Technologies of the Picturesque
British Art, Poetry, and Instruments, 1750–1830

Ron Broglio
He made report
That once, while there he plied his studious work
Within the canvas Dwelling, colours, lines,
And the whole surface of the out-spread map,
Became invisible: for all around
Had darkness fallen — unthreatened, unproclaimed —
As if the golden day itself had been
Extinguished in a moment; total gloom,
In which he sate alone, with unclosed eyes,
Upon the blinded mountain’s silent top!

(20—29)

Nature as circumference that was visible to the eye now becomes the center that spreads out to engulf Mudge and his maps. While the geographic laborer’s eyes remain unblinking in their observation, darkness obscures the mountain’s silent top that has served as landmark and center. The black India ink of the map meets the blackness of nature, while the mountain “from blackness named” asserts its proper name over the surveyor’s marks. Landmark and cartographic orientation are lost.

The poem emphasizes that nature’s clouds, mists, and darkness can wrestle the power of sight away from human control. Figuring space means negotiating human relations to what Merleau-Ponty calls the flesh of the world. We see through and within this flesh, and its thickness constitutes the subjectivity of the subject as well as the thing-ness of the object. In the darkness that falls upon Mudge, the supremacy of Cartesian perspectivalism cedes to haptic space. The self-contained observer, complete with his books and maps, gives way to a bodily self in which “thickness of flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 135). Black Comb reorients the surveyor and tourist. No longer is the mountain a launching point for distant observation and traditional lines of sight; instead, it is an “Eminence” hanging over the observer and immanence, or closeness of nature, in which the observer is immersed. With “Written with a Slate Pencil” as with the Penrith Beacon passage, Wordsworth finds new inflection points between humans and nature that will reconfigure both the self and objects toward a different means of being in the world.

Wordsworth’s landscapes contain dazzling arrays of objects that are laid out specifically to create a narrative of encounter and discovery. As seen at the close of the previous chapter, not all of his poetry corresponds to the clear demarcations of the picturesque tour nor of cartographic mapping. Instead, Wordsworth uses some of his encounters and discoveries to connect himself with the landscape through phenomenological mapping of space. That is to say, he maps a series of bodily relations and resonances with the landscape. While such alternative mapping and means of orienting oneself in space occur within select poems or passages, at other moments, he reinforces the traditional rhetoric of the picturesque in his poems of encounter. In such instances a narrator roams the countryside and happens upon a particular spot that affects his sensibilities and that provides a privileged insight into nature. As in the exterior landscape, so it is in the interior: following revelations regarding nature, the wanderer looks within himself and discovers “a sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused” (1992, 119 lines 95–96). The land itself becomes secondary to a privileged interiority of memory and feeling. The exploration of external space becomes a mapping of the mind registering emotions and ideas. The current chapter works through the different mappings in Wordsworth’s poetry by moving from traditional picturesque encounters and the privileged interiority of the subject discussed in preceding chapters to more radical reconfigurations of self and space through the “trafficking of forms” initially explored at the close of chapter 5. In the more radical moments of Wordsworth’s poetry, the unity of the human subject breaks down and in its place are a series of vector relations between fractured elements of the human body and the environment. In such cases—as with characters in “Resolution and Inde-
pendence,” “The Cumberland Beggar,” “The Discharged Soldier,” and “A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,” — the forceful agency of nature over and against the expectations of the picturesque subject creates a different sense of space and the role of humans in the landscape.

In Wordsworth’s more traditional picturesque poems of encounter, a single object serves as a center, which frames the scene and triggers the exterior revelation regarding nature and the interior contemplation for the narrator. For example, in “Lines [Left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree]” the tree and moss-covered stones around it center the surrounding landscape of curling waves upon the shore, juniper, thistles, and barren rocks. Likewise, in “Michael,” the story’s emblem is the unfinished sheepfold that bears witness to the trials of the aging shepherd. “Hart-Leap Well” has its well, and “The Thorn,” of course, has its “aged Thorn, /This pond, and beauteous hill of moss” centered on the peak of a mountain. “We are Seven” focuses around a gravestone, and “Simon Lee” has its tangled root. In many of these poems, important objects are given proper names and some names are even capitalized throughout the course of the poem, thus investing these objects with a unique and powerful subliminality. Yet this facile marking of objects and space overlooks the complexity of encounter. It omits what has been characterized in the preceding chapter as “experiences that have not yet been ‘worked over,’ that offer us all at once, pell-mell, both ‘subject’ and ‘object,’ both existence and essence” (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 130). The following discussion looks at moments where Wordsworth abandons conventional subject-object relationships and in their place creates confounding layers of intersubjective identity. Such representations of place contrast with the basic assumptions of mapping and space — that objects can be delineated, that space is isomorphic, and that the viewer does not interfere with the space he observes. Additionally, these maps are more than simply epistemological means by which the subject negotiates an environment; rather, they produce an ontologically different subject, a self that is literally beside itself as identity gets established through a transfer of characteristics between the body and the land.

**Syntax of the Lakes**

The seeming ease of mapping and organizing space is evident in the opening pages of Wordsworth’s guidebook to the Lake District. Wordsworth in his *Guide through the District of the Lakes* begins with a “Description of the Scenery of the Lakes” that is intended to provide an overview of the territory. Looking down on the land from a bird’s-eye view or balloon-eye view just above the mountains, Wordsworth provides his readers with an imaginary glance at the whole of the district. Unlike tour guides that direct the reader to actual physical stations for observation, Wordsworth places the reader in an impossible point on a cloud. From this vantage, all of the mountains, like spokes of a wheel, converge on and are captured by the viewer.

To begin, then, with the main outlines of the country: — I know not how to give the reader a distinct image of these more readily, than by requesting him to place himself with me, in imagination, upon some given point; let it be the top of either of the mountains, Great Gaval, or Scawfell; or, rather, let us suppose our station to be a cloud hanging midway between those two mountains, at not more than half a mile’s distance from the summit of each, and not many yards above their highest elevation; we shall then see stretched at our feet a number of vallies, not fewer than eight, diverging from the point, on which we are supposed to stand, like spokes from the navel of a wheel. (1774, 2:171)

As part of the picturesque and guidebook aesthetics, the wheel and spoke image allows the spectator to mentally configure and appropriate a series of objects as a landscape under the gaze of the viewing subject. With this glance, at one moment, at one privileged point, the spectator gains access to the whole region. The metaphor of a wheel and its eight spokes naturalizes the geometric survey of the district. Yet, despite the naturalization, Wordsworth’s overview functions in the same manner as the surveyor’s and tourist’s maps discussed in chapter 3; it frames the scene, removes the body of the observer, and assumes that space is homogeneous.

In the wheel and spoke passage, Wordsworth creates a picturesque landscape by fashioning a center, where the observer is asked to stand, and a border, where the viewer’s horizon frames the scene. As the word “picturesque” implies, the land becomes a frameable picture with borders and a central object to catch the eye and organize the composition. The metaphor of a wheel and spokes unifies the diverse entities over which it is placed like a template. With the geometric template, the natural land becomes a constructed landscape. The viewer is not in the land but at once both above it on a cloud and beyond it looking at a map while imagining being on a cloud. In this mapping, the wheel metaphor assumes a homogenous space — a consistent and continuous space — which grounds the mapping of objects and their interrelation. The reader of the guide can follow Wordsworth’s wheel on a map of the district, and, without fear of discontinuities, he can “travel” to different locations by allowing
his eye or finger to scan the paper. The opening image in “Description of the Scenery of the Lakes” attempts to give the reader an orientation and overview from the removed distance of Cartesian perspectivalism.

However, such orderliness is not always the case in Wordsworth’s poetry or in nature. The image of the wheel in the Guide to the District of the Lakes does not wholly fit the geography since the vale of Coniston will not comply with the template of radiating spokes. So Wordsworth modifies his story to account for another center, another point of inflection not contained within the singular point of the wheel’s center: “—let us trace it [the spoke] in a direction from the south-east towards the south, and we shall next fix our eyes upon the vale of Coniston, running up likewise from the sea, but not (as all the other vallies do) to the nave of the wheel, and therefore it may be not inapty represented as a broken spoke sticking in the rim” (1774, 2:172–73). The “broken” spoke represents another line and another center of activity not aligned with the narrator’s privileged position upon a cloud. While mapping land into an ordered landscape facilitates navigation, with the broken spoke Wordsworth suggests moments of discontinuity as entities on the ground disturb the grounding of homogeneous space. Beneath the image and its topographical plane is a seething multitude of entities, points of view, and points of inflection. No matter how much the image of the wheel has covered over, a point of contention arises from the depths of the land.

There is no one vantage point or center by which one may map and adequately represent the land. Indeed, engagement with the actual land produces many entities that disturb the observer’s distant point of view. While from the imaginary cloud it may seem that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, for the traveler on the ground, the “unfortuitous” position of a lake, bog, mountain, river, tistles, fence, or herd of animals breaks the homogeneity of space through its physical presence. Consequently, on the ground the shortest route may be a bent line around an obstruction. In the spoke and wheel passage, Wordsworth glosses over the sticking point, the vale of Coniston, with a small story. To account for this lake, the initial unbroken wheel becomes a narrative about a broken spoke. Looking at a map of the Lake District and tracing Wordsworth’s lines (both cartographic and prose), one cannot help but wonder what other points of inflection lie in wait to break the spokes and dismantle the wheel. One wonders if the “may not be inapty represented,” with its subjunctive mood and litotes, does not attempt to cover an inaptness of representation—a nonrepresentable seething below the surface of the image.

Unlike in the Guide through the District of the Lakes, there are moments in Wordsworth’s poetry that leverage the seething obstructions toward a nontraditional means of mapping space. From alternative maps he fashions a different sense of selfhood and new relations to nature. The rest of this chapter will follow other instances of Wordsworth’s recreation of space from the Simplon Pass scene in The Prelude, to problems of character and environment in “Resolution and Independence” and “The Cumberland Beggar,” then finally to the disheveled characters in “The Discharged Soldier” and “A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags.” Each reading avoids finding meaning and value as gained through the narrator’s interior reflection on the scene. Instead, the interpretations address what happens to material objects and bodies in the described space.

