ROMANTICISM ON "THE LINE?" WORDSWORTH RESPONDS TO RAILWAY EXPANSION IN 1844

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Rain, Steam, and Speed –The Great Western Railway. J.M.W. Turner (1844)

When thinking of the influence of the railway on nineteenth-century British culture, one might remember George Eliot's lines in *Middlemarch* about how "railways were as exciting a topic as the Reform Bill or the imminent horrors of Cholera,"[1] or more likely envision J.M.W Turner's famous watercolor, *Rain, Steam, and Speed –The Great Western Railway*. Turner recalled challenging himself by painting such a repellent image to "show what I can do even with an ugly subject;"[2] many critics regard Turner's art to be "an allegory of the forces of Nature, cast in the form of a landscape."[3] By the mid nineteenth century, notions of landscape were challenged by this manmade machine, whose ability to surpass natural standards of speed and sound ushered society out of the pastoral and into the modern age. It is well known that the

[1] *Middlemarch,* p. 553.
[2] Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner,* pp. 256-57.
[3] John Gage, *Turner: Rain Steam and Speed,* p. 19.

railway evokes anxieties about destiny, despair, and possibility in Victorian literature, but we often forget that the initial expansion of railway lines occurred while at least one major Romantic remained alive, and this one Romantic unsurprisingly had much to say about it.

William Wordsworth began publishing on railways as early as 1837, thirteen years before his death marked the official terminus of the Romantic era. That a Romantic writer felt compelled to comment on railways, and the larger force of industrialization pushing expansion forward, comes as no surprise when we consider how persistent the theme of natural beauty is throughout the Romantic canon. For Wordsworth particularly, railways challenged the survival of rural domesticity, a crucial theme throughout his entire career. Further, his critiques of expansion paralleled mainstream disapprovals from both "landowners, mainly driven by self-interest, whose families had spent large sums on landscaping parks and improving agriculture," and some who "opposed railways through an altruism derived from the Romantic movement and the concept of the picturesque in natural scenery."[4] When Wordsworth published a set of letters in the *Morning Post* between December 11th and 20th, 1844, he attacked the proposed Kendal and Windermere Railway Company on nearly all of these fronts: landowners' rights, the picturesque, and altruism. A dearth of scholarship on his responses exists today, and much of what does exist merely disregards the letters as instances of senility in his later life. I aim to correct the misconception that Wordsworth's resistance to railway expansion was merely symptomatic of his opposition to progress, and also suggest that his motivations for preserving the solitude and rural character of the Lake District were continuations of principles he espoused during his golden years of composition between 1798-1803. Many publications of his time reinforced the narrative of Wordsworth as political turncoat or deserter, providing these responses as one

[4] Gordon Biddle, "Railways, their Builders, and the Environment," p. 120.

example for their case. However, his railway responses actually reveal a deep, defensive sympathy for the poor in England, a theme clearly present in works as early as *Lyrical Ballads*. By rectifying the narrative of his era, I also intend to challenge the common consensus in contemporary circles about Wordsworth as a prickly elitist in later life, which has persisted since those major publications waged war against his railway letters in the 1840s. Debunking myths about his snobbery in response to the railways does not necessarily deny his often pretentious or condescending tone, but I ultimately defend his legacy against those who disparage these pieces as inconsiderate of the industrial poor in early Victorian England. The poetry and prose of 1844 Wordsworth advocate for much of what his 1798 and following poetry does: the preservation of nature for all to ensure moral amelioration for each through community. His work also provides us with at least one important example of a Romantic commentary on a distinctly Victorian problem, and his arguments on intimacy, domesticity, and rural tradition in the face of rising industrialization get taken up and expanded by notable novelists such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Anthony Trollope, and the Brontës. Wordsworth's railway responses thus manage to both extend eighteenth-century conversations on picturesque aesthetics into his contemporary era and also anticipate Victorian debates on domesticity through one major connection: the need to preserve intimacy with both the hearth and homeland.

A Tale of Two Abbeys

Two short poems entitled "At Furness Abbey" appear in the third volume of Wordsworth's *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, and the sonnet of relevance here is listed under the subcategory "Poems of the Imagination." It seems fitting, and perhaps not altogether coincidental, that this poem's title reminds readers of an earlier poem of the imagination, "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," that premiered in the 1798 first edition of the

Lyrical Ballads. While the latter poem needs little introduction, it is worth quoting Duncan Wu's remark that *Lyrical Ballads* "set out the vision of a world in which a life-force could enter into the lives of ordinary people through an enlightened perception of nature, improving them morally, and leading ultimately to a kind of non-violent political and social revolution."[5] This concept of a moralizing life-force, a "spirit that impels/ All thinking things…and rolls through all things" aptly describes at least one major theme of "Tintern Abbey," and Wordsworth adopts this same powerful philosophy as a defense against the railways when writing "At Furness Abbey" in 1843:

> Well have yon Railway Labourers to THIS ground
> Withdrawn for noontide rest. They sit, they walk
> Among the Ruins, but no idle talk
> Is heard; to grave demeanour all are bound;
> And from one voice a Hymn with tuneful sound
> Hallows once more the long-deserted Quire
> And thrills the old sepulchral earth, around.
> Others look up, and with fixed eyes admire
> That wide-spanned arch, wondering how it was raised,
> To keep, so high in air, its strength and grace:
> All seem to feel the spirit of the place,
> And by the general reverence God is praised:
> Profane Despoilers, stand ye not reproved,
> While thus these simple-hearted men are moved?[6]

[5] *Romanticism: An Anthology,* edited by Duncan Wu, p. 334.
[6] *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth,* edited by Ernest de Selincourt, vol. 3, p. 63.

Wordsworth addresses the "Railway Labourers" from a vantage point, watching on as a spectator while "yon" people take in the impressive ruins. The distance between place and person in "Furness" mirrors how his observer views the Wye Valley from above at the beginning of "Tintern Abbey," and distance communicates the sacredness of a space that we should either approach with caution or admire from a distance in both poems. Railway workers are equally calmed and invigorated by the landscape, sitting and walking as if their physical beings are harmonious with their thoughts; one is reminded of the depictions of motion in "Tintern Abbey," and how the impressions of memory bring the body to stasis: "The breath of this corporeal frame/ And even the motion of our human blood/ Almost suspended, we are laid asleep/ In body, and become a living soul:/ While with an eye made quiet by the power/ Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,/ We see into the life of things."[7] Spectators "look up" with "fixed eyes" to admire the archways, which are themselves kept "so high in air" that they appear suspended. These railway workers enter into a mystical moratorium of motion, a hallowed ground where time disappears and even modern industrial workers can wonder how past draftsmen managed to raise the archways. Much like how today we marvel at the Egyptian pyramids despite technological advancements such as cell phones and space travel, the Abbey inspires and even humbles these men who are there to modernize a space which itself feels ahead of its time. Furness retains an ancient "ample power/ To chasten and subdue" (ll. 94-95) just like the "still, sad music of humanity" (l. 93).

The moralistic implications of "Furness Abbey" signal a continuation of, rather than a break with, Wordsworth's earlier sympathies in *Lyrical Ballads.* The poet suggests in "Tintern Abbey" that communion with nature has the power to purify the mind and serve as "the anchor

[7] "Tintern Abbey" in *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth,* edited by Ernest De Selincourt, vol. 2, ll. 44-50, p. 260. All subsequent citations for "Tintern Abbey" will be taken from this volume unless otherwise noted.

of [his] purest thoughts… and soul/ Of all [his] moral being" (ll. 113-115). Many scholars have argued the fair point that Wordsworth's "Tintern" has less to do with religiosity and more to do with spirituality; Hoxie Fairchild boldly asserts that "Wordsworth's religion… between 1787 and 1800… is avowedly anti-Christian."[8] Brian Barbour concedes generally to Fairchild's point, but considers Wordsworth to be intentionally more anti-Enlightenment than anti-Christian whilst writing "Tintern Abbey." For Barbour, "Tintern Abbey" remains "irrefragably a religious poem in which Wordsworth sought to define and defend a realm of the autonomously spiritual – autonomous *contra* Christianity, spiritual *contra* the Enlightenment." [9] "At Furness Abbey" has explicitly religious overtones, with references to God and the actual architecture of the Abbey contrasting the naturalness of its predecessor. "Tintern Abbey" never actually describes the Abbey itself, whereas "Furness" relishes in the manmade arches of a distinctly Christian structure. Wordsworth's focus shifts from landscape to architecture, which may act either as an indication of Wordsworth's stronger doctrinal affiliations in later life or as a commentary on the inevitability of progress. Although Wordsworth denounces the avarice and ignorance of railway expansionists, he remains hopeful that even human creations may facilitate the enlightening exchange between man and God. What matters most is that those structures perpetuate pure pleasure rather than profanity, so that viewers reflect on moral matters instead of "idle talk." Given the confined nature of sonnet form, we receive no validation of *how* this experience will affect the railway workers but can only assume that these men have been "moved" to recognize the tragedy of industrial expansion meriting the destruction of the Abbey. Perhaps what matters most to Wordsworth in this instance is that the respect men show for the scene and "the spirit of the place" elevates them. Nonetheless, a certain kind of redemption, or at least a moral benefit,

[8] *Religious Trends in English Poetry,* vol. 3*,* p. 170.
[9] "'Two Worlds'": The Structure of the Argument in 'Tintern Abbey,'" p. 152.

comes with the acquisition of insight in both cases: in “Tintern Abbey,” while no longer in “the hour/ Of thoughtless youth,” Wordsworth receives “abundant recompense” by connecting with a higher force through nature (l. 92-3, l. 91). Likewise, the “simple-hearted men” of the railway are contrasted with the “Profane Despoilers” of capitalism, and at the very least feel momentary encounters with the spiritual divine. While this fact alone draws a connection between the Abbey poems, the further moral advantage that comes with such a connection makes “Furness Abbey” an almost older sister to the earlier “Tintern Abbey.”

Given the stark contrast in length, what Wordsworth makes explicit in “Tintern Abbey” can only be supposed in certain instances of “Furness Abbey,” but the obvious ethical impact that he describes in his earlier work reverberates in the latter. Towards the end of “Tintern Abbey,” the poet sermonizes a new philosophy of nature that promises virtuousness for its congregation:

> …and this prayer I make,
> Knowing that Nature never did betray
> The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
> Through all the years of this our life, to lead
> From joy to joy: for she can so inform
> The mind that is within us, so impress
> With quietness and beauty, and so feed
> With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
> Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
> Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
> The dreary intercourse of daily life,

> Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
>
> Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
>
> Is full of blessings. (ll. 126-139).

One might believe that the pointed jab, "neither evil tongues,/ Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men" would appear in "Furness" rather than "Tintern," as it echoes the curt "Profane Despoilers" in the sonnet's end couplet. Although the poet never focuses specifically on the Abbey in "Tintern," he communicates a concern for "lofty thoughts" that returns in "Furness." He worries in both about wickedness disturbing the "cheerful faith" of human decency; in "Tintern," this evil manifests as a betrayal against Nature, reappearing in "Furness" as the act of destroying "old sepulchral earth" for profit. The spirit of Wordsworth's moral concerns remains constant through the years, even as the circumstances lead him to shift focus from landscape to architecture. A dichotomy of virtue emerges that connects these two works, with Wordsworth reproaching those who have failed to wholeheartedly love nature. Unlike the sneerers and despoilers, the railway workers exhibit "grave demeanor[s]" that mirror the "quietness" and "sober pleasure" (l. 143) that Wordsworth himself wishes for Dorothy. Nature and silence work in tandem to effectively move these men even as they are stilled, and the importance of tranquility will echo throughout Wordsworth's later attacks against the Kendal and Windermere Company. Both poems revere a connection between humanity and nature, and while the veneration changes from a spiritual to a specifically Christian tone, Wordsworth remains convinced that immersing oneself in nature affords an opportunity to be brought closer to the powers of life, and to be made a better person for it.

Politics of the Picturesque

In order to fully understand Wordsworth's complex response to the Kendal and Windermere Railway Company in the *Morning Post,* one must first consider the politics of the picturesque as a long tradition in eighteenth-century British literature. Wordsworth steeped himself in the English poetic tradition, with a particular appreciation for William Cowper. Cowper's influence on Wordsworth, even in the early years, was key to his developing poetics of nature. Wordsworth writes in 1802 about how Cowper connected his love of "natural objects," particularly "*unsightly and unsmooth*" ones, with "rural sounds" in Book I of *The Task,* which influenced his own practice in "The Idiot Boy.*"*[10] Two years later, Wordsworth read William Hayley's publication, *The Life and Posthumous Writings of William Cowper,* and so greatly admired the poem fragment "Yardley Oak" that he wrote his own version titled "Ewtrees" in 1804. The poem would be completed nearly ten years later, and appear in the 1815 *Poems* as "Yew Trees." Tim Fulford explores the intertextualities between this pair of poems in a convincing chapter of his *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1815-1845,* in which he suggests that Cowper's verse served as an example of distanced reflection–specifically a reflection on the poet's relationship with history amidst rising tensions in national politics. Cowper's verse adopted the oak tree as a distinctly English image of stability and power, which "was a way forward for a writer alienated from both the Jacobinical speech of the common rural people and the anti-Jacobin language of contemporary patriotism… to retrieve his poetic vocation without turning from historical pressures to a historicized and unpoliticized nature."[11] Cowper presented an idealized picture of rural labor that reverberates in Wordsworth's *Home at Grasmere* and *The Excursion,* with both authors promoting gradual relief rather than large scale reform. Cowper

[10] *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* edited by Ernest de Selincourt, p. 296.
[11] *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1815-1845,* p. 31.

places the burden of responsibility on landowners to protect and provide for their tenants, communicating an anxiety about the "collapse of the consensus in which gentlemanly values were seen as legitimate criteria for government."[12] This concern for maintaining the traditional requirements for political participation was not original to Cowper–indeed, he merely refigured earlier depictions of the issue made by seventeenth and eighteenth-century poets. The picturesque tradition originated partly out of the topographical poetry circulating in the eighteenth century by writers such as John Philips and James Thomson, the latter of whom provided an influential new model that replaced couplets with Miltonic blank verse. In his long poem, *The Seasons,* Thomson connects the importance of submitting to authorial nature with the importance of maintaining social order, eventually publishing more poetry that explicitly flattered his patrons. Thus, even though Cowper carried on a longstanding tradition in English verse, his poetry acts as a conduit between the political and poetic discourses of the 1740s and the upcoming generation of picturesque poets in the 1790s whose contributions aimed to legitimize Tory landowners in the midst of political upheaval.

