

**TRAVEL WRITING AND THE RENEGOTIATION OF THE  
ENGLISH LANDSCAPE, 1760-1800**

by

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## **Abstract**

In this paper it is illustrated that late eighteenth-century English travel guidebook writers promoted idyllic rural landscapes that met or were created to meet picturesque tastes while concurrently advocating the alteration of regional landscapes by means of agriculture, industry and transportation routes. While the impulses behind nostalgic and developed landscapes are at cross-purposes, both were concepts used by guidebook authors to renegotiate perceptions of their local regions: the former to exhibit regional beauties and marvels by appealing to the prevailing aesthetics, the latter to combat stereotypes of backwardness, reframing regional identities within national trends of development and “improvement.” In this way late eighteenth-century travel guidebooks afford an interesting perspective on the rural English landscape of that period and how it was seen, experienced and represented by local promoters.

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***To my parents***

## Introduction

*Since persons of genius, taste, and observation, began to make the tour of their own country, and give such pleasing accounts of the natural history, and improving state, of the northern parts of the BRITISH Empire, the curious of all ranks have caught the spirit of visiting the same.*  
(Thomas West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 1778)

In the opening lines to one of the earliest guidebooks to the Lake District, the Jesuit priest Thomas West effectively captures three elements that characterize the tensions in eighteenth-century English guidebooks: the concepts of “taste,” “nature” and “improvement.” While West is speaking specifically of northern England, these themes are recurrent in eighteenth-century guidebooks regarding the English countryside. Working within the emerging taste for touring picturesque landscapes, late eighteenth-century guidebook authors fed the contemporary interest in visiting picturesque settings by promoting their region’s natural and pastoral features, while simultaneously using the medium of guidebooks to extend their region’s contemporary image and development through the promotion of its changing and “improving” landscape. As such, late-eighteenth-century guidebooks shed light on England’s changing contemporary landscape and how these changes could be absorbed, challenged or endorsed within the framework of tourist promotion.

Picturesque tourism is normally conceived as being a reaction to modernization and urbanization, as the search for timeless, rural landscapes that exemplified pastoral ideals or the hand of nature. In *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, Malcolm Andrews observes that by the 1790s, British tourists who adhered to Sir Uvedale Price’s conceptualization of the picturesque sought out landscapes free of contemporary industrialization, land enclosure and estate

improvement.<sup>1</sup> This decidedly nostalgic tourist focus is not so clearly evident within late-eighteenth-century guidebooks to the English countryside, where authors concurrently praised picturesque settings and supported changes of an industrial or agricultural nature.

By praising not only scenes of pastoral simplicity and the untouched majesty of nature, but also agricultural and industrial technological advances, late-eighteenth-century travel guidebooks are at once both nostalgic and developmental in character. Negotiating the changes of the agricultural and industrial “revolutions” by pursuing the inter-related causes of aesthetics, maximum efficiency and patriotism, guidebook writers juggled the competing priorities of preservation and development without addressing either their inherent contradictions or the potential negative effects of extensive agricultural and industrial change on the environment or the landscape.

Travel was an important element in eighteenth-century British culture. The British Empire was expanding across the globe with the movement of British adventurers, explorers, military, and colonists; closer to home, tourism was also increasing with the rising importance of the “Grand Tour” of continental Europe as a component in the social development of the British elite. Evidence of the sustained interest in travel can be gleaned from the fact that travel literature was one of the most popular genres of literature in late-eighteenth-century Britain, maintaining a close rivalry for dominance with the genre of fiction, and even surpassing fiction in popularity and quantity during the 1760s and 1770s.<sup>2</sup> British ideas concerning the purpose of tourism shifted in the mid-eighteenth century, so that in addition to travel being viewed as a vehicle for cultural learning through exposure to the arts of Italy and other cultural centres, the observation of picturesque landscapes also became a motive for travel.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 66.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers*, 11.

Elements of the landscape that were formerly seen as obstacles, such as mountains, became tourist destinations in and of themselves.<sup>3</sup>

With the increasing contact between Britain and the world at large, there grew a concurrent desire to look within, to learn about the makeup of Britain itself in order to better judge its place in the world. As one guidebook author phrased it: “The Necessity of knowing our own Country *previous* as well as in *preference* to that of others, is so self-evident, that it needs only being mentioned to bring Conviction.”<sup>4</sup> This rising British interest in touring the British Isles generated an assortment of guidebooks written by British authors, for other Britons.<sup>5</sup> By means of these guidebooks, local authors had the opportunity to shape how their region was perceived. Attracting tourists to picturesque settings provided regions, particularly those on the English periphery, with the opportunity to update their identities and combat stereotypes of backwardness by promoting local assets, highlighting regional improvement and linking their regions to national characteristics.

As many academic works have argued, the most prominent landscape aesthetics in late-eighteenth-century Britain were those of the “picturesque” and the “sublime.”<sup>6</sup> As the meanings of these concepts have changed over time, it would be useful here to address the picturesque and the sublime as commonly used in the pursuit of tourism in eighteenth-century Britain. The term “picturesque” emerged in Britain in the early eighteenth century as an anglicization of the French “*pittoresque*” or Italian “*pittoresco*” and was used to denote the kind of scenery or human activity proper for a painting. Its

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<sup>3</sup> Lickorish and Kershaw, “Tourism before 1840,” 8-9; Löfgren, *On Holiday*, 33-34; Moir, *Discovery of Britain*, xiv-xv; Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized*, 113.

<sup>4</sup> Burlington, *Modern Universal British Traveller*, iii

<sup>5</sup> Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers*, 37.

<sup>6</sup> These aesthetic approaches have been studied via their expression in tourism, art, literature, garden design and geography, as well as through the treatises of some of their prime exponents, particularly the works of William Gilpin, Sir Uvedale Price and Edmund Burke. See for example the works of Malcolm Andrews, John Barrell, Denis Cosgrove, Stephen Daniels, Michael Rosenthal, Ian Ousby, David Lowenthal and Hugh Prince.



definition was vague, but most frequently corresponded to physical landscapes that evoked the settings of seventeenth-century landscape artists Claude Lorraine, Salvatore Rosa, Gaspar and Nicolas Poussin.<sup>7</sup> As the century wore on, however, the adjective developed into an extremely contentious aesthetic concept.<sup>8</sup>

The term “picturesque” was complicated by the fact that it encompassed other concepts such as “the sublime” and “the beautiful,” terms that also evolved over the course of the eighteenth century. Edmund Burke outlined the relationship between the terms in the *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*:

...there appears a remarkable contrast. For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth, and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus, whereas early in the century the term “sublime” denoted a perception of the “awfulness” of God and the insignificance of man which could only be attained by those well-versed in classical literature, Burke’s re-conceptualization of the sublime in terms of basic human feelings of self-preservation rendered the term more accessible to a wider range of society.<sup>10</sup> This extension of the aesthetic was important to eighteenth-century rural tourism, which included the middling classes as well as the British elite.

For Burke, while the sublime and the beautiful could be combined within the same object, such as a work of art, there was a clear distinction between the two

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<sup>7</sup> Andrews, *Picturesque: Literary Sources and Documents*, 6.

<sup>8</sup> Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, vii-viii.

<sup>9</sup> Burke, *Sublime and the Beautiful*, 237-238. Burke first published this work in 1757, publishing a revised and expanded version in 1759.

<sup>10</sup> Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, 226-228.

concepts.<sup>11</sup> In practice, however, the terms “picturesque,” “beautiful” and “sublime” were often used interchangeably. As Ian Ousby notes in *The Englishman’s England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism*, the adjective “picturesque” could describe a scene that was predominately “sublime” or one that was predominately “beautiful,” in addition to settings that combined the two factors.<sup>12</sup>

In essence, the late-eighteenth-century conceptualization of the picturesque denoted a scene that combined the contradictory features of beauty and the sublime, or the tame and the wild, in a pictorial setting.<sup>13</sup> As Claire Pace notes, the contradiction between the sublime and the beautiful was a necessary component of the picturesque:

What is not always sufficiently recognized is the degree to which the sense of opposition, of polarity and tension, was a requisite. Each kind had its particular commonplace. It could be expressed variously as harmony/disharmony, or regularity/irregularity; constantly though, the singling out of one quality, or cluster of qualities, implied the existence of its opposite.<sup>14</sup>

Late-eighteenth-century conceptualizations of the “picturesque” and the “sublime” thus focussed more on composition and contrast and should not be confused with later, Romantic conceptions, where the “picturesque” corresponded more to nostalgic beauty<sup>15</sup> and the “sublime” was associated with “untouched nature,” gaining moral meaning in an increasingly industrialized country.<sup>16</sup>

In *The Search for the Picturesque*, Andrews notes that picturesque tourism was, at its core, based on a set of paradoxes. First, the tourist sought untouched nature and

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<sup>11</sup> Burke, *Sublime and the Beautiful*, 238.

<sup>12</sup> Ousby, *Englishman’s England*, 118.

<sup>13</sup> For an extensive treatment of the complex nature of the picturesque, see “The evolution of Picturesque taste, 1750-1800” in Andrews, 39-66.

<sup>14</sup> Pace, “Strong Contraries...Happy Discord,” 142.

<sup>15</sup> Although as Donna Landry notes, some academics, such as Howard Newby, do treat the picturesque and romantic movements as one and the same (1). See the chapter “Ruined Cottages: The Contradictory Legacy of the Picturesque for England’s Green and Pleasant Land” by Donna Landry in *Green and Pleasant Land* (2004) for a discussion of the different perspectives of these two aesthetic concepts.

<sup>16</sup> Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, 230-234; Berg and Clifford, *Consumers and Luxury*, 213.

then sought to improve it, and secondly, the tourist praised the native beauties of the British landscape by invoking idealized foreign models of comparison.<sup>17</sup> I would argue that beyond this, the treatment of rural landscapes in eighteenth-century English guidebooks reveals further paradoxes in how the English countryside was viewed by contemporaries, exhibiting discordant views on land aesthetics, utility and waste. For example, within eighteenth-century guidebooks, a newly enclosed and landscaped park could be considered quintessentially “English,” while more natural landscapes might either be valued for their sublimeness or seen as a waste land wanting intensified agricultural or industrial development.

This paper is based on the assessment of English travel guidebooks published in the period between 1760 and 1800, the height of the picturesque movement. The guidebooks are from throughout England and were selected from the collections available at the British Library and within *The Eighteenth Century* microfilm and online collections.<sup>18</sup> While many urban and site-specific guidebooks were also published in the period, only guidebooks that provided tours of the local countryside were included in this study. These guidebooks were typically local initiatives, written by persons who were resident in the region described, and with a target audience of other Britons. As such, eighteenth-century English travel guidebooks offer insight into local attitudes to the contemporary English landscape and into how local writers wished to mould the images of their respective regions within the national consciousness.

Because of their distinct origin and objectives, locally-produced guidebooks offer

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<sup>17</sup> Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 3. By foreign modes of comparison, Andrews refers the seventeenth-century European artists Claude Lorraine and Salvatore Rosa, whose painted landscapes became aligned in the British psyche with the concepts “picturesque” and “sublime.” Guidebook authors and tourists frequently compared physical landscapes to the work of French and Italian epic and landscape artists.

<sup>18</sup> *The Eighteenth Century: A Microfilm Collection Based on the British Library's Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue* (Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1983-) and *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (Gale Group, <http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>).

a valuable contrast to what we can learn through the study of the traveller's gaze and provide a useful resource in the study of tourism and identity. Since Mary Louise Pratt's groundbreaking work *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, the study of the traveller's gaze in the construction of the identity of both others and self has proven to be a useful methodological tool. However, with the intense focus on the traveller and his or her perceptions and judgement, the role of the "host" has often been overlooked. While the vision of the traveller or tourist may be filtered by their pre-conceived notions of the world and their place in it, there is also opportunity for those observed to exert their influence on the way in which they and their region are seen. One means by which locals could attempt to shape the way in which they were viewed by others was by writing guidebooks that could direct the sight of tourists to objects that would appeal to their tastes, as well as to objects deemed worthy of promotion. The locally-produced guidebooks in this study might be seen in some ways as precursors to twenty-first century local municipal, provincial or state government travel resources.

