildings were perceived from the end of the seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth, by those who deliberately sought them out. It will analyse their responses, as ruined monasteries became subjects of study. Antiquarian literature created a new perspective for viewing the ruined abbey. This influence became significantly more marked on the public by the end of the eighteenth century, as writers such as poet Thomas Gray, and antiquarian William Gilpin, created a blueprint with which to perceive ruined abbeys. The ruins of local monasteries for many began to transform from benign piles of stones, into objects with significant picturesque value and a Catholic history that intrigued many. This was at odds with much of the anti-Catholic sentiment in the Gothic novels which also helped to make the ruined abbey infamous and intriguing.

Margaret Aston was one of the first historians to assess the antiquarian urge to study the ruins of monastic buildings.<sup>3</sup> Aston illustrates how the anti-Catholic fervour with which the Dissolution was conducted waned as the sixteenth century ended. She argues that the rapid destruction called people into action, to try and hold on to a quickly disappearing past, represented by the century's old monasteries and created a nostalgia for that past, almost instantly.<sup>4</sup> The result of this was a softening of opinion towards Catholic practices, this then generated a growing antiquarian interest in ruined monasteries. It is the contention of this chapter that there has been an overemphasis of anti-Catholic sentiment towards the ruined monastery on the landscape. This is not to state that it did not exist but that an analysis of antiquarian literature shows that there were concessions made to their Catholic past, more than has been hitherto recognised. Highlighting this will show how much anti-Catholic sentiment was found in literature, but not reflected with as much vigour in society. There also remained evidence of residual Catholicism, bound up in ancient traditions and customs. Alexandra Walsham's *The Reformation of the Landscape* (2014) builds on a lot of Aston's ideas and looks at the effect of how the dissolution of the monasteries had changed the way the

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<sup>3</sup> Margaret Aston, 'English Ruins and English History'.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

landscape in Britain was perceived. Walsham believes that the mass destruction of religious houses in the 1530s eroded the reverence that people had for sacred places, such as monasteries, and that it helped to create an opinion that was 'deeply hostile to inherited assumptions about the immanence of the holy'.<sup>5</sup> As argued by Walsham some traditions relating to ruined sites were dismissed, due to a conscious rejection of what was believed to be 'vulgar' oral evidence over literature, which was deemed to be a more enlightened medium.<sup>6</sup> Aston summarises the antiquarian impulse of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: 'Where historians delved and annotated and recorded others wandered and hinted and alluded'.<sup>7</sup> The perspective of the 'others', the antiquarians, who wandered, hinted, and alluded, is fundamental to understanding the antiquarian perception of the ruined abbey. This will contribute towards understanding how the Gothic gaze was shaped.

### *Antiquarian Beginnings*

The first popular venture into the study of the newly ruined abbeys was conducted by William Camden who created a comprehensive historical and topographical survey of Great Britain in *Britannia* (1587).<sup>8</sup> As highlighted by Graham Parry, Camden's book reflected what had been a move from the antiquarian study of ancient texts to the study of objects.<sup>9</sup> William Dugdale would follow on from Camden in the seventeenth century with the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, written as a means to document the remains of the destroyed abbeys before they were lost to time. The first volume appeared in 1655, but the sale of the book was slow and a second volume was not added until 1661, and a third did not appear until 1673.<sup>10</sup> This is reflective of the lack of interest shown in antiquarian study in the seventeenth century. Dugdale explained the problematic nature of conducting his study:

ancient abbeys, priories once flourishing in England, and long since utterly suppressed is in these our days in which their very memory seems to some people, odious and ungrateful, more useless and insignificant than an Old Almanack.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 560.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 478-79.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret Aston, 'English Ruins and English History', 254.

<sup>8</sup> William Camden, *Camden's Britannia* (Edinburgh, 1695).

<sup>9</sup> Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquaries of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>10</sup> William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum: A New Edition* (London: Longman, 1817), ii.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, i.

Studies of this kind were evidently considered unusual and many could not see the pleasure or benefit derived from rooting around mouldy, old, ruined monasteries. The text itself was basic and factual, the descriptions of the buildings were concise; he did not attempt to embellish or add any local ancient traditions to his work. Antiquarian interest in ruined monasteries took time to establish itself but would grow considerably across the eighteenth century.

This growth can most acutely be seen in a review in *The Monthly Review* for the second volume of Francis Grose's multi-volume work *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (1772-76).<sup>12</sup> It began:

The success of this expensive work affords a strong proof of the prevailing taste, in this country, for the elegant arts; at the same time that those which chiefly aim at utility are by no means neglected. Let cynics, therefore, and sour divines, rail as they please at the "degeneracy of the age" but there never was an era, or a nation, in which merit, of every kind, was more candidly acknowledged, more eminently distinguished, or more liberally required, than in the present times, and in this happy island.<sup>13</sup>

The reviewer was evidently an enthusiast of antiquarian pursuits, yet it reveals that there must have been a significant increase in it for 'sour divines' to be protesting against it. The study of ruined abbeys was evidently still considered 'degenerate' to the more devout Protestants of the age, yet its popularity was clear. The poet and literary scholar Thomas Gray articulated the emergent antiquarian impulse. In February 1758, Gray wrote to his friend Thomas Wharton, a physician, explaining what fascinated him about antiquities, and the study of old and ancient objects and spaces from the past:

The drift of my present studies is to know, wherever I am, what lies within reach that may be worth seeing, whether it be building, ruin,

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<sup>12</sup> Francis Grose, *Antiquities of England and Wales*, 12 vols (London: S. Hooper, 1772-76).

<sup>13</sup> 'Article XI The Antiquities of England and Wales. By Francis Grose, Esq.' in *The Monthly Review* 52, ed., George Edward Griffiths (London, 1775), 233-34.

park, garden, prospect, picture, or monument; to whom it does or has belonged, and what has been the characteristic and taste of different ages. You will say this is the object of all Antiquaries; but pray what Antiquary ever saw these objects in the same light, or desired to know them for a like reason?<sup>14</sup>

Gray was fascinated with how people of the past conducted themselves. He did not distinguish between objects, items, and spaces; they were as one in his search to understand the past. Gray's contribution to how the ruined abbey was perceived in the eighteenth century is considerable. As the next chapter will show in detail his poem *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) was part of the Graveyard School of poetry which established new ways of depicting and describing ruined ecclesiastical sites. His influence was significant, at times acting as a guide to some, helping to decipher the ruin adorned landscape.

After Gray's death, the poet William Mason who was a friend, wrote an edition of his collected works and described some of what he perceived to be Gray's motivation behind his interest in ruined abbeys:

He endeavoured to trace this mode of building, from the time it commenced, through its various changes, till it arrived at its perfection, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, and ended in that of Elizabeth. For this purpose he did not so much depend upon written accounts, as that internal evidence which the buildings themselves give of their respective antiquity; since they constantly furnish to the well-informed eye, arms, ornaments, and other indubitable marks, by which their several ages may be ascertained.<sup>15</sup>

For Gray, it was the physical appearance of the ruins alone which conveyed their own historical narrative; he had eschewed written evidence and relied upon information about the abbey gained from 'internal evidence', only that which he could see physically. The

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Gray, 'XXIX. Mr Gray to Dr Wharton. 21<sup>st</sup> February 1758,' in *The Works of Thomas Gray, Esq.* ed., William Mason (London, 1827), 211.

<sup>15</sup> William Mason, ed., *The Works of Thomas Gray, Esq.* (London: Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, 1827), 276.

monastery is said to have reached 'perfection' by being dissolved and left to decay by Henry VIII, reflecting a picturesque attitude towards the ruin. Gray wanted to only rely on what he could see, what symbols and markings were left of the Catholic faith meaning that his understanding and perception of the ruins was partially informed by its Catholic past. This hints at the inception of the Gothic gaze: a view of the ruins as perfected by the Dissolution yet using the indicators of Catholicism in the stonework to appreciate and enjoy its beauty.

### *The Catholic Past*

As recognised by Thomas Fuller, who wrote *The Church History of Britain* (1655), conducting any historical endeavour into Britain's meant that there had to be an acknowledgement, albeit a begrudging one, to Britain's Catholic past. Fuller gave an explanation as to the reason for there being vestiges of Catholicism still apparent within local traditions and festivals:

as careful mothers and nurses, on condition they can get their children to part with knives, are contented to let them play with rattles, so they permitted ignorant people still to retain some of their fond and foolish customs, that they might remove from them the most dangerous and destructive superstitions.<sup>16</sup>

Fuller was a Church of England clergyman, and staunchly anti-Catholic, as this statement somewhat reveals. Although belittling of the Catholic faith, it is an insightful comment as it is a concise summation of the complicated conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism. It shows that it was a slow and gradual transformation to the Protestant faith, and that elements of Catholicism could not be removed. These reminders of Britain's Catholic past which were an immovable aspect of the ruined abbey were a complicated task for the eighteenth-century antiquarian to manoeuvre through. An early example of acknowledging the Catholic past was John Weever writing in the seventeenth century who reasoned with the Church of England that no matter the religion, the dead of the nation should be honoured.<sup>17</sup> Rosemary Sweet points to the work of Browne Willis at the start of the eighteenth century as being the first antiquarian to focus heavily on the Catholic past of the

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain: From the Birth of Jesus Christ Until the Year 1648*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1845), 20.

<sup>17</sup> Parry, *The Trophies of Time*, 190.

ruined abbey. Sweet highlights his acquiescence to ancient Catholicism by his compulsion to travel to cathedrals and churches purposefully arriving on the day of their patron saint's festival.<sup>18</sup> The existence of ancient traditions connected to Catholicism was given consideration by the antiquarian John Brand in the preface to his *Observations on Popular Antiquities* (1777).<sup>19</sup> This book was a re-working of Henry Bourne's *Antiquitates vulgares* (1725), the study of ancient customs of Britain, deemed to be vulgar and superstitious.<sup>20</sup> Brand, who had given Thomas Gray the moniker 'the Poet of Humanity', found in his poetry justification for his own endeavours. He saw the value of Gray's pontification in a churchyard and stated: 'I am urged by no false Shame to apologise for the seeming unimportance of my subject'.<sup>21</sup> Gray was evidently a big influence on Brand and this shows how antiquarian study and poetry were interlinked. Brand also understood that ancient traditions and customs could not be entirely disentangled from their Catholic beginnings. Brand explained that:

the prime origin of the superstitious notions and ceremonies of the people is absolutely unattainable. We must despair of ever being able to reach the fountain-head of streams which have been running and increasing from the beginning of time.<sup>22</sup>

Just as with the study of history, antiquarian pursuits also required a begrudging acceptance of Catholic elements. As the last chapter illustrated, the Reformation was a lengthy and gradual process which did not see the eradication of Catholic practices across England as soon as all the monasteries were dissolved. Brand understood this, and asserted:

We shall not wonder that these were able to survive the Reformation, when we consider that, though our own sensible and spirited forefathers were, upon, conviction, easily induced to forego religious tenets which had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, yet were the bulk of the people by no means inclined to annihilate

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<sup>18</sup> Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 243.

<sup>19</sup> Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities*.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Bourne, *Antiquitates vulgares* (Newcastle, 1725).

<sup>21</sup> Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities*, ix.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

the seemingly innocent ceremonies of their former superstitious faith.<sup>23</sup>

Brand acknowledged that despite the physical destruction of the monasteries this did not mean that the majority of society immediately succumbed to the new Protestant faith. Brand did his best to justify his study of these traditions with links to Catholicism by explaining how people were tricked into the faith. In doing so he alluded to the ornate decoration both literal and metaphorical used by the Catholic faith, Brand wrote:

Yet the forgers of these shackles had artfully enough contrived to make them sit easy, by twisting flowers around them: dark as this picture, drawn by the pencil of gloomy Superstition, appeared upon the whole, yet was its deep shade in many places contrasted with pleasing lights.<sup>24</sup>

The Catholic faith is portrayed as constricting shackles, which had contemptuously been constructed to seem appealing. A dark and foreboding impression of Catholicism is created with the flowers being twisted round the shackles, the gloomy superstition, and deep shade – Brand wrote as though he were using the language of the Gothic. Sweet has highlighted the development of how the ruins of abbeys were articulated by the antiquarian; how from Willis onwards there was an emphasis on the emotional response created by visiting them, rather than a need for exact documentation as found in Camden's *Britannia*.<sup>25</sup> This is most certainly the case, as this thesis will show, but the imaginative way that the building was being discussed, even by those such as Gilpin who attempted to erase Catholicism from the perception of the ruined abbey contributed towards an increased interest in the Catholic history of the ruins. As the eighteenth century progressed it would be this type of language which would become associated with the ruined abbey, and as is shown below, this contributed towards the Gothic gaze.

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, iv.

<sup>24</sup> Brand, *Observations on the Popular Antiquities*, xv.

<sup>25</sup> Rosemary Sweet, 'Antiquaries and Ruins', 48.

### *Francis Grose*

In a similar venture, and perhaps inspired by Brand's *Observations*, the antiquarian Francis Grose wrote *Provincial Glossary with a Collection of Local Proverbs and Popular Superstitions* (1787).<sup>26</sup> They both saw the disappearance of certain traditions and customs as a loss rather than an indicator of a more enlightened society. As shown above, previous to this work Grose had published a series of popular volumes entitled *Antiquities of England and Wales* (1772-76).<sup>27</sup> On the destruction of ecclesiastical buildings, he asserted that:

magnificent churches were striking ornaments to the country; the furious zeal with which these were demolished, their fine carvings destroyed, and their beautiful painted windows broken, would almost tempt one to imagine, that the person who directed these depredations, were actuated with an enmity to the fine arts, instead of hatred to popish superstition.<sup>28</sup>

Grose was aggrieved at the way in which the grand architecture and its artistic endeavour had been destroyed so carelessly. As demonstrated in the last chapter, it was not vociferous hatred of superstition which catalysed the dissolving of the monasteries, but a compulsion to capitalise on building materials. Grose's language, neither decisively pro or anti-Catholic, concentrated on the unruly destruction and vandalism of the dissolution which would become the prevalent image in the mind of the viewer gazing upon an abbey.

Grose's words would have carried some influence as his intention was for his volumes to be given the widest possible audience. This was in part owing to his dire financial situation at the time of writing them, but he also stated that:

The author begs to have it understood, that he does not herein pretend to inform the veteran antiquary; but has drawn up these accounts solely for the use of such as are desirous of having, without much trouble, a general knowledge of the subjects treated of in this publication; which they will find collected into as small a compass as

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<sup>26</sup> Francis Grose, *Provincial Glossary with a Collection of Local Proverbs and Popular Superstitions* (London: E. Jeffery, 1787).

<sup>27</sup> Grose, *Antiquities of England and Wales*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, vol 1, 105.

any tolerable degree of perspicuity would permit. In order to render every article as clear as possible, the verbal descriptions, where capable, are illustrated by drawings.<sup>29</sup>

He wanted more than just antiquarians to take pleasure from ruins. To aid this further the publication was made physically small enough so that it could be used as a guide in the field, rather than a large tome to be studied in the home. Stephen Bending contends that Grose was a trend setter and that his work turned the objects of the past into the 'new experience of consumer aesthetics'.<sup>30</sup> Bending's assertion is correct, but it requires more nuance as there were more factors fuelling the popularity of ruins than Grose. However, his appeal to a broader audience was criticised by other antiquarians for his over-embellishment of his descriptions. In a letter to Horace Walpole, William Cole a fellow antiquarian said of him:

but as for old women's stories and vulgar traditions, commend me to Mr Grose's 'Antiquities of England and Wales,' which I had never seen to any purpose till within this month. It is a mere picture-book.<sup>31</sup>

Given that he wanted more people to read his book it is doubtful that he would have taken offence to such a description of his work. This statement also infers that the language he was using, and the stories he was weaving into his descriptions, were more to entertain than to strictly inform the reader. Rosemary Sweet argues that his work certainly aimed at a general audience, but also that his descriptions took inspiration from the burgeoning popularity of the Gothic and picturesque.<sup>32</sup> This can be seen in the way that Grose described ruined sites in more poetic language than factual. His description of Coverham Abbey, North Yorkshire speaks to this:

Dreary and limited almost as the grave, yet this situation thus found a second patron; a situation that may be literally said to weep; where

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., iv.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Bending, 'The true rust of the Baron's Wars: gardens, ruins, and the national landscape' in *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice 1700-1850*, ed., Martin Myrone (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 85.

<sup>31</sup> William Cole in Eliot Warburton, ed., *Memoirs of Horace Walpole and His Contemporaries*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1851) vol 2, 427.

<sup>32</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 319.

deadly hemlock and nightshade grow, surrounded by alders,  
willows, and various kinds of vegetation, that court the gloom, and  
rejoice in moisture.<sup>33</sup>

Grose was contending that the ruins were comparable to the grave in their dreariness, with the walls weeping with moisture, and the surrounding creeping nature containing 'deadly' substances. This was the vernacular of the Gothic and its predecessor the graveyard poem, this is discussed further in the next two chapters. It was this type of language which made Cole compare his work to 'old women's stories'. Yet it was this language which was more entertaining to the reader than basic documentation and which contributed to making his work popular. This popularity would have disseminated Grose's perception of the abbey further and would significantly alter the perception of the ruined abbey in the eighteenth century.

### *Gilpin's Definition of the Ruined Abbey*

It would be embellished descriptions which would lead some to be disappointed when they visited the sites for themselves. In the following case study of Melrose Abbey many who visited the ruins, inspired by its description in Sir Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), were somewhat disappointed when they saw the monastery for themselves. The reason for this disappointment is multifaceted, but one of the main causes was the idealised and romantic way the ruined abbey had been interpreted. This preconceived idea of what the ruined abbey should look like can be seen most acutely in guidebooks. The work of William Gilpin, in his most notable work and what can be considered a proto-guidebook *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1782), contributed towards establishing a new vernacular for viewing ruins. In his most popular work Gilpin described the picturesque ideal setting for the ruined abbey. He stated:

Castles, and abbeys have different situations agreeable to their  
respective uses. The castle meant for defence, stands boldly on the  
hill, the abbey, intended for meditation, is hid in the sequestered  
vale.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Francis Grose, *Antiquities of England and Wales*, vol. 6 (London: S. Hooper, 1782), 83.

<sup>34</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 46.

The image of the ruined abbey hidden within a 'sequestered vale' was one that can be found in antiquarian writing and travelogues throughout the eighteenth century. Gilpin had a specific idea of what a ruined abbey should look like, it was very strict, and there were ruins which did not conform to his view. This drawing by Gilpin below perfectly encapsulates how he envisaged the ruined abbey (see Figure 2-1 below). Gilpin's way of gazing at the ruin would be partly responsible for influencing the Gothic literature tradition, which utilised the ruined abbey in many of its works. As this thesis will show, Gilpin played a significant role in popularising the search for the picturesque and the ruined abbey.

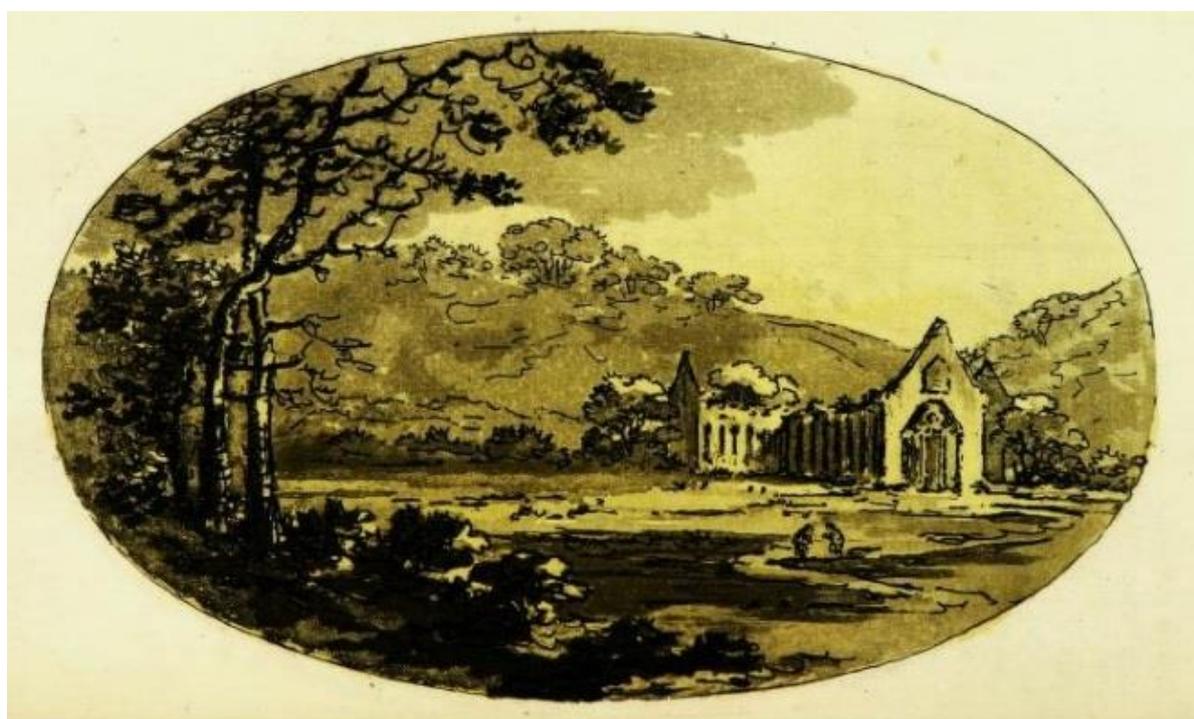


Figure 2-1 William Gilpin, Tintern Abbey, 1782, ink on paper, in William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye* (London: Printed for R. Blamire, 1782), 42.

### ***Impressions of Kirkstall Abbey***

Gilpin was not the first to set out the idealised location for the ruined abbey. The observations made by Thomas Gent, written in 1733 about the ruins of Kirkstall Abbey, near Leeds, Yorkshire, contain much of the language. In his *The Ancient and Modern History of the Loyal Town of Rippon* (1733) Gent recalled how overwhelmed he felt:

No sooner it appear'd to my eyes at a distance from a neighbouring hill, but it really produc'd in me, an inward veneration ... I left my horse at a style; and passing over it, came down, by a gentle descent,

towards its awful ruins; which, good God! were enough to strike the most harden'd Heart, into the softest and most serious reflexion; to think, where once the humble knees were lent to seek omnipotence in ancient forms, it should now have a worse fate, than other like venerable buildings, happily apply'd to the purest and most orthodox religion.<sup>35</sup>

It is possible to feel Gent's enthusiasm, and a palpable awe, being in the presence of the ruins. Gent was a Presbyterian, and it is not clear how this affected his perception of Catholic ruins, but he bemoaned the destruction of the abbey and that such a place, built for God, should not have received such a fate. This shows the complexity of perceiving the ruined abbey: that there was regret expressed for the destruction of these monasteries, whilst in the same context as admiring them for their beauty. Gent carried on, and in the same vein as Gray stated that he 'must write something of its ancient beauty'.<sup>36</sup> Gent described 'the magnificent arches' and 'the crystal river Aire incessantly running by, with a murmuring but pleasant noise; while the winged choristers of the air add their melodious notes to make the harmony greater'.<sup>37</sup> Gent went on to describe more of the abbey and added to his description a story of two men who drowned in the Aire after stealing the altar, to which Gent presided:

Let the world judge of this as they please, when they have considered how far vengeance will pursue those who contemn and defile the places where God has been worshipped.<sup>38</sup>

Providing a practical example of the building's destruction he is far more explicit about its demise compared to the more nuanced and mysterious approach by antiquarians who relied on the ruinous state of the building to tell its story. Not only had Gent created an idyllic scene for the abbey, but he also acknowledged and then admonished the destruction of the monastery. The existence of the story itself, whether fictitious or not, demonstrates that

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Gent, *The Ancient and Modern History of the Loyal Town of Rippon* (York: Printed and Sold at the Printing Office, 1733), 26.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Gent, quoted in Francis Grose, *Antiquities of England and Wales*, 12 vols (London: S. Hooper, 1782) vol. 6, 124.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

within the locality there was a tale of divine justice attached to the ruins, indicating vestiges of Catholic sentiment nearly 200 years after the Dissolution of the monasteries.

Fifty years after Gent's visit in April 1770, Thomas Gray also documented his visit to Kirkstall Abbey. It is possible to see how the language of the antiquarian had developed over this time. He described the scene as a 'delicious quiet valley, on the banks of the river Aire, and preserved with religious reverence by the Duke of Mantagu'.<sup>39</sup> Gray continued, letting his poetic inclination take over, and it becomes more fantasy than a documentation of the site when he described the:

gloom of these ancient cells, the shade and verdure of the landscape,  
the glittering and murmur of the stream, the lofty towers and long  
perspectives of the church, in the midst of a clear bright day,  
detained me for many hours; and were the truest objects for my glass  
I have yet met with anywhere.<sup>40</sup>

It is again an idealised version of the ruined abbey site – surrounded by a lush landscape, next to a flowing river with its tall towers commanding the view. The mention of his 'glass' was in reference to the Claude Glass. If it was pleasing to his glass then it meant all the elements correlated to creating something he thought was truly picturesque. Gray also evokes the mysterious past of the ruin with the 'gloom of these ancient cells'. As is shown in the following chapter, this echoes the words of Alexander Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. So potent was Gray's account that John Britton included it in his description of Kirkstall Abbey in *The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain* (1814).<sup>41</sup>

Thomas West was four miles outside of Leeds eight years after Gray in 1778 when he spotted the 'venerable ruins' of Kirkstall Abbey. West stated, 'we stood some minutes looking with silent respect and reverence on the havock which had been made by time on this sacred edifice'.<sup>42</sup> He is both scathing, yet reverential for the monks' previous pursuits, asserting:

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas Gray, 'V. Mr Gray to Dr Wharton. April 18, 1770.' in Mason, *The Works of Thomas Gray*, 311.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>41</sup> John Britton, *The Architectural Antiquities of Great Britain*, vol. 4 (London: Longman, 1814), 146.

<sup>42</sup> West, *A Guide to the Lakes*, 284.

How much soever we might condemn the mistaken notions of monkish piety, that induced the devotees to lethargic supineness, and to forsake all the soul duties of life in order to be good men; yet we secretly revered that holy zeal which inspirited them to exert every power in erecting structures, the magnitude and beauty of which might excite ideas worthy of the Deity to whom they were dedicated.<sup>43</sup>

West is more accepting of their pious motivations to build the monastery in the first place, but like John Brand he is critical of the minds who were easily swayed towards the Catholic faith. His view highlights the complexities and nuances when looking at the ruined abbey. He was able to appreciate the will and perseverance it took to erect the monastery in the first place, and he alluded to this inciting a reverential emotion. It certainly provided a great deal of introspective contemplation, so much so that West admitted that after viewing the ruins he and his party moralised 'on religious prejudices, the instability of the work of men's hands, and the fading glories of this world'.<sup>44</sup>

As mentioned above, West made his trip eight years after Gray, and it is no accident that he came upon the ruins of Kirkstall. In his *Guide to the Lakes* (1778) he directly references Thomas Gray and his inspiration for initially compiling his guide.<sup>45</sup> West set out in the introduction that:

all the select stations, and points of view, noticed by those who have made the tour of the lakes, verified by repeated observations, with remarks on the principal objects as they appear viewed from different stations.<sup>46</sup>

West had used previous guides to collate what he believed were the best viewing 'stations' to achieve the optimum experience throughout the Lake District. He stated that the guide could also be used by the artist to aid his 'choice of station', he protested that it would not be in any way proscriptive and was 'not presumed, dogmatically to direct, but only to suggest

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 3.

hints, that may be improved, adopted, or rejected'.<sup>47</sup> These stations refer to sites where Gray would have set up his Claude glass, reiterating the prescribed nature of what was considered picturesque. West would berate Gray for his choice of viewpoint, asserting that it 'is a quarter of a mile too low, and somewhat too much to the left'.<sup>48</sup> West then explained how both Gray, and Thomas Pennant had visited the Lakes at the wrong time of year, respectively.<sup>49</sup> This further shows how there was a prescribed notion of how the landscape, and by consequence the objects in it, should be looked at. West's description of Furness Abbey is reminiscent of Gilpin. He wrote:

The situation of this abbey, so favourable to contemplative life, justifies the choice of the first settlers. Such a sequestered site, in the bottom of a deep dell, through which a hasty brook rolls its murmuring stream, and along which the roaring west wind, joined with the deep-toned matin song, must have been favourable to the solemn melancholy of monastic life.<sup>50</sup>

It is likely that Gilpin had read West's work, and this similar description of the abbey site suggests this. Ann Radcliffe certainly was aware of West as she referenced his *Antiquities of Furness Abbey* (1774) when she visited the ruins herself.<sup>51</sup> It is very similar to West:

The deep retirement of its situation, the venerable grandeur of its gothic arches and the luxuriant yet ancient trees, that shadow this forsaken spot, are circumstances of picturesque and, if the expression may be allowed, of sentimental beauty, which fill the mind with solemn yet delightful emotion ... Its romantic gloom and sequestered privacy particularly adapted it to the austerities of monastic life.<sup>52</sup>

The sentiments and language are very closely linked to West's description. Radcliffe used elements of the Gothic gaze by recognising and capitulating to the monastery's Catholic

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>51</sup> Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, 1795), 494.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

past. She noted the picturesque beauty, but also admits to a sentimental beauty and was reminded of the Catholic past of the ruin. At another part of her journey through the Lake District Radcliffe visited the ruins of Shap Abbey and described the scene as ‘deeply secluded, and the gloom of the surrounding mountains may have accorded well with monastic melancholy’.<sup>53</sup> This repeats a familiar idea of what should be expected at a ruined abbey site, accompanied by ‘monastic melancholy’. This melancholic atmosphere will be shown in the next chapter to have in part come from Alexander Pope’s *Eloisa to Abelard*. Radcliffe’s Gothic novels used the ruined abbey as a dramatic backdrop for her tales of mystery and terror and this imagination is awakened when she visited ruins herself.<sup>54</sup> Her description of being within the ruins of Furness Abbey are worth recounting in full:

As, soothed by the venerable shades and the view of a more venerable ruin, we rested opposite to the eastern window of the choir, where once the high altar stood, and, with five other altars, assisted the religious pomp of the scene; the images and the manners of times, that were past, rose to reflection. The midnight procession of monks, clothed in white and bearing lighted tapers, appeared to the “mind’s eye” issuing to the choir through the very door-case, by which such processions were wont to pass from the cloisters to perform the matin service, when, at the moment of their entering the church, the deep chanting of voices was heard, and the organ swelled a solemn peal. To fancy, the strain still echoed feebly along the arcades and died in the breeze among the woods, the rustling leaves mingling with the close. It was easy to image [sic] the abbot and the officiating priests seated beneath the richly-fretted canopy of the four stalls, that still remain entire in the southern wall, and high over which is now perched a solitary yew tree, a black funeral memento to the living of those who once sat below.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>54</sup> For more on Radcliffe’s Gothic novels see: Lynne Epstein Heller, *Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic Landscape of Fiction and the Various Influences Upon It* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 1995); Doborah D. Rogers, *Ann Radcliffe: A Bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 1996); Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (ed.), *Ann Radcliffe, Romanticism and the Gothic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>55</sup> Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794*, 490-91.

Radcliffe's flight of fancy was an embellishment of West's comment that 'the roaring west wind, joined with the deep-toned matin song'. Such an account of being inside the ruined abbey and witnessing the past ceremonies and activities described in almost dream-like language is provocative. The ease with which Radcliffe was able to conjure up in her 'mind's eye' the procession of monks is testament to her knowledge of the building's history and the Catholic ceremonies therein. Radcliffe's novels *The Italian* (1797) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) are considered anti-Catholic for their portrayal of the Spanish Inquisition, yet such a detailed and peaceful representation of monastic life means that more nuance is required for this argument. In the next two chapters it is shown that poetry and Gothic narratives which have been asserted to have exuded anti-Catholic sentiment were not purposefully written with such an agenda in mind.

Radcliffe's perception of the abbey and how she came to understand and read the ruins, like Thomas West, had come in part from Thomas Gray. This helps to demonstrate not only how the perception of the ruined abbey was developed across the eighteenth century but the importance of Thomas Gray as a significant part of this process. Numerous times throughout Radcliffe's journey she made mention of 'Mr Gray' and deferred to his work for describing or recommending places of interest.<sup>56</sup> It is significant that he was used as a reference at a church in Kendal when she had come across:

inclosures [sic], on each side of the altar, differing from pews chiefly in being large enough to contain tombs. Mr Gray noticed them minutely in the year 1769. They were then probably entire; but the wainscot or railing, which divided the chapel of the Parrs from the aisle, is now gone.<sup>57</sup>

Radcliffe was referring to Gray's trip to the Lake District in 1769, she was following in his footsteps. She was repeating not only his journey but recounting and reflecting on his ideas. Gray's perception of the landscape and in this case the ruined abbey was being used as a guide, highlighting the way that objects should be seen and more importantly how they are described.

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 387, 381 and 433.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

The type of language Gray was using which stimulated the imagination of Anne Radcliffe can be seen in a letter to Reverend Norton Nicholls. Gray used dramatic license when describing a walk towards Netley Abbey, he wrote: 'In the bosom of the woods (concealed from prophane eyes) lie hid the ruins of Netley abbey; there may be richer and greater houses of religion, but the Abbot is content with his situation.'<sup>58</sup> The abbot he mentions is fictional, or is perhaps a stone effigy. Gray, like Radcliffe melds fact with fiction, he continued:

see there, at the top of that hanging meadow, under the shade of those old trees that bend into a half circle about it, he is walking slowly (good man!) and bidding his beads for the souls of his benefactors, interred in that venerable pile that lies beneath him.<sup>59</sup>

This is a direct execution of combining fact with fiction. It can be postulated that Gray is indeed referring to a carving of an abbot amongst the ruins and bringing him to life. There is perhaps an amusing element to his description but there is no sense of anti-Catholic sentiment. On the contrary, the abbot is praised by Gray for taking his time and praying for his benefactors, those who have given him indulgences, one of the main reasons for the dissolution in the first place. If it is wholly satirical it still demonstrates that there were peaceful imaginings of life within the monastery, acknowledging its Catholic past without contempt.

### *Earlier Interpretations of the Abbey*

Earlier examples of encountering the ruined abbey help to provide context for their later interpretations and provide evidence of residual Catholic beliefs and traditions attached to some sites. At the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, Celia Fiennes travelled throughout England and documented her thoughts in *Through England On a Side Saddle* (1888).<sup>60</sup> Written and collated in 1702, they would remain unpublished until 1888. Fiennes was not enthused by antiquarianism, being more interested in contemporary life than ancient traditions and decaying buildings.<sup>61</sup> With this in mind her perception of ruined

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Gray, 'VI. Mr Gray to Mr. Nicholls. 19<sup>th</sup> November 1764.' in Mason, *The Works of Thomas Gray*, 312.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>60</sup> Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle*.

<sup>61</sup> David Hey, 'Fiennes, Celia (1662–1741),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37414>.

abbeys is of interest to this study. She provides insight on how much people knew about their localities and surrounding areas, she stated 'I observe the ordinary people both in these parts of Yorkshire and in the norther parts Can scarce tell you how farre it is to the next place unless it be in the great towns'.<sup>62</sup> There was very little knowledge about the landscape beyond their immediate vicinity. Fiennes described the Ely Minster with much disdain, asserting that '[T]his Church has the most popish remaines in its walls of any I have seen', before going on to state that:

There still remaines a Cross over the alter; the Candlesticks are 3 quarters of a yd high massy silver gilt very heavy. The ffont is one Entire piece of White Marble stemm and foote, the Cover was Carv'd wood wth ye image of Christ being baptised by John and the holy Dove Descending on him, all finely Carv'd white wood wth out any paint or varnish.<sup>63</sup>

Other parts of the church were adorned with 'carved stone all sorts of figures, cherubims Gilt and painted in some parts' and 'the pillars are carv'd and painted with the history of the bible especially the new testament and description of christs miracles. The lanthorn in the quire is vastly high and delicately painted and fine carv'd work all of wood, in it the bells used to hung'.<sup>64</sup> The amount of ornate decoration within the church was at odds with the Protestant doctrine. It is reminiscent of the churchwarden's accounts of the first chapter, where Catholic decoration had been kept long after the Reformation had begun. Fiennes' description of St Winfreds is just as detailed. She also describes being in Wells and seeing carved figures of the twelve apostles.<sup>65</sup>

Fiennes also visited the ruins of the abbey at Glastonbury and noted that the kitchen was the only building which was still standing. She was then drawn towards different parts of it, especially the cellar or vault, and revealed a local tradition told to her by the locals that

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<sup>62</sup> Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle*, 79.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

if they cast a stone into the place it gives a great Echo, and ye  
Country people says its ye Devil set there on a tun of money wch  
makes ye noise Least they should take it away from him.<sup>66</sup>

She spots holly growing out of the ruined chimney and comments ‘the superstitious covet much and have got some of it for their gardens and so have almost quite spoiled it’.<sup>67</sup> Tales of the devil being within the ruins, and people taking cuttings of the holly bush suggest strongly that there is still a connection with the abbey to the local community and that they were frightened and also fascinated with the ruins. Scared of its dark corners, but willing to take part of it into their homes. The traveller and journalist Daniel Defoe, a little further into the eighteenth century, recounted tales involving monks and the devil when he visited the abbey at Crowland, in Lincolnshire:

The monks of Crowland were eminent in history, and a great many stories are told of the devils of Crowland also, and what conversation they had with the monks, which tales are more out of date now, than they were formerly; for they tell us, that in antient times those things were as certainly believ'd for truths, as if they had been done before their faces.<sup>68</sup>

Although they are being dispelled as nonsense, the repetition of the story itself perpetuates the idea of the monks and devils being together at the site. This is not itself purposefully anti-Catholic, but it does help to conjure up the idea of supernatural happenings attached to the site. The very existence of ‘a great many stories’ only helps to accentuate this and demonstrates that these tales would have existed within the minds of those in the locality, and as such affected their perceptions of it. In chapter 4 it is seen how stories such as Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796) utilised and exaggerated such tales, furthering the association of the ruined abbey to tales of the supernatural.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>68</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Volume 2 (Dublin: For Messrs. D. Chamberlaine, J. Williams, 1779), 145.

On his journeys Defoe also described a visit to Glastonbury Abbey, in his *Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724).<sup>69</sup> Defoe, who was similar to Fiennes in that he was averse to antiquarian study, wrote of the abbey: ‘where, indeed, the venerable marks of antiquity, however I have declined the observation of them, struck me with some unusual awe’.<sup>70</sup> He is also taken on a tour of the ruins and was told two quite remarkable facts about the site: ‘that King Arthur was buried there, and that his coffin had been found here,’ and that ‘Joseph of Arimathea was here, and that he fixed his staff in the ground, which was on Christmas Day, and it immediately took root’.<sup>71</sup> The tree which took root was the same holly bush that Fiennes encountered. Defoe himself takes a cutting of it, although at first cautious of the tale he stated that the story is ‘universally attested’ to be true.<sup>72</sup> These are vivid traditions, which demonstrate that there was a continuation of stories surrounding the abbey, some taken from the ancient religious world, preceding the start of the Reformation. Strong legends such as this demonstrate that there were abbeys which had abiding traditions closely tied to the Catholic faith that were not shaken off by the Reformation and remained vivid in the minds of those local to them.

### *Henry Hutton's Letters*

The above example exemplifies how elements of Catholicism were either acknowledged by those visiting the abbey, or actively kept by those local to the abbey. The next chapters will describe how poetry and then Gothic narratives created a way of speaking about the ruined abbey which was very different to how they were perceived by those who lived next them. A more nuanced view of attitudes towards ruined monasteries, very different to the celebrated ruins such as Glastonbury or Kirkstall, can be gleaned from the correspondence of George Henry Hutton. Little detail is known about Henry Hutton (as he was known), other than he was the son of mathematician Charles Hutton.<sup>73</sup> He was a member of the British Army, who finished his service as Lieutenant-General, and he was a very enthusiastic, amateur antiquarian.<sup>74</sup> In the 1790s he took it upon himself to write to as many ministers, and fellow antiquarians across Scotland as he could, enquiring about their local dissolved monasteries and nunneries, in order to create his own *Monasticon Scoticon*. This

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>73</sup> Niccolò Guicciardini, ‘Hutton, Charles (1737–1823),’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14300>.

<sup>74</sup> Most information on Henry Hutton can only be gleaned from: Ross, ‘Three Antiquaries’.

would be for Scotland what William Dugdale had achieved with England and Ireland: a comprehensive account of the ruined monasteries throughout the country. Sadly, he would die before he published his findings.<sup>75</sup> These letters have hitherto only been considered in a 1964 article by the Reverend Anthony Ross.<sup>76</sup> The wealth of information that can be gleaned from this correspondence is invaluable towards understanding how abbey sites were perceived in the eighteenth century.

The Reformation which took place in Scotland during 1559-60 was in many respects different to Henry VIII's.<sup>77</sup> Michael Carter argues that the Reformation in Scotland was chiefly the work of iconoclasts who with zeal and thoroughness destroyed all vestiges of the Catholic faith.<sup>78</sup> Carter also insists that the majority of the religious conformed to the new Protestant religion. Both of these statements are largely true, but in the context of how ruined abbeys were perceived they need further assessment. It is certainly true that Scotland severed its ties with the papacy in 1560 when John Knox amongst others created *The First Book of Discipline*. Yet as Stephen Mark Holmes has highlighted, defining 'The Scottish Reformation' is a hugely complex and nuanced task.<sup>79</sup> Just as in England there was not an entire adoption of the new Protestant doctrine and to state as much belies the residual amount of Catholicism still prevalent therein. As Holmes mentions it is also worth acknowledging the myriad of attempted Catholic insurrections in the prevailing 200 years, from Mary Queen of Scots to the Jacobites.<sup>80</sup> As highlighted by Clotilde Prunier, at the time of the Glorious Revolution the Catholic population was 50,000, but this had reduced significantly to 30,000 by 1779.<sup>81</sup> Catholics were sparse in number in the Lowlands but owned large swathes of the Highlands and Western Isles, their existence can be described as

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<sup>75</sup> An unpublished handwritten version exists in the National Library of Scotland (NLS), Adv.MSS.30.5.1-30.5.21., NLS.

<sup>76</sup> Ross, 'Three Antiquaries'.

<sup>77</sup> For the Reformation in Scotland see Ian Borthwick Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation: church and society in sixteenth-century Scotland* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982); Stephen Mark Holmes, *Sacred Signs in Reformation Scotland: Interpreting Worship, 1488 – 1590* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); John McCallum, *Poor Relief and the Church in Scotland, 1560-1650* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018); David McRoberts, *Essay on the Scottish Reformation, 1513 – 1625* (Glasgow: Burns, 1962).

<sup>78</sup> Michael Carter, 'The Making of Britain's Ruins: Monasteries and Castles, 1536 – 1650' in Carter, Lindfield and Townshend, *Writing Britain's Ruins*, 29.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen Mark Holmes, 'The Scottish Reformation was not Protestant', *International journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 14, no. 2 (2014). doi:10.1080/1474225X.2014.930598.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>81</sup> Clotilde Prunier, 'Anti-Popery in Eighteenth-Century Scotland: A Scottish Catholic Perspective,' in *Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland, 1600–2000. Histories of the Sacred and Secular, 1700–2000*, eds. Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Geraldine Vaughan (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 38.

humble with very little influence.<sup>82</sup> The sympathy towards the Jacobite cause was just as scant throughout Scotland, and although this relationship is not so easily defined, Daniel Szechi has provided evidence which shows pockets of physical opposition to government forces after the defeat of the rebellion in 1715.<sup>83</sup> The attitude towards Catholicism in Scotland in the eighteenth century is complex, and the context within England and Scotland is certainly different, yet the relationship to the ruined monasteries and how they were perceived is comparable, and this is most acute in the eighteenth century.<sup>84</sup>

In the vast collection of letters written back to Hutton on his enquiries, the majority are unable to provide any information at all about the ruins of their local monastery. This dearth of specific information on particular ruined sites provides important attitudinal evidence with regards to what had become of disregarded monastery and nunnery sites across Scotland. The attitudes of local people highlight that the monasteries had been used for building materials or they had been forgotten entirely. Hutton stated his motivation for preserving the memory of priories across Scotland, and bemoaned the loss of tangible written evidence on them:

John Knox and others of his spirit among our first reformers, equally animated and resolved to destroy all ecclesiastical monuments and particularly all MSS [sic]. And records relating to religion in order to abolish the memory of what they termed idolatry, and especially burn all books that had red letters as belonging to the Popish worship by which means such MSS histories as came in their way, were sacrificed without distinction.<sup>85</sup>

Hutton's work was not completely in vain, he was praised by a Mr P. Methven for his efforts 'to rescue part of Scottish history from oblivion' and that it was 'certainly a very laudable undertaking and will afford much Entertainment to the lovers of antiquity'.<sup>86</sup> In a letter to

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<sup>82</sup> Prunier, 'Anti-Popery in Eighteenth-Century Scotland: A Scottish Catholic Perspective', 38.

