

Title: The Affective Immanence of Landscape: Transformative Pastoral Empathy  
and Environmental Social Science in Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain Poems

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**THE AFFECTIVE IMMANENCE OF LANDSCAPE: TRANSFORMATIVE PASTORAL EMPATHY  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL SCIENCE IN WORDSWORTH'S SALISBURY PLAIN POEMS**

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected  
in tranquillity.

*Preface to Lyrical Ballads*

I have slept  
Weeping, and weeping I have waked; my tears  
Have flow'd as if my body were not such  
As others are, and I could never die.  
'The Ruined Cottage'

...may the heart  
Breathe in the air of fellow-suffering  
Dreadless, as in a kind of fresher breeze  
Of her own native element.  
'Home at Grasmere'

In *Salisbury Plain* (1793-4) and *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* (1795-99) the poet's sense of mind and nature are aligned to the relationship between affect and history.<sup>2</sup> This interest particularly brings into relief social inequity and the displaced working class during Wordsworth's engagement with enclosure and its close relation, the Poor Laws in England.<sup>3</sup> The mode of departure from pastoral represents an emergent predicament most clear where the innocence of the Golden Age is met with a murder, a sacrifice and a hanging. It is of interest to literary critics that this very departure takes place while Wordsworth is reworking pastoral for *Lyrical Ballads*—the high point in British Romantic poetry, which gives birth to

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<sup>2</sup> I am using Gill for both versions of the poem, which I shall indicate separately as *SP* (*Salisbury Plain*) and *ASP* (*Adventures on Salisbury Plain*).

<sup>3</sup> Between 1795 and 1815 an area one tenth the size of England was subject to enclosure; acres of wastes, commons and heaths were no longer accessible as common lands, effectively reducing the incomes of local labouring families by one half (Kelly 45). The impact of regulation on people and land (via organized charity and establishment of endowments) is a complex issue emerging both from 'the response of the central government [that] focused on regulating the grain trade and on controlling vagrancy' (Kelly and Ó Gráda 343) and nuanced localized power. Prior to 1850, state provision of welfare was caught up in a complex web of '264 general acts and more than 100 local acts' that impinged on the administration of communal relief for the poor (King 18). The Poor Laws were conceived to protect the aged, the sick, the infant poor and able-bodied, or 'those who were not liable to conviction as vagrants but for whom available charitable resources were inadequate' (Oxley 16). Closer to the composition period of *SP* and *ASP*, in 1782 parishes attained the right to form unions for better management and payment of the poor; parishes had been involved in poor relief since 1601 but it was not until 1819 that they were allowed to acquire land (up to 20 acres) for the poor to cultivate (King 274); according to Kelly and Ó Gráda, 'on the eve of the French Revolution expenditure per head on poor relief in England was eight times that of France' (345). By the 1820s a more radical approach to rural property in UK emerged: removing the surplus population to where there were new opportunities for work: the United States, Canada, South Africa and Australia (Oxley 118).

the modern lyric (Kane 271).<sup>4</sup> Pastoral in Wordsworth's hands is anything but a container for solipsism and solitude; its subject and mode are innately social and empathic, giving rise to sombrous allegories of communities located in states of crises alert to the pain of others. I turn to Wordsworth's use of landscape and narrative that envelop dialogue throughout his modernising of an eclogue type, during a period that was to produce the social pattern of modern industrial England.

Miranda Burgess critiques Cartesian dualism that separates affect and emotion in time: affect (the visceral arousal conceived as raw material for cognition) coming before emotion (the evaluative, interpretative outcome of cognitive processes). The distinction between affect and emotion, Burgess argues, 'rests on the alignment of emotion with individuation, or subjectivity' (293). Wordsworth's subject of poetry—the feeling historical subject—underlines the personal, narrative qualities of affect, and yet it is clear that the Salisbury Plain poems present non-personal and non-narrative qualities, too; they operate socially and synchronically, at times akin to transpersonal affect, at others holistic, and therefore disrupt Cartesian coordinates and the privileging of autonomous selves.<sup>5</sup> The canonical reception of Wordsworth suggests a consistent doctrine at the heart of his poetry: that the origin and phenomena of life are produced by a vital principle; nature in all its complexity and contradiction informs the human spirit and its resolve. Without strictly speaking of vitalism, Gilles Deleuze helps us read life within a sense of a large formulation, a conceptualisation of immanence that might speak to a non-dualist theory of emotions that literary studies can offer to the social sciences:

The life of the individual has given way to a life that is impersonal but singular nevertheless, and which releases a pure event freed from the accidents of inner and outer life; freed, in other words, from the subjectivity of what happens: '*Homo tantum*' with which everyone sympathizes and which attains a sort of beatitude. (4)

A blessing without narrative that presents humility, mercy and compassion (beatitude) is an uncannily accurate description of the modulated pastoral modes within the dialogues of the

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<sup>4</sup> '[W]e could say that the energies of pastoral didn't disappear: they were transformed into the eighteenth-century loco-descriptive poem, which itself becomes the lyric genre par excellence of romanticism in the hands of Wordsworth. One is tempted to say that the death of pastoral gave birth to the modern lyric' (Kane 271).

<sup>5</sup> Sedgwick uses these terms to argue for the inseparability of affect and emotion.

Salisbury Plain poems. In these poems, porous human subjects (and non-human animals) seep into the energy and motion of the domain; however, the dark natural order does not find an allegory within a singular subject, but locates a social space beyond sympathy.

