

ROMANTIC ECOLOGY

Wordsworth and the Environmental
Tradition

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For participants past and future in the Wordsworth Summer Conference and Wordsworth Winter School at Grasmere, in whose spirit of dialogue between professional critic and common reader, and with whose sense of the relationship between poetry and place, this book is written.

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All England may, if it so chooses, become one manufacturing town; and Englishmen, sacrificing themselves to the good of general humanity, may live diminished lives in the midst of noise, of darkness, and of deadly exhalation. But the world cannot become a factory nor a mine. No amount of ingenuity will ever make iron digestible by the million, nor substitute hydrogen for wine. Neither the avarice nor the rage of men will ever feed them.

No air is sweet that is silent; it is only sweet when full of low currents of under sound – triplets of birds, and murmur and chirp of insects. . . . As the art of life is learned, it will be found at last that all lovely things are also necessary; – the wild flower by the wayside, as well as the tended corn; and the wild birds and creatures of the forest, as well as the tended cattle; because man doth not live by bread only.

John Ruskin, *Unto This Last* (1862)

INTRODUCTION

The air pollution, more than the existence of the Iron Curtain,
brought about the revolution in Czechoslovakia.

(Luboš Beniak, *Mladý Svět*, Prague, December 1989)

Literary criticism has never been a pure discipline. Ever since Plato and Aristotle argued over whether poets are harmful or beneficial to the state, political and moral concerns have borne in upon the discussion of literature. Inevitably and properly this will be the case so long as poetry continues to have any effect on how we understand ourselves, how we think about the ways in which we live our lives. As political and moral visions change, so literary criticism will change too. I began writing this introduction on a fairly typical day early in 1990 when the three leading stories on the evening television news were: the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union voted to abolish article six of the constitution, thus bringing to an end the formal guarantee of the Party's sole right to power; the announcement of a move towards a unified German currency; and the appearance of a scientific report supporting the hypothesis that there are links between freak weather conditions and global warming.

1989 was more of an 1848 than a 1789, but it may well take its place in history beside the original revolutionary year as a moment when an old order finally died. One could well imagine a citizen of Czechoslovakia who had seen the Prague Spring of 1968 nipped in the bud finding in the events of 1989 'the shoots / And hopeful blossoms of a second spring'. The phrase is Wordsworth's. He used it when he opened the eleventh book of the 1850 text of his autobiographical epic, *The Prelude*, at the moment after the execution of Maximilien Robespierre: 'From that time forth, Authority in France / Put on a milder face; Terror had ceased.' The resonances with 1989 do not need spelling out. But in making a contemporary application it is worth

pausing for a moment on the metaphorical appeal to spring. The 'Prague Spring' has remained a powerful image because of its seasonal propriety: it makes us think of the end of a long winter of tyranny or perhaps of flowers sprouting from an iron curtain. As with Wordsworth's 'second spring', a transformation in the volatile political order is dramatized by means of comparison with a familiar process in the cyclical order of external nature. The force of the image depends on the stability of the notion of 'spring', the knowledge that every winter will be followed by a spring which will bring warmth and new life. This notion in turn depends on a set of assumptions about meteorological certainty: it assumes that, in Europe at least, winter will always be cold. A phrase like Wordsworth's 'It is the first mild day of March'¹ only makes sense after a cold January and February. Suddenly that third news item is seen to be relevant not only to politics but also to poetry. One effect of global warming will be (is already?) a powerful increase in the severity of winds in northern Europe; the swallow has great difficulty in coping with wind, so there is a genuine possibility that within the lifetime of today's students Britain will cease to be a country to which this bird migrates. Keats's ode 'To Autumn' is predicated upon the certainty of the following spring's return; the poem will look very different if there is soon an autumn when 'gathering swallows twitter in the skies' for the last time.

The 1980s witnessed something of a return to history, a move away from ahistorical formalisms, among practitioners of literary criticism. In the area of English Romantic poetry, the foundation for the most characteristic work of the decade was laid by Jerome J. McGann in a series of essays and a small but provocative book called *The Romantic Ideology*.² The capstone of the decade's criticism, published in 1989, was a very large book by Alan Liu called *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*.³ The conceptions of 'ideology' and 'history' underlying these books are in the broad sense Marxist; indeed, McGann's title is a very conscious echo of Marx's *The German Ideology*. If we reduce the thesis of these critics to its bare bones, we find that it is essentially a sophisticated revision of a very old accusation:

In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty, –
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

(Shelley, 'To Wordsworth')

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat . . .
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

(Browning, 'The Lost Leader')

Wordsworth developed a creed of the all-powerful, redeeming poetic Imagination, it is proposed, as a kind of compensation for his political disillusionment or even apostasy. Romanticism gives up on its original revolutionary impulses and finds what it supposes is 'A paradise within, happier far'. Wordsworth's great autobiographical epic ends not with the blissful dawn of the early days of the French Revolution, but with the Restoration of Imagination:

the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of substance and of fabric more divine.

(*The Prelude*, xiii. 446–52)

Imagination is seen as a way of transcending 'this frame of things', the earth in which we dwell, where revolutions go sour; imagination remains 'unchanged', it is 'exalted', 'divine'. The most remarkable *tour de force* in Alan Liu's book is an excavation of the 'history' – in this instance the Napoleonic matter – that is buried beneath Wordsworth's most powerful apostrophe to the Imagination, the crossing of the Alps section of *The Prelude*, book six. Implicitly, Wordsworth is upbraided for suppressing history and for 'privileging' the individual imagination. After all, 'individualism' is a bourgeois fetish.

The arguments are extremely subtle, at times brilliant, but the underlying vision is the crude old model of Left and Right. This is understandable: after all, those terms themselves are derived from the seating plan of the National Assembly in the revolutionary France which Wordsworth visited. But it is precisely this old model that is beginning to look redundant as Marxist-Leninism collapses in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, if the quotation at the beginning of my introduction is to be believed, this collapse cannot be constructed as anything so simple as a triumph of the Right, let alone of international capitalism. It is not difficult to assimilate nationalism and religion, two of the driving forces of the 1989 revolutions, into a Left-Right model, but the

political significance of air pollution demands a rethinking of the categories. The political map has been redrawn and it is time for literary criticism to politicize itself in a new way.

For all the theorizing of the last two hundred years, and in particular the last twenty, no one has succeeded much better than Dr Johnson in defining the function of what we now call 'literature': 'The only end of writing is to enable the readers better to enjoy life, or better to endure it'. Thus one might say that for a neo-Marxist reader in the American academy the end of writing is to make political marginalization endurable and to set theoretical cats among establishment pigeons in enjoyable ways. This book is dedicated to the proposition that the way in which William Wordsworth sought to enable his readers better to enjoy or to endure life was by teaching them to look at and dwell in the natural world. Such a proposition sounds unexceptionable: most people know two facts about Wordsworth, that he wrote about daffodils and that he lived in the Lake District, and these two facts would seem to suggest that he was a 'nature poet'. But some of the most eminent literary critics of our time have believed that Wordsworth was *not* a nature poet, or that there is no such thing as nature, or that if there is such a thing and Wordsworth was interested in it then that interest was very suspect on political grounds. The common reader's view of Wordsworth derives from the Victorian way of reading him, John Stuart Mill's way, John Ruskin's, Leslie Stephen's; this book will argue that, unfashionable as that way now is in literary circles, it might just be the most useful way of approaching Wordsworth in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century.

The concept of a 'useful' way of reading is a Johnsonian one. The two sentences preceding his famous remark about the function of writing are the following:

Many of the books which now crowd the world, may be justly suspected to be written for the sake of some invisible order of beings, for surely they are of no use to any of the corporeal inhabitants of the world. Of the productions of the last bounteous year, how many can be said to serve any purpose of use or pleasure?⁵

The only excuse for adding to the already overcrowded shelf of books on Wordsworth is to try to reveal to corporeal readers how they may derive some fresh use or pleasure from his works. Much literary criticism and theorizing is aimed, if not at an 'invisible order of beings', then at a numerically minute order within the academy. This book is

addressed to some of the current concerns of the academy, but it is also written for 'the common reader'. To address the two audiences at once is a risky business, since they begin with very different premises about writing. 'Broadly speaking,' as Frank Kermode has it, 'the elite is still under the influence of notions of aesthetic autonomy that had their origins in the thought of the late eighteenth century; the masses assume that naïve realism is the proper aim of writing.'⁶ Crudely: the common reader is interested in what literature is 'about'; the professional reader is interested in the ways in which literature is not 'about' the things it says it is about, is interested in what literature suppresses (e.g. women, history) or in the proposition that literature cannot really be 'about' anything since to 'decode' a text is to 're-encode' it. In a book such as this there will inevitably be moments when the assumptions will seem naïvely transparent to professional readers and unnecessarily opaque to common readers. But such moments might be considered a price worth paying for the opening of a dialogue between very different kinds of reader.

Since Dr Johnson recognized that writing always has an *end*, he would not have been surprised by the modern view that when writing about literary texts we cannot avoid being affected by our own historical circumstances. The ends of literary critics are not only exegetical but also polemical; consciously or not, critics always read texts selectively in order to make them serve their own purposes. Redescription thus slides into appropriation. Devout nineteenth-century reviewers used the discourse of religion when writing about Wordsworth; emancipated late twentieth-century critics use the discourse of feminism when writing about Romanticism: both then and now, elements of or absences from the poet's writings are emphasized in order to fulfil the specific polemical desires of specific readers. But in some readings – and I hope to show that my reading of Wordsworth is one of them – the critic's purposes are also the writer's, and when this is the case there can be a communion between living reader and dead writer which may bring with it a particular enjoyment and a perception about endurance. Keats said that we may read fine things but we never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the author;⁷ I shall argue that Wordsworth went before us in some of the steps we are now taking in our thinking about the environment.

The purpose which Jerome McGann wished to make Wordsworth serve in the historical circumstances of the early 1980s was the politicization of Romantic studies in the United States. It was not new to read Romanticism politically. From William Hazlitt onwards, many

distinguished readers have argued that the French Revolution was the ground-bass of the poetic revolution we now call Romanticism. Since it is manifest from *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that the French Revolution was also the ground-bass of Marxism, McGann might have furthered his ends by arguing that Romanticism and Marxism make the same music. And if he had wished to make conceptual as opposed to historical connections he could perhaps have begun with Hazlitt's distinction between 'basis' and 'superstructure' (the latter including 'language, literature, manners, national customs') in the fragmentary *Round Table* essay 'On Patriotism'.⁸ But McGann chose not to follow such activists as E. P. Thompson and Michael Foot into Left-leaning descriptions of Romanticism. He was influenced not so much by political practice as by Louis Althusser's model of literature's servility to ideology.⁹ He accordingly redescribed Romanticism as ideology: the 'Romantic Ideology' displaces and idealizes, it privileges imagination at the expense of history, it covers up social conditions as it quests for transcendence. 'The idea that poetry, or even consciousness, can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand illusion of every Romantic poet.'¹⁰ The point about this description is not that it is true – for of course it is splendidly true in some respects and deeply false in others – but that it served a purpose, namely to offer a challenge to the hegemony which idealizing, imagination-privileging critics like Geoffrey Hartman and Harold Bloom had held over Romantic studies in the United States for twenty years, in particular through their hugely influential books, *Wordsworth's Poetry* and *The Visionary Company*.¹¹ In a development parallel to the so-called 'new historicism' in Renaissance studies, the buzzwords among Romanticists are now 'history' and 'politics' – terms like 'vision' and 'imagination', so central to the previous generation of critics, are now treated with scepticism and often outright hostility. McGann has had extraordinary success in getting what he wanted, and now it looks as if everybody is constructing Romanticism ideologically. Through a model historical progression, what began as an attempt to overthrow a hegemonic regime has itself become hegemonic. A new challenge is needed, or another Bourbon Restoration will be upon us before we know it.

Etymology teaches us that 'radical' pertains to 'root'. A radical reading will go to some root. Thus a critic in the Thompson/Foot mould, like Nicholas Roe, will go back to the Romantics' participation in the revolutionary activity of the 1790s.¹² Those in the McGann mould will go to the same root but concentrate on the poet's later suppression

of that revolutionary activity. Exemplary analyses of the latter sort are Alan Liu's reading of the erasure of Napoleon from Wordsworth's account of the crossing of the Simplon Pass, which I have already mentioned, and an essay by Marjorie Levinson on the (supposed) transmutation of the Liberty Tree and the Champ de Mars into the tree and field of the Immortality Ode, with its implication that to replace historically particular revolutionary symbols with ideal or imaginative conceptions of Tree and Field is a dubious sleight of hand.¹³

If the French Revolution was one great root of Romanticism, then what used to be called 'the return to nature', associated above all with the Rousseau of the second *Discourse* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, was surely the other. This was the root against which the Hartman–Bloom reading of Romanticism set itself. Hartman's polemical purpose was to bring philosophy, and in particular that philosophical tradition which ran from Kantian idealism to Husserlian phenomenology, to the centre of Romantic studies; Bloom's emphasis on 'imagination' and 'the line of vision' may be accounted for by a desire to construct a tradition which ran from the Romantics – and prior to that from the Romantic version of Milton – through Emerson to Wallace Stevens and eventually A. R. Ammons. Stevens, above all: he is the poet 'of our climate'; he is supremely a poet of imagination not nature, so the whole Romantic tradition must be made of imagination not nature. The Hartman–Bloom emphasis on 'The Romantic Imagination' looked reactionary to McGann by 1980, but when first articulated around 1960 such a reading seemed radical because it went against the received wisdom that the Romantics were 'nature poets'. Let us go back for a moment to Geoffrey Hartman's seminal essay of 1962, 'A Poet's Progress: Wordsworth and the *Via Naturaliter Negativa*'.¹⁴ Hartman begins by praising – and ascribing truth to – a very small group of critics who have 'pointed to the deeply paradoxical or problematic character of Wordsworth's dealings with Nature and suggested that what he calls Imagination may be *intrinsically* opposed to images culled or developed from Nature.' There is a telling footnote here to Paul de Man's 1960 essay, 'Structure intentionnelle de l'Image romantique', where the passage on Imagination in the crossing of the Alps sequence of book six of *The Prelude* is said to mark 'a possibility for consciousness to exist entirely by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world'.¹⁵ Again and again in his essay Hartman follows de Man in arguing that Wordsworth sought to go beyond nature: 'The poet is forced to discover the autonomy of his imagination, its independence from present joy, from strong outward stimuli . . . this discovery . . .

means a transcendence of Nature'; 'Wordsworth's tribute to "Imagination" severs the original temporal sequence and forestalls Nature's exhibition to the bodily eye with an ecstatic excursus on the inner eye'; 'The Prelude, as a history of a poet's mind, foresees the time when the "Characters of the great Apocalypse" will be intuited without the medium of Nature.' Here, then, is the Romantic Ideology of transcendence which McGann set *himself* against. Hartman threw out nature to bring us the transcendent imagination; McGann throws out the transcendent imagination to bring us history and society.

It is worth noting that Hartman achieved his goal by putting *The Prelude* at the centre of Wordsworth's work; he considered that because of its 'flight from the autonomous imagination'¹⁶ *The Excursion* represented a falling off. But for Wordsworth himself and his nineteenth-century readers, *The Excursion* was not so much a falling off as a summation of his work. The Ruskin of *Modern Painters* would have found the notion of a Wordsworth who wants to do without nature quite inconceivable; as I will show in chapter 3, for him Wordsworth was pre-eminently the poet of *The Excursion* and this Wordsworth was exemplary in his *seeing* of nature, not in any quest to see beyond it – he is characterized in *Modern Painters I* as 'the keenest-eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature'.¹⁷ Wordsworth did for Ruskin what he did for nearly all his nineteenth-century readers: he taught him how to walk with nature. Even when attacking Wordsworth's poetry late in life, Ruskin said that he had 'used Wordsworth as a daily text-book from youth to age, and ha[d] lived, moreover, in all essential points according to the tenor of his teaching',¹⁸ and unquestionably the most essential of those points pertained to man's relationship with nature. Ruskin, in good Johnsonian fashion, stresses the *use* of Wordsworth. A primary aim of this book is to recapture something of what Wordsworth did for the nineteenth century because it seems to me that what he did then is relevant to what we need now.

McGann's influence within his own special field has been in inverse proportion to the influence in his society – and increasingly in many other societies – of the broadly Marxist views which he represents. *The Romantic Ideology* is a powerful analytic, but its potential for wider political use, for *praxis* outside the academy, is minimal. Let us suppose that we want to politicize Romanticism more pragmatically, in a way that speaks to our present discontents. In order to do so, I suggest that we make the move which many ex-Marxists have made, predominantly in Germany but increasingly in Britain: the move from red to

green.¹⁹ The phenomenon suggested by my quotation from Luboš Beniak and by, for example, the vital role played by the Ecoglasnost movement in precipitating reform in Bulgaria should make us pause to consider the possibility that the revolutionary torch now burns in the hand of greens rather than reds. The 1960s gave us an idealist reading of Romanticism which was implicitly bourgeois in its privileging of the individual imagination; the 1980s gave us a post-Althusserian Marxist critique of Romanticism. The first of these readings assumed that the human mind is superior to nature; the second assumed that the economy of human society is more important than what in chapter 2 I call 'the economy of nature'. It is precisely these assumptions that are now being questioned by green politics. What makes a literary text 'classic' is its ability to speak both to its own time and to later ages; the best readings of classic texts are accordingly those which have both historical and contemporary force. A green reading of Wordsworth is a prime example: it has strong historical force, for if one historicizes the idea of an ecological viewpoint – a respect for the earth and a scepticism as to the orthodoxy that economic growth and material production are the be-all and end-all of human society – one finds oneself squarely in the Romantic tradition; and it has strong contemporary force in that it brings Romanticism to bear on what are likely to be some of the most pressing political issues of the coming decade: the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer, the destruction of the tropical rainforest, acid rain, the pollution of the sea, and, more locally, the concreting of England's green and pleasant land.

The time is now right to allow Wordsworth to become once more what he imagined himself to be, what Shelley called him, and what he was to the Victorians: 'Poet of Nature'. It may be asked what good it will do to relearn Wordsworth's way of looking at nature. I acknowledge that a rereading of a nineteenth-century poet is not actually going to have any effect on any government's policies concerning 'green' issues and also that such a reading runs the risk of appearing modish (do we really need a 'green' literary criticism to go with our lead-free petrol and our ozone-friendly deodorant?). But it still seems to me valuable and important to make claims for the historical continuity of a tradition of environmental consciousness; Wordsworth by no means initiated that tradition, but he has been a vital influence upon it. Furthermore, constructive precedents for the environmental reading of Wordsworth are to be found in the work of Ruskin and of William Morris, and indeed in the role that such a reading played in the establishment of two important institutions, the

National Trust (in its original function as the preserver of land, not its 1930s aberration as the custodian of stately homes) and the English National Park system.

There is a historical basis for the intuitive link that thousands of people still make between the poetry of Wordsworth and the 'natural beauty' of the English Lake District. That link was as firmly established in the Victorian era as it is in Grasmere today. Absolutely characteristic is a moment early in the most popular English novel of the late nineteenth century, Mrs Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere*: in chapter two of book one, which is set in Westmorland, the eponymous hero

stood there bathed in silent enchantment, an eager nature going out to meet and absorb into itself the beauty and peace of the scene. Lines of Wordsworth were on his lips; the little well-worn volume was in his pocket, but he did not need to bring it out; and his voice had all a poet's intensity of emphasis as he strode along, reciting under his breath –

'It is a beauteous evening, calm and free . . .'²⁰

I trust the intuition that locates Wordsworth firmly in nature and I reject the counter-intuitive readings which have been so influential in the academy over the past thirty years. To put it another way: I propose that the Romantic Ideology is not, as Jerome McGann has it, a theory of imagination and symbol embodied in such self-consciously idealist and elitist texts as Coleridge's *Statesman's Manual*, but a theory of ecosystems and unalienated labour embodied in such self-consciously pragmatic and populist texts as Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera*. McGann's case may then be seen to serve no constructive purpose – its only function was a destructive and local one, the breaking down of the Hartman hegemony.

Chapter 1 of this book affirms the importance of nature, and especially of the Lake District, for Wordsworth; it examines his version of pastoral and argues that there is not an opposition but a continuity between his 'love of nature' and his revolutionary politics, for it is precisely the Lakeland environment explored in book eight of *The Prelude* ('Retrospect: Love of Nature leading to Love of Mankind') that prepares the ground for the radical ardour of book nine ('Residence in France and French Revolution'). Chapter 2 historicizes the notion of 'ecology' and finds important sources for it in Romantic attitudes to the environment and in a tradition of texts that runs from Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* to Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera* and Morris's *News from Nowhere*. Chapter 3 examines Ruskin's reading of *The*

Excursion in *Modern Painters* and argues that through Wordsworth Ruskin re-sacralized nature; underlying the chapter is the belief that nature's sanctity, that an ecological *ethic*, must be reaffirmed in our contemporary structure of values. The final chapter, more geographical than historical, explores the motif of place-naming as a way of finding identity by dwelling in the land; it argues that there is a continuing place-naming tradition in English poetry and suggests that the localness of this poetry allows for a differentiation between love of the land and love of the fatherland – an important distinction in view of the recent accusation that the greenest political party of our century has been the Nazis.²¹ The book itself might be described as a preliminary sketch towards a literary ecocriticism.

A LANGUAGE THAT IS EVER GREEN

During his highly productive residence at Racedown in Dorset and then at Alfoxden in Somerset, Wordsworth worked on 'The Ruined Cottage', a poem which Coleridge took to be one of the most beautiful in the language. Over the last twenty years this poem has come to look absolutely central to Wordsworth's achievement and its narrative is now highly familiar to students: owing to failed harvests and high prices, Margaret's husband enlists as a paid recruit; he does not return, Margaret and her family decline and die, nature re-encroaches upon her cottage plot until all that is left is an overgrown ruin. For the poet and the character – originally called the Pedlar, later the Wanderer – who narrates Margaret's tragedy, the ruined cottage provides an image of consolation. Wordsworth tells of how he

traced with milder interest
That secret spirit of humanity
Which, 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies
Of nature, 'mid her plants, her weeds, and flowers,
And silent overgrowings, still survived.¹

The Pedlar responds by saying that he too has gained consolation and a sense of tranquillity, an inner peace that leads to an acceptance of suffering, from the weeds:

The purposes of wisdom ask no more;
Be wise and chearful, and no longer read
The forms of things with an unworthy eye.
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.
I well remember that those very plumes,
Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,
By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,
As once I passed did to my heart convey

So still an image of tranquillity,
So calm and still, and looked so beautiful
Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
That what we feel of sorrow and despair
From ruin and from change, and all the grief
The passing shews of being leave behind,
Appeared an idle dream that could not live
Where meditation was. I turned away
And walked along my road in happiness.
(*'The Ruined Cottage'*, 509–25)

Wordsworth has always provoked widely differing responses. With this passage in mind, I want to consider two contrasting reactions in the Victorian era. First, here is Thomas De Quincey, in his essay on Wordsworth's poetry, originally published in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1845:

It might be allowable to ask the philosophic wanderer who washes the case of Margaret with so many coats of metaphysical varnish, but ends with finding all unavailing, 'Pray, amongst your other experiments, did you ever try the effect of a guinea?' Supposing this, however, to be a remedy beyond his fortitude, at least he might have offered a little rational advice, which costs no more than civility. Let us look steadily at the case. The particular calamity under which Margaret groaned was the loss of her husband, who had enlisted – not into the horse marines, too unsettled in their head-quarters, but into our British army. . . . Here it is that we must tax the wandering philosopher with treason to his obvious duty. He found so luxurious a pleasure in contemplating a pathetic *phthisis* of heart in the abandoned wife, that the one obvious word of counsel in her particular distress, which dotage could not have overlooked, he suppresses. And yet this one word, in the revolution of a week would have brought her effectual relief. Surely the regiment into which her husband had enlisted bore some number: it was the king's 'dirty half-hundred', or the rifle brigade, or some corps known to men and the Horse Guards. Instead, therefore, of suffering poor Margaret to loiter at a gate, looking for answers to her questions from vagrant horsemen . . . the Wanderer should at once have inquired for the station of that particular detachment which had enlisted him. This *must* have been in the neighbourhood. Here, he would have obtained all the particulars. That same night he

might have written to the War-Office; and in a very few days, an official answer, bearing the indorsement, *On H. M.'s Service*, would have placed Margaret in communication with her truant. To have overlooked a point of policy so broadly apparent as this, vitiates and nullifies the very basis of the story. Even for a romance it will not do, far less for a philosophic poem, dealing with intense realities.²

And, by way of contrast, here is John Stuart Mill, in his *Autobiography* of 1873, recollecting how in 1828, twenty-two years old and in the depths of depression, he read Wordsworth for the first time. Granted, he has been reading the short poems, not *The Excursion* into which 'The Ruined Cottage' was incorporated, but the poet's and the Wanderer's reflections are among the best examples of that aspect of Wordsworth which Mill emphasizes:

In the first place, these poems addressed themselves powerfully to one of the strongest of my pleasurable susceptibilities, the love of rural objects and natural scenery; to which I had been indebted not only for much of the pleasure of my life, but quite recently for relief from one of my longest relapses into depression. . . . But Wordsworth would never have had any great effect on me, if he had merely placed before me beautiful pictures of natural scenery. Scott does this still better than Wordsworth, and a very second-rate landscape does it more effectually than any poet. What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings. . . . I needed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings. . . . The result was that I gradually, but completely, emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it.³

These passages are the products of two different kinds of reading. De Quincey's is materialistic and realistic, sceptical and interrogative, ultimately political. Mill's is spiritual and emotive, sympathetic and

engaged, ultimately medicinal. In one, the reader tells the poet what he should have done; in the other, the reader allows the poet to do something to him. Neatly reversing our expectations, De Quincey has produced a Utilitarian reading, Mill a Romantic one.

The most influential recent readings of Wordsworth are in the tradition of De Quincey's, though they are, alas, nowhere near so comic as his. They seem to demand of poetry that it should attempt to solve political and social problems; they forget Chekhov's advice that it is the business of art to pose questions in interesting ways, not to provide answers.⁴ Jerome McGann is annoyed with Wordsworth for finding consolation in nature when he ought to be attending to economic conditions. He is also annoyed with Keats for attending to swallows instead of Corn Laws in 'To Autumn', just as Marjorie Levinson is annoyed that Wordsworth doesn't talk about coal-barges on the river Wye and vagrants in the ruins of Tintern Abbey.⁵ In an essay in which George Crabbe is praised for looking rural poverty squarely in the face, McGann argues that the relationship with nature in poems such as 'The Ruined Cottage' is a matter of 'compensatory justice', 'Romantic displacement', and 'the "fond illusion" of Wordsworth's heart that some uncertain hope presides over all disastered things'.⁶ 'Displacement' is the key term here: comfort in nature is read as an escape from, or even an active suppression of, socio-political reality.

Wordsworth's Nature 'upholds and cherishes' suffering humanity 'first and last and midst and without end'. Ecological nature is Wordsworth's fundamental sign and symbol of his transcendent Nature because the objective natural world – the field of chemistry, physics, biology – contains for human beings, whose immediate lives are lived in social and historical fields, the images of permanence which they need. Like Coleridge, however, Wordsworth translates those ecological forms into theological realities: nature as Nature, the Active Universe and manifest form of the One Life.⁷

So it is that Alan Liu feels a need to do away with this transcendent Nature: 'there is no nature except as it is constituted by acts of political definition made possible by particular forms of government'.⁸ Since the work of John Barrell, critics of Romantic representations of rural nature have become increasingly interested in questions of landownership.⁹ David Simpson looks at parish records and agricultural histories in order to establish the real state of sublunary nature in the Vale of

Grasmere during the early nineteenth century and to consider how true or false Wordsworth's representation of it is in his poetry.¹⁰ In a book aimed at the student market, Roger Sales advances an angry reading of 'Michael' which accuses the poem of ignoring where economic change comes from. Towards the end of the poem we learn of Michael's cottage that 'the ploughshare has been through the ground / On which it stood'; according to Sales, Wordsworth's phrasing effects a cunning evasion of the identity of the driver of the plough – rural change is made to seem like an inevitable process of nature, not a depredation brought about by the aristocracy. Wordsworth suppresses the role of the large landowners in the decline of the smallholders, the 'statesmen' whom he so admired; already in 'Michael' he is implicitly toeing the line of the local grandees, the powerful Lowther family to whom he will later openly toady in his 1818 by-election addresses.¹¹ Critics in this mould like to point out that a majority of statesmen did not really own their land, but held it under a system of 'customary tenure' which allowed it to revert to the lord of the manor if certain payments ('feudal obligations', Sales calls them¹²) were not made. One looks in vain in such books as Sales's for reference to the process of enfranchisement which enabled many statesmen to become genuine freeholders.

There is a constant implication in all this work that Wordsworth *ought* to have written about real economic conditions; hence the analogy with De Quincey's comments on what the Wanderer *ought* to have done about Margaret's unfortunate position. But where De Quincey was playful, others are in deadly earnest. In a recent study of *Pastoral and Ideology*, Annabel Patterson says of a chapter on 'Michael' by a critic of an older generation that it is 'an attractive but overly generous reading'.¹³ The critic's superiority to the poet is proclaimed by that 'overly generous'. We know about ideology and economic reality, therefore to read 'Michael' with Wordsworth's own emphasis on the shepherd's bond with nature, rather than his bondage to the aristocracy, is to read over-generously. What, one wonders, does Annabel Patterson make of John Stuart Mill's reading of Wordsworth? Is it 'overly generous' to read a poet in such a way that he pulls you through a nervous breakdown?

