



John Plaw, *Rural Architecture* (1794), frontispiece.  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

# The Search for the Picturesque

*Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism  
in Britain, 1760-1800*

---

MALCOLM ANDREWS

*Scolar Press*

311  
39

First published 1989 by  
**SCOLAR PRESS**  
Gower Publishing Company Limited  
Gower House, Croft Road  
Aldershot GU11 3HR  
England

Copyright © Malcolm Andrews, 1989

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
Andrews, Malcolm, 1942—  
The search for the picturesque: landscape  
aesthetics and tourism in Britain,  
1760–1800.  
1. Landscape assessment—Great Britain—  
History—18th century 2. Tourist trade—  
Great Britain—History—18th century  
I. Title  
719'.01 GF91.G7  
ISBN 0-85967-693-5

Typeset by Gloucester Typesetting Services  
and printed in Great Britain by  
Anchor Press Ltd, Tiptree, Essex

311  
39

## Contents

---

---

Preface, vii  
Acknowledgements, x  
List of illustrations, xi  
List of maps, xvi

**PART I**

*The rise of the Picturesque*

1. Poetry and the discovery of British landscape, 3
2. Landscape painting and the Picturesque formulae, 24
3. The evolution of Picturesque taste, 1750–1800, 39
4. Travelling ‘knick-knacks’, 67

**PART II**

*The Picturesque tours*

5. The Wye Valley tour: river scenery and ruins, 85
6. The North Wales tour: mountains and bards, 109
7. The tour to the Lakes, 153
8. The Highlands tour and the Ossianic Sublime, 197

Select bibliography of the tours, 241

Biographical notes, 248

Notes and references, 251

Index, 267

painter can create images ‘analogous to the various feelings, and sensations of the mind’, wrote Gilpin near the end of his life, then ‘where would be the harm of saying, that landscape, like history-paintings hath its ethics!?’<sup>51</sup> At the turn of the century John Stoddart’s *Remarks on Local Scenery* reflected that even Reynolds ‘seems to have had little feeling of those delicious and powerful emotions, which, in an uninitiated mind, the forms of nature are capable of producing’. Cozens’ controversial, melancholy mountain landscapes offer some of the earliest examples of this expressive watercolour painting: ‘Cozens is all poetry’, Constable said. In the work of Turner and Girtin in the later 1790s this power is brought to early maturity. In 1799 Turner was reported as saying how much he disliked the ‘mechanically systematic’ methods of watercolour painting, as practised, for instance by John ‘Warwick’ Smith: ‘Turner has no settled process but drives the colours about till he has expressed the idea in his mind’.<sup>52</sup> Turner and Girtin supplied what was felt to be missing in both the topographical tradition and the formulaire Picturesque mode – the poetry of landscape.

### III

## The evolution of Picturesque taste, 1750–1800

---

Mr. Pitt . . . ordered a tent to be pitched, tea to be prepared, and his French horn to breath Music like the unseen Genius of the woods . . . After tea we rambled about for an hour, seeing several views, some wild as Salvator Rosa, others placid, and with the setting sun, worthy of Claude Lorrain.<sup>1</sup>

This is from a letter written in 1753 by Mrs Elizabeth Montagu, the distinguished ‘bluestocking’. The glamorous picnic took place not on the Roman Campagna but near Tunbridge Wells in Kent. It is an early instance of what was, later in the century, to become a descriptive commonplace, and it suggests that the vogue for invoking Rosa and Claude in this manner may well have started during those fashionable ‘conversazioni’ in mid-century London society.

Five years before Mrs Montagu’s letter, James Thomson had published his *Castle of Indolence*. The stanza in Canto I which describes the landscape paintings adorning the Castle concludes with this couplet:

Whate'er Lorrain light-touched with softening hue,  
Or savage Rosa dashed, or learned Poussin drew.

The three distinct characters of seventeenth-century idealized landscape paintings are fixed for the next three generations in those lines.