### Introduction

*Lyrical Ballads, Salisbury Plain, Adventures on Salisbury Plain* and 'Home At Grasmere' see Wordsworth question the place of landscape in pastoral poetry. Paul Alpers insists that pastoral is not about landscape but the lives within it. He argues against a prevailing view that defines pastoral in terms of landscape that is 'charged and privileged by its responsiveness to desire' ('What is Pastoral?' 459). Alpers's paradigm enunciates an important idea: pastoral spaces 'answer to and express various human needs and concerns' (460) - a position that refines his understanding of William Empson's great argument 'that any human expression is bound up in its circumstances and indeed can get much of its power from dwelling fully within them' ('Empson' 103).<sup>6</sup> Conforming to this useful paradigm for pastoral criticism, Wordsworth's experience of Salisbury and Grasmere enquires into the extent to which these needs and concerns can be disconnected from the life of the shepherd, and by extension whether they can disconnect from society and from place. An emphasis on the retelling of experience to sympathetic others potentially counters any dismissal of landscape, as with Alpers's critical focus on the 'social, ethical, erotic and poetic' ('What is Pastoral?' 460), and yet it portends at least some relation to desire; at the very least a longing for a safe place to dwell. For Wordsworth, landscape remains relevant to these very four dimensions articulated by Alpers; displaced labourers, dead spaces, and objects in the landscape are reformulated within pastoral's capacity for realism while its conventions are not only treated with critical awareness but also exaggerated and countered. These poems' reflexive capacities point to a generic restriction by which they are susceptible to presenting the situations of inhabitants of the space; their shame and desire, their joys and hopes. This

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<sup>6</sup> We might notice a conflicted position emerging within Alpers's thesis here. While claiming the importance of place, partly for the disclosure of human emotions (as per Empson), Alpers refutes a critical misconception to claim pastoral for any writing about nature (particularly within the context of the rise of first-wave ecocriticism). This position, while noteworthy in terms of disciplinary debates, does not unpack the politics or problematics of desire; it is only offered within the context that 'certain representations of landscape have always been characteristic of pastoral' ('What is Pastoral' 460). As a consequence, Alpers does not underscore the importance of place, neither in and of itself, nor as an agent within a field of emergent (and potentially affective) relations; his sense of dwelling (thought, feeling, life) is thus incomplete.

cultural issue derives from a social aspect informing a politics of emotional control. This social aspect, therefore, indicates the governance of people's feelings.

Alpers argues that '[l]ike every good critic of pastoral, Wordsworth is attentive to the representing consciousness as well as to the lives represented' ('What is Pastoral?' 447). In Theocritus's idylls, herdsmen are not characteristic shepherds; people are songsters or storytellers of their domain. Accordingly, Wordsworth's figures in the landscape are balladeers and proto-autoethnographers. These figures are represented by a consciousness that outlines empathic relations clustered in discrete and temporary social spaces: sites of pastoral dialogue reconfigured as affordances for empathy. Furthermore, in the Salisbury Plain poems, speaking both of their 'home' domains and the places through which they roam abroad, the displaced poor are bodily set in transport while they transport emotions across terrain to the point of contagion. Mobility is coupled to being moved, extending the Romantic sense of poetry as 'essentially a matter of individual sensibility and spiritual experience' (Alpers 449) to an extensive affective field that is environmentally transcorporeal. Pastoral is more than a mode or genre; it is a way of exploring literature and literature's relation to life. Wordsworth demonstrates an understanding of this. His historical mood is in part indebted to the classical coordination between culture and nature as parallel activities in pastoral, which Wordsworth transforms into immanent activity; an affective force portending that experience is 'more deeply interfused' ('Tintern' 76). This stance, poetic and political, appears to have significant relevance for pastoral and its emotions in late-eighteenth-century England.

### Landscape and Liberty

Kevis Goodman proposes that poetic form, for Wordsworth, is a way of mediating contemporary conditions of forced movement. The mediation is sometimes 'consolatory', sometimes 'memorial.' A thief and murderer caught in the grip of penury, the lone traveller of the opening to the Salisbury Plain poems desperately seeks escape from the psychological turmoil that haunts him. He moves in darkness through the vastness of the plain in the southwest of England. It is far from the contained pasture of northerly Grasmere; it is a conflicted site of production and waste, open to the elements. Like a homeless romance quest figure whose difficult road is externalised in the depiction of a ruinous and barren landscape, this figure is also subject to pastoral transport: from a subject in the world with a burdensome personal history, to the intrapsychic social realm of shared emotions. These two realms map

onto Goodman's sense of the memorial (ruins) and the consolatory (pastoral dialogues), which fuses the environmental and the social with a view to human presence in time.

The traveller walks while 'long.. he fancied each successive slope | Conceal'd some cottage' (*ASP* 64-65). Wordsworth selects 'fancy' here, over 'hope', to avoid an internal rhyme, and to mobilise the word's strong currency in eighteenth-century discourse on sentimentality, particularly the lexicon of the first theorists of emotion including the Scottish moral philosopher Adam Smith: 'We transport ourselves in fancy'; we 'enter into' the emotions of a book's historical circumstance and its characters, and we 'bring home to ourselves the situation' in which feelings take place (Smith 75). This entrance into and transport of affect mirrors pastoral's generic movements between city and country, and is most evident in Wordsworth's empathic pastoral of this period. 'Sympathy in Smith's understanding,' for Burgess, 'requires the subject's imaginative movement through time and space, precisely to the extent that it depends upon the medium of the imagination' (304).<sup>7</sup> She notes how Smith's sense of propriety and good moral conduct in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) relies upon the imagination as a *vehicle* that connects affect to emotion, thus placing his theory of morality (conscience, moral judgement and virtues) within the 'Cartesian tradition' that marks distinction between anterior affect and judgment-based, analytical emotion (301). This vehicle—or the mode of transport between thinking and feeling, of central importance in the history of moral and political thought—can be understood differently, as I shall demonstrate.