De Quincey's witty dismantling of 'The Ruined Cottage' was in fact an aberration in his criticism. In his more characteristic mode he juxtaposed Wordsworth and Crabbe in the way that McGann does, but came down firmly on the side of Wordsworth. Responding to a comparison in a letter by John Clare,

The Opium-Eater wondered that [Clare] should think of comparing Wordsworth and Crabbe together, who had not one thing in common in their writings. Wordsworth sought to hallow and ennoble every subject on which he touched, while Crabbe was anything but a poet. His pretensions to poetry were not nothing, merely, but if they were represented algebraically, the negative sign must be prefixed. All his labours and endeavours were unpoetical. Instead of raising and elevating his subjects, he did all he could to make them flat and commonplace, to disrobe them of the garb in which imagination would clothe them, and to bring them down as low as, or even to debase them lower than, the standard of common life. Poetry could no longer exist if cultivated only by such writers as Crabbe. Wordsworth's aim is entirely the reverse of this.¹⁴

It is this disrobing and debasement that attracts McGann to Crabbe; in their algebraic representations of poetry, modern neo-Benthamites prefix the negative sign to Wordsworth precisely because of his elevation and imagination. Contemporary criticism forces us to choose between a materialist response to poetry from which it can only follow, as Bentham had it in *The Rationale of Reward* (1825), that poetry is of no more value than push-pin, and a response more akin to that of De Quincey and Hazlitt, for whom it was an article of faith that 'Poetry is that fine particle within us, that expands, rarefies, refines, raises our whole being'.¹⁵

The latter quotation is from the first of Hazlitt's *Lectures on the English Poets*. In the same lecture, Hazlitt suggests that the word 'poetry' should not be confined to something found only in books, contained in lines of ten syllables; rather, poetry is 'the universal language which the heart holds with nature and itself'; further, 'wherever there is a sense of beauty, or power, or harmony, as in the motion of a wave of the sea, in the growth of a flower that "spreads its sweet leaves to the air, and dedicates its beauty to the sun," – *there* is poetry, in its birth'.¹⁶ In Romantic poetics, poetry is to be found not only in language but in nature; it is not only a means of verbal expression, it is also a means of emotional communication between man and the natural world. John Clare's poem 'Pastoral Poesy' begins with a manifesto remarkably similar to Hazlitt's:

True poesy is not in words
But images that thoughts express
By which the simplest hearts are stirred

To elevated happiness

Mere books would be but useless things
Where none had taste or mind to read
Like unknown lands where beauty springs
And none are there to heed

But poesy is a language meet
And fields are everyone's employ
The wild flower neath the shepherd's feet
Looks up and gives him joy

A language that is ever green
That feelings unto all impart
As awthorn blossoms soon as seen
Give May to every heart.¹⁷

For Clare, himself a farm-labourer, not a 'gentleman' like Wordsworth, 'pastoral poesy' is the life and the beauty in nature. It is available to give joy 'unto all', to elevate even the 'simplest hearts'; when the shepherd's heart lifts with joy at the sight of a wild flower, that is poetry. Pastoral poetry has a permanent, enduring power – it is an *evergreen* language.

For modern criticism, however, pastoral poetry is historically and socially specific. *Pace* Clare, it is not really written by shepherds, it is a comforting aristocratic fantasy that covers up the real conditions of oppression and exploitation in feudal and neo-feudal agrarian economies. Raymond Williams writes with honest indignation: 'It is not easy to forget that Sidney's *Arcadia*, which gives a continuing title to English neo-pastoral, was written in a park which had been made by enclosing a whole village and evicting the tenants.'¹⁸ Roger Sales lashes out with less measure: 'Pastoralism covers a multitude of economic sins. Literary criticism ought, therefore, to take the form of a brutal strip-tease. Pastoralism should be divested of its silver-tongued language and myths of the golden age.'¹⁹ A major count in the critical indictment of Wordsworth is that he was among the many conspirators in the Great Pastoral Con Trick.

Of course it is to be welcomed that literary critics should have begun to question easy generalities about nature, should now be attending to walls and fences and No Trespassing signs. Alan Liu's claim that 'there is no nature except as it is constituted by acts of political definition made possible by particular forms of government' is arresting. Almost

everywhere on this earth, the land is owned – or claimed – by someone. In a small country like Britain the pressure of landownership has always been exceptionally acute. In international law, even much of the sea is owned. As I write, the issue of the *privatization of water* is politically highly charged. But here one sees the limitation of Liu's argument: not even the most ardent advocate of entrepreneurship and the free market can privatize the air we breathe. Governments may legislate about what we emit into the air, and in that sense the constitution of nature is determined by government and industry, but we cannot parcel out the air as we parcel out the land. And water can only be privatized in a limited sense. The particles of water which form clouds – and we need no reminding of how important clouds were to Wordsworth, as they were to Ruskin – cannot be possessed or sold.

What, then, are the politics of our relationship to nature? For a poet, pastoral is the traditional mode in which that relationship is explored. Pastoral has not done well in recent neo-Marxist criticism, but if there is to be an ecological criticism the 'language that is ever green' must be reclaimed. 'Why did Wordsworth build into *The Prelude* a mini-history of pastoral that contrasts the past with the present, central Europe with northern England, and concludes with an accolade to the hard but noble life of the *working* shepherd?' The question is asked by Annabel Patterson in *Pastoral and Ideology* (p. 272). She goes on to pose a choice as to whether Wordsworth's version of pastoral was the product 'of a man whose social and political instincts were outraged by the hardships attributable to the industrial and agrarian revolutions' or whether it was, rather, a subtle contribution 'to the counter-revolutionary programs of the British government, promoting a conservative ideology based on the "georgic" values of hard work (by others), landownership (Wordsworth became a freeholder in 1803), and, above all, the premise that hardship is to be countered by personal "Resolution and Independence" rather than social meliorism' (pp. 272–3). I would say that it was neither; I would suggest instead that Wordsworth built an account of the pastoral into the pivotal retrospective eighth book of *The Prelude* in order to forge a link between the holistic values of his native vales and the 'social meliorism' that underlay the French Revolution. If this is so, then we must abandon the model of Wordsworth the young radical with his 'outraged' social and political instincts sooner or later (sooner in most current readings²⁰) becoming Wordsworth the 'counter-revolutionary' promoting a conservative ideology. An 'ideology' based on a harmonious relationship with nature goes beyond, in many ways goes deeper than, the political model we have

become used to thinking with. By recuperating the Wordsworthian pastoral, we may begin to reconfigure the model.

Book eight of *The Prelude*, 'Retrospect: Love of Nature leading to Love of Mankind', was written before book seven, but in the structure of the completed poem it is crucial that it comes after it. Book seven, 'Residence in London', contains Wordsworth's fundamental apprehension concerning the city:

Above all, one thought
Baffled my understanding, how men lived
Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
Strangers, and knowing not each other's names.

(Prel. vii. 117-20)

This key perception about alienation in the modern urban world is picked up towards the end of the book:

How often in the overflowing streets
Have I gone forwards with the crowd, and said
Unto myself, 'The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery.'

(vii. 595-8)

From here, Wordsworth proceeds to his description of the blind beggar wearing a written paper explaining his life story:

it seemed
To me that in this label was a type
Or emblem of the utmost that we know
Both of ourselves and of the universe.

(vii. 617-20)

Recent theorists have tended to treat the beggar as the poet's double and to relate this encounter to the sublime bafflement of the moment when the light of sense goes out in the Simplon Pass section of book six.²¹ But such a reading gives insufficient due to the fact that Wordsworth's vision of human life reduced to the status of data which can be written on a label is located in the city. A little later in book seven the poet enters Bartholomew Fair, with its shows and freaks: 'O, blank confusion, and a type not false / Of what the mighty city is itself' (vii. 696-7). The 'type' of the city is very different from the 'types and symbols of eternity' which Wordsworth sees in the landscape of the Alps (vi. 571): here, 'blank confusion' springs not from the inward

mental blockage associated with the Kantian sublime but from the distortion of social relations effected by the economy of the city.

For Wordsworth, the distinction between being in the city and being in nature is cardinal; so it is that the move from book seven to book eight is from negative types to positive ones. As 'Residence in London' ends with Bartholomew Fair, so 'Retrospect' begins with Grasmere Fair. In contrast to the unknown faces in the city, the community gathered in Grasmere for the annual fair is a 'little family'. The only patriarch is the mountain itself. The Vale of Grasmere is imagined as a visionary republic; as Wordsworth put it in his *Guide to the Lakes*, it is a 'pure Commonwealth; the members of which existed in the midst of a powerful empire like an ideal society or an organized community, whose constitution had been imposed and regulated by the mountains which protected it'.²² The language here - 'Commonwealth', 'ideal society', 'organized community' - is from a tradition of radical republicanism that goes back to the English civil war.²³ To summon up English republicanism was to declare allegiance to the French Revolution; it therefore follows that, by associating Grasmere Vale with republicanism, Wordsworth was retrospectively finding a seedbed for his own revolutionary enthusiasm in the rural communities that he had known since his earliest years. In contrast to the competitive chaos of Bartholomew Fair, the sheep pens of Grasmere Fair are ordered and equally distributed. 'Booths are there none' (viii. 25): there are no freak shows and callous entertainments, the fair is not based on economic exploitation. Wordsworth notes the absence of booths in order to make a specific contrast with the London fair, where

Tents and booths
Meanwhile - as if the whole were one vast mill -
Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides,
Men, women, three-years' children, babes in arms.

(vii. 692-5)

The parenthetic simile sustains the critique of industrialization and urbanization. Whereas in the city the family is subordinated to the system of getting and spending, in Grasmere the people are 'embraced' maternally by the hills around. Nature serves as *both* parents; the imagery thus sidesteps the patriarchalism of Tory models of both family and state.

Wordsworth argues that it was only when he went to the city that he fully and consciously apprehended his debt to nature, and in particular how his sense of human brotherhood came from his early encounters

with Lakeland shepherds. In a spirit of visionary republicanism, he represents his native vales as paradise. As Milton in *Paradise Lost* says where the true paradise is *not* before he says where it is ('Not that fair field of Enna . . .'²⁴), so Wordsworth begins with false paradises, rejecting 'Gehol's famous gardens', an emperor's pleasure-garden like Kubla Khan's (viii. 123ff.). He then turns to his origins:

But lovelier far than this the paradise
Where I was reared, in Nature's primitive gifts
Favored no less, and more to every sense
Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
The elements, and seasons in their change,
Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there,
The heart of man; a district on all sides
The fragrance breathing of humanity,
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object.

(viii. 144-53)

Here man is a 'fellow-labourer' with nature, working in harmony with the elements and the seasons. Furthermore, he is free, 'working for himself, with choice / Of time, and place, and object'. Marx argued that when we work for someone else we become alienated: 'the worker relates to the product of his labour as to an alien object'.²⁵ But Wordsworth's shepherds are free, they work for themselves, they represent the spirit of unalienated labour. In his unpublished 'Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff', Wordsworth wrote of 'that most important part of property, not less real because it has no material existence, that which ought to enable the labourer to provide food for himself and his family'.²⁶ In Marx's account of 'Alienated Labour' in the Economic Manuscripts of 1844, 'for the worker who appropriates nature through his work, this appropriation appears as alienation, his own activity as activity for and of someone else, his vitality as sacrifice of his life, production of objects as their loss to an alien power' (p. 86), but in Wordsworth's Grasmere the shepherds retain their vitality and nature is *not* appropriated. In the original manuscript draft of this section of book eight, Wordsworth proposed that there can be such a thing as 'a tract / Boundless of unappropriated earth'.²⁷

Despite the absence of alienation and appropriation, Wordsworth's image is not that of a pre-lapsarian Eden. This is a *working* paradise. In an important passage, the pastoral is hardened and differentiated from that of literary tradition:

And shepherds were the men who pleased me first:
Not such as, in Arcadian fastnesses
Sequestered, handed down among themselves,
So ancient poets sing, the golden age;
Nor such – a second race, allied to these –
As Shakespeare in the wood of Arden placed,
Where Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede,
Or there where Florizel and Perdita
Together danced, Queen of the feast and King;
Nor such as Spenser fabled.

(viii. 182-91)

Wordsworth transposes the pastoral from the fictional Arcadian golden age to the severe life and landscape that he knew:

the rural ways
And manners which it was my chance to see
In childhood were severe and unadorned,
The unluxuriant produce of a life
Intent on little but substantial needs,
Yet beautiful – and beauty that was felt.
But images of danger and distress
And suffering, these took deepest hold of me,
Man suffering among awful powers and forms.

(viii. 205-13)

The poem itself performs the act which Roger Sales demands of literary criticism: it divests pastoral of its silver-tongued language and myths of the golden age. It is the fortitude of the Lakeland shepherd that Wordsworth singles out for praise. At this point he inserts in the 1805 version of *The Prelude* the 'Matron's Tale' that he had originally written for 'Michael', a humble but heroic story of a boy trying to rescue a sheep and himself being rescued by his father. After this narrative, Wordsworth continues in his vein of differentiation. His shepherds are not only unlike those of Renaissance pastoral, they differ also from those of classical poetry:

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
Long springs and tepid winters on the banks
Of delicate Galesus – and no less
Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores –
Smooth life the herdsman and his snow-white herd,
To triumphs and to sacrificial rites

Devoted, on the inviolable stream
 Of rich Clitumnus; and the goatherd lived
 As sweetly underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretius, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, the invisible God, thrilling the rocks
 With tutelary music, from all harm
 The fold protecting.

(viii. 312-24)

Wordsworth suggests that such a soft pastoral world still exists on the German plains which he had seen from Goslar, but he prefers his craggy, harsh northern landscape:

Yet hail to you,
 Your rocks and precipices, ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp, your snows and streams
 Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
 That howled so dismally when I have been
 Companionless among your solitudes!
 There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
 To wait upon the storms: of their approach
 Sagacious, from the height he drives his flock
 Down into sheltering coves, and feeds them there
 Through the hard time, long as the storm is 'locked'
 (So do they phrase it), bearing from the stalls
 A toilsome burthen up the craggy ways
 To strew it on the snow.

(viii. 353-66)

Weather, work, and plain language – note the use of the shepherd's own term for the 'locking' of the storm – ensure that this pastoral is no aristocratic fantasy. Indeed, the aristocracy have no place in this 'Ungovernable' world. Amidst the grand forms of the mountains, the shepherd is free and self-sufficient: 'He feels himself, / In those vast regions where his service is / A freeman' (viii. 385-7). As at the fair below Helvellyn, the only master whom the shepherd serves is nature; there is no feudal landlord. Furthermore, the image of the working paradise evokes a tradition of anti-feudal protest that goes back to Wat Tyler and the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in which John Ball produced the slogan 'When Adam delved and Eve span / Who was then a gentleman?'

Wordsworth's ideal pastoral mountain republic is not exclusively

'northern'. The image of the Grasmere shepherd is comparable to the reality of the Swiss shepherd. In the (unsent) 'Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff', Wordsworth nudged his anti-republican ecclesiastical antagonist: 'If your lordship has travelled in the democratic cantons of Switzerland you must have seen the herdsman with the staff in one hand and the book in the other.'²⁸ The poet himself had first-hand experience of what he was talking about; indeed, he devoted a substantial section of his *Descriptive Sketches*, published in 1793, the year of the 'Letter', to an account of the Swiss shepherd, 'The slave of none', living in the mountains where he is taught 'to feel his rights'.²⁹ The system of democratic representation in the *Landesgemeinde* of the higher cantons of Switzerland, with their elective assemblies, showed that Wordsworth's ideal of political emancipation ultimately derived from unity with nature could actually be brought into practice. The Lake District is seen as the nearest approach to it in Britain: there, as in Switzerland, Wordsworth envisions what Coleridge called 'a particular mode of pastoral life, under forms of property, that permit and beget manners truly republican'.³⁰ As late as 1901, G. W. Kitchin, well known for his liberal and anti-imperial pronouncements, could write in 'The Statesmen of West Cumberland', 'They answer nearly to the free farmers of Switzerland and Norway; they too keep alive, as the Norse and Swiss also do, the love of liberty and simple independence, bred in the blood of men of mountain regions'.³¹ According to this model, pastoral life begets republicanism, and, by the same account, pastoral poetry as redefined by Wordsworth begets both reverence for nature and political emancipation.

The Wordsworthian shepherd represents man 'in his primaeval dower' (*Sketches*, 526). He is a figure of terrific magnitude who looms a giant size in the fog, his sheep like Greenland bears; at the time of the setting sun he is a vast Blakean spiritual form, comparable to an enormous aerial cross stationed high on the Grand Chartreuse, not some 'Corin of the groves' (viii. 420). He is 'man Ennobled' (viii. 410-11): true nobility is to be found amongst not the nobles but the working shepherds. In all this, Wordsworth is fulfilling the demand he made of himself in *Home at Grasmere* to write a poetry of rural life as it is lived, not as it is sung in literary tradition (note the acknowledgement here of 'real evil', the refusal to indulge in a moral idealization):

Is there not
 An art, a music, and a stream of words
 That shall be life, the acknowledged voice of life,

Shall speak of what is done among the fields,
 Done truly there, or felt, of solid good
 And real evil, yet be sweet withal,
 More grateful, more harmonious than the breath,
 The idle breath of sweetest pipe attuned
 To pastoral fancies?

(*Home at Grasmere*, 620–8)

Two questions may be asked about this new project for pastoral: does it offer a valid account of the previous pastoral tradition and does it offer a valid account of real Grasmere shepherding? The answer to the first question is no. It is only valid for a simplified reading of pastoral. In particular, Wordsworth was reacting against the neo-classical version of pastoral, so popular in the eighteenth century, which insisted that the genre should concern itself only with shepherds in a state of innocence in the Arcadian golden age; for Pope, the art of pastoral lay 'in exposing the best side only of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries'.³² When Wordsworth alludes to 'Shakespeare in the wood of Arden' he emphasizes the courtiers who play at pastoral, the 'false Ganymede' who is really the noble Rosalind in disguise. But Arden also contains a Corin and he most emphatically does not live 'For his own fancies' or 'dance by the hour / In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst' (*Prel.* viii. 420–2). He is no neo-classical Arcadian; his hands are greasy and he has to perform such unsavoury tasks as the application of tar to the wounds of his sheep. As for his attitude to his work, in this Corin foreshadows Wordsworth's unalienated shepherd: 'Sir, I am a true labourer. I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's good, content with my harm; and the greatest of my pride is to see my ewes graze and my lambs suck' (*As You Like It*, III. ii. 71–5). Shakespeare, as always, is supremely multi-dimensional. He is not just wilier than the idealizing soft pastoralists, he is also more complex than the idealizing image-makers of unalienated labour, for Corin, despite his content in his work, is shepherd to another man and does not shear the fleeces that he grazes – he is sold along with a piece of property, transferred from churlish master to master-mistress Rosalind.

In Spenser, too, the situation is more complex than Wordsworth's allusion implies. In his lines about the world that Spenser fabled – 'maids at sunrise bringing in from far / Their May-bush', 'Tales of the maypole dance', and so on (*Prel.* viii. 193–203) – Wordsworth is alluding to the May eclogue of the *Shepheardes Calender* where Palinode

'saw a shole of shepheardes outgoe, / With singing, and shouting, and jolly chere . . . to the greene Wood they speeden hem all, / To fetchen home May with their musicall'. 'O that I were there,' wishes Palinode, 'To helpen the Ladyes their Maybush beare.'³³ But the May eclogue is a dialogue in which the sceptical voice of Piers answers back at Palinode,

Perdie so farre am I from envie,
 That their fondnesse inly I pitie.
 These faytours little regarden their charge,
 While they letting their sheepe runne at large . . .

(*'Maye'*, 37ff.)

Piers goes on to discuss questions of hire and payment in shepherding. Besides, a political and ecclesiastical allegory runs through the whole dialogue – Piers's is a Protestant voice. Pastoral has always been a form in which 'under the vaile of homely persons and in rude speeches' poets 'insinuate and glaunce at greater matters'.³⁴ Thus Wordsworth's allusion to the smooth life of classical shepherds smooths over the political complexity of Virgil's pastoral.

The rivers Galesus and Clitumnus, cited in *The Prelude*, occur not in Virgil's *Eclogues*, with their easeful *otium*, but in his *Georgics*, in which there is every bit as much hard work as in Wordsworth. Galesus is in the fourth *Georgic*:

where dark Galaesus waters his yellow fields, I saw an old Corycian, who had a few acres of unclaimed land, and this a soil not rich enough for bullock's ploughing, unfitted for the flock, and unkindly to the vine. Yet, as he planted herbs here and there among the bushes . . . he matched in contentment the wealth of kings, and, returning home in the late evening, would load his board with unbought dainties.³⁵

This unalienated old Corycian bears a remarkable resemblance to Wordsworth's statesmen: scraping a living from poor-quality land, but self-sufficient and happy. Again, 'Lucretilis' alludes to the hill above Horace's Sabine farm, but its context in the *Odes* (I. xvii) suggests not so much pastoral *otium* as surrounding dangers such as wolves.

But, although Wordsworth glosses over some of the complexities of previous pastoral, his distinction in terms of landscape stands. Arden is an enchanted forest, Clitumnus a pleasant river; the hill above the Sabine farm is a far cry from Helvellyn in winter. In dramatic contrast to those of the Arcadian places, Wordsworth's harsh northern names are characterized by rugged 'r' sounds more than sylvan sibilance:

Helvellyn, a superior mount
 With prospect underneath of Striding Edge
 And Grisedale's houseless vale, along the brink
 Of Russet Cove . . .

(Prel. viii. 238-41)

The pastoral is removed from its traditional *locus amoenus* to a landscape such as men do live in. In terms of the distinction that was popularized by Edmund Burke, the aesthetic category of traditional pastoral is the beautiful, while that of the Wordsworthian is the sublime.

The tendency of recent criticism has been to suggest that Wordsworth's sublime representation of his shepherds contrived to distort historical reality for literary effect every bit as much as the *otium* of traditional pastoral had done. It is easy to undermine the vision of book eight of *The Prelude*. Quite apart from the question of how many statesmen really were freeholders, it could be argued that the market economy is in full swing at Grasmere fair. A 'sweet lass of the valley' is to be seen selling apples and pears (viii. 36-43) - 'and who that sees here would not buy?' asks Wordsworth in a line into which could be read a dark hint of prostitution or even of the woman-selling that took place at country fairs like that in Hardy's *Mayor of Casterbridge*. Those who see Wordsworth as Burkean not only in an aesthetic of the sublime but also in a politics of patriotism and patriarchy will find in a line like 'The home and ancient birthright of their flock' (viii. 263) notions of tradition and rootedness which seem to spring from a belief in values of family and home that are the core of Burkean conservatism then and now. After all, it was when he was revising books seven and eight of *The Prelude* in 1832 that Wordsworth inserted his apostrophe to the Burke who

the majesty proclaims
 Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
 Declares the vital power of social ties
 Endeared by Custom.

(1850 Prel. vii. 525-8)

I shall return to what might be described as 'the politics of home', but here it must be pointed out that Wordsworth built into book eight an apostrophe to those readers who refuse to believe his vision of Grasmere Vale:

Call ye these appearances
 Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,

This sanctity of Nature given to man,
 A shadow, a delusion?

(viii. 428-31)

The problem with such readers, he suggests, is that they are nurtured by the dead letter of theory, not the spirit of life. They are Malthusians and Benthamites,

ye who are fed
 By the dead letter, not the spirit of things,
 Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
 Instinct with vital functions, but a block
 Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
 And ye adore.

(viii. 431-6)

Hazlitt saw that for Benthamites the 'idea of a perfect commonwealth' was not the kind of human community which Wordsworth envisioned, but a society 'where each member performs his part in the machine, taking care of himself, and no more concerned about his neighbours, than the iron and wood-work, the pegs and nails in a spinning-jenny. Good screw! good wedge! good ten-penny nail!' Benthamites and modern neo-Benthamites wish 'to strip the cause of Reform (out of seeming affection to it) of every thing like a *misalliance* with elegance, taste, decency, common sense, or polite literature'; they 'leave nothing intermediate between the Ultra-Toryism of the courtly scribes and their own Ultra-Radicalism'.³⁶ With their deadening, materialist emphasis on the wedges and nails of economic reality, such readers leave no room for the *effect* the image of the shepherd has on poet and, by extension, reader. They read in the way that De Quincey read 'The Ruined Cottage', not that in which Mill read Wordsworth. For Wordsworth, to demand 'realism' or 'reportage' from poetry is to misapprehend its function; the purpose of book eight of *The Prelude* is not so much to show shepherds as they are but rather to bring forward an image of human greatness, to express faith in the perfectibility of mankind once institutions and hierarchies are removed and we are free, enfranchised, and in an unmediated, unalienated relationship with nature. The radical humanism of book eight proposes the 'human form' as 'an index of delight, / Of grace and honour, power and worthiness' (414-16). In book seven the institution of the established church is attacked by means of satire in the portrait of a mincing clergyman, 'a comely bachelor', 'pretty shepherd, pride of all the plains', preaching

to his 'captivated flock' (vii. 547-66). He is a false pastor whereas the working Lakeland farmer, free from institutional constraint, is a true shepherd of the people. By virtue of his relationship with his environment he represents human potential wrought to its uttermost.

Nevertheless, even if we turn away from economic reality and towards the shepherd's role as an inspirational figure, there is still the possibility of a critique. Wordsworth's most powerful images of the shepherd are those of the man alone on the mountainside. One cannot help thinking that he sees in the solitary shepherd an image of his solitary self. He seems to project on to the shepherd feelings that really belong to himself, which is to say the feelings of someone like Rousseau's solitary walker:

Night was coming on. I saw the sky, some stars, and a few leaves.
This first sensation was a moment of delight. I was conscious of
nothing else. In this instant I was being born again, and it seemed
as if all I perceived was filled with my frail existence. . . . I felt
throughout my whole being such a wonderful calm, that
whenever I recall this feeling I can find nothing to compare with
it in all the pleasures that stir our lives.³⁷

Renato Poggioli writes of the Romantic development of pastoral:

As the pastoral poet replaces the labors and troubles of love with an exclusive concern for the self, he changes into a new Narcissus, contemplating with passionate interest not his body but his soul. At this point, he deals only, in Whitman's words, with 'the single, solitary soul', and the pastoral becomes the poetic vehicle of solipsism. . . . What Rousseau terms 'rêverie' is a state of passive introspection, by which the pastoral psyche reflects its shadow in nature's mirror, fondly and blissfully losing its being within the image of itself.³⁸

Wordsworth, it might accordingly be argued, is over-absorbed in his own relationship with nature; he makes the shepherd into a symbol of his personal sublime, what Keats called the 'wordsworthian or egotistical sublime'. He is not interested in the shepherd but in what the shepherd provides him by way of both inspiration and admonition; 'He sees nothing but himself and the universe. . . . His egotism is in some respects a madness', as Hazlitt said so devastatingly in his lecture on the living poets.³⁹ The question of the *division* between poet and shepherd, mind and nature, will be explored further in chapters 3 and 4.

Raymond Williams drew attention to the phrase 'the very culture of

the feelings' in Mill's account of his reading of Wordsworth. He argued that here Mill removed 'culture' from 'society' by appropriating the term in the name of the private experience of art: 'These paragraphs [in his *Autobiography*] are now the classical point of reference for those who decide that the desire for social reform is ultimately inadequate, and that art, the "source of inward joy", is fortunately always there as an alternative.'⁴⁰ But Mill did not propose the reading of Wordsworth as an 'alternative' to the desire for social reform. He claimed that Wordsworth taught him to commune with nature 'not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings'. Here one must consider the full implication of the structure of *The Prelude's* eighth book: love of nature *leads to* love of mankind. In a defensive moment, Wordsworth recognizes that, while a traditional, poeticizing pastoral will speak of a woodman languishing from the pangs of disappointed love, real woodmen die of disease 'From sleeping night by night among the woods / Within his sod-built cabin' (612-13). Such a critique of 'love' is built into all the best hard pastoral - Rosalind in *As You Like It* claims that Leander in the Hellespont died of cramp not love, that 'Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love' (IV. i. 99-101). Wordsworth replaces illusions of romantic love with the philanthropy explicit in the phrase 'love of mankind'. Such a move necessitates a critique of the traditional kind of history that is written from above: he will not accept those 'high-wrought modern narratives' which are 'Stript of their humanizing soul, the life / Of manners and familiar incidents' (viii. 774-6). He will write instead a history of working people and local communities. To aggrandize the common man, to write the shepherd into history in this way, is a radical move.

The love of nature leads Wordsworth to be able to love and to see love even in the city. At the end of book eight he returns to his memory of London. He sees a man sitting

with a sickly babe
Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.
Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
He took no note; but in his brawny arms
(The artificer was to the elbow bare,
And from his work this moment had been stolen)
He held the child, and, bending over it

As if he were afraid both of the sun
And of the air which he had come to seek,
He eyed it with unutterable love.

(viii. 849–59)

(In the final text of *The Prelude* Wordsworth transferred these lines to book seven, one of his major structural misjudgements.) This old man is the obverse, the redeemed image, of the blind beggar. That redemption has been achieved by means of the retrospective account of Grasmere shepherds; Wordsworth is now prepared to move on. Books seven to nine form a carefully structured triptych: seven concerns 'Residence in London', eight is the pivot, and nine concerns 'Residence in France'. The pivot is such that the three-book sequence should be read as a progression from alienation in the city through love of nature to the recognition of individual human love and tenderness in the city to the general love of humanity in the revolutionary spirit of book nine, seen at its most powerful in such moments as the one when Wordsworth's friend Beaupuy points to a hunger-bitten girl and says ' "'Tis against that / Which we are fighting"' (ix. 519–20). The principle of the 'love of mankind' to which the 'love of nature' leads is of a piece with the rhetoric of the revolutionary declaration of the universal rights of man. It is no coincidence that for the Romantics Rousseau was a prophet both of nature and of the French Revolution.

To return to Annabel Patterson's choice: she ultimately comes down on the side of the view that Wordsworth's pastoral promotes a conservative ideology based on the premise that hardship should be countered by personal 'Resolution and Independence' rather than social meliorism. This conclusion ignores the cardinal fact that book eight is the prelude to book nine. It also ignores an important point about the function of the pastoral: the purpose of the Arden perspective in *As You Like It* is to bring about the melioration of the court, the overthrow of a corrupt regime. When Thomas Babington Macaulay read *The Prelude* on its publication in 1850, he recorded in his journal: 'The poem is to the last degree Jacobinical, indeed Socialist. I understand perfectly why Wordsworth did not choose to publish it in his life-time.'⁴¹ That 'last degree' is worth pondering, not least because Macaulay had total recall of everything he read and would therefore have held the whole poem in his mind. In summarizing *The Prelude*, he spoke not only of 'the story of the French Revolution, and of its influence on the character of a young enthusiast', but also of 'the old raptures about mountains and cataracts; the old flimsy philosophy about the effect of scenery on the mind'. If

the poem is to the last degree Jacobinical, then these latter features, characteristics of such books as the eighth, are part of its Jacobinism. The 'politics of home', of the small organic community based on frugality, hard work, and 'domestic affections' – the phrase is from the letter to Charles James Fox of 14 January 1801 in which Wordsworth commended 'The Brothers' and 'Michael' to the attention of the leading opposition politician of the day – would then be Jacobinical, indeed socialist, and by no means Burkean.

In one of the most famous passages of the *Reflections*, Burke argued that 'To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind.'⁴² But the three links in Wordsworth's chain are not the same as those in Burke's: where the latter has local community, country, and mankind, Wordsworth has nature, local community, and mankind. Wordsworth goes straight from nature and Grasmere to mankind, and in particular to the aspirations for mankind that were given voice in the ideals of the French Revolution. The inclusion of nature and the exclusion of a Burkean sense of nation, of an established order under threat in England, are equally significant. The progression suggests that the 'socialism' of Wordsworth's republican pastoral is of a highly distinctive kind. Its vision of 'fullness and completeness of life', to use William Morris's fine phrase, is dependent on integration with, not subjugation of, nature. The politics of Grasmere Vale are ultimately based on a relationship to the environment, a marriage of humankind to the natural world – 'the very world which is the world / Of all of us, the place in which, in the end, / We find our happiness, or not at all' (*Prel.* x. 725–7) – and such a relationship transcends the politics of both Paine and Burke, both the French Revolution and the counter-revolution in England. To go back to nature is not to retreat from politics but to take politics into a new domain, the relationship between Love of Nature and Love of Mankind and, conversely, between the Rights of Man and the Rights of Nature. The language of *The Prelude* is fleetingly red but ever green.

