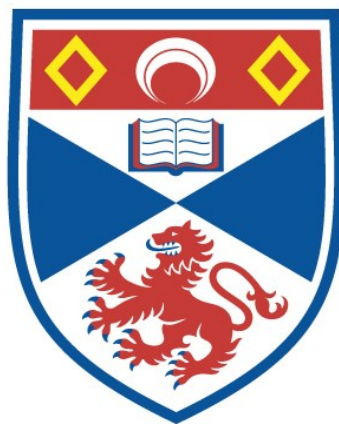


**SOME CONTEXTS FOR WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S
RECLUSE, 1770-1798 : EDUCATION, POLITICS AND
LITERATURE**

Ayumi Mishiro

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



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Some Contexts for
William Wordsworth's *Recluse*,
1770 - 1798:

Education, Politics, and Literature

by

Ayumi Mishiro



Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master
of Philosophy in the University of St. Andrews, 30 August 1996.

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Abstract

The principal aim of this thesis is to illuminate some prefigurations of *The Recluse* from January 1793 (the publication of *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*) to early March 1798 (the first announcement of *The Recluse* in his letters). Three chapters and an appendix assert the importance of this period for Wordsworth's ideas of Nature, Man, and Society in referring to the social, political, and literary background 1770 - 1798, and in particular to the influence of less well-known figures - John Langhorne, John Thelwall, and James Losh. Chapter One focuses on debate about the social utility of education in the explicitly radical milieu of the early 1790s, and suggests that educational interests provided Wordsworth, Thelwall, and Coleridge with a coherent frame into which the *Recluse* scheme would fit. Chapter Two explores similarities in Langhorne's, Thelwall's, and Wordsworth's ideas of Nature, Man, and Society, in particular in their treatment of the poor, and relates these contexts to *The Recluse*. Chapter Three and my Appendix suggest broad similarities between *The Recluse* and *The Economist* magazine, in which Wordsworth showed a keen interest in his letter to Losh of 11 March 1798. The thesis concludes by suggesting that the first announcement in early March 1798 of the 'utility' of *The Recluse* was retrospective - an expression of hopes, ideals, and more practical purposes that Wordsworth had perhaps already outgrown.

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Abbreviations

- Adventures* William Wordsworth, *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*
- BC William Wordsworth, *The Baker's Cart*
- Bewell Alan Bewell, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (New Haven, 1989)
- BV Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Borders of Vision* (Oxford, 1982)
- BWS *Bicentenary Wordsworth Studies in Memory of John Alban Finch*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Ithaca, 1970)
- CC *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, General ed. Kathleen Coburn (Bollingen Series 75; New Jersey, 1969 -)
- Chard Leslie F. Chard, II, *Dissenting Republican: Wordsworth's Early Life and Thought in Their Political Context* (The Hague, 1972)
- CJ John Langhorne, *The Country Justice: A Poem* (London, 1774-7); quoted from *The Poetical Works of John Langhorne* (London, 1804, repr. 1971)
- CL *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. L. Griggs (6 vols.; Oxford, 1956-71)
- Cornell EW William Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk*, ed. J. Averill (Cornell Wordsworth Series, Ithaca, 1984)
- Cornell LB William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. J. Butler and K. Green (Cornell Wordsworth Series, Ithaca, 1992)
- Cornell RC William Wordsworth, *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, ed. J. Butler (Cornell Wordsworth Series, Ithaca, 1979)
- Cornell SP William Wordsworth, *The Salisbury Plain Poems*, ed. S. Gill (Cornell Wordsworth Series, Ithaca, 1975)
- DC MS. Dove Cottage MS, at the Wordsworth Library, Grasmere
- DNB *The Dictionary of National Biography*
- Émile Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, or On Education*, introd. and trans. Allan Bloom (Harmondsworth, 1979)
- Emsley Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars: 1793-1815* (London, 1979)
- Erdman David V. Erdman, 'Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Wedgwood Fund', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 60 (1956)

- Essay* John Thelwall, *An Essay Towards A Definition of Animal Vitality* (London, 1793)
- 1793 EW William Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk* (1793)
- 1794 EW William Wordsworth, *An Evening Walk* (1794)
- EY *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt, 2nd ed., *The Early Years, 1787 - 1805*, rev. C. L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967)
- Four Texts* William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: Four Texts* (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850), ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Harmondsworth, 1995)
- Gill Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford, 1989)
- Gill SP Stephen Gill, 'The Original Salisbury Plain', in BWS
- Harrison Gary Harrison, *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty and Power* (Detroit, 1994)
- Holmes Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions* (Harmondsworth, 1989)
- IF The notes dictated by William Wordsworth to Isabella Fenwick in 1843; quoted from *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. A. B. Grosart (3 vols.; London, 1876), vol. III.
- Jacobus Mary Jacobus, *Tradition and Experiment in Lyrical Ballads, 1798* (Oxford, 1976)
- Johnston Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'* (New Haven, 1984)
- Landon Carol Landon, 'Some Sidelights on *The Prelude*', in BWS
- Lects. 1795 S. T. Coleridge, *Lectures 1795 on Politics and Religion*, ed. L. Patton and P. Mann, CC i (New Jersey, 1971)
- Lock F. P. Lock, *Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1985)
- Lost Satire* Nicholas Roe, 'Wordsworth's Lost Satire', *London Review of Books* (6 July 1995)
- Marshall Peter H. Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven, 1984)
- 'Memoir' 'Prefatory Memoir' in John Thelwall, *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (Hereford, 1801)
- MH Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity* (London, 1969)
- Newlyn Lucy Newlyn, *Coleridge, Wordsworth, and the Language of Allusion* (Oxford, 1986)
- Night* William Wordsworth, *A Night on Salisbury Plain*

- CEconomist* *The CEconomist, or Englishman's Magazine*, ed. Thomas Bigge (2 vols.; Newcastle upon Tyne, 1798-9)
- OMT* William Wordsworth, *Old Man Travelling*
- Partisan* Kenneth R. Johnston, 'Philanthropy or Treason? Wordsworth as "Active Partisan" ', *SIR* 25 (1986)
- Perip.* John Thelwall, *The Peripatetic: Sketches of the Heart, of Nature and Society; in a Series of Politico-Sentimental Journals, in Verse and Prose, of the Eccentric Excursions of Sylvanus Theophrastus* (3 vols.; London, 1793), introd. Donald H. Reiman (2 vols.; New York, 1978)
- PJ* William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (2 vols.; London, 1793)
- Poole* Mrs H. Sandford, *Thomas Poole and his Friends* (2 vols.; London, 1888)
- Pr. W.* *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (3 vols.; Oxford, 1974)
- PW* *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Selincourt and H. Darbishire (5 vols.; Oxford, 1940-9)
- Reed* Mark L. Reed, *Wordsworth: The Chronology of the Early Years* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967)
- Reflections* Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event*, ed. C. C. O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1968)
- Richardson* Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge, 1994)
- Rights* Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. Henry Collins (Harmondsworth, 1969)
- River Wye* William Gilpin, *Observations on River Wye* (London, 1782)
- RY* Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford, 1988)
- Sharrock* Roger Sharrock, 'Wordsworth and John Langhorne's *The Country Justice*', *Notes & Queries* NS 1 (1954)
- SIR* *Studies in Romanticism*
- Stone* Lawrence Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900', *Past and Present*, 42(1969)

- Thel. Life* C. Boyle Thelwall, *The Life of John Thelwall by his Widow* (London, 1837)
- Thel. W.* John Thelwall, *The Politics of English Jacobinism: Writings of John Thelwall*, ed. Gregory Claeys (Pennsylvania, 1995)
- Triumphs* Kenneth R. Johnston, 'The Triumphs of Failure: Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798', *The Age of William Wordsworth: Critical Essays on the Romantic Tradition*, ed. Kenneth R. Johnston and Gene W. Ruoff (New Brunswick, 1987)
- Watchman* S. T. Coleridge, *The Watchman*, ed. L. Patton, CC ii (New Jersey, 1970)
- Wu* Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770 - 1799* (Cambridge, 1993)

Introduction

It was in 1814, sixteen years after the first announcement of *The Recluse* in early March 1798, that *The Excursion* - the 'intermediate part' of that 'philosophical poem' - announced Wordsworth's 'views of Man, Nature, and Society' (PW V. 2). The grand scheme for *The Recluse*, however, was never formally completed, and as Helen Darbishire says, 'all that finally survived, apart from one Book [*Home at Grasmere*], was a Prelude to the main theme and an Excursion from it' (PW V. 368). Kenneth R. Johnston claims that *The Recluse* amounted to the 'ruined outlines of an immense but only partly constructed cathedral' consisting of *The Prelude*, *Home at Grasmere* (the first book of the first part of *The Recluse*), *The Tuft of Primroses* (presumably the second book of the first part), and *The Excursion*, with the rest of the first part and the whole of the third left unfinished (Johnston, xvi-vii). However, Johnston's study *Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'* insists that *The Recluse* exists as a 'coherent though incomplete body of interrelated texts' composed throughout Wordsworth's career (Johnston, vi). Judson Stanley Lyon (7,10) points out that right up until 1813 component parts of *The Excursion* had been 'scattered among Wordsworth's manuscripts' - yet he claims that in other respects *The Excursion* also showed 'the tenacious unity of Wordsworth's thought' over some eighteen years. He regards the birth of 'Wordsworth's most grandiose scheme - a philosophical poem which was to contain 'all his most interesting thoughts on man, nature, and society' and to include 'all his poetry, either directly or by implicit parallel, in its massive design' - as an 'outgrowth of conversation with Coleridge' in the Alfoxden period (July 1797 - summer 1798) when both poets became 'aware of the importance of nature to their world-view' (Lyon, 10).

In *The Borders of Vision* Jonathan Wordsworth places *The Recluse* in a broader perspective: '[H]owever idiosyncratic it may seem', he asserts, *The Recluse* is 'one of a great number of millenarian schemes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'. And as William Hazlitt insisted, Wordsworth can be regarded as 'the purest emanation of the spirit of [an] age' which was trying to believe in 'universal benevolence', 'the omnipotence of truth', and 'the perfectibility of human nature' (BV, 341-2). M. H. Abrams also explains Wordsworth's *Recluse* scheme in the context of the millennium, invoking the explicitly religious terms of the Apocalypse:

Wordsworth, as a poet-prophet, in the 'Prospectus' to *The Recluse* chants a 'spousal verse' in expectation of 'a culminating and procreative marriage between mind and nature' which will 'effect a spiritual resurrection among mankind'.¹ Johnston, like Abrams, points out that Wordsworth aims to display 'a mutually positive and ultimately redemptive relationship' of 'Man, Nature, and Society' in a 'nonrevolutionary philosophy of progress', though he states that the wished-for 'consummation' will be the establishment of a 'new democratic society' (*Triumphs*, 135, 137).

In discussing *The Recluse*, most scholars, like Johnston, Lyon, and Jonathan Wordsworth, have paid close attention to the great decade which began in July 1797 when Wordsworth and Coleridge formed their relationship at Alfoxden and Nether Stowey. This thesis focuses on the preceding decade which began with the earliest composition towards *An Evening Walk* in 1787 (see *Cornell EW*, 85) and concluded with the first announcement of *The Recluse* in Wordsworth's letters to James Webbe Tobin of 6 March and to James Losh of 11 March 1798 (*EY*, 212, 214). I hope to highlight Wordsworth's various views of Nature, Man, and Society in his compositions up to the letters about *The Recluse* in early March 1798. I also trace the influence on the *Recluse* scheme of his predecessors and contemporaries including Edmund Burke, William Godwin, and Thomas Paine, and some less well-known figures, John Langhorne, John Thelwall, and James Losh. Coleridge's contributions to the grand 'philosophical poem' have been investigated by many scholars, and there is no need - or room - to discuss these in detail in this thesis, although I shall refer to them as influential factors. Rather, this thesis focuses on Thelwall, and in particular calls attention to similarities between Thelwall's 'Sketches of the Heart, Nature and Society' in *The Peripatetic* (1793) and Wordsworth's ideas of Nature, Man, and Society in poems towards *The Recluse* composed up to early March 1798.

The Peripatetic concluded in a grand epithalamium:

... Iö Hymen! thy triumphs I join, -
 ...
 Restore me to harmony, softness, and joy; -
 Those ardours by Nature indulgently given
 To realize all that is look'd for in heaven, -
 To unite us in bonds of affection and peace,

¹ M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York, 1971), 27.

And bid the rude struggles of selfishness cease,
 Till, heart link'd to heart, all the universe smile,
 And Social Affection each sorrow beguile,
 While Sympathy's touch shall the union sustain,
 And vibrate alike thro' each link of the chain.

Yet such, if by Nature conducted, and join'd
 Not by Interest and Pride, but the tie of the mind,
 Sex blended with sex from affection alone.
 And Simplicity made every bosom its throne -
 Such, such are the blessings from Hymen would flow,
 And this *wilderness* turn to an *Eden* below: -
 And *Eden of Mind* where each virtue should blow.

(*Perip.* III. 227-8)

The Peripatetic's 'Eden of Mind' later appeared as an earthly 'Paradise' (the 'simple produce of the common day') when in January 1800² Wordsworth began the 'Prospectus' to *The Recluse* by saying that he too would chant the 'spousal verse' of a similarly 'great consummation':

... and, by words
 Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
 Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
 Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
 To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims
 How exquisitely the individual Mind
 (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
 Of the whole species) to the external World
 Is fitted: - and how exquisitely, too -
 Theme this but little heard of among men -
 The external World is fitted to the Mind;
 And the creation (by no lower name
 Can it be called) which they with blended might
 Accomplish: - this is our high argument.³

² Jonathan Wordsworth, *BV*, 108, points out January 1800 as the most likely period of the composition of the 'Prospectus'.

³ *PWV*. 4-5, the 'Prospectus' to *The Recluse*, 47, 55, 57-71.

Whereas the ending of *The Peripatetic* expresses Thelwall's concern for reform of society in mythological terms, and through the language of sensibility ('heart link'd to heart') the blank verse of the 'Prospectus' indicates that Wordsworth intended to describe the ideal relationship of Nature, Man, and Society in terms only of 'what we are'. Throughout this thesis I suggest that Wordsworth's poems had already developed Thelwall's ideas and announced aspects of Wordsworth's 'high argument' by the time of the first letters about *The Recluse* in early March 1798.

This thesis consists of three chapters and an appendix. My first chapter begins by focusing on debate about education in the early 1790s, as expressed by Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, by Paine in *The Rights of Man*, by Godwin in *Political Justice*, by Thelwall in *The Peripatetic*, and by Wordsworth in his *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*. In doing so, I shall suggest that both Wordsworth and Thelwall paid much attention to the social utility of education in 1793 in a way that anticipates the proposed 'utility' of *The Recluse* (EY, 214). A subsequent part of this chapter pinpoints similarities in Wordsworth's, Thelwall's, and Coleridge's social concerns throughout their political activities and writings in 1794-5. Chapter One concludes by calling attention to the fact that all three shared educational interests in the explicitly radical milieu of the 1790s, and that this provides a coherent frame into which the *Recluse* scheme also fits.

My second chapter deals with literary works by some predecessors - William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* and John Langhorne's *The Country Justice*, and compares these with Thelwall's *The Peripatetic*. I point out that Wordsworth's poetic treatment of the victims of social and economic inequalities owed much to the radical and liberal spirit of the 1780s which Langhorne's poetry also reflected. The principal aim of the latter half of Chapter Two is to suggest that, although he was dealing with common themes, Wordsworth developed distinctive ways in which he could voice his views - social, moral, psychological, and 'philosophical' - in what I call the pre-*Recluse* poems (that is, the poems composed before the first meeting with Thelwall and Coleridge at Alfoxden and Nether Stowey in 17-27 July 1797). Among the poems which I refer to are the first (1793) and revised (1794) versions of *An Evening Walk*, the *Salisbury Plain* poems - *A Night on Salisbury Plain* and *Adventures on Salisbury Plain, The Baker's Cart*, and *Old Man Travelling*.

Chapter Three gives prominence to a less frequently remarked part of Wordsworth's letter to James Losh of 11 March 1798. In announcing the full

title of his poem, Wordsworth also showed a keen interest in *The Economist*, a monthly journal to which Losh had contributed since January 1798 (see EY, 214). The contents of the first volume of *The Economist* (January - December 1798) are listed in an appendix. The aim of Chapter Three and my Appendix is to offer a first approach to similarities between *The Recluse's* and *The Economist's* views of Nature, Man, and Society (I believe that future work in this area will be rewarding). I hope my short third chapter and appendix can serve to illuminate a new aspect of the earliest stage of Wordsworth's scheme: the *Recluse* plan and *The Economist* were in some ways culminations of Wordsworth's and Losh's careers in the 1790s and to this extent their 'utility' at that moment was retrospective - an expression of hopes, ideals, and more practical purposes that Wordsworth had already successfully incorporated in his poems.

The influence of figures like Godwin, Paine, and Burke on Wordsworth's works of the 1790s has already been discussed by many scholars (some of which are referred to in this thesis). Similarities between Thelwall's *The Peripatetic* and the *Recluse* poems are suggested by Lyon and Johnston. Lyon (36), by focusing on the subtitle of *The Peripatetic*, 'Eccentric Excursions', pinpoints similarities between the characters' views of Nature, Man, and Society: both works present 'philosophical and social views', point out the 'advantages and disadvantages of commerce', and make the characters 'moralize over selected graves' in the churchyard. Lyon confirms Thelwall's opinion of *The Excursion* recorded in Henry Crabb Robinson's diary of 12 February 1815: 'Wordsworth borrows without acknowledgement from Thelwall himself!!'⁴ However, Lyon concludes, 'Thelwall's acute social consciousness' which 'colors much of *The Peripatetic*' is absent from *The Excursion*; furthermore, he does not specify why Wordsworth should have borrowed from Thelwall in his first place (Lyon, 36). My thesis sets out to demonstrate that throughout his radical activities and his literary works in 1793-8 Wordsworth showed as acute a social consciousness as Thelwall but also an imaginative boldness that Thelwall may have lacked.

Johnston (13-4) refers briefly to what Wordsworth picked up from *The Peripatetic* for the existing *Recluse* poems - *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*. 'As an *organizational* model it [*The Peripatetic*] offered much that Wordsworth could and did use', he says, and points out in particular that '[t]hroughout its three volumes, which are divided into short descriptions, incidents, and

⁴ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, ed. Thomas Sadler (3 vols.; London, 1869), I, 473.

meditations, are many subheadings which, though conventional, would have both stimulated and reflected Wordsworth's particular interests'. What Wordsworth may have owed to Thelwall - how to describe his miscellaneous interests, in particular the philosophical, the political, the psychological, and the aesthetic - was crucial to the *Recluse* scheme since, Johnston asserts, 'much of the difficulty of *The Recluse* was not writing but organizing it' (14). However, Johnston goes no further than suggesting similarities between Thelwall's 'organizational model' and *The Prelude* and *The Excursion*, since 'influences upon a poem that did not fully come into existence are less important than what does exist' (14). Johnston concludes his account of the influence of *The Peripatetic* upon *The Recluse* by emphasizing differences between them: whereas *The Peripatetic* 'mixes so much fustian and cliché with radical political views'

Wordsworth's representations of suffering poor people in the first *Recluse* poems [of 1797-8] do not fit easily into any conventional scheme of politics, nor most available literary categories. So too, *The Recluse* was from the outset informed by philosophic considerations which enriched, complicated, and probably doomed its ultimate completion - at least insofar as "philosophy" signified, for Wordsworth, metaphysical elaboration and systematic consistency. (Johnston, 13-4)

Johnston, although pointing out Thelwall's visit to Alfoxden and Nether Stowey as a crucial incident for the *Recluse* scheme,⁵ asserts in the passage quoted above that even at the outset *The Recluse* had already gone much further than *The Peripatetic* - which was a relatively conventional work. Johnston, like Lyon, regards Thelwall as more of a politician than a poet, more interested in social concerns than 'philosophic considerations'. Treating Thelwall as a poet and politician, my thesis suggests that Wordsworth's pre-*Recluse* poems may have reflected, or shared, Thelwall's 'philosophic considerations' for social victims in the period after 1793 when Wordsworth formed his links with radicals in London.

⁵ Johnston, 11, mentions 'August 1797' as the date of Thelwall's visit, though, as Gill (Gill, 126) and others suggest, it was in 17-27 July 1797 that Thelwall stayed with Wordsworth and Coleridge.

It was in January 1804, six years after the first announcement of *The Recluse*, that Coleridge called it 'the first & finest philosophical Poem' by 'the first & greatest philosophical poet'.⁶ At this moment the 'utility' of *The Recluse* had still not been specified by Wordsworth, though my first and second chapters show that the pre-*Recluse* poems and the 1300 lines alluded to by Wordsworth in early March 1798 did represent Wordsworth's 'philosophic considerations'. Indeed, Johnston asserts, 'the philosophy of *The Recluse*' is 'complete . . . in the sense of reflecting a recognizable form of metaphysical and moral inquiry' (Johnston, 15). I hope my third chapter and appendix may indicate further that Wordsworth might have been interested in *The CEconomist* as a possible outlet for his writing. Although *The Recluse* was announced alongside Wordsworth's inquiry to Losh about *The CEconomist*, not much attention has so far been paid to the connection between them. The 1300 lines of the *Recluse* poems composed up to early March 1798 share some themes and interests with *The CEconomist*. By pinpointing similarities between *The Recluse's* and *The CEconomist's* treatment of the poor, I shall conclude my thesis by presenting *The CEconomist* as a parallel text to the *Recluse* scheme.

Lyon, Johnston, and others have regarded Wordsworth's letters to Tobin of 6 March, and to Losh of 11 March 1798 as the beginning of his plan for a grand poem, and have made a study of *The Recluse* by referring to the completed parts of it, and in particular to the 1805 and 1850 *Prelude* and *The Excursion*. In this thesis I shall deal with the political and literary backgrounds of the last decades of the eighteenth century (1770-1798), and investigate the influence of 'the spirit of the age' on Wordsworth's political activities and writings from 1787 until early March 1798. The principal aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that Wordsworth had already voiced coherent views of Nature, Man, and Society which were of 'considerable utility' - social, political, moral, and philosophical - by the time of the first announcement of the philosophical poem that would preoccupy him for the rest of his life.

⁶ CL II. 1034. Coleridge to Richard Sharp of 15 January 1804.

Chapter I

The Province of Education, 1789-1798

i

(1) Burke, Paine, and the Social Utility of Education

Throughout *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event* (November 1790) Edmund Burke warned of the possible harmful effects of the system of universal suffrage. 'Every thing ought to be open; but not indifferently to every man' because, according to Burke, men of 'a low education, a mean contracted view of things, a sordid mercenary occupation' had no qualifications for 'a government conversant in extensive objects'. In Burke's opinion, '[n]othing is a due and adequate representation of a state, that does not represent its ability, as well as its property'; legislative abilities should be developed by education, which only the ruling class with rank and wealth could afford to provide for its children. The French National Assembly, therefore, could not but reveal 'a poverty of conception, a coarseness and vulgarity' and 'savage and brutal' humanity (*Reflections*, 139-40, 174).

Burke's belief in 'entailed inheritance' convinced him that ordinary people did not deserve recognition for their virtues and abilities because 'all the good things' which were 'connected with manners and with civilization' had depended for ages upon '[t]he nobility and the clergy' who had 'kept learning in existence' (*Reflections*, 173). Without these elite inherited values of 'learning', he believed, men had only 'untaught feelings':

We are afraid to put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason; because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations, and of ages. (*Reflections*, 183)

For Burke, mass-education might undermine social order, and in consequence restricted education was the most effective means to preserve existing social distinctions. As Lawrence Stone (85) points out, between 1660 and 1790 most upper-class people were convinced that ‘a little learning for the poor’ would be dangerous, since it might encourage them ‘to aspire beyond their station’. To the ruling class education of the poor presented a threat to its superiority in society, and for this reason the revolution in France made Burke observe indignantly, ‘Along with its natural protectors and guardians [the nobility and the clergy], learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude’ (*Reflections*, 173).

Within several months after the publication of *Reflections* numerous pamphlets had appeared as replies to Burke, including the first part of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man* (22 February 1791).¹ As Alan Richardson points out, ‘the spectacle of a mass readership in the 1790s’ was ‘brought out . . . vividly by the unprecedented sales of *The Rights of Man*’. By selling as many as 50,000 copies, about three times more than Burke’s *Reflections*, Paine’s *Rights of Man* became the most effective attack on *Reflections* (Richardson, 119, 45). Significantly, and unlike other pamphlets, the first part of *The Rights of Man* not only provided its wide audience with a political language; Paine also devoted as much space to presenting the means of reform as to reproaching Burke’s praise for the natural rights of the inherited class. An important factor in those means was education.

The second part of *The Rights of Man* was published on 17 February 1792, one year after the first, selling in all from 200,000 to 500,000 copies (see Richardson, 45). This popularity reflected the influence of the first part on innumerable readers. Paine himself was conscious that both parts of *The Rights of Man* were educating and encouraging the middle- and lower- class readers to join the reform movement:

Mankind are not now to be told they shall not think, or they shall not read; and publications that go no further than to investigate principles of government, to invite men to reason and to reflect, and to show the errors and

¹ See Lock, 144. According to Lock, about thirty pamphlets had been published as ‘replies’ to Burke six months after the publication of *Reflections*.

excellences of different systems, have a right to appear.
(*Rights*, 156-7)

As this passage shows, for Paine the function of education was crucial for the success of the wider cause of social and political reform. With orderly arrangement and characteristic directness of expression, Paine further developed the discussion of social and political reform with which he had concluded the first part of his pamphlet. He began the second part with praise for America as an ideal republic. 'Republican government', Paine said, is 'established and conducted for the interest of the public' (*Rights*, 178). The present government in Britain, on the contrary, was of benefit not to the people as a whole but to a few of inherited status and wealth. Governments should be founded not on the 'hereditary system', which was 'repugnant to human wisdom' and 'human right', but on the 'representative system' which was 'always paralleled with the order and immutable laws of nature' and consequently truly 'wise' (*Rights*, 176, 183). To improve the condition of the public as a whole, Paine discussed the reform of economic and intellectual inequalities by means of the public education of the poor. In his minute analysis of the amount of tax necessary for this, Paine introduced a plan which would be easy in practice:

To pay as a remission of taxes to every poor family, out of the surplus taxes, and in room of poor-rates, four pounds a year for every child under fourteen years of age; enjoining the parents of such children to send them to school, to learn reading, writing, and common arithmetic; the ministers of every parish, of every denomination, to certify jointly to an office, for that purpose, that this duty is performed. (*Rights*, 241).

We should note that Paine insisted on teaching 'writing' and 'arithmetic', hitherto often regarded as unnecessary even by those who were well-disposed to the poor.² To establish Paine's ideal republic, society should

² The ruling class prevented the lower-middle and lower classes from learning to write because writing, by providing them with the means to express their feelings and opinions, encouraged them to aspire beyond their station. See Stone, 89-90. Stone points out some examples; Jonas Hanway and Hannah More believed that writing was not necessary for people's morals. The National Society for the fostering of elementary education, which had

require not inherited rank, but talent, abilities, and education. Writing and arithmetic would give an opportunity to the lower ranks of the people while also constituting an essential preparation for a more thoroughgoing reform of society. And in Tom Paine's enlightened advocacy of education I believe we find a first announcement of themes that would be crucial to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's scheme for *The Recluse*.

(2) Wordsworth's *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff*: Educating the 'Truly Free'

On 29 January 1793 Wordsworth's *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches* were published by Joseph Johnson, one of the most famous radical publishers who had also published the first part of *The Rights of Man* and other replies to Burke by influential figures like Mary Wollstonecraft and Joseph Priestley (see Chard, 46). Having returned from France in December 1792, Wordsworth may well have visited Johnson's bookshop in St Paul's Churchyard, which was a well-known meeting-place for radicals throughout the 1790s (see RY, 27-8). While Wordsworth was communicating with Johnson, William Godwin was devoting himself to the composition of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, which would be completed on 29 January. It seems unlikely that Wordsworth met Godwin in this period, but Johnson was well-placed to introduce him to radical circles which were receptive to Paine's and Godwin's ideas. In addition, during his stay in London Wordsworth probably visited Samuel Nicholson, a business associate of his cousin, who lived in Cateaton Street near Johnson's bookshop in St Paul's Churchyard.³ Nicholson had been a member of the Society for Constitutional Information, a dissenting and reformist society and precursor of the London

been set up by the Anglican Church, stated that 'it is not proposed that the children of the poor be . . . taught to write and cipher', while the Wesleyan Methodists prohibited the teaching of writing at their schools.