This study sheds light on ad hoc, locally-produced guidebooks, a type prevalent in late eighteenth-century England prior to the creation of mass-produced guidebook series. The focus of this study is exclusively on England, though the picturesque tourist movement extended throughout Britain as well as further afield. Travel guidebooks as we know them today, with specialized companies offering a series of regularized books on different travel destinations, were a development of the nineteenth century. First begun by John Murray in 1836, the modern guidebook generally consists of centralized efforts to systematically record information valuable to tourists travelling to and within various countries and continents. By contrast, their eighteenth-century precursors were typically either first-hand travel accounts or local initiatives written by persons who were

resident in the locality described.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the study of late-eighteenth-century English guidebooks also serves to expand our knowledge of the history of this genre in England, which to date has been largely limited to accounts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>20</sup>

While eighteenth-century guidebooks frequently centred on regional urban centres and their surrounding areas, the depiction of the surrounding countryside is the focal point of this study. These guidebooks touched on a variety of themes, from aesthetics to the promotion of local identity, and offer important insight into contemporary understandings of landscape, more varied and dynamic than might be discerned from artistic renderings, yet more nostalgic than depictions by agricultural writers and others primarily concerned with development. Through tourist guidebooks, regional authors in eighteenth-century England renegotiated their local landscapes by highlighting lands that met the nostalgic tastes of the picturesque while concurrently putting forth conflicting representations of regions in modes of transition, “improvement” and development. Enclosed lands were depicted in guidebooks as idyllic English landscape features, despite contemporary controversy over the increased enclosure of the English countryside. In discussing agricultural improvement, however, authors praised the conversion of waste lands (often characterized as sublime) into productive agricultural land. Carrying on with the theme of “improvement,” guidebook authors encouraged the spread of industrial development in their respective regions, promoting the touring of industrial sites while suggesting areas ripe for further development. The overt efforts of guidebook authors to emphasize the development of local infrastructure and the increasing accessibility of picturesque scenes reflected ironies and tensions

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<sup>19</sup> Morgan, *National Identities and Travel*, 19, and Grewal, *Home and Harem*, 102-104.

<sup>20</sup> The most focused studies on early English Guidebooks as a genre have been Sillitoe’s *Leading the Blind: A Century of Guidebook Travel, 1815-1914* and Vaughan’s *The English Guidebook c. 1780-1870, An Illustrated History*.

inherent to touring “wild” landscapes. While seeking wild landscapes, the easing of tourist access could not help but “tame” such scenes.

English guidebook writers promoted idyllic rural landscapes that met or were created to meet picturesque tastes while concurrently advocating the alteration of regional landscapes by means of agriculture, industry and transportation routes. While impulses behind nostalgic and developed landscapes are at cross-purposes, both were concepts used by guidebook authors to renegotiate perceptions of their local regions: the former to exhibit regional beauties and marvels by appealing to the prevailing aesthetics, the latter to combat stereotypes of backwardness, reframing regional identities within national trends of development and “improvement.” In this way late eighteenth-century travel guidebooks afford an interesting perspective on the rural English landscape of that period and how it was seen, experienced and represented by contemporary local promoters.

## Nostalgia and Landscape: Enclosure in Late-Eighteenth-Century English Guidebooks

Within late eighteenth-century travel guidebooks, the enclosure is presented as the epitome of pastoral beauty. The enclosed landscape is treated as a quintessential English landscape formation, a mark of cultivation and order on the land. Yet, this treatment deliberately downplays the more complex place of enclosure in the eighteenth-century landscape, as well as within contemporary political and social debates. While enclosures had been part of the English landscape to some degree since at least the fifteenth century, and particularly within some of the regions covered by the guidebooks of this study, the treatment accorded to enclosures in English guidebooks served to depict enclosures as a normal, traditional and pan-English formation of landscape, rather than one of contentious, regional and frequently recent and ongoing creation. The period of 1760-1800 was the height of the parliamentary enclosure movement and the debates concerning the place of enclosure as an English form of landscape and agriculture, but guidebooks do not discuss these debates, nor the possible side effects of enclosure on the landscape, economy, wildlife or demography of eighteenth-century England.

This equation of enclosures with beauty and order rather than with agricultural technique may be partly due to the position of guidebooks writers. Most guidebooks of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were written by educated men of the lower gentry or professional classes who were either clergymen, library owners, publishers or teachers.<sup>21</sup> While women also published travel advice, these were typically written from

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<sup>21</sup> Among the known authors in this study, Thomas West (1720?–1779) was a Jesuit priest, John Price (1773–1801) was a bookseller, and both John Love and Richard Beatniffe (bap. 1739, d. 1818) were printers and booksellers (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). For a more extensive look at the background of authors of English guidebooks in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Vaughan, *English Guidebook*, 119-138.

the perspective of a travel journal. (No examples of regional guidebooks written by women were found in the course of this study, though many guidebook authors were anonymous and so it is possible that some were written by women.) Having positions or professions that were largely removed from reliance upon the cultivation and exploitation of the land,<sup>22</sup> guidebook writers were able to view enclosures as detached observers whose views were not bound by the concerns of livelihood or subsistence. This very distance, Raymond Williams argues, is a necessary element to the conception of a scene as landscape: “a working country is hardly ever a landscape. The very idea of landscape implies separation and observation.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Denis Cosgrove notes that “Landscape distances us from the world in critical ways, defining a particular relationship with nature and those who appear in nature, and offers us the illusion of a world in which we may participate subjectively by entering the picture frame along the perspectival access.”<sup>24</sup> Enclosed lands were working country, but the detachment of guidebook writers from the land and the application of picturesque principles which, among other tools, included the observation of lands through the coloured lenses of the “Claude glass,”<sup>25</sup> allowed guidebook writers to view the landscape as one would a painting. In this way, guidebook authors invoking the picturesque could reduce the landscape to a set of artistic conventions and confine their treatment of enclosures to aesthetic and philosophical observations on their physical or visual form.

The place of enclosure in English history is the subject of much debate and controversy, and has been since the rise of parliamentary enclosure in the mid-

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<sup>22</sup> Clergymen could, however, still be implicated through their livings.

<sup>23</sup> Williams, *Country and the City*, 120.

<sup>24</sup> Cosgrove, “Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea,” 55.

<sup>25</sup> The Claude glass has been well summarized by Löfgren: “This fashionable item was a small convex mirror that miniaturized the reflected landscape and gave it a darker more artistic tint: it was an instrument for focusing, framing and composing, named after the landscape painter Claude Lorraine, famous for his special light effects. By using lenses of different tints, the traveler changed a single landscape: moonlight, dawn, winter.” (18)



eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, parliamentary enclosure is at the root of the controversy over enclosure, in that historians and critics have tended to equate parliamentary enclosure with all enclosure, though the characteristics of parliamentary enclosure differed from those of earlier and contemporary enclosures by other means.<sup>27</sup>

For eighteenth-century social critics as well as many subsequent historians,<sup>28</sup> enclosure and in particular, parliamentary enclosure, has been blamed for many of England's economic problems in the eighteenth century, including increased poverty, higher costs of living, vagrancy, increased reliance on wage labour and the erosion of existing parish support systems. In fact, there were many more complex and systematic causes of these issues.<sup>29</sup> These responses were shaped by the fact that enclosure was a very visible and, in some places of the country, dramatic change to the English landscape over a relatively brief period of time. Between 1750 and 1820, the height of the parliamentary enclosure period, approximately 30 percent of England's agricultural land was enclosed by Act of Parliament.<sup>30</sup> In addition, many other lands were enclosed at this time by non-parliamentary means, as Chapman and Seeliger have noted in their study of enclosure in Southern England.<sup>31</sup> There was, of course, considerable variation by region but all regions of England experienced increasing enclosure during the late-eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, despite the controversial nature of enclosure, as Rachel Crawford

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<sup>26</sup> See for example, Muir, *Approaches to Landscape*, 171-2; Tate, *The English Village Community and the Enclosure Movements*, 174-175; Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure and the Vernacular Landscape*, 16 and 44.

<sup>27</sup> Chapman and Seeliger, *Enclosure, Environment and Landscape*, 13.

<sup>28</sup> See Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*, 2-4 for a discussion of the establishment and perpetuation of the orthodox view established by J.L. and Barbara Hammond in *The Village Labourer* (1911) that parliamentary enclosure was a fundamental cause of rural poverty.

<sup>29</sup> Crawford, 43 and 261-262n16; Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*, 146.

<sup>30</sup> Neeson, *Commoners*, 329: "Between 1750 and 1820, 20.9 percent of England was enclosed by Act of Parliament, or some 6.8 million acres; as a proportion of agricultural land the area was much greater, perhaps 30 percent of the total. Moreover in the Midlands, enclosure affected the most densely populated areas."

<sup>31</sup> Chapman and Seeliger, *Enclosure, Environment and Landscape*, 13.

notes in *Poetry, Enclosure and the Vernacular Landscape, 1700-1830*, over the course of the long eighteenth century, British tastes changed from a preference for open spaces to one for contained spaces, which were seen to express authentically English qualities.<sup>32</sup> The guidebooks in this study corroborate Crawford's finding, portraying enclosures as ordered and productive landscape structures.

Enclosed land was represented within these eighteenth-century guidebooks as an element of beauty and order within picturesque prospects of the land. In Richard Beatniffe's *The Norfolk Tour*, published in 1777, a picturesque scene is described in the following terms: "The varied lawns, and hanging slopes, crowned in some places with woods, and in others broken by rich inclosures [sic], are all truly picturesque and beautiful."<sup>33</sup> Key to establishing the beauty of the enclosure was the interpretation of its form as simple yet irregular, therefore, according to these writers, adding a softened element of order, organization and cultivation to the rural landscape. Similarly, the author of *A Description of Brighthelmston*<sup>34</sup> argued that the "delightful prospect" from Devil's-dyke in Sussex, is one where "the scene changes from rude and extensive heaths, to a beautifully enclosed and finely cultivated country on one side, and on the other an uninterrupted view of the sea for many leagues."<sup>35</sup> As described earlier, contrast was a necessary ingredient to a picturesque setting, and in eighteenth-century guidebooks, sublime elements were frequently set against enclosed lands when describing the composition of picturesque sights.

This alignment of enclosures with Burke's "beauty" is further evidenced by the fact that the most frequently employed adjectives used to describe enclosures are: "fine," "beautiful," "sweet," "romantic," "rich" and "elegant." Thus, "BARDSEY, under its rocks

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<sup>32</sup> Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure and the Vernacular Landscape*, 253-255.

<sup>33</sup> Beatniffe, *Norfolk Tour*, 84.

<sup>34</sup> Brighthelmston is the Sussex community now known as Brighton.

<sup>35</sup> *Description of Brighthelmston*, 36.

and hanging woods, stands in a delightful point of view; in front a sweet fall of inclosures, marked with clumps of trees and hedgerows, gives it a most picturesque appearance.”<sup>36</sup> While many of the enclosures so described were “old enclosures,” we may see through these examples how, through the language of the picturesque, enclosed land was portrayed as an English ideal.

The reduction of enclosed lands to a set of aesthetic conventions rather than a method, effective or ineffective, of farming is indicative of the distance between the writers of English guidebooks and personal involvement in working the land. Guidebook writers approached enclosures as outside observers who evaluated enclosures visually from a distance. Without a personal stake in the observed land, they were free to treat an enclosure as an object of beauty and order.

