

“Two Navigators...Sailing on Horseback”: Daniell’s and Ayton’s 1813 Coastal Voyage from Land’s End

to Holyhead

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The othering of Welsh persons would remain a feature of English “home tour” travelogues throughout the nineteenth century. But in the English popular imaginary of the last decades of the eighteenth century, the Welsh landscape had begun to take on new meanings as a locus of picturesque topographical beauty. This was particularly true among visual artists. As early as 1770, the famed painter and aquatinter, Paul Sandby, made several tours through the Welsh countryside and produced multiple aquatint landscapes depicting the region.<sup>1</sup> Sandby’s works opened the floodgate of tourists over the next decades. As Joseph Cradock avowed in 1777, “as everyone who has either traversed a steep mountain, or crossed a small channel, must write his Tour, it would be almost unpardonable in Me to be totally silent, who have visited the most uninhabited regions of North Wales.”<sup>2</sup> The Wye Valley in Wales became the epicenter of British home tourism following the 1782 publication of William Gilpin’s *Observations on the River Wye*,<sup>3</sup> one of the first English travel guides detailing the home tour.<sup>4</sup> This treatise provided the initial conceptual framework of the picturesque topographical aesthetic. Subsequently, picturesque discourse developed through the paintings, travel writing, and artwriting of Richard Payne Knight, Uvedale Price, as well as William Gilpin.<sup>5</sup> The picturesque functioned as a means of mediating the features of the beautiful and the sublime, as defined by Edmund Burke.<sup>6</sup> But these theorists could not agree upon the features and forms defining picturesque landscape beauty. Particularly, the inconsistency and opacity of Gilpin’s claims led many contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan Robertson and Bruce Robertson, *The Art of Paul Sandby* (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art, 1985), 10-11.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Cradock, *An Account of Some of the Most Romantic Parts of North Wales* (London, 1777), i.

<sup>3</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (London, 1782).

<sup>4</sup> Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, 86.

<sup>5</sup> Gilpin, *Three Essays* (London, 1808), Knight, *An Analytical Inquiry* (London, 1805), Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque* (London, 1796).

<sup>6</sup> Anne Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740-1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 70, 80. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful: With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste, and Several Other Additions*. (London, 1756).

and modern scholars to perceive the picturesque as a nebulous concept open to new aesthetic inclusions as well as contradictory and competing interpretations.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the picturesque aesthetic was continuously being defined and redefined.

The picturesque had its origins in both Britain as well as in each imperial matrix. During the Seven Years War, purportedly accurate topographical art in Canada and other peripheries had great importance in shaping metropolitan understandings of the nature of the vast, expanding British Empire. Prior to this conflict with France, Britons did not perceive the overseas holdings and territories as being interconnected and a coherent unit of a single global empire. Visually capturing Canada's newly-acquired Quebec topography served as a precedent for recording the scenic empire.<sup>8</sup> This imperial picturesque lens was later exported to each periphery as well as back to the metropole. Thus, the global picturesque emerged as a dynamic aesthetic defined by a constant dialogue of colonial representation in the imperial center as well as in each imperial milieu.<sup>9</sup>

It was against the background of anterior travel accounts proclaiming Welsh social otherness and visual praise of Wales's ecological picturesque beauty that William Daniell and Richard Ayton defined the objectives of their travels around the entire coast of Great Britain. As an associate of the Royal Academy of Art in London, Daniell was well-versed in aesthetic theories of landscape painting by the time he reached the coast of south-west England and Wales

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<sup>7</sup> Gerald Finley, "The Encapsulated Landscape: An Aspect of Gilpin's Picturesque," in *City and Society in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Paul Fritz and David Williams (Toronto: Hakkert, 1973), 194; Price, *Essays on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful*, I:347-60.

<sup>8</sup> John E. Crowley, *Imperial Landscapes: Britain's Global Visual Culture, 1745-1820* (London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2011), 4-7, 47, 169, 193, 203.

<sup>9</sup> Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," introduction to *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in A Bourgeois World*, edited by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 1997), 4, 1-37.

in 1813.<sup>10</sup> During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Gilpin along with other picturesque artists and writers had rendered landscape paintings and travelogues of the Lake District of north-west England and travel accounts of Wales a cliché.<sup>11</sup> Thus, William Daniell wished to diverge from the hackneyed locales and representations of the home tour and, instead, locate the ostensibly aesthetically alien in regions rarely traversed by tourists.<sup>12</sup> His artistic abilities developed while traveling through India and recording South Asian ecological and architectural features.<sup>13</sup> Daniell applied his empire-forged aesthetic to a subject only recently touched upon by J. M. W. Turner and other influential contemporary painters<sup>14</sup>: the jagged rocks, sublime cliffs, unpredictable waves, and stone pillars along the seacoast.<sup>15</sup>

Very few scholars have given the first volume of Ayton and Daniell's *Voyage Round Great Britain* (1814) more than a passing glance.<sup>16</sup> In his famed monograph, *The Lure of the Sea* (1988, 1994), Alain Corbin briefly claimed that the duo's circumscription of Britain was based upon their compulsion to make the nation appear a logical political and social unit defined by its island geography. For Corbin, this multi-volume undertaking was little more than a romanticist "hymn to the insularity of a nation" following the tumult and tribulations of the Napoleonic

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<sup>10</sup> Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India: The Picturesque Journeys of Thomas and William Daniell, 1786- 1794* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Wendy Joy Darby, *Landscape and Identity: Geographies of Nation and Class in England* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000) 1-99.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Ayton and William Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain, Undertaken in the Summer of the Year 1813 and Commencing From Lands-end, Cornwall* (London, 1814), iii-v.

