The Afterlives of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, 1536-c. 1700

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The dissolution of the monasteries (1536-40) was one of the most critical transformations wrought by the English Reformation. It was also perhaps the most visible manifestation of the idea that Henry VIII's break with Rome was also a break with the medieval past. Yet despite this, historians have paid little attention to how the dissolution was remembered by those who experienced it or to the evolution of this memory in later generations. This thesis probes the nature of the diverse afterlives of the dissolution between 1536 and c. 1700. On one hand, it seeks to account for the persistence of the narratives of monastic corruption and the expediency of suppression propagated by the Henrician regime in the 1530s, which have continued insidiously to shape its modern historiography. On the other, it examines the development of alternative traditions which challenged and interacted with this orthodoxy, highlighting the multivocal and polyvalent character of a memory culture that was dynamic rather than static.

The first chapter examines the attempts of the Henrician government to shape the memory of the dissolution in the 1530s and 1540s, and undertakes a re-assessment of the sources that have conventionally been used by historians of the dissolution. It highlights a triumphant Henrician narrative of monastic corruption and iniquity that the remainder of the thesis sets out to test, complicate, and unravel.

The second chapter explores the relationship between the dissolution and early modern senses of time, chronology, and history. It asks both how perceptions of the dissolution shifted over time and how the protracted and complicated four-year long process of suppression came to be remembered as the historical event that we know as 'the Dissolution of the Monasteries'.

The third chapter turns away from the temporal dimensions of the memory of the dissolution to explore its material, visual, and spatial aspects. It argues that historians have been preoccupied with an emergent 'nostalgia' for the monasteries at the expense of a gentry antiquarian culture that instead promoted a powerful culture of amnesia. It focuses particularly on the neglected subject of converted religious houses, which quite literally embodied efforts to forget the dissolution and the monastic past.

The final chapter focuses on local traditions of memory. It deploys evidence of oral culture mediated through antiquarian writing to question previous work on a purely secular, socio-economic memory of the dissolution. It argues that the concept of sacrilege and the emergence of a folklore of the dissolution are key to recovering the religious dimension of local memory cultures.

If the thesis begins with an account of Henrician attempts to shape the legacies of the dissolution, it concludes by demonstrating how, by 1700, these memory-making processes were starting to be exposed. This thesis thereby demonstrates the value of exploring the dissolution in terms of its long afterlives. It also argues that the dissolution is a powerful case study of historical memory, raising larger questions about the relationship between contemporary memorialising practices and the models of periodisation inherited by modern scholarship, as well as making a significant contribution to the emergent interest in the memory of the English Reformation.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CCA	Canterbury Cathedral Archives
CCCC	Corpus Christi College, Cambridge
DHC	Devon Heritage Centre, Exeter
DUL	Durham University Library
HJ	*Historical Journal*
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
L&P	*Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, James Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie, 21 vols. and Addenda, 2 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1862-1932)
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com>
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* <http://dictionary.oed.com>
P&P	*Past and Present*
TNA	The National Archives, Kew Gardens, London

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Note on the Text

Original spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation have been retained in all quotations, except that the use of i and j, u and v has been modernised. In the interests of clarity, standard contractions and abbreviations have been silently expanded and superscript characters silently lowered. For the sake of consistency, signature numbers are rendered in Arabic numerals throughout. Dates are given in Old Style, except that year is taken to begin on 1 January. All biblical citations are from the Authorised Version of 1611.

Introduction

The Long Afterlives of the Dissolution of the Monasteries

Early in the spring of 1536, Henry VIII and his government embarked upon a course of action that would profoundly alter the character of English religion and society. Citing the endemic corruption, fraudulence, and depravity of the monastic and mendicant orders, the government issued an act of parliament that made provision for all religious houses valued at less than £200 per annum to be suppressed. Between 1536 and 1539, the monasteries fell in waves; their wealth was transferred to the crown and their inhabitants were re-distributed amongst the larger abbeys and convents or else dispersed into secular society. During this period, the Henrician regime claimed only to be undertaking a reformation of the monasteries. But by the autumn of 1539, it had become apparent that the government's policy of reform had been transformed into one of wholesale dissolution. A second act of parliament thus ordered the suppression of all those religious houses that had survived the purges of the previous years. Waltham Abbey in Essex enjoyed the dubious honour of being the final house to fall to the king's commissioners. On 23 March 1540, the Augustinian canons of Waltham finally surrendered their house, bringing the formal process of dissolution to a close.[1] In the space of barely four years, Henry VIII's government had succeeded in eradicating the entire monastic institution – numbering some eight hundred religious houses – in England and Wales.

It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of this rupture. A function of the break with Rome (1533) and the new powers enjoyed by the king in the wake of the Royal Supremacy (1534), this institutional breach with traditional religion was also a highly symbolic break with the medieval past. As a result of the Henrician regime's actions, domestic monasticism was abolished *de facto*, causing upwards of ten thousand religious to be deprived of their homes and vocations, with their lay servants besides.[2] The transfer of approximately one-third of all the land in England out of the hands of the Church and into those of the crown not only required the development of new administrative structures at the level of the state, but also gave physical expression to this rupture in local communities, where the suppression of particular monasteries wrought a transformative effect upon the landscape, making ruins of some religious houses and converting others to new uses.[3] The patterns and rhythms of everyday life

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[1] On the dissolution of Waltham Abbey see Martin Heale, *The Abbots and Priors of Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 323.
[2] This figure is taken from Kathleen Cooke, 'The English nuns and the dissolution', in John Blair and Brian Golding (eds.), *The Cloister and the World: Essays on Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 291.
[3] For the most detailed reconstruction of this transfer see Peter Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands by the crown, 1536-47', PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 1990).

in these communities were also severely disrupted by the loss of the monasteries, which irrevocably altered the religious, social, and economic fabric of early modern England.

This thesis asks how the dissolution of the monasteries was remembered by those who witnessed it and how this memory evolved in subsequent generations. In doing so, it seeks to shed fresh light upon the process of suppression in the 1530s as well as revealing for the first time its long, complex, and highly contested afterlives. The picture of the dissolution that emerges in this context is quite different from that which has dominated its modern historiography. By treating this episode as a case study of historical memory and amnesia, we can not only expose the distortions that have shaped previous scholarship, but also seek to explain them.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries

A critical re-evaluation of the dissolution of the monasteries is long overdue. The major studies of this topic remain three foundational interventions of the mid-twentieth century: David Knowles's magisterial three-volume *Religious Orders in England* (1948-59), subsequently abridged as *Bare Ruined Choirs: The Dissolution of the English Monasteries* (1976), and two influential studies of the process of dissolution, both entitled *The Dissolution of the Monasteries*, by G. W. O. Woodward (1966) and Joyce Youings (1971).[4] Although this literature has been supplemented by a series of local case studies and by two recent essays which re-examine the origins of the dissolution,[5] it largely continues to set the agenda for the historiography of the suppression and to shape our understanding of its significance to Tudor politics and the English Reformation.[6] What follows outlines some features of this scholarship, before suggesting how a

[4] For some older perspectives see F. A. Gasquet, *Henry VIII and the Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 2 vols. (London: Hodges, 1888-9), which approached the dissolution in the context of a narrowly confessional approach to English Catholic history, and Geoffrey Baskerville, *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937), which attacked the tendency in Catholic historiography to romanticise the dissolution.

[5] R. W. Hoyle, 'The origins of the dissolution of the monasteries', *HJ* 28 (1995), pp. 275-305; G. W. Bernard, 'The dissolution of the monasteries', *History* 96 (2011), pp. 390-409. Local studies of the dissolution take different approaches: see for example Christopher Haigh, *The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969); J. H. Bettey, *The Suppression of the Monasteries in the West Country* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1989); M. Claire Cross, *The End of Medieval Monasticism in the East Riding of Yorkshire* (Beverley: East Yorkshire Local History Society, 1993); eadem, 'The end of medieval monasticism in the North Riding of Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 78 (2006), pp. 145-57; eadem, 'The dissolution of the monasteries in sixteenth-century York', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 80 (2008), pp. 153-66; Patrick J. Greene, 'The impact of the dissolution on monasteries in Cheshire: the case of Norton', in Alan Thacker (ed.), *Medieval Archaeology, Art, and Architecture at Chester* (Leeds: Maney, 2000), pp. 152-66.

[6] At the time of writing, it remains to be seen how James G. Clark will approach the dissolution in his new study with Yale University Press – the first monograph-length study of the process of suppression since Youings's *Dissolution of the Monasteries* in 1971.

different approach has the potential not only to shed fresh light upon this highly complex and controversial episode but also to expose the assumptions and misconceptions that have long shaped and coloured modern scholarship.

The salient feature of conventional scholarship on the dissolution is a marked tendency to privilege its administrative aspects. Fuelled by the numerous legal documents, land grants and leases, and visitation surveys and correspondence produced during the 1530s, the suppression of the religious houses has been characterised principally as a highly efficient and relatively painless episode in what G. R. Elton once called the 'Tudor revolution in government'.[7] Both Woodward and Youings suggested that the motives behind the dissolution were primarily financial, and even Knowles, who sought to situate this episode in the context of the long history of English monasticism, argued that 'all available indications go to show that financial, and not spiritual or ethical, considerations were responsible for the move against the monasteries'.[8] The consequences of the suppression for the Tudor state and bureaucracy have also been the subject of meticulous research, including W. C. Richardson's study of the Court of Augmentations, which was established in 1536 to administer monastic revenues and properties confiscated by the Henrician government.[9] More recently, Peter Cunich has undertaken an exhaustive reconstruction of the legal and financial transactions that underpinned the dissolution, highlighting how the gift and sale of monastic properties helped to reinforce patronage networks as well as bolstering the flagging finances of the crown.[10]

By prioritising the legal and administrative dimensions of this process, the conventional historiography of the dissolution has served to downplay its significance to the English Reformation. For Youings, the suppression 'formed neither an integral nor an essential part of the Reformation in England and Wales' because its 'inspiration and execution' owed nothing to religious motives, despite the fact that it had religious consequences.[11] It is striking that Knowles, himself sometime a Benedictine monk and Catholic priest, similarly argued that the dissolution was 'not of itself a great catastrophe' as far as religion was concerned.[12] These arguments served to align the historiography of the dissolution with wider views concerning

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[7] G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953). The two principal collections of primary material are TNA, SP 5 ('Miscellanea relating to the dissolution of the monasteries and to the general surveyors, Henry VIII, 1517-1560'); BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV ('Papers relating to the dissolution of the monasteries').
[8] David Knowles, *Bare Ruined Choirs: The Dissolution of the English Monasteries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 182. This has also been echoed in more recent research: see Hoyle, 'Origins of the dissolution'.
[9] W. C. Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations, 1536-1554* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1961).
[10] Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands'.
[11] Joyce Youings, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 1.
[12] Knowles, *Bare Ruined Choirs*, p. 317.

the fundamental vulnerability of monasticism specifically and Roman Catholicism more generally on the eve of the break with Rome.[13] In his seminal survey, *The English Reformation* (1964), A. G. Dickens thus argued that 'if we adhered rigorously to our main theme, we might almost have avoided [the dissolution], since the fate of the monasteries had only indirect connections with the rise of Protestantism'.[14]

Underlying this pessimistic view of the significance of the suppression is an assumption that the religious orders were irrelevant to, and even actively unpopular in, their local communities on the eve of the dissolution. This was reinforced by a more general anticlerical sentiment which engendered a lack of sympathy for the religious amongst the laity. Indeed, the fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century religious orders have been characterised as having diverted so significantly from the ideals of their foundation that they no longer resembled their pious 'golden age' predecessors of the high Middle Ages.[15] These arguments have encouraged historians to characterise the dissolution of these institutions as devoid of significant or long-term consequences: 'the general assumption of all concerned was that shorn of their lands the religious communities would disappear', argued Youings, 'and this is what in fact happened'.[16]

So pervasive was this argument that in Eamon Duffy's highly influential study, *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992), which sought to recover the vitality of late medieval religion on the eve of the Reformation, monasticism is conspicuous only by its absence. Duffy's account of the strength of Catholicism revolves instead around the unit of the parish and the energy and piety of the laity who sustained it. This 'traditional religion' was a faith that the laity had 'appropriated for themselves' rather than a religion mediated by monks and nuns.[17] Duffy's reluctance to engage with monasticism is also characteristic of the wider revisionist historiography of late medieval and Reformation Catholicism, which has itself tended to perpetuate the argument that the monasteries were in need of reform, especially compared to the vibrant and dynamic lay Catholic community identified in this literature.[18]

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[13] See for example A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London: The Fontana Library, 1970 edn), esp. chs. 4 and 8; G. R. Elton, *Reform and Reformation: England, 1509-1558* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), ch. 1; G. M. Trevelyan, *History of England* (London: Longman, 1973 edn).
[14] Dickens, *English Reformation*, p. 199.
[15] In addition to the works cited above, see David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948-59), iii, p. 7.
[16] Youings, *Dissolution*, p. 1.
[17] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, 2nd edn (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 7.
[18] Monasticism and the dissolution are almost entirely absent from the discussions in Christopher Haigh, 'The continuity of Catholicism in the English Reformation', *P&P* 93 (1981), pp. 37-69; Lucy E. C. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Eamon Duffy and David Loades (eds.), *The Church of Mary Tudor* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009).

More recently, however, historians of late medieval England have reacted against both an earlier narrative of monastic decline and the revisionist prioritisation of lay Catholicism. G. W. Bernard, James G. Clark, and Martin Heale have all advanced arguments for the vigour and relevance of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century monasticism and its continuing importance to local communities up until the moment of suppression.[19] The image of monasticism that emerges from these studies is one of an institution that was 'above all outward-looking'.[20] Changing patterns of late medieval monastic life reflected a new interpretation of the foundation ideals of the religious orders that emphasised their spiritual, social, and economic functions in the community and a shifting sense of the relationship between clergy and laity.[21] Of course, looking beyond the walls of the abbey and convent also made the religious orders susceptible to the sort of accusations of corruption and iniquity that were so forcefully put by Henry VIII's agents in the 1530s. It meant that late medieval monasticism was marked, to use Bernard's phrase, by both 'vitality and vulnerability'.[22] Nevertheless, by attempting to recover the ways in which the religious orders were thriving in late medieval and early Tudor England, historians have destabilised Duffy's vision of a parish-centric faith, highlighting how the monasteries were highly valued by the laity and closely involved in early Reformation debates.[23] The success of these attempts to rehabilitate pre-dissolution monasticism calls conventional accounts of the suppression into question, implying that the vision of the religious orders as a corrupt and outdated irrelevance to early sixteenth-century religion and society is at least partly the product of the dissolution itself. In this respect, Ethan Shagan's important study of Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire is highly suggestive. With a view to demonstrating that the dissolution was not simply a policy imposed from above or dictated from the centre, Shagan

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Monasteries are also described as a 'low priority' for post-Reformation Catholics in John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1975), p. 22.

[19] G. W. Bernard, *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2012); James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011); Martin Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England, c.1300-1535* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

[20] Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, p. 6.

[21] Ibid., p. 38. See also Bernard, *Late Medieval English Church*, pp. 172-179; Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), esp. pp. 231-3; Benjamin Thompson, 'Monasteries, society, and reform in late medieval England', in James G. Clark (ed.), *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), pp. 165-96; Karen Stöber, 'Bequests and burials: changing attitudes of the laity as patrons of English and Welsh monasteries', in Emilia Jamroziak and Janet Burton (eds.), *Religious and Laity in Western Europe, 1000-1400: Interaction, Negotiation, and Power* (Turnhout, Brepols: 2006), pp. 131-46; and Jens Röhrkasten, 'The mendicant orders in urban life and society: the case of London', in Jamroziak and Burton (eds.), *Religious and Laity*, pp. 333-355.

[22] Bernard, *Late Medieval English Church*.

[23] Clark, for instance, has highlighted monastic involvement in early Reformation disputes – both Luther and Erasmus formed their opinions, at least in part, in dialogue with the monastic orders to which they themselves belonged, see *Benedictines in the Middle Ages,* pp. 316-317. Although Heale suggests that the late medieval religious orders offered little in the way of spiritual leadership, he also characterises them as 'fully integrated with the main intellectual currents of their age' and with contemporary 'devotional and liturgical trends', see *Monasticism in Late Medieval England*, p. 31.

explores the question of popular consent and collaboration in the processes of spoliation and suppression. The picture he paints is highly complex. A minority of collaborators was driven to ransack the abbey because of evangelical convictions. At the other end of the spectrum, a small number acted out of a concern to preserve the relics, images, and other material culture of the Cistercian order who lived and worshipped there. For the majority of Shagan's collaborators, however, there was no clear ideological commitment to dissolution. Pragmatism and the potential for personal gain undoubtedly played a role, but so too did the persuasive power of the crown.[24] By reconstructing the very public theological debates surrounding the authenticity and potency of the Hailes relic, the Holy Blood, Shagan suggests that local people internalised the disputes that they had witnessed, causing perceptions of the abbey to change in ways that legitimated popular participation in the dissolution.[25] This is highly significant for thinking about the memory of the dissolution. Not only does it raise the problem of collaboration and the local memory of the suppression, the case study of Hailes also suggests, *inter alia*, that the Henrician regime had embarked upon a deliberate campaign to shape how the dissolution was received and remembered.

Of further relevance here are a number of recent studies by historians of the English Reformation, which suggest that the dissolution was of greater significance to Henry VIII's vision of his political power and religious reforms than has previously been appreciated. For both G. W. Bernard and Richard Rex, the dissolution offers a window into Henry VIII's personal political and religious preferences, albeit they advance diametrically opposite views of its significance which have not yet been reconciled. For Bernard, the campaign against the monasteries was a sign of the king's genuine evangelical commitment;[26] for Rex, the lengthy and complex process of suppression illuminates Henry's instinctive commitment to monasticism and enduring traditionalism.[27]

Rather than focusing principally upon the course of the dissolution in the 1530s, the present study seeks to move beyond this debate by considering the crown and government's engagement with the suppression in a different light. It draws upon the insights of a different strand of historiography, and especially the work of John N. King, Christopher Highley, and Mark

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[24] The classic study of the persuasive power of the Crown is G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
[25] Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 5. On this episode see also Peter Marshall, 'The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the defence of the Henrician church', *JEH* 46 (1995), pp. 689-96 and below, ch. 1.
[26] Bernard, 'The dissolution of the monasteries'; idem, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2005), esp. chs. 3, 5.
[27] Richard Rex, 'The religion of Henry VIII', *HJ* 57 (2014), p. 20. For Rex's perspective on the Henrician Reformation see also 'The crisis of obedience: God's word and Henry's Reformation', *HJ* 39 (1996), pp. 863-94.

Rankin, which has suggested that the Henrician regime was profoundly concerned with its reputation and legacies.[28] This thesis suggests that Henry VIII's government consciously and deliberately attempted to manage the long afterlives of the dissolution of the monasteries. It argues that the regime sponsored a culture of strategic amnesia surrounding the suppression, which reflected its desire to forget certain of its consequences. The dissolution was, in one sense, an amnesia event. If modern scholarship has long underestimated the significance of this critical episode in the English Reformation, this may be because historians have themselves been the victims of these contemporary efforts to make and shape the memory of the dissolution and the medieval past. This is brought sharply into focus by considering how the suppression was remembered in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

Remembering the Past in the Early Modern Period

This project treats the dissolution of the monasteries as a critical moment in which memory was both destroyed and forged anew. Whilst previous scholarship has tended to view the fall of the last religious houses in the spring of 1540 as the end of the story, this thesis views this moment as the beginning of a much longer chronology, tracing the multivalent and polyvocal processes of remembering and selective forgetting that shaped the afterlives of the suppression in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. In doing so, it draws upon innovative recent work exploring memory in the early modern period. In particular, this account of the dissolution as a memory event and a memory crisis speaks to an emergent concern with the ways in which the English Reformation reconfigured how people thought about the past in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Following the work of the French sociologist and philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, historians have long recognised that memory is not a purely personal or physiological process but rather a phenomenon which interacts with and is profoundly shaped by social processes and shared community norms and ideals.[29] As Aby Warburg and Pierre Nora have argued, memory also has visual and spatial dimensions, fostering close links between memory, the landscape, and material culture.[30] It is now widely accepted that memory is practised by both individuals and

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[28] Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and John N. King (eds.), *Henry VIII and His Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. chs. 2, 3. See also Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), chs. 2-4; Christopher Highley, 'Failed commemoration: a royal tomb and its afterlife', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79 (2016), pp. 93-118.
[29] Maurice Halbwachs, *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
[30] Pierre Nora, *Les lieux des mémoire,* 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-92), ed. Pierra Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *Realms of Memory*, 3 vols. (New York, NY: Columbia University

communities, and is dynamic rather than static, evolving in light of the conditions in which remembering takes place. This scholarship has highlighted how memory practices differ between societies and communities, as well as how they have changed and evolved across time and space.[31] Memory itself therefore has a history.[32]

It follows from this that we can study the history of memory in the early modern period. Until recently, however, this was a neglected subject, partly because the study of memory has conventionally been associated with ideas about modernity. The field was pioneered by historians, philosophers, and social scientists – including Halbwachs, Nora, and Warburg – whose primary interests lay in the period post-1800, in the wake of the age of revolutions as well as in the nationalist crises and wartime atrocities that marked the twentieth century. The two World Wars and the Holocaust created a particular incentive to remember the past – a need *not to forget* – and to record the experiences of their victims.[33] Memory has also been closely linked to the emergence of nation states and the institutions, such as state archives, which embody national memory cultures.[34] Studies of memory in the pre-modern period, by contrast,

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Press, 1996-8); idem, 'Between memory and history: *les lieux des mémoire*', *Representations* 26 (1989), pp. 7-24. On Aby Warburg's approach see the summary in E. H. Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: Warburg Institute, 1970), ch. 10.

[31] There is a vast and wide-ranging theoretical literature on memory. For various approaches to this subject which all broadly advance this argument see Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992); Jan Assmann, 'Collective memory and cultural identity', trans. John Czaplicka, *New German Critique* 65 (1995), pp. 125-133; Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, 'Collective memory – what is it?', *History and Memory* 8 (1996), pp. 30-50; Matt K. Matsuda, *The Memory of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jeffrey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins, 'Social memory studies: from "collective memory" to the historical sociology of mnemonic practices', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998), pp. 105-140; Kerwin Lee Klein, 'On the emergence of "memory" in historical discourse', *Representations* 69 (2000), pp. 127-50; Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead, PA: Open University Press, 2003); Karen E. Till, 'Memory studies', *History Workshop Journal* 62 (2006), pp. 325-41; Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008); Joan Tumblety (ed.), *Memory and History: Understanding Memory as Source and Subject* (London: Routledge, 2013). For two critiques of the field see Alan Confino, 'Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method', *American Historical Review* 102 (1997), pp. 1366-403; Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding meaning in memory: a methodological critique of collective memory studies', *History and Theory* 41 (2002), pp. 179-97.

[32] Here my thinking has been shaped by Judith Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 2-8. I am also grateful to Judith Pollmann for discussing the historiography of memory with me.

[33] In this context, oral history emerged as an historical methodology. For an overview see Donald A. Ritchie (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). The Second World War and the Holocaust have been especially important case studies in twentieth-century memory: see for example the work of Jay Winter: *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); idem, *Remembering War: The Great War and Historical Memory in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

[34] See for example John R. Gillis, 'Memory and identity: the history of a relationship', in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 3-24.

were for a long time limited to examinations of contemporary mnemonic art and method.[35] In recent years, however, memory has become a vibrant and exciting area of early modern scholarship.[36] This thesis draws upon, and seeks to extend and refine, a number of themes in this literature: the memory of significant historical events; the spatial and material dimensions of the processes of remembering and forgetting; and the ways in which memory was practised in local communities.

The events that have tended to attract the most scholarly attention as case studies of historical memory have been rebellions and civil wars – episodes that share with the major conflicts of the twentieth century a traumatic character. In the British and Irish context, the afterlives of the Civil Wars of the 1640s have been subject to particularly thorough investigation.[37] Focusing on an earlier period, Andy Wood has also investigated the memory of the 1549 rebellions in early modern England.[38] Further afield, the French Wars of Religion and the Dutch Revolt have provided fertile ground for studying the politics of memory and the experience of trauma.[39] As

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[35] Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 1984); Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: Studies of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; 2nd edn, 2008). For a more recent perspective see Stephen Clucas, 'Memory in the Renaissance and early modern period', in Dmitri Nikulin (ed.), *Memory: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 131-75.

[36] For some general studies of early modern memory see Erika Kuijpers, Judith Pollmann, Johannes Müller, and Jasper van der Steen (eds.), *Memory Before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill 2013); David P. LaGuardia and Cathy Yandell (eds.), *Memory and Community in Sixteenth-Century France* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015); Matthew Lundin, Hans Medick, Mitchell Merback, Judith Pollmann, and Susanne Rau, 'Forum: memory before modernity: cultures and practices in early modern Germany', *German History* 33 (2015), pp. 100-22; Judith Pollmann, 'Of living legends and authentic tales: how to get remembered in early modern Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 23 (2013), pp. 103-25; eadem, *Memory in Early Modern Europe*.

[37] Mark Stoyle, 'Remembering the English Civil Wars', in Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (eds.), *The Memory of Catastrophe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 19-30; Fiona McCall, 'Children of Baal: clergy families and their memories of sequestration during the English Civil War', in Matthew Neufeld (ed.), 'Uses of the past in early modern England', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 76 (2013), pp. 617-38; Matthew Neufeld, *The Civil Wars After 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013); Gary Rivett, 'Peacemaking, parliament, and the politics of the recent past in the English Civil Wars', in Neufeld (ed.), 'Uses of the past', pp. 589-615; Michál Ó Siochrú and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds.), *Ireland, 1641: Contexts and Reactions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Sarah Covington, '"The odious demon from across the sea": Oliver Cromwell, memory, and the dislocations of Ireland', in Kuijpers et al. (eds.), *Memory Before Modernity*, pp. 149-64; Edward J. Legon, 'Remembering revolution: seditious memories in England and Wales', PhD thesis (University College London, 2015); Erin Peters, *Commemoration and Oblivion in Royalist Print Culture, 1658-1667* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[38] Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[39] On the French Wars of Religion see Philip Benedict, 'Divided memories? Historical calendars, commemorative processions and the recollection of the Wars of Religion during the Ancien Régime', *French History* 22 (2008), pp. 381-405; idem, 'Shaping the memory of the French Wars of Religion: the first centuries', in Kuijpers et al. (eds.), *Memory Before Modernity*, pp. 111-25; Susan Broomhall, 'Disturbing memories: narrating experiences and emotions of distressing events in the French Wars of Religion', in Kuijpers et al., *Memory Before* Modernity, pp. 253-68; Tom Hamilton, 'The procession of the League: remembering the Wars of Religion in visual and literary satire', *French History* 30 (2016), pp. 1-30. On the Dutch Revolt see Raingard M. Esser, *The Politics of Memory: The Writing of Partition in the*

Brecht Deseure and Judith Pollmann have argued, violent episodes such as these increased contemporary awareness of historical change and fostered perceptions of a break between past and present. Deseure and Pollmann also suggest that memories of rupture cannot be simply characterised in terms of the experience of novelty, but rather that contemporaries managed and shaped their memories of the past in order to reconcile them with their experience and identity in the present.[40] The dissolution of the monasteries has the potential further to illuminate this process of remembering rupture. Moreover, whilst in some senses a traumatic episode, especially for the generation of religious displaced from their abbeys and convents, the suppression also offers a slightly different case study of historical memory in which violence was not necessarily the defining characteristic of contemporary experiences of change.[41]

What follows also seeks to place the landmark event of dissolution more squarely within the emergent historiography of the memory of the English Reformation.[42] As Alexandra Walsham has recently argued, the upheavals of the Reformation 'fundamentally reconfigured the mnemonic culture' of early modern England.[43] On the level of everyday religious practice, the abolition of the doctrine of purgatory and the practice of intercession challenged traditional practices of commemorating the dead, which had once been a function of the monasteries, amongst other institutions.[44] Changing perceptions of the medieval past were also heavily inflected by the project to reform English history. Helen Parish, for example, has explored how Protestant thinkers reconstructed the lives of medieval saints to create an historical basis for the post-Reformation Church.[45] It is a striking feature of this literature, however, that there has

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Seventeenth-Century Low Countries (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2012); Marianne Eekhout, 'Celebrating a Trojan horse: memories of the Dutch Revolt in Breda, 1590-1650', in Kuijpers et al., *Memory Before Modernity*, pp. 129-48; Erika Kuijpers, 'Between storytelling and patriotic scripture: the memory brokers of the Dutch Revolt', in Kuijpers et al. (eds.), *Memory Before Modernity*, pp. 183-202; Jasper van der Steen, *Memory Wars in the Low Countries, 1566-1750* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2015).

[40] Brecht Deseure and Judith Pollmann, 'The experience of rupture and the history of memory', in Kuijpers et al. (eds.), *Memory Before Modernity*, pp. 315-29.

[41] For an argument that the dissolution was traumatic see Peter Cunich, 'The ex-religious in post-dissolution society: symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?', in Clark (ed.), *Religious Orders*, pp. 227-38.

[42] These issues are now the subject of investigation as part of the AHRC-funded research project 'Remembering the Reformation', directed by Alexandra Walsham and Brian Cummings and jointly based at the Universities of Cambridge and York [https://rememberingthereformation.org.uk, accessed 20 September 2017].

[43] Alexandra Walsham, 'History, memory, and the English Reformation', *HJ* 55 (2012), p. 936.

[44] For an account of this changing commemorative culture see esp. Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Lucy Wooding, 'Remembrance in the Eucharist', in Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (eds.), *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Material Cultures of the Post Reformation* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 19-36

[45] Helen L. Parish, *Monks, Miracles and Magic: Reformation Representations of the Medieval Church* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2005). See also Katherine van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Harold Louthan, *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). These themes are explored in more detail below, ch. 2.

not yet been an examination of the memory-making potential of any of the major events in the English Reformation. The present study therefore seeks not only to recover the significance of the dissolution to the wider processes of the Reformation and its resonance in ongoing religious debate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also to offer one model of how we might use particular events to explore and interrogate the larger relationship between memory and the Reformation.

A second and related theme in recent historiography has been the critical role of places and objects in shaping early modern memory. 'Most places', as David Lowenthal has argued, 'cradle the memory of innumerable past events'.[46] A significant strand of scholarship has revealed the capacity of places in the physical landscape to act as sites of memory – or what Pierre Nora called *lieux de mémoire* – which shaped contemporary customary practices, local traditions, and perceptions of the Reformation.[47] The dissolution has already been afforded a role in this process: in an influential and highly suggestive essay, Margaret Aston argued that monastic ruins functioned to prompt an increased consciousness of and interest in the past in early modern England.[48] A similar theme is picked up in Daniel Woolf's suggestive discussion of the abolition of relic worship in the 1530s. He argues that not only did the dissolution provide 'an impetus to materials recycling', but that 'the antiquarian artefact filled the empty space left by the relic, providing an object of interest for people which could be more safely examined, fondled, cherished, and displayed, even if it were no longer venerated'.[49] This thesis seeks to extend and refine our understanding of the relationship between the material remnants of dissolution and its memory. In particular, it raises the question of how the physical landscape contributed to the forgetting of the monastic past as well as its preservation.

The third and final aspect of current research upon which this thesis impinges concerns local memory cultures. Previous scholarship has approached this question from various angles. Since

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[46] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 238. See also Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).
[47] For a range of approaches see Steve Hindle, 'Beating the bounds of the parish: order, memory and identity in the English local community, c. 1500-1700', in Michael J. Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (eds.), *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 205-27; Nicola Whyte, 'Landscape, memory, and custom: parish identities, c. 1550-1700, *Social History*, 32 (2007), pp. 166-86; eadem, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Windgather, 2009); Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); eadem, 'Sacred topography and social memory: religious change and the landscape in early modern Britain and Ireland', *Journal of Religious History* 36 (2012), pp. 31-51. On *lieux de mémoire* see Nora, 'Between memory and history'. See also below, ch. 3.
[48] Margaret Aston, 'English ruins and English history: the dissolution and the sense of the past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973), pp. 231-55.
[49] Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 29, 194.

the publication of a seminal essay by Keith Thomas on the perception of the past in early modern England, there has been considerable interest in the 'popular' historical imagination.[50] The work of Adam Fox has been especially illuminating in this respect, drawing upon ideas about the hybridity of oral and literate culture in shaping local historical consciousness.[51] Similar themes are present in Woolf's recent study of the 'social circulation of the past', or the shift in historical consciousness brought about by dynamic processes of communication, commemoration, and re-articulation that altered the climate in which knowledge of the past was recalled and transmitted.[52] Perhaps inevitably, however, these studies have to some degree perpetuated dichotomies between 'popular' and 'learned' culture, local and national tradition. Woolf, in particular, has suggested that local cultures of memory were eclipsed by national – and textual – memory cultures in the later seventeenth century.[53]

Reacting against precisely this tendency, Andy Wood has pioneered a different approach to local memory, which emphasises its fundamental longevity and vibrancy. In his recent examination of popular memory, Wood explores the role of custom in generating a 'usable past' in local communities.[54] As he has demonstrated, the dissolution was a part of this usable past.[55] Religion is, however, a marked absence in this analysis. Likewise, Woolf's account of early modern historical consciousness also pays insufficient attention to the role of the Reformation in shaping perceptions of the past. By considering the long, complex, and varied afterlives of the dissolution of the monasteries, the present study not only illuminates the long endurance of local memory and serves somewhat to collapse distinctions between local and national tradition, it also places the Reformation at the heart of our understanding of these memory cultures.

Remembering the Dissolution: Approach and Sources

The field of memory studies, as well as scholarship on early modern memory specifically, is becoming increasingly diverse and wide-ranging. This interdisciplinary literature has defined and used memory in different ways. This thesis adopts the historian Geoffrey Cubitt's broad and

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[50] Keith Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England*, The Creighton Trust Lecture, (London: University of London, 1983).
[51] Adam Fox, *Oral and Literature Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. ch. 4; idem, 'Remembering the past in early modern England: oral and written tradition', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999), pp. 233-56.
[52] Woolf, *Social Circulation*.
[53] Ibid., pp. 13-15, 320, 351, 390 and passim.
[54] Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. ix and passim.
[55] Ibid., pp. 78-93.

flexible definition of memory as 'the study of the means by which a conscious sense of the past, as something meaningfully connected to the present, is sustained and developed within human individuals and human cultures'.[56] Cubitt also sets out some useful parameters for the study of memory as it is relevant to the discipline of history, suggesting that memory has multiple senses: personal and individual, cultural and collective.[57] This echoes the helpful distinction conceived by Jan Assmann between 'communicative memory', which results from the first-hand experiences of particular individuals, and 'cultural memory', which relates to culturally formed 'reconstructions' of the past and the inherited memory that is shaped by texts and other media, as well as by oral tradition.[58] In other words, memory changes with the passing of the generations and evolves in response to the changing circumstances in which information about the past is recalled. Recent studies by Norman Jones and Alexandra Walsham have suggested that we might usefully think about the Reformation within such a generational framework; this thesis adopts a similar approach in its study of the long afterlives of the dissolution.[59]
The chronological parameters of this thesis are therefore necessarily ambitious. The first act of dissolution in 1536 provides a useful starting point, although the discussion which follows will also have an eye to earlier developments in Henrician politics as well as to ideas about the condition of monasticism in the medieval period. Responses to the dissolution during the 1530s and early 1540s were, as we shall see, marked by the impulse to forget more than the impulse to remember. Crown and government promoted a culture of amnesia rather than a culture of celebration or commemoration. Indeed, in one sense, this thesis is more concerned with processes of forgetting than with practices of remembering.[60]

This was also, however, a memory culture that evolved constantly over time and in light of ongoing transformations within the Church of England. As we shall see, successive generations of Protestants overcame the efforts of the dissolvers simultaneously to erase the memory of the

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[56] Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 9.
[57] Ibid., pp. 4, 14-18, and passim.
[58] Assmann, 'Collective memory and cultural identity'.
[59] Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Wiley, 2002); idem 'Living the Reformations: generational experience and political perception in early modern England', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* 60 (1997), pp. 273-88; Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation of the generations: youth, age, and religious change in England, c. 1500-1700', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 21 (2011), pp. 93-121.
[60] In addition to the literature on the theory of memory, there is also a literature on forgetting. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York, NY: Verso, revised edn, 1991), ch. 11; Paul Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1 (2008), pp. 59-71; Ross Poole, 'Enacting oblivion', *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22 (2009), pp. 149-57; David Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and its Ironies* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2016). For early modern examples see Thomas Freeman, 'Dissenters from a dissenting Church: the challenge of the Freewillers, 1550-1558', in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 129-56; Scott Sowerby, 'Forgetting the repealers: religious toleration and historical amnesia in later Stuart England', *P&P* 215 (2012), pp. 85-123. See also below, esp. ch. 1.

monastic past and condemn the suppression itself to oblivion. Our story ends around 1700, five or so generations after the formal process of suppression came to an end. Across this period of more than 150 years, it is possible to discern some distinct shifts – as well as some striking continuities – in the memory of the dissolution. This is not to imply that processes of remembering and forgetting culminated or were over by the turn of the eighteenth century. Indeed, some of the material discussed in the chapters that follow will prefigure and acknowledge relevant developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and beyond, including the Picturesque movement in British art and the Gothic trend in English literature. Nevertheless, this terminal date sets helpful parameters for thinking about the evolution of the memory of the dissolution across the early modern period, beginning with the Henrician attempt to shape the afterlives of the suppression in the 1530s and closing at a moment several generations later when those earlier memory-making practices were finally – if only just – beginning to be exposed.

Within this broad chronological framework, the present study focuses principally upon the reformed Protestant memory of the dissolution. This is partly for reasons of space and scope, but it is also necessary in order to do justice to what was a highly complex, polyvalent, and multivocal memory culture. The Protestant memory of the dissolution also possesses some distinctive features which demand explanation. For example, the suppression proved to be a more ambiguous episode in Protestant memory than in Catholic memory and this gave rise to conflicting impulses to remember and forget certain of its consequences. However, this Protestant memory culture did not, of course, evolve in a vacuum. At several points, we will draw comparisons between Protestant and Catholic memories of the dissolution as a means of illuminating how the former changed and evolved over time. The same is true of radical and separatist perspectives within English Protestantism, which exerted an important influence over specific issues, such as debates about the sacredness of former monastic sites, but which are not central to the overarching argument.

Perhaps the most significant silence in this thesis – and, indeed, in the wider literature on the dissolution – is the perspective of the primary victims of the suppression: the religious orders. In part, this is a product of its focus on Protestant memory, although we should not assume on this basis that the religious were uniformly opposed to the Reformation.[61] The absence of religious voices is also, more importantly, the result of subtle and insidious contemporary processes of forgetting and (self-)censorship. Although some studies have traced the fate of the religious communities after the dissolution, notably Claire Cross's exhaustive examinations of

[61] See for example Richard Rex's study of the friars at the forefront of the Reformation: 'The friars in the English Reformation', in Marshall and Ryrie (eds.), *Beginnings of English Protestantism*, pp. 38-59.

ex-nuns in Yorkshire, historians have had only limited success in capturing experiences of suppression amongst the religious.[62] Mary Erler's important recent exploration of the few surviving post-dissolution writings of the religious orders has offered a partial solution to the problem that we still know very little about their experiences of suppression.[63] This project does not attempt to replicate Erler's study, but it does pose – and tentatively offer an answer to – the question of why monastic voices are found only very rarely in the documentary record. On this point, it connects with highly suggestive recent scholarship resulting from the 'archival turn'.[64] In particular, Jennifer Summit has powerfully demonstrated that early modern libraries and archives were – and are – sites of memory. Historians who use these collections, as Summit argues, inherit not a neutral body of sources but rather a particular vision of the past, fostered through the very organisational and editorial practices by which the archives were created.[65] This thesis suggests that the religious may have been written out of history by those with a vested interest in forgetting the rupture engendered by the dissolution – and that it is these vested interests more generally that have continued to shape and distort the modern historiography of this subject.

This study of the long afterlives of the dissolution is therefore predicated on two claims about evidence: that we need to look again at the conventional sources and that we also need to look beyond those sources. Peter Cunich once argued that meticulous investigation of the administrative dimensions of the dissolution has rendered it amongst the 'most carefully investigated and best documented events of the Tudor age'.[66] This may be the case, but it is vital

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[62] See for example Cross, *End of Medieval Monasticism*; eadem, 'Dissolution of the monasteries'. See also M. Claire Cross and Noreen Vickers (eds.), *Monks, Friars, and Nuns in Sixteenth-Century Yorkshire* (Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, 1995); Cooke, 'The English nuns and the dissolution'; Marilyn Oliva, 'Unsafe passage: the state of the nuns at the dissolution and their conversion to secular life', in Joan Greatrex (ed.), *The Vocation of Service to God and Neighbour: Essays on the Interests, Involvements, and Problems of Religious Communities and their Members in Medieval Society* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), pp. 87-104; Clare Kellar, *Scotland, England, and the Reformation, 1534-61* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), pp. 23-7.

[63] Mary C. Erler, *Reading and Writing During the Dissolution: Monks, Friars, and Nuns, 1530-1558* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). On the survival of religious communities see also eadem, 'Religious women after the dissolution: continuing community', in Matthew P. Davies and Andrew Prescott (eds.), *London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline M. Barron* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2008), pp. 135-46; Peter Cunich, 'The Syon household at Denham, 1539-1550', in John Doran, Charlotte Methuen, and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Religion and the Household* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014), pp. 174-187. On a similar theme see also the work of Laura Wood on vowesses during the dissolution, 'Vowesses in the province of Canterbury, c. 1450-1540', PhD thesis (Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017).

[64] For an overview of developments relevant to early modern history see two recent collections: Andrea Guidi, Alessandro Silvestri, and Filippo de Vivo (eds.), 'Archival transformations in early modern Europe', *European History Quarterly* 46 (2016); Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters, and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe*, P&P Supplement 11 (2016).

[65] Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008). See also below, esp. epilogue and conclusion.

[66] Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands', p. 2.

that we interrogate these records in the context of their production and the circumstances of their preservation. This thesis therefore reassesses the material produced by and for the Henrician government in the 1530s – the visitation correspondence; the two acts of dissolution; the leases, grants, and other legal documentation preserved in the State Papers – in light of its central claim that the suppression itself was an attempt to re-shape memory. It also draws upon a different body of evidence produced after 1540. For the first time, it considers the resonance of the dissolution in Protestant polemic produced as part of the ongoing Reformation and the vision of the suppression offered in historical, topographical, and antiquarian texts and images. It also probes the capacity of this material to reveal traditions about the dissolution which were circulated and inherited orally. Some of these sources shed light on personal and individual memories, some are products of and vehicles for cultural or inherited memory; many testify to the porous boundary between these different types of remembering. The picture that emerges of this reformed Protestant memory culture is, above all, one in which a multitude of voices clamoured to be heard and different visions of the past existed alongside each other.

Before mapping out a chapter structure, a final comment on terminology must be made. Most previous scholarship has referred to this episode as the Dissolution of the Monasteries. This thesis suggests that this short-hand is not neutral. Rather, it emerged in the context of a particular polemical vision of 1536-40 and carries with it a set of assumptions and implications. For this reason, lowercase forms have been adopted in most uses of the term and its derivatives – dissolution of the monasteries, rather than Dissolution of the Monasteries. Where this formulation or its synonyms appear with capital letters, these are deliberate usages intended to describe and interrogate the transformation of the long process of dissolution into a major Reformation event. Indeed, as we shall see, the ubiquity of the name 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' is itself a telling example of how earlier processes of remembering and forgetting the suppression have left their mark upon modern scholarship.

Structure and Summary

The chapter structure reflects the central concern of this project with different aspects of early modern memory, as well as the multiple, competing and coexisting visions of the dissolution articulated in Protestant memory. Change over time is an important element of this discussion. Individual chapters trace changing perspectives on the suppression across at least a century; read in sequence, they also function to effect an overarching forward shift in time. However, the chapters themselves are structured thematically, beginning with an examination of the processes of remembering and forgetting the dissolution in the 1530s, before turning to the

temporal, spatial and visual, and local dimensions of this evolving memory culture. This organising principle allows us to draw connections between different themes in the Protestant memory of the dissolution, whilst remaining sensitive to the synchronic as well as the diachronic characteristics of early modern memory cultures.

The first chapter focuses on the attempts of Henry VIII and his agents to shape the afterlives of the dissolution in ways that suited a particular political and religious agenda. It seeks to reassess the process of suppression in the 1530s, using memory as a tool for rethinking our approach to this episode. With sensitivity to the language deployed by the Henrician regime, it considers some 'paths not taken' in the suppression of the monasteries, before turning to the development of the culture of amnesia promoted by crown and government.[67] It pays particular attention to the emergence of narratives of monastic corruption and the expediency of suppression. It also notes the development of an evangelical critique which lamented that the spoils of the dissolution had not been put to better uses, but highlights how this material nevertheless continued to applaud this episode as a victory over Catholic 'superstition'. It is the success and persistence of this triumphalist narrative that the remainder of the thesis sets out to test, complicate, and unravel.

Chapter two probes the temporal dimensions of the memory of the dissolution, which it traces across the period c. 1540-c. 1640 and in the context of the transition from personal to inherited memory. Using evidence gleaned principally from chronologically organised sources such as histories and chronicles, it asks how and when the suppression came to be considered as a break with the medieval past, as well as a significant historical event in wider narratives of the Protestant Reformation. It shows how these texts could be used to perpetuate the Henrician vision explored in the first chapter by creating particular chronologies of the Reformation, but also traces and sets in context the development of an alternative tradition that turned the triumph of the early reformers into Protestant embarrassment about the iconoclastic zeal of their predecessors. In particular, it begins to explore the language of loss and pity that developed in opposition to Henrician narratives and which contributed to contemporary senses of the dissolution as a moment of rupture between past and present.

In the third chapter, the focus shifts from time to space and the visual and material dimensions of memory. Concentrating on the period between the late sixteenth century and the late seventeenth century, it examines the work of a number of Protestant antiquaries who produced topographies and images of former monastic sites. A fundamental tension can be discerned in

[67] An approach that borrows from Alec Ryrie, 'Paths not taken in the British Reformations', *HJ* 52 (2009), pp. 1-22.

many of these sources between a desire to preserve the remnants of the monastic past for posterity and the need to bury that past in oblivion. Taking previous scholarship on the 'nostalgic' element in antiquarian topographies of the dissolution as its main point of engagement and departure, this chapter addresses the role of both monastic ruins and those sites that were converted to new uses, both spiritual and secular, in shaping changing perspectives on the suppression. By contrast with earlier scholarship, which has tended to emphasise the role of ruins as *lieux de mémoire*, this chapter argues that we should pay more attention to contemporary approaches to converted spaces, which could function to reinforce the earlier Henrician project to forget the dissolution across the generations. It also explores the ways in which the spatial dimensions of memory served in some cases to telescope time, providing a different angle on the questions about chronology and history that formed the basis of chapter two.

If chapters two and three are largely concerned with the historical and topographical imagination of learned authors, the final chapter seeks to use this antiquarian evidence in a different way. It argues that these texts have the potential to provide a sidelight onto traditions about the dissolution that circulated orally in local communities. In particular, it seeks to recover the religious dimensions of these memory cultures, which have long been neglected in previous scholarship. This is partly because contemporaries were often unwilling explicitly to articulate critical perspectives on the Reformation when asked to recall the past in, for example, a court of law. It is also the result of the historiographical tendency to view Protestantism as inherently hostile to oral and local traditions. However, with recent studies of Protestant traditions and folklore, this chapter argues that, far from being the harbinger of their decline, the Reformation in fact generated and invigorated local traditions.[68] Sacrilege, it suggests, may be the key to unlocking this overlooked aspect of the memory of the dissolution, as well as accounting for the persistence of ideas about haunted religious houses and the providential punishments visited upon the dissolvers which were subsequently picked up by later generations of antiquaries and folklorists. In doing so, this chapter also makes a case for the vibrancy and longevity of local memory cultures across the seventeenth century and into the early eighteenth century and beyond.

Together with the epilogue and conclusion, chapter four also returns to theme of Henrician memory making and its long-term consequences, probing the ways in which the crown's vision of the dissolution had started to unravel by c. 1700. We close, then, by revisiting the problem

[68] Ronald Hutton, 'The English Reformation and the evidence of folklore', *P&P* 148 (1995), pp. 89-116; Alexandra Walsham, 'Reformed folklore? Cautionary tales and oral tradition in early modern England', in Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 173-95.

posed at the outset of why Henrician polemic has been so influential in modern historiography when the study of the long afterlives of the dissolution reveals that it was remembered as a highly significant, controversial, and contested episode in the early modern period.

Our vision of the dissolution of the monasteries is impoverished if we focus narrowly upon the years 1536-40 and the material produced and preserved in the course of Henrician attempts to engender amnesia and oblivion. In order to understand its 'earth-shaking importance', we need to look at the dissolution *after* the dissolution – in other words, we need to pay at least as much attention to its long afterlives as to the process of suppression in the 1530s and early 1540s.[69] Examining the dissolution in this way, as a memory event and memory crisis, also offers a case study of how we might think about early modern memory as a polyvocal and multi-dimensional phenomenon – temporal and spatial, local and national, familial and archival – which evolved constantly over time and with the passage of the generations. This has the further potential not only to reconfigure conventional narratives of the Reformation, but also to shed light upon the inherited assumptions that continue to shape our understanding of the early modern period.

[69] Quotation from Alec Ryrie, 'The English Reformation', *History Today* 63 (2013) [http://www.historytoday.com/alec-ryrie/english-reformation, accessed 12 December 2017], in which Ryrie calls for historians to pay more attention to the dissolution. See also Ryrie's comments on this 'weirdly under-researched' topic in 'Reformations', in Keith Wrightson (ed.), *A Social History of England, 1500-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 109.

Chapter One

'No News but the Abbeys shall be Down': Reform, Surrender, and Suppression in the 1530s and 1540s

The dissolution has long enjoyed a reputation as 'one of the most carefully investigated and best documented events of the Tudor age'.[1] This assessment is based on the rich body of evidence created and collected by Henry VIII's government in the 1530s and now preserved principally in the State Papers and Cotton manuscripts.[2] The numerous grants, leases, reports, and letters held in these collections emphasise the legal and fiscal imperatives of suppression, and shed light upon the endemic corruption and depravity supposedly uncovered in the religious houses by agents of the crown. This material has also formed the backbone of most previous scholarship on the dissolution. It is the central contention of this thesis that we need to re-think this evidence. Recent studies by Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and others, have demonstrated that king and government were deeply conscious of the need to control their own legacies.[3] Setting dissolution polemic in this context, this chapter revisits the events of 1536-40 with a view to providing a new perspective on the well-worn story of the suppression as an efficient and virtually painless episode in the development of Tudor bureaucracy and the Henrician Reformation.

The discussion that follows is sensitive both to the evolving language of the dissolution and to the problem of agency in early attempts to shape its legacies and afterlives. Interrogating the rhetorical strategies used by the government to justify its assault on the religious houses, it posits a distinct shift in emphasis in Henrician polemic between 1536 and 1540, tracing firstly the 'reformation' and then the 'surrender' of the monasteries. This dual rhetoric served to underline monastic corruption and the complicity of the religious in their own demise, whilst playing down the wider consequences of this rupture with the medieval past. Attempts by king and government to manage the memory of the dissolution are further revealed by comparing this vision of the dissolution with early critiques of Henrician policy, which began to emerge from both ends of the confessional spectrum virtually from the moment of the fall of the first religious houses. This chapter also examines the evolving language of the suppression with a

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[1] Peter Cunich, 'The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands by the crown, 1536-47', PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 1990), p. 2.

[2] TNA, SP 5 (Miscellanea relating to the Dissolution of the Monasteries and to the General Surveyors, Henry VIII, 1517-1560); BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV (Papers relating to the Dissolution of the Monasteries).

[3] Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and John N. King (eds.), *Henry VIII and His Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. chs. 2, 3. See also Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), chs. 2-4; Christopher Highley, 'Failed commemoration: a royal tomb and its afterlife', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79 (2016), pp. 93-118.

view to exposing the memory-making practices that underpin the archives conventionally used by historians of the dissolution. These collections, it argues, were products of a culture in which processes of conscious remembering were coterminous with strategic amnesia.

The Reformation of the Monasteries, 1536-1538

The long process of dissolving the monasteries began with a controversy over monastic corruption. Since 1535, government agents had been undertaking a series of visitations of the religious houses. Initially intended as a survey of ecclesiastical wealth, which led to the completion of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* in the summer of 1535, the project had subsequently evolved into an attempt to assess standards of piety and decency in the monasteries and to confirm their commitment to the recently established Royal Supremacy. Under the leadership of Thomas Cromwell, vicegerent in spirituals and monastic abuse-finder general, a team of commissioners traversed the length and breadth of the country at breakneck speed, sending reports back to London with astonishing frequency. Collectively, their evidence was damning. Almost everywhere they went, the visitors witnessed or heard testimony of iniquity, fraudulence, and negligence. A typical early report made by Richard Layton and Thomas Legh to Cromwell in January 1536 recommended that William Thirsk, abbot of Fountains Abbey in North Yorkshire, be removed from his post. The commissioners testified that Thirsk had 'gretly dilapidated his howse' through a variety of secular and spiritual crimes, which included 'notoriously keypyng vi. Hoores', 'thefft and sacrilege', and 'one day denyyng thes articles [of religion]' before 'the next daye folowyng the same confessyng' and thus perjuring himself.[4] By denying the Henrician articles of religion, Thirsk had also dirtied his hands with the crime of political disobedience. He was ejected from his abbacy within days.

Layton and Legh's accusations against Thirsk encapsulate many of the main themes of the wider correspondence that passed between Cromwell and the commissioners. Sexual immorality was a particularly common allegation. In November 1535, for instance, John ap Rice had reported from Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk that 'it is confessed and proved that there was here suche frequence of women commyng and reassorting to this monastery as to no place more'. Unlike Legh at Fountains, Rice could find no evidence that the abbot of Bury, John Reeve, was sexually deviant, 'but it was detected that he laye moche forth in his granges, and delited moche in playng at dice and cardes, and therein spent moche money, and in buylding for his pleasure'.

[4] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 114. A selection of the commissioners' correspondence is also published in Thomas Wright (ed.), *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Dissolution of the Monasteries,* Camden Society, old series, 26 (London, 1843).

Unworldly living of this sort was another general theme, as was the neglect of spiritual duty. Reeve, it was alleged, 'did not preche openly' and, like Thirsk, he had refused to acknowledge the king's Reformation. He 'semeth to be addict', Rice reported, 'to the mayntenyng of suche superstitious ceremones as hathe ben used heretofor'. He was also accused of being a bad landlord to his lay tenants, having 'converted diverse fermes into copie holdes, wherof poore men doth complayne'.[5] Both the abbot and his house, Rice implied, were deeply unpopular in the local community. A final theme was fraudulence. The religious orders were heavily implicated in the cults of relics and saints which came under fierce attack in the 1530s as part of the Henrician regime's wider project to shatter 'the visual link between past and present'.[6] This was, therefore, an attempt to erode the material memory culture fostered by traditional religion. Amongst the relics at Bury, Rice reported to Cromwell, 'we founde moche vanitie and superstition', including the coals that had fuelled the flames in which St Laurence had expired, the parings of St Edmund's nails, the penknife and boots of St Thomas of Canterbury, enough fragments of the Holy Cross 'to make a [w]hole crosse', and a number of other objects purported to have therapeutic and thaumaturgic powers.[7]

In response to these reports, the government initiated a phase of partial – and supposedly voluntary – suppressions in March 1536. Despite the fact that the commissioners had uncovered manifold abuses in large houses like Fountains and Bury, the regime has in its immediate sights only those monasteries, nunneries, and friaries worth less than £200 per annum where, it claimed, standards were particularly poor. So pervasive was the rhetoric of corruption, fraudulence, and iniquity that the preamble to the 'Act for the Suppression of the Lesser Monasteries' (1536) alleged that the religious orders were responsible for the 'utter spoyle & destruccion' of their own houses:

> Manifest synne, vicious, carnall and abhomynable lyvyng, is dayly used & commytted amongst the lytell and smale Abbeys, Pryoryes, and other Relygyous Houses of Monkes, Chanons & Nonnes… wherby the Governours of suche Relygyous Houses and thir Covent spoyle, destroye, consume & utterly wast, aswell ther Churches, Monasteryes, Pryoryes, pincipall Houses, Farmes, Granges, Londes, Tenementes & Heredytamentes, as the ornamentes of ther Churches & ther goodes and catalles, to the high dyspleasour of Almyghty God, slaunder of good Relygyon & to the greate Infamy of the Kynges Highnes & the Realme.[8]

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[5] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 120.
[6] Helen L. Parish, *Monks, Miracles and Magic: Reformation Representations of the Medieval Church* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), p. 5. On relics and cults of saints in the monasteries see Martin Heale, 'Training in superstition? Monasteries and popular religion in late medieval and Reformation England', *JEH* 58 (2007), pp. 417-39.
[7] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 120.
[8] 27 Hen. VIII, c. 28**,** *The Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London: Record Commission, 1963), iii, p. 575.

The act therefore granted these houses to the king so that they might be 'used & converted to better uses' and their inhabitants translated to other communities where they could be 'compellyd to reforme their lyves'. By combating depravity and corruption in the smaller houses, the regime argued, the larger – the 'greate solemyne Monasteryes of this Realme' – might flourish free of this canker.[9]

The idea of monastic reform was not new in 1536. The rhetoric of *reformatio* and *renovatio* originated in the New Testament and its potency across the medieval period was indicative of a monastic institution, as well as a Roman Catholic Church more generally, which strove vigorously for the restoration of primitive Christianity.[10] The Henrician government's allegations about the corruption of the religious houses had roots in these older discursive strategies. Living memory also furnished several notable precedents for the suppression of monasteries, including the closure of Creake Abbey in Norfolk in 1506 by Henry VIII's grandmother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, to endow her foundation at Christ's College, Cambridge, and the dissolution of St Frideswide's Priory by the king's former chief advisor, Cardinal Wolsey, to finance Cardinal College, now Christ Church, Oxford in 1522. Wolsey went on to secure a papal bull for the closure of twenty further religious houses in 1524 to support his educational projects in Oxford and Ipswich.[11] Moreover, in the years leading up to the Henrician Reformation, monastic corruption had also been a prominent theme in religious polemic. In 1529, the reformer Simon Fish had published an incendiary pamphlet entitled *A supplicacyon for the beggers* from his exile in Antwerp. The *Supplicacyon* attacked the Catholic Church and accused its monks and ministers of crimes ranging from avarice and idleness to treason, prefiguring many of the main tenets of the commissioners' correspondence in the 1530s.[12] When the 1536 act of suppression highlighted the corruption of the monasteries, it was therefore deploying a rhetoric that could be traced back across the centuries.

This narrative of ongoing reform had the potential to create a powerful continuity with the past. The preamble to the 1536 act declared that 'many contynuall vystytacions hath bene heretofore had by the space of two hundreth yeres and more, for an honest and charytable Reformacion of

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[9] Ibid.
[10] Gerald Strauss, 'Ideas of *Reformatio* and *Renovatio* from the Middle Ages to the Reformation', in Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, 2 vols. (Leiden, New York, NY, and Köln: Brill, 1995), i, p. 6. See also Julia Barrow, 'Ideas and applications of reform', in Thomas F. X. Noble and Julia M. H. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600-c. 1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 345-62.
[11] On dissolutions before Henry VIII see R. W. Hoyle, 'The origins of the dissolution of the monasteries', *HJ* 28 (1995), pp. 275-305; Lucy E. C. Wooding, *Rethinking Catholicism in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 38; Deirdre O'Sullivan, 'The "little dissolution" of the 1520s', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40 (2006), pp. 227-258.
[12] Simon Fish, *A supplicacyon for the beggers* (Antwerp?, 1529?).

suche unthrifty, carnall & abhomynable lyvyng', and yet in that time 'vycyous lyvyng' had 'shamelessly encreaseth and augmentith'.[13] The government thus attempted to portray the first and partial dissolution of the monasteries as the consequence of two centuries of failed reform – and thereby to assuage the novelty and gravity of the break with the past engendered by its assault on the religious houses. But the difference in 1536, in the wake of the break with Rome and the creation of the Royal Supremacy, was that the crown had assumed the power to direct against the monasteries the very rhetoric which the medieval Church had, as Benjamin Thompson has argued, 'so habitually deployed to frame its own authority'.[14] This language of monastic reform thus became a tool for attacking the Catholic Church, rather than an impetus for reform emanating from within it.

As the first suppressions got underway, the rhetoric of monastic corruption and iniquity thus became increasingly potent. It continued to pervade the commissioners' correspondence in the months following the act. At the London Charterhouse, Thomas Bedyll accused its Carthusian prior of 'hypocrisy, vayne glory, confederacy, and obstinacy',[15] whilst Legh went on to report that the abbot of Rievaulx in North Yorkshire was as guilty of 'dissolute lyvyng' as his counterpart at Fountains.[16] This was also the tenor of unsolicited missives sent to Cromwell, which further attest to the power and reach of the government's campaign against the religious. As early as 1535, the London clergyman John Barthlet had reported to Cromwell that he and other 'personez of good conversacion' had 'ffound the prior of the Crossid Fryers in London… beyng in bedde with his hoore'.[17] Even more damaging was evidence of monastic corruption furnished by those within the religious community itself. A particularly colourful example of this self-incriminating tendency can be found in the evidence of Richard Beerly, a Benedictine monk at Pershore Abbey in Worcestershire. Late in the spring of 1536, he informed Cromwell that his conscience had compelled him to report that 'the relygyon wyche we do obser and keype ys no rull of sentt Benett, nor yt no commandyment of God' but instead 'all fowloys our owne sensyaly and pleser… all yn vayne glory'.[18] He further claimed – echoing the findings of commissioners elsewhere – that many of his brethren arrived at matins inebriated, whilst others gambled at dice and cards. It is also striking that those religious who pleaded for exemption from dissolution also inadvertently perpetuated the rhetoric of corruption. Joan Missenden, prioress of Legbourne in Lincolnshire, asked to be spared suppression in 1536 having heard that many

[13] 27 Hen. VIII, c. 28**,** *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, p. 575.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Benjamin Thompson, 'The polemic of reform in the later medieval English church', in Almut Suerbaum, George Southcombe, and Benjamin Thompson (eds.), *Polemic: Language as Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Discourse* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 222.
[15] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 252.
[16] Ibid., fol. 137.
[17] Ibid., fol. 134.
[18] Ibid., fol. 161.

other religious houses in the area were to be dissolved 'bicause of theire myslyvng'. 'Ye shall here no compleyntes agaynst us', she wrote to Cromwell, '[neither] in oure lyvyng nor hospitalitie kepyng'.[19] Missenden thus attempted to revert to the rhetoric of piety and charity associated with the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience that the Henrician regime was attempting so powerfully to invert.

Since the work of G. R. Elton, scholars of the Henrician Reformation have recognised the regime's desire to control propaganda and opinion.[20] More recently, this has been set in the context of Henry's vision of his own power and desire to shape his own reputation and afterlives.[21] As Richard Rex has demonstrated, Henry was enamoured by the models of the Old Testament kings and sought to fashion his own kingship accordingly.[22] One arena in which this played out, as Kevin Sharpe has noted, was in the visual and material trappings of monarchy.[23] But it also profoundly shaped the Henrician regime's vision of events such as the dissolution of the monasteries. The 1536 act thus invoked the image of Henry as a godly king battling the corruption, iniquity, and 'slaunder of good Relygyon' that flourished in the monasteries, much to the 'dyspleasour of Almyghty God' and 'greate Infamy of the Kynges Highnes & the Realme'.[24] As we shall see, some contemporary polemicists drew on the providential character of the king's intervention, although it was left to subsequent generations to develop more explicitly an image of Henry as the divine agent and instrument of the dissolution.[25] Nevertheless, it is in this context of the Henrician government's concerns about its reputation that we must view the sources produced in the 1530s, as well as the regime's emphasis on monastic corruption and the need for reform. Indeed, had it not been for subsequent developments in official policy, history might have remembered this episode as the 'Reformation of the Monasteries'.

