whether to laugh or to be angry. She was angry, and the Beau, who had tyrannised over the daughters of Dukes, prostrated himself before her in despair. But it was too late – the heart after all these years was not a very engaging object even to a simple country girl, and he seems at last to have lavished his affections upon animals. He mourned his terrier Vick for three weeks; he had a friendship[r] with a mouse; he became the champion of all the neglected cats and starving dogs in Caen. Indeed, he said to a lady that if a man and a dog were drowning in the same pond he would prefer to save the dog – if, that is, there[s] were nobody looking. But he was still persuaded that everybody was looking; and his immense regard for appearances gave him a certain stoical endurance. Thus, when paralysis struck him at dinner he left[t] the table without a sign; sunk deep in debt as he was, he still picked his way over the cobbles on the points of his toes to preserve his shoes, and when the terrible day came and he was thrown into prison he won the admiration of murderers and thieves by appearing among them as cool and courteous as if about to pay a morning call. But if he were to continue to act his part, it was essential that he should be supported – he must have a sufficiency of boot polish, gallons of eau-de-Cologne, and three changes of linen every day. His expenditure upon these items was enormous. Generous as his old friends were, and persistently as he supplicated them, there came a time when they could be squeezed no longer. It was decreed that he was to content himself with one change of linen daily, and his allowance was to admit of necessaries only. But how could a Brummell exist upon necessaries only? The demand was absurd. Soon afterwards he showed his sense of the gravity of the situation by mounting a black silk neck-cloth. Black silk neck-cloths had always been his aversion. It was a signal of despair, a sign that the end was in sight. After[u] that everything that had supported him and kept him in being dissolved. His self-respect vanished. He would dine with anyone who would pay the bill. His memory weakened and he told the same story over and over again till even the[v] burghers of Caen were bored. Then his manners degenerated. His extreme cleanliness lapsed into carelessness, and then into positive filth. People objected to his presence in the dining-room of the hotel. Then his mind went – he thought that the Duchess of Devonshire was coming up the stairs when it was only the wind.[3] At last but one passion remained intact among the crumbled debris of so many – an[w] immense greed. To buy Rheims biscuits he sacrificed the greatest treasure that remained to him – he sold his snuff-box. And

then nothing was left but a heap of disagreeables, a mass of corruption, a senile and disgusting old man fit only for the charity of nuns and the protection of an asylum. There the clergyman begged him to pray. '"I do try", he said, but he added something which made me doubt whether he understood me.' Certainly, he would try; for the clergyman wished it and he had always been polite. He had been polite to thieves and to duchesses and to God Himself. But it was no use trying any longer. He[x] could believe in nothing now except a hot fire, sweet biscuits, and another cup of coffee if he asked for it. And so there was nothing for it but that the Beau who had been compact of grace and sweetness should be shuffled into the grave like any other ill-dressed, ill-bred, unneeded old man. Still, one must remember that Byron, in his moments of dandyism, 'always pronounced the name of Brummell with a mingled emotion of respect and jealousy'.

[NOTE. – Mr Berry of St James's Street has courteously drawn my attention to the fact that Beau Brummell certainly visited England in 1822. He came to the famous wine-shop on 26th July 1822 and was weighed as usual. His weight was then 10 stones 13 pounds. On the previous occasion, 6th July 1815, his weight was 12 stones 10 pounds. Mr Berry adds that there is no record of his coming after 1822.][4y]

III

Mary Wollstonecraft

Great wars are strangely intermittent in their effects. The French Revolution took some people and tore them asunder; others it passed over without disturbing a hair of their[a] heads. Jane Austen, it is said, never mentioned it; Charles Lamb ignored it; Beau Brummell[2] never gave the matter a thought. But to Wordsworth and to Godwin it was the dawn; unmistakably they saw[b]

> France standing on the top of golden hours,
> And human nature seeming born again.[3]

Thus it would be easy for a picturesque historian to lay side by side the most glaring contrasts – here in Chesterfield Street was Beau

Brummell letting his chin fall carefully upon his cravat and discussing in a tone studiously free from vulgar emphasis the proper cut of the lapel of a coat; and here in Somers Town was a party of ill-dressed, excited young men, one with a head too big for his body and a nose too long for his face, holding forth day by day over the tea-cups upon human perfectibility, ideal unity, and the rights of man. There was also a woman present with very bright eyes and a very eager tongue, and the young men, who had middle-class names, like Barlow and Holcroft and Godwin,[4] called her simply 'Wollstonecraft', as if it did not matter whether she were[c] married or unmarried, as if she were a young man like themselves.

Such glaring[d] discords among intelligent people – for Charles Lamb and Godwin, Jane Austen and Mary Wollstonecraft were all highly intelligent – suggest how much influence circumstances have upon opinions. If Godwin had been brought up in the precincts of the Temple and had drunk deep of antiquity and old letters at Christ's Hospital,[5] he might never have cared a straw for the future of man and his rights in general. If Jane Austen had lain as a child on the landing to prevent her father from thrashing her mother, her soul might have burnt with such a passion against tyranny that all her novels might have been consumed in one[e] cry for justice.

Such had been Mary Wollstonecraft's first experience of the joys of married life. And then her sister Everina had been married miserably and had bitten her wedding ring to pieces in the coach. Her brother[f] had been a burden on her; her father's farm had failed, and in order to start that disreputable man with the red face and the violent temper and the dirty hair in life again she had gone into bondage among the aristocracy as a governess – in short, she had never known what happiness was, and, in its default, had[g] fabricated a creed fitted to meet the sordid misery of real human[h] life. The staple of her doctrine was that nothing mattered save independence. 'Every obligation we receive from our fellow-creatures is a new shackle, takes from our native freedom, and debases the mind.'[6] Independence was the first necessity for a woman; not grace or charm, but energy and courage and the power to put her will into effect, were her necessary qualities.[i] It was her highest boast to be able to say, 'I never yet resolved to do anything of consequence that I did not adhere readily to it'.[7] Certainly Mary could say this with truth. When she was a little more than thirty[j] she could look back upon a series of actions which she had carried out in the teeth of opposition. She had taken

a house by prodigious efforts for her friend Fanny, only to find that Fanny's mind was changed and she did not want a house after all. She had started a school. She had persuaded[k] Fanny into marrying Mr Skeys. She had thrown up her school and gone to Lisbon alone to nurse Fanny when she died. On the voyage back she had forced the captain of the ship to rescue a wrecked French vessel by threatening to expose him if he refused. And when, overcome by a passion for Fuseli,[8] she declared[l] her wish to live with him and been refused flatly by his wife, she had put her principle of decisive action instantly into effect, and had gone to Paris determined to make her living by her pen.