In the spirit of John Stuart Mill's way of reading, let us ask what Wordsworth's pastoral may do for us. Poems do not send people out on to barricades, but they do have the capacity to alter mentalities. Wordsworth can help us to rethink the nature of politics. The thrust of Mill's reading is that the beauty, stability, and endurance of nature are necessary prerequisites for human social and psychological well-being.

In Jerome McGann's terms, 'Ecological nature . . . contains for human beings, whose immediate lives are lived in the social and historical fields, the images of permanence which they need.' The criticism of the 1980s was vigorous and effective in its critique of Wordsworth's handling of the social and historical fields. But McGann's position, even though it was articulated a mere decade ago, now seems curiously outdated. Ecological nature no longer looks like an image of permanence. In the 1990s we will have to learn to live not just in the social and historical fields but also, perhaps pre-eminently, in the ecological field. I want to conclude this chapter where I began it, with the ending of 'The Ruined Cottage'; let me sketch a reading of that ending for the 1990s.

In the final section of the poem, nature's processes are seen as inexorable. The weeds go on growing, oblivious of human suffering, but for Wordsworth an indefinable 'spirit of humanity' insinuates its way into that growth. Paradoxically, nature's very indifference seems to guarantee humanity's survival. 'Survived' is the climactic word in Wordsworth's lines, and knowing what weight he attached to words we need to remember its Latin root – *sur-vive*, *super vivere*, to live beyond. Wordsworth's intensely immanent religion – we may perhaps allow ourselves to say his 'pantheism' – is at work here. There is no sense of Margaret 'living beyond' in heaven; not until very late in life did Wordsworth rewrite part of this ending in the language of orthodox Christianity. What we do sense is that since the vegetation lives beyond, lives on, her spirit somehow survives too. As in 'A slumber did my spirit seal', the dead female achieves new life in earth's diurnal course. Humanity only survives *in nature*. Human survival and the survival of nature are therefore co-ordinate with one another.

In the Pedlar-Wanderer's meditation on this theme, the crucial point to note is, I think, that it is the weeds and the spear-grass which are found beautiful and which accordingly bring comfort. At funerals we console ourselves with flowers. There is something more robust about the Pedlar's emphasis; he is a realist in that he knows that weeds will always win in the garden. Indeed, his lines seem to be a plea for the claims of wildness, of wilderness. Behind the whole passage there is the startling idea that where wilderness reasserts itself there the spirit of humanity survives. Orthodox thought defines man through his mastery over nature; 'The Ruined Cottage' proposes that the survival of humanity comes with nature's mastery over the edifices of civilization. Wordsworth reminds us that a claim can be made for the weeds. It is a claim that John Clare also made: for him, Eden was to be found not in a

garden but amidst 'flat swampy vallies unholseome'. Clare recognized the importance of the 'refuse of nature'; one of his early poems sings of his love for the 'commons left free in the rude rags of nature', for 'Swamps of wild rush beds and sloughs squashy traces / Grounds of rough fallows wi thistle and weed'.⁴³ And it is a claim reiterated in Gerard Manley Hopkins's stanza, written in the 1880s as if with foreknowledge of the 1990s:

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wilderness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.⁴⁴

THE ECONOMY OF NATURE

The word 'ecology' (*Oekologie*) was coined in 1866 by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel and defined more fully by the same scientist in 1870:

By ecology we mean the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature – the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and to its organic environment; including above all, its friendly and inimical relations with those animals and plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact – in a word, ecology is the study of all those complex interrelations referred to by Darwin as the conditions of the struggle for existence.¹

Ecology, then, is a holistic science, concerned in the largest sense with the relationship between living beings and their environment. The living beings with which Haeckel was concerned were animals and plants; as an academic discipline ecology began, and in many quarters it has remained, as one of the non-human sciences. The first person to have applied the term to man's relationship with the environment seems – appropriately enough for what has become an alternative, radical ideology – to have been a woman.² Ellen Swallow (*nomen est omen?*) was a campaigner for clean air and water and better urban living conditions in the increasingly industrialized eastern United States of the late nineteenth century. She was, to quote a recent historian of science, 'a crusader for establishing a scientific basis for bettering human life',³ and as part of her campaign she appropriated Haeckel's word: 'For this knowledge of right living we have sought a new name. . . . as theology is the science of religious life, and biology the science of life, . . . so let Oekology be hence the worthiest of the applied sciences which teaches the principles on which to found healthy . . . and happy life.'⁴ The first appearance of Haeckel's word in the popular press was in a reference

to Ellen Swallow's theories in the *Boston Globe* of November 1892. From an early stage, then, the term served to denominate both a biological science and an environmental attitude.

As constituted by its earliest academic practitioners, ecology was a science built upon the Darwinian concept of evolution by natural selection according to adaptability to environment. Indeed, the book in which Haeckel coined the word was called *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen: Allgemeine Grundzüge der organischen Formen-wissenschaft, mechanisch begründet durch die von Charles Darwin reformirte Descendenz-Theorie* ('General morphology of organisms: universal characteristics of the science of organic forms, established mechanically through the theory of descent reformed by Charles Darwin'); Haeckel's chief inspiration was the argument in *The Origin of Species* concerning the 'web of complex relations' by which all animals and plants are bound to each other, remote as they may be from one another in the scale of nature. But ecology had other roots besides Darwin, as is clear from Haeckel's use in his definition of the term 'the economy of nature'. This venerable phrase takes us back into a long tradition of natural religion; coined by Sir Kenelm Digby in 1658, its most famous occurrence was as the title of Linnaeus' 1749 essay, 'Specimen academicum de Oeconomia Naturae', known to English readers as 'The Oeconomy of Nature' from Benjamin Stillingfleet's translation in *Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Natural History, Husbandry, and Physick* (1759). 'By the Oeconomy of Nature,' Linnaeus wrote, 'we understand the all-wise disposition of the Creator in relation to natural things, by which they are fitted to produce general ends, and reciprocal uses.'⁵ To classify organisms in the Linnaean fashion is to reveal nature's complex, divinely inspired order. The economy of nature is to be found throughout Enlightenment natural philosophy, whether in the biology of Linnaeus or the geology of Hutton. The latter's 'Theory of the Earth' was 'a view of that system of mineral oeconomy, in which may be perceived every mark of order and design, of provident wisdom and benevolence'; it sought to demonstrate that 'there is a system in nature' and that in the long perspective of geological time nature's economy is benign – 'with such wisdom has nature ordered things in the oeconomy of this world, that the destruction of one continent is not brought about without the renovation of the earth in the production of another'.⁶ We are in that realm of physico-theology associated with the line from John Ray's *The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation* (1691) to William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802).

Even freethinkers who denied the divine source shared the belief that nature has its economy and its economic laws. Thus *The Botanic Garden*

(1789–91) of Erasmus Darwin – whom Coleridge called ‘the everything, except the Christian’⁷ – was at once an assault on the theological premises of such works as Hutton’s ‘Theory of the Earth’ and a popularization of Linnaeus. The aim of the poem, Darwin said in his Advertisement, was ‘to inlist Imagination under the banner of Science’ and ‘to induce the ingenious to cultivate the knowledge of Botany, by introducing them to the vestibule of that delightful science, and recommending to their attention the immortal works of the celebrated Swedish Naturalist, LINNEUS’. In good Linnaean fashion, part one of Erasmus Darwin’s work was actually entitled *The Economy of Vegetation*, though the poem itself is concerned more with creation than taxonomy. One of its principal emphases is the vital role that vegetation plays in the overall economy of nature – a footnote describes the process of photosynthesis whereby the exposure of plants to sunlight creates ‘vital air or oxygene gas’ which ‘rises into the atmosphere and replenishes it with the food of life’.⁸ Darwin’s subsequent work, *Zoonomia* (1794–6), continued in a vein of theological scepticism combined with a firm belief that nature operated according to a systematic economy. *Zoonomia* is one of a number of late eighteenth-century texts expounding the laws of organic life on evolutionary principles; it was by combining these principles with those of another economic system, Thomas Malthus’s theory of the struggle for existence in human population, that Charles Darwin, Erasmus’s grandson, was able to develop his theory of evolution by natural selection.

Fundamental to all these developments was the practice of field observation. The eye that is fixed on the natural world sees the economy at work:

The most insignificant insects and reptiles are of much more consequence, and have much more influence in the oeconomy of nature, than the incurious are aware of; and are mighty in their effect, from their minuteness, which renders them less an object of attention; and from their numbers and fecundity. Earth-worms, though in appearance a small and despicable link in the chain of nature, yet, if lost, would make a lamentable chasm.⁹

This is Gilbert White in Selborne, from where it is a short step to those key Romantic texts, Coleridge’s notebooks and the journals of Dorothy Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau. For all his resistance to pantheism, Coleridge was a scrupulous, deeply inquiring observer of the natural world; the very subtlety of his own intelligence attuned him to the economy of nature: ‘The finest edge, into which the meditative mind

of a Contemplator was ever ground, is but the back of the Blade in comparison with the Subtlety of Nature.’¹⁰ As will be shown in the next chapter, Ruskin attributed his own capacity to see the landscape and the sky to Wordsworth’s example; if he had known Dorothy’s journals, he would have discovered that Wordsworth’s eye for the detailed observation of nature was opened by his sister. And as for Thoreau, the whole project of his writing might be summed up as an attempt to develop a human economy that is responsive and responsible in its relationship with the economy of nature. By a symbolically appropriate palaeographic error the invention of the word ‘ecology’ was for a time actually attributed to Thoreau: the editors of his *Correspondence*, published in 1958, misread ‘geology’ and had him speaking in 1858, eight years prior to Haeckel, of ‘Botany, Ecology, etc.’ (the error crept into the 1972 Supplement of the *Oxford English Dictionary*).

Thoreau would occupy the central place in a study of the Romantic ecology in the United States. There are major distinctions to be made between American and British ecological attitudes, not least because of differences of size and space – Wordsworth’s mighty Helvellyn would be but a foothill in the Rockies. The British tradition I am tracing is much concerned with *localness*, with small enclosed vales; the American environmental tradition is far more preoccupied with vastness and with threatened wilderness (John Muir’s High Sierra), as de Tocqueville recognized:

It is this consciousness of destruction, this *arrière-pensée* of quick and inevitable change that gives, we feel, so peculiar a character and such a touching beauty to the solitudes of America. One sees them with melancholy pleasure; one is in some sort of a hurry to admire them. Thoughts of the savage, natural grandeur that is going to come to an end, become mingled with splendid anticipations of the triumphant march of civilisation. One feels proud to be a man, and at the same time one experiences I cannot say what bitter regret at the power that God has granted us over nature. One’s soul is shaken by contradictory thoughts and feelings, but all the impressions it receives are great and leave a deep mark.¹¹

Where the Wordsworths and Thoreau stand apart from the Darwins and Haeckel is in their emphasis on a symbiosis between the economy of nature and the activities of humankind. Erasmus Darwin wrote footnotes about photosynthesis, while Wordsworth wrote poems about how flowers may vitalize the human spirit. Once late eighteenth-century scientists had shown that plants are literally ‘the food of life’,

since without photosynthesis there would be no oxygen in the atmosphere and therefore no life, Romantic poets could argue that plants are also food for the spirit. Scientists made it their business to describe the intricate economy of nature; Romantics made it theirs to teach human beings how to live as part of it. They foreshadowed Ellen Swallow in the move from theoretical description to an applied science of healthy and happy living. The 'Romantic ecology' reverences the green earth because it recognizes that neither physically nor psychologically can we live without green things; it proclaims that there is 'one life' within us and abroad, that the earth is a single vast ecosystem which we destabilize at our peril. In sharp contrast to the so-called 'Romantic Ideology', the Romantic ecology has nothing to do with flight from the material world, from history and society – it is in fact an attempt to enable mankind the better to live in the material world by entering into harmony with the environment.

In book eight of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth's Wanderer discourses on 'changes in the Country from the manufacturing spirit'. He sees manufacturing towns expanding in a vast sprawl; 'He sees the barren wilderness erased, / Or disappearing'; 'With you I grieve,' he cries,

when on the darker side
Of this great change I look; and there behold
Such outrage done to nature as compels
The indignant power to justify herself;
Yea, to avenge her violated rights,
For England's bane.¹²

Man ought to be 'earth's thoughtful lord' (164), but he has abnegated his responsibilities in the name of material gain. The dark Satanic mills are the temples of a new religion of capital:

Men, maidens, youths,
Mother and little children, boys and girls,
Enter, and each the wonted task resumes
Within this temple, where is offered up
To Gain, the master-idol of the realm,
Perpetual sacrifice.

(*Excursion*, viii. 180–5)

The people are no longer to be seen 'Breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth' (280); no longer is there a 'green margin of the public way' (372), a common space that belongs to all the people. Of the erasure of supposedly barren waste land, Wordsworth implicitly says with

William Cobbett, '“Wastes indeed!” Give a dog an ill-name. Was Horton Heath a waste? Was it a “waste” when a hundred perhaps of healthy boys and girls were playing there of a Sunday instead of creeping about covered with filth in the alleys of a town?’¹³

According to Wordsworth's impassioned vision, the child's vitality is destroyed and his unity with nature is lost when he is put to work in a cotton mill:

His raiment, whiten'd o'er with cotton-flakes
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.
Creeping his gait and cowering, his lip pale,
His respiration quick and audible . . .
The limbs increase; but liberty of mind
Is gone for ever; and this organic frame,
So joyful in its motions, is become
Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead;
And even the touch, so exquisitely poured
Through the whole body, with a languid will
Performs its functions; 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.

(*Excursion*, viii. 309–12, 321–32)

In the world of Richard Arkwright's water-powered spinning frame, the 'organic frame' is dulled and oppressed. Imprisoned in the factory, enslaved to wage labour, the child has lost that primal 'liberty' which is embodied in the mind's joyful responsiveness to breeze and sun and water. The Wanderer does not omit to speak of the favourable effects of industry, but his main concern is to produce graphic images of the deprivation and dehumanization that are the price of 'progress'. In this, he is voicing the concerns that Ellen Swallow later brought together under the banner of ecology.

By the mid-1830s *The Excursion* had been printed four times and sold more copies than any other volume of Wordsworth's poetry.¹⁴ In 1835, however, it was another work which became the first of Wordsworth's productions to reach a fifth edition. It was his steadiest seller, going through five further editions between 1842 and 1859. It was without question the most widely read work of the most admired English poet of the first half of the nineteenth century. Different editions have different

titles, but the work became commonly known as *A Guide to the Lakes*. It was, to quote Mary Moorman, 'more constantly in demand than any of his poetry'.¹⁵ Matthew Arnold's story about meeting a cleric who admired the *Guide* and asked if its author had written anything else is not entirely frivolous.

'New historicist' literary critics have taught us that poems are not free-floating aesthetic objects, that, like all texts, they have a social materiality, they carry ideological freight. But, paradoxically, most such critics working on the Romantic period have gone on privileging poetry by devoting the best of their own work to readings of such canonical texts as 'Tintern Abbey', *The Prelude*, 'To Autumn', and *Don Juan*. To think for a moment of Wordsworth as pre-eminently not the author of 'Tintern Abbey' and *The Prelude* but the compiler of the *Guide to the Lakes* will thus be not only to recover an important nineteenth-century view of him, but also to begin to move away from narrow canonicity. If we are to historicize Romanticism, we must bring the *Guide* from the periphery to the centre. The neglect of it is quite extraordinary. Jerome McGann's sense that there have been too many readings of Romanticism in terms of idealist aesthetic theory is supported by the fact that what has interested critics most about the *Guide* has been its relation to those now well-worn categories, the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque.¹⁶ A far more novel – and historically revealing – approach to the *Guide* will be to undertake the kind of textual morphology at which McGann himself excels.

The *Guide* was first written in the form of an introduction and accompanying text for the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire*, published in monthly parts in 1810 (and reissued, without Wordsworth's knowledge, with coloured versions of the engravings, in 1821). It first appeared under Wordsworth's name in *The River Duddon, A Series of Sonnets: Vaudracour & Julia: and Other Poems. To which is annexed, A Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes, in the North of England* in 1820. This edition carried the explanatory advertisement:

This Essay, which was first published several years ago as an Introduction to some Views of the Lakes, by the Rev. Joseph Wilkinson, (an expensive work, and necessarily of limited circulation,) is now, with emendations and additions, attached to these volumes; from a consciousness of its having been written in the same spirit which dictated several of the poems, and from a belief that it will tend materially to illustrate them.

It first appeared independently as *A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes in The North of England* in 1822, in an edition of 500 copies which was exhausted immediately and reprinted with some revisions the following year in an edition of 1,000. The 1822 edition included a new account of an excursion up Scafell Pike and the 1823 added an account of an excursion to Ullswater – both were based closely and without acknowledgement on unpublished material by Dorothy Wordsworth. The *Guide* appeared in 1835 under the auspices of a Kendal publisher (previous editions having been published in London), with the title *A Guide Through the District of the Lakes in the North of England, with a Description of the Scenery, etc. For the Use of Tourists and Residents. Fifth Edition, with considerable additions*. In this edition, the 'Directions and Information for the Tourist' became a separate prefatory division, set apart from the main body of the *Guide*, which by this time had three principal sections, 'View of the country as formed by nature', 'Aspect of the country, as affected by its inhabitants', and 'Changes, and rules of taste for preventing their bad effects'. Wordsworth began this edition by saying that his purpose was 'to furnish a Guide or Companion for the Minds of Persons of taste, and feeling for Landscape, who might be inclined to explore the District of the Lakes with that degree of attention to which its beauty may fairly lay claim', but that he would begin by getting out of the way 'the humble and tedious Task of supplying the Tourist with directions'.¹⁷

Then in 1842 it became part of *A Complete Guide to the Lakes, Comprising Minute Directions for the Tourist, With Mr Wordsworth's Description of the Scenery of the Country, etc. And Three Letters on the Geology of the Lake District, by the Rev. Professor Sedgwick, Edited by the Publisher* (i.e. John Hudson of Kendal). Wordsworth explained in a letter to Adam Sedgwick, the first Woodwardian Professor of Geology in the University of Cambridge, that in the tourist market his guide was being outsold by others which attended more to the needs of 'the Body of the Tourist', that he had tried to remedy this defect but found the work troublesome and 'infra dig.', and that he had therefore turned the 'guide matter' over to the publisher Hudson, who had undertaken to interweave it with further matter compiled by himself but to leave 'all that related to mind' entire and separate from the rest. In addition, Thomas Gough of Kendal would 'promote the Botany' (he furnished a table listing the woods and fells where some 250 species of plant could be found); with Sedgwick's geological contribution, 'a Book would be produced answering every purpose that could be desired'.¹⁸ This was the version which went through five editions in seventeen years; Sedgwick added a fourth letter on geology to the 1846 edition and an extremely important fifth one to

that of 1853. There was a consonance between poet and scientist: for Sedgwick, as for Wordsworth, the mountains 'give back to us, as the earth's touch did of old to the giant's body, new spirits and enduring strength.'¹⁹ The allusion is to the story of Antaeus, a myth about the need to keep in touch with the earth.

A text that began as accompaniment to the productions of a clergyman cashing in on the vogue for the picturesque eventually became accompanied by the productions of a clergyman who was one of the crucial figures in the history of the science of geology. The textual morphology of the *Guide* is a fascinating index of the shift from the age of Gilpin and Farington to that of Lyell and Darwin. Sedgwick actually used the opportunity provided by Wordsworth to contribute to that highly significant nineteenth-century genre, the self-consciously popularizing work on geology:

I wish to address more general readers – any intelligent traveller whose senses are open to the beauties of the country around him, and who is ready to speculate on such matters of interest as it offers to him. I will therefore endeavour to avoid technical language as far as I am able, and I do not profess to teach, in a few pages, the geology of a most complicated country (for that would be an idle attempt); but rather to open the mind to the nature of the subject, and to point out the right way towards a comprehension of some of its general truths.²⁰

It is no exaggeration to say that the name and nature of the Silurian and Cambrian systems gained currency outside scientific circles chiefly because of Sedgwick's letters in the *Guide*. And in the case of the 1853 edition, the *Guide* was used by Sedgwick for the statement of his case in his great dispute with Sir Roderick Murchison over the latter's fallacious extension of his Silurian system into 20,000 feet of strata which did not belong to it.

In addition to its picturesque and geological functions, the *Guide* served as a complement to one of Wordsworth's most favourably received poetic productions, the *Duddon* volume,²¹ and as a pocket companion for tourists. In the latter of these manifestations it belonged in a genre going back to the works of the eighteenth-century travellers who formed the new taste for the wildness of the Lakes, John Brown, Thomas Gray, and Thomas West. Wordsworth's book is, however, unlike earlier guides in two key respects. First, it is, as the textual history shows, a multi-purpose text: it invites all kinds of appropriation, all kinds of use – it aims to answer 'every purpose that could be desired'. It is

not *merely* for the tourist; as is clear from Wordsworth's disparaging remarks about the tediousness of the '*guide matter*', it uses the popular guidebook format to put Wordsworth's own concerns across to the public. If the text is intended to answer every purpose that could be desired, it may certainly answer my desired purpose, for it to stand as exemplar of the Romantic ecology – especially as Wordsworth's own concerns in those parts of the *Guide* which pertain to the mind were, as we shall see, fundamentally ecological. This is in fact the second respect in which it is unlike other guides: where West and his followers all wrote exclusively for *visitors* to the Lakes, Wordsworth aimed to show what it meant to *dwell* there. It is symptomatic that in writing of the rootedness of Lakeland cottages Wordsworth included some lines of verse from the unpublished manuscript of *Home at Grasmere*, a poem which, as I shall show in chapter 4, was cardinal to his sense of himself as a dweller in Westmorland. Where earlier guide writers adopted the picturesque tourist's point of view and rarely descended from their stations, Wordsworth's approach was holistic: he moved from nature to the natives, exploring the relationship between land and inhabitant; then in his third section he considered the evolving and increasingly disruptive influence of man on his environment. Sedgwick's contribution rendered the text more holistic still, in that the letters on geology supplemented the Wordsworthian analysis of the surfaces of nature and the interaction between man and nature with an account of the depths of nature, of the fossil record which revealed 'countless ages before man's being' and taught 'of laws as unchangeable as the oracles of nature – of harmonies then in preparation' (1853 edn, p. 219). By the time we reach this text we have come a long way from Thomas West and his attempt to make a visit to the Lakes comparable to the composition of a landscape painting. The geologist's hammer has replaced the Claude glass.

I have laboured the point about the different textual manifestations of the *Guide* because they throw into question the proposition that Romantic discourse attempts to seal itself hermetically off from materiality. The history of this central Romantic text constitutes a successive series of engagements with highly varied and highly material discourses such as tourism and geology. The Romantic Ideology is supposed to purvey a myth of individual inspiration, of the isolated and privileged poet, yet this text is a composite production, shaped and reshaped according to the needs of the market, a pooling of the resources of figures as varied as Wilkinson, Wordsworth, Dorothy, Hudson, Sedgwick, and Gough. At certain moments, the very notion of this text having an individual author becomes unstable: for instance,

the text in the first edition repeatedly refers to as 'mine' the accompanying drawings that were not by the author of the text. Furthermore, the extrinsic materiality of the book is matched by the intrinsic materiality of certain key passages in the text. For Marilyn Butler, the later Wordsworth 'ceases to see others as social phenomena; they are objects for contemplation, images of apparent alienation which the poet's imagination translates into private emblems of his troubled communion with nature.'²² In the *Guide*, however, people are seen firmly in relation to their material environment. Among Wordsworth's chief concerns are the management of trees and the architecture of rural buildings. What are these, if not 'social phenomena'? Critics like Butler and McGann are too limited in their view of society: modern ecological politics teaches us that to consider society only in terms of production, income, and ownership is insufficient. What is done to the land is as important as who owns it. Equal distribution of the means of agricultural production is not much use if the land is poisoned.

Section First of the *Guide*, 'View of the country as formed by nature', begins with Wordsworth taking the reader to an imaginary station on a cloud midway between Great Gable and Scafell, from where the eight valleys of the Lake District may be seen stretched out like spokes from the nave of a wheel. By substituting an imaginary station for an actual one, Wordsworth differentiates his *Guide* from those intended only for the bodies of tourists; with the image of the wheel, he introduces the idea of a unified place with a common centre. The remainder of Section First develops this sense of the unity of the country as formed by nature. Mountains, vales, and lakes all work together; even the humble tarn makes a necessary contribution to the whole: 'In the economy of Nature these are useful, as auxiliars to Lakes; for if the whole quantity of water which falls upon the mountains in time of storm were poured down upon the plains without intervention . . . the habitable grounds would be much more subject than they are to inundation' (p. 39). Thomas West never seemed to notice tarns, presumably because he did not deem them either picturesque or sublime. Where other guides concerned themselves with how the more majestic lakes contributed to the charm of a scene, Wordsworth's was interested in the function performed within the ecosystem by the smaller and higher bodies of still water.

In Section Second, the native inhabitants of the district are seen to share in this natural unity. 'The economy of Nature' and the human economy are brought together as the hand of man is 'incorporated with

and subservient to the powers and processes of Nature' (p. 61). Man works in partnership with his environment. Thus Lakeland cottages may be said rather 'to have grown than to have been erected; - to have risen, by an instinct of their own, out of the native rock'; the buildings 'in their very form call to mind the processes of Nature' and thus 'appear to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things' (pp. 62-3). Not even the places dedicated to Christian worship violate the *religio loci*. A consequence of such integration with nature is an integrated social structure: until recently there has been 'a perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists, among whom the plough of each man was confined to the maintenance of his own family, or to the occasional accommodation of his neighbour' (p. 67). There was no nobleman, knight, or squire; the ruling power was nature, not some human overlord. It is here that Wordsworth speaks, in language that I discussed in the previous chapter, of the district of the Lakes as an 'almost visionary mountain republic' (p. 68).

But all this has changed as a result of influx and innovation, the subject of Section Third. New residents who are not rooted in the land have brought dissonant new building styles; worse, in accordance with the 'craving for prospect', their new houses have been built on obtrusive sites where they do not 'harmonize with the forms of Nature'. The rage for picturesque 'improvement' has resulted in the alteration of the contours of the principal island on Windermere lake: 'Could not the margin of this noble island be given back to Nature?' asks Wordsworth, very much in the tone of a modern conservationist (p. 72). Worst of all is the introduction of larch plantations. Wordsworth makes a powerful distinction between the way in which nature forms woods and forests, a gradual and selective process shaped by conditions of soil, exposure to wind, and so on, and the environmentally and aesthetically harmful practices of artificial planting.

The new proprietors and tourists will not go away; the function of the *Guide* is to educate them to care for the delicate ecosystem, as we would now call it, of the Lakes. 'In this wish,' Wordsworth concludes Section Third, 'the author will be joined by persons of pure taste throughout the whole island, who, by their visits (often repeated) to the Lakes in the North of England, testify that they deem the district a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy' (p. 92). In that phrase 'a sort of national property' may be seen the origins of the National Trust and the Lake District National Park. The key figure in this history was the Wordsworthian-Ruskinian, Canon Hardwicke

Rawnsley. In 1883, taking his cue from a battle in which Wordsworth had fought in the 1840s, he launched a campaign against a Bill for the extension of the railway into the heart of the Lakes. He established a Lake District Defence Society and fought not only against the railway but for the establishment of public footpath rights. He gained support from the social reformer Octavia Hill, to whom he had been introduced by Ruskin, and Robert Hunter of the Commons Preservation Society, a group in the vanguard of the open space movement which was agitating for the preservation of green land in and around London. In 1895 Rawnsley, Hill, and Hunter had 'The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty' registered as a charity.²³ The whole concept of a place of 'Natural Beauty' was bound up with Romanticism and the Lake District – the trigger for the public meeting at which the formation of the Trust was first discussed had been the news that a number of sites in the Lakes, including the Falls of Lodore immortalized by Southey and Wordsworth, were up for sale. Among the Trust's first acquisitions were Brandelhow Park and Grange Fell on Derwentwater, Gowbarrow Park – site of the daffodils – on Ullswater, Queen Adelaide's Hill on Windermere, and Burrows Field near Ambleside. In its annual report of 1904 the Trust picked up on Wordsworth's idea of 'a sort of national property' and advocated the creation of a National Park in the heart of the Lake District, though it was not until the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 that this was actually established.

The 1949 Act drew together conservation, planning, and access. It was based on the recommendations of a committee set up in 1947 under Sir Arthur Hobhouse; that committee had accepted the definition of a National Park propounded in the Dower Report of 1945:

an extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action, (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved, (b) access and facilities for public open air enjoyment are amply provided, (c) wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected, while (d) established farming use is effectively maintained.²⁴

Each element of this definition may be traced back to the values of Wordsworth's *Guide*: the maintaining of the place for the benefit of the whole nation; the conception of landscape beauty, with a particular emphasis on wild (sublime) country; the belief in the importance of the

open air; the respect for buildings that have a history in the place; and the recognition that traditional agricultural practices are integral to the identity of the place. Wordsworth would have been pleased that shepherds still work on the hills of Westmorland and Cumberland, since, in contrast to the American model, the English and Welsh National Parks do not consist of enclosed areas owned by the government; the land in them remains privately owned – a considerable amount of it by the National Trust, which remains a private charity – and may be used for commercial activities such as farming and forestry. Conservation is sought by means of planning rather than possession.