Following this interpretive gambit, by discounting the privileged interiority of the Romantic subject, it becomes possible to see how Wordsworth’s sense of selfhood does not come from within the subject; rather, the subject is an inflection point that takes on meaning as it draws together elements from the surroundings. Identity is not prior to encounters with the environment but arises from them in this reconfiguration of the Romantic subject. Environment is no longer defined by the subject at its center. Instead, the relationship is inverted. The center is nature itself, which is nowhere and everywhere, while the subject is an arc of inflection at nature’s periphery. How the arc is drawn and what it attaches to redefines the mobile identity of the poet as he walks through nature. The poet becomes that which connects with various elements in the landscape. As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari explain, the land itself has agency that produces affects and effects, enveloping all who enter into relation with it. This agency of the land they call “haecceity,” a Latin term for “thisness” which they borrow from the medieval philosopher Dun Scotus as a way to express “nonpersonal individuations” (Bonta and Protevi 2004, 94):

There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing, or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have a perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected. (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 261)

As the poet finds himself immersed within sets of connections to other things in the world, “Taking a walk is a haecceity” (Deleuze and Guat-
The relationship between the poet and the land forms what Deleuze and Guattari call an assemblage. Nature functions no longer as decor or background but rather as a series of elements to which the poet relates, things that he rubs up against and that rub against him in ways that change what it means to be a poet and to be a part of nature. Like the vale of Coniston that will not comply with an orderly mapping, the meaning of Wordsworth's poems shifts significantly as a result of a change from a human-centered to an assemblaged space.

In defining the subject according to the surroundings, the problem of marking time and space that was found in chapter 2 reoccurs. This earlier chapter pits way-finding by means of sun, moon, and stars against finding longitude based on a clock. As Harrison's clock wins out over the lunar method, orientation becomes a matter of coordinating human symbols of time (clock time in London with clock time at the point of location) and placing marked time in relation to symbols of space (by drawing fifteen degrees of longitude per hour of clock time). The exterior world gets obfuscated by symbolization. This chapter seeks to put the self back in relation to surrounding objects—water, sun, and land. The inability to symbolize time will serve as a second theme in this chapter. Human time will once again be placed against a variety of natural times that disorient the human subjects in these texts.

**REMAPING THE PRELUDE**

As an illustration of the intersubjective communication between the poet and the environment, consider one of the most Wordsworthian moments in Wordsworth's canon, the Simpion Pass section of *The Prelude*. Critics Geoffrey Hartman and Alan Liu provide examples of how human situatedness in the land has been and continues to be read. For both critics, the human—whether on the scale of the individual with Hartman or at the scale of human history with Liu—remains the standard by which the passage is measured. Recovering the neglected final section of the Simpion Pass episode will present an alternative to their readings. What is at stake is the possibility that the human serves as a false construct for reading interactions in a landscape. Could this crossing of the Alps also be a crossing of agency in which microidentities emerge among human and nonhuman assemblages in the landscape? It may be that agency is constituted by an assemblage of human and nonhuman elements with variable responses and resonances.5

Well-known interpretations of Wordsworth’s Simpion Pass by Geoffrey Hartman in *Wordsworth’s Poetry: 1787–1814* (1964) and Alan Liu in *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (1989) make the scene’s structure familiar. Hartman divides the crossing of the Alps episode from book 6 of *The Prelude* into three sections. Section 6a (lines 488–524) shows the dawn realization from Wordsworth and Jones that they have taken the wrong fork in the road crossing from the Swiss to the Italian Alps. A peasant tells them that they must descend the mountain rather than ascend again; in brief, they discover that they have crossed the Alps already. In 6b (lines 525–48), Wordsworth notes that his anticipation of the crossing allowed him to paint a scene in his imagination that far exceeds the actual event. This section lauds human imagination over and against nature’s beauty. Finally, 6c (lines 549–72) returns to the external landscape but heavily affected by the power of imagination.

Hartman reads the Simpion Pass as the power of Wordsworth’s imagination to supersede the actual crossing experience. In such sublimity of mind, the poet realizes his power to transform and refine his experience of nature through art. For Hartman, 6b, which was composed after 6a and 6c, marks a turning point for Wordsworth:

We know that VI-b records something that happened during composition, and which enters the poem as a new biographical event. [In the narrative sequence] Wordsworth has just described his disappointment (VI-a) and turns in anticipation to nature’s compensatory finale (VI-c). He is about to respect the original temporal sequence, “the eye and progress” of his song. But as he looks forward, in the moment of composition, from blankness toward revelation, a new insight cuts him off from the latter. The original disappointment is seen not as a test, or as a prelude to magnificent, but as a revelation in itself. It suddenly reveals a power—imagination—that could not be satisfied by anything in nature, however sublime. (Hartman 1964, 46)

For Hartman, nature in the landscape of 6a does not provide the poet with the inspiration he seeks. At this point Wordsworth must turn inward. He realizes that his expectations of grandeur supersede what nature can produce. The poet develops a feeling of the sublime in the absence of a referential object. In 6b, the mental faculties stretch beyond nature in the yearning for something greater. The grandeur Wordsworth seeks is made evident in man’s spiritual power: “Imagination!—lifting up itself! / Before my eye and progress of my song . . . to my soul I say / I recognize thy glory” (6.525–26, 6.530–31).

While Hartman reads Wordsworth’s hymn to the imagination as marking the arrival of self-consciousness for Wordsworth, Liu reads the
emergence of self-consciousness as isolated from nature and society. Self-consciousness is thus an unstable figure supported by the very objects that it denies and from which it separates itself (Liu 1989, 51). The foregrounding of the individual occurs at the expense of leaving nature in the middle ground and history in the forgotten and repressed background. For Liu, Wordsworth reads the mountains in relation to Napoleon, the “modern Hannibal,” crossing the Alps. So, in the “spoils and trophies” of 6b, Wordsworth stresses that the imagination renews and rewards rather than pillages in the manner of Napoleon’s famed spoliations. Furthermore, unlike the French army, which robs the areas it invades, Wordsworth likens the imagination to the fertile Nile. The image carries further political and historical weight since it was composed while Bonaparte was preparing to sail for Egypt (Liu 1989, 29). Liu considers how Wordsworth’s metaphors arise from historical figures who triumph over the natural settings of the Alps and the Nile.

History is, of course, human history played out on the stage of nature. Whether historians consider key individuals or cultural movements, what history overlooks is a third element in the clash between two armies—the land itself. From Hartman to Liu what changes is the scale of human activity—from the individual poet to emperors and armies and from poetic insight to culturally situated discourse. Despite these crucial shifts, man—be it individual or collective, manipulating language or manipulated by it—remains the measure for interpretation. However, Wordsworth’s poetry can yield different meanings if we consider freeing agency and individuality from their ties to the human. I will examine this change in agency through an emphasis on section 6c of the Simplon Pass. In such a reading, assemblages of elements take precedence over any particular object—human or otherwise. Even what counts as an object shifts from one moment to the next through different encounters and resonances. Wordsworth’s desire to be surrounded by and in nature gets realized. Yet, as he most dreads, his special relationship to nature where he maintains a distinct and distanced role as poet and recorder of the natural scene is leveled. His status as a privileged individual whose inner experience and musings are to be valued collapses. In contrast to Hartman’s and Liu’s still humanist reading of 6b, the following environmental reading of the 6c passage displays the overlooked vitality of nonhuman interrelation of elements.

Written in 1799 before the notable 6b and before 6a, the 6c passage provides the reader with something other than Liu’s historically situated notion of the sublime and Hartman’s exultation of the poet’s power of imagination. There is a tendency to read the 6c passage as a conventional example of the sublime in poetry. What signals this reading is the disorientation of the spectator, Wordsworth. In a dizzying passage, language falters, failing to hold together in its representation of the majestic Alps. Such faltering is more than sublime; it is the diffusion of nature beyond the human.

This failure of language stems from the inability of the 6c passage to unify the diverse objects and display them as if an observer took them in at a glance. Such excess proves a problem both for Wordsworth as spectator and for the reader. Like the vale of the Coniston passage from the Guide, 6c creates discontinuities that disturb an easy mapping of space. The excess of the landscape described in the passage is not that of a single object nor of a single moment; rather, it is a seething multitude. Wordsworth’s formula for a poem of encounter fails. Spatially, Wordsworth’s desire to frame a scene according to a central object gets frustrated as he attempts to represent a whole series of interrelations in 6c rather than the singular prominent waterfall. Temporally, the event is too drawn out to retain within the moment of a glance. In the sublime of Edmund Burke, the time of the glance is a measurement for space comprehended. Examining the spatial and temporal problems of the passage will provide another way of reading Wordsworth.

First consider time in the passage. The scene unfolds in more than an instant of time. Instead of a “snapshot” moment, the viewer “pans” from woods to waterfall to sky and rocks to “drizzling crags” and “raving stream” and finally to “unfettered clouds.” In the single moment that is said to constitute the sublime, the mind looks for a means of organizing and unifying the diversity within the scene (Kant 1987, 1.25; Burke 1969, 4:10). The insistence of singularity in time and framed unity of the landscape removes the aesthetic from any lived situation. Human experience is not a gathering of singular moments but rather, as Henri-Louis Bergson suggests, a loosely sewn together series of fluctuating durations (1990). Nor do humans see objects as isolated units, but rather in relation to an environment. The viewer and objects viewed remain temporally and spatially situated in surroundings that are themselves temporally and spatially related.

As with time, so too with objects in space. To reflect upon a single object at a single moment may seem like a simple task; yet it is a highly abstract operation since such observation requires that the mind isolate an object as a unit having an internal coherence regardless of other surrounding objects and regardless of time. Despite the level of abstraction
sions are the means by which an entity is revealed in the world. Each prehension is a small part of the infinitely divisible entity.

The prehension serves as an actual entity's referent to the external world. It has a "vector character" of relatedness, a particular directed force of how the entity interacts with its world. The relationship and togetherness among actual entities (including their prehensions) is called a nexus. The consequence of this construction is a plane of relations: "You cannot abstract the universe from any entity, actual or non-actual, so as to consider that entity in complete isolation. Whenever we think of some entity, we are asking, What is it fit for here? In a sense, every entity pervades the whole world; for this question has a definite answer for each entity in respect to any actual entity or any nexus of actual entities" (Whitehead 1978, 28).