The depiction of enclosed land as both a natural and artful element of order upon the landscape can be seen in Father Thomas West’s *Guide to the Lakes*:

...the objects are diversified in the simple and natural order, and contrasted by the fine transition of rural elegance, and pastoral beauty; cultivation and pasturage, waving woods and sloping inclosures [sic], adorned by nature, and improved by art, under the bold sides of stupendous mountains, whose airy summits, the turned-up eye cannot now reach, and deny all access to the human kind.<sup>37</sup>

West further claims: “What charms the eye in wandering over the vale, is that not one streight [sic] line offends; the roads all serpentine round the mountains, and the hedges wave with the inclosures [sic]. All are thrown into some path of beauty, or line of nature.”<sup>38</sup> “Serpentine,” an adjective frequently used in the late-eighteenth century, denoted a curved line, compatible with Burke’s description of the beautiful and William Hogarth’s *Analysis of Beauty* (1753). The serpentine line was perceived as “natural,”

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<sup>36</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 36.

<sup>37</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 54-55.

<sup>38</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 109.

and for Hogarth, the highest form of beauty.<sup>39</sup> Through formulations such as these, enclosed lands (or those enclosed by means other than parliamentary enclosure) were presented as an organic part of the English landscape, their irregularity in shape giving them a natural feel, while their function as boundaries served to bring visual order to the countryside.

Despite their apparent personal immunity from the possible negative effects of enclosure, guidebook writers were not impartial in their treatment of enclosures, nor could they be. In pursuing the objectives of local promotion, guidebook writers were tied to landowners in two ways. First, they were attempting to draw landowners as tourists to their regions, and hence it was wise not to offend their potential visitors/consumers. This is evident, for example, in the *Brighthelmston Directory*, which is inscribed “To the Nobility and Gentry, resorting to Brighthelmston, this improved Edition of the Brighthelmston Directory is inscribed, by their most obedient, and most humble servant, the Author.”<sup>40</sup> Second, the tourist development of local regions was dependent in many ways on the owners of enclosures: these were the persons who possessed those landscape features that guidebook owners were claiming as regional resources or treasures, as well as being important sources of funding and investment into the development of regional tourism potential. The estates of local nobility and gentry were extensively promoted within local guidebooks, many of the picturesque tours being located upon their estates. In addition, local landholders were often instrumental in funding better access to tourist sites, as will be addressed in the final section of this paper. Hence, the ideological interpretation of the formation of enclosures offered by guidebook authors was tied to the very conventional English dogma of an ordered freedom, where law rules but without the strictures and oppression of absolutism.

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<sup>39</sup> Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized*, 127.

<sup>40</sup> *Brighthelmston Directory*, dedication page.

The enclosures most praised for their irregular shape were “old enclosures” or those that had developed gradually over time, rather than parliamentary enclosures, whose lines were typically straight and angular. However, one of the results of parliamentary enclosure that was praised by eighteenth-century guidebook writers and naturalized into the English landscape was the private park. A number of studies have noted that the evolution of private property that corresponded with the enclosure movement involved the deliberate and extensive reshaping of the English landscape for social and aesthetic purposes. Furthermore, the proliferation of the landscape park and the manipulation of scenery was an assertion of ownership and power on the land.<sup>41</sup> As John Rennie Short notes, “While transforming the countryside into an ordered mosaic of bounded fields, the same powerful groups were also creating the other major environmental icon, the English landscape garden. One was for profit, the other for delight, but both were an exercise of power.”<sup>42</sup> In their promotion of landscape parks as tourist sites, guidebook writers supported the expression of the power of the nobility and the gentry upon the English landscape.

Within the eighteenth-century guidebooks treated in this study, parks are handled in a purely aesthetic fashion, without any consideration of the impact of such parks on local communities. For example, in *The Southampton Guide* the changes to the landscape wrought by the Earl of Peterborough were praised as follows:

The River is not very large, but the Tide here forms a Bay just under this Mount, which being contiguous to an Estate belonging to the late Earl of Peterborough, his Lordship purchased it, and converted it into a Kind of wilderness, through which there are various winding gravel Walks, which are extremely romantic and agreeable; here is also a fine Bowling-green.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Williamson & Bellamy, *Property and Landscape*, 116, quoted in Muir, *Approaches to Landscape*, 170.

<sup>42</sup> Short, *Imagined Country*, 67.

<sup>43</sup> [Rev. Letchiot?], *Southampton Guide*, 48-49.

Even in the most extreme cases of changing the local landscape for the purposes of creating a park, the relocation of entire villages, called “imparkment,” guidebook authors did not comment upon the effects for local villagers but instead praised the improving impulses of landowners.<sup>44</sup> This is exemplified in W. Bott’s guide, *A Description of Buxton and the Adjacent Country*, published in 1796. When describing Lord Scarsdale’s park improvement project, which involved the demolition of Scarsdale’s existing seat, the local village being “removed to a considerable distance” and the rerouting of a local road, Bott’s comments were limited to the aesthetic effects of Scarsdale’s “improvements,” with the observation that “the seat of *Lord Scarsdale* justly excites the admiration of all those who visit it, yet it is not brought to that state of perfection to which his *Lordship* intends to carry it, being now employed in making considerable alterations and improvements, both in the house and the grounds about it.”<sup>45</sup> Whereas the displacement of villages marked one of the greatest critiques to enclosure in the eighteenth century, within Bott’s guide this extreme change was not evaluated in terms of effects on the local populace, but in terms of effects on the landscape.

Refraining in this way from making social commentary on parks, guidebook authors instead evaluated parks with regards to the quality of their artifice: the extent to which they were able to improve on nature or recreate picturesque scenes and the extent to which they were able to meld into the “natural” landscape of the area. This is evident in the 1789 guide entitled *A Companion to the Leasowes, Hagley and Enville, with a sketch of Fisherwick, the seat of the Right Hon. Earl Donegall, to which is prefixed, the Present State of Birmingham:*

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<sup>44</sup> The relocation of the entire village was rare, but did occur. The most renowned critique of enclosure, Goldsmith’s poem “The Deserted Village,” concerned the practice of “imparkment” (Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure and the Vernacular Landscape*, 40-43). More common was the enclosure of commons and waste lands for parkland, which also affected locals through the loss of communal pastures, fuel, berries and herbs, recreation, fishing and hunting grounds, and other rights (Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*, 124-139).

<sup>45</sup> Bott, *Buxton and the Adjacent Country*, 33.

Altho' in this delightful EPITOME of rural elegance, 'tis possible to discover that the Hand of Art has done much, guided by the most glowing imagination, and refined taste, yet it is evident that nature has done infinitely more: --The chief merit of Mr. Shenstone, the celebrated designer of the LEASOWES, visibly consisted in lopping off exuberances and supplying omissions; now heightening a beauty, and now concealing a blemish. --In the course of our progress thro' the varied scenes which the LEASOWES present, we shall have frequent occasion to admire the skill and discernment of its arranger.<sup>46</sup>

This notion of building “natural” picturesque settings is one that is seen throughout the guidebooks in this study, wherein the authors applaud the efforts of landowners at creating wildernesses, meandering streams and nature walks, among other features on their estates. By contrast, the practice of turning actual wildernesses into agricultural land was also praised by guidebook owners, as will be seen in the following section.

The way that enclosures are treated in eighteenth-century English travel guidebooks reflects how a relatively new and ongoing landscape change can be treated as a traditional or normal feature of the landscape. It also reveals how an elite landowner could subtly reshape the land within their enclosure to make it seem more traditional, provided that the park blended convincingly and picturesquely with the natural and historic local landscape. As Ann Bermingham has noted, “Precisely when the countryside – or at least large portions of it – was becoming unrecognizable, and dramatically marked by historical change, it was offered as an image of the homely, the stable, the ahistorical.”<sup>47</sup> Though the English countryside changed greatly over the course of the eighteenth century, elements of that change that spoke to picturesque ideals could be incorporated as characteristic and nostalgic features of the English landscape.

In this section we spoke of the physical form of agricultural land and how it was naturalized by the writers of eighteenth-century English guidebooks. In the following

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<sup>46</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology*, 9, quoted in Muir, *Approaches to Landscape*, 172.

section we will examine a type of agricultural change that was recognized by guidebook writers as a recent alteration to the landscape and was celebrated as an innovation: the conversion of “waste lands” to agricultural land.



## Wasteful and Improved Lands: Competing Conceptions of the English Countryside

Whereas guidebook authors presented enclosed lands as a traditional and intrinsic part of the English landscape, they also observed agricultural change in the form of the increased farming of previously uncultivated land. Authors noted measures to enclose these former “waste” lands and praised their “improvement” by landowners. Aside from the extensive and favourable descriptions of the agricultural changes being wrought by those landowners who took on waste lands, the standard language of “waste” versus “improvement” is indicative of how contemporary writers and society perceived these changes.

In the context of picturesque tourism, the treatment guidebook authors give to the conquest of waste lands is curious in that those lands characterized as “waste” were also characterized as sublime landscapes. As previously discussed, a key feature of a picturesque composition was the sublime. Sublime elements were the wild, natural or untamed features of the landscape—for example, mountains, steep hillsides, waterfalls, marshes or rude heaths—that evoked feelings of discomfort, fear or awe. Sublime lands were uncultivated lands and therefore were viewed by some contemporaries as “waste.” However, while termed “waste,” these lands had any number of uses, as Gordon Mingay has noted: “Parts of the waste might be useful for some very sparse grazing, for gathering wild berries and digging turves or peat for fuel, and perhaps for getting supplies of clay, gravel and stone for repairing houses and maintaining the roads.”<sup>48</sup> Waste lands were particularly abundant in northern England, but were also extensive over much of England in the eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*, 8.

From a touristic point of view, waste lands were an asset to those areas seeking to attract picturesque tourists. Thus, the treatment of “waste” lands in eighteenth-century guidebooks is intriguing. While on the one hand, picturesque tourists sought wild landscapes and guidebook writers extolled these features, on the other hand, guidebook authors praised the efforts of agriculturalists to reclaim waste lands or “improve” them.

In the late-eighteenth century, new systems of farming, enclosure and the reclamation of waste lands were rapidly transforming England’s agricultural landscape.<sup>50</sup> In addition to the open fields of the English midlands, waste lands throughout the country were increasingly subject to parliamentary enclosure in the eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> This was particularly so in the late-eighteenth century, when the French Revolution led to greater demand for agricultural production in wartime Britain. In the war period of 1793-1815, nearly two million acres of open-field arable and commons were enclosed, as well as 905,000 acres of commons and wastes.<sup>52</sup> Increased demand made it more worthwhile for landowners to incur the additional expense required to render waste lands agriculturally productive. In addition, some waste lands were rich in minerals and by enclosing these lands landowners would then be able to exploit them through mining.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the very visible agricultural changes of the eighteenth century, Hugh Prince notes in *Art and Agrarian Change, 1710-1815*, that “artists turned away from the

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<sup>50</sup> Prince, “Art and Agrarian Change,” in Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, 107. Historians now debate the notion of an agricultural revolution in eighteenth-century England, citing long-term rather than overnight change. For example, using new crops to restore soil fertility occurred in the sixteenth century, though it was only by the mid-eighteenth century that their use became widespread in England. Nevertheless, the late-eighteenth century marked a significant period for agriculture in that Britain was able to grow significantly more (agricultural production rose approximately 29-64 percent) and feed more people (the population grew by about 50 percent), while using less labour. (Mingay, “Agriculture and Rural Life” in Dickinson, ed., *Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 147-151)

<sup>51</sup> Whyte, “Taming the Fells,” 46-47.

<sup>52</sup> Mingay, *Parliamentary Enclosure in England*, 22.

