

# Evoking the Local: Wordsworth, Martineau and Early Victorian Fiction

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**EVOKING THE LOCAL: WORDSWORTH, MARTINEAU,  
AND EARLY VICTORIAN FICTION**

**Christopher Donaldson**

**Abstract:** Scholars have often recognized the 1830s and '40s as the decades in which Wordsworth first achieved significant commercial success as a poet. Yet, during these same years the market for poetry in Britain was in decline. The present article attends to these two seemingly contradictory developments, arguing that Wordsworth's success in this period can be linked to a broader shift in literary tastes towards fictional works representative of human life in its most particularized and locally distinctive forms. After examining Wordsworth's sales figures and his relationship with the publisher Edward Moxon, the article proceeds to situate Wordsworth within this shift by combining close readings of his pastoral poem 'Michael' (1800) and Harriet Martineau's precedent-setting novel *Deerbrook* (1839). Long regarded as the first Victorian novel of provincial life and manners, *Deerbrook* is shown not only to anticipate the kind of locally distinctive qualities that distinguish the works of novelists ranging from the Brontës to Thomas Hardy, but also to embody the kind of literary sensibilities that made contemporary readers receptive to Wordsworth's verse.

Among the more peculiar facts about Wordsworth's career is that he first achieved financial success at a time when the commercial value of poetry was dwindling. Whereas the first two decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a boom in literary publishing, by the mid 1830s a striking reversal had occurred. Although novels still managed to sell, albeit in reduced numbers, the market for poetry had significantly diminished. As an aged Samuel Smiles later surmised, 'The burst of inspiration which had marked the commencement of the ... century had all but died out, and the public demand for poetry, as well as the quality of the supply, had waned'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, by the beginning of the Victorian period, many of the most popular poets of the previous generation were either mouldering in their graves or gathering dust on their booksellers' shelves. Even Alfred Tennyson, the great poetic voice of the new era, had temporarily fallen silent. Poetry, once regarded as Britain's foremost literary genre, had ceased to hold pride of place.<sup>2</sup>

Historians of nineteenth-century print culture have attributed this decline in the commercial viability of poetry to a number of causes, including the rise of Britain's middle-class reading audience, the refinement of printing technology, the expansion of the periodical press, and the subsequent ascendancy of the Victorian novel. As Lee Erickson, for one, has explained: 'Once the materials and means of printing became cheaper, diffuse prose was no longer at a comparative economic disadvantage with compressed poetry. The periodical format, in particular, gave rise to a variety of ... prose forms that competed for and largely won over the audience for poetry' (Erickson, 47-8). Other factors have also been credited with having influenced this trend: notably, the economic recession of the mid 1820s, the collapse of Archibald Constable's publishing empire, and the comparative 'mediocrity' of the new verse circulating in print.<sup>3</sup> But whatever the underlying causes were, by 1829

longstanding firms such as Longman & Co., whose list of clients comprised the likes of Thomas Moore, Thomas Campbell, Robert Southey, and Wordsworth himself, had begun to turn away from poetry towards other genres. By 1830, even the illustrious John Murray, publisher of Lord Byron, Felicia Hemans, Samuel Rogers, and Sir Walter Scott, was reportedly refusing to read verse manuscripts sent to his firm (Smiles, II, 374). ‘Offer a publisher a volume of poetry,’ warned James Grant in 1837, ‘and he ... looks upon you much in the same way as if he had detected you in the act of attempting to pick his pocket’ (Grant, I, 124-25). Once a lucrative commodity, poetry was now widely discounted as a ‘ladies’ genre’, and the old practice of printing volumes by individual authors had largely been supplanted by the production of albums, annuals, and other kinds of ‘gift-book’ anthologies (St. Clair, 413). Yet, in spite of this turn of events, Wordsworth was more successful than ever.

Although Wordsworth continued to earn only a pittance from his poetry during the early 1830s, by the middle of the decade his verse publications were beginning to yield unprecedented returns. As the poet confided to William Gladstone (then MP for Newark-on-Trent), between 1835 and ’38 his ‘poetical writings’ had brought him ‘nearly 1,500 pounds’.<sup>4</sup> This sum was, of course, only a fraction of what Byron and Scott were netting at the height of their careers. It was, however, more than Wordsworth had received from his verse over the past thirty years combined (WL, VI, 574).<sup>5</sup> The critical recognition he had attained during the previous decade had at last led to commercial success.

A brief survey of Wordsworth’s earnings during the 1820s will help to throw these figures into relief. As other scholars have shown, Wordsworth’s poetry only began to receive widespread acclaim after the publication of *The River Duddon* in 1820.<sup>6</sup> This volume, which contained an early version of Wordsworth’s popular

*Guide to the Lakes*, not only secured his poetic reputation, but also earned him accolades in several of the leading literary reviews. Accolades do not, however, guarantee a living. According to Longman & Co.'s ledgers, by 1823 Wordsworth's net profits from *The River Duddon* totalled approximately £23. By 1834, when the account for the volume was closed, he had received a little more than £10 from a smattering of additional sales. Given that these takings amounted to less than two-months salary for a man of his rank, we can conclude that although *The River Duddon* was Wordsworth's first major critical success, it was also a financial disappointment. Even the oft-maligned *Peter Bell*, from which he had earned £29 in 1819 alone, and an additional £10 and 11s by 1833, put more money in his pocket.<sup>7</sup>

The next six years brought only more disappointments. For it took nearly that long for the *Miscellaneous Poems* of 1820 to exhaust its initial 500-copy printing, by which time, as Wordsworth complained, the 'ann[ual] expence of advertizing' this costly, collected edition had 'consumed in a great measure the residue of [his] Profit'.<sup>8</sup> Nor, moreover, did Wordsworth's next two verse publications, *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* and *Ecclesiastical Sketches*, manage to sell. The proceeds from these two volumes, both of which appeared in 1822, barely covered the prime costs that Longman & Co. had invested in them. To further complicate matters, throughout this period Wordsworth stubbornly refused to take full advantage of the new print commodities, such as the albums and annual gift-books, that began to flood the poetic marketplace. Chiefly marketed towards female readers, these ornamental 'drawing-room' anthologies proliferated in kind and number throughout the 1820s and '30s.<sup>9</sup> For the reading public, these volumes provided a means of perusing selections from the literary worthies of the age. For well-known writers, they represented a chance to reap handsome profits from only a few lines of verse. Yet,

whereas contemporary poets such as Hemans, James Montgomery, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon seized the opportunity to supplement their income,<sup>10</sup> Wordsworth repeatedly turned down generous offers from anthologists, protesting that their collections had ‘destroyed the Sale’ of the ‘Standard works’ which had once ‘brought substantial profit to their Authors’ (*WL*, VI, 55-6). Although Wordsworth did reluctantly begin to permit a few of his poems to appear in albums and gift-books during the late 1820s,<sup>11</sup> his otherwise steadfast adherence to the notion that he ‘must himself create the taste’ by which his poetry would be ‘relished’<sup>12</sup> did more to hinder than to help his sales throughout the first half of the decade.