It is telling that Henry appears to have invented explanations for those reports which did not conform to this vision of the dissolution. In the spring of 1536, commissioner George Giffard testified in favour of St James's Abbey, a house of Augustinian canons, as well as the female Cistercian priory at Catesby, both in Northamptonshire. But, according to a letter from Giffard to Cromwell of June 1536, news had quickly reached him that the king had been openly displeased with the favourable report, 'seyeng that itt was like that we had received rewardes, whiche

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[19] Ibid., fol. 270
[20] G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
[21] On the afterlives of Henry VIII see Rankin, Highley, and King (eds.), *Henry VIII and his Afterlives*; Thomas Betteridge and Thomas S. Freeman (eds.), *Henry VIII and History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
[22] Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 10, 20-1 and passim.
[23] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, p. 150.
[24] 27 Hen. VIII, c. 28**,** *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, p. 575.
[25] See below, ch. 2.

caused us to wright as we dyd'. Giffard regaled this information by way of an attempt to persuade Cromwell of his integrity in speaking once again in favour of the religious orders – this time at Wolstrop Priory in Leicestershire, 'the governour wherof is a vere good husband for the howse, and welbeloved of all thenhabitantes thereunto adjoynyng'.[26] He did not succeed in securing a reprieve. But this episode offers a glimpse into the memory-making processes colouring the Henrician regime's vision of the dissolution, perhaps even in the king's own mind. Once again, this is telling of how the government and its agents were conscious of the need to manage the documentary record of the dissolution. Nevertheless, Giffard's continued pleas for the monasteries he visited are also a reminder that, in the early phase of suppression, part of the government's effort to shape the afterlives of the suppression involved at least paying lip service to the idea of reforming – and not dissolving – the monasteries. This was, after all, a period when wholesale suppression was not only far from inevitable; for many, it was entirely inconceivable.[27]

However, in the context of parallel developments, the position of the monasteries was becoming increasingly precarious. Rather than seeing the dissolution as a discrete episode in the English Reformation, it is helpful here to think about the 'reformation' of monasticism alongside other aspects of religious reform.[28] The wider picture of the Henrician Reformation reveals how the highly persuasive rhetoric of monastic corruption propagated by the government after 1536 was supplemented by a harder edged language of monastic heresy and treason, and by the exercise of coercive power violently to subvert and repress those who adhered to papal supremacy and the Roman Catholic faith – including the religious orders. Shortly before the dissolution, in 1534, the Benedictine nun and prophetess Elizabeth Barton, widely known as the Holy Maid of Kent, had been publicly executed with five of her promoters for treason, after speaking against the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn and the break with Rome. Her severed head was displayed publicly at London Bridge as an admonition to those who harboured similar anxieties about the direction of Henrician religious policy.[29] A few years later, in 1538, a similar example was made of the Observant Franciscan John Forest, who was burnt for heresy for his refusal to acknowledge the king as Supreme Head of the Church.[30] Forest's pyre was partially fuelled by a wooden image of the Celtic saint Derfel Gardarn, brought to London from

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[26] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 213.
[27] For arguments that the dissolution was not inevitable at this stage see G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 270-4; Richard Rex, 'The religion of Henry VIII', *HJ* 57 (2014), esp. pp. 20-5.
[28] On the process by which the dissolution came to be considered a discrete event see below, ch. 2.
[29] On Elizabeth Barton see Richard Rex, 'The execution of Elizabeth Barton', *Historical Research* 64 (1991), pp. 216-20; Diane Watt, *Secretaries of God: Women Prophets in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), ch. 3.
[30] See Peter Marshall, 'Papist as heretic: the burning of John Forest, 1538', *HJ* 41 (1998), pp. 351-74.

Llanderfel, Merionethshire, further underlining the blurred boundaries between the regime's campaign against the monastic corruption and its assault on idolatry.[31]

For Ethan Shagan, events such as these explain the apparent willingness of so many local people to participate in the spoliation of abbeys and monasteries. Drawing on two infamous monastic deceptions that were exposed in 1538, Shagan has suggested that communities quickly began to internalise the anti-monastic polemic espoused by the Henrician regime in print and from the pulpit.[32] First to fall was the Rood of Grace belonging to the Cistercian Abbey of Boxley in Kent – a likeness of Christ that allegedly came alive before the faithful who flocked to see it. In February, the rood was exposed by the king's commissioners as a mechanical fraud employed by the monks to extract financial contributions from gullible pilgrims, and publicly condemned in a sermon preached by John Hilsey, bishop of Rochester and himself only a recent convert to evangelical religion from his former vocation as a Dominican prior. In the sermon, Hilsey railed against the 'engines used in old time', thereby reducing the rood itself to little more than a relic of a bygone age. It was subsequently dismantled and burnt in the capital before a large audience, witnesses to the disgrace and destruction of one of the most prominent medieval miracles. Then, in November, Hilsey returned to Paul's Cross to denounce another feigned monastic relic, the Holy Blood of Christ, housed at Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire. The chronicler Charles Wriothesley, a witness to the exposure of the Holy Blood, recorded that Hilsey 'did let every man behould yt there at Paules Crosse, and all the way as he went to dinneer to the mayres, to loke on yt, so that every person might well perceive the abuse of the sayd thinge'.[33] The abbot of Hailes, Stephen Sagar, had himself been persuaded publicly to condemn the relic as a fraud. These episodes powerfully demonstrate the influence and reach of the government's polemical campaign against Catholic relics, idols, and shrines.[34] So convincing was this rhetoric, Shagan argues, that, at Hailes, local people were persuaded to collaborate in the destruction of the abbey, which eventually surrendered to the king's commissioners on Christmas Eve 1539.[35]

By the late 1530s, claims about monastic corruption, fraudulence, and iniquity were functioning to legitimate a process of suppression that had begun to exceed the parameters set out in the 1536 act of dissolution. The feigned relics at Hailes and Boxley were exemplary episodes in a

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[31] Anne Dillon, 'John Forest and Derfel Gadarn: a double execution', *Recusant History* 28 (2006), pp. 1-21.
[32] Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 187 and ch. 5 passim.
[33] Northumberland, Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 468A, fol. 86r. On Wriothesley's perspective on the dissolution see also below, ch. 2.
[34] See also Peter Marshall, 'The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the defence of the Henrician church', *JEH* 46 (1995), pp. 689-96.
[35] Shagan, *Popular Politics,* p. 187.

wider catalogue of abuses and errors that continued to be reported back to the government. As Peter Marshall has demonstrated, forgery and feigning were prominent themes in the polemic produced by the regime and its supporters.[36] Under the weight of the Henrician regime's attacks, further monasteries were dissolved throughout 1537 and 1538. As George Rolle reported to Lord Lisle in February 1538, 'the abbeys go down as fast as they may and are surrendered to the king'.[37] No longer was it possible to claim that the government was simply undertaking a 'reformation of the monasteries'. Rather, Rolle's comments reveal that a new rhetoric had begun to creep into Henrician polemic. Since 1536, as we have seen, monks like Richard Beerly and Stephen Sagar had offered testimony that implicated the religious orders in the suppression of their own houses. As the dissolution progressed, building on the vision of monastic corruption now embedded in the Henrician Reformation, the notion that monks, nuns, and friars were complicit in their own downfall became increasingly pervasive.

Declarations were drafted for the surrender of religious houses which referred to the crimes of immorality, iniquity, and fraudulence with which they had been so systematically attacked. The personnel in these houses were expected to subscribe to these documents in order to receive the pensions granted to them by way of compensation, perpetuating the fiction, to use Norman Jones's term, that the religious were simply exchanging their property for an annuity.[38] In March 1538, Legh wrote to Cromwell from Holme in Cumbria to report that the Cistercian house of Holmcultram had been 'quietly dissolved' and the monks, who 'think themselves in better case than before', dispersed.[39] In September, Richard Greene, abbot of Biddlesden in Buckinghamshire, made a declaration of surrender in which he confessed that he and his brethren did 'profoundly consider that the manner and trade of living which we and others of our pretensed religion have practised and used many days, doth most principally consist in dumb ceremonies', deploying the language of forgery and feigning used elsewhere to condemn the religious orders. Greene also acknowledged the dangers of 'submitting ourself principally to forinsical potentates and powers which never came here to reform such discord of living and abuses as now have been found to have reigned among us' by the Henrician commissioners.[40] The religious were thus made complicit in their own dissolution and forced to commit to paper their alleged deceitfulness and depravity.

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[36] See Peter Marshall, 'Forgery and miracles in the reign of Henry VIII', *P&P* 178 (2003), pp. 58-62.
[37] *L&P*, xiii, part I, no. 235.
[38] Norman L. Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 70.
[39] *L&P*, xiii, part I, no. 547.
[40] Ibid., part II, no. 421.

Monastic corruption was not the total invention of the Henrician regime. But it was central to the government's vision of the suppressions that took place between 1536 and 1538. To think of this period in terms of a 'reformation of the monasteries' is not to buy into Henrician polemic, but rather explicitly to recognise the deliberate attempt of the government to limit contemporary discourse on the religious houses and orders to their iniquity and impiety, and to acknowledge its efforts to manage the afterlives of the suppression. This continued into 1539, when the rhetoric of monastic corruption and complicity was reconfigured into a rhetoric of surrender, deployed to justify a radical new policy of wholesale dissolution.

The Surrender of the Monasteries, 1539-c. 1540

The suppression of the smaller houses did not signal the end of their 'utter spoyle and destruction' as the Henrician regime had argued in 1536. Rather, the first act of dissolution proved to be the harbinger of the spoil and destruction that was still to come – and of which the Henrician regime was itself the author and the architect. After three years of piecemeal suppression marked by a relentless polemical campaign against the religious, a second act of dissolution was issued in 1539 which retroactively incorporated previously surrendered religious houses into a programme of total suppression. It is a striking feature of the dissolution of the monasteries that, despite the vehemence with which the regime had asserted its rhetoric of iniquity and corruption in 1536, monasticism in principle and as a way of life was never officially abolished. Rather, it was extinguished *de facto* by the 1539 act, which also marked a profound shift in Henrician rhetoric. Less inflammatory and provocative than its predecessor, the act declared simply that the remaining abbeys, convents, friaries, and all other monastic properties had been granted in perpetuity to the crown. Underpinning the act was the language of complicity and surrender, now vastly amplified, with the effect of portraying the dissolution as a virtually painless transfer of land and wealth from church to crown:

> Where diverse and sundrie Abbottes, Priours, Abbesses, Prioresses and other Ecclesiasticall Governours… of their owne free and voluntarie myndes good willes and assentes, without constraynte, coaction or compulsion… have severally geven granted and by the same their writinges severally confirmed all their saide Monasteries, Abbathies, Priories, Nonries, Colleges, Hospitals, Houses of Friers and other religious and ecclesiastical houses & places… to our saide Soveraigne Lorde [Henry VIII] his heires and successors forever.[41]

[41] 31˚ Hen. VIII. c. 13, *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, p. 733.

For the first time, the word 'dissolution' appeared in the Henrician vocabulary. This was not the 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' that has become the modern shorthand for the events of 1536-40, but rather one amongst a set of interchangeable terms to describe the transfer of the religious houses to the state: the 'dissolucion, suppression, renouncing, relinquyshinge, forfeyting, [and] gevyng upp' of the remaining monasteries into the king's hands. In doing so, the regime also continued to invoke the collusion of the religious in fall of their own houses. But perhaps most strikingly of all, by repeated reference to 'the said *late* Monasteries, Abbathies, Priories, [and] Nonries' the 1539 act played a memory trick upon its audience, implying that monasticism had already collapsed long ago – this despite the fact that some religious houses continued to function into the early months of 1540.[42] If the first act of suppression was emblematic of the regime's need to emphasise and memorialise monastic corruption, the act of 1539 reflected a new and powerful impulse to forget.

Chief amongst the aspects of the dissolution that the regime sought retrospectively to forget was the fact that it had not actually been achieved 'without constraynte, coaction or compulsion'. Late in 1539, three abbots – the heads of houses in Colchester, Reading, and Glastonbury – refused to surrender their abbeys to the crown's commissioners. Resistance was not a feature of the government's vision for the afterlives of the dissolution, which had been pre-emptively laid out in the terms of the 1539 act as an episode of painless surrender. A spate of executions followed. In an especially grisly episode, Richard Whiting, abbot of Glastonbury, and two of his monks, Roger James and John Thorne, were dragged to the top of Glastonbury Tor and hanged, drawn, and quartered. Whiting's head was subsequently placed over the west gate of his abbey and his broken limbs were displayed publicly in Wells, Bath, Ilchester, and Bridgwater. G. R. Elton once described this incident as 'a sudden outburst of violence… much at variance with the government's previous behaviour' in implementing its religious reforms.[43] Yet the parade of Whiting's remains recalled the set-piece executions of the Holy Maid and Friar Forest earlier in the 1530s, and it also had echoes of the exposure of the corrupt relics at Boxley and Hailes. Whiting's defiance was thus treated like an act of monastic corruption – the dominant narrative of dissolution in 1536-8. If violence of this kind was – as Elton suggests – relatively uncommon during the suppression, it was not entirely at odds with the practices of a regime that was mindful of the need to manage its own legacies.

However, as the project of dissolution progressed and evolved, and as the regime began to emphasise monastic surrender and to retreat slightly from its earlier argument about the need for the reform of the monasteries, we begin to see a tension emerging in the Henrician

[42] Ibid. My emphasis.
[43] Elton, *Policy and Police*, p. 155.

government's vision of the suppression. On the one hand, after 1539, it sought to bury the religious houses in oblivion in order to downplay the novelty and gravity of the dissolution and its less palatable aspects. On the other, in order to justify this policy, the government was continually forced to reiterate and remember earlier narratives of monastic corruption. As we shall see in future chapters, successive generations would continue to negotiate precisely this struggle between conflicting impulses to remember and forget.

The very process of dissolution was itself an attack upon the physical and material memory of the medieval past. The dismantling of monastic structures was, like iconoclasm, a powerful mechanism of forgetting.[44] It is clear from the commissioners' correspondence that this was a deliberate tactic. In December 1538, a group wrote to Cromwell from 'the late priorye of Christechurche' at Twynham in Dorset, prefiguring the language that the regime would adopt in the 1539 act of dissolution. They invoked the themes of surrender and complicity, writing that the suppression of Christchurch had been a simple and painless affair since the prior, John Draper, was 'a very honest conformable person'. They had also found the priory 'well furnysschide with juellys [jewels] and plate', plenty of which had been earmarked as 'mete for the kinges majestie is [sic] use'. Other fabrics and fittings received less careful handling. The iconoclasts set about defacing the priory's memorials, including a 'monument curiosly made of Cane [Caen] stone, preparyd by the late mother of [Cardinal] Raynolde Pole for herre buriall, wiche we causyd to be defacyd and all the armys and badgis clerely to be delete[d]'.[45] Reginald Pole was a notable opponent of the Henrician Reformation; Margaret, his mother, was executed by the Henrician regime in 1541 and buried without the memorial destroyed by the commissioners in 1538. Simultaneously, this kind of material violence represented a profound attack on Catholic commemorative traditions and beliefs about the dead, and served to erode the dynastic memory embedded in the very fabric of the religious houses.[46] This was a form of strategic, targeted forgetting and a parallel to campaigns such as the regime's attempts to repress the memory of the murdered Catholic saint Thomas Becket.[47] Perhaps unsurprisingly, this process of erasure and destruction was entirely absent from official pronouncements made by the Henrician regime. And yet the monasteries had become a critical battleground upon

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[44] On iconoclasm see Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 256.
[45] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 267.
[46] On the Reformation and commemorative practices see Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Lucy Wooding, 'Remembrance in the Eucharist', in Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (eds.), *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Material Cultures of the Post Reformation* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 19-36.
[47] On forgetting Becket see for example Parish, *Monks, Miracles, and Magic*, pp. 93-99; Thea Tomaini, *The Corpse as Text: Disinterment and Antiquarian Enquiry, 1700-1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017), pp. 94-5.

which the government waged its wider campaign both against what Eamon Duffy has called the 'indoor landscape of memory' in churches and religious houses and, as Alexandra Walsham has demonstrated, against the memory rooted in the wider physical landscape.[48]

The last of the abbeys, the Augustinian house at Waltham in Essex, was surrendered to the king's commissioners on 23 March 1540. Although the dissolution was not completely buried in oblivion, in the years that followed, the Henrician culture of partial and selective amnesia was reinforced by polemic which perpetuated its dual rhetoric of reform and surrender. A brief examination of some of this material reveals that the suppression continued to be invoked by those who retained vested interests in remembering certain aspects and forgetting others.

In particular, monasticism continued to function as an emblem of Catholic corruption in the context of the ongoing Reformation. In 1540, the Cambridgeshire cleric Lancelot Ridley wrote a commentary on St Paul's epistle to the Ephesians in which he urged his reader to 'marke the remissyon of synnes is gyven to us by the bloude of Christe: and not by the popes pardons… [by] Benedictines habit, cope or cote, by monkes bootes' or by 'fryer observantes shoyes or knotted gyrdles'.[49] By forming a monastic stereotype built on the Henrician vision of corrupt monasticism, evangelical polemicists created what Susan Wabuda has described as 'convenient foil for the new type of solid, bearded *paterfamilias*' used to represent the reformers and which inverted the ideals of chastity, poverty, and obedience with which the religious orders had been founded.[50] This archetype could be invoked retroactively to justify the dissolution of the monasteries in ways that continued to perpetuate the Henrician government's exhortations to monastic reform. In 1546, Simon Fish's 1529 anti-monastic *Supplicacyon* was reprinted in a newly expanded version as *A supplicacion of the poore commons.* The anonymous author echoed Fish's reforming voice and used the dissolution as an argument for further reform. He praised Henry VIII for 'seking a redresse and reformation of thys greate and intollerable enormitie' of monastic corruption. The regime had, he wrote approvingly, 'with most ernest diligence, supplanted, and as it were, weeded out a greate numbre of valiant and sturdy monckes, fryers, chanons, hermites, and nunnes, which disguised ypocrites, under the name of the contempt of

[48] Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. ch. 2; Eamon Duffy, 'The end of it all: the material culture of the late medieval English parish and the 1552 Inventories of Church Goods', in Eamon Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege and Sedition: Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 110. See also below, ch. 3.
[49] Lancelot Ridley, *A commentary in Englyshe upon Sayncte Paules Epystle to the Ephesyans, for the instruccyon of them that be unlearned in tonges gathered out of the holy scriptures and of the olde catholyke doctors of the churche* (London, 1540), sig. B2v.
[50] Susan Wabuda, *Preaching during the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 122, 127.

this world, wallowed in the sea in the worldes wealth'.[51] The memory of monastic corruption thus continued to be invoked in Reformation debates.

In light of the potency of these allegations about standards in the monasteries, other polemicists began to develop overtly providentialist accounts of the dissolution. In his 1545 commentary on the Book of Daniel, the evangelical polemicist George Joye wrote of the 'superfluouse excesse and viciouse lyving of ydle bisshops, preistis, and monkis', echoing the earlier polemic peddled by the Henrician government.[52] He described how:

> So sodenly fyll downe all these abbeis: verely for because their abominable idolatry in M[a]sses, images, pelgrimages, shrynes, and their execrable superstiticiouse rytes and ceremonies, and their chosen holynes in flythye voews and dampnable hypocrisye stode in the place there they ought not to have stonden. And therefore there dropped downe upon them so miserable a perpetuall destruccion even the sign of goddis hevey wrath.[53]

Thus Joye characterised the dissolution as a divine judgement, wrought upon the monks in punishment for the crimes uncovered by the Henrician regime in the mid-1530s, thereby playing up the idea that the monasteries had fallen and surrendered, as opposed to having been torn down purely by human hands. For Joye, it was vital that this memory be kept alive to serve as a warning to future generations of the power of God's wrath. This was especially true in light of new developments in Henrician religious policy: in virtually the same breath as it had announced the wholesale dissolution of the religious houses, Henry's government had also begun to revert to a more doctrinally conservative Reformation, embodied in the Act of Six Articles (1539). In this context, as we shall see, the suppression became a prominent motif in evangelical polemic. 'Your prophane popish m[a]sses be abolishyed', Joye admonished, 'as they be well minished and put downe now in many places with the abbeyes'.[54] The memory of the dissolution functioned in this context as a prophylactic against further error, as well as a reminder that, for many, the Reformation remained incomplete.

But there was a tension between this impulse to remember the triumph of the Henrician regime over the monasteries and the impulse to forget. This was perhaps most explicit in the writings of John Bale, one of the most prominent and vitriolic of the evangelical polemicists, who had himself once taken vows as a Carmelite friar. Bale's *Actes of Englyshe votaryes* (1546), which was projected as a series of works attacking monasticism but never completed, took a

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[51] *A supplicacyon of the poore commons* (London, 1546), p. 268.
[52] George Joye, *Exposicion of Daniel the prophete gathered oute of Philip Melanchton, Johan Ecolampadius, Chronade Pellicane & out of Johan Draconite &c* (London, 1545), fol. 67v.
[53] Ibid., fol. 168v.
[54] Ibid., fol. 224r.

profoundly negative view of monasticism. He described the religious orders as 'whoremongers, bawdes, brybers, Idolaters, hypocrytes, trayters, and most fylthye Gomorreanes' – citizens of the biblical city synonymous with impenitent sin and ultimately destroyed by divine wrath.[55] Bale recognised that there were many who believed 'that I haye not herin done wele, in bryngynge so many fylthy exampels of the Popes unchast masmongers to light, which ought rather to haue bene buryed in oblyvyon'.[56] But for Bale, it was vital that remembrance of this corrupt tradition be continued so as to prevent backsliding to Catholicism. Because the *Actes of the Englyshe votaryes* was never completed, its chronology did not extend as far as the Henrician dissolution. But Bale's *Image of both churches*, first published in Antwerp in the mid-1540s, gives a flavour of what future parts of the *Actes* might have looked like: 'In England by the Gospell preaching have many of these waters [stemming from the spring of sin] bene dryed up in the suppression of monasteries, priories, co[n]vents, & fryers houses'.[57] Bale urged remembrance of this corruption precisely because he, like Joye, feared the continued threat posed by Catholicism.

For others, the highly selective memory of the dissolution was underpinned by a different impulse: the imperative to account for what Shagan has described as the 'communal event' of dissolving and plundering the religious houses.[58] In 1544, the Gloucestershire gentleman Richard Tracy published *A supplycacion to our moste soveraigne lorde Kygne Henry the Eyght*, in which he attacked the 'many popishe monckes which late were Abbottes', describing their 'greate pensyons' as unworthy and unjust. He also regretted that 'many of their convent monckes havinge nether lernynge nor other godly qualytes' were yet 'admytted to have cure of soules' in the reformed church.[59] This suggests, perhaps, that there was a continuing interest in keeping alive the anti-monastic rhetoric of the mid-1530s. Tracy had been heavily involved in the dissolution of local monasteries and had also acted as the temporary custodian of the Holy Blood of Hailes after it had been exposed as a fraud in 1538. He reaped the benefits of his loyalty to the crown and came into the possession of large tracts of abbey land in the wake of the suppression, including Clifford Priory in Hertfordshire.[60] His *Supplycacion* made no reference to this land transfer nor indeed to the dissolution itself or the gains made by the nobility more

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[55] John Bale, *The actes of Englyshe votaryes, comprehendynge their unchast practices and examples by all ages, from the worldes begynnynge to thys present yeare, collected out of their owne legendes and chronycles by Johan Bale* (London, 1546), sig. A2r.
[56] John Bale, *The first two partes of the actes, or unchast examples of the Englysh votaryes, gathered out of their own legends and chronycles by Johan Bale, and dedicated to our most redoubted soveraigne kygne Edward the syxte* (London, 1551 edn), fol. vii.
[57] John Bale, *The image of both churches, after the most wonderfull and heavenly Revelation of sainct Iohn the Evangelist, containing a very fruitfull exposition of paraphrase upon the same* (London, 1570 edn), fol. 126v.
[58] Shagan, *Popular Politics*, p. 178.
[59] Richard Tracy, *A supplycacion to our moste soveraigne lorde Kygne Henry the Eyght* (London, 1544), sig. A6r.
[60] On Tracy's life and career see Alec Ryrie, 'Tracy, Richard (*b.* before 1501, *d.* 1569)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27650, accessed 22 May 2017].

generally in its aftermath. Here again we find an inherent tension between the desire to repress the memory of the suppression and the need to remember it – in this instance in order to justify the post-dissolution status quo.

The dissolution was, then, widely perceived as an episode with significance for the wider English Reformation and it continued to exercise a profound influence over debates about the nature and direction of religious reform well into the later years of Henry VIII's reign. But as we have seen in the work of authors like Bale and Joye, this polemic also deployed the memory of the suppression to agitate for further change and thereby to voice a critique of the regime. Henrician attempts to manage the memory of the dissolution also involved rebutting and silencing its critics – who were not only drawn from the evangelical camp, but also from amongst those who remained staunchly Catholic or at least conservative in their religion. Recovering these voices requires us to look beyond the conventional sources for the dissolution and to read some of this material against the grain. These critiques denied the Henrician regime a total monopoly over the memory of the suppression and contributed to a memory culture that was dynamic, polyvocal, and multivalent. They also help to throw the government's attempts to shape the afterlives of the dissolution into sharper relief. It is the earliest of these critiques – the conservative critique – to which we now turn.

Catholic and Conservative Voices

The dissolution was a critical episode in the English Catholic experience of the Reformation. It fostered a memory culture that was as complex, varied, and dynamic as the Protestant memory of the suppression and which continued to evolve across the early modern period. Although this subject is largely beyond the parameters of this thesis, a few examples will function here to delineate its basic contours and to provide points of comparison and departure with aspects of Protestant memory culture. They will also serve to illuminate the government's response to Catholic attempts to undermine the official vision of the dissolution.

The State Papers preserve the echoes of a powerful rumour culture which developed in the early, uncertain days of suppression, when the Henrician regime still purported to be undertaking only a partial dissolution of religious houses. As Thomas Warley wrote to Lady Lisle shortly before the first act of dissolution was announced in early 1536, he had 'no news but the abbeys shall be down'.[61] As the first suppressions got underway, reports continued to

[61] *L&P*, x, no. 573.

travel quickly, both at home and abroad, where they were often received with fear and anger. One of the first openly critical accounts of Henrician policy can be found in the correspondence that passed between Eustace Chapuys, imperial ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire, and Charles V. This reveals the development of an early alternative narrative to that propagated by the English government. In April 1536, Chapuys reported angrily that Henry VIII would 'not forebear to throw down the monasteries, and impiously usurp the foundations for the redemption of the dead'.[62] There was no hint of the Henrician rhetoric of reform and corruption in Chapuys's letter. He adopted a violent language of usurpation and of the 'throwing down' of monasteries, and he openly attacked the English government's assault on the medieval memory rooted in the monastic tradition. Before the end of the year – and long before the wholesale dissolution got underway – Chapuys had further lamented to the Habsburg statesman Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle that a 'legion of monks and nuns' had been 'chased from their monasteries' and were 'wandering miserably hither and thither seeking means to live'.[63] Thus Chapuys inverted the key tenets of Henrician polemic, which argued that the dissolution was an act of reform that had been achieved by the surrender of the religious, and that the whole affair was conducted efficiently and without human cost.

Not only do Chapuys's reports suggest that the dissolution found a cool reception with the Catholic powers of Europe, they also offer a window onto the experiences of the primary victims of the dissolution: the religious orders who were cast out of their homes and deprived of their vocations. The religious are perhaps the most significant archival silence in the documentary record of the dissolution.[64] Pleas for exemption aside, the papers collected by Thomas Cromwell are largely devoid of religious voices. Perhaps this is due, in part, to self-censorship and dissimulation, the result of traumatic experiences of dissolution or a product of the 'humiliated silence' that followed the defeat of monasticism.[65] But it is also undoubtedly indicative of the actions of a regime that would hardly have wanted to document the perspectives of those who dissented from the 'official' vision of the dissolution.[66] The result is that the religious have been written out of the history of the suppression or cast in minor roles as the compliant and contrite victims of their own corruption. Yet, in light of Henrician concerns about the legacies of the

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[62] Ibid., no. 752.
[63] Ibid., xi, no. 42.
[64] For an attempt to recover religious practices of reading and writing during the suppression and in its immediate aftermath see Mary C. Erler, *Reading and Writing During the Dissolution: Monks, Friars, and Nuns, 1530-1558* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). See also below, ch. 2.
[65] For an intriguing discussion of trauma and the dissolution see Peter Cunich, 'The ex-religious in post-dissolution society: symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder?', in James G. Clark (ed.), *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), pp. 227-38. On forgetting as 'humiliated silence' see Paul Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1 (2008), pp. 67-69.
[66] Although, of course, there was no uniformity of perspective on the dissolution amongst the religious. See Erler, *Reading and Writing*, p. 2 and passim.

suppression, this silence speaks volumes about the memory-making processes inherent in the practices and strategies of record-keeping initiated in the 1530s.

Other dissenting voices were harder to suppress, albeit the evidence survives in a mediated form, set down in the hands of court clerks and government agents. The autumn of 1536 witnessed a series of rebellions protesting the regime's religious reforms. The most famous of these risings was that instigated by a group of Yorkshire rebels in October and known as the Pilgrimage of Grace – perhaps the most significant conservative reaction against the dissolution to emerge in the 1530s and one of the most important popular protests of the Tudor period.[67] The rebels claimed the strength of upwards of 30,000 men; accounting for a degree of overestimation on the part of its leaders, this was nevertheless significant enough to indicate widespread discontent in the region, a stronghold of conservative religious sentiment.[68] In the wake of the suppression of the Pilgrimage of Grace, local lawyer Robert Aske, its foremost leader, was brought to trial in 1537. Called to account for his actions, Aske articulated exactly the vision of the dissolution that the Henrician regime was trying so vigorously to undermine:

> First, to the statute of suppressions, [Aske] did grudge against the same and so did the whole country, because the abbeys in the north parts gave great alms to poor men and laudably served God… And by occasion of the said suppression the divine service of almighty God is much diminished, great number of masses unsaid and the blessed consecration of the sacrament now not used and showed in these places, to the distress of the faith and spiritual comfort to man's soul, the temple of God ruffed and pulled down, the ornaments and relics of the church of God unreverent used, the towns and sepulchres of honourable and noble men pulled down and sold, no hospitality now in those places kept… when the abbeys stood, the said people not only had worldly refreshing in their bodies but also spiritual refuge both by ghostly living of them and also by spiritual information and preaching; and many tenants were their fee'd servants to them and serving men, well succoured by the abbeys.[69]

Aske and the Pilgrimage rebels perceived the dissolution as an assault on Catholic piety and a threat to salvation, as well as a shock to the rhythms of English local life. As Philip Schwyzer

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[67] The memory of the Pilgrimage of Grace merits further investigation, although there is not space here to do so. For a suggestive preliminary discussion see Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 6.

[68] R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 293. See also Christopher Haigh, *The Last Days of the Lancashire Monasteries and the Pilgrimage of Grace* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969), chs. 5-7; M. L. Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1996); Andy Wood, *Riot, Rebellion, and Popular Politics in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 49-54; Shagan, *Popular Politics*, ch. 3.

[69] Quoted in Hoyle, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, p. 47. Also printed in Mary Bateson, 'Aske's examination', *English Historical Review* 5 (1890), pp. 550-74.

has observed, this fed into a vision of the dissolution as a national calamity.[70] Aske also inverted the Henrician account of monastic corruption to emphasise the continued piety, charity, and hospitality of the religious orders – the same virtues that scholars such as Martin Heale and James G. Clark have sought to recover and rehabilitate from Henrician polemic.[71] But perhaps the most striking aspect of Aske's statement is his evocative description of the temporal and material rupture engendered by the dissolution. Wholesale suppression was still two years from being formally announced when Aske was put to death in July 1537, and yet his testimony referred poignantly to a time 'when the abbeys stood' as being a time distinct from his own – a time in the past. Thus R. W. Hoyle has described Aske's testimony as a 'eulogy' for the monasteries of the North – a memorial, in other words, for a past that had already been lost.[72]

Aske's testimony only survives because it was recorded in the course of the defeat of the Pilgrimage of Grace and the punishment of its leaders. The repercussions for Aske were swift and severe, undermining his message about the catastrophic consequences of dissolution. At the same time, the regime was also undertaking various measures – both coercive and persuasive – to ensure that dissenting voices were silenced. Prior to Aske's execution, in November 1536, Henry VIII had issued an answer to the petition signed by the Pilgrimage rebels which powerfully underlined the duty of obedience that bound subjects to the crown.[73] Meanwhile, the king also commanded Lord Darcy to 'apprehend as seditious all persons who shall speak of the suppression of the abbeys, taking away of their church goods or of levying new impositions'.[74] Darcy's sympathies, however, lay elsewhere – he had discussed rebellion himself with Chapuys in 1534-5 and ultimately sided with Aske's rebels; as a result, he was executed in June 1537.[75] These attempts to repress dissent should be seen in the context of the Henrician regime's efforts to control the afterlives of the dissolution. At the same time, the king's demand to Darcy also reveals that the government was cognisant of alternative perspectives on the suppression and that an oral culture of sedition was apparently widespread.[76] It is unsurprising, in this context, that collections such as the State Papers and the commissioners' correspondence are largely

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[70] Philip Schwyzer, 'The beauties of the land: Bale's books, Aske's abbeys, and the aesthetics of nationhood', *Renaissance Quarterly* 57 (2004), pp. 99-125; idem, *Literature, Nationalism, and Memory in Early Modern England and Wales* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ch. 2.
[71] Martin Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England, c. 1300-1535* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011).
[72] Hoyle, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, p. 48.
[73] *Answere made by the kynges hyghnes to the petitions of the rebelles in Yorkeshire* (London, 1536).
[74] *L&P*, xi, no. 611.
[75] On Darcy's career see Hoyle, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, ch. 9.
[76] On seditious speech and the dissolution see David Cressy, *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 50.

devoid of critical voices, except for evidence recorded by way of the government's achievements in suppressing dissent.

Yet Catholic critics of the dissolution could not be silenced completely and in the two decades following the dissolution the Catholic critique continued to find expression in religious debate. The Catholic restoration instigated by Mary I in 1553 offers a particularly illuminating vantage point on the evolving Catholic memory of the suppression. Although it was hoped that domestic monasticism might be re-established during the 1550s, the brevity of Mary's reign served to curtail this endeavour.[77] A handful of institutions were revived, including the monastic presence in Westminster Abbey and the Bridgittine house at Syon Abbey on the banks of the Thames, but the parliamentary acts connected to the restoration of monasticism are indicative of a programme that never really got going. In 1554, a proclamation was issued that stated that the owners of former monastic properties would 'for the tyme being' be allowed to 'enioye [their lands] withoute impechmente or trouble'.[78] This time there was no triumphant rhetoric to announce the restoration of the monasteries akin to that which had heralded both their supposed reformation and their eventual surrender under Henry VIII. This reflected the general unwillingness of many amongst the gentry to follow the queen's lead and return their former monastic lands to the church. It also reveals another aspect of the Tudor culture of amnesia: the material beneficiaries of the dissolution – whose number included lay Catholics as well as Protestants – had an interest in retaining their lands and properties and, therefore, a vested interest in forgetting the dissolution.[79]

Despite the fact, then, that the final fate of the monasteries had not yet been decided in the 1550s, most Catholic polemicists thought about the dissolution in the past tense. In the 1530s, Aske had deployed the language of 'pulling down' the monasteries to communicate something of the violence employed by the Henrician regime and the collaborators in the dissolution. During Mary's reign, polemicists continued to invert Henrician tropes, developing a language of suppression and subversion that was at odds with the Tudor rhetoric of reform and surrender. Thus the polemicist Richard Smith argued in 1554 that the 'subversions of abbaies' had been a 'similitude of godlines perswaded by the sayd protestantes, by whose pitifull spoyle procedeth

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[77] Mary's limited revival of domestic monasticism is a neglected subject. For one approach see C. S. Knighton, 'Westminster Abbey restored', in Eamon Duffy and David Loades (eds.), *The Church of Mary Tudor* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 77-123.

[78] *Anno secundo & tertio Philippi & Mariae. Actes made at a parliament begon and holden at Westminster, the xxj daye of October, in the seconde and thyrde yeare of the reigne of our soveraygne lorde and lady Philip and Mary…* (London, 1555), fol. 14r. See also *Anno primo et secundo Philippi & Mariae. Actes made at a parliament begon and holden at Westminster, the xij day of November, in the fyrst and second year of the reigne of our sovereign lord and lady, Philippe and Marye* (London, 1555), fol. 17r-v.

[79] On converted monasteries and amnesia see below, ch. 3.

the decay of our common wealth'.[80] Like Aske, Smith also drew upon the pervasive conservative narrative of socio-economic decline to support this argument. 'The abbeys tilled much corne', he continued, 'for the sustenacion of many men, women, and chyldren, but now shepe & beastes fedde there… & do cause al thinges to be extreamely deare'.[81] For this catastrophe, Smith believed, the agents of the dissolution in 1530s had been punished. If Henrician polemicists had begun to portray the suppression as a providential victory over Catholic corruption, Marian polemicists took delight in describing how God had reproached the reformers for their actions. In this respect, Thomas Cromwell attracted a great deal of attention, his rise and fall roughly coinciding with the two phases of the dissolution. 'What was the cause of Crumwelles falle [in 1540]', Smith asked, 'but heresie begonne with spoyle of abbeis, & treason against the kyng himselfe?'[82] This was, of course, a strategy carefully designed to avoid laying blame with a king whose heir continued to occupy the throne. But although there was not yet sufficient distance on the events of 1536-40 for an explicit critique of Henry VIII to develop, it is nevertheless striking that Smith appears to have thought of the dissolution as a distinctly Henrician phenomenon.

In one sense, this polemic functioned as a remedy against the culture of amnesia promoted by Henry VIII's government. One of the most powerful examples of the capacity of Catholic polemic to sustain and preserve the memory of aspects of the dissolution that were in danger of slipping into oblivion was the Catholic controversialist Miles Huggarde's *The displaying of Protestants* (1556). In defiance of Henrician attempts to downplay the violence of the suppression, Huggarde reminded his audience of the execution of the abbots of Reading, Colchester, and Glastonbury, of John Forest, and of a number of other Catholic martyrs, including some eighteen martyrs of the Carthusian Charterhouse in London.[83] These men 'and a greate number mo[re]', he wrote, had 'died for the cause of the catholyke fayeth'. He urged that their 'memory shall be magnified tyll the ende of the worlde'.[84] This reflected wider commemorative practices concerning the Reformation martyrs, like those examined by Anne Dillon, which also compelled Catholics to remember those who had resisted the dissolution and to reflect upon its human cost.[85]

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[80] Richard Smith, *A bouclier of the catholike fayth of Christes church, conteynyng diuers matters now of late called into controuersy, by the newe gospellers* (London, 1554), fol. 110r.
[81] Ibid., fol. 19v.
[82] Ibid., fol. 102v.
[83] See Anne Dillon, *Michelangelo and the English Martyrs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).
[84] Miles Huggarde, *The displaying of the Protestantes, & sondry their practises, with a description of diuers their abuses of late frequented* (London, 1556), fols. 66v-67r.
[85] See Anne Dillon, *The Construction of Martyrdom in the English Catholic Community* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); eadem, *Michelangelo and the English Martyrs*.

Ultimately, however, Henrician polemic continued to set the tone for the memory of the dissolution itself. Mary's abortive restoration was followed by a new dissolution during the reign of her half-sister, Elizabeth, in 1558. It is striking that neither phase appears to have made much of a mark upon the early modern memory of the dissolution or indeed upon its historiography. Revisionist scholarship, led by Eamon Duffy, has long sought to emphasise the successes of Mary's reign when considered upon its own terms.[86] Perhaps, given more time, things might have been different regarding the monasteries. But as it was, the Marian restoration failed significantly to change the terms of the debate surrounding the dissolution. Catholic polemicists portrayed the suppression as fundamentally an episode in the Henrician Reformation; there is no clear narrative of a Marian 'Restoration of the Monasteries'. Moreover, that there is no conventional narrative of an Elizabethan 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' further testifies to the perceived totality of the Henrician dissolution in the 1530s. Modern scholarship has also neglected the long process of suppression that took place between 1536 and the accession of Elizabeth. In this respect, historians are once again revealed to be the heirs of ideas and traditions of discourse developed during the 1530s and perpetuated and reshaped by successive generations across the sixteenth century.[87]

The accession of Elizabeth serves roughly to demarcate the generational boundary between those who had witnessed and experienced the dissolution and a new generation which had not. Many of the Marian polemicists had relied upon their own memories to furnish their accounts of the suppression. Smith, for example, felt a profoundly personal sense of loss for the abbeys that had once 'nouryshed many poore mens chyldren at schole (emongst the which I was one, or els I shoulde neuer haue been learned)'. This experience served to sharpen and augment his more general lament for the 'gret dammage and decay vnto the honour and seruice of God' wrought by the dissolution.[88] Likewise, the former evangelical cleric and 'doctrinal chameleon', John Standish, having reverted (only possibly sincerely) to the Catholic faith in which he had been raised, wrote in 1556 that 'I remember I heard a sermon [given by Thomas Cranmer] at Paules about the time abbeis were suppressed', the content of which he used to critique the Henrician government's failure to fulfil its promise of 1536 that suppressed monasteries would be put to pious uses.[89] But as Elizabeth's reign progressed, the conservative critique was taken up by those who could not remember the dissolution at first hand. This generation was forced to deal

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[86] See especially Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009). See also Duffy and Loades (eds.), *Church of Mary Tudor*.
[87] See below, ch. 2.
[88] Smith, *Bouclier of the catholike fayth*, fol. 19r-v.
[89] John Standish, *The triall of the supremacy wherein is set forouth the vnitie of Christes church militant geuen to S. Peter and his successoures by Christe: and that there ought to be one head bishop in earth Christes vicar generall ouer all hys churche militant: wyth answeres to the blasphemous objections made agaynste the same in the late miserable yeres now paste* (London, 1556), sig. R8r. On Standish see Duffy, *Fires of Faith*, pp. 63-4.

with and confront the memories that they had inherited from their ancestors who had been raised in pre-Reformation Catholicism and who had witnessed – and even participated in – the events of the Henrician Reformation.

Around 1591, the Yorkshire cleric Michael Sherbrook penned a manuscript entitled 'The fall of the religious houses'. He viewed the episode through the lens of his faint childhood remembrances of the suppression of Roche Abbey, a large Cistercian monastery in Maltby, South Yorkshire, but also principally through the recollections of his father and uncle, who had participated in its spoliation and destruction.[90] In a remarkable passage, Sherbrook wrote that he had once enquired of his father:

> Whether he thought well of the Religious Persons and of the [Roman Catholic] Religion then used? And he told me Yea: For said He, I did see no Cause to the contrary: Well, said I, then how came it to pass you was so ready to distroy and spoil the thing that you thought well of? What should I do, said He: might I not as well as others have some Profit of the Spoil of the Abbey? For I did see all would away; and therefore I did as others did.[91]

This is a striking example of the transmission of memory from one generation to another, as well as powerful evidence of the complex character of popular collaboration in the dissolution.[92] This was, perhaps, an unwelcome memory and encapsulated the realisation that, for many Henrician Catholics, to remember the dissolution was to remember their part in it.

Sherbrook's own comments on the dissolution appear to reveal that, in many ways, he was the heir of his father's memories. Created rector of Wickersley, seven miles from Roche, in 1567, he seems to have upheld the Elizabethan religious settlement and performed his duties diligently.[93] His hazy memory of the 1530s yielded little more than the recollection that he had seen the abbey bells hanging in their timber frames a year or more after Roche fell in 1538.[94] But he also supplied a lengthy history of the suppression, which displayed great sympathy for the religious orders and their houses. Painting a favourable picture of the piety, chastity, and charity of the monks and nuns, Sherbrook reserved his greatest praise for the ways in which they had served the needs of local communities. 'Happy was that Person', he wrote, 'that was Tenant to an Abbey'.[95] He also used a language of pity which remained a consistent feature of conservative

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[90] This manuscript survives in an eighteenth-century copy: BL, Additional MS 5813, fols. 5–29; published in A. G. Dickens (ed.), *Tudor Treatises*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, cxxv (1959), pp. 89-142.
[91] Dickens (ed.), *Tudor Treatises*, p. 125.
[92] See Shagan, *Popular Politics*, ch. 5.
[93] Dickens (ed.), *Tudor Treatises*, pp. 28-9; Michael Carter, 'Michael Sherbrook, the fall of Roche Abbey and the provenance of Cambridge University Library MS GG.3.33', *Notes & Queries* 63 (2016), p. 20.
[94] Dickens (ed.), *Tudor Treatises*, p. 125.
[95] Ibid., p. 95.

critiques of the dissolution and a counter measure against the rhetoric of Henrician triumph. 'It would have pitied any Heart to see', he lamented, 'what tearing up of the Lead there was'.[96] In his opinion, 'the Commons of England have more Cause to praise the Builders and Founders thereof than the Destroyers and Spoylers thereof; and greatly to lament the overthrow thereof'.[97] The dissolution had thus shaped Sherbrook's sense of the passage of time and, implicitly, the contrast between a childhood of abbey bells and an adulthood lived in a rather less munificent world. 'The estate of the Realm hath come to more Misery since King Henry 8 his time', he wrote, 'than ever it did in all the time before'.[98]

This manuscript survives only in an eighteenth-century copy and, although the text has been reproduced and, therefore, possibly and unknowably distorted by the pen of the copyist, its preservation is itself indicative of the potent afterlives of the dissolution in historical consciousness and cultural memory. The long Catholic memory of the dissolution might provide avenues for future research. This brief discussion has served to highlight the emergence of alternative narratives to that promoted by the Henrician regime in the 1530s, which inverted and rejected the government's rhetoric of reform and surrender. Catholics perceived the suppression as a moment of severe rupture in the religious and social fabric of early modern England and had also begun to articulate a vision of the dissolution as a break between past and present. The abortive Marian restoration in the 1550s did little to diminish this sense of a breach in the 1530s. Yet, as we have noted, many Catholics were also not immune from the desire to forget certain aspects of the suppression and the memories of those who had collaborated with the regime could be highly ambiguous.

The Henrician government's efforts to silence and undermine the conservative critique also shed further light upon the character of its campaign to control the afterlives of the dissolution. Moreover, the relative absence of dissenting voices in the records collected by Cromwell and his agents extends not only to the regime's Catholic and conservative critics, but also to detractors of the suppression at the other end of the confessional spectrum. If there were many in Henrician England who believed that the dissolution had taken the idea of reform much too far, there were also those who thought it had not gone far enough.

[96] Ibid., p. 124.
[97] Ibid., p. 89.
[98] Ibid., p. 90.

The Evangelical Critique

At the heart of the problem with the dissolution in the eyes of many reformers was the government's claim of 1536 that it was seizing monastic property in order that it could be 'used and converted' for 'better uses'.[99] In the early days of the suppression, many of the regime's supporters hoped that this meant that monastic wealth would be transferred into the hands of the Church of England, where it might be used for pious and educational purposes. In this respect, the dissolutions conducted by Margaret Beaufort and Cardinal Wolsey set an important precedent. As we noted previously, both Henry VIII's grandmother and former chief minister had been responsible for small-scale suppressions enacted with explicit intent to found and support new educational establishments. For this reason, these dissolutions had been wholly uncontroversial. Many hoped that the Henrician dissolution would follow this model. The humanist Thomas Starkey was one prominent proponent of this argument – not least because he believed that the transformation of abbeys into schools and universities might have the added benefit of quelling fears on the Continent, such as those expressed by Chapuys, about the government's move against the monasteries:

> I thynke the troth ys thys, that yf the world might see thes grete monastarys wych yet stond, converted & turned in to lytyl unyversytes, and made therby, as hyt were commyn scholes of lernyng & virtue to the ryght educatyon of youthe, al thes droonys [drones] wych consume the hunnye driven out of the hyvys [hives] as unprofytable to god & to the world, then schold not the supressyon of these lytyl abbays gyve so much occasyon, among blynd pepul ful of foly, of any sklaunderouse infamy.[100]

Starkey thus tapped into the Henrician rhetoric of reform and aligned it with the humanist concern for education, learning, and the good of the commonweal. It was clear that he supported the principle of dissolution, but also that he had specific concerns about its consequences.

At times, it seemed as though Starkey's vision might be realised. It was certainly a vision shared by many reformers. The government received a number of petitions requesting support for particular institutions. In June 1538, for example, Hugh Latimer, bishop of Worcester and a prominent reformer, wrote to Cromwell begging that the king remember Warwick College with 'some piece of some broken abbey'.[101] Often, these requests were granted. A considerable number of monastic buildings were converted into schools and colleges, and many monastic churches were converted into parish churches and secular cathedrals. These included some

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[99] 27° Hen. VIII. c. 28, *Statutes of the Realm*, iii, p. 575.
[100] *L&P*, xi, no. 73.
[101] Ibid., xiii, part I, no. 1202.

former religious houses in the Cambridgeshire city of Ely where, as the king informed Thomas Goodrich, bishop of Ely, 'we have lately fownded and erected a catherdral churche in the honour of the holy trynytie in Ely… [in] place of the late priory there'. The king wrote that he hoped that further accommodation for the clergy and the master and scholars of the associated grammar school might be found amongst the buildings that remained unoccupied.[102] Not only did conversions of this sort enable the Church of England to retain some of the wealth possessed by the medieval religious houses, it also fostered a degree of continuity in the purpose and function of ex-monastic properties.[103]

Ultimately, however, many of the reformers' hopes for the monasteries were dashed. As much of the commissioners' correspondence in the 1530s reveals, there were other motives at play in the dissolution besides the establishment of new schools and parish churches. 'I desire your favour', Legh begged Cromwell from Holmcultram, Cumbria in 1538, 'for myself and my brother to have the preferment of the said abbey'.[104] Legh's request belies the gains in material wealth and status that stood to be made by the commissioners and others amongst the Henrician nobility and gentry. Pleas of this nature far outnumber requests for support for churches and schools in Cromwell's correspondence. It is telling that many of those who wrote to the king's vicegerent for this purpose drew explicitly upon the regime's anti-monastic rhetoric. The diplomat and commissioner for the dissolution Sir Thomas Elyot, for example, was at pains to impress upon Cromwell that 'I have in as moche detestation as any man lyvyng all vayne supersticions, superfluouse ceremonyes, sklaunderouse jouglynges, countrefaite mirakles, [and] arrogant usurpations' of the religious. Having vehemently professed his anti-monastic credentials, he pleaded that 'I therfor moste humbly desyre you my speciall goode lorde, so to brynge me into the kinges most noble remembrance, that of his moste bounteouse liberality it make like highnesse to reward me with some convenyent porcion of his suppressid landis'.[105] If, as Greg Walker and Jennifer Summit have argued, Elyot's confessional colours are difficult to discern, his writings appearing by turn to express sympathy for the religious and to condemn their corruption, this particular petition is nevertheless a striking demonstration of the potency of Henrician rhetoric.[106] It is clear that Elyot knew that the way to secure the king's favour was to echo the government's vision of the dissolution as a measure of reform designed to tackle

[102] CCCC, MS 120, 26.
[103] On converted churches see below, ch. 3.
[104] *L&P*, xiii, part I, no. 547.
[105] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV, fol. 220.
[106] Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 131; Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), pp. 87-8.

monastic corruption. This tactic appears, moreover, to have worked: Elyot was permitted to purchase lands formerly belonging to Eynsham Abbey in Oxfordshire at a favourable rate.[107]

As things turned out, then, the 'better uses' of which the government had spoken in 1536 tended to involve lining the pockets and coffers of the crown and nobility rather than the church. As Alec Ryrie has demonstrated, dissatisfaction with this state of affairs underpinned a powerful early evangelical critique of the dissolution which fed into the wider 'commonwealth' tradition of political and socio-economic criticism.[108] Unlike the Catholic critique, this position was not founded upon an inherent problem in principle. Rather, the evangelical critique arose out of concerns about the manner in which monastic wealth and property had been dispersed. At the University of Cambridge, for example, student numbers went into a pronounced decline after the monastic colleges were closed and the dissolution left the university 'significantly impoverished'.[109] 'Hindsight', Ryrie argues, thus 'soured even the dissolution of the monasteries' in the eyes of many reformers, to whom it seemed that the government was peddling empty rhetoric by pretending that the spoils of the monasteries would be put to pious uses.[110]

One such critic was George Joye, whose commentary on the Book of Daniel we have already encountered as an example of anti-monastic polemic. If Joye was in many respects a loyal Henrician, he was also critical of the government's handling of the dissolution. Drawing upon the biblical account of corruption in the Hebrew temples, Joye condemned the wealth – the 'goods and iewels of oure temples/abbeys' – misused by the Catholic Church. Such idolatry, he argued, 'empowrs kynges and princes may take them awaye and putt them to beter uses'.[111] But the reality of the suppression left Joye wanting. He further argued that the crown had 'translate[d] chirche goodis into prophane uses… suffering the pore chirches, congregacions, and scoles to be cold and hongreye'.[112] He criticised the pensions received by the religious, but reserved his strongest criticism for the lay owners of monastic property like Legh and Elyot, mocking 'how fiercely the nobilitie fighteth to reteyne in their handis collegis, abbeis, chauntres, bisshoprykes, benefices &c for their owne profite'.[113] To underline his point, Joye inverted the rhetoric of fraudulence that characterised Henrician attacks upon the monasteries, reapplying it

[107] Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 88.
[108] Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. pp. 161-4. On the wider character of evangelical religion under Henry VIII see also Alec Ryrie, 'Counting sheep, counting shepherds: the problem of allegiance in the English Reformation', in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (eds.), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 84-110.
[109] Ryrie, *Gospel and Henry VIII*, pp. 162-3.
[110] Ibid., p. 155.
[111] Joye, *Exposicion of Daniel*, fol. 67r.
[112] Ibid., fol. 68r.
[113] Ibid., fol. 141r.

to describe the regime itself. Monarchs, he argued, did not have the power 'to translate to themselves thecclesiastic goodis' if this involved 'the defrauding of the pore chirches and scoles'.[114] Joye thus invoked the covetousness of crown and government as a parallel to the idolatrous practices he detested in the Catholic Church.

Like Joye, other evangelical polemicists also attempted to re-work the Henrician vocabulary of suppression to suit their own ends. One of the most open and vehement critics of Henry VIII's commitment to reform in the 1540s, Henry Brinkelow, went one step further, adopting the persona of a former Franciscan friar – Roderick Mors – for added rhetorical effect.[115] Mors was a fictional counterpart to real-life figures such as Bale, the ex-Carmelite turned fervent evangelical polemicist. In 1542, writing in *The complaynt of Roderyck Mors*, Brinkelow attacked the government for its pretence that the 'putting downe' of religious houses had served to 'amend that [which] was amisse in them'. Although he condemned corruption in the religious houses, Brinkelow begged his reader to 'see now how it that was amisse [in the monasteries] is amended for al the godly pretense'. He was profoundly concerned by the consequences of the dissolution for the commonwealth and the communities that had relied upon the monasteries. Like Joye, Brinkelow identified a decline in hospitality and charitable giving to the poor; he mourned that in many places there was 'not one meales meate geven' to travellers and those in need.[116] Socio-economic anxieties of this kind were inherent in the evangelical concern for the misuse of monastic property, feeding into a wider sense that the work of reform remained incomplete.

Evangelical polemicists thus used the dissolution to advance a profound critique of the wider Henrician Reformation, as well as the suppression itself. It is worth underlining here that this did little to undermine the government's argument that the monasteries had been in severe need of reform. Moreover, by adopting the voice of a former friar, Brinkelow also subtly perpetuated the complicity of the religious in their own suppression. Yet this was not enough to protect polemicists like Brinkelow and Joye from the ire of the Henrician regime. Just as it had sought to silence Catholic critiques of the dissolution, so too the government attempted to repress and discredit its evangelical critics in order to protect its reputation and the legacies of its Reformation. It is no coincidence, for example, that a large proportion of printed polemic of

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[114] Ibid., fol. 68r.
[115] On Brinkelow's exposure as Mors see Alec Ryrie, 'Brinklow , Henry (*d.* 1545/6)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3437, accessed 4 Oct 2017].
[116] [Henry Brinkelow], *The complaint of Roderyck Mors, somtyme a gray fryre, vnto the parliament house of Ingland hys naturall countrey, for the redresse of certain wycked lawes, evell custums and cruell decrees* (Strasbourg, 1542), sigs. D3v-5r.

this sort was published on the Continent.[117] *The complaynt of Roderyck Mors* was published from Strasbourg in order to protect Brinkelow's identity. Joye, meanwhile, spent two periods of exile in Antwerp because he felt it was too dangerous to remain in England.[118] He returned from his second flight abroad only after Henry VIII's death in 1547.

Joye's fears were, perhaps, unsurprising given the changing direction of religious policy in the 1540s. Even before the last monastery had fallen, a conservative reaction was ushered in by the Act of Six Articles (1539). This only served to heighten anxiety about the failure of Henry VIII's 'reformation of the monasteries'. In a remarkable manuscript treatise addressed to the king, one anonymous evangelical author launched a vicious attack on the Henrician clergy who, he believed, were in danger of backsliding to popery. Adopting the voice of such a cleric, the author satirised critiques of the dissolution as a moment of rupture and decline. In particular, he mocked the argument that 'suerly suerly good neighbours, we had never mery nor welthie world sithens abbayes were put downe and this new learning browghte in place'. He went on to accuse the conservative Henrician clergy themselves of convincing people that 'the suppression of abbeys is thonely causes of thes their infinite miseryes and so set them for the recoovery of their old welth to wish and desire in their myndes the reedefying of superstitioose howses'.[119] His response to this threat was to recommend not only the mass deprivation of those Henrician clerics deemed unfit, but also their internment.[120] This treatise serves to demonstrate that many reformers believed that the work of reform had not been completed with the dissolution. It is also a powerful reminder that the work of suppression could also be undone. The permanent, wholesale dissolution of the monasteries was not a forgone conclusion in the 1540s – indeed a decade later, Mary I enacted her limited revival of monasticism, partially realising this anonymous evangelical's worst fears.

In his recent study of early Reformation radicalism, Karl Gunther has argued that this piece of vitriolic evangelical polemic was a potent example of the political radicalism that lay at one end of the 'spectrum of voices' competing to be heard in the Henrician Reformation.[121] We might, therefore, expect the dissolution to be a critical episode for the development of radical

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[117] On the printing practices and persecution of evangelical polemicists see Ryrie, *Gospel and Henry VIII*, ch. 4.
[118] H. L. Parish, 'Joye, George (1490x95–1553)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15153, accessed 9 Oct 2017].
[119] BL, Royal MS 17 B XXXV, fol. 9r-v.
[120] See Karl Gunther, *Reformation Unbound: Protestant Visions of Reform in England, 1525-1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 91-2. See also Ryrie, *Gospel and Henry VIII*, p. 44; Shagan, *Popular Politics*, p. 275; Peter Marshall, 'Is the pope Catholic? Henry VIII and the semantics of schism', in Ethan H. Shagan (ed.), *Catholics and the 'Protestant Nation': Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 38-9.
[121] Gunther, *Reformation Unbound*, pp. 15, 91. See also Karl Gunther and Ethan H. Shagan, 'Protestant radicalism and political thought in the reign of Henry VIII', *P&P* 194 (2007), pp. 35-74.

perspectives on the Reformation – and yet the suppression does not feature anywhere in Gunther's account of Henrician radicalism. It is clear from this treatise, however, that the suppression was a powerful mnemonic for the idea of an incomplete Reformation, as well as a starting point from which evangelicals pressured for further religious change of a more radical nature. Although Gunther is inclined to draw a direct genealogical trajectory between the theology of Henrician radicalism and later species of Protestant radicalism – principally Elizabethan puritanism – the example of the dissolution suggests that we might think about the links between these perspectives in a slightly different way.[122] Rather than revealing the roots of puritan theology, the anonymous plea to the king provides an illuminating case study of how the memory of the suppression could be invoked as an impetus to further reform.

Generations of reformers would continue to draw upon the arguments made by the evangelical polemicists of the 1530s and 1540s. Catherine Davies has described how, by the reign of Edward VI, covetousness had become 'the new idolatry', in what was 'a conscious adaptation of the language of anti-popery to the description and criticism of a supposedly reformed commonwealth, so that what was indeed an age-old theme was successfully invested with a fresh contemporary resonance'.[123] This critique also had important implications for the question of agency and motivation in the dissolution. In 1554, the Scottish reformer John Knox argued that the 'suppression of the abbacies did rather smell of avarice, then [sic] of true religion' – a vision further refracted through his hatred of episcopal church governance and the transformation of 'superstitious freers, ignorant monks, and idle abots' into 'archbishoppes, bishoppes, persons, [and] vicars'.[124] 'For their own bellies sake', Knox wrote, the government had 'wrooted up many weeds' and in the process, church revenues had been 'most wickedly and ungodly spent'.[125] Likewise, the religious controversialist and Marian exile William Turner likened the nobility to suffers of dropsy, having 'swelled so muche' with the profits of church lands and the acquisition of former monastic properties. He also directly attacked Henry VIII and his 'covetous counsell'.[126] Henry VIII's avarice also complicated providentialist narratives of the dissolution. The doctrine of providence could cut both ways: if Henry was sometimes portrayed as the divine instrument of dissolution, he was also a figure punished for his greed by

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[122] I am grateful to Stephen Tong for sharing his thoughts on Gunther's argument and discussing this aspect of the memory of the dissolution with me.
[123] Catherine Davies, '"Poor persecuted little flock" or "commonwealth of Christians": Edwardian Protestant concepts of the church', in Peter Lake and Maria Dowling (eds.), *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, New York, NY, and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 86.
[124] John Knox, *The appellation of Iohn Knoxe from the cruell and most iniust sentence pronounced against him by the false bishoppes and clergie of Scotland, with his supplication and exhortation to the nobilitie, estates, and communaltie of the same realme* (Geneva, 1558), sig. I4r.
[125] Ibid., sigs. I6r-7r.
[126] William Turner, *A new booke of spirituall physic for diverse diseases of the nobilitie and gentlemen of Englande* (Rome [i.e. Emden], 1555), fols. 48v-49r and passim.

posterity. Thus, for Turner, the destruction of the monasteries had soured the idea of Reformation and resulted in the 'spoile of the [w]hole church'. The '[w]hole realme', he argued, 'smarteth for it unto this day'.[127] The dissolution continued to resonate precisely because successive generations continued to believe that they were witnessing and living its effects. This was part of a wider sense amongst English Protestants that they continued to experience punishment for the failures in the Reformation conducted by their forebears.[128]

The evangelical critique has been almost entirely ignored in the conventional scholarship on the dissolution. Unlike the Catholic critique, which is rendered visible in the sources collected by Cromwell and his agents that pertain to the repression of dissent, the reformist critique is far less apparent in the records compiled under Henry VIII and preserved by his heirs. Largely expounded and perpetuated in unofficial forms of polemic and only fully developed in the aftermath of the suppression, it has had little place in an historiography that has been preoccupied with the course and immediate consequences of the events of 1536-40. Yet, as Ryrie has demonstrated, evangelical polemic depicted the dissolution as 'close to catastrophic' in socio-economic and educational terms.[129] As we have seen, this critique also had purchase in wider debates about the nature of Henrician religious policy and the ongoing Reformation. We need, then, to reconcile this account with the vision of the dissolution that has dominated its conventional historiography. The key to unlocking this problem lies in the enduring power and longevity of the Henrician rhetoric of reform and surrender, and its preservation in the sources and archives upon which historians continue to rely.

From 'Tudor Revolution in Government' to 'Tudor Revolution in the Archives'

In the 1950s, G. R. Elton developed the idea of a 'Tudor revolution in government'.[130] This highly influential paradigm sought to account for the bureaucratic expansion of the Tudor state in the 1530s and specifically the administrative activities and innovations instigated under Thomas Cromwell. The dissolution was perhaps the preeminent episode in this bureaucratic 'revolution'. The sheer scale of the project to dissolve the monasteries necessitated the establishment of new institutions, principally the Court of Augmentations, to manage the transfer of monastic property and wealth from the hands of the church into those of the

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[127] [William Turner], *The hunting of the fox and the wolfe, because they make havocke of the sheepe of Christ Jesus* (London, 1565), sig. D3r.
[128] See Davies, 'Poor persecuted flock'.
[129] Ryrie, *Gospel and Henry VIII*, p. 162. See also Christopher Hill, *Economic Problems of the Church from Archbishop Whitgift to the Long Parliament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 3.
[130] G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953).

crown.[131] Precisely because the dissolution entailed various legal and fiscal imperatives, the government retained a vast collection of paperwork, including the commissioners' correspondence and materials connected to the lease, sale, and grant of ex-monastic lands. It is for this reason that Peter Cunich characterised the suppression as one of the 'best documented' episodes of the Tudor period.[132] These sources have also underpinned the conventional historiography of the dissolution which, as the result of a prevailing tendency in this literature to adopt narrow chronological parameters, has been almost totally reliant upon evidence compiled by and for the Henrician regime.