<sup>53</sup> Mingay, “Agriculture and Rural Life” in Dickinson, ed., *Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 149.

evidence of innovation, indeed, from scenes of cultivation in general.”<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, he notes that by 1800, there was a clear contrast in how wastes were viewed by picturesque tourists and agriculturalists:

By the end of the eighteenth century picturesque tourists were eulogising heaths and moors for their native roughness and playful disorder whilst agricultural writers complained loudly of the stubborn poverty of such villainous wastes. Conversely, to seekers after the picturesque cultivated land appeared disgusting or insipid, but to agriculturalists it seemed charming and luscious.<sup>55</sup>

Prince notes that while agrarian change was a subject that contemporary writers explored in some detail, such was not the case in contemporary art, where artists “who were increasingly sensitive to landscape, and to that of the contemporary English countryside, seemed to ignore such graphic evidence of agrarian change.”<sup>56</sup> While agricultural change was less visible in painting, as Jon Gregory notes, it was frequently represented visually through maps.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike artists, guidebook writers did not ignore contemporary agrarian change, but were instead selective in their representations and approaches. While enclosures and parks were absorbed into the picturesque prospect of the English countryside, the conversion of waste lands into agricultural lands were overtly recognized and praised as transformations of the landscape. The competing views of waste lands did not seem to affect guidebook authors, who both celebrated the sublimeness of waste lands and praised their elimination.

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<sup>54</sup> Prince, “Art and Agrarian Change,” in Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, 107. On this point, Cosgrove notes: “The idea of change, or process, is very difficult to incorporate into landscape painting, although there are certain conventions like the *memento mori* or the ruined building which occasionally do so. But one of the consistent purposes of landscape painting has been to present an image of order and proportioned control, to suppress evidence of tension and conflict between social groups and within human relations in the environment.” (“Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea,” 57-58).

<sup>55</sup> Prince, “Art and Agrarian Change,” in Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, 107.

<sup>56</sup> Prince, “Art and Agrarian Change,” in Cosgrove and Daniels, *Iconography of Landscape*, 98.

<sup>57</sup> Gregory, “Mapping Improvement,” 74.

In the composition of picturesque perspectives, sublime waste lands were a necessary component. Sublime features ranged from the uncultivated heath to jagged rock formations, their common features being their roughness and the evocation of fear or powerlessness. A mountain could inspire fear through its sheer size, jaggedness and inhospitableness to human life. A heath might evoke fear as an area of perceived disorder and lawlessness, a place associated with harbouring idlers and criminals.<sup>58</sup> In short, a sublime feature was unrefined and inspired feelings of awe or fear due to its inhospitable and even dangerous nature, real or imagined. It was by contrast to sublime lands that other lands were beautiful.

Guidebook authors highlighted waste lands when composing picturesque views, as can be seen in the following examples. Heaths might form part of an “exquisitely fine” perspective: “Over the tops of the environing trees on the right, the brown heath appears, beyond which we have a delightful contrast, in a richly cultivated country, stretching away to the utmost limit of the dusky horizon.”<sup>59</sup> The element of contrast was key, and the “wild brown heath heightens the beauties of the fertile plain.”<sup>60</sup> Rock formations, be they mountains, cliffs or otherwise, were waste lands that evoked strong sublime sentiments, being particularly inhospitable to cultivation. As John Love noted in *The New Waymouth Guide*, being on top of the “Barn Rock” or “Durdle Door Rock,” with “a tremendous, frightful precipice all around, strikes the mind with horror!”<sup>61</sup> The guidebook’s descriptive passages illustrate that the key points of interest in the “rough,” “uneven” projection from the cliffs was its formation by the powers of nature: “This Rock, as well as many hereabout, particularly at and near the cove, shew [sic] that there has been a vast convulsion of nature, by some powerful cause; the natural layers of Rocks

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<sup>58</sup> Gregory, “Mapping Improvement,” 66.

<sup>59</sup> Leasowes, *Hagley, and Enville*, 97.

<sup>60</sup> Leasowes, *Hagley, and Enville*, 105.

<sup>61</sup> Love, *New Waymouth Guide*, 45.

being turned from a horizontal to a perpendicular direction, and in some places quite overturn'd."<sup>62</sup> Waterfalls were also powerful expressions of the sublime: "The bold winding hills, the intersecting mountains, the pyramidal cliffs, the bulging, broken, rugged rocks, the hanging woods, the easy water-falls in some places, and in others the tumbling roaring cataract, are parts of the sublimer [sic] scenes in this surprising vale."<sup>63</sup> While sublime scenes were valued for owing more to nature than to art, guidebook authors and tourists did not hesitate to compare them to art. When describing the view from what he labelled "WINDERMERE Station III," Thomas West noted that the mountainous landscape exhibited "the most magnificent amphitheatre, and grandest assemblage of mountains, dells, and chasms, that ever the fancy of POUSSIN suggested, or the genius of ROSA invented."<sup>64</sup> In both landscape art and the physical landscape, the sublime was a valued element of the picturesque whole, and guidebooks authors were conscious of this.

Nevertheless, in the late-eighteenth century a spirit of improvement pervaded English society, a sentiment that was frequently asserted in eighteenth-century guidebooks. "Improvement" was an adjective frequently used by contemporaries to describe landscapes. The term "improvement" was applied to both agricultural and parkland landscapes,<sup>65</sup> as well as to the renovation of country houses and the industrialization of the eighteenth-century countryside.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, the term was so widespread as to give birth to the expression "improvers," an expression that could be either laudatory or derogatory.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Love, *New Weymouth Guide*, 44.

<sup>63</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 164.

<sup>64</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 66.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory, "Mapping Improvement" 64.

<sup>66</sup> Pugh, "Introduction" in Pugh, ed., *Reading Landscape*, 6.

<sup>67</sup> An example of the term "improver" being used in a negative sense is in an excerpt of a travel-journal based guidebook by Mrs. Murray, which refers to a critique made by the picturesque theorist Richard Payne Knight: "A gentleman, whose taste stands as high as any man's,

In the guidebooks used in this study, it was common to discuss the local agriculture<sup>68</sup> and to comment upon the industriousness of local landholders in increasing agricultural productiveness. In *Tour to Cheltenham Spa; or Gloucestershire Display'd* (1788), Simon Moreau spent a great deal of time describing the improvements wrought by Mr. Richard Bishop in Gloucestershire:

Mr. Richard Bishop has within these fifty years, by bringing the grass seeds, turnips, and clover into use, taught the Coteswold [sic] farmers (who, till that time, used to send their sheep and cattle to winter in the vale for want of fodder) to become an opulent people, and keep more than double the live stock they were used to do upon their own lands, throughout the year; which, while they feed and fatten, dung and fertilize the soil, and infallibly secure a good succeeding crop of corn; so that under favourable circumstances, and judicious management, the produce of an acre will, in this country, sometimes equal that of a like quantity of land in the Vale, where the rents are double and treble the price, and the land will not admit of proportionable [sic] improvements.<sup>69</sup>

The extensive description of farming techniques marks a departure from viewing the land solely through a picturesque lens, instead demonstrating the concurrent efforts of guidebook authors to highlight regional potential and innovation. Similarly, in *The Weymouth Guide* (1788), John Love praises agricultural change when noting how a landowner turned the island of Brown-sea Castle, from “a mere barren heath” to “a luxuriant fertilized country.”<sup>70</sup>

While praising innovative landholders, guidebook authors also critiqued those who were less so. For example, in his *Guide to the Lakes*, Thomas West notes the agricultural improvements of the noble owner of Holker, while critiquing more traditional farmers in the area who were slow to take up new practices:

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observed and lamented the extent of Mr. —’s operations. Formerly, said he, improvers, at least, kept near the house, but this fellow crawls like a snail all over the grounds, and leaves his cursed slime behind him, wherever he goes.” (Note to Knight’s Didactic Poem, called “The Landscape,” quoted in Murray, *Lakes of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire*, 21n-22n.)

<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the opening pages of many a guidebook boast of the quality of the local sheep.

<sup>69</sup> Moreau, *Tour to Cheltenham Spa*, 64-65.

<sup>70</sup> Love, *New Weymouth Guide*, 41.

HOLKER... adds to the scenes what is peculiar to itself, with the improvements of the noble owner, finished in a masterly stile [sic]. The traveller will here observe husbandry in a more flourishing way than [sic] in the country he is soon to visit. The farmers here, as elsewhere, are slow in imitating new practices; but the continued success which attends his lordship's improvements has not failed in effecting a reformation amongst the CARTMEL farmers."<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, John Price noted in *The Worcester Guide* (1799) that the Witley estate seemed neglected despite the many potential improvements that could be made by the absentee owner.<sup>72</sup> The praising of innovative agricultural practices and the conversion of waste lands to agricultural lands, as well as the criticism of traditional farming and neglect mark a departure from picturesque principles in that neglected lands (lands given back to nature) were in essence sublime.

Similarly, despite praising parks for purely aesthetic purposes, guidebook authors were also apt (indeed, in the same book) to praise those who used their parks more practically. The author of *A Companion to the Leasowes, Hagley and Enville* effusively extols the park of Lord Donegall, where, "instead of being solely devoted to the feeding of a few useless deer," the park is used for the improvement of the "neighing race" and the "horned kind."<sup>73</sup> As we have seen with land-based agricultural improvement, Lord Donegall's improvements to livestock were held up as a source of national pride and example: "His Lordship's exertions to improve the breed of cattle has every claim to public gratitude, as he stops at no expense or pains to obtain the most valuable stock, and has already reared some of the finest oxen, both for beauty and size, that this country can boast of."<sup>74</sup> Highlighting local innovation in all its forms was a means for guidebook authors to raise the profile of their respective regions within the national scene.

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<sup>71</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 37.

<sup>72</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 94.

<sup>73</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 119.

<sup>74</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 118.

Finally, the evaluation of improved lands illustrates an entirely different set of criteria than those applied to waste lands. Whereas the disorder and irregularity of a waste land was of primary value, on improved land the triumph of man over nature was of prime importance. This is particularly evident in the description of Croome, seat of the Earl of Coventry, in *The Worcester Guide*:

If we examine the vicinity of this seat in an agricultural point of view, we shall there find objects worthy of our attention. The house at Croome, says a writer, in the Agricultural View of Worcestershire, is surrounded with 1400 acres of land under the Earl's own inspection, upon which you do not see a thistle growing, nor a tree or bush undesigned [sic], or out of place. It may, very justly, be stiled [sic] a pattern farm for this kingdom, from its well-formed plantations, and its judicious and extensive drains.<sup>75</sup>

Thus, in contrast to picturesque principles, seats such as Croome were presented to tourists as points of interest in terms of their noteworthiness as examples of national agricultural innovation.

Within eighteenth-century guidebooks, trees are most often portrayed as an element of the picturesque, which, when grown or occurring irregularly, offered visual relief to waste lands and agricultural lands alike, breaking up spaces and drawing the gaze from one point of interest to another. However, forests could be and were portrayed as both waste land and improved land. As seen in *The Southampton Guide* (1768), a forest might be portrayed as a waste land when considered as an obstacle to farming. In this book, the author provides an extensive critique of the Royal New Forest, which had been established by William I in 1079.<sup>76</sup> Arguing that the forest was of no importance to the Crown and “extremely injurious to the Public,” the author claimed,

A civilized People will study to promote Agriculture and Population by all Means, as from these, real and permanent Strength and Riches will be derived. How paradoxical soever it may appear, 'tis certain, that while

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<sup>75</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 123.