Deleuze's language of assemblages works in a similar fashion. As an assemblage, each thing gets defined by what it connects to and where it leads. "Objects" for Deleuze gather meaning through their predication:

Predication is not an attribution. The predicate is the "execution of travel," an act, a movement, a change, and not the state of travel. The predicate is the proposition itself. And I can no more reduce "I travel" to "I am a traveling being" than I can reduce "I think" to "I am a thinking being." Thought is not a constant attribute, but a predicate passing endlessly from one thought to another. That the predicate is a verb, and not the predicate is reducible to the copula and to the attribute, mark the very basis of the Leibnizian conception of the event. (1993, 53)

For Deleuze and Whitehead, the defining unit is the "event" where entities and their relations to one another become manifest. Whitehead even employs Wordsworth's line "we murmur to dissect" to promote actual entities and processes over analytic propositions about substances (1978, 140).

Whitehead proposes that artists and poets precede philosophers because they move outside the language of substance and objects and toward a philosophy of organism. The way Wordsworth bends language, placing words into poetic structures, exemplifies Whitehead's claim. Jonathan Bate expresses the predicament in his eco-logical reading of the Romantics: "Romanticism often insists that language is a prison house which cuts us off from nature, but simultaneously the poet strives to create a special kind of language that will be the window of the prison cell" (Bate 2000, 47). Wordsworth's experience as expressed in "The Unravels the interior coherence of objects and their representation in standard linguistic symbols. More than giving a window onto nature, Words-
worth in this passage breaks the structure of language to gain an immediacy and performativity that connects the reader to the narrator's experience. Nouns, adjectives, and verbs do not hold to their proper place and sets of relations. Consequently, Wordsworth's sense of interrelation between entities creates a robust, textured, and dynamic environment greater than any set piece description of objects. It is the overabundance of relatedness that becomes or even exceeds the sublime for Wordsworth in the 6c section of the Simpion Pass episode.

As Wordsworth takes in experience, there is no single place for his focus. No one object stands out; rather, the landscape becomes a field of related entities. And while at any one moment in the duration of viewing one object may take prominence, the contextual elements are never fully pushed into a background. Consequently, a clearly defined foreground-background structure never takes shape. Instead, the insistent participles—"decaying," "thwarting," "drizzling," and "raving," all within ten lines of poetry—establish a constant flux rather than a series of fixed moments. Amid the flux, trajectories of attributes and properties can be established. Qualities of liquid, solid, and gas disperse themselves throughout 6c. In "the stationary blasts of waterfalls," the stillness of the word "stationary" suggests a permanence that then couples with the tremendous motion of a liquid in "blasts of waterfalls." Having moved from a pseudolid to liquid, the lines turn then from liquid to ether. The liquidity of the falls connects to "The torrents shooting from clear blue sky." Liquidity continues its effect on the scene in "drizzling crags" and "raving stream." From the ethereal sky comes "The unferreted clouds and region of the heavens." Next to the ethereal clouds is an adjective of solidity denoted by its negation "unferreted." The interrelatedness of objects increases in complexity since, in addition to their liquid quality, "drizzling crags" have a solidity—the crags—which emits ethereal tones "as if a voice were in them" (figure 7).

Such complex patterning does not represent the landscape as seen by an observer distanced from the scene but rather presents the experience of a new, expansive, dynamic landscape from within the scene itself. Notice that Wordsworth cannot hold on to any one temporal moment or focus on a single object as he takes in the event. As one temporal moment drops off and is replaced by the next moment, objects drop out of consciousness; yet, qualities and features residually remain in awareness as can be seen in the trafficking of descriptive words from one object to another. "[D]rizzling crags" and "unferreted clouds," for example, carry with them aspects of surrounding objects, the water and the rocks, respectively.

This mapping of vector relations—prehensions of actual entities, to use Whitehead's language—differs greatly from the spoke and wheel map that introduces tourists to the Lake District in Wordsworth’s Guide and that served as an opening figure in this chapter. Contrasting the two maps briefly will be useful for clarifying the focus of this and the previous chapter. The spoke and wheel map is a grid imposed from above the landscape. Amid the rush of stimuli in the land, objects are selected to intelligibly and conveniently organize a scene. The fact that one would never see all the mountains or lakes at one glance from any touristic vantage point does not prevent the usefulness of Wordsworth’s descriptive overview. Rather tourists are expected to carry the overview with them either physically as a map or mentally and then to relate the current on-the-ground position to this impossible vantage. Furthermore, the objects selected in the overview must have a permanence that would prevent the description from becoming dated too rapidly. Such temporal and spatial permanence both draw from and strengthens object-oriented description. In contrast, the Simpion Pass offers a description of events and actual entities/actual occasions as they arise from within the land. The mapping is emergent rather than imposed. Furthermore, in the wheel and spoke map, the observer remains removed from the scene, while in
the Simplon Pass the viewer functions as a trigger for events and prehension of entities.

The entities/occasions of 6c do not simply provide objects in relational context. In the dense descriptive and rhetorical structures of this passage Wordsworth is not presenting a breakdown in the ability of language to represent an experience. Nor is the problem that experience fails to capture the real. The larger claim is that the ontology of objects is more fluid than conventionally conceived and that this protean nature of entities prevents conventional patterns of experience and representation. Objects are in a continual state of becoming rather than possessing an unchanged essential being. They emerge within the landscape by functioning as open nodes that take in their surroundings and reflect them back from their unique standpoint or “prehension.” If objects work as the points of intersection or condensation of vectors, then the being of an object is simply the meeting point of a number of vector becomings. Rather than substance being identical in essence with self, every object is defined by all other entities from its particular point of view. The Simplon Pass scene is not a matter of epistemological strategy—a particular mode of knowing and describing; rather, the passage claims ontological difference in modes of being. The picturesque and critiques of its ideology both assume stable objects in the environment but differ over how these objects are labeled and appropriated. There are, however, more radical possibilities within the picturesque and particularly in Wordsworth’s poetry. By questioning the very ontology of objects, the landscape and the tourist, artist, or poet in the scene become unstable entities with a variety of possible vector connections. The rest of this chapter will explore the various new connections opened by such an interpretation.

In the sublime of Edmund Burke there is a sense of self as insignificant before the overwhelming object while for Immanuel Kant the faculties battle to comprehend the object. Yet within their aesthetics there is a return for this loss (Burke 1969, 4:6, Kant 1987, 1:25, 27). The profit gained from viewing the sublime object is the purchase of the faculties working together toward a guarantee of man’s supersensible vocation. All faculties work in a mutual identification of the object in Burke. For Kant, the faculties provide an intersubjective communication about an object. Recognition thus relies upon a principle of collaboration of the faculties. A conflict occurs as imagination fails to adequately apprehend that which reason demands for comprehension. The violence of the faculties reveals the purposiveness of the mental powers and the superiority of reason. So, even in conflict, there is a unity of all the faculties in the subject: “The subject’s own inability [of imagination to present the object to reason] uncovers in him the consciousness of an unlimited ability which is also his, and that the mind can judge this ability aesthetically only by that inability” (Kant 1987, 1:27). His inability becomes a gain. Kant explains this calling as a supersensible vocation: “Our inner perception that every standard of sensibility is inadequate for an estimation of magnitude by reason is [itself] a harmony with laws of reason, as well as a displeasure that arouses in us the feeling of our supersensible [moral] vocation” (Kant 1987, 1:27). Despite loss and disorientation in the sublime, the subject is recompensed for this loss by insight into the power of reason and our supersensible moral vocation. The observer leaves the sublime with a sense of reason and purpose.

James Heffernan’s reading of the 6c passage of The Prelude gives an example of how the moment is considered sublime and how Wordsworth is compensated for feeling overwhelmed by nature: “From immeasurably far above him to below him and even beside him at his ears, Wordsworth is enveloped by this landscape. But he is not overpowered by it . . . he constructs from these warring and turbulent elements a single sentence with a decisively internalizing predicate: ‘were all like workings of one mind’” (1984, 129). Like Hartman, Heffernan finds that the power of imagination exceeds the landscape and creates a privileged and interior image for Wordsworth as spectator of the waterfall. The 6c passage is commonly considered a stereotypically sublime moment of “transport,” to use the eighteenth-century phrase made popular by the Longinian tradition (Ashfield and de Bolla 1996, 20). It is a transport meant to take the viewer elsewhere. However, what if in the economy of the sublime, a beneficial return for transport did not take place? That is, what if the subject does not return but is truly transported elsewhere? The result would be an unstable ontology for both the objects in the landscape and the viewing subject.

The lines of the Simplon Pass scene seem to be crafted in the tradition of the sublime to ensure a beneficial return on the voyage. There is the superiority of what Wordsworth calls imagination over the senses as evident in 6b, “Imagination! —lifting up itself / Before the eye and progress of my song” (Prelude, 6.525–26). And the final lines of the vision in 6c ensure man’s communication with nature and his role in the divine plan:
Were all like the workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face . . .
Characters of the great apocalypse
The types and symbols of eternity.
(Prelude 6.568–71)

These final lines move the observer far outside the scene of 6c as imagination works in “lifting up itself.” The closing of 6c bolsters the solidity of the human observer as a privileged object in the landscape and contrasts markedly with the experiential engagement with torrents, clouds, and winds. However, in the “tumult and peace” of the woods and waterfall, the exchange of elements between entities and the inability to temporally fix relationships between objects create instability not just in the objects but within the viewing subject. The tumult produces in Wordsworth the sense of being constituted within time and within relation to other entities. Such an experience gives an expenditure without the pleasures of a return. This loss of solidity and objectivity will haunt the poet.

Immediately after “the sublime” of 6c comes a curious eight-line passage:

That night our lodging was an alpine house,
An inn, or hospital (as they are named),
Standing in the same valley by itself,
And close upon the confluence of two streams—
A dreary mansion, large beyond all need,
With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned
By noise of waters, making innocent sleep
Lie melancholy among weary bones.
(Prelude 6.573–80)

It is odd that Wordsworth feels compelled to write a brief passage about the night following his experience of crossing the Alps. The need to mention the inn as a hospital sounds awkward and, consequently, the 1850 Prelude omits it. The lines “By noise of waters, making innocent sleep / Lie melancholy among weary bones” sound ominous. Is this a hospitalization due to melancholy? The economy of the sublime has gone awry—a loss on his investment in the sublime—and in dreary, spacious rooms Wordsworth mourns. He is haunted by the loss of part of himself, a giving over of himself to being within time. The strange exchange of qualities made possible through being in the world disturbs the poet. He has lost the stability of his identity.

