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**Jenny McAuley**

**Representations of Gothic Abbey Architecture in the Works of Four Romantic-  
Period Authors: Radcliffe, Wordsworth, Scott, Byron**

**PhD**

**University of Durham**

**Department of English Studies**

**2007**

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11 JUN 2007

**Jenny McAuley**

**Representations of Gothic Abbey Architecture in the Works of Four Romantic-Period Authors: Radcliffe, Wordsworth, Scott, Byron**

**Abstract**

This study argues the importance of the Gothic abbey to Romantic-period constructions of creative imagination and identity. I examine four Romantic-period authors with reference to particular abbey sites with which they engaged, placing their works in dialogue with contemporary topographical and antiquarian literature, aesthetic theory, and cultural trends. I consider these authors' representations of Gothic abbeys specifically in the terms of eighteenth-century picturesque landscape aesthetics, according to which the abbey was associated with contemplation. My study thus provides an alternative to readings of architectural descriptions in Romantic-period literature that have conflated abbey architecture with castle architecture (regarded as representing states of repression and confinement). Relating Ann Radcliffe to St Alban's Abbey, William Wordsworth to Furness Abbey, Sir Walter Scott to Melrose Abbey and George Gordon, Lord Byron to Newstead Abbey, I show how these authors each used their informed awareness, and aesthetic appreciation, of Gothic abbey architecture both to assert their personal senses of artistic identity and purpose, and to promote their work within a Gothic Revival-epoch literary market.

In this consideration of individual authors and their experiences and representations of specific Gothic abbey sites, my study demonstrates the usefulness of sustained engagement with the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival context to an appreciation of those many literary works of the Romantic period that feature Gothic architectural settings. It is also hoped that it may indicate possible, new directions for critical investigation into the relationships between "Gothic" and "Romantic" literature, and between the literary and the architectural Gothic.

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## Declarations

No part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university, though some similar references to Thomas Chatterton were made in my Cambridge M.Phil (2001) and Oxford M.St (2002) dissertations on other topics.

Jenny McAuley.

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## Introduction

Since Kenneth Clark so categorically stated that “more than any other movement in the plastic arts the [Gothic] Revival was a literary movement,” the eighteenth-century enthusiasm for Gothic architecture has been assured of its place in any history of British art or literature of the Romantic period.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, and the first decade of the twenty-first, literary critics, as well as art and cultural historians, have duly taken account of the architectural trends that paralleled such literary developments as the changes in meaning of the word “Gothic”; the vogue for “graveyard” poetry; literary primitivism; the emergence of the “Gothic” novel, and eighteenth-century preoccupations with a “return to nature.”<sup>2</sup>

Few such accounts have ever provided, or been intended to provide, more than potted histories of particular shifts in semantics or in perspectives on taste, their aims being to sketch in background contexts for the main works or ideas at issue. While all have tended to agree upon the existence of some essential link between the Gothic Revival in architecture and the character of British literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this is an area of enquiry that has remained comparatively under-explored, the importance of the eighteenth-century “wave” of the Gothic Revival to literary Romanticism having rarely attracted as much attention as the engagements

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (1928; London: Murray, 1962) 9.

<sup>2</sup> Frequently quoted and alluded-to examples of these include, as well as Clark, Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature,” *Modern Language Notes* 47 (1932): 419-46; Paul Frankl, *The Gothic* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1960). The “analysis of earlier attitudes towards Gothic,” as “customary prelude to histories of the 19th-century Gothic Revival,” usually beginning with semantic considerations, is meanwhile also identified by Alexandrina Buchanan in “Interpretations of Medieval Architecture, c.1550-c.1750,” *Gothic Architecture and its Meanings 1550-1830* (Reading: Spire, 2002), ed. Michael Hall, 27-50; 27.



with Gothic architecture of such nineteenth-century authors as John Ruskin, Marcel Proust and Henry James.<sup>3</sup>

In this study, I shall be attempting to redress this situation by arguing for the significance of representations of Gothic abbey architecture in Romantic-period British literature to constructions of literary identity. My broader intention in doing so is to demonstrate the usefulness of a sustained engagement with the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival context to appreciation of those many literary works of the Romantic period that feature Gothic architectural settings. Critical readings of these have paid insufficient attention to the particular ways in which their authors most immediately experienced and responded to the actual, Gothic architectural sites that inspired and informed fictions and poetic descriptions. Fundamental to my discussions, therefore, will be the distinction, derived from the aesthetic discourse of the picturesque, according to which the castle and abbey buildings classified in the period as “Gothic” were identified with martial and political power, and spiritual contemplation and seclusion respectively, the Gothic abbey being regarded as further exemplifying the picturesque of intricacy and variety in the ornateness and detail of its decoration.

By locating the Romantic-period imagery of the Gothic abbey in both its eighteenth-century Gothic Revival context, and within longer-standing traditions of representing authorship and creativity, I highlight its enduring, iconic importance in the development of specifically Romantic literary identities. At the same time, developing upon the previous work of such critics as Robert Miles, Michael Gamer and Anne

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<sup>3</sup> See especially Ellen Eve Frank, *Literary Architecture: Essays Toward a Tradition* (Berkeley: California UP, 1979).

Williams, who have attempted to define the Gothic as an aesthetic, rather than as a genre, I posit the architectural Gothic as one point of aesthetic “overlap” between literary works traditionally categorised as “Gothic” and “Romantic.”<sup>4</sup>

In the rest of this chapter, I locate my enquiries within the main critical contexts and traditions of consideration of Gothic architecture within both “Gothic” and Romantic studies. The main themes and contexts of this study will be elaborated in the subsequent chapter, in which I trace the evolution of the Gothic abbey as both defining feature of the eighteenth-century picturesque landscape, and locus for Romantic-period constructions of literary identity and creativity. The sequence of four individual author studies succeeding this begins with a discussion of how Ann Radcliffe developed the image of the Gothic abbey from both Gilpin’s landscape picturesque, and the “Miltonic” tradition of poetry, in her fictions. Radcliffe’s neglected “metrical romance,” *St Albans Abbey*, will be considered here, along with her more frequently discussed novels. I next discuss Wordsworth in relation to the ruins of Furness Abbey and Bolton Priory, explaining how he refined and exploited associations of Gothic architecture with creative identity, and applied Uvedale Price’s theory of the picturesque, both to represent his most exalted artistic ends, and to serve his commercial interests, in a Gothic Revival-epoch literary marketplace.

In the two subsequent author studies, I narrow my focus to concentrate upon the image of the occupant of the picturesque Gothic abbey, taking Sir Walter Scott and George Gordon, Lord Byron as examples of authors who respectively enacted the

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<sup>4</sup> Robert Miles, “The Gothic Aesthetic: The Gothic as Discourse,” *The Eighteenth Century* 32 (1991): 39-57; Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995); Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception and Canon-Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

“antiquary” and “aristocratic” roles of “Gothic occupant.” Scott’s close, lifelong attachment to Melrose Abbey, a possession of the Dukes of Buccleuch, will be paralleled with his imaginative appropriations of it, or versions of it, in his writings as an aspect of his authorial self-fashioning. Lastly, I consider the case of Byron, the aristocratic owner of Newstead Abbey, whose most sustained, imaginative invocation of it (in *Don Juan*) would not be achieved until after he had vacated and sold it -- and in whose poetry may be observed the full range of Romantic responses to the Gothic abbey site as locus of inspiration and creative identity, informed especially by contemporary perceptions of the intricate, varied Gothic manner as “arabesque.”

With these discussions, I suggest that the image of the low-lying, intricately-decorated, medieval Gothic abbey became for late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century authors of both poetry and prose fiction the basis for a literature parallel to the “genre” of “Loyalist Gothic” that James Watt has identified as having developed in the period around the image of the elevated, solidly-constructed castle.<sup>5</sup> While the secular, authoritative functions associated with the castle in the Romantic period dictated a concern in the “genre” identified by Watt with political and dynastic issues, the predominantly contemplative character ascribed to the abbey not only in picturesque aesthetics, but also in the eighteenth-century tradition of consciously melancholic literature stemming from John Milton’s “Il Penseroso,” ensured its prominence within fictions concerned with or characterised by aspects of literary identity and self-fashioning. However, under the pre-eminent influence of Michel Foucault’s studies of institutional buildings as expressions of power and sites of confinement, modern criticism has tended generally to conflate the Gothic abbey’s

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<sup>5</sup> See James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 7; 42-69.

institutional and authoritative functions with those of the castle.<sup>6</sup> From this basic interpretation have derived subsequent, also influential, psychoanalytic and feminist responses to architecture in the Gothic novel.<sup>7</sup>

In my emphasis upon the Romantic-period perception of Gothic abbeys as inspirational loci in this study, I do not seek either to challenge or to correct the many compelling readings that earlier approaches have enabled within the field of “gothic studies.” Certainly there are abundant instances of literature -- *The Monk* (1796), *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer* (1800) and *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) being notable examples -- in which Gothic architecture, even explicitly-described Gothic abbey architecture, does serve merely atmospheric, or definitely politically-symbolic purposes.<sup>8</sup> As novels, however, these works only partially represent the range of literary responses to Gothic architecture, and the Gothic abbey in particular. The confinement of consideration of Gothic architecture in Romantic-period literature to study of the novel is thus a critical tendency that I depart from here in the interests not only of enhancing and adding to existing readings of Romantic-period prose fiction, but also of developing work toward establishing the Gothic as an aesthetic that linked literary forms in the Romantic period, rather than as a generic divide between them.

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<sup>6</sup> See especially the chapter entitled “The Correctional World,” in Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2006) 78-107, and “The Eye of Power,” in Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper (Brighton: Harvester, 1980) 146-65.

<sup>7</sup> Examples include Williams, as well as Kate Ferguson Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana and Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1989), and Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (University Park: Pennsylvania UP, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> See Matthew Lewis, *The Monk*, ed. Howard Anderson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 26; Charles Maturin, *Melmoth The Wanderer*, ed. Alethea Hayter (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977) 514-15; Charlotte Smith, *Letters of a Solitary Wanderer*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Poole: Woodstock, 1995) 17-20.

The architectural-literary relationship was in fact among the earliest hallmarks of the “Gothic” novel to be identified in the first wave of serious criticism of that genre. As Anne Williams has also noted, critics at this juncture also viewed the Gothic less separately from other Romantic-period literature than would later become customary.<sup>9</sup> The title of Eino Railo’s *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (1927) not only posits the sinister, or merely evocative building as characteristic of the literature in question, but also identifies this literature with “Romanticism.”<sup>10</sup> Railo used the “Haunted Castle” as a collective term for those particular images and concepts typical of the eighteenth-century romance -- the “Gothic” of extreme states and imposing settings -- which he believed to have informed the later, more familiar Romantic literary idiom.

More representative of early “gothic studies” was Edith Birkhead’s *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (1921), which effectively established the association, consolidated through subsequent, similar studies, of the idea of the “Gothic” with the form of prose fiction known in its own period as “romance.”<sup>11</sup> This Birkhead defined as being concerned primarily with terror, as evinced in its authors’ preoccupations with sinister locations, saturnine villains and distressed heroes and heroines, and concerns with physical, psychological, or political extremes. This view has been maintained throughout later decades of studies in the field, with the consequence that the “Gothic” has been most understood in the broad sense of a

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<sup>9</sup> See Williams 5.

<sup>10</sup> Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (London: Routledge, 1927).

<sup>11</sup> Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (London: Constable, 1921). As well as Railo, frequently-cited successors to this included Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune, 1938) and Devendra Varma, *The Gothic Flame, Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England, Its Origins, Efflorescence, Disintegration, and Residuary Influences* (New York: Russell, 1966).

literature of excess, corruption or terror. At the end of the 1920s, when “Romanticism” was still most generally understood as being defined by a post-Enlightenment, optimistic sense of the essentially perfectible quality of humankind -- and as having found its most important expressions in poetry, rather than in prose -- another consequence of such a reading of “Gothic” literature as Birkhead’s was a tendency for critics to consider the Gothic novel as marginal to the “mainstream” of Romantic literature.

In attempting to identify links between literature and Gothic architecture, Kenneth Clark contributed significantly to the perpetuation of this Gothic-Romantic dichotomy by his insistence upon such a separateness of Gothic novels from the Gothic Revival. He identified the “true” literary manifestations of that architectural trend in the mid eighteenth-century, contemplative poetry of Thomas Gray and the brothers Joseph and Thomas Warton, figures whose uses of Gothic architectural settings were authenticated by their antiquarian expertise. Having asserted that there was no need to “emphasise the connection between this [mid eighteenth-century] love of dramatised decay and Gothic architecture,” Clark stated that “it is possible to find direct evidence of a connection between literary and architectural taste [in the eighteenth century].” He claimed with regard to the Gothic novelists, however, that

Reaction was ... almost their only connection with the architectural side of the Gothic Revival ... it is impossible to show such a smooth interaction, or even a close parallel between eighteenth-century Gothic novels and buildings. The Gothicness, so to speak, of the romances consisted in gloom, wildness and fear ... this Gothicness was not at all closely connected with architectural forms ... The horror-romantics have their place in the Gothic Revival because they show the frame of mind in which the multitude of novel-readers looked at medieval buildings.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Clark 44-45.

Clark's conclusion here is that the Gothic novel was far less relevant to the Gothic Revival than were the works of legitimate, informed antiquaries. It is a judgement -- and one that I intend to challenge, with particular reference to Ann Radcliffe -- that effectively distances the Gothic novel from what might otherwise profitably have been considered as possible, architectural antecedents. It also cuts them off from the perceived mainstream of Romantic literature and its criticism with its implication that the romances occupied a less exalted literary plane (or genre). In Clark's influential study was thus enforced the notion that late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature was divided into two currents -- the prose "Gothic," and the poetic "Romantic," while any possibility that the Gothic Revival may have represented a common aesthetic linking "Gothic" and "Romantic," as well as prose and poetry, in the period, was likewise obscured.

For years afterwards, critics of the literary Gothic would work upon similar assumptions of a separation of Gothic from Romantic, treating the former always in terms of the novel, and as a marginal form. Gothic was represented as something either to be rehabilitated, or to be confirmed as retrograde and immature, noteworthy only in its having supplied such superficial tropes and effects as atmospheric architectural settings for use in the mature works of Romantic poets who had read romances when young.<sup>13</sup> Other twentieth-century attempts to relate the Gothic to the Romantic would tend to result in essentially inconsequential comparisons of contents,

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<sup>13</sup> See the debate staged in Robert D. Hume, "Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel," *PMLA* 84 (1969): 282-90, and Robert L. Platzner, "'Gothic versus Romantic': A Rejoinder," *PMLA* 86 (1971): 266-74.

or checklists of intertexts, between canonical Romantic texts and the Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe in particular.<sup>14</sup>

Such work must, however, be credited with having at least partially anticipated Gamer's argument as to the extent to which canonical Romantic authors absorbed and deployed elements of the supposedly more populist Gothic in their writing. A more important attempt to consider the "Gothic" as more closely related to the "Romantic" than had been allowed was made by Robert Kiely in *The Romantic Novel in England* (1972). While Kiely enforced a formal, or generic, hierarchy, stating that "The first great and seminal works of English Romanticism were poems," he also asserted that "it would be inaccurate to consider the experimental novels of the period as mere prose by-products of a poetic revolution."<sup>15</sup> Kiely's study also pays close attention to the background of "Gothicism" against which such works as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* were conceived.<sup>16</sup> However, while the importance of architectural aesthetics to such "Romantic Novelists" as Walpole and Radcliffe emerges clearly through his work as an idea, Kiely does not explore the possibility that this architectural element of the Gothic, or "Romantic" novel, could represent a more important point of overlap between this form and the rest of Romantic-period literature.

The late 1960s had meanwhile seen the architectural motifs of the Gothic novel under newly serious and sustained consideration, with the arguments of Michel Foucault gaining most currency. Identifying the late eighteenth century as the period in which architecture became directly involved in the material and economic regulation of

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<sup>14</sup> See Martha Hale Shackelford, "'The Eve of St Agnes' and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*," *PMLA* 31 (1921): 76-94, and Edward Dramin, "'Amid the Jagged Shadows': 'Christabel' and the Gothic Tradition," *Wordsworth Circle* 13 (1982): 221-28.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1972) 6.

<sup>16</sup> Kiely 27-30.



Western society, Foucault read the “Gothic” literature of the revolutionary period explicitly as having been produced by this context, making no distinction between characters or styles of the various types of architecture he considered:

... chateaux, lazerets, bastilles and convents inspired even in the pre-Revolutionary period a suspicion and hatred exacerbated by a certain political overdetermination ... During the Revolutionary period the Gothic novels develop a whole fantasy-world of stone walls, darkness, hideouts and dungeons ... these imaginary spaces are like the negative of the transparency and visibility which it is aimed to establish.<sup>17</sup>

Such questions of the specifically political significances of Gothic literature would dominate the first, and still most influential, of the late twentieth-century full-length studies of Gothic as a genre, David Punter’s *The Literature of Terror* (1980).<sup>18</sup> The failure of so many subsequent critics to consider the representations of architecture in the Gothic novel as anything more than what Robert D. Hume had referred to as “merely atmospheric,” or than the power-bases of Foucault’s interpretation, may perhaps at least partly be ascribed to the success and influence of Punter’s political readings. Punter’s work cannot, however, be blamed for the comparative neglect of either the possibilities for re-evaluation of the Gothic-Romantic relationship, or of those for approaching the Gothic novel via the Gothic Revival context.

As well as devoting the fourth chapter of *The Literature of Terror* to consideration of the influence of the Gothic upon the “high” Romantic poets (albeit within the terms of the typical, loose definition of “Gothic” as concerned with extremes, excess and the supernatural), Punter most definitively established the literary-critical commonplace

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<sup>17</sup> Foucault, “The Eye of Power” 148; 153-54; see also Foucault, *History of Madness* 362, where it is remarked that “the whole fantasy literature of madness and horror [i.e. the Gothic] contemporary with Sade’s work takes place primarily in the high places of confinement [including “the Fortress” and “the Convent”].”

<sup>18</sup> David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day* (London: Longman, 1980).

of locating the Gothic novel within the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival context (taking in such aspects as the contemporary debates as to the origins and meanings of the word “Gothic,” and the role of “graveyard” poetry as antecedent) in his second chapter, “The origins of Gothic fiction.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, in his introductory chapter, he would suggest “the approach via the Gothic Revival as a recognisable movement in the history of culture” first in a list of five possible routes for Gothic studies, continuing with the hint that “within this approach is the possibility of developing the important analogue with architecture,” and citing the work of Maurice Lévy (to be discussed shortly) in that area.<sup>20</sup>

The challenge of engaging with the architectural Gothic in Romantic-period literature on terms that could move such considerations beyond brief, contextualising invocations of Strawberry Hill and Fonthill Abbey has, however, only rarely been confronted in Anglophone scholarship since the 1970s. Studies on the model established by Punter in *The Literature of Terror* have tended to develop most upon the directions already taken by Punter, rather than upon those that he indicated as future possibilities.<sup>21</sup> However, late twentieth and early twenty-first-century discussions of genre within Romantic-period literature have raised the possibility of approaching at least the “Gothic” fiction of the Romantic period through its Gothic Revival, architectural context. Robert Miles’s 1991 article “The Gothic Aesthetic: The Gothic as Discourse” is in this respect suggestive, even while no specific allusion to the architectural Gothic is made in a discussion which highlights the “fragmented,

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<sup>19</sup> See Punter ch.4 (99-129); ch.2 (22-60).

<sup>20</sup> Punter 19.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Miles’s *Gothic Writing 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 1993) and Maggie Kilgour’s *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), with their novel-centred and theoretical approaches, are examples that continue to be frequently cited.

multifarious” (and genre-crossing) character of the cultural “movement” inspired by primitive and medieval cultures associated with the irregular and heterogeneous.<sup>22</sup>

Anne Williams’s *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (1995) is among the most important studies to follow Miles’s in considering “Gothic writing” as encompassing “poetry as well as fiction.”<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Williams places considerable emphasis not only upon the architectural motif of Gothic fiction, but also posits the “Gothic” as integral, rather than marginal, to the cultural movement of Romanticism. In Williams’s broadest interpretation of the architecture of the Gothic novel, however (and aside from one illuminating remark upon Pope’s use of architectural style in the setting of “Eloisa to Abelard,” to be mentioned again below) the castles and the abbeys of the various romances are again conflated as versions of a house, or, after Railo, as a “haunted castle” that, Williams argues, embodied the patriarchal family and its dynamics -- these being, according to Williams, at the heart of the entire “complex” of the Gothic.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, it is more with regard to ideas of “Gothic” gender relations and patriarchal politics than to any more external, aesthetic aspects that Williams discusses her choices of “Romantic” poems, in the latter half of her study.

The castle/house metaphor, as Williams regarded it, would in particular come to dominate later twentieth-century readings of the Gothic novel, with many authors citing Edmund Burke and William Blackstone’s uses of such imagery. It would increase in currency as feminist critics considered the Gothic novel as critique of

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<sup>22</sup> Miles, “The Gothic Aesthetic” 39.

<sup>23</sup> Miles, “The Gothic Aesthetic” 40.

<sup>24</sup> Williams 12; 20-22

domestic, as well as state politics.<sup>25</sup> While the metaphors of the castle and house have provided bases for many valid readings, however, they are not representative of the full range of the possible eighteenth-century and Romantic-period responses to different building-types that equally conditioned literary treatments of such buildings -- many of which have remained obscure, while modern critical and ideological preoccupations have dominated approaches to the texts.

James Watt has asserted the importance of a more “historical” perspective upon the Gothic novel than the retrospective, categorising tendencies of modern criticism have tended to enable, stressing the importance of “[taking] into account the range of literal meanings which the term [Gothic] held in the late eighteenth century.”<sup>26</sup> Whilst concentrating on the more historical and political significances for eighteenth-century authors of imagery of medieval culture generally, rather than upon Gothic architecture in particular, Watt raises possibilities for the consideration of eighteenth-century engagements with “Gothic” culture as aspects of authorial self-fashioning. His scope therefore extends, as that of this study will do, beyond more typical, contextualising allusions to the Gothic Revival as an expression of anti-classicism and simple backdrop to the genesis of “Gothic” fiction. With its focus upon the Gothic novel, meanwhile, Watt’s work contains little sustained consideration of how far *poetry* of the period was informed by contemporary interests in the medieval.

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<sup>25</sup> See, as well as Williams and Ellis, E. J. Clery, “The Politics of the Gothic Heroine in the 1790s,” Philip W. Martin and Robin Jarvis, eds. *Reviewing Romanticism* (New York: St Martin’s, 1992) 69-85, especially 76-80. Clery cites William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765) 15th ed, 4 vols (London, 1809) 3: 268; see also Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), ed. L. G. Mitchell and Paul Langford, *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, 8 vols. to date (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981-2000) 8: 53-293; 85.

<sup>26</sup> Watt 2.

This is something far from neglected in the work of Michael Gamer, who of all recent critics has come closest to realising Peter Garside's prediction that "critical investigations are ... likely to consider the Gothic more fully in relation to poetry."<sup>27</sup>

In *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception and Canon-Formation* (2000), Gamer, like Williams, has argued that "high" Romanticism as exemplified by such authors as Wordsworth, and the supposedly "lower," more populist form of the Gothic were far more closely intertwined than either those critics who have represented them as contemporaneous but separate, or those who have indicated a kind of chronological progression, or maturation, from "Gothic" to "Romantic" have tended to assume. As Gamer explains:

It is no accident that a considerable amount of early nineteenth-century writing explicitly denies (or otherwise deflects) its association with the gothic at its moments of closest kinship ... within [these moments of adjacency and overlap] the gothic perpetually haunts, as an aesthetic to be rejected, romanticism's construction of high literary culture.<sup>28</sup>

However, whilst insisting that "gothic" was not so much a genre, as an aesthetic permeating all imaginative literature of the Romantic period, Gamer does not attempt to characterise this "aesthetic," taking a similarly general view of it to that of Miles (1991), from which article he develops his own thesis. In Gamer's discussions, "gothic" apparently remains the amorphous accumulation of ideas and imagery invoked in most discussions of it as a genre, and taking in concern with the supernatural and preoccupation with the past, as well as the established, but always simplified, associations with imposing medieval buildings and nocturnal settings. Meanwhile, as is most amply demonstrated by the chapter in which he argues that Scott's antiquarianism represented an attempt to "legitimise" the sensationalist,

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Garside, "Romantic Gothic," *Literature of the Romantic Period: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998) 315-40; 315.

<sup>28</sup> Gamer 7.

“feminine” Gothic novel genre, Gamer’s study itself invites, still more compellingly than Watt’s, the possibility of isolating the architectural Gothic which, far from having been “rejected” by Romantic authors, represents one definite point of overlap by which the extent of the Gothic “aesthetic’s” permeation of both “Romantic” and “Gothic” literature might be ascertained.

Gamer’s important arguments could thus be well supported by a refinement of focus upon the Gothic “aesthetic” of Romantic-period literature -- but also still necessary is that clearer sense of what constituted this which, I consider, could be at least partly attained through viewing the literature from the perspective of the contemporary Gothic Revival. Of those studies whose authors have treated Romantic-period representations of Gothic architecture, and in particular of Gothic abbeys, as having had significance beyond the mere provision of atmospheric effects, or of political metaphors, a work still suggestive of many possible routes into further exploration of different types of architectural setting in the Romantic-period novel is Warren Hunting Smith’s *Architecture in English Fiction* (1934).<sup>29</sup>

While Smith attempted little in-depth analysis of the instances of architectural description he identified, his study, with its vast range of examples, and astute (if never elaborated) hints regarding contexts, broke ground that has remained largely unexplored since the late 1960s. Most significantly, Smith noted how details of architectural style could “[serve] a purpose in ... narrative,” and shows awareness of a special importance of the Gothic style, as exemplified in abbey ruins, within eighteenth-century fiction -- as well as challenging Clark’s denial of a parallel

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<sup>29</sup> Warren Hunting Smith, *Architecture in English Fiction* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1934).

between “Gothic” prose fiction and the Gothic Revival.<sup>30</sup> Smith crucially established the eighteenth-century aesthetic of the picturesque as the major context within which the literary representations of Gothic architecture (and, concomitantly, the Gothic Revival as it relates to literature) should be viewed -- as well as highlighting associations of particular character-types with particular manners of building.

As Smith dealt with architectural representation in the novel, meanwhile, so Robert Arnold Aubin would consider poetic treatments of buildings in a chapter of a 1936 survey of topographical poetry of the period.<sup>31</sup> Aubin’s work remains especially useful in its discussions of the classical origins of the loco-descriptive tradition in literature that would find a later mode of expression in the eighteenth-century vogue for poetic evocations of buildings. Identifying “Gothic or ruin sentiment” as perhaps “the most characteristic theme of eighteenth-century poetry,” Aubin also highlighted the Miltonic strain in poetic representation of Gothic architecture, but drew little attention to the castle-abbey distinction that conditioned so many of the period’s responses to different buildings.<sup>32</sup>

The very rare early Anglophone successors to Clark’s, Smith’s, and Aubin’s studies would fail to realise the potential indicated in these for investigation of the relationship between literature (of whatever form) and the Gothic Revival. Despite a title apparently promising a comprehensive examination of relations and interrelations between the two movements it names, Agnes Addison’s *Romanticism and the Gothic*

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<sup>30</sup> Smith 4.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Arnold Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1936); see especially ch.4 (147-93).

<sup>32</sup> Aubin, *Topographical Poetry* 165; 166. Aubin would provide another contribution of lasting importance to considerations of literary representations of Gothic architecture, and their cultural contexts, in “Grottoes, Geology and the Gothic Revival,” *Studies in Philology* 31 (1934): 408-16, to be referred to in the following chapter.

*Revival* (1967; reprinted from a 1938 PhD thesis) would offer little more than a rehearsal of the substance of Clark's *Gothic Revival*, dismissing any notion that a relationship could have existed between most British "Romantic" literature and the Gothic Revival.<sup>33</sup>

Far less reluctant to explore the precise meaning of the Gothic Revival to Romantic-period literature has been Maurice Lévy. In *Le roman «gothique» Anglais 1764-1824* (1968), he supported his insistence upon the close relation of the literary to the architectural Gothic in the period with an exhaustive overview of the production and reception of Gothic images and descriptions throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>34</sup> His title would form part of his intended corrective to the customary French designation of eighteenth-century romances as *romans noirs*, apparently in keeping with the general definition (indicated by "gothic" in Anglophone criticism) of such literature as being concerned with the "darker" ("black") aspects of human nature and experience.

For Lévy, the word "*noir*" would be insufficient to convey what he considered to be the true unifying principle of the English literary Gothic: its consistent location within particular architectural spaces that, in their ancientness, loftiness and obscurities, inspired sensations of wonder mingled with "un sentiment de crainte irraisonnée."<sup>35</sup> Most importantly where the present purpose is concerned, he also identified the particular, intricate manner of Gothic decorative style deplored within neo-classical

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<sup>33</sup> Agnes Addison, *Romanticism and the Gothic Revival* (New York: Gordian, 1967). Addison makes a pertinent account of Thomas Chatterton's Gothic architectural engagements, but cites only Scott as having made any substantial engagement with the Romantic-period Gothic Revival.

<sup>34</sup> Maurice Lévy, *Le roman «gothique» Anglais 1764-1824* (Toulouse: Association des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Toulouse, 1968).

<sup>35</sup> Lévy, *Le roman «gothique»*, 15-16.



tastes as specifically demonstrative, for Romantic-period authors, of imagination itself, comparing this style also with the character of the “grotesque”:

Les gargouilles fantastiques ... les dragons ailés de l'art médiéval étaient aussi difficiles à accepter, pour l'amateur de pureté grecque, que les monstres multiples et variés qui hantent les grottes et les cavernes des romans de chevalerie. Tout «gothique» relève d'un imagination fantastique ou grotesque, toute œuvre d'imagination est plus ou moins «gothique».<sup>36</sup>

Lévy's plethora of examples of verbal and graphic representations still valuably highlights the tradition that had developed in English literature during the eighteenth century of representing specifically Gothic buildings (either ruined or intact) as sites of contemplation and imaginative impulse -- to which the advent of the Gothic novel merely added newly sinister resonances. As recently as 1994, and in response to ongoing debates as to the definition and application of the term “gothic,” Lévy was continuing “to defend the notion that the ‘gothic’ phenomenon cannot be dissociated from a specific background.”<sup>37</sup> A wide variety of literary works, from various periods, having come by the 1990s to have been designated “gothic” on the broad basis of their shared concern with the extreme and the supernatural, Lévy remained adamant that “Gothic,” for him at least, continued to have “that special eighteenth-century flavour, which attaches itself to ruined castles and abbeys.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, and some years sooner than Williams, or Gamer, Lévy concluded that “Le gothique participe, sans doute, de l'esthétique romantique.”<sup>39</sup>

Generally, however, the Gothic abbey as a central, iconic image within Romantic-period literature remained largely ignored by critics throughout the rest of the 1970s

<sup>36</sup> Lévy, *Le roman «gothique»* (1968) 53.

<sup>37</sup> Maurice Lévy, “‘Gothic’ and the Critical Idiom,” *Gothick Origins and Innovations*, ed. Allan Lloyd Smith and Victor Sage (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994) 1-15; 2.

<sup>38</sup> Lévy, “‘Gothic’ and the Critical Idiom” 2.

<sup>39</sup> Lévy, *Le roman «gothique»* 646.

and the 1980s. The first, and for many years the only, significant development upon Lévy's work would be *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism* (1974), a collection of essays edited by G. R. Thompson.<sup>40</sup> Working from the premise that the Gothic was an expression of Romantic sensibilities (but all concerned with prose fiction), the authors of some of these studies considered more seriously than any critics since Smith, including Lévy, had done the possible significances of the characteristic manner of the Gothic cathedral, with its pointed arches and intricate, grotesque decorations, in those literary works for which it provided settings (though they conceived of the significance of the architectural Gothic in metaphorical, rather than material, terms).<sup>41</sup> A similar rare, sustained and systematic attempt to indicate a "common spirit" behind Gothic architecture and "Gothic" prose fiction -- again, in terms of a figurative "affinity" between the architecture and the literature -- would be made by Robin Lydenburg in 1978, while in 1984 Kevin L. Morris discussed the relationship between "high" European Romanticism and Gothic architecture in specifically religious terms.<sup>42</sup>

A continuing sense of the possible parallels between the architectural Gothic and aspects of the "Gothic" novel has, however, prevented the complete disappearance of the image of the specifically Gothic-styled building from critical discussion. Jerrold E. Hogle considers the architectural Gothic within the terms of his discussion of the labyrinth as a location characteristic of the Gothic novel in "The Restless Labyrinth:

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<sup>40</sup> G.R. Thompson, ed., *The Gothic Imagination: Essays in Dark Romanticism* (Pullman: Washington State UP, 1974).

<sup>41</sup> See especially Joel Porte, "In the Hands of an Angry God: Religious Terror in Gothic Fiction," Thompson, ed. (1994) 42-64, and Barton Levi St-Armand, "The Mysteries of Edgar Poe: The Quest for a Monomyth in Gothic Literature," Thompson, ed., 65-93; 66.

<sup>42</sup> See Robin Lydenberg, "Gothic Architecture and Fiction: A Survey of Critical Responses," *Centennial Review* 22 (1978): 95-109; 96, 101, and Kevin L. Morris, *The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature* (London: Croom, 1984).

Cryptonomy in the Gothic Novel” (1980).<sup>43</sup> He makes the important observation here that “delicate” or “ornate” were possible definitions of “Gothic” by the late eighteenth century, as well as remarking that “The revival of interest in Gothic structures [in the period] ... is concerned mainly with the varied styles of ‘intricate cloisters’ or vaults and rarely with the informing concepts of Church and State in the Middle Ages” -- a comment showing an astute awareness of the precedence taken by aesthetics over politics in the later eighteenth-century vogue for the architectural Gothic.<sup>44</sup>

Hogle’s remarks hint most usefully at the extent to which Gothic architectural intricacy informed constructions of imaginative and creative processes, and the identities connected with these, within the broader field of literature in the Romantic period -- though in more recent years Hogle himself has moved from this apparent awareness of the potential for considering appreciation of Gothic architecture as an aspect of the relationship between “Gothic” and “Romantic,” to a view, expressed in a study of Keats, that Romantic authors used medieval (including architectural) imagery more ambiguously, as part of a process of “abjecting” problematic impulses and ideologies.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, prose narrative seems generally to have been the aspect of Gothic fiction to attract most comparisons with the intricate forms of Gothic architecture, Elizabeth R. Napier having noted similarities between the “confusion”

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<sup>43</sup> Jerrold E. Hogle, “The Restless Labyrinth: Cryptonomy in the Gothic Novel,” *Gothic: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Fred Botting and Dale Townsend, 4 vols. (London: Routledge, 2004) 1: 145-66.

<sup>44</sup> Hogle, “The Restless Labyrinth” 147.

<sup>45</sup> See Jerrold E. Hogle, “The Gothic-Romantic Relationship: Underground Histories in ‘The Eve of St. Agnes,’” *European Romantic Review* 14 (2003): 205-23. I agree that Keats’s attitudes to Gothic architecture were as complicated as Hogle argues, which is why this poet will not be coming into sustained focus in this study of authors who did engage positively with the contemporary Gothic Revival.

and “disjunction” of Gothic novels, and Gothic architecture as this was regarded by early eighteenth-century detractors such as John Evelyn.<sup>46</sup>

While the possible significance of the architectural and decorative styles of medieval abbey settings in Romantic literature would remain comparatively neglected, increased critical attention to the aesthetics of ruin and fragmentation in Romantic poetry would keep the image of the abbey (along with that of the castle) in focus.<sup>47</sup>

With *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (1990), Anne Janowitz established an influential perspective upon eighteenth-century and Romantic-period poetry informed and inspired by aesthetic responses to ruined architecture.<sup>48</sup> Janowitz's study most importantly identifies a shift, from the mid-eighteenth century, from the representation of ruined architecture in temporal, narrative terms to the evocation of such sites in spatial, more descriptive (and subjective) terms.<sup>49</sup>

Also highlighted by Janowitz, as well as such essential backgrounds to eighteenth-century ruin perceptions as antiquarianism, is what she terms a “collapse of distinction between poem and building, self and object of contemplation” in Romantic-period versions of ruin description.<sup>50</sup> Her narration of a “movement from public terror [at old, authoritarian structures] to private melancholy ... [that] matches the reduction of poetic scope from recording the objects of monumentality to expressing subjective

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<sup>46</sup> See Elizabeth R. Napier, *The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth-Century Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 70-71.

<sup>47</sup> Aubin, *Topographical Poetry*, remarks upon how “closely allied” the eighteenth-century poetry on Gothic architecture was to the “ruin-poems” (181).

<sup>48</sup> Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

<sup>49</sup> See Janowitz 7.

<sup>50</sup> Janowitz 9.

reactions” would enable such later readings of eighteenth-century architectural descriptions as Deborah Kennedy’s (to be discussed shortly), and has crucially informed the present investigation.<sup>51</sup>

However, while it provides one of the essential background accounts of the literary and aesthetic contexts of the Romantic-period’s imaginative preoccupation with ruined architecture, Janowitz’s study makes no consideration of how authors might have been inspired or affected by the specific styles of the ruined buildings they described. Buildings’ original functions are discussed as important within the formation of political associations, but most emphasis is placed upon the ruined castle as an image and theme of texts (though no specific focus upon the castle, as distinct from any other building-type, is announced). Janowitz’s particular interest in the condition of ruin, rather than in any particular style of architecture as ruined, also limits her arguments as far as my own purposes are concerned, though they maintain their essential relevance; as I shall be showing with reference to Uvedale Price’s picturesque aesthetics, the condition of ruin and the Gothic style of medieval abbey architecture were closely related within Romantic-period perceptions.

Sustained engagement with the characteristic style, or styles, of the architectural Gothic as a consciously-chosen aspect of setting in particular eighteenth-century or Romantic period texts remained rare until the late 1990s, and almost always formed parts of discussions of prose fiction. One such momentary instance would be Anne Williams’s remark, regarding Alexander Pope’s “Eloisa to Abelard,” that

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<sup>51</sup> Janowitz 62; see also Deborah Kennedy, “The Ruined Abbey in the Eighteenth Century,” *Philological Quarterly* 80 (2001): 501-23.

Like the cloister, [Eloisa] is an enclosed space -- dark, mysterious, secretive, complex. Hence it is appropriate that Pope imagines the Paraclete in the shadowy, intricate, Gothic style of Chartres or Notre Dame (which would emerge a century later), rather than placing his Eloisa within the plain twelfth-century Romanesque architecture of the historical Heloise's time.<sup>52</sup>

A more sustained consideration of Gothic architecture, in which it is viewed as sharing characteristic aspects with the Gothic labyrinth, is Fred Botting's "Power in the Darkness: Heterotopias, Literature and Gothic Labyrinths" (first published in *Genre* 26 (1993): 253-82). Another narrative-centred discussion, this most notably applies Foucault's theory in a manner suggestive of certain possibilities for viewing the figure of the author in relation to the Gothic architectural settings of Romantic-period literature.<sup>53</sup> Taking Foucault's "On Other Spaces" as his point of departure, Botting establishes the edifices of Gothic fiction as "heterotopias," spaces dedicated to states and experiences to be undergone beyond the customary boundaries of societies.<sup>54</sup> He identifies with these the Gothic motif of the labyrinth, to the particular structure and character of which he also relates those of Gothic buildings such as Fonthill Abbey.<sup>55</sup>

The salient aspect shared by the labyrinth and the Romantic Gothic abbey in Botting's account is that of a potentially confusing, but also exhilarating (and "licentious"), multiplicity of forms and features. As well as rehearsing established ideas regarding Gothic design as "implicated in the development of a counter-classical framework," Botting also observes that

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<sup>52</sup> Williams 52-53.

<sup>53</sup> Fred Botting, "Power in the Darkness: Heterotopias, Literature and Gothic Labyrinths," in Botting and Townsend, eds., 2: 243-68.

<sup>54</sup> See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16 (1986): 22-27.

<sup>55</sup> See Botting 250.

Gothic designs were linked to different forms of the imagination and its relationship to social and physical space: vastness and intricacy ... signified an extension of mind towards infinity, a perception of subjective freedom and boundlessness.<sup>56</sup>

Within the particular context of Botting's argument (concerned with issues of control within the structures of heterotopias), this remark has important ramifications for consideration of the roles not only of characters, but also of authors (William Beckford being Botting's own major example of one of these) as consciously self-representing elements within the Gothic spaces described in Romantic-period literature. While the archetype of the labyrinth, rather than of the Gothic abbey, continues to dominate in Botting's discussion, his arguments become all the more compelling, where the Gothic abbey as expression of the Romantic imagination is concerned, when he considers the necessity of an organising figure within the labyrinth (or, in the specific terms of this point of his study, the panopticon).<sup>57</sup>

As Botting explains, where the "labyrinthine" structure in question is a novel, either the author, or a narrating, or central, character may take this role, elucidating to the reader the actual unity of what might seem confusingly-ordered multiplicities of characters or plot-developments. Botting subsequently traces the development of representations of such a "principal personage," showing their evolution as an urbane, disinterested, gentlemanly type able "to penetrate all things and uncover their essential differences, to be conversant with the manners of all ranks of life."<sup>58</sup> With one example Botting gives to illustrate this being that of the emergence of lawyer characters in relation to narratives of the "labyrinth" of law in "Gothic" fiction (257), his idea may usefully be applied in consideration of representations of such other

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<sup>56</sup> Botting 250.

<sup>57</sup> See Botting 254, where the argument develops upon Foucault, "Of Other Spaces."

<sup>58</sup> Botting 256.

types associated with Gothic settings in the Romantic period as antiquaries and aristocratic owners. These, as characters -- or, in the particular cases of Scott and Byron, as authors -- may also be regarded as “principal personages,” subjects who order the intricate, varied, “labyrinthine” Gothic architectural settings in which they appear.

The intricate style of Gothic cathedral architecture would nevertheless remain, for Botting, only matter for comparison with the idea of the labyrinth that provided the main focus of his study. The literary significance of the Gothic abbey, as distinct from other types of “Gothic” architecture, in the Romantic period would be more compellingly asserted by Claire Lamont in 1995, in a reading of Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* that stressed the aesthetic and associative terms in which Romantic-period authors such as Austen would have viewed Gothic architecture, arguing that Austen’s heroine Catherine Morland understandably confuses the distinction between the picturesque architectural categories of the ecclesiastical and castellar (General Tilney having imposed his “castellar” authority upon a former site of female community).<sup>59</sup> With relevance to texts beyond Austen’s novel, Lamont identifies the “two opposing signifying systems” with which medieval castles and abbeys were associated in Gothic novels:

The castle is associated with aggression, extroversion and the male; it dominates its landscape. The monastery is associated with repression, introversion and the female, and lies half-hidden in a valley.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Claire Lamont, “Jane Austen’s Gothic Architecture,” *Exhibited by Candlelight: Sources and Developments in the Gothic Tradition*, ed. Valeria Tinkler-Villani and Peter Davidson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995) 107-15; see also Stephen Clarke, “Abbeys Real and Imagined: Northanger, Fonthill, and Aspects of the Gothic Revival,” *Persuasions* 20 (1998): 92-105.

<sup>60</sup> Lamont 108.



While Foucault's thought on late eighteenth-century architecture and literature is not specifically invoked in Lamont's article, this, and the trend in late twentieth-century criticism that it influenced, is recalled by the remark preceding the observation that Eleanor Tilney, in Austen's novel, shows awareness of Northanger Abbey as a former site of women's refuge and contemplation:

Critics of the Gothic motif of the monastery usually stress imprisonment rather than the spiritual role of such a building. A monastic building in the Gothic novel is a place where someone is kept either against their will or at least in denial of the full range of their passions.<sup>61</sup>

Despite Lamont's clear indication of at least one alternative perspective from which to consider the representation of the Gothic abbey in Romantic-period literature, few further instances of such an argument have emerged. Joëlle Prunghaud's *Gothique et décadence* (1997) is, therefore, significant as a full-length, late twentieth-century study in which the characteristic style of the architectural Gothic takes precedence within a discussion of Gothic literary and architectural relationships -- and not merely as an analogue for the form or content of Gothic novels.<sup>62</sup> All Prunghaud's most convincing points regarding the significance of the architectural Gothic to the literary imagination relate most, however, to late nineteenth-century Decadence. The surveys and discussions of Romantic-period "Gothic" texts that form the background to this major, late nineteenth-century focus of Prunghaud's are meanwhile located firmly within the "gothic studies" tradition of viewing Romantic-period Gothic as a "literature of terror."

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<sup>61</sup> Lamont 108-09.

<sup>62</sup> Joëlle Prunghaud, *Gothique et décadence: recherches sur la continuité d'un mythe et d'un genre au XIXe siècle en Grande-Bretagne et en France* (Paris: Champion, 1997).

With these reservations in mind -- and taking into account the essential differences in the Romantic and Decadent attitudes to Gothic architecture as Prungnaud identifies these -- Prungnaud's explanation of the appeal of the cathedral Gothic to Decadent sensibilities has much relevance to my own arguments regarding Romantic responses to, and representations of, Gothic abbey buildings. Her work stands most of all as a forthright assertion of not only the viability, but also the necessity of the "architectural" approach (awareness of the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival context being entailed by this) as a route to appreciation of Gothic literature. Taking Horace Walpole's use of the adjective "Gothic" in the subtitle of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) as her starting-point, Prungnaud identifies this as demonstrative of "le rapport d'étroite dépendance" between the "Gothic" movements in eighteenth-century architecture and literature.<sup>63</sup> Having described the Gothic Revival and the rise of the Gothic novel as "deux manifestations d'un même phénomène," she insists: "Ignorer le code esthétique qui donne un sens à ces textes, c'est courir le risque d'en faire une lecture reductrice."<sup>64</sup>

While Prungnaud presents the usual narration of shifts in aesthetic responses to the Gothic style in architecture from the seventeenth century into the eighteenth, she also offers a far closer "reading" of the Gothic cathedral building as a literary setting than has been offered by any other recent critic. Although this is conducted with specific regard to nineteenth-century Decadent authors, from it emerge the same hallmarks of imposing scale and intricate, detailed, and varied decoration ("surabondance des images ... coexistence des contraires") identified in such Romantic period-focused

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<sup>63</sup> Prungnaud 13.

<sup>64</sup> Prungnaud 14.

discussions of Gothic or labyrinthine architecture as Thompson's and Botting's.<sup>65</sup> These are also the features of the architectural Gothic that, I argue, appealed to authors of poetic representations of cathedral, or abbey buildings -- authors not considered in any depth by Prungnaud, who regards Gothic architectural settings as having passed from the eighteenth century "graveyard" poetry into the "Gothic" novel by chronological progression.

In extending Prungnaud's considerations of the literary significances of Gothic cathedral architecture to Romantic-period poets, as well as novelists, I shall be positioning my own readings most closely in relation to the trend for consideration of literature within the Gothic Revival context that has emerged since the turn of the twenty-first century. Michael Charlesworth has clearly indicated the scope for such engagements, as well as providing a resource to help enable these, with his three-volume anthology, *The Gothic Revival 1720-1870: Literary Sources and Documents* (2002).<sup>66</sup> From this, and from Charlesworth's earlier contribution to Stephen Copley and Peter Garside's collection of essays, *The Politics of the Picturesque* (1994), in which he discusses how aesthetics were used in attempts to neutralise the negative religious and political connotations of abbey remains on landowners' properties, emerges most particularly the relationship between the architectural Gothic and the eighteenth-century landscape picturesque that has been so central to my own investigations.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Prungnaud 258-59.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Charlesworth, ed., *The Gothic Revival 1720-1870: Literary Sources and Documents*, 3 vols. (Mountfield: Helm, 2002).

<sup>67</sup> See Michael Charlesworth, "The Ruined Abbey: Picturesque and Gothic Values," *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape and Aesthetics since 1770*, ed. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 62-80.

While Charlesworth's stated aim in preparing *The Gothic Revival* was to "provide materials for a cultural history of the Gothic Revival and the Gothic novel" (which he rightly observes to have been "very rarely discussed together as parts of a whole cultural movement"), there is every reason to consider this work, and the materials it provides, as adaptable to the purpose of a still broader exploration of the literary Gothic Revival in Britain.<sup>68</sup> Charlesworth's own major concern with "the human predicaments enclosed by the architecture" (1: 5) is in particular suggestive of possibilities for application within a broader Romantic context, not least given Charlesworth's selections from Byron's poetry on Newstead Abbey, in a section of the anthology entitled "Living the Gothic" which also follows Lamont and Clarke in relating *Northanger Abbey* to Gothic Revival contexts.<sup>69</sup> The issue of guilt as surrounding "secular" occupancy of former abbey buildings, that Charlesworth uses these texts by Byron and Austen to illustrate, has attracted perhaps the most recent interest of the ideas hinted in the anthology, though only Lamont has considered the aspect of architectural style.<sup>70</sup>

The other important twenty-first-century study that might be said, with Charlesworth's, to have continued a revival of the "architectural" approach developed by Smith in the 1930s, but effectively interrupted by the dominance of Foucauldian perspectives from the 1960s, is Deborah Kennedy's 2001 article "The Ruined Abbey in the Eighteenth Century." Most crucially, and like Lamont, Kennedy at the outset of her discussion stresses the importance to eighteenth-century perspectives upon

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<sup>68</sup> See "Introduction," Charlesworth, ed. 1: 5-51; 5.

<sup>69</sup> See Charlesworth, ed. 1: 33-35, and, for the selections from Byron, 2: 263-95; Austen is discussed in 1: 9, and extracts from *Northanger Abbey* given in 2: 240-62.

<sup>70</sup> These discussions include, as well as Charlesworth, "The Ruined Abbey," and Lamont, Alison Shell, "Catholic Ghosts and the Former Lives of Gothic" (2005; pending publication). I am grateful to Dr Shell for allowing me to read this work in draft.

architecture of the distinction, established most definitively by William Gilpin, between the aesthetic characters of castle and abbey ruins.<sup>71</sup> This observation follows an opening remark upon the absence of abbey ruins from such discussions of the Romantic-period aesthetics of ruin as Janowitz's -- castles, rather than abbeys, having tended always to provide the examples within arguments relating to "formation of national identity."<sup>72</sup>

Taking the specifically religious, rather than martial or (secular) political, function of the ruined abbey as her own starting-point, Kennedy makes a compelling survey of eighteenth-century responses to such sites as Fountains, Tintern and Netley Abbeys, through which the abbey may be discerned as having been at the centre of a literary "genre" parallel to the castle-based "Loyalist Gothic" identified by Watt. As part of her consideration of the aesthetic, antiquarian, and artistic elements that contributed to the iconic status to which the abbey ruin had been elevated by the first decade of the nineteenth century, Kennedy also presents a "case study" of Thomas Warton junior as an example of an author whose antiquarian knowledge of ruined abbeys, combined with his aesthetic appreciation of them, informed his poetic representations of actual abbey sites.

It is upon Kennedy's work in particular that I aim to develop in this study, expanding especially upon her identifications of the tradition of literary melancholy (focused upon Milton's "Il Penseroso"), and the emerging pre-eminence of the human figure in "picturesque" landscape or building representations, as the essential factors informing

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<sup>71</sup> Kennedy 503; see also Lamont 107-08, and William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, &c. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1782; Oxford: Woodstock, 1991) 31.

<sup>72</sup> Kennedy 503.

the idea of the abbey that would be received, and refined upon, in much literature of the Romantic period. This “idea” of the inspirational abbey, whilst involving a “Gothic” setting, was not invariably, for the authors of the Romantic period, of a nature to merit the label “Gothic” as this would be understood in modern criticism.

More concerned with the ruined, than with the Gothic, character of the abbeys she considers, however, Kennedy does not take into account that it was not only their state of ruin, but also the Gothic manner of their architecture and decoration that invested abbeys like Netley and Fountains with their aesthetic appeal. Such recent reconsiderations of functional aspects of abbeys or monasteries in literature as Nicole Pohl’s are likewise unconcerned with the stylistic manners of such buildings, or with subjective, aesthetic responses to these.<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile, although Philip Connell’s discussion of the politics of Poets’ Corner raises some interesting possibilities for consideration of Westminster Abbey as perhaps the supreme example of association of a Gothic abbey setting with literary identity, the Gothic character of that setting does not figure in his arguments.<sup>74</sup>

In endeavouring to elucidate the character of the relationship between Romantic-period authors and the Gothic abbey, it has, therefore, been necessary to turn to studies in fields other than that of literary criticism. As Kennedy and Charlesworth show, the sense of the Gothic abbey at the beginning of the Romantic period had been

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<sup>73</sup> See Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia, 1600-1800* (London: Ashgate, 2006), especially ch. 4 (95-123).

<sup>74</sup> Philip Connell, “Death and the Author: Westminster Abbey and the Meanings of the Literary Monument,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38 (2005): 557-85. While not concerned with the Gothic character of the abbey, Connell’s arguments are of relevance to one aspect of the present enquiry in their partial focus upon the establishment in the early eighteenth century of conventions of posture and other aspects of iconography in the commemorative representation of authors. See especially Connell 570-72.

conditioned primarily by the aesthetic discourse of the picturesque. It has thus been to studies in art and cultural history that I have referred most for insight into eighteenth-century and Romantic-period responses to the Gothic architecture whose style has been so much disregarded by literary critics.

Among the more generally useful of the historical surveys of the Gothic Revival to have succeeded Clark's is Chris Brooks's *The Gothic Revival* (1999).<sup>75</sup> Brooks provides a comprehensive overview of such important contexts as the trade in topographical literature and illustration, taking account of the political and ideological aspects of eighteenth-century uses of Gothic architectural styles that Clark tends to neglect. He also devotes a chapter to consideration of literary parallels to the architectural vogue. As its title of "Monsters and Maidens: The Gothic Novel" indicates, however, this chapter is concerned most substantially with prose fiction -- which, despite Brooks's concern with architecture, is moreover itself discussed more in the terms of literary-critical associations of "Gothic" with excess, terror and the supernatural.<sup>76</sup>

Despite this neglect of the broader range of literary responses to Gothic architecture, Brooks highlights the close relation between Romantic-period representation of Gothic architecture and the aesthetic of the picturesque that will be so essential to my own discussions. Most importantly, he draws attention to the centrality of the self, or subject, to the perception of any landscape or architectural scene, explaining that

the Picturesque reinforced the self by locating power internally, in the imagination's ability visually to construct and control the world around; so the all-composing eye (I) becomes the creator of its own universe of gratificatory pictures.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon, 1999).

<sup>76</sup> See Chris Brooks 105-26.

<sup>77</sup> Chris Brooks 140.

With Rosemary Sweet's description of the late eighteenth-century consumption of illustrations and descriptions of architectural landmarks as a form of vicarious possession, and Peter de Bolla's further work on the spectating subject (to be mentioned again shortly) also in mind, this idea will be central to my considerations of individual authors' uses of Gothic architectural settings in representations, or expressions, of both the "all-composing" imagination, and the figure of the possessor of such a subjectivity.<sup>78</sup> The history of eighteenth-century landscape gardening, as an area of confluence between responses to architectural features, and notions of picturesque aesthetics, has been another crucial source of insight -- Robert Miles having explicitly identified the mid-eighteenth-century "picturesque garden" as illustrative of an "intersection of [aesthetic] paradigms" also to be observed in "'Gothic.'" <sup>79</sup>

In their studies of picturesque landscape aesthetics, Sidney K. Robinson, Christopher Thacker and Malcolm Andrews all invoke the Gothic style of religious architecture as exemplifying the picturesque as characterised by intricacy, irregularity and variety.<sup>80</sup> Andrews and Thacker in particular have drawn attention to the figure of the spectator or occupant (bards and hermits being typical examples of these) as a central, organising feature of representations of picturesque scenes, Andrews having also influentially classified the subjective responses most linked with ruined buildings from the mid eighteenth century.<sup>81</sup> The picturesque landscape (whether natural, or

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<sup>78</sup> See Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon, 2004) 298; Peter de Bolla, *The Education of the Eye: Painting, Landscape and Architecture in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003).

<sup>79</sup> Miles, "The Gothic Aesthetic" 39.

<sup>80</sup> Sidney K. Robinson, *Inquiry into the Picturesque* (Chicago: University of Chicago P, 1991); Christopher Thacker, *The Wildness Pleases: The Origins of Romanticism* (Beckenham: Croom, 1983); Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989).

<sup>81</sup> Andrews 45-46.



cultivated) is also linked with the formations of creative identities in John Dixon Hunt's *The Figure in the Landscape* (1976).<sup>82</sup> As Hunt shows, representations of the contemplative garden or grotto occupant from the seventeenth century onward were most crucially informed by the conventions already accumulated in the traditional iconography of melancholy which, as I shall explain with additional reference to such works on this area as Raymond Klibansky's and Eleanor M. Sickels's, would also importantly influence Romantic-period constructions of literary identity in relation to Gothic architectural settings.<sup>83</sup>

While Andrews, Thacker and Hunt make little explicit connection between the Gothic architectural style and literary identity -- specific styles, in their studies, being subsumed within the category of picturesque ruin -- Clive Wainwright's *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home 1750-1850* (1989) features interiors which, given the hundred years under consideration by Wainwright, naturally tend to represent examples of the indulgence of Gothic Revival tastes, as acknowledged by Wainwright in his introduction.<sup>84</sup> Of his four chapter studies of individual collectors and their homes, three are of literary interest (being about Horace Walpole's villa at Strawberry Hill, William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey, and Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford), and thus highly suggestive of, even if they do not elaborate upon, precisely the literary-architectural connection that this study will explore. Also emerging from Wainwright's opening, contextualising chapters are some of the manners in which antiquarians' social and cultural identities were constructed from

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<sup>82</sup> John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting and Gardening During the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976).

