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Tom Duggett

# Gothic Romanticism

Wordsworth, Architecture, Politics, Form

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*For my wife, Qian*

*It may be proper to state whence the Poem, of which The Excursion is a part, derives its Title of The Recluse.—Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native Mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own Mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in Verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them ... —The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Anti-chapel has to the body of a gothic Church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little Cells, Oratories, and sepulchral Recesses ordinarily included in those Edifices ... It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system: it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself.*

—William Wordsworth, Preface to *The Excursion* (1814)

[*The Excursion*] affects a system without having any intelligible clue to one.

—William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825)

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

### I

As the subtitle of this second edition indicates, this is a book about William Wordsworth. The title of the first edition—*Gothic Romanticism: Architecture, Politics, and Literary Form* (2010)—underestimated that fact. I am therefore particularly grateful to Clive Bloom, and to the new context offered by the *Palgrave Gothic* series, for the opportunity to correct the oversight. *Gothic Romanticism* is now also *Wordsworth, Architecture, Politics, Form*. Wordsworth was always the representative figure who made the various terms of the original title hang together, and the poet whose essential role in “Gothic culture” I wanted to assert. And now, at the end of 2021, when Wordsworth has been a counsel of hope in a million lonely rooms, again proclaimed a radical “force in cultural history” by Jonathan Bate (2020, 4), it would seem perverse—untrue, unwise, unkind—to publish a book all about him without leading with his name. Especially since what this book really is, is nothing more or less than a long essay attempting to understand, or perhaps in a sense to re-enact, the thinking about Gothic poetry and Gothic architecture that culminates in the Preface to *The Excursion* of 1814.

I will not rehearse that attempt at understanding here: it plays out at its own pace across the following chapters. The two new chapters added to this edition add further layers of context and perspective, and I am continuing the same reading at long distance even when, in Chap. 8, the immediate subject is William Morris’s *News from Nowhere* (1890) and links back through John Ruskin to Robert Southey. But what I can add in

this preface, perhaps, is a comment on method. Because although this book is far from original in paying serious attention to Wordsworth's 1814 Preface, containing what M.H. Abrams called the "indispensable" "Prospectus" to his intended master-work, *The Recluse* (Abrams 1971, 20), it does so with a difference—slowing down and asking questions specifically about the quality of the "relation" being suggested, the different sets of knowledge and ways of thinking being implied, and about just what, beyond the obvious metaphor, the whole "allusion" to Gothic architecture might actually *mean*:

[T]he two Works [*The Prelude* and *The Recluse*] have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Anti-chapel has to the body of a gothic Church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little Cells, Oratories, and sepulchral Recesses ordinarily included in those Edifices ... [A]nd if [the Author] shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself. (*Excursion* 38–9)

Inspiring to Abrams (1971, 20–21), "quietly appalling" to James Heffernan (1979, 110), this "allusion" to "a gothic Church" seemed to me back in 2004 when starting work on Wordsworth and *The Recluse*—and still seems to me today—endlessly perplexing. But it was also comprehensible enough—one could after all find models of "gothic Churches" and accounts of "system" in architecture—to sustain the desire to understand that it inspired. The "history of history" that interests me today, in post-Romantic figures such as R.G. Collingwood and Reinhart Koselleck, was far from my conscious knowledge at the time. But I hope it's not just retrospect to say that I dimly sensed a way to history here in the 1814 Preface—a way suggested above all by Wordsworth's clear awareness of a lack of control over his meaning: "[I]f he may so express himself;" "he may be permitted to add;" "proper arrange[ment] ... may give ... claim ..."

Why so tentative? The dedication of *The Excursion* to William Lowther, Lord Lonsdale prompted Mary Shelley's famous comment, "He is a slave" (Shelley 1987, I, 25)—a comment which, by the way, reflects the narrow political meaning the word "slavery" has throughout this study, strongly limiting or suggesting untold costs in the "liberty" defined by contrast.



