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Eighteenth-Century Garden Spaces: Sensation, Inspiration and Imagination

by

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GARDEN SPACES: SENSATION, INSPIRATION AND IMAGINATION

Irene Elizabeth Coulson

My thesis explores and develops an understanding of how the elements of a landscape operate on the aesthetic sense. Jay Appleton notes that while human beings are spontaneously aware of their environment, its objects have associational properties, which are not inherent in the objects themselves. He asserts that there is no detailed analysis of an actual landscape in terms, which can precisely relate biological and psychological experiences with the aesthetic satisfaction derived from the observation of natural and man-made objects distributed in a particular fashion.[1] To challenge this assertion, I propose that the structure and confined landscape of certain gardens may be analysed to reveal their metaphysical properties and through them, the creative possibilities that can arise. Three specific locations are discussed, namely: The Leasowes, W. Midlands – the home of William Shenstone; Olney, Bucks – the home of William Cowper together with the associated Throckmorton Estate; and Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria – the home of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Those individualistic gardens produced a focused spatial concept of sensory experience: a place to 'be lived in', where their owners were able to wander freely, experience freedom of thought, and find depths of poetic expression in response to powerful aesthetic conditions that arose. Their imaginations were able to experience fresh nuances, as they dwelled within places that required their active physical, emotional and intellectual participation. My proposition addresses the possibilities of articulating this spatial-temporal phenomenon, in a relationship between psychological experience and aesthetic satisfaction. Examples of these poets' work illustrate artistic response to the inspirational spaces of their gardens, which became sources of imagination and creativity in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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[1] J. Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* (Chichester/ New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), p. 62.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, **Irene Elizabeth Coulson** .....[please print name]

declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Eighteenth-Century Garden Spaces: Sensation, Inspiration and Imagination .....

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I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
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Introduction

> 'I know no subject more elevating, more amusing, more ready to wake the poetical enthusiasm, the philosophical reflection, and the moral sentiment, than the works of Nature. Where can we meet with such variety, such beauty, such magnificence? All that enlarges and transports the soul!'[2]

This quotation written in June 1726 by the poet James Thomson is unique to the preface of the second edition of *Winter,* which preceded separately the first complete publication of Thomson's influential descriptive poem *The Seasons* in 1730. The poet's intention was to muse and moralize upon natural description, particularly pictures of those sublime and beautiful objects that gave pleasure to the imagination. This aesthetic had been expounded earlier by Addison who wrote that the primary pleasures of the imagination came from the observation of Nature itself; the poet's own imagination would be developed by the study of Nature rather than of art. The key premises of this quotation capture the meaning of my thesis in which I will unpack those ideas in my own words. My contention is that those concepts were imbued in the inspirational environments of the gardens in which the poets William Shenstone, William Cowper and William Wordsworth dwelled poetically in the second half of the eighteenth century. I will discuss their gardens in terms of the surrounding landscape in which they lived and their combined effects on each poet. My argument is not largely about style and form, which focuses on formal change, but rather an account of the use made of each available garden space within the context of the topography and particular communities wherein those poets made their homes. Much valuable work has already been done on gardens and I will draw on those extensive works as I consider eighteenth-century theory, which still has relevance today, as well as more recent ideas in my discussion. My standpoint is that although individual garden owners may have been aware of contemporary thinking on aesthetics, it was the distinctive structure of the surrounding landscape and the use made of distant views, the times in which they lived, and their particular disposition to their environments and gardens that profoundly influenced their individualistic expressive responses. Whilst I am weaving between the three gardens here, I will deal with them separately in the body of the dissertation. Now, I am concerned with their interconnections and disparities, their shared imaginings and disparate locations, together with the central eighteenth-century and modern critical concepts and vocabulary that hold them together.

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[2] J. Thomson, *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence,* ed. by J. Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. ix. Quoted from the original *Preface* to the second edition of *Winter,* published in 1726.

Introduction

Stephen Bending points out that: 'the apparent physicality of landscape, its geographical location, its geology and terrain' are not the most important aspects of its being, and that a physical viewpoint is likely to be determined by 'ideological assumptions about class and aesthetics', for example.[3] As Robert Lawson-Peebles says: "Descriptions of the environment … are strategies employed by individual writers which encode the interests and concerns of the writers as well as the physical nature of the terrain, the climate, and so on".[4] In my thesis, I engage with the debate on the definition of the term 'landscape' in the eighteenth century by initially making an overall interpretation of the topographical aspects of the environment connected with each of the gardens I will discuss, before considering how they might be perceived through contemplation. I thus incorporate reference to both the physicality of these landscapes, whilst also being attentive to the ideological investments involved in seeing and moving through them. A consideration of how an individual might experience his surroundings is crucial to the main thrust of my argument, which is concerned with the particularity of the places in which the poets I discuss dwelled. Movement through landscape, observation of the environment, textual influences on landscape design, and solitude, privacy and seclusion are all central factors in my main chapters, in which I examine the gardens of Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth. My choice of poets emerged from research at the beginning of my period of study, which included my Masters programme, memories of past visits to Olney and Cumbria, and a sense of progression through time in the eighteenth century. Ultimately, I argue that contemplation of how each poet lived and engaged with his particular environment can shed new light on the poetry and writings of these three men.

Engagement with the Landscape

In order to position myself in my discussion of how these poets could have connected with their surroundings, several writers have informed my thinking. For example, Malcolm Andrews argues that in the eighteenth century, central to the understanding of nature are the close connections between 'literary pastoral, landscape painting, gardening … planned landscape vistas, the promotion of land as an aesthetic asset, and the mediation between domestic and wilder areas of a country estate'. Certainly, this statement has particular relevance for my argument while, in turn, Andrews writes: 'the garden in eighteenth-century England became a green laboratory for aesthetic experiments', and that as a 'philosophical enterprise', gardening 'was promoted by the new confidence in a benignly ordered and rational universe'. The idea of experimentation might be applied to The Leasowes, while philosophical enterprise is the epitome of the Wordsworths'

[3] S. D. Bending, 'Literature and Landscape in the Eighteenth-Century', in Oxford Handbooks Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 1.
[4] R. Lawson-Peebles, *Landscape and written expression in revolutionary America*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 6.

development and use of the garden at Dove Cottage. Andrews adds that there were 'striking distinctions' between cultivated garden estates and outlying areas of uncultivated land, which accentuated the wildness beyond, and the order within the estate.[5] This was a way in which people wrote about gardens, but we know that eighteenth-century history is more complicated. For example, in the early part of the century, the Earl of Shaftesbury was formulating his ideas on the benign nature of all creation, and the pleasure it gave him to contemplate the 'Magnificence' of 'Things of a *natural* kind'.[6] Andrews argues that Shaftesbury's conviction that the apparent random sprawl of the wilderness was of a finer order than anything that could be fabricated by man, was inspirational to rethinking landscape aesthetics. While those interpretations are especially applicable to large estates founded in the early part of the eighteenth century, I will be taking a broader perspective on those viewpoints, and will largely separate myself from those narratives. Specifically, I will blur the distinction between the designed order of a garden and its links with the wider landscape beyond, since for the purposes of my discussion they were complementary.

I am engaging with various other debates such as that of William Kent, whose contribution to garden design focused on 'a greater sinuousness in the design of pathways and allowed a greater freedom for the natural forms of the landscape to predominate'. However, the introduction of the ha-ha still delineated the garden and the landscape beyond, while appearing to create continuity between them. Again, such insights stress formal characteristics, whereas I will be taking a different stance and changing this narrative. For example, that need for separation between garden and landscape is not part of my argument, partly due to the size of the chosen gardens, but also because, for my purposes, the landscape was essentially something to be physically experienced, rather than remaining a distant view. Another opinion is that the work of 'Capability' Brown in the mid-eighteenth century softened the transition from garden to parkland, so that in effect houses were now set in a landscape, not insulated from it by the environing gardens. Again, such smoothing and the creation of a contrived landscape is not part of my proposition, since the individual characteristics of each garden and their relationships towards existing surroundings are an essential part of my thesis. However, Andrews recognizes that towards the end of the eighteenth century theorists urged greater freedom in gardening, and a greater respect for natural forms that had come about over long periods of time.[7] Certainly, this declaration of the importance of admiration of the forms of landscape reflects a fundamental aspect of my argument.

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[5] M. Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 67-68.
[6] A. A. Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, 'The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody', in *Characteristiks of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times,* 3 vols (Birmingham: J. Baskerville, 1773), II, pp. 393-394.
[7] Andrews, *Landscape,* pp. 69-70.

The Pleasure of Philosophical Reflection

As well as examination of the topographical aspects of each garden, I will take my discussion further by including modern debate on contemplation and reflection. Jay Appleton asks: 'What is the source of the pleasure that we derive from the contemplation of landscape? We are free to postulate that it may be different from the source of pleasure to be derived from any other experience'.[8] He notes that in the eighteenth century the writings of philosophers such as Burke and Whately 'grew complex and less closely related to reality', while recognising that 'underneath all the dialectic and all the semantics one encounters ideas which are more realistic than any which had preceded them, because they were ... about real landscape: trees, grass, rough and smooth water, light and shade and so on'. He adds that 'it is really at that moment that we find for the first time an explosion of enthusiasm resulting from the effective bringing together of ... philosophical thought and practical landscape experience'.[9] Unquestionably, this general idea reflects the main objective of my thesis where I have aimed to emphasize such interaction between the abstract and the material within specified garden environments, and to demonstrate the importance of their landscapes, and their effects on the imagination of their owners. Therefore in Chapter 1, I am delineating sources contemporary with eighteenth-century gardens, so as to map out a possible shared aesthetic background with which someone may have engaged while walking in a garden, and developing his or her own experience of it. Various aesthetic viewpoints, such as the writings of Shaftesbury, Switzer, Langley, Burke and Whately, which were widespread in relation to the design of eighteenth-century gardens, will be discussed. The aim is to identify what is important when drawing together a set of ideas to consider when thinking about each garden. While some ideas may appertain to each one, I will select the most appropriate to highlight the particular aspect of the garden under deliberation. These sets of ideas will identify differences in each garden, as well as what might be shared. One example is that of the classical ideal, which had been dominant before the eighteenth century and was displaced when gardens were declared to be an imitation of nature, which was considered to be not only the material world itself but also an inherent force that directs it. Arguments from both sides - the ancients and moderns, the arts and the sciences - could be combined in the context of gardens, although the division between emblematic and expressive gardening was not clear-cut, and was complicated by underlying changes in cultural values. I will refer to the influential theories of Thomas Whately, and in particular his seminal work *Observations on Modern Gardening* of 1770, which analyses natural and built elements of the garden. The author also suggests principles of design, and provides descriptions of major gardens of the day such as The

[8] Appleton, *Experience,* p. 14.
[9] Appleton, *Experience,* p. 24.

Leasowes, together with his aesthetic and emotional responses to them. Whately's book was widely read and his views enable us to understand prevailing tastes and sensibilities. My contention is that the expressive quality of Whately's work and the changing contexts he evokes, relate to poetical reception and experience of each garden, which I will show as my argument develops. I also use modern theories of sensory perception lying within and beyond the terminology of 'expression', to further develop an understanding of the garden's imaginative potential.

Individual Experience

I will be drawing on the writings of Appleton, which are based on behavioural relationships between the observer and his visible environment, since they are particularly relevant to my perception of the potential of each poet's experience of their garden. In apparent consonance with his views on eighteenth-century aesthetics, John Dewey declares that: 'aesthetic understanding … must start with the soil, air, and light out of which things aesthetically admirable arise'. Dewey argues that such conditions make an ordinary experience completely fulfilling to the senses. At the same time he notes that a problem arises when it is recognized that while aesthetic quality is implicit in every normal experience, it is difficult to explain 'why it so generally fails to become explicit'.[10] He infers that certain individuals may experience the aesthetic beauty of a place or thing, while others may not. Furthermore, he adds that beauty is to be discovered in the relationship between the individual and his environment, what he calls 'experience', and writes that: 'The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way'.[11] This statement encapsulates the thread which connects the different strands within my argument, since it is the specific nature of the landscape environments in which those poets lived and their reaction to it that had a direct effect on their garden design and their creativity. Appleton asserts that it is up to academics to 'work out the implications of his [Dewey's] theories for their own fields, and as far as landscape is concerned this has not yet been seriously attempted'.[12] However, in the intervening twenty years, writers such as John Hunt, Stephanie Ross and Stephen Heyde have all expounded their own theories on the relationship between landscape and aesthetics, and I will work with those ideas, incorporating some of their views into my discussion. For example, Hunt takes the view that garden aesthetics in the eighteenth century increasingly fell into the gap between traditional representation of nature and human nature in history, and a view that gave prominence to the interior and autonomous imagination. It is this gap between the material and the intellectual that

[10] J. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (London: Penguin Group, 1934), p. 11.
[11] Dewey, *Art as Experience,* p. 12.
[12] Appleton, *Experience,* pp. 43-45.

I will explore and endeavour to provide substance, an approach with which Heyde would concur. Hunt's work also highlights the writings of the Earl of Shaftesbury who described how different 'characters' in gardens related to Nature, in his belief that that there was an inherent form in every natural object. This is an important theme in my discussion on the structure of each garden and its situation within the landscape. Furthermore, Ross has expounded her views on the theme of 'enclosure', which appeals to our imagination as well as to our senses, since it focuses attention and indicates a basic sensory notion of being surrounded. My thesis encompasses these thoughts, because the concept of an enclosed structure within each garden provides the means by which each poet found expression, in the place he created for himself.

Specificity of Place

Each of the three gardens has particular differentiating features, which I will focus on in my main chapters. In a discussion on the relationship between the observer and his visible environment, Appleton declares that: 'places will vary in their capacity for stimulating aesthetic response … [this] will depend partly on the intrinsic properties of such places and partly on the behaviour mechanisms which govern these relationships'. He adds that the 'symbolism of prospect and refuge' may also be a characteristic of places that we think of as beautiful.[13] This approach is another key tenet in my proposition, and in my argument I will apply aesthetic principles of contemporary thought as well as consideration of modern theories relating to sensory perception. My view is that modern thinking allows me to encapsulate possible effects in a more intimate way, as it offers the opportunity for valuable insights into the sensory experiences of the eighteenth century. This will further enhance description of perceived pleasure within my discussion, as I explore and develop an understanding of how the elements of a landscape operate on the aesthetic sense.

Appleton also notes that while human beings are spontaneously aware of their environment, its objects have associational properties, which are not inherent in the objects themselves. Indeed, in the middle of the eighteenth century, objects in gardens such as The Leasowes demanded an emotional and imaginative response from the visitor, and by 1770, Whately had recognized that as scenes became wilder, natural features of the landscape, which could have the power to affect our imagination and our sensibility, might stir emotions. He perceived that first impressions in the garden might lead to new and original ideas, thoughts that anticipated the effects of the metaphysical aspects of the irregularities of the garden, and their influence on the creative mind. Appleton asserts that there is no detailed analysis of an actual

[13] Appleton, *Experience,* p. 211.

landscape in terms that can precisely relate biological and psychological experiences with the aesthetic satisfaction derived from the observation of natural and man-made objects distributed in a particular fashion.[14] In my thesis I am taking up the challenge inherent in this statement, and I propose that the structure and confined landscape of specific gardens may be analysed to reveal their metaphysical properties, and the creative possibilities that can arise. Three particular locations, which were owned or created by poets, are examined in subsequent chapters, namely: Chapter 2 - The Leasowes, W. Midlands, the home of William Shenstone; Chapter 3 - Olney, Bucks, the home of William Cowper, together with the associated Throckmorton Estate, and Chapter 4 - Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria, the home of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. As the gardens of poets, they allowed for a specific insight into the effects of actual landscape on psychological processes over a period of time in which understandings of both changed. In making my choices, as well as considering the poets themselves, I focussed on the form of their gardens and surrounding environments, as I considered that the interesting differentiations between each garden offered me scope for reflection on their imaginative potential. These thoughts were reinforced by several visits to each one.

Those unique gardens exhibited the confined nature and dramatic, varying topography of their surroundings, resulting in concentrated spatial concepts: places in which those creative people could see themselves, places to 'be lived in'. As Crawford argues: 'when walled aristocratic gardens ... gave way to the ideal of unrestrained views ... the kind of space that represented English national aspirations was radically altered, yet that alteration contained within itself the potential for imagining contained space in a revolutionized way ... [providing] containment with new symbolic possibilities'. She writes that during the eighteenth century 'containment was being re-valued as an aesthetic and representational space in its own right', adding that it 'was, of course, not merely visionary', as she allies boundaries to enclosure and productivity.[15] However, I propose that there was an alternative way of looking at contained space that went beyond the vernacular, or indeed the 'merely visionary', in that the confined nature of the garden was certainly a 'sublime expanse', but one that through its intricate complexity was a metaphysical place that had the potential to transform the creativeness of those who lived in it. Dewey infers that the roots of the aesthetic in 'experience' had the power to convert factors of tension into 'differentiated aspects of a higher powered and more significant life'.[16] As Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth adjusted to their surroundings within the contained spaces that they had created, they could leave the earthly world rather than a heavenly or spiritual one behind, and were able

[14] Appleton, *Experience*, p. 62.
[15] See R. Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 253-255, for a discussion on containment.
[16] Dewey, *Art as Experience,* p. 13.

to respond to their environment and achieve poetic self-expression. In my main chapters, I intend to focus on the idea of containment and to explore its expanding horizons of possibility, as my chosen places and their creative owners reached within and outside their garden boundaries to the landscape beyond. In their gardens, those poets were able to experience freedom of thought in places where they could wander freely, and respond to the poetic images that arose in their minds.

The frame of reference for my thesis is the overall governing metaphor of 'place'. John Hunt discusses the concept of 'exterior place-making'. It is the creation of a space in which we 'see or set ourselves', a place 'to be lived in'. He notes that the concept may sometimes take its cue from 'some important building or even some building that in its turn acquires importance from that place-making'.[17] This notion is an important addition to the idea of the garden as a place for the development of ideas; a thought that was expanded by Tim Cresswell who reflected that the garden may be an active force in the definition of an appropriate set of actions or 'practice'. Cresswell adds that 'people read places by acting in them'.[18] These thoughts are central to my thesis, as I will explore each poet's response to his particular environment, and the way in which he developed the individualistic 'place' of his garden, and the significance of its enclosed buildings. Within the governing metaphor of 'place', each of the three gardens exhibits further distinctive imageries. In the case of The Leasowes, those imaginings relate to William Shenstone's melancholic nature and his interest in ruin and destruction, which were reflected in the structures that he built in his garden. Some of them were of a temporary nature, for while he enjoyed their construction, he also took great pleasure in seeing them fall down. By contrast at Olney, through his daily actions, his writings and his poetry, William Cowper provided ample evidence of the effects of the winter season, which was a most important factor in his environment within and beyond the seclusion of his home Orchard Side. He professed that season of the year to be his most productive time and, as I will discuss, it had the greatest effect on him during the very cold winter of 1783/4. Whereas at Dove Cottage, William and Dorothy Wordsworth became as one with the sensations emanating from the phenomenological place in which they lived. Each of my chosen gardens was different, and in the coming chapters I will explore their topography in relation to eighteenth-century aesthetics, as well as drawing on modern theories where appropriate.

[17] J. D. Hunt, *Greater Perfections* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 2000), p.1.
[18] T. Cresswell, *In place, Out of Place* (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 16.

Wandering Through a Landscape

The action of walking in the garden or in the landscape beyond is a significant area for discussion. It makes possible what Robin Jarvis has termed: 'irregular mental play – the wandering of reverie, or the re-presentation to consciousness of what has been seen and felt – as well as more abstruse forms of introspection and concentrated creative thought'.[19] In each of my chapters the activity of exploring the environment on foot allowed the poet's aesthetic sensibility to take flight as it engaged in experimentation and re-envisioning of the landscape. At The Leasowes for example, William Shenstone combined the practical activity of sheep farming with landscape design, and developed the perimeter of his farm into a celebrated and influential circuit walk. This feature had become a characteristic of garden design by the mid-eighteenth century, with viewpoints to admire or contemplate the immediate scene, and in Shenstone's case was done largely for the benefit of his many visitors. By contrast at Olney, William Cowper's town garden was a private place, but his habit of walking in the surrounding countryside, and in particular to the privately owned Throckmorton Estate, was essential to the development of his imaginative response to the landscape. Whereas, at Dove Cottage, the very private, inspirational and phenomenological space of the garden created by William and Dorothy Wordsworth was the catalyst for the realization of their poetry and other writings. Much of their work was composed during their extensive daily walks in the surrounding landscape, which Jarvis describes as 'more of a given of existence than a conscious aesthetic choice'.[20] He comments that poetry of those days exhibited a certain resistance to argumentative or visionary closure, as well as a tendency to indulge in the free mixing of 'the materials of observation with the materials of learning and memory and the materials of invention'.[21] However, I will argue that such an activity was less of an indulgence than a direct, observational and imaginative response to the environments in which my chosen poets dwelled.

Gaze and Observation

As they walked in their gardens, or in the surrounding landscape, Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth observed their environments, both near and far. The eighteenth-century activity of 'looking' is an important facet of the experience of gardens, and has been reconstructed by Peter de Bolla whose theories will be discussed in relation to the structure of those poets' particular gardens. De Bolla's ideas favour a set of associative triggers and inform a visitor's response, which might generate expectation, delight and surprise, as he is led visually and poetically through a

[19] R. Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1997), pp. 62-88.
[20] Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel,* p. 162.
[21] Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel,* p. 104.

garden. De Bolla argues that what a viewer sees is the result of an inbuilt learned process, and I propose that the concentration of the sequestered nature of The Leasowes, for example, might focus the visitor's attention, making him even more susceptible to the sensations aroused by the variety of its sights and sounds. Likewise, contemporary speculation on the meaning of distance was a way of describing aesthetic experience. It gained a more personal significance when perception through distance became part of the process of aesthetic judgement, and a potential agent of the imagination.[22] Engagement with the form and nature of the garden and the wilder landscape beyond was a key factor for the sensory perception needed for aesthetic response.

While the effects of a landscape are of prime importance to Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth, it is appropriate to consider how other people reacted to a garden and the associative qualities of some of its elements. Dana Arnold asserts that the fashion for country house and garden visiting 'to those of appropriate rank' continued throughout the eighteenth century. She states that, invited or not, the practice of visiting became a signifier of social order and a benchmark of class difference.[23] While such thinking may have been pertinent to some visitors, I will argue that at The Leasowes for example, for William Shenstone, the 'act of communion' between visitor and garden was also important, since visitors were also being invited to participate in its design. In the creation of his garden, his poetic work of art, Shenstone was getting people involved, and building something that many people from all strata of society would remember. Through close reading of travel diaries, brief accounts of contemporary visits to The Leasowes, as well as his poetry and letters, I will examine Shenstone's aesthetic approach to his garden design, and how it affected its visitors. Some of these ideas, such as modern theories of 'looking', together with contemporary and modern theories on 'distance' and sensory perception are also present in the environment of the garden at Orchard Side, Olney, together with the nearby Throckmorton Estate. I will examine that landscape and William Cowper's reaction to it in his letters and poetry, with particular reference to his popular georgic work – *The Task*. Similarly, these ideas can also be applied to the garden and the surrounding environment of Dove Cottage, which will be examined in detail through the letters, journals, poetry and other writings of William and Dorothy Wordsworth.

Textual Influences and Interpretations

As Hunt has argued, the verbal and the visual play a part in the design of a garden, as well as influencing the 'experience, reception, or thinking of gardens'.[24] In particular, the idea of an

[22] J. Ogden, 'From Spatial to Aesthetic Distance in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 35:1 (1974}, 63-78.
[23] D. Arnold, *The Georgian Country House* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), pp. 20-42.
[24] Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, p. 116.

inscription was a significant textual feature of The Leasowes as a complement to the physical structures of the garden. An inscription may have triggered surprise, or a meditative response if recognized by a visitor. The use of inscriptions is a recurring facet of my discussion, since they also appear in Cowper's familiar surroundings, as well as on occasion in Wordsworth's environment, each seemingly influenced by the other. As Hunt argues: a primary function of some inscriptions which are 'invoked to augment the impact of the other senses', is 'to engage readers simply or complexly in a site's relationship with its past'.[25] Such consideration may enable them to see the garden in a new light, perhaps one that is influenced by their own views on the world. Certainly, at The Leasowes, whilst it was Shenstone's private creation, and although several written descriptions of the place existed, he encouraged visitors to explore his garden without personal guidance, thus allowing them to develop their own perceptive experience of it. Another aspect of the crafting of an inscription may be the desire to record feelings of nostalgia and recollections of the effects of a place, so that the area in which it is installed becomes a wellspring of memory and ideas, beyond the immediate garden. This is especially relevant to my discussion on Cowper's use of inscriptions and their subsequent emulation by Wordsworth, in the seclusion of the enclosed and private spaces that they created.

Literature, too, was an inspiration for design, as well as a means of interpreting it for visitors. I will consider the poetical context of the earlier Augustan age, as it is an indication of the differing approaches to the garden environments that will be discussed. Andrew McRae says that at that time: 'poets consistently represented their native countryside as an untroubled site of rural pleasures, but the poetic celebrations of the land were in fact forged out of a period of accelerated social and economic change in rural England'. As English poets discovered their native landscape, the meaning of rural England had never before been so problematic.[26] In the coming chapters, as well as the poetry of Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth, I will include applicable references to James Thomson's *The Seasons*, and John Milton's 'Il Penseroso', which has particular relevance for my thesis.

Solitude

The emphasis on solitude was an important aspect of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, as it identified the power of the landscape to create intellectual and emotional responses in the viewer. In order to identify those aspects of my chosen gardens, I am drawing on the writings of Lord Kames who, in his influential work *Elements of Criticism* (1762), stressed that gardens were important for the individual experience and emotion. One of his key principles was the

[25] Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, p. 122.
[26] A. McRae, 'Landscape and Property in Seventeenth-Century Poetry', in *Sydney Studies*, 20 (1994), 36-62 (p. 36).

importance of the manner in which objects were put together in a garden, and their potential effect on a visitor. Those ideas such as the incorporation of natural objects with man-made ones can be identified in all three gardens, and in particular the different emotions that can be raised by beauty from regularity and colour, plus emotions of grandeur, melancholy, surprise or wonder. Specifically, Kames stressed that a straight walk is less agreeable than a winding or waving walk, which constantly opens up new vistas. It introduces a sense of movement and variety, which would offer a wide range of opportunities for emotional response, which might be concentrated in its isolation and privacy. The approach of the 'waving line' and 'variety' was incorporated as a fundamental feature throughout Shenstone's garden design. His creation of the circuit walk stimulated the imagination by disappearing and reappearing from sight, and invited people to follow it as new scenes were presented to affect their imagination. The presence of water in a garden too is particularly important, since the subtleties of its effects and its qualities of movement offer the possibility of nuanced responses. Whereas The Leasowes was a private garden, and one that the poet could enjoy in solitude, Shenstone had built it with the public in mind, creating a place where people could envisage themselves as individuals in a private space.

The notion of solitude arises too in Cowper's garden at Olney, which was a private place where he could walk, contemplate and immerse himself in composition; this might be termed apt poetic garden behaviour. However his extensive use of the surrounding area and the Throckmorton Estate stretched his creativeness into a more public arena, as he walked often in solitude around its features in a generally prescribed route. The opportunities for imaginative aesthetic response were also present, since the panoramic views of the landscape at Weston Underwood changed throughout the seasons. Cowper's presence in that varied landscape was an important and constantly varying sensory experience, which made possible the association of ideas derived through sensation and perception. I am focusing on this point since this is how aesthetic theory will be used in my proposition that the place of Olney, its surrounding environs and the interactions Cowper had within it and beyond was certainly Gaston Bachelard's 'felicitous space', which enabled the poet to reach his greatest heights of creativity. Similarly, the garden at Dove Cottage was entirely private, a place where William and Dorothy Wordsworth could dwell in solitude amongst the vast landscape of the Cumbrian fells as the seasons changed. Like an echo of eighteenth-century theorists, modern writers have also expounded on the topic of changing panoramas more specifically in relation to sensory perception, and as I will discuss, aesthetic excitement is aroused by the changes and deflections in the vistas presented to poetic awareness. The solitude that those poets sought and the opportunities for poetic inspiration were captured in the specific structures that they built within their gardens, which provided the means by which they could consolidate their thoughts, and find poetical expression.

Prospect and Refuge

The characteristic symbol of a place as a private refuge is a key aspect of my discussion. Appleton links his prospect-refuge theory to the need for survival, giving one a clear view of others while remaining hidden from them. This may sometimes be a valid argument, but I assert that this theory is also applicable to non-threatening situations. Ross declares that in strolling through a garden we do not necessarily or instinctively concern ourselves with such matters, suggesting that we should 'seek correlates of Appleton's variables that will apply to our situation as cultural beings'. My proposition intimates that in this instance the theory is particularly adaptable to the need for a poet to be above earthly concerns, to have a quiet secluded place in which to contemplate, compose his poetry, and to actively seek it. Ross introduces the term "invitation" to 'signal the way in which gardens and other landscapes engage us in imaginative and actual explorations' and allies this to "enclosure"… which 'indicates a basic sensory and kinaesthetic notion … of being surrounded'. She adds that "enclosure" can 'also signify comfort, security, passivity, rest, privacy, intimacy, sensory focus, and concentrated attention'. Ross then notes that Michael Van Valkenburgh has put forward the concept of "immersion", which implies that one is 'surrounded by landscape and having the experience of being changed by it'.[27] These modern thoughts are consistent with my views on the purposes and effects of the secluded private structures that were built in my chosen gardens, since invitation, enclosure and immersion appeal to the imagination as well as the senses, enabling the poet to feel more deeply the qualities and features of his situation.

At The Leasowes, the idea of prospect and refuge can be applied to the circuit walk as a whole, as well as several individual structures within it. Shenstone was offering such variety to his visitors during the period in which his garden was being developed, when he received a broad range of people (1743-1763). It is also applicable to the enclosed nature of Cowper's garden at Olney, and its sheltered spaces of the summerhouse and the greenhouse where the poet could reflect in peace, and focus on his writing. The sequestered nature of the parlour at Orchard Side also created a similar place where the poet could write: somewhere that grew to significance during the time when he was composing *The Task.* Additionally, Cowper's wanderings on the Throckmorton Estate on rising ground that gave him wide prospect views of Olney, led him to the contrasting enclosure of the Moss House in 'The Shrubbery', where he spent much time in contemplation and composition. In my discussion, I will elucidate the effects of the wide

[27] S. Ross, *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 168-170. She quotes M. V. Valkenburgh of Harvard in an article in the *New York Times,* Oct. 13, 1991, sec. 6, pt. 2 (*Home Design Magazine*), p. 46.

prospects of his environment together with the secluded places he created and discovered during his period of greatest creativity (1774–1785).

Appleton's concept of prospect and refuge, together with Ross and Van Valkenburgh's more recent ideas, becomes even more significant on inspection of the landscape in which William and Dorothy Wordsworth lived at Dove Cottage. Throughout his formative years, Wordsworth had lived with distant views of the Cumbrian fells on the horizon, and it becomes evident how important the sense of 'place' was to him. Especially, how the landscape in which he lived affected his imagination, as did the gardens he created together with his sister Dorothy. I will be focussing on the garden at Dove Cottage, as it was there that Wordsworth's major work *The Prelude* was revised. Specifically, I will argue that the countryside surrounding the cottage, together with the Moss Hut that he and Dorothy built at the highest point of the garden, were the key factors in the creation of an environment that was entirely conducive to the poet's imaginative creativity. Through examination of the works of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, especially *The Prelude* and Dorothy's *Journals*, I aim to explicate the effects of the place with reference to contemporary and modern aesthetic theory and the many critical texts that are available. In particular, I will examine the phenomenological dimension of Wordsworth's imagination in relation to his living space and his habit of composing out of doors. The powerful phenomenological presence of the garden next to the cottage, its position in the wider context of the landscape of the Vale of Grasmere, and the construction of the Moss Hut retreat, provided Wordsworth with a place full of contrasts, which had a direct influence on him and became essential to his creativity. Maurice Merleau-Ponty uses the term '*a phenomenal field'* to describe a space in which perceptual experience can be discovered, and I will argue that Wordsworth's environment at Dove Cottage, Grasmere was the embodiment of such a place. Further, the secluded space of the Moss Hut was the crucial place where the poet could retreat into philosophical contemplation during his residence at Dove Cottage (1799-1808).

Just as the poet's imagination is invited to engage with the landscape before him, enclosure inspires him to intensify his experiences within its boundaries, as he is encouraged to alternate between wide, distant views and a shift of focus to an enclosed space. In the case of William Wordsworth, boundaries were central to the spatial configuration of his native region. However, in the poet's time at Dove Cottage when, for example, there was no garden wall, boundary lines may have vanished to suggest distances beyond in spatial ambiguity. The garden blended into woodland, and from the vantage point of the Moss Hut the poet could gaze beyond the steep sloping garden to the prospect of Grasmere Lake and distant fells. As boundaries dissolved between the garden and the landscape beyond, Wordsworth may have entered his inner world where connections made by memory led to vanished moments and distant places, in

a consciousness of the blossoming spaces of the garden and the images that arose in his mind. As Patricia Spacks says, the creation of an insular private space with an inward focus gives a place of self-discovery since privacy is above all an imaginative category.[28] The sense of unity of Grasmere Vale may have liberated the poet's imagination rather than giving it constraint. Consequently, I will argue that it was the visionary environment of the garden at Dove Cottage within the context of the Vale of Grasmere that enabled Wordsworth, in an extension of self-awareness, to take a commanding view of himself, the society in which he lived and his societal concept for the future, and to raise awareness of the value of the common man. My contention is that during Wordsworth's period of dwelling at Dove Cottage, his garden became a metaphysical individualistic space where he was able to respond freely to the poetic images that arose in his mind. It was where his imagination was able to experience new insights within the phenomenological space of the garden, and in particular within the seclusion of the Moss Hut.

Coda

My exploration of both eighteenth-century and modern theoretical viewpoints will support my aim of demonstrating how the places in which the poets Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth dwelled were crucial to their poetical creativeness. While I have drawn on the valuable work of eighteenth-century and more recent critics, what matters to me are the interpretations that they have allowed me to draw from and apply to the environments of my chosen poets, thereby enabling me to offer insightful clarification of the way in which they lived poetically in their gardens. I will draw on the ideas outlined in this introduction as I examine each garden to reveal the differences between them, as well as what might be shared. Those individualistic places produced a spatial concept with a dedicated concentration: a place to 'be lived in'. The building or use of enclosed structures was a vital part of garden design, since those retreats developed into metaphysical spaces where each writer could experience engagement with the senses, and achieve artistic response. Those buildings became part of each poet's own sense of being, places where they could reflect philosophically, and materialise ideas.

Some of my argument might inevitably be perceived as speculative because it is fundamentally based on my own perceptions of the effects of the gardens at The Leasowes, Olney, and Dove Cottage, and is not described elsewhere. The greatest works of each poet were created during specific periods, and my initial thoughts were to uncover what it was about the places in which they lived that might enable such exceptional poetic creativity to occur. In each case an exploratory visit to the garden was essential to experience its topographical context, to

[28] P. M. Spacks, *Privacy, Concealing the Eighteenth-century Self* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 6-11.

spend time absorbing its environment, and to imagine its possibilities for poetical composition. In the coming chapters, I will contextualise the situation of each garden as places where Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth were able to develop new ideas since they could wander freely, and respond in seclusion to the poetic images that arose. Shenstone used the varied topography of the perimeter of his farmland to create a circuit walk with a sense of theatricality, which he was pleased to share with visitors. Conversely, Cowper's small town garden was a private refuge in a bustling place, but his creativity was greatly enhanced by the opportunities he had to wander across the rolling landscape of the nearby Throckmorton Estate. On the other hand, Wordsworth lived a life of sensation and imagination in his tiny private cottage garden, which was enfolded by the dramatic landscape of Cumbria. Their shared yet disparate understanding and experience of their individual landscapes allowed their imaginations to discover new differences, as they co-existed in a synaesthetic blending of the senses within a phenomenological space. Each garden offered a potentially broader range of sensation and perception as the poet moved visually or physically from one area to another, and while each experience may have been the same in some ways, it is the distinctions that I intend to explain too. My proposition addresses the possibilities of articulating this spatial-temporal phenomenon, in a relationship between psychological experience and aesthetic satisfaction. Examples of these poets' work will illustrate artistic response to the metaphysical spaces of their gardens, which became sources of imagination and creativity in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Chapter 1: Aesthetic Viewpoints in Eighteenth-Century Gardens

1.1 Introduction

In order to establish the framework for my thesis, in this chapter I will examine some of the aesthetic sources that were available in the eighteenth century, to represent an imaginable shared aesthetic culture with which a visitor may have engaged while walking in the garden, and freely developing his or her own pleasurable experience of it. The complex writings of philosophers such as Edmund Burke, as well as less well known figures such as Thomas Whately, for example, are discussed in terms of the recognition that their ideas were more realistic than their predecessors since they were about the elements of landscape, such as trees, grass, water, light and shade. Jay Appleton wrote that 'it is really at that moment that we find for the first time an explosion of enthusiasm resulting from the effective bringing together of ... philosophical thought and practical landscape experience'.[29] Modern theories in relation to sensory perception, such as the writings of John Hunt, Jay Appleton and Peter de Bolla, for instance, are also relevant to my discussion since they inform and enhance my reading of the aesthetic experience that the visitor to the eighteenth-century garden may have enjoyed.

While John Dewey writes that beauty might be discovered in the relationship between the individual and his environment, Appleton argues that the aesthetic enjoyment of landscape based on relationships between the observer and his visible environment may vary from place to place, as their capacities for stimulating aesthetic response may differ. He points out that: 'this variation will depend partly on the intrinsic properties of such places and partly on the behaviour mechanisms which govern these relationships'.[30] This approach, which is attentive to both the physical properties of the environment and processes of perception, is the key principle of my thesis, and in the coming chapters I will apply such aesthetic philosophies to the gardens at The Leasowes, Olney and Dove Cottage, all of which exhibit contrasting potential for aesthetic response, as evidenced by their owners' creativity. Here, I introduce some of the key ideological debates that underpin my case studies: the transition between emblem and expression in garden design, the shift away from classical ideals, and the implication of these movements for concepts of nature and art. Several sets of productive tensions are examined, as a desire for erudition in the form of allusions to literary and mythic texts and figures in gardens, contrasts with a desire for garden spaces, which do not require the intellectual labour of interpretation. Tensions between expansion and enclosure, regularity and irregularity, static and kinetic ways of viewing landscapes,

[29] Appleton, *Experience,* p. 24.
[30] Appleton, *Experience,* p. 211.

and public and private experiences of landscape, are also introduced. I unpack some of the important literary, philosophical and aesthetic influences on my chosen gardens, including the works of Milton, Spenser, Locke, Gilpin and Repton, and take into account ideas about the picturesque and sensibility. I also unpack relevant modern aesthetic theories, which enable us to consider how landscape operates on the aesthetic sense to create pleasure, how the poetic image is produced, and how the garden functions as a place in which the association of ideas becomes possible. I consider the effect and importance of refuge and minute detail, and situate my study within the changes in ways of seeing and experiencing that took place in the eighteenth century, from the detachment of the prospect, to the sentimental look engendered by an immersion in the landscape, and to the internal reverie and the mind's eye. Finally, I outline some of the design elements of eighteenth-century gardens, and the ways in which they contributed towards the production of certain aesthetic responses.

1.2 Emblem and Expression

In his influential essay 'The Modern System of Arts', the humanist scholar Paul Oskar Kristeller writes that: 'The fundamental importance of the eighteenth century in the history of aesthetics and of art criticism is generally recognised ... such dominating concepts of modern aesthetics as taste and sentiment, genius, originality and creative imagination did not assume their definite modern meaning before the eighteenth century'.[31] The classical ideal was displaced and the doctrine of Horace's *Ars Poetica* of 13 B.C: 'Ut pictura poesis' - as is painting so is poetry, came to the fore. Stephanie Ross asserts that Horace contended that: 'different paintings please in different circumstances. Some reward close scrutiny, bright light, repeated encounters; others do not', and that such remarks were taken up by 'countless painters, poets, critics and theorists [who] transformed them into a set of rigid precepts, thus generating the traditions of the sister arts.' Ross declares that it may be 'puzzling that Horace Walpole proposed gardening as a sister to both poetry and painting, [since] gardens do not seem well-suited to … the arts of poetry and drama … how can gardens deal with great human subjects and represent significant human actions?' This is a question that I will attempt to answer in the coming chapters.[32] Gardens, like poetry and painting, were declared to be an imitation of nature, considering 'Nature' not only as the material world itself, but also as the essential quality and character *of* something, or the inherent force which directs it.[33] However, Raymond Williams points out that precise meanings of the word are variable, and that such variations are still widespread today, which may allow a

[31] P. O. Kristeller, 'The Modern System of Arts: A study in the History of Aesthetics', *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 12:4 (1951), 496-527 (p. 496).
[32] Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, pp. 49-50.
[33] R. Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), p. 219.

visitor to have some consonance with his or her eighteenth-century counterpart. The displacement of the classical ideal and the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns was evident at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Stephen Heyde writes that arguments from both sides - the ancients and the moderns, the arts and the sciences - could be combined in the context of gardens. He describes the first half of the eighteenth century as being indebted to the modern urge of looking at the environment, but also being possible because it resonated with older ideas about beauty. He adds: 'the shift from 'emblematic' to 'expressive' gardening in the eighteenth-century is well-rehearsed ... but [is complicated by] underlying changes in cultural values that profoundly influenced a whole generation of garden making'.[34] Indeed, Stephen Bending disagrees with the assertion that the landscape gardens of the second half of the eighteenth century are 'expressive', and suggests that this might be misleading. He argues that while the emblematic had faded out of the landscape garden, popular writings encouraged an attempt to read those sites in an emblematic manner, and educated people, seeing a particular phrase or image, would recognize its traditional meaning and associations. Bending notes that George Mason (1735-1806) in 'An Essay on Design in Gardening' still considered the late eighteenth-century landscape garden to be a liberal art.[35]

John Hunt asserts that: 'No garden comes into being without human intervention; none exists without natural and living materials. The garden offers a prime location for aesthetic adventure and debate'.[36] Early landscape gardens conveyed empathy with the ancients, when historical evocations such as a grotto, literary inscriptions, a temple, classical statues, or an obelisk intimated the value of ancient learning. Erudition could be incorporated into the garden by including the story of Hercules, which represents a moral choice between the difficult path of virtue and the easy one of pleasure. Shaftesbury's narrative, 'The Judgment of Hercules' was common education in the first half of the eighteenth century.[37] He refers to images of sculptures of Hercules, and representation of figures of Virtue and Pleasure such as Venus for example, intimating that they should resemble images 'seen on Medals, and other *emblematick* Pieces of like nature'.[38] However, he notes that 'a *historical and moral* Piece must of necessity lose much of its natural Simplicity and Grace, if anything of the *emblematical or enigmatick* kind be visibly and directly intermix'd.[39] In his letter on 'Enthusiasm' of 1707, Shaftesbury writes of the 'Practices of the Antients', which have 'gain'd so much Repute'.[40] He respectfully talks of the lack of

[34] S. Heyde, 'The Historical Roots of 'Aesthetics' in Landscape Architecture', *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes,* 34:2 (2014), 123 -145 (p. 124).
[35] S. D. Bending, 'Re-Reading the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 55:3 (1992), 379-399 (p. 396).
[36] J. D. Hunt, *Garden and Grove* (London: J. M. Dent, 1986), p. 90.
[37] Shaftesbury, 'A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules', in *Characteristiks*, III, pp. 347-391.
[38] Shaftesbury, 'Judgment of Hercules', in *Characteristiks*, III, pp. 364-371.
[39] Shaftesbury, 'Judgment of Hercules', in *Characteristiks*, III, p. 381.
[40] Shaftesbury, 'A Letter concerning Enthusiasm', in *Characteristiks*, I, p. 4.

'Burlesque' in their writing, unlike 'that of our days'.[41] William Shenstone (1714-1763) took a similar approach at The Leasowes when he included a copy of the statue of the Venus de' Medici in his design, together with an inscription which proposed its meaning. For Shenstone, the partly concealed yet naked Venus 'had a more bashful attitude than any other.[42] Venus was thus included as an emblem of 'good taste', notwithstanding her role as an example of 'pleasure', in opposition to public virtue.

In a broad discussion on the theatrical nature of some garden designs, particularly in relation to those of William Kent, Hunt recognises that the designer had a special liking for Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, and that Kent's illustrations for a published version depict several of the temples that he had designed for the garden at Stowe.[43] Hunt asserts that Kent's references to Spenser at Stowe are an important illustration of Whately's point that allusions to favourite poems may animate a scene. Kent's Vale of Venus at Rousham is also mentioned by Hunt who enthuses on the 'delightful' 'descending series of ponds presided over' by the sculpture of the goddess, and posits that the Vale of Venus recalls the vision in the sixth book of *The Faerie Queene* where the poet presents the dance of the three graces:

> Handmaids of Venus, which are wont to haunt
> Upon this hill, and dance there day and night ...
> These three on men all gracious gifts bestow,
> Which deck the body or adorn the mind ...[44]

Hunt suggests that 'for the properly equipped and learned mind' this encounter with Venus would recall 'Spenser's discussions of courtesy and its connections with countryside'. The Leasowes also had a descending series of ponds, and further investigation may reveal a connection with Spenserian thought and poetry, within the context of the emblematic and literary nature of Shenstone's garden. Certainly, Michael Symes and Sandy Haynes have already noted that verse three of Shenstone's poem 'Semi-reducta Venus', which was dedicated to the statue of 'Venus de Medici beside a goldfish pond and under a laburnum', bears 'a titillation strikingly similar to the Bower of Bliss in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene'*.[45] Shenstone, who had a great regard for Spenser and the medieval world he evoked, wrote that he was searching 'for a Motto to my Gothick Building', and had 'been looking over Spenser, but cannot yet fix one to my Mind'. Instead, Virgil and Horace were able to provide Shenstone with the verses he desired.[46]

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[41] Shaftesbury, 'An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour', in *Characteristiks,* I, p. 73.
[42] W. Shenstone, *The Letters of William Shenstone*, ed. by M. Williams (Oxford: Blackwell, 1939), p. 522 (3 October 1759), W. S. to Thomas Percy. Hereafter cited as *Letters.*
[43] J. D. Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 4:3 (1971), 294-317 (p. 302).
[44] E. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene,* VI. 10. xv, xxiii, quoted in Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism', 294-317 (p. 303).
[45] M. Symes, and S. Haynes, *Enville Hagley The Leasowes: Three Great Eighteenth-Century Gardens* (Bristol: Redcliffe, 2010), p.181.
[46] Shenstone, *Letters,* XCV, p. 213 (20 August 1749), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.

At this point, it is appropriate to consider the poetical background of the earlier Augustan age, which refers to the period from 1660 to the death of Pope in 1744, when georgic became the dominant form of poetry. Hunt writes that the dominant taste at the end of the seventeenth century was French, and that it was the rejection of its supposed formality that initiated the English landscape movement. He adds that it was an endorsement of liberty and tolerance against tyranny and autocracy, as Alexander Pope explained in *An Essay on Criticism* (1711):

> But *we,* brave *Britons, Foreign Laws* despis'd*,*
> And kept *unconquer'd,* and *uncivilised,*
> Fierce for the *Liberties of Wit* ...[47]

These ideas are taken further by Rachel Crawford who traces the shift that occurred from the celebration of unbounded expansion and the prospect view at the beginning of the eighteenth century, to the preference for containment and enclosure at the end, drawing upon aspects of politics, economics and poetic practice in her discussion. Crawford focuses on a reading of landscape through political and social change, and examines the treatises of Switzer, Whately and Repton in a reflection on national concerns:

> In 1770, ... when Whately's treatise was first published, the technique [of expansion and containment reconciled by means of illusion] had a response as political as it did horticultural ... His treatise absorbs and reflects the instability associated with the extensions of the British Empire while simultaneously exuding confidence in being English ... the country estate had become an emblem of empire. The house ... at the center [sic] of this emblem was enfolded by its well-tended gardens and radiated power through its unrestrained prospects.[48]

Issues of the influence of power and politics on garden design and subsequent aesthetic experience are areas for further investigation.

Hunt also discusses the writings of Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, who did not refer to untamed nature, but to how different 'characters' in gardens related to Nature. He believed that that there was an inherent form in every natural object and that those tendencies could be cultivated in practical gardening, suggesting that garden spaces could be organised along perspectival lines so that the full scale of natural imagery could be properly apprehended.[49] David Leatherbarrow puts forward a full account of this elaborate theory in his article: 'Character, Geometry and Perspective', nonetheless Hunt points out that Shaftesbury's plea was 'for the idea of pure nature, which since it rarely discloses itself to the naked eye must

[47] A. Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, (London: Collins, 1973), p. 37, 715-717.
[48] Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure*, p. 76.
[49] J. D. Hunt, and P. Willis, eds, *Genius of the Place*, (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1988), pp. 8-9.

be studied in the 'perfected forms' which art provides.[50] Hunt adds that: 'What Shaftesbury's theory did require of gardens was a graduated sequence of design whereby regulated nature near the house gradually gave way to the untouched forms of nature on the horizon ... [and] taught him to understand the potential in untouched forms further off'.[51] Shaftesbury indicated his growing passion for Nature:

> Tis true, said I, (Theocles!) I own it. Your *Genius,* the *Genius* of the Place, and the GREAT GENIUS have at last prevail'd. I shall no longer resist the Passion growing in me for Things of a *natural* kind; where neither *Art*, nor the *Conceit* or *Caprice* of Man has spoil'd their *genuine Order,* by breaking in upon that *primitive State.* Even the rude *Rocks*, the mossy *Caverns*, the irregular unwrought *Grottos*, and broken *Falls* of Waters, with all the horrid Graces of the *Wilderness* it-self, as representing NATURE more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a Magnificence beyond the formal Mockery of princely Gardens.[52]

David Marshall remarks on the theatrical nature of such comments, and that nature here is 'pictured as spectacle and scene'. He adds that while Shaftesbury anticipates the descriptions of William Gilpin, Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight, he also foresees 'the idea that a natural scene might itself *represent* nature'.[53] Alternatively, Hunt deliberates on Shaftesbury's 'uncertainties about the respective scope of 'art' and 'nature', and states that 'it would be more apt to register how the early eighteenth century was experimenting with their balance and ratio. He gives as an example 'the exaggerated wavy lines of walks on the hillside at Hammels [in Hertfordshire which] announce a nature less controlled than the geometry near the house and a determination to discover an English solution to the layout of gardens'.[54] Michael Snodin comments that 'rococo as practised [in the decorative arts] in England was not only beautiful and skilfully executed but also, to a surprising extent, original in design'.[55] I contend that such skill was carried over into the field of garden design and that its 'fantastic and bizarre' qualities were augmented by spatial awareness on a large scale, which set the stage for unusual and spectacular events.

John Harris who details the phenomenon of the serpentine or meandering line has discussed the Artinatural style of garden design, which appeared in England in the early part of the eighteenth century. This style is evident in the work of Stephen Switzer and Batty Langley for example, as illustrated in fig. 1.[56] Nikolaus Pevsner had described this 'wiggly, puny and playful' line as rococo, while there are many other more recent names such as: Elysiums, poetic and

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[50] David Leatherbarrow, 'Character, Geometry and Perspective: The Third Earl of Shaftesbury's Principles of Garden Design', *Journal of Garden History,* IV (1984), 332-358.
[51] Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, p. 96.
[52] Shaftesbury, 'The Moralists, A Philosophical Rhapsody', in *Characteristiks,* II, pp. 393-394.
[53] D. Marshall, 'The Problem of the Picturesque', *Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 35:3 (2001), 413-417 (p. 416).
[54] Hunt and Willis, eds, *Genius of the Place*, p. 9.
[55] M. Snodin, ' Introduction', in C. Hind, ed., *The Rococo in England – A Symposium* (London: V&A, 1986), p. 6.
[56] J. Harris, 'The Artinatural Style', in Hind, ed., *Rococo*, pp. 8-20.

emblematic. These designs were significantly different from the preceding formal gardens, bringing with them a new sense of freedom. As Harris notes: 'It was perhaps not surprising that Pevsner saw a similarity between the twisting and twirlings, the smallness, variety and informality, the intricacies, of early eighteenth-century garden design and the light-hearted, linear rococo style of decoration that appeared in France at exactly the same time'.[57] In his *Practical Geometry* of 1726, illustrated in fig. 1, Batty Langley wrote that his 'artinatural lines' were 'far preferable to the most regular set form hitherto practised', and added that, 'the artinatural walk demonstrates that the most beautiful gardens are to be made in the most irregular forms or boundaries'.[58]

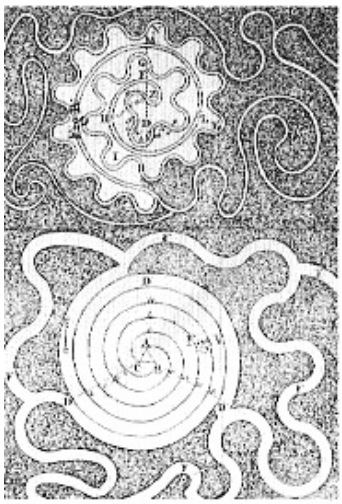

Fig. 1. Batty Langley, 'Artinatural lines', from *Practical Geometry,* 1726

Langley elaborated on this in his *Principles of Gardening* in 1728, when Robert Castell also published his *Villas of the Ancients,* a translation from Pliny's description of his villas at Tusculum and Laurentium. In what appeared to be confirmation based on classical literature of the juxtaposition of irregular and regular gardens, Castell wrote of a 'close Imitation of Nature' that would please 'the Eye from several Views, like so many beautiful Landskips', when one might come upon 'those Pieces of a rougher Taste' through 'winding Paths'.[59] Those imagined landscape plans illustrated in fig. 2, showed the 1st—2nd century villa, using early eighteenth-century design styles.

[57] Harris, 'Artinatural Style', p. 9.
[58] Harris, 'Artinatural Style', p. 12.
[59] R. Castell, *Villas of the Ancients* (London: 1728), pp. 11, 32, quoted in: K. Myers, 'Visual Fields: theories of perception and the landscape garden', in M. Calder, ed., *Experiencing the Garden in the Eighteenth Century* (Bern: Lang, 2006), pp. 13-35 (p. 31).

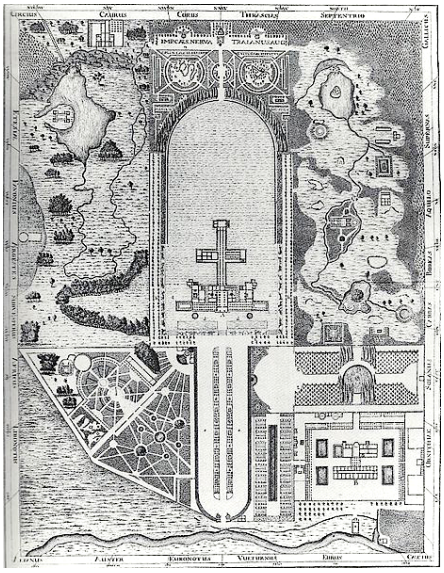

Fig. 2. 'Reconstructed site plan of the ancient Villa at Tuscum', in Robert Castell, *The Villas of the Ancients Illustrated*, 1728

At that time, such concurrence of the formal and the irregular became joined in a fusion of ideas, a new blending of the abstract and the complex, encompassing garden design, spatial concepts and architecture, often joined and given meaning by the 'circuit walk'. Such an example can be found at The Leasowes, which I will discuss in Chapter 2.