<sup>13</sup> Ian Bain, *William Daniell's Voyage Round Great Britain 1814-1825* (London: The Bodley Head, 1966), 12. Daniell noted decidedly picturesque views and complained when the scenery was devoid of picturesque features. William Daniell, "W. Daniell's Journal," in *Walker's Quarterly*, No. 35-6, edited by Martin Hardie and Muriel Clayton (London: Walker's Galleries, 1932), 39, 42, 44.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Wilton, *Turner and the Sublime* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 143-54.

<sup>15</sup> Fellow Royal Academy artists noted that Daniell's choice of color, method of shading, and attention to detail when depicting Britain were presumably influenced by his exposure to South Asian landscape and art. William Sandby, *The Royal Academy of Arts: From its Foundation in 1768 to the Present Time*, Volume 2 (London, 1862), 34-5

<sup>16</sup> *Voyage Round Great Britain* was published in eight volumes between 1814 and 1825. Ayton only provided the text for the first two volumes.

Wars.<sup>17</sup> Such an argument adheres to Linda Colley's assertion that eighteenth and nineteenth-century conflicts with Catholic France played a key role in the formation of a British conception of a unified Britishness and a heightened awareness of Great Britain as a logical political entity.<sup>18</sup> Corbin also claimed that Daniell and Ayton's journey, as well as the further development of sea bathing resorts in Britain, evidenced the growing prestige of shoreline tourism during the 1800 to 1840 period.<sup>19</sup> In this view, by publishing images and travelogues of their circumnavigation, the two travelers contributed to the processes of normalizing the sea and the coast as a British locality of beauty and leisure.

However, this essay disagrees with Corbin on both of these points. The first volume of Ayton's text did not delineate the margins of the Island in order to craft a romantic image of a unified British nation cut off from external threats and influences. Nor was Daniell and Ayton's impetus for circumscribing the Island merely linked to a desire to depict coastal Britons as a metonym for the social variation of a single, homogenizing British populace.<sup>20</sup> Rather, Ayton located social difference, the sublime "horrors of the coast," and neglected spaces in Britain's "wildest parts" in order to illuminate the great diversity of persons and landscapes of the Island.<sup>21</sup> The duo was not trying to encapsulate Britain, but instead showed that there was little coherence to Britishness and that the British landscape had many hidden, rugged regions that were only beginning to be explored by J. M. W. Turner and various romanticist writers.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750-1840*, translated by Jocelyn Phelps (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 173.

<sup>18</sup> Colley, *Britons*, 5-6, 18, 367-9, 273.

<sup>19</sup> Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 173.

<sup>20</sup>Therefore, he was not foreshadowing Whiggish ideas of Britishness and insular societal uniqueness propounded by Macaulay three decades later. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second, Vol. 1* (London, 1848), 7-14.

<sup>21</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, iii-iv.

<sup>22</sup> Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 231.

Richard Ayton's description of their tour from Landsend to Holyhead continually stressed social and geographic dissimilarity between Wales, southwestern England, and inland regions of Britain. Ayton identified certain distinct commonalities among all Welshmen, particularly by repeated description of them as dirty, backward savages. Yet, he also allotted space in his text to detailing local societal transformations produced by external rule, industrialization, and agricultural modifications.<sup>23</sup> This paper suggests that while Ayton condemned Welsh towns as filthy and retrograde, he indicated that each was worth recording because they - much like rustic English fishermen and rocky sublime outcroppings - represented a part of Britain unappreciated by tourists in search of cliché beautiful, picturesque hills and calm, sandy beaches. Ayton's attention to Welsh difference was interwoven with his desire to challenge the normalization of the seacoast as a site of picturesque tourism or heavy industry. Thus, this essay argues that Ayton's text identifies two antithetical definitions of coastal Britain: the pristine, neglected sublime coast of deadly rocks and unadulterated Welsh villages, as opposed to the terrain-blighting metal works and picturesque pleasure spaces of metropolitan holidaymakers. For Ayton, both factory and holiday spot equally ruined local natural wonders and further morally corrupted the local villagers.