<sup>83</sup> Daniel Szechi, 'Retrieving Captain Le Cocq's Plunder: Plebian Scots and the Aftermath of the 1715 Rebellion,' in *Loyalty and Identity: Jacobites at Home and Abroad*, eds. Paul Monod, Murray Pittock and Daniel Szechi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 104.

<sup>84</sup> More can be read about Scotland's relationship to Catholicism in Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Geraldine Vaughan, eds., *Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland, 1600–2000. Histories of the Sacred and Secular, 1700–2000* (Cham: Palgrave, 2020).

<sup>85</sup> NLS Adv MSS 30.5.1.

<sup>86</sup> P. Methven, Grosveror Street, April 30th 1789, NLS, Adv MSS 29.4.2 (vii), 200.

Hutton from the coppersmith William Forbes, he demonstrated passion for preserving ruins of antiquity, and who so deeply lamented the decimation of the ruins of Emanuel Nunnery, near Falkirk, by exclaiming that ‘a flood carried away the east end of the building’ and he dramatically states that ‘I could have rather parted with a larger portion of my house’.<sup>87</sup> Forbes, so enamoured was he with the ruins of the nunnery that he would rather a part of his own house had succumbed to the flood instead. There were others who were more pessimistic about the reception of Hutton’s final findings, such as, Church of Scotland minister, James Scott, who wrote: ‘I have not the Health and Spirits sufficient for it, besides that anything done of that Kind, tho’ with great trouble, does not meet with the general attention or thanks of the Public’.<sup>88</sup> Scott’s sentiments are despondent, yet from a thorough analysis of Hutton’s correspondence, they are accurate. Robert Couper, a poet, was under no illusions as to the fate of the monasteries. Upon request by Hutton to gain information on the priory at Wigtown, Dumfries and Galloway, he is extremely forthright in his reply stating:

I have never had much satisfaction where churchmen were concerned; and I do not care much even to meddle with their deserted nests however much I may be inclined. I have pushed my old priest in the North but unsuccessfully. I believe these chaps live even at this day under the terror of school-tales.<sup>89</sup>

Couper’s derisory remarks about ‘school-tales’ refer to Catholic superstitions, stating that they are still under the terror of them, alludes to there being Catholic belief still evident in parts of Scotland. His use of the phrase ‘deserted nests’ refers directly to John Knox’s rhetoric where he called for the congregation to attack the abbeys and priories, and that the best way to stop ‘rooks from returning’ was to ‘pull down their nests!’<sup>90</sup> Recounting such vehement Protestant rhetoric discloses the attitude that Couper had against the Catholic Church. An unnamed author of a letter counters this attitude and bemoaned ‘it would give me pleasure to contribute to the useful work in which you are engaged. But alas the blind

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<sup>87</sup> William Forbes, Callander, 17 April 1789 in *A Topographical and Historical Account of Linlithgowshire*, ed. John Penney (Edinburgh: Stillies, 1831), 202-203.

<sup>88</sup> James Scott, Perth, November 8th 1800, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (vii), 250.

<sup>89</sup> Robert Couper, Wigtown Galloway, October 5th 1812, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (i), 301.

<sup>90</sup> William M. Engles, ed., *Writings of the Rev. John Knox, Minister of God’s Word in Scotland* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1842), 11.

zeal of our early reformers and the ravages of time, have enveloped us in a darkness not to be removed'.<sup>91</sup> Robert Duncan, a schoolmaster, regretted the lack of enthusiasm surrounding antiquarian pursuits stating 'there are very few people in this neighbourhood who like my interest in those publications'.<sup>92</sup> This comment, along with others such as James Scott mentioned above, highlight that there was a lack of interest in general surrounding ruined abbeys and nunneries, especially those in Scotland, at the end of the eighteenth century.

Hutton failed to receive any useful detailed information regarding the priory sites. The reverend James Steven described the difficulties in attempting to uncover information on the old priory at Lochwinnoch, Renfrewshire, 'all your letters came to hand, being a stranger myself to this place I showed your letter to all who could give information, the reply was uniform, they knew nothing'.<sup>93</sup> This reaction was typical of the correspondence coming back to Hutton. Andrew Grant, a Church of Scotland minister, described the difficulty in finding anyone who knew anything about the priory at Portmoak, Kinross, stating:

there are but few alive who know, with certainty, when the religious houses you mention formerly stood. Nor is this to be wondered at if you consider that these ruined remains of former times have more than once fallen into the hands of proprietors who valued them only so far as they afforded stone for building other houses and parish walls.<sup>94</sup>

This highlights once again that many used dissolved monasteries as a means to gain building materials for other structures. Grant meets 'some old people' who remember having seen the chapel in its entirety. Little is known of any traditions surrounding the building, with exception of a man who was buried on the site, who is purported to be Graham first Archbishop of St Andrews who died a prisoner at Lochlevin castle and was then interred at the priory in Portmoak.<sup>95</sup> It is intriguing to consider that the oldest people in the parish, who had seen the building standing knew nothing about it. The reverend John Monteith at Houstoun, Renfrewshire, had an answer to this by asserting 'you know the

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<sup>91</sup> Anonymous, Kirkendbright, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (i), 44.

<sup>92</sup> Robert Duncan, Inverkeithing, 14th January 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS 29.4.2 (vi), 274.

<sup>93</sup> James Steven, Lochwinnoch Manse, 22nd March 1790, NLS, Adv.MSS29.4.2 (ii), 107.

<sup>94</sup> Andrew Grant, Portmoak 20th December 1788, NLS, Adv.MSS 29.4.2 (vi), 62.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

country people, who are often flitting from one Parish to another, don't trouble themselves about these things'.<sup>96</sup>

Tangible evidence relating to the priories was the most difficult, and perhaps the most fruitless of Hutton's endeavours. Robert Duncan at Inverkeithing, Fife, had trouble placing the monastery as he was sure there was a monastery there, but did not know of the exact spot, the uncertainty came from the lack of records.<sup>97</sup> Duncan went on 'it is a pity that many ancient records, which would have thrown light upon matters of antiquity, have been lost by various accidents; for, without these, men and their works are soon forgotten'.<sup>98</sup> William Robb at Longland bemoaned the state of the records and how they had been kept over the years: 'Ancient Records & Papers relative to their Town that they are all in Tatters & quite illegible to any Person. They have been kept in shocking damp places'.<sup>99</sup> John Preston also had trouble in finding anything about a priory at Dundee complaining that 'the records of the town go back but a short way, & I am well informed they have not a single paper relative to any of the ancient monasteries excepting a Grant from Queen Mary dated at Dundee 11<sup>th</sup> September 1564 allowing them to bury their dead in that place'.<sup>100</sup> This demonstrates that there was an inherent disinterest by anyone to prolong the memory of these priories. Reverend Father Lorimer was aghast that 'nothing should be known, even in tradition, that can lead to a discovery of the name of the foundation of so magnificent a structure in the vicinity of the Capital, and which may rank among the finest edifices in the kingdom'.<sup>101</sup> This shows how the interest in an abbey or tradition of the site had diminished dramatically.

Historical information may have been scant, but there certainly was a lot of anecdotal evidence about what had happened to some of the abbey sites. The minister at Wigtown, Andrew Donnan, provided some indication as to what had happened to the priory there and the stone with which it was made: 'a great deal of which I am informed has been carried off with in the memory of many of the inhabitants of this town, and many small fragments

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<sup>96</sup> John Monteith, Houstoun 18th December 1788, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (ii), 108.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Duncan Inverkeithing 14th January 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (vi), 251.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>99</sup> William Robb, Longland, March 5th 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (i), 93.

<sup>100</sup> John Preston, Dundee 19 August 1789., NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (ix), 128.

<sup>101</sup> A copy of part of a letter to the Rev Father Lorimer, Haddington, Bedford Row, London, 24 June., NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (v), 184.

of it are still to be seen on the field'.<sup>102</sup> The same can be said of the abbey at Kilmeny, in Fife, which was described by the Reverend Andrew Hutton as being a 'quarry I believe since the Reformation, & continues to be so still'.<sup>103</sup> He goes on to exclaim that 'it's shocking to see it ... the whole will soon be mined. In all the houses & dykes thereabouts the carved, hewn stones of the abbey are to be seen'.<sup>104</sup> The stones on both sites respectively were still being stolen within the past century. The same story was repeated at Peasehill, by farmer Alexander Melvill, who stated that the abbey at Balermينو, in Fife, is a heap of ruins 'partly demolished by time, but more so by hands pulling it down in order to build Houses and dykes with the stones'.<sup>105</sup> This observation of the abbey was shared by Defoe who complained that 'we now went away to the north east part of the county, to see the ruins of the famous monastery of Balmerinch, of which Camden takes notice; but we saw nothing worth our trouble, the very ruins being almost eaten up by time'.<sup>106</sup> It is evident that there was nothing pleasing to his eye, rather than having any historical value. This also hints at the structure being somewhat diminished from Camden's time. It is evident then that local people were still using the ruined abbeys as sites to pick up building materials for new structures. They were perceived and used as any other building material would be, devoid of their Catholic and pious past, they had lost all their religious resonance. This demonstrates that people took no interest in the history of the buildings from where the stones came, whether that be religious or not.

Although much of the correspondence to Hutton indicated that many ecclesiastical buildings had been carried off by the locals, it is clear that some ruins still held religious significance. A memorandum, in amongst Hutton's correspondence by an unnamed author, from July 1789, concerning the priory at Strathfillan is particularly noteworthy.<sup>107</sup> The memorandum depicts vividly how the ruins had come to be used by the local community as a form of therapy for the insane. The ceremonies surrounding the ruins are fascinating:

The ceremonies particularly alluded to are practiced in cases of lunacy, by tying the patient (who is laid upon his back) within the

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<sup>102</sup> Andrew Donnan, Wigton January 20th 1790, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (i), 295.

<sup>103</sup> Andrew Hutton, Kilmeny, 14 March 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (vi), 182.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>105</sup> Alex Melvill, Peasehill May 15 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (vi), 195.

<sup>106</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A tour through the whole island of Great Britain*, 162.

<sup>107</sup> The handwriting does not match that of Hutton's.

walls of the ruin, and leaving him all night; however the binding is done in such a way as to leave the lunatic pretty much at liberty; and if he extricates himself, it is ascribed to the interposition of the patron saint; and the most favourable hopes are entertained of a speedy recovery from the malady. This absurd ceremony happened this very year & is continued by the people of the immediate neighbourhood; however remedy has not been in such high repute of late years as formerly; and the custom of frequenting this place on such occasions must cease as the minds of these credulous people become more enlightened.<sup>108</sup>

The Protestant attitude of the author is keenly felt as he hints at the residual Catholicism still in evidence. The writer was disparaging of the Catholic faith, but he was correct that it was still prevalent throughout the country. He does indicate this at the beginning of the memorandum, asserting that at the chapel of ease in Killin, Perthshire, located in the same parish as Strathfillan:

A schoolmaster is also placed here by the society for propagating Christian knowledge which may in time contribute towards eradicating from the mind of the vulgar the superstitions to which they are addicted.<sup>109</sup>

This statement is particularly illuminating as it demonstrates that even by the end of the eighteenth century, Catholicism was very evident within society, especially in locations further away from the south east of England. To try and alleviate this problem an initiative, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) was created in order to educate the Highlands and Islands to Protestantism.<sup>110</sup> Schools were placed all over Scotland which speaks to the hold that Catholicism still had. Their aim was to:

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<sup>108</sup> *Memorandum concerning the Priory of Strathfillan*, NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (vii), 128.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>110</sup> For more on this see: William Ferguson, 'The problems of the Established Church in the West Highlands and Islands in the Eighteenth Century,' *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 17 (1972); John Mason, 'Scottish Charity Schools of the Eighteenth Century,' *The Scottish Historical Review* 33, no. 115, part 1 (April 1954); Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart, 'The genesis and operation of the Royal Bounty Scheme 1725-30,' *Scottish Church History* 33, no. 1.

Seize upon young untutored minds, as yet undepraved by vicious habits and examples, but utterly destitute of all means of cultivation; to rescue from savage ignorance, superstition, and vice; to furnish them with the means of knowledge and grace, and to train them up into fitness for being useful members of the church, as well as of human society.<sup>111</sup>

This need to take strong action as a means to educate Catholicism out of large swathes of society demonstrates how the Reformation had not succeeded entirely. Furthermore, just as anti-Catholicism had not been the driving factor in the physical dismantling of the monasteries in the sixteenth century, so it was in the eighteenth century. They had been left to ruination and used as a means to gain building materials, but they had not been pulled down as a way to eradicate Catholicism.

There is further evidence of practices and ceremonies related to Catholicism still taking place at the end of the eighteenth century. Ceremonies such as the one described above were not uncommon and carried on well into the nineteenth century.<sup>112</sup> Within the parish of Strathfillan in Perthshire, the pool of St Fillan, in Killin was a popular location for ceremonies, as explained in a footnote in *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland*: ‘When mad people were brought to be dipped in the Saint’s Pool, it was necessary to perform certain ceremonies, in which there was a mixture of Druidism and Popery’.<sup>113</sup> It goes on to explain the ceremony further, and what would take place at the Chapel of St Fillan afterward:

After remaining all night in the chapel, bound with ropes, the bell was set upon their head with great solemnity. It was the popular opinion, that, if stolen, it would extricate itself out of the thief’s hands, and return home ringing all the way. For some years past this bell has been locked up, to prevent its being used to superstitious purposes.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, *An Account of the Funds, the Expenditure etc.* (1796), 27.

<sup>112</sup> Emily Donoho, ‘The Madman amongst the Ruins: The Oral History and Folklore of Traditional Insanity Cures in the Scottish Highlands’, *Folklore* 125, no. 1 (April 2014). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43297731>.

<sup>113</sup> Killin, County of Perth, *Old Statistical Accounts of Scotland*, Volume 17, 1796, 377-78.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

There are similarities between the above ceremony, and the one at Strathfillan. The most revealing phrase being that the ceremony was a mixture of 'druidism and popery'. This shows that some Catholic traditions had not been entirely extricated from the community. The need for the bell to be locked up indicates that there still existed a strong residual Catholic presence. The potency of this pervasiveness is evidenced by Sir Walter Scott in notes to his romantic verse *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* (1808). He asserted that '[A]lthough Popery is, with us, matter of abomination, yet the common people still retain some of the superstitions connected with it'.<sup>115</sup> He then further observed that places such as the well of St Fillan 'are still places of pilgrimage and offerings, even among the Protestants'.<sup>116</sup> This demonstrates how Catholic traditions could have stayed enmeshed within a society that had seemingly parted ways with its old religion.

Within Hutton's correspondence very little is said against either popery or superstition, this seems quite unusual given that many of those Hutton wrote to were Church of Scotland ministers. At Paisley priory Colin Gillies and James Mylar respectively provide evidence of physical demonstration against the monasteries, stating that in an inscription in stone dedicated to Abbot George Shaw the line 'pray for his salvation' had been scrubbed out.<sup>117</sup> This demonstrates that there were some in the locality that took exception to the Catholic inscription. John Preston reveals an important piece of information regarding practicing of faith, he stated 'Hector Boethius (if I am not mistaken) who was a Townsman says that the people of Dundee were averse to go to the New Church which was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, & continued long to frequent the Old Church which was called St Clements'.<sup>118</sup> This indicates that some Catholic traditions took longer to break. The faith they practiced would have changed, from Catholic to Protestant, but from this it can be gleaned that many continued to attend the same buildings.

Hutton's letters show similarities as well as significant differences to how old monasteries and nunneries were viewed in Scotland. There is abundant evidence of stonework being carried away from the sites, a trait shared throughout Britain. The responses which detail a complete lack of any evidence of the priory or monastery speak to a wholesale wiping out of

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<sup>115</sup> Walter Scott, *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* (Edinburgh: Paterson, 1830), 277.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>117</sup> James Mylar, Paisley 9 January 1789, & Collin Gillies, Paisley 10 January 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS 29.4.2 (ii), 83.

<sup>118</sup> John Preston, Dundee 19 August 1789, NLS, Adv.MSS 29.4.2 (ix), 129.

the site, lost in memory even to the oldest in the communities. However, this erasure does not reflect the religious beliefs of the people. The existence of old Catholic traditions combined with an initiative such as the SSPCK to convert these communities to the Protestant faith speaks to how deep the old religion ran in society. Their destruction of these abbeys was not indicative of a rejection of Catholicism but a signifier of opportunism, taking now disused stone to help build other structures.

### ***Conclusion***

The perception of the ruined abbey throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is difficult to establish firmly. There was not one attitude that prevailed throughout the whole of Britain. Just as the effect of the Reformation differed from location to location, so did the strength of feeling towards ruined ecclesiastical buildings. The language used to describe the sites transformed and evolved, from Dugdale's matter-of-fact approach recording the derivation of the abbey and a small description of what could be seen, to the flowery and romantic descriptions found in antiquarian texts. Through an artful fusion of fact and fiction, work from Thomas West and Ann Radcliffe found new ways to describe elements of the British landscape. It is evident that Thomas Gray played a significant role in how both West and Radcliffe perceived and understood the ruined abbey. They used Gray's poetry and descriptions as if they were a guidebook, and in turn created their own for others to follow. Gray, along with others such as Francis Grose helped to strengthen, and to some extent legitimise such a blend of fact and fantasy. Imagining the abbey as it once was, but placing it within the current landscape, and appreciating its ruined state. This was not a view of the abbey shared by all, through Hutton's correspondence it is clear that many, less celebrated monasteries had been pilfered and purloined into vanishing completely. Yet there was still evidence of the old religion and its ancient traditions from the small priories to celebrated ruins such as Glastonbury and Kirkstall, demonstrating that the dilapidated and ruined remains of the monasteries was not reflective of the residual Catholic faith across the country.

*Observations on the Wye* helped Gilpin's view of the ruined abbey to become popularised, but this way of seeing the abbey in an idealised setting was not all of his own design. The abbey standing in the sequestered vale located next to a murmuring stream, evoking a sense of awe and reverence had become familiar language relating to the ruins. The popularity of Gilpin's work meant that many began to travel and discover ruined abbeys for themselves.

The impetus for these visits can be found in the work of the Graveyard School poets and the Gothic novel. The next two chapters will demonstrate how this way of viewing the abbey was constructed through an amalgamation of these two literary genres.

## Chapter 3 - Graveyard School Poetry

In tandem with the growth of the antiquarian imagination was the development of the Gothic literary genre throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The narratives and atmosphere these created are essential in understanding the perception of the ruined abbey in the context of anti-Catholicism. Many of the tropes found in Gothic narratives have their origins in the Graveyard School of poetry. These were poets whose work concerned the idea of human mortality, and the entire concept of death, and how this was represented in cemeteries. These poems typically involved a ruined abbey or ruins of ecclesiastical grounds and churchyards. The impact that they made provide an understanding into the perception of these sites throughout the eighteenth century. Their popularity was such that Matthew Gregory Lewis began several of his chapters with excerpts from these poems as a shorthand way of creating the desired foreboding atmosphere in his infamous Gothic novel *The Monk* (1796).<sup>1</sup> Yet it was through less obvious methods that the Graveyard School of poetry made its impact. It was done through repetition of familiar tropes associated with ruined sites – the ivy-clad tower, the solitary owl, the moonlit and shadowy ruin, amongst many, many others. The introductory chapter highlighted scholarly arguments which cite Gothic narratives as one of the prevailing sources for anti-Catholic sentiment in the eighteenth century. This interpretation of Gothic fiction as a form of emboldening rampant anti-Catholicism needs reassessed, and this chapter will do so by showing its connection to the Graveyard School of poetry. Many of the tropes used by the Gothic writers were heightened versions of those found in the work of these poets and they did not all use them as a means to advocate an anti-Catholic perspective. The common tropes associated with the Gothic and therefore enmeshed with anti-Catholic sentiment were not conceived to express such a message. It will be shown below how William Shenstone, for instance, wrote virulently anti-Catholic poetry but did not personally hold such beliefs, merely using the Graveyard School style as a conduit to gain notoriety. An assessment of poetry such as this will show that the perception of the ruined abbey as created by Gothic narratives was partly established through the Graveyard School. Furthermore, an analysis of this connection will challenge the widely accepted belief that the Gothic is rampantly anti-Catholic.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*.

This chapter will not seek to find the exact origin, nor the creation of Gothic tropes in literature, as this has been well studied.<sup>2</sup> The use of Protestant themes and tropes within these stories has also been studied significantly.<sup>3</sup> Rather, this chapter will examine a way of interpreting the ruined abbey in the context of its Catholic past which was espoused by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator*.<sup>4</sup> In conjunction with this it will examine the importance of Alexander Pope's monastic epistle, *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) and how this contributed towards the creation of a language which was able to articulate monastic life to an audience who had no experience of it. Through interpretation as well as imitation, Pope's poem became synonymous with the ruined abbey. The combination of Addison and Pope breathed new life into the dark Catholic past, and with it created a perception of the ruined abbey. This chapter shows this development by analysing the poetry written in the Graveyard School style, with an assessment of the motivations of the writers themselves. The chronological order helps to demonstrate how one poet influenced and affected the work of the other across the eighteenth century.

The Graveyard School of poetry has surprisingly not been extensively studied. The work of Eric Parisot analyses three of its main exponents Edward Young, Robert Blair and Thomas Gray and it is thorough, but it is not exhaustive.<sup>5</sup> Evert Jan Van Leeuwen argues that the link between graveyard poetry and Gothic fiction are similar but that their aims were very different.<sup>6</sup> Van Leeuwen asserts that because the poems themselves were written by churchmen their closest counterpart was the eighteenth-century funeral sermon. Parisot further examines graveyard poetry in the reading of funeral sermons and the increase in private devotion.<sup>7</sup> David Punter is more demonstrative about graveyard poetry's influence

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<sup>2</sup> Fred Botting, ed. *The Gothic* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001); Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750-1820 A Genealogy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003); Carol Margaret Davidson, *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1764-1824* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009); Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend, eds., *The Gothic World* (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Joel Porte, 'In the Hands of an Angry God: Religious Terror in Gothic Fiction' in *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism*, ed., G.R. Thompson (Washington, 1974), 42-64; Victor Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Maria Purves, *Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009); Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*.

<sup>4</sup> Addison, 'Essay No. 110'.

<sup>5</sup> Parisot, *Graveyard Poetry*.

<sup>6</sup> Evert Jan Van Leeuwen, 'Funeral Sermons and Graveyard Poetry: The Ecstasy of Death and Bodily Resurrection,' *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 3 (2009).

<sup>7</sup> Eric Parisot, 'Piety, Poetry, and the Funeral Sermon: Reading Graveyard Poetry in the Eighteenth Century,' *English Studies* 92, No.2 (April 2011).

on Gothic fiction, emphasising its impact on German writers of terror-fiction.<sup>8</sup> To build upon these contributions and to gain an understanding of how these poets affected the perception of the ruined abbey their work along with others in the Graveyard School style needs to be placed in the context of anti-Catholicism. Less familiar work including that of Edward Jerningham, William Shenstone, and Edward Kimber will help to provide an understanding of how influential poets like Young, Gray and Blair were. The previous chapter indicated that the work of Gray was very influential in inspiring others to search for the ruined abbey in the landscape. This chapter argues that the perception of the ruined abbey was informed by language made popular in graveyard poetry, which was then disseminated and further popularised through Gothic stories told in novels and chapbooks. Poetry shaped a pre-existing attitude: it utilised well-known tropes to create a familiar atmosphere for the reader.

***New Perspectives on the Ruined Abbey: Joseph Addison replying to Locke***

Joseph Addison was one of the first writers to consider the perception of the ruined abbey within the context of its Catholic past. Addison was a politician of middling repute, but became renowned for his writing, and his contribution to the popular magazines *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. The readership for both these publications was significant, as highlighted by Jurgen Habermas who describes them as being intimately interwoven with the coffeeshop culture of the eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Habermas also asserts the importance of Addison within these publications, that he argued across a wide variety of social issues, and that these heightened debates and that 'the public that read and debated this sort of thing read and debated about itself.'<sup>10</sup> As demonstrated throughout the last chapter, at the beginning of the eighteenth century the study of Britain's Catholic past was a maligned practice. Addison's own attitude on Catholicism can be gleaned through his publication of a pamphlet entitled *The Present State of the War and the Necessity of an Augmentation Consider'd* (1708), in which he stated that:

The French are certainly the most implacable, and the most dangerous Enemy[sic] of the British Nation. Their Form of Government, their Religion, their Jealousy of the British Power, as

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<sup>8</sup> David Punter, *The Literature of Terror Second Edition* (London: Longman, 1996), 30.

<sup>9</sup> Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 42.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

well as their Prosecutions of Commerce, and Pursuits of Universal Monarchy.<sup>11</sup>

Addison hints that their religion, the Catholic faith, was a contributing factor in making France a dangerous country. His attitude towards Catholicism is also conveyed in his *Essay 110* (1711) in *The Spectator*.<sup>12</sup> In this essay Addison described a walk at dusk near a nameless ruined abbey, during which he contemplated why the human mind would consider such a place to be frightening. It is one of the first pieces of writing to evaluate the effects of the ruined abbey on the imagination. It is also hugely significant as it introduces some of the ideas and tropes which would go on to be repeated and imitated in graveyard poems.

Addison's walk is most likely fictitious, it includes the character Sir Rodger de Coverley, who was fictional and devised by Addison throughout much of his writing as a representation and pastiche of a typical country gentleman. Although the walk as he described it may not have taken place, it is still possible to analyse the language used in order to understand the way in which Addison perceived the ruin. Addison was musing on how being frightened of certain environments was taught at a young age. By writing this essay Addison was responding to John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), in which Locke had assessed the myriad of elements which affect and shape the human mind from birth.<sup>13</sup> He stated quite explicitly that upon being near the site between nine and ten at night that he fancied it to be 'one of the most proper scenes in the world for a ghost to appear in'.<sup>14</sup> Addison quoted directly from Locke's essay:

"The ideas of goblins and sprites have really no more to do with darkness than light: yet let but a foolish maid inculcate these often on the mind of a child and raise them there together, possibly he shall never be able to separate them again so long as he lives; but darkness shall ever after bring with it those frightful ideas, and they shall be so joined, that he can no more bear the one than the other."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Present State of the War and the Necessity of an Augmentation Considered* (London: Printed and sold by J. Morphew, 1708).

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Addison, 'Essay No. 110'.

<sup>13</sup> John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London: Printed for A. Millar, H. Woodfall, J. Wiston and B. White, 1764).

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Addison, 'Essay No. 110', 226.

<sup>15</sup> John Locke quoted in *Ibid*, 226.

Locke argued that the idea of fearing darkness and the unknown was established in childhood, and that these terrors had been taught. As he walked near the ruined abbey at night, Addison was trying out this theory in practice. He stated that he had been warned not to do so as it was reportedly haunted and had frightened his butler who had been confronted by a spirit 'in the shape of a black horse without a head'.<sup>16</sup> Addison described the atmosphere as he walked, noting that the scattered ruins of the abbey are covered in ivy and elder bushes, which harbour 'solitary birds', which only appear at dusk. He continued on:

The Place was formerly a Churchyard, and has still several Marks in it of Graves and Burying-Places. There is such an Echo among the old Ruins and Vaults, that if you stamp but a little louder than ordinary, you hear the Sound repeated.<sup>17</sup>

Addison created a similar atmosphere which was to be replicated in many graveyard poems. One of these common tropes being the descriptions of graves, Addison mentions the 'marks' of the gravestones that hint at them being forgotten and overgrown. Another theme is the sound of the cemetery; Addison described his footsteps and how they were being magnified by the old stones under his feet, contributing to the uneasy atmosphere.

As Addison walked on, it is possible to see the development of more reverential language and other tropes of the Graveyard School being used. He described the ruined scene:

the walk of elms, with the croaking of the ravens which from time to time are heard from the tops of them, looks exceedingly solemn and venerable.<sup>18</sup>

The elm trees are seen as though bowing in contemplation, joined by the ravens created for Addison a 'solemn and venerable' scene. It conjures up the previous Catholic use of the ruins, as will be shown below, the solitary bird is a trope of the Graveyard School. Addison had also attributed the site with a, a reverential atmosphere The creation of this scene with

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

the trees as though in religious contemplation alludes to the building's Catholic past. Addison alluded to the building's Catholic past, and appreciated how some would find the site discomfoting:

These objects naturally raise seriousness and attention; and when night heightens the awfulness of the place, and pours out her supernumerary horrors upon every thing in it, I do not at all wonder that weak minds fill it with spectres and apparitions.<sup>19</sup>

This is one of the first occasions that the phrase 'supernumerary horrors' is used in relation to the ruined abbey. The phrase posits the idea of the mind creating innumerable terrors brought on by darkness and the unknown. It is also a phrase used directly by Robert Blair in *The Grave* (1743), an example of one of the first graveyard poems, which is looked at in more detail below. Addison qualified this by stating that it would be a weak mind who would fill the night with spectres and apparitions. The term 'weak mind', usually denoted Catholicism, it can be assumed that Addison was using it to indicate this also. He was making a connection between the residual strength of the religion and the ruins themselves in the present.

Towards the end of his walk Addison contemplated:

as I was walking in this solitude, where the dusk of the evening conspired with so many other occasions of terror, I observed a cow grazing not far from me, which an imagination that was apt to startle might easily have construed into a black horse without a head: and I dare say the poor footman lost wits upon some such trivial occasion.<sup>20</sup>

This is satirical in tone, yet it showed how the environment was able to play tricks with the mind in the way that Locke had described. Addison acknowledged that there were traditions throughout the country associated with ruined abbeys and churchyards. He then recounted all the supernatural activity in the house of his friend Sir Roger. The best room in

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

his house had 'the reputation of being haunted, and by that means was locked up'.<sup>21</sup> He then added that he could not get a servant to enter his long gallery as 'noises had been heard after eight-a-clock at night'.<sup>22</sup> More occasions are mentioned including a butler having hanged himself in a room and then a wife boarding up all the rooms in which all the members of her family had died. All this called for a chaplain to visit and exorcise the house and to 'lay in every room one after another, and by that means dissipated the fears which had so long reigned in the family'.<sup>23</sup> Addison remarked 'should not have been thus particular upon these ridiculous Horrors [sic], did I not find them so very much prevail in all Parts of the Country'.<sup>24</sup> He was aware of the absurdity of such terrifying stories yet their ubiquitous nature intrigued him. Addison went on to admit that:

I think a Person who is thus terrify'd with the Imagination of Ghosts and Spectres much more reasonable than one who, contrary to the Reports of all Historians sacred and prophane [sic], ancient and modern, and to the Traditions of all Nations, thinks the Appearance of Spirits fabulous and groundless.<sup>25</sup>

His thought was evidently fluid on the matter, as he had begun the essay by being unconvinced at the idea of supernatural occurrences taking place at the site. Although he was derisory of Catholic practices, he did not find the thought of fanciful and suspicious elements which were part of them completely out of the question. He went further with his justification for believing in fantastical thought by arguing 'I might here add, that not only historians, to whom we may join the poets, but likewise the philosophers of antiquity have favoured this opinion'.<sup>26</sup> This justification legitimised, and encouraged others to have a similar perception of the ruined abbey. It promoted the idea to the readers of *The Spectator* that there was the possibility of supernatural occurrences happening within a ruined abbey site. This demonstrates how there could be an acceptance of what were considered 'superstitious' Catholic facets to a ruined monastery. Through this article Addison had made these elements more believable and tangible by being in the environment and experiencing

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 226.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 227.

it first-hand. The popularity of *The Spectator* would likely have seen this approach to perceiving ecclesiastical sites being discussed throughout Britain. Addison boasts at the start of the tenth edition of *The Spectator* that of ‘my publisher tells me, that there are already three thousand of them distributed every day’, which leads him to believe that he has ‘threescore thousand disciples in London and Westminster’.<sup>27</sup> It is debated whether this is an accurate number, but its popularity is highlighted by Tracy Chevalier who points to there being readership as far as Boston and Sumatra.<sup>28</sup> Accurate readership is up for debate, yet Addison’s influence on other writers was significant as the rest of this chapter will show.

### *Alexander Pope’s Eloisa to Abelard*

Someone who had taken a keen interest in Addison’s work in *The Tatler* was Alexander Pope.<sup>29</sup> Pope became acquainted with Richard Steele, the co-convenor of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* with Addison, and for a short while was close to their friendship circle. Pope’s relationship with Addison began well, but ended in acrimony, leading Pope to remark ‘He was very kind to me at first but my bitter enemy afterwards’.<sup>30</sup> In 1715 Pope’s *Epistle to Arbuthnot* cemented this animosity by sketching a character based on Addison accusing him of being vain, jealous and prone to flattery.<sup>31</sup> Addison evidently made an impact on Pope’s work, and this can be seen in Pope’s interpretation of monastic life conveyed in his monastic epistle *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717).<sup>32</sup> This poem is significant for how it shaped the perception of abbey life to the eighteenth-century reader. Published in 1717, Pope’s monastic epistle was written from the perspective of Eloisa, who had been separated from her love Abelard, a teacher twenty years her senior. As punishment for their forbidden relationship, they had been sent to separate monasteries. Pope was a practicing Catholic which made him somewhat of an oddity in early eighteenth-century England. Francis Beauchesne Thornton has asserted that *Eloisa to Abelard* is most telling of Pope’s Catholic training.<sup>33</sup> Jeremy Carnes has explained that the production of the work was an expression of the frustration

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph Addison, ‘No.10. Monday, March 12, 1711,’ in Joseph Addison, *Delphi Complete Works of Joseph Addison* (Hastings: Delphi, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Tracy Chevalier, *Encyclopaedia of the Essay* (London: Routledge, 2012), 805.

<sup>29</sup> Pat Rogers, ed., *A Political Biography of Alexander Pope* (London: Routledge, 2016), 65.

<sup>30</sup> Pat Rogers, ed., *The Alexander Pope Encyclopaedia* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Rogers, *A Political Biography of Alexander Pope*, 66-7.

<sup>32</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Works of Mr Pope* (London: Printed by W. Bowyer, 1717), 389.

<sup>33</sup> Francis Beauchesne Thornton, *Alexander Pope: Catholic Poet* (New York: Pellegrini & Cudahy, 1952), 46.

and fears felt by the Catholic community in response to the failed Jacobite Rising in 1715.<sup>34</sup> However as Pat Rogers has made clear, Pope was not interested in a political life, and his views on social and religious issues were complex and in many cases unorthodox compared to his peers.<sup>35</sup> Although the poem has been analysed as a political statement, its interpretation of monastic life needs to be addressed in more detail. Pope had created a way of understanding monastic life for the eighteenth-century reader and as such had affected how the ruined abbey was viewed and understood.

From the outset of the poem Pope relays the atmosphere in which Eloisa writes her words to Abelard:

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,  
Where heav'nly-pensive, contemplation dwells,  
And ever-musing melancholy reigns;<sup>36</sup>

Pope creates a contemplative and melancholic tone for a place of deep solitude within the nunnery from where Eloisa is writing. The mention of individual, 'awful cells' compounds the isolation further. It is these lines which are imitated most in Graveyard School poetry. The language is also reminiscent of that employed by the antiquarians and writers examined in the previous chapter; an atmosphere of seclusion and contemplation was keenly expressed by Thomas West, Ann Radcliffe, William Gilpin, amongst others. The poem describes more of the surroundings:

Relentless walls! whose darksome round contains  
Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains:  
Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn;  
Ye grotts and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn!  
Shrines! where their vigils pale-ey'd virgins keep,  
And pitying saints, whose statues learn to weep!<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jeremy Carnes, 'Eloisa to Abelard to Eloisa: English Catholics and the Development of gothic Fiction' in *The Ways of Fiction: New Essays on the Literary Cultures of the Eighteenth Century*, ed., Nicholas J. Crowe (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 50.

<sup>35</sup> Rogers, *A Political Biography of Alexander Pope*, 2.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander Pope, 'Eloisa to Abelard,' *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (Yale: Yale University Press, 1963), 252, lines 1-3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 252, lines 17-22.

Eloisa describing the walls as ‘relentless’ – the claustrophobia is keenly felt. This is further accentuated by the stones themselves being described as though they physically held on to the past nuns’ ‘voluntary pains’, alluding to self-flagellation. They are said to ‘contain’ this pain in perpetuity to distribute it as time passes and others encounter them. The ‘grotts and caverns’, the dark recesses of the abbey being draped in ‘horrid thorn’, is resonant of the abundance of foliage and ivy mentioned numerous times by Thomas Gray, Francis Grose, and Gilpin.<sup>38</sup> As the poem progresses there are further descriptions of the environment, contributing towards the claustrophobia and despair:

In these lone walls (their day’s eternal bound),  
 These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crown’d,  
 Where awful arches make a noon-day night,  
 And the dim windows shed a solemn light<sup>39</sup>

The moss-grown domes relate more to a ruined abbey than a functioning monastery. Images of this type would have helped the reader to relate to monasteries which they had encountered themselves. This is further compounded by a contemplative moment which blurs the lines between the protagonist describing a view of the outside world and the monastery itself. Eloisa is yearning to be rescued whilst looking out a window, and considers:

The darksome pines that o’er yon rocks reclin’d,  
 Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,  
 The wand’ring steams that shine between the hills,  
 The grotts that echo to the tinkling rills,  
 The dying gales that pant upon the trees,  
 The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;  
 No more these scenes my meditation aid,  
 Or lull to rest the visionary maid:

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<sup>38</sup> Examples: Mason, *The Works of Thomas Gray, Esq.*, 242, 311, 400; Grose, *The Antiquities of England and Wales*, vol 6, 11, 126, 134, 136; William Gilpin, *Observations, on Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772*, vol. 2, (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808), 135, 275, 351.

<sup>39</sup> Pope, ‘Eloisa to Abelard’, 256, lines 141-144.

But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,  
 Long-sounding isles, and intermingled graves,  
 Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws  
 A death-like silence and a dread repose:  
 Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,  
 Shades ev'ry flow'r, and darkens ev'ry green,  
 Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,  
 And breathes a browner horror on the woods.<sup>40</sup>

There is a multitude of language and tropes that is repeated in the graveyard poem and form part of Gothic narratives. The lament describes the surrounding environment and contains much of the language as seen throughout the last chapter: the abbey in a secluded spot in a valley, surrounded by woodland and a river. Pope had amalgamated the images of the wooded landscape with the language of the cemetery: 'twilight groves and dusky caves' are matched with 'Long-sounding isles, and intermingled graves'. This is immediately followed by the vivid spectre of 'Black Melancholy' sitting amidst the scene with 'a death-like silence and a dread repose'. Her gloomy presence is said to sadden the scene, darkening the flowers and greenery as it does so. It is possible to relate the environment described above to abbey sites described in the last chapter: 'gloom' and 'melancholy' are almost essential aspects of visiting the ruined abbey. This section of the poem ends with tears described as 'falling floods' and the darkening surroundings breathing a 'browner horror on the woods'. This is not dissimilar to Addison's 'supernumerary horror' which poured itself out across the ruined abbey as night fell. In Pope's scene it is the 'Black Melancholy' which has spread its horror into the mind of Eloisa. As has already been shown with Addison's contemplation on the human mind and how it would imagine supernatural occurrences at a ruined abbey, Pope has provided some evidence of how this could have been taught. It is shown below that Pope's influence on the perception of the ruined abbey was considerable and that much of *Eloisa to Abelard* was widely emulated.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 256, 155-170.

The popularity and ubiquity of *Eloisa to Abelard* is exemplified in a poem by Richard Owen Cambridge in 1756, entitled *An Elegy Written in an Empty Assembly-Room*.<sup>41</sup> The beginning of which states:

This poem being a parody on the most remarkable passages in the well-known epistle of Eloisa to Abelard, it was thought unnecessary to transcribe any lines from that poem, which is in the hands of all, and in the memory of most readers.<sup>42</sup>

The poem was so popular that there was no need to reproduce it within the publication for the reader to understand the parody of it. The impact was still felt forty years after its publication and would have disseminated Pope's depiction of monastic life influencing the way people perceived monasticism, and as a result the ruins of monasteries.

### ***Robert Blair's 'The Grave'***

The title of Cambridge's poem is taken from Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), one of four dominant poems in the Graveyard School. Eric Parisot asserts that this school of poetry at its narrowest refers to four individual works. Along with Gray, these were: Thomas Parnell's *Night-Piece on Death* (1721), Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-45), and Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743).<sup>43</sup> These works were the first to use the poetic mode to meditate on the futility of the human existence, centred in the grounds of a graveyard. Parisot's work is concerned chiefly with Parnell and Young's poems, with little attention paid to Blair and Gray. The work of the two latter poets is analysed here to show the influence of Pope and how they built on this to create a perception of the abbey as a terrifying yet intriguing place.

In a similar way to Hans Holbein in the sixteenth century, in his woodcut series *The Dance of Death*, Blair's *The Grave* described death as the great leveller of all people, irrespective of their social stature.<sup>44</sup> Holbein paid special attention to the monks and nuns, depicting death

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<sup>41</sup> Samuel Johnson, ed., *The Works of the English poets from Chaucer to Cowper*, 75 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1810) vol 18.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Owen Cambridge, 'An Elegy written in an empty Assembly-Room', in *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>43</sup> Parisot, *Graveyard Poetry*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Hans Holbein the Younger, *The Dance of Death: 41 Woodcuts by Hans Holbein the Younger* (London: Constable, 1971).

in the guise of a skeleton, guiding them to their mortal denouement.<sup>45</sup> Blair described the scene in the tomb, much like in Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*:

Athwart the Gloom profound! The sickly Taper  
By glimmering thro' thy low-brow'd misty Vaults,  
(Furr'd round with mouldy Damps, and ropy Slime,)  
Lets fall a supernumerary Horror,  
And only serves to make thy Night more irksome.<sup>46</sup>

Blair is describing the soul as it navigates its way around the grave, the dark and dank passage of the tomb is palpable in this verse. The taper, the sole light provider in the scene being described as 'sickly', itself being defined in mortal terms accentuates the enveloping gloom that has already been established. It also creates more shadows as they seem to cling to the walls which are mouldy and damp, and this sets off 'supernumerary horror'. This is repetition of the 'supernumerary horror' as described by Addison, with a similar theme of 'browner horror' as used by Pope, shown above. Not long after the publication of *The Grave*, the writer Reverend James Hervey, in *Contemplations on the Night* (1748) wrote of the childhood terror of being near a churchyard:

How often has the school-boy fetched a long circuit, and trudged  
many a needless step, in order to avoid the haunted churchyard! Or  
if necessity, sad necessity, has obliged him to cross the spot, where  
human skulls are lodged below, and the baleful yews shed  
supernumerary horrors above: a thousand hideous stories rush into  
his memory.<sup>47</sup>

The similarity to Robert Blair could be intentional with the reference to the idea of 'supernumerary horror'. It is also possible that he was referring to Addison too, with the schoolboy having found himself in a similar situation of being in the graveyard and having his mind being filled with those same horrors. Lines from *The Grave* demonstrate the parallels between Blair and Hervey:

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Blair, *The Grave* (London: M. Cooper, 1743), 4.

<sup>47</sup> James Hervey, *The Whole Works of J.H.* (Edinburgh, 1834), 83.

Of, in the lone Church-yard at Night I've seen  
 By glimpse of Moon-shine, chequering thro' the Trees,  
 The School-boy with his Satchel in his Hand,  
 Whistling aloud to bear his Courage up,  
 And lightly tripping o'er the long flat Stones.<sup>48</sup>

The similarities are striking, and both contain many of the same tropes and ideas which preoccupied Addison's mind when he ruminated on the ruined abbey and churchyard. Furthermore, through utilising the character of the schoolboy it brings to the fore the idea of how the terrifying perception of the churchyard was taught from an early age. It would be poetry such as Blair and Gray's which would function in a similar way by instilling and emphasising the unease and terror found in the ruined churchyard.

In the same way that *Eloisa to Abelard* had stayed in the public's consciousness, so too had Blair's poem by still making a significant impact a century later. *The Grave* is quoted in *The Gardener's Magazine* in 1843 and is partially blamed as one of the reasons why churchyards are not popular. Complaining about the unkempt state of cemeteries, the article bemoans:

No wonder that, under such circumstances, the burial-grounds, more especially of towns, are shunned and avoided, rather than sought after as places for meditation. Even under the most favourable circumstances, the associations which are generally attached to churchyards are gloomy and terrific.<sup>49</sup>

Lines from *The Grave* are then quoted after, its impact on the public was still evident. To have printed lines from the poem a century on would only have further catalysed the idea of horrors in the graveyard. Although the poem was not about a ruined abbey the tropes and language used echoed much of Pope's monastic epistle. It was providing a way of perceiving ruined ecclesiastical sites included churchyards which were abandoned and left to ruination.