Indeed, it was not until the publication of the five-volume *Poetical Works* of 1827 that Wordsworth’s own ‘Standard works’ began to make even a modest return. By the time this edition was exhausted four years later, Wordsworth had earned a little more than £422. The next edition of his *Poetical Works*, which Longmans published in 1832, also turned a respectable profit. Although this edition sold slowly, by 1836 it had brought Wordsworth over £316. Both of these figures were, of course, sizable for the period, but it must be emphasized that they were accrued over the course of nearly a decade. If the sums are averaged, the total yield comes to scarcely £82 *per annum*. When held against this amount, the ‘nearly 1,500 pounds’ that Wordsworth reported receiving from his poetry between 1835 and ’38 stands out as a prodigious figure.

Success of this kind compels us to consider its cause. Given the declining prestige of poetry during the 1820s and ’30s, and the sluggish sales that plagued the first forty years of Wordsworth’s career, one can hardly help but wonder what it was that brought about this sudden change in his fortunes. We could, of course, point to a variety of potential contributing factors (not least the gradual inclusion of

Wordsworth's verse in popular anthologies during the late 1820s),<sup>13</sup> but one definite cause of this newfound success was the development of Wordsworth's relationship with Edward Moxon, the most influential literary publisher of the early Victorian era.<sup>14</sup>

The son of a textile 'cropper' from Wakefield, Moxon was only sixteen when he entered the London book trade in 1817. Within five years, however, the enterprising Yorkshireman had earned the trust and admiration of Charles Lamb (whose adopted daughter, Emma Isola, he would later marry), and was well on his way to becoming a branch manager in Longman & Co.'s country distribution department. Moxon left Longmans in 1828 to take a more senior position at the newly established firm of Hurst, Chance, & Co., where he spent two years before resigning in order to go into business for himself. Moxon was supported in this endeavour both by Lamb, who offered him the rights to publish his forthcoming *Album Verses*, and by the patronage of Samuel Rogers, who advanced Moxon a loan of £500 to set up shop. The backing of these two luminaries seems to have been decisive. For in May 1830, when many of the leading publishers were withdrawing from the poetic marketplace, Moxon opened his offices at 64 New Bond Street with an eye towards publishing verse.

By the time of his death in 1858, Moxon's success as a publisher of poetry was indisputable. The parallel repeatedly drawn between him and his great predecessor Robert Dodsley, though perhaps somewhat overstated, is not at all misguided.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, that we think of the early Victorian period as propitious to poetry at all is a credit to Moxon's pertinacity. From established names like Lamb and Rogers, to neglected ones like Keats and Shelley, to comparative newcomers such as Tennyson, Longfellow, and the Brownings, Moxon's publishing record bespeaks a

simple fact: no man of his era did more to promote English verse to the public. (One must, of course, remember that Mathew Arnold and William Rossetti, the two great critics of the age, would not make their presence felt until the early 1850s.)

As his biographer Harold Guy Merriam observes, Moxon's success can largely be attributed to his practice of printing elegant, moderately priced volumes in large quantities. Although this strategy was not fail-proof, it did ensure that his firm's publications were placed within the reach of Britain's expanding middle-class population (Merriam, vi, 76-7). This, more than anything, helped Moxon to establish ties with Wordsworth, who from 1825 onwards was increasingly discouraged by Longmans's failure to sell his works to the general public.<sup>16</sup> When Lamb introduced Moxon to Wordsworth in the autumn of 1826, he stressed that the young businessman could offer 'the best account of The Trade as 'tis now going' (*CML*, III, 56). These words did not go unheeded. For although Wordsworth's first known letter to Moxon contains little more than a few words of patronizing encouragement, by 1830 he was eagerly soliciting Moxon's advice about how to market his *Poetical Works* to a wider audience. Would it be possible, he inquired, to sell 'my poems ... in a cheap Form; something under a pound'? '45 shillings[,] the present price' was much too high, was it not? What could be done to 'make the book acceptable to Mechanics and others who have little money to spare'? Would 'such a mode of publication be likely to repay me'? 'Perhaps you may be able to throw some light upon the subject.'<sup>17</sup> As Wordsworth later explained to Moxon, he desired not only that his poetry 'be read as widely as is consistent with reasonable pecuniary return', but also that it should 'find its way as education spreads to the spirits of many' (*WL*, VI, 518-19).

Moxon's first edition of Wordsworth's verse, *Selections from the Poems of William Wordsworth, Esq., Chiefly for the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (1831),



was, significantly, a collection very much in keeping with this ideal. Marketed as a classroom reader that would inspire pupils ‘with feelings and tastes noble, enviable, and virtuous’, and sold at the modest price of five shillings, Moxon’s *Selections* sought to provide Britain’s youth with ‘a passport to the rational and lasting enjoyment’ of Wordsworth’s verse.<sup>18</sup> The titles included in the volume were chosen, with Wordsworth’s approval, by Joseph Hine, a schoolmaster from Brixton Lodge, Surrey, and comprise mainly shorter pieces reprinted from the 1827 *Poetical Works*, with a few excerpts from longer poems such as *The Ecclesiastical Sketches* and *The Excursion*. As Hine stated in his ‘Preface’, whilst he firmly believed that all of Wordsworth’s poetry exhibited ‘an uncommon sympathy with all that conduces to the formation and preservation of purity’, the poems collected in the book were those that ‘contain[ed] the best maxims of life and death, of infancy, youth, and age, for all ranks of men’ (*Selections*, vii-viii). This new volume, in so many words, openly invited its readers to regard Wordsworth’s significance not merely as ‘a man speaking to men’,<sup>19</sup> but as a moral teacher of mankind. Through Moxon’s intervention Wordsworth had become more than a poet; he had become an arbiter of the nation’s education.

The *Selections* sold well enough to warrant the printing of a second edition in 1834, but it was not until the following year that Wordsworth’s relationship with Moxon truly began to take shape. For, in April 1835, Wordsworth released *Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems*, the first book of new poetry to appear under his name in nearly thirteen years. Published jointly by Moxon and Longmans, the *Yarrow* volume was a phenomenal success. Within eight months the initial print run of 1,500 copies was exhausted, and a new edition was called into production. Although this second edition sold much more slowly than the first, the periodical reviews touted *Yarrow*

*Revisited* as a poetic masterpiece. *The Quarterly Review*, for example, claimed the volume to be ‘without the reach of periodical criticism’.<sup>20</sup> *The Christian Remembrancer* was, if less fulsome, no less encomiastic in declaring Wordsworth ‘the greatest poet of his day’.<sup>21</sup> In his review for *The Examiner*, Leigh Hunt (by no means an uncritical admirer of Wordsworth’s works) went so far as to commend *Yarrow Revisited* as ‘a sweet, various, and majestic’ collection befitting ‘the Greatest Poet of modern England.’<sup>22</sup> None of Wordsworth’s publications had ever received such unanimous praise. Even the applause bestowed on *The River Duddon* seems paltry by comparison.