The major picturesque writers of Wordsworth's generation, mainly William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Richard Knight, adopted Thomson and Cowper's politicized landscapes to validate the rights of landowners in varying degrees. The tumultuous upheaval of European politics following the fall of the Bastille in 1789 cut Britain off from the Continent, which resulted in larger domestic travel; this increasing interest in British travel destinations created a demand for travel literature, enabling the rise in tour narratives in the 1790s. Alongside this consumer trend emerged an artistic philosophy known as the *picturesque,* a movement defined by variety, roughness, and intricacy; David Watkin argues in *The English Vision* that these

[12] Tim Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority,* p. 39

qualities became deeply embedded in the English sensibility, serving not only as a way of interpreting but as a mode of sight throughout the Georgian and Victorian eras.[13] In 1794 William Gilpin defined picturesque objects in the first of *Three Essays,* distinguishing "between those [beautiful ones], which please the eye in their *natural state;* and those [picturesque ones], which please from some quality, capable of being *illustrated by painting*."[14] He goes on to distinguish roughness as a critical component of the picturesque, in direct contrast with Burke's appraisal of smoothness, "a quality so essential to beauty, that [he does] not now recollect anything beautiful that is not smooth."[15] Gilpin's philosophy of variety proved problematic when applied to the inevitably political reality of the times; his poetry and travel narratives searched for truly wild scenes of British picturesqueness, but the political implications of identifying liberty within nature posed challenges across both sides of the Parliamentary aisle. Fulford provides a summation of the opposing tensions that waged war within his narratives: "Gilpin's picturesque tours remain torn between sources of authority, making them symptomatic of conflicts Wordsworth first sought to dramatize and then overcome."[16] Wordsworth inherited many of the same anxieties about picturesque politics and authority, particularly when composing his complimentary topographical poems for Lord Lonsdale. Gilpin would avoid reckoning with the picturesque in his later work, instead advocating for a rural paternalism that reinforced the morals of traditional gentlemanly authority.

Gilpin's early attempts at outlining the picturesque movement were decidedly more ambiguous and ambivalent than his later discourses, primarily because he struggled to rectify the

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[13] *The English Vision: The Picturesque in Architecture, Landscape, and Garden Design.*
[14] *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; And on Sketching Landscape: To Which is Added a Poem on Landscape Painting,* 2nd ed., p. 3.
[15] *On the Sublime and Beautiful,* edited by Charles Eliot, p. 98.
[16] *Landscape, Liberty and Authority,* p. 143.

mercantile implications of his consumable landscapes. Similarly, Uvedale Price feared that commerce threatened social order by economically dividing and organizing the landscape. Price held a vested interest in maintaining the status quo of country properties as he was himself a Baronet, and the lingering trend of flattening property gardens, made popular in the mid-eighteenth century by Lancelot "Capability" Brown, directly endangered Price's own legitimacy. Brown's property parks, immensely sought after by the nobility, destroyed farmlands and wilderness as a performance of imposing authority over landscape. These performative acts were intended to serve as examples to tenants that landowners retained power over property, but they also unintentionally challenged the established notion that property inherently bestowed authority upon the nobility. Price responds to the parks problem in his 1791 *Essays on the Picturesque,* writing that Mr. Brown's method of "mechanical common-place operation" destroys "what time only, and a thousand lucky accidents can mature."[17] Even worse, the process of levelling and flattening landscape made uniform the roughness and variety that defined picturesque scenes; when reflecting on Brown's methods in his *Essays,* Price likened his clumps of trees to "so many puddings turned out of one common mould."[18] Industrialization also threatened to make uniform the variety of rural picturesque landscapes with the expansion of homogenous building plans and mechanical resources. Destruction of the picturesque meant destruction of the ability to maintain a prospect view, which extends the Price/Brown aesthetic debate into the political realm by challenging the belief that a disinterested, aesthetic value could legitimize political dominance.

Concerns over the theory of prospect view were not singular to the writings of Uvedale Price, but his ability to perceive landscape and the picturesque as extended constitutional

[17] Price, vol. 1, pp. 31-32.
[18] Ibid., p. 191.

concerns provides an easy way for us to trace Wordsworth's own budding nationalism in the early 1800s. As early as 1688, the issue of "disinterestedness," an early archetype of the later "prospect view," emerged as a legitimate concern following the consolidation of the landed interest. J.H. Plumb writes that the establishment of a patronage system in the early eighteenth century effectively created "a paradise for gentlemen, for the aristocracy of birth."[19] Land owners in the early eighteenth century were widely perceived as gentlemen with standards independent of self-interest, which effectively legitimized their claims to social and political power. Bishop Berkley broadly defined the importance that disinterestedness, or distanced perspective (prospect view), held in politics in 1712: "If we have a mind to take a fair prospect of the order and general well-being which the inflexible laws of nature and morality derive on the world, we must, if I may say so, go out of it, and imagine ourselves of be distant spectators of all that is transacted and contained in it."[20] Landowners were *de facto* politicians because their chivalry theoretically prevented misguided ambitions over money or power, and Price considered that principle to be pivotal to the balance of freedom as dictated in the English Constitution. Furthermore, the picturesque aesthetic mediated the unbridled freedom of wilderness and the opposing restriction of French gardening, embodying that "restrained liberty" legitimized in the Constitution. Price bridges mid and late eighteenth-century political discourses, and by the rise of the French Revolution his work mirrors Edmund Burke's by identifying "the importance of local traditions and familiar institutions as means by which the power inherited by landowners could be made visible as a paternal authority."[21] Attempting to identify nature as a source of liberty was and remains a messy endeavor, and picturesque narratives added to the mayhem by

[19] *The Growth of Political Stability in England 1675-1725,* p. 187.
[20] *Passive Obedience* in *The Works of George Berkley, Bishop of Cloyne,* ed. T.E. Jessop, p. 33.
[21] Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority,* p. 121.

challenging notions of authority. Jacobins argued that the rough, disorganized character of picturesque scenes represented the natural disorder of freedom, making any attempts to enforce a hierarchy of authority artificial and thus destructible. For radicals, the need for landowners to have their authority validated in picturesque literature directly undermined and discredited the assertion that paternal authority was inherent. Tories rebutted by claiming that the disinterested or distanced view critical to picturesque landscapes legitimized the landowners' gentlemanly disinterested in being above political sway; their elevated status enabled them to look down (metaphorically but also literally) upon issues of state with rationality and perspective, just like tourists observing a picturesque view from afar. For Tories, the nobility was supposedly above politics, which coincided with the prospect view in picturesque aesthetics. The ability to see landscapes with a prospect view metaphorically symbolized the "long view" practiced by Tory politicians, which came in direct contrast with the immediate, sweeping vision of change held by revolutionaries at the end of the century.

As the legitimacy of the landed interest was challenged by both laborers and superiors, so too were those morals of manner and taste that defined a new, nineteenth-century Britain. Connecting the politics of disinterestedness with the picturesque allowed Price to show that leisurely change, rather than Jacobin upheaval, should occur as naturally as the changing of the seasons. Price's picturesque ultimately informed later politics of gradualism that Wordsworth adopted: a philosophy of steady polishing and pruning rather than the levelling of both natural and national institutions. Charles Watkins and Ben Cowell do much in their groundbreaking work *Uvedale Price: Decoding the Picturesque,* the first biography of Price, to expand on the associations between Price and Wordsworth. Wordsworth actually visited Price's property,

Foxley, multiple times and found it at first lacking in "variety" and humanity."[22] However, the two became close correspondents and, as Carl Griffin writes, "Wordsworth [became] an admirer of Price's original thinking."[23] The picturesque tradition in the late eighteenth century was thus both an extension of rational Enlightenment thought and tradition, *and* a response to Revolutionary radicalism. Those who dared to publish theories or poetry on the picturesque were often chastised by both Parliamentary sides, but generally the picturesque aesthetic defended the culture of taste that legitimized the country gentry as political patrons of Great Britain. Wordsworth himself expresses similar concerns over aesthetics, taste, disinterestedness, and the preservation of power in his multiple letters to the *Morning Post* nearly thirty years later, in no small part influenced by this aesthetic debate and its political implications.[24]

Grounded in Gradualism

Thus far I have highlighted multiple issues that were entangled with the picturesque in the early years of the Revolution, in part to intimate the complex nature of Wordsworth's response to the railway and industrial expansion. Gilpin's picturesque promoted a "Gilpinian" gradualism that Wordsworth adopted. Indeed I argue that Wordsworth's gradualist politics predate the "political turn" that most scholarly narratives provide: indications of his gradualism

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[22] p. 166.
[23] "Review of Charles Watkins and Ben Cowell, *Uvedale Price: Decoding the Picturesque,*" p. 164.
[24] While I limit my background study to the works of Gilpin and Price, it is worth noting that there were two other major contributors to the picturesque aesthetic: Richard Knight and Humphry Repton. The former perhaps holds more significance in my scholarly focus as he published a picturesque poem, *The Landscape,* in 1794 that adopted a Popean playfulness with polished couplets. Fulford writes that "Knights attempt to portray the landscape in the playful verse-style established by Pope indicates the distance of his picturesque from Price and from Wordsworth, for both of whom the representation of the rural scene… was a *morally earnest* affair (my emphasis, p. 131). Humphry Repton provides another, more striking foil to the works of Gilpin and Price, as he worked essentially beneath Lancelot Brown; this incentivized his own work to be more commercially than artistically intended, and his approach often involved portraying the rural poor as a threat to which "landscape aesthetics are harnessed to a scheme for the control and reform of the poor" (Fulford again, p. 139). In this way Repton's picturesque diverges from a Wordsworthian poetics of poverty, but both men faced divided allegiances between their own political platforms and means of income from 1812 onwards. For further reading on Richard Knight, see Frank J. Messman, *Richard Payne Knight: The Twilight of Virtuosity.* For further reading on Repton see *Humphrey Repton, Landscape Gardener* and "Humphrey Repton and the Morality of Landscape," both by Stephen Daniels.

and rural nationalism may be observed, for example, in sections of *Home at Grasmere* and even the *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty 1802-3*.[25] One obvious example of this commitment to gradualism may be noted in his friendship with Thomas Clarkson, and its subsequent disintegration following the poet's scandalous involvement in the 1818 elections of Westmorland. The extensive friendship between the Clarksons and Wordsworths involved not just William and Thomas, but also Dorothy and Thomas's wife, Catherine: the pair of women would continue to exchange intimate letters until Dorothy's death in 1855. The fracturing of William and Thomas's confidence began roughly around 1818, when Clarkson provided a letter supporting the Whiggish Henry Brougham to William Crackanthorpe, a cousin of the Wordsworths. Crackanthorpe commented to Dorothy that this letter would be "worth a host of votes," and upon reading it Dorothy conceded that such "a beautiful –a delightful letter" would unquestionably invigorate the Whig campaign: "They never *had* such a Feather in their caps before and never will have again."[26]

Wordsworth took personal offense from this display of support, as he endorsed the opposing candidates, Lord Lonsdale's two sons of Lowther, and remained "ardently active in… counsels and in oral solicitation for the cause."[27] Echoing the divided alliances that Price faced, Wordsworth ultimately turned on Clarkson, believing the election to be not only a matter of local interest but indeed a threat to the nation's identity. He wrote to Lord Lonsdale in the same year that "it is my honest opinion that well-intentioned Enthusiasts, (like my Friend Mr C.) with much talent and little discernment, are of all men living the persons who are most likely to do mischief

[25] I discuss this matter more fully in a chapter of my undergraduate honors thesis, "Wordsworth's British Empire: Property, Liberty, and the Slave Questions," published through the College of William & Mary via WM ScholarWorks.
[26] *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years,* edited by Ernest De Selincourt, p. 811, p. 815.
[27] John Edwin Wells, "Wordsworth and de Quincey in Westmorland Politics, 1818," p. 1083.