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In September of 1794, William Daniell and his uncle, Thomas Daniell, returned to London after having been in India and on the coast of China for nearly a decade. They arrived with countless sketches, studies, and notes that would be the basis of a number of collaborative publications of aquatint landscape prints produced between 1795 and 1810. The creation of four sets of aquatints, entitled *Oriental Scenery: Twenty-Four Views of Hindoostan*, between 1795

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<sup>23</sup>Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 63, 65, 70, 95, 111, 119, 167.

and 1808 allowed both Daniells to advance in the London art world.<sup>24</sup> In the years following his return from India, William Daniell was not as highly regarded as his uncle in the artistic milieu. But he had the opportunity to train as a student at the Academy and to show his works at its exhibitions. He displayed aquatint cityscapes of London as well as views of notable ports of this city and other major coastal towns in England.<sup>25</sup> Of course, Daniell desired to follow his uncle in becoming an Associate and, eventually, a full-fledged Royal Academician.<sup>26</sup> But in order to attain this honor, he would have to produce landscapes that were more elaborate and novel than those he previously had exhibited.<sup>27</sup>

Beginning the late seventeenth century, many young, male British aristocrats and artists alike journeyed to the continent in order to see the historical and modern wonders of Western Europe. This Grand Tour was an educational rite of passage that ostensibly inculcated gentlemanly values and allowed both the artist and the connoisseur to become more adept at the visual arts. The eruption of the Napoleonic Wars officially both ended this a rite of passage for aristocrats and prohibited landscape artists from capturing views of the continent.<sup>28</sup> Thus, much like other members of the Academy, Daniell could only refine his art by touring the corners of the empire or Britain's interior. After turning down an opportunity to travel with Sir Joseph Banks and record New Holland's coastline in 1801,<sup>29</sup> Daniell resolved to produce aquatint

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<sup>24</sup> Archer, *Early Views of India*, 219.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Farington, "Wednesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 1804," in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Vol. 6, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 2281. Thomas Sutton, *The Daniells: Artists and Travelers* (London: The Bodley Head, 1954), 112-14.

<sup>26</sup> C. J. Shepherd, Introduction to *William Daniell: A Voyage Round the Coast of Great Britain*, edited by C. J. Shepherd (London: The Folio Society, 2008), xiv.

<sup>27</sup> Sandby, *The Royal Academy of Arts*, Vol. 2, 34-5.

<sup>28</sup> Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini, eds., *The Grand Tour: the Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1996), 13-18.

<sup>29</sup> William Daniell, "Letter received by Banks from William Daniell," 5 May 1801 (Series 63.57). The Papers of Sir Joseph Banks, State Library of New South Wales. Also, Joseph Farington, "Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1801," in *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, Volume 4, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 1546.

landscapes based upon his journeys through regions of England, Scotland, and Wales.<sup>30</sup> After being turned down numerous times for election to the rank of Associate,<sup>31</sup> Daniell's recently-produced landscapes of Wales and Scotland enabled him to be elected in 1807.<sup>32</sup> Despite increased enthusiasm for Daniell's British views among colleagues in the Academy, he was repeatedly denied promotion to full Academician. Thus, Daniell endeavored to craft his magnum opus and enter the uppermost echelon of Britain's art world.<sup>33</sup> Inspired by the experimental romanticist seascapes of John Sell Cotman, John Constable, and J. M. W. Turner,<sup>34</sup> Daniell sought out the seemingly otherworldly coastal landscape at the literal margins of Britain.

During one of his excursions to the interior of Wales in September of 1806, William Daniell was accompanied by John Ayton, a London art patron and connoisseur who was also a relative of Daniell's wife.<sup>35</sup> Seven years later, after encouragement from John Ayton and Mary Daniell, William Daniell agreed to invite John's troubled younger brother, Richard, on one of his tours of Britain.<sup>36</sup> Richard Ayton, a failed lawyer born into an increasingly impoverished family, lived for years on the Sussex coast as the owner of a fishing vessel and as a struggling writer. Fancying himself a sailor, Ayton frequented fishing voyages and daring rescues of boats caught in tempests. He did so in order to record his experiences in an array of ultimately unsuccessful

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph Farrington, "Saturday, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1807," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Volume 8, edited by Kathryn Cave (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 2017. Sutton, *The Daniells*, 114.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, Joseph Farrington, "Monday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1804," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Volume 5, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 1794.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph Farrington, "Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1807," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Volume 8, edited by Kathryn Cave (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 3134. Sutton, *The Daniells*, 114.

<sup>33</sup> John Garvey, *William Daniell's Isle of Skye and Raasay: An Artist's Journey in 1815* (Leicester: Matador Press, 2009), 9, 19-20.

<sup>34</sup> Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 173.

Joseph Farrington reported that William Daniell was particularly taken with Turner's seascapes. Joseph Farrington, "Wednesday, July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1806," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Volume 8, edited by Kathryn Cave (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 2808.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph Farrington, "Sunday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1806," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Volume 8, edited by Kathryn Cave (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 2848.

<sup>36</sup> Shepherd, Introduction to *William Daniell: A Voyage Round the Coast of Great Britain*, xv.



essays and dramas.<sup>37</sup> In addition to accounts of seafarers, Ayton's essays detailed an array of subjects, including the composition of portraiture, his experiences in a Whitehaven coal mine, and a vivid account of the wreck of the Amsterdam-bound *De Jong Nicholas* on the rocky Sussex coastline.<sup>38</sup> These writings foreshadowed Ayton's enthusiasm for seagoing, his fascination with the sublimity of shipwrecks and deadly crags, and his contempt for the unhealthfulness of heavy industry in his *A Voyage Round Great Britain*. In 1811 Ayton took up residence in London and worked in a public office. This mind-numbing bureaucratic job made him increasingly eager to pen a collaborative work that could achieve at least some success and pay a few bills.<sup>39</sup> Ayton enthusiastically accepted Daniell's offer of accompanying him on the first stretch of the circumnavigation of Britain and subsequently providing a short narrative explaining each of Daniell's aquatints.