The change in attitude towards classical evocations is registered by how later writers came to consider these early examples of the landscape garden. In his seminal work *Observations on Modern Gardening* of 1770, Whately opposed the emblematic with the new fashion for expressive gardening.[60] Emblematical devices are listed as: 'heathen deities and heroes' assigned to woods and lawns; 'river gods' placed in 'natural cascades'; 'columns erected only to receive quotations', and summer-houses 'filled with pictures of gambols and revels'. Whately perceived such devices as 'ingenious contrivances' which 'recal [sic] absent ideas'. However, he noted that they need explanation before they can be understood, and as such, do 'not naturally belong to a garden'. Hunt observes that it is not easy to determine to what extent the complicated process of understanding an emblem was ever instinctive, or how much their recognition depended upon a 'highly trained intellectual capacity'.[61] He gives examples of contemporary emblem books with their explanatory legends, without which few of the images would be comprehended. The question of providing information for a visitor so that they might 'read' a garden correctly will be borne in mind, with particular relevance to The Leasowes. However, while Whately discussed garden emblems in relation to the 'character' of the garden, he suggested that their 'allusion should not be principal'; the 'immediate impression ... should seem to have been suggested by

[60] T. Whately, *Observations on Modern Gardening* (London: 1770; repr. London: T. Payne, 1793), pp. 150-151.
[61] Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism', 294-317 (p. 295).

the scene: a transitory image, which irresistibly occurred; not sought for, not laboured; and have the force of a metaphor, free from the detail of an allegory'.[62] He may have been influenced by Shaftesbury's writings:

> Now the Variety of Nature is such, as to distinguish every thing she forms, by a *peculiar* original Character; which; if strictly observ'd, will make the Subject appear unlike any thing extant in the World besides. [63]

Hunt recognises that there may be characteristics other than the emblematic in a garden, in that walks and winding paths may lead to and encircle objects, which have been judiciously placed to command attention. He intimates that designers such as William Kent, and 'more likely' Capability Brown were instrumental in providing such paths, which Hunt infers were 'naturalistic'.[64] However, he also likens such paths to Stephen Switzer's earlier requirement that a garden should preserve examples of 'a private and natural turn', which may 'allow, even promote' 'the solitary and introspective walk'.[65] Hunt indicates that while the emblematic garden still aims at a public meaning, the expressive garden addresses a private, subjective sphere. He posits that 'thought could be subtly conditioned by changing contexts' and allies this to Whately's expressive quality, where 'ideas should seem to have been suggested by the scene'. I contend that the form and position of these 'changing contexts' can be related to what I am calling garden poetics. I will go on to examine the ways that modern theories of sensory perception can inform our understanding of the ways that these garden poetics took effect on those experiencing them.

The physical properties of ground, wood, water and rocks were examined by Whately who claimed that water was a successful feature of the expressive garden, writing: 'So various are the characters which water can assume, that there is scarcely an idea in which it may not occur, or an impression which it cannot enforce'.[66] Whately discoursed on an enriching series of situations that water may create in a garden, and particularly focused on its qualities of movement. He wrote:

> The characteristic property of running water is *progress;* of stagnated, is *circuity*: the one stretches into length; the other spreads over space: but it is not necessary that the whole circumference of a lake be seen ... [it] never appears so great as when its termination is concealed; the *shape*, not the *close*, denotes the character ...[67]

Whately explored the subtleties of effect achieved by size and shape of a lake and the way water may run within it, capturing the experiential effects of the 'part' on the 'whole'. Switzer, too,

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[62] Whately, *Observations*, p.151.
[63] Shaftesbury, 'An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour', in *Characteristiks,* I, pp. 142-145 (p. 144).
[64] Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism', 294-317 (p. 303).
[65] S. Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica: OR THE Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's RECREATION, The Second Edition, with large additions,* 3 vols (London: J. Fox, 1742), II, p. 197, quoted in: Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism', 294-317 (pp. 305-306).
[66] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 61-91.
[67] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 63-64.

regarded water as essential to a garden, since 'the Scene is perpetually Shifting, and entertaining the Sight at every Moment with something that is New'.[68] He described Water as being 'the very life and soul of a garden', the 'murmuring of Streams and Cadence of Water' being more effective than the wafting of Trees and the warbling of Birds'.[69]

In 1770, Whately wrote that: 'Certain properties, and certain dispositions, of the objects of nature, are adapted to excite particular ideas and sensations [which] affect our sensibility'.[70] He had recognised that first impressions in the garden might lead to ideas that are 'far distant from the original thought', concluding that scenes of nature have the power to affect our imagination and our sensibility. Herein, he was pre-empting the effects of the metaphysical aspects of the irregularities of the garden, and their influence on the creative mind: a consciousness of its imaginative potential.

1.3 Towards Modern Aesthetics

Heyde asserts that while Whately recognised the difference with older examples, 'a more balanced appraisal ... would be to consider them as *both* emblematic and expressive – as a shift *towards* modern aesthetics'.[71] Indeed, in an intimation of the idea that Whately was already thinking in that direction, Hunt puts forward his view that the naturalistic *Grecian Valley* at Stowe is 'a perfect example of Whately's expressive landscape' in that it does not encourage social interaction, or the need for intellectual understanding of detailed meaning.[72] It is a landscape that allows an individual response by each visitor within the context of a wider emblematic garden. As Whately remarked:

> … The art of gardening ... can create *original* characters, and give expressions ... superior to any they can receive from allusions. Certain properties, and certain dispositions, of the objects of nature, are adapted to excite particular ideas and sensations ... and [are] instantaneously distinguished by our feelings ... [this] affects our sensibility.[73]

For Whately, the immediate impression of a garden fired the imagination, in contrast with 'emblematical' characters, which require intellectual work to be understood, intimating that such expressive understanding of a garden follows the aesthetics, which developed from John Locke's philosophy of the mind. As I have indicated, the sense that the move away from an emblematic garden towards an expressive one was not clear-cut. Certainly, in his recent work, Stephen

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[68] Switzer, *Ichnographia,* III, p. 5.
[69] S. Switzer, *An Introduction to a General System of Hydrostaticks and Hydraulicks, Philosophical and Practical* (London: T. Astley, 1729), I, Preface.
[70] Whately, *Observations*. Quoted in Hunt, and Willis, eds, *Genius of the Place*, pp. 301-307.
[71] Heyde, 'Historical Roots', 123-145 (p. 128).
[72] Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism', 294-317 (p. 304).
[73] Whately, *Observations,* pp. 153-154.

Bending writes that the 'alignment of the Grecian Valley with Thomas Whately's expressive landscapes has been superseded by readings that recognize the iconographic importance ... of statuary at key points around the valley.[74]

Sensory Perception and the Value of Labour

Several other writers had intimated that they were conscious of other factors at play: thoughts that had emerged at different times throughout the eighteenth century, not just towards the end. For example, in the early eighteenth century, Joseph Addison (1672-1719) tried to apply new insights to gardening, influenced by the philosophy of Locke, and noted:

> I have here supposed that my reader is acquainted with that great modern discovery which is at present universally acknowledged by all the enquirers into natural philosophy ... the English reader may find it in the eighth chapter of the second book of Mr. Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* (1690).[75]

In his *Essay*, Locke proposed a concept of human psychology whereby experience originated from sense perception and the reflection of the mind on ideas, with no pre-determined values. He wrote that our knowledge is founded in experience, and that: 'These two (the objects of our senses, and of self-reflection) are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring'.[76] Addison recognised that: 'the beauties of a stately garden ... lie in too narrow a compass, the Imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratify her; but in the wide fields of nature, the sight wanders up and down without confinement and is fed with an infinite variety of images'.[77] He praised the perceptive visual qualities of the countryside and suggested that an estate might be:

> … thrown into a kind of Garden by frequent Plantations, that may turn as much to the Profit, and the Pleasure of the Owner? ... Fields of Corn make a pleasant Prospect, and if the Walks were a little taken care of that lie between them, if the natural Embroidery of the Meadows were helpt and improved by some small addition of Art, and several Rows of Hedges set off by Trees and Flowers, that the Soil was capable of receiving, a Man might make a pretty Landskip of his own Possessions.[78]

Addison was introducing ideas about the value of labour, in an indication that more can be gained from the garden than pleasure alone. He implied that horticultural practice could move away from a celebration of aristocratic leisure, towards something that praises human effort. Considerable physical labour was required to build the gardens that I examine, and to thereby

[74] S. D. Bending, 'Introduction', in S. D. Bending, ed., *A Cultural History in the Age of the Enlightenment*, A Cultural History of Gardens, IV (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 3.
[75] J. Addison, 'On the Pleasures of the Imagination', in *The Spectator,* 413, 24 June 1712.
[76] J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1975), II, p. 104.
[77] Addison, *Spectator,* 412.
[78] Addison, *Spectator,* 413.

create changing perspectives for the moving spectator, rather than one that looked down on a prospect. This was particularly relevant in the case of The Leasowes, but was also applicable at Olney and Dove Cottage, as each place became unique to its owner. For Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth, gardening became less about aristocratic entitlement, and more about a view that celebrates human effort, when their authority came from work and the exertion of walking outdoors, rather than through leisure. The effort required to create their gardens was commensurate with their aims, and enabled those poets to reach their heights of creativity, which I believe had a perceived value far greater than pleasure alone.

Switzer acknowledged his debt to Addison, and noted that beauty was no longer a homogenous concept, since sense perception marked the realisation that different external stimuli gave different sensations to the mind.[79] Heyde adds to the debate by suggesting that Addison and Switzer are 'an extension of established ideas of the art of gardening as a dialogue between the higher ideals of beauty and the practical aspects of gardening and agriculture. Gardens were considered to be a representation of Nature, rather than some natural landscape free from human influence'.[80] However, Hunt takes an opposing view when he says that garden aesthetics in the eighteenth century increasingly fell into the gap between the traditional notion of imitation, where representation of nature and human nature in history are stressed, and a rival view, which proposed the affective power of art and therefore gave prominence to the interior and autonomous imagination.[81] While Michel Baridon declares that the garden was: 'the very representation of the empirical way of knowing nature. The observer gradually acquired this knowledge by following winding alleys and chancing upon unexpected prospects. He discovered one particular after another exactly as the experimentalist noted things as they took place and when they took place'. Baridon concludes that the landscape garden complements the taxonomic order with a narrative thread.[82] Katja Grillner offers an alternative viewpoint: 'Whately's descriptions enter our poetic imagination; they leave us with memories of landscapes and scenes. Fluttering impressions momentarily form distinct sensations of imaginary presence. Yet his principles cannot be said to own direct metaphysical implications other than the general emphasis on imprinting ideas on a visitor's mind'.[83] Nonetheless, I will demonstrate that sense perception activated by different external stimuli can be a fundamental part of a visitor's experience of the garden, which can be perceived as a metaphysical place. I will expand on those ideas in light of modern aesthetic theorists whose work helps us to develop a greater

[79] Switzer, *Ichnographia*, III, p.3.
[80] Heyde, 'Historical Roots', 123-145 (p. 125).
[81] J. Ray, quoted by K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), p. 67.
[82] M. Baridon, 'The Gothic Revival and the Theory of Knowledge in the First Phase of the Enlightenment', in V. Tinkler-Villani and P. Davidson, eds, *Exhibited by Candlelight* (Boston, Mass: Brill, 1995), pp. 43-56 (p. 54).
[83] K. Grillner, *Ramble, linger, and gaze, dialogues from the landscape garden* (Stockholm: Royal Institute of Technology, 2000), p. 247.

understanding of our experience of the garden, but firstly I will outline some eighteenth-century aesthetic theories.

Aesthetics of Sensory Perception

In an exploration of the garden as a place of inspiration and imagination, it is worthwhile to examine the interplay between the spatial relationships, the intricate complexity and constant fluctuation of the irregularities of the garden, and its transforming effect on the feelings, ambitions and creativity of the people involved. It is said that we always have difficulty in understanding how the elements of a landscape operate on the aesthetic sense.[84] However, while human beings are spontaneously aware of their environment, Appleton notes that its *apparent* potential as apprehended immediately rather than calculated rationally has the most influence on feelings of pleasure or dissatisfaction. The objects in the environment have associational properties, which are not inherent in the objects themselves, furthermore the garden may be analysed to reveal its metaphysical properties and, through them, the creative possibilities that can arise. New design ideas, spatial arrangements, colours and tonality of the garden, provided opportunities for people to move physically within diverse viewpoints, offering imaginative potential. My thesis examines the possibilities of expressing this spatial-temporal occurrence, in a relationship between psychological involvement and aesthetic pleasure. The various features of the garden contribute to the structure of its confined landscape. Visible man-made boundaries, such as garden walls or hedges, give rise to interconnected spaces in which the small irregular movements of foliage and flowers mingle and are magnified, as people move within the garden. These fluctuations combine with the irregularities of its design, making the garden a metaphysical space: a place that makes the association of ideas possible.

In his work *Greater Perfections,* Hunt discusses the concept of 'exterior place-making', asserting that 'place-making' creates a space in which 'we see or set ourselves', a place 'to be lived in'.[85] This concept is a significant adjunct to the notion of the garden as a place for the development of ideas, and is expanded when Tim Cresswell discusses garden spaces where the interpretations of the people within it give their actions meaning.[86] He writes that a place comes to have significance through our actions which are informed by its existing meanings and ideological beliefs, suggesting that the enclosed space of the garden may be an active force in the definition of an appropriate set of actions or 'practice'. In his discussion on the importance of 'practice', Cresswell adds that: 'people read places by acting in them'.[87] This idea is particularly

[84] Appleton, *Experience*, p. 62.
[85] Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, pp. 1-2.
[86] Cresswell, *In Place, Out of Place*, p. 17.
[87] See Cresswell, *In Place, Out of Place,* p. 16.

relevant in thinking about how people walk through gardens, and the related topic of performativity. In particular, I believe that it relates directly to the circuit walk and its visitors who would be expected to follow a prescribed route through the garden. In that respect, The Leasowes is a good case to examine, since deviation from Shenstone's route would have given a quite difference experience of his garden.

The associative qualities of the elements of the garden are an essential part of people's reaction to the effects they produce, and are encapsulated in contrasting contemporary theories. In his *Essays on the Picturesque* of 1794, Uvedale Price noted that its qualities were 'roughness and sudden variation joined to irregularity' of form, colour, lighting and even sound. He also recognised that people might gradually notice 'the variety produced by sudden and irregular deviation ... parts caught by light, and the contrast that such lights presented with deep shadows, or for the rich and mellow tints produced by various stages of decay'.[88] I propose that, in recognition of their imaginative possibilities, the inclusion of such picturesque elements in the garden design offered the opportunity for the juxtaposition of unexpected forms to pleasurably influence the mind.

In 1790, Archibald Alison put forward a *Theory of Association,* which denied the existence of objective qualities in objects, but accounted for all emotions by the association of ideas aroused in the mind of the spectator. He intimated that 'we feel the sublimity or beauty of their productions, when our imaginations are kindled by their power, when we lose ourselves amid the number of images that pass before our minds, and when we waken at last from this play of fancy, as from the charm of a romantic dream'. Alison respectfully quoted the Abbè de Lille upon the subject of gardening:

> *N'avez–vous pas souvent, au lieux infréquentés,*
> *Rencontré tout-à-coup, ces aspects enchantés,*
> *Qui suspendent vos pas, dont l'image chérie*
> *Vous jette en une douce et longue rêverie?*
>
> (Have you not often, in out-of-the-way places,
> Suddenly met some enchanted features,
> Which check your steps, and whose treasured image
> Throws you into a soft and long reverie?)

[88] C. Hussey, *The Picturesque, Studies in a Point of View* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1983), p. 14.

Alison stressed the importance of these words, and that 'the production of such trains of thought, seems to consist the effect which objects of sublimity and beauty have upon the imagination'.[89] He pointed out that 'if an object reminds the viewer of something pleasant, he will find it beautiful' and referred to this as a 'powerless state of reverie', adding that 'the mind needs to be open to all the impressions', as he put forward the ideas of Whately which by 'singular coincidence [are an] illustration of the fact I have been endeavouring to establish'.[90]

Humphrey Repton (1752-1818) used painting, particularly in his *Red Books*, to form an idea of a place, and then enhanced it to achieve 'elegance, convenience, impressiveness, and, to a certain extent, horticulture'; while Price adopted an intermediate position, admitting the necessity for producing clean, unambiguous effects. In his discussion on the controversy between Repton, Knight and Price, Christopher Hussey posits that the continuing debate between these men 'led to the revival of the formal garden round the house: Price and Knight felt the need for it on aesthetic grounds, Repton on those of convenience'.[91] As Stephen Daniels says: 'Repton cleaved to a Burkean view that landscape should be lived in, not just looked at'.[92] However, this view is mediated by David Watkin who writes that Repton's exceptional visual sensitivity, his awareness of space, of optical illusion and of the shifting tonal values of the changing seasons and times of day, made him conscious that the framed landscape painting must ultimately be inadequate as a guide to landscape gardeners.[93]

One of the most influential writers on the picturesque, William Gilpin (1724-1804), noted that he 'rather doubts that *smoothness* is one of the most essential' points of beauty.[94] He added that he did 'not scruple to assert, that *roughness* forms the most essential point of difference between the *beautiful,* and the *picturesque'*. He advised 'make it *rough* ... all the other ingredients of beauty it already possessed'.[95] Gilpin's views on the aesthetics of beauty were widely available, and may have influenced his friend William Mason, and the designs of Repton.

In 1770, Whately wrote that the art of landscape gardening 'was carried to excess' ... and that 'it excluded, instead of improving upon, nature'.[96] He felt that there: 'probably arose an idea of some necessary correspondence between the mansion, and the scene it immediately

[89] A. Alison, *Essays on the nature and principles of taste*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1790); repr. (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable & Co., 1812), I, pp. 6-7.
[90] Alison, *Essays,* I, pp. 58-62.
[91] See Hussey, *Picturesque,* pp. 161-162.
[92] S. Daniels, *Humphrey Repton, Landscape Gardening and the Geography of Georgian England* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2000), p. 10.
[93] D. Watkin, *The English Vision: the picturesque in architecture, landscape and garden design* (London: John Murray, 1982), p. 80.
[94] W. Gilpin, 'On Picturesque Beauty', in *Three Essays* (London, 1792), pp. 5-6.
[95] Gilpin, *Essays,* p. 8.
[96] Whately, *Observations*, p. 136.

commanded ... *just about the house*'.[97] Repton, too, often quoted Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism* of 1762, in which he advocated 'regularity in that part of a garden which is adjacent to the dwelling-house' ... 'so arranged as to inspire all the different emotions that can be raised by gardening'. I am including this comment, as it is an important allusion to the capacity of the garden to inspire and influence the creative mind. This discussion of the prevailing theories of several eighteenth-century writers offers background to an awareness of contemporary thinking on aesthetics that individual garden owners may have had. I now go on to expand on those ideas in light of modern aesthetic theorists, whose work helps us to develop a greater understanding of our experience of the garden.

1.4 Habitat and Place

In his Habitat theory, Jay Appleton postulates that such awareness stems from the spontaneous perception of landscape features, which are indicative of environmental conditions favourable for survival. He also sees expression and perception as part of a co-existence with the landscape.[98] However, in his work *Poetry of Habitat,* Appleton acknowledges the possibility of unquantifiable feelings of unresolved, inexplicable ideas and thoughts, as he explores fleeting, obscure areas of association.[99] He notes that the sense organs 'have evolved in such a way as to be efficient perceiving-instruments' picking up information which is 'spontaneously processed by the brain'.[100] I suggest that such sensory perception can be absorbed in the garden, where the irregular nature of its structure allows the senses to interact, as a breeze suddenly alters the shapes of the trees and flowers, and people move along its pathways. There, the poet and the artist, in their simultaneous acts of creation, suffuse their creativity with the presence of their perception in the changing spaces created by man; but continually enhanced by nature.

Appleton asserts that: 'open environments ... afford the best opportunities to perceive'.[101] The idea of 'prospect' is balanced by that of 'refuge', where pleasure may be derived from the intensity of their differences. Such thinking reinforces the potential mood and atmosphere of the garden, where people can pass from open surroundings into an enclosed space to feel a greater intensity of poetical perception of sensation and idea. The varying height of the trees, the wall and graduated planting all contribute to a sense of progressive height, which leads to the expanse of the sky and its sense of enormity. Gaston Bachelard says that: 'a tree is always destined for grandeur, and, in fact, it propagates this destiny by magnifying everything that surrounds it'. He

[97] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 136-137.
[98] Referenced in B. Wenner, *Prospect and Refuge in the Landscape of Jane Austen* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006), p. 87.
[99] J. Appleton, *The Poetry of Habitat* (University of Hull: Department of Geography, 1978), p. 9.
[100] Appleton, *Habitat*, p. 4.
[101] Appleton, *Habitat*, p. 7.

goes on to quote Rilke: 'These trees are magnificent, but even more magnificent is the sublime and moving space between them'.[102] In his *Poèmes Français,* Rilke notes the phenomenon of the lone tree:

Arbre toujours au milieu	Tree always in the centre
De tout ce qui l'entoure	Of all that surrounds it
Arbre qui savoure	Tree feasting upon
La voûte des cieux	Heaven's great dome [103]

The tree embodies completeness of form reaching beyond the garden, echoing the clouds and providing a sense of permanence and stability amidst the ever-changing images below. The canopy of leaves gives respite from changing weather, as well as shaping the view of sky and its intimation of the world beyond the confines of the garden. It also changes the shape of the garden through shadow and flickering light, altering light patterns and reflections: shifting space. Forever changing, diffused by clouds and different weather conditions, Alison noted that:

> The Uniformity of the whole number of Leaves [of a tree] is a very beautiful consideration ... awakening a very powerful conviction of Wisdom and Design.[104]

However, Appleton points out that some sense of 'hazard' is essential to activate an aesthetic experience.[105] One can sense that a passing breeze or a sudden shadow might have a similar effect to the pricking of a finger by the thorn of a rose, a moment of sublimation, in that it might 'jostle' one's sensibility, bringing an awareness of the temporal and physical nature of the garden. As Burke declared, 'a sudden beginning, or sudden cessation of sound of any considerable force, has the same power. The attention is aroused by this and the faculties driven forward'.[106] He also recognised that 'the last extreme of littleness is in some measure sublime', giving strength to the notion of tiny changes in the garden that produce great effects as people pass by.[107] Whately might have agreed with that point when he said that, '*minute beauties* may abound in a garden ... temporary concealments give them fresh spirit whenever they appear'.[108] Those views and mine are in opposition to those of Shaftesbury who stressed that the 'Poet and Painter' 'hate *Minuteness,* and are afraid of *Singularity* ... Tis from the *many* Objects of Nature, and not from a *particular-one,* that those Genius's form the Idea of their Work'.[109] In terms of modern thinking on garden poetics, I will build on Shaftesbury's comments because, as I will discuss, '*Minuteness'* or

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[102] Referenced in G. Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* trans. by M. Jolas (Boston. Mass.: Beacon Press Books, 1994), p. 201.
[103] Rilke, *Poèmes Français*, p. 169, referenced in Bachelard, *Poetics,* p. 239.
[104] Alison, *Essays,* II, p. 66.
[105] Appleton, *Habitat*, p. 18.
[106] E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: R. & J. Dodsley, 1759; repr. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2008), p. 62.
[107] Burke, *Enquiry*, pp. 52-53.
[108] Whately, *Observations,* p. 158.
[109] Shaftesbury, 'An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour', in *Characteristiks,* I, pp. 142-145 (p. 145).

'Singularity' are regarded as integral to creativity. These philosophical points are an important consideration when observing the changing spaces of the garden, in an awareness of the effects that can appear. Within the focused intensity of the place, if people look closely at its elements, activating the senses, their perception makes the association of ideas imaginable.

1.5 Gaze and Association

In his essay 'The Charm'd Eye', Peter de Bolla attempts to reconstruct the eighteenth-century activity of 'looking'.[110] Some of the principles he puts forward also apply to the garden, as ways of looking had already changed with the development of the landscape garden and domestic tourism, for example. De Bolla writes that: 'if we take John Hunt's argument that the *design* of gardens changed from emblematic to expressionistic forms, then it must follow that visitors and patrons alike also underwent a shift in how they appreciated these different forms, that is, how they looked'.[111] De Bolla adds that the structure of the landscape garden favours 'a set of associative triggers designed to prompt a sentimental or emotive response'. This form of looking is called 'a sentimental look in which the eye moves in and around the three-dimensional space, registering incident and contrast, generating expectation, and delighting in surprise'.[112] If the eighteenth-century person was already attuned to 'see' in this way, I propose that the concentrated intensity of the garden focused their attention, making them even more susceptible to the sensations aroused by its minute irregularities: 'seeing with the inner eye as much as the outer'. De Bolla alludes to this in his description of the 'reveries and fantasy' that can arise in the sentimental look, and the aesthetics of a 'specifically male fantasy experience'.[113]

Particularly, writing about William Wordsworth, Emile Legouis commented that: 'Never satisfied with the pure form or colour of things, the poet's gaze ... always sought to discern the soul or ideal contained within them'.[114] He noted that it was agreed that, occasionally, there was a particular visionary expression in Wordsworth's eyes: 'as if he saw something in objects more than outward appearance'.[115] Hazlitt, De Quincey and Leigh Hunt all attested to the special light, which shone in the poet's eyes after walking with Nature, and I am quoting Legouis, since Wordsworth's expression may relate directly to the notion of looking and sensing the poetic image, as part of the creative experience.

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[110] P. De Bolla, 'The charm'd eye', in *Body and Text in the Eighteenth century,* ed. by V. Kelly and D.E. von Mucke (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 89-111.
[111] De Bolla, 'The charm'd eye', pp. 89-111 (p. 93).
[112] De Bolla, 'The charm'd eye', pp. 89-111 (p. 94).
[113] De Bolla, 'The charm'd eye', pp. 89-111 (p. 95).
[114] E. Legouis, *The Early Life of William Wordsworth 1770-1798,* trans. by J. W. Matthews (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1897), p. 460.
[115] Legouis, *Early Life,* p. 460.

1.6 The Poetic Image

Whilst being in the garden, looking and sensing its minute irregularities, the poet or artist can experience aesthetic satisfaction and achieve artistic response. Bachelard writes that the formal imagination 'is fond of novelty ... and unexpected events'; 'while the material imagination is attracted by the elements of permanency in things'. [116] In Bachelard's words, these '*direct images of matter',* are those of 'forms given in matter and inseparable from it'. In postulating this concept, he was conscious of defining what was 'necessarily required for a complete philosophical study of the poetic creation'. The creative mind experiences the formal imagination of the beauty of its creation and the changes that fluctuate through its forms, leading to the moment of reception of the poetic image: what Bachelard refers to as 'a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche'.[117] As I have noted, in 1770, Whately had already observed that:

> Certain properties, and certain dispositions, of the objects of nature, are adapted to excite particular ideas and sensations ... when the passions are roused, their course is unrestrained; when the fancy is on the wing, its flight is unbounded ... till we rise from familiar subjects up to the sublimest conceptions, and are rapt in the contemplation of whatever is great or beautiful, which we see in nature, feel in man, or attribute to divinity. [118]

Henry Home, Lord Kames had earlier put forward his own theories on the principles of association and the possibility of an emotional response to the garden. Arthur McGuinness writes that Kames located aesthetic pleasures as midway between the purely intellectual and purely physical, limiting them to the sense experience of the eye and ear.[119] Importantly, this led to a taste for purely mental pleasures, as Kames elucidates:

> A man while awake is sensible of a continued train of perceptions and ideas passing in his mind ... It appears that the relations by which things are linked together, have a great influence in directing the train of thought; because we find by experience, that ideas are connected in the mind precisely as their objects are externally ... we cannot any where extend our view without perceiving things connected together by certain relations.[120]

McGuinness notes that man's notion of reality outside himself depends on these connections, and that there is a direct link between patterns of ideas and aesthetic pleasure, adding: 'because of this natural association, man derives most pleasure when he first contemplates a whole and then its parts'.[121]

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[116] Bachelard, *Poetics*, p. 8.
[117] Bachelard, *Poetics*, p. 15.
[118] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 153-156.
[119] A. E. McGuinness, *Henry Home, Lord Kames* (New York: Twayne Publications Inc., 1970), p. 61.
[120] McGuinness, *Lord Kames*, p. 62.
[121] McGuinness, *Lord Kames*, p. 63.

Kames stressed the importance of contrasts, giving as an example gardening, where: 'the emotions raised by that art are at best so faint, that every artifice should be used to give them their utmost strength'.[122] He lists his range of necessary attributes: neat; wild; grand; regular; gay; melancholy; properties which should be intermixed, 'so that each emotion may succeed its opposite'. Kames' views on the involvement of contrasts in the appreciation of fine arts support Whately's later views on the excitement of sensations, and Bachelard's ideas on poetic creation. As someone moves through the changing contrasts of garden spaces, his senses can become receptive to its changing forms in a creative process resulting in a sudden poetic image, reflecting Claude-Henri Watelet's view that 'les espaces produisent les découvertes, & conduisent les regards', or 'Space gives rise to discoveries, and leads the eye'.[123] The wind alters space, varying light patterns and awakening a powerful aesthetic experience, as it echoes Kames' pleasures of the ear and the eye, and the physicality of swaying foliage, resulting in reception of Bachelard's poetic image.

The human eye can observe the changes in the garden and interpret the associated emotions, which arise from its perceptions of variety, delicacy and colour translated through its vision to the other senses of sound, smell, touch and possibly taste. Within the garden human encounters and events can occur, drawing on the perception and sensitivity of those present. I propose that the combination of irregular shapes within the intensity of a garden space, offers a place for reception of the poetic image, and poetical and painterly creativity. It is significant that people observe and move through the garden, appreciating its changing elements, freely and responsively. It is the sense of *being* in the garden that is a key factor.

1.7 Poetical Influences

James Turner identifies a central impetus in the Augustan period towards a mode of 'topographia' that asserted a new level of engagement with rural conditions, within a strong socio-economic ideology, while maintaining the celebratory purpose of the literary mode of pastoral. McRae notes that the artistic concept that stimulated seventeenth-century initiatives towards a native poetry of the land was that of landscape.[124] The seventeenth-century landscape recalls the classical ethos of 'profit and pleasure', which epitomizes the controlled georgic energy instilled into the gentry's ideology of stable rural retreat. In 1642, Sir John Denham (1614-1669) surveyed from *Cooper's Hill* a prospect of 'wealth and beauty' nourished by the Thames, which Earl Wasserman examines as a 'lyric form of poetry that results from publicly acknowledged conceptions of order… which is fully

[122] McGuinness, *Lord Kames*, p. 82.
[123] M. Watelet, *Essai sur les jardins* (Paris: Prault, Saillant & Nyon, Pissot, 1774), p. 70.
[124] J. Turner, *Politics of Landscape: Rural Scenery and Society in English Poetry, 1630-1660* (Oxford, 1979). p. 10. Quoted in: A. McRae, 'Landscape and Property ', 36-62.

engaged in the world of the poem'.[125] The static scene is described in detail, rather than leaving it to the imagination, whilst its visual composition is effected by taking the eye in a sweep over the 'prospect' view:

> Through untrac't ways, and aery paths I fly,
> …
> My eye, which swift as thought contracts the space
> That lies between…
> (11-14) [126]

From his elevated spot, the poet adopts a firm political position as he surveys the scene, while thought and vision contest with each other for possession of it. This understanding of 'prospect' undergoes significant transformations by the mid-eighteenth century and the poetry of Cowper. Although he still gestures towards Denham's use of the prospect view as all-encompassing, and as a vision of the nation, that visualization relies more heavily on the intimate and the local. We can see such a move being developed by the generation of poets before Cowper, and notably by James Thomson (1700-1748).

Thomson's influential poem *The Seasons* (1725-30) concerns the idea of the gentleman in poetry, a man of comprehensive vision during a time of change, but one who enjoys a harmonious affiliation with Nature. As John Barrell declares: 'the prospect-view encourages us to trust in a view of England seen by the benevolent and retired gentleman, a comprehensive view of a happy world… the nearest approach to God's view available on earth'.[127] Yet, Thomson moves the reader away from static prospect poetry, as he leads one visually and kinetically through the landscape by the metonymic device of the eye until it lights upon its objective. *The Seasons* is written in heroic iambic blank verse which, as John Strachan and Richard Terry point out: 'is more expansive and allows poets to build long argument… poets see in unrhymed heroics an unparalleled metrical flexibility… [to] feel free to deviate from the frame… and to offer musical variation'.[128] However, by 1788, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (lviii, 151) complained that 'readers have been used to see the Muses labouring up… many hills since Cooper's… and some gentle Bard reclining on almost every mole-hill'. In the main chapters of my discussion, the landscapes described have elements of the static Augustan prospect-view, but Thomson also influenced Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth, whose movement through the landscape built on these earlier ideas. As a result, poetry was created that is perceived as more imaginative, and the product of taking part in the landscape - existing in it, rather than detached from it, or above it.

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[125] E. R. Wasserman, *The Subtler Language* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), pp. 48-49. Wasserman states that the primary function of the descriptive elements is to create a meaningful structure for the political concept being poetically formulated.
[126] Wasserman, *Subtler Language*, quoting from Denham, *Cooper's Hill* on pp. 35-44.
[127] J. Barrell, *Literature in History 1730-80, An Equal Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 77.
[128] J. Strachan, and R. Terry, *Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 87.

While it is hard to over-estimate the influence of the poetry of John Milton (1608-1674) on eighteenth-century poetry, it is of particular importance to the poets chosen for this study.[129] 'Il Penseroso' (1645), which remained particularly popular during the eighteenth century, is a lyric poem in a tranquil, soothing tone, which focuses on melancholy as a stimulus for sober contemplation and inspired writing.[130] Notably, with its emphasis on reverie, 'Il Penseroso' focuses on poetic inspiration, as the narrator fancies that his imagined Muse will 'bring all Heaven before mine eyes' (166), and he at last seeks to find:

> … the peaceful hermitage,
> The hairy gown and mossy cell
> (168-169)

This strand of inspirational reverie informs all three of the poets that I examine, and is thus of particular importance for my discussion of their garden spaces. In my deliberations on the poetic imaginings of Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth, I will argue that the implied concept of an enclosed private space, envisioned by Milton long before, was the pre-eminent factor in the facilitation of an environment conducive to their poetical creativity. Barrell declares that one should be able to withdraw from the world in order to contemplate it as harmonious.[131] In Milton's works one can envisage a person as a solitary walker lost in poetical reverie, certainly, such wandering, sometimes in retirement, is an important part of my argument.

1.8 A Walk in the Garden - A Sense of Being

Eighteenth-century texts offer evidence of people who obtained aesthetic satisfaction through walking in the garden, which was also perceived as a place for spiritual meditation, exemplified by the Rev. James Hervey's 'Reflections on a Garden'.[132] In an effusive description of a 'Summer Morning', Hervey depicts the effects on his senses, which inspired '*Tranquillity* of Mind, and invite to serious *Thought*'.[133] His eye marvels at the sight of boundless blossoms, while his heart rejoices in the prospect of autumnal plenty in religious polemic, which is directly related to the senses and their effects on him during his imaginary walk. Mark Francis and Randolph Hester note that the power of the garden 'lies in its *simultaneous* existence as an idea, a place, and an action'.[134] This simultaneity can have a direct effect on the artistic mind as it experiences a fusion of the senses, when a visitor walks through the constant yet changing garden.

[129] D. Griffin, *Regaining Paradise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. ix.
[130] M. H. Nicolson, *A Reader's Guide to John Milton* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1965), pp. 50-64.
[131] Barrell, *Literature*, p. 57.
[132] J. Hervey, 'Reflections on a Garden', in *Meditations and Contemplations* (Dublin: Richard James, 1753), p. 79.
[133] Hervey, *Garden*, p. 80.
[134] M. Francis and R. Hester, *The Meaning of Gardens* (London: The MIT Press, 1991), p. 8.

Rudolf Arnheim describes the imagination as 'an inner world generated largely from experiences of the past but not limited to their reproduction. Imagination uses such material for creating images of its own ... [treating] its images as timeless'.[135] The image it creates is essentially spatial, and the conception of the patterns that the imagination produces presupposes the simultaneous presence of all components. Applying these thoughts to the garden, its spatial diversity may be analysed to encompass the continually changing viewpoint of a visitor, where initially he may not perceive the whole design. However, as his gaze wanders across the visual plane before him, and if something catches his eye, it may affect the direction in which he moves, possibly experiencing the garden in a different way; thus eliciting a different response. A walk in the garden is the essential performative action to experience it at first hand, and the garden designer may have taken into account such potential spontaneity, providing visual options to pursue. Punctuation points within the garden may be architectural or sculptural, for example, inviting or influencing a visitor to participate in a particular mood or train of thought, to reorganise his perceptions of the garden into a new, more comprehensive whole.

Allen Weiss provides another aspect of the topic of spatial ambiguity, 'where depth is the very *reversibility of dimensions* that unfolds with the movements of the body and that gathers meaning through the significance of one's gestures'. He notes that: 'Every object or place may be seen from an infinite number of points of view ... thus perceptually activating any desired perspectival presentation of the object or scene. One has a dynamic view of the garden through experiencing its terrain'.[136] This is particularly relevant in gardens where the designer has included sheets of water of indeterminate size, and amply chimes with Whately's stated views on the importance and effects of water in a garden. As Weiss said:

> Water, in the form of reflecting pools, forms a natural mirror: one that expands the imagination. Water is always changing, always different. The instability of reflections in the water - like the vague perceptions seen in the flickering of candlelight - causes a visual idealization when the image itself comes to life. The reflected image is the dream, or the imagination, of matter itself. Even calm waters have some degree of dynamism; the pool is never a simple mirror.[137]

My view is that the pools of water at The Leasowes are an important aesthetic feature, which had, and still do today, a significant effect on one's experience of the garden. When walking round the ponds, it is not possible to determine their extent as the viewpoint changes constantly, and similar effects occur in Grasmere Vale and Rydal Water, Cumbria, the homes of William

[135] R. Arnheim, 'Space as an Image of Time', in K. Kroeber, *Images of Romanticism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 1-12 (p. 4).
[136] A. S. Weiss, *Mirrors of Infinity* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995), p. 34.
[137] Weiss, *Mirrors*, pp. 85-86.

Wordsworth. The notion of a moving spectator is of great importance to my argument, since the aesthetic theories that I have discussed provide a foundation for poetical response to the garden, as I will discuss in the main chapters. I will now consider some of the design elements of eighteenth-century gardens, and the ways in which they contributed towards the production of certain aesthetic responses.

1.9 Garden Structure and Design

Paths

An important feature of the garden is the gravel path, which as Whately proposed 'constantly presents the idea of a walk'.[138] As people move through the garden, the path may become the thread of a plot, connecting moments and incidents into a narrative. However the 'narrative thread' as an 'empirical way of knowing nature' that Baridon describes is rather different from the one that I am proposing. My suggestion relates to the process of looking and sensing the garden's minute irregularities, when the poet or artist can experience aesthetic satisfaction, and achieve Bachelard's moment of reception of the poetic image. The path also denotes separation, and Whately wrote that: 'the most elegant garden ... will unite in appearance, with the walk, which is then a communication ... between the several parts of a garden', as the eye and the mind move between its different vistas.[139] William Mason celebrated the garden path in his sonnet, 'To a Gravel Walk':

> Smooth, simple Path! Whose undulating line
> With sidelong tufts of flow'ry fragrance crown'd,
> 'Plain in its neatness,' spans my garden ground.[140]

In a note to this poem, he wrote that the phrase, 'Plain in its neatness', derives from Milton, and 'seems to serve my purpose perfectly'. Mason may have been aware of William Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* of 1753, in which he wrote that aesthetic properties reside in certain shapes of line: particularly the wavy line, 'the line of beauty'; and the serpentine line, or 'the line of grace'. The wavy line, which at no two points is the same, shows variety and stimulates the imagination by disappearing and reappearing from sight. Hogarth's idea is encapsulated in the gravel path, or irregularly shaped flowerbeds with curvilinear features that hold great significance for the structure of the garden. In a discussion on the properties of lines, Alison associated the 'winding' line with 'Ease', and a lack of 'force or constraint'; also noting 'Mr Hogarth [who] in his Analysis of

[138] Whately, *Observations,* p. 206.
[139] Whately, *Observations,* p. 209.
[140] W. Mason, *Poems* (York: A. Ward, 1771), II. 1-3.

Beauty'… saw clearly that the Winding Line was of all others the most beautiful'.[141] William Mason encapsulated these thoughts in his poem, *The English Garden,* saying that the designer should take a painterly approach to its creation:

> ... for there thy skill
> Has its chief scope, enrich with all the hues
> That flowers, that shrubs, that trees can yield,
> the sides
> Of that fair path, from whence our sight is led
> Gradual to view the whole. Where'er thou wind'st
> That path, take heed between the scene and eye...
> ... in this path,
> How long soe'r the wanderer roves, each step
> Shall wake fresh beauties; each short point present
> A different picture, new, and yet the same.[142]

The writers that I have quoted extol the virtues of the winding gravel path. Its existence invites people to follow it, aware that whatever the designer has planned will be further enhanced by nature as it presents new scenes, which affect their imagination. As Appleton says, 'it is the expectation aroused by the deflection in the vista that causes aesthetic excitement'.[143]

Walled Boundaries

The meandering nature of the gravel path provides associative triggers, which concentrate the mind on De Bolla's 'sentimental look', and contrasts with the solid character of the garden wall or hedge that surrounds the garden, and is perhaps its most important boundary. A stone wall becomes a living place for encrustations of layers of matter, which become part of the garden; while a hedge can become a home for living creatures. The abundance of tiny layers of encrustations on the wall juxtaposed with the fluctuating shapes, textures and colours of flowers can result in an aesthetic pleasure which Kames would have described as midway between the intellectual and the physical: a pleasurable contemplation of the whole and then its parts.

In the garden design, lines vanish to suggest distances beyond, in spatial ambiguity, but when walls are arranged to form definite enclosures, the space within can be given clarity of shape and proportion. Indeed, as they walk through the garden, the wall that people perceive may be real or illusory. Different shapes and shadows may create the intimacy of imaginary walls limiting the extent of their perception, and the virtual space in which poetic images may suddenly

[141] See Alison, *Essays,* I, pp. 338-339.
[142] W. Mason, *The English Garden: A Poem in Four Books,* ed. by W. Burgh (London, 1794), I. 193-215.
[143] Appleton, *Experience*, p. 229.

appear. As Bachelard says: 'poetic revery ... never falls asleep'.[144] The boundary divides the world into two parts: inside and outside. The inner world carries a special significance, where openings pointing to different viewpoints occlude, and fragment the vista by arrangement of objects or foliage, adding dimension to the garden. Connections made by memory lead to vanished moments and distant places. However, conscious of their poetic needs, people might also actively daydream as they walk with heightened perception: looking, listening and ultimately feeling the blossoming spaces of the garden and the images that arise in the mind.

Garden Design

In the early nineteenth century, John Loudon noted the influence of William Gilpin's work, *The Essay on Prints* of 1768*,* saying that: 'it had the principal influence on persons of taste'.[145] In 1781, a third edition of the work was dedicated to Walpole, 'in deference to his taste in the polite Arts'. It is perhaps reasonable to suggest that developments in gardening may in turn have had their influence upon the working out of the new aesthetics of irregularity. As Chase wrote: 'It is significant that the ideas which these three writers [Gilpin, *Essays on Picturesque Beauty* (1790), Price, *Essays on the Picturesque*, (1794), Knight, *An Analytical Enquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805)] contributed to modern aesthetics bear a peculiar relationship to those ideas on the picturesque which the poet-gardeners contributed to modern landscape theory'.[146] Such places made possible the association of ideas derived through sensation and perception, reflecting Bachelard's '*felicitous space*' where:

> … the act of the creative consciousness must be systematically associated with the most fleeting product of that consciousness, the poetic image ... the duality of subject and object is iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active.[147]

Hunt reminds us of 'the essential fact that gardens ... have always been ways of mediating the physical world'. Such mediation may be varied and complex, and Hunt argues that while gardens may not be 'ways of actually coming to terms with first and second natures', they are 'at least retrospective ways of registering how we have come to terms with them'. He continues: 'By being sophisticated products of our relationship with the world beyond their walls, gardens represent … an art of milieu'.[148] Certainly, my thesis takes the most important attribute of my chosen gardens to be their quality of 'place'. However, it is not a question of 'coming to terms' with 'the world beyond their walls', as Hunt might suggest, but rather their owners' perception of the landscape as a whole, which acts as a catalyst for the development of their gardens, and their

[144] Bachelard, *Poetics,* p. 36.
[145] I. Chase, *Horace Walpole*: *Gardenist,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), pp. 124-126.
[146] Chase, *Gardenist*, pp. 124-126.
[147] Bachelard, *Poetics,* p. 19.
[148] J. D. Hunt, *Gardens And The Picturesque* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 9.

subsequent creativity. Such specificity of place in the pleasurable design of the garden, with its boundaries and planned vistas which limit the view both horizontally and vertically is, as William Cowper said: a product of 'fair result of thought, the creature of a polish'd mind' which animates the senses.[149] The diverse forms of garden that were created in the eighteenth century resulted in metaphysical spaces where the poet and the painter could experience freedom of thought, and demonstrate artistic response to the poetic images that occurred. Their imaginations were able to experience fresh nuances through the fluctuations within the garden, co-existing in a synthesis of being within its phenomenological space.

Mindful of the aesthetic theories so far described, it is now appropriate to look at specific gardens and to discuss their relevance. My selected gardens: The Leasowes, Olney and Dove Cottage show evidence of changing design throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, and have dramatic natural and manmade topography which indicates potential for artistic inspiration. My thesis is based on the proposition that through an analysis of the physical and metaphysical properties of these gardens, I will be able to elucidate the ways in which those spaces enabled and generated creative possibilities in their owners.

1.10 Concluding Reflections

Hunt states that the English landscape garden has usually been treated as an exciting new phenomenon at the start of the eighteenth century, when a reaction set in against the excessive implementation of French and Dutch garden styles. He adds that this view generally acknowledges that the 'new' style owed occasional debts to the past, although it sometimes credits Shaftesbury, Addison and Pope with its creation. Also, this account argues that from the early years of the eighteenth century, gardens became increasingly natural until with the advent of Kent and his successor 'Capability Brown', the landscape garden became indistinguishable from nature itself. Horace Walpole, who was the most influential spokesman for that historical view of the English garden wrote his *History of the Modern Taste in Gardening* during the late 1760's, and published in 1780. He was writing in the time of Capability Brown whom he greatly admired, and perhaps wanted people to read garden history in that light. According to Hunt, Stephen Switzer emerges as a crucial spokesman of the early English garden. He recommended a garden near the house where 'a little Regularity is allowed' with some 'rural and extensive garden' beyond it where the designer 'ought to pursue Nature'. Where possible, enclosing walls should vanish, and by means of 'an easy unaffected manner of Fencing' it would be as if the adjacent Country were

[149] W. Cowper, *The Task* (London: John Sharpe, Piccadilly, 1817), III. 639-640.

all a Garden'.[150] Such a scheme of garden design, as Leatherbarrow suggests, may be attributed to the earlier writings of Shaftesbury whose plea was for the idea of pure nature, which must be studied in the 'perfected forms' which art provides.[151] Hunt deduces that 'art in gardens is dedicated, then, to bringing out the character of intrinsic items'. He continues: 'What Shaftesbury's theory did require of gardens was a graduated sequence of design whereby regulated nature near the house gradually gave way to the untouched forms of nature on the horizon ... what art organised near to the beholder taught him to understand the potential in untouched forms further off'.[152]

These thoughts may be further explored by considering the meaning of distance in the eighteenth century when it became the subject of scientific examination and philosophical speculation, an important dimension in painting and poetry, and a way of describing aesthetic experience. Ogden writes that distance gained a more immediate and personal meaning based on first-hand experience when perception through distance became part of the process of aesthetic judgement. He allies this to the writings of John Locke, George Berkeley and other theorists noting that distance can become an agent of the imagination. The landscape garden never offers a view of the whole; a visitor must explore it and over time a sense of wholeness is collected. One remains within the garden, and an understanding of it is bound to points of view.[153]

As Arnold Berleant says: 'Environmental experience, in particular, lives in the richness of sensory consciousness, an awareness that is more than fusion but rather a perceptually continuous and integrated occasion … This is true synaesthesia, a complete union of the sensory modalities'.[154] However, he later states that: 'Natural beauty can also encourage sensory immersion to reach the experience of unity. These are the aesthetics of engagement, which requires a different approach from eighteenth-century disinterestedness. What we grasp in the wilder states of nature we appreciate too in its more cultivated forms. In gardens, where art and nature are fused, a natural aesthetic is employed to evoke the sense of continuity with nature. Cultural forms and traditions mediate that unity'.[155] I have illustrated some of the aesthetic approaches of the eighteenth century, but I cannot agree that any of them were 'disinterested'. Engagement with the form and nature of the garden and the wilder landscape beyond was a key factor for the sensory perception needed for creativity.

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[150] Hunt and Willis, eds, *Genius of the Place*, p. 11, and Switzer, *Ichnographia,* pp. xiii and xxviii.
[151] Leatherbarrow, 'Character, Geometry and Perspective', 332-358.
[152] Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, p. 96.
[153] Ogden, 'From Spatial to Aesthetic Distance', 63-78.
[154] A. Berleant, *The Aesthetics of the Environment* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), p. 28.
[155] Berleant, *Aesthetics*, p. 172.

Each person that goes into the garden establishes his or her individual boundaries of privacy, which as Spacks points out becomes 'a means to a dramatically different end'.[156] She adds that it is 'conceivable that the individual in privacy might at least explore some marginal realm of personally rather than publicly ordained standards'. Furthermore, she notes that: 'the idea of privacy as ... a space of self-discovery, proves intensely relevant to the meditations of poets, fictional characters, and diarists of this earlier period ... privacy is above all an imaginative category'. Moreover she adds that: 'the growing emphasis on 'sensibility'... calls attention to further perplexities of privacy as an issue'.[157] Additionally, Crawford posits that 'visual confinement produces intellectual breadth'.[158] Consequently, I am proposing that the focused intensity of the garden provides an opportunity for artistic expression: in its design and development; or through the emergence of artistic ideas occurring in the poetic moments arising through the sensing of its minute irregularities. As the human being walks in the garden, he is the catalyst, interpreting the mood or feeling created by shapes, shadows and objects.

As Crawford has said: 'when walled aristocratic gardens ... gave way to the ideal of unrestrained views ... the kind of space that represented English national aspirations was radically altered, yet that alteration contained within itself the potential for imagining contained space in a revolutionized way'.[159] She argues that during the eighteenth century 'containment was being re-valued as an aesthetic and representational space in its own right', adding that it 'was, of course, not merely visionary', as she allies boundaries to enclosure and productivity. Nonetheless, I propose that there was an alternative way of looking at contained space that went beyond the vernacular, in that the confined nature of the garden was indeed a 'sublime expanse'; but one that through its intricate complexity was a metaphysical place that had the potential to transform the creativity of those who designed or owned it. In this chapter, I have discussed eighteenth-century aesthetic sources, as well as those from modern writers. Subsequently, this topic will allow greater understanding of my selected gardens through application of these aesthetic approaches.

[156] Spacks, *Privacy*, p. 5.
[157] Spacks, *Privacy*, pp. 6-11.
[158] Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure,* p. 254.
[159] Crawford, *Poetry*, *Enclosure,* pp. 253-255.

Chapter 2: The Leasowes – Design and Artistry

2.1 Introduction

It is said that William Shenstone rarely left his home, The Leasowes, except to spend a few days 'in an agreeable loiter' with close friends, or to visit friends in London.[160] The Leasowes, Halesowen, W. Midlands was the home of Thomas Shenstone and his wife Anne Penn of Harborough. After leaving Pembroke College, Oxford, their eldest son William (1714 -1763) inherited the estate in 1724 on the death of his father. Thomas Gray remarked that Shenstone 'lived in retirement against his will', and he was perceived as a large ungainly man, polite, melancholy and vulnerable.[161] He was happiest in pastoral pursuits, and said: 'I lead here the unhappy Life of seeing nothing in the Creation half so idle as myself ... I am however pretty frequently pidling in little matters about my Farm'.[162] His somewhat misleading view of himself has persisted; however, in 1743, on the death of his tenant farmer and companion, Shenstone was finally 'compelled to take the whole estate into his own hands'.[163] He wrote: I am taking part of my farm upon my hands, to see if I can succeed as a farmer; but I am afraid I am under the sentence, "'And, behold, whatsoever he taketh in hand, it shall *not* prosper."'[164] Nonetheless, after this point, Shenstone was a busy and creative individual who became absorbed in gardening and the embellishment of his small domestic estate, which George Gilfillan thought of as a 'miniature model paradise'.[165]

Shenstone's letters speak of his literary output and the literary friendships, which were so important to him, and indicate a keenly enquiring and critical mind, which dwelled on the writings of contemporaries and older writers. This was evidenced in his correspondence with a number of friends in the local literary society, The Leasowes Circle, which included: Lady Luxborough and William Somervile; Richard Graves and Richard Jago; Robert Dodsley; the Duchess of Somerset, formerly Lady Hertford; Joseph Spence and Thomas Percy; James Thomson, and the Pitts.[166] Lady Luxborough who had 'immediately recognised' The Leasowes 'for its worth and beauty' and Shenstone's ingenuity, was his chief correspondent. His letters to her are revealing of the man, his interests, and the warmth of their friendship, and she described Shenstone as giving innocent pleasure to others, and having sincere, unartful conduct.

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[160] Shenstone, *Letters,* p. x.
[161] Quoted in: Rev. G. Gilfillan, *The Poetical Works of William Shenstone* (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1854), p. xvii.
[162] Shenstone, *Letters*, LXXXVIII, p. 196 (3 June 1749), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[163] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, p. xi.
[164] Shenstone, *Letters,* XLV, pp. 86-88 (1 March 1743-4), W. S. to Rev. R. Jago.
[165] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, p. xiii.
[166] Quoted in Ward & Trent, et al., *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature,* 18 vols (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907–21); (New York: Bartleby.com, 2000) <http:// www. bartleby.com/145/> [accessed 18 November 2013]; X, 'The Age of Johnson', XI, 'Letter Writers', 'Lady Luxborough and the Literary Society at Barrels: Shenstone'.

So, I will begin by focusing on the evolving design of Shenstone's garden, before considering his engagement with contemporary aesthetic theory in his deployment of variety, wavy lines, emblematic and expressive elements, and his attention to the travelling eye. Then I will examine the interplay between Shenstone's own poetry and garden design, before moving on to consider the social aspects of the garden and its effects, by using visitor accounts. I will consider private response as well as public effects of the garden, its engagements with poetry, music and the theatrical, and finally its lasting cultural impact.