The Revolution thus was not merely an event that[m] had happened outside her; it was an active agent in her own blood.[n] She had been in revolt all her life – against tyranny, against law, against convention. The reformer's love[o] of humanity, which has so much of hatred in it as well as love,[p] fermented within her. The outbreak of revolution in France expressed some of her deepest theories and convictions, and she dashed off in the heat of that extraordinary moment those two eloquent and daring books – the *Reply to Burke* and the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,[9q] which are so true that they seem now to contain nothing new in them – their originality has become our commonplace. But when she was in Paris lodging by herself in a great house, and saw with her own eyes the King whom she despised driving past surrounded by National Guards and holding himself with greater dignity than she expected, then, 'I can scarcely tell you why', the tears came to her eyes. 'I am going to bed,' the letter ended, 'and, for the first time in my life, I cannot put out the candle.'[10] Things were not so simple after all. She could not understand even her[r] own feelings. She saw the most cherished of her convictions put into practice – and her eyes filled with tears. She had won fame and independence and the right to live her own life – and she wanted something different.[s] 'I do not want to be loved like a goddess,' she wrote, 'but I wish to be necessary to you.'[11] For Imlay, the fascinating American to whom her[t] letter was addressed, had been very good to her. Indeed, she had fallen passionately in love with him. But it was one of her theories that love should be free – 'that mutual affection was marriage and that the marriage tie should not bind after the death of love, if love should die'.[12] And yet at the same time that she wanted freedom she[u] wanted certainty. 'I like the word affection,' she wrote, 'because it signifies something habitual.'[13]

The conflict of all these contradictions shows itself in her face, at once so resolute and so dreamy, so sensual and so intelligent, and beautiful into the bargain with its great coils of hair and the large bright eyes that Southey thought the most expressive he had ever seen.[14] The life of such a woman was bound to be tempestuous. Every[v] day she made theories by which life should be lived; and every day she came smack against the rock of other people's prejudices. Every day too – for she was no pedant, no cold-blooded theorist – something[w] was born in her that thrust aside her theories and forced her to model them afresh. She acted upon her theory that she had no legal claim upon Imlay; she refused to marry him; but when he left her alone week after week with the child she had borne him her agony was unendurable.

Thus distracted, thus puzzling even to herself, the plausible and treacherous Imlay cannot be[x] altogether blamed for failing to follow the rapidity of her changes and the alternate reason and unreason of her moods. Even friends whose liking was impartial were disturbed by her discrepancies. Mary had a passionate, an exuberant, love of Nature, and yet one night when the colours in the sky were so exquisite that Madeleine Schweizer could not help saying to her, 'Come, Mary – come, nature-lover – and enjoy this wonderful spectacle – this constant transition from colour to colour', Mary never took her eyes off the Baron de Wolzogen. 'I must confess,' wrote Madame Schweizer, 'that this erotic absorption made such a disagreeable impression on me, that all my pleasure vanished.'[15] But if the sentimental Swiss was disconcerted by Mary's sensuality, Imlay, the shrewd man of business, was exasperated by her intelligence. Whenever he saw her he yielded to her charm, but then her quickness, her penetration, her[y] uncompromising idealism harassed him. She saw through his excuses; she met all his reasons; she was even capable of managing his business. There was no peace with her – he must be off again. And then her letters followed him, torturing him with their sincerity and their insight. They were so outspoken; they pleaded so passionately to be told the truth; they showed such a contempt for soap and alum and wealth[z] and comfort; they repeated, as he suspected, so truthfully that he had only to say the word, 'and you shall never hear of me more',[16] that he could not endure it. Tickling minnows he had hooked a dolphin, and the creature rushed him through the waters till he was dizzy and only wanted to escape.[17] After all, though he had played at theory-making too, he was a business man, he depended

upon soap and alum; 'the[aa] secondary pleasures of life', he had to admit, 'are very necessary to my comfort'.[18] And among them was one that for ever evaded[bb] Mary's jealous scrutiny. Was it business, was it politics, was it a woman, that perpetually took him away from her? He shillied and shallied; he was very charming when they met; then he disappeared again. Exasperated at last, and half insane with suspicion, she forced the truth from the cook. A little actress in a strolling company was his mistress, she learnt. True[cc] to her own creed of decisive action, Mary at once soaked her skirts so that she might sink unfailingly, and threw herself from Putney Bridge.[dd] But she was rescued; after unspeakable agony she recovered, and then her 'unconquerable greatness of mind',[19] her girlish creed of independence, asserted itself again, and she determined to make another bid for happiness and to earn her living without taking a penny from Imlay for herself or their child.

It was in this crisis that she again saw Godwin,[ee] the little man with the big head, whom she had met when the French Revolution was making the young men in Somers Town think that a new world was being born.[ff] She met him – but that is a euphemism, for in fact Mary Wollstonecraft actually visited him in his own house. Was it the effect of the French Revolution? Was it the blood she had seen spilt on the pavement and the cries of the furious crowd that had rung in her ears that made it seem a matter of no importance whether[gg] she put on her cloak and went to visit Godwin in Somers Town, or waited in Judd Street West for Godwin to come to her?[hh] And what strange upheaval of human life was it that inspired that curious man, who was so queer a mixture of meanness and magnanimity, of coldness and deep feeling – for the memoir of his wife could not have been written without unusual depth of heart – to hold the view that she did right – that he respected Mary for trampling upon the idiotic convention by which women's lives were tied down?[ii] He held the most extraordinary views on many subjects, and upon the relations of the sexes in particular. He thought that reason should influence even the love between men and women. He thought that there[jj] was something spiritual in their relationship. He had written that 'marriage is a law, and the worst of all laws . . . marriage is an affair of property, and the worst of all properties'.[20] He held the belief that if two people of the opposite sex like each other, they should live together without any ceremony, or, for living together is[kk] apt to blunt love, twenty doors off, say, in[ll] the same street. And he went further; he