It is vital that we interrogate these sources as polemical and mnemonic devices, artefacts of particular moments and of the circumstances of their preservation. As Jennifer Summit has so convincingly argued, early modern collecting practices functioned actively to shape the character of libraries and archives and the ways in which generations of readers and historians have approached their content.[133] Moreover, the dissolution itself is central to Summit's account of the memory-making function of libraries and archives. Not only did the suppression provide a new impetus for record-keeping, it also entailed the destruction and dispersal of the records and libraries belonging to the religious houses.[134] In the wake of this transformation, the surviving books and manuscripts were re-organised – and even re-bound – by successive generations of post-Reformation owners. These new libraries were 'creative and dynamic spaces' in which the memory of the medieval past was forged anew.[135] Summit's case studies include the seventeenth-century collection of Sir Robert Cotton, in which much of the commissioners' correspondence from the 1530s now resides.[136] The same is also undoubtedly true of the material that is now preserved in the State Papers. These archives were established

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[131] On the history of the Court of Augmentations see W. C. Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations, 1536-1554* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1961).
[132] Cunich, 'Administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands', p. 2.
[133] Summit, *Memory's Library*.
[134] The dispersal of monastic libraries has received significant attention in the historiography of the dissolution. See C. E. Wright, 'The dispersal of the libraries in the sixteenth century', in Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright (eds.), *The English Library before 1700: Studies in its History* (London: University of London, the Athlone Press, 1958), pp. 148-75; Ronald Harold Fritze, '"Truth hath lacked witnesse, tyme wanted light": the dispersal of the English monastic libraries and Protestant efforts at preservation, ca. 1535-1625', *Journal of Library History* 18 (1983), pp. 274-291; Nigel Ramsay, '"The manuscripts flew about like butterflies": the break-up of English libraries in the sixteenth century', in James Raven (ed.), *Lost Libraries: the Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 125-44; James P. Carley, 'Monastic collections and their dispersal' in John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (eds.), with the assistance of Maureen Bell, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume IV, 1577-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 339-47; idem, 'The dispersal of the monastic libraries and the salvaging of the spoils', in Elizabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland: Volume 1, to 1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 265-91. We shall return to the question of libraries and the mnemonic function of archives in the conclusion.
[135] Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 238 and passim.
[136] Ibid., ch. 4. See also Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586-1681: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

as a result of the attempt to relocate the locus of memory making out of the religious houses and into the Protestant establishment.

Amongst the Cotton manuscripts is one of the earliest narrative histories of the dissolution. Entitled 'The manner of dissolving the abbeys by K. H. 8.', this remarkable manuscript illuminates something of the process by which the Henrician vision of the suppression was perpetuated in subsequent generations.[137] Although the author remains anonymous, he demonstrated clear knowledge of the visitation correspondence that passed between Cromwell and the commissioners in the 1530s. The visitation letters, the author wrote, had revealed:

> Of everie suche [religious] house, the vile lives and abhominable factes, in murders of their bretherne, in sodomyes, in whordomes, in destroying of children, in forging of deedes, and other infinite horrors of life, in so muche as deviding of all the religious persons in England into three partes two of theise partes at the least were sodomites: and this appeared in writting, with the names of the parties and their factes.[138]

Although it is not certain whether the author had seen the writings that he mentions in this passage, it is clear that he was fully aware of the commissioners' findings. He also acknowledged the programme of persuasion instigated by the government, writing that 'Cromwell caused preachers to goe abroade, and maintayned them to instructe the people, and so to perswade the subjectes consciences to stand fast to the king without feare of the popes curse'.[139] The author appears to have bought into the Henrician vision of the suppression wholeheartedly. Not only does 'The manner of dissolving the abbeys' echo the tenor of government exhortations to reform the monasteries in 1536, it also employs the rhetoric of surrender developed in 1539. The success of the government's campaign against the monasteries, the anonymous author argued, had resulted in the conversion of many of the religious themselves to the king's cause, who were then 'readie to make surrender of their houses at the kinges commaundment'.[140] This text thus encapsulates the key themes of the Henrician polemic of which it was at least partly the product: the corruption and iniquity of the religious, the efficiency of the wholesale surrender, and the complicity of the religious in their own downfall.

If this served powerfully to undermine conservative and Catholic critiques of the dissolution, 'The manner of dissolving the abbeys' was also a partial riposte to the Henrician regime's evangelical critics. There is some ambiguity in the passage in which the author describes how king and government decided 'to make suche dispersion' of abbey lands and goods 'as it

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[137] BL, Cotton MS Titus F III, fols. 268v-270r.
[138] Ibid., fol. 269v.
[139] Ibid., fol. 269r.
[140] Ibid., fol. 269v.

behoved infinite multitudes for their own interest to joyne with the king in hollding them downe'. But he also praised the 'ffownding [of] divers bushoprickes and colleges' and the munificence of the Tudor nobility, whom he characterised as pious in their 'worship and good calling'.[141] It seems reasonable, then, to suggest that 'The manner of dissolving the abbeys' represented a new vehicle for an older brand of Henrician polemic. The product of traditions of discourse developed in the 1530s – and possibly of access to the documents produced during this period – this manuscript constitutes an early effort to transform Henrician polemic into an historical narrative of the dissolution. The text ends with the final surrender of the monasteries in 1540. 'Here', the anonymous author wrote, 'is all I can remember'.[142]

'The manner of dissolving the abbeys' is not only anonymous, it is also undated. It is therefore unclear as to whether the author had witnessed the dissolution. His claim to 'remember' might, on the one hand, reflect his personal recollections of the fall of the religious houses. The manuscript certainly falls within the date range to make this plausible. It is bound in the Cotton manuscripts with a number of other items gathered during Elizabeth I's reign by William Cecil, Lord Burghley, under the title 'England / Discowrses of the State of England & the Q. majesties proceedings in diverse cases'.[143] If dated to the early part of this period, the author might have been alive to witness the Henrician campaign against the monasteries. On the other hand, his comment might also testify to his inherited memory of the dissolution and the strength of the cultural memory that can be shaped by texts and other media, as well as by oral tradition.[144] In this respect, it is significant that the text of 'The manner of dissolving the abbeys' is almost identical to that set down in a narrative letter dated August 1581, in which the Calvinist lawyer and historian Thomas Norton recounted the fall of the monasteries at the request of Francis Mylles, a servant of Sir Francis Walsingham.[145] An infant in the 1530s, Norton apologised to Mylles that he had no recollections of his own with which to furnish his account, but rather had set down all that he could remember 'as I have understoode by that which I had red & heard'. Yet his version too bears the comment that 'here is all I can remember'.[146] Norton's remark was thus not a claim to have experienced the dissolution, but rather a shorthand for information mediated through cultural memory.

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[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid., fol. 270r.
[143] For the attribution to Cecil see Colin G. C. Tite, *The Early Records of Sir Robert Cotton's Library: Formation, Cataloguing, Use* (London: The British Library, 2003), p. 202. I am grateful to Arnold Hunt for advice regarding the attribution of this manuscript.
[144] Jan Assmann, 'Collective memory and cultural identity', trans. John Czaplicka, *New German Critique* 65 (1995), pp. 128-33.
[145] Washington D.C., Folger Shakespeare Library, MS X.c.62.
[146] Ibid., fol. 1v. This manuscript is also discussed below, ch. 2.

It is difficult to say whether Norton was the author or simply a copyist of the document preserved in the Cotton manuscripts. He certainly enjoyed Cecil's patronage and it is therefore definitely possible either that he had access to Cecil's material or that he had offered his account for preservation in his patron's collection.[147] He was also interested in English history, adopting a providentialist, apocalyptic approach to the past; his most notable work in this respect, entitled 'Of the v periods of 500 yeares', is bound next to the anonymous account of the dissolution in the Cotton volume Titus F III.[148] This evidence is by no means conclusive but, together with the letter sent from Norton to Mylles in 1581, it does make Norton a plausible – even the probable – author of 'The dissolving of the abbeys'. Moreover, the question of authorship aside, the acquisition of this manuscript by Cecil is highly significant because it ties the dissolution into Elizabethan policy-making and the official and quasi-official practices of collecting and archiving that served to perpetuate pro-reform and pro-Tudor narratives. These processes, as Summit reminds us, continue to shape how we think about the history of the dissolution and the wider English Reformation.[149]

Another striking example of the power of the Tudor archives can be found in a richly illuminated manuscript, the *Heroica Eulogia*, also produced in the Elizabethan period.[150] The *Heroica* was created by William Bowyer, an avid collector and Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London, in 1567. Although the manuscript is unfinished, it was clearly intended for Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester. Specifically, the *Heroica* was a polemical text, designed to justify the suppression of monastic properties that had since passed into the earl's hands. It comprises a series of images of depraved and wicked monks and friars accompanied by biblical exhortations against corruption. In one such image the eponymous 'lecherous monk', *monacho libidinoso*, has his ears boxed by a woman (figure 1). This depiction is sexually suggestive, underlining the depravity and iniquity supposedly uncovered in the monasteries; at the monk's feet, a stray cat plays with a loose thread, reinforcing the message of the Latin verse below about the 'filthiness' of its subject. In another image, the *abbate ingluvioso* – or 'voracious abbot' – sings from a popish hymnbook, a roasted piglet on a platter by his side, the very model of the worldly, avaricious, bloated figures described in Henrician polemic (figure 2). The *Heroica* is a remarkable compilation not only because it demonstrates the longevity and pervasiveness of the Henrician regime's anti-monastic language. Its very existence also reflects how successive

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[147] Marie Axton, 'Norton, Thomas (1530x32–1584)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20359, accessed 10 Oct 2016].
[148] BL, Cotton MS Titus F III, fols. 271-275v. I am grateful to Coral Casey-Stoakes for drawing this to my attention and for her advice on Norton.
[149] Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 2 and passim.
[150] San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, HM 160. See also Norman Jones, 'Empowering the earl of Leicester', *Verso: The Blog of the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens*, 26 May 2016 [http://huntingtonblogs.org/2016/05/empowering-the-earl-of-leicester/; accessed 27 April 2017]. I am grateful to Arnold Hunt for this reference.

generations of the Tudor nobility and gentry continued to perpetuate this rhetoric to justify their occupation of former monastic sites. They continued, in other words, to have a vested interest in forgetting some of the more problematic and controversial consequences of the dissolution.

Image of 'De monacho libidinoso' (illustration from William Bowyer, *Heroica Eulogia* (1567). San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, HM 160, fol. 102) removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Figure 1. 'De monacho libidinoso', illustration from William Bowyer, *Heroica Eulogia* (1567). San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, HM 160, fol. 102.

Image of 'De abbate ingluviois' (illustration from William Bowyer, *Heroica Eulogia* (1567). San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, HM 160, fol. 126) removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Figure 2. 'De abbate ingluvioso', illustration from William Bowyer, *Heroica Eulogia* (1657). San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, HM 160, fol. 126.

The *Heroica* was also a product of Bowyer's interest in collecting and of his official duties as the custodian of the largest collection of government records in England in the 1560s.[151] As Keeper of Records, he was the heir of the record-keeping practices begun by the Henrician government during the dissolution. He was also responsible for continuing the preservation and reorganisation of this material and therefore for perpetuating the 'official' vision of the dissolution as preserved in the material compiled by the regime in the 1530s. The *Heroica* was thus a product of Henrician polemic, even as it restated and re-interpreted this material for the Elizabethan age.

[151] On Bowyer as Keeper of Records see J. D. Alsop, 'Bowyer, William (*d.* 1569/70)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69724, accessed 5 Oct 2017].

A growing appreciation of the role of early modern archives in memory formation has begun to cause scholars to refine and re-think Elton's paradigm of the 'Tudor revolution in government'. In light of this insight, Vanessa Harding has recently suggested that we might think instead about a 'Tudor revolution in the archives'.[152] She argues that the explosion in record creation and keeping in the 1530s was both 'a result of the urgent need to manage and remain in control of new areas of activity and responsibility' and the symptom of 'a new interest in creating a permanent and authoritative record'.[153] In other words, Harding's notion of a 'revolution in the archives', like Summit's exploration of the mnemonic function of libraries, allows for the agency of the Henrician government in managing the afterlives of the dissolution and suggests that it was conscious of the need to preserve and perpetuate its own vision of the suppression for posterity. As we have seen, this was predicated on a language of reform and surrender, and attempted to downplay the wider consequences of the dissolution. The success of the regime's attempt to make and shape memory sustained this vision of the suppression in both first-generation memory and the cultural memory of subsequent generations who had not themselves borne witness to the events of 1536-40.

Conclusion: The Dissolution of the Monasteries

The Henrician account of the dissolution has enjoyed a remarkably long afterlife. In the mid-nineteenth century, at a time when the Reformation was again being re-invented and older narratives re-examined in light of new anxieties about the 'myth' of the English Reformation and the emergence of the Anglo-Catholic 'Oxford Movement', Cromwell's visitation correspondence was edited and published under the auspices of the Camden Society.[154] In the preface to the volume, the editor Thomas Wright claimed that these letters 'tell their own story' – and yet he quickly succumbed to the temptation to tell it himself: 'they throw light on the history of a great event… which I regard as the greatest blessing conferred by Providence upon this country since the first introduction of the Christian religion'. Taking the commissioners at their word, Wright argued that 'the great cause of the Reformation has been but ill served by concealing the depravities of the system which it overthrew'.[155] Wright's vision of the dissolution was thus profoundly shaped by the material produced and preserved by the Henrician government. It is

[152] Vanessa Harding, 'Monastic records and the dissolution: a Tudor revolution in the archives?', *European History Quarterly* 46 (2016), pp. 480-97.
[153] Ibid., p. 481. See also Nicholas Popper, 'From abbey to archive: managing texts and records in early modern England', *Archival Science* 10 (2010), pp. 249-66.
[154] On the Reformation in the nineteenth century see Peter Nockles and Vivienne Westbrook (eds.), 'Reinventing the Reformation in the nineteenth century: a cultural history', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 90 (2014). See also Diarmaid MacCulloch, 'The myth of the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991), pp. 1-19.
[155] Wright (ed.), *Three chapters of letters*, pp. v-vi.

no small irony that his *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Dissolution of the Monasteries* (1843) also continues to provide scholars with an important point of access to the documentary record of the 1530s.

Modern historians therefore remain the unwitting heirs of attempts by the Henrician regime to engender a selective forgetting of the suppression and to reshape the memory of the medieval past. Focusing narrowly on the years 1536-40 has rendered generations of scholars vulnerable to the polemic produced by Henry VIII's government, which was subsequently preserved in early modern libraries and archives, and further reorganised and refined in more modern editions. As we have seen, these are not neutral repositories, but are rather themselves products of the debates and polemical battles of the English Reformation. Selective memory and strategic amnesia were reciprocal forces shaping the afterlives of the dissolution.

This chapter has suggested that Henry VIII and his government viewed the dissolution in two distinct phases. The first was the 'reformation of the monasteries', during which the government developed a powerful and influential rhetoric of monastic corruption. The second was the 'surrender' of the monasteries, during which the regime sought to portray the religious as complicit in their own demise whilst downplaying some of the wider consequences of the suppression. This also functioned to soft-pedal the sense of rupture articulated by its critics – both in terms of a break between past and present and a rift in the religious, social, and economic fabric of sixteenth-century England. This laid the foundations for a culture of amnesia regarding the dissolution, as much as, if not more than, for a culture of remembrance.

Yet history has remembered the 'dissolution' and not the 'reformation' or the 'surrender' of the monasteries. This is something of an anomaly in an historiography that has been so heavily inflected by Henrician polemic. The language of the dissolution is, as we have seen, highly significant for how we understand this episode. Although the Tudor rhetoric of monastic corruption and iniquity has proven remarkably enduring, it is not the only analytical vocabulary that historians have inherited to describe the fall of the monasteries between 1536 and 1540. This language continued to evolve and shift across the early modern period. The very terms that we use to denote this episode are thus part of the problem of its long afterlives, artefacts of particular moments and of the very processes of memory-making itself. With this in mind, it is to changing perspectives on the suppression across the early modern period and the eventual emergence of the landmark event that we have come to know as the 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' to which we now turn.

Chapter Two

'Worthy of Lasting Memory':
The Dissolution in the Protestant Historical Imagination

The herald and chronicler Charles Wriothesley witnessed the Henrician campaign against the monasteries from the periphery of the royal court. Born in 1508, he rose to prominence in the service of the Lord Chancellor, Thomas Audley, just as the English Reformation was getting underway.[1] The manuscript chronicle that Wriothesley compiled during these years is testament to the power and reach of dissolution polemic. In February 1538, he was present for the public exposure of the infamous monastic fraud known as the Rood of Grace, the miraculous properties of which the government had recently revealed to be a mechanical deception. Wriothesley saw the rood paraded at Westminster, where it was 'shewed openlye to the people the craft of moving the eyes and lipps, that the people there might see the illusion that had bene used in the sayde image by the monckes of the saide place of manye yeares tyme out of mynde'. He also heard the sermon preached at St Paul's Cross by John Hilsey, bishop of Rochester, condemning 'the abuses of the graces and engines, used in old tyme in the said image' and by which 'the people had bene eluded and caused to doe great adolatrie'.[2] Wriothesley recorded these recollections in his chronicle, which thus preserves the echoes of the rhetoric of monastic corruption, fradulence, and iniquity that saturated contemporary discourse in the 1530s.

Wriothesley was not, however, simply an eye- and ear-witness to revelation of the Boxley fraud. He also played his own small part in its exposure by perpetuating the story of the mechanical rood and committing it to paper. This entry is also part of a much larger catalogue of monastic errors set down in the chronicle, which delineated the major civic and religious events that occurred in England between the reign of Henry VII and the accession year of Elizabeth I. Organised by regnal year and calendar month, Wriothesley's entries included various episodes in the suppression of the monasteries, as well as other upheavals of the early Reformation, all of which were recorded contemporaneously with events as they happened. Although he made no attempt to draw causal connections between episodes, each entry was nevertheless located within this overarching temporal framework. The chronicle therefore constitutes one of the earliest extant chronologies of the English Reformation. Wriothesley was not merely a spectator of the dissolution, he was perhaps also its first historian.

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[1] On Wriothesley's life and career see Gordon Kipling, 'Wriothesley, Charles (1508–1562)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30071, accessed 11 October 2017].
[2] Northumberland, Alnwick Castle, DNP: MS 468A (hereafter Alnwick MS 468A), fol. 81r. The manuscript was published as Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England during the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485 to 1559*, ed. William Douglas Hamilton, 2 vols., Camden Society, new series, II, (London, 1875-7).

Recent scholarship has testified powerfully to the ability of a variety of historical genres to serve the purposes of religious controversy, as Protestants and Catholics alike looked to history to justify their respective claims to be the true heirs of the pristine apostolic church.[3] This literature has suggested how Protestant claims that their movement was one of renewal and regeneration, rather than innovation, had profound implications for the vision of medieval Catholicism that became embedded in contemporary historical consciousness.[4] In the wake of the break with Rome, history was re-written as part of the exercise to find a 'plausible past for the Reformation'.[5] Ironically, given the desire of sixteenth-century reformers to locate the origins of English Protestantism in antiquity and to highlight the continuity between reformed religion and primitive Christianity, history could also give expression to senses of temporal discontinuity and the idea that the Reformation represented a profound break between past and present. The caesura between the Middle Ages and the early modern era upon which more recent models of historical periodisation are predicated is itself partly the product of these earlier processes of writing history and making memory.[6]

This chapter examines the emergence of the dissolution of the monasteries as a critical moment around which contemporary perceptions of the medieval past and the English Reformation were crystallised. It is concerned both with changing perceptions of the suppression over time and with how, in turn, this episode functioned to shape early modern senses of time and chronology. To this end, it draws upon sources which adopt time as an organising principle. Not all of the texts discussed below are 'histories' according to the contemporary understanding of history as a distinct rhetorical mode, but all help to illuminate the evolving memory of the dissolution in historical perspective.[7] After first examining how the suppression was chronicled

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[3] For a recent overview see Felicity Heal, 'Appropriating history: Catholic and Protestant polemics and the national past', in Paulina Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, CA: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 2006), pp. 105-28. See also Alec Ryrie, 'The problems of legitimacy and precedent in English Protestantism, 1539-47', in Bruce Gordon (ed.), *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Volume 1, The Medieval Inheritance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), pp. 78-92; Patrick Collinson, 'Truth, lies, and fiction in sixteenth-century Protestant historiography', in Donald R. Kelley and David Harris Sacks (eds.), *The Historical Imagination in Early Modern Britain: History, Rhetoric, and Fiction, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 37-68. On wider European trends see Anthony Grafton, 'Church history in early modern Europe: tradition and innovation', in Katherine van Liere, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan (eds.), *Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 3-26.

[4] Donald R. Kelley, *Faces of History: Historical Enquiry from Herodotus to Herder* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1998) ch. 6; Alexandra Walsham, 'History, memory, and the English Reformation', *HJ* 55 (2012), p. 902.

[5] Helen L. Parish, *Monks, Miracles and Magic: Reformation Representations of the Medieval Church* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), p. 18. See also Irena Backus, 'What is a historical account? Religious biography and the Reformation's break with the Middle Ages', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 101 (2010), pp. 289-304.

[6] Walsham, 'History, memory, and the Reformation', p. 901 and passim.

[7] On the nature of history in the early modern period see for example D. R. Woolf, *The Idea of History in Early Stuart England: Erudition, Ideology, and the 'Light of Truth' from the Accession of James I to the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Paulina Kewes, 'History and its uses', in Kewes (ed.),

by those who witnessed it in the 1530s, this chapter traces the constant evolution of the memory of the dissolution across a series of flashpoints: Mary I's Catholic restoration in the mid-1550s and its reversal after 1558, the transition from Tudor to Stuart monarchy in 1603, the advent of Laudian religious policies in the 1630s, the Civil Wars of the 1640s, and the anti-Catholic crises of the late 1670s and early 1680s. Within this framework, it explores how the Henrician vision of the dissolution was perpetuated and contested by successive generations of English Protestants. It was through this process of contestation that the protracted and uneven period of suppression we explored in the previous chapter was transformed into a landmark historical event.

The sociologist Philip Abrams has contended that events have two related characteristics: temporal specificity and cultural significance. As episodes become fixed in time and in chronological sequence, he argues, they also acquire meaning for a particular community.[8] Inevitably, this transformation is shaped by processes of retrospection and re-invention; events are products of cultural memory as much as, if not more than, of first-hand experiences. As we shall see, the event that we have come to know as the Dissolution of the Monasteries was one such invention of posterity.

Chronicling the Dissolution

The project of chronicling English history, as Patrick Geary has argued, had always entailed deliberate and conscious 'decisions about what should be remembered and how it should be remembered'.[9] The chronicle genre was the primary vehicle for history in the Middle Ages. Modelled on the Books of Chronicles set down in the Old Testament, these texts functioned as cumulative catalogues of political, religious, and providential occurrences, which they fixed in a sequence of times and dates.[10] These were also characteristically laconic forms of historical

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Uses of History, pp. 1-30; Anthony Grafton, *What was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[8] Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology* (Shepton Mallet: Open Books, 1982), p. 191. See also Diana E. Greenway, 'Dates in history: chronology and memory', *Historical Research* 72 (1999), pp. 127-39.

[9] Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 9.

[10] On the characteristics of the genre see for example Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Genealogy: form and function in medieval historical narrative', *History and Theory* 22 (1983), pp. 43-53; Matthew Innes, 'Using the past, interpreting the present, influencing the future', in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (eds.), *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 29-66; Catherine Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative in the cult of early Anglo-Saxon saints', in Hen and Innes (eds.), *Uses of the Past*, pp. 29-66; Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London and New York, NY: Hambledon and London, 2004); Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Sarah Foot, 'Finding the meaning of form:

writing, which refrained from drawing lines of causation between different episodes. This parataxis was the product of their function as records of divine intervention in the world, through which God's plan for humanity might be revealed gradually but could not be predicted or second-guessed.[11] For similar reasons, medieval chronicles were also conceived as perpetually ongoing projects and it was common for chroniclers to engage in parasitic practices of copying, editing, and enlarging earlier compilations. As recent scholarship has suggested, however, it would be wrong to think that the conventions of the genre rendered chronicles devoid of polemic or narrative. Sarah Foot, Chris Given-Wilson, Matthew Innes, and Rosamond McKitterick, amongst others, have all demonstrated that certain narratives were clearly discernible within and between the lines of these laconic texts. By commemorating certain episodes and not others, chronicles conveyed 'cogent stories' not only about the divine plan for human history but also about various royal dynasties and their particular framing of the past.[12] In this context, memory was a mechanism through which the past was made useful to the present.

Early modern chronicles retained this mnemonic function, even as the genre underwent significant transformation in the early sixteenth century. The dissolution was itself partly responsible for changing the conditions in which these texts were produced. In medieval England, the religious orders had been the primary custodians of the genre. Many of the most well-known and significant medieval chroniclers, including Ranulf Higden, William of Malmesbury, and Matthew Paris, were monks. This reflects the role played by the monasteries as centres of learning and record-keeping and their status as the engines of the medieval memory-making machine.[13] It is no small irony, then, that, in the wake of the Reformation, a genre that had once perpetuated an essentially monastic vision of the past quickly became a vehicle for exposing the corruption of the religious orders and preserving their fall for posterity. In the hands of a new generation of semi-professional lay chroniclers, the religious were rendered victims of their own memorialising practices.

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narrative in annals and chronicles', in Nancy Partner (ed.), *Writing Medieval History*, 2nd edn, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), pp. 88-108.

[11] On the providential quality of chronicles see Alexandra Walsham, 'Providentialism', in Paulina Kewes, Ian Archer, and Felicity Heal (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's* Chronicles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 429.

[12] Foot, 'Finding the meaning of form', p. 102; Innes, 'Using the past', p. 4; McKitterick, *History and Memory*. See also Yitzhak Hen, 'The Annals of Metz and the Merovingian past', in Hen and Innes (eds.), *Uses of the Past*, pp. 175-90; Sarah Foot, 'Annals and chronicles in western Europe', in Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson (eds.), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, Volume 2: 400-1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 346-367; Michael Hicks, 'English monasteries as repositories of dynastic memory', in Michael Penman (ed.), *Monuments and Monumentality Across Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2013), pp. 224-38.

[13] See esp. Cubitt, 'Memory and narrative'; Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, ch. 4.

Charles Wriothesley was amongst the vanguard of these new post-dissolution chroniclers and historians. In an entry dated 1535, he recorded the visitation of the monasteries by Henry VIII's agents. He was clearly aware of the controversy that was already engulfing the religious houses. The passage paraphrases the official injunctions imposed upon the religious by the crown, insinuating their worldliness and hypocrisy, sexual immorality, and duplicity in peddling false relics to the laity:

> Also this year Mr. Thomas Cromwell and Doctor Lee visited all the religious places in England, being ordayned by the Kinges grace for his high visitors, and they tooke out of everie religious house all religious persons from the age of 24 years and under, and shewed them how they shoulde use wilfull povertie, and also he closed up all the residue of the religious persons booth men and woemen that would remaine still, so that they should not come out of their places, nor no men resorte to the places of nonnes, nor weomen to come into the places of religious men, but onlie to heere service and masses in their churches, and also they took out of divers churches of England certaine reliques that the people were wont to worshipp, as Our Ladies girdell at Westminster… with other reliques in divers places which [the religious] used for covetousness in deceaphing the people.[14]

This passage suggests not only that the government's rhetoric of monastic corruption and iniquity was well-established long before the dissolution itself got underway in March 1536, but also that the chronicle genre could serve the purposes of Henrician polemic. As with his entry on the Boxley fraud, Wriothesley's comments on the visitations served to perpetuate a distinctly Henrician vision of the condition of the monasteries. His chronicle was thus both an echo of and a mouthpiece for the regime's anti-monastic rhetoric.

The extent to which Wriothesley's manuscript, like other examples of the early modern chronicle genre, was a product of this climate of dissolution and Reformation has long been obscured by a tendency in the history of historiography to prioritise the continental influences of humanism and jurisprudence at the expense of religion.[15] In this context, the distinction first drawn by Arthur B. Ferguson between the chronicle as an old-fashioned form of scholarship and the post-Reformation ecclesiastical histories that employed history in the service of religious controversy has proved highly influential.[16] Writing about Wriothesley's chronicle, F. J. Levy once argued that it was 'simply an anachronism' because, like most medieval chronicles,

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[14] Alnwick MS 468A, fol. 67v.

[15] See for example F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 1962); F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1967); Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979).

[16] Ferguson, *Clio Unbound*, p. 11. For more recent examples of the tendency to read chronicles as secular texts see D. R. Woolf, 'Genre into artifact: the decline of the English chronicle in the sixteenth century', *SCJ* 19 (1988), pp. 321-45; John O. Ward, '"Chronicle" and "History": the medieval origins of postmodern historiographical practice?', *Parergon* 14 (1997), pp. 101-28.

the early portion of the text reproduced passages from previous chronicles, and because it drew no conclusions 'besides the obvious ones of loyalty to the crown and to the city'.[17] Levy underestimated the extent to which these 'obvious' manifestations of Wriothesley's allegiances reflect the patently polemical quality of his chronicle. This perspective has, nevertheless, proven remarkably enduring. As recently as 2013, it has been argued that Tudor chronicles were devoid of 'rhetorical flourish and polemic', which characterised other genres of narrative history and sacred biography.[18]

David Womersley has, however, convincingly disputed the notion that the form and content of early modern chronicles represent a 'pre-critical' phase of history writing before the 'steady self-emancipation' of history 'from the bondage of religion'. Rather, he suggests, these texts both contributed to and were shaped by a wider political culture that 'served to saturate English historiography with religious implication' as both reformers and traditionalists looked to history for legitimacy in the wake of the break with Rome.[19] Chronicles were not, therefore, the antithesis of confessional history; rather, they belong to the expansive category of historical genres that were coloured and inflected by Reformation debates. Contemporaries recognised this polemical potential better than have generations of historians. The former Carmelite friar-turned-evangelical polemicist John Bale avowed that monastic chronicles revealed the 'fylthynesse' of their compilers.[20] Having abandoned his earlier vocation, he desired 'some lerned Englyshe mane (as there are now most excellent fresh wyttes) to set forth the Englyshe chronycles in theyr ryght shappe'.[21] Whilst Bale sought to re-write the medieval chronicles,

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[17] Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought,* p. 24.
[18] Alexandra Gillespie and Oliver Harris, 'Holinshed and the native chronicle tradition', in Kewes et al (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's* Chronicles, p. 151.
[19] David Womersley, 'Against the teleology of technique' in Kewes (ed.), *Uses of History*, p. 99. See also Walsham, 'History, memory, and the Reformation', p. 902. For some illuminating case studies of the polemic potential of chronicles see Sjoerd Levelt, *Jan van Naaldwijk's Chronicles of Holland: Continuity and Transformation in the Historical Tradition of Holland during the Early Sixteenth Century* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011); Gerard Kilroy, 'A tangled chronicle: the struggle over the memory of Edmund Campion', in Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (eds.), *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post-Reformation* (Farnham: Asghate, 2013), pp. 141-59. See also Alexandra Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory, and autobiography in Reformation England', *Memory Studies* 11 (2018), pp. 36-50. I am grateful to Alex Walsham for sharing this piece with me in advance of publication.
[20] John Bale, *The actes of Englysh votaryes, comprehendynge their unchast practices and examples by all ages, from the worldes begynnynge to thys present yeare, collected out of their owne legendes and chronycles by Johan Bale* (London, 1546), sig. A4v.
[21] John Bale, *A brefe chronycle concernynge the examinacyon and death of the blessed martyr of Christ, Sir Johan Oldecastell, the lorde Cobham, collected togyther by Johan Bale* ([Antwerp], 1544), sig. A5v. For approaches to Bale's historical writing and perception of the past see Alan MacColl, 'The construction of England as a Protestant "British" nation in the sixteenth century', *Renaissance Studies* 18 (2004), pp. 582-608; Cathy Shrank, 'John Bale and reconfiguring the "medieval" in Reformation England', in Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (eds.), *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 179-92; Mark Greengrass and Matthew Phillpott, 'John Bale, John Foxe, and the reformation of the English past', *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 101 (2010), pp. 275-88; Susan Royal, 'Historian or prophet? John Bale's perception of the past', *Studies in Church History* 49 (2013), pp. 156-67.

Wriothesley was more concerned with contemporary events. We might, however, view his chronicle as a parallel project with that to reform medieval history. If, as Womersley suggests, chronicles could function as tools of Reformation, Wriothesley's chronicle was specifically an instrument of the Henrician Reformation.

This is important for understanding Wriothesley's chronology of the dissolution, which powerfully reflects the Henrician polemic of which it was also a product. In 1536, Wriothesley recorded an entry to commemorate the first act of dissolution:

> Also this yeare, at a Parliament holden at Westminster in Februarie last past, and ended the Thursdaie afore Easter, it was granted to the King and his heires, to the augmentation of the crowne, all religious howses in this realme of Englande of the value of tow [sic] hundred poundes and under, with all landes and goodes belonging to the said howses, in as ample manner as the said abbottes and priors held theim. The some of the howses amounted to 376, the value of their landes 32 thousand poundes and more, and the moveables of their goodes, as they were sold, amounted above one hundred thousand poundes; and the religious persons that were in the said howses were clearlie putt out, some to [o]their howses, some went abroade in the worlde. Againe it was pitie the great lamentation that the poore people made for theim, for there was great hospitalitie kept amonge theim, and, as it was reported, tenne thousand persons had lost their living by the putting downe of theim, which was great pitie.[22]

Although the tone and tenor of this passage is subtle in comparison with the more vitriolic forms of dissolution polemic, it is nevertheless possible to find clear evidence of the influence of Henrician rhetoric. Wriothesley's support for Henry VIII and his government underpinned his approval of the transfer of former monastic properties 'to the augmentation of the crowne'. There are also hints of a more vituperative anti-monastic sentiment in his allusions to the 'ample manner' of living enjoyed by the senior ranks of the religious. Moreover, if he expressed pity for the decline in hospitality and the losses suffered by those who had relied upon the monasteries for their livelihoods – and it is ambiguous here whether Wriothesley was referring primarily to the religious or to their lay servants – there is little evidence of the evangelical critique that we noted in the previous chapter. Indeed, it is telling that Wriothesley's pity is first expressed not for the social and economic pressures engendered by the dissolution, but for the fact that the 'poore people' had made such a 'great lamentation' for so endemically corrupt an institution.[23]

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[22] Alnwick MS 468A, fol. 71r.

[23] For a more detailed discussion of this passage see Harriet Lyon, '"A pitiful thing"? The dissolution of the English monasteries in early modern chronicles, c. 1540-c. 1640', *SCJ* (forthcoming, 2018).

Read in sequence with other passages from Wriothesley's chronicle, this entry served to weave his vision of the dissolution into the wider story of the Henrician regime's campaign against Catholic corruption, superstition, and idolatry. Between 1536 and 1538, as we saw in the previous chapter, the Henrician regime claimed that it was undertaking a reformation of the monasteries. In keeping with this official line, Wriothesley's entries for this period collectively constitute an extended commentary on the necessity of reform. A few months after he saw the Rood of Grace exposed, Wriothesley returned to Paul's Cross to witness the denunciation of the Holy Blood of Hailes. In an entry dated November 1538, he recalled that Bishop Hilsey, who had returned to preach against the feigned relic, 'did let every man behould yt there at Paules Crosse, and all the way as he went to dinner to the mayres, to loke on yt, so that every person might well perceive the abuse of the sayd thinge'.[24] In the same year, he was also a witness to the demise of the heretic friar John Forest, whom he called 'a false traitor to his praynce [prince], an hereticke and a seditious person to the Kinges leighe people'.[25] Episodes such as Forest's execution have not been conventionally considered as elements in the dissolution of the monasteries – and yet, as we noted in the previous chapter, they were clearly part of the vitriolic campaign against monasticism which profoundly inflected and informed contemporary perceptions of the suppression.

It is striking that the suppression and spoliation of the religious houses themselves appears to have been of little importance to this narrative of 1536-8, although this is perhaps also unsurprising, since before 1539 the Henrician regime rarely spoke of surrender or suppression. Official polemic had not yet provided a framework for thinking about this episode as anything other than an act of reform. Nevertheless, the physical dissolution of monasteries was unavoidably a part of Wriothesley's experience of the 1530s. Some sixteen entries in his chronicle describe the piecemeal process of suppression, naming specific houses as they fell in waves. By contrast with Wriothesley's extensive commentaries denouncing monastic corruption, passages marking the fall of particular abbeys and convents are remarkably terse and laconic. Shortly after the revelations at Boxley and Hailes, for example, Wriothesley recalled that 'this yere divers religious houses of great possessions were suppressed, as the Abbey of Battell in Sussex, Martin Abbey, Stratford Abbey, Lewys, with other more into the Kinges handes'.[26] Devoid of references to monastic corruption and iniquity, this entry is virtually divorced from Wriothesley's previous account of the suppression in 1536. But read in light of

[24] Alnwick MS 468A, fol. 86r. On the Holy Blood of Hailes see Peter Marshall, 'The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the defence of the Henrician church', *JEH* 46 (1995), pp. 689-96; Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 5. On this episode see also above, ch. 1.
[25] Alnwick MS 468A, fol. 83r.
[26] Ibid., fol. 83v.

earlier entries, Wriothesley's silence becomes pregnant with meaning. The brevity of this passage testifies not to a genre that was blandly unimaginative, but rather to the potency and reach of the twin Henrician impulses selectively to remember monastic corruption and strategically to forget the wider consequences of the dissolution.

When the new policy of wholesale dissolution was announced in 1539, the need to forget its more controversial aspects began to outweigh the desire to remember the Henrician triumph over monastic corruption. As we saw previously, 1539 marked a profound shift in Henrician rhetoric. Once preoccupied with the language of monastic reform, the government began to emphasise the complicity of the religious orders in their own downfall and quietly attempted to institute a retroactive policy of total suppression and the *de facto* abolition of English monasticism. Official polemic thus played down the transformative effect of the dissolution in local communities and the consequences for the generation of monks, nuns, and friars and their lay servants who were displaced from their homes, vocations, and livelihoods. Wriothesley's chronicle also bears the hallmarks of this need to forget. Compared with his extensive entry for the suppression of the lesser monasteries, in 1539 he wrote simply that, 'at this parliament, all the religious houses in England, suppressed and not suppressed, were granted to the Kinge to the augmentation of his crowne forever'.[27] Like the act itself, this brief, laconic passage implied that this transformation amounted to little more than a painless and efficient transfer of land and goods out of the hands of the Church and into those of the state.

Perhaps Wriothesley shared in the vested interests of the crown and its agents to forget certain aspects of the dissolution. Although he was not a direct beneficiary of this revolution in wealth and property, the gains made by the gentry and nobility would have been only too apparent given the circles in which he moved. His patron, Audley, was a major recipient of monastic land.[28] His cousin Thomas Wriothesley, who succeeded Audley as Lord Chancellor in 1544, acquired former monastic properties in no fewer than eight counties between 1537 and 1549.[29] Wriothesley's chronicle also offers some evidence that he may have shared, or at least supported, the interests at the heart of the Henrician culture of amnesia. In November 1539, he marked the fall of Barking Abbey in Essex by recording that the building had since passed to the Devonshire lawyer Sir Thomas Denys whom 'hath to wife my ladie Murffen… sometime

[27] Ibid., fol. 90r.
[28] L. L. Ford, 'Audley, Thomas, Baron Audley of Walden (1487/8–1544)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/896, accessed 16 Oct 2017].
[29] Graves, 'Wriothesley, Thomas'. On Wriothesley's properties and the long memory of the dissolution see also below, ch. 4.

[mistress] to Alis my wife that now is'.[30] In this context, it is little surprise that Wriothesley's chronicle was so profoundly inflected by Henrician polemic.

By 1539, however, it was too late for Wriothesley to re-write the entire chronology of the dissolution to take account of the government's new impulse to forget. The abbeys and convents did not, moreover, disappear overnight, despite the Henrician regime's attempt to make it appear so. Some monasteries continued to function into the spring of 1540, a fact which Wriothesley was ultimately forced to recognise: an entry for March of that year recorded that 'this year also all the religious howses in England were suppressed into the Kinges handes'.[31] It bears repeating that although the brevity of this passage might seem to conform to accounts of the chronicle genre as a laconic and unimaginative mode of historical writing, this appearance is deceptive. Read as part of a larger narrative and alongside the trajectory of the official polemic, Wriothesley's chronicle was no less polemical for its absences and omissions. To treat this text uncritically is therefore to underestimate the extent to which it was originally a product of and a vehicle for Henrician attempts selectively to forget this problematic episode of the early Reformation.

The entry for 1540 marks the final appearance of the Henrician dissolution in Wriothesley's chronicle, although he went on to record a number of related and analogous episodes during the reigns of Henry VIII's heirs, all in a similarly laconic fashion to his entry for 1539. These included the dissolution of the chantries under Edward VI, the abortive restoration of monasticism under Mary I, and the eventual re-suppression of the Marian foundations after the accession of Elizabeth I.[32] In this way, Wriothesley's manuscript reminds us that the long process of dissolution was not over by 1540; rather, it continued to be a feature of the English Reformation until at least 1558. Wriothesley's chronology of the suppression therefore far exceeded the parameters of the event that we have come to know as the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Indeed, for Wriothesley, there was no Dissolution of the Monasteries. Which is to say that, although he witnessed the fall of the monasteries in the 1530s, he would not have recognised the shorthand that modern scholarship habitually deploys to denote this episode. Nor would this term have adequately reflected his experience of a piecemeal process that overlapped and coalesced with other facets of Henry VIII's Reformation. Events were the building blocks of the chronicle genre. It is therefore telling that Wriothesley's vision of the Henrician dissolution

[30] Alnwick MS 468A, fol. 92v.
[31] Ibid., fol. 93v.
[32] Ibid., fols. 124r, 176v, 180r, 184r.

spans some thirty-five entries in his chronicle, which, as we have seen, also mapped clearly onto the rhetorical shifts that characterised official policy. In light of the powerful and pervasive culture of amnesia that emerged in the late 1530s, the dissolution of the monasteries might almost have been the greatest non-event of the English Reformation.

Subsequent generations would develop a vocabulary of 'dissolution' to negotiate the rupture caused by the Henrician suppression that Wriothesley did not possess – and yet, his chronicle is also a source through which we continue to view this episode.[33] We need to recognise, therefore, that Wriothesley's chronicle was a product of earlier memory-making processes, as well as a vehicle for Henrician polemic. It is also worth noting here that the manuscript only survives in the form of a copy produced for the earls of Northumberland in the early seventeenth century.[34] The text that historians have inherited is therefore an artefact of both the 1530s and the early seventeenth century; it is an eye-witness account but one that has also been refracted through the hand of a later copyist. The shorthand by which historians know this chronicle – Wriothesley's chronicle – has served to obscure at least one anonymous agent of remembering and forgetting the dissolution. The preservation of Wriothesley's text also returns us to the question of how the Henrician vision of the dissolution was perpetuated across the early modern period. It is therefore to the long afterlife of Henrician polemic in early modern chronicles and histories to which we now direct our attention.

Perpetuating the Henrician Orthodoxy

After Henry VIII's death in 1547, many of the histories and chronicles produced under his Protestant heirs continued to preserve the Henrician vision of the dissolution for posterity. Noteworthy Tudor chronicles include Thomas Lanquet's *Epitome of cronicles* (1549), which stated boldly that during the dissolution 'all friars, monks, canons, [and] nuns… were rooted out of this realm for their iniquity and naughtiness'.[35] Like Wriothesley, Lanquet also recorded his contempt for the 'dyuers images also hauynge inginnes to make theyr eyes open and shutte', a

[33] I am grateful to Cathy Shrank, whose comments on a paper given at a workshop in October 2016 and organised by the ARHC-funded 'Remembering the Reformation' project, directed by Alexandra Walsham and Brian Cummings and jointly based at the Universities of Cambridge and York, have shaped my thinking on this point.

[34] On the textual history of Wriothesley's chronicle see Harriet Lyon, 'Remembering the dissolution of the monasteries: events, chronology, and memory in Charles Wriothesley's chronicle', in Brian Cummings, Ceri Law, Bronwyn Wallace, and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *Remembering the English Reformation* (forthcoming). See also Northumberland, Alnwick Castle, Archives Filing No. 135 (D. P. Graham's files, c. 1960s: 'Books and manuscripts from the collection of the 9th earl of Northumberland (1585-1632)'.

[35] Thomas Lanquet, *Lanquette's chronicle* [*An epitome of cronicles*] (London, 1559 edn), sig. Bbbb8v. On Lanquet see Henry Summerson, 'Lanquet, Thomas (1520/21–1545)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16056, accessed 10 April 2015].

thinly-veiled reference to events at Boxley, as well as the 'many other false iuglynges, as the bloudd of hayles… wherewith the people of longe tyme had been deceiued', demonstrating the longevity of these infamous deceptions in the public imagination.[36] Likewise *Hall's chronicle* (1548), originally the project of the Henrician lawyer Edward Hall and continued beyond the 1520s by Richard Grafton, King's Printer under Henry VIII and Edward VI, also invoked images of monastic corruption in the form of 'great and fatte abbottes', who 'even at that time' of the first visitations had been considered 'putrified olde okes'.[37] When Grafton, whose press occupied the site of the former house of Franciscan friars near St Paul's Cathedral, published his own *Chronicle at large* in 1568 this passage was repeated verbatim.[38] Like the Henrician polemic of the 1530s, successive Tudor chronicles thus served to emphasise the reformation of monasticism and to downplay the more problematic and controversial aspects of the dissolution.

History also continued to serve the purposes of religious controversy and to justify and defend the reformed Church of England. Appearing a decade after Elizabeth I's accession, Grafton's chronicle was published at a time when the dissolution was still within the limits of living memory, but also in the context of a new political imperative to justify the repression of Marian Catholicism. For example, Mary I's abortive Catholic restoration provided an impetus for the re-publication of some older Tudor chronicles and histories after 1558. In 1555, Mary had issued a proclamation calling for the destruction of *Hall's chronicle*; in defiance of this order, a new edition appeared in 1560.[39] Lanquet's chronicle was also reprinted in 1559. Meanwhile, new texts reached the presses which continued to perpetuate older narratives of monastic corruption in support of the ongoing Reformation. One of the most notable Elizabethan chronicles was the collaborative project known under the name of one of its compilers, Raphael Holinshed, and first published as *The chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* in 1577. Like the earlier Tudor chronicles, Holinshed's chronicle transcribed the injunctions against the religious houses made at the time of the 1535 visitations, thereby preserving the direct echoes of Henrician polemic for posterity.[40] It also recorded such exemplary episodes as the execution

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[36] Lanquet, *Chronicle*, sig. Bbbb8v.
[37] Edward Hall, *The union of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (London, 1548), fol. 227v.
[38] Richard Grafton, *A chronicle at large and meere history of the affayres of Englande and kinges of the same* (London, 1569), p. 1226. See also Meraud Grant Ferguson, 'Grafton, Richard (1506/7–1573)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11186, accessed 16 March 2016].
[39] Peter C. Herman, 'Hall, Edward (1497–1547)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11954, accessed 10 April 2015].
[40] Raphael Holinshed, *The chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande, with their descriptions*, 2 vols. (London, 1577), ii, p. 1564. On the multivocal nature of Holinshed's *Chronicles* see Annabel Patterson, *Reading Holinshed's Chronicles* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Felicity Heal and Henry Summerson, 'The genesis of the two editions', in Kewes, Archer, and Heal (eds.), *Handbook of Holinshed's* Chronicles, pp. 3-20.

of Friar Forest and further condemned the 'notable Images' and 'counterfeyte Saintes' peddled by the religious and exposed by the regime in the 1530s. In the same breath, the compilers wrote of the wholesale dissolution that 'all the orders of Friers, and Nunnes, with their cloysters and houses, were suppressed and put downe'.[41] Holinshed's chronicle thus adopted a model for delineating the dissolution that we have seen in countless other sixteenth-century texts: an extensive, overtly polemical account of the Henrician regime's campaign against monastic corruption in 1536-8 and a concise, laconic account of the dissolution itself after 1539.

Precisely because they were accretive, parasitic texts, chronicles had the power to create powerful continuities of this kind. This was further reinforced by the advent of print, which facilitated the production of chronicles intended for wider consumption than their medieval antecedents.[42] These texts were a different type of chronicle from the manuscript compiled by Wriothesley, which more fully resembled the genre developed in the medieval period. They were commercial products, usually written in the vernacular, and they lacked the organic quality of their manuscript counterparts even as they retained the practices of borrowing and copying from earlier compilations. The result was that these texts themselves became fixed at a particular moment in time – a quality which, according to Daniel Woolf, contributed to their eventual decline. Woolf has argued that chronicles were victims of the changing context in which knowledge of the past was recalled and transmitted: they were quickly outdated and the expense of re-printing them much greater than the production costs associated with various parasite genres, which fed off the chronicle genre before forcing it into a terminal state of decay.[43] Yet it is precisely this static quality that gives Tudor chronicles particular potential to reveal the processes of remembering and selective forgetting through which the Henrician narrative of the dissolution was perpetuated and contested over time.

These texts also have the capacity to shed light upon the process by which the dissolution was beginning to undergo the transformation from process to event. At the time Holinshed's chronicle was first published, a new generation had reached maturity who had not themselves experienced the Henrician Reformation. With increasing temporal distance on the 1530s, there was a growing tendency to telescope the various waves of suppression into distinct episodes and phases. In other words, although successive Tudor chronicles served to perpetuate

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[41] Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*, ii, p. 1571.
[42] D. R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), ch. 1.
[43] D. R. Woolf, 'Genre into artifact'; idem, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 12 and passim. For two recent critiques of this argument see Judith Pollmann, 'Archiving the present and chronicling for the future in early modern Europe', in Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters, and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe*, P&P supplement 11, 230 (2016), pp. 231-52; Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory, and autobiography'.

Henrician polemic, they also set down increasingly abridged chronologies of the dissolution. By comparison with Wriothesley's thirty-five entries delineating the suppression, Lanquet's chronicle, published a decade after the demise of the last English abbey, contained just eight references to the monasteries and none at all to the fall of specific houses. The entries in both Hall and Grafton's chronicles are clustered around the two parliamentary acts of dissolution in 1536 and 1539. Like Lanquet's chronicle, Hall and Grafton's compilations neglected all mention of individual religious houses in favour of generalised comments about the suppression of the monasteries. Holinshed's Elizabethan chronicle contains just five entries about the Henrician dissolution, including the laconic final statement that described how the religious houses had been 'suppressed and put downe' in 1539. These chronicles suggest, then, that by the mid-sixteenth century, contemporaries were beginning to fix the dissolution to certain specific moments in time.

In this context, the suppression of the monasteries began to emerge as a distinct episode in the wider Protestant historical imagination. The resonance of the dissolution with the anxieties and debates that continued to preoccupy the reformers also served further to crystallise this memory. Thus the historian and controversialist John Foxe, in his famous history and martyrology, the *Actes and monuments* (1563), engaged in a counterfactual discussion of the dissolution which barely concealed a note of anxiety about the future of the Protestant establishment:

> What if it should happen through the mutabilitie of the world, that the kyngdom shuld come into the handes of some wycked prynce of a contrary religion? But what shal we nede to stay long in this matter, when as by the doynges of Quene Mary, euery man may consider what she should haue done if the monasteries had bene left standing vntyll her superstitious daies?[44]

This passage functioned to integrate the dissolution into Foxe's wider narrative of the English Reformation whilst also invoking the threat of monasticism to further the polemical cause of Elizabethan Protestantism. Tom Healy has suggested that much of Foxe's writing was intended to establish remembrance amongst his early modern audience. The episodes that Foxe recalled and recounted were designed to illuminate and edify the reader, as well as to involve him or her

[44] John Foxe, *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes, touching matters of the Church, wherein ar comprehended and described the great persecutions & horrible troubles, that have bene wrought and practised by the Romishe prelates, specially in this realme of England and Scotlande, from the yeare of our Lorde a thousande, unto the tyme nowe present* (London, 1563 edn), p. 593. On the polemic of the *Actes and monuments* see Patrick Collinson, 'Truth and legend: the veracity of John Foxe's Book of Martyrs', in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse (eds.), *Clio's Mirror: Historiography in Britain and the Netherlands* (Zutphen: De Walburg Press, 1985), pp. 31-54; idem, 'John Foxe and national consciousness', in Christopher Highley and John N. King (eds.), *John Foxe and His World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 10-34.

in the act of sifting truth from falsehood.[45] In other words, as Peter Sherlock has argued, 'Foxe did not simply create a record of what happened, but found a way in the medium of the printed book to dictate precisely how memory should be interpreted by succeeding generations'.[46] Remembering the Henrician dissolution was an imperative for Foxe in the context of wider attempts to secure the stability of the Elizabethan settlement. In doing so, the *Actes and monuments* served to perpetuate an older vision of the dissolution whilst simultaneously interpreting it for a new generation.

Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs' was highly influential in its time – and has also long continued to inform our understanding of sixteenth-century historical consciousness.[47] It has been suggested that the *Actes and monuments* was also itself born out of a way of thinking about the past shaped by 'the cataclysmic event which began a new phase of historical research in England: the dissolution of the monasteries'.[48] It was certainly a part of the wider project engendered by the suppression and the Reformation to establish and confirm the historical foundations of the Church of England. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these efforts to 'produce a usable past for Protestant England' was undertaken by Matthew Parker, the first Elizabethan archbishop of Canterbury, who assembled a team of scholars which set about reforming history by annotating, editing, and re-binding texts, purging them of what they perceived to be Catholic superstition and corruption.[49] This endeavour was predicated on a sense of regret for losses sustained

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[45] Tom Healy, '"Making it true": John Foxe's art of remembrance', in Gordon and Rist (eds.), *Arts of Remembrance,* pp. 125-40. See also Collinson, 'Truth, lies, and fiction', esp. pp. 37-40; Andrew Hiscock, *Reading Memory in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), ch. 3.
[46] Peter Sherlock, 'The reformation of memory in early modern Europe', in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds.), *Memories: Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2011), p. 33.
[47] See, for example, the wide-ranging discussions in recent works: Collinson, 'Foxe and national consciousness'; Thomas Page Anderson and Ryan Netzley (eds.), *Acts of Reading: Interpretation, Reading Practices, and the Idea of the Book in John Foxe's* Actes and Monuments (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2010); Greengrass and Phillpott, 'Reformation of the English past'; Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Jesse M. Lander, 'The monkish Middle Ages: periodisation and polemic in Foxe's *Acts and monuments*', in Sarah A. Kelen (ed.), *Renaissance Retrospections: Tudor Views of the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2013), pp. 93-110; David Lowenstein, *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), ch. 3.
[48] Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), p. 234. On this theme see also below, ch. 3 and epilogue and conclusion.
[49] Benedict Scott Robinson, '"Darke speech": Matthew Parker and the reforming of history', *SCJ* 29 (1998), p. 1064. See also Ronald Harold Fritze, '"Truth hath lacked witnesse, tyme wanted light": the dispersal of the English monastic libraries and Protestant efforts at preservation, ca. 1535-1625', *Journal of Library History* 18 (1983), pp. 285-7; Timothy Graham, 'Matthew Parker's manuscripts: an Elizabethan library and its uses', in Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland: Volume 1, to 1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 322-42; Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), ch. 3; Nicholas Popper, 'From abbey to archive: managing texts and records in early modern England', *Archival Science* 10 (2010), pp. 254-5; Anthony Grafton, 'Matthew Parker: the book as archive', *History of Humanities* 2 (2017), pp. 15-50. On the capacity of archives to

during the spoliation and dispersal of monastic libraries. In his preface to the 1568 bible, Parker mourned the destruction of England's cultural patrimony, asking 'what other great Libraries have there been consumed, but of late Dayes? And what libraries of old have throughout this Realme, almost in every Abby of the same, been destroyed at sundry Ages… it were too long to reherse'.[50] As Jennifer Summit has observed, it is not clear whether Parker laid the blame for this 'crisis of memory' with the religious or the Henrician commissioners.[51] Nevertheless, recognising that the monasteries had been the custodians of the archival memory of medieval England, the Privy Council gave Parker a commission to survey what manuscripts survived, often in private collections, from the 'diuerse Abbeys' that were 'as Treasore houses, to keape and leave in memorie, suche occurrentes as fell in their tymes'.[52] The attempt to restore and re-order this material was a polemical as well as a practical exercise, intended not only to expose the superstition of medieval monasticism but also to erase or rectify it.

Medieval chronicles were amongst the targets of this attack on the past: Parker observed, for example, that Matthew Paris's manuscript had been 'foully mutilated in some leaves, and erased in many places by some monks' before it was 'nonetheless restored to integrity through the copy of some honest man'.[53] This gives powerful expression not only to the contention of Gordon McMullan and David Matthews that 'the early modern was constructed through or in negotiation with the medieval', but also to the urgency of the campaign to re-write English history in the wake of the Reformation.[54] In the library that Parker left to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, the remnants of monastic collections were kept alongside Protestant visions of the Reformation, including a short Tudor manuscript chronicle written in Latin, which – like so many of the previous chronicles that we have encountered – recorded both the dissolution and related episodes, such as the public exposure of the Boxley Rood and other notable monastic 'fictions'.[55] In this way, Parkerian scholarship, like the efforts of the Tudor chroniclers, functioned to align the overthrow of the religious houses and the revelation of the religious as authors of false miracles and custodians of fraudulent relics with a state-sponsored Protestant national identity.[56] This also goes some way, perhaps, to explaining why historians have tended

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make memory more generally see Eric Ketelaar, 'Muniments and monuments: the dawn of archives as cultural patrimony', *Archival Science* 7 (2007), pp. 343-57. See also below, epilogue and conclusion.

[50] Matthew Parker, 'A preface into the Byble', in *The Holie Bible* (London, 1568), sig, 2r, quoted in Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 101.

[51] Summit, *Memory's Library*, pp. 102, 104.

[52] CCCC, MS 114A, 12, p. 51.

[53] Quoted in Robinson, 'Darke speech', p. 1081.

[54] Gordon McMullan and David Matthews, 'Introduction: reading the medieval in early modern England', in McMullan and Matthews (eds.), *Reading the Medieval*, p. 6.

[55] CCCC, MS 298, vol. iv, 17, fol. 212r.

[56] Summit, *Memory's Library*. See also Collinson, 'John Foxe and national consciousness'; Igor Djordjevic, *Holinshed's Nation: Ideals, Memory, and Practical Policy in the* Chronicles (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 9; Greengrass and Phillpott, 'Reformation of the English past', pp. 282-4.

to be pessimistic about the value of early modern chronicles. As a result of the attempt to reform the past, medieval chronicles became themselves emblems of monkish fraudulence and deceit. The sense of antipathy towards chroniclers from the later sixteenth century onwards identified by Woolf is perhaps a result of their association with the medieval past.[57]

The attempts of reformed Protestants to propagate a vision of English history that, to return to Bale's phrase, reflected the past in its 'ryght shappe' appear to have been reasonably successful. As the dissolution passed out of living memory and into inherited memory, the narratives of the suppression promoted by Grafton and Holinshed, Foxe and Parker continued to have traction. In the previous chapter, we encountered a narrative letter sent from the lawyer Thomas Norton to Francis Mylles in 1581, in which Norton – whose impeccable Protestant credentials included not only the patronage of William Cecil, but also his marriage to Margaret Cranmer in the year of her father's martyrdom – had promised to set down all that he could remember 'as I have vnderstoode by that which I had red & heard'.[58] He did not name his sources, but his letter contains ample evidence of the Henrician perspective that coloured so many of the Tudor chronicles and histories as well as, evidently, historical consciousness articulated in conversation. Norton thus recounted how the suppression was justified by the 'vile lyves' of the religious and the 'abhominable factes in murders of their bretheren in Sodomies, in whordomes, in destroying of children, in forging of deedes & other infinite horrors of lyf'.[59] It is unlikely, as we noted previously, that Norton, who was born in the early 1530s, could claim personally to recall this much of the dissolution. His comment that the letter contained 'all that I can remember' is therefore testament to the longevity of the Henrician vision of the dissolution mediated through cultural memory and in the Protestant historical imagination.

Norton offered a linear narrative of dissolution but, unlike those set down in contemporary chronicles, it was not definitively fixed to a particular moment in time. Unconstrained by the strict chronological structure of the chronicle genre, Norton made no reference to specific times or dates, including 1536 and 1539. Perhaps this represents the failings of memory, but it also undoubtedly reflects a wider process that was beginning to transform the uneven phases of suppression recorded by Wriothesley into a significant event in the English Reformation. It is striking, in this context, that Norton called this episode the 'dissolution of abbies'. This also recalled the title of the history that Norton may or may not have authored, but of which he was

[57] Woolf, 'Genre into artifact', p. 330.
[58] On Norton's career see Marie Axton, 'Norton, Thomas (1530x32–1584)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20359, accessed 10 Oct 2016]. I am grateful to Coral Casey-Stoakes for information on Norton; see also above, ch. 1.
[59] Washington D.C., Folger Shakespeare Library, MS X.c.62, fol. 1v.

certainly aware, entitled 'The dissolving of the abbeys by K. H. 8.'[60] It is unclear precisely when the term 'dissolution' as it pertained to the fall of the religious houses entered the English lexicon, but it is clear that by the later sixteenth century, perspectives on the suppression had begun to shift in ways that served to collapse and condense the various phases of dissolution into something more coherent, and to distinguish it from the wider campaign to discredit the Catholic Church. This was also partly a function of hindsight, which revealed that, despite Henrician claims about the reformation and surrender of the monasteries, the actions of the regime in the 1530s had ultimately claimed the entire monastic institution.

Henrician attempts to dictate the legacies and afterlives of the suppression continued to shape and inflect the histories and chronicles produced during the reigns of his Protestant heirs, even as growing temporal distance functioned increasingly to fix the long process of suppression to particular times and dates. Previously, we noted that neither contemporaries nor historians have paid much attention to the Elizabethan dissolution. It is also striking that the Edwardian suppression of the chantries has been almost completely overshadowed by the Henrician Dissolution of the Monasteries, despite the radical nature of the break engendered by the former with medieval commemorative practices and the doctrine of purgatory.[61] This is relevant, perhaps, to questions of reputation and agency. Edward VI enjoyed a legacy in the early modern period modelled on the young Josiah, biblical iconoclast and child king of Judah, whilst Henry VIII had a rather more ambiguous contemporary afterlife.[62] As we shall see, the dissolution became increasingly central to perceptions of Henry's reign and Reformation, in ways that profoundly influenced how it was remembered across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The emergence of the language of 'dissolution' to describe this episode also illuminates something of this growing tendency to collapse and telescope the various phases and episodes experienced by Wriothesley and the generation who had witnessed the suppression in the 1530s. Yet the process by which the dissolution was transformed into a culturally significant event for English Protestants owed at least as much, if not more, to the development of critical perspectives on the Henrician Reformation. In order to explore when and how the dissolution

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[60] BL, Cotton MS Titus F III, fols. 268v-270r.

[61] For perspectives on the dissolution of the chantries see Peter Cunich, 'The dissolution of the chantries', in Patrick Collinson and John Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), pp. 159-74; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ch. 2; Phillip G. Lindley, '"Pickpurse" purgatory, the dissolution of the chantries, and the suppression of intercession for the dead', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 164 (2011), pp. 277-304.

[62] On Edward VI as Josiah see Margaret Aston, *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 26-37; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London: Penguin, 1999), ch. 2.

finally acquired the name that was perhaps the clearest hallmark of its cultural significance, we must therefore examine the capacity of historical writing to undermine and contest the vision of the suppression expounded in Tudor polemic.

