Introduction

> . . . and we have born
> The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
> William Cowper, *The Task*, Book I, 'The Sofa'

This book begins with walking, thinking about walking, walking as thinking, just walking. In part a response to what I perceived to be the incompleteness of Romantic accounts of aesthetic experience and pleasure, it began by considering decidedly un-Romantic walking: huddling in Edinburgh doorways to avoid creditors, attempting to hold panic at bay while recognizing you're lost in the dark in dangerous terrain, suddenly recognizing that you've chosen the 'wrong' side of Scafell to descend and may die, feeling untethered by the experience of moving house, of 'flitting'. Such experiences put pressure on ideas of aesthetic pleasure: are they pre-aesthetic, awaiting some Burkean 'safe place' in which to be recuperated, or are they simply unorganized, or even unorganizable – verging on what Burke calls the 'simply terrible'? I began this project looking for the former, hoping to deploy what I was calling experiential criticism to assemble a series of fraught events, represented in a variety of genres, which escaped the recuperative logic of received aesthetic categories. As my epigraph from Cowper suggests, we bear the force of physical events without necessarily registering them; the 'ruffling wind' influences us despite its ephemeral quality. Unable to philosophically slot such (often quotidian) experiences, how should we understand their undeniable power? These events are fugitive on several grounds: walking per se destabilizes our ability to constitute a stable point (a prospect) from which to constitute a self (the pleasure of apparent mastery at the heart of the picturesque); the events are often registered in bodily terms outside language, which I'll call 'somatic events'; and the events are subject to time and the vagaries of memory, as the authors attempt to recover some of their immediacy, even as they slip ever more firmly into the past. This final issue of temporality is made more complex by differences in temporal

scale: Coleridge's immediate past in 'This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison': 'that walnut-tree / Was richly tinged' to the forty-year interval between event and reminiscence in Cottle's *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey*. What can be recovered in such writing? Is there a limit to what can be achieved through memory and prolepsis?

To begin, I calculated that I could not uncover the textural detail of this kind of writing without analogous experience. The failure to successfully represent the confusion, panic, unaccountable sadness or other emotional tangles bound up in a specific walk, the things that draw me to these texts, are simply too complex to recover. To mitigate this problem, I walked in support of my more conventional archival research. This experiential research, as I styled it, provided analogous events that I could confront in their unorganized richness. I made no attempt to retrace the footsteps of the authors in any exacting way, but instead staged my own walks in the environs of the originals in the full knowledge that I was doing something different, not repeating the past. Rather, the uniqueness of events is the point, their essential unrepeatability. For example, I began in Edinburgh tracking De Quincey's routes from the safety of his rooms in the debtor's sanctuary to the Blackwood's offices, to his various safe houses in the city. In doing so, I was not in fear of detection and capture by an Edinburgh 'catchpole', nor could De Quincey have imagined negotiating the traffic to cross Princes Street. So while necessary, in the sense that without analogous experiences I wouldn't actually know what I was talking about, these walks have not found their way into the body of the book, and are instead confined to the *Preface*. Although the book could not have been written without them, these walks are not its subject.

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The book then is divided into four chapters organized around a walk or walks in a variety of sites, from standard picturesque beauty spots like the Wye Valley to darkened doorways in Edinburgh. In addition to the walks, mobility, circulation, aesthetic experience and pleasure, somatic events, and writing in various forms as negotiations of these experiences form the bases of the study. Walking and mobility reveal themselves as both lived events and in figural terms, although as writing they are all in some sense figural. Chapter 1 exemplifies these interests. 'Joseph Cottle, Reminiscence, and the Forms of Circulation' begins with a walk in 1795 from Bristol to Tintern. Cottle's walking companions were Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and their soon-to-be wives Sara and