said that if another man liked your wife 'this will create no difficulty. We may all enjoy her conversation, and we shall all be wise enough to consider the sensual intercourse a very trivial object.'[21] True, when he wrote those words he had never been in love; now for the first time he was to experience that sensation.[mm] It came very quietly and naturally, growing 'with equal advances in the mind of each'[22] from those talks in Somers Town, from those discussions upon everything under the sun which they held so improperly alone in his rooms. 'It was friendship melting into love . . .', he wrote. 'When, in the course of things, the disclosure came, there was nothing in a manner for either party to disclose to the other.'[23] Certainly they were in agreement upon the most essential points; they were both of opinion,[nn] for instance, that marriage was unnecessary. They would continue to live apart. Only when Nature again intervened, and Mary found herself with child, was it worth while to lose valued friends, she asked, for the sake of a theory? She thought not, and they were married. And then that other theory – that it is best for husband and wife to live apart – was not that also incompatible with other feelings that were coming to birth in her? 'A husband is a convenient part of the furniture of the house',[24] she wrote. Indeed, she discovered that she was passionately domestic. Why not, then, revise that theory too, and share the same roof? Godwin[oo] should have a room some doors off to work in; and they should dine out separately if they liked – their work, their friends, should be separate. Thus they settled it, and the plan worked admirably. The arrangement combined 'the novelty and lively sensation of a visit with the more delicious and heart-felt pleasures of domestic life'.[25] Mary admitted that she was happy; Godwin confessed that, after all one's philosophy, it was 'extremely gratifying' to find that 'there is someone who takes[pp] an interest in one's happiness'.[26] All sorts of powers and emotions were liberated in Mary by her new satisfaction. Trifles gave her an exquisite pleasure – the sight of Godwin and Imlay's child playing together; the thought of their own child who was to be born; a day's jaunt into[qq] the country. One day, meeting Imlay in the New Road, she greeted him without bitterness. But, as Godwin wrote, 'Ours is[rr] not an idle happiness, a paradise of selfish and transitory pleasures'.[27] No, it too was an experiment, as Mary's life had been an experiment from the start, an attempt to make human conventions[ss] conform more closely to human needs. And their marriage was only a beginning; all sorts of things were to follow after. Mary[tt] was going to have a child. She was going to write

a book to be called *The*[uu] *Wrongs of Women*.[28] She was going to reform education. She was going to come down to dinner the day after her child was born. She was going to employ[vv] a midwife and not a doctor at her confinement – but that experiment was her last. She died in child-birth. She whose sense of her own existence was so intense, who had cried out even in her misery, 'I cannot bear to think of being no more – of losing myself – nay, it appears to me impossible that I should cease to exist',[29] died at the age of thirty-six. But she has her revenge. Many millions have died and been forgotten in the hundred and thirty years that have passed since she was buried; and yet as we read her letters and listen to her arguments and consider her experiments, above all, that most fruitful experiment, her relation with Godwin, and realise the high-handed[ww] and hot-blooded manner in which she cut her way to the quick of life, one form of immortality is hers undoubtedly: she is alive and active, she argues and experiments, we hear her voice and trace her influence even now among the living.[xx]

IV

Dorothy Wordsworth

Two highly incongruous travellers, Mary Wollstonecraft and Dorothy Wordsworth, followed close upon each other's footsteps. Mary was in Altona on the Elbe in 1795 with her baby; three years later Dorothy came there with her brother and Coleridge. Both kept a record of their travels; both saw the same places, but the eyes with which they saw them were very different. Whatever Mary saw served to start her mind upon some theory, upon the effect of government, upon the state of the people, upon the mystery of her own soul. The beat of the oars on the waves made her ask, 'Life, what are you? Where goes this breath? This *I* so much alive? In what element will it mix, giving and receiving fresh energy?' And sometimes she forgot to look at the sunset and looked instead at the Baron Wolzogen. Dorothy, on the other hand, noted what was before her accurately, literally, and with prosaic precision.[a] 'The walk very pleasing between Hamburgh and Altona. A large piece of ground planted with trees, and intersected

by gravel walks. . . . The ground on the opposite side of the Elbe appears marshy.' Dorothy never railed against 'the cloven hoof of despotism'. Dorothy never asked 'men's questions' about exports and imports; Dorothy never confused her own soul with the sky. This '*I* so much alive' was ruthlessly subordinated to the trees and the grass. For if she let 'I' and its rights and its wrongs and its passions and its suffering get between her and the object, she would be calling the moon 'the Queen of the Night';[2] she would be talking of dawn's 'orient beams';[3] she would be[b] soaring into reveries and rhapsodies and forgetting to find the exact phrase for the ripple of moonlight upon the lake. It was like 'herrings in the water'[4] – she could not have said that if she had been thinking about herself.[c] So while Mary dashed her head against wall after wall, and cried out, 'Surely something resides in this heart that is not perishable – and life is more than a dream',[5] Dorothy went on methodically at Alfoxden noting the approach of spring. 'The sloe in blossom, the hawthorn[d] green, the larches in the park changed from black to green, in two or three days.' And next day, 14th April 1798, 'the evening very stormy, so we staid indoors. Mary Wollstonecraft's life, &c., came.' And the day after they walked in the squire's grounds and noticed that 'Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed – ruins, hermitages, &c., &c.'. There is no reference to Mary Wollstonecraft; it seems as if her life and all its storms had been swept away in one of those compendious et ceteras, and yet the next sentence reads like an unconscious comment. 'Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy.' No, we cannot re-form, we must not rebel; we can only accept and try to understand the message of Nature.[e] And so the notes go on.