As we have seen, one of the chief excitements for the Picturesque tourist was the recognition and tracing of resemblances between art and nature. That particular pleasure of comparison and association is, of course, much older than the late eighteenth century. It is clearly formulated, for instance, in Addison’s 1712 *Spectator* papers on ‘The Pleasures of the Imagination’. Addison categorizes the primary sources of the imagination’s pleasures, chiefly those objects or prospects which are distinguished by Greatness, Uncommonness or Beauty. He then turns his attention to what he calls the secondary pleasures of the imagination. Amongst these is our love of comparing objects and tracing resemblances. We are particularly pleased when we compare ‘the Ideas arising from the Original Objects, with the Ideas we receive from the Statue, Picture, Description, or Sound that represents them’.<sup>2</sup> On this principle, ‘we find the Works of Nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art’.<sup>3</sup> This secondary pleasure was of crucial importance for the Picturesque tourists. One might even say that, in many cases, Addison’s secondary pleasure becomes their primary pleasure; when, to revive an earlier example, the

glimpse of a scene in North Wales beguiles the spectator because it seems a nearly perfect native facsimile of a Dughet landscape, or when a pastoral poem suddenly comes to life on the banks of Ullswater. How profoundly satisfying for the poet Samuel Rogers was this moment's vision during a tour in Wales:

I have seen a ragged shepherd boy . . . throw himself down in an attitude that Raphael would not have disdained to copy.<sup>4</sup>

This is life accidentally imitating art – the purest of Picturesque pleasures.

It is the opportunity for just this kind of secondary pleasure which enhances Mrs Montagu's appreciation of her 'picturesque picnic'. I have already mentioned Richard Payne Knight's associationist argument about natural scenery's having greater appeal for the person familiar with classical pastoral poetry (see above, p. 4). He goes on from there to assert that, 'The spectator, having his mind enriched with the embellishments of the painter and the poet, applies them, by the spontaneous association of ideas, to the natural objects presented to his eye, which thus acquire ideal and imaginary beauties'.<sup>5</sup> The association is seldom as spontaneous as Knight suggests, but his is a very clear formulation of the Picturesque habit of mind.

His mention of 'ideal beauties' born of the interaction between natural objects and associated ideas may remind one not only of Pope's rendering of Windsor Forest in terms of Milton's Eden, but also of certain strategies in neoclassical portraiture. Idealization through literary or pictorial allusion had been a professional practice in many a fashionable portrait, where a particular subject could be given an enhanced dignity by being deliberately posed in attitudes reminiscent of Renaissance paintings. Ronald Paulson has shown how, for example, Reynolds' celebrated *Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse* (1784) adopts the pose of a Michelangelo prophet from the Sistine ceiling, and thus adds a religious dimension to the idea of tragedy.<sup>6</sup> So when Mrs Montagu describes the views of the countryside around Tunbridge Wells as 'worthy of Claude', she is both expressing her pleased recognition of the resemblances and enhancing the prestige of a particular landscape.

But if these pleasures are to be shared, it is clear that all parties must understand the aesthetic premises. Mrs Montagu's circle was composed of a cultivated élite whose familiarity with the work of Claude, Dughet and Rosa – as with that of Thomson and Milton or Virgil and Homer – guaranteed the life of this kind of associationist code. The later Picturesque tourists, who came, by and large, from the same class of society, had certainly equal and perhaps greater familiarity with this painterly code, though perhaps rather less familiarity with the classical literary code.

Most of the story so far has shown how British tastes in natural beauty were derived initially from foreign models, from images of Italian scenery rendered by the Latin poets and the seventeenth-century landscape painters. The Picturesque comes into play in this context as a kind of intellectual recreation favoured by a self-confident élite, whose education in the classics might have been completed by the Grand Tour and the opportunity to see the works of Claude, Dughet and Rosa

in Italy and in the English collections. But in this third quarter of the century there are clear signs of a disturbance to the cultural supremacy of this élite. There is an erosion of confidence in the Augustan culture which expresses itself in a variety of ways. Milton and Thomson are beginning to seem rivals to Homer and Virgil. Thomas Gray experiments with Celtic mythology as a new source for poetic ideas and images. A sense of the decline of literature and the fine arts is being voiced by a number of distinguished critics.<sup>7</sup> The idea of an absolute standard of taste, governed by rational rules and supported by reference to the example of the ancients, collapses in a succession of essays by the leading writers on aesthetics, who prove, sometimes unintentionally, that the recognition of beauty is subjective and individual.<sup>8</sup> Graveyard musings and Sublime aesthetics encourage exploration into the darker recesses of the psyche. The taste for Gothick and Chinoiserie in domestic design sorts oddly with the Palladian ideal. Ancient Rome herself had by now been visited by many an Englishman shocked to see at first hand the citadel of the classical world reduced to a rubble of masonry and a few cadaverous, crumbling structures. As David Solkin has argued,<sup>9</sup> the moral lessons to be drawn from Rome's decline in the later Empire were very important for mid-century English culture. Even the veneration of Augustan Rome was waning, with Augustus himself being seen as the enemy to republican liberty and to the arts.

