

Thelwall *versus* Wordsworth: Alternative Lifestyles in Repressive Times¹

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Why was the young William Wordsworth jealous of John Thelwall?² (*Was he?* The evidence for this proposition is discussed below.) It was not a question of petty squabbles. Instead, the issue that animated these men was how and where radicals should live within a corrupt society.

Such questions were particularly heightened in times of conservative repression, as in Britain in the later 1790s. How best should people live, who were profoundly out of sympathy with the government and wider society of their day? So Wordsworth pondered:

...escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me. ...³

In the later 1790s, the notorious radical John Thelwall and the as-yet-unknown William Wordsworth⁴ faced that decision. Their responses highlight a long-running tension about the ideal physical location within the cultural/political left: *whether town or countryside?* And Wordsworth's move to the Lakes – cemented by his later fame - contributed to an alternative view of left-wing 'green' country living that still remains potent.

I: Town *versus* Country?

Town versus country polarities have long been canvassed. An urban location gives prompt access to new political ideas, debates, organisation, action. For radicals in the later eighteenth century, town life provided the basis for contributing to the formation of a mass movement, which could campaign to democratise the hitherto restricted franchise. Among the urban crowds, there were networks of supporters and allies.

On the other hand, towns are often polluted, crowded, alienating, and seemingly dangerous. Their societies are worldly, their politics corrupt – or so the mythology would have it (assuming rather improbably that agrarian life was immune from wicked ways). Moreover, urban organisations with radical intent, under the nose of a vigilant government, were (and still are) at risk of being penetrated by government spies – a perennial theme, even within democratic societies.⁵

Rural life, by contrast, would assist the recovery of true social values by close daily contact with the elemental force of the land. The benevolent imagery of the country retreat goes back to classical times. And the appeal of 'green' radicalism is recurrent on the cultural left.

For examples, take the Diggers, cultivating the waste lands in Surrey in the early 1650s;⁶ or the Chartist Land Society settling its urban working-class subscribers into rural smallholdings in the later 1840s;⁷ or Chairman Mao in

communist China in the 1970s sending bourgeois officials and professionals back to the land, to shed their corrupt urban ways and to learn from the revolutionary force of the ‘simple’, instinctual peasantry.⁸

Not all on the political left, of course, endorsed such reflex attitudes. Marx and Engels famously took the opposite view. Although they ferociously denounced urban degeneration in early nineteenth-century Britain, they were nonetheless certain that the political solution was not a return to ‘the idiocy of rural life’.⁹ The majority on the left, whether non-communist or communist, have also tended to have a profoundly urban orientation. But the lure of the land was and is not easily quashed.

II: The Encounter at Nether Stowey

John Thelwall in the later 1790s found the question of where and how to live particularly urgent. A Londoner by birth and a townee by past residence and experience, he found himself increasingly at odds with his urban roots. The democratic campaign to extend the franchise, in which he had played a prominent role as orator, activist, and political theorist, was being stifled by William Pitt’s campaign of political repression and the two Gagging Acts of 1795. Patriotic anxiety at a time of war with revolutionary France was prompting a loyalist rally. Momentum was seeping away from political radicalism, not to recover for a generation.¹⁰ Thelwall himself had been sent to the Tower in 1794 on a charge of High Treason. Although acquitted, he had become a notorious figure.

By the autumn of 1796, he felt himself to be increasingly persecuted. When lecturing at Great Yarmouth in August that year, Thelwall had to be rescued by the magistrates and his supporters from a hostile crowd of sailors, armed with bludgeons, who attacked and injured several of those present.¹¹ It was a clear sign that his charismatic reform oratory had had its day. Politically

bereft but personally ebullient, John Thelwall was thenceforth in search of a new way of life.

He and Wordsworth met in July 1797. It happened when Thelwall went to Nether Stowey in Somerset for a ten-day visit to Samuel Taylor Coleridge,¹² with whom he was already corresponding.¹³ The three-way encounter was electric. Wordsworth and Coleridge, alive with poetry and philosophy, had themselves met early in 1797 and were already launched upon their high-octane collaboration.

To this gathering, John Thelwall (then aged 33) brought his experience as a seasoned author and campaigner. In 1794-5, he was a talismanic figure. He stirred Coleridge, already a published poet at the age of 25, and the as-yet unknown Wordsworth, aged 27.

Moreover, the effect was entirely mutual. Thelwall was encouraged in the quest for cultural renewal by the pen. Literature could speak to the wider world, even while political activists were gagged. He planned to write an epic poem. Nonetheless, after this bracing first encounter, Thelwall and Wordsworth met only rarely and intermittently. Their mental involvement was of greater duration and complexity. It was not, however, the collaboration of peers, as between Wordsworth and Coleridge, but the spark of other emotions.

III: Wordsworth *versus* Thelwall

What then in 1797-8 could make Wordsworth jealous of Thelwall? The answer turned on the drive with which the latter had embarked upon an alternative lifestyle, in rural 'retreat'.

There was certainly no intimation that Wordsworth was envious of Thelwall's past career as a radical campaigner. The man who later became the Lakeland sage was no seeker of the political limelight. In fact, Wordsworth and

Coleridge in the autumn of 1797 both discouraged Thelwall from settling too near them, becoming aware that he was a dangerous companion, being trailed by government spies.

Nor was it a case of poetic rivalry. Far from fearing competition, Wordsworth warmed instantly to the genius of Coleridge and in 1798 published with him their *Lyrical Ballads* (in which 19 of the 24 poems in the first edition were actually written by Wordsworth).¹⁴ But Thelwall did not become another literary partner. Wordsworth's retrospective assessment, late in life, was not unappreciative: 'Mr Coleridge and I were of the opinion that the modulations of his [Thelwall's] blank verse were superior to those of most writers in that metre'.¹⁵ And, at another time, Wordsworth wrote in 1817 that 'He [Thelwall] has a good ear'.¹⁶ His tone was cool and lofty, showing neither keen enthusiasm nor carping jealousy.

Instead, the irritant was 'sweet Liswyn farm'. That was the residence at Llyswn in Breconshire, where from October 1797 until January 1800 the indomitable John Thelwall worked as a farmer-poet;¹⁷ and it was that which made him grit in the oyster to Wordsworth.