Wordsworth is not alone in being haunted since he passes this experience on to the reader. The poet bends language in order to present the experience in a way that will cause the reader to be caught in a dilemma similar to that of Wordsworth in the Alps. Notice that as the reader moves along he or she can retain only a limited amount of information within the duration of what may be termed the “residual present.” The residual present is not yet the past such that it requires a concerted activity of the mind to recall it, nor is it the present now. It is a series of moments in the duration of the present. After reading several lines, the first lines read and retained in the residual present begin to sink down or drop off, become hazy or fuzzy, as new lines enter the present. This in itself is quite a common experience, and readers are rarely aware of the physicality of reading; however, in 6c the act of reading is made manifest. Take, for example, the following lines:

The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And everywhere along the hollow rent
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting form the clear blue sky
(Prelude 6.558–61)

By the final line of this passage the waterfall of the first line recedes from the residual present into the past. And yet, the liquid “torrent” and the color blue (like water) that appear in the last line invoke a memory of the first line. Just as a description of part of the scene fades, aspects of the passing scene become part of the present moment of reading. This interrelation of diverse elements provides a vector connection. In 6c, properties show up by intersecting and forming dense, intensive nodes around an entity, and the properties do not settle here but show up again in different contexts with different meanings. Vectors carry with them some characteristics of nodes through which they pass and allow for interrelatedness of vastly different entities/occasions in the text.

A pattern forms from vectors just having fallen into the past and then being recalled to a present. For the reader, such patterning creates the frustration of not being able to maintain the complex relatedness of objects in the poem within any present duration. The reader is caught in the problems presented by the temporal act of reading. One wants to continue to read yet must occasionally, or in dense passages such as 6c, must often, shuttle back and forth between lines just having been read and lines newly read. The shuttling takes place sometimes physically by the motion of the eye rereading and the hand flipping back through
pages and sometime mentally through active remembering of moments fallen into the past.

The idea of vector connections is not so foreign to Wordsworth criticism. It simply has not received attention since scholarly focus has been on the human subject—either as an individual or as human history. Vector relations appear in Hartman's reading of the Snowdon passage of *The Prelude*. He calls attention to Wordsworth's strange configuration of objects in terms of other objects and the sliding of qualities from one object to another:

The escape from fixity, in the vision, is extended beyond the doubling of the central recognition to inform even the properties of things and the relationship between thing and symbol. The mist is like the sea yet also "solid" like the mountains. . . . Wordsworth tries to define this action when he says that the imagination imparts to one life the functions of another: shifts, creates, "traffic[ing] with immeasurable thoughts" (Hartman 1964, 65).

And

[We] must try to take the "merely" transferred epithets as literally as possible. They indicate, in the presence of other signs, a dizzy openness of relation between the human and nature. Such to-and-fro ("traffic[ings]") between inner and outer, literal and figurative, or present and past, often span entire episodes and even cross them. The relation of the mist in XIV to that of VI-b and to the inscrutability of nature in VI-a is an example of a cross-episode transfer. For a sustained series of intra-episode transfers we could return to Wordsworth's account of the Simpion Pass . . . where many qualities migrate from the external scene of VI-a to VI-b, then reappear in the landscape of VI-c. (Hartman 1964, 66–67)

Despite such keen observation, Hartman provides scant explanation as to why Wordsworth uses these strange (re)configurations of objects. In part this is because Hartman's own project centers on the growth of the poet's mind. Too great an attention to the implications of "a dizzy openness of relation between the human and nature" as presented in "traffic[ings]" could undermine the critic's goal. Hartman's emphasis on 6b (the hymn to the imagination section) removes him from the possible implications of the "transferred epithets" and "cross-episode transfer." He maintains the division between humans and nature and makes human imagination the agent of change in the landscape by explaining that "Wordsworth tries to define this action when he says that the imagination imparts to one life the functions of another" (Hartman 1964, 65).

Several years after Hartman's observations, Fredrick Garber extends the "traffic[ings]" a bit further in *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Encounter*.

Throughout the first two chapters of his book, Garber remains focused on how Wordsworth establishes an encounter which respects both the integrity of the objects in the landscape (what could be called the thing in itself) and the experience of the viewing subject:

And if he does not always project into the object his glory in his own discrete individuality (of course he does so at times), Wordsworth would at least assume that whatever is out there shares in the quality of imitable selfhood; and the sharing, or the realization that there is something to share, is one more way by which he can link himself with what he sees outside. (Garber 1971, 29)

For Garber's Wordsworth, the stuff of the world has its own selfhood and agency which should be respected and not necessarily superseded by the glories of the poet's imagination. Yet it is worth noting that although Garber's approach respects objects, it is the very subject-object structure which remains unquestioned. Indeed, such criticism reinforces the privileged interiority of the subject. Wordsworth may "link himself to what he sees outside," but he will "protect his own individuality, which he does not want to lose by blending it with another or by being swamped" (Garber 1971, 29). For Garber the "link" is a bridge, not a breakdown of human structures of perception and certainly not a shift in ontology. Like Hartman, Garber prefers a consciousness of some sort, even if the poet "becomes almost a pure consciousness" (1971, 9). There is never the possibility of "blending" with nature in a manner that precedes a human understanding of what thought might be.

How else can the "traffic[ing] with immeasurable thoughts" be understood if not as a play of the imagination? Traffic[ing] might be the prehension of entities among themselves. It is possible that "immeasurable thought" occurs regardless of human agency. (The inability to measure this thought is simply a human inability since nature has no need to measure itself.) Thought as a nonhuman activity coincides with the earlier discussion in chapter 2 on distributed cognition. In that chapter, thought is depicted as a network distributed among the humans working the instruments, the instruments and designers of instruments, the charts and long history of chart makers, and the natural objects being measured. In the case of the lunar method for finding longitude, the maps, lunar charts, quadrants, stars, and moon all participate alongside the human in thinking location. Pushing the notion of cognition a bit further, Whitehead claims that thought is the gathering together (prehension) of actual entities from the standpoint of a particular entity (Whitehead 1978, 18–20). Each object from and within its
My rereading of place and the individual follows particular trends in ecocriticism hinted at by Jonathan Bate in *The Song of the Earth* (2000). Bate repeatedly gestures toward a coupling between humans and nature that is uniquely expressed in literature. In his reading of Thomas Hardy’s *Woolfanger*, Giles, the humble earthbound cider maker, “almost... has become cider and that Grace is drawn to drink him in” (Bate 2000, 19). Giles as cider is more than a metaphor. In Bate’s reading, Giles’s close union with the earth makes him a physical expression of something more and other than human. There is a similar extrahuman subjectivity in Bate’s reading of Rima, the prized love of the European adventurer Able in William Henry Hudson’s Edwardian novel *Green Mansions*. Able, the male protagonist whose name recalls biblical transgression, discovers a bird-girl, Rima, who is “bird and butterfly and leaf and flower and monkey all in one; her voice is the voice not only of bird, but also of insect, of wind and of water” (Bate 2000, 60). Like the Giles-Grace coupling, the Able-Rima union suggests yet another disjunctive synthesis by which literature thinks outside of anthropocentric limits and moves toward human couplings with nature. Bate himself never extends his argument to such a radical dissolution of the humanist subject but rather recovers this subject as an ecofriendly, environmentally aware agent. Nor is he alone in this missed opportunity for a radical revision of the human subject. Prior to many literary interests in “place,” ecologically minded geographers such as Edward Casey and Jeff Malpas employ Heideggerian phenomenology to read spaces but maintain the centrality of the human body rather than its assemblages and vectors of connection to an “outside” as the source of value and meaning (Casey 1993, 130–31).

Despite humanist overtones, Bate’s couplings, Roe’s empathy, and Hartman’s traffickings together suggest alternative readings of Wordsworth that have yet to be developed. It is such alternatives that provide the opportunity for the following interventions in Wordsworth’s poetry, including a fresh look at two standard romantic poems: “Resolution and Independence” and “The Cumberland Beggar.” The change in the configuration of a social space by the transformation of entities in the landscape is stretched further by these poems than is evident in any of the moments in *The Prelude*.

**REMAPING IDENTITY**

In “Resolution and Independence” the transformation of self into or as landscape is evident in an old man becoming a rock, a cloud, and a stream. The elements of nature attributed to the man are usually under-
stood as analogies: the man is old, rough, and solitary as a stone; his voice modulates like a brook; and he moves at a slow, steady pace like a cloud. Such descriptors illustrate how close the man is to nature. Yet, "closeness" to nature maintains a divide between the human and nonhuman. Under such a reading the nature-like qualities remain at the service of human attributes of solitude, voice, and pace. If the qualities are truly read as being of nature, the old man must yield portions of his humanity to alien forms of earth, water, sky, and animals. This opening of human identity can be explored through reading the vectors or trafficking of forms in "Resolution and Independence."

The history the poem's production exposes problems Wordsworth confronts in creating the leech gatherer. The poem is based on an incident in which Dorothy and William encounter a man searching for leeches. Dorothy records the event in her journal entry for Friday, October 3, 1800:

He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on and a nightcap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. . . . He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, and "a good woman, and it pleased God to bless us with ten children." All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches are scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle, where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season, but many years they have been scarce—he supposed it owing their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. . . . He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broke, his body driven over, his skull fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. (Dorothy Wordsworth 1941, 63)

These details are important in the early draft of the poem, then known as "The Leech-Gatherer." Many of the specifics are selectively dropped or reworked in William's later printed version. In both versions the scene begins with a traveling narrator in a state of disorientation (much like the protagonist in Simpion Pass and the Penrith Beacon). While enjoying the harmony of nature, as "The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters" and "All things that love the sun are out of doors," the narrator has a sudden turn of mood:

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,  

As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low.
("Resolution and Independence," lines 22–25, hereafter cited as "RI")

So, while he is aware of the pleasures of the day, Wordsworth as the poem's speaker becomes struck with fears of future woe. "Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty." Recalling Thomas Chatterton and Robert Burns, he realizes the ills that can befall a poet who relies on the taste of the public to save him from poverty.