Despite the slow sales of the second edition of *Yarrow Revisited*, Wordsworth was confident enough in his new publisher’s ability to promote his poetry that when Longmans and Moxon submitted competing offers for the rights to publish a revised edition of his *Poetical Works* in 1836, Wordsworth elected to negotiate with the latter, and effectively withdrew his business from Longmans firm. This was a bold decision. Longmans ranked amongst the most prestigious publishing houses in Britain, and had, moreover, faithfully represented Wordsworth for over thirty years. Wordsworth’s choice, however, proved to his advantage. The terms to which Moxon eventually agreed were the best that Wordsworth had ever received: £1,000 immediately after the publication of the first 3,000 copies and an additional £400 for every subsequent edition of 1,000 copies, as well as full possession of the copyright and the stereotype plates. For a poet who had struggled over the course of forty years to earn a living from his pen, this contract must have come as a welcome vindication. ‘So you see dearest Friends’, Wordsworth proudly declared to his family, ‘there is nothing like standing up for one’s self, and one’s own legitimate interest’ (*WL*, VI, 239).

Although the literary marketplace remained unfavourable for poetry

throughout much of the 1830s and '40s, the figures cited above confirm that, barring the occasional setback, Moxon succeeded both in increasing Wordsworth's sales and in broadening his readership. Yet, whereas these figures affirm that early Victorian readers were purchasing Wordsworth's poems, they do not explain why, at a time when the sale of poetry was exceedingly slow, his works were able to find an audience. Wordsworth's longevity is usually invoked whenever this issue is raised, but the claim that he simply outlived his competitors is dubious. Even if Scott, Byron, and Hemans were dead, their works were still in print. Readers longing for new poetry were, moreover, hardly obliged to buy Wordsworth's. They could just have easily bought the latest *Keepsake*, *Forget Me Not*, or *Literary Souvenir*.

The growth of Wordsworth's cultural prestige in the late 1830s and early 1840s has also been cited as a factor. This is a far more tenable explanation, but it is also potentially misleading. There is no denying that the honorary doctorates Wordsworth received from Oxford and Durham, and the Laureateship he received from Victoria, thrust him into the national spotlight; however, these titles and awards were chiefly the effects, not the causes, of his fame. They may help us to explain why Wordsworth's poems entered the national canon and the educational curriculum, but they do not explain why those same poems found a home in the hearts of Victorian readers. It is not enough to assume that pupils learn to love what they are taught to revere. Much the same can be said of the contemporaneous growth of Wordsworth's reputation as 'the Great Poet of the Lakes'. For although it is true that this same period saw the publication of the 1835 and '42 editions of Wordsworth's bestselling *Guide through the District of the Lakes*, as well as upwards of 'twenty and thirty people' calling on the poet at Rydal Mount each day,<sup>23</sup> his status as a local celebrity and guide should be understood more as a result of his increased popularity as a poet

than as the source thereof.

Other explanations that have been offered are equally disputable. These can be divided broadly into two groups: those that emphasize Wordsworth's complicity with the prevailing ideologies of the early Victorian period, and those that emphasize his influence on those ideologies. For example, in his seminal study *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, Stephen Gill has stressed how the principles of 'natural piety' and humanitarian compassion espoused in much of Wordsworth's poetry complemented the new 'spirit of the age'. 'To many [Victorian] readers', explains Gill, 'Wordsworth's poetry offered not quite a substitute for religion but an alternative realm in which religious sensibilities could operate.'<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, William St. Clair has suggested that the works of canonical writers such as Wordsworth may have actually shaped the tastes of their Victorian readership. As St. Clair observes, texts like Moxon's *Selections* effectively served 'to entrench' Wordsworth's poetry 'in the reading of the nation's youth', and may have thereby predisposed the rising generation to perceive the merits of his works (St. Clair, 417). Though both of these claims are compelling, they each lack a decisive proof. Each assumes a correspondence between the ideals expressed in Wordsworth's poetry and the values and attitudes of his Victorian readers. Neither, however, provides a standard by which to measure the degree of that correspondence. Throughout the first half of this essay I have used sales figures as an index for charting the growth of Wordsworth's popularity and commercial success. Can we find another criterion for determining the cause of that growth? I want to propose that we can, and that we can do so by taking a look at another literary work published by Moxon's firm.

Although, as Merriam notes, Moxon's sales lists suggest that he had little professional interest in fiction, his firm did publish some half-dozen novels (Merriam,

83). Foremost among these is *Deerbrook*, the first novel of the Victorian polymath Harriet Martineau. Martineau's *Deerbrook* may not be familiar to all readers, but many may know something of the latter phase of her career, when, after retiring to Ambleside in 1845, she attained renown as a Lake District essayist and guide. Her *Complete Guide to the English Lakes*, for example, passed through five editions and several reprintings between 1855 and '85, and was, like the articles she wrote about the region, read widely on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>25</sup> Although in each of these later works Martineau helped to promote Wordsworth's posthumous fame, in what follows I want to approach her relationship to Wordsworth from a different perspective. Specifically, I want to suggest that her novel *Deerbrook*, which Moxon published in the spring of 1839, offers us a bearing by which to assess why early Victorian readers responded so favourably to Wordsworth's verse.

The story of two orphaned sisters from Birmingham who pay a summer visit to the novel's eponymous village, only to find themselves swept between the Scylla and Charybdis of local matchmakers and gossips, *Deerbrook* holds the distinction of being the first Victorian novel of English provincial life. Significantly, the novel's setting played a role in putting it into Moxon's hands. Martineau initially offered *Deerbrook* to John Murray, who had invited her to send him the manuscript in 1838. However, as Martineau later recalled, in the end Murray declined to publish the book on account of its 'scene being laid' amongst the middle class residents of a small, provincial village.<sup>26</sup> From a business standpoint this objection is understandable. The parish tales of writers like John Galt, James Hogg, and Mary Russell Mitford had set a new trend in popular fiction during the 1820s and '30s; but, the genre of the provincial novel itself had largely been in abeyance since Jane Austen's death in 1817. Ever a cautious publisher of novels, as Kathryn Sutherland notes, Murray knew

all too well ‘the difficulty of predicting the likely market for new titles in a literary form so subject to the vagaries of fashion’.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, it seems reasonable to conjecture that, in an era in which readers tended to favour the ‘silver-fork’ romances of Theodore Hook, the historical novels of W. H. Ainsworth, and the latest ‘sketches’ by Boz, Murray simply did not think that a novel like *Deerbrook* would sell. As Martineau remarked in her *Autobiography*, ‘I was not aware then how strong was the hold on the public mind which the ‘silver-fork school’ had gained.... People liked high life in novels, and low life, and ancient life; and life of any rank presented by Dickens ... but it was not supposed that they would bear a presentment of the familiar life of every day’ (*Autobiography*, II, 114-5).