Pastoral delimits a particular hermeneutics for its reading. Three consecutive phases deconstruct modernity's break from the ancient: leave-taking, residence in a pastoral space, and a return to the city, respectively. Movement frames dwelling while history measures the present. For Kelly, transport underlines loss and alienation (50-53); for Alpers, pastoral lament is set within 'verbs of motion' where death can be 'described in terms of departures' (*What is Pastoral?* 83). In the Salisbury Plain poems, emotion is backlit by motion as signified by the vanishing cathedral spire:

the distant spire  
That fixed at every turn his backward eye  
Was lost, tho' still he turned, in the blank sky. (*ASP* 48-50)

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<sup>7</sup> See Pinch for the eighteenth-century context i.e. sentiment in philosophy and literature (72-110).

Lost, unhomed and set in an elemental field of emptiness ('blank sky'), the traveller enters 'Sarum's Plain'—the old corrupt borough where the establishment has stolen property from the people. Here, sense experience lacks an object for its gaze (the cathedral); consequently as with the bond between people, the anchor to a known place is loosened. The human is mindful of this double loss: he casts a 'backward eye' rather than an inward eye. However, there is more than causation linking two spatially separated elements here:

As the traveller moves further away from Salisbury, a tiny figure silhouetted against a louring sky 'red with stormy fire' [*SP* 37], the environment becomes increasingly unfamiliar and unnatural. It is, paradoxically, the increase in arable exploitation of the plain that makes it inhuman, as the very evidence of human productivity is transformed into or revealed as something alien; boundless 'wastes of corn' [44] and 'huge piles of corn stack' [48] that in the landscape of nightmare become strangely akin not only to the 'brow sublime' [80] and 'gigantic bones' [44] but to the 'huge plain' [62] itself. They fit. (Kelly 51)

Human and landscape are wedded not through an exploration of what is known and desired (an imagined cottage), but via the warping of the known to almost supernatural status. And yet, the relationship between the traveller and a fellow vagrant that soon follows this configuration of landscape is thus presented in material terms: production and waste.

The geography of Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain is the net sum of farming practices that have generated corn to feed (increasingly urban) multitudes following a change in law that made provision for the land to become crop, no longer a common area of scrub available to all. Wordsworth brings to life a modernised pastoral dialogue in the Salisbury Plain poems where a version of democracy draws from a medieval construct of mutual responsibility; and yet in pushing beyond Renaissance idealisation of primitive pastoral or feudal England as agrarian collective, pastoral in *SP* and *ASP* gives way to profit wherein the inhabitants suffer from environmental alienation through unmediated access to and direct experience of the impacts of unsustainable production. Wordsworth's aesthetics do not portend a prelinguistic access to reality, an unmediated (or pantheistic) nature for example; they enfold landscape and people into common destiny: loss, despoliation. Here excess, paradoxically, creates a waste of people: 'an unpeopled desert, a profusion which destroys its own purpose' (Kelly 51). Less causally, however, there is transformation.

The speakers' interaction cast in the light of Wordsworth's depiction of landscape (above) 'stands at a symbolic midpoint between isolation and community' (Fosso, 'Politics' 168) where pastoral topography is transformed from gothic wastes. It is significant that this midpoint also collapses leave-taking and pastoral dwelling—two of the genre's structuring devices. The dialogue's tone at this point discloses empathy while the narrative suggests that the landscape's affordances are at odds with the imagination. The traveller seeks 'in vain some shepherd's ragged thorn' (ASP 59), which reminds us of the longing in the scene above. Again, the landscape yields not to desire, and he must pass onwards 'more wild, forlorn, | And vacant' (62-63). These lines propel us towards the image of a figure within a holistic affective field. It is worth slowing things down here while mindful of Alpers's underplayed focus on landscape and its responsiveness to desire, and of Smith's notion of transport between two things at spatiotemporal distance from one another. 'Forlorn' derives from Old English *forloren*, the past participle of *forlēosan*, which means 'to lose.' The generic character type is placed in analogy to the landscape, rather than in control or in possession of the land. A withdrawal from the genre here is registered in a mood of hopelessness underscored by an empathic apostrophe on behalf of the narrator: 'the huge plain around him spread; | Ah me! the wet cold ground must be his only bed' (62-63). This figure of speech is ordinarily employed to distance the voice from reality and address an imaginary character; here, the addressee is the observer. The shift in narrative is such that the pastoral mode and genre are not only disjoined but also inverted while the reader is left to imagine the experience of the traveller melting into the barren domain. We expect a sparsely populated pastoral realm fulfilling human desire; here, the figure is 'vacant' but the site is rich with waste. This unanticipated aesthetic moment pregnant with paradox takes purchase of the sensitive reader's mind, testing the imagination as transcorporeal bond; however, the double force of this phrase refers equally to the traveller's suffering and the narrator's sense of it: 'me' and 'his' commingle, and thus empathy softens the literary incongruity. There is no impartial spectator here; no detachment of the narrator from the ground of circulating affects.<sup>8</sup> The net effect is an intra-psychic drama of pastoral modes set on an imminent interpersonal stage, which only serves to signify how character and observer are in feeling with each other (in a living, historical place) rather than how character and landscape are at odds.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Burgess 302.

<sup>9</sup> Sympathy derives from ancient Greek *syn* (together) and *pathos* (feeling); it refers to the perception and understanding to the distress of others; however, it denotes an emotional response that is not



### Affective Immanence

I am arguing that this narrative nuance marks an empathic dimension to the poem's cognitive field, which asks us to rethink the need for imaginative transport between discrete things, and to rethink the common ground between humans and non-humans alike. It is valuable to be mindful that these ideas register in the pastoral key, which has been placed within a context of loss and waste, despoliation and destruction. It is an example of the way that the Salisbury Plain poems offer metaphors for the self's affective relations with nature and society portend a precocious sustainability ethic.<sup>10</sup> Such affective porosity does not entail a defence against exteriority; in abstraction, at least, this porous and modulating interface between humans complies with Alpers's understanding of Romantic sensitivity: 'Wordsworth's meditative pastoral absorbs vocalizing into its own inner movement and music' wherein 'large formulations absorb feeling' (*What is Pastoral?* 274). In my analysis, this absorption is not confined to human society but implies an emotional community of the more-than-human world.