Melancholic, introverted, eclectic and hesitantly nationalistic, many writers and artists of the period seem often in a state of paralysis, bewildered about the present, impatient with the immediate past, fascinated by the remote past. From all this there emerges a sense of the Picturesque which becomes far more complex than Mrs Montagu's accolade to Kentish scenery. I want to focus this mid-century retreat from certain Augustan values, and its contribution to later Picturesque tastes, in two topics, ruins and gardening. The two chief theorists of the Picturesque, William Gilpin and Uvedale Price, both began their writing careers with discussions of garden design; and both, in developing their Picturesque theories, are haunted by that appropriate emblem of a period of decaying confidence, the ruin. This approach might help to explain why 'like a picture' becomes inadequate as a definition of late-eighteenth-century Picturesque, and indeed of our modern, casual 'picturesque'.

#### (i) *The Interpretation of Ruins*

'Pleasing melancholy' and 'agreeable horror' were two types of emotional experience induced by the contemplation of ruins. Both feature prominently in mid-century taste. At the end of the century Charles Heath, the author of one of the best-known tour guidebooks, asserted that 'no two pieces of Poetry, in the English language, have been more universally read, or admired, than Dr. Blair's "Grave", and Mr. Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard"'.<sup>10</sup> Both these pieces belong in composition to the 1740s, and, along with Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1742–45) and Thomas Parnell's *Night Piece on Death* (1722), constitute what, in a later age, came to be known as the Graveyard School of poetry.

One critic, C. A. Moore, who has made a particular study of this mid-century phenomenon has claimed that, statistically, the period deserves to be called the Age of Melancholy. Melancholy was a notoriously English affliction, and even earned the name the 'English Malady'. That was the title of an authoritative book on the subject in 1733 by Dr George Cheyne, who, in his Preface, attributed these 'nervous Distempers' and 'Lowness of Spirits' to several factors such as the dampness of the English climate, the richness of diet and sedentary occupations of the 'better sort (among whom the *Evil* mostly rages)', and the crowded conditions of the big towns. He also noted the recent rise in the suicide rate and judged that it was caused largely by this Malady. In the 1750s and especially in 1755, suicide seems to have reached epidemic proportions. Moore suggests that the Graveyard poets and their successors who felt the impulse to indulge the melancholy mood were forced by the prevailing ethos to resort to methods of indirection. Thus the 'meditatio mortis' in ruined abbeys and country churchyards became much favoured as a kind of religious screen for morbid emotionalism.<sup>11</sup> In the later decades of the century the religious pretext is dropped. Robert Aubin, in his authoritative study of topographical poetry, notes that by the 1780s most English poets had substituted unabashed sentiment for charnel-house horror.<sup>12</sup> The uninhibited indulgence of 'pleasing melancholy' becomes one of the most compelling motives for the Picturesque tourist to visit ruined abbeys and castles.

One reason for this later freedom to discard the religious pretext for such intense emotional indulgence could be found in Edmund Burke's influential formulation of the Sublime in the late 1750s. In his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757; revised and expanded in 1759) he argued that the two strongest instincts known to man are self-preservation and the social impulse. All that directly threatens self-preservation causes terror; and terrifying experiences are the source of the Sublime. Our experience of the Sublime is far greater in intensity than our experience of Beauty. Beauty attracts and reassures: the Sublime intimidates. Beauty draws out one's social instincts. The intensification of social intimacy is the source of the sexual impulse, which in turn assures the continued propagation of the race (a kind of macrocosmic self-preservation). Burke's linking of Beauty and sexuality leads him to characterise Beauty according to the age's general sense of what constitutes feminine attractiveness: weakness, softness, gentle curves, delicate colouring, and so on. For the later Picturesque connoisseur it was an easy matter to find these feminine qualities in the soft, hospitable, mellow landscapes of Claude: accordingly, Beauty in landscape could be analysed in Burkean, psychological terms. The characteristics of the Sublime, on the other hand, include terrifying power, obscurity, and sharp contrasts; and the corresponding painter was Salvator Rosa. The thrill of the Sublime, this 'agreeable horror', depends on one's being able to enjoy danger at a safe distance. The relationship between the spectator, the recoiling figures and the catastrophe in de Loutherbourg's *An Avalanche in the Alps* (fig. 8) is very much an experiment in the Sublime. David Hartley had described this particular kind of pleasure in landscape terms in 1749:



