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Myths of Place: the Importance of Landscape
in
the Poetries of W. H. Auden and Seamus Heaney

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SUMMARY

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by Douglas N. Houston

on

'Myths of Place: the Importance of Landscape in the
Poetries of W. H. Auden and Seamus Heaney.'

Numerous studies of landscape in the works of Wordsworth and his predecessors exist; very few books, however, are concerned with its significance in modern and contemporary poetry. Works on Auden and Heaney make reference to local elements, but do not consider the overall and continuous importance of landscape in their writings. It is hoped that this study goes some way towards remedying these deficiencies.

The philosophical and imaginative cohesiveness of successive poems relating to single specific landscapes in the works of Auden and Heaney suggests the term 'myths of place'. In according landscape a central rôle in the major dialectics of their poetries, Auden and Heaney make the most valuable contributions to the local mode since Wordsworth's advances beyond the picturesque.

Important parallels exist in the developments of their myths of place. Each produces localized poems embodying radical ideologies and complements such work by mythologising landscape into a sanctuary for ideal values. Landscape constitutes a structural principle adequate to the sustained expression of the dominant psychological and ethical intuitions of their

writings. Ultimately, Auden and Heaney neutralize their myths of place by deconstructing the significances that have accrued to their landscapes.

Chapters One and Two consider Auden's varied treatments of the limestone moorland he knew in childhood; Chapters Three and Four investigate his figurative adaptations of landscape. Heaney's early utilisations of landscape and their culmination in his myth of the bogland form the subjects of Chapters Five and Six; Chapter Seven examines his idyllic localizations, while his imaginatively liberating re-evaluations of his native region are described in Chapter Eight. The study concludes with an assessment of the implications for present-day poetry of Auden's and Heaney's achievements in the use of landscape.

Text-centred methods are used throughout, supplemented with geographical and biographical information where this is directly relevant.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations occur throughout the text:

- CP* : W. H. Auden, *Collected Poems*, edited by E. Mendelson
(London, 1976).
- EA* : W. H. Auden, *The English Auden*, edited by
E. Mendelson (London, 1977).
- DH* : W. H. Auden, *The Dyer's Hand* (London, 1963).
- DN* : Seamus Heaney, *Death of a Naturalist* (London, 1969).
- DD* : Seamus Heaney, *Door into the Dark* (London, 1969).
- WO* : Seamus Heaney, *Wintering Out* (London, 1972).
- N* : Seamus Heaney, *North* (London, 1975).
- FW* : Seamus Heaney, *Field Work* (London, 1979).
- SI* : Seamus Heaney, *Station Island* (London, 1984).
- P* : Seamus Heaney, *Preoccupations* (London, 1984).
- S* : Seamus Heaney, *Stations* (Belfast, 1975).
- SA* : Seamus Heaney, *Sweeney Astray* (London, 1984).

INTRODUCTION

'I see the nature of my kind
As a locality I love' (CP, p.182)¹.

W. H. Auden's stature as the foremost poet of his generation seems increasingly to be matched by the ascendancy of Seamus Heaney's reputation. Heaney is widely regarded as the most important poet writing in English to emerge in the post-war era. The scope and achieved ambitiousness of his work's integrated development since 1966 justify recognition of his pre-eminence among contemporary poets, including the late Philip Larkin and Ted Hughes. Dr Larkin's recent death was a great loss both to poetry and the University of Hull; prior to it, however, his output remained, for all its excellence, comparatively slender, with very few poems by him appearing after *High Windows* of 1974. While Ted Hughes continues to write prolifically, his poetry has become diffuse and lacking in the cohesion and accomplishment of his earlier writing. The conscientiousness of Heaney's sustained engagement of social and political themes and the religious implications of his recent work resemble Auden's development in the first two decades of his career.

Heaney was generally acknowledged as a major poet with his collections of the early 1970s, *Wintering Out* and *North*, at the time when Auden's achievement leaves off with his death in 1973. The Auden canon begins with his writings of 1924 and 1925 included in *The English Auden*; Heaney's latest volume, *Station Island* was published in 1984. Together their works span a continuous sixty year period in modern and contemporary British poetry, and constitute much of its finest writing.

This chronology gains significance when it is noted that for both Auden and Heaney landscape forms a poetic mode of crucial importance. Poems derived from their experiences of landscape are central to the meanings and developments of the works of both. Each's concentration upon a single, specific topography forms a thematic constant in his writing. Together, Auden and Heaney continue and extend the importance of landscape as a viable traditional element in British poetry.

In so doing, their localized poetries, by realizing new imaginative potential in the topographical mode, have significant implications for contemporary verse writing. Many of today's poets have made landscape a staple of their work, Ted Hughes, Charles Causley and R. S. Thomas being eminent among those to have done so. Localized poetry has proliferated with the growth in regional consciousness in the United Kingdom in the post-war era and the spread of the regional arts associations during the 1960s. In many cases, however, the treatment of local themes in poetry is superficially visual in a pre-Wordsworthian manner. Much poetry of landscape today complies with Johnson's definition of circa 1780 of 'a species of composition that may be denominated local poetry, of which the fundamental subject is some particular landscape [*sic*], to be poetically described, with the addition of such embellishments as may be supplied by historical retrospection, or incidental meditation'.² Description is kept to a minimum in the localized writings of Auden and Heaney, which are essentially concerned with far-reaching imaginative and intellectual responses to landscape. They exemplify the potential

of the local mode at a time when its popularity threatens a stylistic regression to the *ut pictura poesis* ethos of eighteenth century topographical poetry. By sustaining and deepening their attention to their chosen topographies Auden and Heaney fuse experience of geographical actuality with imagination and intellection. Successions of localized poems result, of a breadth of reference and universality that constitute original myths of place. Both poets extend the perceptual into the comprehensively conceptual through their dedication to continuous investigation of the significances of their specific localities. Their landscapes, being at once of the world and of the mind, provide objective contexts and metaphorical structures for their definitive expressions of the most fundamental concerns of their writings.

Like Wordsworth, Auden and Heaney avoid dependence on the element of local description central to Johnson's definition of local poetry quoted above, while remaining motivated by the experience of landscape. Both poets make modern advances upon Wordsworth's achievement in curbing the domination of the poetry of landscape by 'the bodily eye ... / The most despotic of our senses'.³ Wordsworth's early assimilation and subsequent rejection of the visual basis of the picturesque tradition of landscape poetry are examined in J. R. Watson's invaluable *Picturesque Landscape and English Romantic Poetry*. In *The Prelude* he dismissed the aesthetic of 'mimic art' as 'a strong infection of the age', morally invidious in its degeneration to 'a comparison of scene with scene, / Bent overmuch on superficial things'.⁴ As Watson notes of his

mature poetry, 'When Wordsworth describes landscapes, he is usually less concerned with the cumulative details and more with the unified impression of a scene'.⁵ Auden and Heaney equally disregard the 'superficial things' of landscape; instead, they apprehend and present broader and deeper impressions of their topographies. Despite the ascendancy of the visual element in modern poetry as a consequence of the influence of Imagism, both Auden and Heaney have indicated their independence of the ocular aesthetic. Heaney has written of the inadequacy of responses to place that are 'merely visual' (P, p.132).⁶ Introducing Sir John Betjeman's *Slick But Not Streamlined*, a collection dominated by conventional topographical verse, Auden wryly accounted for the lack of visual emphasis in his own work: 'It is one of my constant regrets that I am too short-sighted, too much of a Thinking Type, to attempt this sort of poetry, which requires a strongly visual imagination'.⁷

The enduring popularity of Betjeman's considerable output of 'this sort of poetry' is one index of the extent to which local elements are a staple of contemporary tastes in poetry. The peripatetic character and visual basis of Betjeman's local poetry, however, makes him a latter-day type of the picturesque traveller of the eighteenth century. His poetry's intellectual and ethical content is often limited to moral nostalgia for the Edwardian era. Auden and Heaney follow that earlier 'Thinking Type' Wordsworth in bringing intense imaginative and intellectual energies to bear upon single, chosen landscapes in their most significant localized writings. Out of each's

sustained attention to his region develop renderings of place of mythological dimensions like that which Wordsworth formed of his responses to his Lake District surroundings. For Auden and Heaney, as for Wordsworth, the subjective conception of a specific locality is deeply imbued with significances engendered in childhood and cultivated in adolescence and maturity. As a result, the landscapes become the foci for the poets' dominant philosophical and spiritual concerns. The idea of landscape provides a comprehensive and extensible medium supporting poetry of universal conceptual import which retains a firm basis in the individual's local experience. Auden's allegorization of 'the nature of my kind / As a locality I love' (CP, p.182) considers human development and potential through the medium of his limestone landscape. Elsewhere, the same topography takes on important ethical and religious meanings in his poetry's long concern with it. The peat-bogs and farmland of Heaney's native locality in Ulster achieve a similar significance in his poetry's sustained treatments of them. His landscape is central to his writings of history and the Irish condition and structures his postulations of benign alternatives to the troubling implications of his involvement with Irish identity. Landscape in the poetries of Auden and Heaney accommodates individual responses together with universal meanings to provide a working illustration of Wordsworth's statement of

How exquisitely the individual mind
 (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
 Of the whole species) to the external World

Is fitted: — and how exquisitely, too —
 Theme this but little heard of among men —
 The external World is fitted to the Mind⁸.

In the localized writings of Auden and Heaney the mind does not simply project its conceits into the landscape through the operation of the pathetic fallacy or prosopopoeia. Attention to the essential characters of their localities, rather than to 'superficial things', allows the topographical and geological fundamentals of their landscapes to suggest significances actively. The bare and exposed remoteness of Auden's Pennine uplands inspires the metapolitical⁹ ethic of austerity and separatism intrinsic to his early treatments of the landscape and his early writing in general. Later, the emptiness and abandonment he perceived in the locality provide the terms for his evocations of selfless love. The limestone bedrock of the area demonstrates wise passivity in its absorbency and ultimate solubility, while the igneous processes within the landscape actively emblemize the potentiating energies of mankind. The vividness and constancy of Auden's ideas of landscape, and his awareness of its potential for communicating abstractions, gave rise to the symbolic topographies characteristic of his longer poems.

Heaney's early treatments of landscape gradually pare away superficialities towards a fusion of ethical and aesthetic values based on his localized perception of 'things founded clean on their own shapes' (*DD*, p.21).¹⁰ The process of reduction to essentials culminates in his poetry's return to its initial locus of the peat-bogs. This featureless topography brings into definition the autonomy and integrity that assume

importance in Heaney's evaluations of personal and national identity. At the outset of his career excavation of the peat-bogs suggested his sustaining metaphor of 'poetry as a dig' (P, p.41). Culture and consciousness have their analogies in a landscape whose strata of meanings his writing penetrates in a search for fundamentals of self and community. In its power to preserve archaeological remains and its depths to which fresh accumulations add, the bogland provided Heaney with his extensible metaphor for history.

Landscape's active and autonomous functions in the poetries of Auden and Heaney, and the intellectual and imaginative concepts it supports, contradict Eliot's opinions of it as a literary mode. In *After Strange Gods* Eliot wrote that 'landscape is a passive creature which lends itself to an author's mood. Landscape is fitted too for the purposes of an author who is interested not at all in men's minds, but only in their emotions'.¹¹ Eliot did not, of course, have before him in 1934 Auden's mature treatments of his limestone landscape, nor Heaney's poetry of his Ulster terrain. His generalized statement of landscape's passivity is not often qualified by the treatment of local elements in English poetry and prose. Only in the poetries of Wordsworth and John Clare is an activating interaction sustained between landscape and the poetic imagination. Wordsworth's Lake District and Clare's Helpston are, like the localities of Auden and Heaney, of motivating importance in their writings, rather than mere providers of scenery. The transcendence of the descriptive limitations of their predecessors in the works of Wordsworth and Clare is

significantly advanced upon only in the localized writings of Auden and Heaney. They extend Wordsworth's establishment of the primacy of the imagination's responses to place by making landscape their essential medium for the communication of ethical, psychological, historical and religious abstractions.

Such claims on behalf of Auden and Heaney might be called into question in view of the extensive use of landscape in the poetries of Thomas Hardy and W. B. Yeats. They are the most obvious exponents of local elements in the poetry of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their treatments of landscape, however, are distinct from those of Auden and Heaney in being much more limited, and as such need brief consideration.

It was in the course of considering Hardy's prose that Eliot voiced his sweeping criticisms of landscape's literary functions quoted above. He introduced his remarks by stating of Hardy that 'In consequence of his self-absorbction, he makes a great deal of landscape'.¹² Severe as they are, Eliot's views of Hardy's use of landscape are supportable, and equally applicable to his poetry. Like his novels, Hardy's verse incorporates much of what Eliot called 'the Wessex staging',¹³ the management of which often involves expansive and detailed evocations of place. The landscape, however, remains imaginatively inert. It provides the passive setting for incident and emotion to which Hardy's first person personae, singular or plural, are, 'In consequence of his self-absorbction', generally central.

Auden and Heaney are objectively concerned with the essential character of landscape *per se*, and the implications of their localized poetries consistently transcend the

limitations of subjective experience. By contrast, landscape is present in Hardy's work principally as local description, to be subsumed entirely by personal considerations or to supply the setting for narratives. Among the better-known examples of Hardy's many poems featuring landscape are 'At Castle Boterel', 'In Front of the Landscape' and 'Wessex Heights'. Numerous poems by Hardy, including 'To a Sea Cliff', 'The Place on the Map' and 'Beeny Cliff', enact in memory an incident in a love relationship against 'the Wessex staging'. 'At Castle Boterel', however, best displays the subordination of landscape to personal significance in this mode of localized recollective procedure. The subjective emphasis in the poem is sufficient to subsume completely the potential objective importance of the geological tenor of the references to 'that hill's story'. Likewise, the perennality of the 'Primaeval rocks' has no significance beyond the fact that 'what they record in colour and cast / Is — that we two passed'.¹⁴ 'Wessex Heights' is similarly self-absorbed, the expansive presentation of the topography having no function beyond its provision of freedom from anxiety for the solitary first person protagonist. The misty scenery of 'In Front of the Landscape' is detailed to no purpose beyond supplying a screen upon which Hardy's imagination almost cinematically projects 'a tide of visions, / Dolorous and dear'.¹⁵

Hardy's work contains a great many such poems in which his 'customed landscape'¹⁶ figures to a greater or lesser extent as the subjectivised backdrop for his reminiscences and narratives. Only in 'The Darkling Thrush' is there a significant instance of imaginative activation of the topography in his poetry. In

this case, the landscape itself provides the central elegiac intuition which is momentarily realized through the restrained anthropomorphism and succeeding metaphors of

The land's sharp features seemed to be
 The Century's corpse outleant,
 His crypt the cloudy canopy,
 The wind his death-lament.¹⁷

Although this qualifies Eliot's perjorative view of landscape's purely passive rôle in Hardy's work, the technique remains conventional and constitutes no advance upon Wordsworth's powerfully imaginative treatments of local elements.

For Yeats, too, landscape is essentially 'a passive creature', formed into Irish settings, notably those of Sligo and Coole, in many poems throughout his work. Like Hardy's depictions of his Wessex, Yeats's treatments of Sligo and Coole fall short of constituting an integrated myth of place or viable topographical medium for his conceptual preoccupations. In both cases this is a consequence of a lack of imaginative interaction with the objectively apprehended fundamentals of their topographies. For Hardy and Yeats, landscape is never the *Ding an sich* that it is for Wordsworth, Auden and Heaney. Auden and Heaney condense the geological and topographical characters of their localities to provide essential premises for the imaginative and intellectual content of their localized poems. In the work of Hardy and Yeats, by comparison, local elements are props, however indispensable as such. Hardy's 'Wessex staging' against which his human dramas are played out is matched by Yeats's employment of the backdrops formed by Sligo and Coole. For Yeats, these landscapes are not of much

interest in themselves. The attractions of Sligo and Coole lie in their respective associations with his ulterior concerns with Celtic mythology and his 'Dream of the noble and the beggarman'.¹⁸

Yeats wrote with apparent conviction of his belief in the 'rooting of mythology in the earth',¹⁹ and retrospectively celebrated his art's 'contact with the soil',²⁰ in 'The Municipal Gallery Revisited'. Nevertheless, his work contains nothing like Heaney's images and metaphors drawn directly from the substance of his landscape, or Auden's loving and ambitious treatments of the geology of his Pennine uplands. Yeats's idea of Ireland remains mythological in the more nebulous sense of the word, founded on folk-tales and legends and achieving original articulation principally in its political aspect. Heaney's sense of Irish national identity is substantiated by its correlation with a specific landscape with which he is intimately familiar. Similarly, the Englishness of Auden's localized poetry is not, as it is in Hardy's work, premised upon received ideas of rural traditionality. It arises from his purely personal affection for 'Those limestone moors that stretch from BROUGH / To HEXHAM and the ROMAN WALL' (CP, p.182). The landscape's motivating attraction sustains an imaginative bond between poet and place that leads him to celebrate in *New Year Letter* the inevitability with which 'An English area comes to mind' (CP, p.182).

Yeats's poetry, like Hardy's, is rich in place-names. For both, however, these remain sign-posts to settings rather than identifying local love-objects as they do in the writings of

Auden and Heaney. The early Yeats of 'The Stolen Child' and 'The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland' enriched the music of such poems with many Irish local namings. These serve to embellish his narratives and establish an esoteric Celtic milieu, and do not, as in Heaney's 'Anahorish' or 'Toome', specify localities that were themselves integral to his writing.

With his search for 'Romantic Ireland',²¹ behind him, Yeats's 'The Wild Swans at Coole' sets the pattern for the use of landscape in his later poetry. The poem begins with a stanza of narrowly selective local description which provides a temporal context and a point of departure for the meditation which follows. 'A Prayer for My Daughter' and much of 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', for example, are likewise structured upon initial evocations of landscape as settings for subsequent meditative developments.

It might be argued that Coole achieves more comprehensive significance as a landscape through Yeats's repeated returns to the locality in 'Coole Park, 1929' and 'Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931'. It is the house and its social and cultural associations, however, that are the focus of both poems. Yeats's concern is not with the landscape itself, affectionate and fairly detailed as his depictions of it are, but with retrospection upon the 'dance-like glory that those walls begot'.²² 'Another emblem there!',²³ exclaims Yeats in 'Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931', indicating his mental habit of arbitrarily enlisting local detail in the service of predefined ideological concerns. Yeats's myth of Coole does not apprehend landscape *per se*, but only its significance as emblematic of

his cultural ideal, which was equally the case in his earlier treatments of Sligo.

While closer to Wordsworth in the cohesiveness and imaginative scope of their treatments of their principal landscapes, Auden and Heaney have their respective debts to Hardy and Yeats. Auden uses vastly elevated prospect in a number of poems between the first appearance of the technique in 'Consider' of 1930 and its last major occurrence in 'Ode to Gaea' of 1954. The effect is sometimes very similar to Hardy's panoptic landscapes of *The Dynasts*. It is therefore significant that in 1940 Auden wrote that what he admired most in Hardy was 'his hawk's vision, his way of looking at life from a very great height'.²⁴ Such perspectives, however, form special cases in the work of both poets, and Auden does not apply the technique to his 'one landscape' (CP, p.414). Elevated views are occasionally used in treatments of Auden's limestone moors, but they are after the manner of Thomson's realistic prospects rather than instances of the hyperbolically inclusive 'hawk's vision'.

Hardy's influence on Auden's earliest writing was, however, more general. The elegiac localizations of such items of juvenilia as, for example, 'The Carter's Funeral'²⁵ are distinctly products of the period when 'I was still listening to Thomas Hardy' (CP, p.98). The line is from Auden's account of his poetic development in 'Letter to Lord Byron', which speaks in terms of outgrowing Hardy's legacy after exposure to Eliot's work. Nevertheless, Auden's continued adherence to the local mode may be considered an important consequence of his early apprenticeship to Hardy.

Similarly, Yeats's influence upon Heaney's poetry, while not contributing to the core of his achievement in his treatments of landscape, is formative. Heaney's poetry of the Irish condition in general and the Troubles in Ulster in particular required an authoritative voice. Yeats's confidence in his poetry written in response to public and political issues after 1914 inevitably presented a model in Heaney's search for a poetry of 'befitting emblems of adversity'.²⁶ Distinct echoes of Yeats are few, but the stance of exposed integrity to which Heaney aspires is itself notably Yeatsian. Recognizing this, Heaney has stated that 'Possibly I've thought too much about Yeats as an exemplar'.²⁷

Heaney has also occasionally followed Yeats in subordinating his perceptual and imaginative responses to landscape to a national cultural ideal. Heaney's 'goddess' of his peat-bog poetry derives directly from the Iron Age mythology examined in P. V. Glob's *The Bog People*. In the Irish context, however, she is closely related to Yeats's Kathleen ni Houlihan as a personification of Ireland. Yeats euhemerized the deaths of the rebels of 1916 into a myth of sacrifice in the name of the Irish national ideal. Heaney does likewise in his 'Requiem for the Croppies' and 'The Tollund Man'. In these poems the interpretation of the fates of the slaughtered as sacrifices to the nationalist cause subsumes the perceptions of landscape around which their myths are structured.

In Heaney's treatments of his landscape, however, it is the more recent example of Patrick Kavanagh, rather than Yeats,

that is of considerable importance. Kavanagh's decisive influence over the emergence and development of Heaney's localized poetry and his mediation between Auden and Heaney are examined in Chapter Five below.

Auden in turn is significantly indebted to Eliot, Dante and Rilke for some of his techniques of local symbolism. Rilke's empathy with inanimates is also recalled at times in Auden's writing of his landscape and the dereliction of the mining industry it contains. These aspects of his poetry are given attention in Chapters Two and Three below.

Both Auden and Heaney look back to older traditions, the former making use of symbolic procedures deriving from the neo-platonic localized poetry of the seventeenth century. Heaney has written in the Gaelic tradition of *dinnseanchas* (*vide P*, p.131), devoted to the treatment of local namings.

The relation of Heaney's poetry of landscape to Auden's is not, however, significantly a matter of influence or emulation. The concern with technical refinement that Heaney's poetry consistently demonstrates constitutes a recognition of Auden's legacy in respect of the latter's insistence on the importance of technique. Occasional touches of the Audenesque are found in Heaney's writing, like the localized conjunction of the particular and the general in Heaney's figuring of 'the marches //of skulking and whingeing' (*SI*, p.107).²⁸ This relates generically to many such metaphors in Auden's poetry, and distinctly echoes Auden's 'parish / of grimacing and licking' (*CP*, p.202).

The pairing of Auden and Heaney for the purposes of this study does not arise from stylistic considerations. It is based upon the similarities in their relations and attitudes to their landscapes, and the parallels in the developments of their treatments of them. For both poets the principal landscapes of their works are localities known and loved in childhood. Like their early, exploratory localized poems, the myths of place they create out of their sustained involvements with their landscapes are imaginatively rooted in deep personal attachments formed in childhood.

Adulthood meant exile from the landscapes that had made enduring impressions upon them in their early years. The depth and range of their responses to their chosen localities are products of lengthy periods of gestation in memory and imagination before the landscapes' emergences in their mature poetry. Wordsworth's sense of memory's locally available communion with childhood underwrites the returns in the poetries of Auden and Heaney to the surroundings of their early years. The power of place to call forth Wordsworth's 'primal sympathy / Which having been must ever be'²⁹ is invoked in important poems by both Auden and Heaney. Auden's ambitious chartings of the growth of love in 'The Prophets' and 'Amor Loci' rely on the experiential continuity and authenticity vouched for by his childhood familiarity with the landscape. The localized allegory of human nature and potential in *New Year Letter* is substantiated by retrospection on experience in boyhood of the 'locality I love' (CP, p.182). Since Heaney's first collection, *Death of a Naturalist*, which was much

concerned with his early years, his poetry has often evoked childhood as a principal element in his sense of place. Poems such as 'Anahorish', 'Kinship' and 'The Harvest Bow' are premised upon their locality's significance as the landscape of childhood, to which repeated returns are made in his latest published work. For both, their localities' direct associations with childhood are productive of a mythical aspect in their exiled conceptions of their landscapes. Auden stated of his limestone uplands that 'that was Paradise. I could never go back'³⁰, while Heaney's designation of his childhood region as 'the first place' (*P*, p.18) has clear Edenic overtones.

Neither Auden nor Heaney is sentimentally effusive about his chosen locality as the essential locus of childhood. Both, however, retain in a number of their poems the Wordsworthian concept of the individual's moral tutelage by his experiences of landscape preserved in memory. For Wordsworth, localized recollections could constitute 'the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being'.³¹ Similarly, for Auden the landscape of childhood provides 'a given mode of thought / Whence my imperatives were taught' (*CP*, p.183) in *New Year Letter*, and educates in selfless love in 'The Prophets' and 'Amor Loci'. Heaney states a debt to the formative influence of his landscape upon his character in writing of his childhood surroundings that 'I grew out of all this // ... inclined to / the appetites of gravity' (*N*, p.43)³² in 'Kinship'. His poems 'Land' and 'Changes' have at their centres the Wordsworthian theme of memory of place as a sanctuary for purity of experience.

The 'primal sympathy' engendered in childhood forms a bond between Auden and Heaney and their landscapes that maturity and exile cannot break. Conversely, time and distance create a perspective that accommodates meanings extending beyond the purely personal. This productive balance of attachment and detachment produces conditions in which their dominant and most penetrating intellectual and imaginative responses are ascendant over superficially visual or sentimental impressions. The constancy of availability in memory and the clarity of recollection of the fundamentals of their topographies coalesce with sustained meditations on human nature and behaviour. Auden thus produces his allegory of 'the nature of my kind' out of his memories of 'a locality I love' (*CP*, p.182). Similarly, Heaney's treatments of Irish identity are conducted through the medium of his sense of being 'Kinned by hieroglyphic/peat' (*N*, p.40) to the Irish past and present. In the works of both, conceptual and psychological abstractions are communicated through their imaginative fusion with images of local actuality. Both make important correlations between the unconscious and the subterranean that necessitate reference to the writings of Freud.

For Auden and Heaney, experience of landscape is a matrix forming images capable of supporting significances of greater than personal import which remain apprehensible in terms of common experience. Early in the careers of both their treatments of landscape involve ambitious moralizations of topography. Their principal landscapes remain real and recognizable places as their metaphorical and symbolic significances increase in the developments of continued

treatments of them. The recurrences of Auden's limestone uplands and Heaney's Ulster terrain in successive poems form strong threads of thematic continuity in their works. The localities are returned to for the making or revision of central statements, and their poetries gain integrity and cohesion from the presences throughout of each's 'one landscape' (CP, p.414).

Poems of their principal localities form important landmarks in the works of Auden and Heaney. The philosophical developments in their writings can be charted through their poetries of landscape as increasingly refined modes of moralizing topography provide vehicles for more comprehensive statements of their essential concerns. Accumulating significances are revised and clarified in the course of the emergence and development of their myths of place. In the late 1920s, Auden's limestone uplands are initially a remote fastness manifesting the austerity and isolation of his early metapolitical radicalism. A decade later he subsequently explores his landscape's potential for exemplifying love and patience in 'The Prophets' and human nature in *New Year Letter*. His integrated myth of the limestone landscape as a sanctuary for a benign natural imperative and human viability is eventually articulated in 'In Praise of Limestone' of 1948.

Heaney's early writing tentatively investigates both the darkness of the peat-bogs as his 'landscape that remembered' (P, p.54) and the Edenic aspects of his native locality as 'the first place' (P, p.18) of childhood. The bogland eventually provides the basis for his myth of history, while

the landscape of habitation around it supplies the imagery for a localized myth of sanctity and innocence.

In both Auden's *oeuvre* and Heaney's work to date there is a deconstruction of the terms of their myths of place. Their landscapes are deliberately stripped of their significances to manifest intuitions of ultimately religious import. Auden's 'In Praise of Limestone' relegates its myth of the landscape as a zone of human viability to secondary importance after 'these marble statues' (*CP*, p.415) introduce their intimations of eternity. The poet's 'antimythological myth' (*CP*, p.415) of the temporal haecceity of things is called into question within the poem as it develops towards its religious conclusion. The last lines recognize the fallibility of human knowledge and accord the landscape the transcendent power to signify the religious absolutes of 'a faultless love / Or the life to come' (*CP*, p.415). 'Amor Loci', Auden's last poem devoted to the limestone uplands, systematically rejects his previous interpretations of the landscape. The poem arrives at a view of the locality's desolation and constancy of availability in memory as the sole analogy for the ethical ideal of 'a love / that ... // does not abandon' (*CP*, p.586).

In his latest collection, *Station Island*, Heaney neutralizes both the historical myth of the bogland and the complementary version of 'the first place' (*P*, p.18) as a landscape of sanctity. In section III of the book's title sequence the peat-bogs shed their former associations to evoke only 'an absence stationed in the swamp-fed air' (*SI*, p.68). The bogland becomes the image of 'a space utterly empty, / utterly

a source, like the idea of sound' (*SI*, p.68). This in turn correlates directly with the vision of 'That eternal fountain ... // which is all sources' source and origin' (*SI*, p.90) with which the religious moment of the 'Station Island' sequence culminates. Like Auden's landscape in 'Amor Loci', the peat-bogs become a 'real focus of desolation' (*CP*, p.596) and analogise a religious ideal. The ghosts who speak in 'Station Island' bitterly question the validity of the sanctified associations evoked in Heaney's previous treatments of 'the first place' (*P*, p.18). Elsewhere in his new collection, Heaney achieves a more detached perspective on his landscape of habitation by casting a cold eye on it as the seat of a 'pious and exacting and demeaned' (*SI*, p.101) community.

Auden and Heaney form their myths of place and arrive at their localized communications of religious intuitions through enduring imaginative fidelity to the geographical actuality of their landscapes. In view of their works' concern with facts of topography and geology, this study will acknowledge geographical and geological specificity when this is of relevance to the poems considered. A strict concern with the verbal ontology of poetry can deny the possibility of the existence of any such relevance, as Edward Mendelson does in his dissertation entitled 'Auden's Landscape'. Mendelson maintains that 'Auden spent much of his childhood in a limestone landscape ... but this is not the limestone landscape of his poems'.³³ Such a statement is true only within the restricted terms of Mendelson's conception of

poetry's ontological independence of the substantial world. The lengths to which he goes in justifying his dismissal of any concern with physical actuality involves him in a curious statement of the obvious: 'The sphere in which a poet creates is entirely verbal ... the solid blockiness of, say, public buildings is, in a poem, insubstantial.'³⁴ Certainly poems are not pop-up models in children's books. Nevertheless, to discount entirely the relation to a poem of the actuality of a landscape when it fundamentally informs the work limits rather than clarifies the conception of poetic ontology. While 'The sphere in which a poet creates is entirely verbal', poetic creation depends upon emotional and imaginative responses that cannot be divorced from their objects. In the localized poetries of Auden and Heaney the cathexis is on known and loved landscapes, which both define geographically, without which the poems would not have been written. The reality of their landscapes assumes a religious importance in accordance with the doctrine of Romans 1:20 that 'the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen'. Auden's limestone moors take on such a significance as a consequence of his desire 'To seek Thee always in Thy substances' (*CP*, p.248) expressed in 'In Sickness and in Health'. Similarly, Heaney's poetry evokes sanctity in his landscape in agreement with his precursor Patrick Kavanagh's statement that 'God is in the bits and pieces of Everyday'.³⁵

The sacrosanct status of the landscapes of Auden and Heaney is substantially a product of their localities' remoteness from the paths of progress and the seats of power and control.

Auden's limestone uplands where abandoned relics of the lead-mining industry lie in dereliction and Heaney's rural corner of County Londonderry are places of no material importance or picturesque attractiveness. Auden's summary of his landscape as 'a backward / And dilapidated province' (*CP*, p.415) might equally be applied to Heaney's Ulster locality. Both places, however, are capable of exercising the 'wordly duty' (*CP*, p.415) defined in 'In Praise of Limestone': their unimportance 'calls into question / All the Great Powers assume' (*CP*, p.415) through their lack of contamination by modernity and materialism.

The similarities in their relations to their landscapes and their treatments of them notwithstanding, there are distinctions to be drawn between the localized poetics of Auden and Heaney. Auden was not a native of his limestone moorlands, although he appears to have spent much time there as a child. His visits to the landscape became increasingly infrequent after adolescence. In his poetry as in his life he remained an occasional visitor to the area. While essential to his expression of his central concerns, his writings of the locality make up a comparatively small number of poems when the overall scale of his achievement is considered. Heaney, by comparison, is a native of the principal landscape of his work. His broader and more informed familiarity with it has resulted in more frequent treatments of the region in his poetry to date.

Auden's more detached experience of his landscape afforded a perspective from which it could be comprehensively viewed

for the purposes of the extended allegory of *New Year Letter*. His success in this area led to the incorporation of sustained passages of localized symbolism and allegory in the subsequent longer poems of the 1940s which are considered in Chapter Four. Heaney, while relying extensively on localized imagery, has not experimented with figurative landscapes, although his treatments of the peat-bogs approach the abstractly symbolic on occasion.

Auden's landscape remained for him primarily an unpopulated retreat, despite the inhabitants he postulated in the quasi-fictive treatments of the region in 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Not in Baedeker'. As a boy, the deserted and wind-swept uplands stood in direct contrast to the densely populated and industrialized surroundings of his home in Solihull. In later years, the vivid memory of the landscape formed a sanctuary for his imagination and ideals during his residence in 'The crowded fatalistic town' (*CP*, p.188) of New York.

Heaney's Ulster locality is, by comparison, essentially a peopled region, although the peat-bogs provide something of an equivalent to the landscape of desertion that Auden found in his limestone uplands. In some of Heaney's localized poetry the human element in the form of the activities of husbandry or the import of Ulster's sectarian differences is to the fore. At such times, Heaney might state, with the less than wholly reliable Auden of 'Letter to Lord Byron', that 'To me Art's subject is the human clay, / And landscape but a background to a torso' (*CP*, p.91). In rural Ulster,

however, human identity is shaped by its natural environment to such an extent that man and the landscape cannot be considered apart from one another.

While such differences exist, the similarities in their relations with their landscapes, and in the developments of their treatments of them, are considerable. Given their prominence within their respective generations, this has importance for contemporary British poetry in general. In the works of Auden and Heaney landscape provides the basis for much of their most ambitious writing. The actuality of the localities they are concerned with imaginatively coalesces with their central preoccupations to constitute each's 'antimythological myth' (*CP*, p.415): the human relevance of their poetries of landscape is of mythological comprehensiveness, while their strict adherence to topographical and geological reality counters any tendencies to vatic presumptuousness or mythic diffuseness.

The relation of their landscapes to their human concerns is invariably of much greater significance than that of providing 'a background to a torso'. For Auden and Heaney landscape is not Eliot's 'passive creature' conveniently available to writers who are 'interested not at all in men's minds, but only in their emotions'. Auden's landscape is imaginatively activated to provide an essential medium for poetry that is, like all his writing, characteristically intellectual. Emotion, beyond the underlying and generally unspoken affection for his landscape of childhood, has little

part in his treatments of his limestone uplands. When love is considered in his localized poetry it is spiritual empathy rather than passionate emotion with which he is concerned. Heaney's poetry of landscape is likewise of an essentially intellectual and imaginative character, and free of emotional bias.³⁶ The peat-bogs and the adjacent topography of 'the first place' supply the images and metaphors that actively manifest the conceptual structure of his work. With much contemporary poetry of landscape remaining a matter of visual description and conventional responses, the scope and originality of the localized poetries of Auden and Heaney demand emulation.

This study follows the growing importance of landscape in their works on a thematic and chronological basis. Chapter One is concerned with Auden's early poetry of his limestone uplands and its formative influence upon the political and ethical character of his subsequent writing. Attention is given in Chapter Two to the landscape's later emergence as a medium for meditations upon human nature and as a sanctuary for ideal values. The symbolic and allegorical extensions of Auden's ideas of landscape are examined in Chapters Three and Four. Chapter Three is concerned with early experiments with the figurative potential of topography, Chapter Four with the formalised local symbolism of the longer poems.

Heaney's initial developments in his treatments of landscape are the subject of Chapter Five, which concludes with the establishment of the peat-bogs as a central locus

of his poetry. In Chapter Six Heaney's early localizations of mythological elements are dealt with prior to an examination of his treatments of communal and national themes through the mythology of the peat-bogs. Chapter Seven considers Heaney's evocations of his landscape as providing access to sanctity and innocence antithetical to the negative atmosphere engendered in his work by Ulster's Troubles. Lastly, Chapter Eight attends to Heaney's attempts to gain detachment from the communal and sectarian implications of his landscape, which produce a new perspective upon his native locality.

The purpose of the following is to establish the importance of landscape in the works of Auden and Heaney by charting the emergence, and eventual deconstruction, of their myths of place. In the course of doing so the inseparability of landscape from the essential concerns of their writing, and its adequacy as a vehicle for major themes, will become apparent. It has been necessary in the writing of this thesis to exceed the normal limit of 100,000 words; the author is grateful to the Board of the Faculty of Arts for permission to do so. Auden and Heaney, the former especially, have both produced *oeuvres* of considerable extent, and their treatments of landscape are of particular significance. Much that might be considered in a fuller examination of their works' concern with local elements has been omitted in the following investigation of their principal utilisations of landscape.

Notes to Introduction

- 1 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 2 Samuel Johnson, *Johnson: Prose and Poetry*, selected by Mona Wilson (London, 1966), p.820.
- 3 William Wordsworth, *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, revised edition, edited by Paul D. Sheats (Boston, 1982), p.209.
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 J. R. Watson, *Picturesque Landscape and English Romantic Poetry* (London, 1970), p.96.
- 6 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 7 W. H. Auden, introduction to John Betjeman, *Slick But Not Streamlined* (New York, 1947), p.14.
- 8 Wordsworth, p.231.
- 9 While Auden's politics were discernibly doctrinaire at times in the early 1930s, the ideology of his earlier work is more intuitive and abstract. I have therefore used the term 'metapolitical' to cover the fusion of ideological and poetic impulses in his writing of the late 1920s.
- 10 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.

- 11 T. S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (London, 1934), p.55.
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 *ibid.*, p.57.
- 14 Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy* (London, 1962), p.331.
- 15 *ibid.*, p.285.
- 16 *ibid.*
- 17 *ibid.*, p.137.
- 18 W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1950), p.369.
- 19 *W. B. Yeats and T. Sturge Moore: their correspondence 1901-1927*, edited by U. Bridge (London, 1953), p.114.
- 20 Yeats, p.369.
- 21 *ibid.*, p.121.
- 22 *ibid.*, p.274.
- 23 *ibid.*, p.275.
- 24 W. H. Auden, 'A Literary Transference', quoted by M. K. Spears, *The Poetry of W. H. Auden: the Disenchanted Island* (New York, 1963), p.66.
- 25 Included in Christopher Isherwood, 'Some Notes on Auden's Early Poetry', *New Verse*, double issue nos. 26-27 (London, 1937), pp.4-5.

- 26 The phrase is from Yeats's 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', and is quoted by Heaney in the account of his work's development and aims in the essay 'Feeling into Words' (*Preoccupations*, pp.41-60, p.57).
- 27 Seamus Heaney, 'Meeting Seamus Heaney', interview with John Haffenden, *London Magazine* (New Series), vol.19, no.3 (June, 1979), p.23.
- 28 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 29 Wordsworth, p.356.
- 30 W. H. Auden, quoted in Charles Osborne, *W. H. Auden: the Life of a Poet* (London, 1980), p.285.
- 31 Wordsworth, p.92.
- 32 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 33 Edward Mendelson, 'Auden's Landscape' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1969), p.26.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.58
- 35 Patrick Kavanagh, *Collected Poems* (London, 1972), p.42.
- 36 There is emotion latent in some of Heaney's treatments of landscape that consider his community's historical and cultural character. It is not, however, of the sentimentally personal sort to which Eliot was referring in his remarks on Hardy's use of landscape, and is most often offset by the conscientiousness of Heaney's engagement of communal themes.

CHAPTER ONE - W. H. AUDEN: THE LANDSCAPE OF COMMITMENT

'Allendale', 'Lead's the Best',
'The Watershed', 'The Letter', 'Missing'¹

— 'a given mode of thought
Whence my imperatives were taught' (CP, p.183).

The vividness of the local impressions conveyed by certain of Auden's poems has resulted in varying interpretations of the essential nature of the landscape of his early work. Writing of Nina's prospect of urban blight in Evelyn Waugh's *Vile Bodies*, Samuel Hynes speaks for many who have considered the world of the early poetry to be basically urban in character. Hynes states that 'what she sees down there is Auden country: the decaying factories, the disused canal, the pylons ...'² The details Hynes cites are all to be found in the opening lines of 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own'. This, while among the many poems Auden rejected when collecting his work, opens with a very memorable panorama of urban desolation:

Smokeless chimneys, damaged bridges, rotting
wharves and choked canals,
Tramlines buckled, smashed trucks lying on their
side across the rails;
Power stations locked, deserted, since they drew
the boiler fires;
Pylons fallen or subsiding, trailing dead
high-tension wires (EA, p.48).³

Graphic as this is, the poem is the only one in *Poems* of 1930 to which an urban setting makes more than an incidental contribution. Hynes's generalization about the urban character

of 'Auden country' perpetuates the misconception which Randall Jarrell strove to correct in 1941. Indicating the element of ideological commitment to the desolate uplands of the early poetry, Jarrell writes of Auden's sense of 'them and us': 'We represent real production, the soil. They are bourgeois — respectable or perverted ... They represent the sterile city, we the fertile country; I want to emphasise this, the surprisingly *rural* character of most of Auden's earliest poems, because so far as I know everyone has emphasised the opposite'.⁴ While broadly far more accurate than Hynes's, Jarrell's conception of the nature of Auden's landscape also misleads. His words suggest a region of productive husbandry, rather than the bare and deserted moorland that is evoked in Auden's early work and in a number of later poems.

In addition to the misconceptions of the character of the landscape of Auden's early poetry that are current, distorted impressions of the frequency with which he wrote of it also exist. François Duchêne writes that 'Auden's fondness for windswept rocky scarps is almost the *griffe* of his early style'.⁵ In all Auden's early work only 'Missing' of 1929 specifies 'windswept rocky scarps' in the 'From scars where kestrels hover' (CP, p.40) of its opening. In addition to 'Missing', only 'The Letter' and 'The Watershed' are directly concerned with the remote uplands to which Auden's poetry returned later in his career. The locality also provides setting and a measure of topographical symbolism in *Paid on*

Both Sides which is referred to below and considered in greater detail in Chapter Three. These works are all of the late 1920s, and the landscape is not present again in Auden's writing until 'The Prophets' of 1939. Jeremy Hooker therefore misleads with regard to the period as well as the frequency of such a landscape's appearances in Auden's early work. Hooker writes that 'in the thirties ... Auden set poem after poem in English landscapes — often against Pennine limestone or other northern uplands'.⁶ Hynes was impressed into forming a mistaken generalization through the force of the urban imagery of 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own'. Similarly, Duchêne and Hooker have been persuaded by the striking local detail of a poem like 'Missing' into over-estimating the incidence of the upland landscape's appearances in Auden's early work.

The presence of the landscape throughout Auden's writing as a whole is, however, fairly distinct, and forms a common element linking his early and his later work. The geographical actuality that informs the landscape recurring in Auden's poetry is that of the Cumbrian uplands of Alston Moor and its environs. The region is mapped out in detail in the namings and topographical features of the allegory of 'the nature of my kind' (CP. p.182) in *New Year Letter*. It is also identifiable through obscure local namings in the early poetry. The area is spoken of by John Auden in his remarks on his brother's love in childhood of limestone uplands: 'Limestone landscapes became Wystan's chosen environment, a

passion originating at the time we were at Bradwell, although, when he had seen more of the Pennines, he probably came to love Alston Moor in Cumberland more than any other place'.⁷ No more detailed information is available to indicate when Auden first encountered this landscape. John Auden's words reveal that it was not in earliest childhood. Auden's reference to himself as 'the boy of wish' (*CP*, p.182) who revisits the region in memory in *New Year Letter* suggests, however, that he knew the area well before adolescence. The contents of Auden's 'Nursery Library' that are listed in *A Certain World*, his commonplace book, include two titles that refer to Alston Moor. One is an H.M.S.O. publication entitled 'Lead and Zinc Ores of Northumberland and Alston Moor', the other T. Sopwith's 'A Visit to Alston Moor'. It seems likely that Auden's early reading of these books predisposed him towards a special relationship with the area. 'The Prophets' suggests as much in its charting of the development of Auden's love for inanimates from his early reading to his familiarity with the landscape. The book by T. Sopwith would appear to be his *An Account of the Mining Districts of Alston Moor*,⁸ the only work by that author to include the name 'Alston Moor' in its title. Sopwith's book must have primed Auden well for his experience of the landscape itself. It is a detailed guide to the locality and its history of lead-mining, describing many of the landscape's features that Auden later incorporated into his poetry. As Edward Mendelson writes, 'The settings of Auden's earliest

poems were places he knew and loved, whose names he learned to treasure before it ever occurred to him to write poems about them'.⁹

The occasional place-names in Auden's early writing also constitute firm links between his poetry and the topography of Alston Moor. Specific namings from the area occur in the items of juvenilia 'Allendale' and 'Lead's the Best',¹⁰ which are considered in detail below. The dale of the former's title is found about eight miles to the east of Alston town. 'Lead's the Best' refers to 'Greenearth Side' and 'Cashwell', namings which re-appear in 'The Secret Agent' and 'The Watershed' respectively. 'Greenearth Side' has more than one variant, being rendered as 'Greenhearth' (CP, p.41) in 'The Secret Agent' and appearing on an Ordnance Survey map as 'Greenhurth Sike'. The map locates the place as some nine miles to the south of Alston. 'Cashwell' seems likely to refer to the source of the Cash Burn, about six miles south of Alston. This location is the site of disused mine-workings, corresponding to local details in 'Lead's the Best' and 'The Watershed'.

John Fuller tentatively proposes that 'Linz' and 'Lintzford' in north Durham¹¹ might have suggested to Auden the name 'Lintzgarth' for the Nower's residence in *Paid on Both Sides*. The name may in fact be found on an Ordnance Survey map of the Alston area, as may that of 'Nattrass', the Shaw's house in the 'charade'. Lintzgarth is a mile west of the village of Rookhope, which also features in *New Year Letter*, and some

fourteen miles to the east of Alston. Nattrass is about two miles south-east of Alston in the parish of Alston with Garrigill.¹² Auden's geographical literalness in the choice of names for the houses recurs in *Paid on Both Sides* during the map-reading scene in which the Nowers plan their attack on Red Shaw. The location upon which their strategy centres is 'Brandon Walls', a name Fuller suggests may derive from a Brandon near Durham town.¹³ The place is to be found, however, on the map two miles to the south-east of the house called Lintzgarth. Mendelson aptly notes that 'Auden's maps were real, but he kept them tightly folded'.¹⁴

These correspondences between the local namings of the poems and place-names in the vicinity of Alston Moor testify to the geographical specificity of the principal landscape of Auden's poetry. Other names and topographical features of the area are subsequently listed in *New Year Letter*. The importance of the physical actuality of the region is, however, subsumed by its imaginative significance. The landscape was initially, and remained, a realization of Auden's imagined world, catering abundantly with its many relics of the mining industry for his boyhood fascination with lead-mines examined below. Later, it came to supply the topographical specifications for his personal Eden of 'Limestone uplands like the Pennines plus a small region of igneous rocks' (*DH*, p.6).¹⁵ The landscape's igneous region, which lies to the South of Alston Moor, is central to the localized allegory of the human condition in *New Year Letter*.

The poem also points to a nominal correlation between the area and Eden in its reference to the River Eden, which flows to the west of the limestone uplands.

It is in the landscape's character as a centre of lead-mining operations throughout the nineteenth century that Auden's attachment to it is rooted. In the title section of *The Dyer's Hand* Auden outlines the subterranean imaginative sphere of his 'private world of Sacred Objects' (*DH*, p.34) of childhood. He states that 'Between the ages of seven and twelve my fantasy life was centred around lead mines and I spent many hours imagining in the minutest detail the Platonic Idea of all lead mines' (*DH*, p.102). In the essay 'The Prolific and the Devourer' Auden writes of his childhood that 'Besides words, I was interested almost exclusively in mines and their machinery' (*EA*, p.397). 'Letter to Lord Byron' also attests to this imaginative obsession of Auden's childhood in the lines 'from my sixth until my sixteenth year / I thought myself a mining engineer' (*CP*, p.95). The 'private world' of Auden's childhood with its 'Sacred Objects' of lead mines and their machinery appears to have been created before he knew the uplands around Alston. When he came to that landscape, its wealth of derelict mine-workings and machinery constituted a manifestation in actuality of all that he had imagined. The limestone moors entered his experience as a landscape of the mind. The geographical reality fused with the already-existing personal mythology centred upon his childhood fascination with lead mining.

The area of Alston Moor retained its unique significance for Auden, and the myths of place evolved throughout his career are all versions of the imaginative importance of a single landscape.

The earliest significance of the landscape in Auden's writing tends towards the conventionally elegiac. The items of juvenilia 'Allendale' and 'Lead's the Best', which will be examined in detail presently, are partially laments for the passing of the mining industry. In both poems, however, the elegiac element is subsumed by idealistic and metapolitical interpretations of the landscape's recovery of its natural autonomy after man's exploitation of it. Auden may be seen to be working towards the myth of place of the early collected poems 'The Watershed', 'The Letter' and 'Missing', which are considered in detail below. In these works the landscape is characterized as an upland fastness, the seat of austere and forceful natural imperatives, whose authority resides in its remoteness and detachment from the contingent world of human affairs.

In sloughing off the mining industry, the moors achieve independence of the relativity of human purpose and take on innate significance in their natural unconditionality. Identification with the values ascribed to the landscape in the early poems is the basis for the idealistic isolation of their protagonists. The moorland's inhospitable integrity signifies ideals that cannot be verbally formulated. The landscape of 'The Watershed' 'will not communicate' (*CP*, p.41) and the spirit of place in 'The Letter' 'never was more

reticent' (CP, p.39). Ultimately, the uplands of the early poems may not be dwelt in, and the landscape disappears from Auden's writing for ten years after 'Missing' of 1929. The 'leader' and his 'doomed companions' of that poem sacrifice themselves to the austere and uncompromising moral authority of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell' (CP, p.40). As we shall see, the unconditionality of the moorland cannot be assimilated into the socially melioristic scheme of the poetry of the 1930s. Auden's experience of Alston Moor ceases to inform his writing directly until 1939, when the landscape re-appears in 'The Prophets' as a teacher of the supra-verbal qualities of love and patience.

'Allendale', the text of which is found in the appendix, is seminal in terms of its anticipation of the landscape's subsequent significances. The exclusive radicalism that is established in 'The Watershed' is latent. The isolated visionaries represented by the 'we' of 'Allendale' are prototypes of 'the leader' and his companions in 'Missing'. There are also indications of the landscape's educative function that emerges later in 'The Prophets', and of its religious significance that is not explicit until 'In Praise of Limestone'. The landscape's imperatives are adumbrated in 'Allendale', as is their recognition and acceptance by the idealistically committed protagonists of the poem. The bleak terrain of voluntary exile is the natural setting and correlative for their visionary separatism. The religious

and romantic connotations of 'Lit by a vision' and the repeated references to dreams are superseded by the more rigorously original diction of subsequent early treatments of the locality. The essence of 'Allendale', however, its sense of the landscape as a fastness to be identified with, is retained and developed in the poems that follow.

In 'Allendale' the moors have not yet acquired their commanding taciturnity. Their imaginative significance is paraphrasable through the convention of prosopopoeia in the gnomic questionings of the chimney and the 'crag-scarred' fells. The chimney indicates transcendental implications, directing attention to an orthodoxly celestial heaven as it stands 'Skywardly pointing as if it were asking: "What lies there? "'. This suggestion of local access to metaphysical experience is confirmed by the following line, 'thither we stray to dream of those things as we linger'. The vagueness of 'those things' notwithstanding, the protagonists in the deserted landscape are afforded some apprehension of the unworldly values inherent in the question '"What lies there? "'. The landscape eventually provides a summary of the teleological implications of the chimney's question in 'In Praise of Limestone' by embodying 'a faultless love / Or the life to come' (CP, p.415). The patience and acceptance that are the lessons of place in 'The Prophets' are also latent in 'Allendale' in the moorland's question '"Why beat you the bars of your prison? "'. That the protagonists are learning the detachment and self-possession recommended by the question is

evident from their assertions in the final stanza that 'We care not .../ Asking no reason'. They base their indifference and faith in their acceptance of the unconditional authority that the landscape manifests. Through their empathy with and commitment to their natural surroundings they take on the moral superiority of the desolate uplands. In the last stanza they are thus empowered to frame a portentous question of their own: "'What look you for, creatures that die in a season?'"

The confidence of address derived from acceptance of the landscape's uncompromising terms develops into the urgent and zealous tones of subsequent important poems. Such a voice is next heard in the unequivocal 'Go home, now, stranger .../ Stranger, turn back again, frustrate and vexed' (*CP*, p.41) of 'The Watershed'. It later resounds in the apocalyptic conclusions of '1929' and 'Consider' and the trochaic stridency of 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own'. The antithesis to the social and moral pollution that Auden's imperative utterances condemn in the early poetry is the bare and elevated landscape of 'Allendale' and the localized poems that follow it. The bitter rhetoric of 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own' is directed at a human landscape of disappointment and decay. The 'fuming alkali tip' and the 'flooded football ground' of '1929' are likewise symptoms of social failure that prompt the prophetic announcement that 'It is time for the destruction of error' (*CP*, p. 53).

'Consider' justifies its ringing castigation of the 'Seekers after happiness' (CP, p.62) by its depiction of their landscapes of decadence and corruption. Auden's challenge to society's unacceptable modernity and moral debility is rooted in his identification with the uncontaminated austerity of his Cumbrian landscape. The moorland of 'Allendale', where 'Dark looming around the fell-folds stretch desolate, crag-scarred', ultimately has its authority concentrated into the moral rigorousness of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell' (CP, p.40) of 'Missing'.

The inspiring bareness of Alston Moor stood in direct contrast to the urban environment of Auden's parental home in Solihull. Reflecting on Auden's upbringing in the Midlands, where he spent much time well into the 1930s, E. R. Dodds considered the Solihull area antithetical to the limestone moors. Dodds states that the theme of the conflict of man and nature in Auden's work 'seems to reflect the desolation of the midland Black Country in contrast with the cold clean winds of Cumberland'.¹⁶ The commitment to the bare integrity of the remote landscape that a number of Auden's early poems enact is a taking of sides in the conflict Dodds discerns. The speaker of the poems becomes a partisan of the affirmative energies of nature in its recovery of autonomy with the collapse of the lead mining industry. This ideological identification with the regenerative values embodied in the landscape forms the metapolitical premise

for the rejection of industrial capitalism in Auden's early work. Urban and industrial landscapes are primarily of interest in his writing as emblems of the spiritual ugliness of materialist culture. 'Letter to Lord Byron' contains Auden's only specific reference to the vicinity of Solihull in its assertion that 'Clearer than Scafell Pike my heart has stamped on / The view from Birmingham to Wolverhampton' (CP, p.82). This is, however, little more than an exercise in Byronic flippancy, and at no point in his work is Auden a genuine enthusiast of the urban. 'Memorial for the City' of 1949 makes categorical his disaffection with urban surroundings and values in its statement that 'As for Metropolis, that too-great city; her delusions are not mine' (CP, p.453).

The demise of the exploiter is emphatically established in the elegiac opening stanza of 'Allendale'. The thrice-repeated negatives of the first three lines combine with the imagery of death and decay to present a powerful object-lesson in the relative ephemerality of industrial purpose. The poem bears witness to the completion of the process noted at its inception by the Wanderer of book VIII of Wordsworth's *The Excursion*. Wordsworth regarded industrialization as the 'great change' responsible for

Such outrage done to nature as compels
The indignant power to justify herself;
Yea, to avenge her violated rights,
For England's bane.¹⁷

Wordsworth's emphasis on national fortunes is echoed in

'Lead's the Best', which sees in the landscape of industrial transience the 'Harsh afterglow of an old country's greatness'. 'Allendale', however, does not share the explicitly social-historical mode of 'Lead's the Best'. Its significance in Wordsworthian terms is that of the individual's derivation of spiritual strength from communion with the absolutes of nature. Auden disparaged Wordsworth as 'a most bleak old bore' (*CP*, p.89) in 'Letter to Lord Byron' and condemned the regressive aspects of 'Wordsworthian nature-worship' (*EA*, p.298) in his journal of 1929. Such statements are, however, qualified by the similarities to Wordsworth demonstrated in the treatments of the locality of Alston Moor in Auden's poetry. The tutelary and educative functions ascribed to the landscape in later work, and already discernible in 'Allendale', are directly part of Wordsworth's legacy. Auden's regard for the landscape's power of explicit moral exemplification in 'The Prophets' and subsequent poems accords it equivalence to Wordsworth's landscape in its tutelage of his sensibility and imagination.

Stylistically, 'Allendale' distinctly precedes Auden's revelatory reading of T. S. Eliot, who 'spoke the still unspoken word' (*CP*, p.98). It belongs to the early Georgian phase of Auden's development, which is described in 'Letter to Lord Byron' in the lines

A raw provincial, my good taste was tardy,
 And Edward Thomas I as yet preferred;
 I was still listening to Thomas Hardy
 Putting divinity about a bird (*CP*, p.98).

Rather than either Thomas or Hardy, however, it is the Wordsworth of 'Bleak season was it, turbulent and wild ...' who is brought to mind by the poem. 'Allendale' evokes the foreboding yet ultimately affirmative qualities of the bleak moorland which are enthusiastically accepted by the protagonists and inspire their idealistic resolution. Wordsworth's sonnet likewise describes the drawing of spiritual strength from an inhospitable landscape, which is geographically proximate to Alston Moor. The teleological import of its concluding question is particularly recalled by the "'What look you for; creatures that die in a season?'" of 'Allendale':

Stern was the face of Nature; we rejoiced
 In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew
 A feeling of their strength. The naked trees,
 The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared
 To question us. 'Whence come ye, to what end?'¹⁸

The landscapes have their austerity in common, a bleakness that is at once challenging and remotely benign to those who value their bare integrity. The desolation of 'The naked trees,/ The icy brooks' is matched in 'Allendale' by the formidable bareness imaged in the line 'Dark looming around the fell-folds stretch desolate, crag-scarred'. Wordsworth's ascription of moral authority to nature is paralleled by Auden's questionings in the voice of the landscape. Both localities are presented as ascetic places where 'Nature denies', zones that both exert and refresh the spirit, not moralized landscapes, but landscapes perceived as innately moral.

The documentary graphicness of the description and the geographical specificity of the title vouch for the local actuality of 'Allendale'. The emphasis on visionary experience and teleological questionings, however, makes the landscape of the poem one that is equally of the mind. In its desolation that denies human purposes yet provides quasi-religious experience the landscape of 'Allendale' anticipates the symbolic topography of the desert as the zone of spiritual trial in Auden's longer poems. With only four lines of visual reportage, 'Allendale' is principally concerned with imaginative rather than ocular responses. Purely aesthetic interest in the severe austerity of the fells is minimal and inseparable from the locality's conceptual significance.

The landscape's metapolitical import is no more than hinted at in 'Allendale' by the brief survey of industrial dereliction and the separatism of the protagonists. The poem casts a cold eye on history and the relativity of human considerations. In 'Lead's the Best' of 1926, presumably a later, if digressive and less unified, poem, the visionary absolutism of 'Allendale' is supplanted by a concern with industrial history. Metapolitical meanings are implicit in the sociological treatment of the community of redundant mine-workers, and are more clearly stated at the poem's conclusion. 'Lead's the Best' is unique in Auden's writing in sustaining the social realism of its rendering of the locality of Alston Moor. The heroic fortitude of the miners that the poem describes subsequently informs 'The Watershed'. Fictive and mythical versions of the landscape and its inhabitants are

presented in 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Not in Baedeker'. Nevertheless, Auden's limestone uplands are essentially the unpopulated terrain of which he states in 'Amor Loci' that

... nameless to me,
faceless as heather or grouse,
are those who live there,

its dead too vague for judgement (*CP*, p.585).

Auden undertakes his account of the miners conscientiously in 'Lead's the Best', striving for accurate effects of direct speech and particularizing the rigours of their lives. This, however, is not sufficient to make the poem entirely convincing as a social document. The drifts into romantic and historical digression undermine the centrality of the concern with the miners as Auden explores remoter local associations. The poem departs entirely from the ostensible subject of lead-mining. It is difficult to escape the feeling that the principal appeal of the locality lies for Auden in the landscape itself. The topography gains an overarching significance from the manner in which the poem is framed at its start and finish by powerful strokes of imaginative local description. As in 'Allendale' and subsequent treatments of the moorland, the descriptive element is minimal in its forceful concentration, and discharges incipiently symbolic functions. Ostensibly, Auden wishes the opening lines' account of the sunset over the fells to evoke the sense of transience essential to the poem's elegiac tenor: 'The fells sweep upward to drag down the sun / Those great

rocks shadowing a weary land'. The imagery of the foreboding landscape rising to seize the sun transcends the requirements of elegy, however, and adds a cosmic and apocalyptic dimension to the opening. Through the energy inherent in the description the landscape is presented as massively and autonomously active. The purely elegiac tenor of the poem is richest in the lines 'Here speak the last of them, soon heard no more / Than sound of clarinets in country churches'. But this is social, rather than topographical, observation, and the local imagery of the conclusion, after the sun has set within the poem's chronology, again goes beyond the requirements of elegy. The evocation of ephemerality through the depiction of the fells is clearly imbued with moral and metapolitical significance, the last line's bathos notwithstanding:

... Naught

Remains but wind-sough over barren pastures
 The bleak philosophy of Northern ridges
 Harsh afterglow of an old country's greatness
 Themes for a poet's pretty sunset thoughts.

The image of national decline draws upon Auden's conception of the moors and their derelict mining industry as a microcosm of the anticipated collapse of capitalism. The poem was published in May 1926, contemporaneously with the General Strike, during which Auden drove for the T.U.C.¹⁹ Less than ten years had passed since the Russian revolution and political disaffection and revolutionary optimism were running high. It seems historically premature to us for Britain, with its empire and economy still intact, to be

imaged in 1926 in terms of the 'Harsh afterglow of an old country's greatness'. To the nineteen year old Auden, however, the fall of 'The old gang to be forgotten in the spring' (*CP*, p.53) must have seemed imminent. The failure of the General Strike may have contributed to Auden's sense of Alston Moor as a place of strategic retreat, inspiring and protecting the visionary ideology of 'The Watershed' and 'Missing'. In subscribing to 'The bleak philosophy of Northern ridges' Auden identifies with the undeceived and austere moral integrity embodied by the landscape. In this way he detaches himself from the contaminating decadence of the city as the seat of the capitalist order, to which 'Lead's the Best' points in the lines

... Hodge himself becomes a sottish bawd
Who takes his city vices secondhand
And grins if he hears Paris mentioned.

In contributing to the development of the rôle of landscape in Auden's poetry, 'Lead's the Best' is notable for its imaginatively retrospective dependence upon his childhood world of 'Sacred Objects'. The poem is an adolescent extension of his early fascination with 'the Platonic Idea of all lead mines'. From the contents of his 'Nursery Library' Auden must have gleaned the technical vocabulary that characterizes the speech of the miners in the poem. As *OED* informs us, 'heading' describes a horizontal passage for working a mine. The two references to 'cheek' signify the sides or walls of a vein. 'Dressing' is to prepare ore for smelting by the removal of the non-metallic portion. For the reader not

versed in mining terminology these words may require elucidation. For the young Auden they were passwords admitting him to the mysteries of the world of those who "did their business in the veins of th'earth". The obscure local namings of 'Cashwell' and 'Greenearth Side' likewise vouch for the authenticity of Auden's knowledge of the actualities of mining. As compounds of 'well' and 'earth', the names give an early suggestion of the subterranean aspect of the landscape, which figures in the lines

Turf covers up the huge stone heaps, green ferns
The dark holes opening into hollow hills
Where water drips like voices from the dead.

The imaginative experience thus present in 'Lead's the Best' is not expanded upon until the topographical section of *New Year Letter*. In the longer poem the access to the subterranean provided by the mine-entrances is ascribed a spiritually educative function in the passage beginning

In ROOKHOPE I was first aware
Of Self and Not-self, Death and Dread:
Adits were entrances which led
Down to the Outlawed, to the Others (CP, p.182).

The 'private world of Sacred Objects' of the childhood *cultus* of lead mining found in 'Lead's the Best' continues to influence the experience of the landscape in 'The Watershed'. The intensity of attention to the dereliction of the mining industry that pervades the first section of the poem again derives from Auden's childhood absorption with lead mines. 'The Watershed' is also characterized by the use of the

technical terms 'washing floors', places for purifying ore, and 'levels' (CP, p.41), or passages through mines. These factors, with the reference to 'Cashwell' (CP, p.41) and the account of the heroic fortitude of the local inhabitants, link 'The Watershed' directly with 'Lead's the Best'. In the year that separates them, however, Auden's style has advanced from the conventional competence of the juvenilia. He is now, in 1927, fully in possession of the elliptical tension and concentrated energy that is characteristic of the best of his early collected work. The verse is still essentially the pentameter, but the compression and harsh music of the diction render it unfamiliar. The declamatory confidence of the syntax produces the tone of imperative urgency that is equally a hallmark of his most memorable early work.

The meaning of the landscape is also more clearly defined. Exploitative human purpose and the autonomy of natural energies are categorically contrasted through the division of the poem into two sections. The first produces a striking cumulative impression of industrial dereliction, decay and death; the second contains no reference to industry and its failure, and amounts to an assertion and celebration of the sacrosanctity of nature. The first section with its references to wetness, winters and storms and its concentration upon mining operations gives us the landscape as the Sopwith of Auden's 'Nursery Library' characterizes it. Sopwith writes that 'the name of Alston Moor (the principal mining manor in the

district) has long been associated with an idea of extreme wildness and severity of climate'.²⁰ In the second part of 'The Watershed' the uplands are transformed by the affirmative vision of natural recrudescence in the imagery of 'bark of elm / Where sap unbaffled rises, being spring' (CP, p.41). These are variant and complementary readings of the locality's imaginative significance for Auden. The first is a localized demonstration of the metapolitical theory of the transience of industrialism, the condensed documentary presentation of which supplants the elegiac mode of the juvenilia. The second evokes the undefiled and purely natural character of the moors as a place of exposure and challenge that manifests the unconditional authority of the life-force. The rising sap and the poised ears of the creature on the alert in the last line are the principal emblems of this affirmative vitality.

In addition to its marked advances in style and its clarification of the landscape's meanings, further important developments are found in 'The Watershed'. The diagnostic tenor and the commanding use of prospect that are characteristics of Auden's poetry of the late 1920s and early 1930s are evident in the poem's opening. The prospect motif is prefigured in 'Allendale' and 'Lead's the Best' by the broad scope of the local imagery of looming 'fell-folds' and 'Northern ridges'. In 'The Watershed' prospect emerges formally through the locative structure of the main verbs of the opening sentence, 'Who stands // ... Below him sees' (CP, p.41).

All the numerous details of the poem's first section accumulate within the perspective afforded by the elevated viewpoint initially established. Subsequent early applications of prospect likewise govern the developments of the poems in which they occur through the commanding elevations created in their opening lines. 'Missing' accommodates the complex description of its first section within its initial view 'From scars where kestrels hover' (CP, p.40), as does 'Consider' with its opening's invocation of the eyes of 'the hawk ... or the helmeted airman' (CP, p.61). The technique is put to fairly frequent use in Auden's poetry of the 1930s. 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own', 'Here on the cropped grass of the narrow ridge I stand' and 'O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven' unfold documentary prospects like diagnostic charts of Britain. The perspectives in 'Look, stranger, at this island now' and 'Spain 1937' are long enough to create national and macro-geographical senses in the poems. Experience of Alston Moor, offering panoramas of surrounding valleys from heights of between 1,500 and almost 3,000 feet above sea level, is fundamental to Auden's use of prospect. Elevated views remain an important strategy in later work, 'Ode to Gaea' and 'Memorial for the City' featuring memorable aerial surveys. The unfolding of the localized allegory of 'the nature of my kind' (CP, p.182) in *New Year Letter* is essentially an ambitious adaptation of the technique. In every instance, the use of prospect is subordinated to the imaginative or philosophical intentions of the poems, its ocular and aesthetic qualities remaining secondary.

'The Watershed' moves from prospect to diagnosis as its first section develops. The landscape displays the symptoms clearly: the patient, industrial capitalism, is terminally ill, the 'industry already comatose, / Yet sparsely living' (CP, p.41) offering a paradigm of change for the young Auden's radical sense of an ending. In support of the diagnosis, the eighteen lines of the first section abound with images of industrial dereliction. References to 'Snatches of tramline', the 'damaged shaft', the 'ramshackle engine', 'flooded workings' and 'abandoned levels' (CP, p.41) combine with the narrative of death and foul weather to evoke moribund desolation and dismalness. The landscape retains its vivid particularity while functioning as an 'antimythological myth' (CP, p. 415) of place central to the metapolitical social critique of Auden's early work. Details of dereliction and the terminal running-down of industry emerge as a leitmotiv in Auden's early work. References to 'Equipment rusting in unweeded lanes' (CP, p.49), 'silted harbours, derelict works' (CP, p.61) and 'derelict iron works on deserted coasts' (CP, p.28) form a memorable aspect of his early poetry. The panorama of social and industrial collapse of 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own' is the most striking instance of such imagery. These images derive much of their substance and authority from the local actuality of Alston Moor, and are closely related to the moral pathology of the early poetry. Humphrey Carpenter has recognized this in writing as follows of the urban shambles of 'Get there if

you can and see the land you once were proud to own':

'the poem owes a lot to Auden's private landscape of abandoned lead mines, and soon reveals itself as not really concerned with the present state of the country but with the defective emotional condition of the middle-class intellectual, for which the ruined industrial landscape is a symbol'.²¹

The emergence of the symbolic dimension of landscape in the early poetry also owes something to Auden's reading of Eliot's 'right / language for thirst and fear' (CP, p.440) in 1926. The conflation of symbolic topographies and views of moral and emotional inadequacy in *The Waste Land* provided Auden with a valuable example for extending the significance of local imagery. The thoroughness with which Auden adapted Eliot's technique was made possible by Alston Moor's provision of images that Auden had made his own poetic properties in his juvenilia.

While anticipating later developments in local symbolism in the metaphorical implications of its landscape, 'The Watershed' also displays, according to Jeremy Hooker, Auden's 'affinities with Hardy and Edward Thomas'.²² Hooker discerns similarities with Hardy and Thomas in the use of a specific local naming in the 'Cashwell' (CP, p.41) of 'The Watershed' and in the poem's latent affection for the landscape. There is, however, an air of disappointment about Hooker's appraisal of 'The Watershed'. He speaks of Auden's achievement in writing it in terms of indicating 'the kind of poet he might have become'.²³ Valuing the purely subjective reaction to

landscape, as epitomised in Hardy's work, above the conceptual scope to which Auden has gained access, Hooker writes thus of 'The Watershed': 'Auden's rendering of the landscape does not, ostensibly, embody a special relation between poet and place, but creates a dramatic metaphor for the condition of England'.²⁴ This statement is valid only in so far as Hooker restricts his attention to the first part of the poem. What follows the diagnostic description of 'The Watershed' in its second section amounts to an unequivocal affirmation of 'a special relation between poet and place'. Ideological commitment to the landscape's embodiment of the life-force provokes an emotionally defensive outburst declaring the inviolability of the locality in the opening lines:

Go home, now, stranger, proud of your young stock,
Stranger, turn back again, frustrate and vexed:
This land, cut off, will not communicate ...

(CP, p.41).

Hooker considers the basic similarity between Auden and Hardy and Thomas, as 'embodied in landscape', to consist in 'a peculiarly inward apprehension of death, known in the self, in the English countryside and in nature at large'.²⁵ The images of death in 'The Watershed', however, are entirely objectified in the poem's narrative. Hooker's citation of the lines 'though many dead / Lie under the poor soil' (CP, p.41) thus offers no support for his morbid theory of subjective 'affinities'. The conclusion's identification with the values of the landscape as a sanctuary for natural vitality

'Where sap unbaffled rises' (CP, p.41) firmly refutes Hooker's argument. Auden's landscape comes to provide his principal images of human viability and his medium for affirming positive ethical qualities in such poems as *New Year Letter* and 'In Praise of Limestone'. In 'The Watershed' it is already wholly evident that he has outgrown the conventional elegiac and subjective emphases in the localized poetry of his predecessors.

Advances towards greater objective significance in the treatment of the landscape of 'The Watershed' are paralleled by the poem's anticipation of Auden's metapolitical radicalism of 1929 and the early 1930s. The incipient symbolism of the deathly 'final valley' (CP, p.41) at the close of the first section becomes more explicit in the use of the image of the valley in '1929'. In the later poem 'the old gang' of the moribund socio-political order²⁶ are abandoned to perish in the more purely figurative 'sullen valley where is made no friend' (CP, p.53). The seasonal emphasis in 'The Watershed', 'Where sap unbaffled rises, being spring' (CP, p.41), corresponds to that of '1929', in which 'the old gang' are 'to be forgotten in the spring' (CP, p.53). The ideological stance is that formulated in 'The Watershed', a partisanship of irrepressible natural vitality embodied in vernal recrudescence, of which love is the human equivalent in '1929'. As subscription to belief in the revolutionary power of positive natural and emotional energies is maintained, Auden is driven to the extreme position of affirming an auto-sacrificial ethic.

Love and life-force will need 'death, death of the grain, our death' (CP, p.53) in '1929', and will doom the leader and his companions in 'Missing'. The airman of *The Orators* is impelled to his suicidal last mission by the earnestness of his revolutionary intentions. As Justin Replogle notes, in the metapolitical scheme of Auden's early work 'the death wish is nothing more than a teleological life force seen at close range'.²⁷ The landscape of 'The Watershed' is the prophet of the apocalyptic 'time for the destruction of error' (CP, p.53) announced in '1929'. Heroic self-sacrifice as the ultimate radical ethic is, however, as yet unformulated. The speaker of the poem remains secure in the separatism of his identification with the vital energies of the landscape that distinguishes him from the rejected stranger.

Ideologically, the speaker's partisanship of the landscape and denial of the stranger in 'The Watershed' are not specifiably doctrinaire. By 1929 Auden had discovered that his somewhat nebulous faith in natural vitality was entirely consonant with the teachings of his early mentors. These included 'Lawrence, Blake and Homer Lane, once healers in our English land' (EA, p.49), and Groddeck, Marx and Freud, amongst others. Under such influences, the vague 'vision' first asserted in 'Allendale' is somewhat clarified in the early collected work, and is seen to have a simultaneously metapolitical, psychological and religious character. While it is most nearly explicated in poems deriving from the initial subscription to the vital energies of the landscape

in 'The Watershed', Auden's ideology is never expressly formulated.

If Auden's 'vision' in 'The Watershed' remains less than clearly articulated, the belief in the landscape's benign imperatives is sufficiently strong to authorize the aggressive rhetoric that dismisses the stranger. In the early poetry, such tones of conviction are repeatedly directed at 'the enemy', of whom the stranger of 'The Watershed' is the first representative. He is turned against and rhetorically set upon for his failure to relate to the landscape on its own terms, for his blindness to the localized vision of natural vitality. With his car, he is the tourist, one of the ignorant and invidious 'Seekers after happiness' (CP, p.62), like 'The summer visitors // ... Choosing their spots to view' (CP, p.40) in 'Missing'. For such, the landscape of commitment exists only to be exploited for what 'The Watershed' refers to as 'accessory content' (CP, p.41) of scenic aesthetics. The speaker's response is less tolerant than that of the priest in Wordsworth's 'The Brothers' with his sigh of 'These Tourists, heaven preserve us!'²⁸ The stranger is violating an ideal of quasi-religious significance. No accommodation is possible in the mind of the speaker between the uncommitted outsider 'Aimless for faces rather there than here' (CP, p.41) and the absolute values of industrial ruin and natural recovery and recrudescence manifest by the landscape. The decisiveness with which 'This land, cut off, will not communicate', and with which 'sap unbaffled rises,

being spring' (*CP*, p.41), is directly partaken of by the speaker. From the landscape itself comes the conviction of his address to the stranger, to whom, 'Aimless' and 'frustrate and vexed' (*CP*, p.41), the localized creed of metapolitical commitment and unity of will cannot be imparted.

The exercise of will and choice that precede and determine commitment are emphasised by the framing of the poem by the 'crux' of its opening line and the 'decision' (*CP*, p.41) of its last. The title 'The Watershed' takes on a locally symbolic function in its designation of a crucial point of separation in addition to its immediate connotation of an upland terrain.²⁹ A crisis of ideological divergence has arisen, from which the stranger is ordered to retreat, while the speaker advances into identification with the values embodied in his natural fastness. Minute perception of creaturely alertness in the ending's 'Ears poise before decision, scenting danger' (*CP*, p.41) provides credentials of the speaker's intimacy of relation with the landscape. 'The Watershed' thus constitutes an initial enactment of the significance of the images of the pass and the frontier in Auden's work. The 'crux' of the first line is passed with the crossing from the scene of death and dereliction of the opening into the landscape of affirmation and vitality of the second section. The zones of industrial dereliction and natural recrudescence are adjacent, or even identical. It is the speaker's decisive commitment that transforms his perception of the landscape from a view of abandonment and ruin into the source of his affirmative vision.

The ideological implications of 'The Watershed' are elaborated in 'The Secret Agent', the spy noting the strategic importance of the topography in the opening's 'Control of the passes was, he saw, the key' (CP, p.41). His motives, however, are materialistic, and defined in terms of the locality's provision of 'easy power' (CP, p.41). Like the stranger of 'The Watershed', he is unwelcome in the landscape around 'Greenhearth', which is characterized as 'the desert' (CP, p.41) in anticipation of Auden's local symbolism of spiritual challenge. Conversely, a successful attempt at 'Crossing the pass' by those wishing to escape 'the old life' (CP, p.31) is envisaged in 'To throw away the key and walk away' of *Paid on Both Sides*. The uplands are hospitable only to those who, like the speaker of 'The Watershed', wish to dissociate themselves from the deathly significance of a spiritually bankrupt order.

The frontier between exploitative human purposes and the silence of the unconditional in a remote landscape that 'cut off, will not communicate' (CP, p.41) is definitively established in 'The Watershed'. A further enactment of the passage from the sphere of human fallibility into the ethically superior realm of natural absolutes is clearly implicit in 'The Letter'. The letter itself represents a world of human contingency external to the landscape's embodiment of more permanent values. Insincere loquacity in the letter's 'Speaking of much but not to come' (CP, p.39) is contrasted with the affirmative silence of the speaker's natural surroundings. The landscape is ascribed a mythical significance in the lines which image the limestone topography in terms of

the nod,
 The stone smile of this country god
 That never was more reticent,
 Always afraid to say more than it meant (*CP*, p.39).

Like 'The Watershed', 'The Letter' emphasises the distinction between the temporality of human concerns and the perenniality of the landscape by its division into two sections. In both poems, the speaker advances from imaginative involvement in human affairs towards recognition of the supra-verbal authority of nature. The decisiveness of the statement of commitment is less rhetorically emphatic in 'The Letter'. A fundamental change of priorities based on identification with the natural cycle is, however, expressed unambiguously in the lines 'I, decent with the seasons move / Different or with a different love' (*CP*, p.39). As in 'To throw away the key and walk away', the pass has been crossed with the discarding of human attachments in favour of commitment to the pure imperatives of nature.

The motif of the pass is integral to the account of 'the very first coming down / Into a new valley' (*CP*, p.39) as a topographical metaphor for the commencement of a love affair. The valley later takes on a symbolic value in its signification of states of achievable happiness and comfortable habitation. The love affair, however, is not happy, and emotionally confusing, as subsequent references to 'a frown' and 'a lost way' (*CP*, p.39) indicate. Tedium and disappointment, in the line 'love's worn circuit re-begun' and the message that the beloved is 'not to come' (*CP*, p.39) respectively, dominate the first

section. The landscape supplies images evocative of the failing of the relationship in the localized perceptions of transience and the terminal state of the signs of industry:

Shall see, shall pass, as we have seen
The swallow on the tile, spring's green
Preliminary shiver, passed
A solitary truck, the last
Of shunting in the Autumn (CP, p.39).

The vulnerability and tentativeness suggested by 'spring's green / Preliminary shiver' are very different to the assertive vernal reading of the landscape where 'sap un baffled rises, being spring' in 'The Watershed'. Similarly, the speaker's commanding stance at the beginning of that poem is replaced by the timorous pose of the protagonist of 'The Letter', introduced as 'crouching behind a sheep-pen' (CP, p.39). The landscape's poetic potential is rich enough for Auden to utilise it in evoking both the confident radicalism of 'The Watershed' and the melancholy of unrequited love of 'The Letter'.

The metapolitical import of the moorland, which continues to inform *Paid on Both Sides* and 'Missing', is left in abeyance in 'The Letter'. The socio-economic implications of the 'Solitary truck, the last / Of shunting in the Autumn' are not pursued. The image is required only to heighten the first section's sense of isolation and transience. In addition, the landscape supplies a projection of the speaker's protesting loneliness and emotional vulnerability in the lines 'Travel across a sudden bird, / Cry out against the storm' (CP, p.39).