All who walk in the National Parks are legatees of Wordsworth, his sister and his friends, who derived so much of their spiritual nourishment from walking and looking in the way that is suggested by such entries in Dorothy's journals as the following:

William had slept very ill – he was tired and had a bad headache. We walked around the two lakes. Grasmere was very soft and Rydale was extremely beautiful from the pasture side. Nab Scar was just topped by a cloud which cutting it off as high as it could be cut off made the mountain look uncommonly lofty. We sate down a long time in different places.²⁵

Wordsworth and Coleridge were walking poets every bit as much as they were poets of the imagination. Imagine Alexander Pope composing poetry: we see him sitting in a patron's house or a coffee-house. Imagine Wordsworth or Coleridge composing: we see them in the open air, as Hazlitt did –

Coleridge has told me that he himself liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood; whereas Wordsworth always wrote (if he could) walking up and down a straight gravel walk, or in some spot where the continuity of his verse met with no collateral interruption.²⁶

Hazlitt is interested in the distinction between Wordsworth's steadiness and Coleridge's variety, but the observation reveals the importance of walking – walking above all in the vicinity of their homes in the Quantocks and then the Lake District – for both poets' work. The National Parks, with their openness to walkers, sustain the spirit of the Wordsworth who, according to De Quincey, had by the 1830s 'traversed a distance of 175 to 180,000 English miles' on foot, 'a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of wine, spirits, and all other

stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits; to which he has been indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings'.²⁷

Whenever Canon Rawnsley made the case for the preservation of the Lake District, he cited the example of Wordsworth. The dedication to one of his books is characteristic: 'to my friend and fellow-labourer William Henry Hills, who has done more than any man in the district, to keep our English lakeland, undisfigured, and "secure from rash assault", for the health, rest, and inspiration of the people'.²⁸ Here the quotation from Wordsworth's 'Sonnet on the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway' is a fixed point of reference. For Rawnsley, there is no contradiction between opposing the extension of the railway into the Lakes and the idea that the Lakes belong to 'the people'. Like Wordsworth, it was to the *rash* assault that he objected. This is an important point, because Wordsworth's concern for the preservation of the Lakes has often been put down to a selfish desire to keep away artisan day trippers from Manchester. But in his 1844 letters to the *Morning Post* concerning the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway, Wordsworth's principal objection was to large-scale organized Sunday outings:

Packing off men after this fashion, for holiday entertainment, is, in fact, treating them like children. They go at the will of their master, and must return at the same, or they will be dealt with as transgressors. . . . Let [the Master-manufacturers] consent to a Ten Hours' Bill, with little or, if possible, no diminution of wages, and the necessities of life being more easily procured, the mind will develope itself accordingly, and each individual would be more at liberty to make at his own cost excursions in any direction which might be most inviting to him. There would then be no need for their masters sending them in droves scores of miles from their homes and families to the borders of Windermere, or anywhere else.²⁹

It is precisely this problem of *mass* tourism that threatens the Lake District today, though ironically the rash assault comes from cars and coaches, not the railway. Changing historical conditions bring different methods of putting ideals into practice: in the nineteenth century the railway represented a threat and there was a need for the protective demarcation of 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty', whereas now the railway is back in environmental favour and the Green Party advocates the abolition of the National Park system on the grounds that

the whole country should be subject to the stringent planning regulations that apply in the Parks.

Between Wordsworth and Rawnsley there was John Ruskin himself, another admirer of the Westmorland cottage's adaptation to its environment, another protestor against extension of the railway into the Lakes. He is an absolutely key figure in my story, for it was through him more than anyone else that the Wordsworthian ecology entered into a broader – and indeed an explicitly political – nineteenth-century environmental tradition. As Wordsworth in his letters on the projected Kendal and Windermere Railway set the environmental effects of railway excursions in the context of factory conditions and the need for shorter working hours, so Ruskin recognized that there is an intimate connection between the conditions in which we work and the way in which we live with nature.³⁰

In the *Guide* Wordsworth lamented the decline of cottage industry. He explained that until recently the estatesmen of the Lakes had relied on two sources of income, their flocks and the home manufacture by their women and children of the produce of their flocks. 'But, by the invention and universal application of machinery, this second resource has been cut off' (p. 90). The whole balance of the economy of the district was thus upset. In the 1880s, however, the 'Ruskin Linen Industry' was established under the auspices of Marion Twelves and Albert Fleming, disciples of *Fors Clavigera*; this initiative led to the revival of the cottage economy in several villages. It was Ruskin's involvement with schemes such as this that Rawnsley had in mind when, at the unveiling of the Ruskin memorial on Friar's Crag above Derwentwater, he spoke of

the worker's friend, the man who more than others of his time so believed in the possibilities of a happier life for the working men, that he set himself against traditions and the ordinary accepted theories of capital and labour . . . and taught that all good work might be worship, and was meant for joy, and that no good work was possible until a man had ceased to be a hand, a mere machine, a cog in an iron wheel, and had been allowed to bring his mind and soul to the task, under conditions that admitted of happiness and health.³¹

This instance of Ruskin's involvement with artisan production in the Lakes suggests a new reading of the relationship between Romanticism, hand-loom weaving, and nature. The argument of the *Guide* is not that nature can provide comfort and draw attention away from bad harvests

and the decline of cottage industry, but that the economy of nature and the cottage economy depend on one another. Labour is harmonized with nature. The securing of the place and the restoring of its local small-scale industries are twin goals for which Wordsworth and Ruskin worked.

The traditional view of the Romantic return to nature is that it is a form of escapism. Wordsworth escapes to the Lake District to get away from the harsh political realities of the Terror; the Victorian Romantics escape into a world of medievalism to get away from laissez-faire capitalism and grimy factories. Freud thought that we need nature for the same reason that we need mental phantasy. He drew the analogy in the twenty-third of his *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*:

The creation of the mental domain of phantasy has a complete counterpart in the establishment of 'reservations' and 'nature-parks' in places where the inroads of agriculture, traffic, or industry threaten to change the original face of the earth rapidly into something unrecognizable. The 'reservation' is to maintain the old condition of things which has been regretfully sacrificed to necessity everywhere else; there everything may grow and spread as it pleases, including what is useless and even what is harmful. The mental realm of phantasy is also such a reservation reclaimed from the encroachments of the reality-principle.³²

But is it productive to oppose our need for nature to the reality-principle? A more useful approach may be that of Hazlitt in his *Round Table* essay 'On the Love of the Country'. Hazlitt claims that no one has ever explained the true source of our attachment to natural objects or of the soothing emotions which the country infuses in us. People have talked of beauty, of freedom from care, of silence and tranquillity, of the healthiness and simplicity of life in the country as opposed to that in the city. But none of these explanations comes to the underlying principle. Hazlitt then cites a passage in Rousseau's *Confessions* where Jean-Jacques describes how he moved into a certain room and was immediately particularly endeared to it because he could see 'a little spot of green' from his window and this was the first time since his childhood that he had had such an object constantly before him. Natural objects, Hazlitt says, are always associated with *recollection*:

It is because natural objects have been associated with the sports of our childhood, with air and exercise, with our feelings in

solitude, when the mind takes the strongest hold of things, and clings with the fondest interest to whatever strikes its attention; with change of place, the pursuit of new scenes, and thoughts of distant friends: it is because they have surrounded us in almost all situations, in joy and in sorrow, in pleasure and in pain; because they have been one chief source and nourishment of our feelings, and a part of our being, that we love them as we do ourselves.³³

Our mental processes in the face of nature work according to the principle of the association of ideas, but what is distinctive about this attachment is 'the transferable nature of our feelings with respect to physical objects' (iv. 19). Loving one person doesn't make you love another person, but loving one tree makes you love all trees. You are affected by a sunset or a spring day not because of its inherent beauty but because it brings with it all the thoughts and feelings you've had in the face of previous sunsets and previous spring days. 'Thus Nature is a kind of universal home, and every object it presents to us an old acquaintance with unaltered looks' (iv. 20). All this is very Wordsworthian, and it is symptomatic that at the centre of Hazlitt's essay there are quotations from the Immortality Ode and 'Tintern Abbey':

To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. ['Ode']

and

Nature never did betray
The heart that lov'd her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy. ['Tintern Abbey']

Ideologically speaking, the problem with this view of nature is that it depends on individual feeling, on consciousness, on the leisure to enjoy sunsets and spring days. But Hazlitt's essay is marked by a strong democratic instinct: nature is a home for *all* – even those who do not own property – and the feelings it arouses are ones that 'all can enter into'. It was William Morris's dream that one day 'This land we have loved in our love and our leisure' might be available to those who live in grim 'grey homes'.³⁴ And in this context it is worth considering a letter sent by a factory-worker together with his contribution to the National Trust's appeal to acquire land round Derwentwater, launched on the occasion of Ruskin's death in 1900: 'I am a working man and

cannot afford more than 2s., but I once saw Derwentwater and can never forget it. I will do what I can to get my mates to help.'³⁵ If Hazlitt's argument is right, this man loved Derwentwater out of something more intrinsic to his identity than a desire to get away from smoke and work. Besides, there is the example of John Clare, whose writing suggests that he gained his identity through his bond with his native landscape and lost it in madness when he was displaced from that land. Nature may matter to a farm-labourer as well as to someone who looks at it over a five-barred gate. Furthermore, the link in Clare's poetry between nature and both the recovery of lost childhood and the possibility of some kind of endurance provides strong support for the argument of Hazlitt's essay. In his poem 'The Eternity of Nature' Clare contrasts the permanence of the daisy with the transience of the individual human's life and even of the posthumous life afforded to the poet. Sublimity and durability are founded in the minutiae of nature: the poem is built on the idea of, to reiterate Hazlitt's phrase, 'the transferable nature of our feelings with respect to physical objects'. It asserts that the daisy plucked by the future child is in some senses the same as the daisy we see now:

Leaves from eternity are simple things
To the world's gaze – whereto a spirit clings
Sublime and lasting – trampled underfoot
The daisy lives and strikes its little root
Into the lap of time – centurys may come
And pass away into the silent tomb
And still the child hid in the womb of time
Shall smile and pluck them when this simple rhyme
Shall be forgotten like a churchyard-stone
Or lingering lie unnoticed and alone
When eighteen hundred years our common date
Grows many thousands in their marching state
Aye still the child with pleasure in his eye
Shall cry 'The daisy!' – a familiar cry –
And run to pluck it.³⁶

When he started to write poetry, Clare knew nothing of the industrial revolution and had never been to London. His work demonstrates that the Romantic concept of integration with nature is not only a reaction against urbanization and that it should not be dismissed as some kind of surplus-value or discarded among the baggage of bourgeois ideology. England's greatest communist knew

that it was more than this. Like Hazlitt, he saw that nature is a universal home:

when we can get beyond that smoky world, there, out in the country we may still see the works of our fathers yet alive amidst the very nature they were wrought into, and of which they are so completely a part: for there indeed if anywhere, in the English country, in the days when people cared about such things, was there a full sympathy between the works of man and the land they were made for: – the land . . . is neither prison nor palace, but a decent home.³⁷

That is from William Morris's first public lecture, on 'The Decorative Arts'. Morris can be reclaimed as a father not only of the British Labour Party but also of the green movement.³⁸ E. P. Thompson's 1955 biography argued that Morris had to shed his Romanticism before he could grow into his socialism. But the ideals of his Romanticism formed the foundation of his socialism; the utopian communism of *News from Nowhere* would not have been possible without the Romantic poetry of *The Earthly Paradise*. If we trace the 'Romantic Ideology' forward into Morris and the prose-poet Ruskin, it becomes something far removed from German idealist aesthetics. It becomes an ideology that is concerned, for instance, with architectural style and town-planning. In chapter seven of *News from Nowhere* the houses of Piccadilly stand in carefully cultivated gardens which run over with flowers and fruit trees. Morris's vision continues:

We came presently into a large open space, sloping somewhat towards the south, the sunny site of which had been taken advantage of for planting an orchard, mainly, as I could see, of apricot trees, in the midst of which was a pretty gay little structure of wood, painted and gilded, that looked like a refreshment stall. . . . A strange sensation came over me; I shut my eyes to keep out the sight of the sun glittering on this fair abode of gardens, and for a moment there passed before them a phantasmagoria of another day. A great space surrounded by tall ugly houses, with an ugly church at the corner and a nondescript ugly cupolaed building at my back; the roadway thronged with a sweltering and excited crowd, dominated by omnibuses crowded with spectators. In the midst a paved befountained square, populated only by a few men dressed in blue, and a good many singularly ugly bronze images (one on top of a tall column).³⁹

Here the Romantic imagination is being used not to transcend nature but to reconstruct Trafalgar Square on ecological principles.

Whatever our class, nature can do something for us. Alan Liu writes that 'nature is the name under which we use the nonhuman to validate the human, to interpose a mediation able to make humanity more easy with itself'.⁴⁰ This seems to me to describe accurately what nature does for Wordsworth, for Hazlitt, for Clare, for Morris, for the factory-labourer who contributed to the Derwentwater appeal. However, Liu links this statement to the claim that '*There is no nature*', in other words that 'nature' is nothing more than an anthropomorphic construct created by Wordsworth and the rest for their own purposes. The polemical desire to reject any casual recourse to 'nature' as panacea for social ills has the unfortunate consequence of occluding any consideration of the whole question of human society's stewardship of 'the features and products of the earth itself, as contrasted with those of human civilization' (*OED*'s thirteenth sense of the word). 'Nature' is a term that needs to be contested, not rejected. It is profoundly unhelpful to say '*There is no nature*' at a time when our most urgent need is to address and redress the consequences of human civilization's insatiable desire to consume the products of the earth. We are confronted for the first time in history with the possibility of there being no part of the earth left untouched by man. 'Human civilization' has always been in the business of altering the land, whether through deforestation or urbanization or mining or enclosure or even the artificial reimposition of 'nature' through landscaping in the manner of William Kent and Capability Brown. But until now there have always been domains into which 'human civilization' does not extend; there has always been a 'state of nature'. Enclosure and landscape gardening have had no effect on the higher fellsides and tarns of Westmorland. Chernobyl, however, has. There is a difference not merely in degree but in kind between local changes to the surface configuration of the land and the profound transformations of the economy of nature that take place when the land is rendered radioactive or the ozone layer is depleted. When there have been a few more accidents at nuclear power stations, when there are no more rainforests, and when every wilderness has been ravaged for its mineral resources, then let us say '*There is no nature*'.

Furthermore, even if we continue to think anthropomorphically, it is essential to modify the idea that we use nature to validate ourselves, 'to make humanity more easy with itself'. For if 'the nonhuman' is to do something for us, we must do something for it – not least give it space, allow it to continue to exist. Rousseau recognized that we

need the conception of a state of nature in order to have a critical understanding of the nature of civilization. Hazlitt's argument about nature as a universal home depends on its endurance, its constancy. A tree helps us to live because it is the same as the trees we saw in our childhood. If we destroy all the trees, we will irremediably disrupt not only the economy of nature but also our own social and psychological economy.

Such images of reciprocity are alien to classical Marxist discourse. Marx characterized the relationship between man and nature in terms of dialectical opposition rather than unity. Man is defined as different from the animals by virtue of his mastery of nature, his 'working-over of inorganic nature'.⁴¹ Nature is the raw material for production; it is approached in terms of its use-value. The whole concept of society having an economic base with a legal and political superstructure fails to address the fact that the economy of human society may in the end be dependent on something larger, the economy of nature. Friedrich Engels is more amenable to ecological reading than Marx – while alert to the poverty of agricultural labourers, he emphasized the benefits of 'fresh country air' and 'healthful work in garden or field'⁴² – but the industrial pollution of Eastern Europe remains as a monument to the absence of ecological thinking in Marxist *praxis*.⁴³ Where capitalism has its Three Mile Island, Marxist-Leninism has its Chernobyl. Even the passage of Freud which I have quoted seems to take for granted the priority which capitalists and Marxists share: the nature-reserve and the park are associated with the old condition of things which must be sacrificed to the 'necessity' of economic progress. Note that phrase about everything being left alone in the nature-reserve 'including what is useless and even what is harmful': Freud is being wholly anthropocentric – he means useless and harmful to man, but much that is useless and even harmful within the human economy will be useful and beneficial within the economy of nature. This is Gilbert White's point about earth-worms.

Marxist criticism claims to bring texts down from the idealist stratosphere into the material world. But a materialism which follows Marx's tenth thesis on Feuerbach in taking the standpoint of human society inevitably finds itself falling in with high capitalism's privileging of the wealth of nations over the wealth of nature. Until quite recently the Romantics were valued precisely because they set themselves against the ideology of capital and offered an alternative, holistic vision – because, we may say, they were the first ecologists. Ellen Swallow defined ecology as an applied science that will teach the

principles on which to found healthy and happy life. John Ruskin proposed the 'strange political economy' that 'the question for the nation is not how much labour it employs, but how much life it produces. . . . THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration.'⁴⁴ Such passages as this from *Unto This Last* are the nineteenth century's most vigorous riposte to the Benthamism which claimed that it is from material well-being that man derives the main part of his pleasure. Ruskin's conception of love, joy, and admiration was learnt from Wordsworth: in the fiftieth letter of *Fors Clavigera* he said that he took Wordsworth's single line, 'We live by admiration, hope, and love' (*Excursion*, iv. 763), as his literal guide in all education. Furthermore, Ruskin's magnificent critique of the theory of divided labour – 'It is not, truly speaking, the labor that is divided, but the men: – Divided into mere segments of men – broken into small fragments and crumbs of life'⁴⁵ – may be traced back to Wordsworth. As Leslie Stephen perceived,

The division of labour, celebrated with such enthusiasm by Adam Smith, tends to crush all real life out of its victims. The soul of the political economist may rejoice when he sees a human being devoting his whole faculties to the performance of one subsidiary operation in the manufacture of a pin. . . . This is the evil which is constantly before Wordsworth's eyes, as it has certainly not become less prominent since his time. The danger of crushing the individual is a serious one according to his view. . . . Men must be taught what is the really valuable part of their natures, and what is the purest happiness to be extracted from life. . . . Many powerful thinkers have illustrated Wordsworth's doctrine more elaborately, but nobody has gone more decisively to the root of the matter.⁴⁶

The powerful thinker whom Stephen has in mind here is undoubtedly Ruskin: the emphasis on 'life' follows *Unto This Last* and the allusion to pin manufacture is drawn from 'The Nature of Gothic'. These Ruskinian texts, not Marx's *Capital*, were the inspirational force behind the socialism of Morris and others; English socialism is at root more 'green' than it is 'Marxist'. As Morris wrote in 'How I became a Socialist', 'I had never so much as opened Adam Smith, or heard of Ricardo, or of Karl Marx. . . . how deadly dull the world would have been twenty years ago but for Ruskin! It was through him that I learned to give form to my discontent.'⁴⁷ Morris found foreshadowings of his critique of the prevailing theory of labour and capital in one other

Victorian sage, Thomas Carlyle, but the latter's vituperations in such texts as *Past and Present* are not built on the Wordsworthian ecology which Morris shared with Ruskin.

The exemplary English ecologist is the Ruskin who undermined the very premises of nineteenth-century capitalist and Marxist theory with his claim that the fundamental material basis of political economy was not money, labour, and production but 'Pure Air, Water, and Earth'. In the fourth essay of *Unto This Last*, Ruskin gave credit to John Stuart Mill for departing from the conventions of political economy by admitting that there was value in nature. He was thinking in particular of a passage in the *Principles of Political Economy* in which Mill wrote in Wordsworthian fashion of the importance of solitude – solitude in the presence of natural beauty and grandeur – for the health of both individual and society, and then went on to express concern about the destruction to the environment that was being caused by economic progress:

Nor is there much satisfaction in contemplating the world with nothing left to the spontaneous activity of nature; with every rood of land brought into cultivation, which is capable of growing food for human beings; every flowery waste or natural pasture ploughed up, all quadrupeds or birds which are not domesticated for man's use exterminated as his rivals for food, every hedgerow or superfluous tree rooted out, and scarcely a place left where a wild shrub or flower could grow without being eradicated as a weed in the name of improved agriculture.⁴⁸

Having cited Mill, Ruskin made his own case. He argued that a maximum of woodland was needed in order to keep the air pure, that the growth of industrial manufacturing was not the answer to the problems of world poverty, and that the quality of human life is not dependent on economic growth alone. It was here that he wrote the words which form the epigraph to my book.

Some years later, in the fifth letter of *Fors Clavigera*, Ruskin wrote once again of the dangers of pollution and of the importance of trees for their effect on the atmosphere. He perceived the relationship between deforestation and drought. His prescience is remarkable; his rousing rhetoric demands a long quotation:

The first three [principles of political economy], I said, are Pure Air, Water, and Earth.

Heaven gives you the main elements of these. You can destroy

them at your pleasure, or increase, almost without limit, the available quantities of them.

You can vitiate the air by your manner of life, and of death, to any extent. You might easily vitiate it so as to bring such a pestilence on the globe as would end all of you. . . . everywhere, and all day long, you are vitiating it with foul chemical exhalations; and the horrible nests, which you call towns, are little more than laboratories for the distillation into heaven of venomous smokes and smells, mixed with effluvia from decaying animal matter, and infectious miasmata from purulent disease.

On the other hand, your power of purifying the air, by dealing properly and swiftly with all substances in corruption; by absolutely forbidding noxious manufactures; and by planting in all soils the trees which cleanse and invigorate earth and atmosphere, – is literally infinite. You might make every breath of air you draw, food.

Secondly, your power over the rain and river-waters of the earth is infinite. You can bring rain where you will, by planting wisely and tending carefully; – drought where you will, by ravage of woods and neglect of the soil. You might have the rivers of England as pure as the crystal of the rock; – beautiful in falls, in lakes, in living pools; – so full of fish that you might take them out with your hands instead of nets. Or you may do always as you have done now, turn every river of England into a common sewer, so that you cannot so much as baptize an English baby but with filth, unless you hold its face out in the rain; and even *that* falls dirty.⁴⁹

The contrast between the beauty of falls, lakes, and living pools, and the smokes and smells, the exhalations and effluvia, the murky waters, of manufacturing industry places Ruskin in the tradition of book eight of *The Excursion*, where Wordsworth writes of 'that brook converting as it runs / Into an instrument of deadly bane' (viii. 257–8). There are aspects of late Ruskin which we will want to reject – the moral opprobriousness; the obsessive, near-paranoid tone; the element of feudalism in the alternative vision proposed – but then all readings, all uses, of literary texts are selective. Though the ecologies of Wordsworth, of Ruskin and of Morris, of Ellen Swallow, are by no means identical to our own, are very much of the nineteenth century, the core of their thinking, so much of which is summed up in the fifth

letter of *Fors*, is familiar and is modern. They are the fathers and mothers of our environmental tradition.

To close this chapter with the question of pure water and air. As has been noted, one version of the *Guide to the Lakes* was published with the *River Duddon* sonnet cycle, which ends with the river flowing out from Cumbria into the Irish Sea; today, if we ascend Conistone Old Man, the mountain beneath which Ruskin lived in the years when he was writing *Fors*, the most prominent sight on the coast is the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant, with its abysmal record for dumping contaminated waste. 'Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide,' wrote Wordsworth of the Duddon in his concluding sonnet; but now it is not only water that glides inexorably into the sea off Wordsworth's coast. As for the air, let us go back into the stratosphere for a moment, not in metaphor but in meteorology. The young Ruskin, as will be shown in the next chapter, learnt from Wordsworth how to look at clouds; the old Ruskin looked at the clouds and became convinced that the weather was undergoing radical change. Writing from Brantwood by Conistone on 13 August 1879, he attributed the air quality – 'one loathsome mass of sultry and foul fog, like smoke' – to the exhalations from 'Manchester devil's darkness'.⁵⁰ The central argument of his extraordinary late work *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* was that the signs of the sky were signs of the times: 'Blanched Sun, – blighted grass, – blinded man'.⁵¹ A preposterous idea: how could human 'progress' alter the configuration of weather across the globe? People said Ruskin was mad.

THE MORAL OF LANDSCAPE

'This will never do.'¹ There is no more famous opening to a review. There are few hatchet jobs so comprehensive and so witty. Twentieth-century opinion has tended to follow Francis Jeffrey: who now reads *The Excursion*? In 1879 Matthew Arnold definitively ranked Wordsworth as inferior only to Shakespeare and Milton. But with this canonization came a narrowing of the canon: '*The Excursion* and *The Prelude*, his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth's best work.'² *The Prelude*, excluded from the canon in Wordsworth's lifetime, made extraordinarily little impact when published in 1850, but its stock has risen and risen since the 1920s. Shares in *The Excursion*, however, have remained depressed for a century. Arnold invented the conception of the 'great decade' and Wordsworth's subsequent decline; the notion that *The Excursion* is a product of the decline, a great white elephant, provides a convenient excuse for not reading what is after all a very long poem. Yet Coleridge said that 'proofs meet me in every part of *The Excursion* that the poet's genius has not flagged' and that 'one half of the number of its beauties would make all the beauties of all his contemporary poets collectively mount to the balance',³ Keats considered the poem to be one of the three things in the age to rejoice at,⁴ and Hazlitt, who had no reason to do Wordsworth any favours, began his review with a sentence very different from Jeffrey's: 'In power of intellect, in lofty conception, in the depth of feeling, at once simple and sublime, which pervades every part of it, and which gives to every object an almost preternatural and preterhuman interest, this work has seldom been surpassed.'⁵ Nor was such high praise confined to the period of the poem's first publication: in 1843 Ruskin, in a letter to his college tutor, said that 'the magnificent comprehension and faultless majesty of *The Excursion*' crowned all of Wordsworth's work.⁶

Criticism should not be done by numbers, but it is salutary to note that of the nineteenth century's four great English critics, three

(Coleridge, Hazlitt, Ruskin) line up in support of *The Excursion* and only one (Arnold) against it. Coleridge and Hazlitt did have reservations: few readers save the young Ruskin can have found 'faultless majesty' throughout *The Excursion*. It is undeniable that many stretches of the second half of the poem are dull indeed; Hazlitt showed characteristic discernment in devoting most of his three-part review to books one to four and dismissing 'the stories contained in the latter part of the volume' in a brief concluding paragraph.⁷ But this should not be enough to justify the modern butchery whereby critics and editors have extricated the heart of book one and implied that 'The Ruined Cottage' is the only part of *The Excursion* with which we need concern ourselves.⁸ Coleridge thought that 'The Ruined Cottage' was 'the finest poem in our language, comparing it with any of the same or similar length',⁹ and no sensitive reader will hastily dissent from his view, but the fact remains that Wordsworth chose not to publish the poem in its original form and that for most nineteenth-century readers it existed only as part of the first book of *The Excursion*. It is sometimes said that the *Excursion* text of the 'Cottage' is ruined by its consolatory lines about Margaret fixing her eyes on the cross, but these were not added until the edition of 1845: the text of 1814 is much closer to the feeling of the original manuscript versions of 1797 to 1804. The recovery and analysis of the manuscripts of such poems as 'The Ruined Cottage' have been one of the great achievements of twentieth-century literary scholarship, but have resulted in an emphasis on what Wordsworth's poems were in their glad dawn at the expense of what they became once published and read. It is as if, in defiance of the Immortality Ode, scholars and critics have been trying to bring back the hour of splendour. Thus, for instance, an important passage of blank verse about contemplating the forms of nature comes to be viewed primarily as a discarded conclusion to 'The Ruined Cottage' and only incidentally as the climax to book four of *The Excursion*.¹⁰ It could just be, however, that this revision was as purposive as that whereby 'There are in our existence spots of time . . .' was moved from part one of the 1799 two-part *Prelude* to book eleven of the 1805 version. The putative five-book *Prelude* of early spring 1804 looks like a rather interesting compromise between that poem's comparatively brief genesis and its epically proportioned consummation: a four-book *Excursion* of 1806 would hold similar attractions.¹¹ And it would even qualify for inclusion in the 'great decade'.

In a sense, many of the nineteenth-century readers who so admired *The Excursion* created such a four-book version for themselves by

concentrating their attention on the first half of the poem. It was the early books, and to some extent the last one, that were much quoted and discussed, that to a reader like Ruskin seemed to be Wordsworth's crowning achievement. Even Jeffrey found praise for the story of the ruined cottage in book one; Hazlitt, not surprisingly, was especially interested in the Solitary's account in book three of his response to the French Revolution; Keats was exceptionally attracted to the passage on mythology in book four; and Charles Lamb wrote in his review that

The fourth book, entitled 'Despondency Corrected', we consider as the most valuable portion of the poem. For moral grandeur; for wide scope of thought and a long train of lofty imagery; for tender personal appeals; and a *versification* which we feel we ought to notice, but feel it also so involved in the poetry, that we can hardly mention it as a distinct excellence; it stands without competition among our didactic and descriptive verse. The general tendency of the argument (which we might almost affirm to be the leading moral of the poem) is to abate the pride of the calculating *understanding*, and to reinstate the *imagination* and the *affections* in those seats from which modern philosophy has laboured but too successfully to expel them.¹²

Lamb's terms are revealing. He finds that he cannot single out the versification and write a piece of purely literary criticism, for everything about the book is bound up with its moral argument. The primary attraction of *The Excursion* for readers from its first reviewers through Ruskin to Leslie Stephen was its ethical content; it appeared to be Wordsworth's crowning achievement because it was the fullest embodiment of his philosophy. Arnold's emphasis on the poetry as opposed to the philosophy was in large part a reaction against the tradition that culminated in Stephen's 1879 essay 'Wordsworth's Ethics', which begins with the claim that the poet and the philosopher live in the same world and are interested in the same truths: 'What is the nature of man and the world in which he lives, and what, in consequence, should be our conduct?' Stephen goes on to argue the standard nineteenth-century case that Wordsworth is the most philosophical of poets – 'Nowhere is it easier to observe the mode in which poetry and philosophy spring from the same root and owe their excellence to the same intellectual powers'¹³ – and *The Excursion* his extended philosophical poem.

Ruskin's understanding of the argument of book four and of the poem's leading moral was similar to Lamb's: the epigraph on the title-

page of every volume of *Modern Painters* was a quotation of the passage in which the Wanderer sums up his attack on 'modern philosophy' and 'the calculating *understanding*':

Accuse me not

Of arrogance, . . .
If, having walked with Nature,
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,
Philosophers, who, though the human soul
Be of a thousand faculties composed,
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize
This soul, and the transcendent universe,
No more than as a mirror that reflects
To proud Self-love her own intelligence.¹⁴

The Wanderer is a man with direct access to nature; Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick that this character was an image of himself as he might have been had he lived only in the eye of nature and lacked 'what is called a liberal education'.¹⁵ Thus the passion and the wandering are Wordsworth's, but the Wanderer is a Wordsworth without the influence of books and a Cambridge education. To the kind of educated readers to whom *The Excursion* was perforce addressed (given its length, its price, and its abstract diction), the Wanderer was a compelling figure precisely because he was different from themselves. Like Schiller's 'naïve' poet, he is unalienated, he offers a path back to nature. 'Naïve' can be a positive term, as it is for Schiller and as it is in the Wordsworthian figure of the child with its unmediated relationship to nature, but it is a conception easily derogated, and Wordsworth lays himself open to such derogation by making his naïve poet not just a Wanderer but also a Pedlar: 'Did Mr Wordsworth really imagine, that his favourite doctrines were likely to gain any thing in point of effect or authority, by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgler about tape, or brass sleeve-buttons?'¹⁶

But a reader like Ruskin had no such reservations. For him, the Wanderer embodied an ideal of vision:

O then what soul was his, when, on the tops

Of the high mountains, he beheld the sun
 Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked –
 Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
 And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay
 In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touch'd,
 And in their silent faces could he read
 Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
 Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
 The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form,
 All melted into him; they swallowed up
 His animal being; in them did he live,
 And by them did he live; they were his life.¹⁷

In passages such as this, readers of *The Excursion* found a summation of the Wordsworthian 'philosophy' of the 'one life' and the 'active universe' – the theory that there is animation in and unity between all things, and that nature is accordingly entitled to moral consideration. At the beginning of book nine, the Wanderer theorizes explicitly about the 'active Principle' that subsists

In all things, in all natures; in the stars
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
 The moving waters, and the invisible air.

