

**‘WALKING WITH NATURE’: ENGLISH COUNTRY ROADS IN THE
WRITINGS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND JOHN CLARE**

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I confirm that the work submitted is my own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines representations of ‘walking with nature’ in William Wordsworth and John Clare’s writings from the 1790s to the 1840s. It focuses on the relationship between walking, country roads (including paths and tracks), and human-nonhuman interactions. In the first chapter, I examine Wordsworth’s *An Evening Walk* and ‘Michael’, and draw on new materialist ideas. Although the connection between walking and writing in Wordsworth has been explored by critics, they have neglected the role of nonhuman agencies in stimulating the walker’s imagination. In chapter two, I continue to discuss Wordsworth’s valorisation of the rural community, concentrating on his descriptions of the improvement of roads in *The Excursion*. I argue that parliamentary enclosure of the common wastes affected Wordsworth’s representations of rural landscapes in the Lake District. The third chapter explores Helpston’s interconnected community of humans and nonhumans through examining Clare’s descriptions of walking on the local roads in ‘The Mores’, ‘Thy little brig is broken down’, ‘Remembrances’, ‘Helpstone’, ‘The Laments of Swordy Well’, and some bird’s nest poems. Roads play contradictory roles in revealing human-nonhuman interconnectedness: they enable Clare’s walkers to connect to the natural world but also to disturb it. My final chapter discusses Clare’s complex account of particular and common nature in ‘The Flitting’, ‘On Seeing Some Moss in Flower Early in Spring’, ‘A Walk’, ‘Footpaths’, ‘Autumn’, and ‘Musings of Melancholly’. Country roads allow Clare’s speakers not only to connect with nature through memory, but also to write about the nonhuman agents around them via the faculty of fancy.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	III
ABSTRACT	IV
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	VII
ABBREVIATIONS	8
INTRODUCTION	9
CHAPTER ONE WALKING IN THE LAKE DISTRICT, NONHUMAN AGENCY, AND MORALITY IN WORDSWORTH'S AN EVENING WALK AND 'MICHAEL'	28
Roving, Landscape, Mindscape	33
'[...] by thy margin rove / A more benignant sacrifice approve'	38
'The Spirits of the virtuous rove'	44
'Turn your steps' and Storied Stones	49
'Who among these Hills / Will be my second Self'	53
Conclusion	59
CHAPTER TWO THE FOOT-PATH FAINTLY MARKED': IMPROVEMENT AND EDUCATION IN WORDSWORTH'S <i>THE EXCURSION</i>	61
The Pedlar's Roads and The Industrial Revolution	66
The History of Cumbria Roads, 1750-1815	74
Roads, Sails, Britain	88
'Liberty of Mind' and Education	94
Conclusion	107
CHAPTER THREE ROADS, NATURE, INTERCONNECTEDNESS IN JOHN CLARE'S ENCLOSURE ELEGIES AND THE BIRD'S NEST POEMS	110
'Paths to Freedom' and Human-Nonhuman Interconnectedness	114

Mobility, Locality, Rootedness	121
‘No road here’ and Ecological Protest	125
‘Old ancient solitude’ and ‘Old tennants’	133
‘We’ll leave it as we found it’	140
Conclusion	147
 CHAPTER FOUR ROADS, MEMORY, AND FANCY IN JOHN CLARE’S NORTHBOROUGH WRITINGS	 150
Roads, Memory, and Particular Nature	154
Roads, Common Nature, and Fancy	172
The Transformative Power of Fancy	188
Conclusion	192
 CONCLUSION	 195
 APPENDICES	 198
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 200

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
MAP 1	84
MAP 2	85
TABLE 1	126

ABBREVIATIONS

HLC *Cumbria and the Lakes Historic Landscape Characterisation*

INTRODUCTION

—Accuse me not

Of arrogance, unknown Wanderer as I am,
If, having walked with Nature threescore years,
And offered, far as frailty would allow,
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,
Whom I have served, that their DIVINITY
Revolts, offended at the ways of Men
William Wordsworth, *The Excursion* (1814), Book IV, ll. 975-82¹

O give me leisure now & let me leave
The noisy village morning noon & eve
Tracking the path that leads to brooks & bowers
To be a hermit with the birds & flower[s]
& walk with nature as a living thing
Her boon companion while she cloaths the spring
John Clare, 'Spring' (1823), ll. 9-14²

'Walk with nature', a phrase shared by Wordsworth and Clare, introduces the subject of this study: the relationship between walking, country roads, and human-nonhuman interactions in their writings. In the above quotations, both poets imagine nonhuman nature as a companion, but the phrase 'walk with nature' encompasses a complex and heterogeneous set of relationships between humans and nonhuman nature. Robin Jarvis argues that in Romantic writing, 'walking leads a mental and aesthetic life that is both

¹ William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye with the assistance of David García (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007).

² John Clare, 'Spring', in *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period 1822-1837*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996-2003), III, 26.

distinct from, and continuous with, its bodily one'.³ For him, walking is not only 'putting one foot in front of the other', but also 'an idea, or a form of thinking (a way of connecting ideas)'.⁴ Hence, 'walking generates writing'.⁵ This study adds more nuance to Jarvis's claim that walking brings forth thinking and writing by exploring how walking into the natural world affects the speakers' minds and provokes their imaginative creativity. It argues that through the shared idea of 'the mind's eye', both poets emphasise the agency of nonhuman nature, as experienced through the act of walking.⁶ My study also argues that walking on country roads contributes to the connection between eye and mind, in that it makes possible walkers' encounters with nonhuman nature. Wordsworth and Clare present country roads as the embodiment of rights of way and key places where humans and nonhuman nature interface. Different kinds of roads potentially represent different kinds of values. Country roads, I argue, are both cultural and natural. They play a powerful role in Romantic pedestrianism and Romantic ecology, a fact that has not been sufficiently recognised by scholarship over the last three decades.

The principal modern usage of the word 'road' — 'a path or way between different places, or leading to some place' — emerged in 1580 and originally referred to 'a way wide enough to allow horses, travellers on foot, or horse-drawn vehicles or the like, to pass' (*OED*). Previously, the term, according to Oliver Rackham, was 'curiously rare before the seventeenth century', but it did occur as 'Old English *rōd* [...] in charters'.⁷ However, the exact meaning of *rōd* cannot be inferred: one possible sense of it is 'a track through a wood', the original meaning of the modern 'ride'.⁸ Another conjecture suggests that *rōd*, as the reflex of Old English *rodu*, means 'linear clearing, track, way' (*OED*). Given the inclusiveness of its etymology, 'road' has been in extended use since

³ Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1997), p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 89.

⁶ John Clare writes in 'Happy Thoughts' (1832): 'The very cattle on the flaggy moors / To the minds eye a pleasant picture seems' (ll. 17-8). He also writes in 'The Mores': 'He gazed upon them with wild fancys eye' (l. 63). Wordsworth writes in *An Evening Walk* (1794): 'So life's secluded hours of peace and shade / The retrospective eye of thought evade' (ll. 544-5).

⁷ Oliver Rackham, *The History of the Countryside: The Classic History of Britain's Landscape, Flora and Fauna* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2020), p. 260.

⁸ *Ibid.*

1581 as an umbrella term for any path, track, course, or physical route. Therefore, in this study ‘road’ rather than ‘path’ works as a collective reference for *footpath*, *highway*, *lane*, *path*, *pathway*, *road*, *track*, and *way*.⁹

This study covers part of the Industrial Revolution, beginning in the 1790s, with agricultural and imperial improvement peaking and British imperialism flourishing, and ending in the 1840s, when parliamentary enclosure nearly finished the transformation of England’s landscape.¹⁰ Given this context, Wordsworth and Clare’s works written in this period tend to show the distinctions between a road and a path, by emphasising a road’s artificial construction and its intended use for vehicles, as well as a path’s organic formation by the continued tread of pedestrians or animals.¹¹ (Nonetheless, both poets sometimes use ‘road’ and ‘path’ interchangeably: for example, in ‘The Mores’, Clare writes, ‘These paths are stopt [...] / [...] “no road here”’ (ll. 65, 70), and in *Peter Bell*, Wordsworth writes, ‘A fair smooth pathway you discern, / A length of green and open road — / As if it from a fountain flowed — / Winding away between the fern’ (ll. 677-80)). The Industrial Revolution and parliamentary enclosure transformed the British road systems, and this inflected the poets’ descriptions of roads. As Brian Paul Hindle points out, before the mid-eighteenth century, ‘those roads which [...] came into being simply through the continual passage of people and animals’ were the norm, and they ‘essentially made and maintained themselves’.¹² Around 1700, many lengths of them were ‘narrow, steep or poorly maintained’, and only packhorses could pass for transporting goods; wheeled vehicles such as wagons, coaches, and carriages could scarce pass, and tourists were few and travelled on horseback.¹³ The situation was improved with the growth of trade, the development of road building techniques, and the spread of turnpikes. Replacing the parish labour system established in 1555 with the

⁹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘road’, n. III. 5. a.

¹⁰ For studies related to agricultural and imperial improvement, see for example, Brian Paul Hindle, *Roads and Trackways of The Lake District* (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1984); Hindle, *Roads, Tracks and Their Interpretation* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1993); Rackham, *The History of the Countryside*; William Rollinson, *Life & Tradition in the Lake District* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1974); William Rollinson, *A History of Cumberland and Westmorland* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1978).

¹¹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘path’, n. I. 1. a.; See *The Excursion*, Book III, line 24, and Clare’s ‘The Mores’, lines 28-34.

¹² Hindle, *Roads, Tracks and Their Interpretation*, p. 12. See also Hugh Davies, *From Trackways to Motorways: 5000 Years of Highway History* (The Mill, Brimscombe Port: Tempus, 2006); Hindle, *The Lake District*.

¹³ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks and Their Interpretation*, p. 70; See also p. 68.

turnpike tolls in the 1710s made possible the more reliable maintenance and improvement of roads.¹⁴ Turnpike trusts ‘were empowered to erect gates, appoint surveyors and collectors’, and charge tolls, so as to fund road repair and improvement.¹⁵ And yet given the techniques of that time and the local rather than the parliamentary implementation, the improvement of roads was then limited to using whatever available surfacing materials to repair existing roads, widening driftways into cartways, or even digging and maintaining ditches.¹⁶ The real transformation of road construction began at the end of the eighteenth century and peaked at the early years of the nineteenth, as the Industrial Revolution and parliamentary enclosure of common fields deepened. With the aid of Parliament, the best engineers were called in, bringing the most advanced road building techniques; they not only re-surfaced, straightened and widened some old roads, but also laid out many new turnpikes and enclosure roads, both straight and wide enough for carts and wagons to go around.¹⁷ The deliberately planned and built road networks altered the face of much of England, and most of them became permanent features of the landscape.

The transformation of roads inflects Wordsworth and Clare’s ambivalent representations of rural England, which is variously described as a picturesque landscape of edification and morality, and a place of desolation and ruin. On the one hand, the newly-built roads encouraged people to walk into the natural world and know more about it, in that they made travelling on foot easier. As John Barrell argues, ‘the improvement in the quality of roads’ is a factor in a movement of ‘opening-out of the countryside in the eighteenth century’.¹⁸ Although wheeled vehicles had developed with the improvement of roads since the 1790s, as Robin Jarvis points out, they were still ‘slow, uncomfortable, and limited to a tiny minority of the population’.¹⁹ Thus walking along the roads and even off the roads remained the popular choice for

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 107, 115.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 115-35.

¹⁸ John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 85-6.

¹⁹ Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 22.

domestic travel. Common roads, as we shall see in Wordsworth and Clare's writings, appear as the public rights of way or the vantage points, allowing walkers to admire picturesque landscape, and to experience and be affected by fauna, flora, and other nonhuman entities. However, the improved roads precluded people from some rural areas, in which many of the old customary paths and earlier tracks running across open fields were discontinued or removed in the process of parliamentary enclosure.²⁰ Generally in pre-industrial times, in contrast, one could 'wander at will through common or uncultivated land and by a variety of ways along the balks dividing the narrow strips where crops were grown'.²¹ In both Wordsworth and Clare's views, the deprivation of common rights had devastating effects on rural life: not only inflicting the loss of the allotments on the class of small independent yeomen, but also harming the customary rights of both the local humans and nonhuman creatures. Therefore in their writings, the poets register their opposition to the enclosure of common lands through the descriptions of the changes in roads and the decay of the modernised rural land.

The last thirty years have seen valuable scholarship on Romantic pedestrianism in relation to Wordsworth and Clare's works: both Anne D. Wallace and Robin Jarvis have paid attention to the relationship between roads and walking.²² And yet their discussions tend to focus more on the cultural history of the transport revolution and growth of pedestrianism, rather than the role of roads in the literary texts. Wallace's key concern in *Walking, Literature, and English Culture* (1983) is a literary mode that she names 'peripatetic', which derives from Wordsworth's writings about walking and the georgic mode.²³ She considers Wordsworth's walking as 'excursive walking', which

²⁰ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks and Their Interpretation*, p. 132.

²¹ Kim Taplin, *The English Path* (Ipswich: The Boydell Press, 1979), p. 5. For other enclosure studies, see also Richard S. Ferguson, *A History of Cumberland* (London: Elliot Stock, 1890); Frank, W. Garnett, *Westmorland Agriculture, 1800-1900* (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1912); Caroline Hardie, John Hodgson, Bette Hopkins, Miles Johnson, Caron Newman, Richard Newman, *Cumbria and the Lakes Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)* [York: Archaeology Data Service, 2014] <<https://doi.org/10.5284/1028832>> [accessed 8 December 2022]; Ian Whyte, *Transforming Fell and Valley: Landscape and Parliamentary Enclosure in North West England* (University of Lancaster: Centre for North West Regional Studies, 2003); L. A. Williams, *Road Transport in Cumbria in the Nineteenth Century* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975).

²² See Wallace, *Walking*; Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*. For other Romantic pedestrianism works, see Kim Taplin; Celeste Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy: Wordsworth and the Simulation of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995).

²³ Wallace, *Walking*, p. 8.

‘accomplishes both wilful movement beyond previous bounds and relocation at walk’s origins, counters the threat of wandering with a promise of return’.²⁴ This peripatetic walking mode, in her view, is ‘a cultivating labour’, in that it acts as an agent of varieties of cultivation, such as ‘home-making’, ‘nation-building’, ‘civilizing’, and ‘poetry-making’, which derive from Virgil’s *Georgics*.²⁵ I nuance Wallace’s claim that walking as a cultivating labour restores rural values by emphasising that for Wordsworth, walking on the difficult path suggests a celebration of rural values. This type of road not only leads to the edifying countryside rather than the corrupt city, but also embodies a natural organic relationship to the landscape.²⁶ The connection between difficult roads, morality, and the natural world appears both in ‘Michael’ and *The Excursion*. In these texts, Wordsworth tends to distinguish the difficult path from the public road, so as to entreat his readers to embrace the values held by the rural community, rather than the industrial society.

Wallace points out that Clare’s pedestrian continually seeks pause, limitation, and an unchanging place, whereas Wordsworth’s prefers motion, succession, and change.²⁷ I think this contrast is overstated. I argue that localism does not necessarily mean stasis: focusing on Clare’s narratives of walking on Helpston roads resolves the seeming paradox between locality and mobility. Frequent repetition of walking on the same roads within a bounded parish enables Clare’s walkers to know the local place well. This mobility within locality results in their deeper attachment to the local natural world. I also argue that in many poems Clare describes how walkers successively follow the winding roads without a pause, and he tends to see country roads as symbols of creativity. For example, in ‘Footpaths’, he writes, ‘The many charms that poesy finds to please / Along the little footpaths such as these’ (ll. 13-4). As we shall see in ‘The Mores’, ‘A Walk’, and some bird’s nest poems, Clare suggests that roads, as a type of open public space, allow walkers to encounter nonhuman nature (such as wild flowers and birds), and thereby to perceive its agency. The connection between eye and mind

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

enables one's imagination or fancy to produce poesy, and in Clare's view such creativity would be 'on the wane', if one could not get access to the old customary footpaths ('Decay A Ballad', ll. 1).²⁸

In *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (1997), Jarvis questions Wallace's 'materialist rationale' — walking is an 'easier, faster, and less expensive' way of travel, compared with traveling by wheeled vehicles — and her account of 'the role of walking in Wordsworth's poetry' throughout the book.²⁹ His key claim that there is a 'fascinating congruence between bodily action and mental process' opposes Wallace's argument of body-mind dualism.³⁰ He emphasises that 'the conditions, qualities and rhythms of a body in motion' mediate 'locomotive and representational freedoms', and this challenges the critical tradition of Romantic writing, in which 'the highest achievements' lie in 'the body [that] is laid asleep'.³¹ Although I agree with Jarvis that 'intellectual processes and textual effects are grounded in the material practice of walking' and that body and mind should not be seen 'as an absolute dualism', my focus is not on 'the rhythms and modalities of walking' but on the way of seeing nonhuman nature while walking.³² The relationship between walking and the natural world has been noted by Wallace and Jarvis, and yet it appears only as brief references or brief discussions.³³ The significance of how nonhuman nature affects walkers' minds has not fully been examined. This process, I argue, provokes Wordsworth and Clare to produce imaginative writings. Through focusing on the agency of nonhuman nature, this ecocritical study develops Jarvis's claim that 'walking generates writing'.³⁴

This study draws on new materialist theory to explore Wordsworth's and Clare's representations of human-nonhuman interactions. 'New materialism', emerging at the

²⁸ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 114.

²⁹ Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, pp. 5, 22.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. ix.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3.

³³ Wallace, *Walking*, p. 13: 'The physical act of walking restores the natural proportions of our perceptions, reconnecting us with both the physical world and the moral order inherent in it'; See also Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 188: 'walking is the most environmentally-sensitive mode of travel, as it restores a sense of proportion between traveller and environment obscured by other forms of transport'.

³⁴ Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 89; See also Wallace, *Walking*, p. 2.

end of the twentieth century, is ‘a contested term’.³⁵ Its ‘new’ characteristic mainly suggests a departure from older materialisms such as Marxism, and yet some of its ideas also renew materialist traditions such as Hobbesianism.³⁶ In addition, as Stacy Alaimo notes, other theories of the ‘nonhuman turn’ (such as actor-network theory, assemblage theory, and speculative realism) ‘could also be enacted as modes of new materialism’.³⁷ This study adopts the new materialist critique of the persistent dualism that sees matter and spirit as poles: matter is not ‘something inert and destined to be molded by spirit’, and should be considered hand in hand with spirit in ‘their mutual affirmation or co-constitution’.³⁸ Such nondualistic claims, as Serpil Oppermann notes, take a ‘disanthropocentric theoretical position situated in a relational ontology of *naturalcultural* meanings and processes’.³⁹ It is therefore fitting to apply the new materialist theories to this ecocritical study of country roads, which, as human-nonhuman interfaces, are both natural and cultural.

This thesis draws particularly on the ideas of Karen Barad, Jane Bennett, and Tim Ingold.⁴⁰ In 2007, Barad coined the influential term ‘intra-action’, which means that ‘distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through’ ‘their mutual entanglement’, and they come into existence together not ‘as individual elements’.⁴¹ In her view, matter refers to ‘phenomena in their ongoing materialization’, and ‘not a fixed essence or property of things’.⁴² The processual sense of ‘intra-action’ can shed light on the relationships between material landscapes and poetic language in Wordsworth and

³⁵ Stacy Alaimo, ‘New Materialisms’, in *After the Human: Culture, Theory and Criticism in the 21st Century*, ed. by Sherryl Vint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 177-91 (p. 177).

³⁶ Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, ‘Introducing the New Materialism’, in *New Materialism: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1-43 (p. 4).

³⁷ Alaimo, ‘New Materialisms’, p. 177.

³⁸ Hartmut Rosa, Christoph Henning and Arthur Bueno, ‘Introduction: Critical Theory and New Materialisms — fit, strain or contradiction?’, in *Critical Theory and New Materialisms*, ed. by Hartmut Rosa, Christoph Henning and Arthur Bueno (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 1-16 (p. 6). See also Alaimo, ‘New Materialisms’, p. 177; Frederic Neyrat, *Literature and Materialisms* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2020), p. 4; Serpil Oppermann, ‘New Materialism and the Nonhuman Story’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Environmental Humanities*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Stephanie Foote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 258-72 (p. 260); Kameron Sanzo, ‘New Materialism(s)’, *Genealogy of the Posthuman*, Critical Posthumanism Network, April 25, 2018, <<http://criticalposthumanism.net/new-materialisms/>> [accessed -05 May 2024].

³⁹ Oppermann, p. 260.

⁴⁰ See Sanzo.

⁴¹ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 33.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 137.

Clare's works. As Brandon Jones notes, the idea asks us not to deal with 'pre-existing bodies upon which language inscribes meaning, but with relations of doing, acting and becoming that exist in material-discursive superposition until an agential cut intervenes to demarcate clear boundaries between words and things'.⁴³

Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* has been influential since it was published in 2010.⁴⁴ By 'the vitality of matter', she means 'the capacity of things — edibles, commodities, storms, metals — not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own'.⁴⁵ Although this idea was put forward for analysing political events, it has been applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to important ecological and literary scholarship.⁴⁶ Its emphasis on the active, living, and vibrant essence of matter is useful to understanding Wordsworth's view of nonhuman agency in objects such as lakes, stones, and mountains.⁴⁷

Ingold's anthropological theories about walking and paths are also taken up in this thesis. A key concept is 'meshwork', which was introduced in Ingold's *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (2011). Ingold defines the concept as 'a texture of interwoven threads', of 'entangled lines of life, growth and movement'.⁴⁸ This entanglement, he suggests, does not mean that 'organisms are entangled in relations'.⁴⁹ But 'every organism—indeed, every thing—is itself an entanglement, a tissue of knots whose constituent strands, as they become tied up with other strands, in

⁴³ Brandon Jones, 'Mattering', in *The Posthuman Glossary*, ed. by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 244-247 (p. 245).

⁴⁴ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), p. viii.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ See Will Abberley, Christina Alt, David Higgins, Graham Huggan, Pippa Marland, *Modern British Nature Writing, 1789-2020: Landlines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); David Higgins, *British Romanticism, Climate Change, and the Anthropocene: Writing Tambora* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Introduction,' in *Material Ecocriticism*, ed. by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 1-17; Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, 'Material Ecocriticism: Materiality, Agency, and Models of Narrativity', *Ecozon@*, 3 (2012), 75-91.

⁴⁷ Critical works have already applied Bennett's theories to analysing Wordsworth's texts. For example, Susan J. Wolfson, 'Stories in Stones', *The Byron Journal*, 48 (2020), 101-17. See also Evan Gottlieb, *Romantic Realities: Speculative Realism and British Romanticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

⁴⁸ Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. xii, 63.

⁴⁹ Ingold, 'Bindings against Boundaries: Entanglements of Life in An Open World', *Environment and Planning*, 40 (2008), 1796-1810 (p. 1806).

other bundles, make up the meshwork'.⁵⁰ Seen in this light, human and nonhuman entities as ever-moving lines of life are 'always in the process of being created by other' humans, animals, tools, matters, etc.⁵¹ Ingold's concept of 'meshwork' particularly sheds light on John Clare's depiction of the locale around Helpston, in which human and nonhuman movement interweave.

Although the new materialism sheds light on Wordsworth's and Clare's representations of human-nonhuman interactions, its bias towards the processual world of materials can tend to elide the political. In 2007, Ingold published an article titled 'Materials against materiality', in which he attempted to 'reverse the emphasis, in current studies of material culture, on the materiality of objects as against the properties of materials', in that materials are 'processual and relational' and not 'fixed'.⁵² Ingold's plea that we should 'take materials seriously' provoked debate. Powerful pushback from a social and cultural materialist standpoint has been given by Christopher Tilly, Carl Knappett, and David Howes in particular. Tilly argues that Ingold's stress on materials is problematic in that 'the meaning and significance and agency (effects) of things on people tends to become sidelined'.⁵³ Similarly, Knappett claims that materiality might be 'a useful way of understanding the conjunction or intersection of the social and the material, without the former swallowing the latter'.⁵⁴ Ingold's views of materials, for Howes, could be called 'post-social' and 'pre-cultural', as he disregards the vital field of material culture: 'relations among humans' for Ingold 'are but a subset of ecological relations', and culture 'doesn't get in between people and their environments' as 'nothing is between'.⁵⁵ The tension between Ingold's 'resolution to take materials seriously' (the way he views 'new materialism') and its social and cultural materialist counterarguments informs this thesis's methodological framework. Besides the new materialism, I also adopt the older cultural materialism in this study, so as to address

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Kari Martin, 'The Hope of Creation— A Conversation with Timothy Ingold' <<https://kenan.ethics.duke.edu/the-hope-of-creation-a-conversation-with-timothy-ingold/>> [accessed 7 May 2024].

⁵² Ingold, 'Materials against Materiality', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14 (2007), 1-16 (p. 1).

⁵³ Christopher Tilly, 'Materiality in Materials', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14 (2007), 16-20 (p. 19).

⁵⁴ Carl Knappett, 'Materials with Materiality', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 14 (2007), 20-3 (p. 20).

⁵⁵ David Howes, 'In Defense of Materiality: Attending to the Sensori-Social Life of Things', *Journal of Material Culture*, 27 (2022), 313-35 (p. 314). See also, Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 5; Ingold, 'Back to the future with the theory of affordances', *Hau*, 8 (2008), 39-44 (p. 4).

both the processual world of materials and their social and cultural significance in relation to the social lives of humans.

II

This study also adopts a cultural-historical perspective to examine how country roads in the historical contexts affect Wordsworth and Clare's representations of landscapes and human-nonhuman relationships. John Barrell's cultural materialist study has examined the inflection of enclosure in John Clare's parish, in particular the change of landscape and the road system.⁵⁶ In this thesis, I attempt to draw a parallel with Barrell's approach to Clare's presentation of enclosure. I focus on two case studies — the road history of Cumbria between 1750 and 1815 and that of Northamptonshire between 1809 and 1830 — and explore how parliamentary enclosure of the commons deeply affected the rights of yeomen through the improvement of roads. I point out that in *The Excursion*, through describing the customary and difficult paths as moral, and the artificial and easy roads as satanic, Wordsworth laments the changes in country life brought by industrialisation, although he registers support for some aspects of imperialism. Similarly, I claim that Clare in 'The Mores' and 'Thy little brig is broken down' condemns enclosure promoters for stopping the old footpaths that connect the local humans and nonhuman nature.

In *The English Path*, Kim Taplin offers two reasons to argue that there is little in Wordsworth's poetry about 'actual paths': first, the Lake District's landscape and land use made it hard to find 'a clearly defined path which provide[d] a unique means of access'.⁵⁷ Moreover, the poet believed that 'nature, though genial, was too powerful to be tamed', and thus never drew his inspiration 'from humanised nature'.⁵⁸ These accounts underestimate the role of paths in Wordsworth's poetic works, though he does not write about them as much as Clare. For Wordsworth, I argue, roads not only signify creativity (for example, 'I love a public road [...] / [...] such object hath had power /

⁵⁶ See Barrell.

⁵⁷ Taplin, p. 109.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

O'er my imagination since the dawn / Of childhood'), but also represent values (*The Prelude*, Book XII, ll. 145-48). If the original function of a road is to avoid getting lost, then this sense of direction is emphasised in Wordsworth's 'Michael', suggesting the moral importance of destination. I draw on Jarvis's idea that to quit the main roads and to explore by-roads signifies a denial of the forces that transform British society, and argue that in 'Michael', Wordsworth's representations of turning from 'the public way' (l. 1) and taking 'an upright path' (l. 3) suggest his celebration of rural values.⁵⁹

My approaches to nonhuman agency and roads coheres with Jeremy Davies's discussion of the potential convergence of cultural materialism and new materialism in Romantic ecocriticism.⁶⁰ Indeed, to examine 'more-than-human actants' and their 'intra-action[s]' with humans in Romantic literature requires consideration of the workings of the Industrial Revolution, which bring about social and ecological transformations.⁶¹ Therefore I bring together the two strains of new materialism (as exemplified by, for example, Jane Bennett) and cultural materialism (as exemplified by, for example, John Barrell) to investigate how the transformation of country roads affects human-nonhuman interactions, and how walking on paths to the natural world connects walkers to nonhuman agency. Both Clare and Wordsworth describe country roads as the entanglement of nonhuman and human forces. In 'The Mores', Clare describes how the shepherd traces the sheep on the same route, moves in union with them, and thus retreads their tracks. Similarly, Wordsworth in *The Excursion* presents how the Wanderer attempts to lead his friends out of the Solitary's hermitage through a path whose 'line had first been fashioned by the flock' (Book III, l. 24). Seen in this light, this study tends to debunk the clichés about Romantic ecology that the natural world is a place to escape from society. One cannot really escape into nature by walking on a country road, which comes into being both artificially and organically.

According to Timothy Clark, 'Clare's status has risen substantially in the last twenty years, precisely because his work offers a less human-centric view of life, giving

⁵⁹ Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, pp. 30-1.

⁶⁰ Jeremy Davies, 'Romantic Ecocriticism: History and Prospects', *Literature Compass*, 15 (2018), 1-15 (p. 12).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

moral standing and value to individual birds and creatures of the field, openly persecuted'.⁶² Nonetheless, as Alan Vardy notes, in his contemporary milieu, Clare was regarded as 'a "minor" poet', for he refused to convert the intrinsic value of 'the objects of nature' into 'purely human value'.⁶³ This 'cut him off from the production of true poetic genius according to the dominant aesthetic theories of the day'.⁶⁴ It is true that Clare does not share Wordsworth's aesthetic project of the construction of the poetic self, and yet when writing about walking in the natural world, both poets register some similarities.⁶⁵ First, given the contexts of the Industrial Revolution and parliamentary enclosure, both Wordsworth and Clare describe the conditions of customary paths after modernisation: closed or disappeared.⁶⁶ Despite the different enclosed landscapes in the Lake District (the common wastes) and Northamptonshire (the common arable fields), both poets lament the destruction of rural community, its people, nonhuman inhabitants, and values, brought by the industrial and agricultural improvements. They both particularly emphasise the lost freedom, or liberty, though Wordsworth tends to emphasise the lost mental freedom more, whereas Clare tends to pay more attention to the deprived rights of way. Wordsworth and Clare have different class positions: the former received liberal education at Cambridge and had no need to labour in the fields, whereas the latter was a self-educated peasant. Despite these differences, both poets entreat their readers to conserve rural landscapes through imparting agency into the stone sheepfold in 'Michael' and the land in 'The Laments of Swordy Well', respectively. In addition, both Wordsworth and Clare are attentive to common nature, and admire its remarkable attractions. In the examined texts of this thesis, both poets blur the boundary between fancy and imagination, and link the faculty of fancy to common nature. Nonetheless, Wordsworth tends to philosophise the connection between eye and mind more, whereas Clare focuses more on extending the functions of fancy. For the latter, fancy has more protean functions than imagination.

⁶² Timothy Clark, *The Value of Ecocriticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 11.

⁶³ Alan Vardy, *John Clare, Politics and Poetry* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 28, 21.

⁶⁴ Vardy, pp. 22-3.

⁶⁵ See Vardy, p. 28.

⁶⁶ For example, Clare's 'The Mores' and Wordsworth's *The Excursion*.

Furthermore, both poets describe the interconnected relationship between humans and nonhumans. Wordsworth tends to use the principle of ‘one life’ to interpret an unutterable communion between humans and nonhuman nature, whereas Clare describes Helpston as a habitat in which humans, fauna and flora share the same fate. Both poets register the integration of the physical landscape and walkers’ mindscape in their loco-descriptive passages. Wordsworth tends to focus more on the dynamic process of how mental images change with the transforming immediate views. In contrast, Clare tends to emphasise the corresponding connections between the perceived images and their imagined images more. If Romantic studies sometimes have a tendency to see Wordsworth and Clare in a crudely oppositional way, this study complicates the seemingly neat division.⁶⁷

III

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One and Two are concerned with Wordsworth’s writings, and the latter two focus on texts by Clare. The first chapter examines Wordsworth’s *An Evening Walk* (1793, 1794, 1836) and ‘Michael’ (1800), and it uses new materialist ideas to answer the question: what does ‘walking with nature’ mean? It focuses on the relationship between nonhuman agency and the morality of walking into the natural world, and mainly explores how two divergent kinds of walking in the Lake District — roving and quitting the public way in favour of the mountain path — lead Wordsworth’s poet-speakers to acquire morality from rural landscapes. I argue that in *An Evening Walk*, roving allows the walker-speaker enough time to perceive the picturesque landscape, for it is characterised by leisure and liberty. Through the connection between the eye and the mind, the speaker considers the primitive form of nonhuman nature as living things that have sensation, and further sees uncommonness and greatness in the common and trivial forms of nature. Walking in the natural world is moral in that it allows the walker not only to acquire pleasure from

⁶⁷ See Erica McAlpine, ‘Keeping Nature at Bay: John Clare’s Poetry of Wonder’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 50 (2011), 79-104; Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 2nd edn (Routledge: London and New York, 2012), p. 44; Vardy, pp. 22-3.

various sounds and sights in the rural landscapes, but also to sympathise with the poor cottager's domestic affections. If in *An Evening Walk* Wordsworth describes the walker's spiritual experiences provoked by the natural world, then he also presents those of the shepherd in 'Michael'. But here, the agency of the rural landscapes affects not only one's mental activities, but also one's way of life. In contrast with the directionless roving in *An Evening Walk*, 'Michael' highlights the significance of following the guide tour of the poet-speaker: that readers need to turn their steps from 'the public way' and stick to 'an upright path' along the brook (ll. 1, 3). This directional walking leads us to 'a straggling Heap of unhewn stones', which embodies the moral pastoral values of shepherds (l. 17). The storied stone sheepfold needs a spokesman to spread the morality that lies in the shepherds' love for their rural lands. Whereas the poet also needs the stone sheepfold as a coauthor to be the must-see spot in his guide tour, so as to attract 'youthful Poets', his 'second Self' to succeed to his poetic inheritance and the disappearing pastoral values (ll. 38-9).

Chapter two deals with the moral significance of 'walking with nature', and its discussion moves from individuals to society. It examines Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814) and focuses on country roads and the roles that they play in rural life within an industrialised and imperial context. It first argues that the improvement of roads is presented as an ambivalent example of industrialisation, which makes transportation easier but morality worse. Wordsworth alludes to John Milton and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to argue that unmodernised roads are moral in that they are formed by custom and usage, and suggest a natural organic relationship to the landscape, whereas the easy and convenient road network produced by industrial improvement involves much human labour and disturbs the local tenants' common rights, and thus is immoral. Section two offers a case study of the history of Cumbria roads between 1750 and 1815, examining how the historical contexts of *The Excursion*, such as the turnpike mania and a series of enclosure movements, affect Wordsworth's descriptions of roads and other landscapes in the text. I argue that parliamentary enclosure of the common wastes deeply affected the common rights of small independent yeomen in the Lake District,

and Wordsworth hoped to preserve the class of people from disappearance through defending their rights of common. The next section argues that the immoral but improved road network acts as a metonym for transformation in broader terms. The connection between roads and canals leads to the transformation of transport, and this improvement provokes the change of commerce mode and the flourishing of the British Empire. However, the improvement of the road system also contributes to humans' wider exploitation of natural resources. Finally, the chapter argues that through allusion to Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), Wordsworth suggests that wandering in the natural world provides a paradigm of domestic education in rural England. The poet reveals a long-neglected issue of rural education—that both public school education and individual nature education are deficient for rural children—by exploring whether industrialisation deprives the rural humbler classes of 'liberty of mind' (Book VIII, l. 323). He uses the Wanderer's childhood walks, which cultivate liberty of mind and the communion with nonhuman nature, to appeal to British rural citizens living in the age of industrialisation for conserving individuality and valorising rural life. Through regarding 'roads' and 'fields' as 'School[s]', Wordsworth emphasises that rural life itself can edify souls (Book II, ll. 30, 31).

The next chapter discusses another case of parliamentary enclosure presented in Romantic ecological writings: that is, John Clare's enclosure elegies. In the first three sections of this chapter, I discuss five enclosure elegies: 'The Mores' (early to mid-1820s), 'Remembrances' (1832), 'Helpstone' (1809-13), 'Thy little brig is broken down' (1832-7), and 'The Lament of Swordy Well' (1832-7). Section one examines three different scenes of 'freedom' in 'The Mores' (l. 69) and argues that Helpston's open roads before enclosure enable interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans. The second section focuses on 'Remembrances', and claims that repeatedly walking on Helpston's country roads enables Clare's speaker to establish deep associations with natural spots, and to further regard Nature as a divine home. Section three returns to the discussion of 'The Mores', and argues that through stopping the customary roads, enclosure deprives Helpston's humans and nonhuman inhabitants of common rights, but makes their

interconnectedness more prominent. Through imaginatively walking on 'paths to freedom' ('The Mores', l. 69), Clare's self-conscious speaker launches ecological protest against enclosure.

Sections four and five focus on the role of roads in Clare's bird's nest poems. The fourth section examines 'The Robins Nest' (1832) and argues that a road leads Clare's speaker to admire the solitude and rootedness of the robin's nest, thereby enabling human-nonhuman connection. In the last section, I first focus on 'The Nightingales Nest' (1832) to explore the double role of the woodland road, which not only brings human admiration and protection, but also disturbance and danger to the bird's nest. I also argue that in 'The Pettichaps Nest' (1825-6) and 'In the hedge I pass a little nest' (1832-7), Clare paradoxically claims that seemingly dangerous paths actually offer the bird's nest safety, whereas seemingly friendly roads are actually risky. By doing so, he attempts to emphasise that the real danger for the birds comes from humans.

The last chapter mainly explores the relationship between roads, walking, and writing poesy. It discusses how Clare, in his Northborough writings, presents both particular and common nature in a complex manner. I replace John Barrell's opposing pair — 'local' and 'abstract' — with particular and common, in particular because the word 'common' is a more flexible and historically appropriate term, and thus can better reveal Clare's complicated presentation of nature.⁶⁸ This chapter examines how particular and common nature relate to memory and fancy. It investigates how Clare invokes country roads to reconnect the speakers to particular nature, and to excite their fancy to engage with common nature. Roads as key places remind Clare's speakers of their deep associations with particular nature, and expose them to common nature's unnoticed values. The first section of this chapter focuses on 'The Flitting' (1832). It discusses how the encounters on roads act as connected images that remind the speaker of his sufferings of displacement and thus release his pain. Roads take him back into the past, for the physical movement induces the mental activity. Through the pictures of roads, the speaker starts his imaginative journeys according to their topographical

⁶⁸ Barrell, p. 177.

vantage points. The speaker longs for Helpston's particular natural forms in his memories because of the friendship between them. The sense of place results in his yearning for a place-specific friendship that cannot move from place to place. 'Native poesy' offers the speaker another approach for happiness: common nature as its subject meets fancy's visual needs, and thus forges a sustainable friendship with the speaker. Section two examines 'On Seeing Some Moss in Flower Early in Spring' (1832), 'A Walk' (1832), 'Footpaths' (1832), and 'Autumn' (1841), and explores how roads can move Clare's speakers forward by exposing them to the value of common nature. Being ordinary does not necessarily mean being insignificant; common nature's right of life makes itself remarkable. Roads reveals that common nature's remarkableness also lies in its link with fancy. Clare considers that fancy has the function to inspire writing about joy in common nature, and this emotional preference suggests that fancy shares the synthetic faculty of imagination. The last section focuses on 'Musings of Melancholly' (1832), and argues that fancy is a transformative power, as it can evolve from associating with the visual impression to synthesising and reproducing mental images. Roads also reveal common nature's unnoticeable and detailed knowledge. By focusing on Clare's roads and exploring their relationships with memory and fancy, this chapter sheds light on how Clare views particular and common nature.

This study brings new perceptions to the current critical accounts of Romantic pedestrianism and Romantic ecology. Through examining Wordsworth and Clare's representations of walking in the natural world, in particular those related to country roads, this study complicates the conventional and oversimplified claims about the oppositions between the two poets. This thesis argues that country roads are key places where humans and nonhumans interface, and thus both cultural and natural. Different types of roads potentially represent different values. Besides, roads sometimes also symbolise creativity. I nuance Jarvis's claim that 'walking generates writing' by emphasising the significance of walking into the natural world. Through a cultural historical case study of Cumbria roads between 1750 and 1815, I clarify Wordsworth's relationship to the history of enclosure in the Lake District. Wordsworth describes

human-nonhuman interactions by focusing on roads. Through exploring Clare's representation of Helpston's pre-enclosure roads, I point out that Wallace's claim that being local means stasis is overstated. Instead, I argue that Clare's mobility within a given locality contributes to his worship of nature and his rootedness to his native place. I draw on Tim Ingold's phenomenological walking theories to emphasise that Clare's local mobility is integral to his mental movement. Furthermore, I also claim that Clare blurs the Coleridgean division between fancy and imagination, and develops fancy's functions through linking it to common nature and roads. Country roads play a powerful role in Romanticism, a fact that has not been sufficiently recognised and should be paid more critical attention in the future.

Chapter One

Walking in The Lake District, Nonhuman Agency, and Morality in Wordsworth's An Evening Walk and 'Michael'

The connection between walking and morality in Wordsworth's poetry has been extensively discussed by Anne D. Wallace who uses the georgic to understand Wordsworthian walking as cultivating labour.¹ In her view, Wordsworth 'defines cultivating walking as excursive, moving out into the world but continually returning to recover familiar ground'.² She considers the moral edification that accompanies this kind of movement as a recollection and preservation of the 'past value' of agrarian England.³ However, in his poems of pedestrian travel, Wordsworth describes various types of walking, and tends to link them to morality.⁴ As Robin Jarvis points out, 'Wallace's modelling of peripatetic theory upon a particular kind of recollective, synthesising labour [...] has prevented her from seeing those aspects of the picturesque sensibility' in travelling on foot.⁵ Although Wallace is right about the way these texts register the past value of rural England, she does not examine the nature of this value and why Wordsworth's walkers hope to conserve it. And yet the moral edification is embodied in the natural world of the Lake District, which exposes Wordsworth's self-conscious speakers to the effects of nonhuman agency on human minds. In *An Evening Walk* (1793) and 'Michael' (1800), Wordsworth describes walking in the natural world as a moral action. It enables the walker to treat nonhuman nature morally, to see nonhuman landscapes as living things with their own sensation and narrative agency, to gain pleasure from seeing human feelings and the vibrant nonhuman impulse in common forms of nature, and to speak for domestic rural England and its poor cottagers. To some extent, these moral principles overlap with the traditional values of

¹ Wallace, *Walking*, p. 11.

² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ See the *Salisbury Plains* poems and *The Ruined Cottage*.

⁵ Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 66.

rural communities, contrasting the exploitation of natural resources promoted by modern improvement. My focus on the natural world nuances Wallace's idea of cultivating walking: it is not only how but also where the pedestrians walk that makes Wordsworthian walking edifying.

This chapter examines *An Evening Walk* and 'Michael' and focuses on the relationship between nonhuman agency and the morality of walking into the natural world. It mainly explores how two divergent kinds of walking in the Lake District – roving and quitting the public way in favour of the mountain path — lead Wordsworth's poet-speakers to acquire morality from rural landscapes. I argue that in *An Evening Walk*, 'roving' allows the walker-speaker enough time to perceive the picturesque landscape, for it is characterised by leisure and liberty. Through the connection between the eye and the mind, the speaker considers the primitive forms of nonhuman nature as living things that have sensation, and further sees uncommonness and greatness in the common and trivial forms of nature. Walking in the natural world is moral in that it allows the walker not only to acquire pleasure from various sounds and sights in the rural landscapes, but also to sympathise with the poor cottager's domestic affections. If in *An Evening Walk* Wordsworth describes the walker's spiritual experiences provoked by the natural world, then he also presents those of the shepherd in 'Michael'. But in the latter, the agency of the rural landscapes affects not only one's mental activities, but also one's way of life. In contrast with the directionless roving in *An Evening Walk*, 'Michael' highlights the significance of following the guide tour of the poet-speaker: that readers need to turn their steps from 'the public way' and stick to 'an upright path' along the brook (ll. 1, 3). This directional walking leads us to 'a straggling Heap of unhewn stones', which embodies the moral pastoral values of shepherds (l. 17). The storied stone sheepfold needs a spokesman to spread the morality that lies in the shepherds' love for their rural lands. The poet also needs the stone sheepfold to be a coauthor — to be the must-see spot in his guide tour — so as to attract 'youthful Poets' to be his 'second Self' and inherit his poetic legacy and the pastoral values (ll. 38-9).

This chapter draws on new materialism and material ecocriticism to shed light on Wordsworth's view of nonhuman agency in *An Evening Walk* and 'Michael'. Karen Barad's idea of 'intra-action' underlines that the interpreter and the interpreted are 'inextricably fused together' and thus 'coemerge at once'.⁶ Her argument sheds light on how in *An Evening Walk* the rover's mental activities are sometimes entangled with the natural landscapes. I also draw on Jane Bennett's notion of 'the vitality of matter' to examine how Wordsworth's 'living lake' acts as a 'quasi agent' with propensities of its own.⁷ My analysis of 'Michael' builds on recent work in 'material ecocriticism', which emphasises how 'material forms [...] intra-act with each other and with the human dimension, producing configurations of meanings and discourses that we can interpret as stories'.⁸ This chapter attempts to regard 'Michael' as a case study of 'a storied matter', which highlights nonhuman matter's 'narrative power' of telling its own 'evolutionary stories' as well as its entanglement with 'human agency and meaning'.⁹ David Higgins points out that 'the study of British Romanticism was integral to the emergence of ecocriticism in the 1980s and 1990s but [...] is in danger of becoming marginal to the growth of material ecocriticism and the environmental humanities more generally'.¹⁰ I hope that this chapter will show how Romantic poetry can become a studied focus for material ecocriticism.¹¹

It seems necessary to justify my ecocritical-pedestrian reading of 'Michael', since the last thirty years have seen a debate between culture-based approaches and nature-based approaches to this 'pastoral poem'— as Wordsworth subtitles it. Roger Sales takes a Marxist approach to the text, and emphasises that the real social and economic conditions obscured by the poet should be regarded as the base of the poem.¹² Similarly, Scott Hess pays attention to the history of the Lake District in the long eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and points out that Wordsworth's

⁶ Barad, p. 3.