³ See *Partisan*, 381. Johnston suggests that Nicholson first met Wordsworth in 1791, and continued to invite him for Sunday dinners. See also RY, 27-8. Roe points out that Nicholson's significance to Wordsworth in 1791 lay in his attitude to the Revolution, to parliamentary reform, and to the pamphlet war initiated by Burke's *Reflections* in November 1790.

Corresponding Society. With Johnson or Nicholson, or both, Wordsworth almost certainly talked about the most successful radical pamphlet in this period - *The Rights of Man* - and Godwin's forthcoming *Political Justice*, the content of which was perhaps already known to prominent radicals.⁴

In spring 1793 Wordsworth was more or less under the influence of the ideals of radicals and dissenters; his activities were centred in Holborn and Johnson's bookshop, Nicholson's house, the Old Jewry meetinghouse, and Wordsworth's elder brother Richard's quarters in Gray's Inn were all near-by (see Chard, 56). The influence of *The Rights of Man* on Wordsworth's *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* (probably composed in February or March 1793) has been so fully discussed that there is no need to argue it again in this thesis.⁵ Calling himself an 'advocate of republicanism' (*Pr. W. I.* 38), Wordsworth identified with Paine although his recent experiences in France affected his republicanism as deeply as any political writings. Owen and Smyser deny Godwin's influence⁶ although I think Wordsworth's *Letter* may have been stimulated by *Political Justice*: in stating that he was 'so strongly impressed with the baleful influence of aristocracy and nobility upon human happiness and virtue', Wordsworth seemingly echoed the subtitle of *Political Justice* ('its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness'). This is a common phrase, but we cannot completely ignore the possibility that *Political Justice* influenced the *Letter* since Wordsworth became acquainted with friends and advocates of Godwin in this period.

⁴ See Wu, 109, and Marshall, 83. Marshall points out that during its sixteen months' composition the content of *Political Justice* had been probably known to some radicals. Wu, 66, suggests that Wordsworth had probably read *Political Justice* by June 1794 when he wrote to William Mathews about their scheme for a political journal, *The Philanthropist*.

⁵ *Pr. W. I.* 23-4, 50-66. In their 'Introduction' Owen and Smyser argue that Rousseau and Paine appear to have influenced the *Letter* because 'the verbal parallels between their writings and Wordsworth's are significantly numerous and often very close' (23). They also point out some similar passages between *The Rights of Man* (Part I and II) and Wordsworth's *Letter*, and suggest that Wordsworth was deeply under the influence of Paine at this time.

⁶ *Pr. W. I.* 23-4. They argue that 'some of Godwin's most important tenets are in direct contradiction to the very heart of Wordsworth's *Letter*', and conclude, 'Wherever similarities occur between Wordsworth's *Letter* and Godwin's *Political Justice*, it is possible to find a common source, usually Paine'. However, in a personal discussion at the 1996 Wordsworth Summer Conference Owen agreed that it seems impossible to deny the possibility of the influence of *Political Justice* on the *Letter*.

Certainly, it is likely that Wordsworth made use of Burke's famous charge: 'learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude' (*Reflections*, 1773). He echoed this phrase in discussing the social inequality resulting from the present system of education:

. . . we are taught from infancy that we were born in a state of inferiority to our oppressors, that they were sent into the world to scourge and we to be scourged. Accordingly we see the bulk of mankind actuated by these fatal prejudices, even more ready to lay themselves under the feet of *the great*, than the great are to trample upon them. (*Pr. W. I.* 36)

Godwin too said that public education had 'always expended its energies in the support of prejudice' and that it reinforced class distinctions. For example, according to Godwin, 'even in the petty institution of Sunday schools, the chief lessons that are taught are a superstitious veneration for the church of England, and to bow to every man in a handsome coat' (*PJ II.* 667-8). Disapproval of education like this was common - particularly among radicals from dissenting backgrounds with first-hand experience of the Anglican hegemony - and to this extent Wordsworth's condemnation of the present system of education indicates his friendship with dissenters (like Nicholson and Johnson) in London in spring 1793.

However, Wordsworth did not disapprove completely of the educational system as then established. Although he said, 'we are taught from infancy that we were born in a state of inferiority to our oppressors' (*Pr. W. I.* 36), Wordsworth himself, educated at Hawkshead grammar school, which was famous for its liberal and humane regime, offered an excellent example of the benefits of enlightened schooling.⁷ As Owen and Smyser suggest, Wordsworth's remarks on education were provoked by Richard Watson's denial of the resources of education to the lower class:

. . . peasants and mechanics are as useful to the state as any other order of men; but their utility consists in their discharging well the duties of their respective stations;

⁷ See Gill, 26-9. Gill argues that 'Wordsworth was taught in a humane way', and provided with two benefits of a liberal education; any books he wanted and contemporary literature.

it ceases when they affect to become legislators; when they intrude themselves into concerns, for which their education has not fitted them.⁸

Watson implicitly agreed with Burke that ignorance was the best means to retain the 'utility' of poor labourers who were obedient to their masters. Wordsworth, on the contrary, expected education to banish inequality:

It is the province of education to rectify the erroneous notions which a habit of oppression, and even of resistance, may have created, and to soften this ferocity of character proceeding from a necessary suspension of the mild and social virtues; it belongs to her to create a race of men who, truly free, will look upon their fathers as only enfranchised. (*Pr. W. I.* 34)

In Wordsworth's view virtues and talents were not to be inherited, but nourished in each person by education. He suggested that if 'a moderate portion of useful knowledge [c]ould be universally disseminated', governments would be provided with men of real '[v]irtues, talents, and acquirements' (*Pr. W. I.* 38-9). The crucial precedent for a reform to establish universal suffrage and 'a pure democracy' (*Pr. W. I.* 37) was widespread education of all those persons Burke had spurned as an uneducated, 'swinish multitude'.

(3) *The Peripatetic*: The General Laws of Nature

Even before the publication of *Political Justice*, John Thelwall shared important ideas with Godwin. While preparing for the publication of *Political Justice* at the end of January 1793, George Robinson (Godwin's publisher) published *An Essay Towards A Definition of Animal Vitality* which Thelwall had read as a lecture to the Physical Society at Guy's Hospital on 26 January. Some twenty years previously, Joseph Priestley (radical, scientist,

⁸ Richard Watson, *A Sermon Preached before the Stewards of the Westminster Dispensary at their Anniversary Meeting, in Charlotte-Street Chapel, April 1785. With an Appendix By R. Watson, D.D. Lord Bishop of Llandaff* (London, 1793), 27; quoted from *Pr. W. I.* 58.

philosopher, and leading Unitarian) demonstrated how his work on electricity might convince people of God's presence in the material world, and how the extension of knowledge, both scientific and philosophic, would enable human beings to achieve an earthly paradise. To Priestley's Unitarian belief Thelwall raised an objection in his *Essay*. Like Godwin, he asserted that '*reason is the great authority of all*', and concluded the introduction to his *Essay* by defining himself as an atheist and materialist:

. . . when systems clash, and demonstrations are not to be had, we ought not to consider who is the author of this, or who of that opinion, but which it is that involves the fewest absurdities, or is best supported by analogy, and the correspondence of the general laws of Nature.
(*Essay*, 4)

Whereas Priestley tried to demonstrate who was 'the author', or, the Creator of this world, Thelwall (like Godwin) insisted that reason alone would convince us of 'the general laws of Nature' which organised both the animate and the inanimate. Thelwall's definition of scientific 'laws of Nature' seems to have echoed Paine's idea that 'All the great laws of society are laws of nature' (*Rights*, 165). However, whereas Paine's 'laws of nature' vindicated the natural rights of man in society, Thelwall's 'general laws of Nature' were synonymous with the simple principles of materialism with which he argued that there was no 'vital principle' of life or 'soul' in human beings separate from the fact of existence (see *Essay*, 7-9). The principal aim of his *Essay* was to describe the animal frame as the '*perfect harmony of organized parts*' in which a '*Vital Principle*', corresponding to 'the general laws of Nature', carried on the vital functions (*Essay*, 33, 8, 4). 'I consider *the preliminary principles of life* to be a *specific organization* and a *specific stimulus*', Thelwall said, and explained how this specific organization inspired animal vitality:

. . . Blood . . . in its passage through the Lungs, collects a something, which generates a specific heat . . . which it diffuses through the whole vascular system, and then (exhausted of its vivifying power) returns again to the lungs, to exhale whatever noxious particles it may have

collected, and inhale a fresh portion of the same vivifying principle. (*Essay*, 39)

Circulating through 'the whole vascular system', the blood brought from the lungs a 'something' of vivifying power. He tried to explain this 'something': 'it must be . . . contained in the atmosphere, and something of a powerful and exquisitely subtile nature' (*Essay*, 40). His answer, briefly, was the 'electric fluid'. Having studied at St Thomas's Hospital, which was famous for its electrical department, and no doubt aware of the recently established London Electrical Dispensary,⁹ Thelwall regarded electricity as the most effective term to explain his vital principle:

If, then, we look upon the component parts of our atmosphere, what can we discover so competent to the task - so subtile, so powerful, so nearly approaching to that idea of an ethereal medium, which some philosophers have supposed necessary to complete the chain of connection between the divine immortal essence, and the dull inertion of created matter, as the electrical fluid? (*Essay*, 40)

This explanation seems to have compelled him to admit a contradiction between his atheistic materialism in the introduction and his acceptance of 'the divine immortal essence'. Thelwall did not give any clearer definition of the 'something' or any reasonable explanation of his contradiction. His *Essay* concluded by calling upon 'the philosophers' to research further into the 'something' that organized the animal frame and mind and connected it to Nature (*Essay*, 40).

The *Essay* suggests that Thelwall shared important ideas with Godwin, Paine, and other radicals. For example, he believed that human beings had no natural distinctions between them. He insisted that reason would contribute to a reform of present society, for it could enable us to learn to recognize 'the correspondence of the general laws of Nature' in our frames, which was a fine example of 'a perfect organization' which might also be applied to society (*Essay*, 4, 12). However, Thelwall was not a

⁹ See Ian Wylie, *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature* (Oxford, 1989), 67. Wylie points out that at St Thomas's Hospital an electrical department was set up, and by 1793 the London Electrical Dispensary was established.

complete atheist or materialist. Although he was not what he had been in his early twenties, 'a Christian, and a very zealous one',¹⁰ his inability to define that 'something' forced him to rely on a mysterious 'divine immortal essence', which he would try to clarify in his later work *The Peripatetic*. Thelwall's discussion of 'divine immortal essence' in scientific terms also prefigures Wordsworth's views of 'Nature, Man and Society' in his *Recluse* poems composed by early March 1798, which my second chapter focuses on. Furthermore, it has similarities with 'the life of things' (50) in *Tintern Abbey* (composed in July 1798), and 'the filial band' (II. 293) in the *Two-Part Prelude* (1799).

On 29 April 1793 Robinson published the three volumes of Thelwall's *The Peripatetic, or, Sketches of the Heart, of Nature and Society, in a series of Politico-Sentimental Journals, in verses and prose, of the Eccentric Excursions of Sylvanus Theophrastus, supposed to be written by himself*. After Tom Paine's trial in December 1792, it was dangerous to publish radical pamphlets. Wordsworth was probably dissuaded from publishing his *Letter* by Johnson in early spring 1793,¹¹ and Thelwall too was obliged to distinguish *The Peripatetic* from political pamphlets - using his 'Sketches' as an effective cover for his political interests.¹²

The title and subtitle of Thelwall's book present the character of a solitary peripatetic sketching 'the Heart', 'Nature', and 'Society' during his 'eccentric excursions' to the outskirts of London, and a number of the characters are introduced, too. He describes one of them, *Ambulator*, as 'a steady and determined advocate for the genuine principle of LIBERTY and EQUALITY' (*Perip.* I. 86). Through *Ambulator* Thelwall, following prominent

¹⁰ 'A Letter from John Thelwall to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 10 May 1796'; quoted from *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford, 1994), 149-50. In this letter Thelwall says 'I was yet a Christian, and a very zealous one (i.e. when I was about your age)' to Coleridge, who was 23 years old at that time.

¹¹ See *Pr.* W. I. 24. As Owen and Smyser suggest, Johnson was fully aware how dangerous it was to publish seditious pamphlets after Paine's trial.

¹² It should be noted that in his explicitly radical journal *Politics for the People* (September 1793 - March 1795, repr. 2 vols.; New York, 1968) Daniel Isaac Eaton published five extracts from *The Peripatetic*; 'The Cottages' (I. 138-42), 'National Opulence' (I. 171-7), 'The Vernal Shower' and 'Legal Consistencies' (I. 114-20), 'The Informer' and 'The Old Peasant' (III. 127-42), and 'The Benevolence' (III. 141-6). The first extract appeared with Eaton's introduction in which he emphasized that *The Peripatetic* was 'a work, in which the most liberal and philanthropic sentiments [would] be found' (*Politics*, I, Part I, 4:48).

radicals like Paine and Godwin, voiced his opinions. And in a dialogue with Ambulator, Sylvanus develops ideas about natural rights:

. . . while he regards as sacred the rights and possessions of every individual, he esteems the distinction of Nature superior to those of Fortune, and (paying his obedience only to the LAWS) proportions his respect to the virtue and abilities of men, and not to their rank and opulence. (*Perip.* I. 86)

In demonstrating that the general laws of Nature enforced no distinctions between men, Thelwall stated that existing inequalities derived from hereditary honours, or 'rank' and wealth. Like Paine, and like Wordsworth in spring 1793, Thelwall held that nothing but natural 'virtue and abilities' would lead us to evaluate men truly.

Among prominent radicals, Godwin was probably the greatest intellectual influence on Thelwall, although there were important differences between their ideas of society and the best means to achieve reform. Godwin began his enquiry into 'political justice' by pointing out that man was affected by his social circumstances, but was not entirely passive. As an intellectual being, man was endowed with understanding, the 'faculty distinct from sensation' (*PJ* I. 343). With this 'greater facility' man could arrange his 'sensations, and compare, prefer and judge' (*PJ* I. 57), and so change his circumstances. Having demonstrated these justifications for equality, Godwin defined 'political justice' as 'the adoption of any principle of morality or truth into the practice of a community' (*PJ* I. 19), and society as a whole. Following Paine, Godwin asserted that the existing government supported social distinctions and prevented human reason from judging without prejudice. He believed that democracy, in contrast, treated every man as an equal, reminded him of 'a consciousness of his value', taught him 'by the removal of authority and oppression to listen only to the dictates of reason', and gave him 'confidence to treat all other men as his fellow beings' (*PJ* II. 494).

Godwin had an entirely negative view about existing governments and institutions, and he disapproved of schools as a tool of government. To fulfil his scheme for a rational reform, he called upon an intellectual élite to 'give to the people guides and instructors' (*PJ* I. 69). He proudly pointed out the advantages of his new society:

With what delight must every well informed friend of mankind look forward to the auspicious period, the dissolution of political government, of that brute engine, which has been the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind, and which, as has abundantly appeared in the progress of the present work, has mischiefs of various sorts incorporated with its substance, and no otherwise to be removed than by its utter annihilation! ¹³

Godwinian rational society, however, would accept only 'well informed' people. Whereas Paine spoke to the mass of the middle and lower classes in the language of common speech in *The Rights of Man*, Godwin addressed his rational philosophy to only a limited number of intellectuals. Godwin, however, did not go any further than describing his ideal society, probably because he discovered contradictions in his scheme. An intellectual élite, educated at state schools, private schools, universities, and Sunday schools, had already been indoctrinated by the government. Furthermore, among the artisan leaders of political societies, including Thelwall, he could not find sufficiently open-minded instructors. *Political Justice* concluded without suggesting any practical means of reform.

Thelwall, on the contrary, sought as wide a range of readers as possible, and expressed his opinions and demonstrated his plans for social reform in various ways - in poetry and prose, in variegated language from poetic diction and the language of everyday life. His various careers as a young man enabled him to deal with miscellaneous topics from unlimited points of view. His hero and narrator, Sylvanus Theophrastus, was constructed of 'the materials for whose character the author was readily supplied from the circle of his acquaintance' (*Perip.* I. 'Preface', vi). Sylvanus's justifications for social improvement derived from Thelwall's medical career at Guy's and St Thomas's Hospitals. 'His situation, at this time, indeed, was not unfavourable to the study of human nature', Thelwall recollected in his 'Prefatory Memoir', and described his friends:

¹³ *PJ* II, 578-9. Wordsworth later echoed 'what delight' in *The Prelude* (1805), X, 818 in attacking Godwinian reason. See *BV*, 267. Jonathan Wordsworth points out this echo as an 'obvious comparison between Godwinian arrogance and Wordsworthian egotistical solitude'.

It was no uninteresting spectacle to observe the gradations and transitions from the rustic bashfulness of the stripling, just emancipated from the village pestil, to the confident prodigality of The Hospital Buck; and no uninteresting one, to mark the progressive improvement of The Few; who separating themselves from a dissipated group, by habits of application and observance, qualified themselves to excel in their respective sphere, and bounded forwards to the honours and emoluments of the most respectable of professions. ('Memoir', xxi)

Here, it was not circumstances that shaped behaviour, but habitual 'application': 'The Few' who made a 'progressive improvement' were those who had made an effort of concentration. By contrast, Sylvanus mentioned the history of gipsies. 'For the space of three or four hundred years', said Sylvanus, they had had 'the immutability and uniformity, I mean, of their manners and dispositions: in which neither time, nor climate, nor example has hitherto produced any considerable alteration' (*Perip.* II. 42-3). Enlightened education was the means to effect an 'alteration', and thus to initiate future progress and improvement.

On these ground, Thelwall called for a reform of the present system of education in Britain. Wentworth, Sylvanus's friend, recollected the useless tuition he received as a boy:

Strange infatuation! that in an enlightened age and country the education of youth should be so shamefully and so notoriously neglected! - that no proof of qualification whatever should be expected from those who undertake the important duties of tuition; but that beings, disqualified even for the most ordinary situations of society, should be permitted to riot at large upon the indolent credulity of parents, and cramp and fetter the infant minds it is their profession to cultivate and enlarge. (*Perip.* III. 38-9)

As Stone suggests, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries upper-class children were mainly educated at home by private tutors or at boarding schools. Tutors and teachers were usually university-trained scholarship men of non-élite backgrounds, whose aims were primarily to earn a living.¹⁴ And as the passage quoted above suggests, there were a considerable number of unqualified tutors and teachers at that time. Stone (94) argues that education at home was such 'a lonely, private thing, a stimulus to the inner-directed personality' that it would never help children prepare for their social lives in the future. It was not private tuition but school education that could 'cultivate and enlarge' the 'infant mind' by means of what Sylvanus called 'friendships and connections' (*Perip.* III. 112). Wentworth insisted on the importance of friendship in a child's early years:

Were young people, from their first serious acquaintance . . . kindly and candidly . . . to cultivate the pleasures and dispositions most agreeable to each other, what a change in the domestic prospects of life might we naturally expect: for surely nothing is more essential for the happiness of those seasons which people wish to spend in each other's society, than that corresponding tastes and dispositions should lead them to the same pleasures, pursuits, and relaxations. (*Perip.* III. 7)

For future happiness in society these 'friendships and connections' should not only be with children of the same social class; Thelwall's scheme for national education was not limited to a small number of the élite. By providing children of all classes with an equal opportunity for giving full play to their virtue and abilities, national education would lead ultimately to a broad-ranging social reform.

In addition to social equality, he expected national education to encourage economic equality. What prevented 'the laws and mysteries' of Nature's 'noblest workmanship' from organizing the perfect harmony between man and Nature were 'the laws of human œconomy' (*Perip.* I. 162).

¹⁴ See Stone, 94, 75. Stone points out that these men of non-élite background 'could at best only hope to gain a job in the lower ranks of the clergy' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (75). One of the alternatives was to become a private tutor. Dorothy mentioned in her letter to her friend of 16 June 1793, Wordsworth had looked for 'the opportunity of engaging himself as Tutor to some young Gentleman' for a living (*EY*, 95).

'Thus stands erect proud Man's superior race, /Secur'd by cautious Nature's partial grace' (*Perip.* I. 165), said Sylvanus, then demonstrated how easily the harmony between man and Nature might be broken:

But, ah! in vain: for Art, with cruel zeal,
 Delves the rent earth, and whets the vengeful steel;
 Or, with invention's magic powers accurst,
 Bids from wrought tubes th' ignited malice burst;
 Whence, low on Earth the glorious structure lays,
 Fall'n in its strength, and ere its hour decays.

(*Perip.* I. 166)

The 'laws of human œconomy' were one of the most harmful examples of 'Art', since they destroyed Nature's 'noblest workmanship' and threw 'every advantage into the hands of the wealthy few, at the expence of the entire depression of the many' (*Perip.* I. 145-6). In short, the 'laws of human œconomy' caused economic and social inequalities.

The government was expected to solve these. 'THE PROFLIGACY OF THE POOR is the greatest evidence of a VICIOUS GOVERNMENT', Julian said to Sylvanus and his friends when they met a drunken 'labouring mechanic' (*Perip.* III. 130, 127). He called upon the government to instruct the 'profligate' poor:

Laws and political institutions are the sap that circulates through the branches, and upon them must the morals and tastes (which are the fruit and foliage of society) depend. (*Perip.* III. 131)

As 'something' in Nature provided man with 'animal vitality' through the circulation of the blood, government should give moral instruction which would circulate to both the rich and the poor. The best means of achieving this 'circulation' was national education. By providing the people of all classes with an equal opportunity to develop their virtue and abilities, education would instruct them how to enrich their lives for themselves, and how to contribute to national welfare. However, social and economic inequalities could not be solved by the government alone. Sylvanus expressed Thelwall's disapproval of charity for the profligate poor:

Misery, indeed, ought to be relieved, even when the effect of vice; and he himself is vicious who can be deaf to its appeal: but if *Labour*, as must be admitted, constitutes the real wealth of the community, it can never be the part of a good member of society to contribute to the *useless* and the *idle*: unless, indeed, where it is commanded by the *coercive laws of his country*, and sanctioned by *hereditary institutions*. (*Perip.* II. 45)

Charity encouraged the 'vagrant indolence' of the poor (*Perip.* II. 45). To encourage morality and instruct them to contribute to 'the real wealth of the community', they should receive the product of their industry. Private property should be secured, since it could provide people with 'every social enjoyment' and '*comfort*' besides 'food and raiment' (*Perip.* III. 129-30).

Godwin, like Thelwall, insisted that people should receive the produce of their industry, but he proposed a form of communism. The system of private property encouraged the 'narrowest selfishness' (*PJ* II. 802), and so frustrated intellectual progress. Godwin proposed an equalization of property and an abolition of private ownership, and he pointed out the advantages of these:

. . . the narrow principle of selfishness would vanish. No man being obliged to guard his little store, or provide with anxiety and pain for his restless wants, each would lose his own individual existence in the thought of the general good. No man would be an enemy to his neighbour, for they would have nothing to contend; and of consequence philanthropy would resume the empire which reason assigns her. Mind would be delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal support, and free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her. Each man would assist the enquiries of all. (*PJ* II. 810)

Whereas Thelwall stated that the system of private property was the basis of the moral improvement of people and 'the real wealth of the community', Godwin called that system 'the narrow principle of selfishness' which

disturbed 'philanthropy', 'the general good', and the intellectual 'field of thought'. However, Godwin did not go any further. He did not mention how practically to equalize property or how to organize the community. Their differences were most marked perhaps in their views on marriage. Whereas Godwin regarded marriage as 'the worst of all properties' and 'the most odious of all monopolies' (*PJ* II. 850), Thelwall treated domestic happiness as a microcosm of public welfare and social affection. He concluded *The Peripatetic* with 'the bells' ringing 'merrily for [the] double wedding' of Belmour and Sophia, and Ambulator and Maria, and 'The Epithalamium' for 'TRUTH and godlike LIBERTY' (*Perip.* III. 226-7):

. . . see, what kind omens bright dawning appears,
 The patriot bosom of Virtue to cheer! -
 Simplicity comes, by fair Liberty led,
 And Hymen - pure Hymen shall lift up his head.
 Each Social Affection once more shall return,
 And the altar of Truth with pure incense shall burn,
 While Love, like the Phoenix, shall rise from the flame.
(*Perip.* III. 228)

Thelwall's regenerated society, an '*Eden of Mind*' (*Perip.* III. 228), derived from the thoroughly 'Wordsworthian' values of 'friendships and connections', 'Social Affection', and personal 'Love'.

Wordsworth probably heard of Thelwall and of *The Peripatetic* through his meetings with Johnson, Nicholson, and their associates during his stay in London in spring 1793. Even after he left London in early summer, his enthusiasm for republicanism would have encouraged his interest in the recent activities and publications of radicals like Thelwall. I shall now focus on Thelwall's influence on Wordsworth, whether direct or indirect, and the intriguing similarities between their political opinions in 1794.

ii

(1) Thelwall: Philosophy in the Tower

It was on 12 May 1794 that Thelwall was arrested with eleven prominent radical leaders of the reform movement, including Thomas Hardy, John Horne Tooke, and Thomas Holcroft (see *Thel. Life*, 214). A few days later Thelwall was committed to the Tower on charges of High Treason:

As the screws tightened outside, Thelwall endured five months of solitary confinement (for a time, two armed guards watched him day and night) in his own "bastille"... (*Thel. W. 'Introduction'*, xxii)

The confinement in the British 'bastille', however, was perhaps not quite so 'solitary' or constrained, since Thelwall's small room in the western tower was next to Thomas Hardy's and near John Horne Tooke's.¹⁵ At first Thelwall was prohibited from expressing his political opinions, as he later recollected, 'I was neither to be permitted to send for my books, nor have the privilege of pen, ink, or paper'. Yet soon he was permitted to send for some of his books 'upon specific application to the Privy Council' (*Thel. Life*, 186-7).

By the end of August the gaolers had become so 'acquainted with the dispositions of their prisoners' that the restrictions had gradually been relaxed. Thelwall and the other eleven prisoners were permitted at first to 'speak with each other with their doors open', then to 'enter each other's rooms, for a few minutes at a time' (*Thel. Life*, 191-2). Although 'always taking . . . precaution', Thelwall could discuss anything except political matters with the others. In particular, he spent most of his free time conversing with Hardy. Observing the conduct and deportment of Hardy, Thelwall was greatly impressed by this 'virtuous man':

Hardy, whose generous love of liberty, and enthusiastic feeling of the purity of his conduct and the justice of his

¹⁵ See *Thel. Life*, 192, and *Thel. W.* xxii. Tooke's room was not in the same western tower, but was not far from Thelwall's room.

cause, lifted his untutored mind above every thing that philosophy and education can impart. (*The. Life*, 192)

Before imprisonment, Thelwall had certainly discussed political and philosophical matters with other 'Citizens' in the London Corresponding Society, including Hardy, but it was at their meetings in the Tower that he came fully to recognize Hardy's virtues, regarding him not only as a fellow 'Citizen' but as an intimate friend. Although confined in the Tower and watched by the gaolers, the small group of twelve prisoners seems to have been a kind of fraternal community, isolated from the public political world. Through talks he observed 'the philosophic firmness' and 'the playful vivacity of [Tooke's] mind'. The two gradually began to 'unbosom' themselves 'with the freedom of men, who, having nothing to conceal, had nothing to fear from what might be overheard' (*The. Life*, 192-3).

The long imprisonment from May to early December 1794 did not discourage Thelwall's enthusiasm for social reform, and he re-commenced his political lectures soon after his acquittal. But his restricted yet close relationship with Hardy, Tooke, and other prisoners encouraged him to recognize the importance of fraternity and philosophical instruction. As we shall see, the small 'philosophic' community - like that experienced by Thelwall in the Tower - was an ideal for which he looked in the years of reaction after the passing of the Two Acts in December 1795. Paradoxically, his period in the Tower prefigured the reclusive society he anticipated joining with Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Dorothy Wordsworth at Stowey and Alfoxden in 17 - 27 July 1797.