<sup>76</sup> Cooper, “Introduction,” *The New Forest*. When discussing the longevity of the New Forest, it is interesting to note that the author attributes the survival of the forest to the poor quality of its soil, characterizing the land as “infertile waste” in the eleventh century and remaining so in the twenty-first century.



thousands of Acres lie uncultivated, and possessed by Deer, Rabbits, Heath, or Underwood, many hundred families are annually migrating to America, to seek for Settlements with which their native Country abounds, yet denies them.<sup>77</sup>

This conception of wooded areas as a waste of land that could be cultivated is particularly interesting when contrasted with what we have previously seen in terms of praise for constructed wildernesses, a term that also traditionally denotes waste.<sup>78</sup>

By contrast to both woods as waste land and wilderness as aesthetic construction, there was also the conception of wooded areas being a land improvement: “On both sides our view ranges over an improved country finely wooded, and backed by the distant tops of the Clee and other hills.”<sup>79</sup> When discussing woodlands as improved lands, the term “plantation” was most frequently employed. In a period of nearly constant warfare, large trees were needed for shipbuilding. The dedication of one’s property to growing trees therefore assumed patriotic significance. In this vein, the author of *A Companion to the Leasowes, Hagley and Enville* goes so far as to include a poem on the tree planting undertaken by Lord Donegall:

Dryads<sup>80</sup>, whom busy population drove,  
From the light leafy chambers of the grove!  
Now issue from their dells, and clustering round,  
All hail the produce of the fruitful ground!  
Where infant OAKS, by DONEGALL, were sown,  
And form a shelt’ring forest of their own;  
Cut from their trunks new NAVIES shall arise,  
In after-times, to glad BRITANNIA’s Eyes!<sup>81</sup>

If the reader of the poem were in any doubt of Donegall’s patriotism in planting his oak

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<sup>77</sup> [Rev. Letchiot?], *Southampton Guide*, 43-44.

<sup>78</sup> Short traces the conceptions of wilderness in *Imagined Country* (1991): “Wilderness is a social definition with origins in the agricultural revolution almost 10,000 years ago. The term ‘wilderness’ emerges then because it is only with settled agriculture that a distinction is made between cultivated and uncultivated land, savage and settled, domesticated and wild animals. In Hebrew, one definition of wilderness is *unsown land*, in ancient Greek it meant *not cultivated* and, in Latin, *barren waste*. In English, the expression may come from the old English term, *wildeoren*, referring to wild beasts. Wilderness is a word whose first usage marks the transition from a hunting-gathering economy to an agricultural society” (5).

<sup>79</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 100.

<sup>80</sup> Wood nymphs.

<sup>81</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 130.

trees, the guidebook includes a footnote to inform readers that in 1779 Lord Donegall received a medal for planting the most oak trees, covering over 25 acres of land. The author goes so far as to claim that Lord Donegall “deserves the thanks of the nation: I sincerely wish that his example may be more generally followed, the planting of Oaks being an effort of more Patriotism than is commonly imagined, as their annual destruction far exceeds their annual growth.”<sup>82</sup> This passage also marks a rare recognition in guidebooks of environmental impact, noting the growing scarcity of forests in England. This observation is linked, however, to the ability to meet England’s manufacturing and imperial needs rather than concerns related to the environment or landscape aesthetics.

The conversion of waste lands into productive agricultural land provides an example of how guidebook writers actively supported human changes to the English landscape. Where waste lands did not meet an aesthetic function, guidebook writers were willing to allow the forces of “improvement” to transform the natural state of the land. In addition to agriculturally developing the local landscape, guidebook writers were also supportive of industrial development in the local rural environment.

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<sup>82</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 130.

## The Spirit of Industriousness: Industry in the English Landscape

The spirit of “improvement” was pervasive in eighteenth-century guidebooks and extended beyond agricultural and park improvements to encompass industrialization. As Simon Pugh has noted, “improvement” was a euphemism employed to describe both the beautification and the industrialization of the eighteenth-century countryside, and later signified the idea of universal industrialization as the sole means of advancing the “undeveloped.”<sup>83</sup>

Over the course of the eighteenth century, England was becoming increasingly industrial<sup>84</sup> and increasingly capable of developing (or substituting for) products that were formerly imported from abroad.<sup>85</sup> Industrial development, both resource- and manufacture-based, is evident in the guidebooks of this study, where authors indicated those industries prospering within their respective regions. Industrial sites, located in cities, towns, villages and throughout the countryside, were favourably portrayed as tourist destinations of interest, and furthermore, as evidence of the industrious spirit of the region, of England and of Britain as a whole. Whereas the idea of an industrial site might seem to jar with picturesque aesthetics, in late-eighteenth-century guidebooks the contrast of industrial sites with nature or art could be portrayed as aesthetically pleasing.

Part of the industrial shift that occurred in the late-eighteenth century was the regionalization of industry. Whereas previously regions were largely isolated, Maxine

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<sup>83</sup> Pugh, “Introduction” in Pugh, ed., *Reading Landscape*, 6.

<sup>84</sup> While the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were previously referenced as the “Industrial Revolution,” many historians now debate the term. Nevertheless, current historiography makes the case that during this period there were significant technological and organizational developments that marked the beginning of two centuries of great industrial change. (John Rule, “Manufacturing and Commerce” in Dickinson, ed., *Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, 128.)

<sup>85</sup> For example, the development from the 1740s of Britain’s “new china trade,” the manufacture of porcelain and pottery, was a substitution for the more heavily taxed importation of porcelain from China. (Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, 125).

Berg argues that from the mid-eighteenth century this was transformed “by internally integrated regions concentrating on an interrelated set of industries.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, whereas previously industries were distributed about the country, over the century certain industries became increasingly concentrated in specific regions, such as the cotton industry in Lancashire, in order to better support the international export market. Canals were important means in the eighteenth century of linking these regions,<sup>87</sup> and their addition to the English landscape was remarked upon in contemporary guidebooks.

Guidebooks did more than just mention industrial sites; these were often recommended as part of the tourist’s itinerary. The Whitrigs mines in the Lake District were suggested by West as a tourist site: “Make an excursion to the west, three miles, and visit the greatest iron mines in ENGLAND.”<sup>88</sup> Visits to industrial sites appealed to eighteenth-century tourists on a number of levels: as evidence of England’s natural resources, scientific innovation and prosperity; as sights that evoked the sublime; and even as a mode of extreme tourism.<sup>89</sup> As Esther Moir notes, the “more dilettante tourists...showed an indomitable determination to descend every pit, to enter subterranean canals, to spend hours in mines crawling along on hands and knees or wading knee-deep in water.”<sup>90</sup> The place of the manufacturing industry amidst England’s tourist treasures is evident in Richard Beatniffe’s “A List of the Palaces, chief Seats, and Curiosities, of ENGLAND, most worthy the Traveller’s Notice.”<sup>91</sup> Among this list of England’s most worthy sites, competing with castles, palaces, noble seats, cathedrals, antiquities, spas, picturesque settings and naval docks, is a machine in Derbyshire that merits a fuller description than most sites:

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<sup>86</sup> Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, 27.

<sup>87</sup> Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, 28.

<sup>88</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 39.

<sup>89</sup> Moir, *Discovery of Britain*, 91. Modern extreme tourism includes, for example, skydiving, bungee jumping, and parasailing.

<sup>90</sup> Moir, *Discovery of Britain*, 92.

<sup>91</sup> Beatniffe, *Norfolk Tour*, 108-115.

In an island of the Derwent, facing Derby, is a famous machine, erected in 1734, by the late Sir Thomas Lambe, for the manufacture of silk; the model of which he brought from Italy, at the hazard of his life. It contains 26,586 wheels; by which machinery one hand-mill twists as much silk as could be done before by 53.<sup>92</sup>

Through this description, the continued interest in expressions of innovation and “improvement” is evident.

As they guided readers throughout the countryside, guidebooks pointed out the local industries. Thus, when passing by Marlow, *The Windsor Guide*, advises readers of the many corn and paper mills in the neighbourhood, as well as of “three remarkable mills, called the *Temple Mills*, or the brass mills, for making kettles, pans, &c. besides a mill for making thimbles, and another for pressing oil from rape and flaxseed.”<sup>93</sup> When touring in the vicinity of Brighton, we are likewise apprised of the shipbuilding activities being “carried on with great advantage at New-Shoreham, on account of the great plenty and cheapness of the timber in the adjacent country.”<sup>94</sup> When touring Romsey in Hampshire we learn that “there is a considerable Manufacture of Shalloons,<sup>95</sup> called Ratinets, carried on in the Town, in which above five hundred Hands are employed.”<sup>96</sup> And in Dorset, “within half a mile of Sherborne, you pass the silk mills of Mrs. Willmott, which are worthy of inspection.”<sup>97</sup> Likewise, in the Lake District, West points out the riches deep within the sublime and seemingly barren mountains: “Above GOLDRILL-BRIDGE the vale becomes narrow and poor, the mountains steep, naked and rocky. Much blue slate of an excellent kind, is excavated out of their bowels.”<sup>98</sup> Through these descriptions we can see industries scattered about England, though there are indications

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<sup>92</sup> Beatniffe, *Norfolk Tour*, 112.

<sup>93</sup> *Windsor Guide*, 161.

<sup>94</sup> *Description of Brighthelmston*, 47-48.

<sup>95</sup> Shalloons are a lightweight twilled fabric of wool or worsted.

<sup>96</sup> [Rev. Letchiot?], *Southampton Guide*, 45.

<sup>97</sup> Love, *New Waymouth Guide*, 28.

<sup>98</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 167.

of the emerging concentrations that would characterize the period of industrial change that Britain was entering.

Industrial sites were promoted as sites of interest to those who wished to see examples of human ingenuity and who desired seeing all that was worth seeing in a locale. Thus, visitors to the Isle of Thanet in Kent were advised that their eye would be “attracted by Mr. Hooper’s horizontal wind-mill for the purpose of grinding corn: and those who delight in seeing an extraordinary display of the human powers in mechanical contrivances, will not think an hour ill employed whilst they are examining the structure of this stupendous machine.”<sup>99</sup> Similarly, while touring the region of Norfolk, a “gentleman desirous of spending a few days in Norwich, and of being acquainted with every thing [sic] worth observation, will not omit seeing the various employments of the extensive manufactory.”<sup>100</sup> In Worcester, tourists were advised on where to apply for admission cards to visit the Royal China Manufactory by the banks of the Severn. Located in a former mansion and open to “any respectable person,” this manufactory was praised as “extensive and elegant, and the whole of the work is well worth the inspection of the ingenious traveller.”<sup>101</sup> Even a guidebook primarily about the landscaping of three parks offers up a trip to glass and clothing factories to break up the journey from Hagley to Enville: “Our ride thither lies through a country delightfully varied: as we touch upon the edge of Stourbridge, whose extensive glass and clothing manufactories give employment to numbers, a visit to some of the principal, will abundantly gratify the curious.”<sup>102</sup> Regardless of the region, the promotion of local industry was an important element in eighteenth-century English guidebooks.

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<sup>99</sup> *Short Description of Thanet*, 22.

<sup>100</sup> *Beatniffe, Norfolk Tour*, 18-19.

<sup>101</sup> *Price, Worcester Guide*, 49.

<sup>102</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 91.

As was the case with agriculture, a consistent theme in the treatment of industry is the focus on “improvement.” Thus, we are advised that the gunpowder mills located on “the delightful rivulet” near Faversham in Kent “are improving and enlarging every day, more particularly in the art of drying the gunpowder which is *there* effected by the means of a constant steam of hot water, conveyed under the copper frame whereon it is placed to dry. This new contrivance is said to answer the purpose exceeding well.”<sup>103</sup> Similarly, we are acquainted with the ingenuity evident in Boveyheathfield in Devon, where coal can be extracted from the earth courtesy of a steam engine:

...crossing BOVEYHEATHFIELD, on the left, lies a coal-work, which will draw the attention of the naturalist; it produces the *lignum fossile* common in some parts of GERMANY; there has lately been a steam engine placed on it, to free it from the water that has for several years inundated the pit....<sup>104</sup>

And in Worcester, we are notified of the “great improvements in which have been made within these few years” by the late Dr. Wall in the production of porcelain,<sup>105</sup> which now rendered importation of this luxury unnecessary:

Some years before the present war, great importations of this article [porcelain] were made from France, but happily British industry has now rendered them unnecessary; for the latter productions of this manufactory have been deemed so superior in beauty and quality, that foreign orders form at the present period great part of the concern, and are rapidly increasing.<sup>106</sup>

One cause for the tourist’s “curiosity” regarding industrial sites was this alignment, by guidebook authors and other contemporaries, of industry with the very character of the English and British people.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Thomas Fisher, *Kentish Traveller*, \*85-\*86. [Note: in the original publication, between pages 96 and 97 are pages marked \*66-\*88. Despite the numbering, content is continuous.]