(ix. 5–9)

Everything is linked to everything else, and, most importantly, the human mind must be linked to the natural environment; for Wordsworth, as he speaks through the Wanderer, the imagination is 'the power to recognize, in his contemplation of them, the life of natural objects and hence to enter into a relationship with them in which all their qualities as living things could be experienced – qualities of character, emotional significance and moral reassurance'.¹⁸ Even the anti-Wordsworthian Byron came under the spell of this vision, as may be seen from such lines in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* as the following, which are manifestly derivative from *The Excursion*:

I live not in myself, but I become
 Portion of that around me; and to me
 High mountains are a feeling

and 'Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part / Of me and of my

soul, as I of them?'¹⁹ Nearly all reviewers of *The Excursion* dwelt on the conception of the life that is in nature. Lamb is again representative: 'To a mind constituted like that of Mr Wordsworth, the stream, the torrent, and the stirring leaf – seem not merely to suggest associations of deity, but to be a kind of speaking communication with it. . . . In his poetry nothing in Nature is dead. Motion is synonymous with life.'²⁰ An orthodox reviewer like James Montgomery in the *Eclectic* has a similar emphasis: he writes of how the Wanderer has been 'spiritualized by communion with nature', but expresses the reservation that Wordsworth has paid to his 'omnipresent Spirit' in nature a kind of homage that should be due to God alone.²¹ Wordsworth was persistently exercised by the accusation that the poem was pantheistic rather than Christian.²²

The line 'But in the mountains did he feel his faith' (i. 226) brings us to the heart of the Wanderer. Where a Montgomery worried about the extent to which that faith did or did not coincide with Christian orthodoxy, Ruskin was content to share the feeling. What he most valued in *The Excursion* was the clarity of vision with which such feelings were articulated: 'there his spirit shaped / Her prospects, nor did he believe, – he saw' (i. 231–2). Seeing the particular forms of nature is of the essence. The very first lines of book one are typical in their detailed perception of two different effects of sunlight:

'Twas summer, and the sun had mounted high:
 Southward, the landscape indistinctly glared
 Through a pale steam; but all the northern downs,
 In clearest air ascending, shew'd far off
 A surface dappled o'er with shadows, flung
 From many a brooding cloud.

(i. 1–6)

Charlotte Brontë said of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*: 'This book seems to give me eyes.'²³ It was Wordsworth, and *The Excursion* in particular, that seemed to give Ruskin eyes – and for Ruskin clear sight was everything: 'the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. . . . To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion, – all in one.'²⁴

In 1843, the year in which he wrote of 'the magnificent comprehension and faultless majesty of *The Excursion*', Ruskin published volume one of *Modern Painters*. The primary purpose of the book was to elevate the status of Turner; one method through which Ruskin sought to achieve this was comparison with Wordsworth: 'hear how

Wordsworth, the keenest-eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature, illustrates Turner here, as we shall find him doing in all other points'.²⁵ Again, in the section of *Modern Painters I* called 'Of Truth of Skies', Ruskin teaches his readers to look at the sky as they have not done before.

There is not a moment of any day of our lives, when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty. . . . And yet we never attend to it.

(II. iii. 1. 1-2)

If we do attend, especially to its quieter moods, then 'the lesson of devotion' will be taught and 'the blessing of beauty given' (II. iii. 1. 3). Wordsworth is again the exemplar of how to look:

Now if there be one characteristic of the sky more valuable or necessary to be rendered than another, it is that which Wordsworth has given in the second book of the *Excursion*:

'The chasm of sky above my head
Is Heaven's profoundest azure. No domain
For fickle, short-lived clouds, to occupy,
Or to pass through; - but rather an *abyss*
In which the everlasting stars abide,
And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might tempt
The curious eye to look for them by day.'

(II. iii. 1. 7, quoting *Exc.* iii. 94-100)

A few pages later, another quotation from *The Excursion* is used to support an observation concerning the effect of sunlight in relation to cloud. Then at the climax of *Modern Painters I* there is a paean to the energy of Turner's cloudscapes:

to mark the independent passion, the tumultuous separate existence of every wreath of writhing vapour, yet swept away and overpowered by one omnipotence of storm, and thus to bid us

'Be as a presence or a motion - one
Among the many there; and while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth,

As fast as a musician scatters sounds
Out of an instrument,' -

this belongs only to nature and to him.

(II. iii. 4. 15, quoting *Exc.* iv. 520-5)

Here the wonderfully Turnerian quotation from *The Excursion* reveals that this power belongs not only to nature and to the great modern painter, but also to the great modern poet.

Wordsworthian and Ruskinian vision both looks at the phenomena of nature and looks through them. At certain moments of intense feeling the optical becomes the visionary. Ruskin, fascinated as he was by clouds, must have been especially attracted to the Solitary's account of his visionary experience which forms the culmination of book two of *The Excursion*. The Solitary narrates how he was walking down from the mountainside through dull mist,

when a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul! . . .
The Appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty City. . . .
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
The vapours had receded, taking there
Their station under a cerulean sky.
O, 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molten together, and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvellous array
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapp'd.

(ii. 824-8, 834-5, 846-60)

Such a combination of meteorological observation and visionary imagination, of vapours and glory, is thoroughly Ruskinian. The sense

of an apparition opening up above the mist and of that vision being an effect of 'earthly nature' yet at the same time a revelation of divine presence is precisely analogous to that of Ruskin in a passage intended for, but not actually used in, *Modern Painters II*:

Suddenly, there came in the direction of Dome du Goûter a crash – of prolonged thunder; and when I looked up, I saw the cloud cloven . . . and, like a risen spirit casting off its garment of corruption, and flushed with eternity of life, the Aiguilles of the south broke through the black foam of the storm clouds. One by one, pyramid above pyramid, the mighty range of its companions shot off their shrouds, and took to themselves their glory – all fire – no shade – no dimness. Spire of ice – dome of snow – wedge of rock – *all* fire in the light of the sunset, sank into the hollows of the crags – and pierced through the prisms of the glaciers, and dwelt within them – as it does in clouds. The ponderous storm writhed and moaned beneath them, the forests wailed and waved in the evening wind, the steep river flashed and leaped along the valley; but the mighty pyramids stood calmly – in the very heart of the high heaven – a celestial city with walls of amethyst and gates of gold – filled with the light and clothed with the Peace of God.

(*LE* iv. 364)

With its conception of a sublime Alpine landscape revealing 'The types and symbols of Eternity', this passage has been compared to Wordsworth's 'Simplon Pass',²⁶ but Ruskin could not have known Wordsworth's lines when he wrote this, since they were not published until 1845. *The Excursion*'s mighty city, however, seems to me to have been a formative influence on the way in which Ruskin saw his vision. The Wordsworthian city is a commingling of cloud, rock, and turf, where the Ruskinian is composed more strictly of the shining rocky pyramids, but such distinctions are slight in comparison with the underlying similarity whereby in each visionary moment a celestial city is revealed through an opening in the clouds as the creative imagination transforms physical sight into what Ruskin called 'spiritual or second sight'.²⁷

But the Solitary and Ruskin draw very different conclusions from their respective visions. For the Solitary, the apparition is but an interlude in the course of a narration that is focused on humanity rather than nature and on suffering rather than glory. He sees the celestial city as he and his neighbours are bringing down to safety an old man who,

while on the mountain digging turf for winter fuel, has been caught by the storm. Within a few lines of the apparition that comes with the end of the storm, the tone changes as attention is turned back to the old man:

though he seemed at first to have received
No harm, and uncomplaining as before
Went through his usual tasks, a silent change
Soon shew'd itself; he lingered three short weeks.

(ii. 891–4)

In the vision, the Solitary seems to see 'the revealed abode / Of Spirits in beatitude' (ii. 873–4): the phenomenon of nature has offered a momentary glimpse, an intimation, of immortality. This causes him to forget the old man's suffering. But human pain and mortality are quickly reasserted as we learn that the quest for fuel and the exposure in the storm have cost the old man his life. As in the story of the ruined cottage, Wordsworth has juxtaposed the heartlessness and the beauty of nature. He does not rest with mountain glory; his is also the poetry of human suffering.

The passage intended for *Modern Painters II*, on the other hand, works towards the obliteration of 'the associations of humanity' and the annihilation of the individual subject 'before, and in the Presence of, the manifested Deity': 'It was then only that I understood that to become nothing might be to become more than Man . . . the immortal soul might be held for ever – impotent as a leaf – yet greater than tongue can tell – wrapt in the one contemplation of the Infinite God' (*LE* iv. 364–5). In contrast to Wordsworth – and indeed to the older 'de-converted' Ruskin who in *Fors Clavigera* penned 'Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain' – there is no consideration of the effects of storm and avalanche on those who actually live and work in the Alps or the Lakes. The passage is all 'Mountain Glory': there is none of 'The Mountain Gloom', that sense of the oppressiveness of village life among the Alps which Ruskin introduced at the end of *Modern Painters IV*. Evasion of human or social questions is an incidental consequence of the desire that underlies the passage, namely, to transcend the individual perceiving mind. The professed aim of the whole of *Modern Painters* was to declare 'the perfectness and eternal beauty of the work of God';²⁸ the desire to efface the image of self is bound up with Ruskin's belief that the modern disease was a form of subjectivity that was harmful to the religious sense.

In volume two of his great work Ruskin developed a theory of the imagination and the sublime that was much indebted to Wordsworth

and Coleridge; then just over a decade later in volume three (1856) he engaged in his most sustained critical account of the poetry and painting of landscape. Chapters eleven to seventeen of that volume remain one of the key texts of the nineteenth century. They are now too little known, so I make no apology for quoting from them extensively in the remainder of this chapter. It is essential to read them as a sequence: the famous twelfth chapter, 'Of the Pathetic Fallacy', should not be read in isolation, as it so often is, but should be considered as an integral part of a closely knit series which runs 'Of the Novelty of Landscape', 'Of the Pathetic Fallacy', 'Of Classical Landscape', 'Of Mediaeval Landscape: – First, the Fields', 'Of Mediaeval Landscape: – Secondly, the Rocks', 'Of Modern Landscape', and, climactically, 'The Moral of Landscape'.²⁹

Ruskin begins by remarking how novel the obsession with landscape is. The arts of the ancients represented men and other living creatures; the Greeks were not interested in mountains. 'Nobody ever cared about blue mountains before, or tried to paint the broken stones of old walls.'³⁰ The minutiae of landscape have become so central to our notions of both poetry and painting that it is hard for us to conceive how novel it was for a painter, or a poet such as Wordsworth, to concern himself with such things as old stone walls. Prior to the modern period, mankind took

very little interest in anything but what belonged to humanity; caring in no wise for the external world, except as it influenced his own destiny; honouring the lightning because it could strike him, the sea because it could drown him, the fountains because they gave him drink, and the grass because it yielded him seed; but utterly incapable of feeling any special happiness in the love of such things, or any earnest emotion about them, considered as separate from man.

(11. 8)

The analysis is strikingly similar to that of Schiller in his distinction between the 'naïve' relationship with nature characteristic of classical culture and the 'sentimental' response of the moderns: 'one finds so little trace among [the Greeks] of the *sentimental* interest with which we moderns are attached to the scenes and characters of nature. . . . [The Greek] does not cling to [Nature] with fervour, with sentimentality, with sweet melancholy, as we moderns do.'³¹ (The terms 'naïve' and 'sentimental' stand for the unmediated and the self-conscious attitudes; they do not carry the overtones they have developed. I shall use the

words in Schiller's way and do not intend to suggest their current derogatory senses.) Schiller's essay is premised on a theory of loss – lost childhood and lost unity with nature – closely akin to that of Wordsworth's great ode. Ruskin's argument also turns on the idea of loss: he seeks to relate the modern feeling for landscape to the loss of the old religious certainties, the stabilities of faith.

Schiller's distinction provides a helpful way into Ruskin's next chapter, 'Of the Pathetic Fallacy'. The naïve poet is entirely possessed by his object, whereas the sentimental poet 'reflects upon the impression that objects make upon him, and only in that reflection is the emotion grounded which he himself experiences and which he excites in us' (p. 196). For the modern, then, the mind's consciousness of its self is such that nature can never be perceived in itself, but only in its effect on the perceiver. Blue would then be not a quality inherent in objects but 'the sensation of colour which the human eye receives in looking at the open sky, or at a bell gentian' (*Modern Painters III*, 12. 1). Both Schiller and Ruskin see the dangers of this potentially solipsistic post-Kantian state of affairs. For Ruskin, it is the origin of the pathetic fallacy whereby, due to 'an excited state of the feelings' (12. 5), we do not see clearly. The pathetic fallacy occurs when the emotion distorts the mental reflection of nature in such a way that the poet no longer sees the object as it really is. Given that the pathetic fallacy is a condition caused by strong passion, it will be a characteristic of all poets, since for Ruskin poetry is passion. But, according to Ruskin, 'the greatest poets do not often admit this kind of falseness . . . it is only the second order of poets who much delight in it.' He explains his two orders in a footnote: 'by these two orders I mean the creative (Shakspeare, Homer, Dante), and Reflective or Perceptive (Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson)' (12. 6, and footnote). The creative and reflective are his equivalents of Schiller's naïve and sentimental; for Schiller, too, Homer and Shakspeare are the greatest naïve poets. Like Schiller's, Ruskin's categories serve as both an eternal measure of poetry and a model of historical decline. There are ancient sentimental/reflective poets and modern naïve/creative ones, but the characteristic moderns (Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson) tend to be in the inferior category which is locked within the self.

Hazlitt's reservations about *The Excursion* were built on the same ground:

It is not so much a description of natural objects as of the feelings associated with them; not an account of the manners of rural life,

but the result of the poet's reflections on it. . . . his thoughts are his real subjects. . . . He sees all things in himself. . . . The image is lost in the sentiment.³²

This led Hazlitt to describe *The Excursion* as 'a philosophical pastoral poem'. It is a brilliant generic classification, for, the moment one interposes the self-consciousness of the philosophizing mind, pastoral ceases to be the language of nature that it is in Clare's 'Pastoral Poesy' and becomes instead the supremely 'sentimental' way of looking at nature. Pastorals of this kind are written about shepherds by writers who are for ever cut off from the shepherd's (imagined) naïve unity with nature; that is why pastorals of this kind are always bound up with loss, are always elegiac and often epitaphic. It is significant in this respect that many of the narratives within *The Excursion* concern characters who are dead, and that Wordsworth included his first 'Essay upon Epitaphs', a text which I will discuss in the next chapter, as a long note to book five.

The Wanderer defends pastoral's way of invoking passion in nature:

The Poets, in their elegies and songs
Lamenting the departed, call the groves,
They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,
And senseless rocks; nor idly; for they speak,
In these their invocations, with a voice
Obedient to the strong creative power
Of human passion.

(i. 475-81)

A crude reading of Ruskin's argument would suggest that he believed that poets *are* idle to call on the hills and streams in this way. Is not this a fallacious ascription of feelings to inanimate nature? But an invocation is not necessarily an ascription: Wordsworth is always wary of the pathetic fallacy, as may be seen from the choice of the word 'seemed' a few lines further on in the Wanderer's lament over Margaret's death:

Beside yon Spring I stood,
And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel
One sadness, they and I.

(i. 484-6)

Here Wordsworth recognizes that the fallacy springs from 'the strong creative power / Of human passion'. 'Now so long as we see that the *feeling* is true,' writes Ruskin, 'we pardon, or are even pleased by, the

confessed fallacy of sight which it induces.' He quotes some lines from 'The Sands of Dee', a lyric of Kingsley's Chartist, Alton Locke, which ascribe cruelty to the foam of the sea, and says that they are good 'not because they fallaciously describe foam, but because they faithfully describe sorrow' (12. 11). Intensity of passion may transform a fallacy into a strength.

The pathetic fallacy, Ruskin argues, is 'eminently characteristic of the modern mind'; the modern landscape poet or painter endeavours 'to express something which he, as a living creature, imagines in the lifeless object', whereas classical and medieval artists were 'content with expressing the unimaginary and actual qualities of the object itself' (13. 1). Why is this? It is a matter of religious faith:

Homer *had* some feeling about the sea; a faith in the animation of it much stronger than Keats's. But all this sense of something living in it, he separates in his mind into a great abstract image of a Sea Power. He never says the waves rage, or the waves are idle. But he says there is somewhat in, and greater than, the waves, which rages, and is idle, and *that* he calls a god.

(13. 3)

This is a crucial development in the argument: where for the moderns the emotion derives from within the feeling self, for the ancients it derives from the gods. Here Ruskin works towards a theory of myth that he later developed more fully in *The Queen of the Air* (1869). The major myths, he suggests, spring from and remain rooted in natural phenomena. The Wanderer has a similar argument in a passage of *The Excursion* concerning ancient Greece to which Hazlitt, Keats, and Shelley were deeply attracted:

The nightly Hunter, lifting up his eyes
Towards the crescent Moon, with grateful heart
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed
That timely light, to share his joyous sport:
And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,
(Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes
By echo multiplied from rock or cave)
Swept in the storm of chase; as Moon and Stars
Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven,
When winds are blowing strong.

(iv. 861-71)

But Ruskin differentiates himself from Wordsworth by implying that this passage ascribes the existence of the goddess only to the imagination of the perceiver:

when Diana is said to hunt with her nymphs in the woods, it does not mean merely, as Wordsworth puts it, that the poet or shepherd saw the moon and stars glancing between the branches of the trees, and wished to say so figuratively. It means that there is a living spirit, to which the light of the moon is a body; which takes delight in glancing between the clouds and following the wild beasts as they wander through the night; and that this spirit sometimes assumes a perfect human form.

(13. 7)

For Ruskin, Wordsworth's modern ('reflective') explanation of the Greek myths inverts substance and shadow: it makes the mental image into the substance, the goddess into the shadow, whereas for the Greeks it was the other way round. Such an inversion is a product of the modern decline in faith. The pathetic fallacy is a substitute for the religious belief that had been destroyed by the Enlightenment.

The two chapters 'Of Mediaeval Landscape' develop the idea that prior to the modern age the representation of nature was always bound up with the presence and the honouring of God, and that divine presence in medieval art was never dependent on a perceiving subject. Wordsworth's landscapes reflect his own spiritual state, whereas Dante's landscapes are always types of spiritual states that exist eternally and externally of Dante himself. Medieval landscapes are stable, definite, and luminous, whereas modern ones are characterized by their cloudiness. That cloudiness is a symptom of vacancy: modern spiritual life is under a cloud not least because modern clouds do not contain gods. In modern landscape there is 'a total absence of faith in the presence of any deity therein':

Whereas the mediaeval never painted a cloud, but with the purpose of placing an angel in it; and a Greek never entered a wood without expecting to meet a god in it; we should think the appearance of an angel in the cloud wholly unnatural, and should be seriously surprised by meeting a god anywhere. Our chief ideas about the wood are connected with poaching. We have no belief that the clouds contain more than so many inches of rain or hail, and from our ponds and ditches expect nothing more divine than ducks and watercresses.

(16. 7)

The 'Dark Age' is the present, not the medieval age. The modern malaise is 'want of faith', a want that is especially apparent in the city: 'A Red Indian or Otaheitan savage has more sense of a divine existence round him, or government over him, than the plurality of refined Londoners and Parisians' (16. 10). In his supposition that spiritual impoverishment is inherent in the process of urbanization, Ruskin stands squarely in the Wordsworthian tradition.

In the face of nature, however, the moderns do retain an instinctive sense of divine presence. In the Greeks this instinct

created, as we saw, the faithfully believed gods of the elements: in Dante and the mediaevals, it formed the faithfully believed angelic presence; in the modern, it creates no perfect form, does not apprehend distinctly any Divine being or operation; but only a dim, slightly credited animation in the natural object, accompanied with great interest and affection for it.

(16. 37)

In that last phrase Ruskin is almost certainly thinking of Wordsworth. It is the accompanying role of 'interest and affection' that troubles Ruskin: this is the pathetic fallacy whereby nature is subordinated to the poet's self. As Hazlitt criticized *The Excursion* for its egotism ('The power of his mind preys upon itself'), so Ruskin objects that Wordsworth has 'a vague notion that nature would not be able to get on well without Wordsworth; and finds a considerable part of his pleasure in looking at himself as well as her' (16. 38). Wordsworth is the archetypal modern in that he dreams and moralizes over nature in a way which is 'the satisfaction made to our modern consciences for the want of a sincere acknowledgment of God in nature' (16. 45). Thus the peroration to book four of *The Excursion*, which is also the delayed conclusion to the story of the ruined cottage, says much of the moral efficacy of the mind's excursive power through which the spirit communes with the forms of nature, but it does not actually acknowledge God. The Wanderer argues that the man who is at one with nature feels 'holy tenderness' and 'The joy of that pure principle of love', is 'compassionate' and 'seeks for good', has conferred upon him 'The ability to spread the blessings wide / Of true philanthropy', discerns 'The spiritual Presences of absent Things', is able to bear 'The burthen of existence', and moves 'along the path / Of order and of good' (iv. 1207-75). But nowhere in his peroration does he mention the name of God.

The Wanderer's discourse on how despondency may be corrected by communion with nature could have been entitled 'The Moral of Landscape'. That is the title of the crowning chapter of *Modern Painters III*. In this extraordinary analysis Ruskin puts God back into nature, in defiance of the tendency of his age, which, as we have seen, he took to be the substitution of the material for the spiritual – of watercresses for divinities – and the relegation of God to a 'dim, slightly credited animation in the natural object' that has more to do with the perceiving mind than any intrinsic truth.

The chapter begins with the possibility that the modern taste for landscape is unhealthy, that it is 'incompatible with the duties of life, and the accuracies of reflection' (17. 1). Accurate vision may require the geologist's hammer rather than the poet's eye: 'This was the chief narrowness of Wordsworth's mind; he could not understand that to break a rock with a hammer in search of crystal may sometimes be an act not disgraceful to human nature, and that to dissect a flower may sometimes be as proper as to dream over it' (17. 7). Furthermore – and in this we hear the voice of a Ruskin who is newly concerned with social issues – Wordsworth's greatness is said to reside in his attacks on 'pomp and pretence', his concern for 'simple feelings and humble hearts', together with his political analyses: without these, his love of nature would have been worthless (17. 9). Romantic contemplation of landscape thus begins to look at best peripheral, at worst morbid.

But then Ruskin stays the argument and suggests that landscape can afford a kind of vision not available elsewhere: he is thinking of the great ode in which Wordsworth 'refers to the intense delight which he himself felt, and which he supposes other men feel, in nature, during their thoughtless youth, as an intimation of their immortality, and a joy which indicates their having come fresh from the hand of God' (17. 11). As he will do again in his autobiography, *Praeterita*, written late in life when he had ostensibly rejected Wordsworth's influence, Ruskin constructs his own childhood in Wordsworthian terms:

The first thing which I remember, as an event in life, was being taken by my nurse to the brow of Friar's Crag on Derwent Water; the intense joy, mingled with awe, that I had in looking through the hollows in the mossy roots, over the crag, into the dark lake, has associated itself more or less with all twining roots of trees ever since.

(17. 13)

The analysis of recollection and association in passages such as this is a

reminder that Ruskin is the key intermediary between Wordsworth and Proust.

Ruskin describes how throughout his youth he had such responses of joy and awe, how, like the Wanderer, in the mountains he did *feel* his faith. His account has Wordsworthian awe, Wordsworthian detail of observation, Wordsworthian properties such as mossy stones and low broken walls, a Wordsworthian solitude, and a Wordsworthian sense of the unutterability of his feeling, of the difficulty of articulation (Wordsworth is English poetry's great master of the prefix 'un-'):

although there was no definite religious sentiment mingled with it, there was a continual perception of Sanctity in the whole of nature, from the slightest thing to the vastest; – an instinctive awe, mixed with delight; an indefinable thrill, such as we sometimes imagine to indicate the presence of a disembodied spirit. I could only feel this perfectly when I was alone; and then it would often make me shiver from head to foot with the joy and fear of it, when after being some time away from the hills, I first got to the shore of a mountain river, where the brown water circled among the pebbles, or when I saw the first swell of distant land against the sunset, or the first low broken wall, covered with mountain moss. I cannot in the least *describe* the feeling; but I do not think this is my fault, nor that of the English language, for, I am afraid, no feeling is describable. If we had to explain even the sense of bodily hunger to a person who had never felt it, we should be hard put to it for words; and this joy in nature seemed to me to come of a sort of heart-hunger, satisfied with the presence of a Great and Holy Spirit. These feelings remained in their full intensity till I was eighteen or twenty, and then, as the reflective and practical power increased, and the 'cares of this world' gained upon me, faded gradually away, in the manner described by Wordsworth in his *Intimations of Immortality*.

(17. 19)

The perceiving subject here is still a modern – a sentimental as opposed to a naïve – with a heart-hunger and an alienation: lost nature is recovered at these momentary 'spots of time', but such moments become less frequent as one grows older. Every trace of 'fallacy' has, however, been removed from the vocabulary. The Wordsworthian moments recalled by Ruskin embody the principle expressed in chapter twelve that strength of feeling gives value to a way of seeing that in scientific terms is fallacious.

At this point Ruskin holds back from the pre-modern acknowledgment of God: 'the presence of a Great and Holy Spirit' is tentative in comparison with the Sea Power that Homer confidently called a God. Ruskin cannot believe – nor can he believe that Wordsworth can believe – that the child does actually have a knowledge of God which the ancients had and the modern adult lacks. Rather, 'what Wordsworth speaks of as a glory in the child, because it has come fresh from God's hands, is in reality nothing more than the freshness of all things to its newly opened sight' (17. 22). As so often, Ruskin's language is close to that of Wordsworth's *Wanderer*:

Ah! why in age
Do we revert so fondly to the walks
Of Childhood – but that there the Soul discerns
The dear memorial footsteps unimpaired
Of her own native vigour.

(Exc. ix. 36–40)

Freshness of vision is life. We lose that freshness as we grow older; it is the writer's task to recover and rekindle it, to make the eye see with a new vigour.

What Ruskin seeks to teach in his writing is that the love of nature has been neglected, has been viewed by modern educationalists as 'inherently the characteristic of truants and idlers' (17. 31). In contradicting this modern view he asserts, and again he is clearly thinking of the *Wanderer*, that 'supposing all circumstances otherwise the same with respect to two individuals, the one who loves nature most will be *always* found to have more *faith in God* than the other', that 'nature-worship will be found to bring with it such a sense of the presence and power of a Great Spirit as no mere reasoning can either induce or controvert', that it 'becomes the channel of certain sacred truths, which by no other means can be conveyed' (17. 32). He supports his case by saying that chapters thirty-eight to forty-one of the book of Job and the Sermon on the Mount, texts which he takes to be the two most decisive parts of the Bible, those in which he hears God speaking most directly, are associated with the love of nature. (Here Ruskin is an heir to eighteenth-century natural religion: the association between the love of nature and the four chapters of Job goes back to Edward Young's verse *Paraphrase on Part of the Book of Job* of 1719, which consisted of precisely these chapters rendered in isolation from the rest of the book, and to the defence of the poetry of nature in James Thomson's 1726 preface to the second edition of his *Winter*.) The

chapters in Job constitute a direction of the mind to 'humble observance of the works of God in nature', and the Sermon on the Mount, the centre of Christ's teaching, has three directives: to act rightly, to hope for heaven, and to 'watch God's wonders and work in the earth'. There is 'no mention of any doctrinal point whatsoever occurring in either piece of divine teaching' (17. 33). Belief, then, for Ruskin – as for Wordsworth's *Wanderer* – is a matter not of doctrinal nicety but of contemplating the lilies of the field. By now, the language has been transformed into that of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and the love of nature has become connected not with the faithlessness of the age but with 'the benevolence and liberty of the age'; it is not morbid but 'precisely the most healthy element which distinctively belongs to us' (17. 34).

In his recuperation of religion, Ruskin in some respects follows *The Excursion* itself, which develops from pantheistic to traditionally Christian language, a development signalled by the introduction of the Pastor in book five and the symbolic juxtaposition of nature and orthodox faith suggested by the title of book six, 'The Churchyard among the Mountains'. But Ruskin eschews ecclesiastical orthodoxy; he goes beyond *The Excursion* in opening up a social vision, a programme for living as opposed to a pious but withdrawn and potentially egotistic philosophy of contemplation. He denies that progress – the advent of the railroad and the telegraph – is necessarily a good thing. Victorian imperialism and capitalism proposed that through the railroad and the telegraph one could give knowledge to savage nations. This is not much use, Ruskin argues, 'if you know nothing *but* railroads, and can communicate nothing but aqueous vapour and gunpowder':

To watch the corn grow, and the blossoms set; to draw hard
breath over ploughshare or spade; to read, to think, to love, to
hope, to pray, – these are the things that make men happy; they
have always had the power of doing these, they never *will* have
power to do more. The world's prosperity or adversity depends
upon our knowing and teaching these few things: but upon iron,
or glass, or electricity, or steam, in no wise.

(17. 36)

Here Ruskin's anti-Benthamite political economy is in accordance with the Romantic ecology of John Clare. For Clare, as for Ruskin, the eye is dead which sees no praise; 'there is happiness in examining minutely into the wild flowers',

to lean on the rail of wooden brigs and mark the crinkles of the stream below and the little dancing beetles twharling and glancing their glossy coats to the summer sun . . . this is real happiness – to stand and muse upon the bank of a meadow pool fringed with reed and bulrushes and silver clear in the middle on which the sun is reflected in spangles . . . this is a luxury of happiness and felt even by the poor shepherd boy.³³

Real happiness, argues Ruskin, 'is in the keeping of the little mosses of the wayside, and of the clouds of the firmament' (17. 37). But the world tramples the mosses and forgets the clouds; the march of progress will destroy the natural world. Science has packed the clouds into iron cylinders and made the steam engine that enables man to travel at a cloud pace; it has got weavable fibres out of the mosses. The modern age imagines that such advances will bring mankind closer to paradise; soon, however, says Ruskin, it will become apparent that going fast is no more paradisaical than going slow and that all the prints and cotton in Manchester cannot make us comfortable in the mind. When we see this, we may see too 'that God paints the clouds and shapes the moss-fibres' (17. 38), that these things are therefore sacred, and that only by living in harmony with them rather than exploiting and destroying them may we be reparaed, may we put into practice the vision of the 'Prospectus' to *The Recluse* which Wordsworth published at the beginning of *The Excursion*:

Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields – like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main – why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.

