



ENGLISH LANDSCAPE – 1:
THE PICTURESQUE



YOUR COUNTRY'S CALL



Isn't this worth fighting for?

ENLIST NOW

'Your Country's Call':
Poster, published by the
Parliamentary Recruiting
Committee, 1915

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Edward Thomas 1878-1917



Passchendaele, 1917

'It was a sweet view – sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive.' (Jane Austen, *Emma*, Ch 42)



Thomas Rowlandson, 'The Country House' (c.1800). © Victoria & Albert Museum, London

'It was a sweet view – sweet to the eye and the mind. English culture, English comfort, seen under a sun bright, without being oppressive ...its suitable, becoming, characteristic situation, low and sheltered – its ample gardens stretching down to meadows washed by a stream, of which the Abbey, with all the old neglect of prospect, had scarcely a sight – and its abundance of timber in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance had rooted up. –The house was ...rambling and irregular, with many comfortable and one or two handsome rooms. – It was just what it ought to be, and it looked what it was'



Chawton House, Hampshire: formerly the home of Edward Austen Knight, Jane Austen's brother. The house is the supposed model for Mr Knightley's Donwell Abbey in *Emma*.

The gentle stream was taught to serpentine seemingly **at its pleasure**, and where discontinued by different levels, its course appeared to be concealed by thickets properly interspersed, and glittered again at a distance where it might be supposed **naturally** to arrive. Its borders were smoothed, but preserved their **waving irregularity**. A few trees scattered here and there on its edges sprinkled the tame bank that accompanied its meanders.... The living landscape was chastened or polished, not transformed. **Freedom** was given to the forms of trees; they extended their branches **unrestricted**, and where any eminent oak, or master beech had escaped maiming and survived the forest, bush and bramble was removed, and all its honours were restored to distinguish and shade the plain.

Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England...to which is added The History of Modern Taste in Gardening* (London, 1782, 2nd ed), 4, 291-92



“I call it a very fine country — the hills are steep, the woods seem full of fine timber, and the valley looks comfortable and snug — with rich meadows and several neat farm houses scattered here and there. It exactly answers my idea of a fine country, because it unites beauty with utility”



Salvator Rosa, *Rocky Landscape with Huntsmen and Warriors*, (c.1670)

[Sense and Sensibility: Edward Ferrers] "Marianne - remember I have no knowledge in the picturesque, and I shall offend you by my ignorance and want of taste if we come to particulars.... I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles. I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees. I admire them much more if they are tall, straight, and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles or thistles, or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farm-house than a watch-tower,- and a troop of tidy, happy villagers pleases me better than the finest banditti in the world."



Revd William Gilpin, 1724-1804



William Gilpin, drawing of Scaleby Castle, near Carlisle, his birthplace



~~The remaining part of the~~
~~road to Rofs, very good.~~
 Rofs is sweetly situated.
 It stands high; & commands
 an ^{extensive} ~~extensive~~ prospect
 every where way. The view
 from the church-yard is much
 celebrated. It is ~~very~~ ^{amusing}
~~trifling~~; but not picturesque.
 It consists of an ^{agreeable} ~~fine~~ twist
 of the Wye, & an extensive
 country beyond it; but it is
~~broken into~~ ^{broken into} ~~so~~ ^{many} ~~parts~~ ^{parts}
 of sufficient ~~distinction~~ ^{distinction}; is broken into too
 many ~~parts~~ ^{parts}; & is seen from
 too high a point. — The
~~of course~~ ^{of course} for a picture. —

As we leave the gates of Gloucester, the view is pleasing. A long stretch of meadow, filled with cattle, spreads into a foreground. Beyond, is a screen of wood, terminated by distant mountains; among which Malvern-hills make a respectable appearance. The road to Rofs, leads through a landscape, woody, rough, hilly, and agreeable.

Rofs stands high, and commands many distant views; but that from the church-yard is the most admired; and is indeed very amusing. It consists of an easy sweep of the Wye; and of an extensive country beyond it. But it is not picturesque. It is marked by no characteristic objects: it is broken into too many parts; and it is seen from too high a point. The spire of the church, which is the man of Rofs's heaven-directed spire, tapers beautifully. The inn, which was the house he lived in, is known by the name of the man of Rofs's house.

At Rofs, we planned our voyage down the Wye to Monmouth; providing a covered-boat, navigated by three men. Left strength would have carried us down; but the labour is in rowing back.

SECT.