Notably, it is worth stressing that all three young men at Nether Stowey in July 1797 were full of hopes and plans, despite external discouragements. Some biographers of Wordsworth describe Thelwall at this time as 'broken'.¹⁸ Far from it. He was a polymath of great resource. He was justly styled by Wordsworth as a man of 'extraordinary talent'.¹⁹ Indeed, 'myriad-minded', the term used to describe S.T. Coleridge, could equally apply to Thelwall. He, however, was much less of a philosopher than Coleridge and much more a man of action. So, once he had made up his mind, Thelwall was quick to regroup. Perhaps too quick, in view of the difficulties of changing from an urban lifestyle to life on a farm.

IV: Rural Habitations

A modest country retreat was already made reality in the form of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's simple cottage residence at Nether Stowey: see the illustration shown in Fig. 1. It was located close to the Quantock Hills in north Somerset. Hence it was 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife', as Gray's *Elegy* had earlier specified the ideal quality of country life.²⁰ Such a simple habitation would foster a frugal (and inexpensive) lifestyle, permitting an impecunious author to commune with nature whilst still writing for a wider public. Earlier Coleridge had begun to plan a cooperative settlement of creative equals - a 'Pantisocracy' - on the banks of the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania.²¹ Now an informal version of the project, with the Wordsworths attracted to Alfoxton House in nearby Alfoxden, briefly arose in Somerset.



Fig.1:
Coleridge's
cottage at
Nether Stowey,
Somerset, where
he lived in
1797-8.

Yet Coleridge's own retreat did not last long. Restless as ever, he left for Germany in 1798, leaving his family in Nether Stowey. John Thelwall, however, adopted his own version of rural living with characteristic determination. By October 1797 he had found a comfortable habitation in mid-Wales.

Thelwall described his new abode, on the riverbank above a big sweeping loop of the 'sylvan Wye', as 'a handsome and roomy cottage, ... altogether as desirable a literary retreat as Fancy could have suggested, or poetry has ever

described'.²² It went with a farm of 36-40 acres, with a mixed economy of grain, root-crops and livestock. And Thelwall applied himself to farm the land directly. Since he had no prior experience, he sought assistance from his brother-in-law who came from Rutland to help.

Thus buttressed, Thelwall threw himself into his new life with relish, as he explained in January 1798 to an old political ally:²³

Our habits are, I assure you, very simple & frugal. We drink no wines, no spirits, no suggar [sic - referring to the abolitionists' sugar boycott against the slave plantation owners]. ...We eat as our servants eat - & (as far as the differences of strength produced by different habits will permit) work as they work. I dig - I cart dung & Ashes - I thresh in the Barn - I trench the meadows when the fertilizing rains are falling, & the waters rush from the mountains, to convey the stream over the grass.

In short, the political lecturer of Beaufort Buildings [Thelwall's former London residence in the Strand] is a mere peasant in Llyswen; & you would smile to see me in an old thread-bare jacket - a pair of cloth pantaloons rudely patched, & a silk handkerchief with my spade & my mattock trudging thro' the village or toiling on my farm; & to this I am not only reconciled - but I am even more enamoured of it than is wise - ...

It was this quick and enthusiastic adoption of an unpretentious, elemental life on the land that provoked Wordsworth's jealousy. Certainly Thelwall's new habitation had generated enough interest to spur his friends to witness it for themselves. Acting upon an impulse in August 1798, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, in company with Coleridge, journeyed up the Wye to visit Thelwall at Llyswen. At that point, it was he who was putting down country roots, while the others were still restive and on the point of departing for Germany. Wordsworth's own sojourn in Dove Cottage at Grasmere did not start until December 1799, when Thelwall's experiment was about to end in failure. In 1798, however, all that was in the future.

There was an outward similarity between their eventual choices of habitation. Both cottages were two-storied, built from local stone, with tiled roofs. Thelwall's Ty Mawr at Llyswen (now buried inside a substantial successor mansion) was the larger, being two old dwellings knocked together: see Fig. 2. It also had a spacious garden, with views of the Wye. Wordsworth's Dove Cottage at Grasmere's Town End (now a place of literary pilgrimage) was built in the same simple, sturdy vernacular style: see Fig. 3. Alongside, there was a modest kitchen garden and, from upstairs, fine views of the lake. Nonetheless, the outcomes of the two men's lifestyle choices were to be very different.



Fig.2: Ty Mawr, Llyswen, the 'handsome and roomy cottage', where John Thelwall lived and farmed, with his young family and brother-in-law, from Nov. 1797-Jan. 1801.



Fig. 3: Dove Cottage, at Townend, Grasmere, where William Wordsworth lived, with his sister Dorothy, his wife Mary (m.1802), and their children, from late 1799-1808.

V: Anecdote for Fathers

Most of what is known of Wordsworth's feelings in 1797-8 comes from his poetry; and his later comments on the same. Needless to say, literary evidence needs careful interpretation. It is poetry's glory that it is not required to be literal or to be taken literally. Listeners and readers often understand a poem in ways that are far from the author's intention. Nonetheless, all literary output,

even the most fanciful, has a context.²⁴ Wordsworth's magisterial *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* is not just 'about' the Wye valley at Tintern. But it is not 'about' anywhere else. Wordsworth's poem was not only triggered by revisiting Tintern but it centrally explores the contrast between his first and later responses to a scene, at once rustic and historic, that had long remained vivid to his inner eye when 'in lonely rooms, and mid the din/ Of towns and cities'.²⁵ The location was far from negligible.

Similarly, *Anecdote for Fathers* is by no means just 'about' a father asking a child to choose between two residences and the adult then learning from the child's innocent wisdom. The poem was written in 1798, during one of Wordsworth's surges of literary creativity. *Anecdote for Fathers* is often paired with *We are Seven*, its immediate precursor in the *Lyrical Ballads*.²⁶ Both feature apparently simple dialogues between a child and an adult (the latter written in the first person). Their general message – or, rather, one key message – is a highly Wordsworthian appreciation of the truthful instinct of the unfettered infant: 'Not in utter nakedness,/ But trailing clouds of glory do we come ...'.²⁷

Initially, the opening stanzas of *Anecdote* evoke a mood of idle talk and retrospection, in the self-specified Wordsworthian style of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'. The adult father-figure muses on happy days in Kilve, 'our pleasant home' – referring to nearby Alfoxden, Wordsworth's Somerset residence.²⁸ A spatial unease, however, is apparent within the structure of the poem. It begins 'here' at Kilve, where the first six stanzas are set, where the poet strolls with 'our quiet home all full in view'.