<sup>83</sup> See Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964) and Eleanor M. Sickels, *The Gloomy Egoist: Moods and Themes of Melancholy* (New York: Octagon, 1969).

<sup>84</sup> Clive Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989) 2.

early in the seventeenth century. As Rosemary Sweet's *Antiquaries* (2004), and Martin Myrone and Lucy Peltz's 1999 collection of essays on antiquarianism have indicated still more clearly, the educated, somewhat saturnine figure of the antiquary was one of the types most frequently associated with the Gothic architectural setting by the beginning of the Romantic period, and one which I shall discuss as having converged in many points of conventional representation with ideas of the author.<sup>85</sup>

The increasing prominence of such observing human figures within artistic and literary representations of picturesque landscape -- or architectural -- scenes from the mid-eighteenth century identified by Kennedy has been most usefully discussed by Peter de Bolla in *The Education of the Eye* (2003). Along with such earlier studies as Carole Fabricant's "The Literature of Domestic Tourism and the Public Consumption of Private Property" (1987), this has informed my own discussions of Romantic-period representations of Gothic architecture in relation to issues of property and authority.<sup>86</sup> Most important to my investigations of authorial self-fashioning, however, have been the ideas developed in it by de Bolla concerning the formations of spectators' identities in the eighteenth century, these having entailed the emergence of such types as the connoisseur from the heightened sense of the self as an element contained within spaces occupied and viewed.

I argue that a similar development of characterisations in relation to particular places was also at the heart of Romantic-period representations of Gothic architectural

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<sup>85</sup> See, as well as Sweet, Martin Myrone and Lucy Peltz, eds, *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice 1700-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), especially "Introduction" (1-13) and Maria Grazia Lolla's contribution, "Ceci n'est pas un monument: *Vetusta Monumenta* and antiquarian aesthetics" (15-33).

<sup>86</sup> Carole Fabricant, "The Literature of Domestic Tourism and the Public Consumption of Private Property," *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature*, ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown (New York: Methuen, 1987) 254-75.

interiors, the physically-present subjectivity of the onlooker necessarily taking on a visually-representable form in the literary work, be it that of an aristocrat, an antiquary, or an ingenuous, imaginative heroine. Where the four authors under consideration here were concerned, their experiences of particular Gothic abbey buildings saw them also positioned as subjective spectators. How they constructed and represented themselves as creative artists identified as such by the specific Gothic architectural sites they are documented as having observed, entered and occupied will be central to my discussions.

In thus emphasising the immediacy of Radcliffe, Wordsworth, Scott, and Byron's experiences of specific Gothic abbey locations, and the extent of their engagements with the culture and literature of the contemporary Gothic Revival, I aim to restore to discussions of architecture in Romantic-period literature a sense of material context that has been largely lacking from discussions predicated upon particular critical and political theories, or limited by considerations of the Gothic as a genre. Along with new insights into the aesthetic relationships between "Gothic" and "Romantic" literature, in the chapters that follow I offer what I hope may emerge as fresh perspectives upon the works of these individual authors, as well as upon more general Romantic-period constructions of literary identity and creativity.

## I

**Gothic Abbey Architecture, the Eighteenth-Century Picturesque, and  
Constructions of Creative Identity**

It was a Ruin of a large Monastery, which had once encompass three Quadrangles; the cloister ... a great number of Vaults & Rooms, covered with Ivy and Weeds ... We soon chose our Dining room, & found seats of the Capitals of two Pillars that were fallen ... We had large entire arches over our heads ... After dinner, we strolled out again, & found ... the Shell ... of a Church ... a whole side of windows entire ... the End window over the altar vastly high, & the whole wrought finely with old Gothic ornaments: one Part of the Roof ... was yet standing ... it was above 60 foot high, & hung like Net work, so thin & so fine, over our heads: No part of Westminster abby is more ornamented.<sup>1</sup>

As Morris R. Brownell has remarked, discussing the 1734 letter of Alexander Pope to Martha Blount in which this description appears: “The discovery Pope made at Netley Abbey was the picturesque.”<sup>2</sup> While of obvious general significance within the history of eighteenth-century landscape aesthetics, this account by the author most pre-eminently associated with a neo-classical aesthetic makes especially clear the particular importance of the Gothic abbey building as a defining element of the picturesque in the mind and imagination of a creative author. Combining objective visual description, technical awareness, and subjective response, it provides an apt starting-point for exploration of the role of the Gothic abbey in eighteenth-century and Romantic-period constructions of literary creativity and identity, and the importance of the Gothic Revival context to these.

For Pope in his letter, the thirteenth-century Netley Abbey is remarkable not only as a ruin, boasting as it does the hallmarks of ivy-growth and structural fragmentation, but

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Pope to Martha Blount, August 11 [1734], in G. S. Rousseau, “A New Pope Letter,” *Philological Quarterly* 45 (1966): 409-18; 415.

<sup>2</sup> Morris R. Brownell, *Alexander Pope and the Arts of Georgian England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978) 89.

also for its specifically Gothic stylistic features and ornamentation, which he notes for their delicacy and intricacy. Pope does not survey the building or its features entirely from a detached, objective distance, but enters and occupies them, and even appropriates them for his own use as a picnic area, or “Dining Room.” His response to the building encompasses all the main elements of later eighteenth-century engagements with the abbey Gothic as picturesque, many of which would also be focused upon Netley.<sup>3</sup> There is the attention to the intricacy of the Gothic ornamentation, as well as a familiar, almost proprietorial, attitude, as well as the impulse, gratified in the act of writing to Blount, to express a subjective response through artistic interpretation.<sup>4</sup> More broadly, Pope’s letter anticipates eighteenth-century fashions for visiting abbey sites, and -- in the light-hearted reference to the “Dining Room” -- for literally converting them as modern residences. He also displays, in his interest in the abbey’s measurements, and in his ability to compare it with another such building, a sense of the technical and stylistic aspects of Gothic architecture shared by the scholars and antiquarians whose researches would further the development of the Gothic Revival into the nineteenth century.

These are the aspects of eighteenth-century and Romantic-period literary engagements with Gothic abbey architecture that I shall be considering in this chapter, showing how responses to architecture both informed, and were informed by, contemporary attitudes to creative identity. The discussion will consist of two parts, the first taking the form of an account of how the Gothic style of medieval church architecture expressed the major eighteenth-century picturesque principles of intricacy and variety that would also inform Romantic notions of an all-comprehending imagination. In the

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<sup>3</sup> See, as well as Rousseau 413, Kennedy 501-23; 515.

<sup>4</sup> There is also a plan to return to the site to finish sketches made of it; see Rousseau 418.

second part, I shall narrow my focus to the figure of the observing, occupying subject upon whose presence the discourse of the picturesque was predicated, considering the stereotypes and representations of those particular onlookers and occupiers that conditioned characterisations in Romantic-period literature set in Gothic architectural locations, with special attention to how these in turn informed typical constructions of the creative author.

To establish exactly the terms in which I shall be discussing the Gothic abbey as picturesque -- and as distinct from the castle architecture also designated "Gothic" during and since the eighteenth century -- I shall focus first upon William Gilpin's writings on landscape aesthetics, these having been the major influences upon the responses to, and evocations of, landscapes of all the Romantic-period authors under consideration here. Gilpin's description of Tintern Abbey in *Observations on the River Wye* (1782) would occasion his first statement of the specific characters of castle and abbey buildings:

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>5</sup>

The choice of quotation from William Mason's *The English Garden* (1771-81) with which Gilpin illustrates this distinction indicates the currency that this text had already attained in contemporary aesthetics, and also shows that the castle-abbey distinction was not original to Gilpin, even though it was largely through Gilpin's agency that such authors as Radcliffe, Wordsworth and Scott derived their first notions of landscape aesthetics. Gilpin's quotation from Book 1 of Mason's poem

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<sup>5</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, &c. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1782; Oxford: Woodstock, 1991) 31.

makes clear his subscription to an existing view of medieval remains as desirable elements within a visually pleasing landscape:

Ah! happy thou, if one superior rock  
 Rear on its brow, the shivered fragment huge  
 Of some old Norman fortress: happier far,  
 Ah then most happy, if thy vale below  
 Wash, with the crystal coolness of its rills,  
 Some mould'ring abbey's ivy-vested wall.<sup>6</sup>

Mason's notes to Book the Fourth of his poem, in which he tells the story of Alcander, the young inheritor of a country estate whose unsightly dairy building he conceals with a (fabricated) "time-struck abbey" (line 101), also establish the distinction adopted by Gilpin with the remark that "of those architectural objects which improved a fine natural *English* prospect, the two principal were the *castle* and the *abbey*."<sup>7</sup>

For both Mason and William Burgh, the author of the 1782 Commentary to *The English Garden*, however, it was evidently the ruined condition of the castle or abbey that defined it as a picturesque building (though Mason would, in his notes, enumerate the main structural features of medieval castle and abbey architecture for the benefit of contemporary, imitative architects).<sup>8</sup> Paramount among their concerns was to distance even newly-constructed landscape ruins from associations with feudal tyranny or papist superstition by the accentuation of the pretended age of the buildings, Burgh advising that "diligence should be used in bringing forward the growth of ivy to assist in giving credit to the fiction."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> William Mason, *The English Garden, The Works of William Mason*, 4 vols. (London, 1811) 1: 211-424. Book the First, lines 380-85.

<sup>7</sup> Mason 1: 411.

<sup>8</sup> See Mason 1: 412-17.

<sup>9</sup> Mason 1: 368.

Such preoccupations clearly link Mason and Burgh with the eighteenth-century picturesque of ruin as this has been defined and discussed by Anne Janowitz (though mainly with reference to original castle buildings). In this particular way of seeing, national history becomes natural history through the integration of relics of defunct political or religious authority with the land.<sup>10</sup> That Gilpin was also the exponent of such an aesthetic emerges from his *Observations ... on ... Cumberland and Westmoreland* (1786), in which he offers a more elaborate discussion than in 1783 of the status of architecture within the picturesque landscape, reiterating his earlier distinction: "Ruins are commonly divided into two kinds: castles, and abbeys."<sup>11</sup> Here, however, he refines upon his previous statement by identifying the abbey, apparently in preference to the castle, ruin as a feature to rank alongside the foliage, mountains and mists also enumerated as typical of the ideal picturesque landscape:

To these natural features ... we may lastly add another, of the artificial kind -- the ruins of abbeys; which, being naturalized to the soil, might indeed, without much impropriety, be classed among it's natural beauties.<sup>12</sup>

As the ensuing observations demonstrate, Gilpin shares Mason's satisfaction that English abbeys should no longer be functioning as such, remarking: "Where popery prevails, the abbey is still intire and inhabited; and of course less adapted to landscape."<sup>13</sup> Having also explained that England's abbey architecture distinguishes it from other countries as its castle architecture does not, Gilpin progresses beyond concern with the condition of the buildings to introduce the next section of his reflections upon picturesque architecture by stating:

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<sup>10</sup> See Janowitz 7.

<sup>11</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland*, 2 vols. (1786; Poole: Woodstock, 1996) 1: 12.

<sup>12</sup> Gilpin, *Cumberland and Westmoreland* 1: 13.

<sup>13</sup> Gilpin, *Cumberland and Westmoreland* 1: 13.



it is the mode of architecture, which gives such excellence to these ruins. The Gothic style in which they are generally composed is, I apprehend, unrivalled among foreign nations; and may be called a peculiar feature of the English landscape.<sup>14</sup>

Like Gilpin's observation upon the distinct characters of the castle and the abbey, the survey of the architectural history of the Gothic abbey in England that follows establishes, by encapsulating mid-eighteenth-century received knowledge and opinion on that subject, the terms in which subsequent authors would most usually invoke and describe Gothic abbey architecture in poetry and fiction. Gilpin draws upon early and mid-eighteenth-century antiquarian debate as to the definition and origins of the "Gothic" style, distinguishing this both from the "Saxon," with which he identifies the earliest English church ruins, and which he refers to as "a coarse, heavy mode of architecture ... [which] seems to have been the awkward imitation of Greek, and Roman models," and from the "Saracenic," with which he associates "grotesque ornaments."<sup>15</sup>

Gilpin's dating of the "invention" of what he considers the true "Gothic" to the period of the reign of Henry II would be adopted by most subsequent literary authors of Gothic architectural descriptions. His account of the "improvements" also comprises the major features that would be mentioned in poetry and fiction to denote a Gothic church, cathedral or abbey setting:

The round Saxon arch began to change into the pointed one ... The east-window being enlarged, was trailed over with beautiful scrawl-work; while the clustered pillar began to increase in height, and elegance; and to arch, and ramify along the roof ... An airy lightness pervaded the whole; and ornaments of a new invention took place. The cathedral of York, and part of Canterbury, among many others, are beautiful examples of this period of Gothic architecture.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Gilpin, *Cumberland and Westmoreland* 1: 13.

<sup>15</sup> Gilpin, *Cumberland and Westmoreland* 1:14; 16.

<sup>16</sup> Gilpin, *Cumberland and Westmoreland* 1:15-16.

While Warren Hunting Smith has identified the later Perpendicular Gothic -- that Gilpin dismisses as a degradation of the style described here -- with the architectural settings evoked by Radcliffe in particular, Gilpin's account of this earlier stylistic phase nevertheless indicates the detail ("scrawl-work") which, along with large structural scale and the pointed arch, had become a standard, signifying hallmark of Gothic architectural representations in literature.<sup>17</sup> His descriptions of abbeys in terms of complex, intricate structures cause them to emerge from his travel writings not merely as features within picturesque landscapes, but also as sites of the picturesque themselves. All demand that same comprehension of the constituent parts comprising the whole object or vista upon which the picturesque way of seeing -- and, ultimately, some Romantic conceptions of creative vision -- were predicated.

Having established the main terms in which Romantic-period authors viewed the architectural Gothic as picturesque, and before proceeding to consider how later aesthetic theorists refined upon Gilpin's accounts of Gothic architecture, it is first necessary to locate the Gothic abbey building within the broader context of the eighteenth-century picturesque in literature as well as aesthetics. As Malcolm Andrews has stressed, literary, as much as visual, responses to landscapes would consolidate the picturesque ideal as it came to dominate eighteenth-century art and descriptive poetry.<sup>18</sup>

It was from the classical literary tradition of the pastoral, with its emphases upon the tranquil pleasures of rural retirement in wild or semi-wild natural settings, that the eighteenth-century British most substantially derived the standards of picturesque

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<sup>17</sup> See Smith, *Architecture in English Fiction* 143-44, and Gilpin, *Cumberland and Westmoreland* 16-17.

<sup>18</sup> See ch. 1 of Andrews (3-23).

landscape appreciation that they applied in garden design and literature.<sup>19</sup> The didactic, georgic tradition most influenced such prescriptive, whilst poetic, guides to landscape design as Mason's, and Richard Payne Knight's *The Landscape* (1794).<sup>20</sup> As has been frequently noted, by Andrews and others, Milton had effectively pioneered the inclusion of architecture as defining features of the English literary picturesque in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso."<sup>21</sup> While a glimpse of what would become an essential aspect of the architectural picturesque, the partial concealment of ancient towers and walls by trees, would be afforded in the former of these pieces, the Gothic abbey interior would be established as a locus of contented, whilst melancholic, contemplation in "Il Penseroso":

But let my due feet never fail  
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
 And love the high embowèd roof,  
 With antique pillars' massy proof,  
 And storied windows richly dight,  
 Casting a dim religious light.<sup>22</sup>

I shall be exploring the impact of these lines upon eighteenth-century and Romantic period representations of Gothic abbey architecture, with particular consideration of how they informed literary self-fashionings, in the second half of this discussion. At this point, however, I wish to consider a major classical antecedent to the Gothic architectural setting, as this was invoked both by Milton and by those authors of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries influenced by his description of the Gothic church interior in "Il Penseroso."

<sup>19</sup> For a full discussion of the reception of the classical literary genres of the pastoral and georgic in eighteenth-century picturesque aesthetics, see Robinson 20-38.

<sup>20</sup> Hunt also cites Horace and Virgil as having "provided a suitable vocabulary for solitude and gardens," the "basic Latin ingredients" of which "could be interpreted to endorse anything from Pope's grotto to Queen Caroline's hermitage." Hunt 51.

<sup>21</sup> See Andrews 22; John Milton, "L'Allegro," *The Poems of John Milton*, ed. John Carey and Alastair Fowler (London: Longman, 1968) 130-39; lines 77-78 ("Towers, and battlements it ['mine eye'] sees / Bosomed high in tufted trees.")

<sup>22</sup> John Milton, "Il Penseroso," *Poems* 139-46; lines 155-60.

The feature of the alluringly wild and varied landscapes of such classical literature as Homer's *Odyssey* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that would be of most significance in the eighteenth-century emergence of the Gothic abbey (ruined or intact) as a site of contemplation, inspiration or creativity was the grotto, the relationship between which and the Gothic Revival has been influentially suggested by Robert A. Aubin.<sup>23</sup> Adopted most enthusiastically in Renaissance Italy as an element of garden and estate decoration (by which period it had also acquired associations with Christian hermits, as well as with the Muses of classical myth), and in its artificial forms decorated with the unmediated forms of plants and shells, the typical grotto structure combined the organic irregularity favoured within the rococo manner, as well as in the picturesque aesthetic, with an association with "meditation" that I should regard as analogous to that of the Gothic abbey ruin as classified by Gilpin.<sup>24</sup>

It is with this type of picturesque architecture, rather than with abbeys such as Netley, that Alexander Pope has been most associated. In the course of his sustained discussion of the extent of Pope's engagement with a "Gothic" aesthetic (in which he stresses the always undiminished, ongoing nature of Pope's commitment to neo-classical aesthetics of purity and regularity), Morris R. Brownell has suggestively observed that "Pope's grotto ... can be associated with contemporary notions of the Gothic in its irregularity, and its connection with geological and architectural ruin."<sup>25</sup>

What Brownell does not examine so closely, however (his sense of "Gothic" here being the generally primitive or non-classical) is the extent to which the character of

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<sup>23</sup> Aubin, "Grottoes, Geology and the Gothic Revival" 408-16.

<sup>24</sup> For accounts of the eighteenth-century fashion for grottoes, and its classical origins, see especially Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City: Retirement and Politics in the Later Poetry of Pope 1731-1743* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1969) 41-79, and Brownell 253-72, in which Pope's garden designs are explicitly located within the context of the early Gothic Revival.

<sup>25</sup> Brownell 272.

Gothic design as itself “picturesque” in its own variety and intricacy of construction reflected, for eighteenth-century enthusiasts of both architecture and landscape, the ruggedness of the natural or artificial grotto.

This perception does emerge from Aubin’s discussion (acknowledged by Brownell), where it is noted that “Grottoes ... had by 1733 become definitely associated with what passed for Gothic architecture.”<sup>26</sup> Foremost among the examples cited by Aubin is Thomas Burnet’s *The Theory of the Earth* (in the second edition of 1691), from which Aubin quotes the description of an imagined, natural grotto’s roof as “Icy fret-work.”<sup>27</sup> What such instances show is that it was not merely ruined architecture that commentators from Burnet onward invoked to illustrate descriptions of formations believed to be the results of a postdiluvial “ruin” of the Earth; rather, they demonstrated an awareness of the typical decorative features of Gothic ecclesiastical architecture in its intact character.

When the sacred or inspirational associations of the classical grotto are also taken into account, it emerges all the more convincingly as the major antecedent to the Gothic abbey setting as this came to be perceived in the later eighteenth century and Romantic period. Certainly such contemporaneous engagements with grotto and Gothic settings as Pope’s, and such geological descriptions as Burnet’s, and those others noted by Aubin, predate the publication of such theories as William Warburton’s (propounded in a note to Pope’s Epistle IV, “To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington”), in which the pointed Gothic architecture was claimed to have originated in the forms of interlacing tree-branches above the groves used for worship by ancient

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<sup>26</sup> Aubin, “Grottoes, Geology and the Gothic Revival” 414.

<sup>27</sup> Aubin, “Grottoes, Geology and the Gothic Revival” 410; see also Thomas Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1691) 1: 116.

Teutonic tribespeople (this being the theory most usually cited as the major factor in the primitivist strand of the Gothic Revival).<sup>28</sup>

It is, therefore, surprising that so few further, explicit connections have been made, following Aubin's, between the "primitive" grotto and Romantic-period representations of Gothic architectural spaces, especially given the etymology of the word "grotesque," an adjective frequently applied in the period in descriptions of ornamentation in Gothic abbeys, and the frequency with which Gothic architectural features were invoked in eighteenth-century and Romantic-period descriptions of geological phenomena. An exception is Noah Heringman, who, considering geology in topographical poetry of the Romantic period, has noted: "Aesthetics and geology merge in the architectural category of ruin, both in such creations as the "grotto" and in Miltonic descriptive poetry."<sup>29</sup>

Ronald Paulson, meanwhile, discusses the "grotesque" (or "grottesque") in terms of its derivation from the intricate, profuse and outlandish decorative artwork revealed in the early sixteenth-century excavations of the Baths of Titus in Rome, as well as ascribing Pope's grotto to a "mythologizing" on that poet's part of his act of writing. He reserves consideration of the "Gothic," however, for another chapter, in which it is

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<sup>28</sup> See William Warburton's note to line 29 of Alexander Pope, "Epistle IV" ("To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington"), *Moral Essays, The Works of Alexander Pope*, 5 vols. (London, 1769) 2: 84-87; esp. 85-86.

<sup>29</sup> Noah Heringman, *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004) 234; see also 246-51 for illuminating examples of the widespread use, in eighteenth-century travel writing, of Gothic architectural terms to describe cave interiors and other geological formations. On these, see also Thacker 173, and Andrews 225-26, and compare *The Gentleman's Magazine* 34 (1764): 572-73, where the interior of "pool's Hole" is described as being "not unlike a Gothic Cathedral," with formations "like the figures of fretwork."

regarded entirely in terms of excess and extremes as manifested by such “sublimely” large and powerful human forces as the revolutionary mob.<sup>30</sup>

I suggest, though, that the following summary of the cultural significance of the grotto setting in the eighteenth century might usefully be extended to explain the significance of the imposing, intricately-decorated space of the Gothic abbey setting to the eighteenth-century and Romantic-period imagination:

The terms *grotto* and *grotesque* were therefore closely connected by the eighteenth century ... and associated with the further suggestions of creativity and liberty, as well as the fantastic, the ominous, and the sinister. Grotesque is here an attitude, a point of view out of which to write poetry, related in unacknowledged ways to the representation of inimical unreason.<sup>31</sup>

Like the grotto as Paulson describes it here, the Gothic abbey setting could be constructed as “ominous ... and sinister” -- whilst also offering, to many authors, a space in whose enclosure imaginative “creativity and liberty” might flourish. Certainly confinement within the “grotesque” space of the Gothic convent building provides the condition for the self-expression that Gillian Beer and Anne Williams have considered to be enabled in Pope’s “Eloisa to Abelard” (1717) -- though this piece, in its depiction of a struggle with the passions, also stands as a reminder of Pope’s abiding concern with the rational.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolution (1789-1820)* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983) See ch. 7 (215-47).

<sup>31</sup> Paulson 175. Hunt suggests that, for Pope, the grotto was “an image of the complexities of man’s mind.” See Hunt 103, where Pope’s own comparison of his grotto to Plato’s cave is also noted.

<sup>32</sup> See Alexander Pope, “Eloisa to Abelard,” *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (London: Methuen, 1975) 252-61; Gillian Beer, “‘Our Un-natural No-Voice’: The Heroic Epistle, Pope, and Women’s Gothic,” *Modern Essays on Eighteenth Century Literature*, ed. Leopold Damrosch (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), and ch. 3 in Williams (50-65).

While Pope can be directly related to primitivist ideals of creativity only with reservations, however, such works as “Eloisa to Abelard” and his gardening activities still represent important early realisations of the eighteenth-century idea and imagery of the solitary, contemplative poet as inhabitant of grotesquely irregular recesses, whether geological or architectural. Following Mack, Brownell, Paulson, Hunt and Aubin’s observations, the suggestion persists of an aesthetic connection between Pope’s Twickenham grotto and the medieval, “Gothic” settings not only of Netley Abbey, but also of Stanton Harcourt, a dilapidated manor-house that prompted further lively, epistolary accounts, and where Pope enjoyed an especially productive period of work on his translation of the *Iliad*.<sup>33</sup>

The affinity of the Gothic and grotto settings as sites of solitary contemplation and inspiration in the early modern imagination is not better evidenced, however, than in “Il Penseroso,” where the evocation of a hermitage in the wilderness directly follows the description of the cloister and church, at the conclusion of the poem:

And may at last my weary age  
 Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
 The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
 Where I may sit and rightly spell  
 Of every star that heaven doth show,  
 And every herb that sips the dew,  
 Till old experience do attain  
 To something like prophetic strain. (lines 167-74)

Having considered the early instances, and antecedents, of inspirational Gothic architectural settings in eighteenth-century literature, I shall now examine the ways in which Gothic church or abbey architecture was received in the criticism and aesthetic

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<sup>33</sup> See Pope to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1718) and to the Duke of Buckingham (1718), *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956) 1: 505-08; 508-11.



theory of the period, attending particularly to identifications of it with the picturesque. However frequently quoted, John Evelyn's denunciation of the Gothic manner in his *Account of Architects and Architecture* (1697) must still begin any such discussion. It is most important where my purposes are concerned for the emphasis it places upon the profusion and variety of ornamentation of the Gothic style in architecture. Apportioning blame to the northern tribes of Goths and Vandals (and also, subsequently, to the "Moors and *Arabs* from the *South* and *East*") that overran the Roman Empire and "subverted and demolished" its "stately" classical monuments, Evelyn complains of their

introducing in its stead, a certain fantastical and licentious Manner of Building, which we have since called *Modern* (or *Gothic* rather), Congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy and *Monkish Piles*, without any just Proportion, Use or Beauty, compared with the truly *Ancient*. So as when we meet with the greatest Industry, and expensive *Carving*, full of fret and lamentable *Imagery* ... a judicious Spectator is rather distracted and quite confounded, than touched with that admiration which results from the true and just *Symmetry* ... which those *August* and *Glorious Fabricks* of the Ancients still produce.<sup>34</sup>

Having conceded that the Gothic architecture is "not without great Industry," Evelyn insists that the style is "such that rather gluts the Eye than gratifies and pleases it with any reasonable Satisfaction." As he explains:

[In] the *Modern Architecture*, the universal and unreasonable Thickness of the Walls, clumsy Buttresses, Towers, sharp-pointed Arches, Doors and other Apertures, without proportion; non sensical Insertions of various Marbles impertinently placed; Turrets and Pinnacles thick set with Monkies and *Chymaeras* (and abundance of busy Work and other Incongruities) dissipate and break the Angles of the sight, and so much confound it, that one cannot consider it with any Steadiness, where to begin or end....<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> John Evelyn, *Accounts of Architects and Architecture* (1697), 3rd ed. (London, 1733) 9ff.

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

As well as prefiguring, albeit with a pejorative emphasis, the main aspects that would see the Gothic categorised as picturesque architecture later in the eighteenth century, these passages from Evelyn also foreshadow the ascendancy of the observing subject in the aesthetic discourses of the same period. The same observations may be made here that Peter de Bolla has made with regard to mid-eighteenth-century aesthetic writings, noting how the “Eye” came to be synecdochally invested with the attributes, movements or moods of the viewing subject of which it formed part (as, in Evelyn’s denunciation of the Gothic, the eye is figured as something capable of being glutted or gratified).<sup>36</sup>

When changes occurred in critical and aesthetic perspectives upon Gothic architecture from the mid-eighteenth century, therefore, it was in terms of the response of the “eye” that these were registered, the observing subject being thus always implied in the assessments made of particular Gothic buildings, or the Gothic style in general. The objective assessment of the Gothic style as potentially confusing in its intricacy and variety remained essentially unaltered, except in that, with the increasing currency of primitivist and antiquarian viewpoints, expressed most famously by Richard Hurd, Gothic architects were given more generously-stated credit for having worked from principles as established as those of the classical builders.<sup>37</sup>

William Hogarth, identified by de Bolla with a highly subjective, aesthetic “regime of the eye,” contingent upon physical containment within, and thus engagement with, the site of aesthetic experience, would make a crucial defence of the architectural Gothic in his *Analysis of Beauty* (1753). In the chapter devoted to “of what sort of Parts, and

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<sup>36</sup> See de Bolla 26.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), in *Moral and Political Dialogues, with Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, 3 vols. (London, 1776) 3: 267.

how Pleasing Forms are composed,” he asked: “have not many gothic [sic] buildings a great deal of consistent beauty in them?”<sup>38</sup> Whilst acknowledging that the “small divided and subdivided parts” of the decoration of Westminster Abbey “appear confused when nigh, and are totally lost at a moderate distance,” Hogarth insisted that “there is nevertheless such a consistency of parts altogether in a good gothic taste, and such propriety relative to the gloomy ideas, they were then calculated to convey, that they have at length acquir’d an establish’d and distinct character in building.”<sup>39</sup>

This appraisal itself followed reflections on “Intricacy” which, predicated upon what Hogarth asserted to be the natural human appetite for pursuit, associated pleasure with the eye’s encounters with obstacles and difficulties. As Hogarth remarked, with an opposite sense of the intricacy of objects to Evelyn’s, “The eye hath this sort of enjoyment in ... all sorts of objects, whose forms ... are composed principally of ... the *waving* and *serpentine* lines.”<sup>40</sup> Among such objects Hogarth would identify “the *ogee* member,” as used in domestic interior ornamentation -- the tapering form of the Gothic arch being also suggested by his use of the pyramid shape as an example of the “beautiful” variety of line achieved by “a gradual lessening.”<sup>41</sup> The Gothic style of architecture, and of interior decoration, thus emerges from Hogarth’s aesthetics as a manner entailing, and inviting, a particularly high (and pleasurable) degree of subjective awareness on the part of the physically-present onlooker.

The discourse of the sublime had meanwhile also cast imposing ruins of all varieties in such a light as, along with the landscape art of Claude Lorrain, presented them as

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<sup>38</sup> William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (1753), ed. Ronald Paulson (New Haven: Yale UP, 1997) 46; see also de Bolla 25-27.

<sup>39</sup> Hogarth 48.

<sup>40</sup> Hogarth 33.

<sup>41</sup> Hogarth 28.

sites of subjective experience desirable for the frissons of “terror” they afforded. Turning briefly now to Edmund Burke’s *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), it is not, however, the sublime of imposing scale, or of obscurity, that I wish most to consider in relation to Gothic abbey architecture (this aspect being common both to abbeys and to such ruined or “Gothic” buildings as castles), but the sublime as Burke, in his final thoughts on “Vastness,” identified it with the opposite extreme of physical scale.

Having observed (also significantly to his successors’ appreciations of Gothic architecture) that “the effects of a rugged and broken surface seem stronger than where it is smooth and polished,” Burke adds that “as the great extreme of dimension is sublime, so the last extreme of littleness is in some measure sublime likewise.”<sup>42</sup>

Elaborating this point with a meditation upon the “infinite divisibility of matter” and microscopic organisms, he continues:

When we ... consider those creatures so many degrees smaller [than those just imagined], and the still diminishing scale of existence, in tracing which the imagination is lost as well as the sense, we become amazed and confounded at the wonders of minuteness; nor can we distinguish in its effect this extreme of littleness from the vast itself.<sup>43</sup>

The sense of confusion, or “amazement” elicited by contemplation of an array of profuse, minute objects is here sublime for Burke as it was not for such commentators upon the minutely various decorative elements of the Gothic in architecture as Evelyn, or Joseph Addison, who could not welcome the distractions, and thus the threats of an

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<sup>42</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. T. O. McLoughlin, James T. Boulton and Paul Langford, *Writings and Speeches* 1:185-320; 243.

<sup>43</sup> Burke, *Sublime and Beautiful* 243.

encroachment of the irrational, that this posed to the “Judicious Spectator.”<sup>44</sup> While Burke’s only explicit allusion to Gothic church architecture in the *Enquiry* is his citation of the aisles of “our old cathedrals” as examples of “sublime succession and uniformity,” his definition of “Magnificence” as “a great profusion of things which are splendid or valuable in themselves” still more strongly prefigures the picturesque appreciations of it.<sup>45</sup>

It is to these that I shall now refer, having already shown how such authors as Gilpin and Mason from the mid-eighteenth century established and developed the conventions of viewing Gothic architecture as an aspect of the beautiful landscape that would inform literary authors in the later-eighteenth, and early-nineteenth centuries. While Gilpin considered Gothic (that is, ruined) buildings as features contributing to a picturesque effect, however, he did not make any explicit connection between the intricate and varied style of the “abbey” Gothic and the broader landscape picturesque, despite clearly identifying the Gothic style of ecclesiastical architecture as characterised by intricacy of ornamentation.

Uvedale Price’s *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794), along with his expanded reworking of this, *Essays on the Picturesque* (1810), are the texts of greatest importance to any consideration of Gothic abbey architecture within the context of the picturesque. Emerging in a period post-dating the publications of the earliest “Gothic novels,”

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<sup>44</sup> For Addison’s views on “Greatness, in the Works of Architecture,” as achieved by the harmonious relationships of parts to whole structures, in expressing which he quotes extensively from Fréart, as translated by Evelyn, and contrasts the “Meanness” of a “Gothick Cathedral” with the sublime effect of the Pantheon, see No. 415 (Thursday, June 26, 1712) in *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965) 3: 553-58, esp. 556-57.

<sup>45</sup> Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry* 245; 246. The influence of Burke’s *Enquiry*, despite its paucity of attention to the architectural Gothic, upon such commentators as Price and Milner is noted by J. T. Boulton in the Introduction to an earlier edition of the work (London: Routledge, 1958) xv-cxxvii; cv-cviii.

these, as well as Richard Payne Knight's *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805) demonstrate the extent to which literary and critical accounts of Gothic architecture influenced each other (an important catalyst in which process being associationism, as I shall shortly discuss).

Having identified the "picturesque" of intricacy, variety, and irregularity as a category distinct from, but frequently to be found in combination with, either or both of the Burkean sublime and beautiful (which in particular he associated with the classical manners of architecture), Price considers the picturesque as an effect achievable not in natural objects or processes alone. The man-made objects that he identifies as most invested with the picturesque of organic variety are architectural ruins of all manners and functions, in which structural fragmentation, and diversity of parasitic plant-life contribute the defining picturesque qualities of "roughness, and ... sudden variation, joined to ... irregularity."<sup>46</sup>

Where Gothic architecture is concerned, however, it is not only the man-made character of the objects, but their artificially-contrived styles of structure and decoration that qualify them as instances of Price's picturesque. As he explains:

Gothic architecture is generally considered as more picturesque, though less beautiful, than Grecian; and upon the same principle that a ruin is more so than a new edifice ... In Gothic buildings, the outline of the summit presents such a variety of forms, of turrets and pinnacles, some open, some variously enriched, that even where there is an exact correspondence of parts, it is often disguised by an appearance of splendid confusion and irregularity.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, As Compared With the Sublime and the Beautiful; And, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London, 1794) 44-45.

<sup>47</sup> Price, *Essay on the Picturesque* 50-51.

While this account could refer either to castellar or to ecclesiastical Gothic architecture, it is the latter that is explicitly indicated as Price elaborates, progressing from the Gothic building's silhouette to its interior features:

In the doors and windows of Gothic churches, the pointed arch has as much variety as any regular figure can well have ... and every person must be struck with the extreme richness and intricacy of some of the principal windows of our cathedrals and ruined abbeys. In these last is displayed the triumph of the picturesque; and its charms to a painter's eye are often so great as to rival those of beauty itself.<sup>48</sup>

The continuing extent to which Price would privilege the architectural Gothic as a defining instance of his picturesque aesthetics is evident from his 1810 *Essays on the Picturesque*, in which his remarks on each of such types of picturesque landscape feature as trees or bodies of water, as well as buildings, are expanded to form individual essays. In "An Essay on Architecture and Buildings, as connected with Scenery," Price brought a more open enthusiasm to remarks on Gothic architecture still veiled decorously in an apparent commitment to the intrinsic superiority of the "Grecian" style in 1794.

In the earlier work, Price had stressed in a note to his above-quoted account of the Gothic silhouette his hope that "it [would] not be supposed, that by admiring the picturesque circumstances of the Gothic, [he meant] to undervalue the symmetry and beauty of Grecian buildings [these having "an irresistible claim to our admiration"]."<sup>49</sup> While remaining nothing less than a committed classicist in 1810, he would nevertheless conclude his (also above-quoted) praise of the characteristic east window of Gothic churches with the sentiment that "its charms are often so great, as to rival those which arise from the chaste ornaments, and the noble and elegant

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<sup>48</sup> Price, *Essay on the Picturesque* 51.

<sup>49</sup> Price, *Essay on the Picturesque* 51.

simplicity of Grecian architecture.”<sup>50</sup> Meanwhile, in the “Essay on Architecture and Buildings” Price would also take a more closely analytical approach to the picturesque. Drawing upon Hogarth’s description of “the beauty of intricacy” effected by the variety in “waving lines” that “lead [the eye] in a kind of wanton chace,” Price posited “what [he conceived] might be called with equal propriety, the sublime of intricacy.”<sup>51</sup>

As Price asserted, intricacy could be regarded as being as much a cause of sublime effects as of picturesque ones, because of the “sublime” states of “suspense and uncertainty” that it could induce in the observer. He thus expanded his category of intricacy to take in not only concrete forms and their distribution in space, but also such effects as those resulting from partial light. By way of illustration of this principle, whereby the sublime of intricacy can produce more powerful effects than the sublime of great mass or scale, Price again tellingly invokes the architectural Gothic. Notably distinguishing it in this case from castle architecture, usually also classed as “Gothic,” he explains that

the same kind of difference [as between the imposingly “massy,” and the more varied and detached objects of large scale] subsists between the intricacy of the pinnacles and fret work of Gothic architecture, and that more broad and massive kind of the towers and gateways of ancient castles.<sup>52</sup>

Price’s next example of the “sublime of intricacy,” John Vanbrugh’s design for Blenheim Palace, indicates how far what he terms “the picturesqueness of the Gothic,” with its manifold constituent elements, had become current in broader fields

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<sup>50</sup> Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* (London, 1810). See also 262, where types of ruin are “graded” and castles and abbeys mentioned as being “in some points of view to us still more interesting,” and certainly second only to classical ruins, which rank first.

<sup>51</sup> Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* 200; see also Hogarth 33.

<sup>52</sup> Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* 202.



of eighteenth-century taste and design. As Price judges it, Vanbrugh's use of "various bold projections of various heights," and "decorations of various characters" prevented an otherwise merely "massive" building from "becoming a lump."<sup>53</sup>

A still more detailed account of the aesthetic effects of Gothic architecture would appear in *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste*, by Price's contemporary and friend, Richard Payne Knight. While Price, late in his 1810 chapter on architecture, would consider the role of association in the formation of tastes, he would not place so much emphasis upon this aspect as Knight did. In his treatise, Knight extended Price's theory of the picturesque -- predicated upon a sensual irritation caused by irregularity of form or colour -- to posit the formation of tastes in general upon combinations of prior associations based upon historical or critical knowledge, or personal experience, with more immediate, sensory responses.

Having observed that there appeared to be no rules or standards for the recently-revived Gothic style in architecture, Knight phrases the customary distinction between the castle and the ecclesiastical (which he refers to as "the cathedral or monastic") in interesting terms, in that he considers these not as types of picturesque ruin, as Gilpin had done, but as "models of generally acknowledged excellence" in specifically Gothic architecture.<sup>54</sup> Viewing the "cathedral or monastic" Gothic very much as an anti-classical manner, Knight goes on to identify it as "manifestly a corruption of the sacred architecture of the Greeks and Romans, by a mixture of the Moorish or

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<sup>53</sup> Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* 212. On the broader contemporary architectural trends involving multiplicities of parts, and the dramatisations of conflicts, or "unrest" between these and the whole structures in which they were comprised in individual buildings, see Emil Kaufman, *Architecture in the Age of Reason: Baroque and Post-Baroque in England, Italy, and France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1955), esp. 6; 18; 44.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Payne Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805), 3rd ed. (London, 1806) 162.

Saracenesque, which is formed out of a combination of the Ægyptian, Persian, and Hindoo.”<sup>55</sup> This essentially oriental style he also notes as apparent in “the grotesque paintings found in Herculaneum and Pompeii,” thus indicating the extent (not noted, as earlier discussed, by Paulson) to which the classical grotesque and the eastern, or “arabesque,” had come to be associated with Gothic architecture in the contemporary imagination -- even if not in the minds of some of the more historically and critically aware commentators upon the origins of Gothic church architecture.<sup>56</sup>

It is in Knight’s account of the Gothic interior that Price’s “sublime of intricacy” receives its fullest expression. Having remarked that “the ornaments of this monastic Gothic consist of indiscriminate imitations of almost every kind of plant and animal, scattered with licentious profusion,” Knight identifies “contrast” as the prevailing principle of Gothic design, anatomising precisely the effect achieved by all the elements recognised as typical of the Gothic church or cathedral interior by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> The most fundamental contrast set up in the Gothic church interior is that between the scales of the entire structure, and of its features and embellishments:

Our Gothic architects ... made all the subordinate parts, and incidental decorations [of buildings], of as small a proportion as was compatible with their being distinctly seen ... the ornaments appear more light and elegant, by being small: and the very profusion, with which they are scattered ... still extended the scale, which they afforded the eye, for the admeasurement of the whole.<sup>58</sup>

To this form of contrast, as Knight goes on to explain, is added that afforded by the varied distribution of light, in varying degrees of intensity, through stained-glass

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<sup>55</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 165.

<sup>56</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 166.

<sup>57</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 167; 175.

<sup>58</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 177.

windows “so as to produce intricacy without confusion.”<sup>59</sup> Knight then describes the cumulative effect created by the combination of the intricate decoration, diffused light, and interruptions to the vista by arches and pillars in terms which fully demonstrate how far the architectural Gothic had come to combine, for the Romantic-period aesthete, pure sublimity of scale and obscurity with a picturesque (because varying and irregular) alternation of revelation and concealment that made the whole only appreciable through apprehension of its parts:

The room was evidently one ... but there was no point, from which the eye could see the whole of it at one glance; so that, though much was seen, something still remained to be seen, which the imagination measured from the scale of the rest. -- Thus effects more imposing have been produced, than are, perhaps, to be found in any other works of man.<sup>60</sup>

The confusion experienced by Evelyn’s “Judicious Spectator” has thus become an almost transcendent sense of apparently infinite scale and substance, effected through the observer’s awareness of their own limitations of vision and comprehension, in a variation, or refinement, upon the awe experienced in the presence of the terrifying object in Burke’s sublime. This refinement, as is especially apparent in the passage just quoted, had its source in the observing subject, with the “imagination” working with the sense-perceptions, and indeed striving beyond the capacities of these, to realise a full sense of the object. In such a process, it is, therefore, self-awareness that must condition awareness of every other aspect of the object, or scene, that is the outward focus of the senses.

Meanwhile, the conditions of “contrast” and variety admired by Price and Knight in picturesque landscapes and buildings were, for these authors, aesthetic expressions of

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<sup>59</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 178.

<sup>60</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 178.

the individual right to property, variety of social degree and mixed character of government that they regarded as necessarily characterising the ideal political state; both would express alarm at the totalitarian state emerging in France at the times of their treatises' writing, Price in particular comparing the "levelling" activities of such a government with the procedures involved in such landscaping techniques as Lancelot "Capability" Brown's:

To level ... means to take away all distinctions; a principle that, when ... brought into action by any determined improver, either of grounds or governments, occasions such mischiefs as time slowly, if ever, repairs, and which are hardly more dreaded by monarchs than painters.

A good landscape is that in which all the parts are free and unconstrained, but in which, though some are prominent ... and others in shade and retirement; some rough, and others more smooth and polished, yet they are all necessary to the beauty, energy, effect, and harmony of the whole. I do not see how a good government can be more exactly defined....<sup>61</sup>

Although Sidney K. Robinson has cautioned against assertions of broad comparisons between picturesque landscape aesthetics and Whig individualism, the image of the varied and irregular Gothic abbey building would be employed frequently enough by authors, such as Wordsworth and Scott, who shared Price and Knight's concerns, to identify it as emblematic of late-eighteenth century liberal, and especially anti-Napoleonic preoccupations.<sup>62</sup> The writings of contemporary commentators upon, and historians of, Gothic architecture serve amply to demonstrate the effects upon observers that Price and Knight identified as characteristic of the varied, intricate ecclesiastical Gothic. Also apparent, from John Milner's work, is the extent to which the highly subjective aesthetics of Price and Knight, themselves informed by the

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<sup>61</sup> Price, *Essay on the Picturesque* 28. See also Knight's stricture against religious and political totalitarianism (including that of Robespierre) in Knight, *Principles of Taste* 236-37.

<sup>62</sup> See Robinson 47-48, where it is remarked that "only with the broadest of brushes could one attempt to define the Picturesque as the Whig style," but allowed that "Certain attitudes towards exercising the power to compose the relationship of part to part and to a whole link politics and aesthetics."

Miltonic tradition of Gothic architectural representation, influenced the manner in which non-literary authors described the effects of cathedral interiors.

In his “Observations on the Means necessary for further illustrating the Ecclesiastical Architecture of the Middle Ages” (1802), Milner would opine that “the most curious and interesting fact ... for the investigation of architectural antiquaries, is, to ascertain the true principles of the Sublime and Beautiful, as applied to those sacred fabrics which are the undoubted masterpieces and glory of the pointed order,” going on to assert the superiority of Gothic to classical architecture, for any purpose of worship.<sup>63</sup>

His explanation of how, for him, the Gothic abbey corresponds to the Burkean sublime epitomises (though without explicit reference to the picturesque) the Romantic-period appreciation of the architectural Gothic. Especially prominent is a sense of the organic character of the structure, conveyed not only through similes comparing natural forms and Gothic architectural features, but also in the figurative use of verbs of growth and movement to convey the shapes and lines of such features:

I think the effect of the ancient cathedrals is greatly helped by the variety of their constituent parts and ornaments ... The eye is quickly satiated by any object, however great and magnificent, which it can take in all at once, as the mind is with what it can completely comprehend ... It is not necessary for me to dwell upon the effect of that solemn gloom which reigns in these venerable structures ... or upon the essential beauty and just proportion in which they are raised, where the infinite variety of ribs, arches, bosses and other ornaments, all grow out of the main columns, with the regularity of Nature in the vegetable kingdom ... they are obvious of themselves, and admitted by all persons of candour and sentiment.<sup>64</sup>

The illustrated 1802 volume in whose preface these reflections appear itself provides a striking indication of the impact made by the Gothic Revival, with its dominant,

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<sup>63</sup> John Milner, “Observations on the Means necessary for further illustrating the Ecclesiastical Architecture of the Middle Ages, In a Letter from the Rev. John Milner, M.A. F.S.A to Mr Taylor,” in Thomas Warton, James Bentham, Francis Grose, John Milner, *Essays in Gothic Architecture*, 2nd ed. (London, 1802) xi-xxiii; xvi.

<sup>64</sup> Milner, “Observations” xviii.

parallel aesthetic and antiquarian discourses, upon the educated popular imagination. Comprising (as well as Milner's preface) excerpts from earlier, more specialised texts -- these being Thomas Warton's *Observations on the Fairy Queen of Spenser* (1762), James Bentham's *History of the Cathedral Church at Ely* (1771), Francis Grose's *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (1773-76), and Milner's *History and Survey of the Antiquities of Winchester* (?[1798-1801]) -- *Essays on Gothic Architecture* stands as a distillation of the major elements that defined an ecclesiastical Gothic setting for an early nineteenth-century audience to whom not only Gilpin's travels, but also Radcliffe's novels, had been available.

From Grose's contribution in particular, the intricacy and sharply contrasting, even outlandish character of medieval decorative features emerge as such defining characteristics. Considering the ornaments in English churches from the period of the Norman Conquest to the reign of Henry II (to which he does not apply the adjective "Gothic"), he remarks that

[they] seem more to be the extemporaneous product of a grotesque imagination than the result of any particular design ... The idea of these artists seems to have been, that the greater number of small and dissimilar subjects they could there assemble, the more beautiful they considered their work.<sup>65</sup>

Regarding that architecture which he does identify as "Gothic or Saracenic," and which he discusses as having flourished in the period following the reign of Henry II, Grose is less approving than he is of the preceding style, considering that its ornateness of both structure and decoration spoiled the contrast between plain buildings and profuse ornamentation achieved in the earlier manner. His description of this style, which follows a rehearsal of the "oriental" theory of Gothic origins,

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<sup>65</sup> Francis Grose, Preface to *The Antiquities of England*, in *Essays on Gothic Architecture* 95-124; 101.

nevertheless highlights the main aspects that had come to be associated with the Gothic architectural interior, enumerating in particular “the delicate lace-work of its fretted roofs, and the profusion of ornaments lavished indiscriminately over the whole building.”<sup>66</sup>

While his account includes, like Knight’s and Milner’s (as well as Evelyn’s), the invocation of a subjective “eye,” which he mentions as liable to be “[fatigued] and [distracted], rather than [gratified],” by the profuseness of the “Gothic” style of ornamentation (102), Grose also highlights the contradictory, “grotesque” character of the decorative figures in the period immediately preceding it. His additional interest in the theories that posited an Arabic origin for the “pointed” Gothic indicates, as does Knight’s *Analytical Inquiry*, the power of these ideas’ appeal to the contemporary reception of Gothic architecture, despite the doubts and debates that also surrounded them.<sup>67</sup> Where Milner’s description of the sublime Gothic interior recalls an all-comprehending Romantic imagination to correspond to the varied, yet ordered, visual picturesque, the preoccupation of such commentators as Knight and Grose with the exotic-seeming diversity, and occasionally extreme imagery, of medieval church embellishment might be identified as analogous to the “arabesque,” ironical, all-embracing Romantic imagination discussed by Anne Mellor with reference to Islamic decorative art.<sup>68</sup>

The emphases placed by such commentators as Price, Knight, Milner and Grose upon the variety of the manifold, minute elements of Gothic ornamentation, and the

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<sup>66</sup> Grose 119.

<sup>67</sup> For discussion of the eighteenth-century debates regarding the possibly Arabic origin of the “pointed” Gothic style, see Arthur O. Lovejoy, “The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature,” *Modern Language Notes* 47 (1932): 419-46; 422-24, and Charlesworth, “Introduction” 25-26.

<sup>68</sup> See Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980) 18-19.

intricacy of their arrangements within entire structures, also links their accounts of the picturesque and the Gothic with Romantic notions of the organic character of creativity, as advocated most notably in England by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Although he only rarely expressed it in his poetry, Coleridge's sense of the architectural Gothic as representing the achievement of unity from fragmentation in his art, and the reconciliation of contradictory ideas and impulses emerges most clearly from his *Biographia Literaria* (1817).

Immediately previous to the account in the *Biographia* of the processes of the "primary" and "secondary" imaginations, according to which the object of the perceiving "primary imagination" is reduced to its component elements, and then re-unified as the creative product of the "secondary," the fictional friend ("C") praising this theory in an interpolated letter describes his response thus:

The effect upon my feelings ... I cannot better represent, than by supposing myself to have known only our light airy modern chapels of ease, and then for the first time to have been placed, and left alone, in one of our largest Gothic cathedrals in a gusty moonlit night of autumn. "Now in glimmer, and now in gloom"; often in palpable darkness not without a chilly sensation of terror; then suddenly emerging into broad yet visionary lights with coloured shadows....<sup>69</sup>

With its subsequent description of the appearances of the "great men" admired in youth "perched in little fret-work niches, as grotesque dwarfs," this passage could be regarded as expressing the entire Romantic recognition of the Gothic church setting as a locus of inspiration and imaginative vision. Obscurity is here the condition of

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<sup>69</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983) 7: I. 301; this use of the Gothic cathedral as symbol of imagination, and as an instance of the general Romantic interest in Gothic architectural imagery, is also briefly noted in Annette Wheeler Caferelli, "How Theories of Romanticism Exclude Women: Radcliffe, Milton, and the Legitimation of the Gothic Novel," *Milton, the Metaphysicals, and Romanticism*, ed. Lisa Low and Anthony John Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 84-113; 106.



enlightenment, as the teasing picturesque of irregularity and varied colour meets the more sombre sublime of darkness in the *chiascuro* effects of fitful moonlight through stained glass windows. Rather than being in any way excluded, the various objects of immature intellectual enthusiasm take their places, albeit in shrunken and distorted forms, as necessary elements within the “design” of the whole state achieved.

Coleridge’s quotation from his own “Christabel” (1797-1800) meanwhile confirms the sense of the Gothic architectural setting as a place where opposites are juxtaposed, and new experiences, and thus new states, induced. The line “Now in glimmer, and now in gloom” describes the similarly half-lit setting of the passageway of Sir Leoline’s castle down which Christabel leads Geraldine to the room that is to become another site of experience gained, the description of which accordingly highlights its varied, Gothic character, as well as the creative inspiration and activity that effected this:

The chamber carved so curiously,  
Carved with figures strange and sweet,  
All made out of the carver’s brain,  
For a lady’s chamber meet....<sup>70</sup>

The connection between the creative imagination and such picturesque irregularity as might be encountered in the architectural Gothic had been made since the mid-

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<sup>70</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Christabel,” *Poetical Works*, ed. J. C. C. Mays, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001) 16: II pt 1: 477-504; lines 178-81. A further sense of the Gothic aesthetic of *discordia concors* as an element of Coleridge’s imagination emerges from the Conclusion to Part II: “Perhaps ’tis pretty to force together / Thoughts so all unlike each other....” (lines 666-67). Compare also “The Eve of St Agnes,” stanza 24, in which is described the “casement high and triple-arch’d ... All garlanded with carven imageries ... And diamonded with panes of quaint device,” in Madeline’s bedroom. John Keats, “The Eve of St Agnes,” *The Complete Poems*, ed. Miriam Allott (London: Longman, 1980) 450-80; lines 208-11. For Keats and Coleridge, Gothic design, along with such feminine characterisations as those of Christabel and Madeline, seems at least partly to represent immature states of mind and levels of experience, thus taking a generally less privileged position in their poetry than in that of the main authors under consideration here. On Keats’s particular use of medieval imagery as an aspect of “abjection” of contemporary “cultural conflicts” see Hogle, “The Gothic-Romantic Relationship” esp. 207-11.

eighteenth century, when neo-classical ideals of genius and taste were being increasingly challenged by primitivism. In his *Essay on Original Genius* (1767), William Duff not only related the quality of creative genius to the primitive phases of both human civilisation and the individual human life, but also invoked the word “picturesque” when describing the workings of imagination in terms of variety and irregularity. Duff’s thought seems to prefigure Coleridge’s theory of the primary and secondary imaginations, when he describes how the imagination makes of the sensually-perceived object a creation of its own (through “[dwelling] upon” it), with which it becomes “enamoured.”<sup>71</sup>

The imagination peculiar to “Original Genius” is then described as distinguished by “a more vivid and a more comprehensive Imagination, which enables it both to take in a greater number of objects, and to conceive them more distinctly.” As Duff goes on to remark,

It [Original Genius] is likewise distinguished by the superior quickness, as well as justness and extent, of the associating faculty; so that with surprising readiness it combines at once every homogeneous and corresponding idea, in such a manner as to present a complete portrait of the subject it attempts to describe.<sup>72</sup>

The imagination and perceptions are here expected to perform just such a feat of comprehension that commentators such as Evelyn felt to be foiled by the “homogeneous” character of the architectural Gothic. Duff also prefigures Knight’s explanation of the perception and appreciation of the varied parts and proportions of a Gothic cathedral interior in terms of a process of association, by which each “component” could be accounted for and related to the others. Meanwhile, where the

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<sup>71</sup> William Duff, *An Essay on Original Genius; and its Various Modes of Exertion in Philosophy and the Fine Arts, Particularly in Poetry* (London, 1767) 67.

<sup>72</sup> Duff 89.

products of original genius are concerned, the unity of many elements in a whole object or organism is again Duff's prevailing idea, as he writes of "Original Genius" as being "distinguished by the most uncommon, as well as the most surprising combinations of ideas" (a judgement which also recalls the outlandish diversity of "grotesque" Gothic decoration), and also by a facility for "vivid and picturesque description."<sup>73</sup>

The similarities between Duff's idea of "Original Genius" and the Gothic as it was coming to be perceived by his contemporaries emerge still more strongly when he enumerates "Irregular Greatness, Wildness, and Enthusiasm" as essential ingredients of "Original Genius." The second of these qualities in particular is described as

formed by an arbitrary assemblage of the most extravagant, uncommon, and romantic ideas, united in the most fanciful combinations; and is displayed in grotesque figures, in surprising sentiments, in picturesque and enchanting description.<sup>74</sup>

It is when Duff, having previously devoted his essay to poetic creativity, turns his attention to the manifestations of original genius in other art forms that this connection between the "irregularity" and variety of the creative imagination and the Gothic style in architecture is finally made explicit. As he explains,

every original Genius, whether in Architecture or any other of the liberal Arts, is peculiarly distinguished by a powerful bias to INVENTION. It was this bias which we may call the instinctive, insuppressible Impulse of Genius, whose spontaneous efforts designed those stupendous Gothic structures, that appear so magnificent in their ruins.<sup>75</sup>

Having stressed what he imagines to have been the Gothic architects' ignorance of classical principles, Duff then asserts:

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<sup>73</sup> Duff 90; 157.