After several months' confinement, books and writing-materials were permitted to Thelwall; political pamphlets and periodicals were certainly prohibited, so he selected 'only some volumes of poetry and of the old English drama' (*The. Life*, 194). Among these he may well have received a poetic drama concerning the French Revolution, which was one of the earliest publications of two young radical poets. Its title was *The Fall of Robespierre* (published in September 1794), and the authors were Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey. Thelwall had certainly read *The Fall of Robespierre* by spring 1795, and his time in prison was an obvious moment for him to have done so.¹⁶ Moreover, he most likely read it not merely as a

¹⁶ For the influence of *The Fall* on Thelwall, see RY, 207-8. Roe mentions that Thelwall's lecture 'On the Prospective Principle of Virtue' (May 1795) developed Coleridge's idea of Robespierre in *The Fall* which had probably been sent to him in the Tower by George Dyer.

politician but also with 'a POET'S EYE'¹⁷ since he was now permitted to have the privilege of pen, ink, and paper, and began to compose some of the poems which were published in *Poems Written in Close Confinement in the Tower and Newgate* in January 1795, soon after the acquittal. Even before their first correspondence in late April 1796, Coleridge and Thelwall shared political opinions and poetic taste. When Coleridge bought a copy of Thelwall's *Poems* on its first publication, he was probably interested more in the survivor of the treason trials than in a poet;¹⁸ it was as poet and politician, however, that Thelwall came to be significant to Coleridge.

(2) Wordsworth: A Democrat and Philanthropist

It was on 11 May 1794, two years after Wordsworth had first asked his college friend William Mathews to suggest some plans for their future (EY, 75-8), that Mathews submitted his scheme for a 'monthly miscellany' for Wordsworth's examination. Wordsworth answered this letter on 23 May, very soon after he received it: 'You mention the possibility of setting on foot a monthly miscellany from which some emolument might be drawn'(EY, 118). Their political enthusiasm, however, was certainly as great a cause for this scheme as their financial need. When Wordsworth said, 'Of each others political sentiments we ought not to be ignorant', his turn of phrase 'political sentiments' suggests a politics of feeling which had some similarity to the manner of Thelwall's subtitle of *The Peripatetic*, 'Politico-Sentimental Journals'. In addition, this passage in the letter is followed by a reference to repressive legislation:

. . . here at the very threshold I solemnly affirm that in no writings of mine will I ever admit of any sentiment which can have the least tendency to induce my readers to suppose that the doctrines which are now enforced

¹⁷ CL I. 204-5. In his first letter to Thelwall (probably written shortly after the publication of *Poems on Various Subjects* on 16 April 1796) Coleridge asked him to read his *Poems* 'with a POET'S Eye'.

¹⁸ CL I. 258. In his letter to Thelwall of 19 November 1796, Coleridge said he had bought this *Poems* on its 'first publication'. However, the fact that Coleridge had 'lost' it by then indicates that he had a keener interest in Thelwall himself than the *Poems*.

by banishment, imprisonment, &c, &c, are other than pregnant with every species of misery. (EY, 119)

The banishment of Joseph Gerrald, Thomas Muir, Thomas Fyssh Palmer, Maurice Margarot, and William Skirving in 1793-4, and the recent imprisonment of the twelve radical leaders, including Thelwall, certainly disappointed Wordsworth (see EY, 119n.), who had confidently said to Mathews two years previously, 'You have the happiness of being born in a free country' (EY, 77). Furthermore, the word 'pregnant' indicates - by unhappy association - that Wordsworth had worried about Annette and her child (aged one-and-a-half at this time) since the declaration of war on France in February 1793.¹⁹ He was eager to contribute demonstrably to the movement for reform and to peace with France. But how precisely was he to do this?

In the subsequent passage Wordsworth, like Thelwall and other radical leaders, defined himself as a democrat, and attacked social inequality:

You know perhaps already that I am of that odious class of men called democrats, and of that class I shall for ever continue. In a work like that of which we are speaking, it will be impossible (and indeed it would render our publication worthless were we to attempt it,) not to inculcate principles of government and forms of social order of one kind or another. (EY, 119)

Although now calling himself a 'democrat', Wordsworth attacked 'the baleful influence of aristocracy and nobility upon human happiness and virtue' as firmly as he had formerly done as an 'advocate of republicanism' in his unpublished *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* (Pr. W. I. 46, 38).

Both Wordsworth and Mathews were too poor to achieve any practical steps at this time,²⁰ but Wordsworth discussed their scheme in more detail. He asked Mathews, 'What class of readers ought we to aim at procuring; in what do we, each of us, suppose ourselves the most able either

¹⁹ See *Four Texts*, x. Wordsworth had left his pregnant mistress Annette in Blois by 29 October 1792 when he was in Paris en route for London. After he left France at the end of November, his daughter Anne-Caroline was born on 15 December 1792.

²⁰ For their financial difficulty, see EY, 115, 118.

to entertain or instruct?' The answer to the first question was certainly 'democrats'. Concerning the second question he made some suggestions:

Besides essays on morals and politics I think I could communicate critical remarks upon poetry, &c, &c, upon the arts of painting, gardening, and other subjects of amusement. But I should principally wish our attention to be fixed upon life and manners, and to make our publication a vehicle of sound and exalted Morality. (EY, 119)

Even at the beginning of the scheme their projected journal was intended for a particular purpose: for the moral and intellectual instruction of democrats. In Wordsworth's educative programme, we can detect the influence of comparable schemes in writings of Paine, Godwin, and Thelwall.

In his next letter to Mathews of 8 June 1794 Wordsworth discussed 'sound and exalted Morality' in more detail. He began this letter with an attack upon social inequality:

I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical governments, however modified. Hereditary distinctions and privileged orders of every species I think must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement . . . (EY, 123)

As Wordsworth said, 'hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British constitution'; he was certainly among the radical reformists who embraced Godwin's ideas, in that he 'recoil[ed] from the bare idea of a revolution' and aimed at 'the welfare of mankind' by rational means (EY, 123-4). 'There is a further duty incumbent upon every enlightened friend of mankind', Wordsworth said, and explained how he would 'diffuse by every method a knowledge of those rules of political justice'(EY, 124). "*The Philanthropist a monthly Miscellany*", which was probably named after Godwin's discussion of 'philanthropy' in *Political Justice*,²¹ was to include

²¹ For Godwin's influence on the theory and the title of Wordsworth's journal, see RY, 184. Roe suggests that Wordsworth was echoing Godwin almost word for word, in a passage from *Political Justice*: 'The revolutions of states, which a philanthropist would desire witness,

'everything that can instruct and amuse mankind'(EY, 125). The projected miscellany was to consist principally of six topics: 'the topic of general politics' which would 'forcibly illustrate the tendency of particular doctrines of government'; 'essays upon morals and manners, and institutions whether social or political'; 'essays partly for instruction and partly for amusement, such as biographical papers exhibiting the characters and opinions of eminent men, particularly those distinguished for their exertions in the cause of liberty, as Turgot, as Milton, Sydney, Machiavel, Beccaria' which would exhibit 'the advancement of the human mind in moral knowledge' and include 'essays of taste and criticism, and works of imagination and fiction'; 'a review of those publications' which were to be 'particularly characterized for inculcating recommendations of benevolence and philanthropy'; '[s]ome poetry' both new and old; and essays on 'parliamentary debates'(EY, 125-6). Godwin had asserted in *Political Justice* that the 'true instruments for changing the opinions of men' were 'argument and persuasion' and the 'best security for an advantageous issue' was 'free and unrestricted discussion'(PJ I. 202). In precisely these ways Wordsworth expected *The Philanthropist* to help Godwin 'establish freedom with tranquillity' and to encourage 'the progress of human improvement'(EY, 123-4).

It seems not to have been a mere accident that *The Philanthropist* also had similarities with Thelwall's *Peripatetic*. The miscellany was, in fact, a very popular style for novels and journals in the late eighteenth century. In his letter to Mathews of 3 August 1791, Wordsworth said his 'incursions into the fields of modern literature' were 'absolutely nothing' except 'three volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, and two or three papers of the *Spectator*'.²² This passage suggests that he had been interested in and familiar with the style of the 'miscellany' before his *Philanthropist* scheme. In addition, he said in his letter to Mathews of 23 May 1794, 'All the periodical miscellanies that I am acquainted with, except one or two of the reviews, appear to be written to maintain the existence of prejudice and to disseminate error'(EY, 119). During 1794 any allusion to political miscellanies would have brought *The Peripatetic*, the miscellaneous series of 'Politico-Sentimental Journals', to Wordsworth's attention, especially so in that it was produced by a rising exponent of the democratic cause.

or in which he would willingly co-operate, consist principally in a change of sentiments and dispositions in the members of those states' (PJ I. 202).

²² EY, 56. For the date of his reading of *Tristram Shandy*, see Wu, 132. Wu suggests that Wordsworth probably encountered Sterne's novel at Hawkshead, and read it in 1787-91.

In fact, the contents of *The Philanthropist* had close similarities with those of *The Peripatetic*. For instance, Thelwall's political discussion, such as 'Indications of Commerce', 'National Opulence', and 'Effervescence of Political Enthusiasm', corresponded to Wordsworth's 'topics of general politics' (EY, 125); Thelwall's 'philosophical' consideration of social problems, 'The Beggar', 'The Hay-Maker', and 'Rewards of Useful Industry', were akin to Wordsworth's 'essays upon morals and manners, and institutions whether social and political' (EY, 125); and as Sylvanus planned a modern epic poem to describe 'the genius . . . of modern Britain' (*Perip.* III. 52) that had 'SYMPATHY', 'HUMANITY', 'MORALITY' (*Perip.* III. 54), Wordsworth aimed to exhibit 'the characters and opinions of eminent men, particularly those distinguished for their exertions in the case of liberty' as examples of 'the advancement of the human mind in moral knowledge' (EY, 126); Thelwall's literary criticism of some poets, such as Beattie, Armstrong, and Charlotte Smith, and his comparison between Dryden and Pope, Shakespeare and Milton, had similarities with Wordsworth's proposed reviews of books and poetry; as 'subjects of amusement' Wordsworth suggested 'critical remarks' upon 'the arts of painting [and] gardening' (EY, 119), and Thelwall drew upon topographical descriptions of ruins to demonstrate the instability of monopoly, for example, 'the once-noble castle of Saltwood' (*Perip.* II. 65) some parts of which were 'converted into barns and store houses' (*Perip.* II. 68). Wordsworth suggested that reports of 'parliamentary debates' should be 'detailed', as Mathews had specified (EY, 126). Thelwall did not deal with parliamentary debates, but he did allude to contemporary events, such as the September Massacre (*Perip.* II. 7), the Reign of Terror (*Perip.* II. 100), the war between France and Britain (*Perip.* III. 102), and he attacked the policy of the government in some poems.

Having discussed the style, contents, and likely readers, Wordsworth asked his co-editors, Mathews and Burleigh,²³ to compose 'at least two numbers' which would be 'circulated in manuscript' among his friends 'in this part of the world as specimens of the intended work', and to 'draw up a prospectus' of their 'object and plan' (EY, 127-8). By November, however, both Wordsworth and Mathews had lost enthusiasm for *The Philanthropist*. Wordsworth began his letter to Mathews of 7 November 1794 pessimistically:

²³ See EY, 118n. Shaver (EY, 135n.) suggests that 'the young man' was probably Mr. Burleigh, whose name was to be later mentioned in Wordsworth's letter to Mathews of 7 November 1794.

The more nearly we approached the time fixed for action, the more strongly was I persuaded that we should decline the field. (*EY*, 134)

Both of them, however, still hoped to go into journalism. 'Pray let me have accurate information from you on the subject of your newspaper connection', said Wordsworth, and asked Mathews to introduce him to 'an opposition paper' (*EY*, 135). Two months afterwards, he asked Mathews once again to look for some employment for him, but he had become less confident of his ability as a political journalist. In his letter of 24 December Wordsworth anxiously said to Mathews:

. . . I have neither strength of memory, quickness of penmanship, nor rapidity of composition, to enable me to report any part of the parliamentary debates. (*EY*, 137)

Although regarding it as difficult to report 'the parliamentary debates', Wordsworth still hoped to become a journalist. What he intended to contribute was 'an essay upon general politics', which he had defined in his letter of 8 June as 'a perspicuous statement of the most important occurrences, not overburdened with trite reflections yet accompanied with such remarks as may forcibly illustrate the tendency of particular doctrines of government' (*EY*, 138, 125).

Wordsworth began his letter of 24 December 1794 by demonstrating his ability to write such an essay: he gave a perceptive account of the most important recent occurrence, 'the acquittal of the prisoners' who had been arrested for High Treason earlier that year:

The late occurrences in every point of view are interesting to humanity. They will abate the insolence and presumption of the aristocracy by shewing it that neither the violence, nor the art, of power can crush even an unfriended individual, though engaged in the propagation of doctrines confessedly unpalatable to privilege; and they will force upon the most prejudiced this conclusion that there is some reason in the

language of reformers. Furthermore, they will convince bigotted enemies to our present constitution that it contains parts upon which too high a value cannot be set. To every class of men occupied in the correction of abuses it must be an animating reflection that their exertions, so long as they are temperate will be countenanced and protected by the good sense of the country. (EY, 137)

We might plausibly regard this passage as the core of one of the longer pieces Wordsworth had hoped to write for his projected *Philanthropist*. But did he contribute to the liberal opposition paper called *The Philanthropist* which was edited and issued by Daniel Isaac Eaton, radical publisher and bookseller in London, from 16 March 1795 to 18 January 1796? It is fact that Wordsworth came to London in January 1795 and lived in the same street as Godwin.²⁴ During his stay Wordsworth became acquainted with prominent radicals, including Godwin, William Frend, George Dyer, and James Losh. Is it a mere accident that *The Philanthropist* came out when Wordsworth was at the centre of London radical life? Is there any link between Wordsworth's *Philanthropist* and Eaton's? Like Wordsworth's projected *Philanthropist* Eaton's forty-three issues consisted chiefly of original and reprinted essays on general politics and on social and political institutions. *The Philanthropist* published a few essays on morals and manners as well. A few pages were devoted to biographical papers, and among them some pages dealt with three of the figures Wordsworth had instanced for his biographical series: Algernon Sydney, Milton, and Machiavelli (*Partisan*, 377-8). As their periodical titles indicate, both Eaton and Wordsworth intended to contribute to a Godwinian rational reform, and it seems natural that the content of Eaton's *Philanthropist* had similarities with Wordsworth's scheme. As Johnston suggests, the many thematic and verbal similarities make it easier to believe that Wordsworth was in some way involved in or connected with Eaton's actual *Philanthropist* than that he was not (*Partisan*, 404). In fact, having abandoned his *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* in early April 1793 and the *Philanthropist* scheme in November 1794, Wordsworth had almost certainly been looking for some means to express his view of society. So I

²⁴ See EY, 140n. According to Coleridge's letter to Dyer, Wordsworth was living at No.15 Chalton Street, Sommers Town. Godwin was then living at No.25.

shall briefly examine when and what Wordsworth could contribute to *The Philanthropist*, making what I hope is a fresh suggestion in this respect.

Johnston divides the forty-three issues into five different stages: the period of high-minded moral journalism (I. 16 March - IV. 6 April); the unstable period (V. 27 April - XVI. 13 July); the radical period (late July - late October); another unstable period (26 October - early December); and the last period (14 December - 18 January 1796). He suggests further that there are a great number of possible parallels with Wordsworth's scheme and his known writings in the first high-minded period.²⁵ In addition, he refers to Wordsworth's projected collaborative satire with Francis Wrangham, curate of Cobham in Surrey, who was jointly taking in private pupils with Basil Montagu in 1794-5 (see Moorman, 266-7). Wordsworth began a collaborative translation of Juvenal's eighth satire with Wrangham during his fortnight's stay in Surrey in summer 1795 (see *Lost Satire*). As Wrangham later recollected, this satire dealt with the 'various personalities' involved in current occurrences²⁶ and its composition coincided with the second period of *The Philanthropist* in which aggressive satires appeared,²⁷ and with the third radical period. It seems likely that Wordsworth and Wrangham intended to contribute their satire to a liberal periodical;²⁸ if so, *The Philanthropist* in its most radical phase would have been an obvious journal in which to place it. While composing the imitation of Juvenal's satire and reading periodicals, probably including Eaton's *Philanthropist*, Wordsworth may have been encouraged to regard poetry itself as a medium for an active intervention in the nation's political life (see *Lost Satire*). Certainly, Wordsworth started to express his views of man and society more fully in poetry at this time, and *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, which had been first

²⁵ See *Partisan*, 393-4. Johnston focuses on the similarities between the opinion on Burke in the fourth issue and that in Wordsworth's *Letter*.

²⁶ A Letter from Wrangham to Blackwood of 25 May 1822, The Blackwood papers (National Library of Scotland). Wrangham said, 'It, of course, involved various personalities now out of fashion.' Wordsworth's version of the second half of the satire survived in letters to Wrangham of 20 November 1795 and of the spring of 1796. See *EY*, 143-4, 156-161. In these versions, Wordsworth alluded to William Eden, the Earl of Lonsdale, Thurlow, Grenville, the Duke and Duchess of Buckinghamshire, and the Prince of Wales.

²⁷ See *Partisan*, 393. According to Johnston, some provocatively aggressive satires appeared in V-VII.

²⁸ See Gill, 96-7. Gill suggests that Wordsworth was pleased enough with it to hope that it would soon be published.

completed as *A Night on Salisbury Plain* in April or May 1794, then revised and enlarged at Racedown in October - November 1795, can be regarded as the first sustained example of his philosophical concern for the afflictions and calamities of the poor²⁹ which was to be crucial to his poems after 1796. In the literary dimensions of radical imagination represented by Thelwall's poems and *The Peripatetic*, and Wordsworth's projected journal and his early poetry, we find further tributaries that would eventually contribute to the grand idea of *The Recluse*.

(3) Coleridge: Pantisocracy and *The Watchman*

June 1794: Thelwall had been imprisoned in the Tower for a month, and Wordsworth had submitted his detailed plan of *The Philanthropist* to Mathews. At this moment Coleridge left Cambridge for Oxford, on his way to Wales (see CL I. 82). The aim of his visit to Oxford was to meet Robert Allen, one of his closest friends at Christ's Hospital, who was by now a medical student at University College, Oxford (see Holmes, 29). On his arrival at Oxford Coleridge was introduced to Allen's friend Robert Southey, who was studying anatomy at Balliol College.³⁰ Southey wrote about the meeting in his letter to Grosvenor Bedford on 19 June:

Allen is with us daily, and his friend from Cambridge, Coleridge, whose poems [*Imitations*] you will oblige me by subscribing to, either at Hookham's or Edwards's . . .
 . My friend he already is and must hereafter be yours.³¹

²⁹ See Gill, 96-7. Comparing the *Imitation of Juvenal* and *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, Gill argues that whereas the intensity of the former depended 'so much on the narrowness of its focus on people whom, essentially, Wordsworth did not care enough about even to denounce', the latter revealed 'the genuineness of Wordsworth's humanitarian concern and the intensity of his anger'.

³⁰ See CL I. 82n.-3n. Griggs mentions, 'Coleridge and Southey were introduced by Robert Allen on Coleridge's arrival at Oxford in June 1794.'

³¹ MS. letter, Bodleian Library; quoted from CL I. 82n.

He said that 'two thirds of our conversation [is] spent in disputing on metaphysical subjects',³² and for three or four days they probably also discussed Coleridge's *Proposals for publishing by Subscription Imitations from the Modern Latin Poets*, which had been published in the *Cambridge Intelligencer* on 14 June. Southey's letter provides us with no detailed information, but their discussion was certainly interesting enough to bring them close to each other in several days. Consequently, Coleridge's stay in Oxford lasted for three weeks.

The three weeks' meeting of Coleridge and Southey saw the birth of the Pantisocratic scheme, and their enthusiasm for this scheme encouraged them to continue their discussion through letters. Coleridge wrote to Southey about the 'pure System of Pantocracy [sic]' on 6 July 1794, soon after he left Oxford (CL I. 84). Whereas Paine drew upon the language of common speech to encourage a wide audience to join the movement for reform, Coleridge, like Godwin, excluded the multitude from his scheme, and intended the 'pure system' of Pantisocracy for only a small number of like-minded friends. He concluded this letter by asking Southey, 'sturdy Republican', to write to him about the fellow-Pantisocrat George Burnett, and to give 'Fraternity & civic Remembrances' to Robert Lovell (also a member of the community).³³

Coleridge's next letter to Southey was written one week afterwards, on 13 July 1794. In this letter he continued to discuss their principal aim, and indicated what led them to initiate the Pantisocratic scheme:

Man is a bundle of Habits: but of all Habits the Habit of Despondence is the most pernicious to Virtue & Happiness Consider the high advantages, which you possess in so eminent a degree - Health, Strength of Mind, and confirmed *Habits* of strict Morality. (CL I. 85)

³² Robert Southey, *New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry (2 vols.; New York, 1965), I, 58.

³³ CL I. 84-5. For the Pantisocrats, see Holmes, 366-70. Holmes points out as the Pantisocrats and the potential recruits Coleridge, Robert Allen, George Burnett (Southey's friend at Balliol College), George Caldwell, Robert Favell (Coleridge's friend at Christ's Hospital), the Frickers (Sara, Mary, Edith, and Martha), Robert Lovell (Southey's friend at Balliol College), Thomas Poole, Robert and Thomas Southey.

In this passage Coleridge was almost certainly alluding to *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*. As is well known, *Political Justice* was a very significant influence on the Pantisocracy scheme; the equalitarian ideal may have been suggested by Southey who followed Godwin in arguing that 'private considerations must yield to the general good' (*PJ* I. 165).³⁴ However, Coleridge disagreed with Godwin's philosophy, and to disagree with Godwin meant disagreement with Southey. 'Warmth of particular Friendship does not imply absorption', he said, and persuaded Southey to agree with him about the importance of love and fraternity in their scheme:

The ardour of private Attachments makes Philanthropy a necessary *habit* of the Soul Philanthropy (and indeed every other Virtue) is a thing of *Concretion* - Some home-born Feeling is the *center* of the Ball, that, rolling on thro' Life collects and assimilates every congenial Affection. (*CL* I. 86)

Unlike Godwin, Coleridge asserted that humanity could not be educated or improved by severely rational means, but only through love and fraternity. There is no evidence that in planning Pantisocracy Coleridge was conscious of *The Peripatetic*, in which Thelwall had described domestic happiness as a microcosm of wider public welfare. However, his Pantisocracy was certainly more akin to Thelwall's society of love and friendship in *The Peripatetic* than Godwin's rational society in *Political Justice*. Even before they knew each other, he certainly shared views of society and man with Thelwall.

It was at the end of August 1794 that Coleridge suggested a scheme for emigration to America, which was very popular in this period. While radicals sought for social and economic equality by means of reform of the social system, some intellectuals had already abandoned their hopes and emigrated to America. Among them was Joseph Priestley, certainly a strong influence on the Pantisocratic scheme. Priestley left for America in April 1794, and settled near the River Susquehannah (see Holmes, 89). In addition, in 1792-6 travel writings encouraged people to emigrate to the new world. For example, in January 1795 two emigration schemes were introduced in the *British Critic*; one, for the Susquehannah, was promoted by

³⁴ For Godwin's influence on the equalitarian ideal of Pantisocracy, see *RY*, 115.

Thomas Cooper who sang the praise of Priestley (his father-in-law) and the Susquehannah Valley in his *Some Information Respecting America* (1794),³⁵ the other for Kentucky was promoted by Gilbert Imlay, author of *A Topographical Description of North America* (1792).³⁶ In July - August 1794 the Pantisocrats reflected on where exactly to found their fraternal community, and they read some travel writings and collected as many pieces of information as possible. On 29 August 1794 Coleridge wrote to the topographer, Charles Heath, about his scheme for emigration. 'A small but liberalized party have formed a scheme of emigration on the principles of an abolition of individual property' (CL I. 96), he said, and asked Heath for his opinion and advice:

The minutiae of topographical information we are daily endeavouring to acquire; at present our plan is, to settle at a distance, but at a convenient distance, from Cooper's Town on the banks of the Susquehannah. (CL I. 97)

As a Unitarian Coleridge hoped to live near Joseph Priestley's colony on the Susquehannah, hence his enthusiasm for siting Pantisocracy there too. At this time Coleridge was preparing for a work 'for private distribution' to 'prove the exclusive justice of the system and its practicability' and 'to sketch out the code of contracts necessary for the internal regulation of the society' (CL I. 96). This work was never completed, although it was evidently prepared with a view to educate prospective participants about the 'principles' of Pantisocracy.

Education remained important to Coleridge in his public lectures at Bristol of 1795. Aiming at reform, Coleridge, like Thelwall and Wordsworth, nevertheless acknowledged the dangers of attempting widespread change amongst an ignorant population. In *The Peripatetic*, Thelwall insisted that the government should think of national education of the lower classes (see *Perip.* III. 39). 'I know that the multitude walk in darkness', said

³⁵ For Priestley and Cooper, see Rosemary Ashton, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford, 1996), 45. See also CL I. 115. In his letter of 21 October 1794 Coleridge suggested to Southey to 'read & ponder on Cowper [sic]'.

³⁶ See Holmes, 77, 89. Holmes suggests that these two schemes reflected expeditions among Quakers, Unitarians, and other idealistic freethinkers. By 1796, it was calculated that some 2,000 people had set out, though many returned disillusioned.

Wordsworth, and demonstrated that *The Philanthropist* would be 'a lantern' to enlighten an ignorant population (EY, 125). Coleridge agreed with Thelwall's and Wordsworth's views on education, but his Unitarianism distinguished him from those who were radicals and atheists. 'The human Race may perhaps possess the capability of all excellence', said Coleridge, but, unlike Godwin, he suggested a religious answer to his own question, 'by what means can the lower Classes be made to learn their Duties, and urged to practice them?':

"Go, preach the GOSPEL to the Poor." By its Simplicity it will meet their comprehension, by its Benevolence soften their affections, by its Precepts it will direct their conduct, by the vastness of its Motives ensure their obedience. (*Lects.* 1795, 44)

Like Godwinian radicals, including Thelwall and Wordsworth, Coleridge regarded the Church of England as one of the sources of despotism. However, he treated the Bible as the most effective means to enable the poor and the lower classes to comprehend the true 'happiness of Mankind' and 'the end of Virtue' (*Lects.* 1795, 45).

Throughout the ten issues of his periodical *The Watchman* (1 March - 13 May 1796) Coleridge, again like Thelwall and Wordsworth, insisted on the 'diffusion of general information', which had been impeded by 'every mode, direct and indirect, of preventing knowledge from coming within the circle of a poor man's expences' (*Watchman*, 10). '[T]he poor man is not only prevented from hearing the truth', Coleridge said, 'but inflamed to a kind of political suicide by the false statements and calumnies, with which the creativeness of ministerial genius is accustomed to adorn its weekly or diurnal productions'. To enable the multitude to listen only to 'the truth' Coleridge insisted on the establishment of 'national education', and asserted the necessity for 'the art of reading and writing' as well as the importance of moral instruction - 'honesty', 'sobriety', and 'brotherly-kindness' (*Watchman*, 11).

By early 1796 Thelwall and Wordsworth had already withdrawn from their plans for promoting reform by means of periodicals and lectures. Thelwall, although continuing political lectures and publications in 1796-7, was, under the compulsion of the Two Acts, gradually distancing himself

from his audience and readers.³⁷ Wordsworth retired into a secluded retreat with his sister Dorothy at Racedown in late September 1795. Coleridge, having concluded his political lectures and periodical, *The Watchman*, commenced forming other plans for the future. All of them were considering what they should devote themselves to instead of politics, how they could express themselves outside the current language of politics, and whom they should address. They had lost their former collaborators, too; Wordsworth was separated from Mathews; Coleridge disagreed with Southey; Thelwall was fiercely attacked by Godwin's *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills*. What remained in fact as a purpose common to them all was the priority of education and instruction.

iii

(1) Thelwall: Natural Education at the 'Academus'

Throughout his political lectures and his weekly periodical *The Tribune* (March 1795 - April 1796), Thelwall had insisted on the establishment of universal suffrage and annual parliaments, and regarded education as the most important means to reform society. I shall outline Thelwall's ideal of education by comparing his educational background as described in the 1801 'Memoir' and *The Peripatetic's* treatment of education in ancient Greece and in 1790s Britain.

The title *The Peripatetic* derived from Aristotle's 'Peripatetic School' to which Theophrastus succeeded as head, and indeed many of Thelwall's educational ideas were based on Aristotle. At the beginning of the first pedestrian excursion to the outskirts of London, philosophical meditation in the countryside led Sylvanus Theophrastus to compare Aristotle's 'Academus' in ancient Greece and educational institutions in 1790s Britain:

³⁷ See E. P. Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', *Past and Present*, 142(1994), 98-9, 102. Thompson suggests that during his lecturing tour in East Anglia Thelwall was attacked by a hired mob of the lower-class poor.