Urgency, however, quickly follows with an unsignalled change of venue. The seventh stanza introduces a child companion and in the final eight stanzas he is cross-questioned by the adult father-figure. By now, the poem is set, with

an unexplained jump, in Wales: 'here at Liswyn farm'. It is as though the poet's mind is caught, undecided, between the two locations. And the need for choice informs the verses that follow. The boy is urged to express a preference between two 'favoured places', Kilve and 'sweet Liswyn farm'. He opts, carelessly, for the former. But the adult is not satisfied. Five times he repeats, holding the child by the arm: 'Why, Edward, tell me why?' The repetition of the question indicates anxiety about the reply. The boy at first is evasive. He cannot explain. Then he sees Liswen's gilded weathercock and replies: 'At Kilve there was no-weather-cock;/ And that's the reason why'. This comment, apparently at an inconsequential tangent, could be interpreted as the artlessness of the infantine mind. Yet, equally, it could be interpreted as sensing Thelwall, the undoubted figure-head of Llyswen, to be a mere gilded whirligig, twisting in the wind, without constancy of purpose.

Either way, the reply is then received with intense pleasure by the adult, who is the father figure of the ballad's title. He exclaims that he has learnt much from the child. The first sub-title of the poem was '*Showing how the Practice of Lying may be Taught*'.²⁹ But the young boy has not actually lied. He has spoken casually and unknowingly, rather than mendaciously. It was the adult who could be accused of importuning the child on matters beyond a child's judgment. Nonetheless, in the poem the verdict is received with heartfelt gratitude and welcomed as deep wisdom. So the final stanza is fulsome:

O dearest, dearest boy! My heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

Emotional and intellectual relief are commingled. 'Out of the mouth of babes' ... Throughout the poem, Llyswen farm's actual tenant remains unnamed. But the implication was that Wordsworth feared a preference for Thelwall over himself. Hence the boy's intuitive association of Llyswen with a

changeable weather-cock was a source of intense gratification and education. Wordsworth, in effect, was poetically allaying his apprehensions by rejecting and denigrating a rival emotional focus. The poem is traditionally dated as written in April or May 1798, well before Thelwall's three friends visited Llyswen in August 1798. And nothing in the poem indicates Wordsworth's direct knowledge of the venue, where there was no actual weather-cock. Rather, it is the need for choice that resonates.

Wordsworth's jealous eye had, moreover, seen clearly. It perceived and respected the authenticity of Thelwall's involvement with the forces of nature. He was not only living in the deep countryside but he was farming the land directly. His wife, four children,³⁰ and brother-in-law depended directly upon his produce. 'Sweet Liswyn farm' is presented not as ridiculous but admirable: 'a favoured place', on a par with Kilve. Yet the jealous eye also perceived the incongruity of Thelwall's transformation. His *volte face* from townee politician with no rural roots into a veritable yeoman farmer was abrupt. The shift, to the critical eye, was that of a weather-cock, Thelwall being seen as a glittering but quickly changeable 'gilded vane'. It was not a friendly image.

At the time of the poem's publication, very few people knew anything about the real Llyswen and most readers then and later were unaware of the history of John Thelwall. So, for the most part, the poem has been received allegorically. And indeed its multi-layered text can be understood in many ways. However, at very least for contemporaries like Dorothy Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and for friends within their radical and literary networks – let alone for John Thelwall himself – it had a direct reference.

Wrapt in his own emotions, Wordsworth showed no sign of caring whether anyone at the time made the connection or not. Having written the poem as an imaginative response to Thelwall's move to Wales, he had no

qualms about publishing it. Warm to those close to him, he often seemed aloof to others. Not for nothing was he dubbed as ‘Allfoxden’s musing tenant’ by Thelwall, whose attitude was one of respect rather than the warmth which he felt for Coleridge.³¹ Nonetheless, Wordsworth did, much later, specify the personal origins of the poem. By then deeply settled into political conservatism, he added a rubric to *Anecdote* which gave measured praise to Thelwall’s abilities and his happy family life. Yet Wordsworth’s overall verdict was hostile: the Llyswen experiment was ‘as unfortunate a speculation as that he [Thelwall] had fled from [i.e. politics]’.³² No sympathy. And certainly no retrospective amity for Thelwall. Wordsworth, who had fretted in 1798 about competition from a fellow poet in an ideal rural retreat, had not forgotten. What do others think today? Try reading *Anecdote for Fathers* (printed as an Appendix pp. 23-4) and see.

VI Thelwall in Wales

Was Thelwall’s ambitious Llyswen project doomed from the start? It might have had a better chance of success had the weather and farming conditions not been so adverse. But, in practice, a mixture of personal and circumstantial factors combined to abort the experiment in just over three years.³³ It was not a favourable time to join the ranks of the small yeomen farmers. They were being gradually squeezed out by competition from commercially-managed great estates, which could best ride the roller-coaster of booms and shortages.³⁴

Furthermore, it happened that Thelwall faced two of the worst winters for farmers in the entire eighteenth century. In 1799 and 1800, cold temperatures and incessant rain caused crops to rot in the fields, killing the seedcorn for next year’s planting. Food prices rose astronomically. Famine conditions threatened, especially outside the large cities with their superior market pull.³⁵ Small farmers, however, could not meet the demand but were desperate themselves.

Things were far from the envisioned ideal of a sturdy independence, the family working contentedly besides a sturdy cottage, under sunlit skies: see Fig. 4.



Fig. 4: an American eighteenth-century print showing an idealised image of a sturdy farmer with his wife and son, reaping the harvest with hand-held sickles – from the era before the invention of the combine harvester in 1834.