The 1802 and the 1807 poems begin to diverge in the next two stanzas that introduce the leech gatherer (RI, lines 50–63). As Jared Curtis explains, the earlier draft contains mainly physical description and many of the details given in Dorothy's journal. Wordsworth focuses on the man's bent frame, his coat and bundle, the narrative of his family, and his general troubles (1971, 101–2). This early version of the poem draws to a close by recalling details of the old man's livelihood, including his selling "godly Books from Town to Town" and seeking leeches "All over Cartmell Fells & up to Bellan Tarn." Then, the final stanza remains the same as in the published version. The 1807 poem differs from the earlier draft in the decision to depart from the physical details of the man. In place of such details, Wordsworth develops a relationship between the man and the landscape. Compare the moment of encounter between the narrator and the old man in the 1802 and the 1807 versions:

He seem'd like one who little saw or heard
For chimney-nook, or bed, or coffin meet
A stick was in his hand wherewith he stirr'd
The waters of the pond beneath his feet

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, an whence;
So that it seemed a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself[

(RI 64–70)

The initial question then is, what provokes the change from specific details to an odd conjunction of qualities in the landscape?
In the spring of 1802 Wordsworth began work on a group of some thirty poems that employ a trafficking of elements including "The Leech-Gatherer," "The Sailor’s Mother," "Alice Fell," and "Beggars." Curtis has pointed out parallels in the use of odd descriptive figures among these poems (1971, 103–5). For example, in "The Sailor’s Mother" the mother stands as "Majestic . . . as a mountain storm" with an "ancient spirit" likened to "Roman Matron." In "Beggars," curious figures of the past are used to describe central woman:

Her face was of Egyptian brown;
Fit person was she for a queen
To head those ancient Amazons files
Or ruling bandit’s wife among the Grecian Isles.16

Wordsworth seems to be working on a transfer of properties across time to invoke a timelessness in the characters. This same sort of timelessness is at work in lines 57–63 of "Resolution and Independence." Yet, the old man seems far more strange, since he does not blend with other characters in history but rather with the landscape and a primordial beast. Wordsworth uses part of the 1816 Preface to explain the effects of "images in conjunction" found in this stanza:

The stone is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the sea-beast; and the sea-beast stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone; which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged Man; who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison. (Wordsworth 1974, 3:53)

As with the Simpion Pass and Penrith Beacon, again there are complex vector connections as aspects of entities merge with other entities to create new patterns and relations. The transfer of properties continues in the poem as the man becomes as a cloud ("RI," lines 88–94) and his voice is associated with a stream ("RI," line 114). In part, Wordsworth’s changes in the 1807 version take their cue from the tedium that Sara and Mary Hutchinson found in the protracted physical description of the leech gatherer (Wordsworth 1984, 55–56). The physical description in the 1802 version fails to show the interrelation between the man and the landscape as well as the feeling of age and duration inspired by this interrelation.

As with the Penrith Beacon, so too here a new set of connections with the landscape serve as a social commentary and as a means of re-forming social relations. The old man is without home or family, the basic markers of society. Home and family allow one to participate in geography, a place on the map. Just as in the Penrith Beacon passage where a tourist can observe the landscape from a privileged height, having a home allows all citizens as observers to mark the subject’s place in the sociogeographic landscape. Knowing the leech gatherer’s home would allow the reader to "place" him by attributing to the man characteristics of a particular region. Additionally, the poor laws of the early 1800s were designed to give support to the local poor, those residing within a particular parish, but the laws did not legislate any relief for the extraparochial poor (Langan 1995, 204). Instead of belonging to a particular place, instead of being in his proper place—and with his Scottish accent, he is notably out of place—the leech gatherer has gone astray, much like Wordsworth in the Penrith Beacon and Simpion Pass episodes.

Socially, the leech gatherer has a metonymical identification with his occupation. He is a leech sucking the blood of society (Langan 1995, 205). However, Wordsworth rearranges the metonymical structure. First, he sees the leech gatherer as one who has a privileged relation to the land as he reads the landscape like a book: "Upon the muddy water, which he conned, / As if he had been reading in a book" ("RI," lines 87–88). Such intimacy with the land provides a unique understanding by lived experience rather than an abstract knowledge; as explained in the 1800 Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, “such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived. . . . such language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is more permanent, and far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets" (Wordsworth 1974, 1:124). The leech gatherer conning the waters has developed a connection to nature through years of experience. The physical and metaphorical connectedness between him and land allows for the transfer of qualities from man to sea creature to stone. In the transfer men "communicate with the best objects" without recourse to the language of the poets as the language of culture.

It is not the old man who needs the poet’s language for communication; rather, the disillusioned poet looks to the leech gatherer for means of “communication with the best objects.” The narrator leeches off of the leech gatherer. In his despondent mood, the poet draws strength from the old man. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator realizes that social formations have worked against poets; society has foreclosed their
imaginative use of language. He sites as examples Chatterton and Burns. In describing Chatterton as a “sleepless Soul,” the narrator connects the poet to the old man who is neither live nor dead “nor all asleep.” The poet like the leech gatherer depends on the social system for his livelihood and yet finds barriers that prevent civic support; there is no social relief for the homeless poor or for the poet who causes language to wander from approved tastes.

Recall that in the 6c passage of the Simplon Pass episode Wordsworth attempts to contain vector relations and transformations of objects by invoking a divine end toward which “sublime” changes move:

Were all like the workings of one mind,
Features of the same face . . .
Characters of the great apocalypse
The types and symbols of eternity

(1799, 6.568–71)

With the invocation of eternal matters, the poet can evade the disturbing redistribution of agency and subjectivity in the Simplon Pass. In “Resolution and Independence,” Wordsworth again figures containment by invoking the divine and eternal. He happens upon the leech gatherer as “it were by peculiar grace / A leading from above, a something given” (“RI,” lines 50–51). Later, toward the close of the poem, the narrator claims the old man is “like a Man from some far region sent. / To give me human strength, and strong admonishment” (“RI,” lines 118–19). And finally, the poem concludes, “God,’ I said, ‘be my help and stay secure; / I’ll think of the leech gatherer on the lonely moor!’” (“RI,” lines 146–47).

Yet the final lines of the poem have an irony to them. Does the poet want to be like the leech gatherer, or does he invoke God to save him from being like the weary old man? Perhaps he fears the strange character cut loose from social ties and roaming across the landscape attaching himself here and there to objects, now a stone, now a cloud, now a stream. The “strong admonishment” reveals these fears:

The Old Man’s shape, and speech, all troubled me,
In my mind’s eye I seem’d to see him pace,
About the wary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently

(“RI,” lines 135–38, emphasis added)

What is it about the man’s shape that troubles the narrator? Could it be his between state, “not all alive nor dead,” and his likeness to a rock and sea beast? And what of his speech? A voice likened to a stream does not simply indicate pleasant modulated tones. It also opens the possibility of unintelligible babble, natural sound without human signification. As with the 6c passage where Wordsworth spends a night beset by melancholy in a hospital-inn, here too transformation between entities troubles the narrator. He fears a loss of part of himself and a loss of language and meaning through contact with nature.

The narrator’s troubles are made clearer by reconsidering some of the changes between the 1802 and 1807 versions of the poem. Abandoning the details of a mimic description of the leech gatherer, Wordsworth uses entities from the landscape—rock, cloud, and stream as well as a fanciful “intermediate” creature, the sea beast—to build another description. The interrelation between entities in the landscape causes the encounter to seem as “in a dream.” The delicious quality of seeing dreamlike metamorphoses calls attention to the narrator’s mood, which is akin to “despondency and madness.” Only by this disorienting mood with which the encounter begins and by a sense of wandering astray from society is the poet able to see the old man in his relation to the land. Wordsworth sets the connection of entities against the social system that rejects the poet and the wandering poor. By providing in the poem sets of interactions and relations that are alternatives to expected social relations, Wordsworth suggests a new type of community. Just as, according to the 1815 Preface, the sea beast occupies an “intermediate” position between the rock and the man, the poet occupies an “intermediate” position between society and the old man. Further, as the sea beast marks the transition between inorganic and organic life, the poet in the same transitional space links humans back to the land. In this position Wordsworth attempts to be the “man speaking to men.” In “Resolution and Independence” Wordsworth discloses a dreamlike possibility of new connections to the landscape that could change society.

As explained in the 1800 Preface, Wordsworth wants a society that lives close to the earth, that communes with entities. However, he never develops what this society close to the earth would look like or how it would work. It appears to be a call back to England before the industrial revolution. In moving backwards to idealize a former set of social relations, it is unclear if Wordsworth grasps the possible social and ontological upheavals implied by the transformations he has set in motion. Like the narrators in his poems who invoke the eternal and divine to close down the vector connections and move them to a common end, a divine plan, Wordsworth draws back from the transformations he reveals in the
through the old man is feeble and dying. Worse still, they are willing to shut him in a poor house and so close off their connection to their environment.

The economy of relations among the villagers overshadows any descriptions of nature. As discussed earlier, Wordsworth cuts off transformation between entities by invoking a divine plan toward which all action tends and by which actions are unified and made sensible to humans:

'tis Nature's law
That none, the meanest of created things,
Of forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist
Divorced from good—a spirit and pulse of good,
A life and soul, to every mode of being
Inseparably linked.

("CB," lines 73–79)

The limits of such a plan, tightly woven into "The Cumberland Beggar," prevent anything other than a few bread crumbs from falling astray and outside the restricted social economy. The beggar serves as "A silent monitor" to keep the moral "habit" in circulation. Wordsworth then wedds 'Nature's law' to the Decalogue and the recompense for charity by which the alms-giver "builds her hope in heaven" ("CB," lines 135, 161). The possible transformation of elements between villagers and across socio-economic strata in lines such as "We have all of us one human heart" ("CB," line 153) gets quickly reinstated within traditional boundaries of Christianity (Chandler 1984, 84–85). Furthermore, the notion that the one heart is a human heart prevents slippages of characteristics between the human and nonhuman.

Despite such insurance against semantic slippage, small moments of human–nonhuman transgression crop up in the text. Consider how Wordsworth describes the eyes of the hunched-over beggar straining to see the sun:

That not without some effort they behold
The countenance of the horizontal sun,
Rising and setting, let the light at least
Find a free entrance to their languid orbs.

("CB," lines 188–91)

The "Rising and setting" describes both the sun and the effort of the beggar's eyes. His eyes as "orbs" take their roundness from the sun. The
whole of the beggar’s life is tracked by the sun. “As in the eye of Nature
he has lived, / So in the eye of Nature let him die!” (“CB,” lines 196–97).
So, as his eyes become orbs that watch the rising and setting of the sun,
the orb of the sun becomes an eye that sees the beggar rise and set, live
and die. The eyes in the poem rove quite a bit. They become oddly
detached from the man’s body by taking on their own agency: “not with-
out some effort they behold,” and “As he moves along / They move
along the ground” (Wordsworth’s emphasis, line 188, 46–47). These
detached eyes become part of the landscape in “the eye of Nature.” How-
ever, it is not accurate to say that the sun becomes an eye. Rather, it is
“the eye of Nature” that watches the man. While the “eye of Nature”
may be a figure for the sun, “Nature” becomes part of the divine plane,
which includes “Nature’s law” and the Decalogue. Once again the
wandering astray of transformation gets cut off by Wordsworth
invoking religion.