Spring passed; summer came; summer turned to autumn; it was winter, and then again the sloes were in blossom and the hawthorns green and spring had come. But it was spring in the North now, and Dorothy was living alone with her brother in a small cottage at Grasmere in the midst of the hills. Now after the hardships and separations of youth they were together under their own roof; now they could address themselves undisturbed to the absorbing occupation of living in the heart of Nature and trying, day by day, to read her meaning. They had money enough at last to let them live together without the need of earning a penny. No family duties or professional tasks distracted them. Dorothy could ramble all day on the hills and sit up talking to Coleridge all night without being scolded by her aunt

for unwomanly behaviour. The hours were theirs from sunrise to sunset, and could be altered to suit the season. If it was fine, there was no need to come in; if it was wet, there was no need to get up. One could go to bed at any hour. One could let the dinner cool if the cuckoo were shouting on the hill and William had not found the exact epithet[f] he wanted. Sunday was a day like any other. Custom, convention, everything was subordinated to the absorbing, exacting, exhausting[g] task of living in the heart of Nature and writing poetry. For exhausting it was. William would make his head ache in the effort to find the right word. He would go on hammering at a poem until[h] Dorothy was afraid to suggest an alteration. A chance phrase of hers would run in his head and make it impossible for him to get back into the proper mood. He would come down to breakfast and sit 'with his shirt neck unbuttoned, and his waistcoat open', writing a poem on a Butterfly which some story of hers had suggested, and he would eat nothing, and then he would begin altering the poem and again would be exhausted.[i]

It is strange how vividly all this is brought before us, considering that the diary is made up of brief notes such as any quiet woman might make of her garden's changes and her brother's moods and the progress of the seasons. It was warm and mild, she notes, after a day of rain. She met a cow in a field. 'The cow looked at me, and I looked at the cow, and whenever I stirred the cow gave over eating.'[6] She met an old man who walked with two sticks – for days on end she met nothing more out of the way than a cow eating and an old man walking. And[j] her motives for writing are common enough – 'because I will not quarrel with myself, and because I shall give William pleasure by it when he comes home again'.[7] It is only gradually that the difference between this rough notebook and others discloses itself; only by degrees that the brief notes unfurl in the mind and open a whole landscape before us, that the plain statement proves to be aimed so directly at the object that if we look exactly along the line that it points we shall see precisely what she saw. 'The moonlight lay upon the hills like snow.' 'The air was become still, the lake of a bright slate colour, the hills darkening. The bays shot into the low fading shores. Sheep resting. All things quiet.'[8] 'There was no one waterfall above another – it was the[k] sound of waters in the air – the voice of the air.'[9] Even in such brief notes one feels the suggestive power which is the gift of the poet rather than of the naturalist, the power which, taking only the simplest facts, so orders them that the whole scene

comes before us, heightened and composed, the lake in its quiet, the hills in their splendour. Yet she was no descriptive writer in the usual sense. Her first concern was to be truthful – grace and symmetry must be made subordinate to truth. But[l] then truth is sought because to falsify the look of the stir of the breeze on the lake is to tamper with the spirit which inspires appearances. It is that spirit which[m] goads her and urges her and keeps her faculties for ever on the stretch. A sight or a sound would not let her be till she had traced her perception along its course and fixed it in words, though they might be bald, or in an image, though it might be angular. Nature was a stern taskmistress. The exact prosaic detail must be rendered as well as the vast and visionary outline. Even when the distant hills trembled before her in the glory of a dream she must note with literal accuracy 'the glittering silver line on the ridge of the backs of the sheep',[10] or remark how 'the crows at a little distance from us became white as silver as they flew in the sunshine, and when they went still further, they looked like shapes of water passing over the green fields'.[11] Always trained and in use, her powers of observation became in time so expert and so acute that a day's walk stored her mind's eye with a vast assembly of[n] curious objects to be sorted at leisure. How strange the sheep looked mixed with the soldiers at Dumbarton Castle! For some reason the sheep looked their real size, but the soldiers looked like puppets. And then the movements of the sheep were so natural and fearless, and the motion of the dwarf soldiers was so restless and apparently without meaning. It was extremely queer. Or lying in bed she would look up at the ceiling and think how the varnished beams were 'as glossy as black rocks on a sunny day cased in ice'.[12] Yes, they

> crossed each other in almost as intricate and fantastic a manner as I have seen the underboughs of a large beech-tree withered by the depth of the shade above. . . . It was like what I should suppose an underground cave or temple to be, with a dripping or moist roof, and the moonlight entering in upon it by some means or other, and yet the colours were more like melted gems. I lay looking up till the light of the fire faded away. . . . I did not sleep much.[13]

Indeed, she scarcely seemed to shut her eyes. They looked and they looked, urged on not only by an indefatigable curiosity but also by reverence,[o] as if some secret of the utmost importance lay hidden beneath the surface. Her pen sometimes stammers with the intensity of the emotion that she controlled, as De Quincey said that her tongue

stammered with the conflict between her ardour and her shyness when she spoke. But controlled she was. Emotional and impulsive by nature, her eyes 'wild and starting', tormented by feelings which almost mastered her, still she must control, still she[p] must repress, or she would fail in her task – she would cease to see. But if one subdued oneself, and resigned one's private agitations, then, as if in reward, Nature would bestow an exquisite satisfaction. 'Rydale was very beautiful, with spear-shaped streaks of polished steel. . . . It calls home the heart to quietness. I had been very melancholy', she wrote. For did not Coleridge come walking over the hills and tap at the cottage door late at night – did she not carry a letter from Coleridge hidden safe in her bosom?

Thus giving to Nature, thus[q] receiving from Nature, it seemed, as the arduous and ascetic days went by, that Nature and Dorothy had grown together in perfect sympathy – a sympathy not cold or vegetable or inhuman because at the core of it burnt that other love for 'my beloved', her brother, who was indeed its heart and inspiration. William and Nature and Dorothy herself, were they not one being? Did they not compose a trinity, self-contained and self-sufficient and independent whether indoors or out? They sit indoors. It was

> about ten o'clock and a quiet night. The fire flickers and the watch ticks. I hear nothing but the breathing of my Beloved as he now and then pushes his book forward, and turns over a leaf.[14]

And now it is an April day, and they take the old cloak and lie in John's grove out of doors together.

> William heard me breathing, and rustling now and then, but we both lay still and unseen by one another. He thought that it would be sweet thus to lie in the grave, to hear the peaceful sounds of the earth, and just to know that our dear friends were near. The lake was still; there was a boat out.