<sup>74</sup> Duff 168.

<sup>75</sup> Duff 257.

they planned [their buildings] by the unaided strength of their own Genius. Their untutored imaginations prompted them to aspire to the Solemn, the Vast, and the Wonderful; and allowing an unbounded scope to the exercise of this faculty, they were able to give to their buildings that awful, though irregular greatness, which elevates the mind, and produces the most pleasing astonishment. These Gothic edifices shew the inventive power of the human mind in a striking light....<sup>76</sup>

Duff's *Essay* thus progresses beyond simple comparisons between the "primitive" irregularity of Gothic architecture, and such poetry as Shakespeare's and Spenser's as compared with neo-classical verse, to trace in the actual inspiration and execution of such works the same imaginative impulse to comprehend a variety of even minute forms (or ideas) on an imposing scale. While the architectural Gothic appears in a separate section of Duff's work to that in which he considers literary creativity, the similarity of the terms in which Duff treats the two art forms makes his study an outstanding example of the emergence, from the mid-eighteenth century, of an association between literary creativity and identity with the Gothic architectural setting. As such, it also provides an appropriate point from which to begin to consider the figure of the author as imagined, in the eighteenth century and Romantic period, in relation to the Gothic abbey setting.

The affinity that I argue was perceived between the imaginative, inspired author and the Gothic abbey setting from the early eighteenth century was itself an instance of the principle of associationism that dominated perceptions of art and architecture in the period.<sup>77</sup> The fundamental distinction that Gilpin and such successors as Knight

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<sup>76</sup> Duff 257-58.

<sup>77</sup> See Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* 247-49, and Knight, *Principles of Taste* esp. 136-46, where the role of education and cultivation of tastes in formation of associations are highlighted, as well as (for a similarly elitist argument) Archibald Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, 5th ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1817) esp. 1: 42; 89. On the general historical philosophical backgrounds to eighteenth-century architectural associationism, see John Archer, "The Beginnings of Association in British Architectural Esthetics," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 16 (1983): 241-64.

made between the castle and abbey ruins in the English landscape was another such instance, being predicated upon the difference between the known, original functions of the buildings, which were considered to have dictated all such other characteristic aspects as location, and manner of design and execution.

As has been frequently remarked, the particular associations that attached to the Gothic abbey as a literary setting changed during the eighteenth century from the moral and political (as in early ruin-meditation, and in such georgic-inspired writings on landscape gardening as Mason's), to the more aesthetic and subjective in character.<sup>78</sup> What remained constant in the imagery and associations conventionally attached to the Gothic church or abbey from the "graveyard" poetry of the 1740s to the Gothic novels of the 1790s was the implied presence of an onlooker or occupier, the human figure represented by Evelyn as a bewildered eye, and by Milner as an awed and admiring one. It is to these human presences within the Gothic abbey of the eighteenth-century and Romantic-period imagination, and the particular, human associations that these prompted that I shall now turn my attention.

As I have earlier noted, the eighteenth-century personification of the "Eye" in appreciations of art and architecture has been identified by Peter de Bolla as an aspect of the self-conscious ways of seeing, or "scopic techniques" that he discusses in *The Education of the Eye*. Even though he refers to Gothic architectural settings including the Leasowes and areas of the Vauxhall pleasure gardens, de Bolla does not relate to these his important arguments regarding the contemporary identification of particular

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<sup>78</sup> See Lévy, *Le roman «gothique» anglais* 40. An area of descriptive literature in which a didactic register was maintained was that of landscaping or gardening instruction, Knight's *The Landscape* (1794) representing the outstanding late instance of politically-interested "georgic" use of landscape description (complete with abbey ruin). Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem*, 2nd ed. (1795; Westmead: Gregg, 1972); see esp. lines 280-86.

settings with particular ways of seeing, which were themselves related to particular types of spectator. To make such connections is, however, tempting when it is considered how closely the experience of observers of Gothic architecture resembles the highly self-conscious “sentimental look” (whereby a spectator observes him or herself in the act and postures of looking, as part of the space he or she occupies). This de Bolla explains as being linked with an aesthetic of intricacy and variety appreciable not with a “gaze” that comprehends unadorned mass or extent and resists profuse detail, but by a “glance” gratified in skimming just such broken or irregular surfaces as would be relished by Price and Knight.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, de Bolla identifies the gaze and the glance respectively with an educated, “elite” viewpoint (the “regime of the picture,” exemplified by the artistic theory of Reynolds) and a more subjective “regime of the eye” predicated upon the individual, immediate, and contained bodily presence, and exemplified in Hogarth’s artistic theory of irregularity and variety.<sup>80</sup>

It is de Bolla’s concept of the “sentimental look” that I should like to keep in mind throughout the following considerations of the various main “types” of Gothic abbey occupant that came to be established by the end of the eighteenth century. The “regime of the eye” and “regime of the picture” distinction also suggests a useful means of identifying these different types, and the different natures of their engagements with Gothic abbey settings. De Bolla himself identifies Horace Walpole with the educated, objectifying regime of the picture; William Beckford, too, was an author whose famous engagement with Gothic architecture had more to do with self-expression than with self-fashioning or self-identification.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> De Bolla 11; 73-74.

<sup>80</sup> De Bolla 25; 74.

<sup>81</sup> De Bolla 110.

Either Walpole or Beckford might have protested a genuine, affective “regime of the eye” response to Gothic architecture, but they fashioned Gothic fabrics, and evoked these through description, on the strengths of their particular identities as wealthy connoisseurs; they did not consider themselves as having been fashioned by their Gothic fabrics. Other individuals, including other authors, however, occupied and appropriated Gothic abbey sites not belonging to them under any law of property (though the case of Lord Byron is an obvious, and interesting exception) through descriptions and narratives in which they identified themselves with the literary creativity also figured in such representations.

The main impetus behind this gradual “occupation” of Gothic architectural spaces as the eighteenth century progressed was the increasing currency of the picturesque as a way of seeing landscapes, and thus buildings, that enabled a figurative, vicarious “command” of the objects of vision.<sup>82</sup> While such proponents of theories of association as Archibald Alison, as well as Price and Knight, insisted that picturesque appreciation was to a large degree determined by historical associations not available to the uneducated classes in particular, the late eighteenth-century rise in middle-class “picturesque” tourism, informed by romances and descriptive poetry, as well as by Gilpin, saw new associations accumulate around Gothic architectural sites, with the result that new “claims” were made upon them, by a broader social group.

The focus of these associations upon the human occupants and activities to be observed in (particularly ruined) abbey and castle settings was itself part of the shift of perspective explained by Janowitz as replacement of the historical, or temporal

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<sup>82</sup> See Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 87; 92.

sense of the ruin by a visual, spatial emphasis. Deborah Kennedy has explained the manner in which this shift manifested itself where representations of Gothic abbey ruins specifically were concerned:

Later representations of ruined abbeys concentrated on the human experience ... in contrast to the stark drawings from the Buck brothers from the 1720s. The change in representation corresponds to that in literary texts, where ruined abbeys were first seen from a distance and mentioned in passing ... Later poems offer a close-up view, taking the reader inside a ruined abbey's walls and often inside the narrator's deepest thoughts.<sup>83</sup>

Such entries and appropriations of Gothic abbey sites as Kennedy describes were, of course, largely enabled by the ruined conditions of the buildings and the absences of any possessive authorities -- while it must be remembered that even those abbeys enclosed within private estates, or modernised and occupied as private homes were sites of a perhaps still more literal process of approach, entry, and appropriation, their original monastic inhabitants having been displaced. The "graveyard" poets, and authors of melancholic (and moralistic) ruin-meditations, would provide the earliest literary instances of this process, as Cleanth Brooks's reading of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" serves to indicate.<sup>84</sup> As Kennedy also explains, though, abbey ruins became places of resort often used by the working classes for purposes less exalted than those of pleurably melancholy contemplation.<sup>85</sup> The

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<sup>83</sup> Kennedy 518.

<sup>84</sup> See Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," *The Complete Poems of Thomas Gray*, ed. H. W. Starr and J. R. Hendrickson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966) 37-43, esp. lines 37-40; Cleanth Brooks, "Gray's Storied Urn," *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (London: Dobson, 1960) 96-113, esp. 100, where it is remarked that the imagined abbey interior is more vividly realised by Gray than the immediate, outdoor setting. Expanding upon this reading with reference to Richard Bentley's accompanying engraving in the poem's first edition, in which a Gothic arch framed the image of the grave and contemplating figures, Lee Morrissey has observed that "In reading the poem as it was published ... we must first view a Gothic church." See ch. 4 of Lee Morrissey, *From the Temple to the Castle: An Architectural History of British Literature, 1660-1760* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1999) 81-107; 101-04.

<sup>85</sup> On working-class, and generally recreational appropriations of abbey ruins, see Kennedy (2001) 504, and compare William Jackson, "Stanzas ... written among the Ruins of St Austin's Monastery in Canterbury, Part of whose Site is converted into a Fives-Court, a Cock-pit, and a Bowling Green," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 59 (1789) pt.2: 936.



most important sense to be gained from all the human engagements with Gothic architectural sites that Kennedy notes is that of a sequence by which outside, visual observation -- as instanced in the plain, documentary illustrations of Samuel and Nathaniel Buck -- shifted into closer approaches, that culminated with the complete location of the subject within the setting.

The consequence for literature of these manoeuvres on and around the sites of ruined abbeys was the establishment of associations of particular figures with such settings -- these appearing in representations always in the act of either or both occupying or viewing the building. Such figures might be imagined as corresponding to the types of eighteenth-century response to ruined architecture identified by Malcolm Andrews, these being the “sentimental”; “antiquarian”; “aesthetic”; “moral,” and “political.”<sup>86</sup> Figures expressing these viewpoints were invoked by authors in their constructions both of themselves as narrating personae, and of other, usually solitary, contemplative and creative characters. While Kennedy has noted the frequency with which “travellers,” or curious tourists, were included in late eighteenth-century illustrations of abbeys, two main types to become especially associated in the Romantic-period imagination with the Gothic abbey were the aristocrat and the antiquary.<sup>87</sup> Both of these had bases in the figure of the original Gothic abbey occupant, the monk or priest (or nun), onto whose “territory” they had encroached, as I shall shortly describe.

A third major Romantic-period category of “Gothic occupant,” that of the tourist, derived characteristics from both these types, with emphasis upon either the hedonistic, or “aristocratic” tendency, or the scholarly “antiquarian” one varying

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<sup>86</sup> Andrews 45-46.

<sup>87</sup> See Kennedy 517.

between individuals. This was not a type with which any of the authors under consideration here, with the possible exception of Radcliffe, evinced much conscious or deliberate affinity in their treatments of Gothic abbey settings, however much they might be regarded as sharing a concern with vicarious enjoyment of a form of possession with the tourist or consumer of popular, graphic or literary representations of particular buildings or other locations.<sup>88</sup>

An early, and famously flamboyant instance of use of a former abbey as the site of aristocratic self-fashioning was that of the “Order of St Francis” convened by Sir Francis Dashwood at Medmenham Abbey in the 1750s. While Christine Gerrard has stressed that a more solid, castellar Gothic architectural aesthetic was favoured by the early- and mid-eighteenth-century Patriot Whigs, rather than any of the later, more ornate forms of Gothic church architecture, the abbey Gothic that formed the backdrop to the bawdy activities at Medmenham may be related to the “licentious profusion” of Gothic architecture as Knight conceived of it via a specifically Whig politics of (potentially libertine) individualism expressed in an appetite for variety.<sup>89</sup> Geoffrey Ashe has highlighted the Medmenham group’s affinity to Rabelais, whose imaginary libertine (but also creative and intellectualising) community of Thélème was based in an abbey and founded on pseudo-monastic lines.<sup>90</sup> Drawing upon stereotypes of monkish licentiousness dating back to the anti-clerical propaganda of

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<sup>88</sup> For discussion of the picturesque and the vicarious enjoyment of land and architecture, and the political ramifications of this for both private and public interests, see Fabricant 254-75.

<sup>89</sup> See Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) 123.

<sup>90</sup> Geoffrey Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: A History of Anti-Morality* (1974; Stroud: Sutton, 2003) especially 9-24 (ch. 1: “The Abbey of All Delights”), in which Ashe relates Rabelais’ libertine philosophy to the *grotesquerie* of medieval carving and marginal illustration (15) and notes Dashwood’s adoption of the Thélème motto of “Fay ce que voudras” (“Do what you will”) (20). On the political significances of the obscene imagery employed by Dashwood in his architecture and gardens see also Wendy Frith, “Sexuality and Politics in the Gardens at West Wycombe and Medmenham Abbey,” Charlesworth, ed., 2: 153-71.

the Dissolution era, Dashwood and his companions were obviously not concerned with serious appreciation of the Gothic surrounds within which they disported themselves, but their associations of licentiousness with the Gothic abbey setting are significant to consideration of Byron's early relationship to Newstead Abbey in particular.

Dashwood's -- and the young Byron's -- assumptions of such monkish accoutrements as the habit were aspects of a specifically burlesque response designed to assert their ownership of a site never intended for such occupancies as theirs (though in Byron's case there may have been an element of mockery of himself as the unexpected heir to the despoiled abbey, as well as of the original Newstead monks). Such typically "aristocratic" forms of self-fashioning were less usual among the non-aristocratic authors under consideration here than the "antiquarian," in which traits of appearance, attitude and activity were also, and less ironically, derived from the first, religious occupants of abbeys. The members of those professions in which antiquarianism was most pursued, the law and the Church (which at this period included academics), indeed maintained in their dress the *sub fusc* styles and colours of medieval clerical habits.<sup>91</sup>

While lawyers and clergy could exert authority of various degrees over the Gothic architectural sites they either researched, and wrote about, or occupied in professional capacities, the antiquarian type had become by the end of the eighteenth century more associated with non-aristocratic occupations of antique architectural sites. As has been described by Chris Brooks and Rosemary Sweet, the popularity of local

<sup>91</sup> On the black, or monochrome, habits of medieval monastic orders as origins of later clerical and legal dress, and on the use of black clothing to represent social distinction (and, later, separation from society) see Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (1975; New York: Avon, 1980) 369-71.

historical and other scholarly researches spread beyond the learned professions over the course of the eighteenth century, with an attendant proliferation of such associated products as the county history and the topographical engraving.<sup>92</sup> While aristocratic traits of ownership and unrestrained, individual liberty were invoked in eighteenth-century and Romantic-period constructions of the creative literary “type” that had emerged by the Romantic period (Duff wrote of the necessary inequality of distribution of “Original Genius” in terms reminiscent of Price and Knight’s advocacy of the “mixed” society), perhaps still more consistently discernible in these was a convergence of stereotypes of the antiquary dating back to the early seventeenth century, with similarly long-standing stereotypes of the creative character.<sup>93</sup>

The traditional emblem, or personification, that connected the image of the dishevelled antiquary or unkempt, elderly male bard with Gothic architectural (or grotto) settings was that of the saturnine or melancholy temperament -- which has already been noted as partly defined by Gothic church, and grotto settings alike in Milton’s “Il Penseroso.” As is explained in Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl’s monumental 1964 study, from the medieval period this personification was typically represented as an aged man, in a customary pose of head resting pensively on hand.<sup>94</sup> As the group of four humours in which this figure represented the cold, dry disposition linked to black bile became gradually transmuted into typical

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<sup>92</sup> See Chris Brooks 129-30; 134-35, and ch. 2 in Sweet (31-79).

<sup>93</sup> Duff remarked that “a diversity and a subordination of intellectual accomplishments are no less necessary to the order and good government of a society, than a subordination of rank and fortune.” Duff 4. On the development, from the seventeenth century, of stereotypes of the antiquary, see, as well as Sweet, Wainwright, and Myrone and Peltz, Beverley Sprague Allen, *Tides in English Taste (1619-1800): A Background for the Study of Literature*, 2 vols. (New York: Rowman, 1969) 2: 45; 88.

<sup>94</sup> Hunt traces another tradition of representing the melancholic temperament in this posture back to Salvator Rosa’s etching “Democritus in Meditation” (1650), in the successors to which ruined monuments became commonplace. See Hunt 43. David Piper has also noted the conventional use of the posture in representations of the profession of authorship from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. See David Piper, *The Image of the Poet: British Poets and their Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) esp. 22, and (regarding portraits of Pope) 60-70.

imagery of more specific temperaments, and professional and social types, the saturnine type, with its constant association with black colouring, came to be identified with the learned and creative professions and pursuits. As is also, interestingly, shown by Klibansky et al, these had been identified with Saturn in still more ancient traditions of Arabic science and philosophy, along with other aspects equally suggestive of various versions of the solitary, proprietorial, contemplative, or confined “Gothic occupant” in the Romantic-period imagination:

[Saturn] ... presides over ... owners of land, works of construction on estates ... over ... division of estates, land and much property ... over being withdrawn into one's self; over loneliness and unsociability ... over bondage, imprisonment, restraint, fettering ... over ... fits of sadness, writing, confusion....<sup>95</sup>

The image identified by Klibansky et al as having had the most potent effect upon early modern depictions of such creative, or otherwise inspired, characters as saints and scholars was not, however, male or elderly, but the female subject of Albrecht Dürer's “Melencolia I” (1514). As Klibansky et al explain, this etching comprised all the main “motifs” of melancholy reproduced into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, via such later versions as those included in the frontispiece to Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and the emblem-books of Cesare Ripa.<sup>96</sup> They included in particular the seated posture, inclined head (usually resting on a hand), and pensive expression of the human figure, as well as a twilight setting and -- most crucially -- a ruined, or at least incomplete, architectural background.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Abû-Ma 'Şar, from Leiden University Library, MS Cod.or.47, fol.255r, qtd. in Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964) 130-31.

<sup>96</sup> See Klibansky et al 374, and (with regard to Pope's personification of “Melancholy” in “Eloisa to Abelard”) Hunt 71-72.

<sup>97</sup> For a survey of these main “motifs,” and their origins in earlier symbolism and iconography, see Klibansky et al 284-362, esp. 286; 314; 319; for explanation of the transmutation of the unfinished building as a symbol of sciences of measurement (including geometry and land surveying) linked with the saturnine temperament in Western and other medieval traditions into an expression of “the romantic cult of ruins,” see Klibansky et al 390.

The implications of this iconography of melancholy, and in particular the increasingly frequent, female gendering of the allegorical personifications from the seventeenth century onward are especially interesting where the iconic figure of the solitary, female occupant of Gothic buildings in the romance fiction of the eighteenth century is concerned (though it is with the eighteenth century that Klibansky's study concludes its survey of the recurrences of the melancholic personification after Dürer, the "Gothic" instances of these being dismissed as too "conventionalised" for substantial consideration).<sup>98</sup> As Klibansky points out, in the Baroque period female figures came to be preferred to the aged male personification of melancholy that had informed representations of such desert hermits as St Jerome in religious art, Mary Magdalen being the Christian saint most frequently invested with female-saturnine attributes traceable back to the Dürer engraving, if at ever greater degrees of separation.<sup>99</sup> The continuation of this female type is easily discernible in the personification invoked by Milton in "Il Penseroso," and subsequently in Thomas Warton junior's "The Pleasures of Melancholy," and, as Hunt has noted, in Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard":

... 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.... (lines 163-66)<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Klibansky et al 391. Notable examples of the endurance of the melancholic motifs, in conjunction with grotto and Gothic settings respectively, appear in M.G. Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), ed. Howard Anderson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 50, and in Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey* (1817), ed. Raymond Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 118.

<sup>99</sup> Klibansky et al 388; see also 387, where it is noted how, prior to this development, the "melancholic" single female figure had become popular for personifications of "Vanity," shown in contemplation of decayed objects (such as ruins). On the conventions of depicting St Mary Magdalen as a grotto-dwelling penitent, see also Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Weidenfeld, 1985) 257.

<sup>100</sup> For illuminating discussion of how Renaissance imagery and theories of melancholy were channelled into the eighteenth-century imagination, and in particular into Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard," via Milton's "Il Penseroso," see ch. 2 of David Fairer, *Pope's Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1984) 25-52, esp. 25, where Fairer notes Joseph Warton's remark in his *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope* (1756) on the suitability of Eloisa, specifically as occupying her Gothic convent church, as a subject for painting. Klibansky et al accept, as does Hunt, Ripa's emblem for melancholy (a seated female) as a possible visual influence upon Milton's "Il Penseroso," but do not otherwise

Marina Warner's remarks stressing that classical and neo-classical uses of female characters in allegorical personifications did not imply that the qualities these represented would be acceptable in real, contemporary women must necessarily temper any consideration of the increasingly frequent, female gendering of "Melancholy," as this came to be regarded as a desirable characteristic in men of learning or letters from the late sixteenth century.<sup>101</sup> As I hope to show in my chapter on Radcliffe, however, the solitary, contemplative female personification inherited in the Miltonic tradition to which Radcliffe aspired could be regarded as having represented to women authors of the period a creative, subjective identity that stood as an alternative to the figure of victimised female prisoner within the Gothic setting, whilst remaining aesthetically evocative of this. Where male authors were concerned, meanwhile, Scheemaker's commemorative sculpture of Shakespeare, erected in Westminster Abbey in 1741, set a new, more classically-inspired trend for the heroic, upright portrayal of the author as a focus of national pride, whilst incorporating the melancholic pensiveness of posture, and taking as its setting the country's most famous, still-functioning Gothic abbey church.<sup>102</sup>

The affinity between the similarly "melancholic" or saturnine figures of the author and the antiquary in the eighteenth-century imagination would see its supreme realisation in the person and career of Thomas Warton, junior. This author was perhaps the period's outstanding example of conscious engagement with antiquarian pursuits as an aspect of literary self-identification, his *History of English Poetry* (1774-81) representing the culmination of a career informed by a fascination with the

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connect Milton's poem with the tradition of the Dürer engraving, on the grounds that this represents the state of melancholy as essentially undesirable. See Klibansky et al 228-31, and Hunt 71-72.

<sup>101</sup> See Warner xix-xx, and (with specific reference to Ripa) 65.

<sup>102</sup> For discussion of the Shakespeare monument and its influence upon the representation of authorship in the eighteenth century and Romantic period, see Piper 80-90, and Connell 570-72.

lost literary and scholarly culture of the monasteries of medieval England, as well as with non-classical, primitive literatures.<sup>103</sup> In his early poem “The Pleasures of Melancholy” (1745), Warton clearly demonstrates the mid eighteenth-century convergence of neo-classical, grotto-based constructions of literary identity with native English “graveyard” locations of inspirational solitude within a specifically Gothic setting -- and with reference to an imagined physical, human presence. While the poem opens with an invocation calling “Contemplation sage” from her “grotto” (lines 1-2), the piece displays as it progresses the poet’s informed awareness of the construction and style of a medieval cathedral interior whilst also generating the more typical atmosphere of the ruin-meditation:

Beneath yon ruin’d abbey’s moss-grown piles  
 Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,  
 Where through some western window the pale moon  
 Pours her long-levell’d rule of streaming light....<sup>104</sup>

Meanwhile, the observation of the physical self in the act of observing is evident from the lines “The taper’d choir, at the late hour of prayer, / Oft let me tread ...” (lines 196-97). This emerges still more clearly, and still more explicitly in connection with Gothic stylistic attributes, in Warton’s “Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Painted Window at New College, Oxford” (1782). Even though effectively a valediction to youthful enthusiasm for the mystique of the Gothic, in favour of the “Enlightened” purity and clarity of the neoclassical manner, this demonstrates in its reflections on its narrator’s previous architectural taste the combination of stylistic awareness (taking in allusion to the “forest” theory of the origin of the Gothic arch) and self-consciousness

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<sup>103</sup> See Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry, from the Close of the Eleventh to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, 4 vols. (London, 1824) 1: 91-96 on the promotion of minstrelsy by monasteries, and 2: 125-31 for Warton’s discussion of the scholarly prestige (and architectural magnificence) fostered by the mendicant religious orders.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas Warton, “The Pleasures of Melancholy,” *The Poetical Works*, ed. Richard Mant, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1802) 1: 68-95; lines 28-31.



that had come to characterise the literary occupant of the Gothic architectural setting:

... enraptured have I loved to roam,  
 A lingering votary, the vaulted dome,  
 Where the tall shafts, that mount in massy pride,  
 Their mingling branches shoot from side to side;  
 Where elfin sculptors, with fantastic clew  
 O'er the long roof their wild embroidery drew....<sup>105</sup>

Both the use of metaphor here, and the particular imagery of (supernatural) artistry and craft involved in this, are also notable in the connection that they establish between the Gothic architectural setting and creative processes. The “lingering” here -- like the sitting and treading mentioned in the church-interior passage in “The Pleasures of Melancholy” -- represents another instance of the physical location of the narrating, observing persona within the setting described. The word “votary” meanwhile bears out Kennedy’s interpretation of Warton’s “Ode III. Written at Vale Royal Abbey in Cheshire” (1777), in which she views the speaker as “a secularised version of a monk” -- this figure having occupied the former home of monks with reflections which, while they dutifully rehearse the ruin-meditation sentiments of relief at the long absence of papist superstition from the site, also commemorate the “Art” and “Learning” which the speaker imagines as having once flourished there.<sup>106</sup>

Described as retaining the “fretted [nooks],” (line 31) “crisped roof,” (line 62) and “cluster’d column” (line 64) that mark it out as Gothic, the abbey -- also possessed of all the irregular charms of ruin -- emerges as a place of inspired contemplation and creativity through the historically-aware perspective of the antiquary. It is in his annotations to this particular piece that Warton’s early editor Richard Mant most

<sup>105</sup> Thomas Warton, “Verses on Sir Joshua Reynolds’s Painted Window at New College, Oxford,” *Poetical Works* 1: 54-62; lines 17-22.

<sup>106</sup> See Thomas Warton, “Ode III. Written at Vale Royal Abbey in Cheshire,” *Poetical Works* 1: 130-39, lines 65-92; Kennedy (2001) 511.

explicitly identified Warton as a poet uniquely concerned with not only the atmospheric effects, but also with close observation of the stylistic character of Gothic ecclesiastical architecture. With regard to the allusion to church windows in lines 29-32, Mant remarks the frequency with which Warton invoked “the Gothic window” in his poetry, going on, in the course of a list of examples, to comment that “it may be difficult to mention any distinguishing feature in that [ecclesiastical] branch of Gothic architecture, which Warton has not noticed. These are not hackneyed pictures, but show an observer of real appearances.”<sup>107</sup> Appearing in the same year as the already-cited *Essays on Gothic Architecture* in which Warton’s note on the architectural Gothic from his *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1762) was excerpted, this edition, and in particular Mant’s emphasis upon Warton’s Gothic-architectural interest, represents evidence of both the fashionable status acquired by antiquarian and historical pursuits by the early nineteenth century, and the extent to which Warton’s work furthered notions of a relationship between creative and antiquarian endeavours and identities.

Warton’s own most explicit expression of the appeal to the creative imagination of antiquarian pursuits, and of the role these played in literary self-identification appears in “Sonnet III: Written in a Blank Leaf of Dugdale’s Monasticon.” In this, he asserts the places both of “Fancy” and “pedantry” as aspects of the pleasurable pursuit of interests in monastic remains (lavishly represented in the successive editions of the work referred to in his title). He highlights these specifically as sources of poetic

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<sup>107</sup> *Poetical Works* 1: 134. Mant discusses Warton’s lifelong enthusiasm for Gothic architecture, and his never-executed plan to write a history of English ecclesiastical Gothic architecture, in more detail in his prefatory memoir for the 1802 Oxford edition of Warton’s poetry. See *The Poetical Works* 1: vii-clxii, esp. xxx-xxxiii.

inspiration, in the act (whether actual or imagined) of merging a literary, creative text of his own with the physical book on medieval abbeys:

... While cloister'd Piety displays  
 Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores  
 New manners, and the pomp of elder days,  
 Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores.  
 Nor rough, nor barren, are the winding ways  
 Of hoar Antiquity, but strown with flowers.<sup>108</sup>

This perceived imaginative appeal of antiquarian study was the aspect of the antiquary persona that linked it most definitively to the literary “type” with which it shared so much of the old iconography of melancholy. Warton the Oxford professor thus represents perhaps the outstanding, Establishment-sanctioned example from the eighteenth century of the association of an antiquary and author with Gothic architectural settings (Oxford itself containing many outstanding examples of Gothic architectural settings constructed specifically as expressions of a learned, and clerical, identity).

It would be in the works of Thomas Chatterton that the confluence of antiquarian and creative impulses with a taste for, and association with, Gothic architectural sites was most strikingly, and practically, exemplified. Although they did not usually identify him with a Gothic architectural setting, graphic representations of Chatterton after his death perpetuated the melancholic tradition of representing the literary “type,” in a ruinous setting, following especially Hogarth’s variation on this in “The Distressed Poet” (1736).<sup>109</sup> Chatterton’s own sustained imaginative (as well as real-life)

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<sup>108</sup> Thomas Warton, “Sonnet III. Written in a Blank Leaf of Dugdale’s Monasticon,” *Poetical Works* 2: 150; lines 9-14.

<sup>109</sup> See, for instance, the design of the 1784 commemorative handkerchief reproduced in E. H. W. Meyerstein, *A Life of Thomas Chatterton* (London: Ingpen, 1930) facing page 476. Hogarth’s much-reproduced image of the impoverished poet in his garret, which reproduced the stock, dejected posture

engagements with the church of St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol stand, however, as the major eighteenth-century precursors to the literary engagements with actual Gothic abbey sites that I shall be exploring in my subsequent chapters.

The extent to which Chatterton related the Gothic style of the church to his ideas regarding artistic identity, genius and creativity emerges with particular clarity from a letter of 1 July 1770, written from London to his Bristol friend Thomas Cary, in which he praises the skill of John Allen, an organist. He first invokes the interior of St Mary Redcliffe in terms that prefigure the awestruck descriptions of Milner and Knight: “Step into Radclift Church, look at the Noble Arches, observe the Symetry the Regularity of the whole. how [sic] amazing must that Idea be which can comprehend at once all that Magnificence of Architecture.”<sup>110</sup> He then concludes: “what the Architect of that Pile was in Architecture, is Allen in Music,” although a lesser appreciation than later authors would avow for the intricate and varied character of the Gothic is then evinced in his comparison of the playing of an inferior organist to such a church’s “minute carvings of Minute Designs, whose Chief Beauties are deformity and Intricacy” (641).

The late date of this letter demonstrates the continuing importance to Chatterton of the Bristol church to his imaginative perceptions of creative identity, even after the two years in which his Gothic enthusiasms had been apparently superseded in his writings by the post-Augustan register and satirical themes of the contemporary London

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and dishevelled appearance of the melancholic similarly transposes the hallmarks of ruin, or the grotesque (which, I have been arguing, also took forms of Gothic architectural ruins or interiors) to the dilapidated garret interior. See William Hogarth, *The Distressed Poet* (1736), City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Chatterton, letter to Thomas Cary, 1 July 1770, *The Complete Works of Thomas Chatterton*, ed. Donald S. Taylor and Benjamin B. Hoover, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971) 1: 639-42; 640.

literary scene from within which he had been working. It comes as a brief coda to the associations of Gothic church architecture with creative identity established much more expansively in the “Rowley” writings, which Georges Lamoine has viewed as literary and textual counterparts to the Gothic architectural fabrications indulged in by Chatterton’s erstwhile, unsympathetic correspondent Horace Walpole.<sup>111</sup>

In their concentrated focus upon a particular, medieval church building, Chatterton’s Rowley texts arguably represent a more committed attachment than Walpole’s to the architectural Gothic as expressive of original creative genius. Neither Walpole’s part-castle, part-abbey pastiche at Strawberry Hill nor his romance *The Castle of Otranto* ever amounted to more than the *jeux d’esprit* of a wealthy gentleman enjoying the current vogue for Gothicised interiors. In the first of his poems substantially depicting St Mary Redcliffe, “Stay Curyous Traveller and pass not bye,” interpolated in the *Discorse on Brystowe* (1768), Chatterton not only represents the sublimely massive Gothic edifice as a testament to the creative inspiration and skill of its architect (“This mightie Pile that keeps the Wyndes at baie ... Shall be the Record of the Buylders Fame for aye”) but also, from the first line, involves the figure of the onlooker as an element in the scene, describing the appearance of the building as it strikes this figure’s perceptions.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> See Georges Lamoine, “The Originality of Chatterton’s Art,” *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture*, ed. Nick Groom (London: Macmillan, 1999) 32-45; 40. An interesting recent, alternative architectural interpretation of Chatterton’s art as characterised by intricacy and variety is presented by Timothy Mowl, who posits the rococo (incorporating the “Gothick”) as an analogue for Chatterton’s imagination and entire oeuvre, with its Orientalist and Augustan, as well as Gothic focuses. See Timothy Mowl, “A Rococo Poet for a Rococo City,” *From Gothic to Romantic: Thomas Chatterton’s Bristol*, ed. Alistair Heys (Bristol: Redcliffe, 2005) 36-52.

<sup>112</sup> Thomas Chatterton, “A Discorse on Brystowe” (1768), *Works* 1: 93-104; lines 195-99.

*The Parlyamente of Sprytes* (1768), meanwhile, recalls the graveyard school in its evocation of a ghost-haunted night in the church that provides the occasion for speaking spirits to praise the genius of William Canynge, the historical town merchant imagined by Chatterton as the cultivated friend of the priest and local historian Thomas Rowley. Not only the future ruined state of the church, but the partial survival of its Gothic features, are envisaged by the ghost of Byrtonne as carrying Canynge's memory into later centuries, the "crased Arches and the Carvellynge" being imagined as remaining to impress "the faytour Traveller that passes bie."<sup>113</sup>

The figure of Canynge, as developed by Chatterton throughout the Rowley writings, is itself an important early instance of the fictional "Gothic occupant," Canynge being the central human component of the broad medieval town scene chronicled by Rowley. He is the crucial component of the entire, Gothic aesthetic through which Chatterton realises his alternative, medieval Bristol as a society that, while a prosperous mercantile centre, favours creative genius as Chatterton felt his own Bristol did not. With his cabinet of antiquities and fondness for Gothicising architectural projects, Canynge recalls the eighteenth-century gentleman "virtuoso" collector and architectural improver, whilst he evinces in the principles upon which his Masonic lodge is established a sense of the inborn, as it were elect, nature of original genius in keeping with such mid-eighteenth-century theories as Duff's.<sup>114</sup> In his appearance and (at least potential) demeanour as described by Chatterton, meanwhile, Canynge foreshadows the saturnine Gothic villains and anti-heroes of Radcliffe, Lewis, and Byron:

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<sup>113</sup> Thomas Chatterton, *The Parlyamente of Sprytes* (1768), *Works* 1: 106-16; lines 141-46.

<sup>114</sup> See "Lyfe of W: Canynge -- by Rowlie" (1768-69), *Works* 1: 228-235; 230-31, where initiation into the lodge is stated as being reserved for those of "cleere Wytte," who "havethe theyre Vapoures subtille and fyne as the dewe whyche ascende the Sonne beames," these men being "required to labour unto the opeynge hylten and loste mysteries...."

He ... is tall and statelie His Eyes and Haire are jeat blacke hys Aspect sweete and Skynne blanche han he not soe much nobilnesse yn hys Fyfigure he would be Wommnaysh, or ne no so moche swotiness, proud and discourteous yn Looke....<sup>115</sup>

With Rowley, as the more typical, provincial clergyman-antiquary, providing the foil to the more “Romantic,” creatively-inspired Canynge, Chatterton’s medieval alter egos thus constitute two halves of the single artistic identity within the Gothic architectural setting in the late eighteenth-century imagination. The former standing as the objective observer, and the latter as the imaginative, inspired occupant, they also represent, whilst being products of, the creative “fancy” as prompted by antiquarian researches focused upon Gothic church architecture. Through these characters, Chatterton’s Rowleian writings also convey a proto-Romantic insistence upon the autonomy of the artist, the architectural Gothic standing for individual liberty for Chatterton in this respect, as it did for figures like Walpole, Price and Knight, not only in their aesthetics but also in their politics.

While the Gothic style could have been implicated in Mary Wollstonecraft’s attack, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), upon the indulgence by wealthy landowners of tastes for “obelisks, temples, and elegant cottages, as objects for the eye” (Gothic being so interchangeable in fashionable garden-decoration with such other characteristically intricate styles as the Oriental or rococo), the varied, intricate character of the Gothic style also had for many Romantic-period authors a more purely libertarian significance.<sup>116</sup> As the political appeal of Gothic buildings for Price

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<sup>115</sup> Chatterton, “Abstracts from Letters” (1768), *Works* 1: 134. The “proto-Byronic” sense of Canynge’s characterisation continues in the “Three Rowley Letters” (1768), in which he is remarked upon by Rowley as a womaniser who “havethe too maynte True Loves and Nonnes ...” *Works* 1: 230.

<sup>116</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols. (London: William Pickering, 1989) 5: 1-60; 56. The same inference may be made from her likening of what she considered to be the convoluted, obfuscatory

and Knight lay in the way that their varied yet unified structures evoked their ideal of a state in which individual liberties could be exercised under the shelter of a singular, monarchical rule, so it could also figure a singular, artistic vision that sought to comprehend all the impressions and sensations of human experience.

This pervasive significance of the architectural Gothic to Romantic perceptions and constructions of creative identity, and the extent to which, in this, it transcended political bias, is strikingly exemplified in the discussion of medieval design (otherwise highly derivative of commentators such as Milner) in William Godwin's *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1803).<sup>117</sup> Even as he stresses the original, authoritarian purposes of medieval churches, which he associates with "the craft of political imposition," Godwin perpetuates the notion of a relationship between Gothic architectural imagery and literary identity.<sup>118</sup> From his account of his researches, he emerges as a combination of imaginative author and antiquary, pondering the creative opportunities offered by the "science" of "antiquities."<sup>119</sup> Dismissing the stereotypes of antiquaries as "cold," "sterile," "phlegmatic," and "desultory" in their attitudes and practices, he explains that in writing the *Life* "it was my wish ... to carry the workings of fancy and the spirit of philosophy into the investigation of ages past."<sup>120</sup>

Having posited the idea of a Christian "divorce between theology and poetry" (1: 33) that left literary creativity free from religious constraints, Godwin associates the Gothic architecture of the medieval church, with its "strong propensity to

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quality of Burke's prose and reasoning to "another Chinese erection, to stare ... the plain country people in the face, who bluntly call such an airy edifice -- a folly" (9).

<sup>117</sup> William Godwin, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet*, 2 vols. (London, 1803); see esp. 1: 140; 144.

<sup>118</sup> Godwin 1: 33.

<sup>119</sup> Godwin 1: x.

<sup>120</sup> Godwin 1: xi.



embellishment” with the primitive poetic artistry of non-classical nations and cultures.<sup>121</sup> Most notably, and having likened Grecian architecture (for which he expresses a preference) to “Augustan” poetry, and Gothic architecture to “the poetry of a ruder and more daring period,” he describes the type of the “Gothic” artist:

[He] does not stoop to conform himself to elaborate rules; he yields to the native suggestions of his sublime and untutored fancy; he astonishes the observer and robs him of himself; and the heart of man acknowledges more occasions of sympathy, of affection and feeling in his productions, than in the laboured and accurate performances of a more enlightened age.<sup>122</sup>

Whilst not new -- it in particular recalls Duff's *Essay on Original Genius*, in which, as has been noted, the affinity between the creative character and the architectural Gothic is strongly implied -- Godwin's Gothic Revival-epoch comparison of the Gothic literary and architectural styles is nevertheless important as an instance of one literary author's application of such ideas in consideration of another author located within a “Gothic” cultural milieu. His remarks show a literary author's perspective upon what had become conventional in topographical, descriptive, and historical representations and discussions of the architectural Gothic, and demonstrate the extent of the association, by the early nineteenth century, of such conventions with constructions of literary creativity and identity.

With commentators including Duff and Milner having since the mid-eighteenth century praised the imaginative flights achieved by the Gothic architects, and with comparison of the “Gothic” styles of literature and architecture having also become commonplace, Godwin in the passage quoted above merges the idea not only of the art, but of the artist with that of the sublime object, showing the author of genius to be

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<sup>121</sup> On the ornate quality of Gothic, see Godwin 1: 142

<sup>122</sup> Godwin 1: 143.

capable, in his writing, of all the effects of a Gothic edifice. He expresses what might be considered a matured, Romantic sense of creative identification with the architectural Gothic, or a progression beyond the simpler associations of religious history, eighteenth-century picturesque aesthetics and “graveyard” melancholy. In acknowledging the aesthetic appeal of the sublimely imposing forms and intricate ornamentation of Gothic ecclesiastical architecture to the imagination and “passions,” and in asserting the creative pleasure and productivity to be enabled by scholarly and antiquarian studies of this, and the culture that produced it, Godwin’s appreciation of Chaucer and his milieu thus comprises, as Pope’s account of Netley Abbey also did, the essential elements of those major Romantic-period imaginative engagements with Gothic abbey architecture which, beginning with Ann Radcliffe, I shall now proceed to explore.

## II

**Melancholy Pleasure: Radcliffe, St Alban's Abbey, and the Inspirational Gothic Interior**

Mrs Radcliffe ... was much attached to St Alban's, the antiquities of which she explored with unwearied zeal, and the historical dignity of which she has vindicated in her longest poem.<sup>1</sup>

Making this remark in his "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe," Thomas Noon Talfourd ascribes to Ann Radcliffe what might be regarded as all three major hallmarks of the Romantic-period, Gothic Revival author. As in Pope's reported encounter with Netley Abbey, there is the association with a particular, real-life location; the involved interest in its history and archaeology, and the imaginative, creative expression of these engagements. Although much neglected, and dismissed as tedious and superficial by the few critics to have discussed it, Radcliffe's *St Alban's Abbey*, her "longest poem," is therefore highly significant to any consideration of how Romantic-period authors responded to and represented the Gothic abbey, and how personal engagements with such sites informed their representations of themselves both as spectators of these, and as authors.<sup>2</sup> It strikingly exemplifies the use, by an author long synonymous with popular "Gothic" fictions, of the typically "Gothic" setting of the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Noon Talfourd, "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Mrs Radcliffe," *Gaston de Blondville, or The Court of Henry III. Keeping Festival in Ardenne, A Romance. St Alban's Abbey, A Metrical Tale; with some Poetical Pieces ... to which is prefixed a Memoir of the Author, with Extracts from her Journals*, by Ann Radcliffe, 4 vols. (London, 1826) 1: 1-132; 96.

<sup>2</sup> Among recent critics, Rictor Norton refers to *St Alban's Abbey* as "several hundred pages of turgid and morbid rhyming couplets," while Robert Miles does not even discuss it, beyond conjecturing the period of its composition. See Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London: Leicester UP, 1999) 200; Robert Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995) 25. For the purposes of these discussions, I shall be accepting Norton's conjecture of 1808-09 as the composition date of *St Alban's Abbey*; see Norton 200.

medieval abbey in the service of what I shall be showing were recognisably Romantic creative ambitions.

In this chapter, I trace Radcliffe's representations of Gothic abbeys in the novels published during her lifetime, and in her volume of travel-writing, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795), before using readings of the posthumously-published *Gaston de Blondville* and *St Alban's Abbey* to show how Radcliffe achieved a synthesis of Gilpin's picturesque identification of the Gothic abbey with seclusion and contemplation, with the idea of the Gothic abbey as locus of specifically creative inspiration refined in Thomas Warton's historically-informed poetical treatments of abbey locations. In these discussions, I develop the important biographical work of Rictor Norton, who, despite his dismissive view of *St Alban's Abbey*, has provided a convincing account of Radcliffe as an author influenced from her childhood by not only the picturesque aesthetic perspectives, but also the material products, of the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival.<sup>3</sup> *St Alban's Abbey* having been a Gothic architectural location with which Radcliffe is known to have been familiar, her creative response to it thus provides crucial evidence for Norton's compelling account of her as an involved participant in the contemporary Gothic Revival "movement" in culture and aesthetics.

In showing how Radcliffe established, and developed the image of the Gothic abbey as a Romantic icon of imaginative inspiration and creative identity, I also offer an alternative

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<sup>3</sup> See Norton 51-52 (on Gothic architectural sites probably known to Radcliffe in the Bath area); 75-78 (on Radcliffe's familiarity with Netley Abbey, and the major contemporary works of picturesque art and aesthetics).

to those interpretations of Radcliffe's architectural representations that have dominated readings of Radcliffe's fictions, the Romantic-period works that most famously exemplify the "Gothic." Established primarily by Michel Foucault, who, as has been noted, explicitly cites Radcliffe and her novels in "The Eye of Power," these interpretations have been most fully developed within feminist criticism of the Gothic novel, so much of which is preoccupied with property, and the power-relations between genders.<sup>4</sup> They endorse an apparent consensus that Radcliffe's architectural settings almost invariably represent confinement, repression and the indulgence of corrupt authorities in arbitrary exercises of power, Robert Miles most succinctly exemplifying such thought in his remark that, in Radcliffe's novels, "what can be said of ruined abbeys can also be said of castles...."<sup>5</sup>

It is in terms of the idea and associations of the castle in particular that such readings tend to treat all the institutional architecture described by Radcliffe, taking as their major frame of reference the castle and house metaphors for the English constitution commonplace in the eighteenth century.<sup>6</sup> On the occasions when they are discussed separately from castle-based, martial or political institutions in Radcliffe's writings, abbeys are regarded as extensions of the authority of such organisations, or (being

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<sup>4</sup> See Foucault, "The Eye of Power" 154; also Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd ed (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000) 83; Ellis, *The Contested Castle*; Lauren Fitzgerald, "Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies," *Gothic Studies* 6 (2004): 8-18.

<sup>5</sup> Miles, *Ann Radcliffe* 78; the extent to which Miles conflates the abbey with the castle in Radcliffe's imagery of setting, in a study otherwise highly sensitive to Radcliffe's aesthetic engagements, is clear from his identification of the abbey of St Augustin (to be discussed below) in *A Sicilian Romance* entirely with the "sublime ... martial, and male" (94).

<sup>6</sup> See especially Clery 76-80, and Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, Writings and Speeches* 8: 85.

apparatus of the Roman Catholic Church in foreign countries or past historical periods) as symbolic of English Establishment institutions that could not be openly criticised in the late eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

The sheer volume of criticism concerned with Radcliffe's "castellar" Gothic itself serves to demonstrate the importance of Gilpin's picturesque as an informing influence upon her architectural representations. As a novel set mainly at a castle, and overtly concerned with issues of ownership and inheritance, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is understandably a focus of criticism preoccupied with issues of property and power -- and so will not be coming under detailed consideration here. I would note, however, that it exemplifies Radcliffe's conscious association of particular architectural settings within particular contexts, in their characters as established by Gilpin. While the abbeys in Radcliffe's work have been validly identified with oppressive politics and ideologies, they nevertheless also demand to be read with far more awareness of the terms of Gilpin's designation of abbeys as places of seclusion and contemplation than has generally been demonstrated in recent criticism. Where the Miltonic tradition of melancholic poetry is also taken into account, abbeys emerge from Radcliffe's writings as not only objects of aesthetic appreciation, but as central images within the development of this author's construction of her creative identity.

Long before Foucault's thoughts on institutional and punitive eighteenth-century

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<sup>7</sup> See Kate Ferguson Ellis, "Ann Radcliffe and the Perils of Catholicism," *Women's Writing* 1 (1994): 161-69; Williams 46-47; Hoeveler 67; Frances Chiu, "Introduction," *Gaston de Blondeville*, by Ann Radcliffe, ed. Frances Chiu (Chicago: Valancourt, 2006) vii-xxxvii; ix, xix, xxv.

buildings came to dominate discussion of architecture in the Gothic, Warren Hunting Smith had entertained the consideration that appreciative sentiments may also have informed architectural representations in English novels of the late eighteenth century, Gothic buildings having proliferated in these between 1770 and 1785.<sup>8</sup> The positive aspects of Radcliffe's Gothic abbey representations have not been completely ignored in later Gothic criticism, Birgitta Berglund and Diane Long Hoeveler having acknowledged some of these in feminist readings that highlight Radcliffe's representations of convents as secure women's communities (albeit with reservations, in the case of Hoeveler).<sup>9</sup>

What Berglund and Hoeveler do not take account of, however, is the character of the abbeys and convents' stylistic manners as Gothic -- an aspect of these objects' representations by which they may be identified as participating in the same, intricate and varied aesthetic of Radcliffe's picturesque landscapes, rather than being merely located within these. Consideration of the architectural Gothic style is likewise absent from Gillian Beer and Alison Milbank's work on women's Gothic, but these critics' respective emphases upon women's confinement, and female engagements with the Miltonic tradition of melancholic poetry hint at possibilities for some alternatives to the Foucauldian and feminist consensus on architecture in Radcliffe's fictions, in which considerations of the Gothic style might be accommodated.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Architecture in English Fiction* 90.

<sup>9</sup> Birgitta Berglund, *Woman's Whole Existence; The House as an Image in the Novels of Ann Radcliffe, Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen* (Lund: Lund UP, 1993) especially 55-63; Hoeveler 53, 110; see also Lamont 109, on late eighteenth-century usage of the word "convent" to denote a specifically female community.

<sup>10</sup> See Beer, and Alison Milbank, "Milton, Melancholy and the Sublime in the 'Female' Gothic from Radcliffe to Le Fanu," *Women's Writing* 1 (1994): 143-60.

While not regarding women's physical confinements in literature as in themselves positive, Beer highlights the expressive and creative potentials realised in such situations, in locating them within the tradition of the heroic epistle. The texts Beer cites -- including Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), as well as Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) and selections from Drayton's *Heroicall Epistles* (1597) -- tellingly almost all feature Gothic-architectural settings as their sites of women's confinement, although this is not a factor to which she draws attention. From Beer's study thus emerges the sense of a particular, "Gothic" aesthetic shared by the heroic epistle and the Radcliffean novel, while, as noted in my Introduction, the specifically "shadowy, intricate, Gothic" architectural character of Eloisa's convent has been elaborated upon by Anne Williams.<sup>11</sup> Also observing that "the symptoms of melancholy coincide with conventional Gothic paraphernalia," Williams importantly emphasises, with Beer, the creativity enabled by Eloisa's situation, considering that Eloisa's pleasure in her writing is "the jouissance of access and participation ... a way out of the structures in which [she] is imprisoned."<sup>12</sup>

I consider that from these readings of eighteenth-century women's Gothic, as well as from Norton's account of Radcliffe's participation in the culture of the contemporary Gothic Revival, a case emerges for regarding the specifically Gothic architectural location as having conditioned Radcliffe's characterisations of women contained within such settings as inspired and creatively productive. This is strengthened when Milbank's work on Radcliffe's affinity to the Miltonic tradition of melancholic poetry is taken into account alongside Beer's compelling arguments for the classical heroic epistle, with its

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<sup>11</sup> Williams 52-53.

<sup>12</sup> Williams 63; 64.



desolate, sequestered settings, as an antecedent for women's Gothic. Departing from the thesis of Gilbert and Gubar, this being that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women writers rejected or resisted a male-dominated tradition, Milbank has traced Radcliffe's aesthetic directly back to Milton's "Il Penseroso" via not only the Burkean sublime, but also the mid eighteenth-century "Graveyard school" of poetry.<sup>13</sup> Most crucially to my concerns, and in terms that I would extend beyond consideration of Romantic-period prose fiction alone, she argues that the "perambulation" of Milton's poet, led by the goddess of melancholy, through "a garden ... a wilder landscape ... an ancient abbey, and a hermit's cell ... sets off the chain of associations between landscape, the medieval past and its religious architecture that will engender the gothic novel...."<sup>14</sup>

While the role of Gothic architecture within Radcliffe's sublime is not central to Milbank's particular arguments, her idea that a (Miltonic) Eve-like "recognition of the loss of Eden ... allows this lack to be refigured as a cultural space in which ... feminine creativity [may be] engendered," adds to the hints in Beer that "Gothic" confinement could provide space for creativity.<sup>15</sup> Milbank also observes that, in *Udolpho*, Emily St Aubert (otherwise much given to producing lyrics under scenic influences) composes no poetry at the castle itself.<sup>16</sup> Her reasoning is that freedom is a precondition for Radcliffe's heroines' creativity, to which I would add that no poetry is composed at Udolpho because

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<sup>13</sup> Milbank 143; see also Cafarelli, esp. 105-06, where (prior to brief observations upon the appeal of Gothic abbey imagery to Wordsworth and Coleridge) it is remarked, regarding Radcliffe's development of her "gothic" aesthetics of "terror" under Milton's influence, that "[in] all of Radcliffe's novels, reactions to deserted and ruined buildings illuminate characters' minds."

<sup>14</sup> Milbank 143-44.

<sup>15</sup> Milbank 148.

<sup>16</sup> Milbank 146.

it is a castle, and so not -- in accordance with Gilpin's aesthetics -- associated with contemplation, or, consequently, with inspiration or creativity. As locations already invested with inspirational properties in "Il Penseroso" and "The Pleasures of Melancholy," abbeys, on the other hand, become in Radcliffe's fictions far more flexible subjects of representation, as I shall now proceed to show, with reference to the romances that preceded the composition of *Gaston de Blondville* and *St Alban's Abbey*.

A perfunctory, incidental description of a Gothic abbey ruin having featured in chapter 12 of *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), Radcliffe's earliest sustained treatment of a Gothic abbey setting appears in *A Sicilian Romance* (1790), at the point in the story where Julia Mazzini has found refuge from her father's castle, and the unwelcome advances of the Duke of Luovo, in the abbey of St Augustin.<sup>17</sup> In describing this setting, Radcliffe conforms to many of the conventions of both picturesque and Gothic architectural description established by the time of her novel's publication in 1790:

The abbey of St Augustin was a large magnificent mass of Gothic architecture, whose gloomy battlements, and majestic towers arose in proud sublimity from amid the darkness of the surrounding shades. It was founded in the twelfth century, and stood a proud monument of monkish superstition and princely magnificence.<sup>18</sup>

In introducing the building, Radcliffe -- like any eighteenth-century author of a local "History and Antiquities," sketches in its stylistic character and history. Elaborating upon this to explain the abbey's origin as "an asylum to many noble Italian emigrants" she adopts the associative manner of a poetic ruin-meditation:

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<sup>17</sup> See *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789; Dublin, 1792) 202-03.

<sup>18</sup> *A Sicilian Romance*, ed. Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 116.

The view of this building revived in the mind of the beholder the memory of past ages. The manners and characters which distinguished them arose to his fancy, and through the long lapse of years he discriminated those customs and manners which formed so striking a contrast to the modes of his own times....<sup>19</sup>

These considerations prompt moral reflections upon the progress of civilisation away from benighted, monastic superstition, toward social and intellectual enlightenment. The author is thus qualified, in the next stage of her description, to register a more subjective, affective response:

At the abbey, solitude and stillness conspired with the solemn aspect of the pile to impress the mind with religious awe. The dim glass of the high-arched windows, stained with the colouring of monkish fictions, and shaded by the thick trees that environed the edifice, spread around a sacred gloom, which inspired the beholder with congenial feelings.<sup>20</sup>

A conclusion is reached in the “overflow” of Julia’s impressions of the abbey into an “ode ... repeated with melancholy pleasure.” Entitled “Superstition,” it registers decorous disapproval of the abbey’s founding institution (in which it also signals that this particular abbey is not to provide a sympathetic refuge).<sup>21</sup> Particularly in that it is not Julia’s own composition, but that of her estranged lover, its appearance in response to a dusk-shadowed, religious setting drawn directly from Milton (and Warton) amply bears out Milbank’s identification of melancholy poetry as steeped in an aesthetics of loss. Where Radcliffe’s fictions are more generally concerned, it typifies what amounts to a topos in which the heroine is stimulated to literary expression by an experience, or impression of the picturesque -- which aesthetic must, in this case, clearly be identified

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<sup>19</sup> *A Sicilian Romance* 116.

<sup>20</sup> *A Sicilian Romance* 117.

<sup>21</sup> *A Sicilian Romance* 117-18.

with the Gothic abbey setting.