2.2 An Evolving Design

The development of The Leasowes was defined by the circumstances and character of its owner: at once poetical, solemn, driven to garden design, erudite, and perpetually short of money. While Shenstone had inherited substantial property and good income, he later wrote that: 'How sufficient my Fortune might have been for all my *present* wishes, had I nursed it ever so little from the time I received it ... a Person cannot *eat* his Cake and *have* it'.[167] The poet could combine his favourite amusements and design in imagination, as when he wrote to Richard Graves: 'My favourite scheme is a poem, in blank verse, upon *Rural Elegance*, including cascades, temples, grottos, hermitages, green-houses ... with a vista terminated by an old abbey'.[168] Shenstone continued to muse on his developing garden in letters to his friends, including his neighbour Lady Luxborough who 'had grown up with gardens that addressed the public even from a rural seclusion, gardens that assumed an audience both for themselves and for their owner'.[169] In 1715 Stephen Switzer had described the practice of the *ferme ornée*:

> By mixing the useful and profitable parts of Gard'ning with the Pleasurable in the Interior Parts of my Designs and Paddocks, obscure enclosures, etc. in the outward, My Designs are thereby vastly enlarg'd and both Profit and Pleasure may be agreeably mix'd together.[170]

The design of Lady Luxborough's *ferme ornée* evolved and was often discussed with Shenstone, and in combining the useful and the pleasurable she was promoting the poetical aims of instruction and 'delight'. This approach may have influenced Shenstone whose resultant plan is shown in fig. 3, with a view of the house as it was during the lifetime of the poet in fig. 4. An engraving of the small mansion within the landscape completed in 1776 by the new owner Edward Horne who demolished Shenstone's more rambling house, and built his mansion on the same site, is shown in fig. 5.

[167] Shenstone, *Letters*, LXVI, pp. 137-143 (5 May, 1748), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[168] Shenstone, *Letters*, XXXIV, pp. 62-63 (February 1743), W. S. to Richard Graves.
[169] S. D. Bending, *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 221.
[170] S. Switzer, *The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation* (London: B. Barker, 1715), p. xiii.

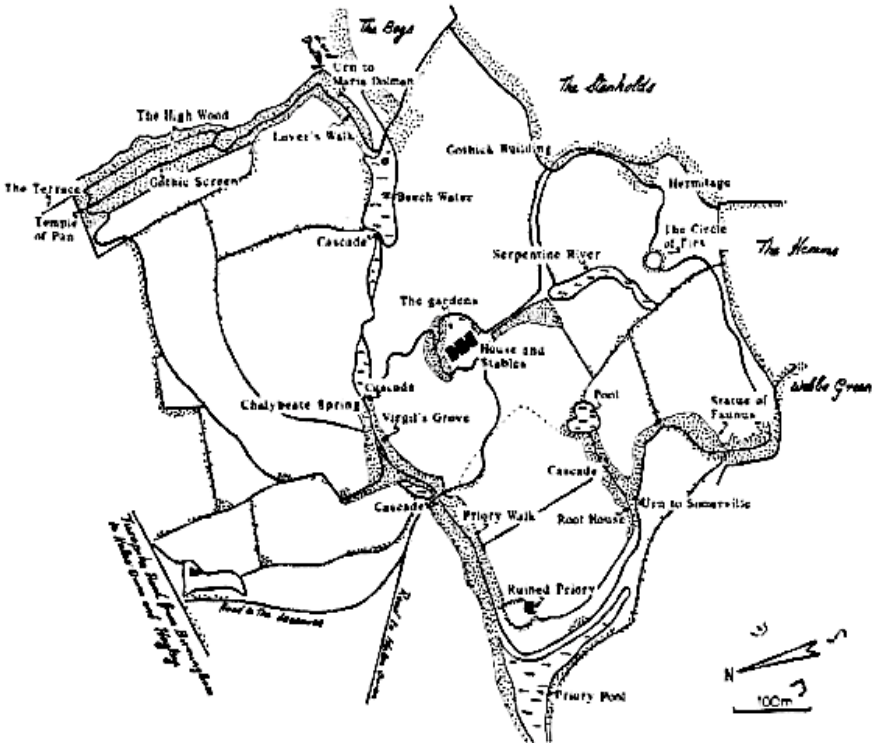

Fig. 3. W. Lowe, 'A Map of The Leasowes as survey'd in 1759'

Fig. 4. D. Jenkins, 'William Shenstone's house at The Leasowes', c. 1750

Fig. 5. 'The Leasowes, nr Halesowen, Shropshire', c 1776

This engraving of the remodelled Leasowes reveals the combination of the practical activity of sheep farming with landscape design. The house is artfully located on a hill and amongst trees, whilst the sheep graze in the foreground. Christopher Gallagher summarizes its nearly 150 acres as a development 'from a simple grazing farm to one of the most celebrated and influential landscape gardens in England'. Prior to enclosure, much of the open land at The Leasowes was arable, ploughed in ridge and furrow, and may have been part of an open field system linked to the nearby town of Halesowen.[171] The publisher Robert Dodsley refers to the former existence of 'a prodigious chain of fish-ponds', the property of the nearby Hales Abbey, and there is evidence that some of the chain of ornamented pools at The Leasowes, such as the Beech Water, and possibly the Priory Pond started life in this way.[172] Fish were present in the ponds until 1761 when all the fish were 'destroyed'; however, Shenstone forgave the thief, to general disapprobation. [173]

The sloping topography of The Leasowes was also a significant factor in its design, as it gave spectacular views from a terrace at the top, and allowed a variety of planting at different levels. A plentiful natural water supply provided the basis for the cascades streams and pools that became a key part of Shenstone's garden design. A circuit walk was created with carefully placed viewpoints, along with inscriptions to be found carved on wooden seats, and benches that were positioned to allow a new vista. Inscriptions were also found on urns, inside huts and the Root-house, together with statues, which altogether highlighted the natural character of the place and invited a visitor's meditative response.[174] The walk ends in the dark seclusion of Virgil's Grove, a

[171] C. Gallagher, 'The Leasowes: A History of the Landscape', *Journal of Garden History,* 24:2 (1996), 201-220 (pp. 201-202).
[172] W. Shenstone, *The works in verse and prose of W. Shenstone, Esq, most of which were never before printed ... with decorations,* ed. by R. Dodsley, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Dodsley, 1765), II, p. 333. Hereafter cited as *Works.*
[173] Shenstone, *Letters*, CCLXXXII, pp. 605-607 (18 October 1761), W. S. to Mr Hull.
[174] S. D. Bending and A. McRae, eds, *The Writing of Rural England 1500-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 191.

dramatic concoction of dizzy heights, towering trees, endless rushing water and meaningful sculpture and inscriptions, giving a sense of meditation and sadness at the fleeting nature of Arcadia. Max F. Schulz argues that any circuit walk is imbued with multiple Christian and pagan associations, which in turn model the soul's journey through life. He speculates that: 'it would have been extraordinary if the religious associations of the circuit walk had not occurred to visitors'.[175] As Michael Symes and Sandy Haynes declare: the sham ruin of the Priory at The Leasowes was a 'calculated effect' [which was] 'supposedly religious'. Indeed the image painted by Shenstone in fig. 6 on p. 65, shows a figure, possibly a hermit, wearing a rosary and crucifix as he approaches the Priory Gate. Such a ruin provoked 'feelings of sadness at decay and the passing of strength and glory'.[176] While it seems natural to associate a garden with Eden, in my view The Leasowes is a personal poem. The creation of a series of scenes with cascades, lawns and dense groves tells us more about Shenstone, as well as Virgilian pastoral, a mediaeval theme of priories, and expansive views of the surrounding countryside. In Dodsley's published plan of the garden, forty stopping points are marked where one can admire or consider the immediate scene, some near object or inscription, or a more distant vista or prospect. He recorded the organisation of the garden's features, setting the scene for the rest of the tour, which would reveal that Shenstone had opened up the natural beauties to their full extent, and that the hand of art was nowhere visible, though much thought and labour had gone into the operations. Other visitors echoed Dodsley's much-quoted prose description as, for example, this account was incorporated into Walpoole's tome - *The New British Traveller* (1784). In his tour of Shropshire, Walpoole visits The Leasowes, which he describes as 'so singularly beautiful', and 'for extent, elegance of display, and variety of scenes, may be justly said to equal at least the first seat in the kingdom'.[177] This lengthy description is in contrast to the brief sketch created by Joseph Spence and Robert Dodsley which Stephen Bending and Andrew McRae describe as 'an aide memoire [which] suggests some of the excitement of visiting The Leasowes'.[178] These accounts will be discussed later in this chapter. There is also a suggestion of existing landscaping which William Shenstone absorbed into his garden design, such as the circle of firs on top of the hill in the east park described by Dodsley as 'large' and 'stately', and visible from both The Leasowes and Hagley. Sir George Lyttelton granted a 99 year lease to Shenstone in 1755; The Leasowes may therefore have been a tenancy of Hagley, and already provided with trees and water.

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[175] M. F. Schulz, 'The Circuit Walk of the 18th-Century Landscape Garden and the Pilgrim's Circuitous Progress', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 15 (1981), quoted in: Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, p. 66.
[176] Symes and Haynes, *Enville Hagley The Leasowes,* p.32.
[177] G. A. Walpoole, *The New British Traveller; or, A complete modern universal display of Great Britain and Ireland* (London: Hogg, 1784), pp. 111-113.
[178] J. Spence and R. Dodsley, 'Plan and Description of the estate of William Shenstone, called the [sic] Leasowes near Halesowen, Worcestershire', in Bending and McRae, *Writing of Rural England,* pp. 195-8. Reproduced by permission of *The Huntington Library, San Marino, California,* MS HM 30312.

Richard Graves wrote that when Shenstone took over The Leasowes, he began 'to *extend* his plan, and to form it into one connected whole, by a line of walk, to shew its several beauties in the most striking light'.[179] He also 'cut vistas to shew from several points of view, the beautiful spire of Hales-owen', seen suddenly and surprisingly from the circuit walk of The Leasowes.[180] Graves noted, however, that: 'Shenstone had no conception of an whole, *or* of disposing of his environs on any confident plan'.[181] The Leasowes was clearly a garden that grew in the imagination of William Shenstone. Without the money to have a garden designed and executed quickly, he dreamt of his creation, and one development soon seemingly independently followed the next. Although by 1746 he had declared his intention 'to embellish my whole farm', which suggests that he may have had a plan in mind.[182] The poet developed individual garden scenes, which embodied beauty, melancholy and pensiveness, and wrote that a garden scene should be developed until it contained '*all* yt the *Place itself requires*'. Shenstone expounded on the 'Pleasure mixed with melancholy' when he looked at ruins, and asked if 'it be not fortunate to raise such Sort of buildings whereof the raising and destroying affords almost equal Pleasure'. Notably, he stops in mid-sentence, and boldly writes the words 'Rise' and 'Destruction' far apart on a separate line, as if to emphasise their importance. Shenstone adds: 'let [not] ye silly *world* understand how idly they calculate, when they endeavour to produce objects of *perpetual* amusement ... *refinement* is an *endless Thing'*.[183] This sentiment was echoed in the poet's musings on discussions within the Leasowes Circle, when:

> …though by faithless friends alarm'd,
> Art have with Nature waged presumptuous war,
> …
> … havoc and contention cease.
> I see the rival powers combine,
> And aid each others fair design:
> Nature exalt the mound where Art shall build;
> Art shape the gay alcove, while Nature paints the field.
> (270-282)[184]

Thomas Whately later wrote that: 'At the sight of a ruin, reflections on the change, the decay, and the desolation before us naturally occur; and they introduce a long succession of others, all tinctured with that melancholy which these have inspired; or if the monument revive the memory

[179] R. Graves, *Recollections of some particulars in the life of the late William Shenstone Esq In a series of letters from an intimate friend of his to (WS) Esq* (London: J. Dodsley, 1788), pp. 63-64.
[180] Graves, *Recollections,* p. 69.
[181] Graves, *Recollections*, in Gallagher, 'Leasowes', 201-220 (p. 204).
[182] A. D. McKillop, 'Thompson's Visit to Shenstone', *Philological Quarterly*, 23 (1944), 283-286. Quoted in Gallagher, 'Leasowes', 201-220 (p. 211).
[183] Shenstone, *Letters*, CLXIX, pp. 406-409 (17 July 1754), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[184] Shenstone, 'Rural Elegance – An Ode to the late Duchess of Somerset, 1750', in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 125-134.

of former times, we … recollect many more coeval circumstances which we see, … as they are come down to us, venerable with age, and magnified with fame'.[185] He added: 'Whatever building we see in decay, we naturally contrast its present to its former state, and delight to ruminate on the comparison'.[186] Shenstone liked to experience such feelings and described how his 'little Pavilion in ye water is no more! I yesterday enjoy'd it in Ruins, but my Pleasure was mix'd with melancholy, as the case would be, were I to survey ye noblest Ruins upon earth'.[187] Shenstone used the term 'Pavilion' for several of his structures, but here he may be referring to his Summer-House or Writing Hut which was built on an island in the Beech Water, as shown in figs. 14 and 15, on p. 76. In his 'Unconnected Thoughts', the poet reflects on the effect of a ruin in a garden:

> A ruin, for instance may … afford that pleasing melancholy which proceeds from a reflexion on decayed magnificence … Ruinated structures appear to derive their power of pleasing, from the irregularity of surface, which is VARIETY; and the latitude they afford the imagination.[188]

In one of his essays, Shenstone described himself as 'the author of the following elegies [who] has a right to consider himself a real shepherd. The flocks, the meadows, and the grottos, are his own, and the embellishment of the farm his sole amusement'.[189] He took great interest in his neighbours' gardens, and while he ruminated on their latest eye-catching building, he noted that:

> … they anticipate everything which I propose to do when I am *rich*; but as that is never likely to be, perhaps it is not of any importance; but what I term *rich*, implies no great deal; I believe, you are a witness to the moderation of my desires; and I flatter myself that you will believe your friend in *that* respect something above the vulgar.[190]

Shenstone was suggesting that abundance of money did not necessarily mean abundance of taste: a view with which Lady Luxborough seemed to agree.[191] Graves notes that on numerous occasions, the Lytteltons who wished to embellish their estate at Hagley,'frequently went over to The Leasowes, after Mr Shenstone had brought it to some degree of perfection'.[192] He adds that they went 'so frequently ... [and] often went to the principal points of view, without waiting for anyone to conduct them regularly through the whole walks. Of this Mr Shenstone would sometimes peevishly complain'.[193] At this point, it would be worthwhile reiterating some of the

[185] Whately, *Observations,* p. 155. Quoted in: Alison, *Essays*, I, p. 60.
[186] Whately, *Observations,* p. 132.
[187] Shenstone, *Letters*, CLXIX, pp. 406-409 (17 July 1754), W.S. to Lady Luxborough.
[188] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening', in *Works,* II, p.126.
[189] Shenstone, 'A Prefatory Essay on Elegy', in *Works*, I, pp. 23-24.
[190] Shenstone, *Letters*, LVI (b), pp. 111-113 ('It is somewhere about the 20th of Sept. 1747'), W.S. to Rev. Mr. Jago.
[191] Henrietta, Lady Luxborough, *Letters Written by the late Right Honourable Lady Luxborough to William Shenstone, Esq* (London: J. Dodsley, 1775), pp. 171-182 (28 December 1749), Lady Luxborough to W. S.
[192] Graves, *Recollections,* p. 81.
[193] Graves, *Recollections,* p. 84-85.

key points on eighteenth-century aesthetics, to understand how the scope and form of Shenstone's design enhanced visitors' appreciation of his garden.

2.3 Towards Sensation and Perception

Eighteenth-century aesthetic theory underlined the emphasis on solitude, as it called attention to the power of the landscape to produce a variety of intellectual and emotional responses in the viewer, and Joseph Addison had written of the possibility of developing the imagination in the presence of nature.[194] In his influential work, *Elements of Criticism* (1762), Lord Kames focused on the ability of the garden to raise a broad range of emotions in a visitor, stressing that gardens were important for the individual experience and emotion. One of the key tenets of Kames' theories was the importance of the manner in which objects were put together in a garden, and their potential effect on a visitor. In a discussion on the subject of 'wit', he refers to Addison who said that: [it lies] 'in the assemblage of ideas; and putting those together, with quickness and variety ... thereby to make up pleasant pictures and agreeable visions in the fancy'.[195]

These ideas were incorporated into Kames' proposal when he identified three elements of the garden: firstly, it was embellished with natural objects such as trees, flowers, and streams; secondly, it incorporated man-made objects such as statues and buildings which might have an iconographic or associative character, but which complemented nature and had the potential to inspire emotion. The third order approached 'nearer perfection', and consisted of: 'Objects assembled together... so arranged, as to inspire all the different emotions that can be raised by gardening'.[196] Other emotions include: 'beauty from regularity, order, proportion, colour, utility', plus emotions 'of grandeur, of sweetness, of gaiety, of melancholy, of wildness, and even of surprise or wonder', 'so that each emotion may succeed its opposite'.[197] Kames wrote: 'In an embellished field, a straight walk has an air of formality and confinement: and at any rate is less agreeable than a winding or waving walk ... at every step they open new views ... my intention is not to make a journey, but to feast my eye on the beauties of art and nature'. [198] He added 'better far an oblique approach in a waving line' which introduces a sense of movement, and 'contributes also to variety', before concluding in a moral tone: '… gardening, which inspires the purest and most refined pleasures, cannot fail to promote every good affection ... and a habit of humanity and benevolence'. [199] Kames' ideal garden would offer a wide range of opportunities for

[194] Addison, *Spectator,* 411-21, 21 June - 3 July 1712.
[195] Addison, *Spectator,* 72, 1711. Referenced in H. Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism,* 2 vols (London: T. Cadell and G. Robinson, 1785), I, p. 266.
[196] Kames, *Elements*, II, p. 688.
[197] Kames, *Elements*, I, p. 212.
[198] Kames, *Elements*, II, pp. 693-694.
[199] Kames, *Elements*, II, p. 699.

emotional response, which might be concentrated in its isolation and privacy. He suggested that the nature of a garden in the winter would stimulate 'a fine tone of mind for meditation and reasoning'.[200]

The approach of the 'waving line' and 'variety' was incorporated into Shenstone's design from the start of his circuit walk, and continued to the end. This was the fundamental feature of the garden, which allowed him to capitalise on its opportunity for spatial awareness, in order to change the variety and extent of his set pieces to inspire the responses that he envisaged. The wavy line, which at no two points is the same, stimulates the imagination by disappearing and reappearing from sight. Its existence invites people to follow it, as it presents new scenes, which affect their imagination. Shenstone wrote that: 'when a building, or other object, has been once viewed from its proper point, the foot should never travel to it by the same path which the eye has travelled before', that you 'should lose the object, and draw nigh, obliquely'. The initial picture, after being presented from a carefully chosen viewpoint, would disappear or be continuously transformed.[201] As Katherine Myers declares: 'Questions of size and distance could remain ambiguous, and so could be manipulated for often illusory effect, but the foot had to be taken on an illusory path to prevent the reality behind the picture being revealed'.[202] Equally, Jay Appleton says: 'it is the expectation aroused by the deflection in the vista that causes aesthetic excitement'.[203] The meandering nature of the path provides associative moments which focus the mind on Peter De Bolla's 'sentimental look', and one visitor responded to this phenomenon in verse: 'Verses by (ARCADIO) written at the Gardens of William Shenstone, near Birmingham, 1756'. In his letters, Thomas Percy identified the poet as John Scot Hylton Esq. of Lappal House near the [sic] Leasowes.[204]

> Such is the WAVING LINE they cry,
> For ever dear to Fancy's eye!
> Yon stream that wanders down the dale,
> The spiral wood, the winding vale,
> The path which wrought with hidden skill,
> Slow twining scales yon distant hill
> With fir invested – all combine
> To recommend the WAVING LINE.
> ... quick shifting as you stray
> vivid scenes on fancy play[205]

[200] Kames, *Elements*, II, p. 696.
[201] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening', in *Works,* II, p. 131.
[202] Myers, 'Visual Fields', in Calder, ed., *Experiencing the Garden*, pp. 13-35 (p. 19).
[203] Appleton, *Experience*, p. 229.
[204] T. Percy, C. Brooks and A. F. Falconer, eds, *The Percy Letters,* 8 vols (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1977), VII, p. 216.
[205] Shenstone, *Works,* II, pp. 383-386.

Shenstone had 'bought Hogarth's Analysis: it is really entertaining: and has, in some measure, adjusted my notions with regard to beauty in general'.[206] In his work of 1753, Hogarth had set up 'the sensibilities' rather than the reason as an aid to beauty, and adoption of those concepts engendered a sense of freedom, which joined a fusion of ideas combining the abstract and the complex throughout Shenstone's circuit walk.[207] The poet's development of his garden had begun some years earlier, and Symes and Haynes suggest that 'Shenstone had fastened on to the serpentine line before Hogarth's exposition'.[208] However, by 1770 Whately had extended the discussion over landscape gardening from the production of emotional states to the articulation of distinct modes of consciousness. He drew a distinction between objects that bear allusive references as *emblematic,* and those that provide environments that stimulate emotive *expression*, both terms of which are particularly relevant to The Leasowes. Whately had also written of the importance of water in a garden, the subtleties of its effects, and its qualities of movement. More recently, Stephen Heyde wrote that 'the shift from 'emblematic' to 'expressive' gardening is well-rehearsed ... but [is complicated by] underlying changes in cultural values that profoundly influenced a whole generation of garden making'.[209]

At The Leasowes in 1754, Robert Dodsley was introduced to Shenstone by John Baskerville, and wrote in wonderment: 'How shall I fix my wand'ring eye? Where find | The source of this enchantment?' [210] In his design, Shenstone had given some thought to how the metonymic device of the eye might lead a visitor visually and poetically through his garden:

> In a scene presented to the eye, objects should never lie so much to the right or left, as to give it any uneasiness in the examination ... No mere slope from one side to the other can be agreeable ground: The eye requires ... a degree of uniformity ... the shape of ground, the disposition of trees, and the figure of water, must be sacred to nature; and no forms must be allowed that make a discovery of art.[211]

According to Peter de Bolla, in the eighteenth century ways of looking had already changed with the development of the landscape garden and domestic tourism, and he argues that visitors and patrons alike also changed the way they looked at those different forms. He writes that the structure of the landscape garden prompts a 'sentimental or emotive response', or 'sentimental look in which the eye moves in and around the three-dimensional space'. It registers incident and contrast, and delights in surprise.[212] He adds: 'How the land looks is connected in subtle and

[206] Shenstone, *Letters*, CLXIV, pp. 395-397 (19 April 1754), W. S. to Mr. Graves.
[207] W. Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (London: Reeves, 1753).
[208] Symes and Haynes, *Enville Hagley The Leasowes,* p. 183.
[209] Heyde, 'Historical Roots', 123-145 (p.124).
[210] Shenstone, *Works,* II, pp. 380-382.
[211] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening', in *Works,* II, pp. 132-133.
[212] De Bolla, 'The charm'd eye', pp. 89-111 (pp. 93-94).

interactive ways to how the viewer looks ... we only ever see what we have learned to see'.[213] If the eighteenth-century man was already attuned to 'see' in this way, I propose that the focused intensity of the sequestered nature of The Leasowes would serve to concentrate his attention, making him even more susceptible to the sensations aroused by the variety of its sights and sounds: 'seeing with the inner eye as much as the outer'. De Bolla indicates this in his description of the 'reveries and fantasy' that can arise in the sentimental look, and the aesthetics of a 'specifically male fantasy experience'. Similarly, de Bolla cites Sir John Dalrymple's *Essay on Landscape Gardening* from the 1750s, in which he 'outlines a theory of the sentiments that are aroused by different visual experiences' of landscape.[214] I will explore the notion of 'looking' later in this chapter in relation to an exploration of the garden itself.

Shenstone was perhaps aware of contemporary speculation on the meaning of distance, which according to John Ogden gained a more personal meaning when perception through distance became part of the process of aesthetic judgement. Engagement with the form and nature of the garden and the wilder landscape beyond was a key factor for the sensory perception needed for aesthetic response.[215] In 1770, Whately had recognised that the garden might lead to ideas that are 'far distant from the original thought', concluding that scenes of nature have the power to affect our imagination and our sensibility.[216] Hunt's discussion of the concept of 'exterior place-making' is an important addition to the idea of the garden as a place for the development of ideas; an idea developed further by Tim Cresswell who reflected that: 'people read places by acting in them'.[217] As Ian Gordon declares, Shenstone created a world of his own in The Leasowes, which was a place of 'inexhaustible ingenuity and true Augustan elegance'.[218] The poet also expressed himself in essays and lyrics, as well as in his most notable poetry, such as *The Schoolmistress* and the *Pastoral Ballad,* which Gilfillan thought, unlike the rest of his work, had 'some genuine inspiration'.[219] Shenstone's poetry makes innovative moves forward from the Augustan age, incorporating elements of the prospect-view found in his garden design, and creating intimate settings that stirred the imagination.

2.4 The Leasowes in Verse

Gilfillan suspected that all Shenstone's raptures and sorrows were as fictitious in substance as in

[213] P. De Bolla, *The Education of the Eye,* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 106.
[214] De Bolla, 'The charm'd eye', pp. 89-111 (pp. 96-97).
[215] Ogden, 'From Spatial to Aesthetic Distance', 63-78.
[216] Whately, *Observations.* Quoted in Hunt, and Willis, eds, *Genius of the Place*, pp. 301-307.
[217] Cresswell, *In place, Out of Place*, p. 16.
[218] I. A. Gordon, *Shenstone's Miscellany 1759-1763* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. xi.
[219] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, pp. v-vi.

form, and with a 'want of profound sincerity'.[220] However, he selected two 'felicitous little touches': the sound of the boy's whistle in *School-Mistress* (1741), and the ringing of the bell in *A Pastoral Ballad* (1743), for their language, manner of description, tenderness of sentiment, and sound.[221] Robert Chambers praised Shenstone's 'simple tenderness and pathos of pastoral song ... the true touches of nature and feeling, and the easy versification of the stanzas … [which] are remembered with delight. We must surrender up the judgement to the imagination in perusing them'.[222] Shenstone's verses took a lasting hold on the popular ear, as their spontaneous simplicity represented a rupture with stiffly 'pastoral' diction, and so with classicism. Eric Partridge considered that the 'wholly delightful and dainty *Pastoral Ballad* constitutes the author's main right to be held an early Romantic'. However, he added that 'this poem has been too often been passed over in favour of *The School-Mistress*, which … is not greatly superior'.[223] Conversely, Oliver Elton declared that this poem, which was written: *'In Imitation of Spenser'*, 'rose at once above the mob of contemporary imitations … Shenstone … finds a 'very singular pleasure' in Spenser's 'simplicity and obsolete phrase''.[224]

Shenstone is more remembered as the beautifier of The Leasowes than as the author of *A Pastoral Ballad*, a much reprinted poem in four parts with a wistful tone and wretched simplicity that derive from his study of Edmund Spenser, and in particular *The Faerie Queene*. Furthermore *A Pastoral Ballad's* association with landscape gardening, provincialism and sentimentality would have endeared it to the imagination of eighteenth-century readers. As Graves said: 'He [Shenstone] had always admired Rowe's song of the *Despairing Shepherd* … [and] first sketched out his *Pastoral Ballad* in that style'. Dodsley first published *A Pastoral Ballad* in 1755, and Shenstone must have made revisions to it in the twelve years before publication, since much of the description in Part 2 – 'Hope' - can only have been written once he had made significant alterations to his garden.[225] The poet hesitated between calling his pastoral lyric an elegy or a ballad, but the eight stanzas of 'Hope' harmoniously mirror the simplicity of pastoral life and aesthetics, as in his imagination Shenstone intimates the synaesthesia of the pleasures revealed in his garden, which was a well-known attraction. Its opening line: 'My banks they are furnish'd with bees' became popular, and a basis for a new pastoral mode of lyrics, while Shenstone's poetry illuminates our perception of The Leasowes:

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[220] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, pp. xi, xix.
[221] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, p. xxi.
[222] R. Chambers, *Cyclopaedia of English Literature* (London: W. R. Chambers, 1844), II, p. 36.
[223] E. Partridge, *Eighteenth-Century English Romantic Poetry* (Paris: Édouard Champion, 1924), pp. 78-79.
[224] O. Elton, *Survey of English Literature 1730-1780*, 2 vols (London: E. Arnold & Co., 1928), p. 13.
[225] See 'A Pastoral Ballad, In Four Parts', in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 149-156.

My grottos are shaded with trees.
And my hills are white over with sheep.
…
My fountains all border'd with moss,
Where the harebells and violets grow.
(II, 3-7)

Not my fields in the prime of the year,
More charms than my cattle unfold;
Not a brook that is limpid and clear,
But it glitters with fishes of gold.
(II, 13-16)

One would think she might like to retire
To the bower I have labour'd to rear:
Not a shrub that I heard her admire,
But I hasted and planted it there.
(II, 17-20)

From the plains, from the woodlands, and groves,
What strains of wild melody flow!
(II, 25-26)

Dear regions of silence and shade!
Soft scenes of contentment and ease!
(II, 53-54)

In a portrayal of the contrasting effects of the scenes he has created along the circuit-walk, with its prospect-views of his estate, Shenstone specifically acknowledged the Augustan centre of his land, and the vast landscape beyond. However, he also reminded the reader of his inventive and intriguing designs, which are essential to the enlivenment of their experience of his garden, and to his poetic achievement. It is therefore appropriate to consider how different visitors reacted to The Leasowes, in order to demonstrate how Shenstone reached out to the feelings of other people, through his own sensibilities and imagination.

2.5 A Place for Visitors

Graves refutes the idea proffered by Thomas Gray that Shenstone's 'whole philosophy consisted of living, against *his will*, in a retirement, which his taste had adorned, but which he *only enjoyed* when people of note came to see and commend it'. Instead, he writes that: 'he [Shenstone] was *pleased* with the honour done to his *place*, we must consider, that The Leasowes was his own

creation, the offspring of his fancy'.[226] However, Shenstone himself put a different slant on his feelings, when he wrote in a letter to 'Mr B': 'I am now grown dependent upon the Friends [my farm] gives me, for the principal Enjoyment it affords; *I* am pleased to find them *pleased* and enjoy its Beauties by Reflection ... my Pleasure appears to be of the social Kind'.[227] Shenstone wrote that: 'in poetry, for instance, it is urged that the vulgar discover the same beauties with the man of reading'. He added that: 'half or more of the beauties of poetry depend on metaphor or allusion, neither of which, by a mind uncultivated can be applied to their proper counterparts'. However, he put forward his view that to overcome the 'confused expectation of pleasing the vulgar and the polite', one should 'address the judicious few, and then ... the mob will follow ... first appearance will engross the politer compliments; and the latter will partake of the irrational huzza'.[228] In the creation of his garden, his work of art, I suggest that this is what Shenstone was doing. He was putting together, refining, getting people involved, and building something that many people from all strata of society would remember. In opening The Leasowes to the public gaze, it was also a place of responsibility, and Shenstone may have felt a sense of obligation to maintain the garden for his public visitors as well as himself.

In her discussion on *The Country House and Its Publics*, Dana Arnold notes that the fashion for country house and garden visiting 'to those of appropriate rank' continued throughout the eighteenth century.[229] She states that, invited or not, the practice of visiting became a signifier of social order and also a benchmark of class difference. Arnold adds that 'the actual act of communion between the tourist and the attraction is less important than the *image* or the *idea* of society that the collective act generates'.[230] While such thinking may have been pertinent to some visitors, I argue that at The Leasowes, social order and class difference were not the only aspects of the nature of the gardens that its designer wished to promote. For William Shenstone, the 'act of communion' between visitor and garden was also important. If 'one of the functions of domestic tourism was to give the illusion of inclusion in an increasingly exclusionary society', at The Leasowes visitors were also being invited to participate in its design which appeared to change frequently in terms of structure and mood. The experience of visiting The Leasowes was carefully controlled by its layout, which ensured that the sights would be seen in the correct order, and from the right viewpoint; although deviation from the route might engender a different performative response from the one intended.

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[226] Graves, *Recollections,* p. 133.
[227] Shenstone, *Letters,* CXCII, p. 451 (October 1755), W. S. to Mr B[innel?].
[228] Shenstone, 'On the Test of Popular Opinion' in *Works*, II, pp. 9-11.
[229] Arnold, *Country House*, pp. 20-42.
[230] M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 189-190, and Arnold, *Country House*, p. 22.

Arnold asserts that 'it is impossible to estimate how much of the subtler or more esoteric meaning of these [garden] landscapes was absorbed by the visiting public.[231] However, it is possible to glean some knowledge through close reading of travel diaries, such as in *Four Topographical Letters ... from a Gentleman of London* (1755), where the author visits The Leasowes and Hagley. He is much impressed by the 'most delightful' Hagley, but seems more affected by The Leasowes as he writes:

> Two Cascades are here remarkable for their Beauty and Simplicity; exceeding many Things of more costly Workmanship, having the Advantage of unaffected Nature on their Side, and ... so elegantly rude, so rural and romantic, as must inspire the beholder with a Notion, that the poetic descriptions of Arcadia and Fairyland are not altogether Fictions.[232]

In 1770, a long cascade near the Root-house also impressed Arthur Young, who wrote that it:

> ... is astonishingly romantic; … a fall of water … first breaks to your view, and then forms twenty more before it reaches you … wildly irregular … branches and leaves form a fine thick canopy of shade, which setts off most gloriously the sheets of water which here and there meet the sun beams and sparkle in the eye. This intermixture of wood and water is amazingly fine'.[233]

A few years later in 1778, Richard Joseph Sullivan Esq., made a tour of England, Scotland and Wales, recording his journey in a series of letters, which were subsequently published in prose by William Mavor. Sullivan wrote that:

> On the approach to the Malvern Hills, they appear much more elevated than they really are; still, however, they are lofty; and rising in the midst of a level country, strike one with a degree of grandeur ... Shenstone, if I mistake not, had a view of Malvern from The Leasowes, Tender-hearted being! Had he but approached them in the manner we did, he certainly would have realised the beauty of his own imagery, 'My hills are white over with sheep', they being to the very summit covered with them.[234] [235]

Sullivan enthused about the beauties of Shenstone's neighbouring park at Hagley, saying that, 'my pen is inadequate to the task of description'.[236] He refers to it as 'perfect an Elysium as possibly can be conceived', describing Thomson's seat and its Latin inscriptions, the hermitage with its lines from Milton's 'Il Penseroso', and the wandering, murmuring streams which 'at length lose themselves; but again bursting from the thicket, they form a cascade, and foam down a precipice'.

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[231] Arnold, *Country House*, p. 31.

[232] *Four Topographical Letters, Written in July 1755, Upon a Journey Thro'...From a Gentleman of London, To His Brother and Sister in Town* (London: I. Thompson and Co., 1757), IV, pp. 57-58.

[233] A. Young, *A Six Months Tour Through the North of England. Containing an Account of the present State of Agriculture, Manufactures and Population, in several Counties of this Kingdom*, 4 vols (London: W. Strahan, 1771), III, pp. 343-344.

[234] Quoted in: W. F. Mavor, *The British Tourists, or Traveller's Pocket Companion, through England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland,* 5 vols (London: E. Newbery, 1800), III, p. 77.

[235] Sullivan refers to: Shenstone, 'Pastoral Ballad', II, 'Hope', in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* p. 151.

[236] Quoted in: Mavor, *British Tourists,* III, pp. 87-97, and Mr Pratt, *Local and Literary Account of Leamington, Warwick, Stratford, Coventry, Kenilworth, Hagley, The Leasowes, Birmingham, and the Surrounding Country* (Birmingham: Lewis Thomson, 1814), p. 116.

Sullivan was no less appreciative of The Leasowes, experiencing 'a degree of veneration as he approached'.[237]

Such eloquent appreciation of Hagley and The Leasowes was not repeated in the comments of J. Grant Esq.[238] Equally hard to impress was Richard Pococke, a lawyer, who was born in Southampton and educated there and at Oxford. He developed a passion for travelling, when the Camden Society published the 'plain, unvarnished' factual accounts of his travels. On his visit to the Midlands in 1750-1751, he passed by The Leasowes, and went 'to Mr. Shenstone's'. He briefly described one of Shenstone's main set pieces: 'we saw a cascade … which might be improv'd to great advantage'. Pococke was more interested, as Richard Graves had been, when:

> … after passing some seats, we came through an arcade made of roots, which opened surprisingly on a water that falls down in many breaks, and is seen through the wood, which has a most charming effect.

He admired 'fine views', and 'a fine piece of water', while noting that the terrain required ascent and descent. He was only finally impressed, and suddenly:

> … surpriz'd with a beautiful cascade, tumbling down a precipice, and two or three more as the river winds round, a bridge, and different views of water, as of the same river, all down to the large piece of water before described, which appears part of it.

From the description, this must be Virgil's Grove, and Pococke notes that there are Latin inscriptions 'on most of the seats', and that 'there are urns in several parts ... some inscrib'd to the memory of his [Shenstone's] friends, as an urn to Somervile, and a seat to Thompson, the poet'. These perfunctory and scant remarks are in contrast to his fulsome praise of the neighbouring property Hagley that, he noted, was under aristocratic ownership and was magnificent.[239] Another visitor, The Honourable John Byng, later Viscount Torrington, wrote unsparingly in his diary in 1781. On his *Tour to the West,* eleven years after Shenstone's death, Byng noted that The Leasowes had 'passed through many owners', but it had 'not been stripped of its timber'. He describes the circuit walk as 'cool and shady' and affording 'charming views', while 'rivulets of water ripple by the walks, and can form temporary cascades'. Byng comments on the poetical inscription on every bench, but notes that, 'the place (in my opinion) is not sufficiently *orneé*'.[240]

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[237] Quoted in Mavor, *British Tourists,* III, pp. 87-97, and in Pratt, *Local and Literary Account,* pp. 120-130.
[238] J. Grant, *Journal of Three Weeks' Tour, in 1797, through Derbyshire, and the Lakes,* publ. in Mavor, *British Tourists.*
[239] R. Pococke, *The Travels through England of Dr Richard Pococke,* ed. by J. J. Cartwright, 2 vols (London: Camden Society, 1888-1889), II, p. 232.
[240] *The Torrington Diaries, containing A Tour Through England and Wales by the Honourable John Byng Later Fifth Viscount Torrington between the years 1781–1794*, ed. by C. Bruyn Andrews, 4 vols (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1934), I, p. 48.

Richard Graves described a visit to The Leasowes in *The Spiritual Quixote Or, The Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffry Wildgoose* (1772). It is a 'comic romance' of a young country squire who was influenced by the Methodists and took a long tour of the Midlands, where he suffered a number of mild adventures in his quest to revive true Christianity. Whilst on their travels, Wildgoose and his companion Jeremiah Tugwell passed near to Halesowen, and saw 'an object, amidst the woods, on the edge of the hill; which upon enquiry, they were told was called Shenstone's Folly'. As with other recorded visits to the site, Wildgoose was able to walk into The Leasowes unchallenged 'through a shady lane'. Graves records the meeting with Shenstone in glowing terms, and his garden with:

> … its natural beauties, which, by the mere force of genius and good taste, Mr Shenstone had improved and exhibited to so much advantage. And this had discovered to the world his own fine political talents and polite learning, which, from his modesty, would otherwise probably have been buried in solitude and obscurity.

Wildgoose and friend were invited to stay at The Leasowes, where Shenstone gave them a guided tour of his garden. However, Wildgoose stressed that the pleasure to be gained from such beauty was for amusement only, and that visitors should spiritualise their experience as much as possible, so that they do not allow a 'fondness for inanimate beauties' to 'interfere with their love of God'.[241]

While the tale of Geoffry Wildgoose purports to be a 'comic romance', it has a sense of verisimilitude in its record of the encounter. Graves writes that although 'the sun was now far upon the decline towards the West', Shenstone was still directing some labourers who were working on the garden in preparation for some visitors the next day. This example belies the notion that Shenstone was idle and perpetually lazy; he must have spent much time walking through his undulating estate, thinking about his improvements and ensuring that his ideas were carried out. These brief accounts of visits to The Leasowes will now be compared with Dodsley's descriptions of the garden and those of another visitor, Joseph Heely, to examine the aesthetic approach taken by William Shenstone and how it affected its visitors.

2.6 The Circuit Walk at The Leasowes

In 1777, Joseph Heely published a guidebook to three West Midlands gardens of the mid-eighteenth century. His visit to The Leasowes is described in words, which build atmosphere and expectations, and where the circuit walk is portrayed as a 'private, necessarily autonomous

[241] R. Graves, *The Spiritual Quixote or The Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffry Wildgoose,* ed. by C. Tracy (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), Book IX, Chapter VII, 'A Sketch of The Leasowes, and of the Character of the worthy Possessor of that Place', pp. 329-330.

experience'. Although, after Shenstone's death, some of the features of the garden had disappeared and some changes had been made, such as the moving of Venus from the shrubbery to a position above a fountain in Virgil's Grove.[242] Heely declared that: 'The glory of this truly arcadian farm rests on its simplicity', and that it was not a garden or park, but 'a farm only'.[243] Dodsley's published version, *A Description of The Leasowes*, is a detailed portrayal of the features of the circuit walk. He is expressive of mood, colour, sound and texture in an intimation of what it must have been like to walk there. Significantly, Dodsley extends his views beyond the boundaries of the garden to take in the landscape with which The Leasowes interacted.[244] Gilfillan refers to Dodsley's description, remarking that the writer gives 'delightful side-views of the scenery, paints it in parts and parcels, although he never makes us see it as a whole', which is perhaps what Shenstone intended. This detailed account contrasts with Dodsley's short version, which Bending and McRae describe as a 'hurried account of an experience before it fades, combining immediacy of response with an awareness of the garden's great variety'. It lists the number of rapidly changing features and views, accompanied by a short prose description of 'The Round of Mr Shenstone's Paradise' which indicates the sensation experienced by Spence and Dodsley, in terms of sound, surprise, light and shade, and the design, which seems to have happened 'by chance'.[245] I will go on to consider Heely's thoughtful but subjective account in conjunction with Dodsley's descriptions, in an aesthetic journey through the garden, while further comparison will be made with Whately's account of The Leasowes in his *Observations.*[246]

In his detailed description, Dodsley records the approach as 'a green lane', which descends 'in a winding manner to the bottom of a deep valley, finely shaded', and a 'ruinated wall, and a small gate, within an arch, inscribed, "The Priory Gate"'.[247] This was a significant entrance to the garden, as Shenstone considered that:

> 'Variety appears to me to derive good part of it's [sic] effect from novelty ... Ruinated structures appear to derive their power of pleasing from the irregularity of surface, which is variety; and the latitude they afford the imagination'.[248]

This approach is mentioned in many accounts, and is a singularly dramatic entrance in its quiet mystery, its sense of entry to an earlier world of contemplation and retreat, and its lack of restriction. Shenstone's own watercolour shown in fig. 6 indicates the scene presented to a visitor as he approached the Priory Gate.

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[242] J. Heely, *Letters on the Beauties of Hagley, Envil, and The Leasowes,* 2 vols (London: R. Baldwin, 1777), II, p. 166.
[243] Heely, *Letters,* II, pp. 226-228.
[244] Shenstone, *Works,* II, pp. 333 -372.
[245] Bending and McRae, *Writing of Rural England,* pp. 195-198.
[246] Whately, *Observations,* pp. 162-171.
[247] R. Dodsley, 'A Description of The Leasowes', in W. Shenstone, *The Poetical Works of Will Shenstone* (London: C. Cooke, 1794), pp. xvii – xxxviii (p. xvii). Hereafter cited as: *Circuit Walk*.
[248] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts', in *Works,* II, p. 131.

Fig. 6. W. Shenstone, 'The Hermit at the Priory Gate', c 1750

A visitor then had to walk uphill; thus when entering and leaving The Leasowes, one always had to traverse the valley. A tour of the garden began with physical effort, which may have raised expectations, while the descent on departure may have engendered a sense of leaving something special behind. Ascents and descents are a necessary part of one's exploration of The Leasowes, and I suggest are incentives for moving forwards and 'the satisfaction of having completed a stage', a hypothesis put forward by Hunt in relation to poetics of movement in the garden.[249] They are also a reflection of the idea of 'prospect' and 'refuge', where pleasure may be derived from the intensity of their differences, and reinforcement of the potential mood and atmosphere of the garden, where people can move from an open area into an enclosed space to feel a greater contrast of poetical perception. Once through The Priory Gate, Shenstone sent a visitor on 'a winding path, with a piece of water on your right'.[250] The deflections of such a path invite people to follow it, as it presents new scenes, which affect their imagination, while its meandering nature draws the mind towards De Bolla's 'sentimental look', and in this case a visitor had the sudden view of the Priory Pool shown in fig. 7. The scene was set for the rest of the tour, and I propose that Shenstone had revealed his innate understanding of the aesthetics of how the sensations he wished to create might be achieved.

[249] J. D. Hunt, 'Lordship of the Feet: Toward a Poetics of Movement in the Garden', in M. Conan, ed., *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2003), pp. 187-214.
[250] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xviii.

Although much altered today, The Leasowes is an estate of 141 acres located in Halesowen, W. Midlands.[251] It still offers a visitor the impression of entering the garden unchecked, and experiencing a gravel path which leads unexpectedly on to a broad expanse of water of indeterminate size. The shadowy, mirror-like stillness of the Priory Pool reflects Dodsley's comment that the atmosphere was 'cool, gloomy, solemn, and sequestered', and a 'striking contrast to the lively scene you have just left'.[252] Although this was abbreviated in his aide memoire to: 'a dark pond'.[253]

Fig. 7. The Priory Pool at The Leasowes

Dodsley then came across a Root-house, also known as the 'Woodhouse' or grotto with an ornamental inscription, which begins: 'Here in cool grot, and mossy cell'. This is a reminder of the poetic melancholy of John Milton's 'Il Penseroso', and Dodsley notes that the four six-line stanzas of the inscription give the sense of 'the abode of Fairies', as he evokes context and changes mood. Shenstone wrote of: 'Fays and Fairies'; the 'quiv'ring beams' of the moon; 'crystal streams'; and 'favour'd bowers'. He exhorted a visitor not to 'wound the shrubs, nor bruise the flowers'; and warns against the profanities of a 'wayward swain'.[254] In his letter to Mr. Jago, Shenstone also included his verses for the Root-houses at Virgil's Grove, signing them 'Oberon' in reference to the character's speech in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream,* IV, I.[255] This inscription at the grotto set the scene for The Leasowes as an art installation, preparing a visitor for a different frame of reference, and leaving the outside world behind, and Dodsley noted that he seemed 'to have landed in a subterraneous kind of region'.[256] When Shenstone erected an urn to William

[251] The Leasowes is listed Grade 1 on English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens, and is the home of the Halesowen Golf Club.
[252] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xviii.
[253] Bending and McRae, *Writing of Rural England,* pp. 195-198 (p. 197).
[254] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xviii.
[255] Shenstone, *Letters,* XC, pp. 202-204 (June 1749), W. S. to Mr. Jago.
[256] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xviii.

Somervile, high up on the hillside opposite the Root-house, as illustrated in fig. 8, a visitor could look up from the deep shadowy valley to the distant urn against the light of the sky.

Fig. 8. D. Parkes, 'Somervile's Urn', 1791

While the urn has now gone, the experience of looking for it remains, as the eye travels from the refuge of a dark 'subterraneous' place up through swaying, flickering foliage to the enormity of the dome of the sky, and a world beyond the confines of the garden. The importance of the act of looking immediately becomes apparent, and in his account Dodsley enhanced the eye's experience by depicting it as 'carried', 'rambling', or 'in repose' as he alludes to a sense of movement, and the sense of pleasure and expectation of the beauties it is seeing. He began: 'Much thought and labour, yet the hand of Art is no way visible either in the shape of the ground, the disposition of trees, or (which are here so numerous and striking) the romantick fall of his cascades'.[257]

Shenstone had created a more rugged scene in preparation for the surprise of the first cascade and on entrance a visitor had been advised to 'listen to the water's fall'.[258]However, looking at water was just as important, and Graves gave further insight into the approach to the first cascade when he wrote that it was:

> … no more than a mere ditch, or hedge-row of hazels and other common brush-wood; but by clearing away the briars and thorns, and shewing the water busily huddling down amongst the roots, and glittering through the stems of the trees, it has an uncommonly beautiful effect.[259]

[257] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xvii.
[258] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xviii.
[259] Graves, *Recollections*, p. 60.

This particular 'effect' is mentioned by several visitors, and is a natural phenomenon on which Shenstone was able to capitalise. The quiet stillness of the previous scene contrasts with the enveloping sound of water, and one walks on with 'the stream attending us, with its agreeable murmurs'. There is more contrasting ground to cover, and Dodsley describes a 'water scene' of several lakes with the 'brawling rivulet running over pebbles' emptying itself into a 'fine piece of water'.[260] Whately said: 'So various are the characters which water can assume, that there is scarcely ... an impression which it cannot enforce'.[261] While Stephen Switzer described water as being: 'the very life and soul of a garden ... more effective than the wafting of Trees and the warbling of Birds'.[262] The sight and sound of flowing water at The Leasowes is perhaps its most expressive attribute, and one that transcends the emblematic nature of some of its manmade features. The view also gave the first glimpse of 'Hales Owen steeple', shown in fig. 9.

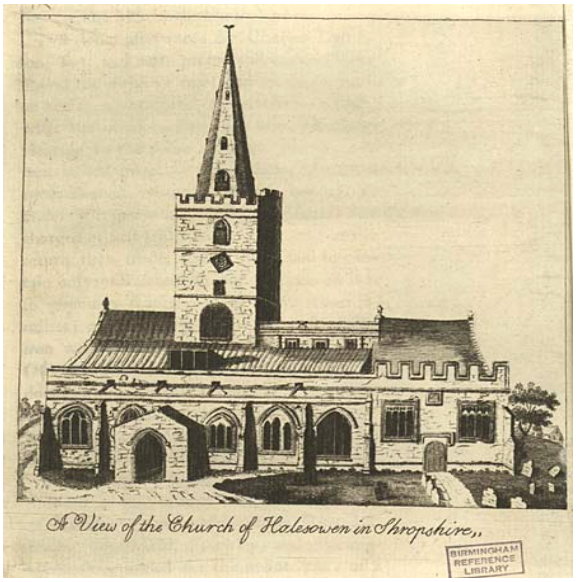

Fig. 9. 'A View of the Church at Halesowen in Shropshire', 1781

Shenstone did not own all the land in the distance, but included its appearance and dimensions in his design, reaching out to the fine vista of 'villages and varied ground' in the background. Dodsley's walk continues as he enters another valley with several stretches of water, which are linked. However, he cannot see their full extent and they are 'to all appearance, unbounded'.[263] These pools, with their unstable watery reflections bring the image to life. Their constant, subtle movements are conducive to flights of imagination, and the association of ideas.

[260] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xix.
[261] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 61-91.
[262] Switzer, *Hydrostaticks,* I, Preface.
[263] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xx.

The deflecting interlude of a 'pleasing serpentine walk' leads to a narrow wooded glade with 'a common bench ... secluded from every eye', and a short breathing space, 'during which the eye reposes on a fine amphitheatre of wood and thicket'.[264] The theatricality of its apsidal shape echoed a standard feature of Renaissance garden architecture which, as Hunt points out, was 'itself indebted to many readings and misreading of classical ruins including theatres like that of Marcellus in Rome'.[265] The plain bench and the enclosed, unadorned, still space offered a visitor a silent moment of privacy and contemplation before nature, as part of the garden drama, in preparation for the next surprising view which takes in 'a beautiful homescene'.[266] The visitor is no longer a passive spectator, and here Shenstone focused on visual and verbal drama when he placed a bench beneath a 'spreading oak' with a Latin inscription for a visitor to ponder:

> Huc ades, O Meliboee! caper tibi salvus et hoedi;
> Et si quid cessare potes, requiesce sub umbra.
>
> Hither, Meliboeus! haste,
> Safe are thy goats and kids: one idle hour,
> Come waste with me beneath this cooling bow'r. [267]

The view from this seat is of distant hills, an unbounded lawn, undulating ground with fine oaks and shrubs, a statue of Faunus and William Somervile's urn. Dodsley is full of the wonder and admiration engendered by the dramatic scenes presented to him. He sees the features of the garden as created with 'so much art' through the placement of objects of markedly contrasting size and texture, and Shenstone's use and management of water, that he is 'transported with the intricacy of the scene', and 'without reflection' adds 'the idea of magnificence to that of beauty'.[268] The rococo poetical nature of Shenstone's design is evident as Dodsley continues his winding walk, noting that the same objects appear before him, but as part of different views to the 'more pleasing parts of this grotesque and hilly country'.[269] He has a view of the ruins of the Priory, illustrated in fig. 10, with Shenstone's house in the distance, and enthuses about the view of the Wrekin, some thirty miles away, and the scene in the foreground, 'to make a complete picture'.[270]

[264] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xx.
[265] Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque,* pp. 50-53.
[266] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xx.
[267] Quotation from Virgil, *Eclogue* 7, 9-10, translated in Heely, *Letters,* II, p. 113.
[268] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xxi.
[269] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xxii.
[270] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xxv.

Fig. 10. D. Jenkins, 'A View of the Ruins of the Priory', c 1750

For Dodsley, 'the eye is carried from very romantic home scenes to very beautiful ones at a distance ... the hill and vale, plain and woodland, villages and single houses, blue distant mountains that skirt the horizon, and green hills romantically jumbled ... make this spot more than commonly striking - nor is there to be seen an acre of level ground through the large extent to which the eye is carried'.[271]As Whately wrote: 'With the beauties which enliven a garden, are every where intermixed many properties of a farm'.[272] However, although the circuit walk followed the edges of the fields and through several enclosures, the presence of the farm was carefully manipulated. Shenstone was reaching out beyond the garden and the farm to *first nature*, where 'blue and shadowy on the far horizon, sweeps the undulating line of the mountains of Cambria'.[273] Such a panorama was a significant part of Shenstone's design; he had recognised that: 'Prospects should take in the blue distant hills; but never so remotely, that they be not distinguishable from clouds'.[274] He was echoing Shaftesbury's theory which required: 'a graduated sequence of design whereby regulated nature near the house gradually gave way to the untouched forms of nature on the horizon ... observed along avenues or walks which gave a unified perspective to the variety of natural forms in view; what art ... near the beholder taught him to understand the potential in untouched forms further off'.[275]

Dodsley walks on to a view of 'the horizon, or brim ... [with] the Clee Hills, the Wrekin, the Welsh Mountains [and] Caer Caradoc, at a prodigious distance'. He asserts that 'they finish the scene agreeably', but declares that the beauty of The Leasowes 'turns chiefly upon distinguishable scenes'... such distant objects 'will not strike a reader in description, as they would a spectator on the spot'.[276] Undeniably, the vastness of the landscape and distant *first nature* that Shenstone

[271] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xxv.
[272] Whately, *Observations,* p. 181.
[273] Quoted from H. Miller, *First Impressions of England and its people* (London: J. Johnstone, 1848), in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* p. xvi.
[274] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts', in *Works,* II, p. 129.
[275] Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, p. 96.
[276] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xxxii.

incorporated into his design, and the sensations that such views provoke throughout the seasons, are better understood when seen *in situ.* Panoramas were placed before a visitor, and having carefully managed each successive 'distinguishable' scene, Shenstone encouraged changes of mood and thought before the astonishment of sudden encounter with a widely expanded vista. He was intentionally introducing an element of theatricality into his design, starting modestly and ending with high drama as one scene followed another. In an essay that sets out many of Shenstone's views on garden design, and refers to theories such as 'Burke's sublime &c.' the poet writes that: 'It is rather to be wished than required, that the more striking scenes may succeed those which are less so'. He adds: 'A garden strikes us most, where the grand and the pleasing succeed, not intermingle with, each other'.[277] While these words may reflect his succession of 'distinguishable scenes' which culminated in grand cascades for example, I contend that they also apply to the sudden extensive views which a visitor came across along the circuit walk, and were therefore rather more than merely 'agreeable' as Dodsley inferred.