<sup>104</sup> Hyett, *Watering Places of Devon*, 56.

<sup>105</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 48.

<sup>106</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 50.

<sup>107</sup> This alignment of industriousness with the character of the English and British people has also been noted by Berg, *Age of Manufactures*, 2.

These links are made particularly clear in John Price's *Worcester Guide* (1799). In the book, Price noted that "the works of industry are more valuable than the mere productions of nature," leading to the increasing size of manufacturing towns such as Worcester.<sup>108</sup> He claimed that the English possess a particular spirit of industriousness and dedication to improvement that has led to manufacturing excellence that was recognized both at home and abroad:

A spirit of improvement, has appeared in this trade [glove making] in common with the other British manufactures; and the beauty and excellent quality of Worcester gloves, have not only attracted the attention of home consumers, but have likewise acquired an excellence in the estimation of foreign merchants.<sup>109</sup>

In terms of this national character of industriousness, Price remarked that England "has been long noted for the industrious spirit of its inhabitants, and a certain perseverance requisite to bring manufactures to a pitch of perfection; and it will be found by the sequel that the city of Worcester is by no means deficient in supporting the national character."<sup>110</sup> Price's continued insistence on fitting the local region within a national image was common in the guidebooks of this study, as was the promotion of current and potential industrial development.

Within eighteenth-century regional guidebooks, authors promoted local industrial resources and even encouraged industrial development. When addressing the increasing industrialization of their respective regions, guidebook authors adopted an attitude of pride and did not express regret over the presence of an industry in the landscape, even in those books more overtly concerned with picturesque principles. Rather, an underlying goal of these locally produced guidebooks was regional promotion and development, and as such even those books primarily concerned with picturesque aesthetics are apt to promote their region's industrial endeavours. In this way, it was not

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<sup>108</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 46.

<sup>109</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 48.

<sup>110</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 46.



out of place for a guidebook on the rural delights of the landscape parks Leasowes, Hagley and Enville to begin with an extensive description of “the present state of Birmingham,” where “the influence of industry and ingenuity, in the advancement, or as it were, creation of a capital town, within about a century, is so remarkable... that a short account of it cannot be uninteresting.”<sup>111</sup>

Industry was praised in guidebooks for the wealth it could bring to a region. Thus, at Stourport, *The Worcester Guide* advised that “we see the rapid effects of industrious commerce. Some years ago, this pretty town was almost a barren, sandy heath, till the junction of the Staffordshire Canal with the Severn was formed at this place, which, from a poor insignificant village, is now become a neat and handsome town.”<sup>112</sup> The cutting of canals through the English landscape is mentioned in several guidebooks and praised for the economic results they brought to those communities they passed through. Thus, the opening of the Staffordshire Canal in 1771 “after an expence [sic] of 105,000/ [pounds],” was well worth the expense for Worcestershire, for it opened the basin to the northern manufacturing hubs and seaports, as well as providing a more economical outlet for the manufactured products of Birmingham and the surrounding area.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Hyett praised the building of a new canal (the Stover Canal) at Newton Bushel in Devon, which he claimed heightened the region’s wealth by allowing for a greater export of clay to the potteries of Staffordshire and the north. Though the canal was built by James Templer in order to ship clay from his own land, Hyett attributed patriotic overtones to the endeavour:

The commerce of TEIGNMOUTH consists chiefly of the exportation of *pipe*, or more properly *potter’s* clay, to STAFFORDSHIRE, LIVERPOOL, &c. (which clay is brought mostly from the vicinage of TEIGNBRIDGE, and from the lands of *James Templer, Esq. of Stover Lodge*, at whose

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<sup>111</sup> “Present State of Birmingham” in *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 8.

<sup>112</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 89.

<sup>113</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 89-90.

sole expence [sic] the before-noticed canal was cut, and to whose patriotic exertions the country and trade are particularly indebted;)...<sup>114</sup>

Furthermore, while noting that Templer had built warehouses “as receptacles for the cubes of clay that are cut in the neighbourhood,”<sup>115</sup> Hyett never addressed the effect of the clay-cutting on the local landscape. Under such circumstances, industrial development trumped aesthetics and dedication to local economic development was attributed national patriotic significance.

In addition to praising existing canals, guidebook authors encouraged the building of new canals, the development of locks and the alteration of rivers to further regional economic development. In *A Tour to Cheltenham*, Simon Moreau noted that “It once was proposed to join the Avon with the Thames by a canal, and so compleat [sic] an inland navigation betwixt London and Bristol, which might be easily carried into execution; the distance between the rise of the Isis and the Avon being about seven miles.”<sup>116</sup> Similarly, in *The Norfolk Tour*, Richard Beatniffe observed the considerable trade taking place between Norwich and Yarmouth by virtue of the Yare River, while noting how much more would be possible if only locks were built, the cost of which he argued would be entirely made up for through the increased shipment of industrial goods.<sup>117</sup> In the Lake District, West also recommended altering a river by Lancaster for industrial development, writing: “Along a fine quay, noble warehouses are built; and when it shall please those concerned, to deepen the shoals in the river, ships of great burthen may come up close to the warehouses; at present, only such can come up as do not exceed 250 tons.”<sup>118</sup> Not simply passively noting and praising examples of regional industrial development, eighteenth-century guidebook authors actively promoted even

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<sup>114</sup> Hyett, *Watering Places of Devon*, 34-35.

<sup>115</sup> Hyett, *Watering Places of Devon*, 55.

<sup>116</sup> Moreau, *Tour to Cheltenham Spa*, 85.

<sup>117</sup> Beatniffe, *Norfolk Tour*, 102.

<sup>118</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 28.

further development, utilizing guidebooks as a means to inform readers and perhaps sway some to invest in these developments, most of which would significantly alter the local landscape.

Within the guidebooks in this study, there is little recognition of the impact of industrial endeavours on the English landscape. Generally these changes were discussed in patriotic rather than aesthetic terms, though industrial elements could also be adopted to picturesque and sublime aesthetics, so that Hyett could describe how a hill in Devon, “barren with respect to herbage” was “enriched with immense quarries of marble, ornamented with lime-kilns and crowned with a spiry obelisk”<sup>119</sup> or could note how a clay barge on a river was picturesque in form.<sup>120</sup> Hyett was not the only author to portray local industry as decorating the rural landscape. He noted that William Gilpin, one of the prime exponents of the picturesque, referred to “two of those ornaments of DEVON” as “*lime-kiln castles.*”<sup>121</sup> Beyond this, John Price argued that manufactories could beautify Britain itself: “the patriotic and enlightened taste of the nobility and gentry, who, by liberal encouragement, have rendered this manufactory not only the support of many ingenious artists, but also an ornament to the kingdom at large.”<sup>122</sup>

At one point Thomas West, in his *Guide to the Lakes*, pointed out the possible negative impacts of industry on both the environment and the picturesque landscape:

From the summit of this rock the views are so singularly great and pleasing, that they ought never to be omitted. The ascent is by one of the narrow paths cut in the side of the mountain, for the descent of the slate, that is quarried on its top. These quarries will, in a short time, sink it many feet below its present height, and destroy the last vestige of its ancient importance.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Hyett, *Watering Places of Devon*, 72.

<sup>120</sup> Hyett, *Watering Places of Devon*, 35.

<sup>121</sup> Hyett, *Watering Places of Devon*, 15.

<sup>122</sup> Price, *Worcester Guide*, 50.

<sup>123</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 97-98.

In this passage West therefore acknowledged the erosive nature of slate quarries on a local mountain and its adverse effects on the tourist seeking a viewpoint. However, this recognition did not stop West from recommending industrial development at other points in his book.

Rather than decrying the presence of industry, guidebook authors treated its absence as an anomaly that warranted explanation. For example, Lewes in Sussex, while perfectly situated for manufacturing purposes, was without industry because “manufactures receive but little encouragement at Lewes. Yet the inhabitants, in general, are wealthy...”<sup>124</sup> Another example is found in West’s *Guide to the Lakes*, where he argued that although Penrith is “seated in the midst of a rich and fruitful country, no manufacturers have been induced to fix here,” not because of “want of industry in the inhabitants” but rather due to the area’s previous borderland instability, as well as what he speculated was a current “want of attention in the people of property.”<sup>125</sup> Whereas some tourists of Sir Uvedale Price’s “picturesque” might have sought landscapes free of contemporary industrialization,<sup>126</sup> for regional guidebook authors, lack of industry was not desirable and was something they attempted to explain and alter through their commentary.

When addressing the industrial changes of the late-eighteenth century, local guidebooks pointed out industrial sites to tourists with local and nationalist pride, recommending them as worthy of visitation because they were examples of English prosperity and endeavour. With regards to the landscape, industrial sites were pointed out either in terms that avoided aesthetic determinations or as elements that provided pleasant contrast with natural beauties, thereby increasing the picturesque quality of a

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<sup>124</sup> *Description of Brighthelmston*, 38.

<sup>125</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 173-174.

<sup>126</sup> Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 66.

prospect.<sup>127</sup> Eighteenth-century guidebooks melded industry into the rural landscape, and even into some picturesque views.

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<sup>127</sup> Another example of this is found in Hyett's *Watering Places of Devon*: "this grand landscape continues for some distance; a lime-kiln, with its huge mass of rock towering behind, only diversifying the face of the wood, and even increasing both its picturesque beauty and grandeur" (73).

## Accessing Rural England: Tourism and the Improvement of Infrastructure

While tourism of the picturesque was for some a nostalgic reaction against modernity, it both benefitted from and helped prompt the modernization of England's transportation system. With the concentration of England's supposedly more sublime settings in its more remote northern and western regions, accessibility was an important factor in encouraging tourism. Thus, an important change in eighteenth-century England that impacted regional tourism was the improvement of the country's transportation system. This included the creation of turnpike trusts, better maintained and surveyed roads, more frequent signposting, more extensive public transportation, and increasingly quick and comfortable vehicles. While changes to England's transportation system were in many ways instrumental to increased tourism, in terms of picturesque aesthetics there were tensions in that new roads left visible marks on the landscape and accessibility has a direct impact on the wildness of a setting.

The eighteenth century might be characterized as the era of the turnpike. Initially developed around 1700,<sup>128</sup> turnpike trusts were intended to maintain roads by restricting their use through the imposition of tolls on those who used the roads.<sup>129</sup> At first, turnpikes were thus not so much the creation of new roads, but an administrative change to road maintenance, shifting the costs of repairing heavily used roads from parishes to those passing through them.<sup>130</sup> The first turnpikes were established on the roads to

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<sup>128</sup> The first Act was in force from 1663 – 1674 but it was not until 1695 that a second turnpike authority was created, with only five more before 1706. Turnpikes prior to 1706 were controlled exclusively by local justices. Following 1706 it was possible to appoint commissioners to oversee the turnpikes. With only one exception, all turnpikes established after 1714 were overseen by commissioners. Albert, "The Turnpike Trusts," in Aldcroft and Freeman, eds., *Transport in the Industrial Revolution*, 33.

<sup>129</sup> Albert, "The Turnpike Trusts," in *Transport in the Industrial Revolution*, 34.

<sup>130</sup> Albert, "The Turnpike Trusts," in Aldcroft and Freeman, eds., *Transport in the Industrial Revolution* 34.