This specific sort of social anxiety or “slavery,” recalling the fit that came over the poet at Benjamin Robert Haydon’s famous “immortal dinner” on December 28, 1817—tongue-tied by the presence of John Kingston, his immediate superior in the Stamp Office—this may be one reason for hesitancy. “I felt pain,” wrote Haydon in his diary, “that such a poet as Wordsworth should be under the supervisorship of such a [‘silly’] being as this Comptroller. The people of England have a horror of office, an instinct against it. They are right. A man’s liberty is gone the moment he becomes official; he is the slave of superiors, and makes others slaves to him” (see Wu 2012, 861). In his recent study of *Wordsworth’s Poetry, 1815–1845*, Tim Fulford sees the 1814 Preface as “modeling” Wordsworth’s uneasily traditionalist later poetry, with its careful calibration of commitment to and distance from “the rural politics and [classicizing] landscape aesthetics of the patrons for whom he increasingly wrote”—such landowners and church builders and maintainers as Lonsdale and the dedicatee of *Poems* (1815), Sir George Beaumont (Fulford 2019, 60, 41, 219). “Classic ground, in this sense, was Gothic ground” (45). But in the context of the 1814 Preface to *The Excursion*, there are surely still larger anxieties and influences in play. “For I must tread on shadowy ground,” Wordsworth writes, a quarter of the way into the “Prospectus” that concludes the Preface, invoking the example of Milton, with a mixture of pride and submission that as I show in this book is archetypally “Gothic,” and that puts particular pressure on writing with “Public” significance and existence “long before.”

In her recent study of *Wordsworth’s Monastic Inheritance* (2018), Jessica Fay takes up the “gothic-Church metaphor” as the key to the poet’s works of the period 1806–1815, reflecting his gathering “knowledge of and imaginative engagement with the history of monasticism” (Fay 2018, 141, 9). It is an ingenious critical move, promising to alleviate at once the burden of “diasparactive ruin,” “incompleteness, fragmentation” that, for Thomas McFarland, the collaborative *Recluse* project brought to both Wordsworth and Coleridge (McFarland 1981, 100, 5). In the close context of Wordsworth and ten years’ reading and writing, the “gothic Church” becomes not so much a marker of a process of “unending rectification” (the phrase is Paul Ricoeur’s [2008, 365]), but rather a stable signifier of monasticism. Therefore also, Fay suggests, “I do not discuss ‘Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey’ because it was composed during a period of religious radicalism, before Wordsworth was reintegrated into the Church of England and before he embarked on his reading of monastic history” (8).

But there, surely, is the rub. For in the minds of Wordsworth's contemporary readers, with no lack of what Ricoeur calls the historical mind's "debt of *gratitude*" to *the past* (2008, 365), but with other and bigger creditors still to pay than *Wordsworth*, what could it possibly have signified what Wordsworth's reading habits now were? Or rather, what deductions could even the poet himself have thought it possible readers might make from his earlier churchgoing poetry? Readers might well have assumed and been expected to assume, on the contrary, and as critics from Harold Bloom to Nicholas Roe have indeed argued, that "Tintern Abbey" was precisely "the plan for *The Recluse*" in miniature (see Roe 2002, 83; and see also Bloom 1961, 127). And if readers had indeed attended closely to the language of the Preface, they might more likely have understood the poet to be asking them precisely not to see his "long before" pieces in isolation, as artifacts of a disowned radicalism, but with sympathy and in right relation—surviving in the altered context of the present and therefore capable still, for all their apparent desuetude, of the circulation of social energy.<sup>1</sup> There is even, perhaps, a model provided for this in the opening lines of another poem that Wordsworth published the following year, his self-consciously black-letter poem, *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815). At the sounding here of a "prelusive hymn," "Bolton's mouldering Priory" revives within:

And in the shattered fabric's heart  
Remaineth one protected part;  
A rural Chapel, neatly drest,  
In covert like a little nest;  
And thither young and old repair,  
This Sabbath-day, for praise and prayer. (ll. 16–36)

Emphasizing with the verse form a possibility vanishing out of the syntax, Wordsworth here alludes to what the longer course of history may yet "repair."