when they meddle with legislation or Politics."[28] This is a far cry from Wordsworth's 1807 sonnet dedicated to Clarkson, within which he praises the "fervent prime" of Clarkson's political efforts. While I would argue that even this sonnet indicates Wordsworth endorsing the "constant Voice"[29] of gradual change over an extended period of time, his apparent dedication to that cause was visibly exacerbated by the 1818 election as it threatened the legitimacy of landowners and their authority over Britain's moral code. Wordsworth himself argued that the Lowthers' political power was "the natural and reasonable consequence of a long continued possession of large property," and that such property defended the rights of smaller gentry and patriots alike: a symbol for all the virtues of the "mellowed feudality of England."[30] Price's politics of disinterestedness are present here in fewer words, and though Wallace Douglas concedes that "the *mystique* of feudalism was perhaps being destroyed… [Wordsworth] was fighting a straw man."[31]

Six years later, Clarkson would appeal to Wordsworth during a period of fierce opposition to slavery in Britain, attempting to enlist Wordsworth for the task of circulating anti-slavery papers in the Lake District. On March 20, 1824, Wordsworth responded with a chilly rebuff, assuring Clarkson that "nobody at Ambleside appeared in the least interested in the Question; and really, anxiously as I desire to see the condition of the Negroes improved, and slavery abolished, I feel the Question involved in so many difficulties, that I am inclined to leave it to the discretion of Government."[32] Wordsworth's mistrust of those "entire and immediate"[33]

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[28] *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years, Vol. 2,* edited by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill, p. 432.
[29] *Poems in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807,* edited by Jared Curtis, p. 247.
[30] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth,* edited by Alexander B. Grossart, pp. 235, 239.
[31] "Wordsworth in Politics: The Westmorland Election of 1818," p. 446.
[32] Letter printed in Ronald Tetreault's "Wordsworth on Enthusiasm: A New Letter to Thomas Clarkson on the Slavery Question," p. 54.
[33] Letter to Benjamin Dockray, *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, Vol. 2,* p. 648.

attempts at reform, explicated continuously in his correspondences and compositions leading up to the 1833 Reform Act, remained rooted in his Revolutionary disillusionment. A picturesque revolution of aesthetics arose simultaneously, apportioning more power and legitimacy to the lower ranks of society. The rise of tourist narratives generated larger consumption of British picturesque landscapes by the middle class, which arguably made these tourists even more disinterested than the nobility because of their passing, distanced relationships with the scenery. Conservatives began arguing that tours in pursuit of the picturesque threatened paternal authority as commoners believed themselves to be acquiring immediate taste and culture through travel (thus rendering them qualified to pursue politics if they followed ruling-class logic.) Concerns over protecting the culture of taste associated with the landed gentry perhaps led Wordsworth to begin the 1835 fifth edition of *Guide to the Lakes* with a statement about his intention to "furnish a Guide or Companion for the *Minds* of Persons Of taste, and feeling for Landscape, who might be inclined to explore the District of the Lakes with that degree of attention to which its beauty may fairly lay claim."[34]

Wordsworth's long-running tourist guidebook, colloquially referred to as *Guide to the Lakes,* was far and away the most commercially popular collection he ever produced, yet it receives a comparative dearth of scholarship today. The *Guide* was initially written as an introduction and accompanying text for Rev. Joseph Wilkinson's *Select Views in Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Lancashire,* a text published in 1810 that capitalized on demands for the picturesque. However, Wordsworth's contributions under his name appeared as a separate published work only in 1820, in a collection mainly of verses such as *The River Duddon* and *Vaudracour & Julia.* The popularity of his Lakeland prose warranted upwards of ten new

[34] Edited by Stephen Gill, p. 27.

editions during and after Wordsworth's lifetime, making it "more constantly in demand than any of his poetry" according to Mary Moorman.[35] We can connect Wordsworth's gradualism with picturesque aesthetics *and* locality in at least one major way: Lake Country. Wordsworth's love of his home town pervaded every aspect of his poetical and political philosophies, which he makes clear in his *Guides.* In the 1835 edition, he provides a passage connecting the gradual nature of rural labor with the aesthetic picturesqueness of the land. Wordsworth describes how the mountains and ridges in the Lakes maintain "an ascent of almost regular gradation, from elegance and richness, to their highest point of grandeur and sublimity."[36] The phrase "regular gradation" suggests that the scenic mountain views are pleasurable to viewers because they unfold before us at a slow, comfortable pace. This gradual visual experience contrasts directly with the moment in *The Prelude* when Wordsworth steals a boat and is initially distressed by a "huge Cliff,/ As if with voluntary power instinct,/ Upreared its head" between the poet and "the bound of the horizon."[37] Wordsworth makes a similar distinction between the sublime Swiss Alps and the pictorial Lakes in the *Guide,* suggesting that the lack of gradation in the Alps make them not only lacking in picturesqueness but also national collectiveness: he discredits their colors as being "not often graduated by Nature into soothing harmony, and so ill-suited to the pencil, that though abundance of good subjects may be found there, they are not such as can be deemed *characteristic* of the country."[38] In contrast sit his Lakeland Mountains, a true representation of the stable, gradual, rural character of Englishness. Wordsworth recognized the relationship established between the moderate landscape and its inhabitants, which enabled the survival of both through the centuries. He internalized this relationship and believed it to be the

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[35] *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Later Years 1803-1850,* p. 384.
[36] *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes,* edited by Ernest De Selincourt, p. 25.
[37] *The Major Works,* edited by Stephen Gill, ll. 406-408, l. 406.
[38] *Guide to the Lakes,* p. 103.

way for England to remain united within itself and serve as a moral protector on the global front. Given the vast readership of the *Guides,* Wordsworth's decision to include these arguments in the last edition of his own lifetime signifies his desire for the issue (and his stance on it) to be widely circulated. Jonathan Bate traces Wordsworth's philosophies in the *Guides* as important elements in his railway responses; he perceives Wordsworth's major objection to the railway in 1844 to be "rash" and "large-scale organized Sunday outings," and that mass tourism encouraged by the railway threatened the "sense of the unity of the country as formed by nature."[39] Notably for my purposes, the 1846 edition of the *Guide* includes both letters written to the *Morning Post* in 1844, suggesting that Wordsworth actively considered the expansion of the railway to be a matter of aesthetics. Conversely, we see him contending that artistic aesthetics could be and were in this instance political. Wordsworth's adoption of picturesque jargon when describing the Lakes and their collective national identity in 1835 differs greatly from his tone when attacking the railways for their manipulation of the popular aesthetic trend seven years later; he therefore wasn't necessarily opposed to all aspects of the picturesque but rather the use of picturesque aesthetics as a marketing tactic to exploit the general public. Railway speculators circulated a false narrative about the moral benefits of a picturesque experience, and he aimed to discredit the claim that the Lakes could be fully comprehended in a moment of travel. When considering the nationalistic implications of his *Guide,* we also realize that Wordsworth perceived the destruction of Lakeland as a threat to the political cohesion of England. It is ironic that picturesque aesthetics alienate political factions while also, as John Waters suggests, strengthening "the middle class's relationship to an aesthetic paradigm [where] the emerging class consciousness unifie[s] itself around a shared perception of nature."[40] Nonetheless, the

[39] "The Romantic Lakes: From Wordsworth to Beatrix Potter," pp. 5, 7.
[40] "Topographical Poetry and the Politics of Culture in Ireland, 1772–1820, p. 233, in *Romantic Generations.*

aesthetic viewpoint of the picturesque came to prominence as the formation of a national culture emerged; following the Napoleonic Wars, Wordsworth perceived the issue of preserving nature as integral to preserving national unity, all in the face of rapid industrialization. Nonetheless, his resistance to railway expansion came about as gradually as his poetic dealings with the matter.

At least one poem written in the decade before 1844 suggests that Wordsworth embraced the railway system in its early years. Saeko Yoshikawa writes: "Far from rejecting railways and technological invention, Wordsworth predicted a glorious future for steam power in terms that were, ironically, quickly appropriated by railway promoters to further their own aims." In 1833, Wordsworth had composed a piece entitled "Steamboats, Viaducts and Railways," which seemingly welcomed railways: it was published in the 1837 edition of *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, and he includes it in the second *Morning Post* letter. When quoting his own work in the letter, Wordsworth precedes the sonnet with the claim, "once for all let me declare that it is not against Railways but against the abuse of them that I am contending,"[41] and he provides a reprinting to justify his earlier acknowledgements of the railway system:

> Motions and Means, on sea & land at war
> With old poetic feeling, not for this
> Shall ye, by poets even, be judged amiss!
> Nor shall your presence, howsoe'er it mar
> The loveliness of nature, prove a bar
> To the mind's gaining that prophetic sense
> Of future good, that point of vision, whence
> May be discovered what in soul ye are.

[41] *Prose Works,* edited by W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, p. 355. All subsequent quotes taken from the Letters to the *Morning Post* are cited from this edition unless otherwise noted.

In spite of all that Beauty must disown
In your harsh features, Nature doth embrace
Her lawful offspring in man's Art; and Time,
Pleased with your triumphs o'er his brother Space,
Accepts from your bold hands the proffered crown
Of hope, and welcomes you with cheer sublime. (355)

Many catchwords of the picturesque aesthetic appear, such as "harsh features," "man's Art," "point of vision," etc. Notably, Wordsworth's insinuation that the railways are disowned by "Beauty" because of their "harsh features" directly relates to Gilpin's assertion that picturesque objects differ from beautiful ones in their ruggedness. The moral element of "Furness Abbey" returns, with natural loveliness again providing "future good" and the ability to see the "soul" through vision. Even in this moment, gradualism creates a certain space between present and future that embodies the prospect view/long view metaphor previously mentioned, so that Wordsworth sees gradual progress at a distance, similarly to how noblemen perceive politics and landscape with a "disinterested" perspective. Technology threatens a distanced prospect, rapidly shortening travel times and triumphing over "Time's… brother, Space." Wordsworth only manages to rectify this tension by portraying the train as Nature's "lawful offspring in man's art," which again echoes Gilpin's argument that for something to be picturesque, it must be *mediated* through art rather than simply observed. Both the words "Beauty" and "sublime" suggest that this sonnet may be a meta-commentary on those Burkean aesthetics that Gilpin and Price reckoned with; although the word "picturesque" does not appear, the "loveliness of nature" serves as an adequate placeholder for the sentiment of the phrase itself. One important distinction from the picturesque that Wordsworth makes is with the word "motions" so that we are no longer

focused on pictorial scenery visible within a still frame. The point of view from a train window approaches that of film: a moving picture. But Wordsworth resists an outright commendation through conditional speculation: the railways have the *possibility* of proving themselves beneficial, so that forthcoming generations may "[discover] what in soul ye are."

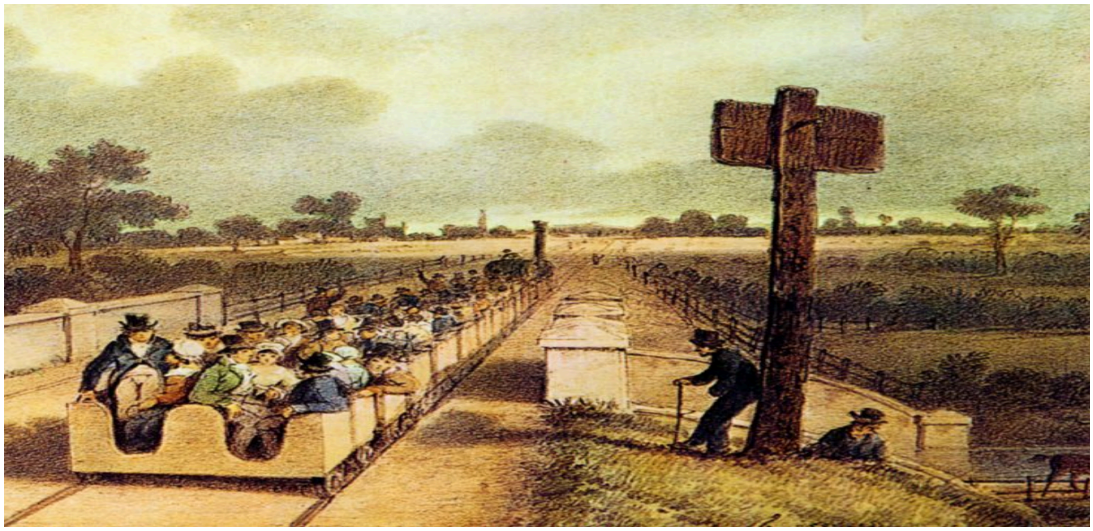
Even Wordsworth's best, albeit backhanded, attempt at complimenting industrialization maintains gradualism, which is further enforced by the grammatical elements of the sonnet. He employs the continuous future tense rather than simple future tense in the octave with the usage of "be" in lines three and eight, which suspends or stretches the moment when history reveals railways to be beneficial. This grammatical move closes the octave, codifying the gradual progress that Wordsworth hopes to see happen with British industrialization. However, the volta shows a steady transition from future continuous to an eventual present tense, mediated by a compound verb form in lines nine and ten ("must disown," "doth embrace"). It is only in the twelfth line that we reach a certain and stable present, and feel convinced that space "welcomes you with cheer sublime."