8. P. de Loutherbourg, *An Avalanche in the Alps* (1803).  
Tate Gallery, London

If there be a precipice, a cataract, a mountain of snow, etc in one part of the scene, the nascent ideas of fear and horror magnify and enliven all the other ideas, and by degrees pass into pleasures, by suggesting the security from pain.<sup>13</sup>

The important stress in the *Enquiry* is on the sensationist interpretation of both the Sublime and the Beautiful. Beauty is not determined by such hallowed Renaissance criteria as proportion, utility or 'fitness', for these are intellectual judgements.

- ✓ Beauty and Sublimity seize the mind before it can collect its thoughts. We shall see later, on the Tours, many such responses recorded in Burkean terminology. Even Gilpin acknowledged that the chief pleasure in Picturesque travel was not the 'scientifical' analysis of scenery (though that afforded great amusement) but the irrational response:

We are most delighted, when some grand scene, tho' perhaps of incorrect composition, rising before the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought . . . every mental operation is suspended . . . We rather *feel*, than *survey* it.<sup>14</sup>

Burke's *Enquiry* classified and gave a dignity to primary emotional drives, and correspondingly had some effect in further discrediting rationalism. It endorsed a number of contemporary challenges to rationalism among the moral philosophers – e.g. Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1752), Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) – and was instrumental in promoting 'sentiment' or 'sensibility', a vogue which grew as the century advanced, especially in the response to the natural world. 'Till Rousseau's time, there had been no "sentimental" love of nature',<sup>15</sup> wrote Ruskin. In this climate a genteel melancholy became a psychologically interesting condition: 'Melancholy itself is a source of pleasure to a cultivated mind', according to John Aikin in the 1790s.<sup>16</sup> Thus the religious pretext for Gothic horrors and morbid emotionalism could be discarded.

As Hartley indicated, the Sublime in landscape terms required dangerous, awe-inspiring scenery, particularly wild mountain country. Marjorie Hope Nicolson's classic study of Sublime aesthetics, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (1959), has demonstrated how, at least in the first third of the century, wilderness and mountain scenery were a minority taste. Nonetheless, there were several remarkable expressions of it, such as Addison's discussions in his 1712 *Spectator* papers 'The Pleasures of the Imagination', and Bishop Berkeley's challenge to the reader not to feel a 'pleasing horror' at the sight of gloomy forests, huge mountains and other manifestations of an 'agreeable horror'.<sup>17</sup> More eloquent was the famous rhapsody to uncultivated country in the Earl of Shaftesbury's *The Moralists* (1709):

I shall no longer resist the passion growing in me for things of a natural kind, where neither art nor the conceit or caprice of man has spoiled their genuine order by breaking in upon that primitive state. Even the rude rocks, the mossy caverns, the irregular unwrought grottos and broken falls of waters, with all the horrid graces of the wilderness itself, as representing Nature more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a magnificence beyond the formal mockery of princely gardens.<sup>18</sup>

Notice the phrase 'genuine order'. It is a skilful anticipation of Augustan objections to misshapen, unruly wilderness with its threat to the sense of order imposed on nature by enlightened, civilised man. Shaftesbury's rhapsodist, fortified by confidence in the well-regulated Newtonian universe, now insists that raw nature – rude, irregular, unwrought, broken – is the source of genuine order, compared with which the human equivalent is just 'formal mockery'. Those 'princely gardens', of course, soon caught up with changing tastes: if nature herself proved niggardly, the proprietor could commission 'Capability' Brown or others to instal broken falls of water and exquisitely irregular and apparently unwrought grottos.