The poetical creativity of her heroines is an aspect of Radcliffe's work already substantially explored in Rictor Norton's critical biography, and with particular relation to *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). As Norton has stated, with regard to this work:

Ann Radcliffe's novels are really *Künstlerroman*, whose central importance lay in the fact that their heroines are themselves literary creators ... *The Romance of the Forest* is a portrait of the artist as a Gothic heroine. Adeline's maturation is an advancement ... from receptivity to creativity ... By the end of the novel, Adeline has become in effect a professional poet.<sup>22</sup>

For Norton, it is the forest, "one of the basic images of female creativity," that forms the locus of Adeline's self-identification as an author -- which idea is consistent with his ascription to Radcliffe herself of an affinity with such isolated tower, grove or cave locations as might be figured as haunts of primitive bards or magicians.<sup>23</sup> As Miles has also trenchantly commented (although it must be remembered that he does not read Radcliffe's abbeys, or indeed any of her architecture, as picturesque):

The pre-Romantic values associated with the picturesque -- sensibility, melancholy, isolation ... form a contemporary 'iconography' of the creative, what one might call genius in its various moods. When the heroine retires to a picturesque glade, she puts herself in touch with the sensibility which was then understood as the quick of modern poetry ... only in this aesthetically fecund isolation can her inner, Romantic self find fulfilment.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Norton 85-86; on *The Romance of the Forest* as containing an analogy for a specifically artistic progress, see also Miles, *Ann Radcliffe* 112, where Adeline's discovery of the manuscript within the abbey is read as "a kind of symbolic redaction of Radcliffe's own writing career," its secrecy being like that imposed upon any eighteenth-century woman of literary ambition.

<sup>23</sup> Norton 88; 87.

<sup>24</sup> Miles, *Ann Radcliffe* 123.



When the Gothic religious building is considered as having been, in eighteenth-century imaginings of sites of inspiration, the descendant from the hermit's cave or grotto, the abbey in *The Romance of the Forest* may easily be regarded as an extension of the forest setting (and vice versa) as Norton interprets this. Such an interpretation is made possible by Radcliffe's invocation of the picturesque -- a way of seeing that progresses from the more historical, chronicle-like description of the abbey in *A Sicilian Romance* to imply the viewing subject in far more definite terms.

This is the idea sensed, if not fully grasped by Smith, when he remarks that, by "deferring" architectural descriptions within the structures of her later novels, "Mrs Radcliffe ... was able to present the building as it first appeared to approaching travellers -- an obvious advantage for pictorial effect."<sup>25</sup> Such is precisely the case in *The Romance of the Forest*, in which a narrative manoeuvre exactly recalls travel writers' emphases upon alternate revelation and concealment as favourable to a picturesque approach. Having glimpsed the abbey's towers "rising from among the trees at a little distance," La Motte, Adeline, and their fellow fugitives find themselves, in the final paragraph of Chapter I, expectantly moving through the twilight forest.<sup>26</sup> This chapter having closed with their being "permitted a nearer, though imperfect, view of the edifice" by another opening in the trees, the second begins with La Motte's approach and entrance to the abbey.<sup>27</sup> These are accompanied by sustained description of an explicitly "Gothic" ruin, still, in parts, "richly ornamented with fret-work" -- and so in keeping with the varied aesthetic of

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<sup>25</sup> Smith 133.

<sup>26</sup> *The Romance of the Forest*, ed. Chloe Chard (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 14.

<sup>27</sup> *The Romance of the Forest* 14-15.

the picturesque as Uvedale Price in particular would characterise this.<sup>28</sup>

In accordance with the specifically subjective emphasis of this abbey description, no historical background impinges upon the reader's initial impression of it, any more than it does upon La Motte's. His response to the abbey, and how this contrasts with that of Adeline, when she and the others join him inside it, is Radcliffe's next focus. La Motte, alone in the abbey amid "deepening gloom," is struck with "a sensation of sublimity rising into terror -- a suspension of mingled astonishment and awe ... fancy bore him back to past ages ... the comparison between himself and the gradation of decay, which [the broken pillars] exhibited, was but too obvious and affecting."<sup>29</sup> Adeline, seeing it by torchlight along with the others, and looking hesitantly at La Motte as she leans on his arm, experiences "mingled admiration and fear."<sup>30</sup>

Taking place here is a dramatisation of the late eighteenth-century shift in perspectives upon the Gothic abbey, particularly where this is in a ruined condition, from the earlier, moralising, "graveyard" tradition concerned with the lost past of an imposing building, to a way of seeing predicated upon immediate, subjective impressions, that prompts workings of fancy less dictated by morals.<sup>31</sup> Adeline, the representative of the latter,

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<sup>28</sup> *The Romance of the Forest* 15.

<sup>29</sup> *The Romance of the Forest* 15-16.

<sup>30</sup> *The Romance of the Forest* 18.

<sup>31</sup> Charlesworth offers another interesting reading of the contrast between La Motte's response to the abbey, and that of the rest of the party, linking La Motte's to earlier eighteenth-century, rationalist (and anti-Catholic, anti-Jacobite) insecurities surrounding Gothic abbey ruins, and noting that the section of the abbey in which the party settles is not ruined, but in a modern "gothic" manner free of such associations, where the characters are able to live "without too many irrational fears." See Charlesworth, "The Ruined Abbey" 74-75.

questions La Motte, and thus also his viewpoint, on the threshold of the edifice. For La Motte, it takes little more than the massive scale of the building, as well as its ruined condition, to engender his sense of the sublime. Where Adeline is concerned, the varying, and thus picturesque, effect of the “partial gleams” (17) conditions her experience. The “scenes of horror” (18) suggested to her present a less disturbing prospect, because mere projections of the fancy, than the “terror” to which La Motte is subjected -- and which, in so far as it is confined to his immediate, interior state, must be understood as unpleasantly “real,” and so prohibitive of any contentment within the abbey surrounds.

As the narrative progresses, Radcliffe’s characterisation of Adeline provides interesting evidence for Peter de Bolla’s theories of eighteenth-century responses to art and architecture as predicated upon positioning of the body, the physical self (comprising the perceiving eye), within the site of display.<sup>32</sup> She first registers her response to the abbey physically, by her “exclamation of mingled admiration and fear” and tears (18) -- which response finds more refined articulation in her poetical compositions. It is, moreover, only once she is well established as an inhabitant of the abbey that Adeline is figured in terms of her appearance, her age, face, figure and manners all being described in detail -- and her possession of “genius” emphasised.<sup>33</sup>

In this, and in her eventual acquisition of the abbey as property, Adeline corresponds to the observing, or contemplating, human figures that, as in contemporary graphic representations of abbeys, focus such scenes as picturesque compositions both by their

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<sup>32</sup> See de Bolla, especially 7; 11.

<sup>33</sup> See *The Romance of the Forest* 29.

physical presence, and by their shaping perceptions, as imagined by their external, real-life onlookers. With these physical aspects, and the abbey setting, Radcliffe combines Adeline's artistic propensities (evinced in the interpolated lyrics), clearly indicating the specifically literary, creative character of this particular "Gothic occupant." The erotically-charged, physical display afforded by Adeline's distressed state and loosened clothing in an early episode of the novel is countered by the subsequent displays of her intellectual capacity and creative talent, so that a "picturesque" object is revealed to be herself a central, ordering subject within the picturesque building or landscape.<sup>34</sup> In the abbey-dwelling -- and ultimately abbey-owning -- Adeline, perhaps more than in any of her other heroines, Radcliffe thus effectively, and explicitly, reclaims the traditional personification of poetic "melancholy" as a female object of implied male desire, for the self-identifying purposes of the creative female subject.<sup>35</sup>

As already stated, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* does not focus substantially enough upon any Gothic abbey settings for consideration at length here. As Radcliffe's most extensive study in the broader aesthetic of the landscape picturesque, however, it demonstrates her maintained sense of the aesthetic distinctions between the abbey Gothic and its castellar counterpart. This is most especially the case towards the end of Volume 4, when the De Villefort family arrive on their estate of Château-le-Blanc in an episode that strikingly

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<sup>34</sup> For the description of Adeline, at her first appearance in the novel, as having "gained from distress an expression of captivating sweetness," and wearing "[a] habit of grey camlet ... thrown open at the bosom," see *The Romance of the Forest* 7.

<sup>35</sup> On female allegorical personifications of privileged abstract qualities as projections of male desires, see Warner, esp. 65. Compare also, with Radcliffe's presentation of Adeline, the artistic appropriations made by the painter Angelica Kaufmann, for her own purposes of self-identification, of such classical female personifications as Minerva and the Muses; see Warner 207-08.



mirrors the arrival of the La Motte party at the abbey of St Clair. Not only do the Countess and Blanche in particular reprise the aesthetic responses of Madame La Motte and Adeline; the De Villeforts' Gothic mansion also recalls the abbey of the previous novel. Both varied, picturesque interiors partake of the landscape picturesque by virtue of its visibility through their Gothic windows, as an integral aspect of each entire scene.<sup>36</sup>

Also occasionally apparent in *Udolpho* is Radcliffe's educated awareness of the different periods and manners of the medieval architecture known generically as "Gothic" up to the end of the eighteenth century. Late in the novel, she describes a fortress as being built "in the heavy Saxon-gothic style."<sup>37</sup> While not of particular importance to the concerns or effects of *Udolpho*, this more academic, technical interest conditioned Radcliffe's future creative treatments of the architectural Gothic. In 1794, and as Norton notes, her likeliest model for such discrimination would have been Gilpin's *Observations ... on Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland* (1786), with its survey of the Gothic style's development in English architecture.<sup>38</sup> As Norton also explains, her family's residence at Bath and connection with Thomas Bentley of the Etruria porcelain works were among factors that made it possible that she was from an early age well-versed in the antiquarian literature of Gothic architecture.<sup>39</sup> *A Journey made in the Summer of 1794* (1795) therefore saw not the acquisition, but the refinement of Radcliffe's technical and historical awareness of the

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<sup>36</sup> See *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 465-68; 483.

<sup>37</sup> *Udolpho* 606.

<sup>38</sup> See Gilpin, *Cumberland and Westmoreland* 1: 13-16.

<sup>39</sup> See Norton 33-34, on Bentley's cultivation of an interest in Gothic architecture whilst planning a dinner-service painted with picturesque scenes (including Furness Abbey, as noted in Norton 119) for the Empress Catherine of Russia, and Radcliffe's possible access to books and prints used as sources.

architectural Gothic.

Norton's discussions of the antiquarian, topographical contexts of Radcliffe's imaginative development are most valuable in that they provide clues to the nature of the shift in her perspectives upon the Gothic architectural setting that occurred between the compositions of *Udolpho*, and of the texts collected in *Gaston de Blondville* (1826). This shift seems to have been in progress, if not necessarily fully effected, during Radcliffe's post-*Udolpho* travels in England and Europe, recorded in *A Journey*, in which Charles Kostelnick has noted that Radcliffe's own, "critical eye" may be found.<sup>40</sup> It is possible to perceive both from this work, and from the novel that followed Radcliffe's return home, *The Italian*, the development of Radcliffe's sense of Gothic architectural settings, and their associations, as a part of an imaginative aesthetic the maturation of which would become apparent in the 1826 publication of *Gaston de Blondville*, in which a prose fiction concerned with political oppression takes a castle as its setting, and a full-length "Metrical Romance" is located at an abbey.

Despite the predominance within it of Gothic church and abbey settings, *The Italian* excludes the detailed architectural descriptions that characterised episodes in *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Romance of the Forest*. Instead, it features far briefer representations, reminiscent of the "stock" character acquired by so much late eighteenth-century ruin-meditation poetry -- and inherited most particularly from Milton via Warton, whose influence upon Radcliffe has been underestimated by both Milbank and Cafarelli. Abbey

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<sup>40</sup> Charles Kostelnick, "From Picturesque View to Picturesque Vision: William Gilpin and Ann Radcliffe," *Mosaic* 18:3 (1985): 31-48; 34.

settings are sketched in with almost synecdochal reference to such recognisable elements as a “tall west window,” “highly vaulted aisles,” or a “long perspective of arches,” appearing incidentally within the narrative, with none of the isolated, “set-piece” treatment that in Radcliffe’s earlier novels places such descriptions at the openings of chapters.<sup>41</sup> Especially when read alongside *A Journey, The Italian* seems part of a general refocusing upon the Gothic architectural image within Radcliffe’s imagination that may be related to some of the major readings of this novel in “Gothic” studies.

These interpretations, and in particular those by David Punter and Maggie Kilgour, form part of broader discussions of *The Italian* as a reaction to Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* that are not relevant to my considerations, except in the aspect of the contrast between Radcliffe and Lewis’s treatments of abbey settings. As I have noted in my Introduction, and as Kilgour observes, the monastery in *The Monk* is characterised entirely as a repressive apparatus; in *The Italian*, however, and as Punter and Kilgour agree, Radcliffe represents the Church and its associated institutions in far less rigidly pejorative terms.<sup>42</sup> As Kilgour has also noted, it is in *The Italian* that Radcliffe engages in one of her most positive representations of abbey, and in particular convent, settings, with her description of the *Santa della Piéta*, where the heroine Ellena Rosalba finds refuge within a community of benevolent nuns, presided over by a motherly abbess “who had known her from her infancy,” and who encourages “innocent and liberal” pursuits, including music.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *The Italian*, ed. Frederick Garber (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981) 64; 116; 136.

<sup>42</sup> See David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, 2nd ed. 2 vols. (Harlow: Longman, 1996) 1: 73; Kilgour 179.

<sup>43</sup> *The Italian* 299-300; Kilgour 180.

The pleasure taken in the melancholy beauty of abbey locations by both Ellena, and by her lover Vivaldi, when, in an earlier episode, he experiences “pleasing sadness” while seeking her in the imposing convent of San Stefano (116), can seem paradoxical when the novel’s apparent concern with the apparatus of the Roman Catholic Church at its most repressive and authoritarian is considered. Being asserted in *The Italian*, however, is the purity of such aesthetic responses to the Gothic abbey as Ellena’s and Vivaldi’s. These Radcliffe opposes to the perversion of the contemplative, inspirational (and sacred) character of abbeys, and in particular convents, by corrupt Church authorities -- as well as by the malign, if tortured, figure of Schedoni, whose sublime, self-defeatingly “singular” personality would be of such importance in Byron’s first constructions of “Gothic occupants,” as will be noted in a subsequent chapter. What Vivaldi initially experiences as the tyrannical power of the Inquisition is accordingly conveyed through the solid, “castellar” character of its architecture:

These walls, of immense height, and strengthened by innumerable massy bulwarks, exhibited neither window nor grate, but a vast and dreary blank; a small, round tower only, perched here and there upon the summit, breaking their monotony.<sup>44</sup>

As the narrative of *The Italian* progresses, however, the Church (and indeed the Inquisition) becomes the instrument of Vivaldi and Ellena’s vindication, as Schedoni is exposed as no true man of God but a decayed aristocrat active in oppressing others both on his own behalf, and on that of the State authority embodied in Vivaldi’s parents, who, in what Punter refers to as their “aristocratic pride,” oppose what they believe to be his disadvantageous marriage to Ellena.<sup>45</sup> The “intricacies” of the cunning, obscurantist

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<sup>44</sup> *The Italian* 196.

<sup>45</sup> See Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (1996) 1: 73.

Schedoni, and the sublimely intricate, labyrinthine windings of the corridors of Inquisitorial power are thus not to be associated with the picturesque intricacy of the Gothic architectural and decorative style. They rather belong to the Burkean sublime manifested in such shadows as might typically obscure the decorative detail of a Gothic church interior -- just as, for Radcliffe, corrupt or repressive Church or State authority obscured the true, spiritual and inspirational character of such spaces.

Despite the saturnine appearance and demeanour that makes him seem so well fitted to the more melancholy varieties of picturesque setting, Schedoni is, therefore, to be understood as being an interloper, and contaminant, within these, whose true identity and activities link him much more to the "castellar." Were it not for the fact that Gothic architecture is described in so little specific detail in *The Italian*, it might indeed be argued that it served Radcliffe in a similar purpose of representing an ideal, "picturesque" society inclusive of many various, individual but interdependent parts, to that which, as I shall be explaining, it served in Wordsworth's works. Certainly the picturesque in its more general manifestation in gardening and landscape has such a significance in *The Italian*, as may be seen in the closing chapter, in which order is restored with the union of the hero and heroine of sensibility, and with which Kilgour has also identified a carnivalesque aesthetic which might be regarded as comparable to the picturesque (and to the Gothic as "grotesque") in its embrace of profusion and diversity.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Kilgour 184, where the carnival aspect of Ellena and Vivalidi's wedding celebrations is specifically related to what Kilgour reads in the novel as Radcliffe's concern that personal, and aesthetic, freedoms should be contained within appropriately rational, authoritative structures (as they are not in *The Monk*).

Radcliffe's description of the cultivated abbess of the *Santa della Piéta* as "a shining example to governesses of religious houses," whose (Roman Catholic) religion is "neither gloomy, nor bigoted" (300-01), is thus part of her construction in *The Italian* of an ideal version of the abbey (or convent) setting that restores to it its "rightful" atmosphere of contemplation and artistic endeavour, reclaims it as an environment for women's retirement and creative expression in particular, and heralds the more exclusive association in Radcliffe's work of the abbey with such conditions that would culminate in her highly detailed depiction of St Alban's Abbey. What the characterisation of this abbess indicates most, however, is Radcliffe's concern in *The Italian* with the human occupants of the settings she evokes, her message throughout being that human intentions and actions, rather than the institutions or beliefs in whose names these are expressed or perpetrated, define the characters and atmospheres of the places associated with these.<sup>47</sup>

This increased focus upon the personalities to be defined in terms of Gothic-architectural settings apparent in *The Italian* was an aspect of the ongoing process of Radcliffe's own self-fashioning as a creative artist, as I shall now show with reference to passages in this novel, and in *A Journey*. Although Kostelnick considers that, as a travel-writer, Radcliffe exercised an entirely objective viewpoint (as opposed to Radcliffe the novelist of "feeling over intellect"), I contend that during her travels of 1794 Radcliffe herself, rather than any of her fictional heroines, had become the subjective centre of the "picturesque" locations explored.<sup>48</sup> Both the new, informed detail with which she would represent

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<sup>47</sup> This idea is suggested in Punter's observation upon the contrasts between the two convent settings (the oppressive San Stefano, as well as the enlightened *Santa della Piéta*) in *The Italian*; see Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (1996) 1: 73.

<sup>48</sup> See Kostelnick 34.

specific, real-life abbey locations from this period, and the emphasis upon the occupants of the fictional abbeys in *The Italian* were consequences of this. From her description of the external aspect and associations of the Gothic abbey building in *A Sicilian Romance*, and her subsequent evocations of the subjective responses of characters to such sites in *The Romance of the Forest*, Radcliffe had narrowed an increasingly inward focus upon herself, an author, as a figure within, and with affinity to, the Gothic architectural location. Two accounts of buildings in the *Journey* provide especially important instances of this “narrowing” of focus in progress, these being Radcliffe’s descriptions of Cologne Cathedral and Furness Abbey, to the former of which I shall refer first, as indicating her interest in the visual effect of the human “component” in picturesque description.

Referring to Cologne Cathedral in a discussion of church attendance in the city, Radcliffe recalls a scene from her visit there:

In the cathedral, a figure in the same attitude [as some other, kneeling women] was rendered more interesting by her situation beneath the broken arches and shattered fretwork of a painted window, through which the rays of the sun scarcely penetrated to break the shade she had chosen.<sup>49</sup>

Significantly, it is the situation here that makes the figure “interesting,” Ellena’s first sight of Olivia at the convent of San Stefano in *The Italian* being couched in terms that, however vaguely, recall these (she is described as “kneeling in a remote part of the gallery, beneath a lamp, which threw its rays aslant her head”).<sup>50</sup> The importance of the

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<sup>49</sup> *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: To which are added, Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland* (1795; Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975) 112.

<sup>50</sup> *The Italian* 86.

human figure as a “component” of the Gothic tableau -- and the clear influence of contemporary uses of human figures in picturesque representations of architecture upon Radcliffe’s literary ones -- is meanwhile most categorically indicated in *The Italian* when Vivaldi is reminded by some architectural drawings of the arch where he has sighted the mysterious figure whom he suspects to be Schedoni. “A picture of it,” he muses aloud, attempting to prompt Schedoni to self-recognition, “would want human figures ... a friar rolled up in his black garments, and ... looking like some supernatural messenger of evil, would finish the piece.”<sup>51</sup>

With this importance of the depicted, occupying, and self-conscious human occupant of the Gothic architectural setting in mind, Radcliffe’s Miltonic, Gothic-architectural “shorthand” description in *The Italian* no longer seems so cursory or inconsequential. Her concern in the novel with the characters of those who occupy its settings combines with architectural descriptions that deliberately allude to melancholic, ecclesiastical settings to invoke the Miltonic tradition of imaginative sensibility and creative identity. In Radcliffe’s imagination, she has thus located herself as author, as well as her characters, within Gothic sites of melancholic contemplation, her progress paralleling that of the general “movement” of the eighteenth-century picturesque spectator into the architectural sites of aesthetic experience.

In structuring *The Italian*, Radcliffe registers this newly self-conscious sense of herself as an author to be identified with the inspirational Gothic abbey setting in the device of the

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<sup>51</sup> *The Italian* 50-51.



contained narrative that anticipates her still more subtle construction of *Gaston de Blondeville*. The novel's prefatory chapter, in which the English traveller receives the written account that constitutes the main narrative, is accordingly set in a Neapolitan abbey church (the "very ancient convent of the order of the *Black Penitents*" [1]) never explicitly designated as "Gothic," but implied to be such in a description that, along with a later mention of a "painted window" (3), appears to distinguish its manner from the more typically Italian baroque:

The interior ... had nothing of the shewy ornament and general splendour, which distinguish the churches of Italy ... but it exhibited a simplicity and grandeur of design, considerably more interesting to persons of taste, and a solemnity of light and shade much more suitable to promote the sublime elevation of devotion.<sup>52</sup>

While a subtle, self-deprecating wit is discernible nearer the close of the preface, as the English reader of the manuscript narrative, purportedly the work of a Paduan student, is warned, "You will perceive from the work, that this student was very young, as to the arts of composition" (4), this setting of the scene of the narrative's "discovery" by the Englishman opens the novel with a clear signal of its author's affinity with the Gothic architectural interior as archetypal site of creative inspiration, and her identification of this with an established, Miltonic tradition of authorship.

As Radcliffe's only sustained, first-person account of a Gothic architectural site to be published in her lifetime, the Furness Abbey chapter in *A Journey* provides the clearest evidence in her writings of the increasingly self-conscious character of her own engagements with abbey sites. In this, as in her journal entries of subsequent years, the

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<sup>52</sup> *The Italian* 2.

author becomes her own heroine, or focusing figure within the scene depicted. The significance of Furness to Radcliffe is evident from its being the only building in *A Journey* to have a chapter devoted to it (this treatment being otherwise reserved for whole cities or districts). The extent to which Radcliffe's subjective response conditioned her sense of the place is further emphasised in the precedence taken by picturesque description over historical background in the account; while this had usually also been the case in the picturesque descriptions of Gilpin, it was not in such local topographies and histories of the period as Thomas West's *Antiquities of Furness* (1774).<sup>53</sup> Only brief details of the abbey's foundation history are included in the first paragraph, fuller discussion of this and other documentary aspects being postponed until after the main description.

Most strikingly, the break between the Furness chapter and that preceding it is exploited in the same way as, and more creatively than, that between the first and second chapters of *The Romance of the Forest*. The final sentence of the previous chapter being left unfinished, its closing words are provided in the heading of the next: "In a close glen ... we found the magnificent remains of / FURNESS ABBEY."<sup>54</sup> The picturesque effect that this is intended to replicate is more fully described early within the body of the Furness chapter:

The windings of the glen conceal these venerable ruins, till they are closely approached ... a few ancient oaks, which stretch their broad branches entirely across [the "bye road"] ... are finely preparatory objects to the scene beyond. A sudden bend in this road brought

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<sup>53</sup> See Thomas West, *The Antiquities of Furness; or, An Account of the Royal Abbey of St. Mary, in the Vale of Nighthshade* (London, 1774), in which some (brief) "picturesque," and even "romantic" description is included (xxvi; 3) but not before details of earlier geography and settlements have been provided. That Radcliffe possessed a copy of this work is noted in Norton 119.

<sup>54</sup> *A Journey* 486-87.

us within view of the northern gate of the Abbey, a beautiful gothic arch....<sup>55</sup>

The description that follows (prior to a separate discussion of the abbey's history) mirrors not only conventions of picturesque representation, but also the "movement" of picturesque perceptions of Gothic abbeys by authors generally. As Radcliffe's contemporary culture had progressed from exterior views of buildings to interior ones -- these having come with increasing frequency to include human figures -- so her account of Furness takes in the whole structure of the abbey, before moving closer up, and further in, to detail features and decorations that include parasitic plant forms, as well as the remnants of "slender gothic window frames" and "beautiful gothic fretwork" (489). It is then related how, "soothed by the venerable shades and the view of a more venerable ruin, we [Radcliffe and her husband] rested opposite to the eastern window...."<sup>56</sup> As imagined scenes from the abbey's past are described as appearing to "the 'mind's eye,'" the implied physical, bodily presence of the author as imagining occupant dominates the scene, being the necessary condition, or origin, of the fancied figures of an abbot and priests (490).

The creative work, that is the description itself, that has resulted from this presence stands for what is most often the next stage of such an architectural (or other picturesque) description in Radcliffe's novels: the poetical response of the heroine, ordering her thoughts into the usual "following stanzas." There is, however, a sense from this work, when it is considered alongside *The Italian*, of confusion, even of impasse, in Radcliffe's

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<sup>55</sup> *A Journey* 487.

<sup>56</sup> *A Journey* 489.

possible attitude to her functions as an author. As works which both follow her year of travels, in the course of which she found herself in the position of the picturesque observers she had imagined in the first romances, *A Journey* and *The Italian* seem to divide between them the author's inclinations toward visual description, and toward more sophisticated plotting, and subtly observed psychological characterisation.

As has often been mentioned by critics from Talfourd onward, it was in *The Italian* that Radcliffe would display her greatest maturity in the depiction of action and character, and in the balancing of these in a unified narrative.<sup>57</sup> It is perhaps possible to discern in the self-conscious character of that work, and especially in the claims to identification with a Miltonic tradition of original authorship that I suggest the uses of Gothic abbey settings partly convey, Radcliffe's own awareness of having achieved a newly high standard of artistry. The impulse to describe aesthetic responses to, and impressions of, scenery seems not, however, to have left her, subsequent to 1794. It was instead concentrated into not only the *Journey*, but also the *Journals*, published in the prefatory Memoir to *Gaston* and *St Alban's Abbey*. These display her continuing, and increasingly heightened, awareness of the aesthetics of Gothic architecture in particular, the accounts of the 1801 tour that took in Salisbury Cathedral being, as Norton has noted, heavily influenced by Gilpin's *Observations on the Western Parts of England* (1798), to which Radcliffe directly alludes.<sup>58</sup> With the exploration of different creative functions enabled by her travels, Radcliffe became aware of newly various directions for her professional work.

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<sup>57</sup> See Talfourd in *Gaston* 1: 130-31; Punter 1: 62; Norton 128.

<sup>58</sup> See Norton 190-91, and compare Radcliffe's entry for 14 October 1801, *Gaston* 1: 56, with William Gilpin, *Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; to which are added, A Few Remarks on the Picturesque Beauties of the Isle of Wight*, 2nd ed. (London, 1808) 54.

Arrived at such a position, Radcliffe may have begun to confront a sense of the inadequacy of prose fiction for treatment of content and subject-matter too abstracted, or “transcendent” in scope for effective articulation within its conventions and realistic or mundane, material concerns, something that has been most illuminatingly discussed by Jay Clayton.<sup>59</sup> For other authors of the period -- P. B. Shelley, as author of two immature “Gothic” romances, being the outstanding example -- poetry emerged as the mode best suited for descriptions that prose could not elevate, in their appeal to the “luxurious melancholy” invoked by Radcliffe at Furness, beyond the level of such works as might be consulted by tourists, or read by aficionados of the more lurid, late eighteenth-century romances.<sup>60</sup> As Punter has commented, though taking no account of *St Alban’s Abbey* as the result of Radcliffe’s attempts to find expression for her essentially poetic sensibility, “The overall vision of life which [Radcliffe] strives to embody clearly seemed to her poetic ... the nexus of feelings and moods which she tries to present ... sublimity, melancholy ... had not previously fallen within the domain of prose fiction, and it is from this fact that some of her creative problems arise.”<sup>61</sup>

It is thus possible to regard Radcliffe as representative of a period in which authors, schooled in the picturesque way of seeing formulated through prose description, sought new ways of articulating the transcendental affect of objects and scenes perceived. This was also the epoch in which the Gothic Revival came to be characterised increasingly by

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<sup>59</sup> See especially ch. 2 in Jay Clayton, *Romantic Vision and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) 47-58.

<sup>60</sup> See P. B. Shelley, *Zastrozzi* (1810) and *St. Irvyne* (1811), *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols. (London: Benn, 1965) 5: 3-103; 107-99.

<sup>61</sup> Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (1996) 1: 56; see also Cafarelli 87.

greater scholarly, or antiquarian awareness of the styles, histories, and fabrics of such buildings as abbeys. Both these transitions may be seen as simultaneously in progress in Radcliffe's career, with the image of the Gothic abbey in each case prevailing throughout. In its progression from prose fiction to verse narrative, Radcliffe's work exemplifies most strikingly of all authors' oeuvres in the period the dual status of the Gothic abbey as both vivid, material setting for popular eighteenth-century fiction, and emblem of the transcendent manner and concerns of Romantic poetry.

With these considerations in mind, it is now appropriate to return to the first, 1826 *Gaston de Blondville* edition of which *St Alban's Abbey* formed part. While the arrangement of contents was posthumous, their juxtaposition does highlight the specificity with which Radcliffe appears to have matched forms, and settings, with contents in her compositions after 1797 -- an aspect of the publication as a whole obscured in Frances Chiu's 2006 edition of *Gaston de Blondville*, which does not include *St Alban's Abbey*, the "Miscellaneous Poems," or Talfourd's "Memoir," and makes only minimal reference to these as its original companion-pieces. A highly political prose romance, *Gaston* has a castle setting, while the "Metrical tale" that follows it renders its evocation of a Gothic abbey building in poetry.<sup>62</sup> The idea of an affinity of fancy with the abbey Gothic is also apparent in the few references to the intricate, non-castellar Gothic style in *Gaston*.

*Gaston de Blondville* takes as its setting the reign of Henry III, adopting Gilpin's

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<sup>62</sup> On the (Radical) politics of *Gaston* see Chiu (2006).

association of that epoch with the first flourishing of the “pointed” Gothic. While a castellar aesthetic generally predominates, there is some detail on the king’s additions to the interior of Warwick castle:

From the arched roof ... hung lamps, that ... illuminated the roial window ... the slender columns ... the curious fret-work of leaves and flowers spreading there; which had been newly done by command of King Henry, who loved such vanities, and had brought this new fashion out of Normandy. He had put such roial windows, perchance better painted, in his new church at Salisbury.<sup>63</sup>

This description is the first association, in the entire four-volume publication in which *Gaston* first appeared, of “abbey” Gothic style with imagination, or fancy, as the narrative recounts the response of the local people to the king’s tastes. Distant peasants see the lighted, stained-glass windows and ascribe them to supernatural agency, before realising that they are merely “of the new manner, called roial ... ” (1: 37). The mention of Salisbury, meanwhile, locates Radcliffe and her perceptions within the text for the reader who has already perused Talfourd’s “Memoir,” with its excerpt from Radcliffe’s Journal entry on the Cathedral there.<sup>64</sup> A similar instance of this, elsewhere in *Gaston*, arises when “a large oriel window of fretted stone-work” is compared with those “in the great church of the city of Cologne in Germany” -- which, in particular, recalls Radcliffe’s published account of Cologne in *A Journey*, so highlighting the direct connection in this work between Radcliffe’s personal experiences of Gothic architectural sites and her creative renderings of these.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Gaston* 1: 28.

<sup>64</sup> Talfourd, “Memoir,” *Gaston* 1: 1-132; 55-56.

<sup>65</sup> *Gaston* 1: 219-20.

The most striking instance of this process (apart from St Alban's Abbey itself) appears in the Introduction to *Gaston de Blondville*. Norton has emphasised the exactness with which Radcliffe adapted previous Journal entries describing the same Gothic interior features featured in the quotation above, as encountered by the travellers Willoughton and Simpson in the romance's framing narrative.<sup>66</sup> Willoughton, more sensitive to aesthetic effects than his worldly companion, exclaims: "How beautifully the ivy falls over those light Gothic window-mullions and that arched door-way, so appropriately and elegantly sculptured with vine-leaves!"<sup>67</sup>

While there is no evidence that Radcliffe read Price, the architectural Gothic here appears as he figured it, possessing in its own character the organic intricacy and variety of form of the natural features attendant upon states of ruin, and being thus doubly steeped in an aesthetics of irregularity.<sup>68</sup> Willoughton, meanwhile -- and most importantly -- speaks for antiquarianism as a stimulant to the imagination, representing the inspired antiquary as "Gothic occupant." Reclaiming the term "antiquary" from Simpson, who uses it in a derogatory sense expressive of eighteenth-century prejudices against dry, scholarly characters apparently over-fond of ancient artefacts or dead matter, Willoughton proclaims:

I have all possible inclination to deserve the title [of antiquary], in its best sense; at least by cherishing those enquiries, which make me intimate with the characters and habits of our fellow creatures in past ages ... These picturesque visions, in which the imagination so much delights, and every discovery, however remote, awaken a peculiar kind of interest and of sentiment no less delightful, which render antiquity, of all studies, the least

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<sup>66</sup> See Norton 195-96.

<sup>67</sup> *Gaston* 1: 16. Compare Radcliffe's Autumn 1802 Journal entry on Kenilworth Castle, in which she describes "the arch of a Gothic door, most elegantly twined with vine leaves, all now hung and clustered with the richest drapery of ivy," *Gaston* 1: 58.

<sup>68</sup> See Price, *Essay on the Picturesque* 50-51.



liable to the epithet of dry ... Antiquity is one of the favourite regions of poetry.<sup>69</sup>

Space forbids full discussion of how Radcliffe, apparently keen to prove the purity -- and antiquarian spirit -- of her own invention in *Gaston*, uses the found manuscript device, complete with the “medieval” diction of the monk Grymbald, the narrative’s supposed translator, in a manner which recalls not only Walpole’s *Otranto* but, more especially, the entire “Rowleian” endeavour of Thomas Chatterton. Another evidence for the seriousness of *Gaston* as a literary enterprise -- and the importance to this of the use of a Gothic-architectural setting -- is the inclusion within the story’s descriptions, and its notorious apparatus of notes, of accounts of “Maria [i.e. Marie de France], the famous French poetess ... then at the Queen’s court, playing on her harp.”<sup>70</sup>

If there is no Adeline or Emily at the heart of this narrative to represent in her experience and development in sensibility the literary career-trajectory traced by Norton and Miles in *The Romance of the Forest*, it is because this story has its own, real-life Gothic literary heroine in “Maria.” The mentions of her in the narrative are brief and few, but somehow sufficiently stressed to claim the reader’s attention. Following the mention above, which occurs as Gaston and Barbara’s wedding-procession enters the chapel at Kenilworth on “The Third Day,” Maria’s name appears again, when, on the same “Day”, one of her songs is performed by Pierre, another court minstrel. Here, the narrator informs us: “She had presented her book to the King, full of marvelous histories, right pleasurable to hear, although they were not all true, nathless she had said to the contrary in the preamble to

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<sup>69</sup> *Gaston* 1: 47.

<sup>70</sup> *Gaston* 2: 9.

her book.”<sup>71</sup>

Maria’s “lay,” as reportedly sung by Pierre, tells of a knight who swears fidelity to his wife when banished abroad, only to acquire a mistress on his eventual return journey. This woman dies from the shock of discovering that her lover is married, but is restored to life by the arts of the knight’s wife, who determines to resign him to the other woman, and then to retire to a nunnery of her own foundation. So moved is the knight by her selflessness that he founds the nunnery himself as a reward for her, whilst also marrying his mistress. The response of the ladies of the court to this entertainment is to “[scruple] not to say, that this was one of those lays of Maria, which were not true. They would not give it credence for a moment.”<sup>72</sup>

This subtly witty digression fleshes out the fleetingly alluded-to Maria as a purveyor of deliberate fictions. The notes authenticate the references to her as fully as they do all the rest of the novel’s minute antiquarian detail. Citing Francis Douce’s translation of the Abbé de la Rue’s “Dissertation” on Maria’s life and writings, they testify to her poems’ preoccupations with chivalric themes, and their considerable popularity. As a quotation from Douce has it:

Denis Pyramus, an Anglo-Norman poet, and the contemporary of Mary, informs us; that they were heard with pleasure in all the castles of the English barons, but that they were particularly relished by the women of her time.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> *Gaston* 2: 110.

<sup>72</sup> *Gaston* 2: 113; 114.

<sup>73</sup> *Gaston* 3: 85-86. See also Francis Douce, “Dissertation on the Life and Writings of Mary, an Anglo-Norman Poetess of the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, by Mons. La Rue. Communicated by Francis Douce, Esq, F.A.S. in a Letter to the Rev. John Bland, Secretary,” *Archaeologia* 13 (1800): 35-67; 38.

Whoever was responsible for the inclusion of this note -- whether Ann or William Radcliffe (who, Norton conjectures, provided the notes on antiquarian matter) -- must have put it in with perfect consciousness of the parallels to be drawn with Radcliffe's own favoured themes, and her commercial reputation as it was popularly perceived.<sup>74</sup> While Frances Chiu has compared Radcliffe in her role as the artist of *Gaston* with the figure of "the silent, mysterious glee-man," who also entertains Henry's court in the novel, it is the reference to Maria in the court at Kenilworth that stands out most as a definite and assertive positioning of the creative literary woman within the picturesque, Gothic architectural setting.<sup>75</sup> The doubts expressed, in Grymbald's narrative, regarding the "truth" of Maria's "pleasureful" works form a subtle link with Willoughton's reluctant doubts as to the veracity of Grymbald's equally enjoyable narrative, while both Willoughton and Grymbald are themselves products of Radcliffe's imagination. As a whole work, *Gaston* thus celebrates the autonomy of the (female) creator of fictions, its lavishly-evoked Gothic setting being absolutely contiguous with this ideal.

What relates *Gaston* most closely to its companion piece, *St Alban's Abbey*, is Radcliffe's employment of modes that emphasise the creative agency at work; thus *Gaston* is told using a combination of framing narrative and (supposedly translated) medieval diction, while *St Alban's* adopts the "high" form of narrative verse. These are works that proclaim their independence of those lurid, late-eighteenth century romance conventions for which many critics were holding Radcliffe responsible, by substituting an antiquarian

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<sup>74</sup> For discussion of the issues of authorship of the contents, including notes, of *Gaston*, see Norton 192-202.

<sup>75</sup> See Chiu xxxvi, where the broader argument is that the glee-man's confrontation of the court with unpalatable political truths compares with Radcliffe's own possible (Radical) political purposes in *Gaston*.

(and not necessarily less “fanciful”) identity for that of the more amateurish, picturesque traveller in the author’s “self-fashioning” imagination.<sup>76</sup> Not only the enthusiasm of scenic description, therefore, but also the precision of antiquarian research and historical data, are poeticised in *St Alban’s Abbey*, with the influence of Thomas Warton, the pre-eminent eighteenth-century proponent of such combined values, being especially discernible throughout the poem and its extensive notes.

Opening her “metrical romance,” Radcliffe invokes a primitivist-Gothic “Spirit of ancient days,” also possessed of a Burkean sublime of obscurity, as inspiring muse, blending eighteenth-century senses of the Gothic in the appeal for “thy elder words, whose sober glow, / Like to th’illuminated gloom of thine own aisles ... Wakes highest rapture while it darkly smiles.”<sup>77</sup> In lines recalling contemporary controversies over the congruity or otherwise of church “improvements,” as well as the traditional Grecian/Gothic dichotomy, an extension of this architectural metaphor then provides more explanation for the desire for a language suited to native, rather than classical themes:

Like Grecian goddess, placed in Saxon choir,  
 Is the false union of the cadenced rhyme  
 And measured sweetness of the tempered lyre  
 With subjects darkened by the shroud of Times,  
 As Gothic saint sleeping in ancient fane  
 Is ancient story, shrined in polished strain;  
 Truth views th’incongruous scene with stern farewell,  
 And startled Fancy weeps and breaks her spell.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> For critical attacks on Radcliffe, and the debasement of the terror-romances she had made fashionable, see ch. 12 in Norton (152-74).

<sup>77</sup> *St Alban’s Abbey*, *Gaston* 3: 89-4:106; 3: 91-92.

<sup>78</sup> *St Alban’s Abbey*, *Gaston* 3: 92.

This preamble thus sets the tone of a work in which architectural imagery and ideas regarding the exercise of fancy are to be inextricably linked.

In the first nine stanzas of Canto I of the poem -- titled "The Abbey" -- Radcliffe presents a description of the abbey that follows the sequence of focus typical of ruin, or architectural meditations. In accordance with the joint impulses at work in the composition, the archaeological and antiquarian combine with the figurative in details that anthropomorphise features of the building whilst also employing more technical terms to describe them. Turrets "so proudly their dental coronets wear" (Canto I, stanza 1), and "Norman beauty" has "lightly o'er the vaulting [thrown] / The thwart-rib and the fretted rose" (I.4). The sense of an "artificial infinite" is conveyed through verbs of movement that represent the building's presentation to "the uplifted eye below" (I.2), albeit as a static object -- the tower "lifts its pinnacled spire" (I.1); the aisle "extends" (I.1); turrets "lift their heads" (I.1).

This imaginary, upward movement by both the abbey and its implied observer displays a projection of action and emotion on to the object by the possessor of the "eye," so enforcing the presence of that figure, however indeterminate, within the whole scene. By the same observant and imaginative agency, the towers can be invested with "saintly grace" in the moonlight (I.3), and "slender columns" may seem to "guard" the porch (I.4). The description of the abbey exterior culminates with a characteristic synthesis of the architectural-historical, observational and fanciful:

The western front shows various style,  
Less ancient than the central pile.

No furrows deep upon its brow  
 The frown of seven stern centuries show;  
 Yet the sad grandeur of the whole  
 Gives it such a look of soul,  
 That, when upon its silent walls  
 The silvered grey of moonlight falls,  
 And the fixed image dim appears,  
 It seems some shade of parted years  
 Left watching o'er the mouldering dead,  
 Who here for pious Henry bled.... (I.4)

From a solid object identifiable by its component parts and stylistic manners, the abbey “morphs” into a frowning human, from which it fades to a “fixed image” (by contrast with the senses of movement previously invoked), and lastly a ghost from the past. The spectral quality of the abbey here is especially suggestive to consideration of this piece as a progression from the melancholic, “graveyard” and ruin-meditation traditions upon which Radcliffe developed her art. It is in the spirit of poetic melancholy that it is invested with the quality of “sad grandeur”; the melancholic impulse conjures it as a “shade,” a haunting memory of loss the concern with which, and the creative capitalisation upon which in the reconstruction of the vanished building, demonstrates this piece’s relation to the poetry of melancholy as explained by Milbank.

Following the general “movement” of the eighteenth-century picturesque, the author-narrator (and addressed, potential onlooker) shifts her focus inside the building. She then, in conformity to the same “movement,” narrows this upon human occupants, evoking first the now-absent figures of the successive abbots of St Alban’s and their monks, as well as their royal and famous guests (I.5), and subsequently the present-day occupant or onlooker. This figure is imagined as physically engaging with the site, the actual contact

registered in the injunction “Pace ye, with reverend step, I pray, / The grass-grown and forgotten way ...” (I.8). In the final two stanzas of this opening Canto, the contemplative onlooker-occupant who can in fancy summon up the abbey’s past is privileged above the merely pleasure-seeking possessor of a “worldly heart” (I.8), for whom, in a reappearance of the votary motif from *A Journey* and *The Italian*, “no hallowed tapers beam / On the pale visage through the gloom / Bending in prayer by shrine, or tomb” (I.8). The kneeling figure is not only an image of contemplation in itself; it is also, imagined as conjured in the mind of the visitor, a mark of the same quality in her or himself.

Such a properly appreciative visitor is reverted to in stanza 9, again embodied for the reader as a walking, looking being with “measured step and slow,” and “lifted eye.” It is for such an ideal occupant, the narrator concludes, that “the gloom shall rise / Of monkish chambers, still and wide, / As once they stood,” the eye setting the elements of the scene in figurative, reconstituting motion, as though growing the building back from its non-existence. This visually-descriptive phase of the canto, and this stanza, closes with an echo of Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” that brings the meditation deliberately to rest within its melancholy tradition. The “eye” returns from its visionary ascent to settle on the anonymous, unmarked graves of the monks, who “urged on human praise no claims,” with the “strong vaulting” that once extended above these, and indeed the entire abbey fabric, as conspicuous by their absence as the abbey interior in the “Elegy.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Compare the closing “approach” to the stone with its epitaph in Gray, “Elegy” lines 115-16; see also, for Gray’s imagined abbey vaulting, lines 37-40.

The canto's subsequent stanzas repeat the pattern of these first nine, expanding upon their exterior-interior-occupant sequence. A more thorough, documentary approach takes over the treatment of historical background, with versified descriptions of the medieval structure and governance of the abbey community. The first evocations of the Gothic-picturesque intricacy and variety of the buildings' decorations appear with the description of the royal lodging, in which organic, floral and foliate forms predominate. Radcliffe also takes the opportunity to link her account of the abbey with established theories of the origin of the Gothic style:

And slender shafts, entwined with flowers,  
Lifted their high o'er-arching bowers,  
Traced forth with mimic skill so true,  
Kings seemed their Windsor's groves to view. (I.16)

A note to these lines alludes to the long-standing supposition that "the Gothic aisle was, at first, an imitation of a superb avenue of trees, or, at least, that the architect of the edifice had the idea of it suggested to him by the effect of that fine arrangement of natural productions."<sup>80</sup> It confirms the Gothic architectural image's role within the poem as the product of art affined to, and respectful of, the teeming variety and exuberant irregularity of nature, the purest expression of primal, creative energy.

Also in focus at this point are the abbey's functions within the wider culture and community. Particularly stressed, as in Warton's "Vale-Royal," is its role as a place of learning, artistic endeavour and preservation of specifically literary heritage. Notes to passages in which this is referred to cite Warton's *History of English Poetry* in

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<sup>80</sup> In Notes to *St Alban's Abbey*, *Gaston* 4: 62-63.



explanations of how monks supported and promoted the British bardic tradition by composing for, and maintaining, minstrels. Such practices, as alluded to here, neatly link eighteenth-century notions of the primitive genius of the bard, and associations of such creativity with Gothic-architectural settings.<sup>81</sup> The imaginative construction of the abbey as a locus of literary creativity and productivity is also lent a technological dimension in the note observing, again after Warton, that St Alban's was the second abbey after Westminster to boast its own press.<sup>82</sup>

A "counterpart" to the "Maria" of *Gaston de Blondville* meanwhile appears in the note to the description, in *St Alban's Abbey*, of the literary life of the abbey community. In this, "Juliana Berners, prioress of the Nunnery of Sopwell," is cited as translator of one of the earliest works printed from the St Alban's Abbey press, "the book on hunting and hawking."<sup>83</sup> Warton's account is clear as to Juliana's standing as a woman of high status and achievement, as he acknowledges that "From an abbess disposed to turn author, we might more reasonably have expected a manual of meditations for the closet, or select rules for making salves," before explaining that "the diversions of the field were not thought inconsistent with the character of a lady of this eminent rank, who resembled an abbot in respect of exercising an extensive manorial jurisdiction."<sup>84</sup> Although the reference to Juliana Berners in *St Albans Abbey* is briefer than those to "Maria" in *Gaston de Blondville*, it conveys a similar sense of the importance of the idea of the creative,

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<sup>81</sup> See Notes to *St Alban's Abbey*, *Gaston* 4: 69-70.

<sup>82</sup> Notes to *St Alban's Abbey*, *Gaston* 4: 61-62.

<sup>83</sup> Notes to *St Alban's Abbey*, *Gaston* 4: 61. On Berners and her three tracts (written in English) on falconry, hunting, and heraldry, see also Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry* 3: 7-8.

<sup>84</sup> Warton *History of English Poetry* 3: 7-8.

capable female (who is in this instance no imprisoned ingénue, but a woman of authority) located within the Gothic walls of Radcliffe's setting.

The canto's final stanzas return it again to the present, imagining occupant. Her or his sensitivity to the environment is signalled again in stanza 33 by the leitmotif-like image of the votive figure ("The lonely, duteous mourner there, / Kneeling and veiled in watch of prayer") imagined as having once been visible through the doorway connecting the abbey and its cloister. Another note connects the supposedly present-day commentary and a remembered scene from the abbey when visited by the author. Both the passage to which the note is linked, and the note itself, irresistibly recall the singing wren of Wordsworth's description of Furness Abbey in Book Second of *The Prelude* (1805), still unpublished in 1826. Describing the silenced choir, the narrator mentions that among a very few sounds to be heard there is "The poor redbreast's minstrelsy, / Who, perched on some carved mask of stone, / By lofty gallery dim and lone" (l.43) evokes ideas of long-lost friends. If this hints at an archetypal, Romantic image of the solitary artist as a spirit of secluded place, the note -- prompted by a mention of an organ in use at the medieval abbey, and supposedly about an actual, remembered experience in the abbey -- enforces this sense still further:

A single oboe, played in the south transept, where it leads the singing of the boys of the Sunday school, is the only object that now sounds within these walls. This simple oboe, however, swells sweetly, and even solemnly, along the high roofs, and sometimes a little robin, perched out of sight, is heard to accompany it. The wild and solemn notes of this little bird, breaking upon such a scene of ancient story, where once the highest pomp of choral minstrelsy filled every vault and gallery ... awaken ideas, which cannot be described, but which seem like recollections.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Notes to *St Alban's Abbey, Gaston* 4: 99-100; compare William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979) II. lines 125-35.

This poem's first canto alone is thus abundant in demonstrations of Radcliffe's literary applications of the aesthetic principles of Gothic, both as sublime and picturesque. *St Alban's Abbey* continues effectively as a rhapsody in Gothic abbey architecture, its small ensemble of "stock" characters (young hero and heroine; a lost parent; an "old retainer") enacting a typical, but telescoped, Radcliffe plot that works as a vehicle for dense description of the abbey under varying light effects. The conditions of the prose fiction of Radcliffe's period -- in which description, however fulsome, is always subjugated to plot-development -- are thus reversed in a poem for which there appears to be little purpose other than to attempt to convey the sublime impressions generated by the architecture as purely and immediately as possible. Both narrative impetus and antiquarian credentials are provided by the situation of the battle of St Albans -- though this, too, is ultimately another device to move all the action and characters inside the abbey, which provides the defeated Lancastrians with sanctuary.

As the poem progresses, certain aspects of the abbey's representation recur, confirming its "character" within the piece as a possibly symbolic synthesis of art, as both a man-made object in the narrative -- and of nature, mimicked in the organic forms of its decorative manner. One such aspect is the forest-comparison, which in one instance is developed to recall the sense in *The Romance of the Forest* that abbey and forest are interchangeable as picturesque sanctuaries for the melancholic solitary. A mortally-wounded soldier having taken shelter in the woods near the abbey after the battle, the scene of his death is described thus:

Here he shall rest till distant day,  
In the deep forest's untrod way,

Coffined in steely arms alone;  
 And, for carved sepulchre of stone,  
 And foliated vault of choral-aisle,  
 The living oak, with darker smile,  
 Shall arch its broad leaves o'er his form,  
 Poor shroud and guard from sun and storm!  
 The woodlark shall his requiem sing,  
     Perched high upon his branchy tomb ... (V.10).

The forest takes on an abbey's characteristics as -- in almost all descriptions of the Gothic style in this poem not concerned with its historical epochs -- the abbey takes on those of the natural, specifically botanical, world. Like the abbey formed by art, its counterpart in nature is occupied by a creative spirit of place represented as a bird, the woodlark in the forest being the counterpart to the robin in the building. Inside the abbey, meanwhile, vaulting extends from the central pillar of one room in a "traced branch of leaf and flower" compared to "a shadowing summer-bower" (VII.2). Organic images are also mentioned in the descriptions of the shrine of St Alban: "flowery knots ... flowers amid the foliage ... wheaten sheafs and roses ..." (VIII.27); and of the north door of the cloister: "slender stems and foliage ... true leaf and flower ..." (VIII.38).

The other main aspect of the abbey's representations in the poem is the way that it is itself invoked in the characterisation of the abbot, the only figure possessed of any distinct personality, or genuine agency in the plot's development (apart, perhaps, from the victorious Duke of York, who demands the surrender of Lancastrians granted sanctuary in the abbey, and who thus might be regarded as standing for a secular, "castellar" authority to counter the peaceful, contemplative and creative spirit of the abbey). As one of the original, monastic occupants of St Alban's, the abbot combines the characters of

the “aristocrat” or presiding, owning authority, and the “antiquary” or contemplative aficionado. At his first appearance, in Canto I, his spiritual affinity with the place is made clear as he smiles in his sleep at the sound of the choir’s chanting (I.3). Following the defeat of Henry VI in Canto IV -- and by a reversal of the anthropomorphising descriptions of the abbey in Canto I -- he is himself described as “some tall arch, in fretted state, / Left lonely ’mid the wrecks of fate,” in lines which continue the ruin/Gothic architectural metaphor:

Though perished be each gorgeous stain  
That coloured high the storied pane;  
Though broken be the moulded line,  
That flowed with grandeur of design ... (IV.12).

In a narrative set in a time separate from the author’s own, the abbot occupies the role of human element essential to the picturesque, architectural Gothic setting, completing the scene whilst investing it with -- and expressing -- its mood of melancholy dignity. The narrator and reader, meanwhile, are implicated in regarding the abbot/abbey ruin as such observers as might centre a ruin-meditation upon their subjectivities:

And o’er the ruin’s desert space,  
That arch throws high and shadowy grace,  
Wraps us in pleasures almost holy  
Of reverence, love and melancholy. (IV.12)

It is this pairing of focal, human occupant figures within an abbey representation that links St Alban’s Abbey with “Written in the Isle of Wight,” the most important to my purposes of the lyric and descriptive “Miscellaneous Poems” that follow the two longer, narrative pieces in the *Gaston* edition of 1826, and with a brief consideration of which I

shall conclude. As well as being inspired by Radcliffe's own visits to the Isle of Wight, this piece appears to draw heavily upon Thomas Gray's description of Netley Abbey in a letter of 19 November 1764 to Norton Nicholls, part of which was printed in the Memoir with which William Mason accompanied the 1775 edition of Gray's poems.<sup>86</sup> It links Radcliffe most definitely with the established current of the eighteenth-century literary Gothic Revival in its invocation not only of Netley Abbey, but also of her poetic predecessors there:

Southampton's vale, where lurks the twilight glade,  
Whose ancient oaks their branches stretch austere,  
And half conceal that Abbey's fretted arch,  
As if to guard from eye and hand profane  
The mouldering stones ...

Oh! reverence this ground; for it is holy,  
Sacred to pious thought; for worldly grace  
By the high-gifted poet often praised.  
Here winged steps have passed, and brightest thoughts,  
Creative as the sun-beam, have up-flown.  
Here pensive Gray some sad sweet moments passed,  
And breathed a spell that save these falling walls;  
There walks that solemn vision, telling his beads;  
Where 'neath the leafy gloom, the Poet's glance  
Espied him!<sup>87</sup>

The passage, as befits its subject of a sequestered abbey ruin, is embedded in the longer, picturesque landscape descriptions that dominate the rest of the poem (and the conventions of which are deployed in the description of the abbey as semi-concealed by foliage). It is immediately followed by an extended pæan in praise of Gray. Figured

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<sup>86</sup> See Thomas Gray, *The Poems of Thomas Gray. To which are prefixed Memoirs of his life and Writings by W. Mason*, 2 vols. (Dublin, 1775) 2: 137-38. On Radcliffe's possible and known visits to the Isle of Wight (in 1790, 1798, and 1811), see Norton 178-80, 216.

<sup>87</sup> "Written in the Isle of Wight," *Miscellaneous Poems*, *Gaston* 4: 107-331; 221-30.

successively as a “departed shade,” a bardic “master of ... song,” with a “full-toned harp,” and a retired disdainer of “vulgar fame,” the dead poet appears in the forms of the typical inhabitants of any late eighteenth-century representation of such picturesque places as grotto, ruin, or complete Gothic building -- a ghost, a primitive bard, a hermetic recluse. The abbot, the poet Gray, and the poet Radcliffe thus emerge from the meditation as successive spirits of the place, each defined by and expressive of its continuously melancholy and contemplative character, located in it by the typical invocations of physical contact (“steps”) and visual receptivity (“glance”). The passage is above all explicit as to the creatively inspirational quality of the abbey ruins, Radcliffe relating herself to Gray, her forerunner in the Miltonic tradition of melancholic poetry, through the occupancy of the abbey that they share in space, if not in time.

Like the progresses of the heroines of her novels, coming into possession of the Gothic sites of their inspiration, Radcliffe’s career -- from fictional sketchings-in of architectural markers of atmosphere, to deep and informed engagement with a real-life Gothic building -- followed that sequence of figurative approach to and entry into the Gothic abbey which also formed the basis of the picturesque way of seeing Gothic architecture. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Radcliffe’s work represented the most sustained and concentrated expression of the centrality of the imagining subject to the picturesque Gothic setting -- and thus also of the idea of the Gothic abbey as the pre-eminent stimulus to and reflection of imaginative subjectivity itself. As I shall now show, returning my focus to the abbey that provided Radcliffe with the setting for one of her most sustained reflections upon the inspirational character of the architectural Gothic, it would be Wordsworth who most

substantially refined this idea in the service of the most exalted ideals of “high” Romantic poetry.