Contesting the Henrician Orthodoxy

Historical memory, as Bruce Gordon has recently suggested, is profoundly shaped by processes of contestation as well as the ways in which 'hegemonic narratives are crafted to silence or at least subordinate other accounts'.[63] In the previous chapter, we saw how critiques of the dissolution had begun to emerge from both ends of the confessional spectrum as early as 1536. Histories and chronicles could also be vehicles for these alternative narratives of the suppression. At the same time as Wriothesley and Grafton were penning and printing their Tudor chronicles, an anonymous former resident of the London Greyfriars – the Franciscan friary which had since become Grafton's workshop – continued to work on the institutional chronicle that had once belonged to his house.[64] This is a rare – possibly unique – direct continuation of the monastic tradition into the mid-sixteenth century.[65] The strikingly Henrician outlook exhibited in the chronicler's terse and infrequent references to the closure and spoliation of various religious houses, including the local 'Austynfreeres' and 'Whytfreers', conceals a continued commitment to Catholicism that re-emerged only in his entries for the reign of Mary I.[66] 'So gladde', he wrote after her accession, 'dyd the pepulles harttes rejoyse in hare comyng in', before observing that 'the vij. Day of Aprell [1555] the observanttes ware put in at grenwych agayn'.[67] Divorced from its institutional context, the Grey Friars' chronicle had become something more akin to personal record of the post-Reformation period.[68]

Like Wriothesley's chronicle, this document therefore reveals a particular thread of the personal memory of the dissolution, except that in this case the chronicle reflects the perspective of a victim of the dissolution rather than that of a beneficiary. As Judith Pollmann and Erika Kuijpers have observed, very few early modern victims wrote down memories that

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[63] Bruce Gordon, 'History and memory', in Ulinka Rublack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Protestant Reformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 769.
[64] BL, Cotton MS Vitellius F XII. Published as *The Chronicle of the Grey Friars of London*, ed. John Gough Nichols, Camden Society, old series, 53 (London, 1852).
[65] See Mary C. Erler, *Reading and Writing During the Dissolution: Monks, Friars, and Nuns, 1530-1558* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), ch. 2.
[66] BL, Cotton MS Vitellius F XII, fols. 353v, 355r.
[67] Ibid., fols. 362r, 365r.
[68] On the porous boundaries between historical and institutional genres and forms of life-writing see esp. Adam Smyth, *Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

recalled personal trauma or culpability.[69] Nonetheless, the laconic quality of the author's entries is remarkable. This is at least partly a product of the conventions of the medieval tradition of which the Grey Friars' chronicle is the residue. But it may also have been shaped by the forces of selective amnesia operating on an account that revisited the traumatic experience of suppression or, possibly, which reflected the guilt of a man whose brotherhood had not followed the model of the Carthusians and resisted the dissolution more vociferously.[70] In other words, the chronicle offers, perhaps, an example of what the anthropologist Paul Connerton has called 'humiliated silence': a specific strategy of deliberate forgetting that functions to distance the individual from a problematic episode in the recent past.[71] It is striking that references to the scribe's own former home are terse and detached, and betray nothing of his feelings about the dissolution. Describing the friary building simply as 'sumtyme the grayfreeres', he noted only that part of the property had since become a kind of warehouse for spoils seized from the French in 1540.[72] Thus the anonymous friar's chronicle may reveal a parallel, even complementary culture of amnesia to that sponsored by the Henrician regime, which had itself long emphasised the complicity of the religious in their own demise.

Conservative sentiments also continued to thrive amongst members of the laity. The brief Catholic restoration under Mary I, which caused such anxiety for reformers like Foxe and Parker, offers an opportunity to glimpse the resonance of the dissolution for the English Catholic community. The civic chronicle of the Marian merchant tailor and London citizen Henry Machyn – misidentified by its nineteenth-century editor as a diary – does not extend as far back in time as the dissolution itself.[73] However, it clearly demonstrates the longevity of the memory of the spoliation of the monasteries into the reign of Mary I, when the queen's limited revival of domestic English monasticism called to mind the Henrician assault on the religious houses.[74] As Andrew Gordon has argued, Machyn's chronicle belies his anxiety about the

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[69] Judith Pollmann and Erika Kuijpers, 'On the early modernity of modern memory', in Erika Kuijpers, Judith Pollmann, Johannes Müller, and Jasper van der Steen (eds.), *Memory Before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), p. 20.

[70] On the Carthusian martyrs see David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948-59), iii, pp. 229-37; Anne Dillon, *Michelangelo and the English Martyrs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), esp. chs. 1-2.

[71] Paul Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1 (2008), pp. 67-69.

[72] BL, Cotton MS Vitellius F XII, fol. 353v.

[73] In his will, Machyn calls the document 'my cronacle'. See Ian Mortimer, 'Tudor chronicler or sixteenth-century diarist? Henry Machyn and the nature of his manuscript', *SCJ* 33 (2002), p. 986. See also Gary G. Gibbs, 'Marking the days: Henry Machyn's manuscript and the mid-Tudor era', in Eamon Duffy and David Loades (eds.), *The Church of Mary Tudor* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 281-308; Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory, and autobiography', pp. 45-6.

[74] The implications of the Marian restoration of monasticism are a neglected feature of her reign. See Knowles, *Religious Orders in England*, iii, pp. 421-43; David Loades, 'The personal religion of Mary I', in Duffy and Loades (eds.), *The Church of Mary Tudor*, pp. 23-4; C. S. Knighton, 'Westminster Abbey restored', in Duffy and Loades (eds.), *The Church of Mary Tudor*, pp. 77-123; Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 26, 44-5.

religious upheavals he had witnessed in the preceding decades.[75] Machyn mourned the treatment of the shrine of Edward the Confessor 'when that abbay [Westminster] was spowlyed and robyd' and declared its re-establishment 'a godly shyte [sight]', praising also the 'goodly syngyng and senssyng as has bene sene [there]' since the nation had reverted to Catholicism.[76] But if recalling the dissolution served Machyn's purposes in offering thanks for the accession of the new Catholic queen, there are also striking absences that further reflect the subtly partisan quality of his text. In one such example of strategic forgetfulness, he offered no comment whatsoever on the execution of the Marian martyrs to whose deaths he surely bore witness. As Machyn's chronicle continued to fulfil something of an institutional function, his practices of inclusion and omission thus also reveal how personal experience and confessional memory could be woven into a document that retained a semi-public status.[77] As with the chronicle of the anonymous Grey Friar, Machyn's silences have the potential to disclose a great deal about the Catholic and conservative experience of the Reformation.

However, if the reign of Mary I was the earliest flashpoint for the development of what Eamon Duffy has identified as the 'conservative voice', it would take a different generation fully to develop a conservative narrative of the dissolution.[78] In 1592, more than fifty years after the closure of the last religious houses, the Elizabethan antiquary John Stow published the first edition of his *Annales, or generall chronicle of England*. Stow's antiquarian output was extensive: at the time of its publication, the *Annales* was the most recent in a series of chronicles penned by Stow, both under his own name – *A summarie of English chronicles* (1565; 1587), *The chronicles of England* (1580) – and as a member of the Holinshed syndicate. But unlike Grafton, with whom Stow sustained a bitter rivalry across their publishing careers, and others of the collective involved in producing Holinshed's chronicles, Stow was not possessed of impeccable Protestant credentials. Earlier in his career, he had twice faced controversy for suspected crypto-Catholicism, first over accusations that he had illegally copied and circulated a pamphlet attacking the queen, and then again when Edmund Grindal, then bishop of London, ordered that his property be searched for illegal Catholic books and manuscripts. The investigation revealed thirty-nine objectionable items and the report that reached William Cecil claimed that Stow's 'bokes declare him to be a great fauver[oure]r of papistrye'.[79] Current historiography tends to

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[75] Andrew Gordon, *Writing Early Modern London: Memory, Text, and Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), ch. 1.
[76] John Gough Nichols (ed.), *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, 1550-1563*, Camden Society, old series, 42 (London, 1848), p. 130.
[77] Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory, and autobiography', p. 46.
[78] Eamon Duffy, 'The conservative voice in the English Reformation', in Simon Ditchfield (ed.), *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 87-105.
[79] Quoted in David Scott Kastan, 'Opening gates and stopping hedges: Grafton, Stow, and the politics of Elizabethan history writing', in Elizabeth Fowler and Roland Greene (eds.), *The Project of Prose in Early Modern Europe and the New World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 73. On this episode

place Stow somewhere between church papist and conservative conformist; Ian Archer has suggested that Stow underwent a 'transition to conformity' over the course of his life, much of which he spent engaged in historical and antiquarian activities.[80] This work, as we shall see also in the next chapter, inspired his interest in England's lost religious houses and the changes wrought by the dissolution on the landscape; among Stow's surviving manuscripts are several collections relating to monastic history, including a survey notebook listing all the religious houses of medieval England in thirty-four folios.[81]

At first glance, the *Annales* does not appear to reflect Stow's religious or intellectual proclivities in the way that Wriothesley and Grafton's chronicles flaunted their support for the Henrician cause. Most of his entries describing the fall of particular houses echo the concise passages set down by Wriothesley, though Stow's lists are not as extensive as those of his predecessor. Late in 1538, for example, he stated that 'The hospital of S. Thomas Akres in London, the blacke friers, the white friers, the gray friers, and the charter house monks in London, were suppressed, and so all other religious houses immediately after'.[82] There are a few subsequent mentions of dissolved houses, including the conversion of St Mary Overy to a parish church and the transformation of St Albans Abbey into a secular cathedral in 1539.[83] Yet these entries are not so numerous as in earlier Tudor chronicles, further testifying to how the long process of suppression was being gradually condensed and collapsed into something more akin to an historical event. It is also the case that Stow's chronicle re-shaped earlier recollections of the dissolution, subsuming his concise lists of dissolved religious houses into a wider narrative that was polemically and confessionally inflected, if rather more subtly so than some previous chronicles. Thus in an entry dated 1536, Stow offers the following account of the closure of the lesser monasteries. It is an account that is at once both remarkably familiar and profoundly altered from what had gone before:

> In a parliament begun in the moneth of Februarie [1536], was granted to the king and his heires all religious houses in the realme of Englande, of the value of two hundred pound and vnder, with al lands and goods to them belonging: the number of these houses then suppressed, were 376. the value of their lands then 32000. pound, and more by yeere, the mooueable goodes as they

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see also Janet Wilson, 'A catalogue of the "unlawful" books found in John Stow's study on 21 February 1568/9', *Recusant History* 20 (1990), pp. 1-30.

[80] Ian W. Archer, 'John Stow: citizen and historian', in Ian Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie (eds.), *John Stow (1525-1605) and the Making of the English Past* (London: The British Library, 2004), pp. 21-2. See also Alexandra Gillespie, 'Introduction', in Gadd and Gillespie (eds.), *John Stow*, p. 2; Patrick Collinson, 'John Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism', in idem, *This England: Essays on the English Nation and Commonwealth in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 287-308.

[81] BL, Additional MS 57945 (John Stow's notebook listing religious houses, c. 1600).

[82] John Stow, *The annales of England, faithfully collected out of the most authenticall authors, records, and other monuments of antiquitie* (London, 1592), p. 972.

[83] On processes of conversion see below, ch. 3.

> were sold, Robin Hoodes pennywoorthes, amounted to more than one hundred thousand pounds, and the religious persons that were in the saide houses, were clerely put out, some went to other greater houses, some went abroad to the world. It was (sayeth mine author) a pitifull thing to heare the lamentation that the people in the countrie made for them: for there was great hospitalitie kept among them, and as it was thought more than ten thousand persons, masters and seruants had lost their liuings by the putting downe of those houses at that time.[84]

This passage, which is an expanded version of a previous discussion of the dissolution in Stow's earlier *Chronicles of England* (1580), bears striking resemblance, both structural and linguistic, to its equivalent in Wriothesley's chronicle.[85] Indeed, the internal evidence is sufficient to suggest that the Henrician herald was in fact the anonymous 'author' behind Stow's account of the suppression of the lesser monasteries.[86]

It is unsurprising that Stow, who was a child of only about ten years old at the time of the dissolution, borrowed his account from an earlier source, not to say entirely in keeping with the chronicle tradition. Yet the implication of the phrase 'sayeth mine author' that what follows is a faithful rendering of its source is profoundly misleading and conceals the notable and important differences between Wriothesley's chronicle and the *Annales*. The latter does not quote verbatim from the Henrician chronicle. Stow erased Wriothesley's polemical comments concerning the 'augmentation of the crowne' and the 'ample' living of the religious. His addition of the contemporary proverb 'Robin Hoodes penny woorthes' to characterise the 'moveable goodes' taken from the religious houses further implies contempt for the king and his commissioners. In contemporary parlance, this phrase had a double meaning, referring either to goods sold at half their worth, as Robin Hood had done with those he plundered, or the legendary outlaw's ability to buy goods at any price because 'the owners were glad to get anything of *Robin Hood*, who otherwise would have taken their goods for nothing'.[87] As evangelical polemicists had noted since the 1530s, Henry VIII could hardly be said to have stolen from the rich to give to the poor. This phrase thus concealed a profound critique of the Henrician government, which found further expression in the final lines of the passage. In a subtle but significant misrepresentation of Wriothesley, Stow conveyed his pity for the

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[84] Stow, *Annales*, p. 966.
[85] The similitude of these entries was underlined by William Douglas Hamilton who suggested that Stow must have had access either to the original manuscript or to a contemporary copy of Wriothesley's chronicle. See Hamilton, 'Introduction', p. xx. See also Barrett L. Beer, 'John Stow and the English Reformation, 1547-1559', *SCJ* 16 (1985), p. 258, though Beer does not discuss the passage in question. Note that Wriothesley's chronicle is not listed among the chronicles owned by Stow identified in Alexandra Gillespie, 'Stow's "owlde" manuscripts of London chronicles', in Gadd and Gillespie (eds.), *John Stow*, pp. 57-68.
[86] See also Lyon, 'A pitiful thing?'.
[87] John Ray, *A compleat collection of English proverbs, also the most celebrated proverbs of the Scotch, Italian, French, Spanish and other languages* (London, 1737), p. 208.

communities – no longer limited solely to the 'poore' sorts – robbed of the religious houses around which they had been built and upon which they had relied for employment, charity, and hospitality. Although here he focused wholly upon the lay victims of the dissolution and made no effort to rehabilitate the monks, nuns, and friars who were the Henrician regime's primary targets, this passage nevertheless conceals the irony that a rhetoric intended to assert the expediency of the suppression and the folly of those who had mourned the loss of the monasteries had been transfigured to mould the dissolution itself into the truly 'pitifull thing'.

The polemic of the *Annales* is both a reflection of Stow's religious proclivities and the product of a political culture that policed conformity in matters of religion. Nothing came of the charges to which he was subject in 1569, but the *Annales* evidences amply the ways in which his religion suffused his sense of history, as well as the necessity of caution in producing a critique of Henry VIII under the second of his Protestant heirs. Other politically charged episodes that have been given a markedly more conservative cast in the *Annales* than in other contemporary histories include the fatal shooting of Robert Packington, one of Foxe's earliest Protestant martyrs, in 1536;[88] the death at the stake of Friar Forest, burned for heresy in 1538;[89] and the accession of Mary I in 1553.[90] In the case of Forest, Stow again paraphrased Wriothesley's chronicle to temper the language of popish error, turning a vituperative condemnation of the 'obstinate' friar into the cautious commemoration of a Catholic martyr.[91]

Stow was not merely a compiler of information, but also an editor, censor, and polemicist of sorts. It is in this context that it becomes possible to understand his approach to Wriothesley's chronicle and the problem of the latter's anonymity, which, the cumulative and parasitic tendencies of the genre notwithstanding, seems particularly unusual. In a prefatory list Stow cited the authority of some three hundred classical, medieval, and contemporary authorities. These include the works of contemporary and near-contemporary chroniclers including Thomas Cooper, Edward Hall, Robert Fabyan, and Polydore Vergil, in addition to a variety of other sources that displayed in abundance their evangelical convictions, including the caustic polemic of John Bale and the profoundly anti-Catholic topography of the Kentish antiquary William Lambarde. Although practices of citation were far from standardised in this period, the margins of the *Annales* are littered with references to these and other texts.[92] But there is no explicit reference to Wriothesley anywhere in any of the extant editions of Stow's chronicle.

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[88] Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 77.
[89] Lyon, 'A pitiful thing?'.
[90] Kastan, 'Opening gates and stopping hedges', pp. 66-79.
[91] Lyon, 'A pitiful thing'.
[92] On the history of citation practices see Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Instead, he has taken the step of parenthetically citing the oblique figure of 'mine author', distancing himself from the very discussion of the dissolution that he had so carefully transfigured. It seems, then, that Wriothesley's obscurity is a product of Stow's intention deliberately to use the chronicle to challenge the Henrician orthodoxy by shaping a very particular afterlife for the dissolution. Stow's work, like that of Wriothesley before him, albeit with a very different character and emphasis, was neither an impartial record of the past nor a vehicle for a moribund tradition of historical writing, but rather a carefully composed narrative saturated with religious and political significance. The careful piece of textual ventriloquism that is Stow's account of the suppression of the monasteries testifies powerfully to the creative potential of the chronicle genre to make and shape historical memory.

Stow's conservative chronicle ought not to be confused with the more flagrantly polemical histories produced by contemporary Catholic historians. The most significant and powerful example of this genre is the Catholic exile Nicholas Sander's *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani* (1585). It was the first narrative of the English Reformation published from a recusant Catholic perspective and it came to be enormously influential in contemporary historiography.[93] In some ways a counterpoint to Foxe's *Actes and monuments*, which had been recently reprinted in a fourth edition in 1583, Sander's history advanced a profoundly negative view of the Reformation, the Elizabethan settlement, and the political and personal machinations of Henry VIII.[94] Although not explicitly conceived as a chronicle, the text bears the main hallmark of this tradition: a series of chronologically ordered chapters, which delineate particular events and episodes organised by calendar date and month. In *De origine*, the dissolution functions as an exemplary episode in a long list of Henry VIII's shortcomings, including his divorce from pious Catherine of Aragon and marriage to wicked Anne Boleyn, as well as his assault on the Roman Catholic Church. Sander thus railed against the 1535 visitation that 'had for its end to enable the king to destroy every monastery the possession of which he coveted' and originated the public campaign against the 'enormities of the religious, partly discovered and partly invented'.[95] He also constructed a narrative that dwelt upon the violence of the Reformation: Sander lambasted the 'storm' brought down upon the religious orders, as well as the Catholic saints whose shrines and cults they promoted, and which roundly

[93] Christopher Highley, '"A pestilent and seditious book": Nicholas Sander's *Schismatis Anglicani* and Catholic Histories of the Reformation', in Kewes (ed.), *Uses of History*, esp. pp. 147-8. See also idem, *Catholics Writing the Nation in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 43.
[94] On Sander as a counterpoint to Foxe see Highley, 'Pestilent and seditious book', p. 152.
[95] Nicholas Sander, *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani*, ed. and trans. David Lewis, *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism* (London: Burns and Oates, 1877), p. 130.

condemned Henry's ultimate project to 'disturb and destroy the remaining monasteries' in England and Wales.[96]

By contrast with Sander's overtly provocative narrative, Stow's chronicle was, as we have seen, born of a different impulse. It was a product of his particular variety of conservative antiquarianism, described by Ian Archer and Patrick Collinson as a 'nostalgic' expression of a worldview that lamented the decline of charity and hospitality from the medieval period and mourned the disfigurement of the post-Reformation landscape and cityscape.[97] As we shall see in the next chapter, pity for the losses sustained at the dissolution quickly became attached to the physical remnants of monastic sites. Ruins, in particular, became a leitmotif in literary expressions of the conservative voice, including William Shakespeare's lament for the 'bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang'.[98] Stow's chronicle was archetypal of this wider conservative tradition. It is also undoubtedly, if cautiously, ideological. Thus when his biographer, Barrett L. Beer, claimed that his subject 'did not join the great religious debates of his day and never wrote polemical works to praise or condemn government policy', he mistook the subtle polemic of the *Annales* for the laconic and secular history long associated with the early modern chronicle genre.[99]

Stow's outlook was predicated on what Patrick Collinson has described as a 'strongly contrasted sense of "then" and "now"' which was to 'persist in the national memory for generations to come', not least reinforced by the success of Stow's own literary output and the republication of the *Annales* in successive editions of 1600, 1601, and 1605.[100] His perception of the dissolution was profoundly shaped by this sense of temporal rupture – by the divide between past and present that the Reformation had engendered. Precisely because 'conservative voices' like Stow's tended to articulate and mourn the temporal breach that the Henrician culture of amnesia sought to downplay, they also functioned further to collapse the various phases of dissolution into a single catastrophic episode. This tendency, as we shall now see, became increasingly prevalent, emphatic, and widespread into the early seventeenth century and beyond.

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[96] Sander, *Rise and Growth of Anglican Schism*, p. 140.
[97] Ian Archer, 'The nostalgia of John Stow', in David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington (eds.), *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 22; Collinson, 'John Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism'.
[98] See Duffy's discussion of this passage from Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 in 'Conservative voice', p. 230. See also Philip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 102-3; Eamon Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege, and Sedition: Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), ch. 11.
[99] Barrett L. Beer, *Tudor England observed: the world of John Stow* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), p. 85.
[100] Patrick Collinson, 'Merry England on the ropes: the contested culture of the early modern English town', in Ditchfield (ed.), *Christianity and Community*, p. 137. On the longevity of Stow see Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 253.

'An Alteration or Revolution of Time'

The Protestant memory of the dissolution became increasingly problematic with the passing of the generation who had witnessed it at first-hand and in the context of growing anxiety about the zeal of the early reformers and the avarice of the Henrician regime in the 1530s. If overt critiques of the dissolution had once been the preserve of a small but committed minority of evangelical polemicists and controversialists, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries it became clear that a growing number of Protestants were beginning to look back upon the suppression with a critical eye. In this context, many commentators began to acknowledge the breach that the dissolution had engendered between past and present, as well the rupture it had created in the religious, social, and economic fabric of early modern England.

For many Protestants, this emergent anxiety was characterised by a sense of decline. In 1578, the puritan divine Laurence Chaderton gave a sermon at St Paul's Cross, subsequently printed as *An excellent and godly sermon*, which focused upon the proper preparation of the clergy and was generally intended to promote a more zealous style of piety amongst his audience.[101] It also gave him the opportunity to rail against 'the papists [who] always cast in our teeth the great and famous hospitals of their nobility and clergy, [and] the building of abbeys, monasteries, and nunneries, cathedral churches, colleges'.[102] This comment reveals how ongoing religious debate compelled remembrance of the monastic past amongst Protestants, for the simple reason that they had not been allowed to forget about the virtues of charity, hospitality, and lay piety associated with the medieval religious houses. Although Chaderton robustly rejected the Catholic position, he was also ultimately forced to admit that these 'outward works… indeed are such as do stop our mouths and put us Protestants to silence'.[103] As well as demonstrating the longevity of the Catholic critique of the dissolution, Chaderton's uneasy confession also suggests that, perhaps, earlier evangelical concerns about the misappropriation of monastic property for private uses continued to trouble a new generation of Protestants.

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[101] On the *Excellent and godly sermon* see Lake, *Moderate Puritans*, ch. 7; Ellen A. Macek, 'Advice manuals and the formation of English Protestant and Catholic identities, 1560-1660', in Wim Janse and Barbara Pitkin (eds.), *The Formation of Clerical and Confessional Identities in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), pp. 317-8.

[102] Laurence Chaderton, *An excellent and godly sermon, most needefull for this time, wherein we liue in all sercuritie and sinne, to the great dishonour of God, and contempt of his holy word. Preached at Paules Crosse the xxvi daye of October, An. 1578* (London, 1578), sig. C5r. On Chaderton see Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), ch. 3; Arnold Hunt, Laurence Chaderton and the Hampton Court Conference', in Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (eds.), *Belief and Practice in Reformation England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 207-28.

[103] Chaderton, *Excellent and godly sermon*, sig. C5r.

Chaderton's sermon also constituted a form of public remembrance incited by the practices of preaching and hearing that have recently been examined by Arnold Hunt.[104] A sense of anxiety about the dissolution may have been only implicit in Chaderton's remarks, but they are nevertheless indicative of how the mood of the Protestant memory of the dissolution was beginning to shift and change. In particular, Elizabethan Protestants were being forced to grapple with problems of charity, hospitality, and education. As the sixteenth century drew to a close, these concerns were further exacerbated, as Felicity Heal has argued, by the sense in which social and economic upheaval combined with the new apparatus for charity enshrined in the Elizabethan Poor Laws (1598) contributed to a decline in the practice of hospitality and philanthropy by the gentry and secular clergy.[105]

By the early seventeenth century, these issues had become prominent in contemporary debate. They therefore helped to keep the memory of the dissolution alive amongst a new generation of Reformation polemicists writing from a variety of religious positions. Versions of the argument that the suppression had engendered a state of interminable decline can be found in the writings of authors including John Cosin, an active member of Richard Neile's circle of anti-Calvinists and later bishop of Durham, Peter Hausted, a notorious critic of puritanism, and William Beale, royalist churchman and Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge.[106] However, it found fullest expression, as Anthony Milton has demonstrated, as a tenet of Laudianism in the 1630s, when political and theological priorities shifted away from the outright condemnation of the Catholic Church as an inveterate evil, a project undertaken by a succession of sixteenth-century polemicists from the Henrician commissioners through to Foxe, towards an appreciation of the piety and ceremonial splendour of a church that had been corrupted but nevertheless demanded admiration for its generosity and munificence.[107] The implications of this argument for shifting perceptions of the dissolution and its convergence with concerns about the appropriation of monastic lands and church wealth will be more fully explored in subsequent chapters. Here it informs the context in which Stow's *Annales* became the subject of a new exercise in reshaping the past to suit the concerns and preoccupations of the early Stuart period.

Edmund Howes began work on a continuation of the *Annales* with the encouragement of John Whitgift, archbishop of Canterbury, three years before Stow's death in 1605, although it would

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[104] See Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Hunt discusses also Chaderton's 'Excellent and godly sermon' at pp. 121, 131.
[105] Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 400-403.
[106] See Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 316-8.
[107] Ibid., ch. 6. On Laudianism and the memory of the dissolution see also below, ch. 3.

be another decade before the new edition went to press.[108] Relatively little is known of Howes's background and career outside of his work as a chronicler and antiquary. Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke identify him among the breed of Protestants described by Peter Lake as 'avant garde conformists'.[109] He can also be connected to the endowment of a choir school and salary for an organist at Christ's Hospital and his interest in the Jacobean programme of restoring ecclesiastical structures further reflected his advocacy of the beautification of churches and ritual forms of worship.[110] Although his first continuation of the *Annales* in 1615 narrowly preceded Laudian debates about the 'beauty of holiness', it is plainly apparent from his writing that Howes mourned the charity and the hospitality of the pre-Reformation age. He made no alterations to Stow's original text, except to extend it to cover the early part of the reign of the new Stuart king, James VI and I. But Howes also found ways to bring his proclivities to bear on this new edition of the *Annales* by adding an 'historical preface' that served to colour and re-shape Stow's vision of the dissolution. Although he acknowledged the corrupt elements of medieval monasticism and the ways in which the religious orders had 'neglected their duty to God and man', Howes nevertheless applauded how medieval monks and nuns upheld their social responsibilities and 'relieved the poore, and raised no rents, nor tooke excessive Fines'. The dissolution when it came thus 'fell sodainley upon [the religious houses]' as swiftly and violently as the 'universal deluge'. Articulating the magnitude of this rupture more clearly than any previous chronicler, Howes wrote that the monasteries had been 'utterly ruinated' by the crown and its agents, 'whereat the Clergy, Peeres, and common people were all sore grieved, but could not helpe it'.[111]

Several themes emerge from these comments. The first is the tension between Howes's account of the virtues of medieval monasticism and his unwillingness to name the religious as its primary victims – or even as being among its victims at all. 'Flattered and secured' in their accumulated wealth, the dissolution was portrayed as a shock to the religious but not a punishment that was wholly undeserved; it was akin, as Howes alluded, to the providential Flood sent by God to punish the sins of mankind. Secondly, the preface exhibits a profound anxiety about the wanton destruction of the monasteries. Developing the conservative rhetoric

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[108] Christina DeCoursey, 'Howes, Edmund (*fl.* 1602–1631)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13985, accessed 20 March 2015].
[109] Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c. 1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 98-100. On the term 'avant garde conformist' see Peter Lake, 'Lancelot Andrewes, John Buckeridge and avant-garde conformity at the court of James I', in Linda Levy Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 113-33.
[110] On Howes and the Jacobean rebuilding project see J. F. Merritt, 'Puritans, Laudians, and the phenomenon of church-building in Jacobean London', *HJ* 41 (1998), pp. 937-8, 955.
[111] Edmund Howes, 'An historicall preface' to John Stow, *The annales, or generall chronicle of England* (London, 1615), sig. ¶5v.

of the sixteenth century, the gutted remnants of abbeys and convents scattered across the landscape appear to have been a particular touchstone for this memory, provoking and shaping Howes's sense of the dissolution, for he also wrote that 'many ruins of them remaine a testimony of [the medieval monasteries] to this day'.[112] Thirdly, this passage reinforces and augments Stow's account of widespread grief for the loss of the monasteries, which reached beyond the 'common' sorts to those in the higher echelons of English society and those with status in the political establishment.[113]

The significance of this theme of decline becomes apparent when Howes, in the act of recalling the dissolution, was prompted also to ruminate on the social and economic problems of his own time. His pity was not only for the direct victims of the suppression but also for the generations still suffering its consequences. In the 1530s, Howes wrote, the dissolution had provided Henry VIII with the opportunity to free the English people from 'all former services and taxes' and 'neyther… be any more charged with loans, subsidies, and fifteens'. Here Howes borrowed from much earlier critiques of the failure of the Henrician regime to divert monastic wealth to pious, charitable, and educational uses, which had been prominent amongst justifications for the suppression in the 1530s. But his argument was also heavily inflected by contemporary concerns about taxation. This was not a common feature of either Henrician or evangelical rhetoric. It was, however, a closely contested issue in the early seventeenth century, which witnessed repeated and protracted conflicts between James VI and I and his parliaments over the state of the royal finances.[114] It was thus with palpable bitterness that Howes concluded that since the dissolution 'there have been more statute laws, subsidies and fifteenes then in five hundreth yeares before'.[115]

This claim that the dissolution had been the most problematic rupture for half a millennium is also of crucial significance to Howes's broader conception of chronology and historical change. Adopting a cyclical model of time in which great 'alterations' or 'revolutions' occurred at five hundred year intervals, Howes used his preface to chart the history of England from the time of Brutus to his own present day. These 'alterations' in time tended to take the form of violent

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[112] Ibid. On the mnemonic capacity of monastic ruins see especially Margaret Aston, 'English Ruins and English History: The Dissolution and the Sense of the Past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973), pp. 231-55; Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 274, 281-3. These issues are explored further below, ch. 3.
[113] Howes, 'Historicall preface', sig. ¶6r.
[114] On the financial problems of the early Stuart crown see for example Johann Sommerville, 'Ideology, property, and the constitution', in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (eds.), *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603-1642* (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 47-71; John Cramsie, *Kingship and Crown Finance Under James VI and I, 1603-1625* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002).
[115] Howes, 'Historicall preface', sig. ¶6r.

wars or conquests, beginning with the dynastic civil wars sparked by the murder of Porrex, legendary king of the Britons, by his brother, Ferrex, and the latter's subsequent death at the hands of his own mother. This was followed at successive half millennia by the tyrannical rule of Julius Caesar, the Saxon conquest, and the invasion of the Normans. It is testament to the potency and longevity of the cultural memory of the dissolution that Howes cited this episode as the most recent of these temporal ruptures. His discussion of monastic complacency and worldliness, of the despoliation of abbeys and convents, and of the consequences visited upon the nation thus belong to an historical narrative that posits the dissolution as the most memorable event of the sixteenth century, on a par with some of the most momentous and violent alterations in English history.

In this respect, it is striking that Howes singled out the dissolution specifically, as opposed to the break from Rome, the supplanting of papal power by the Royal Supremacy, or the Protestant Reformation more generally. One consequence of this decision was to make the suppression virtually synonymous with the reign of Henry VIII and the religious upheavals initiated by his government. The accession of James VI and I in 1603 had created an atmosphere more conducive to critical perspectives on both the dissolution of the monasteries and Henry VIII himself.[116] In stark contrast to the Tudor chronicles, Howes explicitly condemned the king for being the principal player in the dissolution: 'because he would goe the next way to worke overthrew [the religious houses] and raced them… whereat many the Peeres and common people murmured because they expected that the abuses should have bin onely reformed and the rest have still remained'.[117] Discourses of reform designed to combat monastic abuses had been prevalent before the dissolution, but this argument had not been a prominent feature of chronicles produced under Henry's Protestant heirs.[118] For Howes, however, it underpinned an explicit expression of regret for the charity and hospitality of the monasteries which magnified and extended Stow's lament for what had been lost in the early Reformation. Writing that Henry had 'likewise suppresst many fayre hospitalles', Howes suggested that 'the commons beganne to think that the king had no intent eyther to relieve the poore, admit maintenance for maimed souldiers, or to ease them of any common charge'. By implicitly praising the value of monastic charity and the hospitality of the religious orders, Howes built up an increasingly critical image

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[116] Mark Rankin, 'The literary afterlife of Henry VIII, 1558-1625', in Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and John N. King (eds.), *Henry VIII and his Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 105-6.
[117] Howes, 'Historicall preface', sig. ¶5v.
[118] On medieval arguments for reform see Gerald Strauss, 'Ideas of *reformatio* and *renovatio* from the Middle Ages to the Reformation', in Thomas A. Brady, Jr., Heiko A. Oberman, and James D. Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History, 1400-1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*, 2 vols. (Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1995), i, pp. 1-30; Julia Barrow, 'Ideas and applications of reform', in Thomas F. X. Noble, and Julia M. H. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Volume 3, Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600–c. 1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 345-362.

of the king, concluding with a description of an aged, obese monarch, who had grown 'very fat and slothfull' and who ruled through 'feare and terror'.[119] For Howes, the dissolution had thus become the chief abuse of a king who had given himself over to greed.

Howes's chronicle is a powerful testament to the transformation of the lengthy and uneven process witnessed by Wriothesley in the 1530s into a landmark moment in the English Reformation, conforming to Abrams's definition of an historical event as an episode to which 'cultural significance has successfully been assigned'.[120] Howes thus made the strongest claim yet about the importance of remembering the dissolution and about its status as a marker of historical time. He was, moreover, self-conscious of his role as a custodian of memory. It had been his duty, he wrote, to recover those episodes in English history worthy of 'lasting memory'. He also recognised more explicitly than previous chroniclers the urgency this project had acquired in the wake of the memory crisis engendered by the Reformation. Demonstrating a clear awareness of the distorting effects of the polemical rhetoric and propagandist tendencies of his peers and predecessors, he claimed not only to preserve the events recorded in the *Annales* for posterity but also to recover them from the 'wilfull forgetfulnesse' of a people negotiating the consequences of almost a century of religious upheaval. Locating the events about which he was writing firmly in the past whilst at the same time emphasising the importance of their memory to the present, his continuation of the *Annales* was to be a 'token and remembrance to after ages' as well as a 'mirrour of the miseries of former tymes'.[121] The result was, of course, itself polemical: a text which attempted to perpetuate a very particular vision of the dissolution.

When the second edition of Howes's *Annales* was published in 1632, this historical preface was reprinted in its entirity. As in 1615, Stow's original entries on the dissolution and Friar Forest remained untouched and the spectre of Wriothesley lingered on in the reproduction of the phrase 'sayeth mine author'. But Howes's editorial practice had transfigured the meaning of these passages by aligning an older, cautiously critical narrative with a much more censorious take on the rupture of 1536-40. Howes's edition of the *Annales* was thus Stow's conservative chronicle translated and re-interpreted for the early Stuart age.

[119] Howes, 'Historicall preface', sig. ¶6v.
[120] Abrams, *Historical Sociology,* p. 191.
[121] Howes, 'Historicall preface', sig. ¶8r-v.

Naming and Commemorating the Dissolution

Howes offered a unique vision of the dissolution in his sweeping cyclical vision of English history. But he was far from alone in his fundamental contention that the fall of the monasteries was a moment of profound temporal rupture and a landmark event in the Protestant Reformation. As we have seen, chronicles and histories had once been a mechanism for vindicating the Tudor monarchy – or, at least, critiques contained therein had to be extremely subtle and allusive. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, many examples of these genres had become vehicles for attacking Henry VIII and the zeal of the early reformers. This was not a wholesale transformation. Most of these texts, as we saw in the case of Howes, continued to advance an account of the medieval religious orders that was inflected by the earlier rhetoric of monastic corruption. Nevertheless, the histories and chronicles produced in the seventeenth century are also symptomatic of a wider shift in reformed Protestant opinion on the dissolution itself, as Henrician triumph gave way to a more anxious, ambiguous take on the fall of the monasteries.

The development of critical perspectives on the dissolution can be traced across the seventeenth century. At the same time as Howes was working on his second edition of Stow's *Annales*, Morgan Godwin published an English translation of his father Francis Godwin, bishop of Hereford's *Rerum Anglicarum Henrico VIII. Edwardo VI. et Maria regnantibus, annales nunc primum editi* (1616). This chronicle drew heavily upon Stow's chronicles for the early Tudor portion of the text, although it is unclear whether Godwin employed Howes's recently published first edition of the *Annales* or an earlier version overseen by Stow himself.[122] Republished in 1630, also under the title of the *Annales of England*, Godwin's chronicle castigated Henry as an avaricious, violent, and self-interested monarch: a king 'much prone to Reformation (specially if any thing might be gotten by it)'.[123] Godwin thus attributed the dissolution of the larger monastic houses solely to Henry's covetousness:

> Not content with what hee had already corraded [corroded], hee casts his eyes on the wealth of the Abbeys that had escaped the violence of the former tempest: and not expecting (as hee deemed it) a needless Act of Parliament, seizeth on the rest of the Abbeyes and Religious Houses of the Realme.[124]

In doing so, Godwin – like Howes – subsumed the overtly polemical language deployed against Henry by Howes into the main body of his chronicle, tarnishing the king with the 'guilt' of

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[122] D. R. Woolf, 'Godwin, Francis (1562–1633)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10890, accessed 29 Oct 2016].
[123] Francis Godwin, *Annales of England* (London, 1630), p. 159.
[124] Ibid., p. 161.

dissolution which plagued him 'like a consuming canker'.[125] By connecting these anxieties with the person of Henry VIII, texts such as Howes's and Godwin's *Annales* thus elevated the dissolution to the status of an event virtually synonymous with the Henrician Reformation itself.

Godwin was not unique in his tendency to read the dissolution as perhaps the most significant episode in the reign and reforms of Henry VIII. In the same year as Godwin's *Annales* was published, John Taylor, the self-styled water poet, produced a collection of memorials of the monarchs of England. His one-page account of the key events of Henry's reign closes with the fall of the religious houses, which he believed exemplified the 'tempest of history' brought on by the schism with the Roman church. For this cause, he writes, 'the King caused to be suppressed in England and Wales 283 monesteries, 215 Priories, 108 Fryeries, 118 Nunneries, 84 Colledges, 9 Cells, and 103 Hospitals'.[126] There is no mention of subsequent reforms such as the Act of Six Articles (1539), which ushered in a period of greater conservatism in Henrician religious policy and left behind legacies which were rather less wide-ranging and long-lasting than the earlier rupture of the dissolution.[127] Likewise the Stuart chronicler Sir Richard Baker named the dissolution first amongst 'those great disorders, which have been the blemish of [Henry VIII's] life'. Demonstrating a clear awareness that memory and reputation could be made and erased with pen and ink, he wrote that the dissolution was the principal episode that had caused the king to 'be blotted out of the catalogue of our best princes'.[128] Historical writing thus offers an index of shifting perspectives on Henry VIII, which suggests that the dissolution loomed especially large in increasingly negative perceptions of the king and his Reformation. The suppression was, in other words, the most memorable manifestation of the avarice and covetousness of Henry VIII and his nobles.

This theme was, as we saw in the previous chapter, a characteristic of the polemic produced by the regime's early evangelical critics in the 1530s. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, condemnation of Henry's greed and self-interest had become much more widespread. It is worth noting here that this did not eclipse or even diminish the Henrician narrative of monastic

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[125] Ibid.
[126] John Taylor, *All the works of Iohn Taylor the water poet, being 63 in number, collected into one volume, by the author, with sundry new additions, corrected, reuised, and newly imprinted* (London, 1630), p. 316.
[127] For an overview of shifts in Henrician religious policy (and for different perspectives on its character) see for example G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2005), ch. 6; Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), chs. 5-6.
[128] Sir Richard Baker, *A chronicle of the kings of England: from the time of the Romans government unto the reign of our soveraigne lord King Charles. Containing all passages of state & church, with all other observations proper for a chronicle. Faithfully collected out of authors ancient and moderne; & digested into a new method* (London, 1643), sig. Fff2v.

corruption that can be traced – albeit to slightly different degrees – across the trajectory from Wriothesley through Stow to Howes and beyond. If the implication of Godwin's account of the violence of the dissolution is that the religious were victims of the Henrician 'whirle-wind', his chronicle also continued in the manner of the precedent set by government polemic a century earlier by recording various monastic frauds and abuses for posterity. A prominent churchman, Godwin could not condone the 'blinde zeale' of the pre-Reformation age. Among the deceptions he identified was the alleged replacement of the real bones of St Thomas Becket with others from a better preserved corpse. This, he wrote, was an example of the 'superstitious abuse of images' that was the main 'stumbling blocke' to Reformation.[129] Godwin also echoed the long-standing claim about the complicity of the religious in their own suppression, citing their 'guilt of conscience' as the reason many of them 'surrendered their charge even before they were required'.[130] Similarly, Baker's chronicle also exhibits a tension between his negative appraisal of the dissolution and the assertion that the monasteries were the 'forteresses and pillars' of popery, subject to accusations of 'adulteries and murthers' that were 'perhaps no more then [sic] truth'.[131]

A comparable vision of the dissolution can be found in the Church of England clergyman Thomas Fuller's *Church history of Britain* (1656), which offered a comprehensive account in eleven books of the history of Christianity in the British Isles.[132] The sixth book, devoted to the 'Originall, Increase, Greatnesse, Decay, and Dissolution' of the religious houses, is characteristic of the rather ambivalent vision of the suppression we have encountered in previous seventeenth-century histories and chronicles. On the one hand, Fuller was critical of the manner in which the Henrician regime had undertaken the dissolution of the religious houses. 'When King Henry the eighth dissolved Monasteries', Fuller continued, 'there was put into his Hand an opportunity and advantage to ingratiate Himself and His memory for ever' by channelling the tithes belonging to the religious houses into the possession of these 'wronged Parish-Priests'.[133] The king's subsequent failure to make restoration was therefore a source of great regret for Fuller. It is worth noting that this constitutes a relatively mild form of the mid-seventeenth-century Protestant critique of Henry VIII. A few years later, shortly after the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, Fuller's opponent and Laudian churchman, Peter Heylyn, published his *Ecclesia restaurata* (1661), which also served as a partial critique of the *Church history*.[134] In the

[129] Godwin, *Annales*, pp. 159-60.
[130] Ibid., p. 167.
[131] Baker, *Chronicle*, sigs. Hhh4r-v.
[132] On Fuller's career and religious views see W. B. Patterson, 'Fuller, Thomas (1607/8-1661)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10236, accessed 01/01/2018].
[133] Thomas Fuller, *The church history of Britain from the birth of Jesus Christ until the year M.DC.XLVIII* (London, 1656), Book 6, pp. 282-3.
[134] On Heylyn and Fuller's disputes see John Drabble, 'Thomas Fuller, Peter Heylyn and the English Reformation', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, new series, 3 (1979), pp. 168-88;

Ecclesia restaurata, Heylyn vigorously condemned the entire Henrician Reformation, which he believed to have hardly been a Reformation at all because of the conservative reaction after 1539. Instead, he located the true origins of the English Reformation in Edward VI's reign – a product of his anti-puritan obsession with the radical nature of Edwardian Protestantism, which also caused him strongly to downplay the significance of the suppression.[135] Indeed, it is striking that Heylyn offered a more sustained discussion of the Edwardian dissolution of the chantries than he did of the Henrician dissolution of the monasteries.[136]

Fuller, by contrast, put greater store in the suppression as an important episode in the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century. His criticism of Henry VIII fed into a more general critique of the dissolution itself, returning to the familiar theme of a supposed decline in charity and hospitality in the wake of the fall of the religious houses. For all the faults of the religious orders, he wrote, 'by their hospitality, many an honest and hungry soul had his bowels refreshed, which otherwise would have been starved'.[137] Fuller thus qualified the success of the suppression. Yet, ultimately, none of these arguments served to undermine his decidedly negative view of medieval monasticism. Despite offering a critique of Henry VIII's actions, the *Church history* is also heavily coloured by the Henrician rhetoric of monastic error and corruption. Thus Fuller accused the religious of 'specious pretences of piety' and argued that they were 'notoriously covetous' and a drain on the parish clergy. In his account of the process of dissolution, he also reinforced the Henrician vision of the monasteries by reproducing the preamble to the 1536 act of suppression, which, as we saw in chapter one, had so vigorously attacked the 'vi[c]ious, carnall, and abominable living' of the England's monks, nuns, and friars.[138] Conceived as a riposte and a corrective to Catholic histories of the Reformation, the *Church history* necessarily sought to balance Fuller's criticism of Henry VIII with the 'infallible truth' of monastic corruption.[139]

With subsequent anti-Catholic crises, these narratives became still more firmly entrenched. Precipitated by the publication of a new French translation of Sander's *De origine* in the mid-1670s and against the backdrop of the Exclusion Crisis and Popish Plot (1678-81), Gilbert

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Robert Mayer, 'The rhetoric of historical truth: Heylyn *contra* Fuller on *The Church-History of Britain*', *Prose Studies* 20 (1997), pp. 1-20; Anthony Milton, *Laudian and Royalist Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: The Career and Writings of Peter Heylyn* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 174 and passim.

[135] For his brief account of the dissolution see Peter Heylyn, *Ecclesia restaurata, or, the history of the Reformation of the Church of England* (London, 1661), sig. Cv.

[136] See ibid., sigs. Hv-H2r. On the general neglect of the dissolution of the chantries in contemporary writing and modern historiography see above, p. 80. Heylyn's discussion further suggests that the afterlives of the suppression of the chantries merits future investigation.

[137] Fuller, *Church history*, p. 298.

[138] Ibid., p. 310.

[139] Ibid., p. 311.

Burnet produced the first of the three volumes of his monumental *History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (1679-1714). Devoted to the evolution of the church under Henry VIII, the first volume of the *History of the Reformation* encapsulates the fundamental ambivalence with which Protestants had come to view the dissolution and its chief agent. Portrayed as a king ruled by his passions and appetites, Burnet nevertheless casts Henry as the instrument of divine providence. Making a virtue of necessity, he suggested that only such an imperfect and temperamental monarch could have instigated the destructive work of Reformation.[140] He acknowledged, moreover, that the violence and iconoclasm of the Henrician Reformation had also entailed certain losses – the nunnery of Godstow in Oxfordshire, for example, which had encouraged 'great strictness of life'.[141] Like Wriothesley, writing a century earlier, Burnet was thus willing to admit that not all medieval monks and nuns were irredeemably corrupt. He also characterised the social and economic implications of the dissolution as creating significant disorder in the realm. However, preferring ultimately to address monasticism as a monolithic institution, rather than treating different orders and houses on their own terms, the *History of the Reformation* is also inevitably a narrative of monastic decline. Burnet painted a familiar portrait of the Middle Ages when he described how the religious invented 'Relicks without number' to 'feed the devotions of the people', the profits from which enabled them to live 'at ease and in idleness', succumbing to their 'unnatural Lusts' and addicted to idolatry and superstition.[142] He also quoted from the Henrician visitation records to this effect, underlining the power of the Tudor archives to perpetuate a particular vision of the dissolution.[143]

Critically, the *History of the Reformation of the Church of England* also suggests that, more than a century after it had taken place, the Dissolution of the Monasteries had finally acquired its name. At the outset of the first volume, Burnet thus announced his intention to 'give an account of the dissolution of the Monasteries'.[144] Like Foxe and Norton before him, Burnet's use of the language of the dissolution appears to have supplanted the need to refer to the key dates of 1536 and 1539; it was, rather, a shorthand in which this chronology was read as given. The name itself was not Burnet's coinage. It is unclear when contemporaries first began to speak of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, although it is evident that this name was the creation of a generation who had not themselves witnessed the suppression in the 1530s. It was, in other words, an invention of posterity, which appears to have been in common parlance by the second half of the seventeenth century. After c. 1650, the name is also in evidence in other forms of

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[140] See Andrew Starkie, 'Henry VIII in history: Gilbert Burnet's *History of the Reformation* (v. 1), 1679', in Betteridge and Freeman (eds.), *Henry VIII and History*, p. 153.
[141] Gilbert Burnet, *The history of the reformation of the Church of England*, 3 vols. (London, 1679-1714), i, p. 238.
[142] Ibid., pp. 188-9.
[143] Ibid., pp. 222-3 and passim. See also above, ch. 1.
[144] Burnet, *History of the reformation*, i, p. 222.

writing about the past, such as the spatially organised antiquarian studies made by the topographer and chorographer William Dugdale. In the *Antiquities of Warwickshire* (1656), he repeatedly mourned the 'Dissolution of the Monasteries' as 'the greatest blow to Antiquities that ever England had'.[145] For Dugdale, temporal rupture therefore mapped onto a sense of a physical and material break with the past.[146] The name, the Dissolution of the Monasteries, was itself a potent mnemonic for this breach.

Just as the terms 'Protestant' and 'Reformation' were originally pejorative terms, forged by the opponents of religious change, so too were critics of the suppression – or, rather, critics of the way in which Henry VIII had handled the suppression – in large part responsible for its naming.[147] History has remembered not the Reformation or Surrender of the Monasteries, but their Dissolution. This vocabulary of 'dissolution' was not a Henrician invention; rather it emerged over the course of the seventeenth century, as successive generations of Protestants grappled with the difficult legacies of the fall of the religious houses. It was also a function and a product of the hindsight possessed by later generations of commentators – Protestant and Catholic, conservative and evangelical alike – who debated and agonised over the legacies of what was, as we have seen, a highly controversial episode. The meaning of the dissolution continued to be contested well into the late seventeenth century and beyond.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that the suppression was never calendared or celebrated in the sense explored by David Cressy as part of the framework for English national identity and historical consciousness. The vocabulary of dissolution sat uneasily alongside the 'vocabulary of celebration' which underpinned the memorialisation of coronation days and providential deliveries such as the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 or the failure of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605.[148] Indeed, the suppression did not belong to a politically constructed 'public memory' in the same way as these commemorated episodes; it was not invoked as a 'matter of thanksgiving' or a 'stimulus to godliness' and, despite some appeals that Henry VIII had been the divine instrument of the Reformation, it never demanded the same degree of gratitude as these events for the nation's providential deliverance from catastrophe.[149] Rather, it was a morally

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[145] William Dugdale, *The antiquities of Warwickshire illustrated; from records, leiger-books, manuscripts, charters, evidences, tombes, and armes: beautified with maps, prospects, and portraictures,* (London, 1656), preface, p. 22 and passim. See also Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), ch. 8; Jan Broadway, *William Dugdale: A Life of the Warwickshire Historian and Herald* (Gloucester: Xmera, 2011).
[146] This is discussed in more detail below, ch. 3.
[147] On the term 'Protestant' see Peter Marshall, 'The naming of Protestant England', *P&P* 214 (2012), p. 91. On 'Reformation' see Walsham, 'History, memory, and the English Reformation', p. 920.
[148] See David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1989), chs. 5, 7, 9.
[149] David Cressy, 'National memory in early modern England', in John R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 67, 71. For another

ambiguous episode, the significance of which the Henrician regime had, in any case, attempted to downplay in the 1530s. Only with the passage of successive generations and the gradual emergence of a widespread Protestant critique of Henry VIII did the dissolution acquire the status of an historical event. If, as Philip Abrams's definition implies, events are the products of cultural memory, it is significant that this memory also re-shapes and interprets the character of these episodes. Thus the event we know as the Dissolution of the Monasteries only emerged in hindsight and largely in critical perspective.

Yet, ironically, the notoriety that rendered the dissolution unsuitable for official commemoration also placed it amongst the most memorable of Henry VIII's religious reforms. The government's attempt to engender a culture of amnesia around the wholesale suppression had failed. As we have seen, as the dissolution became a critical moment around which contemporary perceptions of the past were crystallised, it also became virtually synonymous with the Henrician Reformation. This tendency is obviously apparent, for example, in Howes's account of the suppression as the most significant event of his age. It is also a pervasive theme in the work of Browne Willis, whose two-volume *History of the mitred parliamentary abbies and conventual cathedral churches* (1718) was published a century after Howes's chronicle. Willis's antiquarian interests were prodigiously wide-ranging, but it was his particular fascination with churches and cathedrals, and his concern for their care and preservation, that caused him to reflect upon the suppression of religious houses.[150] He had a clear sense of the dissolution as a watershed moment: in a now famous passage in the *History of mitred parliamentary abbies*, Willis lamented that it had been nothing less than the 'chief Blemish of the Reformation'.[151] In defiance of the Henrician impulse strategically to forget the suppression, the Dissolution of the Monasteries had thus been transformed from a veritable non-event into one of the most critical and controversial episodes of the entire English Reformation.

Conclusion: Events, Chronology, and Memory

The Protestant memory of the dissolution was not static but dynamic. Contemporary perspectives on the suppression shifted constantly with the passage of the generations and in the context of ongoing religious change and upheaval. We have seen how chroniclers like

example of public memory in the early modern period see also Matthew Neufeld, *The Civil Wars after 1660: Public Remembering in Late Stuart England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013).

[150] On Willis's career see Nicholas Doggett, 'Willis, Browne (1682–1760)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29577, accessed 24 Nov 2017]. On churches, cathedrals, and other monastic structures and the Protestant memory of the dissolution see below, ch. 3.

[151] Browne Willis, *An history of the mitred parliamentary abbies, and conventual cathedral churches*, 2 vols. (London, 1718), i, p. 2.

Wriothesley and Grafton wore their political and confessional colours openly on their sleeves, but both religious conservatives like Stow and subsequent generations of reformed Protestants such as Howes also found in chronicles and histories an outlet for their censure of the dissolution. Wriothesley, Stow, Howes, and their successors are thus emblematic of the continuities and discontinuities of experience between generations that, as Norman Jones and Alexandra Walsham have argued, have considerable potential to illuminate the nature of religious change.[152] Moreover, the work of these contemporary historians and chroniclers offers a glimpse of the larger trajectory of the memory of the dissolution from process to event, and from campaign against monastic corruption, fraud, and iniquity to an episode with rather more complex, not to say wide-reaching and long-lasting, afterlives that were social and economic as well as religious and political.

This memory culture was highly complex, polyvalent and multivocal, but it is nevertheless possible to discern some broad themes and shifts in Protestant perceptions of the dissolution across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Increasing distance on the 1530s served to telescope and condense the various phases of dissolution and to transform the protracted and uneven process of suppression into a culturally significant event. This transformation was also driven in large part by the emergence of critical perspectives on the Henrician Reformation, which were rooted in a profound and growing anxiety about the covetousness of the king and government. It also suggests, as Judith Pollmann and Erika Kuijpers have recently argued, that there were clear limits to the extent to which monarchs and governments had control over memory in the early modern period.[153] Yet the legacies of the dissolution remained fundamentally ambiguous. Contemporary histories and chronicles functioned to perpetuate the vision of the dissolution propagated in Henrician polemic, as well as to challenge and subvert it. The regime's early rhetoric of monastic corruption proved especially potent and enduring, even as other aspects of the dissolution came under sustained attack from Protestant controversialists and historians. It was through these contested processes of remembering and forgetting that the Dissolution of the Monasteries came to loom so large in the Protestant historical imagination.

The act of writing the history of the dissolution was therefore profoundly polemical. The chronicles considered here have also thoroughly disavowed the historiographical commonplace

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[152] Norman Jones, 'Living the reformations: generational experience and political perception in early modern England', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60 (1997), pp. 273-88; Alexandra Walsham, 'The reformation of the generations: youth, age, and religious change in England, c.1500-1700', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 21 (2011), pp. 93-121. See also Peter Marshall, '(Re)defining the English Reformation', *Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009), p. 567.

[153] Pollmann and Kuijpers, 'Early modernity of modern memory', p. 21.

that the genre was devoid of rhetorical force, even if the partisan quality of early modern chronicles is often more elusive than in the more confrontational and vituperative forms of Reformation apologetic. Although the medieval chronicle genre underwent a series of transformations in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, accounts of the death of the chronicle and its transmutation into, to use Daniel Woolf's phrase, a mere 'museum piece' have perhaps therefore also been exaggerated.[154] We have seen how the early modern chronicle genre in fact offered vibrant and creative ways of thinking about the past and, more generally, how the expansive category of historical writing to which these texts belonged was both a product of and a vehicle for shaping the long afterlives of the dissolution in contemporary historical consciousness.

Memory is, therefore, essential to our understanding of the dissolution. It is worth remarking here that generations of modern historians have also been the heirs of what Edmund Howes recognized in 1615 as the polemical tendencies and 'wilfull forgetfulness' generated by the Reformation. By changing the way contemporaries thought about their past and present, the dissolution of the monasteries – like the English Reformation more generally – has also continued to shape the models of periodisation inherited by modern scholarship.[155] To return to the chronicler with whom we began, Charles Wriothesley may not have experienced or recognised the Dissolution of the Monasteries, but his chronicle is a source through which historians and literary scholars continue to view this process. This is, of course, something of an irony considering the desire of the Henrician regime to emphasise the themes of reform and surrender and to repress the memory of the violence and controversy caused by the physical act of dissolution. The ubiquity of the Dissolution of the Monasteries as a shorthand for this contested episode is, therefore, a powerful reminder that historians remain the unwitting heirs and partial prisoners of a vocabulary and a temporal framework that were themselves products of the complex, contested, and dynamic memory culture of the English Reformation.

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[154] Woolf, 'Genre into artifact', p. 352.

[155] For an important recent discussion of the problem of periodisation see Jennifer Summit and David Wallace (eds.), 'Medieval/Renaissance: after periodization', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37 (2007), pp. 453-67. See also below, epilogue and conclusion.

Chapter Three

'Raised out of the Ruins':
Monastic Sites in the Protestant Topographical Imagination

More than a century after the fall of the last abbey in 1540, the effects wrought by the dissolution upon the physical landscape were still everywhere apparent. Whilst travelling in his home county of Wiltshire in the 1650s and 1660s, the antiquary and natural philosopher John Aubrey was frequently confronted with the crumbling remnants of the medieval monasteries. Pausing to reflect on the evocative power of the monastic ruins that he encountered, Aubrey wrote that the 'eie and mind is no lesse affected with these stately ruines than they would have been when standing and entire'. These mutilated structures aroused in Aubrey a 'kind of pittie' for the lost pre-Reformation world of which they were the damaged likenesses, the shadows and shells. Echoing Francis Bacon, he described them lyrically as *tanquam tabulata naufragii* – like fragments of a shipwreck.[1]

In a seminal essay, Margaret Aston identified this strain of Protestant retrospection as a form of 'nostalgia' for the medieval past. According to Aston, the material fragments of the monasteries left behind by the dissolution were particularly significant in shaping the evolution of this memory culture. Ruins, in other words, were mnemonics; they functioned as monuments to and emblems of the state-sponsored effacement of the Catholic past by the Henrician regime. Increasingly, Aston argued, they also became focal points for developing Protestant anxiety about the actions of the early reformers and they could evoke visceral feelings of loss and regret, as well as contributing to contemporary senses of social, material, and aesthetic decline. This inspired a number of antiquaries, including Aubrey, to undertake surveys of the landscape with a view to preserving what little remained of the medieval world for posterity. As the remnants of a vanquished past, monastic fragments provided a fillip to historical enquiry and were critical in shaping the early modern topographical imagination. 'Ruins', Aston contended, 'may make historians'.[2]

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[1] Bodl., MS Aubrey 1; published as John Aubrey, *Wiltshire: the topographical collections of John Aubrey, F.R.S., A.D. 1659-60, with illustrations*, ed. John Edward Jackson, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (Devizes, 1862), p. 4. See also Francis Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum* (London, 1623), book 2, ch. 6.

[2] Margaret Aston, 'English ruins and English history: the dissolution and the sense of the past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36 (1973), p. 231 and passim. For an earlier work that attributed the birth of antiquarianism to the dissolution see Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste,* 3rd edn (London: John Murray, 1962), p. 23. On the evocative power of ruins more generally see Martin S. Briggs, *Goths and Vandals: A Study of the Destruction, Neglect, and Preservation of the Historical Buildings in England* (London: Constable, 1952), ch. 2; Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins* (New York, NY: Walker & Company, 1953).

In Aston's shadow, scholarship on early modern antiquarianism has uniformly emphasised the significance of monastic ruins in the development of the study of the past. Historians including Angus Vine, Graham Parry, Stan Mendyk, and Rosemary Sweet have elaborated Aston's contention that the dissolution was a critical episode in the emergence of early modern topographical writing.[3] This literature has tended to focus on specific authors, such as Aubrey and perhaps most notably the Warwickshire herald William Dugdale, whose monumental three-volume catalogue of religious houses and orders, the *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655-73) has long been considered emblematic of antiquarian responses to the dissolution in the seventeenth century.[4] More recently, Daniel Woolf has sought to place the 'nostalgic' tradition exemplified by the *Monasticon* in the wider context of contemporary historical consciousness and an emerging culture of 'pastness'.[5] This chapter takes these arguments as its main points of engagement and departure. It reassesses the contribution of antiquaries like Dugdale and also seeks to place the 'nostalgic' antiquarian tradition in the context of the wider Protestant topographical imagination.

What follows examines some features of the lament for the past inspired by encounters with monastic ruins, before turning to a category of material remnants that has been almost entirely neglected in the existing literature. In the wake of the suppression, as many as half of all former monastic properties underwent processes of adaptation and conversion for parochial or secular uses.[6] These buildings have been underappreciated as significant products of the material break with the past engendered by the dissolution. Like ruins, monastic conversions had the potential to stimulate historical enquiry, but they also embodied attempts to erase and efface the memory both of medieval monasticism and of the iconoclastic violence of the early Reformation. This chapter interrogates former monastic sites broadly conceived as sites of memory and oblivion, and examines the monastic landscape as a palimpsest upon which memories of the dissolution

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[3] For various approaches see Stan Mendyk, 'Early British chorography', *SCJ* 17 (1986), pp. 459-81; idem, *'Speculum Britanniae': Regional Study, Antiquarianism, and Science in Britain to 1700* (Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Rosemary Sweet, 'Antiquaries and antiquities in eighteenth-century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34 (2001), pp. 181-206; eadem, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York, NY: Hambledon and London, 2004); Oliver Harris, '"The greatest blow to antiquities that ever England had": the Reformation and the antiquarian resistance', in Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen and Richard Todd (eds.), *The Reformation Unsettled: British Literature and the Question of Religious Identity, 1560-1660* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 225-42; Angus Vine, *In Defiance of Time: Antiquarian Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[4] On Dugdale see Jan Broadway, *William Dugdale: A Life of the Warwickshire Historian and Herald* (Gloucester: Xmera, 2011).

[5] Daniel Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 183.

[6] Maurice Howard, 'Recycling the monastic fabric: beyond the act of dissolution', in David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (eds.), *The Archaeology of the Reformation, 1480-1580* (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2003), p. 221.

were continuously re-written and contested. By exploring the place of the suppression in topographical writing and images, it suggests that the historiographical preoccupation with ruins and 'nostalgic' antiquarianism has obscured the complexity of the material and spatial dimensions of the memory of the suppression, in addition to the capacity of antiquarian writing to promote the forgetting of the monastic past as well as its preservation. This was a genre that not only reflected the development of a Protestant culture of remembrance, but also perpetuated a parallel culture of amnesia.

'Ruins and Remains'

Three years before the Henrician commissioners began their destructive tour of England's religious houses, the antiquary John Leland had been awarded his own royal commission to survey the monasteries – or, rather, to survey their libraries. His aim, as he wrote in the 'New Year's Gift' that he prepared for Henry VIII, was to catalogue monastic books and manuscripts to bring them 'out of deadly darkeness to lyvelye lyght'.[7] A precursor to the reformation of libraries and texts attempted by antiquaries and polemicists like John Bale and Matthew Parker, Leland's bibliographic project was thus predicated upon an idea that we encountered in the previous chapter: namely that the religious orders were fraudulent and inadequate custodians of national memory and history. Its completion, however, was severely threatened by the 'almost total disregard for books' displayed by the Henrician regime once the suppression got underway in 1536.[8] Libraries, along with the rest of the monastic fabric, became subjects of the government's assault on monasticism. The spoliation of the religious houses was brutal and swift: books and manuscripts were destroyed or dispersed, at the same time as images and idols were being broken and defaced. In this way, Leland was robbed of his source material. In the

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[7] *The laboryouse journey & serche of Johan Leylande, for Englandes antiquities, geven of hym as a newe yeares gyfte to kynge Henry the viij. in the. xxxvii. yeare of his reygne, with declaracyons by Johan Bale* (London, 1549), sig. B8r. On Leland's bibliographic project see C. E. Wright, 'The dispersal of the libraries in the sixteenth century', in Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright (eds.), *The English Library before 1700: Studies in its History* (London: University of London, the Athlone Press, 1958); Ronald Harold Fritze, '"Truth hath lacked witnesse, tyme wanted light": the dispersal of the English monastic libraries and Protestant efforts at preservation, ca. 1535-1625', *Journal of Library History* 18 (1983), pp. 274-291; James Simpson, 'Ageism: Leland, Bale, and the laborious start of English literary history, 1350-1550', in Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (eds.), *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997), pp. 213-35; James P. Carley, 'Monastic collections and their dispersal' in John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (eds.), with the assistance of Maureen Bell, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume IV, 1577-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 339-47; idem, 'The dispersal of the monastic libraries and the salvaging of the spoils', in Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland: Volume 1, to 1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 265-91; Nigel Ramsay, '"The manuscripts flew about like butterflies": the break-up of English libraries in the sixteenth century', in James Raven (ed.), *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 125-44. See also below, conclusion.