⁷ Bennett, p. viii.

⁸ Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction', p. 7.

⁹ Iovino and Oppermann, 'Material Ecocriticism', p. 83; Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction,' p. 7.

¹⁰ Higgins, *Climate Change*, p. 10.

¹¹ See Wolfson, 'Stories in Stones', 101-17.

¹² Roger Sales, 'William Wordsworth and the Real Estate', in *Wordsworth: Contemporary Critical Essays*, ed. by John Williams (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 92-111.

representation of the local area in ‘Michael’ is idealised.¹³ He claims that Wordsworth – as an outsider – projects his own ‘ecology of authorship’ onto ‘local culture and identity’, and argues that Jonathan Bate as the representative of environmental critics is ‘preposterous’ in publicising Wordsworth’s ecological awareness without taking the social and cultural history into account.¹⁴ On the other side, Greg Garrard, in line with Bate, argues that although Marxist and historicist critics ‘see a concern with nature as a mystification of a “reality” they define in socio-economic terms’, ‘economics ultimately depends on ecology’.¹⁵

Many critics have noticed the interplay between human activities and the pastoral setting. Bate, Geoffrey Hartman, and Karl Kroeber all underline the shepherd’s interactivity or bond with nature.¹⁶ Alan Bewell and Katey Castellano respectively put forward notions of ‘historical ecology’ and ‘social ecology’, and both stress Wordsworth’s effort to preserve the disappearing pastoral community in the Lake District.¹⁷ Anne D. Wallace and Bruce E. Graver focus on the tension between the modes of pastoral and georgic, and both argue that Wordsworth treats these two genres as an inseparable hybrid in ‘Michael’, which allows the laborious, rural life to merge into the pastoral land.¹⁸ I am sympathetic to Wallace’s ‘peripatetic’ mode, which is extended from Wordsworth’s georgic labour.¹⁹ To regard walking as ‘cultivating labour’ indeed explains why the poet’s ‘excursive walking’ can replace ‘the failure of Virgilian cultivation’ and preserve the rural values of the local habitat.²⁰ Despite the insight of Wallace’s critical account, it pays scant attention to the role of nature in the narrator’s walking. To solely associate the narrator’s ‘excursive walking’ with his ‘poetic

¹³ Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press, 2012).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹⁵ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, p. 47.

¹⁶ See Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 104; Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth’s Poetry, 1787-1814* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 263; Karl Kroeber, *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imaging and the Biology of Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 8.

¹⁷ See Alan Bewell, *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2017), p. 247; Katey Castellano, *The Ecology of British Romantic Conservatism, 1790-1837* (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 60.

¹⁸ See Wallace, *Walking*, p. 134; Bruce E. Graver, ‘Wordsworth’s Georgic Pastoral: *Otium* and *Labour* in “Michael”’, *European Romantic Review*, 1 (1991), 119-34.

¹⁹ Wallace, *Walking*, p. 144.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

composition' cannot fully explain walking's cultivating role as an extension of the shepherd's labour.²¹ Wordsworth's descriptions of two kinds of roads reveals his intention to invite his reader to deviate from the public road leading to the dissolute city, and to choose the mountain path leading to the moral valley where the shepherds dwell. From this perspective, it is possible to see the agency of nature's moral edification and to take an ecocritical approach to this pastoral poem.

The first three sections of this chapter focus on *An Evening Walk*. I examine the poem's 1793, 1794, and 1836 texts, for Wordsworth presents more human feelings and thoughts towards nature in the later versions. I first argue that roving in the Lake District allows the speaker's aesthetic perception of scenic areas. Directionless walking offers leisure and liberty. Roving also prompts the speaker to link his mindscape with the landscape, as it connects his mind to his eye. In section two, I argue that roving in the natural landscapes gives rise to a 'benignant' (1794, l. 118) treatment of nonhuman nature: to see the most primitive forms of nature as living things with sensation, to see human feelings and uncommonness in the common forms of nature, to gain pleasure from any minimal movements of nonhuman nature. I will draw on Jane Bennett's notion of 'the vitality of matter' to shed light on Wordsworth's 'living lake' (1794, l. 192).²² Section three argues that roving through the natural world is 'virtuous' (1794, l. 759), because it allows the walker not only to acquire pleasure in the impulse of rural sound and sight, but also to sympathise with the poor cottagers.

The last two sections focus on 'Michael'. In section four, I argue that Wordsworth describes a more directional walking tour to 'a straggling Heap of unhewn stones', so as to inherit what it embodies — the shepherd's moral values — to love nature (l. 17). The poet uses two types of roads — 'the public way' and 'an upright path' (ll. 1, 3) — to embody two opposite values held by the modern city and the pastoral valley. He suggests that morality lies in the natural world, and thus instructs his readers to deviate from the public way and follow the mountain path. I take the approach of material ecocriticism to argue that Wordsworth makes the stone sheepfold 'a storied matter', as

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Bennett, p. viii.

he attaches the story of Michael the shepherd's love for his land to it.²³ Nature's moral edification shapes the shepherd's heart through his connection with his land, and in turn, the shepherd falls in love with nature while its provision of 'his living Being' (l. 75). Section five argues that the narrator hopes to vocalise the dumb stones' non-linguistic text for two reasons. First, 'the gentle agency / Of natural objects' (ll. 29-30) shapes his heart through the medium of storytelling. In addition, the narrator's self-consciousness also flows from the shepherd's inability to articulate the love for nature. The poet and the stones together compose 'Michael' the poem; they are interdependent and reciprocal. The narrator needs his nonhuman co-author to be the must-see scenic spot in his walking tour, so as to give his readers a direction. For him, in order to inherit the moral pastoral values, the reader has to walk to the stones through choosing the mountain path, and thus only 'youthful Poets among these Hills' (l. 38) can be the inheritor of both the pastoral values and his poetic inheritance. By contrast, simply relating Michael's story can only delight 'a few natural hearts' (l. 36). Despite knowing his poem's potential small audience, the narrator acts as a tour guide to encourage his traveller-readers to take part in and finish his walking tour to the stone sheepfold.

Roving, Landscape, Mindscape

In *An Evening Walk*, Wordsworth's speaker describes the Lake District's picturesque landscape perceived in his walking. Although Robin Jarvis has extensively examined the extent to which the poem could be read as textually walking, his focus is not so much on the speaker's mobility as on internalised wandering resulting from stationary observation of the physical world.²⁴ This chapter takes a different approach by paying attention to the speaker's way of walking. I argue that the walker-poet owes his aesthetic perception of the Lake District to 'rov[ing]', as it allows leisure and liberty:

Far from my dearest friend, 'tis mine to rove

²³ Iovino and Oppermann, 'Models of Narrativity', p. 83

²⁴ Robin Jarvis, 'Wordsworth and the Aesthetics of the Walk', in *News from Nowhere: Theory and Politics of Romanticism*, ed. by Tony Pinkney, Keith Hanley, and Fred Botting (Keele: Ryburn Publishing, 1995), pp. 135-56.

Thro' bare grey dell, high wood, and pastoral cove;
 His wizard course where hoary Derwent takes
 Thro' craggs, and forest glooms, and opening lakes,
 Staying his silent waves, to hear the roar
 That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Lodore:
 Where silver rocks the savage prospect chear
 Of giant yews that frown on Rydale's mere;
 Where peace to Grasmere's lonely island leads,
 To willowy hedgerows, and to emerald meads;
 Leads to her bridge, rude church, and cottag'd grounds,
 Her rocky sheepwalks, and her woodland bounds;
 Where, bosom'd deep, the shy Winander peeps
 Mid' clust'ring isles, and holly-sprinkl'd steeps;
 Where twilight glens endear my Esthwaite's shore,
 And memory of departed pleasures, more.²⁵
 (1793, ll. 1-16)

Critics have tended to emphasise Wordsworth's use of the picturesque in the opening lines of this well-known passage, as well as the generalised rather than the particular landscapes in the Lake District.²⁶ However, the role of walking in the poet's portrayal of the visual and aural tensions between landscapes has not been addressed.²⁷ The repeated 'where' introduces five parallel clauses about five scenic areas, in which the speaker walks from place to place in an unsystematic manner. He 'roves': his mobility is unconstrained and leisurely, under no obligation.²⁸ This makes possible his various wandering experiences. Wordsworth's speaker is a privileged spectator; as James

²⁵ William Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk*, ed. by James Averill (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984).

²⁶ See J. R. Watson, *English Poetry of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1985), p. 48; John Turner, *Wordsworth: Play and Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), chapter 1; Jarvis, 'Wordsworth and the Aesthetics of the Walk'.

²⁷ Nichola Trott, 'Wordsworth and the Picturesque: A Strong Infection of the Age', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 18 (1987), 114-21 (p. 115).

²⁸ See *OED*'s entry for 'rove, v. 2. II. 6. a'.

Heffernan notes, before the 1840s, ‘beyond its inhabitants, the Lake District offered its splendid pictures only to those who had the means and leisure to visit it even once, let alone repeatedly’.²⁹ The walker-poet’s right of way in the local, together with freedom from the necessity to labour allows him sufficient time and liberty to admire the sublime of the landscapes from specific perspectives. For example, the ‘silent’ River Derwent offers him an upward view of ‘high’ Lodore, and thus enables him to present the stunning effect of the falls through highlighting ‘the tremulous cliffs’. Likewise, when he walks among ‘silver rocks’, their ‘savage prospect’ compels him to pay attention to and ‘chear [cheer] of’ the sublime, ‘giant yews that frown on Rydale’s mere’. It is noteworthy that the speaker shares his ‘chear’ with the ‘silver rocks’, and his hearing with River Derwent. His somatic presence at the specific spots provokes the entanglement of mind and matter, and he thus humanises the interactions between landscapes.

In contrast with the Burkean sublime in the material landscapes, which signifies ‘a mixture of [...] fear, awe, and reverence’, the second half of the passage describes the Claudean pastoral.³⁰ Roving shapes the walker’s personal impressions of landscapes. His free and unhurried mobility allows him to take a comprehensive tour of ‘Grasmere’, and this exposes him to ‘peace’ in different types of habitat, from ‘meads’ to ‘sheepwalks’ and to ‘woodland bounds’. Unrestrained walking also enables the speaker to overlook the lake ‘Winander’ from a distance, and to regard it as ‘shy’. With a panoramic view, he perceives how it is encircled ‘bosom’d deep’ by the ‘clust’ring isles’. The liberty granted by roving contributes to the speaker’s exclusive association with a spot, as he is able to admire the landscape at a specific time: ‘twilight glens endear my Esthwaite’s shore’. The possessive ‘my’ here suggests that Wordsworth might consider Esthwaite as one of the ‘spots of time’ that can emerge from his ‘memory’ of ‘pleasures’ to lift his mood.³¹ Here, the poet implies that roving makes possible the connection between the human mind and the physical landscape, and I will

²⁹ James A. W. Heffernan, ‘Wordsworth and Landscape’, in *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 614–28 (p. 619).

³⁰ Onno Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 5.

³¹ See Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* (1805), XII, line 208.

further explore this point in the following discussion.

Although the passage of 'Cascade Scene' in the 1793 text has been examined in relation to the picturesque, the 1794 version has not been paid sufficient critical attention.³² In comparing the two versions, James K. Chandler suggests that the latter is 'just a [...] much expanded passage' in terms of the heavy use of adjectives.³³ However, he ignores the nuance in the revised passage: that is, the italic '*I*'. Wordsworth writes in the 1793 text, '—Then Quiet led me up the huddling rill' (l. 71), whereas in the 1794 version, he replaces the personified subject 'Quiet' with '*I*', emphasising the speaker's action of 'wind[ing]':

Then while *I* winded where the huddling rill
Brightens with water-breaks the sombrous gill,
As by enchantment an obscure retreat
Opened at once and stayed my devious feet;
Its sober charms can chase with sweet controul
Each idle thought and sanctify the soul,
And on the morbid passions pouring balm,
Resistless breathe a melancholy calm,
Or through the mind, by magic influence
Rapt into worlds beyond the reign of sense,
Roll the bright train of never ending dreams
That pass like rivers tinged with evening gleams;
(ll. 83-94)

The significance of the passage lies in how the walker's sinuous and winding movements along 'the rill' connect his mind to his eye. Imagery of meanderings unifies

³² For discussions on the picturesque in the 1793 text, see Trott; John Williams, *Wordsworth: Romantic Poetry and Revolution Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 22. For discussions on the 1794 text, see Harriet Jump, "'That Other Eye': Wordsworth's 1794 Revisions of 'An Evening Walk'", *The Wordsworth Circle*, 17 (1986), 156-163 (p. 160).

³³ James K. Chandler, 'Wordsworth Rejuvenated', *Modern Philology*, 84 (1986), 196-208 (p. 205).

the shape of the rill and the walker's way of roving. As 'huddling' suggests, the rill looks crowded together: it is narrow and meanders. For this reason, when the walker moves along it, he has to 'wind' sinuously, not in a restrictive straight line. Such a meandering way of moving forward requires the speaker to attentively and continuously respond to the landscapes, and this enables the 'material sublime' — an outcome 'of the presence of the somatic' — to wake his self-consciousness and bring 'a sudden recognition'.³⁴ Wordsworth uses 'at once' and 'by enchantment' to describe how the walker's mind is spontaneously affected by the contrasting landscapes of the 'bright rill' and 'the sombrous gill [ravine]'. To draw on the new materialist Karen Barad's idea here, mind and matter 'intra-act' rather than interact with each other, as they 'coemerge' through mutual relations, instead of acting as pre-existing, separable entities.³⁵ The rill 'brighten[s]' not only the dark gill, but also the walker's consciousness; it shines light on his mindscape when he draws attention to it.

The connection between the walker's eye and mind further entangles his mindscape with the landscape. 'Stay' suggests the suspension of the walker's physical movement, and yet it activates his spiritual mobility, which responds to and mimics the movement of the rill. Given that he regards the water in the gill as 'an obscure retreat', a secret and secluded place for meditation, his halt thus becomes 'a meditative slowing of time — a real deepening of mind-time'.³⁶ First, unlike the 1793 passage, which lacks 'cohesion between landscape and feeling', here Wordsworth uses 'sanctify', 'morbid', and 'balm' to emphasise the retreat's healing effects on the speaker's 'soul'.³⁷ 'Chase' imparts agency to the rill's 'sober charms', describing the stream's meandering movement. The verb-object combination of 'chase' and 'thought' signifies the landscape's forcible influence on the speaker's mind. The rill actively and precipitately hunts 'each idle thought', though 'with sweet controul'. Here, 'control' is a word reminiscent of 'I have submitted to a new control' (l. 35) in Wordsworth's 'Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont'. In a similar vein,

³⁴ Oerlemans, p. 4.

³⁵ Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction,' p. 4; Barad, p. ix.

³⁶ Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry*, p. 12.

³⁷ John Williams, p. 22.

the poet seems also to suggest that here the speaker submits to the therapeutic power of nonhuman nature. The entanglement of the walker's mindscape and the rill also lies in his imaginative movements. In contrast with the sober soul, the speaker's 'mind' runs free unconsciously 'beyond the reign of sense'. As 'rapt' suggests, the retreat's charms are transported spiritually into his imaginative, plural forms of 'dreams'.³⁸ The 'transcendental and trance-like' state merges what the speaker imagines with what he perceives.³⁹ 'The bright train of dreams' echo the bright rill in the landscapes; as 'roll', 'never ending', and 'pass like rivers' suggest, they are coming into being like how the rill meanders. The 'analogisation of the natural phenomenon and the process of consciousness' is made possible by the halt of the walker's mobility, and yet it is roving, the specific way of walking, that allows him time to stay and meditate.⁴⁰

'[...] by thy margin rove / A more benignant sacrifice approve'

According to James Averill, the passage discussed above shows that in 1794, Wordsworth 'was, for the first time, concerned to describe spiritual experience'.⁴¹ Indeed, following that passage, between the descriptions of 'a small cascade' (l. 101) and the noon-tide retreat (two parts preserved from the 1793 text), the poet inserts a 34-line paragraph of the speaker's admiration for the stream. This new paragraph alludes to Horace's ode to the Blandusian spring, but more importantly introduces 'a more benignant sacrifice' (l. 118) — spiritual responses of 'the mystic Shapes' (l. 117) — instead of carrying on the offering of a 'dying kid' (l. 116). It emphasises how 'a Mind', 'a soul', and 'a heart' respond to the Horatian rill and cascade with moral understanding of humans and nonhuman nature:

The mystic Shapes that by thy margin rove

A more benignant sacrifice approve;

³⁸ See *OED*'s entry for 'rapt, adj. 2. a'.

³⁹ Jump, p. 160.

⁴⁰ Klaus P. Mortensen, *The Time of Unrememberable Being: Wordsworth and the Sublime, 1787-1805* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1998), p. 15.

⁴¹ William Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk*, ed. by James Averill (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 15.

A Mind, that in a calm angelic mood
 Of happy wisdom, meditating good,
 Beholds, of all from her high powers required,
 Much done, and much designed, and more desired;
 Harmonious thoughts, a soul by Truth refined,
 Entire affection for all human kind;
 A heart that vibrates evermore, awake
 To feeling for all forms that Life can take,
 That wider still its sympathy extends,
 And sees not any line where being ends;
 Sees sense, through Nature's rudest forms betrayed,
 Tremble obscure in fountain, rock, and shade;
 And while a secret power those forms endears
 Their social accents never vainly hears.
 (ll. 117-32)

Critics tend to concentrate on the second half of this passage (from 'a heart that vibrates'), as they consider Wordsworth's use of Mark Akenside's language, David Hartley's language, pantheism, and French natural philosophy.⁴² However, to isolate that part from the context leads us to overlook what provokes 'the mystic Shapes' to respond: that is, 'by thy (stream's) margin rove'. In Wordsworth's view, 'rov[ing]' in the natural landscape gives rise to the spirits' progressive responses. The verb 'rove' here echoes 'tis mine to rove' (l. 1) in the 1793 text, reiterating that this very way of walking allows enough time for the connection between the eye and the mind: 'A Mind [...]

⁴² For critical accounts of pantheism, see *An Evening Walk*, ed. by James Averill, p. 15, Harriet Jump, p. 160. For Akenside's influence on Wordsworth, see Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), Part I-3 (1793-1795); Jump, p. 160; Paul D. Sheats, *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1798* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 101. For Hartley's influence on Wordsworth, see Jump, p. 160; Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 228. For French philosophy's influence on Wordsworth, see Richard Gravil, *Wordsworth's Bardic Vocation, 1787-1842* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 75-6; Janice Hewlett Koelb, *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 115; Herbert Walter Piper, *The Active Universe: Pantheism and the Concept of Imagination in the English Romantic Poets* (London: Athlone Press, 1962), pp. 72-3.

Beolds'. However, it is noteworthy that roving not only makes possible the eye/mind connection, but also a more complex interplay between the eye and the heart.

Admittedly, as Harriet Jump and Jon Mee note, Wordsworth uses Hartley's doctrine of vibrations in 'a heart that vibrates evermore, awake / to feeling for all forms that Life can take, / That wider still its sympathy extends'.⁴³ That a heart's 'nervous vibratiuncles' lead to 'the internal communication of ideas and feelings' of sympathy and feeling for all forms of life is apparently Hartleian.⁴⁴ The extended sympathy enables the constantly vibrating heart to act on the eye: to 'see' 'Nature's rudest forms' 'tremble', like its own. And yet we should not ignore that a heart's responsive vibration cannot occur without the eye's observation. It is important to note that 'fountain, rock and shade' here correspond to the preceding lines about the cascade: 'In tremulous bason [the rill's] wild waves repose, / Inverted shrubs [...], / Cling from the rocks, [...] a small cascade, / Illumes with sparkling foam the impervious shade' (ll. 96-8, 101-2). Although Wordsworth obscures 'the mystic Shapes', he does suggest that their presence at the scene is similar to that of the speaker 'I', which guarantees the profound and lasting impact of the perceived landscapes.

Wordsworth implies that roving by the stream results in a moral treatment of nonhuman nature. 'Benignant' here, following the *OED*, means 'exerting a good or kindly influence; favourable, beneficial, salutary'. Its sense of 'salutary' suggests that for the speaker, the homage paid by 'a Mind', 'a soul' and 'a heart' to the god-like stream can remedy that of the 'kid' (l. 116), which is bloody. Also important is its sense of 'favourable', which emphasises the moral advantage offered by these spiritual responses. Compared with a mind's 'calm angelic mood / Of happy wisdom' and a soul's 'entire affection for all human kind', a heart's 'sympathy' for all forms of life is described in the most detail. Wordsworth uses 'tremble', a movement similar to a

⁴³ Jump, p. 160; Mee, pp. 228-9. Scholars tend to think that Wordsworth started to read Hartley in the late 1790s. For example, see Michael Wiley, "'No place on earth / Can ever be a solitude": Lyrical Ballads, Hartleianism, and a World of Places', in *Global Romanticism: Origins, Orientations, and Engagements, 1760-1820*, ed. by Evan Gottlieb (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015), 81-93 (p. 81).

⁴⁴ See Evan Gottlieb, *Romantic Realities: Speculative Realism and British Romanticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 18 and Noel Jackson, *Science and Sensation in Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 76-8. See also David Hartley, *Observation on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and His Expectations*, 2 vols (London: S. Richardson, 1749), i. p. 1-114; i. 2.

heart's vibration, to demonstrate that the most primitive ('rudest') forms of Nature have the faculty of sensation ('sense'), like humans and animals; they are living things and have agency. Furthermore, 'while' introduces his additional emphasis on the individual differences of natural forms (suggested by the plural 'social accents'), though 'a secret power' of 'sympathy' makes them interconnected.⁴⁵ In a later passage, the speaker goes on to explain why such treatment of nonhuman nature is morally advantageous:

How different with those favoured souls, who, taught
 By active Fancy or by patient Thought,
 See common forms prolong the endless chain
 Of Joy and grief, of pleasure and pain.
 With them the sense no trivial object knows;
 Oft at its meanest touch their Spirit glows
 [...]
 But sure with tenfold pleasure they behold
 The powers of nature in each various mould;
 (1794, ll. 203-8, 211-2)

This passage has been well examined in relation to Wordsworth's language of science and other poets' phrasal influences on him, and yet the idea of 'the mind's eye' has not been addressed.⁴⁶ 'Favoured' echoes 'benignant', reiterating that to treat nonhuman nature as living things can receive 'different', special advantages. Wordsworth distinguishes the mental activities ('active Fancy' and 'patient Thought', that is, meditation) from the physiological heart's vibration, suggesting two mechanisms of

⁴⁵ Here, I disagree with Piper's reading of 'social accent': he thinks with a social accent, the forms thus have some significance for the beholder's life among men. See Piper, p. 73.

⁴⁶ For the influence of science on Wordsworth, see Piper, p. 73; W. K. Thomas and Warren Ober, *A Mind For Ever Voyaging: Wordsworth at Work Portraying Newton and Science* (Alberta: The University of Alberta Press, 1989), pp. 56-8; Mark J. Bruhn, *Wordsworth Before Coleridge: The Growth of the Poet's Philosophical Mind, 1785-1797* (New York: Routledge, 2018), chapter 2. For Thomson's influence on Wordsworth, see Marshall Brown, *Preromanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 322-3. For Cowper's influence on Wordsworth, see Tom Clucas, 'Romantic Reclusion in the Works of Cowper and Wordsworth' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2014), pp. 264-5. For Young and Akenside's influence on Wordsworth, see C. C. Clarke, *Romantic Paradox: An Essay on the Poetry of Wordsworth* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 24-6.

seeing ‘the endless chain’ of human feelings in ‘common forms’ and seeing the never-ending line of sympathy for all forms of life. ‘Fancy’ is derived from a Greek word meaning ‘to make visible’ (*OED*).⁴⁷ Its link with ‘see’ here, like the foregoing ‘a Mind [...] beholds’, suggests that for Wordsworth then this faculty is bent on seeing the external world; it is ‘active’. The specific connection between the mind and the eye (fancy or meditation) allows ‘favoured souls’ to perceive the uncommonness of common forms: the shared various human feelings, such as ‘Joy and grief’, ‘pleasure and pain’. This visual and spiritual advantage is conveyed by the verb ‘prolong’. As C. C. Clarke notes, the word ‘takes on a more-than-metaphoric force’, for it ‘both takes meaning from the word “forms” and gives it’; human feelings are passed on to common forms, which further extend them.⁴⁸ Wordsworth indicates here that to see common forms as sentient beings that share human emotions benefits from first seeing them as living things with trembling sensations.

This passage suggests another benefit in seeing nonhuman nature as living things: that is, one will see the greatness of seemingly ‘trivial’ objects. Through the eye/mind connection made by fancy or meditation, the ‘favoured souls’ are observant and sensitive enough to perceive any minimal movements of nonhuman nature: ‘at [the trivial object’s] meanest touch their Spirit glows’. This ‘touch’, the momentary physical contact with or perception of ‘the powers of nature’, in the speaker’s view, brings ‘tenfold pleasure’ to one’s ‘Spirit’, and thus makes a soul satisfied (‘glow’) and ‘favoured’. Wordsworth exemplifies this point with a description of a ‘living lake’:

Blest are those spirits tremblingly awake
To Nature’s impulse like this living lake,
Whose mirrour makes the landscape’s charms its own
With touches soft as those to Memory known;
While, exquisite of sense, the mighty mass
All vibrates to the lightest gales that pass.

⁴⁷ See *OED*’s entry for ‘fancy, n.’.

⁴⁸ Clarke, p. 26.

(1794, ll. 191-6)

‘Blest’ echoes ‘favoured’ and ‘benignant’, repeating the idea that to see nonhuman nature as living things with sensation and to sensitively be conscious of (‘tremblingly awake / To’) ‘Nature’s impulse’ are beneficial. ‘Impulse’ indicates that the speaker even considers nonhuman nature as a spirit, in that ‘the powers of nature’ are so strong that the mind is influenced by the force acting as an external stimulus.⁴⁹ Embodying ‘Nature’s impulse’, the ‘living lake’ engages the speaker’s eye through calmly mirroring the charming landscape, and this visual impression prompts his mental activities — those ‘Memor[ies]’ of other calm lakes. To some extent, Wordsworth’s ‘living lake’ can be seen as Jane Bennett’s ‘vibrant matter’; by ‘vitality’ she means ‘the capacity of things [...] to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own’.⁵⁰ The lake has an innate propensity to create or reproduce while its calm surface mirrors ‘the infinite variety of natural appearances’.⁵¹ It is in its own ongoing producing process, suggesting that matter refers to ‘phenomena in their ongoing materialization’, and ‘not a fixed essence or property of things’.⁵² The blessed spirits’ perception of the vibrant lake is analogous to the lake surface’s reflection of the landscape, and this suggests a unification between the observer and the surrounding forms of nature.⁵³ Another feature of the surface that enables the lake to embody the pleasing and stimulating impulse is its vibrating responsiveness to the flow of air. ‘Vibrate’ suggests that the surface is so sensitive that ‘all’ makes small and quick shaking movements in response to the ‘lightest gales’, revealing the lake’s agency and vitality. Despite ‘the mighty mass’, which renders the lake motionless and ordinary, it is ‘exquisite of sense’, and thus sentient and significant.

⁴⁹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘impulse, n. 3. a’.

⁵⁰ Bennett, p. viii.

⁵¹ *An Evening Walk*, ed. by James Averill, p. 301.

⁵² Barad, pp. 151, 137.

⁵³ See W. J. B. Owen, ‘The Poetry of Nature’, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 18 (1987), 2-11 (p. 9); Jump, p. 159.

‘The Spirits of the virtuous rove’

Towards the end of the 1794 text Wordsworth states that ‘the Spirits of the virtuous rove / Haunts once their pleasure, mountain, lake, or grove’ (ll. 759-60). As the list of three various landscapes suggests, the poet attempts to emphasise the significance of places — of the natural landscapes — that allow ‘the Spirits’ to gain ‘pleasure’ through ‘rov[ing]’. This reminds the reader of his similar emphasis on ‘by thy [the stream’s] margin rove’, the qualification of how ‘the mystic Shapes’ can ‘approve a more benignant sacrifice’. But compared with ‘benignant’, ‘virtuous’ here not only syntactically connects to ‘rove’, but also semantically stresses that roving (for the plentiful pleasure offered by the natural landscapes) is an action free from vice, and not simply beneficial. ‘Haunt’ after the enjambment refers to ‘a place of frequent resort’ (*OED*), and its implication that one enjoys going there makes the following ‘pleasure’ twofold. This echoes the foregoing ‘with tenfold pleasure they [those favoured souls] behold / The powers of nature in each various mould’. In *An Evening Walk*, the self-conscious rover-poet mostly registers these visible or audible nonhuman movements, ‘whose impulse wakes the mind’ (1794, l. 790). He considers that ‘not undelightful are the simplest charms’ in ‘each rural sound or sight’, and thus roves to acquire them like the virtuous Spirits (1794, ll. 239, 198). Given that roving enables his mind to connect to the eye and the ear, he, like ‘those favoured souls’, is able to perceive such greatness in trivial objects’ minimal movements.

Wordsworth tends to present how the impulse of rural sound and sight delights the speaker by integrating the natural landscapes into the rover’s mindscape. For example, in a passage about twilight sounds, their sweetness is conveyed by a shared acute hearing of the walker-poet and the lakes:

Sweet are the sounds that mingle from afar,
Heard by calm lakes, as peeps the folding star,
Where the duck dabbles mid the rustling sedge,
And feeding pike starts from the water’s edge,

Or the swan stirs the reeds, his neck and bill
Wetting, that drip upon the water still;
And heron, as resounds the trodden shore,
Shoots upward, darting his long neck before.
While, by the scene compos'd, the breast subsides,
Nought wakens or disturbs it's tranquil tides;
Nought but the char that for the may-fly leaps,
And breaks the mirror of the circling deeps;
(1793, ll. 301-12)

Wordsworth uses different forms of ambiguities to integrate the 'calm lakes' and the speaker. First, 'heard by calm lakes' has a double meaning. Apparently, the sounds are heard by the speaker, who is roving by calm lakes. And yet the phrase implicates that they are also heard by the living and sentient lakes. In a similar vein, 'breast', 'subside', and 'tide' all have two sets of interpretations, signifying the ebb and flow of human feelings and of the water surface.⁵⁴ Through blurring the distinction between the speaker and the lakes, Wordsworth attempts to emphasise that the rover gains twofold pleasure from both his own sensitive perception of the natural world and the lakes' ever changing states. The speaker's mind is not only woken by the audible and visible impulse of the distant 'sweet' sounds and the movements of birds, fish, and insects in the lakes. More importantly, he is attentive, and thus connected, to the impulse of the lakes *per se*: the lake's alternate states of being 'calm' and being 'disturbed'. When considered in relation to the sentient lakes, the descriptions of the active waterfowls and the wading bird (lines 303-308) become their corresponding responses to the sweet sounds, suggesting that the lakes are living things with sensation. The lakes manifest their high sensitivity in the mirror-like surface, which is broken by 'nought but the char that for the may-fly leaps'. As 'nought but' suggests, this scene seems simply a trivial creature's insignificant feeding movement, but for the speaker, it disturbs his mind. If

⁵⁴ See *OED*'s entries for 'breast, n. II. 5. b and III. 6. a', for 'tide', II. 9, and for 'subside, v. 4. a and 6.'

we conceive ‘compos’d’ to be a pun, which means both settled and written, then the self-conscious rover-poet specifically writes about various sounds and movements from the natural world (such as ‘dabble’, ‘rustling’, ‘stir’, ‘drip’, ‘shoot’), in that they wake his mind by breaking its original tranquility. The integration between the mindscape and the lakes enables them to experience each other’s rest and restlessness, doubling the delight of sound and movements in the natural world.⁵⁵

Similarly, in another passage about evening sight, Wordsworth emphasises that whether the speaker can acquire pleasure from perceiving nonhuman nature’s active impulse depends on the integration of his vision and imagination:

—No purple prospects now the mind employ
 Growing in golden sunset tints of joy,
 But o’er the sooth’d accordant heart we feel
 A sympathetic twilight slowly steal,
 And ever, as we fondly muse, we find
 The soft gloom deep’ning on the tranquil mind.
 Stay! Pensive, sadly-pleasing visions, stay!
 Ah no! as fades the vale, they fade away.
 (1794, ll. 648-55)

As the word ‘accordant’ suggests, the walker-poet’s ‘mind’ or ‘heart’ works in tandem with his eye, when the outside is not completely dark. From ‘golden sunset’ to ‘purple prospects’ and to ‘twilight’, the images in his mind are as dynamic as the material landscapes. When ‘we muse’ on the mindscape, it is getting darker like the ‘ever’ fading light outside: ‘the soft gloom deep’ning on the tranquil mind’. Here, as Ashton Nichols argues, ‘a landscape once determined primarily by sight is becoming a landscape

⁵⁵ Some critics argue that ‘the breast subsides’ here echoes ‘thy breast their deathbed’ in the female vagrant passage, and they think the passage suggests a hovering grief in tranquility. See James H. Averill, ‘Suffering and Calm in Wordsworth’s Early Poetry’, *PMLA*, 91 (1976), 223-34 (p. 225); Kurt Fosso, *Buried Communities: Wordsworth and the Bonds of Mourning* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 61; John Williams, *Wordsworth: Romantic Poetry and Revolution Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 32. But I consider that the idea of waking the mind by nonhuman movements starts to recur hereafter. Thus the passage could be read more as a beginning of the speaker’s gathering of various night sounds and sights than an end of an image of death.

determined by the poet's state of mind'.⁵⁶ This suggests Wordsworth's celebration of the entanglement between mind and matter, as he once claimed that 'I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature'.⁵⁷ The poet makes sense of the world not through instantaneous sense perception because he tends to translate the external scenes into something susceptible to self — to his 'immaterial nature'. For this reason, the walker sees in retrospect: his 'visions' are 'pensive', and they mediate and reflect on the 'twilight' in his memory.⁵⁸ As the oxymoronic phrase 'sadly-pleasing' suggests, this imaginative process delights the walker, in that the 'sympathetic' relationship between the material and imaginative twilight images allows no division between internal and external world.

In the last stanza of the 1794 text, Wordsworth suggests that the morality of roving in the natural world also lies in sympathising with the poor cottagers, besides in acquiring pleasure from the trivial rural sound and sight. Through his 'homeward feet', the speaker attempts to appeal to his reader for valorising the domestic rural life:

—The lake is left behind—my homeward feet
 Wind through this narrow valley's deep retreat.
 — Who now, resigning for the night the feast
 Of Fancy, Leisure, Liberty, and Taste,
 Can pass without a pause the silent door,
 Where sweet Oblivion clasps the cottage poor?
 Here, while I bend o'er this half useless gate,
 And muse on human being's various state;
 This path, that door, those peaceful precincts own
 A charm at any other hour unknown;

⁵⁶ Ashton Nichols, 'Towards "Spots of Time": "Visionary Dreaminess" in *'An Evening Walk'*, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 14 (1983), 233-237 (p. 236).

⁵⁷ *The Poetic Works of William Wordsworth: IV*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 463.

⁵⁸ See *OED*'s entry for 'pensive, adj. 2'.

Now subtle thought a moral interest sheds
On the cool simples of these garden beds,
[Or where the] poppies to the moonshine yield
[A pale]r scarlet in the neighbouring field.
(ll. 769-82)

‘Wind’ reminds us of the walker’s roving, in which ‘Leisure’ and ‘Liberty’ allow his eye/mind connection, that is, ‘Fancy’, to enjoy ‘the feast’: the splendid array of various sounds and sights in the natural landscapes.⁵⁹ However, the rhetorical question suggests that roving also enables the walker to celebrate the ‘silent’, oblivious (unnoticeable) scenes, which are in contrast to the vibrant ones. He sees ‘the poor cottage’ as ‘sweet’, and the ‘half useless gate’ as ‘a charm’, and this is attributed to the ‘moral’ agency of the ‘garden’, ‘the yield’, and ‘the field’. Although ‘yield’ here as a verb means to submit to the physical agent (‘the moonshine’) so as to be affected by it, its place at the end of the line rhymes with ‘field’, recalling ‘those favoured souls’, who equally distribute ‘their’ ‘love’ to the ‘remotest’ and the nearest things in their life, and thus make their ‘farms’ emblematic of harvest (‘yield’):

If, like the sun, their [] love surrounds
The [] world to life’s remotest bounds,
Yet not extinguishes the warmer fire
Round which the close domestic train retire;
If but to them, these farms an emblem yield,
Home, their gay garden, and the world, their field;
While that, more near, demands minuter cares,
Yet this its proper tendance duly shares.⁶⁰
(1794, ll. 213-20)

⁵⁹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘feast, I. 3’.

⁶⁰ See *OED*’s entry for ‘yield, v. III. 20. b’.

The noun 'yield', referring to the production of crops, is embodied by 'these farms', because of the domestic affections of the favoured souls. They do not 'extinguish' their sun-like passion for those affairs 'close' to them, for the sake of paying more attention to the 'remotest' ones. Instead, as the metaphorical 'warmer fire' suggests, their 'love' for the 'domestic' objects is even stronger. Wordsworth uses the image of cultivation to connect 'yield', 'garden', and 'field' together, emphasising that the favoured souls treat their 'home' and 'the world' as plants or crops with expectation. The repeated 'their' stresses the favoured souls' exclusive ownership of vitality and abundance, suggesting that the elaborate devotion to the domestic life enables their 'home' to be vibrant and showy like 'gay garden', 'the world' to be promising like 'field'. As 'proper' and 'duly' repeatedly signify, it is the favoured souls' domestic 'love' that allows caring 'minuter' things to run correctly. For the rover-poet, under 'the moonshine', the cottager's 'garden beds' and the 'yield' of 'scarlet poppies' in the 'field' remind him that these rural population, though 'poor', are as admirable as those favoured souls who enjoy domestic life. His 'homeward feet', therefore, lends a more moral sense to his roving, through his voice for the impoverished cottager. The relationship between walking in the natural landscape, nonhuman agency, and the domestic affections is also presented in 'Michael'. This poem, as in *An Evening Walk*, describes the speaker's spiritual experiences provoked by the natural world, and yet tends to emphasise its moral effects on one's way of life.

'Turn your steps' and Storied Stones

If *An Evening Walk* describes how roving or directionless walking in the Lake District enables Wordsworth's speaker to experience the virtuous pleasure and domestic feelings affected by the natural landscapes, 'Michael' (1800), in contrast, displays how a more directional type of walking leads the poet-speaker to inherit the shepherd's moral values, including the love for rural land. In 'Michael', Wordsworth uses two types of roads — 'the public way' and 'an upright path' (ll. 1, 3) — to embody two opposite

values held by the industrial society and the rural community.⁶¹ He tends to entreat his readers to embrace the values of ‘the pastoral Mountains’ rather than ‘the dissolute city’ (ll. 5, 453), suggesting that morality lies in the natural world. In the very beginning of the poem, as we shall see, the poet-speaker places the reader on ‘the public way’, and instructs them to deviate from it:

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle;
[...]
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
There is a straggling Heap of unhewn stones;
And to that place a Story appertains.
(ll. 1-4; 14-8)

Wordsworth indicates that the difficult ‘upright path’ signifies morality, for moral import has to be secured by one’s physical effort: ‘your feet must struggle’. This path is up along ‘the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill’, a metaphorical as well as real place name that suggests Nature, implying that morality lies there. More importantly, Wordsworth conceives ‘a straggling Heap of unhewn stones’ as a must-see scenic spot, through attaching a moral ‘Story’ about shepherds to it. The heap of stones is an ‘unfinished Sheep-fold’ ‘designed’ by Michael the shepherd, who intends to exhort his son Luke to love their free land and to ‘live the life’ that his ‘Forefathers’ lived (ll. 490, 333, 381, 378). Michael tells his son, ‘let this Sheep-fold be / Thy anchor and thy shield; amid all fear / And all temptation let it be to thee / An emblem of the life thy

⁶¹ William Wordsworth, ‘Michael’, in *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 252-68.

Fathers liv'd' (ll. 418-20). He believes that the life of toiling in the fields keeps his ancestors from moral wrong: it makes them 'innocent' and 'bestir[s] them in good deeds' (ll. 421, 422). Thus he hopes that his son can acquire the same protection from the virtuous pastoral life, while encountering 'evil men', 'fear', and 'temptation' in the city (ll. 418, 416, 419). With the aim of physically passing pastoral values on to his son, Michael builds the stone sheepfold with the young man.

Critics have examined the sheepfold in 'Michael' from the perspective of object-oriented ontology. Reeve Parker discusses whether 'Michael' is a 'finished poem' by focusing on Dorothy Wordsworth's descriptions of how William Wordsworth composed the poem at the sheepfold.⁶² Like Parker, Sally Bushell also invokes Dorothy's journal, but she reads the sheepfold phenomenologically, emphasising that the stone sheepfold is an object made by humans in 'the human space'.⁶³ Although these critical accounts have paid attention to the relationship between human agency and the natural object, the stone sheepfold's nonhuman agency has not been subject to analysis. The shepherd and the stone sheepfold collaborate to produce a natural-cultural story. To take a material ecocritical view, the storied stone sheepfold here can be regarded as 'a storied matter', because it has 'narrative agency', or textuality, which is 'a non-linguistic performance inherent in' the 'material formation'.⁶⁴ In this poem, the narrator, as the spokesman of the dumb stone sheepfold, vocalises the story of how it comes into being. However, it is noteworthy that Wordsworth's stone sheepfold is more than 'a storied matter': the nonhuman object not only records how and why Michael builds it, but also embodies the collective memory of the shepherds' community. The stone sheepfold allows the former way of life to reside in itself — to inscribe on itself — though with no words. Its sustainable presence reminds people of 'the successes and care of previous generations', and thus it becomes a 'living memorial'.⁶⁵ Through such multi-layered textuality, Wordsworth makes the stone sheepfold the embodiment of old pastoral values, and

⁶² Reeve Parker, 'Finishing off "Michael": Poetic and Critical Enclosures', *Diacritics*, 17 (1987), 53-65 (p. 60).

⁶³ Sally Bushell, 'The Mapping of Meaning in Wordsworth's "Michael": (Textual Place, Textual Space and Spatialized Speech Acts)', *Studies in Romanticism*, 49 (2010), 43-78 (p. 63).

⁶⁴ Oppermann, 'Storied Matter', in *Posthuman Glossary*, ed. by Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajová (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 411-4 (p. 412). See also Iovino and Oppermann, 'Models of Narrativity', p. 83; Iovino and Oppermann, 'Introduction', p. 6.

⁶⁵ Castellano, *Romantic Conservatism*, p. 60.

therefore the destination of the narrator's walking tour.

In Wordsworth's view, the shepherds' life and pastoral values are moral because they shape 'natural hearts': they cultivate people to love nature (l. 36). In his letter to Charles James Fox, Wordsworth suggests that the poem attempts 'to draw a picture of the domestic affections' among the 'small independent *proprietors* of land here called statesmen', noting that 'their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings'.⁶⁶ Nature's moral edification shapes Michael's heart through his connection with his land, and this relationship is 'a model of reciprocity between humans and environment'.⁶⁷ Nature manifests its love for Michael in 'these fields, these hills / Which were his living Being even more / Than his own Blood' (ll. 74-76). These natural objects offer the shepherd 'occupation and abode' (l. 26), which constitute his way of life — 'his living Being'. The shepherd might not be conscious of how nature makes him love it while its provision of 'his living being', because its affective edification happens in a relatively spontaneous and effortless manner: it is an osmotic process. Dedicated labour on the land 'from day to day' immerses 'the eye' in 'nature's self', and this makes possible Michael's perception of 'a deeper nature' — the 'natural amity' (ll. *Michael* MS. 2: DC MS. 31, vi, 13, 17, 14, 15, 9). Seeing nature at close distance leads the shepherd to show 'a pleasurable feeling of blind love' for nature, which 'is in life itself' (ll. 78-9). For example, he loves 'the hills' in a way that integrates them into himself:

[...] the hills, which he so oft
Had climb'd with vigorous steps; which had impress'd
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which like a book preserv'd the memory

⁶⁶ William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 401; See also *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, 2nd rev. edn, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt and Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 314-15.

⁶⁷ Castellano, *Romantic Conservatism* p. 60.

Of the dumb animals, whom he had sav'd,
Had fed or shelter'd, linking to such acts,
So grateful in themselves, the certainty
Of honorable gains;
(ll. 66-74)

The shepherd's 'living Being', embodied by the hills, allows nature to lay 'strong hold on his Affections' (l. 77). The description of Michael's memories of what he does and how he feels in the hills suggests that the shepherd's 'thoughts' are not 'indifferent' to nature (l. 64). What impresses on his mind is his strength honed by the hills, as a series of words 'vigorous', 'hardship', and 'courage' suggest. Besides what the hills give to him, as the second half of the passage suggests, the shepherd also remembers what he gives to the hills — how he protects 'the dumb animals' in the very locale. He uses what the hills teach him to reward them: as the word 'grateful' suggests, the shepherd's labour makes the hills fertile.⁶⁸ Thus it seems justifiable for Wordsworth to impart narrative agency to the hills in the third which-clause, so as to let them preserve Michael's 'honorable' 'acts' of saving, feeding, or sheltering animals like 'a book'. The ambiguous simile allows both the shepherd and the hills to record the human activities, and this makes the two an interconnected unity.