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<sup>48</sup> Blair, *The Grave*, 6.

<sup>49</sup> *The Gardener's Magazine and Register of Rural & Domestic Improvement*, 10 vols (London: Longman, 1843) vol 9, 100.

### *Thomas Gray*

With regards to the ruined churchyard, it would be Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) which would have the biggest impact. Just as Pope had his imitators, of which Gray was one, Gray would have a significant influence on the graveyard poem after the publication of his *Elegy*. An unnamed critic in the nineteenth century discussing Gray's work, in the context of other poets at the time who were imitating Pope, wrote:

He stands apart. His poetry is taken to be like an oasis in the desert; it is a sudden spring of perennial freshness gushing out in the midst of that dreary didactic, argumentative, monotonous current of versification poured forth by the imitators of Pope.<sup>50</sup>

It is clear that this critic had become weary by the volume of literary works derivative of Pope. They recognised that Gray was one such imitator but that the quality of his work stood out from the rest. This statement shows a saturation of copycats and demonstrates how prevalent Pope's thoughts and ideas had become in the eighteenth century.

In the same vein as Addison, it was also written as a walk through a ruined graveyard at the close of day. In this poem, as with Robert Blair's *The Grave*, Death is portrayed as the great leveller of all things, the pursuits in life seen as futile in its shadow – 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave'.<sup>51</sup> Roger Lonsdale, whilst considering the inception of the poem, concludes that although published in 1751 it was begun some ten years before and would have been influenced by Blair, along with Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742-45), and Thomas Wharton's *Five Pastoral Eclogues* (1745) amongst many others in the Graveyard School, all writing in the 1740s.<sup>52</sup> Lonsdale also points to phrases and diction borrowed from Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare.<sup>53</sup> However, the poem itself places the poet not in the untouchable echelons of these literary greats, but in amongst the lower orders of folk; worried about their mortality, and likely to be forgotten after their death.

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<sup>50</sup> 'Gray and His School,' *The Cornhill Magazine*, Vol.40, July to December, 1879 (London, 1879), 72.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Gray, *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (London: R. Dodsley, 1751), 4.

<sup>52</sup> Roger Lonsdale, ed., *The Poems of Gray, Collins and Goldsmith* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1969), 109.

<sup>53</sup> Lonsdale, *The Poems of Gray*, 116.

It is the first four stanzas that set the scene amongst ordinary country life, creating a depiction of the days end using similar descriptive tropes to that of Blair and Pope:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,  
 The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
 Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r,  
 The moping owl does to the moon complain,  
 Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,  
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,  
 Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,  
 Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,  
 The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.<sup>54</sup>

Familiar themes and tropes can be seen appearing. The trees are also a familiar component, an idea developed from Pope, the yew tree especially had become a synonymous with the English churchyard. The origins for the tree's connection to the cemetery are not clear. T. N. Brushfield considered the use of the yew tree, quoting Thomas Pennant as saying that it had a 'solemn and funeral character' but for an antiquary named Dr Rock it was the very antithesis of this, and was an emblem of immortality.<sup>55</sup> Thomas Dudley Fosbroke was more forthright in his *Encyclopaedia of Antiquities* (1825), and stated that:

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<sup>54</sup> Thomas Gray, 'An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,' in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy (New York: Norton, 2005), 669, lines 1-16.

<sup>55</sup> T. N. Brushfield, 'Yew Trees in Churchyards,' in *Antiquities and Curiosities of the Church*, ed. William Andrews (London: William Andrews and Co., 1897), 276.

This tree has been a solemn funeral plant among the Classical Ancients, Celts, etc. and no reason can be so well assigned for its appearance in our church-yards, as a symbol of Death from its poison [...] and its gloomy aspect.<sup>56</sup>

It is clear that although there was some debate over its symbolism within the churchyard, the yew tree was linked inexorably to it, and it will be shown below to feature heavily as part of the language of the Gothic. Other tropes would become synonymous with the graveyard poem; the ivy mantled tower, a common motif seen in use throughout the last chapter, as well as used by Gilpin to show the influence of nature overtaking the ruins. The owl is a totem of the lonely atmosphere within the ruins, referred to as 'her solitary reign' as it sits in the moonlight, synonymous with the graveyard poem. The lonely scene is compounded by the people buried there being contained in a 'narrow cell', echoing the wording used in *Eloisa to Abelard*. As has been highlighted by Lonsdale these were already established tropes and themes featured in the work of James Hervey and Edward Young.<sup>57</sup>

The *Elegy* continues and hears from the poet, the 'hoary-headed swain':

'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn  
'Brushing with hasty steps the dews away  
'To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech  
'That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,  
'His listless length at noontide would he stretch,  
'And pore upon the brook that babbles by.<sup>58</sup>

This scene depicts the graveyard close to a wood and 'babbling' stream, similar to the prescribed picturesque view of ruins as set out by Gilpin. The scene is tranquil, set in the morning as the sun rises and meets the dew-laden 'upland lawn', again echoing the sentiments of Gilpin's ideal placement for a ruin. The poem continues describing the missing

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<sup>56</sup> Thomas Dudley Fosbroke, *Encyclopaedia of Antiquities*, 2 vols (London: Printed by and for John Nicols and Son, 1825) vol 2, 752.

<sup>57</sup> Lonsdale, *The Poems of Gray*, 140.

<sup>58</sup> Gray, 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard', 672, lines 98-104.

man who can no longer be seen at his usual haunts only to be seen being carried to the grave:

‘The next with dirges due in sad array  
 ‘Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.  
 ‘Approach and read (for thou can’st read) the lay,  
 ‘Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.’<sup>59</sup>

On his criticism of the poem, John Young highlighted that the ‘thorn’ in question had been linked by Gray to the thorn bush at Glastonbury abbey, as described in chapter two above.<sup>60</sup> The reference to Glastonbury would have helped to ground the scene within real life, guiding those such as Ann Radcliffe and Thomas West who had used Gray as a tool to decipher the landscape.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the final stanzas use the familiar language of the picturesque known to the eighteenth-century reader: the verdant hills, the wooded enclave next to a babbling stream, all used to describe the scene of a ruined monastery. This was not a poem set within a monastery, but it contained all the familiar elements of the language of ruins which would be assimilated into the Gothic novel.

### ***Edward Jerningham***

Edward Jerningham was a poet who had been deeply influenced by Gray’s language and thoughts surrounding the ruined churchyard. He wrote a response to Gray’s elegy entitled *The Nunnery: An Elegy In Imitation of the Elegy in a Church-Yard* (1762). A reviewer wrote of it ‘What, another Elegiac Bard! – Well, this performance, however, must be allowed to be a good Parody, whatever may be thought of it as a Poem’.<sup>62</sup> The reviewer expressed consternation at yet ‘another’ elegiac bard, this demonstrates that the form was very popular at the time. The review goes on to state ‘[T]he description of the monastic Life of the Nuns is poetical and harmonious’.<sup>63</sup> This is somewhat accurate, but Jerningham does not portray a wholly harmonious scene. This is in part due to describing the claustrophobic conditions of monastic life in the style of Pope with direct mention of ‘Eloisa’ and ‘Abelard’. The poem expresses the loss felt by Eloisa, depicting the silent scene as night has fallen:

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<sup>59</sup> Gray, ‘Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard’, 672, lines 113-116.

<sup>60</sup> John Young, *A Criticism on the Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard* (London: Printed for G. Wilkie, 1783).

<sup>61</sup> Chapter 2, 63.

<sup>62</sup> *The Monthly Review Or Literary Journal Enlarged*, vol. 28 (London: Printed for R. Griffiths, 1762), 358.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

Save where in artless melancholy Strains  
 Some Eloisa whom soft Passion moves,  
 Absorpt in Sorrow to the Night complains;  
 For ever bar'd the Abelard she loves.<sup>64</sup>

The appearance of both Eloisa and Abelard make the influence of Pope keenly felt. The use of the names created the desired atmosphere instantly for the reader, so familiar was the monastic trope conjured up by the mention of them. He depicts a similar solitary existence of the nun, which reflects the language used by those describing abbey ruins in the last chapter.

Jerningham's next poem was *The Magdalens* (1763) and was given the subtitle '*By the Author of the Nunnery*'.<sup>65</sup> This shows not only that his work was popular, but also that his attitude towards monasticism had been well received; moreover, an edition of *An Elegy Written Among the Ruins of an Abbey* (1765), was given the subtitle, '*By the Author of the Nun*'.<sup>66</sup> *An Elegy Written Among the Ruins* is another imitation of Gray, but is far greater in length. As well as being damning of monasteries and the clergy who lived therein, the title itself is explicit about its connection to the ruined abbey. This direct correlation to the ruins legitimised the feelings and atmosphere conveyed within the poem, creating an expectation upon visiting such a site:

Where sighs the Zephyr to yon lonely Tree,  
 A solemn Grove its leafy Mantle spread:  
 Where bend yon mould'ring Turrets o'er the Sea,  
 A venerable Dome once rear'd its Head.<sup>67</sup>

The abbey is placed within the familiar surroundings of the leafy 'solemn grove', where the ruins are said to be 'mould'ring'. These are tropes as shown above to have been used by Pope, and then emulated by Gray. In contrast to those poets Jerningham places more

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<sup>64</sup> Edward Jerningham, *The Nunnery* (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1762), 8.

<sup>65</sup> The use of a Magdalen nunnery is in reference to what were houses for 'fallen women' and repentant prostitutes, a house set up with the help of Jonas Hanway, acquaintance of Horace Walpole. Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (London: Pimlico, 2005), 311.

<sup>66</sup> Edward Jerningham, *An Elegy Written Among the Ruins of an Abbey* (London: J. Dodsley, 1765).

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

emphasis on the religious past of the ruins and provides a sharp and biting critique of it. Jerningham depicts an ancient Albion having been tricked into the Catholic religion:

Alas! obsequious to her stern Command,  
 A sullen-pensive Brotherhood they came,  
 Refus'd to trace the Paths by Nature plan'd,  
 And raz'd from Glory's Page their ancient Name.

Nor these alone were found incloister'd here,  
 Here also dwelt the simple-minded Swain,  
 Who wrapt in Sloth dream'd out the lazy Year,  
 'While Industry sat weeping on the Plain.'<sup>68</sup>

This is a bald attack of Catholicism and the clergy who lived in the monastery, they are portrayed as being simple-minded and lazy. It depicts England's 'glorious' past as besmirched by the very existence of the monasteries. This maligning of the clergy is then followed by a portrayal of a character reminiscent of Eloisa who is then merged with a carving of a nun in the fabric of the ruined building. They are worth quoting in full:

On yon Dust-level'd Spire the crafty Maid,  
 With Indignation brooding in her Breast  
 Sits gloomily - - Her Vot'ries all are fled,  
 Her Lamps extinguish'd, and her Rites suppress'd:

Within her Hand a vacant String she hold  
 That once connected many a hallow'd Bead:  
 The blotted Scroll the other Hand unfolds,  
 Contains the Maxims of her slighted Creed:

Couch'd at her Feet, behold a mould'ring Shrine  
 (Of various Relics once the dread Abode)  
 Where runs the Spider o'er his trech'rous Line,

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

Where lurks the Beetle, and the loathsome Toad:

On Darkness' wing now sails the midnight Hour,  
 When for the grateful Sound of choral Pray'r,  
 The shrieking Owl from yon disparted Tow'r,  
 With Notes of Horror wakes her trembling Ear.<sup>69</sup>

These lines demonstrate a direct connection to the poetry of Pope, as well as the use of a myriad of tropes in the Graveyard School canon. The figure of the dust ridden 'Maid', by which is meant a Nun, sitting 'gloomily' amidst the ruined pile is evocative of Eloisa who sat in her 'convent's solitary gloom!'.<sup>70</sup> The mention of the 'dying lamp' a direct reference to Eloisa's lamp which 'grew pale' and towards the end of *Eloisa to Abelard*:

Here, as I watch'd the dying lamps around,  
 From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound.<sup>71</sup>

The 'shrine' in Jerningham's poem is said to be 'couch'd' at the nun's feet and 'mould'ring'. The next two stanzas depict the desolation that has become of the monastery, now the abode of solitary animals at large during the midnight hour, two more standard tropes of the Graveyard School evoked by Jerningham. The cry of the solitary owl creating 'notes of horror' correlates to Addison's experience amid the ruins of an abbey, the echoing sounds creating additional terrifying images in the mind. Furthermore, it also relates to Robert Blair's portrayal of the school-boy hurrying through the ruined graveyard whistling to disguise the noise and echoes his feet are making on the stone.

Jerningham used the stone effigy of a nun to elicit the image of Eloisa and then grounded this story into the fabric of the ruined abbey by having it crumbling and overrun by animals and insects. This is expressed more explicitly further on:

The Path that leads to yonder shattr'd Pile  
 Is now perplex'd with many a sordid Brier:

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>70</sup> Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*, 253, line 38.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 11.

No Crowd is seen within the sacred Isle,  
The Sabbath mourns its long-deserted Quire.

The golden Crozier blended with the Dust  
In horrid Folds the Serpent clasps around:  
The pow'rful Image, and the sainted Bust,  
Defam'd, unhallow'd, press the weedy Ground.<sup>72</sup>

The stonework representation of the bishop's golden staff is decaying and will eventually turn to dust. This is coupled with a stronger image of a saint being lost to time and grown over by weeds. The path that leads to the ruined abbey is stated also to be overgrown. The following case studies will show that this unkempt and obscured view of the ruin will be what is expected for some who visited ruins, and for Arthur Young and William Gilpin it was essential.<sup>73</sup> It was most certainly poetry such as Jerningham's which contributed towards this perception.

The final portion of Jerningham's poem is full of rabidly anti-Catholic and vivid imagery reminiscent of Gothic literature:

From where yon Mountain shades the dreary Plain,  
Attracted by the Scent of human Blood,  
A Troop of Wolves voracious scour'd amain,  
And at this Charnel Vault requir'd their Food:

When, horrid to relate! they burst the Tomb,  
And swift descending to the deepest Shade,  
Up-tore the shrouded Tenant from its Womb,  
And o'er the mangled Corse relentless prey'd.

The paly Stars with dim reluctant Light,  
Like Tapers glimmer's on their Orgies foul,

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<sup>72</sup> Jerningham, *An Elegy*, 7.

<sup>73</sup> Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England*, vol. 2 (London: W. Strahan, 1770), 324; William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 46.

While gliding Spectres scream'd with wild Affright,  
Re-echo'd loud by their tremendous Howl.

Wolves are said to have come down from the mountains, exhumed and devoured the founder of the abbey, presumably as punishment for founding the abbey. As has been highlighted by Lindfield and Townshend, this was written in the same year that the second edition of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* was given the subtitle 'A Gothic Story', yet Jerningham was using distinctly Gothic imagery in this poem pre-empting its popularity in the late eighteenth century.<sup>74</sup> It can be further argued that this imagery was not only laying the groundwork for the Gothic narratives it was also creating an expectation and perception of the ruined abbey which the aforementioned stories would accentuate. Jerningham's description of the ruined abbey as a relic of a dark age created a mysterious atmosphere that made the ruin appealing. A review of the poem at the time of its publishing reflects this. It insisted that Jerningham:

has never failed to expose the bad effects which the institutions of superstition have produced, while he borrowed all that was solemn and magnificent about them to adorn his verse.<sup>75</sup>

This demonstrates part of the function of the Gothic gaze. Jerningham took what he deemed to be 'bad' parts of the ruins, elements relating to Catholicism, and amalgamated them with the 'good' parts, the ornate and picturesque, and this resulted in making the ruins of an abbey a mysterious and intriguing place to visit.

### ***Edward Kimber***

Jerningham, although writing a couple of decades after the height of its creative epoch, belongs to the Graveyard School, yet there are others such as Edward Kimber who have been overlooked by scholars. Kimber's work precedes Jerningham, and even Thomas Gray, but his work in the Graveyard School style has gone hitherto unnoticed. Kimber should be acknowledged as a poet writing in the graveyard style in the 1740s at the beginning of its popularity. Acknowledging this helps to create a better understanding of the motivations

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<sup>74</sup> Peter N. Lindfield and Dale Townshend, 'Edward Jerningham' in *Lost Souls of Horror and the Gothic*, eds., Elizabeth McCarthy and Bernice M. Murphy (Jefferson, 2016), 107-114, 109-10.

<sup>75</sup> *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal*, vol. 32 (London: Printed for R. Griffiths, 1764), 393.

and influences of these poets. In the July 1788 edition of *The County Magazine*, a poem was published entitled *Written extempore on seeing the Ruins of Netley Abbey, near Southampton*, it contemplated:

Ye gloomy vaults, ye hoary cells,  
 Ye cloister'd domes in ruin great,  
 Where sad and mournful silence dwells,  
 How well instruct ye by your fate?

Thus every human pride and boast,  
 Shall soon or later meet decay;  
 In dark oblivion sunk and lost,  
 The idle pageant of a day.

Ah, what is life! a passing hour!  
 A fleeting dream of fancy'd joy!  
 No constant blessing in our power,  
 But dullest repetitions cloy.<sup>76</sup>

The sentiments echo that of *Eloisa to Abelard*, and at times are almost identical. In this iteration of the poem, it is attributed to an unknown author, only given the moniker 'B---NEY'. The poem can also be found attributed to Sir John Scott Byerley in *The Poets of Yorkshire* (1845).<sup>77</sup> In this instance the poem is entitled *Lines on Viewing the Ruins of Mount Grace Abby, near Northallerton* (1788). Little is known of Byerley, but he cannot have written the poem as he was not born until 1780.<sup>78</sup> What is most intriguing is that the same poem can be found published in 1744 in the *London Magazine*, entitled *Written on a Brick in the Ruins of Holy-Abbey, on Holy-Island, near Berwick on Tweed, June 21, 1744*, the writer is anonymous, given only the initials P.V.C.<sup>79</sup> This was a pseudonym for Edward Kimber, son of Baptist minister and author Isaac Kimber, editor of the *London Magazine* in which the poem was published. Edward Kimber has never been studied in the context of the Graveyard School of

<sup>76</sup> B---NEY., 'Written extempore on seeing the Ruins of Netley Abbey, near Southampton', in *The County Magazine For July, 1788*, No. 31. Vol. 2 (London: B.C. Collins, 1788), 495-96.

<sup>77</sup> W.C. Newsam, ed., *The Poets of Yorkshire* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1845), 120-21.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>79</sup> *The London Magazine, and Monthly Chronologer* (London: Printed for T. Astley, 1744) vol 13, 461.

poetry, yet it is possible to state that he wrote one of the first poems in the genre. The only work of Kimber's that has been studied in any great depth is *Itinerant Observations in America* which is a valuable document for insight into America during the 1740s.<sup>80</sup> Using Kimber's *Written on a Brick in the Ruins of Holy-Abbey*, a hitherto unknown example of the Graveyard School of poetry, it can be shown that Kimber was heavily influenced by both Addison and Pope.

Kimber was an admirer of Joseph Addison's work and quotes from him during his travels in America.<sup>81</sup> The influence of Addison is further compounded by Kimber revealing that throughout his journey he was in possession of both *The Spectator* and *Tatler*; magazines which Addison helped to establish. He stated that upon teaching a girl to read English she 'learnt the *English Tongue* in three months time, and in four, read the *Spectators* and *Tatlers* with inimitable Grace'.<sup>82</sup> Having copies of both publications with him on his travels demonstrates their importance to him. Kimber was also heavily influenced by the work of Richard Lewis, principally *Journey from Patapsco to Annapolis* (1731), he admired it so much that he took a copy with him on his journey through America.<sup>83</sup> Kimber quotes from Lewis on his journey:

The level road the longsome way beguiles,  
A blooming wilderness around me smiles;  
...  
Here stately pines unite their whisp'ring heads,  
And with a solemn gloom embrown the shades.<sup>84</sup>

The dichotomy of the 'blooming wilderness' smiling, is reminiscent of the pleasant melancholy of the Graveyard School. The use of the trees in a similar style to Pope, bowing their 'whisp'ring' heads as though in prayer their leaves casting a 'solemn gloom' shares the same tone and atmosphere of Pope describing Eloisa's surroundings. As observed by Kevin J. Hayes, Kimber was influenced by Alexander Pope, as demonstrated in his very early

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<sup>80</sup> Kevin J. Hayes and Edward Kimber, *Itinerant Observations in America Edward Kimber; Edited by Kevin J. Hayes*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998).

<sup>81</sup> Hayes and Kimber, *Itinerant Observations in America*, 50.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

poem *The Annual Recess*.<sup>85</sup> In the *London Magazine* where *Written on a Brick* was published, the poem before on the same page is also written by Kimber, and it mentions Pope directly.<sup>86</sup> In a similar way to Jerningham's poem *Written Among the Ruins*, the title of Kimber's *Written on a Brick, in the Ruins of Holy-Abbey* helps the reader visualise the surroundings. In contrast to Jerningham there is no sign of anti-Catholic messaging contained therein as it is a meditation on mortality and the passing of time – 'Thus ev'ry human pride and boast / Shall soon or later meet decay'.<sup>87</sup> From the focus on this theme of mortality it can be suggested that Kimber was influenced by Blair, as *The Grave* was published a year before in 1743. The plagiarism of *Written on a Brick* spanning from 1744, to its emergence again in 1780 demonstrates the themes and tropes used had continued to be relevant. It is also an interesting quirk to see the poem having been repurposed from a site in the north east of England in Berwick to Netley Abbey in the south west, as if to demonstrate the spread of its use.

### *Charlotte Smith*

The work of Charlotte Smith which has hitherto only been tentatively linked to the Graveyard School can be argued to belong to it. Her poems can also be seen to have affected how people perceived the ruined abbey. Michael Hansen has remarked that even though her work was defined as 'Romantic', much of Smith's poems would fit well in the company of the graveyard poets.<sup>88</sup> Bethan Roberts goes further, illustrating how her most popular work *Sonnet XLIV: Written in the Church-Yard at Middleton in Sussex* (1789), was influential across the literary spectrum, and brought various modes and tropes to the graveyard poem.<sup>89</sup> *Sonnet XLIV* is an imagining of the sea crashing into and overrunning the church-yard:

Drives the huge billows from their heaving bed;  
Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead,  
And breaks the silent Sabbath of the grave!  
With shells and sea-weed mingled, on the shore

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>86</sup> *The London Magazine, and Monthly Chronologer*, Volume 3 (London: Printed for T. Astley, 1734), 661.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 661.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Hansen, 'Elegy, Ode, and the Eighteenth-Century Sonnet Revival: The Case of Charles Emily,' *Literary Imagination* 12, no. 3 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.1093/litimag/imq026>.

<sup>89</sup> Bethan Roberts, "'Breaking the Silent Sabbath of the Grave": Charlotte Smith's Sonnet XLIV and Her Place in Literary History,' *European Romantic Review* 28, no. 5 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509585.2017.1362342>, 550.

Lo! their bones whiten in the frequent wave;  
 But vain to them the winds and waters rave;  
 They hear the warring elements no more:  
 While I am doom'd – by life's long storm opprest,  
 To gaze with envy on their gloomy rest.<sup>90</sup>

It is a vision of the sea, disturbing the peaceful cemetery with a barrage of life and movement, yet the dead remain entirely unaware. It is as if the juxtaposition of these two forces has injected life into the dead as 'their bones whiten in the frequent wave'. The poem closes with a longing for the peace which death can bring compared to 'life's long storm', as the writer envies the dead in 'their gloomy rest'. Roberts highlights the work of Brooks who suggests that the image of the tumultuous landscape is symbolic of the dynamics of the poem itself.<sup>91</sup> This is astute, but it can also be argued that the poem brings the graveyard and its surrounding landscape to life, creating intrigue to a visitor. As a letter to the *Gentleman's Magazine* highlights, the location of the eponymous graveyard in Middleton is ruinous and was partly washed into the sea. The writer of the letter had taken a trip in 1790, and espouses the influence of Smith's sonnet:

Small and insignificant as the church appears, yet, as the site of it has  
 been immortalized by the elegant pen of that poetess of the county,  
 Miss Smith.<sup>92</sup>

The author has then provided a drawing of the church, which they hoped the readers of the poem 'will perhaps be pleased to see the same scene humbly attempted by a sister-art'.<sup>93</sup> The image of the church had been defined by Smith's description in her poetry. Instead of the drawing requiring to be a likeness of the site itself, it is being directly compared to the description and atmosphere conveyed in the poem. In a later sonnet, *Sonnet LXVII On Passing over a Dreary Tract of Country, and near the Ruins of a Deserted Chapel, During a Tempest* (1795), Smith creates more of a frightening scene:

SWIFT fleet the billowy clouds along the sky,

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<sup>90</sup> Charlotte Smith, *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems* (London: T. Cadell, 1800), 44.

<sup>91</sup> Roberts, "'Breaking the Silent Sabbath of the Grave", 550.

<sup>92</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 67, Part 2 (London: Printed by John Nichols, 1797), 729.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 729.

Earth seems to shudder at the storm aghast;  
 While only beings as forlorn as I,  
 Court the chill horrors of the howling blast.  
 Even round yon crumbling walls, in search of food,  
 The ravenous Owl foregoes his evening flight,  
 And in his cave, within the deepest wood,  
 The Fox eludes the tempest of the night.  
 But to my heart congenial is the gloom  
 Which hides me from a World I wish to shun;  
 That scene where Ruin saps the mouldering tomb  
 Suits with the sadness of a wretch undone.  
 Nor is the deepest shade, the keenest air,  
 Black as my fate, or cold as my despair.<sup>94</sup>

Smith is using much more emotive language than in *Sonnet XLIV*, and crucially she is placing herself inside the ruin, 'which hides me from a world I wish to shun'. By creating a more personal space the ruin becomes more tangible for the reader, and the appeal is increased by the gloom which surrounds the ruin appearing to be pleasant and 'congenial'. In conjunction to this the use of the same language and tropes used in Graveyard School poems – the dark wood, the solitary owl, the mouldering tomb. These poems with their familiar tropes within the ruined abbey setting contribute towards the shaping of the Gothic gaze, making them synonymous with similar sites and create an expectation of what should be seen at them.

### ***William Shenstone***

Deborah Kennedy asserts that it is uncommon to find a friendly view of the ruined abbey in the eighteenth century.<sup>95</sup> This assertion requires more nuance. The use of anti-Catholic language in poetry for instance, was not always a sustained and concentrated attack on Catholics. Furthermore, as shown above in Edward Kimber's case the ruined abbey did not simply signify the triumph of Protestantism. It has been shown that Alexander Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* created a habitual way of talking about and describing the abbey that had been constructed over time. Gilpin used Thomas Denton's *The House of Superstition: A Vision at the*

<sup>94</sup> Stuart Curran, ed., *The Poems of Charlotte Smith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 59.

<sup>95</sup> Kennedy, 'The Ruined Abbey in the Eighteenth Century'.

beginning of his biography of John Wycliffe as a way to quickly establish his feelings towards the Catholic Church.<sup>96</sup> The use of such language was as much a recognised style of writing as it was a conscious effort to attack the Catholic faith. Begun in 1743 and published posthumously in 1764, William Shenstone's *The Ruin'd Abbey: Or, The Effects of Superstition* can be seen as an example of a concerted attack on Catholicism in the Graveyard School style.<sup>97</sup> Kennedy asserts that his poem was a celebration of the Dissolution as a 'necessary end to an age of darkness'.<sup>98</sup> Its title suggests that it is more concerned with the negative effects of the Catholic faith, and its content certainly contains those sentiments. However, an analysis of Shenstone's attitudes make his motivations less clear and challenges the veracity of the anti-Catholicism present therein. It is also possible to establish that like many other writers mentioned previously Shenstone was also influenced by the work of Addison and Pope.

*The Ruin'd Abbey* is not only meant as a walk through a ruined monastery, but chiefly it is a walk through Britain's past, from being under the auspices and control of the Catholic faith in ancient times, until what is considered the triumph of Henry VIII's Reformation. It begins in serene surroundings within the grounds of the ruined abbey, this then changes into a contemplation on the origins of the ruin in which the author was standing. The following passage encompasses the aim of the poem, and is worth quoting in full:

If Solitude his wandering steps invite  
 To some more deep recess (for hours there are,  
 When gay, when social minds to Friendship voice,  
 Or Beauty's charm, her wild abodes prefer);  
 How pleas'd he treads her venerable shades,  
 Her solemn courts! the centre of the grove!  
 The root-built cave, by far-extended rocks  
 Around embosom'd, how it soothes the soul!  
 If scoop'd at first by superstitious hands

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<sup>96</sup> William Gilpin, *The lives of John Wicliff and of the most eminent of his disciples; Lord Cobham, John Huss, Jerome of Prague, and Zisca* (London: Printed for J. Robson, 1766), 5.

<sup>97</sup> Dennis Taylor, 'The Abbey-Meditation Tradition: Wordsworth's Sources in the Eighteenth Century' in *Sacred Text - Sacred Space: Architectural, Spiritual and Literary Convergences in England and Wales*, eds., Joseph Sterrett & Peter Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 210.

<sup>98</sup> Kennedy, 'The Ruined Abbey in the Eighteenth Century', 512.

The rugged cell reciev'd alone the shoals  
 Of bigot minds, Religion dwells not here,  
 Yet Virtue pleas'd, at intervals, retires:  
 Yet here may Wisdom, as she walks the maze,  
 Some serious truths collect, the rules of life,  
 And serious truths of mightier weight than gold!<sup>99</sup>

Phrases such as 'superstitious hands', and 'bigot minds', with the qualification that in the abbey's ruinous state 'Religion dwells not here' indicate negative connotations of the building's Catholic past. Nature had now overtaken the stone, and by dint of doing so had replaced religion with 'wisdom' as it 'walks the maze', the ruins of the abbey pour out 'some serious truths'. Shenstone was accepting the beauty and rejoicing in the pleasant surroundings but wished to remind the reader of the tumultuous history that created them. He does this by describing in detail the country's battle with the 'dire disease' that 'tyrant Rome' plagued it with.<sup>100</sup> Shenstone's history recalled monarchs of England and highlights their relationship with the Pope, from Henry II in the twelfth century until George II in the eighteenth century. John Wycliffe, the proto-reformer is also given emphasis and praised for his efforts railing against Catholicism - 'Hail, Wickliff! Enterprising sage!'.<sup>101</sup> The monks are portrayed as having the worst possible attributes:

Oh irksome day! when wicked thrones combine  
 With papal craft to gull their native land!  
 Such was our fate, while Rome's director taught  
 Or subjects, born to be their monarch's prey,  
 To toil for monks, for gluttony to toil,  
 For vacant gluttony, extortion, fraud,  
 For avarice, envy, pride, revenge and shame!<sup>102</sup>

The monks are said to have tricked the country into Catholicism. It is this depiction of the deceitful and sinful monk that is utilised in Gothic literature, this is explored further in the

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<sup>99</sup> William Shenstone, 'The Ruin'd Abbey: Or, The Effects of Superstition' in *The Poetical Works of William Shenstone*, 2 vols, ed., Thomas Park (London: Stanhope Press, 1812) vol 2, 131.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

next chapter. The final lines of Shenstone's poem give direction on how the ruined abbey was now to be perceived:

While through the land the musing pilgrim sees  
 A tract of brighter green, and in the midst  
 Appears a mouldering wall, with ivy crown'd;  
 Or Gothic turret, pride of ancient days!  
 Now but of use to grace a rural scene;  
 To bound our vistas, and to glad the sons  
 Of George's reign, reserv'd for fairer times!<sup>103</sup>

After Shenstone had taken the reader through the tumultuous history with Catholicism – inextricably linked to the titular ruined abbey – he asserts that the ruins were now ‘but of use to grace a rural scene’. This is similar to Gilpin's attitude toward the ruined abbey, who wanted to strip the abbey of its religious history. In contrast to Gilpin, Shenstone's claim that the abbey was now a representation of ‘fairer times’ is inaccurate as he had provided meticulous detail of the abbey's past, and by doing so inexorably connected the ruins to that past. Shenstone does accurately articulate that the ruined abbey had become a typical component of an idealised country scene in the eighteenth century. Yet by providing the detailed history Shenstone had not merely described a benign pile of stones. His depiction of evil and slovenly monks would be interpolated and exaggerated in Gothic novels and this would help to provide incentive for people to visit ruined abbeys. It is the association with the maligned Catholic past that contributed to making the ruined abbey an appealing place to visit. This connection is looked at in more detail in the next chapter.

The vociferous anti-Catholic sentiment in Shenstone's *The Ruin'd Abbey* was at odds with his own attitudes and beliefs. This is important as it illustrates that work such as this was not necessarily a concerted attack on the Catholic Church but was an adoption of attitudes that were somewhat prevalent in the graveyard poetry trend. In Shenstone's *London Encyclopaedia* (1829) entry, written by Dr Samuel Johnson, it is claimed that: ‘In his private opinions our author adhered to no particular sect, and hated all religious disputes’.<sup>104</sup> Given

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>104</sup> *London Encyclopaedia; Or, Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature and Practical Mechanics*, 22 vols (London: Printed for Thomas Tegg, 1829) vol. 20, 180.

his neutral stance on religion, it is perhaps wrong to suggest that his attitude towards the Catholic Church was as damning as that demonstrated throughout *The Ruin'd Abbey*. Shenstone was also criticised by Johnson for moral works more generally and accused him of not being more forthright, it was suggested that 'something of vigour is still to be wished'.<sup>105</sup> In his criticism, Johnson quoted from Thomas Gray who was especially critical of not only Shenstone's work, but his lifestyle as well. Gray stated:

I have read too an octavo volume of Shenstone's Letters: Poor man!  
He was always wishing for money, for fame, and other distinctions;  
and his whole philosophy consisted in living against his will in  
retirement, and in a place which his taste had adorned.<sup>106</sup>

Gray's opinion of Shenstone alludes to him writing *The Ruin'd Abbey* not to convey an anti-Catholic message but as a means to achieve fame and fortune. There is even an argument to be made that the poem could have been written as a parody. While at university he had taken great pleasure in reading humorous tracts such as Echard's *Causes of the Contempt of the Clergy* and Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.<sup>107</sup> He was influenced so much by Pope that his first poem was *The Diamond* an imitation of the latter poem.<sup>108</sup> As with other poets such as Edward Kimber, Shenstone was a reader of Addison's *Spectator* and *Tatler* magazines. Given that publication of these magazines only lasted two years, their influence thirty years on should be considered significant.<sup>109</sup> Addison and Pope had a bearing on Shenstone's work, and this contributed towards a continuation of how the perception of the ruined abbey was formed in the eighteenth century.

### **Conclusion**

As observed by Locke, and repeated by Addison, being frightened of certain environments was something experienced at a young age. This hypothesis of taught fear can be placed in the context of Graveyard School poetry and the perception of the ruined abbey in the

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>106</sup> Thomas Gray, quoted in Samuel Johnson, *The Works of Samuel Johnson, Volumes 1-2* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1837), 279.

<sup>107</sup> William Shenstone, *Recollection of Some Particulars in the Life of the late William Shenstone* (London: J. Dodsley), 19.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Anderson, *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, vol. 9 (Edinburgh: Mundell and Son, 1794), 584.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 584.

eighteenth century. Both Addison and Pope created a literary blueprint, a guide, for understanding and interpreting life inside a monastery. Addison had articulated the notion that, although he was not an admirer of the faith, certain elements of Catholic superstition needed to be accepted in order to understand how ruined abbeys and churchyards had become places that people could be frightened of. Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* then created a way of articulating monastic life and the perceived hardships that went with it. The language and tropes used were then imitated by poets who were writing in what can be considered the Graveyard School style such as Robert Blair, Thomas Gray, Charlotte Smith, and Edward Jerningham. Poets such as William Shenstone extrapolated from Pope's interpretation and added a vehemently anti-Catholic stance. The vernacular of the Graveyard School established recognisable linguistic trends to describe the atmosphere and surroundings of the ruined abbey – the mouldering tomb, the solitary animal, the midnight hour. They utilised a morbid curiosity about mortality and it was this same curious mind which led many to seek out the ruined abbey to experience it for themselves. This vernacular was then adopted and embellished by writers of Gothic fiction, and one of the most significant elements in many of these works was the negative connotations of monastic life. Gothic stories used anti-Catholic imagery such as evil and corrupt clergy, set against the backdrop of a convent or a monastery to scare and terrify its readers. It is shown in the next chapter that these stories did not create a legitimate fear of ruined abbey sites, but instead established them as mysterious and intriguing places for the eighteenth-century reader to visit. Analogous to Addison's explanation of nannies inculcating tales to the young, the Graveyard School poets shaped the way the reader approached and viewed the ruined abbey in the eighteenth century. This influence can be seen most acutely in Gothic literature as the next chapter shows.

## Chapter 4 - The Gothic Novel

Horace Walpole, the writer of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), considered by many to be the first Gothic novel, was mentor and friend to Edward Jerningham. He was such an admirer that Walpole offered to print Jerningham's work himself.<sup>110</sup> This friendship, as well as Walpole's connections with other significant poets such as Thomas Gray, helps to demonstrate that there was a relationship between the Graveyard School poetic and the Gothic. Gray was a close friend of Walpole, and, as demonstrated through the last two chapters, was an influential figure in shaping the perception of the ruined abbey. Gray and Walpole spent from March 1739 to September 1741 on a tour throughout Europe. That tour ended in acrimony, but they remained in contact and, upon receipt of his copy of *The Castle of Otranto*, Gray wrote to Walpole that 'it engages our attention here, makes some of us cry a little, & all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights'.<sup>111</sup> His admiration stemmed from the familiar themes and language he found throughout the book. This chapter will demonstrate how the vernacular shared between the Graveyard School poets and Gothic writers is crucial to gaining a better understanding of the strength of anti-Catholicism that pervaded the Gothic novel, and its portrayal of the ruined abbey. By closely studying the work of noteworthy Gothic writers it is possible to establish how the lexicon of the Graveyard School fed into the Gothic as it depicted supernatural terror amidst abbey ruins. It was a borrowed language that helped to truly inspire the Gothic pen, rather than an overwhelming desire to spread an anti-Catholic message. It is this same attitude which through the medium of literature pervaded the perception of the ruined abbey.

### *Historiography*

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the motivation behind the writing of Gothic novels was complex. Andrew Smith argues that the Gothic was created as a reaction to anxieties about death, and the rumination of mortality, as espoused by poets such as Edward Young.<sup>112</sup> Victor Sage asserts that the inspiration for the Gothic novel was born out of theological and cultural prejudice.<sup>113</sup> As highlighted above, it is Diane Long Hoeveler who is

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<sup>110</sup> Horace Walpole, 'Letter to Edward Jerningham, 9 August 1789', in *Supplement to the Letters of Horace Walpole*, ed., Paget Toynbee (Oxford, 1905), 55.

<sup>111</sup> 'Letter LXIV. Mr Gray to Mr Walpole. Sunday, December 30, 1764' in *The Works of Thomas Gray, Containing his Poems and Correspondence, with Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, ed., William Mason (London: Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, 1825), 266.

<sup>112</sup> Andrew Smith, *Gothic Death 1740-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 11.

<sup>113</sup> Sage, *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition*.

most forthright, arguing that the religious backgrounds of the writers of Gothic tales meant that they were 'politically and ideologically invested in the anti-Catholic campaign'.<sup>114</sup> As is shown in this chapter, such an assertion is too strong and this was certainly not the case for all writers in the Gothic genre. Alison Milbank's work on how religion influenced and affected the creation of the Gothic is extensive and establishes the significance of Protestant rhetoric within the Gothic.<sup>115</sup> Milbank acknowledges the opposition of both Hoeveler and Sage, but states that there is not a sound theological basis for their arguments.<sup>116</sup> Milbank's argument is persuasive, but an overthinking of the theological aspects of Gothic texts blurs an analysis of the aims and motivations of the writers themselves. They were writing using a familiar vernacular that did not necessarily align with their own religious outlook and analysing their correspondence will demonstrate this. Milbank finds the origins of ruined abbey veneration in both Shakespeare and Milton.<sup>117</sup> This thesis provides further nuance to this argument by highlighting the influence of early eighteenth-century writers Alexander Pope and Joseph Addison upon the perception of abbey ruins. Milton is especially relevant when discussing Addison, who was one of the eighteenth century's chief proponents of Milton's work. Writing in *The Spectator*, Addison proclaimed that *Paradise Lost* should be alongside Homer and Virgil in the pantheon of epic poetry.<sup>118</sup> Just as Eamon Duffy had done before Milbank, the point can be conceded that the origins of a literary Protestant tussle with Catholicism began with Shakespeare and his 'Bare Ruin'd Choirs', but this was then refined further through the work of Pope and Addison.<sup>119</sup> Milbank argues that the Gothic is more political and contributes to a contemporary debate between Whig and Tory. This may be the case, but the motivation to write was not entirely to reach these partisan ends. They were far more concerned with entertaining: using the contemporary fear of European Catholicism to scare and terrorise, rather than to inform and politicise.

Robert D Hume believes that it was not the anti-Catholic message which was the main thrust of the Gothic novel, but the creation of a terrifying and brooding atmosphere which could be generated from the ruined abbey setting.<sup>120</sup> The narratives, Hume explains, were

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<sup>114</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 48.

<sup>115</sup> Alison Milbank, *God and the Gothic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>118</sup> Richard Bradford, *John Milton* (London: Routledge, 2001), 109.

<sup>119</sup> Duffy, 'Bare ruined choirs'; Milbank, *God and the Gothic*.

<sup>120</sup> Robert D. Hume, 'Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel,' *PMLA* 84, no. 2 (1969). <https://doi.org/10.2307/1261285>, 286.

placed in the distant past, in a Roman Catholic country, and that this setting existed 'to convey the atmosphere'.<sup>121</sup> Hume further explains this method by stating that 'Wild landscapes, ruined abbeys, and the like, were merely a convenient convention, a standardised method of achieving the desired atmosphere'.<sup>122</sup> It is the creation of this 'standardised method' with relation to anti-Catholic themes that is of particular interest within this chapter: the Gothic novel and how it used the ruined abbey through anti-Catholic vernacular. Through this interpretation of Gothic novels, in conjunction with correspondence and opinion from those who wrote them, it is possible to establish how these stories affected the perception of the ruined abbey. From this analysis it is possible to see that the anti-Catholic elements in much Gothic literature were utilising a pre-existing trend which demonised monastic life. As was shown with poetry in the previous chapter, this only helped to increase curiosity in visiting ruined abbeys, which had hitherto only been of interest to the enthusiastic antiquarian. This contributes towards challenging what was meant by 'anti-Catholicism' in the British mindset.

This chapter is similar in its approach to the last. It will contain textual analysis of Gothic novels, but it will combine this with a study of the writers' thoughts and motivations. This will help to show whether the anti-Catholic elements present in the texts were placed there with intent or as a result of fashionable trends, as was seen in many graveyard poems. This chapter will agree in part with Maria Purves's argument, that the virulent anti-Catholicism which was present throughout the Gothic was not wholly serious.<sup>123</sup> It will challenge the assertion of Diane Long Hoeveler, who insists that the ruined abbeys which appeared in Gothic novels and chapbooks 'advance a clear anti-Catholic agenda'.<sup>124</sup> Her position is not entirely correct. These stories contributed towards anti-Catholic feeling within society generally, but in the main their dominance in Gothic narratives was a development of the antiquarian imagination and a vernacular created by the Graveyard School poets. As has been argued in the last chapter many of these writers followed the blueprint as set by Alexander Pope in his work *Eloisa to Abelard*. In conjunction with this they were influenced heavily by the writing of Joseph Addison in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>123</sup> Purves, *Gothic and Catholicism*.

<sup>124</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 200.

The list of Gothic novels and chapbooks which use the ruined abbey as an essential part of their storytelling is very lengthy, so they cannot all be analysed.<sup>125</sup> This chapter will examine the link between anti-Catholicism and the use of the ruined abbey using four novels and their authors to assess if such a relationship pervaded their work. These books are Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Richard Warner's *Netley Abbey* (1785), Matthew G. Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). These have been chosen as they span from the beginning of what is considered the start of the Gothic tradition in literature with *The Castle of Otranto*, to *Melmoth the Wanderer* which was published when the popularity of such books was on the wane. These books are anti-Catholic in much of their design but the motivation to write them varied. An analysis of their thoughts and ideas which contributed to the creation of their work will show that they were not as heavily invested in the anti-Catholic cause as has been claimed.<sup>126</sup> *Netley Abbey* and *Melmoth the Wanderer* have been given less scholarly attention, but they provide rich examples of how the perception of the ruined abbey was being shaped.