Wordsworth performs his gradualist politics through poetics here perhaps as a way of convincing *himself* that the railway system won't ravage his ambiguous "old poetic feeling." His choice of a Shakespearean sonnet structure allows for more space to develop the "problem" of progress in the sestet, again performing that same gradualism which he advocates for. In a letter to Alexander Dyce in April of 1833, Wordsworth wrote famously about "that pervading sense of intense Unity in which the excellence of the Sonnet has always seemed… mainly to consist," and how, "instead of looking at this composition as a piece of architecture, making a whole out of three parts, [he has] much been in the habit of preferring the image of an orbicular body, –a

sphere –or a dew-drop."[42] His focus on unity predictably occurs in the year that the passage of the Reform Act splintered British opinion into two antagonistic sides, and this perception of the sonnet as a unifying form resonates with a similar inclusivity apparent in "Steamboats, Railways, and Viaducts." Gradualism serves as the only type of reform capable of preserving national unity for Wordsworth, and we can observe the intricate connection of poetical gradualism and thematic unity in this piece. Li-Hsin Hsu concludes that "the initial distrust of mechanic advancement reaches a resolution through several squeaky twists and turns in tone and structure, arriving at a cheerful celebration of speed, motion and progress at the end."[43] It seems fitting that Wordsworth opts for the sonnet's "scanty plot of ground" when responding to a debate centered on the preservation of naturalness, but he notably alters the Shakespearean sestet in a way that preserves the internal conflicts of both poet and poem. The sonnet space here operates as a ground of reckoning, upon and within which he must confront his own anxieties. By the time Wordsworth reprints this piece in the *Morning Post* letter, Britain had reached a point of mania as share prices and speculative interest increased, leading *The Times* to hail the railway as a "triumphant success."[44] It thus comes as no surprise that Wordsworth's anxieties reached a fever pitch when the Lake District faced the threat of railway expansion "triumphing o'er" its space in the midst of a bursting economic bubble.

[42] *The Later Years, Part II,* pp. 604-605.
[43] "The Romance of Transportation in Wordsworth, Emerson, De Quincey, and Dickinson, p. 47.
[44] Quoted in Edward Chancellor, "Bubbles: A Victorian Lesson in Mania," *Financial Times,* April 11, 2010.

The Big Boom Theory: Railway Mania



Inaugural Journey of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. A. B. Clayton (1830)

Francis Mewburn, the solicitor of the Stockton & Darlington Company, wrote in 1845 that "I am alarmed at the number of new lines before Parliament and continuing to be brought forward. *A panic will come.*"[45] Unfortunately for thousands of investors, Mewburn's shrewd observation came too little too late: the 1840s railway bubble was the result of combined Parliamentary, economic, and social miscues occurring since 1835, and a panic inevitably ensued. General Gascoyne coined the phrase "Railway Mania" in 1825, in a letter that described the madness swirling around talks of locomotive power and the mechanizations of modernity.[46] Although we generally think of the railway as a distinctly Victorian innovation, railway-like systems had been in use since the mid-seventeenth century, and the first public railway received assent from King George III in 1801.[47] These early prototypes of the modern-day locomotive relied primarily on literal horse power, and were not intended for passengers (although they occasionally carried them), instead moving predominantly lime, chalk, and agricultural products

[45] Quoted in Jack Simmons, *The Railway in England and Wales: 1830-1914,* p. 39.
[46] *A Merseyside Town in the industrial Revolution,* edited by T.C. Baker and J. Harris, p. 183.
[47] Ernest Carter, *An Historical Geography of the Railways of the British Isles*

betwixt England and the Midlands. The push for a power source requiring less upkeep and providing more speed than literal horse-power continued for nearly thirty years, but ironically emerged almost overnight. Even though Thomas Newcomen and James Watt had each patented their own steam engines in the century before, George Stephenson would be the civil engineer to drastically alter the history of railways with his steam locomotive, the first locomotive to haul passengers on a public railway.

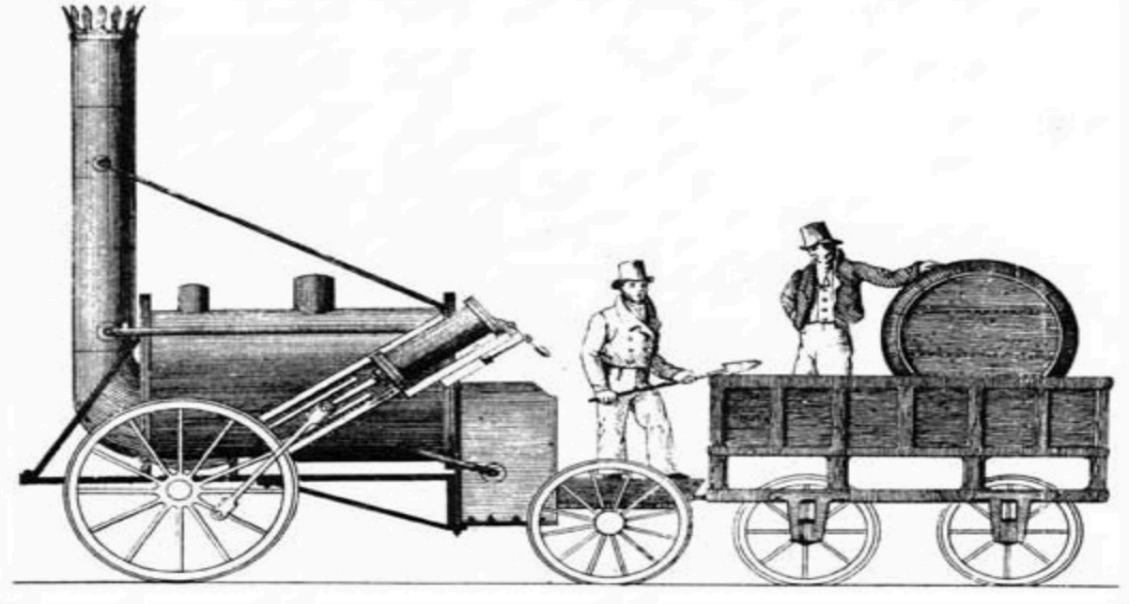
In 1826, Parliament passed the second attempt at a bill promoting the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company to appease growing concern for a line connecting industrial centers Manchester and Liverpool; after searching for three years for an engineering innovation, the Company conducted a public competition intended to secure a source capable of outracing horse power known as the Rainhill Trials in 1829. George Stephenson's locomotive won the competition and he was awarded the contract for the world's first railway engine.[48] *The Times* carried a full report of the trials in an October 12th edition:

> Mr. Stephenson's engine, the Rocket, also exhibited today. Its tender was completely detached from it, and the engine alone shot along the road at the almost incredible rate of 32 miles in the hour. So astonishing was the celerity with which the engine, without its apparatus, darted past the spectators, that it could be compared to nothing but the rapidity with which the swallow darts through the air. Their astonishment was complete, every one exclaiming involuntarily, "The power of steam."[49]

His steam engine renovated weight distribution and introduced a narrow rail gauge that became the standard model for modern trains, later earning him the nickname "Father of the Railways"

[48] Christian Wolmar, *Fire and Steam,* pp. 35-38.
[49] Anonymous, "Trial of Locomotive Carriages."

by historians and scholars. The Liverpool & Manchester Railway formally opened on September 15, 1830, an event which Jack Simmons considers to be the defining moment of nineteenth century modernity. Although the railway was neither the first public, passenger, nor locomotive railway, it was the first large-scale railway intended *primarily* for public passengers, and it linked two great towns of industry. He writes: "We tend to see the Liverpool & Manchester Railway as evolving laboriously, building on the experience of its predecessors; and that is true. But the world at large, which knew very little of those things, became aware of the railway at a single moment of time" (23). For many, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway proved an overnight success, but the resonances of its big boom would be continually felt for the rest of the century.



Stephenson's "Rocket", Mechanics Magazine, October 24, 1829.

A fury of financial activity followed the triumph of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company, initiating between 1836 and 1837 what railway historians now deem the first of multiple Railway Manias in Britain. During this first true frenzy, forty-four new companies were established and approved by Parliament, as compared to the forty-three companies that had been

established in the fifteen years since 1820. Although accurate statistics on railway capital are notoriously hard to track down, Jack Simmons estimates that some £28 millions of expenditures circulated in 1836;[50] Andrew Odlyzko furthers that estimation by expanding the data set to include the entire decade, concluding that capital investments in the 1830s involved real investments comparable to about 2 trillion US dollars today.[51] Just what about railway stock appealed to investors and speculators? Sparing much of the detail, one major element of railway stocks that garnered widespread interest was that many companies issued partially-paid shares, meaning that investors could often obtain assets by paying a small deposit down and paying for the rest of the shares in regular installments.[52] As a result, investors were willing and able to subscribe for shares that they couldn't afford, in the hope of short-term gains.[53] Odlyzko defends initial optimism about the railway market following the 1836 mania, considering its relatively successful return rates, though not as high as the projected 10% yield, profitable given the circumstances. He perceives that "the investment debacle of the Railway Mania of the 1840s arose to a substantial extent because the earlier railway mania of the 1830s was perceived as a success."[54] Many economists look retrospectively at the 1836 mania with reproach, but Odlyzko considers the perceptions as justified because it *was* a financial achievement. However, by the 1840s, railway stock prices continued to soar amidst an ever-growing slew of company proposals and a Parliament that was cautious to impede its own *laissez-faire* economic system. It's a familiar, recurring story: for a short, sweet period of time, those capable of manipulating the system were capitalizing on capitalism.

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[50] *The Railway in England and Wales: 1830-1914.*
[51] "This Time is Different: An Example of a Giant, Wildly Speculative, and Successful Investment Mania."
[52] Gareth Campbell, "Deriving the Railway Mania."
[53] R. C. Michie, "Money, Mania, and Markets: Investment, Company Formation, and the Stock Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Scotland," p. 96.
[54] "This Time," p. 4.

In 1844, the year that Wordsworth wrote his formal arguments against the Kendal and Windermere Railway expansion, the British economy tended to the wounds of a two-year trade depression, and Peel's Parliament tackled reform and the New Poor Law. Simmons puts it best as he wryly concludes that, "given the political system, one's surprise must not be that the British Government did so little to regulate the growth of railways [but] that it did so much."[55] In truth, the government had let the players play their game, and few played it better than George Hudson, the Railway King. Hudson embodied all that Wordsworth and other critics despised about the development of railways: crooked, deceptive, and ambitious, Hudson was responsible for the amalgamation of three minor railways near Birmingham, overseeing the establishment of the Midlands Railway Company in 1844. This venture threatened domination over the vast collection of smaller companies, and many spectators eagerly waited for Parliament to step in and save lower-stakes participants from what R.A Bryer considered to be a swindle on the middle class.[56] However, instead of stepping in to regulate trade, W. E. Gladstone, President to the Board of Trade in 1844, fully encouraged railway expansion privately, and persuaded the Commons to lift Standing Orders requiring investors to deposit 10% of their capital on all stocks. Many economists and historians consider this action to be largely responsible for the wild speculation that followed; by 1845, share prices rose between 71.1 and 98.4% per share as everyone attempted to grab a piece of the action.[57]

During Railway Mania, "thousands of gullible investors were swarming forward, to put money into unsound, even grotesque schemes, and the whole great bubble was growing bigger daily, beyond anybody's power to control."[58] Even Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mill, the Brontë

[55] *Railway in England and Wales,* p. 33.
[56] R.A. Bryer, "Accounting for the 'Railway Mania' of 1845: A Great Railway Swindle?" pp. 439-486.
[57] Campbell, "Deriving the Railway," p. 6.
[58] Simmons, *Railway in England and Wales,* p. 41.

sisters, and William Makepeace Thackeray invested in railway stock, and were each subject to Isambard Kingdom Brunel's prediction that "all the world is mad…some will no doubt have cause to be so before the winter is over."[59] The issue came to a head when *The Times,* a persistent and adamant critic of the railways, ran an exposé written by W.F. Spackman at the peak of investment excitement that accurately showed the total capital in the UK having reached 701 million pounds in 1845, which is the equivalent of seventy-one billion pounds today. These figures stifled anticipation because they revealed that, despite a staggering source of capital, railway lines were still not completed and investors were still not turning a profit. Spackman's analyses intimated that projections for cost had been grossly underestimated, and many investors began to lose hope in their shares returning a profit. Speculators got spooked and prices plummeted as investors rushed to rid themselves of quickly-depreciating stock; largely thanks to Parliament's unwillingness to intercede in Britain's staple capitalistic economy, "many –very many are –by the late strange Railway System deprived almost of their daily bread," according to Charlotte Brontë in 1849.[60] Andrew Odlyzko concludes: "Wordsworth asked in his poem 'Is then no nook of English ground secure from rash assault?' And the resounding answer was, 'Yes, no nook is secure, not when there [are] capitalists willing to build a line there.'"[61]

Letters and Lines

Even though the profit potential for investments generated massive interest during the manias, not everyone in Britain supported the railway system. Wordsworth's criticism of the railway often gets unfairly portrayed as a singular instance of irritability, or even as an attempt to deny the industrial poor the right to Lakeland, but many of his beliefs merely echoed the stances

[59] *Isambard Kingdom Brunel,* edited by L. T. C. Rolt
[60] *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë, with a Selection of Letters by Family and Friends: Vol. I,* p. 267.
[61] "Collective Hallucinations and Inefficient Markets," p. 81.

of various political, religious, and artistic groups at the time. Wordsworth describes the intent of his first letter as thus:

> The scope of the main argument, it will be recollected, was to prove that the perception of what has acquired the name of picturesque and romantic scenery is so far from being intuitive, that it can be produced only by a slow and gradual process of culture; and to show, as a consequence, that the humbler ranks of society are not, and cannot be, in a state to gain material benefit from a more speedy access than they now have to this beautiful region.