'Who among these Hills / Will be my second Self'

As I argued earlier, if we regard the stone sheepfold as a storied matter, then the self-conscious poet is its spokesman, who vocalises the dumb object's non-linguistic text. First, the narrator hopes to inherit nature's moral values from Michael's story, as nature's moral edification shapes his heart through the medium of storytelling. He assimilates the 'Tale' of 'shepherds', and sympathises with their life in 'the Vallies' for the 'sake' of 'Nature':

⁶⁸ See *OED*'s entry for 'grateful, adj. 2. b'.

[...] it was the first,
 The earliest of those Tales that spake to me
 Of Shepherds, dwellers in the Vallies, men
 Whom I already lov'd, not verily
 For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
 Where was their occupation and abode.
 And hence 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.
 (ll. 21-33)

Here, Wordsworth suggests an idea in *The Prelude*'s eighth book that 'love of nature leads to love of mankind'. Several techniques, such as the structure 'not for [...], but for [...]', the alliteration in 'for' and 'field', and the repeated 'l' and 's' sounds, highlight the significance of 'the fields and hills'. These 'natural objects' not only offer the shepherds 'occupation' through the landed properties, but also become their 'abode': their home. The narrator considers that 'the power / Of Nature' is so infectious that he, as an ignorant young 'boy', can vicariously feel the 'passions' of the shepherds rather than his 'own'. The connection between the statesmen-shepherds and their land is so strong that they are interdependent and inseparable. As Alan Bewell notes, 'for the statesmen land was not a thing, separable from themselves, but instead was the essential medium for the realization, expression, and communication of their passions'.⁶⁹ The narrator's sympathy for the pastoral life is involuntary; however, it is also autonomous. This is because nature's alluring power that 'led me on' is 'the gentle agency': it is not

⁶⁹ Bewell, *Natures in Translation*, p. 252.

controlling, and ‘indeed’ allows some time for the narrator to ‘think on man’, however ‘at random and imperfectly’. His reflection on the relationship between nature and the shepherds — on how nature’s agency shapes ‘the heart of man’ and ‘human life’ — makes him self-conscious as an outsider, a poet.

Besides his sympathy with Michael’s story, the narrator’s self-consciousness also flows from the shepherd’s inability to articulate his love for nature, which is somewhat like the dumb stones. In a manuscript passage about conversing with the shepherd, the narrator describes that when facing the ‘direct’ question of whether you love the mountains, the shepherd dares not speak out his affection for nature straightforwardly: he can only repeat the question, and reply that they are ‘frightful to behold’ (*Michael* MS. 2: DC MS. 31, iii, ll. 1, 5). The word ‘frightful’ suggests that the shepherd might regard nature as ‘a religion in his heart’ (*Michael* MS. 2: DC MS. 31, iii, l. 11), which brings him ‘a mixture of many emotions — fear, awe, and reverence’.⁷⁰ Indeed, it is because Michael has faith in nature that he considers building a stone sheepfold will morally protect his son. Although he loves nature in an unspoken way, he externalises his passions for nature with the sheepfold. When Michael is alive, he is the embodiment of pastoral values. However, stones survive longer than people; they exist for Michael, and take over the mission of inheriting pastoral values from him in a silent manner. As Bate argues, ‘the sheepfold itself remains as Michael’s monument’; nonetheless, it is an uninscribed monument.⁷¹ This makes the narrator conscious that he has to relate the story that ‘appertains’ to the stone sheepfold; otherwise, the significance of the moral pastoral values will be ignored by the traveller-readers, who ‘might pass by, / Might see and notice not’ (ll. 15-6).

To some extent, the self-conscious poet and the stones together compose ‘Michael’ the pastoral poem: they are interdependent and reciprocal. Instead of manifesting a power relationship in the narrator’s mediation of the stone sheepfold’s story, Wordsworth specifically describes that the narrator needs his nonhuman co-author to be the must-see scenic spot in his walking tour, so as to give his readers a direction: ‘Nor

⁷⁰ Oerlemans, p. 5.

⁷¹ Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, p. 89.

should I have made mention of this Dell / But for one object [...]’ (ll. 14-5)’. The existence of the stone sheepfold (‘There is a straggling Heap of unhewn stones; / And to that place a Story appertains’) divides ‘Michael’ into two parts: the poet-narrator’s guiding tour to the valley, and his retelling of Michael’s story. The necessity of the first section reveals that the narrator hopes his readers to inherit the old pastoral values through ‘turn[ing] your steps’ ‘from the public way’ (l. 1). This hope is more than to enable the reader, like his younger self, to sympathise with the shepherd’s domestic passions and to feel ‘the gentle agency / Of natural objects’, which are made possible by simply retelling Michael’s story. Walking is significant: only by choosing the upright path towards the pastoral valley over the public way to the debauched city, will a reader reach the stone sheepfold and inherit the shepherds’ moral values. The distinction between inheriting the moral pastoral values and enjoying nonhuman agency is further suggested in the narrator’s address to his readers as ‘youthful Poets among these Hills’ and ‘a few natural hearts’:

Therefore, although it be a history
 Homely and rude, I will relate the same
 For the delight of a few natural hearts,
 And with yet fonder feelings, for the sake
 Of youthful Poets, who among these Hills
 Will be my second Self when I am gone.

(ll. 34-9)

These two groups of readers, to some extent, correspond to the respective roles of the poem’s two parts: the story of Michael’s love for nonhuman nature will ‘delight’ ‘a few natural hearts’, whereas the narrator’s guiding tour will instruct ‘youthful Poets’ to walk ‘among these Hills’, instead of continuing the public way. The narrator’s prediction that the inheritor of the pastoral values will be ‘youthful Poets’ elevates his own identity of being a poet. As ‘be my second Self’ suggests, he claims that to inherit the shepherd’s

pastoral values means to pass on his own poetic inheritance at the same time. In regard to the poet's work and the shepherd's labour, some scholars consider that the poet's 'works are written and read at leisure', and 'the labor of thought and invention' of the poet is 'head-work' rather than genuine manual labour.⁷² However, Wordsworth seems to suggest what Timothy Morton terms 'ecomimesis': that language can survive like the stone sheepfold, similar to Clare's idea of 'a language that is ever green' ('Pastoral Poesy', l. 13).⁷³

For Wordsworth's narrator, the desire to pass on his poetic inheritance conflicts with an awareness of the actual small audience. He is clear that his poem can only 'delight' 'a few natural hearts' and only direct 'youthful Poets' (l. 36); as Sydney Lea points out, the audience is contracted from 'few hearers to fewer still'.⁷⁴ Lea's argument that 'Wordsworth's induction both offers a legacy and prefaces a narrative of *failed legacy*' also seems about right.⁷⁵ And yet we should not ignore the tension between the narrator's insecurity about and faith in the double inheritance of the pastoral values and his poem:

If from the public way you turn your steps
 Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill,
 You will suppose that with an upright path
 Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
 The pastoral Mountains front you, face to face.
 But, courage! for beside that boisterous Brook
 The Mountains have all open'd out themselves,
 And made a hidden valley of their own.
 [...]
 Nor should I have made mention of this Dell

⁷² Graver, p. 120; Wallace, *Walking*, p. 141.

⁷³ Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 31-5.

⁷⁴ Sydney Lea, 'Wordsworth and His "Michael": The Pastor Passes', *ELH*, 45 (1978), 55-68 (p. 58).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
There is a straggling Heap of unhewn stones;
(ll. 1-8, 14-7)

On the one hand, the guide-narrator manifests his insecurity about this tour in his ‘anxiety lest we feel led astray’.⁷⁶ The repeated ‘tumultuous’, ‘boisterous brook’ registers his thoughtfulness: he stresses that the brook is the location where the travellers need to make a turn, and reassures them that ‘you’ have been moving along in the right direction if ‘you’ can hear the brook’s loud and energetic sound. The guide is also afraid that the travellers will ignore the stone sheepfold. ‘You might pass by’ and ‘might see’ it, as it is ‘beside the brook’. And yet you might not ‘notice’ it, because it looks insignificant: the heap of stones is ‘straggling’ and ‘unhewn’. In addition, unlike the vibrant and variable nonhuman movements in *An Evening Walk*, it is motionless, and thus hard to arrest the passerby’s attention. The fear of losing his potential poetic posterity suggests that the narrator is conscious that to pass on his poetic inheritance through the walking tour might not work.

However, on the other hand, despite knowing his poem’s inadequate power, Wordsworth’s narrator shows his resolution to inherit the shepherds’ moral values. He painstakingly encourages the traveller-readers to take part in and finish his walking tour, though it may be effortful to find the direction towards the ‘hidden valley’: ‘But, courage!’. He confirms that once ‘you’ are on the right track, to inherit the moral pastoral values is by no means daunting. ‘The upright path’ towards the ‘Mountains’ seemingly ‘must’ produce great physical difficulty to the travellers, and yet ‘in truth it is an easy walk, since around an unexpected bend the mountains open up into a hidden valley’.⁷⁷ The verb ‘open’ suggests not only the gap between ‘the mountains’, but also a gesture of welcome to the visitors. This comfort for the traveller-readers’ physical difficulty foreshadows the ending of the poem, in which the narrator still reminds them

⁷⁶ Lea, p. 55.

⁷⁷ McCracken, p. 36.

that ‘the remains / Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen’ (ll. 489-90). He seems to entreat them to see his effort in interpreting the stone sheepfold’s story, and not to make him eat his words, since he has addressed them as ‘my second Self’, with ‘fonder feeling’ and eager expectation. In spite of the poem’s gloomy future in terms of its inheritability, the poet makes a brave attempt to preserve the ignored but important pastoral values through language. Perhaps for Wordsworth, each poem has its own generativity that does not fully depend on the author; to give birth to this poem is better than not to write it.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the meaning of ‘walking with nature’ by examining Wordsworth’s various presentations of nonhuman agency in *An Evening Walk* and ‘Michael’. Wordsworth regards nonhuman objects as living things not only with sensation but also with narrative agency. He suggests that walking into the natural landscapes offers us the chance to experience the powers of nonhuman nature. He tends to emphasise the significance of walking locales, for places such as the city and the rural land represent industrial and pastoral values, respectively. Wordsworth claims that the connection between the eye and the mind makes possible the walker’s perception of nonhuman agency: the impulse (vitality) and the story of nonhuman nature. The unification between the mindscape and the landscape enables the observer not only to enjoy the pleasure offered by the sounds and movements of nonhuman nature, but also to connect to the rural land and love it. Although nonhuman nature cannot speak human language, the poet considers that they can communicate with human beings with the help of ‘a secret power’, and at the same time keep their own ‘social accents’ (*An Evening Walk*, 1794, ll. 131-2). This point will be further explored in Chapter 2, in which I claim that in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth sees the process of human-nonhuman communication as ‘communion’ (Book I, l. 22), and interprets the secret power as ‘a kindred love’ (Book IV, l. 1210). Fancy and imagination as two faculties of the mind, Wordsworth argues, tend to deal with the perceived images of the external world. The

link between fancy and common forms of nature, together with the relationship between the perception and the imagination will be further discussed in Chapter 4, where I examine John Clare's presentation of 'the mind's eye'.

As this chapter has shown, Wordsworth claims that walking in the natural world is a moral action. The speakers' mobility in the Lake District rather than the city keeps them from industrialisation's direct corruption, thereby making them 'the Spirits of the virtuous' (*An Evening Walk*, 1794, l. 759). Walking in the natural landscape first leads the walkers to treat nonhuman nature morally: to see the primitive forms of nature as living, sentient beings, and to gain pleasure from seeing human feelings in them, from seeing their own vibrancy and impulse, and from integrating them into the mindscape. Besides, it also leads the walkers to valorise the domestic rural life, and further to sympathise with those poor cottagers, with the hope of speaking for them. Such ideas of valorising rural England and poor rural population also appear in *The Excursion*, and I will discuss them in the next chapter through exploring why 'walking with nature' is a significant means of developing individual education in an industrial and imperial context. The relationship between mobility within the local and the walker's domestic affections or rootedness is also presented in John Clare's poems about Helpston, and I will examine those in Chapter 3.

Chapter Two

‘The foot-path faintly marked’: Improvement and Education in Wordsworth’s *The Excursion*

If in *An Evening Walk* and ‘Michael’ Wordsworth explores the meaning of ‘walking with nature’ through the speaker-poet’s seeing nonhuman objects as living things with sensation and narrative agency, then in *The Excursion* (1814), his focus changes from walker-poets to the rural population, from individuals to community. He discusses the significance of ‘walking with nature’ for rural people in the Lake District or in broader rural areas, and emphasises that wandering in the natural world is a type of domestic education. For the Wanderer in *The Excursion*, ‘walking with nature’ means to ‘withdraw yourself from ways / That run not parallel to Nature’s course’ (Book IV, ll. 489-90): to actively move your body like the wild animals, who enjoy their birthright (such as to roam and to run) at will, so as to keep ‘sensibility’ from ‘shrinking’ (l. 510).¹ Wordsworth suggests that the Wanderer’s active senses lead to his ‘Mind’s *excursive* Power’ (Book IV, l. 1259), a power that enables ‘the wanderings of his thought’ (Book I, l. 341). Given this ‘liberty of mind’ (Book VIII, l. 323), the Wanderer can point out that the poor rural workers in factories have been deprived of individuality and ‘common right’ (Book IX, l. 119). In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth describes that the dark side of industrial improvement is the ‘unceasing toil’ of the humbler rural classes (Book VIII, l. 175). Through excessively exploiting rural labour, industrialisation imprisons the soul, which becomes no longer responsive to the external world. Placing the poor rural labourer within a context of industrialisation and imperialism reveals a long-neglected issue of rural education: both public (school) and individual (nature) education are deficient for rural children. The Wanderer, given his childhood walks and daily peddling, receives a domestic education, and thus fittingly advises British rural citizens to valorise rural landscapes such as ‘roads’ and ‘fields’ (Book II, ll. 30, 31), and to

¹ William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye with the assistance of David García (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007).

receive natural edification through walking.

This chapter is concerned about the Wanderer's discussion about improvement and education in the imperialised Lake District. It examines Wordsworth's presentations of the Wanderer's attitude towards industrial improvement, the relationship between improvement and education, and the Wanderer's view of rural education. It focuses on how country roads are described in *The Excursion*, and argues that for Wordsworth's Wanderer, the ambivalence of industrialisation can be exemplified by the improvement of roads; that the road network is presented as a metonym for transformation in broader terms; and that roads are regarded as 'School[s]' that edify souls, for they are one of the rural locales (Book II, l. 30).

This chapter first argues that the improvement of roads is presented in *The Excursion* as an ambivalent example of industrialisation, which makes transportation easier but morality worse. Wordsworth alludes to John Milton and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to argue that unmodernised roads have moral significance in that they are formed by custom and usage, and in themselves suggest a natural organic relationship to the landscape. By contrast the easy and convenient road network produced by industrial improvement is immoral, for it involves much human labour, and disturbs the local tenants' common rights. Section two offers a case study of the history of Cumbrian roads between 1750 and 1815. Here, I examine how the historical contexts of *The Excursion*, such as the turnpike mania and a series of enclosure movements, affect Wordsworth's descriptions of roads and other landscapes in the text. I argue that parliamentary enclosure of the common wastes deeply affected the rights of small proprietors in the Lake District, and Wordsworth hoped to preserve this class of people from disappearance through defending their rights of common. The next section argues that the improved road network acts as a metonym for transformation in broader terms. The connection between roads and canals leads to the transformation of transport, and this improvement provokes a change in commerce mode leading to the flourishing of the British Empire. However, the improvement of the road system also contributes to humans' wider exploitation of natural resources. Finally, the chapter argues that through

engaging with Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), Wordsworth suggests that wandering in the natural world provides a paradigm of domestic education in rural England. The poet reveals a long-neglected issue of rural education: both public school education and individual nature education are deficient for rural children. This issue is exposed through the Wanderer's exploration of whether industrialisation deprives the humbler rural classes of 'liberty of mind' (Book VIII, l. 323). Wordsworth uses the Wanderer's childhood walks, which cultivate liberty of mind and communion with nonhuman nature, to appeal to British rural citizens to conserve individuality and valorise rural life. Through regarding 'roads' and 'fields' as 'School[s]', Wordsworth emphasises that rural life itself can edify souls (Book II, ll. 30, 31).

One might question whether it is plausible to link the improvement of roads here in *The Excursion* to the planned enclosures of the mid-eighteenth century onwards, as one might even suspect whether the movement had an influence on Wordsworth at all. David Simpson has argued that 'given the high level of sensitivity that most contemporaries showed about enclosure, Wordsworth seems surprisingly unconcerned with the subject'.² He further points out that two personal reasons account for Wordsworth's 'relative silence on the subject': that the poet could not see the land in the same way that a peasant poet like John Clare could, and that enclosure was less important in Cumbria than in the southern counties.³ Similarly, Michael Baron suggests that 'land enclosure is an interesting case, because Wordsworth's own experience of it – the point at which the peasant is confronted by those who have power over him – is unclear'; 'skirting the central agricultural regions of the kingdom, Wordsworth to some extent skirted the issue'.⁴ However, other critics have noted Wordsworth's treatment of the enclosure movement in some of his works, especially the Salisbury Plain poems.⁵

² David Simpson, *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 90.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Michael Baron, *Language and Relationship in Wordsworth's Writing* (London and New York: Longman, 1995), p. 110.

⁵ Thomas Bristow, 'The practice of pastoral empathy in Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain poems', *Australian Literary Studies*, 30 (2015), 45-65; Kevis Goodman, 'Eighteenth-Century Poetry', in *William Wordsworth in Context*, ed. by Andrew Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 91-100 (p. 97); Simon White, *Romanticism and the Rural Community* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 47.

More noteworthy from a historical perspective is Helena Kelly's study. She highlights 'the painful associations that enclosure and enclosers possessed for the Wordsworth siblings' with historical facts: since the 1770s, 'enclosure activity' had increased in the environs of Penrith and the heart of Lowther land, two areas related to the Wordsworth family.⁶ Despite Kelly's valuable argument, her use of 'enclosure' means that some nuance is lost in terms of the movement's patterns. Kelly's claim that 'Wordsworth's childhood was played out in scenes of heavy enclosure' is based both on Dorothy's frequent use of the word 'intake' and on the exact locations and years that enclosure activity took place since the 1770s.⁷ And yet she ignores the difference between the two, which is the key to Wordsworth's diverse and heterogeneous use of 'enclosure', and to his divergent attitudes towards the movement. I draw on Ian Whyte's historical geography study of parliamentary enclosure in North West England and a programme report of Cumbria and the Lakes historic landscape characterisation (hereafter *HLC*) to distinguish the planned enclosure by Act of Parliamentary from ancient enclosure, which consists of 'discrete ancient farms, former common fields and intakes'.⁸ I argue that Wordsworth's interlocutors in *The Excursion* celebrate ancient enclosure in the Lake District, such as 'the enclosure of green fields' (Book II, l. 521) and 'that Enclosure'— a widower's garden-farm 'in the mountain side' (Book VI, ll. 1210, 1157). However, they seem to detest parliamentary enclosure, in that it spells the immoral improvement of the road network. I also draw on Brian Paul Hindle's historical geography study of roads in the Lake District to examine two maps of Penrith surveyed by James Clarke in 1789.⁹ In doing so, I analyse the relationship between the enclosed

⁶ Helena Kelly, 'The Politics of Space: Enclosure in English Literature, 1789-1815' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2009)

<https://www.academia.edu/14327939/William_Wordsworth_and_enclosure_1793_1803> [accessed 8 December 2022]. See also Helena Kelly, "'Wastes of corn": Changes in Rural Land Use in Wordsworth's Early Poetry,' in *Ecology and the Literature of the British Left: The Red and the Green*, ed. by John Rignall, H. Gustav Klaus, and Valentine Cunningham (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 45-60 (p. 47).

⁷ Kelly, 'The Politics of Space'.

⁸ Caroline Hardie, John Hodgson, Bette Hopkins, Miles Johnson, Caron Newman, Richard Newman, *Cumbria and the Lakes Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)* [York: Archaeology Data Service, 2014] <<https://doi.org/10.5284/1028832>> [accessed 8 December 2022], p. 32; Ian Whyte, *Transforming Fell and Valley: Landscape and Parliamentary Enclosure in North West England* (University of Lancaster: Centre for North West Regional Studies, 2003).

⁹ James Clarke, *A Survey of the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire: Together with An Account, Historical, Topographical, and Descriptive, of the Adjacent Country* (London: printed for the author, 1789); Hindle, *The Lake District*.

land and the common, so as to develop Kelly's approach to parliamentary enclosure that happened in Wordsworth's childhood and youth. Furthermore, I will use the analysis of roads in the maps to shed light on understanding the historical context on *The Excursion*.

Despite valuable work by Celeste Langan, Alison Hickey, and Heidi J. Snow, the affinity between *The Excursion* and Rousseau is still underexplored. Langan points out that 'Rousseau's invention of the pedestrian *excursion* has the status of an *excursus*, a supplement to or digression from the "proper" text', and that the Wordsworthian subject can be read as 'the (negated) historical incarnation of Rousseau's imaginary citizen'.¹⁰ And yet in her extensive discussion of *The Excursion*, she only focuses on the Wanderer's double identity as both 'vagrant' and 'host', without paying attention to another pair of Rousseauvian identities: citizen and individual.¹¹ Hickey has noted the connection between Wordsworth's attitudes towards education in *The Excursion* and Rousseau's *Émile*, but her discussion on the two texts remains descriptive, rather than detailed.¹² Snow has provided an examination of the affinity between *The Excursion* and *Émile* in religious terms. And yet she puts more focus on Rousseau's Vicar and Wordsworth's Pastor than on the Wanderer's natural education.¹³ According to Duncan Wu, Wordsworth read *Émile* in 1790, and his reading of other works by Rousseau probably started in the early 1790s.¹⁴ This date was prior to Wordsworth's composition of pre-*Excursion* material starting in 1798. Wordsworth in *The Excursion* invokes Rousseau's idea of a 'return to nature', so as to support his arguments about the morality of customary roads, the Fall of artificial constructions, and the relationship between two forms of education: individual education in the natural world, and public education in the school.

It seems that in presenting the two opposing kinds of education, Wordsworth implies his own admiration for peddling. In the Fenwick note on *The Excursion*,

¹⁰ Langan, p. 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹² Alison Hickey, *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth's 'Excursion'* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 112.

¹³ Heidi J. Snow, *William Wordsworth and the Theology of Poverty* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 108-19.

¹⁴ Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 120.

Wordsworth affirms that ‘wandering’ is his own ‘passion’, and he envies two packmen’s ‘Pedlarism’, which equips them with sharp observation, powerful ‘imagination’, and ‘knowledge of human concerns’.¹⁵ This education from walking in nature, the poet implies, eludes him, in that it conflicts with ‘what is called a liberal education’ by his privileged class.¹⁶ As Langan notes, ‘liberal education is represented as an asset that makes wandering unnecessary; wandering is therefore a kind of dispossession, a way of life undertaken by those without sufficient resources to be “lodger[s] in that house / Of letters” called Cambridge’.¹⁷ Although the reality precludes Wordsworth’s wandering, the poet conceives the Wanderer in *The Excursion* as an image of what his ‘own character might have become’ in a pedlar’s circumstances.¹⁸ It is noteworthy that Wordsworth in the poem not only shows sympathy for peddlars, who suffer from the loss of business caused by the Industrial Revolution, but also for statesmen farmers and rural children, whose common rights are deprived by Britain imperialism. Given his itinerant peddling around various kinds of people, the Wanderer is defined as both the victim and the observer, who relates how industrialisation brings darker changes to rural England.

The Pedlar’s Roads and The Industrial Revolution

My argument about the Wanderer’s view of improvement can be clarified by examining his response to the Solitary’s ‘comparison between his itinerant profession and that of the Knight-errant’ in Book VIII of *The Excursion*.¹⁹ Entitled ‘The Parsonage’, Book VIII begins with the Pastor’s invitation to his house, and then moves to the Solitary’s reluctance to follow and deliberate return to the Knight topic in Book VII. Itinerant peddlars’ labour of ‘carrying relief’ for people’s daily needs and difficulties (‘Counsel is given; contention they appease / With healing words’), in the Solitary’s view, resemble ‘the proud quest of Chivalry’ (ll. 50, 80-81, 83). In contrast, the Wanderer hints in his

¹⁵ *The Excursion*, pp. 1215-6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1215.

¹⁷ Langan, p. 233.

¹⁸ *The Excursion*, p. 1216.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

response that the similarity between a pedlar and a Knight lies in the disappearance of both vocations, for the arrival of the Industrial Revolution leads to the pedlars' 'purer service' no longer being required, suggesting it is 'past for ever' (ll. 88, 89). Critics have noted that the Wanderer's attitude towards industrialisation is ambivalent: that he 'exult[s] to see / An Intellectual mastery exercised / O'er the blind Elements' but laments the destruction of 'the Moral law' (ll. 202-4, 218).²⁰ However, in discussing the changes in the country, focus has tended to be on urban sprawl and the unceasing toil of the rural population, while the improvement of country roads has barely, as far as I am aware, been subject to sustained analysis.²¹ Attention to roads appears only in passing, and yet the role of roads in the 'inventive Age' has not been examined (l. 89).²² The improvement of roads, I argue, is an example of industrialisation's ambivalent 'Creation', which 'produce[s]', but at the same time 'destroy[s]' like 'War':

—An inventive Age

Has wrought, if not with speed of magic, yet
 To most strange issues. I have lived to mark
 A new and unforeseen Creation rise
 From out the labours of a peaceful Land,
 Wielding her potent Enginery to frame
 And to produce, with appetite as keen
 As that of War, which rests not night or day,
 Industrious to destroy! With fruitless pains
 Might One like me *now* visit many a tract

²⁰ See Bushell, *Re-reading The Excursion: Narrative, Response and the Wordsworthian Dramatic Voice* (Aldershot and Burlington USA: Ashgate, 2002), p. 236; Louise Economides, *The Ecology of Wonder in Romantic and Postmodern Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 90-2; Hickey, pp. 98-100; Lisa Hirschfield, 'Between Memory and History: Wordsworth's *Excursion*', *Romanticism and its Others*, 16 (1999); Ralph Pite, 'Wordsworth's Tidal Georgic', in *Georgic Literature and the Environment: Working Land, Reworking Genre*, ed. by Sue Edney and Tess Somervell (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 104-21; Mary Wedd, 'Industrialization and the Moral Law in Books VIII and IX of *The Excursion*', *Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 81(1993), 5-25 (pp. 5-9).

²¹ See Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, pp. 40-1; Hickey, p. 99; Wedd, pp. 6-7.

²² See Rowan Boyson, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment Idea of Pleasure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 174; Economides, p. 91; Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 315; Nigel Leask, "'Penetrat[ing] the Gloom / Of Britain's Farthest Glens': A Response from the Highlands", *Studies in Romanticism*, 61(2022), 305-25 (p. 312); Kenneth MacLean, *Agrarian Age: A Background for Wordsworth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 95, Wallace, *Walking*, pp. 163-4.

Which, in his youth, he trod, and trod again,
 A lone Pedestrian with a scanty freight,
 Wished for, or welcome, wheresoe'er he came,
 Among the Tenantry of Thorpe and Vill;
 Or straggling Burgh, of ancient charter proud,
 And dignified by battlements and towers
 Of some stern Castle, mouldering on the brow
 Of a green hill or bank of rugged stream.
 The foot-path faintly marked, the horse-track wild,
 And formidable length of plashy lane,
 (Prized avenues ere others had been shaped
 Or easier links connecting place with place)
 Have vanished,—swallowed up by stately roads
 Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom
 Of England's farthest Glens. The Earth has lent
 Her waters, Air her breezes; and the Sail
 Of traffic glides with ceaseless interchange,
 Glistening along the low and woody dale,
 Or on the naked mountain's lofty side.
 (Book VIII, ll. 89-117)

The first thing to note is that a Miltonic language is used here to describe the 'new and unforeseen Creation'. The Wanderer's allusions to *Paradise Lost* are apparent as 'strange and new', 'war', 'industrious', and 'destroy' are pervasive in Milton's descriptions of Satan's 'Creation'. Furthermore, 'Enginery' is a significant word, which not only alludes to Satan's fight back against Michael and his angels, 'training his devilish enginery' (*Paradise Lost*, Book VI, l. 553), but also suggests the difference between the 'Creation' in 'an inventive Age' and that in Satan's war.²³ Its modifier 'her

²³ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by John Leonard (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

potent' reveals that the 'Creation' here is not 'War' but rather a kind of quasi-'War'. If Satan's enginery could be conceived as a metonym for masculine destructive power, given that it is designed to defeat God's angels in war, then that of the gendered 'Creation', as the feminine pronoun 'her' suggests, is indicative of fecundity. At this point, Wordsworth's Wanderer seems to soften industrialisation's Satanic side, and yet 'her potent Enginery' is paradoxical in that 'potent' lends masculinity to the feminine object of the 'Creation', when considered in its sense of male reproductive power. This paradox fittingly accounts for the strange and ambivalent nature of the 'Creation': that although industrialisation gives birth to machinery, its 'manufacturing spirit' is not aligned with 'the law of gentleness', but rather a 'bold impetuous force / Fitliest allied to anger and revenge' (*The Excursion*, Book VII, ll. 1066, 1053-4).²⁴

The Wanderer's 'fruitless pains' immediately follow the Creation's destructive production. Industrialisation destroys the vocation of peddling, as the retired Pedlar implicitly argues, through the improvement of the road system. That pedlars depend on those difficult but 'prized' roads to meet customers is hinted at rather than shown; unlike Clare's bold claim in 'The Mores' ('each little path that led its pleasant way', and yet 'these paths are stopt' (ll. 51, 65)), Wordsworth inserts a seven-line memory of the Wanderer's business 'in his youth' (lines 100-6) before the detailed description of the removal of three types of customary roads. To jauntily accumulate the Wanderer's nostalgia of fruitful peddling strengthens the contrast with the 'fruitless pains' of the present moment: the '*now*'. This becomes especially prominent at the brackets — 'Prized avenues ere others had been shaped / Or easier links connecting place with place' — before 'have vanished' produces a moment of bathos. Through the disturbance of the Wanderer's recalling of his youthful peddling, the 'easier', 'stately roads' destroy his calling. The idea that pre-improvement roads make possible the Wanderer's business and happiness is more evident in the manuscript of *The Excursion*, as what originally follows 'fruitless' is 'search', rather than 'pains' in the current version.²⁵ The Wanderer is searching for those roads that once led him to his sales territory — 'Now might I look

²⁴ *The Excursion*, p. 46.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 931.

for many a rugged path / And horse-track wild, and formidable lane / Which not unthankfully in youth I trod'— and yet his search is in vain because improved roads have 'swallowed up' the old difficult ones.²⁶

In terms of cultural context, before the arrival of industrialisation, the commercial mode of pedlarism was popular in Wordsworth's Lake District; as the Fenwick note and T.W Thompson's study suggest, two Scottish packmen, James Patrick (settled in Kendal) and David Moore (settled in Hawkshead), offered Wordsworth's Wanderer an 'external existence'.²⁷ In contrast, the traditional commerce in the local was threatened by the attendant road improvement as the Industrial Revolution and the turnpike mania spread to the Lake District in the 1750s. As Hindle points out, 'there was local opposition from farmers, drovers, carriers (especially in the packhorse trade) or local traders who thought that the new roads would harm their interests, either by altering the established pattern of markets, or by raising costs because of the tolls to be imposed'.²⁸ The Wanderer's old routes of peddling enable his small objects to be marketable, and himself to be 'wished for, or welcome' in country villages ('Thorpe' and 'Vill') or Scottish towns possessing charters ('Burgh').²⁹ In fact, there was a high demand for 'a lone Pedestrian with a scanty freight' in those days, and according to the Author's description of the youthful Pedlar in Book I, 'when Squire, and Priest, and they who round them dwelt / In rustic sequestrations, all, dependant / Upon the PEDLAR's toil' (ll. 356-8). Those customary and difficult country roads, it is suggested, open up the Pedlar's revisiting of his sales territory that he 'trod, and trod again'. More noteworthy is that the Wanderer's business not only brings him profit but also pride. His particularly generous description of Burgh's dignity (lines 103-6) implies that he was rich enough to gain entry into the market, which, according to historical evidence, could only be held by royal burghs with charters, and only be accessed by local merchants who made a

²⁶ *The Excursion*, pp. 931-2.

²⁷ T. W. Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead*, ed. by Robert Woof (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 234-46; *The Excursion*, p.1216.

²⁸ Hindle, *The Lake District*, p. 138.

²⁹ See *OED*'s entries for 'vill', n. 2; 'thorpe', n; 'burgh', n. 1. a; 'Thorpe' is Wordsworth's literary and poetic use, not dialects.

fortune by overseas trade or outsiders who could afford customs tolls.³⁰ The Wanderer's recollection of how the material achievements 'in his youth' were ensured by old roads seems to relieve his 'fruitless pains' 'now', but actually on the contrary, it sparks his extensive accounts of how industrialisation changes and ruins the originally natural landscapes.

It is significant that the Wanderer's personal complaint about the disappearance of his peddling, through allusion to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, turns into a moral criticism of the improved road system. 'Easy', describing the 'stately roads', alludes to Book X of the poem, in which Sin and Death, following Satan's track, pave a broad highway so as to make 'a passage broad, / Smooth, easy, inoffensive down to Hell' (ll. 304-5). This Miltonic connection between 'easy' and evil ('hell[ish]') helps the Wanderer to repeatedly argue that the improvement of roads is an ambivalent example of industrialisation, which makes transportation easier but morality worse. In his view, although 'easier links' and 'easy and bold' roads make transportation more convenient, the unnatural process of their coming into being as well as their removal of difficult customary roads make them a Fall in moral terms. The Wanderer's moral judgements here seem to reflect Wordsworth's own affinity with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Hickey and Snow have noted that Rousseau's *Émile* (1762) inflects *The Excursion* through Wordsworth's textual presentation of the interlocutors' attitudes towards education, religion, and philosophy.³¹ And yet the importance of Rousseau's novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) to *The Excursion* has not been well examined by critics; the idea that people should 'set aside everything artificial [and] bring everything back to nature', in the former, is frequently suggested in the latter.³² It seems that based on this Rousseauvian moral notion, Wordsworth's Wanderer considers that pre-improvement roads are moral in that they are shaped by custom and usage, suggesting a natural organic relationship to the landscape.

³⁰ <<http://www.scalan.co.uk/oldinverness/Burghs.htm>> [accessed 22 May 2023]; <<https://www.aberdeenburghesses.com/history/market-tolls/>> [accessed 22 May 2023].

³¹ See Hickey and Snow.

³² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, or The New Heloise: Letters Of Two Lovers Who Live In A Small Town At The Foot of the Alps*, trans and annotated. by Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché (Hanover, NH, and London: Dartmouth College/University Press of New England, 1997), p. 15.

The best example could be ‘the foot-path faintly marked’. ‘Faint’ is used several times by Wordsworth in *The Excursion* to describe paths (for example, ‘Far from all public road or beaten way / And traversed only by a few faint paths’ in Book V, lines 765-6, and ‘like a long straight path / Traced faintly in the green sward’ in Book VII, lines 415-6). The obscure foot-path could be produced by humans’ retracing of nonhuman animals’ tracks; in Book III, the Wanderer attempts to lead his friends out of the Solitary’s hermitage through a path that ‘its line had first been fashioned by the flock’ (l. 24). This more unforced process of road shaping is consonant with the Wanderer’s view of morality: ‘Moral truth / Is no mechanic structure, built by rule’ (Book V, ll. 563-4). It is apt, therefore, that ‘prized’ is used to admire those primitive ‘avenues’ that have unaffectedly existed before the artificial work. In addition, organically formed roads are more difficult than those artificial ones, and thus moral, when considered in relation to the Miltonic formula of *easy suggests evil*. Compared with ‘stately roads / Easy and bold’, ‘horse-track’ and ‘plashy lane’ are not engineered or metalled, and therefore demanding and even dangerous. At that time in the hilly Lake District (when the pedlar was young), ‘most goods had to be carried by packhorse’ in a ‘rather slow’ speed, because ‘it was impossible to get any vehicle wider than a horse westwards from Kendal until after 1750’.³³ Furthermore, walking ‘by waters’ (DC MS. 74, 13^v, l. 108) is, as ‘formidable’ suggests, difficult to deal with, because this kind of wet, ‘plashy lane’ is so long that would cause the walker’s serious apprehension of failure.³⁴ Fittingly, the successive ‘l’ sound in ‘formidable length of plashy lane’ contributes to the continuity of the tough condition. Nonetheless, Wordsworth’s speakers valorise difficult and dangerous roads; ‘formidable’ here echoes ‘forbidding’ in Book VII, suggesting that ‘rough and forbidding were the choicest roads’ (l. 60).

Wordsworth uses the moral framework to make clear his descriptions of pre- and post-industrialisation roads, and this helps him to argue that the improvement of roads is ‘false’ (Book VIII, l. 287): both *unnatural* in terms of morality and *incorrect* in terms of agricultural land use. ‘Swallow up’ and ‘penetrate’ render the building of ‘stately roads’

³³ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks, and Their Interpretation*, pp. 84-5.

³⁴ See *OED*’s entry for ‘formidable’, adj. a.

aggressive, contrasting with the gentle and organic shaping process of customary roads. To let those old roads utterly disappear and, with effort and difficulty, to enable the improved road system to get through England's 'farthest' region entail a great deal of human labour.³⁵ Indeed, according to Richard S. Ferguson, 'up to nearly the end of the eighteenth century [...] the roads in Cumberland, except "The Military Road", were little better than organized ruts', and more advanced techniques of road building did not appear until the enactment of parliamentary enclosure (rather than 'the turnpike "mania" between 1751-72').³⁶ With 'the aid of parliament', 'the best engineers were called in', and they re-surfaced, 'straightened and widened' some old roads, but meanwhile 'removed most physical traces of earlier tracks', so as to construct elegantly built (in the Wanderer's words, 'stately'), firmly marked ('bold'), and well-connected roads (as 'penetrate' suggests).³⁷ In his poems, Wordsworth tends to link verbs such as 'travel' and 'tread' more to 'path[s]' than to 'road[s]'. For example, in 'The Brothers', the Priest tells Leonard: 'but you, / Unless our Landlord be your host tonight, / Have far to travel, and in these rough paths / Even in the longest day of midsummer' (ll. 220-3).³⁸ In 'The Two Thieves; Or, The Last Stage Of Avarice', Wordsworth writes, "'Twas no more / Than treading a path trod by thousands before' (ll. 27-8).³⁹ As we can see, for Wordsworth, 'path[s]' is often related to foot travel. In contrast, 'road[s]' are barely linked to human customary usage, but more to various adjectives describing its conditions, such as: 'the steep rough road' ('The Old Cumberland Beggar', l. 5), 'the miry road' (*The Borderers*, l. 1334), and 'public Road' ('Fidelity', l. 22).⁴⁰ Wordsworth's usages of 'path' and 'road' suggest that although the removal of physical traces of customary paths improves the condition of transport, it disturbs people's rights of way. The improved artificial road is, of course, immoral from a Rousseauvian view, but its historical contexts imply that it disturbs the local tenants' rights of way to access

³⁵ See *OED*'s entries for 'swallow', v. 10. c, and 'penetrate', v. 1. a.

³⁶ Richard S. Ferguson, *A History of Cumberland* (London: Elliot Stock, 1890), p. 278; Hindle, *The Lake District*, pp. 138.

³⁷ Ferguson, p. 279; Hindle, *The Lake District*, p. 164; See *OED*'s entries for 'stately', adj. 5. a, and 'bold', adj. 8. a. *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 150.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 229; Wordsworth, *The Borderers*, ed. by Robert Osborn (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), 196; Wordsworth, 'Fidelity', in *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 71.

the commons, and this is opposed by Wordsworth. In the next section, I will examine how the historical contexts of *The Excursion* — the turnpike mania and a series of enclosure movements — affect Wordsworth’s descriptions of roads and other landscapes in the text. I argue that besides pedlars, Wordsworth also sympathises with the tenants in the Lake District who suffer from parliamentary enclosure, and he uses the voice of the Wanderer to depict these profound historical changes.

The History of Cumbria Roads, 1750-1815

Hindle points out that ‘it is important to remember that the Industrial Revolution had its origins in the packhorse era, and this was certainly true for the textile industries on either side of the Pennines; many of the first mills, which were sited in the hills to take advantage of water power, could only receive and despatch goods by horse for many years.’⁴¹ As I noted earlier, the transport of goods around the Lake District mostly relied on packhorse before 1750. According to William Rollinson, ‘by 1750 the packhorse traffic out of Kendal was well established, reflecting the town’s importance as a flourishing textile centre as well as an expanding market town’.⁴² Despite the packhorse system’s reliable communication, two disadvantages of it should not be ignored: its slowness (‘a journey from Kendal to London usually took up to 18 days, more if the weather and road conditions were poor’) and its destructive effect on the existing road surfaces.⁴³ Although the authorities and the surveyors had been concerned about the issue of repair, perhaps due to limited techniques and other factors, little was done to improve the situation until the construction of the turnpike roads.⁴⁴

Actually, the first Turnpike Act was passed in 1663 for the repairs of highway — a section of the Great North Road in the counties of Hertford, Cambridge and Huntingdon. The system was effective, given that the Turnpike Trust could raise funds by levying a toll from the road users.⁴⁵ However, ‘it was slow to penetrate the remote

⁴¹ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks, and Their Interpretation*, p. 85.

⁴² William Rollinson, *A History of Cumberland and Westmorland* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1978), p. 89.

⁴³ Rollinson, *A History of Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* See also Hindle, *The Lake District*, p.109.

⁴⁵ See Rollinson, *A History of Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 90; Hindle, *The Lake District*, p.138.

north-western counties', like many other new ideas.⁴⁶ Not until 1739 were the first turnpikes established in Whitehaven, Cumberland, and 'the real boom was to come in the turnpike "mania" between 1751 and 1772'.⁴⁷ According to Hindle's study, among eighteen Cumbrian Turnpike Trusts established from 1739 to 1767, 'six separate turnpike Acts were passed in 1753 alone, and a further six had been set up by 1767'.⁴⁸ This surge over two decades since the 1750s 'clearly formed part of the beginning of the Industrial Revolution' (See Appendix I).⁴⁹ For example, in 1757 carriers' wagons appeared for the first time, and in 1763 the first stage coach, called *The Flying Machine*, drawn by six horses, 'commenced its amazing service between Kendal and Carlisle over inhospitable Shap Fell at an almost incredible speed of between five and six miles an hour'.⁵⁰ The emergence and development of the improved turnpikes in the Lake District, as William Parson claimed in 1829, 'introduced the customs of the metropolis into this remote, and then sequestered corner of the kingdom, where it was formerly common for men to make their Wills before going long journies [*sic*], which were often travelled on foot'.⁵¹ It is noteworthy that Parson's expressions here, such as 'remote', 'sequestered corner of the kingdom', together with *The Flying Machine*, coincide with the descriptions of the introduction of machinery in *The Excursion*, such as 'speed of magic', and 'roads' that 'penetrate the gloom / Of England's farthest Glens'. More significant is that in Book VIII of *The Excursion*, the Solitary describes a scene in Buxton, where 'the swift vehicle approach[es]' with 'the cloud of dust' and 'the freight of merry Passengers' (ll. 381, 382, 386). It is therefore tenable to consider that the Wanderer suggests the turnpike mania's influence on the local 'horse-track' when he describes the improvement of road network. With 'keen appetite', the turnpike mania challenged the long-held dominance of the pack-horse in the hilly Lake District. Given that the completion of turnpike roads and other public roads introduced new, easier, and

⁴⁶ Rollinson, *A History of Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 90.

⁴⁷ Hindle, *The Lake District*, p. 138.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Rollinson, *A History of Cumberland and Westmorland*, p. 92.

⁵¹ William Parson and William White, *History, Directory, and Gazetteer, of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, with that Part of the Lake District in Lancashire, Forming the Lordships of Furness and Cartmel: Illustrated by Maps and Tables* (Leeds: W. White & Co., 1829), p. 24.

faster modes of travelling, 'the halls or hampers of the pack-horses gave way to carts'.⁵²

In historical terms, the Wordsworth siblings were affected by the turnpike mania. William Wordsworth asserted in the Fenwick note on *The Excursion* that the Wanderer's account of the changes in 'Rural Life by the introduction of Machinery is truly described from what I myself saw during my boy-hood and early youth & from what was often told me by persons of this humble calling'.⁵³ It thus seems probable that William, as a schoolboy at the Grammar School in Hawkshead from late May 1779 to June 1787, frequently conversed with David Moore the packman (baptized on 25 July 1756, according to Thompson).⁵⁴ The poet was told about how the turnpike roads as new forms of transport inflicted the pedlar's business, and 'what had befallen him, and what he had observed during his wandering life'.⁵⁵ Perhaps because of the sympathy for pedlars, William and his sister showed less enthusiasm for the improved road system. According to Rollinson, in 1801 when Dorothy was living at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, which was 'on the Ambleside to Keswick turnpike road', she 'considered it sufficiently noteworthy to record in her diary "Today a chaise passed", for most people [still] travelled on foot or on horseback'.⁵⁶

The introduction of stage coaches barely affected the lives of the vast majority of local people who lived in Lakeland valleys.⁵⁷ The limited improvement of roads brought by the turnpike movement accounts for dalesfolk's preference for travelling on foot or on horseback. The turnpike mania 'did make an important contribution to the quality of main roads, easing communications between Kendal and Keswick, and Keswick and Penrith, for example, but most roads would have remained narrow, and difficult to negotiate'.⁵⁸ According to Hindle, in the eighteenth century, 'there were no great advances in the techniques of road building' or 'any specialist knowledge', and 'there was a tendency to use whatever surfacing materials were available nearby';

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *The Excursion*, p. 1223.