### **Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto***

The first edition of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* was published as a purported translation of an Italian manuscript 'found in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England'.<sup>127</sup> Walpole, in the guise of translator William Marshal, explained that the story was written around the year 1529, which placed the book in Europe during the Reformation, only a few years before England would experience a similar, but more dramatic reformation, under Henry VIII in the 1530s. The story centres on Manfred, the ill-tempered Prince of Otranto, who at the beginning of the story is attending the hastily prepared wedding of his son, Conrad. The swiftness of the wedding was owing to an 'ancient prophecy, which was said to have pronounced that the Castle and Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it'.<sup>128</sup> Within the first few pages Conrad is suddenly crushed to death under the weight of a giant helmet 'an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being' which falls from above.<sup>129</sup> As a result Manfred pursues a plan to marry what

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<sup>125</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 321-41, has amassed a very comprehensive list of all anti-Catholic Gothic novels and chapbooks.

<sup>126</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*; Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Gothic Adaption, 1764-1830' in *The Gothic World*, eds., Glennis Byron and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>127</sup> Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, iii.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

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

would have been his son's wife, Isabella, in order to keep his family name going. The story continues, filling the environment of the castle, and an adjoining abbey, with supernatural goings-on, ghostly figures, a moving portrait, and a giant suit of armour. It shares motifs and themes which are linked to the Graveyard School, not least of all the inclusion of subterranean passages through a crypt populated with corpses.

A myriad of tropes shared between the graveyard poets and Walpole's work can be noted. On the occasion of Isabella attempting to evade the angry Manfred, she seeks the help of a stranger to assist her in locating a trapdoor in the flagstones so she can escape quickly. Her task becomes aided by 'a ray of moonshine streaming through a cranny of the ruin above shone directly on the lack [sic] they sought'.<sup>130</sup> The aforementioned 'ruin' is the castle in which Isabella lived. It is therefore odd for it to be described in those terms. Walpole was using a familiar sight on the British landscape, that of the ruined abbey or castle, coupled with the moonlight in a way not dissimilar to themes in graveyard poetry. These themes had been introduced at a previous stage in the narrative, as Isabella began her flight from Manfred through the lower part of the castle, where:

An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges, were echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness ... Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind.<sup>131</sup>

This is very similar in tone to how Addison had described his walk near the ruins.<sup>132</sup> This is no coincidence as Walpole had read much of Addison's work. Marion Harney has shown that Walpole's inspiration for building Strawberry Hill was in part inspired by a reading of Addison's *The Pleasures of the Imagination*.<sup>133</sup> The influence of Joseph Addison played a significant role in inspiring the writers of Gothic fiction as well as those of the Graveyard School.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 27-8.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>132</sup> Joseph Addison, 'Essay No. 110'.

<sup>133</sup> Marion Harney, *Place-making for the Imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill* (Farnham: University of Bath, 2013).

A cursory study of his life would suggest that he was deeply anti-Catholic, yet Walpole's relationship to Catholicism was far more nuanced. He openly objected to Catholic emancipation, and especially objected to the Catholic Relief Bills enacted in 1778, which relaxed certain restrictions on Catholics. The public reaction to this would culminate in 1780 with rioting in London and Birmingham. He was caught up in the riot in London but did not himself participate. His recounting of the incidents to Reverend William Cole is somewhat confusing and hysterical. He related to Cole that:

You may like to know one is alive, dear Sir, after a massacre, and the conflagration of a capital. I was in it, both on the Friday and on the Black Wednesday; the most horrible sight I ever beheld ... I expected to end in half the town being reduced to ashes.<sup>134</sup>

Although the riots began by targeting known or presumed Catholic sympathisers, it grew to an unwieldy size, with the military being drafted in to restore order.<sup>135</sup> He denounced those involved, claiming they were 'The lowest and most villainous of the people, and to no great amount, were almost the sole actors'.<sup>136</sup> On the influence of 'Popery' he stated that 'negligence was certainly its nurse, and religion only its godmother'.<sup>137</sup> As a figure so publicly against the Catholic faith he was distancing himself from the violence. He does not place the blame of the riots wholly with Catholicism, but he alludes to the role it may have played with the French as its conduit. Walpole insinuated that '[F]or the honour of the nation I should be glad to have it proved that the French were the engineers'.<sup>138</sup> His opinion of the French must have changed over time: in 1763, in a letter to Horace Mann, Walpole described having the French diplomat and writer, the Duc de Nivernois, Louis Jules Mancini Mazarini, to his house at Strawberry Hill. He admits that the diplomat did not care much for the style of his house, and goes on:

When I carried him into the Cabinet, which I have told you is formed upon the idea of a Catholic chapel, he pulled off his hat, but

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<sup>134</sup> Horace Walpole, 'To the Rev. Mr. Cole. Strawberry Hill, June 15, 1780.' in *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 6 vols, ed. John Wright (London, 1840) vol 4, 89.

<sup>135</sup> Ian Haywood and John Seed, ed., *The Gordon Riots* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 8.

<sup>136</sup> Horace Walpole, 'To the Rev. Mr. Cole. Strawberry Hill, June 15, 1780.' in *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 6 vols, ed. John Wright (London: Richard Bentley, 1840) vol 4, 90.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

perceiving his error, he said, “Ce n’est pas une chapelle pourtant,”  
[“its not a chapel though] and seemed a little displeased.<sup>139</sup>

Although Walpole was a collector of a wide variety of antiquarian items, to have a room set up as though it were a functioning Catholic church seems at odds with his ideological stance. This shows that his perception of Catholic structures was not wholly negative. Walpole admitted as such in quite stark terms in another letter to the Reverend William Cole. After ruminating on the purpose of religious buildings in general:

I like Popery as well as you, and have shown I do. I like it as I like chivalry and romance. They all furnish one with ideas and visions, which Presbyterianism does not. A Gothic church or a convent fills one with romantic dreams – but for the mysterious, the Church in the abstract, it is a jargon that means nothing, or a great deal too much, and I reject it and its apostles, from Athanasius to Bishop Keene.<sup>140</sup>

His opening line about ‘Popery’ is meant sardonically, as they were both tolerant of Catholicism, but by no means endorsed it. Although he was not a fan of Catholicism, he did not see an unassailable link between the faith and the building. He used Catholicism as an aesthetic in his writing; the ruined abbey was a part of this. He was using elements of the Catholic faith almost as a muse, to inspire writing. This is a very similar relationship to the antiquarians in chapter two. As they documented the environment they would pick and choose which parts they wanted to appreciate, eschewing elements which they found vulgar, or too superstitious. This is the same with Walpole, he would outwardly rail against Catholicism, yet he utilised facets of it which provided him with ‘ideas and visions’. It is shown that this duality is at the heart of Gothic fiction, but more importantly it is a vital component of the perception of the ruined abbey, and the Gothic gaze. It is what made ruins both terrifying but also an appealing place to visit.

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<sup>139</sup> Horace Walpole, ‘Letter XLII, Strawberry Hill, April 30, 1763’ in John Wright (ed.), *Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, to Sir Horace Mann*, 6 vols, ed. John Wright (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1844) vol 2, 142.

<sup>140</sup> Horace Walpole, ‘To the Rev. Mr. Cole. Strawberry Hill, July 12, 1778’ in *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 6 vols, ed. John Wright (London: Richard Bentley, 1840) vol 4, 192.

Walpole's complex relationship to Catholicism can also be viewed through his responses to Clara Reeve's *The Champion of Virtue* (1777).<sup>141</sup> First published anonymously, but then re-issued as *The Old English Baron* (1778), it was written as a direct response to *The Castle of Otranto*. The stories are similar, but their use of supernatural tropes is quite different. A comparison of the approaches that these writers take demonstrates that they were creating similar work, but that their aims were very different. Walpole's response to Reeve's Preface to *The Old English Baron* illustrates the different motivations of the two authors and in turn reveals how they created their respective environments in their novels. His displeasure in Reeve's work is detailed in a letter to Robert Jephson, in which Walpole was complimenting him on his use of Catholic superstition in his play *The Count of Narbonne* (1781), an adaptation of *The Castle of Otranto*. He wrote:

I cannot compliment the author of the "Old English Baron," professedly written in imitation, but as a corrective of *The Castle of Otranto*. It was totally void of imagination and interest; had scarce any incidents; and though it condemned the marvellous, admitted a ghost. I suppose the author thought a tame ghost might come within the laws of probability. You alone, Sir, have kept within nature, and made superstition supply the place of phenomenon, yet acting as the agent of divine justice – a beautiful use of bigotry.<sup>142</sup>

Walpole's final statement of 'a beautiful use of bigotry' is particularly insightful. He is effectively congratulating himself, as it is his own work, stating that although he opposes the superstition, there must be an acquiescence in parts of Catholicism to make the story work. The divine justice originates from a Catholic source, yet it is this same source which has been the origin of the superstitious terror. This is the same conciliatory attitude towards Catholicism identified above which pervades many Gothic narratives: the perception of the ruined abbey through much Gothic fiction is based around this 'bigotry'. As highlighted by Walpole, Catholicism had a role to play as redeemer – 'the agent of divine justice.' This was demonstrated in the previous chapters, where elements of Catholicism were recognised as being immovable parts of the history of the ruined abbey, whether in prose or experienced

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<sup>141</sup> Clara Reeve, *The Champion of Virtue* (London: Printed for the author, 1777).

<sup>142</sup> Horace Walpole, 'To Robert Jephson, Esq., Berkeley Square, January 27, 1780' in *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, vol 4, ed. John Wright (London: Richard Bentley, 1840), 73.

through travel. This is an antithetical attitude to William Gilpin who wanted to eschew all traces of Catholicism associated with the abbey and be solely left with the ruins as a feature of nature, devoid of their religious past.<sup>143</sup>

Walpole had complained about Reeve's adaption two years earlier in 1778. The preface of *The Old English Baron* praises *The Castle of Otranto* for its 'enough of the manners of real life, to give an air of probability to the work; and enough of the pathetic, to engage the heart in its behalf'.<sup>144</sup> Yet Reeve believed Walpole's work was not so believable. She contested that:

We can conceive, and allow of, the appearance of a ghost; we can even dispense with an enchanted sword and helmet; but then they must keep within certain limits of credibility: A sword so large as to require an hundred men to lift it; a helmet that by its own weight forces a passage through a court-yard into an arched vault, big enough for a man to go through; a picture that walks out of its frame; a skeleton ghost in a hermit's cowl.<sup>145</sup>

These instances of the marvellous were too much for Reeve to take the book completely seriously. What is most revealing is that there is no issue concerning the use of Catholic imagery or superstition; merely that some fantastical tropes were a step too far to be considered believable. For Reeve, the appearance of a ghost was evidently in the realms of the possible. She went on to state her case far more astutely:

When your expectation is wound up to the highest pitch, these circumstances take it down with a witness, destroy the work of imagination, and, instead of attention excite laughter. I was both surprised and vexed to find the enchantment dissolved, which I wished might continue to the end of the book.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Dale Townshend, 'Ruins, Romance and the Rise of Gothic Tourism: The Case of Netley Abbey, 1750-1830', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37, no. 3 (December, 2013). <https://doi.org/10.1111/1754-0208.12099>.

<sup>144</sup> Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (London: E. and C. Dilly, 1778), v.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

Reeve's interpretation of Walpole's novel was that too many supernatural elements made the story detach from reality, which made the conceit ridiculous and laughable. This could be due to Reeve placing the story within reality; connecting the story to the real ruined castles and abbeys found on the landscape, and anything outside that reality would not make sense.

It was this amusing element that Walpole could not find within Reeve's book. He wrote to the Reverend William Cole, pondering whether to respond to what he called an 'attack':

It would even be ungrateful, for the work is a professed imitation of mine, only stripped of the marvellous; and so entirely stripped, except in one awkward attempt at a ghost or two, that it is the most insipid dull nothing you ever saw. It certainly does not make one laugh; for what makes one doze, seldom makes one merry.<sup>147</sup>

Sir Walter Scott agreed with the sentiment that Reeve's writing was not the most imaginative, citing it as 'sometimes tame and tedious, not to say mean and tiresome'.<sup>148</sup> It is this discussion surrounding the elements of superstition which is of particular interest to this study. There is not a discussion on the degree of superstition being utilised, rather a more practical argument over what constitutes a reasonable and 'realistic' use of ghosts. This debate illustrates that any direct discussion of the anti-Catholic elements within the book was not a high priority. Elements which one would consider to be controversial are given scant attention, for instance, a monk having an illegitimate son was not considered an issue worth debating. It is possible that the anti-Catholicism was so explicit as not to be debated. If anti-Catholicism were vital to the thrust of the narrative, it is that which would be of greatest importance to be discussed rather than how believable the ghosts and fantastical elements were. An anti-Catholic message was not the main motivation to write *The Castle of Otranto*. Walpole's relationship with Catholicism was complex but he was not in ardent opposition to it. This is evident in his Catholic iconography in his house and his criticism of an imitation of his work based solely on which fantastical elements were believable. The inclusion of many borrowed tropes from graveyard poems demonstrates that its origins lay more with those

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<sup>147</sup> Horace Walpole, 'To The Rev. Mr. Cole., Strawberry Hill, August 22, 1778.', in *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, 6 vols, ed. John Wright (London: Richard Bentley, 1840) vol. 4, 197.

<sup>148</sup> Walter Scott analyses some of the motivation behind Reeve's writing, in Sir Walter Scott, *Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Novelists*, 2 vols (London: R. Cadell, 1834) vol. 1, 325.

poets, than a desire to spread anti-Catholic rhetoric. This resulted in associating the ruined abbey with familiar descriptions found in their poetry and further shaping the perception of it.

### **Richard Warner, *Netley Abbey: A Gothic Story***

The antiquarian Richard Warner was well versed in the history of the abbeys and their decimation, as is evidenced in his publications such as *Topographical Remarks Relating to the South-Western Parts of Hampshire* (1793) and *A Walk through Wales in August 1797* (1797).<sup>149</sup> His novel *Netley Abbey: A Gothic Story* (1795), placed the abbey at its centre. As well as containing similar tropes which can be traced back to the Graveyard School, Warner also put significant value on what he deemed to be historical accuracy. In the two-volume work *Topographical Remarks...* Warner described the surroundings of Hampshire, and it is possible to see how he balanced, and at times wrestled with, the historical context of the buildings, including flowery descriptions which owe much to the Graveyard School. For historical detail of the area Warner utilised the Domesday Book and antiquarian works, such as Dugdale's *Monasticon Angicanum*, at several stages quoting from it, as well as antiquarian works such as those by Browne Willis.<sup>150</sup> In conjunction with this, Warner took influence from Thomas Gray – during the book he quotes him at length to describe the surroundings of Netley Abbey. He took an excerpt from Gray's letter (quoted in chapter 3), where he envisages the monk walking amongst the ruins. This blend of historical evidence and Gray's imagination is a great example of how he perceived the ruined abbey to be an amalgam of fact and fiction. It is this amalgamation that can be seen most acutely in *Netley Abbey*.

*Netley Abbey* was Warner's first and only venture into Gothic fiction. It is set in the reign of Edward II and chiefly concerns father and son Baron de Villars, both called Edward. The younger Edward takes it upon himself to 'join in the fashionable rage of the times, and make a crusade to Palestine'.<sup>151</sup> Upon arriving back in Hampshire he has to deal with Sir Hildebrand, the lord of Netley Castle, who in his absence has gained land by favouring Piers Gaveston, Edward II's favourite. The conclusion of the story sees the young Edward entering Netley Abbey disguised as a bard in order to free Agnes, whom Hildebrand is

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<sup>149</sup> Richard Warner, *Topographical Remarks Relating to the South-Western Parts of Hampshire* (London: R. Blamire, 1793).

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 247, 298-99.

<sup>151</sup> Richard Warner, *Netley Abbey: A Gothic Story*, 2 vols (London: Printed for William Lane at the Minerva Press, 1795) vol 1, 4.

holding prisoner in the crypt of the monastery. Before deciding to liberate Agnes, he investigates the abbey. The reader is told that ‘the piety of Henry the third had founded this religious house’.<sup>152</sup> This alludes to Warner’s need for historical accuracy. Subsequently the language takes on a more romantic tone, the environment is described in more detail:

The clock had just struck eight when Edward reached this delicious spot; the moon in full unclouded majesty slowly mounted the dark blue firmament, scattering yellow radiance on the stream beneath, whose dimpled surface sparkled with the beam [...] A religious awe now took possession of his soul, for the scene around was calculated to excite serious emotions.<sup>153</sup>

Warner is using the vernacular of the Graveyard School. The use of the full moon to light the scene, coupled with the ‘religious awe’ which overcomes him is language which has been taken from poetry, as demonstrated throughout the previous chapter. Edward is encouraged to help Agnes by way of a dream or ‘methodical vision’, a common theme in the Gothic genre.<sup>154</sup> In this dream he takes a very similar walk to the abbey, but this time he ‘discovered amongst the brambles a trap door, wide open, through which streamed a faint ray of light’.<sup>155</sup> The overgrown brambles are reminiscent of the overgrown ivy and thorns as repeated often throughout the Graveyard School poetry. It is also in a similar vein to Isabella’s escape from *The Castle of Otranto*. The similarities to both Walpole’s work and poetry continue as Edward descends the stairs and:

quickly found himself in a damp and gloomy passage, that received a small degree of illumination from a dim lamp placed in a vault at the further end [...] When he arrived there he beheld a large subterraneous chamber, vaulted over head, but with no visible aperture by which daylight might be admitted.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 134-35.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

These tropes of the subterranean passages and the dimly lit taper are the same as those found in the work of Thomas Gray, Robert Blair, amongst other poets of the early eighteenth century, as demonstrated in the last chapter. The denouement of this dream sees him at the end of 'various obscure and intricate passages' at a door, which he looks through to see a figure bent over in private devotion, kneeling before a crucifix. He is then disturbed by the sound of clashing swords and turns round to another door where he saw:

a room elegantly illuminated, but floated with gore; at one end appeared an expiring knight, and at the other a person wrapped in a religious habit, and covered with a cowl, streaming with blood, and lifeless.<sup>157</sup>

Warner created a scene of religious contemplation and punctured this with a room filled with blood and a dead monk. This episode is not explained but it might be considered an anti-Catholic message; the knight, an emblem of reason, having triumphed over the ignorant, vulgar monk. The bleeding person in the religious habit is reminiscent of 'the bleeding nun', which is discussed below. If this scene is to be read as anti-Catholic, it is far more explicit than anything portrayed in Walpole's work, and as such might be a progression of an anti-Catholic agenda. A closer examination of Warner's antiquarian work will demonstrate that his motivations were more complex than this assertion allows for.

It is important to note that Warner was under the tutelage of William Gilpin, a man who eschewed all historic value of a ruin, appreciating it for its picturesque beauty alone. Warner said of Gilpin upon his death that 'His kindness had been fatherly: his society delightful: his example attractive and influential'.<sup>158</sup> Although they worked closely together, with Gilpin in an influential role, their perception of the ruined abbey was very different. This is demonstrated most acutely in Warner's *An Attempt to Ascertain the Situation of the Ancient Clausentum* (1792), in which Warner was trying to find out the location of a Roman station, given the moniker 'Clausentum'. He located it at the western end of a ruined abbey. Warner wanted to place the site within the context of its Roman historical significance, but was advised against this by Gilpin, whom he described as his 'reverend friend', and that he

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>158</sup> Richard Warner, *Literary Recollections*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1830) vol 1, 375.

'warned me of this want of connection, between the ornament and the topic'.<sup>159</sup> This statement is significant. It discloses Gilpin's firmly picturesque attitude towards the ruined abbey; advocating the history of the object be ignored, so that it could be appreciated solely on its picturesque merits. In the case of the ruined abbey, he advocates expunging of its Catholic past. This was an attitude which it was most unlikely that Warner agreed with, given that *Netley Abbey* was steeped in historical events, set during the reign of Edward II in the thirteenth century.

Warner understood both the historic as well as the picturesque significance of the ruined abbey. Hoeveler argues that Warner wove his ideological beliefs about Catholicism into his novel by portraying the monks as hired thugs of a corrupt crown.<sup>160</sup> This was certainly the case, but his stance can be seen above to be more nuanced. He believed that the destruction of the abbeys was disproportional and regrettable. His distilling of how the ruined abbey could be perceived from *Topographical Remarks* is worth quoting in full:

Nearly opposite to this in the same apartment, is a dark aperture, which the rustic antiquarian of the spot, points out as extending a considerable distance under ground. These subterraneous passages are annexed, by vulgar credulity, to almost every old convent in the kingdom; and supposed to contain the masses of riches which the monks were enabled by their avarice to heap together. An idea which probably arose from the reports of the visitors in Henry the eighth's time, who invented, and diligently propagated various stories to lower the cloistered ecclesiastics in the opinion of the people in general, the better to reconcile them to the excesses of the dissolution.<sup>161</sup>

Warner recognised that the commissioner's reports of Thomas Cromwell, as shown in chapter one, were likely embellished to create a negative impression of the clergy in order to justify their dissolution in the sixteenth century. His assessment of the reports speaks to an attention to historical detail which evidently mattered to Warner, as is seen throughout

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>160</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 221.

<sup>161</sup> Warner, *Topographical Remarks*, 298-99.

*Netley Abbey*. This is an attitude diametrically opposed to his mentor Gilpin. Warner wanted to portray the ruins with their historical significance, whereas Gilpin endeavoured to negate their history where possible and to see them as benign objects on the landscape.

On his fictional writing, specifically poetry, Warner stated quite clearly that he did not take his inspiration from his contemporaries, he admitted, 'For to say the truth, the opinion we entertain of too much of our contemporary brother bards is low'.<sup>162</sup> This is perhaps an understatement, given that he went on to illustrate that to receive any sort of inspiration from them was not possible:

Nor can we help considering them in the light of sponges, filled with dirty water; which, squeezed by the rough hand of necessity, or the gentler pressure of vanity, pour out their streams vapid and foul.<sup>163</sup>

He was forthright that his inspiration came from 'the mantle spirit of the *old school*; and to endeavour to transfuse into the poetical productions of the *Omnium Gatherum*, *something like* – the fine sense of Pope; the dignity of Dryden; the feeling of Thomson; the simplicity and force, the sublimity and piety, of the incomparable Cowper'.<sup>164</sup> Warner aspired to the quality of the likes of Pope, and it is not only his works of fiction where this influence can be seen. It is possible to see the influence of these writers at work in his travelogues.

Warner's descriptions of the landscape are distinctly poetic. In *A tour through the northern counties of England, and the Borders of Scotland* (1802) Warner was being guided through the 'Stygian darkness' of a cave in Derbyshire, underneath a hill named Mam Tor. Warner and his party are carried up a stream in the candlelit darkness, where their lights are 'lost in the gloomy vacuity around' as they were 'unable to reach the distant sides and lofty roof of the abyss'.<sup>165</sup> This language is reminiscent of the graveyard poets, and as it continues this comparison is only strengthened:

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<sup>162</sup> Richard Warner, *Literary Recollections*, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1830) vol 2, 160.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-61.

<sup>165</sup> Richard Warner, *A Tour Through the Northern Counties of England, and the Borders of Scotland* (Bath: Printed by R. Cruttwell, 1802) vol 1, 168.

Continuing our course beyond the lights, we found ourselves in another fearful hollow, called the chancel, where our ears were suddenly surprised by the sound of vocal harmony. The strains produced (which were religious) could not be said to be such as “take the imprisoned soul, and lap it in Elysium;” but being unexpected; issuing from a quarter where no object could be seen; in a place where all was still as death; and every thing around calculated to awaken attention and powerfully impress the imagination with solemn ideas, we could not hear them without that mingled emotion of fear and pleasure, astonishment and delight, which is one of the most interesting feelings of the mind; and extremely favourable to the encouragement of the religious principal [sic].<sup>166</sup>

This passage is reminiscent of the subterranean portion of *Netley Abbey* as quoted above. The light not being able to reach all the corners of the cavern, the ‘fearful hollow’, leading the mind to create a cornucopia of images. The phrase ‘a place where all was still as death’ is strikingly similar in tone to the Graveyard School imagery, the setting inspiring ‘solemn ideas’. Warner also references the dichotomy which both repels and attracts visitors to places like the ruined abbey. That mixed emotion of ‘fear and pleasure’ – fascinated in the object, but reticent of exploring the unknown. Warner refers to this as being the perfect environment for encouraging the ‘religious principal [sic]’ to thrive. He defined this principle in another book as the feeling experienced when witnessing impressive picturesque scenery, making him feel inconsequential in the sight of God – ‘Each object tended to inspire us with wonder, adoration, and humility; with a full conviction of our own insignificance, and the omnipotence and immensity of that Being’.<sup>167</sup> These are similar emotions to those articulated by Edmund Burke in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*:

[T]he passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment [...] In this case the

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>167</sup> Richard Warner, *A Second Walk Through Wales by the Rev. Richard Warner, Of Bath, In August and September 1798* (Bath: Printed by R. Cruttwell, 1800), 314.

mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.<sup>168</sup>

As shown above, Warner strived for historical accuracy, but was also a student of the Sublime and the picturesque. This helped to shape the perception of the ruined abbey as it blended historical information about the site and combined this with the picturesque.

He described a walk to Neath Abbey, in South Wales, and was unimpressed by its surroundings. In doing so he revealed a significant amount about the perception of the ruined abbey at this time. He commented:

The ruins are of prodigious extent, but being in the immediate neighbourhood of the metal works, and inhabited by the squalid families employed there, they do not produce the pleasing emotions, that religious remains, under different circumstances, so naturally and generally inspire.<sup>169</sup>

Warner's expectations of what he should experience when gazing on the ruined abbey were not met. It is curious to note that he felt the ruins should provoke a 'natural' reaction, given that the building of such a structure in the first instance is not a natural act. This can be considered a picturesque perception of the ruined abbey. There was still an acknowledgement that the building had a religious context, in contrast to how Gilpin saw the ruins, without any context at all. The usual 'pleasing emotions' that he anticipated were dashed by there being people living amongst the ruins who worked at the metal works close by. This description reveals that the local community experienced the ruins in a very different way to Warner. Instead of being a source of 'pleasing emotions' for the workers, they provided a more practical use: shelter. This hints that the lower classes in society did not consider abbey ruins as overtly sacred. It has echoes of those who encountered locals in Hutton's correspondence who knew nothing about old monasteries and priories in their area.

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<sup>168</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757).

<sup>169</sup> Warner, *A Second Walk*, 96.

On a visit to Basingwerk Abbey, in North Wales, Warner was once again displeased with the surroundings of the abbey, and stated that:

the remains, which are considerable, would be, from the circumstances of the fine wood and water around, and the river at a short distance from them, highly picturesque, were it not for the immediate neighbourhood of the manufactories, which extend quite to the walls of the monastery.<sup>170</sup>

Warner is evidently aware of what he constitutes to be a picturesque abbey, denoting all the requirements including a wooded area and stream. These are elements of the ruined abbey defined starkly by Gilpin, as shown in chapter two, but developed across the eighteenth century. The proximity to heavy industry again speaks to how the ruined abbey was perhaps perceived by the working class. The strength of reverence that was once felt for the site would dissipate somewhat, working in such close proximity to it. Those living close to or living within the ruins of the abbey as shown above evidently perceived and experienced them in a very different way to Warner. This relationship is studied further in the Tintern Abbey case study where people took to living on the site.

It is interesting to note that although he had reverence for the site, he was still able to have a jibe at the clergy who had been there before the monastery's dissolution, and remarked:

A vulgar tradition [...] still exists in the neighbourhood that seven parsons could preach in different parts of it [the building] at one time, without being heard by each other; a proof, if it be a fact, that these worthy pastors had neither the lungs nor energy of some of our modern pulpit-orators.<sup>171</sup>

The contemporary existence of this 'vulgar tradition' demonstrates that the monks still played a significant part in the minds of the community. If there existed a strong anti-Catholic sentiment toward the site such traditions would have been treated with contempt, yet this tradition praised their architectural achievements. This reflects the concept of the

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<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

Gothic gaze, they wanted to enjoy the picturesque beauty, alluding to some of its religious connotations, whilst simultaneously admonishing the Catholic clergy.

Warner's *Netley Abbey* can be considered anti-Catholic, its portrayal of corrupt monks make it more obviously so than that of Walpole's. With that said many of the themes and language used can be argued to be a continuation of the work of the Graveyard School poets. In his travelogues he endeavoured to achieve both historical accuracy, combined with picturesque and poetic flourishes. This was also the case in *Netley Abbey* where he set the narrative within real historical events; this gave the reader a sense that these events could have taken place. This body of work, describing the landscape of England and Wales in these terms, provided the reader with a blueprint, a way of seeing the ruined abbey which combined historical notes and poetic descriptions. This contributed to shaping the perception of the ruined abbey in a specific way, acknowledging its Catholic past, and being intrigued by the superstitious tales being woven amongst its ruins.

### **Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk***

An author who took inspiration from Warner's *Netley Abbey* was Matthew Gregory Lewis in his book *The Monk* (1796). Diane Long Hoeveler contends that Lewis must have read *Netley Abbey* before writing *The Monk*, given not only the themes but the names such as 'Agnes' and 'Raymond' are shared between them.<sup>172</sup> In 1795 Lewis anonymously published the book that would come to be known as *The Monk* the following year. Published when he was twenty years old, the main plot of the book follows the exploits of the monk Ambrosio, who at the beginning is depicted as being the pillar of the community, a man of virtue, admired by all, but whom the reader quickly realises is corrupted by power and lust. Throughout the book the monk commits rape, incest, murder, and makes a pact with the devil, resulting in his grisly demise.<sup>173</sup> The story also contains sub-plots which relate to monastic and conventual life, including a nun who becomes pregnant, a dramatic rescue from a convent, and the mob-led murder of a cruel prioress. From only a cursory glance at the incidents that take place Lewis's portrayal of the clergy is wholly negative. Hoeveler argues that the cathedral of Madrid and the catacombs of St Claire which are the backdrop to *The Monk*, helped put the reader closer to their own political and religious past.<sup>174</sup> It may have brought the reader

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<sup>172</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 224; Richard Warner, *Netley Abbey: A Gothic Story*, 2 vols (London, 1795) vol 1, 67.

<sup>173</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol 3, 306.

<sup>174</sup> Hoeveler, 'The Heroine, the Abbey', 114.

closer to a past, but it was not a true representation of Britain's past. It was a past that had been filtered through enthusiastic antiquarians and the work of the Graveyard School poets. Hoeveler goes further to state that the Catholicism conveyed through the ruined abbey in Gothic literature has a 'very real historical residue'.<sup>175</sup> The historical elements in the wider context are true, however the ridiculous nature of the events in novels such as *The Monk*, and as shown above Warner's *Netley Abbey*, created a confected Catholicism. This was a way of seeing the Catholic past in an imagined and hysterical way through the lens of the Gothic novel. In *The Monk* Lewis provides a way of seeing the abbey and the monastic life therein, using a very similar method to Richard Warner, and contains components of the Gothic gaze. Lewis depicts monastic life with both attraction and fear. The attraction was a product of admiration and veneration of the original building coupled with the fear of its dark corners a symptom of terrifying Gothic narratives, developed from graveyard poetry. The incidents and events which take place in the book portray life in a monastery in a similar way to Alexander Pope in *Eloisa to Abelard*. His poem is directly quoted throughout Lewis' book, but further to this it is shown that his work was an amalgamation of the Graveyard School style with his own narrative. Understanding this connection will show how the perception of monastic life and, as a result, the contemporary ruined monasteries were shaped.

Lewis portrays Catholic elements as both awe inducing and terrifying and is seen acutely in one of the sub-plots involving Raymond who is trying to free his love Agnes from a castle. The similarities to Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* were intentional. She is being kept against her will by the prioress of the abbey, who insists that she is unwell, but this turns out to be untrue. A plan is hatched to free Agnes which involved disguising herself as a known spirit which haunts the castle: the ghost of the Bleeding Nun. Tradition dictates that once every five years the gates of the convent are ceremoniously left open on this night so that the apparition is free to leave. On the night on which the escape is to be made, Lorenzo, Agnes' brother climbs a nearby hill and waits to see her execute the plan. As he waits, he describes what he sees as he looks down:

While I sat upon a broken ridge of the Hill, the stillness of the scene  
inspired me with melancholy ideas not altogether displeasing. The

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

Castle which stood full in my sight, formed an object equally awful and picturesque. Its ponderous Walls tinged by the moon with solemn brightness, its old and partly-ruined Towers lifting themselves into the clouds and seeming to frown on the plains around them, its lofty battlements oergrown with ivy, and folding Gates expanding in honour of the Visionary Inhabitant, made me sensible of a sad and reverential horror.<sup>176</sup>

This passage includes a multitude of tropes and motifs synonymous with both the Graveyard School and the Gothic. Although it is a 'castle' upon which he looks, the narrative of the pregnant nun, combined with the ghost of the bleeding nun eludes heavily to monastic life and in this context the image is synonymous with a monastic building. The condition of the towers, said to be 'partly-ruined', is purposefully evoking the idea of the ruined abbey. It provides a way of looking at the abbey, which can be seen throughout much of the antiquarian literature seen in chapter two. The beginning of the passage describing the pleasant melancholy is followed by the sight of the castle as both awful and picturesque. The use of the phrase 'ponderous walls' echoes much of the graveyard poetry, as well as Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*, as the eponymous Eloisa despairingly described the 'Relentless Walls!' of her cell in the convent.<sup>177</sup> With reference back to the previous chapter, similar language is used by Addison when considering how his Catholic forefathers perceived their surroundings, as he terms it, with 'Reverence and Horrour'.<sup>178</sup> This dichotomy of pleasure and despair can be directly linked to the way in which the abbey was perceived and understood. This is what is meant by the Gothic gaze; a taught way of seeing the ruined abbey as influenced by both the Graveyard School poets and Gothic novels. It was an attitude shared by Walpole and Warner; an acceptance of, and almost a requirement to acknowledge, the building's maligned Catholic past with the pleasure derived from looking at its ruins.

It is evident that Lewis took inspiration from the work of another of the Graveyard School poets, Robert Blair; he introduces chapters seven and nine with lines from *The Grave*.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol 2, 50.

<sup>177</sup> Pope, *The Works of Mr Pope*, 392.

<sup>178</sup> Joseph Addison, 'The Fairy Way of Writing. No.419, 1 July 1712' in *The Works of Joseph Addison*, 6 vols, ed. Henry G. Bohn (London: Bell, 1906) vol 3.

<sup>179</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol.2, 235; vol.3 45.

Lewis interprets and interpolates Blair's words, using them to create the desired uneasy atmosphere. At the beginning of chapter seven, the poem is quoted as follows:

\_\_\_\_\_ Ah! How dark  
 These long-extending realms and rueful wastes,  
 Where naught but silence reigns, and night, dark night,  
 Dark as was chaos ere the infant sun  
 Was roll'd together, or had tried its beams  
 Athwart the gloom profound! The sickly taper,  
 By glimm'ring through thy low-brow'd misty vaults,  
 Furr'd round with mouldy damp and ropy slime,  
 Lets fall a supernumerary horror,  
 And only serves to make the night more irksome!<sup>180</sup>

These lines function to set the scene for the chapter. Lewis used excerpts from poems such as this throughout the book to create an atmosphere that the reader would be familiar with, and if they were unfamiliar the pieces chosen would have created the desired effect very quickly. What is significant for this study is the excerpt from Blair's poem including the term 'supernumerary horror'. This was the same motif used by Addison, as well as James Hervey, and this repetition used in the context of *The Monk* locates these many horrors within a similar monastic setting. This demonstrates further the influence of Addison and compounds the portrayal of life within a monastery as being claustrophobic and full of unknown horror. Before these excerpts appear in the text there are other language and themes similar to those found in both the work of Blair and Addison. Matilda leads Ambrosio through 'subterraneous vaults where reposed the mouldering bodies of the votaries of St. Clare'.<sup>181</sup> As they walk on their surroundings are described as 'sunk within the hollow of a wall, and almost concealed by thick festoons of ivy hanging over it'.<sup>182</sup> These descriptions of corpses and the inclusion of overgrown foliage are also reminiscent of Thomas Gray's poetry.<sup>183</sup> Another example comes earlier on in the first volume of the book, and helps to demonstrate this point further:

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<sup>180</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol 2, 235.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>183</sup> Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

The walls were constructed of roots and trees, and the interstices filled up the Moss and Ivy. Seats of Turf were placed on either side, and a natural Cascade fell from the Rock above.<sup>184</sup>

As well as evoking similar themes to the Graveyard School of poetry, the vernacular is very similar in tone to the travel writers and antiquarians who described the ruined abbeys discussed in chapter two. This provided a fantastical view of the ruins being overtaken by nature.

Ambrosio's subterranean journey continues with Matilda, underneath the cemetery, and this time would result in a meeting with Satan. As they walk to meet him:

on every side, as they passed along, the beams of the lamp displayed none but the most revolting objects; skulls, bones, graves, and images whose eyes seemed to glare on them with horror and surprise.<sup>185</sup>

The lamp is the representation of Blair's 'sickly taper', and the terrifying objects which can be seen using its light are the 'supernumerary horror'. It is evident that the tropes being used are extensions of those created in the Graveyard School of poetry. Lewis' representation of the abbey is partly borrowed, and in many respects an amplification of the work of Blair. There are elements of the narrative which are wildly anti-Catholic, his portrayal of monk Ambrosio as dangerously lustful and a trafficker of the Devil however is too fanciful to be taken as serious comment on the Catholic Church. Lewis was more engaged with the poetry which he threaded through *The Monk*, than creating an anti-Catholic diatribe. He was more interested in entertaining and terrifying his readers and did this by utilising familiar themes and tropes of the Gothic and graveyard poetry.

Sir Walter Scott's analysis of *The Monk* demonstrates that this synthesis of poetry and prose was intentional. Through an evaluation of Lewis' work, and alluding to a friendship with him, Scott's *Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad* (1830) helps to establish a more obvious connection between the work of the Graveyard Poets and the work of the Gothic novelists. Scott was strong in asserting the impact that Lewis' novel had, declaring: "'The Monk" was

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<sup>184</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol 1, 97.

<sup>185</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol 2, 271.

so highly popular that it seemed to 'create an epoch in our literature'.<sup>186</sup> Scott ascribed *The Monk* with creating a genre of its very own, and argued that this was achieved through an assimilation of storytelling with poetry. As shown above, Lewis peppered *The Monk* with work by Blair and Pope, amongst others, for which Scott stated that 'the public were chiefly captivated by the poetry with which Mr Lewis had interspersed his prose narrative'.<sup>187</sup> Scott was arguing that it was through a synthesis of poetry and narrative that Lewis created his Gothic work. This observation, made by a contemporary figure, who was attuned to the Gothic genre, is crucial to the argument of this thesis. This demonstrably shows the influence of Pope, and how his portrayal of monastic life was a vital constituent part of Lewis's work.

*The Monk* received negative criticism, aimed principally at its use of Christian subject matter. An anonymously authored review of *The Monk* described its appeal and controversy:

This singular composition ... which has neither originality, morals, nor probability to recommend it, has excited, and will continue to excite, the curiosity of the public. Such is the irresistible energy of genius.<sup>188</sup>

The dichotomy of being unoriginal and morally bankrupt, yet also a work of genius bears a comparison to both the appeal of the Gothic and the ruined abbey: an illicit excitement generated by the appeal of the unknown. In a letter written to his father, and subsequently published in the *New Monthly Magazine* (1798), Lewis addressed criticism and in part apologised for it. In response to his work being immoral, he asserted that for the next publication he would expunge any content which could be deemed as such. He defended himself on the basis that:

the latter is undeserving censure, Addison will vouch for me: the moral and outline of my story are taken from an allegory inserted by

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<sup>186</sup> Walter Scott, *The Autobiography of Sir Walter Scott* (Philadelphia: Carey and Lea, 1831), 21.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>188</sup> Matthew Lewis, quoted in *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis* (London: Henry Colborn, 1839) vol 1, ed. Margaret Baron-Wilson, 151.

him in "The Guardian," and which he commends highly, for ability of invention and propriety of object.<sup>189</sup>

Lewis was referring to 'The History of Santon Barsisa' published in a periodical overseen by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison called *The Guardian*.<sup>190</sup> The story he refers to is evidently influential to *The Monk* as it concerns the Santon Barsisa being guided by Satan into tricking a king to leave his sick daughter in his care.<sup>191</sup> As a result the Santon seduces and impregnates her, only to be told by the devil that if he wants this to be kept from the public he must murder the daughter. The Santon obliges but has himself been lied to and, in a similar way to the end of *The Monk*, gives his soul over to Satan only to be forsaken by him. From this cursory summation of the allegory, it is clear that Lewis's defence was a credible one. He went on to insist:

I was in my own mind quite certain, that no harm could be produced by a work, whose subject was furnished by one of our best moralists, and in the composition of which I did not introduce a single incident or a single character, without meaning to inculcate some maxim universally allowed.<sup>192</sup>

Just as was true with many of the Graveyard School poets, Addison features heavily as influencer. It is curious to note that the story is attributed to Richard Steele, not Addison.<sup>193</sup> Perhaps it was due to Addison's literary impact that he is given authorship of the story. Lewis made it clear that he was using tropes and themes which were widely known from a respected and popular author.

Walter Scott explained why Lewis and his work became so popular:

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<sup>189</sup> Baron-Wilson, *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis*, 156.

<sup>190</sup> 'The History of Santon Barsisa' in *The British Essayists: Guardian*, ed. James Ferguson (London: J. Richardson and Co, 1823) vol 15, 119.

<sup>191</sup> Santon meaning 'holy man' or 'saint'.

<sup>192</sup> Matthew Lewis, letter quoted in *The New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 11 134; also quoted in *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis*, vol. 1, ed. Margaret Baron-Wilson (London, 1839), 156.

<sup>193</sup> 'The History of Santon Barsisa' in *The British Essayists: Guardian*, vol. 15, ed. James Ferguson (London, 1823), 119.

In short, Lewis's works were admired, and the author became famous, not merely through his own merit, though that was of no mean quality, but because he had in some measure taken the public by surprise, by using a style of composition, which, like national melodies, is so congenial to the general taste, that, though it palls by being much hackneyed, it has only to be for a short time forgotten in order to recover its original popularity.<sup>194</sup>

*The Monk*, although it was not the most well written book, had created an environment which was recognisable, yet still remained a surprise to the public. It achieved this through the familiar poetry and language of the Graveyard School. A satirical obituary of Lewis, written in 1818, in *The Tickler* highlights some of the things he was accused of at the time of *The Monk* being published, such as being a leader in the degradation of the 'English Genius' through his 'ferocious fantasies of Germany'.<sup>195</sup> Walter Scott had recognised his Germanic literary influences, stating how *The Monk* had been written 'in the German taste'.<sup>196</sup> The obituary stated that:

He was a reckless defiler of the public mind; a profligate, he cared not how many were to be undone when he draw back the curtain of his profligacy; he had infected his reason with the insolent belief, that the power to corrupt made the right, and that conscience might be laughed at, so long as he could evade the law.<sup>197</sup>

The obituary further asserts that Lewis's work had been consigned to 'literary oblivion' and finishes by stating 'he has now passed away, and it must be his happiest fate to be forgotten'.<sup>198</sup> This was written in jest, yet its footing in reality reflected the genuine animosity towards Lewis and *The Monk*. It illustrates just how influential the work had been, and the reaction it had garnered from the public. Lewis' portrayal of monastic life was not intended to be accurate, but a caricature of the worst imaginings generated by the fear of Catholicism. Using Pope and Blair as his starting point Lewis accentuated and extended a

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<sup>194</sup> Scott, *Autobiography*, 22.

<sup>195</sup> 'Criticism, The Late M.G. Lewis, Esq.', *The Tickler*, December 1<sup>st</sup> 1818, 2.

<sup>196</sup> Scott, *Autobiography*, 20.

<sup>197</sup> 'Criticism,' *The Tickler*, 3.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

perception of the ruined abbey which had been created by Graveyard School poetry. Utilising excerpts from familiar poems was a short hand, a method of creating the atmosphere Lewis wanted to capitalise on and it was this that inspired his lurid and terrifying tale, not anti-Catholicism.

### **Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer***

Of the writers who have been considered in this chapter it is a far more onerous task to demonstrate that the work of Charles Robert Maturin is less motivated by anti-Catholicism. There is perhaps no more compelling evidence than his final publication which was titled *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church* (1824).<sup>199</sup> It is quite ironic, given the anti-Catholic nature of his work that the origins of his surname came from the street where his father was found as an abandoned baby, 'Rue de Mathurine', named after the convent which was located on that street and after the French saint of that name.<sup>200</sup> Maturin was a Church of England clergyman and writer, most notable for his Gothic novel *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). He is important to this study as his perspective differs from most other popular Gothic writers. He grew up in Ireland, and only reached notoriety towards the end of his life, compared with Matthew Lewis who was born into privilege and became a writer of repute by the age of twenty. Richard Haslam gives Maturin's style of Gothic the description 'Calvinist Sublime', predicated on the reformer John Calvin's assertion that God is 'the cause of all happenings, yet not the author of evil'.<sup>201</sup> He argues that Maturin took elements of Calvin's ideology and translated them into an artistic programme.<sup>202</sup> Although Maturin was an ardent anti-Catholic and distilled this through his work, he was utilising vernacular and common tropes which can be seen to have come directly from other writers; Maturin was easily influenced. He was susceptible to being inspired by whatever he was reading at the time. This was described by an unknown author in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* who had spent time with Maturin in Ireland, as well as England, and said of him:

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<sup>199</sup> Charles Robert Maturin, *Five Sermons on the Errors of the Roman Catholic Church* (Dublin: William Folds and Son, 1824).