This somewhat resembles 'The Watershed' with its last line's emblem of creaturely vigilance in 'Ears poise before decision, scenting danger'. It is, however, more akin to John Clare's use of ornithic imagery to evoke his habitual mood of singularity and isolation. Clare's lines on the crane 'Cranking a jarring melancholy cry / Through the wild journey of the cheerless sky'³⁰ are recalled by 'The Letter', and by the 'curlew's creaking call' (CP, p.40) of 'Missing'. Like Clare, Auden sympathetically identifies with the frailer aspects of nature in the landscape of 'The Letter' in writing of 'Spring's green / Preliminary shiver', the exposed 'sudden bird' and the singular 'swallow on the tile' (CP, p.39). The challenging commitment to an independent ideology based on affirming the landscape's inviolable autonomy that runs through the more public 'Allendale', 'The Watershed' and 'Missing' is absent in the privacy of 'The Letter'. The poem looks forward to the later characterization of the limestone uplands that emerges in 'The Prophets' of 1939. By then, Auden's myth of place has ceased to celebrate his landscape's aggressively inhospitable austerity. Its silence and remoteness come to provide a sanctuary for gentler ideals, pre-eminently selfless love, as anticipated in the 'different love' first identified in the 'reticent' (CP, p.39) landscape of 'The Letter'.

The benevolent aspect of the moorland that is later examined in 'The Prophets', 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Amor Loci' is latent in 'The stone smile of this country

god' (*CP*, p.39) of 'The Letter'. It is too early for Auden to clarify and articulate expressly the uplands' signification of selfless love in the poem of 1927. The second section, however, derives higher emotional and spiritual values from the landscape once dissociation from the fallibility and triviality of the love affair of the opening is achieved. Disappointment and wounded passivity are transcended through the rhetoric of the second section's commencement:

Nor speech is close nor fingers numb
 If love not seldom has received
 An unjust answer, was deceived (*CP*, p.39).

The lines parallel the voicing of resolution which opens the second part of 'The Watershed', and equate within 'The Letter' with the protesting cry of the 'sudden bird' of the first section. Detachment from the sphere of human contingency thus effected, the speaker is free to identify with the unconditional character of the landscape, as in 'The Watershed'. The ethical superiority of this new orientation is indicated in the statement that the speaker has become 'decent with the seasons' and in the approving 'nod,/ The stone smile of this country god' (*CP*, p.39). 'Different or with a different love' (*CP*, p.39) emphasises by repetition the achievement of a new emotional and spiritual adjustment. The 'different love' is essentially selfless, its object the landscape itself, which reciprocates through 'the nod,/ The stone smile' of the looming limestone escarpments. Like the shepherd in Virgil, who, in Johnson's words 'grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks',³¹ the speaker discovers fulfilment in his remote surroundings.

The superseding of the fallible affection of the letter's disappointing loquacity by the landscape's 'reticent' integrity in the 'different love' (CP, p.39) introduces the theme of love's supra-verbal character in Auden's work. In his principal treatments of love, speech is silver and silence invariably golden, as 'Dichtung und Wahrheit' of 1959 goes to considerable lengths to demonstrate. By 1965, Auden found love itself 'far too / Tattered a word' (CP, p.561). In the same year he turned again to the silence of the limestone moors to provide his embodiment of enduring love in 'Amor Loci'. The landscape's loving reticence in 'The Letter' is recalled when the locality is returned to in 'The Prophets' in 1939. Of the inanimate teachers of the heart in the uplands of industrial dereliction that poem states that 'all their lack of answer whispered "Wait"' (CP, p.203). Later, in 'In Praise of Limestone', Auden can convey the religious absolute and anagogical abstraction of 'a faultless love / Or the life to come' (CP, p.415) only in terms of his vision of the landscape. In 1936, Auden asserted, in objecting to Wordsworthian preoccupations with the natural world, that 'To me Art's subject is the human clay, / And landscape but a background to a torso' (CP, p.91). Nevertheless, in his treatments of love as an ideal human value, whether spiritual, interpersonal or a fusion of both, landscape supplies his essential images and precepts. 'The Letter' inaugurates Auden's concern with love in his collected writings. In doing so, it makes more explicit the moralizations of the

landscape that were latent in the prosopopoeia of 'Allendale' and the recognition of 'The bleak philosophy of Northern ridges' in 'Lead's the Best'. Ethical exemplification is evident in the restraint, sincerity and honesty of the landscape that 'never was more reticent, / Always afraid to say more than it meant' (CP, p. 39). The speaker's taciturn apprehension of such values, and his growth from initial emotional anxiety towards patience and self-possession, are demonstrated in the line 'Nor question overmuch the nod' (CP, p.39).

Acceptance of the landscape's uncompromising bareness and the world-forsaking commitment to its embodiment of unconditional values in these early poems amounts to a stoical philosophy of austere impassivity. The dispassionate regard for human ephemerality and patient endurance that the protagonists derive from their surroundings constitute a moral code authorizing the metapolitical social critique implicit in 'Allendale', 'Lead's the Best' and 'The Watershed'. The indifference to suffering of the protagonists of 'Allendale', who 'care not' while 'swept by the wind and the rain there', supports their teleological questioning of human purpose. In 'Lead's the Best' imaginative sympathy with 'The bleak philosophy of Northern ridges' forms the premise for the radicalism of the reading of the topography in terms of the 'Harsh afterglow of an old country's greatness'. The cold eye cast upon the industrial desolation and death of the first part of 'The Watershed' shares the stern detachment of the

landscape that 'cut off, will not communicate'. Similarly, the emotional self-possession and eremitic withdrawal of 'The Letter' are qualities available to one favoured with 'The stone smile of this country god'. The self-sacrificing extremism of '1929' and *The Orators*, and the radical absolutism of 'Consider' are extensions of the critical detachment from the sphere of human contingency arrived at in the early poems of landscape.

The incipiently heroic moral impassivity of the early localized poems derives in part from Auden's familiarity with the harsh worlds of destiny and fortitude of the Icelandic sagas and Old English literature. The primary sense of place engendered by his childhood experience of the limestone landscape was imaginatively fertilized by his reading to produce the dominant mood of the poems. Experience of the Icelandic sagas also came early, as Christopher Isherwood noted in writing that 'Auden ... was brought up on the sagas, and their influence upon his work has been profound'.³² Borrowings from Old English are evident in the title of *Paid on Both Sides*,³³ and in the texts of 'The Secret Agent' and 'The Wanderer'.³⁴ To each of these works Auden's conception of his moorland landscape contributes images evocative of the Old English sense of doom that the poems contain. The protagonists of 'Allendale', 'The Watershed' and 'The Letter' share their exposure to harsh conditions and remoteness from human society with 'The Seafarer' and 'The Wanderer' of the Anglo-Saxon poems of those titles. Auden's dispassionate

figures, however, sojourn in their bare landscape by choice, rather than in doomed compliance with the dictates of *wyrd* like their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. The 'thither we stray to dream' and 'So under it stand we' of 'Allendale' indicate the intentional quality of the visionary separatism maintained in the poem. Likewise, the identification with the landscape in 'The Watershed' and 'The Letter' is willed as an alternative to the ethically inferior positions represented by the stranger and the letter respectively.

The elective nature of Auden's special relationship with the remote landscape is clearly stated in 'I chose this lean country', which, like 'The Watershed', was written in the summer of 1927. Its opening contains an extended sequence of local detail which is used almost verbatim in the first part of 'Missing'. Prior to this, however, comes a statement of intention that reveals the refined minimalism of the aesthetic informing Auden's early work:

I chose this lean country
 For seven-day content,
 To satisfy the want
 Of eye and ear (EA, p.439).

The speaker is a visitor, the substantive 'content' linking him with that seeker after 'accessory content' (CP, p.41), the stranger dismissed in 'The Watershed'. The aesthetic satisfactions afforded by the 'lean country' are not, however, the conventional scenic luxuries of the picturesque. The austerity of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell' and the harsh music of the 'curlew's creaking call'

and 'The drumming of a snipe' (EA, p.439) are suited to the speaker's 'eye and ear'. The ethical stance corresponding to the severe aesthetic thus defined is indicated later in the poem in the teleological detachment of

Turning a stoic shoulder
On a Saint Martin's summer,
Till death shall sponge away
The idiotic sun (EA, p.440).

The dispassionate severity of the aesthetic and ethical qualities of Auden's initial myth of place correspond to his early belief that "'Good poetry is classic and austere"' (CP, p.98) expressed in 'Letter to Lord Byron'. The austere and stoically authoritative presentations of the Alston Moor landscape in his writings of the 1920s preclude entirely any sentimental or picturesque 'accessory content'. Auden's concern is with the fundamentals of his stark landscape and with the code of integrity and patient self-possession it signifies for him. His rejection of perceptual superficialities and concern to apprehend essentials is emphasised in Isherwood's *Lions and Shadows*. Here, Auden, in the person of 'Weston' declares "'Of course, I've absolutely no use for colour. Only form. The only really exciting things are volumes and shapes".' 35

It is to the fundamentals of form that the masterfully economical description of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell' (CP, p.40) attends. The lines are a final refinement of Auden's earlier renderings of the skyline of the moors. E. R. Dodds recalls 'the long slow curvings

of the fells' from an early manuscript poem,³⁶ while the same topography is delineated in the 'Dark looming around the fell-folds stretch desolate' of 'Allendale'. The horizon is subsequently invested with the moral authority of 'The bleak philosophy of Northern ridges' in 'Lead's the Best'. These early descriptions respectively convey the expansiveness, severity and ethical signification of the landscape, aspects which are fused in the achievement of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell'. First used in 'I chose this lean country', then two years later in 'Missing', the lines epitomise the stringency and exactitude of the topographical description of the early poetry. Visual details are kept to a functional minimum, and always governed by the imaginative and intellectual moment of the poetry.

Representation provides a vehicle for the articulation of the meanings of the landscape, and remains a subordinate element throughout Auden's work. Even 'Ischia' of 1948, written in response to his friend Brian Howard's challenging remark that Auden had no visual sense,³⁷ has not much time for ocular appearances. The poem contains a brief essay at picturing the 'delicate yellows / and pinks and greens' (CP, p.416) of the fishing port, along with a few other chromatic adjectives. The serious business of 'Ischia', however, is to consider the interrelations of man and nature on the island of its title as Auden pursues his mature meditations on the Socratic question 'How should man live?'.

Auden did not, however, underestimate either the reader's power of imaginative visualisation or the evocative potential of advantageously placed local images. In 'The Secret Agent', for example, the topographical key-word is 'passes' (CP, p. 41) in the opening line, which suffices to create the impression of a mountainous region essential to the narrative. Similar extremes of descriptive economy are found elsewhere. In 'Let History Be My Judge' the single word 'farms' (CP, p.42) in the first stanza evokes a rural landscape, and in 'On Sunday Walks' 'cottages' and 'villages' (CP, pp.54-55) establish a country setting. Many poems make sparing use of such details, in addition to the few works to which the moorland topography is central. A pervasive sense of rural surroundings in the early poetry results. Duchêne's and Hooker's extravagant estimations of the frequency of the appearances of the uplands cited at the beginning of this chapter are understandable, their carelessness notwithstanding.

The industrial aspect of the landscape is nevertheless an integral part of the impression it makes in Auden's treatments of it. 'The Watershed' firmly establishes the dereliction of mines and machinery as a characteristic of the locality. Industry is glimpsed in 'The Letter', and looms large in both 'Allendale' and 'Lead's the Best'. While dwelling most significantly upon the natural aspects of the topography, 'I chose this lean country', contains three lines which graphically depict industrial dereliction:

Sheds crumbling stone by stone,
 The awkward waterwheel
 Of a deserted mine (CP, p.439).

In the context of the poem, these details are equally a part of the landscape's ability to 'satisfy the want / Of eye and ear' (EA, p.439). Although Auden took nine lines from the sentimentally flawed earlier poem for 'Missing', plus the concluding 'and pass / Alive into the house' (EA, p.440, CP, p.40), the industrial element disappears without trace in the later work. In view of the signs of industry in all the other early treatments of the moors, the derelict mines and machinery are conspicuous by their absence in 'Missing'. The industrial remains' signification of the transience of man's exploitative purposes has been deliberately put into abeyance in the landscape of 'Missing'. A decade later, when Alston Moor is returned to in 'The Prophets' and *New Year Letter*, 'The rusty winding engine' (CP, p.203) and 'the relics of old mines' (CP, p.182) are again given prominence. The industrial remains, while signifying the reassumption of the landscape by nature, also serve to humanize the topography in some measure. Although abandoned and derelict, the mines and machinery effectively mediate between the isolated speakers of the poems and the desolate unconditionality of nature by giving the moors a vestigial human aspect. Such mediation is not required for Auden's purposes in 'Missing', which establishes the heroism of 'the leader' (CP, p.40) in terms of the directness of his confrontation with the unalloyed energies of nature. The poem sharply contrasts the lowland tranquillity of 'the happy

valley, / Orchard and curving river' with the fatal destiny of the unprotected leader amid the 'scars where kestrels hover' (CP, p.40). The ghostly humanizing of the uplands by the relics of industry is not introduced to soften the opposition.

The prospect from the escarpments of 'the happy valley' which opens 'Missing' consolidates the myth of place by fictively utilising aspects of Alston Moor's geography that are incorporated in *New Year Letter*:

There, where the EDEN leisures through
Its sandstone valley, is my view
Of green and civil life that dwells
Below a cliff of savage fells (CP, p.182).

The homonymy of the river and the biblical Eden informs Auden's later vision of the landscape as a sanctuary for ideal values. His identification of the area with Eden is rooted in his childhood, as 'Amor Loci' reveals in speaking of 'a vision, / not (as perhaps at / twelve I thought it) of Eden' (CP, p.585). The 'happy valley' is implicitly Edenic in its contrast with the leader's exposed surroundings. It has a literary original in the happy valley of the kingdom of Amhara in Johnson's *Rasselas*, likewise a place of tranquil fertility bordered by precipitous mountains. *Rasselas* and the leader have in common their rejection of the complacent happiness of the valley, the former quitting Amhara to gain knowledge of the world. The leader, and his 'doomed companions', however, are nihilistically committed to the unconditional as 'Fighters for no one's sake, / Who died beyond the border' (CP, p.40).

The frontier between the world of human contingency and the domain of the landscape's absolute imperatives, initially crossed in 'The Watershed' and 'The Letter', is irrevocably behind the protagonists of 'Missing'. The ideological separatism of the earlier poems has developed into a suicidal extremism anticipating the insistence on death of the committed in the name of love and the life-force in '1929'. As 'Fighters for no one's sake', the leader and his companions emulate Yeats's Irish airman, although they lack even his redeeming 'lonely impulse of delight'. Their heroic absolutism passively resides in their complete exposure to the landscape's conditions, implying conformity with the rigorous ethical severity of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell'. Cut off from the habitable zone below them, the extremism of their commitment to the non-human values of the uplands takes them beyond the possibility of action. It could be said, in William Empson's words, that they are simply 'Waiting for the end, boys, waiting for the end'. 'Missing' might be thus regarded a foretaste of Auden's occasional indulgence in pessimism that earned Empson's squib of 1937.

The leader is indeed inactive, more poseur than hero on the evidence of the text in his 'tall unwounded' (CP, p.40) stance amid the escarpments. Movement is only suggested in the statement that he 'May turn away' (CP, p.40) from viewing the happy valley in enactment of his alienation from its ethos of contentment. The landscape itself is the real

protagonist of the first section of the poem. It is alive with activity in the kestrel's hovering, the sudden loud presences of the curlew and the snipe, and the force of 'driven sleet' that 'scalded to the bone' (CP, p.41). There is a sense of active authority at a geomorphic level in the way the extending line of the horizon 'disciplines the fell' (CP, p.40). A wide range of sensory responses is evoked by the dense local description of the opening of 'Missing'. The visual outlines are complemented by repeated references to the sounds of the birds. Tactile sensation is added in the hyperbole of the 'scalding' sleet, and the sense of taste is present in the statement that 'streams are acrid yet / To an unaccustomed lip' (CP, p.40). The craggy uplands are a vast arena of natural vitality and stimulating phenomena with which the leader, like the speaker of 'I chose this lean country', elects to identify. He is, however, left incapable of significant action beyond his fatal exercise of choice. Like *Paid on Both Sides* and *The Orators*, in which meliorative action is either impossible or performable only in death, 'Missing' is substantially a parable of heroic failure. Tradition and 'the enemy' in *Paid on Both Sides* and *The Orators* respectively pose conditions the protagonists cannot alter. In 'Missing' the landscape's integrity constitutes an ideal the recognition and acceptance of which renders the leader powerless. 'Those who will not act / Perish for that reason' (EA, p.50), as one of Auden's early 'Shorts' has it. His myth of place of the late 1920s is ultimately one of sacrifice to the austere *deus loci* of the moorland. The

leader and his companions can do no more than earn their obituary in the lines 'Heroes are buried who / Did not believe in death' (CP, p.40).

The leader's decision to die 'beyond the border' is, like the airman's last mission in *The Orators*, no more, or less, than an ultimate ideological gesture. It has no meaning in terms of the primal vitality and inviolable autonomy of the uplands, which make 'choice seem a necessary error' (CP, p.50), to quote from '1929'. In passing beyond the possibility of significant action and perishing for an unattainable ideal, however, the leader and his companions are ascribed heroic immortality. Memory of them is integrated into the fabric of the landscape in which they chose to die, as is affirmed by the lines 'all / Whose voices in the rock / Are now perpetual' (CP, p.40). The concept of stone commemorating speech may owe something to Hardy's 'In the British Museum'. The poem attributes special importance to the base of a ruined pillar because "'... that stone once echoed / The voice of Paul"'.³⁸ The religious connotations thus suggested are not wholly irrelevant to 'Missing' and its setting in the mountainous wilderness of Alston Moor's high limestone escarpments. Mountains are the sites for divine revelations in both the Old and the New Testaments, and the leader and his followers much resemble a world-forsaking prophet and his chosen. 'The stone smile of this country god' has faded, and the landscape's countenance is stern, but its *numen* commands fidelity to death of those who have chosen to honour

it. 'The weeks of blizzard over', an uncollected poem of 1927 which supplies a number of lines for 'Missing', supports such a reading of the later poem. The convertability of religious and metapolitical concepts in Auden's early writing is evident from a comparison of the two works. The lines 'But prophets must migrate - / "Leave for Cape Wrath tonight"',³⁹ occur in 'The weeks of blizzard over'. They are secularized in 'Missing' by the single substitution of 'leaders' for 'prophets' (*vide CP*, p.40). The devotional element in Auden's later treatments of his landscape is latent in the moorland's embodiment of unconditionality in the early poetry. The quasi-religious 'vision' of 'Allendale' has a vicarious connection with 'Missing' in the lines 'The contemplation of / A singular vision' (*EA*, pp.439-40) in 'I chose this lean country' which supplied the details of the leader's landscape. Divine immutability, biblically symbolized by rock, is connoted in 'Missing' by the immortality of those whose 'voices in the rock / Are now perpetual' (*CP*, p.40).

Religious implications notwithstanding, the paramilitary and metapolitical character of 'Missing' is emphasised from the start, the title denoting unascertained fate in wartime. The 'leader' is, of course, literally equivalent to the German '*der Führer*', which seems hardly accidental in view of the poem's composition in Berlin in January 1929.⁴⁰ Hitler's ascendancy was becoming imminent and the opposition of radical political extremes characterized an unstable status quo. Auden's sympathies at the time were very evidently with

the left, and '1929' appears enthusiastic about 'final war / Of proletariat against police' (CP, p.51). The archetypally fascist concept of the leader, however, provided a suitable protagonist for the localized dramatization of radical extremism in 'Missing'. The nine lines of topographical description from 'I chose this lean country' formed a ready-made landscape for the poem. Alston Moor became a convenient fiction from the distance of Berlin. 'Missing' lacks the autobiographical specificity of 'The Watershed' and 'The Letter' and consolidates the mythical aspects of the uplands that are latent in the earlier poems. The landscape is cast as a hazardous region of heroic commitment, a country 'beyond the border' that is the goal of the quest for the unconditional. It is the proper setting for the self-sacrificing elect who can accept that 'death / Is necessary condition of the season's putting forth' (CP, p.50). The leader and his companions know, like the speaker of '1929', that revolutionary change will need 'death ... our death' (CP, p.53). Such are the extreme terms, formulated largely through his vision of the moorland, of Auden's ideology of regeneration and the extinction of 'The old gang to be forgotten in the spring' (CP, p.53). For the leader and his doomed companions, there can be no advance beyond their confrontation with the landscape's absolutes, nor any retreat to more viable conditions. The price of the tenability of their position is death. Through the paradox of self-sacrifice to an ideology ultimately enshrining the life-force, they are remembered as 'Heroes ...

who / Did not believe in death' (CP, p.40). The landscape's complete detachment from the sphere of human action is definitively established in 'Missing', and it ceases to inform Auden's work directly until 'The Prophets' of 1939. The myth of the landscape of commitment has served its purpose in preparing the ideological ground for the uncompromising radicalism of subsequent poems. Alston Moor will later take on a more assuaging mythological aspect in its partial synonymy with his notions of 'the Good Place' (CP, p.203).

Auden's strategic withdrawal from the uplands of the leader's fatal separatism commences in the second part of 'Missing'. The successors of the dead heroes, the pluralised 'leaders' (CP, p.40), honour their dedication, but do not emulate their suicidal example. A more compromising *modus operandi* and a turning away from the unconditionality of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell' are recommended:

... Bravery is now
 Not in the dying breath
 But resisting the temptations
 To skyline operations (CP, p.40).

In 'The Letter' and 'The Watershed' advances were made from involvement with human contingency into the landscape's fastness of natural absolutes. The second part of 'Missing' constitutes a reversal, a descent from the 'scars where kestrels hover' to the level of 'The summer visitors' (CP, p.40). Unlike the stranger of 'The Watershed', the visitors are not challenged or rejected, but apparently tolerated in

'Choosing their spots to view' (CP, p.40). They conveniently represent bourgeois behavioural norms against which is set the establishment of a new radical imperative in the lines 'But leaders must migrate / "Leave for Cape Wrath tonight"' (CP, p.40).

The 'leaders', distinct from their predecessors, are not restricted to a fatal destiny in the landscape 'beyond the border'. Cape Wrath's extra-textual status as the destination of a pointless journey in *Lions and Shadows*⁴¹ prompts a reading of the leaders' migration as an exercise in futility. More significantly, their mobility heralds the expansion of Auden's geographical frame of reference in the poetry that follows 'Missing'. The location in the far north of Scotland anticipates the sense of Britain as a whole as the broader setting of his writings of the 1930s. The specific moorland landscape and more generalized rural *milieu* of his earlier work gives way in *The Orators* to a national geography mapped out by the many British place names. 'Dover', 'London' and 'the furnace - crowded midlands' (EA, p.61) of the opening are followed by numerous named English locations as the work develops. Latterly, the Shetland namings of 'Vadill of Urafirth, Stubba, Smirnadale, Hamar and Sullom' (EA, p.76) figure in the airman's deranged strategies. Britain becomes the major locus and theatre of social criticism of the poetry of the 1930s. National surveys are featured in 'O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven', 'Here on the cropped grass of the narrow ridge I stand', and 'Look, stranger, at

this island now', and supplemented by localized writing, as in 'Dover' and 'Oxford'. The poetry of Iceland, Spain and China in Auden's work later in the decade sustains the geographical expansion. 'Commentary' of 1938 sees the culmination of the process, its vast perspectives incorporating the planet itself in an interstellar setting. Man becomes 'Little upon his little earth', while 'the galaxy / Is free for ever to revolve like an enormous biscuit' (*EA*, p.262). Macro-geography is memorably used later in *New Year Letter*, complementing the poem's highly specific allegorization of Alston Moor. In part III a passage details how 'Earth wobbles on down her career' (*CP*, p.183) and a global context is periodically invoked throughout as a means of universalizing the poem's discourse.

The departure from the high moorland and the decision to avoid 'skyline operations' in the second part of 'Missing' emblemize the advent in Auden's poetry of 1929 of a more active radicalism. Residence in Berlin provided him with a sense of political urgency through experience of ideological struggle. It also introduced him to new theories of psychological liberation and evolutionary teleology through his meeting with John Layard. Edward Mendelson writes that 'Until Auden met Layard he had written only of a world trapped within borders' (*EA*, p.xiv). The first part of 'Missing' epitomises such an entrapment, the end result of the idealistic separatism dramatized in the early poems of landscape. According to Mendelson, Auden had already come under Layard's

influence by January 1929, when 'Missing' was written (*vide EA*, pp. xiii-xiv). The descent from the uplands that 'cut off, will not communicate' in the poem's second part signals Auden's new commitment to a more socially viable meliorism.

Abandonment of the isolated idealism of the early poems of landscape and the revision of attitudes after meeting Layard and residing in Berlin are clear from Auden's writings of 1929. The quasi-religious tendency 'To go into the wilderness to pray' (*CP*, p.49) in treatments of the moorland is dismissed as regressive in terms of the evolutionary dynamic in 'Venus Will Now Say a Few Words'. Part III of '1929' finds the speaker dispossessed of his identification with the familiar rural English setting upon the return from Germany:

Being alone, the frightened soul
Returns to this life of sheep and hay
No longer his: he every hour
Moves further from this and must so move,
As child is weaned from mother and leaves home (*CP*, p.52).

The growth to greater maturity in the image of weaning is emphasised in the statement that the speaker is '"no child now"' (*CP*, p.52). Similarly, a general notion of progress and development in the line 'Moving along the track which is himself' (*CP*, p.52) conveys an awareness that significant changes have taken place. Radical change, social and personal, becomes a major theme, and '1929' seeks to assimilate into poetry the experiences of Berlin in its striving for 'An

altering speech for altering things' (CP, p.50). The intense personal analysis of parts II and III of the poem reflects the influence of Layard's psychological doctrines. Theories of pathology and cure learned from Groddeck at this time are evident in the poem's repeated images and metaphors of disease. Experience of political turmoil is graphically present in the account of 'anxiety at night, / Shooting and barricade in street' (CP, p.51), in references to police brutality, and in the poem's optimism regarding revolutionary action. In 1929 the German Communists still exercised active resistance to 'the enemy', who were clearly recognizable in the conjunction of Nazism and bourgeois conservatism. The terminal instability of the Weimar Republic provided an immediate paradigm of radical political change that superseded the essentially theoretical diagnosis of 'An industry already comatose' (CP, p.41) on Alston Moor. The ideological and volitional deadlock of the leader's compliant entrapment in the landscape of unconditionality in 'Missing' is resolved in '1929'. The first three sections of self-questioning and ethical stock-taking prepare the way for the final passage's unequivocal announcement that 'It is time for the destruction of error' (CP, p.53).

With the establishment of a political context for the inspiring but passive and inarticulate idealism associated with the moorland, the landscape disappears for a decade from Auden's writing. Recognition of its purely natural imperatives is superseded by the socially melioristic ethos

maintained until about 1936. Thereafter, as the European political situation worsened and Britain's failed to improve, Auden's ideological optimism markedly diminished. A more negative outlook is sensed early in 1936 from the survey of the absence of operative good will in 'Certainly our city - with the byres of poverty down to'. Bitter pessimism becomes briefly entrenched in the macabre ballads of 1937. 'As I Walked Out One Evening' ironically anticipates Auden's subsequent Christianity and acceptance of the doctrine of original sin in its penultimate stanza's 'You shall love your crooked neighbour / With your crooked heart' (CP, p.115). The desire for a more tenable moral vision becomes acute in 'Sonnets from China' and 'Commentary'. In 1938, part I of 'A Voyage' discovers the myth of the sacred landscape as a sanctuary for ideal values when Auden looks for 'Proofs that somewhere exists, really, the Good Place' (CP, p.143).

Alston Moor is returned to in the following year. In 'The Prophets' the remote landscape of industrial dereliction teaches love and patience in accordance with Auden's emerging religious conviction that

Either we serve the Unconditional,
Or some Hitlerian monster will supply
An iron convention to do evil by (EA, p.460).

Henceforth, the moors and their relics of lead-mining become essentially a landscape of the mind, remembered in detail, as in *New Year Letter*, or imaginatively transformed, as in 'In Praise of Limestone'. The benevolent and educative interpretation of the uplands latent in 'The Letter' forms

the basis of Auden's later myth of place, the foreboding austerity of the other early treatments tending to disappear.

Although featuring centrally in as few as three of his early collected poems, the landscape has an essential rôle in the development of Auden's work. His vision of the moorland directly informs the formulation of the ideological and political element that is characteristic of his poetry of the 1930s. The landscape has a similar importance after 1939, not appearing frequently, but becoming intrinsic to the structure and articulation of the ethical and religious dimensions of Auden's work. Alston Moor is the locus of a number of indispensable poems, while the symbolic and allegorical topographies of the longer works further demonstrate the importance of landscape in Auden's poetry. The following chapter concentrates on later treatments of the limestone uplands from 'The Prophets' of 1939 to the landscape's last appearance in his work in 'Amor Loci' of 1965.

Notes to Chapter One

- 1 The poems with which each chapter is principally concerned will be indicated thus in the chapter headings.
- 2 Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation* (London, 1976), p.59.
- 3 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 4 Randall Jarrell, *The Third Book of Criticism* (New York, 1971), p.121.
- 5 François Duchêne, *The Case of the Helmeted Airman* (London, 1972), p.28.
- 6 Jeremy Hooker, *Poetry of Place* (Manchester, 1982), pp.142-43.
- 7 John Auden, 'A Brother's Viewpoint', in *W. H. Auden: A Tribute*, edited by Stephen Spender (London, 1975), p.27.
- 8 The full title of this work by T. Sopwith is *An Account of the Mining Districts of Alston Moor, Weardale and Teesdale in Cumberland and Durham; Comprising Descriptive Sketches of the Scenery, Antiquities, Geology and Mining Operations in the Upper Dales of the Rivers Tyne, Wear and Tees* (Alnwick, 1833).
- 9 Edward Mendelson, *Early Auden* (London, 1981), p.337.
- 10 *vide* Appendix for the texts of 'Allendale' and 'Lead's the Best'.

- 11 *vide* John Fuller, *A Reader's Guide to W. H. Auden* (London, 1970), p.14.
- 12 Edward Callan's *Auden: A Carnival of Intellect* (Oxford, 1983) indicates the locations of Lintzgarth and Natrass (*vide* p.72) and recognizes the importance of Alston Moor to Auden's earlier work (*vide* pp.28, 29, 30, 52, 77). Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p.121, and Humphrey Carpenter, *W. H. Auden: A Biography* (London, 1981), p.80, both give the whereabouts of the houses in more general terms.
- 13 *vide* Fuller, p.14.
- 14 Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p.122.
- 15 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 16 E. R. Dodds, 'Background to a Poet: Memories of Birmingham, 1924-36', *Shenandoah*, vol. 18, part 2 (Winter, 1967), p.9.
- 17 Wordsworth, p.509.
- 18 *ibid.*, p.123.
- 19 *vide* Osborne, p.42.
- 20 Sopwith, p.6.
- 21 Carpenter, p.113.
- 22 Hooker, p.143
- 23 *ibid.*

- 24 *ibid.*
- 25 *ibid.*, p.140.
- 26 The expression 'the old gang' was used by Randolph Churchill of members of the Conservative government in the House of Commons on 7 March 1878.
- 27 Justin Reppogle, *Auden's Poetry* (London, 1969), p.13.
- 28 Wordsworth, p.232.
- 29 Callan, p.52, comments interestingly on the simultaneity of geographically literal and locally symbolic functions in the title and locus of 'The Watershed'.
- 30 John Clare, *The Poems of John Clare*, edited by J. W. and A. Tibble, 2 vols (London, 1935), I, p.305.
- 31 Samuel Johnson, Letter to the Earl of Chesterfield, 7 February 1755; contained in James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson LL.D.*, three volumes (London, 1938), I, p.178.
- 32 Christopher Isherwood, 'Some Notes on Auden's Early Poetry', *New Verse*, double issue nos. 26-27 (London, 1937), p.4.
- 33 *vide*, Carpenter, p.80n.
- 34 *vide*, Fuller, pp.22, 51.
- 35 Quoted in Osborne, p.43.

- 36 Dodds, p.9.
- 37 *vide*, Carpenter, p.358.
- 38 Hardy, p.359.
- 39 W. H. Auden, 'Poems by W. H. Auden (1927-1928)',
Oxford Poetry, vol. 1, no. 3 (Oxford, 1984), p.93.
- 40 Hitler was known as '*der Führer*' as early as 1921.
By 1928 he was well-known, with twelve seats in the
Reichstag; *vide* Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World
War*, 6 vols (London, 1948), vol. I, pp.42-45.
- 41 *vide* Fuller, p.20.

CHAPTER TWO - AUDEN: TOWARDS THE GOOD PLACE

'The Prophets', *New Year Letter*,

'In Praise of Limestone', 'Not In Baedeker',

'Amor Loci'

— 'let ... // time remembered bear witness
to time required' (CP, p.223).

'The Letter', with its 'the nod, / The stone smile of this country god', first indicated the benign and educative aspects latent in Auden's interpretations of his landscape. A more general affirmation of earth's active benevolence is subsequently made in 'Which of you waking early and watching daybreak' of October 1929:

For daily under the disguise of immediate day-dream
Or nightly in direct vision the man is nourished,
Fed through the common artery of memory
Out of the earth the mother of all life (EA, p.41).

Auden's conception of sustenance drawn from a maternally personified earth may be taken as a further indication of his indebtedness to that 'most bleak old bore' (CP, p.89), Wordsworth. Book VIII of Wordsworth's *The Excursion* introduces the 'ragged offspring' of the poor; in lines with distinct similarities to Auden's, they seem to draw 'some nourishment, as trees do by their roots, / From earth, the common mother of us all'.¹ Auden has extended the convention of a succouring earth for his own purposes by the psychological emphasis in the references to day-dream and sleep. In addition, 'the essential artery of memory' introduces a concept akin to Wordsworth's belief in the spiritual sustenance drawn from

remembrance * of childhood as 'the primal sympathy / Which having been must ever be'.² Memory will become fundamental to Auden's later treatments of his landscape. In his thinking of 1929, however, earth's psychic nourishment contributes to the energy that will thrust 'man / Pushed on like grass-blade into undiscovered air' (EA, p.42) within the terms of the poem's evolutionary teleology and metapolitical optimism. The vitality with which 'sap unbaffled rises' in 'The Watershed' has been conveniently humanized. Earth's benign significance remains imprecise. Like the early 'Allendale', 'Which of you waking early and watching daybreak' has recourse to the vagueness of 'dream' and 'vision' to communicate its notions of natural inspiration. That 'the earth' of the later poem represents a generalization of Auden's specific landscape may be gathered from its second account of earth's nurturing. The reference to sheltering recalls the 'crouching behind a sheep-pen' of 'The Letter', while the image of the 'fells' distinctly evokes the topography of Alston Moor:

Yes, she is with him always and will sustain him;
Often he knows it — caught in storm on fells
And sheltering with horses behind a dripping wall (EA, p.41).

This early attribution of feminine gender and maternal constancy to the earth particularized in a landscape recognizably that of the limestone uplands anticipates *New Year Letter* and 'In Praise of Limestone'. In the former, the moors' subterranean levels are the realm of 'Das Weibliche' (CP, p.183), Auden's myth of place expanding to include experience of 'The Terrible, the Merciful, the Mothers' (CP, p.182). The concept of earth's

psychic nurturing is clarified in the account of the coming to understanding of 'The deep *Urmutterfurcht* that drives / Us into knowledge all our lives' (CP, p.182). 'In Praise of Limestone' emphasises the accommodating and benevolent character of its landscape by asking 'What could be more like Mother or a fitter background / For her son' (CP, p.414). Jeremy Hooker has noted this aspect of Auden's treatment of the moors in words that are apt to the biological and evolutionary connotations of the opening of 'In Praise of Limestone': 'The limestone landscape, which is like the tip of an iceberg, is ... associated or even identified with the mother, in the form of life's unconscious matrix'.³ The implications of Auden's maternal designation of his landscape go beyond the province of this study and open onto areas best charted by those versed in psychology and feminism. The principal virtues Auden identifies in his treatments of the landscape as a sanctuary for ideal values are, however, the traditionally feminine qualities of maternally abiding love and patience.

With 'The Prophets', the arrogant and defensive stance of the speaker of 'The Watershed' and the celebration of futile heroics in 'Missing' are wholly superseded by a high evaluation of the wise passivity imparted by the landscape. Love and patience become fundamental to the essentially spiritual meliorism of Auden's later work as qualities engendering the absorbent disposition necessary to understanding. In *New*

Year Letter and 'In Praise of the Limestone' the subterranean levels of the limestone landscape come to signify unconscious and supra-verbal areas of experience. The landscape manifests the conditions and qualities of 'curing by love' as set forth in 'The Good Life', Auden's contribution to *Christianity and the Social Revolution* of 1935:

The task of revealing the hidden field of experience, of understanding and curing by love, is a very slow, but ultimately the only satisfactory one. 'The chief sin', wrote Kafka in one of his aphorisms, 'is impatience. Through impatience man lost Eden, and it is impatience that prevents him from regaining it'. People take to violence because they haven't the strength and nerve to be absorbent (EA, p.347).

'The Prophets' and 'Amor Loci' interpret the landscape's constancy of benign signification after its abandonment by the exploiter as exemplifying love and patience. 'In Praise of Limestone' recognizes the stone's absorbent nature as the basis of its affinity with mankind. Auden wrote in 1948 that the theme of 'In Praise of Limestone' is 'that that rock creates the only truly human landscape'.⁴ *New Year Letter* anticipated this intuition in the framing of its allegory of 'the nature of my kind' (CP, p.182) in terms of the topography and geology of Alston Moor. Auden's correlation of humanity and limestone is intrinsically optimistic in the associative ascription of loving absorbency and patience to human nature. The limestone landscape provides a sanctuary for wise passivity, offering hope for the survival of 'a love / that ... // does not abandon' (CP, p.586) in a world dominated by 'All the Great Powers assume' (CP, p.415).

A sustained elucidation of the landscape's benevolence that is embryonically present in 'The Letter' and 'Which of you waking early and watching daybreak' begins with 'The Prophets' of 1939. Memory and maturity afforded Auden a perspective on his landscape that permitted him to recognize its enduring constitution of a 'mode of thought, / Whence my imperatives were taught' (CP, p.183). Adherence to the ideological absolutism derived from the early vision of the moorland led to the crisis of spiritual aridity and isolation of the late 1930s. The limitations of purely secular imperatives were accepted with Auden's return to the Christianity of his childhood in 1939-40. True to its provision of 'a love / that ... // does not abandon', the limestone landscape became imaginatively available, authoritatively embodying the unconditional spiritual values of selfless love and patience. The major themes of Auden's later poetry, in its meditations on love, religion and a *modus vivendi* with nature, are all clearly stated in his treatments of landscape after 1939.

In establishing the later myth of his landscape as a sanctuary for ideal values, the actuality of the moorland is to an extent combined with the concept of 'the Good Place'. First heard of in his poetry in 'A Voyage' of 1938⁵, the notional locality of the Good Place reappears in 'The Prophets' and *The Age of Anxiety*. Later it is supplanted by the synonymous 'Eden' of 'Vespers' and the 'dream of Eden' discussed in the 'Prologue' and 'Dingley Dell and the Fleet' of *The Dyer's Hand*. 'A Voyage' loosely defines the Good Place through the

positive textual connotations of 'a juster life' and 'Times and places where he was well' (CP, p.143). Its 'Convincing' innocence is opposed to the illusion of the 'false island where the heart cannot act' (CP, p.143). The traveller, sick with 'unreal excitement' that is 'really an illness', discovers that 'His journey is false' (CP, p.143), as Auden did two years previously in 'Journey to Iceland'. The Good Place is by implication the ideal destination: there 'his fever shall find a cure, the true journey an end / Where hearts meet and are really true' (CP, p.143). In *The Age of Anxiety*, the Good Place is the object of the spiritual quest, identical to Atlantis as the unattainable goal of the seeker of salvation in the poem of that title. Only in 'The Prophets' is the notional landscape of love, congruity, spiritual health and justice given explicit relation to Alston Moor. The poem states that 'when I hunted the Good Place, / Abandoned lead-mines let themselves be caught' (CP, p.203). The lines describe childhood experience, making it evident that the association of the Good Place with the limestone uplands was of long standing in Auden's imagination. In childhood, the biblical connotations of the landscape's River Eden and its embodiment of the magical world of his private *cultus* of lead-mining made the locality identifiable as the Good Place. The designation survives in 'The Prophets', but the landscape is not afterwards explicitly identified as the Good Place, which remains intrinsically unspecifiable as an abstract spiritual ideal.

Auden does not rely extensively upon either the Good Place or his 'dream of Eden'. They are too much general cases to be serviceable as poetic premises in the structuring of his work's ethical and religious dimensions. The presentation of the ideals invested in these notional localities is effectively delegated to the limestone landscape. This translation of the abstract into the actual accords with Auden's request in a poem of 1940 to 'Force our desire, O Essence of creation, / To seek Thee always in Thy substances' (CP, p.248). Edward Mendelson has noted Auden's 'religious commitment, in later years, to the visible created world'.⁶ In terms of Christian orthodoxy, this characteristic of Auden's poetry after about 1940 conforms to the Pauline doctrine of Romans 1:20 : 'For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead'. The most explicit of many demonstrations of Auden's perception of the ineffable in the actual is the conclusion of 'In Praise of Limestone':

... I know nothing of
 Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
 Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
 Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone
 landscape (CP, p.415).

The emergence of the Good Place in 'A Voyage' is quickly followed by the return to the landscape of childhood. Both the notional and the actual locations serve as spiritual and imaginative retreats at the time of the world's final drift

into war. Auden acutely sensed the moral bankruptcy that was the legacy of the 'low dishonest decade' (*EA*, p.245) of the 1930s. His own experience of spiritual loss of direction had been reflected in the imagery of futile journeying of 'Journey to Iceland' and 'A Voyage'. The ambivalence of his attitudes to New York and the U.S.A. after his arrival there in 1939 increased his discomfort and his need for the imaginative privacy of his landscape. He could regard the country in a positive light as demonstrating 'To what conditions we must bow / In building the Just City now' (*CP*, p.190). It was also, however, 'the Great Void where you have to balance without handholds'.⁷ The U.S.A. could easily be seen as the place of 'the unspeakable juke-boxes, the horrible Rockettes and the insane salads ... the anonymous countryside and the synonymous cities besotted with electric signs' (*DH*, p.323). America provided a landscape of negation 'without which, perhaps, the analyst and the immigrant alike would never understand by contrast the nature of the Good Place nor desire it with sufficient desperation to stand a chance of arriving' (*DH*, p.323).

Auden's hitherto casual awareness of the existence of a landscape of the mind was greatly heightened by his experience of the U.S.A. The atlas of 'the inner space / Of private ownership' (*CP*, p.181) is envisaged in *New Year Letter* and accorded intrinsic importance in the structure of each individual's psychology. By 1940, the sanctuary constituted by the Good Place in conjunction with memories of the moors around Alston had become a very salient feature of the moral

geography of Auden's imagination. The 'essential artery of memory' postulated in 'Which of you waking early and watching daybreak' lent substance to the concept of the Good Place through recollection of the landscape of childhood. Once out of England, Auden made the limestone uplands the focus for an objectified and unsentimental nostalgia. In terms of the explication of creative theory in *New Year Letter*, his later poems of the landscape present 'Already lived experience / Through a convention that creates / Autonomous completed states' (CP, p.162). The 'Autonomous completed state' of the Good Place is, in its synonymity with a personal Eden, 'a wish-dream which cannot become real' (DH, p.410). Auden was emphatic upon this point in his discussion of Eden in the essay 'Dingley Dell and the Fleet'. The Good Place and Eden have, however, real significance in their provision of moral orientation towards love, justice and congruity. Their closest approximation in reality is seen to be the moorland of Auden's childhood in his specification of 'Limestone uplands like the Pennines' (DH, p.6) for the topography of his personal Eden. The landscape forms the medium for communicating the ideal values that are notionally embodied in the abstract locality of the Good Place. In later years, the distinction between Auden's memories of the moorland and his personal myth of Eden appears to have become blurred. Charles Osborne's biography of Auden records that 'Once, when a friend asked him if he would like to go back to the landscape he had loved as a child he replied sadly, "Oh no, that was Paradise. I could never

go back".⁸ His attachment to the moors in memory and his distant exile from them in New York established the Alston locality as a landscape of the mind. Its re-emergence and growing importance in his poetry after ten years' absence arose from the topography's unique suitability for combining the concretely particular and the ethically and spiritually abstract.

'Evil is always personal and spectacular, / But goodness ... // ... must be shared as truth, / As freedom or as happiness' (EA, p.268), wrote Auden in 1938. Use of the limestone uplands as a medium for the sharing and affirmation of his ideal values enabled Auden to avoid the obvious pitfalls of moral abstraction and platitude. His need for readily apprehensible images that would adequately convey spiritual and ethical concepts was met by his landscape, and subsequently by the topographical symbolism drawn from his local experience. As M. D. Simpson has noted, through landscape 'Auden established a connectedness which could speak to modern man's isolated subjectivity'.⁹ The problems of poetic communication in the modern cultural situation were considered at length by David Jones in his preface to *The Anathemata* of 1951. Conceiving of the artist's task as being 'to lift up valid signs', one of Jones's principal concerns is with 'the validity and availability of ... images'. He states that 'only what is actually loved and known can be seen *sub specie aeternitatis*' and thus provide 'effective signs'. Today this begs the question, Jones

continues, of 'What for us is patient of being "actually loved and known"'.¹⁰ Auden's depth of attachment to ideas of landscape provided him with many of his most 'effective signs'. The limestone moors supplied imagery that was valid and available in terms of common experience through its rooting in topographical actuality and perceptual particulars. While discharging ambitious conceptual functions, Auden's poetry of his landscape satisfied Jones's criterion of being 'actually loved and known'.

Jones's insistence on truth to experience in art, the necessity of the poet's working 'within the limits of his love',¹¹ relates directly to Auden's concern with illusion in his poetry of the 1940s. The negative power of egotistical falsification of experience, the infatuation with what is not 'actually loved and known', is a major theme of the longer poems. In *The Sea and the Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety* figurative landscapes are the principal vehicle for investigating the sway of illusion over the individual's consciousness. 'Lost in his freedom man pursues / The shadow of his images' (CP, p.279) in *For the Time Being*. Self-deception divorces the psyche from the unconditionality of 'the natural world where / The occupation of space is the real and final fact' (CP, p.272). Man's attempts to colonise the revealed truth of the objective world with his solipsism are considered in part III of 'Kairos and Logos'. Failure to recognize fully that 'The fatherhood

of knowledge stood out there' reduces the world to 'helpless images instead of things / That had looked so decided' (CP, pp.240-41). Impoverishment of experience results, or separation from God in terms of the poem's implicit theology; man is left to see 'himself there with an exile's eyes, / Missing his Father' (CP, p.241).

As 'a locality I love' (CP, p.182) Auden's landscape is his essential token of the objective truth of the created world, careful and consistent detailing of its topography vouching for fidelity to experience. Abandoned by the exploiter, the moorland is no longer contaminated by human illusion. Patient reassumption of its natural autonomy makes the landscape the undeceived exemplification of the axiom that 'One must be passive to conceive the truth' (CP, p.240) of 'Kairos and Logos'. Desolation and 'complete desertion' (CP, p.203) in 'The Prophets' and 'Amor Loci' are fundamental conditions of the uplands' manifestation of selfless love. The massive homogeneity of the limestone bedrock confers unity and wholeness upon the visions of human viability in *New Year Letter* and 'In Praise of Limestone'. Emphatic upon the inviolable integrity of the objective world, Auden recognizes in 'Amor Loci' of 1965 the landscape's independence of all it had signified for him. In 1940 he circumvents the awareness that he has colonised the unconditionality of the moorland with meanings by the statement at the end of the passage of topographical allegory in *New Year Letter*: 'But such a bond

is not an Ought, / Only a given mode of thought' (CP, p.183). Ultimately, the landscape serves to 'tease us out of thought / As doth eternity'. The relativeness of human significance is transcended in the topographical envisionings of the religious absolutes of perfect love and resurrection in 'Amor Loci' and 'In Praise of Limestone'.

A detailed examination of the development of Auden's later myth of place as a sanctuary for ideal values must begin with 'The Prophets'. Stephen Spender, isolating love as Auden's essential and perennial theme, wrote of 'love as interpreter of the world'¹² in his poetry. With 'The Prophets', the world begins to reciprocate by providing landscape as the interpreter of love. The poem's title may be taken to denote the word's root-meaning in the Greek *pro-phanai*, to speak for, the derelict machinery and the landscape vicariously communicating on behalf of love. Abandonment and desolation emphasise the absolute self-possession seen in the industrial relics and their surroundings. The moors provide a focal setting for the derelict machines, the 'they' of the poem, which herald the hypostasization of love in the person of the beloved:

And all the landscape round them pointed to
The calm with which they took complete desertion
As proof that you existed (CP, p.203).

Auden had been living in New York, at the cultural heart of the 'fully alienated land' (CP, p.183) of the U.S.A., for about five months when 'The Prophets' was written in May 1939. His physical and temporal distance from his last experience

of Alston Moor transformed it into a landscape of the mind, autonomous and immutable in memory. The 'Abandoned lead-mines' and 'The rusty winding-engine' (CP, p.203) of the poem, formerly encountered in the historically relative context of 'The Watershed', are now viewed *sub specie aeternitatis*. They become fully imbued with the aura of the childhood world of 'Sacred Objects', to the mystery of which Auden returns in seeking a means to convey love's unconditionality. The necessity of his doing so arose from his meeting Chester Kallman, who was to be his companion for the rest of his life, in the month preceding the poem's composition. In affirming love's indivisibility, Auden opens 'The Prophets' with a record of his childhood cathexis upon illustrations of 'Those beautiful machines' (CP, p.203). An imaginative and affective continuum is established through the memory of the landscape, linking love in childhood with the mature encounter with the beloved. The 'earliest messengers who walked / Into my life from books' are retrospectively considered the prophets of 'the face / That never will go back into a book / But asks for all my life' (CP, p.203). The beloved is ascribed the benign significance of 'the Good Place' as life's central object, 'the Place / Where all I touch is moved to an embrace' (CP, p.203). Love's localization as 'the Place' further establishes its indivisibility, Auden's childhood intimations of love having acquired 'A local habitation and a name' through his encounter with the moors and their machinery.

Sentimentality is avoided by the repeated references to the detached qualities of the landscape and its 'Sacred Objects'. The paradox of the opening's 'Perhaps I always knew what they were saying ...' followed by the deliberately sustained silence of the 'beautiful machines that never talked' (CP, p.203) also precludes emotional indulgence. Auden allows the reader to anticipate the prosopopoeia of speech, but holds such expectations skillfully in check in maintaining the 'lack of answer' of the landscape and machinery. Childhood's fanciful projection of personality into the mining relics is thus conveyed while the poem leaves them in their inanimate silence. The landscape of 'The Prophets' retains the 'reticent' authority that 'will not communicate' with which it is characterized in earlier poems. The dispassionate self-possession evoked recalls the austerity of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell':

And later when I hunted the Good Place
 Abandoned lead-mines let themselves be caught;
 There was no pity in the adit's face,
 The rusty winding-engine never taught
 One obviously too apt, to say Too Late (CP, p.203).

A succession of negatives threads through the poem, 'never' occurring four times, along with 'nothing' and the repeated 'no' in its twenty-five lines. This further governs the motivating affection by offsetting the poem's affirmative tenor, thus strengthening the objectification of the necessary element of nostalgia. The landscape of abandonment and dereliction remains as uncompromising as it

was in earlier poems. Its former exclusive severity is, however, superseded by retrospective perception of its patient acquiescence in the growth of self-knowledge and love. An implicit religious dimension is established by the words 'worship' and 'praising' (CP, p.203), which heightens the suggestion of the landscape's spiritually educative benevolence.

In their silence that communicates through love's empathy to prophesy the coming of the beloved, Auden's treatment of the inanimates of 'The Prophets' has a Rilkean quality. The poem evokes what Rilke, 'whom *die Dinge* bless' (CP, p.165), spoke of in the first Duino Elegy, in J. B. Leishman's translation, as 'the suspiration, / the uninterrupted news that grows out of silence'. Like Rilke, Auden presents a world in which it is 'as though all were announcing / some beloved's approach'.¹³ The 'news that grows out of silence' in 'The Prophets' while the landscape's 'lack of answer whispered "Wait"' (CP, p.203) elucidates the vague intimations of the moors' innate benevolence found in Auden's juvenilia. Specification of the values of love and patience clarifies the generalized affirmation of the comfort and higher ideals derived from the landscape of 'Allendale'. Prior to 'Allendale', Auden had evoked a sense of reassuring affection latent in the uplands' silence. E. R. Dodds recollected a line from a piece of Auden's adolescent verse that spoke of the fells in terms of his finding 'their coldness tenderest warmth, their dumbness words'.¹⁴ 'The Prophets' revives

these early responses to the landscape through its objectified nostalgia in the detached re-creation of affective and imaginative intuitions engendered by the area in childhood.

Such is Auden's strategy in the initial establishment of his myth of place of the moors as a sanctuary for ideal values antithetical to the alienating modernity of American urban life. Nostalgia, a quality often encountered without Auden's objectification of it in contemporary poetry, is viewed by Robert Harbison as a reaction to 'modern ugliness'. Harbison particularizes with relevance to 'The Prophets' in stating that 'There is no nostalgia like the nostalgia for simpler machines, which are now imbued with the warm glow of a smaller past'.¹⁵ Auden's landscape and its derelict machinery are more entirely possessed than hitherto in the privacy and concentration of his memories of childhood as 'a smaller past'. In the landscape of the mind created by his mature exile's perspective on his childhood recollections, the images of Alston moor become more fully available for his writing. The 'ramshackle engine' of 'The Watershed' remained bound to social contingency in discharging 'Its latter office, grudgingly performed' (CP, p.41). 'The rusty winding-engine' (CP, p.203) of 'The Prophets', however, is an impassively autonomous inhabitant of the sacred landscape that silently embodies love and patience. Johnson's dictum that 'words are the daughters of earth, and . . . things are the sons of heaven',¹⁶

is the first lesson of the subtle moralization of the moors and their mechanical relics.

The sustained circumvention of verbal signification in the treatment of love in 'The Prophets' initiates the recognition in Auden's work of love's supra-verbal and supra-rational absoluteness. Love's emergence as the essential truth and major theme of Auden's writing follows upon his experiences of Eros and Agape in meeting Kallman and returning to the church in 1939. 'Heavy Date', composed like 'The Prophets' in that year, also emphasises love's transcendence of semantics and reason in stating

When two lovers meet, then
There's an end of writing
Thought and Analytics (CP, p.208).

By 1940, love's inter-personal and spiritual manifestations are only distinct as 'love' and 'Love', as in the injunction to 'Rejoice, dear love, in Love's peremptory word' (CP,p.248) of 'In Sickness and in Health'. The love for Kallman celebrated through the medium of the landscape in 'The Prophets' is ultimately consubstantial with the spiritual love analogised through the topography of 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Amor Loci'. Love's pervasive importance in Auden's later work derives from his sense of its qualitative indivisibility throughout its spectrum of meanings, as understood by Thomas Mann in *The Magic Mountain*. Mann's words extend to the erotic love, the love of inanimates and the essentially religious conceptions of love dealt with in Auden's writing, and therefore seem to merit quotation in

full:

Is it not well done that our language has but one word for all kinds of love, from the holiest to the most lustfully fleshly? All ambiguity is therein resolved: love cannot but be physical, at its furthest stretch of holiness; it cannot be impious, in its utterest fleshliness. It is always itself, as the height of shrewd 'geniality' as in the depth of passion; it is organic sympathy, the touching sense-embrace of that which is doomed to decay. In the most raging as in the most reverent passion, there must be *caritas*. The meaning of the word varies? In God's name, then, let it vary. That it does so makes it living, makes it human; it would be a regrettable lack of 'depth' to trouble over the fact.¹⁷

Love for the landscape is rooted in Freud's polymorphous-perverse sexuality of childhood, one of the erotic options available in Auden's 'dream of Eden' (*DH*, p.411). Depth of personal affection enables his sense of the moorland to provide the medium for the communication of the supra-verbal nature of love in 'The Prophets'. 'The Good Place' and 'the Place / Where all I touch is moved to an embrace' are conceptual extensions of Auden's 'organic sympathy' with the landscape. Its geographical actuality and 'complete desertion' associatively testify to the unsentimental reality of the idea of love Auden conveys through its local images.

Auden's subsequent treatment of his landscape in *New Year Letter* of 1941 similarly appeals to the facts of

geography and geology in establishing the authenticity of its vision of 'the nature of my kind' (CP, p.182). The permanence and experiential reality of his attachment to 'a locality I love' (CP, p.182) is stated at the beginning of the passage of topographical allegory. Amid the sustained abstractions of the energetic discourse of *New Year Letter*, section three's account of 'Those limestone moors that stretch from BROUGH / TO HEXHAM and the ROMAN WALL' (CP, p.182)¹⁸ provides a valuable concentration of concrete local imagery. Auden's conception of 'the nature of my kind' partakes of the love he states for the landscape through which he expresses his vision of humanity. Love forms the basis of the Christian ethical position that emerges in the poem's insistence on *caritas* as fundamental to a viable social morality. The concept of 'locality', most firmly embodied in the allegorizing of Alston Moor, takes on an affirmative significance as the limited setting in which an ideal social ethos might be realized. While war was being waged for global dominion, Auden offered a philosophy of 'short distances and definite places' (CP, p.414), to refer forward to 'In Praise of Limestone'. The 'local understanding' that develops in accord with music's 'ideal order' in part I provides a model of 'A true *Gestalt* where indiscrete / Perceptions and extensions meet' (CP, p.162). Localism is desiderated as intrinsic to social and spiritual health in the invocation of the poem's penultimate paragraph:

Instruct us in the civil art
 Of making from the muddled heart
 A desert and a city where
 The thoughts that have to labour there
 May find locality and peace,
 And pent-up feelings their release (CP, p.193).

'A desert and a city' emblemizes man's dual nature as isolated consciousness and socially determined being, a distinction indicated throughout *New Year Letter*, which was originally entitled *The Double Man*. Individuality and social interrelation are defined as complementary in the statements in part III that 'Aloneness is man's real condition' and 'every day in sleep and labour / Our life and death are with our neighbour' (CP, pp.190, 193). In making socially available his hitherto personal vision of the landscape in the allegorization of human nature, Auden reconciles 'The public space where acts are done' and 'the inner space / Of private ownership' (CP, pp.180-81).

A sense of social and cultural purpose is distinctly present in *New Year Letter*, its paramount concern being 'To set in order ... the task / Both Eros and Apollo ask (CP, p.162). Art, Auden now believes, is socially valuable not for the propagation of meliorative ideologies, but in its provision of imaginative form for the ideal of 'A true *Gestalt*'. Without the vision and shaping of art, society has no focus for its desires, and man remains lost in pursuit of 'The shadow of his images' (CP, p.279). The artist's duty and his proper discharge of it are not merely desirable within a society but ultimately determine society's nature:

For, craving language and a myth
 And hands to shape their purpose with,
 In shadow round the soft and warm
 The possible societies swarm,
 Because their freedom as their form
 Upon our sense of style depends,
 Whose eyes alone can seek their ends (CP, p.187).

This conception of art is that put forward by David Jones in quoting T. Gilbey's statement that "'the mind is a hunter of forms, *venator formarum*".¹⁹ Jones's comments on the difficulty of finding valid material for poetic signification in the creation of new forms have been referred to above. In taking the limestone landscape for his 'symbol of us all', Auden discovers a form sufficiently ample for the ambitious purposes of framing an allegory of 'the nature of my kind'. The major image of 'those limestone moors' contains a wealth of subsidiary sources for what Jones has called 'effective signs'. In terms of poetry's authenticity in having for its material 'what is actually loved and known', Auden's 'locality I love' is ubiquitously and perennially available as a landscape of the mind. The long introductory sentence to the passage of topographical allegory emphatically establishes its availability, stating, in much abbreviated form, that 'No matter where, or whom I meet, // ... An English area comes to mind' (CP, p.181-182).

Man's growth towards 'sense and decency' (CP, p.182) is effectively allegorized through the clarity with which Auden's topographical and geological images demonstrate the irresistible energies that determine natural form. Mankind, rather than

the isolated protagonists of the early poetry, is identified with the positive energies of natural vitality. Developments in human culture and consciousness are directly ascribed the dynamism of geological processes. A partial identification of the human and natural spheres is made in the recognition of their having in common the impetus of 'life's impersonal desire' (CP, p.182). Fundamental energies surging up from subterranean levels are immediately comparable to the coming to consciousness of previously unconscious elements in man's phylogenetic growth. The formation of the steep volcanic cones of Dufton and Knock pikes and the eruption of basalt at Cauldron Snout provide massive and precise metaphors for cultural, psychological and political developments. The image of 'the line of lapse' refers back to man having 'faulted into consciousness' (CP, p.182) in the preceding lines' establishment of human and geological parallels. Within the terms of the theological doctrine implied by the use of 'lapse' and 'faulted', Auden celebrates rather than mourns man's fallen nature as providing the conditions for higher psychic evolution:

Along the line of lapse the fire
 Of life's impersonal desire
 Burst through his sedentary rock
 And, as at DUFTON and at KNOCK,
 Thrust up between his mind and heart
 Enormous cones of myth and art.
 Always my boy of wish returns
 To those peat-stained deserted burns

That feed the WEAR and TYNE and TEES,
 And, turning states to strata, sees
 How basalt long oppressed broke out
 In wild revolt at CAULDRON SNOOT (CP, p.182).

The analogical correspondence between the subterranean aspects of the landscape and the unconscious is subsequently extended in Auden's account of his imaginatively formative experience at the edge of the mine-shafts:

Alone in the hot day I knelt
 Upon the edge of shafts and felt
 The deep *Urmutterfurcht* that drives
 Us into knowledge all our lives,
 The far interior of our fate
 To civilize and to create,
Das Weibliche that bids us come
 To find what we're escaping from (CP, pp.182-83).

'Myth and art' and the drive 'To civilize and to create' emerge from the unconscious to constitute ideals in the cognitive realm in correspondence with Freud's theory of the super-ego's formation:

Whereas the ego is essentially the representative of the external world, of reality, the super-ego stands in contrast to it as the representative of the internal world, of the id ... thus it is that what belongs to the lowest depths in the minds of each one of us is changed, through the formation of the ideal, into what we value as highest in the human soul.²⁰

A system of *verba visibilia* is provided by the landscape, enabling Auden to deal with the abstractions of cultural and psychic development without recourse to the technical

vocabulary of psychology. The topography becomes an allegorical medium flexible enough to render discernibly Freudian concepts compatible with Auden's religiously orthodox acceptance of the fall of man.

Only in their derivation from the reality of a landscape intimately known and loved since childhood can Auden's images of Alston Moor constitute a basis for his ambitious treatment of human nature. Edward Mendelson perfunctorily dismisses the actuality of the moors as unimportant and irrelevant to a consideration of *New Year Letter*. He states that 'the names and geology function as all-but-arbitrarily chosen referents' and directs attention away from the images towards the concepts they signify.²¹ To do so is effectively to deny Auden's highly specific local images the authority he invests in them as the salient features identifying 'a locality I love'. Rather than being arbitrarily chosen, the landscape and the images it provides are indispensable and unique for Auden's purposes. They are affectionately returned to in memory as the only medium with sufficient breadth of meaning to supply images adequate to evoking Auden's vision of 'the nature of my kind'. It is the physical rather than the merely nominal specificity of the topography, Auden's insistent capitalization of the names notwithstanding, that is primarily important in their functioning as 'effective signs'. The landscape of childhood has become a landscape of the mind which Auden's 'boy of wish' faithfully revisits.

Its notional character and its objective reality are indivisible, so that in the poem, as in the world, 'The Form remains, the Function never dies'.

In recollection, the moors take on a constancy of signification, having the permanent status of 'scenes we remember / As unchanging because there we changed' (CP, p.413), to quote from the later 'In Transit'. In charting the psychological change as he 'knelt / Upon the edge of shafts' Auden substantiates his conception of the landscape's provision of a 'mode of thought, / Whence my imperatives were taught' (CP, p.183). By stating the locality's educative power he acknowledges that 'The fatherhood of knowledge stood out there' (CP, p.240). *New Year Letter* thus indicates Auden's religious commitment to the created world as the embodiment of objective truth. Clarity of recollection in the poem affirms the landscape's importance as a sanctuary for ideal values in Auden's memory and imagination. 'Amor Loci' states of the same locality that 'I could draw its map by heart, // ... name every height, / small burn and lonely sheiling' (CP, p.585). Vividness of memory permits the panoptic prospect of *New Year Letter*. A sweeping survey of the whole area of Alston Moor is made in some forty lines, integrating aspects of the landscape and their imaginative significances that are familiar from earlier poems. Scenes of industrial dereliction in the treatment of 'the relics of old mines' (CP, p.182) recall 'Allendale',

'Lead's the Best' and 'The Watershed'. 'Missing' with its upland landscape uncontaminated by signs of industry is also vividly brought to mind in lines concentrating on the purely natural features of the moors. Images dormant for over a decade are given new currency. The 'happy valley, / Orchard and curving river' and their contrast with the 'scars where kestrels hover' in 'Missing' take on allegorical significance in the opening prospect:

There, where the EDEN leisures through
Its sandstone valley, is my view
Of green and civil life that dwells
Below a cliff of savage fells (CP, p.182).

'The chimney ... at the top of the hill like a finger / Skywardly pointing as if it were asking "What lies there?"' of 'Allendale' retains its interrogative power in *New Year Letter* as the

chimney up the hill,
That smokes no answer any more
But points, a landmark on BOLTS LAW,
The finger of all questions (CP, p.182).

A revival of the elegiac tenor of the juvenilia is also apparent in *New Year Letter*. The 'relics of old mines' are viewed as

... algebraic signs
For all in man that mourns and seeks,
For all of his renounced techniques,
Their tramways overgrown with grass,
For lost belief, for all Alas (CP, p.182).

In its geographical specificity and comprehensiveness, the survey of the landscape in *New Year Letter* is at once more literal and more metaphorically significant than earlier treatments.

The myth of place initiated in 'The Prophets' of the landscape's imaginative delegation for the Good Place is extended in *New Year Letter* by the prospect of the River Eden. Its valley connotes the ideal values of peace, congruity and justice in the poem's glimpse of 'green and civil life' (CP, p.182). The allegorical designation of the area as the symbol of the prelapsarian human condition, 'From which original address / Man faulted into consciousness' (CP, p.182), makes explicit its Edenic status. Wholly knowable and benignly accommodating, the gentler aspects of the landscape realize the desideration of 'locality and peace' (CP, p.193) as a social ideal in *New Year Letter*. In contrast, the poem repeatedly presents the streets of New York as its immediate locus of spiritually deracinated existence and urban alienation. As a poet attempting to discharge his social duty, 'The crowded fatalistic town' (CP, p.188) is Auden's proper setting, although in itself it embodies only materialism's denial of the unconditional. Manhattan's skyscrapers become

The secular cathedrals ... //
 Frozen forever in a lie,
 Determined always to deny
 That man is weak and has to die (CP, p.188-89).

New York is a principal fortress of 'the Great Powers' (CP, p.415) of 'In Praise of Limestone', whose world-dominating assumptions are called into question by the wise passivity of Auden's later myth of place. The landscape affords an escape from the nightmare of modern history in

its harbouring of benevolent ideals and its imaginative access to childhood. At the same time, it possesses a vital cultural significance in its extensive power to symbolize human potential and viability. 'In our urbanized industrial society', Auden wrote, 'nearly everything we see and hear is so aggressively ugly or emphatically banal that it is difficult for the modern artist, unless he can flee to the depths of the country and never open a newspaper, to prevent his imagination from acquiring a Manichean cast, from *feeling*, whatever his religious convictions to the contrary, that the physical world is utterly profane or the abode of demons' (*DH*, p.460). As a means of warding off the endemic unpleasantness and moral bankruptcy of urban modernity, the 'locality I love' is enshrined in memory and imagination. Limestone and the landscape it forms lend substance to the goal of man's quest for 'the Essential Stone, / "The Nowhere-without-No" that is / The justice of societies' (*CP*, p.190).

In addition to its allegorization of the moorland, *New Year Letter* makes frequent use of figurative landscapes, which are examined in Chapter Four below. In such passages topographical and local imagery drawn from Auden's personal experience is the medium for the communication of the purely intellectual content of the discourse. Auden's treatment of creative theory near the beginning of *New Year Letter* states his method of proceeding in the formation of poetic images from local details:

Though their particulars are those
 That each particular artist knows,
 Unique events that once took place
 Within a unique time and space,
 In the new field they occupy,
 The unique serves to typify,
 Becomes, though still particular,
 An algebraic formula,
 An abstract model of events
 Derived from past experiments (CP, p.162).

Bringing together the abstract and the particular, the ideal and the actual, is a central concern of Auden's throughout the 1940s. Algebra is repeatedly cited in *New Year Letter* when the formation of poetic images is spoken of. The 'algebraic signs' (CP, p.182) and the 'algebraic formula' referred to above draw attention in their conception of the uniting of idea and object to the root-meaning of the word 'algebra'. *OED* informs us that it is from the Arabic, '*al-jabr* the redintegration or reunion of broken parts'. In Auden's view as it emerges in *New Year Letter* it is man's culture and consciousness that are divided against themselves and in need of being made whole. In pursuing his artistic obligation 'To set in order', Auden identifies a major cultural schism in the 'opposing dreams' (CP, p.187) that result in ideological polarization. Rigid adherence to either 'PLATO'S lie of intellect' or 'ROUSSEAU'S falsehood of the flesh' (CP, p.187) divides societies and perverts man's spiritual potential. In their mutual exclusiveness, both philosophies fall short of the truth. Auden perceives

the need for a synthesis of Plato's insistence on the higher reality of ideals and Rousseau's levelling belief in man's unifying common physicality. In *New Year Letter* a resolution of the dilemma is adumbrated in the localized allegory of 'the nature of my kind'. The fractured psyche of *The Double Man*, to recall the poem's original title, is symbolically restored to wholeness in the re-union of the ideal and the actual in the treatment of the landscape. Both the notional realm of the Good Place and the physical substance of the desolate moors are invoked to structure Auden's optimistic envisioning of human potential.

Auden states his conception of the complementarity of man's spiritual and physical natures explicitly in 'In Sickness and in Health', a poem, like *New Year Letter*, of 1940:

That reason may not force us to commit
That sin of the high-minded, sublimation,
Which damns the soul by praising it,
Force our desire, O Essence of creation,
To seek Thee always in Thy substances,
Till the performance of those offices
Our bodies, Thine opaque enigmas, do,
Configure Thy transparent justice too (CP, p.248).

The achievement of the spirit's 'transparent justice' as the end of the quest of the 'opaque' flesh forms a starting point for a consideration of Auden's subsequent treatment of his landscape, 'In Fraise of Limestone' of 1948. Its opening lines state man's affinity with the stone in terms of their common eventual transcendence of the concreteness of matter:

If it form the one landscape that we, the inconstant ones,
 Are consistently homesick for, this is chiefly
 Because it dissolves in water (CP, p.415).

The poem is substantially a dialectic based upon the opposition, and ultimate complementarity, of the ideal and the actual. Eternity and time, the spirit and the flesh, the exceptional and the mediocre offset one another until the conclusion resolves the antitheses by uniting religious abstraction and material reality. 'In Praise of Limestone' ends as it began with images of the landscape and water, the physically 'opaque' and the spiritually 'transparent'. Auden affirms that only through matter is the spirit knowable, and that what is actual becomes transcendent through its embodiment of the ideal:

Dear, I know nothing of
 Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
 Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
 Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone
 landscape (CP, p.415).

The geology of the limestone landscape, having been directly associated with human nature in *New Year Letter*, now emblemizes the immanence of the spiritual within the physical through the omnipresence of water. A 'secret system of caves and conduits' is hidden in the rock, from which rises 'the murmur / Of underground streams' (CP, p.414-15). Springs that 'spurt out everywhere with a chuckle' (CP, p.414) symbolize the spirit's manifestation in joy amid the mundaneness of quotidian mediocrity.

Water, or its absence, has a symbolic character early in Auden's work. *Paid on Both Sides* ends with an image of failure to achieve regeneration in the lines 'if there show / Passage for water he will miss it' (CP, p.35). Water's signification of grace and spiritual vitality becomes explicit in the course of the 1930s in such poems as 'Paysage Moralisé', 'Casino' and 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'. In the last named, the longer poems' formal topographical symbolism is anticipated by the conclusion's 'In the deserts of the heart / Let the healing fountain start' (CP, p.198). Water frequently symbolizes spiritual dimensions of experience in *The Age of Anxiety* prior to its incorporation into Auden's vision of his landscape in 'In Praise of Limestone'. 'Streams' subsequently offers a definition of water's signification in its celebration of 'Dear water, clear water ... // pure being, perfect in music and movement' (CP, p.433). Eliot's employment of spiritually symbolic images of water in *The Waste Land* encouraged the development of such symbolism in Auden's writing, an influence considered at the start of Chapter Three below. With regard to the latent or explicit religious character of much of Auden's later work, the symbolic authority of images of water, springs and fountains is substantially derived from the Bible. Many references to water in its various forms are to be found in both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament water becomes an emblematic constant for spiritual renewal, notably in

Christ's teachings concerning the 'living water' of John 4:10-15. The 'fountain of the water of life' of Revelation 21:6 has a formal symbolic quality that is sometimes evident in Auden's images of water and informs the 'gesticulating fountains' (CP, p.415) of 'In Praise of Limestone'.

In its use of water-symbolism Auden's work has relation to the Christian-Hermetic poetry of the seventeenth century in which water signified divine purity of being in accordance with biblical precedents. Similarities between Marvell's 'The Garden' and *The Age of Anxiety* are examined in Chapter Four below. The permeation of the landscape of 'In Praise of Limestone' with water, and the comforting murmur of its underground streams, are markedly similar to Vaughan's 'The Waterfall'. 'In Praise of Limestone' shares its symbolization of the immanence of the eternal in the temporal with the opening of Vaughan's poem:

With what deep murmurs through time's silent stealth
Doth thy transparent, cool and watery wealth
Here flowing fall,
And chide, and call.²²

Christian-Hermetic poetry is also recalled by 'In Praise of Limestone' in Auden's celebration of the passivity and wise *mediocritas* that were the essential virtues of the seventeenth century's *beatus ille*. Auden's 'backward / And dilapidated province' is a landscape of retirement suitable for 'all / But the best and the worst of us' (CP, pp.414-15). Like the retreats of the serene

contemplators of the seventeenth century, the region Auden depicts is conducive to far-reaching meditations like those of the poem's final section. 'In Praise of Limestone' shares in its imagery the casually allegorical quality that was equally a characteristic of Christian-Hermetic poetry. Of much of the poem it can be said, in C. Maddison's words on Marvell's 'The Garden', that 'In the place of propositions, there are pictures, in the place of arguments, illustrations'.²³ Auden's celebration of man's congruity in the landscape, than which none 'could be more like Mother or a fitter background / For her son' (*CP*, p.414), is conducted largely through the framing of a local tableau. Well-chosen visual images accumulate in references to 'these rounded slopes', the 'private pool' and the 'ravine', with their 'fish', 'butterfly' and 'lizard', the 'rock in the sunlight' and the 'hill-top temple' (*CP*, p.414), amongst others. Sensory depth is added in the evocation of the scent of the 'surface fragrance of thyme' and the sound of 'the springs / That spurt out everywhere with a chuckle' (*CP*, p.414). The injunctions to 'Mark ...', 'hear ...' and 'examine ...' (*CP*, p.414) fix the reader's attention upon the details of the scene spread before him in the opening section. After the poem's digressions into the social and ethical implications of the landscape in its middle section particularized images reassume importance. The 'marble statues' and 'gesticulating fountains' (*CP*, p.415) are vivid local details in addition to their

emblemizing of art's permanence and purity of being respectively. Finally, the landscape in its entirety is called forth in the poem's closing anagogical image.

As in *New Year Letter*, the central images of 'In Praise of Limestone' form a unified system of *verba visibilia*, a private but readily available language of affirmation. The key to rendering the manifold significations accessible, for 'goodness ... // must be shared as truth' (EA, p.268), lies in Auden's appeal to common experience in the opening lines. Love for 'the one landscape that we, the inconstant ones, / Are consistently homesick for' (CP, p.414) admits poet and reader alike to the Edenic actuality of 'In Praise of Limestone'. The fusion of seriousness and enjoyment in the poem's mood, its coupling of cryptic signification and transparent simplicity, make the Christian-Hermetic maxim *serio ludere* applicable to 'In Praise of Limestone'. Auden's lightness of touch gives the imagery a broader ambit of meaning than was possible through the more rigid allegorical comparting of *New Year Letter*. The playful essence of the poem's element of *serio ludere* is explicit in the references to the chuckling springs, 'the flirtatious male' and the statues and fountains made 'solely for pleasure' (CP, pp.414-15). As M. D. Simpson observes of 'In Praise of Limestone', 'Images themselves function as secret systems from which meanings "spurt out" and "chuckle" and "entertain"'.²⁴

Auden's serious religious and ethical concerns in 'In Praise of Limestone' link it directly with the longer works that occupied most of his attention between 1940 and its composition in 1948. In dealing with the abstractions of faith and doubt, reality and illusion, Auden has frequent and sometimes protracted recourse to figurative landscapes in the longer poems. Not until topographical allegory and symbol have exhaustively served their purposes in *The Age of Anxiety* does Auden return to landscapes of actuality in 1948. Both of that year, 'Pleasure Island' and 'In Praise of Limestone' transmute surroundings familiar to Auden into opposed myths of place. The poems are equally informed by Auden's recognition of the religious imperative that is the outcome of the sustained dialectic of the longer poems. 'Pleasure Island' frames a chilling homily on hedonism and degeneracy from his perceptions of Fire Island, a holiday area outside New York.²⁵ The moral chaos of the landscape's inhabitants finds an image in the shambles of their landscape:

... a huddle of huts related
 By planks, a dock, a state
 Of undress and improvised abandon
 Upon unshadowed sand (CP, p.265).

Dedicated to the pursuit of sensual pleasure, the beach is transformed by Auden's moral imagination into a Golgotha, 'this / Place of the skull, a place where the rose of / Self-punishment will grow' (CP, p.266).

In Auden's arrangements of his *Collected Shorter Poems* 'In Transit' represents a limbo between the landscape of

evil of 'Pleasure Island' and the terrestrial Good Place of 'In Praise of Limestone'. An ethical context for 'In Praise of Limestone' is established deliberately by allowing it to be immediately preceded by 'In Transit', a poem written two years later. The ego's false Edens of *The Sea and the Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety* are invidious because their illusory natures are not recognized. Conversely, the landscape of 'In Praise of Limestone', of 'short distances and definite places' where 'everything can be touched or reached by walking' (CP, p.414), embodies positive values because the senses verify its objective truth. 'In Transit', however, configures a landscape of actuality that has been rendered unreal by severe restriction of the possibility of human relation to place. Official regulation strips the locality of all meaning beyond the narrow requirements of its function as an airport. 'In Praise of Limestone' celebrates man's congruity in his landscape; 'In Transit' shows a landscape man has deprived of its intrinsic character. Auden's affection for limestone topographies renders acute his sense of the alienation from the natural world brought about by modernity and bureaucracy: 'Through modern panes / I admire a limestone hill I have no permission to climb' (CP, p.413), states the speaker of 'In Transit' wistfully. Where local attachment is denied, an abstract zone, 'a point selected / Jointly by general staffs and engineers', the speaker longs for 'places where we have really been, dear spaces / Of our deeds and faces' (CP, p.413).

Man should find meaning in his landscape, as the landscape should gain meaning from man. 'In Praise of Limestone' affirms this ideal, man's relations with his natural surroundings unimpeded in a world of freedom and ease of movement, life 'Adjusted to the local needs of valleys' (CP, p.414).

The ethic of 'locality and peace' (CP, p.193) advanced in *New Year Letter* takes on political significance in 'In Praise of Limestone'. The poem and its landscape embody the antithesis to the officially determined existence outlined in 'In Transit'. In the latter, the colonisation of the landscape for bureaucratic purposes is part of a process involving the negation of personal identity. The individual is reduced to a cipher under the Plutonian authority of 'a voice that from time to time calls / Some class of souls to foregather at the gate' (CP, p.413).

'In Praise of Limestone' evokes a landscape fostering *mores* that challenge the codes of official regulation and control. 'Alienation from the Collective is always a duty: / every State is the Beast who is Estrangement itself' (CP, p.644), wrote Auden in one of his late 'Shorts'. The 'backward / And dilapidated province' of 'In Praise of Limestone' is loyal to such a creed:

It has a wordly duty which in spite of itself
It does not neglect, but calls into question
All the Great Powers assume (CP, p.415).

David Jones wrote that 'Poetry is to be diagnosed as "dangerous" because it evokes and recalls, is a kind of

landscape lacks 'the historical calm of a site / Where something was settled once and for all' or claims to importance that make 'the meaning of life / Something more than a mad camp' (CP, p.415). Afforded no ulterior significances, its inhabitants are obliged to live more completely in the here-and-now. 'It is today in which we live' (CP, p.218), states 'Another Time', which berates attempts to avoid doing so as another facet of the human propensity for illusion. The 'backward / And dilapidated province' and its unambitious inhabitants, at ease with 'a stone that responds' (CP, p.414) and living for the moment, accord with the religious afflatus of the poem's conclusion. Their sensual mediocrity, understandable failings and the implicit contradiction by the 'mad camp' of 'All the Great Powers assume.' forms a parable on the teaching of 1 Corinthians, 1:27 : 'But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty'.