⁵⁴ See Thompson, p. 243; John Worthen, *The Life of William Wordsworth: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), p. 12.

⁵⁵ *The Excursion*, p. 1216.

⁵⁶ William Rollinson, *Life & Tradition in the Lake District* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1974), p. 167.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 144.

improvements, therefore, were ‘limited to little more than filling potholes and ruts, or digging drainage ditches’.⁵⁹ The turnpike mania did not radically transform the majority of roads through the Lake District, as turnpikes ‘only took over existing roads which needed improvement’, and they did not build many new roads at this period.⁶⁰ In fact, it was not until the enactment of parliamentary enclosure that ‘the gradual and final displacement of the pack-horse tracks and their accompanying means of communication’ commenced.⁶¹

To briefly review the history of a series of enclosure movements in Cumbria sheds light on our understanding of Wordsworth and his interlocutors’ attitudes towards parliamentary enclosure and the improved road system. According to *HLC*, ‘enclosed land of all types forms the largest land use type within the Lake District National Park’, and the local enclosure movements are divided into two main types: *ancient enclosure* (before the late-eighteenth century) and *planned enclosure* (from the late-eighteenth to nineteenth century).⁶² Ancient enclosure consists of three main types: ‘discrete ancient farms, former common fields and intakes’.⁶³ In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth describes the first two types of land use. Discrete ancient farms, above all, are the most common element of anciently enclosed land. They are ‘typically farmsteads with their own set of easily identifiable enclosed fields, which would have been farmed individually either as freehold, or as copyhold or leasehold held off the manor’.⁶⁴ Discrete ancient farms ‘are found in all the lakeland valleys, commonly on the spring line along the valley sides. Outside the steep-sided valleys, [they] also occur on the more open, rolling landscapes on the edges of the moorlands and high fells’.⁶⁵

In the fifth edition of *Guide to the Lakes* (1835), what Wordsworth means by ‘enclosure’ dovetails with discrete ancient farms. He defines the word ‘inclosure’ when he describes how feudal tenants affect the country:

⁵⁹ Hindle, *The Lake District*, p. 139; Hindle, *Roads, Tracks, and Their Interpretation*, p. 115.

⁶⁰ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks, and Their Interpretation*, p. 109. See also Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 144.

⁶¹ Frank, W. Garnett, *Westmorland Agriculture, 1800-1900* (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1912), p. 34. See also L. A. Williams, *Road Transport in Cumbria in the Nineteenth Century* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), p. 86.

⁶² Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 30.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The enfranchised shepherd, or woodlander, having chosen there his place of residence, builds it of sods, or of the mountain-stone, and with the permission of his lord, encloses, like Robinson Crusoe, a small croft or two immediately at his door for such animals as he wishes to protect. [...] The inclosures, formed by the tenantry, are for a long time confined to the home-steads; and the arable and meadow land of the vales is possessed in common field; the several portions being marked out by stones, bushes, or trees [...] but, while the valley was thus lying open, enclosures seem to have taken place upon the sides of the mountains [...] Hence the singular appearance which the sides of many of these mountain exhibit, intersected, as they are, almost to the summit, with stone walls.⁶⁶

The plural noun ‘inclosures’ here means ‘a space included within or marked off by boundaries’ (*OED*), and as Wordsworth suggests, it could be ‘a small croft or two’ used for protecting domestic animals.⁶⁷ The poet claims that this tenantry space is ‘for a long time confined to the home-steads’, and this coincides with ancient ‘farmsteads’ that I discussed above. Furthermore, the location of ‘inclosures’, that is, ‘the sides of mountains’, is identical with that of discrete ancient farms: the edges of the moorlands and high fells. Wordsworth uses this definition of ‘enclosure’ in *The Excursion* three times, and one place in Book VI is a typical example.⁶⁸ In describing a Widower’s faithful affection towards his deceased Wife, the Pastor emphasises the family’s cottage:

[...] —Behold —upon that Ridge,
Which, stretching boldly from the mountain side,
Carries into the centre of the Vale
Its rocks and woods—the Cottage where she dwelt;

⁶⁶ William Wordsworth, *A Guide through the District of the Lake in the North of England, with A Description of the Scenery*, &c., 5th edn (Kendal: Hudson and Nicholson, 1835), pp. 44-5.

⁶⁷ See *OED*’s entry for ‘enclosure’, n. 4. a.

⁶⁸ See how Wordsworth uses ‘enclosure’ in other two places: ‘I have sometimes felt /That ’twas no momentary happiness /To have *one* enclosure where the voice that speaks / In envy or detraction is not heard’ (Book VI, ll. 652-5); ‘Once more look forth, and follow with your eyes / The length of road which from yon mountain’s base/ Through bare enclosures stretches, ’till its line / Is lost among a little tuft of trees’ (Book VII, ll. 43-6).

And where yet dwells her faithful Partner, left
(Full eight years past) the solitary prop
Of many helpless Children.

[...]

The wild pink crowns the garden wall,
And with the flowers are intermingled stones
Sparry and bright, the scatterings of the hills.
These ornaments, that fade not with the year,
A hardy Girl continues to provide;
Who, mounting fearlessly the rocky heights,
Her Father's prompt Attendant,

[...]

—These, and whatever else the garden bears
Of fruit or flower, permission asked or not,
I freely gather; and my leisure draws
A not unfrequent pastime from the sight
Of the Bees murmuring round their sheltered hives
In that Enclosure;
(ll. 1156-62; 1193-9; 1205-10)

That the Widower's Cottage is located in the centre of the valley on the 'mountain side' coincides with the location of discrete ancient farms. This is also verified by the detail that 'a hardy girl' has to mount 'the rocky heights'. The capitalised 'Enclosure' here refers to 'the garden', which is fenced with 'stone' 'walls', and as *HLC* points out, ancient closes are mostly either 'stone walls, hedges, or a mix of both'.⁶⁹ The Pastor admires 'that Enclosure' not only for its fanciful, vibrant sights, but also for his free access to it; he could frequently and 'freely gather' fruits or flowers from the Widower's homestead without 'permission'. In this perspective, walkers' rights of way make

⁶⁹ Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 34.

possible a sociable community.

The second type of ancient enclosure is former Common fields. This kind of farming is found in ‘narrow glaciated valleys of the high fells where it was contained within the ring garth, which separated the cultivated land from the common wastes’.⁷⁰ As a means of ‘maximising the exploitation of the limited arable land’, common fields offer farmers ‘shares in the arable fields and hay meadows, shared ploughing, and fertiliser from stock allowed to graze the fields following harvest or hay cutting’.⁷¹ Although the creation of common fields took place in the medieval period, ‘it has been suggested that common fields were still in use, though dwindling, in the early nineteenth century’.⁷² Indeed, in *The Excursion*, when the Author describes his meeting with the Solitary, he mentions the enclosure of fields: ‘For full in view, approaching through the gate / That opened from the enclosure of green fields / Into the rough uncultivated ground / Behold the Man whom he had fancied dead!’ (Book II, ll. 520-3). Here, ‘enclosure’ means ‘the action of surrounding or marking off (land) with a fence or boundary’ (*OED*).⁷³ The juxtaposition of ‘the enclosure of green fields’ and ‘the rough uncultivated ground’ accords with the separation of the cultivated land from the common wastes that I have noted.

From the 1760s, the process of planned enclosures started to affect Cumbria, either by private agreement or by act of Parliament. The greater part was made up of the enclosure of the common wastes, and the smaller part was used for the large-scale enclosure of common arable fields.⁷⁴ The enclosure of open field arable strips was almost complete by the mid-eighteenth century, and thus there was little land left by the late eighteenth century.⁷⁵ This process was arranged by private agreement without recourse to Parliament; previously the enclosure movement was undertaken on a piecemeal basis ‘through agreement between an individual, or a small group of

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ See *OED*’s entry for ‘enclosure’, n. 1. a.

⁷⁴ Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 56.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* See also Whyte, “‘Wild, Barren and Frightful’ — Parliamentary Enclosure in an Upland Country: Westmorland 1767-1890’, *Rural History*, 14 (2003), 21-38 (p. 22).

individuals, and the manor court'.⁷⁶ In contrast, parliamentary enclosure of the common wastes was different in terms of scale and manner. The area enclosed and the enclosure date would have to be strictly defined and recorded in the enclosure awards. Besides, the passing of a General Enclosure Act in 1801 exempted landowners from the expensive and time-consuming petition for a private act; thus, most planned enclosure took place after that point.⁷⁷ Parliamentary enclosure from the 1770s to the 1820s was part of the long evolution of agricultural improvements, and its aim was to expand the areas of arable land.⁷⁸ According to Whyte, 'between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries Cumbrian yeomen enjoyed modest prosperity and there was little decline in their overall numbers'; 'their rights of common were recognised by enclosure commissioners, regardless of how small their holdings were.'⁷⁹ However, in the later eighteenth century, several factors exerted pressure on Cumbrian commons. The deterioration of commons by overgrazing, the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815), the ever-growing population, and the growth of industry all added to the demand for agricultural production.⁸⁰ Under such circumstances, the smaller customary tenants, therefore, were prepared to agree to enclosure 'as the only realistic way of maintaining their essentially peasant system of production'.⁸¹ According to both Whyte and *HLC*, although organised resistance to the process of enclosure emerged elsewhere in the country, it was largely absent in Cumbria; actually, there was an increasing interest, from customary tenants rather than landowners, in enclosing the commons from the mid-eighteenth century.⁸² In doing so, customary tenants (most were small peasant farmers, and some were the yeoman farmers known as statesmen) could sell 'a proportion of a common to pay for the expenses of the enclosure', and thus had less of a financial burden.⁸³ Nonetheless, C. E. Searle argues that sometimes authentic resistance to

⁷⁶ Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 57.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.

⁷⁸ Whyte, 'Parliamentary Enclosure and Changes in Landownership in An Upland Environment: Westmorland, c. 1770-1860', *The Agricultural History Review*, 54 (2006), 240-56 (p. 243).

⁷⁹ Whyte, 'Parliamentary Enclosure', p. 244.

⁸⁰ See Whyte, "'Wild, Barren and Frightful'", p. 28; Hindle, *Roads, Tracks, and Their Interpretation*, p. 131.

⁸¹ Whyte, 'Parliamentary Enclosure', p. 244.

⁸² See Whyte, "'Wild, Barren and Frightful'", p. 29; Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 58.

⁸³ Whyte, "'Wild, Barren and Frightful'", p. 29; See also Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 59.

enclosure indeed occurred in Cumbria, aiming to protect ‘the way of life of the small peasantry and cottager class’.⁸⁴ It seems that Wordsworth was one of the opponents, who defended the rights of statesmen farmers and continuously opposed to parliamentary enclosure.

Critics tend to consider enclosures in Wordsworth’s writing as aesthetic objects, and to further claim that they offer the poet seclusion and protection from the public, as well as freedom of movement within the bucolic boundary.⁸⁵ But these critical accounts do not distinguish the ancient enclosures from the planned ones made by parliament, and thus they tend to see Wordsworth as a poet who holds positive attitude towards parliamentary enclosure and shows no sympathy for the poor peasants. Wordsworth is actually, I argue, concerned about statesmen, in that they are small independent proprietors, whose shares ‘will be of very trifling or no value, unless annexed or enjoyed with more extensive Tracts’.⁸⁶ In the poet’s own words, ‘this class of men is rapidly disappearing’, for their small allotments will be obtained by the greatest proprietors at low and inconsiderable prices, which leads to their great impoverishment and ruin.⁸⁷ Through both literary and substantial actions, Wordsworth attempts to defend statesmen’s rights of common, for the sake of preserving their class from disappearance. In *The Excursion*, he uses the voice of the Wanderer to denounce that the revolutions of society ‘shook the Tenants out into the fields, / Like wild Beasts without home! Their hour was come; / But why no softening thought of gratitude’ (Book VII, ll. 1048-50). In addition, Wordsworth publicly registered his ‘opposition to the enclosure of common lands in Grasmere’, and finally ‘won out’, with ‘the commons remaining beautiful and the freemen keeping their rights of “foddering and goosage”’.⁸⁸ As his

⁸⁴ C. E. Searle, ‘The Cumbrian Parliamentary Enclosure Movement: A Comparative Case Study of Rural Quiescence’, *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society*, 95 (1995), 247-69 (p. 259).

⁸⁵ Douglas Scott Berman, ‘The “Other” Wordsworth: Philosophy, Art, and the Pursuit of the “Real” in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads’, *Concentric: Studies in English Literature and Linguistics*, 27 (2001), 111-28 (p. 113); See Anne Janowitz, ‘Land’, in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: University of Oxford, 1999), pp. 152-61 (p. 153); Michele Turner Sharp, ‘The Churchyard among the Wordsworthian Mountains: Mapping the Common Ground of Death and the Reconfiguration of Romantic Community’, *ELH*, 62 (1995), 387-407 (pp. 392-3); Michael Wiley, *Romantic Geography: Wordsworth and Anglo-European Spaces* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 42-3.

⁸⁶ Searle, p. 259; *House of Commons Journal L* (1795).

⁸⁷ *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 401; *House of Commons Journal L* (1795).

⁸⁸ William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth’s Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*, ed. by Nicholas Halmi (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), p. 635; MacLean, p. 21. See also Berman, p. 113.

contemporaries have pointed out, the poet ‘couldn’t abear to see faäce o’ things altered [...]. It was all along of him that Grasmere folks have their Common open. Ya may ga now reet up to sky over Grisedale, wi’out laying leg to fence, and all through him. He said it was a pity to enclose it and run walls over it [...]’.⁸⁹ Similarly in 1824, Wordsworth leapt into action in defence of the Rydal commons and ‘the dwindling band of small statesmen whose livelihoods would most be threatened by enclosure’.⁹⁰ As Juliet Barker comments, ‘the threat was beaten off for the time being, but it was not the last time William would have to be an active and vocal champion of the silent fells’.⁹¹

Although parliamentary enclosure of the common wastes deeply affected the rights of small proprietors in the Lake District, it improved the road network and transformed the local and regional landscape. First of all, ‘many hundreds of miles of new roads were created in the early years of the nineteenth century when large areas of Cumbria were enclosed’ (both parliamentary enclosure and the Napoleonic Wars peaked around 1810).⁹² This is because ‘a single enclosure might require several miles of public road to provide access to all the allotments’.⁹³ Before the arrival of parliamentary enclosure, later eighteenth-century county maps illustrated complex networks of roads and tracks running in all directions across the commons.⁹⁴ In contrast, the planned enclosure replaced these with ‘more regular patterns of roads laid out by the commissioners’.⁹⁵ In Whyte’s view, ‘the creation of these road networks, complementing the turnpikes, greatly improved local road transport’.⁹⁶ It is true that, as Hindle notes, ‘enclosure brought about as drastic a change to the local road system as the turnpikes had done to the main roads’.⁹⁷ William Dickinson comments on the extensive enclosures in East Cumberland between 1790-1820 that

⁸⁹ H. D. Rawnsley, ‘Reminiscences of Wordsworth among the Peasantry of Westmoreland’ in *Wordsworthiana: A Selection from Papers Read to the Wordsworth Society*, ed. by W. Knight (London: Macmillan, 1889), pp. 101-2.

⁹⁰ Juliet Barker, *Wordsworth: A Life* (London: Penguin, 2001), p. 389.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Hindle, *The Lake District*, p. 164.

⁹³ Whyte, ‘Taming the Fells: Parliamentary Enclosure and the Landscape in Northern England’, *Landscapes*, 6 (2005), 46-61 (p. 54).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Hindle, *The Lake District*, p. 172.

the first great advantage felt to follow these enclosures was the substitution of stone-made roads for the miry and dangerous tracks over the Commons. These gave facility of transit for lime and for the abundant crops produced on the fresh soils. They also afforded freer and easier access to markets, and gradually opened out resources and communications of which the inhabitants had no previous idea and of which they began to feel the benefits.⁹⁸

Here, the ‘substitution’ for ‘the miry and dangerous tracks’ dovetails with the vanishment of the Wanderer’s ‘formidable length of plashy lane’ in *The Excursion*. It was because ‘between 1780 and 1820 thousands of acres of heathy hill and rushy swamp were enclosed, and converted into cultivated fields and verdant meadows’ that earlier tracks were removed and better roads could be constructed.⁹⁹ Moreover, ‘freer and easier access to markets’ coincides with ‘easier links connecting place with place’ in *The Excursion*. It is apparent that the change in commerce starts to germinate due to the improvement of local roads. In addition, according to J. Stockdale, ‘under the Enclosure Act too, there were formed and made many excellent roads covered throughout with small broken stones in the place of ruinous old clog-wheel cart and pack horse tracks’.¹⁰⁰ The complete replacement of ‘pack horse tracks’ realised by the Enclosure Act makes it more fitting to consider that in *The Excursion* both the turnpike mania and parliamentary enclosure affect Wordsworth’s descriptions of the change in roads.

The geographical and spatial significance of these changes to the Lake District can best be displayed by reference to maps. The end of this section will examine two maps of Penrith, surveyed by James Clarke in 1789.¹⁰¹ The analysis of the relationship between enclosed lands and the commons and that between enclosure roads and turnpike roads in Penrith will shed light on our understanding of the change in Cumbria brought by the ‘inventive age’ in *The Excursion*. The most obvious feature on the first map is the regularity and orderliness of the new landscapes produced by planned

⁹⁸ William Dickinson, *Essay on the Agriculture of East Cumberland* (Carlisle: A. Thurnam, 1853), p. 10.

⁹⁹ Ferguson, pp. 278-9.

¹⁰⁰ James Stockdale, *Annals of Cartmel* (Ulverston: William Kitchen, 1870), p. 326.

¹⁰¹ Clarke, *A Survey*.

enclosure. At the top of the first map, the large-scale elongated enclosures with ruler straight boundaries (the ‘crofts’ area) are conspicuous. Compared with this regular field type, in the centre of the map above Town Head, a semi-regular field type can be seen. Some of the fields are rectangular enclosures with wavy-edged boundaries, and it is noteworthy that a common garden is in the middle of three bare enclosures. It seems that at that time, local people’s common rights were not completely deprived. Another feature on the map is the radial network of roads radiating from the concentrated markets. Named local roads such as Benson Row, Barkhouse Lane, and Bridge Lane connect to each other and can reach the markets through gates or bridges. In addition, the local enclosure roads connect to the regional turnpike roads, as Scott Lane joins the turnpike road from Penrith to Keswick. On the second map, we can see more semi-regular enclosures that are elongated, with parallel curving boundaries (for example, the strip of land close to the turnpike road from Penrith to Keswick) or wavy-edged boundaries (‘Meal cross’). More noteworthy is that besides the planned enclosure lands, ancient enclosure types also appear in the map. On each side of the River Emont, irregular enclosures and those fields with arataral (reversed-‘S’) boundaries are found (they belong to T. Whelpdale Esq. and T. Wallis Esq).¹⁰² This suggests that former common fields still existed in 1789 alongside the more straightened planned enclosure lands. Seen in this light, it is therefore reasonable for Wordsworth’s interlocutors to describe some ancient enclosures in the landscape.

¹⁰² See Hardie et al., *HLC*, p. 36. Most individual fields with the arataral boundaries may be the remains of former common fields.



MAP 1



MAP 2

Roads, Sails, Britain

So far this chapter has examined how the improvement of customary roads in *The Excursion* is an ambivalent example of industrialisation, which makes transportation easier but morality worse; it not only has an unnatural process but also ruins the common rights of statesmen farmers. Book VIII goes on to suggest that the road network in industrialisation acts as a metonym for transformation in broader terms. First, the connection between roads and canals leads to the transformation of transport, and this improvement provokes a change in modes of commerce, which further accounts for the disappearance of peddling:

(Prized avenues ere others had been shaped
Or easier links connecting place with place)
Have vanished,—swallowed up by stately roads
Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom
Of England's farthest glens. The Earth has lent
Her waters, Air her breezes; and the Sail
Of traffic glides with ceaseless interchange,
Glistening along the low and woody dale,
Or on the naked mountain's lofty side.
Meanwhile, at social Industry's command,
How quick, how vast an increase! From the germ
Of some poor Hamlet, rapidly produced
Here a huge Town, continuous and compact,
Hiding the face of earth for leagues—and there,
Where not a Habitation stood before,
The abodes of men irregularly massed
Like trees in forests—spread through spacious tracts,
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths

Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.
 And, wheresoe'er the Traveller turns his steps,
 He sees the barren wilderness erased,
 Or disappearing; triumph that proclaims
 How much the mild Directress of the plough
 Owes to alliance with these new-born Arts!
 —Hence is the wide Sea peopled,—and the Shores
 Of Britain are resorted to by Ships
 Freight from every climate of the world
 With the world's choicest produce. Hence that sum
 Of Keels that rest within her crowded ports,
 Or ride at anchor in her sounds and bays;
 That animating spectacle of Sails
 Which through her inland regions, to and fro
 Pass with the respirations of the tide,
 Perpetual, multitudinous! Finally,
 Hence a dread arm of floating Power, a voice
 Of Thunder, daunting those who would approach
 With hostile purposes the blessed Isle,
 Truth's consecrated residence, the seat
 Impregnable, of Liberty and Peace.

(ll. 109-48)

This is a well-known passage, but its ambivalence has not been addressed. Although Wordsworth writes in the summary of contents that this passage is about 'favourable effects' brought by 'the manufacturing spirit', it is actually pervaded by the idea of humans' 'dominion over Nature' (Book VIII, l. 213).¹⁰³ The link between the improvement of roads and the development of canals is palpable; what follows the

¹⁰³ *The Excursion*, p. 46.

description of the ‘easy’ road network is the scenes of the Kendal to Lancaster canal, ‘of which the construction began shortly after 1792, which winds along through hilly country with magnificent view, in places, of Morecambe Bay and the Lakeland fells’.¹⁰⁴ According to Wordsworth’s note to ‘The Earth has lent / Her waves, Air her breezes’, here he alludes to a ‘pleasing picture’ in John Dyer’s *The Fleece* (1757), which describes the transport of wool by water: ‘Why to the narrow circle of our coast / Should we submit our limits, while each wind / Assists the stream and sail, and the wide main / Wooes us in ev’ry port?’ (Book III, ll. 546-9).¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, unlike Dyer, who completely celebrates machinery, Wordsworth articulates that ‘truth has compelled me to dwell upon the baneful effects arising out of an ill-regulated and excessive application of powers so admirable in themselves’.¹⁰⁶ Machinery causes ‘baneful effects’ for Wordsworth in that industrialisation’s exploitation of natural resources is ‘excessive’ and thus evil. The reappearance of the gendered ‘Creation’, as we have seen, repeats ‘her’ ambivalence that industrialisation produces easier transport but destroys morality. ‘Glides with ceaseless interchange’ suggests the high efficiency of ships, which move smoothly on ‘waters’ with the help of ‘breezes’ and ‘the sail’. But at the same time it also manifests the human industry’s endless demand for natural resources in the busy scene. The locations where ‘the Sail / of traffic’ passes are significant. ‘The low and woody dale’ and ‘the naked mountain’s lofty side’ are Cumbria’s local natural landscapes, contrasting with the man-made ships that ‘glisten’ with a fitful twinkling light.¹⁰⁷ More noteworthy is that the Wanderer considers the dale and the mountain moral because they are natural. ‘Lofty’ here has a double meaning, referring to the mountain’s great height as well as its sublime and high moral quality.¹⁰⁸ The dale and the mountain, though ‘low’ and ‘naked’ in terms of topography and appearance, are not interfered with by humans and thus not undignified. Through the juxtaposition of the easy water traffic and the natural landscapes, the Wanderer’s description of the

¹⁰⁴ William Wordsworth, *The Poetic Works of William Wordsworth: The Excursion*, ed. by E. De Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), p. 470.

¹⁰⁵ *The Excursion*, p. 314.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ See *OED*’s entry for ‘gliste’.

¹⁰⁸ See *OED*’s entry for ‘lofty’, 1. a and 2. b.

development of canals echoes the Rousseauvian moral notion.

The repeated image of the capitalised 'Sail' is a double metonym for both the ship and the thriving industrial nation, as it suggests that the connection between roads and canals allows the inland ship from England to join the overseas trade of the British Empire. 'The Sail / Of traffic' in 'England's farthest Glens' takes part in 'that animating spectacle of Sails / Which through [Britain's] inland regions, to and fro / Pass'. Here, Wordsworth distinguishes 'England's farthest glen' from 'the Shores / Of Britain' in this 1814 version, and perhaps first because 'England' here for him signifies 'inland' and the local. 'Glen' as a type of natural landscape might embody Englishness. Although according to the *OED*, the word 'at first applied to the narrow valleys of the mountainous districts in Scotland and Ireland', it is now 'extended to similar places in other countries'.¹⁰⁹ It means 'a mountain-valley, usually narrow and forming the course of a stream' here, and in the fifth edition of *Guide to the Lakes* (1825) Wordsworth continues to use this definition when introducing the Dacre, the stream near Penrith: 'There is no other stream that conducts to any glen or valley worthy of being mentioned, till we reach that which leads up to Ara-force [...]'.¹¹⁰ Nigel Leask in his recent study notes that 'given that "glens" has a specific Scottish reference, it is likely that Wordsworth originally intended "England" to refer to "Britain", but subsequently revised the term not to give offence to Scottish readers'.¹¹¹ However, given the time when Wordsworth worked on Book VIII of *The Excursion*, that is, the early 1810s, the poet might be more likely to underline the change in 'inland' transportation and its effect on the national commerce.¹¹² Wordsworth continues to allude to Dyer's *The Fleece*, which describes the 'view of the roads and rivers, through which our manufactures are conveyed' in Book III.¹¹³ Major roads link to major rivers of England, and this new method of transportation disperses local manufactures widely around the globe, which

¹⁰⁹ See *OED*'s entry for 'glen', n.1. a.

¹¹⁰ See *OED*'s entry for 'glen', n.1. a; Wordsworth, *A Guide*, p. xix.

¹¹¹ Leask, p. 312.

¹¹² See *The Excursion*, pp. 428, 455. Wordsworth worked on parts of Book VIII 'possibly from late August 1811 and probably between January 3, 1813, and May 1814'. The quoted long passage here was found in DC MS. 74.

¹¹³ Book III, The Argument, see John Dyer, *The Fleece: A Poem in Four Books* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), p. 82.

are dispers'd
 From little tenements by wood or croft,
 Through many a slender path, how sedulous,
 As rills to rivers broad, they speed their way
 To public roads, to Fosse, or Watling-street
 Or Armine, [...] and thence explore,
 Through [...] the sea,
 [...] thro' Tyne, and Tees
 (*The Fleece*, Book III, ll. 559-66).¹¹⁴

In turn, with the flourishing of export trade, the industrial nation is ever thriving and develops into the British Empire; as we can see, 'the Shores / Of Britain are resorted to by Ships / Freightd from every climate of the world'. This is another reason for Wordsworth to distinguish England from Britain, as the latter emphasises the country's global trade, sea power, as well as 'national unity' during the Napoleonic Wars.¹¹⁵ It is seen that the 'freight' here is 'the world's choicest produce' carried by 'Ships', rather than 'the scanty freight' of 'a lone Pedestrian' before industrialisation. The changes in the volume of goods and in the ways of selling suggest a transformation of the national commerce, and this better illustrates how 'an inventive Age' makes the Pedlar's service disappear forever.

As we can see from the long quotation of *The Excursion*, the road system is the first object for industrialisation to transform, and this seems to suggest that the change in roads introduces wider changes in social industry. As Hindle argues, the road improvements were the 'cause' of all the changes during the turnpike mania, such as increasing populations in the towns and rising agricultural production.¹¹⁶ The role of

¹¹⁴ See Hindle, *Roads, Tracks, and Their Interpretation*, p. 112. He argues that 'the industrial revolution is often more closely linked with the building of canals, but even when the canal network was complete, most industries still had to rely on roads, even if only as links to the often distant waterway network'.

¹¹⁵ Regarding to the ideas of Englishness and national unity, see David Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 62.

¹¹⁶ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks, and Their Interpretation*, p. 111.

roads in industrialisation, however, is complicated by Wordsworth: the improvement of the road system also contributes to humans' wider exploitation of natural resources. Although the Wanderer is describing some 'favourable effects' of the industrial changes, he implicitly undermines them in various ways.¹¹⁷ First, a Miltonic language is used to make the progress of urbanisation ambivalent. 'Hiding the face of earth' alludes to Book VII of *Paradise Lost*, in which God created another world, and 'over all the face of earth / Main ocean flowed' (ll. 278-9). 'Hiding' here makes the construction of 'a huge Town' a Satanic work, as this action renders 'earth', the embodiment of God's creation of the natural world, invisible. Furthermore, two similes hint at humans' dominion over nonhuman nature. The density of 'the Abodes of men' makes them comparable to 'trees in forests', and yet they are after all pseudo-forests without roots, and are built on and 'spread through spacious tracts', large areas of land. Similarly, the enshrouding state of 'the smoke of unremitting fires' resembles 'wreaths / Of vapour glittering in the morning sun', but the former actually describes the artificial air pollution, and thus contaminates the latter, which is produced naturally.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, both 'the smoke of unremitting fires' and 'wreaths / Of vapour' are signs of activity and energy, and therefore, as Hickey points out, we are not sure whether 'plentiful' is a positive term or not.¹¹⁹ In addition, the tone of 'wheresoe'er' seems to suggest that the Wanderer is impressed by the high efficiency of machinery that can easily erase 'the barren wilderness'. However, the word 'mild' implies a touch of criticism, as it admires the plough for the traditional agricultural instrument's gentleness. As Hickey notes, 'can the fact that the "barren wilderness" is being "erased" be interpreted as a "triumph"?'¹²⁰ In contrast to the above ambivalent examples that implicitly criticise the changes in social industry, 'perpetual, multitudinous' indirectly celebrates industrialisation. These two adjectives describe the endless, innumerable state of both ripples and 'Sails', suggesting the busy transportation of goods between inland and coastal areas.¹²¹ As I discussed

¹¹⁷ *The Excursion*, p. 46.

¹¹⁸ See Pite, p. 115.

¹¹⁹ Hickey, p. 99.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ See *OED*'s entry for 'multitudinous', 1. b and 2.

earlier, for Wordsworth's Wanderer, such 'unceasing toil' might earn 'all true glory', 'all praise, all safety, and all happiness', but it has to pay the cost of violating 'the Moral Law' (Book VIII, ll. 175, 216-8). However, he seems able to put aside his personal loss of peddling and the issue of moral decay when industrialisation makes Britain a naval power in the Napoleonic Wars. 'Perpetual, multitudinous' introduces the final arrival of 'a dread arm of floating Power', and the nationalistic rhetoric of admiring Britain's sea power for its deterrence like 'a voice / Of Thunder' undercuts the baneful side of industrialisation.

'Liberty of Mind' and Education

If Wordsworth presents the social improvement brought by the Industrial Revolution in an ambivalent manner, then he registers a relentless condemnation of the attendant changes in 'Country-life' (Book VIII, l. 245). Book VIII goes on to describe the Wanderer's account of the effects of industrialisation, but it changes gear entirely to focus on the dark side: the humbler rural classes' 'unceasing toil' (l. 175). Compared to the era when people were mindful of the 'stars'(l. 160), which admonished them to finish working and go home, the age of industrialisation invents 'an unnatural light, / Prepared for never-resting Labour's eyes'(ll. 169-70) in factories. The physical captivity of the rural population, especially of rural children, the Wanderer argues, deprives them of their 'birth-right': 'breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth; / 'Till their short holiday of childhood ceased, / Ne'er to return!' (ll. 282-4). For him, this leads to the imprisonment of 'the soul'(l. 297), and 'liberty of mind'(l. 323) — the responsiveness of sensory perception to the outside world — 'thus gone for ever' (l. 324). It is noteworthy that Wordsworth verifies the Wanderer's arguments through the Solitary's queries in Book VIII and the Wanderer's responses in Book IX. The Solitary points out that before the Industrial Revolution, when rural children's birthright was not deprived, their souls were also fixed: they 'from infancy had breathed / Air unimprisoned, and had lived at large', and yet 'the crust wherein [the] soul / Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheathed in ice' (ll. 345-6, 422-3). He not only doubts whether the natural world, the 'power of

sun or breeze', can 'penetrate' rural children's fettered souls (l. 421), but also considers it 'savage', for its 'unassisted care' (l. 356) tans their skin 'like the soil' (l. 357), and makes their frames 'stiff' (l. 406). The Solitary uses the example of 'the whistling Plough-boy', whose eyes are 'sluggish, blank, and ignorant', to claim that it is not industrialisation but the countryside that causes the 'torpor' of rural children: 'This Boy the Fields produce' (ll. 402, 414, 424, 429). The capitalised, plural 'Fields' are metonymic of the hard rural labour, by which children are 'early trained / To earn' 'the bread they eat' (ll. 396-8). Poverty and hunger, the Solitary suggests here, lead to the torpid souls of rural children. In addition, for the Plough-boy, 'his Country's name, / Her equal rights, her churches and her schools' (ll. 432-3) have not done enough to help him with ignorance, and thus he never learns from 'infant conning of the Christ-cross-row' or 'a Primer' (ll. 417, 418). The Solitary asks the Wanderer — 'in brief, what liberty of mind is here?' (l. 436) — and a passage about the vitality of the Pastor's two sons in his house introduces the latter's detailed responses to the former.

In Book IX, the Wanderer uses 'an *active* principle' (l. 3) and the significance of 'meditated action' (l. 21) to claim that liberty of mind entails not only the birthright of physically being in the natural world, but also the 'commun[ion] with' nonhuman nature (l. 87). Industrialisation, the context of 'the Arts / Of modern ingenuity' (ll. 159-60) is worth criticising, in that it instrumentalises people and deprives them of the 'right of a human Creature' and their individuality.¹²² Through the Solitary's other question — how rural people can 'lean on' 'themselves' 'to know what they must do' (ll. 144-6) — the poem then moves into a discussion of rural life's 'hereditary' (l. 276), edifying power, which has been traditionally ignored by rural population, and the significance of establishing a national education system. It is seen that Wordsworth, through the verification of the industrial improvement's destruction of rural children's liberty of mind, reveals a deep-rooted issue in rural education: both school education and domestic education are deficient. The poet seemingly alludes to Rousseau's *Émile* to argue that receiving education from the natural world is a kind of individual or domestic

¹²² *The Excursion*, p. 47.

education, which is in opposition to school or public education.¹²³ As Hickey points out, although Wordsworth might follow a Burkean tradition, ‘the poem as a whole also shares a deep, if obscure, kinship with Rousseau’s education “toward” nature’.¹²⁴ However, Hickey’s other argument that this ‘affinity with *Émile* exists on the level of text or texture, rather than on the level of “system”’ seems overstated.¹²⁵ In *Émile* Rousseau suggests that there are two kinds of education, ‘communal (or public) education and individual (or domestic) education’, and the latter is ‘the only natural education’.¹²⁶ ‘A social upbringing’ is bound to cause children’s ‘loss of individuality’, as ‘in an era of great industrial population, mass production, compulsory education, that spirit of man may be overwhelmed by the community’.¹²⁷ If ‘society is unnatural, we must choose between making a man and making a citizen’, because ‘citizenship in great nation states like France and England involves the sacrifice of the natural individuality’, of ‘everyone’s birthright’, so as to ensure their national strength.¹²⁸ Drawing on the Rousseauvian frame of tensions between industrialisation and birthright, citizenship and individuality, school education and natural education, Wordsworth, I argue, provides a paradigm of domestic education in rural England based on the Wanderer’s childhood walks in the natural world. In Book IX, when the Wanderer explains how to cultivate liberty of mind and the communion with nonhuman nature, he recalls his childhood walks: ‘Ah! why in age / Do we revert so fondly to the walks / Of Childhood’ (Book IX, ll. 36-8). In doing so, he compares the liberty of his childhood and the imprisonment of rural children living in ‘this Imperial Realm’ (Book IX, l. 294), guiding us back to Book I, in which the Author describes the little Wanderer’s walks. Next, I will focus on Book I and examine how the Wanderer’s childhood walks allow him to acquire liberty of mind, to receive individual education from the natural world, and to valorise rural life.

What differentiates the young Wanderer’s walks from the poor rural children’s physical movement is not the latter’s fixed labour in the field or in the factory, but rather

¹²³ See *The Émile of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, trans and ed. by William Boyd (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1962), p. 170.

¹²⁴ Hickey, p. 112.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Émile*, p. 170.

¹²⁷ *Émile*, pp. 170-171.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

the former's 'active power' of mind (Book I, l. 163). Unlike the young Wanderer, rural children now are

[...] rarely competent
To impress a vivid feeling on the mind
Of what there is delightful in the breeze,
The gentle visitations of the sun,
Or lapse of liquid element — by hand,
Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth — perceived.
(Book VIII, ll. 330-5)

To 'impress' a 'feeling' on the mind of what the natural objects are like, and to perceive them with senses, such as sight, touch, and taste, as 'competent' suggests, are the requisite qualification for liberty of mind. When the Wanderer was a six-year-old boy, in winter evenings, he had to return to 'his distant home' from a bleak 'mountain's dreary edge' 'in solitude' (Book I, ll. 142, 139, 143). Although he as a child was not free from 'terror', while walking, he 'saw the Hills / Grow larger in the darkness, all alone / Beheld the stars come out above his head' (Book I, ll. 149, 143-5). 'Saw' and 'beheld' suggest that the little boy's sight is reactive to the landscapes in the dark, but more important is that his visual reaction is not transient but enduring. The dynamic processes by which 'the Hills / Grow larger' and 'the stars come out' are perceived by the young Wanderer, and this reflects that his mind, in addition to his eyes, is also working. The connection between eye and mind enables the little child to produce 'deep feelings [that] had impress'd / Great objects on his mind' (Book I, ll. 152-3). That the expression here exactly contrasts with 'rarely competent / to impress a vivid feeling on the mind' in Book VIII is apparent. According to the Author, impressions with feelings are 'the foundations of [the Wanderer's] mind': 'they lay like substances' with agential power, which enable him to recall and 'compare / All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms', and to imagine and 'intensely brood' on the mental pictures (Book I, ll. 148,

155, 159-60, 165). The verb ‘brood’ here suggests a meditative process of fostering feelings or thoughts, and in the Wanderer’s own words, ‘the food of hope / Is meditated action’ (Book IX, ll. 20-1).¹²⁹ For him, ‘hope’ means that ‘minds / Have not been starved by absolute neglect; / Nor bodies crushed by unremitting toil’, and in this way, one’s ‘birth-right Reason, therefore, may ensure’ (Book IX, ll. 97-9, 102). Contrary to the passive mind conveyed by ‘starved’, what the Wanderer celebrates is the mind embracing ‘an *active* principle’— a principle that circulates ‘the freedom of the Universe’— which is assigned ‘to every Form of Being’ but ‘reverenced least’ ‘in the human mind’ (Book IX, ll. 3, 16, 1, 18, 19). In order to keep our minds active, the Wanderer seems to suggest, we need to attentively feed them with our affective impressions of the outside world.

The young Wanderer’s active mind gives rise to ‘the Mind’s *excursive* Power’ (Book IV, l. 1259), a power that enables ‘the wanderings of his thought’ (Book I, l. 341) and embodies liberty of mind. ‘The Mind’s *excursive* Power’ appears in Book IV, in which the Wanderer persuades the Solitary into communing with Nature, so that ‘the imagination, the affections, the understanding, and the reason’ can form ‘a legitimate union’.¹³⁰ At that point, ‘Science’ will open ‘her dull Eye’, ‘watch / The processes of things’, and find ‘its most noble use’: to be ‘a support / Not treacherous, to the Mind’s *excursive* Power’ (ll. 1247, 1250, 1253-4, 1256, 1258-9). The phrase has been examined by critics, and yet they have not noted the connection between the Wanderer’s active mind and his thoughts that aimlessly pass from object to object. Jonathan Farina argues that “‘excursive’ means diffuse, and Wordsworth’s use of “things” is excursive in this way”; ‘the Wanderer’s ideal of “Science” guides the “mind’s *excursive* power”’.¹³¹ The first argument seems about right when we consider *things* as *thoughts* or other forms of matter in mind, but the second one misreads Science as the mental mechanism to process things. In line with Bruce Graver, Janice Hewlett Koelb points out that the word ‘excursive’ might refer to ‘rhetorical digression’, the meaning of the Latin origin of

¹²⁹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘brood’, ll. 7. a.

¹³⁰ *The Excursion*, p. 44.

¹³¹ Jonathan Farina, “‘The Excursion’ and “The Surfaces of Things””, *The Wordsworth Circle*, 45 (2014), 99-105 (pp. 101, 103).

‘excursion’, and this point has been neglected in the discussion of ‘the Mind’s *excursive* power’.¹³² Koelb is insightful to emphasise the sense of being ‘prone to stray’ (*OED*) of the word ‘excursive’, and yet why the Wanderer’s mind has a tendency to be erratic and roving has not really been addressed.¹³³ Actually in Book I, following the passage of how an active power ‘brooded’ on the young Wanderer’s mental pictures, the Author describes a scene about the little boy’s curiosity and the mobility of his mind:

[...] — in the after day
Of Boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,
And ’mid the hollow depths of naked crags
He sate, and even in their fix’d lineaments,
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,
Or by creative feeling overborne,
Or by predominance of thought oppress’d,
Even in their fix’d and steady lineaments
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
Expression ever varying!
(ll. 171-80)

The ordering of clauses is interesting in this passage. The locations where the boy ‘sate’ — ‘forlorn caves’ and ‘naked crags’ — are fronted and thus emphasised. ‘Even in their fix’d lineaments’ is repeated, and Wordsworth uses this repetition to show that the boy’s active senses (‘eye’, ‘feeling’, and ‘thought’) lead to his excursive mind. If the first appearance of the repeated clause introduces how amazing the boy is as his varied senses are active when facing the ‘fix’d’ objects for ‘many an hour’, then the second one, with the added words ‘and steady’, contrastingly stresses that the young

¹³² Janice Hewlett Koelb, *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 126. See also Brace Graver, ‘The Oratorical Pedlar’, in *Rhetorical traditions and British romantic literature*, ed. by Don Bialostosky and Lawrence Needham (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 94-107.

¹³³ See *OED*’s entry for ‘excursive’, 2.

Wanderer's mind has agential power – that he has to steadily 'trace' its mobility, its 'ebb' and 'flow'. As 'an ebbing and a flowing mind' suggests, the young Wanderer's mind, actively but aimlessly, moves from one impression, feeling, or thought to another, and this spontaneous and capricious mental mobility signifies liberty of mind. It is noteworthy that three parallel clauses led by 'or' should have been situated between 'an ebbing and a flowing mind' and 'expression ever varying'. They count and embody the varied ways of how the little boy's mind is driven. To place them between the repeated 'fix'd lineaments' and in front of the boy's second action 'traced' highlights the double meaning of 'steady': the 'caves' and 'crag's' are immovable, and yet the mind's mobility is unchanging and uninterrupted.

Following this passage, the Author links the little boy's liberty of mind to education:

Thus informed,
He had small need of books; for many a Tale
Traditionary, round the mountains hung,
And many a Legend, peopling the dark woods,
Nourished Imagination in her growth,
And gave the Mind that apprehensive power
By which she is made quick to recognize
The moral properties and scope of things.
(Book I, ll. 181-8)

'Thus informed' registers that the young Wanderer's excursive mind results in his acquisition of knowledge, and the knowledge is about 'the power / Of Nature' (Book I, ll. 209-10). As we can see, the settings of 'many a Tale' and 'many a Legend' are emphasised by the inserted attributive clauses: 'round the mountains hung' and 'peopling the dark wood'. These natural landscapes are analogical with language, for they like 'books' can not only 'nourish' the little boy's 'Imagination' and

comprehension, but also spread the ‘moral’ message of things. The edifying power of nature, I argue, is perceived by the young Wanderer through his communion with nonhuman nature while walking. ‘Commune’ and ‘communion’ recur throughout *The Excursion*, describing an ideal human-nonhuman relationship for the Wanderer that the two sides communicate ‘unutterable love’, and attain a state of spiritual unity (Book I, l. 226).¹³⁴ The Wanderer argues that ‘living Things, and Things inanimate, / Do speak, at Heaven’s command, to eye and ear, / And speak to social Reason’s inner sense, / With inarticulate language’, whereas humans, ‘who with understanding heart, / [Do] know and love’ (Book IV, ll. 1198-1200, 1203-4). The nonverbal language spoken by ‘the Forms/ Of Nature’ is ‘a kindred love’; it is shared by both human and nonhuman creatures, for they are both made by ‘Heaven’, and thus similar to each other (Book IV, ll. 1202-3, 1210). In both Book I and Book IV, Wordsworth uses the word ‘intensely’ to suggest that the Wanderer’s active senses enable his ‘social Reason’s inner sense’ and ‘understanding heart’ to convey the language of love in the natural world, so as to commune with it. The young Wanderer, we are told,

[...] was prepared,
 By his intense conceptions, to receive
 Deeply the lesson deep of love which he,
 Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught
 To feel intensely, cannot but receive.
 (Book I, ll. 210-4)

Although it seems that the little boy has no choice but to passively and repeatedly ‘receive’ the lesson of love taught by ‘Nature’ as it is so powerful, ‘his intense conceptions’ suggest that his own active mental preparation makes possible Nature’s persistent suggestion: ‘to feel intensely’. The idea that to intensely use our perceptive abilities is the way to commune with the natural world also appears in Book IV, in

¹³⁴ See *OED*’s entry for ‘commune’, v. 1. c.

which the Wanderer describes how ‘a curious Child’ applied his ear to a shell, ‘listened intensely’, and felt ‘union with its native Sea’ (ll. 1126, 1130, 1134). He suggests that it is because senses connect to mind — ‘the passages / Through which the Ear converses with the heart’ are not ‘closed’ by ‘the reasoning Power’ — that ‘the Imaginative Will’ worked and ‘murmurings from within / Were heard’ by the child’s ‘very soul’ (ll. 1147-1149, 1121, 1131-2, 1129). For Wordsworth’s Wanderer, imagination is opposed and superior to reason, in that ‘the imaginative Faculty was Lord / Of observations natural’ (Book IV, ll. 703-4). It not only helps the child here to melt into the shell and the sea, but also forges his own spiritual unity with nonhuman nature.

