

THE ECCENTRIC DOMAIN:
WORDSWORTH, THE LAKE DISTRICT
AND THE EARLY VICTORIAN INDUSTRIAL NOVEL

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ABSTRACT

The first half of the 19th century saw the emergence of the world's first modern industrial nation, and the transformation of England from a rural and agrarian to an urban and industrial economy. These changes were accompanied by an alteration in the relations between the artist and society. Artistic activity of all kinds comes to be regarded as apart from, and fundamentally opposed to, the material and spiritual characteristics of the new order. The so-called Industrial Novels of the 1840s and '50s, along with some other closely related works, reflect this displacement of the artist from the central economic endeavour of the nation, offering ideologically cautious, but imaginatively highly charged statements of dissent from its perceived drift.

In thus orienting themselves the authors of these novels drew decisive inspiration from Wordsworth. His Lyrical Ballads Preface is an early and influential manifesto of political and cultural eccentricity, offering a provisional analysis of the disparate phenomena which constitute the centre, or metropolis, in English life. Many poems in the collection originate novel strategies for circumscribing its hegemony. This thesis aims to isolate Wordsworth's contribution to this field, and to trace his influence on three mid-19th-century novelists who address similar issues: Mrs Gaskell, Emily Bronte and Charles Dickens.

The Introduction begins by examining the critical reception of the Industrial Novels, and the wider question of Wordsworth's reception by the Victorians. It elaborates a spatial model of centrality and eccentricity applicable both to Wordsworth and to the novelists in question, pointing to the long historical tradition of dissent locating itself in geographic and economic margins. Finally, it focuses on the Lake District, by far the most culturally significant of these margins in the 19th century, recounting the stages whereby its bearing on the problems of the new urban-industrial society came to be widely acknowledged along lines first proposed by Wordsworth.

Chapter 1 looks first at Wordsworth's carefully crafted relationship with his society, and the extent to which, in situating himself in the Lake District, he was building on an eccentric focus already in existence. It examines the factors which induced him to adopt this stance, and the ways in which he sought to appropriate, and sustain imaginatively, his own "eccentric domain". In particular, it seeks to distinguish two contradictory trajectories - inward and outward - and

the manoeuvres to which each gives rise. It then looks closely at a number of shorter poems, illustrative of the variety of what I term "topographical strategies", which Wordsworth evolves in order both to defend this domain against incursions from an aggrandising centre, and to combat the centre on its own terrain. I end by looking briefly at certain factors - including his supposed apostasy - which complicate the Victorian reception of Wordsworth, and which go some way towards explaining the characteristically oblique homage of Dickens and Emily Brontë.

Mrs Gaskell, the subject of Chapter 2, represents a remarkably pure, if occasionally sentimental version of the Victorian Wordsworth, carrying his enterprise into the heart of the industrial city. In Mary Barton she elaborates on Wordsworthian hints of the transfiguring power of the imagination, to create in Alice Wilson a memorable characterisation of eccentric virtue, an alternative moral centre. By furnishing genealogies for her characters she maps out an underlying geography which subverts the symbolic and ideological centrality of Victorian Manchester.

Chapter 3 goes on to examine Wuthering Heights, which also has an underlying genealogical structure, and establishes the close kinship between its landscape and the Lake District. Emily Brontë memorably abstracts and intensifies the eccentric domain, internalising it (the familiar inward trajectory), but investing it with such energy that it acquires a quasi-revolutionary potential.

In spite of major differences of temperament and social affiliation, Dickens, the subject of Chapter 4, shares with Wordsworth an underlying hostility to the 'driven impetus' of his society. Thus the specifically metropolitan sources of his inspiration are properly interpreted as celebrations of eccentricity. He reproduces both the inward and outward trajectories embodied in Wordsworth's eccentric enterprise, but remains reluctant to acknowledge their provenance. The chapter concludes with an account of Hard Times, his most forthright engagement with the new industrial forces of the centre. Here problems of serial publication provoked an uncomfortable identification, as artist, with the Coketown operatives, both drawn into unwilling collaboration with alien forces. A necessary release, negotiated through Stephen Blackpool's Wordsworthian death, appears to capitulate to the inward trajectory, but is transformed by Dickens's metropolitan insights into a much more positive reassertion of the eccentric domain.

PREAMBLE

... in spite of an earnest preoccupation with man, his thoughts, his destiny, [Wordsworth] is the poet of nature. And of nature, after all, in its modesty. The English lake country has, of course, its grandeurs. But the peculiar function of Wordsworth's genius, as carrying in it the power to open out the soul of apparently little or familiar things, would have found its true test had he become the poet of Surrey, say! and the prophet of its life. The glories of Italy and Switzerland, though he did write a little about them, had too potent a material life of their own to serve greatly his poetic purpose.

(Walter Pater, 1874)¹

Pater makes a serious critical point here concerning the nature of the relationship - whether necessary or coincidental - between Wordsworth and the region with which he is invariably identified. What strikes me more forcibly, however, is Pater's casual, and apparently impromptu comparison of the Lake District with Surrey, the county in which I happened to grow up. (If this seems to imply the operation of some personal

or autobiographical imperative in the writing of this thesis I will not be unduly dismayed.)

Surrey has never cut an imposing figure on the national stage. According to the architectural historian Ian Nairn, it

was so remote in the Middle Ages that it does not possess a large medieval parish church; yet today there is hardly anywhere in the county where one can feel free of London. ... A history of English medieval architecture could be written without once mentioning a surviving Surrey building; a history of the suburb or the folly could almost be written without going outside the county.²

Surrey's architectural character reflects very closely its broader historical evolution. Insofar as it may in the past have possessed a distinct identity it remained of little account; insofar as, more recently, it has become increasingly significant - populous and plutocratic - it has surrendered its identity to London, and now functions as a mere dormitory and playground. But the Surrey countryside, transformed over the last century-and-a-half by the penetration of the railway and the residential development of its land for people working in, or otherwise tied to, London, has something in common with the Lake District after

all. Both have been the object of the self-aggrandising attentions of the metropolis. The difference is that in Surrey this process has been almost complete. But there has been another Surrey, of grinding rural poverty entirely unalleviated by proximity to the capital. It can be glimpsed here and there in the writings of Cobbett, Young and Stephen Heath. It was still apparent to Mrs Humphrey Ward when she published Robert Elsmere in 1888 and described Surrey as 'a strange mixture of suburbanism and the desert', its solid new wealth interspersed incongruously with wretched backwaters of ignorance and suffering.³

Pater's implied comparison of Surrey and the Lake District wavers between the serious and the facetious. In another way, too, it moves in two quite opposite directions. On the one hand it indulges the careless Victorian habit of abstracting Nature from Wordsworth's poetry and resolving his peopled landscape into mere scenery, a manoeuvre that here serves the interests of rhetorical contrast by effectively suppressing the more complex patterns of relationship that exist between the two localities. But although it omits much, his contrast nevertheless assumes a great deal of its readers. Where the Lake District is concerned this assumption is both total and automatic: the 'grandeurs'

of its scenery and their spiritual connotations need no elaboration for Pater's audience, even though he appears to have little enthusiasm for them himself. But equally, when he turns to Surrey, Pater consciously writes with an intricate web of pre-suppositions in mind. The arch pretence of random choice in 'Surrey, say!' seems calculated to elicit a metropolitan or patrician sneer at the expense of the humdrum suburbanites then colonising rural Surrey, their dreary 'material life' mirroring the littleness and familiarity of a landscape recently made available by the railway to metropolitan day-trippers. For Pater, the very idea of such paltry materials becoming a poet's theme is a delicious absurdity.

Altogether, the passage serves to remind us that space requires its own form of literacy. In assessing the responses of writers to the changing face of the English landscape and to the adjustments in the geographical distribution of social, economic and political activity and power, it is necessary to call upon skills and disciplines eccentric to the main focus of literary criticism. (I try to signal these borrowings in a number of chapter epigraphs, lifted, somewhat unceremoniously, from the works of others in different fields.) To those faithful to more exclusively 'literary' traditions of criticism the

insights that this method produces may themselves appear peripheral. Naturally, I tend to think otherwise, and am comforted by the reflection that for a long time men and women looked up at the heavens, observed the movement of the sun, and concluded that it must revolve around the earth.

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INTRODUCTION

i) Et in Coketown Ego: Wordsworth and the Industrial Novel

And is it among rude untutored Dales,
There, and there only, that the heart is true?

(Wordsworth, 1809)¹

The remote origin of this thesis lay in a desire to account for a particular pattern of displacement, identified by Raymond Williams in Culture and Society (1958) as common to the so-called "Industrial Novels" of the 1840s and '50s.² Most of the novels of this group are prompted by concern at the human impact of the emerging urban and industrial environments of London, the Midlands and especially Northern England, and of certain new forms of industrial organisation characteristic of them. But although the authors derive their primary motivation from the search for "solutions" to "problems", in the last resort they fail to identify credible mechanisms for widespread amelioration originating **within** the situations they describe.

Instead many of them fall back on the conventional narrative devices of marriage and inheritance, together with the newly fashionable, but equally adventitious panacea of emigration, to effect improvements which are, on the contrary, strictly limited in scope. The very sense of an ending is thrown into crisis by the perceived difficulty of reconciling the world of the novel with the real world it purports to mirror. That the offered solutions generally work by extracting some few individuals from the arena in which the "problem" is rooted (a procedure that Williams has criticised as 'a cancelling of the actual difficulties' [p 103]) suggests that English novelists of the period, for a variety of reasons, were ill-equipped to address on their own terms the issues raised by the new urban-industrial society. It may be said at the outset that the humane intentions of the writers concerned are not seriously in doubt. But narrative difficulties mask, ultimately, a failure of will: 'Sympathy was transformed', notes Williams, 'not into action, but into withdrawal' (p 119). At the precise moment when the novel was laying claim to maturity on the basis of its ability to comprehend social process in all its complexity and nuance, vital components of that process continued to elude the novelist's grasp.

If part of the explanation for this shortcoming is rightly identified by Williams as middle-class trepidation at the prospect of autonomous working-class movements,³ much nevertheless remains unaccounted for even in recent discussions of these novels. For some years attention concentrated heavily on the historical context - a period of rapid, and sometimes violent, social and technological change - and on the intellectual ferment that this produced. There was a necessary concern with 'how the appearance' - that is, the "world" of the novels - 'accords with verifiable reality'.⁴ It has now, perhaps, been sufficiently established that these novels draw to varying degrees on personal observation, on the mass of documentary and statistical material collected by government commissions and private individuals, and on the impassioned social teaching and pithy verbal formulations of Thomas Carlyle. But here, on the whole, the matter has been allowed to rest.

More recently, however, signs of impatience with such an approach have begun to appear. Williams himself, in his later writing, avoids the straitjacket of classification which served his purpose in Culture and Society. In The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence (1970) he maintains that 'We need not look only, in a transforming history, for direct or public historical

event and response'. Rather, he argues, the full force of major social change reveals its strength most tellingly in those areas furthest removed from the ostensible agents of change, for example in interpersonal and family relations.⁵ More recently, one critic has maintained 'that any novel written between, say, 1780 and the 1850s bears the impress of and is at its core a response to that transformation of society somewhat inaccurately called the Industrial Revolution'⁶ - a position we may sympathise with at the same time as noting the risk it entails of a damaging loss of focus. Nevertheless in a number of directions there has been a considerable extension of the field of criticism of the "Industrial Novels".

In particular, the prominence of women writers has been much commented upon, and our bibliographical overview of the subject thereby greatly enhanced.⁷ Many more women than men addressed the problems of the emerging industrial society in fictional form, and though only a tiny fraction have found a secure place in the literary canon others offer important pointers to the particular inter-relationships between gender and social and political alignments which they have in common with the more successful examples. The study of them has been extended especially in the direction of neglected aspects of women's experience of both domestic and

political economy; and suggestive parallels have been drawn between the working class and women of all classes - both unenfranchised groups - by writers who maintain that in the 19th century 'class designations came to carry gender overtones'.⁸ By contrast, other studies have emphasised the particular contribution of the nonconformist sects - also, until 1828, an unenfranchised group - to the developing debate.⁹

More immediately germane to my own purposes here is a line of enquiry that abstracts from the "Industrial Novels" those which seem to embody a provincial viewpoint. Louis James has noted how the nineteenth century witnesses the emergence of a conscious regionalism among a number of writers, and other critics have sought to draw out the common characteristics - the provincialism - of these various regionalisms, and to contrast it with a metropolitan voice in Victorian literature.¹⁰ The approach has been subject to certain simplifications - in particular, too unproblematic an acceptance of Dickens's metropolitanism (a question which I shall address in Chapter 4). In part, as John Lucas has hinted, this is no doubt attributable to the failure to define adequately quite what is meant by "provincial".¹¹ Possibly the term itself is misleading; certainly without careful definition it remains a blunt and unwieldy instrument of criticism. I hope in this

thesis to revise substantially the grounds for an enquiry along these lines, and at the same time to offer a new terminology more appropriate to the task.

In so doing I also attempt to take into account a recent and allied critical trend towards the reassertion of the autonomy of the literary work within its historical context. There is now a much greater appreciation of the textuality - and intertextuality - of works which were valued formerly primarily as reflections of a somewhat naively conceived reality, and this has led to a radical reappraisal of some of the "faults" which were attributed to them. Rosemarie Bodenheimer, for example, has written in defence of

just those fictional stories and strategies that have often been understood by social and cultural critics as deflections from the delineation of social crisis or as evasions of its implications.¹²

Only the most banal of the many narratives of industrial life looked no further than the re-casting of Blue-Book material and prevailing ideology in story form. Those that still interest us do so because they stem from complex and often contradictory impulses, held in check by nothing more historically verifiable than an author's integrity. Again, Williams to some extent pre-empted

such a shift in critical perception. Writing in defence of Dickens in 1970 he argued for a reading which sees

not inconsistency - the analytic abstraction - but disturbance - the creative source. It is in just this creative disturbance, in which significance is not given by systems but has to be found, under tension, in experiences, that he has the power to penetrate and illuminate his obscuring and shadow-filled world.¹³

It is time to attend more closely to the imaginative provenance of these novels. For too long - from Louis Cazamian's pioneering study onwards - the Industrial Novels, like the poetry of the First World War, have been constituted as a distinct group wholly by reference to external sources and subject matter, and in defiance of those more intimate (if inchoate) forces that are elsewhere acknowledged as vital determinants of literary form.

Among the most potent of these forces, it will be argued, must be numbered the influence of William Wordsworth, whose life (1770-1850) precisely spans the first and most dramatic phase of the Industrial Revolution.¹⁴ Of course this influence was beset with complexities and contradictions of its own. On the one hand Wordsworth's insistence that the poor were fit and

deserving subjects for the poet's attention derived added force from the recognition, increasingly from the 1830s, of an altered centre of gravity within the social process itself - the consequence specifically of a burgeoning urban proletariat. The Industrial Novels, both in themselves and in the constituency they presuppose, bear ample witness to the degree of acceptance wrought by Wordsworth's poetry in the first fifty years of the 19th century for the literary extension of sympathy to the poor and despised. They are frank and perceptive in their handling of pressing social issues, to a degree that still conflicts somewhat with a received and uncritical notion of Victorian hypocrisy and social complacency. But, on the other hand, we can also see now that Wordsworth burdened the emerging debate with the retarding conditions of a social and economic conservatism, traces of which remain deeply entrenched in the English culture of today.¹⁵

Critical accounts of Wordsworth's standing in the 19th century have done less than justice to both the diversity and the vigour of responses. This has in turn done much to obscure the relevance of his achievement to the Industrial Novels, most discussions of which have been silent (or nearly so) on the subject. A certain 'anxiety of influence' (in Harold Bloom's phrase¹⁶) characterises the reception of Wordsworth in the mid-

19th century, and this will have to be examined in due course. But it should be emphasised that it is indicative of the strength rather than the weakness of the bond. Arguably no one exerted a deeper and more pervasive hold over the period - with the result that Wordsworth's "influence" is everywhere accepted as a given fact, and almost nowhere subjected to the close scrutiny it demands.

Nowhere is this neglect more damaging than in the field of Wordsworth's legacy to the novel, though there are a few notable exceptions. Peter Coveney has thrown interesting light on the lineage of the literary child, a theme which demonstrably connects Wordsworth with Dickens and with Charlotte and Emily Brontë.¹⁷ John Speirs, similarly, maintains that Wordsworth's 'psychological, moral and religious insights' exert 'a deepening effect on the novel in the 19th century', particularly where these novels concern themselves with 'the pains of growing up and of arriving at mature manhood or womanhood'.¹⁸ But both Coveney and Speirs identify Wordsworth's particular contribution as a deeper understanding of the individual mind and its development; they are not concerned with the Industrial Novel as such, nor with the necessarily social themes it embraces.

Wordsworth's influence was so wide-ranging that it is perhaps best regarded one facet at a time. Donald D Stone's The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction has also, as I see it, addressed a single theme, defining Wordsworthian 'acquiescence' and Byronic 'force' as 'the polar attractions of Romanticism' in the Victorian period.¹⁹ But this reductive and somewhat rhetorical contrast is implicitly made the basis for more extravagant claims. Ironically, Stone's remark about Scott - that his 'hold on the Victorians was as contradictory as his own nature' (p 17) - might equally usefully have informed his account of Wordsworth.

Stone's position (which, reservations apart, contains the most comprehensive account of the Victorian Wordsworth to date) derives to a large degree from Leavis's hitherto persuasive contention that the main or representative axis of Wordsworthian influence passes through Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill.²⁰ Certainly Arnold and Mill betray little anxiety about avowing their debts to Wordsworth. But these debts may not be as representative of Victorian culture as has been supposed. No doubt one's idea of Wordsworth determines the Victorian Wordsworth one will discover; but I find something intolerably attenuated in the meek anodyne figure who looses the tears of Arnoldian Victorians, allowing them to purge in a few moments the

accumulated bitterness of their lot, before returning to the fray restored. This is not to deny that in later life Wordsworth connived in precisely this image of himself. The elderly poet who declared himself pleased to hear of his poems giving 'consolation ... under affliction' and 'calmness and elevation of spirit' was possessed of commendable fellow-feeling;²¹ but he was not by any means telling the whole story - nor even, I would suggest, the most interesting part of it.

The danger of relying too heavily on the Arnold-Mill axis of Wordsworthian influence is graphically demonstrated by an essay which Mill wrote in 1833. Mill's mental collapse five years previously, and his subsequent restoration through the agency of Wordsworth's poetry, have, largely through Leavis's energetic championing of them as a representative episode in Victorian cultural history, become a **locus classicus** of 19th-century autobiography.²² The essay, 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', is clearly in some sense a debt repaid to the poet, and builds on a Wordsworthian definition of poetry as 'the delineation of the deeper and more secret workings of the human heart'.²³ But the version of Wordsworth's poetry that emerges from the distinction Mill draws between 'poetry' and 'eloquence' is a singularly impoverished one,

entirely innocent of the poet's more recondite strategies:

Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or uttering forth of feeling. But if we may be excused the seeming affectation of the antithesis, we should say that eloquence is **heard**, poetry is **overheard**. Eloquence supposes an audience; the peculiarity of poetry seems to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling, confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude, and bodying itself forth in symbols, which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence is feeling pouring itself forth to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavouring to influence their belief, or move them to passion or to action. (pp 348-49)

As I have already hinted, Wordsworth was adept at projecting this kind of image of himself as a poet communing with solitude, oblivious of the petty contingencies of the "busy world". He would have been the first to scout the demagogic imputations of 'courting sympathy' and 'influencing belief' (Mill evidently had political oratory uppermost in his mind). Yet the Lyrical Ballads Preface is not only fully engaged with 'the general evil' affecting the society of its day, cognisant of 'the great national events which

are daily taking place, and the encreasing accumulation of men in cities';²⁴ it is also sustained by 'a belief that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed by men of greater powers and with far more distinguished success'.²⁵ When Wordsworth moved to Grasmere ('a very beautiful spot of which almost everybody has heard'²⁶), to a cottage just a few feet from the Kendal to Keswick turnpike, his judgment was shrewd: this was to be a very public retreat. And as a study of the poetry - especially of the Lyrical Ballads - reveals, Wordsworth was seldom content to be merely 'overheard'. On the contrary, he was committed to reforming men's feelings - and his poems show him evolving effective strategies to this end in ways seemingly unsuspected by Mill.

Some of Mill's contemporaries sensed the inadequacy of his, and occasionally Arnold's, over-reverent response to Wordsworth. Charlotte Brontë's mischievous reference to being 'dosed' with Wordsworth²⁷ contrasts sharply with Mill's description of him as 'a medicine for my state of mind'²⁸ in his mental crisis of 1828, and helpfully reminds us of the great range and vitality of Victorian responses. Yet in many quarters the great affection in which Wordsworth was held resulted in a virtual suspension of critical faculties. Even so perceptive a critic as Leslie Stephen felt compelled to

claim that Wordsworth's 'ethical system ... is as distinctive and capable of systematic exposition as that of Butler'.²⁹ Arnold himself drew back at the excesses of the "Wordsworthians" in their attempt to derive from the poetry a comprehensive ethical philosophy - even, in the case of Stopford Brooke, a theology.³⁰ The novelists which I go on to discuss were not immune from these tendencies. But in their attempt to reconcile Wordsworth with the intractable problems of the emerging industrial order it was inevitable that they should find areas where his legacy was wanting, and that they should address these areas in whatever manner seemed to them to be required. To the armchair essayist and Sunday homilist Wordsworth's philosophy was all too likely to become the apotheosis of acquiescence that Stone identifies. The reality was somewhat different, and the novelists I discuss are characterised by their recognition of a more robust energy and commitment in Wordsworth's work which could be extended and adapted to changing needs. The chapters which follow are intended to vindicate this more vigorous tradition in the 19th century.

ii) Centres and Margins: A Spatial Model

Amongst others, I was then encountered, on my passage from Westminster to Whitehall, by a tall big gentleman, who thrusting me rudely from the wall, and looking over his shoulder on me in a scornful manner, said in a hoarse voice these words: **Geography is better than Divinity**; and so passed along.

(Dr Peter Heylyn, 1649)³¹

In part, Wordsworth's hold on the Victorians was the product of a fortuitous conjunction of time and place - of his Border origins, transformed by a Cambridge education into matter capable of commanding a more than provincial audience, at precisely the moment when the farther reaches of Britain were beginning to be seized upon as the necessary cultural and aesthetic complement to an increasingly metropolitan lowland England. His precipitate decision late in 1799 physically to situate himself in a comparatively out-of-the-way spot such as Grasmere, distancing himself from society at large, is thus congruent with that 'practical separation' of cultural activities that Raymond Williams identified as one of the defining transformations of modern English culture.³² Williams argues that literature (in common

with the arts generally) has become increasingly confined to an aesthetic and subjective domain, detached from the practical conduct of the material world. In these changed conditions the propensity of poets to legislate (in Shelley's phrase) remains, perhaps, undiminished, but their authority to do so outside their allotted sphere has met with scant acknowledgement. In practice, of course, this separation is far from complete, and it is precisely in the space between these ideal polarities that societies take shape and writers write. What I hope to do here and in the following chapters is to elaborate on the implicit spatial metaphor of Williams's 'practical separation'. I hope I will not be thought literal-minded for attempting to give real co-ordinates for this "space" in the 19th-century.

It is now some forty years since Basil Willey declared his belief

that the whole course of English life and letters in the nineteenth century would have been different if this island had not contained the mountain paradise of Westmorland and Cumberland.³³

Without doubt, this is a bold claim to make - that a relatively small, thinly peopled and economically

insignificant region, eccentrically attached to the northwestern periphery of mainland England, should decisively shape not just the literature of the nation, but 'English life' itself in the period of the Industrial Revolution. To date nobody has attempted an extended substantiation of the claim. Indeed to do so raises important questions of literary phenomenology which it is partly the purpose of this thesis to address.

The accent of the chapters that follow is, necessarily, frequently topographical. To some this may seem heretical. Today, when the whole country seems mapped out into fatuous literary terrains - James Herriot and Catherine Cookson Country, and even Beatrix Potter's Lakeland! - we are apt to react cynically to facile identifications between writer, or text, and place. Of all people, the literary critic has a duty to detach himself, as it were, from the rest of the tour party, and to ensure that the (blended) Bronte Liqueur on offer is carefully distinguished from the authentic spirit of each (individuated) member of the Bronte family. It is more than a matter of academic snobbery, of course, although that has certainly fuelled the division. The popular Oxford Literary Guide to the British Isles is, in its way, an impressive catalogue of literary associations.³⁴ But the critic will properly object

that the information it contains has little significant bearing on a writer's works. One may even suspect that for many people the touring of places with literary associations is a substitute for the experience of literature itself, or at the very least a distraction from it. It is true that in the case of Wordsworth this habit of substitution can be shown to have a long history (see below, p 28); but this, the critic may retort, is primarily the concern of the historian of leisure.

Insofar as this attitude has discouraged certain other wholly valid critical responses it must be regretted. Topography has a long, distinguished, and far from peripheral place in the canon of English Literature (one thinks of Gerald of Wales, John Leland, William Harrison, Michael Drayton, John Aubrey, Celia Fiennes, Daniel Defoe, Gilbert White, William Cobbett), and can claim the added dignity of classical antecedents. It is only since the later 19th century, at a time of rapid democratisation of travel generally, that the status of topography has declined. But places, as a few modern critics - and many more poets and novelists - have recognised, can inspire extraordinary pieties and no less powerful antipathies, and these may exert a more than superficial influence over a writer's work. Donald Davie argued in 1968 - 'unfashionably', as he then

recognised - 'that poetry may legitimately, and often does, originate in a response to landscape', and he hinted at particular historical conditions in which such an affiliation may acquire a peculiar compulsion.³⁵ Since then there has been a gradual awakening of scholarly interest in the subject, given added impetus by the key studies of Raymond Williams and John Barrell in the early 1970s, and followed up in the work of John Lucas, James Turner, Malcolm Hardman, and others.³⁶

What unites these critics is their understanding that the English landscape is as real and significant a cultural artefact as English literature, art, architecture or music, and that its interplay with these other cultural forms is of the profoundest interest. It is not just that in the physical sense English landscapes (the plural form is more accurate) are, as W G Hoskins has taught, among the most intricately **made** landscapes in the world, even where they appear most natural.³⁷ In an old country landscape is inevitably - almost oppressively - a 'socialized image':³⁸ the embodiment and articulation of patterns of land use and tenure, and of their less visible corollary, the relationship between land and landlessness. These patterns may be effectually overlaid by mystifications of one kind or another - of which "Nature" itself is a particularly protean example; but they are never

entirely effaced. Ultimately, to see a landscape - whether in painting, in words, or **en plein air** - is always to process mentally 'a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring, or symbolising surroundings'.³⁹

This has been true at all times, perhaps, but the manner in which it has been true has varied over the centuries.⁴⁰ The aesthetic judgments which we are accustomed to apply to landscape - and in particular the habitual (but in practice often untenable) separation of "Nature" from the visible tokens of human intervention - are comparatively late formations. In former ages man's impact on the physical landscape was construed as the necessary performance of a divine ordinance. But while this notion might command general acceptance in principle (and even that may be considered doubtful), it was often sharply contested in detail. Pastoral, the chosen mystification of a territorial aristocracy, was never, as Raymond Williams, John Barrell and others have repeatedly stressed, completely divorced from the awareness of the political implications of landownership - of who fashioned the landscape, and for whose benefit. As man's capacity to alter and exploit his surroundings for private gain visibly grew (one thinks of the depopulation that accompanied the creation of the vast monastic sheep ranches, of the drainage of vast areas of

fenland, of the Highland Clearances and the age of Parliamentary Enclosure) the idea that a divine covenant was being fulfilled became increasingly difficult to sustain.⁴¹

Objective changes in the face of the landscape had their counterpart in altered modes of perception. In the mid-18th century the vogue for landscape gardening, and the associated enthusiasm for the ideal Italian landscapes of Claude Lorrain, gave rise to a peculiarly structured genre of locodescriptive poetry, the characteristics of which have been minutely analysed by John Barrell.⁴² These poems legitimate not only landownership in the strict juridical sense, but the proprietorial gaze itself, scanning foreground, middleground and horizon in an elaborate imitation of the process of visual appropriation invited by a Claude landscape or a park laid out by "Capability" Brown. Most were written, if not under direct patronage, then in the shadow of expectation. But the enacting of the proprietorial gaze was not simply a subtly insinuating compliment to a patron, actual or desired; it was also in part the vicarious enjoyment of the privileges of ownership.

The political reaction to revolution in America and France, the equally divisive social and economic consequences of agrarian and industrial change, and the

literary realignments of Romanticism fractured the Augustan consensus, and left English culture in the late-18th to the mid-19th centuries riven by substantial elements of disaffection. (This is not to say that the culture of 18th-century England was entirely homogeneous; merely that the formal constraints within which it operated were more adapted to the resolution of conflicting energies.) As the custom of patronage decayed, to be replaced by the uncertainties of the literary marketplace, the poet's feeling of having a stake - however precarious - in the outlook of the centre became increasingly untenable. In its place emerged a compensatory sense of the value of individual experience, one consequence of which was another important change in the manner of perceiving landscape. The transition from the socially sanctioned Augustan version of experience to the Romantic faith in the self's own sufficing truth created in its turn the potential for investing individual known landscapes (or their constituent features) with a potent combination of phenomenological interest and moral value. Thus it is typically not in generalised laments for the destruction of the countryside, but in innumerable small-scale cleavings to particular places - Yardley Oak (Cowper), the Carshalton ponds (Ruskin), Binsey Poplars (Hopkins) - that these attachments find expression in Romantic and Victorian literature.⁴³

But the localised focus of the responses should not disguise their importance - which lies in their discovery and articulation of a spatial syntax capable of bearing the profoundest signification. For it must be made clear that this is very much more than a matter of "scenery". By a spatial syntax is meant the perception that regions and individual places exist in complex relationships with each other, and that these relationships express, among other things, imbalances in the structure of power within a nation. In identifying particularly with wild and thinly-peopled landscapes, rather than creating conventionally lush pastoral dioramas in the manner of some second-rate writers of the previous century, the Romantic poet signalled his sense of social and economic displacement. Exiled from the centre, he had to take his place among those common mortals whose lives, at least in the pastoral tradition, he had hitherto idealised. Carlyle's description of Ebenezer Elliott - 'a quite unmoneyed, russet-coated speaker', finding expression in 'rugged substantial English' - aptly records the transition.⁴⁴ In Empson's phrase, the poet 'stole the dignities of the swain and the hero for himself'.⁴⁵

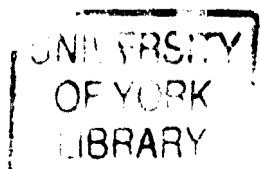
'Stole', of course, is historically apt: the marginal areas of Britain - the forests, mountains, fens, wastes and commons, and the Alsatias of major cities -

notoriously furnished a home for heterodoxy of all kinds - political, social, religious, criminal - long before Wordsworth and his successors sought to tap their energies.⁴⁶ Here, beyond the Pale, opposition to the tendencies of the centre could be mustered, and an alternative "ec-centre" or "exocentre" established. The poacher, the forest outlaw, the cottager who established his right to a parcel of the waste only by custom - all, when the layers of romantic nonsense surrounding them are stripped away, stand for a refusal to acknowledge the settled constitution of law, or the social, economic and political structures it underwrites. The 'perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists' which Wordsworth located in the Lake District valleys of his childhood belongs to the same tradition.⁴⁷

Particularly since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and to a lesser extent during several preceding centuries, such remaining pockets of eccentricity have come under acute pressure from the aggrandising tendencies of the centre. But if the consolidation of nation states hand in hand with the emergence of industrialised economies inevitably implies the more or less aggressive expansion of the centre's influence, it remains the case that this is achieved only in the teeth of powerful countervailing pressures. Thus it is important to remember that the border between

the margin and the centre is neither clearly demarcated nor stable. Crime offers perhaps the most obvious way of extending the sway of the marginal into the space nominally held by the centre. The Victorian poacher, James Hawker, considered his trade to be that of an active republican, subverting the laws of property with which the centre attempted to bind the country to its will.⁴⁸ At the opposite end of the spectrum, the legal machinery of state could be - and on a huge scale was - mobilised to bring wastes, commons, forests and fens within the orbit of the centre through enclosure acts; excise officers could be employed to harness locally self-serving economies to the revenue of the state; roads, canals and railways could be driven into the remotest regions, capturing for the centre on the one hand sources of raw materials and agricultural produce, on the other new markets. But these and a multitude of other actions of the state and its licensed individuals met at every stage with fierce opposition.

Wordsworth was acutely aware of this, and at a number of different levels. It is, for example, amusing to notice how his plan to enclose the small sliver of land lying between the road (a turnpiked road, incidentally, legitimated by Act of Parliament) and his cottage in Grasmere reproduces the time-honoured cottager's subterfuge of purpresture, whereby the illicit



occupation of land is eventually ratified by custom.⁴⁹ Yet in the garden behind the cottage - 'our little domestic slip of mountain'⁵⁰ - a very different, typically defensive posture is apparent. De Quincey called it William and Dorothy's 'little domain'.⁵¹ Here, in the orchard, they built 'a little circular hut lined with moss like a wren's nest, and coated on the outside with heath'; from this 'little retreat' they could survey lake, vale and church without fear of disturbance.⁵² The "eccentric domain" which Wordsworth fashioned from the physical and human landscape of the Lake District is held in tension between these two opposing impulses or trajectories: one outward, aiming always to challenge the rule of the centre through active intervention, the other inward and self-protective, wrapping the known and loved in circle after circle of immunity from the pressures of the outside world.

iii) 'Diffusing health and sober cheerfulness': The role of the Lake District in Victorian England

O thou North of England, who art counted as desolate and barren, and reckoned the least of the nations, yet out of thee did the branch spring and the star arise which gives light unto all the region round about.

(Edward Burrough, 1655)⁵³

The moral evaluation of particular places was something of a Victorian obsession - part of the mental baggage to be unpacked periodically in the course of a grand tour of Europe, or even of a more modest 'home tour'. It would be perfectly feasible to construct a league-table of moral landscapes. In 19th-century England the Lake District reigned supreme, most of its rivals - Snowdonia, the Peak District, the Wye Valley, or the odd focus of interest on Dentdale in the Western Pennines⁵⁴ - seeming more like outliers of the Lakes than serious contenders for their mantle. Only the Scottish Highlands, which Scott had done much to establish in this sense (though with different motives), exerted anything like a comparable appeal.

Wordsworth's influence on subsequent writers was closely bound up with the remarkable status of the Lake District. The public identification of poet and place can be traced back virtually to the moment when William and Dorothy took up residence in Grasmere at the end of 1799. As early as 1802, when Wordsworth could claim barely a handful of adherents, the astute compilers of the Cumberland section of The Beauties of England and Wales quoted from his 'Joanna', one of the 'Poems on the Naming of Places' from the Lyrical Ballads.⁵⁵ In time, poet and place became inextricably intertwined: the physical landscape, as Arnold recognised, was resonant with his poetry.⁵⁶ From the 1820s onwards Wordsworth appeared in local guidebooks as a tourist attraction in his own right, and curious visitors would linger outside his garden at Rydal Mount in the hope of catching a glimpse of him.⁵⁷ By the 1830s many would have felt a kinship with De Quincey's feeling, long before he had set foot in the Westmorland valleys, of 'a second identity projected from my own consciousness, and already living amongst them!'.⁵⁸

Scott had shown what use the novelist could make of a known locale in his Waverley Novels, and many Victorian novelists followed his example, rejecting an earlier tradition of setting geographically footloose narratives among the bland acres of "-----shire". Like Scott, and

especially Wordsworth, they were concerned very often to identify localities which could also carry a moral charge. Commonly the tacit intention was to point to repositories of moral worth as a spur to the reinvigoration of nationalistic notions of Englishness. It is, for example, emphatically the **English** urban poor that Mrs Gaskell redeems by reference to Lake District genealogies and folkloric glosses in Mary Barton, not the numerically important Irish population of Manchester. For the same reason, appeals to foreign localities required more elaborate justification. Wordsworth himself was induced to find alternative incarnations of the Lake District in other regions - notably the Swiss and Tyrolese Alps - where mountainous scenery and backward pastoral communities seemed a sufficient guarantee of moral worth, especially when threatened, as England then was, by Napoleonic aggression. By contrast, in the 1840s Ruskin found a centre capable of nourishing an influential polemic against the defective spiritual base of English industrial culture in the decaying Gothic fabric of Venice. He rooted his attack in a study of the architectural character of the city, which he argued bespoke a society more truly consonant with nature. For this reason, he maintained, the Doge's Palace was 'the central building of the world'.⁵⁹ Venice was not so much 'A wonderful piece of world' but 'Rather, itself a

world'⁶⁰ - an alternative, microcosmic world, as Wordsworth had represented the Vale of Grasmere to be.

Victorian culture was thus well attuned to "centres" and their "eccentric" rivals for influence. It inherited both the Wordsworthian and the Byronic versions of eccentricity, and incorporated them permanently within the structure of experience. But Wordsworth and Byron clearly satisfied very different needs. For whereas the Byronic hero's relation to landscape was essentially symbolic, in Wordsworth's poetry the human and the topographical form complementary elements in a densely bonded totality. The Byronic hero's asociality is merely mirrored in the barren emptiness of his landscape; Wordsworth's figures are an integral part of a landscape which is an austere, but recognisably social organism, in which the human and the physical are not susceptible to sharp differentiation. As Leslie Stephen observed,

He loves his native hills, not in the Byronic fashion, as a savage wilderness, but as the appropriate framework in which a healthy social order can permanently maintain itself.⁶¹

This distinction proved to be of the utmost importance as the 19th century progressed. Wordsworth's

inestimable value to the Victorians lay in his ability to articulate a plausible social correlative for the Romantic sense of marginalisation. His beggars, leech-gatherers, statesmen farmers and shepherds encouraged a reappraisal of attitudes to the forms of poverty generally, and of its growing importance in society as a whole. By contrast, the extreme forms of this Romantic standpoint - Byron's Manfred (1817) (or John Martin's painting, 'Manfred on the Jungfrau' [1838]⁶²), and the desolate landscapes of Caspar Friedrich, for example - were characterised by an utter asociality which could not subsequently be redeemed by the Victorians in their quest for solutions to pressing social problems of their own.

This quest began to be urgent in the 1830s, as disappointment at the limited scope of the 1832 Reform Act led to growing discontent among the large, closely-packed and volatile urban proletariat. With the emergence in 1839 of a vocal and at times militant Chartist movement these concerns became acute. Public and political order seemed in imminent danger of overthrow; private journals and correspondence were alive with dark forebodings of plebeian revolt. Anxiety penetrated to the farthest corners of the kingdom. Thomas Arnold, spending the Christmas vacation away from

Rugby in the Lake District seclusion of Fox How, felt he could not ignore

this new excitement of the operative population. Most gladly would I join in any feasible attempt to check this terrible evil, which men seem to regard as so hopeless that they would rather turn their eyes away from it, and not look at it till they must. But that 'must' will come, I fear, but too soon⁶³

Back at Rugby in the New Year, he gloomily anticipated one of Carlyle's millenarian formulations, voicing his fear that society 'must go down the cataract' if steps were not quickly taken.⁶⁴

Thomas Arnold was an early admirer of Wordsworth, first introduced to his poetry when he went up to Oxford in 1815.⁶⁵ He was fortunate in later life in having a second home, or retreat, at Fox How, where close neighbourhood with Wordsworth developed into a firm friendship. He was also in these years an energetic contributor on social issues to a number of newspapers and journals,⁶⁶ and was thus well placed to put to the test the central propositions of Wordsworth's moral geography. His sole attempt at a poetic exploration of these themes also dates from a spell at Fox How in January 1839.⁶⁷ It envisages a river flowing from 'this

upland Vale' (line 1) to the sea, but traversing in the course of its journey a wide plain. Here, where the affairs of the 'busy World' (24) are transacted, lies 'God's Task' (16) appointed for this modern River Jordan: washing away the stains of humanity.

Although the symbolism is ancient, the terms of reference are explicitly modern, and stem from concerns closely related to those expressed in Arnold's letters of the time. The plain is a mingled landscape of 'Wide fruitful Fields, and many a crowded Town' (18), but it is the urban images that predominate - the 'sullied Stream' (41), and the 'ceaseless Din' (43) rising from dwellings 'Gloomy and close' (50). The water of the upland vale, polluted by its contact with towns and industry, at the same time acts as a purifying influence,

For Life and Freshness to the dreariest scenes
Thy stream supplies.

(51-52)

No doubt Arnold had in mind the River Rothay which flows past both Fox How and Wordsworth's last home, Rydal Mount, its clear waters typical of the many small rivers and streams that radiate from the Lake District. Of course geography did not favour any precise analogy: few

towns of any consequence stand alongside these streams on their short journeys to the Irish Sea. Arnold can hardly have anticipated that his purely symbolic watercourse would become a literal actuality barely fifty years after his death, with the abstraction of the waters - not of the Rothay - but of neighbouring Thirlmere, which was dammed to a higher level to provide drinking water for Manchester.⁶⁸ But his poem clearly shows him meditating on the likely role of the Lake District as a beneficent influence on the troubled cities of England.

Others in the disturbed atmosphere of the late-1830s were reflecting on what salvation Wordsworth had to offer his countrymen. In particular there was a growing recognition that the moral qualities of the inhabitants of the Lake District, as exemplified in the writings of Wordsworth and corroborated by a host of lesser topographical writers, held out a faint hope for the restoration of society on a saner, more equitable footing. Later in 1839 Wordsworth received an honorary degree from the University of Oxford. In the eulogy that accompanied the award the Tractarian John Keble addressed him as the poet who

of all poets, and above all, has exhibited the manners, the pursuits, and the feelings, religious

and traditional, of the poor ... in a light which glows with the rays of heaven. To his poetry, therefore, they should, I think, be now referred, who sincerely desire to understand and feel that secret harmonious intimacy which exists between honorable poverty and the severer Muses, sublime Philosophy, yea, even our most holy Religion.⁶⁹

It was a message that was not lost on Thomas Arnold, who was among the audience.⁷⁰ The following year, once more at Fox How, he addressed the social question again, but this time bringing the comparatively healthy social order of the Lakes into his purview:

It seems to me that people are not enough aware of the monstrous state of society, absolutely without a parallel in the history of the world, - with a population poor, miserable, and degraded in body and mind, as much as if they were slaves and yet called freemen, and having a power as such of concerting and combining plans of risings, which makes them ten times more dangerous than slaves. And the hopes entertained by many of the effects to be wrought by new churches and schools, while the social evils of their condition are left uncorrected, appear to me to be utterly wild. Meanwhile here, as usual, we seem to be in another world, for the quietness of the valleys and the comparative comfort and independence of this population are a delightful contrast to what one finds almost everywhere else.⁷¹

Significantly, it is the 'independence' of the people around him that really grips Arnold's attention at this juncture, because it is this that restrains them from becoming a 'concerting and combining' proletariat such as seemed to threaten the stability of the industrial towns. We should recall this when appraising such Victorian icons of the independent, non-unionised working man as Job Legh and Stephen Blackpool.⁷²

After Thomas Arnold's premature death in 1842, it was the younger members of Keble's audience - among them Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough and John Ruskin - who shouldered the burden of 'this iron time',⁷³ with its intractable problems of human misery and discontent. Wordsworth offered two things to these younger writers. On the one hand he offered a mode of seeing the casualties of progress in a way that was consolatory, that allowed a fixed and reflective gaze to be cast upon them. On the other he offered a glimpse of a tradition, already old and enfeebled in his own time, but once vigorous, of an alternative social constitution, which restrained economic individualism within the bounds of custom and nature, to produce what he offered up - and what was eagerly accepted - as ideal community.

One of the characteristic features of the Lake District in the 19th century - and one of the grounds for

considering it an alternative, eccentric centre in its own right - is its capacity for self-aggrandisement. Some contemporary topographical accounts give the distinct impression that it comprised most of the North of England (see Appendix 1). Attributes common to large areas of England north of the Mersey and Humber, or even to the Highland Zone generally, were regularly presented as though they were peculiar to the Lake District. A case in point is the reputation for independence of the surviving yeoman farmers, or "statesmen", and the absence, more or less, of an impoverished and demoralised reservoir of landless labourers. It is perhaps worth recalling at this point that the North-South Divide as it is now understood is a 20th-century phenomenon. In the 19th century the inhabitants of the manufacturing towns of the North earned relatively high wages (albeit at the price of appalling living conditions), and these tended to force up wages to a lesser degree in the surrounding countryside. Agricultural poverty, both in fact and in public perception, was a problem concentrated mainly in the southern counties. In 1850-51 agricultural labourers in Cumberland were paid an average of 13 shillings per week; the rate was slightly higher in the more heavily industrialised counties of Lancashire (13s 6d) and the West Riding (14s) - nearly double the 7 shillings prevalent in Gloucestershire, South Wiltshire

and Suffolk.⁷⁴ Rates of poor relief, a crucial index in middle-class perceptions of social wellbeing, were also much lower in the North.⁷⁵ Admittedly, agriculture in the northern counties still could not accommodate the natural increase in population, with the result that many (like the Wilsons in Mary Barton) were forced to migrate to the towns; but this was equally true of the southern counties.

To anyone who cared to examine the statistics, it was apparent that, for whatever reasons, the agricultural economy of Northern England was functioning much more equably, and conforming more closely to familiar and cherished expectations of pastoral felicity. Nor was the distinction based on a purely material assessment: in his 1859 Preface to Yeast (the most telling literary exposé of its period of agricultural poverty in the South), Charles Kingsley reassures his readers that in the North the farmer is typically 'a man of altogether higher education and breeding'.⁷⁶ Some observers began to point to emigration from the Lake counties, especially by those of statesman stock, as a positive blessing to the rest of the nation and even beyond. William Dickinson, writing in 1852, applauded the fact that it

is from the savings of this class that their younger sons have been educated, and spread over the kingdom as clergymen and in other professions. ... The successful and wealthy inhabitants of London, Liverpool, Manchester and other commercial and manufacturing towns, are not sparingly intermixed with the offshoots from the vales of Cumberland; and the British colonies, in all parts of the world, have numbers of the progeny of the Cumberland 'statesmen' among them⁷⁷

But in this first, or heroic age of statistical information, it was the quantifiable indices of material prosperity that achieved the greatest prominence. Indeed it was a source of great chagrin to those like Lord Ashley (later Lord Shaftesbury) who wished to legislate to soften the human impact of industrialisation in the northern towns. For Henry Taylor, Ashley's campaign was the conduct of Wordsworthian policy by other means, and he looked forward to the time when 'the country will owe to Lord Ashley, as a legislator, the consummation of a work, of which Mr Wordsworth, as poet and ethical philosopher, so ardently urged the commencement'.⁷⁸ But Ashley's manufacturing opponents - most notably the Manchester-based Anti-Corn Law League - were able to point out that the most degrading poverty was to be found in the agricultural South. In 1837, according to the Poor Law Commission, the lowest wages in England were to be found

in Dorset, where Ashley's paternal estate lay. As his biographers, J L and Barbara Hammond, noted:

Dorsetshire soon became in fact the favourite target of the rhetoric of the Anti-Corn Law League, and no Anti-Corn Law speaker thought his argument complete without a biting reference to the sort of life that men and women were living in villages where the word of Ashley's father was law.⁷⁹

The same alignment of forces recurs in Mrs Gaskell's North and South (1854-55), in which Margaret Hale's acceptance of Thornton's vision of the (Manchester) industrialist's role is in part her awakening to the poverty and ignorance which, in the New Forest village of her childhood, she had hitherto taken for picturesque community.

The historical foundation of the particular claims that Wordsworth made for the society of the Lake District is a matter of some complexity, which will be addressed later. His continuing high regard for the statesmen was not universally accepted even in his own lifetime, particularly by those who saw the class only in its terminal decline, ruined by drink and debts.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, acceptance was very wide, and often uncritical, even of those social types which were less obviously rooted in traditions of sober self-

sufficiency. Originally greeted by a degree of critical ridicule, Wordsworth's beggars and schoolmasters came more and more to be acknowledged as veritable types of the human condition. As such they began to be visible on every side. An old man of Mary Howitt's acquaintance struck her as 'the very prototype of Wordsworth's Matthew'.⁸¹ As a mode of perception this was apparently flexible enough to accommodate the decayed fortunes of the old Lake District economy, and to re-fashion yeoman independence as dependable servitude. Historical research suggests that domestic service was a common destination of emigrant Cumbrians,⁸² though whether this was solely because the employing classes considered them especially eligible, or whether it was in any event the most likely fate of the unskilled in a competitive labour market, is unclear. Mrs Gaskell, however, had no hesitation in employing as servants several members of a statesman family which Wordsworth had described as 'Homeric'.⁸³

A measure of Wordsworth's success in attracting growing credence to his portraits of humble life may be gauged from the furore that erupted when Dr Percival, headmaster of Clifton College and a native of Westmorland, drew attention to some disturbing statistical findings of the Registrar General in a letter to the Times. The letter was addressed to 'all

friends [of] the two sister counties of Cumberland and Westmoreland':

I must confess that it is difficult to find calm and moderate terms adequate to give any idea of the state of things. I sometimes wish that some one would chronicle two or three years' history of bastardy in a few of our retired hamlets and dales; but I venture to say that if this were done the public would be appalled. The general result may be briefly stated. From the Registrar General's returns I find that in the year 1862 (to take an average year) out of every 100 children born in Cumberland and Westmoreland upwards of 11 were illegitimate

Percival had sent the letter in the first place to George Moore, a self-made man and philanthropist who was himself a product of the Cumbrian diaspora; he in turn had passed it on to the Times, which printed it, together with a leading article based upon it, on April 24th 1865. It is possible that Percival intended Moore to receive it on the 23rd, the anniversary of Wordsworth's death, as well as being St George's day, and hence a fit occasion to ponder the state of the nation. At any rate, the leader opens within an overtly literary frame of reference, which points firmly enough in Wordsworth's direction:

What the morals of ancient Arcadia may have been is not recorded by the poets who have dwelt so fondly on its primitive manners. Modern Arcadians, however, have not escaped censorious enquiry on this subject, and the result has been to lower very seriously the ideal of rural felicity. Statistics prove with inexorable cogency that virtue, and especially female virtue, is on much the same level in town and country, and that the great sin of great cities is also the great sin of rude and sequestered villages. The letter of Mr. PERCIVAL which we publish today only goes to confirm a melancholy truth already established by overwhelming evidence, and to remind us that one of the most picturesque districts in England is known to the REGISTRAR-GENERAL as one of the most dissolute.⁸⁴

Beneath the slightly mocking tone of the leader-writer we can glimpse a broader ideological conflict. To so quintessentially metropolitan an organ as the Times the very notion of 'rural felicity' at the lower social levels was no doubt rich in absurdity. 'The morals of rural districts are usually such as cannot well be made worse by any change', noted Harriet Martineau,⁸⁵ a writer closely identified with the economic doctrines of the Manchester School. The Times similarly takes delight in being able to undermine precisely what Wordsworth had claimed was 'a social condition which no one who is competent to judge of it will be willing to subvert'.⁸⁶ It is a calculated rebuff to a public by

now thoroughly implicated in an idyll of pastoral felicity centred on the Lake District, and accustomed to revere its exemplary moral soundness. And with this more distant knowledge: that if the Lake District is once toppled from its pre-eminence, a whole rural myth is endangered. It is a vivid reminder of the ceaseless struggle for mastery between the centre and the eccentric.

CHAPTER 1

'AN APPROPRIATE HUMAN CENTRE': WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

[Wordsworth] ought to be treated like a vast enclosed section of landscape, into which the reader may be turned to ramble at his pleasure.

(Henry James, 1875)¹

i) The Eccentric Domain

... we returned by the way we came, and had a fair prospect of the dale of Grasmere, a fine little plain, mostly of meadow, in the middle of which is a pretty hill, clad with wood, which might have become a manor house, but that I can hear of none in this place.