Like the eyes that seem to have a life of their own, the beggar’s pal-
sied hand has its own agency:

He sat, and ate his food in solitude:
And ever, scattered from his palsied hand,
That, still attempting to prevent waste,
was baffled still[.]

(“CB,” lines 15–18)

As the eyes are related to the sun, the hand that trembles while grasping
food moves like the pecking of the mountain birds. Body parts form
connections outside the unity of the body as a whole. Such fragmentation
undermines the self as individuated and sustainable outside any envi-
ronment. The body is not an a priori whole that then finds relations to
nature; rather, the body is an assemblage of organs and functions that
disconnects and reconnects to other body parts as well as to elements in
the landscape.

For Wordsworth, such connections become apparent through a disori-
entation of the senses. In disorientation, the organs reorganize and
sense differently: they break old habits of perceiving and create new
ones. Reorganization begins by taking untried paths (as does the boy in
the Penrith Beacon passage of The Prelude) or being without a home
parish (as is the leech gatherer) or traversing private property on what
until the early nineteenth century were public access paths across pri-
ivate lands (Langan 1995, 81). Experimentally, wandering means marking
a different relation to the landscape, one that challenges society’s con-
nection to the land. So, for example, rather than ascend to the beacon
that maps a territory, the boy moves into the landscape to craft new as-
semblages. And the leech gatherer’s toils over time wed him to the land
differently than the passing traveler.

Because these characters relate to the land differently, they reveal
other ways of thinking about the landscape than the prospect view. The
social implications of the prospect have been drawn out by Jacqueline
Labbe in Romantic Visualities where she explains “This elite viewpoint
leads to a valorization of the generalized landscape one sees when one
climbs — socially and literally — high enough to oversee. What had been
postulated as an aesthetic category, a metaphor of vision that indicated
one’s place on the eminence, becomes a social advantage” (1998, xi). The
characters examined in this chapter move through nature rather than ob-
serve it at a distance. In their contact with nature they collapse the privi-
ileged interiority of the subject and wed their sense of self to the envi-
ronment. By fashioning other relationships to the landscape, the more
radical moments in Wordsworth’s poetry suggest another way of living
with nature than the viewer’s literal and social elevation.

Furthermore, the nomadic nature of Wordsworth’s characters trou-
ble the social propriety and personal investment in property of the stable
citizens. In reorganization, the very body is different. Rather than obey
the well-formed demands that labor and that aesthetic observation place
upon the body, these characters fashion different connections to the
landscape. The social demands on the body will become more evident in
the next section of this chapter addressing Wordsworth’s “A narrow gird-
e of rough stones and crags” and “Discharged Soldier.”

For the reader, the vector relations between objects impart a disori-
entation similar to that experienced by the narrators of the poems. In the
Simpon Pass episode, the reader experiences the transfer of character-
istics during the act of reading. In “Resolution and Independence,” the
odd combination of stones—sea beast—man imparts a blurred dream im-
age as felt by the narrator. By transformation, Wordsworth hopes to re-
range the reader’s perceptual and experiential understanding of land-
scapes and in doing so challenge social relations to the land. And yet,
Wordsworth is often quick to recontextualize transformations by prais-
ing the poet’s power of imagination or invoking divine providence.
While interested in making visible an interconnectedness between hu-
mans and the landscape, he remains uncomfortable with or incapable of
formulating the implications of the transformational relations he sets in
motion.
Two brief examples will provide further evidence of the transformational relations underway in Wordsworth's poetry and his own uneasiness with the connections between objects that he sets into play. In both "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags" and "The Discharged Soldier" the narrator is shocked by an ill or sickly figure that he describes as only half-human. The other half, the nonhuman half, derives from the organs of the human body malfunctioning and getting caught up in a relationship with the surroundings. For Wordsworth, it is in illness that one becomes most aware of one's body. Such awareness prevents ethereal flights of fancy and brings a return to the material and even animal nature of being human. (Chapter 7 explores the relationship between humans, animals, and illness in more detail.) A poet bent upon greatness through a soaring imagination has every right to fear the implications of such bodilyness since through the body the poet may be led astray and his poetry may never cohere, never unify, and never satisfy common sense and good taste.

"A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags," also known as "Point Rash Judgment," from "Poems on the Naming of Places" in Lyrical Ballade presents a simple story line: the narrator and friends playfully saunter through a valley all the while regarding and commenting on the objects along the shoreline of a lake. The party hears workers in the field harvesting the crops. Then they encounter a peasant fishing, and the party wonders why the man is idling his time away rather than gaining wages for the winter by working in the harvest. Upon closer approach they realize that the man is too debilitated to labor in the field and that this poor peasant is doing all he can to gain a living. Reproachful of their initial evaluation of the man, the party draws the moral conclusion that reservation of judgment and speech are best, and to mark the event Wordsworth names the outcropping on the lake where the incident occurred "POINT RASH-JUDGMENT" ("A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags," line 86, hereafter cited as "RJ").

The problem presented in the poem is one of naming and recognition—an apt concern for a poem under the heading "Poems on the Naming of Places." Difficulties begin when the party considers the man as out of place. He is not in his proper place, the fields, but rather in a place of leisure, a place to be uniquely occupied by the narrator and his friends. It is their privilege to meander through the landscape and comment on what it brings forth:

And there myself and two beloved Friends
One calm September morning, or the mist
Had altogether yielded to the sun
Sauntered on this retired and difficult way
—I'll suits the road with one in haste; but we
Played with our time; and, as we strolled along
It was our occupation to observe
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore—
("RJ," lines 6-15)

Consequently, upon seeing the man, the party exclaims that he is "Im provident and reckless." The proclamation is meant to put the man in his proper place. Not only is it a social expectation that the man's place is in the field, but also it is a demand made by the typical narrative of a landscape poem. As a standard for picturesque poetry, William Cowper's The Task keeps the swain and the harvester at a distance. Gary Harrison explains this dynamic as a figuring of social power relations: "In Cowper's rural scenes, for example, the agricultural laborers appear as mere objects among a variety of other objects presented to keep the spectator's eye, always grounded in its supervisory power; sweeping across the scene . . . special distance supplies the buffer necessary for the spectator's repose. The spectator does not engage in a direct face-to-face encounter with the laborer" (Harrison 1994, 65). The laborers in the field meet the pastoral ideal, in contrast to this man's pastoral idleness, which by right belongs to the narrator and his party.

Of course, all this changes once the narrator sees the man up close and realizes that the "Man worn down / By sickness" is "using his best skill to gain / A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake / That knew not of his wants" ("RJ," lines 58-59, 64-66). Realizing his mistake, the narrator repents in the final fifteen lines of the poem where he names the place "RASH-JUDGEMENT." The narrator's second naming—this time of the place rather than the man—is an attempt to make amends and again set things in their proper place. The power over the place and the man still resides with the narrator who asserts his right to name. Readers never know the man's name. Rather, the place is named by the narrator for what he experiences there. The substantial nature of the event is marked by giving the place name all capital letters. Yet Wordsworth remained uneasy about the name he had bestowed upon the place and event, the entity/occasion. The solidity of a name that grounds the narrator's experience undergoes changes from RASH-JUDGMENT in 1800 to RAH-JUDGMENT in 1820 to RAH JUDG-
MENT then RASH JUDGMENT in errata of 1827 (Wordsworth 1983, 250).

"A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags" ("Point Rash Judgment") appears to be about social relations and identity within the community. Yet, as with "The Cumberland Beggars," there are series of non-human connections that provide a more elaborate context and meaning for the poem. The poet's inability to identify the man and create a proper place for him through naming can be extended to the other elements of nature discovered by the party. The task for the poet is to observe, place, and name all he encounters. When the party first saunters on its way "It was our occupation to observe / Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore" ("RJ," lines 12–13, emphasis added). Then, seeing some beautiful plants along the shoreline, the party places the flowers, weeds, and sundry plants according to their whim:

\[
\text{to point out, perchance}
\]
\[
\text{To pluck, some flower or water-weed too fair}
\]
\[
\text{Either to be divided from the place}
\]
\[
\text{On which it grew, or to be left alone}
\]

("RJ," lines 28–31, emphasis added)

The power over nature, to pluck or leave the plants alive, is in the hands of the party. Finally, the plants are named and placed within a taxonomy so that they can be compared. The "queen Osmunda" found by the lake is more lovely than the Naiad in Greece or the Lady of the Meres. Despite these efforts by the narrator to fix objects according to description and name, their constitution and identity evade him.

Consider the pile of fragments by the shore that the party initially observes. It contains "Feather, or leaf, or weed, or withered bough" ("RJ," line 14). In this line there is no "and" to bring together the objects in a pile. Rather, the "or" functions to obscure the identity of any object. Is it a feather or a leaf? A weed or a bough? These elements remain stubbornly difficult to name since they no longer remain in their "proper" place: the feather is not on the bird, the leaf is not on the tree, and so on. Different from the Romantic project of creating a metaphor that brings together in unity disparate things in nature, the heap with its amorphous form and particles of improper content is an emblem of difference. This is not the Wordsworth who connects the owl and boy and mountains by a hooting sound in "There was a Boy." Nor is it the Wordsworth of the boat-stealing scene of The Prelude where the boy finds a resonance with the boat and water and mountain. In "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags" there is no bird singing or leaves rustling in the wind to show the unity of nature. Rather than a metonymy by which the feather substitutes for bird, the heap is a set of objects that will not congeal, a Romantic trash pile rather than a Romantic grab bag of stock images.

The same undifferentiation of objects occurs with the tuft "of dandelion seed or thistle's beard" that skims along the lake a few lines later ("RJ," line 18). Again the conjunctive "or" plays its role of marking difference. The tuft is not a dandelion seed or a thistle's beard. As is feather and leaf, the seed/beard is not attached to its "proper" place—a dandelion or thistle. This improperly placed object is not only disembodied but also very scarcely embodied at all; it is a "tuft," a light and almost invisible material. The tuft's amorphous quality is furthered by its name "dandelion" and "thistle's beard" which themselves are humorously derived from other objects. Disembodied, amorphous, and nearly invisible, the tuft floats out of the narrator's reach. The pile and tuft bear witness to the problem of locating any proper place or adequate name for objects in the landscape.