('Prospectus', 47–55)

Wordsworth and Ruskin share a rhetorical excess: of course we cannot really be reparaed and of course it is untrue to say that the world's prosperity or adversity depends 'in no wise' on iron and electricity. But, in the words of Peter Fuller, 'To ask whether Ruskin's view of society, in his later years, was realistic or not is to miss the point.' The point of Wordsworth's project was to teach the intellect of

man to wed itself to 'the green earth' which is its 'living home',³⁴ and the point of Ruskin's was to expose the limitations of nineteenth-century political economy by moving from the material to the spiritual. Peter Fuller discerned the contemporary relevance:

Gregory Bateson, the anthropologist, who was no believer, once pointed out how the erosion of the concept of divine immanence in nature led men to see the world around them as mindless, and therefore not entitled to moral, aesthetic, or ethical consideration. This led them to see themselves as wholly set apart from nature; when this loss of a sense of organic unity was combined with an advanced technology, Bateson argued, 'your likelihood of survival will be that of a snowball in hell'.³⁵

In Bateson's original essay, this metaphor is followed by some sentences which in both theme and tone are remarkably similar to such passages of *Unto This Last* as the one that is the first of my two epigraphs: 'You will die either of the toxic by-products of your own hate, or, simply, of over-population and overgrazing. The raw materials of the world are finite.'³⁶ Ruskin preceded Bateson by a century in his recognition of the potentially catastrophic consequences of the exploitation of nature and his belief that the future survival of humankind may well be dependent on the rekindling of a sense of divine immanence in nature. It was because he perceived man's disregard for nature as monstrous *hubris* that Ruskin refused to separate economics and scientific fact from ethics. Historically, it is the case that storm-clouds thickened as the consumption of coal increased in the late nineteenth century; the blast furnaces at Barrow had a particular effect on the air of the Lake District.³⁷ But, as far as Ruskin was concerned, 'The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century' was a moral as well as a meteorological phenomenon: it was a blasphemy against nature, a symptom of mankind's degeneracy. Ruskin said that he did not know whether the plague-cloud could be dispersed and the clear sky brought back, but that what his audience assuredly could do was purify themselves. To translate his point into the language of our own time: ecology has to be an attitude of mind before it can be an effective set of environmental policies.

It was Wordsworth who taught Ruskin to value the mosses, Wordsworth – together with Turner – who taught him to see the clouds, the Immortality Ode that taught him of the gleam of glory in the objects of nature, and the Wanderer who taught him of 'the Mind's *excursive* Power' through which 'deeply drinking-in the Soul of Things

/ We shall be wise perforce' (*Exc.* iv. 1263-6). Wordsworthian faith in the moral of landscape remained the foundation. But Ruskin built on this foundation in a way that speaks vitally to us today, for by the end of his analysis he had come to something new: a programme for education into ecological consciousness.

4

THE NAMING OF PLACES

History has dominated much recent discussion of literature, but geography also has its claims; we live and die as part of the body politic, but we also live and die in place. The poet is as much geographer as historian. In 1813 Wordsworth wrote two poems about the top of the mountain at the southwestern extremity of Cumberland. 'View from the Top of Black Comb' is one of his embarrassing effusions about the prospect that 'British ground commands' and the inheritance of 'Britain's calm felicity and power'.¹ But the other poem, 'Written with a Slate Pencil on a Stone, on the Side of the Mountain of Black Comb', is trigonometrical rather than imperial. It concerns a 'geographic Labourer' who spends several weeks on the top of the mountain in the 'studious work' of map-making. There is a strong analogy between poet and geographer, poem and map; the poet writes his text on a stone on the side of the mountain, while the map-maker turns the mountain into a text. The poem ends with sudden darkness as the mist comes down; geographer and poet are reminded that nature cannot always be seen, controlled, and mapped – it must be respected. In sharp contrast to the crude mastery and patriotism of the 'View' poem, here insight comes with blindness ('he sate alone, with unclosed eyes, / Upon the blinded mountain's silent top'²).

If nationality may be said to play an important role in the formation of our identities, then so may locality. Although he became Laureate, Wordsworth was a poet of Lakeland more than a poet of England. He wrote some execrable public poetry, but his best work was public in an epitaphic more than a patriotic sense.

It need scarcely be said, that an Epitaph presupposes a Monument, upon which it is to be engraven. Almost all Nations have wished that certain external signs should point out the places where their dead are interred. Among savage tribes

unacquainted with letters this has mostly been done either by rude stones placed near the graves, or by mounds of earth raised over them. This custom proceeded obviously from a twofold desire; first, to guard the remains of the deceased from irreverent approach or from savage violation: and, secondly, to preserve their memory. . . . As soon as nations had learned the use of letters, epitaphs were inscribed upon these monuments; in order that their intention might be more surely and adequately fulfilled.³

Thus begins the first 'Essay upon Epitaphs', published, following an introductory paragraph by Coleridge, in *The Friend* of 22 February 1810, and later reprinted as a note in *The Excursion*. The essay is Wordsworth's most eloquent piece of prose; it is also his most sustained meditation upon the intimation of immortality. Where the great 'Intimations' ode turns on a metaphor of the child's before-life, the epitaph essay explores the nature of the human's after-life. Children, Wordsworth remarks, are obstinately and unappeasably inquisitive on the subject of origination, and, since 'Origin and tendency are notions inseparably co-relative', the question 'whence?' inevitably leads to the question 'whither?':

Never did a child stand by the side of a running stream,
pondering within himself what power was the feeder of the
perpetual current, from what never-wearied sources the body of
water was supplied, but he must have been inevitably propelled
to follow this question by another: 'Towards what abyss is it in
progress? what receptacle can contain the mighty influx?'

(ii. 51)

And in this way, Wordsworth argues, 'the sense of immortality' is born.

Wordsworth's implication is that poetry has its origins in memorial inscription and that such poetry of mortality is a guarantor of immortality – the 'Essay' cites with approval a Renaissance 'Discourse of Funeral Monuments' in which it is claimed that the invention of epitaphs 'proceeded from the presage or fore-feeling of immortality' (ii. 50). Traditionally, of course, the origins of poetry are traced back to the stories of bards (the root of epic, heroic, and narrative poetry) and the declamations, songs, and rituals of prophets and priests (the root of drama and those forms of poetry which derive their essence from public performance). But these two traditions are *oral* – it is only

relatively late in the life of a culture that its stories and its rituals, its epics and its performances, are transcribed, are written down. Wordsworth suggests that the epitaphic tradition is different. That kind of poetry which serves to sanctify a place and to preserve the memory of a person has its origins in burial practice. Every culture has monuments to its dead; and, as Wordsworth says, 'As soon as nations had learned the use of letters, epitaphs were inscribed upon these monuments.' The epitaph, the monumental inscription, is the earliest form of written poetry, perhaps one of the earliest forms of any kind of writing. It is the root of that kind of poetry which we call 'lyric', which is written, which comes from strong feeling, which serves to memorialize and monumentalize people and places, and which we associate especially with the 'Romantic' tradition in which Wordsworth is pre-eminent.

Such poetry derives from place; it 'repays its debt to geography by spiritualising the sites which are its source'.⁴ A focus on Wordsworth's recognition of the close relationship between poetry and place, his way of spiritualizing his places, is provided by a remark of one of the most place-conscious of twentieth-century English poets, Edward Thomas:

It is more natural and legitimate to associate Wordsworth with certain parts of England than any other great writer. And for three reasons: he spent the greater portion of his life in one district; he drew much of his scenery and human character from that district and used its place-names very freely in his poems; and both he and his sister left considerable records of his times and places of composition. Moreover, he wrote a guide to the Lakes and a poem that is not quite so useful as a guide-book, but much better.⁵

Thomas's three reasons for associating Wordsworth with a specific place are inter-connected: there is the poet's rootedness, his *knowing* of place; his localness, his *naming* of places, by which I mean not only the registering of received names but also a broader sense of naming that involves defining a place through its character; and his specificity, his *recording* of 'times and places of composition'.

Knowing, naming, and recording are closely related, but there is a progression through these categories towards the personal and towards consciousness, even self-consciousness. The people who know places best, who are most rooted in them, tend not to be those who give them names. They do not need to bother with maps. They are not likely to articulate, to make a meal of, their bond with the place. They do not

chant the names – Grasmere, Helvellyn, Glaramara – as if they have a kind of magic. Still less do they record specificities of time and place, of their personal encounters with nature. No shepherd keeps a journal like Dorothy Wordsworth's. Lakeland shepherds have personal names for Lakeland places, but they do not write them down: no one who is truly rooted in the land indulges in the kind of appropriation which grandly ascribes a possessive to a wood or a rock (Emma's Dell, Joanna's Rock), then fixes that ascription through an act of inscription. The Lakeland shepherd knows the place so well that he does not consciously perceive himself in relation to it; but the poet is always aware of himself in relation to the landscape, is conscious of his own acts of naming.

Seamus Heaney, the most truly Wordsworthian of living poets, writes in an essay called 'The Sense of Place':

I think there are two ways in which place is known and cherished, two ways which may be complementary but which are just as likely to be antipathetic. One is lived, illiterate and unconscious, the other learned, literate and conscious. In the literary sensibility, both are likely to co-exist in a conscious and unconscious tension.⁶

The 'lived, illiterate and unconscious' relationship to place corresponds to the first of my three categories, knowing. The 'learned, literate and conscious' corresponds to the third, recording. The second category, naming, acts for Wordsworth as a mediation between the first and third, resolving the tension that exists between the 'lived, illiterate and unconscious' and the 'learned, literate and conscious'. Before coming to the poems in which Wordsworth enacts this process of naming, I should give examples of the two extremes between which naming mediates.

Shepherds do not write poems about their native hills, do not exist in a self-conscious relationship to them, but that does not mean they do not have strong feelings about them, do not cherish them:

And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green Valleys, and the Streams and Rocks
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with chearful spirits he had breath'd
The common air; 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

Of the dumb animals, whom he had sav'd,
Had fed or shelter'd . . .
these fields, these hills
Which were his living Being, even more
Than his own Blood – what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.⁷

The bond between the shepherd Michael and the land is felt, not articulated. Nature is 'like a book', but its language is not one that Michael has had consciously to learn. He does not name or write about the fields and hills because they are his 'living Being'. They are in direct touch with his affections, his feelings; his love for them is blind, his pleasure in them is coterminous with his very life. When he loses his son, he loses his love for the place, and with that he loses the purpose of his life. He stops building his sheepfold. But, and this is the point where the poet with his self-consciousness enters, the sheepfold itself remains as Michael's monument – it is with this that the poem begins. Michael's sheepfold becomes like the 'rude stones' that mark the graves of the unlettered dead, referred to at the beginning of the 'Essay upon Epitaphs'.

While 'Michael', the poem that concludes the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*, is exemplary for that relationship with place which is 'lived, illiterate and unconscious', the poem that is exemplary for the 'learned, literate and conscious' engagement is the first of the poems in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads* to be explicit about its inspiration in a specific place: 'Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree which stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the shore, yet commanding a beautiful prospect'. The length of the title itself derives from the extreme specificity of place (the obvious comparison is with the full title of 'Tintern Abbey', which goes even further in that it is specific as to time as well as place); the final phrase, 'commanding a beautiful prospect', tells us that this is a poem about looking at a landscape, not living in one. Where 'Michael' is about 'Being', this is about seeing, and seeing implies a see-er who is separate from what he sees. And, sure enough, the poem turns out to be about another man who piles up stones which become his monument, but this time he is a recluse rather than a shepherd. He acts as an image of the poet, alienated from the place because he is conscious of the self.

Charles Lamb greatly admired this poem, and referred to it, when writing to Coleridge asking for a copy of it, as an 'inscription'.⁸ Geoffrey Hartman has traced the history of the poetic genre of

'inscription', a tradition which Wordsworth here reshapes, and which exemplifies the self-consciously learned and literary relationship with place. As Hartman notes, self-consciousness is the key to the inscription: it is always a kind of self-performing text. 'The inscription was anything conscious of the place on which it was written, and this could be tree, rock, statue, gravestone, sand, window, album, sundial, dog's collar, back of fan, back of painting.'⁹ Hartman cites as a light-hearted example Pope's inscription on the collar of the Prince of Wales's dog: 'I am his Highness' dog at Kew / Pray tell me sir, whose dog are you?' Wordsworth included 'Written with a Slate Pencil on a Stone, on the Side of the Mountain of Black Comb' in his own group of 'Inscriptions'; it is a poem that begins with an imperative that is characteristic of the genre, as of epitaph – 'Stay, bold Adventurer'. Like an epitaph, an inscription derives its meaning from the particular place where it is inscribed or imagined to be inscribed.

Hartman demonstrates in his essay that Wordsworth liberated the inscription from this comparatively circumscribed position and made it into an independent nature poem. In so doing he transformed a kind of poetry that had a tradition going back to classical times, and created out of it a – perhaps *the* – principal form of Romantic and modern lyric poetry. 'The inscription, before Wordsworth,' writes Hartman, 'is strangely void of natural detail though full of nature feeling, for the reason that the genre still depends on the site it supposedly inscribes. Rather than evoking, it points to the landscape. If it has an expressive function vis-à-vis the feeling of the poet, it has a merely indicative function vis-à-vis its setting.' Wordsworth's innovation was to incorporate into the scene described 'the very process of inscribing or interpreting it'. Thus 'the setting is understood to contain the writer in the act of writing: the poet in the grip of what he feels and sees, primitively inspired to carve it in the living rock' (pp. 221–2).

That last sentence is most pertinent to the 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. Indeed, with its sense of the presence within the poem of the poet and his act of writing, it takes us to what is essentially new and essentially Wordsworthian about those poems. Surprisingly few of the *Lyrical Ballads* have this self-reflexive quality which, once we reach *The Prelude*, the cardinal poem about what it is to be a poet, becomes so fundamental to Wordsworth's achievement. The poet contained within the poem; the writer wedded to a specific place: these are the two characteristics which give the 'Poems on the Naming of Places' their centrality. In this final chapter I want to reinstate these poems to their position of importance in Wordsworth's *oeuvre* and to reclaim them for

what I would like to describe as an ecological tradition of English place-poetry. Hugh Sykes Davies writes of Wordsworth's immensely strong 'sense of the "household", of a small group of kith and kin, with a very few other intimates', and suggests that 'this "household" in all probability had its own *eclect*, which was embodied, partly at least, in his writing'.¹⁰ By *eclect*, Sykes Davies means something between dialect and idiolect: the distinctive language of a small, unified group. Nowhere is the Grasmere *eclect* more apparent than in the place-naming poems.

The original five poems appeared as a discrete group within *Lyrical Ballads* 1800; an important sixth poem was added to the group in the edition of 1815. Both in *Lyrical Ballads* and subsequently, the poems were preceded by an explanatory Advertisement:

By Persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little Incidents will have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such Incidents or renew the gratification of such Feelings, Names have been given to Places by the Author and some of his Friends, and the following Poems written in consequence.

(LB p. 217)

They record, then, a movement from incident to feeling. The purpose of the poem is to register, to inscribe in a book, a private but much-valued experience. Co-ordinate with this literal inscription is an imagined inscription upon the place of a name that acts as a mnemonic for the incident. The poet has taken upon himself a God-like function: it is usually God who inscribes symbolic language in the book of nature and momentous events in the book of life. But it is also a God-given function, for the ultimate precedent for the poet's act of naming is Adam's:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field.

(Genesis 2: 19–20)

As Keats compared the imagination to Adam's dream of Eve ('he awoke

and found it truth'¹¹), so for Wordsworth to undertake an imaginative act of naming was to exercise the privilege of Adam. Hartman's emphasis on the classical tradition of inscription is such that he fails to remark how biblical an activity naming also is; in Wordsworth, as at various powerful moments in the Old Testament, to name is to express power, to take control. But, as will be shown, the Wordsworthian power and control are not dependent on landownership, the premise that underlies country-house poetry, the Renaissance form which in important respects foreshadows the place-naming poem.

It is highly significant that Coleridge differed from Wordsworth over what might be termed the theology of place. Whether they are seen as divine or Adamic, Wordsworth's acts of naming create a sacramental attitude to place that in Coleridge's view smacked dangerously of pantheism. Coleridge, who spent much of his intellectual life struggling against pantheism and striving for one form or another of transcendence, felt that Wordsworth's God was too narrowly immanent:

I will not conceal from *you* that this inferred dependency of the human soul on accidents of birth-place and abode, together with the vague, misty, rather than mystic, confusion of God with the world, and the accompanying nature-worship, of which the asserted dependence forms a part, is the trait in Wordsworth's poetic works that I most dislike as unhealthful, and denounce as contagious.¹²

For Wordsworth, the soul draws nourishment from the way in which it abides in place, and to Coleridge that is anathema. To put it another way, the act of naming makes the Vale of Grasmere into an earthly paradise, whereas for Coleridge the only paradise available to man before his death is what Milton termed the 'Paradise within'.¹³ There may, then, have been deeper reasons than Coleridge's habitual inability to keep his literary promises for his failure to write the poems on the naming of places that he said *he* would contribute to *Lyrical Ballads* 1800.

In the Advertisement to the 'Poems on the Naming of Places', Wordsworth also speaks of renewing the gratification of the feelings associated with particular moments in particular places. There is a central paradox here: recording is associated with history, with the past, with that which is lost. But the act of recording is an act of renewal. The 'Poems on the Naming of Places' have a profound doubleness: they register loss – the moment recorded in the poem, such as the glimpse of the uncanny figure fishing at 'Point Rash-judgment',

is irredeemably past – but they simultaneously serve as acts of recovery, in that the moment recurs as it is written about and imagined by the reader.

Hartman notes that 'Inscribing, naming, and writing are types of a commemorative and inherently elegiac act' (p. 223). The point about elegy and indeed about all commemorative verse – and this takes us back to the 'Essay upon Epitaphs' – is that its gains and losses are inseparable. A poem is gained out of the loss of a person, a moment, a feeling. This is fundamental to Romanticism: the typical Wordsworthian poem has the present poet making a gain out of the loss of his past self. The 'boy of Winander' is an archetypal text because in it Wordsworth literally kills off the boy that is his childhood self. As is well known, in the original manuscript it was the poet himself who 'blew mimic hootings to the silent owls':

And they would shout
Across the wat'ry vale, and shout again,
Responsive to my call. . . .

And when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mocked my skill,
Then often in that silence, while I hung
Listening, a sudden shock of mild surprise
Would carry far into my heart the voice
Of mountain torrents.¹⁴

When he published the fragment in *Lyrical Ballads* 1800, Wordsworth put the pronouns in the third person and added a coda that buried the boy. The childhood moment is thus distanced and becomes the kind of primal poetic experience that Shelley describes so beautifully:

We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression . . . but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it.¹⁵

This idea of a poem as a 'trace' is especially suggestive. The 'Poems on the Naming of Places' trace walks around Grasmere: they track the past and are the only traces of that past left in the present. Preservation is a key notion, as Wordsworth intimates in the passage in the 'Essay upon Epitaphs' about guarding from irreverent approach and savage

violation. In these poems Wordsworth establishes and then seeks to protect and preserve a sacred, secluded place of the sort that in classical pastoral would have been called a *locus amoenus*. In the essay 'My First Acquaintance with Poets', Hazlitt suggested that the idea for the place-naming poems was borrowed by Wordsworth from the analogous use of local inscription in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's popular novel of 1786, *Paul et Virginie*. Wordsworth disowned the debt, but it is undoubtedly the case that his poems share with *Paul et Virginie* a primitivistic sense of 'pleasant place'. Although set among the mountains, these poems are characterized by shady spots, soft green turf, grove, brook and pool, birdsong, and gentle breeze; the voice is quieter and more intimate, less rugged and sublime, than that of *The Prelude*'s book eight or *The Excursion*'s book two.

The first of the poems, 'It was an April Morning' (LB pp. 218-19), begins with a sense of uncertainty, a doubleness as to its mood. An April morning is a time associated with spring and youth – a rivulet runs 'with a young man's speed'. But that same stream has been 'supplied' by winter. The moment, then, is a transitional, a liminal one: it pauses between winter and summer. I use the term liminal to suggest the idea of a threshold, a margin between two worlds, for 'margin' is an important word in two of the other place-name poems. Three times the poet uses the word 'yet': such qualifications are emblematic of his uncertainty and confusion. He is 'alive' to nature and its impressions, but 'forgetting all' – forgetting all what? his cares or the impressions he has just received? But then there is a 'sudden turning' in the glen, which serves as a sign of the 'turn' in the feeling, the passage out of confusion. The poet has been roaming aimlessly by the brook that runs through Easedale, but now he suddenly finds himself in a secret, green dell, where the sounds denote naturalness and wholeness. Accordingly, he too grows into wholeness. He sees a single cottage which, while it suggests seclusion, also carries a sense of rootedness. He becomes like the cottage as he takes possession of the place:

I gaz'd and gaz'd, and to myself I said,
'Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook,
My EMMA, I will dedicate to thee.'

Emma, as in several poems, is a figuration of Dorothy Wordsworth. The poet cannot possess the land, but at least he possesses the thought; he has achieved a kind of dwelling and a kind of endurance. The 'spot' is dedicated, and thus becomes 'home' – the next two lines include three key Wordsworthian words, 'home', 'dwelling', and 'abode'.¹⁶

Dedication here has the double sense of giving and making sacred or devotional. Certain etymologically connected Latin words are relevant: *dedi*, I gave; *dedicare*, to dedicate, deriving from *de*, down, together with *dicare*, to declare. A dedication is a declaration, a writing down that is also a giving over.

Finally, Wordsworth introduces the idea of the name providing immortality as it lives on after the poet's and his sister's deaths:

And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
Years after we are gone and in our graves,
When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
May call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL.

But this is a fragile survival, for only two or three shepherds have been told, in idle talk. Wordsworth's 'perhaps', 'have cause to', and 'may call it' acknowledge the possibility that the name will not survive, in that 'perhaps' and 'may' suggest their opposites while 'when they have cause to' implies that this may be an infrequent occurrence. Yet in a sense it is irrelevant whether or not the shepherds call the place 'Emma's Dell', for the poem calls it this, with the effect that the act of naming and dedication is renewed every time the poem is read.

The fifth poem in the original group, 'To M.H.' (LB pp. 225-6; the initials stand for Mary Hutchinson, Wordsworth's future wife), inscribes an even more secluded place. The language of the poem makes Mary's nook almost like a monastery or other place of religious retreat, in that it is described as a 'calm recess' and associated with 'refreshment' and 'blessing'. Certain of the poem's images, such as 'And blend its waters with his daily meal', have a distinctly biblical feel. Such holiness is bound up with the Wordsworthian perception of Mary, but this is no straightforward religious poem. The 'spot' – a key word in this group of poems which offer 'spots of place' that correspond to the 'spots of time' in *The Prelude* – is 'made by nature for herself': made by nature, not by God. God, I think, has to be absent from the poem because to admit God is to admit an after-life, and the only after-life here is that of the image of the place as it survives to the 'death-hour' and endures even beyond then through the very texture of the poem.

Death is central to the poem which Wordsworth subsequently added to the group, in which the place dedicated is 'John's Grove'. Here there is a similar pattern to that of 'It was an April Morning' and 'To M.H.', in that the poem begins as the record of a walk to a secluded place. But

then there is a difference, for this poem is about a return, not a single moment in the past. The act of naming takes place in retrospect. Brother John comes to stay, and he finds his way to a fir-grove; Wordsworth goes there later and finds his brother's tracks. They have not been to the grove together, but that they each have been there separately provides a bond between them when they are apart: John has gone away but is able to take the memory of the grove with him; Wordsworth remains behind but is able to remember his brother by naming the grove after him. The poem ends wonderfully, with a sense of the two brothers tracing a path together even as they are far apart, Wordsworth home at Grasmere, John away at sea:

Alone I tread this path; – for aught I know,
Timing my steps to thine; and, with a store
Of undistinguishable sympathies,
Mingling most earnest wishes for the day
When we, and others whom we love, shall meet
A second time, in Grasmere's happy Vale.¹⁷

When this was published in 1815, Wordsworth was compelled to append an extraordinarily poignant note: 'This wish was not granted; the lamented Person not long after perished by shipwreck, in discharge of his duty as Commander of the Honourable East India Company's Vessel, the Earl of Abergavenny.' This provides the most graphic instance of the way in which the moments recorded in these poems are lost and irrecoverable. There can be no 'second' chance, no return. But it is also the most graphic example of gain as well as loss, for the poem itself acts as the second meeting, the reincorporation of John into 'Grasmere's happy Vale'. Through the recitation of the poem in the Wordsworth household, John attains the privileged status of the dead dalesmen in 'The Brothers' who are talked of by the fire-sides of other members of the community and who thus 'in each other's thoughts / Possess a kind of second life' (LB p. 141).

As Hartman suggests, what makes Wordsworth's place-poetry different from that of eighteenth-century loco-descriptive writers is its consciousness of the poet in the act of writing. This consciousness is given ultimate form in poem two of the naming sequence, 'To Joanna' (LB pp. 219–22). In the other poems, the place-name is spoken, whereas here it is written. The poem actually concerns the movement from speech to text; it offers an archetypal scene of writing.

'Joanna' is addressed as someone who is not associated with natural places; the poem begins by telling the reader that she has been brought

up 'Amid the smoke of cities'. This was not literally true of Joanna Hutchinson, the 'real' person addressed, but in the text she serves an emblematic function: she stands for all who are visitors to Grasmere's happy vale. In the poem's first act of recollection, Wordsworth imagines himself ten days earlier talking to the local Vicar about Joanna, who has visited but by then departed. Then, after an exchange of village news, the Vicar asks sternly why Wordsworth has defaced a rock, has 'like a Runic Priest, in characters / Of formidable size'

chisel'd out
Some uncouth name upon the native rock,
Above the Rotha, by the forest side.

This graffito embodies a primary act of writing, its archetypal quality being suggested by the image of the Runic Priest. A footnote explains the origin of the image: 'In Cumberland and Westmoreland are several Inscriptions upon the native rock which from the wasting of Time and the rudeness of the Workmanship had been mistaken for Runic. They are without doubt Roman' (LB p. 222).

The poem then proceeds with a layering of time. In a recollection within the recollection, Wordsworth narrates to the Vicar a walk he had taken with Joanna. He describes his own delight in nature and her laughter at his 'ravishment'. But the laugh is picked up by the rocks and taken into nature through an echo effect:

The rock, like something starting from a sleep,
Took up the Lady's voice, and laugh'd again:
That ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag
Was ready with her cavern; Hammar-Scar,
And the tall Steep of Silver-How sent forth
A noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard,
And Fairfield answer'd with a mountain tone:
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
Carried the Lady's voice, – old Skiddaw blew
His speaking trumpet; – back out of the clouds
Of Glaramara southward came the voice;
And Kirkstone toss'd it from his misty head.

Wordsworth is unsure whether these echoes from hill to hill are in his mind or in nature, in actuality or in reflection: as he puts it in a notebook jotting, 'The poem supposes that at the Rock something had taken place in my mind either then, or afterwards in thinking upon what then took place.'¹⁸ But he is sure that there was an uproar and that

Joanna expressed fear in response to it. She is being initiated into the sublime by having to learn to be 'fostered alike by beauty and by fear' (*The Prelude*, i. 306). Yet another layer of time is then recovered, as the poet tells the Vicar – and Joanna and the reader – that in another walk, eighteen months later, he found himself in the place again and chiselled out Joanna's name upon the rock. With the echo, her laugh was taken into nature, but a sound is evanescent. With the writing, her name is taken into nature – and writing that is carved into rock endures for generations.

Wordsworth's own account of the poem's unfolding emphasizes that it is with the recitation of names that his imagination takes flight. He says that his initial purpose was 'to divert or partly play upon the Vicar', but that

my mind partly forgets its purpose, being softened by the images of beauty in the description of the rock, and the delicious morning, and when I come to the 2 lines 'The Rock like something' etc., I am caught in the trap of my own imagination. I entirely lose sight of my first purpose. I take fire in the lines 'that ancient woman'. I go on in that strain of fancy 'Old Skiddaw' and terminate the description in tumult 'And Kirkstone' etc., describing what for a moment I believed either actually took place at the time, or when I have been reflecting on what did take place I have had a temporary belief, in some fit of imagination, did really or might have taken place.¹⁹

What is striking about this is the persistent reiteration of the phrase 'taken place'. In worrying away at the temporal problem – did the incident really 'take place'? – Wordsworth unconsciously reveals the spatial solution. Whether or not the incident did take place, the poem takes the place. That is to say, in the act of incantation the poet takes possession of the place-names.

Wordsworth's note suggests uncertainty about the 'literal' status of the incident; it is in the imagination that Joanna is written into nature. There is a difference from the other 'Poems on the Naming of Places', which are more specific in their setting. This poem offers not so much a particular as a symbolic act of naming and possessing, of unification with nature. When asked, while on Butterlip How, where Joanna's rock was, Wordsworth said, 'Any place that will suit; that as well as any other.'²⁰ Yet, although the rock is symbolic and not particular, it could not be any rock – it could only be any rock in the Lake District. For there are other names besides Joanna's in the poem: the received

names of the mountains around the Vale of Grasmere and beyond. The poem takes fire with these names for they incorporate Wordsworth into the actual place: the recitation shows that he *knows* his locality.

This section of the poem also incorporates Wordsworth into the literary tradition. In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge called the passage a 'noble imitation of Drayton'.²¹ Michael Drayton was the author of the first great English poem of place, *Poly-Olbion*. Charles Lamb gave an idea of what Drayton meant to the Romantic poets when he wrote of him as

that Panegyrist of my native Earth; who has gone over her soil (in his *Polyolbion*) with the fidelity of a herald, and the painful love of a son; who has not left a rivulet (so narrow that it may be stept over) without honorable mention; and has animated Hills and Streams with life and passion above the dreams of old mythology.²²

In the course of his vast panegyric, Drayton names all of England; at the climax of the poem he finds a paradisaical river Eden in Westmorland. The moment when Wordsworth seems to hear an echo in his native hills also constitutes a literary echo, an answering back to some lines in *Poly-Olbion*:

Which COPLAND scarce had spoke, but quickly every hill
Upon her verge that stands, the neighbouring vallies fill
HELVILLON from his height, it through the mountains threw.
From whom as soon again, the sound DUNBALERASE drew,
From whose stone-trophied head, it on the WENDROSS went,
Which tow'rds the sea again, resounded it to DENT.
That BROADWATER, therewith within her banks astound,
In sailing to the sea told it to EGREMOUND,
Whose buildings, walks and streets, with echoes loud and long
Did mightily commend old COPLAND for her song!²³

By echoing the place-naming technique of these lines, Wordsworth affirms that he too is going over his native soil with the fidelity of a herald and the painful love of a son.