It was a strange love, profound, almost dumb, as if brother and sister had grown together and shared not the speech but the mood, so that they hardly knew which felt, which spoke, which saw the daffodils or the sleeping city; only Dorothy stored the mood in prose, and later William came and bathed in it and[r] made it into poetry. But one could not act without the other. They must feel, they must think, they must be together. So now, when they had lain out on the hill-side they would rise and go home and make tea, and Dorothy would write to Coleridge, and they would sow the scarlet beans together, and William

would work at his[s] 'Leech Gatherer', and Dorothy would copy the lines for him. Rapt but controlled, free yet strictly ordered, the homely narrative moves naturally from ecstasy on the hills to baking bread and ironing linen and fetching William his supper in the cottage.

The cottage,[t] though its garden ran up into the fells, was on the highroad. Through her parlour[u] window Dorothy looked out and saw whoever might be passing – a tall beggar woman perhaps with her baby on her back; an old soldier; a coroneted landau with touring ladies peering inquisitively inside. The rich and the great she would let pass – they interested her no more than cathedrals or picture galleries or great cities; but she could never see a beggar at the door without asking him in and questioning him closely. Where had he been? What had he seen? How many children had he? She searched into the lives of the poor as if they held in them the same secret as the hills.[v] A tramp eating cold bacon over the kitchen fire might have been a starry night, so closely she watched him; so clearly she noted how his old coat was patched 'with three bell-shaped patches of darker blue behind, where the buttons had been', how his[w] beard of a fortnight's growth was like 'grey *plush*'. And then as they rambled on with their tales of seafaring and the press-gang and the Marquis of Granby,[15] she never failed to capture the one phrase that sounds on in the mind after[x] the story is forgotten, 'What, you are stepping westward?' 'To be sure there is great promise for virgins in Heaven.' 'She could trip lightly by the graves of those who died when they were young.' The poor had their poetry as the hills had theirs. But it was out of doors, on the road or on the moor, not in the cottage parlour, that her imagination had freest play. Her happiest moments were passed tramping beside a jibbing horse on a wet Scottish road[y] without certainty of bed or supper. All she knew was that there was some[z] sight ahead, some grove of trees to be noted, some waterfall to be inquired into. On they tramped hour after hour in silence for the most part, though Coleridge, who was of the party, would suddenly begin to debate aloud the true meaning of[aa] the words majestic, sublime, and grand. They had to trudge on foot because the horse had thrown the cart over a bank and the harness was only mended[bb] with string and pocket-handkerchiefs. They were hungry, too, because[cc] Wordsworth had dropped the chicken and the bread into the lake, and they had nothing else for dinner. They were uncertain of the way, and did not know where[dd] they would find lodging: all they knew was that there was a waterfall[ee] ahead. At last Coleridge could stand

it no longer. He had rheumatism in the[ff] joints; the Irish jaunting car provided no shelter from the weather; his companions were silent and absorbed. He left them. But William and Dorothy tramped on. They looked like tramps themselves. Dorothy's cheeks were brown as a gipsy's, her clothes were shabby, her gait was rapid and ungainly. But still she was indefatigable; her eye never failed her; she noticed everything. At last they reached the waterfall. And then all Dorothy's powers fell upon it. She searched out its character, she noted its resemblances, she defined its differences, with all the ardour of a discoverer, with all the exactness of a naturalist, with all the rapture of a lover. She possessed it[gg] at last[16] – she had laid it up in her mind for ever. It had become one of those 'inner visions'[17] which she could call to mind at any time in their distinctness and in their particularity. It would come back to her long years afterwards when she was old and her mind had failed her; it would come back stilled and heightened and mixed with all the happiest memories of her past – with the thought of Racedown[hh] and Alfoxden and Coleridge reading 'Christabel', and her beloved, her brother William. It would bring with it what no human being could give, what no human relation could offer – consolation and quiet.[ii] If, then, the passionate cry of Mary Wollstonecraft had reached her ears – 'Surely something resides in this heart that is not perishable – and life is more than a dream' – she would have had no doubt whatever as to her answer. She would have had no doubt whatever as to her answer. She would have said quite simply, 'We looked about us, and we felt[jj] that we were happy'.

I Cowper and Lady Austen

a – *NYHT*: 'had been in'.
b – *NYHT*: 'youth something'.
c – *NYHT*: 'action, which made any public . . . insupportable. Indeed, if goaded'.
d – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'appointment, he would drown himself; but there was a man sitting on'.
e – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'But when that July . . . despair, not only into the haven . . . but into a settled state of mind, into a settled way'.
f – *NYHT*: 'elder. She had brought him very wisely, like a mother, by letting him talk, and listening to his terrors and understanding them, to'.
g – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'some profound unrest'.
h – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'outcast. He'.
i – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'realised in what way he was unique; how it was that he'.
j – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'tables, for all'.

w – *N&A* and *BB*: 'débris – an'.
x – *N&A* and *BB*: 'try; for he had always . . . duchesses and to religion itself. But . . . longer; indeed there was nothing to try for. He'.
y – *N&A* and *BB* do not have the Note.

1 – For periodical publication and composition, see 'Beau Brummell' above; only material not in that version is annotated here. The essay was further revised for *CR2*. On this series in *CR2*, see 'Cowper and Lady Austen' above. The essay is based on Captain Jesse's *The Life of George Brummell, Esq., commonly called Beau Brummell* (1844; revised ed., 2 vols, John C. Nimmo, 1886). Reprinted: *CE*.
2 – *Life of . . . Beau Brummell*, vol. i, ch. xix, p. 258.
3 – Cf. *ibid.*, vol. ii, ch. xxv, p. 293: '. . . at eight o'clock this man, to whom he had already given his instructions, opened wide the door of his sitting-room, and announced the "Duchess of Devonshire."'
4 – This note derives from a letter to the BBC, printed in the *Listener*, 27 November 1929, in response to VW's broadcast: see *VI VW Essays*, Appendix.