The slippage of names and places in the poem sets up vector relations or what Hartman calls a "trafficking of forms" between objects. The meandering tuft shares qualities with the narrator and his friends who "Saunter'd" and "Play'd with our time." "[N]ow here, now there, / In all its sportive wanderings all the while / Making report" could just as easily be said of the narrator and company as of a tuft. The feathery seed even skims along the shore in much the same way as the party walks along the coast. Of course, the tuft is also like the worn-down man whom the narrator encounters. Both are near the edge of the lake, the tuft being "Close to the surface of the lake" and the man "Angling beside the margin of the lake." The tuft moves "Along the dead calm lake" and the man angles in "the dead unfeeling lake." The description "seeming lifeless half, and half impell'd" by some internal feeling" fits both the tuft and the man who is so weak that he appears half living and half dead.

The September morning is not all beauty and cheer, as the gay party would have it. While the mood of the sauntering group best befits summer, the workers' songs from the field signal fall and the coming of winter. The joy of the party should be tempered, and it is the ill peasant who establishes the melancholy appropriate to the season. According to Wordsworth, the man's torso seems disembodied from his legs, as if the legs could not hold him. The inability to integrate parts to make a satisfying whole has been a problem throughout the poem—as evident in the heap by the lake and the tuft. While the man himself may be worn down,
there is also a wearing down of language as names seem to slip away from the things they are meant to describe.

Perhaps what is most disturbing to the narrator about the man's body is that it does not match his own. The man's legs seem useless, while the narrator's legs have been busy walking through the fields. The gaunt face of the man serves as a stark contrast to the ideal games of the party. The organs of the man do not signal health and self-reliance. Rather, the man needs the world around him in a way that the narrator can never know. It is such weariness and deprivation that transforms the leech gatherer into a sea beast and a stream. Likewise, the beggar changes through his palsied hand and roving eyes. The man's vulnerability and dependency force him to cast off the social expectation that he should work in the field. It is not clear what new world the man has fashioned by his need for his unfeeling environment. Wordsworth never tells the reader but rather goes on to rename the space. Nevertheless, the connection between the tuft and the peasant as both half-animate suggests porous boundaries between the man and his surroundings.

Each of the encounters explored in this chapter has caused the narrative to swerve from an anticipated end and opened up new possible directions for interaction. The encounters work as events—in the Whiteheadian and Deleuzean sense—as that which establishes new sets of relations, new apprehensions and assemblages. Because encounters with their emergent vector connections are not simply for human ends, much of what is read as Wordsworth's poetry of social criticism is, prior to its social concerns, a problem of what it means to be human within a landscape. Harrison has dedicated his book *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse* (1994) to the social criticism presented by wanderers in Wordsworth's poetry. The vagrant provides an unforeseeable opportunity, an unpredictable event, for reconfiguration of relations. For Harrison, those redrawn connections are human and social. In his own reading of "Rash Judgment," Harrison explains:

> These moments of encounter between the spectator and the spectral vagrants, however, also open a space outside the structure and the boundaries of discursive time, a moment in which the vulnerability of the subject and the arbitrariness of the relations of production suggest the possibility to escape the conventional relations of power; hence, the encounter offers at least a transitory glimpse at a utopian horizon. (1994, 76)

Harrison characterizes the outside space as a "utopian horizon." In doing so his work can be set in dialogue with the utopia discourse analyzed by Louise Marin in *Utopiques* (1975) and Michael Wiley's application of Marin's work in *Romantic Geography* (1998). Vector relations are another means of characterizing the escape from current power relations. Like utopian criticism, the interplay of elements in vector relations establishes a line of flight to an outside. Yet utopian discourse remains a horizon outside the reach of the poem. Utopia suggests an alternative, imaginative transcendental operator for society, another symbolic realm by which to reorient social relations.

By contrast, vector relations are already at play within the poem. Their movement is not motivated by a horizon but rather works from within the immanent set of assembled human and nonhuman elements. These elements within the land simply need to be invoked through an event, an encounter. Harrison hopes to uncover a leveling of social relations between vagrant and narrator: "The spectator becomes subject to the gaze of the Other. Thus reversing the status of spectator and pauper, Wordsworth's liminal poetry places the privileged subjectivity and social status of the spectator into question" (1994, 23). In a more radical sense, what is being called into question is not simply social relations but also what it means to be human. In vector relations, the human remains an unstable term as it exchanges characteristics with the surroundings.

A "trafficking of forms" or vector relations unravel objects and their self-contained identities. What drives such connectedness is the possibility of internal difference within the apparent cohering unity of any object. The unraveling of an internal difference in the thing is sparked by an event or by the surrounding environment. As Wordsworth "sees into the life of things" he observes some inner quality of the thing distend itself and attach to objects elsewhere. So the half-alive state of the man leads him to be more like a wandering tuft; the palsied hand of the Cumberland beggar drives him toward a bird-like existence as a pecking machine that wanders and stumbles across the landscape; ages of leech gathering have made an old man into a sea beast. What elements in an object will unravel and where the series of relations will lead is hard to determine beforehand. It is not that the leech gatherer is a sea beast; nor is the beggar a bird. Bird and sea beast are themselves no more stable than humans. What vector relations allow for that metaphor does not is an open series of connections and new configurations of identity.

As has been pointed out, Wordsworth is not always comfortable with the vagrant trafficking of forms that he sets loose in his poetry. Nevertheless, the poet known for a sublime egotism also bears witness to identity as a semistable state that may undergo radical changes. Such changes
go far beyond Wordsworth's early faith in the French Revolution and the liberation of a universal brotherhood of man. Governments prescribe social and economic relationships for their citizens. Intermingling forms serve as a mode of disrupting the state's ability to make laws that apply to citizens and property. Basic functional units such as laborer, productivity, and proper place are displaced by contingent series of interrelations.

Wordsworth's poetry considers the possibility of stepping away from society and connecting with nature in a way that redefines what it means to be human. In fact, Wordsworth's characters most closely aligned to nature are dysfunctional humans. Their dysfunction is only evident if measured by a social norm of human health. Their illness, weakness, or vulnerability provides a means of connecting with the nonhuman and of becoming part of nature. Organs that do not function properly—the palisied hand of the Cumberland beggar, the bent back of the leech gatherer, or the shriveled legs of the peasant fishing—act as aleatory points to initiate new relations outside of the social and the human. Green Romanticism has yet to come to terms with such a rethinking of humanity. In many readings of Wordsworth's "greenness," humanity remains the focal point around which nature as environment is defined. In such readings humans remain the active consciousness that helps nature to think itself, as if nature could not do this on its own. In this and earlier chapters a series of terms—distributed cognition, materiality of thought, and trafficking of forms—have been deployed to create an alternative to such ecocriticism. It is not the internal coherence of humanities that matters but rather the possibility of self-difference that provides a means of thinking and relating to nature.

"The Discharged Soldier" presents yet another ill and wandering figure who disturbs the peaceful mind of the poem's narrator. Much like "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags," the poem begins with the Wordsworthian narrator contended with his surroundings. Walking alone at night amid the "deeper quietness" that comes with solitude, the narrator is "disposed to sympathy" and begins "drinking in" the harmony of nature around him. As with the wandering party that is surprised by the fishing peasant and further surprised by their misjudgment of him, a similar fate awaits the peaceful traveler: "Itchanced a sudden turning of the road / Presented to my view an uncouth shape" (lines 37–38). The uncouth shape is, of course, the discharged soldier.

Wordsworth provides a description of the man's lean, tall body that is reminiscent of the peasant from "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags" ("Point Rash Judgment"): You might almost think
That his bones were wounded. His legs were long,
So long and shapeless that I looked at them
Forgetful of the body they sustained.
His arms were long and lean; his hands were bare;
[His visage, wasted though it seemed was large
In feature, his cheeks sunken, and his mouth]
Shewed ghastly in the moonlight.[]
("This Discharged Soldier, lines 44–51.
hereafter cited as "DS")

The similarity between the soldier and the peasant is not mere coincidence. Beth Darlington provides an explanation in her study of the history and composition of "The Discharged Soldier" (Darlington 1970, 425–48). The poem was written some time after January 27, 1798. Its description of the wet road, the shimmering moon, and the dark blue vaulted sky all draw from Dorothy's January 27 journal entry of their late night walk of January 25. The poem's position prior to a version of "The Ruined Cottage" in Wordsworth's Alfoxden Notebook provides a terminal composition date of March 5, 1798, when the later poem was copied into the notebook. Two years later, in October 1800, Wordsworth wrote "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags." To describe the gaunt and physically ravished peasant, Wordsworth borrowed directly from "The Discharged Soldier." The peasant's legs, like the soldier's, are said to be "So long and shapeless that I looked at them / Forgetful of the body they sustained." As Wordsworth considered placing "The Discharged Soldier" in the 1800 edition of Lyrical Ballads, he struck out mention of the soldier's legs so as not to repeat the lines he had transferred to "A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags." While ultimately he decided against publishing "The Discharged Soldier" in the 1800 edition, he returned to his draft several years later. In the spring of 1804 Wordsworth cut out significant gothic moments in the poem in order to incorporate the soldier's story into book 4 of The Prelude (1797, 426–29).

The heart of the poem is the narrator's ability to bring a wayward soldier out from the desolation of the roadside into the hospitality of a local village. This basic story remains the same in both the 1798 and The Prelude versions. The poem begins with Wordsworth announcing, "I love to walk / Along the public way" ("DS," lines 1–2). By this, of course, he means the public roads, but also, as the poem bears out, "the public way" means he wants to lead a life of good citizenship. By finding lodging for the wandering soldier, Wordsworth leads the man into a path like
his own, into a public way of being. By the poem’s end the narrator proclaims that the man giving the lodging is “my friend” and the soldier “my comrade.” All are brought together under the banner of filial kindness.