Although John Thelwall was no countryman, his interests had always been polymathic. In 1793, he published his aptly-named *The Peripatetic*,³⁶ showing a keen tourist's interest in many walks of life. As a political radical, he also defended Britain's workers in both town and countryside. To comprehend the hard lives of the 'laborious part of mankind', he urged his readers in 1795: 'Visit the garret of the artifice, go into the workshops of the manufacturers, go into the cottages of peasants'.³⁷ If the masses were ignorant, they were made so by lack of opportunities. Yet, on his travels in 1797, Thelwall was often dismissive of real-life agricultural labourers. To him, they were 'ignorant, sly or clownish', as Steve Poole notes.³⁸ Such attitudes did not augur well for long-term immersion in rural living.

Added to the tricky socio-economic context, there were also problems with Thelwall's specific choice of location. He had no prior personal contacts in Breconshire. After a while, he declared himself to be critical of Welsh farming methods; and complained that roaming sheep ate his cabbages. He did not attempt to fit into local 'polite society'. He met with some personal enmity, which resulted in a law-suit. He was harassed by continuing government surveillance of his mail. In 1800, he was also suspected of fomenting industrial unrest in Merthyr, although it did not need Thelwall to achieve that.³⁹

True, he did have positive contacts with 'alternative' cultural figures in Wales, like Iolo Morganwg, who was devoted to the re-invention of the ancient bardic culture.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, that cause was not Thelwall's. He remained a self-isolated figure. Visitors came, yet they were few in number: the two Wordsworths and Coleridge in August 1798; and Henry Crabb Robinson in October 1799.

Lacking the companionship of friendly critics, Thelwall's writings became increasingly self-referential. He produced voluminously: letters, poems, essays, a novel, and an autobiographical memoir. But the promised epic, inspired by Coleridge to pen something Homerically grand, never appeared in anything like a completed form.⁴¹ For Thelwall personally, the final disaster in Wales was the death of his treasured young daughter Maria, whom he mourned in heartfelt poetry.

Frustration, bitterness, and insolvency alike led him to quit. After 1796, Thelwall was facing the mortifying experience of falling into public oblivion. By 1801 he had also failed as a private farmer. He was also criticised by the agrarian radical Thomas Spence for not having considered communal alternatives to individual property-owning. And Thelwall's literary career did not do very much better. His *Poems Chiefly Written in Retirement* (1801) got

respectable sales but a critical mauling in the Whig *Edinburgh Review*.⁴² Thelwall was sufficiently stung to write a hurt letter and public expostulation. Interestingly, he was encouraged to complain by Wordsworth, who had also been criticised in the same journal (but himself refrained from replying).⁴³ The exchange did little to help Thelwall's credibility. He continued to write poetry, both published and unpublished; but he did not have anything like the impact and prestige of his two former companions at Nether Stowey.

Historical oblivion – or, at least, deep overshadowing - was beckoning. Indomitably, Thelwall the erstwhile radical orator relaunched himself as a speech therapist,⁴⁴ by now safely back in an urban environment – at first in Kendal and then in London. As a career, it was constructive and eventually lucrative, if much less dramatic. But it gained nothing in organisational terms from Thelwall's sojourn in Llyswen, away from his main networks and personal contacts. Later, he mused more favourably on his stay. Rural seclusion gave him a chance to regroup and to focus upon improving 'the Science of Human Speech'.

Ultimately, however, Thelwall's move to Llyswen proved to be but a temporary sojourn, rather than a key moment, in his multi-faceted career. And as he left, he penned a sour malediction:⁴⁵

[He, Thelwall, had moved] From "Theatres and Halls of Assembly" to a little Village of only twenty miserable cottages – from the friendly, the enlightened, the animated circles of Norwich – from the elegant and highly intellectual society of Derby - to the sordid ignorance of a neighbourhood whose boorish inhabitants hash up a barbarous jargon of corrupted Welch [sic] with still more corrupted English, utterly indigestible to unaccustomed organs ... [The result was stupefying]. ... Thus terminated this ill-starred experiment for uniting together the characters of the Farmer and the Poet.

VII: Wordsworth in the Lakes

Very different was the experience – and the later reputation – of Wordsworth’s residence at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, in the heart of the Lake District. He and Dorothy settled there in December 1799, immediately after their trip to Germany. They embarked upon ‘plain living and high thinking’.⁴⁶ They grew their own vegetables, whilst communing with nature and recording their responses. Extracts from Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal in May 1800 noted: ‘[Thurs. 15th] A coldish dull morning – hoed the first row of peas, weeded etc. etc. - sat hard to mending till evening ...’ [Fri. 16th] ‘All flowers now are gay and deliciously sweet ... I went forward round the lake at the foot of Loughrigg fell. ... After tea, went to Ambleside – ... Grasmere was very solemn in the last glimpse of twilight; it calls home the heart to quietness. ...’ [Sat. 17th] ‘Incessant rain from morning till night. ... Worked hard and read *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Ballads – sauntered a little in the garden ...’.⁴⁷

Such studious tranquillity fostered another great surge in Wordsworth’s poetic creativity. As a Cumbrian, born in Cockermouth just north of the Lake District, he was already deeply familiar with the local landscape and lifestyles. Reconnecting with his roots proved at once stimulating and satisfying. If his childhood had been unhappy, now he could recover a childlike purity of vision. He married a friend from his schooldays, Mary Hutchinson, who came from north country farming stock. And when their growing family outgrew Dove Cottage, they stayed firmly within the same locality.

From 1808-11, the Wordsworths inhabited the smoky and ‘inhospitable’ Allan Bank, just outside Grasmere, before moving back into the disused Grasmere Rectory (also smoky and damp) from 1811-13. Eventually, they rented the gracious Rydal Mount, where they stayed for the rest of their lives. Wordsworth himself landscaped the gardens of this fellside property, *en route*

between Grasmere and Ambleside. Within the design, he included a plain Writing Hut, with a commanding view - echoing the simplicity of earlier days.