The limestone landscape as a sanctuary for ideal values constitutes a myth of place that 'disturbs our rights' (CP, p.415). Man's urges to achieve dominion over nature and his fellows are patiently challenged by the exemplification of an alternative ethos of human fellowship and co-operation with a landscape 'that responds'. The 'dilapidated province' educates by revealing the ephemerality and relativeness of human purposes and disposing man to question his priorities. No fixed code of behaviour or belief can be founded where

nothing 'was settled once and for all'. The landscape offers no pre-formulated remedy to ease the anxiety of 'our Common Prayer' (CP, p.415) that simultaneously craves assurance and dreads the prospect of a deterministic certainty:

Not to lose time, not to get caught,
 Not to be left behind, not, please! to resemble
 The beasts who repeat themselves, or a thing like water
 Or stone whose conduct can be predicted (CP, p.415).

Even the poet, who accepts the landscape's lessons of life in the here-and-now in his recognition of the haecceity of things, finds his 'antimythological myth' questioned by 'these marble statues' (CP, p.415). The statues' emblemization of the permanence of art intimates the possibility of the transcendence of the temporal inherent in time itself. Eternity is implied as the poem moves towards its religious conclusion, the landscape engendering faith, supra-verbal and unspecifiable, rather than any static social ideology. Marble, the stuff of the statues of the 'Innocent athletes' (CP, p.415), is limestone in its more durable and beautiful crystalline form. The symbolic potential in the affinities between man and the bedrock of his 'one landscape' is thus considerably extended for Auden's purposes in establishing the transcendent dimension of 'In Praise of Limestone'. Limestone's constitution as calcium carbonate makes it chemically akin to the human body, to which both calcium and carbon are essential, particularly in the bone structure. Auden seems aware of this chemical

affinity, writing in the Ischian poem 'An Island Cemetery' of the human skeleton's embodiment of 'a patience that we share with stone' (CP, p.422). The marble of the statues and their human forms conferred by art represent 'modifications of matter' (CP, p.415), the absorbent fallibility of limestone converted by man and nature into beauty and permanence. An implicit analogy is thus introduced which puts forward the conception of man's transcendence of his fallible temporal nature through redemption into the after-life:

... if

Sins can be forgiven, if bodies rise from the dead,
 These modifications of matter into
 Innocent athletes and gesticulating fountains,
 Made solely for pleasure, make a further point:
 The blessed will not care what angle they are
 regarded from,
 Having nothing to hide (CP, p.415).

The anagogical abstractions so established are made more accessible in the conclusion's return to local particularization:

... Dear, I know nothing of
 Either, but when I try to imagine a faultless love
 Or the life to come, what I hear is the murmur
 Of underground streams, what I see is a limestone
 landscape (CP, p.415).

Auden's terrestrial image of the Good Place supplies his Elysian vision, while the sound of the streams connotes the idea of God's 'voice as the sound of many waters' of Revelation, 1:15. The reader is referred back by the

closing images to the Arcadian landscape evoked by the opening, with its 'secret system of caves and conduits'. 'In Praise of Limestone' thus acquires a cyclical character that unites its ending's spirituality with the quotidian actuality of its opening and suggests the unendingness to which its religious dimension aspires. Temporal and spiritual values are brought together in its final section's unbroken meditation. Ethical, aesthetic and religious considerations are reflected in the fluent development of the argument that incorporates treatments of 'wordly duty', the 'marble statues' and 'a faultless love / Or the life to come'.

The myth of place of 'In Praise of Limestone' harmoniously accommodates both the 'opaque enigma' of the flesh and the 'transparent justice' (*CP*, p.248) of the spirit. 'PLATO'S lie of intellect' and 'ROUSSEAU'S falsehood of the flesh' (*CP*, p.187) are alike refuted in the viable relation of the ideal and the actual that the poem defines and promotes. It succeeds in doing so by maintaining a delicate balance between its locally eulogistic and metaphysical elements and its more mundane and documentary tones. A paradigm of 'this green world temporal' (*CP*, p.486) and capable of signifying 'a faultless love / Or the life to come', the landscape is simultaneously 'backward / And dilapidated' with 'a certain / Seedy appeal' (*CP*, p.415). It embodies the nobility of classical art while tolerating the 'pimp' and the dealer in 'fake jewellery' (*CP*, p.414).

Conventionally opposed qualities are entirely integrated in Auden's vision of the landscape by the depth of his attachment to it. His love for the topography and its fallible inhabitants as his *semblables* unifies his widely varied perceptions so that no polarization into paradox occurs to qualify ironically the affirmation the poem makes. The very distinct yet compatible and complementary aspects of 'In Praise of Limestone' create the conditions in which the landscape 'symbolizes the weakness and individuality of common human nature'.²⁷ The words are M.K. Spears's, who states that the poem exemplifies through its celebration of weakness and individuality the essential foundations of humility and faith. Human fallibility and individuality take on the dignity of art and the sanctity of religion in the landscape that fosters and perpetuates values ultimately beyond the dominion of 'the Great Powers'.

Love for the uplands of childhood combines with experience of the Italian island of Ischia to inform Auden's ideal landscape with the elements of social actuality essential to the poem's evocation of human viability. In 1948 Auden began ten years of annual visits to Ischia. On the way to Italy he paid his last recorded visit to the landscape of his childhood for his last meeting with his father, who had retired there.²⁸ Immediate experience of Ischia's limestone topography and *mezzogiorno mores* fused with his recent impressions and memories of the Cumbrian uplands to produce 'In Praise of

Limestone'. As he wrote to Elizabeth Mayer, the dedicatee of *New Year Letter*, 'I hadn't realised till I came how like Italy is to my "Mutterland", the Pennines. Am in fact starting on a poem, "In Praise of Limestone", the theme of which is that that rock creates the only truly human landscape'.²⁹ The 'Voluble discourse' of those 'On the shady side of a square at midday' and such details as the 'formal vineyard' and 'hill-top temple' (CP, p.414) suggest the Italian surroundings that colour the poem. So too, perhaps, do the 'flirtatious male', the 'pimp' and the dealer in 'fake jewellery' (CP, p.414), who bring to mind the dubious repute of Naples, only twenty miles from Ischia. 'In Praise of Limestone' remains, however, void of specific indications of a particular locality, in keeping with its constitution of an ideal myth of place. The poem is rooted in the same geologically fundamental conception of the landscape that gave rise to the allegorization of Alston Moor in *New Year Letter*.

The moorland and its industrial dereliction of earlier poems are more distinctly present in 'Not in Baedeker'. Written a year after 'In Praise of Limestone', Auden's recent memories of the Cumbrian uplands are likely to have been still fresh in his mind. 'Not in Baedeker', however, is, like 'In Praise of Limestone', substantially concerned with evoking a landscape of the mind. Fact and fiction combine to make the poem a further definition of a temporal version of the Good Place. History and topography are drawn upon

to describe a locality with distinct similarities to Alston Moor, while imagination conjures an eccentric society for the poem's 'backward / And dilapidated province'. The geological tenor of *New Year Letter* and 'In Praise of Limestone' is diminished in 'Not in Baedeker', but continues to inform the poem's survey of the landscape. Recovery from the ravages of lead-mining is indicated in the lines 'Today it would take / A geologist's look to guess that these hills / Provided roofs for some great cathedrals' (CP, p.422). The moors reassume their natural autonomy and dispassionate perenniality and in doing so emphasise the transience of human affairs. History in terms of its concentration on exploitation and colonisation is made to seem insignificant against the permanence of the landscape. 'There were lead-mines here before the Romans' (CP, p.422) states the opening, dismissing the glory that was Rome as a mere phase in the locality's past. More recent exploiters have likewise disappeared, the whereabouts of 'the more than one large fortune / Made here' (CP, p.422) unknown. The poem shrugs at 'statesmen and actresses (all replaced)' (CP, p.422). Abandoned by history, the landscape sloughs off human illusions of grandeur and re-possesses its natural integrity as '(what most of the earth is / Most of the time) in the country somewhere' (CP, p.422).

Pope's 'Deep harvests bury all his pride has plann'd / And laughing Ceres re-assume the land' and Wordsworth's 'But at the coming of a milder day / These monuments shall

all be overgrown' prespectively envisage what has been accomplished in 'Not in Baedeker'. C. Salvesson's words on the above quotations from Pope's 'Epistle to Burlington' and Wordsworth's 'Hart-leap Well' are equally applicable to 'Not in Baedeker': 'In either case the contrast of human and natural time embodies a redemption by reversion to nature'.³⁰ For Auden, this redemption confers a natural purity that authorizes the landscape of the poem to represent his dream-Eden. The fictive variant of the Alston Moor locality that is depicted corresponds in a number of ways to Auden's specifications for his 'dream of Eden' in *The Dyer's Hand*. Among his personal requirements for Eden are listed 'Limestone uplands like the Pennines', 'sheep farming', 'Religious processions' and 'local saints' (*DH*, pp.6-7). References in 'Not in Baedeker' to 'these uplands', the raising of 'so-so sheep', and the 'gay procession around the parish' to honour the locality's 'St Cobalt' (*CP*, pp.422-23) make its landscape unmistakably similar to Auden's Eden. To this extent the poem may be considered, in John Fuller's words, a 'travel-book excursion into his dream-Eden'.³¹ As in 'In Praise of Limestone', the landscape lacks namings that would specifically identify it, but its relation to local actuality is nevertheless firmer than Fuller's remark would suggest. Beyond the general indications of a history of lead-mining, Alston Moor is indicated by distinct echoes of T. Sopwith's *An Account of the Mining Districts of Alston Moor* ... Sopwith's book, as Chapter One above has noted,

relates directly to Auden's childhood landscape of Sacred Objects that was the original imaginative manifestation of his dream-Eden of adulthood. When Sopwith writes of 'Alston Moor (the principal mining manor in the district)',³² his outmoded usage is adopted by Auden in the line 'Then mines made the manor a looming name' (CP, p.422). The italicised lines of 'Not in Baedeker' introduced with the words 'An Early Victorian / traveller has left us a description' (CP, p.422) are an affectionate pastiche of Sopwith's style and diction. Auden writes that '*The wild scene is worthy / Of the pencil of Salvator Rosa*'. The lines are based on Sopwith's painterly encomium in his speaking of the landscape as follows: 'the wild and lofty rocks and hilly banks form a subject fit for the pencil of Salvator Rosa'.³³ 'Not in Baedeker' introduces 'the Shot Tower' towards its conclusion, conferring ecclesiastical associations upon it as the setting for the 'imitation / Of a clergyman with a cleft palate' (CP, p.423). Sopwith's account of the area likewise features the building and implies its suitability for imitations of clergymen: 'a footpath leads past a farm called Harbetlaw, and through fields to Tyne bridge at Alston; near which is a shot tower, which with embrasures at the top and a house adjoining, has much the appearance of a church'.³⁴ The debt to Sopwith confirms the poem's character as a composite of history and fantasy. Auden is simultaneously describing his landscape of childhood and fictively evoking his idiosyncratic Eden. Local history, childhood reading,

autobiographical experience of place and a slightly surreal imagination blend for the making of 'Not in Baedeker'.

Historical authenticity is conferred upon the world of the poem by the factuality of its opening. A convincingly informative tone like that of a guide-book is developed through the accumulation of historical detail. The remarkably high incidence of parentheses, which occur eight times in the first section and seven more in the second, increases the effect by suggesting a careful and qualified factuality. All the items of information point to the finiteness of man's exploitation of nature, vested interest in the landscape ceasing when

on

A certain day (whether of time or rock
A lot is only so much and what ends
Ends at a definite moment) there came
Their last day, the day of the last lump, the actual
Day, now vaguely years, say sixty, ago,
When engines and all stopped (CP, p.422).

Industrial capitalism, indicated in the references to machines, 'disputed wills', 'the odd / Breeding-habits of money' and 'the more than one large fortune / Made here' (CP, p.422), has been and gone. Its transience provides a yardstick against which the eccentric *mores* of the indigenous inhabitants assume a greater traditionality. The mine-owners of the nineteenth century are as dead as the Romans, and neither has altered the fundamental patterns of life:

Man still however (to discourage any
 Romantic glooming over the Universe
 Or any one marriage of work and love)
 Exists on these uplands and the present
 Is not uncheerful (CP, p.422).

From the factual tenor of its historical first section, 'Not in Baedeker' moves into the fictive realm of the landscape's present. An alternative reality with an independent and original hagiography and calendar is established. 'St Cobalt', of the annual 'gay procession' (CP, p.423), is not found in *Les Vies Des Saintes*. The *cultus* of a saint may be strictly local, 'of greater interest to the student of topography than of hagiography'³⁵, as Gerald Irvine writes. 'St Cobalt', however, seems highly unlikely to be revered outside 'Not in Baedeker', where the name is apt, deriving as it does from 'Kobold', the demon or spirit of a mine. The 'month of the willow' (CP, p.423), when the procession is held, likewise side-steps religious orthodoxy as well as modern recorded time. It is one of the months of the ancient pagan calendar referred to in Graves's *The White Goddess*.³⁶ The specification of nationality in the reference to 'two English cyclists' (CP, p.423) further distances the landscape evoked from its basis in local actuality by obliquely implying a setting other than England. In their procession that halts 'at each of the now filled-in shafts' (CP, p.423) the indigenous population assimilate into local ritual the relics of the alien exploiter. They reassume history as the landscape reassumes its injured

contours in the opening passage. As in 'In Praise of Limestone', man and nature correspond rather than exist on terms of colonisation and exploitation.

An adjustment towards the greater credibility of the myth of place of 'Not in Baedeker' is made in the concluding lines. An air of historical factuality returns with the resumption of the informatively descriptive tones of the guide-book:

... the shot tower (indirectly
Responsible in its day for the deaths
Of goodness knows how many grouse,
wild duck

And magnificent stags) (CP, p.423).

An autobiographical note, albeit requiring extra-textual evidence, is suggested in the account of the 'imitation / Of a clergyman with a cleft palate'.³⁷ Against the final emblem of human transience in the dereliction of the 'rotting / Ricketty gallery' is set nature's redemptive purifying in the image of 'the no longer polluted stream' (CP, p.423). More explicitly than in his early work, Auden has celebrated the demise of the exploiter of his 'one landscape', and more effectively for the whimsical good humour latent in 'Not in Baedeker'.

Its fusion of social-historical critique, fantasy and localized surrogation for Auden's personal dream-Eden make 'Not in Baedeker' unique among his treatments of landscape. The poem carries on from 'In Praise of Limestone' in promulgating values for which the landscape forms a sanctuary.

The *mediocritas* of 'In Praise of Limestone' survives in 'Not in Baedeker' as intrinsic to an ethos constituting a viable alternative to the bureaucratized modernity of 'the Great Powers' outlined in 'In Transit'. Humility as an essential spiritual characteristic is exemplified by the acceptance of harmless unimportance evident in the inhabitants' unambitious pursuits in the landscape of 'Not in Baedeker'. Their 'present / Is not uncheerful' as they pursue their insignificant interests in 'so-so sheep', 'sphagnum moss' and the eccentric rites of 'St Cobalt' (CP, pp.422-23). After 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Not in Baedeker' Auden makes no further attempts to unite his notional ideal locality of Eden or the Good Place with his memories of the limestone moors. 'Ode to Gaea' of 1954, which follows 'Not in Baedeker' in both *Collected Shorter Poems* and *Collected Poems*, effectively abolishes the myth of the terrestrial version of the Good Place. Earth itself, the 'She' of the poem, is acknowledged as the sole and absolute embodiment of objective truth. With 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Not in Baedeker' still fresh in the reader's mind, 'Ode to Gaea' concludes by accepting the fallaciousness of guesses at Eden: 'what, // to Her, the real one, can our good landscapes be but lies...?' (CP, p.425). In *For the Time Being* Auden had written more than a decade earlier 'it is not Nature which is one public illusion, but we who have each our many private illusions about Nature' (CP, p.300). His later work accordingly ceases to mythologise landscape or to use it as

a medium for the communication of his governing religious and ethical abstractions. His treatments of landscape after about 1950 are mainly objectified and neutral in recognition of earth's unconditionality and detachment from the relativity of human signification: 'She / Does nothing and does not care. / She alone is seriously there' (CP, p.450), states 'Memorial for the City'. With the exception of water's symbolization of 'pure being, perfect in music and movement' (CP, p.433) in 'Streams' and the selfish isolation emblemized in 'Islands', the 'Bucolics' sequence of 1952-53 is essentially objective in presenting its seven landscapes. Images and meanings interpretative of the human condition are no longer sought in the natural world, which becomes the feminine deity of the later poetry. 'Her, the real one' (CP, p.425), 'that old grim She' (CP, p. 432), 'Mrs Nature' (CP, p.434) and 'Dame Kind' (CP, p.503) are the principal names by which Auden pays homage to the absoluteness of nature in his later writing. Man's relationship with nature and his landscapes, a theme introduced in 'In Praise of Limestone', remains a central concern of his *oeuvre* after about 1950. The ethical and religious quest that occupied Auden throughout the 1940s is, however, effectively concluded with the unification of the ideal and the actual of 'In Praise of Limestone'. Landscape is no longer required as a vital source of image and symbol in the presentation of the major abstractions with which he had been dealing in works as different as 'The Prophets' and *The Age of Anxiety*.

In accordance with these developments, 'Amor Loci', Auden's final recollective return to the landscape of childhood in 1965, systematically rejects earlier interpretations of the moorland's significance. Its metapolitical import of the late 1920s as a fastness for the ideological foundations of 'a New / Jerusalem' (CP, p.585) is dismissed along with its earlier, and more abiding, rôle as a model for the dream-Eden. The humanizing of the landscape in 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Not in Baedeker' through their senses of familiarity with its inhabitants, real or imagined, is likewise discarded. Any dwellers on the desolate moors are 'nameless to me, / faceless as heather or grouse'. Even the claim to a working knowledge of the lives of those 'Who "did their business in the veins of th'earth"' in 'Lead's the Best' and 'The Watershed' is disowned. The locality's former mine-workers are now simply 'its dead too vague for judgement' (CP, p.585). With eight years to live, Auden's mind is already concentrated as 'one, / convinced he will die' (CP, p.585) to achieve an undeceived clarity in his memory's perspective on the landscape. His foreword to *Collected Shorter Poems*, also of 1965, attaches great importance to honesty as essential to a poem's value (*vide* CP, pp.15-16). In the spirit of this belief 'Amor Loci' conducts an examination of his previous attitudes to his landscape, and rejects them as not objectively verifiable. The locality remains of unique importance as 'a vision'

(*CP*, p.585), but its meaning resides in truth to experience of its constancy as the unchanging object of affection. No imaginative extension of its significance is permitted, or necessary, as the poem goes on to demonstrate in its sharp focus on the moors' desolation. Before affirming the enduring essence of his relationship with the terrain of 'the Jew Limestone' (*CP*, p.585), Auden disclaims his dream-versions of it. Abandoned and useless to 'Industry' and 'Mr. Pleasure' (*CP*, p.585) of the modern world, the uplands remain

To me, though, much: a vision
not (as perhaps at
twelve I thought it) of Eden,
still less of a New
Jerusalem but, for one,
convinced he will die,
more comely, more credible
than either day-dream (*CP*, p.585).

In establishing the abandonment and desolation of the landscape, Auden depicts in detail the dereliction of mine-buildings and machinery that identifies the Alston Moor locality of earlier poems. The ruined mines take on the grandeur of historical monuments as 'giant works / of delve and drainage' 'wrought ... // in days preterite' (*CP*, p.585). Mood and organic constitution are implicit in the imagery of 'dejected masonry, moss, / decomposed machines' (*CP*, p.585), reviving the Rilkean empathy with inanimates that informed 'The Watershed' and 'The Prophets'. The earlier significances of the relics are, however, put by. They no longer evoke the running-down of industrial capitalism as they

did in 'The Watershed', or silently communicate love and patience as in 'The Prophets'. They have reverted to objects with whose inanimate integrity Auden admits to imaginative empathy in using the adjectives 'dejected' and 'decomposed', but which he no longer yokes into the service of his ideals. The chimney that asked '"What lies there?"' in 'Allendale' and was 'The finger of all questions' (CP, p.182) in *New Year Letter* is likewise liberated from its earlier functions. Its specific character is subsumed in the descriptive generalization of 'Here and there a tough chimney / still towers over / dejected masonry' (CP, p.585). Every image evokes the governing sense of transience in a poem written by 'one, / convinced he will die'. The phrase 'still towers' connotes an eventual end as well as the long persistence of the chimney's form. Like the unfinished sheepfold in Wordsworth's 'Michael', 'it is', in C. Salveson's words, 'destined, as a symbol of human activity and of human time, to decay completely: it is a form which, betrayed by human weakness, cannot be part of nature's continuity'.³⁸ The landscape itself is unchanging, but the relics which had the dispassionate air of wise immortals in 'The Prophets' are no longer transformed with the imaginative aura of the 'Sacred Objects' of childhood. Man's works, like man himself are fallible and transient in the final survey of the locality that Auden's cold eye conducts in 'Amor Loci'.

As emblems of the moors' abandonment by human interest since 'the lodes all petered out' (CP, p.585), the derelict

mines and machinery indicate the exploitative basis of man's relationship with nature. In *The Dyer's Hand*, Auden writes that 'abandoned mine buildings' recall 'a successful past that came to an end, not because nature was too strong, but because she had been robbed of everything she possessed' (*DH*, p.345). 'Ode to Terminus', approximately contemporary with 'Amor Loci', speaks of 'this world our colossal immodesty / has plundered and poisoned' (*CP*, p.609). The landscape's suffering under industrial capitalism and its subsequent complete abandonment mark it as the 'real focus / of desolation' (*CP*, p.586) that constitutes the permanence of form necessary to Auden's designation of it as 'a vision'. The immutable aspect of the moorland is both actual and ideal. With 'Any musical future / ... most unlikely' (*CP*, p.585), it remains as it was in Auden's childhood, the impassive recipient in memory of his affection throughout a life he senses is drawing to a close. As such, the Alston Moor locality has long been a landscape of the mind, unchanging like its geographical actuality. As Salveson states of Wordsworth's landscape of memory 'The unity of feeling grows in memory; the unity of existence is enlarged by the workings of memory'.³⁹ 'Amor Loci' emphasises the locality's unity of notional form in the opening stanza's statement of Auden's clarity of recollection. Memory vividly apprehends the landscape's fundamentals, the permanence of its irreducible intrinsic natural significance to which the poem pays homage in its fidelity of detail:

I could draw its map by heart,
 showing its contours,
 strata and vegetation,
 name every height,
 small burn and lonely sheiling (CP, p.585).

The unadorned reality of the moorland established by the opening represents the objective truth of the world that industry and the poet have, in their very different ways, both exploited. In asking 'what, // to Her, the real one, can our good landscapes be but lies...?' (CP, p.425) Auden implicitly acknowledged his manipulation of nature's integrity in the framing of his myths of place. He has imaginatively colonised his landscape for the purposes of enriching his work as surely as industry annexed it for its lead. The confession and surrender of the dreams of Eden and New Jerusalem is necessary as a penitential preliminary to the conclusion's statement of the abiding visionary nature of his relationship with the moorland. Although 'smeared' by the imaginative exploitation of 'a frivolous worldling', the desolate landscape's unchanging receptiveness to a lifetime's affection provides a unique revelation of 'a faultless love':

How, but with some real focus
 of desolation
 could I, by analogy,
 imagine a love
 that, how ever often smeared,
 shrugged at, abandoned
 by a frivolous worldling,
 does not abandon? (CP, p.586).

Auden's landscape thus becomes his exemplification of the religious and secular ideal of selfless love. Out of his relationship with the moors, he produces a demonstration of Shakespeare's assertion that 'Love is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds'. 'Amor Loci' first strips the locality of the trappings of significance it has hitherto been decked with, and proceeds to establish it as the ultimate token of the highest value in Auden's work. His vision of the landscape cannot be extended or supplemented beyond that point, and the limestone moors receive only passing tribute in subsequent writings. 'Prologue at Sixty' names their topographical features of '*Cross Feld, Keld and Cauldron Snout*' in its survey of the 'numinous map' (CP, p.623) of Auden's past. The poem retains a focus on his 'Essential Stone' (CP, p.190) in the line 'to the South litters of limestone alps' (CP, p.623) in its account of the situation of Kirschstetten, Auden's Austrian home. In Kirschstetten, his last residence, Auden appears to have found the 'locality and peace' (CP, p.193) he desiderated in *New Year Letter*. The village is present in many of his late poems, notably those of *About the House*, his collection of 1965. No myth of place accrues to Kirschstetten, however, and treatments of the locality are essentially descriptive as settings for Auden's sustained meditations on man's relations with nature.

Landscape forms a constant in Auden's poetry thematically linking his late writings of Kirschstetten with his adolescent poems of Alston Moor. The scope and ambitiousness

of Auden's utilisations of local imagery derive from the depth of his enduring attachments to the Pennine moorlands. The myths of place founded upon his visionary interpretations of the limestone uplands are the basis for a succession of poems that constitute indispensable landmarks in his work's development. In the treatments of the moors from the juvenilia to 'Amor Loci', covering some forty years, the ideological, ethical and religious dimensions of Auden's growth as a poet are clearly discernible. Intuitions of radicalism, meditations on love and patience and celebrations of human viability successively emerge from 'The Watershed' to *New Year Letter*, before the synthesis of worldly and spiritual values of 'In Praise of Limestone'. The early poetry of the moors directly informs the metapolitical and psychological dynamic of Auden's work of the late 1920s and early 1930s. From 'The Prophets' onward, the landscape is the basis for more meditative poetry unified by the continuity of ethical and religious themes. 'In Praise of Limestone' marks the resolution of the dialectic of the 1940s and heralds the establishment of the more occasional mode of later writing. The wise *mediocritas* fostered by the landscape of 'In Praise of Limestone' becomes habitual to Auden-the-Horatian in the 'prolix yet terse' (CP, p.423) manner of much of his writing after 1950.

Alston Moor is at the root of an imaginative experience of landscape that is sufficiently rich and extensive to support the symbolic and allegorical topographies of the

longer poems. In the next chapter's consideration of the development of figurative local imagery in Auden's work a return to the early years of his career will be necessary. His imaginative responses to Alston Moor quickly alerted him to the symbolic and allegorical potential of landscape. The fictive adaptation of the moorland in 'Missing' is a notable step towards the invention of notional topographies. The industrial dereliction of Alston Moor is incorporated into the symbolic landscapes of the longer poems at several points (*vide CP*, pp.277, 357, 390-91). It is principally to purely notional landscapes that the longer poems have recourse in communicating the psychological and moral abstractions with which they are concerned. Landscape to Auden, however, was always his 'one landscape' of the limestone uplands, from experience of which the broad spectrum of his ambitious uses of local imagery extends. It is to the development of figurative adaptations of ideas of landscape in the 1930s that the following chapter attends.

Notes to Chapter Two

- 1 Wordsworth, p.511.
- 2 *ibid.*, p.356.
- 3 Hooker, pp.144-45.
- 4 W. H. Auden, quoted in Carpenter, p.357.
- 5 An earlier reference to 'the good place' is contained in the line 'The place of love, the good place' in *On the Frontier* of 1937; *vide* W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, *The Ascent of F6 and On the Frontier* (London, 1958), p.190.
- 6 Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p.185.
- 7 W. H. Auden, quoted in Osborne, p.213.
- 8 *ibid.*, p.285.
- 9 M. D. Simpson, '"This Green World Temporal": A Study of Images and Themes of Nature in Auden's Poetry' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Drew University, New Jersey, 1980), p.80.
- 10 David Jones, *The Anathemata* (London, 1972), pp.23, 24, 25.
- 11 *ibid.*, p.24.
- 12 Stephen Spender, 'Valediction', in *W. H. Auden: A Tribute*, p.247.

- 13 R. M. Rilke, *Selected Poems*, translated by J. B. Leishman (Harmondsworth, 1964), p.61.
- 14 Dodds, p.9.
- 15 Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces* (New York, 1977), p.53.
- 16 Johnson, *Johnson: Prose and Poetry*, p.304
- 17 Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, translated by H. T. Lowe-Porter (Harmondsworth, 1960), p.599.
- 18 The area between Brough and Hexham is much broader than the locality allegorized in the passage in *CP*, pp.182-83. All the local features nominated are in the immediate vicinity of Alston Moor.
- 19 *vide* Jones, p.19.
- 20 Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, translated by J. Rivière (London, 1947), p.48.
- 21 *vide* Mendelson 'Auden's Landscape', p.27n.
- 22 Henry Vaughan, in *The Metaphysical Poets*, selected and edited by Helen Gardner (London, 1961), p.259.
- 23 C. Maddison, quoted in M. -S. Røstvig *The Happy Man*, 2 vols (Oslo, 1962), Vol. I, p.159.
- 24 Simpson, p.203.
- 25 Carpenter, p.345, identifies Fire Island as the locus of 'Pleasure Island'.

- 26 Jones, p.21.
- 27 Spears, p.312.
- 28 *vide* Carpenter, p.357.
- 29 W. H. Auden, quoted in Carpenter, p.357. This letter written in Italy shows Osborne's statement that Auden wrote 'In Praise of Limestone' 'when revisiting the landscape of his childhood' to be inaccurate (*vide* Osborne, p.230).
- 30 Christopher Salveson, *The Landscape of Memory* (London, 1965), p.13.
- 31 Fuller, p.249.
- 32 Sopwith, p.6.
- 33 *ibid.*, p.15.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.42.
- 35 Gerald Irvine, 'Canons of Canonization', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 5 November 1982, p.1223.
- 36 *vide* Robert Graves, *The White Goddess* (London, 1961), pp.173-74.
- 37 *vide* Osborne, p.43 *re* Isherwood's reflections on the young Auden's '"conception of himself as a lunatic clergyman"'.
- 38 Salveson, p.151.
- 39 *ibid.*, p.105.

CHAPTER THREE - AUDEN: THE FIGURATIVE POTENTIAL OF LANDSCAPE

— *Paid on Both Sides, The Orators, 'Paysage Moralisé', 'Journey to Iceland', 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'*

— 'the fabulous / country impartially far' (CP, p.127).

'Missing' of 1929, Auden's last treatment for a decade of the Alston Moor locality, contains the first indications of landscape's figurative potential for his work. Although the poem has been considered in detail in Chapter One above, it is worth briefly reviewing its more figurative characteristics for their anticipation of significant developments in Auden's poetry. The heroic isolation of the leader's separatist extremism is dramatized through the fictive adaptation of the moorland landscape. Opposed states of contentment and exposure to extremes of experience are incipiently symbolized in the juxtaposition of 'the happy valley' and 'scars where kestrels hover'. The severity of 'The slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell' is implicitly emblematic of the austere ideological imperative that dooms the leader. Permanence is denoted in accordance with the biblical symbolic archetype in the image of 'voices in the rock'. From the distance of Berlin where 'Missing' was composed the notional content of the landscape was ascendant over its actuality. Although the many local details are concrete and literal in their immediate derivation from Alston Moor, their functions are fictive and figurative in the poem's constitution of a parable of suicidal radicalism.

After the departure from the moorland of his early work, Auden's writing of the 1930s retained a dependence in many poems upon local imagery depicting geographical actuality. 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own', 'O Love, the interest itself in thoughtless Heaven' and 'Here on the cropped grass of the narrow ridge I stand' are perhaps the most memorable literal presentations of landscapes configuring an overview of Britain's culture and society of the 1930s. In keeping with the developments discernible in 'Missing', however, figurative uses of ideas of landscape were increasingly evident in his writing. Both the uses of large scale geographical actuality and the figurative local mode stem from the early successes with landscape in the juvenilia and the poetry of the later 1920s. The poems considered in this chapter may be regarded as experimental symbolic and allegorical uses of topographical imagery preparatory to the more formalised notional landscapes of the longer poems of the 1940s. Landscape's figurative potential is tentatively explored in *Paid on Both Sides* and used with confidence as early as 1933 to provide the elaborate symbolism of 'Paysage Moralisé'. In the same year Auden wrote the sonnet 'Two Climbs', structured around the symbol of the mountain, and numerous other poems in which the scenic element assumes fictive or symbolic importance.

Localized images composed into symbolic and allegorical landscapes provided a medium for the communication of ethical, psychological and religious abstractions in Auden's

work of the 1930s and 1940s. Figurative landscapes, in uniting conceptual content and a sense of objective perception, render abstractions accessible by their appeal to the world of common experience. Auden apprehended something of such techniques in his early treatments of the moorland through the landscape's power to evoke his austere idealism. Local imagery's effectiveness as a symbolic medium was also impressed upon him in the late 1920s and early 1930s by his familiarity with the poetries of Eliot, Dante and Rilke. Each makes ambitious use of ideas of landscape in conveying abstract themes in his work, and echoes of each's writing are found in Auden's poetry.

Auden read *The Waste Land* in 1926 and hearkened enthusiastically to Eliot's uttering of 'the still unspoken word' (CP, p.98). The quotation is from 'Letter to Lord Byron', which records the sweeping thematic re-adjustment occasioned by exposure to Eliot's work. 'Allendale' and 'Lead's the Best' both precede Auden's reading of Eliot. The marked differences between them and the early collected poems indicate the sudden forsaking of the precedents of Hardy and Edward Thomas in favour of Eliot's example spoken of in 'Letter to Lord Byron' (*vide* CP, p.98). It was Eliot's alienated and dispassionate stance and the tone and mood that accompanied it in *The Waste Land* that influenced Auden rather than its innovative form and technique. Nevertheless, while principally impressed by the pessimistic cultural analysis of the poem, Auden also responded to the importance of its uses

of landscape imagery. The title of *The Waste Land* is its basic and comprehensive topographical metaphor, establishing the ideas of desolation and dereliction as norms in its moral landscape. Auden extended Eliot's generalized evocations of social and cultural decay into the particularized renderings of modern-Britain-as-waste-land in parts of *The Orators* and 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own'. *Paid on Both Sides*, 'Consider' and '1929', with their emphases on moral bankruptcy and their occasional images of dereliction, form a broad background to Auden's more graphic accounts of national cultural destitution. An early indication of Auden's response to Eliot's work is given in the study of the waste land of post-industrial decay in the first part of 'The Watershed'. To the influence of *The Waste Land*, however, must be added factors intrinsic to the recent historical context. For Auden around 1930, as for Eliot not long before, the First World War still provided vivid archetypes of ruined landscapes in the battlefields and towns of Flanders. Paul Fussell's words on Eliot's work have a measure of applicability to Auden's early writing: 'in its immediate postwar context, a work like *The Waste Land* appears much more "a memory of the war" than one had thought'.¹

For Auden, a major aspect of Eliot's achievement was his accommodation in *The Waste Land* of civilization's psychic desolation after the First World War. As he wrote in 'To T.S. Eliot On His Sixtieth Birthday',

it was you
 who, not speechless from shock but finding the right
 language for thirst and fear, did much to
 prevent a panic (CP, p.440).

The desolation of traditional values and the spiritual impoverishment wrought by the war are described in the poem as 'blank day after day, the unheard-of drought' (CP, p.440). The image of 'drought' in this tribute to Eliot implicitly acknowledges Auden's indebtedness to him in respect of the symbolism of water or its absence to signify spiritual conditions. Water for Auden was a symbolic constant for redemptive grace and purity of being, as has been noted in the discussion of 'In Praise of Limestone' in Chapter Two above. Its absence, as in the 'Rainless regions // ... Lands beyond love' (CP, p.389) of *The Age of Anxiety*, denotes unsatisfied yearnings for spiritual comfort and fulfilment, as it did consistently in *The Waste Land*. Water symbolism is introduced at the start of Eliot's poem in the imagery of spiritual aridity of 'dry stone no sound of water' in 'The Burial of the Dead'. Acute spiritual discomfort is most keenly evoked in *The Waste Land* in the desolate landscape of 'What the Thunder Said', where frequent references to water's unavailability accumulate to stress the absence of redemptive grace. Auden began availing himself of the figurative potential of images of water in *Paid on Both Sides*, which is considered below. 'Paysage Moralisé' of 1933 establishes water as a formal symbolic constant in his work. Auden's uses of the symbol of the garden as the goal of man's

spiritual quest also owe something to Eliot's precedents. The gardens of 'The Quest', *For The Time Being* and *The Age of Anxiety* recall Eliot's localizations of perfect being in the figure of the garden in part II of 'Ash Wednesday' and 'Burnt Norton'. Both poets, however, employ this symbol in the tradition of Dante's Earthly Paradise of *Purgatorio* as the landscape of regeneration and redemption, which is referred to below.

Occasional distinct echoes of Eliot are heard in Auden's early writing, as in, for example, 'The chimneys are smoking, the crocus is out on the border'. The imagery of 'holes in the mountains remind us of error' (EA, p.117) recalls Eliot's 'Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth' and 'this decayed hole among the mountains' of 'What the Thunder Said'. Images of mountains recur in the final section of *The Waste Land* with its landscape of 'mountains of rock without water'. To this extent, Eliot may be considered to have influenced Auden in his frequent use of mountainous terrains as landscapes symbolic of psychological trial and exposure to the imperative of fate. This topographical signification is, however, equally a part of the local symbolism of Dante and Rilke. From Mendelson's introduction to *The English Auden* it appears that Auden was familiar with Dante's *Commedia* by 1932. In that year, writes Mendelson, Auden 'worked on a long poem in cantos, a dream vision in which Gerald Heard as Virgil led Auden as Dante through the hell of England' (EA, pp.xv-xvi). The influence of Dante, 'That lean hard-bitten pioneer' (CP, p.164) of *New Year Letter*, is not clearly discernible,

however, until the religious element formally emerges in Auden's work after 1939. The massive and extended topographical frameworks of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* are solidly founded upon orthodox beliefs. Only after his return to Christianity after his arrival in the U.S.A. could Auden identify imaginatively with Dantean local symbolism. In an interview of 1953 he displayed a clear understanding of Dante's techniques of manifesting emotional and spiritual conditions through local imagery: 'What Dante describes in *The Inferno* and *The Purgatorio* is *The World*. Here visual setting becomes the symbol of reality. Despair, for instance, becomes a burning plain; repentance a green lawn'.²

Dantean images are most evident in the longer poems, first becoming noticeable in the extended metaphor of 'The purgatorial hill we climb' (CP, p.178) of *New Year Letter*. The 'Dark Wood' of *Inferno*'s opening is the model in *The Age of Anxiety* for 'the labyrinthine forest' (CP, p.388) of spiritual confusion and lack of direction in direct correspondence to its Dantean original. *Purgatorio*'s concluding green and pleasant zone of spiritual refreshment is also drawn upon in *The Age of Anxiety* in the imagery of 'the hermetic gardens' (CP, p. 386) as a landscape of spiritual regeneration. The poem's waterless desert, its 'Lands beyond love' (CP, p.389) of final spiritual trial, owes something to Dante's burning sands of *Inferno* XIV. Both *The Age of Anxiety* and *The Sea and the Mirror* feature visions of the hellish 'last landscape' (CP, p.391) of the negation of all human values. Like Dante's

Inferno, Auden's 'last landscape' is characterized by extremes of climate and natural phenomena that engulf the 'Seekers after happiness' (CP, p.62) in both the longer poems. Rosetta of *The Age of Anxiety* has a distinctly Dantean function as the worldly *ersatz* Beatrice who leads her male companions on their deluded search for the 'Regressive road to Grandmother's house' (CP, p.371). Dante's schematic symbolic topographies of the Catholic eschatology provided Auden with numerous local symbols of traditional currency constituting an established system of *verba visibilia* for the presentation of spiritual states. Auden's later work contains a broadly localized scheme which corresponds to Dante's categories of spiritual experience in the *Commedia*. Auden's 'last landscape' together with the city and its associated zones of spiritual negation, like the airport of 'In Transit', are his hell of 'the Great Void'³ or 'the Great Wrong Place' (DH, p. 151). His 'middle earth' (CP, p.205) of temporal endurance and endeavour is the quotidian setting for much of his work, his normative 'Purgatory, // ... our residence since birth' (CP, p.179). Dante's *Paradiso* has its equivalent in Auden's later work in the Good Place and the dream-Eden that may be known of but not dwelt in.

While Dante outlined the potential of landscape for evoking states of the spirit, Rilke firstly set examples for the communication of psychological and emotional experience through local imagery. Indications of Auden's familiarity with Rilke are apparent early in the 1930s. 'Two Climbs',

the well-known sonnet of 1933, parallels Rilke's 'Exposed on the hearth's mountains. Virgin rock / under the hands...// no longer sheltered, here on the heart's mountains'.⁴ In 'Two Climbs', Auden's first sustained use of the symbolism of mountains, the imagery clearly echoes Rilke's in its symbolization of *angst* and emotional exposure: 'Upon the mountains of my fear I climb: / Above, a breakneck scorching rock; no caves, / No col, no water' (CP, p.108). Rilke's 'Exposed on the heart's mountains' also contains two subordinate localized figures, 'the last hamlet of words' and the 'farmstead of feeling'.⁵ These metaphors sound distinctly Audenesque to our ears in their yoking together of concrete local images and intellectual and emotional abstractions, indicating the particularity of Auden's debt to Rilke. Like Dante, Rilke receives Auden's homage as a mentor in the assembly of judges of his poetry at the opening of *New Year Letter*, where he is 'RILKE whom *die Dinge* bless, / The Santa Claus of loneliness' (CP, p.165). He receives another tribute for his exemplification of patience as a virtue necessary for the poet in 'Sonnets from China' XIX. It is the Rilke of the 'Duino Elegies' 'Who for ten years of drought and silence waited, / Until in Muzot all his being spoke' (CP, p.156).

In addition to revealing something of the adequacy of local metaphors for the communication of emotional and psychological events, Rilke further demonstrated the spiritually evocative potential of topographical images to Auden. The German poet's sense of the revelatory power of landscape is most evident in his lines 'nothing seems to age or falter:/ the landscape,

like an open psalter, / speaks gravely of eternity'.⁶ Auden's work corresponds in describing the silent education by the moorland in 'The Prophets' and the landscape's analogising of love and eternity in 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'Amor Loci'. The importance Rilke attaches to *die Dinge* as embodiments of objective truth in the 'Duino Elegies', his desire to 'Praise this world to the Angel, not the untellable',⁷ also influenced Auden. The latter's prayer 'To seek Thee always in Thy substances' (CP, p.268), and his imbuing of landscape with spiritual significations, accords with the quasi-religious status that Rilke ascribed to inanimates. In 'The Prophets', Auden's emblemization of love and patience through his imaginative empathy with the mining relics and their landscape is also notably Rilkean. Auden recognized Rilke's achievement in exemplifying the scope of local imagery in an essay of 1939, about the time he was beginning to utilise consistently figurative landscapes: 'While Shakespeare ... thought of the non-human world in terms of the human, Rilke thinks of the human world in terms of the non-human, of what he calls Things (Dinge) ... Thus one of Rilke's more characteristic devices is the expression of human life in terms of landscape'.⁸ Although not significantly Rilkean in style, *New Year Letter* and 'In Praise of Limestone' are Auden's most explicit expressions of human life through the medium of landscape. The sequences of 'The Quest' and 'Sonnets from China', which make important use of figurative local imagery, are Auden's most Rilkean poetry, having the meditative

intensity that was characteristic of the German Poet. More generally, Auden's abiding sense of landscape's dispassionate perenniality and benign detachment from human affairs also relates him to Rilke. There is almost a suggestion of an equivalent to Auden's Good Place as a localized notional constant in Rilke's idea of

... unrevealing
 distance ... some warm, unrelated land,
 that, back-clothwise, will stay, without all feeling,
 Behind all action⁹

While there exist particular instances of similarities between Auden's writing and Rilke's, the latter's influence on Auden's poetry was subtle and pervasive during the 1930s and 1940s. The debt to Rilke, as to Eliot, consisted in tone and mood rather than in particulars of diction or imagery, which is more the case with the major symbols taken from Dante.

Auden's original intuitions of landscape's figurative potential supplied by experience of the moors around Alston disposed him to pursue an interest in the possibilities revealed by the examples of Eliot, Dante and Rilke. Early in his career local imagery became a primary poetic resource, both for the creation of documentary settings and for the communication of conceptual and emotional abstractions. As Bernard Bergonzi has written, 'The landscape or map was a basic structural principle of his imagination',¹⁰ a fact which became apparent with 'Paysage Moralisé' and 'Two Climbs' of 1933. These are the first instances of poems formulated entirely around conceptions embodied in local images and

symbols. The use of mountainous topography in 'Two Climbs' has already been referred to above. Its vivid local imagery enables a complex of moral, psychological and erotic concepts to be communicated in the brevity of its sonnet form. 'Paysage Moralisé' is a sestina built around ideas of landscape evoked by five of its end-words, 'valleys', 'mountains', 'water', 'islands' and 'cities' (*CP*, p.104), which constitute a multifarious system of local effects. Prior to Auden's most sustained use of landscape as a structural principal in parts of the longer poems, 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' is perhaps the work most notable for its local imagery. The poem's development through its three sections is conducted almost exclusively by the presentation of a succession of topographies culminating in the locally symbolic motifs of the conclusion. Local elements, whether literal or figurative or fusions of both, were centrally important to Auden's writing throughout his career, and never more so than during the 1930s and 1940s. Edward Mendelson is substantially correct in stating that 'By the summer of 1939 Auden had stopped writing poems about places, and turned his attention instead to time' (*EA*, p.xx). Auden, however, had never practised the simplistic descriptive localism that is suggested by the phrase 'writing about places', nor did localized treatments disappear from his work as Mendelson's words imply. The ambitious sophistication of Auden's versions of geographical actualities and experiments with landscape's figurative potential led naturally to a concentration on symbolic

topographies in explicating the religious and ethical themes of the 1940s.

During the course of the 1930s Auden developed considerable facility in the manipulation of local imagery to convey conceptual and experiential abstractions. 'Letter to Lord Byron' provides an example of how far Auden had progressed in the use of extended topographical metaphors by 1936 in its slick landscaping of youth. The lines anticipate the more considered locally allegorical schematisations of the longer poems:

I see the map of all my youth unroll,
 The mental mountains and the psychic creeks,
 The towns of which the master never speaks,
 The various parishes and what they voted for,
 The colonies, their size, and what they're noted for
 (CP, p.94).

'Casino' of the same year offers further indications of his increasingly extensive employment of figurative local imagery. The corruption of the casino and its habitués suggests 'the dust and scrub of a desert' where 'the fountain is deserted, the laurel will not grow' (CP, pp.123-24). Water is already well-established as a symbolic constant. Its absence denotes a dearth of morally regenerative qualities, in contrast to the poem's landscape of spiritual health, well-watered and rich in emblems of vitality:

Without, calm rivers flow among the wholly living
 quite near their trysts, and mountains part them, and birds,
 deep in the greens and moistures of summer
 sing towards their work (CP, p.123).

These are merely significant instances from the many and various applications of local imagery in Auden's work of the period.

Later, his facility in the use of such techniques gave rise to an occasional perfunctoriness reflected in the over-frequent use of certain localized figures. 'Parish' and 'landscape' especially are conspicuous by their repetition in a succession of poems in which they conveniently particularize conceptual generalizations. 'Parish' occurs in the account of adolescence in the above quotation from 'Letter to Lord Byron' before it is encountered in two poems of 1939, 'They' and 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'. The former describes bestial congruity in 'the parish / of grimacing and licking' (CP, p.202), while the elegy for Yeats speaks of its subject's familiarity with 'The parish of rich women' (CP, p.197). *New Year Letter* suggests the metaphor is too easily to hand when the parameters of individual experience are imaged as the 'parish of immediacy' (CP, p.166) in the following year. 'Commentary' of 1938 speaks of the examples of the dead as providing ethics that constitute the psychological 'normal landscape' (EA, p.268) in contrast to the horror of the Sino-Japanese war. *New Year Letter* realized the fuller scope of the figure in its extended metaphor of 'The landscape of our will and need' (CP, p.181). The contemporaneous 'In Sickness and in Health' encapsulates a multitude of human imperfections in the comprehensive image of 'The landscape of our blemishes' (CP, p.249). Much later, the same conjunction of the concrete and the abstract turns up like a half-forgotten old acquaintance in the rendering of 'the future / as a named and settled landscape' (CP, p.624) in 'Epistle to a Godson' of 1969.

The more deliberate and systematic recurrences of certain images evident in Auden's poetry during the 1930s indicate the emergence of a scheme of localized iconographic constants. Significations that begin to accrue to particular topographical images early in his career are formalised into fixed symbolizations that become essential to the figurative landscapes of the longer poems. 'Paysage Moralisé' establishes the most important of Auden's local symbolic constants through the consistency of signification of its end-words 'valleys', 'mountains', 'water', 'islands' and 'cities' (CP, p.104). Reference has already been made to the importance of 'water' and 'mountains' in the scheme of Auden's figurative uses of landscape. They are the two most frequently encountered local symbols, invariably signifying purity of being and regenerative grace, and exposure to existential trial and fate's imperative respectively. 'Valleys' have a converse value to 'mountains', representing states of viable habitation and contentment. The antithesis in 'Missing' between the doomed leader's mountainous surroundings and the prospect of the 'happy valley' is the first demonstration of the symbolic functions consistently discharged by these images. 'Islands' embody the concept of selfish and solipsistic isolation, a value with which the geographical actuality of the island of the title is imbued in 'Journey to Iceland'.¹¹ In the 'Bucolics' sequence Auden light-heartedly sustains his attention to the theme of selfish withdrawal from society in 'Islands'. 'Cities' in 'Paysage Moralisé' symbolize the

degenerate and spiritually unfulfilling condition of culture and society, a signification that the city retains throughout Auden's work.

'Paysage Moralisé', discussed more fully below, also introduces the concept of infatuation with the dream-landscape into Auden's work. The theme of the localized vision of escape from reality that is essential to *The Sea and the Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety* is established in the treatment of illusion in 'Paysage Moralisé': 'Each in his little bed conceived of islands / Where every day was dancing in the valleys' (CP, p.105). When fully recognized as 'a wish-dream that cannot become real' (DH, p.410) Auden considered the dream-landscape innocuous and psychologically beneficent as a resort of the imagination. Chapter Four below examines more fully the pathology of escapist identification with the dream-landscape when its illusory nature is ignored. The theme is, however, of direct relevance to this chapter's investigation of Auden's earlier developments of the figurative potential of local imagery. As well as 'Paysage Moralisé', 'Journey to Iceland', examined in detail below, is much concerned with the landscape of delusion. The dream-country of Auden's childhood familiarity with the Icelandic sagas is disconcertingly found to be no more than a dream in the light of Iceland's uncompromisingly bare reality. Auden's desire for escape remains unsatisfied, and the poem concludes with the bleak realization of the dream's unattainability in the image of 'the fabulous / country

impartially far' (CP, p.127). 'Journey to Iceland' also invests a literal use of the image of the desert with the symbolic value that the topography takes on as part of Auden's local iconographic system. The lines 'where // ... the pale/ from too much passion of kissing feel pure in its deserts' (CP, p.126) evokes the ascetic isolation that the desert symbolizes in later poems. *New Year Letter* features the conjunction of 'A desert and a city' (CP, p.193), the individual's need for an inner landscape of retreat and spiritual challenge complementing his societal identity. In *The Age of Anxiety* the desert is the penultimate station of 'The Seven Stages', a zone of isolation and purifying trial. *For the Time Being* features the sardonically comic prosopopoeia of the 'Voices of the Desert', which configure a spiritual wasteland that tests the sanctity of Mary and Joseph. Localized symbolic constants provided Auden with a flexible and comprehensive medium for his exploratory poetic dialectics once the certainties of his early radicalism had faded. 'Psychology and Art Today' of 1935 reflects his growing distance from the imperative tones of some of his memorable early work: 'You cannot tell people what to do, you can only tell them parables; and that is what art really is' (EA, p.341). In his poetry of the later 1930s and 1940s ideas of landscape and the symbolic system they supported were invaluable to Auden in framing his parables of ethical and religious concepts.

Paid on Both Sides contains the first experimental realizations of the figurative potential of landscape imagery

after the treatments of Alston Moor in earlier work. As indicated in Chapter One above, the 'charade', as Auden subtitled the poetic drama, has firm links with the Alston locality in the use of the namings 'Lintzgarth', 'Nattrass' and 'Brandon Walls'. Beyond a number of evocations of wild upland scenery, which provide a suitably rugged background for the play's fighting, detailed topographical representation is of little importance. Imagery of nature derived from Auden's experience of the landscape, however, is used to symbolize the freedom and purity of being unavailable to the protagonists. Their inherited complicity in the feud central to the charade's narrative cuts them off from the regenerative qualities embodied in their upland surroundings. An alternative reality to that dictated by the traditional enmity between the Shaws and the Nowers is consistently emblemized through natural and topographical imagery. '*No scenery is required*' (CP, p.21) state the opening stage-directions, indicating Auden's intention of relying for his effects upon the vividness of the play's local imagery. Its emblematic power is first instanced in Trudy's envisioning of a landscape of innocence and regeneration:

Sometimes we read a sign, cloud in the sky,
The wet tracks of a hare, quicken the step
Promise the best day (CP, p.24).

Freedom from the deadlock of the feud briefly glimpsed, the reality of despair is returned to as the speech continues by stating 'But here no remedy / Is to be thought of' (CP, p.24). Violence defiles the purity and benign vitality symbolized by

the landscape in the two localized accounts of fatal skirmishing (*CP*, pp. 21, 31). Similarly, Christmas, the play's temporal setting, and the love relationships that are formed are profaned by death and enmity.

The season of good-will and the local symbolism of redemptive natural benevolence are emblematically contrasted to the inherited malignancy of the feud. John Nower, the central character, embodies the tensions produced by the opposition of good and evil. Meditatively remorseful after a killing, he perceives his dilemma's implications in terms of a struggle between a viable future and the deathly power of tradition. Isolated by the growth of an impotent desire to escape his circumstances, he envisages freedom in terms of a landscape free from human contamination:

Could I have been some simpleton that lived
 Before disaster sent his runners here:
 Younger than worms, worms have too much to bear.
 Yes, mineral were best: could I but see
 These woods, these fields of green, this lively world
 Sterile as moon (*CP*, p.26).

The chorus which follows emphasises his desperation, suggesting that 'Better where no one feels, / The out-of-sight, buried to deep for shafts' (*CP*, p.27) is a reality preferable to that of the feud. References in the choral lyric to 'Foundries', 'casting process', 'shops' and 'credit' (*CP*, p.26) broaden the charade's ambit to comprehend the implicit critique of industrial capitalism found elsewhere in the early poetry. Imagery of the running-down of industry

and the transfer of property symbolically utilises elements from treatments of Alston Moor in 'The Watershed' and the later 'Not in Baedeker':

These gears which ran in oil for week
By week, needing no look, now will not work;
Those manors mortgaged twice to pay for love
Go to another (CP, p.26).

A metapolitical dimension begins to emerge clearly in *Paid on Both Sides*. As the chorus 'The Spring will come,/ Not hesitate for one employer' (CP, p.33) indicates, the purposes of industry are an irrelevance to the power of natural recrudescence.

Auden's visionary radicalism in the charade is that of his early poems of the upland landscape: the final contest is between man as the agent of tradition and death, and nature as the embodiment of the life-force and its regenerative energies. John Nower sides decisively with the latter in his symbolic gesture of reconciliation in planting a tree with the resurrected spy during the dream-sequence (CP, p.29). Like the speaker of 'The Watershed', he becomes a partisan of the redemptive purity of natural vitality. Hope burgeons in his envisioning of a renewed future in a landscape bright with optimism and spiritual refreshment. The reference to 'the frothing leat' is the first of several symbolically charged images of water as the emblem of purity of being. Their introduction into the charade at this stage indicates the ascendant possibility of positive change concomitant upon Nower's independent action:

But love, sent east for peace
 From tunnels under those
 Bursts now to pass
 On trestles over meaner quarters
 A noise and flashing glass.

Feels morning streaming down,
 Wind from the snows,
 Nowise withdrawn by doubting flinch
 Nor joined to any by belief's firm flange,
 Refreshed sees all,
 The tugged-at teat,

The hopper's steady feed, the frothing leat (*CP*, p.30).

The speech recalls Bo's testimony at the trial of the spy in the preceding dream-sequence. His affirmation of regenerative potential is made in similar imagery of 'days during the migrations, days / Freshening with rain reported from the mountains' (*CP*, p.27). The life-force is cited as a plea in the spy's defence. Bo reiterates Nower's awareness of the necessity of effecting a severance with the malign force of tradition in stating 'By loss of memory we are reborn, /For memory is death' (*CP*, p.27).

Nower opts for decisive meliorative action in leaving at once to be with Anne, his beloved and the daughter of the enemy house of Shaw. The choral lyric 'To throw away the key and walk away' constitutes a metaphorical summary and celebration of the potential significance of his gesture. It is structured around a graphic symbolic landscaping of the possibility of change for a better life. The emblematic journey of the ascent, crossing and descent of the mountainous topography is the first clear instance of Auden's use of

mountains as his local symbol for existential trial and endeavour. The evil deadlock of the feud is forgotten in the lyric's urgency of commitment to progress and renewal. Redemption through positive action 'makes us well / Without confession of the ill' (CP, p.31); the negativity of tradition and history, the former the play's symbol of the latter, are forgone when 'All pasts / Are single old past now' (CP, p.31). Radical alteration of the terms of existence is envisaged as a consequence of Nower's decisive action in the cause of love and reconciliation. Auden brings evolution to the support of the regenerative vision in the lyric's 'The future shall fulfil a surer vow, ...// ...with prolonged drowning shall develop gills (CP, p.31).

The ascent of the mountain evokes change and freedom in 'following a line with left and right, / An altered gradient at another rate' (CP, p.31). Commitment to the recognition of the benign authority of nature, as envisioned in 'The Watershed' and 'The Letter', forms the basis for life's radical re-orientation. Zeal for experience of a new reality goes beyond ideological theorizing, the contrast symbolized in the statement that action 'Learns more than maps upon the whitewashed wall' (CP, p.31). The ascent leads into a landscape of hazard, a symbolic terrain of temptations and dangers upon the allegorical journey that anticipates similar figurative topographies in 'The Quest' and *The Age of Anxiety*:

But there are still to tempt; areas not seen
Because of blizzards or an erring sign,
Whose guessed at wonders would be worth alleging,
And lies about the cost of a night's lodging (CP, p.31).

Success is decisively achieved in the line 'Crossing the pass descend the growing stream' (CP, p.31). The image of the pass attains formal symbolic significance after its more descriptive employment in 'The Secret Agent' and its implicit presence at the opening of 'The Letter'. A point of resolution has been achieved and the break-through into the new life occurs with the image of water symbolizing access to regenerative grace. 'Growing stream' rhymes with the subsequent 'pulse's strum' (CP, p.31), associating the pure vitality emblemized by water with the rhythm of the blood to emphasise biologically the symbolism of renewal. Safety and new security in the shelter of the mountain are reached as the travellers 'Reach villages to ask for a bed in, / Rock shutting out the sky, the old life done' (CP, p.31).

An outburst of fighting follows to qualify the visionary optimism generated by the lyric and provide another glimpse of the landscape of the feud. Nower, however, no longer has any part in it, and is next seen with Anne, innocent in the undefiled uplands as he '*blows on a grass held between the thumbs and listens*' (CP, p.32). Recalling Trudy's glimpse of a landscape of freedom, Nower evokes his affirmative mood in localized images of nature, commencing his speech with 'On Cautley where a peregrine has nested, iced heather hurt the knuckles' (CP, p.32). Ironically, he continues by reminiscing about sport, the emblem of conflict and moral infantilism in the bar-room chat after the map-reading scene (CP, p.24). Nower's unconscious conflation of regenerative local imagery

and the tradition of strife connoted by sport demonstrates his inextricability from 'the old life'. Ominous hints of coming disaster and his own doom are supplied by his apocalyptic landscaping that follows:

Look on with stricter brows
 The sacked and burning town,
 The ice-sheet moving down,
 The fall of an old house (CP, p.33).

He cannot act on Anne's suggestion that they leave at once, and she increases the foreboding with a survey of the locality's history of evil in 'Tonight the many come to mind' (CP, p.33). In choosing to remain, Nower attempts to master fate, to be destroyed by the greater strength of the determinism of the play's matriarchally transmitted tradition. This is the reality that the final chorus confronts in stating 'Though he believe it no man is strong' and 'His mother and her mother won' (CP, p.35). The terminal landscape that the lyric configures contains malignant forces more powerful than the independent will for meliorative change. Defeat and diminution of hope have already been firmly hinted at in the localized imagery of the preceding chorus:

Sick in the green plain, healed in the tundra, shall
 Turn westward back from your alone success,
 Under a dwindling Alp (CP, p.34).

The negative and ominous tenor is augmented in the conclusion's landscape of disaster and exhaustion of resources:

... he is defeated; let the son
 Sell the farm lest the mountain fall;
 His mother and her mother won.

His fields are used up where the moles visit,
 The contours worn flat; if there show
 Passage for water he will miss it:

Give up his breath, his woman, his team;
 No life to touch (CP, p.35).

From the ruins of the collapse of the old order an Edenic landscape emerges in the final images: 'though later there be / Big fruit, eagles above the stream' (CP, p.35).

Fecundity and access to water's hitherto unavailable purity of being reverse the evocation of barren aridity that preceded. Nower's death retrospectively assumes the dignity of a sacrifice necessary to the coming of the new order in enactment of the creed that 'love // ... Needs death' (CP, p.53) of '1929'.

The 'eagles', ornithic emblems of good in their mythological rôle as enemies of the serpent, contrast directly with the 'moles' of the earlier stanza. This most striking use of creaturely symbolism in the landscapes of Auden's early work opposes the heavenly and the abysmal in the manner of Blake's question in 'The Book of Thel': 'Does the Eagle know what is in the pit / Or wilt thou go ask the Mole?'

In the concluding chorus of *Paid on Both Sides* and 'To throw away the key and walk away' formalised symbolic landscapes are first encountered in Auden's work. Elsewhere in the play, more loosely emblematic uses of local imagery explore further possibilities. Nower's 'There is the city' (CP, p.30) is a brief psychological allegory that provides an early indication of the negative symbolic value of the city in Auden's poetry. After the advances towards explicitly

figurative adaptations of ideas of landscape in the charade of 1928 little use is made of topographical symbolism before *The Orators* of 1931. The main text of *The Orators* contains occasional experimental uses of local imagery, and its use of British place-names has been referred to towards the conclusion of Chapter One above. Its most interesting contributions to Auden's development of the figurative potential of landscape, however, are its 'Prologue' and 'Epilogue'. These two poems enact by their symbolic antithesis of passivity and decisiveness respectively a parable of the necessity of action framing *The Orators* at its start and finish. The need for decisive action is a central theme of both *The Orators* and *Paid on Both Sides*. Nower's heroic failure in the charade is paralleled by the fate of the airman in *The Orators*, who finally achieves resolution through deciding upon his suicidal last mission. The 'Epilogue' presents landscapes of hazard through which the rider of the poem must travel in demonstration of his fixity of purpose. Conversely, the 'Prologue' features the Edenic 'green pasture' and 'still waters' as the setting for the protagonist's failure to pursue the dangerous quest suggested by 'The mountain heights' (CP, p.64) of the opening.

A bold escape from the socio-cultural moribundity of what *The Orators* calls 'The immense bat-shadow of home' (EA, p.66) is envisaged in 'The Epilogue'. Its last line's 'As he left them there, as he left them there' (CP, p.60) emphatically states decision and departure. The sojourner in the idyllic landscape of the 'Prologue', however, returns home to

accusation and rejection as a consequence of his neglect of the possibility of action. Entitled 'Adolescence' in later collections, the 'Prologue' describes a failure of development in the progress towards manhood and decisiveness. Its opening's 'By landscape reminded once of his mother's figure' (CP, p.64) is taken by the protagonist as an invitation to regress into nostalgic sentimentality. An attempt to recover the security of the past is subsequently enacted as 'With the finest of mapping pens he fondly traces/ All the family names on the familiar places' (CP, p.64). Instead of healthily relating to memories of what 'In Transit' calls 'places where we have really been, dear spaces / Of our deeds and faces' (CP, p.413), the protagonist is trapped in recollective indulgence. He forsakes experience of actuality for the safety of the map, going against the realization in *Paid on Both Sides* that action 'Learns more than maps upon the whitewashed wall' (CP, p.31). The map is a mode of reassurance, presenting a fixed and contained version of reality conducive to attempts to dwell regressively in memory. The protagonist prefers the pre-determined world of 'the ritual of space' (DH, p.151), as Auden referred to map-reading in 'The Guilty Vicarage', to the uncertainty and risks of 'The mountain heights' that 'get bigger and bigger' (CP, p.64). In diminishing the proportions of reality, the map has a comforting function in the 'Prologue', one of which Robert Harbison is aware in his discussion of maps in *Eccentric Spaces*: 'They are our main means of aligning ourselves with something bigger than us, and so may be thought

mother, one must be weaned from the Earth Mother' (EA, p.298). The landscape of inaction is rich in natural imagery. Its 'green pasture', 'still waters', the 'swan' with its 'dear beak', 'the trees' and the injunction to 'be brave as these roots' (CP, p.64) affirm an idea of organic natural authenticity. The protagonist's choice of his Edenic surroundings amounts to an identification with natural values that is ultimately an act of 'Wordsworthian nature-worship'. The 'good news' that he 'Carries ... gladly' (CP, p.64) from the landscape of ease is that of a belief in a regressive ideology that wishes to reverse man's evolutionary movement away from nature. Through 'nostalgia for the womb', the authority of 'The deep *Urmutterfurcht* that drives / Us into knowledge all our lives' (CP, p.182) has been denied. The protagonist, 'homing the day is ended', must face the wrath of the feminine principle in her terrible aspect as the conclusion's 'The giantess' who 'shuffles nearer, cries "Deceiver"' (CP, p.64).

In the 'Epilogue' to *The Orators*, the pleasant certainties of the 'green pasture' and the map's miniature, manageable version of reality are entirely foregone. The imperative of the quest into landscapes of danger is complied with, and redemption achieved by active experience of the objective world unadorned by sentiment and nostalgia. Like 'To throw away the key and walk away', the 'Epilogue' is an allegory of escape from 'the old life'. The rider's search to 'discover the lacking' is for a new and unified existence,

of as semi-religious ... Maps simplify the world somewhat ... clarify for those over-stimulated by the ordinary confusion'.¹²

The threatening significance and challenge of 'The mountain heights' is conveniently relegated to the substitute reality of the map. An Eden of ease and innocent sensuality is subsequently evoked, with verbatim borrowings from Psalms 23:2 for its 'green pasture' and 'still waters' (CP, p.64). Creaturely purposelessness and self-regarding leisure are conveyed by the idyllic imagery of the dream-like landscape of tranquillity and pleasure:

In a green pasture straying he walks by still waters;
Surely a swan he seems to earth's unwise daughters ...//
Under the trees the summer bands were playing
(CP, p.64).

In the opening lines, the power of '*Das Weibliche* that bids us come' (CP, p.183) implied a summons to a quest into the mountainous 'landscape ... of his mother's figure' (CP, p.64). The protagonist opted instead for the safety of the map and his subsequent sojourn in the landscape of inaction. In terms of Auden's early psychological theory, a desire for regression to the security of the pre-Oedipal state is symbolically enacted. In his journal of 1929 Auden wrote of 'Wordsworthian nature-worship' as 'nostalgia for the womb of Nature which cannot be re-entered by a consciousness increasingly independent but afraid'. He saw man's growing separation from nature as paralleled in the individual's development by 'the breaking away of the child from the Oedipus relation. Just as one must be weaned from one's

and must begin with a complete rejection of the terms of the old. Unlike the impotent 'reader', 'fearer' and 'horror' (CP, p.60) who try to deter him with questions as representatives of a moribund cultural order, the rider escapes through decisive commitment to action. He breaks with the norms to which his doubting questioners are bound in his act of total dissociation summed up in his going "'Out of this house"' (CP, p.60).

The airman of *The Orators* came to the conclusion that 'The power of the enemy is a function of our resistance' (EA, p.93), and justified his suicide as the removal of his personal quantum of resistance. The rider's solution in effecting a complete severance with the order he rejects constitutes a removal of resistance without the necessity of his death. An advance is thus made in the 'Epilogue' beyond the acceptance of the necessary death of those committed to radical change that runs through *Paid on Both Sides*, 'Missing', '1929' and the main text of *The Orators* itself. Auden's rejection of 'the old gang' becomes more viable with the allegory of escape of the 'Epilogue', but it will ultimately drive him to the isolation and alienation from the self of 'Journey to Iceland'.

The prospect of the rider's journey to freedom grows less precise as the opening three stanzas successively describe their landscapes of hazard. Beginning with the well-defined industrial valley, a more generalized view of the uplands of 'the pass' (CP, p.60) follows, before the concluding evocation of a nightmarish zone of vaguely supernatural dangers. The

progression is from the human world of industrial pollution and death of the first stanza into the second's perilous fastness of natural autonomy and towards the final challenge of the unknown. A quasi-literal account is given of the opening's 'valley' of the 'furnaces', 'the midden whose odours will madden' and 'the grave' (*CP*, p.60). The details connote the correlation of industry and death in works like '1929', 'The Watershed' and 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own'. The 'midden' and its polluting odour recall the 'fuming alkali-tip' (*CP*, p.53) of '1929'. It is the Alston Moor landscape of 'Allendale', however, that is most clearly invoked. The topography of the 'valley' and the reference to 'furnaces' draws upon the sequence of local imagery in that poem's 'Down in the valley the furnace no lead ore of worth burns'. An imaginative continuity between Auden's early treatments of his upland landscape and the development of his symbolic topographies is thus evident in the 'Epilogue'. The emerging local iconographic constants of 'mountains', 'valleys', 'water' and 'deserts' all have relation to the rugged and well-watered terrain of remote isolation in earlier poems.

Danger increases for the rider in the second stanza, as 'dusk' falls on the 'path to the pass' (*CP*, p.60). A hazardous transit of a mountainous zone is suggested, as in 'To throw away the key and walk away'. The topographical symbol of the pass again denotes a crucial stage on the allegorical journey to freedom as the rider's endeavour

overcomes the challenge of nature. Touch alone will guide him out of the mountains as darkness gathers and his 'footsteps feel from granite to grass' (CP, p.60). Having envisaged escape from the valley symbolic of a society dominated by industrial capitalism and the surmounting of the purely natural dangers of the mountain, the landscape of the 'horror' (CP, p.60) awaits. Fear and disease threaten the rider in the image of 'that shape in the twisted trees' and the statement that 'The spot on your skin is a shocking disease' (CP, p.60). Earlier in *The Orators* the airman concluded that 'Conquest can only proceed by absorption of, i.e. infection by, the conquered' (EA, p.93). The firm dismissal of the 'horror' in the last stanza denies the diagnosis of 'shocking disease', freeing the rider of the pathology of conquest and oppression. As in 'To throw away the key and walk away', the landscapes of hazard of the 'Epilogue' form the setting for a journey that 'makes us well / Without confession of the ill' (CP, p.31).

The motifs of disease and escape in the 'Epilogue' are also present in 'Consider', Auden's most energetically radical poem of the period. True to the airman's analysis, conquest proceeds by infection through the mobilization of 'the powerful forces latent ...// ... In the infected sinus' (CP, p.61). 'Consider' concludes with its 'Seekers after happiness' 'Escaping humming down arterial roads', futilely, for the poem declares imperatively 'You cannot be away, then, no' (CP, p.62). Theirs is a flight of panic, precipitated

by the sudden realization that 'It is later than you think' (CP, p.62). They have not reasoned, and, as one of Auden's early 'Shorts' has it, 'Those who will not reason / Perish in the act' (CP, p.56). By contrast, the rider of the 'Epilogue' is a type of 'the truly strong man' (CP, p.50) of '1929', capable of both reason and action. His considered refutation of his questioner's discouragements and threats in the last stanza forms a rational basis for his decisive act of departure 'As he left them there, as he left them there' (CP, p.60).

The rider's flight of dissociation from the landscape symbolic of a culture that pollutes and degrades both man and nature is emblematic of Auden's gradual disengagement from the adversary radicalism of his early work. The search to 'discover the lacking' anticipates the quest for spiritual values that tentatively begins in his work with 'Paysage Moralisé' and 'A Summer Night' of 1933. A concern with purely secular meliorism survives in his writing until about 1936. The strident rhetoric of the earlier radicalism, however, does not survive beyond 'Brothers, who when sirens roar' of 1932, which Auden later disowned. After the apocalyptic visions of '1929' and 'Consider' and the auto-destructive commitment of the airman of *The Orators*, Auden's metapolitical stance had become untenable. Poems like 'The Watchers', 'The Witnesses' and 'Here on the cropped grass of the narrow ridge I stand' indicate the emergence of imaginative and quasi-mythical social interpretations in Auden's writing of the early

1930s. The wish to 'discover the lacking' in the 'Epilogue' is more clearly defined in moral terms as the desire to regain 'the long lost good' (*CP*, p.115) in the original version of 'The Watchers' of 1932. Edward Mendelson sees the celebration of love and fellowship in 'A Summer Night' as the critical stage in Auden's development during the 1930s: 'It is possible to read almost all his work during the rest of the thirties as a series of attempts to learn - or to evade - the meaning of that summer night in June 1933' (*EA*, p.xvii).

For the provision of images, metaphors and symbols to convey the religious and ethical abstractions inherent in his emerging philosophical and spiritual orientation Auden found his ideas of landscape increasingly valuable. 'Paysage Moralisé', his most ambitious use of figurative topographical elements in the early 1930s, demonstrates the growing flexibility and scope of his local imagery in pursuing the quest for 'the long lost good'. Social and spiritual aspirations and dissatisfactions and the seeking of refuge from reality in illusion are presented and analysed through the interplay of the sestina's localized end-words, already referred to above. Variations on the topographies evoked by 'valleys', 'mountains', 'water', 'islands' and 'cities' (*CP*, p. 104) weave a rich tapestry of landscapes before the envoy's concluding vision of future regeneration. 'Sorrow' (*CP*, p.104), the sixth of the end-words, is established as the normative condition of mankind. It arises, in the poem's

analysis, from man's failure to respond positively to the imperatives of fate and experiential necessity symbolized in Auden's emerging locally iconographic system by 'mountains'. This becomes evident in the fifth stanza's designation of 'sorrow' as 'The shadow cast across your lives by mountains' (CP, p.105). The 'valleys' of 'Paysage Moralisé', in accordance with earlier uses of the image, signify zones of settled habitation. Initially 'Visions of green to them who craved for water', the poem's charting of gradual cultural decline reduces them to the 'wretched valleys' (CP, pp.104-05) of the fifth stanza. The 'cities', initially intended as embodiments of *civitas* and culture, likewise degenerate from the envisioned 'learned cities' of the opening to the 'unhappy cities' (CP, pp.104-05) of the subsequent debased reality. The dreams of the cities and the valleys as social ideals in the first two stanzas contrast sadly with their miserable actualities of the later 'unhappy cities' and 'moping villages' in 'wretched valleys' (CP, p.105). Auden's awareness of the distance between man's perception of ideals and his attainment of unsatisfactory actualities forms an important theme in his work that is first announced through the local imagery of 'Paysage Moralisé'. Failure to realize the promise of ideals leads to the escapism and solipsistic isolation symbolized in the poem by 'islands', introducing the concept of the delusory dream-landscape in Auden's poetry. Purity of being and regenerative power are emblemized by 'water', of which 'our sorrow' in the symbolism of the envoy

is the frozen form. The end-words have both literal functions in configuring the landscapes of the poem and symbolic significations in its allegory of the founding and failure of civilization.

John Fuller's reading of the symbolic import of the end-words suggests certain other possibilities. The tentativeness of his 'one could say', however, defers to the complex imaginative texture of 'Paysage Moralisé': 'One could say that *valleys* and *mountains* are the female and male principles (like Lawrence's sun and moon) which govern human behaviour: the *valleys* representing the protection, maternal or erotic, of the womb; the *mountains* the phallic motif of the Quest. *Water* represents those creations of man which satisfy his sense of purpose, particularly art'.¹³ With regard to the further significations of 'cities', 'islands' and 'sorrow', Fuller's reading is substantially in agreement with that given above. His sexual, not to say sexist, interpretation of the symbolic values of 'valleys' and 'mountains' is, however, questionable. Auden is usually explicit at some point on the significations of his local iconographic constants, and nowhere are valleys ascribed a feminine or erotic value. Mountains, on the other hand, have an unambiguously maternal symbolic significance directly contrary to Fuller's analysis in the 'Epilogue' to *The Orators*, in which the 'mountain heights' recall 'mother's figure'. Further, *The Ascent of F6* speaks of 'those to whom a mountain is a mother'. Ransom, the play's hero, is compelled to make his climb by his mother's

expectations, and the sinister spirit of the mountain is revealed at the climax as none other than 'Mrs Ransom as a young mother'.¹⁴ Rather than Fuller's 'phallic motif of the Quest', it is 'Das Weibliche' that summons to the quest in Auden's work. Mountains are symbolic of the imperatives of fate and necessity that pertain to 'The Terrible, the Merciful, the Mothers' (CP, p.182) of *New Year Letter*.

It is the attraction of the otherness of the feminine principle that draws man towards 'The far interior of our fate / To civilize and to create' (CP, p.182). Fuller's ascription to water of the signification of human artefacts and art is equally fallacious. Water consistently, and several times explicitly, signifies spiritual regeneration and 'pure being, perfect in music and movement' (CP, p.433) in Auden's poetry.

A Freudian sub-title for 'Paysage Moralisé' might be 'civilization and its discontents'. Freud's theory of the establishment of civilization through the sacrifice of instinct is implicit in the poem's opening. The 'founders of these starving cities' symbolically subdue instinct as 'They reined their violent horses on the mountains' (CP, p.104) before descending into the valleys to build their societies. Auden, whose writings of the 1930s indicate a close familiarity with Freud's thought, reflects in 'Paysage Moralisé' the emphasis on the persistence of unhappiness in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud writes 'Mankind is proud of its exploits and has a right to be. But men are beginning to perceive that all this newly won power over space and time, this conquest of

the forces of nature ... has not increased the amount of pleasure they can obtain in life, has not made them feel any happier'.¹⁵ The poem's recognition of sorrow as the governing constant in the human condition is very much in agreement with the sombre wisdom of much of Freud's late writing. Misery ultimately dominates the 'unhappy cities' and the 'wretched valleys', for all the optimism of the 'founders'' dreams. The inhabitants of the valleys plunge into the catastrophes of the sixth stanza in their bids to escape into illusion from their unsatisfactory existences. Human progress and ambition are called into question in 'Paysage Moralisé' in anticipation of the challenge to 'All the Great Powers assume' of 'In Praise of Limestone'. The presentation of a failing civilization dominated by sorrow suggests man's priorities are spiritually out of order in his pursuit of material progress. 'Paysage Moralisé' implicitly agrees with Baudelaire's statement that the 'Theory of true civilisation ... has nothing to do with gas or steam or table-turning. It consists in the diminution of the traces of original sin'.¹⁶ The words are from Baudelaire's *Intimate Journals* in Isherwood's translation of 1930, which Auden is likely to have read in view of his closeness to the translator.

Failure to achieve happiness and avoid the oppression of sorrow leads to disaffection and disappointment with development of the 'cities' in 'Paysage Moralisé'. These negative emotions are sublimated into the envisioning of illusory dream-Edens as a means of escaping the psychological discomforts of

reality. 'Islands' are the local symbol for the desired Arcadia, the lowlands of habitation, once 'fields like ships to castaways', unable to supply the spiritual needs of those 'who craved for water' (CP, p.104):

Each in his little bed conceived of islands
Where every day was dancing in the valleys
And all the green trees blossomed on the mountains,
Where love was innocent, being far from cities
(CP; p.105).

The populations of the 'moping villages' are equally prone to delusion, and hearken to the lotus-eating alternatives to their wretchedness proclaimed by 'waving pilgrims ... describing islands' (CP, p.105). Disaster and despair follow in the sixth stanza's account of the landscapes of attempted escape. The terms of failure and disappointment are sufficiently well-established for the envoy to begin with its short categorical sentence announcing the conditioning constant of existence: 'It is our sorrow' (CP, p.105). Subsequently the 'barren mountains', 'wretched valleys' and 'unhappy cities' are transformed and the 'islands' of illusion rejected in the envoy's concluding vision:

It is our sorrow. Shall it melt? Then water
Would gush, flush, green these mountains and these valleys,
And we rebuild our cities, not dream of islands
(CP, p.105).

The landscapes of 'Paysage Moralisé' and the regenerative optimism of the envoy are enriched by the symbolic value of the word 'green', which occurs three times in the poem. It signifies love and joy in blazonry and God's bounty and the

resurrection in church ornaments.¹⁷ Together with the fourth stanza's 'gold and silver' (*CP*, p.105), the colour gives 'Paysage Moralisé' a chromatic vividness rare in Auden's work.

Landscape imagery in 'Paysage Moralisé' is used to structure a dialectic of the history of civilization. Hope and sorrow form an antithesis that can only be resolved in the unconfidently prophetic synthesis of the envoy. For its affirmation of the melting and gushing of inherent but unavailable goodness Auden is obliged to borrow from Hopkins's 'Gush! - flush the man, the being with it' of 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'. Edward Mendelson notes the lack of original spontaneity in Auden's articulation of his vision in remarking as follows of 'Paysage Moralisé': 'in imagining the results of this miraculous event Auden infuses his poem with the accentual energies of Gerard Manley Hopkins' religious poetry'.¹⁸ 'A Summer Night', written a month after 'Paysage Moralisé', also envisions the transmutation of sorrow into a positive quality in its somewhat Blakean idiom:

Fear gave his watch no look:
The lion griefs loped from the shade
And on our knees their muzzles laid,
And Death put down his book (*CP*, p.103).