Edith Fricker. Cottle was lame and had to hire a horse in Chepstow. The party's experiences of the Piercefield estate, the ruined Abbey and the iron works in the Angiddy Valley after midnight provide a wonderfully skewed version of the picturesque tour as it was riven by interpersonal rancour, poor planning and aesthetic surprise. It also comes to us over a long interval in time as Cottle retrieves it from memory as 'reminiscence'. The first edition of Cottle's book, which includes the story, used 'recollections' in its title. When he revises and republishes following Southey's death, Cottle attempts to work out the difference in considering memory as a tool for simply 'collecting' moments from the past, or as an inevitable intermixture of recollection and authorial desire as he brings his friends back from the dead. Complex social desire punctuates Cottle's career in Bristol as he imagines the city as a crucible for change, and as the centre of artistic experimentation. His dedication to fostering an intellectual and artistic milieu finds expression in an isolated object, the 'Cottle Album'. Cottle's presence in Bristol seems paradoxical at first: he was doubtless at the centre of dissenting and artistic networks in the city as a radical Baptist, bookseller, poet and publisher, yet his role was primarily as the facilitator of creative activity in the city he loved. That activity coalesces in the materiality of the album he kept in the upstairs room of his Corn Street bookshop. The room served as a writing centre, both literally as the place where his friends wrote (Coleridge wrote and revised parts of his first two volumes there) and as a meeting place for writers. Circulation through the room is recorded and authorial exchange made manifest in the first thirteen sheets of the book where his writer friends inscribed fair copies of their recent work: the first entry is a Southey poem, the second one by William 'Hurricane' Gilbert, and so on including works by Charles Lloyd, Robert Lovell, Cottle's brother Amos, et cetera. What remains is an account of circulation, both in the sense of the physical movement of writers through the room and as a site of dissemination, through this rich artistic node of Cottle's design and making. That the album is now held in the rare book collection at Cornell University doesn't diminish its aura as it continues to speak of something precious, something collectible, a record of movement that, as movement, would otherwise collapse into an unrecollectible past. Cottle intends his collection to spur recollection – a projection into the past to bring forward that vivid milieu otherwise lost in time. Such complex mementoes typify Cottle's mind and project; he wishes to be a passive centre creating art as a catalyst for others. His activities come under the broad heading of friendship, and his lifelong friendship with Southey provides an excellent instance of his desire for

connection over time and distance. A recurrent feature of their long correspondence was Cottle's annual detailed plans for his visit to Southey in the Lake District. None of these tours actually occurred. Cottle had become too infirm to undertake the journey, and his imagining the aesthetic and emotional riches of such visits had to remain just that – imaginings. The element of play in the letters evinces a buoyancy that readers can only admire; Southey was not asked for his sympathy, but rather for his collaboration in creating the fictional holiday. Similarly, once Cottle became unable to come up or down stairs without the aid of his sisters, he described the process as expeditions over difficult terrain.

Cottle's reputation has never really recovered from the savaging it took from the Coleridge family following publication of *Recollections of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* immediately after the poet's death. By focusing on these various forms of circulation, I hope to recover the cohesiveness of Cottle's artistic and social vision, and rehabilitate *Recollections* and its expanded and retitled descendent *Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey* not as score settling, but as efforts to recover something of his friends for posterity. Chapter 2 of this study then turns to the Lake District, 'Walking, Climbing, Descending: Negotiating the Landscape'. It begins with an account of Coleridge's nearly disastrous descent of Scafell via Broad Stand a near impassible vertical rock formation. Coleridge kept two accounts of his 1802 walk through the Lakes, a multiple sheet letter to Sara Hutchinson and a small notebook he carried for the purpose. Many of the notebook entries are produced in situ, including his elation at the summit of Scafell, subsequent panic when he realized he could not return the way he had come, and ultimately relief at having survived the experience. He wrote a more composed (in both senses) account in the letter the following morning. These experiences operate at the limit. Coleridge is 'out of his mind' as endorphins, adrenaline and dopamine combine to lead him into folly. His re-imposition of his rationality cannot be read as a recuperative triumph as it too involves primarily physiological and somatic experiences: lying still, allowing the lactic acid produced by his tired muscles to abate, and recovering his peripheral vision as the hormonal soup that's been driving him subsides. In short, the event is much closer to the 'simply terrible' than the sublime. Nonetheless, he claimed that it served as the source event for 'Hymn Before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouny'. The interplay of aesthetics and physiology serves as the central focus of this section of the book. In addition to Coleridge's misadventure, it describes William Wordsworth's futile efforts to reconcile his experience of the Langdale Pikes and philosophical aesthetics in one of the prose fragments from the