(Thomas Machell, 1692)²

Wordsworth died at Rydal Mount on St George's Day, April 23rd 1850. The date - which is also traditionally the

anniversary of Shakespeare's birth - is dedicated to the personification of English nationhood, and hints at binding a people in forms of customary observance befitting the departure of a Poet Laureate. Other notable events cluster around the watershed of mid-century, giving substance to the impression of a centralising and integrative process at work in English life. 1851 saw the opening of the Great Exhibition, giving pride of place to the multifarious wares of the most prolific industrial nation the world had yet seen. In the same year the decennial census recorded statistically the decisive transition from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban society.³ At a more local level, in 1847 a branch railway was opened from Kendal to Windermere, drawing the hitherto bypassed Lake District into the new metropolitan web of rapid and cheap communications.⁴

The underlying causes of this process were many and complex, but certain salient features may be discerned. Throughout the 19th century - but most dramatically in the first half - the balance of economic activity in England was shifting from the countryside to the town. Industry and commerce, which new forms of organisation were turning into overwhelmingly urban activities, were expanding at an unprecedented rate, and with the advantages of higher capitalisation and the more

effective integration of productive processes, were rapidly extinguishing the smaller-scale - but collectively far from negligible - industrial activities of the countryside. At the same time, advances in agricultural productivity, brought about by increased land utilisation and by improved methods of cultivation and stock-rearing, were being outstripped by the swelling of a hungry urban populace. England moved from being a net exporter of wheat to being a net importer in the course of the Napoleonic Wars; from the late-1840s domestic agriculture could also no longer guarantee to supply the nation's meat needs.⁵ Even while agricultural output continued to grow, it accounted for a dwindling share of the national product. It followed that the interests of the landed aristocracy, who derived the greater part of their wealth and prestige from the land, should no longer dictate the nation's fiscal arrangements. In particular, the import duty which protected British corn producers from overseas competition for much of the 18th and early 19th centuries, began to be seen as an archaic impediment to industrial growth, artificially inflating the cost of labour (which contemporary economists insisted was subsistence-related). Nor were the architects of this growth content with merely subduing the domestic economy to modern principles of free trade: they looked forward to the birth of a global metropolis. In a mercantile

age, argued Cobden, the greatest of the Anti-Corn Law League orators, an aristocracy found to be 'obstructing that progressive spirit which is calculated to knit nations more closely together by commercial intercourse' has forfeited its right to supremacy.⁶

It was this fundamental recognition that in 1846, after a long and bitterly-resisted campaign, secured the repeal of the Corn Laws. Economic historians may question the ultimate significance of repeal - certainly the collapse of domestic agriculture that the defenders of the legislation feared did not materialise until some three decades later - but there is no disputing the importance of the Corn Law agitation as a forum for negotiating the redistribution of economic power in the land. It is no coincidence that the Anti-Corn Law League came to be indissolubly identified with the manufacturing and commercial classes of Manchester, for its victory marked a crucial stage in the enfranchisement of this new and powerful interest group. The significance of the victory was not lost on contemporary writers. Benjamin Disraeli, close to the centre of power and alert to the signs of the times, had already offered his vision of the accommodation that landed and industrial interests would have to effect in the marriage that closes his novel, Sybil (1845).⁷

The Great Exhibition acted as a symbolic recognition of this epochal transition. Exhibitors were invited from all over the world, but half of the exhibition space was reserved for domestic and colonial products; and although its scope extended to every branch of the arts, sciences, agriculture and industry, it was the decorative arts and manufactures that predominated, as a glance at the Exhibition Catalogue reveals.⁸ Contemporary accounts record that the Machinery Court was much the most popular attraction.⁹ Even the Exhibition's detractors had to acknowledge the decisive message that it conveyed. To Ruskin it was nothing short of 'a national museum ... in which a whole nation is interested'.¹⁰ More recently, the cultural historian Martin J Wiener has arrived at a similar conclusion: 'The Great Exhibition embodied to the world the new ideals that seemed to have become the national ideals of Victorian Britain'.¹¹ The unexpected decorum of the huge crowds of working-class visitors, just three years after the threatened Chartist insurrection of 1848, was ample confirmation of the fact.¹² The nation was visibly coalescing around common goals, ideals and cultural self-images, to a degree not hitherto seen; provincial diversity was giving way to an identifiably national ethos - and one in which the manufacturing and commercial interest was now paramount.

In purely cultural terms it was a shortlived triumph for the new men: Wiener's emphasis is pointedly located in that 'seemed'. Never again did it prove possible to mobilise such a huge popular and educated endorsement of the technological image of English identity. With the deaths, in 1859 and 1860, of the engineers Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Robert Stephenson and Joseph Locke - the presiding spirits of the new age - Wiener sees the 'high noon of British technological leadership' passing its zenith and giving way to a long twilight of increasing marginalisation (pp 29-30). The successors to the railway and steamship builders, and to those other Captains of Industry of the first phase of the Industrial Revolution, failed to articulate a sufficiently persuasive vision of their own role, choosing instead to conceal the industrial or commercial sources of their wealth beneath the genteel panoply of landed estates.

But even while it was suppressing, culturally, the underlying sources of its pre-eminence in the world, English society was acquiring an ever more pronounced urban cast. For one enduring consequence of this change in the relative status of town and country was that it conferred on the town the power to redefine the country in its own terms. As the relative productive importance of the countryside dwindled, and as improved

communications made it more accessible, it became increasingly an object for consumption by the new urban (and suburban) majority. Work was conducted in the towns; the countryside provided the space for recreation. Tourism is, in any case, a function of leisure (as opposed to its impoverished counterpart, idleness), and as a mass pursuit is thus dependent upon the enhanced productivity brought about by the industrial and agrarian revolutions. At the lower social levels we note the growing provision, in the course of the 19th century, for Bank Holiday excursions from major population centres (or Wakes Week excursions from the industrial towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire¹³). Higher up the social ladder middle-class tourism diversified from its earlier deferential concentration on the aristocratic spas and seaside resorts,¹⁴ and it became commoner for rural solitude to be held at a premium. An analogous process affected the arts: 'rural poetry', wrote Samuel Palmer in the middle of the 19th century, 'is the pleasure ground of those who live in cities';¹⁵ and to Charles Kingsley city art galleries were the townsman's 'garden of pleasure'.¹⁶

Burke, analysing the causes of the deteriorating relations between England and her American colonies in the 1770s, wisely observed that 'In large bodies, the circulation of power must be less vigorous at the

extremities'.¹⁷ Communications have always been crucial in determining the degree to which the centre can impose its authority on the provinces. In pre-modern England it was necessary for the legal and administrative machinery of state to perambulate the nation at intervals to compensate for the chronic inadequacy of the medieval transport system. The history of the development of London reveals the operation of the same constraints.¹⁸ Until the late-18th century London remained confined to a comparatively small area, since its inhabitants were, with rare exceptions, compelled to walk to their place of work. With the advent of the fast horse-drawn coach the potential for limited commuting over quite long distances first arose. Thus in the 1820s Cobbett found stockjobbers coaching in daily from as far afield as Brighton on a particularly well-serviced route.¹⁹ But it required the greater speed and intricacy of the metropolitan railway network to make such lengthy journeys generally practicable throughout the whole of what have become - in direct consequence - the Home Counties.

There is no question but that the railways were of paramount importance in facilitating the superimposition of a metropolitan culture, not only in the immediate vicinity of London, but throughout the nation. This was not always viewed with complacency, however. One writer

of mid-century recalled the apocalyptic prospect that the railway had seemed to hold out in the 1830s:

The whole country was to be traversed and dissected by iron roads. Wherever there was a hamlet or a cattle track, a market or a manufactory, there was to be a railroad; physical objects and private rights were straws under the chariot wheels of the Fire King. Mountains were to be cut through; valleys were to be lifted; the skies were to be scaled; the earth was to be tunnelled; parks, gardens and ornamental grounds were to be broken into; the shrieking engine was to carry the riot of the town into the sylvan retreats of pastoral life; sweltering trains were to penetrate solitudes hitherto secured to the ruins of antiquity; hissing locomotives were to rush over the tops of houses
....²⁰

The massive expansion of line mileage in the two decades between 1830 and 1850 did indeed place most parts of England within a few miles of a railhead, and made more certain and complete the dissemination of an essentially urban and industrial culture. The railway companies established the most comprehensive network of rapid transport which had yet existed, more flexible than the canals, faster and more regular than the turnpikes. Railways were in the vanguard of industrial progress, not only in their use of steam for motive power, but in their reliance on electric telegraphy, and such

instruments of standardisation as track gauge, timetables - and their necessary concomitant, standard time.²¹ At the same time the railways contributed more obviously by breaking the monopoly stranglehold of key routes in the canal network, for although the canals continued for some decades to carry an increasing freight traffic - albeit at sharply reduced profits - it has been judged that 'the main increments in the demand for transport were sustained by the railways, without which the whole momentum of industrialization and urbanization would have been slowed'.²² There is some evidence that the railways may have done more than simply encourage an already advanced process. It has been suggested, for example, that the demand for iron and for labour, coupled with the initially spectacular returns on capital, rescued industrial capitalism from the depths of its worst crisis of stagnation (1841-42), and hence from all the social and political consequences that economists anticipated from the so-called 'stationary state'.²³

It is true that for many years the railway, although the most democratic of the new modes of travel, remained beyond the reach of many incomes. But for the moneyed classes its consequences were momentous. As the Scottish geologist, Hugh Miller, put it in 1846, 'The country, measured by day's journeys, has grown nine-tenths

smaller than it was in the times of Fielding and Smollett'.²⁴ Traffic in people, and traffic in raw and finished goods, completed the process of social and economic integration, ushering in an essentially homogeneous intellectual and material culture in which the influence of the centre predominated. Of course one can exaggerate the impact of these developments on ordinary lives; one can object that regional and local identities remain alive and compelling to this day. But in innumerable ways it is apparent that a national, metropolitan ethos had decisively supervened by about 1850. Wordsworth was not, therefore, wide of the mark, when in 1844 he singled out railways as the 'favourite instruments' of this new order.²⁵ For the first time in England a recognisably metropolitan ideology and culture was in a position to claim the whole extent of the country as its province. As Robert Vaughan proclaimed in 1843, 'society generally has never been so leavened with the spirit natural to cities'.²⁶

Such a claim did not meet with universal acquiescence. In all walks of life vested interests both great and small underwent painful adjustments as regional economies which had hitherto enjoyed a degree of autonomy were increasingly exposed to competition from better placed or more advanced regions elsewhere. But Wordsworth in later life was primarily perturbed by the

facility that rail travel granted to mass tourism. It was not just the impetus that it gave to the generation of wealth as such, but the wider opportunities for spending that wealth on Lakes excursions. Like Ruskin, later in the century in the Italian cities, Wordsworth continued to insist on discrimination as a necessary qualification for tourists. Ostensibly, he conceded that the Lake District was 'a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy'.²⁷ But we note the shadow of a reservation in the remark: behind the appeal to universal faculties there is, we sense, a necessary standard of taste that must be enforced. His objection to the Kendal and Windermere Railway was precisely that it would bring indiscriminating visitors on a huge scale (he was thinking of the proposals of 'affluent and benevolent manufacturers of Yorkshire and Lancashire' to send their entire workforces on outings²⁸). And he saw in this the prospect, not of gladdened eyes and hearts, but only of the more effectual attainment of utilitarian ends. Most of all, it would impair the enjoyment of those more discriminating kinds of tourist ('the very word precludes the notion of a railway'²⁹) which he took to have little adverse impact on the region:

I have been endeavouring to support moral sentiments and intellectual pleasures of a high order against an enmity which seems growing more formidable every day; I mean 'Utilitarianism', serving as a mask for cupidity and gambling speculations. My business with this evil lies in its reckless mode of action by Railways, now its favourite instruments.³⁰

'... we have too much hurrying about in these islands', he declares finally; 'much for idle pleasure, and more from over activity in the pursuit of wealth, without regard to the good or happiness of others'.³¹

Nearly fifty years before the 'Letters to the Morning Post' appeared, when Wordsworth wrote 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' (1797-8), the 'hurrying about' was scarcely less urgently performed, albeit the available technology - the mail-coach and turnpike road - was less sophisticated. Even before the advent of the railway England boasted probably the most mobile society in the world, the result in part of relative affluence, but also of fifty years that had seen massive infrastructural improvements - the multiplication of turnpike roads; the development, from 1784, of rapid stagecoach services; and the creation of an extensive system of inland navigation. An American visitor, Louis Simond, remarked as early as 1810 how

nobody is provincial in this country. You meet nowhere with those persons who never were out of their native place, and whose habits are wholly local - nobody above poverty who has not visited London once in his life; and most of those who can, visit it once a year. To go up to town from 100 or 200 miles distance, is a thing done on a sudden, and without any previous deliberation. In France, the people of the provinces used to make their will before they undertook such an expedition.³²

The proliferation of railways from the 1830s onwards merely continued an upsurge in personal mobility that was already well under way in the heyday of the stagecoach. Rightly emphasising the importance of the railways in transforming Victorian England, we tend to forget that the previous phase of the transport revolution was scarcely less effectual in sweeping away the barriers to a socially and economically integrated nation. To cite just one example, rail travel had cut the journey time from London to Manchester by two-thirds (from twenty hours to just over six) by 1850. But that figure of twenty hours, attainable by 1830 through the combination of turnpikes and fast stagecoaches, represented in its turn a reduction of a little more than two-thirds from the three days which had been normal in 1750.³³ That the imaginative impact of these earlier advances was comparable to that of the

railways is amply attested by the literature of the period. To Walter Scott, writing in 1818, it appeared that 'The times have changed in nothing more ... than in the rapid conveyance of intelligence and communication betwixt one part of Scotland and another'. In place of the 'ancient, slow, and sure modes of conveyance' familiar in the past, now 'mail-coach races against mail-coach, and high-flyer against high-flyer, through the most remote districts of Britain'.³⁴

Increased opportunities for travel did not, on the whole, blunt the susceptibilities of travellers to the variety and intensity of the experiences that it afforded. On the contrary, the early phases of the transport revolution were, if anything, characterised by an accentuated awareness of place, and of the literary possibilities of topography. Faster journey times initially made more abrupt and stimulating the transition from one kind of landscape to another. Regions hitherto scarcely trodden by outsiders, except in the occasional performance of business or duty, were actively sought out, explored and, in due course, assigned a kind of value reflecting the aesthetic currency of the time.

At first sight this may seem an odd context to outline for 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'. In the note dictated to Isabella Fenwick in 1843, Wordsworth recalled the public pronouncements that occasioned it: 'The political economists were about that time beginning their war on mendicity in all its forms, and by implication, if not directly, on Almsgiving also'.³⁵ But so brief an account of the poem's genesis hardly does justice to the breadth of its engagement with the new order.

There is nothing to suggest that Wordsworth was widely read in political economy at any time of his life, but if we may be uncertain as to his acquaintance with the detailed propositions of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations (1776), it is equally evident that he was more than familiar with their general purport. Certainly John Wilson seems to have struck a raw nerve when he suggested that 'The Idiot Boy' was indebted to Smith's other major work, the Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759).³⁶ Wordsworth retorted with a vigorous defence of his poem, in which he castigated those who

cannot bear to see delicate and refined feelings ascribed to men in low conditions of society, because their vanity and self-love tell them that these belong only to themselves and men like themselves in dress, station and way of life.

And he went on to attack Smith by name, 'who, we are told, could not endure the ballad of **Clym of the Clough**, because the author had not written like a gentleman'.³⁷ The precise issue on which the conflict arises is, of course, highly significant. Clym of the Clough is one of the outlaw heroes of the Border Ballads, and a version of his exploits appears in Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765), a work which effectively restored the old folk poetry of the land to educated perusal, and made possible the experimentation with ballad form that issued in the Lyrical Ballads of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Wordsworth detects in Smith's position a rigid class antagonism that is directly contrary to his own enterprise (see Appendix 2). This hint of an emerging polarisation of literature and economic thought is confirmed by a passage in The Prelude, in which Wordsworth pointedly attributes his acquisition of 'A more judicious knowledge of what makes / The dignity of individual man' to his

having brought to test
Of solid life and true result the books
Of modern statist's, and thereby perceived
The utter hollowness of what we name
'The Wealth of Nations', where alone that wealth
Is lodged, and how increased.³⁸

Wordsworth's Beggar, characteristically, has his origins in 'solid life': 'Observed, and with great benefit to my own heart', the Fenwick Note records, 'when I was a child'.³⁹ (The 'Old' of the title, it is worth remembering, qualifies 'Cumberland' as much as it does the 'Beggar'.) The poem is in part an appeal for recognition of the social utility of mendicity within a value system radically opposed to that of political economy. But behind the overt appeal on the Beggar's behalf Wordsworth is engaged in subtler strategies of his own.

In his famous account of nail-making Smith identified the division of labour as the single most vital prerequisite for economic advance.⁴⁰ Certain necessary conclusions followed from this proposition. Division of labour could be achieved by the agglomeration of productive activities, by the introduction of mechanical innovations, by the incorporation of hitherto disparate and insular economic regions into a single, larger economy, more capable of diversification, and through population growth. But the realisation of its full potential depended on the availability of adequate communications for the interchange of goods. In the second half of the 18th century water-borne transport offered the most economical transport rates, as Smith demonstrated.⁴¹

But where coastal shipping and inland navigation could not reach, it was to modern roads that Smith, and the mercantile community that shared his aspirations, looked for a way of circumventing the limitations on trade imposed by the outmoded packhorse routes.

The turnpike road thus offers a particularly appropriate setting for Wordsworth's opposition to Smith: the symbol of an expanding commerce, it was also a frequent object of resentment as the alien imposition of central, rather than local, government. For although turnpike trusts were generally sponsored by local merchants, manufacturers and the wealthier farmers, they reflected the aspirations of these sponsors to a wider sphere of trade, and appealed to Westminster for ratification. In Cumberland the Lowther, Senhouse and Curwen families, who had extensive interests in mining, shipping and progressive large-scale agriculture, were prominent in seeking improvements to the notoriously bad road network of the region.⁴² Various roads were turnpiked (i e made over to turnpike trusts empowered to levy tolls for their maintenance) in the second half of the 18th century, including the Kendal-Keswick route through Grasmere in 1761.⁴³ But these measures were not unopposed. Particularly in regions hitherto poorly served by communications, they exposed deep divisions between the smaller farmers and tradesmen who lacked

the capital, professional skills, or perhaps just the initiative to participate effectively in a wider market economy, and their larger, wealthier and generally more enterprising counterparts, who chafed under the existing constraints. The compilers of a 19th-century Directory of Cumberland recalled that 'the exaction of tolls gave rise to much popular fury, the people then not clearly seeing that the advantages obtained by good roads greatly counterbalanced the amount of tolls levied for their formation and repair'.⁴⁴

'The Old Cumberland Beggar' is addressed to those 'Who have a broom still ready in your hands / To rid the world of nuisances' (lines 69-70). Wordsworth's project, by contrast, is to **cumber** the land with obstacles. In the path of those who would smooth the highway of economic progress he places his Beggar. Unproductive, parasitic, existing - and scarcely more - on the margins of society, he violates every principle of sound political economy. Even his 'computation', where it should be double-entried, is merely 'idle' (12). The recipient of alms, he cannot even husband these properly, but the crumbs are 'scatter'd from his palsied hand' that cannot 'prevent the waste' (16,17). The constitutive language of Smithian economics is overturned in these deft phrases.

Other forms of subversion may be distinguished. We first encounter the Beggar seated upon a mounting block intended for the use of travellers on horseback. Being "in the way", it transpires, is one of his principal attributes, but it is productive, not of irritability, but of a softening of feelings, and an abatement of the shocks of progress. The potency of the Beggar, in his very destitution and impotence, is of the kind identified by Wordsworth in the 'Essays on Epitaphs' - the potency of virtue that is 'unconscious of the might of her own prowess'.⁴⁵ Thus the mail-coach, closing on him from behind,

Turns with less noisy wheels to the road-side
And passes gently by ...

(41-42)

Unknowingly, the Beggar practises a form of benign subversion - and again when he elicits the pity of the tollgate-keeper, who

quits her work,
And lifts the latch for him that he may pass.

(35-36)

The nourishment of finer, more humane feelings is also the subversion of the legally constituted authority to

levy tolls in the interests of improved communications. His is a milder form of the symbolic overthrow of turnpike fixtures carried out by rioters in the "Rebecca" disturbances of the early 1840s in South Wales.⁴⁶

The Beggar, token of 'the meanest of created things' (74), but nevertheless the bearer of 'a spirit and pulse of good' (77), recalls people to a sense of their common humanity. He is a counter to the exponents of political economy both by passive example and by active (though unconscious) intervention. Wordsworth identifies in the mercantile philosophy of Adam Smith and others that gave such an impetus to the spread of turnpikes and improved communications generally an exaltation of self-interest as an absolute benefit, and a denial of the validity of his own notion - 'That we have all of us one human heart'.⁴⁷ The consequence of allowing Wordsworth's position may be a degree of economic retardation; but it is also the enforcement of that 'Sidelong and half-reverted' (32) look that offers the necessary controlling perception in a period of rapid social and economic change.

In his Beggar - and in the district that identifies him - Wordsworth found a location for his centre of resistance. Not since An Evening Walk, published in

1793, had he made more than incidental use of a Lake District setting, and the comparison is striking. The earlier poem makes detailed reference to a specific locality, but remains constrained by the limitations of the loco-descriptive form. 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' does no more than announce its locality through the epithet of the title, yet it heralds new and exciting possibilities for the use of place in a critique of wider trends. There is still a questing after proper form, evident in the perfunctory - and in the end redundant - suggestion in the first line of a narrative framework for the poem, as well as in the uneasy blend of the descriptive and the didactic that Lamb criticised.⁴⁸ But it establishes many of the features of poems to come.

We can see in detail here, under the pressure of a specific antipathy of the bitterest kind, what Raymond Williams has described as

the recognition of the practical separation of certain moral and intellectual activities from the driven impetus of a new kind of society; ... [and] the emphasis of these activities, as a court of human appeal, to be set over the processes of practical social judgement and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative.⁴⁹

It is worth noting that Williams is careful in his definition of the agency of change: the 'driven impetus' that he isolates cannot be reduced to "the Industrial Revolution", though it clearly gestures towards the aspects of mechanical innovation that underlie it. The dichotomy of Industry and Nature, it should remind us, was polemically, and not empirically fashioned. The Industrial Revolution, narrowly defined, was part of much broader transformations, of which it was the effect as well as the cause. For example, as Williams has insisted elsewhere, the capitalist financial and commercial institutions which made the specifically industrial components of the Industrial Revolution feasible, were already deeply embedded in the structures of agrarian England by the middle of the 18th century.⁵⁰ Conversely, the increasing dependence of a significant sector of British agriculture on the findings of soil chemistry, on steam power and other "industrial" processes is too often overlooked.

Wordsworth, in the Lyrical Ballads Preface of 1800, gropes towards identifying causal links between the various enmeshed components of this complex. But his analysis remains unsystematic. Williams candidly renounces such an attempt at the outset. In practice, an honest obfuscation such as his 'driven impetus' may

be as much as we can reasonably expect, given the manifold complexities of the subject; and even if this term is allowed, there remain considerable problems in defining its relationship to wider social formations and individual experience.⁵¹ However, once the field of economic analysis is restored to that with which Wordsworth would have been familiar, we can more easily comprehend the extent to which the countryside, quite as much as the town, was actually an arena for Williams's 'separation', rather than one pole of an already existent dichotomy. Certainly this was Wordsworth's perception. The lines of connection between industrial and agricultural advances were not yet blurred by subsequent mystifications of rural life in naive opposition to the urban and industrial. A spade was still a spade, and a larch plantation (which to wealthy landowners in the Lake District - among them Bishop Watson of Llandaff - offered the appealing prospect of converting barren hillsides into cash crops) was to Wordsworth still a 'vegetable manufactory'.⁵²

The main thrust of Smith's argument concerning agriculture generally is summed up in the polemical title of his chapter - 'How the Commerce of the Towns Contributed to the Improvement of the Country'. Here he asserts that

Merchants are commonly ambitious of becoming country gentlemen, and when they do, they are generally the best of all improvers. A merchant is accustomed to employ his money chiefly in profitable projects, whereas a mere country gentleman is accustomed to employ it chiefly in expense.⁵³

In spite of the capitalist structures of agriculture, then, the country remains relatively less innovative and dynamic in Smith's eyes than the city, and perpetuates, in a manner that is rapidly becoming eccentric, economic habits formed during an earlier stage of development. In particular, Smith is actuated by the reflection that in economies of this kind, with poorly developed commerce and manufactures, there is little alternative to the expenditure of surpluses in liberality, rather than their accumulation in the form of the capital on which economic progress depends:

In a country which has neither foreign commerce, nor any of the finer manufactures, a great proprietor, having nothing for which he can exchange the greater part of the produce of his lands which is over and above the maintenance of the cultivators, consumes the whole in rustic hospitality at home.⁵⁴

And he adds: 'A hospitality nearly of the same kind was exercised not many years ago in many different parts of

the highlands of Scotland'.⁵⁵ The same, on a proportionate scale, is true of the smaller landed proprietor, and the Lake District was another of its last preserves in the British Isles. The poet Thomas Gray, writing in 1769, was overwhelmed with the simple fare - 'butter, that Siserah would have jump'd at, tho' not in a lordly dish, bowls of milk, thin oaten-cakes, & ale' - with which a Borrowdale statesman regaled him.⁵⁶

In the Guide to the Lakes Wordsworth summarises the Lake District's eccentric version of English agrarian history. Largely ignored by the Romans, and furnishing after their departure 'a protection to some unsubdued Britons' against Saxon and Dane'⁵⁷, the Lakes remained beyond the pale of centralised English power until 'times long posterior to the conquest by the Normans, when their feudal polity was regularly established'.⁵⁸ Indeed for some years after the Norman Conquest it continued to form part of the Scottish kingdom of Strathclyde. The allocation of lands to feudal lords being comparatively late, and the impenetrability and poor prospect of reward in 'the more retired regions' offering little inducement for encroachment, the remoter valleys

must have been neglected or shunned even by the persons whose baronial or signorial rights extended over them, and left, doubtless, partly as a place of refuge for outlaws and robbers, and partly granted out for the more settled habitation of a few vassals following the employment of shepherds or woodlanders.⁵⁹

These 'few vassals' were given the opportunity to establish their independence by the constant threat of Scottish raids. As part of a militarised border, the region perpetuated patterns of feudal obligation mediated not through tribute of labour and goods, as became almost universal elsewhere, but through the occasional performance of military service. So long as defence remained the overriding consideration it suited the interest of baronial authority to populate these districts as densely as the productivity of the land would permit, hence the consistently small average size of the holdings.⁶⁰

As the threat subsided following the union of the English and Scottish crowns, the service obligation was eventually commuted to a nominal cash fine. The unique form of land tenure thus produced - known variously as tenant-right or customary tenure - was eventually ratified in law,⁶¹ and became the foundation of the "statesman" class which formed the characteristic

social base of the remoter Lake District valleys in the 17th and 18th centuries. Although not a freeholder in the strict sense, the statesman's title to his property was effectively the same. In the course of the following century many statesmen demonstrated their new self-confidence in the construction of substantial farmhouses, and the enclosure of new tracts of fell, creating the now familiar landscape of the Lake District valleys that Wordsworth celebrated in his Guide, in which the works of man are 'gently incorporated into the scenery of Nature'.⁶²

Recent historical research has revealed that the golden age of the statesmen emerged remarkably swiftly from an economy in which, as late as 1600, famine had remained endemic,⁶³ and even at the peak of their prosperity the remoter Lake District valleys, with their thin stony soils and brief growing season, can have afforded only a frugal surplus over and above the bare necessities. But this was compensated by a remarkably homogeneous social composition - the legacy of the original military tenures - which precluded the kind of social discontents that afflicted other regions:

They had ... their rural chapel, and of course their minister, in clothing or in manner of life, in no respect differing from themselves, except on the Sabbath-day; this was the sole distinguished

individual among them; everything else, person and possession, exhibited a perfect equality.⁶⁴

The remotest spots developed the purest form of this society:

Towards the head of these Dales was found a perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists, among whom the plough of each man was confined to the maintenance of his own family, or to the occasional accommodation of his neighbour. Two or three cows furnished each family with milk and cheese. The chapel was the only edifice that presided over these dwellings, the supreme head of this pure Commonwealth; the members of which existed in the midst of a powerful empire like an ideal society or an organized community, whose constitution had been imposed or regulated by the mountains which protected it.⁶⁵

Although, as will appear later (see below, pp 165 & 169), there were exceptions to this rule, even in the vicinity of Grasmere, Wordsworth's general point is a fair one. And its significance is not simply that this society approximated to the ideal egalitarian, self-sufficient schemes of social visionaries, whether of the 19th century or the 17th.⁶⁶ The absence of the higher strata of English society effectively confirmed the region in its eccentric relationship to the centre, since, as Peter Laslett has observed, in early modern

England it is only through the gentry that individual communities participated in the collective life of the nation.⁶⁷ This society, with its characteristic spirit of independence arising naturally from a stable and secure tenurial system, endured virtually unchanged, according to Wordsworth, until about the time of his birth, when outside pressures - road-building, tourism, and advances in agriculture and industry - first began to disrupt its settled regime.⁶⁸

The emphasis Wordsworth lays upon the Lake District being spared the unhappy legacy of the "Norman yoke" earns him a place in the long line of dissentient voices, dating back at least to the 17th century, who charged the iniquities of the English social system to the introduction of Norman feudalism.⁶⁹ It is interesting to note, therefore, that the supposedly more equitable Anglo-Saxon polity on which the tradition is predicated, is explicitly dismissed by Adam Smith as a chimera.⁷⁰ Nor, we can be sure, would Smith have shared Wordsworth's admiration for the subsistence farming and broader pursuit of self-sufficiency enforced upon the statesmen by the modest size of their properties and the physical impediments to the movement of goods. At every point, Smith and Wordsworth are at odds. Wordsworth holds up for admiration (in a poem such as 'Michael') an image of

the family not only constituting the primary economic unit, but performing on its own nearly all the skills necessary to feed, clothe, house and equip its various members. For Smith this is little removed from savagery, innocent of the least suspicion of the division of labour, on which the multiplication of productive capacity is dependent. The sheer diversity of the tasks the statesman and his family are required to perform is anathema to him, for whom it is axiomatic that 'A man commonly saunters a little in turning his hand from one sort of employment to another.'⁷¹.

If we turn to works more particularly devoted to agriculture we find a similar trend. Keith Tribe, in an interesting comparison of 17th- and 18th-century agricultural treatises, observes a marked shift in the presentation of farming as an economic activity. In the earlier century, he maintains, writers fail altogether to constitute 'an economic terrain', because they represent agriculture as merely the husbandman's performance of his duties to his household, 'without reference to the place of this household in a national or even local economy'.⁷² Rent is conceived, not as an economic, but 'as a juridical relation', only half divorced from a feudal framework of obligation.⁷³ Although there is abundant evidence for market-oriented agriculture earlier than the seventeenth century, it is

clear that this model reflects the continuing predominance of an essentially self-sufficient subsistence agriculture, in which the emerging pattern of exchanges was as yet undiscerned. From the mid-18th century onwards, by contrast, 'a radically new discursive formation ... displaces the husbandman in his fields and the households as the principle means of economic organisation'.⁷⁴ Farming comes increasingly to be seen, in common with other economic activities, as a **process**, in which 'the farmer is ... part of a series of exchanges in the economy which combine to effect the circulation of the product'.⁷⁵

This displacement of one model by another was not so smooth or complete in reality as it may appear in the pages of prescriptive agricultural treatises, especially in remote areas like the Lake District. When Defoe had cast his shrewd tradesman's eye over the Lake District in the early years of the 18th century he had shuddered - and not with the pleasurable **frisson** of later tourists - at the 'inhospitable terror' which the mountains inspired, and dismissed them as 'all barren and wild, of no use or advantage either to man or beast'.^{75a} The progress of agricultural knowledge revealed new opportunities for gain in what had always been regarded as unremunerative areas of the country, but this knowledge was not instantaneously or uniformly

disseminated. The detailed local enquiries into agriculture which were undertaken from the 1760s onwards reveal sharp conflicts of interest and ideology extending over many decades. J Bailey and G Culley, who compiled the General View of the Agriculture of the County of Cumberland for the Board of Agriculture in 1794, provide vivid corroboration of Smith's general thesis that agriculture is frequently retarded by the conservatism of farmers who fail to recognise the scope for advancement offered by improving contacts with a wider market and fresh ideas. In Cumberland, a large and geographically diverse county, they distinguish three distinct classes of farmer: 'the occupiers of large farms; the small proprietors (provincially "lairds" or "statesmen"), and the small farmers'.⁷⁶ Of these, they remark that the first, who are confined almost exclusively to the coastal plain, welcome improved methods of husbandry,⁷⁷ while the last, being without capital, have no choice but to produce for present necessity, and therefore cannot be blamed for their backwardness. But, they lament, 'To the small proprietors' - the class most characteristic of the upland districts, the same "statesmen" on whom devolved so much of Wordsworth's faith and esteem - to these,

Agriculture, we presume, is little indebted for its advancement: these "statesmen" seem to inherit

with the estates of their ancestors, their notions of cultivating them, and are almost as much attached to one as the other.⁷⁸

In the lowland areas Bailey and Culley could record a mixture of admiration and regret; in the heart of Wordsworth's Lake District they met with nothing but exasperation at the impediments in the way of a modern husbandry. One celebrated example will suffice to give the flavour of their dismay:

At Penruddock we observed some singularly rough-legged, ill-formed sheep. On asking an old farmer from whence they had that breed, or where they got their tups? he innocently replied, **Lord, Sir, they are sik as God set upon the land; we never change any!**⁷⁹

Twenty-five years earlier, in 1769, the progressive agriculturist Arthur Young had turned his attentions to the area. He too found the recalcitrance of the upland farmers frustrating because of the improvements which he believed were obtainable from modern farming methods. On the road between Shap and Kendal, for example, he found

a continued chain of mountainous moors, totally uncultivated; one dreary prospect, that makes one

melancholy to behold; for the soil itself is highly capable of cultivation and of profitable uses.⁸⁰

Reluctance to implement scientific crop-rotations comes in for special opprobrium: 'This is execrable', he remarks of one place; and of another (with more than a hint of Cobbett's robust style) - 'for this these slovens deserve to be hanged'.⁸¹ But Young's Tour, as his title-page announces, is interspersed with observations of a more diverse nature, and even includes 'Views of some picturesque Scenes, which occurred in the Course of the Journey', sketched (indifferently, it should be said) by the author himself. There is also, submerged in his text in the form of two immense footnotes (a firm typographical indication of its secondary importance) an extended account of the scenery of the Lakes. The two parts of his dual narrative inevitably pull in different directions, and it is in the tension that they produce that much of the interest of his observations lies. And yet while the form of notation that Young adopted to present agricultural data served as the basis for similar reports for nearly half a century to come, his attempts at topographical description are singularly lacklustre. In the course of his tour he visited Derwentwater, Borrowdale, Ullswater, Hawes Water and

Windermere, and thus saw at first hand many of the most celebrated sights of the region. But even if we set aside the lamentable inadequacy of his topographical prose (a favourite phrase is '... in the most picturesque manner imaginable'⁸²), there is much that betrays the continuing accounting of the agriculturist. His frustration with primitive techniques of husbandry is compounded by his irritation at the seemingly uncultivated local placenames. 'I should apologize', he writes, 'for many barbarous, and probably, wrong spelt names, for they are taken from the people at Keswick. I have no where met with them in print'.⁸³ And again, later: 'I am sensible throughout this Tour of misspelt names; but many of the places I mention are not to be found in maps, I am obliged, therefore, to write from the ear'.⁸⁴ Unimprovement, he found, throws up other weeds besides backward husbandry.

Sometimes Young employs the same criteria for judging landscape in his topographical as in his strictly agricultural prose. Thus although we find him registering here and there an appreciation of the sublime that is entirely distinct from his professional interests, his ideal in landscape remains the *paysage riant* - the 'elegant waves of cultivated inclosures' with which he is familiar from the softer English shires.⁸⁵ Like Cobbett fifty years later, he cannot

for long dissociate beauty in a landscape from its productive utility. He is in all things an improver - even in tourism. Many of the best viewpoints, he remarks, 'cannot be reached without the most perilous difficulty: To such points of view, winding paths should be cut in the rock, and resting places made for the weary traveller ...'.⁸⁶ The fundamental cast of Young's mind is perhaps most clearly revealed when he refers to Belle Isle on Windermere in the following terms:

I cannot but think it the sweetest spot, and full of the greatest capabilities, of any forty acres in the king's dominions.⁸⁷

'Capabilities', recalling the pre-eminent landscape gardener of the age, Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-83), unites both the aesthetic and the productive impulses to Improvement. Young's suggestion was quickly taken up. Indeed the house built on Belle Isle by a certain Mr English was, according to Wordsworth, 'The first house that was built in the Lake district for the sake of the beauty of the country',⁸⁸ and heralded that influx of permanent and seasonal residents which transformed the south-eastern side of the Lake District from the late-18th century onwards.

Less obvious than the encroachment of industry or "improving" ideas in agriculture, but as powerful in its effects on the Lake District, was the rise of tourism. In fact to separate tourism from its economic base is probably unhelpful. As one writer has noted:

The necessary cause of tourism ... appears to be a level of productivity sufficient to sustain leisure. If productivity is the key to tourism, then any analysis of touristic development without reference to productive centers that generate tourist needs and tourists is bound to be incomplete.⁸⁹

John Dalton's 'Descriptive Poem Addressed to Two Young Ladies at their Return from Viewing the Mines near Whitehaven' (1755) illustrates the point. Its description of the Vale of Keswick is one of the earliest expressions of delight in the sublimity of wild natural scenery, pre-dating Edmund Burke's Philosophical Enquiry by two years. The young ladies referred to were the Misses Lowther, whose family owned extensive and lucrative coal mines along the Cumberland coast.⁹⁰

The early history of tourism in the Lake District has received a good deal of attention in recent years, and it would be superfluous to repeat it here at length.⁹¹

It is well known that it went hand in hand with the emergence of aesthetic theories which cast a new and favourable light on the more rugged kinds of scenery. A handful of topographical pieces in the 1740s and '50s were augmented with increasing rapidity as the 18th century progressed. The poet Gray, whose 'Lake District Journal' (actually a series of letters to Thomas Wharton) had an incalculable influence on Wordsworth's perceptions, visited the Lakes in 1769.⁹² The antiquary Thomas Pennant made two visits, in 1769 and 1772.⁹³ In the latter year William Gilpin, who popularised a singular, and somewhat reductive, taste for the picturesque in a series of published tours, was also abroad in the Lakes.⁹⁴ Thomas West's Guide to the Lakes - the first work of its kind - appeared in 1778, and ran into numerous editions before being superseded by newer publications - including Wordsworth's own Guide - in the early decades of the 19th century.⁹⁵ These works were eagerly received by the growing number of young devotees of the new aesthetic fashion. Throughout the 1780s and '90s a steady stream of visitors flowed into the district, many of them recording their observations, as the fashion dictated, in manuscript or printed journals, locodescriptive poems, or articles for the Gentleman's Magazine - until by 1809 a public clearly satiated in some quarters was happy to welcome William Combe's satire on Gilpin and

similar travellers, The Tour of Dr Syntax in Search of the Picturesque.⁹⁶

Almost by definition those visitors who left a record of their travels were people of some education, and while observations of natural scenery bulk large in their accounts, many were also perceptive enough to attempt descriptions of the manners (or as we would now say, the culture) of the region in more searching ways. As English travellers came increasingly (after the suppression of the last Jacobite Rebellion in 1745) to satisfy their curiosity about Scottish scenery and culture, it was not surprising that they should be struck by a certain foreignness in the scarcely less remote Lake District. One feature in particular was guaranteed to evoke Scotland more than England, the more so after the appearance of Dr Johnson's Dictionary (1755) with its notorious definition of 'oats'. For the Lake District was one of the last parts of the country to retain oats as the staple bread corn, long after it had been supplanted by wheat in lowland England. As one contemporary remarked, 'The bread used by all persons of condition is made of wheat, but the common people eat oaten bread as do the dry-bellied Scots'.⁹⁷ Numerous travellers, beginning with Celia Fiennes in 1698, commented, often with puzzlement on the unconscionable predilection of the local

inhabitants for the "inferior" oaten clap-bread.⁹⁸ The fact that it was also prevalent over much of Northern England (see for example the illustration of oat-bread-making in Walker's Costumes of Yorkshire [1814])⁹⁹ apparently escaped their notice; it was a convenient way for the traveller to constitute the eccentricity of the region, and thus establish his claim to have passed outside the accustomed circle of his audience. The point to observe is that writing of this kind satisfies exogenous demands - performs a kind of expropriation. The description of the making of clap-bread in Pringle's account of the agriculture of Westmorland, as he candidly admits, 'owes its place here to the request of some persons of rank, who wished to see it recorded somewhere'.¹⁰⁰

A similar purpose was served by descriptions of the archaic social structure that prevailed in the Lakes, and particularly the quaint dialect nomenclature then still attached to it:

The honorary titles arising from the different degrees of allowed consequence or property in Cumberland, appear singular when compared with their usual acceptations in society. The mistress of a house is a **Dame**; every owner of a little landed property is a '**Statesman**'; his eldest son is the **Laird**, and where there is no son, the eldest daughter is born to the title of **Leady**. Thus we

may see a 'Statesman driving the plough, a Lord attending the market with vegetables, and a Lady laboring at the churn!¹⁰¹

It was a happy accident that these terms also served to dignify a population which represented one of the last considerable survivals of the once widespread yeoman stratum of English society, and thus tended to insulate it from the attentions of the class-orientated Victorian problematisation of the poor.

The French Revolution and the ensuing war with France closed the Continent to English visitors for the greater part of twenty-five years, and led to a corresponding upsurge in Lakes tourism. Already, in 1793, visitors to Keswick in the summer season exceeded the number of permanent inhabitants.¹⁰² A market was emerging for distinctly less esoteric amusements. Spectacular regattas were staged on Derwentwater and Windermere; gimmicks, such as discharging a pistol in a spot noted for its echo, became popular; and the social paraphernalia of an assembly room was established in the metropolis of early Lakes tourism, Keswick. It is a nice irony that a single word supplied the different needs of both tourists and inhabitants for an epithet to describe this new class of visitors. Bishop Watson of Llandaff, Wordsworth's near-neighbour and the target

of his early (unpublished) Letter, complained in 1805
of

an incessant flux of **Lakers**, (such is the denomination by which we distinguish those who come to see our country, intimating thereby not only that they are persons of taste, who wish to view our lakes, but idle persons who love **laking**: the old Saxon word to lake, or play, being of common use among school-boys in these parts).¹⁰³

One may guess that the schoolboys bestowed the sobriquet rather less politely than Bishop Watson, fashioning the eccentric energies of the dialect into a rearguard act of defiance.

By the turn of the century the cherished solitude of the Lakes was becoming harder and harder to find, especially on the south-eastern flank of the region most vulnerable to outside penetration; so much so that even outsiders were surprised by the changes. Louis Simond, who spent a leisurely month in the newly-fledged resort of Windermere in 1810, commented:

There are no retired places in England, no place where you see only the country and countrymen; you meet, on the contrary, everywhere town-people elegantly dressed and lodged, having a number of servants, and exchanging invitations. England, in short, seems to be the country-house of London;

cultivated for amusement only, and where all is subservient to picturesque luxury and ostentation. Here we are, in a remote corner of the country, among mountains, 278 miles from the capital - a place without commerce or manufactures, not on any high road; yet everything is much the same as in the neighbourhood of London.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, Canon Bouch has noted that the Western valleys remained little known, and as late as 1800 the central Scafell massif - the hub of Wordsworth's wheel in the comparison he adopts in the Guide - was so little known that it appears not at all or with wild inaccuracy on contemporary maps.¹⁰⁵

The subsequent history of the Lake District is quickly told. As the century progressed the summer influx of tourists came to be a recurring nightmare for the more settled inhabitants. 'The weather is beautiful for Tourists', Wordsworth wrote to Henry Crabb Robinson in June 1845, 'and the Country is going to swarm - but some of our Neighbours mean to fly - for instance Mrs A[rnold] and her brood'.¹⁰⁶ Clough, who spent several summers in the Lakes in the 1840s accompanying Oxford reading parties, lamented the increase in prices that resulted. The reason was not far to seek: in July 1844 he reported no less than two Oxford reading parties lodged in Grasmere, besides 'a Water doctor and his

train'.¹⁰⁷ Even allowing for the fact that many of these visitors would have come, like Clough, with contemplative purposes uppermost, the pressure on the forbearance of the inhabitants in the presence of considerable disposable wealth must have been acute.

With the arrival of the railway in the Lakes in 1847 the process seemed complete. The Lakes were now accessible, if not to the whole population, then at least to the relatively high-waged workforces of the industrial North, many of whom had paternalistic employers eager to sponsor "improving" annual outings. In vain Wordsworth implored his contemporaries to respect the forms of social, economic and - as he saw it - moral order which the region had nourished. In their place, he foresaw a society of 'strangers not linked to the neighbourhood, but flitting to and fro between their fancy-villas and the homes where their wealth was accumulated and accumulating by trade and manufactures'.¹⁰⁸ His is perhaps the first unequivocal formulation of what we now know as the second-home culture, the implications of which for large parts of rural England are becoming more generally apparent, as shattered indigenous social structures break down under the strains imposed by an imported, but often absentee, metropolitan order. Ironically, to the extent that Wordsworth's plea was heard, it ushered closer the time

when, with the formation of the National Trust (1895), now the region's largest landowner, and the Lake District National Park (1951), guardianship of the region would pass into the hands of national trustees.¹⁰⁹ At that point in its history it is at least arguable that the Lake District finally submitted to the role appointed for it by the dominant metropolitan order - the centre which Wordsworth had for so many years opposed.

But the story can be told another way. If Wordsworth himself was an early casualty of this process - as his failure to prevent the building of the Kendal and Windermere Railway (with all that that implied) seems to suggest - the efficacy of his work remained oddly undiminished; rather it was transformed into a kind of Trojan Horse drawn inside the walls of metropolitan England. The Lake District itself, imbued with the spirit of his work, was similarly fortified against complete appropriation. National guardianship, within an appropriately sensitised national culture, was, after all, a child of his own mind.¹¹⁰ To this day the Lake District remains an eccentric focus, a rallying point, a terrain on which values at odds with the imperatives of economic progress, environmental vandalism and the diminution of the individual can be nourished.

The ambivalence of Wordsworth's position in this process is paralleled in the development of his critical reputation in the first fifty years of the 19th century. The poet who, in his youth, signalled his dissent from the prevailing tendencies - literary, social, economic and political - of his society, by taking up residence in an out-of-the-way corner of the kingdom, and by 'stiffening', as Ruskin observed, 'every other sentence of his prefaces into defiance', was repaid for many years by the vilification of critics in the major reviews.¹¹¹ Francis Jeffrey in particular conducted a sustained campaign in the Edinburgh Review to repay Wordsworth's temerity with critical marginalisation. Coleridge had Jeffrey in mind when he recalled 'the wantonness and the systematic and malignant perseverance of the aggressions' against Wordsworth in these years.¹¹² The famous expostulation at the beginning of his review of the Excursion - 'This will never do!' - sets the tone. Jeffrey's attack is rooted in a community of literary values, not clearly defined, but tacitly endorsed by his readers, who are united by, among other things, the belief that 'all the greater poets lived, or had lived, in the full current of society' - a distinction which Wordsworth self-consciously shunned.¹¹³ This monolithic conception of society provides the basis for a sly marginalising polemic on Jeffrey's part, aimed at

excluding Wordsworth from the established centre of literary discourse. In one instance its formulation is pathological: Wordsworth's "case" is given up as 'altogether incurable, and beyond the power of criticism'; all the critic can do is to take the necessary precautions 'against the spreading of the malady'.¹¹⁴ Yet on another occasion the limited range of the 'society' whose 'full current' is held to be such a beneficial influence on the poet is momentarily revealed when Jeffrey takes issue with him for reproducing 'the mystical verbiage of the Methodist pulpit'.¹¹⁵ The essence of Wordsworth's offence is non-conformity, and for it he must suffer the same patrician disdain as the established church reserved for the non-conformist. Byron habitually adopted a more extreme form of the same position, likening Wordsworth's admirers to those of the millenarian prophetess Joanna Southcote.¹¹⁶ The generally humble social status that Methodism and Joanna Southcote's following shared betrays Byron's and Jeffrey's desire to inflict condign punishment on a poet who had dared to tax their attention on behalf of figures from humble life. Like Keats, and unlike Mill, they perceived that Wordsworth had indeed a 'palpable design' on them, and would have none of it.¹¹⁷

Macaulay likewise deplored Wordsworth's influence and the 'sect of worshippers' to which it gave rise, while granting the exceptional merits of the poet's own case. It is the 'enthusiastic' excesses of the followers, again, which draw Macaulay's particular condemnation:

Even now all the walks of literature are infested with mendicants for fame, who attempt to excite our interest by exhibiting all the distortions of their intellects, and stripping the covering from all the putrid sores of their feelings. Nor are there wanting many who push their imitation of the beggars whom they resemble a step further, and who find it easier to extort a pittance from the spectator, by simulating deformity and debility from which they are exempt, than by such honest labour as their health and strength enable them to perform. In the meantime the credulous public pities and pampers a nuisance which requires only the tread-mill and the whip.¹¹⁸

It is an ugly, but revealing sentiment, threatening the poet with the punitive rigours of the workhouse or prison yard. But in its more brutal fashion it seeks to implement the same kind of exclusion that Jeffrey and Byron, with more humour, had intended.

The sea-change that Wordsworth's reputation underwent (and that De Quincey memorably encapsulated)¹¹⁹ did not displace instantaneously such long-held positions. But

the leading literary and intellectual figures of the day, the statesmen and even royalty who paid court to him at Rydal Mount like emissaries from another nation, and who counted a carelessly bestowed autograph or fragment of manuscript a precious gift, came to him on his terms. They granted an authority to his eccentricity - conceded, in the end, his centrality in their thoughts. David Masson, in a review published barely four months after the poet's death, signalled this turnabout succinctly (if perhaps unwittingly) when, acknowledging the determining influence of his 'recluse abode', he lamented in the same breath that 'Another great spirit has recently gone from the midst of us'.¹²⁰ A great deal has changed since Jeffrey, in 1809, banished to the outermost margins of the intelligent reader's interest Wordsworth's 'fantastical personages of hysterical schoolmasters and sententious leechgatherers'.¹²¹ Somehow the eccentric has become central.

Suspensions, it is true, linger around Wordsworth's triumph. Some, following Browning, have bewailed the Lost Leader, and pointed to the 'handful of silver' he accepted with the post of Distributor of Stamps.¹²² For Byron, both Wordsworth and Southey showed themselves to be 'shabby fellows' when they accepted offices from the state.¹²³ Others have deplored

Wordsworth's drift into the camp of political reaction - his support for the Lowther interest in Westmorland, the pitiless misanthropy of the 'Sonnets on the Punishment of Death', and the narrow exclusiveness of the letters and sonnets on the Kendal and Windermere Railway.¹²⁴

But it remains the case that these things did not, quintessentially, constitute the Wordsworth of the mid-Victorian reading public, which was quite prepared to excuse ash on an old man's sleeve. Few completely abandoned Wordsworth; the loss would have been too severe. The histrionic tone of Browning's poem betrays, we sense, how strong the attachment still is. Mary Howitt, writing in 1834, regretted the changed outlooks of both Wordsworth and Southey, but found consolation in the belief that the radical potency of their early writings remained undiminished; for 'they have brightened many hearts, and, strangely enough, helped, though they cannot see it, to bring about the revolutions that are now coming upon society'.¹²⁵

The sentiment was echoed in an anonymous sonnet, 'Wordsworth', published in 1847 in Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress. This was edited by Mary Howitt and her husband William, himself a poet and the likely author of the piece. It begins by

apostrophising Wordsworth as 'Thou great Republican Conservative!', and proceeds to an ingenious resolution of this apparent paradox. It suggests that his poetry has, 'like a clarion blast', roused 'England's slumbering multitude' to life. But, the poem laments, Wordsworth, far from taking pride in his achievement, is now appalled by it. And the poem goes on to admonish him for his timorousness:

What, tremblest thou! Nay, rather thankful be
That thou couldst aid to burst th'abasing thrall,
That Truth is mightier than Self in thee.¹²⁶

It is not always easy, in the writings of the two Howitts, to distinguish between political radicalism and a kind of mild Quaker millenarianism.¹²⁷ But the sonnet is suggestive nevertheless of a belief in the continuing potency of Wordsworth's earlier polemic, and of an unwillingness to take too seriously the poet's later, less sanguine, productions.