I could not but compare the ancient modes of education with those of modern times, and lament that the noblest parts of philosophy should have fallen into such slight estimation: that there should be no longer or porch, or grove, or attic-columned school, where emulous youth, thronging round the long-experienced sage, might imbibe the lore of wisdom and of virtue, and improve each noble talent of his soul; but that the instruction of our early and invaluable years should be carelessly resigned to pedants, sycophants, and drivellers, who, if once mankind should be emancipated from all distinctions, but those which intellect creates, would sink into the humble ranks of labourers and mechanics. (*Perip.* I. 11)

Whereas philosophers formerly encouraged genuine distinctions of 'wisdom' and 'virtue' at the Academus, unqualified teachers served to reinforce the social distinctions of rank and wealth at disorganized educational institutions.³⁸

It was not only philosophical instruction but also the retirement of a 'grove' that was lacking in existing educational institutions. In the subsequent passage Sylvanus pointed out the desirable influence of Nature at the Academus in Lyceum, a grove outside the city:

If mute are the sages of antiquity, the instructive voice of Nature is ever eloquent and loud: if unblest with companions of congenial soul, who might improve, with useful converse, the moments of relaxation and pleasure, still the fields and groves afford their entertaining and intelligent society. These trees, these shrubs, this smiling turf, enamelled with these simple blossoms, all invite to intellectual exercise, and render even the idle walk not vain. (*Perip.* I. 12)

³⁸ See Richardson, 119. As Richardson suggests, there was 'a highly unregulated, disorganized, private, and largely unprofessional patchwork of educational institutions: village schools, Sunday Schools, Charity Schools, "dame" schools, evening and Sunday classes held by clerks and artisans' at this time.

At the Academus 'Nature' had helped Aristotle's sages give their pupils philosophical instruction by providing them with the encouragement of 'intellectual exercise' surrounded by the natural world. Now those sages had long been silent, although the 'instructive voice of Nature' remained an eloquent invitation to 'intellectual exercise'.

Listening to the 'instructive voice of Nature' during his 'idle walk' in the outskirts of London, Sylvanus insisted that children should be educated not in large cities like London but in a rural setting :

I could not but reflect, that from the peripatetic habits of the ancient philosophers, and the attachment to rural life displayed by them all, in opposition to the practice of modern students, who are in some degree compelled, by the instructions of society, to bury themselves in large cities, we might readily account for the apparent paradox, why the health of the latter should be so proverbially debilitated, while the former have been so pre-eminent for their longevity. (*Perip.* I. 14)

The 'instructions of society' deprived children of the benefits of Nature, both physical and mental. Sylvanus demonstrated this distortion of education by referring to the connection between Man and Nature:

. . . it is with all the works of Creation - the organs and the objects are so accommodated, by Nature, throughout, and the abundance and the parsimony of her various productions so proportioned to the simple desires of her children, that if every one does not enjoy in plenty what is most the object of his wishes, the fault is not in her, but in the institutions of society, or the voluntary perversion of our own tastes and habits. (*Perip.* III. 126-7)

Sylvanus concluded, 'Nature, if we would listen to her, would teach us a wiser lesson' (*Perip.* III. 127), but the present 'institutions of society' prevented children from listening to the instructive voice of Nature.

The passage above reflected Thelwall's contemplation of the miserable state of educational institutions in London at this time. As Stone

suggests, massive migration into urban centres after the Industrial Revolution prevented public institutions from providing all the children of the poor with efficiently organized educational facilities. For instance, a Dame School contained thirty-one small children in a cellar ten feet square, and a common school twelve feet square was filled with thirty-three children aged from five to fourteen. Schools for the children of the poor were hopelessly inadequate and horribly overcrowded. Stone points out that in such institutions 'the stench was overpowering and discipline only maintained by brutal and constant use of the cane'.³⁹ Deprived of 'moments of relaxation and pleasure' surrounded by nature, and disciplined not by philosophical instruction but with the cane, children could never have sound minds or bodies.

Education in a rural setting in the passage quoted above had a close similarity with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theory of natural education. In *Émile, or On Education* (1762) Rousseau consistently asserted that children should be educated in a rural setting like 'the midst of the fields' far from 'the unhealthy air of overpopulated places'; he regarded the 'internal development' of their faculties and organs as 'the education of nature' (*Émile*, 59, 38). Thelwall's idea of social reform by means of national education developed Rousseau's idea of natural education as a means to form a 'natural man' who would be free from prejudice (see *Émile*, 41). In addition, Thelwall, like Rousseau, insisted on moral instruction, as can be seen from the second volume of *The Peripatetic* which began with a sad reflection on a thrush lying dead 'for the pastime of some inhuman little tyrant' (*Perip.* II. 13). Sylvanus examined the cause of such cruelty:

I cannot help considering almost every vice as the consequence, more frequently, of Ignorance than of Science. - Shall we rather consider it, then, as the abuse of some justifiable principle, which, instead of being directed, is too often perverted, by a negligent or improper education? (*Perip.* II. 14)

The 'negligent or improper education' by unregulated, violent, and disorganized educational institutions encouraged a vicious, cruel temperament. Just as Rousseau presented *Émile* as an example of ideal

³⁹ Stone, 93. Stone quotes these examples from R. Vaughan, *Popular Education in England* (London, 1846), 42-4.

education, Sylvanus recollected the proper and natural education which he had given the little orphan Felicia. When she caught a ladybird and put it into a bottle with 'the innocent vivacity of one unconscious of fault', Sylvanus told her the tale of 'Giants' who caught little folks in cages for their pastime and amusement. Felicia recognized her cruelty, and set the ladybird at liberty immediately. Sylvanus considered that 'the embers of sensibility so kindly provided by Nature to warm this infant bosom' might be 'smothered and neglected' by improper education 'till the spark had at last expired'. With truly moral instruction, teachers should 'fan' and 'rouse' the 'embers of sensibility' into a reverence for life and joy (*Perip.* II. 18). However, as Sylvanus said, 'these early cruelties are so far from shocking the unfeeling mass of mankind, that they are rather cultivated than discouraged' (*Perip.* II. 19); the existing 'improper' education early encouraged the cruelties of the ignorant multitude.

To reform the 'improper' educational system Thelwall presented an example of proper education. In *The Peripatetic* the character Wentworth indignantly compared the beneficial influence of social relationships and Nature on a child's mind at the *Academus*, and the vicious effects in Britain of the 'shamefully' and 'notoriously' neglected education by tutors with 'no proof of qualification' (*Perip.* III. 38). However, Wentworth concluded with his recollection of 'an act of gratitude and justice to one mental benefactor', Hervey, who was 'a young unbeneficed clergyman, of gay and familiar manners, intelligent mind, and engaging conversation' (*Perip.* III. 41-2). This tutor treated boys not as pupils but as friends, and offered them the same colloquial mode of instruction as 'the ancient Greeks' had done to cultivate 'the vivid energies of eloquence and imagination' - whereas tutors of the present day gave children ('the unhappy objects of chastisement') 'the tedious drudgery of reiterated perusal' in 'haughty silence', which would blunt their imaginations and suppress their vivacity (*Perip.* III. 43-4).

In proposing the 'colloquial mode of instruction', Thelwall differed from Rousseau who had insisted that the tutor should restrict the child's vocabulary as much as possible since it might be 'a very great disadvantage for him to have more words than ideas' (*Émile*, 74). Whereas Rousseau tried strictly to control *Émile's* intellectual improvement, Thelwall, aiming at 'discovering, and encouraging the particular bias of every genius' (*Perip.* III. 42), enabled children to cultivate their ideas by themselves. It should be noted that Thelwall's ideal method of instruction came from his own schooldays at Highgate. In the 'Memoir' of 1801 Thelwall recollected his

tutor 'Harvey'. Like 'Hervey' in *The Peripatetic*, this 'young clergyman' had taught Thelwall for three month by means of liberal instruction:

He made himself the conversational companion, not the austere dictator, of the youths committed to his care; and, remarkably lax in every thing that looked like scholastic discipline, directed his attention rather to multiplying the ideas, than cramping the limbs or overawing the faculties of his pupils. In reading he suffered them to *form themselves* into classes; and the attention he paid to the management of the voice and lungs . . . were not less beneficial to health, than to oratorical, and ultimately, to intellectual improvement. ('Memoir', vi)

Whereas Rousseau prohibited *Émile* from reading any books except *Robinson Crusoe* to restrain the emergence of his imagination,⁴⁰ Thelwall promoted the idea that reading could help children cultivate their imagination.

Thelwall's experience of Academus-like education had convinced him of the possibility of and the necessity for national education following his ideal methods. For Thelwall, the national education of all social classes had two principal aims; one was to reform social and economic inequalities by providing all the people with an equal opportunity, the other was to control the multitude by discouraging their propensity for violence. But, after the passing of the Two Acts in December 1795, Thelwall was more-or-less powerless. Abandoned by Godwin and other radicals, and disappointed at his audience, Thelwall still longed for his ideal 'Academy'. In this ideal community his friends were expected not only to be his pupils but also to be his teachers rather like the sages of the ancient world. Frequently attacked by hired mobs during his lecturing tour in 1795-6, Thelwall's views of society seem to have contracted to the small ideal community which, paradoxically, he had formerly known in prison. In this way, his retirement from the political world enabled him further to develop his views of nature, man, and natural education.

⁴⁰ *Émile*, 184-5. Rousseau regarded *Robinson Crusoe* as a 'marvellous book' which could serve a test of the condition of children's judgement during their progress.

(2) Wordsworth's 'Émile': The Liberal Education of Little Basil

In January 1795 Wordsworth was left £900 in the will of Raisley Calvert. It was owing to financial difficulty but also because he had been taking care of Raisley that Wordsworth had abandoned his *Philanthropist* scheme in November 1794. Ironically he was released from both obstacles by this legacy only after he had lost enthusiasm for the scheme. However, money enabled Wordsworth to execute his other plan for the future. At the end of September 1795 he left for Racedown with Dorothy. He retired from any immediate concern over current social problems into his ideal 'home' with his sister, having accepted one of his London friends Basil Montagu's request to take care of his motherless son. As Dorothy wrote in her letter of the beginning of September, when Montagu asked Wordsworth and Dorothy to look after little Basil (aged two-and-a-half), the child was not 'very well taken care of either in his father's chambers or under the uncertain management of various friends'(EY, 147). So Wordsworth and Dorothy began their education of little Basil at Racedown in October 1795.

As Dorothy wrote in her letter, one of the principal aims in looking after Basil was to earn a living.⁴¹ However, it seems most likely that Basil reminded Wordsworth of his daughter Anne-Caroline, who was almost the same age, and left fatherless with Annette Vallon in France. It was not only 'emolument' that resulted from the acceptance of little Basil. As Dorothy said in her letter of 30 November, 'I do not think there is any Pleasure more delightful than that of marking the development of a child's faculties, and observing his little occupations'(EY, 160): the education of Basil was evidently one of their greatest pleasures at the beginning of their life at Racedown.

However, Wordsworth had never taken care of his daughter. Dorothy, too, had no experience in looking after an infant. To prepare themselves for educating little Basil, they most likely consulted some books on education. Among them may have been Rousseau's *Émile, or On Education*, one of the most popular and influential books at this time. No record suggests when Wordsworth and Dorothy in fact read *Émile*, but in the

⁴¹ See EY, 147. Dorothy said, Montagu 'proposed to William to allow him 50£ a year' for Basil's board, which, with Calvert's legacy, would make her and Wordsworth 'always comfortable and independent'.

'Preface' to *The Borderers*, the earliest manuscript of which was written presumably in late 1796, Wordsworth wrote: 'A child, Rousseau has observed, will tear in pieces fifty toys before he will think of making one' (*Pr. W. I.* 76-7).⁴² In fact, their education of Basil seems to have followed Rousseau's *Émile*; in her letter of 19 March 1797 Dorothy explained their 'very simple' system:

We teach him nothing at present but what he learns from the evidence of his senses. He has an insatiable curiosity which we are always careful to satisfy to the best of our ability. (*EY*, 180)

Their 'simple' system had a close similarity with Rousseau's 'education' which should come to children 'from nature or from men or from things':

The internal development of our faculties and our organs is the education of nature. The use that we are taught to make of this development is the education of men. And what we acquire from our experience about the objects which affect us is the education of things. (*Émile*, 38)

However, differences were more marked than similarities. Although Wordsworth and Dorothy seem to have followed Rousseau's prohibition of any books except *Robinson Crusoe* (Dorothy said, 'we have not attempted any further step in the path of *book learning*'; *EY*, 180) they did not utterly prohibit Basil from reading any books. Whereas Rousseau devoted himself to controlling *Émile*'s intellectual and physical growth, Wordsworth and Dorothy aimed chiefly at making Basil 'happy' (*EY*, 180). Moreover, Rousseau treated *Émile* as his pupil, but for Wordsworth and Dorothy little Basil was not only their pupil, but also their teacher, who gave them '[p]leasure' and a 'grand study' of human nature through the development

⁴² See Wu, 119-20. Wu suggests that Wordsworth and Dorothy were reading books on education as an aid to bringing up Basil. Although there is no evidence that Wordsworth had read *Émile* before his composition of the 'Preface' to *The Borderers* in late 1796, Wu, following Paul Betz, points out that Wordsworth seems likely to have been influenced by Rousseau's educational theory since his teacher at Hawkshead, William Taylor, was probably influenced by *Émile*.

of his faculties (EY, 160, 180). If Wordsworth's reference to *Émile* in the 'Preface' to *The Borderers* suggests that they were familiar with Rousseau's thought, their treatment of Basil clearly differed with some aspects of his educational theory.

Wordsworth's idea of liberal education certainly came from his own education at Hawkshead grammar school. As Thelwall had appreciated the liberal method of his teacher Harvey, Wordsworth was taught in a liberal and humane way by teachers and the headmaster at Hawkshead, particularly William Taylor and Thomas Bowman (see Gill, 27). For example, whereas most schoolboys were taught the Classics by means of rote learning and exercises in verse composition in Latin and Greek, Wordsworth was provided with a 'good grounding' in a humane way at Hawkshead such that he could appreciate the beauty of the Classics. In addition, Taylor and Bowman tried to make many books available at Hawkshead School Library, so Wordsworth was able to read not only the Classics but also widely in contemporary English literature. Moreover, he was taught to write in a liberal and humane way as well (see Gill, 28-9). The fact that Wordsworth did not discourage Basil from reading or writing - even at the age of three - indicates that he, unlike Rousseau, regarded it as an advantage for a child to have all possible means to express himself. Furthermore, through the education of Basil Wordsworth may have started to reconsider his own childhood, contemplating the connection between the influence of nature and the growth of the infant mind.

The education of Basil continued at Alfoxden until the summer of 1798, when Wordsworth and Dorothy left for Germany. 'Poor Basil!', Dorothy lamented in a letter, 'We are obliged to leave him behind' (EY, 221). In the subsequent passage Dorothy considered the results of their three-years' education. Basil had 'a most excellent temper', was 'quite free from selfishness', 'extremely active', and 'never fretful or discontented'. Much of his good temper, Dorothy believed, was owing to the 'regularity of temper' and 'the consequent equable treatment' which Basil had received from her and Wordsworth. In addition, 'the solitude of Racedown' had furnished them with the best place for natural education (EY, 221). However, Dorothy concluded that private education was no longer suitable for Basil since, unlike Rousseau, she stated that natural education in a secluded country was effective till a child was four years old. For the five-year-old Basil Dorothy thought it necessary for him to be educated with some friends of the same level as himself:

After the age of about four years he begins to want some other stimulus than the mere life that is in him; his efforts would be greater but he must have an object . . . he must have some standard by which to compare his powers or he will have no pleasure in exercising them, and he becomes lifeless and inactive. (*EY*, 222)

Like Thelwall, Dorothy asserted that 'friendship and connections' were necessary for the growth of a child, both mental and physical.

Wordsworth was encouraged more confidently to regard the liberal and natural way of teaching as the best method by two contrasting examples of a highly systematic education. One was run by Basil's father and Wrangham at Cobham in Surrey in 1794-5. According to James Mackintosh (philosopher, politician, journalist and later the Wedgwoods' brother-in-law), Montagu and Wrangham trained their pupils to be a 'walking encyclopædia'.⁴³ When Wordsworth composed the imitation of Juvenal's satire with Wrangham in the summer of 1795, he probably met some of the pupils. Moreover, he was certainly provided with detailed information about their education throughout his close relationship with Azariah Pinney, the second son of the proprietor of Racedown Lodge who had lived during the previous year, 1794, as a private pupil with Montagu and Wrangham (see Moorman, 266-7). Wordsworth's liberal education of Basil reflected his recognition of the difference between Wrangham's systematic method and the liberal and humane way of teaching he recalled at Hawkshead.

When Tom Wedgwood visited Alfoxden in mid September 1797, Wordsworth also encountered another kind of systematic education: a project calculated to 'anticipate a century or two upon the large-paced progress of human improvement'. Following Godwin, Josiah and Tom Wedgwood planned an academy for 'genius' to bring about 'grand improvements in Education'. In his letter to Godwin of 31 July 1797 Tom wrote a detailed plan of their projected academy: the child's sensory responses would be developed in a 'nursery [with] plain grey walls with one or two vivid objects for sight & touch', all contact with 'a chaos of perceptions' in Nature would be forbidden, and 'the child must never go out of doors or leave his own apartment' (Erdman, 431).

⁴³ See *DNB*, 'Wrangham'. For Mackintosh, see *CL* I. 359n.

likely began to consider the relationship between man, nature, and society, and its influence on the growth of the human mind in this period.

For Wordsworth the principal aim of education was not to make the multitude obey political leaders, but a purified radicalism which would help children cultivate their creative faculties. Having retired from the reform movement, he now began to reflect on the growth of the mind and on the influence of nature and friendship in childhood. Here, I think, we may detect the first stirrings of educative ideas that would be central to *Lyrical Ballads*, *The Prelude*, and *The Recluse*.

(3) Coleridge: The Study of Man and Men

Both as a political lecturer and as editor of a political periodical, Coleridge was concerned with ideas about education. In the first issue of the *Watchman* (1 March 1796) he insisted on the necessity of 'national education' of the lower-class multitude (see *Watchman*, 10-2), and in the 'Review of Count Rumford's Essays' in the fifth issue (2 April 1796) he demonstrated an ideal means of national education by referring to the system of education of soldiers in Bavaria. Count Rumford 'found it necessary to make Soldiers Citizens, and Citizens Soldiers' in order to 'render the military force even in time of Peace, subservient to the Public Good'. To do so, he established a system of public education:

Schools were established in all the regiments for instructing the soldiers in reading, writing and arithmetic; and into these schools the children likewise of the neighbouring citizens and peasants were admitted gratis, and school-books, paper, pens and ink were furnished for them at the expence of government.
(*Watchman*, 176)

In Britain the lower-class multitude was not instructed in the 'art of reading', and they were prohibited from learning 'writing' (see *Watchman*, 10). The art of 'arithmetic' was taught at institutions for the middle classes. Furthermore, as Thelwall frequently insisted in *The Peripatetic*, the existing tax system benefited only the ruling class. However, although pointing out

the advantages of Count Rumford's system of public education, Coleridge seems to have regarded it as almost impossible to realise it in Britain.

One month after this review, on 5 May 1796, Coleridge, preparing for the last issue of *The Watchman*, explained his own method of private education in his letter to Thomas Poole. His plan was first to study 'Chemistry & Anatomy' in Germany and bring over with him 'all the works of Semler & Michaelis, the German Theologians, & of Kant, the great German Metaphysician', then to commence 'a School for 8 young men at 100 guineas each - proposing to *perfect* them'(CL I. 209). Like Thelwall, Coleridge, regarding the qualification of teachers as necessary for education, planned to 'perfect' himself by studying in Germany in order to 'perfect' his students.

To 'perfect' his students Coleridge prescribed three stages of studies:

1. Man as Animal: including the complete knowledge of Anatomy, Chemistry, Mechanics & Optics.- (CL I. 209)

In the second half of the nineteenth century the most important subjects at most grammar schools were Classics, mathematics, and natural philosophy, particularly Newton's *Principia* and Opticks (see Gill, 27-8). The fact that this first stage did not contain the study of the Classics probably reflected Coleridge's education at Christ's Hospital, which was famous for its highly conservative instruction (see Holmes, 27). In his schooldays Coleridge had been more interested in medical and anatomy books than in the Classics.⁴⁷ His plan may indicate that he regarded wearisome rote learning and exercises in verse composition in Latin and Greek (which Christ's Hospital had obliged him to do) as inappropriate to fundamental education. Furthermore, Coleridge, like Thelwall, fully understood that natural philosophy enabled man to recognize the general laws of Nature, which governed the animate and the inanimate worlds. This first stage was neither singular nor exclusive in this period, since the principal aim of Rousseau's natural education was to enable the child to acquire 'only natural and purely physical knowledge' by teaching him natural science, like mathematics, physics, and geography.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ See Holmes, 29. Coleridge's interest in anatomy was stimulated by his elder brother Luke, who studied at the London Hospital.

⁴⁸ *Émile*, 207. Rousseau devotes Book III of *Émile* to pointing out the advantages of natural science.

Coleridge's interest in natural philosophy was more marked in the second stage of studies:

2. Man as an *Intellectual* Being: including the ancient Metaphysics, the systems of Locke & Hartley, - of the Scotch Philosophers - & the new Kantian S[ystem -](CL I. 209)

At this second stage Coleridge differed with Rousseau, who did not provide *Émile* with any knowledge of metaphysics (see *Émile*, 207). The principal aim of this stage was to teach the metaphysical system of Kant, by referring to the books which he would bring with him from Germany. It should be noted that the passage quoted above had a similarity with his plan for education in Pantisocracy, in which he had asserted that the study of Metaphysics should be a 'prerequisite to the improvement of the Head and Heart'(CL I. 119).

However, to perfect students *intellectually* was not the end of Coleridge's school education, which was to make them 'Religious' Beings:

3. Man as a Religious Being: including an historic summary of all Religions & the arguments for and against Natural & Revealed Religion. (CL I. 209)

As an ardent Unitarian he intended to persuade his students to believe in Unitarianism. To do so, he planned to teach the general laws of Nature in the first stage, then the active principle of the mind as a reflection of the One Life in the second stage. The final step of the third stage was 'proceeding from the individual to the aggregate of Individuals'(CL I. 209). In this respect, Coleridge's school scheme had much the same end as the Pantisocratic scheme. Furthermore, it should be noted that Coleridge's educational scheme, though more religious than philosophical, prefigured the principal aim of *The Recluse*: to explore the relationship between Nature, Man, and Society.

It is readily understandable that when Coleridge was asked to be a tutor by Mrs. Elizabeth Evans in Derby at the end of July 1796, he said, 'Every thing I saw of Mrs Evans made me consider the proposed situation an object of my highest wishes'(see CL I. 227-8). On 22 August Coleridge wrote to Josiah Wade from Derby, where he had enjoyed 'the beauties of

Matlock' with Mrs. Evans, adding that 'Sunday I dedicated to the drawing up my sketches of education, which I meant to publish, to try to get a school'. Coleridge's scheme for a school was now practicable, and Dr. Crompton asked Coleridge to help him open 'a day-school' at Derby in November. Unlike his previous plan for 'a School for 8 young men', Dr. Crompton's school scheme provided Coleridge with a more detailed account of a school:

He [Dr. Crompton] called on me, and made the following offer. That if I would take a house in Derby, and open a day-school, confining my number to twelve, he would send his three children. That, till I had completed my number, he would allow me One hundred a year; and when I had completed it, twenty guineas a year for each son. (CL I. 229)

This passage suggests that Coleridge was concerned with payment rather than with the scheme itself. In fact, he excitedly said, 'twelve times twenty guineas is two hundred and forty guineas per annum'. Dr. Crompton talked chiefly about working conditions at this meeting. In the subsequent passage Coleridge referred to how long he would devote himself to the work:

. . . my mornings and evenings would be my own: the children coming to me from nine to twelve, and from two to five: the two last hours employed with the writing and drawing masters, in my presence: so that only four hours would be thoroughly occupied by them. (CL I. 229)

The plan was to commence in November 1796. Before that Coleridge intended to devote himself to teaching Mrs. Evans's children on the one hand, and to preparing for Dr. Crompton's day-school on the other. However, only two weeks afterwards, on 4 September, Coleridge said he regretted that he had accepted the offer, and mentioned reasons in his letter. One was that he disagreed with 'the Grandfather & Guardians' of Mrs. Evans's children. Although Mrs. Evans treated Coleridge with 'esteem, & affection, and unbounded generosity', 'Grandfather & Guardians' disagreed with him (CL I. 234). Coleridge did not point out on what point he disagreed

with them in this letter, though his pupils' guardians probably required him to subscribe to 'the *Law*' - the 39 Articles of the Church of England, which as a Unitarian Coleridge would not agree to do. Although Parliament no longer obliged dissenting teachers to do so, to conservative guardians Coleridge's original methods and his dissenting religion seem to have been completely different from what they had expected.⁴⁹

By 15 October 1796 Coleridge had completely severed his 'Derby connection'. In his letter to Charles Lloyd, Senior, Coleridge wrote about the alteration of his schemes for the future. He determined to 'retire once for all and utterly from cities and towns' to a secluded cottage at Nether Stowey near Bridgwater. He pointed out three reasons. One was that his 'Health would be materially impaired by residing in a town'. Like Wordsworth and Thelwall, Coleridge abhorred the vicious effects of large cities and towns. The second reason was that 'the close confinement and anxieties incident to the education of children' would also impair his health, and would never permit him even 'a snatch of time for literary occupation' (CL I. 240).

The third and principal reason was that Coleridge was anxious that his new-born baby Hartley 'should be bred up from earliest infancy in the simplicity of peasants'.⁵⁰ Coleridge's plan for education in a rural setting had a close similarity with Rousseau's *Émile*, Wordsworth's schooling of Basil, and Thelwall's 'Academy'. Although having abandoned his scheme for a day-school, Coleridge began to look after his personal pupil, a twenty-year-old man, Charles Lloyd, Junior, in his house in September 1796.⁵¹ Charles was 'assuredly a man of great Genius', but Coleridge recognized that his 'colloquial powers open' only 'in tete a tete with whom he love[d] & esteem[ed]'. He pointed out the reason:

. . . this arises not from reserve or want of Simplicity;
but from having been placed in situations, where for
years together he met with no congenial minds, and

⁴⁹ CL I. 234. For the 39 Articles, see William Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, vol. X (London, 1938), 113. According to Holdsworth, in 1779 dissenting ministers and teachers were relieved from the necessity of assenting to certain of the 39 Articles of the Church of England.

⁵⁰ CL I. 240. See also CL I. 236. David Hartley Coleridge was born on 19 September 1796.

⁵¹ See CL I. 235n.-6n. Concerning the original arrangement, Griggs refers to E. V. Lucas, *Charles Lamb and the Lloyds* (1898), 20, which suggests that 'Charles was to pay 80£ a year in return for board, lodging, instruction, and the companionship and mentor'.

where the contrariety of his thoughts & notions to the thoughts & notions of those around him induced the necessity of habitually suppressing his Feelings. (CL I. 236-7)

Like Thelwall, Coleridge regarded 'friendship and connections' as necessary for mental and intellectual growth. While showing his 'congenial' mind to this mentally suppressed young man, Coleridge aimed at encouraging Charles's 'great Genius'.

Much as Wordsworth brought up Basil at Racedown and Alfoxden, Coleridge tried to realise his 'rustic scheme' in looking after his son Hartley and Charles Lloyd:

We shall reside near a very dear friend of mine, a man versed from childhood in the toils of the Garden and the Field, and from whom I shall receive every addition to my comfort which an earthly friend and adviser can give. (CL I. 241)

Coleridge, like Thelwall and Wordsworth, regarded the influence of friendship and nature as crucial to education. In addition, he became interested in the relationship between nature, man, and society in preparing himself for the education of his new-born son and his personal pupil. His ideal small community was now not on the banks of the Susquehannah. Planning to move to Nether Stowey at the end of 1796, Coleridge was certainly thinking of Thomas Poole, 'a very dear friend'(see CL I. 292). Moreover, Wordsworth was to join Coleridge's fraternal community as 'an earthly friend and adviser' in July 1797. Thelwall, too, was to arrive at Stowey on 17 July 1797 and spend ten days with them.