Ten stanzas later, the poem addresses the landscape: 'Thou hoary Pile!' (ASP 154) within a move to enter into the feelings of the traveller: 'Who in his heart had groan'd with deadlier pain | Than he who travels now along thy bleak domain?' (161-162). Figure and ground are placed within a reflexive discourse that entails a mutual bond of suffering and mourning in place (Fosso, 'Community') underscored by the rhyme that binds subject and object. Just before this very situation, Wordsworth positions another form of failed distance between his narrator and his subject to create a distinct view of the terrain and its dwellers, close in company through a common bond to the past.

Hurtle the clouds by deeper darkness piled,  
Gone is the raven timely rest to seek;  
He seem'd the only creature in the wild  
On whom the elements their rage might wreak;

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shared e.g. noticing the suffering of others but feeling only pity (as with the expression, 'the poor thing'). Empathy derives from *empathia*, meaning 'in' or 'at' plus 'suffering' or 'passions'. Empathy has a dual definition: (i) 'perspective taking', imagining things from another person's point of view; (ii) 'emotional response', sharing or mirroring another person's emotions. Stepping into someone's shoes is to gain an understanding of their perspectives (the cognitive aspect) and their feelings (the affective aspect). See Decety, and Krnjaric (7-16).

<sup>10</sup> 'Sustain' is a Middle English word; 'Sustainable', early seventeenth century; 'Sustainability', late twentieth century.

Save that the bustard, of those limits bleak  
 Shy tenant, seeing by the uncertain light  
 A man there wandring gave a mournful shriek,  
 And half upon the ground, with strange affright  
 Forc'd hard against the wind a thick unwieldy flight. (145-53)

Wordsworth's use of participles is telling here. The central point of observation in stanza seventeen is that of the large bird, the bustard, an inhabitant of dry open country. Landscape-scale poetics enliven the visual field here while narrative does not move forward in time; rather, lingering meditation is intensified into a stillness that is ripped apart by the sonorous, vital affirmation of the shriek throughout a shared space. The passage seems to point to the displacement of this creature of the sky, so at home in this unforgiving space; the bustard is given to the arousal of fright and fear ('affright') and has to take to the wing, which for a land bird (at such speed) can often result in 'unwieldy' flight. The non-human is read as one that is insecure in its disposition, potentially fearful. Is the bird attuned to an affective domain 'clos'd by our senses five', as Blake would have it?<sup>11</sup> Is Wordsworth indicating new horizons in the science of consciousness?

Today's philosophers inform us that immanence is unsystematic; it forms and deforms entities (Woodard). Moreover, in her critique of the Kantian tradition that gives priority to 'the essential autonomy of the feeling self', Burgess writes against the idea of affect located 'in discrete bodies and persons'; a second view proposes affect as 'a phenomenon anterior to the distinction of persons' (289).<sup>12</sup> Affect that goes beyond the bounded body, conceived as a flow of energy in and between bodies—as with the example of the landscape's mood extending into the bird (above)—might delineate a pre-individual site for emotions, forming and deforming events and objects within a field of experience. We take note of all these ideas in Wordsworth's view of place and his sense of human needs, which are equally inseparable in his oeuvre as it is coloured by a doctrine of a vital principle. Together, sometimes discordant, sometimes congruent, they are the germinating power of his lyricism. How might this combination relate to a sense of pastoral as a form 'dealing with, not retreating from difficult situations' (Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* 266)?

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<sup>11</sup> See the upper part of plate 7, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1789/1790).

<sup>12</sup> Clough's sense of contagious emotion precedes this argument, clarifying the value of analyzing pre-individual and circulatory emotions alongside social emotions in affect theory.

Emotions impact on our sense of a fit habitation and site for sustained or natural dwelling. Such impression on our perception of the landscape does not come from without, but from within. The traveller is inside the space; the shriek is of him and of the plain. The stanza opens with an absence, the lack of the raven, and brings the bustard in view as another ‘creature’ upon whom ‘the elements their rage might wreak’. Landscape and climate determine degrees of joy and fear in its inhabitants; however, the model of causal relations (or environmental determinism) is given over to a sense of contagion or circulatory affect in this poem. Wordsworth’s lyricism is showing the ‘deeper darkness’ that is ‘piled’. This affective field slowly accumulates over the pages; its expansive timescape is neither exterior, nor anterior, but an unfolding sum of relations within and of the scene depicted. Herein lies nuanced immanence of discord and terror in an obscure relation with desire.

### Figure and Ground

Alpers thinks of pastoral in terms of convening: occasions for songs and colloquies that redress ‘separation, absence, loss’ (*What is Pastoral?* 81). Coming together is an idea that not only denotes consent, conduct and custom, but ‘agreement’ or ‘meeting’: convention is not impersonal; it is *interpersonal*. This view on assembly and agreement speaks to a democratic and inclusive human geography, and articulates a potential literary space of empathy for the more-than-human world. Pastoral brings herdsmen together to hear laments. Wordsworth’s movement away from pastoral brings animals, landscape, labourers and vagrants together in lyricism that belies pastoral’s heightened utterances that ‘characteristically emerge from speeches exchanged in small dramatic situations’ (86). Both models of figures—the classical and the modern—conform to an empathic sense of pastoral convention, where people ‘need each other to hear their complaints and share sentiments and pleasures to sustain them’ (81); there is a relationship between need and desire, however, in the first analysis, Wordsworth’s already traumatised figures are conceived within a unique sensitivity to the environment.