[8] Carley, 'Monastic collections and their dispersal', p. 340.

wake of the destruction, he was obliged to shift to a more topographical mode in which space was 'called upon to stand in for history' and lost textual patrimony.[9] The dissolution thus provided the stimulus for his new project after 1539 to delineate the physical and cultural reality of the Tudor 'worlde and impery of Englande'.[10] In doing so, it was responsible for the study that has been called the 'inaugural work of Renaissance geography'.[11] At the same time, the suppression was also the unacknowledged subject of Leland's topography, which retold the Reformation as 'a story about land and buildings'.[12] The *Itinerary of John Leland*, as it became known after its belated publication in the eighteenth century, was both a product of and itself reflected Leland's encounter with a landscape upon which the memory of the medieval past was being reconfigured.[13]

It is striking that the notes that constituted the *Itinerary* – described by John Cramsie as a 'dynamic hodgepodge of experiences and remembrances' – are replete with references to monastic ruins, testifying to the rapid nature of the transformation wrought upon the religious houses by the combined forces of iconoclasm, spoliation, and excavation in the 1530s.[14] Leland recorded sights such as the 'ruines of old walles' belonging to a suppressed priory near Kirkby Lonsdale, Cumbria,[15] and the 'defacid' chapel dedicated to St Romuald, founder of the Benedictine order of Camaldolese religious, at Southtowne, Northamptonshire.[16] Confronted with these remnants, Leland typically refrained from making overtly polemical or emotional statements about the dissolution, although he was occasionally inspired to deride the Catholic superstition 'of late tymes'.[17] More usually, he employed a laconic formulation which designated sites including Llantarnam Abbey in Cwmbran, southeast Wales, and Warden Abbey, Bedfordshire, as 'lately suppressed'.[18] Yet this terse language of recent transformation also captures the sense of 'then' and 'now' that, even in the late 1530s and early 1540s, pervaded

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[9] Philip Schwyzer, 'John Leland and his heirs: the topography of England', in Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1548-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 242.
[10] *Laboryouse journey*, sig. D5v.
[11] Jennifer Summit, 'Leland's '"Itinerary" and the remains of the medieval past', in Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (eds.), *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 159.
[12] Ibid., p. 166.
[13] Leland's descent into madness around 1546 prevented his work seeing print within his lifetime. His notes were published by Thomas Hearne as *The Itinerary of John Leland the Antiquary*, 9 vols. (London, 1710-12). See also *The itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535*-1543, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith, 5 vols. (London: George Bell & Sons, 1907-10).
[14] John Cramsie, *British Travellers and the Encounter with Britain, 1450-1700* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015), p. 70.
[15] *Itinerary of John* Leland, ed. Toulmin Smith, v, p. 45.
[16] Ibid., ii, p. 38.
[17] See for example ibid., v, p. 105.
[18] Ibid., i, p. 101; iii, p. 45.

Leland's writing.[19] If the dissolution as we have previously encountered it – as a critical episode of the English Reformation, situated in historical time – is absent from Leland's topography, paradoxically the *Itinerary* offers a greater sense of the suppression as a seismic transformation of the English Reformation than its chronicle cousins, which functioned to pin the dissolution to a series of times and dates. By eschewing a linear narrative of Reformation and adopting instead a mode of writing structured around space and the damaged fragments of the medieval past, Leland's notes reveal the magnitude and immediacy of the break with the medieval past.

Monastic ruins were, then as now, a powerful emblem of this rupture. An example of what Pierre Nora has called *lieux de mémoire*, they exerted a powerful influence over the evolving memory of the dissolution and contemporary perceptions of the past, which, as recent scholarship has underlined, were shaped at least as much, if not more, by spaces and objects than by times and dates.[20] It might seem something of an irony that an event which the Henrician regime had sought to forget produced such durable and imposing monuments. Yet many ruins were deliberate creations which stood, as Aston has argued, as 'telling witnesses to the efficiency of Henry VIII's treatment of the religious houses'.[21] In other words, they were not simply by-products of the dissolution, but rather the continuation and the legacy of the government's wider campaign against monasticism and the most visible and tangible symbols of its triumph over Catholic error and corruption. For those who sought to perpetuate the Henrician vision of the dissolution, ruins functioned as sites of memory for the admonition of posterity. Like the images and idols ravaged by Reformation iconoclasm, the sight of ruins was itself admonitory precisely because 'the vanquished past remained *in situ*, a constant reminder

[19] On Leland's sense of past and present see Simpson, 'Ageism'; Schwyzer, 'Leland and his heirs'. On Stow see Patrick Collinson, 'Merry England on the ropes: the contested culture of the early modern English town', in Simon Ditchfield (ed.), *Christianity and Community in the West: Essays for John Bossy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 137; idem, *This England: Essays on the English Nation and Commonwealth in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 287.
[20] Pierre Nora, *Les lieux des mémoire,* 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-92), ed. Pierra Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, *Realms of Memory*, 3 vols. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996-8); idem, 'Between memory and history: les lieux de mémoire', *Representations* 26 (1989), pp. 7-24. See also David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 238; Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995). For some recent approaches to space and memory in the early modern period see Nicola Whyte, 'Landscape, memory, and custom: parish identities, c. 1550-1700, *Social History*, 32 (2007), pp. 166-86; eadem, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Windgather, 2009); Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); eadem, 'Sacred topography and social memory: religious change and the landscape in early modern Britain and Ireland', *Journal of Religious History* 36 (2012), pp. 31-51.
[21] Aston, 'English ruins', p. 231; eadem, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 14.

to worshippers of the new purified communion, of the idolatrous past from which they had been delivered'.[22]

In the hands of successive generations of Protestant polemicists and antiquaries, monastic ruins functioned as powerful polemical weapons. This was certainly the case in the work of the Kentish antiquary and vituperate Protestant apologist William Lambarde, whose major work, the *Perambulation of Kent*, was first published in 1576. The title recalled traditional rituals of walking the boundaries of communities – 'beating the bounds' – which relied upon the mnemonic capacity of the physical landscape to establish the customary geographical limits of villages and parishes.[23] Lambarde's 'perambulation', however, was a rhetorical device that could be used to attack the opponents of Tudor religious reform.[24] Meditating on the religious landscape of medieval Canterbury, he recalled the 'seas of sinne and iniquitie, wherein the worlde (at those dayes) was almost whole drenched' and was compelled to 'prayse God, that hath thus mercifully in our age delivered us, disclosed Satan, unmasked these Idoles, dissolved the Synagogues, and raced [razed] to the grounde all Monumentes of building, erected to superstition and ungodlynesse'.[25] Yet, as Lambarde noted, the survival of monastic ruins ensured that these 'monuments of building' had not entirely disappeared into oblivion. As a result, the *Perambulation of Kent* is marked by a tension between conflicting impulses: to erase the memory of corrupt medieval monasticism and to preserve its mutilated remnants as a warning to posterity. Lambarde frequently expressed a desire to forget the monasteries, even as he committed them to paper. Regarding the former Trinitarian priory at Mottenden, for example, he wrote that:

> Neyther would I have afforded it so much as paper, or place here, but only that you understande, with what number of buildings, varietie of sects, and plent of possessions, Poperie was in old time provided for, and furnished. No corner (almoste) without some religious house, or other: Their suites and

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[22] Margaret Aston, 'Public worship and iconoclasm', in Gaimster and Gilchrist (eds.), *Archaeology of the Reformation*, p. 16.
[23] On this ritual see Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 247; Allegra di Bonaventura, 'Beating the bounds: property and perambulation in early New England', *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 19 (2007), pp. 115-48; Steve Hindle, 'Beating the bounds of the parish: order, memory, and identity in the English local community, c. 1500-1700', in Michael Halvorson and Karen Spierling (eds.), *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 205-228; Whyte, *Inhabiting the Landscape,* ch. 5; Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 200-209.
[24] Alexandra Walsham, 'Matthew Parker, sacred geography, and the British past', in Anthony Grafton, Scott Mandelbrote, and Bill Sherman (eds.), *Matthew Parker: Archbishop, Scholar and Collector* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Alex Walsham for sharing this piece in advance of its publication
[25] William Lambarde, *A perambulation of Kent: conteining the description, hystorie, and customes of that shyre* (London, 1576), p. 221.

> orders were hardly to be numbred: and as for their lands and revenues, it was a world to beholde them.[26]

Far from being motivated chiefly, as Stan Mendyk has argued, by 'the delight he took in collecting and describing ancient things', Lambarde's approach to ruins is indicative of the larger project of the *Perambulation* to reinforce and elaborate a particular strand of Protestant cultural memory.[27]

This was a mnemonic culture of which Lambarde was an heir and a product as well as a contributor. Born as the first monasteries fell in 1536, Lambarde could not personally remember the events he described.[28] Rather, his discussion of significant episodes in the Reformation in Kent was drawn from his inherited memory. These included the exposure of the mechanical Rood of Grace from Boxley in 1538, by which 'notable imposture', he wrote, 'fraud, Juggling, and Legierdemain, the sillie lambes of Gods flocke were (not long since) seduced by the false Romishe Foxes'. But although he had no personal memory of this event, Lambarde was nevertheless keenly aware that, at the time of writing in the mid 1570s, these revelations remained 'yet fresh in mynde' for many among his readership who had seen first-hand the fraud exposed in the marketplace in Maidstone or heard it denounced from Paul's Cross. By recording this episode in print, Lambarde helped to perpetuate its memory across the generational divide. Indeed, he was self-conscious of his role as a custodian of memory, judging that the Boxley affair deserved to be 'continued in perpetuall memorie to all posteritie'.[29] For Lambarde, this was also an ongoing project to crystallise the memory of the dissolution around the Henrician rhetoric of monastic corruption and surrender. During the preparation of the second edition (1596), he made a telling correction to his instruction to the reader to 'passe to the Religious houses', changed to 'lett us passe on to the *late* Religious buildings' in an echo of the 1539 act of dissolution.[30] Written in Lambarde's own hand, this amendment represents the minute re-working of the memory of the dissolution, which served to strengthen his vision of monastic ruins as symbols of a vanquished past.

Subsequent generations of topographers continued to echo and reinforce the triumphalist view of monastic ruins. Richard Carew, in his *Survey of Cornwall* (1602), associated the sites of former religious houses with 'more corrupt ages' than his own.[31] Likewise, in 1630, Joseph Hall,

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[26] Ibid., p. 230.
[27] Mendyk, 'Early British chorography', p. 470.
[28] On Lambarde's life and career see Retha M. Warnicke, *William Lambarde: Elizabethan Antiquary, 1536-1601* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1973).
[29] Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent*, p. 182.
[30] Bodl., 4° Rawlinson 263, p. 128. My emphasis.
[31] Richard Carew, *The survey of Cornwall*, ed. John Chynoweth, Nicholas Orme, and Alexandra Walsham, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, 47 (Exeter, 2004), fol. 82r.

bishop of Exeter, was inspired by ruins to comment that 'every stone hath a tongue to accuse Superstition, Hypocrisie, Idlenesse, Luxury of the late [monastic] owners'.[32] Similar sentiments were also articulated by the historian and topographer Thomas Staveley in the 1670s, for whom the former monasteries of Leicester were emblems of the 'middle & dark Times' and the 'great abuse of Religion'.[33] Individually and collectively, these topographies contributed to the longevity of the Henrician narratives of monastic corruption and the expediency of dissolution. It is little surprise that ruins were inherent to this undertaking: the very purpose of leaving them standing had been to create enduring physical reminders of the suppression of traditional religion. These fragments were, in other words, quite literally monuments to the *ruin* of medieval monasticism.

The afterlives of the dissolution were, however, both multiple and constantly evolving. Despite the best attempts of Lambarde and his successors, the meaning of ruins could not be fixed. Rather their significance lay in the eye of the beholder. In the previous chapter, we noted the emergence of concerns about the repair and beautification of churches in the early seventeenth century. Questions of space and ecclesiastical property were at the heart of this shift, which both reflected and engendered changing attitudes towards sacred places and fabrics.[34] As a result, reformed Protestant attitudes towards the remnants of the medieval past – and, critically, to the destruction of these sites – began to change. In parallel with what Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer have described as the 'resurgence of sacred space during the second generation of the Reformation', there emerged a strand of topography concerned with the preservation of the material past.[35] In light of Aston's argument that this brand of seventeenth-century antiquarianism was essentially 'nostalgic' for the pre-Reformation world, recent scholarship has continued to place ruins at the heart of these endeavours. They also continue to serve as emblems of the emergent Protestant critique of the dissolution and have been central to what Oliver Harris termed the 'antiquarian resistance' which sought to undermine the attempts of the reformers to efface the memory of monasticism.[36] Although

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[32] Joseph Hall, 'Upon the ruines of an Abby', in *Occasional Meditations*, ed. R[obert] H[all], (London, 1630), p. 191.
[33] BL, Add MS 15917, fols. 39v, 40v.
[34] Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), ch. 6. See also Graham Parry, 'Sacred space in Laudian England', in Joseph Sterrett and Peter Thomas (eds.), *Sacred Text – Sacred Space: Architectural, Spiritual and Literary Convergences in England and Wales* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2011), pp. 123-40.
[35] Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer, 'Defining the holy: the delineation of sacred space', in Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer (eds.), *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 21.
[36] Harris, 'Greatest blow to antiquities'. See also Woolf, *Social Circulation*, pp. 62-64; Susan Guinn-Chipman, *Religious Space in Reformation England: Contesting the Past* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), p. 134 and passim.

Harris argues that this cut across confessional divides, it has been most closely associated with the regretful, anxious brand of reformed Protestantism that shaped 'nostalgic' antiquarianism.

It is the paradox of 'nostalgic' antiquarianism that the generation which mourned monastic ruins had not known a world before the Reformation. William Camden, researching his monumental national topography, the *Britannia*, first published in 1586 and translated into English by Philemon Holland in 1610, was conscious of the divide that separated his generation from its iconoclastic forebears. Remembering the dissolution of Walsingham Abbey in Norfolk, he described how within 'the memory of our fathers, when King Henry the Eighth had set his minde and eye both, upon the riches and possessions of Churches, all this vanished quite away'.[37] Camden thus combined elements of an older critique of the avarice of the Henrician regime with a new sense of aesthetic outrage and material loss. In the Suffolk town of Bury St Edmunds, for example, he encountered the 'carcasse… of that auncient monument' of the dissolved Benedictine abbey 'altogether deformed' having been 'utterly overthrowne' under 'goodlie pretense of reforming religion' in 1539. The sight of this crumbling edifice inspired in Camden both regret and a strange sense of admiration: 'I assure you', he wrote to the reader, 'they make a faire and goodlie shew, which who soever beholdeth, hee may both wonder there at, and withall take pity thereof'.[38] Likewise, the cartographer John Speed mourned that ruins 'are become like dead carkases, leaving onely some poore ruines and remains alive, as reliques to posterity, to shew of what beauty and magnitude they have beene'.[39] John Weever, who devoted his time to sketching and recording pre-Reformation monuments and their inscriptions, also appropriated the rhetoric of ruination to describe how 'barbarously' monastic and other church monuments had been '(to the shame of our time) broken downe, and utterly almost all ruinated'.[40] At the former Tonbridge Priory in Kent, he played with the same shipwreck metaphor that would be later employed by Aubrey, writing that 'in the shipwracke of such religious structures' the priory had been 'dasht all a peeces'.[41] The language of the

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[37] William Camden, *Britain, or a chorographicall description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ilands adioyning, out of the depth of antiquitie*, trans. Philemon Holland (London, 1610), pp. 243, 479. On the significance of the *Britannia* see Patrick Collinson, 'One of us? William Camden and the making of history', Camden Society Centenary Lecture, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 8 (1998), pp. 139-63; Wyman H. Herendeen, *William Camden: A Life in Context* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007) esp. chs. 5, 6, and 9; Stuart Piggott, 'William Camden and the *Britannia*, in R. C. Richardson (ed.), *The Changing Face of English Local History* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 12-29; R. C. Richardson, 'William Camden and the re-discovery of England', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 78 (2004), pp. 108-23.
[38] Camden, *Britain*, p. 461.
[39] John Speed, *The theatre of the empire of Great Britaine presenting an exact geography of the kingdomes of England, Scotland, Ireland, and the iles adioyning* (London, 1611), p. 77.
[40] John Weever, *Ancient funerall monuments with in the united monarchie of Great Britaine, Ireland, and the ilands adjacent; with the dissolved monasteries therein contained; their founders, and what eminent persons have beene in the same interred* (London, 1631), 'Author to the reader'.
[41] Ibid., p. 322.

dissolution had thus acquired pronounced spatial and material dimensions. This reflects the potency of the connection between the emergent critique of past iconoclasm and the ruins of the religious houses, which functioned as visible and tangible reminders of this rupture.

It is a striking feature of this particular strand of Protestant antiquarianism that it gave expression to certain ideas and sentiments that had previously been a subtext in Catholic discourse on the dissolution. An illuminating example of this complicated inheritance can be found in the work of the Durham antiquary Robert Hegge. During the dissolution, the shrine of St Cuthbert housed in the city's monastic cathedral had been desecrated by the Henrician commissioners. A local tradition had emerged in Catholic and conservative circles that, despite the commissioners' clumsy violence, the Anglo-Saxon saint's remains had been found intact and undamaged, preserved and protected by divine providence.[42] This narrative was also set down in a remarkable manuscript account of life in the cathedral before and after the Reformation, penned in the late sixteenth century by the Catholic antiquary William Claxton.[43] The 'Rites of Durham' was itself a kind of perambulation of the cathedral and offered a window onto the daily life of the Benedictine monks who had lived within its cloisters. It also railed against the 'subverting of such monuments in the time of Henry. 8th at his Suppression of the Abbeys'.[44] In the early seventeenth century, the 'Rites of Durham' formed an important part of Hegge's cultural inheritance despite his Protestant convictions. He made a number of copies of the manuscript, which he used to inform his own regretful account of the cathedral as a site of memory for the violent spoliation of Cuthbert's shrine.[45] Such an account would have been virtually unthinkable to antiquaries like Lambarde. Although the strong sense of pity apparent in the works of Hegge, Camden, and others did not amount to the adoption of Catholic perspectives by Protestants, it is highly telling of how the Protestant memory of the dissolution was evolving over time.

To some contemporary commentators, however, it appeared that this regretful form of antiquarianism concealed a dangerous desire to rehabilitate and even revive certain aspects of medieval Catholicism. In the *Britannia*, for example, Camden was forced to defend himself against those 'who take it impatiently that I have mentioned some of the most famous Monasteries and their founders'. He was careful to differentiate between his pity for the

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[42] On local traditions about the dissolution more generally see below, ch. 4.
[43] For the attribution to Claxton see A. I. Doyle, 'Claxton, William (1530–1597)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69725, accessed 25 Oct 2017]; Eamon Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege, and Sedition: Religion and Conflict in the Tudor Reformations* (London, Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 247.
[44] DUL, Special Collections, MSP 36, p. 64.
[45] DUL, Special Collections, Cosin MS B.ii.11, fol 46r. On Hegge's work on St Cuthbert see Sarah Scutts, '"Truth never needed the protection of forgery": sainthood and miracles in Robert Hegge's "History of St Cuthbert's churches at Lindisfarne, Cuncacestre, and Dunholme" (1625)', in Peter Clarke and Tony Claydon (eds.), *Saints and Sanctity*, Studies in Church History 47 (2011), pp. 270-83.

material destruction of buildings erected by the lay founders and patrons of the medieval religious houses and his feelings towards the religious inhabitants of those places. Like other Protestant antiquaries, Camden continued to perpetuate the old rhetoric of monastic corruption, deriding the 'weeds' that 'in corrupt ages' grew up 'over-ranckly' in the 'seed-gardens from which Christian religion and good learning were propagated over this isle'.[46] But he also railed against his detractors who, he argued, 'would have us forget that our ancestoures were, and we are of the Christian profession when as there are not extant any other more conspicuous, and certaine Monuments, of their piety, and zealous devotion toward God'.[47] Camden thus recognised that the dissolution had been an assault on memory and sought to reverse or at least to curtail its effects. Similarly, Weever embarked upon the preservation of tombs and monuments erected to the lay founders and patrons whose 'honourable memory' had been virtually extinguished by the careless iconoclasm of a previous age.[48] These monuments, as Peter Sherlock has argued, 'told posterity what should be known about the past'.[49] Weever therefore believed it his duty to 'continue the remembrance of the defunct to future posteritie' by surveying those fragments that remained.[50] This was partially an attempt to undo the efforts of the Henrician regime to consign the religious houses to oblivion, which had resulted in the wheat of medieval piety being thrown out with the chaff of corrupt medieval monasticism. By distinguishing between monastic corruption and lay piety, critics of the dissolution were thus able to use topography to mourn the medieval past without explicitly grieving the Catholic past.

Fears about the corrosive effects of forgetting underpinned the preservationist impulse in seventeenth-century antiquarianism. In the 1640s and 1650s, these fears were further compounded by the new breach engendered by the Civil Wars and Interregnum, which raised the spectre of Henrician iconoclasm and initiated a resurgence of violence against ecclesiastical property.[51] The puritan campaign against idols sharpened the sense amongst some antiquaries that the dissolution had been the work of an earlier 'barbarous generation' who had torn down

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[46] Camden, *Britain*, 'Author to the reader'.
[47] Ibid., p. 6.
[48] Weever, *Ancient funerall monuments*, 'Author to the reader'.
[49] Peter Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), p. 3. See also Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Vanessa Harding, 'Choices and changes: death, burial and the English Reformation', in Gaimster and Gilchrist (eds.), *Archaeology of the Reformation*, pp. 386-98; Jonathan Finch, 'A reformation of meaning: commemoration and remembering the dead in the parish church, 1450-1640', in Gaimster and Gilchrist (eds.), *Archaeology of the Reformation*, pp. 437-49; Lucy Wooding, 'Remembrance in the Eucharist', in Andrew Gordon and Thomas Rist (eds.), *The Arts of Remembrance in Early Modern England: Memorial Cultures of the Post Reformation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 16-36.
[50] Weever, *Ancient funerall monuments*, 'Author to the reader'.
[51] See Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 63; Julie Spraggon, *Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003).

the 'goodly structures… wherewith England was so much adorned' and which were now once again under threat.[52] The act of puritan iconoclasm was itself a mnemonic to that of a previous generation. Thomas Philipott, writing the *Villare Cantianum* (1659), a survey of Kent quite unlike Lambarde's *Perambulation* of 1576, conflated the two waves of violence conducted a century apart: the English landscape, he mourned, had been the victim of the 'ruinous tempest' and 'whirlwind' of both dissolution in the 1530s and civil war in the 1640s.[53] Thus the memory of the suppression associated with former monastic spaces was not only shifting over time, it was also accumulating new layers of meaning.

This troubled climate lent a new sense of urgency to antiquarian projects to preserve the material remnants of the medieval past. The key intervention in this respect was Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*. It is this text, perhaps more than any other, that has shaped our understanding of the role and resonance of the dissolution in seventeenth-century Protestant historical culture and the topographical imagination. A labour of more than two decades, the *Monasticon* was begun by the Yorkshire antiquary Roger Dodsworth in the 1630s, but acquired its final form and shape thanks to Dugdale's efforts in the 1650s.[54] 'In these our dayes', the *Monasticon* admonished the reader, the 'very memory' of the monasteries 'seems to some people odious and ungrateful… more useless and insignificant than an Old Almanack'.[55] Like his predecessors, Dugdale believed that the anti-monastic vitriol inspired by the dissolution was in danger of rapidly eclipsing the piety and munificence of previous generations. The *Monasticon* was an attempt not simply to preserve the material remnants of the medieval past but also selectively to resurrect it in ink and paper form. This included ruins and the ruined parts of working buildings but, as we shall see, the fragments beloved of the 'nostalgic' antiquaries were not the only former monastic sites of interest to Dugdale. They did, however, form part of the material past that he greatly feared was still in danger of slipping into oblivion. This concern underpinned his project to complete the *Monasticon* and it was also apparent in his interactions with other contemporary antiquaries: for example, he wrote to the Oxfordshire antiquary Anthony Wood, who was also interested in former monastic properties, to recommend that he

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[52] William Dugdale, *The antiquities of Warwickshire illustrated; from records, leiger-books, manuscripts, charters, evidences, tombes, and armes: beautified with maps, prospects, and portraictures* (London, 1656), p. 492.
[53] Thomas Philipott, *Villare Cantianum: or, Kent surveyed and illustrated being an exact description of all the parishes, burroughs, villages and other respective mannors included in the county of Kent* (London, 1659), pp. 168, 283.
[54] On the *Monasticon* see Broadway, *William Dugdale*; Christopher Dyer and Catherine Richardson (eds.), *William Dugdale, Historian, 1605-1686: His Life, his Writings and his County* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009).
[55] Roger Dodsworth and William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum sive Pandectæ Cænobionam, Benedictinorum Cluniacensium, Cisterciensium, Carthusianorum; a primordiis ad eorum usque dissolutionem*, 3 vols. (London, 1655-73); quotation from the abridged English translation, *Monasticon Anglicanum, or the history of the ancient abbies, and other monasteries, hospitals, cathedral and collegiate churches in England and Wales* (London, 1693), sig. A3r.

give his papers to the great collector Robert Cotton with whom they 'may be more likely to be preserved for posterity', when otherwise he thought them 'in danger to be utterly lost'.[56]

It is this reflective, preservationist impulse in early modern antiquarianism that returns us to Aubrey, with whom we began, and who was perhaps the most nostalgic of the 'nostalgic' antiquaries. Aubrey's full reflection on monastic ruins, set down whilst researching his expansive manuscript survey of Wiltshire in the 1650s, attests to the close connection between the dissolution and this particular brand of antiquarianism. He was, he wrote:

> Heartily sorry I did not sett down the Antiquities of these parts sooner, for since the time aforesaid many things are irrecoverably lost. In former daies the Churches and great houses hereabout did so abound with monuments and things remarqueable that it would have deterred an Antiquarie from undertaking it. But as Pythagoras did guesse at the vastnesse of Hercules' stature by the length of his foote, so among these Ruines are Remaynes enough left for a man to give a guesse what noble buildings, &c. were made by the Piety, Charity, and Magnanimity of our Forefathers… the eie and mind is no lesse affected with these stately ruines than they would have been when standing and entire. They breed in generous mindes a kind of pittie; and sett the thoughts a-worke to make out their magnificence as they were when in perfection. These Remaynes are *tanquam tabulata naufragii* [like fragments of a shipwreck] that after the Revolution of so many yeares and governments have escaped the teeth of Time and the hands of mistaken zeale. So that the retrieving of these forgotten things from oblivion in some sort resembles the Art of a Conjuror who makes those walke and appeare that have layen in their graves many hundreds of yeares… It is said of Antiquaries, they wipe off the mouldinesse they digge, and remove the rubbish.[57]

In this passage, Aubrey encapsulated the essence of what Aston and others have called 'nostalgic' antiquarianism, which was profoundly shaped by the dissolution and the growing sense of loss, pity, and aesthetic outrage provoked by its remnants. Together with Dugdale, Aubrey was at the forefront of a generation of scholars who were similarly self-conscious of their role in resurrecting the past and preserving it from the corrosive forgetting engendered by what Aubrey called 'oblivion'.[58] Reviving these spaces was a form of 'artificial memory', which entailed the imaginative resurrection of lost sites.[59] By describing and recording such structures and spaces, these texts acted as remedies against the instability wrought by iconoclasm past, present, and future. On one level, this constituted an archival project born of and sharpened by

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[56] Bodl., MS Tanner 456a, fol. 10r. On Cotton's library see above, ch. 2.
[57] Aubrey, *Wiltshire*, p. 4.
[58] Vine, *In Defiance of Time*, pp. 5, 202, and passim.
[59] On antiquarianism and 'artificial memory' see William N. West, '"No endlesse moniment": artificial memory and memorial artefact in early modern England', in Susannah Radstone and Katharine Hodgkin (eds.), *Regimes of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 61-75.

the memory of the dissolution to rival those of earlier generations.[60] But unlike the bibliographic projects of collectors like John Bale or Matthew Parker that we explored in the previous chapter, the 'nostalgic' antiquaries did not seek to secure a basis for a Protestant national identity. The significance of ruins was, instead, re-written to form the backbone of an emergent critique of the dissolution, which resisted the partial oblivion engendered by the agents of suppression in the 1530s.

Although the sense of triumph felt by Lambarde, among others, persisted in cultural memory long after the first generation of reformers had died out, there is a clear association between the vestigial remnants of the monasteries and the development of critical perspectives on the dissolution. Ruins functioned as tangible and enduring reminders of the Catholic past but also, paradoxically, of Reformation iconoclasm.[61] Modern historians are the heirs of this contemporary preoccupation with the evocative, polemical, and mnemonic power of ruins. This literature has served to give life and strength to an argument that contemporary responses to monastic spaces and places were central to the mnemonic culture of reformed Protestantism. Yet to look at the afterlives of the dissolution and the development of early modern antiquarianism solely through this lens is to adopt a form of historiographical tunnel vision. There were multiple material legacies of the suppression in the early modern period. To reduce the memory of the dissolution to ruins and the act of remembrance to an act of resistance is to neglect the wider spatial and material implications of the suppression. Ruins were not the only physical remnants of medieval monasticism. With a view to exploring this complex and varied mnemonic culture, it is to the neglected subject of converted monastic buildings that we now turn.

Converting the Monastic Landscape

The English landscape underwent a profound transformation as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries. This was not, of course, the first time that the sacred landscape had undergone significant change. Like earlier transformations, most notably the spread of Christianity in England in the seventh century, the Reformation was not purely destructive; it was also

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[60] Elizabeth Yale, 'With slips and scraps: how early modern naturalists invented the archive', *Book History* 12 (2009), p. 3. See also eadem, *Sociable Knowledge: Natural History and the Nation in Early Modern Britain* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), esp. chs. 1, 4, 6. On antiquarianism as an archival project see also Peter N. Miller, 'Antiquarianism as an archival "science"', in idem, 'Peiresc's "History of Provence": Antiquarianism and the Discovery of a Medieval Mediterranean', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 101, part 3 (2011), pp. 11-33.

[61] Aston, 'English ruins'; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, 2nd edn, (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 480; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape,* esp. ch. 2.

creative.[62] The conversion of religious houses into parish churches, secular cathedrals, private houses, workshops and warehouses, and public meeting places began as early as 1536. In all, perhaps half of the medieval religious houses experienced this fate.[63] Thus, whilst some contemporaries and many historians have tended to imply that the monastic landscape had, by 1540, been reduced to a landscape of ruins, this was in reality a more varied terrain.

Although the adaptation of monastic architecture has long been overlooked in historical and literary scholarship, it has underpinned a prominent strand of post-Reformation archaeology.[64] In this context, conversions have been envisioned as a tool for perceiving change, as opposed to the fossilised vision of the past embodied in monastic ruins. As Andrew Jones has argued, 'precisely because of the familiarity and apparently unchanging nature of places, change in place offers a stark way of experiencing the passing of time and evoking memory of the past'.[65] This literature has therefore criticised the conventional focus on 'passive and symbolic' ruins. Using the case study of the converted priory at Monk Bretton, South Yorkshire, Hugh Willmott and Alan Bryson have investigated instead how former religious houses enjoyed 'new, active and evolving roles' in the post-Reformation world.[66] Probing the transformation of the priory between the dissolution and its excavation in the twentieth century, Willmott and Bryson's work offers a suggestive account of long-term change that raises important questions about the evolving memory of the suppression associated with converted monasteries. At the heart of their analysis is a process of architectural change that testifies to the gradual effacement of the monastic past achieved by successive phases of conversion, concealment, adaptation, and demolition. This was, effectively, a kind of material forgetting, which engendered a culture of amnesia that became increasingly potent over time.

Early modern topographical writing also has the potential to reveal something about the conversion of monastic buildings and this process of strategic forgetting. For those who had witnessed the dissolution at first-hand, conversions were sites where the past collided with the present. They had the potential to provoke personal memories of the pre-Reformation world,

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[62] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, esp. chs. 1-3. For an overview of the earlier Christianisation of the landscape see John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), ch. 4.
[63] Howard, 'Recycling the monastic fabric', p. 221.
[64] For a sample of archaeological studies of monastic sites see Helen Sutermeister, 'Excavations on the site of the Tudor manor house at Micheldever, Hampshire', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 9 (1975), pp. 117-36; Nicholas Doggett, *Patterns of Re-Use: The Transformation of Former Monastic Buildings in Post-Dissolution Herefordshire* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002); Gaimster and Gilchrist (eds.), *Archaeology of the Reformation,* chs. 14-20; Iain Soden, 'Buildings analysis at Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire, 1993-94', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40 (2006), pp. 129-59.
[65] Andrew Jones, *Memory and Material Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 60.
[66] Hugh Willmott and Alan Bryson, 'Changing to suit the times: a post-dissolution history of Monk Bretton Priory, South Yorkshire', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 47 (2013), p. 136.

but also to engender polemical reflection upon the post-dissolution landscape. During his peregrinations in the early 1540s, Leland did not only encounter ruins. Indeed, the *Itinerary* features a number of properties that had undergone processes of adaptation and which testify to the extremely rapid pace of conversion after 1539. Leland's account of these places underlines his evangelical priorities and Henrician outlook. At Markyate in Hampshire, he witnessed the 'translating of the priorie into a maner place' and during his perambulation of South Yorkshire he noted that Tickhill Friary had been 'translatid to the paroch church'.[67] As Jennifer Summit has argued, the language of 'translation' functioned to downplay the violence of the suppression and its physical and material consequences. In other words, this linguistic device served to minimise the rupture created by the dissolution by assimilating former monastic sites 'into a topography of the newly Protestant nation, a project that involved rethinking, and actively remaking, the relationship between landscape and history, place and time'.[68] Leland's *Itinerary* thus fed into the Henrician project to shape the memory of the dissolution by constructing a vision of the new post-Reformation world in which conversions, like ruins, could stand as monuments to Protestant triumph. At the same time, Leland achieved with topography the same effect achieved by his contemporaries using bricks and mortar. By recording the conversion rather than the destruction of the landscape, he contributed to the eroding and effacing of the monastic past.

It is a salient feature of topographies of conversion that regret for the monasteries can also be found in the work of those who had personally witnessed the dissolution. Everywhere he went in Elizabethan London, the conservative topographer and chronicler John Stow found former religious houses that had become storehouses, parish churches, secular hospitals, and domestic properties. His monumental *Survey of London*, first published in 1598, testifies to the sheer variety of places which prompted Stow to reflect on the city's monastic past. It blends his observations of these sites with his knowledge of their history and with melancholic retrospection on the world that had been lost. In Ealdgate, Stow remembered that there had been 'sometimes an Abby of Nunnes of the order of S. Clare, calld the Minories, founded by Edmund, Earle of Lancaster, Leicester and Darby, brother to King Edward the first, in the yeere 1293'. In recent times, however, he recalled that the nunnery had been transformed and was 'now builded with divers daire and large Store-houses for Armour, and habiliments of warre, with divers workhouses serving to the same purpose' as well as 'a small Parish Church… called Saint Trinity'. For Stow, this process of conversion had wrought the kind of social and economic decline mourned by the later breed of 'nostalgic' antiquaries when faced with monastic ruins. 'Neere adjoyning to this Abby', he wrote, 'was sometime a Farme belonging to the said Nunrie,

[67] *Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. Toulmin Smith, i, pp. 104, 36.
[68] Summit, 'Leland's "Itinerary"', p. 161.

at the which Farme, I my selfe (in my youth) have fetched many a halfe-penny worthe of milke, and never had lesse than three ale pintes for a half penny in the Summer'.[69] Likewise, Stow's encounter with the former Greyfriars priory of Christ's Church, which had since become a parish church, evoked a sense of loss that was profoundly personal: 'As I my selfe have seene', he wrote, 'the Prior kept a most bountifull house of meat and drinke, both for rich and poore, as well within the house, as at the gates, to all comers, according to their estates'.[70] The *Survey* thus demonstrates how geography, like history, could be a quasi-autobiographical undertaking and the vehicle for personal memory as well as a tool with which to record and shape the inherited memory of communities and successive generations.

Confronted with these converted spaces, Stow's *Survey* was in some sense a lament for what he perceived to be a lost golden age of piety and prosperity, further shaped by his own experience of change and ageing.[71] If Stow was, as Patrick Collinson and Ian Archer have argued, one of the first antiquaries to exhibit 'nostalgia' for the medieval past, it was because this was the world of his childhood – a world he had experienced and whose violent passing he lamented.[72] In the previous chapter, we identified similar sentiments in Stow's historical writing, which was coloured by his conservatism in matters of religion. For Stow, the dissolution of the monasteries was part of an ongoing project to attack the physical and material landscape of his youth, as former monasteries were subsumed into the rapidly changing urban landscape which, in turn, transformed the city's physical and social fabric in the present.[73] He shared with later generations of antiquaries the belief that the past could be excavated from the disfigured landscape and subsequently resurrected using topography.[74] It was also an exercise in selective remembering. Thus Stow informed the lawyer and diarist John Manningham that he had neglected to record a number of Elizabethan monuments in the *Survey* because 'those men have bin the defacers of the monuments of others, and soe [Stow] thinks them worthy to be deprived of that memory whereof they have injuriously robbed others'.[75] But unlike later forms of antiquarianism, it is critically important to understand this melancholic reflection on the past in

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[69] John Stow, *The survey of London: contayning the originall, increase, modern estate, and government of that city, methodically set downe* (London, 1633 edn), p. 118.
[70] Ibid., p. 145.
[71] See Collinson, 'Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism', p. 292.
[72] Ian Archer, 'The nostalgia of John Stow', in David L. Smith, Richard Strier, and David Bevington (eds.), *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 22; Collinson, 'Stow and nostalgic antiquarianism'.
[73] See Lawrence Manley, 'Of sites and rites: ceremony, theatre, and John Stow's *Survey of London*', in Smith, Strier, and Bevington (eds.), *The Theatrical City*, p. 52. See also Archer, 'Nostalgia of John Stow', p. 22.
[74] Vine, *In Defiance of Time*, pp. 43-4.
[75] John Bruce (ed.), *Diary of John Manningham, of the Middle Temple, and of Bradbourne, Kent, barrister-at-law, 1602-1603*, Camden Society, old series, 99 (London, 1868), p. 103. See also Woolf, *Social Circulation,* p. 94.

the context of Stow's experience of the dissolution, precisely because this enabled him to encounter monastic conversions as sites of his personal memory.

For subsequent generations, however, the effacing of the past engendered by conversion produced sites of forgetting rather than *lieux de mémoire*.[76] As we shall see in the case studies that follow, converted buildings sponsored a culture of amnesia that promoted a highly selective vision of the dissolution. We can also begin to discern something of this shift in relation to monastic place names. Despite the complex etymology of most place names, the longevity of names that recalled former monastic uses is a striking feature of early modern topography.[77] When confronted with converted sites, Stow was frequently able to recall their monastic names. This was as true of 'the late dissolved Priory of St Bartholomew' in the ward of Faringdon and the 'Augustin Friers Church and Churchyard' at Broadstreet as it was of Christ's Church.[78] More generally, the persistence of names and associations such as these testifies not only to a learned, textual memory, such as that preserved by Stow, but also to the development of other memory cultures in which the past proved difficult fully to erase.

Often monastic names were recorded in legal documents confirming the sale or lease of ex-monastic land to new owners, fostering a kind of legal memory of the dissolution. For instance, the sale of a portion of land in the Barnwell area of Cambridge to St John's College in 1669 recorded the site as 'sometimes belonging to the late dissolved Monastery of Barnwell'.[79] Similarly, a legal case from County Durham in 1631 concerning tithes connected to the former monastery of Newminster in the village of Chapwell made repeated reference to the condition of the property '*ad tempus dissolucionis*'.[80] But these names also had wider resonance. Scrawled on what appears to be the endpapers of a bible, the life writings of early Stuart London citizen and stationer John Norgate record the deaths in 1624 of two of his children, Elizabeth and Edward, in close succession and their burial 'in St Mary Overies Church yard, close to the Church wall at the heather side of the middle Butteris or arched pillar, that stands against the Church wall to hold it up'.[81] St Mary Overie in Southwark – St Mary 'over the river' – was an Augustinian priory until its suppression in 1539, at which time it received a new dedication to St Saviour. As Stow himself recorded:

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[76] On the forgetting and the landscape see Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 252; Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 477 and passim.
[77] On place names see P. H. Reaney, *The Origin of English Place-Names* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1969); G. J. Copley, *English Place-Names and their Origins* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971); Margaret Gelling, *Signposts to the Past: Place Names and the History of England* (London: Dent, 1978); eadem and Ann Cole, *The Landscape of Place-Names* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2000).
[78] Stow, *Survey of London*, pp. 185, 340.
[79] Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives, CB/2/CL/17/2, fol. 240v.
[80] DUL, Special Collections, MSP 52, fol. 67v.
[81] Norfolk, Norfolk Record Office, MC175/1/3-4. I owe this reference to Simone Hanebaum.

> The Church of the said Priory was purchased of the King by the inhabitants of the Borough. Doctor Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, putting to his helping hand, they made thereof a Parish Church for the Parish Church of S. Mary Magdalen, on the South side of the said Quire, out of Saint Margaret on the hill, which were made one Parish of S. Saviour.[82]

A century on from the dissolution and a generation after Stow had noted the transformation of St Mary Overie, the evidence of John Norgate suggests that its medieval monastic name was still in use in the local community – even though previous generations of parishioners had themselves been instrumental in the conversion of the priory into the parish church of St Saviour's.

However, it is also true that monastic place names were becoming inextricably associated with their new functions, owners, and edifices. In the 1590s, within the generation of witnesses to the dissolution, Stow had already witnessed this process at work. In Hart Street, he encountered a building known by many as the 'Crossed Friers' after the brethren of the Holy Cross who had once inhabited it. Since the dissolution, however, Stow recorded that it had become widely known as 'the Lord Lumleyes house'.[83] Likewise, at Christ's Church, where Stow had been inspired to reflect on the halcyon days of his childhood, he emerged from his reverie with an eye turned to the present. After 1539, part of the priory had come into the hands of Thomas Audley, then Lord Chancellor, before falling into the inheritance of the dukes of Norfolk. 'The said Thomas Lord Audley builded and dwelt on this Priorie during his life, and dyed there in the yeere 1544', Stow recorded, 'since the which time, the said Priorie came (by marriage of the Lord Audleys daughter and heire) unto Thomas, late Duke of Norfolke'. By this time, Stow noted, the house was commonly known as 'the Dukes Place'.[84] It seems that although Stow could remember its monastic heritage – and preserved it for posterity in his *Survey* – the memory of the pre-Reformation landscape embodied in monastic conversions was already beginning to fade.

The relative absence of converted monasteries in the conventional literature on early modern antiquarianism is partly the inheritance of the antiquarian tradition stretching from Camden to Aubrey and beyond, which preferred ruins to conversions. But it is also a legacy of memory-making processes surrounding conversions that had been set in motion as early as the 1530s. Stow, like Leland, was a witness to a world in transition and could therefore remember the monastic past at first-hand. If Leland's rhetoric of 'translation' helped to perpetuate the state-

[82] Stow, *Survey of London*, p. 451.
[83] Ibid., p. 157.
[84] Ibid., p. 146.

sponsored narrative of the suppression as only a minimal rupture in the material, social, and religious fabric of early modern England, Stow's religious conservatism coloured his regretful memory of the Henrician Reformation. As we have observed, 'nostalgic' reflection of this kind was possible because Stow had experienced the Henrician Reformation and borne witness to the processes of material conversion and adaptation that it engendered. This was as true of sites that retained their spiritual function as churches as it was of domestic and secular conversions. But as the dissolution passed out of living memory and into inherited memory, the cultures of remembrance associated with these various converted spaces diverged. To a greater or lesser extent, each of these categories – the sacred and the domestic – contributed to the erosion of the memory of the medieval past that Stow had sought to keep alive.

Parish Churches and Secular Cathedrals

It has sometimes been argued that the dissolution of the monasteries ushered in the 'secularisation' of the landscape.[85] This too is an argument borne of the historiographical preoccupation with ruins and the fragments left behind by Reformation iconoclasm, and it neglects, *inter alia*, the significant number of monastic cathedrals and churches that retained some of their original functions in new guises as secular cathedrals and parish churches.[86] For the generation that had witnessed the dissolution, as we have seen, monastic sites that had been converted in this way served as mnemonics for the transformation wrought upon the ecclesiastical landscape by the Reformation. Thus in the immediate aftermath of the suppression, the sight of the parish church at Tickhill had prompted Leland to recall how it had been 'translated' and adapted for new purposes, whilst at Christ's Church in the mid-sixteenth century, Stow had been inspired to offer a series of melancholy reflections on the nature of religious and social change precisely because its architecture was a relic of the pre-Reformation world of his youth. Even Lambarde, whose polemical cause was best served by those mutilated and decayed sites that attested to the ruin of medieval monasticism, occasionally noted the conversion of a former monastery, including the 'Den of Idolatrie' at Hackington which had 'since… become the Parish Church'.[87] The mnemonic capacity of these sites was predicated on contemporary senses of both change and continuity: these buildings simultaneously recalled

[85] See especially C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 18 and ch. 2. passim, for whom the dissolution is the pre-eminent episode in the 'secularisation' of early modern England.
[86] We might speak of 'desacralisation' instead of 'secularisation' in this context, see for example Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation and "the Disenchantment of the World" reassessed', *HJ* 51 (2008), p. 507 and passim. See also above on monastic ruins and below, ch. 4.
[87] Lambarde, *Perambulation of Kent*, p. 253.

something of the medieval past whilst also testifying to the transformative effect wrought by the dissolution upon the ecclesiastical landscape.

The memory of the dissolution associated with these spaces and places also had a pronounced generational dimension. By the late sixteenth century, most people did not possess personal experiences of the transformation of the monasteries that could be brought to bear on their perceptions of the past. In this context, the mnemonic potential of converted churches and cathedrals was complicated by the structural and material continuity they provided with the medieval period.[88] Although, as Pamela Graves has observed, the form and function of ecclesiastical buildings both reflected and contributed to long-term processes of historical change, processes of architectural adaptation and conversion functioned to efface the memory of change rather than preserve it.[89] Converted churches remained sacred places and therefore also inherited many of the spiritual and social functions of the medieval monasteries. They sat uncomfortably in the 'nostalgic' tradition of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century antiquarianism which, on the one hand, viewed ruins as mnemonics for the violent profanation of sacred space conducted by the early reformers and, on the other, railed against the alleged misappropriation of ecclesiastical wealth by the Henrician gentry and nobility. If ruins have been seen as the emblems of Protestant 'nostalgia' *par excellence*, the legacy of converted churches and cathedrals was to prove altogether more complicated and ambiguous.

Those antiquaries who found cause to regret the wanton destruction of monastic buildings were inclined to be less alarmed by their conversion into parochial churches or cathedrals because this transformation could be subsumed into the preservationist enterprise. Surveying the parish church in the Wiltshire village of Malmesbury, Camden noted that it might have fared 'no better than the rest, but beene demolished' had it not been for 'T. Stumpes a wealthy clothier' who 'redeemed and bought it for the townsmen his neighbours, by whom it was converted to a Parish-church'. Rescued therefore from both monastic corruption and Reformation iconoclasm, Camden found 'a great part… yet standing at this day', where it continued to serve the local community.[90] Aesthetic concerns also fed into his appreciation of converted monasteries. At St Albans, he paused at a church 'raised out of the ruins' of the old Benedictine abbey, which he thought deserved 'to be had in admiration' for its 'bigness, beauty and antiquity'.[91] Thus, whereas the sight of monastic ruins had provoked an unfavourable comparison between the

[88] As Lucy Bates has suggested, continuity may therefore have been more perceptible than change. See 'The limits of possibility in England's long Reformation', *HJ* 53 (2010), pp. 1059-60.
[89] C. Pamela Graves, 'Social space in the English medieval parish church', *Economy and Society* 18 (1989), p. 319.
[90] Camden, *Britain*, p. 243.
[91] Ibid., p. 412.

mutilated remnants of the monasteries and the golden age of Christian devotion of which they were the shadows and imprints, Camden found in converted churches evidence of a more laudable transformation which created continuity with the past even as it effaced the images and idols that were the residues of Catholic 'superstition'.

The same was true of antiquarian approaches to converted cathedrals. The survival of cathedrals – including the many monastic foundations that were converted to secular cathedrals – was itself a remarkable feature of the English Reformation.[92] But although cathedrals of all kinds were rendered vulnerable by the upheavals of religious change, current research suggests that they may have played a greater role in advancing the English Reformation than has hitherto been appreciated.[93] This raises interesting questions about the memory of monasticism attached to these sites. Here there was, perhaps, a vested interest of sorts in forgetting the monastic past. It is certainly the case that, in the antiquarian context at least, it does not seem that cathedral buildings with a monastic history were singled out as being particularly problematic and most reflections tended to focus on the present state of the fabric rather than its past. For example, the Devonshire antiquary and civic official John Hooker, a contemporary of Camden, conducted a survey of Exeter which bears many of the hallmarks of preservationist antiquarianism. But he also applauded the transformation of the Benedictine Cathedral Priory into the city's secular cathedral. He described the structure he encountered as 'a verie fayre and a sumptuose buyldinge of free stone and with beautifull pyllers of graye marble'.[94] Thus, although antiquaries like Hooker continued to remember the dissolution as a cautionary tale about the fragility of antiquities, they evidently found no reason to lament the transformation of monastic cathedrals and churches into new emblems of Protestant piety.

With the Laudian project to restore the 'beauty of holiness', the memory of the dissolution associated with structures of monastic origin acquired new layers of meaning.[95] At Ely

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[92] On cathedrals and the Reformation see Stanford E. Lehmberg, *Cathedrals Under Siege: Cathedrals in English Society, 1600-1700* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1996); idem, *The Reformation of Cathedrals: Cathedrals in English Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Diamaid MacCulloch, 'Worcester: a cathedral city in the Reformation', in Patrick Collinson and John Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), pp. 94-112; Ian Atherton, 'Cathedrals', in Anthony Milton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Anglicanism, Volume I: Reformation and Identity, c. 1520-1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 228-42.

[93] For an earlier perspective see David Marcombe, 'Cathedrals and Protestantism: the search for a new identity, 1540-1660', in David Marcombe and C. S. Knighton (eds.), *Close Encounters: English Cathedrals and Society since 1540* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1991), pp. 43-61. This is the subject of ongoing research by Alice Soulieux-Evans: see 'Cathedrals and the formation of "Anglicanism", c. 1660-1714', PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, in progress). I am grateful to Alice Soulieux-Evans for advice on the memory of monastic cathedrals after the Reformation.

[94] John Hooker, *The description of the citie of Excester*, ed. Walter J. Harte, J. W. Schopp, and H. Tapley-Soper, 3 vols. (Exeter: Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1919), i, p. 35.

[95] On the 'beauty of holiness' see Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, ch. 6; Peter Lake, 'The Laudian style: order, uniformity, and the pursuit of the beauty of holiness in the 1630s', in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The*

Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, Lieutenant Hammond, a soldier based with a military company in Norwich whose diary also functioned as a topography of the places that he visited, mourned that the structure had been 'rob'd of Princely dignity and meanes' during the dissolution but also regretted that it continued to stand 'much ruinated and decay'd, and drooping for very Age'.[96] Hammond thus appropriated the rhetoric of ruin to the Laudian cause, subsuming the spoliation wrought during the 1530s into what Julia Merritt has described as a 'value-ridden' and 'polemically constructed' language of neglect and beautification.[97] By contrast, at Romsey Abbey in Hampshire, Hammond was delighted to find 'a fayre and Cathedrall like church', where he admired the 'loftie, and most stately Ile' and 'hansome monuments' that attested to its Laudian credentials.[98] If the project to repair and beautify ecclesiastical buildings had inspired a generation of antiquaries to lament the physical and material rupture engendered by the dissolution, working sites thus continued principally to provoke rumination on their present state. In both its late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century varieties, then, antiquarian writing about ex-monastic cathedrals and churches suggests that it was entirely possible for Protestant topographers to remember the dissolution without recourse to the rhetoric of loss and pity that characterised contemporary writing about monastic ruins. Hammond's comments reflect the complexity of the memory culture attached to former monastic buildings that continued to undergo structural change and repair, as well as how the restoration of church fabrics and fittings functioned to temper and even eclipse the memory of iconoclastic violence.

Churches and cathedrals were also, as recent scholarship on the Reformation in England and Europe has emphasised, sites where memory was challenged and contested.[99] For a more radical breed of Protestant the degree of structural continuity with the past embodied in converted monasteries was a painful reminder of the incomplete character of the English Reformation. The memory of monasticism was therefore deliberately invoked as a polemical weapon. In this context, ecclesiastical structures had been a bone of contention long before the

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Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 161-85. For two approaches to Laudianism and churches and cathedrals see J. F. Merritt, 'The cradle of Laudianism? Westminster Abbey, 1558-1630', *JEH* 52 (2001), pp. 623-46; Ian Atherton, 'Cathedrals, Laudianism, and the British churches', *HJ* 53 (2010), pp. 895-918.

[96] *A Relation of a Short Survey of the Western Counties Made by a Lieutenant of the Military Company in Norwich in 1635*, ed. L. G. Wickham Legg, Camden Miscellany XVI (London, 1936), pp. 91-2.

[97] J. F. Merritt, 'Puritans, Laudians, and the phenomenon of church-building in Jacobean London', *HJ* 41 (1998), p. 960.

[98] *Short Survey of the Western Counties*, p. 59.

[99] See for example Duane J. Corpis, 'Losing one's place: memory, history, and space in post-Reformation Germany', in Lynne Tatlock (ed.), *Enduring Loss in Early Modern Germany: Cross Disciplinary Perspectives* (Boston, MA, and Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 327-67. More generally on the contestation of sacred space see Spicer and Hamilton (eds.), *Defining the Holy*, esp. chs. 10, 14; Will Coster and Andrew Spicer (eds.), *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. chs. 1, 5, 11, 14, 15.

Laudian impulse started to manifest in debates about sacred space. For the Elizabethan separatist Henry Barrow, the Henrician assault on the monasteries had been an exemplary episode of iconoclasm that he hoped to emulate on a larger stage. How, he asked, could churches and cathedrals be permitted to stand 'in their old idolatrous shapes' when superstition was 'so inseperably inherent unto the whole building, as it can never be clensed of this fretting leprosie, until it be desolate, laid on heapes, as their yonger sisters, the abbacies and monasteries are'.[100] In other words, for Barrow, all ecclesiastical structures of medieval origin cradled the memory of the corrupt Catholic past. Barrow's fellow separatist John Smyth, writing in 1609, was likewise persuaded that 'as the goodly buildings of the abbayes, monasteries, and nunries, are already destroyed, and made barnes, stables, swinestyes, jakes, so shal it be done with al the idol temples when the howre of their visitation shal come'.[101] But whilst Smyth's comments testify on one level to the polemical power of remembering the dissolution, they also further underline the extent to which processes of conversion had indeed succeeded in partially effacing the memory of the monastic past. His deliberately polemical and provocative account of the conversion of monasteries in the 1530s praised the Henrician profanation of sacred space and yet failed to acknowledge the fact that some churches and cathedrals had once been abbeys, monasteries, and nunneries. Barrow's critique of churches as the 'younger sisters' of the religious houses likewise carried this implication, whilst maintaining the 'continuous thread of impassioned pleading' that connected iconoclasts across the generations.[102]

Radical Protestant anxiety about the Catholic memory embodied in some churches and cathedrals intensified with political and religious developments in the mid-seventeenth century. The connection between monasteries and post-Reformation churches was not lost on the Church of England clergyman and iconoclast Richard Culmer. Writing half a century after Barrow and Smyth, *Cathedral newes from Canterbury* (1644), published as part of a puritan backlash against the Laudian reforms, accused Canterbury Cathedral of being 'in an abbey-like, corrupt, and rotten condition, which cal[l]s for a speedy Reformation, or Dissolution'.[103] Culmer thus described the memory of the cathedral priory as a canker that riddled the structure. This was a disease, he continued, that had infected generations of Canterbury's clerics:

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[100] Henry Barrow, *A briefe discoverie of the false church* ([Dort?], 1590), p. 132.
[101] John Smyth, *Paralleles, censures, observations* ([Middelburg], 1609), repr. in *The works of John Smyth, Fellow of Christ's College, 1594-8*, with notes and biography by W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), pp. 523-4.
[102] Aston, *Broken Idols*, p. 86.
[103] Richard Culmer, *Cathedrall newes from Canterbury: shewing, the Canterburian cathedrall to bee in an abbey-like, corrupt, and rotten condition, which calls for a speedy Reformation, or dissolution* (London, 1644). The capital 'D' in Dissolution may also be evidence of the phenomenon we encountered in chapter two whereby the Dissolution of the Monasteries acquired its name.

> The Cathedrall, called Christs-Church, in Canterbury, being a Convent of Monkes at the time of the dissolution of Abbeys, in the reigne of King Henry the eight, it was then (instead of Prior and Convent) turned into Deane, and Chapter… these Prelaticall successors of the Idolatrous, proud, lazie, covetous Monkes, as they succeeded them in place, so they followed them in practise, whereby they have a long time caused the godly neare them to groane under their tyranny, superstition, and scandall.[104]

Culmer metaphorically reversed the process of conversion to reveal the original medieval structure from behind its post-Reformation façade in an attempt to instigate a second dissolution of religious places. Selectively remembering the dissolution thus became a deliberate tactic for new generations of iconoclasts, for whom it functioned as a 'destructive precedent' for renewed campaigns against churches and idols.[105] In the event, however, the radical puritan attempt to raze England's cathedrals and churches to the ground was unsuccessful. Lichfield, a cathedral not of monastic origin, was the only such structure to suffer significant demolition at the hands of the image breakers of the 1640s.[106] Moreover, although puritan polemicists might deploy the memory of the dissolution as a rhetorical device, their instinct to destroy was not at all conducive to the topographical modes of expression that preserved the material memory of ex-monastic structures and spaces. As we have already noted, the act of iconoclasm was a mechanism for forgetting the past or, as Eamon Duffy has argued, a 'sacrament of forgetfulness'.[107] This was as true of the wave of iconoclasm engendered by the Civil Wars as it was of that initiated by Henry VIII in the 1530s. In 1643-4, the fanatical iconoclast William Dowsing rampaged across Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, vandalising the images, stained glass, and 'popish' fabrics with which he came into contact. Echoing the epistolary itineraries compiled by the Henrician commissioners, Dowsing kept a journal of his iconoclastic peregrinations. At no point, however, did he single out former monastic sites for their origins or associations.[108] Rather, his actions and those of other mid-century image breakers served to complicate the memories associated with former monastic sites, subsuming the dissolution into a wider narrative of iconoclasm.

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[104] Ibid., sig. A3r.
[105] Aston, *Broken Idols*, p. 80.
[106] On Lichfield Cathedral see Lehmberg, *Cathedrals Under Siege*, pp. 37-8; Spraggon, *Puritan Iconoclasm*, pp. 197-8.
[107] Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, p. 480. See also Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, p. 256 and passim; eadem, *Broken Idols*, esp. part I.
[108] Trevor Cooper (ed.), *The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001). On Dowsing see Aston, *England's Iconoclasts*, pp. 74-83; John Morrill, 'William Dowsing, the bureaucratic puritan', in John Morrill, Paul Slack, and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *Public Duty and Private Conscience in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. 173-204, revised as 'William Dowsing and the administration of iconoclasm', in Cooper (ed.), *Journal of William Dowsing*, pp. 1-28; Spraggon, *Puritan Iconoclasm*, chs. 4, 7.

It was in this context that churches became a focus of the same anxiety about the vulnerability of antiquities that was characteristic of an earlier brand of preservationist topographical writing about ruins. In 1657, on a perambulation of the Oxfordshire countryside, Anthony Wood paused to record the monastic history of Dorchester Abbey, two miles southeast of Oxford, and its conversion into a parish church, where he mourned its further defacement by 'parliamentary soldiers in the late rebellion'.[109] In an attempt to preserve the memory of the site from further erosion, he also created a plan of the church interior. The preservation of the working structures created out of former religious houses has also been a neglected feature of Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*. The emphasis placed upon monastic history in this work has encouraged previous scholarship to view the *Monasticon* as the cornerstone of the 'nostalgic' antiquarian tradition inspired by ruins.[110] But although Dugdale listed ruined houses, he did not comment extensively upon their broken state. Indeed, he devoted at least as much space to religious houses that had been converted into churches and cathedrals after 1539 – and, as we shall see, visually this imbalance is even more striking. The dedicatory epistle to the 1693 English edition, written by John Marsham, intended the *Monasticon* as a reminder that 'of all those Cathedral Churches and Episcopal Seats, whose venerable Fabricks we behold at this day, some were formerly Abbies', as well as a means of showing that although 'the very Ruines of many [religious houses] are become invisible… their Memory still lives in our History and Records'.[111] The act of remembering the pre-dissolution past of churches and cathedrals was therefore an act that defied ongoing attempts to induce amnesia by concealing and adapting, but also by attacking, monastic architecture. To paraphrase Margaret Aston, conversions, as well as ruins, could make historians.

But whilst this preservationist impulse might have been the hallmark of a certain prominent type of topographical writing, it was not characteristic of early modern antiquarianism as a whole. This is more readily apparent in the case of converted monasteries than it is in the example of the monastic ruins that inspired 'nostalgic' antiquarianism. In 1657, Dugdale conducted a perambulation of the East Anglian fens with fellow antiquary Elias Ashmole, during which both men kept short journals of the places they encountered. The differences between the two texts are highly suggestive. Dugdale, who was then engaged in researching the second volume of the *Monasticon*, continued to be preoccupied with converted churches. At Crowland in Lincolnshire, he saw 'that part of the Abby Church, which is now standing viz. the west end from the Crosse' and was impressed by its new fabric, recording that it 'hath a costly roofe of

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[109] Anthony Wood, *The life and times of Anthony Wood, antiquary, of Oxford, 1632-1695, described by himself*, ed. Andrew Clark, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1891-1900), i, pp. 223-6.
[110] Dugdale is prominent, for example, in Aston's seminal study, 'English ruins and English history', pp. 241, 251-2.
[111] *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 1693 edn, sigs. A2r, A4r.

timber, most richly gilt, as if it were newly done'.[112] In the Cambridgeshire village of Thorney, he found cause to mourn the 'few scattering ruines' of the Benedictine abbey that had once stood there, but also noted the survival of 'a parte of the Abby Church, and the body thereof from the Crosse to the west end'.[113] By locating converted churches in relation to their ruined elements and using language that acknowledged the fragmentary condition of these structures, Dugdale's diary reveals his preoccupation with the destructive episode of dissolution.

Strikingly, Ashmole's accounts of the same churches that caught Dugdale's attention made no reference to their monastic origins or to the violence of their conversion. Rather he spoke of them in the present tense and with reference only to their present condition: 'At Thorney & Crowland', he wrote, 'there is now only standing the body of the Churches to the Cross Isle, & noe more'. At Crowland, Ashmole also applauded the grandeur of the working church, it being 'very stately & adorned with severall statues'.[114] Likewise, whereas Dugdale recorded that 'when we came to Torksey, we found the ruines of the Priorie about half a Bow shoot Eastwards from the parish church', Ashmole noted simply that 'Neere the Nunry… is a tumulus'.[115] Ashmole's failure to comment on Torksey's distressed and damaged state belies the different priorities governing the two texts, demonstrating his greater fascination for natural history than the medieval past. Not every observer of the post-Reformation landscape viewed it through the rose-tinted spectacles of nostalgia, pity, and regret.