Merely glancing at those of Wordsworth's poems that most visibly made an impact on the Victorians will go some way to confirming this belief. For the new generation of writers who emerged in the 1830s and '40s Wordsworth was still, before all else, the poet of Lyrical Ballads and, to a lesser extent, of the Poems

in Two Volumes of 1807. As his later works appeared they were read and attracted comment, but they did not satisfy to the same extent. Arnold declared that all Wordsworth's best poetry was written between 1798 and 1808.¹²⁸ Clough perhaps hinted at a still more restrictive canon when he expressed the belief that Wordsworth's intellect stagnated after his move to Grasmere.¹²⁹ The Prelude, published posthumously in 1850, fell within the same parameters, since in inception, if not in its originally published form, it was the product of the young Wordsworth. As Clough wrote to Emerson in July 1850: 'Wordsworth's poem appears on Saturday. - In his best style and of his best years, one is told'.¹³⁰ In time it came to eclipse the Excursion, but neither was to command the same intuitive and almost universal assent that certain of the Lyrical Ballads did. Time and again, as I hope to show, it is the 'Lucy Poems', the 'Matthew Poems', and portrayals of poor and slighted humanity such as 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', that resonate through the writings of the mid-19th century. And these, once we see beyond their self-effacing surface, far from conforming to Mill's impoverished sense of their **modus operandi**, are precisely those poems which hector and challenge, guide and manipulate the reader, demanding the surrender of worn-out assumptions.

By the 1860s Matthew Arnold could cautiously entertain a mechanism for ratifying the centrality of the hitherto eccentric voice. In 'The Literary Influence of Academies' (1864) he envisaged the establishment of an institution along lines similar to the French Academy - an 'intellectual metropolis' which would imitate its forebear by 'giving sure rules to our language, and rendering it pure, eloquent, and capable of treating the arts and sciences'.¹³¹ Arnold implicitly endorses the revisions of literary history sketched out by Wordsworth in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads and in the 'Essays on Epitaphs'. The genius which manifests itself most representatively in poetry is, he concedes, beyond the power of academies to instil, or even to regulate, since 'what ... above everything [it] demands and insists upon, is freedom; entire independence of all authority, prescription, and routine' (p 238). In a prescriptive culture the poetic talent is stifled; hence the genius of the period between Marlowe and Milton 'gave way to our provincial and second-rate literature of the eighteenth-century' (p 240) - where 'provincial' marks a decisive transvaluation of a period more commonly seen as exemplifying the tyranny of the centre. Eccentricity, as a literary characteristic, can be roundly condemned in the same breath as 'hap-hazard, crudeness, provincialism, ... violence, [and] blundering' (p 241),

because what was once eccentric now occupies the centre.

Stylistic virtue, Arnold contends, need no longer be cultivated in the wilderness. Out go the supposed masters of 18th-century prose style, Addison and Burke. Burke is taken to task for the extravagance of his prose - 'prose too much suffered to indulge its caprices; prose at too great a distance from the centre of good taste' (p 247); Addison for lacking 'urbanity' - 'the tone of the city, of the centre, the tone which always aims at a spiritual and intellectual effect' (p 249). Arnold's Hellenism leads him to label their prose as 'Asiatic' (with its classical association of barbarism) as distinct from the pure 'Attic' style; but the implied shifts of taste descend in a direct and more familiar line from Wordsworth. Newspapers, which were to him among the most notorious instruments of metropolitan influence, become, in Arnold's new spatial model, the epitome of the 'provincial spirit' (p 249). It has all the appearance of a cultural *coup d'état*.

ii) 'A Perfect Republic': Home at Grasmere

M'amour, m'amour
 what do I love and
 where are you?
That I lost my center
 fighting the world.
The dreams clash
 and are shattered -
and that I tried to make a paradiso
 terrestre

(Pound, from Notes for Canto CXVII et seq.)¹³²

We are now in a better position to judge Wordsworth's predicament in the dying days of 1799, continuing into 1800, and the nature of his response to it. And behind the obsolete political categories, and all the arcana of an eccentric economic system, we may recognise it as a distinctively modern one: that of a poet clinging to his integrity amid the buffetings of wider political, social, and economic forces. In the present century such a predicament has come close to being the characteristic experience of the artist in society. Pound's cry of anguish, recalling the hopes which foundered in his overthrow and humiliation at the hands of the Allied invaders of Italy, gives it in its

starkest form. The greater part of Wordsworth's energy in the first decade of the 19th century was channelled into steering clear of just the kind of moral and mental abyss into which Pound found himself drawn. The foundation of this security, which became in due course what Williams has called an agreed 'centre of defence',¹³³ was the Lake District - both the physical landscape and the society it sheltered.

Some preliminary remarks on my method of proceeding and selection of texts may be helpful at this stage. I do not anticipate that I will find many objectors to my contention that Wordsworth's best and most influential work belongs to his early years. Most Victorians (as we have seen), and nearly all modern critics, have taken the same view. The Excursion (1814), a work with some admirers, but few devotees, effectively defines the watershed.¹³⁴ I am conscious nevertheless that the importance I confer on Home at Grasmere may be deemed something of an eccentric homage. Regrettably, and in spite of recent signs of interest, it remains one of Wordsworth's least studied poems.¹³⁵ Begun in the spring of 1800, when he was at the acknowledged height of his powers and in the summer of his expectations; substantially complete by 1806; it was destined to be revised intermittently for the next forty years, without an authoritative text for publication ever

materialising.¹³⁶ Apart from a few lines quoted in his Guide to the Lakes (1810), and a hundred or so transferred to the Excursion, Wordsworth ensured that this - perhaps the most intimate of his autobiographical writings - remained unknown outside a small circle of friends and relations. When it finally appeared in 1888 the impact it registered was negligible.¹³⁷ Since then it has struggled to attain canonical status, hampered by the handful of missing or incomplete lines.

In the context of my own argument, there is of course one further objection to the importance I grant it: that it forms no part of the mid-Victorian literary milieu on which the second part of my study focuses. If I were concerned with a narrower analysis of literary influence it would have no place here. But as a key to those of Wordsworth's poems that demonstrably exerted a profound influence on the generations that followed him it is of major importance. The position it was intended to occupy at the opening of the Recluse, the mighty project of Wordsworth and Coleridge's collaboration, underlines the point. It is, moreover, couched in writing of the highest integrity, intellectually supple in a way that is the hallmark only of Wordsworth's finest work. And, most importantly for my present purpose, it amounts to his

most detailed statement of the structure and meaning of the "eccentric domain" which he established in Grasmere, and which, as I hope to show later, crucially underpins the working of many of the most important poems of the Lyrical Ballads.

It is worth recalling at this point that Wordsworth's discovery of the polemical potential of the Lake District is not an accidental consequence of the guileless celebration of his native landscape. The whole concept of a "native landscape" requires, indeed, careful examination. Cockermouth, where he was born, is sometimes subject to a kind of elision in his writing;¹³⁸ it was, significantly, the place where his father conducted the affairs of the industrial and territorial magnate James Lowther, and it lies, equally significantly, just outside the classic Lake District terrain to which he cleaved more willingly. Moreover, Wordsworth's image of this terrain owes much to the inspiration of others - many of them (to adopt the expressive local epithet) "offcomers" - who had seen the Lake District in the decades immediately preceding the accelerated changes of the 1790s onwards.

It was only when he left the Lake District for Cambridge that Wordsworth began to feel the full force of these changes. A passage in the Prelude describes a

return to Hawkshead where much of his boyhood was spent, and where, as Clough rightly observes, 'the substantive Wordsworth was formed'.¹³⁹ Here he was 'transplanted'¹⁴¹ after his parents' deaths, and after the brief, unhappy interlude with relations in Penrith; here, henceforth, for most of the year, he was fostered in the humble household of Anne Tyson. Returning there from Cambridge one summer the pain of alteration first stung him to reflect on the past joys of his childhood.

A grey stone
Of native rock, left midway in the square
Of our small market village, was the home
And centre of these joys; and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
I found that it was split, and gone to build
A smart Assembly-room that perked and flared
With wash and rough-cast elbowing the ground
Which had been ours.¹⁴¹

The deliberate representation of the stone as a kind of omphalos - the centre of his childhood world - and the sense of loss that only a vanished childhood can command, underline the completeness with which the new soil of the transplanted boy has become - by an act of imaginative identification - his native soil. When Wordsworth left Cambridge for his first summer vacation in 1788 it was not to his Penrith relatives, the Cooksons, that he returned - although Dorothy was

there; and certainly not to Cockermouth, his actual birthplace; but to Hawkshead, the hamlet of Colthouse, and Anne Tyson's cottage; these, it seems, appealed as the more native landscape.¹⁴²

And yet it is a telling detail that in lamenting the loss of 'native ground' Wordsworth should call up the assistance of an offcomer. For 'flared' recalls Gray's much-quoted description of Grasmere:

not a single red tile, no flaring Gentleman's house, or garden-walls, break in upon the repose of this little unsuspected paradise, but all is peace, rusticity, and happy poverty in its neatest most becoming attire.¹⁴³

According to Jonathan Wordsworth, the lines from the Prelude quoted above - which are also present, substantially the same, in the two-part Prelude - date from November 1799, when Wordsworth, his brother John, and Coleridge, visited the Lakes.¹⁴⁴ It was on this visit that Wordsworth conceived the idea of renting the cottage in Grasmere that he and Dorothy moved to in the following month.¹⁴⁵ Anticipating the polemical uses to which he was to put this new home, it is clear that Wordsworth found, retrospectively, a new and urgent meaning in the memory of his marred homecoming, Gray's words providing a neat confirmation of the link. What

Hawkshead had once been (or could now be seen to have been), Grasmere was to become again - a cherished unviolated centre.

Home at Grasmere, Wordsworth's most concerted attempt to establish this new centre, makes the same connection. For the opening description of Grasmere is in the form of a childhood recollection, originating in one of his wide-ranging schoolboy expeditions from Hawkshead. Even then, the poem avers, the relocation of the centre was anticipated: "'What happy fortune were it here to live!'", the child Wordsworth exclaims to himself.¹⁴⁶ The sense that Wordsworth is shaping his experience along powerfully preconceived lines is borne out by the description of the Vale of Grasmere. He remembers his astonishment as it came unexpectedly into view when he emerged high up on one of the steep valley sides:

The place from which I looked was soft and green,
Not giddy, yet aerial, with a depth
Of Vale below, a height of Hills above.
Long did I halt; I could have made it even
My business and my errand so to halt.
For rest of body 'twas a perfect place;
All that luxurious nature could desire,
But tempting to the Spirit. Who could look
And not feel motions there? I thought of clouds
That sail on winds; of breezes that delight

To play on water, or in endless chase
Pursue each other through the liquid depths
Of grass or corn, over and through and through,
In billow after billow evermore;
Of Sunbeams, Shadows, Butterflies, and Birds,
Angels, and winged Creatures that are Lords
Without restraint of all which they behold.
I sate, and stirred in spirit as I looked,
I seemed to feel such liberty was mine,
Such power and joy; but only for this end:
To flit from field to rock, from rock to field,
From shore to island, and from isle to shore,
From open place to covert, from a bed
Of meadow-flowers into a tuft of wood,
From high to low, from low to high, yet still
Within the bounds of this huge Concave; here
Should be my home, this valley be my World.

(lines 17-43)

What is remarkable here is the spaciousness of the view - the emphasis on the 'aerial' station from which it is surveyed, on the vertical dimension of depth and height with which this endows it. The 'motions' that he felt as a child - and that he relives now - derive from a consciousness of apparently limitless space, a feeling reinforced by the series of images of unbounded movement: the wind playing on the 'liquid depths' of fields of standing corn, 'over and through and through, / In billow after billow evermore'. It is, finally, a feeling of preternatural liberty, a 'power' and a

'joy'. But - and only now are the limitations of this liberty addressed - 'only for this end'; and there follows a further series of images, this time of short "flitting" movements - movements which are at all times, and confessedly, 'Within the bounds of this huge Concave', the Vale of Grasmere. This Vale, Wordsworth announces, must stand for the whole world. Within it all things are possible, provided the effort of imaginative transcendence is sustained. Thus may a literal contraction of space take on the appearance of an unexampled sense of liberty.

It is easy to see in this manoeuvre - in this fiction passed upon a willing mind¹⁴⁷ - Wordsworth scaling down the more ample political hopes of the 1790s. Early euphoria at the promise of the French Revolution gave way for many in the ensuing decade to disenchantment and despair at its wayward course. Wordsworth's thoughts, recurring to the Lake District with increasing frequency during these years of uprooted wandering (as 'The Female Vagrant', 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' and 'Michael' attest), was jolted by news of Napoleon's violation of republican (and mountainous) Switzerland.¹⁴⁸ Added to this, growing pressure was being exerted by the domestic government to silence known radical sympathisers. One such was John Thelwall, whose association with Wordsworth and

Coleridge brought upon them the attentions of a Home Office spy, and caused Wordsworth to lose the lease on the property that he and Dorothy were renting in Alfoxden, Somerset.¹⁴⁹ Two versions of a conversation which Thelwall, Wordsworth and Coleridge had in Alfoxden in 1797, the year 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' was probably begun, form an eloquent witness to the fraught atmosphere of the times and the consequently blessed prospect of rustic retirement. According to Wordsworth's account, contained in the Fenwick note to 'Anecdote for Fathers', the three of them

were seated together upon the turf on the brink of a stream in the most beautiful glen of Alfoxden, [when] Coleridge exclaimed, 'This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world.' - 'Nay,' said Thelwall, 'to make one forget them altogether.'¹⁵⁰

E P Thompson, enlarging on this and other indications, has gone so far as to suggest that the two poets adopted the idea of spending some time in Germany as a deliberate ploy to evade the more and more searching public scrutiny of political sympathies.¹⁵¹ A similar motivation may account for Wordsworth's precipitate decision, within months of their return, to take up permanent residence in Grasmere.

An important section of Home at Grasmere describes in some detail the journey - much of it on foot - that William and Dorothy undertook late in December 1799 from their temporary residence at Sockburn-on-Tees in Yorkshire to Grasmere. A letter they wrote to Coleridge immediately on their arrival is no less interesting, with its appropriately breathless prose.¹⁵² These two sources provide a detailed account of what was by any standards a remarkable journey, performed by two individuals at the highest pitch of receptivity to their surroundings. Even in this bleakest season, when the elements are at their most inimical, they derived untold satisfaction from the presence of a following wind, which urged them on to a prodigious feat of walking.¹⁵³ It was as though Nature was holding them to their purpose. The visionary experience that attended them at the spot known as Hart-leap Well confirmed the feeling that they had been marked out by special providence -

A promise and an earnest that we twain,
A pair seceding from the common world,
Might in that hallowed spot to which our steps
Were tending, in that individual nook,
Might even thus early for ourselves secure,
And in the midst of these unhappy times,
A portion of the blessedness which love
And knowledge will, we trust, hereafter give

To all the Vales of earth and all mankind.

(248-56)

'Seceding from the common world' invokes the politics of the choice; insists that the move is consistent with the self's integrity, but at the same time acknowledges that its root cause is external and beyond control in 'these unhappy times'. The paradox of Wordsworth's position - taking possession of Gray's paradise and its store of 'unappropriated bliss' (85), yet conscious at the same time of fleeing with almost undignified haste from a political environment that has become insupportable - is encapsulated, curiously, in a line that Wordsworth inserts into a later draft of the poem, in which he describes himself and Dorothy in Grasmere as 'Entrenched - say rather, peacefully embowered' (MS "D", 76). On the simple level of an admission of ambivalence the line is significant enough; but the syntax of statement followed by ostensible correction is strongly suggestive beyond this of the effort of imaginative contradiction - of enjoining upon the imagination the creation of a more consolatory position. This may be taken, indeed, as the dominant preoccupation of Home at Grasmere - a surprisingly unvarnished representation of the poet's situation, but suffused (as are Dorothy's journal entries covering the period of its composition) with the glow of imaginative

transcendence: the transcendence of the narrow material bounds of 'this huge Concave'.

Politics was not the only factor contributing to the shape of the Concave. The opening of the 1805 Prelude offers another version of the retreat to Grasmere, in which the poet describes himself as

escaped

From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will

(I, 6-9)

One is immediately reminded of the swans in Home at Grasmere, whose 'state so much resembled ours' (338) because of their 'Choosing this Valley, they who had the choice / Of the whole world' (328-29). But here the image of the wide-ranging bird is offered without the spatial and chronological co-ordinates that locate the swans. There is little to be gained from trying to identify the 'vast city' referred to and assigning the lines to a specific biographical moment. Rather, we are left to infer that Wordsworth's city is a generalised construct embodying a wide range of features characteristic of urban cultures and

environments, and a convenient emblem for the world he has left behind.

Wordsworth's response to the city - recorded most notably in Book VII of the Prelude - is essentially a response to the London of the 1790s - already an enormous human artefact, unrivalled in Europe, though still a long way short of its mid-19th century extent. His rejection of the city is essentially that of the neurasthenic. He is bewildered and alienated by its apparently senseless variety, by its vulgarity and restless simultaneity. The individual consciousness, which constitutes itself through the imposition of order on sensory data, finds its integrity threatened by this relentless sensory assault. Wordsworth's position is perhaps best summed up by his confessed incomprehension of the 'wearisome unintelligible obliquities of city-life' in a letter of 1798.¹⁵⁴

Echoes of this conflict surface in Home at Grasmere, in the pointed contrast between the full, rounded and imaginatively satisfying existence that the Vale offers, with its 'universal imagery' (793) amply compensating for its small society, and the imaginatively impoverished life of the city:

he truly is alone,
He of the multitude, whose eyes are doomed
To hold a vacant commerce day by day
With that which he can neither know nor love

(808-11)

- where 'commerce' implies the dwindling of human relations to a series of transactions evacuated of all real human exchange, in a manner that foreshadows Carlyle's analysis of the 'cash-nexus'. On the contrary, Wordsworth insists,

 Society is here:
The true community, the noblest Frame
Of many into one incorporate;
That must be looked for here

(818-21)

The topography of the Concave, as Wordsworth articulates it in Home at Grasmere, is an objectification of the poetic centre - the material expression of an inner terrain. Bearing in mind his emphasis (in lines 17-43, quoted above) on the valley's 'spacious heights', and how these are mirrored in the lake, the whole takes on the form of a sphere seen from the inside. One must imagine Wordsworth having broken its outer skin, and wondering now at its arched and scooped interior. (The figure - of course it is no

accident - recalls the cosmography of Paradise Lost.¹⁵⁵) And as he tries to home in (the phrase is exact) on what precisely it is that makes this space so remarkable, we begin to sense something of the magical appeal of the perfect solid - its anaxial self-sufficiency, which resists all efforts to orientate it and thus shackle it to a relationship with the wider world:

'Tis (but I cannot name it), 'tis the sense
Of majesty and beauty and repose,
A blended holiness of earth and sky,
Something that makes this individual spot,
This small abiding-place of many men,
A termination and a last retreat,
A Centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
A Whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself and happy in itself,
Perfect Contentment, Unity entire.

(161-170)

The Concave is an image of the enclosed, self-sufficient society of the remoter valleys of the Lake District. But beyond this it is apparent that Wordsworth is implying a correspondence between outer and inner worlds:

... as these lofty barriers break the force
Of winds - this deep vale as it doth in part

Conceal us from the storm - so here there is
A power and a protection for the mind....

(455-458)

The 'inward frame' of the Concave is not only a manifest form of social and economic organisation, but is also the guarantee of the mind's freedom to create an orderly system of thought of its own choosing, removed from the disintegrating and annihilating tendencies of the city and the policing of public opinion.

Wordsworth called Grasmere 'A termination and a last retreat' (166), but within the Vale a continuing trajectory can be discerned. Like the rippling out-works of a prehistoric hill-fort, concentric images reinforce the defence of the poetic centre. There are the birds wheeling in the Vale, describing 'Orb after orb' (293) in their flight, reproducing in miniature the form of the Concave. More importantly, there are images of William and Dorothy themselves that conform to this pattern. On their first arrival, Wordsworth writes,

Bright and solemn was the sky
That faced us with a passionate welcoming
And led us to our threshold, to a home

Within a home, what was to be, and soon,
Our love within a love.

(259-263)

And most emblematically, there are the two swans
mentioned earlier (see p 113) -

Conspicuous in the centre of the Lake
Their safe retreat.

(331-332)

- a retreat within a retreat, and the very centre, in
all three dimensions, of the Concave - this microcosm
of the world with its 'universal imagery' (793). The
self-referential boundaries of Home at Grasmere,
combined with the exact and unalterable geometry of the
sphere, provide Wordsworth with the single centre which
he craves, in which mind and matter are co-extensive -
a fitting home for

the individual mind that keeps its own
Inviolable retirement, and consists
With being limitless the one great Life...

(969-971)

The elision in the final line neatly enforces the
desired sense of consubstantiality.

An interesting variation on the topography of Home at Grasmere occurs in the 'Essays on Epitaphs' (1810). Here the seceding impulse is transformed into an apotheosis of the country graveyard; the inward trajectory is carried to its furthest conclusion, into the absolute retirement of death. Answering the familiar charge that the epitaphs in a graveyard gloss over the evil of the world, he contends that it is

a happiness to have, in an unkind World, one Enclosure where the voice of detraction is not heard; where the traces of evil inclinations are unknown; where contentment prevails, and there is no jarring tone in the peaceful Concert of amity and gratitude.¹⁵⁶

We recognise at once in the image the replication in miniature of the topography of the Concave, with its 'lofty barriers' shielding it from the storms outside. Wordsworth gently demurs from the notion that he has been 'so far lulled as to imagine I saw in a Village Church-yard the eye or central point of a rural Arcadia'.¹⁵⁷ But it is only the conventional associations of the last two words that he repudiates. As in Home at Grasmere, he is concerned to signal his acceptance of man in all his imperfections - 'The common creature of the brotherhood'.¹⁵⁸ Beyond this the point remains valid: a village churchyard is 'a

visible centre of a community of the living and the dead',¹⁵⁹ the epitaphs it contains 'the joint offspring of the worth of the dead and the affections of the living'.¹⁶⁰

The proper character of an epitaph is crucial to the equivalence Wordsworth perceives between this 'visible centre' and the account of the poetic centre elaborated in Home at Grasmere.

The character of a deceased friend or beloved kinsman is not seen, no - nor ought to be seen, otherwise than as a tree through a tender haze or a luminous mist, that spiritualises and beautifies it; that takes away, indeed, but only to the end that the parts which are not abstracted may appear more dignified and lovely; may impress and affect the more.¹⁶¹

The epitaph's purpose is always exemplary - to 'impress and affect'; but in pursuit of this end it is confined within narrow bounds of decorum, renouncing 'false taste',¹⁶² trusting instead to 'inward simplicity' and the 'simple effusion of the moment'.¹⁶³ That 'The affections are their own justification',¹⁶⁴ should be the guiding precept. Thus chastened, the epitaph more than compensates for the actual abstraction of certain jarring elements of the deceased's life, achieving in

fact a higher truth: 'the object being looked at through this medium, parts and proportions are brought into distinct view which before had been only imperfectly or unconsciously seen'.¹⁶⁵

In a later passage Wordsworth amplifies his belief that epitaphs enshrine a higher truth about human nature than do chronicles of everyday imperfections. The epitaphs of a village churchyard, he argues, constitute

a far more faithful representation of homely life as existing among a Community in which circumstances have not been untoward, than any report which might be made by a rigorous observer deficient in that spirit of forbearance and those kindly prepossessions, without which human life can in no condition be profitably looked at or described. For we must remember that it is the nature of Vice to force itself upon notice, both in the act and by its consequences. Drunkenness, cruelty, brutal manners, sensuality, impiety, thoughtless prodigality, and idleness, are obstreperous while they are in the height and heyday of their enjoyment; and, when that is passed away, long and obtrusive is the train of misery which they draw after them. But, on the contrary, the virtues, especially those of humble life, are retired; and many of the highest must be sought for or they will be overlooked. Industry, oeconomy, temperance, and cleanliness, are indeed made obvious by flourishing fields, rosy complexions, and smiling countenances; but how few

know anything of the trials to which Men in a lowly condition are subject, or of the steady and triumphant manner in which those trials are often sustained, but they themselves! The afflictions which Peasants and rural Artizans have to struggle with are for the most part secret; the tears which they wipe away, and the sighs which they stifle, - this is all a labour of privacy. In fact their victories are to themselves known only imperfectly: for it is inseparable from virtue, in the pure sense of the word, to be unconscious of the might of her own prowess. This is true of minds the most enlightened by reflection; who have forecast what they may have to endure, and prepared themselves accordingly. It is true even of these, when they are called into action, that they necessarily lose sight of their own accomplishments, and support their conflicts in self-forgetfulness and humility. That species of happy ignorance, which is the consequence of these noble qualities, must exist still more frequently, and in a greater degree, in those persons to whom beauty has never been matter of laborious speculation, and who have no intimations of the power to act and to resist which is within them, till they are summoned to put it forth. I could illustrate this by many examples, which are now before my eyes; but it would detain me too long from my principal subject which was to suggest reasons for believing that the encomiastic language of rural Tomb-stones does not so far exceed reality as might lightly be supposed.¹⁶⁶

This is Wordsworth's most considered statement of the claim to attention of the "retiring virtues". Withdrawn into a space that is sealed off from the casual gaze of the world, they constitute the invisible essence of humanity of which the humble epitaphs of a country churchyard are the visible tokens. It should be apparent, too, that the withdrawing motion implicit in the virtues is congruent with Wordsworth's own retirement to Grasmere - the "inward trajectory" I have already described. It is noticeable how he extends the sphere of these virtues to include - among those 'minds the most enlightened by reflection' - himself. Wordsworth conspicuously cultivated the "retiring virtues" in his own person. One has only to look at Haydon's portrait of Wordsworth meditating on Helvellyn (in the midst of a storm) - to look at the meek gaze of the submissively lowered face - to see how earnestly he cultivated the self-effacing image, and how readily Victorian society took it up.¹⁶⁷

iii) Topographical Strategies in Lyrical Ballads and
some other poems

Wordsworth's reflections on epitaphs show clearly his awareness not only of a public, but of the need to adopt certain strategies if that public is to be induced to share his belief in the virtues of retirement, as a moral as well as a spatial condition. Wordsworth's vindication of the humble authors of epitaphs can be extended, on his own authority, to wider realms of literature, and shows him addressing precisely this problem of choosing the most effective strategy. His purpose in presenting these epitaphs is, he explains,

to place in a clear view the power and majesty of impassioned faith, whatever be its object: to shew how it subjugates the lighter motions of the mind, and sweeps away superficial differences in things. And this I have done, not to lower the witling and the worldling in their own esteem, but with a wish to bring the ingenuous into still closer communion with those primary sensations of the human heart, which are the vital springs of sublime and pathetic composition, in this and in every other kind. And, as from these primary sensations such composition speaks, so, unless correspondent ones listen promptly and submissively in the inner cell

of the mind to whom it is addressed, the voice cannot be heard: its highest powers are wasted.¹⁶⁸

This was a very real danger, as Wordsworth well knew from the host of local poets who had shone briefly in their own region without achieving lasting fame elsewhere. His loyalty to his own countrymen in the field of literature has tended to be neglected by critics who have no strong inducement to share an enthusiasm for all-but-forgotten writers. Even a brief survey, however, can throw up interesting sidelights. Writing to Allan Cunningham, a native of Dumfriesshire, in 1825, he declared: 'I have been indebted to the North for more than I shall ever be able to acknowledge'. He goes on to list a succession of poets - among them John Brown, author of the Description of the Lake and Vale of Keswick (1767), John Langhorne, author of The Country Justice (the influence of which on 'The Female Vagrant' is particularly evident), and Thomas Tickell, 'whose style is superior in chastity to Pope's, his contemporary'. But alongside these figures from Cumberland and Westmorland he places a list of others, whose origins, like Cunningham's, are in the southwestern counties of Scotland. All these, like Wordsworth, 'If they did not drink the water, they breathed at least the air of the two countries'.¹⁶⁹ Thus although in his topographical loyalties Wordsworth

came to be a narrow partisan for the Lake District, in his poetic loyalties he retained the wider sympathies of the Borderer.

Other local poets were certainly known to Wordsworth. Their claims on our attention in their own right are not large. Their writings are usually a clumsy mixture of classical pastoral and local reference, and the latter is both scarce and poorly actualised. They are of more interest, however, as one constituent of the literary milieu in which Wordsworth grew up. Many of their publications were financed by means of subscriptions, and the appended lists of subscribers' names give a good impression of the extent of the regional literary culture. Some of Wordsworth's relatives - men of a certain education and some local distinction - were among those to whom appeal was likely to be made. Thus among the subscribers to Ewan Clark's Miscellaneous Poems, published at Whitehaven in 1779, we find, besides 'Raisley Calvert Esq' (Wordsworth's future patron), one 'William Cookson of Penrith' (his uncle, with whom he lived after his father's death) and 'Richard Wordsworth Esq, collector, Whitehaven' (another uncle, at whose house the young Wordsworth was a frequent visitor).¹⁷⁰

The most eminent of the Lake District poets was Josiah Relph (1712-43), a native of Sebergham in Cumberland, and, after education at Glasgow University, perpetual curate there until his death. His Miscellany of Poems was published posthumously in 1747, the subscribers including the same 'Mr William Cookson, merchant', and the notable antiquary Thomas Pennant.¹⁷¹ Subsequently Wordsworth is known to have possessed a copy of his work.¹⁷² Relph's fame seems to have been of slow growth, but in 1798 a second volume of Poems by the Rev Josiah Relph was published in Carlisle, with the notable embellishment of engravings by Thomas Bewick. The dedication to this edition fulsomely describes Relph as no less than 'the Cumberland Bard'.¹⁷³ By now he had become something of a local celebrity. The historian of Cumberland, the Rev W Boucher, erected a monument to him in his birthplace, dubbing him 'another Theocritus'.¹⁷⁴ In 1802, probably the pinnacle of his fame, and three editions of the Lyrical Ballads notwithstanding, the topographers Britton and Brayley noted that Relph 'has been emphatically styled the **Poet of the North**', a distinction that Wordsworth was still some years away from surpassing.¹⁷⁵

It is hard, nevertheless, to imagine Wordsworth deriving much inspiration from poems such as 'Harvest; or the Bashful Shepherd. A Pastoral', or 'The 19th

Idyllium of Theocritus attempted in the Cumberland Dialect', with their uneasy blend of 18th-century pastoral convention and local vernacular. But in Relph's exemplary life of retirement Wordsworth would have found much to reflect upon. The living to which Relph succeeded was worth a mere £30 per annum, one of the most exiguous appointments in a region never richly endowed. Yet according to the author of the Life included in the 1798 Poems, this 'seems to have been the apex of Relph's hopes and expectations, for he never made one exertion, nor one application, to alter his situation'.¹⁷⁶ Neither ambition, nor anything else, seems to have disturbed the tranquil and wholly uneventful course of his short life.

The Preface to the 1747 Miscellany (the edition which Wordsworth possessed) enlarges on the same point with this reflection on the public appreciation of private virtue - one which must have interested Wordsworth keenly:

'Tis true the examples of the deceas'd are not so apt to fire us with that warmth of emulation, as those of the living, or even to be in the least notic'd by the generality of mankind, if there be nothing surprizing or uncommon in the accounts giv'n of them. This, I'm afraid, is our Author's case, whose circumstances and the low sphere he acted in, may perhaps in the eyes of the

injudicious, and those who have not learned to put a true value upon things, render him too mean for public notice. But true greatness, like true happiness, consisteth not in external glare and pomp; it is something within, some good oeconomy there, that giveth them both existence. The lowest person in a Community is as capable of heroism, as the most exalted.

However, the writer continues,

People are governed in their opinions of men, as they are in their own lives, more by passion and prejudice, than by cool reason and deliberate judgment. Let people's actions be ever so honest, and their conduct ever so well regulated, if there be nothing in them to raise the astonishment of mankind, if there be no variety of incidents to touch the passions and engage the attention, or if they are not recommended by outward pomp and equipage, they will be passed by unnoticed and unregarded. Hence it is that those who chuse a private life and retirement, though they may exert every generous, social virtue as far as their influence reacheth, make no very eminent figure in history.¹⁷⁷

Relph's cultivation of the "retiring virtues" observed just this exemplary pattern:

His Philosophy and virtue he did not exhibit, as most people do like curious plate, upon some public occasions only and to entertain company

with; but he made them subservient to the common uses and ordinary occurrences of life.¹⁷⁸

The Preface and Life which introduce the 1747 and 1798 editions of Relph's poetry can be seen as a crude form of intervention on his behalf aiming to circumvent the same paradoxical situation that Wordsworth later examined in the 'Essays on Epitaphs': that the "retiring virtues", by their very nature, fail to arrest the onlooker's attention. This danger becomes particularly acute when the delineation of humble life gives a pretext to scorn. Wordsworth, stung by criticisms of the Lyrical Ballads such as Southey's remark that 'The Idiot Boy' 'resembles a Flemish picture in the worthlessness of its design and the excellence of its execution',¹⁷⁹ made a similar intervention between his poems and the public with his 1800 Preface, to ensure that figures such as his Cumberland Beggar should not be 'passed by unnoticed and unregarded'.

Nowhere was intervention needed more urgently than to combat the influence of the artistic orthodoxy from which Southey aimed his denigration of the Flemish School. The sometimes brutal realism and morally relaxed bucolicism of the Flemish painters had few adherents in late-Georgian England. Instead the

fashion was to admit figures from humble life only in the form of conventional ciphers. Thus it was common to introduce human or animal figures into the foreground of landscapes of the period (their interchangeability being a sure guide to their relative status). But here they performed only the necessary functions of giving scale, counterpointing the natural scene with human attitudes (usually of idleness or play) and sometimes bright splashes of clothing, and invoking the conceptual frame of classical pastoral. These figures do not exist as individuals, and they are entirely abstracted from the social and economic context that has caused them to people this particular tract of landscape. Gainsborough affected to understand no other reason for them:

... do you really think that a regular composition in the landskip way should ever b[e] filled with History, or any figures but such as fill a space (I won't say stop a Gap) or to create a little business for the Eye to be drawn from the Trees in order to return to them with more glee ...?¹⁸⁰

True, there is also a characteristically English genre of rural subjects in which the relationship of these figures to the composition as a whole is much more equivocal (one thinks of Stubbs and Morland particularly), but these may perhaps be regarded as

unauthorised departures from the conventions of Claudean and Poussinesque composition. In the Lake District, moreover, the rule of the canon was notably severe.

Literary depictions of the Lake District generally conformed to the same pattern, especially where they dealt with the human inhabitants of the region. Many of the most widely circulated were by offcomers, and bear the clear stamp of their authors' ethnocentricity. The analogy which this suggests with European accounts of distant corners of the world (similarly "discovered") is far from bizarre. The Lake District was undergoing at this time, largely through the attentions of these early tourists, an acute form of cultural appropriation. It was indeed - in the phrase that Alan Moorehead has applied elsewhere - 'a social capsule' about to be broken open.¹⁸¹

Frequently the observations of visitors seem to have less to do with exalted matters of aesthetic theory, and much more to do with the gratification of facile pleasures. William Hutchinson, a Newcastle attorney and antiquary who toured the Lakes in 1773 and 1774, describes himself and his travelling companion

enjoying little rural scenes, renewing a succession of pastoral images we had collected from the poets in our early years, when the young mind was charmed with romance, and the most fantastic ideas of rural innocence, retirement, and love.¹⁸²

His Lake District is a lost Eden not glimpsed since youth, in which the mind is free to weave whatever fantasies former reading may prompt. But however facile the attention, it is illustrative nevertheless of an appropriating consciousness that is entirely typical. As Hutchinson elaborates on this theme, we begin to understand to what extent he is translating experience into the readily available phrases of a sophisticated literary medium:

Neither did these images pass in the imagination only, for in this sequestered vale, we met a female native full of youth, innocence, and beauty; simplicity adorned her looks with modesty, and hid the down-cast eye; virgin apprehension covered her with blushes, when she found herself stayed by two strangers; and as she turned her eyes for an instant upon us, they smote us with all the energy of unaffected innocence, touched with doubtfulness; - her lips, which in the sweetest terms expressed apprehension, shewed teeth of ivory; and on her full forehead ringlets of auburn carelessly flowed: a delicacy of proportion was seen over her whole figure, which was easy and elegant as nature's self.

- My companion, in rapture, snatched out his pencil, and began to imitate; but the unaffected impatience, and sweet confusion of the maid, overcame our wishes to detain her, and we let her pass reluctantly.

After this little adventure we jogged on, silent, each wrapped up in his own cogitations....¹⁸³

It is a classic version of an encounter, endlessly repeated in different times and places, between two radically different and, in particular senses, unequal cultures. The two young men command the situation on horseback, fortified with a leisure that indemnifies them against the passage of time, equipped with a language (and a drawing hand) that is effortless in its rehearsal of glib abstracting epithets. The woman, on foot, subject to the pressure of time in whatever errand she is abroad on, 'stayed' by the two men, is inarticulate; yet, if we may penetrate the telling opacity of Hutchinson's account at this point - the blushes of 'virgin apprehension' - we recognise her understanding that the attention of the two men constitutes a kind of violation. Not for the first time, one culture's discovery of a new Eden looks set to hasten the Fall of the indigenous inhabitants.¹⁸⁴

Hutchinson's example clearly illustrates the extent to which encounters such as this are mediated by a whole range of presuppositions. 'For in truth, the eye sees in all things "what it brought with it the means of seeing"', as Carlyle notes.¹⁸⁵ This is both an obstacle to understanding and an opportunity for the poet to step between the two parties. The poem 'We Are Seven' is a case in point. The opening line - 'A simple child, dear brother Jim' - is at first sight drawn out to its due length only by one of those phrases castigated by Francis Jeffrey as 'babyish interjections'.¹⁸⁶ In fact the line serves to locate the poem and its narrator between the 'simple child' who will form its subject, and a listening audience. The poet thus mediates their encounter. The precise form this encounter takes is strongly reminiscent of that described by Hutchinson. The narrator's account of the little girl is founded upon the discriminations of a dominant, normative culture, which characterise the girl by means of marginalising epithets:

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad.

(lines 9-10)

Even the child's hair - 'thick with many a curl / That cluster'd round her head' (7-8) - contributes to this

delineation of a kind of human exotic - hardy and luxuriant. But wild as she is, she is not wholly secure from the casual appropriation of the narrator. ' - Her beauty made me glad' (12), he declares; more discreetly than Hutchinson, but just as surely, he transmutes her into an object of leisurely consumption, and engages her in conversation to gratify an idle curiosity.

From the exchange that follows emerges the radical difference that separates the narrator from the little girl. Her claim that she and her brothers and sisters number seven is quickly refuted by the narrator when he learns from the girl that 'Two of us in the church-yard lie' (21). But his insistence is entirely unavailing. For the girl, her dead brother and sister are no less part of a community of siblings because they are buried beneath the turf. They continue to figure in her daily life; their companionship is sought - and found - in the daily round of play; their feelings are consulted. Their presence is indeed more palpable than that of the two who are at sea and the two who have left to live in the town. Against the enclosed logic of the child, the narrator eventually concedes that he can make no headway:

'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

(67-69)

Victory in the encounter lies very clearly with the little girl, and her defence of the inviolate centre that her eccentric consciousness occupies. The narrator, impelled at first to interrogate and then to correct her, is unable to puncture her self-confident counter-assertion, and finally resigns the task. The point at which the narrator's intrusion is repelled is also, significantly, the point from which the poem took its departure. As Wordsworth recalled in 1843, 'I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line'.¹⁸⁷

We can observe a similar operation, more complexly performed, in a poem added in the enlarged 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads - 'The Two April Mornings', one of the 'Matthew Poems', so-called. Here again the main subject is a marginalised or eccentric figure. Jeffrey had no doubts of this:

... by what traits is this worthy old gentleman [Matthew, the schoolmaster] delineated by the new poet? No pedantry - no innocent vanity of learning - no mixture of indulgence with the pride

of power, and of poverty with the consciousness of rare acquirements. Every feature which belongs to the situation, or marks the character in common apprehension, is scornfully discarded by Mr Wordsworth, who represents this grey-haired rustic pedagogue as a sort of half crazy, sentimental person, overrun with fine feelings, constitutional merriment, and a most humorous melancholy.¹⁸⁸

In a sense Jeffrey is right to suspect Wordsworth's motives; he too was clear that Matthew was a schoolmaster outside the 'common apprehension'. The final descriptive touch - the 'bough / Of wilding in his hand' (59-60) - marks him as 'consonant with nature' in the same way that the girl of 'We Are Seven' was. And, equally, 'The Two April Mornings' turns on the rebuttal of an appropriating consciousness, this rebuttal occurring in the vicinity of death.

But Matthew does not belong to a childhood world in which death can be transcended; his loss of his daughter is real and recurring. The particular inviolate space which he occupies is the product of a truth to nature which refuses precisely that which the 'common apprehension' would urge on him. Walking one delightful April morning with the poem's narrator, he relates, again at the narrator's instigation, how nine years after his daughter's death he found himself at

her grave, impelled thither by the sympathetic monition of the sky. There he beheld 'A blooming girl' (43), in every point a match for the daughter he had lost. His 'pure delight' (48) at the sight of this girl in the fullness of her youth, however, turned to anguish as his memory stirred again:

There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I look'd at her and look'd again;
- And did not wish her mine.

(53-56)

The progress of the 'common apprehension' is here closely plotted by Wordsworth in a series of cumulative elements which point towards an anticipated conclusion. Within this orderly sequence 'confine' prefigures its rhyming twin, 'mine', but the expected sense is opposite. The final line abruptly overturns this expectation, and the ordered progression that sustains it: the initial dash approximates it to a snatched or gasped utterance, a sudden about-turn. Matthew refuses to surrender the truth of his own nature to the resolution that the 'common apprehension' would have him accept, and in which the reader is now implicated.

Unlike in 'We Are Seven', the poet/narrator does not here bear the force of the rebuttal; Matthew accommodates it in himself. But the poet is nevertheless instrumental in securing the inviolability that Matthew has been at such pains to maintain. For this is the effect of the remarkable chronology of the poem - a tight interlocking arrangement of concentric narratives. We begin in an assumed present, the time of the poet/narrator's April walk with Matthew. We are transported thirty years backwards to the poem's centre, Matthew's relation of the poignant incident just described, with its further backward reach to the time of the child's death. But in the final stanza, when we expect to be restored to what we have taken to be the poem's present, the incident is plunged still more remotely into the past, by the poet/narrator's appraisal of the reader that now, in the final and "real" present of the poem, 'Matthew is in his grave' (57). This information not only affords Matthew the most inviolable retirement of all - death; it has also - and the abruptness of the announcement gives a special prominence to this effect - the consequence that the poet/narrator is denied the impertinence of probing Matthew's personal resolution. Nothing is permitted to disturb Matthew's unviolated memory of his dead child.

The short poem, 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal', performs a similar manoeuvre, in a manner that suggests the extent to which the 'Essays on Epitaphs' represent a covert defence of the principles of Wordsworth's poetry. As with many of his poems, it is deceptively simple, and can seem to offer a diamond-like resistance to the analytic tools of the critic. Coleridge hazarded that the poem arose from 'some gloomier moment [when] he had fancied the moment in which his sister might die', and this may in part explain a certain reticence about it.¹⁸⁹

The poem offers, in the form of an epitaph conforming to the principles he was to advocate in the 'Essays', an epitome of pastoral death. But the epitaph subserves the lyric form, which introduces a teasing disjunction into the poem. The poet describes the onset of a grace-like state in which he shed his accustomed apprehension in the face of death. The equanimity thus acquired sustains the serene calm of the epitaph that follows, in which we are shown how the dead girl is incorporated with nature -

Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks and stones and trees!

(7-8)

At the point where the abrupt transition from the lyric to the epitaphic mode occurs, however, there is a crucial elision. The stages by which we might expect this transition to be negotiated are entirely omitted, with the result that the epitaph stands oddly distanced from the two lines that determine the lyric form of the poem as a whole:

A slumber did my spirit seal,
I had no human fears:
She seem'd a thing ... [etc.]

The colon which marks the transition collapses under the weight of the syntactical burden that is placed upon it, setting the epitaph adrift, as it were, beyond an unbridgeable divide. As the poet's spirit was "sealed" against the approach of 'human fears' (2), so Lucy's epitaph (if the customary identification is admitted) is insulated against the unwelcome dissections and detractions of the reader. The same is true, though the effect is less pronounced, of another of the 'Lucy Poems', 'She Dwelt Among Th'Untrodden Ways'.

The poems I have just discussed - 'We Are Seven', 'The Two April Mornings' and 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal' - may be seen as representing in its pure form

Wordsworth's guardianship of inviolate spaces - specifically, those of the mind and of death. His strategy is to construct impenetrable defences (analogous to the encircling mountains of the Vale of Grasmere) around these spaces. This is accomplished by a variety of means, having in common an intention to frustrate the incursions of an appropriating consciousness. In 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal' it is a carefully placed lacuna; in 'The Two April Mornings' a sudden reversal of expectation; in 'We Are Seven' the enactment of a rebuff in the poet's own person. In each case there is a refusal to allow the reader the direct contact with the protected space that would entail its violation.

Wordsworth was equally prepared to participate in a kind of "constructive engagement" with his public. This requires a different, more discursive, mode of writing, in which the inviolable essence is not invested in the poem itself, but is mediated through more exoteric forms. One of the consequences of Wordsworth's growing popularity in the second half of his life was, of course, an added impetus to Lake District tourism, with himself now a principal attraction. Wordsworth was frequently irritated by the prying attentions of tourists, but his stance towards

them was in fact more equivocal than this would suggest. Copies of An Evening Walk (1793), for example, were distributed to Peter Crosthwaite's popular Keswick museum to catch the eye of passing visitors. One of the work's few notices (in the Gentleman's Magazine) resulted from a copy being acquired in Penrith in just such a casual fashion by a reviewer who had 'just completed a tour of the Lakes'.¹⁹⁰ There is evidence that at a very early date Wordsworth was involved in the preparation of his brother Christopher's projected Guide,¹⁹¹ a collaboration that eventually bore fruit in Wordsworth's own Guide, the complicated publishing history of which reveals a readiness to introduce new matter by other hands in order to attract a larger share of a highly competitive market.¹⁹²

It is important to bear in mind the manner in which Wordsworth's contemporary readers were for the most part familiarised with the region which he adopted as the setting - incidental or instrumental - to so many of his poems. In particular it must be stressed that Lake District tourism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries shows a remarkable adherence to the itineraries of the earliest visitors, and an equally remarkable persistence of certain formalised ways of

seeing the places. I have already noted the extreme longevity of some of the choicer anecdotes and items of topographical description. West's Guide, the first of its kind, became one of the most influential texts, carried by countless tourists, and running through eleven editions between 1778 and 1821. The second and subsequent editions were enlarged by the addition of numerous addenda, amounting to a substantial anthology of early Lake District writing, which was in itself influential in establishing the canonical status of several items which had hitherto had a relatively limited circulation.¹⁹³ Other books, similarly, consist to a large extent of quotations from much the same range of writings. As these early tourists saw the different kinds of scenery of the Lakes in terms of the paintings of Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa and Gaspard Poussin, so in their written responses they tended to fall back on the models established by Brown, Dalton, Gray and West.

The Miltonic and paradisal overtones that Gray in particular introduced (and that struck a sympathetic chord in Wordsworth's developing response) were eagerly imitated. William Wilberforce, who visited the Lakes in 1779, and who was familiar with both Gray's and

West's accounts, wrote a description of Derwentwater that illustrates well this kind of writing:

The Vale of Keswick look'd beautiful beyond description, the peaceful retreat of some favor'd Mortals undisturb'd by the Cares & Concerns of the World. There was but just wind sufficient to agitate the light vapor which sometimes dropped upon the Ground, & then was gently rais'd up again. The Village dogs bark'd, the Partridge call'd & all was rural Peace & pastoral Enjoyment. Presently the vapor thicken'd and spread by degrees from the opening into Borrodale, till it entirely surrounded us so thick that we could not see even to the Bottom of the Mountain. On a sudden in 4 or 5 minutes at the most it was below quite clear again (Nature's Curtain drew up & discover'd a most wonderful scene) & it look'd like the darkness of Chaos rolling off & bringing to light a New Creation. Such a scene my Eyes never beheld.¹⁹⁴

The language - and perhaps the experience - is typically precious. On other occasions the weight of authority acted rather as a damper on literary ornament. Wilberforce's account of the celebrated waterfall of Lodore in Borrowdale -

... tolerably full for the summer time. Gray's and West's accounts render any further description

unnecessary. The former's is the best thing of the kind I ever read.¹⁹⁵

- may stand for a hundred similar capitulations to the rule of the canon.

West also seems to have introduced the custom, much imitated in later guides, of directing the tourist to the most satisfactory point for viewing a particular panorama or attraction. For the next forty years visitors dutifully followed West's advice, sometimes approving his choice, sometimes singing the praises of another of their own discovery, but rarely neglecting to try West's "stations" (as these viewpoints were known) as well. In one case, the authority of a station was further reinforced by the construction of an ornamental summer house on the site for the accommodation of tourists.¹⁹⁶

Taken altogether, the tourism of the period is characterised by a profound willingness to be guided. Visitors were drawn to the Lakes by the promise of sensory and aesthetic experiences unrivalled elsewhere in England, and were determined to take them where they knew them to be available. It was this compliant sensibility that Wordsworth, himself an enthusiast for

the early writings on the Lakes, saw the opportunity to exploit. His own Guide, plainly, is one consequence of this recognition; but so too, in a different, more covert way, is a poem such as 'Michael', added to the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads.

As we should by now expect, 'Michael', subtitled simply 'A Pastoral Poem', belies the complexity of its strategies. It begins (as John Lucas has observed)¹⁹⁷ in the informed but respectful tones of the guide addressing the tourist:

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill....

(1-2)

The tourist is beckoned aside, out of the broad highway and into an outwardly unpromising byway.

It is in truth an utter solitude,
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not.

(13-16)

In a sense, what is being requested of the tourist is that 'Sidelong and half-reverted' look which we have

already examined (see p 66), directed in this instance, not at a specimen of decrepit humanity, but, it transpires, at 'a stragglng heap of unhewn stones' (17).

As in 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', the subject is culled from Wordsworth's childhood recollection, so that the reader's gaze is directed backwards in time as well, to a point sufficiently distinguished by its archaic features of domestic economy. And as Wordsworth recalled that his Beggar was 'Observed, and with great benefit to my own heart, when I was a child', so we are told in 'Michael' that

this Tale, while I was yet a boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
At random and imperfectly indeed
On man; the heart of man and human life.

(27-33)

This - 'the heart of man and human life' - is the poem's centre. Dorothy, in her journal entry for 11th October 1800, describes the walk up Green-head Gill from which 'Michael' stems; she notes: 'The Sheepfold

is falling away it is built nearly in the form of a heart unequally divided'.¹⁹⁸

In 'Michael' there are no lacunae, no sudden overturnings of expectations, no rebuffs aimed at the unsuspecting reader; nor is there the reluctance found in some other poems to allow the material to assume the form of a tale. A tale is a commodity, and Wordsworth here is content to situate himself within, and profit from, the system of exchanges it belongs to. Thus the opening lines of the poem perform a gentle induction (which is not subsequently revoked), within a framework familiar to the reader from his acquaintance with the ordinary modes of tourism. At the same time it is a subtly different kind of attention that the visitor/reader is invited to pay. In the same way that he is asked to step aside from the 'public way', so too he is urged to look beyond the outward signs of the life-histories of Michael and his wife - the late-burning lamp which 'was a public Symbol of the life, / The thrifty Pair had liv'd' (137-38) - to the private symbol of the inner life that the sheepfold constitutes. The role of the poet, to which the subtitle alludes, is to shepherd the reader out of his accustomed way, and to enfold him within the walls of the human heart.