It was on Samuel Rogers’s personal recommendation that Martineau offered *Deerbrook* to Moxon, who quickly agreed to terms. Although Moxon would have likely shared Murray’s apprehensions about the novel’s marketability, we can easily infer why he was willing to publish it. Rogers’s good opinion was, in itself, an asset well worth retaining. The aged poet had, after all, been one of Moxon’s principal backers. Martineau was, moreover, a literary celebrity in her own right. As the author of the popular ‘didactic fiction’ series, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-34), she had already become a household name both in Britain and in the United States. She was, in so many words, just the sort of client that an up-and-coming publisher such as Moxon would have coveted. Whatever Moxon’s motivations were, in his hands *Deerbrook* became a respectable success. Despite the objections voiced by critics, who found the novel’s characters and setting too ‘tame’, ‘trite’, and ‘middle-class’,<sup>28</sup> *Deerbrook* sold well. Nearly 800 copies were purchased in the first year alone, and within four years there was sufficient demand to warrant printing a new edition. Eight more reprintings followed between 1858 and ’92, after Martineau

transferred the publishing rights to Smith, Elder, & Co., establishing *Deerbrook* as one of the most commercially viable novels of the latter nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup> Yet these sales figures matter not because of what they tell us about Martineau's novel *per se*, but because they alert us to an emergent trend in readerly tastes for the kind of narrative that *Deerbrook* embodies. This new trend, I would suggest, can help us to ascertain why early Victorian readers were drawn to Wordsworth's verse.

Martineau's own estimation of her novel's significance is worth noting in this regard. As she explained in her *Autobiography*, the true success of *Deerbrook* lay not in its achieving 'a larger circulation than novels usually obtain', or even in its 'being still in constant demand' nearly forty years later, but in its having overcome the 'prejudice against the use of middle-class life in fiction' (*Autobiography*, II, 115-16). Reaching back to the works of Austen and Mitford, both of whom she had admired in her youth,<sup>30</sup> Martineau had, in so many words, effectively opened up new possibilities for the literary representation of provincial life and manners. For the later novelists of this provincial tradition, Martineau's book provided both a prototype and a template. George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Brontës all admired *Deerbrook*, and went on to elaborate on its model.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, when Charlotte Brontë presented Martineau with a copy of *Shirley* in 1849, she went so far as to enclose a letter acknowledging the 'pleasure and profit' she had derived from the elder authoress's work. 'When C[urrer] B[ell] first read "Deerbrook",' exclaimed Brontë, 'he tasted a new and keen pleasure, and experienced a genuine benefit. In his mind, "Deerbrook" ranks with the writings that have really done him good, added to his stock of ideas, and rectified his views of life.'<sup>32</sup> George Eliot also praised *Deerbrook*, and informed Herbert Spencer that she was 'surprized at the depths of feeling it reveal[ed].'<sup>33</sup> Anna Jameson, for her part, recommended the novel to Otilie von Goethe as 'an exquisite picture of English

*provincial* life in the middle classes'.<sup>34</sup>

As each of these testaments affirms, *Deerbrook* stands at the threshold of a movement in nineteenth-century English fiction that drew the novel away from London and into the nation's outlying towns and villages. Franco Moretti has already noted how pronounced this shift from centre to periphery is within the wider spectrum of nineteenth-century British fiction.<sup>35</sup> What matters here specifically, however, is that whereas novelists like Dickens and Thackeray were busy establishing a new paradigm for the representation of metropolitan manners, Martineau and her successors were, as one contemporary critic observed, 'introducing original peculiarities into the novel, and extending its range farther over the surface, and more into the corners of English life'.<sup>36</sup> The popularity of this new strain of fiction grew apace during the first two decades of the Victorian era. Indeed, by the time David Masson published his *Critical Sketch of the History of British Prose Fiction* in 1859, he had good reason to remark that the taste for the 'non-metropolitan ... ha[d] been gaining strength' (Masson, 220). As Masson reports, although novelists continued to depict 'London and its suburbs',

there *are* illustrations of English nature and life in their non-conventional and non-metropolitan varieties ... Miss Brontë made a refreshing innovation in English novel-writing when she drew her characters and scenes, and even portions of her dialect, from her native Yorkshire; Mrs. Gaskell has followed with her pictures of artisan life, and her specimens of provincial dialect in Lancashire; and Mr. Kingsley has broken ground, as an artist, in Devonshire and other counties. (Masson, 220)



The works of such authors, Masson concludes, merit praise not merely because of their resistance to ‘the literary centralization of English life in London’, but because the concrete and locally distinctive worlds they portrayed were drawn from ‘rich fields of yet unbooked English life’ (Masson, 220). In seeking to capture the sights and sensations of their local landscapes, each of these authors had, in so many words, helped to expand and enrich the creative domain of the novel.

It would, of course, be tempting to attribute this trend in literary practices and sensibilities to Wordsworth himself. From the ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* to local stories such as ‘Michael’ and ‘The Brothers’, one can cite a number of Wordsworth’s works that contributed, both directly and indirectly, to the Victorian taste for realistic provincial tales. Nonetheless, one must be cautious of according him too much credit. However much Wordsworth may have affected this development, his was not the sole, or even the most decisive influence. From the regional novels of Scott and Maria Edgeworth to the domestic romances of Austen and Frances Burney to the village narratives of Hogg, Galt, and Mitford, one can identify dozens of writers whose works informed this shift. Thus, as Stephen Gill has observed, to claim Wordsworth as an *éminence grise* that shaped Victorian fiction would simply be ‘special pleading’ (Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 116). Authors may allude to Wordsworth, as indeed Martineau alludes to him in *Deerbrook*, and critics may even spot Wordsworthian tropes and subtexts. Yet, for all that, it is more accurate to see the reception of Wordsworth’s works developing in tandem with contemporary attitudes and values than acting as a governing force upon them. Accordingly, rather than examining Wordsworth’s contributions to this turn towards the locally distinctive, in what follows I wish to propose that this turn itself helps explain why Victorian readers were so receptive to his verse. Before carrying this point further, however, it

is worth pausing to delineate what local distinctiveness is and how it features in the popular literature of this period.