Indeed, for a number of antiquaries writing in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, converted churches provided an occasion for meditation upon the triumph of Protestant Reformation and the improvement in piety wrought in parallel with the physical transformation of these structures. This took the form neither of the vitriolic anti-monastic polemic espoused by Lambarde or the aesthetic appreciation for parish churches evinced by Hammond and Camden. Rather, it exemplified a brand of antiquarianism that looked forward in time from the dissolution rather than backwards upon it. At the site of a small monastic chapel in Hounslow on the outskirts of London, the Elizabethan cartographer John Norden, born at the end of Henry VIII's reign, remembered how it had passed into the hands of a Henrician auditor, a man called Roane, who had given an annuity 'upon condition that the enhabytantes shall extend a farther contribution to mayntayne a minister ther'.[116] In the 1630s, at the height of the Laudian reforms, Thomas Westcote, a gentry antiquary of Devonshire stock, wrote that 'I remember there is a fair large spacious church, which somtime appertained to the Priory of Plympton' before switching

[112] BL, Lansdowne MS 722/4, fol. 36r.
[113] Ibid., fol. 35v.
[114] Bodl., MS Ashmole 784, fol. 32r.
[115] BL, Lansdowne MS 722/4, fol. 37v; Bodl., MS Ashmole 784, fol. 34r.
[116] BL, Additional MS 31853, p. 7. For Norden's topographical collections see also BL, Harley MS 6252.

to the present tense to remark that 'since the dissolution of the priory the town hath purchased it, which they bestow upon the vicar, preacher and other pious uses'.[117] Half a century later, the lawyer and antiquary Thomas Denton began a survey of Cumberland at the request of his local MP, Sir John Lowther. Combining his observations of the local landscape with material from the historical collections created by his father, John Denton, Thomas noted at Holm Cultram how the abbey church had been 'made… to serve the inhabitants as a parish church' after the dissolution.[118] The language of service and piety invoked in these works marks a departure from the lament for the pre-dissolution world and the sense of social decline embodied by monastic ruins which has been so profoundly associated with the development of early modern antiquarianism.

Denton and Westcote grappled with a different inheritance than the 'nostalgic' antiquaries. Like Leland, writing more than a century earlier in the context of the Henrician project to forget the dissolution, topographies in this tradition continued to minimise the material, social, and economic rupture wrought by the dissolution. This type of antiquarian writing functioned not to resurrect what had been lost or preserve that in danger of falling into oblivion, but rather to establish and consolidate senses of identity and community amongst the local gentry who were its authors and who constituted its primary readership. In other words, it was written by and for the heirs – both literal and metaphorical – of the generation of Henrician nobles who had profited from the dissolution in the 1530s. The dissolution was a critical moment in their heritage. In this context, topography became an important polemical and genealogical tool of the gentry, shaping the memory of the dissolution by promoting the forgetting of aspects of the medieval past that their preservationist counterparts fought so hard to conserve. This was vitally important to those who lived as well as prayed in converted monasteries. Indeed, the primary sites of this culture of amnesia were not churches and cathedrals but the domestic properties raised out of the ruins of the religious houses.

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[117] Thomas Westcote, *A view of Devonshire in MDCXXX, with a pedigree of most of its gentry, by Thomas Westcote, gent.*, ed. George Oliver and Pitman Jones (Exeter, 1845), p. 383.
[118] Thomas Denton, *A Perambulation of Cumberland, 1687-1688, including Descriptions of Westmorland, the Isle of Man, and Ireland*, ed. Angus J. L. Winchester in collaboration with Mary Wane, Surtees Society 207 (Durham, 2003), p. 195. See also Angus J. L. Winchester (ed.), *John Denton's history of Cumberland*, Surtees Society 213 (Durham, 2010), pp. 179-80. John Denton attributed the dissolution of the monastic church at Holm Cultram to Henry VIII; this attribution does not appear in Thomas Denton's *Perambulation*.

'Great Mansions' and 'Stately Houses'

In the greatest land transfer witnessed in England since the Norman Conquest, the dissolution caused around one-third of all the land in the country to pass from the hands of the Church into those of the crown and its agents.[119] Henry VIII retained some of this property, but other sites were sold on to bolster the crown's finances or to reinforce patronage networks. The recipients and purchasers of monastic lands used them to cement or enhance their social and political status. Some among the nobility and gentry undertook building projects to transform religious houses into private homes. In the years immediately following the dissolution, some thirty new country houses were constructed with remarkable rapidity out of England's ruins.[120] In addition to noting the creation of monastic ruins and the conversion of some properties into parish churches, Leland also noticed that some religious houses had been converted for secular uses. Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire, for example, had once been a house of Premonstratensian canons. In the wake of the dissolution, however, the incumbent Lord Chancellor, Thomas Wriothesley had 'builded a right stately House embatelid, and having a goodely gate… yn the very same Place where the late Monasterie of Premonstratenses stoode'.[121] Wriothesley, who was also the cousin of Charles Wriothesley, whose chronicle we examined in the previous chapter, was one of the most significant beneficiaries of the dissolution after the crown, acquiring former monastic properties in no fewer than eight counties between 1537 and 1547.[122] Like so many domestic conversions of this type, Titchfield became a material expression of the status and wealth accrued by the gentry at the suppression, mirroring the king's own building programme at sites including Dartford Priory and Syon Abbey.[123]

As the archaeology of the dissolution has highlighted, domestic conversions, unlike churches, usually entailed the imposition of an entirely new façade that concealed the original architecture completely.[124] Whilst people still living could remember these transformations, antiquaries continued to commit them to paper. Fifty years after Leland began his peregrinations for what became the *Itinerary*, Camden was similarly struck by the rapid conversion of properties belonging to Thomas Wriothesley, noting at Walden Abbey in Essex, that the Lord Chancellor had 'changed the Abbay into his owne dwelling house'.[125] Confronted with the same grand structure, Norden also remarked upon what had become 'now a stately

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[119] On the administration of this transfer see Peter Cunich, ''The administration and alienation of ex-monastic lands by the Crown, 1536-47', PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 1990).
[120] Howard, 'Recycling the monastic fabric', p. 223.
[121] *Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. Toulmin Smith, i, p. 281.
[122] Michael A. R. Graves, 'Wriothesley, Thomas, first earl of Southampton (1505–1550)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30076, accessed 15 Feb 2017].
[123] Howard, 'Recycling the monastic fabric', p. 223. See also Doggett, *Patterns of Re-Use*, pp. 53, 56.
[124] Soden, 'Buildings analysis at Coombe Abbey', p. 154.
[125] Camden, *Britain*, p. 452.

howse of the E. of Sowthampton'.[126] Elsewhere, Stow was prompted at the former nunnery of Holywell in Shoreditch to note that many houses had 'beene builded for the Lodgings of Noblemen, of Strangers borne, and other' since the dissolution.[127] As Stow realised, the process of converting monastic buildings into private houses was an ongoing project which continued to remodel the monastic landscape so that it reflected new political imperatives and power structures.[128] Insofar as this process was also 'immensely destructive of earlier fabric', these buildings became sites of forgetting the monastic past.[129] By altering, adapting, and appropriating monastic structures, the English gentry created not bleak reminders of what had been lost during the suppression but powerful symbols of what had been gained.

For centuries before the dissolution, land and property had been 'the means by which a family knew itself in historical perspective'.[130] If ruins were the most tangible manifestation of a vanquished past, monasteries turned manor houses were palpable emblems of the shift in influence from clergy to laity that had accompanied the suppression.[131] As Maurice Howard has demonstrated in the case of post-dissolution Reading, the archaeology of the dissolution reveals how the 'priorities for the use of former monastic spaces changed as the topography of the place and the interests of its powerful inhabitants developed in the post-Reformation world'.[132] It is unsurprising, therefore, that a particular species of gentry antiquary came to show a far greater interest in the conversion of the monasteries than in their spoliation. Promising the reader an 'hystoricall & chorographicall description' of Norfolk, the Elizabethan cleric Thomas Beckham thus ignored the history of the Reformation in the county and the material remains that antiquaries such as Camden, Aubrey, and Wood would have thought of as its pre-eminent antiquities. Instead, he was compelled to record the 'divers mannours' that had come into the hands of the nobility 'since the dissolucion' of the religious houses.[133] Sir William Pole's 'Survey of Devon', compiled in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, demonstrated a similar preoccupation with the status and wealth of the local gentry. He noted how Barnstaple Priory had been 'granted to the Lord William Howard of Effingham, & by Charles Earl of Nottingham, it descended unto his son'.[134] At Buckfast Abbey, he was prompted to remark that

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[126] BL, Add MS 31853, p. 44.
[127] Stow, *Survey of London*, p. 470.
[128] See Christopher Phillpotts, 'The houses of Henry VIII's courtiers in London', in Gaimster and Gilchrist (eds.), *Archaeology of the Reformation*, pp. 299-309.
[129] Iain Soden, 'Buildings analysis at Coombe Abbey', p. 154.
[130] Patrick J. Geary, 'Land, language, and memory in Europe, 700-1100', *Transactions of the Royal History Society*, 6th series, 9 (1999), p. 171.
[131] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 326.
[132] Howard, 'Recycling the monastic fabric', p. 230.
[133] Bodl., MS Gough Norfolk 26, p. 346. For the attribution to Beckham see Woolf, *Social Circulation*, pp. 154-5.
[134] DHC, Z 19/18/13b, p. 523.

since the dissolution 'the Manor doth continue still the Kings'.[135] Pole's work was also a foundational source for the topographies of Devon undertaken by Tristram Risdon in the mid-seventeenth century, who repeated Pole's assessment of Buckfast, though he added a piece of information omitted by Pole, recording that the 'skeleton of the vast body' of the abbey was still to be seen.[136]

These texts are emblematic of a variety of antiquarianism that sits uncomfortably with the 'nostalgic' tradition that has typically been associated with the remnants of medieval monasticism. They belong to the commemorative culture of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gentry, in which, as Jan Broadway and Claire Bartram have argued, historical and chorographical writing was deployed as a tool for fostering and fashioning both collective identity and individual reputation.[137] Ironically, many of these endeavours were enabled by the release of historic documents out of monastic archives and libraries and their increased accessibility.[138] Many gentry antiquaries were therefore engaged in collecting monastic materials and some also sought out the remnants of religious houses for precisely this reason. Writing to Camden, the collector and antiquary Henry Savile thus recorded that he had visited Bolton Abbey 'wher I found many Armes of the nobilitie embo[ssed] in stone'.[139] But it was also the case that topography could function as a domain where the early modern gentry remembered – and reshaped – their history. At the site of a former nunnery at Seaton in Cumbria, Denton used the dissolution as an excuse for genealogy, writing that:

> Since the fall of that religious house, it came to the hands of Joseph Pennington, a younger brother of the house of Mulcaster, and is now the inheritance of Miles Pennington Esqr, son of John, son of Miles, son of Joseph, who had it by a match with the daughter and heir to Sir Hugh Askew.[140]

For the Pennington family, the dissolution marked not the end of the medieval world but instead the beginning of its own prosperity. It was this thriving lineage that Denton's

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[135] DHC, Z 19/18/13a, p. 360.
[136] DHC, D.2865, unpaginated. Published as Tristram Risdon, *The Chorographical Description or Survey of the County of Devon, with the City and County of Exeter* (London, 1714). See also Risdon's notebook with historical and topographical observations in Exeter, Exeter Cathedral Archives, MS 3531.
[137] Jan Broadway, *'No Historie so Meete': Gentry Culture and the Development of Local History in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); eadem, 'Symbolic and self-consciously antiquarian: the Elizabethan and early Stuart gentry's use of the past', Matthew Neufeld (ed.), 'Uses of the past in early modern England', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 76 (2013), pp. 541-58; Claire Bartram, '"Honoured by posteryte by record of wrytinge": memory, reputation and the role of the book within commemorative practices in late Elizabethan Kent', in Michael Penman (ed.), *Monuments and Monumentality Across Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2013), pp. 91-104.
[138] Broadway, *No History so Meete*, p. 121.
[139] BL, Cotton MS Julius F VI, fol. 316r.
[140] Denton, *Perambulation of Cumberland*, p. 74.

topography was intended to commemorate and celebrate. This impulse was strengthened by the fact that antiquaries such as Denton belonged themselves to this gentry community. Adopting a present tense formulation that was common in writing of this kind, the Caroline antiquary Thomas Gerard, when confronted with the site of a thirteenth-century Augustinian nunnery at Ilchester in Somerset, remarked only that 'there stands a new house, the seat of my good friend, Mr Dawe'. Describing the landscape around the property, Gerard continued to refer to the site as 'the Priory' which, he wrote, 'I remember for imitation sake'.[141] Gerard's survey reflected the enduring power of monastic names as markers of place, but interpreted their meaning through the lens of a worldview which celebrated the waning of the monastic age.

Implicit in Gerard's description of Ilchester is a sense that the process of conversion had been one of improvement.[142] Likewise, at Wembury in Devon, the antiquary Thomas Westcote admired a house that had once been appropriated to the priory at Plympton, but had passed 'at the dissolution' first to the 'illustrious' Lord Chancellor Wriothesley and then to Sir John Hele, 'who added much to the fame and honour of this place' through the conversion of the property into a 'noble mansion'.[143] A little further on at Tor Abbey, Westcote had cause again to remember that 'after the dissolution it came to be the possession of Rudgway' who 're-edified those almost decayed cells to a newer and better form'.[144] The polemical rhetoric of monastic corruption is only implicit in these passages, but the language of re-edification employed by Westcote implies something of the continued resonance of the Henrician narrative of dissolution across the seventeenth century. This type of topographical writing could thus serve subtly to perpetuate older ideas about the dissolution. Gerard also returned more explicitly to this theme in his account of Somerset, delighting in reminding his reader that 'many greate Abbies would not sticke to shew you a nayle' torn from the cross upon which Christ had been crucified, produced 'of the same forge or rather forging'.[145] Like the historical and polemical writing examined in previous chapters, topographical writing thus also employed the memory of monastic corruption as a means of minimising the magnitude of the rupture engendered by the dissolution. It reflected the processes of architectural conversion that had quite literally effaced the material memory of the medieval past.

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[141] Thomas Gerard, *The Particular Description of the County of Somerset, drawn up by Thomas Gerard of Trent, 1633*, ed. E. H. Bates, Somerset Record Society 15 (1900), pp. 206-7.
[142] This provides a different angle on the theme of improvement explored in Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[143] Westcote, *View of Devonshire*, p. 387.
[144] Ibid., p. 426.
[145] Gerard, *Particular Description of Somerset*, p. 98.

This tendency to downplay the transformation wrought by the dissolution was augmented by belief that the manor houses of the gentry remained integral to the continuation of the charitable and philanthropic duties undertaken by the medieval religious orders. After the suppression of the monasteries, as Felicity Heal has demonstrated, the onus of hospitality was transferred to the post-Reformation clergy and gentry.[146] Their houses – conversions and new builds alike – were structured around 'public display and openness' as an indication of their occupants' generosity.[147] As we have seen, generations of polemicists and antiquaries argued that the dissolution marked a rupture between past and present that had caused social and economic decline. This argument was also at the root of Stow's 'nostalgia', which drew an unfavourable comparison between the plenty of the medieval past and the parsimony of his Elizabethan present. Yet for the generation of Protestant antiquaries who could not remember the pre-dissolution world and who viewed the suppression as critical to the status and reputation of their families and communities, the comparison was reversed.

The Cornish gentleman antiquary Richard Carew completed his *Survey of Cornwall* in 1602. Modelled on Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, although rather less caustic in its polemic than its predecessor, the *Survey* was undertaken with the input of his peers in the local community and was intended largely for their edification and entertainment.[148] A note of criticism crept into his comment that in the immediate aftermath of the suppression 'the golden showre of the dissolved Abbey lands, rayned welnere into every gapers mouth'. This reflected that fact that the Reformation had created a certain amount of instability in the traditional gentry community, whose sense of continuity and cohesion had been tested by the release of church wealth and property into lay hands, which sponsored the rise of a new elite. It was partly for this reason that the seventeenth century witnessed a vogue for genealogy, heraldry, chorography, and topography.[149] Nevertheless, Carew went on to associate monasticism with 'more corrupt ages' than his own and this informed his remarks that the owners of a former priory in the parish of St Germans, known to him by its post-Reformation name of Port Eliot, were commendable for their generosity because 'by [their] charity distributeth, *pro virili*, the almes accustomably expected and expended at such places'.[150] Sentiments such as this also gave further expression to the idea that the dissolution had entailed gains as well as losses.

Such comments were not necessarily incompatible with melancholic reflection on monastic ruins. Westcote, for example, described how the beholder of the 'skeleton of [the] huge body' of

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[146] See Felicity Heal, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), ch. 7.
[147] Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 283.
[148] See Walsham, 'Richard Carew and English topography', pp. 28-9, 33.
[149] Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, fol. 109r. See also Broadway, *No Historie so Meete*, p. 239.
[150] Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, fol. 109r.

Buckfast Abbey 'may both pity and wonder to see the ruins thereof' because they were the carcasses of medieval lay devotion.[151] Westcote's pity, in an echo of his contemporary, Weever, was directed towards the lay founders of medieval monasteries. At the ruins of the Benedictine nunnery of Polsloe, he was 'put in mind to consider and seriously to meditate upon the fore-intentions of mortal men's purposes in thinking of the first founder of this fabric' and mourned that what had been intended as a lasting memorial to the founder's piety had been ruined and 'is no where (that I can find) remembered'.[152] These vestigial remains were, for Westcote, also further evidence of how 'godly purposes' had been 'abused' by the religious – and were thus the antithesis of conversions, which reflected the restoration of godly piety that had once supported Catholic error and superstition.[153] Likewise, Gerard could not suppress a note of pity that the founders and benefactors of the Carmelite friary 'now vanished' in Taunton had been 'dubble buryed first in their graves and secondly with the ruines of the Church and priory, for that fatall thunderclapp in Henry the eight's daies… overthrew this priory to the ground'. His regret only extended so far, however, because he continued to applaud the 'handsome house' built out of some of the fragments of the Taunton Whitefriars by a prominent local family.[154]

It is striking that these passages find echoes in preservationist antiquarian writing, which – though obsessed with monastic ruins – did not allow converted monasteries to go unnoticed. Sometimes these references were inflected with a muted form of the mournful rhetoric of 'nostalgic' antiquarianism. Hammond, for instance, noted how many of the stones that had once belonged to St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury had been 'caryed away and plac'd in great mansions' which themselves now 'fully testify what the pristine beauty and magnificence of this place hath beene'.[155] Others demonstrated that preservationist antiquarianism was capable of having an eye to the present, as well as looking back at the past. Thus in Wiltshire, Aubrey observed a house that had 'belonged to the Abbey of Cainsham, not far off in Somersetshire' which 'after the dissolucion Tho: Earle of Sussex had it'.[156] In some instances, this was framed critically. Norden, for example, appears to have mourned domestic conversions more than the creation of parochial churches. At Daventry in Northamptonshire he wrote that 'theare was sometime a fayre Monasterye', which had been suppressed by Cardinal Wolsey in the 1520s. 'It is greatly defaced', he wrote, and 'yet so much standeth as giveth entertainment unto a Gentleman of some accompt, named as I take it, Mr. Roper'.[157] Yet others appear to have adopted elements of the rhetoric and function of the present-centric tradition of writing about

[151] Westcote, *View of Devonshire*, p. 404.
[152] Ibid., pp. 186-7
[153] Ibid., p. 145.
[154] Gerard, *Particular Description of Somerset*, pp. 58-9.
[155] *Short Survey of the Western Counties*, p. 18.
[156] Bodl., MS Aubrey 3, fol. 98r.
[157] Bodl., MS Top. Northants e 17, p. 38.

the dissolution. At a former Carmelite monastery in Aylesford, Kent, Camden remarked that there was 'now seene a faire habitation of Sir William Siddey a learned knight painefully, and expensfully studious of the common good of his countrie as both his endowed house for the poore, and the bridge heere wich the common voice doe plentifully testifie'.[158] Prefiguring later suggestions that lay hospitality and charity exceeded that of the monastic orders, Camden thus clearly demonstrated that the boundaries between retrospective, regretful antiquarianism and its present-centric cousin were far from wholly distinct.

The difference lay in the balance between perceptions of what had been lost at the dissolution and what had been gained – between the instinct to preserve and destroy, remember and forget. During his perambulation of the East Anglian fens, Dugdale also found himself confronted by monasteries that had been converted into country houses. He commented at Swinstead in Lincolnshire that 'there is no appearance of any of the Abby' that had once stood there, 'but all that is left of it, converted into other buildings'.[159] Likewise, travelling through the Cambridgeshire parish of Chatteris, he noted that 'there is no vestigial of the monasterie now lost' because it had since been 'transformed… into a newe House'.[160] It is striking that Dugdale considered the religious houses at Swinstead and Chatteris to be wholly 'lost' as a result of their conversion into domestic dwellings. His survey thus testifies to the power of the processes of conversion to erase material memory, as well as the capacity of topography to resurrect it. It is also telling that Dugdale only very rarely mentioned the new owners of former religious houses, betraying his preference for the medieval past. In one such entry towards the end of his journal, Dugdale made an illuminating slip: 'we saw Ramsey Mere', he wrote, 'and Ramsey Abbey. I mean the place where it stood, being now Mr Henry Cromwells seat, on our left hand, somewhat above a mile and half distant'.[161]

By contrast, antiquarian writing in the present-centric, genealogically inspired tradition of many seventeenth-century gentry antiquaries invoked the memory of the dissolution almost uniquely as the transformative moment in the fortunes of prominent local families. It relied upon a vision of the suppression as a creative episode. As a result, this present-centric form of topography fostered and reinforced associations between properties of monastic origin, the buildings in their converted form, and the new owners who inhabited and used them. Andrew Marvell's poem, 'Upon Appleton House', captures the tenor and timbre of this particular memory culture. Written for Thomas Fairfax, commander in chief of the parliamentarian forces during the Civil Wars, who retired to the manor house constructed out of the ruins of Nun Appleton Priory in

[158] Camden, *Britain*, p. 332.
[159] BL, Lansdowne MS 722/4, fol. 36v.
[160] Ibid., fol. 34r.
[161] Ibid., fol. 34v.

Yorkshire during the Interregnum, it was, in part, an attempt to manage the memory of the dissolution. 'A nunnery first gave it birth', he wrote, 'for virgin buildings oft brought forth / and all that neighbour-ruin shows / the quarries whence this dwelling rose'. Invoking the language of sacredness to praise the Fairfax family, Marvell declared that 'surely when that after age / shall hither come in pilgrimage / these sacred places to adore / by Vere and Fairfax trod before'.[162] By converting and occupying former monastic property, men like Fairfax contributed to the erosion of the monastic past. This may have been an unconscious process of forgetting, but it may also reflect a deep-seated anxiety about the profanation of sacred space. In the next chapter, we will return to this question and to the critical role of contemporary discourses of sacrilege in shaping this culture of amnesia – for it is clear, as we have seen, that the owners of former monastic properties and the antiquaries who wrote for them belonged to a group whose interests in forgetting the dissolution were much greater than in remembering it.

Depicting the Dissolution

The conflicting impulses to remember and forget the dissolution were also encapsulated in the visual depictions of monastic property produced by antiquaries of various stripes as part of their surveys of the landscape. Images had the power to resurrect structures that had been lost, to preserve vestigial remains, and subtly to erase the memory of the dissolution; iconoclasm, as we have already noted, had the power both to erode memory and to forge it anew. Aston's argument that encounters with the fragments of the monastic past stimulated practices of historical enquiry has profoundly shaped accounts of the visual culture of the dissolution. Building partly upon Aston's essay, Daniel Woolf has argued that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the development of a 'visual culture of "pastness"'.[163] Indeed, for Woolf, the dissolution functions as the key temporal marker in the development of this culture, precisely because its residues were 'the most prominent and visible link to a vanishing medieval past'.[164] It is a critical paradox of the dissolution that Henrician attempts to efface the memory of the monastic past inspired a visual culture that sought to preserve it. Yet Woolf also acknowledges the selective vision with which these objects and their pictorial likenesses were viewed. In a highly suggestive discussion of the changing status of material objects, Woolf proposes that the

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[162] On 'Nun Appleton House' and the implications of architectural conversion see Brian Patton, 'Preserving property: history, genealogy, and inheritance in "Upon Appleton House"', *Renaissance Quarterly* 49 (1996), pp. 824-39; Patsy Griffin, '"Twas no religious house till now": Marvell's "Upon Appleton House"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 28 (1998), pp. 61-67; Clinton Allen Brand, '"Upon Appleton House" and the decomposition of Protestant historiography', *English Literary Renaissance* 31 (2001), pp. 477-510; Jane Partner '"The swelling hall": Andrew Marvell and the politics of architecture at Nun Appleton House', *Seventeenth Century* 23 (2008), pp. 225-43.
[163] Woolf, *Social Circulation*, p. 183.
[164] Ibid., p. 220.

abolition of relic worship helped 'to nurture, rather than to deter, an interest in antiquity', though the boundary between venerated relic and historical artefact remained porous.[165] But, as we shall see, just as antiquarian and topographical writing did not present a uniform account of the dissolution, nor were images of monasteries the preserve of 'nostalgic' antiquarianism.

Early modern depictions of the dissolution itself are rare. A remarkable fragment of a manuscript survey of the properties belonging to the Benedictine abbey in Colchester in Essex, conducted at the time of its suppression, incorporates an image of the judge in the trial of Colchester's last abbot, John Beche, riding out of the city. Produced as a financial record of the lands and manors once belonging to the abbey, it also served as a piece of Henrician polemic. In the background, Beche, who was executed for treason after denying the king's right to seize the site, can be seen in the far distance hanging from the abbey's own gallows (figure 1).[166]

Image of a detail of the execution of John Beche, last abbot of Colchester, and parade of officials through Colchester, c. 1540 removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the British Library.

Figure 1. Detail of the execution of John Beche, last abbot of Colchester, and parade of officials through Colchester, c. 1540. London, British Library, Egerton MS 2164.

[165] Ibid., pp. 193-4.
[166] BL, Egerton MS 2164.

A visual representation of the regime's triumph over monasticism, this image, which occupies almost a third of the vellum upon which the legal document was inscribed, functioned visually to reinforce the anti-monastic rhetoric that underpinned the Henrician assault on the religious houses. Accordingly, neither the process of suppression nor its material consequences are depicted in this image of the abbot of Colchester's execution, which focuses solely upon the triumph of the Henrician regime over alleged monastic corruption. This was the crown's vision of the dissolution rendered in visual form, depicting the regime's triumph over what it proclaimed to be Catholic error and superstition without portraying the destructive, violent, and disruptive aspects of the process of suppression.

Yet, as we have seen, the afterlives of the dissolution were multiple, controversial, and highly complex. This is apparent in a second image of the suppression, which was produced a century after the Colchester manuscript. It belongs to the frontispiece of Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum* (figure 2). The work of the Bohemian engraver Wenceslaus Hollar and probably completed to Dugdale's own design, the bottom right panel depicted Henry VIII in classic Holbeinian mode, brandishing a sword in front of a crumbling religious house as the words *sic volo* [as I will] fall from his lips.[167] Uniquely among contemporary images of both the suppression and its physical and material consequences, the title-page of the *Monasticon* thus depicts the act of destruction itself. Surrounding panels portray commitments made by Henry VIII's predecessors to the sanctity of church property.[168] Henry, it implies, has violated their vows. Reflecting Dugdale's polemical, preservationist stance on the remnants of medieval monasticism, a cartouche beside the depiction of the dissolution bears the warning from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that 'a past age has things to offer which we should not despise'.[169] For Dugdale, remarkably, it was also important to preserve something of the religious orders who had inhabited the monasteries. The *Monasticon* thus depicts a series of monks and friars wearing the habits characteristic of their various orders (figure 3). When compared with the depiction of Beche's execution, the various images in the *Monasticon* testify to a profound shift in emphasis between 1540 and 1655, which further attests to the changing priorities and proclivities of successive generations. Visual trends thus reflected those evident in texts in ways that reinforce

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[167] See Margery Corbett, 'The title-page and illustrations to the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 1655-73', *Antiquaries Journal* 67 (1987), pp. 102-110; Marion Roberts, *Dugdale and Hollar: History Illustrated* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2002), pp. 55-6; Alexandra Walsham, '"Like fragments of a shipwreck": printed images and religious antiquarianism in early modern England', in Michael Hunter (ed.), *Printed Images in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Interpretation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 93. See also Margery Corbett and David Lightbowm (eds.), *The Comely Frontispiece: The Emblematic Title-Page in England, 1550-1650* (London: Henley and Boston, 1979).
[168] Corbett, 'Title-page to the *Monasticon*', p. 104.
[169] Ibid., p. 109.

the idea that increasing temporal distance on the events of 1536-40 helped to crystallise critical perspectives on the early Reformation.[170]

Image of a detail from the title page of William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 3 vols. (London, 1655-73) removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Figure 2. Detail from the title-page of William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 3 vols. (London, 1655-73).

[170] On this theme more generally, see Mark Rankin, 'The literary afterlife of Henry VIII, 1558-1625', in Mark Rankin, Christopher Highley, and John N. King (eds.), *Henry VIII and his Afterlives: Literature, Politics, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 105-6.

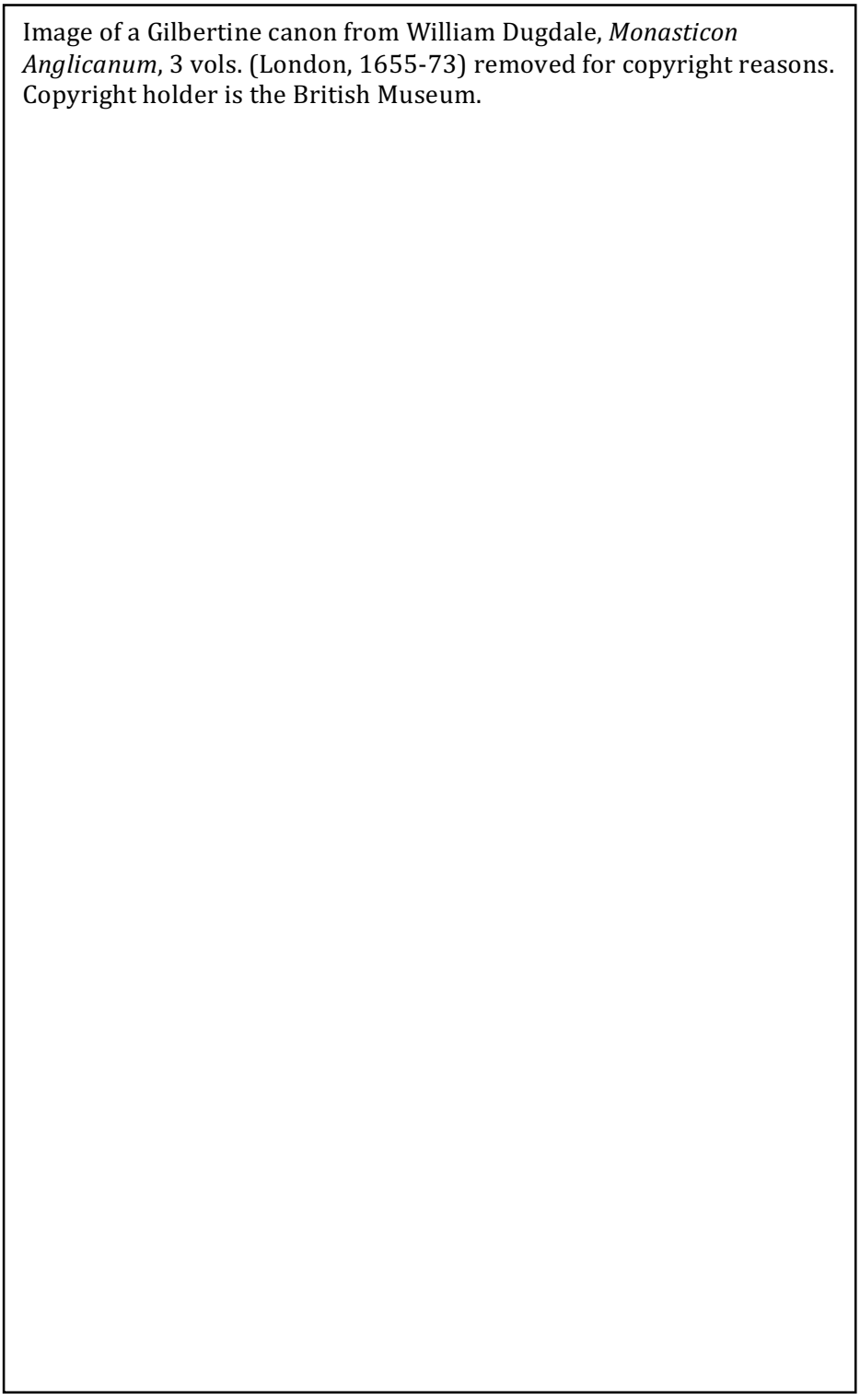

Figure 3. Image of a Gilbertine canon from William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 3 vols. (London, 1655-73).

However, these examples also beg the question of why there were so few early modern depictions of the dissolution. This may be partly the product of a culture that had a difficult relationship with images. In a highly influential study, Patrick Collison argued that the drive to purge sacred spaces of 'superstitious' idols created societies that suffered from a severe aversion to visual imagery.[171] It is true, for example, that Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent*, first published in the 1570s, was the product of a moment that was not particularly conducive to the production of images. Depicting ruins pictorially risked undoing the iconoclastic good works of the early reformers, as well as resisting the divine will which sanctioned the dissolution. However, more recent scholarship has critiqued the comprehensiveness of the shift from a medieval culture of affective imagery to one of intense iconophobia in the course of the sixteenth century, suggesting that the historiographical tendency to overlook Protestant imagery is itself a product of early modern debates about images.[172] Tessa Watt has demonstrated the longevity of pre-Reformation imagery in cheap print and the recent work of Tara Hamling, Richard Williams, Malcolm Jones, and David Davis has explored the processes of adaptation and reformation of the image that contributed to the development of a post-Reformation English religious visual culture.[173] As James Knapp has suggested, images also contributed to the formation of historical consciousness, as long as they conformed to the 'Protestant visual scheme' characteristic of works such as John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which combined word and image to narrative effect thereby undercutting 'any perception of value inherent in the visual'.[174]

Such images could function to commemorate the victories of the reformers. The engraved title page of Gilbert Burnet's *History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (1681-3), for example, aligned iconoclasm with the establishment of the Church of England and alludes to the dissolution as a key episode in this campaign: beneath Henry VIII's feet and the tattered remains of papal supremacy is depicted a crumbling, dilapidated building reminiscent of other

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[171] Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London and New York, NY: Macmillan and St Martin's Press, 1988), p. 119. See also idem, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation*, The Stenton Lecture (Reading: University of Reading, 1986).
[172] Roy Porter, 'Seeing the past', *P&P* 118 (1988), p. 188. For an overview of recent historiographical trends see Adam Morton, 'Coming of age? The image in early modern England', *Journal of Early Modern History* 15 (2011), pp. 435-57; Alexandra Walsham, 'Idols in the frontispiece? Illustrating religious books in the age of iconoclasm', in Feike Dietz, Adam Morton, Lien Roggen, Els Stronks, and Marc van Vaeck (eds.), *Illustrated Religious Texts in the North of Europe, 1500-1800* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 21-52.
[173] Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), ch. 4; Tara Hamling and Richard L. Williams, *Art Re-formed: Re-assessing the Impact of the Reformation on the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England: An Historical Oversight* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2010); David J. Davis, *Seeing Faith, Printing Pictures: Religious Identity during the English Reformation* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2013). See also the essays in Hunter (ed.), *Printed Images*.
[174] James A. Knapp, *Illustrating the Past in Early Modern England: The Representation of History in Printed Books* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 146.

images of ruined abbeys (figure 4).[175] Yet, as we noted in the previous chapter, the dissolution was too controversial to be the subject of a celebratory commemorative culture *per se*. Although the early reformers frequently conceptualised the suppression as a providential deliverance, its legacies were sufficiently controversial and ambivalent to encourage an officially sponsored culture of amnesia rather than one of remembrance. The dissolution may therefore provide a parallel to Judith Pollmann's recent study of the *Beeldenstorm* of 1566 in the southern Netherlands. Pollmann argues that the memory of iconoclasm tended to be highly selective and its agents anonymised in accordance with hegemonic political agendas, and thus depictions of the image-breakers tended to be critical in nature.[176] The highly polemical quality of both Dugdale's image of Henry assaulting the monasteries and Burnet's title page in which Henry looms above the ruins of Roman Catholicism is therefore a powerful visual manifestation of a mid-seventeenth century reflex to defy the oblivion enacted by previous generations. It was, in other words, a form of what has been called the 'art of iconoclasm'; these depictions 'evoke a past in which they existed intact and they signal the transformations that led to their present altered state'.[177] Images had the potential, therefore, further to underline the temporal rupture with the medieval past, as well as the physical and material consequences of dissolution.

The process of depicting the dissolution was, of course, highly selective: like texts, images preserved a particular vision of the past for posterity. Of those antiquaries who sought to preserve ruins, some favoured depictions that captured their mutilated form, intensifying the textual language of loss and regret. At Eynsham, a former Benedictine monastery in Oxfordshire in 1657, Anthony Wood recorded that he was 'wonderfully strucken' by its crumbling ruins, which served to 'instruct the pensive beholder with an exemplary frailty'.[178] The sketch that he produced to accompany these comments depicts Eynsham in the ruinous state that had

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[175] Although Burnet praised the Henrician regime's assault on monastic corruption, his account of the dissolution more generally was somewhat ambiguous. See above, ch. 2.
[176] Judith Pollmann, 'Iconoclasts anonymous: why did it take historians so long to identify the image-breakers of 1566?', *Low Countries Historical Review* 131 (2016), pp. 155-76.
[177] See Alexandra Walsham, 'The art of iconoclasm and the afterlife of the English Reformation', in Antoinina Bevan-Zlatar and Olga Timofeeva (eds.), *What was an Image in Medieval and Early Modern England?,* Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 34 (Tübingen: Narr, 2017), pp. 478-81. I am grateful to Alex Walsham for sharing this piece in advance of its publication. On the relationship between art and iconoclasm see also Keith Thomas, 'Art and iconoclasm in early modern England', in Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (eds.), *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 16-40; James Simpson, *Under the Hammer: Iconoclasm in the Anglo-American Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Stacy Boldrick, Leslie Brubaker, and Richard Clay (eds.), *Striking Images, Iconoclasms Past and Present* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013); Koenraad Jonckheere, 'The power of iconic memory: iconoclasm as a mental marker', *Low Countries Historical Review* 13 (2016), pp. 141-54.
[178] Bodl., MS Wood E1, fol. 44r.

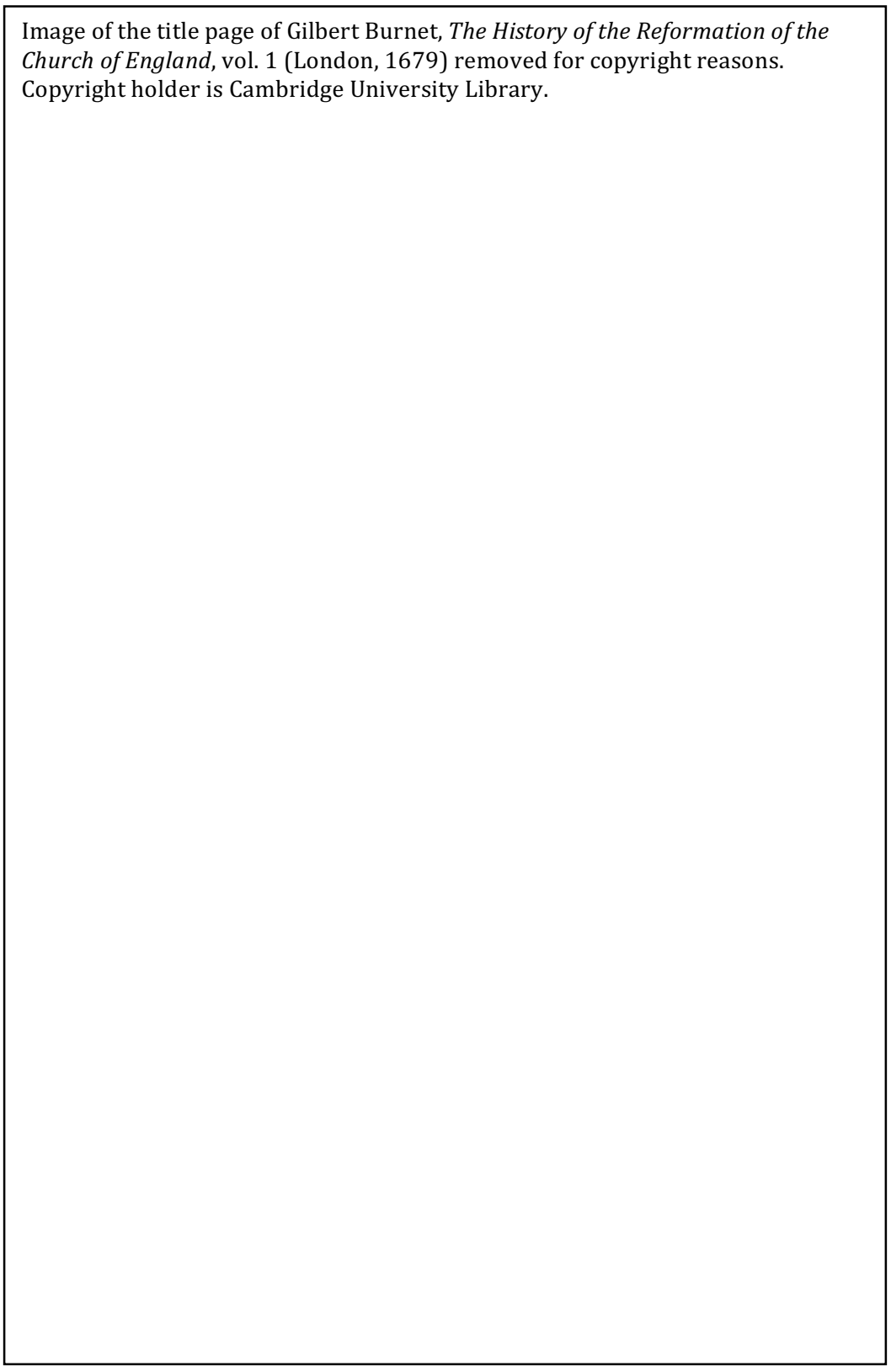

Figure 4. Title-page of Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, vol. 1 (London, 1679).

inspired such a strong sense of the vulnerability of the material past, compounded by the threat to physical and material antiquities that had been posed by civil war and renewed puritan iconoclasm (figure 5).[179] A view of all that remained of the west end of the abbey, Wood also attempted to delineate the spaces once occupied by the main body of the church and its north and south aisles, which had long been razed to the ground.

Image of a sketch of the ruins of Eynsham Abbey by Anthony Wood, 1657 removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the Bodleian Library.

Figure 5. Anthony Wood, 'The ruins of the abbey church of Einsham' (1657). Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood E 1, fol. 45r.

An attempt to preserve what was left of Eynsham, Wood's image also anticipated later trends in the depiction of ruins: perched precariously atop the right-hand tower of the ruined façade, a figure stares out over the space once occupied by the abbey, prefiguring the picturesque tradition that emerged in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by depicting a kind of dissolution tourism. Amongst these images was the etching made by Hollar of the crumbling

[179] Walsham, 'Fragments of a shipwreck', p. 92.

ruins of Newark Abbey in Surrey (figure 6), shown with two figures standing to the left of the structure, contemplating its remains. The antiquary and engraver Francis Place made similar images of ruined religious houses, including the fragments of Byland Abbey in North Yorkshire, in which can be seen a solitary figure to the right-hand of the frame (figure 7). The prospects of Yorkshire engraved by the draughtsman William Lodge, depicting the ruins of both Kirkstall Abbey and Fountains Abbey (figures 8a and 8b) also reflect the emergence of an embryonic cult of ruins, born – paradoxically – of the earlier Protestant impulse to destroy the monastic past. The material fragments that testified to the zeal of the early reformers had thus become the objects of a new kind of Protestant reverence for the past.[180]

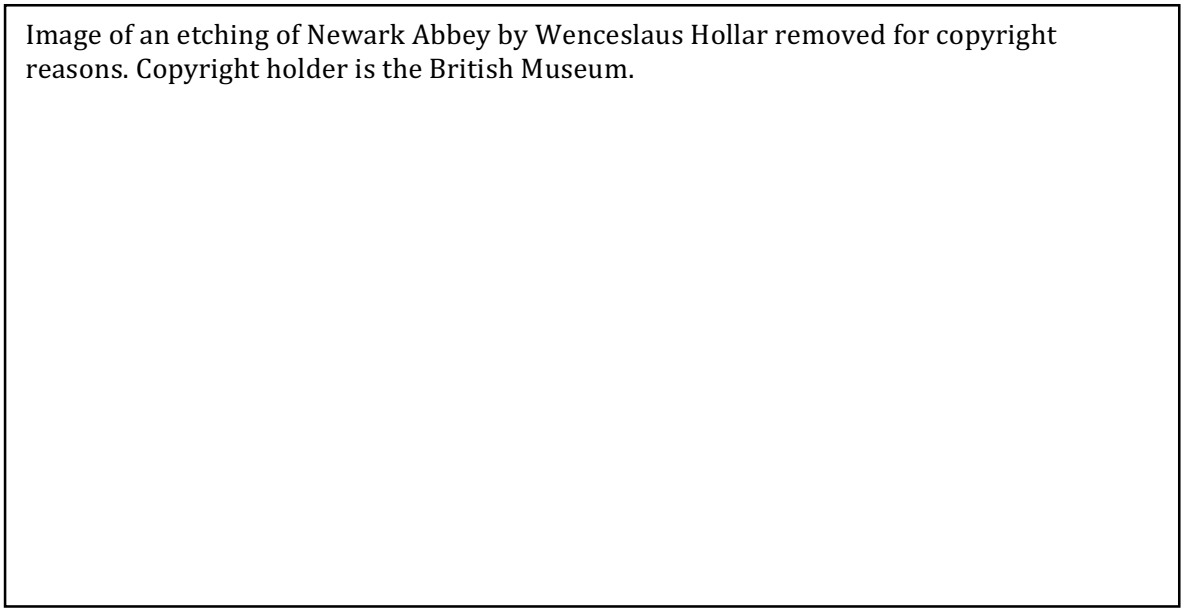

Figure 6. Etching by Wenceslaus Hollar showing a view of the remains of Newark Abbey, with two figures at left looking at the ruins (?1652-77). London, British Museum, Q,6.91.

[180] On this idea see Woolf, *Social Circulation*, pp. 29, 194 and passim.

Image of the ruins of Byland Abbey by Francis Place removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the British Museum.

Figure 7. Francis Place, 'Part of the Ruines of Byland Abbie' (?1647-1728). London, British Museum, 1850,0223.810.

Image of an etching of Kirkstall Abbey by William Lodge from 'The prospects of the two most remarkable towns in the north of England for the clothing trade, viz. Leeds… and Wakefield' (1680s) removed for copyright reasons. The copyright holder is the British Museum.

Figure 8a. Detail of Kirkstall Abbey from an etching by William Lodge, 'The prospects of the two most remarkable towns in the north of England for the clothing trade, viz. Leeds… and Wakefield' (1680s). London, British Museum, Ii,1.24.

Image of an etching of Fountains Abbey by William Lodge from 'The prospects of the two most remarkable towns in the north of England for the clothing trade, viz. Leeds… and Wakefield' (1680s) removed for copyright reasons. The copyright holder is the British Museum.

Figure 8b. Detail of Fountains Abbey from an etching by William Lodge, 'The prospects of the two most remarkable towns in the north of England for the clothing trade, viz. Leeds… and Wakefield' (1680s). London, British Museum, Ii,1.24.

Other images took the creative enterprise of preservation one step further by using the visual as a tool with which to resurrect the architectural glory of the vanquished past. During his survey of Wiltshire, Aubrey delineated a 'Prospect of Malmesbury' with, as the caption bears witness, the 'idea of the abbey entire' (figure 9). The medieval structure, the converted portion of which had captured the topographical imagination of antiquaries from Camden to Dugdale, was thus revived in pictorial form in its entirety, towering over the Wiltshire countryside. This, more so than Wood's efforts at Eynsham, was a creative enterprise that entailed the invention of memory. Aubrey's prospect of Malmesbury was a type of visual fiction, which compensated for the physical and material losses wrought by the dissolution. He also made a hand-drawn watercolour map of the parish, which depicted the contemporary topography together with the residues of an earlier monastic landscape. The map marked the abbey church alongside 'a religious house… dedicated to our ladie: for woemen', a hermitage, and a chapel that had been turned into a 'dwelling house' (figure 10).

Image of a sketch of 'The prospect of Malmesbury' by John Aubrey removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the Bodleian Library.

Figure 9. John Aubrey, 'The prospect of Malmesbury'. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Aubrey 3, fol. 35r.

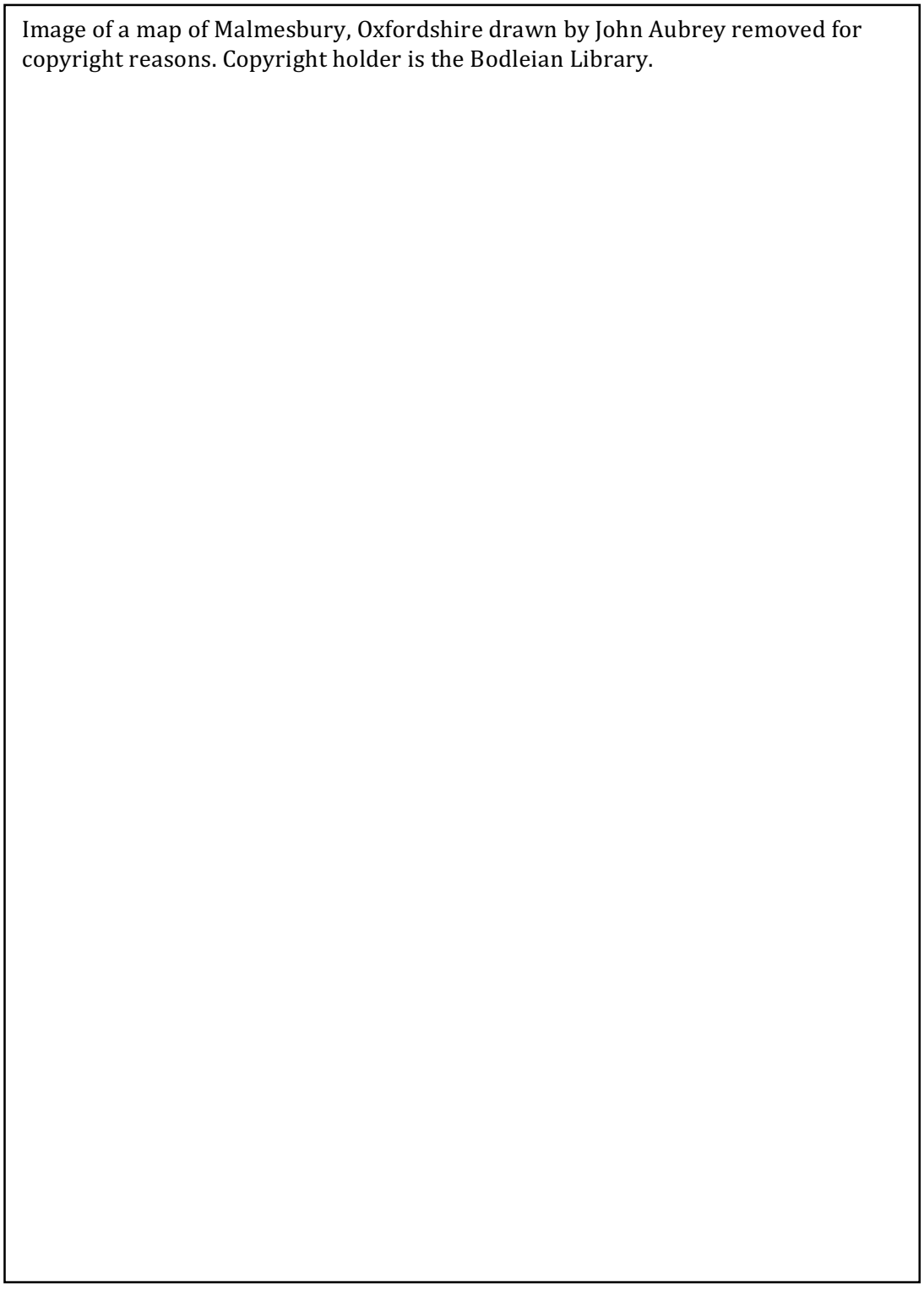

Figure 10. John Aubrey, map of Malmesbury. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Aubrey 3, fol. 39r.

Aubrey claimed to have drawn the map 'by memorie and guesse', which he justified because of its 'use for the antiquities sake'. He expressed a hope to commission a proper map of the area, but thought his rough sketch 'better than none at all'.[181] Aubrey's was a rare intervention in a Protestant cartographic culture which, as Jan Broadway has convincingly demonstrated, served to erase the memory of the dissolution by obliterating ruined monasteries from maps.[182] Once again, the desire of some antiquaries to document the past was drawn into conflict with the impulse to forget. These new maps of the post-Reformation landscape gave spatial expression to new post-Reformation community identities, rendered in a 'potent, visual form'.[183] The famous maps drawn up by John Speed, for example, do not depict the monasteries, which he described as 'swallowed up by time', as though they were no longer a feature of the contemporary landscape.[184] In some ways, Aubrey's survey of Malmesbury thus had more in common with Catholic cartography, which attempted to document and resurrect the 'rich and still not distant Catholic past', though it was born of a confessionally different species of the preservationist impulse.[185]

These fictive images of Malmesbury offer a stark contrast with a third sketch of the abbey contained within Aubrey's sprawling manuscript on Wiltshire. Copied 'out of the *Monasticon*', this image depicted only the part of the monastery that had been converted into the parish church, appended to a crumbling wall cast in shadow to the right-hand edge of the page (figure 11).[186] The original had been engraved by Daniel King who, together with Hollar, produced the plates for the *Monasticon*, most of which depicted the converted churches and cathedrals catalogued in the text. His engraving of Malmesbury was entitled 'The North Prospect of the Conuentuall Church of Malmesbury, that is to say of that [which] now remaynes' (figure 12). As Marion Roberts and Alexandra Walsham have demonstrated, the *Monasticon* is replete with images like that of Malmesbury, centred on conversions rather than ruins, including two renderings by King of the church at Crowland, Lincolnshire – the same structure admired by Dugdale during his and Ashmole's perambulation of the fens – which neglect the ruined elements of the structure in the far corner of the frame (figure 13).[187] If this sits somewhat uneasily with Dugdale's lament for the past, it may be that the huge expense of the *Monasticon* required him to turn to the gentry for commissions. Costing between £3 and £5 per plate, Hollar and King's engravings were financed by individual subscribers, who were usually motivated to

[181] Bodl., MS Aubrey 3, fol. 39r.
[182] Broadway, *No Historie so Meete*, p. 213.
[183] Ibid., p. 207.
[184] Quoted in Summit, 'Leland's "Itinerary"', pp. 173-4.
[185] Zur Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550-1700* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2012), p. 214.
[186] Bodl., MS Aubrey 3, fol. 47r.
[187] Roberts, *Dugdale and Hollar*, pp. 46, 58; Walsham, 'Fragments of a shipwreck', pp. 99-100.

donate as a means of commemorating their ancestors or confirming their Laudian religious credentials.[188] One of the plates of Crowland was financed by Sir Thomas Blount; the second was contributed by Sir Wingfield Bodenham and bears the inscription *Pristini aevi Memoriae* [in memory of the ancient time].[189] To some extent, these images blurred the boundary between the preservationist impulse and the present-centric approach to the physical and material landscape in the context of the ongoing threat to antiquities and ecclesiastical property. But they served ultimately to play down the monastic origins of the structures they depicted, promoting the selective forgetting of the dissolution and the medieval past.

Image of a sketch of Malmesbury Abbey by John Aubrey removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the Bodleian Library.

Figure 11. Sketch by John Aubrey of Malmesbury Abbey, Oxfordshire, copied 'out of the *Monasticon*'. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Aubrey 3, fol. 47r.

[188] Walsham, 'Fragments of a shipwreck', p. 94.
[189] Ibid., p. 99.

Image of an etching of Malmesbury Abbey by Wenceslaus Hollar from William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 3 vols. (London, 1655-73) removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Figure 12. Etching by Wenceslaus Hollar of Malmesbury Abbey, Oxfordshire, from William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 3 vols. (London, 1655-73).

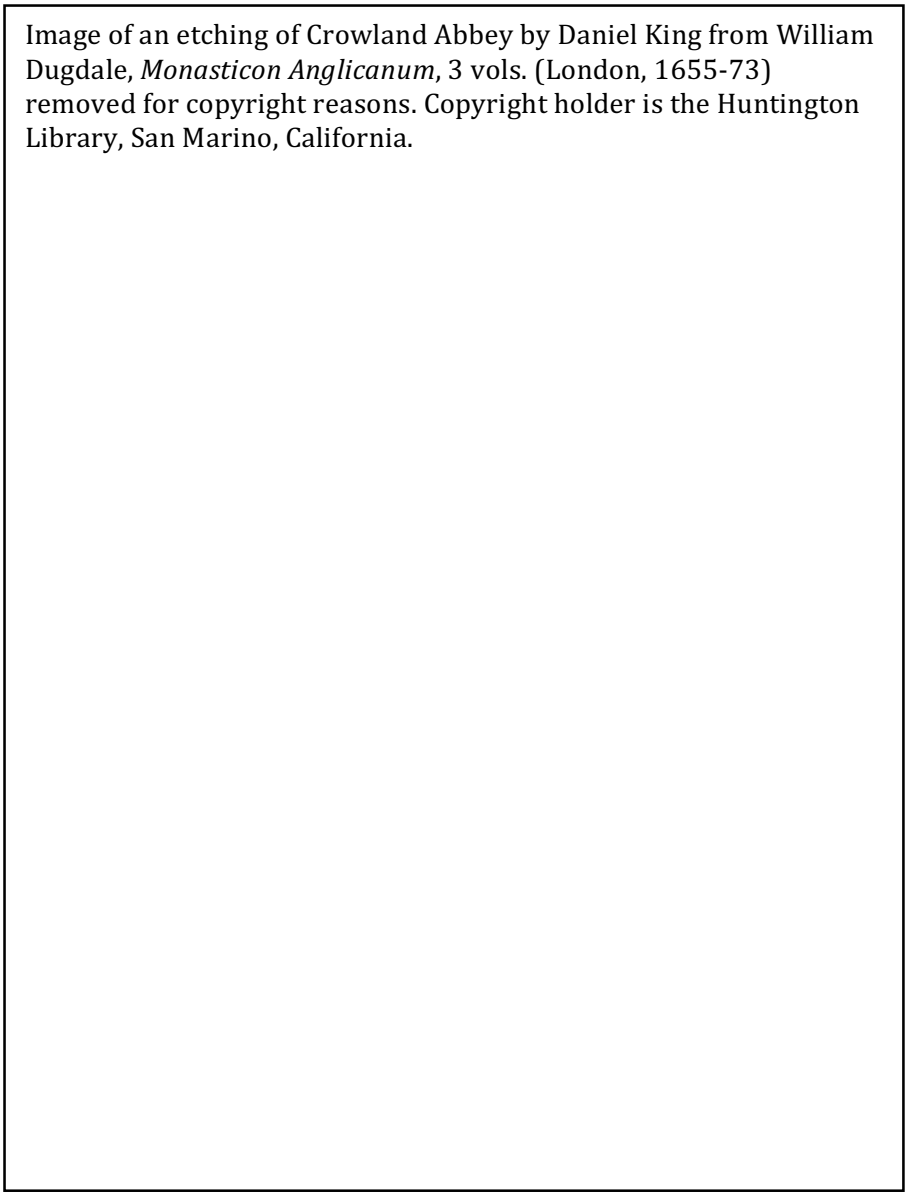

Figure 13. Daniel King, 'The west prospect of the church of Cro[w]land', from William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 3 vols. (London, 1655-73).

As with texts, this form of visual amnesia was connected to sites of secular and domestic conversions, which uniformly favoured the reformed aspects of a building over its monastic heritage. Unlike ruins, these properties did appear on post-Reformation maps and, although the vogue for country house sketches and paintings was a development of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the late seventeenth century witnessed the emergence of this trend for pictorial representation.[190] Images of converted properties evince not the visual culture of

[190] On maps see Broadway, *No Historie so* Meete, p. 213; Rhonda Lemke Sanford, *Maps and Memory in Early Modern England: A Sense of Place* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). On country house art see also Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 303; Kari McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A Cultural Study of Landscape and Legitimacy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

'pastness' explored by Woolf, but rather a visual culture of the present. Hollar's engraving of Ossington House in Nottinghamshire, once home to monks of the Cluniac order, depicted the hall 'from the feild [sic] on the west side as it now is' (figure 14). The caption, printed in Robert Thoroton's *Antiquities of Nottinghamshire* (1676), mourned that 'some part' of the house had been 'ruined in the late rebellious warr' but erased all evidence of its earlier monastic past. Similarly, in the late 1650s, King produced a series of small engravings, etched by Hollar, of more than a hundred English manor houses.[191] These included an image of Nun Appleton House – a commemorative strategy to complement Marvell's verse – which depicts the country manor in its pristine converted state (figure 15). The name of the property, inscribed beneath the images, is the only reminder of the priory out of which the hall had been constructed. By neglecting the medieval history of sites once occupied by the religious and applauding the virtues of their new lay owners through texts and images, a different breed of early modern antiquary contributed, consciously or otherwise, to the political project set in motion by the Henrician regime to minimise the significance of the dissolution as a moment of rupture.

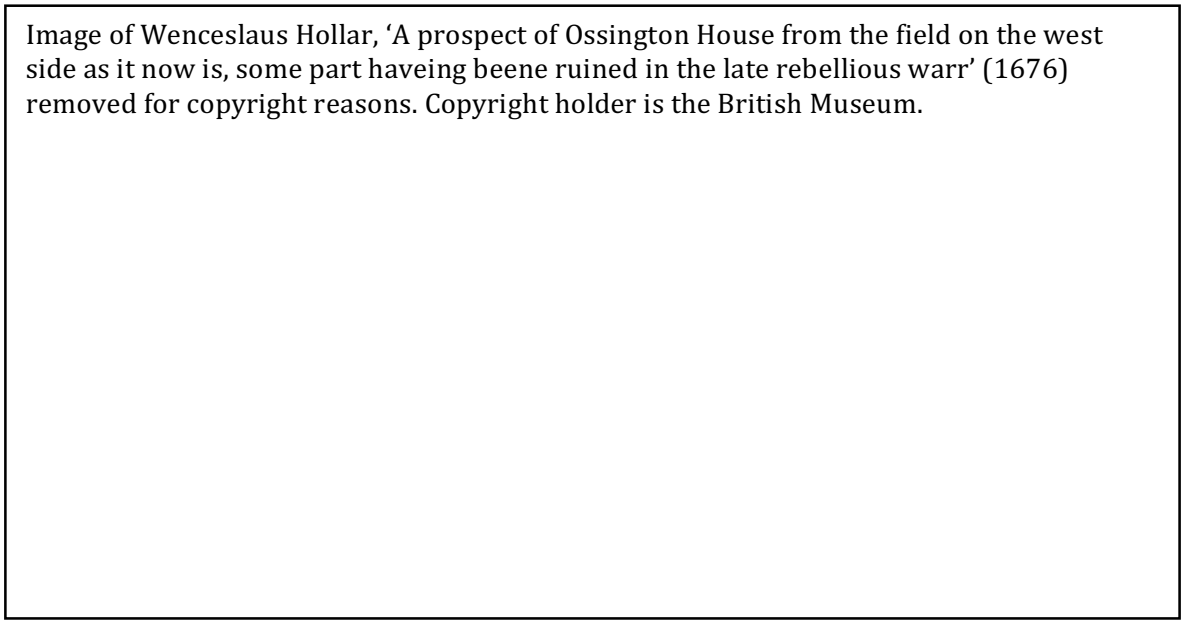

Figure 14. Wenceslaus Hollar, 'A prospect of Ossington House from the field on the west side as it now is, some part haveing beene ruined in the late rebellious warr' (1676). London, British Museum, 1862,0614.1434.

[191] These engravings appear to have been intended for a new edition of William Camden's *Britannia*, which never materialised. See Roberts, *Dugdale and Hollar*, p. 114.