London and around regional centres such as Bristol, where heavy traffic and transport deteriorated the quality of roads beyond the maintenance capabilities of traditional parish processes.<sup>131</sup> The rate by which turnpikes trusts were created increased in the mid-eighteenth century, with 1750-1772 marking the height of the turnpike movement, the so-called "Turnpike Mania."<sup>132</sup>

In part, the rapid expansion of turnpikes after 1750 was motivated by regional competition. As William Albert notes, "By securing a turnpike promoters may have sought to mitigate any comparative damage brought about by road improvements in other areas while at the same time realising similar savings for their own district."<sup>133</sup> By making regions more accessible, road improvements had important economic results for outlying regions, helping to level the playing field for those regions not in the immediate vicinity of London. As such, the economist Adam Smith, commenting shortly after what historians call the "turnpike mania," saw road development as one of the era's greatest achievements:

Good roads, canals and navigable rivers, by diminishing the expense of carriage, put the remote parts of the country more nearly upon a level with those in the neighbourhood of the town. They are upon that account the greatest of all improvements.<sup>134</sup>

The improvements to contemporary transportation systems and lower transportation costs were key making industrial development a more profitable pursuit. Improved transportation also had the effect of making tourism more feasible, making the more remote regions of England accessible to those who sought picturesque landscapes.

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<sup>131</sup> Albert, "The Turnpike Trusts," in Aldcroft and Freeman, eds., *Transport in the Industrial Revolution*, 39-41.

<sup>132</sup> Albert, "The Turnpike Trusts," in Aldcroft and Freeman, eds., *Transport in the Industrial Revolution*, 38. Note that figures related to turnpikes are for new turnpike trusts. B.J. Buchanan argues that the extent of turnpiking was even greater, as these numbers neglected to include renewals and amendments to turnpike Acts, which often greatly increased the mileage of these roads (Buchanan, "English Turnpike Trusts," 226).

<sup>133</sup> Albert, "The Turnpike Trusts," in Aldcroft and Freeman, eds., *Transport in the Industrial Revolution*, 39.

<sup>134</sup> Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, I, (1776) 165, quoted in Rule, *Vital Century*, 215.

The spirit of improvement was not limited to turnpikes; many parish roads were also improved.<sup>135</sup> Part of the achievement of turnpikes, however, was that they provided a means for interregional transport<sup>136</sup> and turnpikes were linked to the more general implementation of milestones and signposts along roadsides.<sup>137</sup> Better roads led to great increases in the speed of stage coaches and allowed for the major expansion of coaching from the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>138</sup> By 1815, coach travel was about four times faster between major centres than it had been in 1750, and twice as fast on other roads.<sup>139</sup>

Commentary on the state of the roads is common in the guidebooks in this study and there is no doubt that improved transportation networks were a welcome eighteenth-century innovation. As the *New Bath Guide* (1762) noted,

The Roads about Bath grow every Day much better, by the Prudence and good Management of the Commissioners of the Turnpikes; as they are at this Time not only very safe, but pleasant; and the Access to the Hills, Claverton and Lansdown, (which were formerly very difficult to ascend) is now rendered very safe and easy either on Horseback, or in Carriages.<sup>140</sup>

Comfort and accessibility were key themes in the guidebooks of the period. Safety was also frequently mentioned, both in terms of road quality and of the risk of assault by highwaymen or brigands. The dangers of the roads were common tropes in travel and tourist literature from the early modern period, for both domestic and foreign travellers.<sup>141</sup> In promoting the Lake District, Thomas West cited the safety of the roads as one reason why visiting the scenic Lake District was a more preferable option than visiting the similar but grander setting of the Alps:

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<sup>135</sup> Rule, *Vital Century*, 221.

<sup>136</sup> Muir, *Approaches to Landscape*, 85.

<sup>137</sup> Moir, *Discovery of Britain*, 8-9.

<sup>138</sup> Gerhold, "Productivity Change in Road Transport," 511.

<sup>139</sup> Rule, *The Vital Century*, 223.

<sup>140</sup> *New Bath Guide*, 32.

<sup>141</sup> Mączak, *Travel in Early Modern Europe*, 158-159.



If the roads in some places [of the Lake District] are narrow and difficult, they are at least safe; no villainous banditti haunt the mountains; innocent people live in the dells. Every cottager is narrative of all he knows; and mountain virtue, and pastoral hospitality are found at every farm. This constitutes a pleasing difference betwixt travelling here and on the continent, where every innholder is an extortioner, and every voiturine an imposing rogue.<sup>142</sup>

Thus whereas Europe is imagined as a land of dangerous roads and “villainous banditti,” extortionate innkeepers and roguish *voiturines* (drivers/guides), the Lake District is by comparison safe and hospitable.

The state of the roads in one’s county seems to have been a matter of pride, and an important point when promoting local tourism. Simon Moreau, in *Tour to Cheltenham Spa; or Gloucestershire Display’d*, published in 1788, dedicates a great deal of space, both in the main text and footnotes, to describing the recent improvements to the local turnpikes, asserting that the “great amendment of the roads in the vicinity, which has taken place according to act of Parliament, will make Cheltenham the most noted, and best frequented watering place in this kingdom.”<sup>143</sup> Similarly, in *Brighton’s New Guide*, when listing the primary advantages of Brighton as a tourist destination, the first point was that “The distance from London is by many miles shorter than any other sea-bathing place in the kingdom, the roads, winter and summer, are kept in the best possible state of repair, and reflect much credit on the different commissioners.”<sup>144</sup> The attention given to road conditions demonstrates their importance in the persuasion of tourists, proximity and ease of access being attributes that guidebook authors sought to convey.

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<sup>142</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 139-140. West spent many years in Europe studying at the Jesuit colleges of St. Omer, Watten and Liège. Prior to that he may also have been a traveller in trade on the continent [Inglesfield, “West, Thomas (1720?–1779),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29101>)].

<sup>143</sup> Moreau, *Tour to Cheltenham Spa*, 28. Moreau includes a footnote that expands in great detail on the recent road improvements.

<sup>144</sup> *Brighton New Guide*, 71.

For the Lake District, in the remote northwest corner of England, the reputation for poor roads is something that Thomas West, writer of *Guide to the Lakes* (1778), took great pains to redress. In the second paragraph of this work he asserted:

Another inducement to making the tour of the lakes, is the goodness of the roads; much improved since Mr. GRAY made his tour in 1765, and Mr. PENNANT his in 1772. The gentlemen of these counties have set a precedent worthy of imitation in the politest parts of the kingdom, by opening, at private expence [sic], carriage roads, for the ease and safety of such as visit the country; and the public roads are properly attended to.<sup>145</sup>

West's explicit praise of increased and improved access to the Lake District forms a clear contrast to the position of Wordsworth, who, a half-century later, reacted quite differently to the idea of furthering the accessibility of the Lake District by bringing a railroad to the shore of Lake Windermere. Strongly opposed to increasing access for tourists, particularly the lower classes or "trippers" that would now be able to visit the Lakes by means of the more affordable and rapid train, Wordsworth protested through public letters and the poetry, asking "Is then no nook of English ground / secure from rash assault?"<sup>146</sup> Far from wishing to keep tourists away, eighteenth-century guidebook authors wished to entice tourists by promoting the improvements to local roads that gave tourists access to their region. In a guide to the Isle of Thanet in Kent, for example, the author made precisely this point:

The roads about this island being originally intended only for carts and waggons [sic], were formerly much neglected, and scarcely passable by the more delicate carriages of convenience or pleasure, but, to the credit of the inhabitants, they have been lately much improved, and are now made so commodious, that although there are no turnpikes, the traveller in Thanet will, without expence [sic], experience all the advantages of that useful institution...<sup>147</sup>

As was the case in agricultural and industrial change, guidebook authors were not

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<sup>145</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 2.

<sup>146</sup> Wordsworth, "On the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" and Ousby, *Englishman's England*, 145-151.

<sup>147</sup> *Short Description of Thanet*, 6.

sparing in their praise of local efforts to develop the regional road infrastructure. Attention to road development seems to have reflected on the general attitude of improvement.

While the focus of this paper is the English countryside, it is worth noting that guidebook authors also wrote about road improvements within towns, which generally amounted to improving street lighting and widening roads, at the expense of demolishing existing buildings. For example, in *The Kentish Traveller's Companion*, published in 1776, when describing the neighbouring town of Rochester, Thomas Fisher notes that “the lane from the High-street of Rochester to the bridge, has been much improved by the wardens, who have the care of it. A row of houses that stood on one side has been lately taken down, which has rendered that passage much wider and more commodious.”<sup>148</sup> Even when the casualties of improvement were sites of historic or picturesque interest, the overriding message concerned the improvement of infrastructure. This was the case in Brighton where it was noted that until 1761 the ruins of a castle built by Henry VIII, which had been destroyed by the sea, could be seen below one of the cliffs, but that it had since been removed in order to create “a more convenient passage for carriages.”<sup>149</sup>

Guidebooks did not just cite the merits of improving roads, but also noted that places that did not improve their roads ran the risk of being bypassed by travellers. Such was the case in Chatham, Kent, Thomas Fisher noted in *The Kentish Traveller's Companion*. When the inhabitants of Chatham declined to participate in a parliamentary road improvement project in 1769, “a new road was made behind Chatham, which gave to travellers, an opportunity of pursuing their journey, without going through a town,

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<sup>148</sup> Thomas Fisher, *Kentish Traveller's Companion*, 87.

<sup>149</sup> *Description of Brighthelmston*, 11-12.

whose pavement, dirt and darkness, had been long a public complaint.”<sup>150</sup> In the end, Fisher notes, the residents of Chatham, “sensible to all these inconveniences,” obtained their own act to improve their streets, with the result that “the town is greatly improved, and rendered much more commodious, as well for those who reside there, as for travellers.”<sup>151</sup> Clearly the economic benefits of tourism were understood and townspeople sought to assist and attract travellers through open, comfortable, safe and attractive roads.

One by-product of the extensive eighteenth-century road works and enclosure movements was the production of extensive geographical surveys and the mapping of the English countryside. The availability of accurate maps and directions were also advertised to tourists as an assurance of the ease with which one might tour the region. In *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, published in 1765, the author noted the recent initiative of the residents of Ramsgate to aid travellers by means of “Guide-posts in all places of difficulty within their precinct.”<sup>152</sup> In a later guide to the same area, the Isle of Thanet seeming to have a reputation for confusing roads, the author of *A Short Description of the Isle of Thanet* promotes the availability of a pocket map to solve the mysteries of the local transportation system:

I must not omit to remark, that strangers will find the roads in the island of Thanet very intricate, as they cross and intersect each other in almost every direction; but that these intricacies are easily unraveled by Mr. Hall’s map, taken from an actual survey of the island, (by that very accurate and intelligent surveyor Mr. Budgon) which marks the roads with the greatest exactness, and precisely ascertains their distances: a stranger with this in his pocket can never be at a loss to determine how many miles any particular village is from another, or to fix its site and bearings, and cannot therefore stand in need of any other guide to direct

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<sup>150</sup> Thomas Fisher, *Kentish Traveller’s Companion*, \*67.

<sup>151</sup> Thomas Fisher, *Kentish Traveller’s Companion*, \*67-68. Fisher notes furthermore that the probable reason for the original refusal of the residents of Chatham to partake in the parliamentary improvement scheme was party politics rather than opposition to improvement since they went to the greater expense of improving their roads without the parliamentary subsidies.

<sup>152</sup> *Description of the Isle of Thanet*, 6.

him in his excursions.<sup>153</sup>

Using these resources, the tourist would be able to plan and follow his route without having to question locals for directions. Guidebooks, maps and sign-postings are repeatedly cited as a means to ease the journey of tourists while freeing them from dependence on the sometimes unreliable directions of locals, but these initiatives may be equally based on the desire of locals not to have to repeatedly answer the same question for every tourist to the region. (It is also worth noting that the creator of the map for the Isle of Thanet, Mr. Hall, was also the publisher of the guidebook in which his map is recommended.)