This duo was in complete agreement in wanting to follow the coastline on foot or horseback and to only depict regions not frequented by tourists. Capturing a rugged, "horrifying" coastline populated by fishermen and Welsh peasants, perilous coastal geologic formations, and the temperament of the sea was their objective. In doing so, the artist and the playwright wished to increase popular interest in the coast as an ambiguous space where divergent desires competed to construct this strip of land as either a placid, sandy resort for privileged tourists or a sublime location of solitary reflection upon one's mortality and the perilous wonders of nature.<sup>40</sup>

In 1813 Daniell and Ayton initially planned to circle the island by boat and record the coastal landscape from a perspective exterior to the British terrain. They intended to travel

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<sup>37</sup> Innes Macleod, *Sailing on Horseback: William Daniell and Richard Ayton in Cumbria and Dumfries and Galloway* (Great Britain: T. C. Farries and Co., 1988), 15.

<sup>38</sup> Richard Ayton, *Essays and Sketches of Character* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1825), 14-26, 142-66, 214-50, 251-74.

<sup>39</sup> Shepherd, Introduction to *William Daniell: A Voyage Round the Coast of Great Britain*, xv

<sup>40</sup> Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 164, 239.

during the summer months each year until the entirety of the coast had been orbited. Thus, neither Ayton nor Daniell knew for how long this project would last or how many images and pages of text would comprise the overall product. The duo set off on horseback on the first leg of their journey in July of 1813, which would comprise the first volume of their *Voyage Round Great Britain*. The artist and the writer planned to return to London the following October after reaching Anglesey, Wales. (See Map). They began their coastal journey at the very tip of the coast of Land's End, Cornwall at the famed rocky outcropping dubbed "the Longships." "After having sufficiently admired the wildness and sublimity of the Lands-end,"<sup>41</sup> the two proceeded north-eastward up the coast of Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset. Following a short diversion to the isle of Lundy and passing through Minehead, Somerset, Daniell and Ayton crossed the Bristol Channel northward towards Aberthaw, Wales. Next, they processed north-west on the coast of southern Wales along Glamorganshire, Carmarthenshire, and Pembrokeshire. The duo then ventured northward up the coast of Cardiganshire, Merionethshire, and Caernarfonshire before ending their summer voyage at Holyhead, Gwynedd, Wales.

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However, William Daniell's and Richard Ayton's plans to gradually circle the whole of Britain in the coming summers did not entirely come to fruition. In addition to the waters proving far too dangerous for a nautical circumnavigation,<sup>42</sup> the artist and the writer could not agree upon the overall intent of the venture. This conflict appears throughout the first volume of *A Voyage Round Great Britain*. Ayton depicts the journey as though it were solely his experience by rarely mentioning Daniell as having been present during their travels. Moreover, the essayist

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<sup>41</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, quote 2.

<sup>42</sup> Macleod, *Sailing on Horseback*, 1-3.

does not mention Daniell's aquatint views of the coast throughout the entirety of the travelogue. This exclusion of the artist's perspectives in the travelogue, as well as the complete elision of Daniell's picturesque seascapes depicting the journey, served to construct Ayton's rendition as authoritative in terms of observations and sublime aesthetics of the English and Welsh coast. Because the duo were effectively conducting two separate projects presenting contradictory renditions of their travels, Daniell severed ties with Ayton following the publication of the travelogue of their second coastal journey in 1815.<sup>43</sup> Daniell sought a unique seacoast picturesque dissimilar to the increasingly hackneyed views of the Wye Valley or the Scottish highlands populating Royal Academy exhibitions and metropolitan art galleries. He wished for the accompanying text to be a solemn narrative elucidating his artworks and the overall aesthetic of the topography that Daniell witnessed.<sup>44</sup> With a few exceptions, Daniell chose calm, luminous days in which to record each seascape and coastal view in order to incorporate an aesthetic and a geography hitherto atypical within the picturesque. Daniell used quiet and mellow tones of blues and greys to fashion unique placid, scenes sparsely populated by anonymous, anglicized peasants, which was typical of the English picturesque.<sup>45</sup>

Conversely, Ayton was utterly uninterested in boring picturesque beauty.<sup>46</sup> As critics and Daniell himself later complained, the text did not in any way match the aesthetic of Daniell's aquatints. In addition to being too light-hearted in tone and placing unnecessary emphasis upon the "lower orders" of local populations of fishermen and factory workers,<sup>47</sup> Ayton eschewed the

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<sup>43</sup> Shepherd, Introduction to *William Daniell: A Voyage Round the Coast of Great Britain*, xvi.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Farrington, "Sunday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1816," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Vol. 14, edited by Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 4762.

<sup>45</sup> Gordon N. Ray, *The Illustrator and the Book in England from 1790 to 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 30.