Emphatic physical rootedness, reiterated in poem after poem, proved very attractive. ‘Fly, some kind Harbinger, to Grasmere-dale!/ Say that we come, and come by this day’s light!’⁴⁸ That was Wordsworth announcing his return home in 1803. Others came too. Literary friends settled nearby, providing companionship if not always harmony. Greta Hall at Keswick, ten miles north of Grasmere, was home to the restless Coleridge from 1800 to 1803.⁴⁹ Then for the next 40 years it was the residence of his brother-in-law Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate from 1813 to 1843.⁵⁰ He valiantly housed not only his own growing family but also Mrs Coleridge and the Coleridge children, and another sister-in-law, the widowed Mrs Lowell. Meanwhile, the essayist Thomas de Quincey rented Dove Cottage between 1809 and 1821.⁵¹ It was he who later gave the *Lake Poets* their collective name.⁵²

Cultural tourists also arrived, attracted especially by the magnetism of the long-lived Wordsworth. ‘We were in luck’, noted John Ruskin in 1830. His holidaying family spotted Wordsworth at church in Rydal, though ‘he seemed to be asleep the greater part of the time’.⁵³ Other visitors came, some known to Wordsworth like John Thelwall (once) or others who were unknown but arrived carrying letters of introduction. The family members at Rydal Mount, in their later prosperity, were hospitable.⁵⁴ It was all very different from Thelwall’s cultural isolation in Llyswen.

Another key contrast, meanwhile, merits closer attention. The economic bases of the two men’s experiences of rural habitation were very different. John Thelwall tried to live off the land. He did not disdain heavy manual labour. His letters recorded that he worked alongside his farm servants; and ate as they did.⁵⁵ In terms of green living, Thelwall did not launch a Digger-style commune.

His model of society was individualistic in relationship to economic production, although he was keen to give equal political rights to all. Nonetheless, in terms of forging an alternative rural lifestyle, he had literally dug himself into the land.

William Wordsworth did not do likewise. He neither worked the land nor lived off it, his vegetable garden notwithstanding. For many years, he had no official employment and his way of life was deliberately frugal. Indeed, his wife's family worried before their marriage that Wordsworth was virtually a 'Vagabond'.⁵⁶ Dorothy Wordsworth as the family housekeeper also found herself harried by creditors and preoccupied by money. She lamented: 'Alas! poetry is a bad trade'.⁵⁷ But there were other sources of funding. Wordsworth gained a belated family legacy in 1802, plus significant financial sponsorship, with grants of land and money, from admirers of his poetic gifts.⁵⁸ The result gave him sufficient independence not to hurry into publication, especially as he was wounded by harsh reviews and mocking critics.

After 1813, however, things changed. Wordsworth was appointed to a post worth £400 per annum, as Distributor of Stamps for Westmorland. At last he had a settled income. Later, he gained the Poet Laureateship (1843) and a state pension. Literary radicals were scornful of his gradual absorption into the establishment. Lord Byron, the aristocrat-poet who was dissipating his own landed inheritance at startling speed, sneered at Wordsworth as a Tory hireling.⁵⁹ And Robert Browning, from a middling London commercial background, fiercely attacked Wordsworth as *The Lost Leader* (1845): 'Just for a handful of silver he left us ...'.⁶⁰

Such anguished comments marked the extent to which the Cumbrian sage had become a role model of a dedicated and disinterested poet, beyond and above the fray. The image persisted, even while the reality was more prosaic. Wordsworth was not a sturdy yeoman, working the land. He was a townsman

come to live in the countryside. Nonetheless, from his rural simplicity, Wordsworth, writing by candlelight (see Fig. 5), had reached the world.



Fig. 5:
Chalk drawing
of
*Man Writing by
Candlelight.*
© Birmingham
Museums &
Art Gallery

Without any substantial private income, Wordsworth had contrived, obstinately, to make a career as a freelance man of letters. His lifestyle might be compared, in his younger days, with that of an impecunious country clergyman; later, to that of a successful professional man. Yet his ‘flock’ were not local parishioners but distant urban readers. To them, Wordsworth offered an aesthetic appreciation - not of cultivated farmland or landscaped parks but of the natural landscape: ‘stones, and rocks, and trees’.⁶¹ Equally, he dramatised not routine field labourers but poverty-stricken outsiders: the Idiot Boy; the Female Vagrant; the Old Cumberland Beggar; the Highland Girl; the Solitary Reaper. Once absorbed into the literary canon, Wordsworth’s perspective upon the elemental rural ‘Other’ proved to have great romantic appeal for Britain’s urbanising society. Cultural tourists still flock to Grasmere in huge numbers but only very few go to Llyswen.

VIII: Country and Town Revisited

Three final points on the town/country debates remain to be made. One is that, in terms of his covert rivalry with John Thelwall, Wordsworth seemingly ‘won’ yet still felt somehow irked. In 1814 he published *The Excursion*, constituting the middle part of a long-planned poem to be entitled *The Recluse*.⁶² Within it, there are long exchanges with a Thelwallian figure named ‘The Solitary’. Some details are strikingly personal, which suggest specific memories. At one point, for example, Wordsworth’s poem intimates that the Solitary spoke ‘with a faint sarcastic smile/ which did not please me.’⁶³ The Thelwallian figure evidently had a power to annoy. And in return, the Solitary’s faults of vaulting political ambition and personal vanity, followed by undue despair at the failure of reform, are admonished at some length.

However, the poem itself halts in mid-flight. *The Recluse* was never completed. While Wordsworth’s general advice to trust in divine providence was clear, the ideal outcome as to how to live was never specified. He himself relied upon patrons and he did not farm the land. Thelwall, who did the opposite, provoked jealousy in Wordsworth. The traveller in *The Excursion* fled from the town but found no rest. So Wordsworth changed tack. He continued to write and revise *The Prelude* about his youth, as the first part of a poetic trilogy. But the final stage never materialised. There was no progression from *The Prelude* to *The Excursion* to - what? ‘*The Fulfilment?*’ ‘*The Homecoming?*’ Wordsworth remained conflicted.

Something of this ambivalence frames the second point to emerge. Wordsworth, Coleridge and Thelwall all contributed and responded to a prolonged shift in sensibility, sometimes subsumed under the name of ‘romanticism’ (which was always an attitude of mind rather than a coherent ideology).⁶⁴ It was a viewpoint that admired wild country landscapes and which

hoped to learn from unadorned ‘Nature’. In some ways, such attitudes can be seen as paving the way for contemporary ‘green’ politics. Indeed, Wordsworth has been hailed as a proto-environmentalist,⁶⁵ although he would not have endorsed direct action, at least in his later much more conservative days, to save a pristine landscape or an endangered species.