III Mary Wollstonecraft

a – *NYHT*: 'hair on their'.
b – *NYHT*: 'dawn; without doubt they saw –'.
c – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'was'.
d – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'And these glaring'.
e – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'a'.
f – *NYHT*: 'brothers'.
g – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'she had'.
h – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'of human'.
i – *N&A*: 'mind." Independence . . . grace and charm . . . her essential qualities.' *NYHT*: 'mind." Grace and charm were not what a young woman needed, but energy and courage and the power to put her will into effect.'
j – *N&A*: 'truth. When she was little more than thirty'. *NYHT*: 'truth. Even at the age of thirty'.
k – *NYHT*: 'forced'.
l – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'she had declared'.
m – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'merely a thing that'.
n – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'her blood.'
o – *NYHT*: 'reformer's complex love'.
p – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'as of love,'.
q – *N&A*: '"Vindication of the Right of Women",'. *NYHT*: '"Vindication of the Rights of Women" –'.
r – *NYHT*: 'not even understand her'.
s – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'something more, something different.'

t – *NYHT*: 'the'.
u – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'time, for all her love of experiment, she'.
v – *NYHT*: 'bargain, with its lustrous coils of hair and its large bright eyes. Every'.
w – *NYHT*: 'too – and it was this that puzzled her most – something'.
x – *N&A*: 'And if she was puzzled herself by the conflict within her, not even the plausible and treacherous Imlay himself can be'. *NYHT* follows *N&A*, but has: 'puzzled by'.
y – *NYHT*: 'penetration and her'.
z – *NYHT*: 'alum and for wealth'.
aa – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'business man; "the'.
bb – *NYHT*: 'that perpetually evaded'.
cc – *N&A*: 'cook. A . . . mistress. True'. *NYHT*: 'cook. True'.
dd – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'once threw herself from Putney Bridge, having soaked her skirts so that she might sink unfailingly.'
ee – *NYHT*: 'she met Godwin,'.
ff – *NYHT*: 'that the world was being born anew.'
gg – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'of indifference to Mary whether'.
hh – *NYHT*: 'waited for Godwin to come and visit her in Judd Street West?'
ii – *NYHT*: 'were fettered?'
jj – *N&A*: 'particular. He . . . love of men and women. He thought that there'. *NYHT*: 'particular. He thought that there'.
kk – *NYHT*: 'for cohabitation is'.
ll – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'love, say, twenty doors off in'.
mm – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'wrote that he had never been in love, but now . . . experience the sensation.'
nn – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'of the opinion,'.
oo – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'Why, then, not revise that theory, too, and . . . roof, only Godwin'.
pp – *NYHT*: 'that "some one takes'.
qq – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'born; a little ride into'.
rr – *NYHT*: 'was'.
ss – *NYHT*: 'convention'.
tt – *N&A*: 'beginning. All sorts of things were to follow after. Mary'. *NYHT*: 'beginning. Mary'.
uu – *N&A* and *NYHT*: 'book called the'.
vv – *NYHT*: 'education. She was going to employ'.
ww – *N&A*: 'Godwin and realize the intimacy and freedom which she achieved in that age of formality and convention – the high-handed'.
xx – *NYHT*: 'But she has her revenge; many people have died . . . the 130 years . . . buried, and . . . letters and follow her arguments and listen to her theories – above all as we study her relation with Godwin and realize its intimacy, its freedom, its assumption of values, we could swear that she is not dead. Surely we have met her only a night or two ago.'

1 – Originally published as a signed essay in the *N&A*, 5 October, and (with variants) in the *NYHT*, 20 October 1929, (*Kp4* C316); it was revised for *CR2*. It is clear that the *NYHT* version predates the *N&A* version. A version close to that in the *NYHT* was translated into French by Jeanne Fournier-Pargoire and appeared in *Le Figaro*, 26–27 December 1929. On this series in *CR2*, see 'Cowper and Lady Austen' above. On 5 August 1929 VW wrote that she 'should be tackling Mary Wollstonecraft' (*III VW Diary*). The *N&A* also contained: LW's 'World of Books' column on *The Letters of Disraeli to Lady Bradford and Lady Chesterfield*, ed. the Marquis of Zetland; and Ray Strachey on 'Monogamy', a review of *Halcyon, or the Future of Monogamy* by Vera Brittain. Reading notes (Berg, RN 1.9) (*VWRN* IX). Reprinted: *CE*.

2 – Jane Austen (1775–1817); Charles Lamb (1775–1834); George Bryan Brummell (1778–1840). On 12 October 1929 a letter from Augustine Birrell appeared in the *N&A*: 'May I be permitted to make a small criticism upon Mrs. Woolf's paper on Mary Wollstonecraft, which to praise would be superfluous. ¶ It has reference to a remark made in passing on the supposed indifference displayed by Charles Lamb to the political and moral questions of his time . . .' VW responded in the issue of 19 October (*Kp4* C318):

'Needless to say, I would accept any judgment of Mr Birrell's on any subject with unhesitating acquiescence. That his view of Charles Lamb's character is the right one I do not doubt. But, whatever inference maybe drawn from it, my remark that Lamb did not mention the French Revolution, and that it passed him over without disturbing a hair of his head, has, I think, some foundation in fact. For example, one may search his letters from 1796 to 1800 without finding a single reference to politics in general or to the French Revolution in particular. And though in 1800 he does mention public affairs and the French Revolution in a letter to Manning, it is in these terms: "Public affairs – except as they touch upon me, and so turn into private – I cannot whip up my mind to find any interest in. I grieve, indeed, that War, and Nature, and Mr. Pitt, that hangs up in Lloyd's best parlour, should have conspired to call up three necessaries, simple commoners as our fathers knew them, into the upper house of luxuries; bread, and beer, and coals, Manning. But as to France and Frenchmen, and the Abbé Sieyès and his constitutions, I cannot make these present times present to me. I read histories of the past, and I live in them. . . . Burnet's good old prattle I can bring present to my mind: I can make the revolution present to me; the French Revolution, by a converse perversity in my nature, I fling as far *from me*." And I do not think that it is mentioned again.'

VW quotes *The Letters of Charles Lamb, Newly Arranged, with Additions*, ed. Alfred Ainger (2 vols, 2nd ed., Macmillan, 1904), vol. i, Letter lv, to Thomas Manning, 1 March 1800, p. 125, which has: 'Sièyes'.

3 – William Wordsworth (1770–1850), *The Prelude* (Edward Moxon, 1850), bk vi, 'Cambridge and the Alps', p. 149. On 22 August 1929 VW quoted from bk vii in *III VW Diary*.