But if "Tintern Abbey" and earlier forms of belief are to be "protected" or "nested" in some such way within the encompassing "body of a gothic Church," then the term cannot be restricted to a ten years' interest in monasticism. As I have been suggesting, contemporaries would surely never have imagined, as literary history all too readily does, that such an "allusion" could either belong to or slip away from personal subjective control—that "a gothic Church" could mean whatever William

Wordsworth at this moment in 1814 wants it to mean. The caution of the analogy itself, covering all of his past poetry, churchgoing or not, radical or not, and banked less upon past achievement than upon what “may” and yet “will” be—this seems to be a function of Wordsworth thinking historically and not personally in this way. The “allusion” is deeper, earlier and more basic than metaphor. This well-known passage in Hans Georg Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (1960), an off-stage presence in James Chandler’s “Burkean” study of *Wordsworth’s Second Nature* (1984), is to the point:

Self-reflection and autobiography ... are not primary and ... through them history is made private once more. In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it. Long before we understand ourselves through the process of self-examination, we understand ourselves in a self-evident way in the family, society, and state in which we live. The focus of subjectivity is a distorting mirror. The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuit of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being. (Gadamer 2004, 278)

Wordsworth and Gothic thus struck me as a particularly rewarding subject to study, requiring a specifically historical approach to be grasped, while being itself already historically mobile or poised, as it were—less like one of the cromlechs of Stonehenge than a rocking stone. It is from that specific use of the word “gothic,” pointing to so many others, that I took the first term in my book’s title. And the word “Romanticism” follows—not because Ann Radcliffe and others wrote what the critical tradition calls “Gothic Romances,” but because, again, the Preface to *The Excursion* is in the very groundwork of modern Romantic Studies. Here, as already noted, M.H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971) locates Wordsworth’s “Program for Poetry.” With this “structural plan of ‘a gothic church’” and the ensuing 107-line “Prospectus” to *The Recluse*, Abrams suggested, Wordsworth was “precise [and] insistent: he envisaged all his poems as one immense work ... written in accordance with a single comprehensive design” (1971, 20).

What I meant by *Gothic Romanticism*, then, was a reading of Romanticism through the Preface to *The Excursion*, exploring ground well-trodden by other critics, but approaching from, as it were, the side of the “closed circuit,” the architectural outside of the Gothic analogy. Page

by page, this book takes interest in every available “public” model of “a gothic Church.” But at the same time, and in a way that makes this book still distinct from recent important work on architecture and literature by scholars such as Peter Lindfield and Dale Townshend—exploring, respectively, *Georgian Gothic: Medievalist Architecture, Furniture and Interiors, 1730–1840* (2016), and *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760–1840* (2019)—I was widening the circuit of my enquiry still seeking the answer to a very specific problem. *Gothic Romanticism* was not in 2010, and is not now, a continuous history or a “big book” in which “the Gothic” is taken as some sort of autonomous entity in search—as JoEllen Mary DeLucia has recently put it—in “search for a clear referent” (2021, 1012). It is, as I began by saying, a book about Wordsworth; whose “incalculably important” Preface, in Stephen Gill’s phrase (2020, 345), with its invitation to an imaginative effort of historical understanding, to see as it were the whole of the moon, almost defines what we mean by Romanticism.

## II

What follows in this book, now as in the first edition of 2010, is a set of six closely connected chapters, developing an overall “Gothic” reading of Wordsworth through a series of close historical readings of major works and their assorted paratexts. Chapter 1, “Introduction: Architecture, Politics, and the Ancient Constitution,” proposes first of all the historical character and the uncanny currency of “Gothic” architectural presences, revisiting the World Trade Center disaster of September 11, 2001 to gauge the depth of the energies concentrated in “Gothic” as a word. Chapter 2 then focuses in on “Gothic” as a term specifically in the literary-historical and political discourses of the eighteenth century, routing its discussion through the Preface to *The Excursion* so as to begin sketching out the “pregnant moment” of Gothic culture in 1814. Here Wordsworth is “creator and receiver both,” and the story I tell in this chapter is of Wordsworth making a profound and prolonged surrender to a new historical control, as a changing cultural ambiance overtakes his published writings and any intended authorial meanings. Chapter 3 then seeks to situate the young Wordsworth in these discourses—child and father in the incipient culture of the Gothic in the 1790s—by reading a prototypical “Gothic” text, *Salisbury Plain* (1794). In the wartime struggle between old, unreflected loyalty and his intense new political allegiance, Wordsworth