In the meeting of the traveller and the female vagrant, the dark shadows of the landscape’s accumulating sorrow suggest potential dynamism between sadness and joy—both manifestations of force—in what follows: Wordsworth’s modernisation of pastoral dialogue. A heavy storm comes in; the whirlwind’s ‘rage’ is ‘extreme’ (164) and operates ‘beneath’ the ‘fabric’ of the ‘scarce’ plain (163). There is no road sign, no gypsy on the path,

no labourer watching his kiln (172-80); in short, no direction, no companionship, and no labour. Slowly the moon rises and a ruined spital comes into view. Much like the hut in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1603-07), the opportune yet unfit refuge is indicative of the protagonist's status as an outcast and someone with neither property nor security. Both literary motifs (site and person) are correct, but they do not harmonize in the scene. There is no comedy of survival. A blast of thunder or a flash of lightning-split sky would complete the understated gothic melodrama. There appears to be no direction home. Moreover, as J. H. Prynne notes with his example, the resting place is hard to visualise 'because of the fierce psychic interference which blisters against it from all sides' (620). This interference gesturing towards a radical non-duality is true for hut and human, dwelling place and dweller; the spot is untimely and ill fitting, and the character is at odds or out of time with the space. This breakdown spells the unfulfillment of desire to rest (the vagrant) while pointing to the genre's capacity to adapt to contemporary situations only after it is aware of its historical contours. In Wordsworth, the warped patoral space will underperform its role as sanctuary for 'the belated swain | From the night-terrors of that waste' (ASP 186-7). The 'belated' traveller is figured as a rustic peasant (swain) in light of his arrival at this location.<sup>13</sup> The lines suggest that he is a shepherd who comes too late to the spital; he is out of time generically, and thus out of place. While clearly marking this poem as a modal afterlife of pastoral, this curious attention to subject formation is a cue for us to be attentive to the ways in which Wordsworth develops a rich sense of time and history (both literary and social) here to great purpose.

The anterior affects of the 'spot' run from 'ancient' (184) times and these monuments fall into speedy ruin: 'and now the Walls are named the dead house of the Plain' (189). Despite this clearly inadmissible space—'there no human being could remain' (188)—the traveller's heart is lifted by the trace of human labour and the effort channelled into helping others in the past that this specific ruin brings to mind. He seeks to fit into the place's historical resonance while mindful of its character 'now,' to attune to its former comfort that is especially valuable in the present. This imaginative and heartfelt step is assisted by implicitly invoking the imaginary of ancient Druidism (of oral Celtic culture) that is part of the thematic and cultural hinterland to this poem, which rescues the moment from nostalgia; it is as if the reach towards or recall of a desired past brings with it other memories, other perhaps inseparable remnants of the fabric of history. Before entering into dialogue, the

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<sup>13</sup> Prynne traces this figure back to a prototype of the 'sad barbarian' in James Thomson's *The Seasons* (1730) (622-3).

traveller puts himself at ease by imitating a figure in a scene of pastoral respite, which collapses the spot's anteriority into the present:

Till to the moor the early shepherd goes  
Here shall sweet sleep his senseless limbs embrace.  
In a dry nook where fern the floor bestrews  
He lays his stiffen'd limbs: his eyes began to close (195-98)

The green and well-covered ground is dry; it is suitable for a leisurely slumber after a short walk, and his repose is bodily in keeping with a tamed pastoral space. In the spirit of Raymond Williams's understanding of pastoral, Wordsworth places a screen on the real to show how it can encrypt invisible rural labour and material conditions; it is placed here only to become transparent as the failing conditions for rest are horrifically magnified by the memory of the female vagrant.

Before he can enter into sleep, the traveller hears the mourning sounds of an as yet unseen and unexpected figure: the female vagrant crying aloud in her sleep. She wakes and instantly recalls 'a tale' (206) of violence that took place at the very spot on which the two are attempting to sleep. Further to this gruesome recollection of a man stoning his horse to death, the vagrant—no longer anterior nor adjunct—recalls her meeting an old man, close to starvation, with a rusting gun, asking for 'the hour' (229); shortly after this, we hear 'of a Swain far astray' (236) who met with the 'mysterious council' (243) of giant figures with shields and axes. The analogue between the figure in her story and the male vagrant who is equally 'astray' and chronographically challenged is compelling; however, the Druidic practices following the modern figure instance a poetic compression of time on the plain, and they also indicate the scene's proximity to Stonehenge and its social structure based upon death and resurrection. Much like the figure that is brought to consciousness from sleep, and the parallel between time-past and time-present as a means to encourage empathic relations, the gothic element here is not one of paralysis and annihilation; it is of a transformational economy (Fosso, 'Politics' 165-66) that is partly lost in this barren space and yet is to be felt in the imagined resonance of the ruin, and in the unrest and perpetual movement (emotionally and geographically) of the vagrants.

The speaker has spent much time relating tales of the harrowing passages through life made by others, before speaking from personal experience:

Much more of dreams from antient ages fetch'd,  
 And spectral sights that fill the shadowy plain,  
 And of wild sounds that mock the shepherd stretch'd  
 On the round barrow 'mid his fleecy train  
 She told, delighted that her fears were vain. (243-47)<sup>14</sup>

The space is soaked in life that can be 'fetch'd' into consciousness that is aware of its difference from pastoral utopias. This awareness—partly of genre slipping into mode—frames experiences of the other and of the self. Such disparity here, however, is mobilized into a third term of the dialectic as social reward, what Anne Janowitz has named 'moments of community' (106). Like Stonehenge and pastoral, the spital is a node in a vast network of life 'where people are linked by corporate experiences of loss and death' (Fosso, 'Politics' 167):

Meanwhile discourse ensued of various kind  
 Which by degrees a confidence of mind  
 And mutual interest fail'd not to create. (ASP 256-58)

Again, Wordsworth interrogates surface dualism to foreground bonding and potential for social and individual transformation. In addition to a sensitivity to space, the emphasis is on the unfolding of time: 'meanwhile' and the duration of events: continuity (memory) over history (change). This narrative hook is an analogue of the dialogue reliant on intimate space, the distance between mouth and ear, and of concordance in the present. An accumulation of discrete elements in the poem shifts register from wasted space to its inhabitants mutually alert to communal experience; transport from historical consciousness to a co-creative living biography in the making.<sup>15</sup>

### Politics of Pastoral

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<sup>14</sup> Annabel Paterson argues that the dreaming man figure in the opening of *The Ruined Cottage* could not have been written without Wordsworth's conceiving of Tityrus (277-278). This passage is similarly evoking.