William Gilpin, page from MS Wye tour book, and page from Observations on the River Wye (1782)



...al view. Nature is always
great in her designs; but very
unequal in her compositions.
She is an admirable colourist,
& can harmonize her tints with
great beauty; but is seldom
correct enough to harmonize
a whole. Her productions,

'Nature is always great in her designs; but very unequal in her compositions. She is an admirable colourist, & can harmonise her tints with great beauty; but is seldom correct enough to harmonize a whole...'



(upper left) Photo of Goodrich Castle from the river
(lower left)
William Gilpin, *Goodrich Castle*, aquatint (1782)

(upper right) section from Gilpin's MS Wye tour book
(lower right) Thomas Hearne, *Goodrich Castle on the Wye* (c.1794)



Hence therefore, the painter, who adheres strictly to the *composition* of nature, will rarely make a good picture. His picture must contain a *whole*: his archetype is but a *part*.

In general however he may obtain views of such parts of nature, as with the addition of a few trees; or a little alteration in the foreground, (which is a liberty, that must always be allowed) may be adapted to his rules; though he is rarely so fortunate as to find a landscape completely satisfactory to him. In the scenery indeed at Goodrich-castle the parts are few; and the whole is a very simple exhibition. The complex scenes of nature are generally those, which the artist finds most refractory to the rules of composition.

In following the course of the Wye, which makes here one of its boldest sweeps, we were carried almost round the castle, surveying it in a variety of forms. Many of these retrospects are good; but, in general, the castle loses, on this side, both its own dignity, and the dignity of its situation.

The views *from* the castle, were mentioned to us, as worth examining: but the rain was now set in, and would not permit us to land.

Hence therefore, the painter, who adheres strictly to the *composition* of nature, will rarely make a good picture. His picture must contain a *whole*: his archetype is but a *part*.

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William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye* [...], 1782

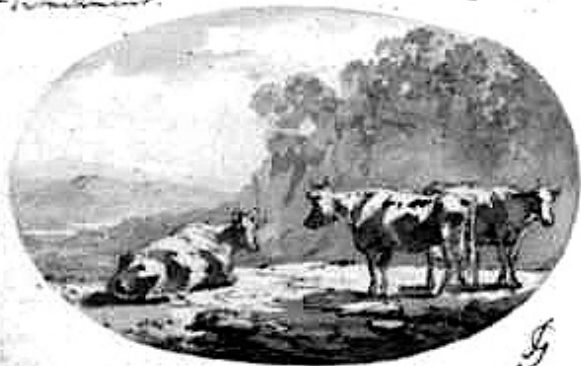


Claude, *Landscape with Narcissus and Echo* (1644)



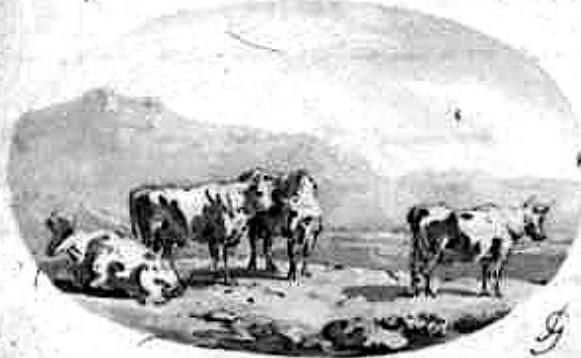
William Gilpin, *Landscape Composition*

When you introduce three, there may be
a Detachment.



G

When you introduce four, there should be



G

sufficient. Two will combine very well, or three. If you increase B. group beyond three, one or more, in proportion, sh^d be a little detached. This detachment prevents heaviness, & adds variety. It is the same ^{principle} applied to cattle, as we before applied to mountains. — The same subvariety of groups may be observed in distant cattle; only here you may introduce a greater number.

In grouping, contrasted attitudes.

+ see page 491.

'Two will combine very well, or three. If you increase the group beyond three, one or more, in proportion, sh^d be a little detached. This detachment prevents heaviness, & adds variety. It is the same principle applied to cattle, w^{ch} we before applied to mountains...'

William Gilpin, MS *Observations...Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland* (c.1773). Illustrations by Sawrey Gilpin.

Anon, *View of Wallbridge, Stroud*, (c.1790)

©Museum in the Park, Stroud



Many of these vallies are greatly injured in a picturesque light, by becoming scenes of habitation and industry. A cottage, a mill, or a hamlet among trees, may often add beauty to a rural scene: but when houses are scattered through every part, the moral sense can never make a convert of the picturesque eye.