'Agreeable horror' and 'pleasing melancholy' are nourished by images of decay, by monstrous, broken and irregular forms, in both natural scenery and the works of man. There is a fascinating essay by Barbara Maria Stafford on these new tastes in landscape at the end of the eighteenth century, particularly the taste for Chaos.<sup>19</sup> Recognising Burke's classifications, she argues that Chaos 'hints at masculine, virile sublimities in opposition to the feminine charms of the ordered'. Travellers now relish 'those parts of nature which are vast, misproportioned or "torn and mangled" by Palladian standards. Chaos has form, form of a special kind which existed before the overlay of sophisticated cultures'. Ruined architecture represents a return to the state of nature, and thus acquires a positive value. In order to clarify the complexity of attitudes towards ruins, as we trace the evolution of later Picturesque tastes, I shall, at the risk of seeming over-schematic, isolate four or five main types of response. The first is that indulgence of melancholy and horror associated with Graveyard poetry and Sublime aesthetics. This can be termed the *sentimental* response to ruins. The second might be called the *antiquarian* response, which seeks to reconstruct the ruin in the imagination and draws upon some architectural expertise. The third is the *aesthetic*: that is the pleasures of form and colouring, the decorative nature of the ruin. John Aikin, writing in the 1790s, believed this response was a very recent development in taste:

The newest and most fashionable mode of considering them [ruins] is with respect to the place they hold in the *picturesque*; and it is chiefly under this head that they have become such favourites with landscape painters and landscape writers.<sup>20</sup>

Aikin is, in fact, inaccurate about the novelty of this response, which was exemplified at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the story of the intended design for Blenheim Park. Sir John Vanbrugh, Blenheim's architect, was invited to assist Henry Wise in laying out the grounds. He wanted to retain as a feature in his landscape design the ruined medieval manor of Woodstock. One of the reasons he gives is claimed by some to be the germ of the whole Picturesque movement. Vanbrugh insisted that were the old building to be glimpsed rising from trees and thickets (with perhaps a recollection of L'Allegro's towers 'Boosom'd high in tufted Trees'), 'it wou'd make One of the most Agreeable objects that the best of Landskip Painters can invent'.<sup>21</sup> Another early example of the aesthetic appreciation of ruins, tinged with sentimentality, occurs in the painter-poet John Dyer's letters from Rome (c. 1724):

There is a certain charm that follows the sweep of time, and I can't help thinking the triumphal arches more beautiful now than ever they were . . . a certain greenness . . . a certain disjointedness and moulder among the stones, something so pleasing in their weeds and tufts of myrtle, and something in the altogether so greatly wild, that mingling with art, and blotting out the traces of disagreeable squares and angles, adds certain beauties that could not be before imagined.<sup>22</sup>

A fourth type of response is the *moral*, neatly expressed in an analogy by Robert Ginsberg: 'A ruin on one's estate once served like a skull on one's desk'.<sup>23</sup> In the moral view the ruin becomes a *memento mori* and an emblem of that favourite eighteenth-century theme, the Vanity of Human Wishes. This is elegantly exemplified in Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, when the poet contemplates one of the ruined castles in the landscape:

Yet Time has seen, that lifts the low,  
And level lays the lofty Brow,  
Has seen this broken Pile compleat,  
Big with the Vanity of State;  
But transient is the Smile of Fate!  
A little Rule, a little Sway,  
A sun-beam in a Winter's Day  
Is all the Proud and Mighty have,  
Between the Cradle and the Grave.<sup>24</sup>

The moral appeal is here closely related to an historical awareness which cherishes the ruin as an image of Nature's levelling of haughty tyranny: in other words, a fifth kind of response, which we might call the *political*. For the eighteenth century the ruined castle is a potent emblem of liberation from Gothic feudalism. 'Believe me', exclaims Addison, in Hurd's imaginary *Moral and Political Dialogues*, 'I never see the remains of that greatness which arose in the past ages on the ruins of public freedom and private property, but I congratulate with myself on living at a time, when the meanest subject is as free and independent as those royal minions; and when his property, whatever it be, is as secure as that of the first minister'.<sup>25</sup> The religious counterpart to the castle, the ruined abbey, represents the triumphant banishment from England of Popish 'superstition'. 'The ruins of these once magnificent edifices', writes Uvedale Price, combining the political and aesthetic criteria, 'are the pride and boast of this island: we may well be proud of them; not merely in a picturesque point of view: we may glory that the abodes of tyranny and superstition are in ruin'.<sup>26</sup> Viewed in this light, the Reformation's destruction of the abbeys of Britain could be commended, and frequently was. William Shenstone called Henry VIII's action 'righteous havoc':