Despite the happy ending, the middle section of the poem finds Wordsworth as narrator disturbed by the soldier’s lack of desire to walk. He is distraught because the man does not come out from the shadows and bare himself to the public. “Along the public way.” The soldier is not part of the human community. The social message is clear. The soldier who once gave himself for the good of the government and its citizens is now discharged not only from service in the army but also from any sense of place in the society he worked to maintain. His very body bears witness to his service and to society’s negligence. Yet, despite his apparent need, the soldier will not move. The man “remained / Fixed to his place,” propped up by a milestone. In his fixity amid the shadows, the man is “cut off / From all his kind, and more than half detached / From his own nature” (“DS,” lines 76–77, 57–59). A peculiar line reveals the speaker’s frustration; the narrator simply exclaims, “I wished to see him move” (“DS,” line 76). Perhaps the desire to see the man move is simply to confirm that the soldier is in fact alive and capable of being revived with the help of the narrator.

With a ghastly look, lean body, and murmuring voice, the shadowy figure appears to be not quite living. The ponderous half-alive state of the man is much like that of the fishing peasant from the “Poems on the Naming of Places.” Like the peasant, the soldier is not simply discharged from his labors; he is outside the community that is constituted by labor and serviceability. Wordsworth’s use of the words “cut off” and “half detached” to describe social isolation follow the physical description of the soldier, whose long and shapeless legs look as though they are “forgetful of the body they sustained.” His very physical body is cut off from itself in such a way that it bears forth a disconnection from the social body. If the man’s legs will not carry his body, then certainly he cannot love to walk on “the public way.” Wordsworth as narrator is frightened by this spectacle of a fragmented human form. It produces a “sense / Of fear and sorrow.” In a desperate attempt to make the soldier’s body more human, the speaker proclaims, “I think / If but a glove had dangled in his hand / It would have made him more akin to man” (“DS,” lines 64–65). Why a glove would make him human and why the glove should be dangling rather than fitting properly on the hand is rather curious. The hand, of course, the most human element of humans, the appendage with opposable thumb used for distinctively human toolmak-

ing. A glove as a piece of clothing serves as a sign of being a part of the human social fabric. The speaker’s wish that the glove should “dangle” is odd and perhaps is meant as a way of hiding the distorted look of the soldier’s body: “his arms were long and lean; his hands were bare.” The narrator seems frightened by the seeming inhumanity of the man.

The soldier’s inhuman quality is furthered by his murmuring. A distinctive murmuring is mentioned five times in the poem. It first appears early in the poem to describe a brook the poet hears in his solitary rambles. Then twice within a space of ten lines the soldier is said to be producing a ghostly murmuring. This is in contrast to the fourth instance of the word. After describing the man’s murmurs, Wordsworth introduces the laborer whom he intends to awaken in order to give the soldier lodging. This laborer is said to be “an honest man and kind; / He will not murmur should we break his rest” (“DS,” lines 111–12). So, unlike the soldier, the laborer proves to be a good member of the social body, as is evident in his ability to work and his social sensibility as one who provides food and lodging. A shorthand for his social goodness is that “he will not murmur.”

The murmuring of the soldier is a sign of his inhumaness. Eventually, once the narrator actually engages with the soldier, the man is found to have an articulate voice that is mild and uncomplaining. However, prior to their conversation, the murmuring works much like the fragmented body. Murmurs are almost language but indecipherable. They are the threat that noise as a breakdown of information will prove superior to language as the transfer of information (Serres 1995, 8). Murmuring is the voice of the inhuman that issues from “his mouth [which] / Shewed ghastly in the moonlight” (bracketed addition is mine). In “The Discharged Soldier,” brooks murmur, laborers do not. The murmuring man and murmuring brook exchange properties in a trafficking of forms. The discharged soldier’s murmuring functions much like attributes of the leech gatherer, which make both wanderers more akin to nature than to man. Detached from the human and serving as an animated element of nature, the soldier disturbs the narrator’s peaceful walk and sympathy with the natural world. In the soldier, nature has a body and voice that do not submit to Wordsworth’s harmonious unification of trees, valley, cliff, sea, sky, and stars that the narrator is “drinking in” at the opening of the poem.

The vagrant’s inhumaness only furthers the narrator’s own possibility of losing a connection with society. As the poem opens, Wordsworth walks in solitude. His solitary wanderings produce a unique relationship
to nearby elements in nature. They become “passing forms” that he
passes in his walks and that pass through him as “My body from the
stillness drink[s] in.” The double passing creates

A consciousness of animal delight
A self-possession felt in every pause
And every gentle movement of my frame.

(“DS,” lines 53–55)

In this moment of animal delight, of pleasure in his body mingling with
other elements in nature, the narrator encounters the discharged soldier.
The soldier acts as a threatening double of the narrator. What concerns
the narrator is that in his solitude he could wander off the public way.
He might leave the path of his social self to follow his animal delight,
which is bound with “near objects” in the surrounding environment.
Indeed, a trafficking of forms would “cut off” the narrator as it has the
soldier, and he might find himself “half detached / From his own [human]
nature” (bracketed addition is mine). Consequently, in response to such
a possible loss of his own humanness, the narrator insists that the soldier
enter society. The speaker’s demand is meant to bring himself back into
the human community and makes the laborer his friend and the soldier
his comrade.

There remains at least one more curious element relevant to the
problem of social humanness in the poem. With no introduction, in the
center of the poem a dog appears

The chained mastiff in his wooden house
Was vexed, and from the village trees
Howled [never ceasing.]

(“DS,” lines 80–83)

The animal is never mentioned again, which leaves the reader to ques-
tion the dog’s role in the poem. Part of the answer comes from texts that
Wordsworth was reading at the time of the poem’s composition. Dor-
othy Wordsworth’s journal entry for January 27, 1798, includes not only
a description of the moon that William borrows for his poem but also a
howling dog that follows just after her description of trees, clouds, and
sky: “The manufacturer’s dog makes a strange, uncouth howl, which it
continues many minutes after there is no noise near it but that of the
brook. It howls at the murmur of the village stream” (Dorothy
Wordsworth 1941, 5). William changes Dorothy’s dog into a mastiff,
which recall’s Coleridge’s barking mastiff in Christabel. In preparation for

the 1800 edition of the Lyrical Ballads, Coleridge’s poem weighed on
Wordsworth’s mind. In both Dorothy’s journal and Coleridge’s poem,
the dog is part of nature, since it is not human, and also part of culture,
since it is domesticated. While Dorothy’s dog howls at the murmuring
brook, Wordsworth’s murmuring brook of line 10 has no such dog. In-
stead, the mastiff appears in line 80, just after the description of the
soldier and his “murmuring sounds” and “murmuring voice of dead com-
plain.” The implication is that the dog barks not because the man is a
stranger but because, like Dorothy’s stream in her journal, he murmurs.
Again, murmuring emerges as a liminal sound between human language
and the natural world. The dog, faithful friend of man, sides against the
soldier and with the citizens of the city. Like Coleridge’s Geraldine, there
is something unnatural about the man. The dog, although some distance
from where the soldier stands, senses it.

As in the other examples from this chapter, the trafficking of forms
that emerge around and through the body of the discharged soldier both
fascinates and horrifies Wordsworth. The gothic elements of the poem
create an aura of supernatural connectedness between objects. What
was a calming moonlight at the beginning of the poem becomes a partic-
ipant in the gothic terror by which “his cheeks [appear] sunken, and his
mouth / Shewed ghastly in the moonlight” (bracketed addition is mine).
Likewise, the peaceful brook and its murmur take on an insidious echo
of the soldier’s unnatural language. Finally, the legs that “love to walk”
must confront the legs that are “forgetful of the body they sustain.” In
1804, when the poem is incorporated into The Prelude, the gothic lan-
guage is left out. These elements are discharged since they do not pro-
vide labor and service to the social theme of the poem. The elaborate
trafficking of forms that Wordsworth set into play in 1800 is eliminated.
Gone are the strange legs of the man, the desire to see a gleve in the sol-
dier’s hand, and the barking mastiff. The deletions turn The Prelude
version of “The Discharged Soldier” into a case study on the social implica-
tions of war. The relationship to nature is glossed over for a story about
Wordsworth bringing a marginal figure back into the folds of humanity
through compassion and neighborliness. The soldier’s final words solid-
ify the case study: “My trust is in God of Heaven / And in the eye of him
that passes me” (“DS,” lines 162–63). The wayward wanderings of a
disjunctive body return to the unity of God and one’s neighbor.

The divine and social designs in “The Discharged Soldier” and the
other poems in this chapter shut down the free play of elements and
open-ended series of connections between humans and nature. The pre-
sentation of subject and objects all at once, pell-mell, before being worked over by habits of reason and taste give way to a divine and social organization. Prior to doing so, before the invocation of a transcendent order, Wordsworth’s poetry comes quite close to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s desire for “the spontaneous organization of things we perceive” (1964, 13). Like the vale of Coniston that refuses mathematical abstraction and neat metaphors of wheel and spokes in Wordsworth’s guidebook, the elaborate trafficking of forms put into play in Wordsworth’s poetry is uneasily resolved by a brief and sudden invocation of a transcendent, divine order.

In the 1800 Preface to the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth explains that the subjects and descriptions of his poems arise from his way of seeing the world around him: “I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject” (1992, 748). As Fredrick Pottle quite convincingly argues in his famous essay “Eye and Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth,” by “subject” Wordsworth does not mean a realistic painting from nature. Rather, he employs imagination to “look steadily” at the world around him. Imagination serves as a faculty for organizing the hapless elements of the world: “at the first level, to make sense out of the undifferentiated manifold of sensations by organizing it into individual objects or things; at the second, and specifically poetic, level, to reshape this world of common perception in the direction of a unity that shall be even more satisfactory and meaningful” (Pottle 1970, 277). Imagination is used as a filtering process by which the confusion of the world, its “undifferentiated manifold of sensations,” is made sensible. However, vector relations call into question the poet’s ability to authoritatively differentiate objects and separate the self from the landscape.

At times Wordsworth seems to favor a disjunctive synthesis of objects, as in his 1824 letter to Walter Savage Landor: “I mean to say that, unless in those passages where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish, and aspirations are raised, I read with something too much like indifference” (Pottle 285). The “lost in each other” quality of poetry raises the possibilities of not just understanding nature from the remove of mapped representations but from active participation. Yet, the whole of the passage from which this quotation is taken tilts in favor of a divine plan: “Even in poetry it is the imaginative only viz., that which is conversant [with], or turns upon infinity, that powerfully affects me — perhaps I ought to explain: I mean to say that, unless in those passages where things are lost in each other, and limits vanish, and aspirations are raised, I read with something too much like indifference” (Pottle 1970,