Nonetheless, there were and are limits to the ‘rurality’ of these perspectives. In fact, they are characteristically adopted by urban societies and, originally, largely by middle-class urbanites at that. There is a parallel here with the nineteenth-century campaigns in support of animal welfare.⁶⁶ These were also launched in town and often imposed upon reluctant country farmers. Despite the rural habitations of Wordsworth at Grasmere and (briefly Thelwall at Llyswen), their audiences were overwhelmingly urban. For one at least, the outcome should have been no surprise. Wordsworth at times did imply that a love of the countryside was unnatural for a townee. He wrote, loftily, that Thelwall, ‘though brought up in the city, ... was truly sensible of the beauty of natural objects’.⁶⁷ Yet the farmer-poet of Llyswen was one of but many townees, like that great fell-walker S.T. Coleridge, who loved the countryside, if not all the country residents. The rural retreat was, in fact, a sub-set of urban life.

Thirdly and lastly, then, the old town/country dichotomy is losing its traction in an urbanising world, which is collectively facing a major ecological challenge. Certainly, there are locational choices to be made about where to live. Yet there is no particular moral virtue in choosing a rural location over an urban one. That point applied then, and also applies today, as much as it ever did. In fact, even among his close associates Wordsworth did not manage to convince them all of the special merits of country living. So the essayist Charles Lamb – notwithstanding his friendship with the Lake poets - wrote defiantly of the pleasures of the metropolis. There was more pleasure to be found in ‘a mob of happy faces’ waiting to attend a London theatre, he urged, than ‘all the flocks of

silly sheep that ever whitened the plains of Arcadia or Epsom Downs'.⁶⁸ There was, and is, more than one way to appreciate the world.

'Nature' is not just found in the wild. Townscapes and landscapes can alike be thrilling. It is very possible to love both. And all places can lend themselves to ecological improvement.⁶⁹ Thelwall for one was ultimately confident in the power of the human masses to generate new ideas and to adapt to new situations: 'Whatever presses men together, therefore, though it may generate some vices, is favourable to the diffusion of knowledge, and ultimately promotive of human liberty'.⁷⁰ Nowadays, the dichotomy between town and country fades before the quest to reconcile individual hopes and fears with the urgent need for collective action globally. We must still dig but we must also organise. Thelwall in his optimistic days would certainly agree to that, while Wordsworth would as beautifully 'muse'.

APPENDIX

William Wordsworth

*Anecdote for Fathers:
Shewing How the Art of Lying may be Taught*

– with sub-title replaced in 1845 by Latin tag from Eusebius:
Retine vim istam, falsa enim dicam, si coges

First publ. in W. Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (1798): poem no. 10;
from J. Morley (ed.), *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (1888), pp. 75-6

I have a boy of five years old;
His face is fair and fresh to see;
His thoughts are cast in beauty's mould,
And dearly he loves me.

One morn we strolled on our dry walk,
Our quiet home all full in view,
And held such intermitted talk
As we are wont to do.

My thoughts on former pleasures ran;
I thought of Kilve's delightful shore,
Our pleasant home when spring began,
A long, long year before.

A day it was that I could bear
Some fond regrets to entertain;
With so much happiness to spare,
I could not feel a pain.

The green earth echoed to the feet
Of lambs that bounded through the glade,
From shade to sunshine, and as fleet
From sunshine back to shade.

Birds warbled round me – and each trace
Of inward sadness had its charm;
Kilve, thought I, was a favoured place,
And so is Liswyn farm.

My boy beside me tripped, so slim
And graceful in his rustic dress!
And, as we talked, I questioned him,
In very idleness.

‘Now tell me, had you rather be,’
I said, and took him by the arm,
‘On Kilve’s smooth shore, by the green sea,
Or here at Liswyn farm?’

In careless mood he looked at me,
While I still held him by the arm,
And said, ‘At Kilve I’d rather be
Than here at Liswyn farm’.

‘Now, little Edward, say why so:
My little Edward, tell me why.’
‘I cannot tell, I do not know.’ –
‘Why this is strange’, said I;

‘For here are woods, hills smooth and warm:
There surely must some reason be
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm
For Kilve by the green sea.’

At this, my boy hung down his head,
He blushed with shame, nor made reply.
And three times to the child I said,
‘Why Edward, tell me why?’

His head he raised – there was in sight,
It caught his sight, he saw it plain –
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the boy his tongue unlock,
And eased his mind with this reply,
‘At Kilve, there was no weather-cock;
And that’s the reason why.’

O dearest, dearest boy! My heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