The Wanderer suggests that he has to walk in the natural world so as to ‘seek for objects of a kindred love’, for a man like him, who embraces imagination and communion with nature, ‘must feel / The joy of that pure principle of love’ (Book IV, ll. 1210, 1206-7). ‘To tend herds’ in childhood, through the relatively leisurely pace of roaming and resting, allows the young Wanderer to ‘read’ ‘the pure delight of love’ in ‘earth’, ‘sky’, and ‘ocean’ (Book I, ll. 225, 217, 205, 222, 209). The little boy’s imagination, enabling his senses to connect to his mind, provokes him to unite with the natural world’s ‘sensation, soul, and form’: ‘in them did he live, / And by them did he live; they were his life’ (Book I, ll. 228, 230-1). The epistrophe in ‘did he live’ emphasises that humans not only physically live in the natural world, but more importantly, they mentally depend on it to survive. Walking in the natural world, after all, guarantees the Wanderer’s birthright. Scott Hess notes that reading the landscape draws upon ‘the long-standing “booking of nature” metaphor in the Western tradition’, and the association between nature and books seems ‘to teach people to approach nature in the same ways, and with the same goals, that they approach high-cultural literary or philosophical works’.¹³⁵ Indeed, for the Wanderer, Nature, like the books on ‘the Minister’s old Shelf’, has edifying power; it teaches him to see it as an inseparable part of humans, to commune with it in the language of love, and ‘to look on [it] with a humble heart’ (Book I, ll. 189, 262).

¹³⁵ Hess, pp. 73-74.

In contrast with the Wanderer's self-education in the natural world, rural people lack domestic education, and in the Wanderer's view, their ignorance results from their insufficient valorisation of rural life. In Book IX, the Wanderer suggests that rural people's fixed souls have little to do with poverty: 'if they, whose souls / Should open while they range the richer fields / Of merry England, are obstructed less / By indigence, their ignorance is not less / Nor less to be deplored' (ll. 175-9). This is because the ploughboy that the Solitary describes is one of the 'lineal Heirs / Of those who once were Vassals of her soil, / Following its fortunes' (ll. 181-3), and these people who make a living from agriculture traditionally never regard the identity of a peasant as a 'delight' or a source of pride (ll. 185, 184): 'But no one takes delight / In this oppression; none are proud of it; / It bears no sounding name nor ever bore ' (ll. 184-6). Given that rural population have little faith in the soil, the Wanderer argues, they are easily tempted by industrialisation's 'gainful Arts' (Book VIII, l. 154) and further follow them 'too fondly' and 'too far' (Book IX, l. 192). That the Wanderer's criticism of rural workers' unawareness of the perils of industrialisation is pervasive, such as 'the soul [...] dejected — even to love / Of her dull tasks, and close captivity' (Book VIII, ll. 297-8) and 'to Victims, which the merciful can see / Nor think that they are Victims' (Book IX, ll. 193-4). He suggests that humanity lies in senses and consciousness, and rural people's blindness to industrialisation's deprivation of their 'common right or interest' signifies their loss of individuality:

[...] wherever Man is made
 An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool
 Or implement, a passive Thing employed
 As a brute mean, without acknowledgement
 Of common right or interest in the end;
 (Book IX, ll. 115-9)

The successive interplay between enjambment and caesura, in both visual and aural

terms, contributes to the restriction to humans' active movement, exerted by industrialisation. 'Man' is passively manipulated into the capitalised nonhuman 'Thing', which is devoted to the Satanic (the god of evil's) Industrial Revolution as 'an offering', 'or' is exploited for its ends as 'a tool'. Two pairs of undifferentiated synonyms ('offering' and 'sacrifice', 'tool' and 'implement') hint that the instrumentalisation of humans deprives them of individuality and difference, and thus they become replaceable 'passive Thing[s]' 'wherever' they are. 'Brute' therefore has a double meaning: nonhuman tools are distinguished from humans because they are senseless and unconscious.¹³⁶ In another place, the Wanderer makes a more pessimistic argument that without humanity,

The Boy, where'er he turns,
Is still a prisoner; when the wind is up
Among the clouds and in the ancient woods
Or when the sun is rising in the heavens,
Quiet and calm. Behold him—in the school
Of his attainments? no; but with the air
Fanning his temples under heaven's blue arch.
(Book VIII, ll. 304-10)

Here, the Wanderer regards the natural world as 'the school', suggesting his celebration of rural domestic education. 'The Boy', however, given his own fettered mind and heart, cannot feel the edifying power of nonhuman nature, the lesson of love taught by 'the wind' 'among the clouds' and 'in the woods'; instead, 'the air' for him is used to 'fan' cotton flakes or locks of wool. To serve for industrialisation 'under heaven's blue arch' ironically reveals the industrial improvement's trampling over both the natural world and humanity, and facing this 'chosen [...] Bondage' (Book IX, ll. 189-90), the Wanderer conveys his appeal to rural people to protest against industrialisation through

¹³⁶ See *OED*'s entry for 'brute', adj. and n. 1.

the rhetorical question: ‘Behold him—in the school / Of his attainments?’

Wordsworth considers that the Wanderer’s self-educative walking in the natural world, as a counteractive mode, conserves individuality for British rural citizens living in the age of industrialisation. The Author feels honoured to be guided by the Wanderer to receive the education from the natural world: ‘What wonder, then, if I, whose favourite School / Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes, / And pathways winding on from farm to farm, / Looked on this Guide with reverential love?’ (Book II, ll. 30-3). To identify country roads and fields with ‘School’ not only validates the edifying power of the natural world, but also recruits children to set foot there, to move their body, feed their mind, and feel the love there. This is reflected in the Wanderer’s advice on the Pastor’s two sons. The Wanderer suggests they move their bodies in the natural world, as they only have ‘a few short hours of each returning day / The thriving Prisoners of their Village school’ (Book IX, ll. 258-9). The ‘Village school’ is regarded as prison in the Wanderer’s view, for it is not natural, and limits one’s individuality. When he was eighteen-years-old, he determined to be a pedlar, rather than to ‘teach a School / In the adjoining Village’, given ‘the wanderings of his thought’, ‘past liberty, and tried restraints’ (Book I, ll. 338-9, 341, 333). Childhood walks offer the Wanderer not only liberty of mind but also his individuality; as Celeste Langan comments on Rousseau’s liberalism, the ‘equation between freedom and mobility is to deinstitutionalize citizenship’.¹³⁷ Therefore, the Wanderer emphasises his wish for the boys — to set them free from physical restraint in a directionless and leisured manner — through a series of motions, imagining them ‘let loose, to seek their pleasant homes, / Or range the grassy lawn in vacancy, / To breathe and to be happy, run and shout / Idle’ (Book IX, ll. 260-3). Wordsworth’s idea that to use wandering in the natural world to conserve rural people’s individuality while they are citizens of the British Empire is palpable here.

Wordsworth also suggests that ranging in the natural world helps rural people valorise rural life. In Book I, the Author registers the adolescent Wanderer’s valorisation

¹³⁷ Langan, p. 33.

of his walking in the natural world, while admitting his inadequate public education:

For intellectual progress wanting much,
Doubtless, of needful help — yet gaining more;
And every moral feeling of his soul
Strengthened and braced, by breathing in content
The keen, the wholesome air of poverty,
And drinking from the well of homely life.
(ll. 327-32)

This passage mirrors the idea in *Émile* that ‘not that every child needs a teacher all to himself to organise his social environment and to direct and guide him in his upgrowing’.¹³⁸ The dash cements the paradoxical contrast between ‘wanting much’ and ‘gaining more’, suggesting that despite the lack of ‘intellectual’ knowledge from ‘needful help’ (no matter teachers or schools), the teenager receives sufficient ‘soul’ and ‘moral’ teaching from domestic individual education. Another paradox between ‘poverty’ and ‘content’ further registers that the Wanderer’s spiritual satisfaction is fulfilled by his simple material possessions. Rural life brings him up. The asyndeton gives equal importance to ‘the keen’ and ‘the wholesome’, thereby revealing the paradoxical characters of ‘homely life’: it is rustic and tough, given the piercing (‘keen’) air, and yet it is also conducive to mental and ‘moral’ well-being.¹³⁹ It is ‘doubtless’, Wordsworth suggests, that teachers and educational institutions can offer the adolescent Wanderer intellectual knowledge, and yet spiritual guidance or individual development can only be provided by Nature. The countryside, after all, by virtue of its natural landscapes, can cultivate the local children with moral values. If rural children, like the Pastor’s sons, can range the fields, they will receive this kind of domestic education and learn that rural life is sublime; they will not ‘repine’ for their

¹³⁸ *Émile*, p. 171.

¹³⁹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘homely’, 2. a, ‘keen’, 4. b, and ‘wholesome’, adj. 1.

[...] Cottage-comrade, whom
Belike no higher destiny awaits
Than the old hereditary wish fulfilled,
The wish for liberty to live — content
With what heaven grants, and die — in peace of mind,
Within the bosom of his native Vale.
(Book IX, ll. 274-9).

Here, Wordsworth's Wanderer admires country life's 'hereditary' morals: freedom, simple desire, and domestic affections. In his view, these should be the highest 'destiny' for a 'Cottage-comrade' to fulfil; however, as he laments, 'domestic bliss, / (Or call it comfort, by a humbler name,) / How art thou blighted for the poor Man's heart!' (Book VIII, ll. 264-6). The countryman's 'native Vale', embodying rural England, is sacrificed for the British Empire's industrialisation. If in 'this Imperial Realm' (Book IX, l. 294), rural children have to preserve their citizenship, to go to village school or to work at factory, so as to serve the empire, then, the Wanderer suggests, it is crucial for them to find time to range the rural landscape, and thus to save their own individuality and rural morals. Wordsworth seems to tell both his urban and rural readers that to serve the country better entails to valorise the countryside more.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the improvement of roads is presented in *The Excursion* as an ambivalent example of industrialisation, which makes transportation easier but morality worse. Wordsworth alludes to John Milton and Jean-Jacques Rousseau to argue that pre-modernised roads have moral significance in that they are formed by custom and usage, and suggest a natural organic relationship to the landscape. Whereas the easy and convenient road network produced by industrial improvement is immoral, for it involves much human labour, and disturbs the local tenants' common rights. I have also argued that enclosure movements in the Lake District are divided into two types:

ancient enclosure and planned enclosure (mainly parliamentary enclosure). Wordsworth holds divergent attitudes towards them: he admires the former, but opposes the latter. Some critical accounts do not distinguish the ancient enclosures from the planned ones made by parliament, and thus they tend to see Wordsworth as a poet who holds positive attitude towards parliamentary enclosure and shows no sympathy for the poor peasants.

Roads are one of the schools of nature education, and yet they are not the only place for rural people to develop observation. If we see *The Excursion* as Wordsworth's potential rescue plan for rural England and its labouring class there in the face of the Industrial Revolution and British imperialism, then the poet suggests rural people look to rural life itself, as it can unfetter souls. The Wanderer is optimistic that 'those blooming boys, whose hearts are almost sick / With present triumph, will be sure to find / A field before them freshened with the dew / Of other expectations' (Book IX, ll. 29-32), in that the 'field' *per se* is promising. Wordsworth suggests that the fields where rural people labour every day could be the schools that open their souls, as long as they keep their mind active and excursive through the connection to their senses. To intensely observe, listen, smell, touch, and feel the rural landscapes allows the labouring class to receive individual, domestic education from nonhuman nature, and this for Wordsworth reconciles the tensions between the compulsory, fixed labour and the leisured wandering. Seen in this light, it is fitting for the Wanderer to lament over 'the rustic Boy, who walks the fields, untaught' (Book IX, l. 164). Furthermore, Michael the shepherd thus seems a good example for rural people who live in poverty and repeat their daily work in the fields: 'his bodily frame had been from youth to age / Of an unusual strength', for 'his mind was keen, / Intense and frugal' and 'watchful more than ordinary men' ('Michael', ll. 43-5, 47).

From the 1793 version of *An Evening Walk* to the 1800 version of *Lyrical Ballads*, and to *The Excursion* published in 1814, Wordsworth's presentations of the rural Lake District and the inflection of modern improvement on the local landscape gradually change. As the Industrial Revolution develops, and the Napoleonic War climaxes after 1810, rural labourers become more involved in a wider national and global context, the

effect of which is to sacrifice domestic rural life. As we have seen, in *An Evening Walk* and 'Michael', Wordsworth admires the poor cottagers for their domestic affections and attachment to the land, whereas in *The Excursion*, he laments over the poor rural workers' unawareness of losing the liberty of both body and mind.

Under the same industrial and imperial contexts other poets besides Wordsworth pay attention to the ambivalent influences brought by modernising 'improvement,' such as parliamentary enclosure. John Clare, like Wordsworth, also writes about the contrasting road conditions between pre-and post-enclosure, and about how the situation of roads influences rural people and the local nonhuman nature. Next, I will examine his presentation of the relationship between roads and nonhuman nature, within the context of parliamentary enclosure.

Chapter Three

Roads, Nature, Interconnectedness in John Clare's Enclosure Elegies and the Bird's Nest Poems

Both Wordsworth and Clare address the effects of parliamentary enclosure on their local areas. In particular, they describe walking on pre-modernised roads and lament over their destruction or disappearance. If Wordsworth's *The Excursion* focuses more on how the improved road system affects human society, in terms of transportation, trade, social industry, and education, then Clare's enclosure elegies tend to concentrate more on how nonhuman creatures in his native village Helpston are deprived of common rights as landscapes are changed and customary routes are blocked. For example, in 'The Mores', Clare registers how 'the plover in its pleasure free' has 'vanished' (ll. 38, 39), the 'bush' and the 'flower' 'are grubbed and done' (ll. 41-3), and the 'flocks' become 'imprisoned ill at ease' (l. 50).¹ Compared with Wordsworth's ambivalent presentation of modern improvement in *The Excursion*, Clare's enclosure elegies boldly articulate an ecological protest against enclosure. That Clare loves nature and especially those nonhuman creatures in his local parish has been discussed for a long time.² James McKusick notes 'the interrelatedness of all life forms' in Clare's works, and points out that the poet's commitment to his local environment contributes to his knowledge of such interrelationships.³ And yet the role of roads in helping Clare's speakers to acquire the knowledge of human-nonhuman interconnectedness has not been examined. Helpston's pre-enclosure roads allow the common rights of both humans and nonhumans. By virtue of their openness, they enhance the interconnectedness between Clare's walkers and the natural world.

This chapter explores how Clare presents the relationship between roads, nature,

¹ *Poems of the Middle Period*, II, 347-50.

² See Barrell; Bate, *Romantic Ecology*; Bewell, *Natures in Translation*; Castellano, *Romantic Conservatism*; James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

³ James McKusick, "'A Language that is ever green': The Ecological Vision of John Clare", *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 61 (1991/ 92), 226-49 (pp. 226-7).

and interconnectedness in his enclosure elegies and some of the bird's nest poems. I argue that for Clare Helpston's pre-enclosure roads are 'paths to freedom' ('The Mores', l. 69), which make humans and nonhumans interconnected. The roads also allow the walkers' mobility within their locality, which results in their worship of nature and rootedness to the local. Clare's elegies claim that through stopping Helpston's customary enclosure inflicts the loss of habitat, sustenance, and freedom on the poor commoners as well as nonhuman creatures. In the bird's nest poems, Clare uses the image of roads to reveal the dilemma of human-nonhuman connection. On the one hand, roads invite the walkers to admire and protect the bird's nest; on the other, roads also suggest danger for the nest as human presence disturbs the bird. In addition, through describing whether a road is friendly or dangerous, Clare emphasises that for birds the privacy of nesting environment is less important than the trust offered by the neighbouring inhabitants. The real danger for the bird's nest comes from humans.

Helpston's country roads and paths had been accessible before the Enclosure Act passed in 1809, when Clare was sixteen years old. They connected different types of habitat, from arable land to pasture, from limestone heath to woodland and fen. The connectivity of roads allowed one's mobility within the local parish, and the shared common rights made local people and nonhuman inhabitants interconnected. However, after the arrival of enclosure, many of the paths 'which ran across the new fields were either deliberately "discontinued", or have simply become disused, and may or may not survive'.⁴ According to John Steane, 'a long straight road was laid out, linking Glinton and Helpston and the Peterborough Market Deeping turnpike road' (see Appendix II).⁵ The Enclosure Act transformed the open arable fields, common, and waste land to small enclosed fields, so as to raise agricultural production and feed the ever-growing population, especially in the towns. In addition, the growth of industry and the Napoleonic Wars both added to the demand.⁶ As John Barrell notes, what enclosure aims to achieve is 'to de-localise, to take away the individuality of a place', to erase the

⁴ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks and Their Interpretation*, p. 132.

⁵ John Steane, *The Northamptonshire Landscape: Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), p. 236.

⁶ Hindle, *Roads, Tracks and Their Interpretation*. p. 131.

local road-system from the map.⁷ Through examining Clare's contrasting presentations of Helpston's pre- and post-enclosure roads, this chapter reveals that roads play a crucial role in human-nonhuman interactions.

The relationship between walking and nature in Clare's writings has received some critical attention. Anne D. Wallace argues that Clare removes walking from the quotidian world because the Clarean pedestrian desires to 'rest in some unchanging, paradisaical place'.⁸ Wallace further points out that Clare's walkers continually seek pause, limitation, and unchanging places, unlike Wordsworth's walkers, who prefer motion, succession, and change.⁹ I think this claim is overstated, in that being local does not necessarily mean stasis. Admittedly, Clare lived in his home parish of Helpston before moving to Northborough in 1832 at the age of 39, and as Barrell notes, '[Clare's] knowledge was knowledge for him only in Helpston' as 'it was the only place he knew'.¹⁰ However, the bounded world does not make him insensitive to the place: walking on Helpston's country roads enables him to encounter nonhuman creatures, and to gain the knowledge of human-nonhuman interconnectedness. Clare celebrates walking as allowing for freedom 'from labour' ('Sunday Walks', l. 99), as well as the pleasure of connecting with nature.¹¹ David Higgins argues that Clare's wandering in the local 'without any apparent purpose or errand' actually makes him 'out of place'.¹² Indeed, to write about the place as experienced through walking enables the poet to 'separate it from the self by turning it into an object'.¹³ As we shall see in this chapter, in 'Remembrances', Clare suggests that repeatedly walking on the same roads within a bounded parish enables the walker better to know the local natural world. This mobility within locality results in the walker's rootedness to the local: the more mobile he is, the more interconnected he and nature are, the more pleased to be rooted to the locality he will be. Clare is a poet of locality, but it does not preclude him from being a poet of

⁷ Barrell, p. 120.

⁸ Wallace, *Walking*, p. 107.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁰ Barrell, p. 120.

¹¹ John Clare, 'Sunday Walks', in *The Early Poems of John Clare 1804-1822*, ed. by Eric Robinson and David Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), II, 645-51.

¹² Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 87.

¹³ *Ibid.*

mobility.¹⁴

Critics have examined Clare's presentation of protection and violation in the bird's nest poems.¹⁵ John Goodridge focuses mainly on human blundering behaviours and the safety offered by the natural world in poems such as 'The Yellow Hammers Nest'.¹⁶ Although Goodridge acknowledges that for Clare, human 'presence itself is, by implication, dangerous to the bird and its eggs', he does not address the tension between the speakers' protective concerns for the bird's nests and the concurrent quiet intrusions.¹⁷ In contrast, Elizabeth Helsinger has noticed the coexistence of the speakers' protection for and intrusion into the bird's nests in poems such as 'The Nightingales Nest'.¹⁸ And yet her critical accounts only appear in the form of brief comments rather than sustained analysis. This chapter sheds new light on the dilemma of the speakers' interactions with the birds' nests through focusing on the contradictory roles of roads: they invite both the human admirer and the adoring intruder of the nests at the same time.

This chapter examines Clare's enclosure elegies and some of his bird's nest poems, in that they both oppose modernity's tendency to seek economic gain at the cost of ecological sustainability. The first three sections discuss five enclosure elegies: 'The Mores' (early to mid-1820s), 'Remembrances' (1832), 'Helpstone' (1809-13), 'Thy little brig is broken down' (1832-7), and 'The Lament of Swordy Well' (1832-7). Section one examines three different scenes of 'freedom' in 'The Mores' (l. 69), and argues that Helpston's open roads before enclosure enable the interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans. The second section focuses on 'Remembrances', and claims that

¹⁴ Scholars have examined the importance of 'place' and 'locality' in Clare's Helpston poems. See, for example, Alan Bewell, 'John Clare and the Ghosts of Nature Past', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 65 (2011), 548-78; Richard Cronin, 'In Place and Out of Place: Clare in *The Midsummer Cushion*', in *John Clare: New Approaches*, ed. by John Goodridge and Simon Kövesi (Helpston: The John Clare Society, 2000), pp. 133-48; Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry* (London: Faber, 1995), pp. 63-82; Elizabeth Helsinger, 'Clare and the Place of the Peasant Poet', *Critical Inquiry*, 13 (1987), 509-31; David Higgins, "'Hail England Old England My Country & Home": Englishness and the Local in John Clare's Writings', *Victoriographies*, 2 (2012), 128-48; Simon Kövesi, *John Clare: Nature, Criticism and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), chapter 1, pp. 1-78; Tom Paulin, *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State* (London: Faber, 1992), chapter 3, pp. 47-55.

¹⁵ See Siobhan Craft Brownson, "'Waterflies with Tiny Wings': Marking Nature in John Clare's Poems", *John Clare Society Journal*, 25 (2006), 51-64 (p. 60); John Goodridge, *John Clare and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chapter 6 'The bird's nest poems, protection and violation'; Helsinger, 'The Peasant Poet', p. 522; Elizabeth Helsinger, 'Poem into Song', *New Literary History*, 46 (2015), 669-90 (p. 677).

¹⁶ Goodridge, pp. 136-44.

¹⁷ Goodridge, p. 138.

¹⁸ Helsinger, 'The Peasant Poet', p. 522.

repeatedly walking on Helpston's country roads enables Clare's speaker to establish deep associations with natural spots, and to further regard Nature as a divine home. Section three returns to the discussion of 'The Mores', and argues that through stopping the customary roads, enclosure deprives Helpston's humans and nonhuman inhabitants of common rights, but makes their interconnectedness more prominent. Through imaginatively walking on 'paths to freedom' ('The Mores', l. 69), Clare's self-conscious speaker launches ecological protest against enclosure.

Sections four and five focus on the role of roads in Clare's bird's nest poems. The fourth section examines 'The Robins Nest' (1832), and argues that a road leads Clare's speaker to admire the solitude and rootedness of the robin's nest, thereby enabling human-nonhuman connection. In the last section, I first focus on 'The Nightingales Nest' (1832) to explore the double role of the woodland road, which not only brings human admiration and protection, but also disturbance and danger to the bird's nest. I also argue that in 'The Pettichaps Nest' (1825-6) and 'In the hedge I pass a little nest' (1832-7), Clare paradoxically claims that seemingly dangerous paths actually offer the bird's nest safety, whereas seemingly friendly roads are actually risky. By doing so, he attempts to emphasise that the real danger for the birds comes from humans.

'Paths to Freedom' and Human-Nonhuman Interconnectedness

My argument about Helpston's country roads and the interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans can be clarified by examining Clare's 'The Mores', which he composed in the early to mid 1820s. Although the poem is well known to critics, the role of pre-enclosure roads — that is, 'paths to freedom' (l. 69) — in connecting humans to nonhumans has not been well examined. Anne D. Wallace has pointed out 'the necessity of freedom to wander in old paths', and yet she considers the countryman's walking simply as 'an aesthetic and an empirical act', which makes possible 'his aesthetic enjoyment of natural scenes' and 'his economic prosperity'.¹⁹ A deeper interconnected relationship, I argue, exists between humans and nonhumans in

¹⁹ Wallace, *Walking*, pp. 112-3.

Helpston, and this is conveyed by Clare's presentation of three different forms of 'freedom' (l. 69), as perceived and experienced through walking: the moorland's 'unbounded freedom'; the local inhabitants' common rights to various types of habitat; and the nonlocal wayfarer's imaginative freedom. Next, I will examine how these three forms of 'freedom' display the human-nonhuman interconnectedness in pre-enclosure Helpston.

According to John Barrell, 'The Mores' is an elegy 'about the enclosure of a tract of moorland to the east of Helpston'.²⁰ In the very beginning of the poem, Clare depicts the moorland's 'unbounded freedom' by a dynamic, 'wandering scene' that one perceives while walking:

Far spread the moorey ground a level scene
Bespread with rush & one eternal green
That never felt the rage of blundering plough
Though centurys wreathed springs blossoms on its brow
Still meeting plains that stretched them far away
In uncheckt shadows of green brown & grey
Unbounded freedom ruled the wandering scene
Nor fence of ownership crept in between
To hide the prospect of the following eye
Its only bondage was the circling sky
One mighty flat undwarfed by bush & tree
Spread its faint shadow of immensity
& lost itself which seemed to eke its bounds
In the blue mist the orisons edge surrounds.
(ll. 1-14)

As Barrell argues, Clare follows James Thomson, presenting a picturesque landscape in

²⁰ Barrell, p. 143.

the manner of eighteenth-century landscape-description.²¹ There is no 'I' in the passage: a disembodied speaker is narrating a picture of moorland in the distance. Also, the word 'scene' suggests a vocabulary produced by the literary mode of the picturesque.²² However, it is noteworthy that although this account is based on the literary convention of descriptive poems, Clare lends individuality and truthfulness to the moorland through his actual knowledge of it. The moorland had unbroken continuity, transcending time, because no human's interference ('rule') or selfish exploitation ('the rage of blundering plough') ruined its autonomy; it had 'unbounded freedom'. And yet this was not only temporal, but also spatial. The moors were visually limitless, as their 'immensity' went far beyond 'the orisons (horizon's) edge', and thus the scene could not be perceived as a whole all at once. In addition, 'uncheht' reveals that Clare does not portray a static moorland over there as the traditional picturesque landscape; quite the contrary. He asks his speaker to walk along the vast, scroll-like picture, so as to fully unfold and display the immense moors. In this way, the scene is moving with the speaker's movement, and therefore wanders like a living thing. Seen in this light, the adjective 'wandering' is transposed from the walker to the moorland, and thus makes them interconnected.

While delineating the 'wandering scene', Clare forgoes a traditional prospect preferred by the eighteenth-century landscape poets: 'the point of view offered by an elevated prospect, from which [one] can look down and survey the landscape'.²³ Instead, he portrays 'a level scene' viewed from the ground: 'one mighty flat undwarfed by bush and tree'. In Barrell's view, 'the level scene' is an 'empty prospect', for 'the eye moving to the horizon is engaged by nothing'.²⁴ For the picturesque poets like Thomson, such prospect 'unfixed' their eye and thus could not be looked into.²⁵ In contrast, for Clare, emptiness signifies freedom, 'an escape from limits', from the 'fence of ownership'.²⁶ Besides, 'level' also denotes equality. 'Undwarfed' suggests that 'the

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²³ Bridget Keegan, 'The World without Us: Romanticism, Environmentalism, and Imagining Nature', in *A Companion to Romantic Poetry*, ed. by Charles Mahoney (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 554-71 (p. 558).

²⁴ Barrell, p. 144.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Keegan, p. 558.

moorey ground' and the 'bush and tree' appeared to share the same height when the walker looked straight and wandered along the scene. Clare seems to indicate that the viewer is equal to the view, and humans are not superior to nonhuman nature. If human beings could treat nature as equal, then they might perceive nature's freedom.

Clare suggests that the autonomous habitat guarantees the free access of its inhabitants. The second pre-enclosure scene shows that domestic animals have the similar common rights of way as the local people, and this makes them an interconnected community made up of both human and nonhuman creatures:

The sheep & cows were free to range as then
Where change might prompt nor felt the bonds of men
Cows went & came with every morn & night
To the wild pasture as their common right
& sheep unfolded with the rising sun
Heard the swains shout & felt their freedom won
Tracked the red fallow field & heath & plain
Then met the brook & drank & roamed again
The brook that dribbled on as clear as glass
Beneath the roots they hid among the grass
While the glad shepherd traced their tracks along
Free as the lark & happy as her song.

(ll. 23-34)

To some extent, 'the sheep and cows' were autonomous, though they were livestock. Their 'freedom' lay in their 'common right' to 'range' and roam outdoors part of the day, without being confined in an enclosure all day long: they didn't feel 'the bonds of men'. Clare specifically makes a distinction between the cows and sheep's mobility, according to his real rural life and attentive observation. Three specific periods — 'every [evening] morn and night' — suggest that the cows' regular daily rhythm related

to grazing: they knew when to go ‘to the wild pasture’, and came back according to the sun’s rising and setting. Whereas the sheep went out earlier than cows; when the sun was rising, they had ‘unfolded’, spread outside. They did not need human beings to give them the signal to roam, and thus when they heard ‘the swains shout’ at their back, they felt ‘their freedom won’. Furthermore, the autonomy of the sheep also lay in that they knew the route of roaming, and were in the lead of the shepherd, who could only ‘trace their tracks along’ behind them. The sheep roamed from place to place across various types of habitat, as they were more selective than the cows in their choice of food, and thus needed various grazing areas, such as ‘red fallow field, heath, and plain’. For the shepherd, the act of tracing the sheep adjusted his walking pace to that of them (when they ‘met the brook’, they stopped and ‘drank’), and thus he moved in unison with them. As two similes in ‘free as the lark & happy as her song’ suggest, the shared mobility with the sheep imparted autonomy and pleasure rather than restriction to the shepherd. Through creating new tracks while reproducing the sheep’s free pace, the shepherd demonstrated that he, like the sheep, had his own common right to various types of habitat, and this freedom was more than a vicarious autonomy produced by watching the sheep’s free mobility. The shared feelings of freedom and happiness, together with the shared common rights of way, reflect that humans and nonhuman creatures in pre-enclosure Helpston were an interconnected community. Here, the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep can be seen as an example of Ingold’s ‘meshwork’, which, as I discussed in the Introduction, means a texture of ‘entangled lines of life, growth, and movement’.²⁷ In Ingold’s view, ‘walking is a matter of laying a trail as one goes along’, and along the trail ‘life is lived’.²⁸ Seen in this light, in ‘The Mores’, the roaming sheep live their life along their tracks, and the shepherd also lives out his identity through tracing the sheep’s tracks and, at the same time, lays his own trail. These two kinds of trails overlap, and therefore form a meshwork of interwoven threads of life, in which the shepherd and the sheep interact with each other.

As we have seen, Clare uses ‘the wandering scene’ and the shepherd’s tracing

²⁷ Ingold, *Being Alive*, p. 63.

²⁸ Ingold, *Lines*, pp. 76, 81.

sheep's tracks to suggest that the act of walking directly prompts interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans. In contrast, in the third pre-enclosure scene, the poet describes how a nonlocal wayfarer gained his imaginative freedom through 'fancys [fancy's] eye', and thereby connected to the physical landscape:

Each little path that led its pleasant way
As sweet as morning leading night astray
Where little flowers bloomed round a varied host
That travel felt delighted to be lost
Nor grudged the steps that he had taen as vain
When right roads traced his journeys end again
Nay on a broken tree hed sit awhile
To see the mores & fields & meadows smile
Sometimes with cowslaps smothered—then all white
With daiseys—then the summers splendid sight
Of corn fields crimson oer with the 'head ach' bloomd
Like splendid armys for the battle plumed
He gazed upon them with wild fancys eye
As fallen landscapes from an evening sky.
(ll. 51-64)

Although 'each little path' was accessible to the traveller, they might make him lose his way. According to Barrell,

the system of roads in an open-field parish [...] is in the first place for the circulation of men and cattle within the parish [...] There will often be no particular distinction between a road that will in fact lead the traveller, however indirectly, out of the parish, and one which leads the farmer to his land and the labourer to his

work but takes the traveller nowhere.²⁹

Barrell rightly points out that the road-system of an open-field village confuses a non-local pedestrian, and as Clare writes in 'Helpstone': 'So when the Traveller uncertain roams / On lost roads leading every where but home' (ll. 179-80).³⁰ 'Astray' in the third pre-enclosure scene is a significant word, referring to 'away from the right way and into error or evil' (*OED*), but is used paradoxically to admire the bright 'morning' that chased the darkness of 'night' away. For the traveller, although the labyrinth-like little path leads him to the wrong way, its charm is as alluring and 'sweet' as the morning, and thus 'that travel felt delighted to be lost'. The personified 'travel' shares the traveller's joy, emphasising that compared to the pleasant journey, the destination seemed less important.

What made the misleading path 'pleasant' was 'little flowers bloomed round a varied host': 'the mores & fields & meadows'. For the sake of seeing them 'smile', the traveller was willing to pause and 'sit on a broken tree' for a while. 'Smile' has two meanings here. First, it refers to a pleasing aspect of a physical thing: that is, the flower covering of the lush ground.³¹ This sense reveals that Clare's traveller anthropomorphises the landscape, but without anthropocentrism. To some extent, he does not impose his own state of mind or feelings on nature; on the contrary, he places the emphasis on the natural object being perceived over the subject doing the perceiving. Furthermore, the ground 'smile[d]' also for celebrating its spontaneous transformation. Two dashes suggest that following the rhythms of season, the flowers also shifted, and bloomed without being interfered with by humans. The traveller knew that the flowers changed with seasons, for Helpston's open roads allowed him to visit the moorland frequently. His mobility was unsystematic and leisurely, and yet as David Higgins argues, for Clare 'the freedom to wander is also the freedom to wonder'.³² As Tim Ingold puts it, quoting Jane Rendell, walking along is 'in itself, a way of thinking

²⁹ Barrell, p. 87.

³⁰ *Early Poems*, I, 156-63.

³¹ See *OED*'s entry for 'smile', v. I. 3.

³² Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 98.

and knowing — “an activity that takes place through the heart and mind as much as through the feet”³³ Clare’s traveller, here, although paused during the journey, integrates his body with thinking processes, in which his imaginative freedom runs wild. ‘Fancys eye’, like Wordsworth’s ‘mind’s eye’, suggests that for Clare fancy also reaches out toward the world, and needs a visual prompt. The traveller not only compared the ‘crimson’ poppies to the ‘armys (armies)’ in uniform, but also synthesised the immediate view, and transformed it into a new mental picture: ‘fallen landscapes from an evening sky’. He associated the poppies with crimson clouds at dusk, and this connection between perceived and imagined pictures suggests that human-nonhuman interconnectedness could also be realised in an imaginary way. Nonetheless, without Helpston’s roads, the three scenes of freedom would not be portrayed. The phrase ‘paths to freedom’ is still worth examining in the post-enclosure context, but before the discussion of it, I will continue exploring the role of Helpston’s roads in the interactions between Clare’s walkers and the natural world.

Mobility, Locality, Rootedness

Helpston’s pre-enclosure roads not only enhance the interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans, but also result in Clare’s rootedness within locality. In Anne D. Wallace’s view, being local and mobile at the same time is paradoxical, in that a local pedestrian does not seek change or prefer motion.³⁴ And yet Clare’s mobility within the local reveals that the more mobile the walker is, the more connected he and the natural world will be, and the more eager to be rooted to the local he will be. This point can be clarified by examining ‘Remembrances’ (1832), in which the speaker recollects those joys once occurred at Helpston’s natural spots, while walking on the local roads long after Helpston’s enclosure.³⁵ I argue that repeatedly walking on Helpston’s country

³³ Ingold, ‘Footprints through the Weather-World: Walking, Breathing, Knowing’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 16 (2010), 121-39 (p. 135). See also Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: Walker Books, 2006), p. 190.

³⁴ Wallace, *Walking*, p. 108.

³⁵ Ian Waites doubts that ‘Remembrances’ might not mean to be ‘an anti-enclosure elegy’, but a ‘nostalgic treatise on aging’, in that by 1832, enclosure had happened such a long time ago. See Ian Waites, “‘The prospect far and wide’: An Eighteenth-Century Drawing of Langley Bush and Helpston’s Unenclosed Countryside”, *John Clare Society Journal*, 28 (2009), 5-22 (p. 12). For similar critical accounts, see Barrell, pp. 174-5; Jonathan Bate, *The Song of the*

roads enables Clare's speaker to establish deep associations with those natural spots, and to further regard Nature as a divine home.

In 'Remembrances', the speaker revisits those spots that once offered him childhood joys, such as 'Langley bush', 'lea close oak', 'cross berry way', and 'old round oaks narrow lane' (ll. 61, 63, 65).³⁶ The plant-related names of places indicate that the natural world delights the speaker; this is why he writes that he 'calls' 'these pleasant names of places' 'to mind' (ll. 35-6). According to Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, this poem offers 'a map of Clare's boyhood, bring[ing] together many of the favourite places that are mentioned elsewhere in his work, many of which can be located on enclosure and ordnance (survey) maps'.³⁷ As Alan Bewell notes, 'the metaphor of a map is appropriate', in that Clare portrays 'his own form of ordnance mapping', 'a counter-history of the Helpston countryside', through recalling 'the plants, traditional names, local associations, and experiences that were being erased from the landscape'.³⁸ Among the natural spots, Clare particularly emphasises 'round oaks narrow lane' through repeating the joy twice. Near the conclusion of the poem, the speaker laments that '& cross berry way & old round oaks narrow lane / With its hollow trees like pulpits I shall never see again' (ll. 65-6), which reminds the reader of his childhood pleasure described forty lines earlier:

When in round oaks narrow lane as the south got black again
We sought the hollow ash that was shelter from the rain
With our pockets full of peas we had stolen from the grain
How delicious was the dinner time on such a showry day
O words are poor receipts for what time hath stole away
The ancient pulpit trees & the play.
(ll. 25-30)

Earth, p. 165. I consider that in 'Remembrances', Clare might suggest both a nostalgia for childhood and a protest against enclosure.

³⁶ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 130-4.

³⁷ John Clare, *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period 1822-1837*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, 5 vols (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996-2003), IV, p. 595.

³⁸ Bewell, *Natures in Translation*, p. 292.

‘Again’ reveals that the speaker and his friends often ‘play[ed]’ outside till the sunset (‘the dinner time’), and at that very time they were in ‘round oaks narrow lane’ more than once. The link between activity, time, and place also appears in the lines preceding the passage: for example, ‘jumping time away on old cross berry way’, or ‘skipping like a leveret before the peep of day’ (ll. 21, 23). This suggests that the speaker ‘used to’ (l. 11) do a certain activity at a certain place and time. Repeatedly walking on ‘round oaks narrow lane’ offers the speaker related knowledge of that place. He might have observed ‘the hollow ash’, and thus knew that its hiddenness could ‘shelter’ them ‘from the rain’, but also from being discovered when they stole ‘peas from the grain’. The double joy of eating the stolen food inside a secret place on a rainy, dark evening made ‘the hollow ash’ of ‘round oaks narrow lane’ unique for the speaker as well as his boyhood playmates. The plural pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’, emphasising a group rather than an individual’s activities, indicates that the speaker’s nostalgia for his childhood is a collective memory of pre-enclosure Helpston.

In ‘Remembrances’, the speaker’s recollection of ‘round oaks narrow lane’ is longer than those of other spots, in that ‘the hollow ash’ offers him not only joy but also home-like attachment. His spiritual bond with the tree evokes both his irresistible memories of it and his disappointment that memory cannot be fully recorded by language: ‘O words are poor receipts for what time hath stole away’. The comparison of ‘the hollow ash’ with a ‘pulpit’ suggests a connection between nature and faith. If the tree can be seen as a metonym for nature, and the pulpit, a metonym for religion, then the association between them indicates that as a spokesman for nature, the hollow ash preaches its doctrine: that is, rootedness. The ancient tree connects to the earth through its roots, and Clare seems to use the image to emphasise that home attaches to a fixed place, that is, the ‘native spot’ (‘Helpstone’, l. 51). Rootedness makes home and a tree interconnected. In this passage, the hollow tree protects humans as home does: it offers ‘shelter from the rain’ as well as ‘dinner’ (‘peas’) on the difficult ‘showry day’. Through highlighting the speaker’s repeatedly walking on ‘round oaks narrow lane’, Clare shows

that the mobility within locality leads his walker to worship nature, and to long for being rooted to his native place. The speaker's lamentation over the destruction of 'old round oaks narrow lane' — 'with its hollow trees like pulpits I shall never see again' — reveals that for Clare parliamentary enclosure destroys his spiritual home through levelling country roads. Timothy Heimlich points out that 'the hollow ash makes for an especially potent metonymic stand-in for the larger landscape because its hollowness calls to mind the absent presence of what once filled it'.³⁹ Indeed, the present levelled landscape was brimming with vibrant life in the past, and the hollow ash can best display the contrast between emptiness (or desolation) and vitality.

Although 'The Flitting' complicates Clare's rootedness to Helpston's natural world, at least in his enclosure elegies, the poet claims that his spiritual home lies in his native village's nonhuman entities. In 'Helpstone', he asks who 'feels his heart warm to view his native place / [...] to trace / The vanish'd green to mourn the spot to see / Where flourish'd many a bush & many a tree' (ll. 71-4). As Barrell notes, Clare 'is only familiar with nature in his own parish and thus can only concentrate on that'.⁴⁰ Given that the poet had been living in Helpston for 39 years before he moved to Northborough, his knowledge was thus knowledge only of Helpston, as 'it was the only place he knew'.⁴¹ Clare suggests that Helpston's natural world has 'a strong attachment' in his mind, and he forges a 'friendship' with the local nonhuman creatures ('Helpstone', ll. 91, 13). This point is clearly shown in an autobiographical fragment composed in the early 1820s (the passage of 'the edge of the orison'), in which Clare describes that beyond the boundary of the local, he feels alienated from nonhuman creatures:

I had imagin'd that the worlds end was at the edge of the orison and that a days journey was able to find it [...] so I eagerly wander'd on and rambled among the furze the whole day till I got out of my knowledge when the very wild flowers and

³⁹ Timothy Heimlich, 'Repetition and Melancholia in John Clare's "Remembrances"', *John Clare Society Journal*, 38 (2019), 61-76 (p. 73).

⁴⁰ Barrell, p. 120.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

birds seemd to forget me and I imagind they were the inhabitants of new countrys.⁴²

As Higgins emphasises, Clare's uncertainty of his identity is conveyed by 'the conceit that the flowers and birds no longer know who he is'.⁴³ The poet considers that his familiarity with the wild flowers and birds measures whether he trespasses beyond the boundary of his knowledge, 'the edge of the orison (horizon)'. He tends to see those nonhuman creatures that he knows within his parish as native, and those beyond as alien: 'the inhabitants of new countries'. The place-specific wild flowers and birds suggest that for Clare his nonhuman friends hold a strong bond with Helpston. If the very place is destroyed, his spiritual world will also decay.

'No road here' and Ecological Protest

Given Clare's strong attachment to Helpston's nonhuman inhabitants, when enclosure arrived at his native village and stopped the old customary roads, he tended to care about nonhuman creatures as much as the poor commoners, and to boldly speak for their sufferings. This contrasts with Wordsworth's Wanderer in *The Excursion*, who tends to focus more on how human society is influenced by the improved road system, and to ambivalently register human's exploitation of natural sources. Going back to the discussion of 'paths to freedom' in 'The Mores', it is noteworthy that Helpston's customary roads are not only for humans: enclosure's destruction of them also inflicts the loss of habitat, sustenance, and freedom on the local nonhuman inhabitants. In one of the post-enclosure scenes, the speaker presents the interconnected sufferings of the poor commoners and nonhuman creatures resulting from the closed roads:

These paths are stopt—the rude philistines thrall
Is laid upon them & destroyed them all
Each little tyrant with his little sign

⁴² John Clare, *John Clare: By Himself*, ed. by Eric Robinson & David Powell (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2002), p. 40.

⁴³ Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 91.