Then from its towering height with horrid sound  
Rush'd the proud abbey: then the vaulted roofs,  
Torn from their walls, disclosed the wanton scene  
Of monkish chastity! Each angry friar



9. Batty Langley, 'An Avenue in Perspective, terminated with the ruins of an ancient Building after the Roman manner', from *New Principles of Gardening* (1728). British Library, London

Crawl'd from his bedded strumpet, muttering low  
An ineffectual curse. The pervious nooks . . .  
Imbide the novel daylight, and expose,  
Obvious, the fraudulent engineery of Rome.<sup>27</sup>

Gilpin referred to Henry VIII's vandalistic successor, Oliver Cromwell, as 'that picturesque genius', who 'omitted no opportunity of adorning the countries, through which he passed, with noble ruins'. Such mixed attitudes, incidentally, were not exclusive to the eighteenth century: even during the two or three generations following the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, nostalgia and antiquarian enthusiasms intensified at the same time as the release from Popery was being celebrated.<sup>28</sup>

For Shenstone these ruins left in the landscape have now become of use only

. . . to grace a rural scene,  
To bound our vistas, and to glad the sons  
Of George's reign, reserved for fairer times!

Fig. 9, a plate in Batty Langley's *New Principles of Gardening* (1728), shows the way of deploying a ruin – here to terminate an avenue perspective. Shenstone, like Price, acknowledges two types of ruin interest, the political appraisal (conquest of arrogant feudalism and 'superstition') and the aesthetic ('grace a rural scene', 'bound

our vistas'). To these he adds a few more when he discusses ruins in his essay on gardening,<sup>29</sup> an important text to which we shall return later:

RUINATED structures appear to derive their power of pleasing, from the irregularity of surface, which is VARIETY; and the latitude they afford the imagination, to conceive an enlargement of their dimensions, or to recollect any events or circumstances appertaining to their pristine grandeur, so far as concerns grandeur and solemnity.

Three sources of pleasure are identified here: formal variety, fanciful architectural reconstruction, and romantic, historical association. The later, more complex developments in Picturesque taste grow out of all these varied attitudes towards ruins in the middle decades of the eighteenth century – varied and often incompatible. Nowhere are the tensions between the characteristically Augustan response to ruins (predominantly as moral and political emblems) and the Picturesque, predominantly aesthetic response (delight in formal variety) more sharply marked than in Gilpin's earliest discussion of landscape aesthetics, *Dialogue upon the Gardens . . . at Stow* (1748).<sup>30</sup>

The *Dialogue* features a debate between two gentlemen visitors to Stowe. As they enter the gardens from the south, one of the first sights they encounter is the artificial Rock-Work which separates the Octagon Pond from the lake, on the borders of which is an artificially ruined Hermitage. The scene is judged by both to be 'vastly picturesque'. This is, incidentally, the first recorded published use of the term by Gilpin. However, one of the visitors is puzzled by the strong appeal of these ruins, and wonders 'why we are more taken with Prospects of this ruinous kind, than with Views of Plenty and Prosperity in their greatest Perfection'. To this his friend gives a reply that is to be crucial in the development of Picturesque theory later in the century:

Yes: but cannot you make a distinction between natural and moral Beauties? Our social Affections undoubtedly find their Enjoyment the most compleat when they contemplate, a Country smiling in the midst of Plenty, where Houses are well-built, Plantations regular, and everything the most commodious and useful. But such Regularity and Exactness excites no manner of Pleasure in the Imagination, unless they are made use of to contrast with something of an opposite kind.

That distinction between natural and moral beauty would have made most Augustans very uneasy, so clearly does it fly in the face of cherished neoclassical values, where physical beauty is seen as the expression of moral beauty. But Gilpin insists on the separation of the two. Although he can interpret, iconographically, Stowe's garden architecture, he is not concerned here with the kind of moral or political pleasure in ruins enjoyed by Shenstone and Dyer. The implication of Gilpin's remarks is that the imagination is amoral. It has very little to do with social considerations, with utility or convenience:

The Fancy is struck by *Nature* alone . . . Thus a regular Building perhaps gives us very little pleasure; and yet a fine Rock, beautifully set off in Claro-oscuro, and garnished with flourishing Bushes, Ivy, and dead Branches, may afford us a great deal.