In admitting sorrow into his epistemology in these works of 1933, Auden recognized a counter-force to the meliorative optimism upon which his radicalism had thrived. The recourse to Hopkins's diction in 'Paysage Moralisé' and the Blakean allegorization of 'A Summer Night' represent uneasy attempts to

formulate a visionary resolution of the difficulty posed by the recognition of sorrow. His poetry was beginning to conform to Freud's belief that 'there are certain difficulties inherent in the very nature of culture which will not yield to any efforts at reform'.¹⁹

The pessimism thus engendered contributed to the alienation from self and society and the lack of spiritual direction that first become evident in his work with 'Journey to Iceland' of 1936. Iceland's geographical actuality provides the poem's major symbol of the island, denoting the desire for escapist isolation in accordance with the signification of 'islands' in 'Paysage Moralisé'. The island, like the mountain and the pass, water and other images of landscape, is beginning to acquire a constancy of signification as part of Auden's locally iconographic system. Escape from the psychological and historical discomforts of reality by taking refuge on Iceland is not, however, possible. This disturbing realization is borne home towards the end of 'Journey to Iceland' as Auden's work moves into the maze of doubt of the later 1930s. In 1938 the emerging ideal of the Good Place formed a thread leading back to the 'love // that ...// does not abandon' of Alston Moor. A more stable vision was subsequently established through the localized celebration of love and patience of 'The Prophets'. No such relief is available in 'Journey to Iceland' from the dawning awareness of the abyss between the ideal and the actual. Its penultimate stanza's figurative local imagery confronts the absence of the spiritual

consolations of the 'locality and peace' desired in *New Year Letter* and sought in vain on the island:

Our time has no favourite suburb, no local features
are those of the young for whom all wish to care;
its promise is only a promise, the fabulous
country impartially far (CP, p.127).

For Auden, Iceland itself is 'the fabulous / country', a landscape of the mind which remains unattainable in its ideal essence despite immediate experience of the island's physical geography. The poem's treatment of topography and history creates the local reality that is the objective truth of Iceland. Disconcertingly unfamiliar, the landscape denies the possibility of escape into the dream of 'the fabulous / country'. Just as Alston Moor took on its unique imaginative value for Auden through childhood reading, so too had Iceland become a place of special associations as a result of his early experiences of literature. Recalling his father, Auden wrote 'some of the most vivid recollections of my childhood are hearing him read to me Icelandic folk-tales and sagas, and I know more about Northern mythology than Greek'.²⁰ The record of childhood in 'Letter to Lord Byron' states 'With northern myths my little brain was laden, / With deeds of Thor and Loki and such scenes' (CP, p.95). As his foreword of 1965 to *Letters from Iceland* affirms, 'In my childhood dreams Iceland was holy ground'.²¹ The island of the dream, however, while constituting the 'limited hope' of the escapist 'lover / of islands' (CP, p. 126), may not be dwelt in. The cherished vision of Iceland is, although not properly recognized as such,

'a wish-dream that cannot become real' (*DH*, p.410), as Auden later wrote regarding personal Edens. 'Journey to Iceland' works towards realizing this in tentatively arriving at the awareness that 'the fabulous / country' remains 'impartially far'. After a perfunctory enumeration of sites of touristic interest, shock at the failure of the 'limited hope' of escapism is registered in the seventh stanza. Its 'should' indicates a disappointed perception of the distance between the expectation and the actuality, the dream of 'the lover / of islands' becoming a source of unease rather than of consolation:

Europe is absent: this is an island and should be
 a refuge, where the affections of its dead can be bought
 by those whose dreams accuse them of being
 spitefully alive (CP, p.126).

'This is an island and therefore / Unreal' (*EA*, p.203), reads the original text, paradoxically conflating fact and fantasy to evoke a desperate clinging to imaginative preconceptions. The futility of the attempt to use the island as 'a refuge' generates the discomfort and doubt that are intrinsic to the atmosphere of 'Journey to Iceland'.

The Europe from which refuge is sought is that of irrevocable Nazi ascendancy and the Spanish Civil War. Iceland's geographical remoteness from the major events of 1936 did not, however, suffice to diminish their import. 'Down in Europe Seville fell, / Nations germinating hell', wrote Louis MacNeice in *Letters from Iceland*.²² Auden noted that he and his co-author were 'all the time conscious

of a threatening horizon to their picnic — world-wide unemployment, Hitler growing every day more powerful and a world-war more inevitable'.²³ The negative and disturbing *Zeitgeist* of contemporary events surrounds 'the lover / of islands' as the sea encompasses Iceland. There is a latent symbolization of the alienating and ungovernable elements that form the poem's contemporary international context in the opening's foreboding treatment of the sea that is Iceland's setting:

... every port has its name for the sea,
the citiless, the corroding, the sorrow,
And North means to all *Reject*.

These plains are for ever where cold creatures are hunted
and on all sides (CP, p.126).

The island itself offers no solace, its topography not remotely humanized or assuaging and indicating as emphatically as the sea the uncompromising otherness of nature. Far from being the desired dream-landscape of refuge opening on to the imaginative world of childhood and its security, Iceland's reality is unsettlingly 'abnormal':

... a glitter
of glacier, sterile immature mountains intense
in the abnormal northern day, and a river's
fan-like polyp of sand (CP, p.126).

Subsequent references to geysers, lava-deserts and the rocky topography add to the evocation of Iceland's disconcertingly unfamiliar landscape. The physical reality that confronts the traveller in 'Journey to Iceland' contrasts with 'his

limited hope' to anticipate the recognition of nature's inviolable unconditionality in 'Ode to Gaea': 'what, // to Her, the real one, can our good landscapes be but lies...?' (CP, p.425). Auden's rendering of the island's local features is redolent of an unease in confronting its inhospitableness that is close to despair. Eliot's symbolic landscape of spiritual aridity at the conclusion of *The Waste Land*, with its nine repetitions of 'rock', is distinctly recalled by the unrelenting emphasis on rock in the third stanza of 'Journey to Iceland':

... an issue of steam from a cleft
in the rock, and rocks, and waterfalls brushing
the rocks, and among the rocks birds (CP, p.126).

Memories of the island inform the imagery of the terminal zones presented in *The Age of Anxiety* and *The Sea and the Mirror*. 'The Seven Stages' of the former concludes with the deluded travellers being engulfed by the catastrophic 'last landscape / Of gloom and glaciers' (CP, p.390). Iceland is even more specifically recalled by 'the lava plateau fissured by chasms and pitted with hot springs from which steam rises' (CP, p.336) to which Caliban transports those who implore him for security in *The Sea and the Mirror*.

Alienation from the local actuality that is incompatible with memories of childhood imaginings of the 'holy ground' dispossesses the traveller of the ideal of the dream-country. The dream becomes an irritant, confronting 'the lover / Of islands' with his selfishness as it accuses him of being

'spitefully alive' in the seventh stanza quoted above. Like 'the hermetic gardens' (CP, p.386) of *The Age of Anxiety*, where the seekers of illusion learn disturbing truths about themselves, 'the fabulous / country' of Iceland draws attention to the darker side of human nature. No longer a hope of refuge, the island comes to resemble a sealed laboratory in which Auden begins to isolate humanity's ingrained malignity in the view of the 'figure on horseback' (CP, p. 126). As *Letters from Iceland* records, Auden did much riding on the island and seemed to have a natural talent for it.²⁴ In view of the poem's awareness of his subjective condition, the rider of 'Journey to Iceland' can be taken as an objectification of autobiographical experience. The deficiencies to which the 'crooked inches' of the rider's blood point are later met by the Good Place as the notional seat of love, justice and congruity. Meanwhile, however, the ominous 'crooked' and the sinister view of humanity implied herald the disconcerting philosophy of 'As I Walked Out One Morning' written a year after 'Journey to Iceland': 'you shall love your crooked neighbour / With your crooked heart' (CP, p.115):

Within the indigenous figure on horseback
 On the bridle-path down by the lake
 his blood moves also by furtive and crooked inches,
 asks all our questions: *Where is the homage? When
 shall justice be done? Who is against me?
 Why am I always alone?* (CP, p.126).

Incipient despair and the unattainability of ideals effectively universalized, the traveller's dispossession of his dream of

'the fabulous / country' becomes emblematic of modern spiritual impoverishment in the penultimate stanza. Sorrow arising from the awareness that 'Our time has no favourite suburb' generates a brief symbolic topography to mourn the death of ideals in 'Tears fall in all the rivers' (CP, p.127). The economy and facility Auden has achieved in the deployment of local imagery allows the reference to 'rivers' to support imagery that establishes the concluding landscape of confusion, death and fear:

... again some driver
pulls on his gloves and in a blinding snowstorm starts
upon a fatal journey, again some writer
runs howling to his art (CP, p.127).

Auden's unease is clearly implied by the final image of the writer who 'runs howling to his art'. The disturbing mood of 'Journey to Iceland' is shared by 'Detective Story', 'Death's Echo' and 'The Price', also poems of the visit to Iceland which contain further developments in Auden's uses of figurative local imagery. All three constitute further treatments of the theme of the loss of the ideal landscape and the subsequent unhappily heightened apprehension of unadorned reality. 'Who is ever quite without his landscape ...?' (CP, p.127), begins 'Detective Story'. Rather than celebrating an imaginative refuge, however, the opening points to the locus of the individual's guilt. In 'Detective Story', 'each man kills the thing he loves', and 'his landscape' marks 'the spot / Where the body of his happiness was first discovered' (CP, p.127). 'Body'

is ambiguous: the sense of 'corpse' can co-exist with the meaning of 'substance' or 'content'. Its deathly import cannot, however, be discounted in view of Auden's remark that the poem is 'about why people read detective stories'.²⁵ In the essay 'The Guilty Vicarage', Auden writes of the landscape of detective fiction, stating that 'the more Eden-like it is, the greater the contradiction of the murder' (*DH*, p.151). In 'Detective Story' the scene of the crime is accordingly the nostalgic idyll of 'The straggling village street, the house in trees, / All near the church ...// ... The country station' (*CP*, p.127). Finally, the poem confirms its hinting at the murder of happiness in its last lines 'But time is always guilty. Someone must pay for / Our loss of happiness, our happiness itself' (*CP*, p.127). As in 'Journey to Iceland', time dispossesses the conscience of its 'favourite suburb' by making it impossible for identification with the ideal landscape of memory and imagination to continue.

From the recognition of sorrow in 'Paysage Moralisé' Auden has progressed towards accounting for human unhappiness in terms of the universality of guilt. He accepts *avant la lettre* Christianity's doctrine of man's inherently sinful nature, but remains as yet denied the consolations of religion. The configuration of the landscape of innocence in 'Detective Story' as a means of heightening the perception of guilt sets the pattern for 'Death's Echo' and 'The Price'. In the former, a locality of secure settlement is initially evoked through the images of 'native shore and local hill' (*CP*, p.128).

The lovers' world of innocent sensuality follows:

Our grass is green, and sensual our brief bed,
The stream sings at its foot, and at its head
The mild and vegetarian beasts are fed (CP, p.128).

Thirdly, the visionary landscape of the 'Dreamer and the drunkard' prophesies salvation in 'The ladders let down out of heaven, / The laurel springing from the martyr's blood'. (CP, p.129). Death, however, has the last word in each stanza, the choruses mordantly refuting the peace, contentment and spiritual regeneration respectively symbolized by the landscapes depicted. The conclusion's '*The desires of the heart are as crooked as corkscrews*' (CP, p.129) echoes the image of man's innate corruption in the 'crooked inches' of the blood of 'Journey to Iceland'. As Auden's view of humanity grows increasingly bleak, his focus on the abyss between the ideal landscape and the abnegating reality proves an invaluable mode of communicating it.

In terms of the theology of guilt and normative unhappiness implicit in 'Journey to Iceland', 'Detective Story' and 'Death's Echo', for the individual to cling to his dream of 'the fabulous / country' amounts to heresy. The crime and its punishment are considered in 'The Price', which begins by asking 'Who can ever praise enough / The world of his belief?' (CP, p.129). Images of 'childhood ... / In the meadows near his home' and the 'woods' outline the landscape of 'the vivid tree / And grass of phantasy' (CP, p.129). The cherishing and imaginative nurturing of the localized ideal becomes a

solipsistic end in itself, as the second stanza states with its opening's 'But to create it and to guard / Shall be his whole reward' (CP, p.129). Reality catches up with the dreamer in the stanza's subsequent images of guilt, disaster and sin. The concluding couplet seals the damnation of the heretic, who 'in the pit of terror thrown / Shall bear the wrath alone' (CP, p.129).

This bad end directly anticipates the forced surrenders of illusion in the 'last landscape' of *The Sea and the Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety*. For the morally infantile in both the longer poems, as for the subject of 'The Price', the dream means more than reality, which will not be ignored indefinitely. In Auden's continuing assessment of the psychology of illusion, however, the mind's ideal landscapes are not necessarily bad *per se*. When the dream's relativity to reality's absoluteness is recognized it can be a valuable component of consciousness. The relative status of Auden's 'locality I love', for example, is indicated by the qualifying 'But such a bond is not an Ought, / Only a given mode of thought' (CP, pp.182-83). Rosetta and Quant of *The Age of Anxiety* demonstrate the distinction between pathological attachment to the dream-landscape and a healthy containment of its significance as a mode of imaginative recreation. The former fabricates an identity around her envisionings of English parkland, while the latter harmlessly indulges in occasional mental visits to 'the etruscan landscape / Of Man's Memory' (CP, p.365).

In 1938 Auden began to intimate the compatibility and complementarity of the dream-landscape and objective actuality with the Good Place's emergence in his writing in 'A Voyage'. At the same time the value and integrity of the individual's 'world of his belief' are affirmed in 'Sonnets from China':

all dream wishes employ
The elementary rhythms of the heart,
Speak to our muscles of a need for joy (CP, p.155).

A recovery is underway from the upsetting realization that 'the fabulous / country' must remain 'impartially far' and the subsequent trauma of moral embitterment. 'Sonnets from China' XVIII makes a balanced appraisal of the relation of the landscape of the ideal to the uncompromising terms of unadorned reality. Humanity's visions of perfection and its constant inability to realize them are patiently accepted as conditions of existence. The middle way between the ideal and the actual that eventually leads to the landscape of their harmonious integration in 'In Praise of Limestone' is gradually becoming discernible. As in 'In Praise of Limestone', in 'Sonnets from China' XVIII the perfection man can envisage but cannot live is objectified in art. The 'gesticulating fountains' (CP, p.415) which combine art's emblemization of permanence and water's symbolism of spiritual vitality in the later poem have their prototypes in the sonnet's 'we ... // ... never will be perfect like our fountains' (CP, p.156). The high evaluation of music, 'our greatest comfort' (CP, p.415), in 'In Praise of Limestone' is likewise anticipated in the figurative landscape of 'each

ritual maze' (*CP*, p.156) in 'Sonnets from China' XVIII. Music's harmonious embodiment of an ideal order inspires visions of a well-ordered future that constitutes 'a musical plan', an Ariadne's thread which 'a musical heart / Can faultlessly follow' (*CP*, p.156).

Life and art remain as distinct as sleep and waking, however, as the opening of the sonnet indicates in its juxtaposition of workaday discomforts and the Arcadian dream-landscape: 'Chilled by the Present, its gloom and noise, / On waking we sigh for an ancient South' (*CP*, p.156). In the original opening, 'mountains' symbolize the challenge of existential imperatives to provide a vivid contrast between the contingent conditions of reality and the realm of imagined perfection:

Wandering lost upon the mountains of our choice,
Again and again we sigh for an ancient South,
For the warm nude ages of instinctive poise,
For the taste of joy in the innocent mouth (*EA*, p.262).

Unfortunately; the glibness of the allegorization admits an unwanted ambiguity. 'The mountains of our choice' intends to denote the uncomfortable necessity of man's responsible exercise of his will as a condition of existence. The wording, however, suggests the mountains are merely chosen out of preference. The symbolic significance of mountains is retained in the later version of the sonnet at its conclusion, which is identical to that of the original: 'We live in freedom by necessity, / A mountain people dwelling among mountains' (*EA*, p.262, *CP*, p.156). The correspondence of

free-will and the determinism of circumstances is demonstrated and the symbolic terrain of existential endeavour recognized as emblemizing the normative conditions of humanity. *New Year Letter* sustains the allegorization in its acceptance that the 'ironic rocks' of Mount Purgatory have 'been our residence since birth' (CP, p.179). The 'ancient South', an immutable classical equivalent of the Good Place, and water's purity of being as 'streams ... that are sure' (CP, p.156) embody the permanence man can aspire to only in art. Life is enriched and given spiritual orientation by such ideals, while contingency and indeterminacy are intrinsic to its nature in the interplay of free-will and necessity.

The reconciliation of the uninhabitable landscape of the wish-dream with the harsh terms of existential actuality in 'Sonnets from China' marks an important stage in Auden's writing of the later 1930s. Notional topographies need no longer be configured only to be rejected as emblems of delusion, as was consistently the case in 'Detective Story', 'Death's Echo' and 'The Price'. They can equally discharge positive functions in signifying ideals that complement rather than contradict reality, and will soon prove invaluable in *New Year Letter* and the other longer poems.

After 'Sonnets from China' XVIII the next major advance in the use of figurative topographical imagery as a structural principle is made in 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'. Several poems of 1938-39 served to increase the scope of local

elements in Auden's writing and may be regarded as directly preparatory to the elegy for Yeats. Public indifference to private suffering is conveyed in 'Musée des Beaux Arts' by using local imagery to co-ordinate the development of the poem. 'Brussels in Winter' and 'The Capital' further establish the negative symbolic value of urban imagery in Auden's work in their confluences of figurative and literal treatments of the city. Urban experience informs the uncompromisingly metaphorical encapsulation of its subject's personality in the line 'His gift knew what he was — a dark disordered city' (EA, p.241) which opens 'Matthew Arnold'. Reference to 'each square and boulevard and slum'(EA, p.241) extends and particularizes the metaphor, showing how Auden is beginning to explore the fuller potential of his major local images. 'Edward Lear' concludes with a sweeping metaphorical summary of Lear's achievement in the line 'children swarmed to him like settlers. He became a land' (CP, p. 149).

All these poems, as well as eight others in *Collected Poems*, were written between December 1938 and February 1939. This very productive period in Auden's career, notable for significant advances in the figurative use of local imagery, culminates with the composition of 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' in the February. The metaphors of Arnold as a 'city' and 'Lear' as 'a land' both go to the making of the elegy. So too do the sense of the world's indifference to individual suffering of 'Musée des Beaux Arts' and the skill in the

deployment of urban detail of 'Brussels in Winter' and 'The Capital'. Yeats's physical being is implicitly imaged as 'a land' in the evocation of death's approach in the statement that 'The provinces of his body revolted' (CP, p. 197). His personality is symbolized by extending the metaphor of character as a 'city' in 'Matthew Arnold' in the subsequent lines 'The squares of his mind were empty, / Silence invaded the suburbs' (CP, p.197). As Icarus falls in 'Musée des Beaux Arts', the landscape of normality persists as 'the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse / Scratches its innocent behind on a tree' (CP, p.147). Likewise, while Yeats dies, the world in general is unconcerned as 'Far from his illness / The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests, / The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays' (CP, p.197). The conflation of symbolic and literal images of the city in 'Brussels in Winter' and 'The Capital' recurs in the elegy. Urban metaphors for Yeats's mind referred to above co-exist with the realistic details of the opening's 'the airports almost deserted, / And snow disfigured the public statues' and reference to 'the floor of the Bourse' (CP, p.197). All the experiments with localized images and metaphors of the remarkable three months up to February 1939 contribute to the major achievement of 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'.

Earlier poems structured entirely around ideas of landscape, principally 'Two Climbs' and 'Paysage Moralisé', seem stiff and unsophisticated in comparison to the range and flexibility of local effects in the elegy. Each of its

three sections is sustained by successive images of landscape and locality. A clear development from the opening's literal urban description through subsequent localized metaphors to the conclusion's formalised local symbolism is apparent. As perhaps the best known of all Auden's works, 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' testifies admirably to its local imagery's success in establishing 'a connectedness which could speak to modern man's isolated subjectivity'.²⁶ The words are from M. D. Simpson's remark on the importance of landscape's function in Auden's work already quoted in Chapter Two, which assumes additional relevance in a consideration of the elegy. 'Modern man's isolated subjectivity' was clearly a concern of Auden's in early 1939, and one to which Yeats's death in January repeatedly drew his attention. In that year's spring edition of *Partisan Review* he included a scathing critique of 'the failure of liberal capitalist democracy' in the counsel for the defence's speech in 'The Public v. The Late Mr William Butler Yeats': 'it has created the most impersonal, the most mechanical and the most unequal civilisation the world has ever seen, a civilisation in which the only emotion common to all classes is a feeling of individual isolation from everyone else' (*EA*, pp.392-93). 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' is equally emphatic on the isolation and alienation endemic in modern existence. The metaphor of 'each in the cell of himself' in part one is followed by the view of man 'In the prison of his days' (*CP*, pp.197-98) in the final stanza. Isolated subjectivity is also denoted in the middle section's

symbolization of the 'ranches of isolation', poetry's retreat from 'the importance and noise of tomorrow'²⁷ (CP, p.197) of materialist civilization. While these socio-political implications link the elegy with the work of 1927-1933, secular ideologies are no longer invoked to project improvements of conditions. Auden's social duty as a poet is now, as the last line states, to 'Teach the free man how to praise' (CP, p.198). The increasingly spiritual orientation of Auden's poetry as the 'low dishonest decade' (EA, p.245) of the 1930s draws to a close becomes explicit. From this point, with the spiritual element ascendant, Auden relies extensively on figurative local imagery to convey the religious and ethical abstractions of his writing. Alston Moor re-emerges as the teacher of love and patience in 'The Prophets' shortly after the elegy for Yeats. 'Goodness...// ... must be shared' (EA, p.268), states 'Commentary', and *New Year Letter* and the other longer poems subsequently capitalize upon the figurative potential of landscape for communicating Auden's ideal values to 'modern man's isolated subjectivity'.

In accordance with its importance in inaugurating the period most notable for its dependence on topographical imagery in Auden's work, 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' sums up the developments of the 1930s. It incorporates the literal local description that structures many of the poems of the decade in the urban scene-setting of its opening. The system of local iconographic constants that evolved through a number

of poems is well-represented in the symbolism of water, the city, the valley and the desert central to the poem. The formalised topographical symbolism of the conclusion demonstrates Auden's increased confidence in established uses of figurative local imagery and looks forward to the accomplished allegorizations of the longer poems. Skill acquired in extending localized metaphors to convey the subsidiary implications of a concept is applied to sustain the imagery of poetry in 'the valley of its making' (*CP*, p.197) in the second section.

The symbolic dimension of the conclusion is well-integrated with the literal local details and more casual topographical metaphors of the elegy's preceding sections. 'The brooks were frozen' combines with the repeated 'dark cold day' and reference to 'the brokers roaring like beasts' of the opening to substantiate the conclusion's symbolism of

In the nightmare of the dark
 All the dogs of Europe bark ...//
 And the seas of pity lie
 Locked and frozen in each eye (*CP*, pp.197-98).

The 'ranches of isolation' of 'the valley' of poetry's making provide the localized metaphorical terms for the subsequent 'With the farming of a verse / Make a vineyard of the curse' (*CP*, pp.197-98). Water symbolism is latent in the innocence of the 'untempted' 'peasant river' and the concept of poetry as a river that 'flows on south' in anticipation of the conclusion's 'healing fountain' (*CP*, pp.197-98). The image

of the fountain forms a redemptive symbolic contrast with the preceding suggestions of moral stasis in the images of freezing, recalling the 'gush, flush' as sorrow thaws in 'Paysage Moralisé'. 'Each in the cell of himself' in part one is echoed by the later 'In the prison of his days' (CP, pp.197-98) to constitute a further link between the ending and what has preceded. The formal symbolism of spiritual aridity in the closing 'deserts of the heart' relates to part one's survey of the moral abnegation of 'the importance and noise of tomorrow' and the unregarded 'sufferings' of 'the poor' (CP, pp. 197-98). The remoteness suggested by the allegorical 'ranches of isolation' also anticipates the subsequent symbolism of 'the deserts'. Authority and authenticity are conferred upon the vatic formality of the last section by the symmetry of its symbolism's relation to preceding local images. Similarly, the opening gains cohesion through the parallelism of its literal urban imagery and its metaphorical uses of the idea of the city. The documentary imagery of 'The brooks were frozen' harmonises with the quasi-symbolic 'peasant river', as does the figuring of 'the evergreen forests' with the subsequent metaphor of 'another kind of wood' (CP, p.197). 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' impresses through the unity of its parts and the fluency of its development that consist primarily in the remarkable knitting together of its various local images, metaphors and symbols.

Between the opening's literal description and intermittent topographical metaphors and the conclusion's formalised local

symbolism lies the landscape of the making of poetry of part two. The localization that structures the first section is consolidated into the topographical allegorization of poetry, while the way is prepared for the conclusion's forthright symbolism. Poetry's remoteness from 'the importance and noise of tomorrow' does not so much diminish its importance as remove it from contamination by the debased values of modern materialist civilization. 'It survives / In the valley of its making where executives / Would never want to tamper, flows on south' (CP, p.197), retaining a purity denoted by the symbolic value of water latent in the image of the river. Poetry maintains its cultural tenure, as the symbol of the valley affirms in accordance with earlier uses of the image to signify secure settlement. As a major symbol, the valley supports the subsidiary localizations of 'ranches of isolation', 'Raw towns that we believe and die in' (CP, p.197) and the metaphor of poetry as a river. Respectively signifying the solitude of the craft's exercise and the scattered community of poets, the 'ranches' and the 'towns' are linked by the common purpose of poetry as it 'flows on south'. The choice of the metaphor of the river of poetry is apt in several ways, revealing the flexibility latent in Auden's figurative uses of ideas of landscape. In a world governed by ulterior material interests, the integrity of poets who 'believe and die' in their art warrants the ascription of purity to their motives through the symbolism of water noted above. 'Flows on south' embodies the movement and development of poetry as

existing in a constant state of extension and growth. The final designation of poetry as 'A way of happening, a mouth' (CP, p.197) is productively ambiguous, terminating the extended metaphor with the estuarial signification of 'mouth' and simultaneously denoting a spoken, living art.

In describing poetry as 'A way of happening, a mouth', 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' refutes the received idea that Auden resigned his social intentions in its line 'For poetry makes nothing happen' (CP, P.197). Of this statement Samuel Hynes has written that 'In this change of heart, by the generation's greatest poet, we might say that the 'thirties really ended'.²⁸ Hynes's analysis, like his account of the urban nature of the essential 'Auden country' challenged at the start of Chapter One above, is far too pat. Unfortunately, such convenient distortions are quickly taken up as truths by those who require simplistic summaries of the complexities of Auden's art and its development. One of Hynes's epigraphs to his *The Auden Generation* is Auden's 'You cannot tell people what to do, you can only tell them parables'. This remark of 1935, already quoted in Chapter Two above, itself undermines Hynes's chronology of Auden's capitulation of his work's political intentions. By 1935 the element of radicalism in Auden's writing was already effectively defunct and its spiritual dimension continuing to emerge, as it had been doing since 1933. Indeed, the statement that 'poetry makes nothing happen' is rendered somewhat anomalous within the elegy by the subsequent appraisal of poetry as 'A way of happening'. The question

of poetry's relation or lack of it to events in the social and political sphere remains open despite Auden's disclaimer. Certainly the elegy's subject was undecided upon it when he asked in 'The Man and the Echo' 'Did that play of mine send out / Certain men the English shot?' As Yeats did, Auden has developed by 1939 well beyond interest in political contingency. Poetry, however, is decidedly still required to make something happen according to 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'. It must 'Still persuade us to rejoice' and 'Teach the free man how to praise' (*CP*, p.198), its meliorative potential now conceived of entirely in spiritual and religious terms.

Accordingly, the symbolic landscapes of the concluding stanzas, the 'vineyard' of 'the farming of a verse' and 'the deserts of the heart' where 'the healing fountain' (*CP*, p.198) must spring, are of biblical provenance. The vineyard is the symbolic site of human endeavour of the parable of the labourers of Matthew 20, and is often emblematic of productive husbandry elsewhere in the Bible. Auden had already used the desert as a quasi-symbolic topography in 'The Secret Agent' and 'Journey to Iceland'. Together with the desiderated 'healing fountain' and the injunction to 'persuade us to rejoice', however, Isaiah 35:1-7 is brought to mind: 'the desert shall rejoice ... for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water'. This notable combining of the biblical symbolism of the desert and water is the best example of many references to both in

the Bible. Their respective significations of desolation and regeneration are clearly evoked in direct correspondence to their symbolic values in Auden's work. The 'healing fountain' itself most readily suggests 'the fountain of the water of life' of Revelation 21:6, already cited in the consideration of water's symbolism in Chapter Two above. This most formal and explicit use of water to signify spiritual revitalization in Auden's poetry also connotes his familiarity with Dante. The healing waters of Eunöe and Lethe in the Earthly Paradise of *Purgatorio* are supplied from 'a fount' of 'sure and constant tide'³⁰ maintained by God's benevolence. Further, the association of 'the healing fountain' with poetry's regenerative potential has a classical source in the fountains of the Muses, Aganippe and Hippocrene, that spring from the foot of Mount Helicon. The landscape symbolism of the conclusion of 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' is both traditional and well-precedented in Auden's *oeuvre* by continual experimentation with topographical imagery throughout his career.

With 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' Auden has realized the figurative potential of landscape sufficiently to begin the ambitious topographical allegorizations of the longer poems. Rich in landscape imagery, the elegy makes repeated use of extended local metaphors in the passage beginning 'The provinces of his body revolted ...' and in the second section's 'valley' of the making of poetry. The technique is now much more flexible and evocatively effective than it was in, for example, the comparatively mechanical formulation of 'the map of all

my youth' (CP, p.94) quoted above from 'Letter to Lord Byron'. In *New Year Letter* this skill in extending local metaphors combines with the confident formalisation of topographical symbolism demonstrated at the elegy's close to produce a number of sustained allegorical landscapes. These are considered in the following chapter, together with developments in 'The Quest' and the other longer poems and the culmination of Auden's figurative uses of local imagery in *The Age of Anxiety*.

'From 1939', writes Edward Mendelson, 'until about 1946 all stable and specific landscapes tend to disappear from Auden's work'.³⁰ The treatments of Alston Moor in 'The Prophets' and *New Year Letter* discussed in Chapter Two above constitute important exceptions to this generalization. Mendelson remains, however, substantially correct with regard to the predominantly figurative applications of ideas of landscape in the period covered by his remark. Indeed, after *New Year Letter* it is not until 'Pleasure Island' and 'Ischia' of 1948 that geographically identifiable loci re-emerge in his poetry. The allegorical landscapes of the longer poems are nevertheless often 'stable and specific' in their own ways. Auden's skill in the manipulation of vivid local imagery most often configures well-integrated notional topographies that signify readily identifiable conditions, events and values. By 1940, the unattainability of 'the fabulous / country' of the Good Place was recognized as a condition of its existence as an ideal. The myths of place derived from experience of Alston Moor, however, could supply firm indications of its

nature in their embodiments of love, patience and human congruity. Its whereabouts was charted through the investigations of moral and psychological states in the longer poems, to which the figurative potential of landscape proved invaluable, as the following chapter will demonstrate.

Notes to Chapter Three

- 1 Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*,
(London, 1975), pp.325-26.
- 2 W. H. Auden, interviewed by Howard Griffin,
'Conversation on Cornelia Street, V', *Accent*,
vol. 18 (1953), pp.45-46.
- 3 *vide*, Osborne, p.213.
- 4 Rilke, p.77.
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 *ibid.*, p.27.
- 7 *ibid.*, p.64.
- 8 W. H. Auden, quoted in Spears, p.142.
- 9 Rilke, p.30.
- 10 Bernard Bergonzi, 'Sense of Geography', *The Times
Literary Supplement*, no. 3946 (London, 1977), p.1310.
- 11 Edward Mendelson notes the importance of the island as
a local symbol in Auden's writing between 1935 and
1938 in *Early Auden*, p.333.
- 12 Harbison, pp.124, 127.
- 13 Fuller, p.100.

- 14 W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, 'The Ascent of F6', in *The Ascent of F6 and On the Frontier*, pp.67, 95.
- 15 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, translated by J. Rivière (London, 1930), p.46.
- 16 Charles Baudelaire, *Intimate Journals*, translated by Christopher Isherwood (London, 1930), pp.84-85.
- 17 *vide* E. C. Brewer, *The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (New York, 1978), p.276.
- 18 Mendelson, *Early Auden*, p.156.
- 19 Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, p.93.
- 20 W. H. Auden in W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (London, 1985), p.210.
- 21 *ibid.*, p.10
- 22 *ibid.*, p.251.
- 23 *ibid.*, p.10.
- 24 *ibid.*, p.142.
- 25 *ibid.*, p.119.
- 26 Simpson, p.80.

- 27 *Collected Poems* has 'the importance of noise of tomorrow'. *Collected Shorter Poems* and *The English Auden*, however, agree on 'the importance and noise of tomorrow', which version appears to be standard for the poem's appearances in anthologies. The version in *Collected Poems* must be considered inaccurate.
- 28 Hynes, p.350.
- 29 *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, Cantica II, *Purgatory*, translated by Dorothy L. Sayers (Harmondsworth, 1979), p.292.
- 30 Mendelson, 'Auden's Landscape', p.7.

CHAPTER FOUR - AUDEN: THE MAPPING OF THE QUEST

New Year Letter, 'The Quest',

For the Time Being, The Age of Anxiety

— 'each must travel forth alone

In search of the Essential Stone' (CP, p.190).

By 1940 the 'nightmare of the dark' of 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' had become the reality of the 'darkness of tribulation and death' (CP, p.223) of the Second World War. The quotation is from 'The Dark Years', which registers the war's intrusion upon Auden's imagination in its localized imagery of psychological desolation and spiritual loss of direction. Auden had known what to expect in advance, as the prophetic images of darkness and the statement that 'the living nations wait, / Each sequestered in its hate' of the elegy for Yeats indicate. With war imminent to even the least clear-sighted in 'September 1, 1939', he describes himself as 'Uncertain and afraid' and 'Beleaguered by ... / Negation and despair' (EA, pp.245, 247). Confusion, fear and war's abnegation of his ideals of love, justice and human congruity made urgent the search for positive moral orientation that began in 1938 with 'A Voyage', 'Sonnets from China' and 'Commentary'. In 1940 the quest motif emerged in Auden's work as the comprehensive metaphor for his desire to establish a viable epistemological, ethical and religious frame of reference. Local symbols and allegorical landscapes together with other topographical metaphors and images became indispensable to Auden in his

repeated treatments of the quest as statements of his work's psychological and spiritual orientation. Narratives of journeying through successions of figurative landscapes in pursuit of truth or illusion are characteristic of his poetry between 1940 and 1946.

In 1941, the *New Year Letter* collection made it evident that the quest had become the leitmotiv of Auden's writing. *New Year Letter* itself contains a number of passages in which the theme is latent before it is unequivocally announced in the sequence entitled 'The Quest'. This appeared in the volume of 1941, along with 'The Dark Years' and 'The Maze', which deal respectively with searches for spiritual and epistemological direction. Written soon after *New Year Letter*, these poems formalise the themes of journeying and search in the longer poem into figurings of the quest. 'Atlantis' of early 1941 is Auden's most straightforward rendering of the motif, describing efforts to find its equivalent of the Good Place. The subsequent longer poems which occupied Auden's attention until 1946 each makes significant use of the concept of the quest. *For the Time Being* conceives of the goal of man's spiritual aspirations as 'the garden of Being' (CP, p.274) and analyses his failure to reach it. The poem's journey of the three wise men is presented in terms of a quest inspired by the star of the nativity. *The Sea and the Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety* are both concerned with the mental landscapes of the regressive search for refuge from the uncompromising facts of existence.

Figurative topographies are used to configure the ethical, psychological and spiritual abstractions that compose the motives, conditions and outcomes of the escapist urge. This theme of the ego's false quest re-emerges prior to *The Sea and the Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety* in 'The Dark Years' after lying dormant since part I of 'A Voyage'. It forms an antithesis to contemporaneous treatments of the valid search for spiritual fulfilment.

The allegorical topographies of *New Year Letter* and the landscapes of the quest in the poems that accompany it in the volume of 1941 further advance the flexibility and scope of local imagery demonstrated in 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats'. Between the elegy for Yeats at the beginning of 1939 and the commencement of *New Year Letter* towards its end, Auden maintained his skill in techniques of localization in a number of poems. 'They' and 'The Riddle' are the best examples. Both, however, recall the presentations of the contrast between the ideal landscape and the guilty actuality in 'Death's Echo' and 'The Price' rather than constituting significant developments in Auden's use of local imagery. In *New Year Letter* and its companion poems his figurative landscapes become more substantial and well-integrated and more capable of supporting extended explications of conceptual abstractions. The system of local iconographic constants evolved throughout the 1930s provides the images of valleys, mountains, water, cities, and deserts, which remain essential to the poetry of 1940-1946. Other symbolic localizations also recur. The

garden is the sacred landscape of 'The Quest', *For the Time Being* and *The Age of Anxiety* and signifies peace blighted by the 'blizzards' (CP, p.223) of history in 'The Dark Years'. Reality's retribution for the pursuers of the ego's false quest in the two longer poems comes in repeated depictions of the 'last landscape' (CP, p.391). Images of the maze or the labyrinth, first encountered in the 'ritual maze' symbolizing undirected idealism in 'Sonnets from China' XVIII, are frequently used to evoke mental and spiritual confusion. 'The Dark Years' incorporates 'the labyrinth' (CP, p.223) as its local metaphor for unknowing, while 'The Maze' of the poem so entitled forms an allegorization of epistemological uncertainty. As the false quest begins to founder in *The Age of Anxiety*, the protagonists' spiritual confusion is emblemized by their loss of direction in 'the labyrinthine forest' (CP, p.388). The poem also makes use of the image of 'the Maze of Time' (CP, p.371) in establishing the terms for the journey of 'The Seven Stages'. These and other images of the labyrinth and maze indicate by their numerousness the extent to which disorientation of mind and spirit were premises in Auden's work of the period. Confusion and uncertainty are also signified by occasional images of woods and waste lands. Examples include the 'dreadful wood' (CP, p.273) in which mankind is lost to good in *For the Time Being* and the 'weary wastes' (CP, p.225) of futile seeking in 'The Quest' IV.

Auden's Christianity provides the grounds for an ultimate resolution of the dialectics of uncertainty and illusion in each of the longer poems. Religious faith alone serves to provide man with an immutable absolute and relieve the anxieties and fears of temporally contingent existence. Idiosyncratic affirmations of the necessity of recognizing that 'in His will is our peace' accordingly conclude all the longer works. The ethical and spiritual orientation that religious belief constituted for Auden sustains the longer poems and forms a conceptual foundation for the extended topographical allegories they contain. Like Dante, some of whose symbols he employs, as noted in Chapter Three above, Auden relies on Christianity's overarching metaphysic to structure his most ambitious writing. The Good Place and its variants in Auden's work of the period are analogues of Dante's Earthly Paradise, where salvation was at last ensured after the rigours of *Purgatorio*.

'Atlantis' is the unattainable site of spiritual fulfilment in the poem of that title, while 'the Good Place' (CP, p.367) and 'the hermetic gardens' (CP, p.386) are the analogues of paradise encountered in *The Age of Anxiety*. *New Year Letter* features the 'temenos' of 'The well of life' (CP, p.177) as its zone of blessedness and the centre of 'The Maze' is the spirit's goal in the poem so entitled. The hitherto nebulous Good Place of 'A Voyage' and 'The Prophets' is more specifically delineated in terms of its symbolic rôle as the landscape of perfection. Only in 'The Quest' is any sojourning in the necessarily somewhat abstract realm of

spiritual wholeness envisaged when the sequence concludes with the sonnet originally entitled 'The Garden'.¹ In the other poems featuring the Good Place or its equivalents, salvation is either glimpsed from a distance or the questers are dismissed from the sacred precincts for their unworthiness. Auden's religious philosophy does not accommodate lasting enlightenment in its emphasis on acceptance of suffering. Beatific states may occur, but 'perfect Being has ordained / It must be lost to be regained' (CP, p.177), as the visitor to the well of life discovers in *New Year Letter*.

The overtly religious element in Auden's work of the 1940s becomes apparent at the conclusion of *New Year Letter*, which sets the pattern for the resolutions of the subsequent longer works. As a dialectic in pursuit of its opening's stated aim 'To set in order' (CP, p.162) the quest metaphor is relevant to the poem as a whole in its search for ethical and spiritual orientation. The goal of the discursive journey through the three parts of *New Year Letter* is the vision of the 'Unicorn', the 'Dove' and the 'Ichthus' (CP, p.192) of its penultimate paragraph. Traditional symbols for Christ and the Holy Spirit, these are depicted in their respective localized settings 'among the cedars' of 'the green woods', 'Upon the branches of the night' and 'in the deep / Sea-lodges' (CP, p.192). The 'sudden Wind', also a symbol of the Holy Spirit, among 'the quiet reeds', the 'Voice / Within the labyrinth of choice' (CP, p.192) and other Audenesque designations of the Deity are also invoked.

These embodiments of holiness are besought to establish spiritual conditions conducive to the harmonious social order of 'local understanding' (CP, p.162) that *New Year Letter* desiderates:

Disturb our negligence and chill,
 Convict our pride of its offence
 In all things, even penitence,
 Instruct us in the civil art
 Of making from the muddled heart
 A desert and a city where
 The thoughts that have to labour there
 May find locality and peace,
 And pent-up feelings their release,
 Send strength sufficient for our day,
 And point our knowledge on its way,
O da quod jubes, Domine (CP, p.193).

Explicit references to the quest are made as the poem approaches its conclusion. Social justice is conceived of as dependent upon the individual's spiritual growth, which is imaged in terms of a journey towards a very abstract variant of the Good Place:

each must travel forth alone
 In search of the Essential Stone,
 'The Nowhere-without-No' that is
 The justice of societies (CP, p.190).

Science's pursuit of truth in the indeterminate universe of modern physics is described in traditional images of the quest as experiments trace 'The path that twists away from the / Near-distant CASTLE they can see' (CP, p.190). The search for order and certainty is implicit in the topographical

allegories of man's lack of direction on Mount Purgatory and 'the barren heath' (CP, p.167), soon to be discussed below. The extended forensic metaphor commencing 'The situation of our time / Surrounds us like a baffling crime' (CP, p.165) is also a variant of the quest in its attempt to locate the root of guilt for the war.

For all the emphasis on searching in *New Year Letter* enlightenment is envisaged in terms of a fortuitous stumbling upon revelatory sanctity in the passage describing the landscape of 'The well of life' (CP, p.177). 'Though compasses and stars cannot / Direct to that magnetic spot' (CP, p.177), grace and good fortune, synonymous for Auden who wrote '*all Luck is good*' (CP, p.622), reveal 'The field of Being' and 'Eternal Innocence' (CP, p.177). An identification of the sacred '*temenos*' with the biblical Eden of the tree of knowledge is indicated in the statement that 'in its orchards grow the tree / And fruit of human destiny' (CP, pp.177-78). The local image of the orchard adds particularly to 'the field of Being', which is otherwise configured primarily in conceptual terms. As in Eden, there is no abiding once the fruit has been sampled: 'Man must eat it and depart / At once with gay and grateful heart' (CP, p.178). Failure to do so is a passively negative act of will cancelling the beatific experience that grace has supplied. A sudden transformation of the zone of 'Eternal Innocence' is envisaged, introducing the first of the landscapes of negation into Auden's work of the 1940s:

The sky grows crimson with a curse,
 The flowers change colour for the worse,
 He hears behind his back the wicket
 Padlock itself, from the dark thicket
 The chuckle with no healthy cause ... //

... As Horror clambers from the well:
 For he has sprung the trap of Hell (CP, p.178).

Dense vegetation, as in 'the dark thicket', recurrently signifies evil in Auden's symbolic landscapes. This value is made explicit in the metaphor of 'the brambles of man's error' (CP, p.235) in 'Luther' of 1940. Pluralized 'dark thickets' surround the ruined site of 'an evil heritage' (CP, p.225) in 'The Pilgrim', the fourth sonnet of 'The Quest'. On 'The Seven Stages' of *The Age of Anxiety*, 'the sanguine sin' is committed 'where the brambles grow thickest' (CP, p.382). Wild nature in its negative aspect of 'that old grim She' (CP, p.432) repeatedly supplies such images in the poetry of the period to emblemize man's abdication of his will when evil is chosen. The extreme examples are the terminal zones of *The Sea and The Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety*, nightmarish landscapes of ungovernable natural chaos.

'Will is free not to negate / Itself in Hell', announces *New Year Letter* at the start of the allegory of existence as 'The purgatorial hill we climb' (CP, p.178). The passage forms a sustained extension of the symbolism of mountains, hitherto most explicit in the 'Wandering lost upon the mountains of our choice' (EA, p.262) in the original version of 'Sonnets from China' XVIII. In *New Year Letter* the mountain's potential for emblemizing free-will's

confrontation with the determinism of time and circumstance is fully realized. The view of humanity living 'in freedom by necessity, / A mountain people dwelling among mountains' (CP, p.156) of 'Sonnets from China' XVIII forms a premise for some fifty lines of localized allegory. Man's familiarity with the normative rigours of his emblematic 'dwelling among mountains' is indicated several times in the passage, which asks

are we not a trifle
Relieved to wake on its damp earth?
It's been our residence since birth,
Its inconveniences are known
And we have made its flaws our own.
Is it not here that we belong,
Where everyone is doing wrong ...? (CP, p.179).

Having paid homage to Dante at the opening of *New Year Letter*, Auden freely designates his symbolic mountain topography as 'Purgatory' (CP, pp.178, 179), and gives it resemblances to Dante's mountain of spiritual endeavour. *Purgatorio's* ascending series of levels sets the pattern for Auden's mountainous zone 'Where any skyline we attain / Reveals a higher ridge again' (CP, p.178). Dante's frequent references to the rockiness of his terrain of redemptive hardship are recalled by Auden's symbolic landscape where

movement is heretical,
Since over its ironic rocks
No route is truly orthodox (CP, p.179).

As the recognition of the absence of a guiding orthodoxy indicates, the theological certainties of Dante's Europe

have largely evaporated in Auden's view of the spiritual progress of modern man. *Amor Rationalis* does not exercise tutelage over twentieth century inhabitants of Purgatory, who must proceed 'With only guessing for a guide' (CP, p.179). Absence of spiritual direction and fixed ethical co-ordinates are also symbolized by the pathless 'ironic rocks' and the imagery of the indeterminate skylines. As a symbolic landscape of intrinsic uncertainty, Purgatory resembles a maze. As has been noted above, this is one of Auden's key-images of the period, which *New Year Letter* cites at its close in the appeal to the 'Voice / Within the labyrinth of choice' (CP, p.192). Purgatory is at once 'the labyrinth of choice' and 'the Maze of Time' (CP, p.371) referred to in *The Age of Anxiety*, as the opening of *New Year Letter's* mountain allegory indicates:

Time is the life with which we live
 At least three quarters of our time,
 The purgatorial hill we climb (CP, p.178).

In accordance with the religious invocation of the conclusion of the poem and Purgatory's immediate connotation of Christianity, spiritual discipline is accepted as imposing form on the directionless quest of existence. The allegory ends by affirming uncertainty's value in complementing and qualifying the religious conviction that provides the orientation and stimulus of hope:

O once again let us set out,
 Our faith well balanced by our doubt,
 Admitting every step we make
 Will certainly be a mistake,

But still believing we can climb
 A little higher every time,
 And keep in order, that we may
 Ascend the penitential way (CP, p.179).

Faith combines with an uncompromising assessment of the difficulties and discomforts of existential actuality to establish the terms of Auden's theology of the longer poems.

Faith's provision of order is, however, desired as an ideal rather than experienced as inherent in the social and cultural *status quo* with which *New Year Letter* is concerned. In purely secular and historical terms, humanity's confusion is unmitigated, as the localized allegory at the start of part two indicates. The journey of life across the 'ironic rocks' of Purgatory is an affair of the individual conscience, which may avail itself of the consolations and guidance of religion. As *New Year Letter's* original title of *The Double Man* emphasises, however, isolate man has another identity in relation to society and common humanity. In this capacity the individual is part of a world benighted by war and modern spiritual impoverishment as the 'low dishonest decade' of the 1930s draws to a close:

Tonight a scrambling decade ends,
 And strangers, enemies and friends
 Stand once more puzzled underneath
 The signpost on the barren heath
 Where the rough mountain track divides
 To silent valleys on all sides (CP, p.167).

Mountains are again chosen as the symbolic landscape of free-will and necessity, but the impetus and optimism for

the quest provided by faith in the allegory of Purgatory are not available. The 'silent valleys' as iconographic constants for settlement signify what the poem later refers to as 'The possible societies' (CP, p.187), viable goals of human progress unattainable to spiritually defective humanity. A predominantly secular epistemology is inadequate to the task of understanding the 'signpost' as mankind stands on the 'barren heath'

Endeavouring to decipher what
Is written on it, but cannot,
Nor guess in what direction lies
The overhanging precipice (CP, p.167).

The 'precipice' emblemizes the possible moral and cultural catastrophe of a victory for Nazism, the political embodiment of evil haunting *New Year Letter*. As 'a Voice, / Compelling all to make their choice' (CP, p.180), Hitler makes the search for ethical direction urgent. While the landscaping of 'the barren heath' proceeds, however, there are no grounds for optimism in the images of darkness, confusion and exposure to discomfort:

Through the pitch-darkness can be heard
Occasionally a muttered word,
And intense in the mountain frost
The heavy breathing of the lost (CP, p.167).

Within the scheme of the topographical allegory, the past is a valley no longer habitable, the former norms of peaceful existence having been destroyed by the apocalypse of war. Mankind has become a refugee, dispossessed by Hitler, the 'theologian who denies // ... The basis of

civility' (CP, p.180), of certainties hitherto taken for granted:

Far down below them whence they came
 Still flickers feebly a red flame,
 A tiny glow in the great void
 Where an existence was destroyed (CP, p.167).

The view of humanity's common plight in the allegory of 'the barren heath' is sustained in the universalization of mankind as 'Frail, backward, clinging to the granite / Skirts of a sensible old planet' (CP, p.167). Several such global perspectives are established in *New Year Letter* to generalize human vulnerability and the disaster of war. Conversely, closely particularized imagery of 'The crowded fatalistic town' (CP, p.188) of New York is imbued with a symbolic dimension to emblemize the spiritual aridity of modern materialistic culture. Fireworks on New Year's Eve become metaphors of man's helplessness as

along the dark
 Horizon of immediacies
 The flares of desperation rise
 From signallers who justly plead
 Their cause is piteous indeed (CP, p.179).

The divorce of spiritual and secular values and the cultural dominion of the latter is conveyed through the ironic use of religious diction in a vivid description of the city:

... dawn sheds its calm candour now
 On monastries where they vow
 An economic abstinence.
 Modern in their impenitence,
 Blond, naked, paralysed, alone,

Like rebel angels turned to stone
 The secular cathedrals stand
 Upon their valuable land (CP, p.188).

Through the use of such locally symbolic techniques, *New Year Letter* firmly establishes the theme of man's spiritual inadequacy and lack of knowledge sufficient to resolve his uncertainty and loss of ethical direction. These negative aspects of Auden's view of contemporary humanity are further evoked by the figurative topographies of 'The Quest'. The sequence is more concerned with the limitations of epistemology than with impoverished spirituality, although man's intellectual failure to take spiritual factors into account is seen as a major impediment to the quest. Knowledge of the spirit is knowledge of the self, and theoretical preconceptions are insufficient equipment for the inner journey to enlightenment, as 'The Preparations' states at the start of the sequence:

In theory they were sound on Expectation,
 Had there been situations to be in;
 Unluckily they were their situation (CP, p.224).

Departure and choice of direction are subsequently symbolized in the topography of 'quays and crossroads ... / ... places of decision and farewell' (CP, p.224). No route the questers choose offers more comfort than any other in the universality of foreboding conveyed by the line 'All landscapes and all weathers freeze with fear' (CP, p.225).

Difficulties quickly ensue, and the third sonnet, 'The Pilgrim', finds its subject distressed and lost in a

landscape symbolic of hazard and negation. The desolate plain and the tower of Browning's 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came' are recalled by the major images. Innocence and ease are emblemized in the first stanza by the 'large afternoons at play' and 'meadows' (*CP*, p.225) of childhood, in contrast to the sorrow, evil and unavailability of spiritual succour subsequently evoked:

Nor all his weeping ways through weary wastes have found
The castle where his Greater Hallows are interned;
For broken bridges halt him, and dark thickets round
Some ruin where an evil heritage was burned (*CP*, p.225).

The 'broken bridges' symbolize discontinuities in man's epistemology brought about by the sacrifice of innocence and intuition to adulthood and education. The revelation of the 'Greater Hallows' would be available if the pilgrim could 'forget a child's ambition to be old / And institutions where it learned to wash and lie' (*CP*, p.225). Acquired knowledge and social conditioning circumscribe the quester's perception of what he seeks, which surrounds him in the created world's embodiment of objective truth. As 'Kairos and Logos', also of 1940, states, 'The fatherhood of knowledge stood out there' (*CP*, p.240):

... everywhere on his horizon, all the sky,
Is now, as always, only waiting to be told
To be his father's house (*CP*, p.225).

Learning and sophistication are opposed to innocence and ingenuousness in the contrast of the corrupting 'city' and the 'villages from which their childhoods came' (*CP*, p.225)

of the fifth sonnet. Man's entrapment within the limits of his knowledge is a theme uniting the three sonnets on the temptations. 'The Tower' follows with its culminating Faustian description of 'great magicians, caught in their own spell' (CP, p.227) to symbolize man's bondage to a fallible epistemology. 'Fresh addenda are published every day / To the encyclopedia of the Way' (CP, p.228), states sonnet XIV, dismissing as irrelevant to the quest's requirements the acquisition of second-hand knowledge. As in 'To throw away the key and walk away', where immediate experience of the journey 'Learns more than maps upon the whitewashed wall' (CP, p.31), there can be no substitute for the quest itself.

Blind confidence, however, will not suffice, for 'The Presumptuous' end up in a landscape symbolizing futility 'stuck half-way to settle in some cave' (CP, p.227). Nor will the mere good intentions of 'The Average', who as 'an Average Man / Attempting the exceptional' (CP, p.228) is not able to rise to the challenge of the landscape of spiritual trial. Here, in the symbolic topography of the desert, detailed for the first time in Auden's uses of figurative landscapes, 'The Average' is entirely at a loss:

So here he was without maps or supplies,
A hundred miles from any decent town;
The desert glared into his blood-shot eyes,
The silence roared displeasure (CP, p.228).

Like the travellers on 'The Seven Stages' of *The Age of Anxiety*, who reach the desert not prepared for its test of

the spirit, 'The Average' can only flee. Success in the quest is the prerogative of 'The Lucky', whose single asset is the 'Grace' (CP, p.229) which those who fail have not possessed. Grace in the form of good luck makes knowledge, emblemized by the advice of 'the erudite committee', superfluous, and enables 'The Lucky' to confound 'the intellectual Sphinx' (CP, p.229).

Grace is craved by 'The Adventurers', as the reference to 'their central thirsts' (CP, p.230) symbolically indicates. Their fundamental error of direction in having chosen the *via negativa*, however, precludes the possibility of grace's intervention, and their quest terminates in a landscape of despair. The repetitions of 'empty' evoke their ultimate forsakings of purpose, while the 'foul marsh' (CP, p.230) recalls the 'marsh' of evil in 'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came'. As a formless, treacherous terrain, the marsh emblemizes reason's descent into chaos. It is a shifting landscape, abnegating epistemology in its symbolization of the absence of any firm basis for knowledge, and breeds only 'monsters' (CP, p.230) of unreason. The 'monsters' bring about a final severance with the benevolent principles and memories that have been denied to seal the fates of 'The Adventurers':

Spinning upon their central thirst like tops,
 They went the Negative Way towards the Dry;
 By empty caves beneath an empty sky
 They emptied out their memories like slops,

 Which made a foul marsh as they dried to death,
 Where monsters bred who forced them to forget
 The lovelies their consent avoided (CP, p.230).

Like the leader and his companions of 'Missing', however, the suicidal choice of 'The Adventurers' is based on an unviably affirmative vision, for they perish 'Still praising the Absurd with their last breath' (CP, p.230). As legends, they come to supply the spiritual refreshment they themselves could not obtain as 'barren wives and burning virgins came / To drink the pure cold water of their wells' (CP, p.230). Their fatal quest sets the pattern for the romantic explorers of the fringes of consciousness in 'Memorial for the City', who earn the epitaph 'Faithful without Faith, they died for the Conscious City' (CP, p.452).

Epistemological certainty comes no closer in 'The Waters' which follows. 'With time in tempest everywhere', the sum of the knowledge of 'The saintly and sincere' is metaphorically conveyed in terms of their clinging 'To rafts of frail assumption' (CP, p.230). Their particular quest has brought them to an abstract landscape of natural chaos where

Enraged phenomena bear down
In overwhelming waves to drown
Both sufferer and suffering (CP, p.230).

'Poet, oracle, and wit' realize the inner nature of their search for truth as they sit 'Like unsuccessful anglers by / The ponds of apperception' (CP, p.230). Their epistemological assumptions are, however, erroneous, and they can only fail by expecting the waters to provide the answer while they inquire with 'the wrong request' (CP, p.230).

The subjective change necessary to fulfilment of the quest is granted by grace in 'The Garden' when those privileged to enter it 'felt their centre of volition shifted' (CP, p.231). As Alpha and Omega, where 'all opening starts' and 'All journeys die', the sacred landscape of 'The Garden' is a rather abstract zone of geometrical and moral perfection:

Here adolescence into number breaks
The perfect circle time can draw on stone,
And flesh forgives division as it makes
Another's moment of consent its own (CP, p.231).

The opening words, 'Within these gates...' (CP, p.230), establish locative terms that contain the impressionistic descriptive details that follow. These are mainly condensed into a single line evoking movement, sound, light and colour: 'White shouts and flickers through its green and red' (CP, p.230). The effect is to suggest the presence of the 'Eternal Innocence' and 'perfect Being' discovered in the precinct of 'The well of life' (CP, p.177) in *New Year Letter*. That poem's concluding vision of 'White childhood moving ... / Through the green woods' (CP, p.192) is also distinctly recalled. The floral suggestions of the colours are confirmed in the symbolization of spiritual solacing in 'The Garden', 'Where often round some old maid's desolation / Roses have flung their glory like a cloak' (CP, p.231). Apt emblematic values are signified by the 'White', 'green' and 'red' in respect of the garden's status as the spiritual goal of the quest. White symbolizes purity, truth and innocence, green

love, joy and divine bounty and red is the colour of magic.² The qualities indicated by white and green are evident in the imagery of children at play, mathematical perfection, forgiveness and the glory of the roses. A magical aspect is suggested in the statement that 'The Garden' is the place where 'wish and weight are lifted' (CP, p.231).

'The Garden' arbitrarily but effectively concludes 'The Quest' and establishes the garden as a landscape of perfection in anticipation of its function in *For the Time Being* and *The Age of Anxiety*. The image is next encountered in 'The Dark Years', a poem heavily redolent of the fear and uncertainty engendered by the war. Composed in October 1940, 'The Dark Years' registers the impact upon Auden's imagination of the events of that year in which Hitler's sweeping successes made Nazi victory seem likely. A landscape of chaos and collapse in which the garden is the major image is presented to symbolize war's destruction of order and values now accessible only to nostalgia:

... blizzards havoc the garden and the old
Folly becomes unsafe, the mill-wheels
rust, and the weirs fall slowly to pieces (CP, p.223).

Confronted with such a reality, the desire for refuge becomes immediate and the poem subsequently presents the concept of escape into the comforting illusion of the dream-landscape:

Will the inflamed ego attempt as before
to migrate again to her family place,
to the hanging gardens of Eros
and the moons of a magical summer? (CP, p.223).

The Age of Anxiety offers a sustained consideration of such an 'attempt to migrate' from the necessity of facing a disturbing present. In 'The Dark Years', however, flight is immediately seen to be futile, for the imagination's haven has also been irrevocably affected by war's infiltration of consciousness:

The local train does not run any more,
the heretical roses have lost their scent,
and her Cornish Hollow of tryst is
swarming now with discourteous villains (CP, p.223).

'The Maze of Time' cannot be slipped out of by solipsistic wishful-thinking, and 'the fancy-governed sequence' merely 'leads us all / back to the labyrinth' (CP, p.223). The 'polar peril' (CP, p.61) envisaged as a threat to civilization in the early 'Consider' has become the reality of Nazi-dominated 1940 as 'predatory / glaciers glitter in a chilly evening, // and death is probable' (CP, p.223). As in the longer poems, faith constitutes the only source of certainty and solace. The desire 'To seek Thee always in Thy substances' (CP, p.248) of 'In Sickness and in Health' of the same year is echoed in the conclusion's sanctification of reality: the 'spirit orgulous' must

conform to its temporal focus with praise,
acknowledging the attributes of
one immortal, one infinite Substance (CP, p.223).

The moral of 'The Dark Years' is that of the subsequent longer poems. Rather than attempting to flee into a dream-landscape like that of 'the heretical roses', the individual

has a religious duty to recognize the actuality he inhabits as unconditional and uncompromising.

Between 'The Dark Years' and *For the Time Being* of 1941-42, 'Atlantis' of early 1941 is Auden's only significant treatment of the landscapes of the quest. The concepts of learning, religious enthusiasm and sensual pleasure as impediments to the search for truth are compartmented into the respective allegorical locations of 'Iona', 'Thrace' and 'Carthage and Corinth' (CP, pp.245-46). Passing through each, the traveller becomes 'acquainted ... / With each refuge that tries to / Counterfeit Atlantis' (CP, p.246). Beyond references to 'some old harbour-city / Of Iona', 'the headlands of Thrace' with its 'stony savage shore' and 'some bar' of 'gay / Carthage or Corinth' (CP, pp.245-46), the landscapes of distraction are not topographically detailed. More attention is given to the terrain of the quest's obligatory landscape of hazard as the traveller enters the 'Stone and snow, silence and air' (CP, p.246) surrounding Atlantis. After 'The terrible trek inland / Through squalid woods and frozen / Tundras', a mountain landscape emblemizing the will's exposure to the challenge of necessity is indicated as the quest approaches 'the last col' (CP, p.246). Atlantis is ultimately unattainable, but the quester is rewarded for his efforts with a glimpse of it that entitles him to 'lie down in peace, / Having seen ... salvation' (CP, p.246).

Compared to the subtle intricacies of 'The Quest', 'Atlantis' offers a rather perfunctory figuring of the journey to spiritual fulfilment. The essential difference between it and the earlier sequence lies in the denial of the goal to the traveller, 'The Quest' having concluded with the beatific sojourn in 'The Garden'. In this 'Atlantis' sets the pattern for *For the Time Being* and *The Age of Anxiety*, in both of which the landscape of perfection is clearly instanced but not available to those who seek it. The Good Place of *For the Time Being* is a particularly abstract zone, 'the garden of Being that is only known in Existence / As the command to be never there' (CP, p.274). It is referred to frequently, and the statement that 'The garden is unchanged' (CP, pp.276, 278) is repeated three times to emphasise its function as the embodiment of immutable spiritual perfection. Rather than a limited series of episodes as in 'The Quest', the search for enlightenment and salvation is now seen as a life's work: 'the garden is the only place there is, but you will not find it / Until you have looked for it everywhere and found nowhere that is not a desert' (CP, p.274). Attainment of the garden is the prerogative of those who die in their efforts to find it, according to the last speech of The Star of the Nativity: 'Horror ... // ... rears to kill', after which the slain quester may 'wake a child in the rose-garden' (CP, p.286).

The words conclude 'The Summons', Auden's rendering of the journey of the Magi, which contains some of the more

concrete local imagery in a poem rich in abstractions. In 'The Summons' Auden has frequent recourse to a Bunyanesque bluntness of allegorization in writing of the 'Bridge of Dread', 'the fosse of Tribulation' or 'the cold hand of Terror' (CP, pp.285-86). His practised use of images of the mountain produces the more interesting 'Glassy Mountain where are no / Footholds for logic' (CP, p.285) to emblemize the inadequacy of orthodox epistemology for the quest. 'Knowledge but increases vertigo', rather than proving a reliable guide, and the journey enters a maze of unknowing where logic is a mere irrelevance:

Those who pursue me take a twisting lane
To find themselves immediately alone
With savage water or unfeeling stone,
In labyrinths where they must entertain
Confusion, cripples, tigers, thunder, pain (CP, p.285).

Less allegorically formal images of intractable landscapes succeed in the statement that 'The countryside is dreary, / Marsh, jungle, rock' (CP, p.286). 'The Summons', however, makes use of techniques of localization that have become items of Auden's stock-in-trade rather than extending his figurative uses of ideas of landscape.

In terms of development in local imagery in *For the Time Being*, the speeches of Thought, Intuition, Sensation and Feeling which introduce 'The Annunciation' anticipate the more ambitious localizations of *The Age of Anxiety*. Like many of the local allegorizations of the subsequent longer poem the landscapes of Thought, Intuition, Sensation and

Feeling are slightly surreal but concretely particular in their vivid local imagery. 'The Four Faculties' of man have the task of revealing the baseness of human nature in its unregenerate state prior to the Annunciation. They set forth 'The human night' in terms of 'Its wanton dreams' (CP, p.276) through their respective landscapes of disoriented intellection, dulled intuition, sensual degeneracy and emotional injury. Sensation begins by stating 'My senses are still coarse / From late engrossment in a fair'(CP, p.277). A tableau of sensual indulgence is configured like that of Langland's 'faire felde ful of folke'³ with 'Whole populations running to a plain, / Making its lush alluvial meadows / One boisterous preposter' (CP, p.277). Human fascination with trivia is emblemized in the compelling attraction of 'Old tunes / Reiterated, lights with repeated winks' (CP, p.277). Time wasted in mindless preoccupation with spectacle and novelty is presented in the imagery of

By the river

A whistling crowd had waited many hours
To see a naked woman swim upstream (CP. p.277).

The landscape of Sensation concludes with an incisively absurd image of debased sensuality as, behind the drinks-booths, 'In a wet vacancy among the ash cans, / A waiter coupled sadly with a crow' (CP, p.277).

The indictment of human nature continues with Feeling's localization of persecution and cruelty. Just as Sensation degenerated into sensual indulgence, so Feeling becomes

destructive passion in its brief and vivid landscape, which is informed with the fury and brutality of the poem's contemporary background of warfare:

I have but now escaped a raging landscape:
 There woods were in a tremor from the shouts
 Of hunchbacks hunting a hermaphrodite;
 A burning village scampered down a lane;
 Insects with ladders stormed a virgin's house;
 On a green knoll littered with picnics
 A mob of horses kicked a gull to death (CP, p.277).

The major images of 'woods' and the 'village' are found frequently in Auden's landscapes. Woods generally symbolize conditions of benightedness, like the 'squalid woods' of 'Atlantis' and 'the labyrinthine forest' (CP, p.388) of *The Age of Anxiety*. Villages are most often literally representative of limited human settlements, having featured in the scheme of Auden's figurative topographies since the 'moping villages' of 'Paysage Moralisé'.

The valley, Auden's principal local iconographic constant for zones of habitation, provides the structural foundation for the landscape of enervated Intuition which follows. Early depictions of industrial waste lands like 'The Watershed' and 'Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own' are called upon to configure

The sombre valley of an industry
 In dereliction. Conduits, ponds, canals,
 Distressed with weeds; engines and furnaces
 At rust in rotting sheds (CP, p.277).

The imagery of ruin and collapse emblemizes the disuse into

which Intuition has fallen in a materialist culture which effectively discounts it. Intuition's decrepitude is further signified in the account of the machinery's 'strong users/ Transformed to spongy heaps of drunken flesh' (CP, p.277). Here it is 'Lead's the Best' that supplies the precedent in its statement that 'Hodge himself becomes a sottish bawd' with the onset of industrial dereliction. Ungoverned vegetation symbolizes Intuition's degeneracy in the imagery of 'Deep among dock and dusty nettle lay / Each ruin of a will' (CP, p.277).

Intuition's realistically particular landscape is followed by Thought's charting of the realm of the impotent intellect, a sphere of 'figures with no ground, / Areas of wide omission and vast regions / Of passive colour' (CP, p.277). Unity of being, the goal of the quest, is impossible in Thought's abstract landscape of infinite incompleteness:

... an embarrassed sum

Stuck on the stutter of a decimal,

And points almost coincident already

Approached so slowly they could never meet (CP, p.277).

Thought concludes by stating 'To Be was an archaic nuisance' (CP, p.277), stating the terms of the negation of humanity that governs the terminal zones of *The Sea and the Mirror* and *The Age of Anxiety*.

In *The Age of Anxiety*, the four faculties of 'The Annunciation' are allegorized in the characterizations of the protagonists. Thought, feeling, intuition and sensation are respectively represented by Malin, Rosetta, Quant and Emble,

as John Fuller notes.⁴ Malin's intellection, Rosetta's emotional sensitivity, Quant's intuitive equability and Emble's hedonism confirm this reading of their significances. In *For the Time Being* the faculties state that 'We who are four were / Once but one' (CP, p.275). *The Age of Anxiety* examines its characters' attempts, as aspects of man's fragmented psyche, to re-gain unity of being, or at least to ease the discomfort of their awareness of its lacking. Their search for 'The primitive pact with pure feeling' (CP, p.348) is a regressive one, aimed at recovering a state of pre-Oedipal security like that evoked in the 'Prologue' to *The Orators*. Refuge from the uneasy inner reality of self-consciousness and the inhospitable objective world of warfare and alienating urban modernity is sought, initially in solitary drinking and subsequently in collectively generated fantasy. The longest section of the poem is 'The Seven Stages', the dream-journey of the ego's false quest, which Rosetta, whom the others elect as guide, hopes will follow the 'Regressive road to Grandmother's House' (CP, p.371). A condition of infantile freedom from the individual's responsibility for his own consciousness, a 'state of prehistoric happiness' (CP, p.371), is envisaged as the goal of their quest. The elaborate dream-landscapes of 'The Seven Stages', however, lead to no 'fabulous / country' of release from reality, but to the terrifying 'last landscape' (CP, p.391). There, 'the world from which their journey has been one long flight rises up before them ... as

if the whole time it had been hiding in ambush, only waiting for the worst moment to reappear to its fugitives in all the majesty of its perpetual fury' (CP, p.391).

With regard to the characters' regressive motivation and the unforeseen and catastrophic destination of their false quest, *The Age of Anxiety* restates and comprehensively extends the theme of escapism in *The Sea and the Mirror*. In addition to their allegorical functions, Malin, Rosetta, Quant and Emble are 'assorted, consorted specimens of the general popular type' (CP, p.334), those who implore Caliban for release in *The Sea and the Mirror*. Caliban cynically translates their desire for 'the ultimately liberal condition' into a landscape of collective nostalgia, a localized vision embodying the pre-Oedipal security that is sought:

'Carry me back, Master, to the cathedral town where the canons run through the water meadows with butterfly nets and the old women keep sweetshops in the cobbled side streets ... O take us home with you, strong and swelling One, home to your promiscuous pastures where the minotaur of authority is just a roly-poly ruminant and nothing is at stake, those purring sites and amusing vistas where the fluctuating arabesques of sound, the continuous eruption of colours and scents, the whole rich incoherence of a nature made up of gaps and asymmetrical events plead beautifully and bravely for our undistress' (CP, p.336).

Caliban then transports his supplicants to the actuality of the primal zone where 'nothing is at stake'. In this last

landscape of the lava-plateau, extinct volcanoes, geysers and chasms, free-will and its concomitant responsibilities are at last irrelevances: 'Here, where the possessive note is utterly silent and all events are tautological repetitions and no decision will ever alter the secular stagnation, at long last you are, as you have asked to be, the only subject' (CP, p.337).

As 'the only subject' of her comprehensively imagined dream-landscape, Rosetta is the focal character in the treatment of the ego's search for refuge in fantasy of *The Age of Anxiety*. Her 'favorite [sic] day-dream in which she indulged whenever she got a little high — which was rather too often' is presented in great detail once it has been introduced in the following general terms: 'one of those landscapes familiar to all readers of English detective stories, those lovely innocent countrysides inhabited by charming eccentrics with independent means and amusing hobbies to whom ... work and law and guilt are just literary words' (CP, p.346). For Rosetta, this fictively archetypal English landscape of privileged tranquillity constitutes a prescribed topographical and social imaginative mode that excludes the unpleasantness and injustice of the modernity from which she seeks refuge. Auden considered Western society to have produced 'a shame-culture' in its materialist emphasis on the inferiority of those without wealth. He stated that 'When such a culture imagines Eden, therefore, it automatically excludes the weak and ungifted',

because 'The happy man is the fortunate man, and to be fortunate means to be successful, rich, powerful, beautiful, admired' (*DH*, p.413). Rosetta's dream-Eden is constructed on such premises to provide an imaginative refuge drawn not from her own experience but from received ideas of ease and affluence engendered by a 'shame-culture'. Her 'couth region' (*CP*, p.348) of aristocratic 'undistress' is a landscape structured around ideologically prescribed conceptions of a well-ordered and affluent England that serves to illustrate a remark by Roland Barthes: 'To induce a collective content for the imagination is always an inhuman undertaking, not only because dreaming essentializes life into destiny, but also because dreams are impoverished and the alibi of an absence'.⁵ As the character representative of feeling, Rosetta is acutely sensitive to the imaginative and spiritual impoverishment of modern society. For her the city that is the immediate locus of *The Age of Anxiety* is

A doomed Sodom dancing its heart out
 To treacly tunes, a tired Gomorrah
 Infatuated with her former self
 Whose dear dreams though they dominate still
 Are formal facts which refresh no more (*CP*, p.354).

She realizes that the 'collective content for the imagination', the basis for her own dream-landscape, consists of the hollow nostalgia of 'dear dreams', which are incapable of informing an abnegating present with meaning. In a society in which the individual is 'Unattached as tumbleweed' (*CP*, p.365)

she protests that 'I refuse to accept / Your plain place, your unprivileged time' (CP, p.364). She therefore clings to her addiction to her outmoded fantasy as the only 'alibi of an absence' to which she has access in her alienation from a culture whose standardized myths 'refresh no more'.

The political implications of Auden's and Barthes's remarks on the ideological determination of dreaming are worked out in Rosetta's awakening from her fantasy. In her liberation from imaginative bondage to her 'paternal world / Of pillars and parks' (CP, p.367) the necessity of accepting objective reality, the central theme of *The Age of Anxiety*, is most clearly stated. At 'the big house' (CP, pp.381-82) on 'The Seven Stages' she achieves a sobering insight into the oligarchic power, selfishness and corruption that form the political and social foundations of her dream of affluent ease. Prior to this, however, her absorption in her dream-landscape is complete, as her first speech in the poem definitively indicates. Her moral duplicity consists in her wish to identify and be identified with her fantasy, as her use of 'ours' when she first speaks and her later references to her aristocratic parents make plain. The modern 'shame-culture' obliges her to try to disown the humiliating reality of her origins in 'the semi-detached / Brick villa in Laburnum Crescent' and her 'poor fat father' (CP, p. 404). Categorical rejection of the 'mythical scenes I make up' (CP, p.404) and acceptance of God and objective reality, virtually synonymous for Auden at this period, do not come until her final speech.

The significance of her awakening is proportionate to the depth of her pre-occupation with the dream-landscape, which is shown to be profound by her opening description of 'what was ours' (CP, p.347). This forms the longest passage of topographical description in Auden's work and succeeds in indicating emphatically the familiarity to Rosetta of 'her favorite day-dream' and the extent of her imaginative investment in illusion. The movement from the opening prospect to the scanning of the details of the panorama emulates Thomson's technique of selective and ordered surveys of landscapes. For Rosetta, as for Thomson, distance lends enchantment, and the harmonious regulation of visual details implies a social harmony in the landscape beheld. As J. G. Turner notes repeatedly in his *The Politics of Landscape*⁶, what such well-arranged accounts omit is of as much consequence as what they include: like the topographical poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Rosetta's landscape is not contaminated by any suggestion of the hardship and inequality that lay beneath the smooth veneer of the English idyll. Her opening speech is worth quoting in full in view of its importance in defining the terms of her illusion. Its leisurely cadences, accommodating syntax and its fluid orchestration of local detail also call for the passage to be presented in its entirety. Far from being recognized as 'a wish-dream that cannot become real', Rosetta's landscape is an imagined refuge in which she invests belief:

From Seager's Folly

We beheld what was ours. Undulant land
 Rose layer by layer till at last the sea
 Far away flashed; from fretted uplands
 That lay to the north, from limestone heights
 Incisive rains had dissected well,
 For down each dale industrious there ran
 A paternoster of ponds and mills,
 Came sweet waters, assembling quietly
 By a clear congress of accordant streams
 A wild river that moseyed at will
 Through parks and ploughland, purring southward
 In a wide valley. Wolds on each side
 Came dawdling downwards in double curves,
 Mellow, mature, to meadowlands and
 Sedentary orchards, settled places
 Crowded with lives; fat cattle brooded
 In the shade of great oaks, sheep grazed in
 The ancient hollows of meander scars and
 Long-legged ladies with little-legged dogs
 Loll'd with their lovers by lapsing brooks.
 A couth region: consonant, lofty,
 Volatile vault and vagrant buttress
 Showed their shapeliness; with assured ease,
 Proud on that plain, St Peter Acorn,
 St Dill-in-the Deep, St Dust, St Alb,
 St Bee-le-Bone, St Botolph-the-less,
 High gothic growths in a grecian space,
 Lorded over each leafy parish
 Where country curates in cold bedrooms
 Dreamed of deaneries till at day-break
 The rector's rooks with relish described
 Their stinted station (CP, pp.347-48).

The account is laden with words evocative of orderliness
 and congruous settlement which directly connote a benevolent

and untroubled society. The 'wide valley', Auden's local iconographic constant for the state of stable habitation, is 'A couth region' of 'settled places' and 'meadowlands' flanked by 'Mellow, mature' wolds. Entirely humanized, the region is the direct antithesis of the 'last landscape / Of gloom and glaciers and great storms' (CP, p.391) that engulfs the travellers on 'The Seven Stages'. Nature itself is well-behaved in the uplands that 'Incisive rains had dissected well', while 'sweet waters' assemble 'quietly / By a clear congress of accordant streams'. When the 'Sedentary orchards' are added to the depiction of the valley beneath the 'limestone heights' where the 'mild river' wanders, the landscape becomes familiar. Auden is re-creating in detail the prospect of 'the happy valley, / Orchard and curving river' seen from the heights of Alston Moor in 'Missing'. His myth of the region's surrogation for the Good Place provided the view of 'green and civil life that dwells / Below a cliff of savage fells' (CP, p.182) in *New Year Letter*. Rosetta, however, ignores that poem's all-important proviso that 'such a bond is not an Ought, / Only a given mode of thought' (CP, p.183), and Auden accordingly authorially subverts her prospect. A subtle and pervasive suggestion of pathological languour accumulates through the successive references to ease and indolence. The river that 'moseyed', the 'dawdling' wolds, the 'Sedentary orchards', the ladies who 'Lolled with their lovers by lapsing brooks' and the dreaming curates

conspire to create a narcotic effect. Rosetta's landscape, which she visits whenever she gets 'a little high', is effectively a drug to which she has become habituated to keep reality at bay.

Subsequent speeches by Rosetta leave no doubt regarding her wish to identify unconditionally with her dream-Eden. In 'The Seven Ages' her companions provide unvarnished accounts of their childhoods. Rosetta, however, compounds the lie established by her initial declaration that 'We beheld what was ours' by detailing an upbringing amid affluence and privilege:

Tall in tweeds on the terrace gravel,
 Father and his friends reformed régimes,
 Monies and monarchs, and mother wrote
 Swift and sure in the silk-hung saloon
 Her large round letters (CP, p.358).

At the end of 'The Seven Ages', she is still dreaming of 'Level lawns and logical vistas' and 'big stone / Houses' (CP, p.369). Personal familiarity with the eccentric imagined aristocracy of her fantasy world is claimed in the speech beginning 'There was Lord Lugar at Lighthazels' (CP, p.369).

Her impressions of the war also contrast dissonantly with the accounts given by her companions. Malin, Quant and Emble provide harshly factual summaries of the mechanized brutality of the conflict. Rosetta, however, sentimentally distorts her vision of the 'besieged island' of Britain by super-imposing the ordered congruity and pastoral

sentimentality of her dream-landscape upon the reality:

Round green gardens, down grooves between white
Hawthorne-hedges, long hospital trains
Smoothly slide with their sensitized freight
Of mangled men, moving them homeward
In pain through pastures (CP, p.351).