The word 'railway' coincidentally doesn't actually appear in his summation, nor does any specific evidence against the process of construction; instead, Wordsworth signifies that the issues at hand are the *process of culture* and the Company's belief that the acquisition of culture can occur rapidly. The Company advertised the rail line as an opportunity for industrial laborers to experience the picturesque scenes of the Lake District by taking Sunday day-trips from Manchester and Liverpool. Wordsworth spends time in the first letter relaying a literary history of English rocks and mountains (the language of the sublime), which were typically described as terrifying and horrible rather than picturesque up until the eighteenth century. He then poses a question of relevance: "But what has all this to do with the subject? –Why, to show that a vivid perception of romantic scenery is neither inherent in mankind, nor a necessary consequence of even a comprehensive education" (342-43). Those District natives chose their dwelling spots for utility rather than beauty, and even their appreciation for the scenery required slow, steady exposure established through domestic duties leading to affection. Wordsworth then comments on the development of taste, and how that too must come from gradual, persistent effort:

> It is benignly ordained that green fields, clear blue skies, running streams of pure water, rich groves and woods, orchards, and all the ordinary varieties of rural nature, should find an easy way to the affections of all men, and more or less so from early childhood till the senses are impaired by old age and the sources of mere earthly enjoyment have in a great measure failed. But a taste beyond this, however desirable it may be that every one should possess it, is not to be implanted at once; it must be gradually developed both in nations and individuals (343).

The phrase "ordinary varieties" reveals his denouncement of the picturesque, or more specifically its use as propaganda by the railway company, by echoing Gilpin's *Three Essays* definition of variety as the main component of picturesqueness (343). Furthermore, his belief that culture must be "gradually developed both in nations and individuals" reiterates the politics of gradualism that polarized picturesque debates during the Reform years. Wordsworth's criticism of speculators stems from the same source that criticized radical reform and picturesque aesthetics: the Burkean belief that any and all change must occur glacially and with caution in order to preserve traditional institutions. The poet ascertains that "all those features of nature which go to the composition of such scenes as this part of England is distinguished for, cannot, in their finer relations to the human mind, be comprehended, or even very imperfectly conceived, without processes of culture or opportunities of observation in some degree habitual" (343). Therefore, the Kendal and Windermere Company's justification for the expansion is illogical and misleading. Wordsworth continually condemns the "attainment of taste" in Letter I, offering an expanded theory of aesthetics that is distinctly in contrast with picturesque aesthetic sensibility and possibly equal accessibility.

Like much of his later discourse, the basis of Wordsworth's criticism against the Kendal and Windermere Company was far less controversial than the tone with which he presented those ideas. The first letter admittedly reeks of elitism and pretension, often referring inadvertently to those of "common mind" who would never be capable of acquiring a true passion for nature (as compared obviously to himself, judge and jury on all such matters). In one particularly sticky passage, Wordsworth argues:

> A more susceptible taste is undoubtedly a great acquisition, and has been spreading among us for some years, the question is, what means are most likely to be beneficial in extending its operation? Surely that good is not to be obtained by transferring at once uneducated persons in large bodies to particular spots, where the combinations of natural objects as such would afford the greatest pleasure to those who have been in the habit of observing and studying the peculiar character of such scenes, and how they differ from one another. Instead of tempting artisans and labourers, and the humbler classes of shopkeepers, to ramble to a distance, let us rather look with lively sympathy upon persons in that condition, when, upon a holiday or on the Sunday, after having attended divine worship, they make little excursions with their wives and children among neighbouring fields, whither the whole of each family might stroll, or be conveyed at much less cost than would be required to take a single individual of the number to the shores of Windermere by the cheapest conveyance. It is in some such way as this only, that persons who must labour daily with their hands for bread in large towns, or are subject to confinement through the week, can be trained to a profitable intercourse with

> nature where she is the most distinguished by the majesty and sublimity of her forms (343-344).

One might accept critical interpretations of the somewhat tactless tone used by Wordsworth when referring to humbler people "in that condition," and indeed I make no excuse for the problematic phrases that appear here. However, if we put the condescending tone aside, Wordsworth implicitly argues for the preservation of locality that he believes will be destroyed by the mechanizations of industrial expansion. In his railway responses Wordsworth carries on the crusade of coaching us to perceive nature with as rigorous and specific a mind's eye as his own. John Nabholtz argues that his *Guides* also do just that, making them (and his railway responses, I would add) "sustained [efforts] in prose to train the minds of his readers to the same loving response to landscape which he knew as the reward of many years of devoted observation."[62] He encourages workers to explore "among neighbouring fields" not only because of the cheaper costs, but also because appreciation for local spaces will then foster an eye that allows for the most "profitable intercourse with nature." Men should be spending time with family exploring their local towns rather than traveling individually to places that hold no significance to them, so that over time they may develop skills to observe nature with greater insight. Importantly, these sustained efforts must occur gradually and often if one is to truly benefit from the encounter. Wordsworth creates a subtle distinction between the fiscal profits earned by railway speculators and the spiritual benefits yielded by habitual interactions with one's local area, which resonates with a decades-long debate he maintained over pure versus artificial pleasures with his contemporaries.

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[62] "Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* and the Picturesque Tradition," p. 297.

Towards the end of Wordsworth's first letter to the *Morning Post,* he makes an important differentiation between quiet and noisy entertainment that implicitly delineates between rural and urban demographics. He sees the extension of a line to Windermere as particularly unnecessary because of the commotion that passing trains would cause, thus destroying the solitude associated with Windermere Lake:

> The wide-spread waters of these regions are in their nature peaceful; so are the steep mountains and the rocky glens; nor can they be profitably enjoyed but by a mind disposed to peace. Go to a pantomime, a farce, or a puppet-show, if you want noisy pleasure–the crowd of spectators who partake your enjoyment will, by their presence and acclamations, enhance it; but may those who have given proof that they prefer other gratifications continue to be safe from the molestation of cheap trains pouring out their hundreds at a time along the margin of Windermere; nor let any one be liable to the charge of being selfishly disregardful of the poor, and their innocent and salutary enjoyments, if he does not congratulate himself upon the especial benefit which would thus be conferred on such a concourse. "O, Nature, a' thy shows an' forms,/ To feeling pensive hearts hae charms. (345-346).

The quoted poem, "To William Simpson of Ochiltree" by Robert Burns, encapsulates the "feeling pensive" heart of his argument, a belief that only some are capable of perceiving the true beauty of nature, and this vision can only be achieved once rough sensibilities have been refined over time. Tranquility plays an important role in this process, as it engenders reflection, but only those with "a mind disposed to peace" may achieve perceptual enlightenment. By this point,

Wordsworth's peaceful depictions of nature in the Lake District had been well established in his continually popular *Guide to the Lakes,* so this line of thinking comes as no surprise. However, Wordsworth recognizes the likelihood of critics associating his "noisy pleasure" with city life, and he subsequently absolves himself from being "selfishly disregardful of the poor." Pantomimes and puppet-shows evoke images of Drury Lane, Harlequinades, and Punch and Judy dolls, and Wordsworth's depiction of these past times as "noisy" perhaps implies also that they are *loud,* or garish in comparison to natural attractions (thus coloring our reading of "cheap trains" as well.) William's concern over the "especial benefit" natural pleasures provide, presumably in comparison with these artificial activities, is a far cry from John Ruskin's view of pantomime as an elevated, spiritual event that retains "some just notion of the truth, in moral things."[63] Yet, much of what Wordsworth argues here does not stem from obstinacy, and one can even trace the roots of this argument back to his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* when he writes that "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants…to this [craving for extraordinary incident] the literature and theatrical exhibitions of this country have conformed themselves."[64] Even from the outset, Wordsworth intended for his poetry to serve as an antidote to the "degrading thirst for outrageous stimulation"[65] that accompanied urbanization, and his poetic purpose always aimed at moralizing the minds of men in the face of this industrial evil.

The tensions between self and crowd, silence and sound, communicate an anxiety over industrial expansion and the moral detriments that Wordsworth associated with city life. Noise was one of the leading complaints associated with the railway, and even as late as 1985, A.A.

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[63] Quoted in *Victorian Pantomime: A Collection of Critical Essays,* edited by Jim Davis, p. 36.
[64] *The Major Works,* p. 599.
[65] Ibid.

Jackson describes trains as an "enormous evil… of peace disturbed day and night by the shrieks of railway whistles."[66] One might be reminded of E. M. Forster's *Howard's End,* and how the auditory assaults of engines constantly bombard Leonard and Jacky Bast's flat by the tracks. With railways came jobs and the creation of railway towns, thus encouraging flocks of both tourists and workers. Wordsworth worries that passing trains will ruin the solitude that ensures moral and spiritual reflection in Lakeland, again echoing the sentiments in "At Furness Abbey." Wordsworth carries on this crusade in a sonnet included in the second letter:

> Proud were ye, Mountains, when, in times of old,
> Your patriot sons, to stem invasive war,
> Intrenched your brows; ye gloried in each scar:
> Now, for your shame, a Power, the Thirst of Gold,
> That rules over Britain like a baneful star,
> Wills that your peace, your beauty, shall be sold,
> And clear way made for her triumphal car
> Through the beloved retreats your arms enfold!
> Heard YE that Whistle? As her long-linked Train
> Swept onwards, did the vision cross your view?
> Yes, ye were startled; –and, in balance true,
> Weighing the mischief with the promised gain,
> Mountains, and Vales, and Floods, I call on you
> To share the passion of a just disdain. (356)

[66] *London's Termini,* p. 272.

His emphatic spondee, “Heard YE” bellows through the echo-chamber created by the mid-line caesura, startling us in the same way that the Mountains themselves are startled by the railway whistle. Wordsworth continues playing sound-maker through the volta, enjambing the line with a sluggish “long-linked Train” which seems to creep rather than sweep onwards; his ability to hasten motion makes the subsequent question “did the vision cross your view” sarcastic, as if it would be impossible to miss something so garish and jarring. The sound-play continues through the volta as vowel sounds follow alveolar consonants, meaning that the vowels ring out through tooth and tongue like pressurized air from a train whistle through lines nine and ten. Wordsworth’s mimesis of a railway in the volta internally ruptures the poem for the sake of startling readers, and it furthermore speaks to a domestic rift being forged by powerful men through England itself.

Wordsworth began an extensive period of sonnet writing following his 1820 *Ecclesiastical Sonnets,* but the national imagery and political abstractions in “Proud Were Ye Mountains” resonant with his much earlier collection of *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty.* The sonnet “Composed by the Sea-side, near Calais” is particularly relevant:

> FAIR Star of evening, Splendour of the west,
> Star of my Country! –on the horizon’s brink
> Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
> On England’s bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
> Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
> Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
> Should’st be my Country’s emblem; and should’st wink,
> Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest

In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies.
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory! –I, with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here. [67]

The heavenly star in "Proud Were Ye Mountains" no longer acts as a "glorious crest" or the "nation's emblem" but has been depraved and made "baneful" by a capitalistic "Thirst of Gold." This later sonnet suggests a tension reminiscent of that between France and England during the 1802-03 Treaty of Amiens when the *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty* were composed, only now Britain battles against and within itself. Incidentally, eight of the poems were recirculated in an anonymous pamphlet titled "England in 1840!" as a response to growing tensions between England and France following Louis-Philippe's expansionist ambitions and Napoleon's nephew, Prince Louis Napoleon, returning to England.[68] Although probably circulated against Wordsworth's own knowledge, the pamphlet adopted his poetry as "a veiled warning to his fellow countrymen to be on their guard in defense of their traditional freedoms."[69] The ghosts of the French Revolution again haunted Britain, only the nation no longer represented stability and integrity as it once had to the poet; he wrote in a letter to Isabella Fenwick that same year that "If hopelessness were not a sin I should be without hope. We appear as a nation, at least the prominent portion of us, to be sinking deeper and deeper every month, in dishonesty and dishonor."[70] While any assumption that he revisited his early *Liberty* sonnets for inspiration

[67] *The Major Works*, p. 281.
[68] Alan Hill, "Wordsworth, Louis-Philippe, and *England in 1840!*"
[69] Ibid., p. 531.
[70] *The Later Years: Part IV,* p. 27.

remains speculative, the political atmosphere and this pamphlet's popularity at least brought the poems back to his attention in the early 1840s. Gone are foreign "men who do not love" England and its traditional identity, instead replaced by greedy British capitalists threatening the moral integrity of their own homeland; Wordsworth emphasizes the internal struggle with words such as "*in*vasive," and he even intentionally misspells "entrenched" to prove his point. In both sonnets, nature communicates and embodies the efficacy of nationhood, with the mountains proudly bearing every patriotic "scar" just as the star across the Channel serves as "a glorious crest/ Conspicuous to the Nations." However, the destruction of nature itself is less problematic than its justification considering that any damage done in times of war (in the name of patriotism) makes mountains proud, whereas destruction for the sake of expansion warrants disgust. Wordsworth reveals his own bias by failing to consider that war oftentimes acts as a conduit for imperial expansion. This disdain for invasion leaves him open to attacks for being hypocritical when he romanticizes the memory of Britain defending herself from foreign invasion even as troops invade revolutionary Europe and establish colonial power in the Caribbean. He longs for the days when Britain represented internal stability and dominance, even as the country stands poised to enjoy the golden years of *Pax Britannica* in the later nineteenth century. Clearly his criticisms come from a traditional conservative viewpoint, and with these discrepancies in mind, we are forced to consider the destruction of *his* home as the source of such an "[un]just disdain." Wordsworth had argued exactly that in a sonnet published two months earlier responding to the Kendal and Windermere Railway, intending to defend himself against calumnious claims that he resisted expansion to keep the British poor out of his precious Lake District.