The role of the Lake District, ultimately, lay in its 'diffusing health and sober cheerfulness' throughout the whole land. If tourism was a fruitful terrain on which to engage a minority of the people Wordsworth wished to influence, the complete reformation of taste that he hoped for demanded more forthright tactics. 'Poor Susan', composed in 1797 (about the same time as 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'), carries the campaign into the heart of the enemy's camp. The signposts are unequivocal: Wood-Street, Lothbury and Cheapside (which means "place of trade") situate the poem's action firmly in the City of London, the financial and commercial capital of the country.

The poem concerns a woman migrant to the city, whose origins lie in a loved, but unspecified locality, which is nevertheless clearly recognisable as a generalised abstraction of the Lake District. (The cottage she recalls there - 'a nest like a dove's' - evidently inspired the name of the poet Mrs Hemans' Ambleside residence in the 1830s, 'Dove's Nest'.) Lamb took Susan to be a servant of some description, and urged Wordsworth to remove the final stanza, which he said gave the impression that she had a less reputable reason for being in London. Wordsworth's compliance, in all editions after 1800, appears to imply that this

was not his intention.¹⁹⁹ In fact 'Poor Susan' is a more straightforward poem than most of those so far discussed. It is concerned only to insist on the resilience of the imagination - even in the most outwardly hostile of environments - if it is grounded in the domestic affections and natural pieties. The sound of a thrush singing performs a kind of 'enchantment', transporting Susan back to her former home:

She sees

A mountain ascending, a vision of trees;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of
Cheapside.

(5-8)

It is a vision of surpassing grace - a moment of eccentric being. But it is of the briefest duration. When it has passed, no conscious effort of the mind can recall it. As with the thrush, which sings in the city in memory of a lost 'tree of its own' (20), the recovery of the past is also the sharp pang of loss. The imagination can palliate, but not efface her misfortune; only by returning home can the loss be restored.

The effect Wordsworth desired from 'Poor Susan' is perhaps better judged by comparing it with a related poem in which the terms of his engagement with the reader are made more explicit. 'The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale' dates from 1800, when it was published in the London newspaper, The Morning Post ('Poor Susan', by contrast, first appeared in the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads, publication of which - as with the original edition of 1798 - was conducted through Biggs and Cottle's Bristol firm). The direct access to a wide audience that newspaper publication implies is qualified by the opening stanza, which seeks to exclude from its audience

the unfeeling, the falsely refined,
The squeamish in taste, and the narrow of mind,
And the small critic wielding his delicate pen...

(1-3)

- another of Wordsworth's catalogues of metropolitan frailty. It is not for these, he insists, 'That I sing of old Adam, the pride of old men' (4). Here, though, the opposition is not between London and the Lake District, even in a disguised form; Tilsbury Vale, although fictitious, evokes the 'turnips, and corn-land, and meadow, and lea' (19) of lowland England.

Nor does Wordsworth amplify his rudimentary narrative explaining the farmer's presence in the city. He has failed in farming, and flitted, leaving debts behind. The cause of his failure is vaguely attributed to his profligate generosity: relying on 'The Genius of plenty', he expended his capital until nothing was left. The morality of such a course is not entered into, though it is significant that Wordsworth withholds any information regarding any dependants that his farmer might have. The reader is left to conjecture whether the subject is not, in any case, an impertinent one to raise. Certainly Wordsworth's refusal to allow any criticism of his farmer for not honouring his debts - his insistence that all credit must be given to the 'ease of ... heart' with which he has acted - appears to be a calculated affront to the guiding precepts of a mercantile nation.

What we must attend to instead is the farmer's unconquerable love for the country, even in the heart of the city. Wordsworth distinguished 'The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale' from 'Poor Susan' on the grounds that the former 'was taken from real life', whereas the latter was of an 'imaginative' origin.²⁰⁰ This is reflected in the more prosaic quality of his farmer's experience - which is not in the least visionary, but

simply the literal comprehension of the tokens of country life that are readily available to the city-dweller. The focus of his attention is the constant flow of farm produce that London sucks in. And he is himself drawn to the great market centres of London - Covent Garden, the Haymarket and Smithfield - but not with that 'disposition to truck, barter and exchange' which Adam Smith elevated almost to the status of a primal instinct;²⁰¹ merely to breathe in the smell of the hay and the cows.

Wordsworth was conscious of 'the deficiencies of this class' among his poems, represented by 'Poor Susan' and 'The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale'. Possibly he had in mind not simply their numerical deficiency, but the shortcomings of each individual poem. For they have this further point in common: they both offer limited, and essentially symbolic victories over the city. They people it with eccentric individuals, who visibly hold onto forms of experience and modes of thought and action that keep them apart from it. And in so doing they challenge the reader to a reappraisal of conventional assumptions. But if this is the "diffusion" Wordsworth hoped to achieve one is inclined to feel that in its emphasis on a couple of social atoms it is far too diffuse to have much effect (though

this did not lessen the appeal of 'Poor Susan' to Mrs Gaskell). London is a great deal more than the sum of its parts. In mitigation, Wordsworth referred the reader to The Excursion.²⁰² But a more fruitful line of inquiry, particularly so far as the Victorian reception of Wordsworth is concerned, is through the 'Sonnet Composed Upon Westminster Bridge'.

If the 19th century had a form dedicated to public poetry it was the sonnet, its compactness making it particularly attractive to newspaper editors. In formal terms, it is something of a jewel, intricately crafted, and capable of brilliant effects. But it works best through a mannered weighing of thesis and antithesis, or the ostentatious show of verbal wit. Ideally it accomplishes a sophisticated *coup de théâtre* that is applauded even in the moment that it is recognised as artifice. This is some way away from the carefully concealed mechanisms of the poems examined so far. Wordsworth composed many sonnets which were essentially public in nature, "occasional" responses to events and issues of public interest. But his handling of 'the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground' is in its results sometimes as arid as his metaphor suggests.²⁰⁴ This can hardly be said of the 'Westminster Bridge' sonnet which has a long and deserved train of

consequences running through the 19th century. Wordsworth himself seems not to have recognised its merits fully, nor its relationship to the two poems just discussed. In our own time it has become such a regular anthology piece that its impact has been dulled, and critical attention has shifted elsewhere. Yet in the pristine moment of its creation it amounted to a kind of revolution.

Revolution of another kind lies somewhere near the bottom of it. The poem was inspired by a privileged moment of transfiguring beauty, granted to William and Dorothy as they left London at dawn one July day in 1802 *en route* for Calais. The purpose of their visit was a rendezvous with Annette Vallon, the mother of Wordsworth's illegitimate child, Caroline; and the occasion was one of the brief interludes of peace in the protracted war England had waged with France since shortly after the Revolution of 1789. Wordsworth had by now completely shed his initial ardour for the revolutionary cause (only a little over a year later he enrolled in the Grasmere Volunteers, a civil defence force raised by Lord Lowther).²⁰⁴ Mary Moorman has speculated on the reasons why the rendezvous should have been in Calais rather than, say, Blois, Annette's home town.²⁰⁵ The most likely reason is that William

and Dorothy were anxious that their return should be as easy and quick as possible in the event of a deterioration in relations between England and France. 'Here, on our native soil, we breathe once more', Wordsworth began the 'Sonnet Composed in the Valley near Dover, on the Day of Landing', and although inside a month he was abusing the moral failings of his countrymen in sonnets such as 'London, 1802' ('Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour: / England hath need of thee'), his first instinctive reaction on their return in August was profound relief. 'Westminster Bridge' was composed just a few days later, and, unsurprisingly, evinces traces of the same nationalistic fervour.

All the foregoing is, I think, necessary to account adequately for the unexpectedly positive underlying sense of London ('that mighty heart') contained in the final line. What began as a profound sense of the beauty that London can assume in particular conditions - 'something like the purity of one of nature's own grand spectacles', as Dorothy recorded in her Journal²⁰⁶ - has acquired, in the form almost of a postscript, an unusually generous endorsement of the great city as a living human artefact.

Living, but momentarily dormant: that is its saving grace. Nature can lend her assistance, in the form of 'The beauty of the morning', but depends for her effect on the absence of smoke in the atmosphere before the work of industry has commenced, or domestic fires have been rekindled. The city is not yet astir, its complex mechanisms are not yet engaged. And viewed thus it seems at one with nature, wearing, 'like a garment', 'The beauty of the morning';

silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

'Open' to the fields and sky expresses not only the temporary abeyance of all effective demarcations, but the city's susceptibility to the pastoral mode. The city is in repose, and the gentler rhythms of the country have reasserted themselves: 'The river glideth at his own sweet will'. Again it is the work of the imagination, but here it casts its spell over an entire city, neutralising those elements that make it urban, and assimilating it to the pastoral mode.

The perception that a city in repose is a fertile ground for the pastoralist becomes increasingly common

as the century progresses, holding out the promise of recapturing the city within landscape conventions - even if only briefly and at intervals - for the eccentric cause. The city could belong to the artist between dusk and dawn, on Sundays and holidays. The Leeds-born painter, Atkinson Grimshaw, drew on this recognition in his development of the nocturne, one of the most distinctive of Victorian painting genres. The term was made famous by Whistler, who acknowledged Grimshaw's prior claim however. Francis Klingender states that Whistler declined to paint urban and industrial scenes, but in this sense that is just what his series of Thames nocturnes amount to:

... when the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairy-land is before us ... Nature who, for once, has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the artist alone.²⁰⁷

The campanili are attributable to Ruskin, but otherwise the passage is the crepuscular counterpart of Wordsworth's gilded dawn. Twilight adds a peculiar magic for the painter, obscuring the functional clarity of utilitarian forms. But the reassertion of Nature's

empire takes many shapes, some of which are illustrated in the chapters that follow. First, however, it will be necessary to look in more detail at how Wordsworth's changing positions on social and political matters influenced the ways in which the Victorian novelists I discuss regarded him.

iv) A Diminishing Arcadia?

In old age Wordsworth enjoyed a strong groundswell of popularity, but there were many who found it hard to square the author of the Lyrical Ballads with the public figure who moved, with a stately and self-conscious air, through the literary coteries of the 1840s. Thomas Carlyle professed 'a real respect for him ... , founded on his early Biography', but found the septuagenarian 'rather dull, hard-tempered, unproductive and almost wearisome'.²⁰⁸ 'One evening', he recalled,

I got him upon the subject of great poets, who I thought might be admirable equally to us both; but was rather mistaken, as I gradually found. Pope's partial failure I was prepared for; less for the narrowish limits visible in Milton and others. I tried him with Burns, of whom he had sung tender recognition; but Burns also turned out to be a limited inferior creature, any genius he had a theme for one's pathos rather; even Shakespeare himself had his blind sides, his limitations: - gradually it became apparent to me that of transcendent and unlimited there was, to this Critic, probably but one specimen known, Wordsworth himself! He by no means said so, or hinted so, in words; but on the whole it was all I gathered from him in this considerable tête-à-tête of ours; and it was not an agreeable conquest.²⁰⁹

If Carlyle had had more sympathy with what he admitted was 'a fine limpid style of writing and delineating, in his small way'²¹⁰ he might have thought more deeply about the fate of this 'small way' in the metropolis. Clearly in Wordsworth's forays into the city much was at stake that required a carefully guarded mien.

This had not been a characteristic of the younger Wordsworth, though appearing well before the 1840s (Keats noted in 1818 'that Wordsworth has left a bad impression where-ever he visited in Town - by his egotism, Vanity and bigotry'.²¹¹) In the years up to about 1805, in complete contrast, it is an enthusiasm for collaboration that is strikingly evident. We have seen how the preservation of the poetic centre depended on a sustained exercise of imaginative will. The frequency with which Wordsworth's poems are formulated in her prose journals demonstrates the extent to which Dorothy was an equal partner in these exertions. Indeed it is in her more intimate and unpolemical prose that the process is sometimes most clearly seen. Hers is an unfinished landscape, not yet purged of a few jarring elements. Attending the funeral of a poor woman of the parish, and meeting the curate at the churchyard gate, she remarks:

he did not look as a man ought to do on such an occasion - I had seen him half-drunk the day before in a pot-house. Before we came with the corpse one of the company observed he wondered what sort of cue 'our Parson would be in.' N.B. it was the day after the Fair.²¹²

Dorothy's tone is indignant, but the observation is recognisably within the bounds of the commonplace; and, in a manner strikingly absent from Wordsworth's more closely guarded writings, it is notable how far Dorothy's response is participated by the community. Personal and community life overlap and interpenetrate in her writings in a manner that is seldom reproduced in her brother's. One has only to compare a passage such as this with Wordsworth's aloofly comic and picturesque handling of Benjamin the Waggoner to see how much more carefully he felt compelled to control and limit the place of bucolic drunkenness in Gray's paradise.

But elsewhere Dorothy too seems to be consciously selective in the way she fashions her surroundings. The very first entry of her Grasmere Journals describes a solitary walk in which she seeks to allay the distress she feels on the departure of her brothers William and John into Yorkshire. Her account minutely details the ebb and flow of her feelings - her lapse

into tearful dejection which even the view across the lake has not power to alleviate, and the solace she finds in contemplating the beauty of certain flowers that she chances upon. Still her mood fluctuates and cannot find a stable mean:

Came home by Clappersgate. The valley very green, many sweet views up to Rydale head when I could juggle away the fine houses, but they disturbed me even more than when I have been happier. One beautiful view of the Bridge, without Sir Michael's.²¹³

It is the emotional upheaval, then, that has triggered this disturbance - a disruption that threatens to puncture the world that the imagination has created for itself. But we can see the imagination taking the necessary steps to resist the threat, 'juggling' the landscape, insisting on exclusions to preserve the integrity of the whole. 'Sir Michael's' reminds us that Rydal Hall, the seat of Sir Michael le Fleming, whose family could claim a long-established precedence in the district, was a conspicuous exception to Wordsworth's 'perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists'. It is not without significance that Dorothy's final insistence on the invisibility of Rydal Hall immediately precedes her resolve to keep a journal again. It is this last exertion of the will which

ensures the survival of the world in which alone the imagination - and hence the journal - have a place.

Wordsworth's own statement of the case - in the famous 'spots of time' passage of the Prelude - is characteristically more distanced, although the metaphor sufficiently betrays its remote topographical origins (to which it is time, perhaps, to return it):

There are in our existence spots of time,
Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
A vivifying virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life in which
We have had deepest feeling that the mind
Is lord and master, and that outward sense
Is but the obedient servant of her will.²¹⁴

What differentiates this passage from Dorothy's quoted above is Wordsworth's reliance upon self-conscious exposition. More than Dorothy's account, which impresses partly through the very spontaneity of the

feelings it records, his is remarkable for the elaborate care taken to seal the self-sustaining, self-healing process from any suggestion of dependence on the outside world. It is of the essence that at the centre the self should be 'lord and master', and that even so fundamental a phenomenon as 'outward sense' must be subdued in order to safeguard the eccentric domain, more especially when it is threatened with contamination by 'trivial occupations, and the round / Of ordinary intercourse'. It is a political solipsism, the developed position of the poet who, in the spring of 1800, found himself suddenly 'lord and master' of all Grasmere's 'unappropriated bliss'.

It is thus a paradox that Wordsworth's extreme self-dependence was crucially underwritten by others. Dorothy's companionship and remarkable faculties of observation, and the intellectual challenge which Coleridge's friendship offered were an essential nourishment. But Coleridge never became wedded to the Lake District as Wordsworth had hoped, and geographical separation proved the prelude to an intellectual estrangement that seems to have left Wordsworth floundering with the vast project for the Recluse. In time even Dorothy's sustenance fell prey to premature senility. Their place was taken by a host of lesser figures - Henry Crabb Robinson, Henry Taylor, Isabella

Fenwick, Edward Quillinan and others - sensitive and attentive companions, but too much in awe of the great poet to provide the necessary intellectual tension. Wordsworth's later years were increasingly insulated from the context of vigorous debate; faculties atrophied for want of use. His remarkable talent for insinuating weighty matter in the simplest of guises, most strikingly evident in the poems of circa 1797-1807, gives way by the 1840s to a polished rhetoric devoid of such recondite strategies. In the face of escalating pressures on the physical and human landscape of the Lake District, Wordsworth submitted to the logic of his own writings and their powerful inward trajectory.

The signs are present from the start. There is, for example, Wordsworth's reference to the garden rising steeply behind what is now Dove Cottage (the Wordsworths' first residence in Grasmere) as 'our domestic slip of mountain'.²¹⁵ It is the 'home within a home' which is the implicit claim of Home at Grasmere; not just the centre, but the very core, the purest, most concentrated embodiment of cherished values. Wordsworth's increasing preoccupation with the gardens of his various houses - especially latterly at Rydal Mount - shows him accepting still narrower confines for the eccentric domain, letting the formal

bounds and landscape devices of the garden substitute for the wider natural arena.

Rydal Mount, where the Wordsworths lived from 1813, offers some suggestive pointers to the change. A former farmhouse, it backs directly onto the old high road between Grasmere and Ambleside, much favoured by William and Dorothy in their walks, but deserted by most traffic in favour of the turnpike along the valley bottom. But in other respects it represents a departure from the old values of the 'perfect Republic' and its egalitarian society. For the Mount is the poet's eminence; it places him, moreover, within a stone's throw of the equally elevated Rydal Hall, now the home of Lady Fleming,²¹⁶ and which Dorothy had been at such pains to 'juggle' out of the view. And although Rydal Mount commands a most extensive prospect to the South, it is noticeable in summer how few signs of human habitation interrupt the view. The historical interaction of man and nature which the Guide offers as the key to the Lake District landscape is here suppressed, and the landscape that the fells, rocky headlands, meadows and lakes compose is correspondingly diminished. John Stuart Mill, who visited Rydal Mount in 1831, seems to have been struck by the same circumstance. He described the house as

the little palace or pavilion which he occupies in this poetic region, & which is perhaps the most delightful residence in point of situation in the whole country. The different views from it are a sort of abstract or abridgement of the whole Westmoreland side of the mountains, & every spot visible from it has been immortalised in his poems.²¹⁷

We will not do better than Mill's phrase - 'a sort of abstract and abridgement of the whole Westmorland side of the mountains' - for the curtailment that in later life fell upon the wide inclusiveness of his youth.

It was decidedly from his eminence that Wordsworth issued his appeals against the Kendal and Windermere Railway, which are animated by a haughty tone of 'just disdain':

Is then no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish; - how can they this blight endure?²¹⁸

From the ponderous table-thumping rhythm of the first line it is apparent that the poem is of dubious verbal integrity. In its appeal to Englishness, and in the trenchant monosyllabic rhythm stretched out over the

first half line ('Is then no nook ...?' / 'And did those feet ...?'), it shamelessly invokes the millenarian prospect of Blake's 'Jerusalem' to bolster a claim based entirely on a regressive appeal to a now remote past. No wonder that Wordsworth should recall the dreams sown in youth when his poem ploughs such a well-worn furrow that fragments of 'the meanest flower that blows' are turned up nearly fifty years later. The yeoman proprietor of 'paternal fields', threatened with expropriation by the railway's backers - he too is a ghostly survival from Wordsworth's earliest manhood - the very period indeed from which, in more reflective moments, he dated the onset of terminal decline among this class. Already Wordsworth, overflowing the strict formal bounds of the sonnet, has entered into a looser compact with prose, in a note appended to the poem. Finally he retreats altogether from the challenges of a verbal medium, and appeals simply to the reader 'who enters into the strength of the feeling'.

The 'Letters to the Morning Post', which amplify the position of the two sonnets, confirm the contracted sympathies of a poet inhabiting a much diminished arcadia. The immediate reactions of Wordsworth's contemporaries were mixed. Those closest to him tended to rally in support. Hartley Coleridge was reportedly defending his stance in the Kendal Mercury in late

1844.²¹⁹ But to others he was fruitlessly defending an exploded myth. The countryside was the last and greatest bastion of ignorance, which the railway held out the promise of overthrowing. Harriet Martineau assumed that Elizabeth Barrett would not need to be told 'how sensual vice abounds in rural districts'. In Ambleside, where she had taken up residence in the 1840s,

it is flagrant beyond anything I could have looked for: and here while every justice of the peace is filled with disgust and every clergyman with (almost) despair at the drunkenness, quarrelling and extreme licentiousness with women - here is dear good old Wordsworth for ever talking of rural innocence and deprecating any intercourse with towns, lest the purity of his neighbours should be corrupted. He little knows what elevation, self-denial and refinement occur in towns from the superior cultivation of the people.²²⁰

Many - especially those who identified most strongly with the early Wordsworth of Lyrical Ballads - must have shared Charles Mackay's regret at his 'very narrow, exclusive, and aristocratic view of the great civilizer of modern times'.²²¹

In other ways, too, a feeling was gaining ground that Wordsworth was neglecting to cultivate the very breadth

of insights that had made his moral and social reflections so apposite. Numerous visitors to Rydal Mount reported that the scope of his reading was surprisingly narrow, and in particular that he displayed very little interest in the works of his contemporaries. De Quincey recalled that

he was careless habitually of all the current literature, or indeed of any literature that could not be considered as enshrining the very ideal, capital, and elementary grandeur of the human intellect. ... In fact, there were only two provinces of literature in which Wordsworth could be looked upon as well read - Poetry and Ancient History.²²²

Wordsworth himself made the point on several occasions, though his motives were perhaps justifiably circumspect: scarcely a poet, it seems, did not at some stage send a copy of his verses for the great poet's scrutiny.

But it is the novel of which Wordsworth remained most doggedly ignorant. Such an obstinate refusal to acknowledge any claim on his attention from a form that was rapidly becoming the most telling literary embodiment of the spirit of the age requires some explanation. In his youth, like Dickens, he devoured

Fielding, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Swift and Richardson.²²³ But as early as 1800 he had set himself against what he saw as the novel's complicity with certain trends of modern urban life. In the Preface to Lyrical Ballads he identified a tendency towards the blunting of 'the discriminating powers of the mind, ... unfitting it for all voluntary exertion to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor'. Chief among the causes of this trend he listed

the great national events which are daily taking place, and the encreasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.

To these pervasive developments - to 'this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation' - Wordsworth argues, literature and the theatre (by which he means to suggest 'frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse') 'have conformed themselves'. A certain kind of novel (the Gothic novel of the 1790s springs most readily to mind, but Wordsworth's net is obviously making a wider cast) is deeply implicated in a process that is directly contrary to 'certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind' and to

those 'powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it which are equally inherent and indestructible'.²²⁴ It is the novel's damaging identification with the world of mere contingency - he once described Goethe's Wilhelm Meister as 'like the crossing of flies in the air' - which, for Wordsworth, renders it unacceptable.²²⁵ As Plato would have banished the poet from his republic, so Wordsworth banished the novelist from his 'perfect Republic'.

But in so doing it can hardly be denied that he cut himself off from many of the rising talents of the age. When Thomas Arnold suggested to him in 1842 that Dickens's popularity with the younger generation was to blame for a falling off in sales of the classics, Wordsworth was amazed: 'Can that Man's public and others of the like kind materially affect the question?' he asked his publisher, Edward Moxon; 'I am quite in the dark'.²²⁶ Emerson, who was introduced to Wordsworth at Rydal Mount in August 1833, was surprised at what he saw as 'the hard limits of his thought'.²²⁷ Not even personal friendship could secure the admittance of a novelist's works to his inner sanctum. The anecdote describing his unmannerly dismissal of Scott's forthcoming Rob Roy (1818) in favour of his own poem, 'Rob Roy's Grave', is well known from its inclusion in Charles Cowden Clarke's 'Recollections of

John Keats'.²²⁸ A rather different account appears in George Brimley's article on Wordsworth in Fraser's Magazine for July and August 1851:

When Rob Roy was published, some of Mr. Wordsworth's friends made a pic-nic, and the amusement of the day was to be the new novel. He accompanied them to the selected spot, joined them at luncheon, and then said - 'Now, before you begin, I will read you a poem of my own on Rob Roy. It will increase your pleasure in the new book.' Of course, every one was delighted, and he recited the well-known verses; and the moment he had finished, said, 'Well, now I hope you will enjoy your book;' and walked quietly off, and was seen no more all the afternoon.²²⁹

Brimley frankly doubted

whether Wordsworth read to enlarge the range of his conceptions or sympathies. In the language of modern criticism, he kept his own centre, and thence surveyed men and books; never attempted to gain their centre.²³⁰

For the more secure maintenance of his stance his reading was subject to rigorous control. It is yet another facet of his determined preservation of the self's integrity that nothing is allowed to impinge on his own centre.

Matthew Arnold recalled Macaulay's remark, when a subscription for a memorial to Wordsworth was being raised, that

ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honour to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country.²³¹

Wordsworth had cut himself off a little too completely from the new age, and the sympathies of a younger generation of poets wavered accordingly. Clough regretted that his poems evinced

something of a spirit of withdrawal and seclusion from, and even evasion of, the actual world. In his own quiet rural sphere it is true he did fairly enough look at things as they were; he did not belie his own senses, nor pretend to recognise in outward things what really was not in them. But his sphere was a small one; the objects he lived among unimportant and petty. Retiring early from all conflict and even contact with the busy world, he shut himself from the elements which it was his business to encounter and to master. ... I fear it cannot quite truly be said of him, as he has himself finely said of Burns -

In busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen;
He lives 'mid winter snows, and when
 Bees fill their hives;
Deep in the general heart of men

His power survives.

People in busy streets are inclined, I fear, a little to contemn the mild precepts of the rural moralist.²³²

Yet in keeping with the majority of his contemporaries Clough continued to esteem those poems 'which follow closest upon his youthful period of living experience'.²³³

Others found a similar difficulty in reconciling deep-seated faith with incidental exasperations. Clough wrote to a friend in 1855 recalling that Tennyson had declared 'that he would rather have written Gray's **Elegy** than all Wordsworth'.²³⁴ Twenty years earlier Tennyson and Edward Fitzgerald, during a tour of the Lakes, had amused themselves with 'a contest as to who could invent the weakest Wordsworthian line imaginable'.²³⁵ Yet amid this professed irreverence it appears that Tennyson was merely biding his time for the moment when Fitzgerald, genuinely implacable in his belittling of Wordsworth, would depart, whereupon he promptly, and in virtual secrecy, paid his respects to the poet at Rydal Mount.²³⁶ For many of the emerging writers of the Victorian era it was a matter of striking an attitude; in a time of rapid and profound change there were new problems to address, new courses

to pursue, and new prophets to attend to; one had to be wary of seeming to identify too unreservedly with the old. Homage was necessarily oblique, the real depths of admiration fit matter only for confession. If there is an exception to this rule among the writers I discuss it is Mrs Gaskell, and it is to her work that I turn next.

CHAPTER 2

MRS GASKELL AND THE BURIED LIFE OF VICTORIAN MANCHESTER

What a naturally fine country is this SOUTH LANCASHIRE! and what an interesting people inhabit it! let us approach nearer, as it were; let us cast an observant eye over the land; let us note the actions, and listen to the conversation of the people, and endeavour to express in writing, our impressions as to both the country and its inhabitants.

(Samuel Bamford, 1844)¹

Mary Barton was 'almost certainly written between the last months of 1845 and the first months of 1847',² dates that agree with the long-held belief that Mrs Gaskell began to write it on the advice of her husband, William, as a method of getting over the loss of their only son, Willie, who died of scarlet fever in August 1845.³ In her own account of the novel's genesis this episode is veiled in a passing reference to 'circumstances that need not be more fully alluded to'.⁴ It is fairly clear, however, that the sympathy

she could no longer lavish on her own son she transferred to the 'care-worn men' of Manchester, 'who looked doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want; tossed to and fro by circumstances, apparently in even a greater degree than other men' (p 37). There are, however, a number of episodes - moments of searing intensity not entirely integrated into the structure of the novel - where the memory of personal loss and the social theme converge. One is Mary Barton's encounter with the starving little Italian boy (p 284), the other Carson's witnessing of an instance of childish magnanimity (pp 437-38) while he is debating whether or not to hound Barton to the gallows.

If the personal grief on which it is founded breathes through Mary Barton a spirit of reconciliation, the period in which its action is set was one of fierce antagonisms. The principal historical event on which it turns dates from 1839, when the People's Charter, carried with earnest hopes to Westminster, was turned away. It is this breach of faith on the part of a seemingly obdurate government that precipitates John Barton's deep depression and so neutralises any reluctance he might previously have had to carrying out his union's decision to assassinate Carson's son. The drawing up of the Charter was a reaction to the

disappointment at the meagre extension of the franchise embodied in the Reform Act of 1832, and followed a long period of deteriorating conditions of trade, of rising unemployment and widespread short-time working. Moreover, in 1839, even a modest upturn in prospects was still three to four years away. Everywhere, but especially in the manufacturing towns of the North, thousands were thrown onto the rudimentary provisions of the New Poor Law.

We have looked already at the widespread disquiet this caused (see above, pp 31-34); and have seen how Thomas Arnold, freed from the professional demands of Rugby School and recuperating at his Lake District retreat, found time to meditate in both prose and verse on the reports of social unrest, and the gulf they revealed between the life of metropolitan England and the life he could see around him at Fox How. At some time between 1849 and 1852 - not long after the appearance of Mary Barton - Thomas Arnold's son Matthew wrote his *cri de coeur*, 'The Buried Life'. Arnold's editor, Kenneth Allott, suggests that its image of the mountain stream flowing to the sea, which partly reinforces, but partly conflicts with the dominant image of 'buried life', owes something to his father's poem, built around the same riverine image, that I quoted earlier.⁵ Possibly the correct interpretation is simply that

Matthew Arnold, as steeped as his father in Wordsworth's poetry and in a love of the Lake District, had, at the back of his mind, a similar but independent notion of that region's life-sustaining properties. In either case, a connection between 'The Buried Life' and Wordsworth's eccentric domain seems established. In the decade intervening between the poems of father and son political events had turned full circle. After the economic nadir of 1841-42, a brief improvement in conditions in the mid-1840s quickly evaporated and a further period of stagnation ensued. Chartist agitation rose to a crescendo with the Kennington Common rally of 1848. But although this event proved to be an anticlimax, marking the start of the rapid and permanent collapse of the Chartist movement, the progress of parallel revolutions on the Continent kept middle-class fears at a high level into the early '50s.

'The Buried Life' is indirectly connected with these concerns, since it voices very clearly Arnold's anxiety at the aggregation of huge urban populations, and the unsatisfactory quality of life - mental more than physical - that resulted. In spirit it foreshadows Meredith's 'Modern Love' sequence (1862), and its essential proposition - that the channels of communication between man and man have been sundered in modern, implicitly urban life - is the same. Certainly

it is a strikingly modern poem when set beside Thomas Arnold's, with its quaint, almost Augustan taste for capitalised nouns. And its intimate, nervous, almost irritable tone sufficiently establishes its urban provenance, even if the voice is specifically that of disaffected urbanism.

Here, as in his father's poem, we find the same concern for the wellbeing of the mass of the population, who find themselves 'alien to the rest / Of men, and alien to themselves' (lines 21-22). That this should be so is an affront to the sympathies that Wordsworth fostered, for as Arnold exclaims perplexedly (echoing 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'), 'The same heart beats in every human breast!' (23). But this observation is merely parenthetical to the poem's more shocking realisation - that this state of affairs has invaded even the charmed space that two lovers occupy.

Arnold does not specify whether he regards this condition as being of recent emergence, but he seems to imply as much; or at least that modern - again, implicitly urban or metropolitan - life has exacerbated it. For it is 'in the world's most crowded streets, / ... in the din of strife' (45-46) that the desire to uncover the compensatory 'buried life' is most intense. And when the effort is baffled the mind demands 'Of all

the thousand nothings of the hour / Their stupefying power' (69-70). These are the myriad tokens of urban existence which, for all the constant flux and variety that they assume, finally pall on the senses and plunge the mind into ennui. Like Wordsworth, Arnold finds the sheer superabundance of sensory data that the city directs at him finally exceeds his powers of comprehension. 'Eddying at large in blind uncertainty' (43) is as good a summation of the intellect defeated by the phenomenology of the great city as will be found in 19th-century literature. A city like London is at odds with human nature, Arnold maintains, and the individual must take steps to safeguard his integrity.⁶ We might quibble and suggest that it is more properly at odds with the developed sensibilities of an intelligent observer of precisely Arnold's background - that is, of someone largely divorced from the production and exchange that alone can give it meaning. But his perception, understandably, is far from unique among 19th-century writers.

Arnold cleaves instead to an older, gentler image of 'life's flow' (88) - a river meandering slowly through meadows, to the mild accompaniments of sunshine and a soft breeze. Exceptionally, in privileged transcendent moments such as occur rarely between lovers, the buried life supervenes, affording the individual a prospect of

The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

(97-98)

Tranquil moments of grace bestowed in the unlikely surroundings of a large city were not, of course, first dreamed of by Arnold. 'The Reverie of Poor Susan' and 'The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale' both describe similar moments (see above, pp 151-56). But with Wordsworth there is a more precise edge. Susan and the Farmer of Tilsbury Vale are both immigrants to the city, the victims to some extent of social and economic pressures, whether specified or not, which have driven them away from their native soil. Immigration to towns and cities, originating in a variety of causes, and attributable as much to changes in the agrarian economy as to advances in industrial production, was one of the primary motors of the Industrial Revolution, furnishing towns which otherwise would have had low net increases - or even decreases - in population with a ready supply of labour.⁷

In Manchester, where Mary Barton is mostly set, these labour migrants came from all over Great Britain and Ireland. There was a great deal of migration over relatively short distances as the handloom weaving trade, much of which was carried on in villages and

small towns in Lancashire and its neighbouring counties, succumbed to competition from more efficient mills. But many of the migrants came from much farther afield. The contribution of relatively sparsely-populated Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North of the Sands to this influx of migrants may not have been a numerically decisive one viewed from the great urban centres of the nation. Nevertheless, it has been remarked that during the 19th century 'the main contribution of the Lake Counties to a national economy lay in the region's own steady supply of people to other parts of England, mainly to centres of industry and commerce', and by 1891 it has been estimated that there were well over 100,000 emigrant Cumbrians throughout England and Wales.⁸ The hard statistical evidence which permits such an estimate dates mainly from the second half of the century. But we can supplement the meagre evidence for the first half with the stray, but telling evidence of anecdote, such as Dorothy Wordsworth's mention of a woman who begged at her door one May day in 1800:

... she had come from Manchester [three days previously] ... with two shillings and a slip of paper which she supposed a Bank note - it was a cheat. She had buried her husband and three children within a year and a half - all in one grave - burying very dear - paupers all put in one

place - 20 shillings paid for as much ground as will bury a man - a stone to be put over it or the right will be lost - 11/6 each time the ground is opened.⁹

Elsewhere she records that "'clemmed", the Cheshire [and Lancashire] word for starved', which Mrs Gaskell uses in Mary Barton, was familiar (as an import?) in Westmorland.¹⁰ If the woman in Dorothy's Journal probably earns her place there through the unmitigated, and hence perhaps atypical misery of her tale, the common fate of migrants was often little better.

The quality of housing has always been a basic index of living standards, and 19th century commentators on conditions in the towns of the industrial North recorded detailed observations of the different kinds of accommodation they witnessed. The number and size of rooms, the provision of water and sewerage, the adequacy of ventilation, the proximity of noxious trades, the quality of the masonry, the amount of the rent - all were minutely recorded in the many investigations, both state-sponsored and amateur, into the conditions of the industrial working class, so that the best, the worst and the average standard could be ascertained. In the vertically-organised Victorian city, where those who could afford to kept to the high

ground, out of the smoke and away from the polluted rivers and canals, the poorest dwellings were often in cellars which, in the estimation of contemporary observers, were superior only to the worst communal lodging houses or to utter homelessness.¹¹

Cellar-dwellings had for many years been particularly prevalent in Manchester and other Lancashire towns.¹² They were frequently associated with the very poorest among the migrant groups, including those described in contemporary accounts as the 'low Irish'. They combined, in accentuated form, all the worst features of early-19th-century working-class housing: overcrowding, poor ventilation, lack of sanitation, exposure to damp and so on. Many were constructed in the most unsuitable locations, on low-lying land where the slightest rise in the water-table caused moisture to seep through floors that were frequently only of earth. Sometimes cellars were turned into lodging houses, and here the multiplication of human misery took on an infernal character.

Angus Bethune Reach, who covered some of the northern towns for the Morning Chronicle articles better known for Henry Mayhew's contributions on 'London Life and the London Poor', found a particularly shocking case in what he was told by the local police was the 'worst

cellar in Manchester'.¹³ Here he found people lodging in what

were literally vaults, three of them opening from one to the other. The air was thick with damp and stench. The vaults were mere subterranean holes, utterly without light. The flicker of the candle showed their grimy walls, reeking with foetid damp, which trickled in greasy drops down to the floor. Beds were huddled in every corner: some of them on frames - I cannot call them bedsteads - others on the floor. In one of these a man was lying dressed, and beside him slept a well-grown calf. ... The smell in this room was dreadful, and the air at once hot and wet.

'What's this you have been doing?' said my conductor to the landlady, stooping down and examining the lower part of one of the walls. I joined him, and saw that a sort of hole or shallow cave, about six feet long, two deep, and little more than one high, had been scooped out through the wall into the earth on the outside of the foundation, there being probably some yard on the other side, and in this hole or earthen cupboard there was stretched, upon a scanty litter of foul-smelling straw, a human being - an old man. As he lay on his back, his face was not two inches beneath the roof - so to speak - of the hole.

'He's a poor old body,' said the landlady, in a tone of deprecation, 'and if we didn't let him crawl in there he would have to sleep in the streets.'

I turned away, and was glad when I found

myself breathing such comparatively fresh air as can be found in Angel-meadow, Manchester.¹⁴

It was in a common lodging house, 'on her miserable couch of straw among twenty other men women & children', that Mrs Gaskell originally intended the death of Mary's prostitute Aunt Esther to occur.¹⁵ This is truly the buried life of Victorian Manchester, and it throws into sharp relief the self-absorbed neurosis of Arnold's poem.

Two cellar dwellings are described in detail in Mary Barton - homes to the Davenports and to Alice Wilson respectively - and neither is as bad as the cellar Reach found. Nevertheless, the Davenports' cellar presents an appalling picture of squalor. It is reached via an unpaved court with an open gutter down the middle; the whole court is awash with what Mrs Gaskell delicately calls 'household slops of every description' (p 98). The cellar, of course, is below the level of the court:

It was very dark inside. The window-panes were many of them broken and stuffed with rags, which was reason enough for the dusky light that pervaded the place even at mid-day. After the account I have given of the state of the street, no one can be surprised that on going into the cellar inhabited by Davenport, the smell was so

foetid as almost to knock the two men down. Quickly recovering themselves, as those inured to such things do, they began to penetrate the thick darkness of the place, and to see three or four little children rolling on the damp, nay wet, brick floor, through which the stagnant, filthy moisture of the street oozed up; the fireplace was empty and black; the wife sat on her husband's chair, and cried in the dank loneliness.

(p.98)

These detailed interiors, with their terse inventories of the meagre portable property of the inhabitants, are a characteristic feature of Mrs Gaskell's manner of presentation. Much of their force derives from precisely their brevity - from the fact that the total possessions of an entire family can be dealt with in the space of an average paragraph. Perhaps even more grimly effective is the way in which the gloom discloses this pitiful property and its surroundings only gradually, and that the floor which first struck the eye as just damp is rapidly revealed to be wet - a condition which only a moment's thought links to the disgusting mess of liquid filth covering the higher level of the court. Health in such a dark and noisome hole would be precarious at the best of times, and cannot withstand the additional burden of malnutrition that has afflicted the Davenports since the father was thrown out of work by the fire at Carson's Mill.

Davenport dies of the fever, but not before he may have infected George Wilson's twins, who die soon afterwards.

Alice's cellar, by contrast, is probably as good an example as could have been found among the working-class districts of Manchester:

It was the perfection of cleanliness: in one corner stood the modest-looking bed, with a check curtain at the head, the whitewashed wall filling up the place where the corresponding one should have been. The floor was bricked, and scrupulously clean, although so damp that it seemed as if the last washing would never dry up. ... [The window was] oddly festooned with all manner of hedge-row, ditch, and field plants, which we are accustomed to call valueless, but which have a powerful effect either for good or for evil, and are consequently much used among the poor. The room was strewed, hung, and darkened with these bunches, which emitted no very fragrant odour in their process of drying. In one corner was a sort of broad hanging shelf, made of old planks, where some old hoards of Alice's were kept. Her little bit of crockery ware was ranged on the mantelpiece, where also stood her candlestick and box of matches. A small cupboard contained at the bottom coals, and at the top her bread and basin of oatmeal, her frying pan, teapot, and a small tin saucepan, which served as a bottle, as well as for cooking the delicate

little messes of broth which Alice sometimes was able to manufacture for a sick neighbour.

(pp 51-52)

Alice's income as a washerwoman cannot have earned her more than a poor standard of living (she would probably not have earned anything but thanks for her herbal remedies),¹⁶ but her material possessions nonetheless bespeak a degree of frugal sufficiency quite unlike the position of the Davenports. The quantity of her possessions, while still small, greatly exceeds the Davenports', although their spartan quality can perhaps be judged from the fact that a box of matches is listed among them. Mrs Gaskell does not disguise the defects in her accommodation. Nor does she omit the unpleasant concomitants of her herbalism, though the fact that the herbs are instruments of comfort to others offers some mitigation.

These two cellars define the urban-rural axis along which Mary Barton is constructed. The Davenports' cellar is quintessentially urban, compressing in narrow compass all the characteristic excesses of the early-Victorian urban environment. The special redeeming qualities which Alice brings to her dwelling are the benefits of a particular rural inheritance, whose

rudiments are gradually made plain in the course of the novel. She and her brother George Wilson are natives of North Lancashire (not Cumberland, as Angus Easson maintains, although his instinct is correct).¹⁷ Alice identifies their home as 'toward Burton' (p 68) - a common enough placename, for which several actual candidates might be advanced; but further mention of Milnthorpe, Lancaster (both p 68) and Arnside (p 269) pinpoint it exactly as Burton-in-Kendal, a large village a few miles inland from the Kent estuary which divides the main body of Lancashire from the part of the county distinguished as 'North of the Sands'. A very few miles to the West is Silverdale, with its views across the Sands to the fells of Furness and the mountains beyond. It is here, in all likelihood, that Mary Barton was written.¹⁸ As so often with Mrs Gaskell, she has kept scrupulously to a known terrain, and one senses in the collocation of her own place of writing and Alice's birthplace a more than usually potent mixture of imagination and projection.

Neither Silverdale nor Burton-in-Kendal are properly in the Lake District (though see Appendix 1 for the elasticity of the Lake District's boundaries, especially along its south-eastern flank), but Mrs Gaskell leaves us in no doubt that they are part of the same material and moral economy. Her enthusiasm for a

kind of ethnological observation is indeed constantly evident. The year after Mary Barton was published, when she had been holidaying at Skelwith Bridge near Ambleside, she contrasted the 'Grand proper rooms ... as dull as dust' in which she imagined a friend to be staying on the Isle of Wight, with the warming-pans, crockery, spurs and traditional dresser which surrounded her in the Lakes: 'our dear charming farm-kitchen at Skelwith was worth a dozen respectable properly-furnished rooms'.¹⁹ The same attempt to constitute a culture through its significant objects is evident in the description of Alice's cellar, which contains a pointed reference to a 'basin of oatmeal' (p 52). When Mary Barton goes to have tea with Alice she is offered 'a quantity of the oat bread of the north, the clap-bread of Cumberland and Westmorland' (p 66). Alice recalls wistfully,

'My mother used to send me some clap-bread by any north-country person - bless her! She knew how good such things taste when far away from home'.

(p 67)

Bread made from oats, as I have already mentioned (see above, pp 85-86), remained widespread in the northern counties long after wheat had become the **sine qua non** of breadmaking elsewhere. The Bartons are familiar

with, and seek to gratify, the culinary idiosyncracies of the Wilsons: Mary is despatched to buy some Cumberland ham for George Wilson, because 'it will have a sort of relish of home with it he'll like' (p 51).

The careful insertion of telling details such as these, which insist that the Wilsons are part of that Cumbrian diaspora which was seen as exerting a morally invigorating influence on the nation, must be viewed in the context of Mrs Gaskell's broader topographical affiliations. Born in London, she spent virtually the whole of her married life in Manchester, but shows little fondness for either. Most of her childhood and adolescence was spent in the small market town of Knutsford (fictionalised as Cranford), situated just a few miles south of Manchester, but psychologically set firmly apart from it in rural Cheshire. Between Knutsford and Manchester, Cranford and Drumble, the rural and the urban, her subsequent life continued to oscillate. Complaints of 'never feeling well in Manchester, and always longing for the country ...' recur in her correspondence.²⁰ In Manchester health was earned only at the price of constant vigilance; her own was not robust, and she had in addition a growing family to look after. The country promised not only bodily health (especially in the summer months, when the risk of cholera and other contagious diseases was a

constant anxiety in Manchester), but mental ease - a more sympathetic environment. 'I am so much better for Knutsford', she confided in 1851; 'partly for air, partly quiet and partly being by myself a good piece of every day'.²¹

There is a significant reverberation of this contrast in the Preface to Mary Barton:

Living in Manchester, but with a deep relish and fond admiration for the country, my first thought was to find a framework for my story in some rural scene; and I had already made a little progress in a tale, the period of which was more than a century ago, and the place on the borders of Yorkshire, when I bethought me how deep might be the romance in the lives of some of those who elbowed me daily in the busy streets of the town in which I resided.

(p 37)

Mrs Gaskell, as this passage shows, has much the same nervous constitution as Wordsworth. Instinctively she shies away from the noise and confusion of the city; like Wordsworth, she seeks a 'framework' - the promise of an ordered structure - in contrast to the chaotic elbowing motion of the city, which allows the mind no repose. Only a determined mental effort restrains her from indulging her more natural affinities, and even so

the pull remains strong. The idea, if not the material, of her first planned novel, located 'on the borders of Yorkshire' has generally been seen as resurfacing in Sylvia's Lovers (1863).²² And, as the trend in Mrs Gaskell's later life was increasingly to extricate herself from Manchester (first by means of increasingly lengthy continental holidays; then, just before her death, by moving to Hampshire), so in her writing she returned to the more gratifying scenes of Sylvia's Lovers and Wives and Daughters.

But for thirty years Manchester was the scene of her husband William's vocation as a Unitarian minister, and she seems to have adapted conscientiously to the life of active philanthropy that was required of her. In her writings, however, there is a clear enough distinction between duty (= work) and pleasure, the one issuing in the difficult, soul-searching Mary Barton, the other in formally sophisticated, but morally and intellectually less demanding work, aiming at the idyllic rather than the tragic. She herself confessed to Ruskin in 1865 that she re-read Cranford as an antidote to low spirits²³ - an admission of the therapeutic role of her writings reminiscent of the likely origin of Mary Barton.

Married life with William verged on becoming one of those marital literary partnerships at which the Victorians excelled. William's interests, both literary and philological, provided her with a not inconsiderable stimulus. He also tried his hand at poetry, on one occasion submitting for Wordsworth's perusal a slim volume of Temperance Rhymes.²⁴ Together husband and wife planned to write imitations of the major English poets; she was working on Coleridge and Wordsworth in the countryside near Knutsford - 'fit place for the latter!' she remarked - in 1836.²⁵ Later in the same year she had the opportunity to see at closer quarters the true Wordsworthian terrain, when she was sent, for the sake of her baby daughter Marianne's health, to Grange-over-Sands.²⁶ Here she overlooked the caravans of travellers crossing the sands of the Kent estuary. This had long been a **locus classicus** of Lake District topography - the gateway to the Lakes, and a spot calculated to whet her appetite for the mountains beyond.²⁷ In the 1840s and '50s numerous family holidays followed at nearby Silverdale, overlooking the same estuary, and at Skelwith Bridge, in the heart of the Lakes close to Grasmere.

Mrs Gaskell's credentials as a devoted Wordsworthian were impeccable. On holiday in Germany in 1841 she was gratified to find that she was staying in places only

recently vacated by the Wordsworths who were touring the country at the same time.²⁸ Oddly, no visit to the heart of the Lakes is recorded before the year 1849. It would appear that this visit was a product of the fame that Mary Barton brought her, since while she was there Edward Quillinan (Dora Wordsworth's widower) arranged a meeting between her and Wordsworth at Lesketh How, his Ambleside house.²⁹ Mrs Gaskell is curiously silent on what passed between them; but at least one subject of their exchange is characteristic: she left with the lines

He that feels contempt
For any living Thing, hath faculties Which he hath
never used

inscribed in his hand in her album.³⁰

According to a much later letter (1859), it was 'The Arnolds & Wordsworths ... [who] took lodgings for us at Skelwith at the house of a "Stateswoman" [,] a Mrs Preston of Mill Brow'.³¹ Throughout the 1850s the Gaskells returned frequently to the same place, and the history of their involvement with the Prestons is a peculiarly interesting one. Mrs Gaskell was evidently flattered by Wordsworth's solicitude, and even more by his description of the Prestons as 'a "Homeric

family"'. Closer acquaintance, it is true, revealed certain flaws in the character of Mr Preston: 'I am sorry to say the father sometimes drinks', she warned Charles Bosanquet, who had asked her advice on a trip to the Lakes. But her faith in their sterling qualities was little shaken, for

when sober he is a fine simple fellow. Mrs Preston's family have lived in that house and on that land for more than 200 years, as I have heard. They have no ambition but much dignity, - and look at that family of stately sons & daughters!³²

Indeed Mrs Gaskell was so impressed by the stateliness of the children that she employed no less than three of them as domestic servants, apparently sharing Wordsworth's curious belief that the much-vaunted independence of the statesman class was in no way compromised by servile occupations.³³ The three Prestons seem to have given loyal enough service, without distinguishing themselves in any way for their strength of character. Another daughter, Eleanor, in service with a London family, seems to have had the 'passionate wilfulness' of the true strain, and caused Mrs Gaskell a certain amount of anxiety when she heard that the attentions of a disreputable suitor threatened to bring shame on the family.³⁴ But she could not,

even in this difficulty, place any confidence in the Prestons' son, William. He seems to have been a general factotum to the Gaskell household, but she considered him rather below the desired standard of independence, having 'what they call "an easy temper" [-] easily persuaded, imposed upon or even intimidated'.³⁵ It would appear that even the strong Preston stock was succumbing to the same deterioration that Harriet Martineau and others observed in the statesman class from the 1840s onwards.

But to return to Manchester, 1837 saw the "imitations" project finally bear fruit - a single fruit - in the form of a poetical sketch, published in Blackwood's Magazine.³⁶ 'Sketches Among the Poor No 1', written in collaboration with William, in spite of occasional absurdities of diction standing over from second-rate 18th-century verse, maps out the ground which Mrs Gaskell will occupy through the writing of Mary Barton and beyond. The poem describes a woman, Mary, living 'By gloomy streets surrounded' (line 3) in a large city, but remembering her childhood in the country home to which she longs one day to return. In the meantime she occupies herself in rendering kindnesses to all those around her. At length she lapses into happy childishness, transported in imagination back to the home of her youth, and finally dies. As Mrs

Gaskell acknowledged (rather understating the case, one feels), she is 'the germ of "Alice"'.³⁷

As for the poem's style, Mrs Gaskell thought that it was 'rather in the manner of Crabbe ... , but in a more seeing-beauty spirit'.³⁸ Crabbe's manner is sufficiently accounted for by the archaic use of rhymed couplets - props to an uncertain poetic talent, we may guess. It seems fairly clear that what she means by 'a more seeing-beauty spirit' is Crabbe seen with the hindsight that Wordsworth affords (the remark follows a passage quoted from 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'). More specifically, it can be seen that Mary is directly descended from Wordsworth's 'Poor Susan', another exile from the countryside immured in a great city. But where Wordsworth insists on the transfiguring imaginative power of the mind, and makes of it an intense but, because of its brevity, melancholy vision of 'Green pastures', the Gaskells present an altogether more sentimental picture. In their depiction of senility there is no transfiguring vision, only a weakening of the individual's grasp of reality. It is characteristic of Mrs Gaskell's failure to develop her Wordsworthian model that she prefers to dissolve the world in a green mist rather than to transform it, anticipating the circumvention of history and narrative that concludes Mary Barton, whereby Jem and Mary are

transported from the difficulties of the Old World to the fair and unfettered prospect of a life in the New.