4 – Joel Barlow (1754–1812), American poet and diplomatist, friend of Tom Paine (1737–1809); settled in Paris in 1788, retreating to London in 1790. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–97) met him in Paris and their acquaintance was renewed in London. Thomas Holcroft (1745–1809), dramatist and author of memoirs and novels. The man with the big head,William Godwin (1756–1836), considered Holcroft to be among his 'four principal oral instructors, to whom I feel my mind indebted for improvement': see *William Godwin. His Friends and Contemporaries* by C. Kegan Paul (2 vols, Henry S. King, 1876), vol. i, p. 17.

5 – As was Charles Lamb.

6 – *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* by William Godwin, ed. W. Clark Durant (1798; Constable and Greenberg, 1927), Wollstonecraft's letter to Joseph Johnson, 13 September 1787, pp. 172–3, continues: '. . . debases the mind, makes us mere earthworms – I am not fond of grovelling!'

7 – *Ibid.*, p. 172, which has: 'adhere resolutely to'.

8 – Henry Fuseli, formerly Johann Heinrich Füssli (1741–1825), painter and writer.

9 – *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to . . . Edmund Burke* (1790); *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman . . .* (1792).

10 – *Mary Wollstonecraft. Letters to Imlay*, with Prefatory Memoir by C. Kegan Paul (Kegan Paul, 1879), pp. xxxiv–xxxv; also in *Memoirs*, p. 223, Letter to Joseph Johnson, 26 December 1792.

11 – *Letters to Imlay*, Letter x, from Paris, 1–2 January 1794, p. 26. Gilbert Imlay (1754–1828), land speculator and author.

12 – *William Godwin*, vol. i, p. 214: 'On the question alone of the relation of the sexes, there is no indication of any approximation to her theories. Her view had now become that mutual affection was marriage . . . It must be remembered that her own experience of family life was not likely to ennoble it in her eyes.'

13 – *Letters to Imlay*, Letter ii, from Paris, August 1793, p. 3.

14 – See *William Godwin*, vol. i, p. 234, Letter from Robert Southey to J. Cottle, 13 March 1797: 'Her eyes are light brown, and although the lid of one of them is affected by a little paralysis, they are the most meaning I ever saw.' See also *Letters to Imlay*, 'Memoir', p. xxxiii.

15 – Mary Wollstonecraft was an occasional guest of Madeleine, *née* Hess (1751–1814), and Jean Caspard Schweizer (1754–1811), both of them Swiss, at their luxurious home in Paris. For an account of this outing to the countryside during 1794, see *Memoirs*, p. 247. Madeleine's journal entry is transcribed as: 'B(aron) de W(olzogen?)', who is not otherwise identified.

16 – *Letters to Imlay*, Letter xxxi, from Paris, 30 December 1794, p. 86.

17 – Cf. Orlando in love with Sasha: 'he felt as if he had been hooked by a great fish through the nose and rushed through the waters unwillingly, yet with his own consent' (*O*, ch. i, p. 50).

18 – Quoted in *Letters to Imlay*, Letter xxxiv, from Paris, 30 January 1795, p. 95: '"The secondary pleasures of life," you say, "are very necessary to my

comfort:" it may be so; but I have ever considered them as secondary.'
19 – See *Memoirs*, p. 30: 'there were some essential characteristics of genius, which she possessed . . . The principal of these was a firmness of mind, an unconquerable greatness of soul, by which, after a short internal struggle, she was (for the most part) accustomed to rise above difficulties and suffering.'
20 – See *William Godwin*, vol. i, p. 113; the extract is from in Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* . . . (G. G. J. & J. Robinson, 1793), vol. ii, pp. 849–51.
21 – *William Godwin*, vol. i, p. 114, quoting from Godwin's *An Enquiry*, vol. ii, pp. 849–51.
22 – *Letters to Imlay*, quoted in 'Memoir', p. liv.
23 – *Ibid.*
24 – *William Godwin*, vol. i, p. 251, Letter from Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin to William Godwin, 6 June 1797; VW omits: 'unless he be a clumsy fixture'.
25 – *Memoirs*, p. 110.
26 – *William Godwin*, vol. i, p. 255, Letter from William Godwin to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, 10 June 1797: 'after all one's philosophy, it must be confessed that the knowledge that there is some one that takes an interest in one's happiness, something like that which each man feels in his own, is extremely gratifying.'
27 – *Memoirs*, p. 109, which has: 'Ours was not . . .'
28 – *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria; A Fragment* (1798).
29 – Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (Cassell, 1889), Letter viii, p. 78, which has: 'I cannot bear to think of being no more – of losing myself – though existence is often but a painful consciousness of misery; nay, it appears to me impossible that I should cease to exist, or that this active, restless spirit, equally alive to joy and sorrow, should only be organised dust – ready to fly abroad the moment the spring snaps, or the spark goes out which kept it together.' Mary Wollstonecraft was born in April 1759 and died in September 1797, so she was thirty-eight when she died.

IV Dorothy Wordsworth

a – *N&A*: 'and prosaically.'
b – *N&A*: 'For if one lets "I" . . . between one and the object, one will be . . . Night"; one will be . . . beams"; one will be'.
c – *N&A*: '– one could . . . if one had . . . about oneself.'
d – *N&A*: 'hawthorns'.
e – *N&A*: 'understand.'
f – *N&A*: 'cuckoo was shouting . . . the epithet'.
g – *N&A*: 'other. Everything was . . . absorbing and exacting and exhausting'.