Wordsworth's concerns over the Kendal and Windermere Railway were inextricably connected with his conviction that preserving nature ensured the integrity of humanity, and he saw the needless railway extension as "a mere gambling speculation, and not only uncalled for, but the Country, through which it is to pass when it comes in view of Windermere is almost to a man against it."[71] Although he responds to a threat against the Lake District, Wordsworth believes that the greed embroiling railway expansion intimated a decay of integrity endemic to the entire British nation. His assumption of the voice of the Lake District is perhaps overreaching, but the charges made against him as an enemy to the abstraction of railways, and by extension, an enemy to progress and reform, prove groundless for several reasons. Caroline Fox wrote after an encounter with the Wordsworths in 1844 that while William lamented over the Kendal and Windermere Railway, he admitted that "railroads and all the mechanical achievements of this day are doing wonders for the next generation; indeed, it is the appropriate work of this age and this country, and it is doing it gloriously."[72] Furthermore, Wordsworth approved of his son's candidacy for the post of Secretary to the Birmingham and Derby Railway eight years earlier in 1836. During the upending first years of the 1830s, Wordsworth had vehemently opposed the Reform Act, but in a letter to Henry Crabb Robinson, he attempted to redeem his reputation by correcting the "mistake in supposing me an Anti Reformer –*that* I never was–but an Anti-Bill man; heart and soul. –It is a fixed judgement of my mind, that an unbridled Democracy is the worst of all Tyrannies."[73] Nearly ten years later, Wordsworth argued in his railway responses that an unbridled capitalism acted as the worst of all tyrannies in modern Britain. His attempts to condemn a railway company for rash expansion earned him praise from

[71] Note to Bernard Barton on Nov, 15, 1844 quoted in Wells, p. 37.
[72] *Memories of Old Friends,* edited by Horace Pym, p. 242.
[73] *The Later Years,* vol. 2, p. 588.

fellow Lakers, but censure from progressives who interpreted his claims as markedly bourgeois and anti-poor.

The unfortunate effect that Wordsworth's sonnet "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" had on public perceptions of his humanitarianism was largely exacerbated by critical newspaper coverage, but in fact public consensus was split. In one of the only studies dedicated to Wordsworth and the railway, John Edwin Wells tracks the barrage of verbal assault directed at Wordsworth by newspapers such as *The Pictorial Times* and *The Spectator,* concluding that misrepresentation of the poet's views "contributed largely to the composition of the Letter[s]."[74] William Knight includes a quotation from one Mrs. Fletcher in his *Life of Wordsworth* revealing that the sonnet "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" "exposed Wordsworth to the most unlooked-for accusations. They actually accuse [him] of desiring to interfere with the innocent enjoyments of the poor, by preventing this district becoming accessible to them by railway."[75] However, Lakeland locals and current scholars provide evidence that these censures were unfair and unfounded, particularly in their claims that his attempts to preserve natural beauty merely masked a desire to exclude poor laborers from the District. Edith Batho determines in her biography of Wordsworth that his

> objection to the proposed extension of the railway… was neither reactionary nor selfish. He did not object to the fixing of the terminus at the Bowness end of Windermere… his objections were the reasonable ones that access would spoil the very seclusion which is one of the charms of the Lake District–the arguments

[74] "Wordsworth and the Railways in 1844-45," p. 39.
[75] Vol. 3, p. 452

> which would be put forward now by members of the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, which is not generally considered to be an obscurantist body.[76]

Hartley Coleridge corroborated this point in a letter he wrote to the Kendal *Mercury* defending Wordsworth in November of 1844, as he assures the public that Wordsworth recognized the necessity of railways in largely industrial areas such as Manchester and Bristol: "He knows well that we must submit to the necessities of the time and where trade requires a Railway, there a Railway must be. But is there any such necessity in the present case?"[77] Indeed, a railway running between Lancaster and Carlisle already made a pass near Kendal, allowing tourists to ascend into the District without missing the invaluable walking tours leading into the heart of Windermere.[78] In the first letter to the *Morning Post,* he scoffed that "surely such a one, could he afford by any means to travel as far as Kendal, would not grudge a two hours' walk across the skirts of the beautiful country that he was desirous of visiting" (345). Wordsworth saw the second railway company expansion into the Lake District as it appeared to most Lakers: an unwarranted capitalistic venture that profited few at the expense of many. He calls upon the mighty forces of nature to fight back against human avarice in his sonnet, with the intention of cutting through the façade of "utilitarian lore" (339).

The sonnet "On the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" first appeared in the *Morning Post* nearly two months before Wordsworth's letters, published on October 12th, 1844; as with the first letter and his earlier sonnets, he mainly attempts to protect nature from swindlers' schemes. The sonnet thunderously opens:

> Is there no nook of English ground secure

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[76] *The Later Wordsworth,* p. 205.
[77] Reprinted in Wells, p. 38.
[78] *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History,* edited by Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle.

From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and mid the busy world kept pure
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish? How can they this blight endure?
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
Baffle the threat, bright scene, from Orrest-head
Given to the passing traveller's rapturous glance:
Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
Of Nature; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong. (339)

Formally, the sonnet offers many irregularities that diverge from Wordsworth's normal sonnet structure. The odd *abababababcddcee* rhyme scheme resists any definite label, and although the concluding couplet resembles a quasi-Shakespearean model, the first eight lines read assuredly more as an octave than two quatrains. The entire octave is composed of questions, bombarding readers for effect such as a candidate goads the crowd with leading questions. The sonnet's logic functions as an extensive series of questions followed by a compressed solution rather than an answer, and Wordsworth again turns to nature as an ameliorating force against the "busy world" of "ruthless change."

Following the recognition of several problems stemming from "utilitarian lore" and capitalistic enterprise, Wordsworth turns to the natural world for support in overcoming human

corruption. The trochaic intrusion at the beginning of the volta literally baffles the quickening iambic pace of the octave, staving off the threat of speed in demolishing the "paternal fields" of Wordsworth's plot of sonnet-ground. We've stumbled across a scene that makes us pause, much like the "passing traveller" across the precipice of Orrest-Head, and we rest for a moment to catch our breath upon the spondaic "bright scene" of the sonnet space. Inevitably, the sonnet again gains speed as it descends, especially if one scans two elisions in line ten to quicken the pace of three consistent short-a consonants (passing traveller's rapturous). And yet Wordsworth still resists total domination of rapidity as he mirrors the trochaic first foot of the volta in line eleven, again pumping the brakes when directly addressing Orrest-head; these moments of rest juxtapose the "rash assault" of phrases depicting human action, so that nature sounds as constant as Wordsworth believes it to be. Alternating regular iambic lines with syncopations internalizes the battle between fast-paced railway expansion and slow, steady Nature, whose spondaic pauses literally resist the forces of speed. He calls upon the "beautiful romance/ Of Nature" to turn travelers into advocates for his cause, even begging for picturesque Orrest-Head to please tourists and win the war of expansion (note the long-e vowel repetition in line eleven's "plead for thy peace" embodying the relaxation Wordsworth longs for.) Although Wordsworth dismisses the picturesque implication that scenes may be fully consumed and appreciated in short moments, here he capitalizes on the trend; this renouncement potentially damages his reputation as a critic of picturesque aesthetics, but it also more importantly reveals Wordsworth's desperation to protect his homeland against a perceived threat.

Lake Windermere from Orrest Head. James Baker Pyne (1849)

Wordsworth opening the sonnet with questions of crisis imitates Milton, his greatest poetic inspiration in later years, and he incorporates a similar *topos* of seduction with the phrase "rash assault" to create a dichotomy of good and evil. However, Wordsworth localizes his paradise as distinctly English, shaping the assault to sound like a figure for military invasion against which citizens must take up arms. J. Douglas Kneale argues that the sonnet "itself becomes a rhetorical defense, not just a poem about defense,"[79] rendering a visionary battle of transports "in which defense and resistance…work against the force of being rhetorically railroaded."[80] Metaphorically, this poem about defense performs the "digging in" maneuver that gradualist politics effectively represent. The sonnet performs a similar gradualism to the one we see in "Steamboats, Viaducts and Railways" by rhetorically resisting transport, aided by Miltonic enjambments throughout both octave and sestet. And yet, the sonnet's militarized diction more closely aligns itself with "Proud Were Ye Mountains" as Wordsworth pits man against nature,

[79] *Romantic Aversions: Aftermaths of Classicism in Wordsworth and Coleridge,* p. 101.
[80] Ibid., 103.

England against the English (or at least those willfully waging war against her.) An additional note follows the poem in the *Morning Post*:

> Let not the above be considered as merely a poetical effusion. The degree and kind of attachment, which many of the yeomanry feel to their small inheritance can scarcely be over-rated. Near the house of one of them stands a magnificent tree, which a neighbor of the owner advised him to fell for profit's sake. "Fell it," exclaimed the yeoman, "I had rather fall on my knees and worship it." It happens, I believe, that the intended railway would pass through this little property, and I hope that an apology for the answer will not be thought necessary by one who enters into the strength of the feeling (339).

This note provides the crux of Wordsworth's argument against the railways, against the corruption of capitalistic subversions, against the misconception that taste and appreciation are easily attained through tourism, and ultimately against the effects of industrialization on developing attachments to nature. He believes himself to be a defender of England, a defender against the invasion of industry which was swallowing territories as rapidly as Napoleon at his height. For Wordsworth, the only (and most sacred) ground left to stand on is his own, a true David and Goliath tale of big business against local community. More importantly, like his model Milton, Wordsworth sees the fight to be a moralistic one, with pure pleasures and lofty thoughts struggling to survive amidst unnatural, ungodly ambitions.

As improved mechanization required expansive resources, capitalism commodified the elements of nature which were once sacred, all at an ever-hastening speed. Notions of space and home were not new to the later Wordsworth, as he most clearly reckoned with both in his much earlier *Home at Grasmere.* The lines "These we have, and a thousand nooks of earth/ Have also

these, but no where else is found–/ The one sensation that is here,/ Here as it found its way into my heart/ In childhood, here as it abides by day,/ By night, here only; or in chosen minds/ That take it with them hence."[81] That word "nook" obviously occurs in the "Sonnet on the Projected Railway" and reappears in the 1850 *Prelude,* as Wordsworth apostrophizes to Coleridge, "is there not some nook of thine,/ From the first play-time of the infant world/ Kept sacred to restorative delight?"[82] In both instances, small tracts of land are kept sacred through the memory of childhood, just like those dreams of retirement kept pure in youth in Wordsworth's sonnet. One could add that just as Wordsworth treasured "spots of time" for recompense, so too did he rely on nooks of space to anchor his sense of self. The subsequent note provides another example of a local yeoman and his deep connection with that "little property" of a "small inheritance," an inheritance presumably made meaningful by patrimony, as in Wordsworth's "Michael." The small farms in the Lake District are infused with familial legacies and the value of labor, and become places where men tread "the mountains which [their fathers] trod./ Hence, and from other local circumstance,/ In this enclosure many of the old/ Substantial virtues have a firmer tone/ Than in the base and ordinary world."[83] Wordsworth even touches on this issue in his first letter, providing an anecdote about Robert Burns favoring the rural Scottish landscapes he himself farmed, even while touring the sublime the Swiss Alps. Alpine glories were mostly lost on him, as Burns remained "little affected by the sight of one spot in preference to another, unless where it derived an interest from history, tradition, or local associations" (345). Heritage and tradition are instilled within landscape, making the preservation of "nook[s] of English ground" about more than environmental conservation: for Wordsworth, these pure spaces

[81] *The Major Works,* p. 177.
[82] Edited by Ernest De Selincourt, Revised by Helen Darbishire, 2nd edition, Book XI, ll. 420-22, p. 424.
[83] *Home at Grasmere* in *The Major Works,* ll. 464-68, p. 185.

represent the best of English character, and the only hope for values such as honesty, humility, and compassion to be passed down to future generations. In his 1835 *Guide to the Lakes,* Wordsworth showed how the visual characteristics of Lake Country had been achieved initially by natural processes, but then seconded by the earliest inhabitants over time: the fields and woods are intermingled because "the plough of the first settlers… followed naturally the veins of richer, dryer, or less stony soil; and thus it has shaped out an intermixture of wood and lawn, with a grace and wildness which it would have been impossible for the hand of studied art to produce."[84] Furthermore, rural workers passed down a spirit of accommodating to nature, as Nabholtz suggests:

> They had no presumptuous thoughts of making the landscape conform to human desires for ostentatious display. Rather, the ordering of their fields and the very construction of their homes were determined by a co-operation with the order and materials of their surroundings. And the result of this simplicity of character was picturesque beauty.[85]

Railways directly endangered the survival of these values by uprooting farmland not only for expansion but also for the construction of glamorous vacation homes which new residents, drawn in by trendy tourism, built in "complete violation of nature on proud principles of display."[86] Wordsworth manifests these anxieties about local tradition, harmony, and simplicity in his concerns for protecting the Lake District from the Kendal and Windermere Company. The ultimate battle at hand thus proves to be a battle for intimacy, for the preservation of locality that has become threatened by the rapaciousness of capital. What's worse, Britain wages this war

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[84] *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes,* edited by Ernest De Selincourt, p. 44.
[85] "Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* and the Picturesque Tradition," p. 294.
[86] Ibid.

internally, which continually distresses the poet as he watches provinciality languish beneath the tracks of expansion. Wordsworth's attempts to preserve small rural communities were not for the sake of keeping industrial workers out, but instead for the safeguarding of domestic freedom, a cause that many industrial workers themselves would advocate for as wage-labor under capitalism made home lives increasingly grim in manufacturing cities. His second letter responds to criticism circulated by newspapers that Wordsworth had dealt inhumanely with the issue of poverty, and he attempts to correct the claim that his arguments were elitist in his response.