Endnotes

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- ¹ An early version of this essay was given to the Panel on ‘Radical Habitations’ at the inaugural meeting of the John Thelwall Society, 4 Jan. 2012, at the British Society for C18 Studies Conference, St Hugh’s College, Oxford; with thanks to all participants for stimulating discussions, especially to the chair Gordon Bottomley, and fellow-panellists Steve Poole and Judith Thompson. Personal thanks go also to Irene Corfield for enjoying the poetry – and heartfelt gratitude to Tony Belton for his as-ever constructive criticisms.
- ² For John Thelwall (1764-1834), see variously C. Cestre, *John Thelwall: A Pioneer of Democracy and Social Reform in England during the French Revolution* (1906; repr. Charleston: Bibliolife, 2009); plus S. Poole (ed.), *John Thelwall: Radical Romantic and Acquitted Felon* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009); and compendium of Thelwall’s political writings in G. Claeys (ed.), *The Politics of English Jacobinism: Writings of John Thelwall* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).
- ³ W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), Bk. 1, lines 6-14.
- ⁴ For Wordsworth (1770-1850), see S. Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 119-50; N. Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), esp. pp. 234-7, 248-51, 260-2; K.R. Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy* (New York: Norton, 1988); Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth: An Inner Life* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); and Hunter Davies, *William Wordsworth: A Biography* (1980; new edn, London: Frances Lincoln, 2009).
- ⁵ See eg. Report on Clandestine Police Surveillance by Denis O’Connor, which criticised undercover surveillance of various political and environmental protest groups over previous 40 years: *Guardian*, 2 Feb. 2012.
- ⁶ There is more in C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), pp. 86-120; and A. Bradstock (ed.), *Winstanley and the Diggers, 1649-1999* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).
- ⁷ A.M. Hadfield, *The Chartist Land Company* (1970; new edn, Aylesbury: Square Edge Books, 2000).
- ⁸ On this, see R. MacFarquhar and M. Schoenhals (ed.), *Mao’s Last Revolution* (London: Belknap, 2006); P. Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and R.H. Solomon, *Mao’s Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).
- ⁹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), in D. McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 225.
- ¹⁰ The waning of radicalism and the impact of the 1795 Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings Acts (known as the Gagging Acts) are explored in A. Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), pp. 359-415; and John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- ¹¹ For this event, see Goodwin, *Friends of Liberty*, pp. 404-5; and a personal testimony by J. Thelwall, *An Appeal to Popular Opinion against Kidnapping and Murder, including a Narrative of the Late Atrocious Proceedings at Yarmouth* (London, 1796).
- ¹² On S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834), see R. Ashton, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996); M. Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: A Bondage of Opium* (London: Quartet Books, 1977); and J.B. Beer, *Coleridge’s Play of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- ¹³ N. Roe, ‘Coleridge and John Thelwall: The Road to Nether Stowey’, in R. Gravil and M. Lefebure (eds), *The Coleridge Connection* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 60-80. See

- also Judith Thompson, “‘Thy Power to Declare’: John Thelwall, Coleridge and the Politics of Collaboration”, *Romanticism*, 16 (2010), pp. 164-83. Much more is available in J. Thompson, *John Thelwall and the Wordsworth Circle: The Silenced Partner* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), which was going through the press when this essay was written.
- ¹⁴ Gill, *Wordsworth*, pp. 141, 149-50, 164-5; and M. Mason (ed.), *Lyrical Ballads* (1992; new edn, Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), pp. 1-31.
- ¹⁵ Wordsworth to Cecil Boyle Thelwall, John Thelwall’s widow: A.G. Hill (ed.), *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, Part 3 – 1835-9* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), Vol. 6, p. 641. See also M.H. Scrivener, *Seditious Allegories: John Thelwall and Jacobin Writing* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).
- ¹⁶ M. Moorman and A.G. Hill (eds), *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, Part 2 – 1812-20* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), Vol. 3, p. 361.
- ¹⁷ See P.J. Corfield, ‘Rhetoric, Radical Politics and Rainfall: John Thelwall in Breconshire, 1797-1800’, *Brycheiniog*, 40 (2009), pp. 17-36; and P.J. Corfield and Chris Evans, ‘John Thelwall in Wales: New Documentary Evidence’, *Historical Research*, 59 (1986), pp. 231-9.
- ¹⁸ Gill, *Wordsworth*, p. 126.
- ¹⁹ W. Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth: Centenary Edition in Six Volumes* (London, 1870), Vol. 1, p. 190.
- ²⁰ T. Gray, *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (1759), in A. Quiller-Couch (ed.), *The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 534.
- ²¹ See L. Newlyn (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 129-30, 158-60; and Ashton, *Life of ... Coleridge*, pp. 46-51, 73-4. For context, see too J. Morrow, *Coleridge’s Political Thought: Property, Morality and the Limits of Traditional Discourse* (London: Macmillan, 1990); and T. Fulford, *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature and Transatlantic Culture, 1756-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 120-1.
- ²² Letter to Thomas Hardy from John Thelwall, Derby, 25 Oct. 1797, in E. Rickword, *Literature and Society: Essays and Opinions II, 1931-78*, ed. A. Young (Manchester: Carcanet New Press, 1978), p. 217 [original of letter now lost].
- ²³ Letter to Thomas Hardy from John Thelwall, Llyswen (letter penned in a Hereford alehouse), 16 Jan. 1798: original in Reed Rare Books Library, Dunedin Public Library, New Zealand; with transcript in Corfield and Evans, ‘John Thelwall in Wales’.
- ²⁴ See e.g. the invigorating, if naturally debated, analysis of Coleridge’s poetic roots in J.L. Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927).
- ²⁵ Mason (ed.), *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 208.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-31 (*We are Seven*) and 132-4 (*Anecdote*). See also D.H. Bialostosky, ‘Narrative Irony and the Pleasure Principle in “Anecdote for Fathers” and “We are Seven”’, *Journal of English and German Philology*, 81 (1982), pp. 227-43.
- ²⁷ From W. Wordsworth, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1807), in T. Hutchinson (ed.), *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (London, 1920), p. 588.
- ²⁸ Kilve is a village on the Bristol Channel, about a mile from Alfoxden, Wordsworth’s then residence, with a short name that is more amenable to verse than either Alfoxden or Nether Stowey, where Coleridge was living.
- ²⁹ Mason (ed.), *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 132: Wordsworth excised this sub-title in 1845 and inserted instead a rare Latin tag from Eusebius’s *Preparatio Evangelica*: ‘*Retine vim*