Shows where man claims earths glows no more divine
 On paths to freedom & to childhood dear
 A board sticks up to notice 'no road here'
 & on the tree with ivy over hung
 The hated sign by vulgar taste is hung
 As tho the very birds should learn to know
 When they go there they must no further go
 Thus with the poor scared freedom bade good bye
 & much the[y] feel it in the smothered sigh
 & birds & trees & flowers without a name
 All sighed when lawless laws enclosure came.
 (ll. 65-78)

The image of 'little sign' hung 'on the tree' is significant, as it shares the message of 'no road here' with 'a board' sticking up on footpaths through the old arable fields, suggesting that nonhuman creatures, such as birds, are also deprived of their common rights by enclosure.⁴⁴ For the speaker, Helpston's local trees are the potential habitats for birds, and thus it seems that to hang a sign of 'no road here' on a tree means not only to keep walkers away, but to deter birds although they do not understand human language. The act of sign hanging 'shows' no respect to birds' common rights, reflecting that 'man claims earths glows no more divine'. This point is further emphasised by 'the tree with ivy over hung', in which the greenness, embodying Nature, is ruined both aesthetically and morally by the 'vulgar taste' shown in 'the hated sign'. Through an anti-anthropocentric point of view, Clare exaggeratedly claims that the enclosed trees (with the sign of 'no roads here') result in the detour or displacement of birds. By contrast, in another poem 'Thy little brig is broken down' (1832-7), Clare directly points out that because of the 'stopt' 'foot path' (l. 3), the isolated 'little spring head' (l. 17) distances itself from the thirsty animals:

⁴⁴ See Steane, p. 236.

The horse that seeks his thirst to suit
Now blunders from thy brink
& prints the gravel with his foot
To make a place to drink.⁴⁵
(ll. 65-8)

The alliteration in 'blunders' and 'brink' emphasises the horse's clumsy and cautious movements by the edge of the enclosed stream. He dares not trespass, and thus cannot drink freely or at will: he has to put 'his foot' 'on the gravel' outside the water, rather than directly into the stream. 'Place' is a metonym for the horse's common right. Enclosure occupies the horse's original drinking place through limiting his freedom to access the stream, and to some extent, renders him displaced; he thus has 'to make a place' for himself. By contrast, although Helpston's pre-enclosure roads were 'battered', 'tr[o]d sad & printed too', they were 'throw[n] / With scores of happy feet' ('Thy little brig is broken down', ll. 53, 55-6). The paradoxical claim reveals that for Clare the common rights delighted inhabitants and enabled them to ignore the difficulty of customary paths.

The shared loss of common rights makes the interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans more prominent. As Katey Castellano notes, the alliance between animals and the poor in Clare's enclosure elegies lies in that they 'all become displaced victims of enclosure and improvement'.⁴⁶ In 'The Mores', the speaker laments that the arrival of enclosure prompts a 'sigh' from both 'the poor' commoners and 'all' nonhuman creatures 'without a name'. Here, humans and nonhumans are interconnected in a double sense. They share the same sadness and disappointment caused by the deprived freedom. More importantly, this insignificant group, 'without a name' or power, cannot utter their sufferings: they have to 'feel it in the smothered sigh'. In contrast, Clare claims in some enclosure elegies that a poet has the power to hear the

⁴⁵ *Poems of the Middle Period*, V, 344-7.

⁴⁶ Castellano, *Romantic Conservatism*, p. 89.

silent sufferings of nonhumans. For example, in ‘The Lament of Swordy Well’, Clare employs anthropomorphism and prosopopoeia to ‘give a voice to the land’.⁴⁷ The speaker gives it ‘the room to speak’, for he knows that it feels ‘wronged’ by enclosure, and thus seeks ‘some sort of right’, and needs ‘a friend’ to speak for its ‘petition’ (ll. 44, 41, 42, 241, 1).⁴⁸ The ‘friend’ should be able to understand the land’s sufferings and enslavement, and thus a native poet is justified in claiming back the habitat’s freedom through poetry. As Bewell notes, poetry can provide the land ‘with a hearing’ so as to expose the ‘absence of social justice’.⁴⁹

Despite the warning sign of ‘no road here’ made by enclosure, Clare arms himself with poetry, and launches an ecological protest through imaginatively walking on ‘paths to freedom’, which are not only physical, but also mental. In ‘The Mores’, in order to reopen the closed paths, Clare’s speaker continues to march on a pathless path to pre-enclosure Helpston, through recalling his childhood memories. However, his reminiscence of the moors is always suspended by the reality’s disruption. Nevertheless, the speaker can always resume, because his desire for freedom empowers him to break the fetters added by enclosure. He contrasts the past unfettered moorland with the present imprisoned scenes three times. The alternate descriptions of memory and reality make the poem walk, with a recurrent action of putting one foot (the past) in front of the other (the present). With half of its length for the past (14, 12, 14) and half for the present (8, 16, 16), the 80-line poem takes six steps and sets up a rhetorical equation (see Table 1). At the end of ‘The Mores’, the poet delivers a confident commentary: ‘& dreams of plunder in such rebel schemes / Have found too truly that they were but dreams’ (ll. 79-80). He believes that enclosure would fail to fence in his poetic freedom, and can only be his target of satire.

Descriptions about pre-enclosure moorland	Descriptions about post-enclosure moorland
14 lines (ll. 1-14)	8 lines (ll. 15-22)

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴⁸ *Poems of the Middle Period*, V, 105-14.

⁴⁹ Bewell, ‘The Ghosts of Nature Past’, p. 567.

12 lines (ll. 23-34)	16 lines (ll. 35-50)
14 lines (ll. 51-64)	16 lines (ll. 65-80)

Table 1

In ‘The Mores’, walking on an imaginary road and searching for freedom are not only embodied in subject matter and structure, but also in form. Clare’s deliberate omission of punctuation renders the poem devoid of end-stopped lines. No line boundaries suggest ‘no fences to divide his lines into smaller parcels’, exhibiting Clare’s protest against enclosure.⁵⁰ Furthermore, these enjambed, open-ended lines make the poem assume a network of pathways that connect to or even cross over each other. In addition, Clare’s employment of iambic pentameter lends ‘the human heartbeat’ to the poem.⁵¹ The natural and steady beat, also like one’s steps, forms a stable background against the speaking voice, and thus ‘keeps the reader in check’.⁵² Clare is walking on his open-ended path-like lines, which are beaten by the pull between the past and the present, back and forth. Walking, the feet’s constant entanglement and attachment to earth, pushes forward the poet, and leaves him into a state of retrieving freedom.

It is noteworthy that both Wordsworth and Clare dislike parliamentary enclosure, and yet they present it in different ways, for different reasons. As we have seen in *The Excursion*, The Wanderer ambivalently describes the over-exploitation of natural resources promoted by industrial improvement, and Wordsworth’s opposition to parliamentary enclosure arises from preserving the small independent yeomen from disappearance. In contrast, Clare uses the word ‘rebel’ to publicly protest against enclosure and the attendant improvement. For example, in ‘Thy little brig is broken down’, the speaker describes the sound of ‘the little spring’ (l. 17) as a ‘merry song’ (l. 103), which cannot be stopped by ‘change’ (l. 105), and could ‘reach the sky’ (l. 106):

⁵⁰ Helsinger, ‘The Peasant Poet’, p. 516.

⁵¹ Erin Lafford and Emma Mason, ‘Falling from Trees: Arborescent Prosody in John Clare’s Tree Elegies’, in *The Eudaimonic Turn: Well-Being in Literary Studies*, ed. by James O. Pawelski and D. J. Moores (Lanham, Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), pp. 97-113 (p. 99).

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 109.

‘Or soon the dwellers in the moon / Would hear a rebel nigh’ (ll. 107-8). Clare’s denunciation of enclosure results from the encloser’s pursuit of wealth, and this has been well examined by critics.⁵³ However, Clare also criticises enclosure for being blind to the interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans:

Now all laid waste by desolations hand
Whose cursed weapons levels half the land
Oh who could see my dear green willows fall
What feeling heart but dropt a tear for all
Accursed wealth oer bounding human laws
Of every evil thou remains the cause.
(‘Helpstone’, ll. 123-8)

The repeated ‘cursed’ / ‘accursed’ is used to describe ‘weapons’ and ‘wealth’, two words that share the same sound ‘wea’. The aurally echoing effect emphasises that enclosure’s pursuit of ‘wealth’ launches wars against the natural world through ‘weapons’— industrial machines or axes that can ‘level half the land’— and thus it is detested (‘cursed’). Here, the ‘evil’, ‘cursed weapons’ remind us of the similar Satanic ‘Creation’ in *The Excursion*, who ‘wield[s] her potent Enginery’ (ll. 92, 94). However, unlike Wordsworth’s description of an ambivalent ‘War’ (*The Excursion*, l. 96), which is both productive and destructive, Clare’s war is purely barbaric, and ruins both ‘the land’ and ‘human laws’. Clare is aware that the damage caused by enclosure involves both humankind and the natural world; as E. P. Thompson notes, the poet ‘was not writing about man here and nature there, but lamenting a threatened equilibrium in which both were involved’.⁵⁴ McKusick argues that ‘the scope and originality of Clare’s ecological vision emerges from’ his sense of locality, in that it nurtures ‘a deep sense of the relation

⁵³ See Goodridge, p.106; McKusick, ‘The Ecological Vision’, p. 239; Ronald Paul, “‘A Language that is Ever Green’: The Poetry and Ecology of John Clare”, *Moderna Språk*, 2 (2011), 23-35 (p. 30); Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City*, intro. by Tristram Hunt (London: Vintage, 1973/2016), p. 199.

⁵⁴ E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p. 184. See also John Parham, ‘The Poverty of Ecocritical Theory: E. P. Thompson and the British Perspective’, *New Formations*, 64 (2008), 25-36 (p. 33).

of all creatures to a habitat in which the human observer is also implicated'.⁵⁵ Indeed, the seemingly narrow local environment paradoxically offers Clare a broad vision that humans and nonhumans are interrelated. For him, the enclosers are small-minded and short-sighted, as they only care about 'profit' and 'gain' because of their 'greedy mind', while ignoring the potential hazard of the over-exploitation of the land ('The Lament of Swordy Well', ll. 13, 15, 130). As Swordy Well articulates, the enclosers 'worked me till I couldnt stand / & crush me now Im down' ('The Lament of Swordy Well', ll. 23-4). To seek economic interest at the cost of ecological sustainability, Clare suggests, is not wise or progressive. The corrupt 'human laws' here, given that 'joy had left the paths of men' ('Remembrances', l. 71), seem to appeal to both social and environmental justice.⁵⁶

'Level', referring to 'to make a surface even', is a word that Clare likes to describe how the enclosure promoters destroy the land through removing bushes, trees, and hills.⁵⁷ The verb seems to signify 'to reduce inequalities in the surface'(*OED*), echoing the free moorland's 'level scene' before enclosure in 'The Mores', and yet on the contrary, it can be seen as an antiphrasis, suggesting inequality and superiority. For example, in 'Remembrances', Clare argues that 'Inclosure like a Buonaparte let not a thing remain / It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill' (ll. 67-8). Enclosure is personified as a Bonapartist tyrant, who has a 'zeal for the conquest of ever more land' through wiping out everything.⁵⁸ The repetition of 'levelled every' emphasises the cruelty of the enclosure-despot, who seems so supreme that can deprive 'every bush and tree' of their rights to life. However, published in 1832, 'Remembrances' actually uses the historical fate of Napoleon, who was isolated on St. Helena then, to speak to the gloomy future of the governmental land policies.⁵⁹ As Michael Nicholson comments, 'enclosure itself becomes leveled through the history of Napoleon's fall'.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ McKusick, 'The Ecological Vision', p. 235.

⁵⁶ See Goodridge, p. 106.

⁵⁷ See *OED*'s entry for 'level', v.1, l. 1. a.

⁵⁸ Ross Wilson, 'Clare's Indistinct Array', *Romanticism*, 17 (2011), 148-59 (p. 152).

⁵⁹ See Michael Nicholson, 'The Itinerant "I": John Clare's Lyric Defiance', *ELH*, 82 (2015), 637-69 (p. 660).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Clare also links 'level' to a matter of taste, suggesting that politics, economy, and aesthetics are not separated.⁶¹ As Raymond Williams notes, 'wealth is not only hard and cruel but tasteless'.⁶² Clare considers enclosure's plan of leveling the land similarly 'tasteless'. For example, in 'The Lament of Swordy Well', he writes, 'when grain got high the tasteless tykes / Grubbed up trees banks & bushes' (ll. 59-60), and in stanza 107 of 'The Village Minstrel' (1821), he writes, '— Inclosure thourt a curse upon the land / & tastless was the wretch who thy existance pland' (ll. 1091-2).⁶³ By contrast, he comments that the desire for Helpston's trees and bushes is a good taste: 'A fond desire that there they might remain / & ah old favourites fond taste approves' ('Helpstone', ll. 92-3). Katey Castellano has examined Clare's essay 'Taste', and emphasises that 'Clare argues that the man of taste prefers the "bleak common" because "he loves variety better than order"'.⁶⁴ Topographical aesthetics reflect ethics and horizons. For Clare, the levelled, unified land embodies 'a single commanding point of view' of the enclosure-tyrant, who is selfish, single-minded, and cares only about individual ownership of land.⁶⁵ Whereas Helpston's commons are 'wild' with irregular surface, as they are imprinted, battered and 'thrown up' by 'sheep', 'rabbits' and 'Moles'.⁶⁶ This for the poet suggests multiplicity, inclusiveness, and a broad vision in which nonhuman creatures are involved in the habitat, besides humans. In the bird's nest poems, Clare seems to suggest that one can develop wide-mindedness through walking on the roads to the natural world. Next, I will continue the discussion of Clare's presentation of roads, nature, and interconnectedness, and examine their complex relationships in some of the bird's nest poems written around 1832.

⁶¹ See Katey Castellano, 'Moles, Molehills, and Common Right in John Clare's Poetry', *Studies in Romanticism*, 56 (2017), 157-76 (p. 162); Donna Landry, 'The Geopolitical Picturesque', in *Land and Identity: Theory, Memory, Practice*, ed. by Christine Berberich, Neil Campbell, and Robert Hudson (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi), p. 107; Vardy, p. 21.

⁶² Raymond Williams, p. 199.

⁶³ *Early Poems*, II, p. 169.

⁶⁴ Castellano, 'Moles', p. 163.

⁶⁵ Hess, p. 31.

⁶⁶ John Clare, *The Natural History Prose Writings of John Clare*, ed. by Margaret Grainger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 289.

‘Old ancient solitude’ and ‘Old tennants’

So far this chapter has addressed the role of Helpston’s country roads in Clare’s enclosure elegies. The ‘paths to freedom’ not only make possible the interconnectedness between humans and nonhumans, but also the walker’s mobility within the given locality, which results in his worship of nature and his rootedness to the local. The paths stopped by enclosure inflict the loss of common rights on both humans and nonhumans, and provoke a poet’s ecological protest against enclosure. Clare continues to use the image of roads in some of the bird’s nest poems to present human-nonhuman interactions. First, in ‘The Robins Nest’, a road leads Clare’s speaker to admire the solitude and rootedness of the robin’s nest, thereby enabling human-nonhuman connection. Clare depicts how the walker-speaker, with a specific direction and purpose, ‘trace[s] the path of briar entangled holt’ (l. 42) to the ‘old wood’ (l. 45), so as to escape from the noisy world and regain his identity: ‘to seek the silence of [each ancient tree’s] ancient reign / & be my self in memory once again’ (ll. 40-1). As Robin Jarvis points out, this poem ‘relieves the undermotivation of rural walking with a quest motif’.⁶⁷ The ‘old ancient solitude’ (l. 65) in the bird’s nest reminds the walker of ‘old days’ (l. 57) and his pursuit: ‘the rest of peace the sacredness of mind’ (l. 58). He attributes ‘this old ancient solitude’ to ‘old neglect’ (l. 50), who

lives patron & befriends
Their homes with safetys wildness—where nought lends
A hand to injure—root up or disturb
The things of this old place—there is no curb
Of interest industry or slavish gain
To war with nature so the weeds remain
& wear an ancient passion that arrays
Ones feelings with the shadows of old days.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 187.

⁶⁸ *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 532-6.

(ll. 50-7)

Clare anthropomorphises the phenomenon of ‘neglect’ into a ‘patron’.⁶⁹ In another poem, while apostrophising the mole, Clare’s speaker writes, ‘I feel thy guest / & hail neglect thy patron who contrives / Waste spots for the[e] on natures quiet breast’ (‘The Mole’, ll. 11-3).⁷⁰ Clare suggests that being neglected signifies protection and ‘safety’ for small animals’ ‘homes’, such as the robin’s nest and the mole’s den. To make homes within the wild enables the environment’s ‘wildness’ to protect the birds from being exposed. Thus ‘the weeds’, as the embodiment of ‘wildness’, sustain the birds’ nests. ‘The weeds’, as Alan Bewell notes, ‘are important symbols’ in Clare’s poetry, ‘for he believed that they constituted a living link to Adam’s original open garden’.⁷¹ In ‘The Robins Nest’, the poet regards ‘the very weeds as patriarchs’ (l. 63), confirming their role as the male (Adamish) head of a community, of ‘this old wood’ (l. 45).

However, as Johanne Clare points out, ‘the celebration of safety is expressed so constantly and, as it were, defensively, that the mind inevitably raises the spectre of its opposite — the danger’ from industrial society.⁷² Three dashes unfold the source of danger for the wild natural world: humans (suggested by the metonym ‘a hand’), destructive activities (‘root up or disturb’), and mercenariness (‘interest industry or slavish gain / To war with nature’). Here, Clare registers his anti-anthropocentric, ecological vision, as he does in enclosure elegies: he considers that humans tend to pursue economic interest at the cost of ecological sustainability. Like the enclosers’ small-mindedness and selfishness, in ‘The Robins Nest’, ‘men’ (l. 39) ‘see no glory but in sordid pelf / & nought of greatness but its little self’ (ll. 7-8). ‘Little’ describes the self-centred and short-sighted humans, who only care about their profit, without considering other more-than human creatures. As Mina Gorji points out, ‘John Clare is a great poet of little things’.⁷³ However, unlike the sense of tenderness and endearment

⁶⁹ Castellano, *Romantic Conservatism*, p. 160.

⁷⁰ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 294.

⁷¹ Bewell, *Natures in Translation*, p. 287.

⁷² Johanne Clare, *John Clare and the Bounds of Circumstance* (Kinston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), p. 179.

⁷³ Mina Gorji, ‘John Clare and the Triumph of Little Things’, in *Class and the Canon: Constructing Labouring-Class Poetry and Poetics, 1750-1900*, ed. by Kirstie Blair and Mina Gorji (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2013), pp. 77-94

suggested in 'little throat' and 'little wings' ('The Robins Nest', ll. 73, 81), 'little self' here reflects the speaker's contempt for the 'me[r]cenary spirit':

[I] look above the trivial things
To which prides me[r]cenary spirit clings
The pomps the wealth & artificial toys
That men call wealth beleagued with strife & noise.
(ll. 36-9)

'Beleagued' indicates that for the speaker to pursue 'wealth' only results in being attacked by profit-led troubles, full of 'strife & noise', in that the pursuit of 'wealth' never ends. The repetition of 'wealth' suggests this point through the redundancy of language. Sarah Houghton-Walker has well examined various forms of repetition in 'The Robins Nest', and points out that 'semantic connections across couplets' ('clings / toys') bring forth the word 'cloys', 'which is after all the very effect of the pomp and wealth Clare is criticising'.⁷⁴ Indeed, being controlled by 'slavish gain' makes one tired; whereas the old wood is 'far from the ruder worlds inglor[i]ous din' (l. 6) and 'so little meddling toil doth trouble here' (l. 62). The speaker thus finds the 'old ancient solitude' in the weeds' enduring protection of the birds' nests, and acquires a peaceful mind.⁷⁵

Besides the wild, undisturbed environment, Clare's speaker connects to the 'old ancient solitude' in the robin's nest also through the birds themselves. He considers the birds as the inheritors of solitude, for he believes that they are rooted to the liveable habitat:

& there these feathered heirs of solitude

(p. 77). Tim Chilcott points out that 'in the total sample of 10, 000 words, there are 'twenty referential words that Clare uses most often', and 'little' is one of them. See Tim Chilcott, 'John Clare's Language', *John Clare Society Journal*, 35 (2016), p. 11.

⁷⁴ Sarah Houghton-Walker, 'Forms of Repetition in "The Robins Nest"', *Romanticism*, 26 (2020), 139-52 (p. 146).

⁷⁵ Houghton-Walker points out that 'Clare's tautologous stutter in "old ancient solitude" might even be said to enact the very continuance of the woodland the tautology itself insists on'. See Houghton-Walker, p. 145.

Remain the tennants of this quiet wood
& live in melody & make their home
& never seem to have a wish to roam.
(ll. 88-91)

‘Tennant’ (tenant) is derived from a Latin word ‘tenere’, which means ‘to hold’ (*OED*). The difference between ‘to hold’ and ‘to own’ suggests that the birds’ stay at ‘the quiet wood’ is temporary, rather than permanent. As Elizabeth Helsinger notes, ‘even the birds are “tenants” who, though they may return again to build their nests in the same spot, are always at risk of eviction’.⁷⁶ Both Castellano and Helsinger point out that the birds and the commoners before enclosure are similar, as they both have nothing to do with private property, and compared with the land, their lives are seemingly shorter.⁷⁷ This seems about right: if the weeds will still ‘delight’ ‘ones curious eyes’ (l. 64) even after ‘ten years’ (l. 66) because they as plants are more ‘like old tennants’ (l. 67), then the birds’ relation to the land seems more temporary. However, Clare creates a tension between the birds’ terminable lease and the ‘feathered heirs of solitude’. He suggests that although the birds can fly away with their ‘feather’, they choose to continue living in the old quiet wood, and to inherit the ‘old ancient solitude’ of this place. This point can be further discussed by examining ‘The Moorehens Nest’, in which Clare emphasises the rootedness of the birds:

While every summer finds [an aged tree] green & gay
& winter leaves it safe as did the may
Nor does the more hen find its safety vain
For on its roots their last years homes remain
& once again a couple from the brood
Seek their old birth place & in safety mood

⁷⁶ Helsinger, ‘Poem into Song’, p. 677.

⁷⁷ Helsinger, ‘The Peasant Poet’, p. 521; Castellano, *Romantic Conservatism*, p. 161.

Lodge there their flags & lay.⁷⁸

(ll. 85-91)

Clare suggests that 'roots' sustain 'homes', and this has a double meaning. Apparently, as the 'roots' of the 'aged tree' continue, a couple of moorhens can keep dwelling in the 'last years homes', which are 'their old birth place' as well. More importantly, the stable tree 'roots' here, like the long-lived 'weeds' in 'The Robins Nest', hold strong attachments to the birds, in that these places provide 'safety' and protection to them, and thus enable them to 'lodge' and 'lay'. Clare's presentation of the birds' rooted tenancy reveals his rejection of the idea that 'nature has no property in itself and that nonhuman beings have no right to the land they occupy'.⁷⁹ As Bewell argues, Clare 'reasserted the moral economic claim that nature and country folk, by virtue of having lived in their places for centuries, could claim traditional tenants' rights'.⁸⁰

That the birds 'never seem to have a wish to roam' results from not only the safety but also the nesting materials offered by the old wood. Rootedness indicates satisfaction. As the speaker describes, the robin tends to stay in his old nest because of its coziness: 'Yet from his ancient home he seldom stirs / In heart content on these dead teazle burs' (ll. 70-1). 'Dead' paradoxically emphasises the robin's satisfaction of his nest. As Houghton-Walker notes, 'even death is capable of sustaining life and maintaining tradition, as "dead teazle burs" are woven into the robin's habitat as well as into the poetic fabric through rhyme, to preserve the next generation in both sense'.⁸¹ Clare suggests that 'nature is the builder and contrives / Homes for her childerns comfort' ('The Nightingales Nest', ll. 83-4).⁸² The habitat offers the birds materials to nest, and in turn, the birds help nature recycle seemingly insignificant, unexploited resources; the relationship between them is symbiotic. In some of the bird's nest poems, Clare describes bird-nesting materials that are taken from nature, such as withered

⁷⁸ *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 468-71.

⁷⁹ Bewell, *Natures in Translation*, p. 282.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Houghton-Walker, p. 150.

⁸² *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 456-60.

leaves and twitch, bleached hay and weed, moss, grass, and hair. For example, in ‘The Nightingales Nest’, the speaker particularly shows curiosity about the simplicity of a nightingale’s nest, in which the bird disregards ‘scarce materials’ like ‘down and hair’, shows less interest in ‘dead oaken leaves’ and ‘scraps of grass’, and only chooses ‘velvet moss’ to nest (ll. 79-81). Although ‘nature will assuredly grant’ whatever the bird ‘wills for its own good with firm conviction’, the bird is not greedy, and only claims what it needs.⁸³ As John Goodridge comments, the bird’s nest reflects ‘the thrifty avoidance of waste in the cyclic economy of the natural world’.⁸⁴

Clare’s speaker specifically traces ‘the path of briar entangled holt’ to the bird’s nest, as he, like the birds, also hopes to be rooted to the old wood. He declares that his heart is ‘loath to part’ (l. 16) from the ‘old oak tree / Buried in green delights’ (ll. 14-5), and this is similar to the birds, who ‘never seem to have a wish to roam’. Such human-nonhuman connection is cemented by an analogy between ancient trees’ spiritual protection for the speaker and the weeds’ physical defence of the birds:

In words not heard but felt—each ancient tree
 With lickers deckt—times hoary pedigree
 Becomes a monitor to teach & bless
 & rid me of the evils cares possess
 & bids me look above the trivial things
 To which prides me[r]cenary spirit clings
 [...]
 To seek the silence of their ancient reign
 & be my self in memory once again.
 (ll. 32-7, 40-1)

The metaphor of ‘a monitor to teach & bless’ is reminiscent of the pulpit trees in

⁸³ Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. by T. Churchill (London: J. Johnson, 1800), p. 441.

⁸⁴ Goodridge, p. 138.

‘Remembrances’, which preach the doctrine of nature. To divert the focus from the wealth-related strife and noise to inner peace and silence is the advice or warning given by nature (‘each ancient tree’) here. Such spiritual edification protects the speaker from the modernised world’s invasion: ‘rid me of the evils cares possess’. The moral agency of ‘each ancient tree’ is experienced ‘in words not heard but felt’, like that of the stone sheepfold in ‘Michael’. Nonetheless, as ‘rid’ suggests, the silent power removes the disturbance of ‘mercenary spirit’ from the speaker, offering him spiritual safety. This protective role of ancient trees resembles that of ‘the weeds’, ‘patriarchs’ of ‘safetys wildness’, and thus the speaker’s spiritual world and the birds’ nests are analogous and interconnected.

In ‘The Robins Nest’, the speaker’s mobility in the old wood can be seen as an ecological act against the modern mercenary spirit, in that it enables him to be a hermit, similar to the birds, the ‘feathered heirs of solitude’. The ‘old ancient solitude’ makes the speaker and the robin interconnected: ‘& when in wood land solitudes I wend / I always hail him as my hermit friend’ (ll. 82-3). ‘Wend’, referring to the slowness of the speaker’s pace, enables him to observe the natural world carefully. Through rejection of speed, this kind of mobility invites the intimacy between humans and nonhuman creatures, as ‘my hermit friend’ suggests. Furthermore, ‘always’ reveals that the speaker’s frequent repetition of walking to the wood land also makes him and the local robin familiar and intimate. Thus, this friendship of celebrating solitude and rootedness forges an alliance that refuses the modern society, which has catalysed strife and circulation since the start of industrial and agricultural improvement. Higgins points out that ‘being a poet, for Clare, is about being a wanderer, a trespasser, a criminal, and Other’.⁸⁵ Although this complicates Barrell’s argument that Clare’s ‘own identity [...] depends on his staying where he is’ as he has ‘no desire’ to leave the place, Clare’s inability to adapt to modernisation is largely inflected by his rootedness to Helpston.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 96.

⁸⁶ Barrell, p. 123.

‘We’ll leave it as we found it’

In the bird’s nest poems, Clare uses roads not only to present human-nonhuman connection, but also to reveal the dilemma of it. Similar to ‘The Robins Nest’, in which ‘the path of briar entangled holt’ leads the speaker to the habitat of the robin’s nest, ‘The Nightingales Nest’ describes how the speaker as a guide hunts for a nightingale’s nest through walking along a ‘green wood land ride’ (l. 1). However, it is worth noting that the road in ‘The Nightingales Nest’ assumes two contradictory roles. On the one hand, the ‘green wood land ride’ enables the speaker to admire the nightingale and her music. On the other, this road suggests danger to the bird, as it makes the speaker an adoring intruder. First, in the very beginning of the poem, Clare describes the guide-speaker as an admirer of the nightingale, who invites the reader to join in his bird-watching:

Up this green wood land ride lets softly rove
& list the nightingale—she dwelleth here
Hush let the wood gate softly clap—for fear
The noise might drive her from her home of love
For here Ive heard her many a merry year
At morn & eve nay all the live long day.
(ll. 1-6)

Clare’s speaker uses a first-person plural (‘lets’) to address the reader, rather than the singular ‘you’, and this, as Hugh Haughton notes, attempts ‘to transport us vicariously to the bird’s habitat in the company of an expert local guide’.⁸⁷ The repetition of ‘let [...] softly’ emphasises the speaker’s entreaty for quiet and little ‘noise’, suggesting his ‘fear’ of disturbing the nightingale. Here, as critics note, Clare depicts the speaker as a

⁸⁷ Hugh Haughton, ‘Progress and Rhyme: “The Nightingale’s Nest” and Romantic Poetry’, in *John Clare in Context*, ed. by Hugh Haughton, Adam Phillips and Geoffrey Summerfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 51-86 (p. 60).

defender of the bird's nest.⁸⁸ 'Her home of love' indicates that in the speaker's view, the nightingale has the rights of habitation.⁸⁹ The rhyme in 'love' and 'rove' seems to suggest that our roving in 'the green woodland' makes possible our love for the bird's nest. It is noteworthy that the speaker particularly stresses the importance of using auditory sense in this journey. Mina Gorji has examined Clare's use of the word 'list', and she points out that for the poet's contemporaries, 'the verb "list" was not archaic, as it is now, and the transitive form of the verb without participle was still available'.⁹⁰ If this is the case, then 'list' might have a double meaning here: 'to listen to', and 'to make a list' (*OED*). Clare seems to suggest that nightingales tend to sing from dense scrub, and therefore in order to identify them, it is much easier for us to hear than to see.

Although the 'green wood land ride' enables the guide-speaker and his traveller-reader to listen to the nightingale, at the same time it also allows their 'presence' to disturb the bird's 'joys':

—How subtle is the bird she started out
 & raised a plaintive note of danger nigh
 Ere we were past the brambles & now near
 Her nest she sudden stops—as choaking fear
 That might betray her home—so even now
 We'll leave it as we found it—safetys guard
 Of pathless solitudes shall keep it still
 See there shes sitting on the old oak bough
 Mute in her fears—our presence doth retard
 Her joys & doubt turns every rapture chill.
 (ll. 57-66)

⁸⁸ See Goodridge, Chapter 6; Markus Poetzsch, 'The Bright Side of "Dark Ecology": John Clare and Henry David Thoreau', *John Clare Society Journal*, 34 (2015), 63-73; Sarah M. Zimmerman, 'John Clare's Conspiracy', in Simon Kövesi and Scott McEathron (ed.), *John Clare: New Essays on John Clare: Poetry, Culture and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 57-76.

⁸⁹ Mina Gorji, 'John Clare and the Language of Listening', *Romanticism*, 26 (2020), 153-67 (p. 153).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

This passage describes the adaptive interactions between the speaker and the nightingale: the guide uses his own listening of the bird's changing music to imagine the bird's listening of his approach. 'Danger' is metonymic of the presence of humans, suggesting that the guide recognises their movements as the cause of the nightingale's 'fear' and vigilance ('doubt'). Various changes in the bird's music indicate her changing emotions as the speaker gets closer. The nightingale's 'plaintive note' signifies her suffering for the imminent threat ('ere we were past the brambles'); the music 'sudden[ly]' reaches a rest when the speaker is near her nest, for the bird refuses to 'betray her home' by a voice full of 'choaking fear'. This protective action of being 'mute' prompts the speaker's responsive protection of the bird's nest: 'We'll leave it as we found it'. Gary Harrison comments that this quote 'has become a catch phrase for bird watchers, hikers, and mountaineers today', as it articulates 'the wilderness ethic'.⁹¹ Similarly, Haughton notes that 'this phrase is like a motto for Clare's poems which prefer recognitions to appropriations'.⁹² These critical accounts seem about right when considered in relation to the speaker's care for the nightingale's safety and 'joys'. However, his fear for her fear conveyed by the very motto-phrase cannot obscure the fact that the travellers have disturbed the nightingale and found her nest before they quit the further exploration: 'our presence doth retard / Her joys & doubt turns every rapture chill'. The speaker's admiration for the nightingale inevitably involves intrusion and disturbance, and the tension between humans and nonhumans here makes him both an admirer and an adoring intruder for the bird. As 'pathless solitudes' metaphorically indicates, for Clare a path signifies human presence and the potential noise and danger, whereas safety and privacy can only be guaranteed without a path and its invitation of humans.⁹³

If in 'The Nightingales Nest', Clare uses the double role of roads to expose the tension between the speaker's protection (love) and violation (disturbance) of the bird's nest, then in 'The Pettichaps Nest' and 'In the hedge I pass a little nest', he uses the

⁹¹ Gary Harrison, 'John Clare's Poetics of Acknowledgement', *Romanticism*, 18 (2020), 41-54 (p. 51).

⁹² Haughton, p. 65.

⁹³ In 'The Wild Bull', Clare also writes 'Yet safe she lives as in a pathless wood' (l. 37). *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 520-2.

image of roads to reveal a paradox: that seemingly dangerous paths offer the nest's safety, whereas seemingly friendly roads are actually risky. By doing so, Clare attempts to argue that the real danger for the bird's nest comes from humans rather than nonhumans. As Fiona Stafford notes, in many of the bird poems, 'snakes, cats, foxes and birds of prey lurk in these poems, ready to snap or pounce or swoop; but the greatest and most consistent predator is man'.⁹⁴ In 'The Pettichaps Nest', Clare uses a 'rut gulled waggon road' (l. 3) to present the speaker's vain protection for the bird's nest. 'Gulled' here has a double meaning.⁹⁵ Apparently, it means 'hollowed out' (*OED*), suggesting the deep furrow in the ground made by the wagon. However, it also means 'deceived' (*OED*), indicating that the seemingly rude road actually offers safety to the pettichap's nest, and thus is misleading. The walker-speaker takes a random road without a specific direction and roams without purpose, and finds a bird's nest at an exposed place by 'chance' (l. 11), which is 'close by the rut gulled waggon road / & on the almost bare foot-trodden ground' (ll. 3-4). He considers the place 'less likely for a bird to form / Its nest' (ll. 2-3) as the surroundings are too exposed:

With scarce a clump of grass to keep it warm
 & not a thistle spreads its spears abroad
 Or prickly bush to shield it from harms way.
 (ll. 5-7)

As David Perkins notes, the speaker 'causes the nest-disclosing alarm, but he does so inadvertently as he walks along, since the nest was built dangerously close to a public way'.⁹⁶ The speaker in 'The Nightingales Nest' and the one in 'The Pettichaps Nest' have different attitudes toward the bird's nest. The former knows nature's 'solitudes' can guard the bird's nest and ensure its safety because of the dense old wood land: '—

⁹⁴ Fiona Stafford, 'John Clare's Colours', in Simon Kövesi and Scott McEathron (ed.), *John Clare: New Essays on John Clare: Poetry, Culture and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 17-37 (p. 34).

⁹⁵ *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 517-9.

⁹⁶ David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights 1790-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 134-5.

safety's guard / Of pathless solitudes shall keep it still' (ll. 62-3). Thus, he advises the visitors, 'we'll leave [the nest] as we found it' (l. 62). In contrast, the speaker in 'The Pettichaps Nest' is apprehensive about the nest's safety, as there is less visible shelter from the natural world compared to the nightingale's in the wood: 'for fears rude paths around are thickly spread / & they are left to many dangers ways' (ll. 28-9). Therefore, the speaker decides to guard the bird's nest by himself.

Clare still uses a first-person plural form to show the speaker's identity as a guide, who instructs his readers to protect the fragile bird eggs: 'We'll let them be & safety guard them well' (l. 27). The speaker speculates that the dangers might come from the surroundings, given that the nest is located at the damaged, public road:

When green grass hoppers jump might break the shells
 While lowing oxen pass them morn & night
 & restless sheep around them hourly stray
 & no grass springs but hungry horses bite
 That trample past them twenty times a day.
 (ll. 30-4)

As Richard Cronin notes, the speaker is 'affected by the apparent vulnerability of these nests, that somehow survive though' livestock passes them many times every day.⁹⁷ The speaker's imaginative empathy with the bird reveals his own perception of the bird's perception.⁹⁸ Hyperbole (also an odd conceit) is used to describe how fragile the shell might be that even a 'grasshopper's jump might break' it. Nevertheless, nonhuman creatures (insects and livestock) do not make the expected dangers happen because of mutual faith: 'yet like a miracle in safety's lap / They still abide unhurt & out of sight' (ll. 35-6). As Jonathan Bate notes, "'The Pettichaps Nest' is a poem about trust".⁹⁹ It seems that here Clare presents how the natural world secretly conducts the protective

⁹⁷ Cronin, p. 145.

⁹⁸ See Cassandra Falke, 'Thinking with Birds: John Clare and the Phenomenology of Perception', *Romanticism*, 26 (2020), 180-90 (p. 187).

⁹⁹ Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, p. 160.

activity to guard the bird's nest. Although in terms of natural history, some nonhuman creatures might harm the fragile eggs of a bird, the speaker attempts to emphasise nonhuman creatures' symbiotic relationship. Such 'faith' is more prominent in 'The Wild Bull', in which Clare presents the friendship between 'skewish poneys' (l. 19) and their feathered 'neighbours':

The[y] bite the bush but never hurt their home
 & if a larks nest happens where they stray
 They'll snuff't—& sturt—and turn another way
 So birds are all that make such neighbours friends
 & for such faith snug safety makes amends.¹⁰⁰
 (ll. 24-8)

The ponies feel afraid and 'sturt' (start) when they narrowly save a lark's nest, and this sympathetic fear shows the interconnectedness between the ponies and their birds-neighbours. The birds have 'faith' in the neighbourhood and make 'friends' with the ponies, and therefore, they are rewarded with 'snug safety'. The cooperative relationship in the natural world enables the ponies to offer the birds' nests tacit protection: they 'turn another way'.¹⁰¹ According to W. John Coletta, from the perspective of ecology, this shows an 'ecological reciprocity' between different species living in the same territory.¹⁰²

In 'The Pettichaps Nest', although for Clare's speaker 'the rut gulled waggon road' is not a safe place to nest, faith offered by the surrounding nonhuman creatures makes the road the pettichap's 'chosen home' (l. 44). As we have seen in 'The Nightingales Nest' and 'The Pettichaps Nest', it seems that Clare tends to emphasise no matter where the bird's nest is, either in a shady, sheltered place like the wood land, or in an exposed place like the open road, the local natural community will guard its safety. According to

¹⁰⁰ *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 520-2.

¹⁰¹ W. John Coletta, 'Ecological Aesthetics and the Natural History Poetry of John Clare', *John Clare Society Journal*, 14 (1995), 29-46 (p. 34).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

Coletta, this phenomenon follows ‘the ecological function of territoriality’.¹⁰³ In a territory of bulls, cows, horses, and ponies (these herbivores belong to ‘an upper tropic or feeding level’), the birds’ nests are protected from intrusion because of ‘the top-down control mechanism’, a ‘function of the selfishness of other organisms’.¹⁰⁴ Seen in this light, in ‘The Pettichaps Nest’, that the road’s poor condition provokes the speaker’s protection of the bird’s safety seems unnecessary.

Clare tends to claim that human presence only brings negative impacts on the bird. For example, in an untitled poem (the first line is ‘In the hedge I pass a little nest’), he uses the connection between roads and passersby to paradoxically point out that the seemingly friendly road is actually ‘cheating’ (l. 37), for ‘they’re not all friends that wander bye / & faith is ill bestowed’ (ll. 27-8).¹⁰⁵ ‘Faith’, again, reveals that in Clare’s view, the safety of a bird’s nest depends more on the trust offered by the neighbour inhabitants than the privacy of the nesting environment. Roads are the locales where humans and nonhumans coexist and interact. The speaker, therefore, has a ‘fear’ (l. 31) that the faithless intruders through walking along roads might ‘quickly meet’ (l. 31) the birds and hurt them. He feels relieved that a brook like a ‘guardian’ (l. 13) keeps people from the young birds: ‘right pleasant brook Im glad ye lie / Between them & the road. (ll. 25- 6).

Focusing on the image of roads presented in Clare’s bird nesting poems allows us to question the tendency to idealise Clare’s ecological vision and to regard him as an eco-hero. James Fisher comments that John Clare is ‘the finest poet of Britain’s minor naturalists and the finest naturalist of all Britain’s major poets’.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, James McKusick argues that ‘Clare’s unique accomplishment in combining a deep sensitivity for natural phenomena with forceful environmental advocacy clearly entitles him be regarded as the first “deep” ecological writer in the English literary tradition’.¹⁰⁷ McKusick considers that Clare’s poetry ‘provides a powerful and suggestive model for

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 187-8.

¹⁰⁶ James Fisher, ‘The Birds of John Clare’, in *The First Fifty Years: A History of the Kettering and District Naturalists’ Society and Field Club* (Kettering, 1956), 26-69 (p. 26).

¹⁰⁷ McKusick, *Green Writing*, p. 78.

environmental advocacy, while it also carries enormous historical significance as one of the inaugurating moments of ecological consciousness in English literature'.¹⁰⁸

Admittedly, these critical comments successfully draw the reader's attention to Clare, a labouring-class poet who was undervalued for a long time. And yet they seem to make Clare's poems too neat, and barely acknowledge those places full of tensions and complexities. As Siobhan Craft Brownson notes, in 'The Green Woodpecker's Nest' and 'Woodpecker's Nest', Clare describes the speakers' conscious disturbance of the birds' nests, such as to bring the eggs down from the tree.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, as Markus Poetzsch points out, in Clare's autobiography, he describes 'invasive and appropriative engagements with the natural world — his tendency to uproot and relocate ferns, orchids and other wild flowers, to kill snakes and eat the flesh [...] of badgers and hedgehogs, to keep birds in captivity while also plundering and disassembling a great number of nests, and so on'.¹¹⁰ These activities 'separate the principles of Clare's environmental advocacy from his naturalist praxis', disproving McKusick's arguments.¹¹¹ In 'The Nightingales Nest' and 'The Pettichaps Nest', although Clare's speakers advise their birder-readers to leave the nests alone — 'we'll let them be' — the protective actions still entail human interference with the birds' habitats. To observe the bird's nest at a close distance, or to walk on the roads by the nest for guarding it, will both startle the birds and expose them to danger. The image of roads, inviting the human admirer as well as the adoring intruder, fittingly reveals the dilemma between letting nature get on with it and messing around with nature in a helpful way. The complex and ambivalent human-nonhuman interactions in the bird's nest poems remind us that Clare's environmental advocacy has its limitations, and should not be celebrated without thoughtful judgement.

Conclusion

¹⁰⁸ McKusick, 'The Ecological Vision', p. 227.

¹⁰⁹ Brownson, pp. 60-61.

¹¹⁰ Markus Poetzsch, 'The Bright Side of "Dark Ecology": John Clare and Henry David Thoreau', *John Clare Society Journal*, 34 (2015), 63-73 (p. 63).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Clare justifies Wordsworth's paradigm of domestic education in rural England, which emphasises that the rural population can cultivate individuality and the love of domestic rural life through walking in the natural world. As we have seen in 'Remembrances' and 'The Robins Nest', walking on the local roads leads the speakers to the ancient trees, which like monitors cultivate them in unutterable words to learn the doctrines of nature, such as rootedness and solitude. Focusing on the image of roads in Clare's enclosure elegies and the bird's nest poems enables us to examine the complicated relationship between humans and nonhumans. Roads enable Clare's walker-speakers not only to connect to the natural world, but also to realise the dilemma of human-nonhuman encounters. Through repeatedly walking on the same roads in a bounded parish, Clare's walkers show that being local does not necessarily mean being static. Their mobility within their locality leads them to worship the natural world, and to be rooted to the native place.

In dealing with some similar subjects, Wordsworth and Clare have different focuses. First, in terms of the negative effects caused by parliamentary enclosure, Wordsworth tends to focus more on mental liberty, whereas Clare is more concerned with the common rights and physical liberty (although imaginative freedom is also important for him). Besides, in terms of the relationship between roads, mobility, and knowledge, Clare tends to valorise repeatedly walking on the same roads in the locale, whereas Wordsworth's walking routes seem longer. However, both poets believe that walking in the natural world strengthens the attachments between humans and nonhuman nature, and further enables them to valorise the domestic rural land. When writing about the walkers' interactions with birds, Wordsworth tends to focus more on how the mindscapes are affected by the physical world, whereas Clare is more concerned with how nonhuman creatures are affected by human movements. Anti-anthropocentrism is more apparent in Clare's works than in Wordsworth's.

Unlike the rural labourers of the Lake District in *The Excursion*, who have lost their 'liberty of mind', Clare shows his own individuality in enclosure elegies to protest

against modernised improvement. He demonstrates that a poet can speak for silent nonhuman forms through intensively feeling and understanding their circumstances, or through imaginatively walking on 'paths to freedom'. Besides, as we shall see in Chapter 4, in his Northborough writings, Clare registers how walking on roads in the natural world can heal the self and encourage creativity. Next, I will explore the relationship between roads, memory, and fancy in Clare's Northborough writings, and investigate how Clare presents the relationship between walking and writing.