Wordsworth's second letter to the *Morning Post,* dated December 17, 1844, was published nine days after his somewhat disastrous first letter, and Wordsworth reminds his readership that the letter intended to denounce any rapid acquisition of taste advertised by the Railway Company. What he refers to as the "slow and gradual process of culture" in the first letter can be interpreted for my purposes as an intimacy with the landscape, or a sense of the space. Wordsworth even uses the word "intimacy" when discrediting the British Museum and National Picture Gallery as opportunities for the lower classes to acquire a taste for art:

> Persons who talk thus forget that, to produce such an improvement, frequent access at small cost of time and labor is indispensable. Manchester lies, perhaps, within eight hours' railway distance of London; but surely no one would advise that Manchester operatives should contract a habit of running to and fro between that town and London, for the sake of forming an intimacy with the British Museum and National Gallery? (349).

Although Wordsworth's argument falters in comparing an eight-hour trip to London with a shorter two-hour trip to the Lake District, his comment about "frequent access at small cost of time and labor" is contextually valid and indispensable to his case. In the summer of that same

year, complaints about the exorbitant fare prices for railway tickets mounted, resulting in the 1844 Regulation of Railways Act passed under the tutelage of W.E. Gladstone as President of the Board of Trade.[87] This legislature regulated the facilities for travel given to the poor, allowing stops at every station and the ability to carry up to 56 pounds of free luggage. However, many argued that these restrictions came after the fact, and although the Act intended to cheapen ticket costs, the resulting price drops were still significantly out of reach for most laborers.[88] Railway companies were slow to accept these restrictions, and many still provided fourth-class tickets with inferior coaches that hardly accommodated human passengers. Realistically, poor workers had neither the time nor the means to indulge in frequent recreational excursions, and Wordsworth merely reiterates that fact in his letter. He then suggests that plans orchestrated by manufacturers to organize large group trips on weekends would not only prove inconsequential in building taste or intimacy, but would degrade the workers they supposedly intended to help.

Wordsworth makes explicit his dissatisfactions with manufacturing and industrial labor in the second letter, bolstering his argument with an appeal to traditional British freedom. He writes about the Lancashire and Yorkshire manufacturers entertaining the thought of sending

> at their own expense, large bodies of their workmen, by railway, to the banks of Windermere. Surely those gentlemen will think a little more before they put such a scheme into practice. The rich man cannot benefit the poor, nor the superior the inferior, by anything that degrades them. Packing men off after this fashion, for holiday entertainment, is, in fact, treating them like children. They go at the will of their master, and must return at the same, or they will be dealt with as transgressors (349-350).

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[87] *The Railway in England and Wales,* p. 37.
[88] David N. Smith, *The Railway and Its Passengers: A Social History*.

Some may argue that funding a mandatory field trip to Windermere, while perhaps a bit condescending, was an altruistic gesture made by wealthy manufacturers for the betterment of their own. However, one must remember that these manufacturers were often also shareholders in the railway companies, making their gestures less philanthropic and more advantageous for themselves. The manufacturers gained the moral validation of allowing their workers recreational opportunities while simultaneously encouraging a love of tourism within each man that would hopefully result in more ticket sales. This interpretation perhaps reads a bit cynical, but Wordsworth articulated a similar opinion and goes further to suggest that such controls offend that sense of personal freedom inherent to all British patriots. He provides the example of a father who expresses gladness that his young son, a soldier returning from war after the French Revolution, has finished with a way of life in which one's own freedom must oftentimes be subject to the wills of others:

> The poor man felt where the true dignity of his species lay, namely, in a just proportion between actions governed by man's own inclinations and those of other men; but, according to the father's notion, that proportion did not exist in the course of life from which his son had been released. Had the old man known from experience the degree of liberty allowed to the common soldier, and the moral effect of the obedience required, he would have thought differently, and had he been capable of extending his views, he would have felt how much of the best and noblest part of our civic spirit is owing to our military and naval institutions, and that perhaps our very existence as a free people has by them been maintained. This extreme instance has been adduced to show *how deeply seated in the minds of Englishmen is their sense of personal independence*. Master-

> manufacturers ought never to lose sight of this truth. *Let them consent to a Ten Hours' Bill, with little or, if possible, no diminution of wages, and the necessaries of life being more easily procured, the mind would develop itself accordingly, and each individual would be more at liberty* to make at his own cost excursions in any direction which might be most inviting to him (my emphases, p. 350).

Wordsworth advocates for labor laws and wage reform so that industrial workers may have more time off to make their own decisions about travel. More freedom hopefully translates into men being able to pursue pure pleasures such as spending with their families after attending church, exploring native fields and appreciating those landscapes because they were enjoyed with loved ones. Personal independence facilitates the ability to build intimacy with others, which then gets grafted onto the physical spaces in which those interactions occur. Preserving nature is about preserving those places that we may travel to with loved ones while also connecting with a higher truth about the human condition; the stability of nature ensures that we may return to the memories of these impactful experiences for recompense, and that these sentiments might even retain afterlives to help others when we're gone. We thus come full circle from "Tintern Abbey," and see that Wordsworth's beliefs in locality and landscape fostering enrichment were as salient in 1844 as they had been in the fervor of his youth. However, Wordsworth now must go beyond his experiences with the rural poor and reckon with a new and ever-growing class of poverty: the industrial laborer. His letters, though not always intentionally, argue for the protection of domestic freedom just as the effects of industrialization on hearth and home begin to inspire Victorian writers such as Elizabeth Gaskell to pen social novels. In this way Wordsworth may have been ahead of his time, even as his mistrust of the Kendal and Windermere Company portrayed him to some as a curmudgeon clutching onto the past. In fact, Wordsworth dealt often

and directly with the issues of Victorian poverty and charity, making him an influential poet of the 1840s.

While critics attempted to argue that Wordsworth's second letter merely extended the exclusionary politics presented in his first letter, it remains clear that he directed his efforts towards solutions to poverty that retained domesticity and decency. In the letter, Wordsworth addresses those

> who think with me upon this occasion that I have been writing on behalf of a social condition which no one who is competent to judge of it would be willing to subvert, and that I have been endeavouring to support moral sentiments and intellectual pleasures of a high order against an enmity which seems growing more and more formidable every day; I mean 'Utilitarianism,' serving as a mask for cupidity and gambling speculations. My business with this evil lies in its reckless mode of action by Railways, now its favourite instruments (352).

Utilitarianism, a group of theories prescribing actions that maximize happiness and well-being, gained popularity in the early nineteenth century through the work of Jeremy Bentham. His work advocated for radical reform, promoting individual and economic freedoms amidst the heady Reform Bill debates in the 1820s. Bentham directly influenced John Stuart Mill and Robert Owen, and his theories made considerable impacts on "the reform of prisons, schools, poor laws, law courts, and Parliament itself."[89] Wordsworth presumably denounces utilitarianism because of the radical reforms associated with the theory, but a moral element also drives his motive. Although Wordsworth himself endorsed pleasure in its purer forms, he ardently scorned those simulations of pleasure that offered no real value or insight morally. According to his Preface to

[89] Clayton Roberts, David Roberts, and Douglas Bisson, *A History of England,* Vol. II, p. 307.

Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth asserts that poets write under the "grand elementary principle of pleasure" which enables men to acquire sympathy and knowledge, and this pleasure brings us into the presence of truth.[90] It seems obvious then that Wordsworth would admonish the utilitarian system proposed by Bentham, who claimed that "between poetry and truth there is natural opposition."[91] Furthermore, as Jeremy Henderson argues, "Bentham was concerned merely with the quantity of pleasure, while Wordsworth emphasized types and qualities of pleasure."[92] Wordsworth had much to say about Bentham and utilitarianism, in both poetry (his 1833 "To the Utilitarians") and prose; in a letter to Charles Fox, Wordsworth particularly censured utilitarianism because

> the vanity and pride of their promoters are interwoven with [their projects] that they are deemed great discoveries and blessings to humanity. In the mean time parents are separated from their children… the wife no longer prepares with her own hands a meal for her husband… there is little doing in his house which his affections can be interested, and but little left in which he can love."[93]

Railway expansionists adopted utilitarian arguments to promote *their* own projects, declaring railways as the next great discovery to bless humanity, all in order to sell more stock and line their own pockets. This marriage of utilitarian benefit to railway expansion resulted in propaganda promoting day trips as the ultimate pleasure, one which all industrial workers were entitled to. Wordsworth took offense from these declarations not only because they acted as "mask[s] for cupidity and gambling speculation" but furthermore because he sought to protect the moral integrity and domesticity of those industrial workers. In the early nineteenth century,

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[90] *Prose Works,* vol. 1, ll. 399-400, p. 140.
[91] "The Rationale of Reward," in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham,* edited by John Bowring, vol. 2, p. 253.
[92] "Jeremy Bentham Versus William Wordsworth," p. 421.
[93] *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* vol. 1, p. 314.

an engineer and inventor known as Count Rumford had revolutionized poverty reform with his poorhouses, which he claimed could turn idle populations into productive citizens; Wordsworth rejected Rumford's poorhouses as viable solutions primarily because they would destroy "the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor."[94]

Many reformers envisaged poorhouses as short-term answers to a larger poverty problem, but according to Samantha Webb, Rumford insisted that "the poor will ultimately prefer to feed themselves in the soup kitchens rather than at home, and the consequences of this preference are precisely those feared by Wordsworth."[95] Poorhouses severed domestic attachments by dividing rooms into communal same-sex bed chambers, and public kitchens discouraged familial intimacy; Rumford dealt with the poor as cogs contributing to a larger machine, and his pedagogy "was inspired by the methods used to break horses: use kindness to make the animal happy, and if that fails, punish severely."[96] In this way, poorhouses made uniform the variety that defined picturesque beauty, severing the ties that made spaces intimate, local, and distinct. Wordsworth communicates his concerns over domesticity in industrialized spaces in *The Old Cumberland Beggar,* hoping that "May never House, misnamed of industry,/ Make him captive; for that pent-up din,/ Those life-consuming sounds that clog the air,/ Be his the natural silence of

[94] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years,* edited by Ernest De Selincourt, Revised by Chester L. Shaver, 2nd ed., pp. 314-315.
[95] "Wordsworth, Count Rumford, and Poverty Relief," p. 32.
[96] Ibid., 31.

old age."[97] Poor folk entered workhouses and largely surrendered the freedom to live as they chose, assimilating into a system of overseers and forced labor that effectively enslaved them. The now famous letter Wordsworth wrote to Charles James Fox about poverty in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* gained a second afterlife in 1838 after Sir Henry Bunbury printed it in his *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas Hanmer,* and while Wordsworth admonished Bunbury for its inclusion without his knowledge, Sir Henry felt it to be a wise statement "with regard to the condition of our laboring classes."[98] Thomas Carlyle comments on the letter to Fox in his 1839 *Chartism,* which Stephen Gill interprets as a confirmation that "however much Wordsworth's political complexion may have altered since *Lyrical Ballads,* his radical humanitarianism had remained constant."[99] This humanitarianism, founded in securing domestic purity and moral benefit for all, clashed with those "Condition of England" questions in the

Men Sitting Down to a Workhouse Dinner. J. Grant (1840)

[97] *The Major Works,* ll. 173-75, p. 54.
[98] Stephen Gill, "England's Samuel: Wordsworth in the Hungry Forties," p. 846.
[99] Ibid.

1840s, questions about the emerging mechanical society created by industrialization that automatized labor and threatened the abilities to think and act spiritually or creatively.