## III

**A Structure Famed: Wordsworth, Furness Abbey, and the Architectural Gothic  
as Picturesque**

The “gothic church” of Wordsworth’s Preface to *The Excursion* (1814), with its “little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses,” is one of two such buildings to have become most famously associated with Wordsworth and his poetry.<sup>1</sup> The other is Tintern Abbey -- which, although a real abbey, is apparently of as immaterial a presence in the “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” (1798) as the entirely figurative edifice that Wordsworth would imagine as comprising his *Prelude* and *Excursion*.<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps because of the intangible characters of these buildings, the real and imaginary, that so little account has been taken of the significance of the Gothic abbey as an aesthetic object and a setting in Wordsworth’s poetry. Such discussions as have been conducted around this theme have tended to focus exclusively upon aspects of religious symbolism -- and most usually upon the phantom, and only debatably present, form of Tintern Abbey.<sup>3</sup> As Kenneth R. Johnston has noted, though, “The ruins of great cathedrals figure importantly throughout [Wordsworth’s] life and works.” He identifies these as not only “in the cornerstone of *The Recluse*,” but also as including “Tintern Abbey, the Grand Chartreuse, Bolton Priory....”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Preface to the Edition of 1814,” *The Excursion, Wordsworth’s Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire, 2nd ed, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940-49) 5: 1-312; 2.

<sup>2</sup> “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” *Poetical Works* 2:259-63.

<sup>3</sup> See, as examples of this religious bias, Peter A. Brier, “Reflections on Tintern Abbey,” *The Wordsworth Circle* 5 (1974) 4-6; Dennis Taylor, “Wordsworth’s Abbey Ruins,” *The Fountain Light: Studies in Romanticism and Religion in Honor of John L. Mahoney*, ed. J. Robert Barth, SJ (New York: Fordham UP, 2002) 37-53.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984) xxiii; in *Wordsworth: A Life* (Harmondsworth: Viking, 2000), Juliet Barker pays frequent, if passing attention to the prominence of Gothic architectural features at locations lived in or visited by Wordsworth and his family; see, for example, Barker 242, 291, 306, 360-61.

In this chapter, I take up the challenge effectively presented by Johnston when he remarks in his preface that “[he] would ... have liked to develop further the implications of the gothic metaphor for the shape of Wordsworth’s oeuvre,” before going on to comment, still more trenchantly, that

... the various revivals of Gothicism by 1815 make it likely that Wordsworth -- who now appears as a pioneer in recognizing their serious intellectual possibilities -- intended to convey [with the “gothic church”] an image of unity-in-diversity, of different styles and structures....<sup>5</sup>

My focus here will be most especially upon those works that feature real abbeys as experienced by Wordsworth, and invoked in far more solid, vividly-realised forms than that of Tintern or the “gothic church” -- the first such instance in Wordsworth’s poetry being that of Furness Abbey in Book Second of *The Prelude* (1805). The Gothic architectural interest will be identified as having been most prominent in Wordsworth’s writings between 1805 and 1815 -- years that saw his close association with Sir George and Lady Beaumont, notable aficionados of the picturesque.

I shall argue that it was specifically in terms of the picturesque, as formulated especially by William Gilpin and Uvedale Price, that Wordsworth came to view and to write about Gothic abbeys in these years. In doing so, I hope to show how far Wordsworth’s mature enthusiasm for Anglican Christianity, for which the forms of Gothic cathedrals stood as symbols, was rooted in an intensive and sustained engagement with the general eighteenth-century and Romantic-period revival of interest in Gothic architecture. The contemporary genre of topographical and antiquarian writing, as exemplified by Thomas Dunham Whitaker’s *History and*

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<sup>5</sup> Johnston xxii-xxiii.

*Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (1812), will also be taken into account, as the other main current of Wordsworth's engagement with Gothic architecture during the same period. As a work for which Whitaker's *Craven* was an acknowledged source, *The White Doe of Rylstone*, as it first appeared in 1815, will receive especially close consideration as the outstanding example of Wordsworth's combination of all the major contemporary aspects of Gothic architectural representation in a single publication also explicitly designed to convey his most fundamental principles of creative purpose and identity. Lastly, I shall return to *The Excursion* to show how not only its Preface, but also episodes in its narrative demonstrate Wordsworth's absorption of the architectural Gothic as picturesque into his broader philosophies of authorship, morality and society.

Criticism concerned with Wordsworth and the picturesque has tended to concentrate more broadly upon his landscape aesthetics, especially as formulated in successive editions of his *Guide to the Lakes*, or upon Wordsworth's buildings as ruins (with no reference to original style of design).<sup>6</sup> My intention is to show how closer consideration of Gothic abbey settings in Wordsworth's writing as sites of the picturesque in themselves, and not merely as parts of picturesque landscapes, may not only further many of the arguments of such critics as Marjorie Levinson and Theresa M. Kelley, but also challenge some of their wider considerations of the landscape picturesque, and of architecture, in Romantic-period literature. Wordsworth's Gothic abbeys are also possible points at which to locate the overlap between the "Romantic" and "gothic" modes of literature that Michael Gamer has argued is present in "canonical" writings of the period.

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<sup>6</sup> Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990); Theresa M. Kelley, *Wordsworth's Revisionary Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

If Tintern Abbey seems as conspicuous by its absence from this study as it does from Wordsworth's poem of 1798, this is because that piece predates that engagement of Wordsworth's with the architectural Gothic as picturesque that is to be my main concern here. The *Descriptive Sketches* of 1793, in which Wordsworth recorded his impressions of the Alpine monastery of the Grande Chartreuse, is another such piece - - though it, and that particular location, will be returned to with reference to the later progression of Wordsworth's interest in such buildings and communities. Marjorie Levinson's meticulous discussion of the extent to which an abbey is actually present in "Tintern Abbey" is indisputably compelling from political points of view, as well as being essential to more general considerations of Wordsworth's abbey imagery in its acknowledgement of the prevalence of this in his work, and contextualising survey of contemporary responses to abbey ruins.<sup>7</sup> It could also be remarked, however, that in 1793, as well as being engaged in the complex processes of overlooking and concealment Levinson discusses, Wordsworth, whether or not still genuinely troubled by questions as to where the religious institution fitted within his revolutionary principles, had simply not developed the way of seeing such architecture that characterised his later representations of it.

From the Gilpin that he carried with him on his Wye travels, however, he did take one idea that would condition his future architectural representations -- and one that Gilpin introduces in the course of his observations upon Tintern:

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>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See "Insight and Oversight: Reading 'Tintern Abbey,'" Levinson 14-57.

<sup>8</sup> Gilpin, *River Wye* 31.

Wordsworth could, in fact, be said to have made a similar, gradual approach to and occupancy of the Gothic architectural space in imagination, to that which has been noted as having taken place within literary and artistic culture generally, with the advent of the picturesque in the late eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> In the “Lines” of July 13, 1798, the abbey, if imagined as at all visible, is just one of many features encompassed within the prospect view described. Viewed as an exterior, and at a distance, Tintern Abbey bears the same relation to Furness Abbey as that location appears and is described in *The Prelude*, as the topographical view of Furness that appears in Thomas West’s *Antiquities of Furness* (1774) does to one of J. M. W. Turner’s 1797 sketches of its interior.<sup>10</sup> It does not contain, but is contained by the comprehending subject.

In their variety and intricacy of design, the Gothic abbeys of Wordsworth’s poetry of the first two decades of the nineteenth century embody the same multiplicity of impressions and experiences imagined as coming within the embrace of the all-comprehending imagination. The perspective of 1798 has been effectively turned inside out with Wordsworth’s discovery of the Gothic abbey ruin as a site, and artificial version, of the vision that is celebrated in the more general terms of landscape in “Tintern Abbey.” If any image links that piece with Book Second of *The Prelude* and *The White Doe of Rylstone*, it is “the Hermit’s cave”: the primitive locus and container of contemplation and creative inspiration from which the Gothic abbey ruin of the Romantic period may be regarded as having descended. The hermitage of “Tintern Abbey” has been one of the most populous areas of discussion of that poem,

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<sup>9</sup> See Kennedy 503-23.

<sup>10</sup> See Christine Dade-Robertson, *Furness Abbey: Romance, Scholarship and Culture* (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 2000) 8; 18.

with questions of how far the abbey substitutes for the cave, and how far the hermit is conceived of in positive or privileged terms, having generated most argument.<sup>11</sup> What appears to have been disregarded in this, though, is the long history of the poetic or contemplative enclosure as a motif with its roots in classical landscape tradition, and its continuation in the cultural vocabulary of Wordsworth's period, via the discourse of the picturesque.

While I do not dispute with Levinson, or with any of those other critics who have followed her, that Wordsworth's conception of the character and purposes of the occupant of such spaces changed between the compositions of "Tintern Abbey" and *The Excursion*, I would draw attention to the extent to which his developing aesthetic sensibilities informed his representation of the abbey as a site of contemplation descended from, rather than substituted for, the idea of the hermitage. Indeed, as I hope to show, to consider this with reference to Price's sublime-and-beautiful-reconciling picturesque is to establish a possible aesthetic means by which Wordsworth managed the subjective-objective struggle that Levinson identifies as having characterised his works progressing up to *The Excursion*. Instead of speculating upon the possibilities concerning the invisible abbey of "Tintern Abbey," therefore, I consider a site visible throughout the poetry of Wordsworth's entire career -- Furness Abbey, which, as well as its set-piece appearance in *The Prelude*, haunts Wordsworth's writings in various other instances throughout his life and career.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See, as well as Levinson, Damian Walford Davies, "Some uncertain notice: The Hermit of 'Tintern Abbey,'" *Notes & Queries* 241 (1996): 422-44; Mark English, "'Recognitions dim and faint': The Hermit of 'Tintern Abbey' Again," *Notes & Queries* 242 (1997): 324-45.

<sup>12</sup> See *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, rev. 2nd ed., 8 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967-93) 3: 333, 392; 4: 83; 7:98, 679, 700, and "The Sands and Furness Abbey," in Wordsworth's "Unpublished Tour" (1811-12), Appendix II to *A Guide through the District of the Lakes, The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974) 2: 287-348; 293-97, as well as the sonnets "At Furness Abbey"

The Furness Abbey episode of Book Second of *The Prelude* (1805) is most fundamentally important within the poem as a whole because it provides the first instance in it of detailed description of a specific location. While Wordsworth has evoked his earlier childhood memories against an impressionistically vague and shifting background of Lakeland waters, forests, mountains and villages, these ruins occasion a newly sustained conjuration of a particular spirit of place. As a ruin, Furness is also related to other fragmentary buildings in Wordsworth's poetry, but as a building of Gothic design it bears another, separate significance. While the Ruined Cottage, or Michael's sheepfold, prompt the imagination to the workings displayed, in those cases, in "etiological" storytelling, places such as Furness Abbey or Bolton Priory are sites of representation of such imagination itself.

The circumstances of the boy Wordsworth's encounters with Furness, and the manner in which these are introduced in Book Second of *The Prelude*, provide the first indications that this is a location of importance both within the account of childhood and within the work as a whole:

Nor is my aim neglected if I tell  
 How twice in the long length of those half-years  
 We from our funds perhaps with bolder hand  
 Drew largely, anxious for one day at least  
 To feel the motion of the galloping steed.  
 And with the good old innkeeper, in truth  
 On such occasion sometimes we employed  
 Sly subterfuge, for the intended bound  
 Of the day's journey was too distant far

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("Here, where of havoc tired") and "At Furness Abbey" ("Well have yon Railway"), *Poetical Works* 3: 62-63; 63.

For any cautious man....<sup>13</sup>

The first of these lines indicates the episode's significance not only to Wordsworth's narrative purpose, but also to his deeper intention of conveying the growth of a poet's mind. The elements of daring, and even subterfuge involved in the rare Furness outings invest them with something of the sense of the boat-stealing episode, in which the furtherance of imaginative maturity and independence is also gained by way of transgression and secrecy -- while the simple narration of progress toward the abbey dramatises an instance of an approach of the picturesque subject to its site of observations. In the description of the abbey itself, meanwhile, the broken structure, variegated style of decoration and flourishing plant life combine to form an image fully conforming to Price's architectural picturesque (though, it must be noted, at this point probably predating Wordsworth's reading of that author):

...a structure famed  
 Beyond its neighbourhood, the antique walls  
 Of that large abbey which within the Vale  
 Of Nightshade, to St Mary's honour built,  
 Stands yet, a mouldering pile with fractured arch,  
 Belfry and images and living trees --  
 A holy scene ...

... trees and towers  
 May in that valley oftentimes be seen  
 Both silent and both motionless alike,  
 Such is the shelter that is there, and such  
 The safeguard for repose and quietness. (II. lines 108-114; 117-121)

The "scene" presented in these lines recalls the picturesque prospect view of the mid-to late eighteenth century; it could represent the abbey as viewed from outside its "antique walls," set off in true picturesque style by the foliage throwing its stonework

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<sup>13</sup> *The Prelude* (1805), ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979). II. lines 99-108.



into relief. The last two lines quoted above, however, introduce the idea of “shelter” - a property of the place to be appreciated from within it -- and this becomes Wordsworth’s next focus in his description. The abbey is remembered as having been approached and entered by the poet in a subtle narrative manoeuvre whereby it comes most vividly to the remembering mind with the immediately present, young Wordsworth being reported as galloping away from it with his friends:

With whip and spur we by the chantry flew  
 In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,  
 And the stone abbot, and that single wren  
 Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave  
 Of the old church that, though from recent showers  
 The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint  
 Internal breezes -- sobbings of the place  
 And respirations -- from the roofless walls  
 The shuddering ivy dripped large drops, yet still  
 So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird  
 Sang to itself that I could have made  
 My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there  
 To hear such music. Through the walls we flew  
 And down the valley, and a circuit made  
 In wantonness of heart, and through rough and smooth  
 We scampered homeward. (II. lines 123-138)

Against the swift movement of the boys on their horses is offset the stillness of the stone carvings, and the lingering impression of the wren’s song, while both this contrast and that of the “rough and smooth” of their route home further locate the passage within the picturesque of contrast and variety. Like the trees, the bird’s song takes on the continuous quality of the abbey fabric in the poet’s overall memory of the place. The whole effect achieved could illustrate Anne Janowitz’s remarks upon the shift in emphasis, in later eighteenth-century ruin-meditation verse, from the histories of places (or their positioning in time) to a positioning in space that transcends the

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passage of time and historical event.<sup>14</sup> While the young Wordsworth and his companions' movement implies the progression of time, a sense of which is also heightened by the constraints involved in their hire of their horses, the elder poet remembers the abbey as it appeared in the past, having also pointed out that it "Stands yet." With this employment of the continuous present tense, the abbey is constructed not only as a real place, but also as an image or symbol for the senses of art, nature and the solitary self experienced there by the poet -- as well as seeming to crystallise into a simple, self-contained version of the architectural gothic as picturesque.

Significantly, the building whose appearance precedes Furness Abbey's within the narrative of Book Second (although it is only mentioned in passing) is the "mouldered cave" with its "hermit's history" (II. lines 65-66) on the island of Lady Holm. From this, and from the echoes of Horatian retirement topoi in an intervening passage describing how the boys enjoyed outdoor meals of "frugal, Sabine fare" (II. line 82) in secluded, riverside situations, may be traced the same primitive-Gothic, grotto-cathedral "sequence" that, I have been suggesting, characterised the evolution of the Gothic architectural site as a locus of creative inspiration and identity in the Romantic period. Matured to the energy and independence that leads him and his friends to make the daring excursion to Furness, the developing poet thus cherishes the idea of actually residing in the abbey that is not a place-name mentioned in passing, but a still present, clearly identified and lovingly described location, identifying himself with the creative "spirit of place" embodied in the wren and its song.

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<sup>14</sup> See Janowitz 14.

None of this on its own, however, demands that the Gothic style of Furness Abbey be accorded any special significance in *The Prelude*. The clearest indication that it is invested with such importance for Wordsworth emerges from the Preface to *The Recluse*, where the Gothic church image is expanded to accommodate Wordsworth's entire oeuvre. With Price's remarks upon the architectural Gothic as picturesque in mind, though, Furness as a site of varied, intricate structure and design acquires a particular prominence with its recurrence in Book Tenth of *The Prelude*. The much-quoted passage in which Wordsworth recalls learning of the death of Robespierre is set on Chapel Island, site of the "still ruin" of another building belonging to the monks of Furness:

... interrupted by uneasy bursts  
 Of exaltation, I pursued my way  
 Along that very shore which I had skimmed  
 In former times, when, spurring from the Vale  
 Of Nightshade, and St Mary's mouldering fane,  
 And the stone abbot, after circuit made  
 In wantonness of heart, a joyous crew  
 Of schoolboys, hastening to their distant home,  
 Along the margin of the moonlight sea,  
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand. (X. lines 557-566)

Various critics have commented upon the exactitude with which this passage echoes lines 123-144 of Book Second.<sup>15</sup> None, however, has suggested why it is this Gothic abbey that links both Wordsworth's early, contemplative and creative impulses, and his joy to hear of the downfall of a totalitarian regime. It would seem, though, that this memory of the Gothic ruin so clearly evoked in Book Second, and recalled at a point of the narrative concerned with the growth of political consciousness within Wordsworth's imaginative development, demonstrates the centrality to his

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<sup>15</sup> See Janowitz 139; Johnston 185-87, and Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 204-06.

perceptions of the Gothic edifice as an emblem of unity and wholeness comprising manifold elements. Gothic design, or the Gothic ruin in which the original decorative features and various natural additions formed an entire, picturesque image, may thus be regarded as analogous in Wordsworth's imagination to that liberated multiplicity and diversity of subjects within a whole, national structure which had become his political ideal.<sup>16</sup>

The 1805 *Prelude* thus demonstrates how much further Wordsworth had progressed in the education in the particular current of picturesque theory to which may be ascribed the difference between his presentations of setting in "Tintern Abbey" and in Book Second of *The Prelude*. His description of the ruined Furness Abbey in the picturesque terms of variety and contrast (particularly of artificial and natural elements), and later recollection of that setting in the context of his responses to events in post-revolutionary France, suggest the influence of the aesthetic theories formulated by such libertarian Whigs as Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight.

While Wordsworth is not known to have encountered Price's *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794) before 1805, Duncan Wu has suggested that it was during 1800 that Wordsworth read Knight's *The Landscape: A Didactic Poem* (1794).<sup>17</sup> As Price's associate, it was thus possibly Knight who transmitted Price's aesthetic principles to Wordsworth prior to the completion of the 1805 *Prelude* (Wordsworth's first reading of Price's *Essay* having apparently been late in 1805).<sup>18</sup> While *The*

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<sup>16</sup> For discussion of Wordsworth's matured political principles, see Michael H. Friedman, *The Making of a Tory Humanist: William Wordsworth and the Idea of Community* (New York: Columbia UP, 1979), Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), and Barker esp. 414-15.

<sup>17</sup> Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading: 1800-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 123.

<sup>18</sup> See Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading: 1800-1815* 171.

*Landscape* neatly contains all the emphasis upon the preservation of natural variety within artificially-contrived design advocated in Price's theory, as a specifically imaginative, literary evocation of the desirable estate it succinctly fuses the classical retirement tradition and the contemporary taste for medieval remains:

Bless'd is the man in whose sequester'd glade,  
Some ancient abbey's walls diffuse their shade;  
With mouldering windows pierced, and turrets crown'd,  
And pinnacles with clinging ivy bound.

Bless'd too is he, who, 'midst his tufted trees,  
Some ruin'd castle's lofty towers sees....<sup>19</sup>

What will also be noted from this is the distinction made between the characters of abbey and castle architecture within a landscape, in perpetuating which Knight followed Gilpin, with whose *Observations on the River Wye* Wordsworth was certainly familiar by this period.<sup>20</sup> In this was categorically established the castle-abbey distinction that would remain central to Wordsworth's representations of Gothic, or ruined buildings, despite his rejection of Gilpin's pictorial principles of scene-arrangement. With Gilpin's distinction in mind, the abbey setting would seem to emerge from *The Landscape* as most in keeping, more so than the castle, with the seclusion Knight favours for the place of contemplation. Meanwhile, most prominent of all on Knight's "agenda," in a whole text underlined by a concluding footnote deploring the excesses that had taken hold in France, is the insistence that "component parts" of any landscape be mixed so that no one feature (such as a building) is allowed to predominate.

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Payne Knight, *The Landscape* lines 280-86.

<sup>20</sup> See Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 66.

The connection in Wordsworth's mind between picturesque variety, the detailed character of Gothic design, and his own ideal, comprehensive imagination is made further apparent in the passages of *The Prelude* describing his experiences of London. In Book Eighth, he finds that contemplation of the initially bewildering, teeming variety of figures, forms, and colours he observes in the city demands a similar way of seeing to that entailed by the Gothic style of ornamentation, which is recalled by images suggestive of medieval rood-screen carvings, or the illuminations in a book of hours. The context within which these appear -- a simile of cave exploration -- is, as will be explained, itself of importance within the development of Wordsworth's engagement with the architectural Gothic.

Recalling having experienced a revelation from the roof of a stagecoach, at which moment he "first [seems] / to enter the great city" (VIII. lines 691-92), or to comprehend its crowded variety, Wordsworth draws a comparison with entry "with torches ... into some vault of earth, / The grotto of Antiparos, or the den / Of Yordas among Craven's mountain tracts ..." (lines 714-15). Following a description of how the light on the irregular surfaces of the cave interior makes it seem to "spread and grow ... [unsettle] and [recede] ..." (lines 715; 718), with the rock-formations also appearing to change their shapes until the eye adjusts to the conditions, he then describes what happens as the traveller continues to look at the "canopy" and "a new quickening ... [succeeds]" (lines 729):

... the senseless mass ...  
 Unites, embodying everywhere some pressure  
 Or image, recognised or new, some type  
 Or picture of the world -- forests and lakes,  
 Ships, rivers, towers, the warrior clad in mail,  
 The prancing steed, the pilgrim with his staff,  
 The mitred bishop and the throned king.... (VIII lines 731-40)

This passage, in which the characteristic intricacy, and some typical motifs, of medieval design are so strongly suggested whilst a geological analogy is being so clearly drawn, stands as an example of what had by the early nineteenth century become a commonplace of geological description: the use of imagery suggestive of Gothic cathedrals to convey the senses of cave interiors (indeed, it recalls with particular exactitude the sensations described by such commentators as John Milner as attendant upon entry to Gothic cathedrals).<sup>21</sup> Both typical symbols of contemplation and creativity, the cave and the cathedral merge in this passage into the imagined site of a process that appears to prefigure Coleridge's theory of the "secondary" imagination.<sup>22</sup> The collapse of a perceived impression into diverse components is followed by their subsequent rearrangement into recognisable, artistic effects (as here, inchoate geological masses appear to resolve themselves into objects and figures from human life). The act of imaginative comprehension necessary to true perception of the diversity of life and nature is thus associated with -- and figured as taking place within -- a location actually described as seeming visibly to be transformed, from something primitive and "grotesque," into a man-made interior possessed of the same apparent detail and intricacy. As had already been happening in the eighteenth-century evolution of the ideal creative locus, a cave "becomes" a cathedral.

*The Prelude* thus contains, in these passages, the major elements of the contemporary Gothic Revival as this was finding expression in literature and aesthetics, and with particular regard to abbey Gothic. These might be summarised as: the identification

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<sup>21</sup> On confluences between (Gothic) architectural and geological interests and descriptive tropes in the eighteenth century and Romantic period, see Robert A. Aubin, "Grottoes, Geology and the Gothic Revival" 408-16; John Wyatt, *Wordsworth and the Geologists* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) esp. 174, and Heringman, esp. 246-49.

<sup>22</sup> See Coleridge, *Works* 7: I.304.

of the abbey site as characterised by seclusion and natural surrounds; the appreciation of a delicate, detailed decorative character; the association of such a varied style with libertarian politics, and the commonplace linkage with geological descriptions that invoked the cathedral Gothic as imposing in scale and minutely varied in decoration, whilst also recalling Christian and classical traditions of grottoes as spaces for solitary inspiration.

All these elements would inform the two subsequent major works of Wordsworth's prior to 1820 in which Gothic architectural settings featured -- *The White Doe of Rylstone* and *The Excursion*. Moreover, by the time of the commencement of the first of these in late 1807, Wordsworth had discovered the architectural Gothic categorically identified as picturesque by Uvedale Price, in the *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794). In a passage of especially salient importance here, Price followed his description of the irregularly broken, overgrown ruin as picturesque with reflections upon how architectural style could further condition the aesthetic response to buildings:

Gothic architecture is generally considered as more picturesque, though less beautiful, than Grecian; and, upon the same principle that a ruin is more so than a new edifice ... In Gothic buildings, the outline of the summit presents such a variety of forms ... some fretted and variously enriched, that even when there is an exact correspondence of parts, it is often disguised by an appearance of splendid confusion and irregularity ... every person must be struck with the extreme richness and intricacy of some of the principal windows of our cathedrals and ruined abbeys. In these last is displayed the triumph of the picturesque...<sup>23</sup>

Meanwhile, Price would elsewhere in the *Essay* make explicit the connection between an ideal aesthetics that could, within controlled conditions, replicate the intricacy and

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<sup>23</sup> Price, *Essay on the Picturesque* 50-51.



variety of organic forms and systems, and a politics that indulged individual liberty within a cohesive, general structure:

A good landscape is that in which all the parts are free and unconstrained, but in which, though some are prominent and highly illuminated, and others in shade and retirement; some rough, and others more smooth and polished, yet they are all necessary to the beauty, energy, effect, and harmony of the whole. I do not see how a good government can be more exactly defined; and as this definition suits every style of landscape ... so it equally suits all free governments, and only excludes anarchy and despotism.<sup>24</sup>

As Duncan Wu has commented, “Price played a part of pivotal importance in Wordsworth’s career” -- so it is surprising that so little sustained critical attention has been paid to the relationship of Price to Wordsworth’s work and thought.<sup>25</sup> In such studies as Theresa M. Kelley’s *Wordsworth’s Revisionary Aesthetics* (1989), Wordsworth’s idea of the “picturesque” seems almost always to be envisaged purely in “Gilpinian” terms, his denunciation of “comparison of scene with scene / Bent overmuch on superficial things,” in Book Eleventh of *The Prelude* (lines 158-59) is most frequently presented as evidence for his outright dismissal of this particular way of seeing landscapes and objects. Price’s picturesque, however, in particular offered a mature alternative to what for Wordsworth had become the outgrown Gilpinian taste for arrangements of disparate scenic elements -- and for this reason alone deserves a greater prominence in Wordsworth studies.

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<sup>24</sup> Price, *Essay on the Picturesque* 28.

<sup>25</sup> See Wu, *Wordsworth’s Reading: 1800-1815* 171. Jacqueline M. Labbe acknowledges Wordsworth’s engagement with Price, but only as part of an argument, which I do not accept, most especially as it ignores *The White Doe of Rylstone* and Wordsworth’s association with the Beaumonts, that “[his] study of Gilpin, Price and Knight took a deeper root than he ... possibly would have liked” -- Labbe considering that Wordsworth’s socio-economic status denied him the masculine, authoritative “prospect view” perspective that he would have preferred to what she claims he regarded as the feminine, and thus restrictive, landscape picturesque. See Jacqueline M. Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998) 58; also xvi-xviii, 5, 57-61.

In Kelley's study, an absence of discussion of Price (except in passing mentions) occasions most surprise, given how far Price's thought on aesthetics and politics seems to inform the philosophy of *The White Doe of Rylstone*, which Kelley convincingly identifies as concerned from its conception with the conflict between imperatives of power and peace, as represented in sublime and beautiful aesthetics. It is as a poem of the Pricean picturesque, as well as of the Romantic-period Gothic Revival, that I now intend to discuss *The White Doe*, with the additional factor in mind of Wordsworth's friendship with Sir George and Lady Beaumont.

While Bolton Priory is only one of the settings to feature in *The White Doe*, its preeminence in the narrative is demonstrated by the fact that it frames, effectively containing, the tale of the Nortons' participation in the doomed Northern rebellion against Elizabeth I. Its opening line presents the "old monastic tower," initiating a vivid account of the arrival of worshippers at the church that continues to function at the heart of the ruin. The building's Gothic style is clearly highlighted with the entrance of the doe, as it and she seem to interact in the effect achieved, setting off each other's (sublime and beautiful) qualities:

Now some gloomy nook partakes  
 Of the glory that she makes, --  
 High-ribbed vault of stone, or cell  
 With perfect cunning formed as well  
 Of stone, and ivy, and the spread  
 Of the elder's bushy head....<sup>26</sup>

This opening description continues with mentions of how the priory altar is "Now rich with mossy ornament" (lines 122) and the dormitory full of wild roses in bloom (lines

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<sup>26</sup> *The White Doe of Rylstone*, ed. Kristine Dugas (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988) I. lines 93-98.

124), and how, in a particularly clear echo of Furness, “a warrior carved in stone / Among the thick weeds stretched alone” (lines 127-28).

The doe’s second and final appearance, at the close of the poem, reprises the Gothic-architectural and decorative motifs of the first; having again arrived through a particular arch, she

... walks amid the mournful waste  
 Of prostrate altars, shrines defaced,  
 And floors encumbered with rich show  
 Of fret-work imagery laid low;  
 Paces softly, or makes halt,  
 By fractured cell, or tomb, or vault,  
 By plate of monumental brass  
 Dim gleaming among weeds and grass ... (I. lines 1908-15).

The importance of the varied Gothic style of the abbey may be further appreciated by comparison with Wordsworth’s representation of the Nortons’ pele-tower at the opening of Canto V, undertaken in terms that clearly recall Gilpin’s castle-abbey distinction:

High on a point of rugged ground  
 Among the wastes of Rylstone Fell  
 Above the loftiest ridge or mound  
 Where Foresters or Shepherds dwell,  
 An Edifice of warlike frame  
 Stands single (Norton Tower its name,)
 It fronts all quarters, and looks round  
 O’er path and road, and plain and dell,  
 Dark moor, and gleam of pool and stream,  
 Upon a prospect without bound. (V. lines 1163-1172)

For Kelley, this description recalls “the dubious ethical perspective of sublime, visionary prospects.” As she goes on to explain,

Both the setting and the tower’s dominion over it signify futile, overweening military machismo ... sublime singularity indicts the tower ... and the early nineteenth-century

fascination with the sublime “singularity” of geological features or ancient architectural monuments. In Wordsworth’s text, the association between singularity and the sublime remains, but its value is radically altered. Here it designates an unlawful, prideful rebellion.<sup>27</sup>

Kelley’s reading of the priory as another such “sublime” setting hollowed out for the influx of sociable, constructive, “beautiful” affection represented by the doe is not inconsistent with this view of the pele-tower. When both tower and priory are interpreted in the terms of Gilpin’s distinction (the tower being understood to be of a “castellar” order and character), however, it becomes apparent just how consciously Wordsworth was invoking -- and contrasting -- the two types of architecture, with all their aesthetic (and thus moral) connotations. What Kelley also never entertains is any possibility that Wordsworth might be positing the (Pricean) picturesque, as embodied in both the abbey’s architecture and the doe’s appearance within it as its occupant, as the solution to the conflict that she reads in such stark terms of the sublime and beautiful.

Meanwhile, the problematic, sublime “singularity” identified by Kelley in the pele-tower description is of the same kind as that discussed by Levinson with regard to Wordsworth’s “Elegiac Stanzas,” a poem which associates another castle building with what Levinson refers to as “the Bastille of individual subjectivity.”<sup>28</sup> This finds one important link with the *White Doe* in the fact that both poems, in their published forms, made explicit a relationship with the artwork of Sir George Beaumont, the pivotal figure within Wordsworth’s post-Gilpinian education in the picturesque -- the Stanzas in their allusion to his “Peele Castle in a Storm,” and the *White Doe* in its

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<sup>27</sup> Kelley 155.

<sup>28</sup> Levinson 124; see also Wordsworth, “Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont,” *Poetical Works* 4: 258-60.

being accompanied, at its 1815 publication, by a frontispiece engraving after Beaumont's painted illustration featuring the doe and priory.<sup>29</sup> Two further factors connect these poems, the first being grounded in Wordsworth's personal circumstances. While "Peele Castle" deals with his recovery from consuming grief at the death of his brother John, the 1815 edition of *The White Doe*, containing the "In trellis'd shed" verses to Mary Wordsworth, further elaborated upon the properties of imagination as a solace and corrective to the broken spirit, in that particular case following the deaths of two Wordsworth children.

Lastly, while Levinson has identified the "Gothic" might of Peele Castle in the "Elegiac Stanzas" with a negative, Napoleonic individualism (that Wordsworth writes of as having apparently conquered in himself as a poet), the 1815 publication of the *White Doe* took place during the months that saw Napoleon's march on Paris, prior to his final defeat -- an event claiming equal prominence with the *White Doe*'s progress in Dorothy Wordsworth's letters from the months in question, and to which Johnston has also pointed as an important context of the publication of the *Excursion*, just one year previously.<sup>30</sup>

The Beaumont link alone makes the *White Doe* a strange omission from Michael Gamer's investigation into Wordsworth's appropriations of the "gothic," which otherwise pays due attention to Wordsworth's correspondence with Sir George as

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<sup>29</sup> For Wordsworth's relationship with the Beaumonts and its influence upon his aesthetic awareness, see Russell Noyes, *Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape* (New York: Haskell House, 1973) 55-87, and Johnston 239, where the couple are referred to as "a proper symbol of Wordsworth's deliberate movement toward cultural conservatism."

<sup>30</sup> See Johnston 290, on how "[*The Excursion*] and the Napoleonic Wars drew to a close together," and Dorothy Wordsworth to Sara Hutchinson, 8 April 1815, and to Catherine Clarkson, 11 April 1815, in *Letters* 3: 226, 229.

“[making] plain ... the ways in which “gothic” and “picturesque” overlap or become indistinguishable from one another” in Wordsworth’s aesthetics and work of these years (though without specific consideration of the architectural Gothic as an aspect of either the “gothic” or the picturesque).<sup>31</sup> The juxtaposition in the 1815 *White Doe* of a frontispiece clearly aimed at a fashionable market for picturesque representations of Gothic architectural sites, with texts (including the prefatory verses “In trellis’d shed”) intended to convey Wordsworth’s thought on the more exalted moral and social roles of the poet, represents just such an artful interplay of genre and content as interests Gamer in his study, and as he sees as characterising the “Elegiac Stanzas” (the castle for him representing the “gothic” element).<sup>32</sup> The Gothic architecture of Bolton Priory, represented in poetry by Wordsworth and in the picture by Beaumont, emerges from the *White Doe* as the image upon which Wordsworth found himself able to project not only his deeper artistic and social concerns, but also an intention of attracting readers whose access to, or membership of, the ruling and best-educated classes identified them as the audience who might best realise his hopes for his society and culture.

What I want to examine now is how the 1815 edition evolved from the original composition of 1808, a process from which may be gained many insights into the extent of Wordsworth’s engagement with contemporary “Gothic Revival” antiquarianism and its products -- and of his own contribution to this culture, in the 1815 quarto. Composed in the earliest, and perhaps closest period of Wordsworth’s association with the Beaumonts (it had been during 1807, the same year as he visited and was inspired by Bolton Priory, that he became actively, and enthusiastically

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<sup>31</sup> Gamer 21.

<sup>32</sup> For this discussion, see Gamer 14-23.

involved in the design and laying out of the Beaumonts' "Winter Garden"), it was from its inception a product of Wordsworth's engagement with the architectural Gothic as picturesque, as his cancelled draft of 1807-08 for an "Advertisment" shows:

Happening in the course of last summer to be on a visit to some Friends in Yorkshire I was by them conducted to Bolton Priory or Abbey as it is generally called; and from the impression of that day the foregoing owes its birth The beautiful Ruin the delicious Vale ... upon all those objects I looked with that high delight which is natural to man ... which when it was afterwards recollected in tranquillity, I felt to be worthy of being recorded in Verse....<sup>33</sup>

Apparent within this account is the typical Romantic-period "process" by which the Gothic abbey site is approached and observed, the outcome ("birth") of the onlooker/narrator's engagement with it (the "impression") being the artistic product.

The occasion of Wordsworth's visit to Bolton Priory in the summer of 1807, and his first responses to it, would be first, and best, documented in the letters of Dorothy Wordsworth, who in late 1807 also noted Wordsworth's acquisition and reading of Thomas Dunham Whitaker's *History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (1805).<sup>34</sup> This is a text interesting not only as background to the *White Doe*, as Kristine Dugas has so fully discussed, in an introduction to the Cornell edition of the poem that pays particular attention to Wordsworth's use of sections of *Craven* in the Notes to the *White Doe* of 1815.<sup>35</sup> It is also a possible, major influence upon Wordsworth's construction of the system of imagery and incidental motifs from

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<sup>33</sup> *White Doe* 193-97.

<sup>34</sup> See Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 19 July 1807, and to Jane Marshall, 18 October 1807, *Letters* 2: 158; 167.

<sup>35</sup> See especially *White Doe* 3; on Wordsworth's extensive use of Whitaker as a source for the *White Doe* see also Curtis B. Bradford, "Wordsworth's 'White Doe of Rylstone' and Related Poems," *Modern Philology* 36 (1938): 59-70, esp. 61-69.

which would emerge *The Excursion*, and -- if one accepts Kenneth R. Johnston's reading of Wordsworth's oeuvre of these years -- *The Recluse* itself, in the (fragmentary) form of such poems as *The White Doe* and *The Tuft of Primroses*.

Whitaker's *Craven* is above all a product of that current of the Romantic-period Gothic Revival that rose through the milieux of topography and antiquarianism, as combined in the "county history." It is outstanding for its "genre" in the amount of space it accords to description and discussion of Bolton Priory -- something in which it provides an apt measure of the progress of the 'picturesque' Gothic Revival. Another of Wordsworth's antiquarian sources, West's *Antiquities of Furness* (1774), evinces a much more detached, documentary account of the Gothic abbey of Furness with its fold-out projection view and table of dimensions.<sup>36</sup> Even the manner of Bolton Priory's appearance in *Craven* recalls conventional treatments of picturesque buildings in travel and imaginative literature of the Romantic period. Throughout the work, the reader is favoured with "glimpses," in the forms of allusions and passing mentions inserted among other, often dense descriptions of scenery and accounts of church and family history (much of which is connected with the Priory).<sup>37</sup> The Priory finally comes into view in what in subsequent editions of *Craven* became a lavish sequence of engravings which, by contrast with the technical rigour of West's illustration of Furness, situate the building among luxuriant vegetation, and accompany it with various, carefully-integrated human and animal figures.

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<sup>36</sup> See the fold-out "Ground Plan," West, *Antiquities of Furness* (not page numbered).

<sup>37</sup> See Thomas Dunham Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (2nd ed. London, 1812) 8; 207 (which connects the "canons of Bolton" with the Cove of Gordale, another instance of a geological feature being described in Gothic-architectural terms); 211.



The text, meanwhile, is proportionate to these images in detail and expressiveness. It describes the remaining abbey architecture and decorations in terms fully conformant to the Pricean picturesque of architecture, the West front being recorded as “extremely rich ... broken into a great variety of surfaces, by small pointed arches ...” and a “rich ornamented arch” being noted, among other similar features.<sup>38</sup> Whitaker also clearly acknowledges both the classical and native literary heritages of the picturesque Gothic church building and its characteristic situation, as seen through educated, late eighteenth-century eyes. He quotes at length not only from Mason’s *English Garden*, on the beauties of Gothic remains as viewed through foliage (abbeys being ranked as superior to castles on this respect), but also from a landscape description in Statius’ *Sylvae*, in which “the aspect of [a] mansion up and down the vale ... the stream ... the hanging shade and continuity of the underwoods,” is compared with the appearance of the Priory in its Wharfedale surrounds.<sup>39</sup>

Whitaker’s *Craven* claims most importance to Wordsworth’s artistic development from 1807 with regard to representation of Gothic church buildings, however, in the emphasis placed in it upon the occupants of these, and their particular, ideal characters. Most notable among these where the *White Doe* is concerned was, of course, the legendary doe herself, with whose story Whitaker provided Wordsworth. Other figures from Whitaker, however, populate Wordsworth’s notes to the 1815 edition, chosen by him to represent the ideal qualities of the solitary yet sociable “recluse,” Lord Henry Clifford of Barden Tower being a notable example.

This emphasis upon the human occupant as an element of any setting evoked

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<sup>38</sup> Whitaker 420-21.

<sup>39</sup> Whitaker 418-19.

represents the next stage by which Wordsworth completed the contraction of (architectural) focus from prospect to exterior to interior to occupant to be discerned in the generally evolving trend of the picturesque. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth had got as far in his picturesque “approach” to the abbey site as to imagine it from within, but his remembered boyhood self at Furness is a necessarily vague and retrospective figure. In its very title, the *White Doe* represents Wordsworth’s progression from this stage to the emphasis upon the occupying figure that focused the composition of graphic and verbal images of abbeys in the representative conventions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As already described, the doe works within the abbey scene as one of the many, varied, picturesque component parts that compose it. The figure of Emily Norton, coaxed by the doe from her “sublime” and futile despair at the destruction of her family, ultimately constitutes another such element. While she has been identified with Spenser’s Una (accompanied by a white lamb, as mentioned in “In trellis’d shed”), Emily in particular represents another striking instance of Wordsworth’s appropriation of “gothic” elements for “higher” Romantic purposes in her resemblance to the solitary female inhabitants of abbey remains to be encountered in Radcliffean romances.<sup>40</sup>

While Emily and the doe might be regarded as central, dominant figures within the *White Doe* narrative as it stood in 1808, this is not so much the case in the 1815 edition, when this is viewed as a whole. From the additional texts of “In trellised shed,” epigrams from Daniel and Bacon, the ballad on the founding of Bolton Priory,

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<sup>40</sup> It particularly suggests an intertext with Radcliffe’s *The Romance of the Forest* (1790), in which the heroine is also accompanied about abbey ruins by a fawn; see Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest*, ed. Chloe Chard (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 62; 63. According to Wu, Wordsworth had read this novel by 1793, while an 1810 edition “turned up in the sale of the Rydal Mount library”; see Wu, *Wordsworth’s Reading: 1770-1799* 115.

and Wordsworth's Notes (as well as the Beaumont engraving), other figures emerge to compete for such precedence, not least among these being the author himself, his expressions in both verse and prose bracketing or framing the main narrative. A considerable amount could have been learned about this author by a careful reader of that first edition.

The figure who emerges at the front of the volume is one who (in the shortened "Advertisment") is moved to compose poetry by an encounter with "the beautiful Scenery that surrounds Bolton Priory," and who praises "Imagination lofty and refined" in a sonnet. In "In trellis'd shed," this poet frankly describes the process of coming to terms with family grief through deep engagement with the "Gothic" imagination of Spenser, also stating a serious artistic purpose: "He serves the Muses erringly and ill, / Whose aim is pleasure light and fugitive ..." (lines 56-57).

The figure that emerges from the other end of the volume represents other versions of personal engagement with the Gothic abbey ruin. This figure is still a poet -- the first item to follow the *White Doe* is his verse composition inspired by the story of the Priory's foundation (which, being concerned with the wish of a grieving mother, the Lady Aaliza whose son was drowned in the Strid, mirrors the memory of parental bereavement that occasioned "In trellis'd shed"). In the "Notes," however, the poet is seen to defer to three other types of the "Gothic occupant." These are Whitaker, the antiquary; the Duke of Devonshire, aristocratic owner of the site of Bolton Priory (as well as of that of Furness Abbey), and the Rev. William Carr,

who has most skilfully opened out ["this enchanting spot's"] features; and in whatever he has added, has done justice to the place by working with an invisible hand of art in

the very spirit of nature.<sup>41</sup>

Readers sufficiently tempted by Wordsworth's praises for Whitaker's "excellent book" to read it themselves would have found Carr's virtues extolled still more expansively. Having completed his "Catalogue of Priors of Bolton" with Carr's name, Whitaker cites that incumbent as being one "to whose indefatigable attention the publick are indebted for so many of the charms of Bolton which heretofore lay concealed and almost inaccessible." As he continues,

As Minister of Bolton Abbey, [Carr's] People are indebted to him for better things: but the example of Mr Gilpin has already shown that the pursuits of taste are by no means incompatible with the active exertions of a good Parish Priest.<sup>42</sup>

The extent to which Whitaker, himself a clergyman, was encouraged by the examples of Gilpin and Carr is abundantly apparent from *Craven*, in which he devotes paragraphs to the dispensation of forthright landscaping advice to members of the local ruling and landowning classes (423-24). Most interesting where the development of Wordsworth's attitudes to Gothic architecture is concerned are Whitaker's strictures on church architecture, which as part of the background to the *White Doe* could represent the next stage from Price in Wordsworth's Gothic aesthetics, as diversity of elements is represented as analogous to a constitutional necessity of inequality (500-01).

As the clergyman emerges as a local figure with authority extending to the education in taste of his parishioners (of all classes), so the church takes shape as the enclosure for such a figure, being as it is already the emblem of contemplation and creativity.

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<sup>41</sup> *White Doe* 164.

<sup>42</sup> Whitaker 425.

As would become apparent (and as will shortly be discussed) from Wordsworth's other poetry of the years 1808-1815, the clergyman as a latter-day inhabitant of the Gothic architectural space who combined authority and social purpose with the retired pursuit of learning and literature came increasingly to dominate his characterisations of Gothic church buildings and the author-figure as occupant of these.

The importance of the *White Doe* to Wordsworth's literary "self-fashioning" is clear in his correspondence from the periods of both its composition and its publication. His letter of February 1808, to Sir George Beaumont, when the poem was just completed, stands as perhaps the most comprehensive expression of this increasingly urgent sense of identity.<sup>43</sup> It is also important as it serves to illustrate the dynamic between the two correspondents, from which the 1815 *White Doe* emerged, as embellished by Beaumont's picture. Having begun by ruefully discarding the idea of publishing "Peter Bell" with a Beaumont illustration because "the sale of Peter would not carry the expense of the Engraving, and ... the Poem in the estimation of the public would be a weight upon the Print," Wordsworth goes on to differentiate between "People" and "Public" as he defines these, the latter being credited with a "sickly taste ... in verse" that makes them unable to appreciate the deeper significances of his work. He concludes this discussion with the statement that "Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing." He follows this avowal of an ambition to instruct with an appeal to his patron made as part of a shift to a "more pleasing subject":

In the Poem I have just written [the *White Doe*] you will find one situation which, if the work should ever become more familiarly known, would furnish as fine a subject for a Picture as anything I remember in Poetry ancient or modern.

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<sup>43</sup> See *Letters 2*: 195-96.

So, in the same letter, are established the main strands of the *White Doe* as an artistic product dependent upon a certain appeal for the dissemination of its message; there is Wordsworth's insistence upon his artistic purpose and integrity, and there is his association of different degrees of taste with the verbal and graphic elements of any poetic publication. There is also his own, clearly stated sense of the visual potential of his poem's subject-matter -- and recognition of the work's being "familiarily known" as a condition for the effectiveness of this.

These "strands" appear in variously tangled arrangements in the Wordsworth correspondence of 1807-08 and 1815, the populist interest, as resisted by Wordsworth, represented most particularly by Dorothy. To continue with the aspect of the frontispiece, while William hints to Sir George that the poem might make a good picture (with no explicit suggestion that he might paint it), Dorothy excitedly reports on the poem's progress to no other than Lady Beaumont with the remark that "proud should we all be if it could be honoured by a frontispiece from the Pencil of Sir George Beaumont."<sup>44</sup> Far from merely writing in terms of any form of pictorial representation, Dorothy indicates with her use of the word "frontispiece" how far she is conceiving of the poem as a physical object, a marketable volume.

Indeed, in their dispute over the text of the *White Doe* -- which would climax with Dorothy's furious remonstrance of 31 March 1808 (*Letters 2*: 207), in which she enumerated various pressing household needs as reasons against William's withdrawal of the piece from an 1808 publication -- William and Dorothy

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<sup>44</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, 28 February 1808, *Letters 2*: 392.

Wordsworth irresistibly recall, albeit with a reversal of genders, the Norton brother and sister in the poem. Emily, maker of an embroidered standard representing the Cross and five wounds of Christ, to be carried by her male relations in their rebellion, herself eschews what she sees as a vain and unholy cause. While her brother Francis clings to this handiwork of hers as a guarantor of family strength and prosperity (as well as of religious truth), Emily asserts values that she believes transcend the merely cultural significance of the material product. For Dorothy Wordsworth, the *White Doe* as text was just such a product as Emily's banner. For William, though, the real significance lay in the immaterial, fictional white doe *of* the text -- just as, for Emily Norton, spiritual truth lay beyond, rather than in any created image or object.

Following Charles Lamb's criticism of the poem for its lack of action, Wordsworth could insist to Coleridge that "[the poem] could not be popular because some of the principle objects and agents [ie the banner and doe] produced their influences and effects not by powers naturally inherent in them, but such as they were endued with by the Imagination of the human minds on whom they operated...."<sup>45</sup> Dorothy, on the other hand, could write five days later to Catherine Clarkson about how anxious "We Females" at Grasmere were that it should be published. "We think that it will sell," she asserted, "the story will bear it up in spite of that spirit that is above the common level of the present state of public knowledge and taste."<sup>46</sup>

The quarto edition of the *White Doe* that appeared in 1815 was a compendium of Gothic Revival conventions calculated to appeal to every interest in the representation of abbey architecture: a narrative with appeal to tastes formed by Scott, in particular

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<sup>45</sup> Wordsworth to S. T. Coleridge, 19 April 1808, *Letters 2*: 222.

<sup>46</sup> Dorothy Wordsworth to Catherine Clarkson, 22 April [1808], *Letters 2*: 228.

his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*; a dimension of serious, antiquarian enquiry; and, preceding all of these, Sir George Beaumont's illustration of the opening scene of the poem, showing the priory to full picturesque advantage. In content, tone and form, it effectively imitated the county history, which by 1815 had become a luxury consumer item. The highly desirable image of the Gothic building as a subject for topographical illustration in print media found itself doubly represented, both visually and verbally, in the *White Doe*. Meanwhile, Wordsworth continued to insist upon his intention that the poem should be read as a vehicle of poetic truth, writing in January 1816 to Francis Wrangham:

I hope that [*The White Doe*] will be acceptable to the intelligent, for whom alone it is written. -- It starts from a high point of imagination, and comes round through various wanderings of that faculty to a still higher ... Throughout, objects [ie the banner and doe] ... derive their influence not from properties inherent in them ... but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects. Thus the Poetry, if there be any in the work, proceeds whence it ought to do from the soul of Man, communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world.<sup>47</sup>

He ought, therefore, to have been cheered by the review of the volume that appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December of 1815. Unusually for the periodical at the vanguard of the Gothic Revival, whose critics generally tended to pay close attention to the presentations of, and quality of, any illustrations in books reviewed -- nothing is said about the frontispiece. The critic is, however, fulsome in praise of the poem, respecting it in quite as serious a spirit as Wordsworth could have wished, and even acknowledging the harshness of the reviews (of the 1808 *Poems*) that had occasioned his former, damning words on the "Public" to Beaumont:

In this Poem Mr. Wordsworth has displayed a richness of fancy and a tenderness of feeling which place him in a high rank amongst the living Poets of his Country ... Heretofore [Wordsworth] has been censured, and even ridiculed ... for the homeliness

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<sup>47</sup> Wordsworth to Francis Wrangham, 18 January 1816 ("Thanksgiving Day" of national celebration of defeat of Napoleon), *Letters* 3: 276.



of his diction, and the want of dignity in his characters; but in the present case such censure would be misplaced, and the ingenious severity of criticism will not easily find matter for ridicule.<sup>48</sup>

Indeed, the actual critical and commercial receptions of the volume transpired to prove the reverse of the Wordsworth brother and sister's predictions for it. While "serious" critics who had derided the Wordsworth of the *Poems in Two Volumes* greeted the *White Doe* with respect and enthusiasm, Dorothy was to find that her optimism for a similarly keen reception in the fashionable world had been misplaced, as actual sales were poor -- owing probably, as she acknowledged, to the exorbitant price of the quarto.

Of the two siblings, then, Wordsworth found himself best served by what can appear, given the sentiments expressed by him in 1808 regarding the poem, to have been a compromise of "high" art with popular, indeed "gothic," aesthetics. Wordsworth remained so adamant, though, as to the retained spiritual significance of the work, and his intended audience, as to make it hard to believe that he would actually have published the *White Doe* in any form that he felt inimical to, or otherwise incongruent with, its "true" meaning. What seems more likely, especially given his engagement with such writings as Price's and Whitaker's, is that he had come to find in the Gothic architectural image an apt symbol or analogue for his feelings regarding his creative identity, and the society he felt bound to serve with that. The contemporary vogue for Gothic architectural description and illustration thus became for him, in the first publication of the *White Doe*, a felicitously occurring condition to be taken advantage of.

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<sup>48</sup> Review of *The White Doe of Rylstone*, *The Gentleman's Magazine* 85 (1815) pt.2: 524-25.

The prominent placement of Beaumont's picture of Bolton Priory alongside a poem so explicitly featuring that setting recalls Levinson's remark upon how some later nineteenth, and early twentieth-century reprintings of "Tintern Abbey" were accompanied by engravings of Tintern Abbey itself, the presence of which in the poem was so debatable. The observation might be made that if Wordsworth was indeed, as Levinson suggests, "overlooking" Tintern Abbey as a politically and religiously problematic object in 1793, by 1815 he was subjecting Bolton Priory, among other Gothic abbey locations, to a completely different regard, within which they loomed large, and very present, in his writing. The Grande Chartreuse, the imposing mountain monastery of the Carthusians visited by Wordsworth in 1792, and whose despoilment by revolutionary troops would so unsettle him in his radicalism, in particular indicates in its appearances in Wordsworth's works the development of his attachment to the Gothic architectural site. As he described its fate in the French Revolution, in *Descriptive Sketches* (1793):

The cloister startles at the gleam of arms,  
 And Blasphemy the shuddering fane alarms;  
 Nod the cloud-piercing pines their troubled heads,  
 Spires, rocks, and lawns, a browner night o'erspreads.<sup>49</sup>

Both Levinson and Johnston have noted the reappearance of this location in *The Tuft of Primroses* (1808).<sup>50</sup> In this fragmentary draft of material intended for the *Recluse*, much of which was variously reused in the *Prelude* (1850) and the *Excursion*, the progress of Wordsworth's own "Gothic Revival" may be traced with particular distinctness. After its use in the *Tuft of Primroses*, the Grande Chartreuse passage's next reappearance would be in the *Prelude* (1850), having been added in 1814/16 to

<sup>49</sup> *Descriptive Sketches*, *Works* 1: 42-91; lines 60-63; compare Pope, "Eloisa to Abelard," lines 167-70.

<sup>50</sup> See Levinson 32; Johnston 245.

what had previously been a brief mention in Book Sixth (ending at line 424) of Wordsworth's having stayed at the Chartreuse. A product of Wordsworth's early, "pre-Pricean" response to such architecture, however, the Chartreuse, like the abbey in "Tintern Abbey," is evoked in far less detail than its setting. The passage of the *Tuft of Primroses* that most conclusively demonstrates Wordsworth's matured appreciation of the Gothic abbey does so with reference to no other site than Tintern itself, in a sustained meditation upon the fate of Britain's monastic culture:

Fallen, in a thousand vales, the stately Towers  
 And branching windows gorgeously array'd,  
 And aisles and roofs magnificent that thrill'd  
 With halleluiahs, and the strong-ribbed vaults  
 Are crush'd, and buried under weeds and earth  
 The cloistral avenues -- they that heard the voice  
 Of some sequester'd brook in Gallia's Vales,  
 Soft murmuring among woods and olive bowers  
 And tilth and vineyards, and the Piles that rose  
 On British lawns by Severn, Thames or Tweed

And saw their pomp reflected in the stream,  
 As Tintern saw; and, to this day, beholds  
 Her faded image in the depths of Wye. --  
 Of solemn port, smitten but unsubdued  
 She stands; nor less tenacious of her rights  
 Stands Fountains Abbey, glorious in decay,  
 Before the pious Traveller's lifted eyes,  
 Threatening to outlive the ravages of Time,  
 And bear the cross till Christ shall come again.<sup>51</sup>

Like Furness Abbey and Bolton Priory, and in a reverse of all the pre-1800 omissions actually to describe such architecture, Tintern and Fountains Abbeys are here "materialised" by Wordsworth in a passage which, whilst emphasising their ruined condition, also draws upon the vocabulary of Gothic intricacy and variety in mentioning features still discernibly "branching," "gorgeously arrayed," "strong-

<sup>51</sup> *The Tuft of Primroses in The Tuft of Primroses with Other Late Poems for The Recluse*, ed. Joseph F. Kishel (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986) 37-56; 53-54, lines 498-496.

ribb'd." Also a part of the scene evoked at Fountains is the "Traveller," the figure that both focuses and composes the whole image, offsetting in particular the imposing scale of the abbey, whilst bringing into the composition the onlooking subjectivity through which it may also be vicariously imagined by the viewer of the picture. Another human figure, however, dominates the rest of the fragment, in the person of the hermit saint, Basil, the description of whose Pontic retreat recalls the type of setting typically associated, as in Gilpin's picturesque, with the Gothic abbey:

... upon a Mount, sylvan and high,  
 And at the boldest jutting in its side,  
 His cell was fix'd, a Mount with Towering Hills  
 Fenc'd round and vallies intricate and deep,  
 Which, leaving one blind Entrance to a plain  
 Of fertile Meadow ground that lay beneath,  
 Fronting the cell, had from all quarters else  
 Forbidden all approach ... (lines 333-340).