turns to an idiom of “Gothic” republicanism rooted in the cathedral and the charter—that is, the only extant provincial copy of Magna Carta (1215)—standing in the near vicinity of Stonehenge. Chapter 4 explores “Gothic Romantic” responses to the Peninsular War, reading Wordsworth’s prose tract, *The Convention of Cintra* (1809) alongside Coleridge’s *Letters on the Spaniards* (1809), and Southey’s *Chronicle of the Cid* (1808) and *Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814). My argument here is that not only was the Peninsular campaign the key episode in the Lake Poets’ thinking about the nation, and in their transition from dissent to loyalism, but that their development in these works of a “progressive Gothic politics” was part of a wider British and European romantic-conservative movement sparked by the Spanish uprising against Napoleon. Chapter 5 turns from this “Gothic” issue to another in the shape of the British and European debate on national education, particularly as represented in the “something of a dramatic form” of Wordsworth’s *Excursion*. I argue that the Lake Poets’ advocacy of Andrew Bell’s “Madras” system of pupil-tuition shows their Gothic politics in action. Chapter 6—originally the Conclusion, and now an “Interchapter” or landing-place—then explores the contribution of the Romantic culture of the Gothic to the gathering pictorial and Arthurian turn in English verse, with a particular focus on *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815).

This second edition contains two new chapters—fresh reports from my investigations in the same field. In many places, these chapters qualify or accentuate the broad argument of Chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. And while I have avoided repetition as much as possible, each chapter recapitulates enough of the previous argument (I hope) to be read individually, and to function as a representative or remodeling of the whole. Chapter 7 turns back again to encounter “Michael, a Pastoral Poem” (1800), and also Book VIII of the 1805 *Prelude*. While *The Prelude* is a constant presence throughout *Gothic Romanticism*, Book VIII did not feature in the first edition, and “Michael” was not included in the line of argument at all. That has now been rectified. Turning my overall account of a “Gothic” “Plan” or design in Wordsworth’s career back toward the pervasive presence of “gothic” fragments and ruins in his poetry, the new Chap. 7 aims to clarify ways in which *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* also function as “Gothic” texts in a broader sense. By that last point—Gothic in a broader sense—I mean the way that Gothic will become a “glorious epithet” even beyond Maurice Levy’s sense about “labyrinthine” fiction from Walpole to Maturin’s *Melmoth* (1820; see Levy 1994, 4). “Gothic” carried an

almost religious charge for such later figures as William Morris and John Ruskin, coming to signify a much longer and more truly popular tradition, both in buildings and in books. My eighth chapter explores that further development, suggesting ways in which it ties back into the middle ages specifically by way of the Lake Poets. Wordsworth and Coleridge here become key figures informing the mind and major public intellectual works of Robert Southey, as he became in turn an unacknowledged precursor for Ruskin in “The Nature of Gothic” (1853) and Morris in *News from Nowhere* (1890).

For this new edition, I have revisited and revalidated the entire text of the first edition, but with the overriding aim of maintaining the integrity of the original argument. Not attempting a “restoration”—repouring foundations or installing a new steel frame—I have instead sought to “conserve” the work to keep it usable in the present. I have therefore silently updated and improved the references, using wherever possible the new editions and the improved scholarly resources that have become available over the last ten years—especially wherever these combine scholarliness with easy access, like the online *Collected Letters of Robert Southey* (2009–). But I have not sought to retrofit my ideas and arguments to subsequent criticism. The task of placing my work in dialogue with other developments in Wordsworth and Gothic studies is instead reserved for the two new chapters. Wherever my sense of errors or misleading emphases have prevented me from simply “revalidating” the text, my approach has mainly been to insert new endnotes. Very exceptionally, I have rewritten the text (as economically as possible) and acknowledged as much. In a number of places, I have moved material from endnotes into the body of the text, occasionally filtering out details that were holdovers from the PhD thesis (St Andrews, 2007) that stands behind this book. Readers wishing to see the various images referenced in the book will find them curated online under the hashtag #GothicRomanticism, and details of relevant publications are provided in the notes.