What 'Sketches Among the Poor No 1' demonstrates, in spite of this arguably regressive tendency, is the Gaskells' recognition of the role Wordsworth has to play in the regeneration of the city. In the meantime they had moved on to a series of lectures, entitled 'The Poets and Poetry of Humble Life', which William was to deliver to 'the very poorest of the weavers in the very poorest district of Manchester'.³⁹ The programme brought art and life into sharply-focused proximity. The lectures were not only well received, but were in request elsewhere in the town, 'deputations of respectable-looking men' waiting on William all day long in the hope of securing his services.⁴⁰ This was a form of enfranchisement that it was within the Gaskells' power to grant to the working people of Manchester. A new series was planned, and Mrs Gaskell reported to Mary Howitt: 'we are **picking up** all the "Poets of Humble Life" we can think of';⁴¹ the subjects included Wordsworth, Burns and Crabbe, and may have been the subject of some rejected prose pieces that Mrs Gaskell later sent to Blackwood's.⁴²

The circumstances of these lectures must have brought home to the Gaskells how remote most of the pieces

enshrined in the literary canon were from the specifically urban concerns and experiences of their Manchester audiences. 'As for the Poetry of Humble Life', Mrs Gaskell insisted, 'that, **even in a town**, is met with on every hand'. The point had to be stressed that, setting aside the partiality of the canon for the rural muse, recognisably the same features of humble life were to be observed in the midst of urban and industrial Manchester as in the ordered **paysages riants** of 18th-century pastoral or in the peopled moral landscapes of Wordsworth's poetry. In Manchester, she continued,

... we constantly meet with examples of the beautiful truth in that passage of 'The Cumberland Beggar:'

Man is dear to man; the poorest poor
Long for some moments in a weary life
When they can know and feel that they have been,
Themselves, the fathers and the dealers out
Of some small blessings; have been kind to such
As needed kindness, for this simple cause,
That we have all of us a human heart.

In short, the beauty and poetry of many of the common things and daily events of life in its humblest aspect does not seem to me sufficiently appreciated.⁴³

What was wanted was the extension of sympathy Wordsworth had argued for - but carried decisively into

the darkest recesses of the new cities of the Victorian age.

Wordsworth's own early forays in that direction offered seminal texts, fragments of a larger enterprise never fulfilled, but backed up by the vast reserves of his wider *oeuvre*. Mary Barton is probably the most concerted and most nearly successful attempt to apply Wordsworthian strategies to the perplexing realities of the new industrial order, and, what is more, to apply them very nearly in Wordsworthian terms, in contrast to the more eclectic procedures of Dickens and Emily Bronte. As such it shows very clearly both the strengths and the limitations of Wordsworth's eccentric domain as a polemical instrument.

Mrs Gaskell is fully aware that her own intimate experience of Manchester is atypical, and that to present it to a wider audience without renouncing this intimacy requires some form of mediation. One has only to think of the epithet "the manufacturing districts", so widely employed in writings of the time, and the succinct way in which it identifies, even as it keeps at a prudent distance, the geographical and economic entity it describes, to realise the extent to which South Lancashire was *terra incognita* to the greater part of the reading public. If it was known at all to

those who had never seen it at first hand, it was probably through the various Tours and Topographical Accounts that appeared in considerable numbers in the first half of the 19th century. Considered as a distinct literary form, these are characterised by their indebtedness to the aesthetic movements of the later 18th century, and the emphasis these latter placed on certain narrowly defined landscape qualities. These were not well adapted to do justice to the minor charms of the South Lancashire landscape. In any case, with a few notable exceptions (e g Cooke-Taylor's Tour of the Manufacturing Districts)⁴⁴ these Tours suffer from a handicap inherent in the form itself. In its very nature the conventional Tour tended to prevent topographical prose from keeping abreast of the social and economic changes which had ushered the North-West into a position of economic centrality; because it was necessarily peripatetic it was predicated on a centre located elsewhere, and thus for all its concern for industrial installations, processes and innovations it could not be other than misleading. It is this retarded topographical sense of South Lancashire that Mrs Gaskell challenges in the first chapter of Mary Barton, while incidentally acknowledging the progress that Wordsworth's Lake District has made towards centrality in the hearts and minds of the nation.

Thus in the opening scene, set in Green Heys Fields just outside Manchester, Mrs Gaskell asserts that although they are open, low and flat, these fields have

a charm about them which strikes even the inhabitant of a mountainous district [note the frame of reference], who sees and feels the effect of contrast in these commonplace but thoroughly rural fields, with the busy, bustling manufacturing town, he left but half an hour ago.

(p 39)

The status of this meagre urban-fringe arcadia, significantly, is underwritten by reference to an assumed (normative) predilection for mountain scenery. The lover of the picturesque is invited to relax the stricter regulations of his aesthetic code, and to concede that, in their own humble way, these fields stand in much the same eccentric relation to their own 'busy, bustling' centre as does the Lake District to the metropolis.

Mrs Gaskell carries this point on a number of fronts. She is at great pains from the outset to establish that the characters of her novel are figures of pastoral. It is the most compelling reason why Mary Barton begins outside the town and on a holiday, with the Bartons and

the Wilsons 'fleeting the time carelessly' in rural surroundings. Specifically, it is a time when the economic forces of the town are temporarily eclipsed, and slower, more irregular human rhythms supervene. As she writes of a similar moment of recreation later in the novel,

Men with more leisure on week-days would perhaps have walked quicker than they did through the fresh sharp air of this Sunday morning; but to them there was a pleasure, an absolute refreshment in the dawdling gait they, one and all of them, had.

(p 328)

And Mrs Gaskell equivocates about the occasion of this saunter in Green Heys Fields, unsure whether it is 'a holiday granted by the masters, or a holiday seized in right of nature and her beautiful springtime by the workmen' (p 40). If the latter it harks back to a fast-disappearing pre-industrial labour regime of the kind that so dismayed Adam Smith. The impression is of Nature suddenly reasserting a usurped authority over the population of this industrial town. The pastoral quality of the scene is further enhanced by indications of an incipient romance between Mary and Jem. It is a relaxation - though a revealing one - of Mrs Gaskell's generally firm adherence to the prosaic and actual that

Jem (who to today's social or economic historian is a model example of the innovative, upwardly-mobile engineer who cuts such a dynamic modern figure in the early and middle phases of the Industrial Revolution) is referred to on one occasion as the 'poor smith' (p 226) of a timeless folkloric mythology.

Much has been written about Mrs Gaskell's insertion of dialect glosses into the novel.⁴⁵ They are considered to have been contributed by her husband William, a keen philologist and dialectologist, whose Two Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect were appended to the fifth edition (1854) of Mary Barton. It has been observed that these serve to associate her urban-industrial characters with a remote and implicitly agrarian past, and dignify their speech by demonstrating the purity of its provenance from the earliest recorded periods of the English language. In effect, they tend to suggest that these people are not the kind of industrial proletariat narrowly conceived by observers such as Engels, but rather a forgotten branch of the English folk, on whom, as on the countryside they once inhabited, urban and industrial conditions have been superimposed. Scratch the surface and the traces of their former condition will appear.⁴⁶

Indeed it is surprising, among all the discussion of dialect, that no comment has been offered (so far as I am aware) on the name 'Barton' itself. The Oxford English Dictionary offers '1 A threshing-floor ... 2 A farm-yard (The regular modern sense) ... 3 A demesne farm'. Of these, the second is probably that which Mrs Gaskell has in mind. One of the instances which the OED gives, from Southey's 'Poet's Pilgrimage', might well, with its mention of

Spacious bartons clean, well-wall'd around,
Where all the wealth of rural life was found

have echoed through her mind as she struggled with the task of rendering faithfully the destitute topography of Manchester.

Closer to Mrs Gaskell's own time, and to the philological interests of her husband, is Isaac Taylor's Words and Places (1864), which traces the Germanic origin of the word along similar lines:

... a **tun**, or **ton**, was a place surrounded by a hedge, or rudely fortified by a palisade. Originally it meant only a single croft, homestead, or farm, and the word retained this restricted meaning in the time of Wicliffe. ... This usage is retained in Scotland, where a solitary farmstead still goes by the name of the

toun; and in Iceland, where the homestead, with its girding wall, is called a **tun**. In many parts of England the rickyard is called the **barton** - that is, the inclosure for the **bear**, or crop which the land bears.

And Taylor adds in a footnote: 'There are some sixty villages in England called Barton or Burton; these must have originally been only outlying rickyards'.⁴⁷ Thus not only are the Bartons given an implied rural genealogy, but etymologically their name is cognate with the very Burton-in-Kendal which is the birthplace of Alice Wilson.

As we have seen elsewhere in her choice of the Prestons as servants, Mrs Gaskell set great store by genealogies, and she carefully provides us with lines of descent for virtually all the important characters, and even some of the minor ones, in Mary Barton. John Barton is 'a thorough specimen of a Manchester man; born of factory workers, and himself bred up in youth, and living in manhood, among the mills'. We are further told that he is 'below middle size' and 'slightly made' (salutary facts to remember as the novel develops), that he was of a wan complexion and had 'almost a stunted look' (p 41). Mary Barton's mother and her Aunt Esther, on the other hand, are of rural Buckinghamshire stock, and they, as John Barton

observes, have 'quite a different look with them to us Manchester folk' (p 43; see also p 57). George Wilson comments that Mary is 'more of her mother's stock than [her father's]' (p 44), but even on his side a remoter rural ancestry is pointed to by his surname. For Mrs Gaskell the very ubiquity of these "genetic" survivals of the rural past, submerged beneath the fabric of modern industrial civilisation, is cause for a certain optimism. Mary Barton charts the resilience and resurgence of this past embodied in the human and material fabric of the present.

In the course of her opening description of Green Heys Fields Mrs Gaskell mentions a 'black and white' (i.e. timber-framed) farmhouse with a herb garden, and comments that the latter dates from a time when 'the garden was the only druggist's shop within reach'. The subsequent account of Alice Wilson's herbalism recalls this house; both are anomalous, almost renegade features in the modern landscape; the very plants in the garden grow in 'republican and indiscriminate order' (p 40) - an interesting choice of words, which suggests undisclosed depths of political ambivalence in the author. We may compare the farmhouse with the Liverpool house of Ben Sturgis and his wife, whose kindness to Mary in her sickness and distress so

palpably contradicts the poor impression that Job Legh entertains of their townsfolk. Theirs is

an old-fashioned house, almost as small as house could be, which had been built long ago, before all the other part of the street, and had a country-town look about it in the middle of that bustling back street.

(p 375)

Like the Bartons' surname, this old rural order finds itself threatened with submergence by a new and alien one. Analogues occur frequently in topographical writings - South Lancashire and North Cheshire have a particularly rich heritage of timber-framed buildings; that is, of the kind of buildings that presented the most striking contrast to the regular stone or brick buildings of the Industrial Revolution. But these houses, like the residue of rural ancestry in the Bartons' character, still function, still exert a countervailing force.

Alice, more obviously, exerts a force counter to the effects of the Industrial Revolution through the use she makes of herbal remedies to treat the sick. When she is first introduced we are told that she has

been out all day in the fields, gathering wild herbs for drinks and medicine, for in addition to her invaluable qualities as a sick nurse and her worldly occupation as a washerwoman, she added a considerable knowledge of hedge and field simples; and on fine days, when no more profitable occupation offered itself, she used to ramble off into the lanes and meadows as far as her legs could carry her. This evening she had returned loaded with nettles

(p 51)

The old rural habits and culture, the folk medicine based on an intimate acquaintance with plants and their medicinal properties - these are in Alice still an active and beneficent force. The case is similar with other vestiges of the old life. Mrs Gaskell lays great stress on the rituals of neighbourliness which punctuate the leisure hours of the Bartons and Wilsons, although she is careful to emphasise that these revolve around frugal, often painfully stinted expressions of hospitality. At no point does she offer to describe the working life of those whose work is central to the economy of Manchester; partly because she is describing a depressed period of trade, but mainly because it is on the fringes of industrial production - holidays, periods of unemployment, the brief leisure hours - where the old 'buried life' survives more nearly intact.

It is a form of unconscious resistance to the moulding pressures of the new urban life, and Alice is at its very centre. Though for much of the novel she is a dwindling physical force, sliding into senility and death, her life matches its length precisely to the needs of those around her. Throughout Jem Wilson's trial and Mary Barton's illness, her influence, in contrast to her failing physical and mental powers, is vital and sustaining. She does not die until the moment when her succession is assured - when the foundation is established in the union of Mary and Jem for an independent continuance of the qualities she embodies. As Margaret says to Jem, '"You'll date your start in life as Mary's acknowledged lover from poor Alice Wilson's burial day"' (p 411). John Barton, significantly, outlives Alice by a few miserable days before also dying - effectively from remorse. She cannot help him, and so he cannot detain her.

With Barton's death ends 'the tragedy of a poor man's life', charted in terms of a denaturing process. In the first chapter we see him walking in green fields with his country-born wife and his daughter. He has suffered his share of tragedy - the loss of a child - and it has permanently soured his temperament, but he retains enough of common human sympathy to share Wilson's vigil at the bedside of Davenport, and to

surrender his own food for the greater need of the man's family. At this stage he is still able to acknowledge Alice's merits, and lives - on the fringes perhaps - but nevertheless somewhere within the moral order which she composes. When his wife, 'an awkward, beautiful rustic, far too shiftless for the delicate factory work to which she was apprenticed' (p 57), also dies, the history of his past sympathies is disclosed, in a manner which Mrs Gaskell can still portray as survivals of this other order of things:

The agricultural labourer generally has strong local attachments; but they are far less common, almost obliterated, among the inhabitants of a town. Still there are exceptions, and Barton formed one.

(p 158)

Every nail in the house, 'driven up for her convenience', reminds him of his dead wife and bids him stay. But with her death

One of the ties which bound him down to the gentle humanities of earth was loosened, and henceforward the neighbours all remarked he was a changed man. His gloom and his sternness became habitual instead of occasional.

(p 58)

Through all this, through his disappointment at the rejection of the Charter, his increasing absorption in the affairs of the union, and his reckless, self-abnegating fidelity to the union's assassination plot, we watch the contraction of his sympathies in the strict sense of the word, his withdrawal from real social contact and shared patterns of thought. Paradoxically, the more his mind is preoccupied with the union, the less capable he seems to be of association.

It is not solely Alice against which the conduct and morality of organised labour are judged. Job Legh, Margaret's weaver and (by preference) naturalist grandfather, is also represented as disapproving of Barton's union. John Lucas has called Legh 'a convincing study of the kind of autodidact regularly to be found in working-class life during the nineteenth century, as we know from any number of Autobiographies and Memoirs'.⁴⁸ The point needs to be stressed if the true significance of his eccentricity is not to be missed. Like Alice's it embodies the surviving traces of a lost rural culture.

Job Legh's sympathy has, by comparison with Alice's, manifestly contracted: his passion for impaled insects is a peculiarly alienated form of oneness with nature -

an antisocial preoccupation that requires an effort of will or a palpable human crisis to dispel it. But once engaged, his social sympathies are vigorous. There is a strong contrast between Legh and Barton implied in Mrs Gaskell's accounts of their respective visits to London, which run more or less end to end in Chapter 9. Barton's sympathies have finally been extinguished by the political indifference he has encountered at the seat of government. When he returns, worn out and bitter, Mary tells him the sad news that their friend George Wilson (Alice's brother) has died suddenly the previous day;

Her tears were ready to flow as she looked up in her father's face for sympathy. Still the same fixed look of despair, not varied by grief for the dead.

'Best for him to die,' he said in a low voice.

(p 141)

'This was unbearable', Mrs Gaskell adds, as much in her own person as Mary's. Mary fetches Job Legh 'to come and cheer her father', and together they draw him into conversation, though a vein of bitterness still runs through his talk. In his account of London, however, he becomes briefly the wide-eyed provincial:

'They're sadly puzzled how to build houses though in London; ... For yo see the houses are many on 'em built without any proper shape for a body to live in; some on 'em they've after thought would fall down, so they've stuck great ugly pillars out before 'em. And some on 'em (we thought they must be th' tailor's sign) had gotten stone men and women as wanted clothes stuck on 'em. I were like a child, I forgot a' my errand in looking about me.'

(p 143)

It is part of Mrs Gaskell's purpose to emphasise the provincialism of her Manchester working folk, even while insisting on the economic centrality of the city and the trades in which they work. But one can only deplore her decision to make Barton (of all people) the mouthpiece for bumpkinesque remarks on the classical architecture of London. The passage serves no real narrative or dramatic purpose. The comedy is ill-timed in view of the sombre burden of Barton's tale, and ill-judged to the degree that it tends to heap ridicule on the whole wider working-class initiative that Barton is representing. It is, moreover, of doubtful credibility: neo-classical columnar architecture was eagerly adopted by the cottonocracy of Lancashire and Cheshire to embellish its residences and public buildings from the early 19th century onwards.⁴⁹ In Manchester itself, the Exchange, the Infirmary and the

then Town Hall made prominent use of classical columns, so that it is highly implausible that Barton should be so staggered. The whole passage is an embarrassing distraction, and if her original intention - in the proto-novel John Barton⁵⁰ - was to insist on his tragic stature, one wonders if, appalled at the Frankenstein's monster she had created, she was betrayed into inserting a later, debunking interpolation.

No such excrescences mar the story of Job Legh's journey to London and back. His is an engaging picaresque narrative strung together on the single principle of human kindness - of sympathies extended and received. Yet it is shadowed by disappointment as Barton's. He tells how his daughter married a Manchester man, and how the two of them moved in pursuit of 'London work and London wages' (p 145), only to fall ill soon after the birth of their child, Margaret. Job Legh travels down by coach to see them with Jennings, the husband's father, but they arrive to find the couple already dead. The rest of the narrative is taken up by their efforts to bring the baby back to Manchester, hampered by shortage of money (from Birmingham they proceed on foot), but assisted by the goodwill of others. Here the comedy - principally derived from the inadequacies of the two men in the office of nurse to the child - is consistent with its

context and, being presented as self-mockery rather than an authorial joke at the men's expense, delightful.

On the last day of their journey they stop at a roadside cottage, where a woman helps them to a meal and dresses the baby - in spite of a gruff, disapproving husband. Later it transpires that she has been moved to help the men by the memory of her own dead child. Once again we are reminded that Mrs Gaskell originally undertook to write the novel as a way of overcoming grief at the death of her own son; there is thus an underlying congruence between the impulses of this country woman and her own motives in writing the novel that consolidates the governing notion of sympathy. The woman's kindness is one instance among many of a network of intermeshing sympathetic relations existing on an altogether different plane from those economic relations which have divided the two fathers from their children. It is significant that the episode portrays the men in the performance of offices not typically theirs; as elsewhere, they are the more susceptible to the artistically much more persuasive treatment here meted out because they are temporarily displaced from their primary economic context - waged labour. Even Barton is roused from his despair by the sheer faith in human

nature that Job Legh's tale evinces, and more still (if less convincingly, to a modern audience) by the recital of Samuel Bamford's 'God Help the Poor', with its pallid concluding Christian hope. But Barton's mind is already locked into another, embittered train, which must run on remorselessly until he has murdered Harry Carson and paid for the crime with his own life.

Once the murder becomes inevitable Barton steps outside the circle of Job Legh's and Alice's influence, and, in spite of herself, of Mrs Gaskell's sympathy too. As he devotes himself more and more to the business of the union, so he lets slip the social and familial ties that have hitherto moderated his propensity for gloomy speculation. On one occasion, in the first phase of Alice's slow decline, she asks Mary where her father is. Mary answers:

'I guess he's at his Union; he's there most evenings.'

Alice shook her head; but whether it were that she did not hear, or that she did not quite approve of what she heard, Mary could not make out.

Mrs Gaskell's equivocation at this point seems less than candid; elsewhere her treatment of the union is plainly dishonest. Her description of the union

official from London amounts to a calculated piece of character assassination, in the form of a succession of sniping innuendos and damning epithets: 'disgraced medical student ... unsuccessful actor ... flashy shopman' (p 236) all fall from her pen in a single sentence. It is hard to reconcile this with the elaborately and explicitly dispassionate tone which Mrs Gaskell assumes elsewhere when she touches on matters of public controversy. If she had called him an agitator and incendiary from the outset she could hardly have been plainer.⁵¹

Part of the difficulty for Mrs Gaskell is that when her novel steps outside the world of which Alice is, symbolically, the centre, she passes outside her own area of experience. She knew the interiors of working-class homes and was familiar with the intricacy and importance of the minor ceremonies of working-class life. She was probably familiar with some of the better-managed mills (which frequently encouraged interested visitors), although she makes little use of that knowledge because it would require a deviation from her over-riding pastoral impulse. But she was - not surprisingly - quite ignorant of the internal conduct of trade unions, which prided themselves on their independence of middle-class well-wishers (who were few enough in any case). And yet, while demurely

confessing her ignorance of political economy⁵² - a subject on which she rightly foresaw that Mary Barton would attract a deal of hostile criticism - she is silent on the basis of her depiction of trade unionism. Both in her handling of the official, and in the lurid gothic prose in which she dresses up the assassination plot (itself a wholly exceptional case, for which few parallels exist in trade union history)⁵³, we must acknowledge what Raymond Williams termed 'a dramatization of the **fear of violence**' rather than any impartial presentation of the evidence.⁵⁴ 'The actions of the uneducated', she confides, revealingly, 'seem to me typified in those of Frankenstein, that monster of many human qualities, ungifted with a soul, a knowledge of the difference between good and evil' (pp 219-20). No less than Thomas Arnold, she saw in combination among the working class a threat first and foremost. In direct contradiction to her own most persuasive representations of the diversity and individuality concealed within the class, she remained haunted by the fear of a huge undifferentiated mass, and did not easily concede that union might also be an expression of the sympathetic faculty.

As a result of this imaginative failure she looks to a terrain evacuated of political and social institutions for a way out - to the ideal 'unappropriated' expanses

of the New World. Like Dickens, before his first visit to the United States soured his hopes, Mrs Gaskell retains something of the Elizabethans' wonder at the prospect of a continent as yet untainted by corruptible human agencies. For when Jem Wilson has been acquitted of Carson's murder, and Barton's guilt has been confessed and expunged, Jem and Mary cannot resume their old lives in the old places. Instead they must emigrate to Canada in order to escape the taints of the Old World and the suspicion that Jem finds himself under from his fellow workmen in spite of his acquittal. The move betrays Mrs Gaskell's failure to recognise that the Industrial Revolution, with all its incidental defects, and for all its apotheosis of individualism, was a collaborative triumph of the first order, that for perhaps the first time in history had the capability to raise an entire society permanently above the immediate pressure of physical want. Yet the various complementary forms of human association to which it gave rise - Chartism, unionism, the co-operative movement - are resolutely denied to those who aspire to them. Jem's new situation is stripped of anchoring associations, cast adrift among vast and meaningless acres. Ostensibly he is to apply his engineering skills to the work of an agricultural college in Toronto. But his timber-built house with its garden and large orchard is surrounded by nothing

more actual and present than the memory of 'old primeval trees' (p 465), felled to make way - for what? for agriculture? for Toronto? - we cannot tell. Canada is a primeval past without a present. Mrs Gaskell's denial of the existent, proliferating and fast hardening interrelations of even a new country, her insistence on the feasibility of planting and sustaining a sturdy yeoman independence in such circumstances, merely reiterates Wordsworth's dogged faith in the statesmen of the Lake District, and, by withholding relevant data, gives the impression that Jem has been restored to something akin to the lives of his rustic forebears. Thus emigration becomes, not a prospective, but a retrospective act. There is no future in it. For more compelling modulations of the eccentric domain we will have to look elsewhere.

CHAPTER 3

A HILLSIDE VIEW OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:

WUTHERING HEIGHTS

It might be a difficult task, now, to ascertain with precision, whether these DEVIATIONS [characteristic of West Riding speech] are in reality **corruptions** or **purities** of the ENGLISH LANGUAGE. They are probably a mixture of the two; I mean, they may contain some slight admixture of depravity. But it would be equally reasonable to suppose that a disturbed stream should be less adulterate than its fountain, as that the language at present established should be less **corrupt**, or (to change the word without altering the argument) less **refined** than that of a District secluded in a singular manner from all intercourse with other languages.

(John Marshall, 1788)¹

Wordsworth's Lake District and the Brontës' Haworth Moor, places of pilgrimage from metropolitan centres the world over, occupy a special place in English culture. The attraction they exert testifies eloquently to Emily Brontë's belief 'that there is, or

should be, an existence of yours beyond you'.² They express in actual geographical space the need to retain some semblance of possible alternative modes of being beyond those subscribed to in the mainstream of our social and economic life. They offer diverting images of a mental and physical life consonant with nature, and imply the possibility - even in the space of a day's visit - of renewing a fundamentally necessary communion. Where the other "literary landscapes" of England have either changed out of all recognition (Shakespeare's Forest of Arden, for example), or are too diffuse to be pulled into adequate focus (Hardy's Wessex, Lawrence's Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border), the Lake District and Haworth Moor possess the necessary definition and coherence to endure as eccentric domains remote from the prevailing forms of individual and collective life. Garrisoned solely by the forces of their respective literary imaginations, they continue to constitute tightly organised enclaves - refuges of the authentic self and embodiments of the unadulterated life of the feelings.

But while Wordsworth sheltered in relative security behind the ramparts of his mountain fastness, Emily Brontë found herself occupying an exposed salient. Wuthering Heights, to adopt a different metaphor, is

located on the most abrupt of geological faults, where the massed forces either side jar and grate against each other ceaselessly: on the one hand an advancing tide of industrialisation and agricultural improvement, bringing with them a new sophistication which permeated every aspect of life; on the other the embattled remnant of an older, simpler order, harsher perhaps, but more vigorous, the product of a particular environment, and preserving some semblance of communion with it. Even in the brief span of Emily Brontë's life (1818-48) the pace of change was dramatic. Directory entries for Haworth in 1823 and 1848 offer a clear illustration. In 1823 Haworth (including its dependent townships) was already a substantial village of 4,663 inhabitants, but the list of its prominent people and tradesmen - publicans, grocers, butchers, smiths, craftsmen, other shopkeepers and a firm of millers - could have been that of any prosperous village in the early 19th century. The woollen trade is represented by six woolstaplers and an equal number of worsted spinners and manufacturers.³ We should not fall into an exaggerated notion of the substance of these 'manufacturers', though. The scale of their activities is well illustrated by the remark of the incumbent of Haworth prior to Patrick Brontë, when he noted in 1801 that

The farms in this neighbourhood are very small, and are occupied by manufacturers whose only care is to obtain from them milk and butter for the use of their families. They sow a very small proportion of their cultivated lands with oats, for various purposes connected with the keeping of their cattle.⁴

The picture this presents of the yeoman clothier, his activities divided perhaps equally between agriculture and manufacture, is scarcely altered since Defoe observed the type around Halifax nearly a century earlier.⁵

By 1848 the village had grown in population by about 50% to 6848, and the transition from a predominantly agricultural to a predominantly industrial economy is plainly shown by the disproportionate increase in spinners and manufacturers of woollen yarn and cloth - to 16 (by now these will probably signify proprietors of greater substance). In addition the Directory lists one firm of shuttle-makers and two individuals distinguished only as 'manufacturers'. Meanwhile the woolstaplers (the name is redolent of an earlier and less intensive mode of industrial production associated with the medieval period), have dwindled to two.⁶

Vestiges of the older order no doubt survived. In the remoter Pennine hamlets, as at Saddleworth Fold on the moors between Huddersfield and Manchester, Angus Bethune Reach found the dual economy of farming and cloth manufacture still functioning in 1849. But its setting was becoming noticeably anachronistic.

The man whose establishment we had come to see was a splendid specimen of humanity - tall, stalwart with a grip like a vice, and a back as upright as a pump-bolt, although he was between 70 and 80 years of age. We entered the principal room of his house; it was a chamber which a novelist would love to paint - so thoroughly yet comfortably old-fashioned, with its nicely-sanded floor, with its great trough beams hung with goodly fitches of bacon, its quaint latticed windows, its high mantelpiece, reaching almost to the roof, over the roaring coal fire; its ancient yet strong and substantial furniture, the chests of drawers and cupboards of polished oak, and the chairs so low-seated and so high-backed.⁷

But the lovingly enumerated domestic details ('which a **novelist** would love to paint') serve only to reinforce the sense of a relict economy. 'Saddleworth', Reach has already noted, 'is now intersected by the Leeds and Huddersfield Railway, and as a consequence, is beginning to lose much of those primitive characteristics for which it was long renowned'.⁸

By the time Mrs Gaskell came to know Haworth in the 1850s, the journey there from the industrial town and railhead of Keighley could 'hardly be called "country" any part of the way'.⁹ The coal fire at Saddleworth Fold reminds us, too, of another aspect of the local economy. Matthew Arnold, who visited Haworth in 1852 in his capacity as a schools inspector, recalled it in 'Haworth Churchyard' (1855) as a place where

colliers carts

Poach the deep ways coming down,
And a rough, grimed race have their homes.

(lines 58-60)

Seams of low grade coal were exploited on Haworth Moor, both for domestic consumption and to fire the limekilns which produced the fertilizer necessary for the improvement of moorland pastures (the chief motive for the enclosure acts which transformed the open moors of many surrounding settlements).¹⁰

Haworth is, and was in our period, less remote and insular than is often imagined. In the 18th century localised incidences of nonconformist enthusiasm had provided the main source of commotion; but in the 19th the neighbourhood was drawn progressively into wider

currents of political and industrial unrest. Only a generation before Wuthering Heights was written much of the West Riding had been convulsed by the fear of Luddism, when, as E P Thompson points out, more soldiers were deployed to maintain order than were at Wellington's command during the Peninsular War.¹¹ As the century progressed new political movements emerged, many dedicated to constitutional rather than incendiary objectives (William Busfield Ferrand, the prominent Tory Chartist, was Lord of the Manor of Haworth), but the area remained a powder keg of unrest. Patrick Brontë, fearing attack from Chartists, took to carrying loaded pistols on pastoral visits around his far-flung curacy.¹² His superior, the Reverend William Scoresby, Vicar of Bradford, was driven to resign his living in 1846 amid threats to his life during a period of violent unrest.¹³

The steam railway that now provides a charming, but anachronistic introduction for the literary pilgrim to Haworth did not arrive until late in the century, but as early as 1848 there was a regular omnibus meeting the train services at Keighley. Branwell Brontë was employed by the newly-opened Leeds and Manchester Railway at Sowerby Bridge, and later at nearby Luddenden Foot before his dismissal.¹⁴ Charlotte,

Emily and Anne, more providently, invested a small legacy in shares in George Hudson's railway company, Emily managing the investment - apparently with some flair - when Charlotte was in Brussels.¹⁵ Even in Emily's short life there was ample evidence of transformation in the neighbourhood, the effects of which were felt in the weakening of idiosyncracies born of isolation, and the gearing of the locality to an infinitely wider frame of social and economic relations.

The economically marginalised daughters of a curate's household necessarily stood in a somewhat eccentric relationship to these transformations. To what extent this sense impinged on the women themselves is harder to determine. Outwardly the lives of the Brontë sisters were little altered. There were material gains, doubtless, in the easier availability of goods and services, but there were also imaginative losses. From their servant, Tabitha Ackroyd, they could catch glimpses of another more radiant world now lost beneath the encroaching mills.

Tabby had lived in Haworth in the days when the packhorses went through once a week, with their tinkling bells and gay worsted ornament, carrying the produce of the country from Keighley over the

hills to Colne and Burnley. What is more, she had known the 'bottom', or valley, in those primitive days when the fairies frequented the margin of the 'beck' on moonlit nights, and had known folk who had seen them. But that was when there were no mills in the valleys, and when all the wool-spinning was done by hand in the farmhouses round. "It wur the factories as had driven 'em away," she said.¹⁶

Haworth Parsonage could not have been better placed as a vantage point from which to ponder this loss. To the front it faced across the churchyard to the village and the valley, where the remaining vestiges of uncultivation were swallowed up one by one, and spots to which memory or tradition attached were obliterated; to the rear it looked directly onto the open moor, unreclaimed and unchanging, except as the elements acted upon it. Much in Wuthering Heights belongs to the characteristically modern **Ubi Sunt** tradition of mourning the passing of old-accustomed forms of life. If only the moor appeared unchanging, what could be more natural than to locate there the desired resistance to change. And so the structural contrast of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange takes shape - the contrast between a hardy autochthonous culture and one which, if not strictly arriviste, is vitiated by contact and compromise with such an ethos.

The bleak, monotonous expanse of Haworth Moor may seem a poor counterpart to the Lake District that Coleridge eulogised as 'a cabinet of beauties'.¹⁷ Indeed it says much for the creative impact of will and desire on inert matter that Emily Brontë's terrain (never named in the novel) should have acquired a standing comparable with Wordsworth's. Her success is not completely without precedents, however. One of the elementary springs of sublimity, as identified in the aesthetic theories of the later 18th century, lay in the vastness of wide open spaces. 'Regions like this', wrote Gilpin of unenclosed Salisbury Plain,

which have come down to us rude and untouched, from the beginning of time, fill the mind with grand conceptions, far beyond the efforts of art and cultivation. Impressed by such views of nature, our ancestors worshiped [sic] the God of nature in these boundless scenes, which gave them the highest conceptions of eternity.¹⁸

Wordsworth, who was reading Gilpin in the 1790s if not before, drew on such hints for his own poem 'Salisbury Plain' (1793-94). Around 1820 the Royal Society of Literature offered a prize of fifty guineas 'for a poetical effusion on Dartmoor; which sum was justly awarded to Mrs Hemans for her vigorous and beautiful lines on the subject'. Undaunted, a Devonport

schoolmaster, Noel Thomas Carrington, published his Dartmoor: A Descriptive Poem in 1826 to many favourable reviews. This took its epigraph from Wordsworth; but several reviewers chose to use Carrington's somewhat archaic poetic style as a stick to beat 'those ruggednesses (arising from want of skill, bad taste, or affectation) which characterise so much of the blank verse of the present day'. The Literary Gazette praised Carrington meanwhile for writing

in the full and natural tide of descriptive verse. The stream is smooth, ample, and gently swelling, like a fine river whose course is through a champaign country; not turbulent, brawling, broken by rocks and cataracts, like most of the poetry of the century in which we live.¹⁹

In other words, Carrington subdued the sublimity of the moor to the mellifluent beauties of the Thomsonian strain.

Carrington felt constrained nevertheless to confess that 'Dartmoor is generally imagined to be a region wholly unfit for the purposes of poetry',²⁰ and Charlotte Brontë made the same apology on Emily's behalf in the 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights.²¹ But Charlotte's is the developed and critical response of

one who has registered how far her early life lay outside general experience. To the Brontë children, steeped in the romantic literature of the preceding half-century, the association of poetry with moorland would have come as no surprise. They had no reason to distinguish the high moors of their upbringing from the more varied delights of the Lake District, the poetic potential of which was by now self-evident. When Branwell wrote to Wordsworth in 1834, soliciting his opinion of some juvenile poems, he felt entitled in effect to "claim kin" with the older poet on the grounds that they had in common an upbringing 'among secluded hills'.²²

The blunt disingenuousness of the claim, rather than any falsity, probably accounts for Wordsworth's failure to reply. The smart which he thus inflicted drew the sympathy of Branwell's sisters, and perhaps accounts in part for the sometimes quarrelsome tone of Emily's engagement with Wordsworth. For Emily's response to him is of a piece with Wuthering Heights itself; deeply receptive to the authentic delineation of passion, but robustly dismissive of all that has lost touch with its most vital sources. Yet in spite of occasional differences, the reading of Wordsworth that sustains Wuthering Heights is both comprehensive and coherent,

more vigorous in its results than Mrs Gaskell's mild implementation of a Wordsworthian programme, more demanding of the reader than Dickens's marginal insights. In scope it extends to the utterance of a Wordsworthian polemic rooted in the features of a particular terrain, and to the adoption of recognisably Wordsworthian strategies of address as a means of safeguarding the integrity of its eccentric vision. It is a signal achievement of Wuthering Heights that in certain respects it surpasses Wordsworth's own fulfilment of those moral and social objects which, at the height of his confidence and ambition, he set himself to accomplish.

The breadth of Wordsworth's ambitions seems worlds away from the familiar image of Emily Brontë - a woman fundamentally, rather than contingently reclusive, the most introverted of a family almost withdrawn from ordinary social contacts. Her early writings were channelled into the private world of the Gondal manuscripts, and, not surprisingly, show no trace of Wordsworth's kind of wide social perspective. In the absence of a social context, the desire for authenticity devolves entirely upon the self. The importance of even momentary apperceptions of authentic feeling is paramount, such that it becomes a scarcely

inferior duty of the poet to record also those moments of near-apperception - fugitive and unassignable, but no less indicative of the poet's proper striving after truth. An early (1837) and self-deprecating poem by Emily Bronte records just such a moment;

Because I could not speak the feeling,
The solemn joy around me stealing
In that divine, untroubled hour.

I asked myself, 'O why has heaven
Denied the precious gift to me,
The glorious gift to many given
To speak their thoughts in poetry?'.²³

Whether the poem is more than a conventional bow in the direction of Romantic aesthetics may remain in doubt, but the avowal is characteristic. Poetry is identified with the authentic delineation of feeling, yet from the poet's very failure to achieve this is derived a secondary authenticity in the refusal to substitute a confected account.

How far a poem such as this suggests an acquaintance with Wordsworth is hard to say. Certainly Wordsworth and the scenery of the Lake District were familiar to the Brontë children. The earliest of Charlotte's letters in Clement Shorter's Life and Letters describes

the three sisters each copying a design from 'some views of the lakes which Mr Fennell brought with him from Westmoreland'.²⁴ Branwell's letter to Wordsworth, mentioned earlier, suggests that they knew not only his poetry but his critical prefaces as well. In novel-writing Charlotte at least sought another guide in Thackeray, but so long as poetry was their major concern it was to Wordsworth and those associated with him (Southey and Hartley Coleridge) that they turned instinctively.²⁵

Some cursory bracketing of Wordsworth's name with those of the Brontës can be found in most recent criticism of Emily Brontë, but no searching account of the connection has yet appeared. John Speirs has found in both Charlotte and Emily

a profound connection with the poetry of the beginning of the 19th century. Narrowly constricted as they themselves were in their personal lives the poetic imagination deepens and extends the scope of their novels (above all in Emily's ... Wuthering Heights).²⁶

Jonathan Wordsworth, in his encouragingly-titled article, 'Wordsworth and the Poetry of Emily Brontë', while reiterating the belief that 'the resemblances go

deep', and that 'in her calmest moments, her privately and passionately held beliefs, her most far-reaching assertions, it is Wordsworth she is close to', nevertheless stops short of asserting 'direct and demonstrable influence' and claims only to have identified 'affinities' between the two.²⁷ While this may be true of the more insularly-conceived poetry, it is hardly the case with Wuthering Heights, where precise verbal echoes confirm suggestions of a deeper correspondence of structure and strategy.

Much of the caution of modern critics can be attributed to the poverty of Emily Bronte's literary estate - the fact that she left behind no substantial body of letters or occasional writings - and to the fact that, almost uniquely among 19th-century writers, she played no part in the community of letters which grew up around her contemporaries. Much too can be traced to the extravagant license which the absence of sufficient reliable data has encouraged her biographers to exercise. Certainly the Bronte sisters cut odd, anachronistic figures in the rapidly transforming industrial region of the West Riding. Malcolm Hardman has noted that on visits to Bradford - the emerging metropolis of the West Riding woollen industry - their timidity and old-fashioned clothes gave them an

appearance of 'eccentricity'.²⁸ But too much has been made (from Mrs Gaskell's Life of Charlotte Brontë [1857] onwards) of the singularity of the Brontë household, to the detriment of more sober judgments.

One temptation is clear. The magnification of Byron's influence injects more zest into a racy biography than Wordsworth's more tepid reputation can impart. It is not that Byron's influence on the moral and metaphysical geography of Wuthering Heights need be diminished; rather it is that the attenuated reputation of Wordsworth must be plumped out and its constituent passion restored. If the poetry itself, with its reflective poise, sometimes seems to oppose such a passionate reading, we have only to turn to Dorothy's Journals to find, undiluted, the reflex of the poet's passion. As, for example, in this entry of April 1802:

A beautiful morning. The sun shone and all was pleasant. We sent off our parcel to Coleridge by the waggon. ... We then went to John's Grove, sate a while at first. Afterwards William lay, and I lay in the trench under the fence - he with his eyes shut and listening to the waterfalls and the Birds. There was no one waterfall above another - it was a sound of waters in the air - the voice of the air. William heard me breathing and rustling now and then but we both lay still, and unseen by one another. He thought that it

would be as sweet thus to lie so in the grave, to hear the **peaceful** sounds of the earth and just to know that our dear friends were near.²⁹

It is an extraordinary moment - the poet rehearsing his own burial, and anticipating, as the final 'our' seems to suggest, that he will lie in the grave next to Dorothy, closes his eyes as if inviting a deathlike slumber to overtake him. Certainly the poem, 'A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal', resonates throughout this passage, almost as if he and Dorothy were testing out its cadences three years after it was written. But still more remarkable is the unspoken accord which exists between sister and brother. It is as if the whole episode passed without either party ever having to announce any stage of the action ('said' becomes 'thought'); the drama unfolds on the basis of an intimate sympathy within which the companionship of death in a shared grave requires no formal assent. The strength of the bond of union is not, after all, so different from that which compels Heathcliff to join Cathy in her moorland grave.

Of course, Dorothy's Journals were not available to the early Victorian reading public; it is still only "affinities" rather than demonstrable influence that can be claimed here. But there are other more concrete

indications that the springs of action in Wuthering Heights have a Wordsworthian foundation, the key to which is another of the 'Lucy Poems', 'Strange Fits of Passion I Have Known', with its sudden, climactic misgiving: 'If Lucy should be dead!'

At first sight, Nelly Dean seems far removed from such violently fluctuating emotions; rather she represents a stable mean amid the novel's turbulent extremes. As nurse she offers continuity from one generation to the next and a link between the worlds of the Heights and the Grange; as a narrator she stands between the immoderate histrionics of Catherine Earnshaw and the trite "novelising" of Lockwood. The episode I wish to look at takes place at the guidestone which occupies a midway position between the Heights and the Grange. What it has in common with Wordsworth's poem is an obscure emotional or psychological logic founded on association. 'Sometimes,' Nelly Dean prefaces the episode, 'while meditating on these things in solitude, I've got up in a sudden terror, and put on my bonnet to go see how all was at the farm'. On a walk to the village of Gimmerton one day she pauses at the guidestone in bright wintry sunshine:

'I cannot say why, but all at once, a gush of child's sensations flowed into my heart. Hindley

and I held it a favourite spot twenty years before.'

Stooping down she finds in a hole in the stone a cache of snail shells, just where they had used to collect them all those years previously. And suddenly the stone is as it was then, and the child Hindley is there again, 'as fresh as reality' before her. Mesmerised, she watches 'his little hand scooping out the earth with a piece of slate', and she utters his name involuntarily (p 108). The child looks up, the spell is broken, and he vanishes;

'but, immediately, I felt an irresistible yearning to be at the Heights. Superstition urged me to comply with this impulse - supposing he should be dead! I thought - or should die soon! - supposing it were a sign of death!'

(pp 108-109)

What is striking here is that Nelly Dean - by all accounts modelled largely on the Brontës' servant, Tabitha Ackroyd, a fount of folklore and superstition - should decisively separate impulse and superstition. The impulse is aboriginal; superstition is called up merely in confirmation. For Emily Brontë is describing here not the socialised forms of superstition, but the 'essential passions of the heart' and their obscurer

logic. What we are offered, then, is Nelly Dean's fundamental congruence with the romantic poet of 'Strange Fits of Passion'. What Wordsworth attributed to himself, Emily Brontë attributes, in strict accordance with the principles of the Lyrical Ballads Preface, to a woman of 'humble life'.

Wordsworth's poem is echoed again, to very different effect, later in the same chapter. Nelly has witnessed Edgar Linton's attempt to eject Heathcliff from Thrushcross Grange and has seen the humiliating discomfiture which he brings upon himself; now she finds herself forced to endure the bruising detonations of Catherine's excited brain. This confrontation, repeated over and over throughout the first half of the novel, between the 'steady, reasonable kind of body' that Nelly calls herself (p 61), and the unstable, violently wilful Catherine, here receives its most telling explanation. As Nelly puts it,

'The stolidity with which I received these instructions was, no doubt, rather exasperating, for they were delivered in perfect sincerity; but I believed a person who could plan the turning of her fits of passion to account, beforehand, might, by exerting her will, manage to control herself tolerably even while under their influence'.

(p 117)

Once again, 'fits of passion' are isolated as the principal impulse to action, but here an extreme mutation, disregarding of socialised constraints, is held up for condemnation. It is one thing to surrender oneself to Nature; quite another to submit Nature to the abuse of manipulation. Wordsworth's poem emerges as the crux of the disagreement between Nelly and Catherine - a disagreement which not only contributes much to the novel's dynamism, but which bears importantly on its complex narrative structure as well, as will be shown.

Contemporary reviewers of Wuthering Heights seem to have been slightly more alert to its Wordsworthian provenance than modern critics. The reviewer for Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper rather condescendingly grouped it with Jane Eyre as coming from 'the same north-country Doric school' - with a suggestion of a somewhat eccentric departure from the proprieties of classical pastoral; but went on to praise its style as 'simple, energetic, and apparently disdainful of prettiness and verbal display' - which may reasonably be taken as the prose analogue of Wordsworth's 'plainer and more emphatic language'.³⁰ A different, but no less familiar stance was adopted by the Spectator, which disparagingly remarked that

Wuthering Heights represented 'An attempt to give novelty and interest to fiction, by resorting to those singular "characteristics" that used to exist everywhere, but especially in retired and remote country places'.³¹ The undisguised reluctance to admit unadorned rustics like Joseph into the literary canon reproduces exactly one form of the hostility which greeted the Lyrical Ballads fifty years before. As for the specific charge of courting novelty by this means, it can be rebutted at once. As early as 1818 Scott had declared in the preface to The Antiquary that his humble characters there were fashioned along Wordsworthian lines.³² But there is a larger confusion too. The simple transplantation of folk from poetry to prose which occurs in Mary Barton cannot account adequately for the complex stresses of Emily Brontë's novel, which are attributable instead precisely to the chariness of her debt to Wordsworth.

Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in Nelly Dean's explicit refusal to wear the full Wordsworthian apparel when it is proffered to her. The developing relationship between Lockwood and Nelly Dean resembles that between Wordsworth and a humble interlocutor such as the leech-gatherer: there are worlds of mutual incomprehension hidden below the scanty surface detail

of communication - and occasionally breaking into open view. Early in the novel Lockwood complements Nelly on her narrative; then drifts off into wider reflections. "I perceive that people in these regions ... do live more in earnest, more in themselves, and less in surface change, and frivolous external things", he remarks. "Oh! here we are the same as anywhere else, when you get to know us," observed Mrs. Dean, somewhat puzzled at my speech' (p 61). Nelly's confusion (we may observe) is understandable: the notion Lockwood is putting forward is a new one. The date is 1801, just a year after the first appearance of Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads, where precisely the same idea is advanced. Are we to assume that in Lockwood we have one of that select band of early admirers of Wordsworth, putting his theories to the test "in the field", so to speak? His persistence certainly has something of the zeal of the recent convert about it:

'Excuse me,' I responded; 'you, my good friend, are a striking evidence against that assertion. Excepting a few provincialisms of slight consequence, you have no marks of the manners that I am habituated to consider as peculiar to your class. I am sure you have thought a great deal more than the generality of servants think. You have been compelled to cultivate your reflective faculties, for want of occasions for frittering your life away in silly trifles.'

Mrs Dean laughed.

(p 61)

Nelly's laughter may have a touch of modesty about it; it certainly serves to hide her embarrassment at Lockwood's not very deft condescension ('**compelled** to cultivate your reflective faculties' is less than flattering). Again Wordsworth's Preface lies behind Lockwood's words: 'in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity ... because ... the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent experience and regular feelings'.³³ Nelly's riposte is superbly apropos:

'I certainly esteem myself a steady, reasonable kind of body,' she said, 'not exactly from living among the hills, and seeing one set of faces, and one series of actions, from year's end to year's end: but I have undergone sharp discipline which has taught me wisdom; and then, I have read more than you would fancy, Mr Lockwood.'

(p 61)

Lockwood's elaborate picture of life in such places, conned in some moment of idleness prior to his arriving in the North, is thus unceremoniously dispelled. Nelly's own reading of her situation dispenses with

metaphysics altogether; hardships inflicted and opportunities seized have made her what she is, as they would have (we may infer) wherever she had spent her life: '"here we are the same as anywhere else, when you get to know us"'. It is a wholly necessary assertion, and refutes at a stroke the marginalising intentions behind a label such as 'north-country Doric school'.

The importance of the landscape of Wuthering Heights, then, is not that of a specific environment enjoining upon its inhabitants particular forms of mental and physical life; the novel does not set out to be a Natural History (in George Eliot's sense) of West Riding Life. The function of the landscape is representative, its scope all-encompassing; like the Vale of Grasmere it is a microcosm, self-sufficient.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell:
The earth that wakes **one** human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.³⁴

The authorship of the poem from which this final stanza is taken has been questioned by C W Hatfield, on several grounds, but chiefly on the negative evidence that no manuscript survives. If it is not Emily's work ('**these** lonely mountains' would seem more

characteristic of her) it must be Charlotte's, but on purely subjective grounds I am inclined to attribute it to Emily; in either case its authority is considerable. The idea of a terrain "centring" Heaven and Hell is uncannily reminiscent of Wordsworth's Miltonic design adumbrated in Home at Grasmere. But Emily Brontë is more receptive than Wordsworth to another literary topos connected with moorland and heath. Like Hardy in The Return of the Native, she recalls the heath where Lear came to an understanding of 'unaccommodated man'. Where the elements swirl, unfettered by the titles and demarcations by which the world holds possession of its estate, insight is granted to the blind and benighted, and knowledge of society to those who are outside it. Wordsworth - and after him, Ruskin³⁵ - identified mountainous regions with liberty (and found confirmation in the resistance of the Swiss to Napoleon's armies), but there is also a tradition of heterodoxy in the wastes of the country which he chose largely to suppress. John Gay's outlaw, MacHeath (the name, as Empson observes, means Lord of the Heath) is a distant kinsman of Heathcliff in the way that his refusal to accommodate himself to the demands of society is identified with the landscape of uncultivation.³⁶ Mrs Gaskell has the same thing in mind when she relates of the vicinity of Haworth that

Forest customs, existing in the fringes of dark wood, which clothed the declivity of the hills on either side, tended to brutalize the population until the middle of the seventeenth century.³⁷

Popular dissent nourished in areas such as this, quite as much as the interests of the woollen trade which Mrs Gaskell mentions, must have underpinned the region's support for the Commonwealth during the Civil War. The nature of the terrain, and the pattern of scattered settlement it evolved, combined with the prevalence of freehold tenure (similar to that prevailing in the Lake District), gave rise to a strong tradition of independence - a tradition that tended more towards defiance of authority than the more self-effacing independence which Wordsworth presented as typical of the Cumbrian statesmen. Even in the 1850s Mrs Gaskell was struck by the eccentricity of the district, as a series of anecdotes incorporated in the introductory chapters of the Life of Charlotte Brontë is intended to demonstrate.³⁸ But even as she is struck by it, she is aware, as Emily Brontë manifestly is too, of its rapid passing, and it is this that gives Wuthering Heights an urgency that it shares with Wordsworth.