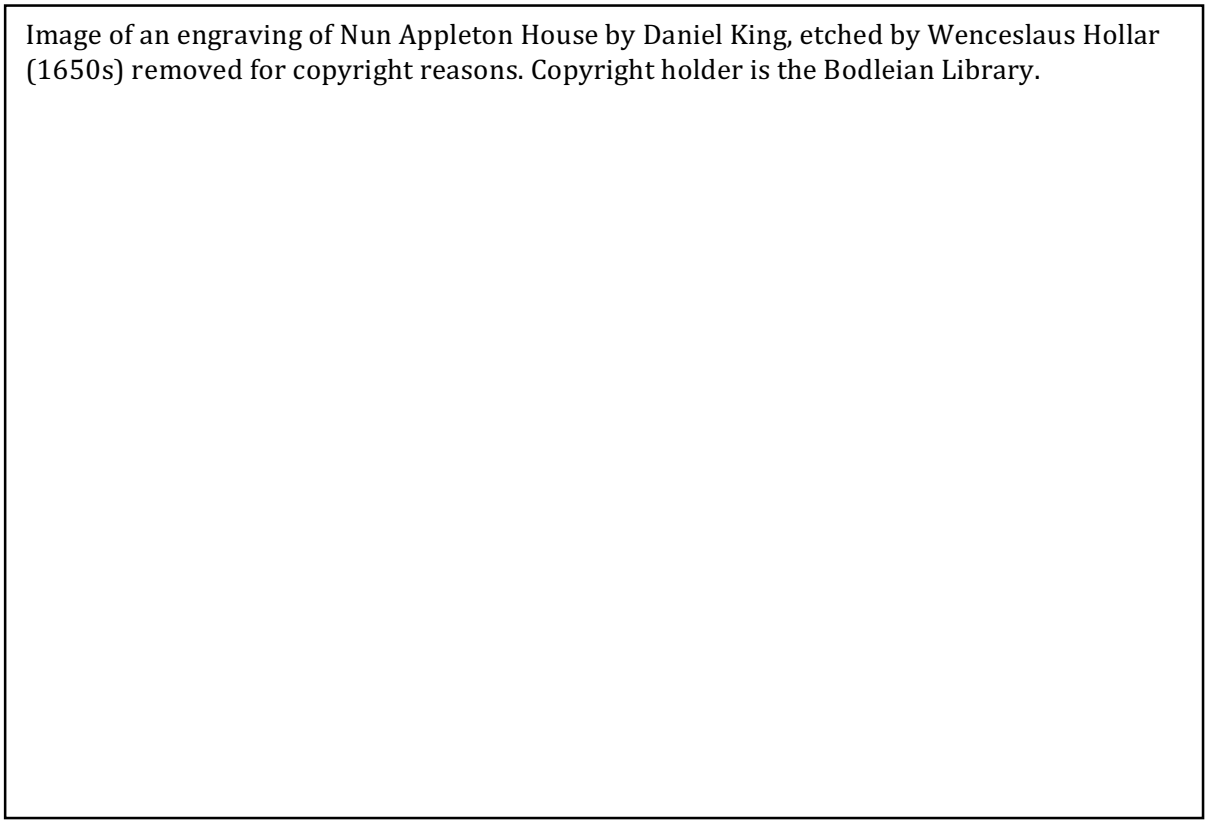

Figure 15. Engraving of Nun Appleton by Daniel King, etched by Wenceslaus Hollar (1650s). Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Maps 1.

King's engraving of Nun Appleton preserved a vision of the house at the height of its grandeur. Half a century later, the Leeds antiquary Ralph Thoresby, whose cousin had recently purchased the estate, journeyed 'to see the stately fabric erected by the late Thomas Lord Fairfax, the General, which has been a noble palace'. Yet upon arriving at the hall, he lamented that 'the house is in part ruinous, and being abundantly too large, is shortly to be demolished, and a more convenient one erected out of part of the materials'. Although Thoresby apparently failed to recognise the irony in his words, he expressed hope of seeing another house 'spring out of the ashes' of Nun Appleton, as 'did this [house] out of those of the old nunnery, of which nothing remains, save a few old grave stones'.[192] Thoresby's writing is thus also a reminder that the process of conversion was ongoing across the centuries, shaped by the fashions and fortunes of the English gentry for whom the dissolution was not the end of the life cycle but rather the beginning.

[192] *The Diary of Ralph Thoresby, F.R.S, Author of the Topography of Leeds (1677-1724)*, ed. Rev. Joseph Hunter, 2 vols. (London: Henry Coburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), ii, p. 74.

Conclusion: Nostalgia and Amnesia

The material remnants of the dissolution endured long after the passing of the generation which had experienced the suppression at first hand. Consequently, they could function as powerful reminders of the spoliation of the monasteries in the 1530s, but they also carried the potential to be re-inscribed with new memories or eroded of their mnemonic power by processes of conversion and adaptation. The capacity of ruins to act as *lieux de mémoire* has preoccupied scholars of early modern antiquarianism. Potent emblems of the material break with the past initiated by the Henrician regime, ruins became key battlegrounds where the memory of the dissolution was contested and they inspired the emergence of a brand of antiquarianism marked by a powerful instinct to preserve the past. From this material, modern scholarship has inherited a vision of the dissolution as a moment of 'radical discontinuity' that fostered a sense of regret for a lost past.[193] As Aston once argued, 'the sight of destruction gives a powerful impulse to preserve and record, [and] is itself conducive to a nostalgia which can merge with concerns for history'.[194]

This chapter has suggested that we might interrogate this 'nostalgic' impulse more closely. The term 'nostalgia' was coined by a Swiss medical student, Johannes Hofer, in 1688 to describe the affliction that would now be called 'homesickness'. With its etymological roots in the Greek *nosos* (return to native land) and *algos* (suffering or grief), it did not acquire its modern meaning of the sentimental or regretful longing for the past until the nineteenth century.[195] The 'nostalgic' antiquaries would not, then, have recognised the label that has been so influential in the historiography of antiquarianism. By use of the term, however, modern scholarship has sought to capture the profound sense of loss articulated by numerous historians, antiquaries, and other commentators, which became such a prominent feature in early modern topography. It is indeed a profound irony that this 'nostalgia' for the monasteries was the creation of a generation which could not remember a time before the dissolution.

Nostalgia *avant la lettre* has been identified in various forms in accounts of the dissolution spanning the early modern period. Aston has identified nostalgic features in topographies dating from the Elizabethan period onwards, all of which treated monastic ruins as mnemonics

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[193] Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 241.
[194] Aston, 'English ruins and English history', p. 336.
[195] On the etymology and history of the term 'nostalgia' see Jean Starobinksi, 'The idea of nostalgia', trans. William S. Kemp, *Diogenes* 54 (1966), pp. 84-103; Lowenthal, *Past is a Foreign Country*, pp. 4-13; idem, 'Nostalgia tells it like it wasn't', in Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw (eds.), *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia* (Manchester and New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 18-32; "nostalgia, n." *OED* [http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/128472, accessed 20 January 2017].

to a profound break between past and present.[196] As Eamon Duffy and others have highlighted, this also found expression in a range of other genres, including, perhaps most notably, in William Shakespeare's sonnet 73, lamenting England's 'bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang'.[197] Indeed, revisionist scholarship on the Reformation has typically borne the imprint of this kind of conservativism. Nostalgia for a lost past is the main theme, for example, of Duffy's exploration of Edwardian church inventories and Shakespeare's 'bare ruined choirs' have been a powerful motif more generally in this literature.[198] Much of the literature on space, antiquarianism, and cultural memory in the early modern period has also adopted these tropes. R. W. Hoyle has suggested that in the wake of the dissolution there developed a 'nostalgia' for monastic hospitality.[199] Keith Thomas has argued that 'nostalgia for the monasteries' was 'particularly evident in Elizabethan England', contributing to the idea that the Tudor period was a formative moment in the development of the idea of the late medieval golden age. For Thomas, 'nostalgia for the past remained implicit in most social criticism: one attacked an evil by evoking an earlier age when it had not existed'.[200] With Aston, Alexandra Walsham and Susan Guinn-Chipman have also identified nostalgia among the distorting filters shaping contemporary perceptions of the landscape and its relationship with cultures of memory and history.[201]

The historiographical preoccupation with the nostalgia evoked by ruins has underpinned the argument that contemporary responses to monastic spaces and materials were central to the mnemonic culture of reformed Protestantism, and especially to an emergent Protestant critique of the dissolution. Architectural survival has, in this context, been viewed as an act of resistance.[202] Yet to reduce the memory of the dissolution to ruins and to remembrance as a challenge to the Henrician orthodoxy is to neglect the wider spatial and material implications of the suppression and the role of other types of former monastic sites in the project to remember – and also the project to forget – the rupture of the 1530s. Few of the so-called 'nostalgic' antiquaries demonstrated the same lament for converted churches that they made for ruined

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[196] Aston, 'English ruins and English history'.
[197] Duffy, *Saints, Sacrilege, and Sedition*, ch. 11.
[198] See Eamon Duffy, 'The end of it all: the material culture of the late medieval English parish and the 1552 inventories of church goods', in idem, *Saints, Sacrilege, and Sedition*, pp. 109-29. See also Duffy's essay 'Bare ruin'd choirs: remembering Catholicism in Shakespeare's England' in the same volume, pp. 233-53. For an earlier example of this tendency see David Knowles, *Bare Ruined Choirs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 319 and passim.
[199] R. W. Hoyle, 'The origins of the dissolution of the monasteries', *HJ* 38 (1995), pp. 227-9.
[200] Keith Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England*, The Creighton Trust Lecture (London: University of London Press, 1983), pp. 14, 17.
[201] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp. 281-2; Guinn-Chipman, *Religious Space*, p. 123.
[202] This idea underpins Harris, 'Greatest blow to antiquities'; Guinn-Chipman, *Religious Space*. More generally see Sarah Tarlow, 'Reformation and transformation: what happened to Catholic things in a Protestant world?' in Gaimster and Gilchrist (eds.), *Archaeology of the Reformation*, pp. 108-21, who also thinks in terms of resistance and adaptation.

monasteries. More significantly, a number of early modern antiquaries writing within parameters of the genealogical historical culture promoted by the seventeenth-century gentry favoured a present-centric mode that deployed the dissolution as a marker of time in the upswing of their fortunes, whilst simultaneously perpetuating Henrician narratives of monastic corruption and the expediency of the suppression. Neither Carew nor Gerard, Westcote nor Denton fit the model of the antiquary notoriously lambasted by John Earle in his *Micro-cosmographie* (1628) as one afflicted by 'that unnatural disease to be enamored of old age and wrinckles'. Though he 'is of our religion, because we say it is most ancient', Earle continued, 'yet a broken statue would almost make him an Idolator' and he would travel forty miles or more to see a 'ruined Abbey'.[203] Earle, then, identified contemporary antiquarianism with a preoccupation with ruins that has long continued to inflect its modern historiography and therefore of our understanding of the spatial and material dimensions of the afterlives of the dissolution.

The conversion of religious houses into churches, cathedrals, and country houses quite literally involved processes of effacing and adapting the material memory of monasticism, and those topographies which described and depicted these new structures thereby contributed, through silence, absence, and omission, to a post-dissolution culture of amnesia. Seventeenth-century Protestantism, like seventeenth-century antiquarianism, was not merely or consistently 'nostalgic' for a world before the Reformation. For Aubrey, Wood, Dugdale, and their peers, the fact that many things had been 'irrecoverably lost' at the dissolution proved a source of profound regret, but topography was also a genre in which senses of loss could converge with gain, past with present, and remembering with forgetting. Antiquarian writing has offered a microcosm of the embattled cultures of remembrance and oblivion that shaped the afterlives of the dissolution. However, the memory of the dissolution also had wider resonance for local communities, for whom the preservation and conversion of former monastic property, and the spectre of sacrilege this raised, were profoundly important. It is these local and oral memory cultures to which the final chapter now turns.

[203] John Earle, *Micro-cosmographie, or, a peece of the world discovered in essayes and characters* (London, 1628), sigs. Cv-C2r.

Chapter Four

'Many Pretty Odd Tales':

Monks, Monasteries, and the Dissolution in Local Tradition

For the majority of those who witnessed the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s, the national scale of the destruction would have been almost unimaginable. Unlike the Henrician commissioners who travelled the length and breadth of the country surveying the religious houses and the itinerant antiquaries who followed in their wake, most people experienced the suppression as a distinctly local phenomenon. Not only did this institutional break with the past irrevocably alter local topographies by creating ruins out of the religious houses or by transforming and adapting them for new purposes, it was also profoundly disruptive to patterns of daily life. Before the suppression, monasticism had been 'at the heart of medieval life and culture'; the religious houses not only served the spiritual needs of local communities, they also fulfilled a variety of social and economic functions, including acting as landlords and employers and offering social relief in the form of charity and hospitality.[1] The experience of this religious, social, and economic rupture in particular communities, as well as the long endurance of former monastic sites, gave rise to geographically specific narratives of dissolution. These traditions contributed to the formation of potent local and familial memories of the suppression, which interacted with and evolved alongside the larger memory cultures we have explored previously through the lens of polemical, historical, and topographical antiquarian writing.

This chapter interrogates the local dimensions of the memory of the dissolution, exploring the wide variety of traditions about monks and monasteries that emerged in its wake. 'Tradition', in this context, is not an entirely unproblematic concept. In the early modern period, the term was religiously inflected and laden with negative associations of backwardness and superstition. 'Unwritten tradition', as Peter Marshall has demonstrated, was frequently invoked by Protestant polemicists as a contrast to the authority of scripture.[2] One corollary of this tendency in Reformation polemic was that, as Alison Shell has further underlined, oral culture came

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[1] Martin Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England, c. 1300-1535* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 1 and passim. See also Benjamin Thompson, 'Monasteries, society, and reform in late medieval England', in James G. Clark (ed.), *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), p. 189.

[2] Peter Marshall, 'The debate over "unwritten verities" in early Reformation England', in Bruce Gordon (ed.), *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Volume 1, The Medieval Inheritance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), pp. 60-77. For contemporary uses see the definition of 'tradition, n.' in the *OED* [www.oed.com/view/Entry/204302, accessed 18 December 2017]. The older historiography of 'tradition' also inherited some of the problems inherent in these terms, see especially Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938).

inevitably to be conflated with traditions passed down through the Catholic Church.[3] Indeed, there emerged a post-Reformation commonplace that tales and stories which circulated orally in local communities were the inventions and fabrications of the 'mad merry Friers, and lustie Abbey-lubbers' of the medieval monasteries.[4] For the same reason that oral culture was so often equated with Catholic traditions, Protestantism has enjoyed an enduring association with the advent of print culture.[5] However, as recent studies by Ronald Hutton and Alexandra Walsham have revealed, contemporary anti-Catholic polemic has long concealed from modern scholarship the ways in which the English Reformation also served to generate and re-invigorate local and oral traditions.[6] This chapter argues that the dissolution was one such episode that inspired a wealth of stories about the past. Broadly conceived as a set of inherited beliefs about the past, tradition provides a lens through which to explore the varied and complex afterlives of the dissolution in local communities.

This examination of local tradition also seeks to place the suppression of the monasteries – and the wider Reformation – at the heart of early modern historical culture. In the wake of a seminal survey essay by Keith Thomas, there is now a substantial literature on perceptions of the past in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.[7] The work of Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf has been particularly important and influential in this respect, underlining how knowledge about the past was articulated and circulated in ways that cut across social divisions and the porous boundaries between interdependent cultures of orality and literacy.[8] The Reformation, however, has been something of a lacuna in this literature.[9] Thus although Woolf argues that

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[3] Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
[4] J[ohn] H[arvey], *A discoursive probleme concerning prophesies* (London, 1588), p. 69.
[5] See for example Elizabeth L. Eisenstein's influential study, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
[6] Ronald Hutton, 'The English Reformation and the evidence of folklore', *P&P* 148 (1995), pp. 89-116; Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), esp. ch. 7; eadem, 'Reformed folklore? Cautionary tales and oral tradition in early modern England', in Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf (eds.), *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 173-95.
[7] Keith Thomas, *The Perception of the Past in Early Modern England*, The Creighton Trust Lecture, (London: University of London, 1983).
[8] Adam Fox, *Oral and Literature Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. ch. 4; idem, 'Remembering the past in early modern England: oral and written tradition', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9 (1999), pp. 233-56; D. R. Woolf, 'Speech, text, and time: the sense of hearing and the sense of the past in Renaissance England', *Albion* 18 (1986), pp. 159–93; 'The "common voice": history, folklore, and oral tradition in early modern England', *P&P* 120 (1988), pp. 26-52; idem, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); idem, 'From hystories to the historical: five transitions in thinking about the past, 1500-1700', in Paulina Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, CA: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 2006), pp. 31-68.
[9] In addition to the works cited above, see also the essays collected in Matthew Neufeld (ed.), 'Uses of the past in early modern England', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 76 (2013), which similarly neglect the role of the Reformation in shaping local and popular historical consciousness.

religion 'provided an arena for the continued circulation of historical knowledge', he pays little attention to the role of religious change and upheaval in shaping the historical culture that he describes.[10] Yet, as we shall see, the dissolution of the monasteries offers an illuminating case study of how religious rupture was remembered in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and how this functioned to shape contemporary historical consciousness.

This chapter explores a variety of local traditions engendered by the suppression. In doing so, it draws upon a series of case studies that are specific to certain places and communities, but which are also emblematic and indicative of wider themes in the long local memory of the dissolution. First, it examines depositions as a source for the memories of those who witnessed the suppression in local communities. It suggests, however, that such an approach has distinct limitations as well as its clear advantages. The remainder of the chapter therefore turns to interrogate a different set of sources. Previous chapters have relied upon the evidence provided by generations of polemicists and antiquaries. Here we will re-examine this diverse body of material from a different angle and read it against the grain with a view to recovering the local memory encountered by these antiquaries, who served as midwives of local and oral tradition. This approach is not without its difficulties, namely that these stories have also been refracted through the worldview of their recorders, but it nevertheless has the potential to shed light on aspects of the memory of the dissolution that have hitherto been largely overlooked. In ways that are intended to complement the themes discussed in chapters two and three, this chapter explores local traditions connected to contemporary senses of both time and space. Traditions about space also raise questions about the spectre of sacrilege which, as we shall see, exerted a critical influence over the afterlives of the suppression in local communities. Collectively, these traditions help to illuminate the vibrancy and longevity of the local memory of the dissolution in early modern England, as well as the conditions in which the early memory-making practices of Henry VIII and his government were, by 1700, beginning to be revealed.

Testimonies of Dissolution

One way in which we can access the memories of those who witnessed the dissolution and its effects in local communities during the 1530s and early 1540s is through legal testimonies and depositions. Historians including Bernard Capp, Malcolm Gaskill, and Laura Gowing have highlighted the value of this material in helping to recover the perspectives of ordinary people as recounted in their owns words, or at least as recorded in the transcriptions set down by court

[10] Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, pp. 309-10.

officials.[11] More recently, Andy Wood has approached these records as repositories of popular memory, in which deponents frequently recalled information about the past as a means of settling disputes in the present.[12] We have already encountered one striking example of this kind of testimony which was directly connected to the dissolution. In chapter one, we examined the deposition of Robert Aske, leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, a rising predicated upon local concerns about the consequences of the suppression of religious houses. In his evidence, Aske made the powerful, if somewhat pre-emptive, statement that the world had been a better place 'when the… abbeys st[oo]d'. He also argued that in the Yorkshire communities at the centre of the revolt, local people had been 'well s[uccour]ed by abbeys', which provided them with 'worldly refresshing in their bodies' as well as a source of 'sperituall refuge'.[13] Aske thus testified to what he perceived to be the catastrophic consequences of the dissolution in the localities, even though the long process of suppression and spoliation was at that time far from over.

Aske's testimony on the dissolution was unusually detailed because it was taken as a direct result of his revolt against the Henrician regime. However, in the wake of the suppression, there were certain other contexts in which local people could be required to remember the fall of the monasteries and the changes that dissolution had wrought in their communities, as well as some circumstances in which they might recall this information incidentally. In Canterbury in September 1562, a quarrel over the ownership of tithes formerly belonging to St Augustine's Abbey and subsequently appropriated by the parsonage of St Paul's obliged several former monks and monastic servants to testify before the courts at Westminster. More than twenty-five years had passed since the dissolution of the abbey, but those called to testify could all remember a time before the Reformation. In early modern England, age carried with it the authority of long memory.[14] One of the deponents was 75-year-old John Wildbore alias Dygon, who had once lived as a monk at St Augustine's. Asked to recall the customary ownership of the tithes, Wildbore testified that 'the same parsonage [St Paul's] was evir during his tyme that he

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[11] See for example Bernard Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Malcolm Gaskill, 'Reporting murder: fiction in the archives in early modern England', *Social History* 23 (1998), pp. 1-30; Laura Gowing, 'Gender and the language of insult in early modern London', *History Workshop Journal* 35 (1993), pp. 1-21; eadem, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch, and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 13 and passim.

[12] Andy Wood, *The Memory of the People: Custom and Popular Senses of the Past in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[13] Reproduced in Mary Bateson, 'Aske's examination', *English Historical Review* 5 (1890), p. 561. On Aske and the Pilgrimage of Grace see R. W. Hoyle, *The Pilgrimage of Grace and the Politics of the 1530s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and above, ch. 1.

[14] Keith Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', The Raleigh Lecture, *Proceedings of the British Academy* 62 (1976), pp. 205-48. See also Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, p. 222.

was monke there belonginge vnto the said monasterye of Sainte Awstens'.[15] Legal evidence of this kind attests to how the memories of those who had witnessed the dissolution were recalled to serve the needs of the present in local communities – in this case, to establish the ownership of tithes.

This example is especially striking because it also offers a rare and unusual insight into the memory of the ex-religious. We have previously noted the paradox that the religious orders constituted the group most affected by the dissolution but least represented in the surviving documentary record. Legal cases such as the dispute over tithes connected to St Augustine's thus provided some ex-religious with an outlet for their memories of dissolution. The nature of these recollections is, however, somewhat problematic. Wildbore's memory is strikingly limited in scope and extent given that his life had been utterly transformed by the Henrician assault on the religious houses. In particular, the total absence of religious concerns or memories of the institutional rupture wrought by the suppression may, at first glance, appear especially surprising.

Although it has the capacity to shed light on some aspects of the local afterlives of the dissolution, legal evidence of this kind also reflects a type of compelled memory which was inherently selective. Depositions reveal a very particular strand of memory that was, on the one hand, coloured and inflected by the concerns of the court and refracted through the pens of its clerks. Testimonies taken in connection with economic disputes or imperatives privileged certain types of response. They were shaped, in other words, by the questions asked of the deponent. A few years after the tithe dispute at St Augustine's, a similar case arose concerning customary rights of way through the old Canterbury Blackfriars. One witness, George Hovenden, parson of Harrietsham, was called upon to offer the memories he had inherited from his family, long-time residents of the city. Asked whether there was a precedent for a thoroughfare running through the former priory, he simply confirmed that a public path had indeed cut through the site 'in the pryoreys tyme'.[16] Like Wildbore's testimony, the character of Hovenden's recollections was thus determined largely by the remit of the case being heard before the court.

On the other hand, memories recorded in legal contexts were also shaped by the deponent's choices about what to divulge. Silences and absences in the archival record are difficult to interpret, but it seems unlikely, for example, that Wildbore's testimony represents the true

[15] CCA, DCc ChAnt/C/1059. Further depositions connected to the case can be found in CCA, DCc ChAnt/C/1060.
[16] CCA, CCA-CC-L/16, fol. 40.

limits of his memory.[17] Like the anonymous Franciscan chronicler we encountered in chapter two, his silence may reflect feelings of trauma or guilt associated with the events of the 1530s. But it might also attest to his desire to avoid incriminating himself by revealing his regret for the passing of the monastic past in public and before officials of the Elizabethan state. Building on Natalie Zemon Davis's highly suggestive and influential study, *Fiction in the Archives* (1987), Arnold Hunt has powerfully argued that we must pay greater attention to 'narratives and story-telling' in legal depositions.[18] Testimony of this kind might therefore be shaped and coloured by silences as well as presences and by decisions to omit information as well as to include it. It was extremely unlikely that those called before the court would choose to incriminate themselves by regretting the Reformation. This form of self-censorship was also a kind of selective amnesia, which further helps us to make sense of the particular emphasis we find in legal sources. Some things it was perhaps more prudent to forget.

These court cases in Elizabethan Canterbury reflect a culture in which, as Andy Wood has argued, custom 'constituted a distinct way of remembering, embedding memory in genres of speech and writing and providing it with organisational focus and legal validation'.[19] It was a mechanism through which knowledge of the past was made usable in the present, as a framework for establishing local rights and privileges and as a tool of political and social contestation. In the two cases we have examined, the customary memory of the dissolution was used to establish local rights to tithes and freedom of movement in the city that had existed since time out of mind. However, because of the circumstances in which they were recalled and recorded, these testimonies also served to downplay other themes in the long local memory of the suppression.

Wood's own exhaustive research into legal sources as repositories of customary memory reveals numerous parallels with the two cases examined above. For example, Wood explores how, in 1606, at a time when the suppression was still – just – within the limits of living memory, 82 year-old George Hinton and 104-year-old Thomas Cowper were called to testify to the boundaries of the estates that had formerly belonged to Rievaulx Abbey in North Yorkshire, once one of the largest Cistercian monasteries in the country. Their depositions suggest that the dissolution had profoundly shaped their perceptions of both time and space. Hinton, in a

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[17] On interpreting archival silence see Rodney G. S. Carter, 'Of things said and unsaid: power, archival silences, and power in silence', *Archivaria* 61 (2006), pp. 215-33. See also Paul Connerton, 'Seven types of forgetting', *Memory Studies* 1 (2008), esp. pp. 67-69.
[18] Natalie Zemon Davies, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Arnold Hunt, 'Recovering speech acts', in Andrew Hadfield, Matthew Dimmock, and Abigail Shinn (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), p. 22.
[19] Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 15.

striking echo of his fellow Yorkshireman, Robert Aske, described the suppression as a breach with an indeterminate past which he called 'abb[e]y time'.[20] Both men also associated Rievaulx's monastic past principally with a time before enclosure had carved up the landscape.[21] This concern with the topography of Rievaulx suggests that, like aspects of the antiquarian tradition examined in the previous chapter, these local memories had pronounced spatial and material dimensions, which were also reinforced and sustained by traditional rituals and customs such as beating the bounds.[22]

If some of the details recalled by these deponents were incidental to the legal cases in question, this only underlines the sense in which the suppression had come to loom large in local memory as a moment of change. Hinton and Cowper, for example, could recall the manorial practices of the last abbot, including his enjoyment of hunting and hawking, and the distinctive white habits and 'black corn[er] capp' worn by the monks.[23] Often these recollections were also inflected by a pronounced note of concern about socio-economic decline. Thus in 1605, 80-year-old Allice Hall remembered before the Court of Exchequer that as a child she 'did allwaies resort to the Abbye & carrye butter & eggs and other thinges thither to sell'.[24] Elsewhere, in the course of recalling how the prior of Tynemouth had perambulated the boundaries of the Northumberland village of Benwell, deponents remembered the benefits of monastic lordship and lamented the economic degradation that had occurred in the decades since the dissolution.[25] This reflects the widespread perception in early modern England that the pre-dissolution past was a 'golden age' of medieval 'merry England'.[26] For Wood, comments such as these are indicative of a wider memory culture in which a 'sense of changing times was strengthened by the Reformation' and the advance of Protestantism and economic decline were inextricably intertwined.[27] He argues that insofar as this evidence 'points towards the long endurance of the local memories of medieval monasticism', it was the 'economic affairs' of the religious houses that loomed especially large in local memory as opposed to 'matters of doctrine'.[28]

Legal documents and testimonies thus render it possible to see how an idea that we have encountered previously in various forms of antiquarian writing, namely that the dissolution was

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[20] Quoted in ibid., p. 91.
[21] Ibid., p. 69.
[22] See esp. Steve Hindle, 'Beating the bounds of the parish: order, memory and identity in the English local community, c. 1500-1700', in Michael J. Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (eds.), *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 205-27. See also above, ch. 3.
[23] Quoted in Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 81.
[24] Ibid., p. 83.
[25] Ibid., p. 82.
[26] Thomas, *Perception of the Past*, pp. 13, 18.
[27] Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 67.
[28] Ibid., p. 81.

closely associated with a profound sense of socio-economic decline, also found wider expression in local and oral cultures. It is in this broader context that we should view perspectives like that of John Stow, the Elizabethan topographer and chronicler, who also remembered the suppression as a rupture with the plentiful, prosperous world of his childhood. Thus in the London ward of Aldgate, Stow had been inspired to recall that 'neere adjoyning to [the] Abby was sometime a Farme belonging to the said Nunrie, at the which Farme, I my selfe (in my youth) have fetched many a halfe-penny worthe of milke, and never had lesse than three ale pintes for a half penny in the Summer'.[29] Some forms of Protestant polemic also help to shed light on the prevalence and potency of this conservative perspective in local communities, suggesting that the testimonies offered by individuals in court cases reflected the wider sentiments of their communities. The Elizabethan pamphleteer and playwright Thomas Nashe, for example, noted a commonplace in Yarmouth, Norfolk, that the present age was no longer 'as plentifull a world as when Abbies stood', at which time, the people said, they 'should have twentie egges a pennie'.[30] Evidence such as this therefore suggests that the recollections of eye-witnesses found wider purchase in their communities, fostering an inherited memory of the dissolution as a moment of socio-economic rupture.

However, we have also seen how the legal context for remembering the dissolution shaped the character of the recollections offered by deponents, fostering a distinct emphasis on socio-economic concerns and customary rights and disputes. Moreover, deponents drawn from amongst the laity would have been no less susceptible than Wildbore, the ex-monk, to the desire to avoid incriminating themselves by remembering the Reformation. As we saw in chapter two, Stow also found out to his cost the dangers of adopting a conservative religious stance. Yet by contrast with legal depositions, polemical and antiquarian genres have potential to illuminate different aspects of the long local memory of the dissolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

One example will serve here to demonstrate this function of contemporary polemic, before we turn to the local traditions encountered by early modern antiquaries. Writing his *Apologie; or, defence of our dayes* (1598), the Lincolnshire cleric Francis Trigge sought to celebrate English Protestantism and to defend it from critiques articulated on the local level by the laity. In doing so, he ventriloquised a number of local commonplaces that reveal not only contemporary concerns with socio-economic decline, but also the deep religious roots of this memory. Thus he wrote of the 'cutting downe of woods, the spoyling of vestments & coapes, the breaking of

[29] John Stow, *The survey of London: contayning the originall, increase, modern estate, and government of that city, methodically set downe* (London, 1598; 1633 edn), p. 118**.** See above, ch. 3.
[30] R. B. McKerrow (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Horace Hart, 1958), iii, p. 171.

Images, the expulsion of Monkes & Nunnes, the ransaking of those rich goodly houses, which things many complaine of, grieue very many to remember at the[ir] hearts'.[31] Local tradition also informed him – he believed erroneously – that 'the [religious] houses might have [stood]' if only 'the abuses might have beene taken awaye'. If these critiques of the dissolution caused Trigge concern, he also heartily approved of traditions that perpetuated the rhetoric of monastic corruption, profligacy, and iniquity familiar from Henrician polemic. 'The fatnesse and haughtinesse, and idlenesse of Monkes, came into a Prouerbe amongest all men', he wrote, 'in so much, that idle persons were called Abbey lubbers: fatt men were saide to haue Abbots faces'.[32] This striking passage, which raises the intriguing suggestion that the Reformation had changed how people perceived particular physical features and body types, also testifies to themes in the local memory of the dissolution which are entirely absent from legal testimony. Although Trigge may not have endorsed all of these traditions, by recording evidence of the oral traditions that troubled him, he also revealed their prevalence in local communities, as well as serving to perpetuate them in print.

If concerns about socio-economic decline have been privileged in previous scholarship on local memory, it may be that this is the product of the conventions and constraints of recollections taken as part of legal proceedings or economic disputes. This is not to deny Wood's argument that, by the late sixteenth century, there had developed a powerful local memory of the dissolution as a moment of profound socio-economic rupture. Nor should we discount the depositions and testimonies examined by Wood as evidence of the popular memory of the suppression. Rather, this analysis suggests that by turning to a different set of sources, it might become possible more fully to recover the complexity of local memory cultures – and, in particular, their religious dimensions. These sources are, in their own way, no less problematic than legal records, but they also have the potential to shed new light upon the tangled afterlives of the suppression in the localities.

Local Narratives and Chronologies

Like the learned historical culture that we explored in chapter two, local memories of the dissolution also had pronounced temporal dimensions. We have already seen how people at all social levels thought about the suppression as a rupture between past and present. It is also the

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[31] Francis Trigge, *An apologie; or, defence of our dates, against the vaine murmurings & complaints of manie wherein is plainly proued, that our dayes are more happie & blessed than the dayes of our forefathers* (London, 1589), p. 13. On Trigge's comments as a reflection of widespread regret for the lost medieval past see Thomas, *Perception of the Past,* pp. 17-18.
[32] Trigge, *Apologie*, p. 9.

case that particular communities developed geographically specific narratives of dissolution, which reflected the particular experiences of people in these localities. These narratives shared with national histories an overarching concern to account for the transition from a world with monasteries to a world without. However, they were also drawn largely from anecdotal traditions embedded in local memory and inherited across the generations by means of oral circulation, as well as being shaped and perpetuated through interactions with textual culture.

An illustrative case study of local tradition in the Devonshire city of Exeter has the potential to illuminate these processes of remembering the dissolution at the micro level. Traces of wider local tradition in Exeter can be found in a series of local chronicles compiled between the late sixteenth and late seventeenth centuries, in which the city's past came under scrutiny in the work of successive generations of Devonshire antiquaries: John Hooker, who was also coroner and later recorder of Exeter; Richard Izacke, sometime the chamberlain and town clerk; and local antiquary Richard Crossing. Although each of these texts is a composite blend of genres and none is explicitly described or catalogued as a chronicle, they all contain substantial portions that take the form of a chronicle, with events recorded chronologically by calendar or mayoral year. These local chronicles did not delineate the national or London-centric narratives of dissolution that we traced using chronicles in chapter two; rather they attest to its specific afterlives in Exeter. They also offer an example of a form of record-keeping that, as Judith Pollmann and Alexandra Walsham have suggested, both reflected and contributed to the vibrancy of local tradition, as well as attesting to the porous boundaries between local and national memory cultures.[33]

John Hooker was born in Exeter in or around 1527.[34] A child at the time of the dissolution, he appears to have relied upon various forms of oral, local, and textual tradition to supplement his own memory in recounting the events of 1536-40. In particular, his chronicle contains a remarkable story perpetuated in local tradition about the visitation and suppression of the smaller religious houses in 1536. In this entry, Hooker described how, upon reaching Exeter, the king's commissioners led by Sir Philip Tregonwell travelled first to St Nicholas's Priory, a large house of Benedictine monks, and demanded the demolition of the rood loft in the priory church. They employed a local man to undertake this destructive work and departed for their next target. Tradition had it that in the absence of the commissioners, a group of townswomen,

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[33] See Judith Pollmann, 'Archiving the present and chronicling for the future in early modern Europe', in Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters, and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe*, P&P supplement 11, 230 (2016), pp. 231-52; Alexandra Walsham, 'Chronicles, memory, and autobiography in Reformation England', *Memory Studies* 11 (2018), pp. 36-50. See also above, ch. 2.

[34] S. Mendyk, 'Hooker, John (*c.*1527–1601)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13695, accessed 10 Nov 2017].

named by Hooker as Jone Reve, Agnes Collaton, Alys Mytter, Jone Roode, and others, 'came yn at hast to the sayd Churche, some with spykes… & some with suche tooles as they could geyte' and broke down the door. Angered by the commissioners' attack on their priory, the women threatened the workman and 'hurled stones unto hym' causing him to attempt to flee the scene by jumping out of a window, upon which 'he escaped the breaking of his neck, but yet brake one of his rybbes'. Upon hearing of the disturbance, alderman Philip Blackcaller hastened to St Nicholas's and managed temporarily to restore calm, until another of the women, Elizabeth Glanfold, 'gave hym a blow and sent him packing'. The episode was only brought to an end with the arrival of the mayor, who ordered the imprisonment of the women. The resistance subdued, Tregonwell and his fellow commissioners 'prevalid to the suppressing of the howse' and, when it was done, 'they intreated the mayor for relaasynge of the women'.[35]

The story of the Exeter townswomen's staunch and impassioned defence of St Nicholas's Priory is indicative of the survival of highly specific memories of the dissolution that were attached to certain sites and spaces. It seems unlikely that Hooker, just nine years old in 1536, had remembered all of the details of this incident at first-hand. Rather, perhaps, this tale owed much of its colour to the oral tradition and cultural memory of the dissolution in Exeter. By including this narrative in his chronicle, Hooker also preserved the echoes of an oral culture of the dissolution that sat uneasily alongside Henrician narratives of the ease and expediency of suppression. His chronicle thus further underlines the potentially subversive quality of the local memory of the suppression, as well as hinting at some of its religious dimensions. Although Hooker refrained from commenting on the motivations behind the violence at St Nicholas's, it seems clear that local resistance to its suppression was provoked by the iconoclastic actions of the commissioners and their agents. It is also telling, perhaps, that this is the first vision of the dissolution that we have encountered to prioritise the agency of women, whose names and actions were preserved for posterity in Hooker's chronicle.[36] The memory of this feat of resistance evidently also survived in local tradition well into the seventeenth century, perhaps in part aided by the circulation of Hooker's chronicle: in 1681, when Richard Crossing was compiling his own manuscript chronicle, he included a single entry or 'memorial' for 1536 which read, 'in Summer 1536 was the Priory of St Nicholas suppresst in this Cittie, which was att first withstood by women'.[37]

[35] DHC, ECA Book 51, fol. 343r.
[36] On gender and oral tradition see Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture*, ch. 3; D. R. Woolf, 'A feminine past? Gender, genre, and historical knowledge in England, 1500-1800', *American Historical Review* 102 (1997), pp. 645-79; idem, *Social Circulation of the Past*, pp. 306-7.
[37] DHC, ECA Book 54, p. 40.

However, local recollections of the dissolution in Exeter could also perpetuate, as well as subvert, the Henrician vision of the suppression. Immediately following his account of the defence of St Nicholas's Priory by the women of Exeter, Hooker set down a second local legend attached to the nearby priory of Polsloe, a female Benedictine house to the east of the city. The crown had made efforts to suppress Polsloe during the dissolution of the smaller houses in 1536, but the priory had been granted an exemption, 'the nunnes' having 'made by there [sic] frendes such meanes' as to secure a reprieve. This proved, of course, to be only temporary and in 1538 the house finally fell to the king's commissioners along with St Nicholas's. A local tradition set down by Hooker recorded evidence of the depravity and sexual immorality that the commissioners had allegedly uncovered within the walls of Polsloe's cloisters. It was said that 'so many of [the nuns] had tasted so m[u]che of the fruit… of the garden, that the most parte of them and as some sayde [12] or [13] of them were with childe'.[38] Local memory, then, did not evolve entirely in opposition to Henrician polemic, but could also function as both a product of and a vehicle for ideas about monastic corruption and iniquity. If the cultural memory of the dissolution had developed in ways that the Tudor government had neither hoped for nor anticipated, the regime's attempts to manage the legacies of the suppression nevertheless continued to inflect local and oral memory cultures.

In the national chronicles we considered in chapter two – and in the Henrician polemic which coloured and inflected many of these texts – 1539 was conventionally considered the endpoint of the dissolution, marked by the announcement of the retroactive policy of wholesale suppression in the autumn of that year. Perhaps as a result of the influence of this larger chronology, Hooker denoted this episode using a formulation that was common in other chronicles of the period: 'Thys year', he noted simply, 'all the Abbeys generally through out all England were suppressed'.[39] But this moment also had different associations in the local community. Richard Izacke compiled his manuscript volume of 'Memorials of the City of Exeter' in 1670. Like Hooker and Crossing's chronicles, the 'Memorials' delineated episodes in local history thought worthy of posterity. The sole 'memorial' for 1539 recorded not the national dissolution but rather a local prophetic tradition that had apparently been fulfilled by the fall of St Nicholas's Priory in the previous year:

> In the wynter about the end of November, one of the Myddle Arches of Exebridge fell downe, & was new builded by the Bridgewarden, for which he bought a great store of stone att the Priory of St Nicholas (lately dissolved) & then the prophecy was fulfilled, which was (as twas then reported) that the River of Exe should runne under St Nicholas Church.[40]

[38] DHC, ECA Book 51, fol. 343r.
[39] Ibid., fol. 345r.
[40] DHC, ECA Book 53, p. 40.

This passage is indicative of how the dissolution could be incorporated into the wider history of local communities, as well as how it functioned as a marker of time for local people. This particular story is also suggestive of how, as we shall see, the reuse of sacred space also had a long afterlife in local tradition.

From a brief examination of these examples of local chronicles, we have seen how early modern Exeter possessed a variety of different traditions about the dissolution, which both fed into and were perpetuated by the antiquarian writing of men like Hooker, Crossing, and Izacke. The longevity of local memories of St Nicholas's Priory and the Polsloe nuns sits somewhat uncomfortably alongside Daniel Woolf's account of historical consciousness in early modern England. Although Woolf offers a sophisticated account of the transmission of knowledge about the past and the reciprocal relationship between oral and literate cultures, he nevertheless posits a narrative of change across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries predicated on the marginalisation of oral and local memory. He argues that popular tradition was 'at risk of being overwhelmed by a print-based historical culture' and that this 'national historical tradition' was forged in an increasingly text-oriented society.[41] Yet the Exeter chronicles suggest that local beliefs about the past were thriving in the early modern period, perpetuated in and shaped by their interactions with literate culture.

Nor was this textual culture merely the 'graveyard of rural antiquarianism' described by Woolf.[42] The Exeter chroniclers were all native to the city but, as we shall now see, itinerant antiquaries were also largely reliant upon local tradition for information about the places and sites that they visited.[43] Before turning to the spatial dimensions of local memory and the topographical texts in which we can uncover traces of this memory culture, it is worth underlining that antiquarian writing is not unproblematic as a source for local tradition. Mediated and refracted through the perspectives and worldviews of the antiquaries who recorded local stories about the past, these texts are inevitably, in part, a reflection of the proclivities and predilections of the recorders of local tradition, as well as that tradition itself. Some antiquaries were openly contemptuous of the traditions they encountered. For example, the early seventeenth-century traveller Fynes Moryson claimed to be unmoved by 'vulgar opinion', which 'preferr[ed] old times to ours'. When 'the cloisters of monks' had thrived in England, he wrote, the religious houses had 'spoiled all that they might be beneficial to few'.[44] In

[41] Woolf, *Social Circulation*, pp. 320, 351, 390 and passim.
[42] Woolf, 'Common voice', p. 52.
[43] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, ch. 7; Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 352 and ch. 10 passim.
[44] Fynes Moryson, *An itinerary written by Fynes Moryson gent. first in the Latine tongue, and then translated by him into English* (London, 1617), p. 113.

other words, Fynes thought that popular pity and regret for the dissolution had been seriously misplaced. These concerns stemmed partly from the uneasy relationship between Protestant antiquaries and their informants, who sometimes expressed perspectives they found troubling.

Nevertheless, it is possible to use these sources to move beyond what Andy Wood has criticised as an 'almost monolithically elitist' focus on learned and textual cultures of remembrance, and instead to seek within these genres the residual evidence of oral traditions about the suppression.[45] This was true of the Exeter chroniclers, but it was especially true of the antiquaries and topographers who surveyed the counties and parishes of early modern England and to whose evidence we now turn. If these onlookers of local tradition were sometimes critical of the beliefs about the past that they encountered, their work nevertheless reveals the longevity of these traditions into the early eighteenth century and beyond.

'Papish Places' and 'Impious Hands'

Oral culture furnished seventeenth-century antiquaries with a variety of inherited traditions which reveal something of the tangled religious, familial, and socio-economic strands of the local memory of the dissolution. Particular narratives were shaped by these themes to a greater or lesser extent depending upon the context in which information was being recalled. Legal contexts, as we have seen, elicited certain kinds of recollections. Other narratives were recalled by their association with certain times and dates. In conversation with the itinerant antiquaries who wandered into their towns and villages, local people tended to recall different aspects of the dissolution – many of them associated with particular places and spaces. Regional topographies thus constitute a rich body of evidence of the local character of the dissolution and enable us to access something of how this rupture was remembered in those communities across the early modern period.

Contemporary perceptions of the past were, as we have seen, profoundly shaped by the physical and material landscape.[46] Geographically specific memories of past events were anchored in local communities, sustained by particular features in the landscape and also through oral circulation and familial and generational patterns of inheritance.[47] Here we will explore the

[45] Wood, *Memory of the People*, p. 29.
[46] See esp. Nicola Whyte, 'Landscape, memory, and custom: parish identities, c. 1550-1700, *Social History*, 32 (2007), pp. 166-86; eadem, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Windgather, 2009); Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*; eadem, 'Sacred topography and social memory: religious change and the landscape in early modern Britain and Ireland', *Journal of Religious History*, 36 (2012), pp. 31-51. See also above, ch. 3.
[47] See also Thomas, *Perception of the Past*, p. 4.

capacity of former monastic sites to engender local traditions about the dissolution, before turning to focus on potent memories of Reformation iconoclasm. As we shall see, the long-term consequences of iconoclasm also loomed large in local memory cultures in the form of the spectre of sacrilege.

One feature of local and oral tradition which revealed itself when local people spoke with antiquaries and topographers was a tendency to augment and amplify the significance of particular local abbeys or convents to the wider process of dissolution. In the 1660s, for example, the Oxfordshire antiquary Anthony Wood was travelling in Gloucestershire when, pausing at Winchcombe, he heard tell of a remarkable narrative. Popular tradition in the town supposed that after the brutal murder of one of Winchcombe's monks by a servant of Henry II, the king had granted nearby Sudeley Castle to the abbey by way of recompense. It remained, so the locals believed, in the monks' possession until the reign of Henry VIII, who had sought to regain the castle for the crown. When he was thwarted in this attempt by the Winchcombe monks, Henry had supposedly flown into a violent rage and was alleged to have declared 'by the mother of God' that 'not only that abbey but all the abbeys in England should be his for this… denial of Sudely Castle'.[48] The people of Winchcombe had thus developed a (probably apocryphal) narrative of the dissolution that augmented the role of their own locality and community upon the larger stage of the national suppression.

It is, of course, difficult to reconstruct the processes of transmission and re-invention that coloured and reshaped local memory across the generations.[49] Wood's account of the dissolution in Winchcombe was the product of several retellings of the story in multiple media, providing ample opportunity for distortion. Nevertheless, the Sudeley Castle narrative is an illuminating example of the transmission of popular tradition in a hybrid oral and literate culture. Wood wrote that he had first encountered the tale at second remove in a manuscript, from which he quoted Henry VIII's declaration.[50] His travels in Gloucestershire appear to have borne out the longevity and potency of this narrative in local memory: the Sudeley Castle episode, as Wood heard tell, was 'as they say, another reason why King Henry VIII desolved the abbeys'.[51] This narrative was kept alive, then, through oral and textual circulation, but also – crucially – by the longevity of the site of the castle itself.

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[48] Anthony Wood, *The Life and Times of Anthony Wood, Antiquary, of Oxford, 1632-1695, Described by Himself*, ed. Andrew Clark, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford Historical Society, 1891-1900), ii, p. 88.
[49] Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, p. 301.
[50] Bodl., Twyne MS 24, p. 553.
[51] Wood, *Life and Times*, ii, p. 88.

Extant physical remains of monasteries also served to engender traditions that reflected the themes of the polemic propagated by the Henrician regime in the 1530s. As we have seen in previous chapters, Henry VIII and his government had embarked on a polemical campaign against the religious orders, which was conducted from the pulpit and the printing press, as well as in public displays of ridiculed monastic frauds like the Rood of Boxley or the Holy Blood of Hailes.[52] We have also seen how the crumbling ruins that littered the landscape could function as monuments to the triumph of the evangelical reformers.[53] In this context, these sites also served to illustrate the significant corpus of traditions about depraved and impious monks, nuns, and friars which the dissolution had inspired. They helped stories about 'fat and lazie Abbots' who 'did take pleasure and delight, to cram & stuffe their paunches with Oysters' to persist and endure in local communities.[54] The conduit of this particular story was the early Stuart topographer and diarist Lieutenant Hammond, for whom the sight of a Canterbury cloister also recalled 'dayes of old' when the corrupt religious orders had 'juggled and jumbled' there.[55] Antiquaries including John Aubrey and Thomas Southouse also encountered local stories in communities in Surrey and Kent respectively about subterranean tunnels and passages built under religious houses to facilitate illicit sexual liaisons between monks and nuns.[56] In this sense, sites and spaces in the landscape served to reinforce narratives of monastic depravity that, as Margaret Spufford suggested, had also become prevalent in forms of cheap print, such as ballads.[57]

Ruined monasteries, as we saw in chapter three, often functioned as mnemonics to the Henrician government's triumph over monastic corruption. Yet, as we also noted previously, the physical remains of the monasteries occupied an often ambiguous place in the Protestant memory of the dissolution.[58] Ruins also – and increasingly – functioned as *lieux de mémoire* for iconoclastic acts commited during the dissolution and the Reformation. Once monuments to the Henrician campaign against idolatry, in the course of the seventeenth century, ruins had begun

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[52] On the local dimensions of this campaign see esp. G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Ethan H. Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 5. See also above, chs. 1, 2.
[53] See esp. Margaret Aston, 'English ruins and English history: the dissolution and the sense of the past', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 36 (1973), pp. 231-55; Walsham, *Reformation the Landscape*, p. 483, and above, ch. 3.
[54] *A Relation of a Short Survey of the Western Counties Made by a Lieutenant of the Military Company in Norwich in 1635*, ed. L. G. Wickham Legg, Camden Miscellany XVI (1936), p. 3.
[55] Ibid., p. 17.
[56] John Aubrey, *A perambulation of the county of Surrey*, 5 vols. (London, 1718-19), iii, pp. 245-6; Thomas Southouse, *Monasticon Favershamiense in Agro Cantiana: or, a surveigh of the monastry of Faversham in the county of Kent* (London, 1671), p. 117. We shall return to the example cited by Aubrey below.
[57] Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen & Co., 1981), p. 220.
[58] See above, ch. 3.

to occupy a much more problematic position in Protestant memory. In 1692, for example, Thomas Brockbank was travelling from his family home in Witherslack, Cumbria, to Oxford where he was a student, and fell suddenly into a foul humour upon the 'unexpected sight of a ruin'd Chappel'. 'I could not chuse but make many reflections on it', he mourned, compelled to remember the Henrician campaign against sites that had once been holy places.[59] If the remnants of the monasteries could, on the one hand, perpetuate the Henrician vision of the dissolution by fostering a body of local tradition about corrupt and iniquitous monks and nuns, they were also, on the other, mnemonics to the destructive consequences of this rupture in local communities. Upon occasion, local tradition could also be called upon to resurrect lost monastic architecture. Tradition, in other words, could sometimes provide what learning alone could not. At Merton in Surrey, for example, John Aubrey mourned that there was 'but little of the Building of the Abbey remaining'. 'Tradition', however, had informed him that 'heretofore here were seven Rings of Bells, and several Chapels; one of them is remaining still, with an old Pulpit, and two old Gates'.[60] Local memory could, then, occasionally act as a prophylactic against the erasure of material memory engendered by the dissolution.

One of the most striking features of this local memory of iconoclasm rooted in the physical landscape was that with new waves of destruction, memories of the dissolution became entangled with other assaults on sacred space.[61] This is powerfully illuminated by a common misconception which arose in the later seventeenth century – and which demonstrates the limits of popular memory as well as the significance of its religious dimensions. In the decades after the Civil Wars and Interregnum, there evolved a tendency to confuse Thomas Cromwell, destroyer of the monasteries, with his kinsman Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector. During the conflict, some polemicists had played on the relationship between the two Cromwells. Thus one satirical treatise, *Ad populum: or, a lecture to the people* (1644), had castigated 'Archdeacon' Oliver Cromwell for his assault on the landscape, 'in whose veines doth run th'reforming Bloud and vertues of his Grand Parent, that Man of Iron, whose tough Hand… at one Blow made many a stately Abbey lie full low'.[62] But local tradition struggled to maintain the distinction, tending to amalgamate two of the chief agents of early modern iconoclasm into a single mythical figure.[63] This was also true in Ireland, where monastic ruins acquired a double layer of painful memories of Catholic defeat.[64] The memory of iconoclasm was therefore central to popular perceptions of

[59] Preston, Lancashire Record Office, DP 290, p. 68. I am grateful to Carys Brown for this reference.
[60] John Aubrey, *A perambulation of the county of Surrey; begun 1673, ended 1692*, 5 vols. (London, 1718-19), i, p. 226.
[61] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, pp. 528-30.
[62] [Peter Hausted], *Ad populum: or, a lecture to the people* (Oxford, 1644), pp. 7-8.
[63] Alan Smith, 'The image of Cromwell in folklore and tradition', *Folklore* 79 (1968), pp. 23-7.
[64] See Sarah Covington, '"The odious demon from across the sea": Oliver Cromwell, memory and the dislocations of Ireland', in Erika Kuijpers, Judith Pollmann, Johannes Müller, and Jasper van der Steen

ruins, even if those perceptions did not accurately reflect past events. Indeed, this confusion seems to have survived in local memory for generations. In the late eighteenth century, the traveller and diarist John Byng thus criticised a misnomer that had been more than a century in the making. 'Whenever I enquire about ruins', he wrote from Eynsham in Oxfordshire, 'I allways get the same answer, that it was some papish place, and destroy'd by Oliver Cromwell, to whose share is laid even much more devastation that he really committed'.[65]

It was not only ruins that called to mind past iconoclasm. In the previous chapter, we examined a present-centric genre of antiquarian writing that reflected and promoted a culture of amnesia amongst the gentry and nobility who occupied former monastic properties. The transformation of former religious houses into gentlemen's houses was also a prominent strand in local memory. When Anthony Wood visited the site of Cogges Abbey, he found that – like so many other ex-monastic structures – it had since become a private house. 'The priorie did stand where the Lord of Downes house now is, neare to the church', he wrote, having learnt that 'the people here think that his Grandfather built the house than now stands there, out of the ruins of the priory houses'.[66] Journeying on to Great Milton, Wood also noted a local memory of the priory there that he had gleaned at second hand from John Leland, who had 'heard say' of a cell of Abingdon Abbey since converted into a farmhouse. 'The voyce goeth there', Leland continued, 'that Louch had this priorie land gyven him'.[67] As we have seen, memories of this nature served partly to make the past usable in the present in legal cases. But it also echoed and reinforced the dynastic memory embedded in the gentry topographies we examined in chapter three, in which we also noted the emergence of a culture of amnesia amongst those who occupied converted properties. Other members of the local community, however, did not share this vested interest in forgetting the dissolution. Rather, the sacred past of these sites gave rise to a set of local traditions that underlined the religious rupture engendered by the suppression.

Many people in early modern England believed that the consequences of the iconoclasm and despoliation that had taken place at the dissolution continued to be felt long after the last religious houses had fallen. Here it is illuminating to return to the recollections of the Elizabethan cleric Michael Sherbrook, and his account of the dissolution of Roche Abbey, North Yorkshire. As we saw in chapter one, Sherbrook's reflections were profoundly influenced by the experiences of his childhood and especially by the memories inherited from his father and

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(eds.), *Memory Before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2013), pp. 149-64.

[65] John Byng, *The Torrington diaries containing the tour through England and Wales of the Hon. John Byng (later fifth Viscount Torrington) between the years 1781 and 1794*, ed. C. Bruyn Andrews, 4 vols. (London: Methuen & co, 1970), i, p. 6.

[66] Bodl., MS Wood E 1, fol. 47r.

[67] Ibid., fol. 281r.

uncle, who had themselves partaken in the spoliation of Roche in 1538. The ruined abbey was also an emblem of his anxieties about the dissolution. 'It would have pitied any Heart to see', he wrote:

> What tearing up of the Lead there was, and plucking up of Boards, and throwing down of the Sparres; and when the Lead was torn off and cast down into the Church, and the Tombs in the Church all broken… and all things of Price, either spoiled, carped [i.e. plucked] away or defaced to the uttermost.[68]

This encapsulates several of the themes that we have encountered previously: as well as deploying Roche as a case study of his regret for the material losses sustained at the dissolution and the piety and munificence of the medieval past, this passage gave local colour and character to Sherbrook's wider account of the dissolution. Sherbrook evidently also remembered this dramatic spoliation as a troubling episode in the history of his own family. His father's act of self-interested desacralisation continued to haunt the younger Sherbrook, who feared that the consequences of the dissolution were still being felt in a community that had effectively robbed itself of a critical source of spiritual succour, employment, charity, hospitality, and education. 'Such is the Providence of God', he wrote, 'to punish Sinners in making themselves Instruments to punish themselves, and all their Posterity, from Generation to Generation!'[69]

The idea that the spoliation of the monasteries had brought divine wrath down upon both the nation and individual families found powerful expression in local tradition. In 1635, Lieutenant Hammond was travelling in Southampton, where he heard reports that the inhabitants of a house built out of a ruined church 'cannot rest quiet a[t] Nights', because the 'razing downe of churches, to reare vp mansions with that stuffe (say they) is not right'. Hammond offered no further detail about these strange happenings, but his comments imply that the locals believed that the occupants of converted properties were being haunted – literally – by their decision to participate in the profanation of sacred space. 'I heard many pretty odd Tales', Hammond wrote of his time in Southampton, although he had 'neither time nor list' to record them.[70] If Hammond was rather dismissive of these traditions, his comments nevertheless suggest that there was a widespread tradition in Southampton that former monasteries and other desacralised places were foci for ghostly activity. As Alison Shell has demonstrated, there had long been a Catholic ghost culture connected to the memory of the dissolution, which profoundly shaped its emergence as a critical episode in the historical consciousness of the English Catholic community.[71] But the consequences of the transformation of sacred spaces into

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[68] A. G. Dickens (ed.), *Tudor Treatises*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, cxxv (1959), p. 124.
[69] Ibid., p. 125.
[70] *Short Survey of the Western Counties*, p. 57.
[71] Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism*, ch. 1.

domestic properties also informed wider perspectives on the dissolution. In Protestant historical culture, these anxieties about the desacralisation of sacred space were also manifest in the form of the local legends and stories of the supernatural that fed into a 'rich anecdotal tradition' rooted in the monastic landscape.[72]

Amongst the sites that captured the seventeenth-century historical imagination was Netley Abbey, a ruined Cistercian monastery close to Southampton, where Hammond had heard tell of ghost stories connected to a number of former monastic properties. Netley had fallen to the crown in August 1536, when many of its buildings were granted to Sir William Paulet, Lord Treasurer and later marquess of Winchester, who set about converting them for domestic use. In the early seventeenth century, Paulet's descendant, also William Paulet, fourth marquess of Winchester, fell into financial difficulties and sold the property to the Seymour family, dukes of Somerset. When William Seymour, third duke of Somerset, died aged nineteen without an heir in 1671, it passed to his sister, Elizabeth Seymour, and her husband, Thomas Bruce, second earl of Ailesbury, before being sold on again in 1676.[73] Around 1700, the property changed hands again, falling into the possession of Sir Berkeley Lucy who, rather than live in the mansion, sought to dismantle it and sell off its materials for profit. This might seem a simple family saga, but the misfortunes of Netley's various owners had all the makings of a classic narrative about the power of providence to punish successive generations for the sins of the father.

When the antiquary Browne Willis visited the site some years later, he heard tell of a series of unusual events that had taken place at the abbey. He learnt from the locals that 'some part of this spatious Building was desecrated (as Tradition says)' in the course of the dissolution and its subsequent conversion into a domestic house by Paulet and his heirs. But the final blow had been dealt by Lucy, who 'sold the whole Fabrick of the Chapel to one [Walter] Taylor a Carpenter of Southampton, who took off the Roof… and pulled down great part of the Walls', leaving the 'Chapel and Abbey… now quite destroy'd'. For this act, Taylor had suffered a divine punishment. 'Tis a thing so particular', Willis wrote, 'and so generally known in the Neighbourhood, and may be attested by divers Evidences, and very credible Witnesses' that:

> During the time that this Taylor (who was a Dissenter) was in treaty with Sir [Berkeley] for the Chapel, he was much disturbed in his Sleep with frightful Dreams, (and, as some say, Apparitions, in particular of a Person in the Habit of a Monk) representing to him the Mischief that would befall him in destroying the Chapel, and one Night he dreamt, that a large Stone out of one of the Windows of the Chapel fell upon him and kill'd him. He was so affected

[72] Ibid., pp. 1, 3-4. See also Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, ch. 4.
[73] 'Parishes: Hound with Netley', in *A History of the County of Hampshire: Volume 3*, ed. William Page (London, 1908), pp. 472-478. *British History Online* http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/hants/vol3/pp472-478 [accessed 21 August 2017].

> with this Dream in particular, that he told what had happen'd to him in his Sleep to a Person of the same Perswasion with himself, viz. one Mr. W a serious man… who examining particularly into the Disturbance that had been thus given him, advised him not to proceed in his Contract, there being reason to fear, that some Mischief would befall him if he did; and that the Notice which had been given him was to be looked upon as the kind Admonition of Heaven to prevent his Hurt.[74]

Taylor, however, had not heeded his friend's advice. 'Moved by the Gain' he stood to make by the contract, the carpenter returned to his work demolishing the abbey, at which point providence intervened. 'He was not far advanced into [the work]', Willis noted, 'when endeavouring with a Pickax to get out some Stones at the bottom of the West Wall', Taylor was struck down: 'the whole Body of the Window fell down suddenly upon him, and crushed him in pieces'.[75] In the local community, this misfortune was remembered as a divine punishment for Taylor's renewed assault on the old monastic structure at Netley.

The tale of Taylor's misfortune was characteristic of ghost stories connected to former monasteries.[76] Willis recorded the tale without the scepticism that inflected later accounts of the goings on at Netley which, as the eighteenth century progressed, also became prominent in the new genres of Romantic poetry and Gothic literature, as well as a site for Picturesque tourism.[77] But in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, for antiquaries like Willis as well as for local communities, episodes like the haunting of Netley Abbey remained cautionary tales that testified to the long memory of divine providence, which visited cyclical punishments upon the desecrators of the abbeys and their heirs.[78] The figure of the ghostly monk also suggests that whilst the experience of the religious orders during the dissolution is a silence in the historical record, their memory persisted and acquired a form of agency in the form of ghost stories long after their death. In the wake of changing attitudes towards the dead and a reorientation of commemorative practices instigated by episodes such as the dissolution, ghosts had, as Peter Marshall has argued, become a Protestant tradition in their own right. They were ambivalent figures who operated within the providentialist worldview of early modern England and could sometimes be 'directly employed to execute the judgements of God'.[79] They also illuminate the long memory of the dissolution in local communities, underscoring Sasha

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[74] Browne Willis, *An history of the mitred parliamentary abbies, and conventual cathedral churches*, 2 vols. (London, 1718), pp. 205-6.
[75] Ibid., p. 206.
[76] Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism*, pp. 39, 48.
[77] Ibid., pp. 40-7.
[78] On the providential worldview of early modern England see Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[79] Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 252.

Handley's contention that 'the history of ghost beliefs… can be understood as a history of what people remember'.[80]

It is in this context of supernatural tales about the ghosts who haunted ruined abbeys, convents, and priories, that we should view wider shifts in the Protestant memory of the dissolution. Ghost stories were a particular species of narrative developed to make sense of a difficult past. Although some antiquaries expressed scepticism about these popular traditions and beliefs, many nevertheless shared the locals' sense that the appropriation of church property for secular purposes was a crime and a sin. Hammond, for example, was inspired by the sight of a ruined chapel belonging to the former Benedictine abbey in Ely, Cambridgeshire, to mourn the damage wrought there by 'impious hands'.[81] This was the same anxiety that underpinned popular accounts of ghosts and providential punishments. Sites such as the chapel at Ely fostered Hammond's sense that iconoclastic destruction was an 'inhumane, sordid' act and a 'malicious detriment to posterity'.[82] He knew this to be the sin of sacrilege – and it is this concept that holds the key to unlocking the religious dimensions of the long afterlives of the dissolution.