At the heart of this book are two chapters, on *Salisbury Plain* (1794) and on *The Convention of Cintra* (1809), which together make the case for something I have tried to define as Wordsworth’s “progressive Gothic politics.” And before I move to reflect briefly upon “Gothic” as this book understands it, I want to say a further word about the meaning of “progressive” here, and where *Gothic Romanticism* stands in relation to two key accounts of Wordsworth’s politics. In his “New Introduction” to *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (2nd ed. 2018), Nicholas

Roe contrasts the “aggressive voice” of the poet in *Salisbury Plain* (1794), wielding “High o’er the towers of Pride” the “herculean mace / Of Reason,” with the voice of “Tintern Abbey” (1798) and its “more reticent manifesto—‘hear’, ‘behold’, ‘think’, ‘connect,’” aiming to “discern roots and relationships, to establish links between past, present, and future” (12). If 1794–1798 measures a “Burkean” turn, as in James Chandler’s account in *Wordsworth’s Second Nature* (1984) of the “traditionalism” underpinning the major poetry, Roe observes that “rights, customs, and traditions were not exclusively Burke’s territory,” and that “poetry—even ‘Burkean’ poetry—is necessarily progressive, oriented to the future, in that each poem grows from what has already been said and creates a verbal world that had not existed before” (Roe 2018, 12). The argument across Chaps. 3 and 4 of this book tends in a broadly similar direction. To borrow the language of *The Prelude* on the informing effect of early experiences of fearful “joy,” I suggest that the radical antiquarianism that “by its own weight / Wearied itself out of the memory,” nevertheless remains in its “substantial lineaments,” as an obscure but shaping presence in the later poetry and prose (1805 I, 625–8). If I have anything substantial to add to Roe’s account, it might perhaps be the thought that Wordsworth remained always radical in some sense, was at all times an agent of “progress,” precisely because of an increasing “orientation” not to the *future* as such, but to the living *past*—to that historical past which, surviving in all the evidence available to be read and understood aright, must constitute any practical perspective upon the present.<sup>2</sup> *Gothic Romanticism* thus agrees with Chandler but for Roe’s reasons. What this book from 2010 still calls “progressive Gothic politics” is something that I would now, if I could research it all over again from the ground up, perhaps try to think out in terms of R.G. Collingwood on “Progress”—not as an ideology of disowning the past, but as “created by Historical Thinking”:

Th[e] understanding of the system we set out to supersede is a thing which we must retain throughout the work of superseding it, as a knowledge of the past conditioning our creation of the future. It may be impossible to do this; our hatred of the thing we are destroying may prevent us from understanding it, and we may love it so much that we cannot destroy it unless we are blinded by such hatred. But if that is so, there will once more, as so often in the past, be change but no progress; we shall have lost hold on one group of problems in our anxiety to solve the next. And we ought by now to realize that no kindly law of nature will save us from the fruits of our ignorance. (Collingwood 1994, 334)

## III

Wordsworth and his historical poetry constitute the main subject of this book. But the lead word in the title is “Gothic,” and I want to close by trying to say something more about the account of Gothic itself as a historical word and concept developing here. As Alexandra Warwick suggested in a bracing critique of 2007, one way to understand the recent rise of “Gothic Studies” is as the effect on English departments of Jaques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* (1994). As criticism took up as universally applicable the specific elaboration of what Derrida called “a hauntology”—the properly deconstructive discovery within a “particular textual economy” of “the presence of traces, in this case those of ghosts,” that “disturb[ed] the dominant logic” in an objectifying discourse “that appears to have expelled” every such trace—so doing “Gothic” criticism threatened to become a strangely *constructive* enterprise, associative rather than analytical (Warwick 2007, 5–15). Starting to say “Gothic” when what they meant was “meaning,” Warwick noted, programmatically “hauntological” critics came inevitably to “discover” the Gothic (hauntingly absent) in every text. But “[w]hat is the use of Gothic to read texts if they are themselves being identified as Gothic?” (7–8).

As suggested by the recent outpouring of “Gothic” publications, including the three-volume *Cambridge History of the Gothic* (2020–21) and new companions on *Gothic and Theory* and *Gothic and the Arts* from Edinburgh University Press (both 2019), the current disciplinary imperative is, as Frederic Jameson put it, to “Always historicize!”—to provide what David Punter calls “a different ‘account’ of how history moves” (Punter 2019, 24). But to start from the position that history is always-already theoretical seems to me to risk hearing only half of what it means. Or only half, at any rate, of what history is coming around again, with the “new biography,” the new “counterfactualism” and what Nicholas Roe terms the “hard task of speculative revival,” to mean (see Roe, “Leigh Hunt and Romantic Biography,” in Davies ed. 2009, 206–7). This is history as in part “antihistoricist” resistant experience, beyond text or “narrative practice”—history as “inchoate, unnamed, yet viable popular practices,” in the words of Robert Miles’s contribution to the *Theory* volume, *registerable in and by* textual “practice” indeed, but not “only, really, documentation,” as Punter puts it (Hogle and Miles eds. 2019, 33, 304). History is action, including documents, but not coextensive with them. As Coleridge’s acquaintance at Rome, Wilhelm von Humboldt, argued in his