Consider, to this end, the following excerpt from Book One, Chapter Five of *Deerbrook*, in which the hero of the novel, the local apothecary Edward Hope, joins the heroines Hester and Margaret, as well as their neighbour Matilda and their cousins Fanny, Mary, and Sophia, on a cowslip-picking excursion:

Hope threw himself from his horse at the entrance of the meadow where the cowslip-gatherers were busy, fastened his steed to the gate, and joined the party. The children ran to him with the gleanings of intelligence which they had acquired since he saw them last, half an hour before:—that it was well they did not put off their gathering any longer, for some of the flowers were beginning to dry up already: that cousins had never tasted cowslip-tea;—(was not this *very* odd?)—that cousin Hester would not help to pick the flowers for drying,—she thought it such a pity to pull the blossom out of the calyx: that Sophia would not help either, because it was warm: that cousin Margaret had gathered a great many, but she had been ever so long watching a spider’s nest,—a nasty large spider’s nest that Matilda was just going to break into when cousin Margaret asked her not to spoil it!<sup>37</sup>

Falling where it does, at the beginning of the novel, this passage is notable for the way it insinuates traits and temperaments that will only become apparent in these key characters as the narrative progresses: the prim Hester and the petulant Sophia refusing, on different grounds, to take part in the flower picking; the introspective Margaret losing herself in the geometry of the spider’s web; the obnoxious Matilda,

always threatening to spoil things in one way or another; the excitable Fanny and Mary, always too forthcoming with every piece of information about their urban cousins—who ‘had never tasted cowslip-tea’! It is, however, not the characters but the setting that makes this passage so remarkable. For other than providing an opportunity for passing a few hints about the *dramatis personae*, the scene thus depicted is of almost no consequence for the development of the narrative. It is true that the cowslips do reappear briefly during the tea party in the summerhouse four chapters later. But they disappear from the story afterwards. In terms of the plot of the novel as a whole, therefore, this scene is merely ambience or ‘background noise’: the setting of the narrative filtering into the work and imbuing it with a distinctive sense of place.<sup>38</sup>

What is important to emphasize here is that this *mise en scène* is not replete with regionally specific detail—cowslips, after all, bloom throughout Britain every May. Nor, furthermore, is it in any way extraordinary. This is not the highland stronghold of Donald Bean Lean; nor is it the Castle of Udolpho. It is, instead, a frank portrayal of everyday village life based on Martineau’s childhood memories of Buckinghamshire and Norfolk (*Autobiography*, I, 50). Nor, finally, is this scene exquisitely detailed. Yet, the topographical atmosphere it evokes is no less palpable. Just as with the skating party in Book Two, and the boating party in Book Three, the cowslip-picking party depicted in the first book of *Deerbrook* helps to locate the action of Martineau’s tale in a recognizable world—a world that revolves around distinctive local customs and events that correspond to the changing of the seasons. This is the local distinctiveness, the ‘background noise’, of the novel.

It may have become clear by now that what I mean by local distinctiveness is, like Barthes’s notion of *l’effet de réel*, a diegetic feature specific to a certain type of

literary realism.<sup>39</sup> But a further qualification is required here. For in realism, understood broadly, the setting typically supplies a constraint: a determined, finite space in which the world of the work is plotted. In a novel such as *Deerbrook*, however, the setting is more than a realist constraint; it is the unacknowledged legislator of the work as a whole. Though it remains in the background, behind the action of the story, it governs the design of the work as well as its moral purpose. Martineau's own assessment of her novel underscores this very point. As she later remarked in her *Autobiography*, her object in publishing *Deerbrook* had been to challenge popular assumptions about the genre of the novel. 'I was rather amused', Martineau explains,

at the turn that criticism took among people of the same class as my personages ... It was droll to hear the daughters of dissenting ministers and manufactures expressing disgust that the heroine came from Birmingham, and that the hero was a surgeon. Youths and maidens in those days looked for lords and ladies in every page of a new novel. (*Autobiography*, II, 115)

In contrast to the prevailing taste for tales of high society, *Deerbrook* presented a story of ordinary village life infused with reflections on moral conduct and social responsibility. As such, it aimed to promote the common scenes of provincial England as a backdrop against which to examine the social realities of the age. Martineau's guiding ambition in *Deerbrook* was, in this sense, much the same as it had been in her *Illustrations of Political Economy*: namely, to delineate a fictional world with which the general public could identify and to depict events that would appeal to middle- and upper-class readers alike. *Deerbrook*'s setting was, at this level, not just integral

to the plot of the novel; it was integral to the argument of the work as a whole.

Although Thomas Carlyle dismissed Martineau's novel as 'very ligneous', 'very trivial-didactic', and 'in fact very absurd',<sup>40</sup> *Deerbrook* was undeniably successful in promoting the simple annals of the provinces as a serious subject for popular fiction. The advertisements for the novel that began to appear around the middle of the century provide first-hand evidence of this. Take, for instance, the following précis, which began to circulate in Smith, Elder & Co.'s book lists in 1859:

DEERBROOK. By Harriet Martineau. Price 2s. 6d. cloth.

This popular fiction presents a true and animated picture of country life among the upper and middle classes of English residents, and is remarkable for its interest, arising from the influence of various characters upon each other, and the effect of ordinary circumstances upon them. The descriptions of rural scenery, and the daily pursuits in village hours, are among the most charming of the author's writings; but the way in which exciting incidents gradually arise out of the most ordinary phases of life, and the skill with which natural and every-day characters are brought out in dramatic situations, attest the power of the author's genius.<sup>41</sup>

Blurbs such as this are notable because of the way they link *Deerbrook*'s merits to its setting. That 'exciting incidents' can 'arise' within 'daily pursuits in village hours' and 'the most ordinary phases of life' is a conviction characteristic of the Victorian provincial novel as a genre, and is, moreover, imperative to the more elaborate geographies that writers like Anthony Trollope and Thomas Hardy would invent as the nineteenth century progressed. Indeed, whether we look to the gentle satire of

local prejudices in *Barchester Towers* or to the seasonal cycle delicately woven into novels such as *Far From the Madding Crowd*, one quickly senses how the tradition embodied by *Deerbrook* helped to establish a new standard for the literary representation of English life. It is at this level, I would contend, that the success of Martineau's novel can help us begin to appreciate why early Victorian readers were so receptive to Wordsworth's verse.

Wordsworth, after all, frequently employs similar diegetic techniques to give his poems a distinctive setting. Whether he invokes actual landmarks, such as in *The Excursion* or the River Duddon sonnets, or simply evokes the 'soft inland murmur' that pervades the scene of 'Tintern Abbey', these local details and notations authenticate the places thus portrayed and imbue them with a tangible presence. One needs look no further than Wordsworth's early verse narrative 'Michael' to spot an outstanding example of this effect at work. The tale of a Westmorland 'statesman', or smallholder, who is compelled to send his only son to his ruin, 'Michael' is a history of a father's personal sacrifice and private grief. The events of this history unfold around the foundations of a ruined sheepfold on the fells above Greenhead Ghyll, a ravine just north of the village of Grasmere. As the poem progresses, we learn that this humble landmark symbolizes the broken covenant between Michael and his son Luke, who, in spite of his father's best intentions, has abandoned his patrimony in shame 'To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas' (l. 456).