so-called *Unpublished Tour* manuscripts. Driven by a desire to secure the meaning and power of the mountains, even after repeated viewings, he equally feared that philosophical reflection might sacrifice the immediacy of the experience – the source of his pleasure, and ultimately of its value. In the end he simply could not negotiate this paradox. His sister Dorothy did much better. Her description of her ascent of Scafell Pike with her friend Miss Barker captures the elation of the ascent and the summit, and the unease and potential terror of a gathering storm. Chapter 2 also gives accounts of other members of the wider Wordsworth circle, including the Quaker Thomas Wilkinson, whose travel journal the Wordsworths and Coleridge used as their guide on their 1803 tour of Scotland, and who was also the author of *Tours to the British Mountains*. William's poems from the Scottish tour, Dorothy's travel journal and Coleridge's designated notebook provide vivid accounts of their individual negotiations of what seemed an alien world. Another of Wilkinson's friends, the brilliant autodidact Elizabeth Smith makes a dazzling appearance at the end of this section via her poems and letters, and as recorded by the affective responses to her premature death, aged twenty-nine, by those who knew her or knew of her. She appears in Wordsworth's *Unpublished Tour* as an invalid, a doomed genius and the translator of Klopstock; Wilkinson marvels at her prowess as a climber and fell-walker caught in sun-dazzled glimpses above him. The final word on Smith goes to Thomas De Quincey who provides an equally marvellous account of her ascent of Airy Force in bad weather – an account that has recourse to supernatural explanation. This intentionally skewed guide to the Lakes aims to supplement and expand critical notions of natural scenic beauty by putting individual authors in direct contact with the terrain. Motion and uncertainty condition such experiences and render aesthetic recuperation unlikely, and in some instances unwanted.

Chapter 3, 'Casting About: Thomas De Quincey in the World', shifts to Edinburgh with De Quincey's reminiscence of his departure by coach after his first meeting with the Wordsworths. The highly digressive essay *The Saracen's Head* describes walks, coach travel, memory and mourning (along with the Wordsworths) and was published in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*. His work for *Tait's*, undertaken out of desperation to supplement his *Blackwood's* income while being pursued for debt and following the death of his beloved wife Peggy, included his vivid recollections of Coleridge, Wordsworth and the other Lakers, much to their dismay. These remarkable essays were produced under the extraordinary circumstance of his voluntary confinement to the Edinburgh debtor's sanctuary within the spatial bounds of Holyrood Park. Undisciplined to say the least, De Quincey could not

prevent himself from secretly slipping into Edinburgh to walk in the streets at night or visit friends by day. Constantly at risk for apprehension and arrest, he circulated through a series of safe houses as part of a frenzied, yet highly productive, writing routine: early supper, evening walking, writing (midnight until breakfast), deliver manuscript copy via one of his young daughters to *Tait's* and/or *Blackwood's*, revise, deliver finished articles, repeat. He produced the famous *Tait's* essays, the stories *The Household Wreck* and *The Avenger*, many essays on philosophy and economics for *Blackwood's*, et cetera, in this fevered rush of composition. His retrospective accounts of the Lakes arose in the context of this peripatetic compositional practice. Writing and memory served as active releases from the physical bounds in which he was confined; mobility and arrest underwrote his artistic output and strained aesthetic understanding as the picturesque and the sublime appeared as histrionics, anxiety so palpable as to feel like all risk, as potential dissolution without end. Despite the risk, especially following his wife Peggy's premature death, De Quincey used his stories and reminiscences to travel back to scenes which engendered his present fraught moment. Unlike the other writers in the book, De Quincey's mobility doesn't always happen on foot. Much of this section finds him riding on top of open coaches experiencing the feel of time as he hurtles into the future. The section concludes with a reading of *The English Mail-Coach*. The variable speeds in De Quincey texts reveal a longing for respite, for an impossible out-of-time. Could he pick apart the past to renovate the present, or must he accept the impossibility of personal recuperation even as he staged its possibility?

Chapter 4, 'Clare and Dislocation,' begins with an account of John Clare's poetry and poetics, focusing on their dedication to the careful delineation of 'lyric events'. The term 'lyric' combines the emotional intensity and power produced by the poem, its sheer musicality, its formal qualities, and often its subject matter. By naming such works 'events', I point to the complex interactions between poet, poetic speaker and the object world, resulting in the poem or prose fragment. I see these interactions as negotiations, temporal as much as spatial. In Clare's case, most famously, the terrain surrounding Helpston and its plant, animal and human inhabitants, even its geological strata provides the locus for his poetry and prose, a body of writing so extensive as to make it one of the most detailed accounts of a single small place ever produced. The intense engagement with his home place, understanding it as a set of lived events rather than as a collection of things, makes it unique. Clare certainly found precedents in other chronicles of village life, especially Robert Bloomfield's *The Farmer's Boy*, Gilbert White's obsessive reckoning of all the things