'The Spoils of Sacrilege'

Sacrilege was a widespread concern in seventeenth-century England.[83] It was also a highly subjective concept. As Michael Kelly has demonstrated, sacrilege eluded precise definition and its application was often contentious.[84] Anxiety about the re-use and misuse of sacred space was fuelled by general concerns about the appropriation of church property and wealth by the state, especially lay impropriations and the withholding of tithes – a form of taxation traditionally levied upon the laity to provide one tenth of earnings or produce for the support of the clergy.[85] But there were also specific concerns stemming from the memory of Reformation iconoclasm

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[80] Sasha Handley, *Visions of an Unseen World: Ghost Beliefs and Ghost Stories in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007), p. 15.
[81] *Short Survey of the Western Counties*, p. 92.
[82] Ibid., p. 34.
[83] On early modern concepts of sacrilege see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, 4th edn (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), pp. 113-21; Martin Dzelzainis, '"Undouted realities": Clarendon on sacrilege', *HJ* 33 (1990), pp. 515-40; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 196-8, 331-4 and passim; Michael Butler Kelly, 'The invasion of things sacred: church, property, and sacrilege in early modern England', PhD thesis (University of Notre Dame, 2013).
[84] Kelly, 'Invasion of things sacred', p. 5 and passim.
[85] See Peter David Yorke, 'Iconoclasm, ecclesiology, and the "beauty of holiness": concepts of sacrilege and the peril of idolatry in early modern England', PhD thesis (University of Kent, 1997).

and destruction.[86] The ghost stories relayed to Hammond and Willis were a particular species of sacrilege narrative, but this anxiety also took other forms and was expounded and elaborated in a variety of genres. What follows traces some different sacrilege narratives about the dissolution, adopting a broad definition of sacrilege as the profanation of sacred space or holy objects. In this way, this concept has the potential further to illuminate how Protestants across the social spectrum remembered the rupture of dissolution, as well as the wider context in which some of the more prominent seventeenth-century sacrilege narratives emerged.

There is some evidence that, as early as the 1530s, some of the purchasers and recipients of monastic lands had grappled with the question of what it meant to transform and occupy sacred spaces. Uncovering these early anxieties about sacrilege, however, requires us to read our sources against the grain. In January 1538, Thomas Wriothesley, first earl of Southampton, was undertaking renovations at Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire, which he had recently acquired from the king. The work was being overseen by John Crayford, who was also a commissioner for the dissolution. It is in Crayford's correspondence with the Wriothesley family that the question of sacrilege emerges, albeit indirectly. Indeed, Crayford encouraged the earl to dismantle the abbey church, urging that 'Mrs. Wriothesley nor you neither be not meticulous ne scrupulous to make sale of such holly [holy] thinges' as altars and other consecrated objects. 'As for plukyng down the church', he continued, '[it] is but a smal[l]e matter, mynding (as we dowbt not that you will) to buyld a chaple' in its place.[87] From these comments, however, we might infer an underlying fear about the spoliation of sacred space and the sin of sacrilege on the part of the Wriothesleys and, perhaps, in the wider gentry community – fears that Crayford took pains to allay.

Moreover, this was no mere 'superstition' on the part of the Wriothesley family, but rather reflected the common belief, drawn from the Old Testament, that it was a sin to profane the holy.[88] Biblical precedents furnished contemporaries with numerous examples of the divine punishments enacted upon those who committed sacrilege. One of the most prominent examples was Achan, who pillaged Jericho of sacred objects and thus brought divine wrath upon the Israelites. As a result of his transgression, Achan was stoned to death, together with his family and household (Joshua 7:20-26). Indeed, it was widely believed that punishment for sacrilege was not only meted out upon the culprit but also upon his or her family line. The Bible

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[86] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 283.
[87] *L&P*, xiii, part I, no. 19. See also Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 327; Nicholas Doggett, *Patterns of Re-Use: The Transformation of Former Monastic Buildings in Post-Dissolution Herefordshire* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002, p. 56.
[88] Described as a 'superstition' in Doggett, *Patterns of Re-Use*, p. 56.

taught that sacrilege was a curse, which was passed down through the generations. When the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar bequeathed stolen objects from the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem to his heir, Belshazzar, he brought the curse of sacrilege upon his own posterity (Jeremiah 52:17-19). Belshazzar used the sacred items at a great banquet and died the same evening, heralding the extinction of the family line (Daniel 5:1-4).[89] Sacrilege was, then, a serious business. Perhaps for this reason, few among the gentry, as Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes have suggested, were as quick as the Wriothesleys to undertake such drastic alterations to monastic churches – and yet it is striking that Crayford qualifies his comments about the 'plucking down' of the abbey church by encouraging the family to build a new chapel.[90]

The paucity of this kind of evidence is, perhaps, at least partly a consequence of its ephemeral nature. But it undoubtedly also reflects the circumstances surrounding the dissolution in the 1530s. There was a delicate balance between sacrilege and idolatry. Both of these concepts, as Kelly has argued, were determined largely in the eye of the beholder.[91] During the suppression, the Henrician regime had publicly and prominently denounced images and idols, the 'superstition' embedded in the very fabric of the monasteries.[92] As we have seen, the campaign against idolatry shaped contemporary perceptions of the dissolution and underpinned the emerging culture of amnesia promoted by crown and government. This is not necessarily to say that anxieties about the re-use of sacred space were not prevalent in the sixteenth century, but rather that they were not a part of the public discourse developed by the Henrician reformers or, indeed, that of its evangelical critics. It took the best part of a century for the balance to start to shift. As late as 1597, the cleric Thomas Beard, in his catalogue of the punishments that divine providence had visited upon England, *The theatre of Gods judgements*, felt able to castigate Cardinal Wolsey's acquisition of religious houses as 'irreligious sacrilege' but remained tellingly silent on the matter of the wholesale Henrician dissolution of the monasteries.[93]

By the early seventeenth century, however, many Protestant clerics and polemicists had come to see the attempts of the Tudor reformers to correct Catholic 'superstition' as sacrilegious acts.[94] They struggled with the precept set down in Romans 2:22 – 'Thou that detest idols, doest thou commit Sacrilege?' In this context, the dissolution was an exemplary – and admonitory –

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[89] On these and other biblical examples of sacrilege see Kelly, 'Invasion of things sacred', pp. 69-71, 299-300 and passim.
[90] See Heal and Holmes, *Gentry in England and Wales*, p. 327.
[91] Kelly, 'Invasion of things sacred', pp. 5, 10, and passim.
[92] See G. R. Elton, *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), ch. 4; Peter Marshall, The Rood of Boxley, the Blood of Hailes and the defence of the Henrician church', *JEH* 46 (1995), pp. 689-96. See also above, ch. 1.
[93] Thomas Beard, *The theatre of Gods judgements where is represented the admirable justice of God against all notorious sinners* (London, 1642 edn), p. 293. See also Kelly, 'Invasion of things sacred', pp. 315-6.
[94] Kelly, 'Invasion of things sacred', pp. 5, 10, and passim.

episode. In 1613, the Church of England minister Foulke Robartes published *The revenue of the gospel is tythes*, which attacked the general post-Reformation practice of lay tithe-holding as sacrilegious.[95] He was compelled, however, to revisit the memory of the dissolution as an especially damaging act of sacrilege. 'Self-love and covetousnesse', he wrote, had made 'overblind and entangle[d] the men of [the Henrician] age' and encouraged them to steal from the church.[96] This was an extension of earlier evangelical and Protestant critiques of the avarice of the Henrician regime, interpreted in light of the emerging early seventeenth-century discourse of sacrilege. Critically, therefore, Robartes's text also reveals how the dissolution continued to resonate with ongoing religious debates about the nature of sacred space and the balance of power between church and state.

Anxiety about the re-use of sacred space, as Anthony Milton has argued, was widespread amongst English Protestants.[97] It is no coincidence, however, that critiques of the dissolution as a sacrilegious act proliferated in the 1630s during the Laudian campaign to restore the 'beauty of holiness'. An early but characteristic example of the Laudian critique of the dissolution was the sermon preached by the polemicist and cleric Edward Brouncker and published as *The curse of sacriledge* (1630). Like the antiquarian texts produced at this time, polemicists like Brouncker were forced to traverse the fine line between criticism of the dissolution and criticism of the Henrician break with Roman Catholicism. Brouncker was therefore careful to criticise the monks as well as their suppressers. In an argument that recalled aspects of the early evangelical critique of the dissolution, he argued that 'when the superstitious & idolatrous use' of monastic property and wealth was 'abolished', that capital 'ought to have been returned to their primitive and lawfull use' in the reformed Church.[98] 'Who needs spectacles to see', he asked:

> How it was only filthy avarice which made this state [the Henrician regime] to doe otherwise at that great day of dissolution of religious houses? For if it had been sanctified zeale, why did they not at the same time pull downe an[d] dispose of the very stones and timber of their Churches, whenas they had been as fully dedicated and more abused to superstition than ever the tithes which belonged unto them?[99]

In other words, it was the sin of sacrilege that Brouncker believed to be the most objectionable aspect of the dissolution. The curse of sacrilege, he argued, had also stained the very memory

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[95] On these practices see Lucy M. Kaufman, 'Ecclesiastical improvements, lay impropriations, and the building of a post-Reformation church in England, 1560-1600', *HJ* 58 (2015), pp. 1-23.
[96] Foulke Robartes, *The revenue of the gospel is tythes, due to the ministerie of the word, by that word* (Cambridge, 1613).
[97] Milton, *Catholic and Reformed,* pp. 332-4.
[98] E[dward] B[rouncker], *The curse of sacriledge, preached in a private parish church, the Sunday before Michaelmas last* (Oxford, 1630), p. 31.
[99] Ibid., p. 30.

and reputation of the Henrician reformers and he further suggested that their crimes continued to have profound consequences for their heirs and successors. 'Though Sacriledge be sweet and pleasant in the mouth', he wrote, 'that is at the beginning, yet it will be bitter in the belly, that is at the latter end'.[100]

Indeed, for the authors of treatises on sacrilege, it was the question of the providential punishments for sacrilege meted out across the generations that kept the dissolution fresh in memory. In the 1640s, the polemicist John Blaxton compiled a catalogue of commentaries on sacrilege under the title 'The English Appropriator' in order to relate many 'memorable examples of gods fearefull judgements upon sacrilegious persons' across the ages.[101] This included the opinion of the philosopher and theologian Ralph Cudworth, who wrote that 'even the stones in the ruinated Abbeys and other religious houses shall rise up in judgement against us' for the crime of sacrilege, despite the otherwise righteous act of Henry VIII in banishing Catholic corruption and 'superstitious idolatry' from the realm.[102] Implicitly, many authors also hinted at the wider popular tradition concerning gentry families who suffered as a result of their associations with monastic property. 'What if we should make a catalogue of all those courtiers, & others', wrote Robartes, 'who in the dissolution of the Abbyes were much enriched by the spoile of the Church, how fewe of so great estates are not alreadie ruinated?'[103] Likewise the Church of England clergyman Ephraim Udall deployed the dissolution as an cautionary tale, writing that:

> It is a thing to be thought on, That many ancient Families (as some intelligent men have observed) who inherited the Lands of their Ancestours… when they took in some of the spoiles made in Tithes and Glebe, by the Statute of Dissolution; their possession quickly spued out of the old possessor of them as a loathsome thinge; the Bread of God providing as the Bread of deceit, gravell in their Teeth… I could therefore wish, That all our Gentry that would preserve their Inheritances, without ruine to their posterity: would beware that they bring not any spoiles of the Churche into their Houses, lest they be spoyled by them.[104]

Inverting the rhetoric of ruin to chastise the purchasers of monastic properties and their heirs, the authors of sacrilege narratives gave expression to a vision of the dissolution which further elaborated the changing relationship between the suppression and contemporary senses of

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[100] Ibid., p. 17.
[101] Bodl., MS Add A 40, fol. 131r.
[102] Ibid., fol. 60r.
[103] Robartes, *Revenue of the gospel*, p. 79.
[104] Ephraim Udall, *Noli me tangere, is a thinge to be thought on, or vox carnis sacrae clamantis ab Altari ad Aquilam sacrilegam, noli me tangere ne te perdam* (London, 1642), p. 32.

time as well as place. A rupture with traditional religion, the dissolution had also become the source from which sprang new Protestant anxieties about their lineage and posterity.

When Udall alluded to 'some intelligent men' he likely referred to the most prominent author of sacrilege narratives in early modern England: the antiquary Sir Henry Spelman.[105] Spelman's major exploration of this subject, *The history and fate of sacrilege*, was deemed too provocative for the presses upon its completion in 1632 and it remained unpublished within his lifetime.[106] Attempts were made to print the work in the 1660s, but the project was hampered by delays and later by the loss of the manuscript in the Great Fire of London.[107] Nevertheless, the manuscript appears to have circulated in the antiquarian community as early as the 1630s, providing readers with a series of definitions and a history of sacrilege, before launching into an exhaustive account of the various evils that had befallen both the agents of the dissolution and the subsequent occupiers of monastic property in Spelman's home county of Norfolk. The memory of the suppression touched Spelman's own life and family: his paternal grandfather was William Saunder, Receiver for the Court of Augmentations; his wife, Eleanor L'Estrange, was the great-granddaughter of one of Henry VIII's commissioners for the dissolution; and his uncle, Francis Saunder, was involved in several disputes over land appropriated from the church.[108] It is not hard to imagine that Spelman feared the consequences of the actions of his ancestors. We noted in the previous chapter that gentry antiquaries and their audiences appear to have preferred to forget England's medieval monastic topography and their role in the conversion of religious houses into family seats. But, according to Spelman, like the ghosts who visited the popular historical imagination, the occupiers of monastic property were also visited by the consequences of past actions.

In Norfolk, Spelman found a wealth of evidence – much of it gleaned in conversation with local people – that purchasers and occupiers were the targets of divine wrath: family lines failed, financial decline forced the sale of property, or else they were struck 'very often by grievous accidents and Misfortunes'.[109] As at Netley Abbey, these punishments were visited not only upon those directly guilty of spoiling sacred space, but also upon successive generations of their heirs. Recent experience furnished Spelman with numerous examples of grave misfortune that mirrored and echoed those set down in the Old Testament. These included the tale of Mr Jenner,

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[105] On Spelman's life and career see esp. Kelly, 'Invasion of things sacred', chs. 2, 6.
[106] An earlier work on the question of tithes and church property, *De non temerandis ecclesiis* was published in 1613.
[107] Stuart Handley, 'Spelman, Sir Henry (1563/4–1641)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26104, accessed 21 Aug 2017].
[108] Kelly, 'Invasion of things sacred', pp. 35-6, 44, 51.
[109] Sir Henry Spelman, *The history and fate of sacrilege, discover'd by examples of scripture, of heathens, and of Christians; from the beginning of the world continually to this day* (London, 1698), pp. 243-4.

the architect of a seventeenth-century house built in the ruins of the famous medieval pilgrimage site at Walsingham Abbey. Spelman confirmed the local commonplace that the family had suffered as a result of this sacrilegious act. Jenner's eldest son and heir, Thomas, died within his father's lifetime; his second son, Francis, was drowned in a boating accident. After Thomas's death, his own children suffered financial ruin and were forced to go 'up and down abegging'. The family line died out.[110] According to Spelman, other families in the area had also suffered similar fates. For example, he traced the trials and tribulations of the owners of Hempton Abbey through five generations of occupants, describing a family plagued by the inability to produce male heirs. Instead they conceived a series of daughters, many of whom were also driven 'out of [their] wits' by the strange curse placed upon them.[111]

Some families were so concerned by these tales of misfortune that they returned some of their property and wealth to the church. In the early 1630s, fearful of the consequences of his ancestors' sacrilege, Viscount Scudamore converted part of the ruined abbey of Dore in Hertfordshire, which had been in his family's possession for a century, into a new parish church.[112] Spelman also cited instances of the occupants of monastic property attempting to make recompense. Towards the end of Elizabeth I's reign, Norfolk gentleman Sir Roger Townshend had bought Coxford Priory from Edward de Vere, earl of Oxford, who had himself only been granted the property by the crown after its original owner, Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, was executed in 1572 for his part in the Ridolfi Plot. After acquiring the old priory, Townshend undertook the demolition of the church, hoping to use the stone to build a new house at Rainham. During the building work, however, the steeple fell down upon a neighbouring house, killing its occupant, Mr Seller. Believing this to be the wrath of God, Townshend felt compelled to return to the church 'three or four impropriations'.[113] By committing the example of Roger Townshed, as well as the numerous stories that dwelt upon the misfortunes of the gentry, to paper, Spelman drew together learned sacrilege narratives and local traditions engendered by the dissolution. Many of these cautionary tales were also indicative of the problematic memory of the dissolution amongst local gentry families, many of whom might have preferred to bury the past in oblivion.

The most notable family to be afflicted by divine punishment for the dissolution was, of course, the Tudors. In his wider history of the dissolution, Spelman found cause to lay blame upon all Henrician nobles, temporal and spiritual, for their role in the suppression. Amongst the

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[110] Ibid., p. 260-1.
[111] Ibid., pp. 262-3.
[112] Ian Atherton, 'Viscount Scudamore's "Laudianism": the religious practices of the first viscount Scudamore', *HJ* 34 (1991), pp. 569-73.
[113] Spelman, *History and fate of sacrilege*, p. 269.

courtiers who had suffered for the dissolution was Thomas Audley, the Lord Chancellor in whose service the chronicler Charles Wriothesley had worked, as we saw in chapter two, and who was punished by being denied an heir for his title. He 'died without Issue-male'.[114] Early Protestant martyrs of the Reformation, including bishops Latimer and Ridley, also had their grisly fates attributed to their supporting roles in the dissolution.[115] But, for Spelman, Henry VIII was the true agent and architect of sacrilege and his heirs were the primary victims of divine wrath. By instigating the dissolution, Spelman argued, Henry had flooded the nation in an:

> Ocean of Iniquity and Sacrilege, where whole thousands of Churches and Chapels dedicated to the Service of God in the same manner that the rest are which remain to us at this day, together with the Monasteries and other Houses of Religion and intended Piety, were by King Henry VIII. in a temper of indignation at the Clergy of that time mingled with insatiable Avarice, sacked and rased as by an Enemy.[116]

This was a crime for which the whole Tudor line had subsequently been punished. 'Touching on [Henry's] Children and Posterity', Spelman wrote, 'after the time that he entered into these Courses, he had two Sons and three Daughters, whereof one of each kind died Infants: the other three succeeding in the Crown without Posterity'.[117] By breaking with the medieval past, Spelman thus believed Henry VIII to have tarnished his own afterlife.

Spelman died in 1641, but it appears that his second son, Clement, continued his work well into the 1660s. Writing to John Cosin, bishop of Durham, Clement Spelman reiterated the catalogue of the 'more than ordinary misfortunes' that had befallen the house of Tudor since the dissolution. He laid the blame for Henry's insecure succession, Edward VI's untimely death, Lady Jane Grey's swift removal, Mary I's barrenness, and the end of the Tudor line with Elizabeth I all with the dissolution of the monasteries. He also argued that the curse had passed with the crown to James VI, whose first son Prince Henry had died prematurely, and then to Charles I, whose misfortune Henry Spelman had not lived to witness, but who Clement Spelman believed to be the ultimate victim of providence. The Civil Wars which cost Charles his life were not, moreover, merely a punishment upon the crown. The nation too was suffering the long consequences of the dissolution: 'since the punishment was nationall, I must beleeue the sinne soe too', Clement wrote, 'and I know noe nationall sinne in England but that of Sacrilidge Committed as a Law by act of parliament' in 1539.[118] The dissolution had thus become an explanatory mechanism for more recent calamities.

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[114] Ibid., p. 203.
[115] Ibid., p. 199.
[116] Ibid., pp. 182-3.
[117] Ibid., p. 191.
[118] DUL, Special Collections, Cosin Letter Book 1, 1B, 94.

Clement Spelman's account of the parallel between the original crime – the sacrilegious suppression of the monasteries – and the punishment – civil war and unstable government – is highly illuminating: 'The Kinge [Henry VIII] makes use of a Crumwell [Thomas] to Dissolve the Monastryes, and god of a Crumwell [Oliver] borne in a dissolved Monastreye to punish the Kinge [Charles I]'.[119] If supporters of the dissolution had sometimes attempted to portray Henry VIII as a divine instrument, Spelman thus inverted this trope, making Oliver Cromwell – whose family did indeed possess large estates in Hinchingbrooke and Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, that had once been religious houses for monks and nuns of the Benedictine order – the divine instrument of the crown's downfall.[120] 'Thus our punishment sprang from our sinnes', Spelman argued, since 'King Henry 8 had taken all the Challices from the Altars of the Dissolved Monastryes and the Parliament and [Oliver] Crumwell seise all the Kings [Charles I's] plate', whilst Charles had himself languished in a 'dissolved hospital his prison'. Spelman begged Cosin to encourage the new Stuart king Charles II to make restoration of the crown's remaining ex-monastic and ex-ecclesiastical properties to the church. For, as he believed he had demonstrated, the dissolution was not simply an event that belonged to the past. Rather the memory of the suppression continued to haunt successive generations, not only of Tudors and Stuarts, but of the entire English people, who had shared in Henry VIII's crimes. Arguing that 'Parents, my Lord, live in their Children', Clement Spelman's was thus a story of cyclical judgements in which the sins of the father continued to be visited upon the present.[121]

Treatises against sacrilege continued to be printed and sermons continued to be preached into the late seventeenth century. Towards the end of the 1660s, Sir Simon Degge compiled a catalogue of the punishments that had befallen the occupants of monastic properties in Staffordshire as a means of demonstrating that 'our ancient gentry were so guilty of Henry the 8th sacrilegious robbing the Church'.[122] Like Henry Spelman, Degge described how 'tis my Observations that the Owners become Bankrupts and Sell, or else die without issue Male, whereby their Memories perish'.[123] In other words, in expiation for erasing the memory of the monasteries, the gentry families of England found themselves slipping into oblivion. 'To show that all prophanation, and invasion of things Sacred, is an offence against the eternal Law of nature', admonished the theologian Robert South, 'we need not go many Nations off, nor many Ages back, to see the Vengeance of God upon some Families, raised upon the Ruines of

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[119] Ibid.
[120] On Cromwell's early life and family property see John Morrill, 'Cromwell, Oliver (1599–1658)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6765, accessed 15 Nov 2017].
[121] DUL, Special Collections, Cosin Letter Book 1, 1B, 94.
[122] Sir Simon Degge, 'Observations upon the possessors of monastery-lands in Staffordshire' (1669), appendixed to Sampson Erdeswicke, *A survey of Staffordshire* (London, 1717), p. 2.
[123] Ibid., p. 4.

Churches, and enriched with the spoils of Sacrilege, gilded with the name of Reformation'.[124] There is little doubt that he was referring to the dissolution of the monasteries. Then, shortly before the turn of the eighteenth century, Spelman's *History and fate of sacrilege* finally reached print. Considered too provocative for publication in the 1630s, its appearance in 1698 remained controversial, but is nevertheless indicative of a Protestant memory culture in which the dissolution had become increasingly contentious. The title page of the new print edition of the *History and fate of sacrilege* bore the warning: 'A treatise omitted in the late edition of [Spelman's] *Posthumous Works*, and now published for the terror of evil doers'.[125]

Learned treatises such as the *History and fate of sacrilege* gave powerful expression to the idea that Henry VIII's assault on sacred space had repercussions which resonated across the generations. But, as we have seen, these concerns were also widespread, articulated in different ways and in different contexts: in the ghost stories and other 'pretty odd tales' about monastic property sustained by local tradition, in the anxiety of gentry families about the consequences of converting former religious houses, and in writings that sought to account for the problematic dynastic memory of England's most infamous Tudor king. The memory of the dissolution was also critical to attempts to make sense of the more recent past, and especially of the tumultuous and turbulent decades between the onset of civil war and the accession of Charles II. All of these aspects of the memory of the dissolution play up the religious rupture engendered by the dissolution, not by rehabilitating monasticism but rather by questioning the transformation of sacred spaces into secular and domestic properties. They reflect the multifaceted nature of the Protestant memory of the dissolution and the reciprocal nature of local and learned traditions. It is in this wider context that we must view interventions such as Spelman's famous discourse on sacrilege and in which we can finally make sense of contemporary attempts to remember and forget the dissolution of the monasteries.

Abraham de la Pryme and the Exposure of the Henrician Regime

Abraham de la Pryme was born in Hatfield in the East Riding of Yorkshire in 1671, almost a century and a half after the dissolution had taken place. The descendant of Huguenot immigrants from Ypres who had arrived in England to take part in the great drainage projects led by Dutch engineers in the early part of the seventeenth century, he did not possess a family memory of the dissolution. Yet the consequences of the dissolution touched upon his life: after learning that some of his property in Hatfield had once belonged to a religious house, such was

[124] Robert South, *Twelve sermons preached upon several occasions* (London, 1692), pp. 338-9.
[125] Spelman, *History and fate of sacrilege*, title page.

de la Pryme's distress that he made over the land to the parish.[126] Haunted by the spectre of sacrilege and anxiety about the misappropriation of ecclesiastical wealth, he returned repeatedly in his writings to the suppression and its long afterlives. The travel diary that he kept throughout the 1690s and the historical and topographical manuscripts that were products of his detailed research into the history of Hatfield and Kingston upon Hull, where he was appointed curate and reader at Holy Trinity Church in 1698, encapsulate many of the themes explored in this and previous chapters. His work was also a conduit of the local traditions which he had inherited from previous generations and which shaped and coloured the narrative of dissolution contained therein. His writing reveals not only the limits of the Henrician regime's ability to manage the long-term legacies of its actions in 1536-40, but also offers a striking example of how these earlier memory-making practices had begun – finally, if only just – to be exposed.

De la Pryme was keenly conscious of the long consequences of the misuse of sacred space. 'Considering the havock that was made of all sacred things in the days of the Reformation', he wrote, 'it is a mercy and a particular and great providence of God that we have what we have'.[127] Providence, as de la Pryme knew only too well, could punish as well as preserve. For the sin of sacrilege, he believed, 'the Curse of God [had] eaten out & Ruin'd almost all the Receivers & possessors' of the monasteries 'long before this day'.[128] His travels uncovered numerous examples of such misfortune, bequeathed to him by local memory and tradition. At Low Melwood, Lincolnshire, in 1698, he viewed a house fashioned out of the fabric of what had once been a 'most fine and stately priory'. 'It is a very unfortunate place', he lamented, 'as common all religious places have been to the sacrilegious and wicked devourers and raptors of the same'. For this reason, 'no family [had] as yet possessed [Low Melwood] one hundred years together'.[129] De la Pryme's notes contain many other tales of this kind, including another tale of a catastrophic fire that had consumed the 'abbey-house, as they called it' at Holderness in the East Riding of Yorkshire, killing its inhabitants and destroying 'all the corn stacks and buildings about it'.[130] Most of these stories he learnt from local people in the places that he visited and he was, as Adam Fox has argued, a 'great collector of local traditions'.[131] But the limits of popular memory were also readily apparent to de la Pryme: 'I went to see Kettelby', he wrote in April 1694, 'but I found that it had never been a religious house, as I had been informed, but only a

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[126] C. E. A. Cheesman, 'Pryme, Abraham (1671–1704)', *ODNB* [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22852, accessed 9 Aug 2017].
[127] Abraham de la Pryme, *The diary of Abraham de la Pryme, the Yorkshire antiquary*, ed. Charles Jackson, Surtees Society 54 (1870), p. 226.
[128] BL, Lansdowne MS 890, fol. 40v.
[129] De la Pryme, *Diary*, p. 174.
[130] Ibid., p. 154.
[131] Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture,* p. 222.

gentleman's hall'.[132] Such was the prevalence of cautionary tales about the conversion of monastic properties, perhaps, that the popular historical imagination saw ruins in the skeletons of country houses whether or not there was strong evidence of monastic origins.

It is also clear that the dissolution had profoundly shaped de la Pryme's sense of time and his perception of the English Reformation. The history that he penned of his hometown of Hatfield digressed into a lengthy treatise about the suppression, which he viewed as the harbinger of the entire Reformation. English Protestantism had 'fortuitously layd its Chief foundations', he wrote, 'while the King & his Papists were carrying on the most Sacrilegous Business that the world ever beheld'. If he remembered the dissolution as Henry VIII's principal legacy, he also regretted that the suppression had become near-synonymous with Henry's Reformation. It was an irony, he thought, that God had 'Wrought and Establish'd a Reformation by & through the Means of the very Papists themselves'.[133] He wished that the king had only reformed monastic abuses – as he had claimed to be doing in 1536 – and allowed the Church to retain the wealth of the monasteries:

> If he had but done these or such like Lawfull things which are no committing of Sacriledge, nor no destruction of Holy things, then would every thing have been done honourably, then would his Praises have been sung in all the Congregations of the Saints, & his memory would have smelld like pretious Ointment unto the world's End.[134]

But this was not to be Henry VIII's afterlife, at least for de la Pryme. Not only had the king committed the heinous crime of sacrilege, he had done so under false pretences. De la Pryme described the dissolution as a 'plot' that was 'so strongly layd against all Religious Places, Monastryes, Prioryes, Nunnerys, Colledges, Hospitals, &c, that in a little time they were all most barbarously & Wickedly destroyd'.[135] In other words, by accusing the religious orders of being fraudulent and corrupt, crown and government had themselves been guilty of fraud and corruption. The ongoing conspiracy theory of the dissolution had been uncovered.

De la Pryme's chronicle of the dissolution, contained within the history of Kingston upon Hull, thus unpicked the polemical campaign against the monasteries of which so many earlier texts and traditions had been the products:

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[132] De la Pryme, *Diary*, p. 90.
[133] BL, Lansdowne MS 897, fol. 122r.
[134] Ibid., fol. 123r.
[135] Ibid., fol. 115r.

> In [1536]… came on the great and wonderfull Dissolution of All the Lesser Monastrys, Nunnerys, and Priorys, which was not Occasioned by… the Superstitions that they held, nor for the Evill lives that they led, for most of that which was laid to their chargers upon the last head was all Lyes, fictions, & Inventions of the Inquisitors to Ruin them, itt being Notoriously Known that them villains where Ever they came hired people to swear any thing against them, even the most horrid Crimes that ever were… The Real truth of the Matter and the real cause of their Ruin was their being Rich & the King poor, they frugall and the Monstrous prodigall in every Respect who disappearing of any Loans, Subsidys or Taxes took this way of Robbing of God & the whole Nation to enrich himself by.
>
> To bring all this the better about care was taken to Invent Storys of the Monks & Nunns of their being the most wicked, Atheistical, & Loudest creatures that ever were… Preachers were sent out all over the Nation to preach up the pretended Abominable lives of the Religious and to sett the vulgar as much against them as ever they could.[136]

The rhetoric of fraudulence and corruption once employed by the Henrician regime to condemn the religious was thus turned upon the regime itself. De la Pryme accused the king of inventing a fiction of monastic corruption to conceal the true motivations behind the dissolution. That is not to say that he was correct to reduce all reports of monastic misdemeanours to 'Lyes, fictions, & Inventions', but rather to recognise that the Henrician attempt to manage the memory of the dissolution was beginning to fail. Nor was de la Pryme the only antiquary to uncover the long memory of this deceit. His near contemporary, John Aubrey, encountered a curious narrative in the Surrey village of Ockham in connection with an apparently spurious tradition of a local nunnery:

> What propagated the current Opinion here, was, that (as the Clerk told me) his Father remember'd, to have gone into a Vault at Newarke Abbey, which, say the people, went under the River to a Nunnery here, by which the poor deluded people would insinuate Male Practices between the Monks and Nunes, a common Slander, thrown upon the Religious at the Time of the Reformation, when it was necessary for the Promoters of the Monastick Destruction, to alledge some specious Pretence to stop the Clamours of Mankind against their proceedings.[137]

Like de la Pryme, Aubrey thus inverted Henrician rhetoric with a view to exposing the memory-making practices employed by the crown and government in the 1530s. This passage also further underlines the generational process of remembering and forgetting the dissolution in local communities, and the centrality of the local landscape to particular narratives of the suppression and its long afterlives. Most importantly, it reveals the limits of the Henrician attempt to make and shape memory. We began in chapter one by exploring how the king and his

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[136] BL, Lansdowne MS 890, fol. 39r-v.
[137] Aubrey, *Perambulation of Surrey*, iii, pp. 245-6.

agents attempted to dictate the legacies of the dissolution. We close here with the exposure and denunciation of those memory-making practices.

Conclusion: Remembering and Forgetting the Dissolution of the Monasteries

Throughout the foregoing chapters, we have explored the long consequences of the Henrician culture of strategic amnesia which, despite the attempts of a few antiquaries to expose the government's memory-making practices, proved remarkably enduring across the early modern period. This thesis has suggested that archival silences of various kinds can be both meaningful and textured, revealing something about the problematic nature of the memory of the suppression for certain groups. By way of a final comment on local memory, it is interesting to consider how this impulse to forget could also influence local and especially familial memory cultures. It is striking, but not especially surprising, that the voices of the gentry and nobility who occupied monastic properties were largely absent from the public debate about sacrilege. Local communities and authors of sacrilege narratives alike told stories *about* the occupiers of monastic property, but few such occupiers told these stories about themselves. When they did, it was with a tone of shame and regret that further underlines the desirability of forgetting the dissolution in these gentry communities.

A short but highly unusual narrative, possibly uncovered by William Dugdale in the course of his antiquarian research into the monasteries, suggests that some gentry families had failed fully to bury the uncomfortable memory of their actions in the 1530s. A short note dated July 1652 relates an exchange between Lord Brudenell, probably Thomas Brudenell, first earl of Cardigan, and Sir William Stanley which had taken place some thirty years before the earl revealed it to the anonymous author of the note. Brudenell recalled that the conversation began with Stanley's enquiry about Sir Henry Cromwell, father of Oliver Cromwell, and owner of the former nunnery at Hinchingbrooke in Huntingdonshire. Upon hearing that the elder Cromwell was dead, Stanley related a tale he had heard some years previously from Sir William Dorver, a courtier to Henry VIII, who described how Sir Richard Cromwell, brother-in-law of Thomas Cromwell, 'much thirsted after' the 'most pleasant seate' at Hinchingbrooke. Richard Cromwell together with Dorver and 'divers young gentlemen' went 'to visit the Nunnes with a purpose to debauch them, and soe render them odious to the intent [that] he might accomplish his ends' of himself gaining the property. When the men were 'repulsed in their enterpryse with much scorne' by the nuns, who 'behav[ed] themselves with exceeding modesty and gravity', Cromwell and his friends 'gave it out that [the nuns] lived viciously, and were whores'. As a result of this fiction, Cromwell finally seized possession of the nunnery. Dorver told this tale 'with great

reluctancye and sorrow, apprehending his part to the very soule, which he much repented of'.[138] Dorver's reluctance in divulging this information is not surprising, but his example suggests that many other families may have been wracked by a similar guilt. Perhaps more significantly, it also reveals that some families were eventually forced to confront their part in enacting and perpetuating Henry VIII's account of the dissolution.

Yet, as we have seen, on both the local and the national stage, successive generations of Protestants also contested and re-shaped the legacies that the Henrician regime had attempted to consolidate in the 1530s. This chapter has argued that the dissolution of the monasteries engendered a diverse range of local traditions that kept alive memories of both medieval monasticism and Reformation iconoclasm. The local memory of the dissolution offers a case study of Alexandra Walsham's contention that this amorphous body of tradition was 'not a fossil so much as a living tissue' that evolved across early modern period and beyond.[139]

A few examples, in addition to the evidence discussed above, will suffice to suggest that the afterlives of the dissolution endured well beyond 1700. In 1717, John Thomlinson, curate of Rothbury, Northumberland, recorded in his diary a conversation with his uncle where they discussed how fire had swept through the neighbourhood, where 'most of the houses [were] built out of an abbey' and which 'some think a judgement'. His own family, he lamented, had once owned property believed to be constructed with 'many stones' originally from the abbey.[140] Whilst in Glastonbury, the eighteenth-century antiquary William Stukeley witnessed a presbyterian attempting to sell stone from the old abbey. Stukeley recorded that few were willing to buy from him, 'thinking an unlucky fate attends the family where these materials are used', as proven by 'many stores and particular instances' of such punishment in local tradition. Even those who were 'but half religious', according to Stukeley, were willing only to build 'stables and out-houses' from the abbey stone and 'by no means any part of the dwelling house'.[141] In the 1750s, Richard Pococke, bishop of Ossory, had also visited Glastonbury, where he wrote that 'the people here seem to have learnt by tradition to lament the loss of support they had from this abbey, and affirm no one ever prospered who took the stones of it away, out of disrespect, to build, or for any other uses'.[142] Pococke thus confirmed that the legacies of the

[138] Bodl., MS Eng. Hist. c 485, fol. 100. The note is pasted into the back of a copy of John Speed's 'Catalogue of Religious Houses' thought to be from Dugdale's collection.
[139] Walsham, *Reformation of the Landscape*, p. 554.
[140] John Crawford Hodgson (ed.), *Six North Country Diaries*, Surtees Society 118 (1910), p. 76.
[141] William Stukeley, *Itinerarium curiosum* (London, 1776), p. 152.
[142] James Joel Cartwright (ed.), *The Travels Through England of Dr Richard Pocoke, successively bishop of Meath and of Ossory during 1750, 1751, and later years,* Camden Society, new series, 42 (London, 1888), pp. 148-9.

dissolution were many and multifaceted, incorporating both a sense of socio-economic decline and profound religious anxieties about sacrilege and iconoclasm.

Many of these traditions eventually fed into a folklore of the dissolution, fostered through the long endurance of oral and local memory cultures *and* in the texts which, as we have seen, preserved many of them for posterity. Stories about secret passages built by nuns and monks co-existed with those about the providential punishments meted out to those who engaged in sacrilege.[143] Aspects of the Henrician vision of the suppression thus survived the attempts of successive generations of Protestants to re-shape the memory of this turbulent and controversial episode, although not entirely intact. If historians once tended to neglect the evidence of folklore, it may be partly because the idea of 'tradition' continued to become increasingly entangled in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with 'the superstitions and monkery of olden time'.[144] The historiographical tendency to overlook this evidence may, then, be yet another long-term consequence of the dissolution itself.[145]

We should not, however, assume that local memory could not survive in this context or that it was eclipsed by national narratives of suppression. Indeed, thinking in terms of local 'tradition' has helped us to avoid resorting to the dichotomies and polarities that have long coloured the historiography of early modern historical culture. Although the work of Adam Fox, Daniel Woolf, and others has emphasised the mutually reinforcing relationship between oral and literate forms of communication, it has also, perhaps inevitably, to some extent perpetuated distinctions between popular and learned, local and national historical consciousness. In particular, Woolf has suggested that local cultures of memory were eclipsed by national – and textual – memory cultures in the later seventeenth century.[146] Andy Wood's study of customary memory reacts against this narrative of decline, yet self-consciously uses the term 'popular' to describe his account of the traditions he uncovers in legal records.

This chapter has drawn upon a wide-ranging body of material to suggest that local traditions about the dissolution were enduring and vibrant. Local memory also fed into the wider memory cultures that shaped learned sacrilege narratives, including Spelman's *History and fate of sacrilege*, and antiquarian histories, including de la Pryme's work on the towns of Hatfield and

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[143] On the folklore of the dissolution see esp. Theo Brown, 'Some examples of post-Reformation folklore in Devon', *Folklore* 72 (1961), pp. 392-4; eadem, *The Fate of the Dead: A Study in Folk-Eschatology in the West Country after the Reformation* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979), pp. 19, 41. On the character of folklore more generally see esp. Walsham, 'Reformed folklore?'; Woolf, 'Common voice'.
[144] William Hone (1780-842) quoted in Richard M. Dorson, *The British Folklorists: A History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 39.
[145] On this tendency see Hutton, 'Evidence of folklore', esp. pp. 91-3.
[146] Woolf, *Social Circulation of the Past*, pp. 13-15, 320, 351, 390 and passim.

Kingston-upon-Hull. It is unhelpful, then, to draw sharp distinctions between local and national, popular and learned cultures of memory. By bringing together a variety of genres, including legal, local historical, and topographical antiquarian writing, it has been possible to gain a clearer picture of how knowledge about medieval monasticism, the dissolution, and the Protestant Reformation was communicated and circulated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, it is only in the context of cultural memory that we can fully appreciate both the longevity and the limits of the culture of selective amnesia promoted by the Henrician regime in the 1530s. If the suppression of the monasteries was originally conceived as a mechanism for forgetting the monastic past, by 1700 it was clear that contemporaries remembered this moment as one of the most controversial and important episodes in the English Reformation.

Epilogue and Conclusion

Memory Events and Memory Crises: The Dissolution of the Monasteries and the English Reformation

The story of the dissolution of the monasteries has sometimes been told as a story about books and manuscripts. When the religious houses were suppressed, their libraries and archives were dispersed or destroyed. As a result, the locus of record-keeping and memory-making was transferred out of the monastic realm and into the hands of a new generation of post-Reformation polemicists, historians, and antiquaries. Throughout this thesis, we have explored the consequences of this transformation, tracing how the religious orders – once the primary custodians of medieval memory and history – came to be rendered victims of their own memory-making practices. The fate of monastic collections also had a direct bearing on this process. This is perhaps the only one of the myriad afterlives of the dissolution to have received sustained historiographical attention and there is now a substantial literature dealing with the dispersal and destruction of the textual patrimony of medieval England.[1] The loss of books and manuscripts has been an especially prominent theme in this scholarship, a concern that historians and literary scholars have inherited from previous generations of early modern antiquaries.[2] Precisely because it engendered the destruction of so many medieval records, the suppression has continued to shape how subsequent generations have approached and accessed the remnants of the monastic past.

Early modern responses to the dissolution of monastic libraries encapsulate many of the themes examined in the foregoing chapters, including the prevalence of a rhetoric of reformation and monastic corruption, the conflicting impulses in Protestant memory to remember and forget the dissolution, and the potential of the suppression to be creative as well as destructive. A brief examination of the long afterlives of the destruction and dispersal of libraries also returns us, finally, to problems of selective memory, strategic amnesia, and the nature of the historical

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[1] See C. E. Wright, 'The dispersal of the libraries in the sixteenth century', in Francis Wormald and C. E. Wright (eds.), *The English Library before 1700: Studies in its History* (London: University of London, the Athlone Press, 1958); Ronald Harold Fritze, '"Truth hath lacked witnesse, tyme wanted light": the dispersal of the English monastic libraries and Protestant efforts at preservation, ca. 1535-1625', *Journal of Library History* 18 (1983), pp. 274-291; James P. Carley, 'Monastic collections and their dispersal' in John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (eds.), with the assistance of Maureen Bell, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain: Volume IV, 1577-1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 339-47; idem, 'The dispersal of the monastic libraries and the salvaging of the spoils', in Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland: Volume 1, to 1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 265-91; Nigel Ramsay, '"The manuscripts flew about like butterflies": the break-up of English libraries in the sixteenth century', in James Raven (ed.), *Lost Libraries: The Destruction of Great Book Collections since Antiquity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 125-44.

[2] For perhaps still the best attempt to survey those books and manuscripts that survive see Neil R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1941).

record. The crisis of material and textual memory engendered by the dissolution not only helped to transform post-Reformation archival practices; it has also served to shape and inflect modern scholarship on the early modern period.

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In the early 1530s, before the Henrician government embarked upon the dissolution of the monasteries, the antiquary John Leland had envisaged his own reformation of the religious houses – or, rather, of their libraries. Leland, as we saw in chapter three, had travelled the length and breadth of the country with the intent to bring monastic collections 'out of deadly darkeness to lyvelye lyght'.[3] He viewed this process of illumination as one of revelation, which served to expose 'all maner of superstycyon, and crafty coloured doctryne of a rowte of Romayne Byshoppes' in the documents he surveyed.[4] He sought, in other words, to reform English history. Leland was thwarted, of course, by Henry VIII's more violent approach to reforming the monasteries. Most of the commissioners and their agents were, at best, careless with monastic books and, at worst, treated them with the same outrage with which they approached idols like the Rood of Boxley. This also contributed to the potent culture of amnesia we have identified in the 1530s – amounting quite literally to the erasure and destruction of the monastic past.

The wanton destruction of libraries left antiquaries like Leland in a difficult position. In the published version of the 'New Year's Gift' that he had prepared for Henry VIII, approval for the eradication of monastic corruption fought horror at the fate of the monastic collections:

> To destroye all [books and manuscripts] without consyderacyon, is and wyll be unto Englande for ever, a most horryble infamy… A great nombre of them whych purchased those superstycyouse mansyons, reserved of those lybrarye bokes, some to serve theyr inkes, some to scour theyr candelstyckes, & some to rubbe their bootes. Some they sold to the grossers and sope sellers, & some they sent over see to the bokebynders, not in small nombre, but at tymes whole shyppes full, to the wonderynge of the foren nacyons.[5]

Appearing in 1549, these are not the words of Leland himself, but those of his friend and self-appointed successor John Bale, who has also made frequent appearances throughout this thesis. In Bale's hands, Leland's original commission was fully subsumed into the project of dissolution;

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[3] *The laboryouse journey & serche of Johan Leylande, for Englandes antiquities, geven of hym as a newe yeares gyfte to kynge Henry the viij. in the. xxxvii. yeare of his reygne, with declaracyons by Johan Bale* (London, 1549), sig. B8r.
[4] Ibid., sig. Cr.
[5] Ibid., sig. Br.

he claimed that Leland had been entrusted with a mission to 'serche and peruse the Libraries of [the] realme in monasteries, conventes, and colleges, before their utter destruccyon, whyche God then appoynted for their wyckednesse sake'.[6] But Bale also mourned the consequences of this 'utter destruction': 'I must confess [the monasteries] most justly suppressed', he wrote, and yet he could 'scarsely utter… wythout teares' how the 'worthy workes of men godly mynded, and lyvelye memoryalles of our nacyon' had perished 'wyth those laysy lubbers and popyshe bellygoddes'.[7]

Before the emergence of the generation of preservationist antiquaries who lamented monastic ruins, there was thus a type of preservationist bibliophile who sought to recover books and manuscripts that were at risk of slipping entirely into oblivion. In this context, there also developed a strand of Protestant memory that recalled the dissolution as little more than a sack of libraries. Corresponding with Archbishop Matthew Parker in 1560, Bale thus remembered the 1530s as a 'tyme of the lamentable spoyle of the lybraryes of Englande' when 'there was no quyckar merchaundyce than lybrary bokes'.[8] Parker himself mourned the libraries destroyed 'of late Dayes'.[9] He also recognised the suppression as an assault on memory, recalling how the medieval monasteries had functioned as 'treasure houses, to kepe and leave in memorie such occurentes as fell in their times'.[10] In the wake of this break with the past, post-Reformation collectors began to compile new libraries and archives to replace those that had been so carelessly destroyed by the Henrician regime. Bale and Parker were both part of a wider network of antiquaries who sought to preserve what they could of the nation's textual patrimony, and their contacts also included those undertaking similar projects on the continent, including Matthias Flacius Illyricus, principal amongst the Magdeburg Centuriators.[11] Other prominent advocates of a national library in England included the antiquary and alchemist John Dee, who had made supplication to Mary I in 1556 for the creation of a new royal library. Dee

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[6] Ibid., sig. B8v.
[7] Ibid., sigs. A7v-A8r.
[8] Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Additional MS 7489. I am grateful to Kathryn James for alerting me to this manuscript and for discussing it with me.
[9] Matthew Parker, 'A preface into the Byble', in *The Holie Bible* (London, 1568), sig. 2r.
[10] CCCC, MS 114A, 12, p. 49. See also Grafton, 'Matthew Parker', esp. pp. 41-2.
[11] Norman L. Jones, 'Matthew Parker, John Bale, and the Magdeburg Centuriators', *SCJ* 12 (1981), pp. 35-49. On Bale's network see also Nicholas Popper, 'From abbey to archive: managing texts and records in early modern England', *Archival Science* 10 (2010), p. 253. See also above, ch. 2. On Parker's collecting practices see Benedict Scott Robinson, '"Darke speech": Matthew Parker and the reforming of history', *SCJ* 29 (1998), pp. 1061-83; Timothy Graham, 'Matthew Parker's manuscripts: an Elizabethan library and its uses', in Leedham-Green and Webber (eds.), *Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, pp. 322-42; Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago, IL, and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), ch. 4; Anthony Grafton, 'Matthew Parker: the book as archive', *History of Humanities* 2 (2017), pp. 15-50; Alexandra Walsham, 'Matthew Parker, sacred geography, and the British past', in Anthony Grafton, Scott Mandelbrote, and Bill Sherman (eds.), *Matthew Parker: Archbishop, Scholar and Collector* (forthcoming). See also Anthony Grafton, 'Writing and reading history in Renaissance England: some Cambridge examples', Sandars Lectures, University of Cambridge, 2015-16 [https://sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/2167093, accessed 5 December 2017].

too lamented the disastrous consequences of the dissolution for books and manuscripts and he begged the queen to:

> Have in remembrance, how that, among the exceeding many most lamentable displeasures, that have of late happened unto this realm, through the subverting of religious houses… it hath been, and for ever, among all learned students, shall be judged, not for the least calamity, the spoile and destruction of so many and so notable libraries.[12]

No such national collection was established under Mary, although Dee did amass a substantial personal library of medieval books.[13] So too did Parker, who bequeathed his own extensive collection of books and manuscripts to his Cambridge college, Corpus Christi, in 1574.[14]

These efforts also coincided and coalesced with the continuing efforts of the reformers to write monastic corruption out of English history. Preservation was an act of reformation. The Parker circle edited, annotated, and re-organised the material it gathered; Bale desired that the old medieval chronicles be re-written for the post-Reformation age and 'set forth… in theyr ryght shappe'.[15] As Jennifer Summit has so powerfully argued, their libraries and collections were, therefore, products of the Reformation. They were designed and arranged with an eye to the formation of a state-sponsored national identity, and they endorsed and reinforced the legitimacy of the Royal Supremacy and religious reform. In this way, Summit argues, collectors 'actively processed, shaped, and imposed meaning on the very materials they contained'.[16] The dissolution, as we have seen, was at the root of this transformation.

In the same way that the wider afterlives of the dissolution continued to evolve across the early modern period, the reconfiguration of archival memory also spanned the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The project to re-shape the past was sustained into the seventeenth century by the prolific collector, Sir Robert Cotton.[17] As a second-generation Reformation

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[12] John Dee, 'A supplication to Q. Mary, by John Dee, for the recovery and preservation of ancient writers and monuments', in *Autobiographical Tracts of Dr John Dee*, ed. James Crossley (London: The Chetham Society, 1851), p. 46. The original, which was damaged in the Ashburnham House fire of 1731, is preserved in BL, Cotton MS Vitellius C VII, fol. 310r.
[13] On Dee see William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).
[14] See also R. I. Page, *Matthew Parker and His Books*, Sandars Lectures, University of Cambridge (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1993).
[15] John Bale, *A brefe chronycle concernynge the examinacyon and death of the blessed martyr of Christ, Sir Johan Oldecastell, the lorde Cobham, collected togyther by Johan Bale* ([Antwerp], 1544), sig. A5v.
[16] Ibid., pp. 3, 15, and passim. See also Eric Ketelaar, 'Muniments and monuments: the dawn of archives as cultural patrimony', *Archival Science* 7 (2007), pp. 343-57. On early modern archives more generally see Liesbeth Corens, Kate Peters, and Alexandra Walsham (eds.), *The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe*, P&P Supplement 11 (2016).
[17] On Cotton see Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586-1681: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Colin G. C. Tite, *The Manuscript Library of Sir Robert Cotton*

collector, Cotton acquired his books not directly from the monastic libraries but rather from other collectors; practices of organisation more than selection determined how his library was read and used – including by many of the figures we have encountered in the course of this thesis, such as William Camden.[18] The Cottonian library preserved medieval and monastic manuscripts alongside the records of Reformation. Cotton thus created the archival equivalent of 'a multipart chronicle of English Reformation history, told through original sources'.[19] Changes in historical culture and record-keeping engendered by the Reformation thus came to inform and shape how new generations of scholars approached its history.

Among Cotton's sources were a substantial number of papers relating to the dissolution and much of the extant correspondence of the commissioners,[20] as well as a number of documents which served to perpetuate the Henrician vision of the dissolution, including 'The dissolving of the abbeys by K. H. 8.'[21] We are confronted, then, with the paradox that the very archives and collections that we conventionally use to illuminate the process of dissolution in the 1530s were also themselves products of the dissolution of monastic libraries and practices of collecting engendered by the Reformation. These libraries and archives were – and are – sites of memory. Thus Summit argues that in the process of preserving and organising these materials anew, collectors including both Parker and Cotton '[transformed] medieval manuscripts into archival sources' and thus '[prepared] the ground for academic literacies of the present day'.[22] In constructing their libraries in a particular way, these early modern archivists also taught readers – contemporaries and historians alike – how to approach sources; 'in preserving the medieval past, the libraries of post-Reformation England also remade it into a body of evidence'.[23]

We might also think about other collections of material pertaining to the suppression in the same way. As we saw in the first chapter, the documents preserved in the State Papers (SP 5) as well as those bound in the Cotton manuscripts (Cleopatra E IV) present a very particular vision of the dissolution. These archives are not neutral. Rather they have served to perpetuate ideas about monastic corruption and the expediency of suppression and to reinforce the culture of selective amnesia fostered by Henry VIII. By focusing narrowly upon the origins and progress of the suppression in the 1530s and its immediate aftermath, historians have restricted not only

(London: The British Library, 1994); idem, *The Early Records of Sir Robert Cotton's Library: Formation, Cataloguing, Use* (London: The British Library, 2003); Summit, *Memory's Library*, ch. 3.
[18] Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 137.
[19] Ibid., p. 149.
[20] BL, Cotton MS Cleopatra E IV.
[21] See above, chs. 1 and 2.
[22] Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 7.
[23] Ibid., p. 15.

the chronological parameters of what was, as we have seen, a highly complex and protracted process of dissolution, but also the evidential basis upon which their accounts rest. This has rendered previous scholarship vulnerable to Henrician attempts to shape the memory and legacies of the suppression of the monasteries, as well as to the practices of successive generations of post-Reformation librarians and collectors.

By examining the long afterlives of the dissolution, as opposed to its origins, course, and immediate consequences, this thesis has revealed how contemporary processes of remembering and forgetting the suppression have long informed and coloured modern historiography. Only by looking beyond 1540 – and past the evidence produced by and for the Henrician regime – has it been possible to recover the varied legacies of this highly controversial and contested episode in English history and the English Reformation. It is, finally, to the wider implications of these processes of memory-making that we now turn.

* * *

The dissolution of the monasteries profoundly and irrevocably changed how people in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries viewed their past and their present. Processes of remembering and forgetting the suppression helped to shape contemporary senses of time, space, and the English Reformation, and ensured that its diverse and contested afterlives were long-lived in national historical consciousness and local memory. This project has sought to reveal the complexity of this memory culture, which it has characterised as multivalent, polyvocal, and constantly evolving**.** We began by suggesting that the dissolution gave rise not to a culture of celebration or commemoration but to a potent culture of selective amnesia. Subsequent chapters have revealed the limits of this exercise in re-shaping the past, as well as the different ways in which successive generations recalled this controversial episode. This thesis has argued that memory is not simply a tool with the potential to shed fresh light on the dissolution, it is also essential to our understanding of this episode. The suppression was a memory event – or perhaps, more accurately, an amnesia event – which functioned to sever ties with the monastic past and to forge perceptions of that past anew. From the crisis of memory engendered by the initial rupture with medieval monasticism in the 1530s to the evolution in the late seventeenth century of the Dissolution of the Monasteries as a critical watershed, our understanding of the suppression has also been coloured and inflected by the ways in which previous generations have remembered – or tried to forget – this break between past and present.

This has important implications for historians of the English Reformation. Recent scholarship has sought to refine our appreciation of the role played by the dissolution in the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century by looking backwards to its precedents in the late medieval and early Tudor period and by attempting to rehabilitate the monastic orders from Henrician claims about their endemic corruption.[24] This thesis has suggested that looking forwards to the memory of the dissolution in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries partially accounts for the success of these endeavours, revealing how an earlier generation of historians had been the victims of Tudor polemic and historiography. More importantly, it has also sought to rescue the dissolution from this enduringly pessimistic vision of its significance in post-Reformation England. As we have seen, the deeply controversial character of this rupture kept its memory alive in the two centuries after 1540, as successive generations of Protestants were forced to confront the consequences, the triumphs and the failures, of the Henrician assault on the medieval past. Historians of the English Reformation might, therefore, benefit from paying greater attention to the dissolution of the monasteries and its resonance in the ongoing religious debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The themes explored in this thesis could also, of course, be traced further into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To some extent, we have seen how Henrician ideas about monastic corruption continued to be propagated in this later period, including by authors and editors like Thomas Wright, who produced the Camden Society's edition of the visitation correspondence. Wright, as we saw in chapter one, believed that he was leaving these letters to 'tell their own story' and yet proceeded to yoke the dissolution to narratives of progress and the 'blessing conferred by Providence upon this country' by the Reformation.[25] These developments too have had a bearing on modern scholarship. To take another example, the 'nostalgia' for the past identified – and critiqued – in chapter three arguably reached its peak only after 1700 with the emergence of the Romantic and Picturesque impulses in British art and the Gothic style in English literature.[26] We have traced the origins of these processes in seventeenth-century

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[24] For studies that re-assess the dissolution by seeking precedents, see R. W. Hoyle, 'The origins of the dissolution of the monasteries', *Historical Journal* 28 (1995), pp. 275-305; Deirdre O'Sullivan, 'The "little dissolution" of the 1520s', *Post-Medieval Archaeology* 40 (2006), pp. 227-258. For attempts to rehabilitate late medieval monasticism see G. W. Bernard, *The Late Medieval English Church: Vitality and Vulnerability Before the Break with Rome* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2012); James G. Clark, *The Benedictines in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011); Martin Heale, *Monasticism in Late Medieval England, c.1300-1535* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

[25] Thomas Wright (ed.), *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Dissolution of the Monasteries,* Camden Society, old series, 26 (London, 1843), pp. v-vi.

[26] On these themes and the legacies of the dissolution see for example Rose Macaulay, *Pleasure of Ruins* (New York, NY: Walker & Company, 1953); Malcolm Andrews, *In Search of the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989); Anne Janowitz, *England's Ruins: Poetic Purpose and the National Landscape* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Alison Shell, *Oral Culture and Catholicism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

antiquarianism but it is also important to recognise how these subsequent paradigms have continued to reinforce the historiographical dominance of monastic ruins and a sense of nostalgia for a lost and vanquished past.

We might also benefit from placing the Henrician dissolution in comparative perspective. This project has suggested that the event we now know as the Dissolution of the Monasteries was the product of a distinctively English Protestant memory culture. Yet the phenomenon of suppressing monasteries was common across early modern Europe, where widespread anticlerical sentiments fostered waves of iconoclastic violence, amongst the primary targets of which were abbeys, convents, and friaries. Like the English Reformation, the Scandinavian Reformations were marked by state-sponsored assaults on religious houses, especially in Denmark and Norway where the impulse for evangelical reform took hold more quickly than in Sweden and Finland.[27] In cities such as Strasbourg and Zurich, iconoclastic attacks on monasteries were generally instigated by local people rather than the state,[28] and in Germany, where the process was somewhat less violent, the monasteries were never officially dissolved but 'simply faded away by attrition'.[29] The Henrician government itself also attempted a suppression in Ireland, over which it claimed sovereignty, and to promote another dissolution in Scotland, although both of these endeavours enjoyed limited success.[30] In all of these places, as well as in the Low Countries, the physical destruction of religious houses was complemented by the development of a political and print culture which propagated anti-monastic polemic.[31] The interests of the Henrician regime in forgetting certain aspects of the English dissolution perhaps renders this a particularly good case study of attempts to shape the memory of the monastic past. But undoubtedly this process had parallels in other places and other Reformations.

2007), ch. 1; Roger E. Moore, *Jane Austen and the Reformation: Remembering the Sacred Landscape* (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2016).

[27] Ole Peter Grell, 'The Catholic church and its leadership', in Ole Peter Grell (ed.), *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 70-113. On iconoclasm in the English Reformation see Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts: Volume 1: Laws Against Images* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); eadem, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[28] Lee Palmer Wandel, *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 128, 167-8.

[29] Christopher Ocker, *Church Robbers and Reformers in Germany, 1525-1547: Confiscation of Religious Purpose in the Holy Roman Empire* (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), p. 11.

[30] On Ireland see Brendan Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of Religious Orders in Ireland under Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Henry A. Jefferies, *The Irish Church and the Tudor Reformations* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), ch. 4. On Scotland see Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 16, 63.

[31] Alistair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London and Ronceverte: Hambledon Press, 1990), pp. 9-10, 35. See also Sophie Murray, 'Dissolving into laughter: anti-monastic satire in the reign of Henry VIII', in Mark Knights and Adam Morton (eds.), *The Power of Laughter and Satire in Early Modern Britain* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2017), pp. 27-47.

If memory can function as a tool to illuminate processes of dissolution and Reformation, this study of the Henrician dissolution has the potential, in turn, to open a window onto wider questions and problems in the study of memory in the early modern period. Firstly, it invites us to reconsider the role of religious change in shaping the historical culture of early modern England. The dissolution has offered a case study of a Reformation event that reconfigured contemporary perceptions of the past. We saw in chapter two how the suppression was critical in shaping contemporary senses of time and chronology. In chapter four, we explored how the fall of the monasteries also served to foster local traditions about the past that were closely connected to anxieties about sacrilege and the sacredness of former monastic sites. This thesis has therefore questioned previous accounts of the 'social circulation of the past' in which religion has tended to be overlooked.[32] Rather it has argued that the suppression – and by extension the Reformation – was central to the changing historical culture of early modern England. The dissolution, in other words, offers us a powerful example of how wider processes of religious change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 'precipitated significant shifts in the mental and cultural environment within which people perceived, investigated, and interpreted the past'.[33] It demands that we take seriously the impact of the Reformation on how contemporaries perceived the past, as well as its role in shaping how that past was recorded and archived.

A second and related issue, and one which we have considered at various points throughout this thesis, is therefore the question of the relationship between contemporary memory-making practices and modern historiography. The foregoing chapters have revealed that our vision of the dissolution is impoverished if we focus too closely on the material produced by and for the government in the 1530s. Drawing upon the work of Jennifer Summit, this thesis has underlined how the conventional archives we use to illuminate the dissolution are not neutral repositories but rather products of attempts to shape memory.[34] This also forces us to confront the fundamental irony that this landmark Reformation event, which had become virtually synonymous with the Henrician Reformation by the mid-seventeenth century, was an episode that Henry VIII and his agents would rather have forgotten – or, at least, an episode that they wanted only selectively to remember. As we saw in chapters one and two, for most people who lived through the 1530s, there was no Dissolution of the Monasteries. Rather, we have inherited this vocabulary from the late seventeenth-century critics of Henrician religious policy. The emergence of the idea of 'Dissolution' thus offers a parallel to recent studies of the evolution of

[32] See especially D. R. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500-1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and above chs. 2, 4.
[33] Alexandra Walsham, 'History, memory, and the English Reformation', *Historical Journal* 55 (2012), p. 936.
[34] Summit, *Memory's Library*, esp. chs. 3, 4.

the terms 'Protestant' and 'Reformation'.[35] This is a problematic legacy for historians to manage and also serves as a reminder that we remain the partial prisoners of processes of remembering and forgetting that shifted with the passing of the generations and evolved in the changing contexts in which information about the past was recalled and transmitted. The sources we use to illuminate the dissolution have the potential to reveal how it was remembered, but they are also part of the problem, artefacts of particular moments and of the very process of memory-making itself.

This has a third and final implication for the prevailing models of periodisation which continue to shape the field of early modern history. The Reformation has long been considered a major turning point in English history. This thesis has suggested that the dissolution of the monasteries played a critical role in demarcating the medieval from the early modern. It has argued that the suppression was an assault on the memory of the medieval past, with which it engendered a physical, institutional, and symbolic break. In chapter two, we explored how this rupture shaped contemporary senses of time and chronology, and in chapter three we noted the emergence of an idea of 'abbey time'. At the same time, the dissolution also served to reconfigure the record-keeping practices which created the collections that provide historians with our main point of access to the history of the Reformation. In other disciplines, the suppression has also been credited with a crucial role in the formation of the English literary canon,[36] as well as being the stimulus for an 'archival revolution'.[37] The suppression is, then, at least partly at the root of enduring models that shape the way we still think about the early modern period. The dissolution of the monasteries not only helped to shape contemporary historical consciousness, it also had profound and important consequences for the historical record upon which we continue to rely.

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[35] On the term 'Protestant' see Peter Marshall, 'The naming of Protestant England', *P&P* 214 (2012), p. 91. On 'Reformation' see Walsham, 'History, memory, and the English Reformation', p. 920.

[36] Trevor Ross, 'Dissolution and the making of the English literary canon: the catalogues of Leland and Bale', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, new series, 15 (1991), pp. 57a-80. See also James Simpson, 'Ageism: Leland, Bale, and the laborious start of English literary history, 1350-1550', in Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (eds.), *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997), pp. 213-35; Jennifer Summit, 'Monuments and ruins: Spenser and the problem of the English library', *ELH* 70 (2003), pp. 1-34.

[37] Vanessa Harding, 'Monastic records and the dissolution: a Tudor revolution in the archives?', *European History Quarterly* 46 (2016), pp. 480-98. See also Popper, 'From abbey to archive'.

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