Drayton is Wordsworth's authentic precursor in this respect, but the later poet is distinctive in that his voice is much more personal. Wordsworth's achievement in his naming poems was to develop a highly original sense of specific place and of the relationship between self and place. He embodied this sense not only through the Draytonesque evocation of the magic of place-names when they are listed and

chanted, but also through a new intensity of association between particular places and particular moods or moments, and an unprecedented boldness in actually taking possession of a place. In the act of naming, he ceases to be an observer and becomes a dweller; he becomes, in a lovely phrase of Edward Thomas's, 'lord of that he does not possess'.²⁴ Anne Barton compares Wordsworth's namings to those of Ben Jonson in the primary country-house poem, 'To Penshurst' (for instance, 'Thy copse too, nam'd of Gamage'),²⁵ but there is an important difference: the copses of the Penshurst estate are actually owned by the Sidneys after whom they are named, whereas the rocks and groves taken possession of by Wordsworth are his metaphorically rather than legally.

Nevertheless, even metaphorical possession raises the question of the relationship of these poems to landownership and to the social conditions that result from the unjust distribution of land. One has to confront the possibility that the poet is so busy identifying with the place that he ignores the inhabitants. In the third poem of the sequence ('There is an Eminence' - *LB* p. 222), Dorothy makes William into an Eminence by pointing out a 'lonesome Peak' and declaring that it will bear her brother's name. This is perhaps taking the egotistical sublime a little far. The poet has become a lofty mountain top, 'high above' the public way; in such a position it is all too easy to neglect the public weal. Again, the fourth poem ('A narrow girdle of rough stones' - *LB* pp. 223-5) is open to a social and political critique. It begins with the observation of a figure who appears to be an idle peasant who is fishing instead of gathering in the harvest, and then progresses to the poet's self-admonition for rashly judging the man before looking closely at him (the closer look reveals that owing to his weakness and poverty he is in no condition to be participating in the harvest). What we have here is self-reproach, not social anger. Wordsworth expresses the sentiment that we should 'temper all our thoughts with charity', but says nothing about actually giving charity, let alone questioning a social and economic order which makes people dependent on charity.

David Simpson reads this poem in terms of an 'exchange between two different "uses" of nature, one for fantasy and one for subsistence'; he argues that even the Emma's Dell poem is aware of this potential conflict - 'Emma's Dell must remain unmarked, and most particularly so because it already functions within someone else's subsistence economy. The shepherd's hut intimates that the land is needed for life itself, and not just for pleasant diversion'.²⁶ For Simpson, Wordsworth is aware in these poems of 'the miscreative functions of the figuring

imagination; miscreative, because they divide man from man in seeking, however covertly, to establish an exclusive possession based on personal experience or private language' (*Figurings*, p. 31). Quite apart from the fact that Wordsworth's imagined acts of possession are not exclusive but familial, the problem with this kind of reading is the loading of its terminology. By distinguishing between 'fantasy' and 'subsistence', Simpson implies that the imaginative appropriation of place is some kind of bourgeois flight of fancy. In traditional Benthamite/Marxian fashion, economic 'subsistence' is what matters most. One senses that we are being told to engage with the complexities of the Speenhamland system, not to accept an imaginative restructuring of place which enables poet and reader to find a home without actually owning the land. In response to such a reading one can only say, to borrow from Wordsworth's second letter on the Kendal and Windermere Railway, 'These are not matters to be brought before a Board of Trade, though I trust there will always be of that board members who know well that as we do "not live by bread alone," so neither do we live by political economy alone'.²⁷ Even those who toil need to dwell - Clare wrote in 'The Flitting' of his 'own old home of homes' and indeed of owning a spot, despite the fact that he never possessed any property.

With regard to their role in Wordsworth's establishment of himself as a 'dweller', the dates of the 'Poems on the Naming of Places' are significant. During 1799 William and Dorothy decided to settle in Grasmere; they moved into Dove Cottage that December. The place-name poems were composed in the course of the next year. Dorothy's journal entry for 1 September 1800 is typical: 'We walked in the wood by the Lake. W. read Joanna and the Firgrove [an early version of the poem on John's Grove] to Coleridge'.²⁸ It is through these poems, then, that Wordsworth expresses his sense of belonging in the Vale of Grasmere, of having come home. Jonathan Wordsworth speaks of Wordsworth moving about in his new-found paradise, 'naming and claiming places within it, as Adam names his fellow inhabitants of Eden'.²⁹ 'Claiming', however, needs to be modified. God says to Adam in *Paradise Lost*:

Not only these fair bounds, but all the Earth
To thee and to thy Race I give; as Lords
Possess it, and all things that therein live,
Or live in Sea, or Air, Beast, Fish, and Fowl.
In sign whereof each Bird and Beast behold

After their kinds; I bring them to receive
From thee their Names, and pay thee fealty
With low subjection.

(viii. 338–45)

Here naming signifies dominion, whereas Wordsworth's namings speak of assimilation. The subjection is that of the man to the place, not the beasts of the earth to man; it is Wordsworth who is paying the fealty. Thomas's phrase 'lord of that he does not possess', which applies so finely to Wordsworth, precisely inverts the words which Milton puts into the mouth of God, 'as Lords / Possess it'.

Throughout 1800 Wordsworth was also working on a more sustained poem concerning his new abode, *Home at Grasmere*. Conceived as the first book of the first part of the great unwritten epic *The Recluse*, it was never published by Wordsworth. It is nevertheless a key text; modern criticism has begun to do it justice,³⁰ but its intimate relationship with the contemporaneous place-naming poems has not been fully attended to. It constitutes an addition to and summation of the group: where the short poems name individual *loci* in Grasmere Vale, this long poem explores and, in a broad sense, names the whole valley together with its inhabitants. *Home at Grasmere* begins with a prospect of the vale, seen as a 'paradise';³¹ it goes on to record and preserve both a series of 'Spots' in the vale and 'Some portion of its human history' (635); by the end, community and place are integrated, 'The Inmates [are] not unworthy of their home, / The Dwellers of the Dwelling' (858–9).

Wordsworth's dwelling in the vale is signalled by a tender apostrophe:

Embrace me then, ye Hills, and close me in;
Now in the clear and open day I feel
Your guardianship; I take it to my heart;
'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.

(129–32)

A glorious reciprocity is at work in the verse-paragraph which these lines begin.³² Through his apostrophe, Wordsworth sanctifies the valley, with its hills, lake, island, church, and cottages; in return, the valley offers the poet its 'guardianship'. By the end of the paragraph, a sense of complete unity between the poet and the 'Spot' has been achieved. And in this unity the place no longer has to be named explicitly; indeed, the source of the sense of unity is beyond naming. Wordsworth says of the place what Milton's Adam says of God, that it

'Surpassest far my naming' (*Paradise Lost*, viii. 359). It can only be known:

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

(161–70)

But, although no name is explicit here, the passage is underwritten by the name 'Grasmere'. The unity depends on the bond that is established between 'Wordsworth' and 'Grasmere', a bond which, as Edward Thomas saw, has not been broken. Laurence Goldstein makes the point eloquently:

Wordsworth's poetry made something happen; it awakened the moral conscience of posterity to the value of places which bear a habitual resemblance to Eden, our profound dream of harmony and joy. And our own joy owes much of its body to Wordsworth's recollections of his feelings in those places. Magical presences haunt the sites of Hawkshead, or Esthwaite Water, or the daffodils of Gowbarrow Park because Wordsworth felt and articulated their character.³³

In *Home at Grasmere*'s astonishing verse-paragraph, 'Embrace me then, ye Hills . . .', Wordsworth achieves a truly ecological poetry. The word 'ecology' is ultimately derived from the Greek *oikos* and *logos*. What Wordsworth has produced here is a *logos* of the *oikos*, the home. Man has come home to nature and the place takes on a wholeness, a unity that is entire. The text stands as a paradigm for what Karl Kroeber calls, in a fine phrase, 'ecological holiness'.³⁴

A naming poem stands between a naturalized 'dwelling poem' and an alienated 'prospect poem'. The poets who are at one with nature are, to reiterate Schiller's terms, 'naïve', while those who are conscious of themselves and their own separation from nature are 'sentimental'. 'The poets are everywhere, by their very definition, the *guardians* of nature,' Schiller wrote in his essay of 1795. 'They will either *be* nature,

or they will *seek* lost nature.³⁵ As I suggested in the last chapter, the key 'sentimental' poetic form, that which strives for reunification with nature, is a version of pastoral. Schiller's idea of the reflective poet seeking lost nature is implicit in Paul de Man's unfolding of the sub-text of William Empson's *Some Versions of Pastoral*:

What is the pastoral convention, then, if not the eternal separation between the mind that distinguishes, negates, legislates, and the originary simplicity of the natural? . . . There is no doubt that the pastoral theme is, in fact, the only poetic theme, that it is poetry itself. Under the deceitful title of a genre study, Empson has actually written an ontology of the poetic.³⁶

Wordsworth, however, reserves the title 'A Pastoral Poem' for 'Michael', his 'naïve' poem. The shepherd Michael is a poet of Schiller's first type, 'They will either *be* nature' – Michael *is* nature. In a cancelled manuscript passage, Michael, when discoursing of 'mountain sights', looks at his interlocutor 'as with a Poet's eye': Wordsworth perhaps cancelled these lines because the hypostatization 'Poet' is sentimental rather than naïve. To call Michael a poet is to give him the same status as the 'youthful Poets' cited early in the poem, whereas the purpose of his history is to provide for those youthful poets an exemplar of integration with nature which they themselves lack. In the same manuscript draft, Wordsworth wrote that Michael would not have comprehended had he been asked 'in terms direct' 'Whether he lov'd the mountains': this bears out my earlier argument that the shepherd does not openly articulate his bond with place in the way that the poet does.³⁷

'Michael', then, is a new kind of pastoral, stripped of the Schillerian 'sentimental', the sophisticated and self-conscious. It is the poem in which Wordsworth recovers the Schillerian 'naïve' for the English poetic tradition. Having explored the vale in *Home at Grasmere*, Wordsworth was able by the end of the year to enter into the life of a representative inhabitant of the vale, to enter fully into the feelings of the shepherd. Here a less generous reader would say: having laid claim to the place, Wordsworth appropriates for himself the people. He admits in 'Michael' that as a boy he loved the shepherds 'not verily, / For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills / Where was their occupation and abode' (LB p. 227); as a man, it might be suggested, he merely projects on to the shepherd his own desire for the fields and hills to be 'his living Being'. But such a reading is deeply false to the modesty and dignity of the poem's tone; Wordsworth's relationship to

the kind of human being for whom Michael stands is not arrogantly appropriative but profoundly humble. That humility derives from the knowledge which Wordsworth shared with Ruskin that those who 'draw hard breath over ploughshare or spade' frequently do have a connection to their environment and an inner collectedness that are not available to the alienated intellectual. As was argued in chapter 1, there is an element of idealization in Wordsworth's perception of the shepherd, but it is an idealization worth making in order to bring writer and reader back to nature.

When Wordsworth revised and added to *Lyrical Ballads* for the two-volume edition of 1800 (in fact published in January 1801), he moved 'Expostulation and Reply' and 'The Tables Turned' to the beginning of the collection. This pair of lyrics is about looking at and receiving from nature: as in the 'Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree', the poet is detached from nature in the manner of the Schillerian sentimental. The last poem in the collection, finished on 9 December 1800, was 'Michael'. Wordsworth was insistent that it should appear as the climax of volume two. The movement through *Lyrical Ballads*, then, is from sentimental to naïve; the process of working through the collection in sequence reconnects the reader to nature. We begin as spectators *ab extra* and end with Michael. It is also significant in this respect that the text of 'Michael' opens by addressing a traveller, whose relationship with Grasmere Vale is manifestly 'sentimental', but closes with the oak, the unfinished sheep-fold, 'the boisterous brook of Green-head Gill', and no spectator.

However, as Schiller recognized, the absolute naïve was no longer available in the post-Kantian world. Schiller wrote of 'man who cannot now go back to Arcady'; Wordsworth in *Home at Grasmere* dismisses 'all Arcadian dreams, / All golden fancies of the golden age'.³⁸ Wordsworth could not really be a shepherd. What he had to do was fulfil Schiller's demand that the modern poet must *unite* the naïve with the sentimental. In so doing, the poet becomes at one and the same time a seeker after lost nature and a guardian of the nature that remains. And it is here that the ordering of *Lyrical Ballads* is even more suggestive, for immediately before 'Michael' the reader encounters the five 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. It is their namings that provide the bridge, the uniting of sentimental and naïve, of poet and nature.

The naming of places indelibly marks the continuing English Romantic tradition. Among Wordsworth's immediate successors, two very

different poets whose work was shaped by a bond with a specific locality and a cherishing of the music of place-names were Walter Scott and John Clare. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the poem with which the former shot to fame in 1805, ends with the song of the minstrel being carried into the places of the Scottish borders which were as rich a seedbed for Scott as the Lakes were for Wordsworth:

but still,
When summer smil'd on sweet Bow hill,
And July's eve, with balmy breath,
Wav'd the blue-bells on Newark heath;
When throistles sung in Hareheadshaw,
And corn was green on Carterhaugh,
And flourish'd broad Blackandro's oak,
The aged Harper's soul awoke!
Then would he sing achievements high,
And circumstance of chivalry,
Till the rapt traveller would stay,
Forgetful of the closing day;
And noble youths, the strain to hear,
Forsook the hunting of the deer;
And Yarrow, as he roll'd along,
Bore burden to the Minstrel's song.³⁹

Dorothy Wordsworth was perceptive when she remarked that Scott's 'local attachments' were 'more strong than those of any person I ever saw'.⁴⁰

In sharp contrast to the Laird of Abbotsford, for whom place-naming was part of a project to fashion and bolster a new sense of Scottish national identity, Clare was an alienated figure, a peasant who could not possess the land and who was further removed from it by enclosure. His poems are attempts to recuperate the land and his own, not a national, past. Like Wordsworth's poems of place, Clare's are closely bound up with loss. In a typical journal entry, Clare wrote:

Took a walk in the fields saw an old wood stile taken away from a favourite spot which it had occupied all my life the posts were overgrown with Ivy and it seemd so akin to nature and the spot where it stood as tho it had taken it on lease for an undisturbed existence it hurt me to see it was gone for my affections claims a friendship with such things but nothing is lasting in this world last year Langley Bush was destroyed an old whitethorn that had stood

for more than a century full of fame the gipsies shepherds and Herdmen all had their tales of its history and it will be long ere its memory its forgotten.⁴¹

Here the bond with a 'favourite spot' has a remarkable intensity; there is a sense of physical pain at the disappearance of a familiar landmark. For Clare, poetry is like those gypsies' and shepherds' stories in that it seeks to 'leave behind / The memory of a name'.⁴² The names he valued most were those of the places which he loved and which are gone, as in 'Remembrances':

By Langley Bush I roam but the bush hath left its hill
On Cowper Green I stray, 'tis a desert strange and chill
And spreading Lea Close Oak ere decay had penned its will
To the axe of the spoiler and self-interest fell a prey
And Crossberry Way and old Round Oak's narrow lane
With its hollow trees like pulpits I shall never see again
Inclosure like a Buonaparte let not a thing remain
It levelled every bush and tree and levelled every hill
And hung the moles for traitors – though the brook is running still
It runs a naked stream cold and chill.⁴³

Wordsworth's 'Poems on the Naming of Places' inscribe, guard, protect, and preserve secluded bowers and sacred places; Emma's dell, Mary's nook and John's grove are inviolable. The moments associated with their naming may be lost, and in the case of John so is the person, but the place remains. For Clare, however, the places associated with his childhood roamings and joys have been transformed. History has overtaken Northamptonshire, where Westmorland has not yet been touched so deeply: enclosure has come like a Buonaparte – it is an amazing simile – and everything has changed. Acts of Enclosure had far less effect on the landscape and the farming practices of the Cumbrian hills than they did on the agricultural life of the eastern flatlands. Wordsworth occasionally saw himself as a violator of nature, especially in 'Nutting', but in Clare's world the violators are profiteers, followers of 'self-interest' from elsewhere. For Clare, the march of 'progress', which he calls decay, is conceived as writing ('decay had penned its will') and all that is possible in response is writing of his own: by naming Langley Bush, Lea Close Oak, Crossberry Way, and old Round Oak Lane he can give them a kind of monumentality and immortality. Paradoxically, in inscribing loss, he achieves a recovery. Edward Thomas recognized this in his marvellous summary account of Clare's achievement:

No man ever came so near to putting the life of the farm, as it is lived, not as it is seen over a five-barred gate, into poetry. He gives no broad impressions – he saw the kite, but not the kite's landscape – yet his details accumulate in the end, so that a loving reader, and no one reads him but loves him, can grasp them, and see the lowlands of Northamptonshire as they were when the kite still soared over them.⁴⁴

Wordsworth's localness, his capacity to make poetry out of his native region, was a necessary prerequisite for Clare's. Had Wordsworth not written of Westmorland, Clare could not have written of Northamptonshire and the 'loving reader' would have been deprived of his or her re-visioning of those lowlands with the kite soaring over them.

So too with the other great local writer in English, Thomas Hardy. Edward Thomas again provides an entry, as he writes of Hardy's music of place-names:

I prefer Mr Hardy's poems to his novels, and there the place-names offer many pleasures and provoke several kinds of curiosity. . . . He writes no poetry that could suffer by names and dates. That something happened 'At this point of time, at this point in space,' it pleases him to put on record.

This suggests a continuity with the Wordsworth who recorded particular times and places of composition in a way that earlier poets did not. Thomas goes on to consider the effect of Hardy's use of names, some of them authentic, others invented:

The general effect of using local names with no significance for the stranger, and no special private value of sound or association for the poet, as in 'From Pummery-Tout to where the Gibbet is' or 'Scene. – a sad-coloured landscape, Waddonvale', or 'By Mellstock Lodge and Avenue', or 'Not far from Mellstock – so tradition saith –' or 'While High Stoy trees twanged to Bubb Down Hill, / And Bubb Down to High Stoy', the general effect is to aid reality by suggestions of gross and humble simplicity. It might become a trick or device, but in Mr Hardy it is not either, though it succeeds in different degrees. In a recurring line like the following, the name gives even a kind of magic reality, and perhaps magnifies the wind which has no name: 'Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare.' The least effect is to make sure of keeping the poem to earth by keeping it to Dorset, so that a storm strikes freshly on jaded ears by means of

'The drone of Thorncombe trees,
The Froom in flood upon the moor,
The mud of Mellstock Leaze.'⁴⁵

Naming keeps the poem to earth so that Antaeus-like it grows strong.

Thomas wrote elsewhere that English country place-names are themselves poems,⁴⁶ an insight which gets to the heart of certain effects in Hardy, in Thomas's own poems, and in a related poet, A. E. Housman. In Schiller's terms, Housman is among the most 'sentimental' poets in the language. No one seeks lost nature, 'the land of lost content', with more poignancy:

Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
And cannot come again.⁴⁷

But in the fiftieth poem of *A Shropshire Lad*, Housman quotes and answers a local naming rhyme out of the 'naïve' folk tradition:

*Clunton and Clunbury,
Clungunford and Clun,
Are the quietest places
Under the sun.*

In valleys of springs of rivers,
By Ony and Teme and Clun,
The country for easy livers,
The quietest under the sun.⁴⁸

Here, as in Wordsworth, the recitation of place-names bridges sentimental and naïve. Through his acts of naming, Housman summons up and gives himself back to the lost Shropshire by means of which he figures many other kinds of loss. The 'air' of the local rhyme does not kill: instead, it recovers, so that the place is no longer a 'far country' and the hills, spires, farms, and highways are revisited. *A Shropshire Lad* was a prized possession in the knapsacks of thousands of men on the Western Front in the Great War because from title-page onwards it evoked a potent image of the England for which they imagined they

were fighting.⁴⁹ Place-names reconnected the disorientated soldier to his home, as in Ivor Gurney's poem in which the infantryman meets a fellow soldier at Buire-au-Bois, 'When on a sudden, "Crickley" he said. How I started / At that old darling name of home!'⁵⁰

But Hardy and Thomas are more Wordsworthian than Housman in their place-naming, for they also have the Wordsworthian way of investing the spirit of their loved ones in nature. Each of them wrote a sequence which, I suggest, constituted their version of Wordsworth's 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. Hardy's sequence was written in 1912 and 1913 after his wife's death. The places known, named, and recovered in these poems are those not of Wessex, but of North Cornwall – Boscastle, the Vallency Valley, Beeny Cliff, and so on – where he met and courted his Emma. The beloved is as deeply enshrined in these places as Wordsworth's beloved Dorothy, John, Joanna, and Mary are in the places around Grasmere which are inscribed in the 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. Consider the first and last stanzas of 'A Dream or No', one of the most delicate poems in the sequence:

Why go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot to me?
 Some strange necromancy
 But charmed me to fancy
 That much of my life claims the spot as its key.
 Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist?
 Or a Vallency Valley
 With stream and leafed alley,
 Or Beeny, or Bos with its flounce flinging mist?⁵¹

The eclect here renders the magic of place, the spot as a 'key' to the poet's emotional life. In the Wordsworthian manner, there is a strange, moving combination of loss – rendered by Hardy's poignant cadences – and recovery, of the elegiac and the affirmative. Place-naming enables the poet to live on.

Edward Thomas's 'Household Poems' for his wife and children ask to be read in similar terms. Although I do not think that critics have perceived it, the relationship between this sequence and the 'Poems on the Naming of Places' is even closer; Wordsworth's way of dedicating his groves and walks to his family was Thomas's direct inspiration. The poems themselves enable the poet to give the places he loves, but cannot physically own, to the people he loves. Writing makes the poet, to use the phrase again, 'lord of that he does not possess'. The first poem in the group, written for Thomas's elder daughter, Bronwen, is

representative in that it turns on an image of owning certain valued places:

If I should ever by chance grow rich
 I'll buy Codham, Cockriden, and Childerditch,
 Roses, Pyrigo, and Lapwater,
 And let them all to my elder daughter.
 The rent I shall ask of her will be only
 Each year's first violets, white and lonely,
 The first primrose and orchises –
 She must find them before I do, that is.
 But if she finds a blossom on furze
 Without rent they shall all for ever be hers,
 Codham, Cockriden, and Childerditch,
 Roses, Pyrigo and Lapwater, –
 I shall give them all to my elder daughter.⁵²

As in Wordsworth, these places are not materially the poet's, yet through the imaginative activity of the poem they are found and possessed. Rather as the village-name 'Adlestrop' is now inseparable from Thomas, so the rural England named here has in a sense been bought by the poet and given to his dedicatee. With Hardy and Thomas, then, the tradition of English poems of place, which perhaps began with Drayton and was transformed when it was personalized by Wordsworth, is brought into our own century.

Poetry that registers the names of English places inevitably leads the reader to reflect on the idea of England. Englishness is a peculiarly powerful but also a peculiarly problematic concept.⁵³ It is powerful not least because so much of the finest English poetry has sprung from love of the land; it is problematic because it is a concept that can slide all too easily into that dangerous religion called chauvinism. There is a difference between Wordsworth's Lucy 'beside an English fire' and Rupert Brooke's soldier 'under an English heaven'. Lucy's, I would suggest, is an authentic Englishness – Lucy perhaps is the spirit of English place – whereas the Englishness of Brooke's soldier is trumped-up and of a dangerously jingoistic kind. It is Wordsworth's localness, his sense of place, that makes all the difference. One way of putting it would be to say that Wordsworth was rooted in Grasmere – 'Home at Grasmere' – as Brooke was not in Grantchester.

My thrice-quoted phrase about being lord of that which we do not possess occurs in one of Edward Thomas's reflections on the complex relationship between place and nation:

[Izaak Walton] knew England and the men who knew England best – Camden and Michael Drayton. Drayton, the author of *Polyolbion* and the ballad of Agincourt, was Walton's 'honest old friend'. There is one other passage which I shall quote, though my subject is not the *Compleat Angler*, because it reminds us how much a man may be lord of that he does not possess. He is speaking of some fields which belonged to a rich man with many lawsuits pending, yet he who 'pretended no title' to them could take a sweet content in them: 'For I could sit there quietly, and looking on the water see some fishes sport themselves in the silver streams, others leaping at flies of various shapes and colours; looking on the hills, I could behold them spotted with woods and groves; looking down the meadows could see, here a boy gathering lilies and ladysmocks, and there a girl cropping culverkeys and cowslips, all to make garlands suitable to this present month of May . . . I say, as I thus sat, joying in my own happy condition, and pitying this poor rich man that owned this and many other pleasant groves and meadows about me, I did thankfully remember what my Saviour said, that the meek possess the earth.' . . . I believe [Thomas continues] that England means something like this to most of us; that all ideas of England are developed, spun out, from such a centre into something large or infinite, solid or aëry, according to each man's nature and capacity; that England is a system of vast circumferences circling round the minute neighbouring points of home.⁵⁴

At first sight, the politics of this might appear to be Burkean. The delicate final image seems to be in the tradition not only of Wordsworth's figure of Grasmere Vale as a 'centre' but also of Burke's progression from the little platoon of the local community to the nation at large. But Burke wrote in defence of property, whereas for Thomas the spirit of England is to be found not with the rich who own the majority of the land but in such figures as the vagrant 'Lob'.⁵⁵ The most telling line in the poem of that title reads 'One of the lords of No Man's Land, good Lob': the image is remarkable in its compounding of the original sense of no man's land as waste land or common land, that which is not possessed by any individual (Wordsworth's 'green margin of the public way'), and the terrible new sense of the word that was being invented in Flanders as Thomas became a poet. Thomas suggests paradoxically that no man's land may be the truest kind of English land.

In the same spirit, Coleridge in his magnificent poem 'Fears in

Solitude' can attack the institutions of English society, even acknowledge that he has been branded a traitor to his country, yet still recognize that not only his creativity but his very being is derived from his native land:

O my Mother Isle!

How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,
All adoration of the God in nature,
All lovely and all honourable things.
Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
The joy and greatness of its future being?
There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
Unborrowed from my country! O divine
And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
And most magnificent temple, in the which
I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
Loving the God that made me!⁵⁶

Even if we want to redefine Coleridge's 'God in nature' along the lines of Ruskin's theory of the moral of landscape in *Modern Painters*, this remains an extraordinarily powerful passage. It will continue to strike a chord in the many readers who acknowledge the importance of native lakes and mountain-hills, dales and rocks and seas, in the constitution of their identities. And for the many who are uncomfortable with nationalism, it is a timely reminder that love of the land may be differentiated from institutionalized patriotism. Politically alert critics are often suspicious of rural poetry because of its apparent tendency to cover up ugly realities and to fall in with Burkean values. It is easy to argue that Housman's Shropshire and Coleridge's Quantocks elicit a misty-eyed nostalgia which draws attention away from war-mongering governments. But it could equally well be argued that to be at one with nature is to foster liberty. This is precisely what Coleridge argued in 'France: an Ode', a companion poem to 'Fears in Solitude', where the poet finds true liberty as he shoots his being through earth, sea, and air. The ode was written as a recantation of Coleridge's original enthusiasm for the French Revolution; it locates the source of disillusionment very precisely with France's invasion of Switzerland. And here it should be remembered that the two qualities for which the

Swiss were renowned in the eighteenth century were their republican virtues – foreshadowings of ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’ – and their exceptionally intense bond with their native soil. The latter was reputed to be so strong that they were supposed to suffer from a national disease, *Heimweh*, when they were away from home.⁵⁷ This association between republican liberty and local attachment suggests that the poetry of home and of place, whilst it will always have a vested interest in *conservation*, need not be the dupe of conservative politics.

When asked why he had decided to enlist in the Artists’ Rifles in 1915, Edward Thomas stopped, picked up a pinch of earth, and said, ‘Literally, for this.’⁵⁸ It was probably with similar sentiments that Wordsworth enlisted in the Grasmere militia in 1803. Thomas refused to write the kind of chauvinistic poems that the popular press wanted: ‘Beside my hate for one fat patriot / My hatred of the Kaiser is love true.’⁵⁹ Reviewing war poetry in 1914, he contrasted that which was ‘deliberately’ English and therefore meretricious with that which was ‘inevitably’ English and therefore of value; he regarded ‘Fears in Solitude’ as the best of all English war poems because it was ‘humble’.⁶⁰ His literary contribution to the war effort was the compilation of an anthology called *This England*, where the emphasis is on not overt patriotism but the quieter Englishness of Walton, Cobbett, Clare, and Borrow. The allusion in the title of the anthology, as in Coleridge’s apostrophe to his mother isle in ‘Fears in Solitude’, is to John of Gaunt’s praise of the English land and condemnation of corrupt English political institutions in *Richard II*. For Thomas, the ‘most English’ of all poems was the song in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, ‘When icicles hang by the wall’, a lyric of which he wrote his own dark revision in his poem ‘The Owl’. He excluded ‘professedly patriotic writing’ from his anthology ‘because it is generally bad and because indirect praise is sweeter and more profound’.⁶¹ His anthology offered his own image of ‘This England, Old already’:

the old Manor Farm,
And church and yew-tree opposite, in age
Its equals and in size. Small church, great yew,
And farmhouse slept in a Sunday silentness.
The air raised not a straw.⁶²

Thomas writes of the manor farm, not the manor *house*: this England is one that we may be lords of without possessing. ‘England’ is not an idea, not even a ‘nation’, but a very specific place, a place that for the poet is ‘home’.

For Thomas, as for Wordsworth, pastoral was not a myth but a psychological necessity, an underpinning of the self, a way of connecting the self to the environment. In literature as in life, connection with the external world is dependent on what Clare called ‘The Eternity of Nature’, dependent on the survival of the daisy and the return of the swallow. What would Coleridge have been had the vales around Stowey not been ‘quiet’, had there been no ‘green sheep-track’ and ‘heathy hill’ in the Quantocks? How would Edward Thomas have reached out to the dispossessed, to the houseless poor and to those in the mud of Flanders, had his night not been pierced by the cry of a bird once common, now threatened?

Then at the inn I had food, fire, and rest,
Knowing how hungry, cold, and tired was I.
All of the night was quite barred out except
An owl’s cry, a most melancholy cry

Shaken out long and clear upon the hill,
No merry note, nor cause of merriment,
But one telling me plain what I escaped
And others could not, that night, as in I went.