At this point the Romantic emphasis on authentic selfhood, and the ethnological theme I have outlined,

converge. If Wuthering Heights charts the reclamation through two generations of the country's wastes and 'the earth's rude tenants' who inhabit them, it does so in a spirit of sorrow, and with a determined attempt to pour scorn on the complacent reader who might be tempted to applaud the change. For there is a true sense of the tragic in evidence here: with the passing away of Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff passes away, too, something of the potential of all of us; a whole society is diminished through its subtle complicity in their fall.

One feature of the way of life at the Heights recurs in the work of many contemporary writers concerned with changes in rural life (it can be paralleled in Cobbett's Rural Rides or Clare's The Parish). Under old Mr Earnshaw's regime the whole household, servants included, eats together in the 'house' or kitchen. Even in the time of Lockwood's acquaintance with the place the incorrigible Joseph ensures that the hierarchy of master and man that the outsider Lockwood expects to find is oddly inoperative. Nor is this aspect of the Heights a merely casual interpolation. Although Earnshaw's Lear-like fiat in foisting the foundling Heathcliff on an unwilling household is the first step in a series of events almost culminating in

the complete debasement of his line, it is an altogether more mundane decision of his that actually precipitates the dissolution of the old order. In failing health, and tiring of the discontent he has engendered in his son by allowing Heathcliff to usurp the affection formerly bestowed on him, he sends Hindley away to college. When the boy returns three years later for his father's funeral and to inherit the property, he brings a wife accustomed to other manners. He himself is greatly altered, as Nelly observes:

He had grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed quite differently; and, on the very day of his return, he told Joseph and me we must thenceforth quarter ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the house for him. Indeed he would have carpeted and papered a small spare room for a parlour; but his wife expressed such pleasure at the white floor and huge glowing fireplace, at the pewter dishes, and delf-case, and dog-kennel, and the wide space there was to move about in, where they usually sat, that he thought it unnecessary to her comfort, and so dropped the intention.

(pp 43-44)

We recognise immediately that Hindley's loss of colour likens him to the enfeebled Linton stock rather than the robust Earnshaws: thus has the world infected him.

His wife, too, is but 'a rush of a lass', according to the doctor, Kenneth (p 63). Changes in his speech and dress show that he has learnt a love of refinement that contrasts sharply with what he finds at the Heights, not least in its archaic domestic arrangements. Accordingly, the servants are banished to the back-kitchen. The plan for a papered parlour is further evidence of the aspiration to gentility; while the fondness his wife evinces for the quaint furnishings of the 'house' (the main cooking and living room), which render the parlour unnecessary, indicates some acquaintance with the fashion for the picturesque. Joseph, constitutionally unamenable to all "improving" ideas (in the same way that his language is virtually impenetrable to outsiders), is still decrying parlours as monstrous affectations when Isabella Linton comes to stay there (p 142).

The process of acculturation is shortlived though. Frances, the wife, quickly sickens and dies after giving birth to Hareton; Hindley relapses into stubborn boorishness. But the die has been cast. Heathcliff, banished with the servants, is an outcast from house and hearth, declassed almost to the point of savagery, while Catherine becomes his voluntary companion in exile. Deprived of almost all opportunities for

socialised expression, the two conceive a solipsistic phenomenology in which, because the self and the world are co-terminous, the governance of passion is rendered irrelevant. (Catherine, according to Nelly, 'never had power to conceal her passion' [p 70].) When Catherine declares that her love for Heathcliff 'resembles the eternal rocks beneath' - that, in short, 'I am Heathcliff' (p 82) - she signals her oneness with the nature that is also her own nature. When she breaks faith with it and marries Linton the rupture is felt in the convulsion of the elements as well as in the outraged feelings of Heathcliff.

The marriage to Linton decisively snaps the bond of feeling. Linton's love is sincere and, in its own sphere, ardent; but it is incapable of the kind of self-abnegation required to lose itself in another. He cannot feel **with**, only **for** Catherine. At the crucial moment, after the violent altercation already mentioned between Heathcliff and Linton, when Catherine attempts to subdue the latter to her will once more by feigning illness, he closets himself in his library and refuses to heed her. Catherine's exasperation on learning that he is 'among his books' is fierce: 'What in the name of all that feels, has he to do with **books**, when I am dying?' (p 122). The current of feeling between them

being thus broken, she drifts into an Ophelia-like trance, real or contrived. From that point onwards her mind begins to slip away from the Grange to the remembered world of the Heights. It is as if the reality of her present surroundings cannot be sustained once the solipsism is punctured.

The antagonism which is implied here between feeling and books is clearly of serious concern to the novelist. Its importance for a proper understanding of Wuthering Heights is immense. There are good grounds for believing that it was decisively shaped by what may be termed an anxiety of publication on Emily Brontë's part. Mrs Gaskell tells how on one occasion Patrick Brontë, wishing to gauge the talents of his children (then aged between four and ten), gave each in turn a mask to hold in front of the face, hoping that thus defended against too close a scrutiny they would speak the more boldly.³⁹ It is apparent that the difficulty of fashioning an adequate narrative voice was an abiding one with the shy, socially unaccomplished sisters, and more especially with Emily. The stories, "magazines" and plays which occupied much of their childhood were secret even from their father.⁴⁰ When Charlotte first stumbled upon Emily's poems and expressed her admiration, it took, she recalled, 'hours

to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication'.⁴¹

Emily's reluctance is understandable. The poems of hers that Charlotte included in the 1846 volume of the three sisters' work are, even after Charlotte's alterations, still only half emerged from the interior fantasy world of the Gondal manuscripts, a world which persisted beyond childhood and which signifies precisely the absence of a socialised voice. The fact did not escape Charlotte, who was painfully aware of the eccentricity of her sister's gift. She recognised that it was not enough that 'Flowers brighter than the rose bloomed in the blackest of the heath for her', nor that 'out of a sullen hollow in a livid hill-side her mind could make an Eden', if the reader were not prepared for the encounter. Rephrasing Carlyle's dictum - that 'the eye sees in all things "what it brought with it the means of seeing"' - she acknowledged that 'The eye of the gazer must **itself** brim with a "purple light"'; otherwise, 'the drear prospect of a Yorkshire moor will be found as barren of poetic as of agricultural interest'.⁴²

It is abundantly clear that Charlotte, notwithstanding the considerable bravery of her own works, was a timid

reader of Wuthering Heights, shrinking before its passionate embracing of extremes, but also underestimating its purely technical proficiency. Wuthering Heights is a tremendously circumspect - or circumscribed - novel which, on examination, turns out to be carefully structured to guard against the risks of misconstruction and misappropriation. Emily Brontë is well aware of the dangers which are entailed by committing her book into the hands of possibly unsympathetic readers. An exchange between Hareton and Catherine Linton betrays her anxiety. Catherine has found that Hareton has secretly concealed a stock of her books, which he hoards even though he is scarcely capable of reading his own name. Lockwood, sensing an imminent outburst, intervenes diplomatically, suggesting to Catherine that Hareton is "'not **envious** but **emulous** of your attainments"' (p 301). "'Oh!'" she retorts,

'I don't wish to limit his acquirements ... still, he has no right to appropriate what is mine, and make it ridiculous to me with his vile mistakes and mispronunciations! These books, both prose and verse, were consecrated to me by other associations, and I hate to have them debased and profaned in his mouth!'

(p 302)

The transition from the private Gondal manuscripts to the public domain of print was not an easy one; a careless misconstruction on the part of a reader would inflict a painful injury. The slightly forced insistence on 'both prose and verse', neatly encompassing the range of Emily's literary achievements, hints at the depth of authorial feeling that was channelled into Catherine's petulant outburst.

But there is also a more radical sense of untranslatability at work here. Catherine's precious books cannot survive translation into Hareton's halting, untutored rendition; their meaning is too utterly dispersed in the sheer labour of enunciation; consecrating associations are rudely blasphemed. It is a difficult recognition for a writer to come to, but Wuthering Heights shows Emily taking the necessary steps to protect the integrity of its vital substance from the casual misappropriation of careless readers. Within this scheme, Lockwood and Nelly Dean, the two characters who at first sight appear to perform the function of interpreters, are thus more correctly viewed as the unwitting guarantors of an authenticity which they are not in fact competent to judge.

Lockwood's authority as a narrator is quickly and comically demolished in the opening chapters of the novel. His ignorance of the manners and customs of his Yorkshire hosts is of course assumed to be the reader's too, but the reader is rapidly dissuaded from any closer identification by the catalogue of indignities to which he is subjected. His humiliation is compounded by the palpable falseness of the language he uses to describe it - 'some turn of my physiognomy so irritated madam ...' (p 5), he remarks coyly of one of the dogs at the Heights that promptly begins to savage him - with the result that not only he, but an entire mannered form of discourse stands discredited by the end of his sorry adventure. And yet he commences in high spirits, buoyed up by the anticipation of satisfying tastes engendered by some of the sillier kinds of novels of romance and adventure. Displaying an absurd insensitivity to literary genres, he shows signs of wishing to assimilate Nelly Dean's tale to a similar formula. In a lull in her storytelling he recapitulates the main events for himself and speculates on the way they might develop:

Yes, I remember her hero had run off, and never been heard of for three years: and the heroine was married. ... Did he finish his education on the Continent, and come back a gentleman? or did he

get a sizer's place at college? or escape to America, and earn honours by drawing blood from his foster country? or make a fortune more promptly, on the English highways?

(pp 90-91)

As always, Nelly's answer to such nonsense is commendably blunt: "'I'll proceed in my own fashion"', she thanks him (p 91).

But Lockwood is nothing if not obtuse. The following September he is still running on in the same vein: 'What a realization of something more romantic than a fairy tale it would have been for Mrs Linton Heathcliff, had she and I struck up an attachment, as her good nurse desired, and migrated together into the stirring atmosphere of the town!' (p 304). Lockwood's whimsy for making himself the hero of a story of his own imagining is justly ridiculed in the early chapters by casting him as the actor, not in the romantic novel of his inclinations, but in a brief but painful gothic ordeal (his "haunted" night at the Heights), from which he emerges with rather less credit than one of Mrs Radcliffe's heroines.

It becomes apparent that Lockwood's "novelising" tendency has a deeper source. He is not merely a

daydreamer; he is temperamentally averse to the objectification of states of passion in human flesh and blood. He much prefers the vicarious pleasure of listening to Nelly Dean's account from his sick-bed (with the indemnity it grants him from the consequences of his amorous fantasies), to the anxiety of a real flirtation with Catherine Linton. When he learns finally of her impending marriage to Hareton he is more relieved than discomfited. He is incapable of entering imaginatively into the real substance of the tale he is listening to. As he remarks to Nelly, he is unwilling 'to venture my tranquility by running into temptation; and then my home is not here. I'm of the busy world, and to its arms I must return' (p 256). Nelly quite rightly doubts his ability to comprehend what she is telling him; his leisurely, indolent lifestyle is so far removed from the exhausting physical and mental regime that Catherine Earnshaw follows. "'You'll not want to hear my moralizing, Mr Lockwood"', Nelly interjects apologetically at one point; but adds, more penetratingly: "'you'll judge as well as I can, all these things; at least you'll think you will, and that's the same thing"' (p 183). Once again, here, Emily Brontë tacitly admonishes the reader.

But if Nelly Dean here voices the anxiety of an author conscious of the risks of misappropriation, elsewhere she is herself reliable only inasmuch as she is conscious of her own limitations. Like Lockwood, she occasionally falls prey to 'running on too fast' in speculations (p 4), and her narrative then becomes vitiated by prejudices and predilections of her own. On numerous occasions she calls into question her own reliability as a witness to Catherine's more wayward actions and utterances.

My heart invariably cleaved to the master's [i e Edgar Linton's], in preference to Catherine's side; with reason, I imagined, for he was kind, and trustful, and honourable: and she - she could not be called the **opposite**, yet she seemed to allow herself such wide latitude, that I had little faith in her principles, and still less sympathy for her feelings.

(p 107)

Again it is at the crucial word 'feelings' that the disjunction is decisive. Nelly, like Edgar, remains excluded from the true centre of Catherine's interior domain. Nelly's saving virtue, however, is a scrupulous reticence in the face of what she manifestly does not understand. Catherine's death brings home to her the complex and contradictory feelings which

hitherto, in her exasperation, she has submerged beneath a cruder partisanship against her. Confronted with Catherine's corpse, overcome by a feeling of tranquility which is mysteriously at variance with the doubts she entertains about the probable fate of the woman's soul, she faithfully withholds judgment, abstracting herself momentarily from the narrative process, and conferring on the corpse itself the privilege of a voice: 'It asserted its own tranquility, which seemed a pledge of equal quiet to its former inhabitant' (p 165). Nelly allows the rebuff. Here, and here alone in Wuthering Heights, the reverence due to authenticity is enacted.

CHAPTER 4

'OUR MOST UNFRUITFUL HOURS'? CHARLES DICKENS

... when all is said, ... the chief fountain in Dickens of what I have called cheerfulness, and some prefer to call optimism, is something deeper than a verbal philosophy. It is, after all, an incomparable hunger and pleasure for the vitality and the variety, for the intricate eccentricity of existence. And this word "eccentricity" brings us, perhaps, nearer to the matter than any other. It is, perhaps, the strongest mark of the divinity of man that he talks of this world as "a strange world," though he has seen no other. We feel that all there is is eccentric, though we do not know what is the centre.

(G K Chesterton, 1906)¹

i) The Downward Step

Malcolm Hardman, in a recent study of Ruskin, has hinted suggestively at the structure of Victorian culture in his allusion to 'a whole network of conscientious Victorians co-operating with each other

in ways known and unknown to themselves'.² The rapid advances in communication from the late 18th century onwards opened up new possibilities of collaboration that had not been available to earlier periods. The interconnections of mid-19th century literary society are, accordingly, impressively intricate. Even so, teasing disjunctions crop up here and there. Among the contents of Dickens's library at Gad's Hill on his death was found the slim volume of Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell, presumably one of the copies distributed by the Brontë sisters to prominent literary figures. In 1870 its pages remained fresh and uncut.³

Hardly less surprising, given the prominence of the two men in the 1830s and '40s, is the fact that no firm evidence has ever been found to indicate that Dickens and Wordsworth ever met. Wordsworth was a regular visitor to London, where he invariably devoted some time to "literary breakfasts" and similar engagements. He and Dickens had a number of acquaintances in common, among them Thomas Carlyle, Leigh Hunt and Samuel Rogers, and both were separately engaged in the campaign for Talfourd's Copyright Bill. Yet the decisive meeting seems never to have occurred. One suspects a degree of connivance on both their parts. Dickens lacked the reverence, while Wordsworth had not

the vivacity and humour to have made the occasion a success.

Yet Dickens at least took the trouble to acquaint himself with the poet's writings, even if it is difficult at first to reconstruct his impression of them from the few stray references in his letters and in the reminiscences of others. The paucity of such material is perhaps less remarkable than the extreme obliqueness that characterises it, especially anything implying admiration for Wordsworth. A diary entry for February 5th 1839, during the campaign for the Copyright Bill, is particularly revealing:

Dine with Mr. Harness - $\frac{1}{4}$ before 7.

Only three - Wordsworth - Dyce - Kenyon.
Wordsworth (fils) decidedly **lumpish**. Copyrights need be hereditary, for genius isn't.⁴

It is hard to imagine a more backhanded compliment, elevating the father to the rank of genius by abasing the son to the level of a boor. But it is interesting too in that it suggests that Dickens felt constrained in much the same way as Tennyson did from uttering the true depth of his feeling for Wordsworth.

Dickens's readers - or at least his reviewers and critics - felt no such constraint. One, writing in Chambers Edinburgh Journal in January 1846, described The Cricket on the Hearth thus:

It is a picture of humble life, contemplated in its poetic aspects, and at its more romantic crises; and shows its author, in one sense, ambitious of becoming the Wordsworth of prose fiction.⁵

We may credit the reviewer's intelligence, while doubting, perhaps, his grasp of the contemporary debate. Two years previously Richard Henry Horne, in what was arguably the most comprehensive critical account of Dickens then published, presented a lengthy justification of the same proposition. Horne's A New Spirit of the Age (in which his essay appeared) set out to recast Hazlitt's formula for a new generation. Within this framework Horne held out the collective achievement of Dickens's novels as a new Lyrical Ballads, adapted to new conditions, and adopting vigorous new methods, but fulfilling aims traceable to Wordsworth's radical early work. The arrangement of Volume One pointedly opposes Dickens, occupying pride of place in the first chapter, to the combined talents of Wordsworth and Leigh Hunt (the last survivors of the old age into the new), who bring up the rear.⁶

Horne is keenly aware of the affinities between Dickens and Wordsworth. In Oliver Twist he finds that 'the deepest touches of pathos ... grow out of the very ground of our common humanity' (I, 17-18); and he singles out the death of the pauper woman early in the novel as an instance of Dickens's capacity for 'the enlargement of sympathies' (I, 19). The choice of Oliver Twist is clearly a polemical one. Of all Dickens's novels so far published (Horne was writing while Martin Chuzzlewit was appearing) it is 'the work which is most full of crimes and atrocities and the lowest characters' (I, 17). For Dickens encountered much the same opposition to his "low" subject matter as had Wordsworth at the beginning of the century; not because tastes had remained static, but because Dickens was making new demands on his readers, compelling them to further and possibly more difficult enlargements of sympathies. When Oliver Twist appeared it was widely condemned as a further deplorable addition to the canon of "Newgate Novels". Horne's essay, by contrast, is a vindication of Dickens's attempt to expand the scope of the Wordsworthian enterprise to encompass the least favourable aspects of Victorian urban life:

his power of dealing with the worst possible characters, at their worst moment, and suggesting their worst language, yet never once committing himself, his book, or his reader, by any gross

expression or unredeemed action, is one of the most marvellous examples of fine skill and good taste the world ever saw

Dickens, Horne pursues, is at home in

all sweet pastoral scenes.... But he has also been through the back slums of many a St. Giles's. He never 'picks his way', but goes splashing on through mud and mire. The mud and mire fly up, and lose themselves like ether - he bears away no stain - nobody has one splash.

(I, 11-13)

Where Wordsworth placed his hope for the reformation of London in the kind of involuted imaginative transfigurations of 'The Reverie of Poor Susan' and the 'Sonnet Composed Upon Westminster Bridge', Dickens is seen here as a saint of the church militant, boldly plunging into the raw physical matter of the city - and proving miraculously immune to its taints. Sanitary reform, Horne's argument suggests, follows naturally upon Dickens's reinvigoration of Wordsworth's faltering urban mission, in much the same way as Henry Taylor had seen Lord Ashley's factory reforms as its logical extension (see above, p 39).

The most telling illustration of Horne's case is his treatment of The Old Curiosity Shop - of all Dickens's

Whose eyes were dim
And senses failing -
Grandames, who might have died ten years ago,
And still been old - the deaf, the blind, the
lame,
The palsied,
The living dead in many shapes and forms,
To see the closing of this early grave.
What was the death it would shut in,
To that which still could crawl and creep above
it!

(I, 66-67)

Horne made only minor omissions and emendations to achieve this result, and preserved the punctuation exactly as Dickens wrote it. Even so, one can hardly applaud the result; the attempt at transposition is, in the end, misplaced. Even when his intentions are Wordsworthian, Dickens's prose moves to a histrionic measure that is entirely his own and has no counterpart in the poet.

But the exercise has, in other respects, a sound enough basis. Even the title of Dickens's novel reproduces - perhaps consciously - the syntactical pattern of 'The Old Cumberland Beggar'. That this is rather more than a chance echo, is evident from Dickens's own gloss on his title:

... in writing the book, I had it always in my fancy to surround the lonely figure of the child with grotesque and wild, but not impossible companions, and to gather about her innocent face and pure intentions, associates as strange and uncongenial as the grim objects that are about her bed when her history is first foreshadowed.⁷

Human curiosities crowd in upon Nell at every turn - individuals whose mental, physical or occupational characteristics have turned them into baroque excrescences debarred from an integral role in the mainstream of modern society, but who, for that reason, retain an arcadian innocence that makes them fit companions for the girl. It is the morbidly reflective Master Humphrey with his obscure 'infirmity' (p 43) who initiates the tale, and equally it is his feebleness which commands the child's confidence and makes the tale possible. Nell embraces this marginal world with all the effusiveness that childish innocence can muster: "'Let us be beggars, and be happy"', she urges her grandfather just before they leave London for ever (p 122). Virtue resides implicitly in the derelict, the marginal and the eccentric in this novel, and underlies the strong centrifugal force at work in it, a movement from city to country, from a money economy to a mendicant subsistence, but also from fallen life

(most emphatically in the deformed vitality of Quilp) to arcadian death.

And yet outright homage to Wordsworth is avoided. Just as William and Elizabeth Gaskell chose to acknowledge Crabbe as the inspiration of their 'Sketches Among the Poor No. 1', even while the language of the acknowledgement is redolent of Wordsworth's poetry (see above, p 204), so The Old Curiosity Shop, in spite of its Wordsworthian frame of reference, is dedicated to Samuel Rogers, Dickens's and Wordsworth's mutual friend. The geographical coordinates of the novel are similarly displaced. Nell's final destination is a village with a backdrop of 'the blue Welch mountains' (p 438) - one of the Lake District's sibling regions. The picturesqueness of the village is sufficiently indicated (and is reinforced ironically by Quilp's reflections on the picturesqueness of his dreary 'summer house' in one of the interpolated London chapters [p 475]). The buildings, with their archaic gothic ornament, are seen as 'emulating the mastery of Nature's hand' (p 480), while the church even attracts tourists, for whom Nell acts as a guide (p 508). The social structure of the village, too, bears comparison with Wordsworth's Lake District -

They were all poor country people in the church, for the castle in which the old family had lived, was an empty ruin, and there were none but humble folks for seven miles around.

(p 509)

- although there is a noticeable falling off in Dickens's version from the historical specificity of Wordsworth's remarks, and their sensitivity to social gradations finer than feudal aristocracy and 'humble folks' alone.

Dickens's topographical prose is to a certain extent undermined by such vagueness, but his sense of the symbolic organisation of the village space around the church and churchyard is unerring. The graves of the village dead are the moral centre of the village, and of a wider world beyond it. As the schoolmaster earnestly entreats Nell to consider,

there may be people busy in the world at this instant, in whose good actions and good thoughts these very graves ... are the chief instruments. ... There is nothing ... no, nothing innocent or good, that dies and is forgotten. Let us hold to that faith, or none. ... Forgotten! oh, if the good deeds of human creatures could be traced to their source, how beautifully would even death appear; for how much charity, mercy and purified affection, would be seen to have their growth in

dusty graves!

(pp 503-504)

And like Wordsworth in the 'Essays upon Epitaphs', the bachelor is anxious to defend the dead from their detractors (pp 497-98). The village may be seen, in a sense, as cohering through a common submission to the monitory influence of the graveyard. The inhabitants' lives mirror the quiet rest of the dead. The clergyman is 'of a shrinking, subdued spirit, accustomed to retirement, and very little acquainted with the world' (p 485). The elderly sexton, warning Nell of 'the downward step' (p 490) into his cottage, symbolically welcomes her to a community whose characteristics are as much those of the graveyard as those of the living world: 'What was the death [Nell's grave] would shut in, to that which still could crawl and creep above it!' (p 658). What began as a centrifugal movement, fleeing the deformities of London and the industrial Black Country, has become congruent with Wordsworth's "inward trajectory".

This is apparent from the repeated echoes of Wordsworth in these later chapters. The children that Nell comes upon playing in the churchyard recall the little girl of 'We Are Seven' in their imaginative triumph over the fact of death, turning graves into gardens and

incorporating them into Nature's regenerative processes (p 490). More striking still is the identification of Nell at her death with Wordsworth's Lucy. But not at the instant of death itself. In Wordsworth's poem -

She seem'd a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force
She neither hears nor sees ...

- death is elided between retrospect and present reflection in the interval between the stanzas. It is the contemplation of the dead, rather than the intimate and appalling process whereby life is extinguished, that engages Wordsworth's attention. Similarly Nell's death without struggle is virtually lost in the elaborate shroud of tenses that Dickens weaves around her. The last hours of her life are stripped of painful associations - defused - by the reiterated 'She was dead' (pp 652-54). As in Wordsworth's poem, the reader finds himself retrospectively contemplating the dead before he is aware that death has intervened. And Dickens draws our attention to the same paradoxical collocation of death and the semblance - in Wordsworth's case the vivid recollection - of life:

She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God,
and waiting for the breath of life; not one who
had lived and suffered death

(p 652)

Death is irredeemable; but the dead may be redeemed through the restorative action of pastoral. The Old Curiosity Shop transports Nell and her grandfather from the congested and morally vitiated atmosphere of London to a pastoral village where the forms of man are consonant with the forms of nature. But beyond this, Nell continues to the very heart of the village - to the church where 'Heaven's work and Man's ... found one common level ..., and told one common tale' (p 494), and to the churchyard where the dead in their ultimate and inviolate retirement afford a model for the life of the village. Her consummation is the perpetually arrested youth of Wordsworth's Lucy, incorporated with Nature and looking on God, and serving, as the schoolmaster pointed out, to mend and sustain the living and so accomplish the reformation of the world.

Dickens confessed later: 'I can't preach to myself the schoolmaster's consolation, though I try'.⁸ The problem lies partly in the character of Nell herself. The journey that she makes, and which gives the novel its basic structure, is not for her a moral progress,

though it may be for us. She is not conceived in such a way as to admit of development, and this presents Dickens with a fundamental narrative problem. His solution is simple, but flawed: as he succinctly puts it, Nell's history is 'foreshadowed' (p 42) from the start; each successive stage only requires the gradual deepening of the shadow. The narrative thus insists that Nell's progress is not a morality but a pathology. But the less than satisfactory result is that her death acquires a purely pathological inevitability that is without ethical foundation.

The case is different with Nell's grandfather, whose redemption through suffering has a Shakespearian, as well as a Wordsworthian provenance. He must surrender all worldly faculties, until he is no more than 'a mere child - a poor, thoughtless, vacant creature - a harmless fond old man' (p 289), like that other 'foolish, fond old man', King Lear. His wish to restore Nell's fortunes has been deformed into a mania for gambling which, paradoxically, places him in the grip of forces inimical to her wellbeing, and which he must renounce before she can be restored - not on earth, but in heaven. As with Lear, the death of the child in whom he has invested all his hopes brings utter desolation and 'a cry never to be forgotten' (p 650).

For Nell's grandfather there is no easy elision of death, no consolatory redemption of the dead; only 'the weary void'. The moment of her death is shielded from him, but the blow is only delayed, not lightened in any way: 'The moment it had passed their lips, he fell down among them like a murdered man' (p 660). Nothing can console him. His brother's arcadian promise that they will 'rest again among our boyish haunts' (p 652) cannot penetrate the void. Even the small boy who testifies to the continuity of youth and innocence 'had no longer any influence with him' (p 661).

Dickens's imaginative identification passes from Nell to her grandfather. He is plainly appalled by what he has done, and his appeal for understanding of the old man's mental prostration is heartfelt:

If there be any who have never known the blank that follows death - the weary void - the sense of desolation that will come upon the strongest minds, when something familiar and beloved is missed at every turn ... - if there be any who have not known this, and proved it by their own experience, they can never faintly guess how, for many days, the old man pined and moped away the time, and wandered here and there as seeking something, and had no comfort.

(p 660)

These are symptoms anatomised by Wordsworth and illustrated in such poems as 'Michael' and 'The Ruined Cottage'. Indeed there may well be an echo of the former, in which the bereaved and pining old man 'many and many a day' betook himself to the sheepfold in the mountains, 'And never lifted up a single stone' (lines 474-75); it is the austere diction of that last line which seems to recur in Dickens's 'and had no comfort'. There are limits to the efficacy of consolation, limits that Dickens himself - whose emotional investment in the character of Nell was profound - felt most sharply.

ii) 'The Two Most Unlike Men'

Horne wrote of Nell's funeral that it was 'worthy of the best passages in Wordsworth, and thus, meeting on the common ground of a deeply truthful sentiment, the two most unlike men in the literature of the country are brought into the closest approximation'.⁹ It was a rare convergence, the more so given the degree to which Dickens here allowed his writing to be subsumed within a Wordsworthian scheme. Even so, Dickens declined to acknowledge the implied homage. However closely the two men may have agreed on the need to extract some consolation from the death of children, their differences were fundamental.

The anonymous reviewer of The Cricket on the Hearth already mentioned sketched one important distinction between them:

Deficient in the profundity and stern power of that great master, the novelist yet has some requisites that the poet wants - a certain wit and humour, and, above all, an experience of civic life, that the bard of Rydal has failed to cultivate. Moreover, Mr. Dickens succeeds quite as much by tact as genius.¹⁰

Although we may quibble at the overly respectable connotations of 'civic life' as applied to Dickens, the broad basis of the reviewer's distinction remains valid. What most clearly sets the two writers apart is their radically different social orientation: Wordsworth fulfilling the bardic office of commenting on society from solitude, Dickens espousing society itself, mastering its intricate rules, its highways as well as its byways, even while condemning its shortcomings. 'Tact' is the mark of the writer who has learnt how to respond effortlessly to the contingencies of social life; it is in this sense that his is a 'civic' art.

The importance of this distinction requires some further exploration. One of Charles and Mary Cowden Clarke's recollections of Dickens is particularly illuminating. They recalled him (at a dinner given in honour of the actor William Macready)

to be possessed of remarkably observant faculty, with perpetually discursive glances at those around him, taking note as it were of every slightest peculiarity in look, or manner, or tone that characterized each individual. No spoonful of soup seemed to reach his lips unaccompanied by a gathered oddity or whimsicality, no morsel to be

raised on his fork unseasoned by a droll gesture or trick he had remarked in some one near.¹¹

We recognise in the portrait one of Dickens's cardinal strengths - a tireless capacity to isolate and refract traits of character in his own person. We notice too how un-Wordsworthian is this suffering the self to be played upon to such a degree by apparently trivial external stimuli. It should be scarcely necessary to add that this is a characteristically metropolitan phenomenon. Precedents for his achievement can be found in the eighteenth-century novelists - Defoe, Fielding, Sterne and Smollett - and, crucially, in the animated profusion of Hogarth. It is a lineage that owes much to the special nature of London. Dickens, one might say, refines its influence to a quintessence. More than an urban writer, shaped by distinctively urban experience, he uniquely embodies the unparalleled experience of London.

Georg Simmel's pioneering essay, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', formulated the correspondence (since become a commonplace) between the conditions of life in large cities and the emergence of strongly individuated 'characters' such as Dickens exploits to such effect. Simmel sees a number of pressures converging powerfully

in metropolitan life. In the economic sphere the extent of competition promotes increased specialisation to ensure a dependable means of support; the staggering multiplicity of trades described by Henry Mayhew in his London Labour and the London Poor is perhaps the most irrefutable corroboration of this proposition as applied to a particular stratum of economic activity.¹² More important still, perhaps, are the psychological pressures on the individual to evolve a satisfactory relationship with the enveloping human aggregate - specifically to differentiate himself and thus keep at bay the submerging tide of anonymity. 'This', writes Simmel,

leads ultimately to the strangest eccentricities, to specifically metropolitan extravagances of self-distanciation [sic], of caprice, of fastidiousness, the meaning of which is no longer to be found in the content of such activity itself but rather in its being a form of 'being different' - of making oneself noticeable. For many types of persons these are still the only means of saving for oneself, through the attention gained from others, some sort of self-esteem and the sense of filling a position. In the same sense there operates an apparently insignificant factor which in its effects however is perceptibly cumulative, namely, the brevity and rarity of meetings which are allotted to each individual as compared with social intercourse in a small city.

For here we find the attempt to appear to-the-point, clear-cut and individual with extraordinarily greater frequency than where frequent and long association assures to each person an unambiguous conception of the other's personality.¹³

The assumption of distinctive character traits is thus identified as the individual's response to the attritional impact of metropolitan life on the self, eroding its uniqueness, levelling all distinctions. The individual is compelled to express his own individuality, and given the numbers all around him compelled to do just the same, it is evident that that expression must be 'specialised' to the point where its uniqueness is sufficiently assured. Hence the emergence of eccentric patterns of dress, behaviour, speech, mannerism and so on.

It may perhaps be apparent that these manifestations of the self-protective reflex bear comparison with Wordsworth's more conscious articulation of his own predicament in the early years at Grasmere, and the imaginative courses he followed to rectify it. It is an indication of the limitations of Wordsworth's achievement that his own crucially important imaginative engagement with the experience of London

failed to produce this recognition. As I have suggested earlier (see above, pp 113-15), Wordsworth's encounter formed the basis of the first substantial statement of metropolitan "alienation" which the strongly individuated character is meant to compensate. But his account stops short at this point, and fails to identify the causal connection between the conditions of metropolitan life and the freakish exhibits which, in the flickering phantasmagoria of Book VII of the Prelude, seem to be spilling over from Bartholomew Fair to people the whole city. Wordsworth's account covers all the crucial elements, but allows itself to be repulsed without penetrating to the positive human capacities which the evidence can point to. For Wordsworth, London can be redeemed only in the transcendent theatre of the imagination ('The Reverie of Poor Susan', 'The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale') or through wholly extraordinary instances of the transmuting power of nature ('Sonnet Composed upon Westminster Bridge').

It is here that Wordsworth's lack of affinity with Dickens is most striking. Thronged city streets, far from defying comprehension and inducing a fear of self-annihilation, were for Dickens the very texture of metropolitan life, surface features admittedly, but

features whose underlying connections were intimately known to him - were indeed the key, not only to an understanding of the city, but to a comprehension of society as a whole. They were also an indispensable imaginative stimulus. In a famous letter to John Forster, written in August 1846 from Switzerland where he was attempting to write Dombey and Son, Dickens complained that 'the absence of streets and numbers of figures' was much to blame for his failure to progress at a satisfactory rate. 'I can't express how much I want these', the letter continues:

It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place (as at Broadstairs), and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is IMMENSE!! ... **My** figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them.¹⁴

It is a principle of composition quite unlike Wordsworth's interior resolution. It seems to dispense with his subjection of external matter to the scrutiny of an inner light, but rather to grant a dangerous autonomy to external stimuli. Above all it is a species of "vital" composition, in which a premium is

set on chance suggestion and the fecund energy of numbers and flux. To Wordsworth it represents the 'busy world' at its most inconsequential - a meaningless aggregate in motion, impelled by a specious value-system and bent on petty and meretricious errands. Dickens's writing threatens always to burst the bounds of its author's own intentions, such is the energy it taps; Wordsworth's is always contained by the self's own encircling defences, jealously guarded against exogenous influences.

The difference between the two men is almost one of physiology, as their very different attitudes to journalism highlight. Dickens took to parliamentary reporting as a fitting apprenticeship to the craft of writing; and as his fictional talents developed they continued to be shaped in important ways by conditions of writing - most obviously, serial publication - perhaps more proper to the world of journalism. It was not that he found politics as such germane; rather that he was temperamentally and artistically endowed with the means to translate what he saw into the enactment of 'a grand comic pantomime'.¹⁵ It is significant that Wordsworth, who in 1794, careerless and with no secure maintenance to look forward to, also considered parliamentary reporting as a profession, stopped short

at the realisation that the conditions of journalism were wholly inimical, not only to his literary talents, but to his physical constitution. He explained to his friend William Matthews, who was already a reporter,

that I have neither strength of memory, quickness of penmanship, nor rapidity of composition, to enable me to report any part of the parliamentary debates. ... There is a still further circumstance which disqualifies me for the office of parliamentary reporter, viz. my being subject to nervous headaches, which invariably attack me when exposed to a heated atmosphere, or to loud noises; and that with such an excess of pain as to deprive me of all recollection.¹⁶

Both Dickens and Wordsworth possessed prodigious physical energy, which they expended in extravagantly long walks, but where Dickens's energy was gregarious, carrying him always into the thick of things, Wordsworth's was retiring, neurasthenic in its pursuit of solitude.

We have seen how in Switzerland Dickens's withdrawal from his accustomed writing environment led to the stagnation of his imaginative powers. The Alpine backdrop of Lake Geneva - devoid of the necessary accidents, the creative collisions of material that the

city offered - was apparently no substitute. It is therefore interesting to note that Forster should have considered this as something requiring careful explanation for the Victorian public:

At his heart there was a genuine love of nature at all times; and strange as it may seem to connect this with such forms of humorous delineation as are most identified with his genius, it is yet the literal truth that the impressions of this noble Swiss scenery were with him during the work of many subsequent years: a present and actual, though it might be seldom a directly conscious, influence. ... He worked his humour to its greatest results by the freedom and force of his imagination; and while the smallest or commonest objects around him were food for the one, the other might have pined or perished without additional higher aliment. Dickens had little love for Wordsworth, but he was himself an example of the truth the great poet never tired of enforcing, that nature has subtle helps for all who are admitted to become free of her wonders and mysteries.¹⁷

Forster's apologetic tone is further evidence, if such were needed, of the sway which Wordsworth continued to hold over the later 19th century. And yet a nagging doubt attends his defence. For is it not in fact the 'smallest or commonest objects' quite as much as the 'higher aliment' which evoke in Forster's mind the

moral topography of Wordsworth's poetry? Certainly Dickens was equally active in enforcing that other Wordsworthian testament -

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

Dickens was fond of the lines - took them to himself intimately and reshaped them as occasion required. Indeed it was to Forster that he wrote at the end of a long letter from America in April 1842: 'I don't seem to have been half affectionate enough, but there **are** thoughts, you know, that lie too deep for words'.¹⁸ The emphasis seems deliberately calculated to cancel some previous denigration of Wordsworth, to acknowledge a truth that circumstances have made pressing. And yet it remains a deep haul from below the ordinary level of Dickens's conscious life. On the surface the two men were temperamentally too unlike. Wordsworth offers a moral exemplar; Dickens an irreverent, irrepressible wit. Leigh Hunt, one of the figures whose age and circle of acquaintance linked Dickens with his Romantic predecessors, judged the difference to a nicety. 'There are good-humoured warrants for

smiling', he observed, 'which lie deeper even than Mr Wordsworth's thoughts for tears'.¹⁹

This confusion on Forster's part reflects, in all likelihood, his real uncertainty regarding Dickens's attitude to the picturesque. About his delight in beautiful scenery Forster may have been right; but equally there can be no doubt of the deep suspicion aroused in him by the cult of the picturesque. When Pickwick's companion Wardle compliments Sam Weller with "This is a curious old house of yours", the latter replies facetiously, "If you'd sent word you was a-coming, we'd ha' had it repaired".²⁰ But the issue was a serious one. The license given to the aesthetic faculty to attach value to things otherwise distinguished by their contribution to human discomfort was an obvious source of misgiving. Even Wordsworth could on occasion so far forget himself in catering for the taste of the curious tourist as to refer to 'the decaying hamlet of Hartsop, remarkable for its cottage architecture'; and Ruskin, too, was apt to associate rather too complacently the picturesque appearance of the Westmorland cottage with the unalleviated poverty of its occupants.²¹ Neither stopped to consider the indignity that such an attention might inflict on those occupants.

Will Fern, in Dickens's Christmas book, The Chimes, describes the view from inside the house as clearly as need be:

'Gentlefolks, I've lived many a year in this place. You may see the cottage from the sunk fence over yonder. I've seen the ladies draw it in their books a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I've heerd say; but there an't weather in picters, and maybe 'tis fitter for that, than for a place to live in. Well! I lived there.'²²

Dickens reveals, perhaps unexpectedly, his grasp of current theories of the picturesque as applied to landscape gardening, and his understanding that they were founded on social divisions enshrined in both language (Will Fern's non-standard form, 'picter', signals his exclusion from the polite discourse of the picturesque) and landscape (the sunk fence simultaneously excludes the cottage from the park while incorporating it into lengthy vistas for the enjoyment of those at the great house).

Dickens's socially integrative vision cannot tolerate this kind of demarcation, any more than he can the idea of an aesthetic divorced from practical considerations of human welfare. Certainly this objection seems to have coloured his response to the classic Wordsworthian

terrain of the Lake District. On the one occasion when he did venture into it, he seems to have been impelled chiefly by a desire to overthrow its title to a kind of aesthetic hegemony. In September 1857 marital difficulties led him to seek the companionship of Wilkie Collins in an absurd bachelor jaunt to the fringes of the Lake District, the product of which was the co-authored Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices.²³ The first stage of Dickens's preparations was to consult the relevant volume of the Beauties of England and Wales, the same work which over fifty years previously had presciently introduced Wordsworth's name to the Lake District tourist (see above, p 28). But even at this stage of planning his mode of consulting it was defiantly subversive. From this compendium of picturesque and sublime scenery Dickens selected the dreariest, drabbest, least-frequented mountain in the whole guide - 'a gloomy old mountain 1500 feet high' on the far northern margin of the Lake District; 'Nobody goes up. Guides have forgotten it', he remarked with satisfaction.²⁴

The two men make their way there, not along the trans-Pennine routes recommended by Wordsworth, nor by the classic approach across the Lancaster Sands, but via Carlisle (where they find 'guide-books to the

neighbouring antiquities, and eke the Lake country' (p 314) and so by a little-frequented back route to the vicinity of Carrock. The mountain fulfils Dickens' expectations admirably. 'No visitors went up Carrock', the village shoemaker informs them. 'No visitors came there at all. Aa' the world ganged awa' yon' (p 315) - gesturing towards the heart of the Lake District. This thronged terrain where 'the world' promenades is not the Lake District of Wordsworth's polemic (though we can glimpse it from time to time in his letters). It has been wrested back into a state of concentricity, of congruence, with the primary centre of the nation. Its bounds no longer describe an eccentric circle. Even the sequestered neighbourhood of Carrock furnishes evidence of the change. The drawing room of the inn reveals 'an unexpected taste for little ornaments and knick-knacks' (p 315): mass-produced Staffordshire ware such as a butter-dish - 'a graceful trifle in china to be chatted over by callers, as they airily trifled away the visiting moments of a butterfly existence' (p 316). The inn's collection of books is a roll-call of city novelists and city wits - Fielding, Smollett, Steele and Addison (p 316).

Dickens is critically aware of the Lake District as a centre, and at every stage consciously keeps to its

neglected fringes. It is as though while his domestic situation prompted an uncharacteristic foray into wild nature, a sustaining wit diverted him from too close a collusion with Wordsworth. As is made clear by the title of the account he and Wilkie Collins wrote of their expedition, the presiding spirit was not Wordsworth but Hogarth, whose ancestry - a choice coincidence - identified him as an alternative *genius loci*.²⁵ The tour takes shape accordingly: the narrative chronicles a delinquent progress, doomed by a familiar morality to end in pain (Wilkie Collins twists an ankle badly on the descent of Carrock) and remorse (a tedious convalescence in a succession of ill-favoured Cumberland resorts). But along the way Hogarth and Wordsworth meet in some significant skirmishes. On their way from Carlisle, for example, Dickens and Collins are afforded the spectacle of 'old Skiddaw (who has vaunted himself a great deal more than his merits deserve; but that is rather the way of the Lake country), dodging the apprentices in a picturesque and pleasant manner' (p 315). The use of 'picturesque' is mischievously disingenuous. When it starts to dodge the apprentices like a runaway pickpocket in a Hogarth engraving we know that Skiddaw - immortalised in countless topographical set-pieces - is dancing to a new tune.

Without a break the passage switches to a new, but equally subversive mode:

Good, weather-proof, warm, peasant houses, well white-limed, scantily dotting the road. Clean children coming out to look, carrying other clean children as big as themselves. Harvest still lying out and much rained upon; here and there harvest still unreaped. Well cultivated gardens attached to the cottages, with plenty of produce forced out of their hard soil.

(p 315)

Here, unmistakably, is a shift to the spare, practical notation of Young, Marshall and Cobbett, and their persistent attention to the material conditions of the countryside. We have already seen in Chapter 1 how this kind of prose operates in ways at odds with the Wordsworthian enterprise. We have seen, too, how Dickens rejected an architectural aesthetic that tended to obscure the primary role of the house as a weather-proof shelter. It is only necessary further to point out that the satisfaction expressed at finding the houses well white-limed is a specific rebuttal of one of Wordsworth's more dogmatic expressions of taste. In the Guide he deprecates the practice of white-liming upland dwellings (a necessary measure to weather-proof walls built of inferior and often unmortared stone) on

the grounds that the colouring of a house should 'admit of its being gently incorporated into the scenery of Nature'.²⁶ He prefers rather to see 'the glare of whitewash ... subdued by time and enriched by weather-stains',²⁷ - an odd instance of poverty expressing itself as enrichment; and Ruskin's position entirely.

Once again the passage switches without a break into another, this time heavily ironic, voice:

Lonely nooks, and wild; but people can be born, and married, and buried in such nooks, and can live and love, and be loved, there as elsewhere, thank God! (Mr. Goodchild's remark.)

(p 315)

And here the method is simple, as Thomas Goodchild (alias Charles Dickens) gushingly voices a reductive outline of Wordsworth's position. But the fact remains that these lonely nooks that Dickens refers to are so unfrequented only because 'the world' betakes itself **en masse** to the heart of Wordsworth's Lake District. Dickens's recognition is that Wordsworth's inviolate centre has, like all centres ultimately, exerted a gravitational force. The centre is naturally self-aggrandising, and as the process continues eccentricity is redefined and reappears on a new margin. 'The Lazy

Tour of Two Idle Apprentices' beats the bounds of this new margin, from the village at the foot of Carrock, through a dispiriting series of unappetising towns on the northern and western fringes of Cumberland - Wigton, Allonby, Maryport, places to this day remote from the affections of most English people - always skirting the Lake District proper; and so following the railway round the coast to Lancaster and beyond. It is a calculated celebration of places kept inviolate only by an inherent unattractiveness. In an age when a reservoir of leisure was suddenly being released by increasing opportunities for travel (it suggests) this may be the only lasting security.

iii) Life and Death in the English Landscape

A number of critics have sought to elucidate what appears to be a deeply equivocal response to the emergence of the Railway Age in Dombey and Son.²⁸ Of course Dickens was very far from being an uncritical champion of the railway. The engine that kills Carker in chapter 55 executes a kind of justice, but the severity of the punishment - dismemberment and evisceration - is wholly incommensurate, and betokens a force that is running out of control. Wordsworth's contention that the railway rides roughshod over private interests and violates individual pieties is, on the face of it, subscribed to by Dickens; such must indeed have been the case. But Staggs's Gardens, where the great railway-building of Dombey and Son takes place, is a complex conception, an intricate mesh of private and public - a realisation, not of individual interests and pieties such as invest the paternal acres of Wordsworth's statesmen, but of the denser fabric of urban life. And in this fabric Dickens detects a remarkable resilience. The first shock of the earthquake that the railway inflicts 'rent the whole neighbourhood to its centre', we are told (p 120). But if 'Staggs's Gardens was no more', something of it

weathers the shock. It is as though among all the destruction and dislocation the roots survive, and eventually spring up anew, in new forms; conforming themselves, admittedly, to the new regime of railway time, but not, as Wordsworth believed, in a merely servile reflex, rather as the articulation of their own proper energies:

The old by-streets now swarmed with passengers and vehicles of every kind: the new streets that had stopped disheartened in the mud and waggon-ruts, formed towns within themselves, originating wholesome comforts and conveniences belonging to themselves, and never tried nor thought of until they sprang into existence. Bridges that had led to nothing, led to villas, gardens, churches, healthy public walks. The carcasses of houses, and beginnings of new thoroughfares, had started off upon the line at steam's own speed, and shot away into the country in a monster train.

(p 289)

In his faith in the capacity of Staggs's Gardens to originate 'wholesome comforts and conveniences belonging to themselves' Dickens declares - more clearly perhaps than anywhere else - the unbridgeable distance between himself and Wordsworth. Even in such an apparently trivial matter as his choice of the genitive form **Staggs's** we glimpse an insurmountable

difference. For in his avoidance of the polite and more euphonious form *Staggs'* he confides the vernacular sympathies that enabled him to enter imaginatively into the complex workings of the urban environment in ways not open to the poet. It is what opens his eyes to the charmed space that Toots the engine-driver occupies in the headlong rush of the railway world. And it is what allows the realisation of Wemmick's dual existence in Great Expectations, apportioning his public and private persons within the temporal and spatial divisions of the metropolis. For Wordsworth, London can be redeemed only through an access of preternatural grace, whether it be a moment of imaginative transcendence or an instant of transfiguration brought about by the exceptional intervention of Nature. For Dickens, pockets of redeemed life are part of the everyday reality, the wholesome weft to the more sinister warp. It is not for nothing that the individual whom Pip instinctively recognises 'would never be very successful or rich', owing to 'a natural incapacity to do anything secret or mean', is named Herbert Pocket.²⁹

In the age that first diagnosed the peculiar ills of urbanisation Dickens's was not an easy faith to hold to. When we turn to Hard Times we can observe how

tenaciously he did hold to it. Hard Times is perhaps the least typical and most perplexing of all Dickens's novels. Ruskin regretted that in it Dickens - speaking 'in a circle of stage fire' - had not applied 'severer and more accurate analysis' to 'a subject of high national importance', though he granted that 'his view was the finally right one, grossly and sharply told'.³⁰ Yet F R Leavis considered it unique for its 'peculiarly insistent' quality, for the almost total absence of Dickens's characteristic stylistic excrescences.³¹ John Lucas has adopted a similar stance, classifying it as a 'thesis-novel'.³² But unlike Leavis, most critics from Chesterton onwards have had difficulty finding for it a central place in the Dickens canon.

The anomalous standing of Hard Times should not surprise us. In writing it Dickens moved outside his accustomed terrain, and a certain disorientation is evident in the result.³³ Previously only The Old Curiosity Shop had made such a sustained excursion outside London and its southeastern hinterland. Even here the novel's centre of gravity remains firmly in London, while Nell's final resting place, somewhere close to the Welsh border, makes no claim to topographical veracity. Coketown, by contrast, is firmly associated with Preston, where Dickens carried

out his preliminary fact-finding, and although it is equally anonymous - that is precisely the point - its topography is demonstrably representative of the brick-built Lancashire mill towns.

Dickens was accustomed to researching unfamiliar locations for episodes in his novels (for example, the Yorkshire chapters of Nicholas Nickleby), but the fact that they were just episodes meant that the strain placed on the actual data of his reportage was greatly reduced. It must be said that part of the thinness of texture in Hard Times that Leavis found - as 'insistence' - so commendable is owing to the inadequacy of Dickens's data to sustain the imaginative world of a whole novel. But what is of exceptional interest in it is the manner in which Dickens seeks to circumvent this and other difficulties. More particularly, the process reveals an undercurrent of Wordsworthian sentiment in Dickens that in his more self-confident productions is largely overlaid.

On 20th January 1854, a few days after undertaking to write a new novel for Household Words, Dickens sent a note to Forster listing fourteen possible titles, adding that he thought there were 'three very good ones among them'. The titles were:³⁴

According to Cocker	Something Tangible
Prove It	Our Hardheaded Friend
Stubborn Things	Rust and Dust
Mr. Gradgrind's Facts	Simple Arithmetic
The Grindstone	A Matter of Calculation
Hard Times	A Mere Question of Figures
Two and Two are Four	The Gradgrind Philosophy

All but one of these, either literally or through colloquial reference, attempt to characterise the narrowness, harshness and aridity of the system of thought which presides over Coketown. 'Hard Times' shares the colloquialism of the others, but there the resemblance ends; its emphasis instead is upon a quite broadly conceived human experience. 'Hard Times' evokes the experience of workmen and women and their families who suffered harsh conditions of work punctuated by periods of short time and unemployment; more widely, that of whole generations of working people who endured the upheavals and prolonged hardships of an industrialising economy. 'Hard times' are not simply a matter of wage and price indices, they are a matter of experience - more particularly, of the perception of experience. And of course the sympathies that the phrase calls up are even wider, since who cannot remember hard times of one sort or another? But it also recalls, unostentatiously and without special pleading, the particular hard times of Charles Dickens

himself, a fact which exerts a determining influence on the novel.