The speech reveals that her fantasies of 'couth' and 'consonant' English parkland draw upon her sense of her origins in 'That island in arms where my home once was' (CP, p.351). To create Rosetta's false memories, Auden is calling upon his own recollections at the distance of New York of England and his Cumbrian 'locality I love'. The general topographical resemblance of Rosetta's dream-landscape to the Alston Moor region has already been remarked upon. Prior to *The Age of Anxiety*, New York had found him employing his memories of England to very different ends in 'The Prophets' and *New Year Letter*. His investment of personal feeling in Rosetta's speeches, however skillfully he objectifies his nostalgia through artifice and irony, has not escaped notice. John Bayley has written that 'The poetry of Rosetta is perhaps the most moving he has written',⁷ words indicative of the effectiveness of Auden's characterization of Rosetta as the poem's representative of feeling. For Rosetta, as for Auden, the U.S.A.'s urban environment is 'the Great Void where you have to balance without handholds'.⁸ At the cost of her integrity, the English dream-Eden with which she identifies provides her with psychological support by filling 'the Great Void' with an imagined order.

Like Rosetta, Quant, also an immigrant as the 'Prologue' states, imaginatively frequents a dream-landscape. He too feels dispossessed spiritually by modernity in a culture in which 'as so often happens in the modern world ... there was no one-to-one correspondence between his social or economic position and his private mental life' (*CP*, p.345). There are, however, essential distinctions between his localized fantasy and Rosetta's. Quant's dream-landscape is not the standardized realm of affluence and upper-class order which the 'shame-culture' recommends to Rosetta. His 'fabulous / country' is a composite of various classical mythologies drawn from his extensive reading referred to in the 'Prologue'. Rosetta's 'Level lawns and logical vistas' are a mode of psychological escapism which she renders doubly invidious by her autobiographical identification with the dream. Quant's mythological landscape is, like Auden's personal dream-Eden, both an ideal location and a source of imaginative recreation. It is fully recognized as 'a wish-dream that cannot become real' in accordance with Auden's prescription for the proper enjoyment of the dream-Eden. Unlike Rosetta, whose compulsive recourse to her fantasy is revealed by its presentation in her first speech and its frequent recurrences, Quant does not introduce his mythological landscape until 'The Seven Ages' are well underway. The speech in which it occurs begins with an extended review of human banality which Quant suddenly breaks off to focus inwardly upon the permanence and splendour embodied in his dream. Rosetta

framed her descriptions in the past tense as a consequence of her deluded wish to belong historically to her fantasy; Quant speaks entirely in the present tense to describe objectively his landscape's perennial availability:

Who closes his eyes
Sees blonde vistas bathed in sunlight,
The temples, tombs, and terminal god,
Tall by a torrent, the etruscan landscape
Of Man's Memory. His myths of Being
Are there always (CP, p.365).

As Quant continues, the composite nature of his mythological dream-landscape is revealed. The topography is detailed in terms of the 'unchanging / Lucid lake' where Narcissus gazes, the 'cave' of Polyphemus and 'the virid bank, / That smooth sward' (CP, p.365) where Orpheus lies slain. Art's triumph over time and nature, which Quant's landscape affirms in its celebration of the persistence of the ancient myths, is emblemized by death's failure to silence Orpheus:

the bloody head,
In the far distance, floating away
Down the steady stream, still opening
Its charming mouth, goes chanting on in
Fortissimo tones, a tenor lyre
Dinning the doom into a deaf Nature
Of her loose chaos (CP, p.365).

Quant's locally mythopoeic imagination is also the vehicle for the landscapes of Venus Island and the quest for the Good Place in 'The Seven Ages'. The former allegorizes the commencement of active sexual experience in early adulthood, the third of the ages. As Auden's local iconographic constant

for selfish isolation, the island is the landscape of hedonistic pre-occupation with concupiscence. Quant arrives on 'The savage shore where old swains lay wrecked' to ascend duly Venus's 'basalt stairway', but avoids 'The great gate where she gives all pilgrims / Her local wine' (CP, p.360). Allegorically, he has foregone loss of objectivity in sexual initiation. The 'brambles of man's error' (CP, p.235) and 'dark thickets' (CP, pp.178, 225) of earlier landscapings of evil are recalled as Quant finds himself 'Pushing through brambles' (CP, p.360) to obtain an independent perspective on what takes place on Venus Island. The woods of persecution in Feeling's speech in *For the Time Being* are revisited for the surreal emblemization of depraved cruelty in the lines

cupids on stilts,
 Their beautiful bottoms breaking wind,
 Hunted hares with hurricane lanterns
 Through woods on one side (CP, p.360).

Prostitution thrives in 'a brick bath-house' amid abandoned revelry to 'mad music', while 'Primroses, peacocks and peachtrees' ornament the 'Degraded glen' (CP, p.360-61). The cold eye with which Quant surveys the scene finally takes in a glimpse of a meretricious and diseased Venus with 'a very / Indolent ulcer' (CP, p.361) on her thigh.

Free of the obsessive pursuit of sensuality, Quant is able to undertake the quest for the Good Place in the sixth age. The allegory begins with medieval directness of personification as the idea of the quest forms out of discomfort and distress:

In the soft-footed
Hours of darkness when ... //

... Pride lies

Awake in himself too weak to stir
As Shame and Regret shove into his their
Inflamed faces, we failures inquire
For the treasure also (CP, p.366).

'The tears of parting at Traitor's Halt' (CP, p.366) mark the journey's beginning, an allegorical localization of a stage beyond which those disloyal to their ideals will not proceed. Entering the landscape of evil, filled with images of pain, collapse, deformity and waste, the quest gets underway:

... Repellent there

A storm was brewing, but we started out
In carpet-slippers by candlelight
Through Wastewood in the wane of the year,
Past Torture Tower and Twisting Ovens,
Their ruins ruled by the arrested insect
And abortive bird (CP, p.367).

The transit of the terrain of negation and abomination completed, 'Red River' (CP, p.367), the allegorical emblem for the course of evolution, is reached. Here, 'on Wrynose Weir / Lay a dead salmon' (CP, p.367). The location signifies a point at which the salmon's characteristic vigour and tenacity in swimming upstream are insufficient for further evolutionary progress, which requires man's higher intelligence to move beyond nature. Man is alone on the quest of the spirit, to emphasise which it is stated that 'the dogs ... / ... turned tail' (CP, p.367) at Wrynose Weir.

Loss of material comfort in accordance with the necessity for asceticism as the quest progresses is allegorized when 'Our diseased guide deserted with all / The milk chocolate' (CP, p.367). 'Emerging from / Forest to foothills' (CP, p.367) the travellers symbolically move from benightedness towards the mountainous landscape surrounding the Good Place. As in 'Atlantis', the goal is sighted but not reached as the mist clears and Quant obtains 'one glimpse of the granite walls / And the glaciers guarding the Good Place' (CP, p.367). Disappointed, but retaining his equability, the quester returns to his normative landscape of moral imperfection. 'Mockbeggar Lane' emblemizes meanness of spirit in accordance with the traditional 'Mock-beggar Hall', 'A grand, ostentatious house, where no hospitality is afforded, neither is any charity given'⁹:

... My hands in my pockets,
Whistling ruefully I wandered back
By Maiden Moor and Mockbeggar Lane
To Nettlenaze where nightingales sang
Of my own evil (CP, p.367).

Quant's quest and his other figurative landscapes in combination with Rosetta's repeated returns to her detailed dream-Eden prepare the reader for more than twenty pages of the landscaping of 'The Seven Stages'. The dream-world through which the four characters pass on their regressive attempt to make 'the journey homeward / Arriving by roads already known' (CP, p.371) is dramatically feasible as a group-fantasy inspired by alcoholic conviviality. They

'establish a rapport in which communication of thoughts and feelings is so accurate and instantaneous, that they appear to function as a single organism' (CP, p.371). Together, they imaginatively set out to achieve 'that state of prehistoric happiness which, by human beings, can only be imagined in terms of a landscape bearing a symbolic resemblance to the human body' (CP, p.371). This statement has proved a red-herring in critical appraisals of *The Age of Anxiety*. It must be taken to indicate that man necessarily conceives of the locus of happiness anthropomorphically in desiring to re-possess the security and comfort of the womb. Conversely, sensual pleasure may be imagined topographically, as Malin demonstrates in detail when enjoining Emble to amorousness with Rosetta in 'The Masque':

And you, bright Prince
 Invent your steps, go variously about
 Her pleasant places, disposed to joy;
 O stiffly stand, a staid monadnock,
 On her penepain; placidly graze
 On her outwash apron, her own steed;
 Dance, a wild deer, in her dark thickets;
 Run, a river, all relish through her vales (CP, p.399).

Auden's analogising of primal happiness 'in terms of a landscape bearing a symbolic resemblance to the human body' has, however, been taken to refer directly to 'The Seven Stages'. It has thus been assumed that the section should be read as based upon firm allegorical correspondences between

the stages and parts of the human anatomy. This has resulted in the production of a number of 'keys' to 'The Seven Stages' which claim, for example, that 'the rival ports' (CP, p.377) signify lung and liver; the 'sawtooth range' (CP, p.375) of mountains is said to represent the human rib-cage and 'the hermetic gardens' (CP, p.386) to symbolize the genitals.¹⁰ None of these, or the other elaborate interpretations which accompany them, is supported by more than a fancifully inquisitive response to the text. The last example is particularly wide of the mark: 'the hermetic gardens' are, as the poem makes clear, and as precedents in *For the Time Being* and 'The Quest' would suggest, a zone of spiritual regeneration and the sanctified harmony of man and nature. In any case, at no point do the stages lead to a 'state of prehistoric happiness' to which Auden's analogy between landscape and the human body relates. Such attempts to categorise anatomically 'The Seven Stages' are therefore irrelevant as well as specious. 'The Seven Stages', rather than embodying 'prehistoric happiness', bring the travellers, sadder and wiser after their failed quest, to the realization that pre-Oedipal bliss cannot be re-gained by the sane and responsible adult in modern civilization. 'The / Regressive road to Grandmother's House' (CP, p.371) to which Rosetta blithely welcomes her companions leads only to the despair of the desert and the terrifying chaos of the 'last landscape' (CP, pp.389-92).

Although Rosetta inaugurates a false quest to achieve the imagined security and comfort of her dream-idylls, the characters unconsciously embark upon a valid journey of the spirit in 'The Seven Stages'. Without knowing it, they reach the true quest's goal in 'the hermetic gardens' in accordance with their 'restless urge to find water' (CP, p.372) at the section's start. With regard to water's symbolic value, this 'urge' represents a thirst for spiritual regeneration that draws them out of the darkness in which they initially find themselves. Rosetta spoke better than she knew in describing the requirements for the journey in terms of 'The sole essential is a sad unrest / Which no life can lack' (CP, p.371). Unknown to the ego, which desires only the comfort of the womb, the restless spirit pursues the purity Auden invariably symbolizes by water. The travellers enter 'a sad plain' (CP, p.372) of suffering and oppression where sorrow, discontentment and the destruction of warfare emblemize human misery. Progress is made towards a 'mountainous district' (CP, p.373), Auden's symbolic landscape of free-will and necessity. Optimism is engendered by the advance, which Rosetta's speech reflects in its lyrical imagery of 'warm weather, white with lilies, / Evergreen for grazing' (CP, p.373). Malin further indicates the incentive of the spirit symbolized by water in his statement that

let down
 From U-valleys like yarn,
 Waterfalls all the way
 Quietly encourage me on (CP, p.374).

The possibility of choice and action becomes real once they arrive at the Mariners' Tavern, high in the mountains 'on a treeless watershed' (CP, p.375). Decision and a parting of ways are signified by the 'watershed', as in the early poem of that title, and they split into pairs to travel down to the populous 'maritime plains' (CP, p.376). Allegorically, they are entering the sphere of history and society after their emergence from the primeval darkness of the opening. Continuing on the second stage, they travel through normative landscapes of collective human habitation on their routes to 'the rival ports' (CP, p.377). Each describes settled and comfortable existences from which the 'restless urge to find water' alienates them. Rosetta beholds 'the glassier homes / Of more practical people with plainer minds', which contrast with adjacent aristocratic dwellings where 'The light collaborates with a land of ease' (CP, p.377). 'Ease' is a key-word in her verbally constructed dream-Eden, indolence and enervated relaxation having characterized her view 'From Seager's Folly'. 'Ease is rejected' (CP, p.369) were the concluding words of her lament for the unavailability of her imagined landscape in 'The Seven Ages'. The journey of the stages is, however, beginning to shake the credibility of her dream-Eden. References to 'decrepit palaces' and 'Fine old families who fear dishonour' (CP, p.377) introduce ideas of imminent collapse and foreboding into the hitherto unbroken serenity of her fantasy.

The comfort and domesticity of 'the maritime plains' are succeeded by the unknowable otherness of the ocean once they reach 'the rival ports'. Here, where 'Urgent whispers / Promise peace, and impatience shakes / Ephemeral flesh' (CP, p.378), the temptation to unite with the ocean's oblivion through suicide is experienced. Quant imagines the ease of death as

The desperate spirit
 Thinks of its end in the third person,
 As a speck drowning
 In those wanton mansions where the whales take
 Their huge fruitions (CP, p.378).

The dream-magic of their fantasy, however, speeds them on the third stage by producing an aeroplane and a train for their journey to 'the city' (CP, p.380).

On his approach to the city, Quant depicts a landscape of abandonment and dereliction that echoes the treatments of post-industrial waste lands in earlier work. Auden's familiar Rilkean empathy with inanimates informs Quant's account of the industrial remains, which provides an anticipatory evocation of the misery subsequently encountered in the city:

Our train is traversing at top speed
 A pallid province of puddles and stumps
 Where helpless objects, an orphaned quarry,
 A waif of a works, a widowed engine,
 For a sorry second sigh and are gone (CP, p.378).

True to its usual signification in Auden's work, the city of the fourth stage represents a spiritually bankrupt social order.

The 'facetious culture' of 'a borough all bankers revere' is specifically capitalist, its urban topography dominated by monuments of the monetarist ethic:

August and Graeco-Roman are the granite temples
Of the medicine men whose magic keeps this body
 Politically free from fevers,
 Cancer and constipation (CP, pp.378,380).

Abandonment and dereliction take on a human aspect as their train ride out of the city passes 'the Women's Prison', the 'Hexagonal Orphanage', 'the Orthopaedic Hospital' and 'the State / Asylum' (CP, p.381).

The transit of the city and the fourth stage conclude with arrival at 'the big house', 'half hidden by trees, on a little insurrection of red sandstone' (CP, p.381). The house's situation symbolizes its dominion over the morally defective culture of the city, made explicit in Quant's introductory account of the building's administrative importance as 'Crown' property:

The facade has a lifeless look,
For no one uses the enormous ballroom;
 But in book-lined rooms at the back
Committees meet, and many strange
 Decisions are secretly taken (CP, p.382).

Images of evil and oppression accumulate in Quant's speech, but Rosetta, primed to enthusiasm by her fantasy world of aristocratic tranquillity, has already entered, exclaiming 'In I shall go, out I shall look' (CP, p.381). She emerges with her dream of innocent order shattered, and sums up her disillusionment and new awareness of the big house's

oligarchic function in the words 'I got what is going on' (CP, p.382). She proceeds to configure a landscape of concupiscence, cruelty and pride that she has seen from 'a big bow-window, / With valley and village invitingly spread' (CP, p.382). Her revised prospect is radically different from her fondly imagined view 'From Seager's Folly'. Harmony and ease are no longer the theme in a landscape where 'The significant note is nature's cry / Of long-divided love' (CP, p.383). The local features of the 'coiling river', 'the park', 'the terrace', the 'valley' and 'the orchards' (CP, pp.381-82) correspond to identical images in her previous renderings of her dream-Eden. The significance of the topography they compose, however, has changed entirely. Emblems of greed, injustice, dispossession and suffering transform her delusory Good Place into a landscape of evil,

a World that is fallen,
 The mating and malice of men and beasts,
 The corporate greed of quiet vegetation,
 And the homesick little obstinate sobs
 Of things thrown into being (CP, p.383).

At 'the forgotten graveyard' (CP, p.383) the fifth stage ends with the implicit moral that *stipendia peccati mors est*. The corrupt opulence of the big house is denied 'Where wildflowers begin / And wealth ends' (CP, p.384). Nature burgeons in the listings of creatures and plants while human purpose expires where 'impulse loses / Its impetus' (CP, p.384). A symbolic dying is enacted at the graveyard, cutting the travellers off from the social zones they have passed through

and preparing them for the possibility of spiritual rebirth in 'the hermetic gardens'. The sixth stage commences with their journey towards the gardens through landscapes of natural beauty, 'perilous places' because of the erotic temptations they foster:

how plausible here
All arcadian cults of carnal perfection,
How intoxicating the platonic myth (CP, p.385).

Accidentally, and unconscious of having reached the goal of the spiritual quest, they arrive at 'the hermetic gardens' to 'gaze about them entranced at the massive mildness of these survivals from an age of cypresses and cisterns' (CP, p.386). In calling the gardens 'hermetic', Auden draws upon the sacred associations of the garden in the scheme of seventeenth century Christian-Hermetic thought. According to M.-S. Røstvig's *The Happy Man*, in Christian-Hermetic philosophy the divine spirit, descending into the vegetable world as greenness, was knowable in the garden as the terrestrial emblem of paradise.¹¹ Marvell's 'The Garden' is the best known poetic rendering of Christian-Hermetic ideas, and Auden's 'hermetic gardens' have much in common with the landscape of Marvell's poem. Emble's perception of 'the stillness here' corresponds to Marvell's 'Fair Quiet', while the 'shade' of 'The Garden' is present in Auden's 'silent umbrage' and 'long shadows' (CP, pp.386,387). Marvell's 'Sacred plants' have their equivalents in the 'sweet-smelling borders' and 'rose-walks' (CP, p.386) of 'the hermetic gardens'. 'Cypresses' and 'the wanton groves'

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(*CP*, p.386) are Auden's counterpart to the 'Fair trees' of 'The Garden'. Marvell's statement that 'When we have run our passions' heat, / Love hither makes his best retreat' is paralleled by the protagonists' arrival in the gardens after the erotic stimulation of the preceding section. The redemptive 'hero's / Leap into love' (*CP*, p.386) that is possible in 'the hermetic gardens' corresponds to Marvell's statement of transcendence as 'Casting the body's vest aside'. Auden does not directly echo Marvell's emphasis on greenness in the 'lovely green' and 'a green thought in a green shade' of 'The Garden'.¹² The 'lawns' (*CP*, p.386) and lush vegetation of 'the hermetic gardens' are, however, adequately evocative of the sacred verdure of Christian-Hermetic thought.

Auden leaves no doubt regarding the sanctity of the gardens and their spiritually regenerative function. Rosetta is instinctively aware of their hallowed character in her opening statement that it is 'tempting to trespass' (*CP*, p.386) in them. As the travellers realize they must depart, the landscape's redemptive and regenerative virtue is plain to Emble, who says 'I would stay to be saved' (*CP*, p.389). Malin has a vision of 'pirouetting angels' and is 'Reproached by doves' (*CP*, p.387), birds traditionally symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Divine sanctification is suggested in the phrase 'the unctuous day' (*CP*, p.386), the adjective demanding to be read in terms of the donation of 'an unction from the Holy One' as in 1 John 2: 20. Water, Auden's symbolic constant for spiritual regeneration and purity of being, is

ubiquitously present in the 'cisterns', 'neat canals' and at least one 'pursive fountain' (CP, p.386). The last image relates to the 'everlasting fountain / Of the waters of joy' (CP, p.274) of *For the Time Being* and 'the healing fountain' of the elegy for Yeats. Ultimately, 'the fountain of the water of life' of Revelation 21: 6 is invoked. By the redemptive and regenerative power thus symbolized 'The ruined rebel is recreated / And chooses a chosen self' (CP, p.386) in harmonious inter-relation of human and divine wills.

Having stumbled upon 'the garden of Being that is only known in Existence / As the command to be never there' (CP, p.274), the four are quickly obliged to quit 'the hermetic gardens'. Awareness of spiritual inadequacy and sinfulness produces psychosomatic symptoms of discomfort in each as 'the extraordinary charm of these gardens begins to work upon them' (CP, p.389). With confessions of their failings, they flee the gardens, and, with guilt as their only guide, 'plunge into the labyrinthine forest' (CP, p.388) to begin the final stage of their journey. Dante's quest of the spirit from the Dark Wood to the Earthly Paradise in the first two books of the *Commedia* is reversed: Auden's characters are forced by their lack of grace out of the paradise of the gardens and into the dark unknowing of 'the labyrinthine forest'. Considering the morally infantile nature of their search for 'The primitive pact with pure feeling', they are, however, making some progress. Conscience and doubt have at least

brought them to Dante's starting point in Auden's equivalent of the Dark Wood, from whence the true quest may begin.

The desert's landscape of spiritual challenge awaits them after 'mysterious laws of direction' re-unite them 'at the forest's edge' (CP, p.389):

Giddy with the glare and ungoverned heat,
 We stop astonished,
 Interdicted by desert, its dryness edged
 By a scanty scrub (CP, p.389).

They have reached a landscape 'vacant of value' (CP, p.389), a place not colonised by human significations, worlds away from the landscape symbolically resembling the human body initially desired as the goal of their quest. Here, in 'Rainless regions // ... Lands beyond love' (CP, p.389), the spiritual succour symbolized by water that has encouraged them must be sought out by faith. Malin reveals their lack of this requirement in his dismissal of 'Reports of explorers', the mystics and saints who affirm that

hidden arrant streams
 Chuckle through this chapped land
 In profound and meagre fissures,

Or that this desert is dotted with
 Oases where acrobats dwell
 Who make unbelievable leaps (CP, p.390).

Not for them 'seek, and ye shall find', nor any attempts at the leap of faith. Auden's directions ask all the relevant questions, to each of which the answer is a flat 'no' as far as his four characters are concerned: 'Is triumph possible?

If so, are they chosen? Is triumph worth it? If so, are they worthy?' (CP, p.389).

In rejecting the opportunity to achieve salvation through enduring the trial of the desert, they dissociate themselves from the spiritual quest that has been revealed to them. Consequently, the narrative of 'The Seven Stages' begins to break down as they deny the quest that has provided the hidden logic of their journey. Emble's speech beginning 'As yet the young hero's / Brow' (CP, p.392) forms the first hiatus in the rapid progression of the stages, and ushers in the ominous darkness out of which the 'last landscape' emerges. Auden draws upon his childhood experience of 'Self and Not-self, Death and Dread' (CP, p.182) in the landscape of disused mines of *New Year Letter* to evoke subterranean gloom and fear as Emble speaks:

his steps follow the stream
Past rusting apparatus
To its gloomy beginning, the original
Chasm where brambles block
The entrance to the underworld;
There the silence blesses his sorrow,
And holy to his dread is that dark

Which will neither promise nor explain (CP, p.391).

A sense of 'the underworld' thus established, the catastrophic conclusion of 'The Seven Stages' begins to engulf them as Rosetta configures the hell of the 'last landscape',

Of gloom and glaciers and great storms
Where, cold into chasms, cataracts
Topple, and torrents
Through rocky ruptures rage for ever (CP, p.391).

Her description corresponds significantly to the topography and climate of Dante's *Inferno*, emphasising the last landscape's function as the symbolic damnation of the seekers after happiness. Its 'great storms' are the equivalent of Dante's 'blast of hell that never rests' and the 'hailstones, sleet and snow' of *Inferno*'s second and third circles.

Rosetta's references to 'rocky ruptures' and 'basalt' (*CP*, p.391) recall the rockiness of the bowges of Dante's eighth circle. The 'cataracts / ... and torrents' that 'rage for ever' in the last landscape correspond to 'The sound of water thundering down' over *Inferno*'s 'Great Barrier'.

Rosetta's view of 'glaciers' and 'the solid ice / Of frowning fjords' (*CP*, p.391) equates with the eternal ice of the frozen lake of Cocytus in the lowest reaches of Dante's hell.¹³

Chaos, destruction, darkness and cold overwhelm the terrified travellers as the reality they have sought to escape rises before them 'in all the majesty of its perpetual fury' (*CP*, p.391). Logic and sanity begin to break down as Auden intersperses nonsensical lines into the poetry. Rosetta invokes another landscape of madness in her reference to the 'petrified polka on Pillicock Mound' (*CP*, p.392), directly echoing Poor Tom's refrain 'Pillicock sat on Pillicock hill' on the blasted heath in *King Lear*. Loss of reason becomes complete as the characters' speeches finally degenerate into single lines of nonsense verse.

They awake from the long dream of 'The Seven Stages' unable to recall it in detail, emerging, in Dantean terms,

from *Inferno* to the existential trials of *Purgatory*. The search for hedonistic fulfilment continues in revelry at Rosetta's flat. Malin and Quant depart, cheerfully encouraging Emble and Rosetta to the sexual union that is to be the culmination of their quest for pleasure. Emble, however, passes out from drinking, and the party is over. Rosetta faces the disillusionment of the big house and renounces her dream-Eden in an affirmation of her Hebraism and acceptance of her true origins. To quote from Auden's 'In Memory of Sigmund Freud', her recovery from self-deception means she is 'changed / simply by looking back with no false regrets' (CP, p.216). Quant retires home with his habitual equability, while Malin has a subdued spiritual awakening as the subway train he rides symbolically emerges from underground into the dawn as it crosses 'the Manhattan Bridge' (CP, p.407). As the representative of the intellect, Malin has learned from the disaster of 'The Seven Stages'. The refusal to face the challenge of the desert and the subsequent terror of the last landscape inform his statement that

We would rather be ruined than changed,
 We would rather die in our dread
 Than climb the cross of the moment
 And let our illusions die (CP, p.407).

His final speech reconciles suffering and faith in a stoical and intellectually tested acceptance of Christianity.

The conclusion of *The Age of Anxiety* forms a sober and unspectacular outcome to the quest that is Auden's essential

pre-occupation between 1939 and 1946. Rosetta's awakening from the deception of her dream-landscape and Malin's resolution of his dialectic of faith and doubt do, however, comprehend the fundamentals of Auden's intellectual and spiritual search. Religion, ethics and epistemology, the major abstractions that constitute the thematic common ground between *New Year Letter* and *The Age of Anxiety*, are conclusively, if somewhat summarily, considered in Rosetta's and Malin's last speeches. Rosetta peremptorily sums up the individual's ethical obligations in her advice to the sleeping Emble:

Be spick and span, spell out the bumptious
 Morals on monuments, mind your poise
 And take up your cues, attract Who's-Who,
 Ignore What's-Not. Niceness is all and
 The rest bores (CP, p.403).

Malin's summary of the human condition states the inadequacy of an orthodox, anthropocentric epistemology, recalling the emphasis on the fallibility of 'the encyclopedia of the Way' in 'The Quest'. Man's 'lucid dialectics' offer no real answers:

We're quite in the dark: we do not
 Know the connection between
 The clock we are bound to obey
 And the miracle we must not despair of (CP, pp.406, 407).

For all his intellection, Malin's nearest approach to truth is in 'the flash / Of negative knowledge' (CP, p.408) glimpsed in drunkenness. Ultimately, he opts for an epistemology based on a recognition of God's otherness, 'That

Always-Opposite which is the whole subject / Of our not-knowing', believing that 'His Truth makes our theories historical sins' (CP, p.408). Ethics and epistemology are thus subordinated to religious faith at the close of *The Age of Anxiety*, as Malin's invocation of 'His love', 'His Good', 'His Question', 'His Truth' and 'His World' (CP, pp.408-409) establishes emphatically.

The governing abstractions of Auden's poetry satisfactorily examined and 'set in order' (CP, p.162), the extensive figurative landscapes essential to their presentation are no longer required. The long quest that effectively began with the recognition of doubt and spiritual isolation in Iceland in 1936 ends with the Christian testimony of *The Age of Anxiety* in post-war New York. Malin's emergence from underground onto the Manhattan Bridge while 'East River glittered' (CP, p.407) at the end of the poem emblemizes Auden's writing's re-engagement of geographically specific actuality. Subsequently, 'Pleasure Island' and 'In Praise of Limestone' make the return to landscapes of common experience, treatments of which are henceforth enriched by Auden's symbolic and fictive techniques.

Throughout a poetic career spanning almost fifty years between the earliest collected works of the 1920s and his last poems of 1973 landscape was invaluable to Auden. The foregoing, while omitting much, principally his poetry of Ischia and Austria, has, it is hoped, demonstrated the range and importance of his use of local themes and imagery.

'Like marble / mileposts in an alluvial land' (CP, p.417), to quote from the ending of 'Ischia', his poems of the limestone uplands mark succeeding stages in the expanse of the *oeuvre*. Figurative topographies drawn from Auden's sense of the importance and potential of ideas of landscape are essential to the longer poems and many of the works leading up to them.

Among contemporary poets, only Seamus Heaney makes consistent and sustained use of landscape with an ambitiousness and flexibility that make it feasible to consider him Auden's successor in the local mode. Similarities in their conceptions and developments of the use of landscape have been examined in the introduction to this study. It is now time to move on to a detailed investigation of Heaney's myths of place and the importance of local elements in his work.

Notes to Chapter IV

- 1 The sonnets of 'The Quest' are subsequently referred to by their original titles, which are given in *Collected Poems*, pp.682-83.
- 2 *vide* Brewer, pp.276, 1044, for these, and other, significations.
- 3 For indications of Auden's familiarity with Langland *vide* Mendelson, *Early Auden*, pp.125, 133-34.
- 4 *vide* Fuller, p.189.
- 5 Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London, 1972), p.141n.
- 6 J. G. Turner, *The Politics of Landscape* (Oxford, 1979); Turner is principally concerned with seventeenth century poetry, but the strategies of selectivity and exclusion he describes are equally applicable to Thomson and other poetic topographers of the eighteenth century.
- 7 John Bayley, *The Romantic Survival* (London, 1957), p.182.
- 8 W. H. Auden, quoted in Osborne, p.213.
- 9 Brewer, p.849.
10. Richard Hoggart, *Auden: An Introductory Essay* (London, 1951), p.244, suggests that 'the sawtooth range' may symbolize the ribs, while the other alleged correspondences are in Fuller, pp.196-97.

- 11 *vide* Røstvig, vol. I, Chapter IV, 'The Hortulan Saint'.
- 12 *vide* Andrew Marvell, 'The Garden', *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*, edited by Helen Gardner (London, 1972), pp.335-37.
- 13 *vide* Dante, *Cantica I, Hell*, pp.98, 104, 181, 170, 285-86.

CHAPTER FIVE - SEAMUS HEANEY: THE QUEST FOR DEFINITION

'Digging', 'At a Potato Digging',
 'Storm on the Island', 'Synge on Aran',
 'Personal Helicon', 'The Peninsula',
 'Shoreline', 'Bogland'

— '... love of a country
 Begins as attachment to our own field of action'.¹

Important similarities in the treatments of landscape in the writings of W. H. Auden and Seamus Heaney, and the parallels in their developments of local themes, have been indicated in the introduction to this study. Each evolves myths of place expressing the central concerns of his poetry out of wide-ranging responses to a single locality. Like Auden in 'Amor Loci', Heaney eventually disavows his earlier renderings of his landscape and accords it a higher significance independent of previous interpretations. Little of Auden's influence is directly discernible in Heaney's poetry. Behind the latter's achievement, however, is the example of Patrick Kavanagh, whose later work is sometimes distinctly Audenesque, both in style and attitudes to landscape. An interesting, if essentially incidental, liaison between Heaney's treatments of landscape and Auden's can be discerned in Kavanagh's work, to which Heaney's poetry indubitably owes a great deal. The debt to Kavanagh is widely recognized in considerations of Heaney's work. As Philip Hobsbaum states of the relation between Heaney's poetry and that of his predecessor, 'it is an

influence so absorbed that, as Leavis said of Eliot reworking Laforgue, it amounts to originality'.²

Kavanagh's echoes of Auden's writing, however, have, as far as the present writer is aware, gone largely unremarked. It will therefore be worth briefly considering Kavanagh's legacy to Heaney, and subsequently similarities in the works of Kavanagh and Auden. Common ground between Auden's poetry of the Cumbrian uplands and Heaney's of rural Ulster will be seen to exist in Kavanagh's writing.

Kavanagh's principal locality around Shancoduff in County Monaghan and Heaney's County Londonderry landscape to which his native Mossbawn is central are some fifty miles apart. The border separating Eire from Ulster that runs between these places notwithstanding, their topographies and regional elements in the diction used to describe them are markedly similar in Kavanagh's and Heaney's poetries. Both poets re-create their landscapes in poems using local terms like 'boortree' and 'haggard', and both occasionally incorporate direct speech in dialect in their writing.³

Kavanagh's countryside of 'the whins / And the bog-holes, cart-tracks, old stables where Time begins' is quite familiar to one who turns to his poetry after absorbing Heaney's work.⁴ Both provide vivid impressions of regions of potato diggings and stony ploughland where farms stand adjacent to peat-bogs and families pray in their kitchens in landscapes fraught with religion.⁵ Kavanagh's mythologising of his locality as the spot 'where Time begins'

is paralleled by Heaney's designation of Mossbawn as 'the first place' (*P*, p.18), reflecting the timelessness inherent in one aspect of his myth of place.

Apart from the excellence of his best writing, Kavanagh's achievement in more general terms was in pioneering a modern poetry of authentic Irish rural experience. While other Irish poets of the 1940s still strove to emulate Yeats, Kavanagh regarded him as '"the last great Victorian poet"' (*vide P*, p.126) and wrote from fidelity to his own perceptions and imagination. As Heaney has written, Kavanagh

forged ... a consciousness for the great majority of his countrymen, crossing the pieties of a rural Catholic sensibility with the *non serviam* of his original personality, raising the inhibited energies of a subculture to the power of a cultural resource. Much of his authority and oddity derive from the fact that he wrested his idiom bare-handed out of a literary nowhere (*P*, p.116).

In this, a succeeding generation of poets from both Eire and Ulster is indebted to him, and none more so than Seamus Heaney. Kavanagh established his landscape of Irish townlands and peat-bogs and the human experience it contains as the basis for a poetic mode that was readily available for Heaney. More particularly, certain conventions and images that are characteristic of Heaney's writing derive directly from Kavanagh's work. Heaney's sexualizing of his landscape, his correlation of poetry and ploughing,

and his emblemization of suffering as a cow's afterbirth, for example, all follow precedents set by Kavanagh in his *The Great Hunger* alone.⁶ Kavanagh's poetry of agricultural labour is matched in its experiential vividness only by the writings of Stephen Duck and John Clare, like whom he was effectively a 'peasant poet'. The poems in Heaney's early collections describing the tasks of farming are, in their Northern Irish context, exercises on themes given modern currency by Kavanagh. Fully aware of the permeation of his work by echoes of Kavanagh's diction and imagery, Heaney has repeatedly paid tribute to him. On being asked why he had not written a poem for him, Heaney's reported reply was 'I have no need to write a poem to Patrick Kavanagh; I wrote *Death of a Naturalist*'.⁷ Heaney's most recent collection, *Station Island*, sustains his recognition of Kavanagh's importance to his work. On his Lough Derg pilgrimage in the book's title sequence, the ghost of 'a third fosterer' familiarly addresses Heaney; a note identifies the voice as Kavanagh's, whose own 'Lough Derg' was written in 1942:

Sure I might have known
once I had made the pad, you'd be after me
sooner or later. Forty-two years on
and you've got no farther! (*SI*, p.73).

But 'What about Auden',⁸ as Kavanagh exclaims to one espousing the supremacy of modern Irish poetry in his 'Tale of Two Cities'? The words indicate both familiarity

with Auden's work and a high estimation of it. Further and more explicit evidence of Kavanagh's regard for Auden is found in Anthony Cronin's *Dead as Doornails*. In his reminiscences of Kavanagh, Cronin records that 'Of his poetic contemporaries only Auden was allowed to have any "merit" or "talent", which were his favourite words of commendation. Auden occasionally got high praise'.⁹ Kavanagh's poetry sometimes recalls a characteristic technique of Auden's in such conjunctions of the abstract and particular as 'The trucks of language' and 'the windows of high charity'.¹⁰ Kavanagh also shares Auden's tendency to allegorize casually moral abstractions, and both display a Rilkean empathy with inanimates that informs their responses to landscape.¹¹ Rather than in isolable similarities, however, it is in the movement of Kavanagh's verse that Auden's influence is subtly pervasive. As Michael Allen has noted, 'Auden is ... important to the making of Kavanagh's later rhythms'.¹² Much of Kavanagh's best writing achieves the unstrained accommodation between normative metres and the cadences of the individual voice that is an important aspect of Auden's style.

By 'later rhythms' Allen may be taken to be referring to Kavanagh's work after, broadly speaking, about 1950. At this time correspondences in Kavanagh's and Auden's uses of landscape become discernible. Earlier, Kavanagh had occasionally celebrated his Monaghan locality, most memorably in 'Shancoduff' of 1934. Many other poems had taken the

agricultural landscape for their setting, but not until his later writing is the mythical aspect of place consolidated. Like Auden in 'The Prophets' and 'In Praise of Limestone', Kavanagh emphasises the remoteness and unimportance of the locality he presents in his most memorable treatments of his Monaghan landscape. Its significance is personal, and stated in terms of its provision of a sanctuary for ideals and imagination in direct correspondence to the functions of Auden's landscape of the mind. Thus 'Innocence' begins by recording rejection of Kavanagh's inconsequential and conventionally unattractive 'little farm'. Its conclusion, however, affirms its imaginative uniqueness as 'love's doorway into life' to recall Auden's statements of a transcendent identification with his landscape: 'I cannot die / Unless I walk outside these whitethorn hedges'.¹³ Similarly, 'Kerr's Ass' echoes Auden's statement in *New Year Letter* of the constancy of recollective availability of his 'locality I love' regardless of distance and circumstance. From exile 'In Ealing Broadway, London Town' Kavanagh's landscape loses none of its distinctness or personal significance; it is ultimately presented as the seminal locus of his imagination in correspondence to Auden's account of nascent imaginative experience in the passage of *New Year Letter* beginning 'In ROOKHOPE I was first aware ...' (CP, p.182):

... a world comes to life —
 Morning, the silent bog,
 And the God of imagination waking
 In a Mucker fog¹⁴.

The bitter irony of the context notwithstanding, in 'The Defeated' Kavanagh directly echoes Auden the geographer of the Good Place. 'This most ancient barnyard' of rural Ireland becomes 'your own good place' to the representative of cultural provincialism whom Kavanagh satirizes in the poem. 'The Defeated' constitutes a desperate strategy in the course of Kavanagh's one-man battle with the self-satisfied nationalist ethic he noted in much Irish poetry. The baby of his personal vision of Monaghan is thrown out with the bathwater of the narrow and sentimental localism that formed the basis of the sort of writing he detested. When 'The Defeated' describes its rural backwater as 'the last preserve / Of Eden in a world of savage states',¹⁵ Kavanagh does not wish, for the purposes of the poem, to be taken at face-value. The words are nevertheless consistent with his rendering of the sacrosanctity of 'the whitethorn hedges / Of the little farm',¹⁶ the Good Place of 'Innocence' cited above. Furthermore, as 'the last preserve of Eden' the landscape of 'The Defeated' is, albeit ironically, accorded 'a wordly duty' (CP, p.415) similar to that defined in Auden's 'In Praise of Limestone'. In Kavanagh's 'world of savage states' the 'ancient barnyard' functions like Auden's 'antimythological myth' of place in calling 'into question / All the Great Powers assume' (CP, p.415). Auden's

'backward / And dilapidated province' (CP, p.415) of 'In Praise of Limestone' is more distinctly recalled by the 'backward place / Where no one important ever looked'¹⁷ of Kavanagh's 'The One'. For both poets, their unfrequented landscapes' unimportance in terms of materialist priorities permits a more authentic relation to place that issues in localized poems of deep imaginative and spiritual import. In Auden's 'The Prophets' and 'Amor Loci' local attachment is spoken of as objectively manifesting love, as it is in Kavanagh's 'Innocence' and 'The One'. Kavanagh concludes 'The One' by stating that 'beautiful, beautiful God / Was breathing his love by a cut-away bog'.¹⁸ This is reminiscent of Auden's visions of his landscape's revelations of 'a faultless love' in 'In Praise of Limestone' and 'a love / that ... // ... does not abandon' (CP, pp., 415, 585) in 'Amor Loci'.

In its imagery of 'the swamps and marshes' and 'a cut-away bog'¹⁹ 'The One' also brings immediately to mind the best known aspect of Heaney's landscape. The bogland is essential to the structure and development of Heaney's poetry. He too expresses an intensity of personal attachment to the landscape which is articulated as love. His 'Kinship' repeats its 'I love ... ' with an ingenuousness worthy of John Clare, who often stated his affection for his native surroundings by beginning poems thus:

I love this turf-face,
 its black incisions,
 the cooped secrets
 of process and ritual (N, p.40).

While P. V. Glob's *The Bog People* is indispensable to Heaney in his treatments of the bogland, Kavanagh's precedent in celebrating so poetically unpromising a terrain in 'The One' and elsewhere is equally so. Kavanagh's similarities to Auden in writing of his unsung landscape constitute in turn a vicarious but significant link between Auden and Heaney in the establishment of their myths of place. Heaney's 'first place' and Auden's Good Place are thus closer than the distance between the former's Londonderry townland and the latter's Cumbrian uplands would suggest. For Heaney, as for Auden and Kavanagh, the importance of landscape is primarily manifest in his responses to an otherwise inconsequential locality known and loved in childhood. In writing reminiscent of Auden's deeply affectionate treatments of his 'backward / And dilapidated province' Kavanagh handed on to Heaney the terms on which his poetic engagement with his native Mossbawn could begin. All three poets underwent exile from their chosen landscapes, which consequently became topographies of memory and imagination whose high poetic valency provided the basis of their myths of place. Childhood engendered in each his motivating love of landscape and produced ineradicable local impressions. In New York Auden's imagination was never far from Alston Moor, just as Kavanagh's Monaghan accompanied him mentally

to Dublin and London. Heaney's Mossbawn has likewise remained vividly available to him throughout his years in Belfast and latterly County Wicklow and Dublin.

As the introduction notes above, there is a fundamental distinction, the importance of broad similarities notwithstanding, between Auden's relation to the Cumbrian uplands and Heaney's to his Ulster townland: from childhood onwards Auden remained a visitor, first physically, then mentally, to his unpeopled landscape; Heaney, and likewise Kavanagh, are natives of their localities and their responses to them invoke the characters and *mores* of the farming communities among which they grew up. Communal implications exert significant pressures upon the imaginations of both poets, and social attitudes of belonging and alienation run in counterpoint through their works. Kavanagh's affirmative treatment of the landscape and empathy with its inhabitants in *The Great Hunger*, for example, are offset by his criticisms of his countrymen's complacent failure to improve the dismal quality of their lives. Joyce, whom both Kavanagh and Heaney revere, had Dedalus castigate the Irish as 'A race of clodhoppers',²⁰ a view reflected in both poets' perceptions of ignorance and bigotry in their communities. Heaney's work is occasionally redolent of disgust and despair in its confrontations with the murderous implications of the spirit of republicanism as it very actively survives in the landscape of his poetry. An uneasy and intriguing tension exists in his writing between his repugnance for

bloodshed and his hereditary sympathy with the ideals of political and cultural autonomy that can issue in sectarian outrage.

Such historical, political and sociological considerations cannot be divorced from a consideration of Heaney's treatments of landscape. In the rural Ulster locality with which so much of his poetry is concerned man's involvement with the soil is such that to speak of the landscape is to invoke its human implications. Heaney's and Kavanagh's sexualizing of human relations with the earth is unstrained in the context of their accounts of the almost conjugal intimacy with which their farmers know their land. Theirs is a culture in which many an ageing bachelor farmer is Kavanagh's Maguire of *The Great Hunger*, 'the man who made a field his bride'.²¹ The possibility of such a fate underwrote Kavanagh's literary aspirations when he left his Monaghan farm for Dublin in 1939. Heaney's mythology of 'The Tollund Man' as 'Bridegroom to the goddess' (*WO*, p.47)²² may owe much to Dr Glob's researches; it retains experiential authenticity, however, as a less than audacious extension of the bonding to the soil that dictated the terms of the society into which Heaney was born. The bare landscapes of Kavanagh's and Heaney's works are thus the principal, and invaluable apt, vehicles for their treatments of the human condition. Their perceptions of their topographies support unified bodies of poetry of great breadth of moral, cultural and imaginative reference. In rural Ireland

landscape constitutes a text in which readings of deprivation, narrow-mindedness and historical resentment can co-exist with extrapolations of heroic integrity, perseverance and independence of spirit.

Heaney's native community, the Catholic minority in Ulster, and its historical and cultural traditions are often acknowledged explicitly or by direct implication in his localized writings. His response to his landscape in poetry is essentially twofold: on the one hand, his treatments of place originate in or accommodate the historical, cultural and political associations of his community and its topography; on the other, his impulses and intuitions in dealing with landscape are more private and characterized by an original lyricism arising from personal significances and perceptions. Poems in the former mode tend to draw upon his reading in archaeology, mythology and history and his inherited familiarity with the lore of Irish republicanism. They are often purposefully serious in their discharge of Heaney's sense of imaginative obligation to the community of his ancestry and origins. In his more private and lyrical poems of landscape, Heaney's fidelity is to his own perceptions and memories. Such works are frequently unambiguously affirmative in tenor, whereas poems mediating communal experience through acquired cultural associations can be highly equivocal in matters reflecting what Heaney has called 'Our tribe's complicity' (*FW*, p.23)²³ in Ireland's Troubles.

Heaney himself has considered these distinct modes of poetic response to landscape in his essay 'The Sense of Place'. He begins by suggesting that 'there are two ways in which place is known and cherished, two ways which may be complementary but which are just as likely to be antipathetic. One is lived, illiterate and unconscious, the other learned, literate and conscious. In the literary sensibility, both are likely to co-exist in a conscious and unconscious tension' (P, p.131). The co-existence of these senses of place and the tensions thus produced are certainly evident in his own poetry; the opposition of the personally intuitive and communally associational modes is sometimes not as clear as the distinction the present writer has drawn above might suggest. As Heaney's essay continues, Patrick Kavanagh and John Montague are presented as respective exemplars of the 'lived' and 'learned' attitudes to landscape as they are manifest in poetry. His remarks on the differences between the two poets in their uses of local namings are illuminating with regard to his own work's privately experiential and culturally associational approaches to landscape. For Kavanagh, 'place names are there to stake out a personal landscape, they declare one man's experience, they are denuded of tribal or etymological implications' (P, p.140). Montague uses local namings, however, as 'sounding lines, rods to plumb the depths of a shared and diminished culture. They are redolent not just of his personal life but of the history of his people, disinherited and dispossessed. What

are most resonant and most cherished in the names of Montague's places are their tribal etymological implications' (P, p.141).

As Heaney's poetry progresses beyond his exploratory early work he inclines, like Montague, to trace increasingly what Auden called 'the lost annals / of a cudgeled people' (CP, p.592) in his treatments of landscape. The ascendancy of Heaney's communally oriented poetry of 'a shared and diminished culture' coincides with the resurgence of the Troubles in 1969. The historical and cultural myth explicated in the development of his peat-bog poems constitutes his most significant response to the complexities of Ireland's unhappy past and Ulster's troubled present. The place-name poems in *Wintering Out*, Heaney's third collection of 1972, indicate his growing assent to the idea of a poetry comprehending the history and psychology of his community. In his 'Anahorish' and 'Broagh' a balance is maintained between fidelity to personal and perceptual experience and loyalty to the history and identity of his people. 'Toome', however, slightly later in the book, finds the self submerged in the depths of the communal significances of its landscape. As *Wintering Out* continues and *North* follows, Heaney's observational and lyrical poetry of place becomes rare as he intensifies his localized engagement of historical and cultural themes.

As Blake Morrison has stated, 'A proper response to Heaney's work requires reference to complex matters of ancestry, nationality, religion, history and politics'.²⁴

'Toome', referred to above, is a case in point. The village of the title is in the immediate vicinity of Heaney's birthplace. Its associations, however, directly evoke a history far more extensive than Heaney's own. Toome is central to the Irish republican liturgy of heroism and sacrifice in the cause of the national ideal as the site of the execution of the young patriot Rody McCorley in 1798. Ethna Carbery's ballad written last century remains one of the most popular of its kind, immortalizing McCorley who 'goes to die / On the bridge of Toome today'.²⁵ For Heaney, the landscape of 'Toome' is more substantial in historical perspective than in terms of his perceptual responses to it. Direct reference to McCorley and his fate is unnecessary; particulars of rebellion are subsumed by the poem's simultaneously extensive and compressed calling forth of the Irish past. Heaney's purely personal experience of place is annexed, somewhat to his discomfiture, by the localized text in which his community's past is writ large. In his *Seamus Heaney*, Morrison quotes A.T.Q. Stewart, whose words sum up the fusion of local, historical and sectarian elements in Heaney's localized poetry and its engagement of the Troubles:

The war in Ulster is being fought out on a narrower ground than even the most impatient observer might imagine, a ground every inch of which has its own associations and special meaning.

The Ulsterman carries the map of this religious geography in his mind almost from birth. He knows

which villages, which roads and streets, are Catholic, or Protestant, or 'mixed' ... To understand the full significance of any episode of sectarian conflict, you need to know the precise relationship of the locality in which it occurred to the rest of the mosaic of settlement. But the chequerboard on which the game is played has a third dimension. What happens in each square derives a part of its significance, or perhaps all of it, from what happened there at some time in the past. Locality and history are welded together.²⁶

While Heaney's involvement with the cultural associations of his landscape obliges him to look beyond his own experience, the communal import of his native region is intrinsic to his sense of personal identity. As he stated in an interview with Seamus Deane, the 'self in some ways takes its spiritual pulse from the inward spiritual structure of the community to which it belongs; and the community to which I belong is Catholic and nationalist'.²⁷ His work's involvement with his community's history and psychology attempts to bring his own identity into focus. The dilemma of identity, personal and national, is indicated in his remark that 'I have maintained a notion of myself as Irish in a province that insists that it is British' (P, p.35). This paradox was resolved on one level in 1972, when Heaney moved south to Eire and became a citizen of the Republic. His native landscape, however, and all its personal and communal meanings has by no means disappeared from his poetry, as the intense engagement of his home ground in recent writing

emphasises. Heaney's words of Montague in 'The Sense of Place' are indicative of the inseparability of personal and communal elements in his own identity: 'When Montague asks who he is, he is forced to seek a connection with a history and a heritage; before he affirms a personal identity, he posits a national identity, and his region and his community provide a lifeline to it' (P, pp.143-44). *Death of a Naturalist*, Heaney's first collection, illustrates this statement as it applies to him; before a firm concern with personal identity is stated in the book's closing lines, 'I rhyme / To see myself' (DN, p.57)²⁸, his Irishness has been clearly established in a number of the most memorable poems.

The fusion of locality, personality and history that makes landscape the principal vehicle for Heaney's major themes is indicated by his consideration of the 'tribal etymological implications' of the name 'Mossbawn'. The 'complex pieties and dilemmas' woven into his identity 'were implicit in the very terrain where I was born' (P, p.35). Mossbawn's etymology is ambiguously suggestive of both English and Gaelic roots, leaving Heaney to conclude that 'In the syllables of my home I see a metaphor of the split culture of Ulster' (P, p.35). The topography is likewise imbued with significances emphasising the ambivalences of history, politics and nationality among which Heaney grew up: 'Mossbawn lies between the villages of Castledawson and Toome. I was symbolically placed between the marks of English influence and the lure of native experience, between the

"demesne" and "the bog" (P, p.35). His native experience of the locality and his sense of origins in its community were fundamental to his work's inception. As he states at the conclusion of the article from which the above quotations are taken, 'my quest for definition, while it may lead backward, is conducted in the living speech of the landscape I was born into. If you like, I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with my reading' (P, p.37).

Heaney's investigations of his 'roots' and their communal implications form a major part of his achievement to date. Before proceeding to examine his early work it will therefore be worth outlining the central developments in his writing prior to their detailed consideration in subsequent chapters. The Troubles in 1969 made Heaney's concern with the communal orientation of his poetry acute. His purely subjective mode, however, had already become partly redundant. His latent sense of Irishness permits a nationalist 'we' to begin subsuming the solitary 'I' of his writing towards the end of his second collection, *Door into the Dark*. The communal first-person plural is explicitly instituted in his 'Girls Bathing, Galway 1965', when a disguised Kathleen ni Houlihan appears perfunctorily in the lines 'A pirate queen in battle clothes / Is our sterner myth' (DD, p.23). Here, the 'our' sits rather uneasily with the local reportage in the third-person of the rest of the poem. 'Bogland', the second collection's final poem and the inauguration of Heaney's sustained treatment of that landscape, is altogether more

confident with its first-person plural. Communal intentions are unambiguously declared by the poem's dominance by the nationalist 'we', which finds its proper landscape in the archetypally Irish terrain of the peat-bogs.

Throughout his subsequent two collections Heaney's first-person singular by no means disappears, but it is most often to be found 'Lost, / Unhappy and at home' (*WO*, p.48) amid the complex significances of the landscape of the Troubles. The distinction in responses to place he discerned in his comparison of Kavanagh and Montague becomes readily apparent in his own poetry. Heaney's subscription to 'the shared calling of blood' (*WO*, p.24) remains more cautious and qualified than Montague's occasionally naive romantic nationalism. Nevertheless, until the cultural and historical obligation to his community is met in *Wintering Out* and *North*, Heaney's private and lyrical poetry of landscape is considerably diminished. His pursuit of communal themes through the myth of place of the bogland brings him to a point he later describes as having been 'mired in attachment' (*SI*, p.102). In the more lyrical and perceptual poetry which survives during this period, the self moves freely in a well-lit and open landscape of husbandry. Of such writing it may be said, in Heaney's words on Kavanagh's relation to his landscape, that 'His sensibility is acutely of its own time and place, and his region is as deep not as history but as his own life in it' (*P*, p.142). To the peat-bog poetry, with its mythological apparatus of the goddess and her

sacrifices adapted from Glob, Heaney's summary of Montague's sense of place applies: 'The ancient feminine religion of Northern Europe is the lens through which he looks and the landscape becomes a memory, a piety, a loved mother' (*P*, p.141). This 'lens', however, is a glass that is often seen through somewhat unclearly. 'Compose in darkness' (*N*, p.20) is a maxim in *North*, and Heaney can sound speculative rather than entirely convinced or convincing in alluding to 'the ancient feminine religion' and its relation to the Irish present. In justifying his adaptation for his myth of place of Glob's findings concerning the bodies sacrificed in the peat-bogs Heaney has stated that 'In many ways the fury of Irish republicanism is associated with a religion like this ... I think the republican ethos is a feminine religion in a way'.²⁹ As an oblique apologia for terrorism, this indicates how Heaney, once bound to his community by his tenebrous myth of place, can allow speciousness to supplant the lucid objectivity found elsewhere in his work.

In his more private poetry of the open landscape of perception and memory, Heaney's writing can shine with the light he discerns in Kavanagh's work: 'His whole imagination consented to the idea of the Incarnate, and his work is suffused with the primary Christian imagery of light, light shining in darkness. Childhood, innocence, poetry, religion, all of these were part of the spectrum that mythical light broke into.'³⁰ *North* opens with 'Mossbawn: Two Poems in

Dedication'; the first of these, 'Sunlight', shines in bright affirmation of a personal sense of sanctity to relieve the sometimes oppressive darkness of the book's subsequent delvings into the bogland and the psychology of the Troubles. The locality of Mossbawn is written of elsewhere as possessing the Edenic purity implicit in Heaney's terming it 'the first place'. Like Auden, Heaney roots his personal vision of the Good Place in his memories of the landscape of childhood.

While there are effectively two poetries of landscape constituting separate myths of place in Heaney's work, both derive originally from his personal experience of the locality in which he grew up. The peat-bog poetry, although often lacking the experiential authenticity of more personal expressions of his sense of place, relates directly to Heaney's childhood in its accommodation of terror and foreboding. As Heaney indicates in his essay 'Mossbawn', the 'silky, fragrant world' of 'the first place' (*P*, p.18) stood immediately adjacent to the disturbing landscape of the bogland: 'gradually, those lush and definite fields gave way to scraggy marshland. Birch trees stood up to their pale shins in swamps. The ferns thickened above you. Scuffles in old leaves made you nervous ... This was the realm of bogeys ... the moss, forbidden ground' (*P*, pp.18-19). The communal sympathies and enmities latent in Heaney's landscape of origins ineluctably demanded his

attention; the bogland, the 'landscape that remembered' (P, p.54), supplied the apposite medium for his work's engagement of national, cultural and historical themes. In the course of his poetry's development, Heaney has immersed himself in a conscientious and sometimes agonising examination of the motives, aspirations and morality of his native community. If his poetry of the bogland is less lucid and precise than that of the 'lush and definite fields' this is because it enters ill-charted areas of sectarian prejudice and historical resentment.

Ultimately, Heaney liberates his imagination from its sense of hereditary complicity in terrorism and its domination by the imperatives of his community. In his latest collection, *Station Island*, the bogland is purged of its tribal and sacrificial associations to appear principally as the site of a meditatively evocative 'absence stationed in the swamp-fed air' (SI, p.86). Within the scheme of Heaney's poetry to date, however, the myth of place centering on the bogland remains the most readily identifiable manifestation of the importance of landscape in his work. His first two books, with which the rest of this chapter is principally concerned, constitute an exploratory journey towards the bogland as the most adequate vehicle for the major themes that begin to emerge. Mossbawn is initially presented as the locus of his fostering by beauty and by fear in poems introducing both the 'lush and definite fields' and the landscape of the bogland.

The 'quest for definition' leads for a period away from the native ground while Heaney extends his knowledge of the meanings of place in his responses to other Irish topographies. At the end of *Door into the Dark* the landscape of childhood assumes central importance again in 'Bann Clay' and 'Bogland', the latter establishing the terms for Heaney's intensive engagement of communal and national themes.

From the outset, Heaney begins to realize landscape's potential for the communication of conceptual abstractions. In Auden's early treatments of Alston Moor the topography's conceptual import remains only vaguely defined. It takes him more than a decade to arrive at an explicit articulation of the limestone moors' significance in the perceptions of love and patience of 'The Prophets'. In 'Digging', the first poem in his first collection, which will be examined shortly, Heaney, by comparison, frames a lucid and extensible metaphor from his experience of landscape and his awareness of its latent significances. This precociousness is a consequence of his native familiarity with a topography that contains a polysemous script of historical, social and cultural meanings. With such resources at his disposal, Heaney, like Auden, minimalizes the visual element in his localized poetry, and has summarily dismissed 'the merely visual' (P, p.132) response to landscape. With regard to the modicums of local detail in his treatments of landscape, Heaney again parallels Auden in using them to establish an

austere aesthetic implying moralizations of stoic integrity and independence. In 'The Peninsula', considered at length below, Heaney's hermeneutic approach to the texts of place and his minimal aesthetic of self-sufficient integrity are explicitly stated:

... now you will uncode all landscapes
By this: things founded clean on their own shapes,
Water and ground in their extremity (DD, p.21).

The fusion of ethical and aesthetic impulses that Seamus Deane discerns in the writings of Joyce, Yeats and Beckett,³¹ and which this study has ascribed to Auden, is evident early in Heaney's poetry. 'The Peninsula', however, marks the point at which his experimental treatments of landscape begin producing valuable results in preparation for the purposeful air his poetry of landscape subsequently assumes.

It is with the tentative confidence of 'Digging' of 1964 that Heaney's investigations of landscape's adequacy as the principal mode of his poetry begin. Long before he started writing Heaney's Mossbawn had effectively become a landscape of the mind after a family move at the age of fourteen took him elsewhere. As Anthony Bailey writes, 'though the new farm was not distant, the effect was to seal off his childhood, almost hermetically'.³² In due course boarding school and university in Belfast completed his exile from Mossbawn by educating him out of the unlettered culture of his ancestors, a consideration central to 'Digging'. Temporal and physical distance put Mossbawn

in a perspective conducive to poetry: 'What I had taken as a matter of fact as a youngster became a matter of wonder in memory', (P, p.48) writes Heaney in the essay 'Feeling into Words'. Much of his first collection, *Death of a Naturalist*, constitutes an act of retrieval of childhood, its landscape and the inherited traditions and activities of which he had been dispossessed. As 'Feeling into Words' states in accounting for his work's development up to the formal establishment of the myth of the bogland, 'Digging' was for Heaney his first poem of authentic contact with his origins. It is remarkably comprehensive in terms of its adumbration of themes and strategies that sustain Heaney's writing for over a decade. Both the farmland and the peat-bogs that are to become his characteristic topographies are featured in the poem's survey of the landscape of memory. His father's digging in the potato fields and his grandfather's spade-work 'on Toner's bog' (DN, p.13) also firmly state the concern with ancestry that gradually intensifies into Heaney's engagement of his historical antecedents. The father and the grandfather are the first representatives of the community whose 'shared calling of blood' is in Heaney's own veins, but from which his circumstances have detached him. Much of his writing to date analyses the duality of belonging and alienation in his relations with his people and both celebrates and laments their character. The central metaphor of 'Digging', analogising spade-work and writing, states Heaney's

conception of his poetry of retrieval, summed up in 'Feeling into Words' in his view of 'poetry as a dig' (P, p.41).

The landscape the spades penetrate in 'Digging' is imaginatively equivalent for Heaney to the history of the self and its community. Its strata of significances await excavation in his desire to know the fundamental characters of both. Writing in 1974 of 'poetry as revelation of the self to the self, as restoration of the culture to itself' (P, p.41) Heaney formulates expressly conceptions that constitute a clear sub-text in 'Digging'.

The violence, past and present, that blights Heaney's landscape, and with which his writing will eventually be much concerned, is also implied in 'Digging'. 'The squat pen rests; snug as a gun' (DN, p.13) of its second line is on one level a weakness in the poem; it detracts, by suggesting a mixture of metaphors, from the strength of the closing analogy between the pen and the spade, which also begins 'The squat pen rests' to conclude with 'I'll dig with it' (DN, p.14). The correlation of the pen and the gun may equally, however, be taken to indicate a nascent sense of Heaney's conception of poetic responsibility towards his community and their indigenous culture. It forms a modernization of Bulwer Lytton's 'The pen is mightier than the sword'. Heaney's working round to the conclusion's pairing of the pen and the spade is effectively a beating of swords into ploughshares. The verbatim repetition of 'The squat pen rests' tacitly draws attention to this

textual dropping of the gun; poetry, Heaney implies, can address his community's grievances and serve its cultural ideal as adequately as a taking up of arms. There are historical injustices and social imbalances in the landscape of *Death of a Naturalist* to which 'At a Potato Digging', 'For the Commander of the "Eliza"' and 'Docker' firmly point. The shadow of the gunman is present in the militaristic dramatization of stealth and armed bravado of 'Dawn Shoot'. With hindsight, Heaney saw something of 'the theatricality of the gunslinger' (P, p.41) in 'Digging', acknowledging implicitly the mild obsession with weaponry throughout *Death of a Naturalist*. 'Trout', 'Churning Day' and 'The Barn' employ an arsenal of imagery of armaments and violence in detailing ostensibly innocent aspects of the Mossbawn landscape. More than one critic has noted this and dismissed the tendency as gratuitous and forgiveable in an otherwise admirable first collection. Such imagery derives, however, from Heaney's upbringing in a community for whom guns and bombs had been very real aspects of the local mythology of republicanism. Three years after the publication of *Death of a Naturalist*, the book's imagistic rumours of violence were grimly verified with the renewal of sectarian strife in 1969. Heaney's 'Docker' proved prophetic in its 'That fist would drop a hammer on a Catholic — / Oh yes, that kind of thing could start again' (DN, p.41). The bogland introduced in 'Digging' provided the basis for the homicidal myth of place through which Heaney confronted the 'slaughter / for the common good' (N, p.45) undertaken in the name of his community.

There is already more to the bogland in 'Digging' than simple local description can account for. The penetration to the fundamentals of origins and identity that the poem's concluding pairing of the pen and the spade initiates develops out of the imagery of the grandfather's digging for peat. Hidden depths to be profitably worked towards are suggested as the ancestor expertly wields the spade, 'going down and down / For the good turf. Digging' (*DN*, p.14). The isolation of the single word 'Digging' between periods focuses the reader's attention on the poem's title, which stands as a statement of intent at the opening of this first collection. The grandfather's spade-work, 'Nicking and slicing neatly' (*DN*, p.14) is also emulated in the clipped rhythmical precision of much of the poem. In his own field, a pun whose aptness surely excuses it, Heaney is already digging with the pen with something of the workmanlike expertise he reveres in his predecessors.

By the time of 'Bogland' in his second collection the business of poetic penetration of the simultaneously literal and figurative landscape of indigenous culture is underway in earnest. That poem's echo of the grandfather's 'going down and down' in its 'Our pioneers keep striking / Inwards and downwards' (*DD*, p.56) indicates the continuity and unity in Heaney's work as he extends the central metaphor of 'Digging'. The work of cultural retrieval formalised in 'Bogland' is anticipated in 'Digging' by its similarity to the anonymous Gaelic poem 'An Mac Leighinn'. As Heaney

does, the unknown author of this poem, translated by Austin Clarke as 'The Scholar', considers the detachment from the traditional labours of rural life conferred by education. The analogy between the pen and the spade that forms the crux of 'Digging' may be considered part of Heaney's communal cultural inheritance in view of its close resemblance to the central metaphor of 'The Scholar':

He profits from his ploughland
For the share of the schoolmen
Is a pen in hand.³³

Gaelic does not feature significantly in Heaney's work until the place-name poems of *Wintering Out*; like other important aspects of his later poetry, however, it is revealed by the inaugural opening of the poetic landscape in 'Digging'.

Its adequacy as an indicator of Heaney's broader concerns and subsequent themes notwithstanding, 'Digging' makes no ambitious projections in stating its author's evolving sense of 'poetry as a dig'. Its success is that within its personal and immediately familial limits it can imply communal and more remotely ancestral possibilities from its firm grounding in personal perception and memory. Heaney's positing of writing as a surrogate for digging is best justified by the lines that raise the question of identity by recognizing that a severance with the ways of his fathers has occurred. The pen suddenly thrusts into the dark fabric of the landscape to effect an instantaneous

fusion of the local and the ancestral in the double signification of 'living roots'. 'Digging' takes on a striking confidence and originality in the sort of writing that prompted C. B. Cox's 'His words give us the soil-reek of Ireland'.³⁴ An energetic music of consonantal runs tempered by rich assonances demonstrates Heaney's skill with sound patterns in his poetry. The 'Nicking and slicing' of the well-turned anecdotal preamble suddenly strikes 'the good turf' as a clear focus on the essential substance of the landscape is achieved. With audacious concision the images are extended into metaphors for personal consciousness and ancestral history in this first sensing of Heaney's home ground as the 'landscape that remembered' (*P*, p.54):

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.

But I've no spade to follow men like them (*DN*, p.14).

The imaginative enthusiasm evident in the diction and music of this first poetic contact with the earth itself is also present in 'Poem' later in Heaney's first collection. 'Muck', 'sods', 'clabber' and 'clay and mush' (*DN*, p.48) convey the vividness and variousness of his sense of the soil as images in this unusual allegory of love. Heaney's range of words to define and discriminate between types of soil is remarkable; in addition to those quoted above, his first collection speaks of 'gravelly ground', 'mould', 'turf' and 'humus' (*DN*, pp.13, 14, 32). As with John Clare, whose

many terms for areas of land are noted by John Barrell³⁵, this breadth of vocabulary is an index of Heaney's native intimacy with his agricultural landscape. 'Poem' promises the beloved perfected endeavour, and 'the child / Who diligently potters in my brain / Digging with heavy spade' (*DN*, p.48) is easy to identify as the aspiring poetic spade-worker of 'Digging'.

'At a Potato Digging' is likewise enriched by Heaney's familiarity with the earthy interior of his landscape, 'the black hutch of clay / where the halved seed shot and clotted' (*DN*, p.31). Such hard and vigorous diction in the poem's descriptions of the soil matches like elements in 'Digging' and 'Poem'. The neat, restrained quatrains that observe labour and meditate on history in 'At a Potato Digging' are supplanted by a freer verse that the immediacy of Heaney's sensory responses to the 'crumbled earth' (*DN*, p.32) demands. The investment of personal feeling in history that the poem makes is effectively underwritten by the intimacy with which the landscape of the communal ritual of potato gathering is known. After the sweeping prospect of the opening, inherited from Kavanagh's panoptic depictions of landscape and labour in *The Great Hunger*, Heaney closes in to celebrate the soil and what it yields:

Flint-white, purple. They lie scattered
like inflated pebbles. Native
to the black hutch of clay
where the halved seed shot and clotted
these knobbed and slit-eyed tubers seem
the petrified hearts of drills. Split
by the spade, they show white as cream.

Good smells exude from crumbled earth.
 The rough bark of humus erupts
 knots of potatoes (a clean birth)
 whose solid feel, whose wet inside
 promises taste of ground and root (DN, p.32).

'Digging' took a similar sensual delight in potatoes, with its childhood memories of 'Loving their cool hardness in our hands' (DN, p.13). Within the historical context of 'At a Potato Digging', considered in Chapter Six below, the vegetable has a totemic status in signifying the community's vital and ancient relation with its landscape. At this early stage in Heaney's work, however, the aesthetic implications of the potatoes are more interesting. Heaney's closest approximation to an aesthetic definition comes later in 'Nerthus', which begins 'For beauty, say an ash-fork staked in peat, / Its long grains gathering to the gouged split' (WO, p.49). 'Nerthus' values a rugged simplicity and homogeneity that are equally evoked by the 'solid feel' and 'cool hardness' of the 'knobbed and slit-eyed tubers' 'white as cream' within. The shape, feel and colour of the potatoes suggests an aesthetic to which the austerity and integrity Heaney begins to evoke in his treatments of landscape are intrinsic. It is towards the apprehension of such qualities that the desire to penetrate to fundamentals latent in 'Digging' becomes directed as his early work develops. 'In Small Townlands' confirms such an interpretation of the aesthetic direction Heaney is taking in its admiration for the revelatory reduction of a painter's

art 'That strips the land of fuzz and blotch, / Pares clean as bone' (*DN*, p.54). The 'small townlands' of the title denote an Irish topography much like Heaney's own; its underlying character is revealed by an art that cuts into the perceived landscape with the same energetic confidence as the grandfather's spade 'on Toner's bog':

In small townlands his hogshair wedge
Will split the granite from the clay
Till crystal in the rock is bared (*DN*, p.54).

By the end of his second collection, Heaney finds his aesthetic of irreducibles topographically epitomised by the flat and almost featureless bogland. In refining his localized writing until an ethical dimension is integrated with the perceptual response to landscape, however, Heaney leaves Mossbawn in *Death of a Naturalist* to travel to the west of Ireland. Three poems in the collection, 'Storm on the Island', 'Synge on Aran' and 'Lovers on Aran', celebrate the stark austerity of the west. The topography of the island is evoked in terms of a purity Heaney comes to define in 'The Peninsula' as 'Water and ground in their extremity' (*DD*, p.21). The later prose-poem 'The stations of the west' presents the ascetic local atmosphere of the west coast of Ireland in some detail, and implies something of the region's cultural significance. Heaney travels west 'to inhale the absolute weather', but also to attempt to learn Gaelic in the Gaeltacht where the tongue has its last sanctuary. It is the landscape itself, however, that makes the most lasting impression on him: 'But still I would recall the

stations of the west, white sand, hard rock, light ascending like its definition over Rannafast and Errigal, Annaghry and Kincasslagh: names portable as altar stones, unleavened elements' (S, p.22).³⁶ For one in search of fundamentals, this landscape of 'absolute weather', 'unleavened elements' and 'white sand, hard rock' is highly instructive. There the Irish identity, not yet dispossessed of its language and culture, survives with an undiminished integrity emblemized in the topography itself. The 'names portable as altar stones' are all in Donegal, the very geography of which connotes Irish cultural and political autonomy. The county is the only part of Northern Ireland that is not British; Malin Head, the most northerly spot on the island, is Irish ground. The 'portable' place names lodge in memory as pledges of Irishness, mnemonics recalling the local text of cultural self-sufficiency Heaney has read in 'The stations of the west'.

Returning to *Death of a Naturalist*, such cultural, and ultimately political, considerations are implicit in the affirmation of stoic independence made in 'Storm on the Island'. In a desolate landscape, an entrenched community defined only by the poem's 'we' survives with a spirit of resistance equal to their deprivation and the assaults of the weather. The poem's dogged assertiveness is consistent with the character of the Ulster Catholics' republican ethos under British dominion that 'could be and would be resisted' (S, p.11) that Heaney recalls imbibing when young in

Stations. As in Auden's 'The Watershed', enthusiastic acceptance of the bare landscape's rigorous terms in 'Storm on the Island' provides credentials for the speaker's tones of defensive integrity. Like Alston Moor, Heaney's island is no place for those who cannot affirm their identification with the bleak terrain:

We are prepared: we build our houses squat,
Sink walls in rock and roof them with good slate.
This wizened earth has never troubled us
With hay, so, as you see, there are no stacks
Or stooks that can be lost. Nor are there trees ...

(*DN*, p.51).

With three more negatives to follow in its almost hyperbolic account of exposure and desolation, 'Storm on the Island' comes close to caricaturing its intentions in becoming a celebration of deprivation. A reader might feel he has strayed across a fictional border into another landscape of the west, that of the unmitigated Irish abjectness of Flann O'Brien's *The Poor Mouth*. Nevertheless, 'Storm on the Island' serves its turn in the development of Heaney's local aesthetic; like the painter's brush of 'In Small Townlands', the poem reaches towards the fundamentals of its landscape, stripping its topographical particulars to the irreducibles of rock, earth and sea. Similarly, 'Lovers on Aran' works its allegory of erotic union around local imagery of 'Water and ground in their extremity' (*DN*, p.21).

The penetrative brushwork that 'Pares clean as bone' (*DN*, p.54) of 'In Small Townlands' is recalled more explicitly by 'Synge on Aran'. Winds 'pare down' (*DN*, p.52) the landscape with an incisive and revelatory precision like the painter's talent 'That strips the land of fuzz and blotch' (*DN*, p.54). Heaney's approval of this topography of the barest essentials is conveyed imitatively in the paring down of his verse in 'Synge on Aran'. It is the first poem in which he begins assimilating the aesthetic lessons of place into his style in working towards the spare forms that later characterize his poetry:

Salt off the sea whets
the blades of four winds.
They peel acres
of locked rock, pare down
a rind of shrivelled ground;
bull-noses are chiselled
on cliffs (*DN*, p.52).

'Islanders too / are for sculpting' (*DN*, p.52), Heaney notes in beginning his compressed appraisal of correspondences between human character and the landscape. Man and place are in close relation, the former partaking of the uncompromising aspect of the latter, and both being 'chiselled', 'carved' and 'polished' by the craftsmanlike wind. The metaphors of the wind's reductive and simultaneously creative shaping imply the natural and local provenance of the style Synge travelled to Aran to learn. Synge's ghost appears at the end of the poem, the landscape's

influence on his style admirably evoked in images drawn from the rarefied character of the island:

There
 he comes now, a hard pen
 scraping in his head;
 the nib filed on a salt wind
 and dipped in the keening sea (DN, p.52).

It was to absorb the spirit of the west that Yeats directed Synge to Aran. His success in assimilating indigenous Irish qualities into his work moved Yeats to state that 'Synge, like all of the great Kin, sought for the race, not through the eyes, or in history, but ... in the depths of the mind'.³⁷ In the island poems in *Death of a Naturalist* Heaney confronts a landscape entirely void of what Auden termed topographical 'accessory content' in 'The Watershed'. His imagination is obliged to turn inwards, towards the Yeatsian 'depths of the mind', prompted in 'going down and down' by the emphasis on underlying fundamentals in his perceptual responses to the topography. A psychological dimension emerges in the 'Strange, it is a huge nothing that we fear' (DN, p.51) that concludes 'Storm on the Island'.

With the growing inseparability of the aesthetic and ethical implications of local experience in Heaney's work, external perceptions and inward meditations become unified. Like Synge's, Heaney's pen begins 'scraping in his head' once it has been honed by exposure to the stimulating bareness of Aran. He is about to enter the *Door into the*

Dark of his second collection, where, as Synge did in Yeats's estimation, he will seek for 'the race' in recognizing communal and cultural elements as inherent to the depths of his own mind. Mossbawn, once returned to after instructive experience of other topographies, gradually narrows until Heaney is to an extent imaginatively confined to the peat-bogs. There, on 'the moss, forbidden ground', he emulates his grandfather's penetration, 'striking / Inwards and downwards' (*DD*, p.56) into a landscape 'not to be sounded / by the naked eye' (*N*, p.41) to gain deeper knowledge of self and tribe.

Accordingly, after the Aran poems, Heaney revisits Mossbawn and childhood in 'Personal Helicon' to conclude his first collection and begin formally the combined penetration of the landscape and his consciousness. The surface topography and activities of the landscape of origins have been carefully laid out in much of *Death of a Naturalist*. In 'Personal Helicon' it is to early memories of a series of wells that Heaney returns. His attraction to the subterranean aspects of his landscape has been indicated in the opening of the ground in 'Digging', 'At a Potato Digging' and 'Poem'; in 'Personal Helicon' the fascinated child peers into the depths to bring the adult poet to the dawning awareness that 'I rhyme / To see myself, to set the darkness echoing' (*DN*, p.57).

As with Auden's experience in boyhood of the mine-shafts in his landscape recorded in *New Year Letter*, Heaney's well-gazing results in an increased awareness of 'Self and Not-self' (*CP*, p.182). Adjusting Freud's scheme of psychological development to the growth of Heaney's poetry, the ambitious child of 'Poem' is beginning to sense the id's resources, and his ego-ideal is about to emerge. As *The Ego and the Id* puts it in describing the formulation of the ego-ideal as 'the representative of the internal world, of the id', 'Owing to the way in which it is formed, the ego-ideal has a great many points of contact with the phylogenetic endowment of each individual - his archaic heritage'.³⁸ Heaney's 'archaic heritage', his 'Not-self' of tribal consciousness, becomes available to him by the end of his second collection after 'Personal Helicon' begins the charting of 'the darkness' of his individual mind. Correspondingly, an 'ego-ideal' emerges to dominate his work until about 1975, the ideal of an Irish cultural and political identity whose integrity is not impeached by the matter of Ulster. This pattern of development eventually results in a temporary diminution of the purely personal and perceptual aspects of Heaney's treatments of landscape. His desire 'to set the darkness echoing' sets up resonances that increasingly suggest 'the shared calling of blood' and its historical and cultural associations.

The directions becoming apparent as Heaney's poetic spade-work goes deeper are entirely consistent with the

tentative unearthing of themes of ancestry and identity in 'Digging'. By the end of his first collection 'the quest for definition' is well underway. 'Personal Helicon' remains a poem of the history of the self, and its surface topography of 'ferns and tall / Foxgloves' (*DN*, p.57) is that of the daylight lyricism of much of *Death of a Naturalist*. The darkness Heaney plumbs and moves to enter at the poem's close, however, is the Irish 'our proper dark' of Yeats's 'The Statues', where 'we may trace / The lineaments of a plummet-measured face'.³⁹ Heaney's own tracing of the Irish condition, inaugurated in 'At a Potato Digging' and elsewhere in his first collection, will come to dominate his work, and the peat-bogs will prove invaluable in conducting it.

In advancing towards the peat-bog poetry, there are indications in Heaney's *Door into the Dark* that he is consciously working towards the strong simplicity of a shared myth. 'Undine' and 'Requiem for the Croppies' constitute experimental mythologisations of landscape which are considered in Chapter Six below. Parables drawn from his rural surroundings of an art of confident strength, already implicitly desiderated in 'Synge on Aran', are offered in 'The Forge' and 'Thatcher'. Quasi-mythological with its grunting Hephaestus of a blacksmith and its anvil 'Horned as a unicorn' (*DD*, p.19), 'The Forge' connotes a sense of entering into the craft's mysteries. A poetry of hierophantic dedication is correspondingly suggested;

in 'The Forge' one senses that Heaney is proposing, like Joyce's Dedalus, to 'go into the smithy of my soul to forge the uncreated conscience of my race'.⁴⁰ Certainly several of its companion poems in *Door into the Dark* make the national orientation of Heaney's work more clear. 'Thatcher' likewise commends an art of vigour and achieved simplicity. Like the smith of 'The Forge' and the poet Heaney seems to wish to become, the 'Thatcher' is intrinsic to his community but set apart from it by his solitary and quasi-magical expertise.

The thatcher's talent for 'pinning down his world' (DD, p.20) is one Heaney seeks to develop in his continuing investigations of landscape's adequacy as a vehicle for his major themes. 'The Forge' and 'Thatcher' are accordingly followed by 'The Peninsula' which applies their lessons of relaxed accomplishment and spare strength to defining the fundamentals of a landscape and the essence of its significance. Like the Aran poems before it and 'Bogland' which soon follows, 'The Peninsula' celebrates a landscape of evocative starkness. Since his visit to the island, however, Heaney's ability to moralize bare landscapes with a minimal apparatus of implication has increased significantly. As his note accompanying 'The Peninsula' and 'Bogland' in the anthology *Let the Poet Choose* indicates, Heaney has become more consciously aware of landscape's potential for the communication of extrinsic themes. In choosing 'Bogland' and 'The Peninsula' to represent his work, he

reveals the increasing importance of landscape to his poetry and the greater deliberation with which he proceeds in his treatments of it: 'These two, I hope, by an act of attention, turn a landscape into an image and that image, in turn, has implications beyond the poem'. 'The Pensinsula', he continues, was chosen 'because of its fidelity to the Ards Peninsula in County Down, and also because the clarity and plainness of this landscape seems to insinuate that patience and simplicity are fundamentals'.⁴¹

The comment makes clear the importance Heaney attaches to 'fundamentals' *per se*, a fact to which the treatments of landscape considered so far have all implicitly attested. As well as 'patience and simplicity', 'The Peninsula' brings strongly to mind the self-sufficiency that is affirmed as a fundamental of survival in 'Storm on the Island'. This quality is embodied in the integrity of the whole landscape of the poem, an encompassing *Ding an sich* of

...things founded clean on their own shapes,
Water and ground in their extremity (DD, p.21).