As in many of Wordsworth's most famous poems, the story of Michael's loss is told to the reader by a wandering narrator who conducts us to a secluded spot for the purpose of explaining its significance. The first several lines of the poem are well worth recalling with this in mind:

If from the public way you turn your steps  
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill,  
You will suppose that with an upright path  
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent  
The pastoral Mountains front you, face to face.  
But, courage! for beside that boisterous Brook  
The mountains have all open'd out themselves,  
And made a hidden valley of their own.  
No habitation there is seen; but such  
As journey thither find themselves alone  
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites  
That overhead are sailing in the sky.  
It is in truth an utter solitude,  
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell  
But for one object which you might pass by,  
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook  
There is a straggling heap of stones! (*LB 1802*, II, 199-200; ll. 1-17)

Among the many striking features of this passage is Wordsworth's skilful modulation of his narrative voice. For although the narrator begins the poem in the second person, addressing his reader as a local guide might address a stranger, in line fourteen he suddenly turns and speaks to us *in propria persona*: 'Nor should *I* have made mention of this Dell | But for one object which *you* might pass by, | Might see and notice not.' This shift in person is, of course, remarkable for the way it directs our imaginative gaze towards the 'straggling heap of stones', the object around which the narrator's

story thence unfolds. But it is all the more remarkable for what it does not do. For although this shift draws a particular landmark to the foreground, it does not eclipse the landscape depicted in the first thirteen lines of the poem. The ‘tumultuous brook’, the ‘upright path’, the ‘pastoral Mountains’, the ‘hidden valley’, the ‘sheep’ and ‘rocks’, the ‘stones’ and ‘kites’: all of these figures merge together to form a scenic backdrop to the narrator’s tale. Nor, furthermore, does this backdrop ever recede from our view. In line 322, for instance, we learn of Michael’s plan to erect the sheepfold ‘Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Gill.’ Again, in the final lines of the poem, the narrator concludes his tale by reminding the reader that ‘the remains | Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen | Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Gill’ (ll. 480-2). In gesturing back to the ghyll, these proximal deictics (‘Near’, ‘Beside’) help to fix the narrator’s tale to a particular locale; what is more, they give the reader the impression that the sights and sounds of that locale are present in the background throughout the entirety of the poem. Much in the same way that the cowslip-picking scene in *Deerbrook* enables the reader to relate to the world of the novel, these deictic cues apprise us of the presence of the landscape in the poem. Once again we perceive the setting of the narrative filtering into the work and imbuing it with a distinctive sense of place.

Like the provincial setting of *Deerbrook*, moreover, the setting of ‘Michael’ is more than a constraint upon the narrative. Indeed, as in much of Wordsworth’s poetry, in ‘Michael’ the reader is compelled to recognize the integral relationship between the setting and the moral purpose of the poem. Wordsworth’s well-known classification of ‘Michael’ as a ‘Pastoral Poem’ is especially significant in this regard. For, as other scholars have noted, in attaching this tag to his poem Wordsworth was deliberately challenging received ideas about the pastoral mode.<sup>42</sup> Michael, after all,



is no Colin Clout, but ‘An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb’ (l. 42). Instead of an idyll, his tragic tale comprises a ‘history | Homely and rude’ (ll. 316-17). In direct contrast to the conventions of contemporary pastoral poetry, with its bucolic idealizations and masquerades, in ‘Michael’ Wordsworth attempted to draw attention to the actual circumstances attending the lives of the shepherds of Cumberland and Westmorland. Wordsworth famous explanation of ‘Michael’ in his letter to Charles James Fox of 14 January 1801 makes this point painstakingly clear. As Wordsworth stresses in this letter, like its companion poem ‘The Brothers’, ‘Michael’ was intended to epitomize the plight of a vanishing ‘class of men who are now almost confined to the North of England’ and ‘who daily labour on their own little properties.’<sup>43</sup> These ‘properties’, as Wordsworth goes on to explain, matter not only because of the subsistence they afford, but also because they constitute a kind of birthright, a social covenant interlinking families, through generations, to their native soil:

The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who ... are proprietors of small estates, which have descended to them from their ancestors ... Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man from which supplies of affection, as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. (*WL*, I, 314-15)

When read in light of these declarations, as Fiona Stafford has eloquently argued, ‘Michael’ is much more than a poem distinguished by its ‘attentive recreation of local

detail'; it is a poem whose local detail bespeaks Wordsworth's convictions about the values and traditions of the region of his birth (Stafford, *Local Attachments*, 51).

Significantly, for the purposes of this article, Wordsworth's claims about the moral purpose of 'Michael' first came to light in 1838, when Sir Henry Edward Bunbury printed Wordsworth's letter to Fox in his edition of *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas Hanmer, Bart.* Although Bunbury's edition of Hanmer's correspondence was a work of limited circulation, it did succeed in publicizing Wordsworth's letter as a document indispensable to the appreciation of his poetry.<sup>44</sup> In 1851, Christopher Wordsworth (the poet's nephew) gave an approving nod to this notion when he reprinted the letter to Fox in his *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* as 'an authentic report of the inward feelings with which [his uncle's] poems were composed.'<sup>45</sup> Today, the publication of this private letter in the late 1830s matters not because it alters our conception of Wordsworth's poetry, but because it indicates an important turning point in his reception history. Specifically, it indicates the early Victorian era as the period when the principles that informed Wordsworth's works began to arouse widespread sympathetic interest. Judging from the contemporary success of novels such as *Deerbrook*, we can infer, with relative assurance, that early Victorian readers were more amenable to the subject and sentiment of poems like 'Michael' than their immediate forebears had been.

In order to appreciate this point one must recall that the ideals Wordsworth first espoused in poems such as 'Michael' influenced his poetry throughout the entirety of his career. From early works like 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' to autumnal reveries such as 'I know an aged Man', the belief that 'the essential passions of the heart' (*LB 1802*, I, vii) could best be seen in scenes of common life, remained integral to the substance and purpose of his art. This continuity points up an important

contrast: namely, that whereas these portrayals of simple characters and events were dismissed by Wordsworth's earliest critics, by the dawning of the Victorian era they had earned him popular acclaim. The same poems that Francis Jeffrey and Lord Byron had once derided for their 'low' and 'uninteresting' subject matter, were celebrated half a century later by enthusiasts like James Russell Lowell as representative of that 'power for particularization' which made Wordsworth's poetry 'truly great'.<sup>46</sup> It would be a mistake to assume that these conflicting appraisals represent the total spectrum of opinions held by Wordsworth's contemporary readership. Nevertheless, they *do* exemplify a basic trend in the reception of his poetry between the years 1800 and 1850. What I wish to propose here, on the basis of the preceding pages, is that this trend can be best understood as part of a broader shift in literary tastes towards works representative of human life in its most particularized and locally distinctive forms.