Dickens was born in a suburb of Portsmouth, but, his father's employment with the Navy taking him to Chatham, it was in Kent that his early childhood took shape. Kent, the "Garden of England" (it even has a River Eden!), became for Dickens synonymous with innocence and ease. Pip grows up on the Kent marshes, and his journey of self-discovery ends with his rediscovery of his birthplace. And Dingley Dell, where the great Pickwickian Christmas is celebrated, is located somewhere in Kent. Here his memories were of the carefree companionship of other children, of the beginnings of his education, and of his discovery of his father's small library of books. 'Pleasant, pleasant country', Dickens eulogised; 'Who could live to gaze from day to day on bricks and slates, who had once felt the influence of a scene like this'.³⁵

Dickens's most enduring memory of this period was of the walks he took with his father in the countryside rising behind Chatham to Gad's Hill, the highest point on the London to Dover coach road and the scene of Falstaff's celebrated robbery in Henry IV Part One. Here, opposite an inn known as (what else?) the

Falstaff Arms, stood a large house called Gadshill Place. Later in life Dickens recalled these outings at the beginning of a piece entitled 'Travelling Abroad', collected in The Uncommercial Traveller. The traveller-narrator is Dickens himself, on his way to Dover and France. But the 'very queer small boy' whom he stops to speak with is Dickens too, as a child of nine years.

'Holloa!' said I, to the very queer small boy, 'where do you live?'

'At Chatham,' says he.

'What do you do there?' says I.

'I go to school,' says he.

I took him up in a moment, and we went on. Presently the very queer small boy says, 'This is Gadshill we are coming to, where Falstaff went out to rob those travellers, and ran away'.

'You know something about Falstaff, eh?' said I.

'All about him,' said the very queer small boy. 'I am old (I am nine), and I read all sorts of books. But do let us stop at the top of the hill, and look at the house there, if you please!'

'You admire that house?' said I.

'Bless you, sir,' said the very queer small boy, 'when I was not more than half as old as nine, it used to be a treat for me to be brought to look at it. And now I am nine, I come by myself to look at it. And ever since I can recollect, my father, seeing me so fond of it, has often said to me, "If you were to be very

persevering, and were to work hard, you might some day come to live in it." Though that's impossible!' said the very queer small boy, drawing a low breath, and now staring at the house out of window with all his might.

I was rather amazed to be told this by the very queer small boy; for that house happens to be **my** house, and I have reason to believe that what he said was true.³⁶

Dickens bought the house in 1856, after hearing quite by chance that it was for sale. At the outset there was a problem with the water supply. Dickens threw himself with characteristic energy into superintending the sinking of a well in the chalk. Finally, he exulted to Angela Burdett-Coutts, the bottom reached 'bright clear water'.³⁷ In an age that had more commonly to lament the violation of pure water by the spread of industry and towns, Dickens was unusually fortunate in being able thus to recover (invent, some might say) the untroubled stream of his early youth.

Forster recognised the crucial importance of these early memories of Kent in Dickens's imaginative development, calling it 'the birthplace of his fancy'.³⁸ By contrast, the second period of his childhood threatened the utter extinction of just that faculty. It was like being cast out of Eden. His life

in London deteriorated sharply as his father's financial difficulties increased. When John Dickens was confined for debt in the Marshalsea Prison, Charles Dickens, then aged twelve, was sent out to work in Warren's Blacking Warehouse on Hungerford Stairs, off the Strand. In this dismal establishment he stuck paper labels on bottles of boot-blacking, a monotonous operation performed on batches of a gross at a time for the sum of six shillings a week.

For over twenty years, long after his fortunes had mended beyond all expectations, Dickens utterly repressed the memory of this period of his life. No one was privy to this supposedly shaming secret, until in 1847 Forster's chance discovery of some contingent fact prompted Dickens to write the 'Fragment of Autobiography' that appears in Forster's Life. There is disagreement about how reliable Dickens's testimony in later life should be thought,³⁹ but it would be foolish to deny the intensity of the experience to which it relates, as these extracts demonstrate:

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these everyday associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I

had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation up by, was passing away from me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written.

No advice, no counsel, no encouragement, no consolation, no support, from anyone that I can call to mind, so help me God.

I know that I have lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond.

... I never said, to man or boy, how it was that I came to be there, or gave the least indication of being sorry that I was there. That I suffered in secret, and that I suffered exquisitely, no one ever knew but I. How much I suffered, it is, as I have said already, utterly beyond my power to tell. No man's imagination can overstep the reality. But I kept my own counsel, and I did my work.⁴⁰

These are Dickens's 'hard times', mild and brief compared with those of many workers in industry or agriculture, but no less deeply felt. During this phase of his life he found himself separated from his family, who accompanied his father to the Marshalsea

while he lodged with a woman whom he later portrayed as the miserable Mrs Pipchin; plunged into an alien environment where the other employees, identifying his middle-class origins, referred to him as 'the young gentleman'; aware, even at this tender age, of the process of **déclassement**; and, most importantly, deprived at a stroke of 'what I had ... raised my fancy and my emulation up by'. To Dickens, the successful novelist of 1847, a man who had risen to such eminence almost wholly through the exercise of his fancy, this was the crucial point, the terrifying thought that this might have put a stop to everything there and then. For years after his fancy had recovered its full vitality, the memory operated in the manner of a localised impediment to its exercise. Even in 1847, he maintained, the entirety of the experience remained 'utterly beyond my power to tell':

Until old Hungerford Market was pulled down, until old Hungerford Stairs were destroyed, and the very nature of the ground changed, I never had the courage to go back to the place where my servitude began. I never saw it. I could not endure to go near it. For many years, when I came near to Robert Warren's in the Strand, I crossed over to the opposite side of the way, to avoid a certain smell of the cement they put upon the blacking-corks, which reminded me of what I was once. It was a very long time before I liked to go up

Chandos Street. My old way home by the Borough made me cry, after my eldest child could speak.

In my walks at night I have walked there often, since then, and by degrees I have come to write this. It does not seem a tithe of what I might have written, or of what I meant to write.⁴¹

A comparison between this passage and the earlier one relating to Gad's Hill reveals an extreme polarity in Dickens's use of topography, and the way this relates to the fancy - to the creative imagination - on which his achievement rests. In extreme circumstances, Dickens, like Wordsworth, could feel himself subject to annihilating tendencies identified with a particular topography, and could experience the complete collapse of his imaginative faculties - until 'the very nature of the ground changed'. Conversely, a place like Gad's Hill, where he fulfilled the fanciful longings of his childhood and where he could, moreover, give vent to a certain Falstaffian side of his nature, becomes the purest spring of the fancy with its 'bright clear water'. I wish now to trace these polarities as they find expression in Hard Times.

The genesis of Hard Times can be traced to a brief visit Dickens made to Manchester in 1838 at the tail-end of his researches for Nicholas Nickleby in the

Yorkshire schools. A letter briefly describes the visit:

I went, some weeks ago, to Manchester, and saw the worst cotton mill. And then I saw the best. **Ex uno disce omnes.** There was no great difference between them So far as seeing goes, I have seen enough for my purpose, and what I have seen has disgusted and astonished me beyond all measure. I mean to strike the heaviest blow in my power for these unfortunate creatures.⁴²

In the truncated form in which Dickens gives it, the Latin quotation roughly equates with the modern idiom, 'When you've seen one, you've seen them all'. But the indignation of his ensuing remarks suggests a harsher construction. This is more in keeping with the Virgilian original - '**Crimine ab uno disce omnes**': 'From the one crime recognise them all as culprits'.⁴³ It seems that Dickens had this in mind, because elsewhere in the letter he refers to Manchester as 'the enemy's camp, and the very headquarters of the factory system advocates'. Here we are forced to take stock, for the prose has acquired a distinctly partisan stance.

It appears that Dickens first thought of incorporating his 'heaviest blow' in Nicholas Nickleby, but in the

event quite the reverse transpired, with the benign Cheeryble Brothers being the only characters in that novel who are directly traceable to the Manchester visit. There then followed a long interval in which his response matured. Nine years later he wrote the 'Fragment of Autobiography' which offers a firm basis for recognising that the fancy, or imaginative faculty, may be beneficially or adversely affected by the moral topography of its immediate environment. Then in 1850 he launched the weekly magazine, Household Words, in which Hard Times later appeared. For the first number he wrote a 'Preliminary Word' outlining the magazine's aims in a way that establishes a clear antipathy between the fancy on the one hand and the 'utilitarian spirit' of the industrial towns on the other:

No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities, will give a harsh tone to our Household Words. In the bosoms of the young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished. To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out: - to teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody,

brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a better acquaintance and a kinder understanding - is one main object of our Household Words.⁴⁴

The passage reads virtually as a synopsis of Hard Times. There is first of all the 'utilitarian spirit', and the 'iron binding of the mind to grim realities', set against the 'light of Fancy'. There is the Fancy described as capable of becoming an 'inspiring flame' if properly nurtured - anticipating Louisa Gradgrind's comment about the Coketown mills:

There seems to be nothing there, but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, Fire bursts out, Father!⁴⁵

And there is the spectre, too, of the same Fancy liable to be deformed, if it is neglected or repressed, into a 'sullen glare' - as the Fancy in both Tom and Louisa is deformed into different forms of sullenness. Finally, there is the earth represented as 'this whirling wheel of toil' - a striking mechanical image that recurs in the 'Starlight' chapter of the novel (Book 3, Chapter 6). Most importantly, yet most likely to be overlooked, there is a movement in the passage, also

recreated in the novel, from the constraint implied by the 'iron binding of the mind', to the spacious hope of a society restored to mutual amity on the 'wide field' of unfettered imagination. Perhaps it is not surprising, in the light of this, that when at the beginning of 1854 Dickens's financial partners in Household Words urged him to write a new serial novel he was able to commence almost at once.⁴⁶ The structure of ideas and feelings was already present; all that he lacked was a little background information, which he quickly set about remedying by taking the train up to Preston for a few days.

The choice of Preston was dictated by contemporary events. The town was in the grip of a prolonged strike by the cotton operatives, and it was on the conduct of the strike that Dickens chiefly concentrated during his stay. He attended a meeting of strike delegates and an open-air meeting of factory operatives; he witnessed relief being dispensed to strikers' families; and he visited one of the mills where some of the mill-hands were still working. What impressed him most was the calm restraint that prevailed among the strikers. His sympathies were humanitarian rather than political, a softening of his indignation of 1838; he could not believe that the strike was anything but a mistake.

But, as he was at pains to emphasise, in the article 'On Strike' that promptly appeared in Household Words, 'I left the place with a profound conviction that their mistake is generally an honest one, and that it is sustained by the good that is in them, and not by the evil'.⁴⁷

Generally speaking, Dickens's article overlaps remarkably little with Hard Times. Clearly the two productions answer different requirements, and since both were to appear in the same columns Dickens would be anxious not to repeat himself. The article confines itself largely to the strike, and contains little topographical information and little that illuminates the ordinary day-to-day life of the town in normal conditions of work. Curiously, where Hard Times does seem to duplicate its material - as in its portrayal of the strike - we find the emphasis radically altered and the journalistic data of the article apparently rejected, a move which some critics have interpreted as a betrayal on Dickens's part of his own senses.⁴⁸

What is significant is that the main part of the article which does seem to bear directly on the novel derives not from Preston itself, but from Dickens's journey there. Dickens was clearly conscious of the

foreignness of the material he was handling, and chose to confront geographical and ideological differences directly. It is a candid unpacking of the perceptual baggage which Dickens the reporter took with him to Preston, and takes the form of an exchange with a fellow-passenger, 'Mr Snapper', a convinced exponent of the Manchester School. The conversation becomes heated when Dickens objects to the glibly insensitive language of Political Economy when discussing the strike:

'Pray, what would you have, sir,' enquired Mr Snapper ..., 'in the relations between Capital and Labor, but Political Economy?'

I always avoid the stereotyped terms in these discussions as much as I can, for I have observed, in my little way, that they often supply the place of sense and moderation. I therefore took my gentleman up with the words employers and employed, in preference to Capital and Labor.

'I believe,' said I, 'that into the relations between employers and employed, as into all the relations of this life, there must enter something of feeling and sentiment; something of mutual explanation, forbearance, and consideration; something which is not to be found in Mr McCulloch's dictionary, and is not exactly stateable in figures; otherwise those relations are wrong and rotten at the core and will never bear sound fruit.'⁴⁹

It is a beautifully poised riposte, the propositions expounded in what begins as a measured sequence, but which is validated finally by an upsurge of feeling which overwhelms control and dissolves its careful punctuation. Dickens, in his 'little way', anticipates Sissy Jupe's resistance to the Gradgrind philosophy. This is how she tells Louisa Gradgrind about one of the 'mistakes' she made at school:

'... Then Mr M'Choakumchild said he would try me again. And he said, This schoolroom is an immense town, and in it there are a million of inhabitants, and only five-and-twenty are starved to death in the streets, in the course of a year. What is your remark on that proportion? And my remark was - for I couldn't think of a better one - that I thought it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million. And that was wrong, too.

(p 97)

It is a position that, for Dickens, must always approximate to the Arcadian morality of children. To attempt the kind of philosophical calculus on which political economy relies is to sacrifice precisely that quality of innocence that is so highly prized. Instead we must recover the 'little way' where it survives, in order to counteract the dead words of ideology. (The

non-standard orthography of M'Choakumchild's name identifies him with Mr Snapper's favourite economist, who was frequently styled M'Culloch.⁵⁰) This Dickens proceeds to do, by directing his attention to economically and ideologically marginalised groups: to children, to Sleary's circus, and to the pre-industrial economy of values of other groups not yet co-opted into the Gradgrind scheme of things - everywhere, in short, where the Fancy seems still to lead an unfettered existence.

What course will the 'little way' suggest through the industrial environment of Coketown? At first sight the surroundings do not appear promising:

It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but, as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves forever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like one another, and many small streets still more like

one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

These attributes of Coketown were in the main inseparable from the work by which it was sustained....

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful.

(p 65)

Two contrary processes can be seen at work here. On the one hand we can see Dickens's fancy battling with intractable material. The exoticism of the images he lights upon - the 'interminable serpents' and the melancholy-mad elephant - is a telling sign of the mind's extremity. Yet it is an advance on the easy notation of pastoral antithesis which provides the staple of many other writers. Even the black canal is redeemed by the exotic possibilities of purple dye. The images evoke notions of oriental decadence - of opulence, cruelty and perhaps death. At the same time they show an imagination still managing to impose a pattern on its material. As Dickens had written in the 'Preliminary Word' to Household Words, 'in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the

surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out'.

But against this we have also to recognise a parallel failure of the imagination to penetrate the outwardly monotonous urban environment of Coketown and recognise the diversity of its human constituents. Dickens's insistence that the inhabitants are all 'equally like one another' is surprising. As Raymond Williams observes:

... whatever the adequacy of this uniform view as an image of a new and unnatural industrial order, it implicitly contradicted Dickens's own characteristic way of seeing people and their actions. Indeed it is tacitly dropped at every other point even in Hard Times, where the people, quite clearly, are not 'equally like one another'.⁵¹

The animation of London streets is plainly lacking, and Dickens pours a huge effort into conjuring an atmosphere of physical, spiritual and imaginative suffocation:

In the hardest working part of Coketown; in the innermost fortifications of that ugly citadel, where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in; at the heart of the labyrinth of narrow courts upon

courts, and close streets upon streets, which had come into existence piecemeal, every piece in a violent hurry for some one man's purpose, and the whole an unnatural family, shouldering, and trampling, and pressing one another to death; in the last close nook of this great exhausted receiver, where the chimneys, for want of air to make a draught, were built in an immense variety of stunted and crooked shapes as though every house put out a sign of the kind of people who might be expected to be born in it; among the multitude of Coketown, generically called 'the Hands', - a race who would have found more favour with some people, if Providence had seen fit to make them only hands, or, like the lower creatures of the seashore, only hands and stomachs - lived a certain Stephen Blackpool, forty years of age.

(p 102)

The accumulation of what Dickens's readers, in the wake of a series of widely publicised government inquiries, were rapidly coming to recognise as the salient "facts" of the new urban and industrial environment of the nineteenth century, is relentless: 'killing airs and gases ... bricked in', streets and houses 'pressing one another to death', the whole town a 'great exhausted receiver'. Death is the prevailing motif. But work is the defining characteristic of the inhabitants - 'the Hands'; one saw nothing in Coketown 'but what was severely workful', and many of the town's reprehensible

features were in any case 'inseparable from the work by which it was sustained'. Work and death - as Stephen Blackpool's dream, in which his loom is transformed into a gallows (p 123), explicitly relates - form the grim equation to which Coketown is the palpable answer.

There was a shocking novelty to this equation. Work, the primeval curse, was nevertheless the means of sustaining life. As the 19th century advanced this accustomed identification of work with life became increasingly difficult to sustain, as successive government commissions highlighted occupational diseases and injuries stemming directly from conditions of work. In other ways, too, the nature of work and the concomitant status of the worker were seen to be changing. As Weber remarked, 'Wherever modern capitalism has begun its work of increasing the productivity of human labour by increasing its intensity it has encountered the immensely stubborn resistance of ... pre-capitalistic labour'.⁵² The scope of Weber's study of Protestantism and Capitalism reminds us that this confrontation did not surface only in the critical years of the Industrial Revolution; rather that it was then that the greatest strides were made in overcoming that resistance.

However, the separation of waged work from the domestic and recreational operations of life has always been capable of variation, from trade to trade and region to region. One may instance seasonal variations in hours of work, the honouring of "Saint Monday", and the general toleration of 'sauntering' in trades not characterised by a rigid division of labour.⁵³ Industrialisation, with its highly capitalised modes of production, and its dependence on wider and wider markets to compensate for a tendency for profit margins to diminish, placed enormous pressure on these hindrances to productive efficiency. The cotton industry, the most rapidly and completely mechanised of all, was the first to demand - and, to a large extent, achieve - these sacrifices of its workforce.

To the ideologues and apologists of the factory system, however, it was absurd to think in terms of loss. Human nature, it was argued, is unregenerate, at least among the lower orders. According to Andrew Ure, whose Philosophy of Manufactures (1835), exerted a strong influence on the young Karl Marx, the pre-industrial labourer was capable only of 'irregular paroxysms of diligence'.⁵⁴ Friedrich Engels seems to have caught the tone of entrepreneurial frustration in his account of a Manchester firm of building contractors 'who had long had enough of [the] "barbaric" custom' of seasonal

variations in hours of work, and who 'decided to put an end to this relic of the "Dark Ages" with the help of gas lighting'.⁵⁵ The workforce had, literally, to be enlightened as to the beneficial consequences of more strictly regulated conditions of work. Great emphasis was laid upon individual responsibility for accurate time-keeping (hence the traditional reward for long-service). Bounderby admonishes the circus children in just these terms: 'we are the kind of people who know the value of time, and you are the kind of people who don't know the value of time' (p 72). The worker had to regularise his own constitution; alternatively, as E P Thompson suggests, pointing to the role of Methodism in conditioning working people to accept this regime, he had to 'methodise' it.⁵⁶ The intimate architecture of experience, quite as much as the outward landscape in which it was conducted, was transformed by the Industrial Revolution.

The machine was the potent symbol of this new order - both the actual agent of many of the transformations in the nature of work, and a compelling model for the reorganisation of the worker's human constitution. As Carlyle perceived, 'Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also'.⁵⁷ Machinery overlays piecemeal human modes of action with a pattern of continuous movement

to which the individual must accommodate himself as he can, in the same way that a cog obeys the pressure of an adjacent part. Stephen Blackpool's work in the cotton mill is exactly of this nature:

The work went on, until the noon-bell rang. More clattering upon the pavements. The looms, and wheels, and Hands, all out of gear for an hour.

(p 108)

Looms, wheels and hands - all set in motion by the same power source, all disengaged at the same appointed moment. Only the capital 'H', with its faint hint of the divine, distinguishes the hands from the other components of this huge productive machine. And the machine is not, finally, the mill, but the whole town: 'Time went on in Coketown like its own machinery' (p 126). The people are reduced, not just linguistically, but experientially, to the mechanical agency of their hands, while the needs of hearts and minds - the faculties that crave amusement in Dickens's formulation - are overlooked. With some difficulty Stephen manages to preserve a heart, but he is losing his mind to the machine:

Old Stephen was standing in the street, with the odd sensation upon him which the stoppage of the

machinery always produced - the sensation of its having worked and stopped in his own head.

(p 103)

The relentless mechanical rhythm of the machine penetrates even the proper domain of every individual - the recesses of the mind. Faced with this assault, his sovereign intelligence ransacked, it is not to be wondered at that Stephen can perceive in his surroundings nothing but a muddle.

There is a sense in which Stephen expresses the bafflement that Dickens himself felt at applying his fancy to a region governed by principles openly hostile to the development of any such faculty. It is worth reminding oneself of the naked eloquence of the early advocates of the machine age before the advent of public relations experts. The following is from Andrew Ure's account of Richard Arkwright's invention of a powered spinning frame:

The main difficulty did not, to my apprehension, lie so much in the invention of a proper self-acting mechanism for drawing out and twisting cotton into a continuous thread, as in the distribution of the different members of the apparatus into one co-operative body, in impelling each organ with its appropriate delicacy and

speed, and above all, in training human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work, and to identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton.

And he goes on to deplore the 'listless' and 'restless' habits of those who have not yet been turned into 'useful factory hands'.⁵⁸

The 'self-acting mechanism' figures equally prominently in the Benthamite administrative machinery of the 1830s and 1840s. Edwin Chadwick, the principal architect of the 1834 Poor Law Report, observed:

The object of machinery is to diminish the want not only of physical, but of moral and intellectual qualities on the part of the workman. In many cases it enables the master to confine him to a narrow routine of similar operations, in which the least error or delay is capable of immediate detection. Judgment or intelligence are not required for processes which can be performed only in one mode, and which constant repetition has made mechanical. Honesty is not necessary where all the property is under one roof, or in one inclosure, so that its abstraction would be very hazardous; and where it is, by its incomplete state, difficult of sale. Diligence is insured by the presence of a comparatively small number of over-lookers, and by the almost universal adoption of piece-work.⁵⁹

It is in the nature of the factory system itself to exact the requisite standards of judgment, intelligence, honesty and diligence, and consequently the manufacturer need not concern himself further with the cultivation of these qualities. For Chadwick it was an attractive model of administrative institutions generally, and the machinery of the New Poor Law was shaped accordingly to accommodate 'self-acting mechanisms'.

Within such a scheme the imaginative life of the individual passes largely unnoticed. Nominally an unproductive faculty, it may even have a counter-productive effect. Hence Chadwick's insistence that the principles and rates of relief under the New Poor Law be fully and accurately set forth in public:

It is abundantly shown in the course of this inquiry, that where the terms used by the public authorities are vague, they are always filled up by the desires of the claimants, and the desires always wait on the imagination, which is the worst regulated and the most vivid in the most ignorant of the people.⁶⁰

Such a concerted onslaught on the imagination, or, as Dickens preferred to call it, the fancy, goes a long way towards explaining his remark, quoted earlier, that

Manchester was 'the enemy's camp'. Here was the recognised source and power base of an aggressively propagated, but arid and partisan philosophy that set at naught the needs of the imagination, whether in the form of the stimulus of an attractive environment varied periodically by Sleary's Circus, or of an educational system receptive to the wholly imaginative thought-processes of a child like Sissy Jupe. These opposed terms, clearly, were in Dickens's mind from quite early on in his development. But in the course of writing Hard Times his perceptions of them were sharpened immeasurably by the conditions imposed by a tight publishing schedule.

Hard Times was Dickens's first novel since Barnaby Rudge, fourteen years previously, to appear in weekly parts. In the intervening years he had grown accustomed to the much greater freedom - in both time and space - of monthly instalments. Some of the novel was written at comparative leisure, but since serialisation in Household Words commenced before the manuscript was completed much of the novel had to be produced with the almost mechanical regularity and rapidity imposed by the weekly schedule. As John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson have noted, even in the portion composed at leisure he was severely constrained by the need to squeeze into each small serial part the

material necessary to advance the plot and lure the reader on from week to week; so much so, that eventually the parts had to be enlarged somewhat at the expense of other material in the magazine to ease the difficulty.⁶¹

It was under these conditions that Dickens began to identify, more closely, probably, than he had anticipated, with the conditions of the factory operatives in the Lancashire mill-towns. Certainly the demands of such a publishing schedule are an unlikely environment for the fancy to flourish in. The fact that the pace of work was dictated by an external, apparently inhuman demand from the press for the week's copy, week in week out, suggests a clear analogy with the invasive rhythms of Stephen Blackpool's loom. In February 1854 Dickens wrote to Forster, complaining:

The difficulty of the space is CRUSHING. Nobody can have an idea of it who has not had an experience of patient fiction-writing with some elbow-room always, and open places in perspective. In this form, with any kind of regard to the current number, there is absolutely no such thing.⁶²

On the face of it this is merely Dickens indulging in a little self-pity over the problem of adapting to

restricted column-space. But two things stand out: first, the emphasis laid on the word 'crushing'; and second, the spatial connotation of 'elbow-room' being translated into the landscape terminology of 'open places in perspective'.

'CRUSHING' goes right to the heart of Hard Times, to the notion of grinding which, as the list of alternative titles shows, was in Dickens's mind from the start. ('They want to be ground. That's what they want, to bring 'em to their senses', Mr Snapper had told him on the train to Preston.⁶³) The principle instrument of this grinding is the machine in its various manifestations. In fact Dickens somewhat disingenuously confounds different kinds of mill. Grinding and crushing are the age-old functions of the corn mill, originally a manorial perquisite sustained by feudal impositions. Strictly, corn mills have little (beyond motive power) in common with the cotton mills of the Industrial Revolution. But Dickens clearly intends his readers to recall that time-honoured figure of English folklore, the hard-hearted miller, who will grind men's bones for flour. For Dickens, cramped by the tight confines of the weekly part, a similar power of crushing seems to have been invested in the printing press. The work-processes of the Coketown cotton mills and the conditions within

which Dickens is compelled to write come to be seen as parallel forms of servitude to the machine, exposing the individual to comparable assaults on his imaginative faculties. Once this identity of oppressions is established the novel receives a new and compelling sense - literally - of direction. Just as the people of Coketown long for the open countryside where they can walk and breathe on Sundays, so too Dickens longs for 'open places in perspective', whether in the form of a relaxed publishing schedule, or the open places of the novel's geography where his Fancy can recover its health and vigour.

For this is how Hard Times, in the final book, breaks out of its own poisonous circle. Dickens, oppressed by his own subject matter and by the publishing conditions imposed upon him, his fancy suffocating, leads the narrative out of Coketown into a countryside embodying radically different values. As with the memory of Warren's Blacking Warehouse, so too with Coketown, he attempts to erase it from his mental topography altogether. Recalling the 'Preliminary Word' to Household Words, we can see how he has exchanged the 'iron binding of the mind to grim realities' for the 'wide field' of a possible Arcadia:

Though the green landscape was blotted here and there with heaps of coal, it was green elsewhere, and there were trees to see, and there were larks singing (though it was Sunday), and there were pleasant scents in the air, and all was overarched by a bright blue sky. In the distance one way, Coketown showed as a black mist; in another distance, hills began to rise; in a third, there was a faint change in the light of the horizon, where it shone upon the far-off sea. Under their feet, the grass was fresh; beautiful shadows of branches flickered upon it, and speckled it; hedgerows were luxuriant; everything was at peace. Engines at pits' mouths, and lean old horses that had worn the circle of their daily labour into the ground, were alike quiet; wheels had ceased for a short space to turn; and the great wheel of earth seemed to revolve without the shocks and noises of another time.

(p 283)

This is no facile Arcadia, no sentimental townsman's Eden of smiling fields and contented rustics; the landscape is, after all, 'blotted here and there with heaps of coal'. Nevertheless the mines round about seem to have been left behind by industrial developments in Coketown. The engines serving the pits are primitive horse-engines, rather than steam-powered as in the town. Dickens recognises that pastoral is separated from the central features of modern existence beyond a shifting threshold, and that this threshold is

continually advancing in the wake of obsolescence that industrial society leaves behind it. The horse-engine in the 1850s was already passing over the pastoral threshold (as the steam engine has in turn in our own century).

Beyond these technological perceptions, however, what we are presented with is a Sunday Arcadia - the recognition that the residual features of an arcadian life where one might 'fleet the time carelessly' are now confined to a single day of the week, when wheels cease 'for a short space to turn'. For the rest of the week the mines, for all their lush rural setting, carry on augmenting the spoil-heaps and casually slaughtering the men working them. Even long-disused pits, their mouths all but stopped up by the natural regeneration of plants, continue to kill and maim; Stephen Blackpool is only the latest of many victims.

Nevertheless certain features of life survive here which have been supplanted in Coketown. The whole pace of life seems to be different, in ways that extend beyond the special character of Sunday to suggest more permanent differences in the people who work here and the way their work is regulated. These differences are demonstrated in the rescue of Stephen. Sissy Jupe, casting about for men to help, comes across two men

lying in the shade on a heap of straw behind a shed. At first sight they are unlikely candidates for a task that is both urgent and delicate.

First to wake them, and then to tell them, all so wild and breathless as she was, what had brought her there, were difficulties; but they no sooner understood her than their spirits were on fire like hers. One of the men was in a drunken slumber, but on his comrade's shouting to him that a man had fallen down the Old Hell Shaft, he started out to a pool of dirty water, put his head in it, and came back sober.

(pp 285-86)

Dickens's faith in this particular cure for the effects of drink may be fanciful, but we are dealing here with people on whom the fancy can once again operate without constraint. Later on the man who was drunk turns out to be 'the best man of all' in the rescue, yet to Ure and Chadwick he epitomises the 'irregular' nature of pre-industrial labour. Crucially, he responds, not at the prompting of some external machine rhythm, but, like his companion, because his 'spirits' respond to the irregular but compelling needs of a fellow man. It is not even clear that these same philanthropic spirits do not in his case derive from his late intoxication. The entire rescue operation verges on the chaotic: vital equipment is forgotten and has to be fetched or

improvised; it is a painfully long time before Stephen, fatally injured, is hauled to the surface. What redeems this catalogue of shortcomings is the fact that it represents the combined ingenuity, perseverance and failings of a band of people united by nothing more than a wish to answer a human need.

Stephen's human needs, it transpires, have run their course. The shocks and troubles of another time - the wheels and machinery of Coketown - are become as nothing to him, beside the slow silent motion of the 'great wheel of earth'. Its motion has entered into him as once that of his loom did. Lying on his back, paralysed from his fall at the bottom of the Old Hell Shaft, immured in the earth, he is as devoid of 'motion' or 'force' as the girl in Wordsworth's 'A slumber did my spirit seal'. His horizon is narrowed to a patch of sky at the top of the shaft, his only indication of the passage of time. In this intermediate state, with all the hallmarks of death and just the vestige of life, Stephen learns the rhythm of earth's diurnal round: 'Day and night again, day and night again. ... Another night. Another day and night' (pp 274 & 282). The rescue measures out another beat of the rhythm, starting in broad daylight but dragging on into the night, and so setting the scene for Stephen to communicate the faith he has derived

from the starlight. Broken by his fall into the shaft - 'this form, almost without form' (p 289) - Stephen lies incapable of movement, his eyes still locked on the star. This alone has offered him some clarification of the pervasive muddle that he has hitherto been unable to fathom. If his call for Christian forgiveness and tolerance is less satisfying than the formal perfection of the economy of nature that Wordsworth's poem offers, it nevertheless preserves the same precarious balance between life and death, suggesting that rewards can only be otherworldly, and that only on the margin between life and death can they be foreseen. Nell's shadowed life and Stephen's interlude of living death grant them a privileged access to the very epicentre of the eccentric domain.

Dickens's return to Wordsworth at this climactic moment of Hard Times bears witness to the difficulty which he laboured under. The imaginative difficulty of the physical and spiritual landscapes of Coketown, characterised by a uniformity wholly at odds with his natural affinity for diversity and superabundance, compels this deflection into the locally available version of a pastoral setting. And this difficulty is compounded by the stringent conditions imposed by the publishing schedule, to produce a doubly urgent need

for space - for the imaginative space which the fancy requires in order to flourish. The fancy can no more survive 'where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in' than Stephen Blackpool can. The brief excursion into the countryside outside the town, and the imaginative satisfactions of Stephen's pastoral death, restore the fancy, make possible the reconciliations with which the novel closes. Wordsworth has given the contours of this sanative landscape; Dickens, mapping the altered contours of mid-19th-century England, finds its features outcropping in places unsuspected by Wordsworth. It is Wordsworth who first crystalises the characteristic modern alienation from the urban environment, and uses this to sustain an extreme, but crudely monaxial differentiation between metropolitan and non-metropolitan England. Dickens, schooled by different experiences, owing different allegiances, is more sensitive to the gradations which exist within the bounds of the metropolitan domain, and the dynamic processes by which they are governed. In the turbulent environment of an industrialising and urbanising nation, he draws attention to the proliferating and constantly fluctuating margins, discovers the charmed spaces where the individual keeps his own centre in spite of everything, testifies to the calm I within the storm. These are present and active in a way that

Wordsworth's Lake District, rooted in a remembered but vanishing past, can never be, and they point towards a balancing of the odds between the eccentric domain and the monolithic immensity of the centre.

CONCLUSION

For centuries, geographical isolation made the Lake District a haven for eccentricities of dialect, husbandry and social and economic organisation. Advances in industry and agriculture elsewhere in the country in the latter half of the eighteenth century made these survivals seem increasingly anachronistic. Economists and agricultural commentators applied from outside a covetous perception to the barren soils of the mountain valleys, seeing how great was the unrealised potential for the production of value. But, perversely, the tourists, who began to flock to the Lakes in increasing numbers at the same time, invested the **unchanged** social and physical landscape with a potent aesthetic value, even while they threatened its survival by the insensitive importation of metropolitan forms of life. These contrasting forms of exogenous attention were established in all essentials by about the time of Wordsworth's birth, and as the century progressed their irreconcilability became more and more apparent. The Lake District thus became an arena in which to chart the dissemination of a modern industrial society through its destruction of the last vestiges of the old yeoman commonwealth, but also, as Wordsworth

saw, a terrain on which a defence could be founded against such encroachments.

Wordsworth's importance, therefore, was not so much in the creation of the "eccentric" focus which the Lakes came to represent, but in his recognition of the polemical opportunities it presented. He seized upon an aesthetic domain already constituted in the works of Gray and others, and made of it both a sanative physical landscape in a time of dangerous political uncertainty, and an image of the embattled mind in its attempt to resist the assaults on its sovereignty which the new urban and industrial order seemed to threaten.

Wordsworth's recognition was a timely one. As the 19th century progressed national wealth mounted rapidly, but national wellbeing seemed more and more to be called into question by the manifest consequences of urbanisation and industrialisation. In such circumstances the survival in the Lake District of a society still largely untouched by these changes was of particular importance. It held out to writers and others, anxiously searching for mitigating alternatives to the human distress which seemed to be accumulating all around them, the model of a society constituted on entirely different lines. The **desire** to find in the Lake District a human social scale and an imaginative

consonance with nature was itself the cause, perhaps, of certain distortions. By the middle of the 19th century, as some writers not enamoured of Wordsworth's influence were quick to point out, much that he had written in defence of had already disappeared; much had, perhaps, disappeared even before he wrote of it. But an "eccentric domain" was by then sufficiently established, encoded in Wordsworth's poetry, and firmly accommodated within the moral geography of the nation.

When, from the 1830s onwards, novelists came to address the problems of an emerging industrial society, they found in Wordsworth a vital, though often problematic sustenance, and in the Lake District an important moral, as well as geographic, referent. This had two important consequences. First, it immeasurably enriched the novelists' creative grasp of the whole human situation they set out to represent. Wordsworth had done much to stimulate interest in both the physical and mental environment of poverty, and though his subjects were mostly rural, there were suggestive pointers in his work to the results which such an attention could achieve when applied to the urban poor. Second, in the case of Emily Brontë and Dickens, it invigorated their texts with the lineaments of a quarrel with Wordsworth that is in itself a creative engagement of the first order - though a much neglected

one. The first greatly enhances the worth of their novels as social documents of their age, for the imaginative sympathy of their authors does much to supply the subjective texture that is lacking in statistical accounts. But the second is what validates them as artistic testaments, sets them apart from those more ideologically smug narratives which light on easy resolutions of complex problems. For the 'deflections' to which Dickens and Mrs Gaskell are subject are not easy, though they may follow a line of least resistance. They remain, ultimately, expressions of artistic integrity - of what a given mind was capable of in a particular situation - legitimate embodiments of the continuing urge to find and hold a 'paradiso terrestre'.

APPENDIX 1

A PERAMBULATION OF THE LAKE DISTRICT

The geographical definition of the Lake District is comparatively straightforward. It is an upland region formed by the Cumbrian Mountains, predominantly over 600 feet above sea level (and rising to rugged mountain peaks over 3,000 feet high), but deeply dissected by a series of valleys, the majority of which contain lakes of glacial origin. Wordsworth's image of this roughly circular region, centred on the Scafell Massif, with the valleys radiating from it 'like spokes from the nave of a wheel', remains unsurpassed.¹ Towards the south the land falls away via the gentler fells of Furness and Cartmel to meet the sea at Morecambe Bay. To the north and north-west it drops more sharply to a broader coastal plain bounded by the Solway Firth. Geologically, agriculturally, and in many other ways too, the Solway Plain is quite distinct from the Lake District proper. The area so defined occupied the historic counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and the detached portion of Lancashire "Over the Sands". Altogether the area is bounded by the Irish Sea for about three-fifths of its circumference, making it more or less a peninsula. On much of the landward side it is divided from the Pennine uplands by the broad valley of the River Eden, but towards the South a tongue of upland (the Shap and Howgill Fells) reaches across to meet them. However, the historic north-south routeway over the Shap summit is here of much greater importance than east-west routeways, and this has tended to isolate the Lake District from more easterly influences.

Contemporary Tours and Guides to the region observe few such niceties of definition. Many take as their parameters the two-and-a-half counties, and while concentrating heavily on the mountainous core, include whatever else is considered to be of interest in the vicinity. But many works extend their commentary beyond these counties. Travellers generally approached either from the south or from the east. In the first case the crossing of the Sands of Morecambe Bay - a momentous gateway to the Lakes - provided a ready demarcation, and works rarely comment in detail on anything further south than Lancaster, overlooking the Sands. On the east side, however, there was no clear cut-off point. Travellers might travel north along the Great North Road, as Wordsworth suggested,² and then turn west along the trans-Pennine routeways formed by the Aire Gap, Wensleydale and Garsdale, or the Roman road across Stainmore. Whichever route they took there was much of interest or curiosity almost as soon as the high road was left behind, and many works accordingly extend the province of the Lake District deep into the Yorkshire Dales and the limestone scenery and caves of Craven.³ By no stretch of the imagination can areas like these, any more than the Solway Plain, be considered parts of the Lake District, yet they were repeatedly drawn into the same focus of attention. The poet Josiah Relph (see pp 127-30) came from Sebergham, just north of the Lake District in the direction of Carlisle, yet his verses find their way into West's Guide, and become, **de facto**, Lake District documents. It is necessary to make the point: Hogarth's forebears, too, did not come from the Lake District proper, but from its eastern margin, in the village of Bampton, near Shap; yet Sala's account of his ancestry makes it clear that it fell under the same spell (see p 302). The Lake District may have been subject to the

appropriating attentions of the centre, but it was not beyond appropriating a wider province of its own.

APPENDIX 2

ADAM SMITH AND THE POETS

Smith's remark on 'Clym of the Clough' was probably known to Wordsworth from an article entitled 'Anecdotes of Dr Adam Smith' that appeared in the European Magazine and London Review in August 1791.¹ The article is signed merely 'Glasgow. A.', and appears to be written by someone as exasperated with the great economist as was Wordsworth, for it maintains that

On the subject of poetry it will be remarked with surprize, that Dr Smith seems not to have been endowed with a gleam of taste. Almost all his opinions are erroneus and contemptible. (p 133)

On the subject of blank verse, Smith was especially damning, excepting only Milton from his strictures:

'They do well ... to call it blank, for blank it is; I myself, even I, could make blank verse as fast as I could speak. Nothing but laziness hinders our Tragic Poets from writing, like the French, in rhyme.' (p 134)

Beattie's poem The Minstrel, which the young Wordsworth admired,

he would not allow to be called a poem; for it had, he said, no plan, no beginning, middle, or end. He thought it only a **series of verses**.

(p 134)

The remark which rankled most with Wordsworth came in response to the writer of the article urging the case of the 18th-century Scottish poet Allan Ramsay. Smith replied:

'It is the duty of a poet to write like a gentleman. I dislike that homely style which some think fit to call the language of nature and simplicity, and so forth. In Percy's Reliques, too, a few tolerable pieces are buried under a heap of rubbish. You have read perhaps Adam Bell [,] Clym of the Clough, and William of Clouderlie?' I answered, Yes. 'Well then,' said he, 'do you think that was worth printing?'

(p 135)

On the other hand, 'He was fond of Pope, and had by heart many favourite passages' (p 135). Perhaps he was not entirely lacking in critical faculties, to judge by his mention elsewhere of the 'nervous precision of Mr Pope'.² But an admiration of Pope arising out of such an exclusive notion of literary propriety was not calculated to earn Wordsworth's esteem.

APPENDIX 3

RICHARD WATSON, BISHOP OF LLANDAFF, AND THE BOARD OF AGRICULTURE

Scattered among the Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson is a considerable body of information respecting his enthusiasm for agricultural improvement and large-scale larch-planting - a practice which Wordsworth specifically condemned as detrimental to the appearance of the Lake District.¹ Watson's involvement with the Board of Agriculture, the main institution dedicated to the furtherance of agricultural improvement in the late-18th and early-19th centuries, began early. He was one of its thirty "ordinary members", 'and was constant in my attendance at its meetings, whenever I was in London'.² On one occasion he was offered - but declined - the vice-presidency of the Board (II, p 102). In 1793 he contributed his 'Preliminary Observations' to Pringle's General View of the Agriculture of the County of Westmorland,³ having previously intended to compile the whole report himself (II, p 97). Like Bailey and Culley, the authors of the Board's Cumberland report, and like Arthur Young before them, Watson had little faith in the small yeoman farmers of the Lake District, whom he found reluctant to adopt new methods and crops.

His self-congratulatory account of his various experiments in improvement would certainly have infuriated Wordsworth:

I Made, in 1805 and 1806, a large plantation, consisting of three hundred and twenty-two thousand five hundred larches, on two high and

barren mountains, called Berkfell and Gomershow, situated near the foot of Winandermere. During the same period, I improved above an hundred and fifty acres of land, which was covered with heath, and not worth two shillings an acre, situated at Kelleth, in the parish of Orton, in the county of Westmorland. I know of no means more honourable, more certain, or more advantageous, of increasing a man's property, and promoting at the same time the public good, than by planting larches on mountainous districts, and improving low waste lands, (where lime is reasonable and the soil tolerable,) by bringing them into tillage. I drew up a paper on these subjects, and presented it to the Board of Agriculture in 1807. The paper was ordered by the Board to be printed among their communications, vol viith [sic], and a gold medal was unanimously voted to the author of it, whose motto prefixed to it was **Private Wealth, and Public Strength.**

(II, pp 263-64)

NOTES

PREAMBLE

- 1 'Wordsworth', in William Wordsworth: A Critical Anthology, ed Graham McMaster (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p 192.
- 2 Ian Nairn & Nikolaus Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Surrey, 2nd edn, rev Bridget Cherry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p 17.
- 3 Robert Elsmere, ed Rosemary Ashton (OUP, 1987), p 150.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Thomas Hutchinson, ed, Poetical Works of Wordsworth, new edn, rev Ernest de Selincourt (London: OUP, 1936), p 250.
- 2 Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961; rpt with postscript, 1963), pp 99-119. Williams singles out for discussion Mrs Gaskell's Mary Barton and North and South, Dickens's Hard Times, Disraeli's Sybil, Kingsley's Alton Locke and George Eliot's Felix Holt. Louis Cazamian, in Le Roman social en Angleterre (Paris, 1903), trans Martin Fido as The Social Novel in

- England 1830-1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs Gaskell, Kingsley (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), extends his discussion to a broader corpus of novels, and many subsequent writers have followed his example. The most common additions to those treated by Williams are Disraeli's Coningsby, Kingsley's Yeast, Charlotte Bronte's Shirley, Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's Helen Fleetwood and Frances Trollope's Michael Armstrong.
- 3 Williams, Culture and Society, p 102.
 - 4 Sheila M Smith, The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p 2.
 - 5 The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), p 65.
 - 6 Igor Webb, From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution (Ithaca & London: Cornell U P, 1981), p 16.
 - 7 See, e g, Monica Fryckstedt, 'The Early Industrial Novel: Mary Barton and its predecessors', reprinted from Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, LXIII, no 1 (Autumn 1980); and Joseph Kestner, Protest and Reform: The British Social Narrative by Women 1827-1867 (London: Methuen, 1985), especially pp 11-21.
 - 8 Leonore Davidoff, 'Class and Gender in Victorian England', in Sex and Class in Women's History, ed Judith L Newton, Mary P Ryan & Judith R Walkowitz (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), p 18.

According to Joseph Kestner, 'Writing social fiction allowed women, although not enfranchised, to participate in the legislative process' (Protest and Reform, p 13).

- 9 See, e g, Valentine Cunningham, Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), passim.
- 10 'Landscape in nineteenth-century literature', in The Rural Idyll, ed G E Mingay (London: Routledge, 1989), pp 70-71; W A Craik, Elizabeth Gaskell and the English Provincial Novel (London: Methuen, 1975), passim.
- 11 The Literature of Change: Studies in the Nineteenth-Century Provincial Novel, 2nd edn (Brighton: Harvester Press and Totowa, N J: Barnes & Noble, 1980) p ix.
- 12 The Politics of Story in Victorian Social Fiction (Ithaca & London: Cornell U P, 1988), p 5.
- 13 'Dickens and Social Ideas', in Dickens 1970, ed Michael Slater (London: Chapman & Hall in association with the Dickens Fellowship, 1970), p 98.
- 14 Peter Matthias, in The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914, 2nd edn (London & New York: Methuen, 1983) identifies the century 1750-1850 as characterised by the most rapid growth ever experienced in the British economy, but within this century places the commencement of the fastest growth at 1780 (pp 2-4 & 15-16).

- 15 Martin J Wiener, English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p 29.
- 16 Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry (New York: OUP, 1973).
- 17 The Image of Childhood. The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature, revised edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp 68-161; also U C Knoepfmacher, 'Mutations of the Wordsworthian Child of Nature', in Nature and the Victorian Imagination, ed U C Knoepfmacher & G B Tennyson (Berkeley & Los Angeles: Univ of California Press, 1977), pp 391-425.
- 18 Poetry Towards Novel (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), p 284.
- 19 The Romantic Impulse in Victorian Fiction (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard Univ Press, 1980), p 255.
- 20 Leavis writes in Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964): 'Of the Victorian poets it is Arnold who is known as the Wordsworthian, and if there can be said to have been a Wordsworthian tradition, it is through him that it passes'; but, he adds, 'In Arnold's relations with him there is a characteristic discrepancy between criticism and poetic practice' (p 154). See also William A Jamison, Arnold and the Romantics, in Anglistica, X (1958), pp 31-57.

- 21 Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn, rev Chester L Shaver, Mary Moorman & Alan G Hill, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-88), Later Years, IV, pp 20 & 24.
- 22 F R Leavis, ed, Mill on Bentham and Coleridge (1950; rpt CUP, 1980), p 12.
- 23 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties', in Autobiography and Literary Essays (Collected Edn, vol I), ed John M Robson & Jack Stillinger (Toronto: Univ of Toronto Press & London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 345. The essay was first printed in the Monthly Repository for January & October 1833; I have restored the 1833 readings from the footnoted variants.
- 24 Lyrical Ballads, ed R L Brett & A R Jones (London: Methuen, 1963; rev impression 1965), p 249.
- 25 Lyrical Ballads, p 250.
- 26 Letters: Early Years, p 327.
- 27 Margaret Smith & Herbert Rosengarten, eds, The Professor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p 253.
- 28 Autobiography (OUP, 1924), p 125.
- 29 'Wordsworth's Ethics', in Hours in a Library, 3 vols (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1899), II, pp 276-77.

- 30 'Wordsworth' (1874), in Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: Univ of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, p 48.
- 31 Preface to Cosmographia, quoted in W G East & S W Woolridge, The Spirit and Purpose of Geography, 3rd edn (London: Hutchinson, 1966), p [5].
- 32 Culture and Society, p 17.
- 33 Nineteenth-Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold (London: Chatto & Windus, 1949), p 99.
- 34 Dorothy Eagle & Hilary Carnell, eds, Oxford Literary Guide to the British Isles, OUP, 1977.
- 35 'Landscape as Poetic Focus', in The Poet in the Imaginary Museum, ed Barry Alpert (Manchester: Carcanet, 1977), p 166. Davie hints that 'areal' (p 169) affiliations acquire much greater compulsion in times of political or historical crisis. At the same time they are capable of manipulation for political ends: see for example the wartime anthology, Landmarks: A Book of Topographical Verse for England and Wales, ed G Rostrevor Hamilton & John Arlott, CUP, 1943.
- 36 John Barrell, The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840 (CUP, 1972); Raymond Williams, The Country and the City (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973); John Lucas, The Literature of Change; James Turner, The Politics of Landscape: Rural Scenery and Society in English Poetry 1630-1660 (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard Univ Press, 1979); Malcolm Hardman, Ruskin and Bradford: An Experiment in Victorian Cultural History (Manchester U P, 1986).

- 37 The Making of the English Landscape (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), passim.
- 38 James Turner, Politics of Landscape, p xi.
- 39 Denis Cosgrove & Stephen Daniels, The Iconography of Landscape: essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 9 (CUP, 1988), p 1.
- 40 Kenneth Clarke, Landscape Into Art (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), passim; Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), passim.
- 41 See, e g, Keith Lindley, Fenland Riots and the English Revolution (London: Heinemann Educational, 1982).
- 42 John Barrell, The Idea of Landscape, pp 1-63.
- 43 For Cowper, Clare and Hopkins see the poems of the same names; for Ruskin, see The Crown of Wild Olive (1866), in Works of John Ruskin, ed E T Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-12), XVIII, pp 385-88.
- 44 'Corn-Law Rhymes' (1832), in Works of Thomas Carlyle, Centenary Edn, 30 vols (London: Chapman & Hall, 1896-99), XXVIII, p 138.
- 45 William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral: A Study of the Pastoral Form in Literature (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p 167.

- 46 Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1972), pp 32-45.
- 47 W J B Owen & Jane Worthington Smyser, eds, Prose Works of William Wordsworth, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, p 206.
- 48 P J Waller, Town, City, and Nation: England 1850-1914 (OUP, 1983), p 195; Harry Hopkins, The Long Affray: The Poaching Wars in Britain (London: Secker & Warburg, 1985), pp 264-65.
- 49 Letters: Early Years, pp 275 & 295; for purpresture, see Oliver Rackham, The History of the Countryside (London: J M Dent, 1986), pp 265-67.
- 50 Letters: Early Years, p 274.
- 51 Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets, ed David Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p 367.
- 52 Letters: Early Years, p 518.
- 53 Quoted in Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down, p 59 (epigraph to ch 5).
- 54 See Mary Howitt's novel, Hope On, Hope Ever! (1836; rpt Dent, Cumbria: Dales Historical Monographs, 1988). The geologist Adam Sedgwick, who collaborated with Wordsworth on later editions of the latter's Guide to the Lakes, was a native of Dentdale, and his discouragingly titled Memorial by the Trustees of Cowgill Chapel (1868)

and Supplement to the Memorial (1870), collected and reprinted as Adam Sedgwick's Dent, ed David Boulton (Sedbergh & Dent: privately published, 1984) conceal an enterprise very similar to Wordsworth's. In the 20th century the poet and friend of Ezra Pound, Basil Bunting, came to live at Briggflatts in Dentdale.