<sup>200</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 1827, Part 1, (London: Printed by S. and R. Bentley, 1827) 403.

<sup>201</sup> John Calvin, quoted in, Richard Haslam, 'Maturin and the 'Calvinist Sublime'', in *Gothick Origins and Innovations*, eds. Allan Lloyd Smith and Victor Sage (Amsterdam, 1994), 45.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

His studies were governed not by desire to promote or perfect his acquisitions in learning; but by the description of composition he happened to have at hand. Locke and Tillotson gave way to Mrs. Radcliffe and Monk Lewis at the season when the spell of romance was on him.<sup>203</sup>

This quite fluid basis of influence shows that his writing of a Gothic novel was perhaps not solely predicated by a desire to disseminate anti-Catholic sentiment but based on what he was reading at the time. This is demonstrated further by another account of his sensibilities when it came to writing:

He cultivated himself less than the example of others, and permitted the impressions of what he read to displace the memory of what he thought. He wrote less from permanent principle than immediate impulse, and too often sacrificed what he had to say to the consideration how he should say it.<sup>204</sup>

This is of course only one source and should be treated with caution, yet this was someone who had spent time with him for an extended period. With that being said, it can be strongly suggested that his writing was based on a more immediate influence than a polemical urge to convince or convert the reader to an anti-Catholic way of thinking. There is no better exemplification of this than in the first few pages of *Melmoth the Wanderer* where Lewis's *The Monk* is mentioned by name within the narrative. To describe the relationship John Melmoth had with his uncle it is stated that 'the pair resembled Don Raymond and the ghost of Beatrice in the Monk'.<sup>205</sup> With the publication of *The Monk* having been some twenty years previous it must have made a considerable impact as it was being used as shorthand to describe such a relationship. It also works as a literary device in order to create a desired atmosphere matching that of Lewis' book. He did however have some more consistent influences and Alexander Pope was one of them; he was one of his 'idols of poetical devotion; and he had been heard to declare that he considered "Pope's Eloisa to Abelard a

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<sup>203</sup> 'Conversations of Maturin. No. 2,' *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* (London: Printed by S. and R. Bentley, 1827), 576.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>205</sup> Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Constable, 1820) vol. 1, 4.

piece perfect in its way.”<sup>206</sup> This emphasises once again the importance of Pope’s monastic epistle on the minds of Gothic writers and, given how easily Maturin was influenced, it certainly affected the language used throughout his work.

One of the best examples in *Melmoth the Wanderer* of Maturin taking influence from Pope’s monastic epistle was his portrayal of life as a monk in ‘*Tale of the Spaniard*’.<sup>207</sup> This lengthy story within the novel depicts a son who is placed into a monastery against his will by his mother and father. The son, Alonso, repeatedly protests against being sent to become a monk, but finally yields when he is told he is illegitimate, and this can only be rectified if he concedes to life in a monastery. It portrays monastic life as consisting of monks who conduct themselves in a variety of despicable ways. A monk attends matins drunk, ‘wrecking the altar’ and ‘even soliciting the portrait of the Virgin in language not to be repeated’.<sup>208</sup> This incident went unpunished as the monk was a relation to Archbishop of Toledo, thus demonstrating how nepotism was rife throughout the monasteries. This is further compounded by a monk who was detected returning a book to an adjacent cell after a permitted hour, and as punishment he ‘was compelled to sit for three days at reflection, while we were dining, barefooted and his tunic reversed, on the stone floor of the hall’.<sup>209</sup> It is then stated that ‘The Jesuits are fond of courting power’. This shows starkly that Maturin wanted to demonstrate that monks were deeply flawed and untrustworthy, and he certainly succeeded. It is without question an anti-Catholic text. However, there is language used to describe life inside the monastery which was influenced by the Graveyard School. After an apparent miracle had taken place the monks assembled, and Alonso surveyed the scene:

There was a stifled whisper. I saw several heads bent together. I did not know what they were meditating nor did I care. I was walking alone, - it was a delicious moon-light evening. I saw the moon-beams through the trees, but the trees all looked to me like walls. Their trunks were as adamant, and the interlaced branches seemed to twine themselves into folds that said, “Beyond us there is no passing.”<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* (London: Printed by S. and R. Bentley, 1827), 577.

<sup>207</sup> Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, vol. 1, 182.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 273.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-75.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

The protagonist walking alone, the moon lighting up the scene and the ominous seemingly impassable trees create the same atmosphere and imagery used by Robert Blair and Thomas Gray. The trees taking on the appearance of a wall are reminiscent of Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* and the convent's 'Relentless Walls!'<sup>211</sup> There are further similarities to that monastic epistle, as Alonso's brother Juan writes to him clandestinely from another monastery, reflecting the relationship between Pope's two eponymous protagonists.<sup>212</sup> Given Maturin's affection for the poem, this was certainly done on purpose. Maturin displayed more of his influence with allusions to 'The Bleeding Nun' motif, as used by Lewis. There is a great unrest within the monastery and Alonso is confronted by a monk being chased:

Suddenly a phantom approached me – I dropt to my knees – cried  
 "Satana vade retro – apage Satana." A naked human being, covered  
 with blood, and uttering screams of rage and torture, flashed by  
 me.<sup>213</sup>

The influence of Lewis comes through quite clearly. The monk referred to first as being a 'phantom', his appearance almost too shocking to be real, creates a vivid and troubling imagery in similar ways to Warner's slain monk and Lewis' Bleeding Nun. Alonso immediately pleads 'get thee behind me, Satan' at the sight of the monk, Maturin utilising the fear of the devil. These superstitious events were exaggerated and accentuated versions of those created by the Graveyard School and gave them a more tangible monastic environment in which to exist. This would have provided a different context for the ruins of monasteries and, as a result, changed the perception of them.

Maturin's motivation behind its conception are included in the preface of the first edition of the book with an admission about the descriptions used in '*Tale of the Spaniard*'. On his utilising fear of Catholicism, he wrote:

The "*Spaniard's Tale*" has been censured by a friend to whom I read it, as containing too much attempt at the revivification of the horrors

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<sup>211</sup> Pope, *Eloisa to Abelard*.

<sup>212</sup> Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, vol 1, 318.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

of Radcliffe-Romance, of the persecutions of convents, and the terrors of the Inquisition.<sup>214</sup>

He was being chastised for what was perceived to be a mere reworking of older, and perhaps now unpopular, themes of the Gothic, as first developed by Ann Radcliffe. This admission highlights quite starkly that the premise was a very familiar one, and one that had been borrowed from Radcliffe's books from the eighteenth century. It also belies how the popularity of Gothic fiction of this style were falling out of favour with the public.

Victor Sage highlights how *Melmoth the Wanderer* failed to become a great success in Britain due to a bad critical reception, yet it was very popular in France.<sup>215</sup> Sage goes on to show how the novel was reinterpreted by Eugene Sue in the popular French work *The Wandering Jew*. The story had all the similar hallmarks of the Gothic novel but was from the perspective of the Huguenots and their attempt to regain France. The success of this book in France, highlights how the main attraction to it would not have been its anti-Catholic messaging. The poor reception of the book in Britain demonstrates that more than just anti-Catholicism was required to entertain. Perhaps it was the mundanity of Maturin's portrayal of life within the monastery that made the book unpopular. Yet the descriptions and events that took place therein would still have shaped the way people perceived the monastery; the popularity of these narratives meant that their version of monastic life would have been the most vivid one.

### **Conclusion**

It is unarguable that anti-Catholicism was pervasive throughout British society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but Gothic novels were not all written to deepen and embolden these attitudes. As has been demonstrated in this chapter and the previous one, much of what had been written concerning life within convents and monasteries can be related back to Pope's depiction of monastic life in *Eloisa to Abelard*, as well as Joseph Addison's analysis of how terrifying tales had been inculcated at a young age. Highlighted above, and as hinted at by Walpole himself, *The Castle of Otranto* was written as a piece of entertainment, not as a wholly serious polemical or religious commentary. Walpole, known for his anti-Catholic attitudes, understood that however maligned the Catholic past may

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<sup>214</sup> Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, vol 1, x.

<sup>215</sup> Sage, *Horror Fiction*, 39.

have been there needed to be an acquiescence and acceptance of that past in order for the narratives to function – ‘a beautiful use of bigotry’.<sup>216</sup> This dichotomy of rejection and acceptance of Catholicism was reflected in the way that the ruined abbey was represented in Gothic novels. Lewis’s theatrical *The Monk* exemplified this, and connected directly with Graveyard School poetry, by punctuating the beginnings of various chapters with it, putting flesh on the bones of those poets’ macabre elegies. This created a tangible perception of life inside a monastery, which made their ruins a more intriguing place to visit. In conjunction with this was a way of seeing the ruins through the Gothic gaze, a blueprint of interpreting the ruins defined by the language of Graveyard Poetry and Gothic narratives. This interpretation can also be found in the antiquarian and travelogue accounts of chapter three. Richard Warner is one example, with his tour of the cave under Mam Tor where he used allusions to religious imagery and architecture to describe his surroundings. Warner certainly displayed anti-Catholic attitudes in *Netley Abbey*, still using reverential language to describe the monastery in a similar way to Walpole. Maturin was steadfastly anti-Catholic, yet he was influenced far more by the current literature he happened to be reading, than by the religion he followed. The motivation of these Gothic writers was multifarious, yet many of their publications have been defined by anti-Catholicism; this was not the case. They had different approaches, but their work coalesced on identical themes which had been defined by the Graveyard School poets. Ultimately their work was governed by a duality of fear and intrigue; this contributed towards a new way of seeing the ruined abbey that had hitherto not existed.

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<sup>216</sup> Horace Walpole, ‘To Robert Jephson, Esq. Berkley Square, Jan. 27, 1780’ in *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, 6 vols, ed. John Wright (London: Richard Bentley, 1840) vol 6, 73.

## Introduction to Case Studies

The next three case studies provide specific examples of how ruined abbeys were perceived in the long eighteenth century. These are the Cistercian monasteries of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, Melrose Abbey in the Scottish Borders, and Tintern Abbey in Monmouthshire. They have been chosen as they were popular visitor attractions, their locations and surroundings are different, yet in the eighteenth century they were viewed in similar ways. Fountains Abbey sits in a curated garden, and the grounds of the abbey are manicured. Antiquarians such as Arthur Young and William Gilpin felt that this was not the way the ruin should be seen, requiring them to be more overgrown and unkempt. Harriet Beecher Stowe is disappointed when she sees Melrose Abbey for the first time as it failed to match up to the descriptions as relayed in both Sir Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and Washington Irving's account of his visit, which she had evidently read. Tintern Abbey, having been the subject of many works of literature, but most crucially featured in William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* (1782), became the quintessential ruined abbey to visit in the eighteenth century.

At Fountains Abbey, although there was a story of Robin Hood slaying a monk on the site, it was the story of the hardy and brave monks who founded the monastery which took precedence. John Bower, the caretaker turned tour guide of Melrose, acted out the stories of Sir Walter Scott's *The Lay*, becoming a concentrated example of the influence a fictional text had on a real site. And at Tintern Abbey, Charles Heath's *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey* (1793) demonstrates, through each edition from 1793 to 1828, that there was a shift from descriptions and prose to historical information on the Catholic history of the abbey.

## Chapter 5 - Case Study One: Fountains Abbey

The ruins of Fountains Abbey stand in the curated landscape and gardens of Studley Park, Yorkshire (see Figure 5-1). In 1754, Thomas Gray visited Studley Park and was so overcome by his surroundings that he declared he could not do them justice with words:

I have one of the most beautiful Vales here in England to walk in with prospects that change every ten steps, & open something new where I turn me, all rude & romantic, in short the sweetest Spot to break your neck or drown yourself in that ever was beheld.<sup>1</sup>

This was an emphatic and theatrical illustration of how Studley, and even the wider surroundings of Ripon were established as being picturesque by the middle of the eighteenth century. As well as appreciating his surroundings Gray was also demonstrating his ability to turn the picturesque into the macabre, claiming that it would be the perfect scenery in which to die a tragic death. Previously, in the same letter, Gray excused his inability to complete his descriptions of his travels as he had 'not yet gather'd up my Quotations from the Classicks to intersperse, like Mr Addison'.<sup>2</sup> The influence of Joseph Addison was so great that he wanted to wait until he could imitate his work by quoting from classical ancient poets, just as Addison would have done. As chapter four showed, Addison's influence was heavily felt in the descriptions and perception of the landscape through significant literary figures. Poets such as Gray in turn influenced others. These poems and Gothic stories helped to inspire people to visit the abbey in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet the manicured and pleasant setting at Fountains Abbey ran somewhat contrary to the solitary and terrifying tales found in Gothic narratives.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Gray, 'To The Revd Mr Brown' Durham, July 24. Tuesday. 1754, in *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray and William Mason, with Letters to the Rev. James Brown*, ed. John Mitford (London, 1853), 13-16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16.



Figure 5-1. Balthasar Nebot, *View of Fountains Abbey*, 1768, print, National Trust, Swindon.  
<https://www.ntprints.com/image/344711/view-of-fountains-abbey-by-balthasar-nebot-1768>.

This chapter demonstrates how language and themes associated with the Gothic persisted when referring to the ruins of the abbey. These themes were assimilated with an acknowledgement of its Catholic past: part of the appeal of Fountains Abbey was the hardship that the monks endured in order to found the monastery in the twelfth century. It is this adversity narrative which has influenced the perception of Fountains most strikingly. Assessing how the abbey was described and written about through poetry, correspondence, and guidebooks, in the eighteenth century, highlights this assertion. The chapter will demonstrate that the language of graveyard poetry and the Gothic persisted, yet through the means of a story of hardship, the negative connotations towards the abbey and the monks who had lived within its walls had fallen away. This led to an earnest and respectful interest in the history of the abbey, contrary to the anti-Catholic sentiments present in Gothic literature.

There are many studies of Fountains Abbey, the most comprehensive of these is Mark Newman's *The Wonder of the North: Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal* (2015).<sup>3</sup> The first extensive study of the site was carried out by John Walbran in *Memorials of Fountains* (1863).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mark Newman, *The Wonder of the North: Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> John Richard Walbran, *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Mary Fountains* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1863).

Although Newman contends that Walbran had not taken into consideration a number of primary documents which provided crucial information on the use of the site after the dissolution of the monastery in the 1540s, he still identifies it as being a key text for Fountains. Walbran's study is invaluable for its exhaustive description of the site, as well as providing a demonstration of how the language of the picturesque had become part of factual documents about the abbey. His guidebook, however, *Ripon, Harrogate, Fountains Abbey, Bolton Priory and Several Places of Interest in their Vicinity* (1856) is of most use to this study as it provides guidance on visiting and experiencing the ruins of Fountains.<sup>5</sup> The general histories of the abbey are thorough on the description of the abbey but pay very little attention to the perception of the ruins.<sup>6</sup> Sarah Thompson's work is an examination of how the site had changed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and how it has been perceived across that period.<sup>7</sup> Thompson's work follows a similar theme to this thesis, but it places the value on reaction to Fountains' Gothic architecture, as opposed to the stories and tales of the Gothic novel. With that said, Thompson considers the role of the 'Gothic Picturesque' and looks at what was defined as the ideal location and condition a ruin should be in. This chapter will build on some of the definitions and theories identified in her work in order to establish how Fountains Abbey was perceived.

The machinations involved in the landownership of Fountains Abbey are lengthy and complex, but what is significant is that William Aislabie purchased the estate of Studley in 1768. It was his father, former Chancellor of the Exchequer John Aislabie who became interested in designing the gardens around the ruins of the abbey. Thompson highlights how John Aislabie's garden plan placed the ruins at its centre and included the enlarging of a hill to the north-east of the ruins called Round Hill.<sup>8</sup> This type of improvement to the landscape around the abbey can be seen as informing the Gothic gaze by creating physical way of seeing the ruins. This was symbolised most acutely by a physical doorway called 'The Surprise', which stood on a hill and was used as a viewing platform for the abbey. This established a way to look at the abbey similar to that of Raymond in *The Monk* when he is

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<sup>5</sup> John Richard Walbran, *Ripon, A Guide to Harrogate, Fountains Abbey, Bolton Priory and Several Places of Interest in their Vicinity* (London: A. Johnson and Co., 1856).

<sup>6</sup> Walbran, *Memorials of the Abbey*; George Hodges, *Fountains Abbey: Story of Medieval Monastery* (London: John Murray, 1904); Newman, *The Wonder of the North*.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Thompson, 'Recycling Ruins The Critical Reception of John Aislabie's Work at Fountains Abbey and the Changing Function of the Gothic,' *Third Text* 25, No 6 (2011). <https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2011.624342>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 675.

looking at the castle where Agnes was being kept.<sup>9</sup> Efforts were made to create the perfect surroundings and landscape within which the ruins could be perceived at their optimum picturesque quality. It is the creation of this landscape and how Fountains Abbey was perceived which is assessed throughout this chapter.

### *Arthur Young and William Gilpin*

One of the most pertinent descriptions of Fountains Abbey is by Arthur Young in *A Six Months Tour Through the North of England* (1776).<sup>10</sup> Young was a writer who became renowned for his work as an agricultural reformer. Throughout the 1760s and 70s Young travelled extensively in search of a farm, and this search resulted in a wide variety of publications on agriculture, including farming and husbandry, and tours throughout England in which he described the landscape.<sup>11</sup> He corresponded with some of the most influential figures of the eighteenth century, including George Washington, Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette, William Wilberforce, and Joseph Priestley. His most significant friendship in relation to this study was with Edmund Burke. In conjunction with his work on the sublime, as seen in the last chapter, Burke was passionate about farming and land management. Burke highly praised Young's book, *The Farmers Calendar* (1771), which addressed the state of agriculture in England.<sup>12</sup> From his description of Studley Park and Fountains Abbey in *A Six Months Tour*, it is possible to see the influence of Burke and the picturesque. Young's preconception of what constituted a ruin was challenged when he saw that the abbey was being excavated and new doors were being installed. He stated:

This work has, I apprehend, rendered it necessary to clear away all the rubbish from the court ... I suppose, occasions the new fir doors in so many of the old arches: these circumstances are at present destructive of the beauty of the ruin.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol 2, 50.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour Through the North of England* (London: W. Strahan, 1770).

<sup>11</sup> G.E. Mingay, 'Young, Arthur (1741–1820),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/30256>.

<sup>12</sup> Charles William, Earl Fitzwilliam and Richard Bourke, eds. *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London: F. and J. Rivington, 1844) vol 1, 258.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England* (London: W. Strahan, 1776) vol 2, 323.

This observation of the abbey being improved with new doors led Young to further consider what constituted a ruin, and what was the ideal location and condition for one to be in. Young indicated what came to his mind when he thought of a ruined abbey:

We generally find them in retired, neglected spots, half filled with rubbish, and the habitation rather of bats, owls, and wild beasts, than of man.<sup>14</sup>

Although there was truth that many ruins were neglected, it is their very nature to be so. Young populated them with bats and owls – echoing the tropes of the Graveyard School poets, where solitary animals were the sole inhabitants of their moonlit domain. He goes further by describing what seeing the ruins in such a state did to the mind:

This horrible wildness greatly strengthens the idea raised by falling walls, ruined columns, and imperfect arches; both are awful, and impress upon the mind a kind of religious melancholy.<sup>15</sup>

The conditions described by Young and the ‘religious melancholy’ combine to create a passage similar to that found in the Gothic. He asserted that this melancholy is impossible to replicate in a ‘modern ruin’, in reference to sham ruins. This is an acceptance of the building’s history and a way of perceiving the ruin in contrast to that of William Gilpin, who, as previously noted, rejected its Catholic past. Gilpin himself visited Fountains Abbey around the same time as Young, and his description promotes the idea that the surroundings suggest a ‘cheerful solitude’.<sup>16</sup> Gilpin stated that this sense of solitude is in every object around ‘all tending to sooth and amuse: but not to rouse and transport; like the great scenes of nature’.<sup>17</sup> Gilpin wanted to appreciate the object in the moment without being distracted by its historical significance. This is antithetical to the Gothic gaze which allows the mind to see the ruin and then explore it in the context of the multifarious ideas

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 323.

<sup>16</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations, on Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772*, 2 vols (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808) vol 2, 176.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 176.

and imagery associated with the Gothic. Thus, Young's mere mention of religion created an acceptance of the religious past of the building without casting aspersions on it.

Young considered how the ruin should be viewed, and in doing so hinted at components which make up the Gothic gaze. He stated that:

Ruins generally appear best at distance; if you approach them, the effect is weakened, unless the access is somewhat difficult.<sup>18</sup>

Young's belief that a ruin was best viewed from a distance provides a partial explanation of the construction of the Gothic gaze. He helps to compound this idea further and argued that an element of mystery was required and provided detail on how this should be generated. Young was not averse to artificial paths as long as they did not allow for access to the entire building: 'it is a question whether the more you see by such means does not proportionably [sic] lessen the general idea of the whole'.<sup>19</sup> Young then described the conditions that a ruin should be in:

Looking, as it were, by stealth through passages that cannot be passed, heaps of rubbish stopping you in one place, broken steps preventing both ascent and descent in another; in a word, some parts that cannot be seen at all, others that are half seen; and those fully viewed, broken, rugged, and terrible.<sup>20</sup>

This description of impenetrable passages and places which are obscure and mysterious creates a scene that would not be out of place within a Gothic narrative. He goes on to justify this, explaining that in such a place

the imagination has a free space to range in, and sketches ruins in idea beyond the boldest limits of reality.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England*, 4 vols (London: W. Strahan, 1776) vol 2, 323.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

Young was arguing that the imagination functions best when it is given unknown spaces to roam within. This relates to how the Gothic gaze works; the mind populates this unknown with the myriad of terrifying images and scenarios created from graveyard poetry and Gothic narratives, and this operates best from a distance. He further asserted that to tamper with this, and to 'lay open the hidden recesses unpervaded [sic] by the sun for so many centuries, you at once destroy these great effects'.<sup>22</sup> It then emerged that he was not an admirer of the Gothic style of building, admitting that without the ruin being overgrown with foliage it was unlikely that 'a single part in genuine beauty makes up for such a loss'.<sup>23</sup> Young did not enjoy the architecture but he was not concerned about the building's Catholic past. He liked the ruins for their ability to conjure up a 'religious melancholy' – the obscured and ruinous building inciting in the imagination an equally obscure Catholic past, which he populated with images taken from the language of the Graveyard School.

Gilpin's attitude towards the ruins of Fountains Abbey ran counter to Young's. He was very exacting in his summation of where a ruin should stand:

The ruins of the abbey which is the great object [...] The river and the paths should wind carelessly through the lawns and woods, with little decoration. Buildings should be sparingly introduced. Those which appear, should be as simple as possible – the mere retreats of solitude. The scene allows no more; and the neighbourhood of so noble a ruin renders every other decoration, in the way of building, either trivial, or offensive.<sup>24</sup>

Gilpin could see in his mind the perfect landscape for the abbey to be placed in, and the above description reads as if he were gazing at a painting. As shown in chapter two, this idealised version was created through an amalgamation of antiquarian study and a nostalgic view of the past. This can be seen as informing part of the Gothic gaze: the creation of an idealised version of where an abbey should be situated within a landscape. Although Gilpin believed that he was eschewing the building's Catholic beginning, his way of perceiving the ruined abbey had its origins in its religious past.

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>24</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations, on Several Parts of England*, 176-77.

Hints of this can be found in Gilpin's reaction to seeing Fountains Abbey. Gilpin critiqued the park, and wholly berated it and the condition of the ruins. He was forthright in his criticism:

Instead of these ideas, which the vallies [sic] of Studley naturally suggest, the whole is a vain ostentation of expense; a mere Timon's villa; decorated by a taste debauched in it's conception, and puerile in it's execution.[sic]<sup>25</sup>

It is evident that the way the ruins were presented was not to Gilpin's taste. By referring to *Timon's Villa* he was evoking the subject in a poem by Alexander Pope, in which he depicts a highly decorated garden.<sup>26</sup> The mere mention of Pope demonstrates again that his influence was considerable: the first name Gilpin thought of to describe an object on the landscape was Pope. It is shown below that Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* came to mind when others visited Fountains Abbey. As Gilpin continued, he quoted from Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queen*, to create the atmosphere that he wished to have been met with at Fountains:

Fresh shadows fit to shroud from sunny ray;  
Fair lawns to take the sun in season due;  
Sweet springs, in which a thousand nymphs did play;  
Soft, tumbling brooks, that gentle slumber drew;  
High reared mounts, the lands about to view;  
Low-winding dales, disloigned from common gaze;  
Delightful bowers to solace lovers true.<sup>27</sup>

Although the lines functioned as an illustration of what Gilpin was thinking, it is at odds with his attitude towards how he claimed to perceive ruins. He stated that he wanted to appreciate the ruin and the surroundings in the moment only, yet from his example of Spenser it is as though he wanted to be transported into a different place and time where

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays, in Four Epistles* (Glasgow, 1754), 158.

<sup>27</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations, on Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772*, 2 vols (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808) vol 2, 177.

'thousands of nymphs play' and the surroundings 'disloigned from common gaze'. This is comparable to how the Gothic gaze functions, a way of seeing the ruins and its surroundings in a different light predicated on fictional writing, in Gilpin's case more Romantic than Graveyard School or Gothic. Young, was more sympathetic to the state of the ruins, and advocated that to fully experience the ruin, and for it to create imaginative thought it had to be left untouched to nature, time, and the elements:

These reasons appear to me of sufficient force to justify the leaving a ruin in the wildest and most melancholy state the ravaging hand of Time can have thrown it into.<sup>28</sup>

Young wanted Fountains to be left unmanicured which would allow for these creative and 'melancholy' thoughts to take hold. It is unclear if he felt a similar emotion to Gilpin in his distaste for the way Aislabie had constructed the garden around the ruins. He stated:

As to Fountaine's [sic] abbey, the present possessor has too much taste to lessen the effect of one so spacious; the circumstances I before hinted were I then remarked temporary.<sup>29</sup>

Whether or not he was impressed by the ruins in the condition in which he saw them it is not clear. He did state that the possessor had taste. This is very different to Gilpin's attitude, stating that although he felt they were not in the condition that evoked the usual feeling from an abbey, he was still awestruck by the structure itself. Young acknowledged the building's Catholic past, in opposition to the attitude of Gilpin. Further to this Young, who was an admirer of Burke, used language of the picturesque and the Gothic to inform his perception of the ruins. It may not be defined as the Gothic gaze, but Gilpin, who had expelled the spectre of Catholicism from the ruins, still used the lens of literature to articulate his view of the ruined abbey. This demonstrates that, even though he advocated the idea of the picturesque being based on how the ruins looked in the moment, he was using poetry such as Spenser's to formulate an expectation of what he wanted to see at Fountains Abbey.

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<sup>28</sup> Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England*, vol 2, 324.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

### *John Walbran's Account of Fountains*

To inform his exhaustive account of the site, John Richard Walbran deferred almost solely to Gilpin for evidence in his *Memorials of Fountains* (1864).<sup>30</sup> *Memorials* is valuable for its history of the abbey, as well as containing guidance on how to view the ruins. Walbran was a scholar of the Yorkshire landscape and had written what is ostensibly a guidebook entitled *Ripon, Harrogate, Fountains Abbey, Bolton Priory and Several Places of Interest in their Vicinity* (1856). Written in the nineteenth century, his guide provides insight into how antiquarian writing had evolved since the beginning of the eighteenth century, discussed in chapter two. Antiquarians and travel writers encountering ruined abbey sites used an amalgamation of historical information and folklore. Walbran was also a proponent of this combination, as well as using the language of the picturesque. This is exemplified by his description of two of the chapel buildings as 'melancholy', and asserting that the north end of the abbey had a 'gloomy character'.<sup>31</sup> He even described the recent excavation and restoration of an old level to the abbey as increasing the 'picturesque appearance of the Abbey'.<sup>32</sup> His admiration of the abbey is clear: describing the Lady Chapel, he exclaimed 'the amplitude of its dimensions, the graceful, aspiring, heavenward tendency of its component parts must captivate and astonish even a vulgar and careless mind'.<sup>33</sup> In this context 'vulgar' could refer to the ancient Catholic mind, although Walbran does not malign those who built the abbey. During the excavation items were found belonging to the monks, including kitchen items, and jewellery. Walbran's reaction to these personal items owned by the clergy reveals his attitude towards his perception of the monks:

Yet trifling and worthless, in every respect, as most of these objects might be, they seemed, as they came from the hiding-place where forgotten hands had cast them, to connect the spectator with those whom three centuries have divided from personal sympathy and association, more intimately than the disclosure of that ruined scene in which they had so long been consigned to oblivion.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> John Richard Walbran, *Memorials of Fountains Abbey* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1863), 109.

<sup>31</sup> John Richard Walbran, *Ripon Harrogate, Fountains Abbey, Bolton Priory and Several Places of Interest in Their Vicinity* (Ripon: A. Johnson and Co., 1856), 77.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

As Walbran was looking at objects owned by the monks, he was not filled with glee at the thought of the building's destruction, but took a more considered, reflective approach to them. Writing in the 1850s it is perhaps not a surprise that Walbran was tolerant of these reminders of Britain's Catholic past, given that the Catholic Relief Act passed in 1829 with disappointment amongst society but no protests or riots such as those of the Gordon Riots after the act of 1778.<sup>35</sup> He even asserted that compared to merely the ruins themselves, the objects worked as a conduit to bring him closer to the monks who would have lived there three hundred years hence. There is no assertion by Walbran that this connection to the hands which had built the abbey were in any way tainted by Catholicism. To add to his description of the abbey Walbran quotes from William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (1798).<sup>36</sup> Walbran quotes:

Thy mind a mansion for all lovely forms.  
Thy memory a dwelling place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies.<sup>37</sup>

The inclusion of this text shows starkly the influence of the picturesque. Wordsworth had helped to shape and inform the way in which the ruin was being perceived in the landscape.<sup>38</sup> What is most important to note is that Walbran was able to differentiate between the historic and picturesque appeal. When considering some of the improvements made to the site by Aislabie, he acknowledged the dichotomy between improvement of the site and its picturesque appeal. He stated that:

One of the greatest misfortunes, however, consequent on these operations, was not that he did so much, but that, in the main direction, he did not do sufficient. For, in the indiscriminate clearing of the floor of the abbey church, having removed the larger masses of loose groining and fixed masonry, he found it the readiest method of obtaining what he required, to bring the rest of the rubbish and fragmentary relics to a common level, and cover all with one

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<sup>35</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 339.

<sup>36</sup> This will be discussed in the chapter on Tintern Abbey.

<sup>37</sup> William Wordsworth, *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*, quoted in John Richard Walbran, *Ripon Harrogate, Fountains Abbey*, 100.

<sup>38</sup> See Tintern Abbey case study, 220.

oblivious sward. This process, which was likewise adopted in other parts of the abbey, occasioned the present specific cause of appeal, and one that is almost daily regretted by persons of education and cultivated taste, who visit the building from all parts of the kingdom. Whether then, it is considered with reference to the picturesque appearance of the building; or the proper development of the unrivalled architectural effect of the abbey church, this accumulation is, indeed, exceedingly to be lamented.<sup>39</sup>

Walbran was disappointed that the fallen stonework and detritus had been covered over with soil and detracted from learning about the building, as well as from its picturesque value. Walbran understood that the clearing of the abbey floor which erased signifiers of the building's past as well as ruining the picturesque beauty was to benefit the casual visitor rather than 'persons of education and cultivated taste'. Walbran's perception of the abbey was at odds with Gilpin's, as is shown in the third case study a similar levelling had taken place at Tintern Abbey, and this had pleased Gilpin.<sup>40</sup> Both appreciated the picturesque value of the ruin, but Walbran would have liked to understand more of the history of the building whereas Gilpin wanted to rid the ruins of this past. Not only does this demonstrate the complex nature of how the ruined abbey was perceived but it hints at the need for some to understand the history of the monastery.

### *The Surprise*

The popularity of the ruins is highlighted by Walbran who stated that there were 'many thousand visitors' who came to seek the abbey:

either to gratify their minds by the perception of the beautiful, or to improve them by the study of the principles developed in its design and construction.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Walbran, *Memorials of Fountains Abbey*, 110.

<sup>40</sup> See Tintern Abbey case study, 203.

<sup>41</sup> Walbran, *Memorials of Fountains Abbey*, 109.

Those who came to view the abbey could do so by way of *The Surprise*. This was a doorway located on a hill which functioned as a viewing platform that looked out across the Ripon landscape and had the ruins of Fountains as its focus (see Figure 5-2).



Figure 5-2 - 'Looking over the Half Moon Pond and weir of Studley Royal Water Garden from the Surprise View towards Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire', print, 32 x 21 cm, National Trust, <https://tinyurl.com/kcrs7ecz>.

This purpose-built way of looking at the ruins, constructed in order to provide a specific way to view the abbey, its contention being that it offered the optimum way to experience them. The MP and writer Richard Joseph Sullivan saw the abbey through the portal of *The Surprise* and remarked:

you come next to a spot where you open a view of the finest ruin that it is possible for imagination to conceive. On the left, a modest river gently glides along its side, tufted with oak and evergreen; on the right, rocks and woods romantically shew themselves in natural wildness; while in front, a fine lawn extends itself to where the abbey rears its awful head in all the pride and dignity of age.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Richard Joseph Sullivan, *Observations Made During A Tour Through Parts of England, Scotland, and Wales in Series of Letters* (London, 1780), 192.

This description includes many of the expected traits of an abbey site, as set out by the travel writers and antiquarians considered in chapter two. Just as Gilpin had outlined above, there existed a preconceived idea of what the surrounding landscape should look like around an abbey site. From the positioning of *The Surprise*, it is evident that this was the intended purpose and that it was placed at this location with these preconceived ideas in mind. Sullivan went on to state that: 'Never until this moment did I conceive it possible for tottering walls to appear so lovely'.<sup>43</sup> An unknown visitor, writing in *The London Catholic Magazine* (1844) was shown *The Surprise*, and although at first he was hesitant about the conceit of the doorway he admitted that it produced an 'extraordinary effect'.<sup>44</sup> After following his guide up the hill, he provides a valuable description of being shown *The Surprise*:

a rustic seat is reached, placed in front of a Gothic doorway, which being suddenly thrown open, reveals to the view a beautiful valley of which one had not previously suspected the existence, and Fountains Abbey in isolated majesty occupying the midst of it. In a framework as it were of rock and wood and verdure, the vast grey ruins of the monastery stand forth in marvellous relief, its lofty tower soaring far above every other object, and concentrating upon itself the wonder-stricken gaze of the spectator.<sup>45</sup>

This description demonstrably shows how the gaze of the viewer was manipulated by the experience of being presented with *The Surprise*. As with Sullivan's experience all the similar traits were described and created a familiar picturesque view.

The librarian and writer, Walter White's negative experience of *The Surprise* stands in stark contrast to the above examples:

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Joseph Sullivan, *A Tour Through Parts of England, Scotland and Wales, in 1778. In a series of letters*. 2 vols (London: T. Becket, 1780) vol 2, 126-27.

<sup>44</sup> 'Ruins of Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire', *The Catholic Cabinet, and Chronicle of Religious Intelligence* (Saint Louis: Printed and Published by William J. Mullin, 1843), 757.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 757.

I could not help wishing that earl de Grey, to whom the estate belongs, would abolish the puerile theatrical trick called The Surprise. Arrived on the brow of an eminence, which overlooks the valley of the little river Skell, you are required to stand two or three yards in the rear of a wooden screen. Then the guide, with a few words purporting, "Now, you shall see what you shall see," throws open the doors of the screen, and Fountains Abbey appears in the hollow below. As if the view of such a ruin could be improved by artifice.<sup>46</sup>

White's opposition to *The Surprise* was predicated on how it cheapened the experience of viewing the ruins, and that to view them by any means was enough. White visited the abbey in the 1860s, and his disinterest in the dramatics of *The Surprise* could be a symptom of this type of attraction as unfashionable. White was certainly horrified by the use of a gimmick to heighten his enjoyment of the abbey. Yet there were occasions in his own experience which show that he was using artifice himself in order to do the same thing. After *The Surprise* visitors were led down a hill to Robin Hood's Well where there was 'a spring of delicious water, which you will hardly pass without quaffing a draught to the memory of the merry outlaw'.<sup>47</sup> Arguably this was an older style of artifice, but engaging with the folklore and legend of Robin Hood used principally as a focal point for visitors was somewhat hypocritical.

From White's further description of the site it is clear that the legend of Robin Hood was associated with Fountains Abbey. After walking through the ruins White climbed the hill on the other side and was amazed by its structure. They then came to a cave which echoed and he described how 'the lurking voice is made to utter over-much nonsense'.<sup>48</sup> He then posits the question as to what the monks would have thought about the noise being made, but he then conceded that:

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<sup>46</sup> Walter White, *A Month in Yorkshire* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861), 252.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 252.

if history is to be depended on, even they were not perfect; for towards the close of their career, they fell into evil ways, and became a reproach. As we read:

“In summer time, when leaves grow green,  
And flowers are fresh and gay,  
Robin Hood and his merry men  
Were disposed to play.”<sup>49</sup>

White was quoting lines from a sixteenth-century poem *Robin Hood and the Curtall Fryer* (c.1600).<sup>50</sup> Using a fictional work to inform his perception of the site. White went on to quote further from the poem, detailing how there was a friar at Fountains Abbey who would be able to fight Robin Hood and win. White then details Robin Hood’s victory over the ‘Curtall Fryer’:

A right sturdy friar, who with his fifty dogs kept Robin and his fifty men at bay, until Little John’s shooting brought him to terms:

“This curtall fryer had kept Fountaines dale  
Seven long years and more,  
There was neither knight, lord, nor earle  
Could make him yield before.”<sup>51</sup>

This monk is being portrayed as having a reign of terror over the people of the community around Fountains Abbey. White then correlates this clergyman with ‘one of three Yorkshire abbots beheaded on Tower-hill for their share in the Pilgrimage of Grace’.<sup>52</sup> Highlighted in the first chapter, this was the only significant insurrection against the dissolution of the monasteries, associating him with the worst dissenters. The poetry was inserted as an

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Ritson, *Robin Hood: A Collection of All the Ancient Poems, Songs and Ballads, Now Extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw: to which are Prefixed Historical Anecdotes of His Life* (London: William Pickering, 1823).

<sup>51</sup> Walter White, *A Month in Yorkshire* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861), 252.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 252.

amusement to the reader but combining it with the Pilgrimage of Grace connected the poetry to a real event which would have legitimised the legend somewhat.

### *The Influence of Pope at Fountains*

As has been discussed throughout this thesis the work of Alexander Pope, and particularly *Eloisa to Abelard* had played a significant role in how the perception of the ruined abbey had been formed. This influence continued to have an impact on those who visited Fountains Abbey. The inclusion of lines taken from *The New Harrogate Guide* (1822) demonstrate that the poem was used as a way to illustrate monastic life, and what remained of that life at Fountains Abbey.<sup>53</sup> There was again an amalgamation of historical content and lines from Pope's monastic epistle informing attitudes towards the site. The ruins of Fountains were introduced as 'awful remains of this ancient Abbey' and were said to be in a 'deep Vale, through which flows the Brook called Skell, and the high Hills on either side, clothed with lofty Trees, and varied with Scars, slope gently to the brook'.<sup>54</sup> This set a scene very similar to those of the antiquarians and travel writers in chapter two. Directly underneath this introduction are the following lines, quoted from *Eloisa to Abelard*:

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,  
Where heavenly pensive contemplation dwells.<sup>55</sup>

Using these lines created a familiar scene and atmosphere for the reader by introducing the site and then immediately connecting the ruins of Fountains Abbey to Pope's monastic epistle. It also hinted that perhaps the sight of Fountains conjured up in the mind the atmosphere of Pope's poetry. It is curious to note that after quoting *Eloisa to Abelard*, a tale of how sad and solitary life in a convent can be, it then conveyed the history of the abbey in a very positive tone. It stated that the founding of the abbey was a protest against the 'relaxation of discipline' in their original convent and being 'disgusted with the luxury of their life, resolved to migrate where monastic manners were practised with more severity'.<sup>56</sup> The events involved with how the monastery was established were then recounted. It is

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<sup>53</sup> *The New Harrogate Guide* (Harrogate: Printed for, and sold at Langdale's Library, 1822). Also published as *The Tourist's Companion; Being A Concise Description and History of Ripon, Studley Park, Fountains Abbey, Hackfall, Brimham Crags, Newby Hall, Knarsborough, Harrogate, Harewood House, Bolton Priory etc.* (Ripon: Printed and sold by T. Langdale, 1822), page numbers are the same.

<sup>54</sup> *The Tourist's Companion*, 51.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

stated that the monks who rebelled against their convent were thrown out but they were provided for with a piece of land called Skelldale, 'the receptacle of wild beasts and overgrown with wood and brambles'.<sup>57</sup> The monks were then portrayed in the same light as the writers above: as being a resilient group, as 'during part of the winter, a large Elm tree was their only shelter; they afterwards retired under the melancholy shade of seven Yew trees, growing near where the Abbey now stands'.<sup>58</sup> Although this established the monks as being hardy, it also illustrated their demise, with a somewhat anti-Catholic bent, that:

The irregularities and luxuries of the Monks, their great opulence,  
and their attachment to the Pope, precipitated their fall which ended  
in general ruin.<sup>59</sup>

The guide used Thomas Cromwell's letters as its primary source, but was cautious of the veracity of his reports, stating that although a member of their clergy was hanged at Tyburn in 1537, their activities 'may be in some degree exaggerated, yet it shews the apprehensions the Monks had of their dissolution, as they were disposing of the valuables to prevent them falling into the hands of the Laity'.<sup>60</sup> As a description of the monks' lives and the eventual dissolution of their monastery it is not a robust attack, but is a more measured approach. What followed was a lengthy and complimentary description of the ruins. It was stated that 'Europe cannot produce its equal, so lofty, light and elegant is the architecture'.<sup>61</sup> Towards the end of the description further lines from Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* were quoted:

But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,  
Long sounding aisles and intermingling graves  
Black melancholy sits, and round her throws  
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:  
Her gloomy presence saddens every scene,  
Shades every flower and darkens every green;  
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>58</sup> *The New Harrogate Guide*, 53.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 58.

And breathes a browner horror on the woods.<sup>62</sup>

These lines acted as a conduit, a form of shorthand to convey a feeling of the site in a way that would be recognisable to the reader. These lines especially provided vivid and macabre imagery with the 'intermingling graves' and the 'death-like silence'. This use of the poem as well as acting as a description for the site helped to perpetuate the link between Pope's work and the perception of the ruined abbey.

This was not the first occasion that Fountains Abbey conjured up the words of Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. The poet, writer and classicist Elizabeth Carter recounted the monastic epistle when she visited Studley in the 1770s. Carter was one of the founding members of the 'bluestocking circle', who were ostensibly a group of female friends who were poets, writers and intellectuals including Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Montagu and Hannah More.<sup>63</sup> The circle would expand to include both sexes but its initial aim was for intellectual enrichment, hitherto thought unbecoming of a lady in eighteenth-century society. Carter was very familiar with the monastic motif, as highlighted by Emma Major, she had made a point of visiting nunneries on her travels and viewed nuns with both admiration and suspicion.<sup>64</sup> It is this dichotomy which is part of the Gothic gaze. Carter, in a letter to Catherine Talbot in 1781, described visiting the park, and admitted that:

It is surely very beautiful in its own singular style, but looks like the retreat of solitude and silence. I never saw any place which appeared to me so perfectly the abode of melancholy.<sup>65</sup>

This description aptly summarises how the Gothic gaze functioned. The sight of the abbey was appreciated for its architectural beauty and its location of 'solitude and silence'. This

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>63</sup> More on the bluestockings: Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712-1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Nicole Pohl and Betty A. Schellenberg, eds., *Reconsidering the Bluestockings* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2003); Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings Displayed: Portraiture, Performance and Patronage, 1730-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>64</sup> Major, *Madam Britannia*, 99.