<sup>46</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 102.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Farrington, "Thursday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1815," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Volume 13, edited by Kathryn Cave (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 4641.

appreciation of beauty. Rather, he focused upon the sublime horrors of the sea, as defined by Edmund Burke in 1757 and later acclaimed by romanticist writers and visual artists. For Burke, the sublime was antithetical to beauty, which was characterized by pleasure, effeminacy, delicacy, smoothness, and the instilling of emotions of the familiar and the safe. By contrast, the sublime, which was rooted in aesthetics of roughness, nebulousness of detail, and sharp contrast of light and darkness instilled in the viewer an overwhelming sense of horror. The sublime was a masculine aesthetic that functioned as a form of “agreeable horror,” or a thrilling visage of pain and death encased within the picture plane or trapped in the pages of a book. Thus, such horror, which was “...the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling,” could mesmerize - but could not harm - the viewer.<sup>48</sup>

From the outset of his account, Ayton defined depictions of the sublime sea and adjacent rugged coastal terrain as being a challenge to the normalization of the sea as a site of picturesque beauty and leisure. As the author asserted in his introduction, “those parts which are frequented for the purpose of sea-bathing, are chosen where the shore is flat and convenient for bathers and bathing machines...[But,] ruggedness and sublimity, features for which coast scenery is most to be admired, would be subversive of the objects for which these places are visited.”<sup>49</sup> Thus, by illuminating these antithetical constructions of the coastline, Ayton was defining representations of sublime cliffs as a challenge to “the invention of the beach.”<sup>50</sup> By the latter half of the eighteenth century, some local British authorities reshaped and managed certain beaches as spaces of elite and bourgeois holidaymaking. Essential to this transformation was the literal

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<sup>48</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful: With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste, and Several Other Additions*. (Basil: Printed and Sold by J. J. Tourneisen, 1792), 47, 79, 122-3, 155, 202, quote 47

<sup>49</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, iii-v. Quote iii-iv.

<sup>50</sup> I am borrowing Alain Corbin’s phrase. Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 254.

transmogrification of the seaside by the improvement of infrastructure, landscaping, and the removal of fishermen and other local persons not associated with the leisure industry. The “beach” transformed from a working area of villagers into a resort catering exclusively to the privileged. The soft, calm, sandy beach became the site of new architectural forms, novel entertainments, and innovative therapeutic contraptions - most notably, the horse-drawn wooden bathing machine - intended to appeal to fashionable persons.<sup>51</sup> By the 1790s, local entrepreneurs in coastal towns published guidebooks that transformed the beach from a mere location of many spas to an actual tourist destination.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Richard Ayton condemned such seaside spas as immoral by encouraging immodesty among bathing tourists as well as by corrupting local populaces. As the artist and the writer passed the Welsh resort town of Tenby, “this sudden accession of prosperity so inflated the minds of the natives, and so far intoxicated them, that they lost all sense of moderation.”<sup>53</sup>

In order to challenge the corruption of the beach resort, Ayton’s observations of rough shorelines, remote coastal towns, and perilous rock outcroppings lining the Welsh and south-west English coastline were always through the lens of “the tyranny of the sea” and the murderous rocks of the coastline.<sup>54</sup> The entirety of Ayton’s travelogue continually oscillates between details and histories of coastal villages and “the demon who reigns in [every] reef,” nearby cliff face, and sharp crag.<sup>55</sup> Thus, unlike inland hamlets and picturesque villages beloved by typical English aesthetic tourists, the angry sea and rock faces cast a shadow of danger and

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<sup>51</sup> Fred Gray, *Designing the Seaside: Architecture, Society, and Nature* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 117, 131, 147-50.

<sup>52</sup> Zoe Kinsley, “Beside the Seaside: Mary Morgan’s Tour to Milford Haven, in the year 1791,” *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland*, edited by Benjamin Colbert (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 33.

<sup>53</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, iii-iv, 33, 79-80. Quote 79,

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, v, 4, 18, 29, 93-5, 103, 106. Quote v.

<sup>55</sup> Ayton does in fact spend much of the 200 pages of the travelogue discussing the appearance and dangers of rocks. *Ibid.*, 5.

death over each coastal town and its local lore. When reflecting upon the coast of Boscastle, Cornwall, Ayton avowed that he could “conceive nothing more terrible than entering this harbor at night in a gale, with the rocks closing about you and deepening the darkness, and with nothing visible but the white breakers, roaring on all sides amongst rocks which you know it would be destruction to the touch.”<sup>56</sup>

Thus, to be a sailor or to inhabit the shoreline was not merely to be constantly imperiled; rather, it was to eternally contemplate one’s own mortality as well as the ease of destruction of all those around you. For this very reason, Ayton took every opportunity to converse with local fishermen about their craft. Often, “drowning [was] the principal subject of their discourse. All the most harrowing accounts of wrecks which they could remember or invent, they dwelt on with unsparing prolixity, demonstrating that the sea was never to be trusted, and that often very near when it was little expected.”<sup>57</sup> Because these men lived and died by the sea, they could be forgiven for extorting money from tourists, robbing travelers, and looting beached vessels. For Ayton, experienced boatmen became more than mere repositories of tales of the horrors of the sea. Rather, their daily confrontation with their own watery or rocky death allowed them to become walking antitheses of the calm, fashionable beaches being filled with bathing machines and tourists, and increasingly incorporated into the home tour topographies of picturesque landscape painters.<sup>58</sup> Thus, throughout Ayton’s journey these seafarers remain a potent symbol of the unaltered, sublime seascape and personal reflection upon the might of nature.