In addition to the improvement of road management and quality, another change of the eighteenth century was the expansion of public transportation, in the form of posts, coaches, and other public vehicles. Most guidebooks included a section on public transportation, listing information such as schedules, prices and routes. This information was significant enough that it was occasionally mentioned on a guidebook's title page, as was the case in *The Salisbury Guide*, whose cover page noted that it contained "the Times of the coming in, and going out, of POSTS, COACHES, MACHINES, CARRIERS, &c."<sup>154</sup> *The Salisbury Guide's* list of public transportation to and from Salisbury ran to ten pages and demonstrated regular and extensive connections, not just to London, but to a variety of cities, towns and villages.<sup>155</sup> The importance of public transportation as an incentive for tourists might be ascertained not only from the extensive treatment guidebook authors give to the availability and frequency of access, but also from the fact that it might be portrayed as a principle asset of a region. In *Brighton's New Guide*, published in 1800, the author notes that in Brighton "The stage-coaches and waggons [sic] are conducted by proprietors of great respectability, and no place has neater

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<sup>153</sup> *Short Description of Thanet*, 65.

<sup>154</sup> *Salisbury Guide*, title page.

<sup>155</sup> *Salisbury Guide*, 45-55.

coaches, better horses, or more attentive drivers, than are to be found on the Brighton-road.”<sup>156</sup> The wide availability of public transportation shows not only the interconnectedness of English towns and regions, but also demonstrates the widening participation in tourism. More comfortable, quick and “respectable” public transportation meant opportunities for those of the middling classes to partake in tourism, rather than limiting tourism to those who owned their own travelling vehicles.

From the above, we can see the importance guidebook authors attributed to quality roads and public access for regional tourism. Given the importance of “wild” landscapes in eighteenth-century tourism, however, the question arises as to whether ease of access impinged on the supposed sublimity of a site. Despite the extensive focus on landscapes in eighteenth-century travel guidebooks, it is interesting to note that there is little commentary on how changes to the road networks affected the landscape. An admirer of picturesque principles might criticize those roads that were straight as being unnatural to the eye, but roads that curved in a serpentine fashion were instead worthy elements of a picturesque view.<sup>157</sup> Within the guidebooks of this study, there are no examples of direct criticism aimed at a specific road for ruining a prospect. The increase of accessibility for tourists was without fail heralded by these guidebooks as a good thing. Landowners who built roads that brought tourists directly to a waterfall or some other worthy site were praised for their efforts. The only discussion of the effect increased traffic might have on the local environment is offered in the Kentish guidebook, *A Description of the Isle of Thanet*, published in 1765. Acknowledging that the absence of suitable roads meant that tourists left a destructive path through the

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<sup>156</sup> *Brighton New Guide*, 73.

<sup>157</sup> An example of this is found in West’s *Guide to the Lakes* (109) and has been discussed on pages 13-14 of this paper.

fields of local farmers and landowners, the author praised the resulting initiative to create a more extensive road system in the area.<sup>158</sup>

In addition to praising the roads that would bring tourists from London and other centres, guidebook writers supported private initiatives to make it easier for tourists to access picturesque and sublime settings. In *A Companion to the Leasowes, Hagley and Enville*, the author notes that the owner of Enville has made the beauties of the landscape accessible even to the infirm by making paths wide enough for carriages: “It should also be remarked that the PARK of ENVILLE has the peculiar advantage of rendering its beauties accessible to the visit of the invalid, as its noble owner has, with the greatest liberality, disposed a carriage way throughout the whole.”<sup>159</sup> Similarly, in the Lake District, Thomas West praises the efforts of Sir Michael Le Fleming to give tourists access to the sublime waterfalls on his property:

At RYDAL HALL are two cascades worthy of notice: One is a little above the house, to which Sir MICHAEL LE FLEMING has made a convenient path, that brings you upon it all at once, a mighty torrent tumbling headlong from an immense height of rock, uninterrupted into the rocky bason [sic] below, shaking the mountain under you with its fall, and the air above with the rebound: It is a surprising scene. This gentleman’s example in opening a road to the fall, recommends itself strongly in this country, that abounds with so many noble objects, that travellers of the least taste would visit with pleasure, could they do it with safety.”<sup>160</sup>

While noting that Fleming had built a path directly to the falls and had therefore assured the safety of the tourist, West provides a description of the falls which emphasizes their sublimeness. West does not express concern over the affect of the road on the scene, and furthermore, suggests that others follow Fleming’s example.

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<sup>158</sup> *Description of the Isle of Thanet*, 6. This is quite different than was the case when the railroads of the nineteenth century meant even greater increases in tourist traffic. Wordsworth strongly protested against railroads being built directly to the lakes in the Lake District during the 1840s.

<sup>159</sup> *Leasowes, Hagley, and Enville*, 108.

<sup>160</sup> West, *Guide to the Lakes*, 79-80.

Similarly, in the Peak District, also one of the most notable destinations for tourists of the picturesque, W. Bott supports the addition of a “convenient passage” into the sublime Matlock Dale:

The entrance into *Matlock Dale* is through a rock, which has been blasted for the purpose of opening a convenient passage: It was intended, when the passage was made, to have left a rude arch, which was a happy idea, and, had it been carried into execution, would have had an excellent effect; but even in its present state, the views from this place are very striking.<sup>161</sup>

While the blasting of a hole through the rocks surrounding the dale was a drastic alteration to the original landscape, Bott nevertheless finds the scene to be extremely sublime, the only factor to affect its overall sublime character being “the variety of trees and shrubs .... giving a softness to the scene, rendering it beautiful and sublime.”<sup>162</sup>

Thus, for Bott, as with other writers, human alterations that literally beat a path to sublime settings did not necessarily detract from the sublimeness of a scene. Bott likewise praises the Duke of Devonshire for adding a carriage road to accommodate the public wishing to visit the sublime “Lover’s Leap”:

...at the distance of a mile from *Buxton*, is a deep and craggy precipice, known by the name of the *Lovers Leap*, where his *Grace the Duke of Devonshire* has made a carriage road of near two miles, for the accommodation of the public. This part of the Dale is no more than a narrow and tremendous chasm, and it requires some firmness of mind to be able to look down to the bottom of it without feeling some degree of terror.<sup>163</sup>

From this we can see that, despite an interest in sublime landscapes, it was a matter of importance for guidebook authors that tourists have means by which to easily access sites. Furthermore, they did not see, or at least did portray, the greater access as a threat to the sublime character of an area.

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<sup>161</sup> Bott, *Buxton and the Adjacent Country*, 22.

<sup>162</sup> Bott, *Buxton and the Adjacent Country*, 23.

<sup>163</sup> Bott, *Buxton and the Adjacent Country*, 40.



Within the guidebooks discussed in this study, there are only two critiques of contemporary road development. The first, in Thomas Fisher's *The Kentish Traveller's Companion*, published in 1776, was heritage-based: as a result of "the alterations and improvements made of late years upon the turnpike road, particularly on Blackheath, Shooter's-hill, and Rexleyheath," he noted, "the traces of the old Roman way are almost obliterated. But beyond Dartford Brent there is much less difficulty in discovering the remains of it."<sup>164</sup> In terms of picturesque interests, however, the only critique can be found in Hyett's *Guide in a Tour of the Watering Places and their Environs on the South-East Coast of Devon*, published around 1796. Rather than comment on the physical impact of turnpikes on the English landscape, however, Hyett instead criticized the impact of turnpikes on the tourists' imagined landscapes, on their potential power to determine what tourists did and did not see of a region and thereby to alter how tourists imagined a region. Referring to how some previous visitors had found Devon wanting in picturesque beauties, Hyett attributed this to a failure to look beyond the turnpikes:

Few counties can boast of having those qualities in a higher degree than Devonshire, but (as elsewhere) they do not always occur on turnpike roads. To discover the charms of NATURE, we must follow her steps thro' the wild glen, by the foaming river, and ascend the steep hill, clad with luxuriant foliage, to where the scathed rock rises from the romantic eminence in rugged majesty...<sup>165</sup>

While many tourist sites could be seen from the turnpikes, Hyett asserted that tourists who wished to see picturesque and sublime views needed to leave the carriage and the turnpikes behind and go off the beaten track in order to see the more exceptional sites.

The treatment of transportation and accessibility in eighteenth-century guidebooks reflects what might be considered tensions between the authors' goal of promoting the civility or modernity of their region and their efforts to promote the sublime and "natural" character of its landscape. In the last few decades of the eighteenth

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<sup>164</sup> Thomas Fisher, *Kentish Traveller's Companion*, 35.

<sup>165</sup> Hyett, *Watering Places of Devon*, iv.

century, writers of tourist guidebooks did not express concern about the increasing number of roads crisscrossing the country, altering the landscape and bringing greater access to remote and sublime settings. Rather, what is apparent is a belief that regional identities could be judged based on local transportation networks, road quality affecting perceptions of a region's civility or backwardness and the roadside landscape shaping opinions of a region's picturesque merit.

## Conclusion

In late-eighteenth-century England, the rising interest in picturesque landscapes led to an increase in domestic tourism. Within this context, local guidebook authors were keen to share their regional picturesque and sublime assets, but more than this, sought to shift metropolitan attitudes regarding England's peripheral regions. By highlighting the many contemporary changes to their respective regions, guidebook authors portrayed their regions not as frozen in time, but as part of the larger national movement in pursuit of "improvement." As such, eighteenth-century travel guidebooks offer insight into how regional writers perceived their local environments and identities, as well as on how they attempted to shape tourists' perceptions of their regions.

When promoting their regions, guidebook authors advanced sites that conformed to the prevailing picturesque and sublime aesthetics and participated in the representation of enclosed land and landscape parks as classic English land formations. However, they were not willing to conform to metropolitan conceptions of regional backwardness and concurrently put forth their own interests by promoting local development and identities. Contrary to more rigid conceptions of the picturesque, guidebook authors celebrated agricultural change and industrialization. They also promoted the development of better transportation systems that, while facilitating tourism, also posed dangers to the preservation of the picturesque and sublime characteristics that tourists sought. In this way, eighteenth-century English guidebooks reflect tensions in the representation of regional landscapes, demonstrating competing impulses to celebrate supposedly traditional and natural landscape features while also promoting the changing nature of that landscape.

Tourists seeking the picturesque were not always impressed by this. When locals adjusted to their new reality as a tourist destination and left behind pursuits seen

as traditional for more lucrative opportunities in tourism or other industries, nostalgic tourists complained of the corruption of locals from their original state. Such was the case, for example, in the Lake District, one of England's most remote regions, where, by the end of the eighteenth century, within twenty years of the first edition of Thomas West's *Guide to the Lakes*, tourists in search of the picturesque complained of the rapid inflation of prices and the "corruption of the local people," attributing both to the growth of tourism.<sup>166</sup> This tension between the tourist's desires to see a nostalgic landscape and yet have local populations remain unaffected by their visitors is one that exists to this day. While not as readily apparent early in the picturesque movement, which was more focused on the composition of landscape than an explicit reaction against modernity, as England continued its agricultural, industrial and transportation growth into the nineteenth century, these tensions increased. As Romantic interests overtook eighteenth-century aesthetics, picturesque and sublime sights became more aligned with the search for "untouched" places, both in terms of nature and populations.<sup>167</sup>

Rather than being preservationist in scope or focussed on depicting idyllic rural settings for the consumption of urban tourists, eighteenth-century guidebook writers pursued dual identities for their respective regions, highlighting landscape features that reflected timelessness while also actively promoting regional development. In this way, the guidebooks of eighteenth-century rural England illustrate how local populations could attempt to shape their tourist experience, utilizing the aesthetics that inspired tourists to visit, yet combating the wholesale application of the aesthetics' cultural ideals, which would have reinforced and imposed perceptions of backwardness on regional

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<sup>166</sup> Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 168-171. Moir also notes that "Already by the 1790's all this was beginning to verge on crude capitalism" (*Discovery of Britain*, 147), while Ousby observes in *Englishman's England* that "The disgust they [tourists] felt for guides, beggars and all the accompanying signs of commercialisation strikes a wholly familiar note in eighteenth-century travel literature" (104).

<sup>167</sup> Berg and Clifford, *Consumers and Luxury*, 213.

populations. By means of travel guidebooks, local authors were able to counter the picturesque filter with images of complex regions that contained picturesque gems but were also modern, innovative and improving.

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