which constituted the village of Selbourne over many years, and even in Walton's *The Compleat Angler* which he referred to in his journal as the 'best pastoral'. Nonetheless, the poetry and underlying poetics defy the possibility of precedent. For example, Bloomfield's poetic avatar Giles might rest from his labour to watch a beetle climb a blade of grass, but such lived 'events' are exceptional, isolated moments in the descriptive chronicling of *The Farmer's Boy*, whereas such minutiae very often constitute Clare's subject. To call Clare's descriptions obsessive entirely misses the point. (Claims that Clare was 'only' a descriptive poet have a long history, and thankfully have been superseded.) He does not simply describe the things themselves in some naïve cataloguing procedure, but rather describes his interactions with such things in time, producing poems rich in the ineffable, in the fragile miracle of giving form to otherwise fugitive events. Sonnets, for Clare, prove to be ideal temporal units, fourteen lines in which even the briefest of events can unfold. His early sonnet 'A Scene' makes clear the difference between such a procedure and the eighteenth-century prospect poems he began by imitating.[1] The compositional finish of a Thomson poem, its unity, relies on the achievement of a beautifully arranged static view. The illusions of authorial power and the mastery of the viewer's gaze exercised a hold over poet and audience as they enjoyed the pleasures of the picturesque, its hint of 'roughness' subsumed in a carefully constructed order. The ethical and political problems of picturesque aesthetics have been much rehearsed, perhaps most thoroughly by Ann Bermingham in *Landscape and Ideology*. However, I'm not saying that Clare formulated a critique of the confluence of picturesque aesthetics, enclosure and capital, but rather that he recognized the illusory nature of the power over the landscape such works arrogated. Clare's 'scene' was radically open, allowing the superabundance of natural objects and human subjects to flood in. He renounced the exercise of aesthetic power in favour of faithfulness to the object world, and to recording his actual engagement with it. 'Formal negotiation' aptly describes his art practice; Clare sought the adequate form for what he saw and felt.

Despite having noted above that Helpston and environs were Clare's great subject, this chapter concentrates on Clare's move to Northborough, the so-called 'flitting'. The Northborough sonnets and the two great poems recording the move, 'The Flitting' and 'Decay: A Ballad', emerge as efforts to negotiate and perhaps constitute the new place. To understand this effort, I place the works in the context of his efforts to raise capital to outfit his new smallholding, his correspondence with his London friends FH Cary and Allan Cunningham in an effort to build a subscribers list for a new volume of poems, and his ongoing exchanges with Mrs Emmerson,

including her purchase of the cow 'May' and a butter churn to help him establish himself in this new guise. It is difficult in retrospect not to see the whole thing as simply a 'guise', more Clare mimicry, but his patrons are as guilty as they sought to establish their poet as a smallholder, an economic class fraction that had been functionally obsolete for over a decade. Beyond the economics of the move, Clare struggled to understand the meaning and nature of 'home' that he might constitute a new one. In this vein he and his friend Joseph Henderson, the head gardener at Milton House, laid out the borders at the Northborough cottage and selected the plantings, not as an imitation of his Helpston garden, a small masterpiece of species variety and design created over many years, but rather as a new garden to suit its place. Nostalgia was not so paralyzing that he failed to recognize the specificity of each place; the utterly different physical situations, their unique ecosystems, meant the Northborough garden had to be of its place or fail to thrive. While Helpston and Northborough are separated by some two and a half miles, the apparent shortness of the distance matters not at all. Reading Clare's distress as an overreaction misses the point of his poetry, and ignores the astonishing quality of the body of work he had produced to date – the poetic representation of 'lyric events' in and around his home. His sadness did not become despair; otherwise the Northborough poems could not have been written.

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The critical interests pursued throughout this study intersect with several important current trends in understanding the field of Romantic Studies, especially as it concerns subjectivity, feeling, emotion, affective experience and response, and the formal structures which emerge from the constitutive events I describe and analyse, including the lyric. The recent collection *Romanticism and the Emotions*, edited by Joel Faflak and Richard Sha, reveals the complexity of these intersecting interests. Faflak's interests and focus are primarily psychoanalytic, for example, building on his work on the proto-psychoanalytic concerns of the period. Sha, on the other hand, comes to this critical terrain from the vantage of cognitive science.[2] So despite beginning from very different assumptions (should the unconscious be understood in psychoanalytic terms or as a vestigial effect of brain activity, for example), the editors find common cause in moving the critical conversation towards emotion and affect. This book participates in that general turn, and I profess membership in that very broad church. To be clear: this is not to say that I believe in the possibility or efficacy of establishing a unitary