The sublime aesthetic of the coastline composed of stormy waters and threatening, jagged rocks was closely associated with Romantic images of shipwrecks. By the middle of the

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<sup>56</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 17, 51, 63.

eighteenth century, shipwrecks became evocative symbols of catastrophe, mortality, and dangers of the sea and coastline in Britain.<sup>59</sup> In fact, they became signifiers of the potential dangers looming over any Briton engaged in commerce or traversing the global empire. After 1688, the development of the English fiscal-military state apparatus allowed for the development of a much larger navy engaged in warfare for longer periods of time. Britain's flotilla continued to grow throughout the century as prevailing mercantilist ideology encouraged ever-expanding global networks of seaborne trade and naval defense of monopolies. Nearly continuous warfare during the latter part of the century led to exponential military growth.<sup>60</sup> Concurrently, there was a sharp increase in the influx of news of death and destruction of sailors, merchants, and civilians at sea.<sup>61</sup> Because many persons lost friends and loved ones in naval battles or in some imperial periphery attached to Britain by sea, the shipwreck became a powerful symbol mediating distant war and loss. Destruction during the Napoleonic Wars caused the image of the dilapidated, beached ship to be all the more resonant with a viewing public and readership. Thus, Ayton strategically invoked the Romantic-Age trope of shipwrecks and its associations with dangerous sharp rocks, reefs, and sea cliffs entering the collective imagination of Britons.<sup>62</sup>

The sight of a torn-open hull and useless masts in an artwork or on a nearby beach also spoke to the dangers of the home coast. Shipwrecks were the most common form of catastrophic accident during this period, and, as Ayton reported, most major port towns had an oral tradition of the horrors of the coast. Each year about 5,000 English persons died at sea from shipwrecks. The vast majority of naval accidents occurred very close to shorelines if not on the beach itself.

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<sup>59</sup> Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 234-6.

<sup>60</sup> John, Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 27-31, 168.

<sup>61</sup> Mary A. Favret, *War at a Distance: Romanticism and the Making of Modern Wartime* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4-9, 64-5.

<sup>62</sup> Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 241-3.

Most drownings took place near the coast and among the sharp geologic formations and waves which brought death to the vessel itself. Invoking a spectrum of emotions in the audience, shipwrecks were an increasingly popular literary and visual artistic motif beginning in the latter part of the eighteenth century. By 1800, older works of literature detailing disastrous voyages found new audiences as accounts of shipwrecks became fashionable in Britain. Visual artists incorporated derelict and destroyed vessels in their landscape compositions in order to engage with the specter of mortality and the unrelenting might of nature. During the Romantic Age, authors and painters alike continued to provide the public with this metonym of sublime emotions associated with terror, torment, death, and appreciation for life.<sup>63</sup> The cliffs, crags, and other dangerous rocks observed by Ayton were always viewed through this romantic lens as the true source of shattered timbers and lost sailors. For Ayton, each element of the oceanic sublime merely emphasized the shore itself and its connotations of death.

While this popular transfexion upon shipwrecks was in actuality a contemplation of the fragility of life at sea, Ayton reported that wrecks also could be a joyous windfall for local townsfolk. Yet, the manner in which villagers looted said much about their character. In his *Voyage Round Great Britain*, the essayist recounts numerous instances of local persons looting beached vessels or even intentionally extinguishing the flame of their lighthouse in order to lure unsuspecting ships into a deadly labyrinth of rocks.<sup>64</sup> Ayton insists that professional sailors “plunder on a simple principle of justice to themselves;...they are invariably humane and gentle towards the sufferers.” But local Welsh villagers “are notorious for more than common rapaciousness and brutality in their attacks upon the miserable wretches.”<sup>65</sup> Ayton reiterates

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 234-6, 239, 242-3.

<sup>64</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 63-5.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 63.



throughout the travelogue that all the persons of Wales are not to be trusted. In essence, the failed playwright's familiarity with the long-established literary tradition of detailing the Welsh as the other within Britain colored both his prose and his observations while en route along the coast.

The earliest travelogues elucidating the uniqueness of the populations of Wales and south-western England within the British Isles were medieval pilgrimage accounts.<sup>66</sup> The first of such works were Gerald of Wales's *Itinerarium Kambriae* (1191) and *Descriptio Kambriae* (1193). In subsequent centuries, this "distinction from other nations" was a topos in travel writings on the Welsh "home tour." By the eighteenth century, travelogues perpetuated this distinction by pinpointing Wales as an underappreciated site of accessible alterity within Britain.<sup>67</sup> Thus, travel accounts from the latter part of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century continued to define Wales as British yet still the other within.<sup>68</sup> When detailing his 1774 travels, Henry Wyndham stated that "the Welsh tour has been hitherto strangely neglected; for, while the English roads are crowded [sic] with travelling parties of pleasure, the Welsh are so rarely visited, that the author did not meet with a single party... We must account for this from the general prejudice which prevails, that the Welsh roads are impracticable, the inns intolerable, and the people insolent and Brutish."<sup>69</sup> One contemporary English traveler echoed such sentiments in claiming that the poor infrastructure, uncleanliness of

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<sup>66</sup> Benjamin Colbert, "Introduction: Home Tourism," introduction to *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland*, edited by Benjamin Colbert (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

<sup>67</sup> Katie Gramich, "'Every Hill Has Its History, Every Region Its Romance': Travellers' Constructions of Wales, 1844-1913," in *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland*, edited by Benjamin Colbert (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), quote 147.