<sup>15</sup> Wordsworth's treatment of time is constructed quite differently in 'Michael: A Pastoral Poem' (1800), which has a less intimate sense of simultaneity and synchronicity than the Salisbury Plain poems. Luke's ignominy and shame—public disgrace, negative social emotion—happen in the 'meantime' (451) of his father's farming practices. '[M]eantime' is key: 'it signals the split into distinct spatial-temporal experiences, the word itself denoting one temporal order which intervenes into ... another, the two orders being simultaneous but separate' (Wiley 55).

Ancestry and progeny might not affect the relationship between the speakers in the example above; however, the vagrant has experienced great loss—her husband and children in the American war,<sup>16</sup> the dispossession of her father's land—and her decline into vagrancy is seen as an effect of these desperate events. Wordsworth, however, does not entertain a fully formed and individualised poetics of loss via a sequence of events:

The traveler reads her voice as mournful and ghostly, then, for much the same reason that she perceives him as one of the dead's company and is herself later referred to as a "mourner" (351): they are already assembled by their status as mourners and by their repeated transferring of mourning and death onto one another. (Fosso, 'Politics' 164)

The power of such 'mutual interest' seems to dispel any sense of reducing an affective plane of immanence (i.e. emotion separate from affect) to a subject's perception of something exterior to herself: 'She knew not what a hell such spot had power to wake' (ASP 252). This lack of a privileged autonomous self's cognitive control is akin to not holding emotion as a private property of a person. A defence of objectivity, and narrative intrusion, are markedly absent here. The voice given to mourning and death enacts dwelling as a shared field of experience (or analogous experience), which betokens a possibility for fellow feeling: 'And now to natural sympathy resign'd, | In that forsaken building where they sate' (259-60). The spot in Salisbury Plain has never been the property of its inhabitants, and this levels the affective ground. The weakened cognitive dimension in *Adventures on Salisbury Plain*, viewed in this loosely defined democratic light, radically alters any reading of the poem; of metaphor and allegory; of figure and ground. The poem is now operating on three levels of feeling: first, the affective field that encompasses landscape, climate, humans and non-humans, an almost contagious accumulation of hardship and suffering; second, care for the personal hardship of each of the storytellers' on the part of each listener; third, empathy for either character in story, or for the storyteller on the part of the listener. The traveller is the listener to the female vagrant's stories of others, a dynamic relation that delineates 'natural sympathy' from the point of view of the narrator, which concords with an emergent space of empathy between the protagonists. As the poem progresses, the traveller and vagrant become

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<sup>16</sup> Wiley suggests that William Crowe's *Lewesdon Hill* (1788) is a source for Wordsworth for its dissident Whig politics 'including his opposition to Britain's policy in America (that is, to the military policy that led to the death of the female vagrant's family)' (36). Wordsworth's critique of a causeless war—the American Revolution/War of Independence (1775-1783)—is sustained in 'Home at Grasmere' (MS. D 801-02) where the source for his imagination in social and political idealism comes from a chief principle outwith the vale.

increasingly understanding owing to their common experience of injustice, and the futility of relating such experiences within a contained pastoral space lacking a public. Wordsworth's struggle with this very problem is made apparent by comparing the conclusions to the first two versions of the poem.

*Salisbury Plain* ends with fourteen stanzas that are no longer concerned with the figures that give voice to emotions. The first of these holds the voice of an addressor sympathetically casting farewell, or 'Adieu' to the 'friendless hope-forsaken pair!' (SP 415). The poem moves on at this point to consider notions of Justice, Peace, Truth, Injury, Strife and Hate. It speaks directly of Slaves, Exile, Terror and Bonds, the Law, Pride and Reason. Highly charged with rhetorical flourishes and epigrammatic turns of phrase, there is a cleverness or control that operates while the poet is energised, the line enthusiastic, the mood revolutionary. There is, therefore, some confluence or commingling of emotion and reason, of strong feeling attuned to the twilight of late-eighteenth-century England. How might the close of the poem proper and this politicised pastoral post-script assist our understanding of Wordsworth's historical treatment of emotions and landscape?

The first stanza is an invitation not to exercise nostalgia for pastoral, but to entertain a 'parody of pre-enclosure propaganda' (Kelly 541):

But now from a hill summit down they look  
Where through a narrow valley's pleasant scene  
A wreath of vapour tracked a winding brook  
Babbling through groves and lawns and meads of green.  
A smoking cottage peeped the trees between,  
The woods resound the linnet's amorous lays,  
And melancholy lowings intervene  
Of scattered herds that in the meadows graze,  
While through the furrowed grass the merry milkmaid strays. (SP 406-414)

The scene is animated by active and contagious energies; vapours track a 'winding' and 'babbling' brook invoking a parallel between air and water; the 'smoking' homestead echoes the first image while peeping through trees which give to the woods, themselves resounding with the sounds of birds that are interfused with the utterances of cattle. Each item in this diffuse and fluid amalgam operates metonymically for the whole, and yet there has been too much 'melancholy' before we are invited to accept the pastoral stock character (the 'merry milkmaid') as a serious final labourer of the poem and representative of human society. In



Wordsworth's first version of the poem, *Salisbury Plain*, a return to a *locus amoenus* and its order is unconvincing. It is intended to be so. These lines invoke an intuitive sense of Romantic irony with respect to genre where it appears that pastoral is invoked to remind us of its malleability, and its limits. Through the reformist narrator's clarion call at the very end of the poem, Wordsworth sets up false pattern recognition as a means to reflect upon the values or traditions by which we read literature and landscape. Notably, difference is prioritised over fellowship.