Thelwall's plan for national education was abandoned when he left the centre of the reform movement in April 1796. Although Wordsworth had called for national education in his unpublished *Letter* of 1793 and presented an educative agenda throughout the *Philanthropist* scheme in May - November 1794, his interest in education was limited to Basil Montagu in this period. Coleridge's discussion of national education concluded with the abandonment of the *Watchman* in May 1796. Although Coleridge had devoted more time to planning for private education, none of his school schemes - the education in Pantisocracy, the school for eight boys, and the

day-school in Derby - had been realised. By the time of their meeting at Alfoxden and Stowey in 17 - 27 July 1797, all of them had become more broadly interested in philosophical improvement rather than the specific issue of the education of children. Retired from the political world, they were concerned more generally with views of 'Nature, Man, and Society'. The *Recluse* scheme was to commence in early March 1798. However, the projected philosophical poem concerning nature, man, and society owed much to the educational preoccupations Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Thelwall had shared in the explicitly radical milieu through which all three had moved in recent years.

Chapter II

Some Aspects of Literature, 1770 - July 1797

It was at the beginning of March 1798 that Wordsworth first mentioned *The Recluse or views of Nature, Man, and Society* in his letters.¹ By this time he had already composed '1300 lines of a poem . . . of considerable utility' (EY, 214), which probably consisted of *The Ruined Cottage* (April 1797 - March 1798), *The Old Cumberland Beggar* (January - March 1798), *The Discharged Soldier* (January - March 1798), and *A Night Piece* (January - March 1798) (see Johnston, xvii). The completed 1300 lines (which I shall call the early *Recluse* poems) reflected concerns of his previous works (the poems composed before July 1797, which I shall call the pre-*Recluse* poems hereafter); *An Evening Walk* (published January 1793), *Descriptive Sketches* (published January 1793), *A Night on Salisbury Plain* (composed August-September 1793 - April-May 1794), *The Baker's Cart* (composed late 1796 or spring 1797), and *Old Man Travelling* (composed April - June 1797).

The principal theme of *The Recluse* was not singular or exclusive to Wordsworth, as my discussion of educational ideals and schemes in Chapter One has shown. His 'views of Nature, Man, and Society' (EY, 214) also had significant precedents. Thelwall had presented 'Sketches of the Heart, of Nature and Society' in *The Peripatetic* (published on 29 April 1793). Coleridge expressed his opinions on Nature, Man, and Society in both religious and political terms in 1795 - 6 throughout his political lectures, in his periodical *The Watchman*, and in *Poems on Various Subjects* (published on 16 April 1796). Wordsworth's, Thelwall's, and Coleridge's concerns with Nature, Man, and Society reflected their political activities, though they more revealingly demonstrated the influence of preceding literary works. Their aesthetic interest in the poor stemmed in part from the popularity of the picturesque in the 1770s and 1780s, particularly from William Gilpin's guidebooks in which he had described beggars, gipsies, and vagabonds in and around ruins as an embellishment of picturesque landscape. On the

¹ EY, 212, Wordsworth to Tobin of 6 March, and EY, 214, to Losh of 11 March.

other hand, their radical protest against the present government in their literary works showed social, political, and moral consideration for the miserable state of the poor like that in John Langhorne's *Country Justice* (1771-4).

The first section of this chapter deals with views of Nature, Man, and Society in literary works by the most distinctive and influential forerunners, William Gilpin and John Langhorne, then compares them with Thelwall's 'sketches' in *The Peripatetic*. The second section, focusing on Wordsworth's pre-*Recluse* poems concerning distresses and miseries in society, and particularly on his description of the poor, points out what is singular in his treatment of 'Nature, Man, and Society', and how his 'views' changed and developed up to the first announcement of *The Recluse* in early March 1798.

i

(1) Gilpin's Observations on Picturesque Landscape

Observations on the River Wye, And Several Parts of South Wales, &c. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty; Made in the Summer of the Year 1770 was published in 1782. When Gilpin and his party made a tour of the River Wye in 1770, Tintern Abbey, like other ruins, was 'a dwelling-place of beggars and the wretchedly poor' (Moorman, 402-3). As he said, 'We did not expect to be interested: but we found we were': the 'scene of desolation' in and around the abbey had a great effect on him and his companions, and he devoted nearly half of the pages of the section concerning Tintern Abbey to his impression of the poor. '[T]he poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants were remarkable', Gilpin said, and described the wretchedly poor dwellers in the abbey:

They occupy little huts, raised among the ruins of the monastery; and seem to have no employment, but begging: as if a place, once devoted to indolence, could never again become the seat of industry. (*River Wye*, 35-6)

'Begging' enabled most of the poor inhabitants to devote themselves to 'indolence', but some more 'industrious' ones offered tours of the scenes of 'poverty and wretchedness'. A 'poor woman' of 'industry', though having 'lost the use of her limbs', led Gilpin and his party to her 'mansion', and told them 'the story of her own wretchedness'. While making no reference to her story, Gilpin offered a detailed description of a 'loathsome . . . human dwelling':

It was a cavity, loftily vaulted, between two ruined walls; which streamed with various-coloured stains of unwholesome dews. The floor was earth; yielding, through moisture, to the tread. Not the merest utensil, or furniture of any kind, appeared, but a wretched bedstead, spread with a few rags, and drawn into the middle of the cell, to prevent its receiving the damp, which trickled down the walls. At one end was an aperture; which served just to let in light enough to discover the wretchedness within.

Gilpin concluded this guided tour of the 'cell of misery' in Tintern Abbey by saying, when we 'felt the chilling damps, which struck us in every direction, we were rather surprised, that the wretched inhabitant was still alive; than that she had only lost the use of her limbs' (*River Wye*, 36-7).

As the extract quoted above will indicate, throughout the encounter with the disabled female in the ruin Gilpin did not express any personal compassion for her - although he did show an insatiable curiosity about the poverty and wretchedness of the loathsome dwelling. As Gary Harrison (63) asserts, Gilpin described the poor men and women as 'the bona fide human configurations of the picturesque' which 'would not suggest any particular expression that might invest them with moral or individual (one might add historical) human qualities'. In *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems* Marjorie Levinson (29-32) quotes extracts about Tintern Abbey from well-known guidebooks by Gilpin's contemporaries, in a discussion of the effects of the nearby foundry: as she suggests, most of them regretted the 'despoliation' of the landscape, since the iron-works had changed many of the 'picturesque' vagrants at the ruin into 'industrious' labourers. Furthermore, and as Harrison (15, 30-6) points out, 'social, political, and

economic crisis' in the 1790s led the ruling class not to treat the poor as part of 'Nature' but increasingly to consider 'the economic values' of their industrial contribution to 'the welfare of the nation': the 'distinction between the *idle* and the *industrious* poor' identified the latter as 'productive members of society' who 'best deserved respect and charity'. For Gilpin and the tourists the poor 'indolent' vagrants in and around the ruins, though lacking not only in a living but also in the moral worth associated with 'industry', were a necessary embellishment of picturesque landscape. In fact, the popularity of picturesque tours prevented the wretched inhabitants from resuming productive 'industry' by encouraging their 'indolence', namely 'begging' as a 'spectacle' of poverty. Throughout his series of guidebooks Gilpin's observations in the 1770s and 1780s did not embrace 'Nature, Man, and Society', but were limited to the landscape, and in particular to the picturesque harmony of ruins, wretched huts, and the 'idle' poor.

As Levinson and others have suggested, although Wordsworth's tours to Tintern Abbey in 1793 and 1798 were influenced by picturesque sketches in guidebooks, Wordsworth did not in fact focus on the picturesque ruin in his *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*.² In the five years since the first visit (the summer of 1793) to the second (13 July 1798) Wordsworth had been affected by his readings of literary works as well as political publications, among which John Langhorne's *Country Justice* was probably one of the most influential.

(2) Langhorne's 'Lenity' in *The Country Justice*

John Langhorne described the poor from a humanitarian point of view in his poem *The Country Justice* (1774-7). As he recollected in his 'Memoir of the Author', in 1772 Langhorne had 'lived retired at his parish of Blagdon, content with performing the duties of his station, and exercising the benevolence of his disposition in relieving the distresses of his poor'. Although Langhorne, like Gilpin, belonged to the middle class, he did not treat the poor as an object of charity (the fashionable upper-middle-class

² Wu, 66, suggests that Wordsworth had read Gilpin before he started the tour of the River Wye in July 1798. See also Kenneth R. Johnston, 'The Politics of *Tintern Abbey*', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 14 (Winter 1983), 8, who suggests Wordsworth may have carried a copy of Gilpin on his trips to the Wye in 1793 and 1798.

pastime in that period) but looked on their miseries and distresses with compassion. *The Country Justice* reflects his experience as 'an acting magistrate' in Somerset, concerned with charity, the poor laws, and the penal law.³

The influence of Langhorne on Wordsworth has been remarked by some critics, although the ways in which Wordsworth's views on the miseries of the poor were indebted to *The Country Justice* may deserve reconsideration. Wu (83-4) suggests that Wordsworth had been familiar with Langhorne's works since his Hawkshead days. And as T. W. Thompson remarks, Wordsworth's debt to Langhorne is evident in the opening lines of his first published poem, *Sonnet, on Seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams Weep at a Tale of Distress* (March 1787):

She wept. - Life's purple tide began to flow
In languid streams through every thrilling vein . . .

Here Wordsworth echoed Langhorne's lines almost word for word: 'she saw Life's purple tide, /Stretch'd her fair arms, with trembling voice she cry'd'(Translation of Bion's *The Death of Adonis*, 49-50).⁴

As Jacobus (144) points out, in the description of a female beggar in the first published edition of *An Evening Walk* (January 1793) Wordsworth showed a more marked debt to Langhorne's *Country Justice*. Wordsworth found 'Minden's charnel plain'(254) such a straightforward echo of Langhorne's 'Minden's plain'(CJ i. 'Apology for Vagrants', 15) that he immediately corrected it to 'Bunker's charnel hill' in the errata to the first edition (see *Cornell EW*, 62n.), but his debt to Langhorne was not entirely erased by this verbal correction. This echo indicates that even at the earliest stage of his poetic career Wordsworth, like Langhorne, described the wretchedness of the poor not as a 'spectacle' (picturesque or otherwise) but as the miserable experience of the weak and helpless in society. In addition, by focusing on the victims of the vicious policies of the government - the war widow and her dying children - Wordsworth showed concerns similar to Langhorne whose principal aim in *The Country Justice* was to demonstrate to his fellow magistrates the ideal 'Character of A Country Justice' by pointing out the 'injustice' and inhumanity of the existing system of social laws:

³ John Langhorne, *The Poetical Works of John Langhorne* (London, 1804, repr. 1971), the 'Memoir of the Author', 23.

⁴ T. W. Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead*, ed. Robert Woof (London, 1970), 344.

Justice . . . in the rigid paths of law,
 Would still some drops from Pity's fountain draw,
 Bend o'er her urn with many a gen'rous fear,
 Ere his firm seal should force one orphan's tear . . .
 (CJ i. 'Character of A Country Justice', 9-12)

He asserted the need to treat criminals with 'Justice', 'Pity', and 'Lenity': 'Be this, ye rural Magistrates, your plan: /Firm be your justice, but be friends to Man':

Still mark if Vice or Nature prompts the deed;
 Still mark the strong temptation and the need:
 On pressing Want, on Famine's pow'rful call,
 At least more lenient let thy justice fall.
 (CJ i. 'General Motives for Lenity', 1-2, 11-4)

The link between humanity and the promptings of 'Nature', in his social context, prefigured (if only in outline) the 'utilitarian' formula of *The Recluse* and also shows broad similarities with Wordsworth's pre-*Recluse* poems.

Lyrical Ballads deals with similar concerns to those in *The Country Justice*, and in particular Wordsworth seems to have picked up some ideas and words from the passage quoted above for *Lines written in early spring* (composed early March - c. 16 May 1798):

To her fair works did nature link
 The human soul that through me ran;
 And much it griev'd my heart to think
 What man has made of man.

...

If such be of my creed the plan,
 Have I not reason to lament
 What man has made of man?

(*Lines written in early spring*, 5-8, 22-4)

However, there are more differences than similarities. Wordsworth, in focusing on the healthy link between Nature and Man, intended to follow

'Nature' not to disturb the harmony of society. Langhorne, on the other hand, by defining the promptings of 'Nature' as 'need', 'pressing Want', and 'Famine's pow'rful call', aimed to protect the natural claims of man on society: 'if . . . Nature prompts the deed;/ . . . more lenient let thy justice fall' ('Lenity', 11-4).

As Jacobus (145) suggests, the principal aim of Langhorne's 'poetry of indignation' was to 'shock the reader out of his assumptions by confronting him with glaring miscarriages of justice or shortcomings in poor-law administration'. To do so, he tried to draw the reader's attention by narrating the miseries of one of the criminals, a 'poor Vagrant' (CJ i. 'Apology for Vagrants', 5) - a passage frequently discussed in relation to *An Evening Walk* though I shall suggest the difference between Langhorne's and Wordsworth's points of view. Both deal with war victims, but while the narrator in *An Evening Walk* related a common example of the ill-effects of war on the weak, the magistrate in *The Country Justice* spoke for 'the poor Vagrant' with pity:

him, who, lost to ev'ry hope of life,
Has long with fortune held unequal strife,
Known to no human love, no human care,
The friendless, homeless object of despair . . .
(CJ, i, 'Apology for the Vagrants', 1-4)

'[H]uman love' and 'human care' for the vagrant led Langhorne to insist, it was not 'folly' but 'misfortune' that brought '[t]hose last of woes his evil days [had] wrought' ('Apology', 7-8). Langhorne also suggested a possible cause of his crime: the vagrant was supposed to be the child of a war widow (whether it was fact or not) - a 'child of misery, baptiz'd in tears!', whom '[p]erhaps on some inhospitable shore . . . a widow'd parent bore', and '[p]erhaps that parent mourn'd her soldier slain' ('Apology', 20, 11-2, 16). Langhorne, by saying that 'perhaps' the criminal was one of the most miserable war victims, tried to make his fellow magistrates treat him with 'justice' but also with 'pity' and 'lenity'. Having suggested that the misery of his birth might well have formed 'sad presage of his future days' ('Apology', 19), Langhorne continued the narration of his later life in which the criminal was described as one of the soldiers discharged without

any adequate compensation:⁵ although having done 'deeds of valour' for Britain, veterans 'to their native shores return'd, / Like exiles wander'd . . . / Or, left at large no longer to bewail, / Were vagrants deem'd, and destin'd to a jail!' (CJ i. 'Apostrophe to Edward the Third', 4, 7-10) In suggesting that his crime was prompted by 'fate of war' ('Apostrophe', 14), Langhorne demonstrated how magistrates could and should be 'friends of Man' through exercising what he called 'social mercy' ('Apology', 9). As he said, 'Still mark if Vice or Nature prompts the deed' ('Lenity', 11): the 'Man' who deserved 'social mercy' was genuinely unfortunate. Even if the criminal was not a war victim, to a magistrate of 'lenity', 'justice', and 'human love' like Langhorne he appears a 'Man' who should be protected from the inhumane system of the penal law. The vicious poor (professional beggars and gypsies), on the contrary, even though not criminals, should be excluded from 'human care' and 'social mercy' (a view also held by Thelwall).

The influence of Langhorne's 'poor vagrant' on Wordsworth was not limited to *An Evening Walk*. Roger Sharrock (302-4) suggests that *Guilt and Sorrow* (1842) reflects Langhorne's opinions, though I shall point out in the next section that the first version called *A Night on Salisbury Plain* shows Langhorne's influence more markedly. Furthermore, although less frequently remarked, Langhorne's insight into the ill-effects of government prefigured the principal aim of Wordsworth's revision of *A Night of Salisbury Plain*: 'Its object is partly to expose the vices of the penal law and the calamities of war as they affect individuals'.⁶ In describing 'the profligacy of the poor' as 'the greatest evidence of a vicious government' (*Perip.* III. 130), Thelwall's *Peripatetic* may also have owed much to Langhorne.

Having demonstrated the viciousness and inhumanity of existing political institutions, Langhorne pointed out the 'injustice' of the poor laws as one of the principal causes of the miseries of the poor. As a means of 'fair Justice', Langhorne said, the poor laws should 'restrain' the 'rich from wanton cruelty' and in so doing 'smooth the bed of penury and pain; / The hapless vagrant to his rest restore' (CJ i. 'The Appointment, and its Purpose', 12, 3-5). The present system of charity was far from these purposes, administered by a 'parish-officer' (a 'monster furnish'd with a human frame') and a 'sly, pilfering, cruel overseer' (a 'shuffling farmer, faithful to

⁵ See Harrison, 101. By referring to Emsley (34), Harrison points out the miserable condition of soldiers returning from the American wars.

⁶ EY, 159. Wordsworth to Wrangham of 20 November 1795.

no trust,/Ruthless as rocks, insatiate as the dust!')⁷ The present system of charity encouraged the overseer's '*pride*' - 'Humanity's first foe' ('Protection', 14) in overlooking his 'wanton cruelty' to a 'poor hind':

When the poor hind,⁸ with length of years decay'd,
Leans feebly on his once subduing spade,
Forgot the service of his abler days,
His profitable toil, and honest praise,
Shall this low wretch abridge his scanty bread,
This slave, whose board his former labours spread?

(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 43-8)

As an administrator of charity (and as the poor man's former master) the 'proud farmer' (54) should furnish the poor 'hind' and his family with relief and also pity. However, this 'ruthless' and 'cruel' overseer, ignoring the man's 'former labours' - and paying no attention to the 'penury and pain' of his 'helpless family' (51) - did not show any 'humanity':

See the pale mother, sunk with grief and care,
To the proud farmer fearfully repair;
Soon to be sent with insolence away,
Referr'd to vestries, and a distant day!

(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 53-6)

Without any charity or care the helpless family endured 'the last extremes of penury' ('Protection', 68). Langhorne insisted that the proud farmer, having abridged poor relief, did not merit any 'social mercy' or 'lenity':

If in thy courts this caitiff wretch appear,
Think not, that patience were a virtue here.
His low-born pride with honest rage controul;
Smite his hard heart, and shake his reptile soul.

(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 61-4)

⁷ CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 36-7, 40-2.

⁸ According to *OED*, a 'hind' here means 'a farm servant, an agricultural labourer' ('hind', sb2, 2).

However, as he said, 'The truth is rigid'(60): under the present system of the poor laws the 'patience' of the poor was ignored while that of this 'sly' overseer was regarded as a 'virtue'. The patience of the 'hapless' poor reinforced the principle of the poor's silence as a measure of their genuine want, which was to be frequently asserted by political economists in the last two decades of the eighteenth century: for example, as Harrison points out, Joseph Townsend in *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws* (1786) and Thomas Malthus in the fifth edition of *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) divided the poor into those 'undeserving' or 'deserving' of alms: 'those who call[ed] attention to their suffering should not receive alms' and 'those who suffer[ed] silently should receive alms graciously'.⁹ Langhorne, as a humane magistrate, looked at the sufferings of the poor in his parish with humane concern while Townsend and Malthus, like Gilpin, treated them as objects of charity, or, units of unexploited economic utility.

Like the 'hapless' poor in the passage quoted above, and as Harrison (145) says, 'those who suffered silently' in fact mostly remained 'invisible to the potential benefactor'. Langhorne exemplified the 'invisible' misery of silent sufferers by narrating another tragic event he had experienced in his parish - the death of an aged shepherd and his wife:

- That roof have I remember'd many a year;
 It once gave refuge to a hunted deer -
 Here, in those days, we found an aged pair; -
 But Time untenants - Hah! what seest thou there?
 "Horror! - By Heav'n, extended on a bed
 "Of naked fearn, two human creatures dead!
 "Embracing as alive! - ah, no! - no life!
 "Cold, Breathless!"

(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 79-86)

⁹ Harrison, 145. For the definition of the 'deserving' poor Harrison refers to Townsend's assertion that 'modest worth stands at a distance, or draws nigh with faltering tongue and broken accents to tell an artless tale'(Joseph Townsend, *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws by a Well-Wisher to Mankind*, 1786, repr. Berkley, 1971, 19). Harrison also refers to Malthus's observations on 'the silent and retiring sufferer laboring under unmerited difficulties'(An *Essay on the Principle of Population*, which Harrison quotes from David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1960*, Harvard, 1964, 547-8).

Langhorne continued, 'I knew the scene, and brought thee to behold /What speaks more strongly than the story told. /They died thro' want -' ('Protection', 87-9). Thelwall follows Langhorne's example when he says: 'Real Misfortune . . . is not frequently to be heard crying in the streets' and 'we must seek them in their modest retirements' like 'the cottage of the industrious peasant' (*Perip.* I. 30-1). And although little critical attention has so far been paid to it, the connection between the 'dead tenants' and their cottage in the passage above prefigured the more reticent story of an 'untenanting' in *The Ruined Cottage*; somewhat like Langhorne, the old pedlar begins, 'I see around me here /Things which you cannot see' (67-8), and tells the young poet of a broken 'bond /Of brotherhood' (84-5) between Margaret and her cottage. Wordsworth's *The Last of the Flock* (composed early March - c. 16 May 1798) also shows similarities with Langhorne's description of the injustice of the charity system. The poor shepherd says

"I of the parish ask'd relief.
They said I was a wealthy man;
My sheep upon the mountain fed,
And it was fit that thence I took
Wherefore to buy us bread:"
"Do this; how can we give to you,"
They cried, "what to the poor is due?"
(*The Last of the Flock*, 44-50)

In Langhorne's poem the aged family fell victims - like Wordsworth's shepherd - to abuse of the poor laws:

No arm to save, and no protection near,
Led by the lure of unaccounted gold,
Thy bailiff seiz'd their little flock, and sold.

Their want contending parishes survey'd,
And this disown'd, and that refus'd to aid:
A while, who should *not* succour them, they tried,
And in that while the wretched victims died.
(*CJ* ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 114-20)

The 'wretched victims', like the shepherd in *The Last of the Flock*, were deprived of their small property by the vicious bailiff and 'refused aid' by the overseers of the poor who hounded them on from parish to parish. However, Langhorne concluded, 'In vain / To rave at mischief, if the cause remain!' ('Protection', 121-2) Even for a humane magistrate like Langhorne reform of laws could not be sufficient for the protection of the poor. 'Superior *here* the scene in every part!' ('Protection', 195), he said, and suggested the way to seek happiness in his parish:

Here reigns great Nature, and there little art!
Here let thy life assume a nobler plan,
To Nature faithful, and the friend of man!

(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 196-8)

While Langhorne suggested that rural magistrates should protect the genuinely unfortunate with 'social mercy' by making 'lenity' their 'plan' ('Lenity', 1-2), he encouraged the people in his parish to follow a 'nobler plan' of 'Nature' - to show 'Nature's love' and 'Nature's virtue' ('Protection', 145, 140), namely compassion, towards their friends. As Jacobus (145) says, like Langhorne, Wordsworth in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* (October-November 1795) suggests that 'the only refuge of the poor lies in mutual compassion'.

In contemporary society penal law punished criminals without considering whether their deeds were prompted by 'Nature' or 'Vice' - whether they were victims of needs which resulted from society's neglect, or not. The section on 'Protection of the Poor' in *The Country Justice* concluded with the story of a 'pitying robber', who 'felt as man, and dropp'd a human tear' when he saw 'A babe just born that signs of life exprest, /Lay naked o'er the mother's lifeless breast' (211-3). As Sharrock (303) points out, this sentimental story has similarities with *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*. Like Wordsworth's discharged sailor, the robber was a virtuous man at heart. Although he had 'no time to waste', he gave 'a part of what he [had stolen] before' to the neighbours to take care of the baby (214-6). The misery of the dead mother and her baby was, again, one of the shortcomings in poor-law administration:

The ruffian officer oppos'd her stay,
And, cruel, bore her in her pangs away,

So far beyond the town's last limits drove,
 That to return were hopeless, and she strove.
 Abandon'd there - with famine, pain and cold,
 And anguish, she expir'd . . .

(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 225-30)

She was a victim of the poor laws, and the 'pitying robber' likewise became a victim of the penal law at the end of this episode: 'His life the gen'rous robber paid, /Lost by that pity which his steps delay'd!' (233-4)

The 'Protection of the Poor' demonstrated that social forms were so unnatural and inhumane that they distanced Man and Society from the mutual compassion of 'Nature's love and virtue'. Sharrock (304) suggests that Wordsworth developed his own variations of the story of a wretched woman and a murderer from the theme that had impressed him in Langhorne. In addition, he points out (303-4) that Wordsworth echoed Langhorne's 'yon solitary thorn' ('Protection', 203) in *The Thorn*, though their similarities, I think, seem not to go much further than a verbal echo. Rather, I shall suggest in the next section that Wordsworth might well have drawn upon some ideas and words (including 'yon solitary thorn') for the 1794 revisions he made to *An Evening Walk*. But as we have seen, Wordsworth's debt to Langhorne was not limited to this passage: Langhorne's sections on the criminal¹⁰ may well have encouraged Wordsworth to consider the vital connections between Nature, Man, and Society. Indeed in a more general sense *The Country Justice* was a significant background to the *Recluse* scheme since Wordsworth's reading of it persisted throughout the period of the development of his views of Nature, Man, and Society; by the time of the composition of *An Evening Walk* in 1788-9; while revising it for the publication in 1791-2; while composing *A Night on Salisbury Plain* in summer or autumn 1793; while revising it as *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* in autumn 1795; and at about the same time as the commencement of *The Recluse* in early March 1798 (see Wu, 83-4).

However, differences between their views of Nature, Man, and Society are I think also significant. Throughout *The Country Justice*, Langhorne scarcely focused on 'Nature' as natural phenomena; although beginning, 'Nature's seasons different aspects wear, /And now her flowers, and now her fruits are due', this stanza concluded not by paying attention to

¹⁰ CJ i. 'Character of A Country Justice', 'General Motives for Lenity', 'Apology for Vagrants', and 'Apostrophe to Edward the Third'.

any natural scenery but by referring to his views of society: 'for social ends we grew'.¹¹ Langhorne's views of 'Man' and 'Society' were limited to the people in his parish, and he aimed to persuade them to be 'friends of Man', individuals of mutual 'social' utility. Wordsworth, on the other hand, in considering Nature, Man, and Society more generally and deeply, aimed in *The Recluse* at providing the reader with more universal views of 'considerable utility' in which each category interrelated with the others.

(3) *The Peripatetic*: Thelwall's Sketches of the Heart, of Nature and Society

Like Gilpin's *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty*, 'The Eccentric Excursions' in *The Peripatetic* consist of pedestrian and equestrian excursions¹² in and around London. Sylvanus and his friends, like Gilpin and his party, visit well-known picturesque sites; some have been reduced to ruins, others converted into more 'useful' structures - hospitals (like 'Greenwich Hospital', an 'asylum' for those who have 'sacrificed their youth and limbs in the maritime wars'; *Perip.* I. 54-6), almshouses (a 'miserable shelter for the labourers and mechanics who administer to the luxuries of this gay metropolis' in Bermondsey church-yard; *Perip.* I. 125-6), and barns and storehouses (for example, in Shooter's Hill and West-Hythe; *Perip.* I. 186-7, II. 52).

Ruins, as we have seen, provided beggars, gipsies, and vagrants with habitations in this period. Like Gilpin, Sylvanus narrated an encounter with a 'cheerful family of vagrants' near one of the 'majestic ruins' of the 'once-noble castle of Saltwood' (*Perip.* II. 70, 65-6). However, Thelwall did not view vagrants as part of the picturesque landscape; like Langhorne, he expressed consideration for the poor, although he went much further in describing Sylvanus's feelings and also in examining and explaining the working of them. To take one example: on their way to West-Hythe, Sylvanus and his friends were approached for charity by 'a robust and ruddy youth, apparently about one or two and twenty, with nothing of evident distress about him, except the ragged apparel':

¹¹ *CJ* ii. 'Dedication to Robert Wilson Cracroft, Esq.', 25-6, 28.

¹² See *Perip.* II. 49, 'An Equestrian Digression'.