<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth Carter, 'Letter CXLIV. Sept. 11, 1781,' in *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot, from 1741 to 1770*, 4 vols, ed. Montagu Pennington (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1809) vol 4, 290-91.

was then amalgamated with the language of the Gothic and created the perfect 'abode of melancholy'. This comparison is compounded when Carter combined her description with the words of Eloisa. She wrote:

She meets one in every walk, and

"----- round her throws

A death like silence, and a dread repose,

Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,

And breathes a browner horror o'er the woods."<sup>66</sup>

Carter, an accomplished poet, was blending her own experience with that of Eloisa. Being amongst the ruins of Fountains had brought her closer to imagining what it would be like for Eloisa alone in her cell. As with the example above, this too would have helped the reader (Talbot) understand the surroundings easily. Carter's description of the site is also very instructive on the perception of the abbey. She asserted that:

The whole scenery is however admirably adapted to the solemn ruins of Fountain [sic] Abbey, which stands in the centre of it. Indeed every thing reminds one of the historical description of the original desert where this noble monastery succeeded to the dark yew trees, beneath whose gloomy shade, the poor monks at first formed their only shelter against the driving snows and dashing rains; but what will not enthusiasm encounter: more I fear for the sake of fame, than of that religion they professed.<sup>67</sup>

This is a significant insight into how the ruins of Fountains were perceived. Carter's assessment of the ruins within the context of the park, like Gilpin's was predicated on a preconceived idea of the ideal location for a ruined abbey. This was then connected to the history of the founding monks of Fountains, which is evidently a well-known tale as Carter felt that the site matched the 'historical description'. Although partly sympathetic to their plight against the elements, she was suspicious that this was more an act for fame than it

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

was a penance before God. Carter used phrases such as 'solemn ruins' and 'gloomy shade', synonymous with Graveyard Poetry and the Gothic, signalling its influence. This correspondence shows that there existed a coalescence of poetry and local history which informed the perception of the ruins of Fountains. It was an attitude which was able to elicit the activities of the monks without being anti-Catholic. As shown above, this story of the monks suffering under the tree remained a constant point of interest near the abbey. It is evident that descriptions of the abbey were in part informed by Gothic tropes, but it was the language that was borrowed not their oppositional stance to the clergy. Interest and intrigue in the abbey was furthered by its Catholic past, not despite it.

### *Poetry at Fountains Abbey*

The sight of Fountains Abbey brought Pope's monastic epistle to mind, but its ruins inspired the pens of many other poets. A concentration of this poetry comes from the nineteenth century when many were inspired to travel to experience ruins for themselves. There are familiar tropes in these poems which echo the language found in the Graveyard School, yet they perhaps owe more to the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge than to Edward Young or Thomas Gray, as there is more emphasis placed on the picturesque elements than the macabre. There is also the influence of William Gilpin, who wanted to rid the ruin of its past and for it to be appreciated in its contemporary state only. With that said, although many of the poems celebrate the triumph of nature over the manmade structure, the religious past of the building is still recognised. Further to this, when religion is mentioned, it is not always in a derogatory or derisive way as was common in Gothic narratives.

The poet and writer Letitia Elizabeth Landon's poem *Fountains Abbey* (1833) is a pensive ode to the overtaking of flowers and plants upon the ruins of the abbey. As the poem opens, she refers to the silenced prayers of the departed monks in a tone of lament:

Never more, when the day is o'er,  
Will the lonely vespers sound;  
No bells are ringing - no monks are singing,  
When the moonlight falls around.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Letitia Elizabeth Landon, 'Fountain's Abbey' in *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era: An Anthology*, ed. Paula R. Feldman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2001), 381.

In this stanza there are signifiers of the Graveyard School: the ending of the day, the lonely sound of prayers, the solitude created by there being no bells and no monks, and ending upon the familiar trope of the moonlight. The poem then describes the flowers and plants which have grown over the symbols and objects which belonged to the monks and the Catholic faith:

Still do they blow 'mid the ruins below,  
For fallen are fane and shrine,  
And the moss has grown o'er the sculptured stone  
Of an altar no more divine.<sup>69</sup>

The life inherent in the flowers is said to 'mock the wreck below'.<sup>70</sup> This description of the array of flowers and mould growing all over the ruin at Fountains does not entirely correlate with the observations made by those who have visited the site. Arthur Young for instance did not find Fountains to fit the exacting criteria of a ruin as it was situated within a curated garden. Landon's mediations on the site share similar language to those which she made in her poem *The Unknown Poet's Grave* (1830), a poem far more in the Graveyard School style.<sup>71</sup> It is possible that due to her prolific output she borrowed from those poems rather than from her own experience of visiting the site.<sup>72</sup>

A poetic work entitled *A Week at Harrogate, a poem: in a series of letters, from Benjamin Blunderhead* (1818) is an amusing work written by Barbara Hofland under a pseudonym.<sup>73</sup> It depicts a trip to Studley Park:

We'd agreed a large party should go, on this day,  
To the RUINS OF FOUNTAINS, (now mould'ring away)  
And STUDLEY – From us, but a very short ride:

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>71</sup> *The Harp of The Wilderness or Flowers of Modern Fugitive Poetry* (London: Simpkin, 1836), 150.

<sup>72</sup> Glennis Byron, 'Landon [married name Maclean], Letitia Elizabeth [pseud. L. E. L.] (1802–1838),' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15978>.

<sup>73</sup> Tim Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 174.

Both amply describ'd in the Harrogate Guide!<sup>74</sup>

Although not a wholly serious poem, it is interesting to note that it is the *Harrogate Guide* which is given prominence as the book which has provided the description for the site. For the guide to get highlighted in such a way somewhat demonstrates its popularity. The poem includes an extract from a different poem which is said to be 'written after seeing the ruins of Fountains-Abbey, and addressed to the author of this little work'. The author of the poem is only given as 'W.C.'<sup>75</sup> It begins by describing the chapel:

How spacious the Quire, which re-echo'd, erewhile,  
The sweet-swelling notes from the loud-sounding aisle;  
But now 'tis uncover'd, and silent, and bare,  
A retreat for loath'd reptiles, and fowls of the air ....<sup>76</sup>

The ceasing of religious activity within the chapel is bemoaned; the wildlife which now use the ruins as their habitat are referred to as 'loath'd'. The solitary animal has been shown to be a common trope both in Graveyard School poetry and Gothic novels. The lament for the previous use of the monastery demonstrates that there was no malicious or anti-Catholic rhetoric being used. The poet goes further with their upset exclaiming:

What boots it, great Percy! that for thy remains,  
In return for rich grants of extensive domains  
A sepulture was found by the high altar's side?  
Thy tomb demolish'd – The alter [sic] destroy'd.

This relates to Henry de Percy's tomb which according to William Dugdale was interred there in 1315.<sup>77</sup> The lines mourn both the loss of de Percy's tomb and the altar which is near it. This was not a celebration of Protestantism over Catholicism but decrying the lack of

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<sup>74</sup> Benjamin Blunderhead, *A Week at Harrogate. A Poem: In a Series of Letters, Addressed from Benjamin Blunderhead, Esq., to His Friend, Simon ... Second Edition; with Three Neat Plates* (Knaresbrough, Printed for the author, 1813), 60.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>77</sup> 'The Topographer, A Visit to Studley Park and Fountains Abbey, Yorkshire', in *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction*, 38 vols, ed. Thomas Byerley & John Timbs (London: Printed and Published by J. Limbird, 1828) vol 12, 356.

respect being shown to someone who invested so much into the creation of the abbey, which is being allowed to decay around him. The original poem goes on to focus on the decay of the ruins themselves:

Oh! ye ruins of FOUNTAINS! we all must deplore  
Your original beauties are now seen no more!  
That time should be sweeping your grandeur away,  
That grandeur – majestic, though now in decay!  
Ah, soon! ah, too soon! there is reason to fear  
That those beautiful ruins will all disappear!<sup>78</sup>

It is perhaps the comical conceit of the poem that there is a contradiction in this stanza. Rather than a celebration of the foliage and picturesque beauty espoused by others such as Gilpin and Wordsworth, the overgrown aspects of the ruins are being bemoaned. Then in the same verse the ruins are said to be beautiful and that it is deplorable that they will soon decay and disappear. This poem is perhaps a satire of the poetical works which have been inspired by Fountains which glorify the ruinous appearance of the monastery, pointing out that such praise at leaving them to decay will result in their eventual disappearance. Whether or not this was the case, the existence of a satirical poem about Fountains demonstrates that it was a recognisable style to lampoon.

The writer of what could be considered the most affectionate poem towards the abbey, entitled *Fountains Abbey* (1826) is known only as 'G.Y.H.'<sup>79</sup> The poem begins by depicting the vivid hues of youth, and wishing to relive those moments in the older years. It then reflects upon first seeing the abbey:

When FOUNTAINS, mould'ring in its wild recess,  
First met the gazing of my eager eye,  
Array'd by Nature in its verdant dress,  
With lofty pinnacle, and arches high,-  
Sweet were the flowers that there a fragrance shed,

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<sup>78</sup> Blunderhead, *A Week at Harrogate*, 62.

<sup>79</sup> G.Y.H., 'Fountains Abbey,' in *The Imperial Magazine, Or, Compendium of Religious, Moral, & Philosophical Knowledge*, vol. 8 (London: Printed at the Caxton Press, 1826), 177.

Sweet as the faces of the smiling train.<sup>80</sup>

It depicts an idyllic scene, not dissimilar to Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* as utilised by Gilpin to express his disappointment at the state of Fountains. Unlike Gilpin, this writer, when looking upon the same ruins rejoiced in the amount of foliage which had made the ruins their habitat. The poem then goes on to acknowledge the building's Catholic past:

When magic moonlight clothes the monkish scene,  
 And speaks it sacred to the poet's lyre;  
 When all is silver'd with her cloudless sheen,  
 Each ruin'd pillar and decaying spire,-  
 Then, then to pore upon the sculptor's toil,  
 Is joy ecstatic to the mourner's mind:  
 The midnight hush, - the monastery's spoil,  
 Engross the soul, and leave the world behind.<sup>81</sup>

These lines again owe much to the Graveyard School of poetry: taking place at midnight and the ruins being cast in moonlight. The lines also help to convey and define the elements of the Gothic gaze. Each object within the scene coalesces to 'engross the soul, and leave the world behind'. This correlates to the experience of seeing the ruins and the mind conjuring up frightening visions in the unknown, just as Joseph Addison's walk through the ruins in *Essay 110* did. There is mention of the 'monkish scene', but this is not explicitly used as a pejorative: it is used in a descriptive manner in order to convey the appropriate environment for the ruins of the monastery - the serenity of the night-time scene evoking the atmosphere of monastic life. This is evidence of using the tropes of Graveyard School poetry and the Gothic to describe the ruins of Fountains Abbey but eschewing overt anti-Catholicism. The last lines of the poem describe the surroundings:

And where around the mount and woody dell,  
 Alternate smile beneath a summer's sky:  
 Where virtue is, and peace delights to dwell;

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<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

Who would not wish in such a spot to die?<sup>82</sup>

The ending mirrors Thomas Gray's words, quoted at the beginning of the chapter, positing the idea that it was so beautiful that it was an attractive location in which to die.

### ***Conclusion***

The location of Fountains Abbey within a curated and managed landscape was at odds with the portrayal of the ruined abbey in both Graveyard School poetry and in Gothic stories, but it was still described in similar terms to both. The site was designed to accentuate the abbey, as evidenced through the existence of *The Surprise* which purposely framed the ruins at its centre. Doing so challenged expectations of what should be found at a ruined abbey site, and these expectations were articulated through language which evoked Graveyard Poetry and the Gothic. The use of *Eloisa and Abelard* found in *The New Harrogate Guide* is the most tangible evidence of these tropes being connected to Fountains Abbey and then being disseminated. Elizabeth Carter using Pope's words to describe her emotions at being amongst the ruins of Fountains, and Gilpin drawing from another work of Pope, demonstrated his influence. Although by the middle of the nineteenth century the descriptions of the ruins became amalgamated with picturesque poetry with the focus shifting to descriptions of the foliage and flowers covering the ruins, there was still evidence of the language of the Gothic. Familiar tropes were used to describe the site: the midnight hour, the moonlight and the solitary animal using the ruins as its habitat. This was done as a means to create the desired and familiar atmosphere of those narratives, and not to proselytize against Catholicism. That said, at Fountains there were elements of this ideology in stories associated with the site, such as that of Robin Hood and the 'Curtall Fryer': a story of heroic triumph over a corrupt monk. Stories such as this did not prevent visitors from envisioning the monks and their life at the abbey - exemplified by Walbran imagining them using the objects found during excavation, or White thinking how they would react to the sounds being made in the cave. The story of the monks became one of the main draws to Fountains Abbey. The tales attached to the yew and elm trees which still stood on the site, grounded the mythology, and made the tales more tangible to the visitor. The increased popularity of the site across both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries helped to

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

perpetuate the monk's tale, creating an image of the monks at odds with those told in popular Gothic novels.

## Chapter 6 - Case Study Two: Melrose Abbey

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, graveyard poetry and Gothic stories helped to create an atmosphere around ruined ecclesiastical buildings which was sought out by the public to be experienced. Melrose Abbey, Roxburghshire, in the Scottish Borders is a great example of how literature transformed the way in which a ruined abbey was perceived. When comparisons are drawn with Fountains Abbey, a site which became the focus of picturesque beauty by way of guidebooks, the ruins of Melrose Abbey were subsequently interpreted and defined chiefly by the work of Sir Walter Scott. It was Scott's first successful publication, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), which irreversibly altered how the site was viewed and understood. As can be seen below (Figure 6-1), the artist JMW Turner painted the ruins, bathed in moonlight with the first two lines of the poem inscribed in the bottom left of the painting. The effect of Scott's work can also be seen acutely through American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe who visited the ruins of Melrose Abbey in 1853. An enthusiast of the works of Scott, Stowe was excited to witness the ruins for herself which she had read so much about in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Yet upon her arrival she was disappointed:

“Melrose!” said the loud voice of the conductor; and starting, I looked up and saw a flourishing village, in the midst of which rose the old, gray, mouldering walls of the abbey. Now this was somewhat of a disappointment to me. I had been somehow expecting to find the building standing alone in the middle of a great heath, far from all abodes of men, and with no companions more hilarious than the owls.<sup>1</sup>

*The Lay of the Last Minstrel* had created in Stowe's mind an idealised version of the abbey which the reality of the ruins themselves could not match. Her description, although informed by Scott's work, was not unlike the abbey locations described by the antiquarians and travel writers in chapter two: standing alone, in a wooded vale, shielded from the

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<sup>1</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* (Boston: Philips, Sampson, and Company, 1854), 129.

outside world. It had been portrayed by Scott in *The Lay* as the chief actor in a well curated scene, in the same way that Fountains Abbey stood central in the grounds of Studley Park.

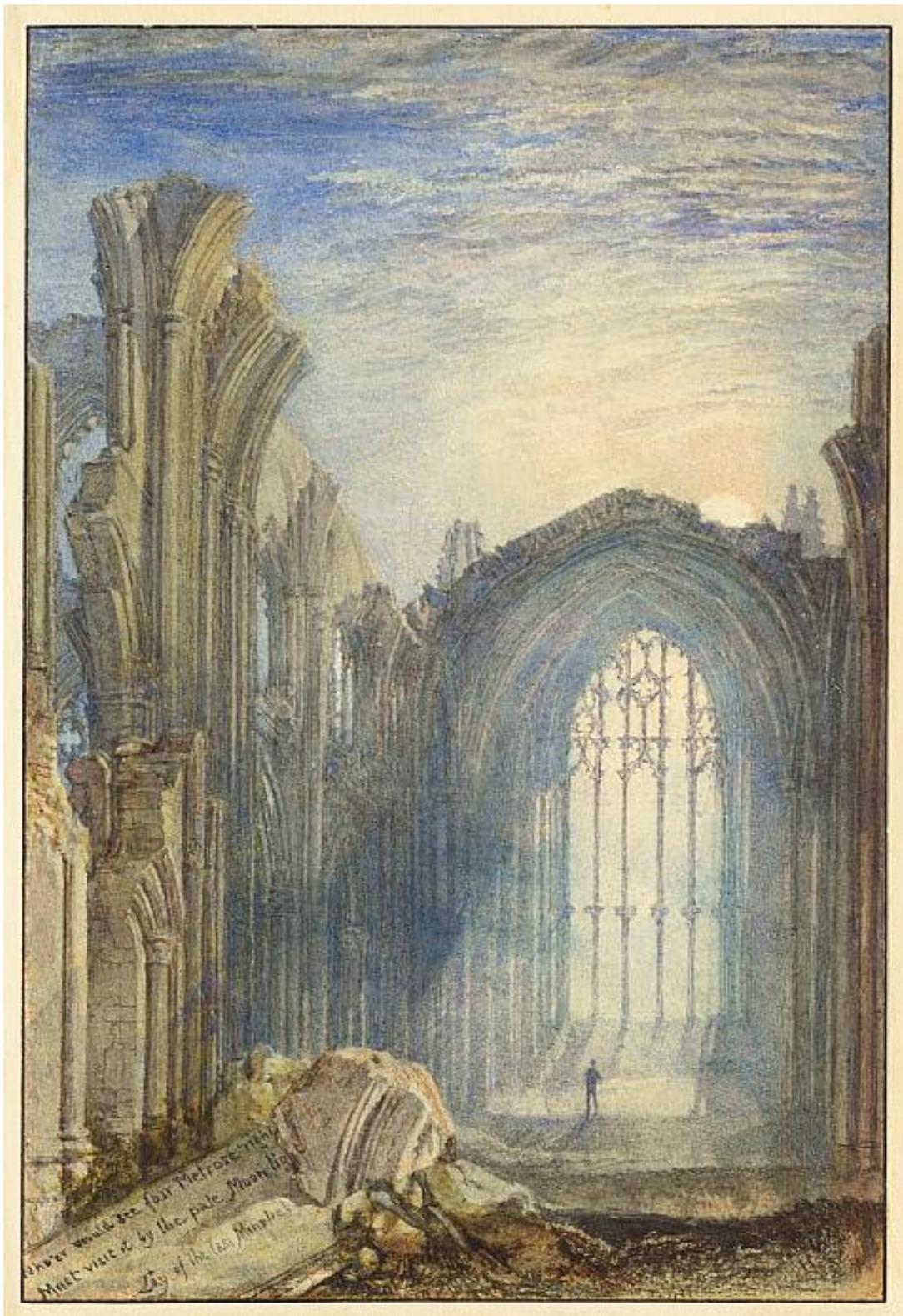


Figure 6-1. Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Melrose Abbey*, 1822, Watercolour on cream wove paper, 19.7 x 13.5 cm, The Clarke Institute, Massachusetts. <https://www.clarkart.edu/artpiece/detail/melrose-abbey>.

This chapter will assess the significance of the work of Sir Walter Scott on the perception of Melrose Abbey. It offers a study of how the Gothic gaze functioned when a popular literary source used a real location as part of its narrative. It will also consider how the ruins of Melrose were perceived before the publication of Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and then compare this with the expectation of his enthusiasts who visited the abbey. It will demonstrate that as well as influencing how the ruins were seen, Scott's work fundamentally changed how Melrose was understood. In addition, this chapter will also give prominence to the exponent, and hitherto unacknowledged conduit of Scott's imagination regarding the ruins of Melrose Abbey: John Bower. Bower was the custodian of Melrose Abbey under Walter Scott, and his enthusiasm and unquestioning interpretation of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* played a significant part in the dissemination of Scott's perception of the ruins. A close analysis of Bower and his published guidebooks of the abbey will provide a more nuanced understanding of how Scott's work affected Melrose Abbey. Bower provides a heightened example of how the Gothic gaze was created practically on a ruined abbey site.

### *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*

At the end of his description of the ruins of Melrose Abbey, the Reverend James Morton in *The Monastic Annals of Teviotdale, Or, The History and Antiquities of the Abbeys of Jedburgh, Kelso, Melros [sic], and Dryburgh* (1832) states that:

In order to obtain a lively and accurate idea of what this beautiful structure must have been, in its entire state, the reader must be referred to the glowing admirable description of it by Walter Scott, in the Lay of the Last Minstrel, - a work which, as it is in every person's hands, need not be quoted here.<sup>2</sup>

Although an exaggeration that every person had a copy of *The Lay* his admission highlights just how popular Scott's work had become by the middle of the nineteenth century. *The Lay* is a poem told in six cantons and follows a minstrel who trades the telling of his tale for shelter. The minstrel's story takes place in the sixteenth century and is of feuding clans and two lovers caught up between them, Lady Margaret Scott of Buccleuch, and Baron Henry of

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<sup>2</sup> James Morton, *The Monastic Annals of Teviotdale, Or, The History and Antiquities of the Abbeys of Jedburgh, Kelso, Melros, and Dryburgh* (Edinburgh: W.H. Lizars, 1832), 257.

Cranstown. The first canton sets the scene of Sir William of Deloraine being given the task to go to Melrose Abbey to recover a book from the grave of the wizard Michael Scott:

And in Melrose's holy pile  
 Seek thou the Monk of St Mary's isle:  
 Greet the father well from me;  
 Say, that the fated hour is come,  
 And to night he shall watch with thee,  
 To win the treasure of the tomb:  
 For this will be St Michael's night,  
 And though stars be dim, the moon is bright;  
 And the cross of bloody red  
 Will point to the grave of the mighty dead.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike many Graveyard Poems and the Gothic tales, this poem depicts the Catholic clergyman in a positive light; he is greeted well and asked to help in a mysterious task. The lines contain familiar signifiers of the Gothic: the graveside, a moonlit scene, and phrases such as 'the fated hour' and 'the cross of bloody red.' As the canton comes to an end Sir William of Deloraine reaches the abbey:

And far beneath, in lustre wan,  
 Old Melros' rose, and fair Tweed ran;  
 Like some tall rock, with lichens gray,  
 Seemed, dimly huge, the dark Abbaye.<sup>4</sup>

Descriptions such as these of the abbey rising above in a grand manner would have contributed to Stowe's disappointment. Chapter two demonstrated that the typical abbey site was said to be in a secluded valley, and next to a running stream. By stating that the abbey was 'far beneath' Scott had placed the abbey in these familiar surroundings, with the 'fair Tweed' river running past it. This would have contributed towards a perception of the abbey which was then significantly developed in the second canton. The beginning of this canton takes the form of a guidebook:

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (London: Longman, 1805), 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,  
 Go visit it by the pale moon-light;  
 For the gay beams of lightsome day  
 Gild, but to flout, the ruins gray.  
 When the broken arches are black in night,  
 And each shafted oriel glimmers white;  
 When the cold light's uncertain shower  
 Streams on the ruined central tower;  
 When buttress and buttress, alternately,  
 Seem framed of ebon and ivory;  
 When silver edges the imagery,  
 And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;  
 When distant Tweed is heard to rave,  
 And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave;  
 Then go – but go alone the while –  
 Then view St David's ruined pile;  
 And, home returning, smoothly swear,  
 Was never scene so sad and fair!<sup>5</sup>

There are portions of the poem where the minstrel breaks from the tale and speaks directly to those he is singing to, and it is not made clear whether these lines are part of the tale or just general advice. This is an important distinction to highlight as there is no break between the first and second stanza, and the second depicts Doloraine knocking at the door of the abbey, which has been described as being in ruins in the first. The lack of definitive ownership of the voice gives the impression that it is Scott himself talking about the abbey. The lines dictate that to see the ruins 'aright' they must be viewed by moonlight, and to see them during the day would do them no justice. There are then the familiar signifiers of the graveyard poem, such as the solitary 'owlet' which hoots over the 'dead man's grave'. The stanza is ended by describing the ruins as a 'scene so sad and fair'. These are the diametrically opposed positions which help to create the Gothic gaze. The inclusion of this

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 35-6.

idea helps to perpetuate this perception of the ruined abbey as a melancholic but also an intriguing place to visit.

Chapter four highlighted that Scott took an interest in elements of the Gothic, and corresponded with Matthew Lewis, author of *The Monk* (1796). Michael Gamer highlights the contrarian view of writers such as Walter Scott as well as Samuel Coleridge in their reviews of popular Gothic works, poured scorn over them.<sup>6</sup> Gamer goes on to assert that Scott's *The Lay* contained familiar tropes of the Gothic, but they were deftly hidden within the context of what was deemed to be 'enlightened antiquarianism.'<sup>7</sup> Scott was utilising tropes associated with Gothic narratives but disguised it under the auspices of antiquarian study. Michael Alexander points to Scott's early influences and publications as having a grounding in romance ballads, which had a significant impact on *The Lay*.<sup>8</sup> Alexander also highlights Scott's influence from the Auchinleck Manuscript, from the twelfth century, containing romantic ballads, verses, and tales. Scott borrowed the manuscript from the Advocates Library from 1789 to 1800, and again in 1801.<sup>9</sup> Alexander believes that Scott's ballads and verse were inspired by the manuscript and helped to fulfil the hopes of poets such as Thomas Warton and Thomas Gray who, in the eighteenth century, had hoped to revive such ballads. Whether Scott was conscious of the fact or not, he was continuing the legacy of these early Graveyard School poets, contributing towards a similar framing and perception of the ruined abbey.

### ***Sir Walter Scott and Melrose Abbey***

In the plethora of books written about Scott there is very little consideration given to the perception of Melrose Abbey, and more attention is given to Abbotsford, the house which Scott built close to the abbey which he filled with a wide and varied collection of antiquarian curiosities.<sup>10</sup> Through the construction of Abbotsford, and the machinations involved in dismantling the abbey which preceded it, a perception of Melrose Abbey can be gleaned. As has been shown throughout this thesis, dissolved abbeys were used for their materials from as early as the middle of the sixteenth century. Melrose Abbey was no exception to the

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Gamer, 'Gothic fictions and Romantic writing in Britain' in Gothic Fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Alexander, *Medievalism: the Middle Ages in modern England* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Erin Hazard, 'The Author's House: Abbotsford and Wayside' in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

looting and reclamation of its stone and a variety of other materials. Harriet Beecher Stowe is told that Melrose was

considered for many years merely a stone quarry, from which materials were taken for all sorts of buildings, such as constructing tolbooths, repairing mills and sluices; and it has been only till a comparatively recent period that its priceless value as an architectural remain has led to proper efforts for its preservation. It is now most carefully kept.<sup>11</sup>

The apparent increase in care taken to preserve ancient and ruined monasteries demonstrates a change in attitude towards their historic value, as well as reflecting their picturesque appeal. There is very similar language used in a pamphlet from Adam Milne entitled *A Description of the Parish of Melrose in Answer to Mr Maitland's Queries Sent to Each Parish of the Kingdom* (1743).<sup>12</sup> It provides a thorough description of the abbey but more crucially contains motivations and attitudes towards the repurposing of materials from it. It is stated that James Douglas became custodian of the abbey, and took materials for building 'a fine House for himself, which is still standing, and his Name and his Lady's on one of the windows, anno 1590'.<sup>13</sup> It goes on to describe more contemporary damage that had been done to it, and repeats similar lines to those quoted by Stowe: 'As much of it has been demolished lately for building a Tolbooth, for the repairing their Mills and helping their Sluices'.<sup>14</sup> What is curious to note is that although it is stated that the building had been used for materials for contemporary construction there existed unease with this:

the People here have a superstitious Conceit, that the Baillies who give Orders for the pulling down of any Part of it do not long continue in their Office; and of this they give many instances, as in the Commendator and others, though the same that make this Remark have no Scruple to take these Stones for their own Houses.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Stowe, *Sunny Memories*, 157.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Milne, *A Description of the Parish of Melrose in Answer to Mr Maitland's Queries Sent to Each Parish of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh: T.W. and T. Ruddimans, 1743).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

There was a belief in divine retribution being meted out to those who oversaw the destruction of the abbey, exhibiting an almost Catholic attitude. It also highlights a contradiction towards the perception of the abbey: it was considered somewhat unlucky to be associated with removing the stone, yet at the same time it was being used to build houses in the locality.

James Morton's *Monastic Annals of Teviotdale* (1832) provides descriptions of the ruins from various sources and includes a letter to Roger Gale, written by Mr Francis Drake of York on 14 July 1742, as a means to illustrate that in order to fully appreciate the ruins a degree of knowledge about the site was required. The aim of his letter was to have the Antiquarian Society consider the structure in more detail for a 'Monasticon Scoticum.'<sup>16</sup> Drake described the site, admitting that it was of small stature but praising the sculpture and stonework, yet he was critical that there had not been a sufficient drawing available, and that the only printed one was 'ill done'.<sup>17</sup> Morton explained that although the ruins were beautiful, they were perhaps not grand enough or 'sufficiently imposing', and that it would not quite 'satisfy the expectations formed from its great celebrity'.<sup>18</sup> Morton criticised the description, as an example of someone 'intelligent' who did not know enough about Melrose to fully appreciate it. As shown above he goes on to strongly assert that if someone required a detailed explanation of what the ruins looked like they should refer to Scott's *The Lay*. This provides further evidence that Scott's impact upon the perception of Melrose Abbey was significant.

Before Scott had made an impression on the ruins, Francis Grose, at the very end of the eighteenth century, used the quote from Drake in a footnote to add to his description of Melrose Abbey in *The Antiquities of Scotland* (1797).<sup>19</sup> Grose's description is very thorough, and like Drake's and Milne's, there is a lack of poetical embellishment to the language that is used. Grose was impressed by the ruins, stating that:

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<sup>16</sup> Morton, *The Monastic Annals of Teviotdale*, 257.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 257.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.

<sup>19</sup> Francis Grose, *The Antiquities of Scotland* (London: Hooper and Wigstead, 1797), 125-26.

In this fabric there are the finest lessons, and the greatest variety of Gothic ornaments, that the island affords, take all the religious structures together.<sup>20</sup>

This is high praise from Grose who had by this time documented many of the ruined abbeys across Britain. His experience of visiting the ruins affected him so much that, on returning once more to the abbey, he asserted: '[I]n the morning, at sun rise, we again returned to these splendid ruins, which had even occupied the visions of our sleep'.<sup>21</sup> The ruins created an experience so impactful that they were to be dreamt of.

### *Henry Hutton and Walter Scott*

A contemporary of Grose, George Henry Hutton, whose correspondence was analysed in chapter two, was able to bridge the gap between before and after Scott left an indelible mark on the ruins of Melrose Abbey. Hutton was attempting to create a *Monasticon Scotorum*, a document of all the dissolved abbeys across Scotland.<sup>22</sup> An anonymous description, amongst Hutton's correspondence in the National Library of Scotland, identified as being written by his hand, was presumably intended to be part of this venture.<sup>23</sup> This description documents a visit to the ruins in June 1787. Hutton wrote of Melrose Abbey passionately and affectionately, based upon what he believed was evidence and historical fact, eschewing picturesque or romantic language. This is in contrast to the language of antiquarians and travel writers discussed in chapter two, who used the language of the picturesque and the Gothic to describe the ruins of ecclesiastical buildings. It is possible to glean from his description of the ruins that he was more interested in the original state of the abbey than in appreciating them for their ruinous appearance. He wrote of a portion of the ruins:

The west side of the center [sic] of the tower is yet standing: it appears to have supported a spire; a loss to the dignity and beauty of the present remains, that must be regretted by every spectator.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>22</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>23</sup> NLS, Adv.MSS.29.4.2 (v), 60.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 60.

Hutton's lament was for the once great building now reduced to ignominy in ruin. It is clear that Hutton was only interested in the historical value of the ruins, he did not care for their picturesque value. This is further made clear as he described the nave of the church, which was still used as a place of worship, 'but it is kept in a degree of distress and disorder, that cannot be too much regretted'.<sup>25</sup> There is no hint in Hutton's writing that he held any anti-Catholic attitudes. His tireless search for any and all information, as evidenced in his copious correspondence related to Scottish abbey sites attests to this.

It was this thorough approach to antiquarian pursuits that Hutton shared with Walter Scott. The pair struck up a friendship across letters, and although a meeting was often solicited by each party, they never met in person. Hutton first wrote to Scott in November 1800 after a chance meeting in Peebles with a Professor Stewart.<sup>26</sup> Upon inquiring about Blantyre Priory, Stewart suggested that he write to Scott.<sup>27</sup> It is evident that Hutton made the most of this opportunity as there is no room left to spare on the letter, which requested information on different religious houses and stated:

I should be equally thankful, Sir, for any particulars, however trivial, concerning the Priories of Canonby, Pittenweem, Restennot, Loch Tay, Strathfillan, Rowanhill, Scarinch...<sup>28</sup>

His enthusiasm, which he was apologetic for was all but matched by Scott who obliged by sending him a drawing of the Inverness seal as requested. Hutton thanked Scott's wife Charlotte who had also helped in the matter.<sup>29</sup> Their correspondence may have stopped in 1801, but Scott's eagerness is typified in a letter he sent to Hutton in the spring of 1802, which has a charming impatience, although he does concede that 'I am myself a very lazy correspondent, I have no right to complain of the silence of others'.<sup>30</sup> He acknowledged the importance of Hutton's work:

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<sup>25</sup> NLS, MSS. 29.4.2 (v), 60.

<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Dugald Stewart, the mathematician and philosopher.

<sup>27</sup> NLS, MS.3874, 81.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Scott, 'To George Henry Hutton, 26 March 1802' in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1831-1832 and Appendices of Early Letters*, ed. Henry Grierson (London: Constable, 1937), 376.

I confess myself too much interested in our national antiquities to be indifferent as to the progress of your work which must throw great light on our Church History.<sup>31</sup>

Scott was clearly impressed by Hutton's passion for antiquarian study and considered the work he was doing to be of high importance. This demonstrates Scott's desire to know as much as possible about religious sites. This attitude is in stark contrast to William Gilpin's expulsion of religion from his appreciation of the ruined abbey, which was based solely on its picturesque qualities and shunned its Catholic origins. Through this correspondence Scott displayed an almost antithetical approach: desire to know about the history of the building with little care for its Catholic connections. Hutton reciprocated enthusiasm, but for Scott's poetry, stating that he longed to see his 'Border Poems' and that he hoped

you have not omitted the old song beginning – "O the Monks of Melrose" – But in case you did not think it worthy of a place in your collection, might I beg your favour of you to give it me when you are so good as to write.<sup>32</sup>

This wish to own a poetical work based on a ruined abbey hints at Hutton being attracted by more than just an antiquarian interest in monasteries. It is also one of the first examples of Scott's work having an influence on opinions on a monastic site. There is no further evidence of correspondence between the pair after July 1802 apart from a letter from Hutton that includes a request for information for 86 individually named sites across Scotland.<sup>33</sup> Such a considerable request of his time would have demonstrated to Scott that he was regarded as someone who had extensive expertise and knowledge of Scotland's antiquities and landscape. His deep interest in abbey sites, combined with his studying of the Auckinleck Chronicle, gives an indication of how the monastic elements of *The Lay* were created and helps to show how he affected the perception of Melrose Abbey.

These examples provide some idea of how the ruins were seen before Scott made his indelible mark upon them. The difference in the perception of the abbey from before and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 376.

<sup>32</sup> NLS, MS.3874, 146.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 172-73.

after Scott can be seen most starkly through the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland*. The first edition of the accounts were published in the 1790s with the description of Melrose Abbey being published in 1793. John Sinclair wrote admiringly of the ruins, stating that it was

one of the most magnificent in the kingdom; and continues still to be the admiration of strangers, who, in respect of the height and embellishment of its columns, with all kind of sculpture, the beauty of its stones, and symmetry of its parts, reckon it one of the best of the gothic structures they have seen.<sup>34</sup>

What is notable from this description is the lack of either flowery or poetical language; the abbey was being appreciated solely for how it looked, referring to it as being revered for its height and its carved columns. It is not dissimilar to Drake's description quoted in Morton: in awe of the structure with its intricate carvings and sculpture, with no additional embellished or emotive language. When compared to the 1845 *Statistical Account*, carried out by John Gordon, the difference from the description in the first edition is very apparent:

Of the ruins of Melrose Abbey, which have been so frequently and so well described, both in poetry and prose, it is unnecessary to say much.<sup>35</sup>

This alludes to the impact that writers such as Scott had made on the perception of Melrose Abbey. It shows that a document whose function is to record Scotland capitulates to the arts for a description. This demonstrates acutely that the Gothic gaze held sway over the interpretation of the ruins. This is something that Walter Scott was aware of and he knew keenly how stories rooted in the familiar and local could change the perception and understanding of a landscape. In a letter to the poet Anna Seward, upon finding out that she had written an imitation of his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802), he ruminated on the association of story and place:

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<sup>34</sup> John Sinclair, ed., *The Old Statistical Accounts of Scotland*, 21 vols (Edinburgh: Printed and sold by William Creech, 1793) vol 9, 89.

<sup>35</sup> John Gordon, ed., *The New Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1835*, 15 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1835) vol 3, 59.

Much of its particular charm is indeed, I believe, to be attributed solely to its locality. A very commonplace and obvious epithet, when applied to a scene which we have been accustomed to view with pleasure, recalls to us not merely the local scenery, but a thousand little nameless associations, which we are unable to separate or to define.<sup>36</sup>

What Scott was describing is clearly related to the Gothic gaze. The 'local scenery' can be interpreted as a local abbey, and the 'thousand little nameless associations' are the numerous thoughts and visions brought on by Gothic stories of the unknown. To demonstrate this, Scott continued and related this line of thought to Romantic poetry:

In some verses of that eccentric but admirable poet, Coleridge, he talks of

"An old rude tale that suited well  
The ruins wild and hoary."

I think there are few who have not been in some degree touched with this local sympathy. Tell a peasant an ordinary tale of robbery and murder, and perhaps you may fail to interest him; but to excite his terrors, you assure him it happened on the very heath he usually crosses, or to a man whose family he has known, and you rarely meet such a mere image of Humanity as remains entirely unmoved.<sup>37</sup>

Scott was asserting that grounding the narrative in a known real location made the story more tangible and the elements therein became more believable. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* was Scott's 'old rude tale' that suited the 'wild and hoary' ruins of Melrose Abbey. As he continued his letter to Seward, he demonstrated how literature influenced how the ruins were to be perceived. It is reminiscent of Joseph Addison and his walk amongst the ruins, asserting that fears are learned at a young age. Scott wrote:

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<sup>36</sup> Walter Scott, 'To Anna Seward, Edinburgh, June 29, 1802' in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1787-1807*, ed. H.J.C. Grierson (London: Constable, 1932), 144.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

I fear our poetical taste is in general much more linked with our prejudices of birth, of education, and of habitual thinking, than our vanity will allow us to suppose; and that, let the point of the poet's dart be as sharp as that of Cupid, it is the wings lent it by the fancy and prepossessions of the gentle reader which carry it to the mark.<sup>38</sup>

This admission is significant for understanding Scott's perception and resultant interpretation of the ruins of Melrose Abbey. Scott was referring to poetical taste, but this can be attributed to the composite parts that make up the Gothic gaze. It echoes the arguments made by Locke and Addison as highlighted in chapter three, that being frightened of environments such as ruined abbeys was a taught process based on factors such as education and prejudices developed as a child. Scott understood that works such as *The Lay* succeeded if they coalesced with the readers' perception of ruined abbeys, and to a broader extent if they appreciated the poem's interpretation of the ancient romantic ballad.

### ***Washington Irving at Melrose Abbey***

As has been argued by Michael Alexander it was perhaps through Scott's interpretation as a Unionist which created an idealistic and romantic view of a medieval and chivalric Scotland for readers in Europe and the United States.<sup>39</sup> His fiction was grounded solidly in what seemed like real tales from history and this was a large part of their appeal – nostalgia for a past which did not exist. His impact in the U.S. is evidenced in descriptions of Melrose Abbey appearing in an edition of *The Baptist*, a magazine published in Memphis, Tennessee, in August 1868, published with accompanying Scott quotations.<sup>40</sup> Kerry Dean Carso has argued that the influence of Walter Scott altered the course of American architecture.<sup>41</sup> One of the first American accounts of Scott's interpretation of the Scottish landscape was by Washington Irving, who visited him in 1816. It contains valuable insight into Scott's perception of Melrose Abbey. Irving certainly made an impact on Harriet Beecher Stowe, who upon arriving in front of Abbotsford House recalls:

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>39</sup> Alexander, *Medievalism*, 28.

<sup>40</sup> *The Baptist*, Memphis, Tenn., Saturday, August 15, 1868.

<sup>41</sup> Kerry Dean Carso, 'Diagnosing the 'Sir Walter Disease': American Architecture in the Age of Romantic Literature,' *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 35, no. 4 (2002).  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44029969>.

I had at the moment, spite of the rain, very vividly in my mind Washington Irving's graceful account of his visit to Abbotsford while this house was yet building, and the picture which he has given of Walter Scott sitting before his door, humorously descanting on various fragments of sculpture, which lay scattered about, and which he intended to immortalize by incorporating into his new dwelling.<sup>42</sup>

Irving's experience had meaningfully informed Stowe's perception as well as her expectations of what she would encounter herself at Abbotsford and Melrose Abbey. Stowe had used Scott's poetry and Irving's letters as a guidebook.

Stowe's account of her visit to Abbotsford helps to highlight contradictions and inconsistencies surrounding how much stone Scott took from the ruins of the abbey to construct the building. Stowe insisted that he had not taken any stone from the abbey itself, but had made casts of the stone in order to build Abbotsford.<sup>43</sup> This runs counter to Washington Irving's account where he stated that, during his visit he saw '[A]bout the place were strewed various morsels from the ruins of Melrose Abbey, which were to be incorporated in his mansion'.<sup>44</sup> Stowe told Irving's account to a lady who worked in a shop near the abbey and her interaction reveals how Scott's relationship with the abbey was perceived by people within the Melrose community. Stowe entered the shop and into a little room 'where an elderly woman professed to have quite a collection of the Melrose relics'.<sup>45</sup> Stowe put it to the woman that Irving recalled seeing parts of the abbey which were to be included within the building of Abbotsford. The woman 'repelled the idea with great energy, and said she had often heard Sir Walter say, that he would not carry off a bit of the building as big as his thumb.'<sup>46</sup> Scott himself admitted to what can be interpreted as pieces larger than his thumb in a letter to the Scottish poet Joanna Baillie where he described a well he was constructing, and stated that: 'I have a noble spring which I have enclosed and covered with a gothick [sic] front formed out of some of the broken stones found in the

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<sup>42</sup> Stowe, *Sunny Memories*, 132.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 162-63.

<sup>44</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 43.

<sup>45</sup> Stowe, *Sunny Memories*, 162.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

rubbish of Melrose Abbey when the old church was removed'.<sup>47</sup> In a letter to Lady Abercorn the following year he speaks of the same well, but goes into more detail, describing it as more of a folly:

As I got an ingenious fellow to put my little fragments of columns and carving together you would really think it was 400 years old. It is covered with earth all around above and behind and my morning's occupation has been planting weeping willows and weeping birches about and above it.<sup>48</sup>

Scott was clearly not averse to creating sham ruins, and although he did not explicitly state that the stone was from the abbey, the admission of them being 'columns and carving' indicates that they were miscellaneous pieces of stone and therefore most likely taken from the abbey. Irving also mentioned what is most likely to be this well, stating that Scott 'had already constructed out of similar materials a kind of Gothic shrine over a spring, and had surmounted it by a small stone cross.'<sup>49</sup> The addition of the cross hints at his interest in religious iconography, a passion which would lead him to fill his house with objects that had been found at the abbey, and he declared as much to Daniel Terry.<sup>50</sup> He went so far as to state that he was creating a 'chapel of ease' and a room which he described as 'Gothic' and 'filled with stained glass'.<sup>51</sup> This is similar to Horace Walpole who had created what was ostensibly a chapel in his house. It was shown in chapter five that Walter Scott's relationship to the Catholic faith was more benign than it was hostile; creating a collection of items owned by the monks taken from the abbey speaks to that. In contrast to Walpole, who had shown strict opposition to Catholicism, Scott displayed a sympathetic approach to the destruction of the abbey. Gilpin, on the other hand, wanted to empty the abbey of its previous meanings and appreciate it for its picturesque qualities only. To build upon Michael Alexander's argument, Scott wanted to hark back to the sixteenth century in his narratives: not to chastise or berate the Catholic church, as Richard Warner had done in

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<sup>47</sup> Walter Scott, 'To Joanna Baillie', 11 October 1812, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1811 – 1814*, ed. H.J.C. Grierson (London: Constable, 1932), 174.

<sup>48</sup> Walter Scott, 'To Lady Abercorn' Abbotsford, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1813' in *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>49</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 43.

<sup>50</sup> Walter Scott, 'To Daniel Terry, November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1816,' In *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott 1815-1817*, ed. In H.J.C Grierson (London: Constable, 1932), 287.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

*Netley Abbey* (1795), but as a conduit to conjure up romantic, medieval imagery. It was gallantry that guided Scott's pen, not contempt.