The appeal has become almost exclusively visual. We may find it more comfortable to live in a regular building, but the *imagination* can only be fully pleased with 'a ragged Ruin, with venerable old Oaks, and Pines nodding over it', such as Stowe's 'old' Hermitage. The division is complete. The imagination or 'Fancy' craves satisfactions which seem wholly contrary to those required by morality, the 'social Affections'. Since it is above all the painter who is concerned chiefly with what gives *imaginative* pleasure, the adjective 'picturesque' is duly applied to this type of aggressively anti-utilitarian scenery.

The setting for Gilpin's *Dialogue* raises a problem in itself. Garden ruins could not legitimately inspire historical reflections. In spite of the Hermitage's being described several times by the two visitors as impressively old, it was no more ancient than Gilpin himself. The sentimental confusion caused by skilfully executed artificial ruins is amusingly illustrated in the story of the naïve gentleman visitor to a famous landscape garden. He observed to the gardener who was his guide that the splendid ruin before him must be very old indeed. 'Oh sir', said the gardener, 'the next my Master builds will be much older'.<sup>31</sup> The real age of these ruins did not seem to matter very much, nor did the fact that they had never existed in a pre-ruined state as intelligible architecture. Garden theorists such as Thomas Whateley might well advise strict architectural accuracy in contriving these dilapidated fragments, and insist that the supposed original design should be clear; but not many ruin builders were so scrupulous. Antiquarian curiosity can seem ludicrously inappropriate in the case of artificial ruins. They were designed either for didactic, emblematic purposes, such as the telling satirical relationship between Stowe's beautifully intact Temple of Ancient Virtue and its ruined Temple of Modern Virtue, or simply in order to stimulate vague, sentimental associations.

But what of those cases when authentic medieval ruins were annexed by the landscape gardener (as, for example, Vanbrugh had wanted at Blenheim) and viewed alongside contemporary architectural follies? A good example is Fountains Abbey which John Aislaby incorporated into his Studley Royal garden in the late 1760s. The problem here was how to harmonize the true antique with modern imitations and modern garden design. Aislaby failed, according to Gilpin, because he showed insufficient respect in his garden design for the venerable antiquity of the Abbey. The lawns around the crumbling remains had been neatly shaved, and the proprietor was trying to restore the ruin. 'The very idea of giving a finished splendour to a ruin, is absurd', thought Gilpin: 'the *recent* marks of human industry' were wholly unnatural in a place evidently forlorn and deserted by man. A true ruin has ceased to be wholly the work of man:

Rooted for ages in the soil; assimilated to it; and become, as it were, a part of it; we consider it as a work of nature, rather than of art.<sup>32</sup>

Ruins fascinated the Picturesque tourist partly because, in spite of Gilpin's recommendations to separate moral and aesthetic responses, they raised so many questions about the relationship between man and nature, as well as presenting interestingly

broken lines and varied tints. According to Aikin, for those who travel in search of the Picturesque, 'the regular lines of art but ill harmonize with the free strokes of nature', but ruins represent that surrender of art to nature:

The ivy creeping along gothic arches, and forming a verdant lattice across the dismantled casements; bushes starting through the chasms of the rifted tower . . . are the fantastic strokes of nature working upon the patterns of art, which all the refinement of magnificence cannot imitate.<sup>33</sup>

However, ruins caused considerable problems for some of the Picturesque theorists. As we shall see, it becomes necessary for Uvedale Price to leave aside discussion of ruins, because ruins, especially on a monumental scale, stimulate too complex a response for the theorist concerned to isolate specifically formal, Picturesque qualities. Gilpin however, although his concern is principally with matters of form and colour, allows the rich complexity of associations a free role in determining his response to ruins. There is the very occasional stock moral reflection, but usually his response is a blend of vague, sentimental associations and the painter's relish of broken lines, abrupt chiaroscuro and the subdued variety of colours and textures. In this emphasis he is typical of the Picturesque tourists in the last third of the century. Familiar with Sublime aesthetics, tinged with fashionable 'sensibility', and equipped with the connoisseur's vocabulary in landscape analysis, these later ruin enthusiasts are primarily interested in mood, colour and composition. Their Augustan predecessors, by and large, were excited by allegorical interpretation of garden architecture and sculpture and by the moral and political connotations of ruined castles and abbeys. 'All these devices', wrote Thomas Whateley of garden statuary, 'are rather emblematical than expressive . . . they make no immediate impression, for they must be examined, compared, perhaps explained, before the whole design of them is well understood'.<sup>34</sup> These are intellectual exertions which the later tourists usually find too strenuous and too prosaic. David Solkin has dated these changing attitudes to the 1760s, during which 'a number of British artists had begun to produce ruin-pieces that emphasised particular details at the expense of general ideas or ideals of order, and which offered vague emotional pleasure as opposed to specific intellectual instruction'.<sup>35</sup>