Chapter Four

Roads, Memory, and Fancy in John Clare's Northborough Writings

John Barrell has influentially argued that Clare's move to Northborough in 1832 brings a considerable change in his nature poems, as his task becomes 'to write about nature as abstract and not as local'.¹ The notion of 'abstract nature' is defined by Barrell in opposition to 'local'. For him, 'local nature' refers to those nonhumans in Helpston; whereas 'abstract nature' suggests those 'naked of associations' with the particular context of Helpston.² In a word, 'abstract nature' refers to nature that 'is the same as it is everywhere else'.³ However, to state that after moving Clare resolves everything into the abstract is too absolute: there are still passages in his Northborough texts indicating that nature is not the same everywhere. This chapter nuances Barrell's claim and explores how Clare, in his Northborough writings, presents both particular and common nature in a complex manner. Similar to Barrell's notion of 'local nature', 'particular nature', it seems to me, means those nonhuman entities related to Helpston. Whereas by 'common', I refer to the familiar, the insignificant, the vulgar, and the shared and accessible. 'Common' is a more flexible and historically appropriate term, and therefore I use it to replace Barrell's 'abstract', so as to better reveal Clare's complicated presentation of nature. This chapter argues that country roads enable Clare's speakers not only to connect with particular nature through memory, but also to write about common nature around them via the faculty of fancy. Roads as key places remind Clare's speakers of their deep associations with particular nature, and lead them to discover common nature's values.

Kim Taplin in *The English Path* argues that Clare relies on 'actual walks' rather than 'memories of the places' to 'shelter from psychological storms'.⁴ Similarly, Ben Hickman suggests that Clare 'makes a conscious attempt to resist' representing a

¹ Barrell, p. 177.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 176-7.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁴ Taplin, pp. 107-8.

landscape from a distance like Coleridge, who ‘steps back into a meditational sphere of frozen time’.⁵ Admittedly, Clare does write much about the relationship between walking, the natural world, and the self. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the speaker in ‘The Robins Nest’ traces the path into the old woodland so as to seek solitude. However, this does not necessarily mean that Clare never attempts to write imaginary walks. Actually, the example in ‘Happy Thoughts’ suggests that Clare does write about how imagination can achieve the same effects as walking on roads, and that the imaginary space might be as important as the physical one. As Paul Chirico points out, it is significant ‘to understand more richly the relation of Clare’s writings [...] to the bodily spaces which that memory and imagination are understood to inhabit’.⁶ In this chapter, I will show that in some of Northborough writings, Clare marries physical and imaginary landscapes.

This chapter builds on Tim Ingold’s ecological anthropology to explore Clare’s representation of how physical walking induces an imaginative experience. Ingold claims that ‘the terrains of the imagination and the physical environment’ have no ontological distinction because they are, in essence, images.⁷ Walking in the physical landscape and thinking in the imaginary landscape, in his view, are a matter of seeing. In both practices, the mind starts to work when engaged with things, whether they are corporeal or not. The objects have to be processed through ‘a visionary experience of revelation’, for they cannot be fixed in the mind unless they become visible.⁸ Therefore, ‘landscape is the work of the mind’, for both the physical landscape and the imaginary one are in the form of mental pictures.⁹ Ingold proposes that ‘to perceive a landscape is to imagine it’, and rejects the division between inner and outer world, as he believes landscape is a part of our experience.¹⁰ For him, perception connects to imagination by ‘the perpetual self-making of the world’.¹¹ He considers imagination as

⁵ Ben Hickman, ‘John Clare and the End of Description’, *John Clare Society Journal*, 30 (2011), 5-22 (p. 15).

⁶ Paul Chirico, ‘The Life of Rural Scenery’, *Romanticism*, 26 (2020), 191-201 (p. 192).

⁷ Ingold, ‘Ways of Mind-Walking: Reading, Writing, Painting’, *Visual Studies*, 25 (2010), 15-23 (p. 15).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁹ Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), pp. 6-7; See also Ingold, ‘Introduction’, in *Imagining Landscape: Past, Present and Future*, ed. by Tim Ingold and Monica Janowaski (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1-18 (p. 2).

¹⁰ Ingold, ‘Introduction’, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

a dynamic process to make things visible, to bring things into existence.¹² And thus, the landscape is perceived when it is ‘continually brought forth in the very act of imagination’.¹³

The faculty of fancy has long been regarded as opposed to the faculty of imagination, since Coleridge famously put forward the term ‘fancy’ and subordinated it to the latter.¹⁴ In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge makes a distinction between imagination and fancy, and defines the former as the ability to synthesise the external presence that the mind receives through the senses, and to transform it into something new.¹⁵ Whereas the latter for him, on the contrary, has no ability to engage with the outside world, ‘but fixities and definites’.¹⁶ The last twenty years have seen valuable scholarship on the poetic faculty of fancy, and focus has tended to be on the more privileged status of fancy than that of imagination in Clare’s works.¹⁷ For example, Adam White points out that in Clare’s sonnets fancy is more than the province of the playful and capricious, for it combines the external world with the internal thought and feeling.¹⁸ This chapter examines Clare’s both poetic and autobiographical works, and argues that in his writings, the poet extends the functions of fancy through imparting a protean aspect to the faculty. For Clare, fancy often evolves from association to synthesis, and from spontaneous responses to visual stimuli. This blurs the distinction between fancy and the aspects of what Coleridge and Wordsworth would designate imagination. In addition to explaining how fancy matters more than imagination in Clare’s works, this chapter also argues that Clare suggests a relationship between fancy and the common. White has noticed the relationship between fancy and a generalised landscape in Clare’s poems through focusing on the word ‘local’.¹⁹ Nonetheless, he

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Jeffrey C. Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry: The Fancy in British Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 2-3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

¹⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. 1, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 304-5.

¹⁷ See Robinson, *Unfettering Poetry*; Adam White, ““High-Commission’d” Fancy in the Poetry of Leigh Hunt, John Keats, John Hamilton Reynolds, and John Clare”, *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 27 (2013), 15-21; Adam White, *John Clare’s Romanticism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

¹⁸ White, *John Clare’s Romanticism*, pp. 68, 72.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

does not explain why Clare relates fancy to a less local landscape, for example in the poem 'Fancys'. I associate the word 'fancy' with the word 'common', as in Clare's view common nature meets fancy's visual needs of accessibility and emotional preference for joy. Jeffrey C. Robinson argues that the faculty of fancy indicates the unfettering of mind, as it can make 'reality more real' and thus awaken the conscious mind through 'de-familiarization'.²⁰ I will build on Robinson's argument and explore how Clare invokes fancy to write about the uncommon value of common nature.

The first section of this chapter focuses on 'The Flitting' (1832). It discusses how the encounters on roads act as connected images that remind the speaker of his sufferings of displacement and thus release his pain. Roads take him back into the past, for the physical movement induces the mental activity. Through the pictures of roads, the speaker starts his imaginative journeys according to their topographical vantage points. The speaker longs for Helpston's particular natural forms in his memories because of the friendship between them. The sense of place results in his yearning for a place-specific friendship that cannot move from place to place. 'Native poesy' offers the speaker another approach for happiness: common nature as its subject meets fancy's visual needs, and thus forges a sustainable friendship with the speaker. Section two examines 'On Seeing Some Moss in Flower Early in Spring' (1832), 'A Walk' (1832), 'Footpaths' (1832), and 'Autumn' (1841), and explores how roads can move Clare's speakers forward by exposing them to the value of common nature. Being ordinary does not necessarily mean being insignificant; common nature's right of life makes itself remarkable. Roads reveals that common nature's remarkableness also lies in its link with fancy. Clare considers that fancy has the function to inspire writing about joy in common nature, and this emotional preference suggests that fancy shares the synthetic faculty of imagination. The last section focuses on 'Musings of Melancholly' (1832), and argues that fancy is a transformative power, as it can evolve from associating with the visual impression to synthesising and reproducing mental images. Roads also reveal common nature's unnoticeable and detailed knowledge. By focusing on Clare's roads

²⁰ Robinson, pp. 11, 21.

and exploring their relationships with memory and fancy, this chapter sheds light on how Clare views particular and common nature.

Roads, Memory, and Particular Nature

My argument about roads, memory, and particular nature can be elucidated by examining ‘The Flitting’ (1832), which is recognised as the first poem that Clare writes about his move from Helpston to Northborough.²¹ Scholars have discussed the poem from the perspectives of displacement, nature’s value, and pedestrianism, and yet the role of roads has not, as far as I am aware, been subject to analysis.²² The image of ‘the narrow lane’ (l. 25) appears in the fourth stanza, and it allows the speaker to release his sense of loss caused by displacement: not until he steps on the road in his new home does he articulate that ‘happiness’ (l. 33) can only be offered by the natural world in his native place.²³ Before examining the effects of ‘the narrow lane’ on the speaker, I will first explore how the beginning of the poem accumulates his nostalgia for nonhuman creatures in his native place. By doing so, I argue that in ‘The Flitting’, Clare uses encounters on roads to link the speaker’s memory of his old ‘home bred pictures’ together, so as to alleviate his sufferings of nostalgia and displacement.

In the first two stanzas, Clare uses a repeated phrase ‘I miss’ to emphasise the speaker’s longing for the natural world in his native place:

I miss the hazels happy green
The bluebells quiet hanging blooms
[...]

²¹ See Jonathan Bate, *John Clare: A Biography* (London: Picador, 2004), p. 389; Martin Frederick, *The Life of John Clare* (London: Macmillan, 1865), p. 248; Shalon Noble, “‘Homeless at Home’: John Clare’s Uncommon Ecology”, *Romanticism*, 21 (2015), 171-81 (p. 173); Mark Storey, *The Poetry of John Clare: A Critical Introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 142; Anne D. Wallace, ‘Farming on Foot: Tracking Georgic in Clare and Wordsworth’, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 34 (1992), 509-40 (p. 520).

²² For studies on displacement, see Bewell, ‘The Ghosts of Nature Past’; Sara Guyer, *Reading with John Clare: Biopoetics, Sovereignty, Romanticism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015); Higgins, ‘John Clare’s Writings’. For studies on nature’s value, see Johanne Clare, *The Bounds of Circumstance*; Gorji, ‘The Triumph of Little Things’; Storey, *The Poetry of John Clare*. For studies on pedestrianism, see Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*; Wallace, *Walking*.

²³ *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 479-88.

I miss the heath its yellow furze
 Molehills & rabbit tracts that lead
 Through beesom ling & teazle burrs
 That spread a wilderness indeed
 The wood land oaks & all below
 That their white powdered branches shield
 The mossy paths—the very crow
 Croaks music in my native field.
 (ll. 5-6, 9-16)

It is noteworthy that in the second stanza, 'miss' is the only main verb in the eight lines, making all the other clauses subordinate to the main clause: 'I miss'. The paratactic syntax here lays stress on the referent, rather than the lyric subject 'I', and this enables the speaker to make a list of those nonhuman creatures in his 'old home' (l.1) that once impressed him. In doing so, the speaker could recall the mental pictures of the 'green fields & every pleasant place' (l. 2) of his native place. As Nicholas Birns notes, 'in missing "the heath its yellow furze" [Clare's speaker] is recognizing its physical absence, yet also soliciting its mental presence'.²⁴ Unlike the wintry bleak images of 'heath', 'furze', and 'ling' in 'Emmonsails Heath in Winter' ('I love to see the old heaths withered brake / Mingle its crimped leaves with furze & ling' (ll. 1-2)), in 'The Flitting', the 'yellow furze' on 'the heath' and the pinky heather ('beesom ling') represent the colourful 'summer' (l. 3) scenes. The season of 'summer' is significant in 'The Flitting': as a metaphor for the vibrancy of the natural world, it connects the speaker's old and new homes and recurs. After leaving his 'old home of homes', the speaker considers that 'the summer like a stranger comes / I pause & hardly know her face' (ll. 1, 3-4). The personified female 'summer' makes the speaker estranged from 'her', and this has nothing to do with the season per se, but results from his emotional

²⁴ Nicholas Birns, "'The Riddle Nature Could Not Prove": Hidden Landscapes in Clare's Poetry', in *John Clare in Context*, ed. by Hugh Haughton, Adam Phillips and Geoffrey Summerfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 189-220 (p. 202).

attachment exclusive to the summer of his native home, rather than the summer of any other places.

The speaker's obsession with things related to his old home becomes stronger in the third stanza, in which he hopes that his 'chair' and the 'bird-music' are from his native place, and thus he is familiar with them:

I sit me in my corner chair
That seems to feel itself from home
& hear bird-music here & there
From awthorn hedge & orchard come
I hear but all is strange & new
—I sat on my old bench in june
The sailing puddocks shrill 'peelew'
Oer royce wood seemed a sweeter tune.
(ll. 17-24)

The dash divides two contrasting scenes of the speaker's listening to the bird song while sitting. In the present scene, the stressed locations of 'awthorn hedge & orchard', together with the clause 'I hear but all', suggest that the speaker judges the bird song with attentiveness. However, it seems that he only knows the bird song from his old home, and this place-specific idiosyncrasy makes him regard the 'bird-music' from his new home as 'strange and new'. The corresponding memory of listening to the Helpston bird suggests the speaker's emotional bond with his native place. The pace of the poem accelerates: in lines 22-24, the speaker quickly draws the conclusion that the puddock's (red kite's) 'shrill' call in the old home is 'a sweeter tune' than the new home's 'bird-music'. The seemingly hasty judgement reflects that his auditory bias is based on where the sound is from, rather than how pleasant it is. As the oxymoron in the sweet shrill peelew suggests, the flight calls of 'peelew' made by the red kite are neither music nor 'tune'. However, given that the bird is from 'royce wood' of Helpston, the speaker thus

considers its sound as ‘sweet’, regardless of its potentially unpleasant shrillness. Clare’s choice of words also contributes to the speaker’s obsession with and belonging to his old home. The use of dialect in ‘puddocks’ and the name of a Helpston place ‘royce wood’ both reflect ‘the localness of the language’.²⁵ These provincial terms act as metonymic substitutes for Helpston, helping the speaker to remain loyal to his native village.

If the first three stanzas focus on the speaker’s nostalgia for the natural world of his old home, then from the fourth stanza, he starts to articulate his sufferings of displacement. Unlike the unnamed ‘bird-music’ that the speaker hears while sitting, the encounter of a ‘nightingale’ on ‘the narrow lane’ provokes him to vent his pain of no longer belonging to the native place, in that he considers the bird displaced like him:

I walk adown the narrow lane
 The nightingale is singing now
 But like to me she seems at loss
 For royce wood & its shielding bough.
 (ll. 25-8)

The seemingly shared displacement with ‘the nightingale’ enables the speaker to release a sympathetic sense of loss for himself and for the gendered bird as well. The image of ‘the nightingale’ suggests the continuity of a species in two locations. However, the enjambed phrase ‘at loss / For’ suggests that in the speaker’s view, the habitat of the nightingale can only be ‘royce wood’, and thus the bird’s current presence in his new home makes her unable to obtain the native place’s protection and support (indicated by the metaphoric ‘shielding bough’).²⁶ Given the shared longing for the native habitat

²⁵ Barrell, p. 128.

²⁶ The connection between the nightingale and Royce Wood is common in Clare’s writings. See John Clare, *The Letters of John Clare*, ed. by Mark Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 577. In a letter to Elizabeth Gilchrist, written in Spring 1832, Clare wrote: ‘There are some things that I shall regret leaving & some journey that I shall make yearly— to see the flood at Lolham Briggs— to gather primroses in hillywood & hunt the nightingales nest in royce wood & go to see the furze in flower on Emmonsails heath’. Besides, Clare thinks that nightingales might be absent from Northborough. See *The Letters*, p. 561. In a letter to John Taylor, written in January 1832, Clare wrote: ‘a Nightingale never reaches so far in her summer excursions’.

with the nightingale, the speaker seems not alone, and becomes sufficiently bold to pour out his sufferings: 'like to me she seems at loss'. Like the shepherd and the sheep in 'The Mores', the speaker and the nightingale also form a 'meshwork' (following Tim Ingold), as the threads of their movement from the old to the new home interweave. A person's mindscape (or 'life process', in Ingold's words) is partly created by the nonhuman creature.²⁷

Following the image of 'the nightingale', Clare specifically presents the encounters on 'the narrow lane' as connected images, which correspond to the natural scenes or nonhuman creatures in Helpston. These encounters on the road prompt the speaker to unleash his eagerness to get back home for restorative pleasure, because only the native place can offer him 'happiness':

I lean upon the window sill
The trees & summer happy seem
Green sunny green they shine—but still
My heart goes far away to dream

Of happiness & thoughts arise
With home bred pictures many a one
Green lanes that shut out burning skies
& old crooked stiles to rest upon
Above them hangs the maple tree
Below grass swells a velvet hill
& little footpaths sweet to see
Goes seeking sweeter places still.

(ll. 29-40)

The speaker halts his steps because of his mental torment, which compels him to 'lean

²⁷ See Kari Martin, 'The Hope of Creation'.

upon the window sill'. This pause not only signifies an interruption of his physical movement but also an absence of 'heart'. The repeated 'green' in 'Green sunny green they shine' suggests that the speaker perceives the 'happy' scene of 'summer trees'. The pleasant images, however, cannot content the speaker: '—but still / my heart goes far away to dream / Of happiness & thoughts arise / With home bred pictures [...]'. The enjambment here in 'to dream / Of happiness' in 'home bred pictures', like the previous 'at loss / For royce wood', emphasises the speaker's strong attachment to his old home. It seems that he only considers his native village as 'home'; no matter how 'green' the 'summer trees' are, he cannot enjoy their 'happiness' as they are not from his 'home'. As Jonathan Bate notes, Northborough 'never became home' for Clare.²⁸ The 'happy trees' provoke the speaker to divert his awareness from where he is (the new home) to where his mind is (the old home), as he is eager for the restorative pleasure from 'home bred pictures' to cure the unbearable sufferings of displacement.

Clare suggests that physical movement induces mental movement, for he connects the speaker's imagined pictures to the perceived encounters on roads. The speaker immerses himself in the imaginary rambling in the native village, and he first imagines the 'picture' of 'green lanes' among 'many a one', because it connects to the 'narrow lane', which he first perceives in his real walk. The 'old crooked stiles' and 'the maple tree', as a series of connected images, successively correspond to 'the window sill' that he 'leans upon' and 'the trees' shining 'sunny green'. That Clare unites perception and imagination is elucidated by Ingold's claim: the power of imagination lies in 'continually bringing forth the forms we encounter [...] in nature' while 'walking in the landscape'.²⁹ As I suggested earlier, Ingold argues that when the mind engages with landscapes, it tends to make them visible, because they can only be fixed in it as mental images.³⁰ The speaker here not only perceives the encounters — 'the narrow lane', 'the window sill', and 'the green trees' — with his eye, but also with his mind's eye. When his mind makes the encounters on roads visible, an imaginary landscape of his old home

²⁸ Bate, *John Clare: A Biography*, p. 388.

²⁹ Ingold, 'Ways of mind-walking', p. 23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18

is ‘continually brought forth’.³¹ Thus, the end of the real walk is where the imaginary walk starts from. Clare uses the present tense to suggest that the process of generating a virtual landscape is occurring, because an imagined landscape is a composition there to be ‘cast in the current of time’.³² Although the ‘home bred pictures’ derive from memories, they make the speaker mentally present at his native village through his walking in mind. For him, simply recollecting the fragments of memory cannot cure his sufferings of displacement. In order to ‘dream of happiness’, he has to spend more time in arranging the remembered images according to a topographical vantage point of roads: he not only thinks on roads and of them, but also with them.³³ The speaker describes how ‘green lanes’ unfold the landscape from different angles: upward view (‘above them hangs the maple tree’), top view (‘below grass swells a velvet hill’), and distant view (‘goes seeking sweeter places still’). It is walking, though imaginary, that allows the speaker to ‘have a real mobility, in terms of the ability to see in different directions’.³⁴

The speaker in ‘The Flitting’ needs to physically walk on roads and encounter things, so as to bring forth ‘home bred pictures’; in Rebecca Solnit’s words, ‘memory is unimaginable without physical dimensions’.³⁵ As some scholars have argued, unlike Coleridge, Clare relies on actual walks rather than imaginary movement to connect to a physical landscape.³⁶ Although for Clare ‘remembrance is a process solidified from things and spatial encounters’, imagination could occur without any help from the physical movement.³⁷ In ‘Happy Thoughts’ (1832), Clare shows that imagination can happen without the inducement of roads, claiming that imaginary walks can achieve the same effects as actual walks:

My spirits stir at liberty & play

³¹ Ingold, ‘Introduction’, p. 7.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³³ Robert Macfarlane, *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 26.

³⁴ Jo Lee and Tim Ingold, ‘Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socializing’, in *Locating the Field, Space, Place and Context in Anthropology*, ed. by Simon Coleman and Peter Collins (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 67-85 (p. 70).

³⁵ Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (London: Granta, 2014), p. 77.

³⁶ See Taplin, pp. 107-8; Hickman, p. 15.

³⁷ Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), p. 27.

With happy thoughts that ramble far away
 Along the waggon rifted lanes & woods
 That give bold outline to the level plain
 Where old embowering oaks lift over head
 An arch of bowering grains—and then to lye
 On the brown heath where sheep are scantily fed
 & view the smiles of an unbounded sky
 Aye theres a wholesome feeling out of doors
 That nourishes the heart with happy themes
 The very cattle on the flaggy moors
 To the minds eye a pleasant picture seems.³⁸
 (ll. 7-18)

Here, what walks on 'the wagon rifted lanes' is not a person, but a person's thoughts. The speaker does not need roads to connect the present to the past so as to retreat into the healing memories, for the 'pleasant pictures' have existed in his mind. Nevertheless, he does need the image of roads to start his imaginary journey. Within the short nine lines (9-17), he completes the journey through varied habitats at a quick pace, because it is his thoughts that start with 'the waggon rifted lanes & woods', pass 'the level plain', rest at the 'heath', and then reach 'the flaggy moors'. Clare does not describe how the speaker interacts with the imaginary landscape, because in his view, the landscape is part of the speaker. In Ingold's words, 'it is with us, not against us'.³⁹ As Patrick Bresnihan comments, for Clare nature is not 'a world out there, external to the inner creative force of imagination and thought'.⁴⁰ The phrase 'mind's eye' reveals that the speaker does not see an outside world with his eye, but an inner world. He considers that the 'old embowering oaks', the 'arch of bowering grains', the 'unbounded sky' all bespeak 'happy themes', as they are the representative 'pleasant pictures' in his 'mind's

³⁸ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 300-1.

³⁹ Ingold, 'The Temporality of the Landscape', *World Archaeology*, 25 (1993), 152-74 (p. 154).

⁴⁰ Patrick Bresnihan, 'John Clare and the Manifold Commons', *Environmental Humanities*, 3 (2013), 71-91 (p. 83).

eye'. The repeated sound in the words 'embowering' and 'bowering' stresses that the 'grains' are as luxuriant and shady as the 'old oaks', offering protection and happiness for the speaker. Clare uses the power of imagination to offer the speaker a movable space, which allows him a place to retreat to at any time. According to Kaori O' Connor, this suggest 'the most important relationship between persons and landscape', because one 'is not being in it, but having it be in you'.⁴¹ Clare focuses on the power of imagination throughout 'Happy Thoughts', and at the end of the poem, he illustrates that the imaginary walk could play the same role as a real walk does. Through bringing the speaker 'calm', 'peace', and 'delight', the imaginary ramble 'checks the restless mood that often longs to roam' (ll. 25-8).

In 'The Flitting', the relationship between roads and memory continues, although the image of roads does not always appear in an explicit way. Clare still asks roads to unfold the speaker's memories of the old home according to their topographical vantage points. They link each place of human-nonhuman associations in his recollections, and thus present his memories in a form of journey, where he interacts with various nonhuman companions:

There have I sat by many a tree
& leaned oer many a rural stile
& conned my thoughts as joys to me
Nought heeding who might frown or smile
Twas natures beauty that inspired
My heart with raptures not its own
& shes a fame that never tires
How could I feel myself alone

No—pasture molehills used to lie

⁴¹ Kaori O' Connor, 'Imagining and Consuming the Coast: Anthropology, Archaeology, "Heritage" and "Conservation" on the Gower in South Wales', in *Imagining Landscape: Past, Present and Future*, ed. by Tim Ingold and Monica Janowski (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 121.

& talk to me of sunny days
 & then the glad sheep resting by
 All still in ruminating praise
 Of summer & the pleasant place
 & every weed & blossom too
 Was looking upward in my face
 With friendship welcome 'how do ye do'.
 (ll. 113-28)

'Conned' is a significant word, referring to 'to pore over, peruse, commit to memory' (*OED*). Clare implies that the speaker is walking on Helpston's roads in memory: 'there' and 'then' indicate the change of scenes proceeding in order, and the 'rural stile' suggests the presence of a road. Following the roads, the speaker recalls his interactions with Helpston's nonhuman forms, and considers them as manifestations of 'friendship'. He believes 'nature's beauty' could 'inspire' his 'heart' and make him not 'alone', and thus desires to bring 'sweet memories to the mind' (l. 111). A series of plural nouns for nonhumans suggest that the speaker has deep associations with his native place, because he knows so much about it. He manifests his intimacy with 'many a tree' and 'many a rural stile' in the phrasal verbs 'sit by' and 'lean over', which signify one's dependence on others. Besides, the expressions of 'talk to' and 'how do ye do' suggest a reciprocal interaction between him and the 'pasture molehills' and 'every weed and blossom'.⁴² The use of anthropomorphism here reveals that Clare's 'emotional survival seems to depend on his ability to establish some sort of communicative exchange' with the natural world.⁴³

The speaker's friendship with Helpston's natural world is particular, for his native village endows the local nonhuman creatures with a sense of place and a sense of exclusivity.⁴⁴ First, it seems that the speaker's nonhuman friends are always attached to

⁴² Helsinger, 'The Peasant Poet', p. 525.

⁴³ Nancy Derbyshire, 'John Clare and the License of Listening', *John Clare Society Journal*, 37 (2018), 41-62 (p. 55).

⁴⁴ See Barrell's explanation of 'the sense of place', p. 114.

particular locations:

I miss the prospect far & wide
From Langley bush & so I seem

Alone & in a strange scene
Far far from spots my heart esteems
The closen with their ancient green
Heaths woods & pastures sunny streams.
(ll. 47-52)

As the specific name of a place ('Langley bush') and a list of admiring 'spots' ('the closen', 'heaths woods', 'pastures sunny streams') indicate, for the speaker, familiar locations rather than 'strange scenes' can offer him companionship and make him not 'alone'. As he later complains about his new home, 'strange scenes mere shadows are to me / vague unpersonifying things' (l. 90). The word 'unpersonifying' reveals that in his view, places or 'scenes' should allow one to treat nonhuman creatures as humans, to forge intimate associations with them. Otherwise, places will only establish an unreal ('vague') and distant ('strange') relationship with people. One of Clare's letters of the same period helps to elucidate the sense of place embodied in the speaker's nonhuman friends. In January 1832, Clare wrote about his move in a letter to his publisher John Taylor, and mentioned his strong attachment to Helpston's natural landscape:

[...] I have had some difficulties to leave the woods & heaths & favourite spots that have known me so long for the very molehills on the heath & the old trees in the hedges seem bidding me farewell — other associations of friendship I have few or none to regret [...].⁴⁵

⁴⁵ John Clare, *The Letters of John Clare*, ed. by Mark Storey, p. 561.

According to Clare, what links him with Helpston is his friendship with the local landscape rather than anything else. Time nurtures his personal associations with nonhuman entities in his native village. Not only has he been familiar with them but also they 'have known' him 'so long', and therefore, they are emotionally involved with each other. Whether the temporary 'molehills' or the rooted 'old trees', the poet labels them with specific locations, such as 'on the heath' and 'in the hedges'. By doing so, he defines and distinguishes each of his friendship with Helpston's nonhuman creatures, and thus can write about each place as particular experiences. Clare's sense of place lends particularity to his nonhuman friends, and makes them 'local attachments'.⁴⁶ The particular nature fosters 'the psychological bonds' between him and Helpston, and renders them unique and strong.⁴⁷

The psychological bonds between Clare and Helpston's nonhuman beings make the nonhuman creatures in 'The Flitting' nontransferable and rooted to the speaker's native village. Clare takes advantage of the rootedness of the image of 'trees' to suggest that the speaker cannot transfer his intimacy with nonhuman creatures from his old home to his new home:

Here every tree is strange to me
All foreign things where eer I go
Theres none where boyhood made a swee
Or clambered up to rob a crow
No hollow tree or wood land bower
Well known when joy was beating high
Where beauty ran to shun a shower.
(ll. 97-103)

Whereas Clare represents the nightingale as mobile, he presents trees as specific to a particular place. The difference between species suggests that the speaker's friendship

⁴⁶ Fiona Stafford, *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 274.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

with nonhuman creatures might continue with the royce wood nightingale's migration from Helpston to his new home; whereas it cannot be maintained by the immovable trees when he leaves his native village. Seen in this light, Jonathan Bate's comment that 'loving one tree makes you love all trees' does not seem applicable here, for the speaker makes a distinction between the trees in his new and old homes.⁴⁸ The local trees are regarded as 'strange', 'foreign things', in that Clare's 'radical attentiveness, of a belonging so intense that it turns' the non-Helpston domain 'into an utterly foreign land'.⁴⁹ Given that the local trees are 'naked of associations' with the speaker, they, therefore, cannot sustain his friendships.⁵⁰ The speaker seeks those trees in Helpston for his memories are attached to them: they establish associations with him through offering him childhood pleasure, such as to make a 'swing', to 'rob' the crow's nest, and to shelter from the rain, like the pulpit hollow ash in 'Remembrances'. The very condition of having associations with nonhuman nature determines that the speaker's friendship has to be exclusive to Helpston's natural landscape: 'theres none' in the new home. This renders Helpston's nonhuman beings particular, for they are not seen 'as part of "nature" in general'.⁵¹

'The Flitting' might be seen as a poem of searching for a particular friendship with nonhuman nature: a friendship that cannot flit. Here, the verb 'flit' probably has two meanings: to move from one place to another, and to fleet away rapidly. The following discussion will focus on the first meaning, and I will examine the second one later. According to the consolidated glossary attached to *John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period 1822-1837*, the word 'flitting' means 'moving from one house to another, departing'. As the speaker flits, his friendship with nonhuman nature seems also change with the change of locations, from Helpston's intimacy to the new home's alienation. He suggests that the loss of friendship makes him suffer: 'I feel the loss / From home & friends & all alone' (ll. 43-4). He hopes his friendship with nonhuman nature can be fixed in his old home and not move, thus he always searches for the particular nature in

⁴⁸ Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, p. 53.

⁴⁹ Guyer, p. 89

⁵⁰ Barrell, pp. 176-7.

⁵¹ Barrell, p. 114.

Helpston. Throughout the poem, some detailed accounts of the native natural world, together with the speaker's association with it, always follow his short complaints about the new home's alienation. Alan Bewell argues that in 'The Flitting', 'Clare self-consciously uses his feelings of psychological dislocation in order to comprehend what it means to living in a world [...] where all human and nonhuman beings are subject to removal'.⁵² It seems that in 'a world where everything is flitting', the speaker cannot make new friends with nonhuman nature.⁵³ It might be easily to consider Clare's attempt to find the non-flitting, particular nature as equivalent to a search for home, as the former could be seen as a metonym for Helpston. However, as Simon Kövesi points out, if we call Clare 'homeless', we use the word metaphorically while ignoring its original meaning.⁵⁴ Clare, after all, is not a refugee owing to poverty or destitution; he has shelter and settled home. As the phrase 'home bred pictures' suggests, Helpston's particular nature rather than the idea of home offers the speaker happiness to alleviate his sufferings of displacement. The flitting from Helpston to Northborough — though three miles away — embodies 'great psychological distances' for Clare.⁵⁵ The poet needs a cure for relieving the sufferings of loss in his poetic imagination, because neither Northborough nor post-enclosure Helpston could help him.

In the eighth stanza, Clare associates the image of 'weedling' with the speaker's 'thoughts' of being desperate for the memories of the native natural landscape:

& still my thoughts like weedlings wild
 Grow up to blossom where they can
 They turn to places known so long
 & feel that joy was dwelling there
 So home-fed pleasures fill the song
 That has no present joys to heir.
 (ll. 59-64)

⁵² Bewell, 'The Ghosts of Nature Past', p. 568.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Simon Kövesi, *John Clare: Nature, Criticism and History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 31.

⁵⁵ Wallace, *Walking*, p. 110.

The simile allows the speaker's imaginary return to the old home to run riot, to 'grow up to blossom' like 'wild weedlings'. As Bewell notes, 'Clare sees his poetry and thoughts as "weedlings wild," as displaced plants rooting themselves wherever they can'.⁵⁶ The alliteration and three syllables in 'weedlings wild' render his tone brisk, indicating that his goal is clear. The subject 'they' of the second sentence follows closely after the adverbial clause 'where they can', thereby creating a sense of impatience. The speaker's mind cannot wait to 'turn to' Helpston's natural landscape, for the particular nonhumans exist in the 'places known so long'. They have associations with him, and thus could offer him 'joy', which is exclusive to the very place and cannot be transferred – 'heired' – elsewhere. Ingold argues that 'to imagine something is to appear it', 'to join with a world in which things do not so much exist as occur'.⁵⁷ In 'The Flitting', the speaker's 'thoughts' of memory are always 'growing up', always recollecting, because they are attending the rebirth of the particular nature, the 'home-fed pleasures'.

In 'The Flitting', Clare actually offers the speaker two approaches for curing his sufferings of displacement, and they progress as two parallel threads. Besides the thread of memory and the particular nature, the poet also spends eleven stanzas (nearly half of the poem) describing two forms of writing: 'sublime' verse and 'native poesy' (ll. 76, 164). He assigns the image of 'weed' (l. 186) to exemplify the speaker's thoughts, that is, 'native poesy', and also to embody the little, simple thing that autonomously grows in the rural. He suggests that 'native poesy' can offer the speaker another approach 'for happiness', as 'nature still can make amends' for the speaker's 'parting' with his nonhuman 'friends' in Helpston (ll. 65, 204-6).

David Higgins examines the meaning of 'native poesy', and points out that 'native' suggests 'that it is naturally occurring and [...] relates to particular origins', but 'it

⁵⁶ Bewell, *Natures in Translation*, p. 287.

⁵⁷ Ingold, 'The Maze and the Labyrinth: Walking, Imagining and the Education of Attention', in *Psychology and the Conduct of Everyday Life*, ed. by Ernst Schraube and Charlotte Højholt (Hove, East Sussex: Routledge, 2016), p. 105. See also Ingold, 'Introduction', p. 14.

refers to something greater than simply [Clare's] home parish'.⁵⁸ Mark Storey, Joanne Clare, and Anne D. Wallace do not focus much on the word 'native'; instead, they contrast the two forms of verse and claim that the speaker's admired poesy is the poetry of nature, which is about rural, common, small, simple and unseen things.⁵⁹ In line with the above scholars, I argue that the subject of 'native poesy' is something reachable like common nature. Like the previous image of 'weedling', the image of 'weed' also offers the speaker joy. However, it makes him feel that 'joy' is everywhere, not only from the particular place 'known so long': 'I feel at times a love & joy / For every weed & every thing' (ll. 189-90). It might be less 'sublime' compared with the 'pomp' and 'splendour' of 'gold & pearls & mystery' (ll. 76, 73, 156, 75), yet the speaker admires it for its accessibility, and thus considers it a truer version of the sublime: 'But passions of sublimity / Belong to plain & simpler things' (ll. 76-7). In the end of 'The Flitting', time gives its verdict on the value of 'sublime' verse and 'native poesy': the former embodied by 'pomp' and 'grandeur' does not survive, whereas the latter represented by 'poor persecuted weeds' remains (ll. 209, 216, 212). This judgement implies the second sense of the word 'flitting'— flickering and fleeting— given that the sublime poetry is short-lived.⁶⁰ And it completes my discussion of the search for a non-flitting friendship in this poem: the second thread of 'native poesy' reveals that 'The Flitting' might also be considered as a poem of searching for a sustainable friendship with nonhuman nature that can last, rather than fleet away rapidly.⁶¹

'Native poesy' and the little weed survive because their accessibility makes the speaker's 'fancys eye' sustainable (l. 158). In the twentieth stanza, Clare describes how demanding it is for the speaker to compose and read the 'sublime' verse, whereas 'native poesy' is more accessible and spontaneous:

Give me no high flown fangled things
No haughty pomp in marching chime

⁵⁸ Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 99.

⁵⁹ Storey, *The Poetry of John Clare*, p. 144; Joanne Clare, p. 145; Wallace, 'Farming on Foot', p. 521.

⁶⁰ See Bewell, p. 568 and Noble, p. 174.

⁶¹ 'Flit' can also mean 'proceed', 'pass' and 'move along'. See *OED*'s entry for 'flit', v. 8. a'.

Where muses play on golden strings
& splendour passes for sublime
Where citys stretch as far as fame
& fancys straining eye can go
& piled untill the sky for shame
Is stooping far away below.
(ll. 153-60)

The speaker is self-consciously producing a poem, rejecting the ‘high flown fangled things’. The syntax of two long clauses introduced by ‘where’ reflects that writing sublime poetry is laborious. The echoing affricate of ‘ch’ in ‘marching chime’ creates auditory stimuli, and aurally suggests that the ‘splendour’ of ‘haughty pomp’ could only be made on ‘golden strings’. In addition to the requirement from sound, Clare specifically spends more time depicting the visual demand of ‘high flown fangled things’. The four lines introduced by the second ‘where’ manifest that the speaker has to ‘strain’ ‘fancys eye’ so as to perceive the ‘sublime’ of ever-expanding ‘cities’ and ever-piled buildings. The personified ‘fancy’ is injured, as its eye tries too hard for a ‘high viewpoint’ required by the ‘immense height and breadth’ of artefacts.⁶² As a result, the ‘strained fancy’ produces strained verses, which are not born naturally but forced by a deliberate effort. Clare then suggests that focusing on a ground level enables the muse’s fancy to acquire a viewpoint through walking and thus to perceive the landscape more easily:

I love the verse that mild & bland
Breaths of green fields & open sky
I love the muse that in her hand
Bears wreaths of native poesy
Who walks nor skips the pasture brook.

⁶² Wallace, *Walking*, p. 104.

(ll. 161-5)

The 'green fields & open sky' suggest that walking allows the speaker to acquire a wide horizon and thus produce 'native poesy'. 'The verse' is simple: it is 'mild & bland'. But the word 'breaths' shows its signs of life. The value of 'native poesy' lies in 'wreaths': the honour made by common flowers. As the pun in 'poesy' and 'posy' implies, the local, small flowers not only make the physical 'wreaths' in 'the muse's hand'. They also bring honour, the symbolised 'wreaths' to the poesy, which is produced spontaneously and does not 'skip' the common things like 'the pasture brook'. The repeated clause 'I love' manifests that 'fancys eye' admires common nature: it can be perceived from an effortless viewpoint of ground level; its simplicity makes it accessible.

Clare's 'fancys straining eye' needs to be further examined, as he connects the word 'fancy' to thoughts: that is, 'sublime' verse and 'native poesy'. According to the *OED*, the word 'fancy' is a contraction of 'phantasy' or 'fantasy', which is derived from a Greek word meaning 'to make visible'. As Adam White argues, 'the meaning of fancy as "making visible" is particularly relevant to Clare's poetry', for the poet retains the eighteenth-century aspect of fancy, which emphasises the visual — 'seeing and looking'.⁶³ According to Jeffery C. Robinson, in the Romantic period the poetic faculty of fancy is 'bent on association', and 'reaches out toward the world'.⁶⁴ It is true that in 'The Flitting', Clare personifies 'fancy' and asks its 'eye' to associate with the immediate, external world: for example, 'green fields'. However, this does not necessarily mean that the poet only lends fancy eyes to see the world. Actually, he also allows fancy to involve in the internal, to think and even to create like imagination: in 'The Flitting', fancy's eye stimulates the muse to produce poetic fantasies. Critical accounts in the Romantic period tend to consider fancy as inferior to imagination, mainly because the former is associative and not creative, dispersive and not synthetic.⁶⁵

⁶³ White, *John Clare's Romanticism*, p. 68. Also see the same book, p. 79.

⁶⁴ Robinson, pp. 6, 4.

⁶⁵ See Robinson; White, *John Clare's Romanticism*.

However, as some scholars have discovered, in Clare's works fancy has a more privileged status than imagination, for it combines the external world with the internal thought and feeling.⁶⁶ It seems to me that fancy in Clare's poems has multiple and protean meanings, as the poet often assigns it to transform from the associative mode into the synthetic mode, from the fleeting and capricious whim into the inventive and contemplative imagination. In Clare's works, Coleridge's dichotomy of imagination and fancy seems more like a continuum, along which the two are similar, sometimes blurred, but can be distinguished. In the next section, I will explore fancy's transformative power through discussing its relationships with roads and common nature.

Roads, Common Nature, and Fancy

So far this chapter has discussed how, in Clare's Northborough writings, roads allow the speaker to look back on the particular nature in Helpston and thereby alleviate his sufferings of displacement. In this section, I will argue that in other Northborough writings, roads also move the speakers forward and therefore expose them to the value of common nature. This section suggests that Clare still desires particular nature as he moves to Northborough. Admittedly, as some scholars argue, at the end of 'The Flitting', it seems that the narrative changes from the speaker's longing for a particular nature to an embrace of an abstract nature.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, we should not take the poem as an exemplar and claim that it is in Northborough that Clare completes a chronological progression to a love for Nature, regardless of its distinctions between places. Even before the move in 1832, Clare had claimed in different writings that *nature is the same everywhere*.⁶⁸ Besides, by the word 'common' Clare does not only mean the 'abstract', ordinary nature, which is 'outside the particular context of Helpston'.⁶⁹ The poet also uses the term to include those seemingly vulgar,

⁶⁶ White, *John Clare's Romanticism*.

⁶⁷ Barrell, p. 176; Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 138; Guyer, p. 95.

⁶⁸ See John Clare, *The Letters of John Clare*, ed. by J. W. Tibble and Anne Tibble (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 48; John Clare, *John Clare: By Himself*, ed. by Eric Robinson and David Powell (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2002), p. 53.

⁶⁹ Barrell, p. 178.

insignificant natural forms, and those familiar, accessible, and shared scenes related to the nonhuman. As common nature denotes more meanings than abstract nature, it is thus not the opposite of particular nature.

My argument about common nature's value starts with examining 'On Seeing Some Moss in Flower Early in Spring' (1832). In this poem, the speaker presents his view of 'common things' and exemplifies it with some moss that he encounters while walking. The image of moss does not appear until he completes a rather long (six-stanza) general introduction of common nature. The arrangement is 'beyond the familiar': the 'casual attitude toward closure' seems to suggest that the speaker's mind is 'uncontrollable, in its variety, excess, and unpredictability'.⁷⁰ Both this and the crossing rhymed tetrameter and trimeter couplets reflect 'the un-fettering of mind', characteristic of 'a poetry of the Fancy'.⁷¹ Although the word 'fancy' does not appear in this poem, Clare hints at its existence throughout the streamy and sinuous verse, in which 'common things' is the motif (l. 13).⁷²

In the third and fourth stanzas, the poet contrasts the magnificent landscapes in 'poesy' with 'common things', and uses the faculty of fancy to suggest that one advantage of common nature is *to be seen easily*:

Though poesys woods & vales & streams

Grow up within the mind

Like beauty seen in pleasant dreams

We no where else can find

Yet common things no matter what

Which nature dignifies

If happiness be in their lot

They gratifye our eyes.

⁷⁰ Robinson, pp. 3-5.

⁷¹ Robinson, p. 13.

⁷² *Poems of the Middle Period*, III, 565-7.

(ll. 9-16)

The relationship between the ‘mind’ and the ‘eye’ seems to reflect the relationship between imagination and perception. However, Ingold’s argument—‘to perceive a landscape is to imagine it’—is not applicable here.⁷³ Clare uses a concessive clause to show that ‘though’ the speaker’s mind allows the images of magnificent landscapes to ‘grow up’ in ‘poesy’, his ‘eyes’ still need a palpable object to be placed before them. This emphasis on sight suggests that imagination here assumes the form of fancy. As I discussed earlier, Clare’s view of fancy retains the eighteenth-century preference for visualising something ‘before our eyes’, rather than ‘the objects not actually before the eye’.⁷⁴ In order to ‘gratifye’ fancy’s ‘eyes’, the poet immediately offers ‘common things’ to follow the enjambment and the adversative conjunction ‘yet’. As the phrase ‘no matter what’ suggests, ‘common things’ are reachable: ‘we can find’ them easily wherever we are, as long as ‘nature’ is present in and ‘dignifies’ them. Like the example in ‘The Flitting’, where ‘fancys straining eye’ loves ‘native poesy’ perceived from a ground-level viewpoint, here, Clare makes a link between common nature and fancy again, for he intends to make use of the characters of common nature to meet the visual needs of fancy.

The link between fancy and common nature is clearly presented in another poem ‘What is There in Those Distant Hills’ (1832-7). The speaker’s fancy is evoked through the visual association with the external landscape: ‘What is there in those distant hills / My fancy longs to see’ (ll. 1-2).⁷⁵ After repeating a rhetorical question — is nonhuman nature in the ‘distant hills’ as ‘common’ as it is ‘everywhere’? — he concludes that there is no difference between nonhuman nature here and that in the unreachable places (ll. 8, 1). Therefore, he considers:

If so my fancy idly clings

⁷³ Ingold, ‘Introduction’, p. 14.