All of these concurrent forces come to bear on Wordsworth's letters, and all, at the very least, serve to correct the misconception that his stance excluded or showed a lack of concern for the industrial poor. Regardless of what newspapers propagated as selfishness in his responses, Wordsworth did not

> wish to keep the Lakes to himself and his wealthier friends. But he would have them remain what they were when they evoked and realised his young imagination… Mr. Wordsworth does not object to the railroad because it will bring a poorer class to see the Lakes than has hitherto been able to indulge in that luxury, but for the sake of its inevitable violation of domestic privacy; for the stones, and the trees, and the humble homes it must trample down; for the good it *must* destroy, while the equivalent good is a mere and not very promising speculation…the railroad will take away more honest bread than it will give.[100]

Coleridge echoes Brontë's remark about the subsistence of "honest bread," which further justifies the moral dichotomy between humility and greed that Wordsworth concerned himself with. He perceived the right to domestic privacy as integral to moral refinement, and railway expansion in primarily rural areas merely represented the larger dual threats of industrialization and capitalism that swindlers profited from. Wordsworth concludes his second letter by acknowledging his guilt in only one of the claims laid against him: "if gratitude for what repose and quiet in a district hitherto, for the most part, not disfigured but beautified by human hands, have done for me through the course of a long life, and hope that others might hereafter be

[100] Hartley Coleridge, printed in the Kendal *Mercury*.

benefited in the same manner and in the same country, *be* selfishness, then, indeed, but not otherwise, I plead guilty to the charge."[101] Despite his extended efforts, the Kendal and Windermere Company completed the railway in 1846; Wordsworth's attempts at persuading the Board of Trade failed, and their report concluded that "there are no public grounds which ought to be decisive against the Kendal and Windermere railway receiving the sanction of Parliament."[102] No nook of English ground remained safe from what Tennyson termed "the ringing grooves of change,"[103] not even the vicarage Wordsworth's son John oversaw in Cumberland; the rectory was demolished and the railway constructed two years after Wordsworth published the sonnet in *The Morning Post.*

The Bottom "Line"

While the trajectory of Wordsworth's efforts to stifle the Kendal and Windermere Railway Company failed, his responses provide us with an important reminder that oftentimes his later career gets preemptively disregarded by both himself and scholars as uninspired. Victorian industrialization, widespread poverty, and yet another growing wave of revolutionary radicalism all provided Wordsworth with much inspiration, and his ardent feelings as expressed in these responses challenge the claim that he lacked motivation to compose. The argument that Wordsworth's later compositions abandon the radical political identity promoted in *Lyrical Ballads,* betraying poor rural laborers as a result of his patronage and public position as stamp distributor, is another important falsehood that this study of railway responses discredits. Much of his defense in 1844 stemmed from the conviction that domesticity fosters intimacy with nature, which in turn offers moral enlightenment; this philosophy of locality can be seen in

[101] *Prose Works,* p. 355.
[102] *Prose Works,* vol. 3, p. 334.
[103] *Locksley Hall*, l. 184, p. 71.

works as early as "Tintern Abbey," "Home at Grasmere," and the *Lyrical Ballads* if one only looks for it. The different historical contexts surrounding the compositions of Wordsworth's early and late works ultimately determined the difference in critical reception between them. Adopting the "Jacobinical speech of the common rural people," to again quote Fulford, aroused Whiggish radical sympathies for *Lyrical Ballads* during the decade-long overthrow of a monarchy in France by poor country laborers, whereas protecting the countryside against Victorian industrialization and the employment opportunities it afforded could be easily misconstrued as traditionalist and aristocratic. In one way, Wordsworth's death in 1850 saved him from watching railways usher in the beginning of urbanization in Britain and beyond, fulfilling its destiny "to undermine much of the fabric of rural tradition itself through industrial suburban expansion and other, more insidious, developments."[104] Victorian writers bore the responsibilities that Wordsworth left behind, and many followed in his thinking when criticizing or satirizing railways.

Although Wordsworth never lived to see the height of anti-railway sentiments in the later nineteenth century, his arguments retained an afterlife in the Victorian world. The 1844 railway responses act as a literary bridge between the dying Romantic generation and early Victorian England. John Ruskin famously carried on Wordsworth's crusade when railway expansion threatened the Peak District, and he would later decline a gold medal offered by the Royal Institute of British Architects in protest of the railway expansion through Furness Abbey, which he considered the greatest atrocity in Britain in his lifetime.[105] Ruskin held a deep respect for Wordsworth, and was inspired in no small part due by his criticism of railway expansion in "At Furness Abbey" and his advocacy for the conservation of the Lake District. Charles Dickens

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[104] Alan Everitt, "The Railways and Rural Tradition: 1840-1940," p. 181.
[105] *The Complete Works of John Ruskin,* edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, pp. 513-516.

notably attacked railways in many of his works such as the "Mugby Junction" stories and *Bleak House,* and one could argue that George Hudson, the infamous "Railway King" who created the mammoth Midlands Railway Company, inspired Merdle's character in *Little Dorrit.*[106] In 1870, Henry James complained that the "hideous embankments and tunnels" of the "detestable little railway"[107] marred the beauty of the Isle of Wight, and Anthony Trollope satirized railway speculation extensively in his 1875 *The Way We Live Now.* Wordsworth's negative response to railway expansion therefore was not merely a rearguard, belated effort, but rather an *early* contribution to an extensive literary tradition that spanned the entire Victorian era. Art critics and architects also fought against the railways; A.W. Pugin criticized railway stations for attempting to mask their true, unsightly aesthetics,[108] and Francis Whishaw deplored "the growing evil of expending large sums of money on railway appendages…instead of cottage buildings which… would have been amply sufficient."[109] An entire book could be written on Ruskin's artistic assaults against the railways, but suffice to say that Wordsworth's responses from an aesthetic perspective also held merit amongst later Victorian circles. Wordsworth's concerns over industry and morality were also received favorably both during and after his life, and activism for these issues carried through to the end of the nineteenth century.

As a new wave of Christian fervor flooded England in the final decades of Wordsworth's life, many religious leaders began looking to his poetry for a model of sympathizing with the poor. Railway expansion coincided with this movement in both negative and positive ways: the lines connecting major industrial cities allowed clergymen to spread the Gospel to a wider audience in need of salvation, but the railways themselves often threatened destruction to rural

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[106] Grahame and Angela Smith, "Dickens as Popular Artist."
[107] *English Hours,* p. 232.
[108] *Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England,* p. 11.
[109] *Railways in Great Britain and Ireland,* pp. 367-68.

religious monuments such as Furness Abbey and John Wordsworth's own vicarage. R. C. Richardson tracks the ways in which religious institutions adopted railway symbols for their own purposes: Evangelists exploited the potential of the railway as a religious metaphor, temperance movements worked with railway companies to clean up the drunken, sinful image of railway laborers, and bishops often preached on rail cars or at stations since "it was better a Sunday afternoon visit to an exhibition or a railway excursion" than an afternoon of profanity.[110] In 1840, a poem known as the "Spiritual Railway" circulated around cities, attempting to bring industrial workers to Christ by depicting a pilgrim's progress through railway travel: "Come then poor Sinners, now's the time/ At any station on the Line/ If you'll repent and turn from Sin/ The Train will stop and take you in."[111] While Wordsworth's railway responses don't extensively comment on religion, his own faith undoubtedly influenced his agitations against those large-scale Sunday outings advertised to industrial workers by the railway companies.

In a letter to W. E. Gladstone on Oct. 15, 1844, merely one day before the publication of his sonnet "On the Projected" in the *Morning Post,* Wordsworth pleaded for Gladstone to consider the spiritual ramifications of expansion:

> We are in this neighbourhood all in consternation, that is every man of taste and feeling, at the stir which is made for carrying a branch Railway from Kendal to the head of Windermere. When the subject comes before you officially, as I suppose it will, pray give it more attention than its apparent importance may call for. In fact, the project if carried into effect will destroy the *staple* of the Country

[110] "The 'Broad Gauge' and the 'Narrow Gauge': Railways and Religion in Victorian England," p. 103.
[111] Quoted in Richardson, p. 111.

> which is its beauty, and, on the Lord's day particularly, will prove subversive of its quiet, and be highly injurious to its morals.[112]

Wordsworth notably worried that railways would hinder rather than help religion, but many religious reformers who encouraged expansion used his poetry as a justification for their efforts. Reverend Frederick Robertson drew inspiration from Wordsworth and preached to his poor congregation about attaining salvation in nature; Stephen Gill recounts that Robertson was both practical and realistic: "He knew that the struggle to pay the rent left little time for communion with the godhead in nature, but in expounding Wordsworth's poetry he offers a vision of richer possibilities even for mundane life."[113] When awarding Wordsworth an honorary degree from Oxford in 1839, John Keble delivered the Crewian Oration and claimed that he "of all poets, and above all has exhibited the manners, the pursuits, and the feelings, religious and traditional, of the poor…that secret and harmonious intimacy which exists between honourable Poverty, and… holy Religion."[114] Railways drew both literal and metaphorical lines between rich and poor, but George Brimley reflected one year after Wordsworth's death that his poetry broke down "the conventional barriers that, in our disordered social state, divide the rich and poor into two hostile nations."[115] Vernon Lushington, a Judge and Secretary to the Admiralty, declared that Wordsworth "must be considered a leader in that grandest movement of modern times, care for our humbler brethren; his part being not to help them in their suffering, but to make us reverence them, for what they have in common with us, or in greater measure than ourselves."[116] Tim Fulford concludes that Wordsworth "sought to discover in the English landscape a national order

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[112] *Later Years,* p. 1232.
[113] "England's Samuel," p. 852.
[114] Sir J. T. Coleridge, *A Memoir of the Rev. John Keble,* p. 260.
[115] "Wordsworth," *Fraser's Magazine,* pp. 104-05.
[116] *Principal Shairp and His Friends,* p. 229.

that would not exclude the experience of the poor," resolving those picturesque narratives which contained moral anxieties about religion and rural labor in an urbanizing world. The "early Victorian construction of him as a Christian poet" placed significant pressure on Wordsworth to write and revise into greater congruity with such a legacy, but it also ensured the popular consumption of his poetry in the later nineteenth century by soon-to-be influential Victorian writers.[117]

Where this project has attempted to comment on the later poetry and prose of Wordsworth, with specific interests in how the picturesque and rural domesticity swayed his convictions regarding the railways, there is still very far to go in completing a comprehensive analysis on the reception of his legacy in Victorian Britain and beyond. Stephen Gill provides the touchstone text for scholars with his *Wordsworth and the Victorians,* broadly defining how Wordsworth impacted novelists, poets, and social activists in the years just before his death. Jeffrey Cox also recently published a comprehensive study on several of Wordsworth's poems written after Waterloo, and how they were often in dialogue with the poetry and politics of second-generation Romantics such as Shelley, Keats, and Byron in *William Wordsworth, Second Generation Romantic.* Jeffrey Cox lastly has an exciting study entitled *Poetic Innovation in Wordsworth: 1825-1833,* which breaks down the minutest elements of Wordsworth's poetic manuscripts in relation to sound, vision, and imagination. Nonetheless, few studies directly focus on the 1840s, despite the fact that Wordsworth continued publishing, republishing, and engaging in current events, even writing the Coronation Ode for Prince Albert's chancellorship at Cambridge in 1847. The particular subject of locality, and Wordsworth's interest in how

[117] Gill, "England's Samuel," p. 855.

domesticity fostered enlightenment, deserves further study in connection with its afterlife in both rural and industrial novels. George Eliot prefaces *Adam Bede* with lines from *The Excursion*:

> "…So that ye may have
> Clear images before your gladden'd eyes
> Of nature's unambitious underwood
> And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when
> I speak of such among the flock that swerved
> Or fell, those only shall be singled out
> Upon whose lapse, or error, something more
> Than brotherly forgiveness may attend."[118]

Her novel takes clear cues from Wordsworth when she applauds the values of an intimate, rural culture and attempts to evoke sympathy for the poor by depicting a family bond destroyed by poverty. Anne Brontë makes mention of Wordsworth and Romanticism in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall,* and while Elizabeth Gaskell doesn't allude to Wordsworth in her *Mary Barton,* her criticism of industrialization for its degradation of home life echoes his own sentiments about preserving "bonds of domestic feeling" amongst the poor. There is thus something more to be said about the distinctly feminine consumption of Wordsworth's poetry in Victorian England, particularly as it pertains to issues of domesticity and morality. And yet, for all that Wordsworth got right in predicting industrial poverty, environmental destruction, and railway speculation, he underestimated the benefits that railway expansion would have in restoring an interest in rural vernacular tradition, which became a widespread movement in England as travel opened the countryside to larger audiences. Alan Everitt believes that perhaps the most potent legacy of

[118] Epigraph.

railways was their doing "much to open up the historic riches of the countryside to a new generation of writers on rural society."[119] The question of how Wordsworth influenced rural and industrial novelists in the Victorian age is not one that can be answered here, but it undoubtedly reckons with those same issues of domesticity, poverty, and humanitarianism that Wordsworth grappled with in much of his work. Most importantly, his railway responses reveal that the poet held nearly identical convictions about these issues in 1844 as he did in his early career, challenging the narrative of Wordsworth as a mere state hireling or political turncoat in later life. As current scholars commit to the overdue task of revisiting the latter half of Wordsworth's compositions, one hopes that constructive conversations about his advocacy against the Kendal and Windermere Expansion will serve as proof in favor of, rather than against, his ongoing efforts to promote rurality, sense of place, and individual liberty for all in a rapidly modernizing world. From Wordsworth to Gaskell, Trollope to Sinclair, the right to domestic happiness remains at the forefront of advocacy for wage-labor reform. Wordsworth's campaigning for the protection of domestic life was neither the first nor the loudest, but it was trenched in concerns over protecting rural culture and the intimacy we build with a distinctly local space. In this sense, Wordsworth not only anticipated Victorian responses to industrial poverty and domestic decay, but he also foresaw the inevitable consequence of an irrevocably mechanized world that carried through the end of the century.

[119] "The Railways and Rural Tradition," p. 181.

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