Romantic subject, as if such a creature might pop out at the end of history. Thirty years of carefully nuanced historicist enquiry have shown us how individual subjects are necessarily interpolated by contingent forces, personal, social, political. The experiential moments I trace throughout the book reveal fragile transitory selves subjected to all kinds of forces, from the physiological demands of the terrain to the complexity of social conditioning. Put another way, this book follows the critical lead provided by Raymond Williams' discussion of 'structures of feeling' in his 1977 *Marxism and Literature*. Like Williams, I am 'concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt . . . characteristic elements of impulse, restraint and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating community' (132). I follow this famous critical prompt by elaborating moments of 'present consciousness' and the 'inter-related communities' in which it arises. Whereas Williams' broad goal is to reveal the underlying human forces driving social formations, mine is to reveal the reciprocal effects of such formations on individual human subjects – the manifold feelings of experience.

The writing I analyse attempts to represent these moments in transit where and when the self negotiates a fleeting lived experience and is temporarily constituted via that experience. In some cases, these representations seem pre-aesthetic, steeped in sensation, before the processes involved in perception and association convert them into aesthetic value via recuperation. In other cases, the experiences are simply unorganized and perhaps unorganizable – transitory moments beyond the possibility of aesthetic judgement/value, yet nonetheless redolent of the stuff that we are. When Coleridge records his foolishness in allowing his judgement to be clouded by endorphins on the top of Scafell, or De Quincey huddles in an Edinburgh doorway in the twilight to evade a 'catchpole', or Clare momentarily traces a nightingale back along the road to Royce wood and 'home', they are not in command of their faculties, yet writing provides an interval no matter how fleeting, a place of solace and sometimes simply of sense (in Coleridge's case) where, as events collapse into the past they produce a record of transitory shapes and constitutive power. Such writing opens up the quotidian, the everyday, and by way of illustration I offer some moments from early Coleridge poems and Dorothy Wordsworth's *Alfoxden Notebook* to show how such writing engages experience and time and creates glimpses of the furtive Romantic subject as it is constituted, collapses, is constituted, collapses, is constituted, et cetera.

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Walking, Thinking, Feeling

Coleridge records a set of fleeting everyday experiences in his early poems, revealing the complexity and texture of the events I hope to excavate over the course of this study. He is equally famous for his complex and comprehensive consideration of philosophical reflection, especially apperception, the mind's capacity to reflect on its own reflexivity, as for this early poetry. His detailed rearrangement/recombination of Schelling, Fichte and his own ideas seeks to understand the status of thinking itself. While typical of Coleridgean philosophical pursuits, such self-reflection does not dominate his poetry. Here I explore his representations of 'events' that either escape reflection as part of quotidian everyday experience, or which remain unorganized, fugitive events for which reflective meaning cannot finally be assigned. Such events remain bodily, thus my choice of the word 'somatic' to describe them. This deferral of meaning seems adjacent to aesthetics, or perhaps a preliminary stage in some aesthetic operation, yet resists the reflective organization necessary for judgment. Nonetheless Coleridge's sheer responsiveness to sensory events, his openness to sensation, must be foundational in his subsequent working out of reflexive modes, including aesthetic judgment. What I hope to demonstrate is that such judgments don't represent the teleological ends of their engendering experiences, but rather the unstable vacillations and negotiations of complex everyday events.

I begin with the figure of Coleridge in the midst of idleness, yet somehow still attending to events. Understood as necessary to his poetics, inasmuch as they allow him to collect the stuff of poems, such moments often escape subsequent reflective meanings, whether aesthetic or religious. The lazy-day aspect of the Clevedon cottage poems illustrates this phenomenon. The status of his reverie in 'Effusion XXXV,' for example, cannot be established by the pious retrenchment of the final verse paragraph. The mind fails to organize the excess produced by the simplest events. For example, Coleridge's effusiveness as the poem opens translates into eager loquaciousness as he responds to the sheer rush of affective experience: 'most soothing sweet it is / To sit beside our cot, our cot o'ergrown / With white-flowered jasmin, and the broad-leaved myrtle, / (Meet emblems they of Innocence and Love)' (2–5). The repetition of 'our cot, our cot' captures his breathlessness, and the enjambed lines produce the effect for the reader, yet he doesn't seem satisfied with the sensual moment. The parenthetical aside converts that moment by allegorizing the jasmine and myrtle into Innocence and Love. In attempting to secure meaning from the fleeting richness of the lived