The contours of this shift have been delineated above in terms of the evolution of the Victorian provincial novel. It is, however, worth noting in conclusion that a similar vogue for depicting (what Masson called) the 'rich fields of yet unbooked English life' can also be traced within the poetry of this period. William and Robert Chambers, co-editors of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, advocated for this trend explicitly whilst surveying the publishing scene of the early 1840s. Complaining of the inverse proportion between the quantity and quality of the new poetry on the market, the Chambers brothers urged the nation's 'amateur poets' to follow the example of earlier writers by seeking inspiration through the 'patient examination of nature and rural life and scenery'.<sup>47</sup> As the Chambers write:

we in all kindness would recommend our poetically-inclined friends to turn

their mental energies to better account than hammering crude ideas into verses. There is scarcely a district of the country which does not offer something worthy of noting down and describing, be it even for private recreation and literary discipline. The “Natural History of Selbourne [sic],” one of the most pleasing books that was ever published, is exactly of this nature. (Chambers, 141)

It seems to me highly suggestive that the Chambers brothers should extol *The Natural History of Selborne*, the life’s work of the provincial historian and naturalist Gilbert White, as a model for Britain’s aspiring poets. New works of high merit, as this reference implies, were not to be composed from abstruse meditation, but grounded upon the careful study and observation of specific local scenes. It is beyond the scope of this article to assess the actual impact that the Chambers’s advice may have had; however, it goes without saying that this desire to capture the atmosphere and aspect of particular places *is* evident the works of several notable Victorian poets. This is, after all, precisely what one finds in Tennyson’s idyll ‘The Brook’, and later in his ‘Northern Farmer’ poems and ‘The Church-Warden and the Curate’. It is, moreover, exactly what one finds in Hardy, William Barnes, and A. E. Housman, and in the verses of those other nineteenth-century poets who shared the artistic aim of portraying previously neglected portions of the British Isles. Thus, even though later critics like Matthew Arnold and James Hannay would go on to decry provincialism as the principal defect of British *belles lettres*,<sup>48</sup> the tradition embodied by these poets, and the rise of the provincial novel, affirms that this turn towards the local and the particular was one which continued to resonate over the course of the century. This insight may not resolve all of our questions about the vicissitudes of Wordsworth’s

nineteenth-century reception, but it does help us begin to understand why his poems found a place within Victorian society.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Smiles, *A Publisher and His Friends: Memoir and Correspondence of the Late John Murray*, 2 vols. (London, 1891), II, 374.

<sup>2</sup> The scholarship on this topic is extensive, and ranges from contemporary accounts such as T. F. Dibdin's *Bibliophobia: Remarks on the Present Languid and Depressed State of Literature and the Book Trade* (London, 1832) and James Grant's *The Great Metropolis, Second Series*, 2 vols. (London, 1837), I, 121-69, to later historical studies, such as F. A. Mumby's *Publishing and Bookselling: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1946), 232-5. Notable recent assessments include Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form* (London, 2000), 17-48; William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge, 2004), 413-32; and James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850* (New Haven, 2007), 320-50.

<sup>3</sup> F. A. Mumby, *The House of Routledge, 1834-1934* (London, 1934), 1. Writing in the *Englishman's Magazine* in 1831, Charles Lamb condemned the new verse of his contemporaries as 'the vague, dreamy, wordy, *matterless* Poetry of [an] empty age'. See E. V. Lucas (ed.), *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, 7 vols. (London, 1907), I, 341.

<sup>4</sup> Wordsworth to William Gladstone, 23 March 1838: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1982), VI, 536. Hereafter *WL*, VI.

<sup>5</sup> For details about Wordsworth's sales and income, cf. W. J. B. Owen, 'Costs, Sales, and Profits of Longman's Editions of Wordsworth', *The Library*, 12 (1957), 93-107; and Erickson, *Economy of Literary Form*, 53-60.

<sup>6</sup> See, especially, Stephen Gill, 'Wordsworth and *The River Duddon*', *Essays in*

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*Criticism*, 57 (2007), 22-41.

<sup>7</sup> These sales figures are quoted from Longman & Co.'s ledgers (Reading University Library, Special Collections MS 1393, Divided ledger D2, fols. 38, 185). A survey of Wordsworth's entries in the company's ledger books is provided in Owen's 'Costs, Sales, and Profits'.

<sup>8</sup> Wordsworth to Samuel Rogers, 21 January 1825: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1978), IV, 306. Hereafter *WL*, IV.

<sup>9</sup> See Fredrick Winthrop Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift-Books: A Bibliography with a Descriptive Introduction* (Boston, 1912), 81-112, 129-30. According to Faxon's indices, by 1829 there were no fewer than twenty-four competing annuals on the British book market; by 1832, there were at least sixty-four.

<sup>10</sup> Hemans, for instance, is thought to have earned in excess of £930 for her publications in literary annuals between 1825 and '35 alone. Landon, for her part, received a steady commission of £100 a year for her work as the sole literary contributor to *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* between 1832 and '38. See St. Clair, *The Reading Nation*, 230, and Paula Feldman, 'The Poet and the Profits: Felicia Hemans and the Literary Marketplace', *Keats-Shelley Review*, 46 (1997), 148-76. For a detailed list of contributors to British literary annuals between 1823 and '50, see Andrew Boyle, *An Index to the Annuals, Vol. I: The Authors (1820-1850)* (Worcester, 1967).

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, N. Stephen Bauer, 'Wordsworth and the Early Anthologies', *The Library*, 27 (1972), 37-45. Significantly, as Bauer notes, Wordsworth's poetry was also disseminated in unauthorized reprintings throughout the entirety of this period.

<sup>12</sup> Qt. Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, 21 May 1807: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The*

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*Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, rev. Mary Moorman (Oxford, 1969), II, 150. Hereafter *WL*, II.

<sup>13</sup> The possible influence of annuals and literary anthologies on Wordsworth's reputation is perceptively discussed in Ian Michael, *The Teaching of English: From the Sixteenth Century to 1870* (Cambridge, 1987), 223-37; Peter J. Manning, 'Wordsworth in the *Keepsake*, 1829' in John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (eds), *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices* (Cambridge, 1995), 44-73; and Philip Connell, 'How to Popularize Wordsworth', in Philip Connell and Nigel Leask (eds), *Romanticism and Popular Culture in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2009), 262-82.

<sup>14</sup> Despite his many contributions to Victorian literature, Moxon has been accorded little scholarly attention. The most comprehensive assessments of his life and career are Harold Guy Merriam, *Edward Moxon: Publisher of Poets* (New York, 1939); Patricia J. Anderson and Jonathan Rose (eds), *British Literary Publishing Houses, 1820-1880*, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 375 vols. (London & Detroit, 1978-2006), CVI, 213-18; and Hans Ostrom's entry on Moxon in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, eds. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford, 2004), XXXIX, 598-601. Much of what we know about Moxon's early years comes from the letters of his friend and mentor, Charles Lamb. It is, for example, in Lamb's letter to Henry Colburn of 25 September 1827 that we learn of Moxon having 'the conduct of one of the four departments of [Longmans's] Country line.' It is, moreover, Lamb's letter to Moxon of 19 March 1828 that fixes the *terminus post quem* Moxon left Longmans to join Hurst, Chance, & Co. Additionally, it is Lamb's letter to Moxon of 3 May 1828 that suggests that Moxon served as one of Hurst's principal literary advisors. See E. V. Lucas (ed.), *The Letters of Charles Lamb, to*



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*Which Are Added Those of His Sister Mary Lamb*, 3 vols. (London, 1935), III, 133, 156, 162. Hereafter *CML*, III.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, J. H. Lupton, *Wakefield Worthies; or, Biographical Sketches of Men of Note Connected, by Birth or Otherwise, to the Town of Wakefield in Yorkshire* (London, 1864), 230; Mumby, *Publishing and Bookselling*, 227-8; and Merriam, *Edward Moxon*, 27 *et passim*.