The second version of the poem, *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* (1795-1799), is more complex in terms of emotions, speaking of empathy rather than sympathy. As we come to the final stanza we are reminded of an earlier event: stanza thirteen details a 'spectacle' (*ASP* 118) revealing the space as 'savage', which cannot be viewed without surrendering to a 'shuddering pain' (119). In this scene we learn of a crude and violent example made of another criminal, that reminds the traveller of 'all he had feared from man' (121)—perhaps cruel retribution for his own crime—knocking him to the ground where he lay 'without sense or motion' (125). It is a high point of melodrama: unintentional stasis triggered by violence; movement held still in the grip of emotion:

For as he plodded on, with sudden clang  
A sound of chains along the desert rang:  
He looked, and saw on a bare gibbet nigh  
A human body that in irons swang,  
Uplifted by the tempest sweeping by,  
And hovering round it often did a raven fly. (112-17)<sup>17</sup>

The sound waves of the bell might ripple the feathers of the bird that lives on decaying waste as a hanged man sways in the wind. Such is Wordsworth's investment in affective resonance across time and space, and across species and life. Fast-forward to the final scene of the poem to note the extension of the pangs of the guilty man's conscience to an enacted social world, a public space where he was hanged for others to see:

They left him hung on high in iron case...  
And now some kindred sufferer driven, perchance,  
That way when into storm the sky is wrought,  
Upon his swinging corpse his eye may glance

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<sup>17</sup> The sounds of chains on an open plain links this poem with the sounds of the manacles of an escaped convict in the fragment 'Incipient Madness' (circa 1797, first published in 1940).

And drop, as he once dropp'd, in miserable trance. (821; 825-28)

Here is an image of a moving body paradoxically signifying the terminus of life at the last breath of the poem. For the eye to drop, perhaps the body is innately expressing an emotion: the head hanging in shame. While affectively charged, the rhyming pattern fuses contingency or the unexpected – ‘perchance’ to the shape of the natural world – ‘glance’ – and these conjoin on the way to the emotional disposition of the subject’s waking state, his ‘miserable trance’. This lexicon stitches together surprise, sense experience and state of mind within an accumulative register fusing seeing and feeling, drawing the reader towards a sense of similarity, repetition. This register occupies separate consecutive lines and yet again the attributes are not strictly causal. ‘Drop’ and ‘dropped’ take one syllable each, conflating time-past and time-present, while the tri-syllabic word ‘miserable’ places extreme suffering at centre stage, but it is dependent upon this collocation of separate moments in history underscored by the internal slant rhyme. This linguistic occurrence resonates with Wordsworth’s unique sense of the duration of emotions in time (as above) that are as circular as they are linear, as spatial as they are historical; geographically present when historical consciousness is awakened. It also signifies Wordsworth’s intimate and delicate rippling waves of understated literary foreshadowing over explicit narrative prolepsis; the traveller we learn is a murderer, but he is not a dead man until the end of the poem.

In this seemingly non-productive wasteland, for all their imagery of death, depopulation and decay, both poems exhibit a reformist animus i.e. motivation to move away from this space and the affective field of ‘the living plain’ (ASP 124). These two elements are backdrop to neither human nor non-human action; life is immanent and pastoral is tentatively transformative. This discrete landscape modulation on epistemological and material terms is best understood by the power dynamic between climate and weather: the sky does not precede and give life to the storm, rather it is shaped by its many changing properties over time: ‘into storm the sky is wrought.’ Deleuze reminds us of relevant seventeenth-century metaphysics: ‘In Spinoza immanence is not immanence *to* substance, but substance and modes are *in* immanence’ (4). In this view, Wordsworth’s sky is an ‘immanent event’ that ‘actualises itself in a state of things’ (the storm) and ‘in a lived state’ (to be ‘wrought’) which brings the event about (5). And, to keep with Wordsworth, it is in ‘that way’—the rise of immanence figured non-dualistically across humans and non-humans alike—that poetry locates nuanced affect. While there is neither a clear logical nor semantic bond between the

storm and the wretchedness of human circumstance, it is a misery nonetheless that affirms the involuntary and unbidden disposition of the vagrant; caught out by injustice and by the tempest of the plain, he is 'wrought' in the scene of nature. This complex view of landscape belies its power to invoke the poet's critique of society at large.

### Conclusion

For Wiley, Wordsworth's spatialised affect as seen in his use of ruined spaces and this decaying pastoral is an attempt to understand 'out of the absence, the *ou-topos* or no place that it has become' whether he and others can construct in their 'imagination and memory, a space in which they can sustain pastoral-idyllic values' (50). Fosso's more literary than geographical understanding of Wordsworth's innovation offers a marked comparison in terms of the poems of *Lyrical Ballads*: 'their deployment of genre is more muted than is the case of *Salisbury Plain*, producing neither that poem's disjunctive mobilizations nor its haunting vision of a summit as yet unattained in a world of social deserts and deeps' (173-74). Perhaps a poet articulates the best account of affective immanence in this period:

We are dealing here with cultural screening and projection, across a threshold of transitional signifiers that is specifically important for the part of surrender of voluntary control implicated in the practices of the Romantic imagination. It is not to be the constructions of art and regulatory tradition that give shape to formless powers, but encounter with the protected real world open and without accommodation, and unvoiced. (Prynne 623-24)

Narrative control of dialogue contrasted with the storytelling of emotions, and the pastoral genre itself giving shape to 'formless powers', both seem critically relevant to a reading of the *Salisbury Plain* poems. Wordsworth's own particular screening of emotion in these poems projects across individual subjects and energises cultural exchanges to destabilise any (potentially unhelpful) dichotomy between landscape and the lives within it.