<sup>68</sup> The construct of "Britishness" ossified as a response to conflict with an external, foreign other, namely Catholic France. But local identities tied to greater notions of "Welshness," "Scottishness," and "Englishness" remained powerful divides among the British populace. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5-6, 18, 367-9, 273.

<sup>69</sup> Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, *A Gentleman's Tour Through Monmouthshire and Wales, in the Months of June and July, 1774*. (London: T. Evans, 1775), ii.

the towns, and purported backwardness of the peoples evidenced that the “Welsh are nearly a century behind the English.”<sup>70</sup> Welsh alterity remained a feature of most English travel writing throughout the nineteenth century even as Welsh landscape aesthetics found appreciation among Englishpersons. For Ayton, despite his complaints of squalor and rudeness, this Welsh otherness signified a resistance to the normalization of beach resorts and coastal metal works corrupting persons and the landscape.

When detailing most villages and larger port towns along the coast of Wales, Ayton’s account begrudgingly follows the enlightenment tradition of recounting local histories and noting the features of the cityscape as a means of defining local character. The author reiterates his complete lack of interest in these details or the physical antiquities and ruins which purportedly “escaped [his] dull sight.”<sup>71</sup> Moreover, for Ayton, the remnants of Ancient Roman roads were dangerous and inconvenient, dilapidated medieval buildings were aesthetically little more than “vulgar rubbish,” and castles were very common and banal.<sup>72</sup> In fact, dilapidated aged fortresses were so common in Wales that their “first question on entering a village was regularly – which way to the castle?”<sup>73</sup> Despite the compulsion to inspect each monotonous local relic, the playwright found the restoration or preservation of ruins to be a waste of energies.<sup>74</sup> He contended that for most villages the vast majority of buildings are not worthy of notice, except when they were dirty, worthy of complaint, or an unusual church.<sup>75</sup> For instance, he noted “the small church of Llandyssilio, which is remarkable only for the preposterousness of its situation.

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<sup>70</sup> Anonymous, “Tour in the Summer 1776. Though Wales,” National Library of Wales. MS 2862.A.,f.37. Quoted in Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 109.

<sup>71</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 10, 14, 58, 84-6.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, 74.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 58, 74.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 59, 95.

It stands on a rock projecting from the Anglesey shore...I know not why so absurd a situation was selected, though the absurdity seems to be part of a system in Anglesey, in which most of the churches...are noted for being in rude places near the sea-shore.”<sup>76</sup>

Details of unique local histories, myths, and “uninteresting” ruins and modern structures were important enough for Ayton to spill ink. Yet, his travelogue concomitantly denied Welsh regional and municipal distinctiveness by continuously essentializing the Welsh as backward and only exhibiting signs of civility due to external influence.<sup>77</sup> Ayton frequently invoked local medieval histories detailing invasions by the Normans or Saxons as evidence of the importation of societal progress. According to the author, “the Welsh at the time of the first invasion of Wales by the Normans had no knowledge of architecture beyond its simple elements.”<sup>78</sup> And prior to the Saxon invasion, “the state of government, or rather of anarchy, that prevailed in Wales as long as it retained its independence, did not permit the inhabitants to settle in extended societies.”<sup>79</sup> In essence, by identifying Welsh societal variation and progress as rooted in foreign contacts and rule, Ayton emphasizes the porosity of Britain’s borders. These observations were not a verse in a “hymn to insularity,”<sup>80</sup> but were instead an underscoring of the dissimilarity of the rugged coasts and coastal people to the Anglicizing, English-speaking Welshmen of the Wye Valley normalized through the home tour. Seemingly retrograde shoreline villages located on the literal margins of the British landmass were, therefore, not mere holdovers from older social milieus.<sup>81</sup> Rather, they were unique composites of traditional Welsh backwardness and alienness

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 189.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 29-30, 58, 84, 111-19.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 95,

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>80</sup> Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea*, 173.

<sup>81</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 68-9, 81.