***John Bower: Custodian of Melrose***

Irving's visit was made during the construction of Abbotsford and provides invaluable accounts of Scott's perception of not only the house but more importantly of Melrose Abbey. Upon arrival at Abbotsford, Irving was greeted by Scott's dogs and then by Scott himself who stated regretfully that he could not go with Irving to visit Melrose but told him that his son Charles, and custodian of the abbey, John Bower, would guide him round the ruins.<sup>52</sup> Scott informed Irving that his guides would:

tell you the whole truth about it, with a good deal more than you are not called upon to believe – unless you be a true and nothing-doubting antiquary.<sup>53</sup>

This advice was certainly tongue-in-cheek, as the enthusiastic John Bower would proceed to guide Irving through the ruins recounting *The Lay* and showing him the objects and places named in the poem. Irving complimented Bower on 'the minuteness of his antiquarian research' as he had 'discovered the very tomb of the wizard, the position of which had been left in doubt by the poet.'<sup>54</sup> It is revealed that such accuracy to the poem is found to be amusing to Scott as he used to

amuse himself with the simplicity of the old man, and his zeal in verifying every passage of the poem, as though it had been authentic history, and that he always acquiesced in his deductions.<sup>55</sup>

Scott had significantly altered the way that Bower interacted with the ruins of Melrose, and also deeply influenced the way he understood them. Not recognised by many scholars as an important figure, John Bower's contribution to not only the perception of Melrose Abbey, but as someone perpetuating the myths and legends created by Scott is considerable. Bower was aware of how much he was influenced by Scott's work and admits so in a letter

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<sup>52</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 9.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

dedicated to Scott at the beginning of his guide to the abbey entitled *Description of the Abbeys of Melrose and Old Melrose, with their Traditions* (1813).<sup>56</sup> An analysis of the book provides valuable insight into how Bower perceived the ruins and, further to this, what he conveyed to visitors at the abbey, and suggests what they would have experienced as they walked through the ruins with 'Johnny Bower'.<sup>57</sup>

Bower's perception of the ruins of Melrose Abbey are conveyed through his use of John Copeland's poem *Saint Andrews; Or, a Sentimental Evening Walk: Near the Ruins of that Ancient City: a poem* (1776) to introduce their history of them.<sup>58</sup> The poem laments:

Whose mangled spires aloud to heaven complain,  
Of base injustice from the hands of men,  
Whose shatter'd fragments only tend to shew  
The dreadful havoc of th' insulting foe.<sup>59</sup>

This is a little-known poem about the ruins of the abbey at St Andrews, Fife and written in a style not unlike that of the Graveyard School. It differs, however, in that the poem is defined more by it being a lament for the abbey's ruinous state, rather than an attempt to create supernatural or fantastical images in the Gothic mode. Bower used Copeland's lines as a conduit to help him describe the surroundings and landscape where Melrose is situated. This demonstrates that his understanding of the state of the abbey was partly informed by poetical work such as Copeland's. As Bower ends his history of the abbey and begins his own description of the ruins themselves, he uses the last two lines of Copeland's poem:

A heap of ruins but remains of thee;  
'Tis all thou art – and all the WORLD shall be!<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> John Bower, *Description of the Abbeys of Melrose and Old Melrose, with their Traditions* (Kelso: Printed for the author, 1813), iii.

<sup>57</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> John Copeland, *Saint Andrews; Or, a Sentimental Evening Walk: Near the Ruins of that Ancient City: a poem* (Edinburgh, 1776).

<sup>59</sup> John Copeland, quoted in John Bower, *Description of the Abbeys of Melrose and Old Melrose, with their Traditions* (Kelso, 1813), 16.

<sup>60</sup> Bower, *Description of the Abbeys of Melrose*, 27.

These lines were written in imitation of Alexander Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* (1717), reinforcing how Pope helped to shape the perception of the ruined abbey. Bower's use of Copeland's poem intermittently throughout his work is reminiscent of Matthew Lewis in *The Monk*, where each chapter of the book was prefaced by lines from Graveyard Poetry in order to create the desired atmosphere for the reader.<sup>61</sup> Bower reflected this style in his publication of further guidebooks for Melrose Abbey which like Lewis inserted lines from Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743) to convey the desired mood of the ruins. Bower quotes from Blair:

See yonder hallowed fane! The pious work  
Of names once famed, now dubious or forgot;  
And buried 'midst the wreck of things which were;  
There lie interr'd the more illustrious dead.<sup>62</sup>

If these lines were unfamiliar to the reader, they would help to describe the ruins, and if they were aware of them it would contribute towards a confirmation of learned perceptions of ruined abbeys taken from poetry. Bower's guidebooks culminated in a more comprehensive edition which also took in Abbotsford house entitled *Abbey of Melrose and Description of Abbotsford Dryburgh* (1851). This publication had even more excerpts and stanzas taken from Scott's canon, as well as from Graveyard Poets. The description of Melrose begins with lines taken from a poem which opens chapter eight of Scott's book *The Abbot*:

The sacred tapers' lights are gone;  
Gray moss has clad the altar stone;  
The hold image is o'erthrown;  
The bell has ceased to toll.<sup>63</sup>

This perpetuated the well-known motifs and tropes of the Graveyard School: the tapers, the overgrown altar, the bell falling silent. Inclusion of these lines demonstrates that Bower was utilising more than just *The Lay* to inform the readers' view of the abbey.

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<sup>61</sup> See chapter 4.

<sup>62</sup> Bower, *Description of the Abbeys of Melrose*, 27.

<sup>63</sup> John Bower, *The History and antiquities of Melrose, Old Melrose, and Dryburgh Abbeys, with a description of Abbotsford, Eildon Hills* (Melrose: J. Bower, 1852).

Bower relates a story of apparent divine retribution of a person by the name of Thomson who was

employed to demolish the images in the year 1649, while striking at the babe in the Virgin Mary's arms, was struck by a piece of that stone on his arm, which he never had the right use of afterwards. And by scoff upon his name he was called Stumpy, which his posterity still retain.<sup>64</sup>

The tale is most likely apocryphal, but it helps to illustrate that there were stories, such as those of the Baillies, associated with the ruins which were sympathetic to damage caused to the original stonework. The story stated how it was reported to Rome that the man responsible for the damage was 'dragged at horses' heels for the sacrilegious deed, which actually took place.'<sup>65</sup> Such stories convey that traditions concerning the abbey were not of a Protestant bent, but more celebratory of justice being served upon those who would want to damage it in some way. It can be assumed that Bower conveyed this tale to visitors as he showed them about the ruins, helping to perpetuate the idea of divine retribution and the ruined abbey.

As a means to introduce his description of the abbey ruins he quotes from *The Lay*, using the now infamous lines:

If thou wouldst view fair Melrose aright,  
Go visit it by the pale moon-light ....<sup>66</sup>

He provided the reader with the rest of the first stanza from the second canto. Scott had perhaps inadvertently written the lines as though from a guidebook, yet they were now, in the hands of Bower, being used in such a way. It is evident that he took this poem as advice as he commented 'But I must proceed with day-light, to point out what is worthy of notice on the outside of the ruin'.<sup>67</sup> Bower shared with Irving how these lines affected visitors to the site:

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<sup>64</sup> Bower, *Descriptions of the Abbeys of Melrose*, 31-2.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

many of the most devout pilgrims to the ruin could not be contented with a daylight inspection, and insisted it could be nothing, unless seen by the light of the moon.<sup>68</sup>

Their experience was being solely dictated by attempting to recreate the poem. The use of the word 'pilgrim' is also interesting, invoking a religious experience for the visitors. Bower then regaled Irving with his method of how he artificially created the moonlight for the tourists:

Johnny was sorely puzzled, therefore, how to accommodate his poetry-struck visitors [sic] with his indispensable moonshine. At length, in a lucky moment, he devised a substitute. This was a great double tallow candle stuck upon the end of a pole, with which he would conduct his visitors about the ruins on dark nights, so much to their satisfaction that, at length, he began to think it even preferable to the moon itself. "It does na light up a' the Abbey at aince, to be sure," he would say, "but then you can shift it about and show the auld ruin bit by bit, whiles the moon only shines on one side."<sup>69</sup>

It was as if Bower was creating a theatrical performance for those visiting the ruins, bringing the characters and scenes depicted in *The Lay* to life in front of their eyes. Experiences such as this should not be discounted as part of Walter Scott's legacy. They would have contributed significantly to the dissemination of the myths and tales associated with the abbey.

In comparison to the writers in chapter two above, Bower's descriptions in his guidebooks are playful and reflect some of the theatrical elements shown above. As he guided the reader through the abbey, he took time to not only explain the stonework in minute detail but on occasion he gave the objects individual personalities. He described a monk 'playing on a guitar, who seems to be much distressed by the burden of an image that has been on his

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<sup>68</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

back.<sup>70</sup> Imagining the monks wandering round the ground was a motif amongst some poets, as shown in previous chapters, yet Bower did not bring them to life in this way. Rather, he gave the carvings themselves expression. He described two figures upon a south buttress:

the cripple upon the back of the blind; the cripple appears to be in great agony by his attitude, and the blind seems to be pressed down by the weight of the cripple.<sup>71</sup>

It becomes clear why Washington Irving found Bower so engaging. He almost animated the carvings, stating how there are 'a great number of curious figures on these buttresses; some more like dragons than any thing else; others are like men, and appear to spring out of the building' and 'strange looking creatures upon these buttresses, something like griffins, ready to fly from the building.'<sup>72</sup> Bower also made some of them speak, such as the monk: 'a cowl on his head, his right hand upon his ear, and his left hand holding his rosary, who by his expressive countenance appears to be saying, "I value my beads more than my ear."<sup>73</sup> Bower remarked to Washington that if visitors were brought to the abbey Scott would call out for him:

"Johnny! Johnny Bower!" – and when I go out, I am sure to be greeted with a joke or a pleasant word. He'll stand and crack and lauff wi' me, just like an auld wife – and to think that of a man that has such an awfu' knowledge o' history!"<sup>74</sup>

Bower's deference to Scott is clear, yet Scott should have been grateful for Bower's enthusiasm for the ruins of Melrose Abbey. Scott's imagination helped to unlock Bower's, and although he was seen as merely using *The Lay* as his blueprint for interpreting the ruins, it worked as a conduit to help Bower explain and bring the ruins alive for his visitors.

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<sup>70</sup> Bower, *Description of the Abbeys of Melrose*, 33.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 36-7.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>74</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 14.

Evidently enthusiastic about Melrose Abbey, Bower was not always forthcoming with information about the site. In a hitherto undocumented letter from him to Henry Hutton, upon receipt of a request for information about the abbey, Bower was reticent in his reply of what is left: 'for the monastery is gone and not a vestige remains but a small piece of the cloister.'<sup>75</sup> This letter was sent in June 1816, around the time when Irving had visited the abbey, and the lack of detail in Bower's reply is in stark contrast to the enthusiastic custodian he encountered. Bower referred to Hutton's request for 'the plan of Melrose of what remains – and what has been'. Due to Bower's enthusiasm for the abbey it is strange that he did not want to provide plans that he would have known of or that Scott would most certainly have had in his possession. It is even more curious, given that Bower had written a book about Melrose. Hutton eventually obtained plans, and these and other sketches drawn by himself as well as contributions from others for Melrose Abbey make up part of his collection of drawings that are held in the National Library of Scotland.<sup>76</sup>

Washington Irving's summation of the effect that Scott's work had had on Bower compounds what Bower had himself written:

The fictions of Scott had become facts with honest Johnny Bower. From constantly living among the ruins of Melrose Abbey, and pointing out the scenes of the poem, the Lay of the Last Minstrel had, in a manner, become interwoven with his whole existence, and I doubt whether he did not now and then mix up his own identity with the personages of some of its cantons.<sup>77</sup>

Irving ruminated on his time with Bower and stated that by the time he had written his account of visiting Scott that 'it is more than probable his [honest Johnny Bower's] simple head lies beneath the walls of his favourite Abbey'.<sup>78</sup> It is evident that Bower's passion for Melrose Abbey did not wane in his old age. There are etchings of the abbey ruins from 1834 and 1835 which bathe the ruins in moonlight (see Figure 6-2).

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<sup>75</sup> NLS, MSS.29.4.2 (v), 115.

<sup>76</sup> George Henry Hutton, *Hutton Drawings*, National Library of Scotland, Adv.MSS.30.5.22-3.

<sup>77</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.



Figure 6-2 - John Bower, *Interior view of the South Transept of Melrose Abbey*, etching on paper, 26.5 x 24cm, The British Museum, London. [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P\\_1868-0612-2215](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1868-0612-2215).

Not only did his etchings disseminate his passion, but his enthusiasm for the ruins must have been infectious, as the guide who had taken Stowe around the ruins was 'a young man, who seemed to have a full sense of its peculiar beauties'.<sup>79</sup> It is not clear whether this was a relative of John Bower but it is evident that his enthusiasm was passed on to the next custodian; Bower's perception of the abbey was carried onto another generation.

<sup>79</sup> Stowe, *Sunny Memories*, 111.

Other guidebooks which discussed Melrose Abbey, such as *The Border Tour* (1826), provide some of the motivation for people to explore abbey sites and explains the reason people began to travel more at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its author believed that what Byron had dubbed the 'age of cant' was in fact the 'age of Travels'.<sup>80</sup> It continued by attributing this incentive to travel due to the improved state of the public roads, steam power, and that as a result commerce had increased, resulting in a 'nation of travellers.'<sup>81</sup> It then exclaims that an inhabitant of Cheapside could not die without having 'gazed on the waters which flow beside the lovely ruins of Dryburgh' or a milliner of Bath could not sip her tea without

boasting of having sailed upon the Queenly Windermere with Professor Wilson's "Foresters" in her hand; or of having followed the advice of the "Mighty Minstrel," and gazed upon "St Mary's ruined pile," by moonlight.<sup>82</sup>

The 'Mighty Minstrel' alluded to Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and the 'ruined pile' being looked upon by moonlight was Melrose Abbey. This shows quite acutely that literature was informing travelling habits. Just as Radcliffe and West, as described in chapter two, had been inspired by Gray to seek out ruined sites, this was a similar effect, but on a grander scale, with the advancement in travel technology as the nineteenth century progressed. This is compounded further as the guide goes on to state:

It is not to be doubted but that these numerous wanderers are often at a loss to what objects to direct their attention, in the various places they visit; - Hutchinson and Redpath's histories, invaluable as works of reference, are scarcely suitable companions in a post-chaise; nor is there any volume of description sufficiently portable for a traveller in search of the picturesque.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *The Border Tour Throughout the Most Interesting Places in the Counties of Northumberland, Berwick, Roxburgh, and Selkirk. By a Tourist* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1826), v.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, v.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, v-vi.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

It recognised that histories were not suitable, in both their content and practical value, for helping to conjure up in the mind the necessary rudiments for seeking out the picturesque. This echoes the matter-of-fact descriptions found in the *Statistical Accounts of Scotland* and the account given by Francis Drake. They were unable to provide to the reader a useful guide for finding sites of beauty, but the guide does concede that '[N]ovelty can scarcely be expected in a topographical work'.<sup>84</sup> Guides such as these recognised that places of interest such as abbeys were not appealing just for their historical value, but that work by literary figures such as Scott also provided motivation which meant that people travelled to seek out the real locations where their favourite tales took place.

### **Conclusion**

It was in this vein that Bower's recreation of Scott's stories contributed significantly towards the perception of Melrose Abbey. Through his enthusiasm for Scott's work, he had brought the words off the page and provided a practical example of the Gothic gaze. Undoubtedly it was *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* that attracted people to Melrose Abbey, in order to view its moonlit ruins. Scott's poem had amalgamated the ancient ballad with components of graveyard poetry and the Gothic. The romantic aspects of the poem grounded in Scott's antiquarian pursuits had provided a different perspective to the waning popularity of the latter two genres. The familiar, conflicting elements of the abbey scene being so 'sad and fair', combined with a tale of gallantry and romance, and its seemingly accurate portrayal of the ruins, allowed Bower to act out the ballad physically within the ruined abbey in which he stood. This theatrical element to Bower's guided tour around the ruins can be related to *The Surprise* at Fountains Abbey. Both were interpretative and theatrical ways of seeing the ruins, and both can be related to the Gothic gaze. *The Surprise* was a view of the ruined abbey informed by an amalgamation of the Gothic and the Picturesque, Bower's tour worked in a similar way, but was predicated on a specific work of literature which combined elements of the ancient ballad and Gothic tropes. Bower's method of guidance around the ruins perpetuated an idea of what was to be found at a ruined abbey - brought to life at the site itself. Stowe's account makes it clear that it was not just Scott's poetry but also Washington Irving's account of his experience with Bower that had created an expectation of what she would experience at the abbey.

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

## Chapter 7 - Case Study Three: Tintern Abbey

In 1838, the writer Catherine Sinclair wrote emphatically about her experience of visiting Tintern Abbey:

Who has not read, heard, and dreamed of Tintern Abbey, examined prints and copied sketches, talked and listened about its beauties, till they seem to have been haunting the venerable ruins all their lives<sup>85</sup>

Sinclair's zeal for the site is reminiscent of Jane Austen's excitable Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Austen's satire about the obsession for seeking out the Gothic at ruined abbeys.<sup>86</sup> In contrast to Catherine Morland, however, all of Sinclair's expectations were met and, in most cases, exceeded. She even suggested that it was like being inside a painting, stating: 'in every exhibition of pictures, there are always at least six of the landscapes painted to represent cattle standing in water; and here were abundant studies for an artist'.<sup>87</sup> In the first few lines of her description of the abbey she quoted from a poem by Lord Byron, followed with a line from Robert Bloomfield's poem *The Banks of Wye* (1812), demonstrating that poetry was still being used as a method to help describe the ruined abbey in the nineteenth century. Sinclair was unimpressed with the 'wretched cottages' around the abbey which had 'stuck themselves close to the walls, like barnacles on the side of a stately vessel, which do all in their power to disfigure it'.<sup>88</sup> As she entered the abbey through the western door, however, she was awestruck and admitted that:

Descriptions of Tintern Abbey should be written on ivy leaves, and with a poet's pen, for no other could do justice to the air of solemn grandeur and religious melancholy reigning within its desolated cloisters, and inspiring that mysterious sentiment of awe with which we gaze on an inanimate body from which the soul has departed.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Catherine Sinclair, *Hill and Valley: Or Hours in England and Wales* (Edinburgh: Robert Carter, 1838), 300.

<sup>86</sup> Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey: and Persuasion* (London: John Murray, 1818).

<sup>87</sup> Sinclair, *Hill and Valley*, 299 – 300.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

This passage contains a plethora of tropes connected with the Gothic gaze as demonstrated throughout this thesis. The image of the poet writing an ode to the abbey upon ivy leaves is a vivid one, and this is combined with the solemn and melancholy atmosphere felt within the ruins which work as a conduit to inspire Sinclair to contemplate on death. Sinclair continued her musing upon the ruins and lamented the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII and showed sympathy toward the plight of the monks. As she made to leave the site, Sinclair described what she saw:

Our solitude was invaded by a cargo of passengers, landed at Chepstow from on board the Bristol steam-boat, who rushed in with sketch-books, eye-glasses, parasols, best bonnets, McIntosh cloaks, baskets of provisions, and every sort of modern luxury essential to the full enjoyment of beautiful scenery or ruined abbeys.<sup>90</sup>

Sinclair's description accurately articulates the popularity of the ruined abbey by the middle of the nineteenth century (see Figure 7-1). Similar scenes have been shown in the previous case studies of Fountains and Melrose Abbey; the ruined site awash with visitors seeking out the picturesque. This influx of tourists to a ruined abbey is in contrast with the travel writers and antiquarians highlighted in chapter two, who were the lone enthusiasts of the ruined monasteries of Great Britain. The impetus for these visitors came, to some degree, from William Gilpin. His influence on those seeking out the picturesque was significant, contributing substantially by articulating new ways of perceiving ruins in the landscape. He published what is considered to be one of the first guidebooks for the picturesque, *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty: Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1782).<sup>91</sup> This book contributed heavily towards the search for the picturesque, and in doing so altered the way the ruined abbey was perceived. Tintern Abbey is the archetypal foundation for Gilpin's picturesque attitude of the ruined abbey and the significance of his contribution to the development and dissemination of this attitude is the focus of this case study.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>91</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*.



Figure 7-1 - Peter Van Lerberghe, An Internal View of the Tintern Abbey seen by moon light in South Wales, c.1800, Pen and Ink/Watercolour, 54 x 39.7cm, The British Library, London, <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/an-internal-view-of-tintern-abbey>.

Gilpin's influence is apparent in many works pertaining to Tintern, and in some cases it has been almost copied verbatim. It was Gilpin's work which set the standard for the picturesque tour, and none more so than his description of the Wye in *Observations on the River Wye*. He influenced others to follow in his footsteps. A tour of the Wye Valley became extremely popular, creating scenes similar to those described above by Sinclair. This popularity let those who were inspired by Gilpin interpret Tintern Abbey in different ways, and it is this difference which is of most importance to this study. Gilpin's Protestant faith, demonstrated most notably through his biographies of reformers John Wycliffe and Hugh Latimer, would influence his descriptions of these monuments to the country's Catholic past. Gilpin's mode of anti-Catholicism through the picturesque was to all but eschew the religious components of the building's past or if it were highlighted it would be denigrated. It is this anti-Catholic attitude which was not reciprocated in most other descriptions of Tintern Abbey which were to follow. It was Gilpin's picturesque way of viewing the abbey that was the catalyst for others to follow in his footsteps, not his anti-Catholic stance.

As a means with which to gauge Gilpin's method and attitude towards the picturesque and the ruined abbey it is placed within the context of Charles Heath's *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire* (1793).<sup>92</sup> This guidebook shows tangible aspects of the Gothic gaze as well as being indicative of the growth in both the popularity of the ruins and the desire for more information about them. It was first published by Heath himself in 1793 and ran for eleven editions until 1828. It included descriptions from amongst others, Francis Grose, William Gilpin, and Thomas Whately, as well as historical charters, the earlier editions also included poetry. It is one of the first guidebooks written specifically about an abbey, and its contents change quite drastically from the first to the last edition. These changes are symptomatic of the shifting perception of the abbey as the long eighteenth century continued. This case study will show that the absence of religion from the work that made the abbey famous namely Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye*, was not shared by the majority of other writers. Those who wrote about the site chiefly defined it within the language and tropes of graveyard poetry and the Gothic, but crucially acknowledged its Catholic past. This shows that there was an enduring legacy of Gothic tropes which cut through new perspectives of the ruined abbey as held by Gilpin. Furthermore, there was an acceptance and burgeoning interest in the monasteries' Catholic origins, at odds with the

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<sup>92</sup> Charles Heath, *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire* (Monmouth: C. Heath, 1793).

broad denigrating brushstrokes of the Gothic narratives which had helped to popularise the ruined abbey.

The previous two case studies demonstrate how the perception of the ruined abbey can in part be traced back to a grounding in graveyard poetry and the Gothic, with a conciliatory attitude towards their Catholic past. At Fountains Abbey, the notoriety of the site was heightened due to the increase in travel, and the grounds were kept neat in order to continually attract visitors. There was an idea as to what the ruin should look like and its neat appearance prompted ruminations on these expectations, further accentuated by *The Surprise*. A study of Melrose Abbey demonstrated that a work of literature which featured the monastery directly affected how the ruins were understood by the viewing public. This was then given extra credence through the work of John Bower who brought the site to life with his theatrical guided tours around the ruins. This case study will show how an amalgamation of both these experiences was to be found at Tintern Abbey. The growth of its popularity caused the main body of the abbey to become cleared of rubbish and covered with a grass lawn, and the increase in visitors occasioned many in the local vicinity to become ad hoc tourist guides. The role of Charles Heath's guidebook as part of this process is significant and is analysed as part of this chapter. It functions as a nuanced version of John Bower's guides to Melrose Abbey and works as a means to reflect the attitudes and perceptions of the ruined abbey from 1793 to 1828. As Bower was the guide for Melrose Abbey, so Charles Heath was the guide for Tintern Abbey.

### *Gilpin's View of Tintern Abbey*

In order to understand the backdrop against which Heath's book was published an understanding of Gilpin's work needs to be established. It is of significant interest that Gilpin chose to open his description of Tintern Abbey with lines from a poem by William Mason. Mason was a poet and sometime gardener, who had come to the attention of Thomas Gray when he wrote *Musaeus: a Monody to the Memory of Mr Pope, in Imitation of Milton's Lycidas* (1747), a poem on the death of Alexander Pope in the style of John Milton.<sup>93</sup> It was Mason and Gray who encouraged Gilpin to finally publish *Observations on the River Wye*, as it had been distributed widely in manuscript form within his literary circle from

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<sup>93</sup> William Mason, *Musaeus: a Monody to the Memory of Mr Pope, in Imitation of Milton's Lycidas* (London: R. Dodsley, 1747).

1770 onwards, the year in which he made his trip.<sup>94</sup> Inspired by Gilpin's trip Gray had taken a very similar journey down the Wye in 1770. Gray wrote to Mason in September of that year and conveyed his enthusiasm for where he had been:

I am very well at present, the usual effect of my summer expeditions ... [I] have seen Worcestershire, Gloucester, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Shropshire, five of the best counties this kingdom has to produce. The chief grace & ornament of my journey was the river Wye, which I descended in a boat from Ross to Chepstow (near 40 miles) surrounded with ever new delights, among which were the New Weir (see Whateley), Tinterne Abbey, & Persfield.[sic]<sup>95</sup>

By stating that these were 'ever new delights', Gilpin indicated that he did not know much about them. This is confirmed in an earlier letter he wrote to Thomas Wharton where he explained that he visited Monmouth which was to him 'a town I never heard mention'd' and which turned out to be the 'delight of my eyes, & the very seat of pleasure'.<sup>96</sup> Gray was in the final years of his life, as he died in 1771, and admissions such as these from someone so well-educated and well-travelled hints that the Wye was a new place to visit. The 'Whateley' that Gray mentions was Thomas Whately who wrote *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), in which there is a description of Tintern Abbey. Whately had only just published his description of Tintern in 1770, so his work must have made an impact if it was significant enough for Gray to have mentioned it in his letter. Whately was one of the first to analyse the importance of the ruin to the landscape, or in his case the garden, and his *Observations* became very popular, changing the way gardens were perceived. He stated that ruins

may be intimately blended with trees and with thickets, and the interruption is an advantage; for imperfection and obscurity are their

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<sup>94</sup> John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis, *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden, 1620-1820* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 337.

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Gray, 'Letter to William Mason, September 1770', in *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray and William Mason, with Letters to the Rev. James Brown*, ed. Rev. John Mitford (London: Richard Bentley, 1853), 437-438.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Gray, 'Letter to Thomas Wharton, 24 August 1770', in *The Letters of Thomas Gray, Including the Letters of Gray and Mason*, ed. Duncan C. Tovey (London: George Bell and Sons, 1912), 290-291.

properties; and to carry the imagination to something greater than is seen, their effect.<sup>97</sup>

This is reminiscent of Arthur Young's reaction to seeing Fountains Abbey and how its manicured surroundings were antithetical to how a ruined abbey should appear. Fountains lack of overgrown undergrowth did not allow for the imagination to take over. It is also akin to Gilpin's attitude towards the ruined abbey and that nature should certainly play its part by overtaking them so that they become one with the landscape obscuring their historical significance. What is not concurrent with Gilpin's picturesque attitude is Whately's description of Tintern and how he thought a ruin should look:

Nothing is perfect; but memorials of every part still subsist; all certain but all in decay; and suggesting, at once, every idea which can occur in a seat of devotion, solitude, and desolation.<sup>98</sup>

By referring to the abbey as a seat of 'devotion' and 'solitude' Whately is referring to its religious past, which is quite opposite to Gilpin's attitude.<sup>99</sup> When Gilpin visited Tintern Abbey in 1770 he described the surroundings as being idyllic. In similar language to that of the travel writers and antiquarians quoted in chapter two, he wrote:

Such is the situation of Tintern-abbey. It occupies a gentle eminence in the middle of a circular valley, beautifully screened on all sides by woody hills; through which the river winds its course; and the hills, closing on its entrance, and on its exit, leave no room for inclement blasts to enter. A more pleasing retreat could not easily be found.<sup>100</sup>

The abbey is described as standing by itself in a wooded vale being flanked by a stream. This repeats the language often used throughout the eighteenth century and echoes the feelings of Arthur Young as seen in the Fountains Abbey case study. Gilpin imagined the 'pleasing retreat' in the context of the building's original use. He declared that:

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<sup>97</sup> Whately, *Observations on Modern Gardening*, 131.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Warner admits that Gilpin 'warned me of this want of connection, between the ornament and the topic' in Warner, *Literary Recollections*, vol 1, 254.

<sup>100</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 32.

So sequestered from the commerce of life, that it is easy to conceive, a man of warm imagination, in monkish times, might have been allured by such a scene to become an inhabitant of it.<sup>101</sup>

Gilpin's comment was dismissive and belittling of the monk's faith by referring to it as their 'warm imagination'. He was acknowledging the building's Catholic past yet being disparaging of it. Gilpin's attitude towards the Catholic faith in the context of the picturesque was not given much consideration until the work of Robert Mayhew in 2000. Mayhew connects the 'clergyman Gilpin' to the 'picturesque Gilpin' and highlights the complexity of Gilpin's beliefs, based on Latitudinarianism, interpreting nature as God's work.<sup>102</sup> Latitudinarianism was a form of broad Anglican Protestantism which allowed a less strict doctrinal reading than High Anglicanism, with space for human reasoning. Mayhew argues that Gilpin stripped away the doctrinal and denominational conflicts present in the rationalism of Latitudinarian belief and placed its onus on the evidence in nature to prove the power of God. It is possible to see this in Gilpin's description of Tintern Abbey. Gilpin celebrated the nature which had overtaken a lot of the stonework:

To these are superadded the ornaments of time. Ivy, in masses uncommonly large, has taken possession of many parts of the wall; and gives a happy contrast to the grey-coloured stone, of which the building is composed. Nor is this undecorated. Mosses of various hues, with lichens, maiden-hair, penny-leaf, and other humble plants, overspread the surface; or hang from every joint, and crevice. Some of them were in flower, others only in leaf; but, all together, they give those full-blown tints, which add the richest finishing to a ruin.<sup>103</sup>

The overgrown aspect of the ruin very much pleased Gilpin. It can be read as a celebration of nature over man's mortality and susceptibility to time, represented by the ivy which had now 'taken possession of the stone'. There were aspects which did not delight his

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>102</sup> Robert Mayhew, 'William Gilpin and the Latitudinarian Picturesque,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33, no. 3 (2000). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30053947>.

<sup>103</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 34.

picturesque gaze as much. He declared that a number of the gable ends 'disgust' his eye with their 'vulgar' shape, and that this could be remedied by '[A] mallet judiciously used': 'but who durst use it?'<sup>104</sup> He was not averse to human interference to create his vision of picturesque nature, yet his perception of what constituted picturesque was by no means fixed. A couple of pages on from this statement he declared that:

More picturesque it certainly would have been, if the area, unadorned, had been left with all its rough fragments of ruin scattered round; and bold was the hand that removed them: yet as the outside of the ruin, which is the chief object of picturesque curiosity, is still left in all its wild, and native rudeness; we excuse – perhaps we approve – the neatness, that is introduced within. It may add to the beauty of the scene – to its novelty it undoubtedly does.<sup>105</sup>

Gilpin's approach to the picturesque was certainly a confused and contrarian one. He was at once in favour of judicious use of a mallet to improve the look of the ruins to his eye, whilst simultaneously berating those who had cleared the floor of the abbey of stonework. When he then went on to compare the wildness of the exterior to the neat interior, he found it more pleasing. It is perhaps this stream of consciousness and these ruminations on what constituted the picturesque that appealed to those who followed Gilpin into the Wye Valley.

Gilpin's entire account of his visit is included in Heath's *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey* until the 1823 edition where he was given a less prominent role and parts of his account appeared under 'Opinions of Accomplished Writers'.<sup>106</sup> This was in part due to his depiction of the grounds of the abbey becoming obsolete as they included descriptions of people living amongst the ruins which by 1823 had gone. Gilpin upon seeing those living within the ruins recounted a 'scene of desolation' and in his opinion 'the poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants were remarkable'.<sup>107</sup> He went on to vilify the people who lived in the grounds further:

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<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>106</sup> Charles Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Ancient and Present State of Tintern Abbey* (Monmouth, 1823).

<sup>107</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 35.

They occupy little huts, raised among the ruins of the monastery; and seem to have no employment, but begging: as if a place, once devoted to indolence, could never again become the seat of industry.<sup>108</sup>

Although Gilpin was wont to eschew any reference to the building's religious past, he did not miss an opportunity to malign it if the opportunity arose. It perhaps displays a prejudice or misunderstanding by Gilpin of the role of the monastery as it would have acted as a help for the poorest in the local community. As he made to leave the abbey site he was accosted by

the whole hamlet at the gate, either openly soliciting alms; or covertly, under the pretence of carrying us to some part of the ruins, which each could shew; and which was far superior to any thing, which could be shewn by any one else.<sup>109</sup>

Gilpin depicts a type of bidding war as the crowd vied for the visitors' attention. These people can be considered to be in the mould of the tour guide, but their practice was based upon necessity rather than a passion or enthusiasm for showing visitors the different aspects of the abbey. This point is made acutely by Gilpin's reference to the 'poor woman' that they followed, who had promised to show them the monk's library, whom he described disturbingly:

She could scarce crawl; shuffling along her palsied limbs, and meagre, contracted body, by the help of two sticks. She led us, through an old gate, into a place overspread with nettles, and briars ... [A]ll indeed she meant to tell us, was the story of her own wretchedness; and all she had to shew us, was her own miserable habitation.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

He exclaimed that he had ‘never saw so loathsome a human dwelling’.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps such depictions of human deprivation would have intrigued some readers and added to the appeal of visiting the abbey, in a similar way that Gothic stories of superstition and terror did. However, the reduction of Gilpin’s presence as a main part of Heath’s guidebook, as well as a reduced abstract from the original text, hints that Heath may have altered the book as visitors’ tastes changed and as they became more interested in the history of the building. Further analysis of Heath’s guidebook will show that this was the case.

### *Charles Heath’s Guidebook*

The value of Heath’s book, as a tool with which to chart the popularity of the ruins of Tintern Abbey, as well as gain an insight into how the abbey was perceived more generally, is considerable.<sup>112</sup> Little is known about Heath. His father owned extensive paper mills and subsequently inspired Charles to set up his own printing press in Monmouth in 1791.<sup>113</sup> He wrote several topographical accounts of different sites and areas across Monmouthshire, including Raglan Castle, the Wye Valley and Monmouth.<sup>114</sup> The most thorough biographical account of Heath is by C.S. Matheson, whose scholarly work on the guidebook provides insight into what motivated him to produce the text.<sup>115</sup> Matheson’s work is valuable, placing the focus quite heavily on Heath, and also comparing his work to the French traveller Louis Simond and his experience of visiting the ruins in 1811 in *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain, During the Years 1810 and 1811, by a French Traveller* (1815).<sup>116</sup> Matheson provides context for the guide in the development of tourism to the site and through the machinations involved in Heath publishing the work himself. However, there is little attention given to the accounts which were included in the guide, or the poetry which

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>112</sup> The guidebook had eleven editions, only six of which are now accessible. Only the tenth and eleventh editions state as such on the frontispiece, whereas the others are only identifiable by their year, and are referred to as such throughout this text. Some are paginated whilst the majority are unpaginated. Page numbers are given where they are stated.

<sup>113</sup> Joanne Potier and Anon, ‘Heath, Charles (1761–1830), topographical printer,’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12830>.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> C.S. Matheson, ‘Ancient and Present’: Charles Heath of Monmouth and the Historical and Descriptive Accounts... of Tintern Abbey 1793 – 1828’ in Benjamin Colbert (ed.), *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); ‘I Wanted Some Intelligent Guide’: Charles Heath and Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Ancient and Present State of Tintern Abbey.’ *Romanticism* 19, no.2 (2013). doi:10.3366/rom.2013.0127.

<sup>116</sup> Louis Simond, *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain, During the Years 1810 and 1811, by a French Traveller* (New York: Eastburn Kirk and Co, 1815).

helped to make up the earlier editions. An analysis of what was contained within the guide will help towards an understanding of the dominant perception of Tintern Abbey.

The frontispiece of the first edition of Heath's *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey*, published in 1793 states that it was 'Sold By Him In The Market Place, And At All the Inns in the County'.<sup>117</sup> He must have placed copies at these inns to help others decipher the ruins. He reveals as much in the 1803 edition, in which he stated that he 'wanted some intelligent guide to impart innumerable circumstances, which the contemplation of such a scene naturally excited in the mind of every curious and observant traveller'.<sup>118</sup> This suggests that in the wider context there was a need for such a guidebook for the visitors to the Wye Valley. The statement made on the frontispiece as to where the editions were published allow some insight into this increasing interest in the abbey. The 1797 edition stated that the publication was sold by 'Mr. Rogers, Beachley Old Passage House', and by 'Mr. Walter George, Beaufort Arms in Chepstow' both stops along the River Wye, indicating that the abbey was a point of interest for a tour along the river. By the 1803 edition it stated that it was 'sold also at all the towns in the county', and by 1823, the tenth edition, it had expanded to 'Mr. Murray, London'.<sup>119</sup> By the final edition in 1828 it was still being printed and sold by Heath himself in Monmouth, but it was also being sold at the established publishing house 'Longman and Co.' in London.<sup>120</sup> These incremental stages across three decades, expanding from local print to national, chart an increase in popularity and interest in learning about the ruined abbey that was not merely for those visiting the abbey.

As stated above, the contents of the book itself were initially based on excerpts from travel writers and antiquarians such as Stebbing Shaw, Francis Grose, William Gilpin and Thomas Whately. There was also an inclusion of a poetical description by Edward Davies, with the 1803 edition also including a poem by J. Copywell from 1760 entitled *The Moonlight Night*.<sup>121</sup> By the 1806 edition all poetry had been abandoned with only space given to a 'Sonnet

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<sup>117</sup> Charles Heath, *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire*. (Monmouth: C. Heath, 1793).

<sup>118</sup> Charles Heath, *Monmouthshire. Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Ancient and Present State of Tintern Abbey* (Monmouth: C. Heath, 1803), v.

<sup>119</sup> Heath, *Monmouthshire*. (1803); *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Present State of Tintern Abbey* (Monmouth: C. Heath, 1806); *Historical and Descriptive Accounts of the Ancient and Present State of Tintern Abbey* (Monmouth: C. Heath, 1823).

<sup>120</sup> Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1828).

<sup>121</sup> Charles Heath, *Monmouthshire*. (1803), 70; Originally found in J. Copywell, *The Shrubs of Parnassus. Consisting of a Variety of Poetical Essays, Moral and Comic* (London, 1760), 59-61.

Composed on Leaving Tintern Abbey'.<sup>122</sup> The poetry gave way to more information about the site and the surrounding environs under the title of 'General Remarks About Tintern Abbey', which included 'The first settlement of Tintern as a Wire Manufactory' and the same for iron manufactory.<sup>123</sup> The inclusion of these at the behest of poetical works signals a change to a more factual interest in the site, rather than poetical or picturesque interpretations. It was not only descriptions which were included in the book but also a history of the monastery, complete with extracts from two of William Dugdale's publications the *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1693) and *The Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), utilised to provide information on the founding of the abbey and its upkeep as a functioning monastery.<sup>124</sup> The need to include such historic detail contradicted Gilpin's attitude towards the picturesque, and highlights that the majority of people visiting the abbey were curious to know about its Catholic past.

Heath admitted in the preface to the 1803 edition that the abbey first took his attention in a picture gallery. He stated that:

my attention was particularly arrested by a fine painting of Tintern Abbey; which, from being executed on a large scale, afforded the artist full scope for the delineation of this admirable (and to me novel), pile of ruins.<sup>125</sup>

It is a curious quirk to acknowledge that Heath's interest in the abbey was piqued through an artistic representation. It would most certainly have been a romantic and idealised interpretation of the ruins and this had inspired him to recreate for others that experience of seeing the ruins for the first time. It has been seen that such romantic images of the ruined abbey had left many disappointed: Melrose bathed in moonlight is one such example. Yet it was not Heath's aim to replicate the romantic image he had seen. His aim was to collect

the different accounts of the most respectable writers in this walk of literature, and afterwards add, or incorporate with them, such other

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<sup>122</sup> Heath, *Monmouthshire. Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1806).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Charles Heath, *Descriptive Accounts of Tintern Abbey; Selected from the Most Esteemed Writers on That Beautiful Ruin* (Monmouth: C. Heath, 1797).

<sup>125</sup> Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1828).

local anecdote, as tradition, or scarce and curious books, or manuscripts, might supply.<sup>126</sup>

This was to be a book grounded far more in historical and factual information about the abbey, rather than interpretation of its ruins. The miscellaneous nature of the sources that Heath used for the book also indicates that at the time of compiling there was a paucity of information from orthodox literature that could be collated to create a more substantial work about the abbey. This does not show that there was a lack of people writing about the site, but it highlights that there was a need to collate what writing there was to help and instruct the growing number of visitors to the site.

The passage chosen by Heath to begin the book is from Francis Grose's *Antiquities of England and Wales, Volume 3* (1773).<sup>127</sup> It contains aspects of the Gothic gaze. The excerpt starts with a short history of the monastery, replete with a timeline of the founders of the abbey. Grose then provided the dimensions of the building. He went on to recount his experience of entering the abbey, and it is worth reading in full:

On the whole, though this monastery is undoubtedly light and elegant, it wants that gloomy solemnity so essential to religious ruins; those yawning vaults and dreary recesses which strike the beholder with a religious awe, and make him almost shudder at entering them, calling into his mind all the tales of the nursery.

Here, at one cast of the eye, the whole is comprehended, nothing being left for the spectator to guess or explore; and this defect is increased by the ill-placed neatness of the poor people who shew the building; by whose absurd labour the ground is covered over with turf as even and trim as that of a bowling-green, which gives the building more the air of an artificial ruin in a garden, than that of an ancient decayed abbey. How unlike the beautiful description of the poet!

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Heath, *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey* (1793), 8.

Half buried there lie many a broken bust  
 And obelisk and urn o'erthrown by time;  
 And many a Cherub here descends in dust  
 From the rent roof and portico sublime.  
 Where rev'rend shrines in Gothic grandeur stood,  
 The nettle, or the noxious night shade spreads  
 And ashlings, wafted from the neighb'ring wood,  
 Thro' the worn turrets wave their trembling heads.<sup>128</sup>

The content of the passage, and its use in this guide provide one of the best examples of the Gothic gaze. Grose believed that it was essential for ruins to have a 'gloomy solemnity', which was lacking at Tintern. It required more mystique and dark corners which Grose believed created a 'religious awe' inciting 'tales of the nursery'. This is reminiscent of Joseph Addison's walk amongst the ruins at midnight.<sup>129</sup> In contrast to Addison who was at first reticent to believe any of the fanciful tales told of the ruins, Grose expected them and believed them to be a necessity for the ruined abbey. The disappointment felt by Grose that the abbey did not live up to his expectations is comparable to that of Arthur Young when he visited Fountains Abbey, and those of the visitors to Melrose Abbey whose real life experience of the ruins did not match Scott's literary creation. The denouement of the excerpt accentuates the disappointment with lines from J. Cunningham's *Elegy On a Pile of Ruins*, which romanticise a ruined abbey being overgrown by nature, in keeping with Gilpin's outlook on the picturesque. Grose's account would have been one of the first to be read by those who purchased the guide. This is important to note as it would have set the tone for their experience at the site. They may have experienced similar dissatisfaction at the abbey, and the distributing of Grose's work, which contained all these Gothic elements will have raised these expectations.

There were others who felt disappointed by the sight of the abbey, including Archdeacon William Coxe who wrote of being underwhelmed in his *Historical Tour through Monmouthshire* (1801). Coxe stated that he began his journey 'about half a mile above the village of Tintern', perhaps alluding to William Wordsworth's title *Lines Written a Few Miles*

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<sup>128</sup> Francis Grose, quoted in Heath, *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey* (1793), 1-10.

<sup>129</sup> See Chapter 3.

above Tintern Abbey, *On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798* (1798).<sup>130</sup>

He must have had an idea of what he expected to find, as he stated that:

The first appearance of the celebrated remains of the abbey-church did not equal my expectations, as they are half concealed by mean buildings, and the triangular shape of the gable ends has a formal appearance.<sup>131</sup>

Coxe was evidently disappointed upon seeing the ruins, yet it is curious to note that his experience echoed much of what was explained by Gilpin. Gilpin stated that '[I]t has been an elegant Gothic pile; but does not make that appearance as a distant object, which we expected'.<sup>132</sup> Further to this, as mentioned above, Gilpin was wont to wish to take a mallet to the gable ends, and Coxe was also not enamoured by them either. This description by Coxe was published in the *Penny Magazine* in 1833.<sup>133</sup> The use of his experience in this magazine is instructive for understanding the dissemination of perspectives on Tintern Abbey. This magazine did not run for a long time (1832–45), but it had a readership of over one million, and it circulated not only throughout Great Britain, but in Europe and North America too.<sup>134</sup> This distribution of Coxe's perspective of the abbey to the working classes highlights just one method of how this view of an abbey spread throughout the country. Coxe's interpretation is of note as it was conducted after Gilpin's travels and not long after Wordsworth's *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* was published and the contents certainly reflect their influence.