foundational 1821 lecture “On the Historian’s Task,” to focus only on the documentary record is “choosing actual error”: “The manifestations of an event are scattered, disjointed, isolated; what it is that gives unity to this patchwork, puts the isolated fragment into its proper perspective, and gives shape to the whole, remains removed from direct observation” (Humboldt 2008, 167–8). For the historian’s mind to restore this withdrawn “causal nexus” involved “merely” learning “to understand better the genuinely intelligible material by making its own the structure of all occurrences ... to perceive more in that material than could be achieved by the mere operation of the intellect” (167–8). The object of the historian, writes Paul Ricoeur, explaining Collingwood, “is the union of the inside,” in “thought,” and the “outside,” in “physical changes,” which distinguishes historical action from natural event (Ricoeur 2008, 366–7). Or, to return to materials perhaps closer to home, such as Alan Liu commenting on his own heart-stopping quotation from Melvyn Bragg’s Lake District lexicon of corporal punishment—of the “braying, breaking, leddering, nointing” of “young souls”—“part of what we mean by history is that the man really is the father of the child before, as Wordsworth imagined, the child can be father of the man” (see Davies ed. 2009, xvi–xvii).

*Gothic Romanticism* calls fundamentally into question any approach to “Gothic” as a “theoretical” hall of mirrors for the literary-critical self-reflections of a single slim volume published in 1765. In the 2008 Oxford University Press edition of the novel, E. J. Clery describes the publication event of the second edition of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, now subtitled “A Gothic Story,” as a “dislocation,” a moment from which “‘Gothic’ is no longer a historical description” but a “new genre” (2008, xv). But as both Nick Groom in his criticism and in his successor OUP edition of 2014, and Richard Adelman in work on John Ruskin have recently indicated, if “Gothic” meant something primarily about genre after 1765, the nineteenth century missed the memo (see Groom 2018, 120; and Adelman 2017, 152–63). In Ruskin and in William Morris the term continued to mean something quite different, something both older and newer and more profoundly social—and “Gothic” continued to collocate mostly with “architecture,” that most poetic and co-operative of the practical arts, until the 1970s. “Mediaeval,” Thomas Dudley Fosbrooke’s almost instantaneously devalued new coinage of 1817, was turned by Ruskin at mid-century in the direction of a “Gothic form” social fusion of “architecture,” “religion” and “national life and character” (see Matthews 2011, 695–715; and Ruskin 1854, 21, 193; 1866, 48, 56–7).

And as the works of Morris after Ruskin make clearly visible, it is a paradox of semantic history that all through the long displacement of “Gothic” by “medieval,” as the more conveniently period-specific term, almost all of the old negative connotations were steadily flowing out, and almost all of the sense of historical potential was flowing back into the older and more useably ambiguous word (see Chap. 8). Insofar as critical accounts of “Real” history in Gothic fiction depend upon 1960’s-vintage definitions of eighteenth-century “Gothic” as, to quote Jerrold Hogle, “*we must remember*, a floating signifier that could mean ‘imaginative in a medieval manner’ or ‘barbarous and pre-civilized’ by more modern standards” (Hogle and Miles eds. 2019, 114, my emphasis), they are ultimately less sublimely built in air than built on sand.