The progress of Dodsley's walk takes him through 'finely varied scenes', and 'most graceful confusion' and 'contrast'. 'Water is seen to advantage in many different stages of its progress' as he enters a 'new theatre of wild shaggy precipices, hanging coppice ground, and smooth round hills between'.[278] He walks downhill into shade along Lover's Walk, by a 'bubbling rill ... rolling over pebbles or falling down small cascades, all under cover, and taught to murmur very agreeably'.[279] Dodsley finally descends 'to a beautiful gloomy scene, called Virgil's Grove', whose sides 'are enclosed with irregular tufts of hazel and other underwood; and the whole over-shadowed with lofty trees rising out of the bottom of the dingle, through which a copious stream makes its way through mossy banks, enamelled with primroses, and variety of wild wood flowers'.[280] Here, Shenstone erected a small obelisk, shown in fig. 11, with the inscription: 'P. Virgilio Maroni | Lapis iste cum luco sacer esto', [To Publius Virgilius Maro | let this stone and grove be consecrated].

Fig. 11. D. Parkes, 'Obelisk in Virgil's Grove', 1791

[277] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts', in *Works,* II, pp. 125-147.
[278] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xxxvi
[279] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, p. xxxix.
[280] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, pp. xxxiii-xxxiv.

This 'opake and gloomy' place is the main set piece of The Leasowes towards the end of the circuit walk. Dodsley's eye travels round the scene shown in fig. 12, and is drawn by glimmering light, as 'his eye rambles to the left', to view an unimaginably beautiful cascade. 'The scene in this place is that of water stealing along through a rude sequestered vale ... Farther on we lose all sight of water, and only hear the noise, without having the appearance'.[281] This engraving shows one of the cascades to the left, with tumbling waterfalls to the right, and a canopy of trees.

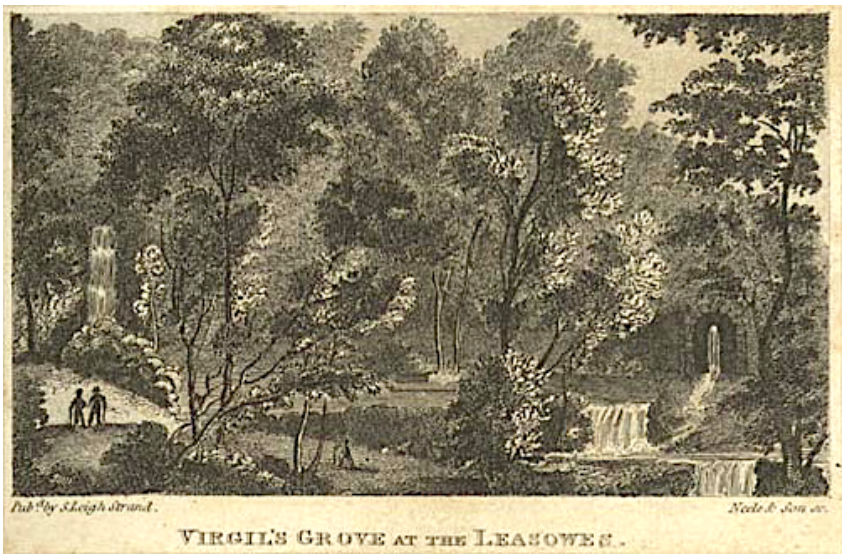

Fig. 12. 'Virgil's Grove at The Leasowes', c 1820

The use and carefully controlled management of water is perhaps the key feature of Shenstone's landscape design, where he captured and directed water around The Leasowes, re-using streams in several vistas, creating different moods, and writing: 'Water should ever appear, as an irregular lake or winding stream.[282] The poet also noted that 'the eye should always look rather down on water'.[283] This is particularly evident at Virgil's Grove where the path skirts its precipitous banks, and a visitor might hazard an approach to view the clamour of the watery scene below. Thomas Heely shared Dodsley's sentiments and, on his visit to The Leasowes, wrote that:

> It is certain that nothing gives a finer lustre, or adds more to the beauty of pleasure grounds, than water, where a place will admit of it, either as lake, river, or cascade; and these I have now and then seen in great perfection.[284]

[281] Dodsley, *Circuit Walk*, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.
[282] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts', in *Works*, II, p. 141.
[283] Shenstone, 'Unconnected Thoughts', in *Works*, II, p. 130.
[284] Heely, *Letters,* I, IV, p. 77.

Heely expounded his theory on water management: it should have the overall objective of giving 'the whole scene ... an appearance of nature' ... which might 'consequently deceive the most penetrating eye'.[285] He was then moved to quote lines from Milton:

> ... meanwhile murmuring waters fall
> Down the slope hills, dispersed, or in a lake,
> That to the fringed bank with myrtle crowned
> Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
> (IV, 260-263)[286]

In his letters, Heely uses descriptive words such as: 'lucid, undulating stream'; 'loud torrent knows to rush'; 'foaming rage'; 'grotesque and wild'; 'chirps', and 'in silence glides', which reflect his experience of the sounds of water created in Shenstone's design. Heely also noted an emblematic Latin inscription of a few lines from Pitt on another bench:

> Unsettled we remove
> As pleasure calls from verdant grove to grove;
> Stretch'd on the flow'ry meads, at ease we lie,
> And hear the silver rills run bubbling by.[287]

The garden gave Shenstone endless inspiration, while he echoed Pitt's words:

> … lay me Fate! on flowery banks secure,
> …
> Soothed by the murmurs of my pebbled flood,
> I wish it not o'er golden sands to flow;
> Cheer'd by the verdure of the spiral wood,
> I scorn the quarry, where no shrub can grow.[288]

Several benches were placed In Virgil's Grove, and in one example a Latin inscription was hidden at the rear of the bench.[289] The curious visitor would have to look for it, as Hunt points out: 'visual organisations of space are probably more immediate as well as available at various distances which inscriptions are not'.[290] In the case of Virgil's Grove, at the end of the circuit walk, Shenstone may have thought that the design and drama of the visual experience took precedence. Virgil's *Georgics*, an influential work on practical husbandry, spoke of the wonders of the countryside and retirement, prefiguring some of the thinking behind the *ferme ornée,* and as Symes and Haynes suggest, it was not by chance that Shenstone celebrated Virgil as the culmination of his circuit walk. The whole nostalgic iconography of the place came to fruition as

[285] Heely, *Letters,* I, IV, p. 86.
[286] J. Milton, 'Paradise Lost', in *The English Poems of John Milton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 188.
[287] Heely, *Letters,* I, IV, p. 98.
[288] Shenstone, 'Elegy XXIII – Reflections Suggested by His Situation', in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 55-59. 83-84. 89-92.
[289] The bench has been replicated as part of the current restoration programme.
[290] Hunt, *Greater Perfections',* p. 134.

the cumulative effect of the design, statues, sculpture and inscriptions embodied the meaning of the place.

Whately particularly noted the qualities of movement in water, which have a special resonance at The Leasowes, in terms of the sound of its movement, and moments of pooled stillness. Allen Weiss writes that: 'every object or place may be seen from an infinite number of points of view'.[291] My view is that Shenstone capitalised on the 'fishponds' that were present when he took over The Leasowes, and constructed his design around them. Not only were they repositories of water, which fed other parts of the garden, but they were also an aesthetic feature, which provided interludes of calm on the circuit walk, although it is not always possible to see the full extent of still water as the viewpoint changes constantly. As Weiss says:

> Water, in reflecting pools, forms a natural mirror: one that expands the imagination. Water is always changing, always different ... Even calm waters have some degree of dynamism; the pool is never a simple mirror.[292]

At Virgil's Grove, Shenstone's management of water culminated in a vista of cascades, swirling streams and still pools, in a steep valley which is viewed through the flickering light of a canopy of beech trees. The theatricality of the scene is heightened by the sparkling reflection of light on the water, and made even more sensational by the echoing drama of its endless rushing sound as the never-ending stream falls over the edge, and crashes to the valley floor. While much restoration work has ensured that the cascade and the eddying pools of water once more surprise and astound a visitor, a more tranquil prospect downstream seen from a steep bank highlights the single-arch bridge which is the only remaining structure dating from Shenstone's time, as shown in fig. 13.

Fig. 13. Virgil's Grove, The Leasowes

[291] Weiss, *Mirrors*, p. 34.
[292] Weiss, *Mirrors,* pp. 85-86.

2.7 A Personal Place?

As John Archer remarks, visitors' accounts praised the natural and architectural beauties of The Leasowes. However they also suggested that the garden was more than a 'simple aesthetic object of regard', or 'a stage set for theatrical display of the owner's tastes and allegiances', as might be found in aristocratic estates of earlier decades.[293] He proposes that The Leasowes could be a place for 'engaging and exciting deep-seated passions', as evidenced by the letters of the poet Thomas Hull, who in his work 'Shenstone's Walks' addresses a person, Zattoo, in a manner that suggests intimacy. Heely, Graves and Hull too saw the garden as a place 'for private engagement with matters of private and intimate concern'. Archer takes this further and proposes that Shenstone perceived his garden as part of a life-journey, and as a means of resolving problems of the self. The circuit walk, with its objects and places designed to evoke ideas, memories, or feelings, gave him 'orchestrated opportunities for intellectual, emotional and physical engagement ... from a private and solitary perspective'.[294] The dramatic topography of the garden, which entailed physical effort and potential changes of mood, was complemented by statuary, objects and inscriptions, which Archer suggests all 'bore an explicit connection to Shenstone's personal life'. He argues that this was a result of 'the Enlightenment's increasing emphasis on autonomy as a crucial component of the self', and quotes Locke who argued that terrain appropriated personally by an individual, through the application of personal labour, would necessarily become *private* territory. Also, that the relationship between the individual and his plot of land would be a *private* one. The smaller bourgeois estate lacked the social powers and obligations that nobility on larger estates possessed. At The Leasowes, this notion was 'an instrument for fashioning private identity', since the *bourgeois* as opposed to *aristocratic* nature of The Leasowes enabled Shenstone to create a garden which provided a 'material *performance* of the proprietor's identity'.[295]

An important feature of such a landscape was the creation of insular, private spaces with an inward focus, and with a path from beginning to end that gave 'a sense of a complete, and completed, experience'.[296] As Patricia Spacks says: each person that goes into the garden establishes his or her individual boundaries of privacy, noting that: 'privacy is above all an imaginative category'. She continues: 'the growing emphasis on 'sensibility'... calls attention to further perplexities of privacy as an issue'.[297] While most accounts relate to the solitary visitor, it was often the practice for groups of people to a visit a garden. However, Archer states that the

[293] J. Archer, 'Language and Identity – Baby Talk at The Leasowes 1760', *Cultural Critique,* 51 (2002), 143-185 (pp. 143-144).
[294] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (pp. 145-146).
[295] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (p. 165).
[296] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (p. 148).
[297] Spacks, *Privacy*, pp. 5-11.

assumption would be for each individual to experience the garden in a private way; what he calls a 'personal journey of self-discovery'. As such, Archer refutes the notion that a visitor was obliged to follow the garden as though there was a script. However, I am unsure that each visitor would approach the garden with 'self-discovery' in mind, and Tom Williamson also notes that a visitor might respond according to his or her own learning, taste and aspirations.[298] Nevertheless, even in open spaces, visitors also seek privacy, even against the grain of public spaces, but at The Leasowes, visitors were compelled to perform, to entertain a new self, or exploit the old one.

Shenstone had already perceived the importance of some of his structures and objects in 'the latitude they afford the imagination', since they gave a range of opportunities and were not prescriptive.[299] In particular, he may have included his personal Summer-House or Writing Hut on a small island in the Beech Water with its view of the spire of Halesowen Church and the Clent Hills in the distance, as shown in fig. 14, and of the cascades below it in fig. 15.

Figs. 14, and 15. W. Shenstone, 'Summer-House or Writing Hut on the Beech Water, The Leasowes', c 1750

Shenstone had built the 'Summer-House' as a '*Study*, without regarding it as an *object*; & at ye Time I built it had no Thoughts of laying out my Environs'.[300] This was a personal retreat, which focused on the feature of rushing water that would become the key aspect of his circuit walk. Time spent in meditation in that place may have allowed Shenstone to determine his garden design, and as I have noted, when it fell down in July 1754, his sadness was tinged with pleasure in contemplating its ruin.

[298] T. Williamson, *Polite Landscapes* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1995), p. 67.
[299] Shenstone, *Works,* II, p. 131.
[300] Shenstone, *Letters,* XCVI, pp. 214-216 (30 August 1749) W. S. to Lady Luxborough.

2.8 Poetry, Music and Theatrical Improvements

On Shenstone's death, Dodsley published a posthumous collection of his *Works* which has since been seen as offering the prescribed version of the conduct of a visit to The Leasowes, as described earlier. More recently, Sandro Jung's research shows that Dodsley was selective, as Jung has found 6,000 more lines, which will be published in a new edition of *Works* in 2017.[301] Still, that does not account for the individual experience, and that Shenstone had already recognised the possibilities within his garden for the imagination to fly freely. On arrival in the country, Shenstone intimated that poetic inspiration through Oenone, a mountain nymph linked to the gift of wine in Greek mythology, was likely to be found in his garden:

> Near fount or stream, in meditation, rove;
> If in the grove Oenone loved to stray,
> The faithful Muse shall meet thee in the grove.[302]

He also wrote:

> Lord of my time my devious path I bend,
> Through fringy woodland, or smooth-shaven lawn,
> Or pensile grove, or airy cliff ascend,
> And hail the scene by Nature's pencil drawn.
>
> Thanks be to Fate …
> …
> Sequester'd shades and gurgling founts are mine,
> And every sylvan grot the Muses love.
>
> Here if my vista point the mouldering pile,
> Where hood and cowl Devotion's aspect wore,
> I trace the tottering relics with a smile,
> To think the mental bondage is no more. [303]

Shenstone also expressed these views to Lady Luxborough saying: 'I fancy no one will prefer the Beauty of a *street* to the Beauty of a Lawn or Grove; and indeed the Poets would have formed no very tempting an *Elysium*, had they made a *Town* of it'.[304] Whereas in a reference to John Milton, Shenstone wrote to Richard Graves:

> 'Ah me! – I fondly dream'.[305] The Days of Fancy and dear Enthusiasm will never more return! Such as those that flew over our Heads when you were *here*, and at *Harborough,* on

[301] From a paper given at the *Shenstone Tercentenary Conference*, Pembroke College, Oxford, 15-17 August 2014.
[302] Shenstone, 'Elegy I', in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 1-3, 12-15.
[303] Shenstone, 'Elegy XXI' - `Taking a View of the Country from his Retirement', in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 49-52, 9-21.
[304] Shenstone, *Letters*, LXI, pp. 125-127 (February 1747), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[305] Milton, 'Lycidas*',* 56*,* in Milton*, English Poems*, pp. 34-39.

> your first visit; when the *merum Rus* [undiluted countryside] of the [sic] *Leasowes* could furnish you with pleasanter Ideas, than the noblest Scenes that ever Painter copied.[306]

Shenstone was a musician, and sang and played the harpsichord well. Sandro Jung proposes that Shenstone's 'Elegies' can be set to music, and that the poet may have seen them as madrigals.[307] I agree that this was likely, since he wrote of a 'printed Madrigal', which was possibly 'Sloth' - 'Hither dear Boy, direct thy wandering Eyes'.[308] Another possibility is: 'An Irregular Ode after Sickness'.[309] Furthermore he wrote: 'If your Ladyship's *Eolian* Harp shall please me ... I promise to give up my Harpsichord immediately ... Moreover I will frame every Madrigal I write to be sung to that instrument only'.[310] As I have discussed, Shenstone's poetic creativity was inspired by his landscape garden when he wrote the *Pastoral Ballad, in four parts* in 1743.[311] Its twenty-seven double-quatrain stanzas with their melancholic tone and striking imagery endeared themselves to a wide audience, and Dr Arne who valued Shenstone's abilities as a songwriter set the second part of the poem called 'Hope' to music.[312] However, when Shenstone asked Dr Arne to '*compleat* the musick to my Pastoral', [Shenstone] 'offered him no Money', leaving 'no hopes of prevailing' and the probability 'that He may not comply'.[313] 'Hope' is a direct reflection of poetic imagery drawn from Shenstone's own creation of his garden, and became a popular song. Musical experience was an important part of a visit to The Leasowes, and people were encouraged to perform as they wished. Shenstone wrote: 'Did I ever tell you how *unseasonably* the three fiddles struck up in my grove about an hour after you left me; and how a set of ten bells was heard from my wood the evening after? It might have passed for the harmony of some aerial spirit ... Mr Pixell has made an agreement with his club at Birmingham, to give me a day's music in some part of my walks'.[314] However, solitude and the cultivation of self was a recurrent concern, as Joseph Heely remarked on the potential qualities of discovery present in The Leasowes. He praised the poet for keeping 'the spirit of curiosity for ever on the wing', adding that Shenstone likened his garden to a 'solitary maze'.[315]

Shenstone continued to make apparently experimental changes to Virgil's Grove, and from his letters to Lady Luxborough reveals his need to discuss the success or failure of the alterations. In particular, he dedicated a grove to the poet James Thomson whom he had met on 30 August

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[306] Shenstone, *Letters,* LXIX, pp. 149-151 (June 1748) W. S. to Rev. Mr. Graves.
[307] From a paper given by S. Jung at the *Shenstone Tercentenary Conference*, Pembroke College, Oxford, 15-17 August 2014.
[308] Shenstone, *Letters*, LIX, pp. 119-121 (26 December 1747), W. S. to Lady Luxborough. Refers to: *Poems upon Various Occasions,* Oxford, 1737.
[309] Shenstone, *Letters*, C, pp. 222-224 (18 October 1749), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[310] Shenstone, *Letters*, XXX, pp. 173-176 (9 November 1748), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[311] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 149-156.
[312] Shenstone, *Letters*, CLXXXIV, pp. 436-439 (29 March 1755), W. S. to Lady Luxborough, and British Museum: Add MSS 28959 (30 November 1754), Thomas Arne to W. Shenstone.
[313] Shenstone, *Letters*, CLXXXVII, pp. 443-445 (17 April 1755), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[314] Shenstone, *Letters,* CXVI, pp. 275-277 (11 June 1750), W. S. to Rev. R. Jago.
[315] Heely, *Letters*, II, p. 166.

1746 when, while sitting reading in one of his alcoves, he encountered William Lyttelton of Hagley, and Thomson who were walking on the 'footway from Hales-Owen'. The significance of this chance meeting was recorded in: 'Account of an Interview between Shenstone and Thomson' 1746, which was first published in the *European Magazine* in 1800.[316] Thomson was much taken with the valley and the brook, and when they passed into Virgil's Grove, remarked that it was a delightful place for a person of poetical genius. Lyttelton said that the place would '*improve* a poetical genius' to which Thomson responded that 'a poetical genius will improve this place'.[317] Shenstone took up Thomson's suggestion for improvements, and in the following year he placed a seat in Virgil's Grove to commemorate the poet's visit, and later erected a memorial obelisk to him, shown in fig. 11 on p. 71. Shenstone was interested in what his visitors had to say and invited criticism, since as much pleasure appeared to be gained from the creative process as from the resultant garden landscape. He was 'pleased with [the compliments] that are given to my place; which I consider as naturally possessed of many beauties, each of them brought to light, and perfected through my own discernment, care, and cultivation'.[318] Shenstone reported: 'I have done a good deal round my Place. Company produced new Operations, and new Operations produced almost daily Company. The Line of my Path is now almost universally extended to the Sides of Hedges, and, together with some slighter Improvements, have been added two new Cascades ... it is a very *great* Thing for the *Size* of it'.[319]

The first half of the eighteenth century was indebted to the modern urge of looking at the environment, but it also resonated with older ideas about beauty in an affinity with the ancients. Historical evocations such as a grotto and literary inscriptions displayed erudition, and Shenstone included many such objects in his design, for example a copy of the statue of the Venus de' Medici which, for Shenstone, was included as an emblem of 'good taste'. Hunt suggests that 'for the properly equipped and learned mind' this encounter with Venus would recall 'Spenser's discussions of courtesy and its connections with countryside', within the context of the emblematic nature of Shenstone's garden.[320] Whately made the point that allusions to favourite poems may animate a scene, and as I discussed earlier, John Hunt's argument, which draws from Whately's assertion, is particularly applicable to The Leasowes. Hunt examined William Kent's liking for Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene,* and its relation to the garden at Stowe together with its relevance to Rousham's 'Vale of Venus'. Shenstone had admired Spenser from an early age and mentioned him often in his letters, writing his well-known poem *The School-Mistress, 'In*

[316] McKillop, 'Thompson's Visit to Shenstone', quoted in Gallagher, 'Leasowes', 201-220 (p. 206).
[317] See: *European Magazine,* 37 (1800), 185-6. Quoted in: S. D. Bending, and A. McRae, eds, *The Writing of Rural England, 1500-1800,* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 192.
[318] Shenstone, *Letters,* CXXX, pp. 318-323 (17 Sept 1751), W. S. to Rev. R. Graves.
[319] Shenstone, *Letters,* CLXXIII, pp. 415-416 (13 November 1754), W. S. To Mr D[avenport].
[320] J. D. Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden', *Eighteenth–Century Studies,* 4:3 (1971), 294-317 (p. 302).

Imitation of Spenser'. Such an association ties in with Hunt's recognition that there may be characteristics other than emblematic in the garden, in that walks and winding paths may lead to and encircle objects, which have been judiciously place to command attention.[321] However, Whately opposed the *emblematic* with the new fashion for *expressive* gardening.[322] He also distinguished between distracting allusive objects and the capacity of the garden to sustain 'characters' which give 'expressions to the several scenes superior to any a visitor can receive from allusions'.[323] Whately may have been influenced by Shaftesbury's ideas on the importance of recognising the '*peculiar* original' character of things. Whately's discussion centred on the problematic distinction between responses by *emblematic* means, versus the generation of emotions in the private, subjective sphere of *expressive* natural elements. As I argued in Chapter 1, the issues were complex, and no clean break occurred between the emblematic garden and the expressive one; indeed, they were not exclusive at The Leasowes.

The theatricality of Shenstone's circuit walk, what Brown calls 'a pageant of surprises' and the conception of mood, was shown in Shenstone's considered use of urns in his garden.[324] He intended to erect one in Virgil's Grove on the sudden death of the poet James Thomson, and another to William Somervile, saying that: 'Urns are more solemn, if large and plain; more beautiful, if less and ornamented. Solemnity is perhaps their point, and the situation of them should still cooperate with it'.[325] With the exception of William Somervile's urn, which has already been discussed, an urn would have introduced an air of melancholy to a wooded scene, enhanced by the suddenness with which it was encountered, as exemplified in fig. 16.

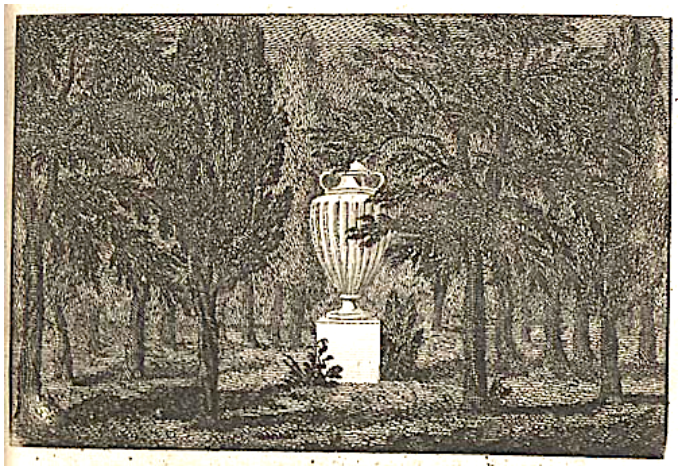

Fig. 16. 'A Classical Urn at The Leasowes', 1765

[321] Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism', 294-317 (p. 303).
[322] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 150-151.
[323] Whately, *Observations*, p.153.
[324] Shenstone, *Letters*, CX, pp. 257-260 (6 March 1749-50), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[325] Shenstone, *Works,* II, pp. 134.

The illustration is an engraving of a classical urn set amongst trees accompanying Shenstone's 'Elegy I,' in *Elegies, written on many different Occasions*. A visitor would have become aware of its inscription in Latin, which Shenstone had arrived at through extensive correspondence and deliberation.[326] He was creating an environment where things happen and memories are evoked, so that the garden becomes more than a place to be seen and sensed. Its creator and other participants in these activities are actually part of the garden; they are fused within its phenomenological space, and are creating an event. In a letter to Lady Luxborough, he hopes that her 'Ladyship will assist here (in crowning it with an anniversary Chaplet, … Whilst we sit in a Circle round it ... I *turn'd* much of ye Urn (properly so call'd) wth my own hands; wch your Ladyship may also do & *add* to ye Honour you do him, unless you think it too laborious'.[327]

The association of melancholy with garden settings was commonplace in the eighteenth century, with numerous writers echoing Milton's 'Il Penseroso' in particular, in their accounts of pleasurable or melancholic landscapes. Shenstone, too, expressed melancholy when:

> Again the labouring hind inverts the soil;
> Again the merchant ploughs the tumid wave;
> Another spring renews the soldier's toil,
> And finds me vacant in the rural cave.[328]

Melancholy lent itself to being a type of pleasure to be realised through the soulful contemplation of ruins, and those who created gardens were attentive to providing opportunities for melancholy experience. An example is Shenstone's construction of the imagined history of the sham Ruined Priory at the far end of the Priory Pool, together with his placement of urns in the landscape.[329] However, if a visitor was developing his own response, he may have viewed the urn in the glade differently. The melancholy nature of the scene may have evoked sadness, stillness, or obliviousness, and speculation about the nature of the urn, and the meaning of its Latin inscriptions. As Bending points out: 'crucial to accounts of melancholic pleasure is the ability to walk away, and indeed pleasurably melancholic interludes frequently assume movement through a landscape'.[330]

The stage-like setting of the urn in a glade placed a visitor in another role: that of 'performer'. Shenstone had already recognised the potential in his garden for individual experience, and the character of performance at The Leasowes was a sequence of secluded sites

[326] 'The spreading beech alone he would explore |With frequent step; beneath its shady top| (Ah! Profitless employ!) to hills and groves |These undigested lays he wont repeat.' Translated from Latin, in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, p. 1.
[327] Shenstone, *Letters*, CVI, pp. 246-248 (7 December 1749), W.S. to Lady Luxborough.
[328] Shenstone, 'Elegy XIX - Written in Spring, 1743', in Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 43-45. 1-4.
[329] R. Terry, ed., 'Enlightenment Depression II', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 44:2 (2011), v-xii (p. ix).
[330] Bending, *Green Retreats,* p. 125.

offering private opportunities for the individual's journey.[331] The relation between visitor and garden was constituted in terms of each individual's private experience, which required a series of personal responses with the entire circuit of the garden. Archer remarks on the phenomenon of the isolated nature of the private landscape garden as a proper site for such pursuits.[332] The articulation of self with respect to landscape involved the active physical, emotional and intellectual participation of the individual. The sequence of diverse scenes provided a visitor with 'a dynamic process' to experience dimensions of selfhood over time as it gave him an opportunity to articulate his identity by *performing* it. A walk in the garden is the essential performative action to experience it at first hand.

2.9 Concluding Reflections

Although Shenstone knew the common pastime of visiting gardens, I contend that that was not necessarily something to which he initially aspired; it was something that developed along with his interest in garden design and the need to share the experience. Indeed, while the poet initially wrote that he: 'first embellished my Farm, with an Eye to the Satisfaction I should receive from its Beauty', he then said that: 'I am now grown dependent upon the Friends it brings me, for the principal Enjoyment it affords; I am pleased to find them pleased, and enjoy its Beauties by Reflection'.[333] The poet took visitors on personal tours of his garden, and his friend Thomas Percy wrote: 'While you are leading Spectators of taste round your groves, you may insensibly give them lectures on taste, and on the best manner of laying out ground. It is a subject both needful and acceptable, and might teach people of Fortune not to be led by the nose by such Cabbage-planters, as xxx', where 'xxx' is an illegible word heavily crossed out.[334] Shenstone wrote: 'It is now Sunday evening, and I have been exhibiting myself in my walks to no less than a hundred and fifty people'. Even allowing for exaggeration, it is apparent from several sources that The Leasowes was much visited.[335]

In his essay, 'One Among Many...' Bending argues that 'far from being dominated by the landowning aesthetic ... visitors were trying to find ways of asserting their own cultural status through a demonstration of socio-aesthetic competence', and that 'the sense of both inclusion and exclusion is central to the experience of the garden in the later eighteenth century'. He points out that with the increasing emphasis on feeling and sentiment, 'an emotional response ... became a means of asserting one's place within a substantially broadened elite of the propertied

[331] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (p. 173).
[332] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (p. 174).
[333] Shenstone, *Letters*, CXCII, pp. 451-452 (October 1755), W. S. to Mr. B[innel?].
[334] T. Percy et al, *Percy Letters*, VII, LXIII, p. 17 (5 October 1762), T. P. to W. S.
[335] Shenstone, *Letters*, XCI, p. 204 (June 1749), W. S to Richard Jago.

classes'.[336] Aesthetic judgement was the prerogative of everyone, and while one may not have been able to own such a garden, it was open to everyone to feel that they were cultivated enough to be able to appreciate its finer points.

Shenstone continually refined and embellished his garden but, as Symes and Haynes point out: 'the vision changed little from his ideas of 1746 … By the end of 1749 the path formed the complete circuit'. The garden became more sophisticated, but not different, although implementation took longer, and the south-western part with the Ruined Priory and Priory Pool was not completed until the late 1750's.[337] Shenstone's friend Richard Graves wrote of this in his *Recollections,* which give us the process of transformation and the growth of what Gilfillan aptly describes as the landscape-lyric.[338] The 'miniature paradise' of The Leasowes was labour-intensive requiring skill and attention to detail, and while it was small such endeavour gave it renowned importance and significance. Its diminutive size was carried through to Shenstone's design which incorporated a succession of places usually of a sequestered nature which intensified the notion of closure and miniaturization, while on occasion challenging a visitor to look more expansively to the gigantic infinity of *first nature.* A visitor's notion of the self might then alternate between a small space making 'the body gigantic', and a sense of a very large space which transformed 'the body into miniature, especially pointing to the body's ... insignificant aspects', as he moves through the landscape.[339] Susan Stewart writes that we find the miniature at the origin of private, individual history, but we find the gigantic at the origin of public and natural history. The gigantic becomes an explanation for the environment, a figure on the interface between the natural and the human. 'While the miniature represents a mental world of proportion, control, and balance, the gigantic presents physical world of disorder and disproportion ... The most typical gigantic world is the sky – a vast, undifferentiated space marked only by the constant movement of clouds with their amorphous forms'.[340] Stewart compares the picturesque and the sublime as: 'historical styles of exaggeration in the depiction and presentation of nature'. The aesthetic experience of the sublime is characterized by astonishment and surprise: the grandeur of scenery results in a sudden expansion of the soul and the emotions. In his essay *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful,* of 1757, Edmund Burke elaborated astonishment into a feeling of terror, an individual painful experience that contrasts with the social and pleasant response to the beautiful. At The Leasowes, while astonishment and surprise were an important part of the circuit walk, in visitors' accounts nowhere does astonishment

[336] S. D. Bending, 'One Among Many: Popular Aesthetics, Polite Culture and the Country House Landscape', in Arnold, *Country House*, pp. 61-78.
[337] Symes and Haynes, *Enville Hagley The Leasowes,* p. 155.
[338] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, p. xiv.
[339] S. Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 71.
[340] Stewart, *On Longing*, p. 74.

descend into terror. Rather, the effect appears to be one of beauteous rapture, whether the surprise occurs within an enclosed space, or upon a sudden encounter with the landscape beyond.

Graves wrote that 'the embellishment of his farm, however, was by no means the *business*, but only the *amusement* of Mr Shenstone's leisure hours'.[341] Indeed, Sandro Jung has researched the textual nature of Shenstone's work, which was derived from the poet's classical education, and led to his deep interest in 'the book' and all its associated activities.[342] Shenstone's creativity was boundless; he was very interested in the material appearance of objects, wallpaper and book bindings, exemplified by his detailed drawing shown in fig. 17.

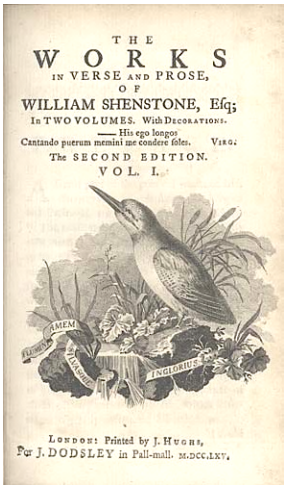
THE
WORKS
IN VERSE AND PROSE,
OF
WILLIAM SHENSTONE, Esq;
IN TWO VOLUMES. With DECORATIONS.
—— His ego longos
Cantando puerum memini me condere soles. VIRG.
The SECOND EDITION.
VOL. I.
LONDON: Printed by J. HUGHS,
For J. DODSLEY in Pall-mall. M.DCC.LXV.

Fig. 17. Title page from vol. 1 of James Dodsley's second edition of *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone Esq*, 1765

Although Shenstone did not spend much time managing his affairs, he was not indolent; his artistic activities were demanding and industrious. Perhaps unaware of the complexities of his literary work, for most writers Shenstone seemed to be a lethargic, melancholic character. Yet many remembered him and his almost mythical garden, and his friends looked on with admiration, while aristocratic acquaintances sought his advice on the improvement of their estates. In his *Observations,* Whately explained his theory of 'pastoral poetry' in some detail in relation to The Leasowes, where he found a sense of endearment in the memory of Shenstone: 'a perfect picture of his mind, simple, elegant, and amiable'.[343] Symes and Haynes write that while Shenstone has been dismissed as a mediocre poet, 'Dodsley thought well of him', saying that: 'in the simplicity of the pastoral, one may venture to say that he had very few equals'.[344] Joseph Heely also commended the garden's 'inimitable beauties', and referred to:

[341] Graves, *Recollections*, p. 54.
[342] S. Jung, 'William Shenstone's Poetry, The Leasowes and the Intermediality of Reading and Architectural Design', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37:1 (2014), 53-77.
[343] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 162-171.
[344] Symes and Haynes, *Enville Hagley The Leasowes*, p. 142.

> … the hospitable, the generous, the immortal Shenstone!, whose private character did so much to honour humanity; whose public one, in the literary world, as a poet, and a man of consummate knowledge, ranks so estimable,--- and to whose exquisite taste is wholly owing the inimitable beauties that arise in THE LEASOWES.[345]

Patrick Eyres remarked that 'Shenstone's melancholic pastoral can be retrieved through sensitive interpretation combined with the music of cascading water, wind sough, leaf rustle and birdsong'.[346] As Cowper said:

> … Stillest streams
> Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird,
> That flutters least, is longest on the wing.[347]

The respect felt for Shenstone was shown on his death when he was commemorated in company with Pope, Thomson and Milton, and Lord Lyttelton erected an urn at Hagley 'under a natural pavilion of stately oaks'.[348] Within the current restoration programme at Hagley Park, Shenstone's urn has been re-discovered, restored and placed in its original position. Its inscription reads:

> To the memory
> Of William Shenstone, Esq.
> In whose verses
> Were all the natural graces,
> And in whose manners
> Was all the amiable simplicity
> Of Pastoral Poetry,
> With the sweet tenderness
> Of the Elegaic.

William Mason also paid tribute to Shenstone, both as a man of taste, and as a poet, in his admired poem *The English Garden*.[349]

> ... Nor, Shenstone, thou
> Shalt pass without thy meed, thou son of peace!
> Who knew'st, perchance, to harmonize thy shades,
> Still softer than thy song; yet was that song
> Nor rude, nor inharmonious, when attun'd
> To pastoral plaint, or tale of slighted love
> HIM, too, the living leader of thy powers,
> Great Nature! [350]

[345] Heely, *Letters*, II, p. 95.
[346] P. Eyres, 'Introduction', *New Arcadian Journal, Arcadian Greens Rural: The Leasowes, Hagley, Enville, Little Sparta,* 53-54, (2002), 11.
[347] W. Cowper, *The Task* (London: John Sharpe, Piccadilly, 1817), VI. 902-904.
[348] Graves, *Recollections,* pp. 186-7.
[349] Graves, *Recollections,* pp. 188-9.
[350] Mason, *English Garden,* I. 524-531.

Samuel Johnson remarked that Shenstone delighted in 'rural pleasures and his ambition of rural elegance'. His embellishments were made with 'such judgment and such fancy, as made his little domain the envy of the great and the admiration of the skilful ... Whether [this] demands any great powers of mind, I will not enquire'.[351] Nonetheless, I have argued that the garden created by William Shenstone was a metaphysical place, which through its continued evolution developed into a place that made the association of ideas possible. The Leasowes was a place 'to be lived in', one where the poet could experience new ideas spontaneously. As Shenstone wandered freely about his farm, his response to the poetical images that arose was reflected in his poetry, and in the subtle changes he continually made to the garden. Whately remarked that, '[The Leasowes] will always suggest a doubt, whether the spot inspired his verse; or whether, in the scenes which he formed, he only realized the pastoral images which abound in his songs'.[352] In response, I propose that The Leasowes was Shenstone's greatest poem, one that revealed his abundant aesthetic abilities and his continuous effort to create poetic harmony by appealing to the mind as well as the senses. The 'spot' and the 'songs' were mutually inclusive. Shenstone's fusion of creativity came into being in the phenomenological space of The Leasowes.

Hunt avers that Shenstone created The Leasowes 'as a veritable *memento mori* to friends and poetic predecessors'.[353] However I propose that that was not his sole intention; he took the opportunity to develop his broader vision of a theatrical landscape which is particularly evident in the way he created scenes and events using texture, sound, light and shade. Notably, Shenstone exploited the topographical nature of the place and allowed a visitor to broaden his view outside the boundaries of the garden to the features of the landscape beyond. Whately describes this aspect of the garden as a 'prospect ... of endless variety', making the point that 'the art of contrivance can never be perceived; the effect always seems accidental'.[354] At The Leasowes, a visitor was able to move from one boundary to another, experiencing a broad range of sensations and perceptions. Each visitor was intended to appreciate each point on the circuit for its improved natural beauty and any vista or prospect view, as well as understanding that they were making an aesthetic, philosophical and moral journey. As Richard Graves wrote:

> Yet of some kinder Genius point his way
> To where the Muses o'er thy Leasowes stray,
> Charm'd with the sylvan beauties of the place. [355]

[351] M. Williams, *William Shenstone – A Chapter in Eighteenth Century Taste* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers, 1935), p. 34.
[352] Whately, *Observations,* p. 162.
[353] Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque,* p. 331.
[354] Whately, *Observations,* p. 166.
[355] Shenstone, *Works,* II, pp. 374-375.

In the engraving shown in fig. 18, Shenstone is receiving a crown of laurels from Apollo who was also the God of Music.[356] The poet regarded himself as approved by Apollo, the Greek and Roman God of Harmony, Order, Reason and Truth, and with The Leasowes in mind, wrote:

> 'Twas such a shade, and such a nook,
> In such a vale, near such a brook,
> From such a rocky fragment springing,
> That fam'd Apollo chose to sing in;
> ...
> With laurel wreath and mimic lyre,
> That crown a poet's vast desire.[357]

Fig. 18. Frontispiece from vol. 2 of James Dodsley's second edition of *The Works in Verse and Prose of William Shenstone Esq*, 1765

The image endows Shenstone with Apollo's characteristics as a bringer of harmony, representing his influence on landscape design. It is also a reflection of the importance of sound within The Leasowes, and the musicality and artistry of Shenstone's use and management of water. He was particularly fond of the sound of church bells, and wrote: 'You cannot ... laugh at my contribution to the Bells. I live but at the Distance of *Half* a mile, upon an opposite Hill to that on which the Church is built; a fine Valley betwixt, with a pretty large Piece of Water ... there is no Place in the Parish where the Bells will sound more harmoniously than The Leasowes. And, by the *bye,* I knew from the beginning'.[358] Shenstone implies that he had perceived the aesthetic potential of his

[356] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works*, pp. 202-220 (p. 211), 39-48.
[357] W. Shenstone, 'The Progress of Taste: or, The Fate of Delicacy. Part The Third', in W. Shenstone, *The Poetical Works of Will Shenstone* (London: C. Cooke, 1794), pp. 218-221 (p. 219), 39-42, 47-48.
[358] Shenstone, *Letters,* CXLIX, pp. 359-361 (13 May 1753), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.

farm very early on, and I propose that this perception was the guiding force for his greatest creation - his poetic landscape. Gilfillan described Shenstone as a 'master-spirit', but Robert Dodsley had the last words on William Shenstone's original and idiosyncratic creation of his garden at The Leasowes:

> ... Tis thine own taste, thy genius that presides.[359]

[359] Shenstone, *Works,* II, pp. 380-382.

Chapter 3: Olney and Beyond

3.1 Introduction

In the enclosed garden of the poet William Cowper (1731–1800) at Olney, Bucks and the open spaces beyond in which he wandered daily, he found such 'amusement' in those 'agreeable bowers' that there was no need to go any farther.[360]

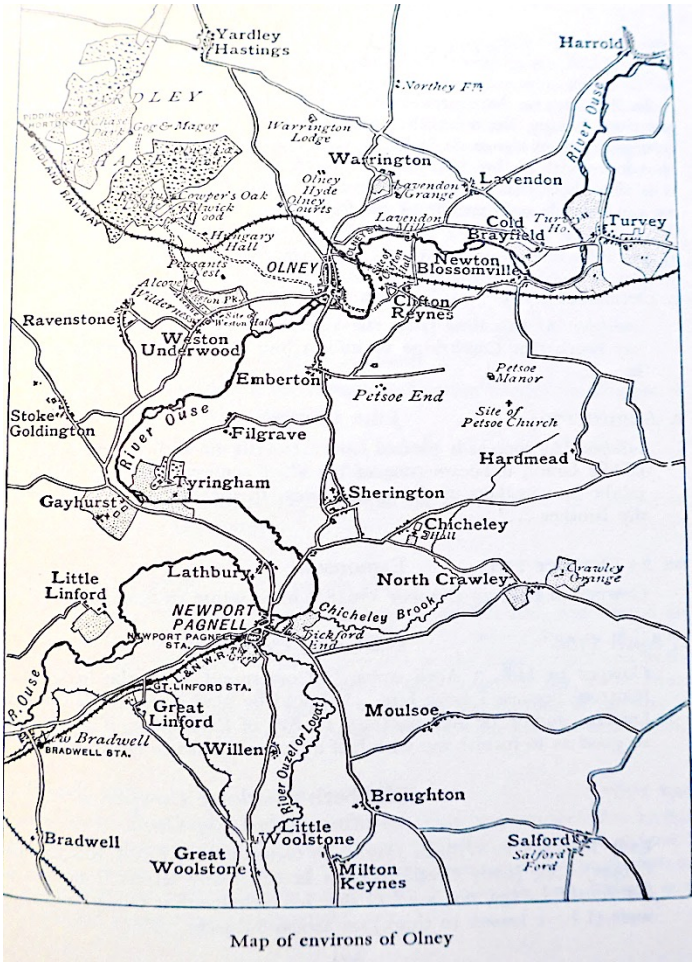

Fig. 19. 'Map of the Environs of Olney, Bucks', c 1904

Cowper owned neither a carriage nor a riding horse, and while he benefitted from the generosity of friends and relatives who offered him occasional transport, in general, walking with a companion or in solitude was one of his chief activities. I propose that his propensity for walking was more than a mere necessity, or one based on exercise alone, or for the need to escape from

[360] *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, ed. by J. King and C. Ryskamp, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), II, pp. 269-272 (14 August 1784), W. C. to William Unwin. Hereafter cited as *Letters,* followed by the relevant volume and page.

Olney. Throughout the eighteen years in which the poet resided there, in fine weather he wandered in the tranquil environment of the meadows by the River Ouse towards several nearby villages. However, in particular he walked towards the higher, more varied landscape at Weston Underwood from where he had a panoramic view of Olney, and where he had permission to wander in the Throckmorton Estate.[361] The map in fig. 19 indicates the general area of the environs of Olney, while the one shown later in fig. 35 on p. 125, illustrates in more detail the main area in which Cowper explored his surroundings.

I propose that those walks were essential, as they allowed him to ponder on the material he had derived from his extensive reading of books and newspapers, the ideas that may have arisen from conversations with his fireside companions, the interactions he had with the denizens, as he might say, of Olney, and the sights, sounds and smells that assailed his senses as he walked. Cowper wrote that: 'We live upon the banks of the Ouse, much celebrated in pastoral Song, and a River so beautifull and so beautifully border'd that it may well suggest poetical ideas to any man that has but a moderate share of Fancy'.[362] Such walking made possible the association of ideas derived through sensation and perception, reflecting Bachelard's '*felicitous space*' where:

> … the act of the creative consciousness must be systematically associated with the most fleeting product of that consciousness, the poetic image ... the duality of subject and object is iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active.[363]

I am focusing on this point because this is how aesthetic theory will be used in my proposition that the place of Olney, its surrounding environs and the interactions Cowper had within it and beyond, was indeed the 'felicitous space' which enabled the poet to reach heights of creativity.

The pleasing qualities of Cowper's garden were enhanced by the seasons, though Cowper confessed to being a 'winter poet', at odds with others who wrote in the spring. He said: 'the Season of the Year which generally pinches off the flowers of poetry, unfolds mine such as they are, and crowns me with a Winter garland'.[364] In his *Essays*, Archibald Alison quotes the philosopher Denis Diderot who asked: 'Qu-est-ce qu-il faut au poète? Est-ce une nature brute ou cultivée? Paisible ou troublé [sic]? Préféra-t-il la beauté d'un jour pur et serein, à l'horreur d'une nuit obscure, ou le siflement interrompu des vents se mêle par intervalles au murmure sourd et continu d'un tonnerre éloigné? [365] As he reflects on these words, Alison infers that what a poet

[361] *Letters*, II, pp. 530-534 (1 May 1786), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.
[362] *Letters*, I, pp. 484-485 (27 May 1781), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[363] Bachelard, *Poetics*, p. 19.
[364] *Letters*, I, pp. 470-471 (9 May 1781), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[365] 'What does a poet need? Is it untamed nature or one that is cultivated? Peaceful or troubled? Does he prefer the beauty of a pure and serene day, to the horror of a dark night, or the interrupted whistling of the winds mingling at intervals with the dull and continuous murmur of distant thunder?

likes most is the dramatic contrast between weather conditions and the sense of dread that darkness can bring.[366] He illustrates his argument with reference to James Thomson's poem *The Seasons,* where the poet alludes to the dramatic changes in the weather in his description of winter in the northern regions:

> Thence, winding eastward to the Tartar's coast,
> She sweeps the howling margin of the main;
> …
> As if old Chaos was again returned,
> … a bleak expanse
> … cheerless, and void
> While …
> The long long night incumbent o'er their heads,
> Falls horrible![367]

Thomson indicates the finality of the moment in the stark drama of the last two words of this extract. As I will argue, for Cowper the extent of the extreme weather that brought harsh living conditions to everyone in 1783/4, and its particular effects on him, embodied Alison's conclusion that poetry comes from dramatic and possibly severe contrasts within a poet's environmental conditions. Alison finished his illustrations with a 'sublime' one from Book IV of John Milton's *Paradise Regained*:

> …. either tropic now
> 'Gan thunder, and both ends of Heaven; the clouds
> From many a horrid rift abortive poured
> Fierce rain, with lightning mixed, water with fire
> In ruin reconciled; nor slept the winds
> Within their stony caves, but rushed abroad
> From the four hinges of the world, and fell
> On the vexed wilderness, whose tallest pines,
> Though rooted deep as high, and sturdiest oaks,
> Bowed their stiff necks, loaden with stormy blasts,
> Or torn up sheer: ill wast thou shrouded then,
> O patient Son of God …
> (IV, 409-420)[368]

My contention is that the overwhelming nature of the extraordinary weather conditions that Cowper endured during that winter were nevertheless a catalyst for him, as his imagination was stimulated to achieve its height of creativity, and that he may be aptly described as a 'patient Son of God'.

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[366] Alison, *Essays*, I, pp. 53-58. Referencing: Mons. Diderot, *Epître à Mons. Grimm sur la Poésie Dramatique.*
[367] Thomson, *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence*, p. 153. Extract from 'Winter', 902-925.
[368] Milton, 'Paradise Regained', in Milton, *English Poems*, p. 435.

3.2 Places of Refuge and Creativity

John Hunt writes that Cowper's 'concern is about the garden as a place of inhabitation, a space made over and made better by human concerns as well as by the spade'. He bases this thought on the poet's opinion that he 'can fib without lying and represent [his own gardens] better than they are'.[369] Hunt suggests that from a poetical perspective, Cowper is implying that his garden is a dwelling place, but one that he has improved by accommodating his own interests and thereby creating a place conducive to his poetic genre, a place representative of himself. Whilst I find that statement to be essentially true, I will argue that Cowper's presence in his garden was made more complex within the context of its position in Olney, and the surrounding area.

The sheltered nature of Cowper's garden at Orchard Side, and in particular its refuges of the summerhouse and the greenhouse that he built, provided secluded spaces wherein the poet could reflect in peace, and focus on his writing. The sequestered parlour at Orchard Side was a similar place where Cowper could write, in the congenial atmosphere of domesticity established by Mrs Unwin whom he had encountered when he boarded with her family in Huntingdon, after leaving Dr Cotton's 'Collegium Insanorum' at St. Albans. On meeting her for the first time, Cowper wrote that they 'had walked together near two hours in the garden ... That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better for her company'.[370] However, the Cambridgeshire landscape proved to be disagreeable to the poet: he wrote that 'my Lot is cast in a Country where we have neither Woods nor Commons nor pleasant Prospects. All Flat and Insipid; in the Summer adorned only with blue Willows, and in the Winter covered with a Flood'.[371] Nevertheless, his stay at Huntingdon instilled in him a love of gardening, and Cowper wrote that: 'having commenced Gardiner, I study the Arts of pruning, sowing and Planting': an interest that would influence him for the rest of his life.[372] However, the sudden death of the Revd Morley Unwin later in 1767 initiated a move to Olney, Buckinghamshire where the Revd. John Newton had found accommodation for Mrs Unwin and Cowper at Orchard Side in the Market Place. It is shown in the town plan in fig. 20, and was a place where the poet quickly supposed that nothing appeared to happen: 'Occurrences here are as scarce as Cucumbers at Christmas'.[373] Nevertheless, the three-storey building in the centre of the image in fig. 21 was and still is in a most prominent position from where to witness the busy daily life of Olney, which was literally on his doorstep.

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[369] Hunt, *Greater Perfections,* p. 175. He quotes from: William Cowper, *Poetry and Prose,* selected by Brian Spiller (London, 1968), p. 795.
[370] *Letters,* I, pp. 117-119 (18 October 1765), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.
[371] *Letters,* I, pp. 156-158 (30 January 1767), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.
[372] *Letters*, I, pp. 166-167 (14 May 1767), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[373] *Letters*, I, pp. 198-199 (18 June 1768), W. C. to Joseph Hill.

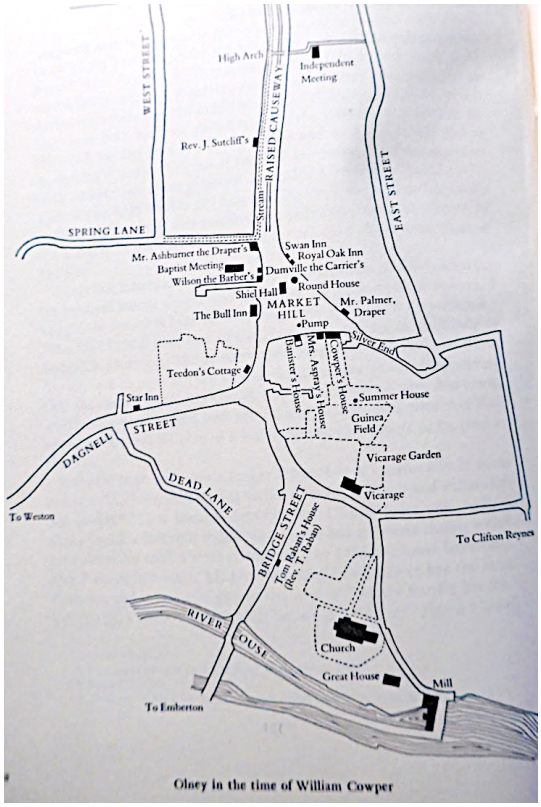

Fig. 20. Olney Town Plan in the time of William Cowper, c 1904

Fig. 21. Storer, 'Cowper's House' - Orchard Side, Market Place, Olney, Bucks, 1822

Evidently, Cowper developed an ambivalent attitude towards Olney, at times loving it, and at others hating it. Nonetheless, his observation and involvement in its daily life was essential to his imagination, and a key part of his poetical achievement. In late 1783, whilst composing *The Task*, Cowper reminisced on the years spent in Olney and wrote that he had:

… early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wish'd.[374]
(IV, 799-801)

Olney was the place where all the elements essential to Cowper's creativity would come together, and perhaps in an awareness of that, the poet indicated by the curiously circular nature of these lines a reflection of the breadth of his experiences revealed in *The Task.* Moreover, Cowper wrote that:

'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it.
(V, 446-473)

While Orchard Side and Olney were far from ideal, the poet had a sense of freedom there, and in his use of the word 'liberty', Cowper may have been referring to his propensity for moving through the surrounding landscape, and in particular the freedom that he found within the boundaries of the Throckmorton Estate where he found other secluded places in which to meditate and compose. At the same time, it is notable that in the 1780's, during Cowper's greatest period of composition, 'freedom' was a political term playing with the French Revolution. Speculatively, I propose that further separate debate on this potential aspect of Cowper's work may be of interest.

3.3 Garden Spaces – Perceptions and Associations

A Small Town Garden

At Orchard Side, Cowper created his version of a garden that, I suggest, became an essential part of his creativity. The garden is in two connected parts: the flower garden adjoins the house and is surrounded by a high stone wall encrusted with lichens and layers of matter, and in his time Cowper erected a greenhouse – his 'cabinet of perfumes' - for more exotic fruits, together with a pineapple frame, illustrated in fig. 22. The addition of the greenhouse built against the east wall gave the poet another sheltered space for his creativeness, and was where he occasionally took residence during summer months.

[374] *The Works of William Cowper Esq*. ed. by Robert Southey Esq., 15 vols (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1836), IX, 'The Task'. Hereafter cited as *The Task*. All quotations from *The Task* are cited by book and line.

Fig. 22. Birket Foster, 'Cowper's Greenhouse and Pineapple Frame', 1878

The other part of the garden is at right angles to the flower garden, and originally belonged to the apothecary Mr Aspray. It was his herb garden and is planted with ancient mulberry trees and vegetables, and is where the summerhouse still exists *in situ*, as illustrated in fig. 23, which also shows its view of Olney Church. Both parts of Cowper's garden were formerly surrounded by an orchard, which in part exists today.

Fig. 23. Storer, 'Cowper's Summer House' at Orchard Side, Olney, 1822

In 1994 the Trustees of the Cowper & Newton Museum were awarded a grant from the Carnegie Trust to redesign the flower garden, and the decision was taken to have only plants that had been introduced to this country before 1800, the year of the poet's death. Modern conservationists have restored the flowerbeds, using the few extant images of it in Cowper's time to ascertain the shape of the borders and their likely effects, as illustrated in fig. 24. This small private enclosed garden contains shrubs and fragrant graduated planting that attracts bees and butterflies. It is filled with a sensation of intimacy and constant tiny movements, as one passes along its paths.