Wordsworth's reflexive engagement with pastoral space enables a view on life in the context of lived life—the shepherd, the displaced labourer—and in the context of non-life—ruined pastoral homesteads, empty spaces. Here, Wordsworth's Romantic poetics of selfhood oscillate between personal memory and human history; however, the lyric in the wake of the pastoral mode also grafts affect to life to disclose contemporary conditions in England. This creative force renders visible the hidden meaning experienced by the living being. It unpacks

the boundaries of self within an impulse to thematise immanence, gesturing towards a contemporary politics of injustice and degrees of fellow feeling for our species' predicaments.

Commenting on a different period of pastoral literature in England, Louise Montrose proposes that 'to write *about* pastoral may be a way of displacing and simplifying the discontents of the latter-day humanist in an increasingly technocratic academy and society' (415). It might be true that Wordsworth is guilty of such displacement in his creative practice. With respect to criticism, it appears that a recent wave of interest in pastoral, as with georgic and with elegy and odes, seems to return us to our discipline, the study of literature:

What is the pastoral convention, then, if not the eternal separation between the mind that distinguishes, negates, legislates, and the originary simplicity of the natural? . . . There is no doubt that the pastoral theme is, in fact, the only poetic theme, that it is poetry itself. (de Man, 'Dead-end' 239)

Paul de Man's understanding of Empson's analysis of English pastoral as 'an ontology of the poetic' reminds us what poetry can do with thinking and feeling. Wordsworth's handling of pastoral is generic in that his articulation of affect resists conflating the Arcadian and Utopian; his practice is transformative in the ways that it frees itself from mimesis through its narrative frames. These frames denote a reflexive metapoetics that combines with genre to offer despatches from the site of tired bucolic markers and unreal spaces. Moreover, Wordsworth's attention to genre discloses an affective region of the mind to be visited for a sense of the real conditions of country and culture. From an alternative perspective, these frames can be read as an 'anecdote' representing the contingencies of our aesthetic impulse to 'provide for historical continuity or change within the form' (Alpers 'What is Pastoral?' 441).<sup>18</sup>

Acutely aware of limitations born of counterfeiting rustical communications (that veil the interests of the ruling class), shades of political consciousness in Wordsworth point not to the deficiencies of melancholy but perhaps to how the poet feels that raising anger is inappropriate within the historical mode. In the Salisbury Plain poems, a politics of impotence (anger) is quashed by an aesthetics of empathy that looks normative and

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<sup>18</sup> See also Alpers's 'Empson' (102) for a deft summary of literary freedom and social, psychological and historical restriction.

innovative at once. For Karl Kroeber, this spirited comportment brings into relief one possible affective community. The constitutive psychology deriving from Wordsworth's emphasis on inclusive wholeness in Kroeber's reading is more complex than a substitute for religious experience ('Ecological' 53). The human can play within the greater 'intercourse of knowledge' (Wordsworth, 'Home' 756), promote growth as the true constant (over change), and can act out figures within the dynamic settlement of society, 'deliberately fitting oneself into a natural organization consciously discerned and appreciated' (Kroeber, 'Home' 135). In the attempt to follow the emotional contours of Wordsworth's engagement with pastoral, this essay has evaluated how such a process of 'fitting' in the Salisbury Plain poems is concerned with cultural contamination (indwelling, empathy) and is accepting of both the historical record and its own moment within a continuity of humans' creative accounts.

From the limited study in this essay, it is not possible to reflect on whether the long history of pastoral has an innate logic resident within fixed formal patterns that repeat over time. And yet Wordsworth exhibits how the genre is plastic, and how the mode is elastic. Lyricism in the Salisbury Plain poems acts like a stress test for pastoral's power to exert a hermeneutic force on reading. Constructed communities, the resilience and dignity of vagrants set against contingent historical pressures, the desire for social amelioration in its absence: all these are hinted at in pastoral through the ages; they combine as thematic reflection on contemporaneous reformist scepticism and republican hope in late-eighteenth-century England. Furthermore, stabilities resident in the genre are undone while emotions appear contagious, and 'the Virgilian bower becomes, by its permeability, the site of the humanized imagination' (Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* 284). And it is here that Wordsworth outstrips Alpers's reading of the meditative absorption of feeling *by* landscape that answers to and expresses human needs. Wordsworth's focus on oral history invites communion with a landscape's restless affective field: the shriek of the man and the plight of the bird, the spital watermarked with a troubled history echoing the deeper time of Druidic sacrificial rituals unconcealed. This affective field exemplifies a moment when 'the analogical correspondence with nature no longer asserts itself'; for de Man 'when the earth under our feet is not the stable base in which we can believe ourselves to be anchored' ('Time' 7). Unstable mobility in the Salisbury Plain poems suggests not only the link between movement and feeling but also a subject in process, coming into being through its relations with others, including literary genre. The politics of transformation is on this side of the horizon. Pastoral, it appears, is inherently sociable and somatic, bound up in its circumstances and history.

In the final analysis, Wordsworth's intimacy with nature permits a disturbing reading of society at large. His project to modernise literary forms places the social spaces of individual and collective emotions in relation with physical and political environments, delimiting the cultural (and literary) landscapes in which individuals or groups (and readers) can orient themselves to analyse their responsiveness to these emotions, or even to act on their responses.

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