<sup>16</sup> See, especially, *WL*, IV, 306-9, 319-21, 327-9.

<sup>17</sup> Qt. Wordsworth to Edward Moxon, 2 June 1830: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1979), V, 273-4; and Wordsworth to Moxon, 17 December 1840: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford, 1988), VII, 155.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Hine (ed.), *Selections from the Poems of William Wordsworth, Esq., Chiefly for the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (London, 1831), i. Hereafter *Selections*.

<sup>19</sup> Qt. William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, With Pastoral and Other Poems*, 2 vols. (London, 1802), I, xxviii. Hereafter *LB 1802*.

<sup>20</sup> Hartley Coleridge, 'Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems. By William Wordsworth', *Quarterly Review*, 54 (1835), 181-5: 181.

<sup>21</sup> 'Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems. by William Wordsworth', *The Christian Remembrancer, or, The Churchman's Biblical, Ecclesiastical, and Literary Miscellany*, 17 (1835), 413.

<sup>22</sup> Leigh Hunt, 'Yarrow Revisited, and other Poems. By William Wordsworth', *The Examiner*, 1421 (1835), 259-60: 260.

<sup>23</sup> Qt. Isabella Fenwick to Henry Taylor, 18 August 1838: Edward Dowden (ed.), *The Correspondence of Henry Taylor* (London, 1888), 94.

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- <sup>24</sup> Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford, 1998), 44.
- <sup>25</sup> See Barbara Todd, *Harriet Martineau at Ambleside* (Carlisle, 2002), 159-86; Michael R. Hill (ed.), *An Independent Woman's Lake District Writings: Harriet Martineau* (Amherst, NY, 2004), 25-54; and Alexis Easley *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850-1914* (Lanham, MD, 2011), 69-91.
- <sup>26</sup> Harriet Martineau, *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, 3 vols. (London, 1877), II, 115. Hereafter *Autobiography*.
- <sup>27</sup> Kathryn Sutherland, 'Jane Austen's Dealings with John Murray and his Firm', *Review of English Studies*, 64 (2013).
- <sup>28</sup> 'Deerbrook; A Novel. By Harriet Martineau', *The Edinburgh Review*, 69 (1839), 494-502: 495.
- <sup>29</sup> Smith, Elder & Co. began publishing *Deerbrook* after Moxon's death in 1858. According to the company's sales lists, they reprinted Martineau's novel in '58, '59, '60, '70, '72, '78, '84, and '92.
- <sup>30</sup> See Martineau, *Autobiography*, I, 418-20.
- <sup>31</sup> For a discussion of *Deerbrook's* influence on later Victorian fiction, see Valerie Sanders, *Reason Over Passion: Harriet Martineau and the Victorian Novel* (Sussex, 1986), 58-81; Caroline Roberts, *The Woman and the Hour: Harriet Martineau and Victorian Ideologies* (Toronto, 2002), 52-75; and Tabitha Sparks, *The Doctor in the Victorian Novel: Family Practices* (Farnham, 2009), 23-45.
- <sup>32</sup> Brontë to Harriet Martineau, 17 November 1849: Margaret Smith (ed.), *The Letters of Charlotte Brontë*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2000), II, 287-8. Brontë wrote this letter under her masculine pseudonym, Currer Bell.
- <sup>33</sup> Eliot to Herbert Spencer, [8? July 1852]: Gordon S. Haight (ed.), *The George Eliot Letters*, 9 vols. (New Haven, 1954-78), VIII, 51.

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- <sup>34</sup> Jameson to Otilie von Goethe, 26 February 1842: G. H. Needler (ed.), *Letters of Anna Jameson to Otilie von Goethe*, (London, 1939), 134.
- <sup>35</sup> See Franco Moretti's *Graphs, Maps, and Trees* (London, 2005), 35-66, and 'Serious Century', in Franco Moretti (ed.), *The Novel, Volume 1: History, Geography, and Culture* (Oxford, 2009), 364-400.
- <sup>36</sup> David Masson, *British Novelists and Their Styles: Being a Critical Sketch of the History of British Prose Fiction* (London, 1859), 219.
- <sup>37</sup> Harriet Martineau, *Deerbrook: A Novel*, 3 vols. (London, 1839), I, 41-2.
- <sup>38</sup> My use of the terms 'local distinctiveness' and 'background noise' is indebted to Sue Clifford & Angela King, 'Losing Your Place', in Sue Clifford & Angela King (eds), *Local Distinctiveness: Place, Particularity and Identity* (London, 1993), 7-20.
- <sup>39</sup> See Roland Barthes, 'L'effet de réel', in Éric Marty (ed.), *Roland Barthes: Œuvres complètes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1993-95), II, 479-84.
- <sup>40</sup> Thomas Carlyle to John A. Carlyle, 15 April 1839: C. R. Sanders (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, 39 vols. (Durham, NC, 1970-85), XI, 87.
- <sup>41</sup> Advertisement for Smith, Elder, & Co. in Harriet Martineau, *England and Her Soldiers* (London, 1859), [305].
- <sup>42</sup> See, especially, Fiona Stafford's 'Plain Living and Ungarnish'd Stories: Wordsworth and the Survival of the Pastoral', *Review of English Studies*, 59 (2008), 118-33, and *Local Attachments: The Province of Poetry* (Oxford, 2010), 50-9, 126-7.
- <sup>43</sup> Wordsworth to Charles James Fox, 14 January 1801: Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford, 1967), I, 314. Hereafter *WL*, I.
- <sup>44</sup> See C. J. F. Bunbury, *Memoir and Literary Remains of Lieutenant-General Sir*

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Henry Edward Bunbury, *Bart.* (London, 1868), 172. For more information about the reprinting of Wordsworth's letter to Fox, see Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, 25-6.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet-Laureate, D.C.L.*, 2 vols. (London, 1851), I, 174.

<sup>46</sup> Qt. Francis Jeffrey, 'Poems, In Two Volumes. By William Wordsworth', *The Edinburgh Review*, 9 (1807), 214-31: 218, and James Russell Lowell, 'Sketch of Wordsworth's Life', in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth: With a Memoir*, 3 vols. (Boston, 1854), I, xxxviii.

<sup>47</sup> William Chambers and Robert Chambers, 'Amateur Poets', *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, 590 (1843), 141-2: 141.

<sup>48</sup> See, for instance, Matthew Arnold, 'The Literary Influence of Academies', *The Cornhill Magazine*, 10 (1864), 154-72.