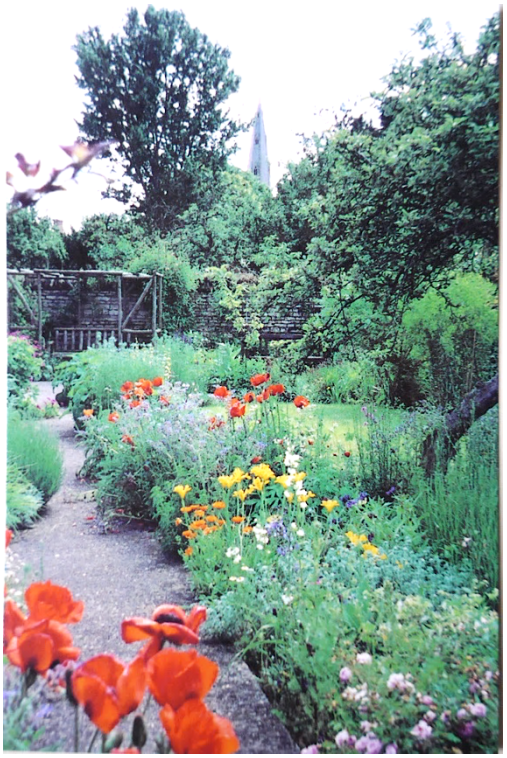

Fig. 24. Cowper's Flower Garden in June

In the heat of a June day, the sensory concentration of the garden that Cowper created was immediately evident as I moved from the house into the walled space of the flower garden. The physical pleasure derived from being there today may be perceived as a personal experience, but due to the efforts made to re-establish the flower garden as it was in Cowper's time, it may also be an imagined likeness of the poet's own feelings. As I walked along what had been Cowper's gravel path by the boundary of the high stone wall, its radiating heat that he mentioned was reflected forcibly upon me. The static layers of encrustations on the wall formed a background for the fluctuating shapes, textures and colours of the flowers in the border. The pleasure gained from gazing at the agreeable image before me increased as I contemplated the whole scene and then its individual elements. I then felt an aesthetic pleasure, which Lord Kames would have described as midway between the intellectual and the physical, as I stood where Cowper once stood. Although there was little breeze, the garden was animated with the faint sound of bees as they moved amongst the flowerbeds, enlivening the still sultry air. However, a sudden noticeable change came upon me when I encountered the shadowy chill of the doorway that had been made in the south wall of the flower garden, shown in fig. 25.

Fig. 25. Doorway to the Summerhouse Garden

The sudden intensity of the difference in temperature jostled my sensibility and made me aware of the physical nature of the garden. Such a moment raises expectations, and invites exploration of the unseen other part of the garden, which unexpectedly opens out to the sky with vistas of tall trees, vegetables, an ancient mulberry tree orchard, and the extraordinary appearance of Cowper's summerhouse, shown in fig. 26.

Fig. 26. Cowper's Summerhouse Today

The division of the garden space is reflected in Jay Appleton's idea of the balance between 'refuge' and 'prospect', and the differences between their attributes. Such specificity of place in the pleasurable design of the garden, with its boundaries and planned vistas which limit the view both horizontally and vertically is, as Cowper said: a product of 'fair result of thought, the creature of a polish'd mind' which animates the senses (III, 639-640). Moreover, at Olney, the poet's perceptions and creativity extended beyond the boundary of his garden refuge into the wider prospects of the landscape beyond, particularly the Throckmorton Estate. I will discuss how the two came together poetically with particular reference to his popular georgic poem of reflection and discovery – *The Task*, and others created during that period.

A Gentle, Undulating Landscape

On a visit to William Hayley at Eartham, Sussex, Cowper was filled with terror by the sight of the seemingly mountainous hills of his surroundings. Although the beautiful scenery and pure air delighted him, it did not alter the degree of his affections for Weston Underwood and the Throckmorton Estate, as he wrote: 'The Genius of that place suits me better; it has an air of snug concealment in which a disposition like mine feels peculiarly gratified'.[375] Certainly, Conrad Brunström argues that Cowper's 'most congenial environment is the bordered wilderness and the gentle rise and fall of moderately wooded countryside'. The poet had a reflective, experiential approach to his own setting, with a natural melancholy that 'looks out at his environment in hope of some sympathetic version of divine creativity'.[376] The spiritual task of gardening in the face of nature demanded thought and effort - the discipline of humanity and the profusion of divine power. This became a co-operative development of a careful balance, a sensitive and humble awareness of the beauties of the landscape, in a partnership between humankind and nature. Cowper's outlook can be contrasted with his views on the practices of "Capability Brown":

> Lo! He comes –
> The omnipotent magician, Brown appears!
> Down falls the venerable pile, th'abode
> Of our forefathers, a grave whisker'd race,
> But tasteless.
> (III, 765-769)

Brown is perceived as a high-handed despot: 'He has no warrant for his impious ordering of nature'.[377]

> He speaks. The lake in front becomes a lawn,
> Woods vanish, hills subside, and vallies rise:
> And streams as if created for his use,
> Pursue the track of his directing wand,
> Sinuous or strait, now rapid and now slow,
> Now murm'ring soft, now roaring in cascades,
> Ev'n as he bids.
> (III, 774-780)

Cowper's lines criticize the apparent 'egotistical magisterial whim' inherent in Brown's 'improvements', which is the antithesis of his own sensitive approach and aesthetic understanding of the landscape. As Brunström declares: Cowper, 'the true gardener … does not impose schemes on nature, but takes time out to listen to the voice of God through natural

[375] *Letters*, IV, pp. 189-190 (9 September, 1792), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.
[376] C. Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004), p. 125.
[377] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 115.

processes … in a programme of meditation and labour – cooperating in patient and respectful harmony'.[378] One could associate Book III of *The Task* with Book IV of *Paradise Lost,* as well as Books VIII and IX for example*,* since Cowper has plainly drawn from Milton's imagery. As Vincent Newey might agree, Cowper clearly sees the image of the garden as a powerful metaphor for psychological balance:

> A life all turbulence and noise, may seem
> To him that leads it …
> But wisdom is a pearl with most success
> Sought in still water, and beneath clear skies.
> (III, 379-382)

For Cowper, gardening enjoys both a literal and a metaphorical significance as a means of mediating the divine:

> But through true worth and virtue, in the mild
> And genial soil of cultivated life
> Thrive most, and may perhaps thrive only there,
> (I, 678-680)

The gardener and his environment cultivate one another in a harmonious interaction of spiritual and aesthetic development, resulting in peaceful growth.

Wandering and Contemplation

The novelist Martin Dean noted that whilst writing his first novel, visits to Parisian gardens discovered for him a pleasure:

> In becoming aware of seeing and experiencing something without a specific purpose, and which stimulated flashbacks of memory and a panoramic sequence of thoughts and associations … Gardens … link thoughts to preconscious conditions while you walk, and reflect actual thought processes … in their tendency to grow densely and run wild at the wayside.[379]

It is this aspect of the garden that authorizes the 'reverie' or 'curious drifting' that James Elkins and Dean identify.[380] As Cowper passed from something akin to Kames' 'regularity ... adjacent to the dwelling-house' into a broader expanse of ground, the contrast offered the possibility of a greater intensity of poetical perception. Hunt reminds us of 'the essential fact that gardens ... have always been ways of mediating the physical world', and adds that they are 'sophisticated products of our relationship with the world beyond their walls'.[381] Martin Priestman comments

[378] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 113-114.
[379] M. R. Dean, 'Nature as a Book – a Book as Nature', *Journal of Garden History* 17 (1997), 172-173.
[380] J. Elkins, 'On the Conceptual Analysis of Gardens', *Journal of Garden History,* 13 (1993), 189-198 (p. 189).
[381] Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, p. 9.

on: 'Cowper's deliberate and declared use of stream-of-consciousness literary practice that follows on from Locke's theory of the association of ideas …The importance of associationist theory is indisputable'. Priestman also notes: 'the importance of Cowper's recurrent images of wandering, as if through the landscape of the poem'.[382] As well as physical movement, such as when the poet repetitively 'wandered' in the Throckmorton estate, a journey which Edward Wedlake Brayley attempted to 're-tread' in *Cowper Illustrated*, I propose that Cowper's 'wandering' was also a mental process. This was something that may have occurred during moments of creativity in his garden, or on one of his daily walks when, in a lyric moment of contemplation, Cowper interiorized his thoughts. While wandering in the sensory space of his garden or beyond, I suggest that he was affected by subconscious trains of association, which augmented his creativity, in addition to his assertion in a letter to the Rev. William Unwin that 'reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage'.[383] Therefore, I am disagreeing with Priestman's statement that: 'the associative nature of the poem's design … is no more entirely 'freely associative' than any other kind of mental or literary process'.[384] However, he later seems to diverge from this viewpoint as Cowper's 'familiar style … is based on a psychological theory of the association of ideas, which gives implicit status to the irrational workings of the human mind as represented in the individual mind of the author'.[385] Furthermore, Daniel Ritchie declares that *The Task* emphasises the role that intuition plays in acquiring knowledge. The reciprocal relationship between the observer and the natural world gives fullness to the experience of nature'.[386] Here, we might read 'fullness' as an extension of the associative thought process that through contemplation and meditation contributed to the poet's creativity.

This would be revealed in Book VI of *The Task* – 'The Winter Walk at Noon', where Cowper's natural observations are reconciled with his interiorized thoughts and outward experience. The poet does this as well elsewhere in the poem where he remembers certain elements of his daily walk around the environs of Olney, exemplified in fig. 27, and in particular the nearby Throckmorton Estate at Weston Underwood.

[382] M. Priestman, *Cowper's Task, Structure and Influence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 3.
[383] *Letters*, II, pp. 284-285 (10 October 1784), W. C. to William Unwin.
[384] Priestman, *Cowper's Task,* p. 14.
[385] Priestman, *Cowper's Task,* pp. 20-22, with reference to Cowper's letter to William Unwin on the 'familiar' style. See *Letters,* I, pp. 9-11 (17 January 1782), W. C. to William Unwin.
[386] D. E. Ritchie, 'Reconciling the Heart with the Head in the poetry of William Cowper and the Thought of Michael Polanyi', in *The Fullness of Knowing* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010), pp. 185-210.

Fig. 27. Birket Foster, 'The Rural Walk Through Lanes', 1878

Ritchie notes that the 'wise observer 'dwells' on nature over a period of time, and establishes a personal connection … in *The Task* [this observer] connects his experience of nature, social life, beauty and religion'.[387] I believe that the contemplative nature of Cowper's work is a reflection of the length of time he had spent looking, thinking and absorbing the environment in which he lived at Olney and beyond, and the wider world of which he was aware through newspapers and magazines. Cowper infers that insight came through:

> Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
> Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
> And nature in her cultivated trim
> Dressed to his taste, inviting him abroad.
> (III, 355-358)

However, his need for perpetual motion meant that walking was more than exercise and observation; it was an important part of the poet's creative process. Just as the subsequent solitude of his summerhouse or greenhouse, as well as the sequestered nature of the parlour at Orchard Side, enabled him to consolidate and memorize those thoughts. As he 'wandered' through his garden at Orchard Side and beyond, Cowper may or may not have consciously considered these points; but I contend that he was aware that he was within a setting that was entirely conducive to his art.

[387] Ritchie, *The Fullness of Knowing,* pp. 185-210.

Various features of a garden contribute to the structure of its landscape, giving rise to interconnected spaces, and the environment in which Cowper wandered offered different places, which all competed for his attention. As Hunt argues: the concept of 'exterior place-making' creates a space 'to be lived in'. Tim Cresswell expands this idea and declares that the interpretations of people within a garden give their actions meaning, adding that: 'people read places by acting in them'. In the case of Cowper, as he moved through his familiar landscape, from an enclosed space to a much wider space with extensive prospect views, he may have remembered and been affected by the last lines of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a work he owned and referred to in his letters, and which informed his poetry:

> The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide:
> They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way.
> (XII, 646-649)[388]

Those words that reflect thoughts of punishment and loss of Eden may have infused the melancholy nature of this 'patient Son of God'. Such despondent contemplation may have also contrasted with his self-confessed pleasure at the minute delights of his garden at Orchard Side, which were magnified all around him. Cowper's poetic inspiration might therefore have been a continually changing aspect of his wandering, from pleasure to pain, and back again.

Private Retreats

The establishment of the garden next to the house at Olney encouraged Cowper to take to gardening and drawing, as well as writing in the morning in his 'verse-manufactory' - the small summerhouse in the garden, shown in fig. 28, as he wrote:

> I write in a nook that I call my Bouderie; It [sic] is a Summer house, not bigger than a Sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden … and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an Apothecary, now dead, as a smoking room … At present however it is dedicated to sublimer uses ... here I write all that I write in summer-time ... It is secure from all noise, and a refuge from all intrusion.[389]

On another June day the poet wrote:

> I am sitting in the Summer house, (not the Greenhouse); the door which is open is toward the garden, and the window which is open also, is toward a pleasant orchard, so if it were possible to be cool, that happiness would be mine.[390]

[388] Milton, 'Paradise Lost', in Milton, *English Poems,* p. 386.
[389] *Letters*, II, pp. 359-361 (29 June 1785), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[390] *Letters*, II, pp. 354-356 (12 June 1785), W. C. to William Unwin.

Fig. 28. Cowper's 'Bouderie' (Summerhouse)

The significance of this quiet retreat, which is hidden from the house and is reached by walking through the flower garden and a shady doorway, is immense. Its sudden, dramatic and unusual appearance is very striking, whilst its small dimensions give a strong impression of privacy, enclosure and solitude. In such a place, Cowper could develop his ideas, but sometimes inspiration did not come to him, as he wrote, in an intimation of the sensations that he felt:

> We envy you your Sea-Breezes. In the Garden we feel nothing but the Reflection of the Heat from the Walls ... The worst of it is, that tho' the Sun beams strike as forcibly upon my Harp Strings as they did upon his [Virgil's], they illicit no such Sounds, but rather produce such Groans as they are said to have drawn from those of the Statue of Memnon.[391]

It is evident from his letters that the poet spent much time in the garden, and that it was an important part of his daily routine. He wrote: 'I have 8 Pair of tame Pigeons - When I first Enter the Garden in a Morning, I find them Perched upon the Wall, waiting for their Breakfast, for I feed them always upon the Gravel Walk'.[392] However, such activity would have been dependent on the season, and generally limited to fine weather. It clearly gave him pleasure, and loss of opportunity to be in the garden, together with his need for perpetual movement, may have engendered a feeling of being trapped, thus taking his activities in other directions. Cowper's sense of the importance of the garden as a place 'to be lived in' was reflected in his comment: 'the very Stones in the garden walls are my intimate acquaintance; I should miss almost the minutest object and be disagreeably affected by its removal'.[393] As I found when walking in the garden, the abundance of tiny layers of encrustations on the wall juxtaposed with the changing shapes, textures and colours of flowers, may have given Cowper an aesthetic pleasure midway between the intellectual and the physical: a pleasurable contemplation of the whole and then its parts.

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[391] *Letters*, I, pp. 297-299 (17 July 1779), W. C. to William Unwin.
[392] *Letters*, I, pp. 303-304 (21 September 1779), W. C. to William Unwin.
[393] *Letters*, II, pp. 150-152 (27 July 1783) W. C. to John Newton.

His attachment to the garden had motivated him to move into the greenhouse in 1781, saying:

> I might date my letter from the Green-house, which we have converted into a summer parlour ... we find that the sound of the wind in the trees, and the singing of birds, are much more agreeable to our Ears ... not to mention the exchange of a sweet-smelling garden.[394]

The shelter of the greenhouse during summer months also provided Cowper with surroundings conducive to his poetical imagination, which at times proved elusive when his state of mind was not attuned to creativity, or the weather was too hot.[395] Nevertheless, he also noted in June 1783 that the greenhouse could be a place, 'where I hear nothing but the pattering of a fine shower and the sound of distant thunder … though I should be glad to write, I write little or nothing. The time for such fruit is not yet come'.[396] In fact, that time was about to arrive, as the weather would change rapidly, altering the poet's habits and allowing him to enter a most productive phase of creativity, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Cowper had confessed to being a 'winter poet', and his daily routines seemed to serve him well, since he noted in February 1785: 'I have just been refreshing myself with a walk in the Garden, where I found that January (who according to Chaucer was the Husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow'.[397] Cowper's lyre was still clearly strung after his period of exceptional productivity, and was about to produce 'summer fruits brought forth by wintry suns' (III, 552).

3.4 Despair Turns to Hope

The extraordinary period between October 1783 and October 1784 when Cowper composed *The Task* had been preceded by a period of deep solemnity in which he wrote 'The Shrubbery'. His wanderings in the undulating landscape of the Throckmorton Estate had led him to the enclosure of the Moss House in the area known as 'The Shrubbery', illustrated later in fig. 32, on p. 121, where he spent much time in contemplation and composition, when despair had clouded his vision during a 'time of affliction'.[398] As Stephen Bending argues: 'Cowper's poetry … most clearly articulates an account of debilitating retreat and of the inability of retirement to offer release from … depression'.[399] It was a time when Cowper saw those 'silent bow'rs' differently:

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[394] *Letters*, I, pp. 507-509 (16 August 1781), W. C. to John Newton.
[395] *Letters*, I, pp. 516-518 (9 September 1781), W. C. to John Newton.
[396] *Letters*, II, pp. 138-139 (3 June 1783), W. C. to William Bull.
[397] *Letters*, II, pp. 329-330 (27 February, 1785), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[398] W. Cowper, 'The Shrubbery', <http:// www. poetryfoundation.org/poem/173289>[accessed 21 October 2015]. First published in *Poems, by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple. Esq* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1782). Quotations from 'The Shrubbery' are followed by their line numbers.
[399] Bending, *Green Retreats,* p. 124.

Oh happy shades – to me unblest!
Friendly to peace, but not to me!
How ill the scene that offers rest,
And heart that cannot rest, agree!
(1-4)

The poet saw 'sadness ev'rywhere', and all that pleas'd in wood or lawn' had been 'withdrawn'. 'The Shrubbery' is written in six four-line stanzas, with alternate rhyming quatrains that aid the poetical effect of the poem. The mixture of end-stopping and overruns or 'enjambement' allows Cowper to develop a sense of despair through sound and the language used. He dramatizes the scene in the first stanza by the use of exclamation marks, negative contrasting emotions and assonance: 'unblest', 'not to me', 'offers rest', 'cannot rest'. In so doing, he effectively adds to the sound-patterning of the work, enforces his developing idea of failure and loss, and increases the reader's expectations throughout the poem by the use of such poetic techniques which add to its visual and aural meaning.

In the second stanza the poet continues to fix the scene in the mind of the reader as he places himself by the glassy reflections in the water before him, beneath the canopy of a pine tree, and with awareness of the movement of the leaves in the alder trees. However, he retains the doubt that pleasure could be his, as he wistfully separates the words 'any' and 'thing', in a beseeching last line:

This glassy stream, that spreading pine,
Those alders quiv'ring to the breeze,
Might sooth a soul less hurt than mine,
And please, if any thing could please.
(5-8)

The depth and fixity of Cowper's 'affliction' is highlighted in the third stanza by the use of overrun on the first line that stresses his misery through the alliterative words: 'fix'd', 'foregoes', and 'feels', and the despairing word 'unalterable'. Their effects are heightened again by alliteration: 'she', 'shows' 'same sadness', and 'slights the season and the scene'.

But fix'd unalterable care
Foregoes not what she feels within,
Shows the same sadness ev'rywhere,
And slights the season and the scene.
(9-12)

Cowper continues to use alliteration in the fourth stanza to contrast what has gone: 'pleas'd', and 'peace possessed', while assonance is the used to good effect in 'lost its beauties', as the use of the words, 'animating smile withdrawn' suggests the negative deadening effect of his affliction:

> For all that pleas'd in wood or lawn,
> While peace possess'd these silent bowr's,
> Her animating smile withdrawn,
> Has lost its beauties and its powr's.
> (13-16)

The poet then suggests positive activity for some using an insistent 't' sound, and reminding the reader of the place he is in, but slowing down the pace through punctuation. Again, through alliteration, assonance, and repetition of the words 'like me' with contrasting effect, Cowper builds up the meaning of the stanza to end with the sonorous exclamation – 'woe!'

> The saint or moralist should tread
> This moss-grown alley, musing, slow;
> They seek, like me, the secret shade,
> But not, like me, to nourish woe!
> (17-20)

The personal nature of the poem is encapsulated in the repetition of the word 'me', as Cowper begins the final stanza, while the overrun and lack of punctuation adds to the complexity of its first two lines:

> Me fruitful scenes and prospects waste
> Alike admonish not to roam;
> These tell me of enjoyments past,
> And those of sorrows yet to come.
> (21-24)

Finally, Cowper's thoughts are neatly expressed in a crescendo of sound as the tone rises briefly, and then conclusively ends in despair. As Bending says: 'This dramatising of alternative but coexisting states, of pleasure felt by its absence, is characteristic of Cowper's uncertainty about retirement'.[400]

His sombre mood at that time can be contrasted with that of two years later when his attitude changed as fine weather and his consciousness of sounds raised his spirits, as did his new acquaintance Lady Austen. All of that encouraged an optimistic approach to his 'experience' of nature, since daily observation of his garden involved seeing and responding through thought, as Cowper wrote:

> I can look at ... a handsome tree, every day of my life, with new pleasure ... for I never in all my life have let slip the opportunity of breathing fresh air, and of conversing with nature, when I could fairly catch it.[401]

[400] Bending, *Green Retreats,* p. 126.
[401] *Letters*, II*,* pp. 177-179 (10 November 1783), W. C. to William Unwin.

Appleton asserts that trees contribute to the sense of enormity of the sky, and as Bachelard says: a tree magnifies 'everything that surrounds it', reaching upwards beyond the garden. The effects of wind and weather added to the sublime quality of the trees' movements, such as when Cowper wrote:

> A Crow, Rook, or Raven, has built a nest in one of the young Elm trees, at the side of Mrs. Aspray's Orchard. In the Violent Storm that blew Yesterday Morning, I saw it agitated to a degree that Seemed to threaten its immediate destruction & Versified the following thoughts upon the occasion.[402]

This letter contained the fruits of Cowper's imagination: *The Fable of the Raven* first published in 1782, and there are numerous instances in his letters where the poet links movement and happenings in the garden to his 'flowers of poetry'. There is a constant sense of Cowper being in the garden: lyrically aware of all its changes through the seasons, and the effects of sun, wind and rain: a sense of being at one with nature.

3.5 Volcanic Turmoil

Cowper had described himself as a Recluse, by choice although not by temperament. He would rather have 'the Silence of this nook and the snug fire-side in our diminutive parlour' to a place of 'gaiety and splendor [sic]'. Moreover, the environment of his garden with its sense of constancy and stillness was one that the poet knew would be ripe for creativity. Nevertheless, he wrote that: 'News is always acceptable, especially from another world'.[403] The winter of 1782-3 had been severe, a time that Cowper professed to have been productive. However, there was more unusual weather to come, since in Iceland there had been a volcanic eruption on 8 June 1783 that affected Europe, causing meteorological disturbances, a widespread toxic haze, and domestic food shortages. In a series of letters dated from 13 June 1783 onwards, Cowper recorded some extraordinary atmospheric changes, seemingly unaware of the Laki volcano that would erupt for the next eight months. He wrote that he had always been 'a great Observer of natural appearances', but it was impossible 'not to be struck by the singularity of the present season ... The fogs still continue … the Sun hardly shines at noon … last night the moon was of a dull red … the colour of a heated Brick'. He was astonished that 'such an atmosphere should obtain for so long a time … We have had more Thunderstorms … yesterday morning two fireballs burst in the steeple or close to it'. Furthermore, the temperature was 'still as hot, and the air as full of vapor, as if there had been neither rain nor thunder all the summer'. Cowper also speculated that the weather might tell a different story: 'As a Poet nevertheless I claim, if any wonderfull event should

[402] *Letters*, I, pp. 341-343 (10 May 1780), W. C. to John Newton.
[403] *Letters*, I, pp. 527-528 (6 October 1781), W. C. to William Unwin.

follow, a right to apply [it] to the purposes of the tragic Muse'.[404] Tobias Menely writes that: 'although no "wonderfull event" occurred, Cowper's muse was awakened and he began writing *The Task.* Menely may perhaps be also referring to Lady Austen's influence on Cowper.[405] Instead, my proposition intimates that at that moment in time all the elements of the poet's environment came together to enable him to compose his great poem: that was the wonderful event.

In a moment of self-referential philosophical thought, Cowper recognized that he had become: 'an OEconomist of time, and [had to] make the most of a short opportunity … I have just time to observe that time is short, and by the time I have made the observation, time is gone'. This sense of urgency at time passing was reflected in a letter to John Newton regarding the complexity of the present time in comparison with the simplicity of the 'Antediluvian world'.[406] The poet, who through newspapers was a witness to modern changes, had become alert to fluctuations in timescales, and Menely asserts that in *The Task*, Cowper contrasts the temporal confusions of the Metropole with types of meteorological time, such as georgic harmonization of seasonal cultivation, and a sense of looking to the atmosphere for divine judgement. Cowper came to regard the atmospheric turmoil as a symptom of modernity, and addressed the poetic challenge of understanding contemporary events. To do this, he needed several sources of information, and while he avidly read newspapers with information from the wider world, he had to have an alternative viewpoint from which to judge the present. This was made manifest by his interaction with the busy life of Olney, and his need to walk outdoors. Throughout the seasons, the poet intuitively built up an understanding of the natural cycle of present experience at Olney as paths and prospects were revisited:

> How oft upon yon eminence our pace
> Has slacken'd to a pause, and we have borne
> The ruffling wind scarce conscious that it blew,
> While admiration feeding at the eye,
> And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
> (I, 154-158)

At the same time, he was also able to make contrasts with the area's perceived historical position in relation to the Metropole. For Cowper, the past and present, indoors and outdoors seemed to exist simultaneously through his memory. The sudden change in weather patterns may have been an additional spur to write down all that accumulated experience in poetry that is imbued with a

[404] *Letters*, II, pp. 142-144 (13 June 1783), W. C. to John Newton, and *Letters*, II, pp. 148-149 (29 June 1783), W. C. to John Newton, and *Letters*, II, pp. 150-152 (27 July 1783), W. C. to John Newton, for example.
[405] T. Menely, '"The Present Obfuscation": Cowper's Task and the Time of Climate Change', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 127:3 (2012), 477-492.
[406] *Letters*, II, pp. 185-188 (30 November 1783), W. C. to John Newton.

sense of stillness, and yet which uses the apocalyptic weather of the time as a marker for the expression of ideas.

Cowper had become increasingly fond of his 'sequester'd state', in contrast to his happiness at being outdoors in the Summer House or Greenhouse, or walking in the garden or around the Throckmorton Estate. He exclaimed that the parlour at Orchard Side was: 'the place of all the world that I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself, and with the least disturbance to others'.[407] At that singular moment in time the poet was, through necessity, closing himself off from the landscape outside, and his imaginings of space and distance had changed in that sheltered place, where the warmth of his fireside might have engendered a sense of security against the cold temperatures outside. In that cosy but enforced environment Cowper's imagination could take different directions, thus bringing him happiness through his misery, while at the same time implying domination over others. He wrote: 'The weather is an exact emblem of my mind in its present state. A thick fog envelops every thing, and at the same time it freezes intensely', and he noted that his mental state meant that he had been in 'darkness' for 'a period of eleven years'.[408] *The Gentleman's Magazine* recorded temperatures below freezing from 19 December 1783 to 21 February 1784. Still, during that time Cowper had already begun the task that his new acquaintance Lady Austen had set him – that of writing a poem, initially called *The Sofa*, but which became *The Task*. By the end of February 1784 a 'Thaw' had begun, and Cowper wrote: 'the Ice in my Ink however is not yet dissolved. It was long before the frost seized it but at last it prevailed. The Sofa has consequently received little or no addition since'.[409] Although the poet could not write down all his thoughts during the nine week period when his ink was iced over - 'the longest that has happened since the year 39', Cowper may have spent time thinking ahead and mentally composing his great work, and constructing the 'Argument' that appears before each book. He wrote of the disruption caused by the carpentry needed to repair 'the Stair foot door' that was swollen, broken and inoperable, stating that: 'The consequences … are rather unfavourable to my present employment, which does not well brook noise, bustle, and interruption'.[410] Indeed, Cowper had already said that: 'the Sofa [was] the starting-post from which I addressed myself to the long race that I soon conceived a design to run'.[411]

The poet revealed that even without the external physical stimuli of the garden and surrounding landscape, he had in fact been industrious during that exceptionally cold winter,

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[407] *Letters*, II, pp. 150-152 (27 July 1783), W. C to John Newton.
[408] *Letters*, II, pp. 199-201 (13 January 1784), W. C to John Newton.
[409] *Letters*, II, pp. 216-218 (21 February 1784), W. C to William Bull.
[410] *Letters*, II, pp. 193-196 (3 January 1784), W. C to William Unwin.
[411] *Letters*, II, pp. 308-310 (11 December 1784), W. C to John Newton.

since he had completed four books of *The Task*, and part of the fifth. Cowper's forced seclusion at Orchard Side allowed his memory and imagination to take flight, although he would later make revisions to Book IV where he expands on the theme of shadows and twilight, as he emphasises feelings of emptiness:

> …. gloom
> Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
> The mind contemplative, with some new theme
> …
> Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
> That never feel a stupor, know no pause
> Nor need one.
> (IV, 278-284)

Cowper, who in the 'Argument' to *The Task* IV referred to this section of the poem as 'A brown study', inferred a sense of absence, and confessed that he was ' a soul that does not always think'. He often 'has fancy ludicrous and wild' which is fed by 'strange visages express'd | in the red cinders' of the fire, as his:

> … understanding takes repose
> In indolent vacuity of thought.
> And sleeps and is refresh'd.
> (IV, 296-298)

According to Kevis Goodman, who described such a pause as 'a mode of affective perception', Cowper used such a moment 'in order to describe the interstices between ideas', and Goodman concludes that 'such vacuities [are] the play of aesthetic perception'.[412] He adds that Cowper 'ignites … a familiar century-long controversy waged from Locke on, concerning the relationship of consciousness to thought and the basis of personal identity'. John Locke was intent on denying the existence of an immaterial substance that can exist independently of the body and its "twin fountains" of knowledge, sensation and reflection. He insists that "consciousness" which depends on physical embodiment "is inseparable from thinking, and … essential to it", and protests that if we imagine that thought might occur apart from bodily consciousness, "then it will be hard to know wherein to place personal Identity".[413] In a letter to John Newton, Cowper wrote of 'unconnected thoughts', and in a loose reference to Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* remonstrates: 'pardon me, Messieurs les Philosophes, there are moments when if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so. And the thought and the consciousness of it seem to me … to be inseparable from each other'.[414] Goodman declares that Cowper had entered the debate to imagine the 'unthinking mind' that is not just a sleeping mind, but that those

[412] K. Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 72.
[413] Goodman, *Georgic Modernity,* p. 89.
[414] *Letters*, II, pp. 281-283 (9 October 1784), W. C to John Newton.

moments of 'vacuity' offer 'a curious reprise or précis of some of the most worldly moments of the poem', and represent 'not a recess or a retreat but an aperture … a loophole – through which the world's strangeness enters'.[415]

While this may be a valid argument, there might be another explanation since Cowper admitted that he often concealed his lethargic mood by wearing 'a mask of deep deliberation' while 'oft reclined at ease':

> … as the man
> Were task'd to his full strength, absorb'd and lost.
> Thus oft reclined at ease, I lose an hour
> At evening, till at length the freezing blast
> That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
> The recollected powers, and snapping short
> The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
> Her brittle toys, restores me to myself.
> How calm is my recess!
> (IV, 300-308)

This telling passage reveals that amongst his attentive audience within the small confined space of the parlour at Orchard Side, the poet was creating and controlling an almost silent, safe place where behind the mask, if he chose, his imagination could be set free to wander in his memories of the 'variegated show' of the landscape in which he was used to walking (IV, 310-321). Another explanation could be that the mask concealed the fact that his mind was sunk in melancholy. As Cowper elucidated: 'Despair… is never out of my mind one minute in the whole day ... I can never give much more than half my attention to what is started by others, and very rarely start any thing myself'.[416] Melancholy was something he described as 'extremely agreeable' on occasion, and the mask of deliberation may have been a vehicle that allowed Cowper to descend into that state of mind without the knowledge of his companions. Alternatively, he might have been doing nothing at all, but whatever the reason, his reverie was broken and his mind brought back sharply to the present by the abrupt noise of the wind on the shutter. The significance of the moment is emphasised by the poetical conventions of alliteration and assonance throughout the passage quoted, which ends finally in a state of calm. Such dramatic evenings by the fireside during the relentless cold winter of 1783/1784 were conducive to this activity, since the poet may have spent much time in silent despair in the company of his confidants, or in fact abstracted from them. However, those times also gave Cowper the opportunity to find himself 'in a frame of mind

[415] Goodman, *Georgic Modernity,* p. 90.
[416] *Letters*, II, pp. 224-226 (19 March 1784), W. C. to John Newton.

that does not absolutely forbid … employment … Verse is my favorite [sic] occupation'.[417] It is my considered view that those ritualized evenings in the parlour at Orchard Side during that prolonged winter were a highly significant factor in the creation of *The Task*.

3.6 News from Afar as Time Passes

Yet Cowper had said earlier that he was generally dissatisfied with his life at Olney; he had 'no Attachment to the Place that binds me here, but an Unfitness for every other. I lived in it once, but now am buried in it, and have no Business with the World on the Outside of my Sepulchre'.[418] His sense of isolation may have been strengthened by the imminent departure of his friend Rev. John Newton for a new assignment in the City of London, where Cowper had once worked at The Temple. However, the poet was becoming an avid reader of newspapers, and while they may have reinforced his sense of seclusion, through his habit of reading in the evening to his captive listening companions, they took him into a far wider world than that of Olney. Although he had said that: 'I know nothing but what I learn from the *General Evening*'.[419] He remarked that the 'turbulent times' in which they lived were brought to life by welcome news in letters and newspapers, although there was always a delay between knowledge of events in London and elsewhere, and its arrival in Olney. At 'Orchard side … we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the watermark, by the usual dashing of the waves'.[420] This sense of remoteness was regularly interrupted by the dramatic arrival of the post, which was brought by a man on horseback who trumpeted his arrival as he crossed Olney Bridge, shown in fig. 29:

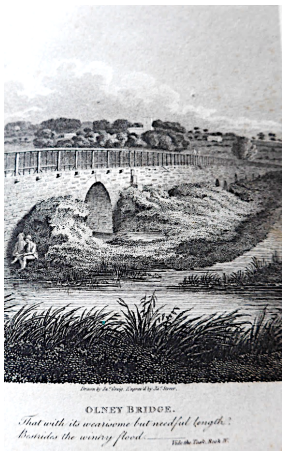

Fig. 29. Storer, 'Olney Bridge', 1804

[417] *Letters*, II, pp. 224-226 (19 March 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[418] *Letters*, I, pp. 321-322 (4 March 1780), W. C. to Mrs Newton.
[419] *Letters*, I, pp. 323-324 (16 March 1780), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[420] *Letters*, II, pp. 228-230 (29 March 1784), W. C. to John Newton.

> Hark! 'tis the twanging horn! o'er yonder bridge
> …
> He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
> …
> News from all nations lumbering at his back.
> (IV, 1, 5, 7)

These dramatic opening lines from Book IV of *The Task* immediately place the reader in a certain place and point in time, when another background sound in Cowper's life was of huge significance to him. If he was inside the house at the time, he may not have heard it, but if he was in the garden he certainly would. Besides, if Cowper was at the Vicarage he would also have been able to see the man and horse crossing the bridge, which is a structure of 'twenty-four arches of various sizes and built at irregular distances. It spans the entire width of the valley, which is sometimes entirely filled with water, and is frequently damaged by the strength of the current, particularly when ice floods occur'.[421] That evocative scene linked the poet with the world beyond the bounds of Olney, raised expectations, and was a constant stimulus to action. Cowper's enthusiasm was evident when he habitually disseminated the news and information gleaned from those deliveries to his household companions in evening gatherings in the parlour at Orchard Side, stating that:

> The grand debate,
> The popular harangue, the tart reply,
> The logic and the wisdom and the wit,
> And the loud laugh – I long to know them all;
> I burn to set the imprison'd wranglers free,
> And give them voice and utterance once again.
> Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
> Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
> …
> So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
> (IV, 30-41)

The poet read aloud perhaps because he liked to open up arguments, and was able to choose which articles he would read, exemplifying his control over the parlour scene. Cowper's words also embody a sense of longing, and a wistful desire to be part of metropolitan activities with their vicarious pleasures, from which he is absent. While he raises the notion of shutting out the exterior world of Olney, the poet is intentionally shutting himself into a place where his imagination can take him back to the Metropole, away from more mundane matters outside, and in particular some exceptional weather conditions. Those somewhat theatrical evenings by the fireside with ladies 'fast bound in chains of silence' which they 'fear to break', accompanied by

[421] J. S. Storer, *The rural walks of Cowper: Displayed in a series of views near Olney, Bucks., representing the scenery exemplified in his poems: with descriptive sketches, and a memoir of the poet's life* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1822), p. 53. Hereafter cited as: *Rural Walks*.

background sounds of a crackling log fire, a bubbling and hissing tea urn, and the clicking of knitting needles, dramatized Cowper's chosen readings, and made them meaningful to his audience.

However, in spite of his evident interest in cultural and political matters emanating from the Metropole, Cowper wrote that: 'It is hardly possible for a man to interest himself less than I do in what passes in the political world'… since [I am] 'an extramundane character… not made of the dust of this planet'. This somewhat ironically self-deprecating remark was countered by the claim that he nevertheless did 'sometimes talk upon these subjects and … [had] sometimes written upon them, as if they were indeed as important to me, as they are to every man around me'. He then summarized the key points of current politics that had been construed from newspapers, adding: 'Thus in short hand I have accounted for my opinion'.[422] Conversely, Goodman argues that Cowper had 'the intentional strategy of … full-scale representation of the newsprint in Book IV of *The Task,* information that was, according to Goodman, mostly taken from issues of *The Morning Chronicle* for September 1783.[423] Contrariwise, Cowper had already written that: 'The Authority of a newspaper is not of sufficient weight to determine my opinions, and I have no other documents to be set down by. I therefore … am suspended in a state of constant Scepticism'.[424] In spite of these inconsistencies, Cowper said that he would 'not apologize for [his] Politics or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the newspapers', he 'took it for granted that those Reporters of the Wisdom of our Representatives, are tolerably correct and faithfull'.[425] He wrote that:

> My principal purpose is to allure the Reader by character, by scenery, by imagery and by such poetical embellishments, to the Reading of what may profit him … to combat that predilection in favor [sic] of a Metropolis … [and] to have a stroke at Vice, Vanity and folly wherever I find them.[426]

Cowper was setting up his stance to the world as he claimed the importance of his poem, and that he would use landscape as a means of moving himself into the public sphere. He intended to compare the provincial with the metropolitan, highlight the local in relation to the national, and make the private to be public. As Goodman writes: the first part of Book IV of *The Task* 'is saturated with images of sound', and a 'full range of the cacophony of news'.[427] Cowper's imaginings result in images of sound and action that evoke the rough and tumble of political debate without physically being there, and he admitted that:

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[422] *Letters*, II, pp. 233-236 (11 April 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[423] Goodman, *Georgic Modernity,* p. 78.
[424] *Letters*, II, pp. 198-199 (8 January 1784), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[425] *Letters*, II, pp. 214-216 (22 February 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[426] *Letters*, II, pp. 300-303 (27 November 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[427] Goodman, *Georgic Modernity,* p. 79.

> 'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat
> To peep at such a world. To see the stir
> Of the great Babel and not feel the crowd.
> To hear the roar …
> At a safe distance ….
>
> (IV, 88-92)

The poet was expressing his appreciation of the opportunities that his quiet life at Olney offered him, which at that moment was heightened by the restrictions of the weather. Cowper's need to rely on his memory and imagination presented contrasts between the physical experience of his garden, the wider landscape in which he was accustomed to walk, and the imagined settings of metropolitan concerns. Julie Ellison remarks that: 'Cowper is the first person to use the newspaper explicitly as the basis of a fanciful (but nonsatiric) image of the world'.[428] Although it seems that Cowper saw himself as a 'satyrical' writer noting that while still at home, newspapers enabled him to acquire a knowledgeable and perhaps imaginary understanding of the world which revealed to him the:

> … manners, vices and follies of the modern day … Of such information however I have need, being a writer upon those subjects myself and a satyrical writer too.[429]

At that time the news was of great significance: the American war had ended in defeat; there was political turmoil, and parliamentary debate over British policies in India and Ireland, and Pitt was returned as Prime Minister with a large majority after the general election of April 1784. As Cowper wrote: 'At a time like the present, what Author can stand in competition with a Newspaper?'[430] Ellison posits that Cowper could 'dramatize the provincial reader and the scenes in which he absorbed the information contained in newspapers, and turn them into an aesthetic rendering of the 'busy life' of the world'.[431]

> This folio of four pages, happy work!
> …
> What is it but a map of busy life,
> Its fluctuations and its vast concerns
>
> (IV, 50-56)

For Cowper, reading newspapers and writing poetry using his own interpretations of metropolitan, cultural and political life, became a long-distance connection with the world beyond the perceived seclusion of Orchard Side. Although he had recognized earlier that newspapers

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[428] J. Ellison, 'News, blues, and Cowper's busy world', *Modern Language Quarterly,* 62:3 (2001), 219-237 (p. 234). Hereafter cited as *News*.
[429] *Letters*, II, pp. 289-291 (30 October 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[430] *Letters,* II, pp. 218-220 (29 February 1784), W. C. to William Unwin.
[431] Ellison, *News*, 219-237 (p. 221).

might not be giving him the full story: 'We are indebted to you for your Political Intelligence, but … give us such Information as cannot be learn'd in the Newspaper'.[432]

My contention is that during that cold winter, when he was unable to go outside and into his garden for much of the time, Cowper's extensive memories of his experiences would be encapsulated into his major work *The Task*. This did not only apply to the information gleaned from newspapers and magazines, but also to the poet's sensory consciousness and acute observations of life in Olney. His habit of reading aloud and his pride in the enhanced meaning his voice gave to the reading matter, added impetus to his work, as well as the subtle insightful reflections that had occurred as he had wandered in the surrounding area.

3.7 Walking to Weston

The received intelligence from the newspapers and magazines to which Cowper subscribed, contrasted with his daily interaction with life in Olney.[433] The poet needed variety, and the sheltered nature of his life at Orchard Side was productive, especially in inclement wintry weather. Conversely, while he often yearned to sit and do nothing, he also longed to 'escape' from it, to be 'perpetually in motion', noting that his:

> … 'frequent calls into the garden' were not 'sufficient … Man, a changeable creature himself, seems to subsist best in a state of Variety as his proper element. A melancholy man at least, is apt to grow sadly weary of the same walls and the same pales, and to find that the same scene will suggest the same thoughts perpetually'.[434]

Cowper, possibly referring to but slightly distancing from himself by use of the term 'Man', seemed to have recognized a lack of constancy in his feelings. His self-absorbed musings proclaim a sense of occasional boredom with the safety and security of his home at Orchard Side. The poet wanted to know more, and did not seem to separate Olney from the wider world: his vision was as wide as it was narrow. He appeared to resolve the tense disjunction of uncertainty by importing his wider knowledge into the local, as well as displaying a need to export the local as being of significance. Cowper's vision and sense of self incorporated the world beyond Olney: the global as well as the national. An example is his particular response to contemporary issues such as the slave trade, which he describes as 'human nature's broadest, foulest blot' (II, 22). In Book III, 'The Garden', Cowper finds peace and joy in the presence of nature, domestic happiness, and the occupations of a retired gentleman. Then he enters into a discussion of country versus town,

[432] *Letters*, I, pp. 285-286 (18 July 1778), W. C. to William Unwin.
[433] Cowper received: *The Morning Chronicle, General Evening Post* and *Gentleman's Magazine,* and was passed copies of others such as: *Morning Herald; Monthly Review,* and *Public Advertiser*.
[434] *Letters*, II, pp. 30-32 (6 March 1782), W. C. to John Newton, and *Letters*, II, pp. 333-335 (19 March 1785), W.C. to John Newton.

which becomes a landscape of tension, as he contemplates the 'ruinous effects of gaming and of expensive improvement', with particular reference to London which 'ingulfs them all', and displays 'charms that sully and eclipse | The charms of nature' (III, 816, 825-826). The contrast between two different ideas as Cowper moves from the local to the national was a technique that imitated Thomson who preferred not to depict nature for its own sake, but to do so for what it teaches. Such as when he describes a rainbow after a spring shower, and then immediately refers to the scientific theory of Sir Isaac Newton, and contrasts that with the amazement of the uneducated swain.[435] As Cowper intended, in *The Task* he has given local and personal detail, and instantly moved to a comparison with his national experience.

While Cowper worked in the morning, in fine weather much of the afternoon was taken up with walking in the nearby fields and meadows, and on the rising land beyond. As he quaintly said: 'Amusements are necessary in a Retirement like mine, & especially in such a State of Mind as I Labour under. The Necessity of Amusement makes me sometimes write Verses'.[436] He intimated that a man like him:

> … has a peculiar pleasure in contemplating the beauties of nature … O I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding upon a lovely Prospect, my eye drinks the rivers as they flow…[437]

In this passage, Cowper stresses his gift for finding particular joy in the wonders of nature, and establishes his endless love of 'lovely Prospect', but he then uses the metonymic device of 'the eye' to express his feelings at that moment. Cowper presents a dense landscape description where mental activity, the poet 'feeding' at the eye combined with the flow of the independent life without, evokes the spirit of place that allows him to declare 'my eye drinks'. The poet implies that his vision thus moves between tragic or therapeutic, projecting his constant wavering between thoughts of heaven and hell. For Cowper, the contemplation of nature gives him a place of emotional stability.

The poet also took to landscape drawing with a passion and described it as 'a most Amusing Art' - one that required 'much Practise & Attention', and engendered Feelings … all of the intense kind'. Nonetheless, he recognized that such intensity could generate too much 'Pressure' that would cause 'Weariness and Fatigue', so that he would have to 'look out for Something else'. Perhaps he would be able to 'String the Lyre again'.[438] It would have to be one Amusement, or another, and Cowper's interest in drawing may have enlivened his daily habit of walking,

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[435] Thomson, *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence*, pp. 8-9. Extract from 'Spring', 204-217.
[436] *Letters*, I, pp. 328-330 (6 April 1780), W. C. to William Unwin.
[437] *Letters*, I, pp. 334-336 (3 May 1780), W. C. to John Newton.
[438] *Letters*, I, pp. 338-340 (8 May 1780), W. C. to William Unwin.

sometimes for several hours.[439] Whilst the practice of drawing may have been attributed to his particular class and status, in this instance it could be related to his innate artistic abilities in his representation of what was before him, or perhaps distancing himself from it. Indeed, there are instances in *The Task* where the poet is evidently not seeing objects in isolation but rather as a momentary still picture, taking in the middle distance and background as he gazes at the scene. One example occurs during a walk on the Throckmorton Estate when:

> While admiration feeding at the eye,
> And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene.
> Thence with what pleasure have we just discern'd
> The distant plough slow-moving, and beside
> His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,
> The sturdy swain diminish'd to a boy!
> …
> While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
> That as with molten glass inlays the vale,
> The sloping land recedes into clouds…
> (I, 157-171)

On another occasion, framed by tall elms, the poet sees the movement and hears the sound of the local labour of the thresher which evoke thoughts of the 'ceaseless action' of nature, and the

> 'Constant rotation of the unwearied wheel
> That nature rides upon'. Nature 'dreads
> An instant's pause, and lives but while she moves.
> Its own revolvency upholds the world'
> (I, 367-372)

In this early section of *The Task,* Cowper is moving closer to the optimistic georgic tradition represented by Thomson's *The Seasons,* as the thresher introduces the poem's first major moral-social assertion, which echoes Thomson not only in what it says, but also in its use of its characteristic dynamic circling imagery.[440] Cowper is instantly relating the local to the global as he muses on georgic productivity in the world.

The act of walking energized Cowper's senses in many ways, and on some occasions, he had what Robin Jarvis describes as: 'a fully bodily encounter with the landscape', as he walked in a 'perceptual envelope' during his local excursions.[441] One example is when Cowper noted that: he had a 'strong partiality to a Common' and remembered the 'Common in the neighbourhood of Southampton':

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[439] *Letters*, II, pp. 351-354 (4 June 1785), W. C. to John Newton.
[440] Priestman, C*owper's Task,* p. 60.
[441] Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel,* p. 80.

> My nostrils have hardly been regaled with those wild odours from that day to the present … But we have a scent in the fields about Olney, that to me is equally agreeable … It proceeds … neither from herb nor tree nor shrub … it is in the soil [and] exactly the scent of amber when it has been rubbed … I had a strong poetical desire to describe it when I was writing the Common-scene in the Task.[442]

Cowper's distant memories of Southampton and more recent impressions from Olney were reflected in the lines:

> The common overgrown with fern, and rough
> With prickly goss, that shapeless and deform
> And dangerous to the touch, has yet its bloom
> And decks itself with ornaments of gold,
> Yields no unpleasing ramble; there the turf
> Smells fresh, and rich in odoriferous herbs
> And fungous fruits of earth, regales the sense
> With luxury of unexpected sweets.
> (I, 526-533)

These lines are filled with sensual detail in a litany of assonance and alliteration, such as: 'goss' and 'shapeless'; 'deform and dangerous'; 'decks itself'; 'fresh, and rich', and the distinctive words: 'luxury of unexpected'. They are redolent of the intense, private and continuing sensory experience Cowper had while moving through the fields close to his home. The lines are not necessarily representational, but have turned his experience into an aesthetic one.

Those pleasing perceptions contrast with the completely different sensations that could arise while Cowper walked and observed his familiar surroundings. In the neighbouring parish of Lavendon about two miles from Olney, there was a field by the mill with a terrace leading down to the River Ouse with its reflections of the luxuriant vegetation on its banks, as illustrated in fig. 30.

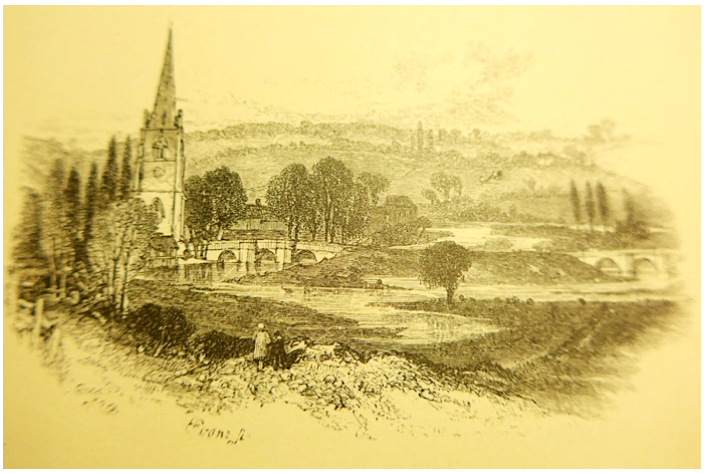

Fig. 30. Birket Foster, 'The Ouse - slow winding through a level plain', 1878

[442] *Letters*, II, pp. 413-415 (6 December 1785), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.

Poplars were planted on the riverbank at the foot of the field that Cowper 'used to account a little paradise'. However, one day he saw that the poplars had been felled, and that 'the scene [had] suffered so much by the loss, that though still in point of prospect beautiful, it [no longer had] sufficient charm' to attract him.[443] That melancholic occasion brought about a poem –*The Poplar Field*, which was published in the Gentleman's Magazine in January 1785, signed W.C., as shown in fig. 31.

Select Poetry, ancient and modern, for January, 1785. 53

ODE FOR THE NEW YEAR.
By WILLIAM WHITEHEAD, Esq.

DELUSIVE is the Poet's dream;
Or doom prophetic Truth inspire
The zeal which prompts the glowing theme,
And animates th' according lyre?

Trust the Muse; her eye commands
Distant times, and diftant lands,
Theo' barbling clouds in op'ning skies
See, from Difcord, Union rife,
And Friendfhip bind unwilling foes
In firmer ties than duty knows.

Torn rudely from its parent tree,
You Scion, rifing in the Weft,
Will foon its genuine glory fee,
And court again the foft'ring breaft,
Whofe nurture gave its pow'rs to fpread,
And fwell their force, and lift an alien head.

The parent tree, when ftorms impend,
Shall own Affection's warmth again;
Again its fofte'ring aid fhall lend,
Nor hear the fuppliant plead in vain;
Shall ftretch protecting branches round,
Extend the fhelter, and forget the wound.

Two Britains, thro' th' admiring world,
Shall wing their way with fafe unfurl'd,
Each, from the other kindred ftate,
Aware, by turns, the bolts of fate,
And ufe of mutual amity endear
The Tyre and Carthage of a wider fphere.

When Rome's divided eagles flew,
And different thrones her empire knew,
The varying language foon disjoin'd
The boaftful maflers of mankind:
But here, no ills like thofe we fear,
No varying language threatens here;
Congenial worth, congenial flame,
Their manners and their arts the fame,
To the fame tongue fhall glowing themes
afford [record.
And Britifh Heroes act, and Britifh Bards

Fly fwift, ye years, ye minutes haſte,
And in the future lofe the paſt;
Oer many a thought-affliding tale,
Oblivion, caft thy friendly veil;
Let not Memory breathe a figh,
Or backward turn th' indignant eye;
Nor the inſidious arts of foes
Enlarge the breach that longs to cloſe;
But acts of amity alone inſpire
From faith and cordial love, and wake the willing lyre.

THE POPLAR FIELD.

THE poplars are fell'd, adieu to the fhade [made.
And the whifpering ſound of the cool colon-
The winds play no longer, and ſing in their leaves, [ceives.
Nor the Ouſe in its boſom their image re-

Twelve years had elapſed ſince I laſt took a view [they grew;
Of my favourite field and the bank where
When behold on their ſides in the graſs they were laid, [ſtray'd.
And I ſat on the trees under which I had

The blackbird has ſought out another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a ſcreen from the heat;
And the ſcene where his notes have oft charm'd me before, [more.
Shall reſound with his ſweet-flowing ditty no

My fugitive years are all haſt'ning away,
And I muſt, alas! lie as ſlowly as they,
With a turf on my breaſt, and a ſtone at my head,
Ere another ſuch grove riſes up in their ſtead.

The change both my heart and my fancy employs;
I reflect on the frailty of man and his joys:
Short-liv'd as we are, yet our pleaſures, we ſee,
Have a ſtill ſhorter date, and die ſooner than we. W. C.

TO THE MEMORY OF EDWARD WYNNE*, ESQ.

"Tales fundebat lacrymas."