Wm Gilpin, *Observations...River Wye* (1789)

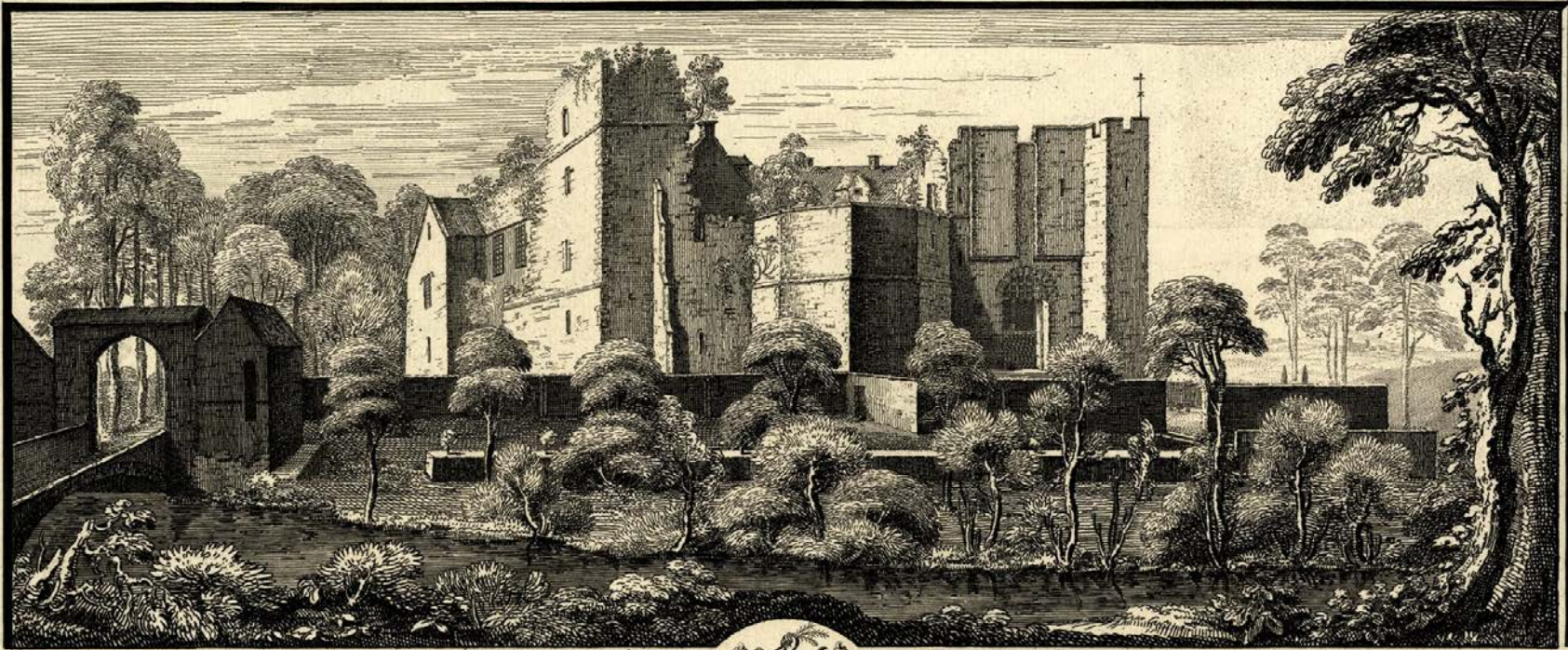


Thomas Rowlandson, *Visitors Inspecting the Abbey Ruins* (nd)



Gilpin: 'Tintern - abbey - The cross isle sh^d be longer & in better perspective & nearer the west-window ... a number of gabel-ends hurt the eye with their regularity; and disgust it by the vulgarity of their shape. A mallet judiciously used (but who durst use it?) might be of service in fracturing some of them...'

THE NORTH-EAST VIEW OF SCALEBY-CASTLE, IN THE COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND.



To Richard Gilpin Esq.
 This Prospect is humbly Inscr'd by
 his Oblig'd Servants
 Sam. & Nath. Buck.



THIS Castle n^o is still surrounded with a Moat in very good Order, was built by Richard the Rider, surnam'd Shiloff, who first possess'd y^e Manor of Scaleby by the Grant of R. Hen: I. From Him it descended along with y^e said Manor, for about Ten Generations unto Rob: Shiloff, who died in y^e Reign of R. Hen: VI. without Issue. Then it came by Marriage of y^e Heire's, to y^e Pickering's, & afterwards from them; by y^e like means to y^e Masgraves of Layton in this County, of whom after it had suffer'd much in y^e Civil Wars, it was purchas'd by Rich: Gilpin Esq. M.P. Grandfather of Richard Gilpin Esq. y^e present Proprietor. Sam. & Nath. Buck delin. et. Sculp. Publish'd according to Act of Parliament March 26. 1729. & Corsets

'LOUIS BABOON' (BOURBON) vs 'JOHN BULL'



Gillray, *The Genius of France, Expounding her Laws...* "Ye shall be Vain, Fickle & Foolish..." (1815)



'Britannia in Tribulation...seeking John Bull's Advice' 1807

'the increasing primitivism of contemporary literature [in the so-called Pre-Romantic period] was the natural consequence of rising anti-aristocratic feeling and the propagation, very often through the convenient and historically appropriate device of anti-French oppositions, of a supposedly English system of morality and aesthetics, a system with distinct social as well as national orientations, calculated to confront French supremacy, abase the frenchified great, and glorify the British many as the 'true' source of national virtue'... 'the aesthetic revolution...was an integral part of a still larger *nationalist* revolution...'