⁷⁴ White, *John Clare’s Romanticism*, p. 70.

⁷⁵ *Poems of the Middle Period*, V, 166-8.

To notions far away
& longs to roam for common things
All round her every day.
(ll. 29-32)

Clare's idea that fancy likes to engage with something reachable recurs here. The phrasal verb 'roam for' suggests fancy's emotional attachment to 'common things'. The phrase 'all round' indicates that the speaker's 'fancy' desires something that can be seen 'every day'. He never regrets not seeing 'far hills', because there is no 'need' to 'see' it (l. 57). 'Their array'— the special scenery — is 'grass', which is no better than the grass 'here' that 'the little paths go through' 'every day' (ll. 58-60).

In 'On Seeing Some Moss in Flower Early in Spring', Clare enumerates the common things that nature values, and in his view, common nature includes four types: the insignificant, the vulgar, the familiar, and the shared and accessible. He anthropomorphises nature as a female carer, and uses a series of verbs to depict how 'she watches over' the insignificant, such as 'the old' and the 'small' (ll. 18, 22); how she 'esteems' the vulgar and not noble, such as 'the humble' and the 'mean' (ll. 19, 22); how she is not 'heedless' of the familiar 'things of every day' (ll. 23, 21). Clare especially uses one stanza to illustrate that common nature is accessible and shares the same beauty everywhere:

The common things in every place
Display their sweets abroad
The daisy shows a happy face
On every common road.
(ll. 25-8)

The repetition of 'every' suggests that the speaker's 'journey' to 'the common things' is continual and open-ended (l. 6). Besides, it also implies that his fancy is seeking for

common nature, as he seems always on the move from ‘place’ to ‘place’, for admiring the unified ‘sweets’ of ‘the common things’. ‘Common road’ suggests the speaker’s right of way, but moreover, it also indicates that ‘the daisy’ is accessible. The speaker reviews the ‘daisies’ ‘on every common road’ as if they are on parade, because they all share ‘a happy face’ without exception. As Katey Castellano points out, Clare presents ‘the silent work’ of nonhuman nature — its autonomous life activities — as ‘the practice of common right’.⁷⁶ Through asserting common nature’s right of life in his poetic works, the poet intends to protest against enclosure’s expropriation of the commons in the early nineteenth century.

It is near the very end of the poem that Clare formally spends three stanzas in introducing the speaker’s experience of encountering some moss, which is referred to in the title. The image of moss embodies common nature’s characters. Moreover, it also reveals common nature’s uncommonness (remarkableness) through demonstrating its common right of life:

This moss upon the fallow roots
Of this secluded spot
Finds seasons that its station suits
& blossoms unforgot

This common moss so hid from view
To heedless crowds unknown
By nature made as happy too
Finds seasons of its own

It peeps among the fallen leaves
On every stoven grows
Sufficient sun its shade recieves

⁷⁶ Castellano, ‘Moles’, p. 157.

& so it buds & blows.

(ll. 37-48)

The moss looks humble, as it is located at the unpleasant ‘sallow roots’ of a ‘secluded spot’. The dialect word ‘stoven’, referring to ‘a sapling, shoot from the stump of a tree’ (*OED*), also emphasises the disadvantageous location of the moss. The moss is also insignificant, as it is unnoticeable, hidden ‘from view’. Nonetheless, the moss has its own agency, as it continuously ‘finds seasons’. Clare makes the word ‘find’ as the only verb in each stanza, so as to suggest that the moss has the capacity to act, to claim its common right of life. This power to seek opportunities for growth is endowed by ‘nature’. The poet continuously fronts the object of a clause, so as to emphasise that nature’s bounty makes possible the common moss’s autonomy. The fronted object ‘sufficient sun’ suggests that as long as the moss ‘receives’ the essential energy, it will seize the chance to ‘blow’. It is noteworthy that the word ‘blow’ has a double meaning here: it not only means ‘to burst into flower’, but also ‘to expose and betray’ (*OED*). Through blooming, the moss makes itself seen, although as ‘peep’ suggests, it might only show itself a partial appearance just above the soil.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, it is visible ‘among the fallen leaves’. Through demonstrating its own right of life, the moss manifests the ambiguity and remarkableness in its commonness: being ordinary does not mean being insignificant. Clare presents the common moss as a particular one, and its particularity not only lies within itself but also consists in the attention to it from the outside world. The poet still explains this by virtue of the ambiguity created by different senses of the word ‘common’, and here the sense of being familiar contradicts the sense of being shared. The word ‘every’ suggests that the moss might be prevalent and thus not rare; however, the fronted object ‘heedless crowds’ reveals that the moss might be unknown for most people, who cannot or don’t wish to pay careful attention to it. Clare considers roads as key places that lead one to discover the value of common nature. In ‘A Walk’ (1832) and ‘Footpaths’ (1832), he presents how the speakers walk

⁷⁷ See *OED*’s entry for ‘peep, v. 1’.

on roads so as to seek common nature's unknown attractions. For example, in 'A Walk', the speaker 'wanders' for seeking 'summer luxury':

Being refreshed with thoughts of wandering moods
I took my staff & wandered far away
Through swampy fenland void of heaths & woods
To see if summers luxury could display
In such drear places aught of beautiful
& sooth it gives me much delight to say.⁷⁸
(ll. 1-6)

Initially, he believes that nature's 'delight' lies in the location-specific habitat, such as 'heaths and woods', the typical Helpston landscape, and that the 'swampy fenland' is nothing but 'drear' and desolate. However, the nameless 'lanes without a guide post' awaken him to the realisation that besides the particular nature, common nature could also offer 'green delight':

— Now lanes without a guide post plainly tells
Their homward paths — while from a stile is seen
The open church tower and its little bells
& chimneys low where peaceful quiet dwells
My journey feels refreshed with green delight
Though woods nor heaths nor molehill pastures led
A pleasant varied way — yet richly spread
Corn crowded grounds in awthorn hedges dight
That shelter gave to many a little bird
Where yellow hammers 'peeped' in saddened plight.
(‘A Walk’, ll. 53-62)

⁷⁸ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 311-4.

The use of caesura and the word ‘yet’ suggest although the ‘fenland’ is void of ‘pleasant varied ways’, ‘yellow hammers’ lead the speaker to a neglected habitat in the dense ‘awthorn hedges’. Clare specifically underlines the verb ‘peep’ by inverted commas, as he intends to stress the word’s multiple meanings: ‘to look quickly or furtively (to appear only partially)’ and ‘to utter high-pitched sound’.⁷⁹ He suggests that the yellowhammers betray their presence through their chirp as well as their quick and secret look through the dense hedges. ‘Peeping’ is a reciprocal action: the speaker sees the yellowhammers exactly when they are looking out from behind the hedges. Gorji points out that Clare ‘celebrates the triumph of “little things”’.⁸⁰ As I discussed earlier, to be ordinary does not necessarily mean to be insignificant. The yellowhammers expose an uncommon habitat to the speaker: ‘Corn grounds’ feeding ‘many a little bird’ might not be a special scene. However, the unnoticeable locale — the tight hedges — renders the scene extraordinary.

Similarly in ‘Footpaths’, the speaker continuously looks for ‘the charm of poesy’ along ‘the little footpaths’ in the first-person-plural point of view (ll. 13-4).⁸¹ In a stanza, he suggests that a hidden nook of the common ‘wood’ offers us ‘the charm of solitude’:

Now almost hid in trees a little gate
 Cheats us into the darkness of the wood
 We almost think the day is wearing late
 So dreamy is the light that dwells around
 & so refreshing is its sombre mood
 We feel at once shut out from sun & sky
 All the deliciousness of solitude
 While sauntering noiseless oer the leafy ground

⁷⁹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘peep, v. 1; v. 2’.

⁸⁰ Gorji, ‘The Triumph of Little Things’, p. 91.

⁸¹ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 317-20.

The air we breath seems loosing every trace
 Of earth & all its trouble & the mind
 Yearns for a dwelling in so sweet a place
 From troubles noise such stillness seemeth bye
 Yet soon the side brings some unwelcome spire
 To bid the charm of solitude retire.
 (ll. 43-56)

Walking allows the speaker to have a real mobility: to look around and move forward slowly.⁸² As he responds to the footpath, he is thus able to discover a hidden, 'little gate', made by the luxuriant 'trees'. The word 'cheat' suggests that the gate's invitation entices the speaker into the unknown and eerie 'darkness of the wood'. And yet as the word 'refreshing' suggests, the speaker considers this 'sombre' space unfamiliar but pleasant, and this is because it offers him the 'deliciousness of solitude'. 'Sauntering', the slow pace of walking, enables him to savour the 'charm of solitude' from the visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory aspects. Walking, to some extent, is 'an accomplishment of the whole body in motion'; it is not just what a body does but what a body is.⁸³ While moving forward into the dark space, the speaker relies more on his feeling, smell, and hearing than his sight to perceive the environment. He 'feels' it 'shuts out' the 'sky' overhead and buries the road underfoot (because of 'the leafy ground'). He hears no 'noise' and smells 'the air' without 'trace of earth'. The speaker appreciates the unworldly nook for keeping away from 'trouble' of the earthly life, and thus his 'mind yearns for a dwelling' in this 'sweet place'. The similar idea that the speaker's mind longs to dwell in nature's solitude for joy also appears in 'A Walk': 'my journey tells / My mind that joy in poor seclusions dwells' (ll. 78-9). Clare's view of 'dwelling' is worth discussing, because it explains how the mind perceives 'the charm of poesy' in the natural world.

⁸² Lee and Ingold, 'Fieldwork on Foot', pp. 69-70.

⁸³ Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, 'Introduction', in *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 1-19 (p. 2).

Common nature's value not only lies in its own remarkableness. It also plays a vital role in stimulating fancy, a mental activity, to imagine and to write about 'the charm of poesy' that it offers. For Clare, the act of dwelling makes possible fancy's engagement with common nature, as it suggests an immersion in both the physical and the imaginary world of nature. The English word 'dwell' derives from Old English 'dwellan', which is related to 'delay' and 'stay'. Therefore, dwelling in nature could be read as a state of staying in nature. Heidegger's view of dwelling is applicable here to Clare's imaginary retreat into the natural world for 'the charm of poesy'. As Jonathan Bate argues, 'for Heidegger, poetry is the original admission of dwelling because it is a presencing not a representation, a form of being not of mapping'.⁸⁴ In addition to Bate, Ingold reads Heidegger's dwelling as a merging of self and world, because for him dwelling means the immersion of a lifeworld, and a precondition for one's being.⁸⁵ He claims that the essence of dwelling is 'wayfaring', for life is an open-ended journey, and a human being is a wayfarer 'instantiated in the world as a line of travel'.⁸⁶ In 'laying a trail of life', the wayfarers 'contribute to the weave and texture' of 'the world's continual coming into being'; they 'participate from within in that very process'.⁸⁷ If we apply Ingold's theory to Clare's view of dwelling, then the state of staying in nature would be regarded as the poet's way of life: to immerse oneself in nature through walking. The shared subject of 'Footpaths' and 'A Walk' suggests that the Clarean dwelling converges with both Heidegger's emphasis on poetry and Ingold's stress on wayfaring. Roads, after all, lead fancy not only to immerse in common nature's solitude for joy, but also to imagine 'the charm of poesy' there, and then to produce poetry.

Clare clearly shows the relationship between fancy and writing at the end of 'A Walk', where the speaker self-consciously considers that his writing is provoked by fancy:

As written on by some strange phantasys

⁸⁴ Bate, *The Song of the Earth*, p. 262.

⁸⁵ Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, pp. 153, 169; Lee and Ingold, 'Fieldwork on Foot', p. 78.

⁸⁶ Ingold, *Line*, pp. 78, 76.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

Strange prodigys that happy summer brings
To minds as happy & my journey tells
My mind that joy in poor seclusion dwells.
(ll. 67-70)

As the repeated word ‘happy’ suggests, fancy (the contraction of the word ‘phantasy’) writes about ‘joy’.⁸⁸ The fronted object stresses that the pleasure lies in ‘strange prodigys’— some extraordinary or unusual things or occurrences.⁸⁹ Here, common nature offers the remarkableness ‘in poor seclusions’: it manifests its great but hidden value in the unnoticed habitat of hawthorn hedges that supply many yellowhammers with corn grounds. Fancy can produce poetry because the ‘joy’ that lies in nature’s solitude prompts it to imagine ‘the charm of poesy’:

Yet still the little path winds on & on
Down hedgerow sides & many a pastoral charm
We soon forget the charm of poesy gone
In the still wood land with its silent balm
& find some other joy to dream upon
[...]
Home comforts for dull winters reveries
When the dull evening claimeth news & friends
Calm pleasure thus home nearing fancy sees
That maketh vanished fancy full amends
As the crooked footpath at the village ends.
(‘Footpaths’, ll. 57-61, 66-70)

The word ‘fancy’ first appears in the last stanza of ‘Footpaths’. In the speaker’s view, the end of ‘the crooked footpath’ suggests the end of fancy, because footpaths breed

⁸⁸ See *OED*’s entry for ‘fancy, n.’.

⁸⁹ See *OED*’s entry for ‘prodigy, n.’.

‘reveries’— a state of dreaming about pleasant things. As the phrasal verb ‘dream upon’ suggests, fancy here involves in the internal thoughts and feelings, for it shows the creative faculty like imagination. As long as ‘the little path winds on’, it can lead the speaker to other ‘pastoral charms’ besides ‘the still wood land’. The natural landscapes like ‘hedgerow sides’ will renew his feeling of ‘joy’ and sustain his fancy to bring their ‘charm of poesy’ into being.

Fancy’s relationships with imagination and joy also appear in ‘Autumn’ (1841). The autobiographical piece is regarded by Margaret Grainger as ‘Clare’s most significant late natural history prose passage’.⁹⁰ The poet wrote it in October and November of 1841, when he just retrieved the long-lost freedom after escaping from High Beach Asylum in Essex and returning to his Northborough home. According to Grainger, in ‘Autumn’ Clare includes three walking routes: ‘a walk due east from Northborough to the river Welland and then up the west bank of the river to Deeping Gate; a walk from the Nine Bridges, Northborough, along the north bank of the North Drain to Lolham Bridges; a walk between Waldram Hall and Welland Ford’.⁹¹ While walking on Helpston’s roads in the second route, Clare assigns fancy to assume the form of imagination and thus to possess a faculty of synthesising the outside world:

[...] the meadow lakes seen from the bank puts me in mind of school adventures and boyish rambles the very spots where I used to spend the whole sundays in fishing while the bells kept chiming in vain — I cannot make out where all these feelings and fancys are gone too — The plot of meadows now dont look bigger then a large homestead and the ponds that used to seem so large are now no bigger then puddles and as for fish I scarcely have interest enough to walk round them to see if there is any — yon arches yonder with trees peeping above them and between them and where the traveller is hopping away wearily over them on the narrow road is Lolham Bridges — time makes strange work with early fancys the fancied

⁹⁰ Margaret Grainger (ed.), *The Natural History Prose Writings of John Clare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 327.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

riches and happiness of early life fades to shadows of less substance even than the shadows of dreams.⁹²

Here the plural form of ‘fancys’ means more than the fleeting ideas from associating with the external world, but assumes the role of imagination. As I discussed earlier, unlike Coleridge and Wordsworth, Clare blurs the distinction between fancy and imagination.⁹³ In the above passage, it seems that fancy, similar to imagination, has the image-making faculty or propensity for visualisation. The meaning of fancy as ‘making visible’ is particularly relevant to Clare’s writings.⁹⁴ Walking along the North Drain within the parish of Helpston allows the poet to see ‘the meadow lakes’, which have established deep associations with him since his boyhood. They work on his mind: the faculty of fancy synthesises them as mental images. As the expression ‘early fancys’ suggests, the mental images of ‘the meadow lakes’ put him ‘in mind of’— make him visualise — other long-stored images of memories such as ‘school adventures’, ‘boyish rambles’, and ‘Sunday fishing’. The juxtaposition of ‘feelings and fancys’ as another example suggests that Clare allows fancy to involve in his inner movement.

Clare suggests that fancy has a relationship not only with common nature, but also with particular nature. His ‘early fancys’ of ‘the meadow lakes’ ‘fade’ away because he loses ‘interest’ in them; he considers them prosaic and no longer particular. A dash and a description of their present scenes follow his confusion about the disappearance of fancy. The repetition of ‘no bigger then’ suggests that the poet is aware that past objects seem bigger in memory for he was a little child when he encountered them. Furthermore, the change in perspective between childhood and adulthood might also explain why he considers ‘the meadows’ and ‘ponds’ nothing more than ‘a large homestead’ and ‘puddles’ now. The familiar landscapes cannot engage his mind as before because they are tantamount to common things, which are ordinary and not

⁹² Clare, *By Himself*, pp. 272-5.

⁹³ See Adam White, *John Clare’s Romanticism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 68; Erin Lafford, “‘fancys or feelings’: John Clare’s Hypochondriac Poetics”, in *Palgrave Advances in John Clare Studies*, ed. by Simon Kövesi and Erin Lafford (London: Palgrave, 2020), pp. 249-73 (p. 258).

⁹⁴ White, *John Clare’s Romanticism*, p. 68.

special: he scarcely has ‘interest enough to walk round them to see if there is any fish’. Clare’s ‘early fancys’ ‘fade to shadows’ as their visualised objects now look not as before, although his ‘early life’ is of great value, of ‘riches’. It might be easy for Clare to recognise the familiar location of ‘Lolham Bridges’; however, it is impossible for him to make ‘the early fancies’ of the spot real again.

Like the example in ‘A Walk’, where fancy writes about joy, in ‘Autumn’, a passage about seasonable memories suggests that fancy has a happy disposition and tends to engage in the pleasure brought by common nature. Clare does not articulate that his fancy transpose their objects from Helpston’s particular nature to Northborough’s common nature. However, it might be plausible to believe that as ‘the rural pictures or objects’ in Northborough’s natural landscapes offer him ‘happiness’, they replace Helpston’s shrunken ‘meadow lakes’ to content and sustain his fancy:

I sigh for what is lost and cannot help it — yet there is even calm spots in the stormiest ocean and I can even now meet happiness in sorrow — the rural pictures or objects in these flats and meadows warms ones loneliness such as a rustic driveing his little lot of cows or sheep down the plashy droves and plucking a handful of awes from the half naked hedges to eat as he goes on — The rawky mornings now are often frosty — and the grass and wild herbs are often covered with rime as white as a shower of snow — in the fen greensward closes the pewet or lapwing may be seen in flocks of two or three hundred together about Waldram Hall dabbling on the hedges [i.e. edges] of the lakes left by the rains [...] nature like simplicity is beautifull in every dress she chuses to put on with the seasons — even winter with his doublet of snows & hoar frost can make himself agreeable when he chuses to give people leave to go out of doors.

The metaphors in ‘even calm spots in the stormiest ocean’ suggest that the poet regards Northborough’s natural world as an alternative emotional support, given that it can relieve his ‘sorrow’ for alienating from Helpston’s landscapes. Clare exemplifies the

solace that can ‘warm ones loneliness’ with two scruffy and imperfect scenes: a peasant’s flocks herding and fruits picking on ‘the plashy droves’ and the ‘half naked hedges’. The rural life’s vulgar and dirty reality endears common nature to Clare; as Mina Gorji points out, the poet’s aesthetic admires ‘the stained, the mottled, the dishevelled, the broken and battered’ because he regards breaking the order and making a mess as true to life.⁹⁵ The peasant poet prefers to depict the natural objects in a simple and authentic manner rather than use poesy to mask their imperfection. He juxtaposes the unpleasant ‘plashy droves’ with the animate ‘little’ stocks, and the imperfect ‘half naked hedges’ with the fruitful ‘awes’, so as to suggest that common nature, though vulgar, is agreeable. Two contrasting scenes further suggest how common nature’s ‘simplicity’ can ‘warm ones loneliness’. The vitality in a lively scene of ‘the pewet flocks’ ‘dabbling’ by the lakes follows and chases away the lonely and chilly feelings in a frigid scene, in which ‘the grass and wild herbs covered with rime’ in ‘the frosty mornings’. Clare explicitly admires common nature for its ‘simplicity’, because this character allows his fancy to enjoy nature’s beauty at any time. As I suggested earlier in the discussion of ‘The Flitting’, nature’s simplicity makes it accessible, and thus meets fancy’s visual needs. The metaphor of ‘dress’ personifies nature and suggests its all-season beauty: ‘[she] is beautifull in every dress she chuses to put on with the seasons’. In the poet’s view, even the winter ‘doublet of snows & hoar frost’ is ‘agreeable’, because the simple scene of the plain white clinging to the ground at least gives people an excuse to ‘go out of doors’.

In ‘Autumn’, Clare further reveals his attachment to common nature through presenting his affinity for anything related to it. This seems to suggest a dissolution of the border between nonhumans and humans, for the descriptions of natural scenes here incorporate human activity:

— now here is a stile partitioning off somebodys portion of the bank but the middle rail is off so I stoop under to get through instead of climbing over it — there is a

⁹⁵ Mina Gorji, ‘John Clare and the Poetics of Mess’, *Moveable Type*, 5 (2009), 1-11, (p. 1).

pair of harrows painted red standing on end against the thorn hedge and in another ground an old plough stands on its beam ends against a dotterel tree sometimes we see a roll lying in on one corner and broken trays and an old gate off the hooks waiting to be repaired till repairs are useless — even these rustic implements and appendages of husbandry blend with nature and look pleasing in the fields.

‘Somebodys portion of the bank’ suggests a private piece of land; Clare, however, trespasses on it with recklessness because ‘the middle rail is off’. If the image of ‘rail’ could be considered as ‘the imagery of land boundaries’, then its incompleteness suggests an invitation from the enclosed piece of land.⁹⁶ Thus, it is plausible to regard Clare’s trespass as a successful communication between humans and nonhumans. As the detailed descriptions of the ‘rustic implements and appendages of husbandry’ suggest, the poet embraces not only common nature, but also the unity made by it, together with the artificial. Within the piece of land, the natural forms and the rustic tools are interconnected. ‘Dotterel’ is an interesting word: according to Clare’s own explanation in *The Village Minstrel* glossary, a dotterel tree means ‘a pollarded tree, an old stumping tree in hedgerows that are headed every ten or twelve years’.⁹⁷ Seen in this light, the shared ‘old’ age makes the ‘plough’ and the ‘tree’ interconnected; fittingly, the two interact with each other in one scene. In this sense, the rustic implements partake of nature. Clare further suggests that the rustic tools could be in harmony with nature when not in use. The expression ‘stand on end against’ indicates that the ‘pair of harrows’ here are not instrumentalised, as they guard ‘the thorn hedge’ rather than exploit it.⁹⁸ Similarly, the word ‘sometimes’ introduces three common scenes where the tools are free: the ‘roll’ (clod roller) ‘lying in on one corner’, the ‘broken trays’ (the fences for confining sheep), and the ‘old gate’ ‘off the hooks’. Here at the end of ‘Autumn’, Clare changes the speaker’s voice from ‘I’ back to the plural pronoun ‘we’, which appears in

⁹⁶ John Goodridge and Kelsey Thornton, ‘John Clare: The Trespasser’, in *John Clare in Context*, ed. by Hugh Haughton, Adam Phillips and Geoffrey Summerfield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 87-129 (p. 99).

⁹⁷ *Poems of the Middle Period*, V, 662.

⁹⁸ See Emma Mason, ‘Ecology with Religion: Kinship in John Clare’, in Simon Kövesi and Scott McEathron (eds.) *New Essays on John Clare: Poetry, Culture and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 97-117 (p. 113).

the very beginning. He intends to use the familiar scenes rather than his individual experience to remind the reader that the seemingly insignificant rustic tools could ‘look pleasing in the fields’, if they work not for humanity’s sake and ‘blend with nature’.

The Transformative Power of Fancy

So far this chapter has explored how, in Clare’s Northborough writings, common nature meets fancy’s visual needs for accessibility and emotional preference for joy. In each case, the poet respectively presents fancy’s associative faculty and synthetic faculty. Next, I will explore how Clare suggests a transformative process of fancy: from the associative mode into the synthetic mode, from the fleeting whim into the imaginative creation. My argument about fancy’s transformative power in relation to roads and common nature can be elucidated by examining ‘Musings of Melancholly’ (1832). In this poem, Clare describes how the natural scenes on roads ‘entertain’ the speaker’s ‘fancy’ (ll. 5-6).⁹⁹ The word ‘fancy’ appears on various occasions and shows its multiple and protean meanings, including a whim induced by the external world, an imaginary idea from the internal, and something between the two. The speaker relates each sense of ‘fancy’ to nature, and as White argues, ‘Clare’s response to the landscape is mediated in a number of complex ways by the work of what he defines as “fancy”’.¹⁰⁰

In the fifth stanza, fancy’s multiple meanings suggest its evolution from associating with the outside world to imagining the world that is gone:

Phantasys the wood land weaves
& my eyes in vague employ
Mark the grey veined ivy leaves
& I feel a snatch of joy
Then betook in childish whims
Oft I stoop to gather up

⁹⁹ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 556-67.

¹⁰⁰ White, *John Clare’s Romanticism*, p. 74.

Neath the old oaks jiant limbs
Many a mottled acorn cup.
(ll. 33-40)

Fancy initially assumes the form of ‘phantasys’, which suggest fleeting ideas. They work, according to fancy’s associative mode, for the external world — ‘the wood land’ — so as to ‘employ’ the speaker’s ‘eyes’.¹⁰¹ Fancy then engages with the speaker’s inner feelings: the phantasys’ interaction with the ‘ivy leaves’ brings the speaker ‘a snatch of joy’. However, as the word ‘snatch’ suggests, the pleasure brought by transient ideas cannot last long. The evolution of fancy from the visual impression to the mental activity further develops. The word ‘betake’ in the past tense indicates that ‘phantasys’ evolve into the speaker’s memories as they go to the past from the present. Fancy now works according to its synthetic mode, as the present ‘wood land’ reminds him of his ‘childish’ interactions with ‘the old oaks’. The ‘jiant limbs’ and ‘many’ ‘acorn cups’ suggest that the oaks, though old, are remarkable. The speaker’s act of ‘stooping’ seems a gesture of respect to ‘the old oaks’, which reflects common nature’s ambiguity: being ordinary does not mean being insignificant.

In another example, Clare shows the transformative power of fancy in a clearer way. Fancy here not only synthesises the external presence as mental images, but also creates something new based on them.

These I pass & onward roaming
Meet with dangers unawares
To a stonepits margin coming
Lost in moods & idle cares
Then I feel a minutes pleasure
Happy at the change of scene
& in troubles thoughts at leisure

¹⁰¹ See Robinson, p. 11.

Fancy throws a smile between

Musing on the craggy ridges

That the stone pits margin bounds

Climbing them like rocks & bridges

That so troubles thoughts confounds

Thinking thunders roaring oer me

Sheltered neath some shelving stone

& an ocean spread before me

While some ledge I'm standing on.

(ll. 57-72)

Although words like 'path', 'track', 'road way', and 'road' constantly appear in the poem, the poet does not articulate that the speaker is 'roaming' on a road in the above lines (ll. 83, 100, 121, 148). Yet as the word 'these' and the phrase 'the change of scene' suggest, a road's presence is implied here. Being 'lost' in his troubled 'thoughts', the speaker is 'unaware' of the existence of 'a stonepit' as well as his dangerous location at the margin of it. The sudden and fleeting encounter prompts him to stop 'idle cares', in that it breaks the inertia of his mind and precipitates his attention into alertness. The use of cross rhyme in 'pleasure' and 'leisure' creates an echo effect of happiness, suggesting that when he tunes his movement to the road again, 'the change of scene' makes him 'happy', however transient ('a minute'). The personification in 'fancy's smile' and the word 'musing' suggest that fancy's synthetic faculty can prolong the evanescent pleasure by imagining and visualising the scene of the 'stonepit'. The speaker's fancy synthesises the dangerous 'stonepit's margin' as a mental picture, as the simile in 'climbing [the craggy ridges] like rocks & bridges' suggest. Based on the imagination, his fancy further reproduces other similarly fearful, 'gloomy pictures' (l. 74). The word 'confounds' signifies the transformative power of 'fancy', as it confuses the real scene with the imaginary scenes of 'thunder roaring', 'ocean spreading', and his 'standing on

some ledge'. As White points out, fancy intensifies the speaker's thought and feeling as it processes and 'shapes strange things' from the outside into the inner products.¹⁰²

In the latter part of 'Musings of Melancholly', Clare suggests when the speaker's mind is not at cross-purposes with his body, it recovers not only awareness of the physical environment, but also observation of it. He presents how the implied roads allow the speaker to move forward so as to acquire the knowledge of common nature in detail:

— All now a pleasing aspect yields
& every thing I hear & see
Of images about the fields
Seems bringing happiness to me

Now I notices as I pass
Grounds where different cattle graze
How sheep cease to bite the grass
& turn with nimble champ to gaze
& the cow just licks her side
Loath a moment to delay
While the horse with carless stride
Shakes his mane & turns away

Then to notice with supprise
Instinct that to things belong
Wonder unto reasons eyes
Meet me as I stalk along
Dog pursuing by the scent
His master—who for half a day

¹⁰² White, *John Clare's Romanticism*, p. 79.

May have the start—yet where he went
He follows as he knew the way
(ll. 205-24)

Ingold points out that ‘knowledge is not built up but grows along the paths’.¹⁰³ After paying continuous attention to the natural world, the speaker obtains a broader knowledge of its inconspicuous details from place to place as he goes along the road. ‘The movement of walking is itself a way of knowing’, because the surface of the ‘ground’ contributes to the speaker’s knowledge and contemplation of nature.¹⁰⁴ The poet uses ‘the language of the footpath walker’ in the verbs ‘hear & see’ to suggest that the speaker attends to the roads by careful observation.¹⁰⁵ Walking allows proximity to the ‘ground’, and therefore enables him to ‘notice’ how ‘different cattle graze’ and how the ‘dog’ pursues his master with his acute senses of ‘instinct’ and smell. Besides, as the word ‘stalk’ suggests, walking provides slowness, and thus allows him to notice the details in local environments.¹⁰⁶ The repeated verb ‘notice’ follows the directional adverbs ‘now’ and ‘then’, and this implies that the speaker’s attentiveness resonates with the natural scenes — it is ‘going along with them’.¹⁰⁷ Roads move the speaker forward, because they expose his ‘reasons eyes’ to a world of ‘wonder’ and ‘surprise’.

Conclusion

For Clare, country roads are symbols of creativity. Walking on them can lead his mind either back to the past or forward to the present, and produce corresponding poesy in relation to memory and fancy. Clare suggests that roads, as a type of open public space, allow walkers to encounter nonhuman nature, and thereby to perceive its agency. The connection between eye and mind enables the walker’s imagination or fancy to produce poesy, and in Clare’s view such creativity would be ‘on the wane’, if one cannot get

¹⁰³ Ingold, ‘Footprints through the Weather-World’, p. 134; Ingold and Vergunst, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Ingold and Vergunst, ‘Introduction’, p. 5; Ingold, ‘Footprints through the Weather-World’, p. 135.

¹⁰⁵ Ingold, ‘Footprints through the Weather-World’, p. 135.

¹⁰⁶ Lee and Ingold, ‘Fieldwork on Foot’, pp. 69-70.

¹⁰⁷ Ingold, ‘On Human Correspondence’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, n.s. 23 (2010), 9-27 (p. 19).

access to the old customary footpaths ('Decay A Ballad', ll. 1).¹⁰⁸

As we have seen, for Clare both memory and fancy relate to seeing. The eye associates with the external presence and perceives the natural landscapes as either particular or common, whereas the mind's eye is concerned with the inner world and visualises the mental images fed by the physical world. Country roads help the external act on the internal. They start journeys, and display every scene while winding on. The encounters on a road connect to the corresponding images in other journeys and thus remind the pedestrian of the past. Moreover, the changing scenes unfolded by roads expose common nature's simplicity and remarkableness, which meets fancy's visual requirement for accessibility and emotional preference for joy. As the act of walking allows one to proceed on roads in a relatively slow and attentive manner, fancy thus has more time to feel, to muse on and even to dream upon common nature before the eye. The immersion and dwelling in nature makes possible fancy's gestation, and as a result, fancy transforms from associating with transient visual stimuli into synthesising and creating imaginary scenes. By focusing on country roads rather than the act of walking, I have tried to suggest that Clare desires a sustainable relationship with common nature that can be forged everywhere, anytime. Clare's fancy tends to discover pleasure from the roadside common nature, however hidden, eerie, scruffy, imperfect, simple, and dangerous. Thus it seems to him that nature's value is constant and will not change with location or season, and his poetic creativity will also be constantly fed with the perceived natural forms. As fancy means more than the fleeting, the common things for Clare are much more than the ordinary and insignificant. The poet is clear that they are undervalued, and therefore he always assigns fancy to appear in his self-conscious poems, so as 'to bring to light'— to reveal the truer, uncommon value of common nature.¹⁰⁹

Both Wordsworth and Clare register the remarkableness of common nature, and both link fancy to the common forms of nonhuman creatures. In the texts that I have examined, Wordsworth tends to obscure the boundary between fancy and imagination,

¹⁰⁸ *Poems of the Middle Period*, IV, 114.

¹⁰⁹ Robinson, p. 9.

whereas Clare seems to suggest that fancy has more functions than the faculty of imagination. Although some critics point out that both Wordsworth and Clare prefer to walk in pathless places, this thesis has shown that both poets use the image of roads in their works to explore the complex relationships between humans and nonhuman nature.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has shown that focusing on Wordsworth and Clare's representations of country roads has particular values. Country roads are key places where humans and nonhumans interface. Different kinds of roads potentially represent different values. This study mainly explores the tension between the roads shaped by custom and usage and the roads artificially imposed onto the landscape. Pre-enclosure customary roads are open, though difficult. They represent the pastoral morality as they provide a site in which humans and nonhumans are interconnected, whereas modernised roads come into being through destroying the original customary roads. Modern roads are easy and metalled, but suggest human's exploitation of nature. Walking on country roads contributes to the connection between eye and mind, in that it makes possible walkers' encounters with nonhumans. This makes a methodological contribution to Romantic ecology: a road as a space is not only cultural, but also allows encounters with nonhumans.

This study has explored how walking into the natural world affects the speakers' minds and provokes their imaginative creativity. Through the shared idea of 'the mind's eye', Wordsworth and Clare emphasise the agency of nonhumans, as experienced through the act of walking. In the first chapter, I used new materialist ideas to investigate the question: what does 'walking with nature' mean? I examined Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* and 'Michael', and argued that for Wordsworth walking into the natural world is a moral action. By using the idea of 'storied matter', I made a contribution for my argument: that Michael's stone sheepfold has its narrative agency, and becomes the co-author with the narrator. Chapter two dealt with the morally edifying significance of 'walking with nature'. I examined Wordsworth's *The Excursion*, and explored the role of roads in rural life within an industrialised and imperial context. Through a case study of the history of Cumbria roads between 1750 and 1815, I contributed to my argument: that some critical accounts do not distinguish the ancient enclosures from the planned ones made by parliament. They tend to consider

that Wordsworth holds positive attitude towards the latter, but in fact, what the poet admires is the former.

In the third chapter, I examined John Clare's enclosure elegies, and explored how the local roads before and after enclosure make humans and nonhumans interconnected. I also examined bird's nest poems by Clare. By examining the Clarean walker's repeatedly walking on the same roads, I contributed to my argument: that being local and mobile at the same time is not paradoxical. In addition, by focusing on the complex role of roads, I emphasised that we should not celebrate Clare's environmental advocacy without thoughtful judgement, as human admiration and protection for the bird's nests bring disturbance and danger to them. In chapter four, I looked at Clare's Northborough writings, and argued that country roads enable Clare's walkers not only to reconnect with particular nature through memory, but also to write about common nature around them via the faculty of fancy. By drawing on Tim Ingold's views of perception and imagination, and of walking, I pointed out that for Clare the process of generating an imaginary landscape is continually brought forth. Furthermore, by focusing on the image of roads, I claimed that Clare extends fancy's functions through linking it to common nature and roads.

Bringing Wordsworth and Clare together makes a contribution for my approach: that the two poets share many similarities in writing about the inflection of parliamentary enclosure on England's different rural areas. Thus they can be discussed together, and should not be crudely divided in an oppositional way. In writing about walking in rural landscapes, both poets emphasise the idea of 'the mind's eye', which enables walkers' perception of the external world to act on their faculties of imagination or fancy. They both register the contrasting road conditions before and after modernisation, and describe how the discontinued customary roads made by parliamentary enclosure result in the sufferings of poor labourers. They both emphasise the significance of freedom for the rural population, and speak for the silent landscapes. Both poets valorise domestic rural England, and claim that humans and nonhumans are

interconnected. These shared points between Wordsworth and Clare bring new perceptions to the view that these two poets are polarised and not comparable.

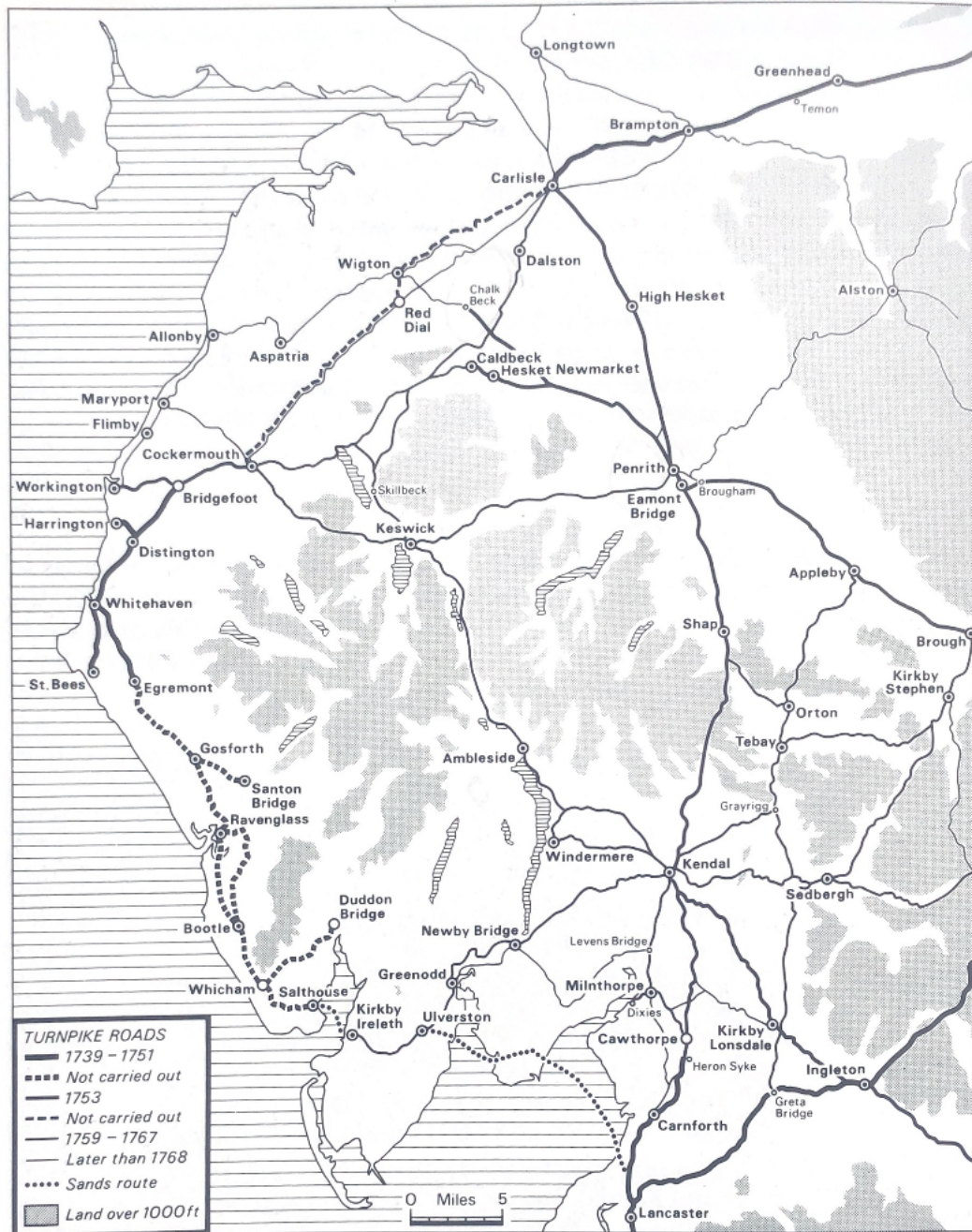
The work that I have done in this thesis opens up new possibilities for research around walking on roads and human-nonhuman interactions later in the nineteenth century. For example, in the writings of Thomas Hardy, it would be useful to consider the role of walking on country roads in unfolding human-nonhuman relationships in *The Return of the Native* (1878). Hardy's presentation of Wessex's cultural landscape involves various kinds of roads and paths, and they not only connect to each other, but also join different figures and fates together. I hope that the road-focused approach to this thesis offers a paradigm to ecocritical studies, as it helps to explore the complex and undiscovered human-nonhuman relationships.

Future work might also examine 'walking with nature' in relation to women writers in the Romantic period who represent walking in the natural world. For example, it would be valuable to investigate how Dorothy Wordsworth in her journals registers her personal observations of nonhuman nature and rural life in the Lake District. In addition, it would be worth examining how Charlotte Smith in her poetry and prose — such as 'Beachy Head' (1807), *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784), and *Rural Walks* (1795) — describes the relationship between rural walking and nonhuman creatures. As a whole, this thesis has shown that roads are key spaces for humans and nonhumans to interact. Roads are both cultural and natural, and play a powerful role in Romantic ecology and Romantic pedestrianism. Over the past thirty years, the value of roads has not been sufficiently recognised by scholarship, and yet this study has shown that roads are worth more critical attention.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

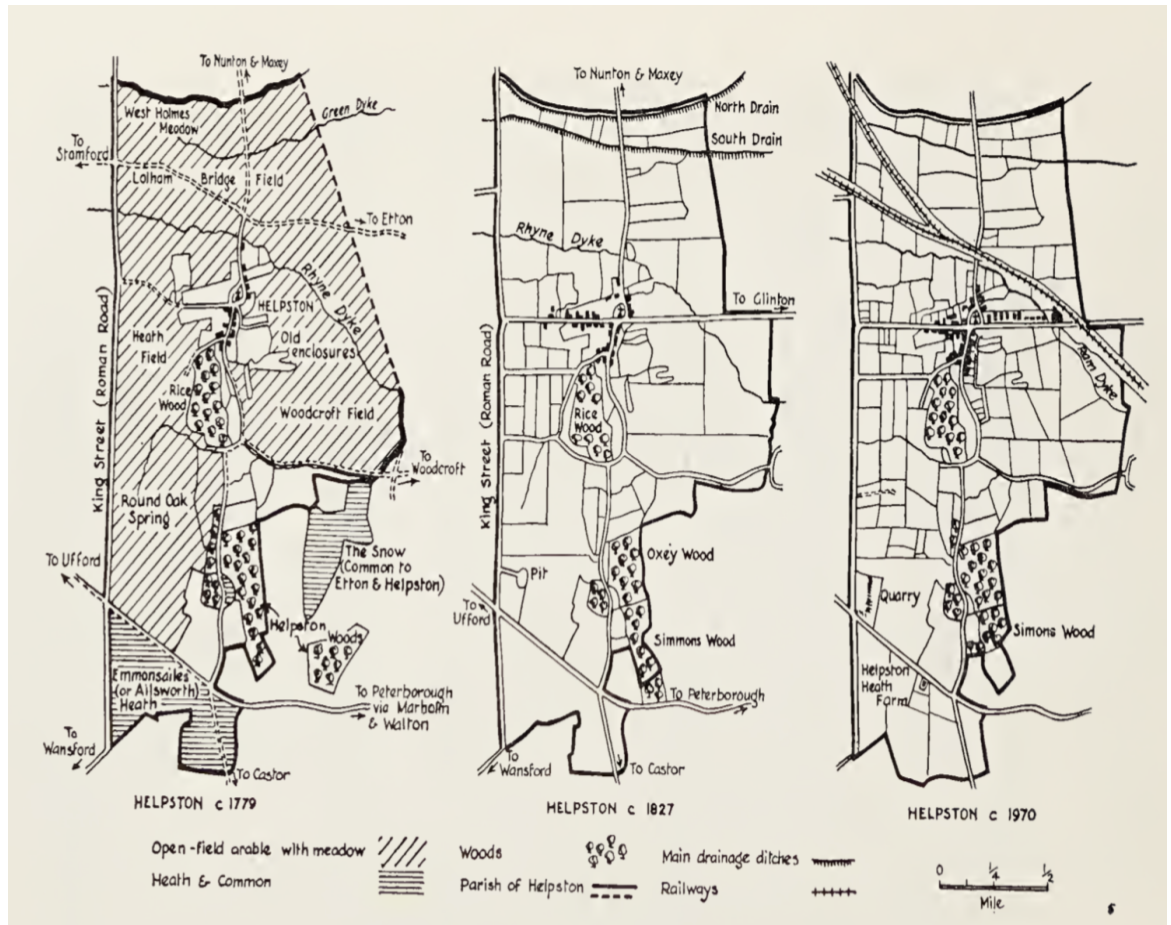
Cumbrian Turnpikes¹



¹ Taken from Hindle, *The Lake District*, p. 142.

APPENDIX II

Helpston²



² Taken from Steane, p. 234.

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