HE, who, entranc'd, late the Muſe's choir
Invok'd, while gratitude attun'd his lyre,
To chearful ſtrains Wynne's virtues to relate,
Ah! ſad reverſe! now mourns his hapleſs fate.
O could I ſing like her† whoſe polith'd lay
With cypreſs-wreaths bedrew'd her Count's
moral, [flow,
Then ſhould my verſe with wary'd ſolemn
To all the melting energy of woe; [ſweet
Or, were my voice like her's‡, whoſe Doric
In ſweetly-warbling elegiac note,
Sung how "the waves cloſ'd round her bro-
o'er's head, [dead!"
"And murmur'd, as they cloſ'd, for Lycid
Then ſhould Melpomene, from all her bowers,
To deck his urn, collect her choiceſt flowers.
And ſhow the ſtrains of grief. Farewel, bleſt ſhade!
Accept this tribute to thy memory paid.
What though thy hearſe no martial glories claim?
"The vain parade of monumental fame§!"
For nobler honours grace thy tomb, for theirs
Each peaceful virtue drops a grateful tear.
Science and Art the general loſs deplore,
And mourn their friend, their patron, now no more! [ſhed.
Too juſt their grief; for few, like Wynne, we
Anxious to heal the ſick or wounded mind;
When Worth, unſeen, droop'd its neglected head,
And pin'd beneath Affliction's mildew ſhade;

* See vol. LIV.
† Miſs Seward.
‡ Mrs. Sheridan. See p. 36.
§ A line of Mrs. Carter's.

With

Fig. 31. Page 53 of *The Gentleman's Magazine* (January 1785)

Cowper's earlier visit to the field would have been during a period when he was suffering from severe depression, as he wrote:

> Twelve years had elapsed since I had last took a view
> Of my favourite field and the bank where they grew;
> When behold on their sides in the grass they were laid,
> And I sat on the trees under which I had stray'd.
>
> (5-8)

The stark reality of the poplars laid on their sides must have evoked memories of that time, and a recollection of the solace he might have felt while he walked through the 'colonnade' of shady poplars reflected in the river, with the ever-present 'whispering sound' of the wind as it 'sang' in their leaves, or the 'sweet-flowing ditty' of the blackbird. The reminiscence of those echoing

[443] *Letters*, II, pp. 530-534 (1 May 1786), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.

sounds brought about a consciousness of the ephemeral nature of pleasure, a shortening of time and a sense of mortality. The picture had changed, and what was once a life-enhancing aspect of his walk had become a still and silent ruin.

A similar sense of destruction was felt during an 'Excursion to the Spinney', another name for 'The Shrubbery' on the way to Weston Underwood, and described by Brayley as a 'retired spot'. 'The Shrubbery' was part of Weston Park, where Cowper had been given permission to wander. A picnic had been followed by a walk 'to the wilderness about half a mile off' before returning to Olney.[444] However, that favourite walk was spoiled when he found that the Spinney had been 'cut down to the stumps'.[445] Cowper repeated this 'melancholy theme' several years later just before publication of *The Task*:

> That which was once the serpentine walk is now in a state of transformation … The desolation of the whole scene is such that it sunk our spirits ... the ivy and the moss with which the hermitage was lined, are torn away, and the very mats that cover'd the benches, have been stripp'd off, rent in tatters, and trodden under foot. So farewell Spinney … it is desecrated.[446]

The sense of desolation may have been provoked by the importance of that area in Cowper's memory since the hermitage or Moss House, shown in fig. 32, was where he had spent much time in contemplation. According to Thomas Wright, 'The Shrubbery' was 'threaded with a winding path … in its midst stood the rustic hut or 'Moss House'… which had on one side of it a weeping willow, and in front a beautiful circular sheet of water': a retreat where Cowper wrote exquisite verses 'in a time of affliction'.[447]

Fig. 32. Storer, 'The Shrubbery' at Weston Park, 1822

[444] *Letters*, I, pp. 498-500 (22 July 1781), W. C. to John Newton, and *Letters*, I, pp. 501-503 (29 July 1781), W. C. to William Unwin.
[445] *Letters*, II, pp. 333-335 (19 March 1785), W. C. to John Newton.
[446] *Letters*, II, pp. 361-363 (9 July 1785), W. C. to John Newton.
[447] T. Wright, *The Life of William Cowper* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892), p. 358.

As Brayley pointed out, access to this retreat was through a gate by the road that led to 'the windings of a lonely alley' before giving onto 'an ampler space' where stood the Moss House.[448] He wrote that one particular poem – 'The Shrubbery' - possibly written in that place, and which I discussed earlier, was of such pathos as would affect every reader. Brayley quoted some lines by Cowper that were painted on a board and which, as Storer said: the poet ' caused … to be placed in it' [The Moss House]. Cowper was a friend of the Throckmortons, and had the freedom of their estate. His frequent visits to 'The Shrubbery', while not necessarily giving him a sense of ownership, may have indicated his attachment to it, and a sense of the ease that the poet hoped to find whilst in that place:

> Here, free from riot's hated noise,
> Be mine, ye calmer, purer joys,
> A book or friend bestows;
> Far from the storms that shake the great,
> Contentment's gale shall fan my seat,
> And sweeten my repose.[449]

Yet, the hoped-for serenity cannot be found in any of 'The Shrubbery's six verses, which are instilled with a sense of hopelessness against the bleakness of his restless heart. However, at some point later the board was stolen, and Cowper substituted another with rather more optimistic lines rephrased from Book VI of *The Task*:

> No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
> Stillness accompanied with sounds like these,
> Charms more than Silence. Meditation here
> May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
> May give an useful lesson to the head,
> and Learning wiser grow without his Books.
> (VI, 76, 83-87)

In fig. 33, there is a facsimile of these lines in Cowper's handwriting, as it was sent to the painter for the new board. Cowper intimates that whilst he is free from the clamour of Olney, there is some noise present in the Moss House, but it is acceptable to him. The significance of the tolerable noise levels caused him to change line 83 of *The Task* from 'sounds so soft' to be 'sounds like these'. The words also place the inscription and its installation in the Moss House itself, where Cowper's confessed need for variety and movement as well as sensory inputs are brought to a standstill, as he experiences 'stillness' and 'moments' of inspiration. Cowper goes on to make an effective capitalisation of the first letters of the words 'Silence', 'Learning' and 'Books', unlike

[448] E. W. Brayley, *COWPER Illustrated by a series of Views in, or near, the Park of WESTON-UNDERWOOD, Bucks* (London: Vernor and Hood, Poultry, 1804), p. 22. Hereafter cited as: *COWPER Illustrated.*
[449] Brayley, *COWPER Illustrated,* p. 23, and Storer, *Rural Walks*, p. 47.

those in *The Task,* which are in lower-case. Conversely, the word 'and' in line 87 of the poem begins with a capital letter, whereas in the inscription it is in lower-case, perhaps to emphasise the capitalisation of the next word – 'Learning'.

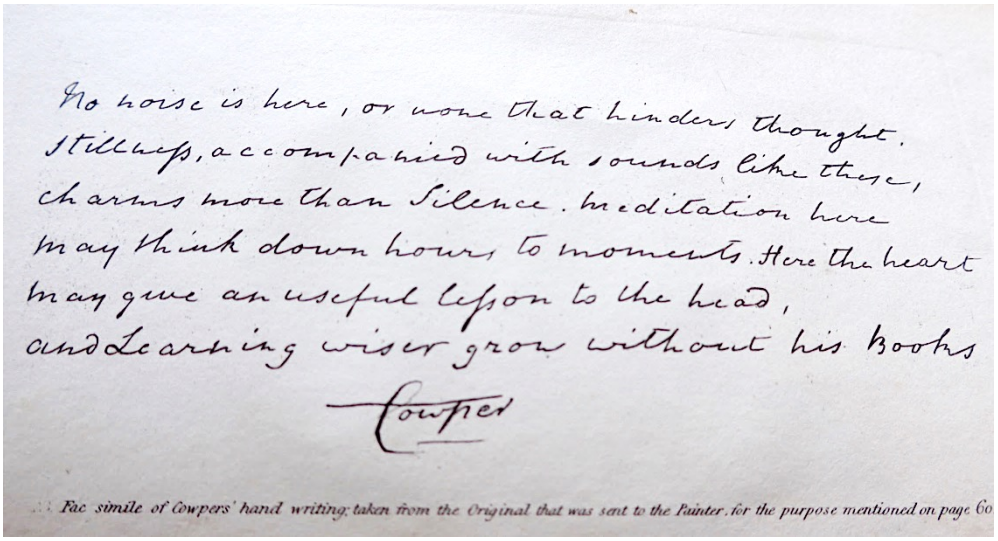

Fig. 33. Cowper's second inscription for the Moss House, from Storer, *Rural Walks,* 1822

The poet seems to be creating a vision of how he wants the landscape to be, and perhaps creating a metaphor for what the garden means to him. The creation of the inscription with its sense of introspective withdrawal might be compared with a line drawing of his ideal garden. He is fixing, stabilising and aestheticizing his thoughts and emotions in the face of his recognized state of misery. The two inscriptions are different versions of him, while *The Task* is its public version.

The repetitive nature of the poet's regular walks to Weston Underwood throughout the seasons may have revised and consolidated his thoughts, since his memories seemed to be triggered by sounds as described in Book VI of *The Task* – 'The Winter Walk at Noon', exemplified in fig. 34.

> There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
> ….
> Some chord in unison with what we hear
> Is touch'd within us, and the heart replies.
> How soft the music of those village bells
> Falling at intervals upon the ear
> In cadence sweet! …
> …
> With easy force it opens all the cells
> Where memory slept. Wherever I have heard
> A kindred melody, the scene recurs,
> And with it all its pleasures and its pains
> (VI, 1-14)

Fig. 34. Birket Foster, 'The Winter Walk at Noon', 1878

Those memories were written in the summer of 1784, and while there had been a brief respite from the freezing winter weather during the spring, Cowper described the 'unpleasant Summer [as one that] makes me wish for Winter… such [gloomy] weather when the days are longest, makes a double Winter, and my spirits feel that it does. We now have frosty mornings, and so cold a wind, that even at high noon we have been obliged to break off our walk on the southern side of the garden and seek shelter'.[450] However, some fine weather in September 1784 after 'a most wintry June, July and August', may have stimulated his haste to finish the transcript of *The Task.*[451] Cowper wrote from the greenhouse:

> I sit with all the windows [of the greenhouse] and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees, but if I lived in a Hive I should hardly hear more of their music ... their hum ... is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that Nature utters are delightfull'.[452]

Nevertheless, once *The Task* was complete in October 1784, the cold weather continued until April 1785, and Cowper wrote that 'A Country render'd impassable by frost [kept him] so close a prisoner'.[453] The on-going wintry conditions directly affected the poet who had been almost always confined to the house, and composing in freezing surroundings. During that time, Cowper's musings were soothed by the influence of the wafted strains of the village bells, and the sounds of Nature, while the act of remembering brought back the past in 'comprehensive views', so:

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[450] *Letters*, II, pp. 254-256 (21 June 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[451] *Letters,* II, pp. 274-275 (11 September 1784), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[452] *Letters,* II, pp. 277-279 (18 September 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[453] *Letters,* II, pp. 321-322 (22 January 1785), W. C. to Joseph Hill.

That in a few short moments I retrace
(As in a map the voyager his course,)
The windings of my way through many years.
(VI, 16-18)

The map in fig. 35 illustrates the area in which Cowper rambled on his way to Weston Park. The wide, slow-moving River Ouse with its maze of small streams and drainage dykes crosses a flat, verdant plain between gradually rising gravel terraces on either side.

Fig. 35. Map of the area of William Cowper's Daily Walks, 1895

As Cowper walked from Olney across the fields and watery meadows of the River Ouse, he would have been able to see the village of Weston Underwood with its pale stone buildings on the gently rising horizon, approximately a mile and a half away. That distance may have represented a stage to be achieved in order to fulfil the expectation of known pleasures to be revisited, and the prospect of leaving Olney behind. The walk with its gradual ascent allowed the poet to cross a boundary between the busy world of Olney and a quieter place of reflection and contemplation, from which he could look down to the spire of Olney Church and much of the town, as illustrated in fig. 36.

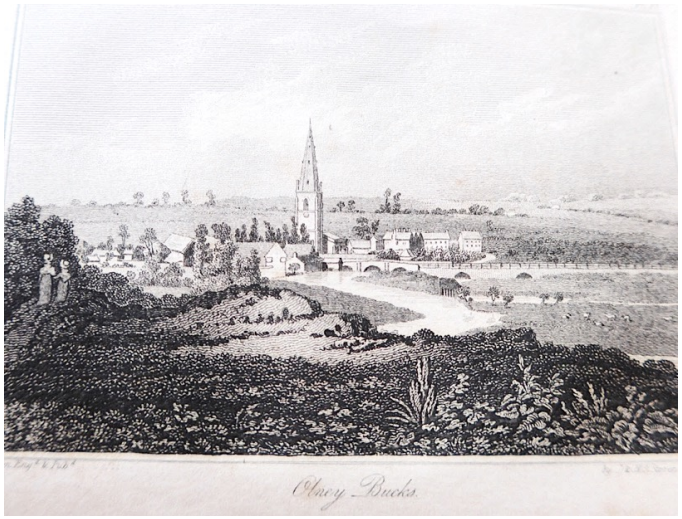

Fig. 36. Storer, 'Olney' from the South West, 1822

There was also the extensive prospect of steeply undulating ground seen in every direction with landmarks such as: the square tower of Clifton Church, the village of Emberton with its embattled church tower, several large mansions, and 'The Shrubbery'. There were also features mentioned in *The Task* such as: 'The Alcove', the 'Colonnade' and the 'Peasant's Nest', all enlivened by rural sounds which 'exhilarate the spirit, and restore the tone of languid Nature' (I, 181-182). Once *The Task* had been published in October 1785, the resumption of correspondence with his cousin Lady Hesketh marked a major change, and Cowper was excited to be able to show her his 'prospects, the hovel, the Alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described'.[454]

However, such enthusiasm is mediated by Jarvis who points out that: 'the network of positive and negative connotations of walking/wandering is more complicated in '*The Task'* than it is in most poems of the period'. There are 'social and religious contexts … overlapping in an unresolved tension'. He gives the example of Cowper's encounter with a band of gipsies in Book 1 – 'a vagabond and useless tribe' who prefer 'squalid sloth to honourable toil' (I, 559, 579). Cowper's ambivalence about walking comes to light in those lines, as his sense of the freedom comes into conflict with his suspicion of other social classes and his 'disapproval of fecklessness and parasitism' – 'Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal' (I, 573).[455] Jarvis asserts that the verb 'wander' in particular is regularly overwritten with prejudicial religious significance in *The Task*. Cowper talks joyfully of his familiarity with the wildlife in his neighbouring woods and fields: 'Here unmolested, through whatever sign | The sun proceeds, I wander' (VI, 295-296), as he performs his appointed role in the divine '… economy of nature's realm' (VI, 579). This contrasts with the poet's comparison of the man who has seen 'the lamp of truth', and who 'no longer

[454] *Letters*, II, pp. 474-477 (9 February 1786), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.
[455] Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 81.

wanders lost' (V, 845, 847), and he who wanders 'bemazed in endless doubt' (V, 848). Jarvis concludes that distance from personal subject matter, and a deeper engagement with evangelical rhetoric assists Cowper to build on the idea of wandering which becomes opposed to directness as a way of truth, although he wishes 'To walk with God, to be divinely free' (V, 722). As I have intimated, the activity of 'wandering' was an important aspect of the poet's exertion, both physically and mentally, and something that he did consciously in his garden as well as on his daily walks in the surrounding area of Olney. At times, Cowper found that his labour of close contact with nature inspired his belief in contiguity with its creator, and prompted 'remembrance of a present God' (VI, 252).

3.8 Other Viewpoints

The complexity of Cowper's feelings as he walked to Weston was not transferred to those who later endeavoured to comment on the routes he took. An attempt to follow Cowper's path today is soon thwarted, as nearly all the features have gone, and since much of the land is under private ownership, one's way is barred. However, soon after Cowper's death in 1800, the topographer Edward Wedlake Brayley attempted to write down the itinerary of Cowper's walks in Weston Park. He tried to 're-tread [Cowper's] footsteps', although as early as 1804, he perceived that there had been 'considerable change'.[456] Mostly, the poet's descriptions in *The Task* follow the route that Brayley depicted, although Cowper generally included his memories of parts of the walk when they were triggered by other imaginative thoughts related to the essence of the moment, rather than describing the route for its own sake. Also, whilst his route through the Throckmorton estate figures in Book I – 'The Sofa', elements re-surface elsewhere in the poem. Like Brayley, Cowper soon expands in Book I on the feature of a small farmhouse on a neighbouring estate, which he called the 'Peasant's Nest', shown in fig. 37.

[456] Brayley, *COWPER Illustrated*, pp. 3-27.

Fig. 37. J. Greig, 'The Peasant's Nest', 1804

This was a small thatched cottage almost completely obscured by surrounding elms, and seen from the high walk in Weston Park, the only place where it could be seen to advantage. Cowper wrote that he had 'often looked wistfully at a snug cottage, which on account of it situation at a distance from noise and disagreeable objects, seemed to promise me all I could wish or expect'.[457] At first, it was perceived as an ideal secluded spot for contemplation:

> And hidden as it is, and far remote
> From such unpleasing sounds as haunt the ear
> In village or in town…
> …
> Oft have I wish'd the peaceful covert mine.
> Here, I have said, at least I should possess
> The poet's treasure, silence, and indulge
> The dreams of fancy, tranquil and secure.
> (I, 228-210, 233-236)

These lines reveal that Cowper was seeing poetically, as his vision is one of make-believe. He is seeing the panorama before him as a picture, and not something that was real. The poet sought peace and joy in the presence of nature, and from a distance, this small cottage that was seen across undulating ground appeared idyllic. However, this was a fantasy in which Cowper saw himself as a hermit, untrammelled by the world, in a different place, familiar yet unfamiliar, and remote. Conversely, the gently euphoric moment is quickly dashed when he exclaims that the 'the wretch' who lives 'in that still retreat' has no water, is poorly fed, and without the convenience of a baker who makes a regular personal delivery announced by the creak of his panniers full of

[457] *Letters*, I, pp. 507-509 (16 August 1781), W. C. to John Newton.

bread. In spite of the seemingly sublime appearance and situation of the cottage, Cowper realizes that it is a place for a lowly peasant, rather than one for a man like him who expects to be well served. He wanted both things: the perceived seclusion of the location of the cottage, together with all the conveniences of Olney to which he had become accustomed, as he adopted powerfully contradictory positions at the same time. Contrariwise, Brayley is somewhat more expansive in his comments about the view from the cottage to the village of Emberton, illustrated in fig. 38, with a 'bold swell of sloping hills in the foreground, contrasted with the softened tones of distant landscape, richly variegated [which] forms an effect, beyond description, pleasing and picturesque'.[458] Cowper may not have seen that view, as he might not have visited the cottage, which was not part of the Throckmorton Estate. In this instance, the beauty of the prospect was a secondary issue for the poet, for despite his misgivings about Olney, and his professed need for solitude, in such circumstances of possible deprivation and discomfort, Cowper declared: 'If solitude makes scant the means of life | Society for me!' (I, 248-249).

Fig. 38. Birket Foster, 'Emberton Village and Church', 1878

Brayley says little about the walk from the 'Peasant's Nest' through the 'Colonnade' of chestnut trees shown in fig. 39, that is revealed after passing through a small tree plantation, but Cowper is more forthcoming. He lingers thoughtfully as his memory allows him to expand on its significance as a 'Monument of ancient taste', and regrets that such a notable feature was 'now scorn'd'.

> Our fathers knew the value of a screen
> From sultry suns, and in their shaded walks
> And long-protracted bowers, enjoy'd at noon
> The gloom and coolness of declining day.
> (I, 255-258)

[458] Brayley, *COWPER Illustrated*, p. 9.

Fig. 39. Birket Foster, 'The Colonnade', 1878

Cowper esteems the downhill interlude of calm and shade, and the regularity of its planting. However he gives prominence to the sudden surprise of the steep drop at the end, although Brayley infers that the whole 'Colonnade' was 'extremely precipitant and abrupt'. The poet may have consciously created a much more dramatic moment as the 'Rustic Bridge' shown in fig. 40, came into view with 'a gulf in which the willows dip | Their pendant boughs, stooping as if to drink' (I, 268-269).

Fig. 40. Storer, 'The Rustic Bridge', 1822

Brayley is rather more expansive about the scene that would have faced Cowper, describing it as 'remarkable for its wild and romantic beauty', a personal and perhaps conventional opinion that was devoid of the drama and poetic overtones invested in the scene by the poet. This is a continuous feature of Brayley's account, in that while he attempts to give a factual account of

what he perceives as the route of Cowper's walk, he cannot see it from the poet's point of view. Cowper keenly set up the next dramatic moment in his poem, as he wanted to climb up the other steep side of the 'gulf' to attain the view of: 'the proud alcove | That crowns it!' (I, 278-279).

Fig. 41. Storer,'The Alcove from the Avenue', 1804

Cowper delights in his arrival at the 'Alcove', described by Brayley as 'a sexagon, of a light and graceful form, composed of wood'.[459] Brayley is interested in its history, its role as a 'noble ornament', and its convenience as a resting place 'in the face of a delightful and extensive prospect'. These were all features that were important to Cowper's sense of self and his vision of what the landscape should be. However instead, the poet focuses on the condition of the structure and the damage caused 'By rural carvers, who with knives deface| The panels, leaving an obscure rude name| In characters uncouth, and spelt amiss' (I, 281-283). They are people he dismisses as clowns who have defiled his vision in a crude and ignorant way. Nevertheless Cowper immediately turns outwards from the degraded enclosed space of the 'Alcove', and takes an authoritative view as the panorama before him, illustrated in fig. 42, inspires his imagination:

> Now roves the eye
> And posted on this speculative height
> Exults in its command. The sheep-fold here
> Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
> …
> Each to his choice, soon whiten all the land.
> (I, 288-291, 294)

[459] Brayley, *COWPER Illustrated*, p. 12.

Fig. 42. Storer, 'View from the Alcove', 1822

In an echo of Thomson who wrote: 'Meantime you gain the height, from whose fair brow | The bursting prospect spreads immense around', Cowper again invokes the 'eye' to survey the scene.[460] The scattered Miltonic movement of the sheep encourages Cowper's eye to look in other directions, to other scenes and colours in the 'spacious map' of the landscape highlighted by the setting sun as it finds the distant 'molten glass' of the Ouse which 'glitters' and then 'retires'. Storer notes that the expansive view to the southeast is particularly interesting and varied with the spire of Olney church 'towering from the foliage like an obelisk'.[461] Nonetheless, Brayley writes matter-of-factly that the 'Avenue presents itself directly in front'. However, the poet focuses directly on an apparent steep dip in the ground that Brayley dismisses as 'a narrow channel to drain the hollow'. He marvels at Cowper's unbounded poetic licence that raises 'the minutest trifle to the appearance of dignity and consequence'.[462] Contrariwise, Cowper's poetic imagination had sensed the presence of a female spirit who would replenish a small stream, perhaps through seeping groundwater as it glittered in wintry sunlight. He was imaginatively influenced by his classical education where rivers were sometimes personified by reclining figures pouring water from urns. The implicit connection between Cowper's perception of flowing water and the poet's mind anticipates later conceptions of artistic creativity, as Hunt has argued elsewhere that moving water, often organised by structures such as pools, rills and fountains provides 'a machinery of meditation … where the expressive character of water determines mental activity'.[463]

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[460] Thomson, *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence*, p. 28. Extract from 'Spring', 950-951.
[461] Storer, *Rural Walks*, p. 37.
[462] Brayley, *COWPER Illustrated*, p. 14.
[463] J. D. Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 85.

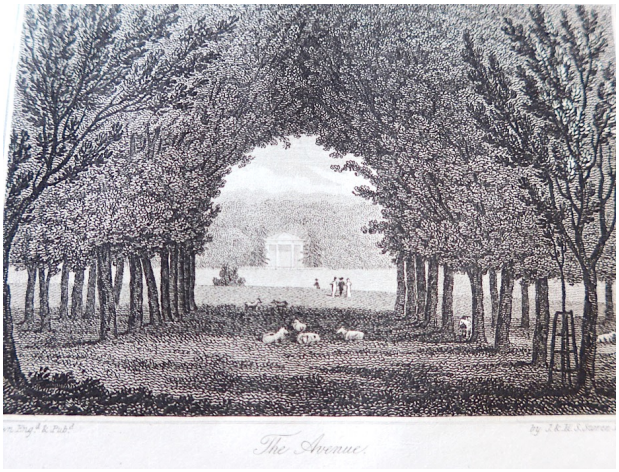

Fig. 43. Storer, 'The Avenue', with the Alcove in the distance, 1822

A conventional eighteenth-century image of 'The Avenue' is shown in fig. 43, while the poet's eye roves and takes a more freely associative approach, as its view of the scene remains fanciful. The trees of 'The Avenue' form a 'graceful arch' that takes on the significance of a cathedral and is reminiscent of other avenues that have been felled. Cowper was aware of the 'hands divine' that created the landscape, but unlike others, perhaps like Brayley, who simply see the features of the landscape before them, that does not apply to those with a:

> mind that has been touch'd from heaven … taught to read His wonders … The soul that sees him, or receives sublimed new faculties … Discerns in all things … A ray of heavenly light gilding all forms Terrestrial … (V, 796-811)

In his discourse on the picturesque, William Gilpin, wrote 'that every admirer of *picturesque beauty,* is an admirer also of the *beauty of virtue;* and that every lover of nature reflects, that 'Nature is but a name for an *effect,* | Whose *cause* is God'. He added that: 'If however the admirer of nature can turn his amusements to a higher purpose; … great scenes can inspire him with religious awe'.[464] I suggest that the subtle difference between Gilpin's remarks and those of Cowper can be attributed to the poet's perceived immanence from God, who was part of his being, and whose activities were already imbued with 'a higher purpose', and 'awe'. As Cowper gazes at the landscape his imagination responds to the elements:

> The chequer'd earth seems restless as a flood
> Brush'd by the wind. So sportive is the light
> Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,
> Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,
> And darkening and enlightening, as the leaves
> Play wanton, every moment, every spot.
> (I, 344-349)

[464] Gilpin, 'On Picturesque Travel', in *Three Essays* (London, 1792), p. 47.

In this extract from *The Task,* Thomson, who in The Seasons wrote a lengthy and dramatic passage on the subject of fishing, may have inspired Cowper. While Thomson concentrates on the reality of the practice and effects of fishing, Cowper uses the images of movement inherent in Thomson's descriptions of rushing water, struggling worms and fish, and lively rays of sunshine, in another way.[465] Cowper looks up to the 'airy', 'light', 'yet aweful' arch of trees above (I, 341-342), and reflects on the shadows dancing on the earth before him. In the absence of living forms, the poet is released from earthly ties and once again reaches towards a heavenly or spiritual response to his environment, to achieve poetic self-expression.

Brayley's depiction of Cowper's walk is a useful and important adjunct to a reading of *The Task*. His plain descriptions of the features of his walk may be contrasted with the poet's viewpoint. This may be partly attributed to the number of times Brayley attempted the walk, and in which season. Cowper had made the journey hundreds of times during his residence at Olney, and the main features of the landscape may have become well understood due to familiarity. Instead, the poet was able to let his imagination wander freely as he gazed upon a landscape instilled with 'The unambiguous footsteps of … God'. He 'reads nature whom the lamp of truth | Illuminates' and 'no longer wanders lost' (V, 812, 845-847), 'Happy who walks with him!' (VI, 247). Cowper was particularly receptive to the effects of atmospheric changes on distant objects, and how their shapes and colours changed according to the light, and wind movements that:

> … lull the spirit while they fill the mind,
> Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,
> And all their leaves fast-fluttering, all at once.
> (I, 187-189)

Cowper transfers the sensation to inner life, as he merges natural and internal landscapes. He evokes the responding consciousness as much as the world to which it responds, while the reader overhears the poet's thoughts on the scene he is viewing. Cowper gives the impression of a person whose deliberations are associative and exploratory, while fluctuating in and out of the present. He wrote:

> Every thing I see in the fields, is to me an Object, and I can look at the same rivulet or at a handsome tree every day of my life with new pleasure … I never in all my life have let slip the opportunity of breathing fresh air and of conversing with nature, when I could fairly catch it.[466]

Cowper was defining his ability to see and remember the details of the changing elements of the countryside in which he wandered, whether they were near or far, large or small. He implies an

[465] Thomson, *The Seasons and The Castle of Indolence*, pp. 13-15. Extract from 'Spring', 379-442.
[466] *Letters*, II, pp. 177-179 (10 November 1783), W. C. to William Unwin.

abstracted vision of the landscape that allowed him to have visionary ideas that were separate from reality, whether he was in a small location, or in a panoramic setting.

Invigorated by the sensations he feels, Cowper then enters the 'Wilderness' with its 'well-roll'd walks | With curvature of slow and easy sweep' to which he gives scant portrayal (I, 351-352). By contrast, Brayley's description is more detailed, as is James Storer's subsequent account in 1822, and may infer that some of the handsome urns, statuary and the 'Gothic Temple' were placed there later, post-dating the publication of *The Task*. Storer reports that there was a statue of a recumbent lion 'on a basement at the end of a mossy walk'. Also, one of the urns was engraved with an epitaph to 'a favourite Pointer, who bore the name of Neptune', and was 'Pointer to Sir John Throckmorton', while the other urn was inscribed to a spaniel named Fop. A serpentine path led to the 'Gothic Temple', a 'little arbour, which often afforded the Poet a resting-place', as illustrated in fig. 44. At the end of an 'elegant vista' stood a 'bust mounted upon a pedestal: Cowper supposed this to be a likeness of his favourite Homer'. The bust had been placed in 'The Shrubbery' at Weston Lodge during Cowper's residence there, and Storer noted that: 'The shrubbery was very generally admired, being a delightful little labyrinth, composed of flowering shrubs, and adorned with gravel walks, having convenient seats placed at appropriate distances'.[467]

Fig. 44. J. Greig, The Gothic 'Temple in the Wilderness', 1804

The 'deeply-shaded, winding path' leads from the 'Wilderness' to the 'Grove', where unlike Brayley, Cowper discerns beauty beyond its boundary.

> Here unmolested, through whatever sign
> The sun proceeds, I wander. Neither mist,
> Nor freezing sky, nor sultry, checking me,
> Nor stranger intermeddling with my joy.
> (VI, 295-298)

[467] Storer, *Rural Walks*, pp. 40-44.

It is my contention that the constant recurrence of Cowper's walks to Weston was an important part of the interiorization of his thoughts. He wrote that:

> ... with few associates, in remote
> And silent woods I wander
> …
> With few associates, and not wishing more.
> Here much I ruminate, as much I may …
> (III, 117-121)

So far I have written about sights and sounds in their absence, and as it is no longer possible to 're-tread' the route of Cowper's walks, my thoughts which are based on my observations of Cowper's writings are speculative. I suggest that the sights and sounds that occurred during those walks, differentiating between the physical and the imaginative, were instrumental to the narrative of his composition, just as the garden at Olney was a place where the poet could wander in privacy, in a world of sensation and perception:

> T'arrest the fleeting images that fill
> The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast.
> (II, 290-291)

The mirror was held up to the receptive mind of the poet; but as Hagstrum says: 'the mind itself ... was in its turn held up to visible nature. The poet's wit lay in combining the details of nature, not in creating them'.[468] Cowper expanded on this, as he remarked on the pleasure to be gained from 'the shifts and turns … to which the mind resorts' to find the appropriate words to 'pencil off … a faithful likeness of the forms he views'. This occupation is so pleasing that it will 'steal away … themes of sad import'. However, the poet adds that his readers will be unaware of the arduous nature of composition, and not appreciate his words in the same light; he is a happy man to be lost in his own musings (II, 285-310). John Dryden wrote in his poem *The Spanish Friar* (1681): 'There is a pleasure sure in being mad which none but madmen know!', and Cowper may have paraphrased those meaningful words when he wrote: 'There is a pleasure in poetic pains | Which only poets know' (II, 285-286). Cowper justified his sequestered existence and his chosen occupation; he felt that he was not slothful but instead worked for:

> ... the service of mankind.
> He that attends to his interior self,
> …
> Has business; feels himself engaged to achieve
> No unimportant, though a silent task.
> (II, 372-378)

[468] J. H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 140.

3.9 Concluding Reflections

Cowper's observation of nature represents a decisive break with the poetry of the 'prospect' and has been highly regarded for the movements at eye level that it traces. Property and leisure were the prerequisites for a permanent interest and a broad perspective of the environment, in an ancient relationship between landed leisure and the right to govern. However, Conrad Brunström argues that a just distribution of landed property is precisely the sort of extension of 'interest' that is needed for long-term political participation. Cowper's religious conception of 'interest', 'prospect' and 'inheritance' contributes to the rhetoric of the contemporary political landscape, although his 'judgmental perspective [was] stereotypically redolent of leisured class privilege'.[469] This 'Son of God' surveys the scene with uncertain yet 'gentrified proprietorial composure':

> He looks abroad into the varied field
> Of Nature, and though poor perhaps compared
> With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
> Calls the delightful scen'ry all his own.
> His are the mountains and the vallies his,
> And the resplendent rivers. His t'enjoy
> With a propriety that none can feel,
> But who with filial confidence inspired,
> Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,
> And smiling say – my father made them all.
> (V, 736-747)

Yet, Cowper has space to refute the quasi-religiosity of the prospect at greater length:

> Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
> His works …
> Thine eye shall be instructed, and thine heart
> Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight …
> (V, 779-783)

Still, animals grazing on the mountaintop are oblivious to the distant scene before them, unlike man who:

> … rests content
> With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
> But not its author.
> (V, 791-793)

Cowper represents natural religion as a false aesthetic, since inspiration is needed to inform the spectator's vision, and Brunström finally asserts that: 'Poetry per se cannot therefore mediate

[469] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, pp. 132-134, for a contextualized discussion on the use of the word 'interest'.

Cowper's existence, without a creative synthesis of receptive awe and creatively provisional conjecture'.[470] This point is consistent with my argument regarding the possibilities of aesthetic response to the garden. Cowper does not own land, he commands prospects in a far more provisional and peripatetic way than earlier poets; he describes movement through the landscape, and his own imaginative response.

Cowper recognized that it was difficult to understand where some of the connections within and between the books of *The Task* came from, writing: 'The Sofa is ended but not finish'd … Do not imagine however that I lownge over it. On the contrary I find it severe exercise to mould it and fashion it to my mind'.[471] As Priestman explicates: Cowper's wish for 'ease and leisure' is not apparent in the first two books which encompass 'strenuous georgic and satirical-sermonizing' until the 'Horatian formula has been eventually established in the middle two [books] when the first two can be retrospectively made to fit it'. Priestman adds that the last two books use 'the evasive device of a winter setting [which] enables 'ease to become an unremarked-on precondition of the task of contemplation', and that 'the poem remains essentially an exploratory process'.[472] I agree that Cowper continually probes his responses to the sensations that assail his consciousness throughout the poem. However, I have argued that since *The Task* was composed during the long winter of 1783/4, in my view winter was not an evasive device. Instead, it was the essential stimulus for Cowper's creativity, which occurred through the extraordinary circumstances that came together in the place of Olney, at that moment in time.

Cowper had written earlier on the subject of familiar style in verse-writing: 'It is of all stiles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose … is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake.[473] He also remarked: 'The search after poetical expression, the rhime and the number are all affairs of some difficulty, they amuse indeed but are not to be attained without study, and engross perhaps a larger share of the attention than the subject itself'.[474] Like Thomson in *The Seasons*, Cowper wrote *The Task* in heroic iambic blank verse, and as Strachan and Terry point out: 'blank verse is more expansive and allows poets to build long argument… The poet may feel 'free to deviate from the frame whenever the sense of his lines dictates and to offer musical variation from the potential dreariness of unmodulated poetry'.[475] Indeed, Jarvis declares that it 'does seem irresistible to posit a synergy between Cowper's peripatetic habits, the loose, open-ended connectivity of *The Task* as improvised epic, and blank

[470] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 137.
[471] *Letters*, II, p. 269 (3 August 1784), W. C. to William Bull.
[472] Priestman, *Cowper's Task,* pp. 11-12.
[473] *Letters*, II, pp. 9-11 (17 January 1782), W. C. to William Unwin.
[474] *Letters*, II, pp. 224-226 (19 March 1784), W. C. to John Newton.
[475] J. Strachan, and R. Terry, *Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 87.

verse as the enabling medium of its languid philosophical travels'.[476] Cowper's commitment to the pleasurable technical aspects of composition, allowed him to distil the information he had gleaned from newspapers:

> … in chase of terms
> Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win, --
> …
> Than by the labour and the skill it cost,
> Are occupations of the poet's mind
> So pleasing, and that steal away the thought
> With such address, from themes of sad import
> (II, 288-300)

The poet infers that he is not simply taking the information as truth, but is able to put his own interpretation on it, through intellectual and physical effort. He found the serial nature of the news, its brevity and immediacy, its potential for change and redundancy, and the multitude of thoughts it presented to him to be problematic. Cowper likened the search for news in his imagination to a bee busily foraging for pollen:

> He travels and expatiates, as the bee
> From flower to flower, so he from land to land;
> (IV, 107-108)

The image of the bee occurs in Bachelard's work as he writes of the outcome of the sun's rays striking an object, and bringing with it the sound of bees, which in turn merge with the buzzing thoughts in one's head, so that the head becomes 'the hive of the sounds of the sun'.[477] Bachelard is referring to an image of summer, but while Cowper was imagining 'winter' in those verses, he may have been reminiscing about warmer days when ideas and thoughts accumulated in his mind, as he reflected in his poem 'On the Same':

> There Mem'ry, like the bee, that's fed
> From Flora's balmy store,
> The quintessence of all he read
> Had treasur'd up before.
> ... The flow'rs are gone – but still we find
> The honey on his tongue.[478]

Cowper regarded poetry as his 'steady occupation', and a remedy for his '*anguish of mind'.* He confessed that while he was writing *The Task*, he was '*very often most supremely unhappy*'. Nevertheless, the poet recognized the liberation of craftsmanship that had transpired, and he

[476] Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel,* p. 83.
[477] Bachelard, *Poetics,* pp. 226-227.
[478] G. Standfast, *The Poetical Letters of William Cowper Esq* (London: Charles Daly, C19th), p. 138. 9-16.

sensed that his labour had real value: 'A poet may, if he pleases, be of a little use to the world'.[479] Indeed, Cowper's contribution to his social and economic well being amongst his family and friends was comprised of literary labour. Although he worked in his garden, with additional help, his main occupation was the creation of his greatest work, *The Task,* and from his place of retirement. Olney gave him the time, and was the place that provided him with an impetus to connect with the world. As Brunström says: 'Cowper … absorbed, refined and disseminated much of the 'mainstream' thought of the age in which he lived'.[480] Certainly, 'the late eighteenth-century garden is a metaphorical minefield, suffused with emblems of political oppression, revolutionary licentiousness, and social decay'. Nevertheless, amongst all that, 'Cowper believed the relationship between humanity and the natural world is one that must be carefully balanced, requiring a sensitive and humble awareness of the real beauties of the landscape'.[481] Critics tend to note that Cowper 'oscillates' between Religion, Politics and Nature, a position that Brunström argues is actually more akin to 'tense, symbiotic relations *between* values', rather than a preservation of 'the integrity of the terms between which he moves'.[482] *The Task* would influence Romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth, although as Bill Hutchings says: '*The Task* could not be like *The Prelude*. For Wordsworth the poetic experience validates itself; for Cowper it requires external validation'.[483] Within the context of the co-dependence of the poet's public and private selves, it has been my argument that the validating environment at Orchard Side, Olney and its proximity to Weston Underwood, set the stage for the originality of Cowper's composition of his great work, *The Task*.

[479] *Letters*, II, pp. 454-459 (16 January, 1786), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.
[480] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 11.
[481] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 115.
[482] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 20.
[483] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 18. Quoting Bill Hutchings, *The Poetry of William Cowper* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 196.

Chapter 4: Dove Cottage – A Wild Retreat

4.1 Introduction

My intention is to look at the garden created by William and Dorothy Wordsworth at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, Cumbria where they lived from 1799 to 1808, and where Wordsworth is considered to have produced his finest work. I will examine it from my perception that it was a phenomenological place, and one that had a direct influence on Wordsworth's creativity and his poetry. In so doing, I am drawing on the writings of several modern theorists to underpin my argument. For example, Monika Langer declares that it has 'become necessary to reconsider the nature of sensing … Perception can no longer be collapsed into knowledge, nor can the creating of connections remain the prerogative of the understanding'. She asserts that 'a new dimension calling for new conceptions is thus opened up', what Maurice Merleau-Ponty designates as '*a phenomenal field'.* It is not a space for 'a disembodied mind', but rather an 'ambiguous domain' in which perceptual experience can be discovered. Reflection is the activity of an individual philosopher and is always conditioned by his situation in the world. The phenomenal field can provide the means to revive perceptual experience and induce consciousness to embark on radical reflection.[484] As Lydia Goehr notes: 'Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological existentialism depends … on his view of intentionality explored … as embodied thinking in movement'.[485] While Edward Relph declares that: 'it is just not possible to draw boundaries around landscapes or to define and analyse systematically the individuality of a particular place'. He adds that there is little likelihood of formulating the elusive relationships between continuity and particularity in places, and that the best that can be achieved is a clear description of the distinctiveness of a place. [486] Also, according to Arnold Berleant, the precise content of a theory of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience has yet to be developed.[487] Nevertheless, I will attempt to contribute to the debate when I look at eighteenth-century aesthetic theory as well as modern theorists, in order to build a picture of William Wordsworth's existence at Dove Cottage, within the context of its location in the Vale of Grasmere, Cumbria, and to identify the significant inspirational effects of the garden on his creativity.

It is recognized that Wordsworth was influenced by many other writers, and according to Martin Priestman: 'Wordsworth read *The Task* when young'. Indeed, Duncan Wu suggests a date of July 1785, 'soon after' Cowper's poem was published, and twelve years before Wordsworth

[484] M. Langer, *Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 15-20.
[485] L. Goehr, *Elective Affinities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 5.
[486] E. Relph, *Rational Landscapes and Humanistic Geography* (London: Croom Helm Ltd. 1981), p. 174.
[487] A. Berleant, *The Aesthetic Field: A Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Cybereditions Corp., 2000), p. 161.

began work on *The Prelude,* in 1797.[488] Priestman adds that: '*The Task* is an important staging-post on the way to *The Prelude's* own synthesis'.[489] The poem's self-reflexive nature 'responded to changing conceptions of the 'self' in order to 'fix 'the wavering balance of [his] mind''.[490] As part of his discussion on self-referential composition, Paul Jay notes that: 'Wordsworth was writing at a time when art, thought, and self-consciousness' were breaking free from 'theological epistemology, and when what Hegel called the 'practical activity' of aesthetic cognition and representation was itself coming to be thought of as a spiritual and self-transforming act'.[491] Wordsworth placed great value on his own childhood experience spent in Cockermouth, illustrated in fig. 45, and where the gardens of his home have been restored to their considered state in the poet's time.

Fig. 45. R. Sands, after Thomas Allom, 'Cockermouth', 1832

The illustration shows Cockermouth Castle in the centre with the poet's house to its right on the River Derwent, that 'beauteous Stream'. The image displays the wide, open space in which Wordsworth lived with its distant views of the fells on the horizon, and it becomes evident how important the sense of 'place' was to the poet throughout his life, and how the landscape in which he lived affected his imagination, as did the gardens he created together with his sister Dorothy. At the house in Cockermouth, a riverside terrace borders a walled garden with fruit, vegetables, trees, herbs and scented flowers, and Wordsworth was free to play in its garden and neighbouring fields. He later described in *The Prelude* how the river's 'steady cadence' gave him:

[488] D. Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading, 1779-1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 38. Hereafter cited as *WR 1779-1799.*
[489] Priestman, *Cowper's Task,* p. 162. Referencing M. Moorman, *William Wordsworth: the Early Years* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 74, 100.
[490] W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), (New York/London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1979), I. 650, referenced in P. Jay, *Being in the Text* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974)
[491] Jay, *Being in the Text*, p. 33.

A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
(I, 284-285)[492]

The poet was developing his imagination through his childhood experiences - the 'seed-time' of his soul: those that brought fear as well as those that brought pleasure. He wrote that no man could be:

> … utterly insensible to the colours, forms, or smell of flowers, the sounds and motions of birds and beasts, the appearances of the sky and heavenly bodies, the warmth of a fine day, the terror and uncomfortableness of a storm.[493]

Those early experiences stayed with Wordsworth throughout his life, bringing 'New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers'. He remembered:

…those wilds
In which my early feelings had been nurs'd,
And naked valleys, full of caverns, rocks,
And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
Echoes and Waterfalls, and pointed crags
That into music touch the passing wind.
(VIII, 791-796)

The subtle effects of the sensory properties of the places in which the poet lived were essential to his imagination, and I will discuss those dwellings in terms of eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, as well as more recent work which will shed new light upon their effects. As Herbert Lindenberger points out: 'nearly all of Wordsworth's major poetry was written during the years that covered the composition of *The Prelude'* while he lived at Dove Cottage, Grasmere. Lindenberger then poses the question: 'How are we to account for the brief flowering and rapid decline of the genius of one our greatest poets?'[494] In order to make a contribution to that debate by putting it within the frame of reference of the places in which Wordsworth lived, I will focus on the importance of features of the cottage, its garden, and its setting in the landscape of the Vale of Grasmere. Wordsworth's great work -*The Prelude*, is the main example that will be associated with the sensory properties of the environment in which the poet lived, since it conflates both his childhood and the presentation of his direct engagement with his surrounding landscape. As Wordsworth leaves London, the poem begins with an allusion to the powers of nature on his poetical imaginings:

[492] W. Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), I. 608. Quotations from *The Prelude* are cited by book and line.
[493] W. Wordsworth and D. Wordsworth, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805),* ed. by E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 353 (7 June 1802), W. W. to John Wilson. Hereafter cited as *Early Letters*.
[494] H. Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's Prelude* (Princeton, N. J: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. ix.

Oh there is a blessing in this gentle breeze,
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds
And from the sky ...
(I, 1-3)

... this hour
Hath brought a gift that consecrates my joy;
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A corresponding mild creative breeze,
A vital breeze ...
... and is become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation.
(I, 39-47)

Lindenberger notes that: 'the dominating images of *The Prelude* are wind and water, images which by their very nature … allow the poet free range between the observable world and the higher transcendental reality which he wishes to make visible to us'.[495] During the course of this chapter I will elaborate on this point.

4.2 A Dwelling Place

Wordsworth's love of nature extended into his friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and with 'the principle inducement of Coleridge's society', Wordsworth took a year's lease on Alfoxden, a house near Nether Stowey in Somerset. Dorothy Wordsworth wrote of the 'very excellent garden ... at the end of the house, and our favourite parlour, as at Racedown, looks that way'.[496] At Alfoxden, Wordsworth habitually composed poetry while striding up and down the gravel path, a practise that would become a significant, almost ritualistic custom. Such an inspirational routine became particularly noticeable after 20 December 1799, when brother and sister took on Dove Cottage in Grasmere, Cumbria as shown in the plan in fig. 46.

[495] Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's Prelude,* p. 71.
[496] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, pp. 190-191 (14 August 1797), D. W. to Mary Hutchinson.

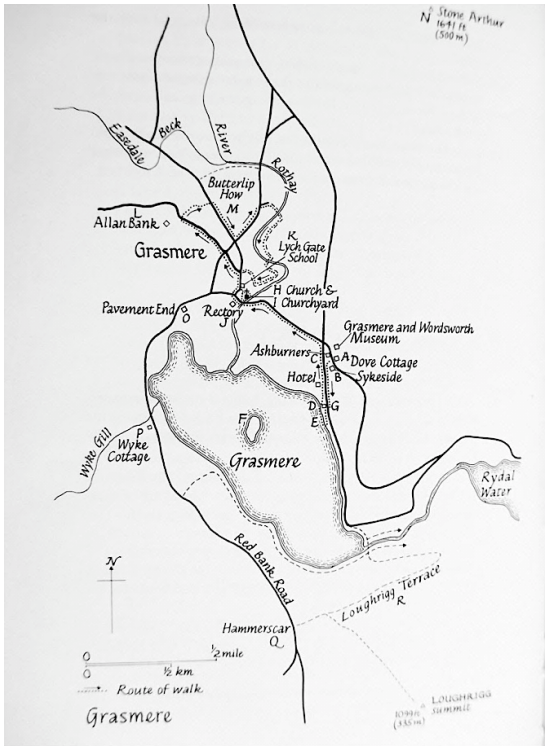

Fig. 46. 'Plan of the environs of Grasmere, Cumbria', 1984

The cottage is in Town End at the southern end of Grasmere, and when Wordsworth lived there it had an almost uninterrupted view of the lake with its island in the middle, as illustrated in fig. 47.

Fig. 47. James Bourne, 'View of Grasmere Lake', 1802

Karl Kroeber notes that the poet's retreat to Grasmere was not 'evasive action' and as I will discuss, Wordsworth may have recognized that the cottage shown in fig. 48, within the context of its setting by the lake in Grasmere, had the potential to be a place that was self-contained and

self-sufficient, and where he could be profoundly at ease.[497] At that time, slate slabs or 'shards' formed the fence in front of Dove Cottage, and similar fences exist today in nearby Ambleside.

Fig. 48. Amos Green, 'Dove Cottage at Town End, Grasmere', 1800

The Public Road to Rydal passed through Town End as shown in fig. 49, where part of Dove Cottage is on the right, and although the traffic may have been light, for Wordsworth it remained an intrusion.[498] Although in apparent contradiction, the poet would later write in *The Prelude*: I love a public road: few sights there are | That please me more (XII, 145-146).

Fig. 49. Thomas Miles Richardson, 'Grasmere from Town End', c 1800

[497] K. Kroeber, 'Home at Grasmere: Ecological Holiness', in G. Gilpin, *Critical Essays on William Wordsworth* (Boston, Mass: G. K. Hall & Co, 1990), pp. 179-195 (p. 182).
[498] W. Knight, *Memorials of Coleorton Being Letters from Coleridge Wordsworth and his Sister Southey and Sir Walter Scott to Sir George and Lady Beaumont of Coleorton Leicestershire, 1803-1834*, ed. by W. Knight, 2 vols (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887), I, pp. 99-103 (1 August 1805), W. W to Sir George Beaumont.

For many years Dorothy had longed for a permanent home, and in a letter to her friend Jane Pollard, she wished for 'a little cottage' with a garden and a 'wood behind the house' that she and William could call their own.[499] It seems that Dove Cottage was equally pleasing to Dorothy, and in a letter to Coleridge, Wordsworth wrote that: 'D is much pleased with the house and *appurtenances* the orchard especially; in imagination she has already built a seat with a summer shed on the highest platform in this our little domestic slip of a mountain ... We mean also to enclose the two or three yards of ground between us and the road, this for the sake of a few flowers, and because it will make it more our own'.[500] This 'summer shed' would be the Moss Hut, the poet's quiet retreat that was not built until late 1804 when, I propose, it would become of enormous importance to Wordsworth's creativity, and enabled him to finish *The Prelude.* Furthermore, Dorothy's immediate response to the garden was an indication of the influence she had on the poet's work, and she herself enjoyed 'the quiet of the moss-hut' where she would write her letters. [501]

Dorothy's journals record the activities that were on-going in the garden as it became more useful, she wrote: 'We have ... a small orchard and a smaller *garden* ... we pulled down a fence which formerly divided it from the orchard. The orchard is very small, but then it is a delightful one from its retirement, and the excessive beauty of the prospect from it'.[502] The 'fence' would have been a shard fence similar to the one at the front of the cottage, and a strong visual barrier in the garden. At that time, brother and sister seemed to be very close, perhaps because they had been separated in childhood on the deaths of their parents, with Dorothy sent to different relatives before being reunited with William sixteen years later when she had, as Pamela Woof declares: 'a strong sense of deprivation', and no other means of support.[503] Dorothy came to rely on William for her safekeeping and a sense of belonging, and anxiously sought his presence. This was particularly evident in 1800 when there are many instances of disquiet expressed in her journals, as she awaited news of William and his return from Yorkshire. The poet valued Dorothy's industrious management of his domestic environment, which left him free for composition, as well as her own writings, which influenced and became part of his own. She was a compliant and willing scribe for his poetic works, and displayed a tolerant ability to discuss and assist in composition. At Dove Cottage, William and Dorothy Wordsworth fashioned a private outdoor place with many vegetables, wild and cultivated flowers, plants foraged in the neighbourhood, an orchard terrace seat, and space to wander. However, the possibility of building a 'summer shed,'

[499] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 97 (10 and 12 July 1793), D. W. to J. Pollard.
[500] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 274 (24 and 27 December 1799), W. W. and D. W. to S. T. Coleridge.
[501] W. Wordsworth and D. Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years*, ed. by E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), pp. 34-36 (17 June 1806), D. W. to Lady Beaumont.
[502] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 295 (10 and 12 September 1800), D. W. to Mrs John Marshall.
[503] D. Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xi. Hereafter cited as *Journals.*

was ever present, and Dorothy noted in early 1802 that she and Wordsworth 'went into the orchard as soon as breakfast was over laid out the situation for our new room & sauntered a while'.[504] The Wordsworths may have already considered their 'new room' to be a writer's retreat at the highest point in the garden, which might be rewarded by a vision of the divine. As such they might have been influenced by Milton's 'Il Penseroso', which Wu notes was 'well known to W'.[505]

Dorothy was deeply affected by the poem, which focuses on melancholy as a stimulus for contemplation and inspired writing, and which was widely read in the eighteenth century. On 3 June 1802, Dorothy wrote that: 'A very affecting letter came from MH (Mary Hutchinson) while I was sitting in the window reading Milton's Penseroso to William'. While on 24 December 1802, she noted that she was listening to William 'reading some of Milton's [sonnets] & the Allegro and Penseroso'.[506] Milton's lines infer that a tranquil melancholic mood was one by which to 'attain | To something like prophetic strain'.[507] In the poem, the narrator invites Melancholy to bring:

> … calm Peace and Quiet,
> …
> And hears the Muses in a ring
> Ay round about Jove's altar sing;
> And add to these retired Leisure,
> That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
> But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
> Him that yon soars on golden wing,
> (45-52)

The narrator imagines poetic visions of Melancholy:

> Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among
> I woo, to hear thy even-song;
> And, missing thee, I walk unseen …
> (63-65)

While a room that casts a gloomy light would make a fine retreat for thoughtful musing:

> … let my lamp, at midnight hour,
> Be seen in some high lonely tower,
> Where I might oft outwatch the Bear,
> (85-87)

[504] D. Wordsworth, *Journals,* p. 58 (24 January 1802), and p. 94 (1 May 1802).
[505] D. Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading, 1800-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 146-147. Hereafter cited as *WR 1800-1815.*
[506] D. Wordsworth, *Journals,* pp. 105 and 134-135.
[507] Milton, 'Il Penseroso', 173-174, in Milton, *English Poems*, p. 28. Quotations from 'Il Penseroso' are cited by line.

In the morning, melancholy would take the narrator: 'To arched walks of twilight groves, |and shadows brown …' (133-134), and hide him 'by some brook,' (139), while the bee hums and the waters murmur, and he would fall into a 'mysterious dream' (147). At the end of his reverie, the narrator imagines that his Muse will 'bring all Heaven before mine eyes' (166), and at last seeks to find:

> … the peaceful hermitage,
> The hairy gown and mossy cell,
> Where I may sit and rightly spell
> Of every star that heaven doth shew,
> And every herb that sips the dew
> …
> These pleasures, Melancholy, give;
> And I with thee will choose to live.
> (168-176)

The narrator speculates paradoxically about the poetic inspiration that would transpire if the imagined goddess of Melancholy he invokes were his Muse. The vision of poetic inspiration offered in 'Il Penseroso' explores contemplative ideas, which could apply to the garden at Dove Cottage, and in particular the Wordsworths' tentative plans for a writer's retreat.