And salted was my food, and my repose,
Salted and sobered, too, by the bird’s voice
Speaking for all who lay under the stars,
Soldiers and poor, unable to rejoice.⁶³

Of course Wordsworth’s poem about the boy of Winander addresses itself to the workings of the mind and the power of imagination. But let us not forget that it is also about a boy alone by a lake at dusk blowing mimic hootings to unseen owls. Which are there to answer him.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 The opening of 'Lines written at a small distance from my House', in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798).
- 2 McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago, 1983) and the essays collected in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford, 1988).
- 3 Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford, 1989).
- 4 *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York, 1979). All quotations are from this edition in the 1805 text, unless otherwise stated.
- 5 'Review of a Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil', in *The Works of Samuel Johnson*, 12 vols (London, 1801), viii. 48.
- 6 'The Common Reader', in *An Appetite for Poetry* (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1989), p. 51.
- 7 Letter to J. H. Reynolds, 3 May 1818.
- 8 *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London, 1930-4), iv. 68.
- 9 Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1969), trans. and repr. in his *Lenin and Philosophy* (London, 1971).
- 10 *The Romantic Ideology*, p. 91.
- 11 Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (New Haven, 1964); Bloom, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (New York, 1961). McGann in fact traced the dominance of 'the Romantic Imagination' back to René Wellek and M. H. Abrams, but Hartman and Bloom are more relevant to his attack on the institution of Romantic studies circa 1980 since their innovations enabled the Wellek-Abrams construction to be reconstituted in terms of post-structuralist theory.
- 12 Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford, 1988).
- 13 Liu, 'Wordsworth: The History in "Imagination"', *ELH*, 51 (1984), 505-48, now incorporated in his *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*; Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* (Cambridge, 1986).
- 14 *Modern Philology*, 59 (1962), 214-24; an expanded version formed the fulcrum of *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*. I quote from the original version, which is conveniently reprinted in the 1979 Norton edition of *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*.

- 15 De Man's own trans., 'Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image', in his *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York, 1984), p. 16.
- 16 Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (repr. Cambridge, Mass., 1987), pp. 293-4.
- 17 *Modern Painters I* (London, 1843), pt II, sec. ii, chap. 3, para. 5.
- 18 'Fiction, Fair and Foul', in the *Nineteenth Century*, November 1880, IV, para. 79.
- 19 Rudolf Bahro's phrase: *From Red to Green*, trans. D. Fernbach (London, 1983).
- 20 *Robert Elsmere* (1888; repr. Oxford, 1987), p. 30. In a typical move, the location of the poem quoted has been translated from its original Calais sands to Wordsworth's native vales.
- 21 See Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century: A History* (New Haven, 1989).

1 A LANGUAGE THAT IS EVER GREEN

- 1 'The Ruined Cottage', 502-6, in *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford, 1984). Unless otherwise stated, Wordsworth's shorter poems are quoted from this edition.
- 2 Repr. in *De Quincey as Critic*, ed. John E. Jordan (London, 1973), pp. 407-9.
- 3 Mill, *Autobiography* (repr. London, 1924), pp. 125-6.
- 4 To A. S. Suvorin, 27 October 1888, in *Letters of Anton Chekhov*, ed. Avraham Yarmolinsky (London, 1974), p. 88.
- 5 See McGann, 'Keats and the Historical Method in Literary Criticism', repr. in *The Beauty of Inflections* (Oxford, 1988); Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* (Cambridge, 1986).
- 6 'The Anachronism of George Crabbe', in *The Beauty of Inflections*, p. 310.
- 7 McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections*, p. 300.
- 8 *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford, 1989), p. 104.
- 9 See in particular Barrell's influential discussion of enclosure in *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge, 1972).
- 10 *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination: The Poetry of Displacement* (New York and London, 1987).
- 11 Sales, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (London, 1983), chap. 3.
- 12 *English Literature in History*, p. 58.
- 13 *Pastoral and Ideology: Virgil to Valéry* (Oxford, 1988), p. 275n.
- 14 'Notes of Conversations with Thomas De Quincey', in James Hogg, *De Quincey and his Friends* (London, 1895), p. 92. I owe this reference to Rob Morrison.
- 15 'On Poetry in General', in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London, 1930-4), v. 2.
- 16 *Complete Works*, v. 1.
- 17 Clare, *Selected Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Summerfield (London, 1990), p. 163.
- 18 *The Country and the City* (London, 1973, repr. 1975), p. 33.
- 19 *English Literature in History*, p. 77.

- 20 James K. Chandler, for instance, argues in *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago, 1984) that Burkean political values are already implicit in the supposedly 'radical' poetics of *Lyrical Ballads*.
- 21 See, for example, Neil Hertz, 'The Notion of Blockage in the Literature of the Sublime', in his *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York, 1985), pp. 40-60, especially the closing pages.
- 22 *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes. The Fifth Edition (1835)*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt (Oxford, 1906, repr. 1977), p. 68.
- 23 For Wordsworth and this tradition, see further Z. S. Fink, 'Wordsworth and the English Republican Tradition', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 47 (1948), 107-26.
- 24 *Paradise Lost*, iv. 268ff.
- 25 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford, 1977), p. 78.
- 26 *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford, 1974), i. 43.
- 27 MS Y, *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York, 1979), p. 505.
- 28 *Prose Works*, i. 39.
- 29 *Descriptive Sketches*, 519-61, in *Wordsworth's Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford, 1940-9, corrected edn, 1952-8), i. 72-4.
- 30 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, VII, 2 vols (Princeton, 1983), ii. 45.
- 31 Kitchin, *Ruskin in Oxford and Other Studies* (London, 1904), p. 56.
- 32 'A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry', in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt (London, 1963), p. 120. Pope is following Fontenelle's theory of pastoral (1688). See further, J. E. Congleton, *Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, 1684-1798* (Gainesville, 1952), and the discussion of Wordsworth and the pastoral tradition in chap. 5 of S. M. Parrish, *The Art of the Lyrical Ballads* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973).
- 33 *The Shepheardes Calender*, 'Maye', 19-36, in *Spenser's Minor Poems*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt (Oxford, 1910), pp. 47-8.
- 34 George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), bk 1, chap. 18.
- 35 *Georgics*, iv. 126-33, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough in Loeb edn (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1916).
- 36 Hazlitt, 'The New School of Reform', in *The Plain Speaker - Complete Works*, xii. 182-3.
- 37 *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Second Walk, trans. Peter France (Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 39.
- 38 Poggioli, *The Oaten Flute: Essays on Pastoral Poetry and the Pastoral Ideal* (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), p. 22.
- 39 *Complete Works*, v. 163. Keats coined the phrase 'egotistical sublime' in a letter to his friend Woodhouse written on 27 October 1818, a few months after he heard Hazlitt's lecture.
- 40 Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (London, 1958; repr. Harmondsworth, 1963), p. 80.
- 41 Macaulay's *Journal*, 28 July 1850, quoted in *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, p. 560.

- 42 *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1790; repr. 1910 [Everyman edn]), p. 44.
- 43 'Song', *The Oxford Authors: John Clare*, ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Oxford, 1984), pp. 46-7.
- 44 Hopkins, 'Inversnaid' (1881).

2 THE ECONOMY OF NATURE

- 1 Translated and quoted in Robert P. McIntosh, *The Background of Ecology: Concept and Theory* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 7-8.
- 2 For an attempt to link ecological consciousness and feminism, see Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco, 1980; repr. London, 1982).
- 3 *Background of Ecology*, p. 20.
- 4 Quoted, Robert Clarke, *Ellen Swallow: The Woman who Founded Ecology* (Chicago, 1973), p. 120.
- 5 Quoted, Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology* (San Francisco, 1977), pp. 37-8.
- 6 James Hutton, 'Theory of the Earth; or an Investigation of the Laws observable in the Composition, Dissolution, and Restoration of Land upon the Globe', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 1 (1788), pt 2, 209-304 (pp. 287, 304, 294).
- 7 To Josiah Wade, 27 Jan. 1796, *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford, 1956-71), i. 177. In the same letter Coleridge remarks on Darwin's atheistic rejection of Hutton.
- 8 *The Economy of Nature* (London, 1791), canto iv, line 34, note. Though not named as such until the 1890s, photosynthesis was first studied in the 1770s.
- 9 Gilbert White, *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789), Letter XXXV, 20 May 1777.
- 10 MS Egerton 2801, f. 58 (watermark 1827), in *Inquiring Spirit: A Coleridge Reader*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (1951; repr. New York, 1968), p. 223.
- 11 Alexis de Tocqueville, 'A Fortnight in the Wilds', in *Journey to America*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J. P. Mayer (London, 1959), p. 372. For Thoreau's Romantic ecology, see the discussion in Worster, *Nature's Economy*.
- 12 *Excursion*, viii. 129-30, 151-6, quoted from the text in vol. 5 of *Wordsworth's Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford, 1940-9); the text as originally published in 1814 had the additional line 'Through strong temptation of those gainful arts' between 'there behold' and 'Such outrage'.
- 13 Quoted, W. G. Hoskins and L. D. Stamp, *The Common Lands of England and Wales* (London, 1963), p. 61.
- 14 See W. J. B. Owen, 'Costs, Sales, and Profits of Longman's Editions of Wordsworth', *The Library*, 5th series, 12 (1957), 93-107.
- 15 Moorman, *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Later Years 1803-1850* (Oxford, 1965), p. 384n.
- 16 See, for example, J. R. Nabholz, 'Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* and the Picturesque Tradition', *Modern Philology*, 61 (1964), 288-97; W. J. B. Owen,

- 'Wordsworth's Aesthetics of Landscape', *Wordsworth Circle*, 7 (1976), 70-82; and, most recently, Theresa M. Kelley, *Wordsworth's Revisionary Aesthetics* (Cambridge, 1988), chap. 2.
- 17 *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes. The Fifth Edition (1835)*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt (Oxford, 1906, repr. 1977), p. 1. Subsequent quotations will be from this, the most readily available edition, but for textual apparatus see vol. 2 of *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford, 1974).
 - 18 Wordsworth to Adam Sedgwick, late March 1842, in *Letters of William Wordsworth: A New Selection*, ed. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1984), p. 303. On Wordsworth's friendship with Sedgwick, see further Marilyn Gaull, 'From Wordsworth to Darwin: "On to the Fields of Praise"', *Wordsworth Circle*, 10 (1979), 33-48. For an important account of the influence of geological theory, and in particular catastrophism, on the language of the early Wordsworth, notably in the French Revolution section of *The Prelude*, see Alan Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment* (New Haven, 1989), part 4. Bewell is one of the few critics to recognize the importance of environmental discourse for a reading of Wordsworth; he is especially useful on the eighteenth-century inheritance, in particular Montesquieu's belief that climate and soil exercise a formative influence on politics.
 - 19 'Geology of the Lake District', in Hudson's *Complete Guide to the Lakes*, quoted from 4th edn (1853), p. 219.
 - 20 'Geology of the Lake District', Letter 1, *Complete Guide*, p. 170.
 - 21 Reviewing the *Duddon* volume, the *British Review* praised the 'Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes' as both a valuable illustration of the poems and high in its own 'absolute merit' (vol. 16, Sept. 1820, p. 38).
 - 22 Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (Oxford, 1981), p. 67.
 - 23 For the early history of the Trust, see John Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape* (London, 1988).
 - 24 Dower Report on National Parks in England and Wales (Cmnd 6628), quoted in *The Discovery of the Lake District*, Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition catalogue (London, 1984), p. 164.
 - 25 31 Jan. 1802, in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2nd edn by Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1971), p. 82.
 - 26 'My First Acquaintance with Poets', in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols (London, 1930-4), xvii. 119.
 - 27 Essay on Wordsworth in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* (1839), in De Quincey, *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*, ed. David Wright (Harmondsworth and New York, 1970), p. 135.
 - 28 Rawnsley, *Literary Associations of the English Lakes*, 2 vols (Glasgow, 1894, repr. 1901), dedication page.
 - 29 Appendix 2 of de Sélincourt's edn of the *Guide*, pp. 158-9. See further, Stephen Prickett's discussion of Wordsworth's two railway sonnets in 'Macaulay's Vision of 1930: Wordsworth and the Battle for the Wilderness', *Essays and Studies*, 39 (1986), 104-17.
 - 30 Ruskin's importance for this tradition is still insufficiently recognized, though Bernard Richards makes a good beginning in his essay 'Ruskin and Conservation', *The Texas Quarterly*, 21 (1978), 65-73.

- 31 Rawnsley, *Ruskin and the English Lakes* (Glasgow, 1901), pp. 212-13. See also chap. 5, 'Ruskin and the Home Art Industries in the Lake District'.
- 32 Freud, *Introductory Lectures*, trans. Joan Riviere (London, 1922), pp. 311-12. Quoted as a chapter epigraph in Keith Thomas's invaluable *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London, 1983).
- 33 *Complete Works of Hazlitt*, iv. 18. Hazlitt's argument is not quite as original as he claims: it is in some respects foreshadowed by Johnson in *Rambler*, 36, 21 July 1750.
- 34 See Morris's poem 'The Message of the March Wind', in his *The Pilgrims of Hope* (1885).
- 35 Quoted, B. L. Thompson, *The Lake District and the National Trust* (Kendal, 1946), pp. 42-3.
- 36 John Clare, *Selected Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Summerfield (London, 1990), p. 158. Grevel Lindop quotes part of this passage in support of a similar point to mine in 'The Language of Nature and the Language of Poetry: The 1988 Pete Laver Lecture', *Wordsworth Circle*, 20 (1989), 2-9 (p. 3).
- 37 William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs*, ed. Asa Briggs (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. 96.
- 38 For the relationship between socialism and green politics in the late nineteenth century, see Peter C. Gould's excellent study, *Early Green Politics: Back to Nature, Back to the Land, and Socialism in Britain 1880-1900* (Brighton and New York, 1988). For a recognition of Morris's centrality to any conception of 'green socialism', see Raymond Williams, 'Socialism and Ecology', in his *Resources of Hope*, ed. Robin Gable (London, 1989), 210-26.
- 39 Morris, *News from Nowhere, and Selected Writings*, ed. Briggs, p. 217.
- 40 *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford, 1989), p. 38.
- 41 *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford, 1977), p. 82.
- 42 *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845; English edn, 1892, repr. St Albans, 1969), p. 38.
- 43 See, however, Howard L. Parsons's attempt to construct a 'socialist Ecology' in the introduction to his *Marx and Engels on Ecology* (Westport, Conn., 1977).
- 44 *Unto This Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy* (1862), essay IV, 'Ad Valorem', in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London, 1903-12), xvii. 104-5. Library Edition cited hereafter as LE.
- 45 'The Nature of Gothic', para. xvi, in *The Stones of Venice*, vol. ii (LE x. 196).
- 46 Leslie Stephen, 'Wordsworth's Ethics', in *Hours in a Library*, new edn, 3 vols (London, 1909), ii. 275-6. The reference to Adam Smith is supported by a footnote referring to Wordsworth's 'how dire a thing/Is worshipped in that idol proudly named/"The Wealth of Nations"' (1850 *Prelude*, xiii. 77-9).
- 47 *News from Nowhere and Selected Writings*, pp. 34-5.
- 48 *Principles of Political Economy*, book iv, chap. 6, para. 2, in vol. 3 of *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, gen. ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto, 1965), p. 756.
- 49 *For's Clavigera*, Letter V, 1 May 1871 (LE xxvii. 91-2).
- 50 *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884), Lecture 1 (LE xxxiv. 37).
- 51 *Storm-Cloud*, LE xxxiv. 40.

3 THE MORAL OF LANDSCAPE

- 1 Francis Jeffrey's review of *The Excursion*, *Edinburgh Review*, November 1814, quoted from *William Wordsworth: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Graham McMaster (Harmondsworth and Baltimore, 1972), p. 122. Where possible, reviews and opinions are quoted from this valuable anthology, cited hereafter as McMaster.
- 2 Arnold's introduction to *Poems of Wordsworth* (1879), McMaster, pp. 222-3.
- 3 Letter to Lady Beaumont, 3 April 1815, McMaster, p. 130.
- 4 The other two being Hazlitt's criticism and Haydon's paintings: *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), i. 203.
- 5 *The Examiner*, 21 August 1814, McMaster, p. 114.
- 6 Letter to Rev. Walter Brown, McMaster, p. 179.
- 7 *Examiner*, 2 October 1814, p. 638.
- 8 This particular revision of the canon has its origin in Jonathan Wordsworth's *The Music of Humanity* (London, 1969) and reaches its apotheosis with Stephen Gill's widely used Oxford Authors edition of Wordsworth, where 'The Ruined Cottage' is printed as an independent poem and the rest of *The Excursion* is excluded.
- 9 Letter to Lady Beaumont, 3 April 1815, McMaster, p. 130.
- 10 See, for example, the treatment of this passage ('Not useless do I deem / These quiet sympathies with things that hold / An inarticulate language . . .') by Gill in the Appendix to his Oxford Authors edition, and again in his *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford, 1989).
- 11 It would essentially comprise books one to four of the 1814 text, together with a few additional passages that were already written by this time, such as the lines on the 'active Principle' in all things which begin the Wanderer's discourse in book nine.
- 12 *Quarterly Review*, October 1814; Lamb's text was heavily edited by William Gifford. I quote the reprint in *Lamb as Critic*, ed. Roy Park (London, 1980), p. 197.
- 13 *Hours in a Library*, new edn, 3 vols (London, 1909), ii. 250, 255.
- 14 *The Excursion*, iv. 978-92, with Ruskin's elision.
- 15 Fenwick note, in *Wordsworth's Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford, 1940-9), v. 373.
- 16 Jeffrey's review, quoted from his *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review* (London, 1855), p. 599.
- 17 *The Excursion*, i. 198-210. Quotations from *The Excursion* are followed by line references to Helen Darbishire's edition in vol. V of *Poetical Works*, but the text has been silently emended to conform to the first edition of 1814.
- 18 H. W. Piper, *The Active Universe: Pantheism and the Concept of Imagination in the English Romantic Poets* (London, 1962), p. 122. Piper's remains the best introduction to the theory of the 'one life' and its background in the scientific theories of Joseph Priestley and Erasmus Darwin; especially interesting from the point of view of environmental consciousness is his account (pp. 70-2) of John 'Walking' Stewart, whom Wordsworth met, probably in Girondin circles in Paris, and who argued in his *Apocalypse of Nature* (c. 1790) that man must 'do no violence to any part of animate nature'.

- 19 Canto III, stanzas 72 and 75, in Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford, 1978-91), ii. 103-4. Typically, Byron then qualifies his enthusiasm ('But this is not my theme') and proceeds with some distinctly two-edged stanzas concerning Rousseau.
- 20 Lamb, in the *Quarterly Review*, in *Lamb as Critic*, ed. Park, p. 196.
- 21 *Eclectic Review*, 2nd series, 3 (1815), pp. 27, 22.
- 22 See, for example, his letter to Catherine Clarkson of December 1814, McMaster, pp. 127-8.
- 23 Letter to W. S. Williams, printed in *Macmillan's Magazine*, 64 (1891), 280; quoted in Elizabeth K. Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), p. 167. Helsinger's is the best account of Wordsworth's influence on Ruskin, though, as will become apparent, I do not share her view (p. 6) that in *Modern Painters III* Ruskin has a 'highly critical attitude toward Wordsworth as a Romantic poet of imagination'.
- 24 *Modern Painters III* (1856), chap. 16, para. 28, in *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, Library Edition, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London, 1903-12) (LE), v. 333.
- 25 *Modern Painters I* (1843), part two, section two, chapter three, para. five (LE iii. 307) - subsequent references will be in the form 'II. ii. 3. 5', cited without page refs to LE.
- 26 See, for example, John D. Rosenberg, *The Darkening Glass: A Portrait of Ruskin's Genius* (New York, 1961; repr. London, 1963), p. 19, and Helsinger, *Ruskin and the Art of the Beholder*, pp. 117-20.
- 27 *Modern Painters III*, chap. 17, para. 3 (LE v. 355).
- 28 Preface to vol. V (LE vii. 9).
- 29 The final chapter, 'Of the Teachers of Turner', in which Turner is played off against the artificiality of Claude, acts as a bridge that leads to the detailed account of Turner in the first five chapters of volume four (also 1856).
- 30 *Modern Painters III*, chap. 11, para. 3 (LE v. 193). Part four of Ruskin's massive study occupies the whole of volume three; subsequent references to this volume accordingly give only chapter and paragraph number (in the style '11. 3'), without page refs to LE.
- 31 Friedrich Schiller, 'On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry', trans. Julius A. Elias, in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: Winckelmann, Lessing, Hamann, Herder, Schiller and Goethe*, ed. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1985), p. 189.
- 32 Hazlitt's *Examiner* review, in McMaster, p. 115.
- 33 Fragment on 'Taste', in *The Oxford Authors: John Clare*, ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Oxford, 1984), pp. 479-80.
- 34 Phrases quoted from the earlier version of the 'Prospectus' in *Home at Grasmere* (1991).
- 35 Fuller, *Images of God: The Consolations of Lost Illusions* (London, 1985), pp. 282-3. Fuller developed his argument about the importance of Ruskin in *Theoria* (London, 1988).
- 36 *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (London, 1972), p. 468.
- 37 See further, Denis Cosgrove and John E. Thornes, 'Of Truth of Clouds: John Ruskin and the Moral Order in Landscape', in *Humanistic Geography and Literature: Essays on the Experience of Place*, ed. Douglas C. D. Pocock (London, 1981), pp. 20-46, where it is pointed out that levels of smoke and

sulphur dioxide peaked in London and the rest of Britain around 1880 (p. 39).

4 THE NAMING OF PLACES

- 1 *Wordsworth's Poetical Works* ed. Ernest de Sélincourt and Helen Darbishire, 5 vols (Oxford, 1940-9), ii. 289-90.
- 2 *Poetical Works*, iv. 199.
- 3 'Essay upon Epitaphs, I', in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford, 1974), ii. 49. Subsequent references given in text.
- 4 Peter Conrad's phrase, in his *Everyman History of English Literature* (London, 1985), p. 90.
- 5 Edward Thomas, *A Literary Pilgrim in England* (London, 1917; repr. Oxford, 1980), p. 261. The notion of pilgrimage built into the title is telling: for Thomas, certain places are shrines to the writers associated with them.
- 6 Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978* (London, 1980, repr. 1984), p. 131.
- 7 'Michael, a Pastoral Poem', in Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (London, 1963, repr. 1968), p. 228. Since one of my concerns in this chapter is the position of the place-naming poems in the structure of Wordsworth's 1800 collection, quotations from *Lyrical Ballads* are taken from this edition (cited hereafter as *LB*), not Gill's *Oxford Authors* text.
- 8 Lamb to Coleridge, July 1797, in *The Letters of Charles and Mary Anne Lamb. Volume I: Letters of Charles Lamb 1796-1801*, ed. Edwin W. Marrs, Jr (Ithaca, 1975), p. 117.
- 9 'Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry', in Geoffrey Hartman, *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970* (New Haven, 1970), p. 207. In this essay and the related 'Romantic Poetry and the Genius Loci', also in *Beyond Formalism*, Hartman locates Wordsworth firmly in place, in nature; had subsequent criticism attended more to this aspect of his work and less to the 'imagination against nature' argument of 'Wordsworth and the *Via Naturaliter Negativa*', Romantic studies might not have descended down the rocky path I traced in my introduction.
- 10 *Wordsworth and the Worth of Words* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 275.
- 11 To Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817, *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), i. 185. Keats's allusion is, of course, Miltonic rather than strictly biblical.
- 12 Thomas Allsop, *Letters, Conversations and Recollections of S.T. Coleridge*, 2 vols (London, 1836), i. 107.
- 13 *Paradise Lost*, xii. 587.
- 14 MS JJ, in *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York, 1979), p. 492.
- 15 *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism*, ed. John Shawcross (London, 1909), p. 154.
- 16 On these words, see further, John Kerrigan, 'Wordsworth and the Sonnet: Building, Dwelling, Thinking', *Essays in Criticism*, 35 (1985), 45-75.

- 17 'Poems on the Naming of Places VI', 'When, to the attractions of the busy world . . .', in *Poetical Works*, ii. 118-23.
- 18 See *Poetical Works*, ii. 487.
- 19 *Poetical Works*, ii. 487.
- 20 Quoted in David McCracken, *Wordsworth and the Lake District* (Oxford, 1984), p. 193.
- 21 *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, VII, 2 vols (Princeton, 1983), ii. 104.
- 22 Note to *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, in *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, who lived about the time of Shakespeare* (London, 1808). See Lamb as Critic, ed. Roy Park (London, 1980), p. 117.
- 23 *Poly-Olbion* (1622), Song XXX, lines 155-64, quoted by Coleridge in *Biographia*, ii. 104.
- 24 See *A Language not to be Betrayed: Selected Prose of Edward Thomas*, ed. Edna Longley (Manchester, 1981), p. 230.
- 25 'The Road from Penshurst: Wordsworth, Ben Jonson and Coleridge in 1802', *Essays in Criticism*, 37 (1987), 209-33.
- 26 Simpson, *Wordsworth and the Figurings of the Real* (London, 1982), pp. 172, 31; see also his *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* (London, 1979), pp. 72-6.
- 27 *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt (Oxford, 1906, repr. 1977), p. 160.
- 28 *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2nd edn by Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1971), p. 37.
- 29 Jonathan Wordsworth, *William Wordsworth: The Borders of Vision* (Oxford, 1982), p. 147.
- 30 See, for instance, Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'* (New Haven, 1984).
- 31 *Home at Grasmere: Part First, Book First of 'The Recluse'*, ed. Beth Darlington, The Cornell Wordsworth (Ithaca and Hassocks, Sussex, 1977), MS B: Reading Text, line 12. Subsequent quotations are followed by line reference to MS B, the text included in *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford, 1984).
- 32 It should be recorded that where I feel 'glorious reciprocity', David Simpson finds 'near-hysterical possessiveness' - *Wordsworth's Historical Imagination* (New York and London, 1987), p. 135. Simpson and I obviously respond rather differently to Wordsworth's tone. The taste of the reader will judge between us. One aim of this chapter, as of chapter 1, is to suggest that a positive use may be made of what Simpson's book views sceptically as Wordsworth's 'agrarian idealism'.
- 33 Goldstein, *Ruins and Empire: The Evolution of a Theme in Augustan and Romantic Literature* (Pittsburgh, 1977), p. 183.
- 34 Kroeber's article "'Home at Grasmere': Ecological Holiness", *PMLA*, 89 (1974), 132-41, is the only previous published 'ecological' reading of Wordsworth that I know.
- 35 'On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry', trans. Julius A. Elias, in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism*, ed. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1985), p. 191; Schiller's italics.
- 36 De Man, 'The Dead-End of Formalist Criticism', repr. in his *Blindness and*

- Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis, 1983), p. 239.
- 37 See MS 2, in *Poetical Works*, ii. 482.
- 38 'On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry', p. 213; *Home at Grasmere*, 829-30.
- 39 *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, canto VI, in *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. J. Logie Robertson (Oxford, 1904), pp. 47-8.
- 40 Letter of 4 May 1805, in *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805*, ed. E. de Sélincourt, rev. C. L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967), p. 590.
- 41 Journal for 29 Sept. 1824, in *The Prose of John Clare*, ed. J. W. and Anne Tibble (London, 1951), pp. 109-10.
- 42 'Impulses of Spring', *The Oxford Authors: John Clare*, ed. Eric Robinson and David Powell (Oxford, 1984), p. 111.
- 43 Clare, *Selected Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Summerfield (London, 1990), p. 197.
- 44 Thomas, *A Literary Pilgrim in England*, p. 227.
- 45 *A Literary Pilgrim in England*, pp. 143-6.
- 46 *A Language not to be Betrayed*, p. 211.
- 47 *A Shropshire Lad*, XL, in Housman, *Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, ed. Christopher Ricks (London, 1988), p. 64, with the misprint 'This' in line 5 corrected to 'That'.
- 48 *Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, p. 76. Housman noted in a letter that one of the variants on 'quietest' was 'drunkenest' - to Houston Martin, 14 April 1934, *The Letters of A. E. Housman*, ed. Henry Maas (London, 1971), p. 352. As Wordsworth acknowledged 'real evil' in the Vale of Grasmere, so Housman's Shropshire is a place of drunkenness, infidelity, and murder.
- 49 On the importance of pastoral in the experience of the Great War, see 'Arcadian Recourses', chap. 7 of Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York and Oxford, 1975), and, as a supplement, my essay 'Arcadia and Armageddon: Three English Novelists and the First World War', *Etudes Anglaises*, 39 (1986), 150-62.
- 50 'Crickley Hill', in *Collected Poems of Ivor Gurney*, ed. P. J. Kavanagh (Oxford, 1982), pp. 55-6.
- 51 Quoted from *The Oxford Authors: Thomas Hardy*, ed. Samuel Hynes (Oxford, 1984), pp. 164-5.
- 52 *The Collected Poems of Edward Thomas*, ed. R. George Thomas (Oxford, 1978, repr. 1981), p. 98.
- 53 For some contentious soundings, see John Lucas, *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry, 1688-1900* (London, 1990). On Edward Thomas's troubled Englishness, see Stan Smith, *Edward Thomas* (London, 1986).
- 54 *A Language not to be Betrayed*, pp. 230-1.
- 55 Thomas, *Collected Poems*, pp. 53-7. Edna Longley, Thomas's best critic, offers a superb reading of this poem in her *Poetry in the Wars* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1986), pp. 47-57. Longley describes Thomas's 'history-through-geography', his deciphering of 'inscriptions' and the 'language of landscape', as a 'pioneering ecological philosophy' (pp. 57-8) - so it is, but it is also Wordsworthian.
- 56 *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, 2 vols (Oxford, 1912), i. 262-3.

- 57 In *Liberty*, part IV (1736), James Thomson described settlements such as Geneva as 'Cities of brothers' where there was 'equal life', and alluded to 'the Swiss sickness': 'And sickening fancy oft, when absent long, / Pines to behold their Alpine views again' (iv. 331, 346-7 and notes). See further, Alan D. McKillop, 'Local Attachment and Cosmopolitanism - The Eighteenth-Century Pattern', in *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. F. W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (New York, 1965), pp. 191-218. Wordsworth first wrote about the strong attachment which the Swiss feel towards their native mountains in a letter to Dorothy sent from beside Lake Constance on 6 September 1790.
- 58 Eleanor Farjeon, *Edward Thomas: The Last Four Years* (Oxford, 1958, repr. 1979), p. 154.
- 59 *Collected Poems*, p. 86.
- 60 *A Language not to be Betrayed*, p. 131.
- 61 *A Language not to be Betrayed*, p. 221.
- 62 'The Manor Farm', *Collected Poems*, p. 18. A perhaps preferable variant reading has 'The church and yew' in place of 'Small church, great yew'.
- 63 'The Owl', *Collected Poems*, p. 40. In addition to darkly revising the 'merry note' of *Love's Labour's Lost*, Thomas's poem, with its image of descent from a hill to the warmth of an inn, reiterates the 'green socialism' of William Morris's 'The Message of the March Wind' - 'But lo, the old inn, and the lights, and the fire' (quoted by Thomas in *A Literary Pilgrim*, p. 89).

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