*Must we remember?* Might we not try creatively to forget? To define “Gothic” by way of the “medieval” is to perpetrate an evident historical solecism—albeit one that a thoroughly “hauntological” criticism may engineer to advantage. But really “anachronism”—that is, the possibility of committing a genuine anachronism—is precisely what is at stake in the nature of Gothic. As Jerome Christensen argued against Francis Fukuyama’s thesis of “the end of history,” it is the anti-Romantic, “posthistorical” or “postmodern” position to rule out any such real thing as “survival” or “holdover” (Fredric Jameson’s terms), or any such “really is” as that of Liu on the “leddered” and “noited” child, at all (see Christensen 2000, 11). And bearing in mind Robert Miles’s recent argument from Christensen and Slavoj Žižek on Romanticism as the spirit of anachronism holding open hope for the “emergence of unrecognized possibility,” struggling in the grip of the “mind-forged manacles of modernity” (Hogle and Miles eds. 2019, 38), there might yet be a way of studying Gothic historically without either returning to “theory” or writing positive histories that risk making a thing of a living thought. This book, I hasten to add, achieves no such thing. But it is an attempt to make a start. For any such new historical Gothic must bid a Romantically “antihistoricist” defiance to any flattened-out “postmodern” sense of the difficult, knotted anachronism-made-material that the word continued after 1765—and still in most contexts continues—to mean. To discover living fountains within the “Gothic bequest” to contemporary culture would require an apprehension of “Gothic” itself as a term in slow and uneven transition during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and into the present, and perhaps still yet unrealized. “Gothic” might then be seen not as an already-flatly-synchronic “theoretical” “floating signifier,” but as what historical semantics after Reinhart Koselleck’s *Futures Past* (1985) might describe as a

word worth staying with—as something evidently undergoing the discovery, within all its latent and confused contents, and in all the ambiguous interstices of its combinations, of a social conception of historical time.

TJED

Suzhou, China

Tom Duggett

## NOTES

1. See Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder,” in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (1990), 231; and R.G. Collingwood, “Outlines of a Philosophy of History” (1928), and “History as Re-enactment of Past Experience” (1936), in *The Idea of History* (1994, 447–8, 298–302).
2. See Niall Ferguson on Collingwood and “applied” or “practical,” problem-solving history, in his October 2016 lecture to the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA), “The Decline and Fall of History;” available here:  
<https://www.goacta.org/wp-content/uploads/ee/download/Aliferguson-Merrill-Speech.pdf>.

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Tom Duggett, Shanghai, 2010

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And now thanks, both renewed and new: to my wife, Qian, my partner and my guide, and to our children. To Benjamin, born in Shanghai in 2011, and Emily, born in Suzhou in 2015—both of you now bigger than the five years' child of the early *Prelude*—in years two and six, at the book-ends of your small school's primary years. You teach me daily that what we feel is still more deeply what we know. I was talking about you to your Nana Gail when she passed away in 2018. And it was her far back singing of the ballad of "Scarborough Fair," living on in me, that lulled both your infant slumbers. And so I dare to hope with Wordsworth in draft passages of "Michael," and with his great biographer, Stephen Gill, that by "the sovereignty / Of forms" our feelings *are* "indissolubly bound / Together." And that thus, in thought, and in part at least, are "affinities preserved / Between all the stages of the life of man."

Tom Duggett, Suzhou, September 1, 2021

## Praise for the *First Edition*

“Tom Duggett’s *Gothic Romanticism* is a compellingly ambitious study of the pursuit of a purer and better gothic in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century England. Focusing on Wordsworth and the Lake Poets’ attempt to refine a coarser, more sensational gothic as set forth in the novels of Radcliffe and Scott and in antiquarian curiosities, Duggett weaves sustained analysis of their poetry with thoughtful commentary on medieval architectural imagery and history, the turn to conservative politics, and educational reform. This multileveled investigation demonstrates in engaging prose the centrality of a cultivated rhetoric of a gothic aesthetic in this period while provocatively suggesting its relevance to a post-9/11 era where architecture ‘has assumed an importance that seemed without precedent.’ *Gothic Romanticism* goes far in detailing such a poetic, cultural, and historical precedent.”

—Citation, *Winner of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) Prize for Independent Scholars for distinguished published research in the fields of modern languages and literatures, 2010*

“*Gothic Romanticism* succeeds not only as a study in cultural history, but as an education in the dynamic fusion of the poetic and the constitutional imagination – something so fundamental to the common law cultures of the world, and yet rarely valued as such. To articulate the many planes of Wordsworth’s intricate activity in this sphere is a fine achievement.”

—Gregory Leadbetter, *Professor of Poetry, Birmingham City University, in The Wordsworth Circle*

“What arises from this strikingly original analysis is a significant recasting of William Wordsworth as the chief architect of emergent Gothic culture, as well as sophisticated new models of both Gothicism and Romanticism that promise to inspire further important work.”