The reader's attention is caught by the reflexive emphasis of 'their own shapes', as this grammatical underlining of capable independence is used, without obvious necessity, in the preceding emblematisations of self-sufficient autonomy:

The leggy birds stilted on their own legs,
Islands riding themselves out into the fog (DD, p.21).

These recurrent reflexives in Heaney's reading of independence in the landscape seem to echo, quietly and

persistently, 'Sinn Fein', literally 'we ourselves', otherwise 'ourselves alone'. The republican ethos is paraphrased in the local imagery, and the Irish nationalist dimension already discerned in Heaney's fusion of his aesthetic and ethical responses to place becomes more nearly explicit. This comes as no surprise from the author of 'At a Potato Digging' and 'For the Commander of the "Eliza"' in *Death of a Naturalist*. While those poems owed much to Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger*, the historically partisan emotion in their confrontations of Ireland's grievances is very much Heaney's own. Andrew Waterman has stated, with considerable relevance to developments and potential difficulties in Heaney's work, that 'The pressures of a deforming national history have always constrained Irish poets to move from the personal towards larger mythicisings and this can prove a factitious and narrowing exercise'.⁴² Heaney comes to be aware of the 'narrowing' tendencies in his 'larger mythicisings' on behalf of his community when he writes of having become 'mired in attachment' (*SI*, p.102). As has been stated above, he does significantly forsake personal impulses and intuitions during the period of his sustained involvement with communal and national themes. He cannot, however, be called 'factitious' in this, as his concern with Irishness stems directly and fluently from his early dealings with personal ancestry and identity. The peat-bogs as the basis for his Irish myth of place are not

arbitrarily or factitiously chosen but constitute a major aspect of his landscape of childhood. Nor does Heaney place the dogmas of nationalism before the dedication and conscientiousness of his practice as a poet. If the landscape of 'The Peninsula' whispers 'Sinn Fein', this is because republicanism is genetically inherent in 'the shared calling of blood', the ancestral voices to which Heaney's imagination must respond. The subtlety with which the ethos of independence is insinuated in 'The Peninsula' remains characteristic of his treatments of national themes. Like the shifting bogland, without rigidity in 'Missing its last definition / By millions of years' (DD, p.55), Heaney's poetry never settles firmly into doctrinaire nationalism. As for Auden in Stan Smith's view of his work's continuous avoidance of ideological closure, for Heaney 'Consciousness means renouncing that unproblematic unity of being',⁴³ the comforting certainty of unqualified identification with a political creed.

This habitual refusal to think in terms of ideological destinations is written into 'The Peninsula', a 'land without marks so you will not arrive // But pass through' (DD, p.21). Its *paysage moralisé* is qualified by this emphasis on the absence of topographical referents of fixed significations. Heaney has no points of overriding importance to make, and the poem's commendation of self-sufficient integrity is entirely compatible with its intimations of the value of open-minded silence. The

tour of 'The Peninsula' begins and ends with advice to hold one's peace: 'When you have nothing more to say, just drive / For a day all round the peninsula ... // ... And drive back home, still with nothing to say' (*DD*, p.21). Patience and simplicity, the morals Heaney draws from the landscape, are silent virtues and the poem's codifying of autonomy is essentially unspoken. Silence is an important consideration in Heaney's work's high evaluation of reticence and verbal withholding, as Blake Morrison notes in his chapter 'The Gag of Place' in *Seamus Heaney*.⁴⁴ Later, the wish to speak out becomes urgent when Heaney complains that 'The tongue's / Leashed in my throat' (*WO*, p.46), although when he does so it is not without eventual misgivings. 'The Peninsula', however, like Auden's landscape that 'never was more reticent', that 'cut off, will not communicate' (*CP*, pp.39, 41), strikes a fine balance between silence and suggestion. Auden infused the austere separatism his uplands signified into later more overtly political poems; similarly Heaney's extrapolations of independence in the remote landscape of 'The Peninsula' are subsequently read into the more explicitly nationalist topography of 'Bogland'. At this stage, Heaney's silent education by the Ards Peninsula in patience, simplicity and self-sufficiency resembles Auden's in 'The Prophets', when the derelict and self-possessed mines' 'lack of answer whispered "Wait"' (*CP*, p.203). As well as connoting autonomy as 'unfenced country' (*DD*, p.55) the topography of

'Bogland' shares the simplicity of 'The Peninsula' in its essential featurelessness, and its patience in the enduring aspect of the 'landscape that remembered' (P, 54).

Accordingly, the meanings gleaned in 'The Peninsula' are inscribed into memory within the poem, in anticipation of their lasting relevance to subsequent work. The imperative 'Now recall ...' indicates that 'The glazed foreshore and silhouetted log, / That rock where breakers shredded into rags' (DD, p.21), together with the autonomous birds and islands referred to above, already compose a landscape of the mind. This stark topography of 'Water and ground in their extremity' constitutes an index of fundamentals, a key to Heaney's local texts of which he states 'that now you will uncode all landscapes / By this' (DD, p.21).

As a moment of 'clarity and plainness' in Heaney's passage through his *Door into the Dark*, the excursion of 'The Peninsula' ends once 'you're in the dark again' (DD, p.21). The landscape's lessons have been learned and stored in memory, however, and Heaney's second collection continues towards its conclusion in 'Bogland'. Two poems near the end of the book, 'Whinlands' and 'Shoreline', make further advances in the moralization of landscape in preparation for the establishment of the myth of the peat-bogs. In 'Whinlands' a test of fire applied to the whins serves to consolidate the aesthetic and ethical ideal of 'things founded clean on their own shapes'. Burning the plants does not destroy them but, like the painter's brush of 'In Small

Townlands', accomplishes a revelatory reduction to fundamentals:

... incineration like that
 Only takes the thorn.
 The tough sticks don't burn,
 Remain like bone, charred horn (DD, p.47).

Kavanagh's landscape of 'Whin-blossoms burning up the dew'⁴⁵ is gestured towards by the poem's images of fire and the whins' chromatic brilliance where 'Hills oxidize gold' (DD, p.47). It concludes, however, with implications alien to Kavanagh's sense of place and more of a piece with the culturally associational mode Heaney considered typical of Montague. The historical and archaeological references of the last stanza give its morally connotative 'Persists' a cultural overtone. As in 'The stations of the west', Heaney focuses on the character of the landscape to emblemize obliquely the tenacity of the indomitable Irishry in clinging to their indigenous history and culture:

Gilt, jaggy, springy, frilled
 This stunted dry richness
 Persists on hills, near stone ditches,
 Over flintbed and battlefield (DD, p.48).

Earlier in *Door into the Dark*, 'Requiem for the Croppies', considered in the following chapter, is confidently partisan in its mythologising of Irish history. 'Shoreline' complements it with a nationalist and quasi-mythological treatment of Ireland's geography. The poem consolidates Heaney's emerging sense of national identity by purposefully ignoring the border that runs through Northern Ireland and

his personal and tribal consciousness. Localities in Ulster and Eire are indiscriminately strung together to make 'Shoreline' Heaney's richest poem for place-names. They form a liturgy of an undivided Ireland: the Ulster counties of Down and Antrim are followed by Eire's Wicklow and Mayo; Moher in County Clare is named and the conclusion points north, south, east and west for the final pan-Irish imagery of

Strangford, Arklow, Carrickfergus,
Belmullet and Ventry
Stay, forgotten like sentries (DD, p.52).

A historically remote and undivided Ireland is evinced by the penultimate stanza's references to 'the Danes', 'the chinking Normans' and 'currachs' (DD, p.52). By juxtaposing precise topographical details with the large-scale geography mapped by the place-names, Heaney combines local and national elements in the poem. Auden achieves a similar effect in 'Look, stranger, at this island now', denoting Britain as a whole in the opening and then introducing particulars related to 'the small field's ending' (EA, p.158). County Down is named to evoke a broad area that is subsequently imaged in the details of 'the sea / Sidling and settling to / The back of a hedge' (DD, p.51). 'Basalt stands to' specifically at the cliffs of Moher, and the general and the particular are combined in the lines

Take any minute. A tide
Is rummaging in
At the foot of all fields,
All cliffs and shingles (DD, p.51).

The black basalt at Moher supplies the basis for the anthropomorphism of 'ocean and channel // Froth at the black locks / On Ireland' (DD, p.51). This is supplemented by the following image in the double signification of 'strands / Take hissing submissions' (DD, p.51). Ireland itself emerges in Heaney's work, personified as a mythological presence whose feminine character is indicated by the images of her fine head of black hair. The goddess of the peat-bog poems is not introduced until 'The Tollund Man' in *Wintering Out*. Her coming is firmly anticipated, however, by the macro-geographical anthropomorphism of 'Shoreline'.

The explicitly Irish motivation that is growing stronger in Heaney's poetry as his second collection draws to a close slackens briefly in 'Bann Clay', the penultimate poem separating 'Shoreline' from 'Bogland'. A return is made to the landscape of childhood to apprehend its geological basis. The substratum of clay beneath the valley of the River Bann supports the bogland and its preserved history that Heaney's poetry is about to consider:

It underruns the valley.
 The first slow residue
 Of a river finding its way.
 Above it, the webbed marsh is new,
 Even the clutch of Mesolithic
 Flints (DD, p.53).

Heaney's aesthetic of strong simplicity is exemplified in the firm homogeneity of the clay, which he remembers cut into 'Slabs like the squared-off clots / Of a blue cream'

(*DD*, p.53). The poem is ingenuously descriptive; the clay is not susceptible to moralization or metaphorical adaptation, embodying in its prehistoric inscrutability the fundamental integrity to which other treatments of landscape have pointed. Rather than attempting to paraphrase its significance in his continuing reading of Mossbawn, Heaney recognizes the clay as the ground of the palimpsest upon which the texts of his landscape are written:

Under the humus and roots
This smooth weight. I labour
Towards it still. It holds and gluts (*DD*, p.54).

'Digging' is recalled in the intimacy with the earth of 'humus and roots' and formally acknowledged in 'I labour / Towards it still'. The early analogy between the pen and the spade is holding good as Heaney moves on to 'Bogland'. The layers of 'the webbed marsh' and their cultural and historical associations must be penetrated if Heaney is to make contact with the unity and innocent integrity represented by 'Bann Clay'. Ultimately, he cannot achieve this, and the peat-bog poetry ends in an exhausted acceptance of tribal iniquity in the admission of 'Slaughter / for the common good' (*N*, p.45) of 'Kinship'. 'Bann Clay' and its optimistic sense of latent purity accordingly becomes redundant in the overall scheme of Heaney's poetry; it finds no place in his *Selected Poems 1965-1975*, despite the finely-tuned music of its rhymes and its valuable contribution to his evocation of 'the first place'. Its memories of how 'water gradually ran // Clear on its old

floor' and clay 'baked white in the sun' (*DD*, pp. 53-54) emblemize a desiderated purification of the tribal identity that Heaney cannot effect. At the time of writing, however, Heaney's imagination had not yet been plunged into the maelstrom of the Troubles, and 'Bogland' shares the enthusiasm for penetration to untainted fundamentals expressed in 'Bann Clay'.

In pairing 'Bogland' for *Let the Poet Choose* with 'The Peninsula' Heaney spoke of the former as 'an attempt to make the preserving, shifting marshes of Ireland a mythical landscape, a symbol of the preserving, shifting consciousness of the Irish people. History is the soft ground that holds and invites us into itself century after century'.⁴⁶ The strata of botanical history are physically manifest in the layers of the peat, and the human past is likewise traceable through excavations in the landscape. As Heaney notes in his 'Feeling into Words', 'a great proportion of the most cherished material heritage of Ireland was "found in a bog"' (*P*, p.54). Those who conduct such work of retrieval become 'Our pioneers' in 'Bogland', in which Heaney's nationalist 'we' becomes well-established:

Our pioneers keep striking
Inwards and downwards,
Every layer they strip
Seems camped on before (*DD*, p.56).

Heaney pays considerable attention to 'Bogland' in 'Feeling into Words' out of gratitude for the poem's almost fortuitous provision of the basis for his extensible myth

of place. It is the first step towards the peat-bogs' fulfilment of his subsequent need for an imaginative 'field of force in which ... it would be possible to encompass the perspectives of a humane reason and at the same time to grant the religious intensity of the violence its deplorable authenticity and complexity' (*P*, p.56). As 'a landscape that has a strange assuaging effect on me, one with associations reaching back into early childhood' (*P*, p.54) the bogland is capable of uniting Heaney's personal experience and his sense of the communal archaic heritage. He recognizes this in writing of his 'need to make a congruence between memory and bogland and, for the want of a better word, our national consciousness' (*P*, pp.53-55). Ultimately, such considerations and poetic spontaneity combined for the making of 'Bogland': 'I ... had been reading about the frontier and the west as an important myth in the American consciousness, so I set up — or rather, laid down — the bog as an answering Irish myth. I wrote it quickly the next morning, having slept on my excitement' (*P*, p.55).

These quotations from 'Feeling into Words' indicate that the tentative engagements of national themes in preceding treatments of landscape had developed into an ambitious commitment to a poetry of Irish communal experience. The inauguration of the myth of place of the peat-bogs is spoken of as a deliberated step in such a direction. 'Bogland' itself announces Heaney's nationalist intentions in its confident assumption of the Irish 'we' which becomes central

to much of his subsequent work. In *Door into the Dark*, 'Requiem for the Croppies' used the first-person plural, but in the form of a dramatic monologue; 'Girls Bathing, Galway 1965' risked its unobtrusive 'our'. The 'We are prepared ...' of 'Storm on the Island' in the first collection had direct reference only to its limited insular community. 'Bogland', however, is unambiguously nationalist from its opening word and in the postulation of a nationally archetypal landscape that follows. The Irish 'we' constitutes a structural principle in the poem, reinforced by the capitalized 'Our ...' that recurs to introduce further sentences consolidating the national identity:

We have no prairies
 To slice a big sun at evening —
 Everywhere the eye concedes to
 Encroaching horizon,

 Is wooed into the cyclops' eye
 Of a tarn. Our unfenced country
 Is bog that keeps crusting
 Between the sights of the sun (DD, p.55).

Heaney's, and Ireland's, 'unfenced country' emblemizes independence of externally imposed regulation, a *sine qua non* for the ideal of an indigenous and autonomous national culture. As an analogue for history, the shifting bogland's indeterminacy of form corresponds with Tom Paulin's view that 'history ... for the republican ... is a developing process which aims at the establishment of a full cultural identity'.⁴⁷ Like Auden's moorland, which becomes inviolable once it is of no further use to industry, the bogland is

beyond colonisation and exploitation, as 'They'll never dig coal here' (*DD*, p.55) affirms.

In its assertive use of the Irish 'we', its embodiment of a spirit of independence and its archaeological aspects, 'Bogland' displays characteristics Heaney associates with Montague's treatments of landscape in 'The Sense of Place': 'There is an element of cultural and political resistance and retrieval in Montague's work that is absent from Kavanagh's' (*P*, p.141). The personal and perceptual responses to place in which Heaney most resembles Kavanagh are still evident in 'Bogland'. By the time of 'The Tollund Man', when communal myth subsumes personal experience, the topographical detailing of 'Bogland' is stripped away and the landscape is perfunctorily presented in the phrase 'the flat country' (*WO*, p.47). In 'Bogland' the tactile immediacy of Heaney's sense of the soil that characterized his early work survives in the lines 'The ground itself is kind, black butter // Melting and opening underfoot' (*DD*, p.55). Subsequently, the vivid particularity of Heaney's personal responses to the peat-bogs is not met with again until 'Kinship' concludes his sustained treatments of the landscape.

The drift in Heaney's work towards the 'learned, literate and conscious' sense of place he associates with Montague is underlined in 'Bogland' by its relation to its author's reading. As 'Feeling into Words' indicates above, Heaney's 'reading about the frontier and the west' prompted its

composition. In his *Seamus Heaney*, Blake Morrison discerns the influence of E. Estyn Evans's *Irish Folk Ways* on Heaney's work. Morrison quotes Evans on the subject of the bogland as "an approximate chronological sequence of landscapes and human culture going back several thousand years".⁴⁸

Heaney's premise for 'Bogland' of 'bog as the memory of the landscape, or as a landscape that remembered everything that happened in and to it' (*P*, p.54) forms a poet's paraphrase of Evans's words. Morrison writes of Evans 'recounting the recovery from Irish bogs of perfectly preserved butter'.⁴⁹ In lines elliptically stating the synonymy of the landscape and history, 'Bogland' states that

Butter sunk under
More than a hundred years
Was recovered salty and white (*DD*, p.55).

While this, with its archaeological estimate of dating, would appear to derive directly from *Irish Folk Ways*, the details could equally be memories of Heaney's landscape of childhood. As he writes in 'Feeling into Words', with equal relevance to the discovery of 'the Great Irish Elk' (*DD*, p.55) in 'Bogland', 'We used to hear about bog-butter, butter kept fresh for a great number of years under the peat. Then when I was at school the skeleton of an elk had been taken out of a bog nearby and a few of our neighbours had got their photographs in the paper, peering out across its antlers' (*P*, p.54). In several important respects, therefore, the landscape of 'Bogland' is, as Heaney has already been quoted in stating of the world of Kavanagh's poetry, 'as deep not

as history but as his own life in it' (P, p.142). The poem, like others after it, represents a mode of response to landscape in which personal perception and memory on the one hand and communal and culturally associational elements on the other are held in equilibrium. From 'Digging' to 'Bogland' the metaphor of pen-as-spade has proved uniquely apt; its penetration of the strata of identity in Heaney's mental landscape has brought him into contact with 'the good turf' of his archaic heritage. He will now join 'Our pioneers' in their 'striking / Inwards and downwards', effectively relegating his personal responses to landscape to secondary importance until the tribal implications of 'Bogland' have been thoroughly worked out.

The mythological dimension of Heaney's poetry of the peat-bogs is not properly established until his stimulating encounter with P. V. Glob's *The Bog People*. Nevertheless, the goddess is sensed beckoning seductively in the use of 'wooded' in the second stanza of 'Bogland' quoted above. Heaney's myth of place is fundamentally one of the intensity of his own people's relations with the soil. Universality, however, is in the nature of myth; the peat-bog poetry and other work directly relating to it has relevance to societies other than Heaney's in signifying humanity's deep psychological and nutritive bond with the earth. As W. R. Rodgers noted, the universal emotion of local attachment exists in Ulster in a particularly acute form:

It is impossible to convince an Ulster Protestant farmer that, in the event of an all-Ireland government being formed ... his farm will not be taken away from him and given to his Catholic neighbour. And, mark you, it is equally impossible to convince the Catholic neighbour that *he* will not be given the Protestant's farm ... all the promise and multiplicity of attachments which you denote by 'love of country' is adumbrated in the peasant's love for land.⁴⁹

In 1969 'the old trouble of Ireland, the hunger for land',⁵⁰ as Rodgers put it, erupted into violence once more. Heaney's response to the Troubles is most significantly charted by further developments in his treatments of landscape. It is to such writing, in which the terrain of 'Bogland' proves an invaluable vehicle for the communal concerns in Heaney's work, that the following chapter principally attends.

Notes to Chapter Five

- 1 T. S. Eliot, 'Little Gidding', *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London, 1969), p.195.

- 2 Philip Hobsbaum, 'Craft and Technique in *Wintering Out*', in *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, edited by Tony Curtis (Bridgend, 1982), p.39.

- 3 Compare, for example, 'Ante-Natal Dream', Kavanagh, p.129, and Heaney's 'Glanmore Sonnets' V, *Field Work*, p.37, for 'boortree'; 'From Tarry Flynn', Kavanagh, p.29, and 'Servant Boy', *Wintering Out*, p.17, for 'haggard'; *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh, p.46, and 'Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces', *North*, p.24, for samples of dialect speech.

- 4 Kavanagh, p.70; the quotation is from 'Advent'. Heaney's 'Whinlands', *Door into the Dark*, pp.47-48, concentrates on Kavanagh's 'whins'. Kavanagh's 'bog-holes' recur in Heaney's poetry after 'Bogland', *Door into the Dark*, pp.55-56, establishes the terrain's importance in his work. Heaney's 'Bog Oak', *Wintering Out*, pp.14-15, shares its 'cart track' with Kavanagh's 'Advent', while 'Gone', *Door into the Dark*, p.14, and 'Servant Boy', *Wintering Out*, p.17, feature stables.

- 5 Compare the potato gathering scene that opens *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh, p.34, with Heaney's 'At a Potato Digging', *Death of a Naturalist*, pp.31-33. Stony ploughland is common to *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh, p.47, and Heaney's 'Land', *Wintering Out*, p.21. The proximity of farms to bogland is indicated in 'A Christmas Childhood', Kavanagh, pp.71-72, and Heaney's 'Kinship' V, *North*, p.44, as well as in the latter's prose by 'Mossbawn', *Preoccupations*, p.18. Family prayer in kitchens is described in both *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh, p.41, and Heaney's 'The Other Side', *Wintering Out*, pp.35-36.
- 6 Compare, for example, Heaney's 'The Tollund Man', *Wintering Out*, pp.47-48, and 'Undine', *Door into the Dark*, p.26, and *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh, pp.34-35, for instances of sexualizing of landscape. Compare 'Glanmore Sonnets' I, *Field Work*, p.33, and *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh, p.38, for their common correlations of poetry and ploughing. This trope is implicit very early in Kavanagh's work in 'Ploughman', Kavanagh, p.3. Heaney's 'First Calf', *Wintering Out*, p.74, distinctly recalls *The Great Hunger*, Kavanagh, p.45, in its imagery of bovine afterbirth.
- 7 Seamus Heaney, quoted in Michael Allen, 'Provincialism and Recent Irish Poetry', in *Two Decades of Irish Writing*, edited by Douglas Dunn (Cheadle, 1975), p.35.

- 8 Kavanagh, p.115.
- 9 Anthony Cronin, *Dead as Doornails* (Swords, Co. Dublin, 1980), p.91; *vide* also Cronin, p.117, for further indications of Kavanagh's respect for Auden: "'That fellow Auden ... has a well-stocked mind. He has a lot of furniture, a lot of philosophy and psychology and that sort of thing. Of course it's junk, but it does to make a blaze, it creates energy and a sort of warmth ...".' Kavanagh felt he himself lacked such "'junk ... to make a blaze"'.
- 10 Kavanagh, p.86 ('A Wreath for Tom Moore's Statue') and p.164 ('Question to Life').
- 11 Compare, for example, 'Narcissus and the Women', Kavanagh, p.145, with Auden's *The Age of Anxiety, Collected Poems*, p.366, for instances of both poets' allegorizing tendencies, and, for example 'Requiem for a Mill', Kavanagh, p.156, and Auden's 'The Prophets', *Collected Poems*, p.203, for instances of their common affection for inanimates.
- 12 Allen, p.36.
- 13 Kavanagh, p.127.
- 14 *ibid.*, p.135.
- 15 *ibid.*, p.97.
- 16 *ibid.*, p.127.

- 17 *ibid.*, p.159.
- 18 *ibid.*
- 19 James Joyce, *The Essential James Joyce*, with an introduction by Harry Levin (Harmondsworth, 1967), p.249.
- 21 Kavanagh, p.35.
- 22 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 23 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 24 Blake Morrison, *Seamus Heaney* (London, 1982), p.13.
- 25 Ethna Carbery, 'Rody McCorley' in *Rich and Rare*, selected by Sean McMahon (Swords, Co. Dublin, 1984), p.71. The ballad's inclusion in this very various collection 'for everyone who loves Ireland' is indicative of its perennial standing in the repertoire of the singing nationalist.
- 26 A. T. Q. Stewart quoted in Morrison, p.35.
- 27 Seamus Heaney, 'Unhappy and at Home', interview with Seamus Deane, *The Crane Bag*, vol. I, no. 1 (Dublin, 1977), p.62.
- 28 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 29 Seamus Heaney quoted in Anthony Bailey, *Acts of Union* (London, 1980), p.129.

- 30 Seamus Heaney, 'Kavanagh of the Parish', *The Listener* (London, 26 April 1979), p.577.
- 31 *vide* Seamus Deane, 'Irish Poetry and Irish Nationalism' in *Two Decades of Irish Writing*, edited by Douglas Dunn, p.9.
- 32 Bailey, p.124.
- 33 Quoted in Donald Davie, 'Austin Clarke and Padraic Fallon', in *Two Decades of Irish Writing*, edited by Douglas Dunn, pp.42-43.
- 34 C. B. Cox in *The Spectator*, quoted on the cover of later editions of *Death of a Naturalist* and other collections by Heaney.
- 35 *vide* John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* (London, 1972), p.134; as Barrell notes, Clare writes of 'balks', 'fallows', 'furlongs', 'furrows', 'eddings', 'lands', 'ground', 'close', 'plain', and 'nook' to describe 'distinct parts of his landscape ... all subsumed by Thomson within the words "mead" and "field"'. Similarly, a writer without Heaney's knowledge of the varied composition of his topography might rely on 'earth' alone to generalize where Heaney so finely discriminates.
- 36 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.

- 37 W. B. Yeats, quoted in Joseph Hone, *W. B. Yeats* (London, 1943), p.238.
- 38 Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.48.
- 39 Yeats, p.370.
- 40 Joyce, p.252.
- 41 Seamus Heaney in *Let the Poet Choose*, edited by J. Gibson (London, 1973), p.72.
- 42 Andrew Waterman, 'Somewhere, Out There, Beyond: The Poetry of Seamus Heaney and Derek Mahon', *PN Review* 21, vol. 8, no. 1 (Manchester, 1981), p.43.
- 43 Stan Smith, *W. H. Auden* (London, 1985), p.37.
- 44 *vide* Morrison, pp.17-28.
- 45 Kavanagh, p.108; the line is from the speeches of 'the Countryman' in 'Adventures in the Bohemian Jungle'.
- 46 Seamus Heaney in *Let the Poet Choose*, edited by J. Gibson, p.72.
- 47 Tom Paulin, *Ireland and the English Crisis* (Newcastle, 1984), p.141.
- 48 E. Estyn Evans, quoted in Morrison, p.45.

- 49 W. R. Rodgers (identified as author of an anonymous article by Terence Brown in ' W. R. Rodgers and John Hewitt' in *Two Decades of Irish Writing*, edited by Douglas Dunn, p.96), 'Conversation Piece: An Ulster Protestant', *The Bell*, vol 4, no. 5 (August, 1942), pp.313-14.
- 50 *ibid.*, p.314.

CHAPTER SIX - HEANEY : THE LANDSCAPE THAT REMEMBERED

- 'Undine', 'Requiem for the Croppies',
 'Gifts of Rain', 'Toome', 'The Tollund Man',
 'Bog Queen', 'Kinship'
 — 'The backward look behind the assurance
 Of recorded history, the backward half-look
 Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror'.¹

Wintering Out of 1972, Heaney's third collection, registers distinctly the impact of the Troubles upon his poetry. The dedicatory stanzas beginning '*This morning from a dewy motorway / I saw the new camp for the internees*' (WO, p.5) create an introductory emphasis on the reality of internment, military security and terrorism; the '*bomb*' and '*machine gun*' (WO, p.5) of the lines that might have been mere metaphors of weaponry in *Death of a Naturalist* are now actualities in the landscape of Heaney's immediate experience. His sense of the Irish condition as he knew it in Belfast after 1969 is summed up in a stanza from which the nationalist optimism present in *Door into the Dark* has wholly disappeared:

*Is there a life before death? That's chalked up
 on a wall downtown. Competence with pain,
 coherent miseries, a bite and sup,
 we hug our little destiny again* (WO, p.5).

Wintering Out contains many such acute sensings of Ulster's unease, and deals memorably with the Troubles both directly and obliquely in '*A Northern Hoard*' and '*The Other Side*' respectively. The communal import of Heaney's work is considerably extended when personal experience is seen to

provide paradigms of the labours of the community in works like 'Land' and 'Gifts of Rain'. In such ways, Heaney's writing begins to correspond closely in its orientation towards his people's experience and its mythological developments to his analogy between poetry and water-divining. Heaney writes that 'The diviner resembles the poet in his function of making contact with what lies hidden', possessing 'a gift for mediating between the latent resource and the community that wants it released' (*P*, pp.47, 48). This chapter deals with Heaney's attempts to extend his treatments of landscape in order to make available what he senses is 'hidden and real' for himself and his community. The relevant period in his work is that between the emergence of the 'landscape that remembered' (*P*, p.54) in 'Bogland' and the exhaustion of the peat-bogs' mythic potential in *North* of 1975. 'Bogland' also unequivocally established the nationalist 'we' in his poetry, positing an identity that began to raise important questions with the outbreak of the Troubles in 1969. The need to supply what is 'hidden and real' becomes urgent in the recognition of 'an absence' in 'Gifts of Rain':

I cock my ear
at an absence —
in the shared calling of blood

arrives my need
for antediluvian lore (*WO*, pp.24-25).

Heaney has become aware of an obligation, not only to the tribe but also to himself in terms of 'my need', to offer up 'antediluvian lore'. The quest for fundamentals in his earlier work now takes the form of the desire to comprehend himself

and his people by making contact with the base-level of the communal archaic heritage. The 'antediluvian lore' he needs to supply will make the Troubles more comprehensible by bringing to light genetic factors giving 'the religious intensity of the violence its deplorable authenticity' (P, p.57).

In 'Feeling into Words' Heaney writes of the importance in the Irish context of attempting 'to define and interpret the present by bringing it into significant relationship with the past' (P, p.60). His peat-bog poetry undertakes to do just that. Its myth of place recognizes the imperative communal emotion engendered by native attachment to the soil that the modern nationalists have in common with their ancient forebears. Heaney does not wish to exonerate his community, but urgently desires to elucidate their motives, and to come to terms with that part of himself that is communally determined. Doing so is a protracted and sometimes painful matter in which Heaney's bog-myth eventually brings him to the realization that

I... // ... would connive
in civilized outrage
yet understand the exact
and tribal, intimate revenge (N, p.38).

The above lines from 'Punishment' relate to the public humiliation by tarring of girls accused of betraying the tribe by consorting with British soldiers. Like much else in *Wintering Out* and *North*, the poem reflects Heaney's first-hand experience of the Troubles during his residence in Belfast between 1969 and 1972. Acquaintance with violence and his

own sense of foreboding at the time, threatened as he was with death and called 'the well-known Papist propagandist',² underwrite experientially the homicidal terror of the bog-myth. 'Bogland' had already brought the landscape to prominence in his work and conferred a quasi-mythological status upon it. The outbreak of the Troubles found Heaney's imagination drawn back to the peat-bogs in his efforts to comprehend simultaneously history and the present in his work. In 1969, Heaney writes in 'Feeling into Words', 'the problems of poetry moved from being simply a matter of achieving the satisfactory verbal icon to being a search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament' (P, p.56). In this search, the encounter with P. V. Glob's *The Bog People* was crucial, and led directly to the extension into tribal myth of the landscape of 'Bogland'. Glob described the violent deaths and commitment to the peat-bogs of victims slaughtered as tributes to the goddess of the soil. His account fused with Heaney's awareness of the lethal intensity of his people's territorial struggle and his conception of the bogs as an archetypal Irish landscape to produce 'The Tollund Man'. As has been noted, Heaney's personal and perceptual responses to the topographical aspect of the bogland are considerably diminished in 'The Tollund Man', as in the peat-bog poetry generally. The landscape's mythological significance is ascendant in its adequacy as a vehicle for considering the communal psyche. As a localized conceptual premise, however, the bogland supports poetry of comprehensive scope which retains an imaginative basis in the

landscape of childhood. Treatments of the peat-bogs range from the learned speculation of 'Belderg' to the journalistically graphic 'Punishment', while private responses to the landscape are adequately accommodated in 'Kinship'.

In establishing his myth of the bogland Heaney is indebted to Yeats as well as to Glob. The latter's influence is often explicitly evident in details of imagery and narrative, some of which are instanced below. Heaney's indebtedness to Yeats consists on one level in his following Yeats's precedent for an Irish poetry of national and public consequence that is governed by the integrity of an individual voice. In 'Feeling into Words', Heaney further defines his 'Search for images and symbols adequate to our predicament' in terms of Yeats's wish to supply "'befitting emblems of adversity"' (P, p.57). The phrase is from 'Meditations in Time of Civil War', a title with applicability to much of Heaney's writing during Ulster's as yet unresolved Troubles. Heaney's awareness of an element of emulation of Yeats in his work of the period is indicated by his already-quoted remark that 'Possibly I've thought too much about Yeats as an exemplar'. There is evidence of adaptation of Yeatsian motifs in the euhemerism of Heaney's mythologising in poems like 'Requiem for the Croppies' and 'The Tollund Man'. Yeats is fully aware of the tendency of history to transmute into mythology in 'Easter 1916', and in 'The Rose Tree' he makes his own contribution to the phenomenon. The poem treats the deaths of Pearse and Connolly after the Easter Rising as blood-

sacrifices fertilizing the ideal of Irish nationhood:

'But where can we draw water',
 Said Pearse to Connolly,
 'When all the wells are parched away?
 O plain as plain can be
 There's nothing but our own red blood
 Can make a right Rose Tree'.³

Heaney employs the same euhemeristic strategy in 'Requiem for the Croppies', which is examined more fully below, and acknowledges Yeats's example in discussing the poem in 'Feeling into Words': 'The oblique implication was that the seeds of resistance sowed in the Year of Liberty had flowered in what Yeats called "the right rose tree" of 1916' (P, p.56). The conjunction of blood and fertility with which 'Requiem for the Croppies' concludes gives it direct relation to Yeats's 'The Rose Tree'. 'The Tollund Man', also considered in detail below, likewise follows Yeats in its hypothesized prayer 'to make germinate' (WO, p.48) the remains of Irish victims of history to vitalize the present nationalist struggle.

In employing such mythicising techniques Heaney demonstrates the truth of A. H. Birch's statement that in Ireland 'the passage of time does not so much heal the wounds of the past as turn them into myths to justify further sacrifices'.⁴ Like Yeats's gravediggers of 'Under Ben Bulbin', Heaney's peat-bogs 'but thrust their buried men / Back in the human mind again'.⁵ In the later utilisations of the bogland, the political commitment of 'The Tollund Man' is qualified by graver reflections on the persistence of the patterns of

sacrifice and revenge from prehistory to the present. As myths wrought of sacrifice, earth and nationhood, however, 'Requiem for the Croppies' and 'The Tollund Man' are redolent of the nationalist ethos in its most notorious form of *Blut und Boden*. At the close of 'Kinship', Heaney's last treatment of his bog-myth, any enthusiasm for the fight for integrated Irish nationhood that was latent in such earlier poems has faded. Bitterness and exhaustion are evoked by the poem's statement that 'Our mother ground / is sour with the blood / of her faithful' (*N*, p.45). Nevertheless, there remains an attitude less of acceptance of bloodshed than of bleak resignation to its inevitability as Heaney concludes 'Kinship' by asking his witness to

report us fairly,
 how we slaughter
 for the common good

 and shave the heads
 of the notorious,
 how the goddess swallows
 our love and terror (*N*, p.45).

Blake Morrison perceives in the phrase 'slaughter / for the common good' Heaney's entrapment in his work's communal idiom. Morrison states of the expression that 'It is one of several points in *North* where one feels that Heaney is not writing his poems but having them written for him ... by the "anonymities" of race and religion'. He adds that 'at such moments, like it or not, his poetry grants sectarian killing in Northern Ireland a historical respectability which it is

not usually granted in day-to-day journalism'.⁶ For Morrison in the passage from which the above quotations are taken, Heaney's 'slaughter' denotes I.R.A. atrocities. Edna Longley is more precise, however, in noting that Heaney's work does not so much attempt to dignify such events as to render comprehensible the ruthlessness within the nationalist community: 'He excludes the inter-sectarian issue, warfare *between* tribes, by concentrating on the Catholic psyche as bound to immolation, and within that immolation to savage tribal loyalties'.⁷ Her words are certainly directly applicable to poems like 'Punishment', 'Strange Fruit' and the later 'Casualty'. Elsewhere, as in 'Requiem for the Croppies', the dead of Heaney's poetry are the tribe's casualties at the hands of their oppressors. At no point does Heaney categorically endorse his community's 'inter-sectarian' outrages, whatever lengths he may go to to understand 'the psychology of the Irishmen and Ulstermen who do the killing' (P, p.57).

Within the Iron-Age frame of reference provided by Glob's *The Bog People*, the goddess of Heaney's bog-poetry is nonetheless synonymous for the purposes of his myth with Mother Ireland. Yeats's Kathleen ni Houlihan is immediately brought to mind. Less obviously, Heaney's goddess connotes Kavanagh's view of rural Ireland's domination by the gynocratic ethos emblemized by Maguire's domineering mother in *The Great Hunger*. As 'Bridegroom to the goddess' (W0, p.47), 'The Tollund Man' is among the ancestors of Maguire, whose

mother 'praised the man who made a field his bride'.⁸ Like the doomed heroes of the republican ballads and other followers of Kathleen ni Houlihan, 'Maguire was faithful to death'.⁹ Their fates, although different, were commonly determined by the territorial imperative which is at the root of Heaney's myth of the bogland.

In responding to 'the shared calling of blood' by sustaining the bog-poetry's treatment of his tribe's quasi-religious binding to the land, Heaney prompts the following very relevant questions from Edna Longley: 'Insofar as Heaney's own role in the poems parallels that of the bridegroom-victims, does he really attain "sad freedom", or in fact sacrifice some imaginative liberty to that "dark-bowered queen", Kathleen ni Houlihan? Has tribal pre-ordination, or ordination, any petrifying effect on poetic life?'¹⁰ Longley cites several of the more exhibit-like poems in *North* which persuade a reader to concur with her implications. Works like 'The Grabaulle Man' and 'Strange Fruit' lack vitality as exercises on themes already more vigorously dealt with. In a number of the peat-bog poems the physical landscape is barely present but provides an essential if almost abstract mythical and historical premise. As such, the bogland has necessitated the foregoing consideration of elements in Heaney's treatments of it that, while of immediate relevance to the poetry, are somewhat wide of the topographical orientation of this study. The following, therefore, initially considers developments in Heaney's localized writing leading

to the myth of bogland, after which detailed examination of the bog-poems is restricted to those which are significantly concerned with the landscape *per se*.

Heaney's mythology of the goddess, the bogland and the tribe is not formally inaugurated until 'The Tollund Man' in *Wintering Out*. It would be an oversimplification to say that the already-examined 'Bogland' provided the landscape while Glob provided the myth; mythological elements structuring expressions of communally significant matters are present in Heaney's treatments of landscape from the outset. Attention must be given to such aspects of his earlier work which made imaginatively feasible the eventual formulation of the myth of the bogland.

The most important indications of Heaney's mythopoeic inclinations in *Death of a Naturalist* are found in 'At a Potato Digging'. This poem also constitutes his first attempt to engage the themes of Irish history and nationhood. It significantly anticipates later work in its conflation of a communal orientation, treatment of the nineteenth century's Irish potato famine and mythologised designation of the soil as 'the black / Mother' (*DN*, p.31). The communal and historical elements in 'At a Potato Digging' logically extend the concern with ancestry evident from preceding poems like 'Digging' and 'Ancestral Photograph'. The latter unassumingly raises the subject of nationality in its reference to 'the stage Irishman / Whose look has two parts scorn, two parts dead pan' (*DN*, p.26). In moving from personal and

familial history to dealing with communal and national history, however, there are signs in 'At a Potato Digging' that, at this early stage, Heaney's ambitions are outstripping his abilities. Roland Mathias remarks of the poem that 'a recall of the famine of "forty-five" is stitched a little uneasily ... into the sharp visual description of the present'.¹¹ The mythological references to 'the black /Mother' and 'the famine god' (*DN*, p.31) are likewise somewhat arbitrary. They nevertheless combine well with imagery of ritual and supplication to introduce Heaney's sense of 'the religious intensity' of his tribe's 'territorial piety' (*P*, p.57) on which the bog-myth is eventually premised:

Heads bow, trunks bend, hands fumble towards the black
Mother. Processional stooping through the turf

Rekurs mindlessly as autumn. Centuries
Of fear and homage to the famine god
Toughen the muscles behind their humbled knees,
Make a seasonal altar of the sod (*DN*, p.31).

Heaney's early intimation in 'At a Potato Digging' of the presence of *Das Weibliche* in the landscape is followed up and enlarged upon in 'Undine' of *Door into the Dark*. This second collection is rich in quasi-mythological treatments of perceptual experience in such poems as 'The Forge' and 'A Lough Neagh Sequence'. In 'Undine', and 'Rite of Spring' which precedes it, Heaney's imagination infuses a specifically mythological dimension into his memories of 'the first place'. Both poems interpret the making available of water in metaphors of sexual relations between man and the latent feminine energies

of the earth. Rather than dealing with the landscape of Mossbawn, 'Rite of Spring' adopts a close focus upon the pump in the Heaney's farmyard. The pump is a recurrent image in Heaney's recollections of childhood, and has a totemic function in the essay 'Mossbawn', where it marks 'the centre of another world' (P, p.17).

'Undine' is more akin to 'Digging' and other early poems in its sense of intimate familiarity with the stuff of the landscape and its attention to the spade-work by which man possesses it. It differs from other such treatments in being framed around the classical myth of the 'undine ... a water-sprite who has to marry a human being and have a child by him before she can become human' (P, p.53). It remains, however, primarily a poem of the personal sense of place from its origination in 'an orphaned memory, without a context, obviously a very early one, of watching a man clearing out an old spongy growth from a drain between two fields' (P, p.53). 'Undine' owes its experiential authenticity to Heaney's own labours at drain-clearance, recorded later in 'Land' in *Wintering Out*. Like the peat-bog poetry and much else he has written, 'Undine' demonstrates the cogency of Heaney's remark that 'I began as a poet when my roots were crossed with my reading' (P, p.37): native experience of the County Londonderry farm fuses with acquired mythological knowledge to produce the poem. Unlike many of the bog-poems, however, 'Undine' harmoniously integrates vivid recollections of landscape into its mythological structure as the dramatic

monologue of its water-sprite. Details of 'the briars', 'grey silt' and 'drains' sketch in the topography before the rich local particularity of the 'marriage' of man and water:

... I rippled and I churned

Where ditches intersected near the river
 Until he dug a spade deep in my flank
 And took me to him. I swallowed his trench
 Gratefully, dispersing myself for love
 Down in his roots, climbing his brassy grain (DD, p.26).

Water takes on a greater significance than that of the myth of the undine, embodying the life-force itself in the statement that 'I alone // Could give him subtle increase' (DD, p.26).

'Undine' and 'Rite of Spring' give water a symbolic status in Heaney's work akin to Auden's designation of it as 'pure being, perfect in music and movement' (CP, p.433). In 'Anahorish' and 'May', examined in the following chapter, water symbolizes purity of being in an 'antimythological myth' of landscape similar in essence to Auden's terrestrial Good Place of 'In Praise of Limestone'.

While the contemporaneous 'The Forge' and 'Thatcher' indicate Heaney's aspirations to a communally serviceable art of strong simplicity, 'Undine' reveals his increasing interest in the potential of localized myth. The consciousness of his intentions of adapting mythology for the purposes of his poetry of rural Ulster is evident from his remarks on the poem in 'Feeling into Words': 'I once said it was a myth about agriculture, about the way water is tamed and humanized when streams become irrigation canals, when water becomes involved with seed' (P, p.54).

In 'Undine', myth is at the service of personal experience; in 'Requiem for the Croppies', also in *Door into the Dark*, the converse is rather the case. Heaney's native familiarity with his landscape is used to authenticate the poem's dramatization of the Rising of 1798 in its imagery of the 'ditches' and 'hedges' of 'our own country' (DD, p.24). The Yeatsian euhemerism of the concluding motif of bloodshed and fertility has already been referred to above. The significance of the localized mythologisation of history in 'Requiem for the Croppies' lies in its unalloyed nationalism. It is the first instance of Heaney's unqualified identification with his community, their history and their ideals of Irish nationhood in his work. As such it was conceived of and executed with deliberation, as Heaney's reflections on the poem indicate:

'Requiem for the Croppies' ... was written in 1966 when most poets in Ireland were straining to celebrate the anniversary of the 1916 Rising. That rising was the harvest of seeds sown in 1798, when revolutionary republican ideals and national feeling coalesced in the doctrines of Irish Republicanism and in the rebellion of 1798 itself — unsuccessful and savagely put down. The poem was born of and ended with an image of resurrection based on the fact that some time after the rebels were buried in common graves, these graves began to sprout with young barley, grown up from barley corn which the 'croppies' had carried in their pockets to eat while on the march (P, p.56).

Heaney's reference to 'an image of resurrection' links 'Requiem for the Croppies' to 'The Tollund Man' with its tentative prayer 'to make germinate' (WO, p.48) the remains of the Irish dead. The Croppies' food of barley corn is also consistent with the later poem and the mythological apparatus adapted from *The Bog People*. Glob believes the goddess's victims were fed a ritual meal of a 'last gruel of winter seeds' (WO, p.47), as Heaney puts it, of which barley was a significant ingredient.¹² The emerging nationalist mythology of 'Requiem for the Croppies' is, broadly speaking, distinctly similar to the fertility cult Glob describes, and to others yet more ancient in *The Golden Bough*. The poem thus anticipates, via Yeats's 'The Rose Tree', the mythology formulated in 'The Tollund Man'.

The mythical structure to which *The Bog People* led Heaney permitted an understanding in terms of tribal atavism of 'the religious intensity of the violence' stemming from the 'territorial piety' (P, p.57) of Heaney's community. 'Gifts of Rain' in *Wintering Out* evinces the depth and intimacy of human relations with the soil upon which the tribe's obedience to the territorial imperative is based in Heaney's landscape. The poem mediates between personal experience of place and the communal and historical elements that are becoming ascendant in Heaney's writing. The opening sections establish the importance of man's proximity to his landscape as fundamental to human identity and bodily survival. Erotic suggestions in the treatment of a figure gathering crops in a flooded field

indicate the quasi-conjugal nature of local attachment as Heaney knows it. *OED* gives the meaning 'finger ring' for 'hoop', allowing Heaney's 'hooped' to suggest the crop-gatherer he observes has, like Kavanagh's Maguire, 'made a field his bride'. Through the images of reflection, the figure embraces the entirety of the landscape's 'sky and ground':

His hands grub
 where the spade has uncastled
 Sunken drills, an atlantis
 he depends on. So
 he is hooped to where he planted
 and sky and ground
 are running naturally among his arms
 that grope the cropping land (W0, p.24).

The observational intensity of the preceding lines shows the acuteness and powerful originality of Heaney's perceptual and lyrical responses to the minutiae of his landscape:

a flower of mud -
 water blooms up to his reflection
 like a cut swaying
 its red spoors through a basin (W0, p.23).

Similarly, the opening's 'he begins to sense weather / by his skin' (W0, p.23) indicates a responsiveness to local conditions that is genetic rather than acquired in its sensitivity. Heaney's statement of the figure he watches, 'He fords / his life by sounding. / Soundings' (W0, p.23), has reflexive application to the poetry he is writing; in sounding the depths of his sense of place he continues his 'quest for definition' of origins and identity.

From such beginnings, demonstrating the essentiality of human relations with the landscape, 'Gifts of Rain' moves to a fusion of personal and communal experience and enters areas of myth and history. Childhood is invoked as Heaney recalls listening with his family to the sounds of the River Moyola in flood. Reference to the river in 'Mossbawn' indicates that it is intrinsic to Heaney's sense of the innocent brightness of 'the first place': 'I have a sense of air, of lift and light, when this comes back to me. Light dancing off the shallows of the Moyola River, shifting in eddies on the glaucous whirlpool' (P, p.20). In 'Gifts of Rain', however, Heaney is less concerned with his private vision of the sanctity of the landscape of childhood and more attuned to its communal implications. The recognition of a responsibility to himself and his community to supply 'antediluvian lore' completes the proof of the syllogism tentatively proposed in *Death of a Naturalist*: I am of my family, my family is of Ireland, therefore I am Irish. Recollection of the river's 'usual / confabulations, the race / slabbering past the gable' is succeeded by a pregnant silence out of which Heaney must speak for his community:

I cock my ear
at an absence —
in the shared calling of blood
arrives my need
for antediluvian lore (W0, p.25).

The 'confabulations' of the river subsequently transmute into the voices of the archaic heritage with which Heaney must

commune to retrieve the communal past for the sake of his children's future. Reference to 'crops rotted' emblemizes the major scar on the modern Irish psyche, the potato famine of the last century. The imagery of the dead by the river shore mythologises the lines by bringing to mind Dante's vision of the ghosts beside the Acheron in *Inferno*:

Soft voices of the dead
are whispering by the shore
that I would question
(and for my children's sake)
about crops rotted, river mud
glazing the baked clay floor (WO, p.25).

Attention to the sounds of the river is renewed for the conclusion of 'Gifts of Rain', in which its preceding elements are woven together. In association with 'the shared calling of blood', the river now evokes the cultural ideals of autonomy and indigenous self-sufficiency already extrapolated from the landscapes of 'The Peninsula' and 'Bogland'. As in 'The Peninsula' the moralization is effected through the use of reflexives:

The tawny guttural water
spells itself: Moyola
is its own score and consort,
bedding the locale
in the utterance (WO, p.26).

The last lines quoted stress the active persistence of Gaelic in the naming 'Moyola'. The ideal of integrated Irish nationhood is demonstrated by the inalienable Irishness of the locale residing in the phonemic music of its name's articulation.

The river becomes an emblem of the continuity of the cultural heritage, 'breathing its mists / through vowels and history' (WO, p.25). As such it is 'swollen' in the poem's present with the gathering force of nationalism in contemporary events. The poem's leitmotiv of the flood emerges as a local symbol of the ungovernable indigenous energies welling up in Heaney's community. 'Gifts of Rain' concludes with a recognition that the communally determined part of Heaney's personal identity takes pleasure in this resurgence. Calling himself 'Dives', popularly the rich man of the parable of Luke XVI,¹³ he unequivocally accepts his community's territorial tenacity and acquisitiveness. W. R. Rodgers's words on 'the old trouble of Ireland, the hunger for land' are verified by the last line's admission of obsessive attachment to holdings of ground. The sexual connotations of 'mating' and 'pleasure' recall the earlier quasi-erotic images of intimate relations with the soil. 'Gifts of Rain' ultimately implies that 'the hunger for land' is an instinctual urge akin to, and not wholly distinct from, sexual libido, repression of which issues in the Troubles as a means to satisfaction:

A swollen river,
 a mating call of sound
 rises to pleasure me, Dives,
 hoarder of the common ground (WO, p.25).

The fusion of the privately perceptual and communally associational modes of response to place in 'Gifts of Rain' constitutes another example of Heaney's ability to hold the two in working equilibrium in his writing. He values the

realization of such a unified apprehension of landscape as a 'feeling, assenting, equable marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind', forming 'the sense of place in its richest possible manifestation' (P, p.132). The communal, cultural and implicitly political concerns that emerge at the conclusion of 'Gifts of Rain', however, begin to subsume personal responses to place as *Wintering Out* progresses.

Ireland's Troubles, past and present, form a clear sub-text in 'Toome', which follows directly upon the ground-boarding conclusion of 'Gifts of Rain'. With its companion place-name poems 'Anahorish' and 'Broagh', prime indicators of the general importance of landscape in *Wintering Out*, 'Toome' illustrates an observation by Jeremy Hooker: 'The tensions and reactions accompanying identifications of locality and nation - "my place" and "my country" - are not necessarily conscious; but they will inevitably find direct or indirect expression, at times of national crisis, in a poetry of place'.¹⁴ In 'Toome', as the introduction to the last chapter stated, any sense of 'my place' is lost beneath the weight of the locality's significance in terms of 'my country' and its history. Like 'Anahorish' and 'Broagh', with which it is firmly a part of Heaney's native landscape, 'Toome' is on one level a celebration of the survival of Gaelic in a place-name. His cultural unearthings in the landscape's strata of significances include such indigenous namings in poems retrieving something of the Irish tradition of *dinnseanchas*, 'a form of mythical

etymology' (*vide P*, p.131). Etymology, however, has little part in 'Toome', a village whose republican associations endure perennially in the ballad 'Rody McCorley'. The very name detonates echoes of terrorist explosions in the 'soft blastings' (*WO*, p.26) with which Heaney savours its enunciation. Buried caches of arms are connoted by the subsequent use of 'souterrain'¹⁵ (*WO*, p.26). 'Toome' exemplifies the relevance to Heaney's treatments of landscape of A. T. Q. Stewart's already-quoted statement that 'Locality and history are welded together' in Ulster. The 'Soundings' of 'Gifts of Rain' intensify as Heaney plumbs the depths of the Irish past, 'striking / Inwards and downwards' earnestly in pursuit of the implications of 'Bogland'. History of comparative recency is contacted in the form of 'musket-balls' (*WO*, p.26), suggestive of the Rising of 1798. A much more remote past and signs of the bog-myth are also encountered in the image of 'torcs'. Torcs are twisted neck-bands, which, according to *The Bog People*, 'are the mark of honour of the goddess, and a sign of consecration to her'.¹⁶ 'Toome' is effectively a peat-bog poem. In 'Belfast', already quoted from in Chapter One, Heaney identifies the village with 'the lure of native experience ... "the bog"' (*P*, p.35). Descending to the primal level of the tribal unconscious, symbolized by 'alluvial mud', Heaney's imagination is submerged beneath 'bogwater' (*WO*, p.26), indicating the poem's return to the watery landscape of 'Bogland'. It is worth quoting 'Toome' in full for the syntactical fluency with which Heaney moves from relishing the name to total immersion in its associations:

My mouth holds round
 the soft blastings,
Toome, Toome,
 as under the dislodged

 slab of the tongue
 I push into a souterrain
 prospecting what new
 in a hundred centuries'

 loam, flints, musket-balls,
 fragmented ware,
 torcs and fish-bones
 till I am sleeved in

 alluvial mud that shelves
 suddenly under
 bogwater and tributaries,
 and elvers tail my hair (WO, p.26).

Having reached 'alluvial mud', Heaney is back at the base-level of his landscape and its polysemous topographical script to which he penetrated in 'Bann Clay'. The sense of liberation and resolution in arriving at the inscrutable essence of his native region in the earlier poem has, however, disappeared in 'Toome'. Rather than evoking any feeling of having solved the problem of identity, the unusual usage 'sleeved' in 'Toome' suggests a measure of confusion. *OED* gives 'Pent up, confined' in the sense of being surrounded by water for a meaning of 'sleeved'. This is consistent with images of being 'under / bogwater and tributaries'. Having arrived in 'Toome' at what Morrison describes as 'the primeval source of his selfhood and race'¹⁷, Heaney begins to discover that he is already 'mired in attachment' (*SI*, p.102). He

remains thus 'sleeved' in his landscape's communal implications until his obligation to 'the shared calling of blood' ends with the sad freedom of 'Exposure' which closes *North*.

Heaney is not at ease during this period in his work. The subscription to the nationalist and republican ethos, latent in, for example, 'Gifts of Rain' and 'The Tollund Man', is drastically qualified in *Wintering Out* by the agonised confrontation with the Troubles of 'A Northern Hoard'. As he wrote in a newspaper article collected under the title 'Belfast' in 1972, 'At one minute you are drawn towards the old vortex of racial and religious instinct, at another time you seek the mean of humane love and reason' (*P*, p.34). It is towards 'the old vortex' that he is ineluctably drawn in his peat-bog poetry by the desire to produce communally oriented poetry. Exhausting tensions are inevitably produced, and in *North* 'the weary twisted emotions that are rolled like a ball of hooks and sinkers in the heart' (*P*, p.30) spoken of in 'Belfast' are sensed frequently.

The first indications of such weariness and anguish come in the 'A Northern Hoard' sequence. The poems are set in Belfast's urban landscape of 'the burnt-out gable', 'gunshot, siren and clucking gas' (*WO*, pp.41, 39) where peace and comfort are wholly denied. The 'coherent miseries' of Ulster's 'little destiny' traced in the sequence evoke a despondency and unease well-described in terms of Auden's confrontation with war's grave unrest in 'The Dark Years':

... a vita minima, huddling for warmth,
 the hard- and the soft- mouthed together
 in a coma of waiting, just breathing
 in a darkness of tribulation and death (CP, pp.222-23).

'Tinder' concludes 'A Northern Hoard' with an allegorical narrative of attempts to strike flame from flints, followed by the bewilderment and desolation coming after 'the flames' soft thunder' (WO, p.44). The prehistoric imagery of the 'flints' and 'a cave-mouth flame // Of leaf and stick' (WO, p.43) suggests Heaney's sense of the primitive and tribal qualities in his community and their struggle. 'Tinder' thus anticipates the atavistic treatments in the later peat-bog poetry. Commentators other than Heaney have noted the primitivism of the strife in Ulster. In A. H. Birch's view, the difficulties in resolving the Troubles derive from the cultic irrationality inherent in them: 'In many respects the conflict still resembles an ethnic or tribal conflict. Like tribes, each community has its own myths and heroes, its own songs and symbols — the orange and green sashes, the Union Jack and the Irish tricolour'.¹⁸ Edna Longley reads the allegory of 'Tinder' in terms of the violent struggle for nationhood of Heaney's community: 'The underprivileged "tribe" who have lit the tinder of revolution, wonder what to do with their "new history"'.¹⁹ The poem's conclusion forms one of Heaney's closest approaches to the purely figurative use of landscape. Images of 'cold cinder' and 'tundra' outline an impressionistic

topography of hyperborean desolation, recalling Auden's arctic landscapes of despair in works like 'Atlantis' and *The Age of Anxiety*:

Now we squat on cold cinder,
 Red-eyed, after the flames' soft thunder
 And our thoughts settle like ash.
 We face the tundra's whistling brush
 With new history, flint and iron,
 Cast-offs, scraps, nail, canine (WO, p.44).

This local emblemization of the discomfort and confusion that permeate 'A Northern Hoard' is followed by a return to a landscape of actuality in 'Midnight'. The outlook remains very bleak, however, and the despair of the preceding sequence is latent in the imagery of the dark, sodden topography of the bogland:

Rain on the roof tonight
 Sogs turf-bank and heather,
 Sets glinting outcrops
 Of basalt and granite,
 Drips to the moss of bare boughs (WO, p.45).

After the local specificity of the place-name poems, and other renderings of localities detailed out of personal familiarity with them, Heaney's landscape is becoming anonymous and generalized. The 'turf-banks and heather' of 'Midnight' provide images of a region identified only in the broadest terms as 'Ireland' and 'Kildare' (WO, p.45). Heaney's perceptually limited and precise experience of place is being superseded by his sense of Ireland, a process completed in 'The Tollund Man' which follows 'Midnight'.

The last words of 'Midnight', 'The tongue's / Leashed in my throat' (WO, p.46), indicated a desperate desire to speak out and break the deadlock of fear and confusion evoked in 'A Northern Hoard'. In its invocation 'to make germinate' the victims of history's wrongs, 'The Tollund Man' comes as a bid to do so. The blank terrain of the bogs and the Iron-Age cult of sacrifice and fertility provide a landscape and a mythology archetypally relevant to Heaney's view of the Irish condition. 'Bogland' had already established its 'unfenced country' as Heaney's national landscape. The very word 'bog' is a small stronghold of indigenous Irishness as one of the few words of Gaelic to have survived unaltered in English. In its power to preserve and yield up evidences of ancient cultures, the bogland offers a localized analogy of the atavistic surfacing of violence in the nationalist community. Their tribal ethos of intense 'territorial piety' that motivates the Troubles amounts to a surviving manifestation of earth worship. Ireland's nationalist iconography of 'Mother Ireland, Kathleen Ni Houlihan, the poor old woman', 'call her whatever' (P, p.57), accordingly resembles the cult of the goddess of the ground described in *The Bog People*. These correspondences upon which Heaney bases his bog-poetry are grimly clinched by the present-day killings committed in the name of Irish nationhood; human sacrifices to the goddess for the community's benefit in Glob's account are directly analogous to the 'slaughter / for the common good' carried out by extremists in Heaney's tribe. To go as far as Heaney does

in according fanatical republicanism the historical dignity of a religion²⁰ seems an unfortunate confusion of mythological metaphor and social reality. In his poetry's attempts to penetrate to the fundamentals of the Troubles, however, the myth of the bogland is an apt and adequate imaginative vehicle.

Although the bogland is rapidly losing its local particularity and becoming a conceptual premise in Heaney's communal mythology, personal experience of the nature of the landscape continues to inform 'The Tollund Man'. Verbatim borrowings from Glob in the poem²¹ notwithstanding, that author did not so much supply the structure of Heaney's myth of place as confirm intuitions already present in earlier poems. The 'goddess' was prefigured by 'the black / Mother' of 'At a Potato Digging'. Sacrifice and fertility in the name of nationhood were introduced in 'Requiem for the Croppies', while 'Digging' and 'Bogland' had indicated the potential for Heaney of the landscape of Glob's *The Bog People*. When Heaney imagines 'the flat country' (WO, p.47) of Glob's Jutland, he does so through the medium of his familiarity with the bogland as part of his landscape of childhood. The vivid recreation of the sacrifice draws upon his intimate knowledge of the wet textures of County Londonderry's peat-bogs. It also calls upon the conjugal and erotic elements in the imagery used to describe relations with the soil in 'Undine' and 'Gifts of Rain':

Bridegroom to the goddess
 She tightened her torc on him
 And opened her fen,
 Those dark juices working
 Him to a saint's kept body,
 Trove of the turfcutters'
 Honeycombed workings (WO, p.47).

Heaney uses Glob's account of the landscape of Jutland and the lethal cult of the goddess as a prism to refract into mythology his community's depth of attachment to the contested soil of Ulster. In support of their indigenous and archaic claims to an integrated national identity, Heaney risks the audacious syncretism of the second part of the poem. As Edna Longley notes, the Tollund Man, originally a victim of the Iron-Age cult, becomes for Heaney a 'Christ-surrogate'²²; ultimately resurrected out of history by the goddess of the bogs (herself congruous with Irish Mariolatry), he is tentatively proposed as an object of worship. The hierophant-poet suggested by 'The Forge', later the shaman who communed with the tribal dead in 'Gifts of Rain', steps forward to propose his dangerous act of consecration. A flaw in the cohesiveness of Heaney's view of republicanism as 'a feminine religion' is evident in his use of 'blasphemy'. The religion of his people is, of course, Catholicism; while worship of the goddess and reverence for the Virgin may be imaginatively compatible, Christianity remains distinct from the nationalist cult suggested in 'The Tollund Man':

I could risk blasphemy,
 Consecrate the cauldron bog
 Our holy ground and pray
 Him to make germinate
 The scattered, ambushed
 Flesh of labourers (WO, p.48).

The section continues into a brief listing of perished candidates for 'germination', Irish victims of violence who might be returned to the present, like the Tollund Man, as myths to inspire the nationalist cause. The significance in terms of Heaney's treatments of landscape of the passage is contained in the phrase 'cauldron bog'. This is on one level a fortuitous borrowing from Glob,²³ in whose book it appears as a standard topographical term for describing a type of small bog. In the context of the poem, however, the use of 'cauldron' advances Heaney's mythologisation of the landscape. The nefarious feminine powers that hold sway over the fortunes of a nation in *Macbeth* are best remembered by their repeated chant of 'Double, double toil and trouble; / Fire burn, and cauldron bubble'. The cauldron is effectively synonymous with witchcraft, and 'cauldron bog' extends the necromantic strain in *Wintering Out* established by the ritual of the mandrake in 'A Northern Hoard'. Heaney is invoking his superstitious memories of the bogland as 'the realm of bogeys ... forbidden ground' (P, pp.18-19) to reflect the terror and irrationality implicit in the resurgence of tribal energies his work is confronting. The sinister aspect of the bogland is consolidated in *North*, images of blackness and darkness occurring in each

of the subsequent peat-bog poems. Witchcraft is also occasionally suggested, as is noted below, while Heaney's conceit in 'Come to the Bower' is distinctly necrophiliac.

With 'The Tollund Man', the night of the Troubles begins to thicken in Heaney's work. His imaginative energies are effectively limited for a period by the ambit of the bogland's dark mythology as he becomes 'mired in attachment' to his tribe. A dawning awareness of the closure of new directions is contained in the description of himself as 'lost' (WO, p.48) at the end of 'The Tollund Man'. Seamus Deane commends the poem as the finest in *Wintering Out* and finds it 'also, happily, a fusion of a political sensibility with the theme of self-growth'.²⁴ Self-growth, however, in the development of his work's independent experiential responses is becoming a secondary consideration in 'The Tollund Man' as communal, and ultimately ideological, themes subsume it. Deane's 'happily' sits oddly in his appraisal of a work that seems best known for concluding as follows:

Out there in Jutland
In the old man-killing parishes
I will feel lost,
Unhappy and at home (WO, p.48).

'Funeral Rites' in *North* echoes 'man-killing parishes' in the phrase 'each neighbourly murder' (N, p.16); the adequacy of Iron-Age Jutland as a mirror to modern Ulster is firmly founded upon parallel practices of communally oriented homicide, among which Heaney feels discomfitingly at home.

The partial identification with his bog-body subject that Heaney expresses in 'The Tollund Man' arises from his sense of being bound to yet alienated from his community that was present as early as 'Digging'. The Tollund Man's 'sad freedom' (*WO*, p.48) to be honoured as a communal sacrifice is felt in some measure by Heaney as a poetic spokesman and myth-maker for his tribe. Kavanagh speaks for Heaney as well as himself in writing that 'Poetry made me a sort of outcast ... I do not believe in sacrifice and yet it seems I was sacrificed'.²⁵ As Edna Longley has already been quoted as remarking of the bog-poetry, 'Heaney's own role in the poems parallels that of the bridegroom-victim'. It falls to him to make the imaginative descent into the heart of Ulster's darkness on behalf of his tribe in his work's penetrations of the strata of the bogland.

In 'The Tollund Man', Heaney establishes, in Longley's words, 'a myth that fits the inconclusiveness both of memory and of Irish history'.²⁶ As such, the shifting landscape of the bogland provides an extensible mode for Heaney to satisfy his sense of obligation to 'the shared calling of blood'. The initial impulse of 'The Tollund Man' becomes attenuated, however, as he proceeds to do so. To refer once more to Longley's invaluable '*North* : "Inner Emigre" or "Artful Voyeur"?', in later treatments of the myth of place the hypothetical consecration of 'the cauldron bog' 'has hardened into accepted doctrine'. Subsequent bog-poems attempt to expand upon 'The Tollund Man', but, as Longley writes, 'Heaney may have mistaken his initial epiphany for a literal signpost, when it was really

a destination, a complete emotional curve that summed up profound feelings and wishes about the situation in Northern Ireland. The ambiguous resolution - "lost, /Unhappy and at home" - may be as far as he can genuinely go'.²⁷

Longley certainly has a point; reaching the nexus of selfhood, tribe, landscape and mythology of 'The Tollund Man' after his reading of Glob is, in some senses, 'as far as he can genuinely go'. Nevertheless, as a destination the myth of place of 'The Tollund Man' and the network of correspondences between ancient Jutland and modern Ulster that Heaney found in *The Bog People* demanded further exploration. The dependence on Glob, however, exhibited by the close relation of all but one of the subsequent bog-poems to his text indicates a formulaic re-working of the 'initial epiphany' of 'The Tollund Man'. *North* is largely a following through in which a measure of repetition is inherent of the implications of the atavistic myth of the bogland. The forward movement of Heaney's poetry virtually ceases as he sustains and intensifies his 'digging' on the site opened up in 'The Tollund Man'. Blake Morrison senses this in considering the title of Heaney's fourth collection, in words echoing Longley's quoted above:

The titles of all Heaney's previous books had embodied some notion of progress: the naturalist might be dead but the poet would take his place; the door into the dark would open up new worlds; see the winter out and spring might not be far behind. But *North* is just north, an arctic cul-de-sac from which one can escape only by turning round and going south (which as it happens, Heaney did).²⁸

Heaney recognises that the potential of his myth of the bogland has been exhausted in 'Hercules and Antaeus' at the close of the bog-poem-dominated Part I of *North*. 'Antaeus', which opens Part I, emblematically celebrates his work's dependence on the depths of his dark landscape:

... I cannot be weaned
Off the earth's long contour, her river-veins.
Down here in my cave

Girdered with root and rock
I am cradled in the dark that wombed me
And nurtured in every artery (N, p.12).

'Hercules and Antaeus', however, is a parable of the severance of the intimate contact with the soil that has sustained Heaney's poetry from 'Digging' to *North's* mythologised engagement of the Troubles:

Hercules has the measure
of resistance and black powers
feeding off the territory.
Antaeus, the mould-hugger,
is weaned at last (N, p.52).

The 'black powers' latent in the sinister 'cauldron bog' are exhausted. The 'holy ground' where the hierophant-poet accorded his people's homicidal 'territorial piety' the dignity of a religion is deconsecrated. A dismissal of Antaeus and all his works is made in the closing line's expectorative reference to 'pap for the dispossessed' (N, p.53). Antaeus's body becomes 'a profiled ridge, /a sleeping giant' (N, p.53), reassumed by the landscape from which he drew his strength. The mythicised fusion of topographical and human forms recalls

David Jones's symbolization of the latency of an indigenous Celtic culture in 'The Sleeping Lord':

Is the configuration of the land
 the furrowed body of the lord
 are the scarred ridges
 his dented greaves
 ? // . . .
 Does the land wait the sleeping lord
 or is the wasted land
 that very lord who sleeps?²⁹

For Heaney, however, such topographical myth-making, including his own 'antediluvian lore', is henceforth 'pap for the dispossessed'. Hercules' individual intelligence comes as 'a spur of light' (*N*, p.52) dispelling the darkness of the bog-myth. A desire for dissociation from the tribe is firmly implied, and Heaney's subsequent work goes to considerable lengths in conscientiously attempting to achieve it.

Only by immersing his imagination in the myth of the bog-land in Part I of *North* does Heaney realize the necessity of working towards his later 'free state of image and allusion' (*SI*, p.20). Seven of the poems prior to 'Hercules and Antaeus' specifically relate to the bogland, mainly incorporating aspects of *The Bog People*, but also drawing upon Heaney's personal experience of the landscape. These works range from the etymologically speculative 'Belderg' to the memories of childhood and detailed topographical evocations of 'Kinship'. 'Belderg', like the majority of the bog-poems, uses the landscape as a procedural premise founded upon the already-established analogy between history and the strata of the peat.

The 'blanket-bog' is 'stripped off' to reveal 'The soft-piled centuries' (*N*, p.13). In most of the treatments of it in *North*, the bogland has become a quasi-conceptual topography of fixed historical and mythical significance, or, in the words of 'Belderg', 'A landscape fossilized' (*N*, p.13). Longley's suggestion that the myth of 'The Tollund Man' subsequently 'hardened into accepted doctrine' takes on a literal aptness. The 'blanket bog' of *North* covers a multitude of the tribe's sins by viewing them in terms of ineluctable atavistic determination. Ciaran Carson states of the bog-poetry's correlations of tribal violence ancient and modern that Heaney

seems to be offering his 'understanding' of the situation almost as a consolation ... It is as if he is saying, suffering like this is natural; these things have always happened; they happened then, they happen now, and that is sufficient ground for understanding and absolution. It is as if there never were and never will be any political consequences of such acts; they have been removed to the realm of sex, death and inevitability.³⁰

It is not, however, a primary function of this study to assess the ethical validity or degree of relevance to the Troubles of Heaney's myth of the bogland. Such matters have already been considered in some detail and will be raised again as a consequence of the inextricable interweaving of local and cultural themes in his work. Rather than examining *North's* numerous bog-poems individually, the topographical elements in which are, as has been noted, often highly attenuated, attention will be restricted to 'Bog Queen' and

'Kinship'. These two are significantly concerned with the bogland *per se* and are, particularly the latter, vitalised by personal experience of the landscape in ways their companion poems are not. In both 'Bog Queen' and 'Kinship' Heaney is firmly on Northern Irish ground, rather than imaginatively projecting into the pages of *The Bog People* as he does in much of the peat-bog poetry. These poems have nevertheless direct relation to Glob's text. 'Bog Queen' echoes earlier Danish poets' treatments of a similar theme quoted in *The Bog People*.³¹ The poem is concerned with a preserved female body found at Drumkeragh in County Down in 1781. As Glob states, this provided 'the first properly documented account of a bog-body',³² giving Heaney's adaptations of *The Bog People* for Irish purposes a measure of historical aptness. Whether or not Heaney visited the site, not far from Belfast, is unknown to the present writer. The landscape of the poem, however, is topographically particularized with details not found in Glob which derive either from experience of Drumkeragh or from the vividness of Heaney's general familiarity with the region. His native landscape of '"the demesne" and "the bog"' (*P*, p.35) and the 'turf-bank and heather .../... glinting outcrops / Of basalt and granite (*W0*, p.45) of 'Midnight' are recalled by the opening of 'Bog Queen':

I lay waiting
 between turf-face and demesne wall,
 between heathery levels
 and glass-toothed stone (*N*, p.32).

Heaney's inherited intimacy with the composition and processes of the earth also gives 'Bog Queen' an air of experiential authenticity and local specificity absent from most of the bog-poetry:

through my fabrics and skins
the seeps of winter
digested me,
the illiterate roots

pondered and died
in the cavings
of stomach and socket (N, p.32).

The landscape is further rendered substantial by the references to 'the gravel bottom', 'the stone jambs / at my head and my feet' and the boldly effective fusion of the particular and the general in

gemstones dropped
in the peat flow
like the bearings of history (N, pp.32-33).

These last details, like the reference to 'phoenician stitchwork', are owed to Glob,³³ but they are wholly consonant with the particularity of Heaney's own imagery, which further includes the local metaphors of 'moraines' and 'fjords' (N, p.33). Such a quality of being 'earthed in the actual' (P, p.119), to quote Heaney on Kavanagh's work, makes 'Bog Queen' a poem of landscape rather than a tenuously localized exercise on a conceptual theme.

The resurrection which concludes the poem gains a macabre realism from the care Heaney has taken over the particularization of the landscape, the concreteness of which is sustained by the images of 'bog' and 'bank':

The plait of my hair,
 a slimy birth-cord
 of bog, had been cut

 and I rose from the dark,
 hacked bone, skull-ware
 frayed stitches, tufts,
 small gleams on the bank (N, p.34).

'Bog Queen' is unique among Heaney's presentations of the bog-myth in being a dramatic monologue in the person of a bog-body that actively undergoes resurrection. With the exception of 'Kinship', the bog-poems in *North* are all in some measure poetic reports on preserved remains. In 'Bog Queen', the strategy of canonizing 'The Tollund Man', whose unearthing emblemized resurrection, is taken one step further. The earlier poem performed its 'consecration' in the name of the goddess and Ireland; the imaginatively literalized resurrection at the conclusion of 'Bog Queen' is tantamount to the body's apotheosis into an incarnation of the goddess herself, analogous in Heaney's mythology to Mother Ireland. In recognition of this, Edna Longley reads 'Bog Queen' as a modern contribution to the *aisling* tradition in Irish poetry, in which nationhood and liberty are envisaged as a female form:

'Bog Queen', although over-amplified like 'The Grabaulle Man', renews that well-worn genre the *aisling* by presenting Ireland as her landscape, weather, geography, and history, and by pushing her 'old hag' incarnation to an extreme Since this is the one Bog poem with true Irish antecedents, it can begin with an apt analogue of dormant nationhood ('I lay waiting / between turf-

face and demesne wall'), and end with an equally plausible 'rising'.³⁴

The goddess makes her final appearance in Heaney's work to date at the close of 'Kinship'. Although the poem is notable for evoking personal and perceptual experience of the bogland, section VI finalises the myth of place by making explicit what has been implied all along: 'the goddess' who 'swallows / our love and terror' is synonymous with Mother Ireland:

Our mother ground
is sour with the blood
of her faithful,

they lie gargling
in her sacred heart (N, p.45).

This is an identification Heaney has not wished to establish unequivocally earlier in the development of the bog-poetry. Unqualified by the weary bitterness and ironic urbanity of this last part of 'Kinship' it would have been too close to the naive and sentimental nationalism of, for example, 'Rody McCorley':

Oh! Ireland, mother Ireland,
You love them still the best,
The fearless brave who fighting fall
Upon your hapless breast.³⁵

Within the frame of reference of sacrifice to the goddess as the embodiment of the nationalist ideal, such sentiments might be inferred from earlier work. By now, however, Heaney is beginning to achieve the detachment from his tribe that makes possible his dismissal of localized myth as 'pap for the

dispossessed' in 'Hercules and Antaeus'. The use of 'sacred heart' in the above quotation from 'Kinship' similarly distances him from his community. The phrase immediately connotes Catholicism, the avowed religion of his people, that made the idea of prayer to the Tollund Man 'blasphemy'. In their territorially motivated barbarism, however, the 'sacred heart' his tribe seems most to reverence is that of their personified homeland. This oblique imputation of religious hypocrisy is unambiguously confirmed later in *North*:

. . . Of the 'wee six' I sing
 Where to be saved you only must save face
 And whatever you say, you say nothing (N, p.59).

Even so, section VI of 'Kinship' ultimately achieves little more than a show of heart-felt hand-wringing at the atavistic inevitability of the situation. That 'suffering like this is natural', to recall Carson's words quoted above, is suggested by a parallelism of diction between sections IV and VI. The former's account of the botanical growth of the bogland includes the lines 'The mothers of autumn / sour and sink' (N, p.43); this is immediately echoed by the already-quoted 'Our mother ground / is sour . . .', while the 'inhumed faces // of casualty and victim' (N, p.45) likewise 'sink' into the history to which the bogs are analogous. The fatal souring with blood is as beyond human regulation as autumn, and Heaney invites his witness to behold the facts with the workaday courtesy of the guide to a chamber of horrors:

And you, Tacitus,
 observe how I make my grove
 on an old crannog
 piled by the fearful dead (N, p.45).

The stanza contains an admission of Heaney's assumption of the rôle of hierophant-poet in his forging of the myth of the bogland. There are a number of correspondences to a passage from Tacitus which Glob gives in translation.³⁶ Tacitus describes the cult of the goddess on an 'island of the ocean', a phrase Heaney quotes verbatim in this section of 'Kinship'. Tacitus provides Heaney's 'grove', where 'a single priest' officiates at the rites of the goddess. The persona Heaney adopts in this section is that of the priest of the goddess explaining arrangements to the Roman historian. Heaney's 'crannog', an ancient Irish lake-dwelling, connotes the 'sequestered lake' of the passage quoted by Glob. Here, the ritual ablutions of the cult were carried out and the ministrants duly drowned, or 'swallowed' as Tacitus has it, with which Heaney's 'the goddess swallows / our love and terror' accords. 'Terror' is likewise referred to in the translation from Glob. Heaney's 'crannog / piled by the fearful dead' is thus the dwelling of the poet-priest supported as on piles by the victims sacrificed in the sacred lake. For Heaney's purposes, we must read 'bog' for 'lake', an interpretation for which Glob sets a precedent.³⁷ In terms of the bogland's function as an analogue for history, therefore, Heaney is admitting that he has utilised the fates of the slaughtered to construct his mythology. He recognizes that he has effectively participated

in the process described by A. H. Birch whereby Ireland's 'wounds of the past' become 'myths to justify further sacrifices'. The weariness and despair of which section VI is redolent derive in part from this knowledge; Heaney's engagement of the Troubles on behalf of his community is at an end as 'Kinship' draws thus to a close.

The valedictory treatment of the goddess in section VI is complemented by sections III and V, which signal the presence of a male deity of the bogland in correspondence to Glob's findings. In section III 'a turf-spade / hidden under bracken' is discovered and planted upright in the ground as the male counterpart to 'the cloven oak-limb' (*N*, p.42) representing the goddess. On the one hand, the section is vividly evocative of personal experience of the bogland, written with Heaney's keenness of perceptual response to the textures of the landscape:

I found a turf-spade
hidden under bracken,
laid flat, and overgrown
with a green fog.

As I raised it
the soft lips of the growth
muttered and split,
a tawny rut

opening at my feet
like a shed skin (*N*, p.42).

On the other, it is theatrically mythologised. The self-consciously dramatic element in the ritual of the spade is heightened at the conclusion. Here, Heaney mechanically reiterates the analogy between the peat and history familiar

from 'Butter sunk under / More than a hundred years' of 'Bogland', 'a hundred centuries' // loam' in 'Toome' and 'The soft-piled centuries' of 'Belderg': 'I stand at the edge of centuries / facing a goddess' (*N*, p.42). Ciaran Carson has noted this unhappy combination of personal and culturally associational elements in section III of 'Kinship'. His remark is applicable, to a greater or lesser extent, to much of Heaney's bog-poetry: 'The two methods are not compatible. One gains its poetry by embodiment of a specific, personal situation; the other has degenerated into a messy historical and religious surmise'.³

The erection of the 'turf-spade' as the totem of the bogland's male diety, however, is authenticated in terms of personal experience by Heaney's early admiration for his ancestors' spade-work in 'Digging'. There, the spade becomes the symbol of the masculine heritage, the means of possessing and penetrating 'the black / Mother' of the landscape. Heaney's father and grandfather are exemplars of its use: 'By God, the old man could handle a spade. / Just like his old man'; 'My grandfather cut more turf in a day / Than any other man on Toner's bog' (*DN*, p.13).