The plaintive cant of his voice . . . was acted with such address that, in spite of his sleek appearance, the heart of Ambulator was affected, and he was going, almost mechanically, to give him money. (*Perip.* II. 44-5)

Ambulator, following the picturesque tradition, 'mechanically' regarded charity as a means to help the poor without considering the beggar's moral worth. However, 'the flaming ruby of his cheek, flushed perhaps a little by inebriation, checked the rising ardour', and gave time for Sylvanus's admonition:

"Is this an object of charity? . . . Look at those limbs, and that healthful countenance: and then tell me whether you consider it to be the part of a professor of real benevolence, to encourage his vagrant indolence? Misery, indeed, ought to be relieved, even when the effect of vice; and he himself is vicious who can be deaf to its appeal: but if *Labour*, as must be admitted, constitutes the real wealth of the community, it can never be the part of a good member of society to contribute to the *useless* and the *idle*: unless, indeed, where it is commanded by the *coercive laws of his country*, and sanctioned by *hereditary institutions*". (*Perip.* II. 45)

In the passage quoted Thelwall seems to have developed Langhorne's discussion of the shortcomings of the poor laws by dividing the poor into the 'useless' and 'idle' and the truly impoverished. As Harrison (34) suggests, in the 1790s 'the moral and economic value of the poor' was 'constructed in terms of a relation to production', and 'industry' and 'independence' were regarded as 'natural and inevitable determinants of human value and dignity'. However, while workers came to be valued 'less for the ontological value of their labor and more for the economic values of the commodities they produced' (Harrison, 36), Thelwall in the passage above put more emphasis on the economic and social significance of the

'Labour' as the basis of the ideal relationship between Man and Society: 'the real wealth of the community'.¹³

Langhorne insisted that the 'nobler plan' of 'great Nature' would lead men to feel mutual compassion (CJ ii. 'Protection', 196-8); Thelwall described the 'general laws of Nature', which governed the animate and the inanimate alike (see *Essay*, 4), as a bond between Man and Society. Thelwall's insight into the influence of the 'general laws of Nature' as a bond between men is marked in another of Sylvanus's encounters, this time with an unemployed labourer. While taking a 'solitary ramble' in the outskirts of London, he was accosted by 'a labouring man, in tolerable decent attire, but who, with a pathetic voice, pleaded for charity'. The memory of two earlier encounters with the 'vicious' poor, in both of which he had been violently attacked, 'wrapt' his mind in 'abstruse contemplation':

I have . . . an habitual antipathy - not against distress . . .
but against professional beggary - It is the vicious
profession of indolence and hypocrisy! (*Perip.* I. 23-4)

Consequently, he 'pass[ed] silently on' without paying any attention to the pathetic plea when his eye glanced at an 'implement of rustic labour suited to the season, though the long continuance of unfavourable weather had prevented the opportunities of its use' (*Perip.* I. 24-5). At first sight the labourer's hay fork appeared to Sylvanus as a 'formidable weapon' (*Perip.* I. 25); however, the man did not brandish it in a threatening way but trailed it along the ground. Having reversed his impression of the labourer, Sylvanus 'turned instantly round':

my hand, sympathizing with the feelings of my heart,
waited not for the cold approbation of Reason, but went
immediately and instinctively to my pocket. (*Perip.* I.
26-7)

¹³ See *Thel. W.* xliii-xlix. Claeys points out that Thelwall's interest in political economy, and particularly in the social and political value of the 'productive labour' became more marked in 1795 under the influence of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. As Claeys suggests, in *The Rights of Nature* (1796) Thelwall, by insisting that capital could not be productive without labour, or vice versa, demonstrated the mutual dependence, both economic and social, of society and its members.

Although what he was about to take out of his pocket was money, it was not law-forced charity, but a token with which he tried to show compassion. The turn of his feelings brought about a mysterious revolution in the labourer's: 'just at the same moment, as if by the same instinct, he [the labourer] turned round again toward me' (*Perip.* I. 27). Stimulated by this 'instinctive' correspondence between them, Sylvanus became more interested in the labourer; in answer to his compassion the labourer told a 'simple tale', 'by way of apology for having solicited' (*Perip.* I. 29). With this correspondence between Sylvanus and the unemployed labourer (although accidental and short-lived) Thelwall took the reader inside 'the Heart'. Here, perhaps, we can just glimpse the stirrings of a 'psychological' approach to understanding the nature of suffering and human compassion which parallels the concerns of Wordsworth's *Salisbury Plain* poems and also prefigures the more intensely introspective poetry Wordsworth would write in 1797-8.

The encounter with 'The Maniac' is another such incident. In a church-yard Sylvanus and his friends heard 'a slow and tremulous voice, warbling with exquisite harmony, but in so faint and mournful a key, that . . . [they] could scarcely distinguish the words'. Sylvanus tried to explain why he felt a 'mournful sympathy' at the sound:

why did my heart vibrate, and my pulse beat in solemn unison to the melting cadence? - Why was my breath suspended, and my foot rivetted to the consecrated turf? - And by what mysterious mechanism did the unconscious tear steal down my cheek responsive to the tremulous note? (*Perip.* II. 131-2)

He strove to find a cause for this 'mysterious mechanism', though his 'unconscious tear' seemed beyond rational interpretation:

Here was no selfish retrospect; no anticipation of correspondent suffering . . . I had not seen the mourner - I knew not the complexion of her woes - Desire and Apprehension stood equally aloof. - And yet I pitied - and I wept! (*Perip.* II. 132)

Sylvanus could not find rational cause for his readiness to pity: the only explicit reason was a 'faint and mournful' voice. Wentworth too said, 'there is something holy in the voice of sorrow', and wept profusely (*Perip.* II. 132).

The curious episode of 'The Maniac', I believe, has similarities with Wordsworth's *The Thorn* (composed c. 19 March - 16 May 1798). Like Sylvanus and his friends, an old sea-captain is drawn by the mournful cry - 'Oh misery! oh misery!' (*The Thorn*, 65) - of a woman who sits by a mound 'like an infant's grave in size' beside an 'aged thorn' (61, 56). He has no factual grasp of the 'complexion of her woes', although he eagerly seizes on rumour and superstition by way of explaining her miserable state.

Like the sea-captain, Sylvanus and his friend drew near to the spot, which was believed to be 'her mother's sepulchre':

... the posture in which she reclined, leaning with both her hands upon the grave, prevented us from seeing her face. Yet was there an air of exquisite melancholy diffused over the whole form ... (*Perip.* II. 133, 135)

Sylvanus, like the inquisitive narrator in *The Thorn*, tried to describe the 'Maniac' in minute detail. Yet he was unable to give rational explanation for the 'melancholy', which seems to have 'diffused over' her 'whole form'. However, 'a single glance of her tearful eyes' (*Perip.* II. 135) was enough to stimulate Sylvanus to define, though unconfidently, the 'mysterious mechanism' as 'Compassion':

... real Sorrow shuns with timid modesty the assistance of Compassion, and leaves the gracious boon of Mercy to impudent Imposture. *Seek*, then, thy objects, blest Benevolence. - Hunt them in silent shades and cold retreats - let the voice of thy comfort steal on them unawares, and thy bounty, like the unseen dews of heaven, conceal the hand that sheds it. (*Perip.* II. 136)

The passage above shows some similarities with the earlier, momentary communication between Sylvanus and the labourer. However, whereas Sylvanus gave money to show 'compassion' to the labourer, the 'mysterious mechanism' in the passage above is a kind of stealthy 'unconscious' correspondence between human beings. As Langhorne said, 'Nor known to

him the wretches were, nor dear,/ He felt as man, and dropp'd a human tear'(CJ ii. 'Protection', 217-8): equally, the robber's unconscious tear seems to have prefigured Thelwall's 'mysterious correspondence' between men.

Thelwall's 'Compassion' seems to demonstrate the harmony of 'general laws of Nature' (discussed in medical and scientific terms in his *Essay Towards A Definition of Animal Vitality*) as a unity of 'the Heart', 'Nature', and 'Society'. In this respect Thelwall's 'Compassion', though explained only as a 'mysterious mechanism', prefigured Wordsworth's and Coleridge's concept of the universal unity of 'One Life'. In addition, Thelwall moved from political discussion of the utility of the poor to a psychological consideration of the mind and in particular of the mechanism of compassion, from radical opinions on the ill-effects of the present social and political system to sympathetic views of a bond between men.

ii

(1) Two Texts of *An Evening Walk*; 1793 and 1794

Most of the reviewers of *An Evening Walk* (published on 29 January 1793) referred to the description of the miseries of the female beggar, but they regarded it as part of the poem's picturesque scenery. They treated the 1793 *Evening Walk* as a 'descriptive poem',¹⁴ a series of 'paintings'¹⁵ of 'new and picturesque imagery'¹⁶ described by 'the hand of an able copyist of nature'¹⁷ 'with a spirit and elegance'.¹⁸ As Wordsworth himself later recollected, the 1793 *Evening Walk* deals chiefly with 'the infinite variety of natural appearances'(IF, 5). However, the fact that all existing early manuscripts (composed in 1787-92), - DC MS. 2, 5, 6, and 7 -, contain a

¹⁴ *The Analytical Review*, 15 (March 1793), 296-7; quoted from *Cornell EW*, 303.

¹⁵ *The European Magazine*, 24 (September 1793), 192-3; *Cornell EW*, 304.

¹⁶ *The Critical Review*, n.s., 8 (July 1793), 347-8; *Cornell EW*, 303.

¹⁷ *The Analytical Review*, 15 (March 1793), 296-7; *Cornell EW*, 303.

¹⁸ *The Gentlemen's Magazine*, 64 (March 1794), 252-3; *Cornell EW*, 306.

description of the beggar and her children¹⁹ indicates that even at the earliest stage of his poetic career (and under the influence of Gilpin) Wordsworth's views were not limited to the picturesque landscape alone. The revised version of *An Evening Walk* (DC MS. 9, composed in 1794) reflected more markedly Wordsworth's insight into human suffering, though this version was never quite finished. Paul Sheats asserts that the lines added in 1794 show 'moral and emotional significance', and James Averill, following Sheats, suggests that Wordsworth explores 'social, ethical, and religious issues' in the second version.²⁰ However, the 1794 *Evening Walk* is I think also significant as a first announcement of the themes of Nature, Man, and Society, which would develop throughout the composition of the pre- and early *Recluse* poems.

Most reviewers, both contemporary and modern, describe the 1793 *Evening Walk* as a topographical or loco-descriptive poem (see *Cornell EW*, ix). Placed between the 'elegant' description of 'Swans' and the picturesque scenery of 'Twilight Objects', the delineation of the 'Female Beggar' and her dying children appears like the beggars, gipsies, and vagrants in Gilpin's *Observations*. Whereas the swans show each other 'tender Cares' and 'mild domestic Loves' (1793 *EW*, 207), the mother and her babes are 'hapless human wanderers' (1793 *EW*, 239), without any hope, help, or charity. The description of their miseries and distresses, following the 'elegant' description of a pair of swans and their little ones, was for Wordsworth's first readers 'pathetic'²¹ and 'elegant'²² rather than sympathetic and tragic. In this way, the fate of the beggar and her children successfully contributed to the embellishment of picturesque landscape.

However, as some contemporary reviewers stated, the passage about the female beggar was not only 'descriptive' but also 'affecting' enough to remind the reader of Langhorne's description of the war widow, though the latter, as the *Critical Review* said, had more 'strength'.²³ But Wordsworth started revising immediately after publication (see *Cornell EW*, 12), and his

¹⁹ See DC MS. 2; *Cornell EW*, 86-7, DC MS. 5; *Cornell EW*, 94-5, DC MS. 6; Landon, 373-4, and DC MS.7; *Cornell EW*, 98-103.

²⁰ Paul D. Sheats, *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1819* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 102. See also *Cornell EW*, 'Introduction', 13. As Averill suggests, the second version consists of 802 lines, among which 356 lines were added to the original 446 lines.

²¹ See the *European Magazine*, 24 (September 1793), 192-3; *Cornell EW*, 304.

²² The *Gentleman's Magazine*, 64 (March 1794), 252-3; *Cornell EW*, 305.

²³ The *Critical Review*, n.s., 8 (July 1793), 347-8; *Cornell EW*, 303-4.

enthusiasm for social reform now made him go much further than recording 'natural appearances' (IF, 5). Consequently, and as Averill points out, in the 1794 *Evening Walk* landscape becomes a '*paysage moralisé*' (Cornell EW, 14): see for example, the moral lesson that Wordsworth extracts from the description of a rooster's mourning cry:

Rise rather at his [the rooster's] call from slumber pure
 And meet him early at your opening door;
 There with another eye behold him wave
 The floating pomp of plumage Nature gave.
 From love of Nature love of Virtue flows,
 And hand in hand with Virtue Pleasure goes.

(1794 EW, 257-62)

Averill regards this passage as prefiguring '*The Prelude's* dictum that love of Nature leads to love of Mankind' (Cornell EW, 14), although I think this might be to anticipate a little too much. Rather, the passage above, I believe, shows similarities with Langhorne's account of the long-lost 'social, hospitable days' in which all the people had shared 'Nature's love' and 'Nature's virtue' (see CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 145, 140). However, whereas Langhorne intended to demonstrate the viciousness of the present government, even in this pre-*Recluse* poem Wordsworth's views of Nature, Man, and Society are more fully interconnected:

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

(1794 EW, 119-32)

Averill quotes the latter half of the passage above (ll.125-132) as Wordsworth's first references to pantheism - 'all forms that Life can take' (see *Cornell EW*, 15). It prefigures the famous lines in *Tintern Abbey*:

that serene and blessed mood
 In which the affections gently lead us on,
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things.

(*Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey*, 42-50)

The 'secret power' in the passage quoted from the 1794 *Evening Walk* is, I believe, also similar to Thelwall's 'something' - 'the divine immortal essence' in his *Essay Towards A Definition of Animal Vitality* (39-40), 'the pure electric fire' and 'Life's first great mover' in *The Peripatetic*, which provided the vital organs (the heart, the brain, and the lungs) with a vivifying principle from the air through circulation of the blood.²⁴ Thelwall's discourse was not limited to medicine and anatomy, for he tried to explain the close relationship between, or, the unity of, the Heart, Nature, and Society. I do not suggest that Wordsworth drew directly upon Thelwall's writings and ideas in the 1794 *Evening Walk*, though it seems not utterly impossible or unlikely. However, it is certain that in 1793-4 both Thelwall and Wordsworth were preoccupied with the global relationship between Nature, Man, and Society while devoting themselves as well to the practical concerns of the radical reform movement.

As the passage quoted above from the 1794 *Evening Walk* suggests, Wordsworth (like Thelwall) was already considering the relationship between the human mind and natural phenomena, and the social value of it. Langhorne's primary concerns in the section on 'Protection of the Poor', as we have seen, were similar issues. The passage about 'Nature's love' and

²⁴ See *Perip.* I. 'A Digression for the Anatomists', 159-166.

'virtue'(140) in *The Country Justice* was followed by this description of the evening scenery:

Seest thou afar yon solitary thorn,
Whose aged limbs the heath's wild winds have torn?
While yet to cheer the homeward shepherd's eye,
A few seem straggling in the ev'ning sky!
Not many suns have hasten'd down the day,
Or blushing moons immers'd in clouds their way,
Since there a scene, that stain'd their sacred light,
With horror stopp'd a felon in his flight;

(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 203-10)

The 'scene' which 'stopp'd' the robber '[w]ith horror' was the miserable sight of the lifeless mother and her new-born baby. As we have seen, this section was framed to demonstrate the differences between the injustice and inhumanity of social laws and 'Nature's virtue' and 'love' in the ancient 'social, hospitable days'(140, 145). However, Nature seems not to have indicated to Langhorne any active relationship similar to the 'mysterious' power of compassion that Thelwall and Wordsworth began to explore around 1793-4.

The revised version of *An Evening Walk* has a passage of twilight scenery, similar to that in *The Country Justice*, just before the description of the happy 'Swans':

Now while the solemn evening-shadows sail,
On red slow-waving pinions down the vale,
And, fronting the bright [west], in stronger lines,
Yon oak its darkening boughs and foliage twines,

(1794 EW, 410-3)

This description of the darkling picturesque landscape is followed by the more 'solemn' scenery of the swans in '[d]omestic bliss secure and constant love / And constant peace' on the 'silent tides'(464-5, 425). In the 1794 version Nature is no longer 'natural appearances'(IF, 5), it reflects and expresses the relationship between the female beggar and society: for example, a 'Storm' symbolizes the mother's fear of her children's death:

Oh! when the whirling drifts her path assail,
 And like a torrent roars the mountain gale!
 - Perhaps she knows that wretched mother's pain
 Whose fate - oh grant, kind Heaven, my fears in vain!
 Poor Wanderer, when from forest, brook, and dell,
 Long sounding groans the coming storm foretell,
 Thy memory in those groans shall live and cast
 Fresh horror o'er wide Stanemoor's wintry waste.

(1794 EW, 506-13)

As Landon (373-6) suggests, the mother is no longer the passive 'female form' in earlier manuscripts - DC MS. 4, 5, and 6 in which Wordsworth, following Elizabeth Halket's ballad *Hardyknute* (published in 1719), described a 'woeful story of "Fairy fair"'. She is now an affectionate mother who is doing 'all she can do for her children against bitter odds', and particularly against the 'ruthless Tempest' and its 'deadliest dart' (524):

... to baffle the rentless Storm,
 She tries each fond device Despair can form;
 Beneath her stiffened coats, to shield them strives,
 With love whose providence in death survives.

(1794 EW, 530-3)

However, what she tries to protect her children from are not so much natural disasters but the miseries and distresses which derive directly from social and economic inequalities.

In insisting that the present system of society was breaking the correspondence between Nature and Man, Wordsworth seems to have followed Thelwall's discussion of 'Nature' and 'Art' in *The Peripatetic*. By suggesting the difference between the 'general laws of Nature' and 'Art', or, 'the laws of human œconomy' (the existing system of society), Thelwall asserts that the latter 'withdraws the beauteous veil that Nature has spread around her operations', and breaks the harmony between Nature and Man (*Perip.* I. 162-6). The female beggar in the passage quoted above is no longer part of Nature, but an isolated human being. Furthermore, the concluding lines provide her with a significant role - a 'Poor Wanderer' deserted by society:

When morning breaks I see the [] swain,
 Sole moving shape in all that boundless plain,
 Start at her stedfast form by horror deck'd,
 Dead, and as if in act to move, erect.

(1794 *EW*, 534-7)

The mother's 'stedfast form' recalls the lifeless mother in *The Country Justice*. In concluding the passage about the female beggar above Wordsworth was most likely conscious of the beginning of the encounter between the robber and lifeless mother in *The Country Justice*: 'a scene, that . . . /With horror stopp'd a felon in his flight'(CJ ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 209-10).

The fact that Wordsworth stopped with the scene at which Langhorne had started, I think, reflects the differences between their views of Nature, Man, and Society. Langhorne's principal aim was to expose the injustice and inhumanity of some laws, and the subsequent passage in *The Country Justice* was concerned in particular with the ill-effects of the poor laws and the penal law. Unlike Langhorne, Wordsworth tried to go further than contemporary issues, including the cause of the miseries of the mother. His aim was not to suggest to the reader ephemeral solutions, but, as Landon (375-6) suggests, to demonstrate the 'inner grandeur' of human nature by focusing on the mother's hopeless but persevering struggle. Whereas radical leaders, including Thelwall, considered the economic values of 'productivity' among the 'industrious' poor in this period (see for example Harrison, 34-6), Wordsworth was more preoccupied with human value and dignity in the 'stedfast form' of the 'lifeless' mother in the 1794 *Evening Walk*. Wordsworth, although, like Thelwall, aiming at a thoroughgoing reform, had already begun to go beyond social, political, and economic values to contemplate the more philosophical and spiritual dimensions of the relationship between Nature, Man, and Society.

(2) The *Salisbury Plain* Poems, 1793 - 1796

The earliest complete version of the *Salisbury Plain* poems, *A Night on Salisbury Plain*, was started in August or September 1793. Mark Reed (307-8) suggests that composition of it had begun in 1788 when Wordsworth tried to describe in blank verse the misery of a war widow prefiguring 1793 *Evening*

Walk ll. 257-300; Stephen Gill (*Gill SP*, 145-6), following Reed, points out similarities between the war widow in *An Evening Walk* and existing preparatory fragments for *The Female Vagrant*, which were probably composed in or about 1791 - 1792. The *Salisbury Plain* poems, stemming from the same inspiration, have a close connection with *An Evening Walk*. By focusing on the treatment of the female vagrant in his three pre-*Recluse* poems composed during and after his London radical life - the 1794 *Evening Walk* and the first and second versions of the *Salisbury Plain* poems, I shall trace the development of Wordsworth's views of Nature, Man, and Society from late 1793 (the beginning of *A Night on Salisbury Plain*)²⁵ up until early 1796 (when the manuscript of *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* was submitted for publication to Joseph Cottle).²⁶

As Gill states, Wordsworth, having abandoned the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* perhaps in April 1793, echoed some of its ideas in *A Night on Salisbury Plain*. Although the title indicates that this poem has some resemblance to the topographical genre, it is concerned less with the description of scenery than with social distresses. Furthermore, Wordsworth's political opinions are more markedly radical than in his earlier works. Gill says, the 'attack on the oppression of the poor is the centre from which all of the poem's questioning radiates', and he points out the similarities between the *Letter* and *A Night on Salisbury Plain*:

The woman's story of how she and her father were pauperized indignantly refutes the complacent assertions of the Bishop of Llandaff in the Appendix to his sermon "On the Wisdom and Goodness of God in having made both Rich and Poor." The old father's

²⁵ For the date of the composition of the first version, see *Cornell SP*, 4-5. As Gill points out, the fact that in his letter to Mathews of 7 November 1794 Wordsworth confidently said, 'A night on Salisbury plain, were it not so insufferably awkward would better suit the thing itself' (*EY*, 136), indicates that the first version had been completed in some form by the end of October 1794.

²⁶ For the date of the composition of the second version, see *Cornell SP*, 12. As Gill points out, although Wordsworth had been working on the second version, the 1795 poem (now lost) might well be substantially represented by the fair copy of 1799. See also *EY* 163, 166: in his letter to Cottle of January 1796 Wordsworth said that he was to transmit a manuscript copy of *Salisbury Plain* 'in a few days'. Dorothy said to her friend in her letter of 7 March 1796 that Wordsworth was going to publish it.

impotence under the oppression of the wealthy, the destruction of the woman's family in the war, the inadequacy of provisions for the sick and needy - all of these *facts* are the basis for the poet's declamations which open and close the poem. (*Cornell SP*, 5)

These 'facts' derived chiefly from Wordsworth's own experiences during the tour to the West of England in July 1793, and he was stimulated particularly by his 'melancholy' encounter with the fleet, which was 'preparing for sea off Portsmouth at the commencement of the war'.²⁷ When the complete version was first published as *Guilt and Sorrow* in 1842, Wordsworth recalled the impression of Stonehenge:

The monuments and traces of antiquity, scattered in abundance over that region, led me unavoidably to compare what we know or guess of those remote times with certain aspects of modern society, and with calamities, principally those consequent upon war, to which, more than other classes of men, the poor are subject. ('Advertisement'; *Cornell SP*, 217)

Even fifty years after writing this poem, he vividly recollected that *A Night on Salisbury Plain* had been originally expected to demonstrate the 'calamities' of the poor. Wordsworth's views of Nature, Man, and Society in *A Night on Salisbury Plain* were related to those in the 1794 *Evening Walk*, though more markedly focused on contemporary social problems and more radically aimed as protest against existing government and political institutions. As he later recollected in the 'Advertisement', the *Salisbury Plain* poems reflected 'distress and misery beyond all possible calculation' (*Cornell SP*, 217). I shall argue that composition and revision of the *Salisbury Plain* poems in 1793 - 6 showed a continuation and completion of former works - *An Evening Walk*, *Descriptive Sketches*, and the *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* - and achieved a shift from political treatment of social distresses to a more philosophical insight into inner dimensions of human suffering.

By comparing *A Night on Salisbury Plain* with *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, Gill asserts that in the former Wordsworth expresses his

²⁷ The 'Advertisement' to *Incidents upon Salisbury Plain* (1841); *Cornell SP*, 215.

'condemnation of tyranny and social injustice' with 'no hesitation, no allowance for the variety of life'. The 'violence of the tone', Gill says, 'must command our sympathy', since in this early version we can see 'Wordsworth's natural response to intense social, political, and personal pressures'(Gill SP, 146). The effect of this poem on the reader is similar to Thelwall's 'simple' tales of the poor in *The Peripatetic* and the description of the sufferings of the female vagrant in *An Evening Walk*. However, the aim for moral improvement was not exclusive to Wordsworth or Thelwall. As Gill suggests, Wordsworth followed Godwin and Paine on the one hand, and reflected 'the main shared assumptions and feelings of the radical and humanitarian opposition of the early 1790's' on the other. What we should note, Gill states, is that Wordsworth aimed to 'make the reader feel through the medium of poetry' what they could not feel in political pamphlets like Godwin's and Paine's - 'the truth about society and its treatment of the common man'(Gill SP, 147). What did Wordsworth try to demonstrate as 'the truth about society'? Who did he describe as 'the common man'? What did he intend to make the reader feel? In discussing his views of Nature, Man, and Society in *A Night on Salisbury Plain*, I shall suggest some answers to these questions.

The first version of the *Salisbury Plain* poems begins with the brief introduction of a discharged soldier, a 'traveller' on 'Sarum's plain'(Night, 38). Although he is 'strong to suffer, and his mind /Encounters all his evils unsubdued'(10-11), he 'with a sigh /Measured each painful step'(38-9). His misery did not derive only from 'thirst and hunger'(42), but expressed Wordsworth's protest against the indifference of the government to soldiers, and particularly against inadequate compensation for their services.²⁸ However, the principal cause of his misery was his alienation on the huge plain: denied 'Love', 'Friendship', and 'social life', he 'scarce could any trace of man descry'(Night, 30, 33, 43). The description of the traveller's solitude indicates that Wordsworth tried to go inside the human mind while also voicing his radical opinions on contemporary social problems. Like in the 1794 *Evening Walk*, Nature here reflected the working of the traveller's mind. To him Stonehenge was more than the superstitious 'dead house of the plain'(Night, 126). It seems to have symbolized the traveller's hopelessness and his isolation from society.

²⁸ Emsley, 51, suggests that between 1793 and 1796 40,000 soldiers were discharged without adequate compensation.

Wordsworth's views were more explicitly expressed after the traveller's encounter with another victim of society, a 'female wanderer' (a war widow who had come back alone from America after the death of her husband and children).²⁹ It was not long before their similar states - solitude on the plain and alienation from men and society - made them friends: the traveller addressed to the female wanderer 'low words of cheering sound', and she, answering his kindness, began to tell him the story of her miseries '[w]ith sober sympathy and tranquil mind' (*Night*, 158, 202). As many have observed, her story was concerned with contemporary social problems - the local oppression of peasants³⁰ and the ill-effects of the American War. Although described by means of abstractions and personifications, the miseries of the female wanderer, if published, may well have gone further than political tracts by making contemporary readers feel 'the truth about society' and its ill-treatment of the poor.

By describing the feelings of the female wanderer after the death of her husband and children, Wordsworth showed a growing insight into the mind. As Jacobus (149-50) states, the 'mighty gulf of separation' (*Night*, 370), which the female wanderer feels on her homeward voyage from America, is 'the gulf between living and no longer having a reason to live', since she 'loses her humanity through losing those she loves'. Unlike the narrator in the 1794 *Evening Walk*, the traveller was an 'earthly friend' whose kindness and sympathy encouraged her to determine to leave 'the tomb' for society. In the 1794 *Evening Walk* the mother was found dead in the morning, though her 'stedfast form . . . as if in act to move' (536-7) showed human dignity and courage. The description of the dawn in *A Night on Salisbury Plain*, on the contrary, indicated regained hope:

The city's distant spires ascend
Like flames which far and wide the west illumine,
Scattering from out the sky the rear of night's thin
gloom.

Along the fiery east the Sun, a show

²⁹ See *Night*, 138 and stanzas 33-44.

³⁰ See Z. S. Fink, *The Early Wordsworthian Milieu* (Oxford, 1958), 88-9, 134-5. Fink suggests that when describing the 'miserable hour' (261) following the 'Oppression' (257) of the female vagrant's father, Wordsworth probably thought of the story of local oppression in which an old couple are tyrannized because they would not sell a field to a local landowner.

More gorgeous still! pursued his proud career.

(*Night*, 394-8)

All that had scared the female wanderer overnight - the storm, darkness, and loneliness of the plain - had gone. Furthermore, the traveller was affected not only by this gorgeous scenery but by the woman's tale:

. . . human sufferings and that tale of woe
 Had dimmed the traveller's eye with Pity's tear,
 And in the youth mourner's doom severe
 He half forgot the terrors of the night,
 Striving with counsel sweet her soul to chear,
 Her soul for ever widowed of delight.
 He too had withered young in sorrow's deadly blight.