—Nick Groom, *Professor of Literature in English, University of Macau*

“Duggett achieves a subtle tracing of the complex and ambivalent trope of the Gothic as it appears, often in occluded form, in a number of Wordsworth’s works. His handling of the political writing is exceptionally illuminating.”

—Tim Fulford, *Professor of English, De Montfort University*

“For scholars of the fantastic, *Gothic Romanticism* reads on a double register. Its depth of historical context makes this book a companion to English literatures of the fantastic that rehearse long-standing national narratives, creating their own continuities with the past.”

—Elizabeth Hoiem, *Assistant Professor in English,  
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, in  
Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*

“Duggett takes the reader deep into the Gothic edifices of Romanticism and charts the Lake Poets’ involvement in the Gothic Revival and formation of a Gothicised British sensibility. His important study provides a crucial corrective to Gothic and Romantic studies, making this book essential reading.”

—Marie Mulvey-Roberts, *Professor of English Literature,  
University of the West of England*

“*Gothic Romanticism* is a study of Wordsworth and the ‘Gothic constitution’ – the notion, which is still deeply operative in English public law, that a set of precepts which has emerged from history or tradition may be deeply preferable to one which is laid down by prescription. The changes in Wordsworth’s thinking, so frequently regarded as a kind of apostasy, are regarded here in terms of that unique mixture of public and private aesthetic form which, in architecture, produced the Houses of Parliament, the forum of our (Gothic) democracy. The marvelously suggestive conclusion pursues a route from Wordsworth’s politics into the intricacies and difficulties of the sublime.”

—David Punter, *Professor of Poetry, University of Bristol*



# CONTENTS

1	Introduction: Architecture, Politics, and the Ancient Constitution	1
2	Romantic Poets and Gothic Culture	27
3	Radical Gothic: Politics and Antiquarianism in Wordsworth's <i>Salisbury Plain</i>	77
4	"By Gothic Virtue Won": Wordsworth's <i>Convention of Cintra</i> and the Peninsular War	113
5	Wordsworth's Gothic Education: <i>The Excursion</i>	167
6	Interchapter: The Staring Nation	197
7	Wordsworth's Early History: "Michael" and <i>The Recluse</i>	215
8	The Style Historic: The Gothic Line from the Lake Poets to William Morris	243
	Bibliography	273
	Index	295
		xxvii

## ABBREVIATIONS

- 1799; 1805; 1850 *Prelude* texts from Jonathan Wordsworth, ed. *The Prelude: The Four Texts* (London: Penguin Books, 1995)
- BL *Biographia Literaria*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols. (London: Princeton University Press, 1983)
- Church and State* *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. John Colmer (London and Princeton, NJ: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Princeton University Press, 1976)
- CLRS *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, [www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey\\_letts/](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/southey_letts/), 6 parts, ed. Lynda Pratt, Ian Packer, Tim Fulford, and Carol Bolton, 2009–2016
- CLSTC *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956–71)
- Excursion* *The Excursion*, ed. Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye, assisted by David Garcia (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2007)
- EY *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787–1805*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edition, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967)
- FN *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993)
- GM *Gentleman's Magazine*
- Lectures on Literature* *Lectures 1808–1819: On Literature*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by R. A. Foakes, 2 vols. (London and Princeton, NJ: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Princeton University Press, 1987)

- Life and Correspondence* *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. Charles Cuthbert Southey, 6 vols. (London: Longman, 1849–50)
- LY* *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edition, rev. Alan G. Hill, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978–88)
- MW* *William Wordsworth: The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)
- MY* *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edition, rev. Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–70)
- New Letters* *New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols. (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1965)
- Prose Works* *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974)
- QR* *Quarterly Review*
- Reflections* *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, by Edmund Burke, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987)
- Rights of Man* *Rights of Man; Common Sense; and other writings*, by Thomas Paine, ed. Mark Philp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
- RSCH* *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Lionel Madden (London: Routledge, 1972)
- Selections* *Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. John Wood Warter, 4 vols. (London: Longman, 1856)
- SPP* *The Salisbury Plain Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975)
- STM* *Sir Thomas More: or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*, by Robert Southey, ed. Tom Duggett, 2 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 2018)
- WDR* *The White Doe of Rylstone; or, The Fate of the Nortons*, ed. Kristine Dugas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988)