It is to such memories that section V of 'Kinship' returns to offer a subtler fusion of Heaney's reading of Glob and personal experience than the rather arbitrary section III. The veneration of the male ancestors in 'Digging' is more emphatically stated in Heaney's recollections of assisting with 'the turf-cart' (*N*, p.44) in childhood. The taking of

refreshment to his grandfather at work in the early poem is brought to mind by the chivalrously emblazoned rendering of similar duties:

I deified the man
 who rode there,
 god of the waggon,
 the hearth-feeder.

I was his privileged
 attendant, a bearer
 of bread and drink,
 the squire of his circuits (N, p.44).

Memory and the 'need / for antediluvian lore' are compatible in this section, with its clear recall of childhood in such vivid imagery as that describing 'our progress / down the haw-lit hedges' (N, p.44).

The relation of the passage to Glob's text and its significance within Heaney's myth of place are left for the reader to infer from the phrase 'god of the waggon'. It is to the 'waggon', or 'turf-cart', that the attention of one familiar with *The Bog People* is drawn. Its 'hand carved felloes', 'the cupid's bow / of the tail-board' and 'the socketed lips / of the cribs' (N, p.44) relate it to Glob's reports of bog-discoveries of 'waggon . . . of fine craftsmanship and opulent decoration'.³⁹ Such were the vehicles used to convey the goddess on her spring journeyings around the communities of ancient Jutland. Tacitus, in the passage in Glob referred to above, speaks of 'a consecrated chariot' touched only by the priest. Section V is thus

linked with the conclusion of 'Kinship' that follows it, implying that, as poet-priest, Heaney has inherited the sacred charge of the 'waggon' from his ancestor. Introduction of the 'god of the waggon' extends the chronology of Heaney's adaptations of *The Bog People*, which have previously focused exclusively on the territorial sovereignty of the goddess, otherwise 'Nerthus'. As Glob states, 'Njord, the male deity ... took over the role of Nerthus in later antiquity'.⁴⁰ The male rôle in the bog-myth has hitherto been that of the bridegroom-victim. Heaney's incorporation of a masculine deity into his bog-poetry allows the successful fusion of memory and mythology in section V of 'Kinship'. Unlike the strained conjunction of actuality and mythological manipulation of section III, and the virtually figurative landscape of section VI, section V harmonizes with the personal orientation of much of the poem.

The tribe and the union with the archaic heritage emblemized in the bogland are clearly gestured towards by the opening of the first section:

Kinned by hieroglyphic
 peat on a spreadfield
 to the strangled victim,
 the love-nest in the bracken,
 I step through origins (N, p.40).

What follows, however, is emphatically personal. The repeated 'I love ...' states Heaney's depth of attachment to the landscape, and the sensory immediacy derives from the

topography rather than acquaintance with the work of Dr Glob:

the bog floor shakes,
 water cheeps and lisps
 as I walk down
 rushes and heather (N, p.40).

In the essay 'Mossbawn' Heaney talks of 'mosscheepers', imaginary creatures of childhood inhabiting the bogland in its fear-inspiring aspect of 'the realm of bogeys . . . the moss, forbidden ground' (P, pp.18-19). This memory informs the unusual usage in 'water cheeps', while the mystery latent in Heaney's personal sense of the landscape is further evoked by the topographical details of the following stanza. In actuality, as in recollection, the bogland is innately consistent with the dark arcana of the myth it supports in Heaney's writing:

I love this turf-face,
 its black incisions,
 the cooped secrets
 of process and ritual (N, p.40).

The ideal of 'a feeling, assenting marriage between the geographical country and the country of the mind' is exemplified in respect of Heaney's writings of the bogland in parts of 'Kinship'. Section I concludes with lines at once topographically literal and figuratively indicative of other dimensions of significance in its reference to bog-pools 'not to be sounded / by the naked eye' (N, p.41).

Similarly, section II concludes its essentially documentary survey of the 'process and ritual' of nature and history by acknowledging the imaginative importance of the 'Ruminant

ground' (*N*, p.41). The lines evoke the revelatory aspect of the 'landscape that remembered', echoing the exposure of 'the soft-piled centuries' when 'blanket bog' is 'stripped off' in 'Belderg'. As a landscape of the mind, the bogs are the 'nesting ground' where Heaney's myth of place has been incubated in embryo since childhood sensings of their foreboding depths and darkneses:

Ground that will strip
its dark side,
nesting ground,
outback of my mind (*N*, pp.41-42).

Childhood familiarity with the peat-bogs is also implicit in their designation as 'slime kingdoms' (*N*, p.41) in the opening, directly recalling the 'great slime kings' (*DN*, p.16) of Heaney's infancy, the frogs of 'Death of a Naturalist'. That early poem's sense of the child's horror at the repugnant aspects of nature in the Mossbawn landscape is firmly present in this second section of 'Kinship':

Quagmire, swampland, morass:
the slime kingdoms,
domain of the cold-blooded,
of mud pads and dirtied eggs (*N*, p.41).

The oblique correspondences in sections I and II with childhood fears of 'mosscheepers' and the like in the 'slime kingdoms' testify to Heaney's 'lived, illiterate and unconscious' response to the landscape. His sense of being 'Kinned by hieroglyphic peat' is thus verified in terms of the bogs' 'associations reaching back into early childhood' (*P*, p.54).

Section II then proceeds to introduce the 'learned, literate and conscious' component in Heaney's myth of place. Acquired knowledge of the bogland is firstly etymological, 'bog / meaning soft' translating from the Gaelic and, with the subsequent 'fall of windless rain' (*N*, p.42), evoking his sense of the landscape's 'strange assuaging effect' (*P*, p.54). Awareness of the botanical constitution of peat is displayed in the lines

Ruminant ground,
 digestion of mollusc
 and seed-pod,
 deep pollen-bin (*N*, p.41).

Reference to the bogs' historical associations in their power to preserve 'votive goods / and sabred fugitives' prepares for the conjuration of the goddess in the words 'Insatiable bride' (*N*, p.41). Something like the clash of personal and mythical attitudes that mars section III's ritual of the turf-spade is felt when Heaney arbitrarily encloses 'Insatiable bride' between full-stops. The cadence and continuity of the imagery is broken by the goddess's abrupt entry, suggesting the incompatibility in Heaney's conjunctions of myth and experience upon which Longley and Carson have remarked.

The fusion of experiential and extraneous elements in Heaney's sense of the bogland is much subtler in section IV, which in many ways brings to a head the nationalist implications of his myth of place. Overtones of the peat-bogs' significance in terms of Heaney's envisioning of a resurgence of indigenous

Irish cultural and political autonomy in Ulster have been discernible in his treatments of the landscape since 'Bogland'. In 'The Tollund Man', the emblematic resurrection of the bog-body provides a premise for the tentative prayer 'to make germinate' the slain in the name of integrated Irish nationhood. Immediately after the literalization of the resurrection motif in 'Bog Queen', 'The Grabaulle Man' further promotes the bog-bodies' analogue of the birth of a unified Ireland. Death's finality is challenged in the lines asking

Who will say 'corpse'
to his vivid cast?
Who will say 'body'
to his opaque repose? (*N*, p.36).

Heaney follows this with images of gestation and delivery in similes comparing the Grabaulle Man's hair to 'a foetus's' and describing his emergence from the peat 'bruised like a forceps baby' (*N*, p.36). Rather than simply following the convention of asserting immortality by the denial of death's reality, Heaney firmly suggests that the bog-body signifies a re-birth of some sort.

The full import of this strategy, and the meaning of like images in section IV of 'Kinship', is implicit in the concluding grouping of the Grabaulle Man with 'the Dying Gaul / too strictly compassed // on his shield' (*N*, p.36). For Heaney the statue of the Dying Gaul and the preserved bog-body exhibited at Aarhus have more than their similarly prostrate postures in common. The isolated reference to the statue puzzled the present writer until its associations with the idea

of Irish cultural resurgence in David Jones's essay 'The Dying Gaul' were taken into account. Heaney's familiarity with Jones's work has already been inferred from echoes of 'The Sleeping Lord' at the close of 'Hercules and Antaeus'. In the essay, Jones identifies the Dying Gaul, primarily through the figure's adornment with a torc, the token of the goddess, as a symbol of Celtic culture. The statue represents 'a hieratic pattern of society which had survived as a functioning organism from pre-history: something which had been influential from Denmark to the Aegean'.⁴¹ The reference to Denmark forms a tenuous link between the Dying Gaul, the Grabaulle Man from Denmark's peat-bogs and Heaney's poetry of the bogland. More significantly, however, Jones identifies the culture of which he speaks with the religion of 'the Great Mother',⁴² and makes Ireland central to his argument. The essay concludes by asserting that, like Heaney's Grabaulle Man, 'the Dying Gaul is not dead yet' and by locating a resurgence of indigenous Celtic culture in Ireland, particularly in the works of James Joyce.⁴³ The images of birth used in 'The Grabaulle Man' are thus mediated by reference to 'the Dying Gaul' into the scheme of Heaney's cultural and political nationalism. History's 'scales', an image possibly borrowed from Jones's essay,⁴⁴ have the 'forceps baby' from the peat added to the weight of 'beauty and atrocity' (*N*, p.36); out of the poem's images forms Yeats's 'A terrible beauty is born', its meaning of 1916 now applicable to the latter-day 'Rising' in Ulster. Such an interpretation is supported by the conclusion,

bloodshed acquiring unwonted dignity and phylogenetic authorization when the grouping of the bog-body and the statue is completed by the addition of

. . . the actual weight
of each hooded victim,
slashed and dumped (N, p.36).

Heaney's complex readings of the 'hieroglyphic peat' demand in their turn such decodings of his readers. Without thus accounting for the imagery of 'The Grabaulle Man', the full significance of section IV of 'Kinship' is unavailable. The 'nesting ground' of the bogland is recognized as the matrix out of which Heaney's mythology has sprung by his designation of it as 'seedbed' (N, p.43). The image further connotes the motifs of germination in 'Requiem for the Croppies' and 'The Tollund Man', and, more incidentally, recalls the bog-victims' ritual meals of 'winter seeds'. Further, the references to human gestation and birth and the ideological sub-text they supply in 'The Grabaulle Man' are invoked by the pluralised 'waters' (N, p.43). Taken in association with the procreative 'seedbed' and the subsequent 'mothers of autumn', 'waters' most readily suggests the fluid in the amniotic cavity. 'Kinship', like 'The Grabaulle Man', is obliquely, almost unconsciously, indicating a version of the Troubles that Heaney refuses to endorse in the subsequent 'Whatever You Say, Say Nothing'. There, the interpretation of the nationalist resurgence in Ulster and its concomitant severe disturbances as inevitable motions in the birth of a united Ireland is rejected:

... The liberal papist note sounds hollow

When amplified and mixed in with the bangs
That shake all hearts and windows day and night.
(It's tempting here to rhyme on 'labour pangs'
And diagnose a rebirth in our plight

But that would be to ignore other symptoms ...) (*N*, p.58).

In section IV of 'Kinship', however, Heaney's subscription to the concept of the nascence of a united Ireland is implicit in his treatment of the landscape. Quotation of the section's opening lines must be deferred until the dense weave of their meanings has been considered more fully. Heaney combines the 'wet centre' of the conclusion of 'Bogland' with the 'holds and gluts' of 'Bann Clay' to produce the opening's 'This centre holds / and spreads' (*N*, p.43). This not only constitutes a reference back to his earlier conceptions of the poetic potential of his landscape's sub-strata; it also formulates a contradiction of Yeats's 'the centre cannot hold' of 'The Second Coming'. The poem effectively asserts that the nationalist ideology inherent in the myth of the bogland has the organic dynamism and irresistibility of a newly emerging phase in cultural history. The disturbances arising from its establishment are not Yeats's 'Mere anarchy'⁴⁵ but valid indications of the coming of a new order. Section IV's imagery accords the bogland an absolute imaginative significance as a localized Alpha and Omega, comprehending death and life equally in the 'process and ritual' of decomposition and generation. On such unconditional terms Heaney bases section IV's conflation of human and natural histories. A natural

inevitability is thus conferred on the cultural and ideological inferences to be drawn from his preceding treatments of the myth of the bogland. This carries through to section VI in the already-noted parallelism of section IV's 'The mothers of autumn / sour and sink' and 'Our mother ground / is sour with the blood / of her faithful'. Section IV of 'Kinship' thus offers the most revealing glimpse of the full implications of Heaney's myth of place that have fermented in the 'cauldron bog'. Its opening's imagery encapsulates the spectrum of significances that have accrued to Heaney's sense of the bogland before it settles into the botanically neutral treatment of its middle stanzas:

This centre holds
and spreads,
sump and seedbed,
a bag of waters

and a melting grave.
The mothers of autumn
sour and sink,
ferments of husk and leaf

deepen their ochres.
Mosses come to a head,
heather unseeds,
brackens deposit

their bronze (N, p.43).

The Irishness that is for Heaney inherent in the very substance of the landscape preserving the Gaelic name of *bog* is implicit in the statement that 'This is the vowel of earth' (N, p.43). The curious metaphor relates to Heaney's sense of 'the personal and Irish pieties as vowels' (P, p.37) in

the fabric of his poetry. Peat as 'the vowel of earth' is thus ascribed a measure of imaginative synonymity with the Irishness intrinsic to Heaney's conception of his work. The landscape and the poetry it has inspired are linked in the inarticulate depths of Heaney's consciousness, which he raids by setting the darkness echoing through speculations like that on the Irishness of vowels. Vowels are not, as consonants are, determinate sounds, but will last as long as there is breath to utter them. The 'vowel of earth' goes on, like the river of 'Gifts of Rain', 'breathing ...// through ... history'. As has been noted repeatedly, for the purposes of Heaney's myth of place, the bogland is history; reflection on its botanical formation in section IV of 'Kinship' provides a further emblem of the passage and accumulation of human time as 'a windfall composing / the floor it rots into' (*N*, p.43). In its analogousness to history this illustration of the 'process and ritual' of the bogland's formation and growth again connotes the nationalist bias of Heaney's imagination in 'Kinship'. The 'new history' of 'A Northern Hoard' is constantly being born out of the dying of the old; the 'centre holds / and spreads' in Heaney's myth of place, the gyre of resurgent Irish culture widening around the ancient significances persisting in the 'landscape that remembered'. Paulin's already-quoted observation is brought to mind by the implications of historical change and renewal in 'Kinship': 'history ... for the republican ... is a developing process which aims at the establishment of a full cultural identity'.

The glosses on the 'hieroglyphic peat' in 'Kinship' begin to point unequivocally towards Heaney's affirmation of his own Irishness, the depth of which he has sounded through the sequence's extended meditation on the bogland. Accordingly, section IV ends by designating the peat-bogs' Irish archetypal landscape as Heaney's own landscape of origins. To accomplish this he employs the simile of a willow, thereby invoking the necromantic associations of the 'cauldron bog' already hinted at by the epithet 'moon-drinker' (*N*, p.41) in section I of 'Kinship'. As Robert Graves notes in *The White Goddess*, 'the willow ... was sacred to Hecate, Circe, Hera and Persephone, all Death aspects of the triple Moon-goddess, and much worshipped by witches'.⁴⁶ The hierophant-poet in his 'grove / on an old crannog' of section VI is also connoted by the mythical association of the tree with poetry. Graves writes of 'Orpheus ... receiving the gift of mystic eloquence by touching willow-trees in a grove of Persephone'. He also invites his readers to consider 'the injunction in *The Song of the Forest*: "burn not the willow, a tree sacred to poets"'.⁴⁷ Heaney's willow is 'weeping', however, anticipating the despair barely masked by the urbanity of the address to Tacitus in the final section's survey of slaughter and desolation. The assertive, almost celebratory, air of the opening's 'This centre holds ...', with its latent subscription to the ideology of Irish cultural and political resurgence, is strongly qualified by the ending's subdued tones:

I grew out of all this
 like a weeping willow
 inclined to
 the appetites of gravity (N, p.43).

In confessing to 'the appetites of gravity' Heaney recognizes the inherent seriousness of disposition that invariably prevents him from being simultaneously convincing and enthusiastic in his more explicitly ideological poems. These are few, and they often founder on the self-consciousness with which they are deliberated. Morrison notes such a tendency in the communal partisanship of much of *Stations*.⁴⁸ The toponymic 'A New Song' is thus hamstrung in its etymological republicanism by the confusing awkwardness with which its argument develops. Like Auden in his early treatments of Alston Moor, Heaney's best work allows the political element in his responses to landscape to remain latent in his imagery. Both are poets before they are ideologists; the self-conscious weaknesses of Auden's politically explicit work of the 1930s, for example the unhappy 'Brothers, who when the sirens roar ...', resemble Heaney's in a poem like 'A New Song'. Their radicalism is an inherent but necessarily subordinate aspect of their localized writings; it is poetic integrity rather than diffidence or cold feet that precludes their works' rigid subscription to definable ideologies.

The overtly political response has been expected of Heaney in certain quarters. In his 'Irish Poetry and Irish Nationalism', Seamus Deane endorses Montague's 'political commitment' and is best pleased with Heaney when signs of the same are detectable

in his poetry.⁴⁹ Heaney implies admiration for Montague's poetry of 'cultural and political resistance' (*P*, p.141) in 'The Sense of Place'. His own imaginative and intellectual acuteness and independence, however, render him ill-equipped to write poetry of sustained and explicit republicanism. The treatments of landscape that have been considered in this chapter sometimes amount to oblique attempts to do so, and a great deal of an ideological nature may be inferred from such work. Heaney is, however, like Auden regretting his inability to emulate Betjeman, ultimately 'too much of a Thinking Type' to settle for the strictures and simplicities of 'political commitment'. As has been noted, the dismissive 'pap for the dispossessed' in 'Hercules and Antaeus' may be construed as a statement of dissociation from 'the shared calling of blood' and its claim on his poetry.

The contradictions of maintaining 'a notion of myself as Irish in a province that insists that it is British' (*P*, p.35) resulted in the insistent nationalist sub-text in Heaney's work between about 1969 and 1972. For one 'Who long felt my identity / So rudely forc'd'⁵⁰, as *An Open Letter* has it, the republicanism implicit in the bog-poetry and other writing was a means of affirming his Irishness. Leaving Belfast for Eire and Irish citizenship in 1972, however, seems to have largely resolved Heaney's dilemma of identity. *An Open Letter* finds him free to affirm, without the ambiguity that begged important questions in his previous uses of the first-person plural,

... be advised
 My passport's green.
 No glass of ours was ever raised
 To toast *The Queen*.⁵¹

Indeed, the Irish 'we' that thrived in his work from around the time of 'Bogland' into much of *North* is little met with in later writing.

The move South also distanced Heaney from personal familiarity with the violent excesses of his tribe and their enemies that had made urgent his response to the Troubles. The bogland had served its purpose in his poetry, and *Field Work*, which followed *North*, contains no reference whatever to the landscape. Ulster's Troubles and the personal and communal issues they raise are far from forgotten, but after *North* Heaney is no longer 'mired in attachment' to his tribe.

Between *Wintering Out* and *Field Work* a succession of treatments of his native landscape complements the communally oriented localized writing exemplified by the bog-poetry. These are the versions of Mossbawn and its surroundings that evoke Heaney's Edenic sense of 'the first place' and rely upon his more purely personal and perceptual experiences of the topography. It is with such writing that the following chapter is concerned.

Notes to Chapter Six

- 1 T. S. Eliot, 'The Dry Salvages', *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot*, p.187.
- 2 *vide* Bailey, pp.127, 130.
- 3 Yeats, p.206.
- 4 A. H. Birch, *Political Integration and Disintegration in the British Isles* (London, 1977), p.72.
- 5 Yeats, p.398.
- 6 Morrison, p.68.
- 7 Edna Longley, 'North': "Inner Emigré" or "Artful Voyeur"?' in *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, p.78.
- 8 Kavanagh, p.35.
- 9 *ibid.*, p.36.
- 10 Longley, p.66.
- 11 Roland Mathias, 'Death of a Naturalist', in *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, p.22.
- 12 *vide* P. V. Glob, *The Bog People*, translated by Rupert Bruce-Mitford (London, 1977), pp.33, 35, 57, 163.
- 13 *vide* Brewer, p.359.
- 14 Hooker, p.122.

- 15 *vide* Morrison, p.44, *re* the connotations of 'souterrain'.
- 16 Glob, pp.163-66, and *vide* p.159.
- 17 Morrison, p.44.
- 18 Birch, p.86.
- 19 Longley, p.69.
- 20 Heaney's remark that 'I think the republican ethos is a feminine religion in a way' is quoted in Bailey, p.129, and Morrison, p.63. In context, this is qualified by its place among the 'imaginative parallels' between the Iron-Age sacrificial cult and present-day Ulster. The conception of the republican ethos as a religion is nevertheless fundamental to Heaney's bog-myth, as is reflected in his analysis of the Troubles in terms of 'cults and devotees' and 'territorial piety' in 'Feeling into Words' (*vide P*, p.57).
- 21 'The Tollund Man' is, of course, very much a poem out of Glob, as Heaney's note that it 'originated from a reading of P. V. Glob's *The Bog People*' states in the 'Acknowledgements' section of *Wintering Out*. Direct borrowings from Bruce-Mitford's translation of the book include the following: 'pointed skin cap' (Glob, p.20), 'gruel' (Glob, p.33), 'Honeycombed' (Glob, pp.39, 42), and 'cauldron bog' (Glob, p.44).

- 22 Longley, p.74.
- 23 *vide* note 21 above.
- 24 Deane, p.20.
- 25 Kavanagh, p.xiii.
- 26 Longley, p.68.
- 27 *ibid.*, p.77.
- 28 Morrison, pp.68-69.
- 29 David Jones, *The Sleeping Lord and Other Fragments* (London, 1974), p.96.
- 30 Ciaran Carson, quoted in Longley, p.78.
- 31 *vide* Glob, pp.72-73; Heaney's 'I lay waiting...' and the subsequent resurrection motif resemble passages Glob quotes by C. Hostrup in his treatment of the 'Queen Gunhild' bog-body; the references to jewels and rich clothing in 'Bog Queen' are akin to Steen Steensen Blicher's poetry in extracts from his 'Queen Gunhild' quoted in *The Bog People*.
- 32 Glob, p.103.
- 33 *vide ibid.*, p.104.
- 34 Longley, p.79.
- 35 Carbery, *Rich and Rare*, p.71.

- 36 *vide* Glob, pp.159-62.
- 37 *vide ibid.*, p.163.
- 38 Carson, quoted in Longley, p.81.
- 39 Glob, p.168.
- 40 *ibid.*
- 41 David Jones, *The Dying Gaul and Other Writings*
(London, 1978), p.56.
- 42 *ibid.*, p.57.
- 43 *ibid.*, p.58; Jones's statement that 'It is impossible
in recalling the Dying Gaul not to recall James Joyce'
is surely a masterly example of the far-fetched critical
assertion.
- 44 *vide ibid.* p.51, *re* Rome's 'unfairly weighted scales'.
- 45 Yeats, p.211.
- 46 Graves, p.173.
- 47 *ibid.*, p.174.
- 48 *vide* Morrison, p.51.
- 49 *vide* Deane, pp.14, 16, 20, 21.
- 50 Seamus Heaney *An Open Letter* (Londonderry, 1983), p.11.
- 51 *ibid.*, p.9.

CHAPTER SEVEN - HEANEY: MIST AND ABSENCES

'Anahorish', 'May', 'Land', 'Sunlight',
 'The Seed Cutters', 'The Strand at Lough Beg',
 'The Harvest Bow'

— 'when you are tired or terrified
 your voice slips back into its old first place'
 (SI, p.52).

Heaney's direct exposure to the Troubles during his residence in Belfast results primarily in the foreboding imagery and ideological tensions of his bog-poetry and associated works. *Wintering Out* and *North* also contain a succession of poems which are conspicuous as sanctuaries of peace and innocent congruity amid the 'coherent miseries' and deep unrest of Heaney's writing of the period. Such poems, exemplified by 'Anahorish' and 'Sunlight', are firmly located in Heaney's landscape of childhood in its aspect of 'the first place' (P, p.18). They are essentially products of Heaney's private and perceptual responses to the Mossbawn area and constitute a benign myth of place that is sustained into *Field Work* of 1979. Thereafter, the idyllic interpretation of the native landscape is, like the bog-myth, discontinued, as Heaney strives to achieve a truer and more detached perspective upon Mossbawn in his last collection, *Station Island*. This chapter is concerned with those scattered but memorable poems between 'Anahorish' in *Wintering Out* and 'The Harvest Bow' in *Field Work* in which Heaney's myth of 'that original townland' (FW, p.58) is expounded.

As a refuge of the imagination and a sanctuary for ideal values, Heaney's mythicising of Mossbawn parallels Auden's adaptations of his limestone uplands for the bodying forth of his notional Good Place. Both poets' 'good landscapes' (CP, p.425), to quote from Auden's 'Ode to Gaea', emerge as strategic responses of their imaginations under disturbing pressures from external political events. Auden's Good Place entered his poetry in 1938, when the Second World War was already a foregone conclusion to the worsening international situation. Similarly, Heaney initiates his localized myth of sanctity and innocence in *Wintering Out* at the time when his work first registers the agonies of Ulster's 'little destiny'. In poems like 'Sunlight' and 'The Harvest Bow', Heaney directly associates the Mossbawn landscape with ideals of love and congruity to match Auden's renderings of Alston Moor in, for example, *New Year Letter* and 'In Praise of Limestone'. Ultimately, Auden disclaimed his Edenic myth of place in 'Amor Loci', as Heaney does in the course of his re-investigations of Mossbawn in *Station Island*.

The term 'antimythological myth' which Auden coins in 'In Praise of Limestone' describes both his own imbuing of Alston Moor with the values of his Good Place and Heaney's idealized presentations of his landscape. Whereas the bog-poetry relied overtly on a traditional fertility myth, his writings of 'the first place' in its benign character are firmly rooted in personal experience of topographical

actuality. As we have seen, myth tended to subsume local particularity in the poetry of the peat-bogs; in the poems considered in this chapter, the ideal and the actual are harmoniously integrated, as in Auden's presentations of his 'antimythological myth' of Alston Moor. The latency of the bog-myth in Heaney's earliest writing was noted in the preceding chapter; similarly, the unconstrained atmosphere of 'those lush and definite fields' and evocations of childhood innocence in several poems in *Death of a Naturalist* anticipate the poetry of Heaney's 'good landscape'.

While fundamentally poems of personal and perceptual experience, an element of nationalism informs some of the works examined in this chapter. The Irishness to which the Gaelic of 'Anahorish' firmly points is discernible in other poems contributing to the myth of Mossbawn's benevolence. Heaney not only creates a personal imaginative alternative to the Ulster of the Troubles, but also associatively confers a measure of innocent detachment from their 'little destiny' upon his community. This latter strategy is most apparent in 'The Seed Cutters', which is paired with 'Sunlight' at the start of *North*; the poem carefully frames an extra-historical tableau of the community in their landscape to evoke a rural world remote from the 'slaughter / for the common good' confronted elsewhere in *North*.

To some extent, therefore, Heaney's benign myth of 'the first place' is consciously selective, consisting of generalizations premised upon his personal memories of

childhood's innocence in Mossbawn. Such remembrances alleviate his adult 'appetites of gravity', as the essay 'Mossbawn' states in its already-quoted 'I have a sense of air, of lift and light, when this comes back to me' (P, p.20). Selectivity is evident in, for example, 'Anahorish', which sustains its Edenic re-creation of the locality by excluding other personally sensed associations the place has for Heaney. In his remarks on the village in 'Belfast', the historical resentment is Ireland's, but the anger is Heaney's own: the name '*anach fhíor uisce* ... the place of clear water' leads back 'into that civilization whose demise was effected by soldiers and administrators like Spenser and Davies, whose lifeline was bitten through when the squared-off walls of bawn and demesne dropped on the country like the jaws of a man-trap' (P, p.36).

Heaney eventually becomes unhappy about the procedures of selection and exclusion necessary to the formalisation into his mythical 'good landscape' of his perceptions of Mossbawn and its environs. Dissatisfaction with such versions of 'the first place' is among his reasons for undertaking the radical re-evaluation of his attitudes to the landscape and its significances in *Station Island*. The 'Mist and Absences' of the title to this chapter are taken from the sixth of the 'Glanmore Sonnets' in *Field Work*, where Heaney states his future intentions, realized in *Station Island*, thus:

'I will break through', he said, 'what I glazed over
With perfect mist and peaceful absences ...' (FW, p.38).

The 'absences' are those of the excluded images and emotions relating to the Troubles that Heaney shuts out of his idylls of Mossbawn to ensure its tranquillity. 'Sunlight' begins 'There was a sunlit absence' (*N*, p.8); what is missing is what makes so much of *North* disturbing, the tensions with which Heaney's poetry is fraught in responding to Ulster's unrest. Subtle indications of the strife-torn reality outside the recollective sanctuary of the 'original townland' are discerned in certain of the readings given below. With the exception of 'The Strand at Lough Beg', however, the overall atmosphere of the poems to be considered is one in which the Troubles are conspicuous by their absence.

Heaney's 'mist' is essential to the soft-focus with which the landscape is configured in 'Anahorish', 'The Strand at Lough Beg' and in several passages in *Station Island* (*vide SI*, pp.22, 71, 73). The line 'misting towards the ideal forms' (*SI*, p.30) from 'Remembering Malibu' describes Heaney's tendency to blur reality's harder edges in creating his mythicised 'good landscape'. 'The Strand at Lough Beg', an elegy for a murdered relative, becomes the subject of Heaney's pained awareness of his occasional deliberate avoidance of the less than idyllic implications of his sense of place. In section VIII of the 'Station Island' sequence the ghost of the elegised victim accuses him of having 'confused evasion and artistic tact' in the way 'The Strand at Lough Beg' 'saccharined my death with morning dew' (*SI*, p.83). The accusation reveals Heaney's consciousness of

his methods of proceeding in the creation of his benevolent renderings of Mossbawn. So too does the statement that he has 'glazed over' actuality in the above quotation from the 'Glanmore Sonnets'. His purposeful adjustments of his local responses were indicated when the present writer questioned him regarding the high incidence of images of light in *Field Work*. Compared to the sustained emphasis on darkness in *North*, the succeeding collection seemed remarkably well-lit. This, said the author, was 'to an extent ... deliberate'.¹ Heaney did not elaborate on this, but the obvious implication is that he was aware of a need for daylight in his work after its protracted sojourn in 'the black maw / Of the peat' (*N*, p.31). Similarly, the poems with which this chapter is concerned form clearings of space and comparative freedom during the period in which Heaney is otherwise 'mired in attachment' to his tribe.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude from the above remarks that Heaney is a glib manipulator of his landscape for the achievement of contingent effects. His sense of the sanctity and timelessness of Mossbawn and its surroundings is inherent in his native familiarity with the landscape. Writing of the locality in 'The Sense of Place', Heaney describes some of the qualities his myth of 'the first place' attempts to retrieve and preserve:

It was once more or less sacred. The landscape was sacramental, instinct with signs, implying a system of reality beyond the visible realities. Only thirty years ago, and thirty miles from

Belfast, I think I experienced this kind of world vestigially and as a result may have retained some vestigial sense of place as it was experienced in the older dispensation (*P*, pp.132-133).

He continues with reference to Church Island, a part of the landscape sanctified as the site of a pilgrimage honouring the island's associations with St. Patrick. Church Island features directly only in 'The Strand at Lough Beg', but the sacramental character it confers on the locality is implicit in other poems. An additional abundance of legendary and historical associations in the surroundings of Heaney's childhood combine with Church Island's sanctity to produce 'the foundation for a marvellous or a magical view of the world, a foundation that sustained a diminished structure of lore and superstition and half-pagan, half-Christian thought and practice' (*P*, p.133).

Heaney's Edenic myth of Mossbawn is based on the landscape's intimations of such a 'view of the world' and the remote antiquity it connotes. He designates his native place as the seat of the *omphalos*, the mythological navel-stone of the world, in the essay 'Mossbawn' and in the poem 'The Toome Road'. Like Auden's 'backward / And dilapidated province' of 'In Praise of Limestone', Heaney's landscape forms a sanctuary for essentially human values that call 'into question / All the Great Powers assume'. The passive resistance to alienating modernity exercised by Heaney's benign myth of place becomes demonstrative at the conclusion of 'The Toome Road'. A challenge to 'Caesar with all this They' (*CP*, p.433) is uttered as Heaney takes a stand

upon the landscape's embodiment of ancient and inviolable values:

O charioteers, above your dormant guns,
It stands here still, stand vibrant as you pass,
The invisible, untoppled omphalos (FW, p.15).

Heaney's evocations of sanctity in his landscape make use of quasi-symbolic images of water, as noted in the consideration of 'Undine' in the preceding chapter. The springs of 'Anahorish' and 'May' and the dews of 'The Strand at Lough Beg' emblemize purity of being in correspondence to similar images in Auden's work.

Similarities with Auden's terrestrial versions of his Good Place notwithstanding, Kavanagh's precedents are, in the Northern Irish context, of more immediate relevance to Heaney's poetry of the innocent landscape of the *omphalos*. Heaney's treatments of Mossbawn as the seat of extra-historical values of fundamental human significance follows Kavanagh's technique of sweeping history aside in some of his renderings of Monaghan. In *The Great Hunger* Kavanagh accords Maguire's landscape and the community it sustains a status equivalent to Heaney's view of Mossbawn as the *fons et origo* of sacrosanct human values:

There is the source from which all cultures rise,
And all religions,
There is the pool in which the poet dips
And the musician.

Without the peasant base civilisation must die...²

Heaney's use of mist, remarked upon above, together with the immediately Edenic connotations of 'the first place' and his

sense of inviolable rural integrity are all exemplified in Kavanagh's 'To the Man After the Harrow'. Kavanagh invokes the mist at man's creation in Genesis 2:6, and establishes the terms for Heaney's affirmations of the archetypal and quasi-religious nature of the patterns of life he perceives in his landscape. For the present writer, Kavanagh's short poem is the most vigorous contribution to the rural mode in modern poetry in English, and as such merits quotation in its entirety:

Now leave the check-reins slack,
 The seed is flying far today —
 The seed like stars against the black
 Eternity of April clay.

This seed is potent as the seed
 Of knowledge in the Hebrew Book,
 So drive your horses in the creed
 Of God the Father as a stook.

Forget the men on Brady's hill.
 Forget what Brady's boy may say.
 For destiny will not fulfil
 Unless you let the harrow play.

Forget the worm's opinion too
 Of hooves and pointed harrow-pins,
 For you are driving your horses through
 The mist where Genesis begins.³

There are also lessons for Heaney in Kavanagh's lyric that concludes his novel *Tarry Flynn*. The effectiveness of mist is indicated again in the poem's opening in 'the mist-chill fields', while Heaney's 'marvellous or ... magical view of the world' has a precedent in Kavanagh's closing lines:

And then I came to the haggard gate,
 And I knew as I entered that I had come
 Through fields that were part of no earthly estate.⁴

Heaney has already been quoted on the subject of 'the primal Christian imagery of light, light shining in darkness'⁵ in Kavanagh's writing. This characteristic of Kavanagh's poetry is another aspect of his legacy to Heaney, whose apparatus of affirmation in the poems considered below frequently incorporates such images as the 'Marshlights in the summer dark' (*WO*, p.75) of 'May'.

Most of the similarities that have been noted with Auden's and Kavanagh's mythicisings of their landscapes are evident in 'Anahorish' which inaugurates Heaney's benign myth of place. Heaney's "'place of clear water'" (*WO*, p.16) corresponds topographically to the basic outlines of the landscape suggested at the opening of Auden's 'In Praise of Limestone'. There, the 'springs / That spurt out ... with a chuckle' confer their benediction of pure vitality upon 'these rounded slopes' (*CP*, p.414). In 'Anahorish' the landscape is characterized in terms of a parallel conjunction of 'springs' and 'hill' (*WO*, p.16). The harmonious interrelation of man and the landscape in 'In Praise of Limestone' is likewise fundamental to 'Anahorish'; clear water, signifying the sanctity of an indigenous purity of being, intermingles emblematically with the human artefacts of the cobbles to evoke accord between man and nature:

My 'place of clear water',
 the first hill in the world
 where springs washed into
 the shiny grass

and darkened cobbles
in the bed of the lane (WO, p.16).

Just as Auden's images of water do in their symbolization of sanctity, 'Anahorish' invokes Dante's Earthly Paradise. Heaney's imagery of 'clear water' washing into 'shiny grass' corresponds closely to Dante's most precise local particular in *Purgatorio* XXVIII in the description of how Lethe's 'Clear water bathes the grasses'.⁶ Like Lethe's waters of forgetfulness of evil, 'Anahorish' is an antidote to Heaney's consciousness of Ulster's 'coherent miseries' in its embodiment of an assuaging myth of congruity and natural benignity. In terms of the experience of childhood on which the myth is founded, 'Anahorish' is intrinsic to 'the first place' as the village where Heaney attended primary school.⁷ Like Auden's 'one landscape' that is inseparable from his memories of his boyhood, 'Anahorish' ranks high for Heaney among what 'In Transit' calls

places where we have really been, dear spaces
Of our deeds and faces, scenes we remember
As unchanging because there we changed (CP, p.413).

The Edenic aspect that Heaney's benign myth of place has in common with Kavanagh's personal myth of Monaghan is implicit in the designation 'the first hill in the world' of 'Anahorish'. An authenticity of prehistoric primality is suggested in accordance with Kavanagh's precedents by the conclusion's reference to the inhabitants of 'Anahorish' as 'those mound-dwellers' (WO, p.16). Affirmatively significant images of light like those Heaney finds characteristic of Kavanagh's

work are present in 'the shiny grass' and the piercing of darkness of

after-image of lamps
 swung through the yards
 on winter evenings (WO, p.16).

These elements of incipiently symbolic images of water, Edenic innocence and purity, extra-historical human characterization and emblematic images of light are recurrent features of the poems under consideration. As leitmotifs stemming from 'Anahorish', they give unity and continuity to Heaney's benign myth of place until it is concluded in 'The Harvest Bow'. The landscape and labours of 'those mound-dwellers' with their primitive 'pails and barrows' (WO, p.16) affirm innocuous survivals from prehistory to offset the homicidal atavism of the tribe evoked in the poetry of the bogland.

The communal archaic heritage is latent in 'Anahorish' in the second stanza's italicised reiteration of the name. The italics draw attention to the fact that *Anahorish* signifies a language other than English, while "place of clear water" offers a translation of the original form of the name in the Gaelic *anach fhíor uisce* (vide, P, p.36). Like 'Toome', 'Broagh', 'Gifts of Rain' and 'A New Song' which also contain retrievals of Gaelic in *Wintering Out*, 'Anahorish' gestures towards Heaney's indigenous cultural ideal in its cherishing of the place-name. The nationalist sub-text that is explicit in the other poems named above is only latently present in 'Anahorish'. An unobtrusive if not wholly incidental

associative ascription of purity and pastoral congruity to the culture, and ultimately the ideology, promoted elsewhere in Heaney's work is inevitable, although 'Anahorish' does not solicit such inferences. Heaney claims the landscape for its personal rather than its communal significance by the emphatic 'My "place ..."' of its opening. The 'mound-dwellers' are described in the third-person with a sympathetic objectivity very distinct from the nationalist 'we' that is becoming conspicuous in *Wintering Out*.

The celebration of consonance and congruity in 'Anahorish' is primarily conducted through Heaney's acuteness of auditory and imaginative response to the name. Auden's remark that 'Proper names are poetry in the raw. Like all poetry they are untranslatable'⁸ is both verified and qualified by 'Anahorish' in the topographical exegesis of the name. Stimulated by its inherent poetry, Heaney mediates between the vocables of 'Anahorish' and the landscape they designate. Signifier and signified accord with one another so entirely that the local description of the grassy, hilly landscape emerges again in Heaney's topographical transposition of the music of the name:

Anahorish, soft gradient
of consonant, vowel meadow (WO, p.16).

Here, and elsewhere in his acts of 'bedding the locale / in the utterance' (WO, p.25) of local namings, Heaney entirely integrates aspects of poetry distinct enough to have become opposites in modern practice: concrete visual particulars in the *ut pictura poesis* tradition of a poetry of rational

surfaces are purposefully united with the intuitive musicality of poetry's appeal to less conscious areas of experience. The human addition of the place-name is inseparable from the topography to which it is applied. Man and the benevolent nature that bathes the lane's cobbles with pure spring water are entirely in harmony. This version of congruity is antithetical to the fear of nature's repugnant aspects in 'the slime kingdoms' (*N*, p.41) that forms an undercurrent in Heaney's work and contributes to the foreboding of the bog-poetry. Like Auden's, for whom nature could be either the alienating 'that old grim She' (*CP*, p.432) of 'Plains' or the succouring 'Mother' (*CP*, p.414) of 'In Praise of Limestone', Heaney's awareness of nature varies. Both poets, however, must opt unequivocally for a benign nature in adapting their landscapes for their 'antimythological myths' of the personal Good Place. The harmonious and sacrosanct agreement of man and landscape upon which 'In Praise of Limestone' is premised is equally fundamental to Heaney's evocations of the innate benevolence of his 'old first place'. In 'Yeats as an Example?' Heaney identifies in Yeats's '*The Stare's Nest by My Window*' from 'Meditations in Time of Civil War' 'a deeply instinctive yet intellectually assented-to idea of nature in her benign and nurturant aspect as the proper first principle of life and living' (*P*, p.112); the words summarise the ethos to which Heaney himself subscribes in his idylls of Mossbawn.

'May' in the second part of *Wintering Out* reassembles the main elements of the myth of place instituted in 'Anahorish'. In doing so it suggests Heaney's tendency to attenuate a poetic impulse by re-working it that was reflected upon in the last chapter's assessment of the bog-poetry following 'The Tollund Man'. The local specificity of the place-name in 'Anahorish' is dispensed with in 'May', but its topographical details and emblematic images are notably similar. 'May' reproduces the correlation of the spring, the grass and the lane in 'Anahorish' in its penultimate stanza. An identical affirmation of harmonious inter-relation between man and nature results through imagery of the upsurging of pure vitality in the form of spring water crossing an artificial thoroughfare:

Wasn't there a spa-well,
 Its coping grassy, pendant?
 And then the spring issuing
 Right across the tarmac (WO, p.75).

The 'gleam / of the fabulous' (WO, p.76), to quote from the later 'Fireside', in the 'lamps / swung through the yards / on winter evenings' of 'Anahorish' recurs in the 'Marshlights in the summer dark' (WO, p.75) concluding 'May'. Together, 'Anahorish' and its clone 'May' anticipate the function of 'Sunlight' in *North* through their symbolic lightenings of the darkness that is thickening as Heaney's work begins charting Ulster's sea of troubles. The extra-historical authenticity of being of the 'mound-dwellers' of 'Anahorish' is connoted in 'May' by the desiderated primitivism of

I should wear
 Hide shoes, the hair next to my skin,
 For walking this ground (WO, p.75).

Heaney has formalised the intuitions and images of 'Anahorish' into a quasi-fictive myth of place. As the above quotation suggests, the landscape has become a sanctum of indigenous purity that merits the donning of sacramental footwear in emulation of religious practice. The recollective 'Wasn't there a spa-well ...?' quoted above refers back to memories of 'Anahorish' and 'the first place' that have been formed into a sanctified landscape of the mind. 'Anahorish' itself maintained a delicate balance between the idyllic qualities of the pastoral and the unadorned realism of the rural ode. Its conclusion qualified the lyrical potential of 'wells' by coupling it directly with the less than delicate 'dunghills' (WO, p.16). 'May', however, concludes its formalisation of Heaney's 'good landscape' by incorporating the motif of the quest, the object of which is envisaged in floral images entirely characteristic of pastoral convention:

I'm out to find that village,
 Its low sills fragrant
 With ladysmock and celandine,
 Marshlights in the summer dark (WO, p.75).

The fundamental difference in the settings of 'May' and 'Anahorish' is seasonal. The latter is a poem of winter, while 'May' derives its optimistic tenor from its enthusiastic sensings of spring and coming summer. Within a collection entitled *Wintering Out*, this seasonal discrimination between

two otherwise remarkably similar poems has an implicit symbolic function: the indigenously Irish purity that capably survives through winter in 'Anahorish' is coming into its own in the burgeoning of 'May'. Auden's metapolitical seasonal readings of place, like the 'sap un baffled rises, being spring' of 'The Watershed', come to mind. It could be said that Heaney is merely wishing the Troubles away in moving from winter to spring; 'May', however, seems rather to require reading in terms of their having an outcome favourable to the nationalist tribe. It certainly has no importunate sense of ideological partisanship like, for example, 'A New Song' in the same collection. Irishness is, however, explicit in 'May', and expressed in an unusual local image that anticipates seminally the republicanism of the birth motifs considered towards the end of the preceding chapter:

My toecaps sparkle now
Over the soft fontanel
Of Ireland (WO, p.75).

'May' thus has a discernible, if unobtrusive, cultural and political orientation in keeping with Jeremy Hooker's observation that 'appeals to national feeling' may use 'images ... of a locality or localities presented in *their* particularity and variety as *essence* of the whole. The identifications of part with whole are naturally felt with special intensity at times of national crisis'.⁹ Heaney illustrates this tendency with regard to both the singular

and plural instances of Hooker's 'locality or localities'. The primary observational landscape described in the opening of 'May' triggers recollection of the mythicised landscape of childhood at its close. The initial actuality of 'Trout ... flipping the sky / Into smithereens' and 'green stems, lugs of leaf / That untangle and bruise' (WO, p.75) evokes the vitality and fecundity of the concluding localization of the quest's goal. Ireland as a whole, as geographical entity and embodiment of a national cultural ideal, partakes of the affirmative energies and lyrical vision expressed in Heaney's treatments of the landscapes of the poem.

As 'Land' earlier in *Wintering Out* makes evident, the well-rehearsed recollective procedure in 'May' results from a deliberate enshrining of 'the first place' in memory. Like Auden, who stated in *New Year Letter* that 'No matter where, or whom I meet ... // ... An English area comes to mind' (CP, pp.181-82), Heaney has unfailing access to his landscape of memory. 'Land' describes the deliberate fostering of familiarity with the particulars of place in preparation for a coming departure. It does not present the locality as 'glazed over' with pastoral lyricism, but speaks of a conscious development of attitudes and responses to the topography that will prospectively provide the substance of a personal myth of place. Heaney's sense of the landscape has been worked into his consciousness through the cultivation of an habitual mental disposition:

I composed habits for those acres
 so that my last look would be
 neither gluttonous nor starved.
 I was ready to go anywhere (WO, p.21).

Heaney has effectively learned his landscape by heart, to which the dense topographical evocation of the recollective opening testifies. The tasks it describes are labours of love, recalling the almost conjugal intimacy with the fields that was noted in the preceding chapter's consideration of 'Gifts of Rain'. There, the observation of labour was conducted in the third-person as part of the communally oriented strategy of the poem. 'Land', by comparison, is entirely rooted in personal experience, affirming the close and affectionate relation to the landscape upon which Heaney's benign myth of place is founded. The raising of 'a small cairn' (WO, p.21) has a commemorative function that is part of the conscious dedication of the landscape to future memory that 'Land' re-enacts. Dawn walks in the fields likewise suggest a purely affective and supererogatory regard for the locality. The rituals of the love of place and the necessary labours of the farm are equally cherished in the comprehensive memory they constitute. Auden's fidelity of recollection in the 'I could draw its map by heart ...' that opens 'Amor Loci' is paralleled by the vividness of Heaney's re-creation of his own 'one landscape'. Inertia, the besetting sin of concentrated passages of local description in poetry, is obviated by the high incidence of verbs of motion and labour with which the visual details are interwoven:

I stepped it, perch by perch.
 Unbraiding rushes and grass
 I opened my right-of-way
 through old bottoms and sowed-out ground
 and gathered stones off the ploughing
 to raise a small cairn.
 Cleaned out the drains, faced the hedges
 and often got up at dawn
 to walk the outlying fields (WO, p.21).

With the particularity and depth of the habitually available recollection of the topography established, the second part of 'Land' uses the conditional mode to re-enter the landscape of the mind. As in 'Digging', poetry is proposed as a surrogate for a traditional rural activity, in this case the ceremony of the Corn-Mother, or Old Woman, described as very widespread in Northern Europe in *The Golden Bough*.¹⁰ The relation to place formerly memorialized in actuality by the raising of the cairn is now commemorated in memory by the verbal enactment of the traditional fertility ritual. Recollective intensity and imagination sustain a concrete particularity in which the conditional surrogation of words is subsumed in the reality of actions and local materials they create:

This is in place of what I would leave
 plaited and branchy
 on a long slope of stubble:
 a woman of old wet leaves,
 rush-bands and thatcher's scallops,
 stoked loosely, her breasts an open-work
 of new straw and harvest bows.
 Gazing out past
 the shifting hares (WO, pp.21-22).

The intensity of Heaney's projection into the remembered landscape increases in the final section. Memory inhabits 'the phantom ground' as one of 'the shifting hares', adopting the closest of focuses to evoke a sense of lying 'under grass and clover' (WO, p.22). In view of the deprecation of the Irish as 'wild hares' (WO, p.32) in the subsequent 'Traditions', Heaney's imaginative identification with the hare gives 'Land' a latent nationalist dimension. The intrusion of violence upon the equability of the deeply personal relation with the landscape that has been described may therefore be read in terms of the Troubles breaching the peace of 'Land':

I ... // ... must not be surprised
 in bursting air
 to find myself snared, swinging
 an ear-ring of sharp wire (WO, p.22).

This third section is problematically elliptical; it seems, however, to suggest that there is no real refuge in the privacy of relation to the 'good landscape' from the disturbing external events in which Heaney is hereditarily implicated. Such an interpretation is supported by the development of the remainder of Part One of *Wintering Out*. After 'Land', the book is increasingly concerned with national and communal themes which culminate in the formal institution of the bog-myth in 'The Tollund Man'.

By the time of *North* the hopes for an end to the bleak season of the Troubles that were implicit in the title *Wintering Out* have faded. The privacy of Heaney's personal

vision of his 'old first place' may offer no enduring shelter from Ulster's storm; nevertheless, a return to the landscape 'where Time begins'¹¹, to quote once more from Kavanagh's 'Advent', can provide an hiatus in what 'North' calls 'the long foray' (*N*, p.20) of Heaney's strenuous 'quest for definition'. *North* is accordingly prefaced with 'Mossbawn: Two Poems in Dedication', 'Sunlight' and 'The Seed Cutters', in which the peace and congruity unavailable as Ulster's 'little destiny' is violently worked out are re-created in the landscape of memory. As Blake Morrison notes, these two poems offer 'affirmations to be balanced against the bleakness of what follows' in *North*.¹² Both are based in the myth of place established in 'Anahorish', evoking an innocent detachment from history in a setting where human authenticity of being is rooted in an integrity of prehistoric provenance. The two poems' position outside the main text of *North* is itself emblematic of their imaginative removal from the history and the present the book confronts. 'Sunlight' has the water and light of 'Anahorish' and its companion piece 'May' among its central images, while 'The Seed Cutters' focuses on the 'mound-dwellers' at their innocuous and self-sufficient labours.

Although the snaring episode in 'Land' suggests there is no escape from the nightmare of history, for the purposes of 'Sunlight' and 'The Seed Cutters' Heaney suspends his disbelief in the idea of refuge. As before, he purposively frames a version of his 'backward / And dilapidated province'

and its inhabitants that redeems his landscape of its 'slaughter /for the common good'. The essay 'Mossbawn' states the premise on which the poems are based in recalling Heaney's childhood in the Second World War and affirming that 'historical action does not disturb the rhythms of the yard' (P, p.17). *Stations* tells a somewhat different story from that evocation of naturally sanctioned detachment from the war. 'England's difficulty' describes the covert sympathy with Germany and antipathy to England that made 'historical action' at that time something other than the remote irrelevance it is termed in 'Mossbawn'. The point is not that Heaney is mendaciously manipulating the record. The contradictions that exist in his various renderings of his 'original townland' are clearly apparent in his poetry. In *Wintering Out*, for example, the social harmony implicit in 'Anahorish' is at odds with the strong hints of enmity in the same landscape in 'Broagh' and 'The Other Side'. Such discrepancies in his readings of Mossbawn's localized script point rather to the essentially mythological character of the treatments of it as Heaney's 'good landscape'. Historical truth is not a requisite of myth, which is concerned with ideals and archetypes above and beyond its relation to social reality, however substantial or slight that might be. 'Sunlight' and 'The Seed Cutters' are valid postulations of a myth of place antithetical to that of the bog-poetry, the latter unequivocally accommodating the tribe's iniquity in a landscape 'sour with the blood / of her faithful'.

The poems may be read partly as extensions of the moralization of the Ards coastline in 'The Peninsula', which Heaney valued for its power to affirm that 'patience and simplicity are fundamentals'. Both depict the simple and patient purposefulness of archetypal tasks implying the nutritive essentiality of the community's relations to the soil of 'the first place'. Baking in 'Sunlight' and work in the potato fields in 'The Seed Cutters' take place in the abundance and slowness of time in what 'Mossbawn' categorically terms 'another world' (*P*, p.17). In the 'sunlit absence' of 'Sunlight' time seems to stop in the farmyard as the sun slows to a leisurely halt:

... the sun stood
like a griddle cooling
against the wall

of each long afternoon (*N*, p.8).

The poem is no more, on one level, than a 'spot of time' recalled from childhood, a bright memory of Heaney's maiden-aunt¹³ baking. This activity provides repeated images of the whiteness of flour and the 'goose's wing' (*N*, p.8) which straightforwardly emblemize innocence. On another level, 'Sunlight' acknowledges that it is creating 'a marvellous or a magical view of the world' by the emphasis on timelessness in its mythicised view of the landscape of childhood. The internal, magical time of the myth prevails, while external historical time goes on, a twofold temporal awareness conveyed in the image of 'the tick of two clocks' (*N*, p.9) towards the poem's conclusion. In the 'space' opening onto

eternity as time stops again in 'Mossbawn', Heaney has, like Auden in 'Amor Loci', a penetrating and enduring perception of love:

here is a space
 again, the scone rising
 to the tick of two clocks.
 And here is love
 like a tinsmith's scoop
 sunk past its gleam
 in the meal-bin (N, p.9).

Circumvention of historical time is equally, and more obviously, the basic strategy of 'The Seed Cutters'. By appealing to Breughel in the opening lines, Heaney establishes a temporal frame of reference antedating the Elizabethan intensification of Ireland's griefs that is at the root of the present's Troubles; removing the cause obviates the effect to liberate the community of 'our anonymities' from their history:

They seem hundreds of years away. Breughel,
 You'll know them if I can get them true (N, p.10).

In the landscape of the myth, time is again of no consequence, as the patient workers continue their simple labour of sustenance:

... With time to kill
 They are taking their time. Each sharp knife goes
 Lazily halving each root that falls apart
 In the palm of the hand (N, p.10).

As in 'At a Potato Gathering', the work is ritualized into a ceremony of soil and season in which individual self-

consciousness is lost as the labourers participate 'mindlessly' (*DN*, p.31) in the communal rite. Already a totem of Irishness in the earlier poem's cult of 'the black / Mother' and 'the famine god', the potato's aesthetics now become emblematic of the national history. When cut, the potatoes reveal the whiteness that signified the innocence of 'the first place' in 'Bann Clay' and 'Sunlight'; at their hearts, however, is a foreboding stain symbolizing the oppression and bloody struggles of history that are intrinsic to Heaney's sense of Ireland:

... a milky gleam,
And, at the centre, a dark watermark (*N*, p.10).

From all of Heaney's presentations of his benign myth of place there are inferences to be drawn concerning his work's broader engagement of national and communal themes. Even in the childhood idyll of 'Sunlight', the 'two clocks' hinted at an historical actuality beyond the sacrosanct world of the poem. In 'The Seed Cutters', the subtle intrusion of history in the emblematic potential of the potato is anticipated by the local details of the opening. Heaney's need for refuge in his landscape of memory is reflexively enacted within the poem by the imagery of sheltering as his community seek protection from their 'whistling brush // With new history' (*WO*, p.44):

They kneel under the hedge in a half-circle
Behind a windbreak wind is breaking through (*N*, p.10).

Finally, however, Heaney negotiates the poem's escape from history by formalising the scene into a painterly tableau,

thus re-invoking Breughel and his era. The authenticity of the concluding composition of the landscape and its inhabitants is sealed by an echo of that most unaffectedly moving spokesman of the rural community, John Clare. Heaney's final apostrophe recalls the following lines from Clare's celebration of Christmas in 'December' of his *The Shepherd's Calendar*:

Old customs O I love the sound
 However simple they may be
 What ere wi time has sanction found
 Is welcome and is dear to me.¹⁴

Clare's lines not only summarise the nostalgic strategy of 'The Seed Cutters', but provide the mode and diction around which Heaney structures his closing invocation. 'Calendar customs' connotes the title of Clare's long poem of the rural seasons and the perennial nature of the activities it describes.

O calendar customs! Under the broom
 Yellowing over them, compose the frieze
 With all of us there, our anonymities (N, p.10).

Ultimately, Heaney has re-entered the landscape of memory by exchanging the poem's third-person observational mode for the last line's 'us' and 'our' to comprehend the community and himself. He is absorbed into the innocent myth of place he has created in a demonstration of its function as a refuge for his imagination.

'The Strand at Lough Beg' concludes with a similar evasion of history by allowing the present to be absorbed into the mythical landscape. In doing so, Heaney resurrects his

murdered second-cousin, for whom the poem is an elegy, to walk with him in the landscape of memory beside the Lough's shore. It is an ambitious poem, juxtaposing a nightmarish localization of sectarian murder with the sanctified zone of Church Island to evoke the full spectrum of Heaney's responses to his native locality and its community. In achieving the poem's effects, particularly the imagined return to the landscape of childhood for the audaciously dramatic conclusion, Heaney relies upon a range of techniques and local emblems drawn from previous renderings of his benign myth of place. As Tony Curtis notes, 'He shows in "The Strand at Lough Beg" that he, already the proven master of images from his native rural countryside, can build on that facility, deepening and extending his art to tragic proportions'.¹⁵

In accordance with the 'sterner, explicitly religious dimension'¹⁶ that Morrison discerns in *Field Work*, in which 'The Strand at Lough Beg' appears, the antithetical landscapes of the elegy symbolically oppose good and evil. The 'demon pack' of apparitions out of the Sweeney legend, associated with the Armagh locality of the murder,¹⁷ are summoned to emblemize the evil of the landscape of the opening. The 'Blazing' heads of Sweeney's madness transmute into the treacherous lamp of the fatal ambush as the nightmare of legend becomes the homicidal reality of a divided Ulster:

... Where Sweeney fled before the bloodied heads,
 Goat-beards and dogs' eyes in a demon pack
 Blazing out of the ground, snapping and squealing.
 What blazed ahead of you? A faked road block?
 The red lamp swung, the sudden brakes and stalling
 Engine, voices, heads hooded and the cold-nosed gun?

(FW, p.17).

Harmony follows, as the jagged rhythms of the landscaping of the killing yield to fluent iambic pentameters and mellifluous rhymes to introduce the known and loved topography of 'the first place':

... Where you weren't known and far from what you knew:
 The lowland clays and waters of Lough Beg,
 Church Island's spire, its soft treeline of yew (*FW*, p.17).

The landscape is viewed in its sacramental aspect, 'Church Island's spire' immediately denoting Christian sanctity and sanctuary and implying the Lough's status as the place of pilgrimage spoken of in 'The Sense of Place' (*vide P*, p.133). Like the smooth rhythms dominated by gentle 'l' and 's' sounds, the textures of the topography are mild and assuaging; 'lowland clays', 'waters' and the 'soft treeline' evoke a peaceful landscape of accordant habitation.

The innocence implicit in such a depiction of the Mossbawn area is more explicitly established and extended to the character of the elegy's subject in the second section. Guns have no place in such a landscape, and 'spent cartridges' left by 'duck shooters' (*FW*, p.17) are startlingly alien. The smooth iambic rhythm jars into harsh trochaic expletives to describe them as 'Acrid, brassy, genital, ejected' (*FW*, p.17). Tony Curtis notes the effectiveness of this line in its deliberate breaching of the peace so far evinced:

Heaney's timing is perfect: 'Acrid, brassy, genital, ejected'. The rhythm is a gun-burst, a short, clipped-off listing of qualities. They clash with each other within the line, a bitter smell, a seductive glint in the light, seeding there amidst

the plants. The words grate in the ear; this is an intrusion. It's a phallic penetration of the land, a reminder of macho pressures, a sexual distortion of values.¹⁸

In his reaction to this intrusion, Heaney's second cousin, being 'scared to find spent cartridges' (*FW*, p.17), takes on the innocence of his landscape; the firearms that took his life were no part of his living character. As in 'The Seed Cutters', rural authenticity and simplicity constitute credentials affirming the detachment of the elegy's subject from the history of which he was a victim. The family of Heaney and his second cousin 'fought shy', keeping their distance from what did not concern them within the ancient patterns of their lives as small farmers, who

could not crack the whip or seize the day:
Big-voiced scullions, herders, feelers round
Haycocks and hindquarters, talkers in byres,
Slow arbitrators of the burial ground (*FW*, p.17).

Their 'old language of conspirators' (*FW*, p.17), however, obliquely implicates them in the unhappy history and troubled present from which the poem attempts to dissociate them. The 'tick of two clocks' is heard distinctly in 'The Strand at Lough Beg'; the muffled sound of the time-bomb of the Troubles intrudes upon the idyllic landscape of childhood like 'Death's Echo' upon the dream-Edens in Auden's poem of that title. 'Arbitrators of the burial ground' also qualifies extra-textually the rustic integrity the passage succeeds in evoking. The words are taken from 'England's difficulty', where they first appeared in company with

'scullions', which also recurs in 'The Strand at Lough Beg'. 'England's difficulty', like much of *Stations* in which it is collected, supplies a gloss to Heaney's use of 'conspirators' in the elegy; the prose-poem indicates the sectarian hatred and duplicity that are inconsistent with the peasant ingenuousness of the 'Big-voiced scullions' inhabiting Heaney's 'good landscape'. By allowing the word 'conspirators' into 'The Strand at Lough Beg', Heaney consciously admits its less than benign associations to qualify his myth of 'the first place'. In thus accommodating innocence and iniquity, the elegy's second section is a bridge between the landscape of the Troubles of the opening and the localized sanctity of the conclusion.

Water, light and mist, essentials of the initial framing of the benevolent myth of place in 'Anahorish', are all intrinsic to the re-creation of the Lough shore at the poem's close. Like the 'mound-dwellers / ... waist-deep in mist' (*WO*, p.16), the cattle seem to float in 'an early mist' that softens the lineaments of the landscape. Paralleling the piercings of darkness by the 'lamps' of 'Anahorish' and the 'Marshlights' of 'May', the Lough 'shines' through the mist to affirm the innately benign character of the locality. The plentiful 'dew' subsequently takes on a sacramental quality in the baptismal cleansing that concludes the poem. Heaney and his second cousin enter a privacy beyond their common binding to their community as they walk through the dawn towards their cattle. Their closeness, their shared

congruity in their native landscape of 'the first hill in the world', the earliness of the hour and the pastoral mode of the description recall the shepherds 'Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night' in 'Lycidas':

For we were nurst upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.

Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd
Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
We drove a-field¹⁹.

By embellishing 'The Strand at Lough Beg' with echoes of the best-known elegy in English, Heaney enhances the aura of his pastoral myth of place. In doing so he relaxes the poem's relation to social and topographical actuality in preparation for its transcendent conclusion:

Across that strand of yours the cattle graze
Up to their bellies in an early mist
And now they turn their unbewildered gaze
To where we work our way through squeaking sedge
Drowning in dew. Like a dull blade with its edge
Honed bright, Lough Beg half shines under the haze *FW*, p.18).

The reality of the Troubles from which the mythicised landscape provides a consciously maintained imaginative refuge is deliberately let loose in the conclusion for one disruptive line: 'With blood and roadside muck in your hair and eyes' (*FW*, p.18) Heaney's relative McCartney collapses beside him, 'roadside muck' sullyng the Lough-side idyll with the shocking ordinariness of 'each neighbourly murder' (*N*, p.16) in Ulster. From this point, the sanctity of the scene that was implicit in the opening's view of 'Church Island's spire' is unequivocally affirmed as Heaney performs

extempore last rites for the dying McCartney. The materials for the sacramental cleansing and laying out are the 'dew', the 'moss' and the 'rushes' that the landscape benevolently donates. From the Miltonic precedent of the conclusion's introductory lines its ending moves onto a more overtly mythologised plane in its close similarities to images in Canto I of Dante's *Purgatorio*. Heaney states the direct relation of 'The Strand at Lough Beg' to this Canto by taking the poem's epigraph from it. The ritual washing of McCartney's body and the dressing of it with rushes correspond to Cato's instructions to Virgil concerning the cleansing of Dante from 'hell's disfiguring smears':

Go, take this man, and see thou gird his waist
 With a smooth reed, and from his brow likewise
 Cleanse all this filth with which it is defaced.²⁰

As the reed is plucked at the close of Canto I of *Purgatorio*, it is miraculously replaced to indicate the hallowed character of the redemptive ground upon which the travellers have alighted:

And soon as it was plucked — O, strange to say!
 Just as it was, from that same spot of ground
 The humble plant sprang up again straightway.²¹

Heaney's rushes are likewise miraculously renewed in consonance with the 'marvellous or ... magical view of the world' that he imaginatively realizes on the shores of Lough Beg. In terms of the poem's relation to Dante's *Commedia*, McCartney has emerged from the hell of the introductory scene of the murder to enter upon the redemptive journey of Purgatory:

I ... // ... kneel in front of you in brimming grass
 And gather up cold handfuls of the dew
 To wash you, cousin. I dab you clean with moss
 Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud.
 I lift you under the arms and lay you flat.
 With rushes that shoot green again I plait
 Green scapulars to wear over your shroud (FW, p.18).

In making explicit the indigenous sanctity that the landscape signifies for him, Heaney brings his myth of 'the first place' to its culmination in 'The Strand at Lough Beg'. His renderings of the 'good landscape' around Mossbawn are subsequently discontinued with 'The Harvest Bow' later in *Field Work*. The peace that has been sought for and invariably intruded upon in *Field Work* is most convincingly and uninterruptedly located in the vivid recollection of the landscape of childhood in 'The Harvest Bow'. Heaney's benign myth of place and its code of innocent authenticity and timeless continuity are effectively concentrated into the straw bow plaited by his father's hands²²; with the natural congruity and equability of his Mossbawn childhood encapsulated in 'this frail device' (FW, p.58), the landscape is unburdened of its mythologised significance. Earlier, more selective and exclusive treatments of the topography are superseded by a realism that incorporates unadorned social and historical actuality. Images of 'the railway', 'old beds ... in hedges' and 'An auction notice' (FW, p.58) would have been censored out of earlier readings of the extra-historical character of the landscape. Here,

they are integrated with more rurally lyrical details of the stanza of local description at the heart of the poem. The harvest bow provides a peep-hole on the past, its 'golden loops' (*FW*, p.58) a channel for memory to re-enter the landscape of childhood, and then to spy an identical bow on Heaney's father's lapel. This motif of the-bow-within-a-bow opens up a perspective that recedes far into the ancestral past, reaching back ultimately to the region's 'old religion' (*P*, p.134) of which the device is a survival. The landscape and the bow into which its significances are woven are timeless constants behind the coming and going of generations of fathers and sons:

And if I spy into its golden loops
 I see us walk between the railway slopes
 Into an evening of long grass and midges,
 Blue smoke straight up, old beds and ploughs in hedges,
 An auction notice on an outhouse wall —
 You with a harvest bow in your lapel (*FW*, p.18).

Although the bow connotes the persistence of pagan customs and their fusion with Christian practices in Heaney's native community, as described in 'The Sense of Place' (*vide P*, pp.133-34), the poem solicits no communal inferences. Unlike the Gaelic of 'Anahorish', the hare of 'Land' or the potatoes of 'The Seed Cutters', the harvest bow does not constitute a key to a national or historical sub-text. In this respect, 'The Harvest Bow' is unique among Heaney's evocations of his 'good landscape' that have been the subject of this chapter; however obliquely or directly, each version

of the benign myth of place had some point of contact with the ideological tensions informing the darker myth of the bog-poetry. 'The Harvest Bow' thus marks the point at which Heaney is no longer necessarily bound by his genetic attunement to 'the shared calling of blood'. As *Field Work* draws to a close, the poem demonstrates this new detachment, establishing the terms that will permit Heaney to re-examine his origins from an independent standpoint in *Station Island*. Rather than being ineluctably 'drawn towards the old vortex of racial and religious instinct' (*P*, p.34) as hitherto, Heaney can subsequently make his own choices from the base of his 'free state of image and allusion' (*SI*, p.20).

The silence and peace that the poem celebrates are of and in the landscape; as in Auden's 'Amor Loci', there are no significances left to evoke beyond the locality's constitution of a focus in memory for an abiding personal affirmation. All echoes of Heaney's troubled and insistent nationalist readings of the landscape that mythicisings of 'the first place' sought either to evade or endorse fade into silence in 'The Harvest Bow'. Like Auden dispensing with his myth of his landscape's terrestrial surrogation for the notional Good Place in 'Amor Loci', Heaney lets go of the ideal values of his 'good landscape' by concentrating them into 'A throwaway love-knot of straw' (*FW*, p.58). His father's 'mellowed silence' and all 'the unsaid' that contains it (*FW*, p.58) are woven into the bow. As such, it assumes a higher significance than the Gaelic vocables cherished in 'Anahorish'

as signposts to the Tir-na-Nog of the national cultural ideal. It becomes the still point at the centre of Heaney's turning sense of place, implicitly, as 'a knowable corona' (*FW*, p.58), the sun around which the planetary system of the meanings of Mossbawn revolves. The poem supports such an interpretation in concluding that words can neither add to nor detract from the totality of

that original townland

Still tongue-tied in the straw tied by your hand (*FW*, p.58).

Through sustained contemplation of the bow, Heaney evolves an object for poetry that transcends his earlier ambitions. The wish 'To see myself, to set the darkness echoing' (*DN*, p.57) grew into the 'need / for antediluvian lore' (*WO*, p.25) that left him 'mired in attachment' (*SI*, p.102) and seeking moments of refuge in re-creations of Mossbawn. 'What is my apology for poetry?' (*FW*, p.41), asked Heaney earlier in *Field Work* after sensing the personal escapism latent in his pastoral vision of the 'Glanmore Sonnets'. By way of reply, 'The Harvest Bow' affirms a concept of poetry in a quotation from Patmore (*vide P*, p.7) that neither evades nor despairs at confronting Ulster's 'little destiny'. The benign myth of 'that original townland' has, like the grim saga of the bogland, served its purpose by the end of *Field Work*, but its emblem remains intact:

The end of art is peace

Could be the motto of this frail device

That I have pinned up on our deal dresser (*FW*, p.58).

In 'The Harvest Bow', Heaney's exile from Mossbawn is about to begin. He recalls himself as a boy 'already homesick / For the big lift of these evenings' (*FW*, p.58), presumably in anticipation of his departure for boarding school. This remembered prospect of leave-taking reflexively enacts Heaney's tacit farewell in the poem to his attempts to re-possess the landscape of childhood in selective and mythicised memories. With both the bog-poetry and his versions of an Irish Good Place behind him, Heaney, like the Yeats of 'A Coat', puts away his 'old mythologies'.²³ Mossbawn is the setting for much of *Station Island*, but there is henceforth a clear understanding that it is irrevocably of the past. The detachment from the landscape's ultimately constricting significances that begins in 'The Harvest Bow' is definitively established in *Station Island*. Its title sequence forms an intensive re-investigation of origins that dispels the cosmetic mists and fills in the conspicuous absences that were necessary to the benign myth of place.

Moves towards liberating his imagination from its partisanship of the landscape of origins began with Heaney's disavowal of 'antediluvian lore' as 'pap for the dispossessed' at the close of Part One of *North*. Much of *Field Work* tries and fails to establish the independence that is glimpsed at last in 'The Harvest Bow'. In *Station Island* Heaney succeeds, taking the advice of Joyce's ghost to 'Let go, let fly, forget' (*SI*, p.93). The following chapter examines the re-evaluations of Mossbawn by which Heaney works clear of his poetry's former circumscription by personal and communal loyalties to his 'old first place'.

Notes to Chapter Seven

- 1 Seamus Heaney in conversation at the Frances Horowitz memorial poetry reading in the Coulsdon Hall, Bristol, on 30 October 1983.
- 2 Kavanagh, p.52.
- 3 *ibid.*, p.27.
- 4 *ibid.*, pp.28-29.
- 5 Seamus Heaney, 'Kavanagh of the Parish', *The Listener* (London, 26 April, 1979), p.577.
- 6 Dante, *Purgatory*, p.290.
- 7 *vide* Bailey, p.125, and *Station Island*, p.73, *re* Heaney's primary schooling at Anahorish.
- 8 W. H. Auden, *A Certain World* (London, 1970), p.267.
- 9 Hooker, p.121.
- 10 *vide* James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, abridged edition (London, 1970), Chapter XLVI, pp.542-57.
- 11 Kavanagh, p.70.
- 12 Morrison, p.58.
- 13 Heaney's relation to Mary Heaney, the dedicatee of 'Sunlight' and 'The Seed Cutters', is indicated in Bailey, pp. 124, 138, where it is stated that she is the subject of 'Sunlight'.

- 14 John Clare, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, edited by E. Robinson and G. Summerfield (London, 1964), p.126.
- 15 Tony Curtis, 'A More Social Voice : *Field Work* ', in *The Art of Seamus Heaney*, p.112.
- 16 Morrison, p.81.
- 17 *vide* Seamus Heaney, *Sweeney Astray* (London, 1984), pp.69-70 for indications of local and narrative correspondences between 'The Strand at Lough Beg' and the tale of Sweeney.
- 18 Curtis, p.111.
- 19 John Milton, *Milton's Poems*, edited by B. A. Wright (London, 1963), p.42.
- 20 Dante, *Purgatory*, pp.76, 75.
- 21 *ibid.*, p.77.
- 22 Heaney's relationship to the maker of the harvest bow is established in Curtis, p.118.
- 23 Yeats, p.142.

CHAPTER EIGHT - HEANEY: BEYOND THE FIRST KINGDOM

'Making Strange', 'The Loaning',
'Station Island', 'The First Kingdom'

— '... the first step taken
from a justified line
into the margin' (SI, p.97).

By the end of the title sequence of *Station Island*, his last collection of 1984, Heaney has made clear that a major re-assessment of his attitudes to his landscape and all it signifies has taken place. His work's loyalty to his native community is at an end; the implicitly or openly nationalist readings of locality and history that culminated in the bog-poetry are summarily dismissed when Joyce's ghost states "That subject people stuff is a cod's game" (SI, p.93). A cold eye is likewise turned on the more private myth of the 'good landscape'; the shade of William Carleton follows Heaney's recitation of idyllic images of Mossbawn with "All this is like a trout kept in a spring" (SI, p.66), reducing the landscape of memory to sentimental unimportance. Disencumbered of his rôle as poetic spokesman for 'the shared calling of blood', Heaney no longer needs the refuge he sought by re-creating the 'old first place'. Henceforth, he can "Take off from here" (SI, p.93), as Joyce advises. His freedom to do so is enacted in the adoption of the 'bird-man' (SI, p.123) persona of Sweeney to transcend the landscape of origins in 'The First Flight'.

Heaney's coming into possession of this detachment may be traced back to the outcome of 'the long foray' (N, p.20)

of *North*. The heavy imaginative investment he made in a poetry of communal and historical orientation leaves him virtually bankrupt as part one of the collection reaches its indecisive and unrewarding conclusions: the bog-poetry expires with the tortured urbanity of part VI of 'Kinship'; Hercules and Antaeus' subsequently terminates such communal myth-making in seeming to say, with Auden of 'Spain 1937', that 'History to the defeated / May say Alas but cannot help or pardon' (EA, p.212). *North* ends with Heaney south of the Ulster border in the Wicklow landscape of 'Exposure', dejected and directionless as he asks 'How did I end up like this?' (N, p.72).

Much of *Field Work*, which follows *North*, constitutes an attempted recuperation of Heaney's energies after the dissociation of his communal sensibility that is documented in 'Exposure'. The collection fails, however, in its efforts to achieve imaginative independence of all that had been geographically left behind by Heaney's move to the Republic of Eire. Its strongest poems remain those which confront the Troubles, like 'Casualty' and 'The Strand at Lough Beg', or those which, like the latter and 'The Harvest Bow', re-possess the landscape of childhood. The 'Glanmore Sonnets' self-consciously strive to establish an aesthetically autonomous poetry, but they too drift back to Mossbawn before sinking in the gap between life and art. Prior to the appearance of *Field Work*, Heaney remarked that 'I have occasionally talked of the countryside where we live in Wicklow as being pastoral rather

than rural, trying to impose notions of a beautified landscape on the world, in order to keep 'rural' for the unselfconscious face of raggie-taggle farmland' (*P*, p.173). The admission indicates the selectivity of his vision in work like the 'Glanmore Sonnets', which cannot ultimately exclude the less delicate 'rural' realities and the violence they imaginatively connote:

We have our burnished bay tree at the gate,
 Classical, hung with the reek of silage.
 From the next farm, tart-leafed as inwit.
 Blood on a pitch-fork, blood on chaff and hay,
 Rats speared in the sweat and dust of threshing —
 What is my apology for poetry? (*FW*, p.41).

Breachings of the pastoral peace of Glanmore recur throughout the collection. As Tony Curtis remarks after reflecting on the domestic equability of much of *Field Work*, 'Images of the Troubles, the problems of the country as a whole, intrude themselves into the context'.¹

At this stage, Heaney remains bound to the troubled present in Ulster and the peaceful past in Mossbawn. Glanmore, where he and his family resided at a rural remove for 'our four years in the hedge-school' (*FW*, p.43), is at best a surrogate landscape deputising for 'that original townland'. Heaney recognizes as much in stating of his Wicklow retreat that 'it was the first place I was able to write about the house I was living in and the place around it ... that wasn't County Derry or somehow connected with the original place. That was because Glanmore was *like* the original place'.²

The sanctuary sought in *Field Work* is still most effectively available in the landscape of memory, which is very consciously re-entered as a refuge in the recollection of childhood in the fifth of the 'Glanmore Sonnets':

I fall back to my tree-house and would crouch
Where small buds shoot and flourish in the hush (*FW*, p.37).

The ideal of creative freedom from his work's entanglement in origins that has left him 'mired in attachment' (*SI*, p.102) is most clearly glimpsed in *Field Work* at the end of 'Casualty'. Heaney admires the dispassionate detachment from the nationalist community, and society in general, embodied in the fisherman elegised in the poem, perhaps the strongest in the collection. Before this figure fell victim to 'Our tribe's complicity' (*FW*, p.23), Heaney shared something of his independence, which 'Casualty' celebrates aptly by metrically emulating Yeats's parable of solitary integrity in 'The Fisherman'. The account of the work of fishing serves, through the suggestions accruing to 'rhythm', as an allegory of a self-sufficient poetry later designated 'my free state of image and allusion' (*SI*, p.20):

... I tasted freedom with him.
To get out early, haul
Steadily off the bottom,
Dispraise the catch, and smile
As you find a rhythm
Working you, slow mile by mile,
Into your proper haunt
Somewhere, well out, beyond ... (*FW*, p.24).

While Heaney cannot achieve such a freedom until the conclusion of the 'Station Island' sequence, advances towards it are made in 'The Strand at Lough Beg' and 'The Harvest Bow'. These, as the preceding chapter has shown, are more than straightforward renderings of the benign myth of 'the first place'. 'The Strand at Lough Beg' explicitly comprehends both the landscape of the Troubles and the realm of the idyll, which had hitherto been unfeasible in the space of a single poem. In 'The Harvest Bow', Heaney begins to work free of his largely unexamined attachment to the landscape of childhood by encapsulating its benevolent significances in the 'throwaway love-knot of straw'. The poems thus tentatively approach the integrated view of his landscape of origins that Heaney becomes capable of through the re-evaluations of *Station Island*. 'Our mother ground / ... sour with the blood / of her faithful' and the innocent locality of 'the first hill in the world' cease to be antithetical in a new perspective that accords them a neutral parity. The strategies and assumptions of previous treatments of the landscape are dispensed with: the evasion and selection that circumvented the Troubles with the 'perfect mist' and 'peaceful absences' of the mythologised 'good landscape' become redundant; the bogland loses its foreboding aura as the old 'realm of bogeys' and locus of the homicidal myth of place to re-emerge as the blank and spiritually evocative terrain of 'Station Island' part III.

In establishing this more objective and more balanced perception of the Mossbawn area, Heaney consciously and significantly revises the terms upon which he presents the locality. Both the bog-poetry and the treatments of the landscape's benevolent aspects were, as we have seen, strongly informed by memories of childhood. Especially in the creation of his benign myth of place, Heaney conferred an extra-historical permanence upon his landscape of memory; this accords with Auden's high evaluation of the psychologically nourishing potential of 'scenes we remember as unchanging', which in turn re-states Wordsworth's doctrine of the recollective enshrinement of the personal sense of place. As *Station Island* makes clear, however, in Heaney's case his landscape's changeless perenniality in memory is not the whole story. The mist and absences of works like 'Anahorish' and 'Sunlight' and the primitivism of the bog-poetry's tribally archetypal landscape failed to acknowledge changes in the 'original townland' that occurred before his departure from it. Previous writing, in his poetry and prose, took no account of the housing construction and industrial development in the locality clearly indicated by several poems in *Station Island*. 'The Sandpit' describes early memories of the opening up and exploitation of the landscape in 1946 for its sub-strata of sand and gravel and their use in building 'the new estate' (*SI*, p.55). Heaney refers to the sand and gravel below his locality's topsoil in some detail in the essay 'Mossbawn'; there is, however,

no mention of their direct association with the building industry's activities in the area, which would hardly be compatible with the timeless idyll of 'the first place' which the essay helps to create.