In this fragment may thus be seen at work the process, continuous from around 1807, by which Wordsworth constructed the figure of the poet as both contemplative recluse and agent of "social love," developing as part of this the idea of the poet's "habitat" -- which from 1807 would increasingly be consolidated along the lines of the church, as descended from the primitive structures of hermitages.

With this in mind, *The Excursion* may now be turned to, linked as it is to the *Tuft of Primroses* by the meditation in the fragment upon retirement as quest for contentment in peace, rather than as flight from dread (lines 280-308). Johnston has noted how the *Tuft of Primroses* follows "the poetic form that Wordsworth's *Recluse* project inevitably produced" by ending with the poet's having "raised up an institutional

structure of imagination from himself, and ... razed it again back down to himself."<sup>52</sup>

As Johnston reads the meditation upon the ruined abbeys, this halts the poem with the difficulty of how to progress from the emblem to the actuality of "nature's pure religion," with the result of this being that the process turns back upon its creator. As in the cases of any Romantic protagonist or tourist to have found themselves within the precincts of the abbey ruin, contemplation of the place inevitably revolves back to the subjectivity of the onlooker. This is why Wordsworth turns his attention in *The Excursion* to the occupant of contemplative space, as represented by the Solitary and the Pastor.

Despite his expressions of regret at supposedly not having been able to pursue his interest in Wordsworth's Gothic architecture in his study, Johnston's reading of the *Excursion* so efficiently follows up the clues to the importance of the Gothic architectural aesthetic to that text (including, and going beyond the Preface) that it must be admitted that little is left to add. He notices how the Solitary "blends right into [the] melancholy scene" of the church in Book V ("The Pastor"), in lines that confirm the new intensity of Wordsworth's focus upon the "Gothic occupant" with their involvement of gesture and posture, and suggestion that the Solitary is, in his resemblance to a sculpture, part of an artistically-achieved aesthetic in his attitudes both mental and physical:

... looking down the darksome aisle  
 I saw the Tenant of the lonely vale  
 Standing apart; with curvèd arm reclined  
 On the baptismal font; his pallid face  
 Upturned, as if his mind were rapt, or lost  
 In some abstraction; -- gracefully he stood,  
 The semblance bearing of a sculptured form

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<sup>52</sup> Johnston 260.

That leans upon a monumental urn  
 In peace, from morn to night, from year to year. (V lines 209-217)<sup>53</sup>

Most importantly to the present concern, Johnston discusses the Parsonage of Book VIII as an “emblem” in which is achieved “an image of blended opposites intended to convey the healing force of tradition (construed as a systematic reconciliation of contraries.” As he explains, the Parsonage is “in effect the institutional renovation of all *The Recluse’s* ruined cottages,” concluding, most crucially, that it is “intensely significant in *The Recluse’s* image-system because a residence is here coterminous with its resident...”<sup>54</sup> Johnston even identifies the “little Gothic niche” as the “clinching detail” of the minutely described Parsonage, explaining that its emptiness enables the imaginative liberation of the Poet, “who has stood in many ruined abbeys and wondered wildly if he might not somehow fill such empty religious spaces under threat of modernist destructions with a contemporary ‘gothic’ masterpiece.”<sup>55</sup>

I would add to these highly relevant observations by drawing attention to how far the description of the parsonage is steeped in Price’s picturesque of architecture. The terms in which it is figured make it, in fact, the culmination of all Wordsworth’s considerations of Gothic architecture, with relation to his own art, over the key Price- and-Beaumont-influenced years from the turn of the nineteenth century. For this reason, it is worth quoting from at length:

Like image of solemnity, conjoined  
 With feminine allurements soft and fair,  
 The mansion’s self displayed; -- a reverend pile  
 With bold projections and recesses deep ...

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<sup>53</sup> For an account of the conventional use of this posture in eighteenth-century commemorative representation of authors, see Piper, esp. 80-90.

<sup>54</sup> Johnston 319.

<sup>55</sup> Johnston 319.

... We paused to admire  
 The pillared porch, elaborately embossed;  
 The low wide windows with their mullions old;  
 The cornice, richly fretted, of grey stone ...

... From behind the roof  
 Rose the slim ash and massy sycamore,  
 Blending their diverse foliage with the green  
 Of ivy, flourishing and thick, that clasped  
 The huge round chimneys, harbour of delight  
 For wren and redbreast ...

Nor must I leave untouched (the picture else  
 Were incomplete) a relique of old times  
 Happily spared, a little Gothic niche  
 Of nicest workmanship; that once had held  
 The sculptured image of some patron-saint,  
 Or of the blessed Virgin, looking down  
 On all who entered those religious doors. (VIII lines 459-462; 464-467; 477-482; 484-490)<sup>56</sup>

From the opening lines of the passage from which I have extracted these sections, the Parsonage is revealed to be the consummation of Price's sublime-and-beautiful-embracing picturesque of Gothic architecture, combining "solemnity" and "feminine allurements," as well as such dualities as light and shadow. The harmonious co-existence of the trees and other forms of plant life with the masonry recalls the Furness Abbey of the *Prelude*, as does the mention of the wren which, along with the robin, may be heard to sing within its shelter. Irregularity and multiplicity are here, but without the decayed and fractured condition of ruin. Price's Gothic thus emerges as the aesthetic to reconcile diverse elements whilst enabling them to retain their discrete identities.

The moment at which Wordsworth's picturesque progress into the Gothic interior was

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<sup>56</sup> The layout of the Pastor's garden trees recalls Wordsworth's own design for the Beaumonts' Winter garden at Coleorton; see Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont (undated), *Letters* 2: 122-20.

finally complete might be located in four verses near the close of Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822), two of them (XLIII and XLIV) being set in the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge (a staple since the mid eighteenth century of treatises in praise of the architectural Gothic), and the fourth (XLV) invoking Westminster Abbey.<sup>57</sup> The first of them (XLII), meanwhile, is addressed to "Cathedrals, Etc." Having hailed "ye everlasting Piles" as "Types of the spiritual Church which God hath reared," Wordsworth imagines human presence in a cathedral interior in the manner typical of such representations since the late eighteenth century:

Not loth we quit the newly-hallowed sward  
 And humble altar, 'mid your sumptuous aisles  
 To kneel, or to thrid your intricate defiles,  
 Or down the nave to pace in motion slow;  
 Watching, with upward eye, the tall tower grow  
 And mount, at every step, with living wiles  
 Instinct -- to rouse the heart and lead the will  
 By a bright ladder to the world above. (XLVII. lines 3-10.)

Alongside the sketched-in, "intricate" details of a Gothic interior is the physically-present figure, engaging with the building's surfaces in "[kneeling]" and "[pacing]," and the exploratory, synecdochal eye, following the equally figurative, upward movement of the cathedral in its characterisation as a living organism. In this idea, the poem also highlights Wordsworth's progression from the ruin-meditation as a mode for treatment of Gothic architectural settings; this is a living church, the organic forms that would represent its affinity with nature in a ruined state being substituted by the Gothic manner that achieves the same effects of organic intricacy and variety.

Both Johnston and Levinson agree upon the reasonable conclusion that Wordsworth's solution to the dilemma posed to the socially-minded poet by "a self-aggrandizing,

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<sup>57</sup> *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822), *Poetical Works* 3: 341-407; 404-06.



lawless, isolating and world-destroying subjectivity” lay ultimately in the idea of institution, as established through the authority of Church and State, and represented by such symbols as the Gothic abbey.<sup>58</sup> The Gothic space might be said to have reached the limits of its descriptive potential in Wordsworth’s imagining of the Parsonage. The narrowing of Wordsworth’s focus, in the manner of the rise of the picturesque, from the container to the contained -- the onlooking and imagining subject -- is further confirmed in Johnston’s remark how, subsequent to the *Excursion*, Wordsworth expressed the organic character of his projected opus through a metaphor not of a church’s structure, but of a human person’s.<sup>59</sup>

In the decades following the first publications of the *Excursion* and the *White Doe* in the consecutive years of 1814 and 1815 respectively, Wordsworth was to continue to invoke the architectural Gothic, though never again in such detail and with such evident aesthetic appreciation as he did over the years considered here. While there is the consideration that the final defeat of Napoleon allayed many of the fears of totalitarianism addressed by Wordsworth in his adoption of the Gothic architectural aesthetic, the Gothic cathedral or church was generally to figure in his works less as an image of his idea of the all-comprehending imagination or libertarian constitution, than as an explicitly Christian symbol. Like the banner and the deer in the *White Doe*, the Gothic building came itself to be invested by Wordsworth with an importance located not in its extrinsic aspect, but for abstract qualities not to be conveyed through mere visual description.

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<sup>58</sup> See Levinson 133; Johnston 319.

<sup>59</sup> Johnston xxiii.

### III

#### Exhibiting the Ruins: Scott, Melrose Abbey, and the Antiquary as Artist

On 8 January 1825, Sir Walter Scott's houseguest Captain Basil Hall recorded in his diary having taken a walk on the Abbotsford estate, which took in a view of Melrose Abbey, "on which there was a partial gleam of sunshine lighting up an angle of the ruins." At his vantage point, he was favoured with the following observations by Scott's gamekeeper, Tom Purdie:

When I came here first ... I was little better than a beast, and knew nae mair than a cow what was pretty and what was ugly ... but now I ken the difference ... I'll show you what the gentlefolks likes. See ye there now the sun glinting on Melrose Abbey? It's no aw bright, nor it's no aw shadows neither, but just a bit screed o'light -- and a bit daud o'dark ... and that's what they ca' picturesque; and, indeed, it maun be confessed it is unco bonnie to look at!<sup>1</sup>

This anecdote supports Daniel Cottom's arguments that "taste" in the late eighteenth-century was viewed as the attribute of an entirely aristocratic temperament.<sup>2</sup> By his own admission almost bestial in his former ignorance of beauty, more like a farm animal than a man in the affinity with the land which made him, as he also comments, "cuif enough to think that the bonniest thing in the countryside was a corn-field enclosed in four stane dykes," Tom has become initiated whilst at Abbotsford into more exalted mysteries of aesthetic judgement. Having identified the effect of the light on the abbey as "picturesque," and "what the gentlefolks likes," though, he goes on to remark that he likes it, too.

The abbey in the varying winter sunlight is thus a site of pleasurable aesthetic

<sup>1</sup> John Gibson Lockhart, *The Life of Walter Scott*, 10 vols. (Edinburgh, 1839) 7: 287.

<sup>2</sup> See Daniel Cottom, "Of Taste and the Civilized Imagination," *The Civilized Imagination: A Study of Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, and Sir Walter Scott* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 1-32.

experience for members of all classes -- not that the distinctions between these are forgotten in any onlooker's delight at the scene. Tom distinguishes not simply the abbey as "pretty" or "ugly," but also shows an awareness that it constitutes what would be considered a "picturesque" object by an upper-class onlooker, upon which his own assessment of it as "unco bonnie to look at" is not necessarily contingent. In so doing, he clearly displays the workings of what Peter de Bolla has designated the unschooled, subjective "regime of the eye" in viewing objects (as opposed to the educated "regime of the picture").<sup>3</sup> The abbey itself, meanwhile, stands out as of interest because able to appeal so strongly to members of such diverse sections of society. The "gentlefolks" have not appropriated it so completely as "picturesque" that a gamekeeper cannot also make it the object of his own pleased perception. Reading Captain Hall's anecdote, we do not only see the abbey through Tom's eyes (Tom being the one who conveys what the light on the abbey looks like, while the Captain merely lets us know the fact of the light's play on the abbey); we cannot see it without Tom's being also included, or inferred, in the picture.

Captain Hall's report of Tom Purdie's aesthetic appraisal of Melrose Abbey involves the same interdependency of the viewing or imagining subject and any site described that is so frequent in Scott's writings. That so many of these concern Melrose Abbey or fictional renderings of it is far from coincidental. As I intend to show, this site, which Scott considered to be "the most graceful and picturesque of all the monastic ruins in Scotland," became for him in its Gothic style -- even more than in its ruined condition -- an icon through which he could convey his particular constructions of creative identity whilst answering the demands of a literary market which, throughout the period of

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<sup>3</sup> De Bolla 25.

Scott's career, traded energetically in the Gothic architectural image. As he presided over the creations of his imagination, so these allowed a popular readership a kind of possession of objects from which, in their real, historically-functioning characters, almost all members of society would have been excluded. At the same time, for Scott as for other Romantic authors influenced by the aesthetics of Uvedale Price in particular, the Gothic style in architecture presented itself as an important analogue for his broader social attitudes.

The works of Scott's in which uses of Gothic architecture in connection with ideas relating to literary identity may most clearly be observed are *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *The Antiquary* (1816), and *The Monastery* (1820), all of which feature either Melrose Abbey itself (in the case of the *Lay*) or abbey sites inspired by it. Before any of these works are discussed further, it is necessary to place Scott's engagement with Melrose Abbey more definitely within the contemporary contexts of the Gothic Revival and picturesque aesthetics. In accomplishing this, I shall refer to *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818) as a text which, while it features no sustained evocation of a specifically Gothic-style abbey setting, nevertheless provides perhaps the clearest instance in Scott's creative works of his engagement with the picturesque aesthetic as formulated by Uvedale Price, and the strongest support for reading his Gothic-architectural settings as having been informed by Price's picturesque.

Scott is, perhaps, of all Romantic-period authors the one most associated with "Gothic" architecture, not least because of his famous establishment at Abbotsford with its extensive "borrowings" of designs and, indeed, fragments of its fabric from Melrose Abbey. Architectural considerations have figured, but only tangentially, within some

important studies that have examined Scott in relation to genre, in particular gauging the extent to which he may be regarded as a “gothic” author.<sup>4</sup> These studies necessarily confront issues of definition, in which engagements the architectural Gothic has been variously emphasised, being always cited as just one of several aspects of what would make a text, or author’s preoccupations “Gothic”. Fiona Robertson acknowledges Maurice Lévy’s insistences upon the (medieval) architectural analogy as essential to literary Gothic, but, in keeping with her arguments concerning narrative structure, considers “Gothic” architecture as denoting more generally the various typical settings and “furnishings” of any “Gothic” novel: the labyrinthine passages and mysterious vaults whose style of execution has not tended to be related to their more frequently-discussed functions either within plots, or as symbols identified in psychoanalytic readings.<sup>5</sup>

For Michael Gamer, “Gothic” character is defined as it contributes to the general, literary Gothic effect, which, Gamer argues, itself constituted an “aesthetic” which crossed genres in the period. Gamer’s chapter on Scott concentrates on Scott’s use of antiquarianism to aid a reinvention of “gothic” as a masculine mode for serious, artistic engagements with issues of history and property, as opposed to the sentimental, feminine register -- or the lurid, German-derived themes and characterisations -- with which those plays and novels now termed Gothic had come to be associated by the start of the nineteenth century. What Gamer does not consider, however, is the role that the architectural settings that linked Scott’s fictions with the “lower” mode of the Gothic played within Scott’s constructions of the type of authorship he was promoting -- a type

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<sup>4</sup> See especially Fiona Robertson, *Legitimate Histories: Scott, Gothic, and the Authorities of Fiction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), and Gamer 163-200.

<sup>5</sup> Fiona Robertson 68-69.

that drew upon elements of the bard and antiquary personae already associated with such settings in eighteenth-century representations.

Such associations of human figures with Gothic abbey settings were, of course, part of the broader aesthetic of the landscape picturesque that had developed by the late eighteenth century. Just how conversant Scott was with the picturesque theory of Uvedale Price in particular is evident throughout writings from all stages of his career, ranging from the letter of 23 March 1813 to Lady Abercorn in which he describes himself as “studying Price with all my eyes,” with a view to applying the ideas in his own landscaping activities at Abbotsford, to his 1828 *Quarterly Review* article on Sir Henry Steuart’s *The Planter’s Guide* (a “Practical Essay” on the use of trees in landscape design), itself an aesthetical treatise in praise of picturesque variety which refers closely to Price’s 1810 *Essays*.<sup>6</sup>

Most significantly to any consideration of Scott and the picturesque, Price’s aesthetics carry a high political charge in sympathy with Scott’s own attitudes. In particular, Price conceives of the ideally-varied landscape as free from what he perceives to be the despotism of “the general system of improvement,” which, after “Capability” Brown, levelled those features which might divert the eye. Opposing the spirit of “Painting” (as engaging picturesque viewpoints) to that of “Improvement,” Price explained how

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<sup>6</sup> *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson, 12 vols. (London: Constable, 1932-37) 3: 240; review of Sir Henry Steuart, *The Planter’s Guide; or a Practical Essay on the best Method of giving immediate effect to Wood ...* in *The Quarterly Review* 37 (1828): 303-44; 307. For more detailed discussion of this in relation to Scott’s especial interest in the use of trees in creation of picturesque landscapes -- and for further demonstrations of the importance of Price and theories of the picturesque to Scott -- see Marcia Allentuck, “Scott and the Picturesque: Afforestation and History,” *Scott Bicentenary Essays: Selected Papers read at the Sir Walter Scott Bicentenary Conference*, ed. Alan Bell (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic P, 1973) 189-98. A more general discussion of Scott and the landscape picturesque (but one which does not consider the role of the architectural Gothic within this) is Murray G. H. Pittock, “Scott and the British Tourist,” *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, ed. Gerald Carruthers and Alan Rawes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003) 151-66.

where a despot thinks every person an intruder who enters his domain, and wishes to destroy cottages and pathways, and to reign alone, the lover of painting, considers the dwellings, the inhabitants, and the marks of their intercourse, as ornaments to the landscape.<sup>7</sup>

Although they may not be equal in status or function, human figures are essential to the picturesque landscape as they are to the “organic” society idealised by Scott.<sup>8</sup> Price’s political analogy, meanwhile, extends still further as he links the pared-down or deformed manners of garden design (including “vegetable giants, obelisks, &c”) that he deplores so much with the arrival in England of William III. Two revolutions, he considers, took place in 1688, that in landscaping being far less “Glorious” than the constitutional one:

That [revolution] in politics, was the steady, considerate, and connected arrangement of enlightened minds; equally free from blind prejudice for antiquity, and rage for novelty; neither fond of destroying old, nor of creating new systems. The revolution in taste is stamped with the character of all those, which either in religion or politics have been carried into execution by the lower, and less enlightened part of mankind ... No remnant of old taste, however rich and venerable, was suffered to remain, and our churches and gardens have been equally stripped of their ornaments.<sup>9</sup>

The compromise which fails to be achieved between rational Netherlandish politics and the stark aesthetics of the same origin is effected in the picturesque as Scott enjoyed it, whether manifested in landscaping or in the ornamentation of a Gothic building such as Melrose Abbey. In the case of Gothic architecture, the tradition of organically-inspired decoration is not broken with simply because the oppressive regimes of Church and State behind it have been. Such ideas would become still more important in Scott’s mind as his politics became more decidedly Tory; with the feudal social structure itself

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<sup>7</sup> Uvedale Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* 338.

<sup>8</sup> See P. H. Scott, “Scott’s Politics,” *Scott and his Influence: The Papers of the Aberdeen Scott Conference, 1982*, Association for Scottish Literary Studies Occasional Papers 6, ed. J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1983) 208-17.

<sup>9</sup> Price, *Essays on the Picturesque* 147.

becoming more attractive to him, not only the style, but also the substance of a Gothic structure as comprised of many contributing units all placed in service to the dominant organism they collectively formed, came to provide a fitting analogue for it.

Within the whole range of Scott's fictions, his engagement with this theory would find its fullest expression in *The Heart of Midlothian*. This is a text regarding which Leland Monk has already offered an interesting discussion in architectural terms, although with reference to the novel's eponymous edifice of secular state authority, rather than to any church building in it, and with no reference to picturesque aesthetics.<sup>10</sup> For Monk, the correctional, institutional character of the Tolbooth prison (which Scott does designate as "Gothic") may be related to the novelist's role enacted by Scott in the work -- an argument serving to demonstrate James Watt's model of a school of "Loyalist Gothic" fiction set within "castellar" Gothic locations.<sup>11</sup> Certain passages descriptive of other settings in the novel, however, clearly allude to the specifically intricate, varied picturesque style with which such commentators as Price identified church or abbey Gothic.

The picturesque sensibility that informs *The Heart of Midlothian* is first manifested at the opening of chapter eight, as Reuben Butler watches dawn break from Salisbury Crag (the term "picturesque" being used to describe the effect of the Pentland Hills):

...the prospect, composed as it is of ... enchanting and sublime objects, changes at every step, and presents them blended with, or divided from, each other, in every possible variety which can gratify the eye and the imagination. When a piece of scenery so beautiful, yet so varied, -- so exciting by its intricacy, and yet so sublime, -- is lighted up by the tints of morning or of evening, and displays all that variety of shadowy depth, exchanged with partial brilliancy ... the effect approaches near to

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<sup>10</sup> See Leland Monk, "The Novel as Prison: Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 27 (1994): 287-303.

<sup>11</sup> See Watt ch. 2 (42-69).



enchantment.<sup>12</sup>

All the major elements of the picturesque prospect view are present: the combination of sublime scale and more delicate, disparate detail; the “intricacy” and “variety” stipulated by Price, and here achieved particularly by effects of shifting light, and the implied, spectating subject. Where the latter element is concerned, Butler is, in effect, not alone on the Craggs. Also conjured up is the contemplative figure of Cleishbotham, the imagined compiler of the narrative, who remarks: “This path used to be my favourite evening and morning resort, when engaged with a favourite author, or new subject of study.”<sup>13</sup> Lastly appears the author himself, through the note appended to the narrator’s expressed regrets as to the Edinburgh authorities’ failure to keep the path around the Craggs passable, “a circumstance which, if true, reflects little credit on the taste of the Good Town or its leaders.” Scott, it emerges, is able to report that “A beautiful and solid pathway has ... been formed within these romantic rocks; and the author has the pleasure to think, that the passage in the text gave rise to the undertaking.”<sup>14</sup> As in Wordsworth’s apparatus accompanying the *White Doe*, the author locates himself within the scene described, identifying himself and his act of literary creation with this picturesque setting -- and, in this case, hinting that he has himself indirectly effected the physical “improvement” to the landscape.<sup>15</sup> The freely critical, proprietorial stance taken by Scott also resembles that assumed by Wordsworth in the *White Doe* notes -- a point I shall be returning to with specific reference to Scott and Melrose Abbey.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Heart of Midlothian*, ed. Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990) 74.

<sup>13</sup> *The Heart of Midlothian* 74.

<sup>14</sup> *The Heart of Midlothian* 523.

<sup>15</sup> Compare Wordsworth, *White Doe* 157; 164.

Meanwhile, by far the most important -- and explicit -- instance of the Pricean picturesque as applied to *architecture* in *The Heart of Midlothian* is the description of the Willingham rectory, childhood home of the libertine George Staunton, as encountered by Jeanie Deans on her journey south. While the house is not specifically identified as “Gothic” (indeed, it derives most of its picturesque effect from the variety of styles applied to it over successive decades), it is evoked in terms strongly reminiscent of eighteenth-century accounts of Gothic buildings, most significant among these being “irregularity” and the “intricate”. The conventions of picturesque description of the Gothic building are recalled also in the manner in which, as in other fictional accounts of such sites, the text “approaches” the house through an account of its aesthetically appropriate surrounds:

It was situated ... on a rising ground ... covered with small enclosures, or closes, laid out irregularly, so that the old oaks and elms ... fell into perspective, and were blended together in beautiful irregularity ... The front of the house was irregular ... Successive occupants had made considerable additions and improvements, each in the taste of his own age, and without much regard to symmetry. But the incongruities of architecture were so graduated and happily mingled, that the eye, far from being displeased with the combinations of various styles, saw nothing but what was interesting in the varied and intricate pile which they exhibited ... not indeed beautiful or grand, but intricate, perplexed, or, to use Mr. Price’s appropriate phrase, picturesque.<sup>16</sup>

On the outside, at least, the Rectory -- and the institution it represents -- in a large measure realise Edmund Burke’s vision of the ideal (conservative) constitution as a grand old mansion, continually added to; as such it may be interestingly contrasted with such purely pejorative appropriations of that famous metaphor as Mary Wollstonecraft’s.<sup>17</sup> As a specimen of the irregular picturesque as a traditionally Whig aesthetic, it also signals Jeanie’s closer approach to the centre of state authority where she is to make her appeal for her sister’s life, in the novel’s central, pivotal scene. In the

<sup>16</sup> *The Heart of Midlothian* 313.

<sup>17</sup> See Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* 85; Wollstonecraft 41.

period of Scott's story, this centre is located at Richmond, where Jeanie meets Queen Caroline -- a noted early aficionado of the landscape picturesque as expressed at nearby Kew through such ornamental garden architecture as the artificial hermitage in which she housed a poet, Stephen Duck. This is not a connection laboured, or even drawn attention to, by Scott -- but the architectural-aesthetic association is irresistible as an appearance from this particular queen centres both the novel's plot, and the sequence of "picturesque" instances that may be traced through it.

The rest of the story, after Jeanie's successful encounter with the queen, unfolds on one level as a fictional case study in picturesque aesthetics and the consequences of their realisation, the Duke of Argyle being the agent who effects a living *mise en scene* in which the Deanses are effectively disposed as human elements within the landscape to which he transports them (the novel's final episodes are, in fact, of considerable interest where broader issues of picturesque aesthetics and their social and political ramifications are concerned, extending well beyond the immediate scope of this study). Where Scott's specifically *Gothic* architectural engagements are concerned, this central episode at Richmond remains most pertinent, with the description of Jeanie and the Duke's entry to the Park that closes chapter 36:

They found themselves at the extremity of a deep and narrow alley ... screened from the sun by the branches of the lofty elms which united over the path, and caused it to resemble, in the solemn obscurity of the light which they admitted, as well as from the range of columnar stems, and intricate union of their arched branches, one of the narrow side aisles in an ancient Gothic cathedral.<sup>18</sup>

Not only is the obscurity and mystique of Burke's ideal authoritative state evoked in

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<sup>18</sup> *The Heart of Midlothian* 358.

this “architectural” location; it also invokes what had by the time of this novel’s publication become a conventional identification of the Gothic architectural style, with its characteristic pillars and arches, and its minutely varied manner of embellishment, with the organic forms of trees. In its turn, this image suggests the eighteenth-century theory, of the primitive origin of the Gothic church style as having been located in the forests in which early Teutonic tribespeople performed their religious rituals.<sup>19</sup> Completing the image, and further associating it with a picturesque manner of presentation, are the two human figures -- who each represent different “types” of picturesque occupant. The Duke of Argyle, as becomes ever more apparent in the novel after this episode, stands for what de Bolla has designated as the “educated eye” that could recognise itself as a specifically composing, as well as participating element of a picturesque scene. Jeanie, on the other hand, exemplifies the labouring-class figure as a feature of the landscape -- just as the cattle from which she derives her livelihood, and which she will join on Argyle’s Highland estate, could also be said to do.<sup>20</sup>

While the “castellar” Gothic of the Tolbooth, the “Heart of Midlothian” itself, dominates the landscapes of the novel, with the sublime mountain landscape of the Deanses’ new home eventually taking over from it, this invocation of the Gothic church interior as picturesque, and its appearance at such a central position in the narrative, demonstrates the significance of that aesthetic within the novel. As Monk discusses, in *The Heart of Midlothian* Scott confronts the failure of the authority embodied in the Tolbooth to contain and control a volatile society in the years between two Jacobite

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<sup>19</sup> See William Warburton’s note to line 29 of Alexander Pope, “Epistle IV” (“To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington”), *Moral Essays, The Works of Alexander Pope*, 5 vols (London, 1769) 84-87, esp. 86.

<sup>20</sup> It is interesting to note, in relation to this, that Tom Purdie, in describing his particular capacities for picturesque appreciation, compares his limitations in these to those of a cow; it is as though both he and Jeanie associate themselves with the livestock with which, as working-class characters, they share a status as features of the picturesque landscape (being organised as such by their employers).

rebellions. In addition to this, I suggest that in place of the penal character that might be identified with the castellar Gothic of the prison, and along with his succession of varied Scots landscapes, Scott in this novel posits a more delicate architectural Gothic comprising a “picturesque” multiplicity of intricately-blended elements. This aesthetic expresses the ideal not only of a well-managed Union, but also of a perfectly ordered, interdependent society -- though the novel also problematises this ideal. George Staunton clearly represents the “mixed” libertine character in which was manifested the dark side of the Whig gentleman aficionado of the picturesque, and which threatened the balance of the peacefully “mixed” constitution.

The organisational role of Argyle in *The Heart of Midlothian* is something else noted by Monk, though just as he considers the architecture of the novel in Foucauldian terms of discipline, rather than from any sustained point of view of aesthetics, he does not place this character within any picturesque context.<sup>21</sup> Monk’s remark that “in the way he oversees and arranges the characters’ lives, the Duke is a stand-in for the author,” is nevertheless highly suggestive to any such consideration of this character.<sup>22</sup> While the Duke does not appear in any actual Gothic architectural setting, as a titled proprietor and connoisseur with the power to put his fashionable, typically eighteenth-century landscape aesthetics into practice on his Highland estate he may be identified as belonging within the “aristocrat” category of “Gothic occupant.” This is made most strikingly obvious in the contrast between his and Jeanie’s responses to the sweeping,

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<sup>21</sup> The picturesque aspect is, however, hinted, whilst not elaborated upon, through Monk’s choices of quotations to illustrate Scott’s appreciation of the 1796 redesigning of Edinburgh’s Bridewell prison in a Revived (castellar and fortress-like) Gothic manner; see Monk 293-94, where “the Gothic suggestions of the Bridewell’s exterior” are noted, along with Scott’s response to the “romantic” character of the prison’s style and elevated location.

<sup>22</sup> Monk 290; compare the notion of the “principal personage” within the “labyrinthine” Gothic space in Botting 57-58.

richly varied landscape surrounding Richmond, which for Jeanie is simply “braw rich feeding for cows”; while she regards the land in terms of its purposive potential, the Duke takes the strictly disinterested perspective of a leisured spectator.<sup>23</sup> As will be explained with reference to the works involving Melrose Abbey, the figure of the aristocratic “Gothic occupant” is important within Scott’s own self-fashioning as an author -- along with that of the antiquarian one, as will shortly be discussed.

Having considered the importance to Scott of the picturesque as a way of seeing exemplified in the intricacy and variety to be observed in Gothic architectural design and decoration, and predicated very much upon the implied presence of a spectating, scene-composing subject, it will now be appropriate more closely to consider Scott’s particular interactions with the Gothic abbey building at Melrose. For Scott, Melrose Abbey was, in his life, and in much of his literature, the focus for his own ideas regarding the identity of the author and his place and role in society. These, as I shall show, frequently invoked current stereotypes of the poet as minstrel and the Gothic architectural occupant as antiquary in particular, which, when highlighted against Scott’s Melrose settings, are revealed as sharing many characteristics -- as well as being informed by notions of a more “aristocratic” identity to which the properly picturesque appreciation of such sites might be attributed.

Scott’s attachment to Melrose Abbey is well-documented; as well as the Tom Purdie anecdote from the Abbotsford diary of Captain Hall, John Gibson Lockhart’s *Life of Scott* contains other instances of his admiration of the site, and his active participation

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<sup>23</sup> On “disinterestedness” and leisure as prerequisites to the gentlemanly appreciation of the picturesque, see Bohls 68; 69.

in schemes for its preservation.<sup>24</sup> Scott's letters provide still further insights; on 7 September 1808, he apologises to a Miss Smith for his tardiness in replying to a letter of hers, his excuse being that his time had been "put into requisition by some English visitors who engaged me in my hobby horsical office of exhibiting the ruins of Melrose Abbey..."<sup>25</sup> Nine years later, on 2 August, he offers to discharge the same function for David Wilkie -- "I will be happy to be showman over these beautiful remnants of architecture."<sup>26</sup> The tone has shifted from self-deprecating consciousness of what much of fashionable society might have considered to be "virtuoso" tendencies, to the almost proprietorial. When his purpose is not to apologise (which would explain the dismissiveness with which he refers to showing visitors round in the letter to Miss Smith), Scott, in his enthusiasm for and knowledge about the abbey, appears to relate to it almost in the manner of an owner.

This is something that emerges all the more strikingly when, beyond the trivial round of parties of pleasure, his preoccupation is with saving the ruin from collapse. In this case, though, his feeling of personal involvement with the abbey is tempered by his awareness that it does not actually belong to him. In a letter to Lord Montagu of 21 April, 1822, full of informed assessments of the structural problems, and suggestions for remedies, Scott expresses himself conscious of the Abbey's being the property of the Duke of Buccleuch, then in his minority -- "which makes it delicate," he continues, "to add what my anxiety for this fine and unique fabric prompts me to say which is that when an estimate is produced ... if it should exceed what the Tutors of Buccleuch think they can dedicate to such a purpose I will answer for a considerable sum being raised in

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<sup>24</sup> See Lockhart 3: 297; 5: 41, 350-51; 7: 28, 143; 8: 63, 199.

<sup>25</sup> *Letters* 3: 89.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters* 4: 484.

the country ... and think myself proud and honoured in being permitted to add my mite to such an undertaking."<sup>27</sup> Scott has not lost sight of the power that remains behind the abbey -- having replaced that which the Church once wielded from it -- but the fact of the Duke's minority creates space for him, within the abbey, to take considerable literal control of it, aside from his figurative mastery-in-occupation of the space, which will in due course be discussed. This attitude extends to adoption of a positively avuncular tone when referring to the Duke in a letter to Montagu on the 28 April 1822: "I conceive our young friend is of an age sufficient to consider the preservation of so beautiful a remnant of antiquity as a matter of honour to himself and to his estate..."<sup>28</sup>

The following month, and in another letter to Montagu (consisting largely of detailed considerations of problems caused to the abbey fabric by water and ice), Scott pronounces himself satisfied with the progress of the repairs, and keen to view them at closer quarters: "Please God I will be up on the roof of the old Abbey myself when the scaffolding is up ... entire affection to the work in hand must ... counterbalance the disadvantages of increased weight and stiffened limbs."<sup>29</sup> However sharply it may contrast with the milkmaids and fashionables who populate Gothic abbey ruins in so many contemporary engravings, the image of the fifty-one-year-old author clambering up the venerable walls of Melrose to oversee the execution of his plans for it could not be further in keeping with Romantic-period identifications of spectating human figures

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<sup>27</sup> *Letters* 7: 135.

<sup>28</sup> *Letters* 7: 150. Scott's tone in this correspondence irresistibly recalls that taken more publicly by Thomas Dunham Whitaker in his *History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven* (already discussed in relation to Wordsworth), with regard to various Gothic architectural locations, but most notably to Bolton Priory, property of the Duke of Devonshire, of which he writes: "Having now told what Bolton has been, and what it is, I shall ... hint, with due reverence, at what it may become," before outlining recommendations for restoration of the building and re-landscaping of the site in the course of which he assures the reader that "the trifling violation of private property [buildings between the ruin and the gateway to the abbey precincts] would easily be compensated ..." Whitaker 423; 424.

<sup>29</sup> *Letters* 7: 161.



-- especially authorial ones -- with Gothic-architectural settings. Himself the creator of the image, in his letter, Scott uses it -- consciously or otherwise -- in effect to integrate himself, the author, with the fabric of the building over which he has taken control, if only partially through his depictions of it in his fictions, and his assistance with its preservation.

Scott's use of decorative motifs, and physical fragments from Melrose Abbey in his arrangements for his house and land at Abbotsford is another striking aspect of the part played by the abbey in his construction of a proprietorial, as well as a literary identity.<sup>30</sup> In a letter to Joanna Baillie of 11 October 1812, he describes how he has "enclosed and covered" a spring in his grounds with "a gothick front formd out of some of the broken stones found in the rubbish of Melrose Abbey ... as there was moss put between the junctions of the stones and the lime was carefully blackened," he remarks, "it will not have a modern appearance in the least."<sup>31</sup> This, in a way, is the reverse of the process in which he indulged at the site of Melrose Abbey. When there, he positioned himself as the viewing subject who was also a component of the entire scene; at Abbotsford, he was doing the same thing, but by constructing the Gothic setting around himself. The central contemplative figure is also the antiquary who acquires, sorts and selects the elements of this -- an idea that Sean Malley has interestingly explored in terms which will be discussed further in relation to *The Antiquary*.<sup>32</sup>

Scott himself explicitly linked the figure of the antiquary -- frequently perceived as a

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<sup>30</sup> Scott's enthusiasm for accumulating elements of abbey Gothic at Abbotsford was paralleled by a similar keenness to obtain features from castellar Gothic buildings; on his integration of remnants from the demolished Tolbooth into his Abbotsford buildings, see Monk 296.

<sup>31</sup> *Letters* 3: 174; see also 216-20, and (about use of casts of Abbey ornaments in his library) 4: 287-91.

<sup>32</sup> Sean Malley, "Walter Scott's Romantic Archaeology: New/Old Abbotsford and *The Antiquary*," *Studies in Romanticism* (2001) 233-51.

dry, pedantic type concerned only with the sterile, factual minutiae of a dead past -- with the poetic sensibility in his biographical article on Horace Walpole. "A Horace Walpole or a Thomas Wharton [sic]," he asserted,

is not a mere collector of dry and minute facts, which the general historian passes over with disdain. He brings with him the torch of genius, to illuminate the ruins through which he loves to wander.<sup>33</sup>

Scott was careful, however, to distance the selective processes of the imaginative antiquary, master of his own constructions in the (medieval Gothic) manner best adapted to reflecting the picturesque aesthetic of fancy, from less exalted characters who, mastered by the dictates of fashion, indulged such tastes on more superficial levels:

The Gothic order of architecture is now so generally, and indeed, indiscriminately used, that we are rather surprised if the country-house of a tradesman retired from business does not exhibit lanceolated windows, divided by stone shafts, and garnished by painted glass ... and a pig-house with a front borrowed from the façade of an ancient chapel.<sup>34</sup>

This is a prime example of an attitude described by Cottom by way of introduction to his study -- the anxiety experienced by the aristocracy (or, as in this case, those of what Cottom identifies as of aristocratic temperaments) when members of the lower orders threaten to attain, in however inexpert a fashion, those standards which they (the aristocrats) have established as desirable in polite society. The paradox is in the way that the standards may only maintain their power while the majority of people are actually kept in ignorance of them -- otherwise, as Cottom has it, the lower classes "might notice what they are missing."<sup>35</sup> The necessity of education in particular ways

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<sup>33</sup> "Horace Walpole," in Walter Scott, *Lives of Eminent Novelists and Dramatists* (London: Warne & Co. [no year]) 532-544; 535.

<sup>34</sup> Scott, "Horace Walpole" 535.

<sup>35</sup> Cottom 9.

of seeing objects (in particular art works) to the attainment of “taste” is the aristocrats’ defence against undesirable incursions on to their aesthetic territory.

Such aesthetic awareness as Tom Purdie’s, coupled with his unschooled ability to appreciate, and so stake a claim in an object of supposedly upper-class taste, would thus be regarded as of grave concern by the possessor of the aristocratic temperament described by Cottom. Scott himself, as so many critics (including Cottom) have discussed, spent his career articulating a sense of his own position in life as a difficult combination of “lawyer” and “laird” -- the aspirant, acquisitive professional (in which character he produced his literary work) and the aristocratic possessor of property.<sup>36</sup> His engagement with the Gothic in architecture was also fraught with these concerns; even while it was his profession to produce evocations of Gothic sites for the possession of others, he used this function in ongoing attempts to consolidate a character as aristocratic proprietor. On the figurative level, he -- and his characters the Minstrel, Jonathan Oldbuck and Captain Clutterbuck -- attained possession of the Gothic site as seat of authority in their acts of fictional and historical creation.

That such contemporary issues regarding taste and creativity were bound up with Scott’s engagement with the aesthetic of the contemporary Gothic Revival is clearly demonstrated by the prominence of Gothic architecture in his fictions set within what might, by at least some definitions, be termed the “long eighteenth century” during which he himself was living and working. The framing narrative of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* takes place in the era of the “Glorious” Revolution; *The Antiquary* is set at the height of the Napoleonic wars; *The Monastery*, though its main narrative is about the

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<sup>36</sup> See, as well as Cottom: Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992); Jane Millgate, *Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1984).

Reformation, has a contemporary frame narrative, in which the French Revolution looms large in the recent experiences of a displaced Benedictine monk. In such fictions, the architectural Gothic is evoked not so much as part of an historical setting, but consciously as still-contemporary. Melrose Abbey is not the only Gothic building to provide such a setting -- an evocation of Glasgow Cathedral, heavily influenced by Burke's conception of the sublime, dominates the central episode of *Rob Roy* (1817), while St Magnus's Cathedral and its neighbouring "Earl's Palace" attain similar, if momentary, prominence in *The Pirate* (1822).<sup>37</sup> Meanwhile, in *Waverley* (1814), there are allusions to the vogue for Gothic domestic interiors during the 1740s.<sup>38</sup> Scott's fictional representations of Melrose Abbey, however, remain the most potent instances of his use of a Gothic architectural setting as part of his literary self-fashioning and in literary self-promotion -- as focus upon his first, and most sustained such evocation will demonstrate.

The description of Melrose Abbey at the opening of Canto II of the *Lay* is perhaps the most frequently discussed of Scott's Gothic-architectural representations, opening:

If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,  
 Go visit it by the pale moonlight;  
 For the gay beams of lightsome day  
 Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey.  
 When the broken arches are black in night,  
 And each shafted oriel glimmers white;  
 When the cold light's uncertain shower  
 Streams on the ruin'd central tower;  
 When buttress and buttress, alternately,  
 Seem framed of ebon and ivory....<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See *Rob Roy*, ed. Ian Duncan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998) 242-45; *The Pirate*, ed. Mark Weinstein and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001) 286-87; 380-83. These instances noted in Fiona Robertson 162; Robertson considers the Glasgow Cathedral scene in *Rob Roy* in particular detail, noting its centrality to both the narrative and physical structure of the novel (182-86).

<sup>38</sup> See *Waverley*, ed. Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), esp. 13, where the library at Waverley-Honour is described as "a large Gothic room, with double arches and a gallery," and 250, where Flora Mac-Ivor imagines that a domestically settled Waverley would "refit the old library [at Waverley-Honour] in the most exquisite Gothic taste ... and dig grottoes."

<sup>39</sup> *The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Poetical Works*, ed. J. Logie Robertson (London: Oxford UP, 1967)1-88;

Most often commented upon -- by Scott himself, among others -- is the author's failure ever to have acted upon his Minstrel's injunction "If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright, / Go visit it by the pale moonlight." As he would write to the poet Bernard Barton, he had been "guilty of sending persons a-bat-hunting to see the ruins of Melrose by moonlight which I never saw myself ... I ... must ... be contented with supposing that these ruins look very like other Gothic buildings which I have seen by the wan light of the moon."<sup>40</sup> The admission accompanies autographs including one which offers a variation upon the end of the *Lay* description of the abbey: "Then go -- and meditate with awe / On scenes the author never saw, / Who never wandered by the moon / To see what could be seen by noon."<sup>41</sup> That Scott himself had never physically observed this imaginary scene merely serves to highlight this passage the more strikingly as essential to the *Lay* in its substantial concern with creative (literary) identity; the abbey by moonlight is the pure product of his fancy. As Ruth Eller has commented, "taken in its proper context, [the opening of the second Canto] becomes more than a versified depiction of Melrose: it is central to the theme of the poem."<sup>42</sup>

Eller's notion of the theme, however, centres upon those issues of history to which the abbey is most significant in its character as a ruin. She does comment upon some of its Gothic-styled decorations, quoting the lines "Nor herb, nor floweret, glisten'd there / But was carv'd in the cloister-arches as fair," but with the sense of the stone as "dead substance," like the past which is "softened and given artistic form" by the Minstrel, "in order to please and have meaning for the modern audience."<sup>43</sup> For Eller, the abbey

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8 (no line numbers).

<sup>40</sup> *Letters* 3: 387.

<sup>41</sup> *Letters* 8: 387-88.

<sup>42</sup> Ruth Eller, "Themes of Time and Art in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 13 (1978): 43-56; 48.

<sup>43</sup> Eller, "Themes of Time and Art" 49.

“remains ... the place of death,” whatever the pleasures of contemplating it -- a sense shared by J. H. Alexander, in his *Three Essays* (also of 1978).<sup>44</sup>

In accordance with his view that “the poem’s deepest underlying theme is ... man’s attempts to avoid death, his encounter with death, and his learning how to live in the face of death,” Alexander concentrates on the deathly aspect of the abbey, with its prominent gravestones.<sup>45</sup> His reading of Melrose in the poem is almost entirely negative -- indeed, he provides a clear example of those critics who conflate the significances of castle and abbey Gothic, stating: “Both the main buildings in the poem, military Branksome and ecclesiastical Melrose, are seen as in some measure repressive.”<sup>46</sup> For Alexander, the morbid atmosphere of the abbey is a necessary foil for the love that he considers opposes death in the poem -- “love must come to terms with death in order to transcend it.”<sup>47</sup> Identifying black, white and grey as the colours associated with the abbey within the colour scheme he traces through the composition, Alexander reads these as continuing the theme of death, explaining that the “ruins grey” reflect in particular the grey of the Minstrel’s faded hair.<sup>48</sup> The monochrome effect of the moonlight on the abbey, meanwhile, is compared with the black-and-white vestments of “the severe Cistercian order to which Melrose belonged.”<sup>49</sup>

While these critics’ particular readings of the poem as a whole are convincing, they emphasise the abbey’s ruined state in the perceptions of both the Minstrel’s and Scott’s

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<sup>44</sup> J. H. Alexander, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel: Three Essays* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1978).

<sup>45</sup> Alexander 1-111; 50; 35.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander 20.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander 20.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander 59.

<sup>49</sup> Alexander 59.

audiences, rather than its Gothic character as the *entire* structure it raises within the Minstrel's narrative. I would argue that different interpretations become possible when the description is considered as a product of the Gothic Revival. Indeed, the black-and-white image of the abbey as described in the text resembles nothing so much as a copperplate-engraved, topographical illustration, when imagined in the most literal possible terms. The imaginative act repairs the ravages of time, presenting the abbey as an accurate visual representation of it could not do in 1805 -- but in a manner similar to that in which it would be most likely to have been executed at that time, given that very few people would have had access to colour illustrations depicting any subject whatever. Seen from this point of view, the connotations of the imagined abbey are far from morbid, excepting the necessary frissons of "gothic" terror allowed as Deloraine and the Monk make their progress through it. The image clearly indicates itself to be one that the readership may enjoy for its purely aesthetic content, in offering which it demonstrates its own significance as an iconic symbol for imaginative creativity.

The manner of Melrose Abbey's introduction into the text, and the successive accounts of its features and interior, in turn recall verbal treatments of picturesque subjects in travel and fictional literature of the period. In particular, the description opens a new canto, the approach to the abbey having been "announced" at the close of the last -- or near the close, in this case, as the appearance of the abbey is deferred further by the narrative's brief return to the Minstrel at the Duchess's court, pausing in his song -- and still further if Note 13 (following "the convent's lonely wall" in stanza XI of Canto First) is consulted immediately during reading. Such approaches to Gothic sites in Romantic-period literature resemble the element of alternated concealment and revelation favoured by aestheticians in approaches to such sites. The note itself, also

following a description of the distant Abbey as “Like some tall rock with lichens grey” (rock formations and the variegated effects of lichen being typical hallmarks of the landscape picturesque) sets the scene in the terms of a picturesque (and topographical-historical) description, conditioning their conception of the abbey as it is shortly to be described:

The ancient and beautiful monastery of Melrose was founded by King David I. Its ruins afford the finest specimen of Gothic architecture and Gothic sculpture which Scotland can boast. The stone of which it is built, though it has resisted the weather for so many ages, retains perfect sharpness, so that even the most minute ornaments seem as entire as when newly wrought. (Note XXI, 62)

Especially notable here is the emphasis upon the Gothic style of the building and its decorations -- which are stressed as being still typically “sharp” and “minute,” in spite of the ruined condition which is clearly not to be viewed as the salient characteristic of the structure in these descriptions -- because it is not, as has been noted, intended to be imagined as a ruin.

That the abbey is intended to exemplify the Gothic style as picturesque, rather than merely as terrifyingly sublime in its darkness and trappings of death, becomes still more evident as Deloraine is led through its precincts by “the Monk of St Mary’s aisle.” Following Stanza VIII, in which appear the “flowerets” noted by Eller, stanza IX presents a view of the interior which irresistibly recalls the standard accounts of such sites in topographical or architectural accounts where the onlooker pauses on the threshold of a Gothic building and gauges the height of the ceiling vaults, sensing generally the space around him before attending to the more intricate details of the design:

By a steel-clench’d postern door,  
They enter’d now the chancel tall;



The darken'd roof rose high aloof  
 On pillars lofty and small:  
 The key-stone, that lock'd each ribbed aisle,  
 Was a fleur-de-lys, or a quatre-feuille,  
 The corbells were carved grotesque and grim;  
 And the pillars, with cluster'd shafts so trim,  
 With base and with capital flourish'd around,  
 Seem'd bundles of lances which garlands had bound. (Canto II, Stanza 9, pp. 9-10)

The last of these features is identified by Eller as “the perfect image of the Minstrel’s craft and mission: to bind with the entrancing garland of song the stern materials of the heroic past.”<sup>50</sup> In a later article, Eller would develop further the idea of the abbey as closely linked with Scott’s construction of poetic identity. “Buildings ... can be metaphors for art ...” she states, “the Last Minstrel celebrates the ruin as emblem of the interconnection of Nature and Art.”<sup>51</sup> The Gothic style, still more than the ruined state that literally combines natural processes with the artistic execution of the building’s decorative features, effectively combines nature with art, based as it is upon such organic forms as are described in the stanza just quoted. This emerges still more strikingly from the first eight lines of stanza XI:

The moon on the east oriel shone  
 Through slender shafts of shapely stone,  
 By foliated tracery combined;  
 Thou wouldst have thought some fairy’s hand  
 ’Twixt poplars straight the ozier wand,  
 In many a freakish knot, had twined;  
 Then framed a spell, when the work was done,  
 And changed the willow-wreaths to stone.

The final four lines here contain an echo of the (already mentioned) primitivist theory of the origin of Gothic design, which during the eighteenth century was on at least one

<sup>50</sup> Eller, “Themes of Time and Art” 49.

<sup>51</sup> Ruth Eller, “The Poetic Theme in Scott’s Novels,” in Alexander and Hewitt, eds., 75-86; 80.

occasion demonstrated in practice by researchers on the topic.<sup>52</sup> A figurative expression for the look of Gothic design thus meets an echo of scholarly, antiquarian conjecture in the evocation of this single locus of creative energies and identity -- for this, after all, is what Melrose Abbey is in the *Lay*, and more explicitly so than in any of Scott's works.

John Sutherland has remarked that the *Lay* "principally asks to be read as an obsessional exercise in name narcissism, a fantasia on what it is to be a 'Scott'."<sup>53</sup> In explanation, Sutherland identifies all the various bearers of the name Scott concerned with the poem, and featuring in its *dramatis personae*: Harriet Scott, the Countess of Dalkeith who asked Walter Scott to write a poem, which stimulus prompted him to compose the *Lay*; Anne Scott the late seventeenth-century Duchess of Buccleuch, at whose house the Last Minstrel arrives at the start of the poem, and Anne Scott the widow of Walter Scott of Buccleuch in the Minstrel's narrative.<sup>54</sup> As Sutherland points out, although the Earl of Deloraine in the poem was fictional, the same title belonged to Henry Scott, the son of the famous Duke of Monmouth, married to the later Anne Scott -- and then there is Michael Scott, "one of the mythic founders of the family... whose power was -- like [Scott's] own -- manifested in 'books' of various kinds...."<sup>55</sup> Michael Scott's magical book is found enshrined in the abbey, and the Minstrel's narrative closes with Mass being offered there for the repose of his soul.

The pervasive sense of self that Sutherland sees as expressed throughout the poem in its

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<sup>52</sup> See Michael Charlesworth's account of Sir James Hall's practical experiment with "a small wickerwork cathedral" as part of research for his 1797 address to the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Charlesworth, "Introduction" 26.

<sup>53</sup> John Sutherland, *The Life of Walter Scott: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995) 102.

<sup>54</sup> Sutherland 102-03.

<sup>55</sup> Sutherland 103.

invocations of, or oblique references to the name of Scott -- all of whom bear some relation to the creation of the poem, be it as patron-figures or as fictional characters with active roles in generating its plot -- is thus centred upon the bodily presence of the supposedly originating Scott within the abbey fabric. The tomb is the means by which this presence is fixed and sealed; interred within it, the mystical master of the iconic book becomes an integral part of the substance within which he is also contained. This aspect of the poem's story is highly deliberate on Scott's part -- as his notes to it indicate, he made specific decisions both in placing Michael Scott, "by a poetical anachronism," in a later era than that in which he actually lived and in selecting his own beloved Melrose Abbey from various possible sites as the place of Michael Scott's burial.<sup>56</sup> Meanwhile, unable literally to bury himself within its precincts (though he would ultimately be laid to rest in another abbey, at Dryburgh), at Abbotsford Scott assembled around himself some of the same corbels, along with other fragmentary adornments of the abbey, that he described in his poem as part of the setting for the wizard's grave, thus locating himself in his own, reconstituted version of the site.<sup>57</sup>

The natures of the roles assigned to all the various Scotts in the poem are also significant -- apart from the poet Walter and the sorcerer Michael, all the others are aristocratic. Nobility and supernatural powers are thus linked, in this work, by a kind of family resemblance to the literary character of Walter Scott the author -- and all of them find affinity with the highly-decorated, Gothic edifice of Melrose Abbey. While the abbey carries such connotations of Scott's sense of himself as quasi-aristocratic master of his imaginative "estate" and its products, it is also inextricably linked with Scott's self-image as a professional author.

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<sup>56</sup> *Lay of the Last Minstrel* Note XXVIII, 64-65.

<sup>57</sup> *Letters* 5: 171.

Certainly in the *Lay*, the image of Melrose Abbey becomes one of these products, offered -- via the Canto Second description -- for public consumption in the same way that those engraved illustrations of Gothic architecture which it so much resembles were. It becomes the mark of the creativity being traded in as capital, and could itself be considered as capital; something that was certainly the case where engravings were concerned, Rosemary Sweet having recently described how these were, on occasion, used as currency within the contemporary publishing trade.<sup>58</sup> Scott himself was close to the trade in topographical engravings and texts, more than once becoming directly involved with its productions. Indeed, he is sometimes assumed to have been the author of the *Border Antiquities of England and Scotland* (1814-17), a series of descriptions of castles, cathedrals, pele-towers and artefacts, accompanied by lavish engraving illustrations, which bears his name on its title page.<sup>59</sup>

Scott's contribution to the *Border Antiquities* was, in fact, confined to an "Introduction" tracing the succession of styles and functions of buildings in the region that, due to the lateness of its submission, is usually to be found providing the bulk of the work's second volume in its typical bound form. In some ways this work is not significant in the wider context of Scott's career. He himself thought it, with its confusions and delays, "a foolishly conducted publication," and it is certainly hardly ever discussed in recent secondary literature on Scott (Sutherland does not even grant it an entry in his index).<sup>60</sup> Scott's part in the *Border Antiquities* does, however, provide evidence of his

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<sup>58</sup> Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Hambledon, 2004) 63.

<sup>59</sup> See *The Border Antiquities of England and Scotland*, 2 vols (London, 1814). For discussion of the exact authorship and confusing publication history of the *Border Antiquities*, see James C. Corson, "The 'Border Antiquities,'" *Bibliothek* 1 (1956): 23-26 and "A Supplementary Note on 'The Border Antiquities,'" *Bibliothek* 2-3 (1959-62): 15-23, the latter of which responds to William B. Todd, "The Early Editions and Issues of Scott's *Border Antiquities*," *Studies in Bibliography* 9 (1957): 244-51.

<sup>60</sup> *Letters* 2: 449.

direct engagement with those contemporary trends in antiquarianism which -- as Gamer discusses, though without reference to the *Border Antiquities* -- generated the particular Gothic aesthetic favoured, in his mature work, over the fantastical excesses of German romance literature and drama. It shows him literally participating in a trade in the Gothic architectural image in which he continued to operate by representing Gothic architecture (among other meticulously-evoked aspects of medieval culture) in the fictions produced from the publishing-house in which he was himself a partner.