- istam, falsa enim dicam, si coges*'. It means 'Retain your way/power, for I would tell you false things, if you force [me]'; or, more colloquially, 'Preserve your own power [of truth], for, if forced, I'd tell you lies'. With thanks to Ahuvia Kahane and Jonathan Powell (Royal Holloway Classics) for advice on this tag, whose full meaning depends upon context.
- ³⁰ John and Susan Thelwall, who arrived at Llyswen with three children Maria (1793-9), Algernon Sidney (1795-1863), and John Hampden (1797-1874), then produced another daughter Manon Roland (1799-?) but shortly afterwards lost Maria. Another daughter Sara Maria Thelwall (1801-59) was born immediately after their departure from Wales; and much later, John Thelwall in his sixty-seventh year, produced with his second wife Cecil Boyle a sixth child, his son Derwent Birkbeck (1831-78). With thanks to Judith Thompson for advice on the multiple Thelwall progeny.
- ³¹ J. Thelwall, *Lines Written at Bridgewater in Somersetshire ...* in his *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement*, p. 130.
- ³² Wordsworth, *Poetical Works ... Centenary Edition*, Vol. 1, p. 190.
- ³³ See Corfield, 'Rhetoric, Radical Politics and Rainfall'; and E.P. Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', *Past & Present*, 42 (1994), pp. 94-140; repr. in idem, *The Romantics: England in a Revolutionary Age* (Woodbridge: Merlin, 1997), pp. 156-217.
- ³⁴ A.H. Johnson, *The Disappearance of the Small Landowner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909; repr. 1963).
- ³⁵ Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793-1801* (Gloucester: Sutton, 1988).
- ³⁶ See J. Thelwall, *The Peripatetic* (1793); and Judith Thompson (ed.), *The Peripatetic/John Thelwall, with an Introduction* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001).
- ³⁷ J. Thelwall, *The Tribune, No. 30: On the Causes of the Calamities and Disturbances that Afflict the Nation, Part 2, Including a Vindication of the Moral Character of the Laborious Poor against the Insulting Calumnies of their Oppressors ...* (London, 1795), in Claeys (ed.), *Politics of English Jacobinism*, pp. 253, 254.
- ³⁸ See companion-essay by Steve Poole, 'Configuring Jacobin Landscape: John Thelwall and Topographical Radicalism in the 1790s': John Thelwall Society website.
- ³⁹ For the south Wales context, see Chris Evans, "*The Labyrinth of Flames*": *Work and Social Conflict in Early Industrial Merthyr Tydfil* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993).
- ⁴⁰ For Iolo Morganwg [Edward Williams] (1747-1826), see C.W. Lewis, *Iolo Morganwg* (Caerfon: Gwasg Pantycelyn, 1995); and M. Löffler, *The Literary and Historical Legacy of Iolo Morganwg, 1826-1926* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007).
- ⁴¹ See 'Specimens of the Hope of Albion: Or, Edwin of Northumbria – An Epic Poem', in J. Thelwall, *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (London, 1801; repr. Hereford, 1805), pp. 175-202.
- ⁴² *Edinburgh Review*, 2 (April 1803), pp. 197-202.
- ⁴³ See Gill, *Wordsworth*, p. 224; and letter to Thelwall from Wordsworth, Grasmere, mid-Jan. 1804, in E. De Selincourt (ed.), *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Vol. 1: The Early Years, 1787-1805* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 431-5.
- ⁴⁴ Denise Rockey, *Speech Disorder in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The History of Stuttering* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), esp. pp. 46-7, 86-9, 174, 240.
- ⁴⁵ Thelwall, 'Prefactory Memoir', in *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement*, pp. xxxviii, xlvi.
- ⁴⁶ From Wordsworth's sonnet *Written in London, September 1802* (1807), in Hutchinson (ed.), *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, p. 307.
- ⁴⁷ M. Moorman (ed.), *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth: The Alfoxden Journal, 1798; The Grasmere Journals, 1800-3* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 16-17.

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- ⁴⁸ Wordsworth, *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803* (1815), in Hutchinson (ed.), *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, p. 295.
- ⁴⁹ Lefebure, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, pp. 315-16, 319-20, 358-9, 367, 386-90, 407.
- ⁵⁰ For the Bristolian Robert Southey (1774-1843), see esp. W. Speck, *Robert Southey: Entire Man of Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); J.L. Madden, *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1972); and D.M. Craig, *Robert Southey and Romantic Apostasy: Political Argument in Britain, 1780-1840* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007).
- ⁵¹ For the Mancunian Thomas de Quincey (1785-1859), see G. Lindop, *Opium Eater: A Life of Thomas de Quincey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); A. Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber, 1968); and R. Morrison, *The English Opium Eater: A Biography of Thomas de Quincey* (London: Weidenfeld, 2009).
- ⁵² T. De Quincey, *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* (1873), ed. D. Wright (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).
- ⁵³ T. Hilton, *John Ruskin: The Early Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 19.
- ⁵⁴ Gill, *Wordsworth*, pp. 352, 385-6, 411, 421-2.
- ⁵⁵ Letter to Thomas Hardy from John Thelwall, Jan. 1798 – cited above n. 22.
- ⁵⁶ Gill, *Wordsworth*, p. 206.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 265.
- ⁵⁸ On the subject of Wordsworth's finances, which would merit further study, see *ibid.*, pp. 206, 218, 253-4, 296-7.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 296. For Byron's own finances, see J. Beckett with S. Aley, *Byron and Newstead: The Aristocrat and the Abbey* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2001).
- ⁶⁰ Robert Browning (1812-89), 'The Lost Leader', line 1, in his *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845).
- ⁶¹ From W. Wordsworth, *A Slumber did my Spirit Seal* (1800), in Hutchinson (ed.), *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, p. 187.
- ⁶² See K.R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); and Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox'.
- ⁶³ Wordsworth, 'The Solitary', being *The Excursion: Book 2* (1814), in Hutchinson (ed.), *Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, p. 780.
- ⁶⁴ See S. Chaplin and J. Faflak (eds), *The Romanticism Handbook* (London: Continuum, 2011); and L.R. Furst (ed.), *European Romanticism – Self-Definition: An Anthology* (London: Methuen, 1980).
- ⁶⁵ See discussions in J. Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991); and J.C. McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).
- ⁶⁶ For introductions to a huge literature, see C.J.C. Phillips, *The Welfare of Animals: The Silent Majority* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2009); and R. Boddice, *A History of Attitudes and Behaviour toward Animals in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain: Anthropocentrism and the Emergence of Animals* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).
- ⁶⁷ Wordsworth, *Poetical Works ... Centenary Edition*, Vol. 1, p. 190.
- ⁶⁸ Charles Lamb (1775-1834), 'The Londoner' (1802), web-published by P. Madden (ed.) at www.essays.quotidiana.org/lamb.
- ⁶⁹ For the Transition Towns movement, which seeks ecological improvements on a local community basis, whether in towns or villages, see www.transitionnetwork.org.
- ⁷⁰ J. Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature* (1796), in Claeys (ed.), *Politics of English Jacobinism*, p. 400.