Over time, the imaginative possibilities of the garden evolved, and in December 1804 Wordsworth wrote: 'We have lately built in our little rocky orchard a little circular Hut lined with moss like a wren's nest, and coated on the outside with heath, that stands most charmingly, with several views from the different sides of it, of the Lake, the Valley and the Church'.[508] The poet may have been influenced by the Moss House built within 'The Shrubbery' on the Throckmorton Estate that William Cowper used as a place of repose and which, given his interest in Cowper, Wordsworth may have seen illustrated in Brayley's *Cowper Illustrated*, as shown in fig. 50. This popular book was first published in 1803 and had several reprints, and although Wu does not include it in his list, he notes that Wordsworth subscribed to several libraries and that: 'The Wordsworths were using books belonging to the [Grasmere Subscription] Library in Jan. 1805'.[509]

[508] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 518 (25 December 1804), W. W. to Sir George Beaumont.
[509] Brayley, *COWPER Illustrated*, p. 23, and Wu, *WR 1800-1815*, p. 267.

Fig. 50. Storer, The Moss House in 'The Shrubbery' on The Throckmorton Estate, 1804

Cowper wrote of the Moss House in *The Task* and, as I discussed in Chapter 3, he had an inscription in its praise copied onto a board, which he had placed in that retreat. Wu writes that Wordsworth continued to read *The Task* in subsequent years after he acquired it following its first publication in July 1785.[510] He also suggests that the poet read William Mason's *Poems* between 1785 and 1787, so that Wordsworth may also have considered Mason's poem *The English Garden,* where rustic simplicity in garden architecture is advocated. In Book IV, when Alcander erects a shrine to Nerina, Mason writes of:

> A Shed of twisting roots and living moss,
> With rushes thatch'd, with wattled osiers lin'd.[511]

The types of building being constructed in the Lake District were particularly interesting for Wordsworth, and he was unhappy about inappropriate structures, as he described in: 'Poems on Rural Architecture'.[512] The Hut, which was made of natural materials and blended in with the landscape, embodied the type of architecture of which the poet approved. By contrast, he disapproved of the proposal for a stone 'pleasure-house' on an island in Rydal Water. However, it was not built and the stones were left in a heap, as Wordsworth wrote in an 'Inscription' on that

[510] Wu, *WR 1770 -1799,* pp. 38-39.
[511] Mason, *English Garden*, IV, 115, and Wu, *WR 1770-1799,* p. 97.
[512] W. Wordsworth, 'Poems on Rural Architecture', in *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1797-1800,* ed. by J. Butler and K. Green (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 234-235. Hereafter cited as *Lyrical Ballads*.

subject: 'Lines Written with a Slate pencil upon a Stone, the largest of a heap lying near a deserted Quarry upon one of the Islands at Rydale'.[513] The poet may have made reference to this incident when he wrote to Sir George Beaumont saying: 'I will copy a dwarf inscription which I wrote for it [the Hut] the other day':

> No whimsy of the purse is here,
> No Pleasure-House forlorn;
> Use, Comfort, do this roof endear;
> A tributary Shed to chear
> The little cottage that is near,
> To help it and adorn.[514]

This was perhaps an echo of Cowper's creation of an inscription for the Moss House, and as the choice of words seems to suggest, like Cowper, Wordsworth may have had the inscription placed in the Moss Hut. The tone of the dedication also tends to highlight the differences between the aspirations of the wealthy builder of the Pleasure-House, Sir William Fleming of Rydal Hall who had the leisure time to create such an ostentatious building, which might reflect his perceived status. He did not heed the outrage that might be felt at the sight of a bright white structure amidst the mountainous landscape of the Lake District, and only abandoned the project when he realised that Rydal Water is shallow, and that strangers could easily walk across to the island. Rather than an improvement, for Wordsworth the Pleasure-House represented a destructive force of unlimited potential. The beauty of the place could not satisfy Sir William, instead he had to impose his self-importance into a space where it could be seen and possibly envied. Wordsworth compares the useless qualities of the 'Pleasure-House' with the usefulness and modesty of the Moss Hut, which he refers to as a 'tributary Shed', in keeping with its surroundings. The poet emphasises the clash of aesthetics between people of Sir William's class and wealth, as well as the newly rich, and those who live in more humble surroundings. Wordsworth highlights the differences between a building that is purely symbolic with that of the 'Shed', which was essentially a domestic space and part of Dove Cottage. The poet enjoys Sir William Fleming's folly, as it represents the victory of local forces of nature over human vanity.

The 'Hut' or 'Shed' had assumed an importance in the poet's mind: it was becoming a temple, as he indeed described it to his brother John as 'a charming little Temple'.[515] Dorothy also confirmed its existence: 'we have been busily employed about finishing a little hut or shed, a sort of larger Bird's nest (for it is lined with moss) at the top of our Orchard, a place for my Brother to

[513] Wordsworth, 'Lines Written with a Slate pencil upon a Stone, the largest of a heap lying near a deserted Quarry upon one of the Islands at Rydale', in *Lyrical Ballads,* pp. 209-210.
[514] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 518 (25 December 1804), W. W. to Sir George Beaumont.
[515] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 523 (27 December 1804), W. W. to Capt. John Wordsworth.

retire to for quietness on warm days in winter'.[516] When the Wordsworth family moved to Rydal Mount in 1813, the poet built another summerhouse or 'moss-lined shed' at the highest point in the garden, as shown in fig. 51.

Fig. 51. Anon, 'Summer House by Far Terrace Rydal Mount, 13 August 1850'

This pen and ink sketch, which was drawn three months after Wordsworth's death on 23 April 1850, illustrates the 'mossy shed' which appears to be of circular form. It may be indicative of the appearance of the Moss Hut at Dove Cottage, which Wordsworth would have approached via the Orchard Terrace. At Rydal Mount the moss-lined shed was at the end of the Sloping Terrace, which is parallel with and above Isabella's Terrace, shown in fig. 52. The stone wall on the far right is the northern boundary of the property.

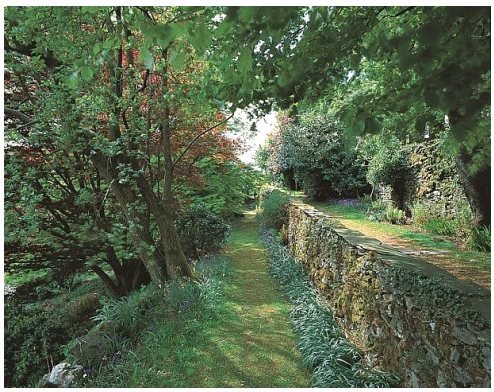

Fig. 52. Isabella's Terrace and the Sloping Terrace at Rydal Mount

[516] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 521 (25 December 1804), D. W. to Lady Beaumont.

The crowded, noisy environment of Dove Cottage may not always have been suitable for poetic composition and it seems that in early 1805, Wordsworth spent much time in the private retreat of the Moss Hut: reading newspapers, in contemplation, and writing. In the quiet seclusion of that place, the poet could look across the lake and the fells to Silver How, and afar. Whilst there has been much building since then and a loss of view, the image in fig. 53 gives an idea of the vastness of the landscape before him, and the sense of being in a realm above the cottage below.

Fig. 53. View from the Orchard Terrace towards Dove Cottage and Town End

The steepness of the garden behind the cottage was a significant feature and instrumental in the establishment of the phenomenological and sensory aspects of the place, and their effects on Wordsworth. In particular, the almost precarious position of the Moss Hut above the orchard terrace on the boundary line between the garden and woodland beyond heightens the feeling of remoteness that may have existed there. In Wordsworth's time, that quiet retreat would have blended unobtrusively into the unfenced garden setting, and may have been a singularly inviting prospect on high against the shadow of mature trees - a signifier of tranquillity and creativity. However, the sense of unity between garden and landscape was partially lost when Thomas de Quincey destroyed the Moss Hut and built a stone wall to separate the garden from the wood and stream, when he took over Dove Cottage in 1811. The garden now has a sense of enclosure that would not have been present for William and Dorothy Wordsworth. More recently the Wordsworth Trust has built a small summerhouse on the site of the Moss Hut, which gives a good indication of the panorama that would have been before the poet, and potentially the sensations that he might have felt. While Wordsworth was able to think and compose in the apparent solitude of his wild retreat, he would still have been aware of the microcosm of humanity in the cottage far below, and affected by joys 'of subtler origin', as well as:

> Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
> Which seem in their simplicity to own
> An intellectual charm...
> (I, 578-580)

I am focussing on the location of the Moss Hut since in my view it was the phenomenological aspect of its setting and the inherent inspirational qualities of the garden at Dove Cottage that were so important to Wordsworth's aesthetic response, and a direct influence on his imagination. Some such features were also present at the poet's subsequent homes, which underline the importance of their influential form and context.

4.3 A Continuum of Landscapes

In his description of the scenery of the lakes, Wordsworth asks the reader to imagine themselves at some given point such as on a cloud hanging midway between Great Gable, shown in fig. 54, and Scafell where they would have a panoramic view of the valleys of the Lake District stretching before them, as they diverged 'like spokes from the nave of a wheel'.

Fig. 54. William Green, 'View of Great Gable, Wastwater, from Overbeck Bridge', 1822

Green's view indicates what Wordsworth imagined looking down on: 'a large piece of lawless patchwork, or an array of mathematical figures, such as in the ancient schools of geometry might have been sportively and fantastically traced out upon sand'.[517] The poet describes the ridges that enclose the vales and the 'forms and surfaces, first of the swelling grounds, next of the hills and rocks, and lastly of the mountains - an ascent of almost regular gradation from elegance and richness to the highest point of grandeur and sublimity' which allows the observer to view 'every possible embellishment of beauty, dignity, and splendour, which light and shadow can bestow' at different times of day.[518] As a schoolboy, Wordsworth first saw the Vale of Grasmere from Hammerscar on the Red Bank Road, where the whole Vale suddenly becomes visible in a moment of theatrical surprise, as illustrated in fig. 55.

[517] W. Wordsworth, *Guide to the Lakes*, ed. by E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 42.
[518] W. Wordsworth, *A Description of the Scenery of the Lakes* (London: Longman, 1822), p. 7. Hereafter cited as *Scenery of the Lakes*.

Fig. 55. W. Banks, after L. Aspland, 'Grasmere from Red Bank', c 1840

In her journal, Dorothy also remembered the scene around Rydale and Grasmere, which she had first seen in 1795 when she visited the area with William.[519] Dorothy later referred to that journey as a time when she and William 'first began our pilgrimage together', which may suggest her recognition of the importance of their relationship, the significance of that 'blessed place' with its sense of divinity, and a search for spiritual well-being.[520] The Vale of Grasmere stretches northwards to lofty mountains, with the lake and its five-acre island immediately below, and when Wordsworth lived at Dove Cottage he could look south and west across the Vale and lake with glimpses of Easedale to the northwest, as shown in fig. 56. These views were particularly important from the vantage point of the Moss Hut, but were also present to a lesser extent from the upstairs sitting room in the cottage, which Wordsworth used as a study before the Moss Hut was built.

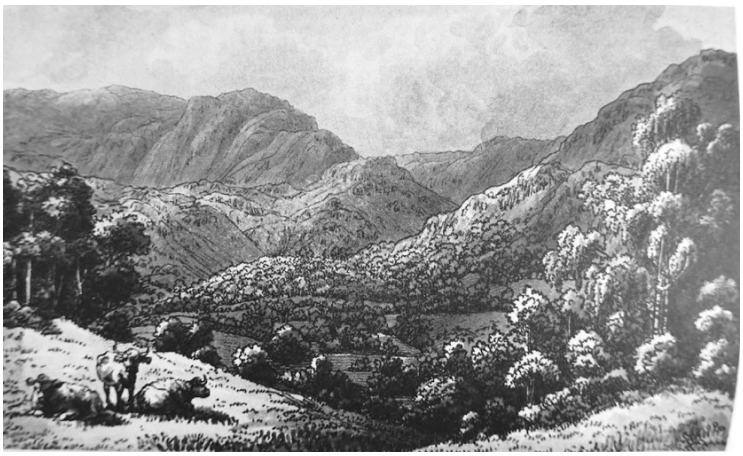

Fig. 56. William Green, 'Easedale from Butterlip How', 1814

[519] D. Wordsworth, *Journals,* p. 60 (31 January, 1802).
[520] D. Wordsworth, *Journals,* p. 93 (30 April 1802), and p. 132 (6 October 1802).

Over time, the cottage became manifestly too small for the Wordsworth family, their friends and associates, so that in 1808, they all moved to Allan Bank, the newly rich Mr Crump's whitewashed 'Abomination', which is situated at the northern end of Grasmere Lake, left of centre in the image in fig. 57.

Fig. 57. View of 'Allan Bank', Grasmere, Cumbria

However, in spite of the beauty of the setting, the house proved to be unsuitable for the family, as was the Rectory where they lived briefly, and the importance to Wordsworth of the environment at Dove Cottage was reflected at Rydal Mount to which the family moved in 1813, as shown on the plan in fig. 58.

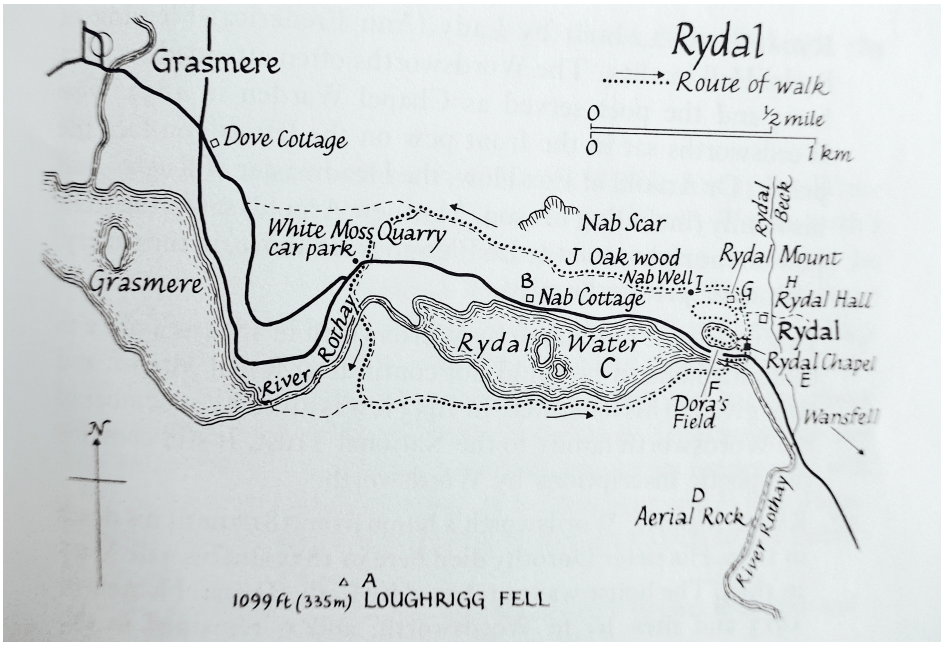

Fig. 58. 'Plan of the environs of Rydal, Cumbria', 1984

Many of the features of Dove Cottage are also present at Rydal Mount, which is a larger property with spacious grounds, and which became the family's permanent home, as illustrated in fig. 59.

Fig. 59. Thomas Huson, 'Rydal Mount', 1895

The drawing room and library on the ground floor face due south to Lake Windermere framed by steeply rising fells, as shown in fig. 60, with the Norse mound in the foreground and Lake Windermere in the distance.

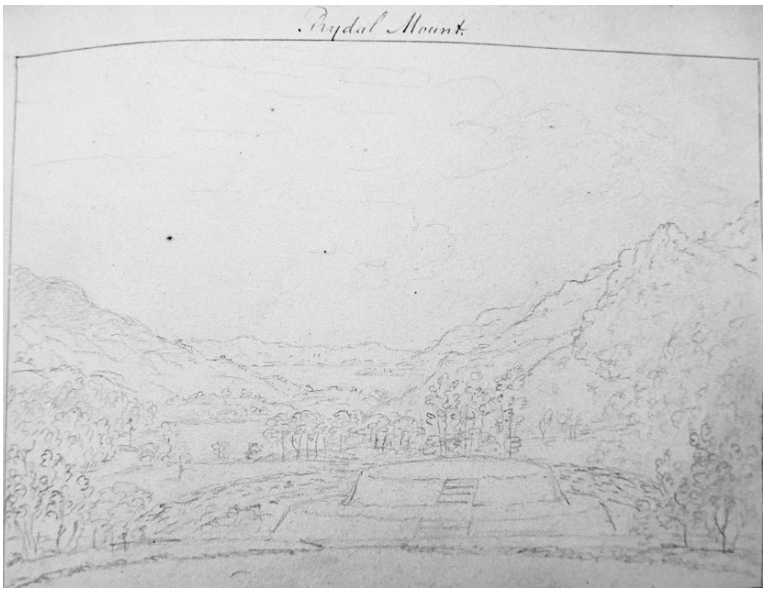

Fig. 60. Thomas Chubbard, 'Rydal Mount, no. 29', 1798

The room that Wordsworth added as a study on the second floor offers the same view but from a higher perspective, as shown in fig. 61.

Fig. 61. View from Wordsworth's study at Rydal Mount

According to Harriet Martineau, Wordsworth said that the view of Windermere in the distance was 'a light thrown into the picture … changing with every hue of the sky'. She admired 'a true poet's garden, its green hollows, its straight terraces, bordered with beds of periwinkle, and tall foxgloves, purple and white – (the white being the poet's favourite)'. The house also had views of Rydal Water to the southwest, as illustrated in fig. 62.

Fig. 62. James Bourne, 'Rydal Lake', 1802

Martineau also admired the summerhouse, which disclosed a 'view of Rydal Pass, with the lake lying below' as shown in fig. 63.[521] Wordsworth's descendants who now own Rydal Mount have built a rustic summerhouse of slate and wood to replace the 'mossy-shed', now lost, as part of extensive restoration of the gardens.

[521] H. Martineau, *A Complete Guide to the English Lakes, illustrated with coloured prints, outlines of mountains, and a map coloured geologically by John Ruthven* (Windermere: John Garnett; London: Whittaker & Co., 1855), p. 18.

Fig. 63. View of Rydal Water and Far Terrace from the Summer House

Wordsworth revered the variety of the influences of light and shadow upon the features of Cumbria's landscape where torrential rain had carved ravines that form geometrical shapes, and he was interested in their manner of changing form and character due to the varying effects of light, cloud and mist. The views from his homes echo this fascination: the circular form of the Vale at Grasmere as seen from Dove Cottage; the triangular shape of the fell viewed from Allan Bank, and the v-shaped form of the fells either side of a distant shimmering view of Lake Windermere from Rydal Mount. Those tranquil yet subtly changing panoramas faced the poet as he worked; whether it was in the sitting room, or from the Moss Hut at Dove Cottage; or at his desk opposite the window in his study at Allan Bank. At Rydal Mount, Wordsworth could see similar views while working in his study, contemplating in the seclusion of the 'moss-lined shed', sitting in his cutlass chair, or lying outstretched on his 'couch' in the library. The poet was particularly taken with 'mysterious attachments of the Cumbrian mountains' of 'fleecy clouds resting upon the hill tops … pregnant with imagination for the poet!' [522] While in her journals, Dorothy also noted formations of clouds in the fells, such as when she and William walked round Grasmere and Rydale Water, and 'Nab Scar was just topped by a cloud which cutting it off as high as it could be cut off made the mountain look uncommonly lofty', as illustrated by the scene in fig. 64. [523]

[522] Wordsworth, *Scenery of the Lakes*, p. 36. There are some viewpoints, which suggest that Dorothy wrote much of this book.
[523] D. Wordsworth, *Journals,* p. 60 (31 January 1802).

Fig. 64. Thomas Huson, 'Nab Scar and Nab Cottage', 1895

Water was an ever-present feature of Wordsworth's outlook. He thought the form of a lake to be perfect when 'from any given point the whole may be seen at once, the width of it bears such proportion to the length … it never assumes the shape of a river'. This approach was rather different from that of Thomas Whately who saw beauty in a broad expanse of water of indeterminate size; although Wordsworth recognized that large lakes such as Windermere may 'present to the eye the essential characteristic of many'.[524]

I have focused on the different aspects of the locations in which the Wordsworths lived in Cumbria as they all reflect his deep attachment to his surroundings, and the similar but ever-changing panoramas that faced him as he walked and worked, in whatever season, and in all weathers. However, it was in the garden at Dove Cottage that his interest in the variety of sensations emanating from the constantly varying aspects of the surrounding landscape of the Vale of Grasmere had the greatest effect. It is my contention that the garden there had phenomenological qualities that influenced the power of Wordsworth's imagination, which came to fruition in the sequestered space of the Moss Hut.

4.4 A Phenomenological Place

I will now examine the garden as it might have been designed and created in Wordsworth's time, as noted in William and Dorothy's letters, writings and journals, to explain why I believe it to have had certain phenomenological qualities that had a direct effect on the poet. Therefore, I will also be making a case for its importance as the catalyst for Wordsworth's exceptional achievements during the period known as his 'great decade'. When brother and sister arrived at Dove Cottage,

[524] Wordsworth, *Scenery of the Lakes*, pp. 18-20.

the little rocky garden needed attention, and it was Dorothy who did most of the planting, as she recorded in her journal from May 1800 to January 1803. She noted the plants that she saw and gathered on her almost daily walks, and wrote of her constant outdoor activities where even 'incessant rain' did not stop her, as she 'sauntered a little in the garden'.[525] Dorothy 'strolled', 'sauntered' and 'rambled' often, which was perhaps an indication of the pleasure she found there, yet it was also a serious place of work, and one whose garden produce was essential to their lives. The Wordsworths and their visitors often sat on the bench in the orchard, or 'walked backwards & forwards, the prospect most divinely beautiful from the seat'. During that time the Moss Hut retreat was only an idea, and Dorothy records William moving away from the garden to walk in the shade of the woods uphill and beyond its boundary, deep in composition.[526]

Over time, the garden with its mixture of wild and cultivated flowers, together with the orchard, was allowed to grow wild and abandoned. Their wildness and the immensity of the landscape of the Vale surrounding Dove Cottage were an important aesthetic experience and creative force for Wordsworth, and he wrote:

> … this whole Vale…
> Swarms with sensation, as with gleams of sunshine,
> Shadows or breezes, scents or sounds …[527]

Sensation 'swarms' in the garden at Dove Cottage due to the sequestered place that nature and the Wordsworths had created, and its familiarity that allowed transmutation of the senses throughout the seasons. In particular, the Moss Hut would have provided an atmosphere of intimacy and warmth, and was an enclosed space where all the senses might be assailed. Furthermore the wind would have played a significant part when Wordsworth's 'vital breeze' became a 'tempest' as it blew through the overgrown flowers and grass while he made the short steep uphill journey to the seclusion of his retreat against the backdrop of the windswept Cumbrian fells, where the vast open 'prospect' of the view with its intimations of divinity contrasted with the privacy and 'refuge' of the Hut. The wind altered space, varying light patterns and awakening a powerful aesthetic experience, as it echoed Kames' pleasures of the ear and the eye, and the physicality of the swaying foliage, resulting in poetic images which were constructed in Wordsworth's mind. While the Moss Hut may have brought moments of solitude, Wordsworth clearly did not feel that he was alone in its sensory environment, as he wrote:

> … Solitude is not
> Where these things are …[528]

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[525] D. Wordsworth, *Journals,* p. 3.
[526] D. Wordsworth, *Journals*, pp. 26-27.
[527] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 174-199. 664-667.
[528] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *Major Works*, pp. 174-199. 807-808.

Kenneth Johnston notes that: 'the *phenomenological* dimension of Wordsworth's imagination, relative to his bodily living space is intriguing', adding that the poet had 'a profound need to recollect his emotions in tranquillity'. At Dove Cottage, the garden and the terraced orchard provided a private place for the poet to compose 'by his usual method of outdoor striding and humming'.[529] The powerful phenomenological presence of the garden next to the house, its position in the wider context of the Vale of Grasmere, and the Moss Hut retreat, became essential to Wordsworth's creativity. The topography of the garden and the Vale, may have resonated for the poet with the memory of the revelation that occurred during his night-time ascent of Mt Snowdon in July 1793 when:

> … a Light upon the turf
> Fell like a flash: I looked about, and lo!
> The Moon stood naked in the Heavens, at height
> Immense above my head, and on the shore
> I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
> …
> That dark deep thoroughfare had Nature lodg'd
> The Soul, The Imagination of the whole.
> (XIII, 39-65)

Wordsworth intimates that clarity of vision may be enhanced by moments of insight, which could result in powerful ideas, because:

> A meditation rose in me that night
> Upon the lonely Mountain when the scene
> Had pass'd away, …
> …
> The sense of God …
> (XIII, 66-72)

The poet does not describe the appearance of sky and earth, rather that which is revealed to him through the self-disclosure of the sights of the sky. As Kroeber suggests: 'Wordsworth attains an effect that Milton did not desire, poetic chiaroscuro, … which depends upon his determination to represent the supernatural in the natural, i.e. where the full emotional power of light emerges'.[530] The unexpected vision of the moon shining upon the clouds made the poet stop in a moment of self-appraisal which led to a richer integration of his mind with the natural world, and hence his imaginative development. He wrote:

> … the glorious faculty
> Which higher minds bear with them as their own.

[529] K. R. Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth* (London: Pimlico, 2000), pp. 505, 586.
[530] K. Kroeber, *Romantic Landscape Vision – Constable and Wordsworth* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 89.

That is the very spirit in which they deal
With all the objects of the universe;
They …
… catch it by an instinct;
… they build up greatest things
From least suggestions …
(XIII, 89-99)

As Wordsworth's aesthetic sense receives the panorama, he intensifies its atmosphere of loneliness by imitating the action of nature's power, by transforming the objects of the universe as nature itself has changed them. James Heffernan sees the changes wrought by 'the sea of mist' as 'a perfect model of imaginative transformation, an archetypal embodiment of imaginative power' giving the moment its extraordinary impact. It was similar to the effect of the 'glimmerings' that Wordsworth often had as he walked by Grasmere Lake, and from the top of Mt Snowdon, he had witnessed the analogy between natural power and poetic creation. This engendered the belief that when a poet transforms the visible universe by the power of his imagination, he imitates the creative action of nature itself.[531] Moreover, Kroeber notes that: 'critical events in the poet's life, acts precipitating imaginative enrichment, take him by surprise. The opportunity to advance manifests itself as an apparent halt'.[532]

Wordsworth's vision is created by different sounds as much as by sight. His relationship with nature infiltrates the interconnected workings of phenomena, and such poetic images of his imagination are visible inclusions of the unknown, or shadows of divinity, in the sight of the familiar. As the philosopher Martin Heidegger writes: 'The poetic saying of images gathers the brightness and sound of the heavenly appearances into one with the darkness and silence of what is alien. By such sights the God surprises us. In the strangeness he proclaims his unfaltering nearness'.[533] Wordsworth's revelation is one of an unrepeatable interpenetration of invisible sounds and visible silences. He is the synaesthetic creator of its meaning in a transmutation of one sense into another, in a spiritual union of the whole. Such an illumination may be further clarified by Heidegger who proposes an alternative way of thinking about the concept of truth formulated by Plato and Aristotle that is based on conformity of observation and idea. Heidegger instead revives the idea of truth as disclosure and openness that is revealed in the insight of a moment, when some thing or some individual reality becomes evident, as that person inhabits a different space in the landscape and the mood changes. Appropriation lies in that moment of insight when things are understood differently and stand in a new light.

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[531] J. A. W. Heffernan, 'Wordsworth and the Transforming Imagination (1969)', in J. S. Hill, *The Romantic Imagination* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1977), pp. 166-175 (pp. 171-174).
[532] Kroeber, *Romantic Landscape Vision*, p. 103.
[533] M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language and Thought,* trans. by A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 225-226.

The poet valued the traditions, crafts and way of life of cottagers in the Lake District, and Michael Friedman asserts that 'Wordsworth's creativity seemed to have been linked to a strong need for a sense of an enclosing, supportive community'.[534] However, the area also gave Wordsworth the opportunity to experience for himself its character and the understanding that is consequently reflected in his prose and poetry. Ultimately this may be the result of what Edmund Husserl calls: 'an *all-embracing self-investigation'*.[535] I suggest that Dove Cottage and its garden became for Wordsworth the place that encapsulated the basic thoughts of Heidegger who developed the concept of 'Building Dwelling Thinking'. Its essential continuity with the state of *being* provides the means to describe how Wordsworth was able to find the measure of his life at Dove Cottage, and dwell there poetically. In *Scenery of the Lakes,* Wordsworth noted the pleasure he felt from seeing a 'living column of smoke, through the still air ascending from [the cottage chimney]'. The use of roughly quarried slate in buildings provided a place for the seeds of lichens, mosses, ferns and flowers, and the mountain-cottage then appeared to become part of nature, with its variety of garden foliage, a murmuring rill, and its self-sufficiency.[536] Dove Cottage was a place where, especially from the vantage point of the Moss Hut, the poet could perceive how his world fitted together. In Heidegger's writings: the appropriation of 'mortals to divinities, earth to sky, things to places and functions' can be 'determined only by the upward glance that spans the between of earth and sky, the dimension'.[537] Moreover, I must add that in Wordsworth's case, a downward glance to the presence of the cottage with smoke curling from its chimney may have enhanced those connections, and reinforced their oneness. Additionally, the linking of earth and sky is reflected in Grasmere Lake, while wheeling birds rise and fall in the space between, just as smoke rises from the cottage to the sky. The shape of the Vale reproduced the sense of the 'blended holiness' of earth and sky that the poet cherished, and which he had envisioned on Mt. Snowdon. As Kroeber says: 'The perfect spherical enclosure of the vale embodies the possibility of a wholeness of life, a joining of the psychic with the physical, of past with future in the present'.[538] As Wordsworth wrote in 'Home at Grasmere', a poem he began work on in 1800, after his arrival at Dove Cottage:

> … no where else is found –
> The one sensation that is here; 'tis here …
> … 'Tis (but I cannot name it) 'tis the sense
> Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,
> A blended holiness of earth and sky,
> Something that makes this individual Spot …

[534] M. H. Friedman, *The Making of a Tory Humanist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 1.
[535] E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations- An Introduction to Phenomenology* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), p. 156.
[536] Wordsworth, *Scenery of the Lakes*, p. 57.
[537] Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, pp. xiii –xiv.
[538] Kroeber, *Romantic Landscape Vision,* p. 119.

> … A termination, and a last retreat,
> A Centre, …
> A Whole without dependence or defect …
> … Perfect Contentment, Unity entire.[539]

This unfolding of inspiration took Wordsworth beyond aesthetic appreciation of the appearance of his garden, into the realm of fundamental thinking about the role of the poetic in human life, and his response to *being*: to open up and take measure of his existence. The fourfold oneness of earth and sky, mortals and divinities was preserved for the poet as he lived at Dove Cottage. The location and the existing cottage were the space for the fourfold to exist, but it was the building of the Moss Hut high above the cottage that enhanced the presence of the fourfold, and acted as the catalyst for Wordsworth's poetic imagination.

4.5 Towards Sensation and Perception

At this point, it would be useful to review briefly some of the key points on eighteenth-century aesthetics as well as modern theories, to understand how the scope and form of the garden at Dove Cottage enhanced Wordsworth's appreciation of it. Eighteenth-century aesthetic theory emphasized the power of the landscape to create an array of philosophical and emotional responses in the observer, and Addison wrote of the likelihood of the imagination being developed in the presence of nature.[540] Lord Kames' views on the potential for a garden to raise sensations in a visitor were more specific, especially in relation to a recommended variety of features and the opening up of vistas. These would offer a wide range of opportunities for emotional response that might be concentrated in the garden's isolation and privacy. His approach to the importance of a 'waving line' and 'variety' was incorporated into the Wordsworths' evolving design, and was a fundamental feature of the garden that allowed them to capitalize on its opportunity for spatial awareness, and the changing panorama at every turn. The discussion over landscape gardening was extended by Whately to include distinct modes of perception, as well as emotional response. While Peter De Bolla's recent work on how people 'looked' in the eighteenth century argues that visitors and owners also experienced a change in how they appreciated different forms within a garden. As I discussed in Chapter 1, De Bolla writes that the structure of the landscape garden helps to produce 'associative triggers' which create an 'emotive response', as 'the eye moves in and around the three-dimensional space'.[541] He writes: 'How the land looks is connected in subtle and interactive ways to how the viewer looks ... we

[539] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *Major Works*, pp. 174-199. 155-170.
[540] Addison, *Spectator,* nos. 411-21, (21 June – 3 July 1712).
[541] De Bolla, 'The charm'd eye', pp. 89-111 (p. 94).

only ever see what we have learned to see'.[542] The power of the sequestered and dramatic nature of the garden at Dove Cottage might have focused both William and Dorothy Wordsworth's attention, making them even more susceptible to the sensations aroused by the variety of its sights and sounds: 'seeing with the inner eye as much as the outer'. De Bolla alludes to this in his description of the 'reveries and fantasy' that can arise by different visual experiences of landscape. These concepts may have been present, and engendered a sense of freedom that joined a fusion of ideas combining the abstract and the complex, in Wordsworth's short journey uphill to the Moss Hut.

The poet was also perhaps aware of contemporary thought on the meaning of distance, an important dimension in poetry, and which gained a more immediate and personal meaning based on first-hand experience when perception through distance became part of the process of aesthetic judgment.[543] Engagement with the form and nature of the garden and the wilder landscape beyond was a key factor for the sensory perception needed for aesthetic response, and both factors were in abundance from the vantage of the Moss Hut. In 1770, Whately wrote that: 'Certain properties, and certain dispositions of the objects of nature, are adapted to excite particular ideas and sensations [which] affect our sensibility'.[544] He had recognized that the garden might lead to ideas that are 'far distant from the original thought', concluding that scenes of nature have the power to affect our imagination and our sensibility. Whereas Whately's theories are an important adjunct to consider in relation to the garden at Dove Cottage, Wordsworth was setting himself in a much larger space. His vision extended beyond the immediacy and the minute detail of the garden, into the far distance, both physically and mentally.

4.6 Spatial Awareness and Design

Wordsworth's existence in the garden at Dove Cottage was in contrast to his life within the domestic environment of the cottage itself. While he used the sitting room on the upper floor as a study, the noise downstairs, particularly from the children who, as Dorothy said, could 'be heard in every room in the house', may have often interrupted his train of thought. As Richard Lang has argued, the home is an extension of bodily existence, and the doorway reflects the experience of transition, 'animating in a visible manner the dialectic of inside and outside'.[545] Whilst perhaps in a state of mind open to composition, Wordsworth could leave Dove Cottage through the doorway

[542] De Bolla, *Education of the Eye*, p. 106.
[543] Ogden, 'From Spatial to Aesthetic Distance', 63-78.
[544] Whately, *Observations.* Quoted in Hunt, and Willis, eds, *Genius of the Place*, pp. 301-307.
[545] R. Lang, 'The dwelling door: Towards a phenomenology of transition', in D. Seamon and R. Mugerauer eds, *Dwelling, Place and Environment* (Malabar, Fl.: Krieger Publishing Co., 2000), pp. 202-213.

he had constructed on the upper floor, without encountering further the noise and bustle of domesticity downstairs. The poet then found himself directly in the garden, and faced with a steep hillside and the sight of the Moss Hut on high. The irregular, rocky nature of the terrain was a challenge to be overcome, so Wordsworth built stone steps in the grass to assist him. John Hunt discusses movement in a garden, and 'the satisfaction of having completed a stage'.[546] This is a modern idea, but it can help my discussion because in this case, ascent and descent was a necessary part of Wordsworth's journey to and from the Moss Hut. An incentive for moving forwards from one stage to another can be set within the context of the poet's need to make the regular journey to continue work on *The Prelude*. The walk uphill also reflected the idea of 'prospect' and 'refuge', where pleasure may be derived from the strength of their differences, as well as reinforcement of the potential mood and atmosphere of the garden. Wordsworth could pass from the wild and varied features of the garden into the shelter of the Moss Hut to be enfolded by sensation and inspiration. He also built a winding path around the edge of the crags, which provides an alternative, gentler and shadier route, while its deflections presented new scenes to affect his imagination. In this case the poet gave himself a changing view of the cottage, and the sudden view of the panorama of Grasmere Vale and Easedale as he reached the Moss Hut. As well as making practical use of the available garden space, Wordsworth had revealed his innate understanding of how the garden would operate on his aesthetic sense, as well as perhaps recognizing its importance as a phenomenological place.

Many writers were influenced by William Mason's poem *The English Garden* (1771), in which the poet wrote:

> 'Of that fair path
> from whence our sight is led
> Gradual to view the whole.
> Where'er thou wind'st
> That path …
> Shall wake fresh beauties'. [547]

Wu writes that Wordsworth had read it 'by Feb. 1815', but that 'he must have read it many years before'.[548] Mason's imaginings were perhaps reflected in the design of the garden at Dove Cottage, and his painterly approach was also echoed in the work of William Gilpin whose *Observations* (1786) were read by Wordsworth. Wu notes that the poet was an avid reader of Gilpin's work from the time of its publication - he 'borrowed from it immediately', and had

[546] Hunt, 'Lordship of the Feet', pp. 187-214.
[547] Mason, *English Garden*, l. 197-214.
[548] Wu, *WR 1800-1815,* p. 143.

'probably owned a copy since his Cambridge years'.[549] Wu writes that Gilpin's painterly way of looking at the landscape is apparent in Wordsworth's imagery. He gives as an example the detailed light effects described by Gilpin, such as the 'tremendous shudder' that 'runs in lengthened parallels' across the surface of a lake, giving 'the painter an opportunity of throwing in those lengthened lights and shades which give the greatest variety and clearness to water.[550] Another example is Gilpin's description of Bassenthwaite by night, when he writes 'of the gloom … spreading a lengthened gleam of wan, dead light under the dark shade of incumbent mountains: but whether this light was owing to vapours arising from the valley; or whether it was water … to the uninformed traveller would appear a matter of great uncertainty'.[551] Wu records specific dates of between '14 Jan. – 13 June 1804' for a reading of *Observations*. This was at a time when William and Dorothy Wordsworth were once again thinking of the small retreat they would build, which would be set in the context of the panorama of the Vale of Grasmere that lay before the viewpoint of the garden at Dove Cottage. It may not be too fanciful to suggest that Gilpin's words may have influenced their ideas, which would come to realization later that year.

In particular, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, too, was critical of the false grandeur and unnaturalness of the formal garden, perceiving it as having 'something idle and precious in it, which renders it puerile'.[552] He wrote to the Duchess of Portland: 'I find that nature, in a garden, is not the same: she has more brilliance, but she does not move me as much. Men say, they make nature more beautiful – but I believe they disfigure her'.[553] Rousseau recommended that the garden should be completely enclosed, and believed that untouched Nature had most effect upon the emotions. Within the structure of the Clarens estate in Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761)*,* Julie's hidden garden, the 'Elysée'*,* with its apparent naturalness and simplicity, reflects the utopian motif of the novel. James Jones discusses the importance of Julie's garden within the structure of the novel, and its relationship to the concept of Utopia or, the best of all possible worlds. He writes that the 'Elysée' represents the antipode of the highly patterned, stilted, conventional French gardens common to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ... a milieu for a rarefaction of personal harmony'.[554] Julie's garden is enclosed by thick shady trees, flowering shrubs, creepers and fruit trees, and the grass is mixed with herbs, flowers and mosses; however, she reveals that the garden has been carefully arranged by her.[555] Yet Saint-Preux, Julie's lover,

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[549] Wu, *WR 1770-1799*, pp. 64-66, and *WR 1800-1815,* p. 93. Refers to: W. Gilpin, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England; Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland,* 2 vols (London, 1786)

[550] Gilpin, *Observations,* I. p. 100.

[551] Gilpin, *Observations,* II. pp. 21-2.

[552] D. Wiebenson, *The Picturesque Garden in France* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 29.

[553] D. Jacques, *Georgian Gardens: The Reign of Nature* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1990), pp. 94-95.

[554] See James F. Jones, Jr., *La Nouvelle Héloïse: Rousseau and Utopia* (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1977), pp. 62-64.

[555] Jones, *Rousseau and Utopia*, p. 64, Julie says: 'Il est vrai … que la nature a tout fait, mais sous ma direction, et il n'y a rien là que je n'aye ordonné' (II, 472).

writes that no evidence of a human hand can be found in what seems to be a completely natural environment. Within the novel, Rousseau has created a 'natural' place where the visitor may attain 'eternal tranquillity' and a 'natural state of perfection'.[556] Rousseau's expression of garden design is reflected in the views of other French theorists of the 1770's, such as his friend Claude-Henri Watelet who published *Essai sur les jardins* in 1774, showing the progressive shift in French taste from classical gardens such as those at Versailles to the picturesque or natural style of the late eighteenth century. Watelet had read Whately, but like Rousseau did not think the French should imitate English gardens blindly. His ideal garden would be indirectly utilitarian since he thought that utility could be reconciled to the picturesque, the romantic and the poetic.[557] Watelet noted that 'movement, that very spirit of nature, that inexhaustible source of the interest she inspires' was the key to his theory of gardens.[558] He remarked: 'on veut non-seulement que les matériaux des ouvrages des Arts & l'emploi qu'on en fait, plaisent aux sens, mais aussi que l'esprit & l'âme éprouvent à leur occasion, des sentimens [sic] & des impressions qui les remuent & les attachent'.[559] While Wu does not include Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* in his list of Wordsworth's reading, he reports that the poet read *Les Jardins* by Jacques Delille 'by 1792', and that the poem was retained by Wordsworth in a copy of Delille's *Œuvres* at Rydal Mount. Wu comments that: 'W had before him a copy of *Les Jardins',* when he referred to Watelet in a note added to *Descriptive Sketches* (Dec. 1792), and it is my view that the ideas of Watelet and his friend Jean-Jacques Rousseau may have had a place in the design of the garden at Dove Cottage.[560]

The inspirational qualities of Watelet's views are present in the garden at Dove Cottage where visible man-made boundaries such as walls or hedges give rise to indistinct continuity of space, through which the small irregular movements of flowers and foliage interpenetrate and are intensified by the movement of people within it. The fluctuations in the garden make it a metaphysical space, which encourages flights of inspiration. Conversely, when William and Dorothy Wordsworth arrived at Dove Cottage, the size of the space and the nature of the terrain present in the garden limited the alterations that they could make. However, the removal of the barrier of the shard fence that separated the orchard from the rest of the garden opened up possibilities and created a sense of unity. The stepping-stones up to the top of the garden begin immediately in front of the first-floor door; they suggest action as images of footsteps and journeys past and present. Indeed, this was a feature that the poet repeated when he moved to

[556] Jones, *Rousseau and Utopia*, p. 66, Saint-Preux writes: 'On y reconnoît toujours la main du maître et l'on ne la sent jamais' (II, 371), 'la main du jardinier ne se montre point' (II, 478).
[557] Wiebenson, *Picturesque*, p. 65.
[558] Claude-Henri Watelet, *Essay on Gardens*, trans. by Samuel Danon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 13.
[559] M. Watelet, *Essai sur les jardins* (Paris: Prault, Saillant & Nyon, Pissot, 1774), p.2, 'We don't only wish that the materials of works of art and the use they're put to bring pleasure to the senses, but also that the mind and soul be touched and stirred by their appeal'.
[560] Wu, *WR 1770-1799,* p. 46.

Rydal Mount, where he created a doorway in his library that led directly onto the garden, and a flight of fourteen stone steps. These lead in turn to the long straight Sloping Terrace walk at the top of the garden and his 'moss-lined shed' or 'Summerhouse' with its panoramic views to Lake Windermere and Rydal Water. The steps shown in fig. 65 lead to the Mound, and a similar stair is in front of the library door.

Fig. 65. A flight of stone steps at Rydal Mount

A small flight of similar steps has recently been uncovered at Dove Cottage, leading from the path round the edge of the garden to the Orchard Terrace. The deflecting interlude of the path, or the meandering flight of stepping stones, led to the Moss Hut whose enclosed, still space offered Wordsworth a silent moment of privacy and contemplation before nature, as part of the garden drama. The importance of the hut to William and Dorothy Wordsworth was evidenced by their fury when it was pulled down by Thomas de Quincey when he took on Dove Cottage in 1811. The view from this steep spot is of the panorama of Grasmere Vale with Dove Cottage below, and Wordsworth was not only reaching out beyond the garden to *first nature*; he became part of it. Indeed, the vastness of the landscape that Wordsworth saw from the Moss Hut, and the sensations that such views provoke throughout the seasons, are better understood when seen *in situ.* In the view from that vantage point, the eye may travel from its refuge up through swaying, flickering foliage to the enormity of the dome of the sky, and a world beyond the confines of the garden. It may also travel ahead to the lake and surrounding fells, or northwest to Easedale, or almost straight downwards to the dwelling the poet had just left behind. The importance of the act of looking instantly becomes clear with the realization of pleasure, and an anticipation of the beauties that may be seen.

In order to expand on the concept of the importance to Wordsworth of the garden at Dove Cottage, and in particular the construction of the Moss Hut retreat, Jay Appleton's Habitat theory is of interest. He postulates that awareness of ideas stems from spontaneous perception as part of a co-existence with the landscape.[561] However, he also acknowledges the possibility of indeterminate feelings of unresolved, inexplicable ideas and thoughts, as he explores fleeting,

[561] Referenced in B. Wenner, *Prospect and Refuge in the Landscape of Jane Austen* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2006), p. 87.

obscure areas of association. He notes that the sense organs 'have evolved in such a way as to be efficient perceiving-instruments' picking up information which is 'spontaneously processed by the brain'.[562] Such insights may be used to artistic effect in the garden, where the irregular nature of its structure allows the senses to interact, and where Wordsworth may have suffused his creativity with the presence of his perception, which was continually enhanced by nature. As a schoolboy, whilst riding on the fells, the poet had listened to an invisible bird that 'sang to itself' so sweetly that:

> 'there I could have made my dwelling place
> and liv'd for ever there
> To hear such music'
> (II, 133-135)

The eternal was glimpsed, and Wordsworth knew that Nature had let him 'drink' a 'visionary power' (II, 330). At times he became consciously creative and 'commun'd' with Nature, when:

> An auxiliary light
> Came from my mind which on the setting sun
> Bestow'd new splendor, the melodious birds,
> The gentle breezes …
> …
> … and the midnight storm
> Grew darker in the presence of my eye.
> (II, 387-374)

Appleton declares that, 'open environments ... afford the best opportunities to perceive'.[563] The idea of 'prospect' is balanced by that of 'refuge', where pleasure may result from the strength of their dissimilarities. This reinforces the potential atmosphere of the garden at Dove Cottage where Wordsworth's fundamental propensity for stillness, and openness to reception of the poetic image, was able to flourish. Dorothy gives us an example of this when she recorded a day spent on the fells above Rydal with her brother and Coleridge, and tells of how she and Coleridge 'left William sitting on the stones feasting with silence'.[564] The garden at Dove Cottage was where Wordsworth could pass from open dramatic surroundings into the sheltered tranquillity of the Moss Hut to attain greater depths of poetical perception. This was important and solitary work, and the poet gave thanks to:

> … Ye Mountains and Ye Lakes,
> And sounding Cataracts! Ye Mists and Winds
> That dwell among the hills where I was born.
> (II, 440-442)

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[562] Appleton, *Habitat*, pp. 4-9.
[563] Appleton, *Habitat*, p. 7.
[564] D. Wordsworth, *Journals*, p. 90 (23 April, 1802).

Whately's remarks on the qualities of movement in water have a special resonance at Dove Cottage in terms of the sound of the gentle flow of the rill at the edge of the garden. The sound of its unceasing, subtle movements has been somewhat obscured since Thomas de Quincey built the stone wall separating the garden from the woods and stream. This particular feature of the garden was also present at Rydal Mount, where Rydal Beck, illustrated in fig. 66, flows continuously with great force down the mountainside nearby the house.

Fig. 66. Sir George Beaumont, 'Rydale Waterfall', 1798

Water was an important feature of the panorama before Wordsworth at Dove Cottage, and one on which he capitalized after his move to Rydal Mount in 1813 where, as well as having extensive views towards Rydal Water and Lake Windermere, the poet created a series of rock pools amongst the trees and shrubs on the steep slopes below his mossy-shed. These small pools are almost hidden and give an element of surprise, as they bring the movement of flowers and foliage to life in unstable watery reflections. They also bring a sense of hazard to the walker attempting to traverse the downward slope of the garden, and as Allen Weiss writes: 'one has a dynamic view of the garden through experiencing its terrain'.[565]

Wordsworth's overwhelming preference for composing outdoors is well known and documented. Sometimes he re-visited a place of special significance, such as when he ascended each day from Dove Cottage to 'a straggling heap of unhewn stones', described at the beginning of 'Michael'.[566] On other occasions, he composed as he walked, and was delighted to find 'a hoary pathway' 'beneath the fir-trees' near Grasmere that had been worn by his brother John, by

[565] Weiss, *Mirrors,* p. 34.
[566] Wordsworth, 'Michael', in *Major Works,* pp. 224-236, 17.

'habitual restlessness of foot'.[567] The path, which gave him a means of entering the thickly planted grove, also allowed him to indulge in his desire to 'walk |Backwards and forwards long as I had liking | In easy and mechanic thoughtlessness'.[568] Wordsworth describes walking as necessary to the work of writing poems, as he seeks a protected and secluded space in which he can indulge his need to wander and think divergently, since he liked to 'walk | At large and unrestrain'd, nor damp'd too soon by mortal cares' (XIII, 38-359). Freedom of movement that is also steadily rhythmic and absorbing within a well-defined space is what the poet may have found best to release his creativity.

In the bounded and encircled space of the garden at Dove Cottage, where William and Dorothy Wordsworth could wander freely and responsively, the revelatory experience of walking in that private place may have allowed softer inner contemplation, and a reflective mode of being. As I wrote in Chapter 1, Hazlitt, De Quincey and Leigh Hunt all attested to the special light that shone in the Wordsworth's eyes after walking with Nature, and such visionary expression may have related directly to the notion of looking and sensing the poetic image, as part of the creative experience. I think that these philosophical points are an important consideration when observing the changing spaces of the garden, in an awareness of the effects that can appear. Within the intensive concentration of the place, if people look closely at its elements, activating the senses, their perceptions may take flight. Wordsworth wrote: 'From nature doth emotion come, and moods | Of calmness equally are nature's gift' (XII, 1-2). As Robin Jarvis has argued, the poet intimates that his work 'might be assimilated to nature in its operations on the receptive mind, and helps to reassure him of his ability to maintain an 'ennobling interchange' between the objects of perception, and the 'higher power' of imagination.[569]

While being in the garden, looking and sensing its minute irregularities, the poet can experience aesthetic satisfaction and achieve poetic response. In Bachelard's words, these '*direct images of matter'* are those of 'forms given in matter and inseparable from it'. In postulating this concept, he is conscious of defining what was 'necessarily required for a complete philosophical study of the poetic creation'. The creative mind experiences the formal imagination of the beauty of its creation and the changes that filter through its forms, leading to the moment of reception of the poetic image: what Bachelard refers to as 'a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche'.[570] I have also discussed earlier theorists such as Whately who in 1770 had already observed that: 'Certain properties, and certain dispositions, of the objects of nature, are adapted to excite

[567] Wordsworth, 'When first I journeyed hither', in *Major Works,* pp. 220-223, 57, 64, 71.
[568] Wordsworth, 'When first I journeyed hither', in *Major Works,* pp. 220-223, 36-38.
[569] Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel,* p. 106.
[570] Bachelard, *Poetics*, p. 15.

particular ideas and sensations.'[571] While Lord Kames also located aesthetic pleasures as midway between the purely intellectual and purely physical, limiting them to the sense experience of the eye and ear.[572] Kames' views on the involvement of contrasts in the appreciation of fine arts support Whately's later views on the excitement of sensations, and Bachelard's ideas on poetic creation. All of which bear relation to the effects of the elements of the garden on the sensitivity and creativeness of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, as they dwelt in the phenomenological place of Dove Cottage.

The design of the garden, with its sense of foreground and distance, undulating surfaces, differing vistas and meandering lines, is enlivened by its vertical elements that produce variety and scope for light and shade, prospect and refuge. The combination of irregular shapes within the intensely confined garden space close to the cottage, yet within the context of the vast panorama of Grasmere Vale, offered an exceptional place for reception of the poetic image. The garden's boundaries open up in different ways, creating diverse spatial concepts, and sites for poetical creativity. As I have argued, it is the sense of *being* in the garden that is the key factor, since it allowed the poet to experience a fusion of the senses as he perceptively moved through its varied and challenging setting. The garden's paradoxical nature of constancy and change empowered Wordsworth to make a passive, contemplative connection with nature and God.

4.7 Privacy and Sensibility

David Cooper recognizes that 'notions of boundary and boundedness are central to Wordsworth's spatial configuration of his native region'.[573] He liked the idea of settled domesticity, and the idea of circumscribed freedom that the Vale of Grasmere represented for him. When the poet first saw the Vale as a schoolboy from Hammerscar on the Red Bank Road, he fantasised about staying forever in that earthly paradise, and to be able to fly like a bird or butterfly 'within the bounds of this huge Concave'.[574] Wordsworth gave us the sense of that perfect union of the topographical and spiritual centre of his life that he felt he had reached. He perceived the place as a 'termination and a last retreat … Unity entire'.[575] Indeed, Jarvis comments that the poet's pedestrian action can be identified with the progress of Hope, but that Wordsworth's 'spiritual journey no longer finds its literal ground in his bodily migrations, becoming instead a journey of ever-decreasing circles into the geographical and human heart of his adoptive home'.[576]

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[571] Whately, *Observations*, pp. 157-158.
[572] McGuinness, *Lord Kames*, p. 61.
[573] D. Cooper, 'The Poetics of Place and Space: Wordsworth, Norman Nicholson and the Lake District', *Literature Compass*, 5:4 (2008), 807-821 (p. 807).
[574] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *Major Works,* pp. 274-199, (p. 175), 42.
[575] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *Major Works,* pp. 274-199, (p. 178), 166-170.
[576] Jarvis, *Pedestrian Travel*, p. 114.

As I have discussed, the wall or hedge that surrounds the garden is perhaps its most significant physical boundary, and at Dove Cottage, the recognized extent of the garden, whether it had a physical delineation or not, was the virtual space within which poetic images might suddenly appear. As Wordsworth went into the garden he was establishing his individual boundaries of privacy, his place of self-discovery, and a space to release his imagination. A concentration of sensory experiences in the garden provides an opportunity for artistic expression through the emergence of imaginative ideas occurring in the poetic moments arising through the sensing of its minute irregularities. It was where Wordsworth could thoughtfully wander to experience moments of poetical inspiration, and Hunt reminds us of 'the essential fact that gardens ... have always been ways of mediating the physical world', they are 'sophisticated products of our relationship with the world beyond their walls'.[577] The physical aspects of the garden at Dove Cottage with its need to climb steep paths and steps while experiencing the garden's differing sounds and scents, made the visit memorable not least as a reminder of the hard work required to make the journey possible. An important feature of such a landscape was the creation of an insular private space with an inward focus, together with the path from beginning to end that gave 'a sense of a complete, and completed, experience'.[578] Whately also discussed the creation of an environment where things happen and memories are aroused, so that the garden becomes more than a place to be appreciated and sensed. Its visitors are actually part of the garden; they are incorporated in its phenomenological space, while the articulation of self with respect to landscape involved the active physical, emotional and intellectual participation of the individual. The changing aspects of the garden provided a visitor with 'a dynamic process' to experience dimensions of selfhood over time, as it gave him an opportunity to express his identity by *performing* it. A walk in the garden is the essential performative action to experience it at first hand, and Wordsworth demonstrated this activity by his ascent to the Moss Hut, together with his habit of striding up and down the orchard terrace in composition.