(*Night*, 399-405)

Unlike the narrator in the 1794 *Evening Walk*, he felt 'Pity' not only for her 'tale of woe' but also for all 'human sufferings'. As Gill (*Gill SP*, 146) suggests, Wordsworth's 'natural response to intense social, political, and personal pressures' and particularly 'condemnation of tyranny and social injustice' probably commanded the sympathy of contemporary readers. And as Jacobus (145, 152) says, the passage quoted above indicates that the only refuge of the poor lay in 'mutual compassion', since consolations and comforts were few in society: although the 'terror of the night' had gone, the traveller was still afflicted by 'sorrow's deadly blight', and the female wanderer too remained 'widowed' - homeless and hopeless. Yet their mutual compassion was strong enough to convince them that they were not as lonely as they had been, encouraging her to seek a home.

The description of the plain reflected the transformation of their feelings from despair to hope: at sunset 'the huge plain' had spread around the traveller 'vacant'(62) - alienated from 'Love', 'Friendship'(30), and 'social life'(33):

. . . thence no smoke upwreathed his sight to cheer;
 And see the homeward shepherd dim appear
 Far off . . .
 No sound replies but winds that whistling near
 Sweep the thin grass and passing, wildly plain;

Or desert lark that pours on high a wasted strain.
(*Night*, 49-54)

At sunrise Salisbury Plain was no longer 'vacant' or deserted:

. . . now from a hill summit down they look
Where through a narrow valley's pleasant scene
A wreath of vapour tracked a winding brook
Babbling through groves and lawns and meads of green.
A smoking cottage peeped the trees between,
The woods resound the linnet's amorous lays,
And melancholy lowings intervene
Of scattered herds that in the meadows graze,
While through the furrowed grass the merry milkmaid strays.
(*Night*, 406-14)

The story of the traveller and the widow concluded when at sunrise they left 'the dead house of the plain' for a village, a human community. In *The Peripatetic* Thelwall said, 'it is not the *rich*, but the *poor*, who support the poor of this country' (*Perip.* III. 142). The whole of *Salisbury Plain* bears out Thelwall by revealing the poor helping the poor, while suggesting that social and economic oppression had worked to frustrate this mutual support.

Wordsworth started to revise the first version of *Salisbury Plain* soon after he moved to Racedown with Dorothy at the end of September 1795. In his letter to Francis Wrangham of 20 November he confidently said

. . . since I came to Racedown I have made alterations
and additions so material as that it may be looked on
almost as another work.

He explained what the 'alterations and additions' mainly concerned:

Its object is partly to expose the vices of the penal law
and the calamities of war as they affect individuals. (*EY*,
159)

In *A Night on Salisbury Plain* Wordsworth had made no reference to the penal law, though he described the miseries of two war victims as 'the calamities

of war'; the principal aim of the revision was not to pin-point the shortcomings of the policies of the government, but to expose how they did and would 'affect individuals'. To do so, Wordsworth transformed the traveller into a sailor on the run after committing a murder, exploring the effect of murder on his mind.³¹ Gill regards *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* as 'both a continuation and a consummation' of *A Night on Salisbury Plain*, and explains what the 'alterations and additions' dealt with:

It continues the social and political interests of the poem, and even extends them, but this continuing attack on the government of the country does not draw on any really new response to contemporary conditions . . . it is successful because the rhetoric of *Salisbury Plain* has been replaced by a fully dramatized presentation of the human calamities consequent upon war, but Wordsworth's interest was rapidly shifting from social and political phenomena to the more complex phenomena of human motives and behavior. (*Cornell SP*, 12)

Although Wordsworth referred to the penal law and the war against France, his principal aim was neither to attack social and political oppression nor to encourage the democrats in the reform movement. Rather he intended to develop an insight into the human mind by considering the effect of social miseries on it.

Adventures on Salisbury Plain begins without formal introduction:

A Traveller on the skirt of Sarum's Plain
O'ertook an aged Man with feet half bare;
Propp'd on a trembling staff he crept with pain,
His legs from slow disease distended were;

(*Adventures*, 1-4)

The traveller, unlike the narrator in the 1794 *Evening Walk*, drew near to the aged man to observe how miserable he was:

³¹ See *Gill SP*, 142. In Gill's opinion *Adventures* markedly shows the shift of Wordsworth's interest from politics to the mind of man and the value of human relationships.

His temples just betrayed their silver hair
 Beneath a kerchief's edge, that wrapp'd his head
 To fence from off his face the breathing air.
 Stuck miserably o'er with patch and shred
 His ragged coat scarce showed the Soldier's faded red.

(*Adventures*, 5-9)

The old man was one of the discharged soldiers, whose miserable conditions had been one of the principal causes of crime in *The Country Justice*.

Unlike political tracts in this period, Wordsworth did not investigate in depth the ill-treatment of discharged soldiers. The old man's miserable state forced the traveller to wonder why he made his difficult journey across Salisbury Plain:

"And dost thou hope across this Plain to trail
 That frame o'ercome with years and malady,
 Those feet that scarcely can outcrawl the snail,
 These withered arms of thine, that faltering knee?"

(*Adventures*, 10-3)

Pity for the old man made the traveller say, 'Come, I am strong and stout, come lean on me'(14). Like the mysterious correspondence between Sylvanus and the unemployed labourer in *The Peripatetic*, the traveller's sympathetic offer soon affected the old man: 'short the joy that touched his melting heart, /For ere a mile be gone his friend and he must part'(17-8).

As the labourer, answering Sylvanus's compassion, told the latter the story of his miseries, the old man, in reply to the traveller's kindness, told him 'how he with the Soldier's life had striven / And Soldier's wrongs'(20-1). As Wordsworth said in his letter to Wrangham of 20 November 1795 (*EY*, 159), the old man's story dealt chiefly with how 'the Soldier's life' had affected him. Although describing the ill-effects of the war on the poor, Wordsworth, unlike Langhorne (who demonstrated that vicious policies led the poor to commit crime) focused on the miseries of the old man, and in particular on the reason why he journeyed across the plain:

. . . he had limp'd to meet a daughter driven
 By circumstance which did all faith exceed
 From every stay but him: his heart was riven

At the bare thought: the creature that had need
Of any aid from him most wretched was indeed.

(*Adventures*, 23-7)

Although not alluding to present social concerns, the simple description of the discharged soldier, like Thelwall's simple tales of the poor, was calculated to encourage the reader to consider the 'fate of war', and to feel pity for victims of war. The encounter with the old man, therefore, shows Wordsworth's active moral instruction of the reader by means of poetry, and it is in this respect, I would suggest, that we can see Wordsworth even this early moving towards an idea of the poetic 'utility' he proposed for *The Recluse* in 1798.

The last stanza, although often cited as reflecting the influence of Langhorne or as an anti-Godwinian opinion of punishment is, I think, more significant as Wordsworth's discussion of the ill-effects of the penal laws on the lower classes and a continuation of his plan for moral instruction. As in the encounter between the traveller and female vagrant in the first version, the only relief of the poor lay in mutual compassion. The 'vices' of the penal law, however, had gradually numbed the people, in particular the lower classes. The last stanza deals with inhumane reactions to the hanged traveller:

. . . dissolute men, unthinking and untaught,
Planted their festive booths beneath his face;
And to that spot, which idle thousands sought,
Women and children were by fathers brought . . .

(*Adventures*, 821-4)

The gibbet, scene of a barbaric punishment, is complemented by the dissolute and 'untaught' crowd which surrounds 'that spot'. Here Wordsworth seems close to Thelwall, who stated in *The Peripatetic*, 'THE PROFLIGACY OF THE POOR is the greatest evidence of a VICIOUS GOVERNMENT' (*Perip.* III. 130). Furthermore, Wordsworth, in describing the execution of the murderer, seemingly recalled Langhorne's conclusion to the encounter between the robber and lifeless mother:

His life the gen'rous robber paid,
Lost by that pity which his steps delay'd!

No soul-discerning Mansfield sate to hear,
 No Hertford bore his prayer to mercy's ear;
 No lib'ral justice first assign'd the gaol,
 Or urg'd, as Camplin would have urg'd his tale.

(*CJ* ii. 'Protection of the Poor', 233-8)

By reminding the magistrates in his parish of a 'guardian magistrate'(132) in the 'social, hospitable days'(145) like 'Mansfield', 'Hertford', and 'Camplin', who had shown 'lenity', 'pity', and 'justice' for criminals, Langhorne concluded the section on the 'Protection of the Poor'. Wordsworth, on the other hand, went much further by leading readers to consider 'distress and misery' with compassion and benevolence, or, in Thelwall's terms, the 'mysterious' correspondence between men. Although it was impossible for individuals to reform the miserable state of the lower classes, they could encourage each other to be 'strong to suffer'(*Night*, 10) the harsh reality.

In *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* Wordsworth had already gone much further than Thelwall by suggesting to the reader the mechanism of compassion in moral terms. Furthermore, the close connection with *An Evening Walk* indicates that Wordsworth might well have had the line 'From love of Nature love of Virtue flows' in his mind (1794 *EW*, 261). If so, the two versions of *Salisbury Plain* show the shift of Wordsworth's views from landscape and natural phenomena in *An Evening Walk*, and contemporary social problems in the concluding stanzas of *A Night on Salisbury Plain*, to a less ephemeral insight into Nature, Man, and Society in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*. *The Baker's Cart*, which Wordsworth composed while working on *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, shows a further way to describe the connection between Nature, Man, and Society.

(3) *The Baker's Cart* : The Rebellious Heart

Like the encounter between the traveller and old man in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, *The Baker's Cart* begins without formal introduction:

I have seen the baker's horse,
 As he had been accustomed at your door,
 Stop with the loaded wain, when o'er his head

Smack went the whip . . .

(BC, 1-4)

By describing a contrast between the past and the present, the narrator indicated that he was 'accustomed' to see this scene, and simply described what he 'saw' near the door:

. . . you were left as if
 You were not born to live, or there had been
 No bread in all the land.

(BC, 4-6)

Unlike the old man in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* the children did not plead for bread even though starving. The silence of the children showed similarities with Langhorne's and Thelwall's discussion of the 'invisible' miseries of those who, numbed by repeated distresses, were suffering their abject conditions in silence. However, the narrator (this time unlike Langhorne and Thelwall), did not accuse the government of ignoring the miseries of the poor, but continued to focus on what he saw and heard:

She saw what way my eyes
 Were turned, and in a low and fearful voice
 She said, 'That waggon does not care for us.'

(BC, 14-6)

The mother neither begged for bread, though she seems to have had nothing to provide her children with except a pitcher of water, nor asked the narrator to 'care for' them. Unlike the beggars in *The Peripatetic* and the old man in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, she expressed resignation involuntarily. The narrator, deeply impressed by her brief words, said

The words were simple, but her look and voice
 Made up their meaning, and bespoke a mind
 Which being long neglected, and denied
 The common food of hope, was now become
 Sick and extravagant . . .

(BC, 17-21)

Even though her mind appeared to the narrator to have been unbalanced, she did not say anything more nor did she describe their miseries. Like her children, she seems to have represented the 'Real Misery', which Thelwall distinguished from 'professional' beggars in *The Peripatetic*; Langhorne too had pointed out that people in need had no means to express their miseries.

In *The Watchman* Coleridge (like Langhorne, Thelwall, and Wordsworth) pointed out the ill-effects of the existing system of charity in his discussion of 'The Present State of Society', quoting from *Religious Musings*:

O aged Woman! ye who weekly catch
The morsel tost by law-forc'd Charity,
And die so slowly, that none call it murder!³²

'Charity' did not provide the poor with sufficient relief nor with the 'common food of hope' (BC, 20), 'neglecting' the human value of the poor until, Wordsworth suggests, their minds become '[s]lick and extravagant' (BC, 21). But Wordsworth's narrator, unlike Coleridge, did not attack the system of charity, and the reaction of the narrator was different from those described in most encounters with the poor in *The Peripatetic*. Whereas Sylvanus and his friends gave alms to the aged, children, and unfortunate labourers, the narrator in *The Baker's Cart* did nothing for the miserable mother and her starving children. It was certainly possible for him to buy bread for the children or to give money to their mother; but he did not do so. At the least, like Thelwall's peripatetics and the traveller in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, he could have asked her to tell him of their suffering. Yet no compassionate words were expressed in the poem. Instead, the narrator concluded with this insight: the woman had been

... by strong access
Of momentary pangs driv'n to that state
In which all past experience melts away
And the rebellious heart to its own will
Fashions the laws of nature.

(BC, 21-5)

³² *Watchman*, 65. For the quotation from *Religious Musings*, see 67n.

Like the poor people in Thelwall's *Peripatetic* and Langhorne's *Country Justice*, the mother, numbed by long 'experience' of 'denied hope', suffered in silence. However, her simple words, look, and voice enabled the narrator to recognize 'the rebellious heart'. This seems to be the same kind of 'mysterious mechanism' of correspondence between minds that Thelwall had described in superstitious terms in the episode of 'The Maniac'. By describing how the 'strong access /Of momentary pangs' affected the mother's mind, Wordsworth tried to explain the mechanism of compassion in 'psychological' terms. In the concluding lines Wordsworth went further than Langhorne and Thelwall by showing a psychological insight into the inner dimensions of the 'invisible' miseries of the poor. Roe (RY, 137) regards the 'imaginative involution from external circumstances to inner life' in *The Baker's Cart* as a pattern 'for Wordsworth's larger development from poet of protest to poet of human suffering'. In late 1796 and during the spring of 1797 Wordsworth, I think, had been a 'poet of protest' and 'poet of human suffering'.

(4) *Old Man Travelling*: Animal Vitality and Tranquillity

A brief but significant encounter was also described in *Old Man Travelling*, started at about the same time as *The Baker's Cart* (late in 1796 - early 1797), and composed chiefly in April - June 1797. Wordsworth's larger development from 'poet of protest' like Thelwall and Langhorne to 'poet of human suffering' is, I think, more revealingly expressed in this latest of the pre-*Recluse* poems.

Old Man Travelling shows similarities with other pre-*Recluse* poems. It begins without any introduction of the characters or the connection between them. Although *Old Man Travelling* deals with the story of an old man's misery, the narrator gives no help to him nor expresses feelings for him. As the mother's simple words were elaborated by her look and voice in *The Baker's Cart*, the old man's 'tranquillity' makes up the meaning of his simple story. The description of the old man has similarities with that of the aged soldier in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, too. *Old Man Travelling* was important not only as a continuation of the earlier pre-*Recluse* poems. It had another significance for Wordsworth's future. It should be noted that the

subtitle of this poem, 'Animal Tranquillity and Decay: A Sketch', seems to have echoed the title of Thelwall's *An Essay Towards A Definition of Animal Vitality* (read on 26 January 1793), in which he discussed 'Vital Action' or 'Life'(12). It was possible for Wordsworth to have had an opportunity to read it or at least to know of the title while in London radicals in spring 1793. Furthermore, his friendship with Coleridge after their first meeting in Bristol in late August or early September 1795 was another way for him to hear of this essay.³³

Like *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, the poem begins with a description of an old man on a road:

The little hedge-row birds,
That peck along the road regard him not.
(OMT, 1-2)

The old man is too passive to disturb nature around him. His 'tranquillity' is more marked in the subsequent passage:

He travels on, and in his face, his step,
His gait, is one expression; every limb,
His look and bending figure, all bespeak
A man who does not move with pain, but moves
With thought . . .
(OMT, 3-7)

Whereas the aged soldier in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* 'crept with pain'(3) the old man, whose 'bending figure' moves not with 'pain' but with 'thought', seems to be not a human being but part of Nature and, perhaps, an embodiment of 'the laws of nature'. As the mother and her children in *The Baker's Cart* suffered distresses in silence, the old man's perfect peace and tranquillity are a result of, and succeeded his 'effort' and '[l]ong patience'(OMT, 7-13). However, whereas the mother seems to have been pained until her 'rebellious' heart fashions 'the laws of nature' to 'its own will'(BC, 24-5), the old man, whose mind is not '[s]ick and extravagant'(BC, 21) but 'insensible' appears to be subdued to complete harmony with Nature.

³³ For more on Thelwall and Wordsworth, see Nicholas Roe, 'Coleridge and John Thelwall; Medical Science, Politics, and Poetry', *The Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series No. 3 (Spring 1994).

The old man, in seeming to move without pain, apparently requires no 'common food of hope' (BC, 20) or help. Unlike the narrator in *The Baker's Cart*, the young man, beholding the old man's tranquillity 'With envy', begins to ask him 'whither he [is] bound, and what /The object of his journey' (OMT, 14-6). The old man replies

"Sir! I am going many miles to take
 "A last leave of my son, a mariner,
 "Who from a sea-fight has been brought to Falmouth,
 "And there is dying in an hospital."

(OMT, 17-20)

The object of his journey is the same as the aged soldier's in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*: the latter was going to see his daughter, who was more 'wretched' than her 'wretched' father. By transforming the daughter into the dying sailor Wordsworth described one of the most 'wretched' in society in this period,³⁴ though expressing no overt protest. Moreover, there is no explanation why the old man is so tranquil even when he talks about his dying son - whereas in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* the aged soldier's heart was 'riven / At the bare thought' (25-6).

The poem concludes without describing how the narrator felt, what exactly he said to the old man, or what he did for him. However, the simple description of the old man's tranquil appearance and the unadorned story of his calm endurance has a calculated purpose: whereas in *The Baker's Cart* the miserable mother, '[l]ong neglected' (19) by society, was obliged to endure miseries and distresses with '[s]lick and extravagant' heart (21), the old man's heart is calm and tranquil fitting itself to the 'insensible' processes - or 'laws' - of nature. The strange patience of *Old Man Travelling* seems to give definition to and evidence of 'the laws of nature' which had been violated in *The Baker's Cart*.

When *Old Man Travelling* was published in the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, Wordsworth was regarded as a 'poet of protest'. By

³⁴ See Emsley, 51. Emsley, by referring to Sir John Fortescue, suggests that in 1793-6 about 25,000 soldiers and 10,000 seamen had died principally of yellow fever or other tropical diseases in the West Indies, and the government did little more than 'fill the hospitals and die'. It is certain that a considerable number of discharged soldiers and sailors were dying in hospitals at this time.

focusing on the old man's story of his dying son, Dr Burney said in the *Monthly Review* that it was

. . . finely drawn, but the termination seems pointed against the war; from which, however, we are now no more able to separate ourselves, than Hercules was to free himself Nessus . . .

Although expressed in terms of myth, Burney's review concluded by suggesting, 'The old traveller's son might have died by disease'.³⁵ It was popular at this time to express protest against war by describing the miseries of war victims dying in hospitals of wounds or diseases. In this respect *Old Man Travelling* seems to have been related to protest poetry. However, as we have seen, it was more than an opinion on a particular social event or problem. Burney too, although he paid most attention to the latter half of the poem concerning the dying mariner, seems to have recognized that the old man's simple story was 'finely drawn' enough to lead the reader to seek meaning beyond the present social problems.

In *Old Man Travelling* Wordsworth was no longer solely a 'poet of protest'. His views were not limited to contemporary social problems but focused on the connection between Nature, Man, and Society. The fact that the old man embodied the harmony of the inanimate and the animate worlds indicates similarities with Thelwall's scientific discussion of the 'general laws of Nature' in *An Essay Towards A Definition of Animal Vitality*. However, there were more differences than similarities. Whereas Thelwall, focusing on the animal frame and the vital organs, suggested 'something' as the essence of animal vitality, or, life, Wordsworth described 'animal tranquillity' in a way that suggested through the imaginative idiom of poetry how the 'laws' of Nature, Man, and Society were interrelated.

The pre-*Recluse* poems (the 1793 and 1794 versions of *An Evening Walk*, *Descriptive Sketches*, the first and second versions of the *Salisbury Plain* poems, *The Baker's Cart*, and *Old Man Travelling*) show the development of Wordsworth's views of Nature, Man, and Society in the preparatory decade from 1787 to 1797, and also indicate some similarities between Wordsworth, Thelwall, and Coleridge. They also reflect Wordsworth's development from a 'poet of protest' to a 'poet of human suffering', though in *Old Man Travelling* Wordsworth, I believe, seems to have gone much further. He was

³⁵ The *Monthly Review*, xxix (June 1799), 209.

already a 'poet of tranquillity' who aimed not merely to document human suffering but to see into the possible harmony of Nature, Man, and Society. The earliest two pre-*Recluse* poems (the 1793 *Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*) were published at the end of January 1793. *The Female Vagrant* and *Old Man Travelling* were to be published in the first volume of *Lyrical Ballads* in mid September 1798 (see *EY*, 227n.). Wordsworth's growth as a poet throughout the pre-*Recluse* poems, therefore, had been unseen by the public. The latest pre-*Recluse* poem, *Old Man Travelling*, showed a successful step towards *The Recluse or views of Nature, Man, and Society*: Wordsworth had already developed a complex and distinctive vision of Nature, Man, and Society - social, moral, psychological, and one might add 'philosophical'- by the time of the ten days' meeting with Thelwall and Coleridge at Nether Stowey and Alfoxden in 17 - 27 July 1797.

Chapter III

The Recluse and The Œconomist

NUMBER I.
OF THE
ŒCONOMIST,
OR
ENGLISHMAN'S MAGAZINE.
For JANUARY, 1798.

PRICE ONLY THREE-HALFPENCE, OR ONE GUINEA FOR 150.



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Printed by M. Angus, Newcastle upon Tyne,
AND SOLD BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS IN GREAT BRITAIN.

Communications to the Magazine are desired to be directed, Post Paid, to the Editors of the Œconomist, at Mrs Angus's, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The title-page of *The Œconomist*, Volume I, Number I (January, 1798).

The first number of *The Economist, or Englishman's Magazine* appeared in January 1798. The title-page shows a drawing of a female rural labourer with a banner of 'Truth, Liberty, Virtue', and reads, 'Price only three-halfpence, or one guinea for 250', and 'Printed by M. Angus, Newcastle upon Tyne, and sold by all the booksellers in Great Britain'.¹ We can regard *The Economist* as 'a cheap monthly for the enlightenment of the masses' (see *EY*, 214n.), and particularly of the rural middle and lower classes. In appearing at the beginning of 1798 *The Economist* represented one of the ways in which one-time radical pamphleteers had been forced to seek a means to pursue reform outside the political world following the Two Acts in December 1795.

Wordsworth showed a keen interest in *The Economist* while also announcing the *Recluse* scheme to James Losh - who contributed to the journal - in his letter of 11 March 1798:

I have not yet seen any numbers of the *Economist*, though I requested Cottle to transmit them to me. I have been tolerably industrious within the last few weeks. I have written 1300 lines of a poem which I hope to make of considerable utility; its title will be *The Recluse or views of Nature, Man, and Society*. (*EY*, 214)

In concluding this letter, 'Let me hear from you immediately' (*EY*, 214), Wordsworth reinforced the implicit sense of his letter: that the 'utility' of *The Economist* and that of *The Recluse* were related. Although having 'not yet seen any numbers', he had already been informed of 'the *Economist*' by Losh's letter of 1 December 1797.²

The concluding paragraph of Wordsworth's letter to Losh of 11 March 1798, though frequently referred to as the first announcement of the full title of his grand poem, deserves reconsideration, since, I think, it suggests connections between *The Economist* and the *Recluse* scheme. In this chapter I shall point out similarities between *The Recluse* and *The Economist*, and consider the aim of Wordsworth's letter to Losh. *The*

¹ *Economist*, I, No. I, title-page. Each issue of Eaton's weekly periodical *The Philanthropist* (16 March 1795 - 18 January 1796) was two pence. The title-page of the 'Prospectus' of Coleridge's eight-days periodical *The Watchman* (5 February, issued 1 March - 13 May 1796) reads, 'Price Four Pence' (see *Watchman*, 3).

² See *EY*, 186n. Shaver suggests that on 1 December Losh was preparing to launch *The Economist*.

Æconomist completed a second volume and ceased publication in December 1799, though I shall focus on the first volume (January - December 1798) with which Wordsworth was familiar during the months of his close relationship with Losh in summer 1798. It is my aim in this third chapter to demonstrate that *The Æconomist* showed ideas of Nature, Man, and Society similar to those of *The Recluse*, and to suggest some similarities between *The Æconomist* and Wordsworth's poems of 1797-8. Because we know little precise information about Wordsworth's movements in the earlier part of this period, some of my arguments are necessarily speculative although, I hope, also suggestive of the immediate cultural milieu in which the project for *The Recluse* took shape.

(1) Losh and *The Æconomist* in 1797 - 1798

The close parallels between Wordsworth's and Losh's radical careers in the early 1790s have been documented in detail.³ Less frequently noted is Losh's role in helping Wordsworth make a connection with a significant figure. When Wordsworth and Montagu had supper with Losh at Bath on 27 March 1797, they were introduced to John Wedgwood, elder brother of Josiah and Thomas. Losh and John Wedgwood may have known each other through Dr. Thomas Beddoes: Losh became acquainted with Dr. Beddoes while contributing to Sunday Schools and Schools of Industry in the Bath-Bristol area (ill health compelled him to leave London in 1795).⁴ John Wedgwood, as a member of Dr. Beddoes' committee, was planning to make a series of 'rational toys' to cultivate the senses of children at this time.⁵ There is nothing to suggest what Losh and Wedgwood talked about with Wordsworth and Montagu over supper, though it seems at least likely that they may have exchanged opinions on education, and in particular on the education of little Basil, and that afterwards John Wedgwood and Montagu (who spent most of his time with the Wedgwoods and Godwin in May-June

³ For Losh's radical career in Paris in 1792, and in London in 1793-5, see RY, 191-3. For the first possible acquaintance of Wordsworth and Losh in Paris in late 1792, see Reed, 139.

⁴ See James Losh, *The Diaries and Correspondence of James Losh*, ed. Edward Hughes (2 vols.; London, vol. I, 1962, vol. II, 1963), vol. I, xiii.

⁵ See Erdman, 491. According to Erdman, Beddoes supplied the Wedgwoods with an important aspect of the great art of cultivating senses.

1797) passed some information about this to Josiah and Tom,⁶ who were planning an academy for genius. As we have seen in Chapter One, in his letter to Godwin of 31 July 1797 Tom mentioned Wordsworth and Coleridge as the most likely 'superintendents' for the academy: although he had met neither of them, from what he had heard of them Wedgwood regarded Wordsworth as suited for 'the most promising mode of benefiting society' (Tom Wedgwood to Godwin; Erdman, 430-1). The visit of Tom Wedgwood and James Webbe Tobin to Racedown in mid September 1797 can be regarded as a first contact with the projected superintendent for the academy, though Wedgwood found Wordsworth's natural education of Basil thoroughly different from his systematic method.

The first meeting of Wordsworth and John Wedgwood indicates a further possibility - namely that Wordsworth referred in conversation to what he had recently written, been writing, or planned to write, namely the earliest version of *The Ruined Cottage*.⁷ Even if Wordsworth had no opportunity to talk about it, his correspondence with Losh in 1797 suggests that Losh may have passed-on information about *The Recluse* to John Wedgwood and his brothers. Moreover, it seems not utterly impossible for Losh, as a well-known link figure, to mention Wordsworth's views of Nature, Man, and Society in the earliest version of *The Ruined Cottage* to a number of his more-or-less radical friends and acquaintances in the latter half of 1797. We cannot know how many people had been informed of the *Recluse* scheme by early March 1798, though Wordsworth's letters of 6 and 11 March indicate that to Losh, Tobin and others (John Prior Estlin,⁸ Lamb,⁹ Cottle, and perhaps the Wedgwoods) some or all of the '1300 lines of a poem' may well have been known already.

⁶ See Erdman, 429, 434. Erdman points out that Tom Wedgwood may well have heard from his brother (Erdman suggests Josiah as the person who dined with Wordsworth in March 1797) and Montagu of Wordsworth's interest in human progress, which had been demonstrated in the education of Basil since October 1795.

⁷ See *Cornell RC*, x, 8-9. The existing earliest manuscripts (MS. A and the Racedown Notebook), which dealt with the decay of Margaret and her cottage, were written in March - 4-7 June 1797.

⁸ See *Cornell RC*, x, 10, and *CL*, I, 327. Coleridge sent Estlin on 10 June 1797 an extract (lines corresponding to MS.B 491-528) from one of the earliest manuscripts, which is now missing.