#### (ii) Moral, Sentimental and Picturesque Gardening

The history of the English garden to the end of the eighteenth century is a paradigm of these changing tastes, as Ronald Paulson, John Dixon Hunt and others have demonstrated. In the early stage the garden and its architectural ornaments were to be read like an emblem book or *paysage moralisé*, much as Denham had interpreted the view from Cooper's Hill: many features in that view were indeed later manufactured and miniaturised for the gardens – gentle hills and valleys, glades for contemplation, and fragments of ancient architecture. Aaron Hill's planned Moral Rock Garden takes this version to its extreme.<sup>36</sup> His garden was to have been a kind of moral test, inviting the visitor to choose from a number of paths at the perimeter,

with titles like Honour, Riches and Industry, only one of which led to the Temple of Happiness and Cave of Content at the centre. Elsewhere emblematic architecture (Stowe's Temple of Virtue) and emblematic statuary elaborated various moral precepts. Jonathan Tyer's estate near Dorking included a Valley of the Shadow of Death where the effigy of an unbeliever dying in agony was positioned opposite to a Christian dying serenely.<sup>37</sup>

At a later stage, the garden is toured like a gallery of three-dimensional seventeenth-century landscape paintings (which themselves deployed modified iconographic systems): 'every journey is made through a succession of pictures'<sup>38</sup> observed Horace Walpole of this kind of garden. Pope and William Kent were reckoned to have been the first who 'practised painting in gardening'. Pope, according to Spence, maintained that 'all gardening is landscape painting'.<sup>39</sup> The landscape painter becomes the model for the management of distances. Philip Southcote at Woburn contrived a view which, with a few native variations, might almost fit a description of a Claude painting. The hill and ruined church refer to St Anne's, the very ruin which Denham, a century before, had included as emblematic of religious excesses, but which now serves only to 'bound a vista' in decorative fashion:

From the line that leads to the house, the foreground is the meadow, the mid-ground a winding stream with clumps and trees scattered about it, and the background is the rising of the hill and the line of trees to the ruined church.<sup>40</sup>

The painter also influences the distribution of colour, as Henry Hoare observed: 'The greens should be ranged together in large masses as the shades are in painting'. On similar principles 'the lights and shades in gardening are managed by disposing the thick grove-work, the thin, and the openings in a proper manner, of which the eye generally is the properest judge'.<sup>41</sup> The chief beauty of Shenstone's Shropshire estate, The Leasowes, according to Robert Dodsley's 1764 'Description', was its range of 'distinguishable scenes'.<sup>42</sup> The tour of the gardens was a circuit punctuated by seats affording a great variety of views. Each view was captioned, like a painting, with an appropriate inscription on or near the viewing seat. Such a garden still catered for cultivated, patrician tastes, as Shenstone suggested in his 'Thoughts' on gardening: 'Objects should be less calculated to strike the immediate eye, than the judgement or well-formed imagination, as in painting'. With its interplay between selected viewpoint and Latin verse inscription this is landscape evidently designed for the connoisseur. But The Leasowes was also attuned to the age of Sensibility. The mood, or 'peculiar character' of the landscape – the 'savage', the sprightly, the melancholy, the horrid – could each be enhanced by 'suitable appendages' such as funerary urns, and lovers' benches.

The picture-gallery phase of gardening blends with or gives way to this third, sentimental phase in which the garden, now largely shorn of significant statuary and classical monuments, becomes a landscape of variety, to be *felt* as a medley of moods. The Picturesque begins to flourish in the second phase, runs confusedly into