For a related discussion, see James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), ix- xi, 4-5, 7-9, 18- 23, 108, 117, 172- 4, 178, 181, 329.

from outside Britain. After arriving in the Welsh town of Fishgard, Ayton found the local inn to exhibit more signs of “comport and cleanliness...than in any other which we visited in Wales.” For the traveling essayist, his comments upon this unexpected purity “may serve to chronicle the march of civilization.”<sup>82</sup>

However, for Ayton, historical foreign influence upon the coastal villages did not diminish certain commonalities of backwardness among nearly all Welsh persons. After entering the popular town of Swansea, the “handsomest town in Wales,”<sup>83</sup> Ayton bemoaned the utter filthiness of each street and each villager. He reported that “in most parts of this country which I visited...the women are beyond all sufferance dirty and slovenly, and as they unfortunately dress all alike, there is no competition among them, and they are equally unmoved by the love of cleanliness and the shame of dirt.”<sup>84</sup> Later in the journey, Ayton and Daniell entered the village of Llanbedrog and found that they were no longer in “the land of civilization. Near it [the village] were a few common wigwams of the country, and from them there presently issued a flock of women and children, who, in their manners really bore a nearer resemblance to savages....None of them could speak English; but we learned from our guide that they were much astonished at the sight of us... We continued our journey with our umbrellas over our heads, and they followed us for some distance with as much interest and curiosity as if we had been going off in a balloon.”<sup>85</sup> Ayton’s condescending remarks equally underscore isolated Welsh towns as antithetical to the anglicized Welsh peasant featured in the foreground of a typical picturesque landscape composed during the home tour.

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<sup>82</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 123.

<sup>83</sup> In fact, Ayton noted that a guidebook had recently been published for Swansea. Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 69.

<sup>84</sup> Ayton and Daniell, *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 69-70.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 167.

Coastal, isolated Welsh persons may have been dirty and backward, the latter demonstrated by the spectacle of Ayton's umbrella, but these individuals had not been morally corrupted by the establishment of nearby tourist resorts or industrial plants. While Welshmen were always shifty characters for Ayton, this stage of "savagery" and "simple virtue" was surely preferable to the inevitable blight upon their scruples and landscapes.<sup>86</sup> By the early nineteenth century, copper works, iron works, and coalmines dotted the Welsh coast and transformed coastal villages from fishing communities into epicenters of industrial pollution. Ayton reiterates visages and tales of smoke and ash emanating from refineries and covering every surface of the nearby landscape, rendering agricultural improvement an impossibility. Equally, heavy industry drove away fishermen and quarried the very sublime cliff faces characterizing the coastal aura.<sup>87</sup> This disease upon the soil and seascape aesthetics was equally matched by the unhealthfulness of Welsh industrial laborers. For Ayton, seeing miners "come up to grass," or workers leaving the factory, was to behold a parade of disease derived from toxic working conditions.<sup>88</sup> Generally, the author pays surprisingly little heed to the women of coastal villages of either Wales or southwestern England, but he is quick to note their role as workers in heavy industry. Receiving lesser pay than men, yet equally corrupted by the foulness of industrial plant,<sup>89</sup> the Welsh women become increasingly immoral. Ayton claims that "the women have not escaped the common contamination; the streets of Swansea are almost as notorious for scenes of loud and shameless profligacy as the Point in Portsmouth."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 15, 20-21, 59, 67.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, particularly, 20-1

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 28, 67-70.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 70.

Ayton detected a direct correlation between the further rise in Welsh immorality, decline in public health, and the transformation of the landscape. The redefinition of the seaside into a space of shameless tourists, forges of English industrial fortunes, and the picturesque landscape of a unified, homogenizing “Great Britain” did so to the detriment of peasants, fishermen, and natural aesthetics representing a unique, under-approached natural sublimity of the ocean. These were not mere local changes akin to the Norman and Saxon invasions of ages earlier. Instead, such transformations served to eliminate the coastline as a matrix of multiple meanings and functions. The coastline would not exist to travelers as a natural rocky outcropping forged by the temperament of ageless natural ferocity so beloved by romanticist visual artists and writers, but as a milieu forged to meet the expectations of tourists. Rather than a space of sublime wonder and romanticist self-reflection, the seascape would become a desolate, ruined industrialscape or a locale of bathing contraptions occupied by nude, bourgeois holidaymakers utterly uninspired by their surroundings. Therefore, Daniell’s and Ayton’s *A Voyage Round Great Britain* urged home tourists to explore the rugged coastline of the nation as an alternative to the destructive beach resort.<sup>91</sup> But Ayton’s text fought against Daniell’s attempt to fully incorporate the seascape into the home tour picturesque aesthetic. Although these differences in perception of the landscape yielded a severance of their partnership as travelers, Ayton’s over-bloated “captions” to Daniell’s picturesque coastal views produced a compelling argument in accordance with contemporary romanticist aesthetics. However, it would be Daniell’s prints that were moving copies off of booksellers’ shelves. Ayton’s text, on the other hand, received great criticism among artists at the Royal Academy as being too lighthearted and focusing upon grubby peasants. Such a travelogue did not prove appealing to most buyers of Daniell’s seascapes, who merely sought placid,

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<sup>91</sup> Kinsley, “Beside the Seaside,” 46

picturesque seas, sand, and a few crags.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, most sold copies were dissected in such a manner that the aquatints remained in the buyer's collection, and Ayton's text was discarded and unread.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Joseph Farrington, "Thursday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1814," in *The Diary of Joseph Farrington*, Volume 13, edited by Kathryn Cave (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 4454.

<sup>93</sup> Sutton, *The Daniells*, 120.





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