- 55 The Beauties of England and Wales; or, Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive, of each County, 18 vols (London: Vernor, Hood, etc, 1801-16), III (1802), ed John Britton & Edward Wedlake Brayley, p 66.
- 56 'The spots which recall him survive, / For he lent a new life to these hills' ('The Youth of Nature' (1852), lines 13-14, in Kenneth Allott, ed, The Poems of Matthew Arnold [London: Longmans, 1965], p 246).
- 57 See for example, Jonathan Otley, A Concise Description of the English Lakes, 5th edn (Keswick: the author, 1834), p 109.
- 58 Recollections, p 120.
- 59 The Stones of Venice (1851), in Works, IX, 38; quoted in Jeanne Clegg, Ruskin and Venice (London: Junction Books, 1981), p 121.
- 60 Modern Painters (1843-60), in Works, VII, p 374; quoted in Clegg, Ruskin and Venice, p 135.
- 61 Leslie Stephen, Hours in a Library, p 291.

- 62 Illustrated in David Robertson, 'Mid-Victorians amongst the Alps', in Knoepflmacher & Tennyson, eds, Nature and the Victorian Imagination, p 124.
- 63 Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold, D D (London: Ward, Lock & Co, n d), p 347.
- 64 Stanley, Life of Thomas Arnold, p 347.
- 65 Humphrey House, 'Wordsworth's Fame', in All in Due Time: The Collected Essays and Broadcast Talks of Humphrey House (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1955), pp 37-38.
- 66 See The Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Arnold, D D (London: B Fellowes, 1845; rpt Farnborough: Gregg International, 1971).
- 67 Poem in Kenneth Allott, ed, The Poems of Matthew Arnold (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1965), pp 610-11.
- 68 The work was authorised in 1879, and the reservoir finally opened in 1894. See J D Marshall & John K Walton, The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century (Manchester U P, 1981), pp 209-12; and The Discovery of the Lake District: A Northern Arcadia and its Uses (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1984), pp 152-55.
- 69 Keble's address, in the original Latin, appears in Christopher Wordsworth, Memoirs of William Wordsworth, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1851), II, pp 355-58; the translation is taken from Humphrey House, 'Wordsworth's Fame', All in Due

- Time, p 38. Another account of the ceremony appears in Stopford A Brooke, Life and Letters of Frederick W Robertson, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1865), I, pp 23-24.
- 70 Stanley, Life of Thomas Arnold, p 355.
- 71 Stanley, Life of Thomas Arnold, p 367.
- 72 A map in Sidney & Beatrice Webb, The History of Trade Unionism (n p: the authors, 1913) shows Westmorland to have had, proportionately, the lowest trade union membership of all the northern counties in 1892 (facing p 478).
- 73 For Clough's attendance at the event, see Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough, with a Selection from his Letters and a Memoir, ed his wife (London: Macmillan, 1888), p 84; for Ruskin, see Works, II, pp xxvi-xxvii.
- 74 James Caird, English Agriculture in 1850-51 (1852), 2nd edn with an introduction by G E Mingay (London: Frank Cass, 1968), frontispiece & p 512.
- 75 Caird, English Agriculture, p 514.
- 76 Yeast; a problem (London: J M Dent, 1912), p 2.
- 77 'On the Farming of Cumberland', Journal of the Royal Society of Agriculture, XIII (1852), p 277; quoted in Marshall & Walton, The Lake Counties, p 72.
- 78 Quarterly Review, LXIX, no CXXXVII (December 1841), p 19.

- 79 Lord Shaftesbury (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1939), p 89.
- 80 E g Harriet Martineau, A Complete Guide to the English Lakes (Windermere: John Garnett, n d), pp 138-41.
- 81 An Autobiography, ed Margaret Howitt, 2 vols (London: Wm Isbister, 1889), I, p 197.
- 82 Marshall & Walton, The Lake Counties, p 72.
- 83 J A V Chapple and Arthur Pollard, eds, The Letters of Mrs Gaskell (Manchester U P, 1966), p 570.
- 84 Times, 24 April 1865. The episode is related in Samuel Smiles, George Moore, Merchant and Philanthropist, 2nd edn (London: George Routledge, 1878), pp 288-89.
- 85 A Complete Guide to the English Lakes, p 141.
- 86 'Kendal and Windermere Railway. Two Letters Re-Printed from the Morning Post' (1845), in Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, p 352.

CHAPTER 1. 'AN APPROPRIATE HUMAN CENTRE': WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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- 3 Eric E Lampard, 'The Urbanizing World', in The Victorian City: Images and Realities, ed H J Dyos & Michael Wolff, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), I, p 4.
- 4 J D Marshall & John K Walton, The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century (Manchester U P, 1981), p 37.
- 5 John Burnett, Food and Want: A Social History of Diet (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp 21-22.
- 6 Quoted in J D Chambers & G E Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880 (London & Sydney: Batsford, 1966), p 160.
- 7 Sybil; or, The Two Nations, ed Thom Braun (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), Book VI, ch 13.
- 8 Art Journal Catalogue, rpt as The Great Exhibition London 1851 (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970), passim.
- 9 Asa Briggs, Victorian People (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p 46.
- 10 'The Opening of the Crystal Palace considered in some of its relations to the prospects of art' (1854), in Works, XII, p 418.

- 11 English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850-1980 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p 28.
- 12 Briggs, Victorian People, p 43.
- 13 Robert Poole, 'Oldham Wakes', in Leisure in Britain 1780-1939, ed John K Walton & James Walvin (Manchester U P, 1983), pp 71-98.
- 14 John K Walton, The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750-1914 (Leicester U P & New York: St Martin's Press, 1983), pp 6-8 & 22.
- 15 'Some Observations on the Country and Rural Poetry', in The Parting Light: Selected Writings, ed Mark Abley (Manchester: Carcanet & Ashington: Mid Northumberland Arts Group, 1985), p 155.
- 16 'Picture-galleries should be the workman's paradise, a garden of pleasure, to which he goes to refresh his eyes and heart with beautiful shapes and sweet colouring, when they are wearied with dull bricks and mortar, and the ugly colourless things which fill the workshop and the factory'. 'Letters to Chartists. I. National Gallery' (1848), in Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of his Life, ed his wife, 2 vols (London: Henry S King & Co, 1877), I, p 168.
- 17 'Speech on Moving the Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies' (1775), in Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, 6 vols (OUP, 1906-1907), II, p 190.

- 18 See the maps illustrating the growth of London in G M Trevelyan, English Social History (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), pp 602-11.
- 19 Rural Rides, 2 vols (London: J M Dent, 1912), p 160.
- 20 J Francis, A History of the English Railway. Its Social Relations and Revelations (1851); quoted in John Gage, Turner: Rain, Steam and Speed (New York: Viking Press, 1972), p 28.
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- 23 Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p 114.
- 24 First Impressions of England and its People (1846), ed William F Laughlan (Hawick, Roxburghshire: Byway Books, 1983), p 7.
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- 26 The Age of Great Cities; or, Modern Society Viewed in its Relation to Intelligence, Morals and Religion (1843; rpt Shannon: Irish U P, 1971), p 1.

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- 28 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, p 349.
- 29 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, p 341.
- 30 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, p 352.
- 31 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, pp 355-56.
- 32 An American in Regency England: The Journal of a Tour in 1810-11, ed Christopher Hibbert (London: Pergamon Press, 1968), p 59.
- 33 Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, fig 16.
- 34 The Heart of Mid-Lothian (London: J M Dent, 1956), p 15.
- 35 Brett & Jones, Lyrical Ballads, p 306.
- 36 Letter to Wordsworth, dated June 1802, in Graham McMaster, ed, William Wordsworth: A Critical Anthology (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p 77.
- 37 Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn, rev Chester L Shaver, Mary Moorman & Alan G Hill, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-88), I, Early Years 1787-1805, p 355.
- 38 The Prelude: A Parallel Text, ed J C Maxwell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971; rpt with corrections 1972), 1805: XII, lines 76-81.
- 39 Brett & Jones, Lyrical Ballads, p 306.

- 40 An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, 2 vols (London: J M Dent, 1910), I, pp 12-13.
- 41 Smith, Wealth of Nations, I, pp 16-17.
- 42 L A Williams, Road Transport in Cumbria in the Nineteenth Century (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp 32 & 39.
- 43 Williams, Road Transport, p 214.
- 44 P J Mannex & W Whellan, History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cumberland (1847); quoted in Williams, Road Transport, p 33.
- 45 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 65.
- 46 J P D Dunbabin, Rural Discontent in Nineteenth-Century Britain (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), pp 21-23.
- 47 Compare Adam Smith: 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages' (Wealth of Nations, I, p 13).
- 48 '... it appears to me a fault in the Beggar, that the instructions conveyed in it are too direct and like a lecture: they don't slide into the mind of the reader, while he is imagining no such matter'

- (Letters of Charles Lamb, 2 vols [London: J M Dent, 1909], I, p 178).
- 49 Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961; rpt with postscript, 1963), p 17.
- 50 The Country and the City (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), passim.
- 51 For a discussion of the latter, see Igor Webb, From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution (Ithaca & London: Cornell U P, 1981), pp 21-25.
- 52 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 217.
- 53 Wealth of Nations, I, p 362.
- 54 Wealth of Nations, I, p 363.
- 55 Wealth of Nations, I, p 363.
- 56 Correspondence of Thomas Gray, ed Paget Toynbee & Leonard Whibley, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), III, p 1088.
- 57 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 195.
- 58 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 196.
- 59 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 196.
- 60 R H Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century (London, 1912), p 188.

- 61 Mildred Campbell, The English Yeoman under Elizabeth and the Early Stuarts (London: Merlin Press, 1983), pp 148-53.
- 62 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, pp 200-201.
- 63 Andrew B Appleby, Famine in Tudor and Stuart England (Liverpool U P, 1979), passim.
- 64 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, 200-201.
- 65 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, 206.
- 66 Compare Harrington's 'Agrarian law': '... if the whole people be landlords, or hold the lands so divided among them that no one man, or number of men, within the compass of the few or aristocracy, overbalance them, the empire (without the interposition of force) is a commonwealth'. 'An equal commonwealth is such a one as is equal both in the balance or foundation, and in the superstructure; that is to say, in her Agrarian law, and in her rotation. An equal Agrarian is a perpetual law, establishing and preserving the balance of dominion by such a distribution, that no one man or number of men, within the compass of the few or aristocracy, can come to overpower the whole people by their possessions in lands'. James Harrington, The Commonwealth of Oceana (1656), ed Henry Morley (London: George Routledge, 1887), pp 19 & 39-40.
- 67 Peter Laslett, The world we have lost (London: Methuen, 1965), p 80.

- 68 Wordsworth's interpretation of Lake District history is broadly upheld by modern studies. See, besides works already cited, two articles by G P Jones: 'The Poverty of Cumberland and Westmorland', Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Archaeological & Antiquarian Society, New Series, LV (1955), 198-208; and 'The Decline of the Yeomanry in the Lake Counties', Transactions, N S, LXII (1962), 198-223.
- 69 Christopher Hill, Puritanism and Revolution (London: Panther Books, 1968), ch 3.
- 70 Wealth of Nations, I, p 365.
- 71 Wealth of Nations, I, p 8.
- 72 Land, Labour and Economic Discourse (London, Henley & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp 54 & 56.
- 73 Land, Labour and Economic Discourse, p 64.
- 74 Land, Labour and Economic Discourse, p 66.
- 75 Land, Labour and Economic Discourse, p 66.
- 75a A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain (1724-26), ed Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p 549.
- 76 J Bailey and G Culley, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Cumberland; with Observations for the Means of its Improvement, with the same authors' General View of ... Northumberland, and A Pringle, General View of ...

- Westmoreland, 3rd edn (London: Richard Philips, 1805), p 209.
- 77 One local landowner, John Christian Curwen, was a noted authority on advanced techniques of husbandry. See Edward Hughes, North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century. II, Cumberland and Westmorland 1700-1830 (London: OUP, 1965), pp 223-32.
- 78 Bailey & Culley, Agriculture of Cumberland, p 209.
- 79 Bailey & Culley, Agriculture of Cumberland, p 249. For the activities of Bishop Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, in the field of agricultural improvement, see Appendix 3.
- 80 A Six Months Tour through the North of England, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: W Strahan & W Nicoll, 1771), III, p 131.
- 81 Young, Six Months Tour, III, PP 115 & 139.
- 82 Young, Six Months Tour, III, p 147.
- 83 Young, Six Months Tour, III, p 113n.
- 84 Young, Six Months Tour, III, p 137n. Gray, too, was repelled by 'these barabarous names' (Correspondence, III, p 1080).
- 85 Young, Six Months Tour, III, pp 142-43. Young was a Suffolk man.
- 86 Young, Six Months Tour, III, p 126.

- 87 Young, Six Months Tour, III, p 138.
- 88 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, p 342.
- 89 Dennison Nash, 'Tourism as a Form of Imperialism', in Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism, ed Valene L Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), p 35.
- 90 A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757; 2nd edn 1759; facsimile rpt Menston: Scolar Press, 1970). John Dalton, 'A Descriptive Poem Addressed to Two Young Ladies at their Return from Viewing the Mines near Whitehaven' (1755), rpt in Thomas West, A Guide to the Lakes in Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire, 3rd edn (London: 1784).
- 91 Norman Nicholson, The Lakers: The Adventures of the First Tourists (London: Robert Hale, 1955) remains the standard work. The subject has, however, recently been the subject of a number of interesting exhibitions: see The Discovery of the Lake District: A Northern Arcadia and its Uses (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1979); Peter Bicknell, ed, Beauty, Horror, and Immensity: Picturesque Landscape in Britain, 1750-1850 (CUP & Fitzwilliam Museum, 1981); Peter Bicknell & Robert Woof, eds, The Discovery of the Lake District 1750-1810: A Context for Wordsworth (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 1982) and The Lake District Discovered 1810-1850: The Artists, the Tourists, and Wordsworth (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 1982); and David Thomason & Robert Woof, eds, Derwentwater: The Vale of Elysium (Grasmere: Trustees of Dove Cottage, 1986).

- 92 Correspondence, III, pp 1074-1110 & 1125-27.
- 93 Thomas Pennant, A Tour in Scotland in 1769 (Chester, 1771); and A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides in 1772, 2 vols (Chester: J Monk & London: B White, 1774-76).
- 94 Observations, on Several Parts of England, particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, made in the year 1772, 3rd edn, 2 vols London: T Cadell & W Davies, 1808.
- 95 A Guide to the Lakes, in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire (1778), 3rd edn, London, 1784.
- 96 William Combe and Thomas Rowlandson (illus), The Tour of Doctor Syntax, in search of the Picturesque (London & New York: Frederick Warne, 1892). First appeared (as The School Master's Tour) in the Poetical Magazine, 1809-11.
- 97 Richard Burn, quoted in Edward Hughes, North Country Life, p 25.
- 98 The Journeys of Celia Fiennes (London & Sydney: Macdonald & Co, 1983), pp 223-24.
- 99 F W Moody, 'Oatbread', in Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society, VIII (1949), 20-30, which includes Walker's illustration.
- 100 Pringle, Agriculture of Westmorland, p 337.
- 101 The Beauties of England and Wales; or, Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and

- Descriptive, of each County, 18 vols (London: Vernor, Hood, etc, 1801-16), III (1802), ed John Britton & Edward Wedlake Brayley, p 242.
- 102 Britton & Brayley, Beauties of England and Wales, III, p 238.
- 103 Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson, Bishop of Landaff [sic], 2nd edn (London: T Cadell & W Davies, 1818), II, p 269.
- 104 Simond, An American in Regency England, pp 81-82.
- 105 Canon C M L Bouch, Prelates and People of the Lake Counties: A History of the Diocese of Carlisle 1133-1933 (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1948), pp 353-56.
- 106 Letters: Later Years, IV, p 679.
- 107 Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough, ed Frederick L Mulhauser, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), pp 129-32.
- 108 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, p 352.
- 109 Marshall & Walton, The Lake Counties, pp 204-19. The origins of the National Trust can be traced back to the Thirlmere Defence League. This was set up to oppose the water-supply scheme of Manchester Corporation (see above, p 34), and rallied support by pointing out that the "Rock of Names" associated with Wordsworth and Coleridge would be submerged by the scheme.
- 110 Guardianship is often regarded as an original contribution of Wordsworth's, on the basis of his

referring to the Lake District as 'a sort of national property' (Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 225). However, Wordsworth probably derived the idea from Gilpin, who declared (after seeing how the ruins of Fountains Abbey had been vandalised in the interests of landscape gardening): 'A **legal** right the proprietor unquestionably has to deform his ruin, as he pleases. But though he fear no indictment in the king's bench, he must expect a very severe prosecution in the court of taste. The refined code of this court does not consider an elegant ruin as a man's **property**, on which he may exercise at will the irregular follies of a wanton imagination: but as a deposit, of which he is only the guardian, for the amusement and admiration of posterity' (Observations, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, made in the year 1772, on several parts of England; particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland, 2nd edn [London, 1788], p 188).

- 111 Pre-Raphaelitism (1851), in Works, XII, p 354.
- 112 Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions, ed George Watson (London: J M Dent, 1975), p 276. Derek Roper, on the other hand, has maintained that the Lyrical Ballads were well-received by comparison with the general run of new verse (Reviewing Before the 'Edinburgh' [London: Macmillan, 1978], pp 94-101). However, this does not alter the fact that Wordsworth, Coleridge, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Jeffrey and Byron all seem to have shared an assumption that Lyrical Ballads was an appropriate terrain for ideological conflict.

- 113 'William Wordsworth' (1814), Essays on English Poets and Poetry from 'The Edinburgh Review' (London: George Routledge & Sons, n d), p 529.
- 114 'William Wordsworth', Essays on English Poets, p 527.
- 115 'William Wordsworth', Essays on English Poets, p 531.
- 116 '... this man is the kind of poet who, in the same manner that Joanna Southcote found many thousand people to take her dropsy for God Almighty re-impregnated, has found some hundreds of persons to misbelieve in his insanities, and hold his art as a kind of poetical Emanuel Swedenborg or Richard Brothers or Parson Tozer, half enthusiast and half impostor', Don Juan, ed T G Steffan, E Steffan and W W Pratt, revised edition (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1982), p 37. Also a letter to Leigh Hunt in 1815: 'Who can understand him? Let those who do, make him intelligible. Jacob Behmen, Swedenborg, and Joanna Southcote, are mere types of this arch-apostle of mystery and mysticism', Selected Prose, ed Peter Gunn (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p 219.
- 117 Letters of John Keats, ed Robert Gittings (London: OUP, 1970; rpt with corrections, 1975), p 61.
- 118 'Criticisms on the Principal Italian Writers', Italian Poets and English Critics, 1755-1859, ed Beatrice Corrigan (Chicago & London: Univ of Chicago Press, 1969), pp 133-34.

- 119 Recollections of the Lakes and Lake Poets, ed David Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p 117.
- 120 'Wordsworth', Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Other Essays (1875), rpt, Essay Index Reprint Series (n p: n p, 1973), p 3. The article, a review of Poetical Works (1849), first appeared in the North British Review for August 1850.
- 121 'Robert Burns' (1809), Essays on English Poets, p 183. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, writing in the Athenaeum in 1842, made the observation more pointedly, arguing that 'the Nature he was faithful to "betrayed not the heart which loved her," but, finally, justifying herself and him, "DID" - without the Edinburgh Review' (The Poetical Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning [OUP, 1913], p 654).
- 122 Poems of Robert Browning (OUP, 1923), p 2.
- 123 Don Juan, pp 6 & 7.
- 124 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, III, pp 333-34.
- 125 An Autobiography, ed Margaret Howitt, 2 vols (London: Wm Isbister, 1889), I, p 243.
- 126 Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress, ed William and Mary Howitt, I (1847), p 10.
- 127 See, e g, William Howitt, Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1849), II, 257-91, in which

Howitt equates Wordsworth's "philosophy" with the essence of Quakerism.

- 128 'Wordsworth' (1879), in Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold, 11 vols (Ann Arbor: Univ of Michigan Press, 1960-77), IX, p 42. John Stuart Mill located the watershed at the Miscellaneous Poems of 1815, 'to which little of value was added in the latter part of the author's life' (Autobiography, p 124).
- 129 'After his settlement at Grasmere [1799] we do not imagine that his mind or genius developed or grew at all. It grew perhaps in bulk, we may say, but never altered its form or character, attaining merely more and more what he himself calls "the monumental pomp of age"' ('Lecture on the Poetry of Wordsworth', in Prose Remains of Arthur Hugh Clough, with a Selection from his Letters and a Memoir, ed his wife (London: Macmillan, 1888), p 308).
- 130 Correspondence, I, p 285.
- 131 Prose Works, III, p 244. Subsequent page references to this volume are given in the text.
- 132 The Cantos of Ezra Pound, Revised Collected edn, enlarged impression (London: Faber & Faber, 1981), p 802.
- 133 Culture and Society, p 59.
- 134 James Losh's response of February 1815 is perhaps typical: 'I have read Wordsworth's Excursion once through, but must read it a 2nd time before I form

- any decisive opinion as to its merits. I can already say that it is far too long, in many parts of it tedious and obscure, but full of much beauty and pure and elevated sentiments': Diaries and Correspondence of James Losh, ed Edward Hughes, 2 vols (Surtees Society, CLXXI [1956] & CLXXIV [1959]), I, p 46.
- 135 E g John Turner, Wordsworth: Play and Politics (London: Macmillan & New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), pp 189-201.
- 136 Home at Grasmere, ed Beth Darlington, Cornell Wordsworth (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1977), pp 8-19 & 36-37.
- 137 Home at Grasmere, pp 455-62.
- 138 Cockermouth is named as his birthplace in the 1805 Prelude (I, 287), but the reference is removed in the 1850 text. Is there also perhaps a sense of passing it over with indecent haste in the lines: 'Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less / In that beloved Vale to which ere long / I was transplanted' (1805: I, 307-309)?
- 139 'Lecture on the Poetry of Wordsworth', Prose Remains, p 305.
- 140 Prelude, 1805, I, 309.
- 141 Prelude, II, 33-41.
- 142 Mary Moorman, William Wordsworth: A Biography. The Early Years 1770-1803 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p 106.

- 143 Correspondence, III, p 1099.
- 144 William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p 104; Prelude 1798-99, ed Stephen Parrish (Ithaca: Cornell U P and Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977), II, lines 31-39.
- 145 Moorman, Early Years, p 451.
- 146 Home at Grasmere, line 49. This and subsequent line references are to the text known as MS "B" unless otherwise stated.
- 147 The phrase recalls Charles Lamb's, in a letter to Wordsworth dated 30th January 1801, in which he discusses 'The Old Cumberland Beggar': 'Here the mind knowingly passes a fiction on herself, first substituting her own feelings for the Beggar's, and, in the same breath detecting the fallacy, will not part with the wish' (Letters of Charles Lamb, 2 vols [London: J M Dent, 1950], I, p 178).
- 148 Moorman, Early Years, p 382.
- 149 Moorman, Early Years, pp 338-39.
- 150 Wordsworth's account is given in Ernest De Selincourt, ed, Poetical Works, 5 vols (OUP, 1940-54), I, p 363; Coleridge's slightly different account is in Specimens of the Table-Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: John Murray, 1852), p 105.
- 151 'Disenchantment or Default? A Lay Sermon', in Power and Consciousness, ed Conor Cruise O'Brien &

William Dean Vanech (London: Univ of London Press and New York: New York U P, 1967), p 168.

- 152 Letters: Early Years, pp 273-81.
- 153 '... will you believe me when I tell you that we walked the next ten miles, by the watch over a high mountain road, thanks to the wind that drove behind us and the good road, in two hours and a quarter, a marvellous feat of which D. will long tell. ... then off to Sedbergh 7 miles farther in an hour and thirty five minutes, the wind was still at our backs and the road delightful' (Letters: Early Years, p 280).
- 154 Letters: Early Years, p 255.
- 155 Turner, Wordsworth: Play and Politics, p 189.
- 156 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 64.
- 157 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 64.
- 158 Home at Grasmere, line 434.
- 159 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 56.
- 160 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 58.
- 161 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 58.
- 162 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 75.
- 163 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, pp 70 & 72.
- 164 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 57.

- 165 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 58.
- 166 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, pp 64-65.
- 167 Reproduced in Frances Blanshard, Portraits of Wordsworth (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1959), plate 23.
- 168 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 70.
- 169 Letters: Later Years, I, pp 402-403.
- 170 Miscellaneous Poems, Whitehaven, 1779. The list of subscribers occupies pp v-xxii.
- 171 Josiah Relph of Sebergham, A Miscellany of Poems, with a Preface and a Glossary, Glasgow: for Mr Thomlinson in Wigton, 1747.
- 172 Chester L Shaver & Alice C Shaver, Wordsworth's Library: A Catalogue (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1979), p 213.
- 173 Poems by the Rev Josiah Relph, of Sebergham, with a life of the author (Carlisle: J Mitchell, 1798), p iii.
- 174 Quoted in Poems by the Rev Josiah Relph, p xix.
- 175 Britton & Brayley, Beauties of England and Wales, III, p 176.
- 176 Poems by the Rev Josiah Relph, p vii. The typology is a common one in Lake District writing. James Clarke, in his Survey of the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire, cites

several examples of clergymen in receipt of even smaller stipends than Relph's, and the tales that grew up of the incumbents accumulating great wealth through the exercise of extreme parsimony (2nd edn [London, 1789], pp 33 & 35).

- 177 Miscellany of Poems, pp iv-vii.
- 178 Miscellany of Poems, p ix.
- 179 Critical Review, XXIV (October 1798); rpt in Brett & Jones, Lyrical Ballads, p 319.
- 180 Quoted in John Barrell, The dark side of the landscape: the rural poor in English painting 1730-1840 (CUP, 1980), p 35.
- 181 Alan Moorehead, The Fatal Impact: The Invasion of the South Pacific 1767-1840 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1966), p xiii.
- 182 William Hutchinson, An Excursion to the Lakes in Westmoreland and Cumberland; with a Tour through part of the Northern Counties in the years 1773 and 1774 (London: J Wilkie, 1776), p 178.
- 183 Excursion to the Lakes, pp 178-79.
- 184 One celebrated actual instance of this kind of attention is the case of the "Maid of Buttermere", who was tricked into a bigamous marriage by the ne'er-do-well, Augustus Hope. See De Quincey, Recollections pp 66-73; also William Mudford, Augustus and Mary; or, the Maid of Buttermere. A Domestic Tale, London: M Jones, 1803.

- 185 Past and Present, in Works of Thomas Carlyle, Centenary Edn (London: Chapman & Hall, 1896-99), X, p 239.
- 186 'Robert Burns' (1808), Essays on English Poets, p 182.
- 187 Brett & Jones, Lyrical Ballads, p 285.
- 188 'George Crabbe' (1807), Essays on English Poets, p 290.
- 189 Letter to Thomas Poole dated 6th April 1799, in Brett & Jones, Lyrical Ballads, p 301.
- 190 Letters: Early Years, p 602, quoted in An Evening Walk, ed James Averill, Cornell Wordsworth (Ithaca & London: Cornell U P, 1984) p 10. The Gentleman's Magazine notice is also printed in this edition (p 305).
- 191 See Z S Fink, ed, The Early Wordsworthian Milieu: A Notebook of Christopher Wordsworth with a few entries by William Wordsworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), passim.
- 192 This is fully discussed in Owen and Smyser, Prose Works, II, pp 123-35, especially p 134. See also the introduction and notes to Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes, ed Ernest De Selincourt, paperback edn (OUP, 1977).
- 193 Among them Dr Brown's 'Description of the Lake and Vale of Keswick', Dalton's Descriptive Poem and, in later editions, Mrs Radcliffe's 'Account of an Ascent of Skiddaw'.

- 194 Journey to the Lake District from Cambridge 1779, ed C E Wrangham (Stocksfield, Northumberland: Oriel Press, 1983), p 59.
- 195 Wilberforce, Journey to the Lake District, p 48.
- 196 See David McCracken, Wordsworth and the Lake District: A Guide to the Poems and their Places (OUP, 1985), p 227.
- 197 John Lucas, 'Places and Dwellings', in The Iconography of Landscape: essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments, ed Denis Cosgrove & Stephen Daniels, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 9 (CUP, 1988), p 100.
- 198 Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth, ed Mary Moorman (London: OUP, 1971), p 45.
- 199 Letters, II, p 158.
- 200 Note in Poetical Works, p 726.
- 201 Wealth of Nations, I, p 14.
- 202 Hutchinson, ed, Poetical Works, p 726.
- 203 Hutchinson, ed, Poetical Works, p 199.
- 204 Moorman, Early Years, p 602. Lowther had recently repaid the debt owed by his father to Wordsworth's.
- 205 Moorman, Early Years, pp 563-64.

- 206 Journals, p 151.
- 207 'The Ten O'Clock', quoted in Francis D Klingender, Art and the Industrial Revolution, ed Arthur Elton (St Albans: Paladin Books, 1972), p 160.
- 208 Reminiscences (London: J M Dent, 1932), p 357.
- 209 Reminiscences, p 360.
- 210 Reminiscences, p 357.
- 211 Letters, p 69.
- 212 Journals, p 38.
- 213 Journals, p 15.
- 214 Prelude, 1805, XI, 258-73.
- 215 Letters: Early Years, p 274.
- 216 Moorman, Early Years, p 228.
- 217 Earlier Letters, I, p 82.
- 218 Poetical Works, p 224.
- 219 Letters: Later Years, IV, p 650.
- 220 Quoted in Chambers & Mingay, The Agricultural Revolution, p 194.
- 221 Scenery and Poetry of the English Lakes. A Summer Ramble (London: Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1846), p 13. See also note 124.

- 222 Recollections, pp 189-90.
- 223 'Autobiographical Memoir', in Graham McMaster, ed, William Wordsworth: A Critical Anthology (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p 34.
- 224 Brett & Jones, Lyrical Ballads, p 249.
- 225 English Traits, Representative Men and other essays (London: J M Dent, 1908), p 10.
- 226 Letters: Later Years, IV, p 314.
- 227 English Traits, p 11.
- 228 Recollections of Writers (1878; rpt Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1969), pp 149-50.
- 229 Essays (n p: n p, n d), p 179.
- 230 Essays, p 178.
- 231 'Wordsworth', Complete Prose, IX, p 36.
- 232 'Lecture on Wordsworth', in Prose Remains, pp 318-19.
- 233 Prose Remains, p 320.
- 234 Correspondence, II, p 496.
- 235 Hallam Lord Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir (London: Macmillan, 1905), p 128.
- 236 Robert Bernard Martin, Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart (London: Faber & Faber & OUP, 1983), pp 202-203.

CHAPTER 2: MRS GASKELL AND THE BURIED LIFE OF VICTORIAN MANCHESTER

- 1 Walks in South Lancashire and on its borders (1844; rpt Clifton, N J: Augustus M Kelley, 1972), p 8.
- 2 J G Sharps, Mrs Gaskell's Observation and Invention: A Study of Her Non-Biographic Works (Fontwell, Sussex: Linden Press, 1970), p 52.
- 3 Winifred Gerin, Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p 73.
- 4 Preface to Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life, ed Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p 37. Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.
- 5 Kenneth Allott, ed, The Poems of Matthew Arnold (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1965), pp 275-76n.
- 6 Lionel Trilling comments suggestively on the underlying reasons for Arnold's flamboyant manner as a young man: '... all of Arnold's youthful affectation is directed towards the preservation of himself, toward allowing himself to be himself. If he wanted to protect his power of joy he had to keep off his friends by setting between them and him the barrier of his eccentricity' (Matthew Arnold, Uniform Edn [OUP, 1982], p 28).
- 7 Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p 27.

- 8 J D Marshall & John K Walton, The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century: A Study in Regional Change (Manchester U P, 1981), pp 67 & 68.
- 9 Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth: The Alfoxden Journal 1798; The Grasmere Journals 1800-1803, ed Mary Moorman (OUP, 1971), p 16.
- 10 Journals, p 78.
- 11 Anthony S Wohl, Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain (London: J M Dent, 1983), pp 296-99.
- 12 John Aiken, A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester (London: John Stockdale, 1795; rpt New York: Augustus M Kelley, 1968), pp 193-94.
- 13 Jules Ginswick, ed, Labour and the Poor in England and Wales 1849-51, 8 vols (London & Totowa, N J: Frank Cass, 1983), I, p 78.
- 14 Ginswick, Labour and the Poor, I, pp 78-79.
- 15 See the 'Conclusion yet to be written' for Mary Barton, in Sharps, Observation and Invention, pp 561-62.
- 16 See George Ewart Evans, The Pattern Under the Plough: Aspects of the Folk-Life of East Anglia (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), p 91.
- 17 Angus Easson, Elizabeth Gaskell (London, Boston & Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p 74.

- 18 See p 303, where Mrs Gaskell mentions 'this lovely night in the country in which I am now writing'.
- 19 Letters of Mrs Gaskell, ed J A V Chapple & Arthur Pollard (Manchester U P, 1966), p 83.
- 20 Letters, p 544.
- 21 Letters, p 168.
- 22 See, e g, Easson, Elizabeth Gaskell, p 159.
- 23 Letters, p 747.
- 24 Ross D Waller, ed, Letters Addressed to Mrs Gaskell by Celebrated Contemporaries, now in the possession of the John Rylands Library, reprinted from Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, XIX, no 1 (January 1935) (Manchester U P, 1935), p 34; Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn, rev Chester L Shaver, Mary Moorman & Alan G Hill, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-88), Later Years, IV, p 94.
- 25 Gaskell, Letters, p 7.
- 26 Gerin, Elizabeth Gaskell, pp 56 & 81-82.
- 27 See, for example, Wordsworth's liminal experience on hearing the news of Robespierre's death while crossing the sands (Prelude, 1805: 467-567. See too J M W Turner's painting 'Lancaster Sands' (c1826). Mrs Gaskell's short story, 'The Sexton's Hero' (1847) uses the sands as its setting.

- 28 Letters, p 44.
- 29 Gerin, Elizabeth Gaskell, p 103.
- 30 Marageret Shaen, Memorials of Two Sisters (1908);
cited in Gerin, Elizabeth Gaskell, p 103.
- 31 Letters, p 570.
- 32 Letters, pp 570-71.
- 33 For Wordsworth's attitude on this matter, see Dorothy Wordsworth, George and Sarah Green: A Narrative, ed Ernest De Selincourt, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936. The five children of George and Sarah Green were orphaned when their parents perished in a snowstorm in 1808. The incident provides the subject of Wordsworth's 'Elegiac Stanzas composed in the Churchyard of Grasmere'. William and Dorothy sat on the committee that was set up to raise a charitable subscription 'by means of which the Children may be placed in respectable Families: it is also intended to send them to School; and what money remains is to be employed in setting them forward as apprentices or servants' (p 18). See also William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Letters: Middle Years, I, pp 239-45; and Thomas De Quincey, Recollections of the Lakes and Lake Poets, ed David Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp 248-71.
- 34 Gaskell, Letters, pp 270-71, 273 & 276.
- 35 Gaskell, Letters, p 270.

- 36 Blackwood's Magazine, XLI (1837), pp 48-50; rpt in Gill, ed, Mary Barton, pp 469-72.
- 37 Letters, p 82. For a detailed list of parallels between the Mary of 'Sketches' and the Alice of Mary Barton, see Sharps, Observation and Invention, p 28n.
- 38 Letters, p 33.
- 39 Letters, p 33.
- 40 Letters, p 33.
- 41 Letters, p 33.
- 42 Sharps, Observation and Invention, p 25n.
- 43 Letters, p 33.
- 44 Notes of a Tour in the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire, 2nd edn, 1842; rpt ('3rd edn'), New York: Augustus M Kelley & London: Frank Cass, 1968.
- 45 E g, W A Craik, Elizabeth Gaskell and the English Provincial Novel (London: Methuen, 1975), pp 39-41.
- 46 The rural bias of dialectology is confirmed by Martha Vicinus, 'Literary Voices of an Industrial Town', in The Victorian City: Images and Realities, ed H J Dyos & Michael Woolf, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), II, pp 757-60.

- 47 Words and Places: Illustrations of History, Ethnology and Geography (1864-73; London: J M Dent, 1911), p 101 & n.
- 48 The Literature of Change: Studies in the Nineteenth-Century Provincial Novel, 2nd edn (Brighton: Harvester Press & Totowa, N J: Barnes & Noble, 1980), p 54. To the more commonly cited example of Thomas Cooper may be added that of the weaver John Horsefield, president for thirty years (until his death in 1854) of the Botanical Society of Prestwich, Manchester - see W B Crump, 'Samuel King and his Botanical Tours in Yorkshire', rpt with the same pagination from The North Western Naturalist for December 1943 (Arbroath: T Buncle & Co, n d), p 275.
- 49 See [William Cooke Taylor & 'Mr Redding', eds,] An Illustrated Itinerary of the County of Lancaster (London: How & Parsons, 1842). The Infirmary (p 73) was built in 1755 and enlarged in 1835; the Town Hall was built in 1822-25 (p 37). Other examples of columnar architecture in Manchester included the Exchange, built 1806-1809 (p 9), and Sir Charles Barry's Royal Institution (now the City Art Gallery) of 1825-30. Dates taken from Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, Murray's Lancashire Architectural Guide (London: John Murray, 1955), p 160.
- 50 Angus Easson argues that 'Despite Gaskell's claim after publication that "John Barton" was the original title, the original names suggest that Mary's love was, along with Manchester life, always central to her design (Elizabeth Gaskell,

p 73). The title John Barton occurs in Letters, p 70.

- 51 In Mary Barton at least, I cannot agree with Angus Easson's claim that Mrs Gaskell is 'sympathetic towards the unions (though not uncritical of them)' (Elizabeth Gaskell, p 61.
- 52 Gill, ed, Mary Barton, p 38.
- 53 On one occasion Mrs Gaskell cited a number of murders in Glasgow in justification of her presentation (Letters, p 196); the murder of Thomas Ashton in Manchester in 1831 was fictionalised in Elizabeth Stone's William Langshawe, Cotton Lord (1842)
- 54 Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961; rpt with postscript, 1963), p 102.

CHAPTER 3: 'A HILLSIDE VIEW OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION': WUTHERING HEIGHTS

- 1 [John] Marshall, section on 'Provincialisms', in The Rural Economy of Yorkshire. Comprising the Management of Landed Estates, and the Present Practice of Husbandry in the Agricultural Districts of that County, 2 vols (London, 1788), II, p 306.
- 2 Wuthering Heights, ed Ian Jack (OUP, 1981), p 82. Subsequent page references in the text are to this edition.

- 3 Yorkshire Directory (1823); quoted in Alasdair Clayre, ed, Nature and Industrialization (Oxford: OUP in association with Open University Press, 1977), pp 91-92.
- 4 M L Baumber, From Revival to Regency: A History of Keighley and Haworth 1740-1820, I (Keighley: the author, 1983), p 68.
- 5 A Tour through the whole Island of Great Britain, ed Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p 493.
- 6 Yorkshire Directory (1848); quoted in Clayre, ed, Nature and Industrialization, pp 92-96.
- 7 Jules Ginswick, ed, Labour and the Poor in England and Wales 1849-51, 8 vols (London: Frank Cass, 1983), I, p 149.
- 8 Ginswick, ed, Labour and the Poor, I, p 141.
- 9 The Life of Charlotte Bronte, ed Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), p 54.
- 10 Baumber, From Revival to Regency, I, p 68.
- 11 E P Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968; rpt with a new preface, 1980), p 617.
- 12 Gaskell, Life, p 90.
- 13 John Lock & Canon W T Dixon, A Man of Sorrow: The Life, Letters and Times of the Rev Patrick Bronte 1777-1861 (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965), p 325.

- 14 Winifred Gerin, Branwell Bronte (London: Hutchinson, 1961), ch 14.
- 15 Winifred Gerin, Emily Bronte (OUP, 1971; rpt with corrections, 1972), pp 142 & 163.
- 16 Gaskell, Life, pp 110-11.
- 17 Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London: John Murray, 1852), p 115.
- 18 Observations on the Western Parts of England, relative chiefly to Picturesque Beauty (London: T Cadell jnr & W Davies, 1798; rpt Richmond, Surrey: Richmond Publishing, 1973), p 83.
- 19 Noel Thomas Carrington, Dartmoor: A Descriptive Poem (n p: n p, 1826), unpaginated notices following text.
- 20 Carrington, Dartmoor, p vii.
- 21 '... to strangers ... unfamiliar with the locality ... The wild moors of the north of England can ... have no interest' - from the 'Editor's Preface' to the 2nd (1850) edn of Wuthering Heights, in Ian Jack, ed, p 369.
- 22 Gerin, Branwell Bronte, p 127. The letter is dated 19th January 1837.
- 23 C W Hatfield, ed, The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Bronte (New York: Columbia U P, 1941), pp 48-49.
- 24 The Brontes: Life and Letters, 2 vols (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), I, pp 77-78.

- 25 For Charlotte Bronte's contact with Southey, see Winifred Gerin, Charlotte Bronte: The Evolution of Genius (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp 109-11; for Branwell's connections with Hartley Coleridge, see Gerin, Branwell Bronte, passim.
- 26 Poetry Towards Novel (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), pp 293-94.
- 27 'Wordsworth and the Poetry of Emily Bronte', Bronte Society Transactions, XVI (1972), pp 85-100.
- 28 Ruskin and Bradford: An Experiment in Victorian Cultural History (Manchester Univ Press, 1986), p 156, quoting (in part) William Scruton, Pen and Pencil Sketches of Old Bradford (Bradford, 1889), p 237.
- 29 Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth: The Alfoxden Journal 1798; The Grasmere Journals 1800-1803, ed Mary Moorman (OUP, 1971), p 117.
- 30 Miriam Allott, ed, The Brontes: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p 227.
- 31 Allott, Brontes: Critical Heritage, p 217.
- 32 'Among the same [unpolished] class I have placed some of the scenes, in which I have endeavoured to illustrate the operation of the higher and more violent passions; both because the lower orders are less restrained by the habit of suppressing their feelings, and because I agree with my friend Wordsworth, that they seldom fail to express them

- in the strongest and most powerful language' - The Antiquary, Waverley Novels 5, 2 vols (London & Paris: Fisher, Son, & Co: 1836), I, pp i-ii.
- 33 Lyrical Ballads, ed R L Brett & A R Jones (London: Methuen, 1963; rev impression 1965), p 245.
- 34 Hatfield, ed, Poems of Emily Bronte, p 256.
- 35 See the chapters on mountain scenery in Modern Painters, in Works of John Ruskin, ed E T Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-12), e g VI, 454-55.
- 36 William Empson, Some Versions of Pastoral: A Study of the Pastoral Form in Literature (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p 163.
- 37 Gaskell, Life, p 65.
- 38 Gaskell, Life, pp 66-68.
- 39 Gaskell, Life, p 94.
- 40 Gaskell, Life, p 117.
- 41 'Biographical Notice of Ellis and Acton Bell', added to the 2nd edn (1850) of Wuthering Heights; rpt in Ian Jack, ed, p 359.
- 42 Past and Present (1843), in Works of Thomas Carlyle, Centenary Edn, 30 vols (London: Chapman & Hall, 1896-99), X, p 239; 'Extract from the Prefatory Note to Selections from Poems by Ellis Bell', in Ian Jack, ed, Wuthering Heights, pp 369-70.

CHAPTER 4: 'OUR MOST UNFRUITFUL HOURS'? CHARLES
DICKENS

- 1 Charles Dickens, 17th edn (London: Methuen, 1928), p 205.
- 2 Ruskin and Bradford: An Experiment in Victorian Cultural History (Manchester Univ Press, 1986), pp 2-3.
- 3 J H Stonehouse, ed, Catalogues of the Libraries of Charles Dickens and W M Thackeray, reprinted from sale catalogues (London: Piccadilly Fountain Press, 1935).
- 4 The Letters of Charles Dickens, Pilgrim Edn, ed Madeline House & Graham Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-), I, p 639.
- 5 Philip Collins, ed, Dickens: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p 174.
- 6 A New Spirit of the Age, 2 vols (1844; facsimile rpt Farnborough: Gregg International, 1971); subsequent volume and page numbers in the text refer to this edition. Horne was in fact the editor, rather than author of the work, and it is not entirely clear which essays he wrote himself, which he commissioned from others (such as Elizabeth Barrett who wrote the Wordsworth essay), and to what extent such distinctions may in any case have been blurred by collaboration or editorial control. The problem is discussed in Ann Blainey, The Farthing Poet: A Biography of Richard Hengist Horne 1802-84 A Lesser Literary

- Lion (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1968), pp 142-43. There is no evidence that any other hand was involved in the Dickens essay, and it is therefore probable that it is Horne's.
- 7 'Preface to the First Cheap Edition: 1848', in The Old Curiosity Shop, ed Angus Easson with an introduction by Malcolm Andrews (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p 42.
- 8 Letters, II, pp 181-82.
- 9 A New Spirit of the Age, I, p 68.
- 10 Collins, Dickens: The Critical Heritage, p 174.
- 11 Recollections of Writers (1878; rpt Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1969), pp 295-96.
- 12 London Labour and the London Poor: the condition and earnings of Those that Will Work, Cannot Work, and Will Not Work, 4 vols (London: Charles Griffin & Co, 1864).
- 13 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903), in On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings, ed Donald N Levine (Chicago & London: Univ of Chicago Press, 1971), pp 336-37.
- 14 Letters, IV, pp 612-13.
- 15 'A Parliamentary Sketch', in Sketches By Boz, Oxford Illustrated Dickens (London: OUP, 1957), p 160.

- 16 Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, ed Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn, rev Chester L Shaver, Mary Moorman and Alan G Hill, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967-88), Early Years, p 137.
- 17 The Life of Charles Dickens, ed A J Hoppe, 2 vols (London: J M Dent, 1966; rev edn 1969), I, pp 417-18.
- 18 Letters, III, p 211. Wordsworth's lines are from 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (204-207); in Poetical Works of Wordsworth, ed Thomas Hutchinson, new edn, rev E De Selincourt (London: OUP, 1936), pp 460-62.
- 19 The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt, ed J E Morpurgo (London: Cresset Press, 1949), p 254.
- 20 The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, Oxford Illustrated Edn (London: OUP, 1948), p 124.
- 21 Wordsworth, Guide to the Lakes, in W J B Owen & Jane Worthington Smyser, eds, Prose Works of William Wordsworth, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, p 168; for Ruskin, see 'The Poetry of Architecture', in Works of John Ruskin, ed E T Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-12), I, pp 49-50.
- 22 Christmas Books, Oxford Illustrated Edn (London: OUP, 1954), pp 131-32. Mrs Gaskell has a comparable episode in North and South, ed Dorothy Collin (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp 56-58.

- 23 The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices, in Household Words, XVI (July-December 1857), pp 313-19, 337-49, 361-67, 385-93 & 409-16. Subsequent page references in the text are to this volume.
- 24 Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, II, p 189.
- 25 See George Augustus Sala, William Hogarth (1866; rpt, n p: Ward Lock Reprints, 1970), pp 9-11.
- 26 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 214.
- 27 Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 215.
- 28 See, for example, Steven Marcus, Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), pp 298-311.
- 29 Great Expectations, ed Angus Calder (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p 201.
- 30 Unto This Last, in Works, XVII, p 31n.
- 31 F R & Q D Leavis, Dickens the Novelist (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p 252.
- 32 The Melancholy Man: A Study of Dickens's Novels, 2nd edn (Brighton: Harvester Press & New Jersey: Barnes & Noble, 1980), p 254.
- 33 **pace** F S Schwarzbach, Dickens and the City (London: Athlone Press, 1979), pp 144-45.
- 34 Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, II, pp 119-20.
- 35 Pickwick Papers, p 155.

- 36 'Travelling Abroad', in The Uncommercial Traveller and Reprinted Pieces, Oxford Illustrated Edn (London: OUP, 1958), pp 61-62.
- 37 Letters from Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts 1841-1865, ed Edgar Johnson (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953), p 346.
- 38 Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, I, p 11.
- 39 F S Schwarzbach, for example, queries its veracity, calling it an 'imaginative reconstruction' of the events it describes (Dickens and the City, p 17).
- 40 Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, I, pp 22, 24 & 25.
- 41 Forster, Life of Charles Dickens, I, p 33.
- 42 Letters, I, pp 483-84.
- 43 This is the translation given in the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (2nd edn). According to Steven Marcus, Dickens's uncharacteristic use of a Latin tag at this point suggests the extent to which the experience of Manchester struck him as foreign: Engels, Manchester and the Working Class (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1974), pp 30-31.
- 44 Household Words, I (1850), p 1.
- 45 Hard Times for These Times, ed David Craig (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p 135.

- 46 John Butt & Kathleen Tillotson, Dickens at Work (London: Methuen, 1957), pp 201-202.
- 47 Household Words, VIII, p 557; see also Geoffrey Carnall, 'Dickens, Mrs Gaskell, and the Preston Strike', in Victorian Studies, VIII (1964-65), 31-48; and K J Fielding & Anne Smith, 'Hard Times and the Factory Controversy: Dickens vs Harriet Martineau', in Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXIV (1969-70), 404-27.
- 48 'Does this mean that when Dickens' eye was not firmly on his subject - when he was more concerned with working out plot than with strict fidelity to his observation - he lapsed into commonplace bourgeois prejudice?' (Carnall, 'Dickens, Mrs Gaskell, and the Preston Strike', p 44).
- 49 Household Words, VIII, p 553.
- 50 J R McCulloch, or M'Culloch, was the author of a number of works on economics and statistics, including Principles of Political Economy (1825).
- 51 The Country and the City (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), p 153.
- 52 The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, quoted in E P Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968; rpt with a new preface, 1980), p 392.
- 53 For a contemporary account of "Saint Monday", see [Thomas Wright], Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867; rpt New York: Augustus M Kelley, 1967), pp 108-30.

See also E P Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism', in Past and Present, XXXVIII (1967), 59-97; rpt in Essays in Social History, ed M W Flinn & T C Smout (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 39-77. And N N Feltes, 'To Saunter, To Hurry: Dickens, Time, and Industrial Capitalism', in Victorian Studies, XX (1976-77), 245-67.

- 54 The Philosophy of Manufactures: or, an Exposition of the Scientific, Moral, and Commercial Economy of the Factory System of Great Britain (London: Charles Knight, 1835), p 16.
- 55 'Postscript to The Condition of the Working-Class in England', in Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, Collected Works, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975-), IV, p 585.
- 56 Thompson, Making of the English Working Class, p 402.
- 57 'Signs of the Times' (1829), in Works of Thomas Carlyle, Centenary Edn (London: Chapman & Hall, 1896-99), XXVII, p 60.
- 58 Philosophy of Manufactures, p 16.
- 59 Report from His Majesty's Commissioners for inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws (London: B Fellowes, 1834), pp 73-74.
- 60 Poor Law Report, p 50.
- 61 Butt & Tillotson, Dickens at Work, p 203.

- 62 Quoted in Butt & Tillotson, Dickens at Work, p 203.
- 63 'On Strike', Household Words, VIII, p 553.

APPENDIX 1

- 1 W J B Owen & Jane Worthington Smyser, eds, Prose Works of William Wordsworth, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, p 171.
- 2 In the section of the Guide headed 'Directions and Information for the Tourist', in Owen & Smyser, Prose Works, II, p 155.
- 3 See, for example, the 'Description of natural curiosities in the edge of Yorkshire' and the 'Extract from a Tour to the Caves in the West-Riding of Yorkshire', both included among the Addenda to Thomas West, A Guide to the Lakes, in Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire, 3rd edn (London, 1784).

APPENDIX 2

- 1 European Magazine and London Review, XX (July-December 1791), 133-36.
- 2 The Theory of Moral Sentiments, Bohn's Standard Library (London: Henry G Bohn, 1853), p 286.

APPENDIX 3

- 1 W J B Owen & Jane Worthington Smyser, eds, Prose Works of William Wordsworth, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, pp 217-22.
- 2 Richard Watson, Anecdotes of the Life of Richard Watson, Bishop of landaff; written by himself at different intervals, and revised in 1814, 2nd edn, 2 vols, (London: T Cadell & W Davies, 1818), II, p 98.
- 3 A Pringle, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Westmoreland; with Observations for the means of its Improvement. Drawn up for the Consideration of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement, 3rd edn (London: Richard Phillips, 1805), pp 280-94.

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