h – *N&A*: 'till'.
i – *N&A*: 'and would be tired again.'
j – *N&A*: 'sticks – nothing happens more out of the way than that. And'.
k – *N&A*: 'a'.
l – *N&A*: 'symmetry are subordinate to that. But'.
m – *N&A*: 'that which'.
n – *N&A*: 'with a variety of'.
o – *N&A*: 'urged on by an indefatigable curiosity and reverence,'.
p – *N&A*: 'which she knew not how to master, still she must control, she'.
q – *N&A*: 'to nature and thus'.
r – *N&A*: 'it again and'.
s – *N&A*: 'the'.
t – *N&A*: 'For Dove Cottage,'.
u – *N&A*: 'cottage'.
v – *N&A*: 'into the histories of . . . secret that the hills concealed.'
w – *N&A*: 'so closely she observed how . . . been", and his'.
x – *N&A*: 'mind long after'.
y – *N&A*: 'or the moor, that she was most at her ease. Her finest work was done tramping . . . wet Scots road'.
z – *N&A*: 'a'.
aa – *N&A*: 'party, mused within himself, and sometimes debated aloud, the different meanings of'.
bb – *N&A*: 'had to walk, because . . . was mended'.
cc – *N&A*: 'And they were hungry because'.
dd – *N&A*: 'if'.
ee – *N&A*: 'sight'.
ff – *N&A*: 'his'.
gg – *N&A*: 'But the brother and sister tramped . . . themselves, for Dorothy's . . . as an Egyptian's and her clothes were shabby and her . . . they came to the waterfall. And . . . powers of observation fell upon it, searching out its character, noting its resemblances, defining its differences with all the ardour of a discoverer, with all the rapture of a lover. She had seen it'.
hh – *N&A*: 'with Racedown'.
ii – *N&A*: 'peace.'
jj – *N&A*: 'and felt'.

1 – For periodical publication and composition, see 'Dorothy Wordsworth' above; only material not in that version is annotated here. The essay was further revised for *CR2*. On this series in *CR2*, see 'Cowper and Lady Austen' above. See also 'Wordsworth Letters', *I VW Essays*. Reprinted: *CE*.
2 – Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (Cassell, 1889), Letter v, pp. 53–4: 'But it is not the Queen of the Night alone who reigns here in all her splendour, though

the sun, loitering just below the horizon, decks her with a golden tinge from his car, illuminating the cliffs that hide him . . .'
3 – *Ibid.*, p. 54: 'The grey morn, streaked with silvery rays, ushered in the orient beams (how beautifully varying into purple!).'
4 – *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. William Knight (2 vols, Macmillan, 1897), vol. i, 'Journal written at Grasmere', 31 October 1800, p. 56.
5 – *Letters Written*, Letter viii, p. 78 (this sentence concludes the passage from which the quotation in n. 29 in 'Mary Wollstonecraft' above is extracted).
6 – *Journals*, vol. i, 18 March 1802, p. 102.
7 – *Ibid.*, 14 May 1800, p. 32.
8 – *Ibid.*, 13 April 1802, p. 105, which has: 'the lake was of'.
9 – *Ibid.*, 29 April 1802, p. 114, which has: 'it was a sound'.
10 – *Ibid.*
11 – *Ibid.*, 16 April 1802, pp. 108–9, which has: 'us become white'.
12 – *Ibid.*, 'Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland', Second Week, 27 August 1803, pp. 253–4.
13 – *Ibid.*, final paragraph, pp. 254–5.
14 – *Ibid.*, 23 March 1802, pp. 103–4, which begins: 'It is about 10 o'clock, a quiet night . . . nothing save the breathing'.
15 – John Manners (1721–70), Marquess of Granby, army officer and politician.
16 – Cf. the variant penultimate paragraphs of 'Moments of Being: "Slater's Pins Have No Points"' (1927), *CSF*, p. 10.
17 – See William Wordsworth, 'The Inner Vision' (1833), which begins: 'Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes'.

William Hazlitt

Had one met Hazlitt no doubt one would have liked him on his own principle that 'We can scarcely hate anyone we know'. But Hazlitt has been dead now a hundred years, and it is perhaps a question how far we can know him well enough to overcome those feelings of dislike, both personal and intellectual, which his[a] writings still so sharply arouse. For Hazlitt – it is one of his prime merits – was not one of those non-committal writers who shuffle off in a mist and die of their own insignificance. His essays are emphatically himself. He has no reticence and he has no shame. He tells us exactly what he thinks, and he tells us – the confidence is less seductive – exactly what he feels. As of all men he had the most intense consciousness of his own existence, since never a day passed without inflicting on him some pang of hate or of jealousy, some thrill of anger or of pleasure,[b] we cannot read him for long

without coming in contact with a very singular character – ill-conditioned yet high-minded; mean yet noble; intensely egotistical yet inspired by the most genuine passion for the rights and liberties of mankind.

Soon, so thin is the veil of the essay as Hazlitt wore it, his very look comes before us. We see him as Coleridge saw him, 'browhanging, shoe-contemplative, strange'. He comes shuffling into the room, he looks nobody straight in the face, he shakes hands[c] with the fin of a fish; occasionally he darts a malignant glance from his corner. 'His manners are 99 in 100 singularly repulsive', Coleridge said. Yet now and again his face lit up with intellectual beauty, and his manner became radiant with sympathy and understanding. Soon, too, as we read on, we become familiar with the whole gamut of his grudges and his grievances.[d] He lived, one gathers, mostly at inns. No woman's form graced his board. He had quarrelled with all his old friends, save perhaps with Lamb. Yet his only fault had been that he had stuck to his principles and 'not become a government tool'. He was the object of malignant persecution – Blackwood's reviewers called him 'pimply Hazlitt', though his cheek was pale as alabaster. These lies, however, got into print, and then he was afraid to visit his friends because the footman had read the newspaper and the housemaid tittered behind his back. He had – no one could deny it – one of the finest minds, and he wrote indisputably the best prose style of his time. But what did that avail with women? Fine ladies have no respect for scholars, nor chambermaids either – so the growl and plaint of his grievances[e] keeps breaking through, disturbing us, irritating us; and yet there is something so independent, subtle, fine, and enthusiastic about him – when he can forget himself he is so rapt in ardent speculation about other things – that dislike crumbles and turns to something much warmer and more complex. Hazlitt was right:

> It is the mask only that we dread and hate; the man may have something human about him! The notions in short which we entertain of people at a distance, or from partial representation, or from guess-work, are simple, uncompounded ideas, which answer to nothing in reality; those which we derive from experience are mixed modes, the only true and, in general, the most favourable ones.

Certainly no one could read Hazlitt and maintain a simple and uncompounded idea of him. From the first he was a twy-minded[2] man – one of those divided natures which are inclined almost equally to two quite opposite careers. It is significant that his[f] first impulse was