⁹ See *Cornell RC*, 6, 11. As Butler suggests, Lamb must have heard some version of *The Ruined Cottage* while staying with Coleridge in mid-July 1797, and perhaps later saw more of it.

After Wordsworth's visit to Bath at the end of March 1797 Losh wrote to him on 1 June from Bath and on 21 July from Newcastle upon Tyne (EY, 186n.). It was perhaps sometime in summer 1797 that Losh was informed of a scheme for a monthly journal by his friend Thomas Bigge, and asked to become a co-editor or a contributor. As Shaver points out, in his letter of 1 December 1797 Losh presumably mentioned *The Œconomist* (EY, 186n.), and may well have given quite detailed information about the forthcoming journal, since the principal aim had been discussed by contributors and some articles of the first number had already been completed by this time. If so, Wordsworth may well have decided that his *Recluse* poems might be of 'considerable utility' if published in *The Œconomist*. To consider the possible relation of *The Recluse* and *The Œconomist*, I shall focus on the views of Nature, Man, and Society in the first volume of *The Œconomist* (Numbers I - XII, January - December 1798), most of which (perhaps from the first to the eighth) Wordsworth had read before he left for Germany in September 1798.

(2) *The Œconomist*, Vol. I (January -December 1798)

I shall begin this section with the title page, contents and contributors for the first volume of *The Œconomist*.

The Œconomist, or Englishman's Magazine

Truth, Liberty, Virtue

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By beginning with an article entitled 'What is Man?', the first number (January 1798) of *The Economist* demonstrated itself as a vehicle for promoting the 'progress of human improvement' - like the Wedgwoods' educational project:

REASON distinguishes the human species from the brute: and by the industrious improvement and right application of Reason, man is distinguished from man.

However, by saying 'Nature . . . hath given to all men REASON, and probably in equal degrees',¹⁰ *The CEconomist* disagreed with Godwin and the Wedgwoods, who insisted that reform could be achieved by a small intellectual elite. Rather the journal followed the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and perhaps particularly Shaftesbury, who said, 'O wise CEconomist . . . whom all the Elements and Powers of Nature serve!'¹¹ The subsequent passage suggests how man, as a '*social animal*', should and could pursue 'the industrious improvement and right application of REASON' in the community:

The community . . . is obliged to assist and improve the individual . . . and the individual is equally obliged to assist and improve other individuals, and the community of which he is a member.¹²

To encourage the continual improvement of Reason *The CEconomist*, in quoting from David Hume, insisted on the necessity not only of intellectual but also of moral instruction:

*"Virtue (says the celebrated David Hume) is nothing but a more enlarged and more cultivated reason, and never flourishes except whence a good education becomes general, and where men are taught the pernicious consequences of vice, treachery, and immorality."*¹³

As in earlier publications by Paine, Thelwall, Godwin, and Coleridge, 'a good education' was foregrounded by *The CEconomist* as a key to future welfare. For example, as a means of 'general happiness', an article in issue

¹⁰ *CEconomist*, I, No.I, 'What is Man?', 2.

¹¹ Shaftesbury, *Characters*, III, §I. (1737), II, 372; quoted from *OED*, 'economist', 2. According to *OED*, 'economist' in this sense means 'one who attends to the sparing and effective use of anything'.

¹² *CEconomist*, I, No.I, 'What is Man?', 2-3.

¹³ *CEconomist*, I, No.I, 'What is Man?', 3.

seven entitled 'The Art of Happiness' suggested the public instruction of children:

Instruction, commencing with early life, and conduced upon the pure principles of philanthropy, would lead them [children] to that true goodness, in the praise of which all hearts are united, and which must, from its nature, necessarily be gaining strength for ever.¹⁴

In regarding the happiness of the people as 'the benefits of rational and virtuous education',¹⁵ the passage above shows similarities with Thelwall and Coleridge, both of whom aimed at the improvement of 'the Heart' and 'the Head', while disagreeing with the Godwinian rational principles of philanthropy in *Political Justice*.

But *The Economist* disapproved of atheistic radicals like Thelwall by insisting that the 'universal good education of the lower classes' could be achieved not by 'political principles' but by 'good morals and pure Christianity'.¹⁶ *The Economist*, like Coleridge in *Religious Musings*, in his lectures, and in *The Watchman*, insisted that religious belief could unite Nature, Man, and Society:

We call upon them [Englishmen] to remember the free spirit and the mild morality of that gospel which they profess to revere: and if they must excite the passions of their country men, we advise them to be content with rousing those which are useful and benevolent; namely, a spirit of social union, and an ardent devotion for the public good.¹⁷

Education and the 'public good' were topics current in *The Economist*, and overlapped with Wordsworth's developing plan for a poem of comparable 'utility'.

Losh and *The Economist* have significance to Wordsworth's poems of 1797-8, too. In an article entitled 'An Account of a Cottage and Garden near

¹⁴ *Economist*, I, No.VII, 'The Art of Happiness', 173.

¹⁵ *Economist*, I, No.VII, 'The Art of Happiness', 172.

¹⁶ *Economist*, I, No.VIII, 'On the Means of promoting genuine Christianity', 198, 194.

¹⁷ *Economist*, I, No.VI, 'On the Duty of Defending the Country in Case of Invasion', 157.

Tadcaster', *The Economist*, like Langhorne, Thelwall, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, distinguished 'the well-disposed and industrious poor' from 'the idle and profligate', and attacked the inefficiency of the Poor Laws:

As the law is too frequently executed, the cottager, though poor himself, is regularly assessed for the relief of the poor; but he receives no benefit from the fund, no assistance towards the support of himself and his family, unless he is reduced to absolute want, and presents himself hopeless at the door of the workhouse.¹⁸

The passage above shows similarities with Langhorne's account of the hapless poor denied poor relief, Wordsworth's pre- and early *Recluse* poems (particularly *The Ruined Cottage*), and some poems in *Lyrical Ballads*. The subsequent passage dealt with the custom of providing the poor with personal property - a cottage and garden: this custom would 'diminish the calls for parochial relief' and 'encourage and improve . . . good habits', since 'it would attach them to their parishes, and give them an increased interest and share in the property and prosperity of their country'.¹⁹ This article deserves comparison with the connection between Margaret and her cottage and garden in *The Ruined Cottage*, although Wordsworth's interests had reached beyond 'property' and 'prosperity', as we have noted.

So Losh's influence on Wordsworth's emerging conception of the *Recluse* scheme was possible and I think likely. In addition, Wordsworth's frequent visits to Losh in June - July 1798 suggest a reciprocal influence on *The Economist*. Wordsworth travelled to Bristol to superintend the printing of *Lyrical Ballads*, and visited 'some particular friends at, and in the neighbourhood of, that place'.²⁰ Losh moved to Shirehampton on 25 May 1798, and was surely among Wordsworth's 'particular friends' in the neighbourhood of Bristol. In fact, since late May 1798 Wordsworth and Losh had become closer to each other. Losh's diary of 24 May noted 'Wordsworth'. We cannot know whether this indicates that they met or that Losh wrote to or heard from Wordsworth, though both were in fact in

¹⁸ *Economist*, I, No.VI, 'An Account of a Cottage and Garden near Tadcaster, with Observation, etc.', 139.

¹⁹ *Economist*, I, No.VI, 'An Account of a Cottage', 141.

²⁰ EY, 219. Dorothy to Richard Wordsworth of 31 May 1798.

Bristol that day. On 1 June Losh wrote to Wordsworth, and invited him to pay a visit (see *EY*, 219n.). Wordsworth arrived at Shirehampton on 12 June and stayed with Losh until 16 June. In his diary Losh recorded that on 15 June Wordsworth took a walk with him, and read aloud some of his poems (see *EY*, 225n.-6n.). As Moorman (400) suggests, Wordsworth perhaps read to Losh the last two poems for inclusion in *Lyrical Ballads, Expostulation and Reply* and *The Tables Turned*, which he had carried with him to Cottle on 10 June. Losh's diary of 12 June described Wordsworth as 'pleasant and clear, but too earnest and *emphatic* in his manner of *speaking in conversation*' (*EY*, 225n.). Losh did not mention what they talked about during their brief meeting, or which poems Wordsworth read to him. It seems likely that their keen interests in and commitment to education in 1795-8 led them to consider the most effective educative method to improve the natural well-being of man and society. Wordsworth demonstrated this in *Expostulation and Reply* and *The Tables Turned* by contrasting his idea of natural education with a systematic method like the one advocated by the Wedgwoods. As Erdman (488) points out, the Wedgwoods insisted that superintendents should enable the child to receive new impressions in 'the most rational . . . order and quantity' by providing his senses and brain with 'progressively arranged' stimuli. Nature was nothing but 'a chaos of perceptions', so 'the child must never go out of doors'.²¹ Wordsworth, on the contrary, said,

Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless -

(*The Tables Turned*, 16-8)

During his stay with Losh in 12 -16 June 1798 Wordsworth perhaps also referred to some or all numbers of *The Economist* (Numbers I - V, January - May 1798), which he had recently read,²² and may well have pointed out similarities (and differences) between his views of Nature, Man, and Society and those in *The Economist* in an 'emphatic' manner. Wordsworth may well have picked up some ideas and materials for his poems from the first eight numbers of *The Economist* (January - August

²¹ Tom Wedgwood to Godwin of 31 July 1797; Erdman, 430-1.

²² See Wu, 108. Wu, referring to Wordsworth's letter to Cottle of 9 May 1798, suggests that Cottle perhaps immediately sent all the published numbers to Wordsworth.

1798). In the first number 'The Cottage' exemplified how man and society should assist and improve each other. 'Give me a neat convenient cot,' a rustic labourer says, since to him a cottage seems to symbolize

An upright, independent mind:
 A reverence for human kind:
 A love for just and equal laws:
 A zeal in holy Freedom's cause.²³

As 'An Account of a Cottage and Garden' in the sixth number suggests, private property, namely a cottage and garden, would be a link between the rural lower classes and society, since

. . . it would encourage and improve the good habits of the poor; it would attach them to their parishes, and give them an increased interest and share in the property and prosperity of their country.²⁴

As the titles indicate, 'The Cottage' and 'An Account of a Cottage' deal with similar concerns to *The Ruined Cottage*. Furthermore, the importance of private property in the passages above seems to have been echoed in *Michael*, which would appear in the second volume of *Lyrical Ballads* (published on 25 January 1801). I do not assert that the social values articulated in *Michael* were influenced by *The CEconomist* (though it seems not utterly unlikely); rather, I suggest that *The CEconomist* may have led Wordsworth to pay more attention to the practicalities of the rural economy which he would tackle in some of his poems composed after his return from Germany on 1 May 1799.²⁵

An anonymous poem,²⁶ 'The Beggar's Petition', in the second number shows more marked similarities with the pre- and early *Recluse* poems. The

²³ *CEconomist*, I, No.I, 'The Cottage', 4, ll.7-10.

²⁴ *CEconomist*, I, No.VI, 'An Account of a Cottage and Garden near Tadcaster, with Observation, etc.', 141.

²⁵ For the dates of the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* and of Wordsworth's return, see Gill, 184, 158.

²⁶ As the list of the contents suggests, most articles in *The CEconomist* mentioned the initials of the contributors, though 'The Beggar's Petition' was one of the few anonymous contributions.

first seven stanzas are a beggar's narration of his miseries, which, I think, are worth quoting at full length:

Pity the sorrows of a poor old man,
 Whose trembling limbs have borne him to your door,
 Whose days are dwindled to the shortest span,
 Oh! give relief, and heaven will bless your store.

These tatter'd clothes my poverty bespeak,
 These hoary locks proclaim my lengthen'd years;
 And many a furrow in my grief-worn cheek
 Has been the channel to a flood of tears.

Yon houses, erected on the rising ground,
 With tempting aspect drew me from my road;
 For plenty there a residence has found,
 And grandeur a magnificent abode.

Hard is the fate of the infirm and poor!
 Here, as I crav'd a morsel of their bread,
 A pamper'd menial drove me from the door,
 To seek a shelter in an humbler shed.

Oh! take me to your hospitable dome;
 Keen blows the wind, and piercing is the cold;
 Short is my passage to the friendly tomb,
 For I am poor and miserably old.

Should I reveal the sources of my grief,
 If soft humanity e'er touch'd your breast,
 Your hands would not withhold the kind relief,
 And tears of pity would not be repast,

Heaven sends misfortunes; why should we repine,
 'Tis heaven has brought me to the state you see;
 And your condition may be soon like mine,
 The child of sorrow, and of misery.²⁷

²⁷ *CEconomist*, I, No.II, 'The Beggar's Petition', 51.

The beggar has resemblances with the old man in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, who tried to make the traveller help him by revealing his 'frame o'ercome with years and malady'(11) and demonstrating misfortunes caused by the soldier's life - 'how he with the Soldier's life had striven /and Soldier's wrongs'(20-1). We should also note that stanzas III-V, like *The Country Justice*, *The Peripatetic* and the pre- and early *Recluse* poems, show the inefficiency of the poor laws and inhumanity of the higher ranks of society. There is no way of suggesting to what extent this anonymous contributor was influenced by his predecessors and contemporaries, though the passage quoted above demonstrated a humane treatment of beggars similar to Langhorne, Thelwall, and Wordsworth while political economists of the time focused only on the potential productivity of the poor. In *Beggars*, written some four years later, Wordsworth retained concerns apparent in *The CEconomist*; the gipsy woman

... stretched her hand
And begged an alms with doleful plea
That ceased not. . . ²⁸

In *The CEconomist's* view, those who should and could listen sympathetically to the poor's woes and help them were the middle ranks. In the 'Preface' to the 1800 *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth would suggest similarities in his projected readership by saying that it was his aim to make '[l]ow and rustic life' 'interesting' for his 'Reader'.²⁹ Like 'The Beggar's Petition', the pre- and early *Recluse* poems and *Lyrical Ballads* all show the middle-class reader 'incidents of common life', and particularly '[l]ow and rustic life'.³⁰ Losh's keen interest in *Lyrical Ballads* (published on 15 September 1798) led him to buy a copy immediately and to 'read Coleridge and Wordsworth's poems aloud' on 19 September (*EY*, 227n.). Common themes and shared interests connect Wordsworth's poems and the *Recluse* scheme with *The CEconomist* - and as I have tried to show Wordsworth and Losh had considerable curiosity about each other's activities and publications in 1797-8. The concern for the practical 'utility' of writing,

²⁸ William Wordsworth, *Beggars* (composed on 13 and 14 March 1802, published in 1807), 13-5.

²⁹ William Wordsworth, the 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800; quoted from *Cornell LB*, 743.

³⁰ The 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800; quoted from *Cornell LB*, 743.

which I have traced in my three chapters, also forms a link between *The Recluse* and *The Economist* at this moment. But then Wordsworth was no pamphleteer; his career as a journalist was a shadowy possibility at the best; and his acquirements as a 'systematic' thinker had not wholly impressed the Wedgwood brothers. In a way, then, *The Economist* can be thought of as representing aspects of Wordsworth's *Recluse* scheme which he was uniquely unfitted to fulfil - a parallel text to the grand philosophical project that Wordsworth as poet had already outgrown.

Conclusion

In 1814 Wordsworth concluded the 'Preface' to *The Excursion* with the 'Prospectus' of *The Recluse* - announcing 'the design and scope of the whole Poem' (PW V. 2). Ten years previously Coleridge, in calling Wordsworth 'the first & greatest philosophical Poet', said in his letter to Richard Sharp of 15 January 1804

. . . I prophesy immortality to his *Recluse*, as the first & finest philosophical Poem, if only it be (as it undoubtedly will be) a Faithful Transcription of his own most august & innocent Life, of his own habitual Feelings & Modes of seeing and hearing.
(CL II. 1034)

Although Wordsworth's 'Prospectus' and Coleridge's prophecy looked to the future, the outlook for *The Recluse* was not otherwise optimistic. After the Alfoxden - Nether Stowey period (July 1797 - summer 1798) both poets had less frequently referred to the *Recluse* scheme in their letters and writings, and Wordsworth had spent most of his time composing what he called 'minor Pieces' (PW V. 2).

My thesis, in focusing on Wordsworth's activities and writings up to early March 1798, has suggested that Wordsworth's first announcement of *The Recluse* not only showed the 'design and scope' of his future work but also reflected his previous preoccupations. In *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment* Alan Bewell regards *The Recluse* not as a 'freshet' of *The Brook* - the poem on 'men, nature, and society' which Coleridge planned in summer 1797¹ - but as a representation of 'Wordsworth's own sophisticated response to his previous moral concerns' and his 'political commitment'. He points out Michel Beaupuy, the London Godwinian circle, and the *Philanthropist* scheme as crucial for Wordsworth's 'moral and political thought' in 1792-5 (Bewell, 7-8). My first chapter has called attention to Wordsworth's interests in education in 1793-8 in relation to 'the province of education' in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The first and second parts have

¹ S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (2 vols.; Oxford, 1907, repr. 1968), vol. I, 129.

highlighted the fact that even in their most radical phrases of 1793-5 Wordsworth, Thelwall, and Coleridge went much further than Burke, Paine, Godwin and other well-known leaders by looking beyond the immediate social utility of education. In addition to 'moral concerns' and 'political commitment' (Bewell, 8), my second part has also dealt with 'philosophical' preoccupations which Wordsworth, Thelwall, and Coleridge developed in 1794-5. As the third part of Chapter One has shown, they aimed to realize a 'philosophical' education with a natural and liberal ideology after they abandoned formal commitments to the reform movement.

Bewell (12) suggests, '*The Recluse* appears to have supplanted plans for a series of "essays" probably on education and moral subjects', so '[t]he philosophical poem . . . was not a wholly new departure from Wordsworth's previous moral and political concerns'. I have spent the first half of Chapter Two making a study of another influence on *The Recluse* - the 'social', 'political', 'moral', and 'philosophical' aspects of literary works by Langhorne and Thelwall. The second part indicated that Wordsworth's pre-*Recluse* poems developed Thelwall's ideas of 'the Heart, Nature and Society' into more universal views, and responded to Langhorne's humanitarian treatment of the victims of social and economic inequalities. As my second chapter has shown, by the time of the first announcement in early March 1798 the *Recluse* poems had already treated 'education and moral subjects' in appropriately 'philosophical' terms.

Wordsworth's 1300 lines (*The Ruined Cottage*, *A Night-Piece*, *The Discharged Soldier*, and *The Old Cumberland Beggar*), although dealing with different aspects of Nature, Man, and Society, and seemingly having little relation to one another, were in fact parts of 'a poem' which Wordsworth concerned as a coherent whole (EY, 212, 214). Johnston points out *The Peripatetic* as 'an organizational model' to which the 'miscellaneous' *Recluse* may have owed much (Johnston, 13-4). Bewell, in focusing on the 'vast systems of Kant and Hegel', says

Moral philosophy provided Wordsworth with a model for how one might write a coherent, encyclopedic, multitextual poem, built upon a loose grouping of discrete poems of varying lengths, on different subjects, and in diverse genres. (Bewell, 16)

Lyon (7) suggested that a great portion of *The Excursion* had been 'scattered' among Wordsworth's manuscripts until a very late date, reinforcing Bewell's point about the 'looseness' of the whole scheme. However, although *The Recluse* was left formally uncompleted, as Johnston insists, the existing parts - *The Prelude*, *Home at Grasmere*, *The Tuft of Primroses*, and *The Excursion* and the 'minor Pieces' form a 'coherent' body made up of miscellaneous parts (Johnston, xi). Bewell also holds that 'minor Pieces', when 'linked to larger treatises', would show

how analytical discussions of the mind (both of the individual and of the human race) could be seen in relation to narratives about the genesis and stage-by-stage development of human society and institutions. (Bewell, 16)

Like Johnston, Lyon, and many others, Bewell thinks of *The Prelude*, *Home at Grasmere*, and *The Excursion* as the existing main parts of *The Recluse*, and focuses most attention on *Lyrical Ballads* as 'minor Pieces' (Bewell, 16). I hope my second chapter has given prominence to less frequently remarked parts of *The Recluse* - the pre-*Recluse* poems (the 1793 and 1794 *Evening Walk*, *A Night on Salisbury Plain*, *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, *The Baker's Cart*, *Old Man Travelling*), which (following the 'gothic church' analogy) we might think of as Wordsworth's imaginative steps up towards his greater poetic edifice. Here too - as we have seen - is something of a 'miscellaneous' quality, and a seeming concern with themes of Nature, Man, and Society which formed the structural pillars of the projected larger work.

As Chapter One and Two have shown, by the time of the first announcement of *The Recluse* in early March 1798 the 'design and scope of the whole Poem' had already existed in Wordsworth's mind and had been exemplified in his poems of 1793-8. Furthermore, the pre- and early *Recluse* poems might perhaps be regarded as 'a Faithful Transcript of his own most august & innocent Life, of his own habitual Feelings & Modes of seeing and hearing' (CL II. 1034). Coleridge's account of 'the first & finest philosophical Poem' (CL II. 1034) was still six years ahead, and it would take Wordsworth more than fifteen years to make the 'Prospectus' to it known to the public. Most reviewers, both contemporary and modern, have regarded the 'utility' of *The Recluse* as prospective. However, as my short third chapter and appendix have suggested, the 'utility' of *The Recluse* and Wordsworth's

concerns with *The CEconomist* were in another sense both retrospective. By early March 1798, so far regarded as the outset of the grand scheme, Wordsworth had already outgrown *The Recluse's* and *The CEconomist's* hopes, ideals, and purposes - social, moral, political, and philosophical. Needless to say, *The Recluse* had already gone much further than *The Peripatetic* and other influential literary works, and looked beyond the eighteenth-century enlightenment, on which *The CEconomist* was based, and on which Bewell focuses his study of Wordsworth. I hope my thesis has illuminated 1793-8 as Wordsworth's most productive and 'industrious'(EY, 214) period ironically prefiguring not the outset but the end of *The Recluse* as an intellectual and imaginative possibility for the poet.

Appendix

The Œconomist Vol. I (January - December 1798)

(1) Contents

The Œconomist, as a monthly miscellany for the economic, intellectual, and moral improvement of the rural middle classes, dealt chiefly with four subjects - economy (mainly agriculture), the poor, politics (which focused attention more on general principles than on particular detail), and morals. According to the subjects, articles can be listed as follows:

<Economy>

Number I

The Cottage

On Leases

Number II

On Leases, concluded

On the Tax on Horses used in Husbandry

Number III

Lord Kaim's Lease Described and Recommended

by Dr James Anderson

Number IV

On the Diffusion of Agricultural Information

Number V

Account of a Cottage and Garden near Tadcaster

Inclosures Considered as an Obstruction to Agriculture

Dialogue on the Œconomist

Number VI

Account of a Cottage and Garden

On Agriculture as a Profession for young Men of Family

Method of rearing Calves without Milk

Number VII

The Greatest Advantages of a Cow to a labouring Man

- On Storing Corn
 Number VIII
 Further Reflections on Leases
 Number IX
 Reflections on Lord Somerville's Address to the Board of Agriculture
 Number X
 A Memoir on Property, Part 1st.
 Number XI
 On Property - Part 2.
 A Hint respecting Wheat Crops, on Barley Soils
 On Potatoes
 Colouring for Gates, Rails, &c.
 Number XII
 On Property - Part 3
 The Harvest Moon

<The Poor>

- Number I
 Soup Kitchen at Newcastle (Count Rumford's *Essay on Food*)
 Number II
 A Sketch of the Public Establishment for the Poor in Bavaria
 The Beggar's Petition
 Number III
 On the Ox-head Soup
 A Statement of the Extent to which the Education of the Poor is
 Neglected
 An Easy Cheap Method of Making Ovens
 Number IV
 Abstract of Count Rumford's *Essay on Food*
 Number IX
 Lines from Cowper's *Poems* (Charity)
 Observations reflecting the Poor
 Number X
 Parochial Instruction of the Poor
 Number XI
 Extract from the *Poor Reports*
 Number XII
 On the Use of Rice *Poor Reports*, Vol. I, No.xxv.

<Politics>

Number II

On the Importance of National Union
 Sketch of the Reign of the late King of Prussia

Number III

Sketch of the Reign of the late King of Prussia, concluded
 Line's from Thomson's *Liberty*

Number IV

On the Means of National Union
 On the Expences of the War

Number V

Report of Mr Bull
 On Peace

Number VI

On the Duty of Defending the Country in case of Invasion
 On Calumination of Party
 A Parable against Persecution

Number VII

Observations on the Duty and Power of Juries

Number VIII

Extract from a pamphlet 'Question as it stood in March, 1798'
 (the Two Acts)

Number IX

On the Present State of Ireland
 The Reformer
 Essay by Britannia

Number X

On the Present State of Ireland, Part 2nd.

Number XI

The Reformer - No.2

<Morality>

Number I

What is Man?
 On the Middle Rank of Society
 The Lime Trees - A Fable
 A Reasonable Affliction

(2) Contributors

Most contributors wrote under pseudonyms or initials, so it is difficult to know exactly how many contributors *The Economist* had. I shall list contributors and articles as follows:

*Pseudonyms, Initials

<Z.>

Number I January 1798
 What is Man?
 The Cottage

<X.>

Number I January 1798
 On the Middle Ranks of Society
 Number IV April 1798
 On the Expences of the War
 Number VI June 1798
 On Agriculture as a Profession for young Men of Family
 On the Frequency of Suicide

<Y.>

Number II February 1798
 On the Importance of National Union
 Number IV April 1798
 On the Means of National Union
 Number VI June 1798
 On the Duty of Defending the Country in case of Invasion

<K. - N. Kent>

Number I January 1798
 On Leases
 Number II February 1798
 On Leases, concluded

- On the Tax on Horses used in Husbandry
 Number IV April 1798
 On the Diffusion of Agricultural Information
 On Tithes
 Number V May 1798
 On Tithes, concluded
 Number VII July 1798
 The Greatest Advantages of a Cow to a labouring Man
 Number VIII August 1798
 Further Reflections on Leases

<V.F.>

- Number I January 1798
 Soup Kitchen at Newcastle (Count Rumford's *Essay on Food*)
 Number II February 1798
 A Sketch of the Public Establishment for the Poor in Bavaria
 Number IV April 1798
 Abstract of Count Rumford's *Essay on Food*

<C.B.>

- Number I January 1798
 Remarks on English History
 Number X October 1798
 Parochial Instruction of the Poor

<I.>

- Number II February 1798
 Sketch of the Reign of the late King of Prussia
 Number III March 1798
 Sketch of the reign of the late King of Prussia, concluded
 On Mottos (3 mottos)
 Number IV
 Mottos (3 mottos)
 Number V May 1798
 Report of Mr Bull
 Number X October 1798
 On Solitude
 Number XI November 1798

On the Spirit of Intolerance in Private Life

<U.O.>

- Number III March 1798
 On Mottos (2 mottos)
- Number V May 1798
 Dialogue on the Economist
- Number VI June 1798
 On Calumination of Party
- Number IX September 1798
 Essay by Britannia
- Number XI November 1798
 On my Vine-Staff In Imitation of Burns
- Number XII December 1798
 Delolme
 A Philosophical Ode to a Dung-hill

<D.D.>

- Number III March 1798
 The Three Shepherds

<Maltutinus>

- Number IV March 1798
 Advantage of Early Rising
- Number VII July 1798
 On the Advantages and Pleasures of Early Rising

<Tho. Bernard>

- Number V May 1798
 Account of a Cottage and Garden near Tadcaster
- Number VI June 1798
 Account of a Cottage and Garden

<T.M.>

- Number VII July 1798
 The Art of Happiness

<A Friend to the Constitution>

Number VII July 1798

Observations on the Duty and Power of Juries,
as established by the Laws of England, with Extracts from Various
Authors

<W.>

Number VIII August 1798

On the Means of Promoting genuine Christianity
On the frequent Union of Fanaticism and Hypocrisy

<L.L.>

Number VIII August 1798

Elegy in a London Church Yard

Number IX September 1798

Observations reflecting the Poor

<A.Z.>

Number VIII August 1798

Extract from Dr Knox's *Essays*

<C.W.>

Number IX September 1798

On the Present State of Ireland

Number X October 1798

On the Present State of Ireland, Part 2nd.

<A Lover of Agriculture>

Number IX September 1798

Reflections on Lord Somerville's Address to the Board of Agriculture

<W.D.>

Number III

On Mottos

Number IX September 1798

Prodigality a cruel Vice

Number XI November 1798

A Hint respecting Wheat Crops, on Barley Soils

Nature, Man, and Society seem to me to have reflected Losh's leading role in this journal for the enlightenment of the rural middle classes.

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