Subsequent to the *Lay*, Scott would never again represent Melrose Abbey in such elaborate detail. When the *Lay* description of it is kept in mind, though, later representations of the abbey, or of fictional buildings inspired by it, can be understood as also conveying ideas regarding literary self-fashioning. This is possible because of the new emphases involved in Scott's representations of the abbey -- these being focused upon the human occupants who are so important throughout his works, where the evocation of landscape or other settings is concerned. James Reed has considered Scott to have created in his works "a total landscape, one which includes, as well as the view, an assemblage of men and women, animals, dwellings..."<sup>61</sup> Contingent as it is upon the presence of a viewing subject, the picturesque scene always involves at least one human figure, whether or not this comes within its visible scope. The later eighteenth-century picturesque way of seeing buildings was an outcome of people's closer approaches to, even entrances within, structures previously associated with exclusive church or state powers. Topographical illustrations -- those showing Melrose Abbey in the *Border Antiquities* providing good examples -- show people as elements of the scenes depicted, which are drawn from closer (often interior) perspectives than

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<sup>61</sup> James Reed, *Sir Walter Scott: Landscape and Locality* (London: Athlone, 1980) 2.

those of earlier eighteenth-century landscape illustration in which objects are viewed from long distances; the counterpart to these in literature was the prospect view poem.

From the dominant presence of the entire Melrose Abbey in the *Lay*, then (which itself had its focus upon the individual contained within the Gothic structure), Scott narrowed his focus to its human occupant. While illustrations of abbeys frequently included stock images of peasants and playing children -- and by no means inaccurately, given the numbers of contemporary accounts of old abbey sites as having become places of resort for the working classes -- the figure most usually to have been specifically associated with the Gothic architectural location in Scott's society was that of the antiquary. The title of *The Antiquary* (1816) must by itself have prompted associations in the reader's mind, calling up a Gothic setting rather as, perhaps, *The Monk* would also have done. While the antiquary Jonathan Oldbuck is indisputably at the centre of this novel -- and of its secondary Gothic site (after the Melrose-inspired St Ruth's Priory) -- he is, however, not its only Gothic occupant.

This novel -- and the Priory ruins, with their hidden treasure and sinister family secrets -- are sites within which various typical "Gothic occupants" recognisable from the life or literature of the late eighteenth century, when the story is set, seem to jostle for precedence, all with claims to the centrality of themselves and their particular perspectives within the picturesque setting; Shawn Malley has remarked that the priory ruins are "located at the crossroads of the novel's antiquarian community."<sup>62</sup> Katie Trumpener has also commented upon the manner in which Scott in *The Antiquary* contrasts different character-types concerned with the reception and recording of

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<sup>62</sup> Malley 233-51; 246.

history, specifically reading the novel as dramatising a “showdown between bard and antiquary,” though I would argue that the novel’s Gothic abbey setting highlights the extent to which Scott regarded these types as sharing characteristics, even before the reconciliation discussed by Trumpener as taking place between them.<sup>63</sup> In addition to the antiquary, there is the titled but impoverished gentleman seeking validation of what he believes to be his natural, inherited status in society; the young poet; the sinister German Rosicrucian, and the mendicant, a human (and bard-like) feature of the picturesque landscape. For each of these, the ruined abbey site contains the promise of material, financial -- or, in the case of Lovel -- genealogical “capital” upon which identity may be established and survival at a desirable level of society assured.

Malley’s reading represents an extremely full and elegant development upon Gamer’s suggestions (which do not cover *The Antiquary*) as to how Scott effected a maturing of “gothic” from supposedly German-style sensationalism to a gentlemanly, British, antiquarian-spirited mode via which to articulate concerns of nationhood, class, and canonicity. Beginning with identification of antiquarianism as a pursuit in which elements of a past are acquired and arranged to the liking of a present in which particular views prevail (in departure from the aims of actual archaeology in removing such objects from their original contexts), Malley identifies the Romantic-period antiquary as the character-type to represent such activity, and the abbey ruin as natural setting for the dramatisations of this in *The Antiquary*. He regards Scott’s correspondence as “[indicating] that he was certainly sensitive to the symbiotic relationship between romance and architecture as decidedly discursive structures.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997) 120.

<sup>64</sup> Malley 236.

Most importantly, Malley focuses upon the person and identity of the antiquary-figure at the heart of all his assembled artefacts. In considering “Scott the middle-class lawyer and novelist” as such a figure, he explains how, by collecting and reassembling the fragments of such a structure as Melrose Abbey, Scott “systematically imposes a mythological identity of himself as a landed aristocrat.”<sup>65</sup> The acts of purchase and exchange involved demonstrate the extent to which capital is present in such a self-fashioning; it is as a successful capitalist that Scott is able to assume his “aristocratic” identity as master of a domain partly constructed of pieces of the Gothic abbey which represents the literary self behind both the “lawyer” and the “laird” (in connection with which, it is interesting to note that it was around the time of *The Antiquary*’s composition and publication that Scott was involved with the preparation of *Border Antiquities*). The archaeological site is the source of the “capital,” and so also of the sense of self.

There would be little to add to Malley’s study, so comprehensively does it connect antiquarianism and the “Gothic” literature of the Romantic period in *The Antiquary*, were it not that his discussions of archaeology and the interests of antiquaries make no distinctions between the various fields that such interests could occupy.<sup>66</sup> It does not, for instance, discuss why the ruin featured in the novel was an abbey, rather than a castle -- and so leaves literary identity out of a discussion centred mainly upon social and economic considerations. Katie Trumpener, meanwhile, has considered literary identity in this novel, but without the reference to the Gothic abbey setting that might have revealed the figures of “antiquary” and “bard” to be less dissociated than she

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<sup>65</sup> Malley 251.

<sup>66</sup> Stuart Piggott has commented, with reference to *The Antiquary*, that the Romantic and the antiquarian “are inseparable in Scott.” See Stuart Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1976) 133.



implies they were for Scott even as she reads in *The Antiquary* an ultimate “collaboration” between the two types.<sup>67</sup> I argue that the use of the Gothic abbey in *The Antiquary*, when compared with the abbey in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and its character as the repository of creative genius, highlights the importance in Scott’s self-perception of the specifically creative nature of his trade.

As Malley explains, in *The Antiquary* “Scott establishes the priory as a location of antiquarian sport and a place for the district’s antiquaries and their families and friends to gather ... The ruins are the site of quite ordinary antiquarian occupations evocative of the localism and religious flavour of amateur county antiquarian societies in the nineteenth century.”<sup>68</sup> They are also, though, a site for picturesque appreciation -- as is apparent from the description of St Ruth’s in the text. The party -- Oldbuck and his niece, Wardour and his daughter, Lovel, Dousterswivel, and the local vicar -- come upon the ruins in accordance with the picturesque principle of surprise: “when they had followed [Oldbuck] through a breach in a low, ancient and ruinous wall, they came suddenly upon a scene equally unexpected and interesting.”<sup>69</sup> The surrounding landscape has all the variety and seclusion observed by Gilpin as characterising the locations of abbeys in particular: “The banks ... arose everywhere steeply, and in some places were varied with rocks ... breaking the uniformity of the green pasture-ground.”<sup>70</sup> Also in keeping with earlier eighteenth-century standards of the

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<sup>67</sup> See Trumpener 121. Mike Goode also alludes to church architecture with regard to the construction of identity in *The Antiquary*, but despite his own passing observation that Scott’s description of Oldbuck’s study (“a lofty room ... obscurely lighted by high narrow latticed windows”) “resembles a church architecturally,” he interprets the setting in terms of a tomb. I would suggest that the resemblance borne by Oldbuck’s study to a church interior indicates it as a site of contemplation and creative inspiration, the antiquary being for Scott a type of literary, as well as academic endeavour -- and Oldbuck’s house being founded upon monastic remains. See Mike Goode, “Dryasdust Antiquarianism and Sappy Masculinity: The Waverley Novels and the Gender of History,” *Representations* 82 (2003): 52-86; 64.

<sup>68</sup> Malley 247.

<sup>69</sup> *The Antiquary* (Edinburgh, 1871) 155.

<sup>70</sup> *The Antiquary* 155-56.

picturesque is the combined effect of the buildings and the wooded setting:

[The ruins] were not of great extent; but the singular beauty, as well as the wild and sequestered character of the spot on which they were situated, gave them an interest and importance superior to that which attaches itself to architectural remains of greater consequence, but placed next to ordinary houses, and possessing less romantic accompaniments.<sup>71</sup>

The description of the building places it as being of the same, intricate form of Gothic as the Melrose of the *Lay*:

The eastern window of the church remained entire, with all its ornaments and tracery work; and the sides, upheld by flying buttresses, whose airy support, detached from the wall against which they were placed, and ornamented with pinnacles and carved work, gave a variety and lightness to the building.<sup>72</sup>

Oldbuck breaks the group's contemplative silence with a typical ruin-meditation comment upon the former character of the place. "There was the retreat of learning in the days of darkness, Mr Lovel!" he exclaims, before rehearsing the usual lament for the destroyed "conventual libraries." That he addresses the remark to Lovel, the aspirant poet, demonstrates Malley's point about the site as contested among the various archaeological interests represented by the characters. While Oldbuck the antiquary shares obvious external and circumstantial characteristics with his creator, it is Lovel the poet to whom Malley refers as "Scott's alter ego," in whom "Antiquarian and gothic cultures fuse."<sup>73</sup> During the day, in the context of the party of pleasure, Oldbuck controls Lovel's view of the ruins, locating them specifically within a national history. When Lovel returns by night, though, following his duel with M'Intyre, he sees the place in the poetic, or romantic spirit in which he has most affinity with it, this being confirmed in the burial of the Countess Glenallan there, which locates the

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<sup>71</sup> *The Antiquary* 156.

<sup>72</sup> *The Antiquary* 156.

<sup>73</sup> Malley 251; 248

particular secret of his identity and personal history in the ruin rather as Scott, in the *Lay*, locates his own literary identity in Melrose Abbey in the person of his namesake Michael.

Guided now by the minstrel-figure Edie Ochiltree, rather than the antiquary Oldbuck, the fugitive Lovel exchanges the detached view of the ruins he has previously enjoyed for more intimate physical containment. Having accessed a passage of the Priory via a cave in the surrounding rocks, he situates himself within the very intersection of the picturesque landscape and architectural fabrics. Night enhances the sensory aspects of the place; as Edie explains, it is by night that the priory wallflowers -- “maist aye seen about ruined buildings” -- smell sweetest. Himself a “picturesque” figure, Edie describes the ruin in terms which recall the nocturnal transfiguration of Melrose in the *Lay*, as well as according with Price’s accounts of the ruined Gothic building as being among the supreme examples of the picturesque object. Speaking of the presence of flowers at ruined sites, he muses:

maybe it’s a parable, to teach us no to slight them that are in the darkness of sin and the decay of tribulation, since God sends odours to refresh the mirkest hour, and flowers and pleasant bushes to clothe the ruined buildings. And now I wad like a wise man to tell me whether Heaven is maist pleased wi’ ... thae pleasant and quiet lang streaks o’ moonlight that are lying sae still on the floor ... and glancing through the great pillars and stanchions....<sup>74</sup>

As a local “minstrel” and popular historian, Edie -- in accordance with Scott’s acceptance of Thomas Percy’s theory of the origins of minstrelsy -- is in the service of aristocracy; in harbouring Lovel within a site which holds the solution to the mystery of his birth, he is providing an early indication of Lovel’s status which tallies with the

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<sup>74</sup> *The Antiquary* 201.

aristocracy-minstrel relationships traced in the *Lay*. Meanwhile, as Oldbuck mourns the collapse of conventual learning, Edie celebrates the replacement of papist ceremonial (as he describes in detail, in continuation of the speech quoted) by the workings of nature at the ruin. Lovel and Oldbuck are not so opposed in their claims upon St Ruth's though, as Dousterswivel and Oldbuck are, or the Countess Glenallen and Lovel.

Just as antiquarianism may have its romantic aspect -- as Scott explained in his essay on Walpole -- so the poetic impulse may find reflection in the particular haunt of the antiquary, its organic intricacies picked out and heightened in their effects by moonlight. The affectionate nature of the relationship between Oldbuck and Lovel -- exemplified in Oldbuck's ambition to collaborate with Lovel on a publication which would combine poetry with an antiquarian apparatus, as also noted by Trumpener -- reflects the shift in eighteenth-century perspectives on the Gothic ruin, whereby exclusively historical or moral associations came to be balanced with a more purely fanciful sensibility.<sup>75</sup> Meanwhile, as representatives of the "Gothic" where this is defined as pertaining to that architectural style which most effectively replicated the natural detail and variety of the picturesque in landscape, both characters triumph over the "gothic" Dousterswivel, whose claimed familiarity with the site is as illusory as the antiquarian Scott would come to consider the irrational, extremist German literature in which he had indulged in youth.

The antiquary's mastery of the Gothic site is also the central issue within the framing narrative to the novel in which Melrose Abbey took on its third guise, as Kennaquhair in *The Monastery* (1820). Captain Clutterbuck's account of how he gained the

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<sup>75</sup> See Trumpener 121.

familiarity with the site that made him the local expert turned to by a mysterious visitor serves also to acquaint the reader with the site, prior to the closer focus of the narrative itself upon the people concerned with it. As its title suggests, its sequel, *The Abbot* pays a still more concentrated attention to people (though not so much to the Abbot as the characters Roland Graeme and Mary Stuart). Moreover, the monastery, ruined in the Reformation, features prominently in only one scene of that novel, its situation being one of immediate violence and despoilment that precludes any picturesque manner. For this reason, only *The Monastery* will be considered here, and this only with reference to the framing narrative.

Ten years after the first publication of *The Monastery*, Scott opened his Introduction to the 1830 “Magnum Opus” edition with the remark that

It would be difficult to assign any good reason why the Author of *Ivanhoe*, after using, in that work, all the art he possessed to remove the personages, action, and manners of the tale, to a distance from his own country, should choose for the scene of his next attempt the celebrated ruins of Melrose, in the immediate neighbourhood of his own residence. But the reason, or caprice, which dictated his change of system, has entirely escaped his recollection; nor is it worth while to attempt recalling what must be a matter of very little consequence.<sup>76</sup>

Here is a pretence concerning motive to succeed the one regarding identity. With Scott’s identity as “the Author of *Waverley*” already publicly known by the time this edition was published (as he notes in an 1830 note to the “Introductory Epistle” supposedly by Clutterbuck, that will be further discussed) the mention of the abbey’s proximity to his “place of residence” makes explicit his identification of the abbey with his home, and links this production of his later career with *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. The notes to that piece, with the sense of first-hand observations of the abbey they

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<sup>76</sup> “Introduction,” *The Monastery* (Edinburgh, 1871) 1-14; 1.

conveyed and explanations of Scott genealogy, had equally located the author within the abbey site in question. The reason for the Melrose-inspired setting has never escaped Scott's recollection, nor is it of "very little consequence." As in the case of his first creative work, and as his long-standing involvement with the preservation of the site demonstrate, it is no less than the symbolic locus for his creative genius and identity.

In the 1830 Introduction, Scott goes on to consider the merits of Melrose as a setting for fiction: "The localities of Melrose suited well the scenery of the proposed story; the ruins themselves form a splendid theatre for any tragic incident which might be brought forward."<sup>77</sup> Their appeal, as well as that of the surrounding country, to the fanciful (or superstitious) imagination is then detailed in accounts of the folklore accumulated around the site, before Scott stresses that, while based upon Melrose, "Kennaquhair" is an imaginary location to which additions have been freely made. Far from distancing the resulting fiction from its original, though, this only emphasises its character as a particular spur to Scott's creativity; just as he had never seen the abbey by the moonlight he evokes in the *Lay*, so neither he nor anyone else would have had any real experience of "all the particulars of the picture [of Kennaquhair]."<sup>78</sup> The creative fancy was, indeed, a particularly delicate issue for Scott with regard to this novel, which he devotes much of the rest of the Introduction to confronting, in his justifications for the "unexplained supernatural" White Lady of Avenel. She, meanwhile, is no less totally fictional than Captain Clutterbuck, the pseudo-source of the novel.

This character, along with the Benedictine whose acquaintance he makes in the course

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<sup>77</sup> *The Monastery* 1.

<sup>78</sup> *The Monastery* 3.

of the narrative, personify the acts of historical imagination connecting Scott's present-day musings upon the ruins in the Introduction, and the created fiction of *The Monastery*. The importance in this work of the Gothic occupant as Scott conceived of him -- that is, as a figure representing and asserting literary identity itself -- is clear from the way in which the scope broadens outward from the contained occupants to description of the abbey, rather than the other way around, as would be the case in any strictly "picturesque" account. As Fiona Robertson has commented, in her valuable discussion of the antiquary-personae of Scott's Introductions as expressions of Scott's claims to his *literary* property:

[Scott's Introductions] at once limit the imagination by surrounding it with physical and historical details, and increase the mystery of artistic inspiration, the process by which the details can be seen to have been combined to make the very different fiction which the reader encounters in the novel. Scott at once controls the reader's imagination and elevates his own, since so full a display of the raw materials of fiction cannot but remind the reader of the creative power which has so transformed them.<sup>79</sup>

Clutterbuck and his career are drawn with a fulness proportionate to Scott's increased assurance, by 1820, in his own characters as literary maker and authoritative local antiquary. Unlike the young heroes Edward Waverley and Francis Osbaldistone who are educated out of their anti-professional and anti-commercial tendencies -- but like the mature Jonathan Oldbuck -- Clutterbuck achieves vindication for having rejected professional life for supposedly inspired indolence, when the antiquarian studies he has engaged in prove to have their useful applications. He achieves this first at a local level; the abbey ruins of Kennaquhair having "forced themselves on [his] attention," he becomes useful to the community as a guide to the abbey site.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, he outstrips the sexton in expertise, matching "his portion of traditional lore" with the

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<sup>79</sup> Fiona Robertson 158.

<sup>80</sup> *The Monastery* 19.

fruits of more scholarly, technical investigations.<sup>81</sup> In particular, he gains access to the site through knowledge, the abbey having at first “[forced]” itself upon him -- which expression recalls the contemporary discourse of the sublime, in accordance with which the subject is first made to feel as though annihilated. The comprehension of the object that is reached through recognition of that state is thus suggested by Clutterbuck’s accumulation of knowledge.

His engagement with the Gothic ruin thus contributes to a particular, at first barely conscious self-fashioning on Clutterbuck’s part; it invests him with the identity of which he had previously been so uncertain. As he recounts:

By degrees my mind became enlarged; I found a book or two which enlightened me on the subject of Gothic architecture, and I read now with pleasure, because I was interested in what I read about. Even my character began to dilate and expand. I spoke with more authority at the club, and was listened to with deference, because on one subject, at least, I possessed more information than any of its members ... With this general approbation waxed my own sense of self-importance and my feeling of general comfort ... I ... was happy because I had something to do ... I had commenced local antiquary, and was not unworthy of the name.<sup>82</sup>

In the reference to books, Clutterbuck is recalling previous attempts to divert himself with the wares of circulating libraries, only to find the “trashy [novels]” clamoured after by “every half-bred milliner’s miss about the place” too dull and difficult to get through. His eventual conversion to Gothic-architectural treatises represents just such a shift from insubstantial, effeminate “gothic” romance to “legitimate” -- “Gothic” -- antiquarianism as Gamer and Malley identify as having taken place in Scott’s own early career. Meanwhile, as “local antiquary”, Clutterbuck has assumed the function of a refined, latter-day minstrel-figure, bringing learning and thus enhanced social

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<sup>81</sup> *The Monastery* 19.

<sup>82</sup> *The Monastery* 19-20.



consequence to what had been a strictly grass-roots, if recognised and respected, role within a community. His “something to do” takes on the character of a trade as he begins, after a fashion, to capitalise on his expertise -- the “excellent Cheshire cheese” of which he is partaking when the Benedictine is announced is, we are informed, “a present, by the way, from an honest London citizen, to whom I had explained the difference between a Gothic and a Saxon arch.”<sup>83</sup> This, in particular, serves to show how clearly he is defined by his engagement with the specifically Gothic, not merely old or ruined, character of the architecture in which he has become so interested. Meanwhile, he enjoys the singularity of his status, whilst cheerfully accepting the fact of his dependence for this upon the awareness and attention of other members of his society -- just as any contemplative, poetic solitude must be defined against the society any individual abstracts him or herself from, and the singularity of any literary “genius” preserved by its recognition by a reading public.

It is not to a minstrel, however, that Clutterbuck compares himself when he and the Benedictine have arrived -- significantly, by night -- at the fictional version of Melrose Abbey. As he has it,

If a half-pay Captain could have represented an ancient Border-knight, or an ex-Benedictine of the nineteenth century a wizard monk of the sixteenth, we might have aptly enough personified the search after Michael Scott’s lamp and book of magic power.<sup>84</sup>

In his 1830 note to this passage, Scott claims that, before his identity as a novelist had been made public, “the author had been forced into this and similar offences against good taste, to meet an argument ... that there was something very mysterious in the

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<sup>83</sup> *The Monastery* 20.

<sup>84</sup> *The Monastery* 32.

Author of Waverley's reserve concerning Sir Walter Scott, an author sufficiently voluminous at least."<sup>85</sup> Like the earlier note, though, this is disingenuous, serving clearly to demonstrate Robertson's observation that "the paratexts of the *Magnum Opus* continue rather than expiate the 'liberties' taken under the guise of anonymity in the first edition."<sup>86</sup> When Sutherland's observation upon the possibility that Deloraine in the *Lay* might also have borne the name Scott is taken into account, Clutterbuck's identification with the "Border-knight" (Walter Scott having by this time been knighted) takes on every appearance of a new refinement of the play upon names in the *Lay*.<sup>87</sup>

The Benedictine, meanwhile, is a more seriously-conceived personification of the literary spirit of the Gothic-architectural place. He is a literal embodiment of the monk-figure associated -- as in ideas of hermits and hermitages -- with solitary contemplation and the creative function this was considered to nourish, the prime agent in Clutterbuck's acquisition of the manuscript. His fictional nature as a contrivance providing an "origin" of the novel's main narrative confirms this link with the idea of creative identity, and undercuts the fictional circumstance of the Papist's return to the abbey (as Clutterbuck describes, he kneels in the aisle to offer the first Latin prayers spoken at the site since the Reformation) which might otherwise smack of Catholic sympathies; within this framing fiction, Catholic sentiments are reported as having figured within the original manuscript given to Clutterbuck. Fictions themselves, these are evoked only so as to be "excised."

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<sup>85</sup> *The Monastery* 32.

<sup>86</sup> Fiona Robertson 160.

<sup>87</sup> See Sutherland 102-03.

The overwhelming sense from the “Introductory Epistle,” however, is one of the reconciliation of the “Gothic” characters who in *The Antiquary* stand in direct (if, in some cases, amicable) competition with each other. The closing phases of Clutterbuck’s dealings with the Benedictine are marked on both sides by assurances that neither agent in the transmission of the story contained in the manuscript need compromise his beliefs and allegiances in any aspect of the work. Instead of a graduation from the irrational, monastic “Gothic” sensibility to a studious antiquarianism put in all instances to a country and society’s service, there is harmonious, simultaneous co-operation between the two impulses in the (itself fictional) propagation of the fiction, set within the walls of the Gothic architectural structure with which both types were associated by the early nineteenth century.

In his “Answer to the Introductory Epistle,” Scott, as “The Author of Waverley,” directly compares his fiction of the antiquary and monk to Thomas Chatterton’s “Rowley” writings.<sup>88</sup> In these, the figures of the poetical monk and the studious local antiquary had been combined against a Gothic-architectural backdrop, the particular character of which is apparently connected, in the Rowley poetry, with creative identity.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, as creator of both fictional figures, “The Author” emerges as supreme in his mastery over both *The Monastery* as text, and the imagined Gothic architectural space of its title.

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<sup>88</sup> *The Monastery* 41.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Thomas Chatterton, “Stay curyous Traveller,” *Works* 1: 99 lines 1-2. Given Scott’s allusion to Chatterton and Rowley in his “Answer,” it is curious that *The Monastery* is not discussed in Frank Jordan, “Scott, Chatterton, Byron, and the Wearing of Masks,” Alexander and Hewitt, eds., 279-89. Scott’s invocation of Chatterton/Rowley here is, meanwhile, another instance of the effectively interchangeable characters of the antiquarian and poetical identities that, it could be argued, challenges the assertions of Trumpener in particular as to a poet/antiquary conflict (she reads Chatterton’s Rowley papers, as well as Scott’s antiquarian fictions, as expressions of an antiquary “yearning ... to become” a poet that can result in a “drift into various degrees of forgery”).

Scott's attachment to the architectural Gothic as picturesque was only one manifestation of what Judith Wilt has referred to as a craving in him for territory -- the tendency which seems to have attracted most recent critical interest in Scott, along with his fascination with dichotomies.<sup>90</sup> As a "proprietor," though, he was also a producer. The products of his picturesque imaginative properties, "illustrations" of Melrose Abbey that, especially in their nocturnal moods, were literary counterparts to the antiquarian engraving, became in their turn the property of others.

Melrose Abbey's Gothic style, with its quintessentially picturesque attributes of intricacy and variety, thus provided Scott throughout his life and career with an iconic image of Romantic creativity. The pre-eminence of the viewing subject as a component figure within the picturesque setting was for Scott the symbol of that possession of property through occupation which he enacted particularly at Abbotsford. By its nature an aesthetic of parts combined, yet maintaining their separateness, in the formation of a whole structure (or scene), the picturesque recalls the archaeological or antiquarian impulse to accumulate often disparate objects toward representation of a particular "view."

While it was only as "antiquary" that Scott could involve himself with the physical fabric of Melrose, property of the Duke of Buccleuch, as an author he could take on the assembling, organising attributes of just such a landowning aristocrat as Buccleuch -- or as Argyle in *The Heart of Midlothian*. In his work as an author, however, Scott could not lay claim to the disinterestedness of the true aristocrat. It is thus possible to view the antiquary or author figures portrayed by Scott (including himself) within the

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<sup>90</sup> Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985) 17; for further discussions of this theme see also Welsh, Sutherland, W. H. Scott.

picturesque setting of Melrose Abbey as being perhaps as closely related to a Jeanie Deans or Tom Purdie as they are to the Duke of Argyle -- because they, too, are workers, their interests and livelihoods rooted in the lands where they reside.

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## V

**Licentious Profusion: Byron, Newstead Abbey, and the Architectural Gothic as  
“Arabesque”**

Writing to his lawyer in April 1809, beset with financial anxieties, the twenty-one-year-old Byron insisted:

in any shape I can meet ruin, but I will never sell Newstead, the Abbey and I shall stand or fall together, and were my head as grey and defenseless as the Arch of the Priory, I would abide by this Resolution.<sup>1</sup>

The same attitude, with variations of phrasing, is reiterated in many of Byron's letters of this period (1808-1812).<sup>2</sup> In this instance, Byron identifies himself completely with the fabric of his ancestral home, also demonstrating intimate, informed awareness in his reference to one of its specific, and most iconic, features. The extent to which he regarded the abbey as emblematic not only of his status as an aristocrat, but also as an author, had been still more evident two years earlier, when he had suggested to John Ridge that “a view of Harrow, or Newstead,” might be substituted on the frontispiece of a new edition of *Hours of Idleness*, should his own portrait not be available.<sup>3</sup>

For the young Byron, eagerly approaching his majority and full possession of his patrimony, the image of the abbey was a mark of his identity as both aristocrat and author. It would retain this status throughout his life and literary career, despite its eventual sale in 1817, while influential associations of Byron with Gothic abbey

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<sup>1</sup> Byron to John Hanson, 26 April 1809, *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols. (London: Murray, 1973-82; hereafter *LJ*) 1: 202.

<sup>2</sup> See *LJ* 1: 195 (6 March 1809, to Catherine Gordon Byron); 2: 94 (9 September 1811, to his half-sister).

<sup>3</sup> *LJ* 1: 138 (20 November 1807).

settings by others would begin to appear within the course of his lifetime. Among these would be Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816), in which the eponymous hero is lord of a ruined priory, and William Hazlitt's 1824 *Spirit of the Age* essay on Byron, in which the poet is characterised in terms of an obscure, Gothic church interior.<sup>4</sup> After Byron's death, Washington Irving's account of his pilgrimage to Newstead Abbey in the late 1820s would serve to perpetuate such associations into the succeeding two centuries -- and, even before Byron's birth, Horace Walpole had enthused over it as "the very abbey," a quintessential example of the picturesque Gothic ruin.<sup>5</sup>

However, with the important exceptions of *Lara* (1814) and *Don Juan* (1823), both to be discussed here, Byron's own writings appear to display little sustained engagement with the Gothic abbey as a cultural icon of his period. The classical and the oriental are the characters of design and architecture, be this ruined or entire, to emerge most definitely and memorably from such works as *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and most of the "Turkish Tales." It can be tempting to dismiss Byron's association with the Gothic as having been merely circumstantial, and confined to the simple fact of his actual ownership of a Gothic abbey building from which -- as John Beckett and Sheila Aley assert in their detailed history of Newstead and its Byron family owners -- he

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<sup>4</sup> Lady Caroline Lamb, *Glenarvon*, ed. Frances Wilson (London: Everyman-Dent, 1995) 118-22, where a party of pleasure to Lord Ruthven's ruined abbey is narrated in terms fully in keeping with Romantic-period literary conventions of picturesque description, and Ruthven/Glenarvon himself is first encountered at this site by the heroine, Lady Calantha Avondale; William Hazlitt, "Lord Byron" (1824), *The Spirit of the Age* (1825; Oxford: Woodstock, 1989) 159-81; 165, 166.

<sup>5</sup> Washington Irving, "Newstead Abbey," Charlesworth, ed., 2: 296-352; Horace Walpole to George Montagu, 1 September 1760, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis and Ralph S. Brown, Jr., 48 vols. (London: Oxford UP, 1937-83) 9: 299.

was largely absent, before finally selling it (an action interpreted by Beckett and Aley as “loss” occasioned by Byron’s previous spendthrift habits).<sup>6</sup>

The specifically Gothic character of Newstead Abbey, and contemporary aesthetic constructions of this, nevertheless demonstrably informed Byron’s imagination, and the process of his literary self-fashioning. While Byron’s attitudes to the architectural Gothic underwent a more protracted, even diffuse, process of change and development than did those of such enthusiasts as Wordsworth and Scott, he ranks with these as another Romantic-period author for whom the Gothic abbey building attained the same iconic importance as a site of creative identity, claiming the same descent from the picturesque aesthetic of intricacy and variety, and the inspirational grotto of classical tradition. This discussion will first trace the development of the “Byronic” hero as a figure informed by Gothic abbey settings, before progressing to consideration of how Byron continued to use Gothic architectural imagery in the works following his departures both from Britain, and from the emphasis upon sublime singularity in the fashioning of his characters and his own literary identity.

By far the most prevalent of recent interpretations of Byron’s relationship to Newstead is that informed by traditional “gothic” criticism, or by broader considerations of the aesthetics of ruin, in which the abbey, as a church property appropriated for secular, aristocratic occupancy, is regarded as a site of historical guilt and political insecurity.<sup>7</sup> Such critical tendencies to regard Newstead solely as a site

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<sup>6</sup> John Beckett and Sheila Aley, *Byron and Newstead: The Aristocrat and the Abbey* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> See “Introduction,” Charlesworth, ed., 1: 35; David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) 13-19; 18. Further considerations of Byron’s imaginative responses to Newstead in terms of the historical, political, and economic issues concerned with it include Malcolm Kelsall, *Byron’s Politics* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987) 8; Michael Robertson, “The Byron of *Don Juan* as Whig



of negative associations and experience for Byron find much justification within his published poetry and personal correspondence. Whenever Byron uses the word Gothic in senses pertaining to medieval buildings, or as it conveys ideas of wider medieval culture and customs, it almost always carries a pejorative charge, and is frequently invoked for unfavourable comparison with the beauty and majesty of natural structures.

Byron's attitude to Gothic most often seems coloured by contemporary understandings of the word as meaning barbarous or antiquated. "Shall Man confine his Maker's sway," he demands in "The Prayer of Nature" (1806), "To Gothic domes of mouldering stone?"<sup>8</sup> In the Alpine stanzas of Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the narrator challenges "Goth or Greek" to "Come, and compare / Columns and idol-dwellings ... / With Nature's realms of worship, earth, and air..."<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, in *Hints from Horace* (1811), "The groves of Granta, and her Gothic halls, / King's Coll., Cam's stream, stain'd windows, and old walls ..." are cited as the hackneyed stuff of "pompous" poetry, while faced with Satan's multitudinous host in *The Vision of Judgement* (1822), a discomfited Archangel Michael turns "all colours -- as a peacock's tail, / Or sunset streaming through a Gothic skylight / In some old abbey, or a trout not stale..."<sup>10</sup>

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Aristocrat," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 17 (1976): 709-24; 721, and Jerome Christensen's reading of the "English Cantos" of *Don Juan* in ch.9 of *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993). These considerations invalidate Beckett and Aley's attempt to argue that Byron scholarship previous to their study had tended to perpetuate a myth of Byron the disinterested poet through neglect of his aristocratic status and landowning capacity; see Beckett and Aley 11.

<sup>8</sup> *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980) 1:28-30; 29 lines 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Works 2: Canto III, stanza 91; lines 856-58.*

<sup>10</sup> *Poetical Works* 1: 288-318, lines 27-28; 6: 309-45. Stanza 61, lines 483-85.

Conversely, Byron's work also draws upon his experiences, in Greece and Italy, of monastic foundations as places of refuge, contemplation and intellectual and creative endeavour. Discussing the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke's monk disguise in *Don Juan*, Christensen has also noted the frequency with which Byron, and his characters, "take on monkish habits"; he mentions not only Byron's retreats at the Mount Athos monastery, and at the Armenian monastery near Venice in 1816-17, but also the Giaour's "removal to a monastery" (to be considered here), and Donna Julia's retirement to a convent in *Don Juan*.<sup>11</sup> As narrator of *Don Juan*, Byron also muses, "I think I should have made monastic vows, / But for my own peculiar superstition" (Canto XV stanza 24). Any attempt to establish the particular significance, or significances, of Newstead Abbey to Byron and his work must, therefore, necessarily be circumscribed from the outset by awareness of the contradictory character of Byron's own treatments of, and pronouncements upon the abbey, and Gothic architecture in general.

Newstead Abbey has been accorded its share of factual importance and political significance by Byron's biographers and critics, with the newly-ennobled child Byron's arrival at the looming ruin in its expanse of parkland having become a descriptive set piece of the Byronic biography.<sup>12</sup> Few, however, have considered it any more deeply from the perspectives of its decorative style, and character, as a medieval abbey.<sup>13</sup> Of Byron's critics, Bernard Blackstone has paid perhaps the most

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<sup>11</sup> See Christensen (1993) 343.

<sup>12</sup> See Phyllis Grosskurth, *Byron: The Flawed Angel* (London: Hodder, 1997) 21-23; 305; Peter Quennell, *Byron: The Years of Fame* (London: Collins, 1974) 16; Benita Eisler, *Byron: Child of Passion, Fool of Fame* (London: Hamilton, 1999) 34.

<sup>13</sup> Fiona MacCarthy examines the importance of Newstead to Byron's personal and artistic development at moderate length, placing other responses to it within its Gothic Revival context. See Fiona MacCarthy, *Byron: Life and Legend* (London: Murray, 2002) 18-20; 20. MacCarthy also conjectures that Newstead was a possible inspiration for the fictional abbey in Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* (1794), Radcliffe having had nearby family connections; see MacCarthy 20.

serious attention to the iconic importance of Newstead in the poet's works and imagination, returning throughout his 1975 study to the idea of Newstead as "an important paradigm for Byron."<sup>14</sup> Most crucially where the present purposes are concerned (though without explicit reference to the Gothic style), Blackstone regards Newstead as having encapsulated for Byron such dualities, or "basic antinomies" as "sacred and profane, ascetic and self-indulgent, solitary and social ... dynastic pretensions ... and family squabbles...."<sup>15</sup> He also perceptively views Newstead as part of a "Gothic identity" both "embraced and rejected" by Byron, asserting: "[Byron] was born, after all, into a Gothic period, the age of Gray, Walpole, Percy, Ann Radcliffe, Chatterton, Blake; and the lord of Newstead could hardly escape his context."<sup>16</sup>

The context of Byron's Orientalism provides another potentially profitable line of approach to Byron's aesthetic "Gothicism," the point of convergence between Byron's Oriental and his Gothic being in the idea of the "arabesque" as this has been discussed by Anne K. Mellor and Peter Conrad.<sup>17</sup> Mellor draws upon Oleg Grabar's identification of profusion, a sense of the possibility of infinite growth, and separateness in the conception of surface ornamentation from that of an object's shape, as major characteristics of Islamic, or "arabesque" art -- characteristics also to be observed in the Gothic of Newstead.<sup>18</sup> Even when Byron is not engaging directly

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<sup>14</sup> Bernard Blackstone, *Byron: A Survey* (London: Longman, 1975) x; see also 63, where Blackstone figures Byron's development from childhood to maturity in terms of the architectural styles that "accompanied" each stage at Harrow, Newstead, and Cambridge.

<sup>15</sup> Blackstone 340.

<sup>16</sup> Blackstone 63.

<sup>17</sup> See Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980); Peter Conrad, *Shandyism: The Character of Romantic Irony* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> Mellor 193-94, referring to Oleg Grabar, *The Formation of Islamic Art* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1973) 198-201.

with Gothic abbey architecture in his writings, the “arabesque” sensibility of which it becomes the expression in *Don Juan* is nevertheless frequently present, as -- in light-hearted or more serious moods -- he articulates general concerns with dualities and chaos. The extent to which the Gothic and arabesque may be seen as interrelated in Byron’s imagination and aesthetics becomes still more apparent when his probable awareness of eighteenth-century theories of an Arabic, or “Saracenic,” origin of Gothic architecture is taken into account.

The catalogue to the 1816 sale of Byron’s library provides some hints as to the nature of his engagements with such contemporary aesthetic discourses.<sup>19</sup> An eleven-volume, 1801 edition of *Beauties of England and Wales*, and *Illustrations of Northern Antiquities* (1814) represent evidence of Byron’s participation in the fashions for antiquarianism and topography, which in the Regency period had increasingly attracted royal and noble patronage. The presence of “Knight on taste” in the 1816 catalogue most suggestively links Byron with the currents of aesthetic thought with which not only Knight but his associate Uvedale Price (upon whose work Knight extensively draws) were involved -- and in which explicit discussions of the aesthetic effects of Gothic architecture figured substantially.<sup>20</sup> Although it can only be conjectured that Byron actually read Knight (though he was certainly acquainted with

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<sup>19</sup> This is reproduced in Byron’s *Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) 231-45.

<sup>20</sup> The inclusion of Knight’s treatise on the 1816 sale catalogue has been noted in Elizabeth French Boyd, *Byron’s Don Juan: A Critical Study* (New York: Humanities, 1958) 92. Also noted by Boyd as appearing in the same catalogue is Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*; although this does not discuss Gothic architecture with the detail that Knight does (taking a derogatory tone when it does, Kames being a staunch advocate of the neoclassical), it contains the same hallmarks of specifically Whig picturesque aesthetics, and their emphasis upon intricacy and variety. See Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1765). For Byron and Knight’s acquaintanceship (mentioned with particular reference to Byron’s participation in the Elgin Marbles controversy) see Andrew Ballantyne, *Architecture, Landscape and Liberty: Richard Payne Knight and the Picturesque* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997) 52-53.

him), it is useful to bear the *Analytical Enquiry* in mind when considering Byron's appreciation of Gothic architecture and its particular intricacy-and-variety-dominated aesthetic.

In discussing the Gothic in architecture as an instance of the picturesque, Knight rehearses -- like Gilpin and Price before him -- the idea of its occurrence in two "kinds," the "castle" and the "cathedral or monastic."<sup>21</sup> His thoughts on the latter of these kinds are most interesting with regard to Byron, an observer and describer of both Gothic and oriental buildings, in that they favour the "oriental" theory of Gothic origins, and that they characterise the Gothic in terms of contrast, association, and intricacy.<sup>22</sup> As Knight asserts,

That style of architecture which we call cathedral or monastic Gothic, is manifestly a corruption of the sacred architecture of the Greeks and Romans, by a mixture of the Moorish or Saracenesque, which is formed out of a combination of the Ægyptian, Persian, and Hindoo.<sup>23</sup>

He regards the style's descent as traceable from St Sophia's, Constantinople, to the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, "the last and most perfect of this kind of buildings."<sup>24</sup> Knight describes a similar multiplicity and intricacy of ornamentation to that earlier noted as characterising "arabesque" design as the prevailing characteristic of the monastic Gothic:

The ornaments of this monastic Gothic consist of indiscriminate imitations of almost every kind of plant and animal, scattered with licentious profusion, and without any pre-established rule or general principle; but often with just taste and feeling, as to the effect to be produced. No part of the interior of King's chapel is unornamented; and though the ornaments, considered with reference to parts only, often appear crowded,

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<sup>21</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 162.

<sup>22</sup> For the prevalence of "Oriental" and "Saracenic" theories of the origin of Gothic architecture, see Lovejoy 421-24.

<sup>23</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 165.

<sup>24</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 166.

conspicuous, and unmeaning, yet the effect of the whole together is more rich, grand, light and airy than that of any other building known, either ancient or modern.<sup>25</sup>

King's chapel, as well as the sixteenth-century Mughal tomb of Salem Chishti (which boasts pointed arches and "delicately pierced [openwork] walls") are among the examples of ornamental uses of structural or functional architectural features chosen by James Trilling, in a 2001 study of the practice of ornamentation that demonstrates the endurance of the identification of Gothic with certain Islamic architecture.<sup>26</sup> Having described the "synthesis of structure and ornament" in King's chapel as "intellectually as well as visually satisfying" (in which he echoes Hogarth's relish for the "difficulty" involved in the visual apprehension of Gothic ornament), Trilling later defines the "virtuosity" displayed by the Mughal designers as "calculated disdain for the properties of the material -- and the skill to back it up," these terms echoing Mellor's literary-critical considerations of the same effect, as achieved in *Don Juan*, itself a work in which examples of both Islamic and Gothic architecture appear.<sup>27</sup>

Such a stylistic confluence was aptly emblematised at Newstead Abbey itself in the presence there of mysterious carved panels, apparently depicting Byron family involvement in the Crusades, which have been remarked by commentators from Washington Irving to Jerome J. McGann, who mentions them in a note to lines 6-7 of the fifteen-year-old Byron's 1803 poem, "On Leaving Newstead Abbey" ("Of the mail-covered Barons, who proudly to battle / Led their vassals from Europe to Palestine's plain...")<sup>28</sup> In this piece, however, as in the "Elegy on Newstead Abbey,"

<sup>25</sup> Knight, *Principles of Taste* 167.

<sup>26</sup> James Trilling, *The Language of Ornament* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001) 68; 179.

<sup>27</sup> Trilling 179; see also Mellor 193.

<sup>28</sup> See Irving, in Charlesworth, ed., 2: 304; *Poetical Works* 1: 364, n.6.

also collected in *Hours of Idleness* (1807), Byron himself engaged more with the ruined state of the abbey than with its Gothic character. For this reason, the juvenilia will not be coming under substantial consideration here -- though it is illustrative of Byron's tendency, when engaging with Newstead throughout the course of his life and career, to replicate the various conventions of eighteenth-century and Romantic-period writing on the image of the Gothic abbey ruin. In the case of *Hours of Idleness*, these are Ossianic lament and didactic ruin-meditation, while most important to the present discussion is the closing focus, in both "On Leaving ..." and the "Elegy" upon the figure of an observer and occupier who is also the owner of the site described. This figure is referred to in the third person (while, as Blackstone notes, the abbey is addressed in the second), which fixes him, along with the parasitical growth, cloisters, and "yawning arch" ("Elegy" line 138), as an image in the scene evoked, in the manner of the picturesque.

It will be recalled that the years immediately succeeding the publication of *Hours of Idleness* were those of the letters in which Byron so fervently insisted upon keeping possession of Newstead. In the early Newstead poems, just as he had in his letter to Hanson, he identifies himself as contemplating (and occupying) subject with the fabric and setting of the site itself, his preoccupation with its history and traditions comparable to the manner in which Gothic architectural sites were represented in the art and literature of the mid eighteenth century -- that is, with the emphasis upon the places rather than any people involved with them. As the quality of Byron's self-awareness changed, so he began, in the manner of his times, to focus more upon the occupant -- or occupants, past as well as present -- of his Gothic abbey.

Byron's reminiscences of this period, appearing in a letter to John Murray of 1820 largely devoted to memories of his deceased friend Charles Skinner Matthews, provide an apt summary of this stage of the development of his attitudes to Newstead:

We went down to Newstead together, where I had got a famous cellar, and *Monks'* dresses from a masquerade warehouse. We were a company of some seven or eight, with an occasional neighbour or so ... and used to sit up late in our friars' dresses, drinking burgundy, claret, champagne, and what not, out of the *skull-cup* ... and buffooning all around the house, in our conventual garments. Matthews always denominated me 'the Abbot,' and never called me by any other name in his good humours, to the day of his death.<sup>29</sup>

This summer of 1809, immediately before Byron's embarkation with John Cam Hobhouse upon their Mediterranean tour, represented the climax to the second of his major periods of residence at Newstead (the first having been constituted by his holidays from Harrow). His majority attained, Byron had been exercising a newly seigneurial control over the estate, commissioning improvements and seducing the housemaids.<sup>30</sup> He was well aware of the main antecedent for his aristocratic predilection for debauchery in monks' costumes. The previous spring, he had jocularly described to Hobhouse a plan "to ... reestablish Medmenham Abbey, or some similar temple of Venus, of which I shall be Pontifex Maximus."<sup>31</sup>

The allusion to the site of Francis Dashwood's "Hellfire Club" gatherings of the 1740s and 50s highlights Byron's familiarity, noted by Blackstone, with the libertine (and Rabelais-inspired) Whig lore of his day, and his identification with just such a specifically aristocratic, proprietorial attitude.<sup>32</sup> Like Dashwood's, Byron's assumption of a monk's disguise threw the old monastic, and new aristocratic

<sup>29</sup> Byron to John Murray, 19 October 1820 *LJ* 7: 231.

<sup>30</sup> MacCarthy 76-77; 79-80.

<sup>31</sup> Byron to Hobhouse, 14 March 1808 *LJ* 1: 160-61.

<sup>32</sup> See Blackstone 340.



characters of his home into deliberately absurd juxtaposition, as recalled in the first canto of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, where monastic corruption rumoured at the time of the Dissolution is invoked as an antecedent to offset the latter-day antics of the "Childe" and his companions. The abbey, meanwhile, is described through the use of such typical eighteenth-century shorthand words as "pile" and "dome," with no perceptible appreciation for its stylistic character:

The Childe departed from his father's hall:  
 It was a vast and venerable pile;  
 So old, it seemed only not to fall,  
 Yet strength was pillar'd in each massy aisle.  
 Monastic dome! condemn'd to uses vile!  
 Where Superstition once had made her den  
 Now Paphian girls were known to sing and smile;  
 And monks might deem their time was come agen,  
 If ancient tales say true, nor wrong these holy men. (I.VII)

For Byron, however, the Mediterranean travels which in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* represent the triumph of the classical and natural over an apparently abandoned aesthetic of the superstitious, irrational and licentious would stimulate new ways of thinking about and seeing the northern medieval traditions with which he associated Newstead. Letters written by Byron to his mother from the Levant show how his imaginative grounding in the medieval culture described by Scott informed some of his perceptions of Turkey. Describing Tepaleen by sunset, he writes that "it brought to my recollection (with some change of *dress* however) Scott's description of Branksome Castle in his lay, & the feudal system," and, continuing with an account of Ali Pacha's palace, he mentions "a kind of cloister."<sup>33</sup> At Constantinople, where he visited St Sophia's (cited, as discussed, by Knight as an Eastern antecedent of the Gothic of King's chapel), Gothic architecture seems to have been much on his mind;

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<sup>33</sup> Byron to Catherine Gordon Byron, 12 November 1809 *LJ* 1: 227.

indeed, he states that “I prefer the Gothic Cathedral of Seville to St. P[aul]’s, St. Sophia’s and any religious building I have ever seen,” going on to note that “The walls of the Seraglio are like the walls of Newstead Gardens only higher, and in much the same *order*....”<sup>34</sup>

Whether or not he had actually studied Knight, Byron, like Knight, associates the Gothic with the Arabic styles of architecture. His sensitivity to and awareness of the character of Newstead are evident here, as it provides his reference-point for appreciation of the Turkish buildings he sees. Meanwhile, the small, working Capuchin monastery on the slopes of Mount Athos where Byron lived and worked during 1810-11 provided him (although not Gothic in style) with possibly a more immediate and genuine engagement with the ideal of picturesque, contemplative retirement than any of the contemporaries also under consideration here experienced in an abbey building -- though there was also as much scope for licentious diversion, this being of a specifically homoerotic nature, as there had been at Newstead.<sup>35</sup> The alteration that the sojourn on Mount Athos effected in Byron’s attitudes to the monastic, or quasi-monastic life may be traced through certain writings deriving from these months.

In one of these pieces, a parodic sonnet composed during a period of serious, feverish illness in 1810, and included in a letter to Hobhouse, Byron explicitly contrasts the figure he cuts among the Capuchins with his remembered self at Newstead -- thus showing how far to the forefront of his mind Newstead, as well as his immediate situation, had come in that time of crisis:

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<sup>34</sup> Byron to Catherine Gordon Byron, 28 June 1810 *LJ* 1: 251.

<sup>35</sup> MacCarthy 127-28.

Poor B-r-n sweats -- alas! how changed from him  
 So plump in feature, and so round in limb,  
 Grinning and gay in Newstead's monkish fane,  
 The scene of profanation and Champagne....<sup>36</sup>

In the nine stanzas of the fragmentary "Monk of Athos," begun the following year, Byron celebrated the convent, or rather its location, as a constant, peaceful refuge from the war and persecutions suffered by Greece.<sup>37</sup> As always in Byron's outdoor descriptions, Nature is privileged above any creation of Man's, the "glittering [spires]" (line 65) to be seen through the mountain's dense foliage being merely a part of the entire scene surveyed. In such merging with the landscape, however, the various, working convents of the Mount figure within a description remarkable for its genre and period in the sympathetic, non-pejorative tone with which it is expressed. Byron notes that the site is "As yet unspoil'd by sacreligious Hands," and writes of the "sweet religious calm" breathed by the air, sea, rocks and woods, and thus "Weaning the thoughts from every low desire ..." (lines 62; 69-70). As work marginal to Byron's major "project" of this period (Cantos I and II of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), this piece demonstrates how an engagement with the picturesque refined not only Byron's perspective upon landscapes in general, but also his attitudes to the monastic building as a component of these.

However, having left the varied pleasures of the Mediterranean behind him in the late summer of 1811, Byron was transported almost immediately to a Newstead whose gloom was the more oppressive for the spate of bereavements he was to suffer or learn of throughout the succeeding autumn. No longer surrounded by "buffooning" friends

<sup>36</sup> *Poetical Works* 1: 284, lines 5-8.

<sup>37</sup> "The Monk of Athos," *Poetical Works* 1: 285-87.

in friars' habits, as he had been when last in residence, Byron found himself -- as mentioned in more than one of his letters in the weeks following his mother's and C. S. Matthews's deaths -- with only the skulls of some of its original monks (as previously collected by Byron from the abbey grounds, and displayed in his study) for company.<sup>38</sup> The burlesque character with which Byron had invested his ancestral seat had become distorted by his melancholy into an uncanny one.<sup>39</sup> With this new mood, and Byron's experience of the East, also germane to the composition of *Lara* were Byron's changing attitudes to his identity both as author and estate-owning aristocrat during the intervening years.

These he would express in some verses on Newstead Abbey, not published until 1834, that Jerome J. McGann has noted form "a gloomier continuation of the Newstead Abbey poems [the "Elegy" and "On Leaving ..."] which Byron wrote for his [*Hours of Idleness*] volumes."<sup>40</sup> While the "Elegy" and "On Leaving ..." closed with the teenaged author's anticipations of successes to honour his ancestry, these verses are saturated with the older poet's sense of his failure to revive the faded glory of the Byrons. As in the earlier Newstead verses, the abbey is characterised as a ruin, rather than as a building of any particular style or character -- but, while the earlier poems did identify with the abbey the figure of its owner-occupant, these six stanzas do so

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<sup>38</sup> See letters to John Cam Hobhouse, August 10 1811, and Robert Charles Dallas, August 12 1811. *LJ* 2: 69; 70. On Byron's expansion of his skull collection see Irving, in Charlesworth, ed., 2: 313; MacCarthy 134. Walter Scott's jocular display of a monk's skull found at Abbotsford, reported by Irving, contrasts with Byron's more ambivalent attitude to his ownership and occupation of Newstead. See Washington Irving, "Abbotsford," Charlesworth, ed., 2: 353-90; 370.

<sup>39</sup> Freud's ninth definition of "*heimlich*" (previously defined as "homelike") in "The 'Uncanny'" (1919), which he gives as "[coming] to have the meaning ascribed to '*unheimlich*' [frightening; eerie]," seems especially interesting where Byron's relationship to the home of whose previous inhabitants he was deeply -- and ambivalently -- conscious is concerned, though considerations of space and relevance forbid further exploration here (I note Nigel Leask's Freudian/post-colonial reading of *Lara* in these terms later in this chapter). See Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" trans. James Strachey, *Art and Literature*, ed. Albert Dickson, The Penguin Freud Library vol. 14; (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) 335-76; 341, 345; 346-47.

<sup>40</sup> "[Newstead Abbey]," *Poetical Works* 1: 341-42.

far more explicitly, conveying an idea of physical, rather than merely contemplative engagement:

And the step that o'erechoes the gray floor of stone  
 Falls sullenly now, for 'tis only my own;  
 And sunk are the voices that sounded in mirth,  
 And empty the goblet, and dreary the hearth. (lines 9-12)

The poem's opening is equally in keeping with what had become the typical mode for representation of the abbey ruin as an inspirational site. As Scott did in describing Melrose Abbey in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Byron evokes an image of Newstead lit not by the sun, but by the moon, in the monochrome tones of a print engraving. Throughout the verses, the poet complains of lack of the light that in an earlier, eighteenth-century ruin-meditation of more didactic purpose would be invoked in closing lines to signify the triumph of the rational over the Popish and superstitious. Whilst bitter in tone, and while the speaker effectively turns in disgust from his own imagined presence in the abbey, the poem thus nevertheless figures Newstead as a site for intensely personal, subjective musing, from which may arise a creative act.

It is this personal, subjective character that most distinguishes these verses from the "Elegy" and "On Leaving ...". In both pieces, the abbey is apostrophised in the second person, with the heir to its possession being in almost all instances written of in the third. These six quatrains thus represent Byron's deepened sense of self-identification with Newstead, which -- despite his resumption in the Tales of a third-person narrating voice -- would most substantially inform his characterisations of such melancholic anti-heroes as Lara and the Giaour, steeped as these were in the idea that the abbey setting might be expressive of such states of mind as theirs.

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The text that represents the final stage in the progress of development toward such constructions of Gothic abbey settings as aspects of the characterisation of “Byronic” heroes is the fragmentary “Il Diavolo Inamorato” (1812), considered by McGann to be related to “The Monk of Athos.”<sup>41</sup> While this features no explicitly Gothic architecture (though some might conceivably be imagined as featuring within its Venetian setting) the figure described in its final two stanzas prefigures, whilst also obviously descending from Radcliffe’s Schedoni, the brooding inhabitants of both the Giaour’s abbey refuge and Lara’s ancestral hall.<sup>42</sup>

Having described this character as possessed of a “glassy eye” flashing with “long-desired -- but still-deferred Revenge,” (line 81) Byron goes on to mention that “His garb was that of godly Eremite, / Such as on lonely Athos I have seen ...” (lines 82-83), describing this location in its turn as being one to cause the world-weary, world-hating traveller to “wistful linger,” wishing “that such had been his lot ...” (lines 87; 89). Various hints thus combine in this preliminary sketch of the Byronic hero and his “habitat”: the solitary tendency, the fierce and mysterious bearing, and an association with the detached, contemplative life of the religious hermit.

Following months of increased financial anxiety, August 1812 would see Byron compelled to accept Thomas Claughton’s offer for Newstead Abbey. As he wrote in his Journal in November of the following year -- the ultimately cancelled deal with Claughton still proving inconclusive -- “It cost me more than words to part with it --

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<sup>41</sup> “Il Diavolo Inamorato,” *Poetical Works* 3: 13-14; see also McGann’s note, 392.

<sup>42</sup> On the development of the Byronic hero as a literary type, see Peter L. Thorslev Jr., *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P); Blackstone 233.

and to *have* parted with it! What matters it what I do? or what becomes of me?"<sup>43</sup> He was prepared to acknowledge, though, that his retention of Newstead was by this time as distressing a financial prospect as it was from any more emotional perspective. Byron's recognition of his abbey as capital necessary to be realised finds a parallel in his swallowing his usual lordly disdain for accepting payment for his writing in the case of *Lara*, which -- perhaps not coincidentally -- featured within its opening canto the set-piece abbey description that signalled Byron's maturation from the sacreligious mockery of his Cambridge vacations.<sup>44</sup>

While *Lara* has been most often regarded as a companion-piece to *The Corsair*, having been discussed by Byron himself as a sequel to it, there is a less frequently-noted continuity -- of setting -- between *Lara* and *The Giaour* (1813), the latter of these pieces being partly narrated from the abbey to which its anti-hero has retired. For this reason, the *Giaour* merits momentary consideration before *Lara* is more fully discussed -- though it contains only vague impressions of its abbey setting. Just as in *The Italian* Ann Radcliffe had concentrated her descriptive energies upon the protagonist Schedoni, contenting herself with sketching in the hallmarks of the abbey setting almost synecdochally, in terms inherited from Milton's "Il Penseroso" via Thomas Warton's "The Pleasures of Melancholy," so Byron in *The Giaour* confines himself to atmospheric hints whilst placing the figure of the occupant in the foreground of the setting:

His floating robe around him folding,

<sup>43</sup> November 17 1813 (Journal, November 14, 1813-April 19, 1814), *LJ* 3: 204-58; 209.