These indications of social and topographical change in his landscape are consolidated elsewhere in *Station Island*. When Heaney returns to his native place after long absence in 'Sweeney Redivivus' he finds it unrecognizable. The poem begins with an imagined emergence from underground, enacting a return from the historical and psychological depths of his sustained penetration of origins. Rising through the sand to awaken to an altered present, Sweeney - Heaney discovers that the landscape of his myths has disappeared beneath the modernity of 'the new estate':³

I stirred wet sand and gathered myself
to climb the steep-flanked mound ... //

... The old trees were nowhere,
the hedges thin as penwork
and the whole enclosure lost
under hard paths and sharp-ridged houses (*SI*, p.98).

Similarly, 'Anahorish School' and its environs have changed beyond recognition, according to the account given by the ghost of a former teacher encountered in 'Station Island' part V:

'Birch trees have overgrown Leitrim Moss,
dairy herds are grazing where the school was
and the school garden's loose black mould is grass'
(*SI*, p. 73).

Earlier in the collection, the title of 'Changes' anticipates the revelations of the altered face of Mossbawn that are to follow. In this poem, Heaney goes back to the pump in the farmyard that features recurrently in earlier poetry and prose⁴. With its 'plunger slugging up and down' to produce a sound Heaney chooses to hear as '*omphalos, omphalos, omphalos*' (*P*, p.17), the pump has hitherto been a totem of the instinctual vitality and extra-historical authenticity of his community. Now it is obsolete and derelict, housing a bird's nest in the untended 'long grass' (*SI*, p.36); no longer 'marking the centre of another world', it passively brings to mind the bygone days of its original siting that is described in detail in 'Sinking the shaft' of *Stations*. 'Changes' concludes by purposively shoring memories against the ruin of 'the first place'; Heaney recommends his companion to retain an impression of their visit in direct correspondence to Wordsworth's encouragement of his sister to remember at the close of 'Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey':

So tender, I said, 'Remember this.
It will be good for you to retrace this path
when you have grown away and stand at last
at the very centre of the empty city' (*SI*, p.37).

These and further acknowledgements in *Station Island* of time and change are essential to Heaney's re-evaluation of Mossbawn and its meanings and his eventual achievement of detachment from them. He deliberately completes the deconstruction of his myth of 'the first place' as an extant

landscape of the mind after its initial relegation to the irretrievable past in 'The Harvest Bow'. It is no longer a sanctuary of permanence from which he is exiled, but a landscape that changed even as he knew it. There can never be any going back to the place as he once evoked it; Auden's undeceived distinction between actuality and the personal Eden as 'a wish-dream that cannot become real' is henceforth effective for Heaney. Pound's version of the return of the native after his years away from the U.S.A applies to Heaney's new objectivity in revisiting Mossbawn in *Station Island*; his metaphor of 'Exotics' has an aptness in view of Heaney's sense of becoming a poet 'when my roots were crossed with my reading': 'Exotics were necessary as an attempt at foundation. One is transplanted and grows, and one is pulled up and taken back to what one has been transplanted from and it is no longer there'.⁵

Heaney has tried and failed to achieve 'foundation' in his assiduously constructed landscape of memory. The 'Station Island' sequence constitutes a moral inventory by means of which he recognizes and neutralizes the sentimental and hereditary loyalties and fictions that bound him to his privately and communally authorized versions of Mossbawn. What became familiar from successions of earlier poems is divested of the nostalgic veils of beauty and fear that made childhood the emotional locus of both the benign myth of place and the bog-poetry. "'I repent / My unweaned life"' (*SI*, p.85), cries Heaney in 'Station Island' part IX, indicating an awareness of the pre-Oedipal security

that lay beneath his previous treatments of Mossbawn. Auden's reaction upon returning to his landscape of childhood after experience of Berlin is recalled by the metaphor of weaning and the changed relation to rural origins that it denotes:

Being alone, the frightened soul
Returns to this life of sheep and hay
No longer his: he every hour
Moves further from this and must so move,
As child is weaned from mother and leaves home
(CP, p.52).

For Auden, Berlin precipitated a new political consciousness that necessitated 'weaning' from the emotional certainties of childhood and the landscape in which they were recollectively embodied. Heaney's estrangement from his past in *Station Island* serves to 'rent / the veil of the usual' (SI, p.104), revealing the political complicity of the solidarity with his community inherent in his myths of place. One of his ghostly accusers in the book's title sequence, the second cousin elegised in 'The Strand at Lough Beg', brings this home to him in the words '"The Protestant who shot me through the head / I accuse directly, but indirectly you"' (SI, p.83). In the 'blanching self-disgust' that follows, Heaney utterly rejects the '"unweaned life that kept me competent / To sleepwalk with connivance and mistrust"':

'I hate how quick I was to know my place.
I hate where I was born, hate everything
That made me biddable and unforthcoming' (SI, p.85).

This is a far cry indeed from the celebratory affirmations

of deep local attachment and the nationalist sub-text of their imagery in, for example, sections I and IV of 'Kinship'. The less than properly conscious assumptions of locally determined identity are now felt to have led Heaney 'to sleepwalk' in 'connivance' with the extremism of his tribe. 'Station Island' registers the shocks of awakening which eventually produce in Heaney a calmly detached, and somewhat dismissive, attitude to his landscape and its inhabitants. As the bird-man poet of the 'Sweeney Redivivus' sequence, his interest in the particulars of topography diminishes with his new imaginative elevation. Like Auden's socially comprehensive view 'As the hawk sees it or the helmeted airman' (CP, p.61) of 'Consider', Heaney's eye is broadly and critically cast on the character of his native community.

In *Station Island*, Heaney works towards his independent perspective on his landscape by consciously estranging himself from his formerly habitual local responses. The defamiliarization⁶ of Mossbawn that culminates through the quasi-hallucinatory effect of the ritual fasting of the 'Station Island' sequence begins in 'Remembering Malibu' and 'Making Strange'. The latter's title suggests that Heaney's strategies of detachment may owe something to Brecht, whose dramatic theory and practice of *Verfremdung* is translated as 'making strange'.⁷ According to R. Gray, through the use of *Verfremdung* 'Brecht's intention is not merely to make the familiar unfamiliar, to "estrangle" it,

but to lead on to a fresh vision of reality in a more real sense'.⁸ In radically revising the bases of his relation to his landscape and the past rooted in it, this is precisely what Heaney intends by the 'making strange' of *Station Island*. That Heaney's *Verfremdung* of Mossbawn is deliberate is further suggested by references to defamiliarization elsewhere in the collection: he speaks of being 'estranged' (*SI*, p.87) from a once-familiar object as memory intensifies to a critical pitch in 'Station Island' part X; after returning to Mossbawn in 'Sweeney Redivivus', he states that the repressive conditioning bred of his elders' 'unfurtherable moss-talk'

... will have to be unlearned
 even though from there on everything
 is going to be learning (*SI*, p.99).

The already-quoted 'rent / the veil of the usual' indicates a sense of the Brechtian 'fresh vision of reality' that Heaney experiences at the surprise of a kingfisher's flight in 'Drifting Off'.

'Remembering Malibu' begins the *Verfremdung* of the home-ground after the 'Last Look' at what is familiar of the preceding poem so entitled. By correlating 'Last Look' with 'Station Island' part IV it becomes clear that a dying man is bidding farewell to his landscape. This has an emblematically reflexive significance in *Station Island* as Heaney recognizes the moribundity of his former sense of place and begins the termination of his 'unweaned life'.

'Remembering Malibu' subsequently finds him on the Pacific island of the title, 'far, far // from the suck of puddled, wintry ground' (*SI*, p.31). The lines state a new and negative conception of local attachment, consistent with Heaney's uneasy sense of the pull of 'the old vortex of racial and religious instinct'. His 'appetites of gravity' have hitherto allowed the territorial imperative to draw him in through a genetically transmitted loyalty now perceived as 'the suck' of the landscape itself. The image recalls the conclusion of 'Kinship', where 'the goddess' 'swallows' the emotions of her devotees. Like a black hole in the space of Heaney's consciousness, his native 'territorial piety' has exercised an attraction that dictated the fundamental orientation of his work. Only at the distance of Malibu can he feel freedom from the 'suck' of 'the old vortex' of the tribe and their landscape and begin to realize the possibility of neutralizing its power over him. Habitual attachment to the idea of Ireland is described through the metaphor of a shoe, with conditioned local responses and cultural assumptions 'welted solid to my instep' (*SI*, p.31). On Malibu, with Ireland held in an estranging perspective, Heaney conceives a wish 'to rear and kick and cast that shoe' (*SI*, p.31), as he proceeds to in subsequent poems.

In 'Making Strange' which follows Heaney begins resolving his dilemma of inherited attachment and desired independence by initiating the process of self-discovery that intensifies in the 'Station Island' sequence. Obligated to mediate

between a native of his landscape, metaphorically rooted to the soil 'in the tubs of his wellingtons', and a stranger of 'travelled intelligence', (*SI*, p.32), Heaney gains insight into his own nature. Exile and education have conferred on him 'travelled intelligence', while his birth and upbringing as a Catholic farmer's son ineluctably class him with the 'unshorn and bewildered' (*SI*, p.32) native. The central impulse of his poetry up to *Field Work* was to retrieve and authenticate his locally and communally determined Irish identity. Doing so raised the matter of Ulster's status as 'a province that insists it is British' (*P*, p.35) and inevitably produced poetry latently sympathetic to Irish nationalist aspirations. Since the ideal of a creative freedom 'Somewhere, well out, beyond' began to form, however, his subscription to 'the shared calling of blood' has been questioned. Part of Heaney's eventual increase in self-knowledge through the accusations and questionings of the 'Station Island' sequence is the realization that he cannot slough off his inherited identity; correspondingly, he must recognize the authenticity of what he has become, the accomplished poet of no mean learning with five collections and an already monumental reputation to his credit. Hitherto he has tended in his work to be either the ingenuous farmer's son or the learned 'etymologist of roots and graftings' (*FW*, p.37); he has inclined towards the native simplicities of his vision of Mossbawn's 'good landscape', or has otherwise delved eruditely into 'the coffered / riches' (*N*, p.28) of

archaeology, history and myth. As we have seen, the distinction between the 'lived, illiterate and unconscious' and the 'learned, literate and conscious' responses to landscape defined in 'The Sense of Place' is clearly discernible in his work.

In 'Making Strange' the two characteristic modes of Heaney's writing are personified in the figures of the sophisticated stranger and the unlettered native; as Blake Morrison observes, the poem frames 'both ... a real encounter and ... a parable of the poet's divided self'.⁹ As soon as the dilemma is recognized 'a cunning middle voice / ... out of the field' (*SI*, p.32), Heaney's muse born of the crossing of roots and reading, comes to the rescue. He is enjoined to unite his two voices and produce a new, estranging harmony from the synthesis of opposites. The incapacitating sense that he is like neither the stranger nor the native yields to the possibility of achieving a new integrity by combining his affinities with both. "Be adept and be dialect" (*SI*, p.32), he is instructed by the voice out of the landscape. Doing so establishes a fresh perspective and transcends the limiting familiarity of habitual responses that have grown stale. By initiating *Verfremdung* in 'Making Strange', Heaney begins 'to alienate alienation',¹⁰ to quote Needle and Thomson on the functions of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekte*: the 'living roots' of 'Digging' remain severed by exile and education, but the concomitant tensions of proving, or denying, who he is need

no longer be felt in Heaney's work. At the same time, the ideal of poetry's creative autonomy is consolidated by the re-affirmation of fidelity to the 'departures' from the ordinary occasioned by his muse's original promptings. Rather than unsuccessfully attempting to distance himself from the past through the artistic preciousness of much of *Field Work*, Heaney re-engages his origins with defamiliarizingly unified senses of self and place:

'... Go beyond what's reliable
 in all that keeps pleading and pleading,
 these eyes and puddles and stones,
 and recollect how bold you were
 when I visited you first
 with departures you cannot go back on.'
 A chaffinch flicked from an ash and next thing
 I found myself driving the stranger
 through my own country, adept
 at dialect, reciting my pride
 in all that I knew, that began to make strange
 at that same recitation (*SI*, p.33).

The 'pleading' of 'eyes and puddles and stones' explains Heaney's susceptibility to 'the suck of puddled, wintry ground'; the 'eyes' are those of the 'bewildered' native 'smiling at me for help' (*SI*, p.32), effectively 'pleading' with Heaney to speak for him to the 'travelled intelligence' of the stranger. The desire to be a spokesman for his taciturn and inarticulate community was latent as early as 'Digging', and both Heaney's myths of place constitute attempts to fulfil it. In grouping 'eyes' with 'puddles'

and stones', he indicates the inseparability of the human and natural aspects of his landscape in a region where culture and society are inextricably bound to the soil. He is arriving at a clearer awareness of the 'lived, illiterate and unconscious' nature of his underlying relation to 'the first place': an unspoken, pre-verbal sympathy with the people to whom he is kinned that extends without differentiation to their landscape has always informed the emotional pulse of his poetry; this is 'what's reliable', that he must now 'Go beyond' through the 'making strange' of his native place.

Accordingly, modernity is admitted to 'that original townland' to effect its alterations to the face of 'what's reliable' in 'Changes', already referred to above. The *Verfremdung* of Mossbawn subsequently continues in 'The Loaning', which opens with an intensified investigation of the pull on Heaney's sympathies of 'all that keeps pleading' in the landscape. The fusion of the human and the natural in 'eyes and puddles and stones' is sustained as 'The Loaning' renders 'the first place' unfamiliar in its eerie re-creation of 'the limbo of lost words' (*SI*, p.51). Imagination follows up the introductory 'the wind shifting in the hedge was like / an old one's whistling speech' (*SI*, p.51) to comprehend the landscape's attraction in terms of its assimilation of dispossessed speech and dying words. The topography of 'raftered sheds and crossroads' is of itself familiar to any reader of Heaney's, or Kavanagh's, poetry; it is most

effectively 'made strange', however, by the literalized account of the transmigration of 'lost words':

They had flown there from rafted sheds and crossroads,
 from the shelter of gable ends and turned-up carts.
 I saw them streaming out of birch-white throats
 and fluttering above iron bedsteads
 until the soul would leave the body.
 Then on a day close as a stranger's breath
 they rose in smoky clouds on the summer sky
 and settled in the uvulae of stones
 and the soft lungs of the hawthorn (SI, p.51).

Like the 'voice / ... out of the field' in 'Making Strange', reminding Heaney of his obligation to 'first / ... departures you cannot go back on', 'the limbo of lost words' has its claim on him. The sensitivity to the landscape that first prompted his poetry is a function of his hereditary binding to those whose lives it determined and ultimately absorbed. Imaginative insight into the inherent humanity of the landscape leads Heaney to conclude that it chose its poet by insufflating him in infancy with its vestigially human breath. The extension into a structurally encompassing metaphor of the initial simile of 'the wind' and 'an old one's whistling speech' is finally sealed by the imagery of 'haws' and 'rose-hips'. *Verfremdung* shocks these topographical details, familiar from their incorporation into the landscape of childhood as 'the haw-lit hedges' (N, p.44) of 'Kinship' part V, into strangeness: as 'spit blood', the haws complete with mordant clinical exactitude the conventional indication of mortality

in the preceding 'the soul would leave the body':

Then I knew why from the beginning
 the loaning breathed on me, breathed even now
 in a shiver of beaded gossamers
 and the spit blood of a last few haws and rose-hips
 (SI, p.51).

The symbiotic parity of the human and the natural components of the landscape tentatively established by 'Making Strange' becomes surreally explicit in 'the uvulae of stones / and the soft lungs of the hawthorn'. Heaney seems to be adapting Flann O'Brien's thesis regarding the convertibility of policemen and bicycles in *The Third Policeman*. The long and intimate contact between man and machine in the world of O'Brien's bizarre masterpiece resulted in a reciprocal transference of the character and substance of the one to the other. Heaney's stones and hawthorns likewise take on organic human attributes as a consequence of the inhabitants' life-long closeness to the landscape. The converse is demonstrated in part II of 'The Loaning', where Heaney's male elders are characterized as 'solemn trees' (SI, p.51). *Verfremdung* is effected by the re-creation of the imaginative child's awe in the presence of the taciturn adults sitting immobile in the darkening kitchen. By this tenebrous and unsettling evocation of his stern patriarchs, Heaney furthers the deconstruction of the hitherto predominantly Edenic renderings of childhood and its landscape:

Big voices in the womanless kitchen.
 They never lit a lamp in the summertime
 but took the twilight as it came
 like solemn trees. They sat on in the dark
 with their pipes red in their mouths, the talk come down
 to *Aye* and *Aye* again and, when the dog shifted,
 a curt *There boy!* (*SI*, p.51).

The simile of 'solemn trees' is subsequently extended and literalized into the fusion of actuality and hypnagogic trance in which the child drifts off into the 'branches' of his elders' company. Their monosyllables are stirred by the wind as noises in the trees they have become to complete the postulation of the equivalence of the human and the natural characters of the landscape:

... I closed my eyes
 to make the light motes stream behind them
 and my head went airy, my chair rode
 high and low among branches and the wind
 stirred up a rookery in the next long *Aye* (*SI*, pp.51-52).

Heaney is saying things about his landscape for which such imaginative structures supply the only language; people are not trees, hedges do not breathe, but these are rational considerations on the surface of his sense of place. The sounds of the fields and the silence of their inhabitants produces an atmosphere Heaney has known since infancy; its strangeness is only now becoming apparent as he returns to it with a new sense of detachment. To evoke and account for the mood of the landscape and its people in terms of their lived affinities with one another is a fluent extension of the intimacy of man and soil described in earlier poems

like 'Land'. This grounding of the *Verfremdung* of 'The Loaning' in experiential actuality extends to the cultural and linguistic character of Heaney's native Ulster. On one level the poem reveals the vividness and literalness of his awareness of 'the living speech of the landscape I was born into' (P, p.37), to quote once more from 'Belfast'; on another it goes beyond the personal intuitions thus spoken of and provides a poetic gloss on an observation by Tom Paulin. Paulin's sense of the 'Irish English' that is the 'living speech' of Heaney's landscape as 'some strange creature of the open air' is precisely consistent with Heaney's evocation of 'the limbo of lost words':

Spoken Irish English exists in a number of provincial and local forms, but because no scholar has as yet compiled a *Dictionary of Irish English* many words are literally homeless. They live in the careless richness of speech, but they rarely appear in print ... It is a language without a lexicon, a language without form. Like some strange creature of the open air, it exists simply as *Geist* or spirit.¹¹

The documentary dimension suggested by the poem's relation to the conditions of Irish English is expanded as the third section emerges into unadorned local reportage after the 'making strange' of the opening. Heaney's *Verfremdung* is seen to be working as 'The Loaning' achieves 'a fresh vision of reality in a more real sense'. For the first time in his treatments of the landscape it is rendered with

a descriptive immediacy bare of metaphor or implicit mythologisation. After the imaginative departures that preceded, the response to the workaday sounds of the locality surprises with its immediacy and freshness. 'Making strange' has already resulted in a 'demythologized' (FW, p.48), to quote from Heaney's 'Skunk', perception of Mossbawn; the beginning of part III of 'The Loaning' indicates possession of the objectivity towards his native place that Heaney has realized must form a basis for the creative freedom he desires. The sudden stopping of the blackbird's song and the new awareness of surroundings occasioned by the shock of its discontinuation reflexively enact the success of Heaney's *Verfremdung* of Mossbawn; by 'making strange', habitually mythologised and selective responses to the landscape have been broken off to allow a new apprehension of its objective totality:

Stand still. You can hear
 everything going on. High-tension cables
 singing above cattle, tractors, barking dogs,
 juggernauts changing gear a mile away.
 And always the surface noise of the earth
 you didn't know you'd heard till a twig snapped
 and a blackbird's startled volubility
 stopped short (SI, p.52).

With the achievement of this new clarity, Heaney arrives at a better understanding of his motives for the former creation of the Edenic myth of 'the first place'; the moral exhaustion and familiarity with terror consequent upon his engagement of the Troubles led to the opening up of the

landscape of childhood as an extra-historical refuge for the imagination:

When you are tired or terrified
your voice slips back into its old first place
and makes the sound your shades make there ... (SI, p.52).

The suspension dots with which the lines conclude tacitly state that we know the rest already from the numerous poems of 'peaceful absences' considered in the preceding chapter. They also indicate an hiatus in the dynamic of his re-evaluation of Mossbawn. He has not yet escaped 'the limbo of lost words', and the line of retrospective analysis he has begun to pursue is lost temporarily in the spaces between memories. He has begun to establish a more objective relation to his landscape and the personal and communal past it embodies; here, however, his new awareness of the nature of his attachment to his 'old first place' fades into the very emptiness of the space his *Verfremdung* has cleared. This momentary dissociation is overcome by invoking a passage in Canto XIII of Dante's *Inferno*. Heaney has wished to 'Be adept and be dialect', to unify the indigenous and extrinsic aspects of his responses to the landscape; reversion to being 'adept' allows the scholar-poet to step back from 'The Loaning' by viewing it in the mirror of images out of the *Commedia*. The poem's conception of the immanence of human speech in the landscape's natural features and its most striking image of 'spit blood' are comprehended in the paraphrase of Dante. The twig snapping in the lines quoted above mediates between external

actuality and literary recollection; 'learned, literate' experience fuses with 'lived, illiterate' familiarity with the fields in Heaney's psychic continuum to stabilise the estranged present by reference to the tradition embodied in Dante. He is once more, but differently, 'reciting my pride / in all that I knew', not conducting a stranger around 'the first place', but introducing his rural muse to Dante. In the turnings of his 'making strange' he effectively emerges still 'adept at dialect':

When Dante snapped a twig in the bleeding wood
a voice sighed out of blood that bubbled up
like sap at the end of green sticks on a fire (SI, p.52).

The conclusion's 'now' subsequently re-engages the immediacy experienced in the lines of aural local description with which part III began. Under the auspices of the citation of *Inferno*, Heaney acknowledges that the present, with 'everything going on', has dimensions in which reality and nightmare intersect. Previous estranging images of 'light motes', 'the dark / with ... pipes red', 'spit blood' and the ghostly 'shades' are subject to a secondary *Verfremdung* to posit the possible actuality behind allegations of torture in Ulster. The poem's leitmotiv of vocal sounds, hitherto quietly eerie or assuaging, reaches a hellish pitch as the priest of the inquisition begins his introit:

At the click of a cell lock somewhere now
the interrogator steels his *introibo*,
the light motes blaze, a blood-red cigarette
startles the shades, screeching and beseeching (SI, p.52).

'The Loaning' brings together elements that have previously been separated in the spectrum of Heaney's responses to his landscape. The 'reliable' topography of hedges, sheds, crossroads and cattle is no longer simply a vehicle for affirmations of rural integrity, but takes on a disturbing quality hitherto more characteristic of the bog-poetry. Similarly, childhood is evoked in images that create a 'dark-bowered' (*N*, p.31) atmosphere like that previously associated with the poetry of the bogland. The 'sense ... of lift and light' (*P*, p.20) that has been intrinsic to most of Heaney's poetry of 'the first place' and childhood has become a redundant pastoral convention; it is cancelled out by being crossed with the perturbing childhood emotions hitherto evinced by 'the realm of bogeys ... the moss, forbidden ground'. 'The Strand at Lough Beg' succeeded in accommodating both the landscape of terror and the world of the innocent idyll, but they were kept antithetically separate. *Verfremdung* of 'that original townland' has deconstructed the previously categorically distinct aspects of his landscape. The auras of the farmland and the peat-bogs fuse to produce an atmosphere new in his writing, just as the attempt to 'Be adept and be dialect' is resulting in a new awareness of the self.

This unification of the formerly separate senses of place in 'The Loaning' can be understood by reference to the topography of Mossbawn as laid out in the essay of that title. Within the scheme of Mossbawn's latent local symbolism, the

locus of the poem forms a connection between the antipathetic landscapes of beauty and fear, 'the lush and definite fields' and the sinister bogland. 'The Loaning' of the title may be taken for 'the Sandy Loaning', its hedges described in the essay corresponding to the local details of the poem's opening. It is along the Sandy Loaning that Heaney conducts his readers in the essay's transit from the open fields to the 'forbidden ground' of the bogs. The pathway links Heaney's hitherto invariably distinct topographies and as part of his landscape of the mind fuses his responses to them to create the new and estranging atmosphere of the poem:

There was what we called the Sandy
 Loaning, a sanded pathway between
 old hedges leading in off the road,
 first among fields and then through
 a small bog ... It was a silky,
 fragrant world there, and for the
 first few hundred yards you were
 safe enough ... But, gradually,
 those lush and definite fields
 gave way to scraggy marshland
 ... This was the realm of
 bogeys ... the moss, forbidden
 ground (*P*, pp.18-19).

After this synthesis of fields and bogland in 'The Loaning', 'The Sandpit', already referred to above, extends the 'making strange' of the 'old first place' by confirming the hints of radical alteration in 'Changes'. Having gained an objectivity which allows him to tell the whole story of his landscape of origins, Heaney begins to re-evaluate his

identity more thoroughly in 'The King of the Ditchbacks'. Through being 'adept at dialect', he is beginning to resolve the tensions between conscious and unconscious localized responses and, by extension, aspects of himself. As he notes in 'The Sense of Place', the 'learned, literate and conscious' and the 'lived, illiterate and unconscious' modes of experiencing landscape 'may be complementary but ... are just as likely to be antipathetic' (P, p.131). Moves towards making his exiled and educated consciousness compatible with his intuitive native sensibility establish a basis for the integrated creative independence he aspires to. Filling in the blanks on the map of the landscape of memory, as 'The Sandpit' does in updating the topographical record, is one part of this process. A fuller recognition of his own nature must also be achieved.

Accordingly, 'The King of the Ditchbacks' registers the formative attractions of mystery and stealth in the landscape of childhood that have not been openly acknowledged in earlier poetry. 'There is nothing to hide' (SI, p.41), writes Heaney in 'A Bat on the Road', words which are axiomatic of the revelations of *Station Island* and the coming stocktaking of motives and memories in its title sequence. The imaginative sovereignty of 'The King of the Ditchbacks' over the more shadowy areas of Heaney's imagination is recognized as integral to his senses of self and place; a further step is taken in the establishment of new terms for his poetry and a fuller understanding of the desire for creative

independence is arrived at. 'The King of the Ditchbacks' is Sweeney, 'who used to camp in the ditchbacks along the road to the first school I attended' (SA, p.viii).¹² Heaney's childhood fears of the man are retrospectively viewed as repressed attraction for the mysterious freedom he embodied. This Sweeney and the eponymous bird-man of the *Buile Suibhne*, the persona later adopted in 'Sweeney Redivivus', jointly come to Heaney's aid in resolving his central difficulty, concisely identified in the introduction to *Sweeney Astray*: 'the quarrel between free creative imagination and the constraints of religious, political, and domestic obligation' (SA, p.vi). 'Obligation' has left him 'mired in attachment' to the religious, political and domestic experience of the community that exerts 'the suck of puddled, wintry ground'. 'The King of the Ditchbacks' lives beyond the communal pale, 'a denless mover' whose 'stealthy rustling' (SI, p.56) haunts Heaney like a spectre of independence daring him to seize his own freedom. He does so, after rehearsing the 'Dream fears' of childhood, to gain in self-knowledge, as he did through becoming 'adept at dialect' in 'Making Strange':

After I had dared these invocations, I went back towards the gate to follow him. And my stealth was second nature to me, as if I were coming into my own (SI, p.57).

This quasi-fictive re-creation of childhood experience is a parable of 'the God of imagination waking'¹³, to quote from Kavanagh's 'Kerr's Ass'; the sensation of 'coming into my own' felt on following Sweeney becomes in retrospect

a recognition of the poetic vocation: 'I remembered I had been vested for this calling' (*SI*, p.57), continues Heaney, echoing the previous awakening to the awareness of his destiny of 'Then I knew why from the beginning / the loaning breathed on me'.

'The King of the Ditchbacks' ends with Heaney forsaking his birthright of the communally determined heritage that formerly established his identity as 'Dives, / hoarder of common ground'; divorced by the 'calling' to which Sweeney led him, he knows his quest for creative freedom is continuous with the 'first / ... departures' into poetry that made him

a rich young man

leaving everything he had
for a migrant solitude (*SI*, p.58).

As the first of the ghosts Heaney encounters in the 'Station Island' sequence, 'Sweeney, / ... an old Sabbath-breaker / who has been dead for years' (*SI*, p.61), stands wholly apart from the pilgrimage around which the poems are structured. Sweeney's status as tutelary of Heaney's poetry is confirmed by the Orphic connotations of 'lyre' in the account of his appearance:

... a man had appeared
at the side of the field
with a bow-saw, held
stiffly up like a lyre (*SI*, p.61).

Embodying the mysterious impulses that first led Heaney to write, Sweeney is alien to both the erudite and the native components of Heaney's character. The 'mystery man'

(*SI*, p.61) has no time for Heaney's 'pride / in all that I knew'; the acquired knowledge of the 'adept' and the communal lore of the 'dialect' are equally unpalatable to the unlettered and anti-social Sweeney. His "'Damm all that you know"' (*SI*, p.61) is the first of the verbal assaults on his assumptions Heaney faces in 'Station Island', which gets underway as the 'half-remembered faces' (*SI*, p.63) of the other pilgrims come into view. In his efforts to "'Go beyond what's reliable"', however, Heaney must detach himself from Sweeney, his old familiar from the darker side of the growth of a poet's mind. Sweeney's parting shot, "'Stay clear of all processions!'" (*SI*, p.63), voices an attractive independence, but, as in 'Making Strange', Heaney must re-immense himself in his origins to work through them towards the new perspective he desires. The pilgrimage, representing the Catholicism of his upbringing, ultimately consolidates and endorses Heaney's 'migrant solitude' by an act of *reculer pour mieux sauter*: Heaney cannot possess a freedom like Sweeney's simply by emulating his anti-social stance; he must earn it by making the investigative journey into and beyond 'what's reliable' that the sequence enacts:

I was a fasted pilgrim,
light-headed, leaving home
to face into my station (*SI*, p.63).

. *Verfremdung* gradually intensifies as the pilgrimage progresses after Heaney, 'light-headed' from fasting, sets off along 'a drugged path // I was set upon' (*SI*, p.63).

The adjective 'drugged' becomes operative in the hallucinatory strangeness and vividness with which incidents and objects from the landscape of memory are re-possessed by consciousness as the sequence develops. Memory itself is significantly 'made strange' through the increasingly distinct changes in mood and cognition brought about as the fasting is sustained within the chronology of 'Station Island'.

Through such concerted *Verfremdung* and the incisive questionings of the sequence, Heaney endeavours to exorcise its principal ghost, that of his 'unweaned' attachment to Mossbawn and the territorial imperative it embodies. His old sense of place and all it implies in terms of communal loyalties has been bid a gestural farewell in 'Last Look' and deliberately made defunct by the re-mapping of the landscape in 'Changes' and 'The Sand Pit'. The nostalgic simplicities of the 'reliable' responses to the landscape of memory are, however, still experienced like reflex reactions, as Heaney's defensive reply to Carleton's ghost in section II indicates. Carleton's advice to achieve liberation from bondage to origins even at the price of treachery is unacceptable to Heaney, who asserts the fundamental innocence of his native community. Carleton, whose own betrayal was to forsake the Catholicism of his tribe and become a Protestant,¹⁵ is upbraided by Heaney's implication that trouble in his native landscape is largely the business of Orangemen:

'I have no mettle for the angry role',
I said. 'I come from County Derry,
born in earshot of an Hiberian hall

where a band of Ribbonmen played hymns to Mary.
 By then the brotherhood was a frail procession
 staggering home drunk on Patrick's Day

in collarettes and sashes fringed with green.
 Obedient strains like theirs tuned me first
 and not that harp of unforgiving iron

the Fenians strung. A lot of what you wrote
 I heard and did: this Lough Derg station,
 flax-pullings, dances, summer crossroads chat

and the shaky local voice of education,
 All that. And always, Orange drums.

And neighbours on the roads at night with guns'

(*SI*, pp.65-66).

Conceding a point to Heaney, Carleton softens, but still recommends an undeceived self-possession in his "Remember everything and keep your head" (*SI*, p.66). Heaney's 'everything', however, remains bound up with essentially idyllic memories of his Mossbawn childhood. In enactment of his defensive speaking from the heart rather than from the head, Heaney's dialectic breaks down; his rejoinder to Carleton takes the form of an asyntactic showing forth of the recollective riches of the landscape to which he is loyal. Images of natural fecundity and recollections of the innocence of play in infancy provide an effusive apologia for his failure to break the spell of the 'old first place':

'The alders in the hedge', I said, 'mushrooms,
 dark-clumped grass where cows or horses dunged,
 the cluck when pith-lined chestnut shells split open
 in your hand, the melt of shells corrupting,
 old jampots in a drain clogged-up with mud —'

(*SI*, p.66).

The lyricism of the lines is reflexively parodic of the controlled and mythicised sentimentality of earlier renderings of his Mossbawn childhood. In yielding to Carleton's interruption that breaks off this imagistic rehearsal of his 'unweaned' sense of place, Heaney tacitly concedes the nostalgic weakness of the case he has tried to put. Carleton's acerbic realism concludes the debate: memories, however fond or lucid, are of secondary importance in the immediacy of living. Heaney's localized lyricism has its place, and even its purifying function, but such a 'trace' of past experience cannot re-state the terms of life, which, to be realistic, remains a dirty business:

'All this is like a trout kept in a spring
or maggots sown in wounds —
another life that cleans our element.

We are earthworms of the earth, and all that
has gone through us is what will be our trace'
(*SI*, p.66).

With the benign myth of Mossbawn put firmly in its unimportant place, section III subsequently effects a complementary radical re-evaluation of Heaney's sense of the bogland. The sacrosanct emptiness the former 'realm of bogeys' comes to signify is anticipated in the meditative pause with which the section opens. Heaney is stopping for a moment to assimilate his feeling of a break with the past that his sustained 'making strange' has achieved. The deliberate enshrinement of the landscape in memory of 'I composed habits for those acres' of 'Land' is recalled

in the opening's 'I knelt. Hiatus. Habit's afterlife ...' (*SI*, p.67). As in 'The Loaning', suspension dots indicate a temporary cessation of the forward movement of the dialectic of self-discovery of *Station Island*. The old sense of place is technically dead since 'Changes' and 'The Sandpit', and, despite its 'afterlife', the encounter with Carleton has gone some way towards laying its ghost. Heaney's 'Hiatus' is filled with an absence different from the equivocal lacunae in the readings of Mossbawn that were necessary to the depiction of a landscape of innocence in poems like 'Sunlight'. The new stillness he experiences as he kneels at prayer on the station is that of the discontinuation of his conditioned responses to the past. As if a shell no longer contained the sound of the sea, awareness of the death of his recollective habits comes as a mild shock whose aftermath is silence and peace. Consciousness itself is the 'ocean' of the extended metaphor, which is sustained as the sequence develops in images of movement through water as Heaney rides the mounting wave of memories:

There was an active, wind-stilled hush, as if
 in a shell the listened-for ocean stopped
 and a tide rested and sustained the roof (*SI*, p.67).

Childhood intimations of death float in on the stilled 'tide', the disembodied image of a 'wreath' (*SI*, p.67) indicating the hallucinatory intensity 'Station Island' is taking on as its *Verfremdung* of the past progresses. This memory fades, to renew the 'Hiatus' of the opening, the still unfamiliar peace of mind that lies beyond the conditioned

responses of 'what's reliable' in Heaney's sense of himself and his origins. A vivid experience of a fresh 'absence' ensues; unlike the significant omissions in the structuring of the benign myth of place, this is a total emptiness, an awareness of the pure potential of undifferentiated consciousness before it devolves into meaning's particularity. Heaney finds an image to express this transcendent intuition of the mind's pre-verbal indivisibility by returning to the blank topography of the bogland. His old 'forbidden ground' is effectively purged of its long-standing association with terror by providing the only correlative available for his experience of what amounts to a peace that passes understanding. The bleak realism of the supplementary imagery relating to the dead dog authenticates the revelation described, successfully warding off the tendency to sanctified abstractionism that besets much 'visionary' poetry:

A cold draught blew under the kneeling boards.
 I thought of walking round
 and round a space utterly empty,
 utterly a source, like the idea of sound;
 like an absence stationed in the swamp-fed air
 above a ring of walked-down grass and rushes
 where we once found the bad carcass and scraps of hair
 of our dog that had disappeared weeks before (SI, p.68).

The repeated 'utterly' emphasises that Heaney has awakened from the dreams of memory to an experience of the unconditional. As the introduction to this study has noted, the bogland takes on a parallel status to Auden's empty landscape in its manifestation of love's absoluteness in 'Amor Loci'.

Heaney's continued reaching towards fundamentals has made contact with 'a source' beyond the personal and communal relativity of all he has hitherto thought and felt; 'the idea of sound' postulates a condition anterior to verbalised consciousness and connotes apprehension of a state of cosmic latency prior to the utterance of the Logos. An absolute primality like that of Genesis 1: 1-2, when 'In the beginning ... the earth was without form and void', is suggested by the matrix of potentiated emptiness envisioned. The religious character of the experience described is confirmed by comparing it with the translation of St. John of the Cross in the penultimate section of 'Station Island'; the 'eternal fountain, hidden away' is 'all sources' source and origin' (*SI*, pp.89-90), in correspondence to the 'space ... / ... utterly a source' correlated with the bogland in section III.

Whereas 'the lush and definite fields' became eerie and unsettling in 'The Loaning', the hitherto disquieting peat-bogs now emerge as the locus of an inviolable peace. This is consistent with the bogland's 'strange assuaging effect on me' that Heaney describes in 'Feeling into Words' and evokes something of in parts of 'Kinship'. For his primary purposes, however, the bogs have previously been very much the terrain of the undead bog-bodies, the hints of necromancy and the communication of his sensings of Ulster's terror. The assuaging and peaceful character of the bogland is subsequently invoked in section IX of 'Station Island',

when Heaney addresses the ghost of a dead I.R.A. terrorist. References to the 'grenade' and bog-burial connote the violence and communal sacrifice previously dealt with through the medium of the peat-bogs, but the 'repose' of the landscape subsumes such considerations. The 'realm of bogeys' now points educatively to 'The calm' of 'complete desertion', like the desolate moors of Auden's 'The Prophets':

Unquiet soul , they should have buried you
 In the bog where you threw your first grenade,
 Where only helicopters and curlews
 Make their maimed music, and sphagnum moss
 Could teach you its medicinal repose (SI, p.84).

Through the *Verfremdung* of 'The Loaning', Carleton's devaluation of the idylls of Mossbawn and the revelatory instancing of the bogland, Heaney divests his landscape of its former categories of significance. The double-focus that produced the antithetical myths of place of the farmland and the bogs is exchanged for a more unified perspective on the 'original townland'. There follows a series of confrontations with some of the ghosts who inhabit the landscape of memory. The principal function of these dialogues with the dead is to permit Heaney to come to terms with the awareness that his previous myths of place necessitated strategies of evasion and equivocation. Knowing this only becomes possible with the achievement of a detachment from his landscape that he did not formerly possess. The accusations and questionings he endures from the ghosts and himself are aimed at retrospective clarification to

facilitate a fuller realization of the personal integration and creative freedom he has begun to enjoy.

Kavanagh chides Heaney in section V for failing to move beyond his example of poetic loyalty to the personal sense of place. The unavailability of workable new directions that showed in the loss of impetus in *Field Work* is singled out as a significant shortcoming by Kavanagh. Heaney is gently mocked for his poetic involvement with the pilgrimage, which represents no imaginative advance on Kavanagh's 'Lough Derg' sequence published in 1942. Kavanagh's '"Iceland, maybe?'" as a suggested new direction seems to indicate his knowledge of Auden's work, considered at the start of Chapter Five; this knowing reference to 'the fabulous / country' to which the morally directionless Auden sought to flee¹⁵ might hint that Heaney shares Kavanagh's admiring familiarity with Auden's work, as well as Auden's experience of destitution of options:

' ... Forty-two years on
and you've got no farther . But after that again,
where else would you go? Iceland, maybe? Maybe
the Dordogne?'
And then the parting shot. 'In my own day
the odd one came here on the hunt for women'
(*SI*, p.74).

Graver considerations follow, as sections VII and VIII find Heaney apologising to the ghosts of victims of the Troubles for his work's 'timid circumspect involvement' (*SI*, p.80) in Ulster's 'slaughter / for the common good'. McCartney, elegised in 'The Strand at Lough Beg', accuses

Heaney of indifference to his death and of exploiting murder for poetic effect. Heaney's pained and self-recriminatory awareness of the selectivity of his myth of Mossbawn as the landscape of sanctity is all too clear as he records how he 'pleaded with' his 'second cousin'. The image of the drawing of blinds contains a recognition that the 'good landscape' was stage-managed by strategies of exclusion:

'I kept seeing a grey stretch of Lough Beg
and the strand empty at daybreak.
I felt like the bottom of a dried-up lake'.

'You saw that, and you wrote that — not the fact.
You confused evasion and artistic tact.

The Protestant who shot me through the head
I accuse directly, but indirectly, you
who now atone perhaps upon this bed
for the way you whitewashed ugliness and drew
the lovely blinds of the *Purgatorio*
and saccharined my death with morning-dew (*SI*, p.83).

Heaney's involvement, however 'circumspect', is felt to have stirred the cauldron of the Troubles through the nationalist motivation inherent in his mythologisation of 'the first place'. As Blake Morrison writes of the indictment Heaney puts in the dead man's mouth, 'This is severe, too severe, as only a poet could be with himself'.¹⁶

Heaney's self-abnegation is not, however, done until he repents his whole 'unweaned life that kept me competent / To sleepwalk with connivance and mistrust' (*SI*, p.85) in section IX. In this passage, already referred to in the opening of this chapter, the hallucinatory quality of

'Station Island' becomes pronounced. Heaney's repugnance for the origins and identity from which his *Verfremdung* has given the beginnings of detachment becomes objectified in disturbing images of the polluted sea of his consciousness:

... down a swirl of mucky, glittering flood
 Strange polyp floated like a huge corrupt
 Magnolia bloom, surreal as a shed breast,
 My softly awash and blanching self-disgust (SI, p.85).

Bitterness and alienation from 'the first place' become vehemently articulate as Heaney's renunciation climaxes with

'I hate how quick I was to know my place.
 I hate where I was born, hate everything
 That made me biddable and unforthcoming' (SI, p.85).

From this nadir of absolute rejection a new sense of acceptance is permitted to grow. In the aftermath of self-disgust comes a factual recognition of the ineluctable nature of his identity's rooting in the community and landscape of his origins. The essentiality of his relation to his people and their place is conveyed in images recalling previous treatments of Mossbawn; the cairn of 'Land', the eddying Moyola of 'Mossbawn' and the cascade of the early poem 'The Waterfall' analogise the authenticity and inevitability of the locally determined aspect of his identity. Having formerly gone to lengths to celebrate and verify it, and latterly wished its dissolution, the possibility of unstrained acceptance is now established:

As if the cairnstone could defy the cairn.
 As if the eddy could reform the pool.
 As if a stone swirled under a cascade,
 Eroded and eroding in its bed,
 Could grind itself down to a different core (SI, p.86).

Heaney has received back the 'core' of his identity after the dissociating confrontations with the dead that plunged him into emptiness beyond the certainties of being either 'adept' or 'dialect'. Allegories of restoration and redemption accordingly follow, spiritually consolidating this new equability, in sections X and XI as the catharsis of 'Station Island' approaches its desired resolution.

'Like a convalescent' (SI, p.92) after the emotional and physical rigours of the pilgrimage, Heaney takes a helping hand as he reaches the mainland and steps from the boat. No less a shade than that of James Joyce is now at his side, offering assistance and pointing the direction he must take. Joyce exemplifies an art of inviolable independence that can draw upon its maker's origins without allowing them to circumscribe or suffocate his creative integrity. Poetry itself, advises Joyce, must be Heaney's object; his former communal loyalties and sense of his writing as a function of a national culture are, as he has by now realized, impediments to the real business of art:

... 'Your obligation
 is not discharged by any common rite.
 What you must do must be done on your own
 so get back in harness. The main thing is to write
 for the joy of it ...' (SI, pp.92-93).

Joyce waves aside Heaney's praise of Dedalus's linguistic pride in his Irishness in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; the earnest nationalism that germinated in *Death of a Naturalist*, bloomed darkly in *Wintering Out* and *North* and went to seed in *Field Work* is uprooted and thrown away in Joyce's "'That subject people stuff is a cod's game"' (SI, p.93). The wish to be 'Somewhere, well out, beyond' that Heaney conceived after he 'tasted freedom' with the fisherman of 'Casualty' is endorsed by Joyce, who encourages Heaney to move freely through the ocean of consciousness:

'... You lose more of yourself than you redeem
 doing the decent thing. Keep at a tangent.
 When they make the circle wide, it's time to swim
 out on your own and fill the element
 with signatures on your own frequency,
 echo soundings, searches, probes, allurements,
 elver-gleams in the dark of the whole sea' (SI, pp.93-94).

Like Dedalus, whose 'destiny was to be elusive of social or religious orders',¹⁷ Heaney accepts that the 'migrant solitude' he spoke of at the end of 'The King of the Ditchbacks' is indeed his lot. Joyce has advised him to "'Take off from here"' (SI, p.93), anticipating the metaphor of flight central to the following section of *Station Island*; while Sweeney, the exiled bird-man who is the victim-hero of the Gaelic saga Heaney translated in *Sweeney Astray*, provides the persona, Joyce supplies the example in the figure of Stephen Dedalus. Heaney's initial recognition of his 'migrant solitude' parallels Stephen's discovery of his vocation as

the singular 'wanderer'¹⁸ in pursuit of his vision of art. At this point, Dedalus begins to identify with his wing-making mythological namesake in conceiving of his calling in terms of liberating flight, and desires to forge 'a new soaring impalpable imperishable being'.¹⁹ In emulation of 'the hawklike man whose name he bore soaring out of his captivity',²⁰ Stephen aspires to escape another labyrinth, that of Heaney's 'shared calling of blood', in which both have felt themselves entrapped: 'When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets'.²¹

Although the Joycean precedent is indispensable in Heaney's bid to '"Let go, let fly, forget"' (SI, p.93), Sweeney supplies a more locally apt mask. Sweeney's landscapes are Heaney's own, Ulster regions around his 'original townland' and the more southerly realm which he sought to regard as an *ersatz* 'first place' in *Field Work*. These local correspondences are sealed by the presence in Heaney's landscape of memory of the 'mystery man' of 'The King of the Ditchbacks'; the adoption of the bird-man persona for 'Sweeney Redivivus' has a satisfying inevitability:

My fundamental relation with Sweeney ... is topographical. His kingdom lay in what is now south County Antrim and north County Down, and for over thirty years I lived on the verges of that territory, in sight of some of Sweeney's places and in earshot of others — Slemish,

Rasharkin, Benevagh, Dunseverick, the Bann, the Roe, the Mourne. When I began work on this version, I had just moved to Wicklow, not all that far from Sweeney's final resting ground at St. Mullins. I was in a country of woods and hills and remembered that the green spirit of the hedges embodied in Sweeney had first been embodied for me in the persons of a family of tinkers, also called Sweeney, who used to camp in the ditchbacks along the road to the first school I attended. One way or another, he seemed to have been with me from the start (SA, pp. vii-viii).

One of the primary functions of 'Sweeney Redivivus' is to demonstrate that Heaney has heeded Joyce and achieved the long-desired freedom from his landscape of origins and its entrammelling nets of communal obligation. He has broken off his sentimental attachment to the 'trout kept in a spring', to recall Carleton's dismissive designation of his cherished memories of Mossbawn. After the emptying revelations and accusations of 'Station Island', he can begin to re-construct his attitude to his origins in terms of a critical detachment from them. The central metaphor of pen-as-spade inaugurated in 'Digging' is acknowledged as 'Sweeney Redivivus' opens with 'The First Gloss', but Heaney now grips 'the shaft' for different reasons; his poetic spade-work no longer aspires to locate and re-possess the severed roots of his identity, but seeks to establish new foundations clear of the 'justified line' of his former fealty to the tribe and their nationalist ideology:

Take hold of the shaft of the pen.
 Subscribe to the first step taken
 from a justified line
 into the margin (*SI*, p.97).

He has pored long over the local and communal texts of his native landscape; now he steps 'into the margin' to take up the position of detachment from which he makes the critical glosses of 'Sweeney Redivivus'. The topography of farmland and peat-bogs that made up the fabric of so much of his 'unweaned' poetry now has a diminished importance. 'Sweeney Redivivus', already quoted from above, and 'In the Beech' complete the *Verfremdung* of his old sense of place by dwelling on modern building developments in Heaney's 'original townland'. In the latter's recollection of childhood in time of war, Childe Heaney is 'a lookout posted and forgotten' (*SI*, p.100), watching Mossbawn changed before his eyes by the encroachments of modernity:

I watched the red-brick chimney rear
 its stamen course by course,
 and the steeplejacks up there at their antics
 like flies against the mountain.

I felt the tanks' advance beginning
 at the cynosure of the growth rings,
 then winced at their imperium refreshed
 in each powdered bolt mark on the concrete (*SI*, p.100).

This recognition of Mossbawn's subjugation by military 'imperium' annuls the former assertion that 'historical action does not disturb the rhythms of the yard' (*P*, p.17) in 'Mossbawn'; in deconstructing that platitude of rural

authenticity, Heaney shows the distance he has travelled from the localized sentimental loyalties that informed such a statement only five years prior to the publication of *Station Island*.

It is in 'The First Kingdom' that Heaney unambiguously states the obsolescence of his partisan assumptions of the peasant rectitude of his community. The sharpness of its critique of his 'two-faced' (SI, p.101) tribe seems to act upon Carleton's advice to disloyalty as a strategy for self-preservation:

'... If times were hard, I could be hard too.

I made the traitor in me sink the knife.

And maybe there's a lesson there for you...' (SI p.65).

The extra-historical mode of, for example, 'The Seed Cutters' is ironically twisted to distance Heaney into detachment, as 'the mound-dwellers' of 'Anahorish' become 'the nobles' of a clod-hopping court:

The royal roads were cow paths.

The queen mother hunkered on a stool
and played the harpstrings of milk
into a wooden pail.

With seasoned sticks the nobles

lorded it over the hindquarters of cattle (SI, p.101).

The suggestion of auto-parody in Heaney's defensive speech to Carleton considered above here becomes Mossbawn-burlesque as Heaney's imaginative lyricism turns back on the tribe to mock their presumption.

The imaginative and emotional investment in the communal past formerly derived its validity from Heaney's loyalties

to his forefathers out of which his nationalist historiography grew. Like other articles of communal faith hitherto firmly rooted in the soil of his origins, his historical endorsement of the tribe is cancelled by the colder eye he now casts on the past; the landscape of 'The First Kingdom' is no longer 'glazed over' with a wash of bucolic innocence, but embodies a bad past from which, we may infer, a violent present stems:

There was a backward rote of names and mishaps,
bad harvests, fires, unfair settlements,
deaths in floods, murders and miscarriages (SI, p.101).

Heaney's communal 'we', virtually redundant since the unsettling conclusion of *North*, becomes entirely defunct as the poem states his divorce from the community through the unsympathetic 'they' of its last lines. The genetic transmission of 'the old trouble of Ireland, the hunger for land' is spoken of with an objectivity that indicates Heaney's new indifference to 'the shared calling of blood'. Understanding is retained in the use of 'demeaned'; the 'backward rote' of historical resentments that supports the nationalists' 'justified line' and makes acute their ground-hoarding tenacity is no less real for Heaney's recently acquired detachment. Understanding, however, has become almost incidental in comparison to the ethical contortions formerly produced by his attempts to comprehend the character of his tribe:

They were two-faced and accommodating.
 And seed, breed and generation still
 they are holding on, every bit
 as pious and exacting and demeaned (SI, p.101).

'The First Kingdom' forms an appraisal of Heaney's birthright, the 'everything' he left for the poet's 'migrant solitude', that stabs his 'unweaned life' to the heart. He has spun his myths of place, fictions of beauty and fear set firmly in the local actuality of his origins; for all his international reputation, his primary audience has been the culturally dispossessed of his landscape, the 'people far too eager to believe me / and my story' (SI, p.98) returned to in 'Sweeney Redivivus'. That they have been difficult to please was evident from the hurt confusion of 'Exposure' at the end of *North*. That the reception 'they' gave his conscientious engagements of the Troubles was little short of insulting is indicated in 'The First Flight', which retrospectively recognizes the imaginative circumscription to which communal loyalties led:

I was mired in attachment
 until they began to pronounce me
 a feeder off battlefields (SI, p.102).

This is too much; Heaney-Sweeney, having long perched on his vulnerable 'point of repose' (SI, p.102) in the tree of his poem-making, is angered at last into flight. 'New rungs of the air' (SI, p.103) are ascended as the bird-man breaks free of the 'suck of puddled, wintry ground'.

Judging by 'The First Kingdom', the tribe's approval and the

multifarious significances of the birthright embodied in their landscape are no longer of any consequence: 'if my rights to it all came only / by their acclamation, what was it worth?' (*SI*, p.101).

'Sweeney Redivivus' continues its enactment of escape from the labyrinth of communal obligation with a succession of poems that sustain *Station Island's* 'making strange' in their unfamiliarity. One reason for their disconcerting newness is the relegation to minor importance of the hitherto 'reliable' landscape that has been fundamental to earlier work. Local experience continues to inform 'Sweeney Redivivus', as in, for example, 'The Cleric', which allegorizes Christianity's annulment of the territorial imperative, and strikes the present writer as the strongest poem of the sequence; the 'old first place', and the fusions of personal and communal experience that formed Heaney's responses to it, are, however, of little immediate import after 'The First Kingdom'. To achieve a proper perspective on Heaney's fictive and sometimes rather abstract departures in 'Sweeney Redivivus' it will be necessary to see what he does next. Perhaps, like Auden, who wrote of Alston Moor seldom after the quiet climax of his long engagement with the landscape in 'Amor Loci', Heaney will effectively curtail his poetry of Mossbawn after the radical re-evaluations of *Station Island*.

On the evidence of 'Sweeney Redivivus', he has already begun to do so. The productiveness of his relation to the landscape in terms of the variousness, imaginative depth

and the breadth of reference of the poems that make up his myths of place is unique in British poetry since the early 1960s. The only modern parallel to Heaney's attainments in twenty years' poetry of Mossbawn exists in the range and philosophical significance of Auden's writing of Alston Moor and his concomitant figurative uses of landscape throughout forty years of his career. In considering the works of both, the rôle of landscape and the comprehensiveness of their myths of place have an importance that should not be underestimated. The conclusion to this study which follows will summarise their achievements in the use of landscape and consider the implications for localized poetry of the present day.

Notes to Chapter Eight

- 1 Curtis, p.104.
- 2 Seamus Heaney, 'Meeting Seamus Heaney', p.21.
- 3 A comparison of Ordnance Survey maps for 1960 and 1981 of Heaney's native locality reveals a significant amount of building development in the area. The map produced in 1902 permits a comparison that of course reveals an even greater degree of change. The present writer was unable to obtain maps for the early and later 1940s to gain a more specific idea of the changes recorded in 'The Sandpit'. Heaney's landscape is no more than typical of the developments in housing and industry that have taken place in many rural areas since the last war. In this respect Mossbawn becomes of additional interest as an example of social and topographical alteration in the last forty years. Heaney seems to indicate Mossbawn's typicality in the spread of post-war uniformity in 'The Birthplace', where he writes

Everywhere being nowhere,
 who can prove
 one place more than another? (SI, p.35).
- 4 The pump is the most recurrent image of Heaney's landscape of childhood, invested with the significances referred to here and in Chapter Six, pp. 360-61. It

first appears in 'The Early Purges' (*DN*, p.23); 'Rite of Spring' and 'Mother' (*DD*, pp.28, 29) establish its mythological potential. It is central to the evocation of the landscape of innocence in 'Sunlight' (*N*, pp. 8-9), and next appears in 'A Drink of Water' (*FW*, p.16). In addition, it is incorporated in the essay 'Mossbawn', returned to in 'Changes' and forms the subject of 'Sinking the shaft' (*S*, p.8), as stated in this chapter.

- 5 Ezra Pound, interviewed by Donald Hall in *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, Second Series* (London, 1963), p.53.
- 6 R. Gray, *Brecht: the Dramatist* (London, 1976), p.76, uses 'defamiliarize' to translate Hegel's '*Entfremdung*', the term Brecht adapted for his '*Verfremdung*', to which the present writer proceeds to relate Heaney's strategies in *Station Island*.
- 7 *vide ibid.*, and *ibid.*, Chapter Four, 'Theories and Practice', pp.67-89. J. Needle and P. Thomson, *Brecht* (Oxford, 1981), p.133, note that Brecht was influenced in his theory of *Verfremdung* by Victor Schlovsky's '*priyom ostranyeniya*', literally translated from the Russian as 'a way of making strange'.
- 8 Gray, p.75.

- 9 Blake Morrison, 'Encounters with familiar ghosts',
The Times Literary Supplement, 19 October 1984, p.1191.
- 10 Needle and Thomson, p.133.
- 11 Paulin, p.186.
- 12 *vide* preliminary key to abbreviations.
- 13 Kavanagh, p.135.
- 14 Morrison, 'Encounters with familiar ghosts', p.1192,
supplies this, and other, information about Carleton.
- 15 *vide* Chapter Three, pp. 171-72, 196-202.
- 16 Morrison, 'Encounters with familiar ghosts', p.1192.
- 17 Joyce, p.178.
- 18 *ibid.*, p.185.
- 19 *ibid.*, p.184.
- 20 *ibid.*, p.229.
- 21 *ibid.*, p.211.

CONCLUSION

'"But Landscape", cries the Literary Supplement,
 "You must have Landscape"...//
 ..But Landscape's so dull
 if you haven't Lawrence's wonderful wooziness'.¹

Many significant similarities exist in the responses to landscape and the modes of employing it in the works of Auden and Heaney; some were considered in the introduction to this study and some at the start of Chapter Five, while others have been noted during examinations of particular poems in which they occur. At base, both poets exhibit a comparable range and depth in sustaining and developing their treatments of landscape. Specific topographies, and locally articulated concepts extending from them, are essential to many of the poems upon which the formidable reputations of Auden and Heaney rest. Landscape forms a dynamic structural principle for the expression and development of the central themes in their writings. The continuity, imaginative depth and breadth of human relevance of the poetries of Alston Moor and Mossbawn considered above are unrivalled in modern poetry. The foregoing, it is hoped, supports the claim made in the introduction that Auden and Heaney make the most, indeed the only, valuable advances in the poetry of landscape since Wordsworth. Place was important to a number of nineteenth century poets, Tennyson and Clough coming readily to mind; its function, however, was generally to supply the themes for occasional poems or the settings for narratives and subjective dramatizations, as exemplified by

Hardy's use of 'the Wessex staging' considered in the introduction above.

As it did for Wordsworth, the 'one landscape' (CP, p.414) forms for both Auden and Heaney a thematic constant throughout decades of writing, accommodating, and often inspiring, the fundamental philosophic and imaginative energies of their works. Auden and Heaney surpass Wordsworth's example in extending their responses to place beyond the essentially pantheistic and subjective afflatus that sustained his treatments of his Lake District surroundings; as we have seen, the political, historical and psychological themes integral to their poeries are most often significantly articulated in poems structured around images and ideas of landscape. The ethical and aesthetic aspects of their localized writings are abreast of the central philosophic developments of the century and acknowledge both traditional and modernistically innovative poetic models. The fixed quasi-religious significance of landscape in Wordsworth's poetry, accordant with the stable orthodoxy of his day, may continue to inform the works of Auden and Heaney, but it does not dictate the terms of their topographical writings. For both, the sense of place is intellectually and imaginatively polysemous, as the variant readings of single landscapes in each's work indicate.

The 'antimythological myths' of place produced by their long engagements with the landscapes of their childhoods resolve the difficulties surrounding the use of myth and symbol in modern writing. Contemporary critical theory's high evaluation of the perceptually and experientially particular is recognized

in the rooting of their myths of place in the actualities of loved and known landscapes; at the same time, the symbolic valency of the imagery and mythological comprehensiveness of the themes of their localized writings satisfies more traditional expectations of universality. The particular and the general, the personal and the universal, are harmoniously integrated into the 'Autonomous completed states' (CP, p.62) of their major poems of landscape. Ideal values are affirmed through the medium of topographical actuality and philosophical and psychological abstractions communicated in evocative patterns of imagery derived directly from landscape. Auden's figurative topographies of the 1930s and 1940s are fully adequate to the expression of his ethical, epistemological and religious preoccupations of the period. Poems like 'The Prophets' and 'In Praise of Limestone' evolve and state essential precepts of his work through the inferences drawn from landscape. The abstractions of local and genetic determination of the individual and communal identities and the atavism informing the Troubles in Ulster are made intelligible by Heaney's adaptations of his native responses to Mossbawn.

To consider either Auden or Heaney as simply 'a poet of landscape' is to reveal a sentimental regard for their localized writings that is not compatible with the scrupulousness of their own attitudes to their chosen topographies. The nostalgia and local or national sentiment that are the commonplaces of topographical poetry may be present, in an imaginatively modified or intellectually objectified form, in the spectrum of Auden's

and Heaney's local responses. For neither, however, does the engagement with landscape begin or end in unexamined affective assumptions. From the outset, in Auden's 'Allendale' or Heaney's 'Digging', for example, landscape's metaphorical potential and its anticipatory accommodation of major themes in their writings is evident; their early poems of place are exploratory intellectualizations impelled by childhood's legacy of local attachment, which is exhausted only when the implications of their landscapes are ultimately resolved. The thematic elements latent in such initial treatments of Alston Moor and Mossbawn are all examined in detail in the long continuum of each's writing of his chosen topography. Their re-creations of the landscapes of memory remain governed by the intellect rather than the affections as successive poems extend the importance of local imagery in the expression and clarification of their mature concerns.

In repeatedly revising the significances of their landscapes, Auden and Heaney most clearly demonstrate the dynamically active natures of their poetics of place. As we have seen, both become aware of the operation of traditional pastoral strategies of exclusion and selection in their localized poetics. Auden's early ability to adjust his sense of place is evident in, for example, the disappearance of his landscape's industrial relics for the evocation of a zone of unconditional natural autonomy in 'Missing'. The landscape of austere separatism in the early work is transmuted by subtle changes of emphasis into the accommodating and benevolent surrogate Good Place of

later poems. The conspicuous absences in Heaney's creation of his 'good landscape' are occasioned by his conscious exclusion of the atmosphere and imagery of the Troubles. As we later discover, modernity itself is screened-off for the purposes of his myths of place. Similarly, the 'assuaging' aspect of the bogland is minimized as a result of the emphasis on foreboding required by most of his poetry of the peat-bogs. In *The Age of Anxiety*, Auden's consciousness of the selectivity he has himself formerly employed results in the ironically subverted idyll of Rosetta's major speech beginning 'From Seager's Folly / We beheld what was ours ...'. By 1954, he is asking 'what / ... can our good landscapes be but lies...?' in recognition of the inevitable fallaciousness of human responses to place. The deconstructions of illusion conducted largely through manipulation of local imagery in *The Age of Anxiety* and *The Sea and The Mirror* are eventually applied to his former readings of Alston Moor in its reduction to 'the real focus / of desolation' in 'Amor Loci'. Heaney likewise achieves an awareness of the evasiveness and selectivity of his localizing strategies in desiring to "'break through ... what I glazed over / With perfect mist and peaceful absences"'. The subsequent *Verfremdung* of his landscape cancels the assumptions structuring his myths of place to produce a local apprehension of the unconditional paralleling the resolution of Auden's engagement of the limestone uplands in 'Amor Loci'. Heaney too subverts his idyllic renderings of landscape in the course of *Station Island* as part of his strategic detachment from his 'original townland'.

After 'Amor Loci' of 1965, Auden curtailed his recurrent use of Alston Moor as a structural principle in his work; Heaney, as has been suggested above, seems to be following suit after the radical re-evaluation of his native locality in his last collection. To take the disappearance of the chosen landscape after the neutralizing of its significances as the essential lesson in the works of Auden and Heaney for contemporary poets of place is perhaps too sweeping a conclusion. If others emulated them in breaking off poetic relations with the landscapes of their work after analysing the nature of their local attachments, an important and popular mode in contemporary British poetry would be discontinued. To pursue this unlikely hypothesis, however, the deconstructions of conventional local responses upon which most of the present day's poetry of landscape is based might be of greater interest than much that is produced in the topographical mode.

For many of our minor poets, and for some whose reputations are substantial, treatments of landscape are premised upon a sentimental affirmation of identification with place that might be reduced to the formula 'I live / was born / enjoy being (delete where inapplicable) here, therefore I am'. As noted in the introduction to this study, authors' relations with landscape are often substantiated in terms of visual fidelity to the perceived particulars of a topography. To this may be more or less arbitrarily added the 'historical retrospection, or incidental meditation' that Johnson included in his already-quoted definition of 'local poetry'. For Auden and Heaney,

the sense of history and the 'meditative' content are integral to their responses to landscape, rather than constituting 'incidental' embellishments to ocular renderings of place.

In the critical cult of the visual particular, however, 'scrupulously exact renderings of the places and the weathers'² perceived are acclaimed for their avoidance of failings associated with more ambitious poetry. This poetic of negative virtues results in work of a narrow integrity and limited interest, as Donald Davie seems uncomfortably aware elsewhere in the article from which the above quotation is taken. Davie's praise of Jeremy Hooker's 'scrupulously exact' *Solent Shore*, a collection typifying the visual fidelity and personal attachment to landscape that characterizes so much contemporary poetry of place, necessitates the following apologia: 'Because with us the eye has achieved a mysterious domination over the other organs of sense, there will perhaps be fairly ready acknowledgement that this [Hooker's title poem] paints an admirably precise "picture in the mind's eye" — though many readers even so will feel ungratefully "Is that all?" because they miss the yeasty yearnings and indefinite sublimities that they know from other kinds of poetry'.³

Finely honed visual re-creations of landscape in poetry are not without qualities to admire; Charles Tomlinson exemplifies the potential of the ocular mode in the precise and subtle intricacies of the imagery with which he frames his localized poetry. Tomlinson is also a painter of repute, however, which may account for the heavy visual bias of his writing. This

characteristic of his work leaves him open to the following criticism by Julian Symons, which might be justly levelled at much contemporary localized poetry in the *ut pictura poesis* tradition:

Respect ... rather than enjoyment was my reaction to Charles Tomlinson's *The Flood*, in which his fine painterly sense is concentrated typically on views of snow, turning hay, a pig's head and the flood of the title poem. Mr Tomlinson is good at making us see things, but the trouble is that the things seen aren't very interesting. Carefully constructed, well observed, these poems are also distinctly dull.⁴

'Fine painterly sense' or 'well observed' are the sort of phrases that frequently set the tone of the praise, not always so faint, accorded to collections dominated by the sense of place. Tomlinson seems to bear the brunt of a reviewer's dissatisfaction with the visual inertness of the present day's tide of work of this kind. Poetry is not painting, as Lessing long ago conclusively, if somewhat laboriously, established:

But I will try to consider the matter upon first principles. I reason in this way. If it be true that Painting, in its imitations, makes use of entirely different means and signs from those which Poetry employs; the former employing figures and colours in space, the latter articulate sounds in time, — if, incontestably, signs must have a proper relation to the thing signified, then co-existent, signs can only express objects which are co-existent, or the parts of which co-exist, but signs which are successive can only express objects which are in succession, or the parts of which succeed one another in time. Objects which co-exist, or the parts of which co-exist, are termed bodies. It follows that bodies, with their visible properties, are the proper objects of Painting.

Objects which succeed, or the parts of which succeed to each other, are called actions. It follows that actions are the proper object of Poetry.⁵

Imaginative activation of local imagery, the organic sense of natural and geological process and dialectical dynamics are, as we have seen, intrinsic to treatments of landscape in the poetries of Auden and Heaney. Their topographical images can be visually striking when such effects are required to accentuate readings of landscape. Their poetries are entirely free, however, of Davie's 'mysterious domination' of the eye that has recently produced the riddle-me-ree school of the Martian's attempts to be simultaneously interesting and visual. Neither Auden nor Heaney indulges in description as an end in itself; aesthetic perceptions fuse with extrinsic intuitions to produce memorably concentrated images characteristic of their works' visual aspects: Auden's 'slow fastidious line / That disciplines the fell' and Heaney's 'gemstones dropped/ in the peat flow/ like the bearings of history', for example, visually encapsulate conceptions implying philosophies central to their writings. Increased awareness of such potential exhibited in their localized poetries would redeem much of the poetry of landscape of its 'distinctly dull' character.

While often aspiring to painterly excellences and frequently informed by no thought or emotion stronger than nostalgia, topographical poetry still enjoys the popularity it acquired in the eighteenth century. The conditions which then made poetic evocations of the countryside especially palatable to an essentially town-dwelling audience have in their

subsequent development led to the modern mythologisation of the rural.⁶ In our present circumstances, urban modernity and technological materialism have made Auden's 'fully alienated land' (CP, p.183) normative surroundings for most of us. The above quotation from *New Year Letter* had immediate application in 1940 to the U.S.A., but, since Auden wrote thus, the word 'Americanization' has become a necessary evil in the vocabulary of the social historian. Auden's awareness that 'the machine has now destroyed / The local customs we enjoyed' (CP, p.190) is more than ever axiomatic of a world in which American-based multi-national corporations effectively call the tune. Hooker's already-quoted observation on 'identifications of place or region with nation ... at times of national crisis' has applicability to the present significance of landscape as a poetic mode in Britain; nostalgia for an era prior to the diminution of supposedly indigenous national qualities fostered the popularity of both the late Sir John Betjeman's topographical poetry and Mrs Thatcher's appeal to Victorian values. Similarly, the growth in regional consciousness since the 1960s,⁷ often manifest in localized poetry, seems also a product of the desire to retrieve a sense of locally autonomous identity.

As a product of the need for escape from the nightmare of global history, a poetry of topographical description and locally circumscribed historiography reaches towards 'the warm glow of a smaller past'. The words, Robert Harbison's from his remarks on nostalgia already quoted in Chapter Two, seem

relevant to the importance Davie and Hooker attach to 'the idea of home',⁸ embodied in visually verifiable local poetry. In going beyond their myths of place, both Auden and Heaney come to realize that the 'good landscape' rooted in childhood memories of the 'smaller past' must be objectively recognized as 'a wish-dream that cannot become real'. For others, however, with weaker powers of moral and imaginative discrimination, the landscapes of nostalgia and all they connote seem liable to be mistaken for practicable alternatives to a discomfiting status quo.

Authenticity⁹ of being and a sense of the vitality of tradition have taken on the status of marketable myths in a culture that pays much lip-service to the need to 'discover the lacking' (CP, p.60). The following extracts from Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* describe the conditions in which the poetry of landscape is at present often looked to to supply such values:

The belief that the organic is the chief criterion of what is authentic in art and life continues ... to have great force with us, the more as we become alarmed by the deterioration of the organic environment ... In an increasingly urban and technological society, the natural processes of human existence have acquired a moral status in the degree that they are thwarted ... In many quarters, whatever can be thought susceptible of analogy to the machine ... is felt to be inimical to the authenticity of experience and being.¹⁰

Trilling goes on to note that 'the idea of authenticity readily attaches itself to instinct'.¹¹

The partisanship of instinct, most evident in Lawrence's writing, is crossed with Wordsworth's affirmation of the quasi-religious subjective relation to nature and landscape in the poetry of Ted Hughes. For Hughes and his followers, the 'tribe of Ted' among whom Heaney was initially numbered, instinct, nature and landscape have taken on a degree of synonymy. The primality of extremes of weather, feral ruthlessness and geological and human endurance in adverse local conditions are essences of the dramas Hughes's poetry has enacted in its various landscapes since the 1950s. The comparative absence of the incessant intellectual and imaginative development that marks the continuous treatments of landscape in the works of Auden and Heaney has been no impediment to Hughes's popularity; his poetry supplies the requisite authenticity and traditionality that are most often manifest in his depictions of the human and natural characters of landscape. Charles Causley is also noted for his localized retrievals of social and existential qualities that modernity is considered to have annulled; his mastery of ballad and other popular traditional forms provides apt vehicles for his employment of landscape for bringing Harbison's 'smaller past' into our uneasy present.

Of the other poets who might be cited in addition to those already mentioned for their works' conspicuous involvement with landscape, only R. S. Thomas forms an exception to the rule of limited development. Like Auden and Heaney, Thomas has thoroughly examined the assumptions that informed his early reliance on the local mode. As M. Wynn Thomas notes,¹² for

R. S. Thomas the locality of Manafon provided the context and metaphors for his sustained engagement with the theme of Welshness. Thomas's eventual alienation from the concept of a collective culture saw the marked diminution of landscape's importance to his work, which latterly concentrates on abstracted philosophical and spiritual experience.

The above consideration of the treatments and significances of landscape in the poetry of the present day has, it is hoped, served a purpose: the achievements of Auden and Heaney in forging, developing and ultimately abandoning their myths of place take on greater import when compared with the visually and sentimentally limited character of much contemporary poetry of place. Their avoidance of the painterly idiom characteristic of localized poetry is paralleled by the literary rather than customarily sentimental traditionalism of their localized writings. While both are innovative poets, their treatments of landscape implicitly acknowledge Wordsworthian precedents and incorporate elements deriving from Dante. Auden's adaptations of Anglo-Saxon themes give some of his early renderings of Alston Moor links with remote indigenous traditions, as do Heaney's invocations of Gaelic poetry and etymology.

As a staple of the poetry-reading public's taste for some two centuries, topographical poetry is a significant category of literature in English. In terms of breadth of reference, technical variety and philosophical and imaginative depth, the poems considered in the foregoing chapters contain a great many

precepts and examples for present-day and succeeding treatments of landscape.

Local imagery in the works of Auden and Heaney, whether geographically specific or figuratively adapted, is intrinsic to their achievements. The poems that have formed the basis for this study do not represent numerically a large proportion of the writings of either; their significance, however, is qualitative rather than quantitative, for major treatments of landscape are central components of each's poetry, structuring and unifying essential themes. Auden and Heaney might be accorded eminence on the strength of their writings of landscape alone, had neither written anything besides. As it is, the importance of landscape to the works of two such outstandingly skilled and dedicated poets is its importance to writing in English today.

Notes to Conclusion

- 1 W. H. Auden in W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland*, pp.216-217.
- 2 Donald Davie, 'Hard Squares', *PN Review* 9, vol. 6, no. 1 (Manchester, 1979), p.57.
- 3 *ibid.*, p.56; Hooker also adopts the strategy of preempting the reader's tendency to say 'So what?' to a poetry of topographical visualization in his review of Philip Pacey's *Charged Landscapes*: after quoting Pacey's 'King's Cross to Grantham', 'one of his most dynamic charged landscapes', Hooker writes 'if it be objected that this is only a lively rendering of stubble-burning seen from a fast train in Lincolnshire, England, then I would ask, as I think the poem does, what is the reality of those names, and the potentiality of life's dangerous and exciting energies in those places?' - Jeremy Hooker, 'Landscapes of Fire' *PN Review* 11 vol. 6, no. 3 (Manchester, 1979), p.17. Hooker's appeal smacks rather of the 'yeasty' and 'indefinite' Davie pointedly disclaims, and, with his 'England', seems to invoke the nationalist element in local poetry referred to below.
- 4 Julian Symons, *The Sunday Times*, 18 April 1982, p.40.

- 5 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, from *Laocoön*, translated by Sir Robert Phillimore, in *The Great Critics*, edited by James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks (New York, 1951), p.472.
- 6 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London, 1975) and *Culture and Society* (London, 1958) contain much that is of relevance to the cultural developments and conditions that produce the 'mythologisation of the rural' and the popularity of the poetry of landscape.
- 7 'Place became the heart of our emotional and intellectual concerns' in the 1960s, according to Jeremy Hooker's lecture 'The Poetry of Place' given on the morning of 20 October 1985 in the course of the conference entitled *Poetry, Place and Politics: the Welsh Sixties*; held in the Seddon Room at University College of Wales, Aberystwyth.
- 8 The quotation is from Hooker's lecture cited above; Davie praises Hooker's *Solent Shore* in 'Hard Squares', p.57, for its evocation of 'the emotion that we have when we recognize some particular terrain as "home"'. The emphatically local character of Hooker's poetry and criticism and the significant involvement with place in Davie's poetry seem aimed at establishing the sense of belonging upon which both place a high evaluation.

- 9 Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London, 1972), p.93, notes of 'authenticity' that 'the word has become part of our moral slang'; subsequent quotations from Trilling clarify its significance.
- 10 *ibid.*, pp.127-28.
- 11 *ibid.*, p.143.
- 12 M. Wynn Thomas's lecture 'Earlier R. S. Thomas', given on the morning of 19 October 1985 during the *Place, Poetry Politics: the Welsh Sixties* conference, most interestingly spoke of Thomas's abandonment of the significances with which his landscape was originally imbued.

APPENDIX : UNCOLLECTED EARLY POEMS BY W. H. AUDEN

Allendale

The smelting-mill stack is crumbling, no smoke is alive there,
Down in the valley the furnace no lead ore of worth burns;
Now tombs of decaying industries, not to strive there
Many more earth-turns.

The chimney still stands at the top of the hill like a finger
Skywardly pointing as if it were asking: 'What lies there?'
And thither we stray to dream of those things as we linger,
Nature denies here.

Dark looming around the fell-folds stretch desolate, crag-scarred,
Seeming to murmur: 'Why beat you the bars of your prison?'
What matter? To us the world-face is glowing and flag-starred,
Lit by a vision.

So under it stand we, all swept by the wind and the rain there,
Muttering: 'What look you for, creatures that die in a season?'
We care not, but turn to our dreams and the comfort we find there,
Asking no reason.

— printed in Christopher Isherwood, 'Some Notes on Auden's
Early Poetry', *New Verse*, double issue nos. 26-27
(London, 1937), p.5.

Lead's the Best

The fells sweep upward to drag down the sun
Those great rocks shadowing a weary land
And quiet stone hamlets huddled at their feet;
No footstep loiters in the darkening road,
But light streams out from inn doors left ajar,
And with it voices quavering and slow.
'I worked at Threlheld granite quarry once,
Then coal at Wigan for a year, then back
to lead, for lead's the best' —

— 'No, sir, not now,
They only keep a heading open still
At Cashwell' —

— 'Yes, the ladder broke and took him
Just like a pudding he was when they found him' —
'Rich? Why, at Greenearth Side the west vein showed
Ten feet of ore from cheek to cheek, so clean
There weren't no dressing it' —

steps closed the door
And stopped their mouths, the last of generations
Who 'did their business in the veins of th' earth',
To place a roof on noble Gothic minsters
For the glory of God, bring wealth to buy
Some damask scarf or silken stomacher
To make a woman's body beautiful,
Some slender lady like a silver birch,
A frozen dream of a white waterfall,
Slim-waisted, and hawk-featured, for whose love
Knights sought adventure in far desert lands
And died where there was none to bury them;
Nor thought of those who built their barren farms
Up wind-swept northern dales, where oftentimes
The Scot swooped suddenly on winter nights
And drove their cattle back across the snow
By torchlight and the glare of blazing homes,
Where torn men lay, that clutched their wounds,
And bonnie forms face downward in the grass
As in old ballads very pitiful.

Here speak the last of them, soon heard no more
Than sound of clarinets in country churches;
Turf covers up the huge stone heaps, green ferns
The dark holes opening into hollow hills
Where water drips like voices from the dead.
A pile of stone beside the stream is all
Left of the 'Shop' where miners slept at nights;

(Within, tired crowded sleepers, far from home;
 Without, the torrent, darkness, and the rain);
 Nor will they start again in early dawns
 With bags like pillows slung across their shoulders
 And watched by children enviously, who wish
 Themselves grown-up to climb like that, for whom
 Soon after it was all the other way;
 Each wished himself a child again to have
 More hours to sleep in.

All their memory fades
 Like the two-headed giant slain by Jack
 Who lay for years in the combe-bottom, where
 Men flocked at first, then fewer came, then ceased,
 And only children visited the spot to play
 At hide-and-seek in the dark, cavernous stalls
 Or gather berries from the thorns which hid
 The arched ribs crumbling in the grass.

They go

And Hodge himself becomes a sottish bawd
 Who takes his city vices secondhand
 And grins, if he hears Paris mentioned. Naught
 Remains but wind-sough over barren pastures
 The bleak philosophy of Northern ridges
 Harsh afterglow of an old country's greatness
 Themes for a poet's pretty sunset thoughts.

— printed in *Oxford Outlook* (May, 1926), pp.119-20.

Further examples of Auden's juvenilia are readily accessible in Osborne's *W. H. Auden: the Life of a Poet*, pp. 25-26, 74. ('The Traction Engine', 'Dawn', 'Woods in Rain'). In addition to 'Allendale' given above, Isherwood's 'Some Notes on Auden's Early Poetry' includes 'The Carter's Funeral', pp. 4-5. Ten uncollected poems by Auden are printed in 'Poems by W. H. Auden (1927-1928)', in *Oxford Poetry*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Spring 1984), pp.84-94.

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