Claude, *Landscape with Jacob and Laban and his Daughters* (mid C17)



John Varley, *Landscape with Harlech Castle* (early C19)



Claude, *Landscape with Jacob and Laban and his Daughters* (mid C17)



John Varley, *Landscape with Harlech Castle* (early C19)

‘...with regard to real Views from Nature in this Country, he [Gainsborough] has never seen any Place that affords a Subject equal to the poorest imitations of Gaspar or Claude’. (Thos Gainsborough, letter to Philip, 2nd Earl of Hardwicke, c.1770?: *The Letters of Thomas Gainsborough*, ed. J. Hayes, New Haven & London, 2001, p.30)

THE
Virtuosi's Museum,
Containing
SELECT VIEWS,
in
England, Scotland and Ireland:
Drawn by P. SANDBY, Esq. R.A.
LONDON.
Printed for S. Hoare, at the Sign of the Gun, in Fleet Street.

Title Page to *The Virtuosi's Museum, Containing Select Views in England, Scotland and Ireland (1778-81)*, by Paul Sandby



Paul Sandby, *Roche Abbey, Yorkshire (c.1770s)*

Thomas Girtin, *Morpeth
Bridge*, 1802



J.M.W. Turner,
*Llanthony
Abbey*, 1794



But besides the *variety* of it's beauties, in some or other of which it may be rivalled; it possesses some beauties, which are *peculiar* to itself.

One of these peculiar features arises from the intermixture of wood and cultivation, which is found oftener in English landscape, than in the landscape of other countries. In France, in Italy, in Spain, and in most other places, cultivation, and wood have their separate limits. Trees grow in detached woods; and cultivation occupies vast, unbounded common fields. But in England, the custom of dividing property by hedges, and of planting hedge-rows, so universally prevails, that almost wherever you have cultivation, there also you have wood.

William Gilpin, *Observations... Lakes* (1786), I, 5-9



Now altho this regular intermixture produces often deformity on the nearer grounds; yet, at a distance it is the source of great beauty. On the spot, no doubt, and even in the first distances, the marks of the spade, and the plough; the hedge, and the ditch; together with all the formalities of hedge-row trees, and square divisions of property, are disgusting in a high degree. But when all these regular forms are softened by distance – when hedge-row trees begin to unite, and lengthen into streaks along the horizon – when farm-houses, and ordinary buildings lose all their vulgarity of shape, and are scattered about, in formless spots, through the several parts of a distance – it is inconceivable what richness, and beauty, this mass of deformity, when melted together, adds to landscape. One vast tract of wild, uncultivated country, unless either varied by large parts, or under some peculiar circumstances of light, cannot produce the effect. Nor is it produced by unbounded tracts of cultivation; which, without the intermixture of wood, cannot give richness to distance. – Thus English landscape affords a species of *rich distance*, which is rarely to be found in any other country.

William Gilpin, *Observations... Lakes* 1786, I, 5-9



...Thus English landscape affords a species of *rich distance*, which is rarely to be found in any other country. – You have likewise from this intermixture of wood and cultivation, the advantage of being sure to find a tree or two, on the foreground, to adorn any beautiful view you may meet with in the distance.

William Gilpin, *Observations... Lakes* 1786, I, 5-9

[Mr Darcy invites Elizabeth to join a walk himself, Mrs. Hurst and Miss Bingley, who has just been abusing Elizabeth's family. Elizabeth replies, laughing:]

“No, no; stay where you are. You are charmingly group'd, and appear to uncommon, advantage. The picturesque would be spoilt by admitting a fourth. Good bye.”

Pride and Prejudice Ch.10



[Donwell Abbey: Mr Knightley's country house]...its suitable, becoming, characteristic situation, low and sheltered – its ample gardens stretching down to meadows washed by a stream, of which the Abbey, with all the old neglect of prospect, had scarcely a sight – and its abundance of timber in rows and avenues, which neither fashion nor extravagance had rooted up. –The house was ...rambling and irregular...



Stowe, Buckinghamshire