<sup>44</sup> See Grosskurth 197. The joint publication of *Lara* with Samuel Rogers's *Jacqueline* (a verse romance with pathetic heroine and medieval setting) demonstrates the extent to which its marketing was calculated to reflect popular, Gothic Revival-informed tastes; see Samuel Rogers, *Jacqueline* (1814), *The Poetical Works of Samuel Rogers* (London, 1892) 97-107. Elizabeth French Boyd and M. K. Joseph have commented upon the debt owed by Byron in *Lara* to the Gothic "romance"; see Boyd 154, and M. K. Joseph, *Byron the Poet* (London: Gollancz, 1964) 46.

Slow sweeps he through the column'd aisle;  
 With dread beheld, with gloom beholding,  
 The rites that sanctify the pile.  
 But when the anthem shakes the choir,  
 And kneels the monks, his steps retire;  
 By yonder lone and wavering torch  
 His aspect glares within the porch ...

See -- by the half-illuminated wall  
 His hood fly back, his dark hair fall ...

For he declines the convent oath,  
 And leaves those locks' unhallow'd growth,  
 But wears our garb in all beside;  
 And, not from piety but pride,  
 Gives wealth to walls that never heard  
 Of his one holy vow or word. (lines 883-904)

Although nothing in the tone of this description suggests the formerly burlesque character of Byron's self-identification with his abbey, this has its sombre echoes in the element of travesty suggested by the Giaour's adoption of monastic "garb" whilst he "declines the convent oath." The young Byron's lavish improvements to sections of Newstead are also perhaps hinted in the Giaour's generous material support of a foundation to which he claims no religious commitment. Meanwhile, and as would become still more apparent in *Lara*, the figure of the "Gothic occupant" is described in terms -- the predominance of dark colouring, the obscure aspect caused in this case both by a mysterious personal history and the folds of a monastic habit -- which share with the indicators of setting ("columned aisle ... half-illuminated wall ...") a relation to the Burkean sublime of shadows and secrecy.

Like other graphic and descriptive representations of Gothic abbeys in the period, that in *Lara* may be regarded as an icon offered for vicarious possession by purchasers and readers of the work. As in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) -- and in the



unpublished 1811 stanzas on Newstead -- the abbey is displayed by moonlight, its Gothic character signified here not only by enumerated, typical features, but also by a use of the word itself. Meanwhile, the occupying figure merely sketched into, or merely implied in, the Newstead poems of *Hours of Idleness* is invested, in the character of Lara, with increased stature and presence as an integral feature of the scene. His sublimely dark appearance and demeanour, identified by Mario Praz with a tradition of anti-heroic characterisations descending from the Satan of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (via Radcliffe's Schedoni), constitutes a kind of family resemblance between him and his actually inherited, ancestral surrounds.<sup>45</sup> The passage in which he walks his gallery following his return from abroad is the supreme example in Byron's works of the abbey interior description as informed by that other Miltonic tradition of melancholic scene-setting:

He wandering mused, and as the moonbeam shone,  
 Through the dim lattice or the floor of stone,  
 And the high fretted roof, and saints, that there  
 O'er Gothic windows knelt in pictured prayer,  
 Reflected in fantastic figures grew,  
 Like life, but not like mortal life to view:  
 His bristling locks of sable, brow of gloom,  
 And the wide waving of his shaken plume,  
 Glanced like a spectre's attributes, and gave  
 His aspect all that terror gives the grave. (lines 191-200)

While these lines enable the reader to recognise the familiar, iconic abbey setting, they are more importantly concerned with Lara's recognition of the Gothic character of "his solitary hall," the physical presence there (registered by the usual means of reference to the activity of walking), and his troubled self-identification with it. This idea provides a clue as to what it is that terrifies him there. Lara, it seems, is scared of

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<sup>45</sup> See Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. Angus Davidson (London: Oxford UP, 1970) especially 63-71.

his own shadow (“And his high shadow,” it is narrated in line 182, “shot along the wall” as he turns whilst pacing the hall), disturbed by this apparition of “himself” by the uncanny light of the moon. The description of the Gothic interior may be read as though through Lara’s eyes until his own, spectral-seeming image is suddenly interposed upon the scene evoked, in a shift which shows him to the reader just as he appears to be reflected back to himself -- or rather, in his ghostly quality, to haunt himself.

The reflection of the “inexplicably mix’d” (line 289), dark, contradictory character of Lara in the obscurity and intricacies of the Gothic decorations surrounding him appears to parallel the author’s melancholic self-identification with the image of the abbey, as well as with the real abbey at Newstead.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, in *Lara* Byron developed from the characterisations of the anti-heroes of *The Giaour* and *The Corsair* a persona that, like the image of the Gothic abbey, had itself become a product for consumption, even as Byron the author entered upon a newly, and reluctantly, commercially-minded phase of his career.<sup>47</sup>

It is to this period of Byron’s career that belong such enduringly iconic images of him as Richard Westall’s 1813 portrait of him (in profile, and in the melancholic head-on-hand pose), and such anecdotes of his tastes in dress as a habitual preference for black.<sup>48</sup> The Byronic persona was also being actively exploited by John Murray; in an

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<sup>46</sup> On the cathedral as symbolic of both the heights of transcendental aspiration and the depths of fallen human nature, see G. R. Thompson, “Romanticism and the Gothic Tradition,” Thompson, ed., 1-10; 4, and Prungnaud 276.

<sup>47</sup> See Ghislaine McDayter, “Conjuring Byron: Byromania, Literary Commodification and the Birth of Celebrity,” *Byromania: Portraits of the Artist in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Culture*, ed. Frances Wilson (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 43-62, esp. 48-49.

<sup>48</sup> See Doris Langley Moore, “Byronic Dress,” *Costume: The Journal of the Costume Society* 5 (1971): 1-13; 6-7. The contemporary context of Byron’s taste for black was, of course, the fashion for understated, monochrome men’s dress led by George Bryan “Beau” Brummell, on which, and its

1814 edition of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the above-quoted stanza in which the Childe's desertion of his ancestral home is narrated was illustrated with an engraving in which, although apparently leaving the abbey behind him, the saturnine figure of the Childe is framed by and thus inextricably connected with his archetypically Gothic-architectural background.<sup>49</sup>

Such was the image that the British reading public had of Byron when, re-enacting the departure of the Childe that had itself represented his first, temporary move away from Newstead, he took what would be a permanent leave of his abbey and his country following the breakdown of his marriage in 1816. At this stage of his career, it is possible to view Byron's sense of the abbey as a marketable asset in terms similar to those of critics who have discussed Byron's ambivalent attitudes to public identifications of him with such extreme variations upon the Gothic anti-hero type as the vampire (the major instance of this being the attribution to him of John Polidori's 1819 story "The Vampyre").<sup>50</sup> Newstead, like the other trappings of his fictional, "Byronic" heroes, was something of which Byron was making his most concerted efforts to rid himself at this period, conceding the necessity of selling it just as he had conceded the need to accept payment for *Lara*.

The emotional and psychological effects of the sale of Newstead to Thomas Wildman in 1817, as well as of the marital separation the previous year account for the tones of

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convergence with the conventional imagery of melancholy, see Hollander 375-76, where it is also notably commented: "The isolating quality of the new black male clothing ... made subtle mockery of its sacerdotal and monastic use" (376). The relationship between dandyism and the Gothic is further discussed, with reference to Byron and Brummell, in Catherine Spooner, *Fashioning Gothic Bodies* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004) 96; 103.

<sup>49</sup> Reproduced in *Works* 2, facing page 10.

<sup>50</sup> See McDayter 51-55.

increased cynicism and melancholy in Byron's writings between 1816 and about 1821. In these, Gothic architectural settings become the subjects of such dark, pejorative representations as have earlier been mentioned. In such pieces as *Manfred* (1817) and *Werner* (1823) however, it must be noted that the "castellar" Gothic -- associated with political might and institutional oppression rather than with imaginative inspiration or liberty -- predominates over the cathedral Gothic of buildings such as Newstead. Whilst it contains such individual features as stained glass, and while McGann has indicated its parallels with Newstead in Byron's imagination, Werner's residence is a fortress, not an abbey.

The development of this newly-charged architectural aesthetic may be traced in the continuation of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Byron's aesthetic detachment from the Gothic seems the most complete in Canto IV (1817-18), dominated as this is by the classical and neoclassical architecture of Rome. In this canto and in Canto III (1816), however, may be observed the increased engagement with the picturesque of landscape through which Byron, like Wordsworth before him, might be considered to have developed the greater appreciation of the architectural Gothic as an intricate and varied manner that emerges from the description of "Norman Abbey" in *Don Juan*. Certainly a picturesque intricacy and variety are the hallmarks of the scenes viewed by Harold in the Rhineland, the "blending of all beauties" conveyed through the breathless syntax of III stanza 46:

Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,  
 And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells  
 From gray but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells. (lines 411-14).

The reappearance of these castles in III.61 is in still clearer accordance with the picturesque, the principle of contrast being at work as “Harold” views “The forest’s growth, and Gothic walls between” (line 584). Any implied admiration of this feature of the scene is, however, undercut by the succeeding lines’ reflections upon the supremacy of Nature’s grandeur to the works of man, as Byron invokes the picturesque commonplace of the resemblance of rocks to turrets, “In mockery of man’s art” (line 586), before allowing the ruins to “recede” before “the Alps, / The palaces of nature ...” (lines 590-91). He also has more immediate reasons for dismissing the prospect of the castles, however pleasant this view may appear from a distance. As McGann has explained, highlighting the transition this passage provides from the preceding stanzas about the final defeat of Napoleon: “the Rhine castles exist in the new landscape of quiescent fecundity, but they represent in themselves the same kind of dangerous *hubris* which possessed Napoleon.”<sup>51</sup>

While it is not the present purpose to pursue the broader, much-debated question of Byron’s possible absorption (or rejection) of Wordsworth’s influence in *Childe Harold* III, it may be noted that, in this period, both expressed their concerns regarding Napoleon and the tyrannical character of his power in terms of imposing feudal or martial architecture.<sup>52</sup> As has already been discussed, the isolated, fortified tower represented useless, individualistic (and Napoleonic) despotism in *The White*

<sup>51</sup> Jerome J. McGann, *Fiery Dust: Byron’s Poetic Development* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968) 308.

<sup>52</sup> For discussion of Byron and Wordsworth with regard to the stanzas on Nature in *Childe Harold* III, see ch.2 in M.G. Cooke, *The Blind Man Traces the Circle: On the Patterns and Philosophy of Byron’s Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1969) 38-60, as well as in Joseph 81, McGann 32-33, and Blackstone 188-98. The imposing castle ruin as “related to the brooding anti-heroes in some of Byron’s poems, and to the literary image of Byron himself” -- as well as to Napoleonic “proud separateness” -- is discussed, also with reference to Wordsworth, in Geoffrey Ward, “Byron’s Artistry in Deep and Layered Space,” *Byron and the Limits of Fiction*, ed. Bernard Beatty and Vincent Newey (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1988) 191-225; 194-98.

*Doe of Rylstone* (1815), as Theresa M. Kelley has read this.<sup>53</sup> It is thus interesting to note that Byron both owned, and apparently read, a copy of the first, 1815 edition of *The White Doe* -- another text which, like *Lara*, and like Byron's projected edition of juvenilia, traded upon the Gothic abbey image, and which also caused its author anxieties regarding the public representation of his literary identity.<sup>54</sup> Byron's possession and perusal of this text demonstrates his participation in, and awareness of the trade in the Gothic abbey image as a product of picturesque aesthetics. However, and despite his period pursuing studies in Armenian over "daily expeditions" during late 1816 to the monastery of the Mechitarists at San Lazzaro, outside Venice, the latter two cantos of *Childe Harold* show Byron still not ready to follow Wordsworth in the presentation of the Gothic abbey building as a picturesque emblem of alternatives to the "sublime" states of self-absorbed grief or self-isolating tyranny.

This continued hesitation to commit to a Gothic architectural aesthetic is further indicated in Canto IV of *Childe Harold*. Here, no Gothic abbey, but the basilica of St Peter affords Byron's pilgrim an experience otherwise in most respects comparable to eighteenth-century accounts of entry into Gothic cathedral interiors: "Thou seest not all; but piecemeal thou must break, / To separate contemplation, the great whole" (IV. lines 1405-06). This instance of the neoclassical serves to demonstrate Byron's capacity for an appreciation similar to that demanded by the architectural Gothic in his period, whilst remaining true to his Augustan sense of aesthetic decorum.

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<sup>53</sup> See Kelley 150.

<sup>54</sup> *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815) is listed as lot 362 in the 1816 sale catalogue; see *Prose* 244; see also "Versicles," *Poetical Works* 4: 114. On some "surprising affinities" between Byron's *Tales* and Wordsworth's *White Doe* (in which architecture does not, however, figure) see Peter J. Manning, "Tales and Politics: *The Corsair*, *Lara*, and *The White Doe of Rylstone*," *Byron: Poetry and Politics*, ed. E.A. Sturzl and James Hogg (Saltzburger Studien zur Anglistik und Amerikanistik 13, 1981) 204-30.

Elsewhere in Canto IV, classical allusions and engagements honour the traditions of ideal retirement, taking in their beginnings in antiquity, and their eighteenth-century expression through ruin-meditation, in which the Romantic idea of the Gothic abbey had its origins.

Paramount among these is the invocation of Egeria, among the most important inspirational figures to be associated with grottoes in the classical tradition. The cave setting of the Elysian spring is described in aptly picturesque terms, the “fern, flowers, and ivy” round it being “Fantastically tangled” (IV.116-117, lines 1044-45). An extensive note by John Cam Hobhouse, in which the bases for Juvenal’s anecdote of Egeria and Numa are examined, emphasises, even while Byron’s text most overtly associates Egeria with the inspiration of love, the creative spirit of not only the imagined grotto but also its locality. As Hobhouse explains, this was the site of many springs and grottoes frequented by the Muses, and presided over by the learned nymph Egeria.<sup>55</sup>

Discussing *Manfred* (1817), another work of Byron’s belonging to this epoch of his career, Philip W. Martin has suggested that writing this drama, with its “Gothic extravagance” (which included explicitly “Gothic” scenery), led Byron “to a point at which [he] could caricature the self he loved to indulge,” thus enabling him through its content, if not its mode, to develop the sensibility from which *Don Juan* emerged.<sup>56</sup> It might also be observed with regard to *Manfred* that, while no abbey forms any part of its settings, it is an Abbot who represents the alternative to the “castellar” mentality

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<sup>55</sup> *Poetical Works* 2: 254-56.

<sup>56</sup> Philip W. Martin, *Byron: A Poet Before his Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) 113; 134; *Manfred*, *Poetical Works* 4: 51-102.

to the titular anti-hero. As will be considered here, the fragmentary, contradictory elements of the “Byronic” character that got its ultimate representation in the title character of *Manfred* would no longer hold together in the works of Byron’s maturity, and least of all in the “English Cantos” of *Don Juan*, in which a multiplicity of characters took on “Byronic” traits.

What I should like to suggest, before discussing Byron’s representation of “Norman Abbey” as the setting for these characters, is that a similar process took place where Byron’s architectural representations were concerned. It is most clearly traceable in Canto V of *Don Juan* (1821), which features the prolonged, reflective digression in which Byron as narrator expresses his attitudes and responses to architecture in terms of contemporary aesthetics.<sup>57</sup> While the occasion for this is ostensibly Juan’s experience of the Turkish Sultan’s palace, the central, pivotal function of Gothic abbey (or at least abbey-style) architecture in Byron’s imaginative development of such ideas becomes clear when it is considered how far accounts of William Beckford’s Fonthill Abbey seem to have influenced this set-piece description, rather as the building itself apparently informed the description of the palace of Eblis, a monumental Oriental edifice in Beckford’s own *Vathek*.<sup>58</sup>

Beckford was himself a figure at the centre of just such a Gothic-Oriental confluence as Byron’s Lara, and most obviously and superficially like Byron in that he combined possession of a Gothic abbey with production of Orientalist fictions. Like a real-life Lara haunted by what Leask has recognised as the “*unheimlich*” atmosphere of the seat of an authority vested in ownership of lands and people, the Caribbean

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<sup>57</sup> *Don Juan* (1819-23), *Poetical Works* 5.

<sup>58</sup> See William Beckford, *Vathek* (1786), ed. Roger Lonsdale (London: Oxford UP, 1970), esp. 107-09.



plantation-owning Beckford would be plagued with financial and physical discomforts consequent to his own hubristic enterprise at Fonthill.<sup>59</sup> His financial failure as the proprietor of a Gothic “abbey” is fascinatingly linked with Byron’s similar experience with an original abbey in that Major Thomas Wildman, Byron’s schoolmate and the purchaser of Newstead, was the son of the Thomas Wildman who, with his two brothers, is alleged by Boyd Alexander to have “fleeced” Beckford in his stewardship of the Jamaican estates.<sup>60</sup>

Both Byron and Beckford also developed their awareness of the Gothic style through travels in countries where both Eastern and Western architectural styles and aesthetics could be observed, or compared, sometimes within the same structures -- Byron’s being in Turkey, and Beckford’s in Portugal. They are most strikingly linked, however, as figures in whom the contemporary conflict between aristocratic and commercial identities was most spectacularly dramatised in their involvements with abbey buildings that both affirmed and undermined their self-images -- and which, for both, found representation in terms both of the Gothic and Oriental characters, with the ornate intricacy and variety of decorative style these shared.

To return to Canto V of *Don Juan*, the description of the Sultan’s palace -- itself a satire upon contemporary evocations of the picturesque in architecture -- is preceded

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<sup>59</sup> See ch.1 in Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992) 13-67. Lara’s mysterious imperialist guilt, as Leask reads this, compares interestingly with Byron’s aristocratic occupation of a monastery whose former inhabitants might also be regarded as “Other.” For Beckford’s sense of persecution at Fonthill, and his subscription to the “Saracenic” theory of the architectural Gothic’s origin, see his 6 February 1811 letter to Gregorio Fellipe Franchi, *Life at Fonthill 1807-1822 With Interludes in Paris and London From the Correspondence of William Beckford*, ed. Boyd Alexander (London: Hart-Davis, 1957) 97.

<sup>60</sup> See Boyd Alexander, *England’s Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford* (London: Centaur, 1962) 210-11.

by Byron's most explicit poetic statements on picturesque description, in which he imagines a "Nature" who, "tortured twenty thousand ways, / Resigns herself with exemplary patience / To guide-books, rhymes, tours, sketches, illustrations" (*Don Juan* Canto V, Stanza 52, lines 414-16). These musings develop into a more focused discussion of architecture in particular, from which emerges Byron's continuing preference for the natural world, over any building, as a site for sublime contemplation, and his continuing ambivalence toward individual possession of spaces originally intended for official, or especially religious use (V.57 lines 450-55). As he explains, "I pass my evenings in long galleries solely, / And that's the reason I'm so melancholy" (V.58 lines 463-64).

Compressing what is effectively the condition dramatised in the entire unfolding of such "Tales" as *The Giaour* and *Lara* succinctly into one of the jaunty couplets so characteristic of the register of *Don Juan*, Byron as neatly makes clear the actual separateness of himself and the gloomy galleries, though, as his descriptions of Newstead will show, the detachment of identity from setting is not to mean an absolute dissociation. Meanwhile, he develops the ideas regarding such vainglorious architectural projects as had become fashionable in his time with an extended allusion to the tower of Babel, a monument to the "masonic folly / Of those ... who give themselves to architecture wholly ..." (V.63 lines 498-500).

Led into the presence of Gulbeyaz, Juan passes through "a gigantic portal" (V.85 lines 676) and a "giant door ... carved in curious guise" (V.86 line 682) and guarded by dwarves, just as Beckford's thirty-two-foot door at Fonthill had been attended by a dwarf. Entry to the "huge hall" to which the door leads is described as being "as

though they came upon a shrine” (V.85 line 689). A further room displays another typical characteristic of the Gothic interior (as also typically mentioned in cathedral descriptions in particular), Byron describing it in terms reminiscent of Addison’s disapproval of the intricacy of Gothic: “A rich confusion form’d a disarray / In such sort, that the eye along it cast / Could hardly carry anything away ...” (V.93 lines 739-41).

It is significant that an *Oriental* palace, rather than a Gothic abbey such as Fonthill was intended to imitate, is chosen here to illustrate the general views expressed in Byron’s digression on architecture. While he goes on to implicate “the more chasten’d domes of Western kings” (V.94 line 747), it is the Oriental which prevails in these passages as the exemplar of “gothic” excess -- the associations of tyranny with a Turkish setting being also indicative of Byron’s deepening involvement with the cause of Greek independence from Turkey. The tone of the later description of Norman Abbey, whilst still imbued with Byron’s refusal to take any aspect of his story or arguments too seriously, is entirely different -- as here, taste does not seem to be in question, the Gothic being reserved for a largely (if not entirely) different treatment.

The nature of the shift in Byron’s attitude to Gothic abbey architecture may be expressed in terms of a divergence between his senses of its functions, and of its style -- which can in its turn be related to his by now non-proprietary relationship to Newstead. Beckford’s Fonthill may have been in the Gothic manner, but, by the time Byron came to write Canto V of *Don Juan*, he had come to associate the overweening arrogance of such projects with the monolithic “Babel” forms of such constructions.

Just as castellar “Gothic” architecture provides the backdrops to such dramas of tragic individualism as *Manfred* and *Werner*, and just as the image of the tower was associated with Napoleon in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* III, so the idea of Fonthill, not in fact an abbey, but a fortress founded upon a form of tyranny, and upon self-defeating self-absorption, was transposed in *Don Juan* to a Turkish context.

The specifically Gothic character of Fonthill, however, remained for Byron untainted by such associations, having instead become associated for him with the picturesque sensibility that informs the representation of Norman Abbey. As already noted, one of the characteristics of the Islamic arabesque was an independence of ornament from form -- an aspect that might be regarded as characterising the style of Newstead as it is figured, as Norman Abbey, in *Don Juan* XIII-XVII (1823), and that would be remarked by Nikolaus Pevsner in 1951.<sup>61</sup> While aspects of the abbey’s form and function remain associated with the authoritative institutions of the medieval Church and the contemporary State, the architectural Gothic style with which it is embellished emerges through the final cantos of *Don Juan* as the aesthetic most expressive of the spirit of Byron’s matured poetic art.

Byron’s physical absence from the actual precincts of Newstead, like his emphasis upon his distinctness from the “Gothic” setting in the couplet diagnosing length of time spent in “long galleries” as the cause of his melancholy, would thus not mean the end of the abbey’s functioning within his authorial self-fashioning and self-expression. No longer enclosed by its structure, as Childe Harold was framed by his

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<sup>61</sup> Mellor 193-94; of the use of a side portal, apparently (but not) concealing an aisle, in the church front at Newstead Abbey, Nikolaus Pevsner has remarked: “This remarkable instance of preference given to aesthetic considerations is worth remembering.” Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Nottinghamshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951) 116.

Gothic threshold in the 1814 engraving, Byron remained essentially bound up in its style -- as indeed, in Venice, he had been surrounded by examples of both the northern Gothic, and the true Islamic arabesque, as well as of manners that blended both these, as at the Palazzo Ducale that provided him with the main setting for *Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice* (1821).<sup>62</sup>

While it is tempting to ascribe Byron's renewed engagement with the architectural Gothic in his works to his time in Venice, however, there is no evidence in any of his writings (including letters) of such appreciation; as Tony Tanner has remarked, "Byron's Venice is generalized, conceptualised and imagined from an airy distance," his descriptions of it being "topographically non-specific, vague, allusive as he characteristically is."<sup>63</sup> The evocation of Newstead in Cantos XIII-XVII of *Don Juan* could as easily have been the pure product of memory, the "English Cantos" having been compared, as a memorial exercise, with Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (a work famously also dominated by Gothic architectural imagery).<sup>64</sup> However it occurred to him, though, the image of the Gothic abbey expressed the sense of self that Byron had acquired by 1823. As the "sublime," forbidding Byronic hero, possessed of the painfully fractured, agonised individual ego reflected in the profuse, crowded content of *Childe Harold*, would be reinvented as the generous,

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<sup>62</sup> On the Palazzo Ducale as "the supreme expression of the Gothic style in the city," combining the classical and Gothic with "a Moorish predilection for shimmering inlaid surfaces and delicately carved traceries," see Deborah Howard, *the Architectural History of Venice* (1980; New Haven: Yale UP, 2002) 90.

<sup>63</sup> Tony Tanner, *Venice Desired* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992) 26; 28. On the general appeal to the Romantic (and Gothic) imaginations of Venice as a city of intricate construction, and politics, as well as intricate Gothic and arabesque architectural styles, see also Denis Cosgrove, "The Myth and the Stones of Venice: An Historical Geography of a Symbolic Landscape," *Journal of Historical Geography* 8 (1982): 145-69, and Victor Sage, "Black Venice: Conspiracy and Narrative Masquerade in Schiller, Zschokke, Lewis and Hoffmann," *Gothic Studies* 8 (2006): 52-72, esp.52-55.

<sup>64</sup> See Peter W. Graham, *Don Juan in Regency England* (Charlottesville: University P of Virginia, 1990) 181.

contradiction-embracing, Romantic ironist narrator of *Don Juan*, so the towering, solid, mountain fortresses of Manfred and Werner, and the Eblis-like domain of the Sultan, would be abandoned for the joyous, “licentious profusion” of the abbey Gothic style.

It has been remarked that, in the detailed rendering of Newstead as Norman Abbey, Byron’s writing career came full circle, returning to the central architectural image of *Hours of Idleness*.<sup>65</sup> There is also a considerable volume of criticism of the Norman Abbey scenes of *Don Juan* as Byron’s supreme expression of his lifelong Whig aristocratic principles, and as revealing the particular social, political and economic tensions of his former position as the inheritor of property.<sup>66</sup> Only Kelsall makes a specific consideration of Norman/Newstead as not only an abbey, but a Gothic building whose structure and stylistic character, in its gradually-accumulated, irregular character is “the sign of an adherence to the primitive values of the free Constitution.”<sup>67</sup> Joseph’s reading, however, provides what remain the strongest (if undeveloped) hints of the importance of the stylistic character of “Norman Abbey” -- whilst confirming a connection between Byron’s response to St Peter’s and his matured appreciation of Newstead’s Gothic:

Newstead ... appears in a very real and substantial setting, with a history and an identity of its own, and despite the mocking treatment of the Black Friar, the Gothic element is given full value. As with the description of Saint Peter’s in *Childe Harold IV*, it is the architectural sublime, created by man, which displaces the natural....<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> See Blackstone 337, 340.

<sup>66</sup> As well as Charlesworth, Kelsall, and Michael Robertson, see Joseph 290; Christensen 330-31, and Michael Macowski, “Revisiting Gothic Primogeniture: The Kinship Metaphor in the Age of Byron,” *Gothic Studies* 3 (2001): 32-44.

<sup>67</sup> Kelsall 181; see also 182.

<sup>68</sup> Joseph 319.

The detailed evocation of Norman Abbey draws upon every way of seeing the architectural Gothic to have become current by the early nineteenth century, beginning in Canto XIII stanza 55, as Lord Henry and Lady Adeline Amundeville go down to their seat in the country:

To Norman Abbey whirl'd the noble pair, --  
 An old, old monastery once, and now  
 Still older mansion, -- of a rich and rare  
 Mix'd Gothic, such as artists all allow  
 Few specimens yet left us can compare  
 Withal: it lies perhaps a little low,  
 Because the monks preferr'd a hill behind,  
 To shelter their devotion from the wind.

In this stanza is telescoped and pastiched a typical picturesque description of an abbey building, in which its situation is among the first aspects enumerated -- as well as its style of "Mix'd Gothic," which here is figured in highly appreciative terms (these being partly intended to flatter the tastes of a fashionable or aspirant readership). In its continuation, the description comprises all the usual factors; the abbey is low-lying (XIII.55 lines 438-40) in a wooded valley (XIII.56 lines 441-42) complete with river and lake (XIII.57-58). Following what Beatty has identified as some hints of the Ossianic primitive, the ruin-meditation tradition dominates next, as the original religious purpose of the abbey, the passage and ravages of time, and the appearance of its features in ruin all come into focus in stanzas 59-62, in which the abbey church is described as "A glorious remnant of the Gothic pile" (XIII.59 line 465) with a "venerable arch" (line 472).<sup>69</sup> This focus is sustained with mentions of the decorative niches, as well as, in stanza 57, the evocation of what remains the abbey's most iconic feature:

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<sup>69</sup> See Bernard Beatty, "The Force of 'Celtic Memories' in Byron's Thought," Carruthers and Rawes, eds., 103-16; 109-10.

A mighty window, hollow in the centre,  
 Shorn of its glass of thousand colourings,  
 Through which the deepen'd glories once could enter,  
 Streaming from off the sun like seraph's wings,  
 Now yawns all desolate: now loud, now fainter,  
 The gale sweeps through its fretwork, and oft sings  
 The owl his anthem, where the silenced quire  
 Lie with their hallelujahs quench'd like fire.

While, as in the Newstead poems of Byron's juvenilia, the ruined state of the abbey is communicated most clearly here, this stanza also highlights, as those do not, the intricate character of its surviving ornamentation -- most obviously in the allusion to "fretwork." Another indication by which Byron's appreciation of the architectural Gothic may be gauged is provided in the simile of the seraph's wings, which subtly recalls, whilst contrasting with, the irreverent comparison of the Archangel Michael's colouring to that of a stained-glass, abbey window. Most important, however, at this point in the description of Norman Abbey is the Gothic building's characterisation as a locus of creative inspiration and productivity -- the "musical" sound of wind through the "huge arch" being later to find its human analogue in Adeline Amundeville's harp-accompanied ballad of the Black Friar in Canto XVI. As Beatty has expressed it, "The old house sings like an Aeolian harp in harmony with the elements ... it is intensely receptive to its surrounding landscape."<sup>70</sup>

If no longer lord of Newstead, Byron in creating Norman Abbey is claiming the figurative, authorial possession claimed by other, non-abbey-owning, Romantic-period authors of abbey descriptions. This in particular would seem to explain the imaginative freedom with which he evokes this fictional abbey; it is possible to

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<sup>70</sup> Beatty, "The Force of Celtic Memories" 109.



conjecture that, with the sale of Newstead accomplished, and never to see it or to set foot in it again, Byron had exchanged his actual, legal ownership of the property for such “authority” over it as Scott, for example, had exercised at Melrose. Although no longer physically situated within Newstead, with the more purely imaginative engagement with it that informed the Norman Abbey cantos of *Don Juan*, Byron found himself capable of a far more concrete, detailed rendering of its atmosphere and fabric than had been achieved in previous treatments. Having been realised as a financial asset, Newstead Abbey had thus also become “material” for artistic creativity, upon which Byron found himself likewise able to capitalise.

As the survey of Norman Abbey continues, Byron’s full awareness of the picturesque characterisation of the Gothic as diverse, intricate and varied in its ornamentation emerges through his description of the fountain. Here are most explicitly emphasised the contrasts and discrepancies to be observed in the Gothic at its most grotesque (or *grottesque*, where this is understood in its sense of pertaining to the intricate, organic designs discovered in excavations at Pompeii) and the Gothic achievement of harmony in the whole structure even where the character of decoration seems irregular:

Amidst the court a Gothic fountain play’d,  
 Symmetrical, but deck’d with carvings quaint --  
 Strange faces, like to men in masquerade,  
 And here perhaps a monster, there a saint ... (XIII.65 lines 513-16).

The abbey itself is described in terms which, as well as continuing this sense of the architectural Gothic as a manifestation of picturesque intricacy and variety, also

encapsulate the nature of Byron's artistic achievement in his Italianate, burlesque register:

Huge halls, long galleries, spacious chambers, join'd  
 By no quite lawful marriage of the arts,  
 Might shock a connoisseur; but when combin'd,  
 Form'd a whole which, irregular in parts,  
 Yet left a grand impression on the mind,  
 At least of those whose eyes are in their hearts. (XIII.67 lines 529-34)<sup>71</sup>

Such a characterisation of the abbey compares with the manner of the whole poem's evocation of life and society, as Graham has read this. He refers to *Don Juan* both as "a satire in the etymological sense -- a generic stew or hotch-potch combining and assimilating diverse elements," and, recalling Mellor and Conrad's readings, as an instance of Friedrich Schlegel's concept of the "poetical arabesque."<sup>72</sup> As Graham explains: "In the visual form called arabesque, the apparent freedom of the artist to be capricious ... exists beside coherence of design and pleasing proportions."<sup>73</sup> That the arabesque as expressed in the exuberant variety of the Gothic decorative style is to provide *Don Juan* with its prevailing aesthetic has, indeed, been hinted in the opening canto, with its description of the risqué illuminations, clearly instances of the Gothic as "licentious profusion," in Donna Inez's missal. Also indicated in the final two lines of Canto I, stanza 46, in which this appears is the challenge to be expected from

<sup>71</sup> Compare Horace Walpole's remark that "One must have taste to be sensible of the beauties in Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic." Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 4 vols. (Twickenham, 1765-71) 1: 115.

<sup>72</sup> Graham 6. Regarding uses by Keats's early critics of the word "arabesque" in describing the rambling, crowded character of *Endymion*, Martin Aske also mentions late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century definitions of it as relating to the Gothic in art and architecture when at its most delicate and highly-wrought. See Martin Aske, *Keats and Hellenism: An Essay* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 158 n.44. For Schlegel's original remarks on the arabesque, which he describes as "the oldest and most original form of human imagination," and identified with "artfully ordered confusion ... charming symmetry of contradictions ... [and] wonderfully perennial alternation of enthusiasm and irony which lives even in the smallest parts of the whole," see Friedrich Schlegel, "Dialogue on Poetry," *Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms*, trans. and ed. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1968) 51-117; 86.

<sup>73</sup> Graham 7-8.

conventional morality to the world-view expressed in the aesthetic of this book, which, also significantly, has been produced in the interests of spiritual enlightenment:

The Missal too (it was the family Missal)  
 Was ornamented in a sort of way  
 Which ancient mass-books often are, and this all  
 Kinds of grotesques illuminated; and how they,  
 Who saw those figures on the margin kiss all,  
 Could turn their optics to the text and pray,  
 Is more than I know -- But Don Juan's mother  
 Kept this herself, and gave her son another.

It is in the "Black Friar" episode that brings the poem to its untimely close -- and which contains passages already noted by Boyd as direct echoes of *Lara* -- that Byron explores by a process of doubling and division which itself shares in the arabesque "intricacy and variety" of the Gothic as picturesque, the nature of the creative identity (or identities) conditioned by the Gothic character of the abbey.<sup>74</sup> As has been frequently discussed, these are personified in the characters of the women encountered by Juan at "Norman," this multiplicity of figures taking on the contrasting traits that Byron had previously tended to combine in the "mixed," contradictory character of a Giaour or Lara. Of these characters, Aurora Raby has been most discussed as representing in herself the convergence of all the traits of the "Byronic hero."<sup>75</sup> Beatty posits the fictional construct of Norman Abbey as part of his "supporting evidence" for regarding Aurora as a Byronic "hero," but with no such reference to its character as Gothic as might still further support its relation to a "mixed" temperament. Beatty in particular has taken an especial interest in Aurora's

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<sup>74</sup> See Boyd 154-55.

<sup>75</sup> See Charles J. Clancy, "Aurora Raby in *Don Juan*: A Byronic Heroine," *Keats-Shelley Journal* 28 (1979): 28-34, and Bernard Beatty, "Fiction's Limit and Eden's Door," Beatty and Newey, eds., 1-38, esp. 30-31.

Catholicism as providing her, along with the “Black Friar,” with a superior claim to occupy the abbey.<sup>76</sup>

Where creative identity is concerned, however, it is Adeline who emerges as a Gothic-inspired author in the manner of one of Radcliffe’s heroines (especially her namesake in *The Romance of the Forest*), stimulated to artistic expression and production by her surrounds, Graham having noted how she exemplifies the “mobility” described by Byron himself in the poem as the essence of creative genius.<sup>77</sup> Her creative mastery is signified in her actual authority within a Gothic abbey, while the potential “guilt” of this is mitigated by her subjection to her husband -- who dismisses her as only “half a poetess” (in XVI.39 line 306). As a version of Byron, Adeline could be said to represent him before he came into either his inheritance of Newstead or his matured, male sexuality -- both which aspects of his adult self, as Kelsall has suggested, are embodied by the Whig grandee Lord Henry (who as yet another version of Byron could also represent the “other half” of the “poetess” of whom he jokingly imagines Adeline as forming half).<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile, although it does have special functions relating to creativity and identity, which place it in common with other Romantic representations of the medieval abbey, Norman Abbey does not escape the comparison with Babel applied in the case of the Turkish tyrant’s palace. Prior to the main descriptive passages, it is introduced (in XIII.50 line 396) as “The Gothic Babel of a thousand years.” Following Juan’s first intimation of the less creditable aspects of the Amundevilles’ occupation of the abbey,

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<sup>76</sup> See Beatty, “The Force of Celtic Memories” 109-10, and also Graham 172.

<sup>77</sup> Graham 193.

<sup>78</sup> See Kelsall 181.

this allusion is developed in an explicitly Gothic Revival context which shows that Byron had not forgotten his pejorative senses of “Gothic,” as one of Lord Henry’s morning callers is named as “a modern Goth, I mean a Gothic / Bricklayer of Babel, call’d an architect,” with plans “to erect / New buildings of correctest conformation, / And throw down old, which he call’d *restoration*” (XVI.58 line 505-12).

The story of Babel in Genesis (narrated in Canto V) is one of lost wholeness and unity. The “tower, whose top may reach unto heaven” is constructed by people “of one language, and of one speech” in an attempt “to make [them] a name” (11:4;2). God punishes them for their presumption by “[confounding]” their common speech, as a result of which they are dispersed and thus weakened. On one level, this story can almost serve as an allegory for Coleridge’s theory of the secondary imagination that, for him, drove literary creativity, the disintegration of component elements necessary to their reconstitution in a new, artistic whole.<sup>79</sup> For Byron, however, it shows a consciousness of the vainglorious motives behind monumental constructions (whether within the monastic tradition, or Regency fashions for “improvements”) -- as well as a resignation to a world of irreconcilable difference that was to find such a good-natured outlet in *Don Juan*. The “Mix’d Gothic” of Norman Abbey mirrors the society that it encloses not least in the fact that it is intricate by design. Whilst emblematic of Byron’s creative pleasure, it also provided the best aesthetic through which he could honestly portray his *milieu* in England.

It is, therefore, not coincidental that the setting of John Hookham Frere’s *Whistlecraft* (1818), which provided Byron with a new metre for burlesquing purposes, is an

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<sup>79</sup> See Coleridge, *Works* 7: I.304.

imagined medieval realm in the Rabelaisian tradition, complete with abbey inhabited by buffoonish monks.<sup>80</sup> For Byron, the Gothic always remained a possible mode for suggesting the absurd, as it did for Peacock -- which is not to suggest that he considered it to be in any way absurd of itself.<sup>81</sup> Rather, in all its “licentious profusion,” it provided him with the perfect aesthetic through which to articulate his senses of life and society, with all their (many deliberate) confusions and contradictions, as he had experienced these within the upper echelons of the English Establishment.

Accordingly, Juan’s first reenactment of Lara’s experience in the long gallery is accompanied by a similarly detailed allusion to the characteristic features of a Gothic abbey interior to that which accompanied the narrative of the earlier poem. The vital difference is in the *ottava rima* verse form that itself encapsulates the variety, detail and vigour of the carvings and stained glass, the heroic couplets of *Lara* having contributed to the effect of that poem as an expression of vexed aristocratic occupation of a monumental, gloomy hall. In the “Gothic chamber,” where Juan is “enclosed” (and thus framed in his setting, as appropriate to a version of the Byronic hero) finds himself unable to sleep (XVI.15), he leans from a window-niche, again being “framed,” “Where many a Gothic ornament remain’d, / In chisell’d stone and painted glass ...” (XVI.16 lines 126-27).

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<sup>80</sup> John Hookham Frere, *Whistlecraft* (1818; Oxford: Woodstock, 1992).

<sup>81</sup> Boyd notes the affinity between Byron’s satire and that exemplified in Peacock’s *Melincourt* (1817) which itself features a convivial gathering at the Gothic abbey of “Redrose,” presided over by “Sylvan Forester,” owner of another “skull-cup”. See esp. ch. 4 of Thomas Love Peacock, *Melincourt*, in *The Novels of Thomas Love Peacock*, ed. David Garnett (London: Hart-Davis, 1948) 91-343; 116-21.

A characteristically Gothic shadow is likewise cast over Juan's second encounter with the "Black Friar," as his attempt to touch what he believes to be a ghost brings him into contact only with "the wall, / On which the moonbeams fell in silvery showers, / Chequer'd with all the tracery of the hall ..." (XVI.120 lines 1002-04). Lastly of all, in the unfinished seventeenth canto -- and apart from the haunted expressions of Juan and Fitz-Fulke at breakfast -- the image the reader is left with is that of "The light, that through the Gothic windows shone" (XVII.14 line109). The allusion to the style of the windows seals the character of this episode, and the entirety of *Don Juan* as it stands, as a creation of Gothic intricacy, variety and irregularity contained within the fixed, recognisable structure of epic.

From this culmination of *Don Juan*, it can seem as though the Gothic as burlesque had triumphed over the Gothic as picturesque in Byron's sensibilities at the close of his career. To reach this conclusion, however, is to fail to take *The Island* (1823) into account. The closeness of the composition of this work to that of *Don Juan* has been remarked by Beatty, while Joseph has noted that it contains "one of the finest effects of Byron's Gothic imagination" in the description of the cave in which Neuha the island maiden provides sanctuary to the young Scottish *Bounty* mutineer, Torquil, as "a kind of sunken and submarine cathedral."<sup>82</sup> Gothic architectural features are invoked in minute, stylistically aware detail specifically for contrast with the purely natural substance and "design" of the site of primal innocence:

Wide was it and high,  
 And show'd a self-born Gothic canopy;  
 The arch uprear'd by nature's architect,  
 The architrave some earthquake might erect;  
 The buttress from some mountain's bosom hurl'd,  
 When the Poles crash'd, and water was the world ...

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<sup>82</sup> Beatty, "Fiction's Limit" 1-38; 21; Joseph 60.

The fretted pinnacle, the aisle, the nave,  
 Were there, all scoop'd by Darkness from her cave.  
 There, with a little tinge of phantasy,  
 Fantastic faces mop'd and mow'd on high,  
 And there a mitre or a shrine would fix  
 The eye upon its seeming crucifix.  
 Thus Nature play'd upon the stalactites,  
 And built herself a chapel of the seas.<sup>83</sup>

This most immediately and irresistibly recalls Keats's account of Fingal's Cave, addressed to his brother Tom following an 1818 excursion there, in which he remarks how "the roof is arched somewhat gothic wise," and opines that "for solemnity and grandeur it far surpasses the finest Cathedral!"<sup>84</sup> The passage is most important, however, in that it exemplifies Byron's positive engagement with the Gothic -- and more, I should argue, than it signifies any dismissive or denigrating attitude. While the natural character of the space is certainly privileged, this is effected through an appeal to the reader's sense of the Gothic abbey as a comparable space.

This sense, at the time of Byron's composition of the poem, would have been informed by established literary and aesthetic representations of the Gothic-styled religious building as a place of imaginative, and possibly creative inspiration, themselves descended from representations of the irregularly-structured classical grotto as locus of contemplation and creativity.<sup>85</sup> In keeping with the early nineteenth century commonplace of Gothic-architectural comparison in geological descriptions; Byron himself had already hinted at Gothic architectural features in *Manfred*, in

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<sup>83</sup> *Poetical Works* 7: 26-74; lines 145-60. Trilling notes that, in Islamic arabesque design, the use of manifold small, intricately-decorated niches, known as *muqarnas*, within larger alcoves was "also referred to as stalactite decoration." Trilling 69.

<sup>84</sup> Letter to Thomas Keats, 23-26 July 1818, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Maurice Buxton Foreman (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1935) 199-200.

<sup>85</sup> See Aubin, "Grottoes, Geology, and the Gothic Revival."



which “a steep fantastic pinnacle” on the Jungfrau is described as “The fretwork of some earthquake.”<sup>86</sup>

The cave description in *The Island* has, meanwhile, been read as alluding to fields other than just that of popular geological discourse. While Byron would note Mungo Park’s remarks on the similarities between rock formations encountered in the Caves of Ellora, and the typical features of Gothic architecture, Victor N. Paanenen has identified a description by Thomas Medwin of an intricately decorated, and sublimely obscure Indian temple interior as another possible influence upon Neuha’s cave as imagined by Byron.<sup>87</sup> As Paanenen shows, Medwin would emphasise the same ideas of awesome scale and sublime obscurity common to contemporary cathedral interior descriptions, even comparing the dim light of the caves with that of “nos cathédrales gothiques.”<sup>88</sup>

With Paanenen’s observations in mind, the cave in *The Island* represents the definitive confluence in Byron’s work of the primitive, medieval and Oriental strands of his perspective upon Gothic architecture -- all these being predicated upon a “picturesque” awareness of intricacy and variety of features and forms. Meanwhile, McGann convincingly identifies the character of Neuha as an “Egeria” figure, an

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<sup>86</sup> *Manfred* II.ii.11-12. On the invocation of Gothic church architecture in Romantic-period geological description, see, as well as Aubin, “Grottoes, Geology, and the Gothic Revival,” Heringman 246-51. Marjorie Hope Nicolson confines her remarks on Byron and architecture to his experiences of (classical) ruins, his sense of which as sublime she compares with his descriptions of mountains. Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (New York: Norton, 1963) 377-78.

<sup>87</sup> Victor N. Paanenen, “Byron and the Caves of Ellora,” *Notes and Queries* (1969): 414-16, in which is cited Thomas Medwin, “Some Account of the Cave Temples of Ellora, etc.,” in *Bibliothèque Universelle des Sciences, Belles-Lettres, et des Arts* 16 (April 1821): 344-57 and 18 (September 1821): 3-13, 111-122.

<sup>88</sup> Qtd. in Paanenen 415.

ideal, inspirational “nymph” to succeed Haidee and Aurora Raby.<sup>89</sup> To this consideration, it might be added that she is most specifically defined as such in her association with a cave that corresponds, in its containing formations described as resembling man-made, Gothic ornaments, to eighteenth-century representations of grottoes -- just as the blended elements of Aurora’s character and identity are presented to the reader against a Gothic abbey backdrop.

While it does not invoke the cathedral Gothic so explicitly as does the description of Neuha’s cave, that of Haidee’s cave in *Don Juan* II.184 strikingly prefigures the passage quoted from *The Island*, serving to illustrate this point:

...in the worn and wild receptacles  
 Work’d by the storms, yet work’d as it were plann’d,  
 In hollow halls, with sparry roofs and cells,  
 They turn’d to rest ... (lines 1469-71).

In the description of Neuha’s cave (similar in innocent, womblike function to Haidee’s, but imbued with Byron’s acquired appreciation of the Gothic style) Byron thus returns the contemplative Gothic-architectural space to its origins in the cave or grotto as haunt of such inspirational nymphs as Egeria -- Newstead Abbey with its rival nymphs Adeline, Aurora and Fitz-Fulke being a northern-European, Christianised version of the same idea.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, the exactness of the architectural description -- in which the intricacy and variety of features find emphasis

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<sup>89</sup> McGann 189; 199-200. McGann does not appear to notice the salutation of Egeria in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* III as “a young Aurora of the air” (III.115 line 1030), which links her all the more definitely to the character Aurora encountered by Juan at Norman Abbey. Beatty, meanwhile, compares Haidee and Aurora Raby -- though as sharing the same “mixed” both innocent and knowing dispositions, rather than as “Egeria” figures. See Beatty, “Fiction’s Limit,” especially 23; 31-33.

<sup>90</sup> Beatty has shown how this contest may be regarded in the light of genre with the comment that “The last cantos of *Don Juan* are like a battleground between various feminine muses (Adeline, Aurora, Fitz-Fulke, associated with Pope, Shakespeare and fashionable light verse respectively)...” Beatty, “The Force of Celtic Memories” 111.

-- links the cave as sanctuary and site of imaginative and natural liberty with the aesthetic character of the abbey where the young Byron had briefly had his own home, and where he had first begun to act upon his creative impulses. Although Byron had cast off Newstead itself as a simple product of institutional religion, and as a problematic historical and material inheritance, in Neuha's cave in *The Island* -- as in Lara's mansion, and Lord Amundeville's Norman Abbey -- are discernible his continued attachment to the "arabesque" Gothic manner in which he recognised the spirit of his own imagination, identity and art.

## Conclusion

The end of the “Romantic” period is perhaps too often bracketed by the death of Byron in 1824. Where the history of literary representation of Gothic ecclesiastical architecture is concerned, this “benchmark” is of especially limited usefulness -- as it was with the death of Byron that the image of the Gothic abbey became in effect consolidated in its status as an emblem of Romantic invention and identity. From William Hazlitt’s 1824 *Spirit of the Age* essay on Byron -- during the composition of which the poet died -- and with such early, literary pilgrimages to Newstead Abbey as those described by Washington Irving and Nathaniel Hawthorne, the image of the sublimely obscure and ornately embellished abbey building continued to accumulate about it the most specific and literal associations with authorship and creativity of its entire history as a traditional, archetypal locus of melancholic contemplation and inspiration.<sup>1</sup>

The Romantic attachment to the Gothic abbey would not be more strikingly evinced, in the decades following Byron’s death, than in the novels of Benjamin Disraeli, in which a sequence of impressive abbey ruins, all described in terms fully in keeping with the eighteenth-century landscape picturesque, would culminate in the expansive, set-piece evocation of “Marney Abbey” in *Sybil* (1844).<sup>2</sup> However, the highly specific, social and political purposes that Disraeli intended his novels to serve place

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<sup>1</sup> See William Hazlitt, “Lord Byron,” *The Spirit of the Age* (1825; Oxford: Woodstock, 1989) 159-81, esp. 165, 166; Washington Irving, “Newstead Abbey” (1859), Charlesworth, ed., 2: 296-352; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks*, ed. Randall Stewart (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1941) 486-91.

<sup>2</sup> See Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil: or The Two Nations* (1845; London: Oxford UP, 1970) 58-68, and *Coningsby or The New Generation* (1844; 5th ed, Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1849) 139-45, as well as *Venetia* (1837), ed. Ann R. Hawkins and Jeraldine R. Kraver, *The Pickering Masters: The Early Novels of Benjamin Disraeli* (London: Pickering, 2004) 6, in which Disraeli reimagines Byron as Lord Plantagenet Cadurcis of “Cadurcis Abbey.”

these abbey representations in an entirely separate phase of the history of the architectural Gothic in literature. With such events as Catholic Emancipation and the passing of the Reform Act, and with the emergence of such movements as the Anglo-Catholic Revival, invocations of the Gothic style in literature and architecture became charged with more practical purposes and significances than those specifically figurative, imaginative ones that I have been considering, with reference to the earlier Gothic Revival -- Wordsworth being the only author under discussion here who would survive to respond to, having indeed partly inspired, its particular, early mid-nineteenth-century manifestations.<sup>3</sup>

While all such concerns could provide materials for an entirely separate enquiry, what I hope has been accomplished by my focus upon some particular, Romantic-period literary representations of the Gothic abbey is an illumination of the continuities and confluences between the most often separately considered forms of poetry and prose, and the "genres" of "Gothic" and "high" Romanticism. At the same time, it is hoped that these discussions might stand as a constructive contribution to the debate as to the nature of the relationship between Gothic architecture, and that genre of literature to which the same designation has traditionally been applied. What my considerations of this group of authors should most especially have shown is the almost universal importance of the Gothic abbey image to Romantic-period authors who, although their backgrounds, and modes of expression differed, were all concerned with conveying senses of intricacy and variety -- whether of imagination, experience, or society.

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<sup>3</sup> An especially interesting instance of Wordsworth's awareness of the later nineteenth-century Gothic Revival in its specifically Roman Catholic manifestations occurs in his letter of 24 July 1841 to Isabella Fenwick, in which he describes, with both fascination and suspicion, the sight of the new Cistercian monastery being built in Charnwood Forest, and the monks working near it. See Wordsworth, *Letters* 7: 218.

All four of the authors I have considered here lived and worked in a period when images of ecclesiastical Gothic architecture had powerful visual and imaginative appeal, enjoying widespread cultural currency across diverse forms and audiences, and within discourses from aesthetic theory to “gothic” fiction. It was also a period in which spectators and occupants of sites of aesthetic experience came with increasing self-consciousness to conceive of, and represent, themselves as such. As I hope has been shown, their uses of Gothic architectural imagery inspired by experiences with actual abbey sites enabled each of the authors considered in this study to identify themselves as creative artists within the culture in which they lived, and upon which they materially depended. Through it, they were also able to relate themselves to far older traditions in the construction of creative genius, inspiration and achievement that dated back to the classical grotto as haunt of the Muses, via the shadowy abbey interior of Milton’s “Il Penseroso.” These settings were linked by the aesthetic of the eighteenth-century picturesque (as well as by that of the “grotesque”) in the perceived irregularity, intricacy and variety of aspect that would serve as an analogue for, and expression of, the ideal, all-comprehending Romantic imagination.

In these arguments, I have aimed most to emphasise the importance of picturesque aesthetics to the way in which eighteenth-century and Romantic-period authors viewed, and distinguished between, the Gothic buildings -- the castles, and the abbeys -- of the British landscape. In doing so, I have endeavoured to restore to the appreciation of works often considered in the more general critical terms of the “gothic” a sense of the immediate and specific cultural contexts sometimes obscured by the backward projection on to the literature of such modern political and ideological preoccupations as those involved in Foucauldian or feminist readings.

What I hope has also emerged from this study, however, is a sense of the extent to which consideration of Romantic-period texts from contemporary perspectives upon architecture and aesthetics may serve some of the interests of modern criticism.

In beginning my sequence of author studies with Radcliffe, I have indicated some of the insights into specifically female authorial self-fashioning that awareness of the picturesque abbey-castle distinction and traditions of personification of melancholy (linked, by the eighteenth century, with abbey settings) may afford. Radcliffe's works are of broader significance as products of the Romantic-period Gothic Revival, meanwhile, for their having located within and around the inspirational abbey setting those impulses to the transcendent that would be still more strenuously asserted in such poetry as Wordsworth's. As I have shown with regard to Wordsworth, the Gothic abbey, whilst representing the purely imaginative spirit in its sublime scale, and while enshrined in Price's aesthetics as the exemplar of sublime-and-beautiful-reconciling, picturesque architecture, could also provide *The White Doe of Rylstone* with a material focus which both aided the immediacy and effect of the poem, and (especially when accompanied by an illustration) gave the 1815 edition of the text currency as a product of fashionable "Gothic Revival" culture.

The Gothic abbey also became for Scott a form of capital in which he traded, evoking images of Melrose Abbey in his highly popular writings, and upon which he drew in the construction of his identity as an author, literally surrounding himself with pieces of the abbey fabric. He asserted in doing so a proprietorial status at the real Melrose Abbey, the bases of his claim to which were knowledge, sensitive aesthetic appreciation, and creative inspiration, rather than literal, legal or material ownership,

figuring himself as a feature of the site in his succession of frame-narrating antiquary characters. In the case of Byron, meanwhile, actual ownership of a Gothic abbey, and initial exploitation of its melancholic-creative associations, would be followed by confrontation of the necessity literally to capitalise on the property. The same, intricate “arabesque” Gothic style that was so famously exemplified at Newstead would, however, provide Byron with the ideal aesthetic through which to express the matured, ironical poetic persona that emerged from the fragmentation of personal and creative identities he suffered in the years following his departure from Newstead and England.

As noted at the opening of my Introduction, it has been to later nineteenth-, and twentieth-century representations of Gothic architecture, by such authors as Ruskin and Proust in particular, that considerations of Gothic architecture in literature have tended to refer. Proust especially has been invoked in connection both with Wordsworth’s “memorial” art in *The Prelude*, and his gothic-church metaphor in the Preface to *The Excursion*, and with Byron’s commemoration of Newstead Abbey in the English Cantos of *Don Juan*.<sup>4</sup> Such comparisons are, however, necessarily superficial, and conditioned by critical hindsight, the general Romantic-period engagement with the images, and the actual sites of Gothic abbey buildings providing in itself a broad enough field for exploration, as I hope has been shown here. Beyond the simple provision of backgrounds to “gothic” novels, and entirely distinct from later nineteenth-century and modern appropriations of the Gothic architectural image, the literary expressions of the Romantic-period Gothic Revival were statements of

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<sup>4</sup> See M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1973) 80-83, and Graham 181.



artistic endeavour and identity established firmly within a tradition of literary self-fashioning, but flourishing within an epoch of their own.

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