The sequestered nature of the Moss Hut, within the context of the Vale of Grasmere, intensified the notion of closure and miniaturization, while also allowing Wordsworth to look more expansively to the gigantic infinity of *first nature.* His notion of the self might then waver between a small space making 'the body gigantic', and a sense of a very large space, which transformed 'the body into miniature', as he moved through the landscape. As I have discussed, Susan Stewart writes that we find the miniature at the origin of private, individual history, but we find the gigantic at the origin of public and natural history. The most typical gigantic world is the sky – a vast, indistinguishable space made obvious only by the unceasing movement of clouds

[577] Hunt, *Gardens and the Picturesque* p. 9.
[578] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (p. 148).

with their unstructured forms. Stewart writes that the: 'aesthetic experience of the sublime is characterized by astonishment and surprise: the grandeur of scenery results in a sudden expansion of the soul and the emotions'.[579] In my view, her arguments can be related directly to Wordsworth's experiences in the garden at Dove Cottage, since it was a place 'to be lived in', one where he could think freely. As he walked backwards and forwards across the terrace at the top of the garden, his response to the poetical images that arose was reflected in his poetry: the place and the poetry were mutually inclusive. Wordsworth's fusion of creativity came into being in the phenomenological place of Dove Cottage, and was focused in the Moss Hut.

The poet appeared to see the landscape as a 'social space', yet as Danahay points out, a writer concerned with autobiography 'has both lost the community as a premise' and 'must discover or perhaps create, his or her own social context'. He argues that 'autobiography is founded on the basis of the redefinition of community as society and the creation of a space for the autonomous individual'. The search for an audience that would confirm the writer's sense of self makes use of the community, in the service of the self. According to Danahay, Wordsworth represented himself as a 'community of one', and it was Dorothy who recorded the community in her journals. The poet found his identity as a 'masculine, autonomous self confirmed by nature … both the landscape and Dorothy functioned as mirrors for his construction of himself as an autobiographical subject'.[580] Wordsworth had a strong need for an enclosing, supporting community, as signified by rural villages in the Lake District, or in his sister Dorothy; however, his need to represent himself as a unique individual precluded connection to a wider society. The poet described himself: 'A Traveller I am, | And all my Tale is of myself' (III, 196-197). His idea of singleness was linked with imagination, and the isolation that such a view implies:

> Here must thou be, O Man!
> Strength to thyself; no Helper hast thou here;
> Here keepest thou thy individual state:
> No other can divide with thee this work:
> No secondary hand can intervene
> To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
> The prime and vital principle is thine
> In the recesses of thy nature, far
> From any reach of outward fellowship,
> Else 'tis not thine at all.
> (XII, 188-197)

[579] Stewart, *On Longing*, pp. 71-74.
[580] M. A. Danahay, *A Community of One: Masculine Autobiography and Autonomy in nineteenth-century Britain* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 46-50.

These lines suggest that Wordsworth is cut off from other people, and that fellowship is unobtainable, as he experiences the possibility that, as an autonomous individual, he cannot represent the community. Yet the poet sought a commanding presence in nature that would ratify his boundaries for him.[581] It is my view that the whole phenomenological place of the garden at Dove Cottage with its panoramic view of the Vale of Grasmere before it, and that 'space of pristine individuality' - The Moss Hut, were together the visionary space that invited Wordsworth to foster those ideas, which were recounted in *The Prelude.* It is significant that while Books I and II of the poem were finished by October 1800, in the first year of the Wordsworths' residency at Dove Cottage, the bulk of the work in Books III to XIII was completed between January 1804 and May 1805. This was the period of resurgent thought regarding the 'little hut or shed' that would be built in the garden, its completion in late 1804, and subsequent constant usage.

4.8 A Commanding View Towards the Light

The tranquil panoramic view from the Moss Hut at Dove Cottage allowed Wordsworth prolonged observation of the Vale throughout the seasons. It offered a permanent possibility of synaesthetic creation of meaning, as the unceasing, subtle movements of Grasmere Lake with its ability to absorb and reflect light gave rise to continuity of space. The vista from the Moss Hut provided the poet with an unassailable view over his physical environment, and having built that pristine place, by dwelling there, it then gave him space to think expansively. As Kroeber declares: the 'liberty' that Wordsworth 'seemed to feel' was derived from a 'simultaneous encouragement of delight' in the power of his remembered perceptions both from the past, and imaginably in the future. The sense of unity of Grasmere Vale liberated the poet's imagination rather than giving it constraint.[582] Wordsworth noted that Thomas Gray described the Vale as a 'little unsuspected paradise', full of 'peace, rusticity, and happy poverty'.[583]

According to Tim Fulford: 'for Wordsworth ... the representation of a commanding view was a means of establishing ... authority over objects of [his] contemplation and the whole cultural field'.[584] Wordsworth had demonstrated a need to guard the individuality of the Lake District, its liberty and its sense of independence, as he reflected in 'Home at Grasmere' where he infers that liberty is represented by someone such as a shepherd whose place in the landscape affords him spiritual rather than actual possession, a freedom which is understood by a poet

[581] Danahay, *Community of One*, p. 52.
[582] Kroeber, 'Home at Grasmere: Ecological Holiness', in Gilpin, *Critical Essays,* pp. 179-195 (pp. 192-193).
[583] Wordsworth, *Scenery of the Lakes*, p. 67.
[584] T. Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority - Poetry, Criticism and politics from Thomson to Wordsworth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 11.

whose independence is contingent on owning nothing. Wordsworth was taking measure of his existence, and as Fulford says: 'In the years 1800-1805 he began to conceive an increasingly ideological role for his own voice'.[585] Wordsworth's 'great argument' was that there should be a poetic shared language that was intended to move its readers towards a renewed sense of national community. The poet could only hope that his 'verse may live, and be even as a light hung up in heaven', so that the rural classes would also be awakened to the power of its language.[586] 'Home at Grasmere' was written between 1800 and 1806, and is imbued with the idea that personal authority depends on mastery of one's own land and proper inheritance that are essential for freedom, peace and self-worth. Grasmere Vale was where:

> … the sun and sky,
> The elements, and seasons in their change,
> Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there
> The heart of man; a district on all sides
> The fragrance breathing of humanity,
> Man free, man working for himself, with choice
> Of time, and place, and object.
> (VIII, 147-153)

Wordsworth's vision here is one of himself and his relationship with the place in which he dwelt, and his deep understanding of its people. As Jonathan Bate points out, the poet may be projecting feelings onto himself that belonged to Rousseau's solitary walker:

> … I saw the sky, some stars, and a few leaves … In this instant I was being born again, and it seemed as if all I perceived was filled with my frail existence …[587]

Bate suggests that Wordsworth 'is over-absorbed in his *own* relationship with nature'.[588] However, as I have argued, it was the visionary environment of the garden at Dove Cottage within the context of the Vale of Grasmere that enabled the poet's imagination to take flight. In an extension of self-awareness, he was able to take a commanding view of himself, the society in which he lived and his societal concept for the future, and to raise awareness of the value of the common man. Wordsworth wrote of the theatricality of Grasmere Vale and its reflection:

> How vast the compass of this theatre,
> … while all the distant grove,
> That rises to the summit of the steep,
> Shows like a mountain built of silver light: [589]
> …

[585] Fulford, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority,* p. 181.
[586] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *Major Works*, pp. 174-199. 1006-1049.
[587] J-J. Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. by Peter France (London: Penguin Books, 2004), p. 39.
[588] J. Bate, *Romantic Ecology* (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 30.
[589] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *Major Works*, pp. 174-199. 782-791.

Dreamlike the blending also of the whole
Harmonious landscape: all along the shore
The boundary lost - the line invisible
That parts the image from reality;
And the clear hills, as high as they ascend
Heavenward, so deep piercing the lake below.[590]

The notion of boundary beyond the confines of the garden has been lost as the heavenward rise of the hills with its intimations of divinity is balanced by its downward reflection in the earthly element of water, in a subtle interpenetration of earth and sky. Wordsworth admired light and shadow in all their combinations, and from the Moss Hut, a shadowy light altered by surrounding fells and changing weather glistens across the lake. At Rydal Mount, with its more expansive outlook and uninterrupted view of Lake Windermere on the horizon, sparkling clear light fills the drawing room and library providing clarity of vision inside as well as outside across the sloping garden to the church and beyond.

One evening in 1806, as twilight fell, Wordsworth walked across from Dove Cottage to the shoreline where he had a sensory and revelatory experience that was the basis for a sonnet: 'Composed by the Side of Grasmere Lake':

CLOUDS, lingering yet, extend in solid bars
Through the grey west; and lo! these waters, steeled
By breezeless air to smoothest polish, yield
A vivid repetition of the stars;
Jove, Venus, and the ruddy crest of Mars
Amid his fellows beauteously revealed
At happy distance from earth's groaning field,
Where ruthless mortals wage incessant wars.
Is it a mirror? - or the nether Sphere
Opening to view the abyss in which she feeds
Her own calm fires? - But list! a voice is near;
Great Pan himself low-whispering through the reeds,
"Be thankful, thou; for, if unholy deeds
Ravage the world, tranquillity is here!"[591]

In the still silence of Grasmere Lake, the planets and the stars are reflected in the 'steeled' water, but Wordsworth questions whether the lake is a mirror, or perhaps the abyss he referred to before when 'all along the shore' the boundary was lost, and the invisible line 'that parts the image from reality' allowed the heavens to pierce the lake below. As Weiss says: 'Water… forms a

[590] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in T*he Complete Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888; New York: Bartleby.com, 1999), <http:// www.bartleby.com/145/> [accessed 07 August 2015], 567-579.
[591] Wordsworth, 'Composed by the Side of Grasmere Lake', in *The Complete Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888; New York: Bartleby.com, 1999), <http:// www.bartleby.com/145/> [accessed 10 August 2015], 1- 14.

natural mirror: one that expands the imagination [but it is] never a simple mirror'.[592] Those insubstantial reflected pinpoints of light, the heavenly display and the tranquillity of the massive nature of the Vale before him must have emphasized the smallness of his own physical dimensions, as the sublime scenery encompassed his whole being. For Wordsworth, horizontal and vertical boundaries may have disappeared, as deep shadows made depth and distance ambiguous, reflecting Martin Jay's remark when describing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the senses: 'through vision we touch the sun and the stars'.[593] Alone, yet not in solitude, the poet's imagination was stimulated by dim light and shadow. Only the slight rustling of a breeze 'whispering through the reeds' brought bodily connection with reality, his notion of the self, a sudden expansion of the soul and emotions in a fusion of the senses, and an intensity of poetical experience before a contemplative connection with nature and God.

Wordsworth had noted the peculiar stillness of a lake, which encourages quiet contemplation, and particularly its reflections of clouds, light, the imagery of the sky and surrounding hills, together with its way of making visible changes of atmosphere, and displaying movements of the lightest breeze. The poet perceived the static 'glimmering' and 'steady' nature of the lake as something containing imagery that for the viewer 'would enter unawares into his mind'.[594] This was particularly relevant to his view of the shadowy, mirror-like tranquillity of Grasmere Lake, as indicated in fig. 67.

Fig. 67. John White Abbott, 'Hill Cragg on Grasmere Lake July 12, 1791'

The conflict between reality and mind-pictures in the work of William Wordsworth has been discussed by Dominic Rainsford who states that the poet had much in common with the Jean-Jacques Rousseau of the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. Rainsford declares that: 'Both are much

[592] Weiss, *Mirrors,* pp. 85-86.
[593] Quoted in: J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Chichester: John Wiley, 2005), p. 42.
[594] Wordsworth, *Scenery of the Lakes*, p. 19.

concerned with the cultivation of a self that is by turns both stoical and vulnerable in isolation from other human beings, but in proximity to a richly visualised inanimate nature'.[595] Rousseau wrote that:

> 'Such is the state in which I often experienced on the Island of Saint-Pierre, in my solitary reveries, whether I lay in a boat, and drifted where the water carried me, or sat by the shores of the stormy lake, or elsewhere, on the banks of a lovely river or a stream murmuring over the stones. What is the source of our happiness in such a state? Nothing external to us, nothing apart from ourselves and our own existence; as long as this state lasts we are self-sufficient like God'.[596]

Rainsford, somewhat controversially, likens this state of being to non-existence; it has nothing to mark its outline and is a kind of trance. This opinion is difficult to equate with Wordsworth's own perceptions of the powerful abilities of a lake to encourage contemplation, it was instead something that contained subtle, inspirational imagery that affected his imagination. I believe that the presence of Grasmere Lake, whether the poet viewed it from the garden at Dove Cottage, or close by at night, or on his almost daily walks, was a powerful and recognizable influence on his creativity. In spite of his doubts, Rainsford still acknowledges the effects of 'glimmering' views that Wordsworth saw as he walked by Grasmere Lake, and which may be illustrated by passages from *The Prelude:*

> Those walks did now, like a returning spring,
> Come back on me again. When first I made
> Once more the circuit of our little Lake
> If ever happiness hath lodg'd with man,
> That day consummate happiness was mine …
> (IV, 126-130)

> As on I walked, a comfort seem'd to touch
> A heart that had not been disconsolate,
> Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
> At least not felt; and restoration came …
> (IV, 143-146)

> … I had hopes and peace
> And swellings of the spirits, was rapt and soothed,
> Convers'd with promises, had glimmering views
> How Life pervades the undecaying mind,
> How the immortal Soul with God-like power
> Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep …
> (IV, 152-157)

[595] D. Rainsford, 'Solitary Walkers, Encountering Blocks: Epistemology and Ethics in Romanticism and Land Art', *European Journal of English Studies*, 7:2 (2003), 177-192.
[596] Rousseau, *Reveries,* pp. 88-89.

Although Wordsworth was alone by the lake, he did not look about him, but instead looked within himself, experiencing hesitant 'glimmerings' of an inner light, which seem to be more significant than the natural darkness that slowly spreads over the mountain heights. Rainsford declares that just as Wordsworth obscures the outer darkness with his inner light, Rousseau buries real nature under 'soft, consolatory foliage'. However, once Wordsworth's inner light fades, and also perhaps when 'a rippling breeze' reminds him of reality, the outer world becomes more visible as he gives a vivid depiction of the lake before him, when: 'The long Lake lengthen'd out its hoary line' (IV, 171). The environment in which the poet is sitting has taken precedence over his inner 'glimmerings', but his imagination then takes over when the sounds created by the wind in the surrounding foliage give him an inner visual image of his dog. The strength of the vision causes Wordsworth to think that he has registered its presence, he says: 'I turn'd my head, to look if he were there' (IV, 180). Wordsworth says no more, but leaves the reader to recognize his disorientation in the face of nature, real and imagined.

4.9 Concluding Reflections

Wordsworth had a life-long fascination with English landscape gardening, proclaiming to Sir George Beaumont: 'Painters and Poets have had the credit of being reckoned the Fathers of English Gardening; they will also have hereafter the better praise of being fathers of a better taste'.[597] The poet became interested in the English Watercolour School when Henry Edridge visited Dove Cottage in September 1804, probably at the urging of Sir George Beaumont, and in 1808 when William Havill, a distinguished water colourist painted in the neighbourhood. Wordsworth wrote to Sir George: 'He has done a view of Rydale Water, looking down upon it from Rydale Park, of which I should like to know your opinion'.[598] My selection of illustrations included in this chapter is for the most part contemporary, and the images are imbued with a sense of place as a reflection of those features of the landscape that were of constant significance to the poet.

Russell Noyes writes that it is 'in his poetry that Wordsworth excels in the art of landscape': from 'purely descriptive poems' to those in which 'the inner response and human significance are central', and where images have the 'power to open our eyes, quicken our sensibilities and deepen our insight' in a 'transfiguration' of nature.[599] These pellucid comments are more expressive and influential than those of Thomas Babington Macaulay who read *The Prelude* in 1850 on posthumous publication, and criticized: 'old raptures about mountains and cataracts; the

[597] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, p. 624 (17 and 24 October 1805), W. W. to Sir George Beaumont.
[598] W. Wordsworth, and D. Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years,* ed. by E. de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), p. 171 (Jan or Feb 1808), W.W. to Sir George Beaumont.
[599] R. Noyes, *Wordsworth and the Art of Landscape* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1973), p. 257.

old flimsy philosophy about the effect of scenery on the mind'.[600] My thesis rejects Macaulay's comments, since my intentions have been to bring together eighteenth-century aesthetic theories that were widely available in the mid-nineteenth century, and to link them with modern landscape theories and philosophy, to build a picture of the background thinking that may be applied to the creation of what is usually regarded as great imaginative poetry.

My proposition intimates that William Wordsworth, together with his sister Dorothy, perceived the imaginative potential of their garden in the context of its position in Grasmere Vale, and with the comprehension of the revelatory insights that the poet had experienced, it was a perfect place for them to dwell. Occasionally, Dorothy reminded the poet of this, such as when brother and sister returned to Dove Cottage one moonlit night when they saw 'the Crescent moon with the 'auld moon in her arms'', and Dorothy 'repeated verses to William' until he was 'soothed'. In her journal, Dorothy does not indicate which verses were read out loud, but simply says: ''This is the Spot' over & over again'.[601] Wu notes that Wordsworth was reading Milton's *Paradise Lost* in 1802, and while Wu does not list it specifically, I suggest that Dorothy might be quoting from Book III, when:

> … the neighbouring Moon
> (So call that opposite fair star) her aid
> Timely interposes …
> …
> With borrowed light her countenance triform
> Hence fills and empties to enlighten the Earth,
> And in her pale dominion checks the night.
> That spot to which I point is Paradise …[602]
> (III, 726-733)

William and Dorothy Wordsworth's innate understanding of the aesthetics of their garden and the building of the Moss Hut, led them to develop the phenomenological space of the garden at Dove Cottage, which had a direct influence on Wordsworth's imagination. Juhani Pallasmaa asserts that 'the timeless task of architecture is to create embodied and lived existential metaphors that … structure our being in the world', and as such, the place in which we live 'becomes part of our own body and being'. He uses words such as: 'reflect', 'materialise', and 'eternalise ideas', all of which might apply to the subsequent creativity within the sensory environment of the Moss Hut.[603] These ideas might be echoed in Wordsworth's lines:

[600] Referenced in: Bate, *Romantic Ecology*, p. 32.
[601] D. Wordsworth, *Journals*, pp. 95-96 (4 May 1802).
[602] Milton, 'Paradise Lost', in Milton, *English Poems,* p. 179.
[603] Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the Skin,* p. 71.

> … Then darkness came,
> Composing darkness, with its quiet load
> Of full contentment, in a little shed
> And wondering at its new inhabitants.[604]

As daylight fell, the poet was losing the visual aspects of the garden, and the enclosed space of the Moss Hut may have assumed different qualities, which encouraged composition. It may have also released earthly concerns, thus enabling him to focus on higher thoughts that excluded all else around him, in what Daniel Ritchie refers to as the reciprocal relationship between the observer and the natural world that gives fullness to the experience of 'nature'.

Once the Hut had been built in late 1804, it became a significant place in the poet's life. In the 'Advertisement to Poems on the Naming of Places', Wordsworth notes that: 'little Incidents will have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar Interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such Incidents ... Names have been given to Places by the Author'.[605] In an apparent expansive mood, in a letter to Sir George Beaumont, Wordsworth said: 'I write to you from the Moss-Hut at the top of my orchard, the Sun just sinking behind the hills in front of the entrance, and his light falling upon the green moss of the side opposite me. A Linnet is singing in the tree above ... the green fields ... lie before me in quietness ... I have the pleasure to say that I finished my Poem [*The Prelude*] about a fortnight ago'.[606] Once *The Prelude* was complete in 1805, the 'neglected' and 'melancholy' garden received attention: the 'little shed' was finished and the family spent 'many sweet hours' there; it was 'of great use to us in keeping the other house quiet'.[607] Dorothy also wrote 'from the Hut, where we pass all our time except when we are walking ... I think it is the sweetest place on Earth - the little wrens often alight upon the thatch and sing their low song'.[608] This memory was echoed at Rydal Mount in 1825 when a wren was nesting in the roof of the 'moss-lined shed' that Wordsworth had built in the garden. This inspired him to write a poem comparing a parrot living indoors in a gilded cage with the wren that 'haunted the Summerhouse'.[609] It seems that in the garden at Dove Cottage, William and Dorothy Wordsworth had created their own *Elysium*: a place of 'eternal tranquillity', and one that would be recreated at Rydal Mount.

The period that Wordsworth spent at Dove Cottage between 1799 and 1808 is thought of as his most prolific: a time when he produced some of his greatest works. As I have shown, his

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[604] Wordsworth, 'Home at Grasmere', in *Major Works*, pp. 174-199. 263-267.
[605] See Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads,* pp. 241-251.
[606] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, pp. 593-595 (3 June 1805), W. W. to Sir George Beaumont.
[607] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, pp. 596-597 (8 June 1805), D. W. to Mrs Thomas Clarkson.
[608] Wordsworth, *Early Letters*, pp. 597-601 (11 June 1805), D. W. to Lady Beaumont.
[609] Wordsworth, 'The Contrast: The Parrot and the Wren' in *The Complete Poetical Works* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888; New York: Bartleby.com, 1999), <http:// www.bartleby.com/145/> [accessed 20 August 2015].

early exposure to nature through his cultivated home garden and his wanderings through the wildness of the countryside, imbued in him a profound love of Nature: the inspiration for his poetic vision. The home environments that he sought reflected this, and recognition of the boundaries around his garden and the landscape beyond allowed Wordsworth to perceive the presence of elusive relationships while he existed in Grasmere Vale. The contained and sublime space at Dove Cottage was one that through its intricate complexity was a metaphysical place that had the potential to transform imagination, as evidenced by his poetic self-expression. The creation of the garden by William and Dorothy Wordsworth and the building of the Moss Hut, the poet's retreat and temple, which was a short uphill walk through the garden and orchard, and which faced the panorama of the Vale of Grasmere, was the most significant step in the formation of an environment in which Wordsworth's senses could take flight, in moments of supreme poetical creation.

Conclusion

So as to study the gardens of William Shenstone, William Cowper and William Wordsworth, and to support my proposition that they were instrumental to the creative output of those poets, I have argued that eighteenth-century aesthetic theory combined with more recent ideas was essential to develop my understanding of the environments in which they lived. I have explored those theoretical viewpoints with the aim of demonstrating how the inspirational places in which those poets dwelled, namely The Leasowes, W. Midlands, Orchard Side, Olney and Dove Cottage, Grasmere, had the capacity to impress their minds with a multiplicity of sensations, which stirred their imaginations, and which found expression through their poetry. My examination of those gardens acknowledges that, amongst other attributes, it was the distinctive topography of their surrounding landscapes that influenced those poets' approaches to garden design, and their unique responses to their environments.

William Shenstone's Influential Design

Other people too were affected by certain gardens, and in particular, Thomas Whately determined that The Leasowes, which he regarded as a farm rather than a *ferme ornée,* was full of a variety of scenes. He concluded that: 'every natural advantage of the place within itself has been discovered, applied, contrasted, and carried to the utmost perfection, in the present taste, and with inexhaustible fancy'.[610] Shenstone developed his garden with the visitor in mind, and he delighted in the knowledge that others also found pleasure there. It is my view that as a musician and an artist, he was creating what nowadays might be described as a 'performance space', where drama and music, for example, may be performed. The theatrical nature of the contrasting spaces within his garden invited visitors to interact with each setting in a controlled order, and to appreciate its changes of structure and mood. Though the visual and emotional excitement produced by its differences and its elements of surprise might engender a different performative response from the one intended, an effect that Shenstone would have found interesting. People from all walks of life visited The Leasowes frequently during Shenstone's lifetime, including leading figures such as Benjamin Franklin and Dr Johnson. Furthermore, it had an inspirational effect on visitors from abroad who used Shenstone's ideas for their own gardens. Specifically, The Marquis de Girardin who visited in 1763 imbued 'his estate of Ermenonville with the spirit of Shenstone'. It became known as the French Leasowes, and was a garden of inscriptions on the circuit round the lake where could be found a memorial to Shenstone among the many

[610] Whately, *Observations,* p. 170.

features.[611] Yet after Shenstone's death in 1763, the garden declined rapidly, and when Thomas Jefferson, the future third president of the United States, made a tour of English gardens in April 1786, he was greatly impressed by The Leasowes, even though it had deteriorated considerably. He thought that: 'This is not even an ornamented farm. It is only a grazing farm with a path round it. Here and there a seat of board, rarely any thing better. Architecture has contributed nothing … Walk through the woods is umbrageous and pleasing … Many of the inscriptions are lost'. Nevertheless, Jefferson took Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* with him, and like his companion John Adams, he thought The Leasowes to be 'the most rural of all. I saw no spot so small that exhibited such a variety of beauties' encompassed in its relatively small extent.[612] However, such comments may relate to Whately's descriptions rather than what was left to be seen of the garden itself. In spite of that anomaly, I suggest that Jefferson and Adams may have been impressed by the topography of the place and the vistas that abound on the circuit walk. Furthermore, they were evidently impressed by the ideas contained in Whately's descriptions, since Jefferson had already acquired a copy of Shenstone's *Works*, published by Dodsley in 1768, as well as Heely's *Letters* of 1777*,* and Castell's *The Villas of the Ancients* of 1728, for his library. It is thought that Jefferson incorporated some of Shenstone's ideas into his garden in Virginia, USA. Certainly, in writing about Monticello in 1806, Jefferson wrote that it had: 'of prospect … a rich profusion', [which] 'may be successively offered, & in different portions through vistas, or which will be better, between thickets so disposed as to serve as vistas, with the advantage of shifting the scenes as you advance on your way'.[613] Recently, the concept of the Grove has been revived, and aims to show the garden envisioned by Jefferson, and which Shenstone perhaps inspired. It is evident that the poet's open approach to visitors was a major factor in spreading his garden's fame and influence, and of my chosen gardens, only The Leasowes can be viewed in this way, since both Cowper's and Wordsworth's gardens were private spaces, and not open to the public.

Christopher Gallagher intimates that the garden lionised Shenstone's lifestyle in rural seclusion, which may be reflected in Oswald Doughty's comment: 'artificiality indeed is Shenstone's most striking characteristic ... [he] was a poet of the sentimental, not of true human emotion'. He managed to create a place of the highest artificiality, The Leasowes, where he lived in 'celibate retirement' and 'contemplative melancholy ... Shenstone was fundamentally an egoist'.[614] While these ideas are interesting, I contend that Shenstone was, at heart, an artist and polymath who did not ask a visitor to think of his garden as self-referential. Through his instinctive

[611] Symes and Haynes, *Enville, Hagley, The Leasowes,* pp. 187-188.
[612] T. Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas* Jefferson *Digital Edition*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008-2016), Main Series, vol 9 (1 November 1785-22 June 1786).
[613] Jefferson, *Jefferson Papers,* L. C., and Fiske Kimball, *Jefferson's Grounds and Gardens at Monticello*, pp. 5-7.
[614] O. Doughty, *English Lyric in the Age of Reason* (London: O'Connor, 1922), p. 100. Quoted in S. Jung, *Poetic Meaning in the Eighteenth-Century Poems of Mark Akenside and William Shenstone* (Lampeter, Wales: The Edwin Mellin Press, 2002), p. 168.

understanding of the aesthetics of his evolving design, he enabled a visitor to experience a broad range of individual emotions. David Fairer supports this view when he writes that Shenstone was less self-indulgent and more self-aware, in that his 'reflections were considered, objective, indirect and thought-provoking'. He adds that Shenstone incorporated the 'sentimental look' in his garden, but that involved intellectual activity, and as Fairer says: 'the visual field is being alertly negotiated'. Shenstone's aesthetic alertness is described as 'relational' looking: a mode that is conscious of the subjective, but also of the way 'relations between objects change as we ourselves move'. The poet demands that a visitor is attentive to 'how things are variously disposed towards each other and ourselves', in a self-questioning manner. Shenstone combined an aesthetic awareness with questions of value, showing that his way of looking brought the aesthetic and the ethical together.[615]

For the passing visitor, time spent at The Leasowes combined a sense of being in surroundings with high literary connotations, together with experience of sculpture, architecture and a designed landscape which offered a planned spatial experience, as well as one which engaged thoughts and actions. The physical aspects of the visit with its need to climb steep paths amidst sometimes difficult terrain made the visit a memorable reminder of the enormous effort that had gone into its creation. As John Archer allows: 'the visit was in reality a series of sequentially different events ... and a journey, during which a visitor constructed a personal narrative', beyond the static set piece of the garden. Consequently, The Leasowes was suited to the active participation of a visitor, as it had the particular capacity to 'facilitate the narrative figuration of identity'.[616] Archer notes the originality of Shenstone's approach of creating such a linear sequence of places where personal and solitary engagement with the self might occur, and relates this to the emerging search for identity in the eighteenth century. Shenstone looked upon 'my scheme of embellishing my farm as the only lucky one I ever pursued in my life. – My place now brings the world home to me'.[617] Moreover, I propose that Shenstone regarded it as artistry and 'craftsmanship for its own sake'; as he said: '*refinement* is an *endless Thing'*.[618]

The boundary between the garden and 'economically productive domains beyond' was evident, and a visitor might have appreciated that 'pursuits of leisure, while requiring physical as well as mental effort ... still transcended pursuits of labour'.[619] However, I contend that the experience of such a landscape must be mediated by the designer's intention, and Shenstone was happy to include views of the productive parts of his estate; as Joseph Addison said: 'Fields of

[615] D. Fairer, 'Fishes in his Water: Shenstone, Sensibility, and the Ethics of Looking', *The Age of Johnson,* ed. by J. Lynch, 19 (New York: AMS Press, 2009), 129-147 (pp. 133, 137 and 142).
[616] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (pp. 155-156).
[617] Shenstone, *Letters***,** CLXVIII, pp. 404-406 (15 July 1754), W. S. to Rev. R. Graves.
[618] Shenstone, *Letters*, CLXIX, pp. 406-409 (17 July 1754), W. S. to Lady Luxborough.
[619] Archer, 'Language and Identity', 143-185 (p. 149).

Corn make a pleasant Prospect'. When he asked: 'why may not a whole Estate be thrown into a kind of Garden … a Man might make a pretty Landskip of his own Possessions', Addison was introducing ideas about the value of labour, and the praise of human effort.[620] This is what Shenstone achieved: he took his small estate, and with care and imagination turned it into a landscape garden, incorporating his own agricultural land, as well as borrowed views of the surrounding countryside. Considerable physical labour was required to build The Leasowes, creating changing perspectives for the moving spectator, as well as one that looked towards a prospect. For Shenstone, through his labourers, authority came from the creation of a unique garden that gave other people much pleasure. The effort required to build it was his height of creativity; the poetry and the garden were as one.

William Cowper's Triumph of Sensibility

Considerable exertion was also required of William Cowper, not only in the daily effort of walking for hours in the surrounding countryside, but also in building his small town garden at Olney with the help of a labourer, thereby creating a space whose sequestered nature bombarded the poet's senses. In contrast to the tumult of the world around him, Cowper saw his garden as 'blest seclusion from a jarring world' which 'has peace, and much secures the mind' (III, 675, 679), asking: 'What could I wish, that I possess not here?' (III, 690). Through his need for perpetual motion, Cowper described himself as 'a wandering muse' with 'constant occupation without care' (III, 692-693), as he absorbed the sights and sounds that surrounded him. As I have argued, his reminiscences of past wanderings, as well as his appraisal of information from afar, came together poetically at Orchard Side, Olney, where its safe secluded atmosphere became the ideal environment for Cowper's composition of his great work - *The Task*.

The need for seclusion and solitude is given another perspective by Conrad Brunström who writes that since the poet had no stable internal idea of self-esteem or personal security, he took solace in creating a version of himself that was somehow immune from the vicissitudes of his own continuing spiritual crisis.[621] Additionally, Vincent Newey argues that the poet's work constantly displays: 'self-revelation which not only lays open the recesses of his mind but constitutes a quest for identity and psychic integration'.[622] Brunström asserts that the poet's uncanny 'respectability' and his refusal to settle down were demonstrated in 'rambling blank verse'.[623] He also notes that:

[620] Addison, *Spectator*, VI, 3 June 1712–2 Sept 1712.
[621] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, p. 124.
[622] V. Newey, *Cowper's Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982), p. x.
[623] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, pp. 99-137. In this instance the poetic metre had 'a sexual as well as a technical quality … rejecting the closures of the couplet and of marriage within the same life movement'. Brunström adds that Cowper's 'queer sexuality found relief and expression in enjambement', and that the heteronormative pattern was subverted by 'a Miltonic rejection of the tyranny of rhyme'.

'No-one in the eighteenth century read Milton more avidly than Cowper'.[624] Certainly, Cowper mentioned his 'Miltonic labours' in a letter to Lady Hesketh, among others.[625] His poem, *Retirement*, which anticipates many of the themes of *The Task,* helps illuminate Cowper's need for both singularity and sociability, although 'Retirement, far from being a state of repose, becomes a mental and spiritual battlefield'.[626] Cowper's daily friendships with women were 'carefully anti-heteronormative', while 'solitude remained a pose', a useful strategy, and an idea that needed the presence of at least one other person to sustain and affirm it.[627] Brunström's views offer an interesting aspect that can be considered when examining Cowper's life and work, concerning his interest in gardening, and his connection with the landscape in which he lived.

In his discussion on the structure of *The Task*, Martin Priestman focuses on the influences of earlier poets on Cowper's composition. In particular, he emphasizes Thomson's *The Seasons* 'in its profound and serious praise of work [which] provides the other instinctive pole from the ease of Horatian retirement' as evidenced in Books III and IV of *The Task.* According to Priestman, *The Seasons* is a major source for Book I, and for its increasing examination of 'mercantile expansion and exploration overseas'. However, I am offering an alternative to his views on the winter season, which I suggest had another meaning in *The Task*. Priestman writes that Thomson's poem suggests a 'seasonal structure which, though only picked up half way through *The Task* without either explanation or symmetry, becomes crucial to it', as Books IV, V and VI clearly owe a major debt to 'Winter' [of *The Seasons*], and are in contrast to the first three books which become 'summer'. Priestman writes that Cowper exploits 'the Thomsonian value of winter as a time of significant inactivity' which allows him (Cowper) to reach his concluding vision of the various seasons woven into one in an 'equation of winter with life itself'.[628] Moreover, the biographical approach to an understanding of *The Task* is discounted, and might be viewed as 'critically moribund'.[629] Nonetheless, it is my proposition that as an observant man with a strong perceptive awareness of his surroundings, Cowper was profoundly affected by the remarkable meteorological events taking place, and he became deeply immersed in the common struggle to survive, all of which was reflected in his poetry. Priestman conjectures that the concluding vision of '*The Task'* is one of the seasons being rolled into one, just as Thomson concludes *The Seasons* with a vision of 'one unbounded Spring encircling all'. Conversely, I believe that the imposition of a Thomsonian 'seasonal structure' is of less significance to me than Cowper's response to his

[624] C. Brunström, ''Leaving the Herd': How Queer was Cowper', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 29:2 (2006), 157-168.
[625] *Letters*, IV, pp. 167-169 (11 August, 1792), W. C. to Lady Hesketh.
[626] Brunström, *William Cowper – Religion, Satire, Society*, pp. 99-137, See Ch. 5, 'A Gardener's Question Time', for a full debate on Cowper's approach to religion, retirement and gardening.
[627] Brunström proposes that Cowper's manner of dwelling at Olney evidenced an 'anti-heteronormative sublime … that is based on a wholesale refusal of the predictive unidirectional grammar of sexual exchange'.
[628] Priestman, C*owper's Task,* p. 8.
[629] Priestman, C*owper's Task,* p. 4.

immediate environmental circumstances. One should also allow for the poet's more positive outlook when he was composing *The Task*, and his professed preference for writing during the winter since, unlike the Thomsonian use of the term, that season was evidently his most productive period. While Cowper may have felt trapped at Orchard Side, he was well aware that it was at a moment in time when 'winter' became the overriding problem for so many local people. I suggest that his concentration on 'winter' in Books IV, V and VI of *The Task* was largely influenced by the weather, but can also be explained by his crucial involvement with the daily lives of people in Olney.

Cowper had a strong sense of his uniqueness as a poet, quoting a reviewer who wrote of the poet's singularity:

> *Most poets have no character at all*; being for the chief part only echoes of those who have sung before them … This, however, is not the case with Mr. Cowper; he is a poet *sui generis*, for as his notes are peculiar to himself, he classes not with any known species of bards that have preceded him: his style of composition, as well as his modes of thinking, are entirely his own. [630]

Paradoxically, Cowper wrote: 'Poetry, English Poetry I never touch, being pretty much addicted to the writing of it, and knowing that much intercourse with those gentleman, betrays us unavoidably into a habit of imitation, which I hate and despise most cordially.[631] However, it is noticeable throughout *The Task* that certain poets such as Milton and Thomson influenced Cowper, and in particular, Milton appears to have been a constant inspiration. For example, Cowper takes Milton's 'As yet this World was not' from *Paradise Lost* (V, 577), and changes it to 'As yet black breeches were not' (I, 10). Such comparisons can be made frequently, especially with Cowper's particular liking for 'nibbling sheep' (I, 110), referencing Milton's 'L'Allegro', 'Where the nibbling flocks do stray' (72). As Bending says: 'we should acknowledge the influence and echoes of Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' in such later accounts of pleasurable and melancholic rural landscapes'.[632] Certainly, Cowper later referenced 'Il Penseroso': 'So glide my life away' (VI, 1000), 'And may at last my weary age | Find out the peaceful hermitage' (167-168). Noticeably, Cowper had read Shenstone, and there is a direct connection between Shenstone's ode *Rural Elegance*, and *The Task*.[633] Shenstone's lines: 'Her impulse nothing may restrain … They only that deserve, enjoy.' (232-263), with their wistful sense of homage towards rural life, can be compared with Cowper's lines: 'It is a flame that dies not even there … Found here that leisure and that ease I wish'd.' (IV, 743-801). The place of Olney enabled the poet to focus on his writing, but it was an

[630] R. Griffiths, *The Monthly Review*, 67 (October 1782), 262.
[631] *Letters*, II, pp. 182-183 (23 November 1783), W. C. to Joseph Hill.
[632] Bending, *Green Retreats,* p. 124.
[633] Gilfillan, *Poetical Works,* pp. 125-134. Quoted in W. K. Thomas, and W. U. Ober, *A Mind Forever Voyaging* (University of Alberta Press, 1989), pp. 195-198.

activity that was underpinned by Cowper's crucial expenditure of physical effort in the creation of his garden, his repetitive wandering, and absorption of his surrounding environment.

Cowper had recognized that his work did not 'boast a regular plan', writing:

> 'My descriptions are all from Nature. Not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience. Not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural … the whole has one tendency. To discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London Life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue'.[634]

His great poem, *The Task*, is a struggle for a balanced and fruitful presence in the world, while especially his communion with Nature was a form of worship, which was captured in the lines:

> The Lord of all, himself through all diffused,
> Sustains and is the life of all that lives.
> Nature is but a name for an effect
> Whose cause is God.
> (VI, 221-224)

Certainly, Vincent Newey writes that *The Task* is: 'a trial of the spirit, a struggle for balanced and fruitful being-in-the-world', although Cowper's imaginative representations of nature embody a triumph of his acute sensibilities over tendencies towards selfishness and despair. Newey says that Cowper's situation signified the experience of the ''modern man', who … must … forge a personal wholeness out of a response to self and the world beyond self'.[635] Consequently, this thought raises the prospect of William Cowper as a forerunner, giving shape and expression to the emerging presence of 'the self' in English literature.

William Wordsworth's Inspirational Retreat

It was the phenomenological aspect of the setting of the Moss Hut, and the inspirational qualities of the garden at Dove Cottage within the context of the Vale of Grasmere that were so important to Wordsworth. They provided him with a place full of contrasts, which had a direct influence on his imagination and creativity. As Edward Relph notes: 'there is no systematic method of obtaining insights … only the slow and uncertain phenomenological process of 'letting things manifest themselves. This event cannot be forced. It has to be allowed to happen'.[636] This reflective manner of thought may be allied to the idea of environmental humility, a concern for the being of things and places, which requires respect, wonder and meditation on a landscape. I am putting forward these ideas, since such twentieth-century philosophical points are relevant to

[634] *Letters*, II, pp. 284-285 (10 October 1784), W. C. to William Unwin.
[635] Newey, *Cowper's Poetry*, pp. x-xi.
[636] Relph, *Rational Landscapes*, p. 187.

Conclusion

Wordsworth's mode of *being* during the time he dwelt at Dove Cottage, and I believe were inherent in his depth of understanding of the importance of the garden to his imagination.

Dove Cottage was built into the hillside, and the changes that Wordsworth and Dorothy made to its garden, together with the singular building of the circular Moss Hut in consonance with the Vale before them, strengthened the poet's experience of the vertical dimension of his world, as well as making him aware of the depth of the earth. It provided the environment and the freedom from earthly bondage that enabled Wordsworth to look to the sky, and sense the divinity that would help him to disclose his great poetic gift. The circular nature of Grasmere Vale before him, of which the cottage was a part, immersed the poet in a phenomenological space vital to the realization of his creativity. His imagination was set free in the seclusion of the Moss Hut, but the short, steep uphill journey was difficult, as the crags, stepping stones, terraces and the irregular nature of the terrain would have caused him to twist and turn quite often in order to reach his goal. While it was a familiar exercise, it must have been one with an element of danger, especially during those winter months of 1804-5 when most of *The Prelude* was concluded. I suggest that the potential danger involved in the effort to reach the Moss Hut was essential to Wordsworth's sense of achievement.

According to René Wellek, imagination is often thought of as the eighteenth-century 'faculty of arbitrary recall and willful combination of images'; while at other times it is held to be a 'neo-Platonic intellectual vision'. He wrote that: 'the neo-Platonic metaphysical conception permeates the last books of *The Prelude'*, adding that Wordsworth sometimes makes imagination a purely subjective 'imposition of the human mind on the real world', while at other times he makes it 'an illumination beyond the control of the human mind'.[637] However, the poet most often takes a collaborative stance:

> A balance, an ennobling interchange
> Of action from within and from without
> The excellence, pure spirit, and best power
> Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees.
> (XII, 376-379)

The breadth and depth of Wordsworth's interest and insight, and the stature of his vision as a poet who held 'communion with the invisible world' might be exemplified by the vision he experienced on Mt Snowdon, which Wellek suggests, reveals a parallelism between nature and imagination. The poet observed that:

[637] R. Wellek, 'Varieties of imagination in Wordsworth (1955)', in J. S. Hill, *The Romantic Imagination* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1977), pp. 159-165 (p. 159).

… Imagination …
Is but another name for absolute strength
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And reason in her most exalted mood.
(XIII, 167-170)

He is likening the ability of 'higher minds' to identify:

… a love that comes into the heart
With awe and a diffusive sentiment;
… this proceeds
More from the brooding Soul, and is divine.
(XIII, 162-165)

This higher reasoning brings together love: love of mankind and of God in a realization that imagination tends towards infinity and the eternal, implying religious feelings that were self-articulated in terms of the world around him, and an insight into the unity of the world. My contention is that Wordsworth's profound understanding of this intellectual approach was instrumental in the period when he inhabited Dove Cottage (1799-1808), where his garden became a metaphysical space and he was able to experience intellectual freedom. It was an individualistic place where Wordsworth could respond to the poetic images that occurred, and where his imagination was able to experience renewed subtleties through the fluctuations within the garden, co-existing in a blending of his unique presence with its phenomenological space.

The poet's approach to the use of the garden and the household in general may also have been a reflection of Rousseau's ideas on gender roles. Wordsworth had read Rousseau's *Social Contract* and *Discourse on Inequality* by 1793.[638] His view on the nature of the relationship between men and women was rooted in the notion that men are stronger and therefore more independent. Dorothy Wordsworth was educated and brought up in such a way that she would fill what Rousseau would perceive to be her natural submissive role as a wife, but while he advocates these very specific gender roles, he does not regard men as simply superior to women who have particular talents that men do not. Rousseau says that women are cleverer than men, and that they excel more in matters of practical reason: views that are continually discussed between both feminist and Rousseau scholars. As Martin Danahay argues: during the nineteenth century, the roles of domestic servants and of a housekeeper or wife were perceived as essential for the masculine, creative and intellectual work of writing.[639] In the secluded environment of Dove Cottage, while Dorothy did provide the domesticity that William expected, it is evident from her

[638] Wu, *WR 1770-1799,* p. 119.
[639] Danahay, *Community of One*, p. 1.

journals, writings and their approach to composition that there was also a collaborative relationship between brother and sister.

Danahay writes that 'Wordsworth invokes the unity and boundedness of his self as a way of defining his subject and setting limits on the scope of his project', which was the composition of *The Prelude,* an act of literary creation that Danahay describes as 'unprecedented' and 'unreproducible'.[640] He declares that Wordsworth chose to write about himself, basing his justification for writing the text on his individuality, since there was no precedent for himself and no one could imitate his life. Additionally, behind the ideal of the single self, 'lies the desire to possess a space of pristine individuality that will belong to the author alone'. The work that the poet will create in that special place will 'define an inner landscape of experience that belongs to the author alone'.[641] Certainly, it is my contention that the garden at Dove Cottage, and in particular the private enclosed space of the Moss Hut were the catalysts for the completion of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's greatest composition, embodied in his declaration that he was: 'Single and of determined bounds'.[642] With his faith in the 'singleness' of his self, I believe that the poet sensed the importance of that place when he took it on, and that his collaborative relationship with his sister enabled them to create a unique space for their creativity to take place.

People and Place

The creative interplay between people and place may be defined as the notion of my thesis. Within that framework, certain images reoccur in each garden, namely: the presence of enclosed structures; the use of inscriptions; glittering ground water and the poetry of John Milton, especially *'Il Penseroso'.* Ideas can be part of the garden, most notably with words that speak to the passer-by, and the surroundings of the garden or inscriptions of words may be considered in relation to each other. Poetry records the writers' promenade through the garden, throughout the seasons, the times of day and the time in which the garden grows. As John Hunt says: 'The processes of growth, of movement, and of mental association are all forms of transition to which, more than spatial juxtapositions, poetry bears witness'. Above all, poetry can convey those intellectual thought processes that leave the garden to fix on distant events or memories yet are compellingly if briefly triggered by the immediate setting. More recently, Hunt stresses the idea that: 'the word comes into its own when it can explore, explain, and share the associations, feelings and ideas that designed sites promote'.[643] In my thesis, I have sought to identify and explain the links between the specific surroundings in which my three chosen poets lived, and the

[640] Danahay, *Community of One,* pp. 45, 58.
[641] Danahay, *Community of One*, p. 41.
[642] Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805)*,* I, 669.
[643] Hunt, *Greater Perfections,* pp. 172-173.

possible aesthetic effects that were inherent in those places. It has been my contention that those particular inspirational environments enabled Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth to produce what is perceived as their most outstanding poetry.

Furthermore, those kinds of effects may also apply to modern times, as Elizabeth K. Meyer maintains in her discussion on aesthetics as part of a manifesto for sustainability in twenty-first century landscape design, where she reframes beauty not simply as an act of pleasure but possibly as one of transformation. Meyer argues that the combination of physical characteristics and sensory qualities could possibly alter one's mental state, and asserts that this is a legacy of the eighteenth century when the attention to the physical properties of the surroundings and their effect on the mind was at the centre of garden aesthetics. She differentiates between aesthetics and appearance, and suggests that modern aesthetics celebrate motion, change and multiple visions, recognizing the flow of passing time and the singularity of the moment in time, in an engagement with all the senses. Meyer adds that 'this aesthetic includes both the making of things and places and the sensing, using, and contemplating of them'.[644] While I support this viewpoint, and have used modern aesthetic theories to back up my argument, I maintain that such thinking was also present in the eighteenth century, to some extent. Michel Baridon offers an explanation in his discussion on 'associationism', which he defines as the nature of sensations as the sources of ideas in the mind. He writes that philosophers such as John Locke and Thomas Whately were 'proof of the links between the theory of knowledge and the concepts which defined the landscape garden'. Baridon refers to Locke's observation 'on the modes of sensation (pleasure and pain)' … where the removal of pain 'operates as a pleasure: and the loss or diminishing of a pleasure, as a pain'. He declares that this dynamic principle applies very well to the walker who passes back and forth from pain to pleasure, as he reacts 'to the slightest variations in the environment, and is reminded that his own personality is constructed in the dimension of time'. Baridon then asserts that 'the entry of time into the landscape garden brought about a true revolution in the perception of nature'.[645] Indeed, as I have argued, extensive walking over long periods of time and the significance of movement to the poets as they moved visually or physically from one area to another, was an activity that was essential to their creativity. Moreover, Michael Conan notes Christian Hirschfeld's 'sense of importance of memory and imagination when taking stock of the experience of motion through a landscape … [which] seems to lead to contemplation in stillness'.[646] It was especially applicable to the imaginative development of Cowper who was particularly sensitive to temporal fluctuations, and

[644] E. K. Meyer, 'Sustaining Beauty. The Performance of Appearance: A Manifesto in Three Parts', *Journal of Landscape Architecture,* 98:10 (2008), 92-131 (pp. 96-102).
[645] M. Baridon, 'Understanding Nature', in Calder, ed., *Experiencing the Garden,* pp. 65-85 (pp. 82-83).
[646] M. Conan, ed., *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion*, pp. 14-16.

to Wordsworth whose work was synonymous with key moments of time, and of time passing. Therefore, I contend that Meyer's concept of the flow of time in modern thinking is a continuation of philosophical ideas that originated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rather than something new.

In each of my chosen gardens, there would have been practicalities to consider in terms of the accumulation of construction materials, and for Hunt, in what he describes as 'exterior place-making', that necessity may involve buildings, and also elements of nature: trees, shrubs, grass, water and rocks. Hunt writes that 'place-making' was done by, among others: poets, estate managers, farmers and gardeners. Though he argues that it was the result of the mixed work that went into agriculture, horticulture, hydraulics and building, as well as symbolic expression and possibly cultural rhetoric, together with pragmatic planting and maintenance.[647] While Hunt avers that there was never a body of specialists to compose treatises specifically for place-making or landscape architecture, he does mention William Mason's poem *The English Garden* of 1771, which specifically addressed the English situation in the late eighteenth century. To a certain extent theoretical treatises would not have been necessary for the poets that I have examined, since their gardens were quite different and were an evolving artistic response to the place and time. Although I believe that the theorists Claude-Henri Watelet and Thomas Whately influenced Wordsworth, and that Cowper had possibly seen Mason's poem. Inevitably, practical issues of building and maintenance were involved, especially at The Leasowes, which was entirely reliant on labour to construct and maintain the hydraulics that controlled its water features. As Hunt says, place-making is a fundamental mode of human expression and experience, but reminds us that garden theories should be 'invented anew', lest one develops 'too firm a commitment to any one perspective', whether literary, philosophical, or horticultural, for instance.[648] Stephen Heyde, who suggests that 'landscape architecture might benefit from more critical research of modern aesthetics as it surfaced in history', puts forward an alternative viewpoint.[649] Certainly, in my argument I have attempted to take this approach, by bringing together eighteenth-century aesthetics as well as modern ones, with the aim of examining and explaining my views on how the distinctive gardens of Shenstone, Cowper and Wordsworth were of crucial importance and influence on their creativity.

A key feature of the gardens that I have discussed is that there was no predefined design formula, and no existing formal layout to be taken into consideration, although some standing features were retained, such as Cowper's Summerhouse in the garden at Orchard Side, Olney. On

[647] Hunt, *Greater Perfections,* pp. 1-3.
[648] Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, p. 8.
[649] Heyde, 'Historical Roots', 123-145 (p. 141).

the whole it may be said that each design was unique, and a reflection of the response of the owner to the place in which he found himself, rather than a theoretical evocation. Hunt elaborates that 'place-making' is 'fundamentally an art of milieu', which 'acquired aesthetic status in the years around 1800', and which 'involves not only the inhabitants and users but the history of the place that is made or remade, the story of the site over time'. Each site imposed its own restrictions on the designer who had to contend with climate, topography and available water, for example. As such, each garden may be said to represent the French geographer Augustin Berque's concept of *milieu*, where the production of landscape is not simply a question of physical surroundings, but also the inscription of how an individual or society conceives of its environment. *Milieu* is where we are and what we are surrounded by, and how the individual constitutes and continues to modify those surroundings. A landscape, or in this instance a garden, is a combination of object and subject: the place itself and the individual who creates or modifies it, and as Hunt declares, landscape comes into being as the creative coupling of a perceiving subject and the object perceived. As I have argued, the phenomenological aspects of the garden, which are its pre-existing significance, bring together the garden and the landscape beyond, which changes continually throughout the seasons, together with the mediating physical creativity of the owner/ tenant of the garden in the creation of a new whole. Hunt declares that: 'Gardens focus the art of place-making or landscape architecture in the way that poetry can focus the art of writing'. He suggests that the poet's 'formal and creative skills … make poetry among the most concentrated and demanding of literary expressions', and that the same qualities of compactness and application can be put forward for garden art. [650] My proposition intimates that all those qualities were present in the each of the gardens that I have discussed, resulting in places that were effectively works of art.

In particular, the private retreats created within them complemented their designers' literary aspirations, and as Stephanie Ross declares: 'Enclosure … appeals to our imagination as well as to our senses. [It] brings about a focusing of attention', since 'it indicates a basic sensory and kinaesthetic notion … of being surrounded'. [651] The Root-House and the Writing Hut at The Leasowes, the Summerhouse and Greenhouse at Olney, and the Moss Hut at Dove Cottage all represent the theme of withdrawal and reflection. It was the opportunity to move from an open sensory environment into one of deep stillness that offered each poet a place for immersion into a realm of contemplation and composition. Though Symes and Haynes declare that in the case of The Leasowes, the 'garden as a whole might be seen as a retreat, a paradise constructed by, and for the main enjoyment of the owner ', but allow that: 'Visitors (singly or in small numbers) could

[650] Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, p. 11.
[651] Ross, *What Gardens Mean*, pp. 170-171.

partake in this experience of seclusion'.[652] This thought can be extended by Mark Laird's comment that: the 'idea stems back to Joseph Addison at the beginning of the century, who developed the notion that the imagination could be formed and trained to respond to stimuli, particularly of a natural kind'.[653] Nevertheless, I have focused on the aesthetic effects of each garden on the poet who inhabited those spaces, and the opportunities for poetical creation that were developed through their own perceptions of the environments in which they dwelled. Hunt declares that: 'It is through writing that we are accorded access to the metamorphosis of simple environment into milieu (space into place), to the human subject's entering literally and spiritually into an objective site, and to the consequences of that experience'.[654] Immersion in the senses can distract us from other things, and as I have argued, it was the innovative places of their gardens with their sensory focus, which concentrated the poets' attention. Through differing concatenations of circumstances, William Shenstone, William Cowper and William Wordsworth were each able to experience the power of their individual gardens, in a deeply reflective awareness of their personal sensory and bodily engagement with them, as evidenced by their heights of poetical creation.

Wordcount = 74,771

[652] Symes and Haynes, *Enville, Hagley, The Leasowes,* pp. 32-33.
[653] M. Laird, *The flowering of the landscape garden: English pleasure grounds, 1720-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 184.
[654] Hunt, *Greater Perfections*, p. 173.

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