The impact of Gilpin's work can be seen elsewhere and understanding the dissemination of his use of picturesque language will help demonstrate how influential his perception of Tintern Abbey was. This will show that his words and thoughts were repeated so much as to make Gilpin the authority on Tintern Abbey. In 1783, a year after the publication of *Observations*, an excerpt was placed in *The London Magazine* by an anonymous contributor. It stated at the beginning that

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<sup>130</sup> Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, 201.

<sup>131</sup> William Coxe, *Historical Tour through Monmouthshire* (London: T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, 1801).

<sup>132</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 49.

<sup>133</sup> *The Penny Magazine* (London, 1833), 276-77.

<sup>134</sup> Patricia J. Anderson, 'Pictures for the People: Knight's 'Penny Magazine', an Early Venture into Popular Art Education,' *Studies in Art Education* 28, no. 3 (1987): 133. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320604>.

As many of your readers have undoubtedly visited the celebrated Tintern-Abbey, the following description of it cannot fail of bringing to their mind, in the strongest point of view, the various beauties of those famous ruins.<sup>135</sup>

The certainty with which the contributor writes to preface the excerpt, and to state that ‘undoubtedly’ the readers of the magazine would have already visited the abbey indicates the popularity of the site. Just over a decade since Gray found the location to be new and exciting, this highlights how popular Tintern Abbey had quickly become. This confident language may also have led some readers to believe that by merely reading the account they too had visited the site themselves. Several documented accounts of visiting Tintern Abbey would attest to this rephrasing or in some cases plagiarising Gilpin’s work. Samuel Leigh was one such writer who copied whole passages from *Observations on the River Wye* without giving credit to the original author. This is a common theme amongst descriptions of Tintern Abbey that came after the publication of *Observations*. In the eighteenth century it was certainly not uncommon for writers to plagiarise their peers work, or ‘imitation’ as they would have termed it.<sup>136</sup> This is perhaps the most significant contribution towards the dissemination of Gilpin’s thoughts; tangible evidence of his influence is the repetition of his words in subsequent publications.<sup>137</sup> Mark Willett, mentioned above, in his excursion to the abbey supposedly writes of his experience, yet large swathes of his account are peppered with Gilpin’s language. Although Willett does mention at the beginning of his book that he has been guided by those who went before him including Gilpin, this does not account for him using that experience in place of his own.

Although containing large passages copied straight from Gilpin, Samuel Leigh’s *Leigh’s Guide to Wales and Monmouthshire* (1835) showed what was arguably a view of Tintern Abbey inspired by Sir Walter Scott, with the ruins apparently being improved by moonlight:

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<sup>135</sup> *The London Magazine, July to December, 1783* (London: Printed for R. Baldein, 1783) vol 52, 39.

<sup>136</sup> George J. Buelow, ‘Genius, Plagiarism in English Criticism of the Eighteenth Century,’ *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 21, no. 2 (1990), 119. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/837018>.

<sup>137</sup> Other publications which use his words are: *Gentleman’s Monthly Intelligencer For January, 1783* (London, 1783) vol 52, 39-40.

The best situation to view the interior is from the right-hand corner, soon after you enter the west door. The view from this spot, when the sun is shining, or when the harvest moon sheds her beams on the mouldering pile, is truly sublime.<sup>138</sup>

The use of this moonlit motif shows the strength of Scott's influence on the ruined abbey, but, as demonstrated by John Bower at Melrose Abbey, the idea of the moonlight improving the view of the abbey only led to many visitors being disappointed when this could not be achieved. This idea of viewing the abbey by moonlight was also promoted by Heath in his guidebook. Heath thought that the abbey in the 'blossom season' was a perfect counterpoint to the abbey's appearance by the moonlight. He stated that:

The grounds that encircle it, on every side, are thickly planted with the choicest fruit trees, which, when in bloom, afford the most striking contrast to the ivy-vested walls of the monastery. Such 'cheerfulness' surrounding such 'desolation' is a circumstance very rarely equalled.<sup>139</sup>

This astutely described part of the Gothic gaze; a contradiction of beauty and ruination coalescing to create an appealing picturesque scene. This is not the first occasion where Heath alludes to the Gothic gaze and the picturesque. A question is raised in the book as to the appearance of the ruin, and if it benefits from being strewn with ivy.<sup>140</sup> Heath retorts that:

It has been the author's pleasure to have viewed it under every variation and change of the season, as well as times of the day; but the still hour of the evening has always been preferred for the most agreeable enjoyment of the scene. At that part of the year when the heavens are lighted up in the fullness of their glory, by what we name the HARVEST MOON, the Abbey then presents itself in grandeur beyond the power of my abilities to express.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Samuel Leigh, *Leigh's Guide to Wales & Monmouthshire* (London: Printed for Leigh and Son, 1835), 327.

<sup>139</sup> Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1828).

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

Heath was defending the abbey from a commentator who declared that he would 'most cheerfully submit to live on a scanty pittance the remainder of his days, to accomplish the restoring of this Church to its former splendor [*sic*] and beauty'.<sup>142</sup> Heath believed that it should stay as it was, and was in fact more beautiful for being in its ruinous state, echoing much of Gilpin's attitude towards the ruined abbey. The promotion of the idea that the abbey should be viewed by the light of the moon was included in *The Cambrian Traveller's Guide* (1840), advising that '[T]he most beautiful effect, on visiting these ruins, is enjoyed by moonlight'.<sup>143</sup> Heath implied that the ruinous condition helped him to imagine how the abbey used to be:

I have pictured in my imagination the church in its most perfect preservation [...] I fancied its lofty windows decorated with allusions to the Sacred Page [...] while the whole of the convent, awakened to the worship of their Creator, standing in the transept galleries, poured forth the song of praise to the great Fountain of their existence.<sup>144</sup>

These passages are vital for understanding how people perceived the ruined abbey in which they stood. Such a popular guide, promoting the idea of imagining the surroundings of the ruins to be as they were when the monks lived within the abbey's walls, demonstrably elicits the past Catholic history of the building. Heath married his thought with Gilpin's observation that the secluded location of the abbey would 'warm the imaginations, in Monkish times'.<sup>145</sup> This correlation is misplaced as Gilpin was merely stating that it was an idyllic place for contemplation; he was not doing as Heath had done, and imagined the monks using the building. With Heath considering the blossom of the trees within the orchard outside he was grounding these tangible symbols of the abbey's past by stating that the monks were skilled in horticulture, 'Dr. Griffin observed to me, 'that to their care we are principally indebted for the fine productions of our gardens and orchards''.<sup>146</sup> For the monks to have been given credit for the nature surrounding the abbey would have been anathema

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<sup>142</sup> Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1823), 65.

<sup>143</sup> George Nicholson, *The Cambrian Traveller's Guide, and pocket companion* (London: Longman, 1840), 446.

<sup>144</sup> Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1828).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

to Gilpin and his picturesque ideal. Comments such as this highlight the importance given to emphasising the religious past in Heath's book, further exemplified by the volume of historical facts and charters of the abbey also included in it. By the 1806 edition of the guide, it even went so far as to describe the church vestments worn by the monks in the twelfth century.<sup>147</sup> Due to the regular alterations to the book, this shift to include more nuanced facts about the monks illustrates a burgeoning interest in the Catholic history of the building. Such interest in the religious past of the abbey shows that there was less interest in the elements linked to Gothic tales, and more emphasis placed on the historic. That is not to say that getting a clearer picture of what a terrifying abbot may have looked like could not have played a small part in this intrigue. As was seen with Fountains and Melrose Abbey the tale of the monks who lived at the abbey played a sizeable role in guiding people and informing them about the ruins of Tintern Abbey, at odds with their terrifying portrayal in Gothic narratives.

Mr Gethen, whose name appears in Heath's guidebook, can be considered a tangible example of how the role of the monk as part of the ruined abbey began to be tolerated. He is not mentioned until the 1803 edition where it is stated on the frontispiece that he was the caretaker of the abbey. In the 1806 edition there is some 'useful information to travellers' which indicated that Mr Gethen was then the keeper of the Beaufort Arms. This inn was previously cited in the 1797 edition as belonging to a Mr Walter George. The guide states that Gethen would provide 'a clean room, and a frugal fare, with every requisite attention', which suggests that he was happy to have people visiting and exploring the abbey.<sup>148</sup> Mark Willett's account of his excursion to the abbey, published in 1810, stated that he had visited the Beaufort Arms which was 'kept by Mr Gething [sic], who likewise shews the abbey'.<sup>149</sup> His presence at the abbey must have been influential. Upon his death a footnote in the final edition of Heath's book recounts that he was the caretaker for a 'long course of years', and that

when standing by his side, engaging in conversation within these walls, his interesting appearance - increased by his reverend locks, grown white with age - impressed me with the idea, "of his having

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1806).

<sup>149</sup> Mark Willett, *An Excursion from the Source of the Wye* (Ross-on-Wye: Fineleaf Editions, 2007), 67.

been one of the Religious of this Convent, whom nature had preserved from the wreck of time."<sup>150</sup>

So enamoured was Heath by Gethen's fervour and passion for the abbey that he was described as being part of the ruin itself – imagined as in the form of a monk, having been brought from the past into his presence. Gethen evidently created a similar atmosphere to that of John Bower at Melrose Abbey. His enthusiasm for the abbey and its history are clearly conveyed in the above excerpt. The description of Gethen in these terms suggests that the tales he used to tell visitors at the abbey were steeped in the religious history of the building. For there to exist what was essentially a representation of a monk at the abbey site illustrates that there was a curtailing of fear associated with Catholic clergy which had been such a vital ingredient in Gothic narratives.

The most noteworthy description in Heath's book which conveys a deeply religious feeling is by someone who is not named and whose contribution is only given the title 'Effusions of a Friend after first visiting Tintern Abbey'.<sup>151</sup> It must have held some importance to Heath as it is a constant throughout subsequent editions from 1803 onwards; in a book of frequently changing content, this is significant. They described what they could see as they reached the abbey:

I approached, with reverence, the venerable walls of the hallowed Sanctuary, hardly to be entered without a tear! An air of Sacred Majesty reigns, even in the relicks of this once-glorious fabric,- the throne of devotion and of holy zeal .... The broken image of the founder (near where stood the High Altar, and grand eastern window), seems to weep for the destruction of his work of piety; while the pillars, bereft of their gilded ornaments, join the sad melody of silent woe!<sup>152</sup>

The significance of this account to understanding the perception of Tintern Abbey should not be underestimated. It could be argued that this account was perhaps satirical, but the

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<sup>150</sup> Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1828).

<sup>151</sup> 'Effusions of a Friend, After Visiting Tintern Abbey' in Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1803), 75.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

earnest intentions as relayed by Heath in the preface to his book would strongly suggest otherwise. The approach to analysing the ruins is almost antithetical to Gilpin. The author entering the abbey with veneration, as though it were still a functioning monastery; lamenting the loss of the gilded columns and doing as Bower had done and giving life to the statues by imagining them weeping at the destruction of the abbey; and conveying the scene and its surroundings as creating a silent woe as a result of the building's demise, is the opposite to Gilpin's picturesque attitude. The description helps to convey a sense of how those who visited the ruins might have approached the abbey, and what their imagination might have conjured up. Moreover, the inclusion of this extract within Heath's guide would contribute towards a perpetuation of this attitude and create a level of expectation in others, such as has been demonstrated throughout this thesis. Therefore, although Gilpin had inspired many to visit the site, they did not imitate his attitude against the religious past of the ruins. It also further highlights that the existence and printing of attitudes that were more than tolerant of the monastery's previous use were in stark contrast to the Gothic narratives which turned the abbey into a mysterious and sometimes terrifying environment to experience.

### ***William Wordsworth***

A change in the attitude towards the ruined abbey can also be gleaned from the popularity of William Wordsworth's poem *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, which, like Gilpin's work, had inspired many to visit the ruins. Wordsworth's poem, published in 1798, does not mention the titular abbey itself and its enigmatic and mysterious lines eschew religion, in the same manner as Gilpin's writing. Yet by doing this, the poem allowed the ruin to be read as another object entirely, with meditation on time and reminiscence, a quality hitherto disavowed by Gilpin. The impact of Wordsworth poem is clear and its importance to romantic poetry has been analysed exhaustively elsewhere.<sup>153</sup> These studies

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<sup>153</sup> Kenneth R. Johnston, 'The Politics of "Tintern Abbey",' *The Wordsworth Circle* 12, no. 1 (Winter, 1983). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24041014>.; Geoffery Little, 'Forms of Beauty, Loops of Time: Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey",' *The Journal of the Sydney University Arts Association* 12 (1984); Charles Kostelnick, 'Wordsworth, Ruins, and the Aesthetics of Decay: From Surface to Noble Picturesque,' *The Wordsworth Circle* 19, no. 1 (Winter, 1988), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24042600>; Charles I. Armstrong, 'Dwelling upon Time: Memory's changing function in the poetry of Wordsworth,' *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 1, no. 2 (2002). <https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.114>; Karen Hadley, 'The Commodification of Time in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey",' *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 42, no. 4, (Autumn, 2002). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1556292>; Mark Canuel, 'Historicism, Formalism, and "Tintern Abbey",' *European Romantic Review* 23, no. 3 (May, 2012). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509585.2012.674270>; Crystal B. Lake, 'The Life of Things at Tintern Abbey,' *The Review of English Studies* 63, no. 260 (June 2012). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263673>.

analyse the importance of time, memory, and nostalgia, which are all contributing factors to the construction of this work, yet Wordsworth's whereabouts whilst writing and the poem's direct link to Gilpin have hitherto not been examined. Sarah J. Wolfson highlights that Wordsworth had Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* with him when he visited the abbey.<sup>154</sup> This is hugely important as it demonstrates how Gilpin had been used as a guide by Wordsworth to navigate his way to Tintern Abbey. Gilpin's influence can be seen throughout *A Few Lines* showing how he helped to shape the perception of the abbey in one of the most influential odes to ruins.

Wordsworth begins the poem by echoing the typical view of the abbey, situated in the secluded valley, located next to a murmuring stream:

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a sweet inland murmur. – Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
Which on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.<sup>155</sup>

Although he does not specifically mention the abbey, the name in the title would have been enough, especially when the archetypal abbey was known to be situated in a secluded spot in a valley, next to a flowing river. A modern example of the likely view is given below (see Figure 7.2). This was the idyllic image of the abbey as espoused by both Arthur Young and Gilpin. Charles Kostelnick has argued that the absence of the ruin itself within the poem is a partial rejection of and reaction to the picturesque.<sup>156</sup> He further argues that Wordsworth created his own version of the picturesque by providing more substance than merely accounting for what could be seen. He was perhaps building upon Gilpin's perspective of

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<sup>154</sup> Susan J. Wolfson, 'Poem Upon the Wye' in *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, ed. Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>155</sup> William Wordsworth, 'Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour, July 13, 1798,' in *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Michael Mason (London: Longman, 1992), 207-208, lines 1-8.

<sup>156</sup> Kostelnick, 'Wordsworth, Ruins, and the Aesthetics of Decay', 26.

the abbey as part of nature, eschewing the religious past of the ruin, yet Kostelnick's analysis does not discuss this. Crystal B. Lake's assessment is thorough but focuses more on the political aspects of poems written before *A Few Lines Written*, whilst arguing that Wordsworth's poem was apolitical as he had left the ruin out of it completely.<sup>157</sup> Lake's argument is forceful, but her analysis of the poem omits any conversation about Gilpin and the influence of the picturesque, arguing that it was 'Enlightenment' thought that made Wordsworth take the abbey out of the poem. This was not the case: as has been shown above, the abbey *is* in the poem in all but name. Comparing the lines quoted above with Gilpin's first view of Tintern, a direct correlation can be made. First, (and as quoted previously in this thesis) Gilpin stated outright that:

Castles, and abbeys have different situations, agreeable to their respective uses. The castle, meant for defence, stands boldly on the hill: the abbey, intended for meditation, is hid in the sequestered vale.<sup>158</sup>

Gilpin defined the parameters of the abbey through the lens of his picturesque attitude. This definition was quoted in Heath's guidebook, meaning that its continual dissemination would have helped to establish such an attitude toward the ruined abbey. It is possible to see Gilpin's influence elsewhere in the poem. Wordsworth described what can be considered the surroundings of the abbey as he sits under the shade of a tree:

Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
 Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
 Among the woods and copses lose themselves,  
 Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb  
 The wild green landscape. Once again I see  
 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
 Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms  
 Green to the very door<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Lake, 'The Life of Things at Tintern Abbey'.

<sup>158</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 46.

<sup>159</sup> Wordsworth, 'Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey', 208, 12-18.

He is looking out over the valley and down at the orchards, which as shown above were tangible artefacts of the life of the monks. When these lines are compared with Gilpin's first description of the ruins of Tintern it is possible to see a direct correlation between the two:

The woods, the glades intermixed; the winding of the river; the variety of the ground; the splendid ruin, contrasted with the objects of nature; and the elegant line formed by the summits of the hills, which include the whole; make all together a very enchanting piece of scenery.<sup>160</sup>

The lines of Wordsworth mirror much of what was described by Gilpin above, the abbey in the secluded vale of woods, cliffs, and the winding river. This is further exemplified by Gilpin who stated that the outside of the ruin which was 'the chief object of picturesque curiosity, is still left in all its wild, and native rudeness' this can be compared to Wordsworth who viewed the trees with their 'green and simple hue' blended into the 'wild green landscape', 'green to the very door'. The most revealing lines which can connect Wordsworth to Gilpin's description are those which concern the cottages:

and wreathes of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees,  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem,  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The hermit sits alone.<sup>161</sup>

These lines are very similar to Gilpin's description of the people who begged and lived within the abbey. The direct mention of the 'vagrant dwellers' hints at the description Gilpin gives of the woman who showed them her 'miserable habitation'.<sup>162</sup> The depiction Gilpin conveys of the place where the woman lived, her 'cell of misery' with a floor of earth, the walls which 'streamed with various-coloured stains of unwholesome dews' and a 'wretched

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<sup>160</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 32.

<sup>161</sup> Wordsworth, 'Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey', 208, 18-23.

<sup>162</sup> Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 36.

bedstead, spread with a few rags' is quite strongly reminiscent of 'some hermit's cave, where by his fire, the hermit sits alone'.<sup>163</sup> These similarities are not merely a coincidence, and the quickness with which Wordsworth wrote the poem speaks to the influence of Gilpin.



Figure 7-2 - Dr Alison Cathcart, *Tintern Abbey as seen from the Devil's Pulpit*, 2021, photograph, University of Stirling, reproduced with author's permission.

Margaret Levinson's thorough analysis asserts that Wordsworth reduces the inclusion of human life in the poem as a means to erase the unwanted industrial and socially deprived reality from the surroundings.<sup>164</sup> Had he placed himself downstream, Levinson argues, Wordsworth would not have seen any reflection on of the banks of the Wye, but instead an 'ouzy and discoloured ... polluted surface'.<sup>165</sup> Levinson acknowledges the descriptions of the abbey by Gilpin and how they fed into the perception of the abbey, but does not make a direct link between his *Observations* and Wordsworth's poem. Wolfson considers the multifarious influences that would have presided over Wordsworth's writing, highlighting the work of Shakespeare and Milton, but she is more focused upon its similarities to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*.<sup>166</sup> This helps to ground the poem in the tradition of the Graveyard

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>164</sup> Margaret Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 29.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>166</sup> Wolfson, 'Poem Upon the Wye'.

School poem. Wordsworth himself acknowledged that he did not write the poem whilst 'looking down' but on his journey from Tintern Abbey to Bristol. Wordsworth conceded that:

I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of 4 or 5 days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after....<sup>167</sup>

As highlighted by Wolfson above, the inspirations which held sway over Wordsworth's mind as he wrote *A Few Lines* would have been multiple and varied, yet unquestionably Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* was one of them. Yet his explanation of how he composed the poem suggests an urgency. To reach for descriptions and language highly reminiscent of Gilpin's book, which had first inspired him and then which he physically took with him to guide his travels around the Wye Valley is telling of its influence. Yet, much scholarly work which considers Wordsworth's poem does not even mention Gilpin's name.<sup>168</sup> The language of Gilpin had shaped Wordsworth's perception of Tintern Abbey, and it is a strange anomaly that the poem does not feature in Heath's guidebook. It may indicate how famous the poem was and how ubiquitous it was, rendering a reprinting of it in the guidebook needless.

It is possible to see the impact of Gilpin's *Observations* in other poet works. Before Wordsworth's *A Few Lines* was published Edward Jerningham, wrote the poem *Tintern Abbey* (1796).<sup>169</sup> Jerningham was greatly influenced by Thomas Gray, and this poem is one example in the Graveyard Poetry style.<sup>170</sup> However, it is also possible to see the impact of Gilpin in his work:

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<sup>167</sup> William Wordsworth quoted in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Lyrical Ballads*, eds. R.L. Brett & A.R. Jones (London: Routledge, 2005), 287.

<sup>168</sup> William Christie, *The Two Romanticisms and Other Essays* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2006); Karen Hadley, 'The Commodification of Time in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey.'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 42, no. 4 (2002). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1556292>.

<sup>169</sup> Edward Jerningham, *Poems and Plays, By Mr. Jerningham*, 2 vols. (London: Nornaville and Fell, 1806) vol. 2, 135.

<sup>170</sup> See chapter 3.

Nature her shelt'ring moss around has thrown,  
 As if in pity of the faded pile,  
 And ev'n to cheer what sorrow calls her own  
 On ruin's brow has bid her flow'rets smile.<sup>171</sup>

These can be compared to Gilpin's description of the ivy, moss and flowers growing amidst the ruins which were a 'happy contrast to the grey covered stone'. With this subtle nod to Gilpin in mind it is of particular interest that Jerningham placed an asterisk next to the title of the poem and in the footnote advised the reader to '[S]ee the account of Tintern Abbey by the Rev. Mr. Gilpin, in his *Observations upon the River Wye*'.<sup>172</sup> Jerningham was deferring to Gilpin as the authority on Tintern Abbey. By prefixing the poem with this advice, he was alluding that the reader would need Gilpin's description in tandem with his work to appreciate and understand it fully. From the analysis of Jerningham in chapter three, which showed that he was wont to create work, which was fashionable rather than ideologically motivated, it can be believed that he had never visited the abbey himself but wrote this solely inspired by Gilpin's account. If he had visited the ruins he would have taken Gilpin's *Observations* with him to be his guide.

As shown above, poetry which was included in Heath's guidebook initially had evidently fallen out of favour with the book's compiler by the time of the 1806 edition. It is clear that he now wanted to provide more historical information rather than artistic representations of the site. The poem which was included in the first edition in 1793 refers to the previous Catholic use of the building without scorn or derision. It begins:

Above LANCOT, in a sequester'd dell,  
 Where Monks in former days were wont to dwell,  
 Inclos'd with woods and hills on every side,  
 Stands Tintern Abbey, spoil'd of all her pride;  
 Whose mournful ruins fill the soul with awe  
 Where once was taught God's holy saving law;  
 Where mitred abbots fann'd the heavenly fire,

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<sup>171</sup> Jerningham, *Poems and Plays*, 135.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

And shook, with hymns divine, the heavenly choir.<sup>173</sup>

The familiar image of the abbey in the secluded vale, surrounded by woodlands is created, but in contrast to the Graveyard Poetry and indeed Gilpin's depiction, there is an envisioning of what it was like when the monks conducted a mass. The rest of the poem is a mixture of lamentation over the ruinous state of the abbey, references to the wire works and local lore including the legend of Strongbow, represented by his statue. This mixture of myth and history is similar to Richard Warner's *Netley Abbey*, discussed in chapter five, where he combined historic characters with tales of the supernatural. Towards the end of the long eighteenth century this use of religious imagery in poetry about Tintern Abbey was still common. In 1835 Samuel Leigh quoted from a poem which follows much of the tradition of the Graveyard Poem:

How many hearts have here grown cold,  
That sleep these mouldering stones among!  
How many beads have here been told!  
How many matins here been sung!

On this rude stone, by time long broke,  
I think I see some pilgrim kneel,  
Think I see the censer smoke,  
I think I hear the solemn peal.

But here no more soft music floats,  
No holy anthems chanted now;  
All hush'd, except the ring-dove's notes  
Low murm'ring from yon beachen bough.<sup>174</sup>

The same lines were used in multiple publications to establish an atmosphere for Tintern Abbey.<sup>175</sup> In *Chilcott's History of Bristol* there was evidently no space to write a full

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<sup>173</sup> Charles Heath, *Historical and Descriptive Accounts* (1793).

<sup>174</sup> Leigh, *Leigh's Guide to Wales*, 328.

<sup>175</sup> James Sargent Storer, ed., *Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet, Containing a Series of Elegant Views of the Interesting Objects of Curiosity in Great Britain*, 8 vols (London: W. Clarke, 1810) vol 8; 'May 1, 1816,

description of the abbey, so in lieu of that they deferred to this poem.<sup>176</sup> It is then further stated that for 'a more ample description of these celebrated regions of the picturesque, we must refer the reader to Archdeacon Coxe, and to the author of "The Banks of the Wye"'.<sup>177</sup> The continued reprinting of this poem, with its allusions to the monastery's Catholic past would have contributed towards reinforcing this past as being part of how the building was perceived. This was in opposition to Gilpin's attitude towards the abbey. Edmund Gardner's *Sonnet Written in Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire* (1796), echoes much of the same Graveyard Poetry style with references to its Catholic past:

These hoary pillars clasped by ivy round,  
This hallowed floor by holy footsteps trod,  
The mould'ring choir by spreading thorns embrowned,  
Where fasting saints devoutly hymned their God.<sup>178</sup>

These examples show just how tied to its religious past the reputation of Tintern Abbey had become by the middle of the nineteenth century. Many, therefore, sought out the ruins to write about them, having been inspired by Gilpin; but they eschewed Gilpin's derision of the abbey's Catholic past.

In *Bradshaw's Journal* (1843), originally devised by the cartographer and publisher, George Bradshaw as a weekly magazine, and edited by George Falkner, there is a description of a trip to Tintern Abbey. The date and author of the journey are unknown, it can be assumed that it was Bradshaw himself and that the trip must have taken place in the early 1840s. It was acknowledged that the scene before him as he looked upon the abbey and its surrounding environs could not be described with any justice and that it had been 'thoroughly exhausted by the most eloquent English writers'.<sup>179</sup> Due to this he conceded to

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Anecdotes of the State of Manners, and of Reading,' *The Monthly Magazine* (London: Printed for Sir Richard Philips, 1816) vol 41, 303; *Domestic, literary and village sketches: addressed to the young of our neighbourhood* (London: Printed by William Nicol, 1823), 33; Nicholson, *The Cambrian Traveller's Guide*, 446; *Bradshaw's Journal*, 4 vols, ed. George Falkner (London: William Strange, 1843) vol 4, 290.

<sup>176</sup> John Chilcott, *Chilcott's Descriptive History of Bristol* (Bristol: J. Chilcott, 1849), 393.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>178</sup> Edmund Gardner, 'Sonnet Written in Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire' in *The New Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*, ed., Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 819; also appears in *The European Magazine, For July 1796*, Vol. 30. (London: Printed for J. Sewell, 1796), 119.

<sup>179</sup> Falkner, *Bradshaw's Journal*, vol 4, p.290. See also J.T. Barber, *A Tour Throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1803), 266-67.

'relinquish the task in despair, or rather rest in the sweet remembrances often suggested in our own minds ... touchingly embodied in immortal verse, by the Poet of the Lakes'.<sup>180</sup> He explicitly deferred to Wordsworth to describe satisfactorily what he was experiencing, such as his influence over public attitudes to the ruins. He also hinted at Gilpin, and the familiar motif of 'throwing open' the west door in a similar fashion to *The Surprise* at Fountains Abbey. For the description of what is seen behind the door he copied the account of J.T. Barber from his *A Tour Throughout South Wales and Monmouthshire* (1803):

It is neither a mere creation of art, nor an exhibition of Nature's charms, but a grand spectacle, in which both seem to have blended their powers, in producing an object beautiful and sublime.<sup>181</sup>

This is followed by similar descriptions of the site to those documented above, including the anonymous poem beginning 'How many hearts have here grown cold'. What is unusual about this description is that it called hysterically into question the foreboding which might follow this increased interest in ancient Catholic monasteries. He predicted a loosening of morals:

The veneration cultivated for the picturesque and the antique, has, we apprehend, led to other and more grievous errors than the false estimate which has been formed of the architectural achievements of the so-called dark ages; not the least of these is the prevailing taste for a return to ancient forms and ceremonies, frequently displayed in connection with the very structure of recently erected churches - admirably adapted, perhaps, to the illiterate people of by-gone days, but as little suited to those of the present age as would be a return to the erection of family mansions on lofty crags, or the adoption of stone floors, narrow windows, unpaved, unlighted streets, or any other development of ancient ignorance and mental imbecility.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Falkner, *Bradshaw's Journal*, vol. 4, 290.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

This ire was perhaps aimed at the Gothic Revival which built churches in the Gothic style, which were to him eyesores of a bygone age. This was followed by a report of the conversation he overheard on his journey from Tintern to Monmouth, of an innkeeper who tried to curtail drunk and disorderly behaviour by not opening on 'the Sabbath'. He was met with the 'displeasure of his chief supporters, including the clergyman of the parish', who was said to be a drunk and 'whose irreverent and gross behaviour, even at the death-beds of his parishioners, were so disgusting, that we were glad to escape their further detail'.<sup>183</sup> This, to Bradshaw, was the cost of continuing to learn about the Catholic past and its traditions; to do the opposite was the only way 'to enjoy the blessings of a moral, enlightened, and happy population'.<sup>184</sup> Bradshaw's account is hyperbolic, but the fervour with which he wrote about the problems attached to the Catholic past highlights that it had become a popular pastime but this also demonstrably shows that not everyone wanted to know about the history of the ruined abbey. Given the popularity of the ruined abbey as object of artistic endeavour this opinion can be adjudged to be rare, yet it highlights the dichotomy at the centre of the appreciation for the ruined abbey – the acquiescence to the Catholic faith.

### *Conclusion*

Towards the end of the long eighteenth century, Tintern Abbey and the Wye Valley were so much revered for their picturesque beauty they were almost considered sacred. The surroundings were deemed by some to be so perfect that anything interrupting the beauty was too difficult to bear. The writer and poet George Mogridge wrote of his visit to the Wye Valley and recounted that

I have heard that a celebrated poet, on visiting the place, full of enthusiastic and ardent anticipations, was so disgusted on finding two soldiers playing cards on the proudest summit of this commanding cliff, that he hurried back from the scene utterly unable to overcome his disgust sufficiently to allow him the delight of feasting his eyes on the entrancing scene. Fully can I enter into his susceptibility.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.

<sup>185</sup> George Mogridge, *Old Humphrey's Country Strolls* (New York: Robert Carter, 1847), 70.

The emotions and expectations aroused by the reputation of the scenery were so heightened that it led to melodrama from the poet. This is likely to be an apocryphal tale, yet it helps to convey a sense of the power that the scenery could have upon the viewer, and the weight of expectation that had been created by Gilpin and Wordsworth. Gilpin especially, through his *Observations* had created a blueprint and guide for perceiving the ruined abbey. His work had encouraged many to visit the Wye Valley, intrigued by his depiction of a what was a new and exciting landscape, with Tintern Abbey one of the main features. The language he used, and his picturesque way of framing the abbey was disseminated through plagiarism of his work, reproduction of his work in publications such as Heath's guidebook, and as an obvious influence upon those writing about the Wye Valley.

Heath's *Descriptive Account of Tintern Abbey* has shown tangibly that the perception of the ruined abbey changed from the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. There was a shift away from the need for poetical and picturesque interpretations of the ruin, to more factual and historical knowledge. The multitudes of visitors, many inspired by Gilpin, would have arrived with a dizzying expectation of what they were about to see, and this anticipation was combined with the Gothic narratives which heavily featured the ruined abbey. Although some were underwhelmed by what they experienced at the site, there was a burgeoning interest in learning about the history of the abbey. The means by which the attraction to the ruined abbey was first created was in contrast to the resultant historical interest in the buildings. The eschewing of Catholicism from Gilpin's observations of Tintern, and the terrifying tales of monks and nuns in Gothic narratives had only served to create more intrigue in the ruins of monasteries. As the long eighteenth century came to an end it is clear that there was a desire to learn more about the Catholic origins of the ruined abbey, at odds with the anti-Catholic literature which had made them infamous.

## Chapter 8 - Conclusion

Margaret Aston asserted that ‘ruins may make historians’.<sup>1</sup> She alludes that their ruinous edifices were analogous of the fragmented and mysterious history of the country, longing to be put back together and made sense of.<sup>2</sup> The ruined monasteries of Britain in the eighteenth century signified a mysterious and now lost past. To make sense of this great unknown a new history was constructed for them by graveyard poetry, antiquarian endeavours, and the writers of Gothic literature. Through a misunderstanding of the Reformation and the dissolution of the monasteries, a concocted and confected Catholic past which had not existed was disseminated. The assertion that the swiftness of the Dissolution denoted an overwhelming anti-Catholic attitude towards monasteries and nunneries needs to be more nuanced. The Reformation was a blistering attack on the ancient religion of Catholicism in Britain, but it failed at eradicating it from the country. The relationship to the newly dissolved buildings has shown that it was opportunism which propelled the dissolution of the monasteries, not a deep-rooted urge to erase Catholicism. It provides a clearer context not only for the anti-Catholic sentiment found in Gothic writing, but also the triumphalist attitudes which see the ruined abbey as denoting victory for enlightened thought over the backward Catholic past.

The romanticised image captured in so many engravings and paintings was representative of how the Gothic gaze had shaped the perception of the ruined abbey. Antiquarian study and the search for the picturesque created an idealistic perception of what the ruined abbey should look like and where it should be placed within the landscape. The chief proponent of this was William Gilpin. His definition of the abbey ‘intended for meditation, is hid in the sequestered vale’ became the standard yardstick with which to measure the picturesque beauty of the ruined abbey.<sup>3</sup> The travelogue of Thomas Gent showed that he had felt similarly but had battled with the beauty of the remnants with the Catholic faith which he abhorred.<sup>4</sup> His description was similar to Gilpin’s, but it was *Observations on the River Wye* which made it the popular opinion. This was seen most acutely in the Fountains Abbey case study where *The Surprise*, the doorway on the hillside was set up in order to frame the abbey

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Aston, ‘English Ruins and English History’, 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

<sup>3</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye*, 46.

<sup>4</sup> Gent, *The Ancient and Modern History of the Loyal Town of Rippon*, 26.

in this very way. The door was dramatically swung open and revealed the abbey in the middle of the valley with the river beside it and the dramatic rocks to the right.<sup>5</sup> This demonstrated that this view was fashionable enough to have created a bespoke piece of theatrics to accommodate visitors with this expectation of the ruined abbey in mind.

There are echoes of a specific way to view the ruins in the Melrose Abbey case study, seen through the eyes of John Bower, Washington Irving, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The study helped to emphasise the expectations of what was anticipated at a ruined abbey. John Bower took the lines from Sir Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and brought them to life for visitors inside the abbey itself. This was a heightened and exaggerated version of what could be expected at the ruined abbey, as defined in poetry and the Gothic, but behind the theatrics were elements of the Gothic gaze. As Irving observed he would 'verifying every passage of the poem, as though it had been authentic history'.<sup>6</sup> This again is an intensified version of a regular visitor to an abbey, but it demonstrates how the poem was acting as a guide by which to understand the abbey. Stowe had read the accounts of Washington who had described all he had seen when visiting the abbey, and the guided tour he was taken on by Bower. This had built up her expectations so much that when she arrived at the abbey, she was disappointed as she thought it would be 'standing alone in the middle of a great heath, far from all abodes of men, and with no companions more hilarious than the owls'.<sup>7</sup> This reflects the idea of the poem as guide: creating the ideal location in the mind of the viewer combined with the tropes of both Gilpin's definition of the ruin in the landscape and graveyard poetry.

The perception of the ruin was also in large part shaped by Thomas Gray. His influence is seen throughout this thesis, but it is most acute in the work of Ann Radcliffe and Thomas West. Both refer to him in their travelogues directly, demonstrating that his writing was in part a de facto guidebook, alerting them to what they should look out for. West's criticism of Gray's choice of viewing station shows how there was conflicting opinions on what constituted the perfect picturesque ruin.<sup>8</sup> The Tintern Abbey case study revealed the influence of Gilpin on William Wordsworth's *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*,

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<sup>5</sup> Richard Joseph Sullivan, *Observations Made During A Tour Through Parts of England, Scotland, and Wales in Series of Letters* (London: T. Becket, 1780), 192.

<sup>6</sup> Irving, *The Crayon Miscellany*, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Stowe, *Sunny Memories*, 129.

<sup>8</sup> West, *A Guide to the Lakes*, 7.

which had hitherto not been discussed in any detail. It demonstrated that Gilpin's *Observations* was taken out into the field and followed closely, influencing the perception of the landscape, and the ruined abbey as part of that.

Along with Thomas Gray and William Gilpin, the work of Joseph Addison and Alexander Pope has been shown throughout this thesis to have been most influential in forming the perception of the ruined abbey. Addison's ruminations on ghosts appearing in the ruins of an abbey, written in one of the most popular publications of its time, led many, such as the poets Robert Blair and James Hervey to expand on his idea of 'supernumerary horror'.<sup>9</sup> Their poems amplified and disseminated a new vernacular for the ruined cemetery and ecclesiastical edifice. In the same vein, Alexander Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* became a way of articulating monastic life and a blueprint of sorts for the poems which it would inspire. Thomas Gray was one such prominent poet. In his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) he infused the stones and turf of the graveyard with meditations on mortality - 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave'.<sup>10</sup> Gray was emulated just as Pope had been, his influence heavily felt throughout the work of Edward Jerningham. Jerningham's poetry included *An Elegy Written Among the Ruins of an Abbey* (1765), and this was more vociferously anti-Catholic: 'Here also dwelt the simple-minded Swain / Who wrapt in Sloth dream'd out the lazy Year'.<sup>11</sup> When the whole poem is examined it is clear that it consists of elements taken from Pope as well as Gray. Jerningham also took what he believed to be the 'good' elements of the ruin with the 'bad' parts of the Catholic faith. William Shenstone's work was similar, *The Ruined Abbey; or, the Effects of Superstition* (1764) was assessed by Kennedy to be a work of triumphalism, marking the victory of the Reformation over the dark of Catholicism.<sup>12</sup> However, an examination of Shenstone's motivations and influences saw that this was not the case, expressed best by Dr Johnson who declared 'In his private opinions our author adhered to no particular sect, and hated all religious disputes'.<sup>13</sup> Edward Kimber who had hitherto not been considered in any scholarly work to be a writer of graveyard poetry proved through his *Written on a Brick in the Ruins of Holy-Abbey, on Holy-Island, near Berwick on Tweed, June 21, 1744* (1744) that he had contributed to this genre. It is

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<sup>9</sup> Blair, *The Grave*; James Hervey, *The Whole Works of J.H.* (Edinburgh, 1834).

<sup>10</sup> Gray, *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Jerningham, *An Elegy Written Among the Ruins*.

<sup>12</sup> Kennedy, 'The Ruined Abbey in the Eighteenth Century'.

<sup>13</sup> *London Encyclopaedia; Or, Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature and Practical Mechanics*, Volume 20 (London: Printed for Thomas Tegg, 1829), 180.

also apparent that he was heavily influenced by both Pope and Addison, providing strong evidence that their work held sway over the perception of the ruined abbey in the eighteenth century.

Graveyard poetry was a tool with which to frame the ruin, as both a terrifying and yet intriguing place to visit. These poets articulated the seemingly indescribable emotions of being within a monastic ruinous space, filling it with mouldering tombs, overgrown plant life, solitary animals, and bathing it in moonlight. These somewhat romantic images captured the imagination of many and led them to seek out these ruinous locations. The origins can partially be attributed to both Addison and Pope, but contrary to Evert Jan Van Leeuwen's assertion the legacy of these poems can be found in the work of Gothic literature.<sup>14</sup>

Highlighted in the many ministers' letters written to Henry Hutton, which had not been given much scholarly attention previously, was the experience found at smaller and less celebrated abbey sites. Hutton's endeavours to gain knowledge on the numerous priory and abbey sites of Scotland were fruitless, yet the letters provide invaluable information on attitudes towards the Catholic faith and their remnants in local communities in Scotland. Many abbeys and priories had been reduced to almost nothing, causing consternation amongst most of Hutton's correspondents. When asking older members of the community about the existence of these abbeys they knew nothing, reflecting what could be perceived to be a lack of interest in an ancient religion. Yet the existence of Catholic traditions, highlighted within the letters and the administering of the SSPCK throughout Scotland belies a waning of the Catholic faith. These letters stand in stark contrast to the romantic and picturesque view of the abbey as espoused by Gilpin. They show that when the monasteries began dissolving in Scotland, excluding the more celebrated abbeys such as Melrose and Dryburgh for example, most were carried away by the locals and used for other buildings, echoing the experience shown in chapter one. As was the case in England, this dismantling was not a sign of their change of faith, but merely seizing an opportunity to gain prepared building materials, their faith persisted.

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<sup>14</sup> Leeuwen, 'Funeral Sermons and Graveyard Poetry'.

### *A New Perspective of Anti-Catholicism?*

Linda Colley states that the reaction to the Catholic Relief Act of 1829 was far more understated than 1778, but she emphasises that it was the 'poorer, more marginal and less literate folk who were the most stridently and devotedly anti-Catholic in 1829'.<sup>15</sup> However, this anti-Catholicism needs to be placed into the wider context. As Colin Haydon has asserted, the fear of Catholicism in the eighteenth century was aimed at a more faceless 'other' than individual members of the society in which they lived. It was aimed at Catholic gentry and those higher in society. He quotes from William Hamilton Reid's *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies* (1800), an incident during the Gordon Riots where the crowd were called to 'go to such a house, as there were Catholics there', with the reply being 'What are Catholics to us? We are only against Popery!'.<sup>16</sup> Haydon also emphasises that Protestants and Catholics lived side by side, and that they needed to work together in order to get by in life.<sup>17</sup> There was certainly fear of Catholicism, but this thesis has shown that it had not manifested itself within the bricks of the ruined abbey. The amount of interest shown to ruined monasteries demonstrates there was an acceptance of their Catholic past, and Heath's guidebook to Tintern Abbey shows that there was an earnest and respectful engagement with that past.

To return to Dianne Long Hoeveler's assertion that Gothic novels had helped 'advance a clear anti-Catholic agenda': this is not the case.<sup>18</sup> While it is true that there was fear of Catholicism in Britain, especially at the end of the eighteenth century, the Gothic narratives were not adding to this. As Purves has argued, and as this thesis has found, they were entertainment and not taken as a serious political comment. Gothic narratives also assimilated tropes of the graveyard poem into their stories as a means to articulate a ruined religious space. As was the case for Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) who placed lines from Robert Blair's *The Grave* (1743) at the beginning of certain chapters.<sup>19</sup> *The Monk* also contains elements comparable to Gilpin's method of viewing the abbey, combined with the vernacular of the graveyard poem. As Lorenzo climbed a hill and looked out upon the

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<sup>15</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 340.

<sup>16</sup> W.H. Reid, *The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis* (London: Printed for J. Hatchard, 1800), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth Century England c.1714-80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology*, 200.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Lewis, *The Monk*, vol.2, 235; vol.3, 45.

ruinous castle the scene filled him with 'melancholy ideas not altogether unpleasing'.<sup>20</sup> The rest of the description contained many of the tropes synonymous with the ruined abbey. Lorenzo viewing the ruinous castle with a combination of sadness and pleasure helps to define the Gothic gaze. A way of looking upon the ruined abbey created through an amalgamation of graveyard poetry which lamented the passing of time, with the terrifying and intriguing unknown inherent in the Gothic narrative. The effectiveness of this is found in the way that the ruined abbey became an attractive and popular place to visit.

This study has shown a more comprehensive analysis of how the ruined abbey was perceived in the eighteenth century than has hitherto been explored. It has contributed towards an understanding of how the maligned Catholic components of the monastery's past were dealt with. However, it has complicated the way in which anti-Catholicism has been considered in the eighteenth-century. An inquiry into the motivations and development of the Graveyard School of poetry revealed that it was responsible for a set of tropes consequently used by Gothic literature and this challenges the assertion that the genre was vehemently anti-Catholic. A further exploration of prominent writers in the Gothic genre has shown that their main objective was not to advance an anti-Catholic rhetoric. The case studies of significant ruined abbey sites revealed that no matter what had inspired the trip to the ruined abbey there was always an interest in the Catholic past of the monastery, at odds with the apparent anti-Catholic mood of the country. This thesis has shown that there needs to be a reassessment of how anti-Catholicism is viewed not only in the context of the Gothic and the ruined abbey, but in the eighteenth-century British mindset as a whole.

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis, *The Monk*, vol 2, 50.

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